contemporary fate of great cultural and literary myths

▪

le destin contemporain des grands mythes culturels et littéraires

▪

die gegenwärtige Bestimmung der großen kulturellen und literarischen Mythen

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Aadress/Address:

INTERLITTERARIA, *Tartu Ülikool, maailmakirjanduse õppetool, 50090 Tartu, Estonia tel./fax: +372 737 5350, e-mail: talvet@ut.ee; website: www.ut.ee/inlit*

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TARTU ÜLIKOOLI
KIRJASTUS

“INTERLITTERARIA” VÄLJAANDMIST TOETAB
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VOLUME 1

Introductory Note

It may sound like a paradox, but myths, even though their origin is generally associated with ancient cultures, have not disappeared at all in our postmodern and super-technological world. Such a view was held by a number of participants of the 7th International Conference of the EACL, "Contemporary Fate of Great Cultural and Literary Myths" (Tartu, September 23–26, 2007). While one type of myths dies, other myths immediately replace them. It seems to be sure that the world cannot get rid of myths until human life persists on the earth.

One could ask is there anything in the myth still worth discussing, when hardly any philosopher in history has passed by the world of myths. Heaps of books about myths have been written in a great number of languages. The world has its myths and every nation and people have their myths. They are not a privilege of undeveloped communities, ancient cultures or tribes close to nature. Also the city and modernity give birth to myths. Writers fight their daily battles with myths, deconstructing them and constructing them again. Postmodern theory has claimed the disappearance of grand narratives and, thus, also, the withering of grand myths. Alas, postmodern theory itself has become a grand narrative and formed its myths, like the one imagining that the virtual and written world could replace the unwritten "non-virtual" world.

The essence of myth seems to be its obscurity: it does not free us from its obsession, but perpetually puts a thinking human being to the test. Intellect would like to solve myth, but when the solution seems to be near, it appears that myth has absorbed the individual mind, leaving the answer still in semi-darkness. One must start once again from the very beginning. The research of myths has become a kind of hermeneutics. Every generation must translate myth for itself anew, as the experience of the old proves to be insufficient. It is because those myths that should probably be written with an initial capital letter M, contain secret hints at how we should spend our brief earthly life and what could give sense to our existence.

At the same time the other meaning of myth is not wrong either – myth as a mere fiction manipulated by power in such a manner that big

human communities would never get rid of their fascination. Indeed, such grand myths were in our recent past communism and fascism. Lenin claimed that religion was the opium of humankind. Thus in religion – in conscience based on belief – hidden ties with myth could be found.

One could think that once reason has destroyed myth and has declared gods dead, the world would become a paradise. Unfortunately, such a hope seems to be merely illusory. Disappearance of myth and gods would probably provide a perspective to nothingness. A paradise without gods does not exist.

It is likely that human being has been destined to wander between myth and history. In the most fascinating way it has been reflected by Miguel de Cervantes in *Don Quixote*: don Quijote and Sancho Panza are at any moment in myth and also beside the historical reader.

Rationality does not really contradict myth. Rather, reason and myth are complementary, both having their share in our experience of reality. Until reason avoids the obscure reign of myth, it is devoid of good choices and decisions. In darkness the "other" germinates, the one about whom contemporary cultural researchers so eloquently talk.

However, it has never been easy to leave one's "own" dominion. To transcend it, courage is needed. Let us hope our recent international conference and its papers would contribute to the widening of our mythic horizons. Myth is infinite. Thus a further meditation on it is welcome on the pages of *Interlitteraria.*

Interlitteraria's next *miscellanea*-issue will appear in the fall of 2009. Manuscripts should arrive by January 31, 2009. At the same time the EACL will start to spread a call for papers of its 8th international conference, of which the subject has also a lot to do with myth: it is the canon-shaping of world literature and national literatures by means of and departing from literary histories.

Jüri Talvet,
Editor

Myth as Knowledge: The Problem of Myth in Modernity

LIISA SAARILUOMA

Myth and Criticism of Myths in Modernity

The general attitude towards myths during the two centuries of European Modernity has been an ambiguous one. The Enlightenment had proposed a rational criticism of myths, but at the turn of the 18th century, the Romantics maintained the necessity of myths, and since then the two lines have concurred in our culture (cf. e.g., Frank 1989: 93–102). In this article I shall ask how this ambiguous attitude towards myths makes its appearance in modern literature. I will ask in particular, firstly, what the modern myths are like and, secondly, in what ways myths are used in contemporary literature. As a background to this, the position of myths in our literary and cultural tradition more generally shall be sketched.

At the beginning of the European literary tradition, literature, myth and knowledge were one and the same thing. Homer's epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, stemming from the eighth century BC, are regarded as the beginning of European literature, but to the Greeks they were much more than just literature. For several centuries Homer was to the Greeks the most important authority on matters regarding gods and man's position in the universe, and on the most important event of the Greek past, the Trojan War. His description of this war includes the representation of the Greek hero, a valiant warrior, which was the ideal and role model in the education of youth for centuries to come. In short, Homer was the authority on all the knowledge that was regarded as indispensable to be passed on to every new generation (cf. Jäger 1973: 63–88).

According to Aristotle, philosophy was born as *mythos* was replaced by *logos*, i.e., when mythic explanations of the state of affairs in the world were replaced by rational knowledge of the inner order of things. Philosophic thinking arose around 600 BC, but it still took centuries, before it generally superseded poetry and Homer as the greatest authority on knowledge for the Greeks. Plato's polemics against poetry still derives from this ancient rivalry between poetry and philosophy. Plato denies the authority of Homer and his tradition in matters of knowledge and claims this position for philosophy only; a poet has no real knowledge of the matters he deals with. In fact, he appeals foremost to the emotions of his audience instead of the rational part of the mind. This is why poets are not, with a few exceptions, tolerated in his ideal state (see *The Republic* 401d–402c, 411a–412b, 522ab, 603ab).

Aristotle is more favourably disposed towards poetry than was Plato. According to him, poetry, even if it cannot compete with philosophy as a source of knowledge, still has an important task: it illustrates important truths of life to people who are unable to conceive abstract philosophical truths (cf. *Poetics* 1448b, 1451ab). Aristotle's *Poetics* deals especially with tragedy. In most tragedies, an ancient myth was performed on stage. In Aristotle's view, it is, however, not necessary that the story (*mythos*) presented derives from mythology; it can as well be invented by the author of the tragedy himself (*Poetics* 1451b). It is evident that to Aristotle tragedy, as he knew it in the fourth century BC, was totally detached from its religious origins. To Aristotle myth then no longer has the authority of a religious truth, but myth is for him an archetypal story concerning a generally human situation or event.

This allegorical interpretation of myth – originating in the fifth century but adopted by Aristotle for the interpretation of myths in tragedy (cf. Brisson 1996: 50, 53–54) – became in the following centuries decisive for the attitude towards myths as topics and material in literature. Literature may utilize myths, even if their content is not regarded as literally true, because they express something generally valid and important. The allegorical interpretation of myths made it possible that Greco-Roman mythology was extensively used in literature also in the Christian centuries. It is no exaggeration to say that Greco-Roman mythology combined with biblical myths and stories comprises an inexhaustible source of stories and images for literature and art until the latter part of the 18th century, when subjects from everyday life gradually replaced mythological subjects in art and literature.

The Enlightenment is an important turning point in the attitude towards myths. The Enlightenment philosophers fiercely attacked everything that they considered as irrational thinking, including Christian mythology, as far as it was regarded to be literally true. The truth value of myths had to be judged in the light of experience and reason, and what proved to be irrational, had to be rejected. In the era of Enlightenment, an ideological criticism of myths was also generated that not only rejected myths as fabrications, but also claimed that the clergy deliberately served the masses the untruths of myths in order to safeguard their own interests.

The Modern Age in Europe was in its entirety a period in which the world view was increasingly determined by scientific rationality. In the light of scientific rationality, myths deliver pseudo-knowledge and are thus harmful, that is why they have to be unmasked and replaced by real knowledge. The Enlightenment criticism of myths then has in science a powerful ally.

At the turn of the 19th century, the Early German Romantics – Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, Schelling – wanted to restore myth into its culturally central position (cf. Schlegel 1978, Schelling 1976). They criticized the natural sciences propagated by the Enlightenment for splitting nature into innumerable elementary facts and partial mechanisms without being able to present the world in its entirety as meaningful, which only could validate it to propound individuals and communities a guideline in their actions. This is why myths are indispensable. Myths are the manner in which a community presents its world to itself making things and the actions of individuals appear as meaningful. Nietzsche has crystallized the task of myths as follows:

> [O]nly a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement. Myth alone saves all the powers of the imagination and of the Apollinian dream from their aimless wanderings. The images of the myth have to be the unnoticed omnipresent demonic guardians, under whose care the young soul grows to maturity and whose signs help the man to interpret his life and struggles. Even the state knows no more powerful unwritten laws than the mythical foundation that guarantees its connection with religion and its growth from mythical notions. (Nietzsche 1967: 135.)

The idea of myths as the legitimizing basis of a community and its members, which reappears e.g., in the work of Max Weber (cf. Frank 1982: 192) and Manfred Frank (ib., 1989: 93–112), is expressed here very clearly; the idea is part of the Romantic inheritance in thinking of myths.

The Early Romantics demanded that a new mythology must be created by poets that would correspond to the needs of modern man. This mythology shall deliver the basis for the new, romantic poetry (cf. Schlegel 1978). The specificity of modern mythology is that it must be such as to also satisfiy the demands of reason. Nothing less is, then, required than a conciliation of *mythos* and *logos*, of myth and rationality, in the new mythology that would satisfy the demands of critical reason.

It is an irrefutable fact that the Early Romantics were not able to carry out their programme: the poets in their circle did not succeed in creating the desired mythology that would serve as the basis for literature. Nearest to this comes the Late Romantic composer Richard Wagner with his operas. However, his "new" mythology is nonetheless very old indeed: Wagner imagined to have detected the collective myths for Germans in ancient Germanic mythology. Also his project failed, however, in the sense that modern Germans were not willing to assume the ancient mythology as their spiritual horizon.

Following Early Romanticism, the discussion of myths has been dominated by the opposing trends of criticism of myths and advocacy of myths. Both attitudes can also be combined and intertwined in one and the same person. Nietzsche, for example, on the one hand is a fierce critic of views which he regards as mythical, but on the other hand he regards myths as indispensable for an individual and a culture.

Even after religion has relinquished its position as the basis for the world view to science, criticism of myths has lost nothing of its importance, when the myths are understood in a broader sense than belonging only to religion. In this broader sense, all beliefs through which a society explains its world and validates actions, but that are not proven to be true according to the criteria of scientific rationality, are myths. Roland Barthes regards as myths any social representation that suggests a social usage to be "natural" without taking into consideration its social and historical conditions and the social groups whose interests are bound to it (cf. Barthes 1970). Another example of a modern critic of myths is Jean-François Lyotard, who uncovers "mythic" construc-

tions in the very core of the Western view of history. He contends that the idea of progress, a guiding principle in our view of history, is not scientifically based but rather a myth-like construction which is used to legitimize social practices (cf. Lyotard 1979). Furthermore, Hayden White has shaken the historians' belief that their research is firmly scientific by claiming that they borrow the "plots" of the stories they present as scientific truths from a set of archetypal mythic plots of the kind described by the literary theoretician Northrop Frye (White 1973; Frye 1957).

The works of Barthes, Lyotard, White and their followers have shown that myths are to be found even where only science and reason were expected. However, besides this myth critical line, there are in the contemporary intellectual discussion of myths also eminent proponents of myths among authors and philosophers, theoreticians and researchers of culture (cf., e.g., Eliade 1959, Fischer 1966, 199ff., Frank 1982). The defenders of myth could refer as an argument for the indispensability of myths to the historical fact that even in Modernity, where scientific rationality has had the supremacy over other forms of presenting things, new myths are continuously born which are of vital importance to culture. Don Juan, Faust, Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe are, as for example Michel Tournier and Ian Watt have emphasized (Tournier 1981: 31–32, Watt 2002), myths created exactly for modern man, to propose models for his being in the world. Mythic thinking does not, however, in modern times lead its existence as a current totally separated from scientific thinking, but both are in several ways intertwined.

Modern Myths: Don Juan, Faust, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe

Romantics contributed to establishing Don Juan, Faust, Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe as mythic figures of Modernity. The reason why they did not, however, consider these to fulfil their wish for a new mythology of Modernity is, as far as I can see, the fact that these were not the kind of collective myths that could form a common cultural horizon of the era. Rather than mythical heroes in the classical sense, who make the common ground of values visible to society, modern

mythic figures are problematic heroes, although they actually also present genuine values of society.

Ian Watt reminds us about the fact that three of the four mythic figures of Modernity emerged in the late 16th or early 17th century in the atmosphere of Counter-Reformation: *Faust*-"Volksbuch" stems from the outgoing 16th century, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* appeared in two volumes in 1605 and 1615, and Tirso de Molina's *Don Juan* was first performed in 1630. More generally, it is of foremost importance that all four mythic figures were born in an historical era in which the religious grounding of the world view had not yet vanished. From the point of view of religion, justice is done, when Don Juan and Faust end up in hell, as the former had recklessly and disregarding the morals chased erotic pleasure, while the latter had signed a pact with the Devil in order to pursue erotic pleasure and power and, first of all, to uncover the ultimate secrets of nature. Don Juan and Faust were thus originally negative heroes or anti-heroes, and their stories were warning examples of what might follow, if one engages in seeking pleasure or knowledge. Both of these temptations were dangerous parts of the new "ideology" of Renaissance, which was far more oriented to the mundane than the Middle Ages that preceded it. Unlike the former, Don Quixote's action does not violate religion or morals, but he is a negative hero in a comic mode: as a consequence of devouring books, he has lost his wits and now follows a behavioural code which does not accord with the surrounding world. Originally, Don Quixote did not express the values of society through negation or a warning example, as Don Juan and Faust did, but Cervantes' novel was read only as a comic novel (cf. Close 1978).

The youngest of the four mythic figures is Defoe's Robinson Crusoe: the novel bearing this title appeared in 1719. The religious world view is still present in this work, too: its values are still based on the Bible. However, Defoe's Calvinism is fully compatible with the spirit of enterprise and the pursuit of profit which Robinson represents, first as a plantation owner in the colonies and as a slave trader at sea and later on the desert island, where he establishes, at first completely by himself and later with the help of his savage slave, a colonial plantation. The religious world view frames his enterprise, as is seen in Robinson's Bible reading on Sundays – he had rescued the Holy Book from the ship wreck – and in his reflections that his confinement on the desert island was a punishment by Providence for his disobedience

towards his parents. Robinson is a penitent – like the female hero in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) – but, at the same time, his activity on the desert island is exemplary in a positive sense.

The retreat of Christian faith from Europe as the common basis of the world view that offered a closed cultural horizon to the continent, lead in the following centuries to a reinterpretation of the religiously condemnable anti-heroes as paragons of modern man. Don Juan and Faust are no longer simply warning examples who deserve their punishment. In the epic poem *Don Juan*, Lord Byron creates a hero who represents the Romantic, problematic, passionate, but also reflective, critical and ironic individual. In Goethe's "tragedy", Faust becomes the paragon of modern man who is in eternal search for contentment in love, power and especially knowledge without ever reaching his goal, but who exactly through his incessant striving is – in a metaphysical sense – absolved from guilt of any kind. Don Quixote appears in the Romantics' reinterpretation also as a Romantic hero who seeks to obtain the ideal in a world where it cannot be obtained (cf. Close 1978). Furthermore, in his pedagogical main work *Emile*, Rousseau presents Robinson Crusoe as the measure of "natural" man and makes the remark that even his loneliness is nothing exceptional: he himself feels as lonely in Paris as Robinson on his desert island (cf. Watt 2002, 175). This means that Robinson who follows the predominant economic rationality on his desert island is declared "natural" not only in regard to his activities but also to his loneliness: man in contemporary society is a lonely island.

The modern mythic heroes are thus individuals who pursue goals that are suggested for the modern man: erotic pleasure, wealth, power, knowledge or the making of a better world. These goals are recognized as actually pursued in society – but even taken together they do not seem to form a common and unified value basis for the society. Rather, the position of the "heroes" in society is a marginal one and their relation to it problematic. Ian Watt speaks about the modern mythic figures as "individualistic" (Watt 2002), and to a certain extent the characterisation is correct. Instead of partaking in a common endeavour important to the whole of society, the heroes pursue their own goals, which might from the point of view of the society not be totally unproblematic. Labelling the myths as "individualistic" for this reason is, however, not quite satisfactory, because the concept "individualistic myth" seems in itself to be a *contradictio in adjecto*. This is because

"individualistic", as a characteristic of modern thinking, does not only suggest that somebody acts separately from the others, but also that one thinks and sets goals independently from the others, being an autonomous subject of cognition and moral action. Thus modern individualistic thinking seems to exclude mythic thinking, which inevitably is collective.

Michel Tournier considers Don Juan, Don Quixote, Faust and Robinson as outsiders, who are deliberately deviant in order to question the functioning of the society – and he thinks that they are exemplary exactly in this, because in order to attain something valuable for the society one has to distance oneself from the ready-made social forms of action (Tournier 1981: 31–32). Tournier's conception might with a good reason be called individualistic: a deviation from a rule is here regarded as the for society valuable contents of a myth.

However, Tournier's proposal is not a sufficient description of modern myths either, because the aforementioned myths mean for their audience obviously far more than mere deviation from norms. It is also of importance what the figures represent. The fact that the figures reappear in literature again and again, makes it obvious that they represent, as Faust does for Oswald Spengler (cf. Spengler 1922–1923), modern man's conception of himself and his endeavours. Modern mythic figures suggest various options of living, but these options do not unambiguously lead to a happy and good life for the individual and the society but might lead to problems and contradictions.

Thomas Mann defines the function of myths in his essay "Freud and the Future" in a manner that suits the modern myth well. He maintains that myths are needed for grounding man's living: a life is lived "correctly", when a mythic model is followed. A person senses his/her life as being something unique, but actually s/he assumes a "character" which follows a mythic model. This lends to one's life dignity and assurance (Mann 1990: 492, 494). Thus we lead our unique life following the exemplary life of somebody else, walking in the footsteps of a mythic figure (In-Spuren-Gehen, ib. 492).

Thomas Mann's conception of the function of myths is a combination of individualistic and mythic thinking. It is no longer a question of collective heroism, but at issue are different possibilities of shaping an individual's identity and his or her life. The difference between the collectivity and the individuality of the "hero" is here the same as that which was discussed in the theory of the novel at the end

of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century as the difference between the hero of an epos and the hero in a novel. Whereas the heroes in an epos represent their collective and fight for a common cause, the hero of a novel is a private person, whose experiences and problems are located in the realm of private life (cf. Blanckenburg 1965: 17; Hegel II: 211–212). The hero of a novel is an individual whose relation to society is problematic (cf. Blanckenburg 1965: 17; Hegel II: 211–212). Thus the novel expresses the fragmentation of the modern world and the separation of the public and the private spheres which are discernible also in the aforementioned modern mythic figures. It is no coincidence that two of the four mythic figures, Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe, were originally heroes in a novel and that in the last two centuries modern myths have often been used and discussed precisely in novels.

Individualistic in Thomas Mann's conception of myth as a choice of one's identity and life story is not only that one has to choose among several possible models, but also that one by one's own choices accomplishes the fulfilment of the model in one's life. The individual's freedom of choice and responsibility are then not waived even when individuals shape their lives according to mythic models. Applying a myth to one's own life always involves a reinterpretation of the myth. Thomas Mann was aware of this, as he in his *Joseph and His Brothers* combines the retelling of the biblical myth of Joseph with the modern concept of the *Bildungsroman*, a story of an individual's personal development and socialisation, or as he in *Doctor Faustus* permits the 20th century avant-garde composer Adrian Leverkühn to appear – and interpret himself – as a new Faust figure. In the latter novel, Mann also displays the process through which new cultural myths are constantly born. Adrian Leverkühn does not only appear as a variant of the mythic figure of Faust but also of that of Nietzsche – which means that the historic character Nietzsche is here transformed into an archetypal or mythic figure that incarnates the problems of modern man. It is left to the audience to accept or to reject Mann's proposal to regard Nietzsche as a new mythic figure of Modernity.

Uses of Myth in Contemporary Literature: Tournier and Wolf

In Ancient literature, it was forbidden to change the course of events in a myth (cf. Aristotle: *Poetics* 1453b): Agamemnon must be murdered by his wife, Medea has to cause the death of her rival and to kill her children. In the allegorical interpretation of myths in the classical tradition of literature, the myths were thought to present eternal truths. Hence they were not to be altered, but their validity was reaffirmed in ever new adaptations. It is interesting to observe how a myth's supra-historical truth was, however, actually always reinterpreted in accordance with the culture and the period. For example, in Racine's plays the heroes of Greek mythology act, feel and speak like the paragon of a French 17th century courtier. Also in the literature of the 20th century this kind of repetition of myths occurs, which is based on the faith in the universal validity of myths. Thus, in Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), the events are placed in the United States in the time immediately after the Civil War, but the course of events is exactly the same as in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

In contemporary literature myths are, however, often altered, and the usage of myths means mostly rewriting them and not only adapting them into a new context. Rewriting a myth is always provocative, because it alters something through which the culture interprets itself. Rewriting a traditional myth is a challenge to the culture: if the legitimizing *Ur*-story is different than what we had thought, we have to change our self-understanding.

In post-colonial literature, the opportunity to re-tell European myths and also to confront them with non-European mythology has been widely used to challenge the superiority of European culture (cf. Gilroy 1996, Webb 1992). But also in European literature itself, rewriting myths has been a powerful means of cultural criticism. I shall examine here Michel Tournier's novel *Friday* and Christa Wolf's novels *Cassandra* and *Medea* for this.

In his novel *Friday, or the Limbs of Pacific* (*Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*, 1967), Tournier re-tells the story of Robinson Crusoe. Contrary to what the title seems to suggest, the point of view in the narrative is still Robinson's and not his servant's, but the course of events has been radically changed. Whereas Defoe's Robinson reproduces on the desert island the rule over nature and the colonial social

order familiar to him from his own culture, proving thus the "naturalness" of the capitalist and colonial social system, Tournier denies the naturalness of this order: for him, Robinson's endeavour to submit the island (and the savage slave) under his rule is only a transition phase which will be overcome by attaining another attitude that is regarded as superior.

Afterwards Tournier has expressed doubts that *Friday* may be an even too philosophical novel (cf. Davis 1988: 192). It is true that it deals with some of the crucial questions of Western thinking like the problems of subject and object, knowledge, responsibility and identity. Tournier has said that he let Robinson develop through the three stages of knowledge represented in Spinoza's philosophy: from the immediacy of sensory perception a person rises to the level of systematic conceptual knowledge of some parts of nature – which makes ruling over nature possible – and, at last, to the highest level, that of contemplative knowledge of all being in its entirety (Tournier 1977: 223–9). However, one has to take into consideration that Tournier regards Spinoza's philosophy as an absolute truth no more than any other philosophical system, which for him all are myth-like explanatory models that are ultimately not grounded in reason (ib. 27–31, 152–155, 191–198). Thus Robinson's development is not the "truth" about attaining the highest stage of knowledge. Rather, the point is to challenge our customary way of thinking: the knowledge that makes us capable of ruling over nature perhaps is not the only thinkable or even the highest form of knowledge.

Whereas Defoe's Robinson remains the same person through the 28 years of isolation on the island, for Tournier's Robinson nothing remains as it was before, as he is separated from his community. Loneliness alters the manner in which he thinks, remembers, perceives and speaks. Neither do his "natural" feelings or his sexuality remain the same, but they are also profoundly transformed in his solitude. Gradually his individuality and even his humanity are lost, and while the dehumanisation first meant degradation to the level of a boar wallowing in mire, later it came to mean something that in a positive sense surpassed the merely human. In Robinson a new attitude towards himself and his surroundings, the island, gradually develops: he no longer is the subject that counters the island as an object of observation, but he feels himself to be one with the island. The island that once had appeared feminine to him – he had regarded it as his mother or as his

earth-spouse – is now at one with himself: his subjectivity has lost its individual and human character and has become the subjectivity of the island. In the higher, contemplative form of knowledge he takes everything as it is, without wanting to change it. His savage servant Friday guides him towards this attitude, after Friday has been set free from slavery and become his brother. At the end of the story, Robinson does not want to return to civilisation when an opportunity for this presents itself, but instead Friday who is fascinated by the sails of the visiting ship escapes on it. However, Robinson does not stay without company because the ship boy Jaan Neljapaev remains on the island. Robinson gives him the name Thursday – without knowing, as little as the vast majority of the readers, that this is exactly what the Estonian name 'Neljapäev' means. Where do the meanings come from, are they "right" or invented – the author seems to be playing a game with his audience.

By rewriting the myth Tournier does not intend to create a new myth, e.g., one that would try to define what an "Übermensch" or a "noble savage" is. Rather he aims at criticizing a well-known myth and encourages us to pay attention to how mythic models actually determine our thinking. Here myth critical is the questioning of the supposition that even on a desert island a human being acts exactly like he does in our society. Furthermore, Tournier reflects on the functioning of myths, as he allows his Robinson to think about how he uses myths for interpreting his experiences and actions. As Robinson at the end of the phase of the "governed" island feels tempted to kill Friday, he first identifies himself with the punishing God of the Old Testament, until it occurs to him that perhaps the myth of Cain and Abel, i.e., the fratricide, should be applied to this case. In other words, we use myths to legitimize our deeds – but we have in myths themselves no ground for choosing exactly this myth or archetypal pattern of action for application. Tournier shares with Thomas Mann the insight that the responsibility in applying myths ultimately remains with the individual.

In Christa Wolf's *Cassandra* (1983), the Trojan War is seen from the point of view of a female Trojan, a woman who understood what was happening. Cassandra, the daughter of the king Priamus, has according to the myth received the gift of prophecy from Apollo, but her prophecies, though true, were always disbelieved. Also in the novel, Cassandra is a priestess of Apollo and a seer whose predictions are

never believed – because nobody wants to believe what is evident but disagreeable. "For a long time I could not understand, why not everybody saw what I saw - that they could not see the naked meaningless form of events." (Wolf 1984: 49.) The mythic figure of Cassandra has thus been made credible and brought near the readers by explaining psychologically why she was not believed. Psychological explanation is exactly the manner in which the modern reader "understands" what the myth is about, and accepts its contents which otherwise would appear as fantastic and even irrelevant.

Cassandra recognizes the truth about the war, about what it means and where it will lead to. Her view of the Trojan War is essentially another than that which is mediated in Homer's epics. The story Homer tells about the Trojan War is a legitimation story for the Greeks whom we consider as the founders of Western culture: the story presents the Greeks with their hero, the warrior. By seizing this primeval or *Ur*-story and recounting it differently, Wolf questions Western civilisation from the very beginning. She does not glorify the war, but she renders it rather in the light of the knowledge that the generation which has lived through the catastrophes of the 20th century has: war is not culture, or the beginning of it, but its opposite, it is barbarity and the ruin of culture. Is it then not shocking or deeply disturbing that at the beginning of our culture there was war? Are war and barbarity then at the root of our culture, the primeval or *Ur*-story, through which we ought to understand ourselves?

In Wolf's description of the Trojan War it is also essential that the Trojans are represented as maintaining a higher cultural level than the Greeks. There is a difference in the manners of warefare, which with the Greeks are savage when compared to the rules of fighting which the Trojan princes are supposed to follow. Cassandra thinks that everybody who witnessed the fight between Achilles and prince Troilus on the first day of the war, should have realized what this war would be like. Achilles, the greatest hero of the Greeks – and the protagonist in Homer's *Iliad* – is a bloodthirsty monster, for whom committing physical violence gives a satisfaction that is comparable to erotic pleasure. "Achilles, the beast" is the expression which Cassandra employs to describe him. The barbarity of the Greeks manifests itself also in the manner they treat each other. Attention is paid especially to the manner in which the Greeks subordinate their women: the women have no say even in their own matters. Not to mention the women that have been

acquired as a booty of war: they are dealt with like any other property. For the Trojan women who end up in the camp of the Greeks this means psychic ruin already before the war has been lost. Furthermore, the lower cultural level of the Greeks is evidenced by the fact that they had taken recourse to human sacrifice before the departure of the expedition: the daughter of the leader of the Greeks, Agamemnon, had been sacrificed. This means also for the Greeks a relapse into old, more barbaric manners, but Cassandra considers it as very significant that the chief of the Greeks is a weakling without self-confidence, whom his men can persuade to commit a crime against his will. The royal house of Troy has to conceal his crime from the Trojans, so as not to shock them by the monstrosity of the enemy.

But the war spoils the Trojans, too, before it ruins them. Nothing in the royal house or in the city remains as it was. The war corrupts and brutalizes both men and women. For Cassandra it is too high a price for victory that Trojans become like their enemies. Would it not be more important to live according to Trojan customs and according to Trojan laws than merely to survive? Cassandra has, however, to experience that war corrupts and brutalizes Trojans to become like their enemies, before it in the end puts them to death and destroys their culture. "Achilles the beast possessed every inch outside and inside of us." (Wolf 1984: 129.)

Cassandra wishes oblivion for Achilles and a sudden but painful death for those who praise him, but Homer and his heroic Achilles continue to live on in the European cultural memory. Wolf's proposal for a "truthful" description of the Trojan War questions, however, Homer's rendition of that war in a manner that appears plausible from the point of view of the outgoing 20th century (or the beginning of the new millennium). Furthermore, it also questions the myth of our history as a success story of how ever higher and higher levels of culture were attained. Perhaps Greek culture was not, at least in the beginning, the highest in the contemporary world. Perhaps at the beginning, a barbarian civilisation subdued a culture of higher standing. Perhaps this happens even today.

In Wolf's *Medea* (1996), the course of the mythic story has been changed considerably, in addition to that the action is throughout psychologically motivated. Medea, the daughter of the king of Colchis and a skilful curer of diseases, follows Jason who has come to Colchis to bring back to Greece the Golden Fleece, but in contrast to the

original myth, it is not love that prompts Medea to leave her home country, but instead she leaves for political reasons: she is appalled by the fact that her father sacrificed his only son to keep the throne for himself. The corruptive effect of power is one of the main themes in the novel. Medea and a number of citizens of Colchis, both men and women, follow Jason to Corinth, were Medea gives birth to male twins. The difference between the Corinthians and the Colchidians is presented here similarly as the difference between the Greeks and Trojans in *Cassandra*. The Colchidians are depicted as being sprightly, having a positive view of life and being friendly in their demeanour, even the women conducting themselves with self-assurance, and their miscarried efforts to reorganize the rule in Colchis are regarded as idealistic, whereas the Corinthians are rigid and competitive, they have subdued their women, and they feel an unjustified superiority over the Colchidians.

Medea's ruin ensues from the fact that she soon discovers in the Corinthians the same barbarity that she had wanted to escape from by leaving Colchis: exactly like her farther had allowed his son to be killed in order to keep the throne to himself, Creon, the ruler of Corinth, had allowed his daughter to be sacrificed. This is a closely guarded state secret, and the royal administrative apparatus now has to destroy Medea as a measure of self-protection. Like in the original story, Jason wants to marry the (other) daughter of Creon in order to succeed him on the throne, and this was in the original myth the reason why Medea, the illegal wife, had to be expatriated. In Wolf's version of the story, the king's daughter Glauce is an epileptic girl who fell ill as she had to witness the sacrifice of her sister. Medea almost succeeds in curing her by her skilful caretaking and by exhorting her to confront the traumatic events of the past, in order to free herself from their grip. But Glauce is brainwashed into believing that Medea is a witch. Furthermore, the people of Corinth are made to believe that Medea is the cause of the plague that ravages the state. She is expelled, and as Glauce commits suicide by jumping into a well, this is said to be caused by her witchcraft as well. The Corinthians also kill her two sons, but the rumour is spread that she had herself killed the sons as revenge on Jason. Medea, who now lives in a cave in the mountains, cannot, as she hears of this, do anything but to curse her persecutors – with just a faint hope that the posterity would ever learn the truth about her.

Medea is different from the other cases of rewriting myths considered so far in that it not only criticizes one specific myth, but criticism is aimed at the creating and using of myths for legitimizing action in general. To fall back on myths might have a disastrous effect on individuals and society as a whole. If a community resorts to a scapegoat myth, this is not disastrous only for the individual against whom it is applied but also for the community itself. This is because by distancing the fault from oneself and finding fault in an outsider or someone whom it is easy to get rid of – as, by the motto of the seventh chapter, human beings are apt to do when struck by a misfortune – the community does not cure the evil in itself. The chief astrologer of Creon says that the Corinthians insist on regarding themselves as the most innocent people in the world. Medea considers this as a feeling of superiority which prevents the Corinthians from seeing the truth about themselves. Where critical self-reflection would be required, someone is chosen to be the scapegoat, and the real problems are denied and remain unsolved.

This is the way it happens time and again. On her way to Greece Medea meets her female relative Circe, who with her company had been expelled from Colchis as she had rebelled against the backward rule of the king. Her ruined name is a prediction of what will happen to Medea as well. It is told that she transforms men into swine – undoubtedly because she forces them to confront themselves as they really are. What do men, then, want from Circe? As always, they search for "a woman that assures them that nothing is their fault; that gods, whom they sometimes pray to, drive them to their deeds" (Wolf 1996: 109).

The mythic figures of gods are used for dubious purposes, if they are burdened with the responsibility for men's deeds. Medea also attacks the basic logic of applying myths, namely legitimizing present-day acts by ancient stories. We are not allowed to "deliberately use pieces of the past, combine and separate them as happens to suit us" (ib. 103), only to legitimize our demand of power or anything else.

In *Medea*, Wolf sides with the critics of myths against myths. A culture has to be self-critical and choose itself as a main object for its desire for knowledge, and it should not apply old models, possibly stemming from a totally different cultural era and context, to validate its present actions. Wolf proceeds at this point further than Tournier who is convinced that we cannot get rid of myths because we grow up in their

"humming" and understand ourselves through them (Tournier 1977: 191), but who also emphasizes the importance of the constant reflection on the functioning of myths and of re-evaluating their contents. Myths alone do not suffice as a basis of a world view, but in Tournier's opinion we cannot do without them either.

One could possibly say that Tournier and Wolf are examples of the kind of author that the Early Romantics sought, namely authors who present our culture with new myths, or profoundly transformed versions of the old ones, which also satisfy reflective reason. However, these myths which are constantly rewritten, are not of the kind that they could close a common horizon of culture, which according to the Romantics and Nietzsche is the task of myths. But perhaps a late modern man no longer desires a world with a closed horizon. Maybe we prefer the openness, to be conscious of the incompleteness of our construction of the world and the acceptance of it. We might even be satisfied just with the fact that rewriting myths make us to think somewhat differently of something that had appeared obvious.

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From the Nature of Myth to the Myth of Nature

PENG YI

I intend to talk about the coming together of myth and nature in modern time by way of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. To do that, I will go over briefly Ernst Cassirer's distinction between myth and nature in *The Myth of the State* and his discussion of Rousseau in *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Cassirer's reflection on the modern political myth is a continuation of his generation's interest in myth as a particular mode of rationality and in the emergence of modern form of totalitarianism.[1] His contribution is first to retain the tension between logical thinking and the mythic mode and then to broach the connection between myth and language which transcends the dichotomy between scientific rationality and the mythic mode. In the process of laying out the history of thoughts on myth and the birth or re-birth of myth in the realm of modern politics, especially from Enlightenment on, Rousseau emerges as one of the pivotal figures who enacts the drama of sense and sensibility. Rousseau is important not just because he elaborates the celebrated theory of the social contract. For

[1] What is interesting about Cassirer and Hannah Arendt, both expatriates and both writing in the wake of the Nazi totalitarian regime and the holocaust, is that in their reflection on the underlying causes of totalitarianism Rousseau plays a central part. Cassirer devotes the above two book-length works on Rousseau so that sense can reclaim sensibility. On the other hand, Arendt, in her *On Revolution*, places Rousseau's coupling of emotions and politics at the center of her contemplation on the political heritage of the Enlightenment and its negative effect on modern political thinking that confuses passion with politics.

Cassirer, at least in his *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Rousseau represents the inalienable values and the necessary risks of freedom and autonomy, often on the backdrop of tortured and torturing drama of human psychology. Thomas Carlyle's idea of the hero worship, the political use of myth and particularly political ritual are hallmarks of our modern world. To Cassirer, myth cannot and refused to be simply eliminated. Without doubt, Cassirer does not see Rousseau as confronting the political myth of the modern age in all its aspects (e.g. the myth of the hero or the charismatic leader).[2] Yet perhaps we can explore and extend the critique of myth in Cassirer by looking into Rousseau's narratives of his search for his "independence" in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (abbreviated as *Reveries* hereafter) as a specifically literary response to that critique. Rousseau's reveries in the above work can be viewed as linked to myth is because the question of nature is crucial to his reflection on modernity. This last work of Rousseau is relevant because first he manages to cast an oblique look at some of the central issues of his political works, for example that of the contract. Secondly, in Rousseau's works from the *Discourses* to *Social Contract* and to *Reveries*, the nature of the political is inextricably intertwined with his views on nature. Therefore, the word "nature" includes his idea of the "state of nature", in which human beings exist in their primitive, independent and more or less peaceful state and the "nature" that is the background of his idyllic wondering in *Reveries*. This nature as we will be able to glimpse is that which ranges from the tranquil landscape of his self-exile, the nature of the amateur botanist,

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[2] Carlyle's idea of hero worship may perhaps be connected with Weber's concept of the charismatic hero and both of these may help the emergence of the idea or myth of the modern man. Rousseau plays or enacts the ambivalence, the birth pangs of this modern man. If we take into consideration *both* the political legacy of the Enlightenment and how Weber's emphasis on the importance of political leadership (for instance in his "Parliament and Government under a New Political Order" or "The Profession and Vocation of Politics") in the face of Weimar crisis *and* the birth of the modern political Leader of which Hitler is the most catastrophic example, perhaps the complexity of Rousseau as the exemplary modern man can be revealed: the mythic dimension of the modern man exemplifies conviction that may lead to either revolution or catastrophe.

and that of reflection of human nature.[3] Finally *Reveries* highlights one of the most thorny issues of Rousseau criticism: that of the nature of Rousseau's writing. The self-contradictory, seemingly inconsistency in Rousseau is probably the reason why Cassirer wishes to envision Rousseau as a "question", as an open question as shown in the title, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.* We cannot overlook the fact that myths, or *mythos*, are ultimately stories. In short, we need to reflect on the part fictionality and his reveries or day-dreaming play in the tension between rationality and the so-called mythic mode of thinking. After all, as Rousseau and Cassirer have frequently pointed out, the so-called social contract and the related state of nature is more a fictional scenario than realistic depiction of time immemorial. This last point may develop a possible supplement to Cassirer's emphasis of the connection between myth and language.

Despite the differences between those scholars who look upon myths of different civilizations as modes of thinking, however primitive, as structured and as logical as anything Western cultures can provide and those who stress their incommensurability, the underlying aim of both camps is to streamline the garbled language of the myth and trim away the irrational noises so as to unearth its grammar or structure, so to speak (Cassirer 1946a). But Cassirer will further attempt to consider myth as both the deep-seated impulse of bringing order to an otherwise threatening or chaotic world and as providing a sympathetic bonding to the society as a whole. Cassirer here is really

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[3] Habib in his *A History of Literary Criticism* outlines what is at stake here. Although in the passage he is talking about the neoclassical concept of nature, in comparison with that of the Romantics, but given the range of meaning that nature takes on in Rousseau, the complex of meanings centering around the concept that Habib sketches out remains an open and pertinent question: "This complex concept [i.e. nature] had a number of senses. It referred to the harmonious and hierarchical order of the universe, including the various social and political hierarchies within the world. . . . The concept also referred to human nature: to what was central, timeless, and universal in human experience. Hence, 'nature' had a deep moral significance, comprehending the modes of action that were permissible and excluding certain action as 'unnatural'. . ." (Habib 2005: 274). Both the harmonious quality of the hierarchies and what is universal in human nature seem to carry a moral overtone: it would be just as "unnatural" to carry out acts that go against the universal principle as it would be immoral to try to subvert the existing hierarchies.

outlining the general parameters of the importance of myth: it is an effort in making sense by projecting a systematic structure, but the mythical narratives of gods are not just substitutes of abstract ideational representations that provide rational explanations of the world. They flesh out a more comprehensive need for the living connection between the world and the human beings who try to settle into it. Rationality then is one facet of the more global activity that also reveals its viability and vitality in terms of emotions, our fear and our desire. The comprehensiveness of myth is ultimately the "'unity in the manifold'" toward which and on which our culture aspires and establishes itself and this is precisely the motive force behind the bond creating society and community (Cassirer 1946b: 37–8). This so-called "sympathetic bonding" is at the heart of Cassirer's theory of myth (and language) and myth's transformation of human beings, through language, out of the natural world dominated by causality, the natural world in which scientific rationality operates.

One of the most frequent mythic motifs, that of birth and renewal, can serve as an example of Cassirer's conception of myth as the alchemy of turning physical causality into social interaction; moreover, this theme that involves nature and her transformation is a link from Cassirer to Rousseau:

> If this life is to be preserved it must be constantly renewed. But this renovation is not conceived in mere biological terms. Even here the persistence of the human race depends upon social and not upon physiological acts. The clearest expression of this general conviction is to be found in the rites of initiation . . . Up to certain age, the attainment of puberty, the child is still regarded and treated as a merely 'natural' being. . . . But then comes a sudden reversal of this physical order. The child has to become an adult – a member of the society. . . . If the new social being is to be born the physical being has to, in a sense, to die. . . . (Cassirer 1946b: 40–1)

Cassirer emphasizes that the same cycle of death and life in the initiation rites can be found also in the natural world, in the rites of vegetation (e.g. the cults of Attis and Adonis) (Cassirer 1946b: 40). But of course the point is that both the social and natural rites represent the leap from the merely physical to that of the non-physical, the social.

The transformational force of mythic rites does not stop at the leap from the physical to the moral. It also betokens the inner see-saw of a civilization between perhaps counterpoint forces and its ultimate aim is the creation of an **expression** and an **image** out of the eternal cycles. In the myth of Dionysus, the Greek logical tendency needs must come face to face with the bacchic undertow of violence and destruction. Of course the whole scenario reminds us of the contemporary world of Rousseau and that of ours:

> In the Dionysian cult we find scarcely any *specific* feature of the Greek genius. What appears here is a fundamental feeling of mankind, a feeling that is common to most primitive rites and to the most sublime spiritualized mystic religions. It is the deep desire of the individual to be freed from the fetters of its individuality, to immerse itself in the stream of universal life, to lose its identity, to be absorbed in the whole of nature. . . . (Cassirer 1946b: 41)

In the face of the powerful forces of feeling in the Dionysian cults, the choice of the Greek religion cannot be a total submission to these forces of emotions, however powerful and undeniable. The elaboration of the cult into the story of Dionysus Zagreus signifies a decisive turn. The myth of Dionysus Zagreus, for Cassirer, works out, explains the otherwise confounding cult. This working out is the creative, the symbolic function of myth in addition to its emotional gravitational pull. What we need to recognize is not just the perennial struggle between sympathetic bonding and forces of disintegration, of life and death, and of individuality and nature but also the fact that Cassirer in the meantime has shifted to the central question of expression:

> Myth does not arise solely from intellectual processes; it sprouts forth from deep human emotions. Yet on the other hand all those theories that exclusively stress the emotional element fail to see an essential point. Myth cannot be described as bare emotion because it is the *expression* of emotion. The expression of a feeling is not the feeling itself – it is emotion turned into an image. This very fact implies a radical change. What hitherto was dimly and vaguely felt assumes a definite shape; what was a passive state becomes an active process. (Cassirer 1946b: 43)

Myth extends the efficacy of reason and expands the realm of physical causality into world of human bonding and association. If myth is a step away from physical nature, it is also an index and an expression, an image satellite orbiting the eternal cycles of association and disintegration.

What Cassirer detects in the cult of Dionysus, i.e. the wish to surrender one's individuality to the immensity of the "universal life" and the "whole of nature" are also Rousseau's recurrent motif, from the *Discourses*, through *Social Contract* and certainly to *Reveries*. But whether the individual who is Rousseau would go quietly into the bonding or whether the whole that is nature is so easily attained are questions we need to explore. More importantly, as a lonely wanderer and day-dreamer, how Rousseau can immerse or fail to do so into the whole of nature will show in what degree reveries are expressions in Cassirer's sense.

Rousseau's *Reveries* began in 1776, a few years before his death and it consists of ten walks. These walks involve some wandering around natural landscape but most of them are reflections of his own life-long concerns and his relationship as a self-exile and lone wanderer with the world at large. In the "Third Walk", Rousseau expresses a sentiment about the art of dying similar to what Cassirer says concerning initiation rites as demanding the child to relinquish his uninitiated physical being in order to be born into the life of the adult. Here Rousseau is criticizing the drive towards the endless pursuit of knowledge even into old age: "We enter the race when we are born and leave it when we die. . . . All you have to consider then is how to make your exit. If an old man has something to learn it is the art of dying . . ." (Rousseau 2004a: 48). The turning away from the pursuit of knowledge is actually a return both to the child that Rousseau has always been and miraculously to an existence unconstrained by the physical limits of age: "Ceasing therefore to seek among men the happiness which I felt I could never find there, my ardent imagination learned to leap over the boundaries of a life which yet hardly began, as if it were flying over an alien land in search of a fixed and stable resting-place" (Rousseau 2004a: 48). The enlightenment Rousseau is seeking is not the enlightenment merely in terms of knowledge but it is one of self-enlightenment that flies in the face of mortality (or mortals?). This self-enlightenment promises a happiness beyond the boundaries of physical life. This is renewal through the art of dying and self-enlightenment. This veering away and return, veering away from the

myth of knowledge and a return to nature, Rousseau envisions, is the path to a universal life: "'No, empty logic-chopping will never destroy the close relation I perceive between my immortal nature and the constitution of the world, the physical order I see all around me. In the corresponding moral order, which researches have brought to light, I find the support I need to be able to endure the miseries of my life'" (Rousseau 2004a: 56)[4]. In the famous "Fifth Walk", Rousseau seems to have finally found the "fixed and stable resting-place" he hankers for. On the island of Saint-Pierre in the middle of lake Bienne, he is convinced that he is truly happy. It is not a momentary thing of brief ecstasy or passion. It is instead a constant state. The reason why such a state is the true bliss is that life is for Rousseau in this walk and in the "Ninth Walk" plagued by interminable mutability (Rousseau 2004b: 87–8).[5] Saint-Pierre provides a rare opportunity for Rousseau to gain a glimpse of the state of happiness and this state has to do with nature that the island and its environ can amply supply. Through questions of mortality and happiness, his encounters show us the enmeshing between nature and myth. Rousseau's emphasis of the importance of the pursuit of happiness and lasting calm is in clear opposition to what he earlier called the logic-chopping of the philosophers. Secondly, his encounter possesses a mythic dimension in the sense that this happiness beyond the mere pursuit of knowledge is to be found in the embrace of nature which is not at all devoid of what he seeks spiritually. Also, because of Rousseau's conception of nature as kind of cessation of mutability, we are reminded of the Cassirer's interpretation of the myth of renewal and Dionysian cult: the necessity of dying (into ecstasy?) in order to transcend physicality. With one essential

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[4] This is the pivotal place where we witness the dramatization and complication of what Habib outlined in the above quoted passage: Rousseau is not only envisioning his encounter with the physical world, i.e. "nature"(or "the corresponding moral order" which may or may not be the physical world), in a moral light but he is also affirming the intimate and *personal* (I see, I perceive) connection between his immortal nature and the physical world (which may also be called nature), the corresponding moral order (the "constitution of the world"). He is immortalizing the personal as well as materializing the corresponding moral order, making that order residing in the physical world, making the moral order almost "worldly", up close and personal.

[5] For example, "[h]appiness is a lasting state which does not seem to be made for man in this world. Everything here on earth is a continual flux which allows nothing to assume any constant form" (Rousseau 2004d: 137).

difference: the nature of myth, of the need to transcend physicality, in Cassirer's case is now turned into a myth of nature under the microscopic scrutiny of the amateur botanist in Rousseau. It is not so much the opposition between heart and mind as one between the self-absorbed calmness and the indifference of reason. It is as if we witness in Rousseau the fading out of myth, with its passionate sound and fury, into the stillness of nature and this merger is possible because the modern conception of society begins with Rousseau's idea of the social contract with presupposes a state of nature:

> But it must be admitted that this [reverie in which one forgets all the troubles and become conscious of one's existence] happened much more easily and agreeably in a fertile and lonely island. . . . It was without doubt a fine opportunity for a dreamer who is capable of enjoying the most delightful fantasies even in the most unpleasant settings . . . Emerging from a long and happy reverie, seeing myself surrounded by greenery, flowers and birds, . . . I fused my imaginings with these charming sights. . . . I could not draw a line between fiction and reality; so much did everything conspire equally to make me love the contemplative and solitary life I led in that beautiful place. Would that it could come again. . . . I know that mankind will never let me return to this happy sanctuary, where they did not allow me to remain. But at least they cannot prevent me from being transported there every day on the wings of imagination and tasting for several hours the same pleasures as if I were still living there. Were I there, m sweetest occupation would be to dream to my heart's content. Is it not the same thing to dream that I am there? . . . I am often more truly in their midst and they give me still greater pleasure than when I was surrounded by them" (Rousseau 2004b: 90–1).

Before we talk about Rousseau's dream of the happy sanctuary in nature which is fought with complexity, the complicated relationship between reality and fiction, and between being there and dreaming being there, a final fourth point needs to be attended to. The wandering of the idler is shaped by the searching eyes of the enthused botanist. In more than one walk (e.g., also in "Seventh Walk"), Rousseau expresses

his interests in botany and he has written on botany and the botanic system of Carl von Linné. Rousseau is then just initiated into botany and intends to compose a work on that subject so that he can describe "every grass in the meadows, every moss in the woods, every lichen covering rocks" and he determines not to "leave even one blade of grass or atom of vegetation with a full and detailed description" (Rousseau 2004b: 84). Through the examination of the sexual system of plants and the invention of binomial nomenclature (e.g. *homo sapiens*), botany in the hands of Linné is becoming a universal classification system.[6] In what way is Rousseau attracted by Linné and his mechanical classification system? In the "Seventh Walk", Rousseau elaborates on the reasons he is attracted to the science. The botany of Linné is a counter-science in a way for it differs from the ultimately utilitarian research of his time. Botany does not want to inspect the "properties", medicinal or otherwise, of the object of classification (Rousseau 2004c: 109). Linné's contribution lies in his effort in rescuing botany "from the schools of pharmacy and restoring it to natural history and agronomy" (Rousseau 2004c: 110). This science that enables him to describe or classify every blade and each atom can usher him into the surrounding harmony. "[I]n a state of blissful self-abandonment", he will manage to lose himself in the "immensity of this beautiful order" (Rousseau 2004c: 108). What is most extraordinary is that the immersion through reverie transforms him into the "unity of all things", the universal life (108).[7] We can imagine Rousseau as a saint Jerome of plants, a Dionysus of flora, a medieval scribe of flowers, or a amateur classifier tirelessly transcribing and filling in the gigantic table of classification on which every atom of fauna and flora is recorded. But what is the relation between the science of botany and the science that Cassirer sees as in opposition to emotions and myths? Or perhaps it is not a question of myth in contrast to scientific rationality, but a question of self-relinquishment and annihilation, of losing oneself in a dutiful transcription of the book of nature as if one is writing the alphabetic monads of fauna and flora, in contrast to the self-love and indifference

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[6] For example, Koerner "Carl Linnaeus in his Time and Place" (Koerner 1996: 146ff).

[7] It would be interesting to see whether this idea of participating in the immensity of the beautiful order and the universal life has anything to do with Kant' theory of the sublime.

that Rousseau sees as embodied in the science and rationality of his time.

In *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* Cassirer also deals with Rousseau's revision of the systematic natural philosophy of his time by the very concept of self understanding. Cassirer's discussion is conducted in the context of one's own feelings as the ultimate ethical guides and the roots of society, freedom and law. According to Cassirer, what distinguishes between Rousseau's works and Holbach's *The System of Nature* is former's discovery of the inherent validity of one's emotions: "From the original power of feeling Rousseau gained a new understanding of nature; with it he put himself into the center its living presence. . . . Against the formalism and schematic abstraction of the 'nature-system,' such as we find it in Holbach's *Système de la nature*, he opposes the quickening flow of his 'nature-emotion'" (Cassirer 1989: 106). When one gazes into oneself one finds the ground of ethical insights and by this self-understanding one becomes one with nature.[8] But for Cassirer, the self-evidence of ethical insights is fundamentally different from the passive self-evidence, the immanent truth of the emotions. The spontaneity of ethical insights just as the sui generis social contract is something self-elected. For Cassirer, this self-elected act of contract and ethical judgment demonstrates the centrality of human will and freedom. The true thrust of "nature-emotion" lies in

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[8] In short, Rousseau personifies the Kantian aesthetic judgment but his self-understanding on the basis of his oneness with nature possesses an ethical dimension too.

In addition, the connection between Rousseau and Kant does not escape Cassirer himself and this is evident in his *Rousseau, Kant and Goethe*. In the introduction to the book, Peter Gay unearths an intriguing passage which to Gay anticipates what Cassirer would say concerning the similarity between Rousseau and Goethe, if the author ever has the chance of actually writing such a piece. In this passages from Goethe we see similar fascination with nature of the kindred spirits and amateur botanists: "I sometimes think of Rousseau and his hypochondriacal distress; and yet I can understand how so fine an organization can be disarranged, If I didn't take such an interest in natural matters, and if I didn't see that in midst of apparent confusion one may compare and give order to a hundred observations . . . I should often think myself mad "(Cassirer 1945: xiv). The ambivalent relation nature here depicted has with the law of reason and the force of emotions is what need to understand in more details.

the term's fusing together of self-understanding of one's nature as ethical basis and one's oneness with nature through emotions.

But it is exactly this identification of the nature that is the self and that with which one is to be united that should be put to the test in *Reveries*. Right after he mentions Linné's *Systema Naturae* as his latest fascination, Rousseau confesses to raptures and ecstasies this botanic study brings to him: "Nothing could be more extraordinary than the raptures and ecstasies I felt at every discovery I made about the structure and organization of plants and the operation of sexual parts in the process of reproduction . . ." (Rousseau 2004b: 84). It seems that the natural organization especially the sexual reproductive operation of the plants disclosed in the science of botany are fully capable of providing Rousseau the opportunity of losing himself, of "losing it" and becoming one with nature. In a later walk, Rousseau even calls his botanic fascination a kind of **madness**. The important thing is that instead of considering the systematic cataloging of nature as a move away from nature-emotion, Rousseau becomes the devoted naturalist who really allows himself to be transported by the charm of nature through a ritual of classification. In the seventh walk where he declares the botanic research a kind of madness, he has decided to learn all of Joannes Andreas Murray's *Regnum Vegetabile*, he is acting out the more than perfect naturalist: ". . . I am seriously considering the wise plan of learning all of Murray's *Regnum Vegetabile* and acquainting myself with every known plant. . . . I botanize learnedly at my birdcage, and every new blade of grass that I spot makes me say to myself with satisfaction: 'There is one more plant anyhow" (Rousseau 2004c: 106). This endless cataloging instead of being led astray, away from emotions, makes him more in touch with the hatred and vengeance which threatens to tear apart the pastoral quietness and which flows under the whole texture of the work in question: "I am not trying to defend my decision to follow this whim; it seems very reasonable to me, persuaded as I am that in my present situation to devote myself to the pastimes that appeal to me as not only very wise, but very virtuous into bargain" (ib.). The virtue of becoming one with nature will enable him to rid himself of the "seeds of hatred or vengeance" and to take revenge by being happy despite the persecutors (I don't think it is that the seeds are here by accident): The fruit of happiness will not come directly from the seeds of hatred and vengeance but from perhaps natural seeds, seeds of nature. Finally, this immersion into nature through adopting the

perfect cataloger is actually giving us a first glimpse of another form of reason arising out of nature, an alternative kind of "nature-reason", a reason that is nature:

> Yes, there can be no doubt that reason allows and even directs me to give way to any inclination that attracts me when nothing prevents me from following it, but it does not tell me why this particular activity should attract me . . . It is a strange choice and I should like to know the explanation for it. I think, properly understood, it might add something new to the self-knowledge which I have devoted my last hours of leisure to acquire (Rousseau 2004c: 106–7).

Earlier we have talked about for Cassirer, contained in myth and rite such as Dionysus and initiation is the perennial strife between nature and culture or physical causality and social interaction. Out of the passionate enactment that is myth or ritual, we see the leap from physicality to active human community and participation, or better still, the expression that simultaneously marks and makes possible the leap from physicality to freedom, from nature to humanity. But Rousseau's drama of transformation (from nature to myth to human community) is played out totally on the leaves of nature; moreover, the story of transformation is so close to the vegetative because the almost Borgesian classification reminds us of the Chinese encyclopedia that begins Foucault's *The Order of Things*:

> This book first arouse out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered . . . all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought . . . – braking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things . . . This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e)sirens, (f) fabulous . . .' (Foucault 1973: xv).

This amateur classification and encyclopedic endeavor ("There is one more plant anyhow") of Rousseau the day-dreamer and eternal

wanderer shores up at the same time the limitations of reason, and that of the search for totalizing or totalized systematic knowledge. Rousseau's botanic encyclopedic research is an alternative sprawling system and this system of his private madness enables him to embrace nature in order to first immolate the selfish and self-centered pursuit of totalizing knowledge, to sacrifice Narcissus on the altar of nature. This highlights the turn to nature is Rousseau's radical answer to the emerging modern world where a myth of nature predominates.

Cassirer in the concluding chapter of *The Myth of the State*, "The Technique of the Modern Political Myth", considers the rise of the hero, the Great man in the realm of politics as one of the characteristic of the modern world. Instead of homo sapiens, we have homo magus and the homo faber. This anachronistic fusion of figures from two different developmental stages constitutes the paradox of the modern political myth. The political leader of the present world has to at the same time be charismatic, heroic in the romantic sense, but on the other hand, he has to possess the calculating mindset of a factory production line engineer (Cassirer 1946c: 282). I think this is infusing the forces of destruction and blind necessity into the persona of the Great Man. Myth according to Cassirer's quotation of Doutté, is the personification of the collective wishes (Cassirer 1946c: 280). Perhaps modern political myth not only is indeed the personification of the collective wishes but also a naturalization, a making-physical that reduces individuals into inanimate objects. Against this blind tide of naturalization, the private madness of Rousseau the naturalist attempts to stem.

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The Eternal Return of the Myth of Platonism

TRIIN KALLAS

> It is not that words are imperfect, or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperably inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the other's terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say.
>
> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

Plato is generally regarded as the founder of a particularly Western tradition of thinking often referred to simply as "metaphysics". The Continental tradition with Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida at its head, has famously undertaken a critical evaluation of the Platonic foundations of metaphysics and their limitations, exploring possibilities of thinking "beyond Platonism". In political philosophy, Platonism has become a synonym for totalitarianism and Plato is seen as the "main enemy of open society" by Popper. Regardless of their exact choice of words, philosophers in the 20th century tend to see Platonism as something that has to be overcome, reversed, or left behind. It seems surprising that the various schools and traditions of our times come to agree on defining their common enemy. On a closer look, it becomes evident that the particular ideas that are declared to be overcome or reversed may vary a great deal. What exactly is the meaning of Platonism and its relation to Plato? Is it just a rhetorical method used by several 20th century thinkers who take Plato to be their opponent and turn him into a straw man?

Nietzsche's re-evaluation of the origins of the Western metaphysics will serve as the main critical voice in the following essay, since most of the 20th century Anti-Platonists have been building on his insight. Nietzsche not only points out the significant disparity in Plato's words

and activities, but also addresses the metaphysical tradition that has been extending the Platonic "theory" for a long time. *If* this theory is a fabrication that was born out of political motives, as Nietzsche suspects, the philosophical tradition that has been built on it has proceeded on a misperception of its own origin.

I will suggest that the cultural myth of "Platonism" is largely constructed by the interpretive tradition itself, which has projected back to Plato the classical hierarchies of ideality vs. materiality, unity vs. plurality, intelligibility vs. sensuality, identity vs. change, eternity vs. temporality. Thanks to the 2500-year tradition of treating Plato as a Father of Metaphysics, this has become a myth in the sense of Barthes: a social fiction.[1] The task of describing *how* the distortion has been introduced by different interpretations is enormous and falls out of the scope of the present paper. I shall rely in these matters on the previous studies, e.g. Hyland's recent book *Questioning Platonism*, and proceed to the more challenging question: *why* are Platonic texts so prone to conflicting interpretations? Is there something about Plato's method that excludes the possibility to settle on what his theory really is?

There is a growing number of studies on Plato now that put an emphasis on the literary and hermeneutic issues involved in the dialogues. Certain formal and literary aspects – dialogue form, use of irony and dramatic characters etc. – may be far more relevant to Platonic scholarship than philosophers or scholars usually tend to think. In this paper, I shall analyse the use of myth as an example of imagistic thinking in Plato, and discuss its consequences on the ways that Plato can be read. My aim is to indicate that the overcoming of Platonism that philosophy was occupied with all through the 20th century, was an overcoming of just one particular interpretation of Plato(nism).

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[1] Barthes describes the 'myths' of society, i.e. the social lies and fictions that are to be uncovered, understanding myth as a set of phenomena and convictions that is produced by the society in order to preserve its origins and core. Myth makes the artificial appear as natural: the rules of morality, cultural and aesthetic values are presented as self-evident. Consequently, myth transforms appearances into the essential, deforming actuality in the way that people appear as no more than deliverers of opinions, the origin of which is unknown to them. The Barthean approach here would be to study the common expressions currently in use. The most vivid everyday example of this is probably the concept of "Platonic love" with its connotation of ideality and non-physical character that have little to do with Plato's original understanding of love.

Is Plato a Platonist?

Historically, the first philosophers to identify themselves as Platonists appeared in the 2nd century C.E. Restricting of this term to only those who explicitly called themselves *Platonikoi-Platonici* would, however, exclude a number of earlier followers of Plato and members of his Academy. Moreover, there are studies (e.g. J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*) which present a large amount of evidence of the fact that in late antiquity Platonism is understood as *airesis*, a way of thinking or a set of beliefs, instead of a philosophical school in an institutional or organisational sense. (Gerson 2005: 254)

The historical definition of Platonism is problematic because the followers of Plato never formed a coherent group, but were involved in an ongoing debate on the teachings of Plato as well as the basic problems of philosophy. This again supports the idea that Platonism should rather be seen as a way of thinking rather than a strict philosophical position or a set of these. After delineating the fundamental feature of Platonism as a "top-down metaphysical approach", Gerson (2005: 269–276) goes as far as to claim that also Aristotle was a Platonist. This is unusual on the background of the traditional history of philosophy that delineates Platonism and Aristotelianism as two different or even competing schools of thought whose influence was prominent up to the Modernity. Gerson's view is also an example of a particularly wide understanding of the term "Platonism" that has little to do with the historical person, Plato himself. On that ground it is possible that Platonism can also be seen as *antedate* to the writings of Plato: "It was fairly widely believed in antiquity that Plato was not the first Platonist" (Gerson 2005: 256).

These arguments give us a strong reason to abandon the historical approach and search for Platonism as a set of certain beliefs that may emerge in any historical epoch. There is a number of beliefs that have been proposed as "authentically Platonic": a belief in an immortal soul (or part of soul); belief in a separate sphere of Forms (or divine intellect); a belief that evil is not substantial, but a privation of good; a belief that the material world in flux is not real; a belief in an ideal state that imitates the structure of justice in soul, etc. If Platonism is a way of thinking that precedes and outlives Plato as a person, what is the connection of these beliefs to his writings?

The perfectly intelligible world of eternal and unchanging beings was posited long before Plato; even if we lack evidence on the import of any more ancient (e.g. Indian) thought systems into Europe, Plato was certainly in good contact with the Eleatics. These thinkers were driven by a sincere wish to discover an order that exists independently of humans and their illusory sense perception. Plato, on the contrary, introduced myths and lies to philosophy.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche (1973: 31–32) not only gives very different evaluations to Plato and Socrates ("How could the most beautiful growth of antiquity, Plato, contrast such a disease? Did the wicked Socrates corrupt him after all?"), but also points to Plato as the founder of dogmatic philosophy, that is, Platonism. "It must certainly be conceded that the worst, most durable, and most dangerous of all errors so far is a dogmatist's error – namely, Plato's invention of the pure spirit and the good as such." However, Nietzsche calls this invention a mask of Plato – one of the "monstrous and frightening masks". I believe this is an allusion to the role that Plato played and pretended: a mask that succeeded in creating a certain illusion in its audience, both contemporary and that to follow.

The most radical view on this is probably introduced by Deleuze (1994: 68), who asks: "Was it not inevitable that Plato should be the first to overturn Platonism, or at least to show the direction such an overturning should take?" Without underestimating the ontological claims of Platonism, Deleuze agrees with Nietzsche to locate its actual motivation in the realm of ethics and politics. The purpose of setting a model (Plato's Form or Idea) is to establish a difference between Socrates and the Sophist, between good and bad pretenders to the name of truth. The truth itself, however, remains a matter of debate in Plato's dialogues. The question of overturning arises from an understanding that with Plato, "the issue is still in doubt: mediation has not yet found its ready-made movement" (ib. 59). The brief allusion to Plato as a philosopher who overturned Platonism, or at least showed the direction to such an overturning, indicates that when Deleuze refers to Platonism, he is not speaking about a philosophical doctrine that Plato elaborated in his dialogues, but rather to the tradition of thinking that arose from a certain way of reading those dialogues.

Nietzsche's readings of Plato

Immanuel Kant declared that his Copernican revolution in philosophy was an inverted Platonism: he reversed the Platonic hierarchy between the intelligible and the sensible by making the finite consciousness the source of ideas that can be thought. For Nietzsche this reversal was not radical enough, because the moral idea in Kant functions still *as if* it were independent of consciousness. Thus Nietzsche defines the task of the philosophy of the future as a radical break from Platonism. I will concentrate next on what the reversal means for Nietzsche. In the early works it is, most of all, that the distinction between the real and the apparent worlds should be abolished.

> Platonism intended to substitute an external, foundational and invariable *eidos* for an unsettled structure of variable forms organizing itself out of its own inward concentration of energy. In the image of an external *eidos* we find the seed of monotheism in the West and the greatest threat to the development of healthier forms. (Nietzsche 1974: 143)

With a few exceptions, the Western tradition has been directed, in Nietzsche's view, by Plato's taste for the mastery of an enduring, external form. Platonism for Nietzsche is not a way of thinking that developed over a longer period or in cooperation with Neoplatonist and Christian thinkers. No, it is clearly an achievement associated with the particular person, Plato: he established a metaphysical system that challenged the assumptions of his day, replaced the so-called Hellenic paradigm by declaring the supremacy of his own scheme of the enduring form. Christianity as "Platonism for the people" (Nietzsche 1973: 31) just inherited this transvaluation from the Platonists. Many philosophers share this view with Nietzsche, e.g. Gadamer (2001: 38–9) says that "Plato first erected the counter-construct to the universal flux in order to outline his thinking of the *eidos*;" and Heidegger's identification of being with the Greek notion of *physis* in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* refers to his attempt to return to the pre-Platonic, more original understanding.

It is a juxtaposition of two ways of thinking: the former, which is associated with Heraclitus, sees ideas as developing through internal

variation, and the latter, Platonic one, desires a coherence of knowledge that has to be grounded in absolute, unchanging and foundational forms. When this independent sphere of forms is introduced, it has to be opposed to the changeable world of the apparent. For Nietzsche, the main problem with this distinction is the hierarchy of values that it poses, disparaging the world of flux in favour of the intelligible world that Nietzsche sees as no more than an "empty fiction." The separation of the two worlds has obvious consequences: (1) the physical world comes to be seen as evil (Augustine: the physical world's variations are determinate of the evil found therein, while such variations are to be measured against the invariable, unchanging goodness of God's perfection[2]), and (2) since the foundation is an empty fiction, this model necessarily leads to nihilism, resulting from an alienation of the human agency from the concepts that measure our lives.

Nietzsche's analysis in the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* of Heraclitus' worldview or the "Hellenic way" that Plato abandoned, concentrates on the notion of *diapheromenon* (variation) as differentiated from *sympheromenon* (coherence), based on the famous fragment D51: "People do not understand how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself. There is a harmony in the bending back, as in cases of the bow and the lyre."[3] The Greek *diaphero* has several connotations: it can mean literally to 'to lead' or 'to carry' (*phero*) 'against', but in the political life it would also signify a man who 'excelled' in the use of language, *diaphero* in this sense would be a mark of 'distinction', a surpassing or differing from the crowd. In this fragment, the middle voice (*-omenon*) implies an action that falls between active and passive modalities, so that the agent simultaneously acts 'against itself' and receives that advance 'from itself'. "*Diapheromenon* describes the nature of emergence as such, from out of original indifference; it describes all stages of this kind of struggle, from the lowest kind of uprising to the highest" (Wilkerson 2006: 146). Some commentators have pointed out that the account of this Heraclitean world of variations in the early writings of Nietzsche is later to become his conception of the will to power: an original violence that brings forth its antinomy, and wanting to be different, the exception. But clearly this is also the principal source for the will of the 20th century to overturn Platonism.

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2 Saint Augustine, *Confessions* Book VII.13

3 Translation by Greg Whitlock.

Let us have a closer look at the Heraclitus fragments. Beside the one already quoted, the opposition of *diapheresthai/sympheresthai* appears in two other fragments, no D10 and D72. All three speak about an inner strife or opposition, that tends to eclipse their actual harmony or oneness. The opposites and their belonging together as one are present as conditions for the emergence of something: a sound from the lyre or the force to pull the arrow from the bow. The multiplicity and their unity depend on each other; there is no hierarchy or priority of one over the other.

Plato never uses the pair of *diapheresthai/sympheresthai* in one sentence. He often speaks of *diapherein* as a differing of opinions, and certainly he is not always tolerant about the multitude of different views and different gods that is characteristic of the Hellenistic age. He wants the truth to be one. But is there any disagreement in principle with Heraclitus? We should note the way how Heraclitus refers to the "people" who do not understand the basic truth. Heidegger shares this attitude in his remarks that philosophy is only attainable for the few. Is this not the kind of elitism, the privilege to be selected, exactly what they condemn as a Platonism?

Further, *diapherein* can in ordinary speech also mean a multitude of viewpoints as different perspectives. A discussion of paintings in *Republic* 598a provides an example:

> The works of the craftsmen," he said. "Is it the reality of them or the appearance? Define that further point." "What do you mean?" he said. "This: Does a couch **differ** from itself according as you view it from the side or the front or in any other way? Or does it **differ** not at all in fact though it appears different, and so of other things?" "That is the way of it," he said: "it **appears other** but **differs not** at all.

There is an important distinction between the appearance that may seem different (appear other – *phainethai alloia*), and the reality of what the thing *is*. As we know the function of this argument here is to disregard artists who are only concerned with how the things look and not how they really are. The 'difference' that applies to appearances is thus also not the real difference that would be interesting or relevant for Plato.

On the higher level of the souls and moral arguments, the difference between seeming and being proves to be much more complex. In the

first book of the *Republic*, justice and injustice are discussed as a pair of opposites. Here injustice is described as a difference (of opinions) between groups of people, or between two different people, and finally: within a person as a difference inside one's soul. Difference is always accompanied with hatred, so that people are "unable to accomplish anything in common with one another," a difference in one person (352a:) "makes that thing an enemy both to itself and to everything opposite and to the just." It is within the nature of injustice to produce difference (and not the other way around; injustice does not result from differences of opinion). Since there exist opposing views, one of them has to be right and the other wrong. The next task would naturally be to present the prototypes of the perfectly just and unjust behaviour. Glaucon says that he would *polish* both the just and the unjust man, like a pair of statues for a competition, which means that they would be cleaned from all the dirt of the seeming in order to uncover what lies beneath the surface. This is because they discover with Socrates that in fact the most unjust man can actually seem perfectly just – e.g. a populist politician whose decisions please the crowd, but are not for their benefit in the long run – and an enemy in disguise is even more harmful namely because he is trusted by people as a friend. The comparison test therefore requires that we do not take appearances into account. Since the extreme of injustice is able to appear as perfectly just, the difference between them lies not in what they look like, but in what they desire. The unjust man wants to make an impression of a just man, the just man may not care about what he looks like, but he *wants to be* just. So, analogous to how the injustice was shown to produce difference, justice is conceived as always a whole. What man desires is integrity, and this is called justice. Could this be read as in Spinoza: justice is good because it is what the just man wants, and he does not want it because it is good? There cannot be an unjust whole, there cannot be a person who is aspiring to be unjust: person can behave unjustly because he has diverged from the idea of justice (mostly out of ignorance) and there is a difference, a struggle within his soul. Since the whole can only be affirmative and there is no Idea of injustice, no one could desire to be unjust. Even the most unjust aspires for perfection, but in his case the investment is into the perfect appearance of being just, and not the justice itself.

The opposition that they began with – opposition of the just and unjust man – breaks down: there is no injustice as such that would

define the unjust man; all we can say about him is that his soul contains a difference. That which can be known has to be one. So we could agree with Nietzsche that there is sympathy towards *sympheromenon* in Plato, because the object of desire is always projected as a whole, and evil is produced as difference into this unity, not as a separate entity.

> These are two distinct readings of the world: one invites us to think difference from the standpoint of a previous similitude or identity; whereas the other invites us to think similitude and even identity as the product of a deep disparity. (Deleuze 1990: 261)

The unifying tendency, however, is there only if we think of static entities, of models that are projected into the ideal world. In the empirical world, totalities occur only in individual thinking. Souls as eternally moving beings should rather be seen in action. Towards the end of Book 10, soul is considered as immortal and liberated from the veils of appearance. The issue of its desires is now there even more clearly than before: one must (611e) "recognize what it lays hold of and with what sort of things it longs to keep company … and what it would become like if it were to give itself entirely to this longing."

This longing unifies the soul into a whole, but at the same time it makes the soul be less than a whole, insofar as it is defined by this perpetual longing and, thus, its incompleteness. The ultimate validity test of its justice is not about what the soul *is*, but what it would *become* of it was to pursue its desires. That which summons thinking – that what calls for thinking – is not the previous similitude or identity, and also not the difference that operates on the level of appearances. As Socrates says in *Republic* 523c: that which calls for thinking is when something appears to be at the same time the opposite of itself, something that is "one and not one".

Plato's texts are full of inner contradictions, and there are several systems of interpretation to deliver from this situation. For example, the developmental approach has set the dialogues into a historical sequence, which enables the scholars to assume that Plato abandoned some of his earlier views as he developed new ones. I would propose here that this kind of diversity is completely in line with his philosophical method – with the sole purpose of calling us to think.

Nietzsche repeatedly calls Plato a "mediator" who hides behind masks and does not wish to reveal his own position. In later works Nietzsche becomes more and more tolerant towards this apparent lack of position and regards the mediation as a development of philosophical self-consciousness, turning philosophy into a new intellectual need. "Knowledge thus became a portion of life itself, and as life it became a continually growing power – until eventually knowledge collided with those primeval basic errors" (Nietzsche 1974: 171). The basic error was the early philosophers' belief in universal truth as well as their self-deception when seeing themselves as masters of that truth, impersonal and changeless. Although Nietzsche seems sympathetic for the innocence and honesty of the pre-Socratic philosophy that gets lost in the age of the Athenian democracy, he no longer advocates a return to the previous philosophy.

One the one hand, Nietzsche recognises that with Plato, philosophy had taken up the path of the myth-makers, while at the same time Plato provides us with his famous argument against myth and poetry. On the other hand, he suspects that Plato intended this as a "noble" lie. As Catherine Zuckert (1985: 224) puts it, "Plato and his hero-teacher Socrates may have understood more of what they were doing than their successors. ... For this reason, Nietzsche doubts that Plato believed his own doctrines." It were the followers who built their knowledge on the doctrines of Plato, and not his scepticism about the universal truth.

> Why is it that from Plato onwards every philosophical architect in Europe has built in vain? That everything they themselves in all sober seriousness regarded as *Aere Perennius* is threatening to collapse or already lies in ruins? How false is the answer ... "because they had all neglected the presupposition for such an undertaking, the testing of the foundations, a critique of reason as a whole." ... The correct answer would rather have been that all philosophers were building under the seduction of morality, even Kant – that they were apparently aiming at certainty, at 'truth,' but in reality at '*Majestic Moral Structures.*' (Nietzsche 1982: 2–3)

Myth as a model and as an image

Scholars who study the dialogues are also confronted with an apparent discrepancy between Plato's words and deeds, that is, the positions uttered by the characters of his dialogues and his own philosophical method. I shall next discuss his use of myth as an example of such practise.

The contrasting of myth *qua* the irrational and philosophy/science *qua* the rational starts from the dichotomy of *mythos – logos* that originated in Classical Greece and is habitually associated with Plato. Since Plato is the first philosopher who systematically opposes his (or Socrates') art to that of story-tellers, we could expect him to distance himself from the mythological tradition as far into the other 'side' as possible. Plato, however, never avoided myths, and even incorporated them into the very decisive moments in the dialogues. It often happens that when the dialectic of the arguments has run into a dead end, one of the characters of the dialogue tells a story.

And this time, the stories, unlike those of the pre-philosophical mythology, are post-philosophical in the sense that they are integrated into the rational, and yet somehow go beyond reason. For Plato, there exists an imagistic sphere of thought that comprises the truth that is ineffable, that cannot be expressed in words. This is the famous Platonic "seeing", *theoria.* Also the opposition between *mythos* and *logos* breaks down: philosophical myth can only legitimately be used in conjunction with dialectic. Myth is the discourse out of which dialectic emerges and in which dialectic ends when the object of its analysis cannot be verified. Sometimes there is no rational proof for the problem, sometimes there is no time to look for it (most famously at the end of *Phaedo* Socrates excuses himself for being short of time – he has to die at sunset – asks his fellows to carry on his mission, and relates a myth).

In *Phaedo,* the immortality of soul is first proved deductively, but in the end the very axioms that Socrates started from, are questioned by Simmias and Cebes in the similes of lyre and weaver. Socrates presents a kind of methodology of science (95e–102a) and tells how he recognised that he was 'no good' at science, because it was ruled by appearances, uncertainties and doubt, and how he had developed his own method, which proceeds from hypotheses to better hypotheses

until reaching the first principles. The same procedure is described in the *Republic* 509d–511e.

These instances give reason to believe that for Plato dialectic is often incapable of justifying the first principles and the role of myth is to substitute for that inadequacy. Morgan's examination of *Protagoras* shows that the use of myth to present unverifiable axioms is precisely what Plato wished to avoid, and that philosophical myth can only legitimately be used in conjunction with dialectic. Myth is the discourse out of which dialectic emerges and in which dialectic ends when the object of its analysis cannot be verified. "Thus it can be regarded as a symbolic short-cut for the analytic process, although it can replace it" (Morgan 2000: 290). Deleuze (1994: 61) writes along the same lines that since dialectic lacks probative force and has to be relayed by a myth which provides the imaginary equivalent of mediation, the duality of myth and dialectic is overcome by Plato in the method of division. Myth establishes the model against which appearances are measured, and is thus integrated into the very heart of dialectic.

Let me bring an example. The Greeks loved drama, but we know that Plato was very critical of the poets and the art of imitation. There is an actor on the stage, who pretends to be someone else: a god. So the gods, who should in reality be absent, are brought into being by the art of imitation. By the mediation of a copy, to be more precise, because imitation is only a copy. Traditionally, the interpreters have been concerned about the relation between the original (god) and the copy (actor), and declared the copies null and void, because only the real has any worth.

The copies, however – here the artistic side of poetry – are those which actually make the play effective. The illusion is more convincing, the nearness of the gods is felt more clearly if mediated by music and dance. The absence of the absent is forgotten more easily the more music captivates the audience. According to Brisson (1998: 66–74), there is a gradual shift in Plato's writing from the link between the imitated reality and the imitator to the link between the imitator and the addressee, the listener or spectator. The imitator learns how to bring about the needed reaction of the audience and begins to manipulate. Therefore, the reaction of the spectators is as little autonomous as the components of music: in fact, even the audience is imitating. Plato thus gives exact prescriptions in the *Republic*, which plays are suitable for certain audiences, e.g. the soldiers are to imitate only such heroes who excel in bravery, temperance,

and sense of freedom. The imitating of wicked people and shameful actions harms the soul; hence the imitations are to aim at ethical perfection. The decisive factor in measuring the value of a speech is not its correspondence to reality, but the reaction of the audience. The narrator is no more than an vehicle of the message, which is intended to affect the spectator's soul. S/he is the locus where the invisible, as mediated by imitation, becomes present. And here the processes start that bring about changes for the actual present, where myths become real by the ethical impact that the stories have on their audience.

Plato asks his contemporaries to think about the difference between reality and appearance, which is not unlike the modern ventures in demythologising. At the same time, he is well aware of the opportunity of using the persuasive effect of myth for the benefit of education and politics. The stories that are told to children need not actually be true as long as they express acceptable ethics. In the ideal state, the production of myth is to be controlled, and sometimes it will be necessary to create stories purposely that are not true. Socrates explains that a "true falsehood" can be useful in a number of occasions: against enemies; against mad and ignorant people who attempt something bad; and in the case of stories about ancient events that are not known for sure. Book 3 of the *Republic* (414b–415c) presents the legendary account of a "noble lie" that is used to make citizens more loyal to the state. The persuasive effect rests on the appetitive part of soul and is most efficient if used on children or adults whose rationality is less developed or who are not able to rationalise.

Myth is the only way of addressing the "untamed animal" of the soul dominated by appetites, which can only understand images. Plato also calls myth the "charm" of juries and parliaments and crowds. Like medicine that can be poisonous or produce health, the charm can lead people to believe falsehood, or heal souls by bringing moderation to it. But the effect does not depend on whether the story corresponds to the reality or not. It depends on how the audience will *see* it.

The classical reading would conclude that Plato disregards images as copies, which have no reality, and admit that sometimes he is willing to use them for the sake of propaganda. I believe that he describes processes that do not have truth value as such. He is more interested in providing the audience with an example of the search for the idea of justice than the ontological status of the Idea in its transcendent, otherworldly being. We have been looking on the wrong relationships, we

are used to seeing ruptures and discordancies which can often be seen as bridges and connections.

Plato proceeds by images. These images may obstruct the reality, they may seduce us to forget about the desire for truth and acquiesce to a convenient illusion, but they may also work as short-cuts to the real. I believe that it does not lie in the image, but in the way of looking at the image. In Plato's world, looks matter. The truth cannot be proved, but it can be seen – only by oneself. Perhaps its degrading into metaphysics was caused by the wish of the Academics to teach philosophy as a doctrine instead of getting involved in a dialogue. But there is no greater injustice than to ascribe this attitude to Plato.

Conclusion: Disciplines invent the teachers[4]

As Keith Ansell-Pearson (1994: 76) has observed, the main problem of Plato for Nietzsche was that Plato "failed to recognize the artistic basis of his own philosophy and presented it as eternal and objective truth". Perhaps it have more been the interpreters who have been promoting this way of reading Plato?

Among the people who study the works of Plato, there have always existed different schools of interpretation. In France, there has been a strong opposition between those who regard Plato as an "intellectual", and those who see a "mystic" in him. In Germany, the Tübingen school has been promoting the idea that the real teachings of Plato remain unwritten and the dialogues are just an illusory façade of his secret oral doctrine. In the English speaking world, the latest, so-called "new" interpretations of Plato bring the dialogic form into the centre. In one way or another, they all emphasise that the writings of Plato have many strata to be revealed, and possible angles of interpretation that have been overlooked by the classical, doctrinal study, which probably originates from the Academy of Athens that sought to teach Platonic "theories". Nietzsche's reading of Plato proves to be invaluable for its

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[4] I owe this expression to Régis Debray. His *Transmitting Culture* and its 'mediological' approach – which subordinates the origin or the object that is transmitted in history to the process of transmission – is an implicit source of inspiration for the current study.

focus on the contextual issues, like Plato's hidden political and ethical motives. It offers a way to understand Plato's texts as indefinitely open and complex, and a theorizing look that is multiple and with more perspective. This is how we truly withstand Platonism: the model of a fixed and totalizing gaze that has been haunting philosophy long before and long after Plato.

No matter how confusing this may seem, I think it is in the best harmony with Plato's own intentions that the interpretive process will never stop. Plato's distrust towards the unreliability of the written word (despite of his production of writings), his use of several "voices" and many other aspects point to his love for the ongoing dialogue in the sense of evolving arguments and discussions. He uses Socrates as a voice, but does not always rely on his authority (on his death bed Socrates exhorts his interlocutors to "care little for Socrates but much more for the truth" - *Phaedo* 91c). Yet most of the scholarship of the last two centuries has proceeded on the assumption that Plato had a "doctrine". Now, first attempts are made to address Plato from a different angle and interpret Plato from the position that "philosophic view may indeed be able to transcend the situation out of which it arises, but it will always be a *finite transcendence*" (Hyland 2004: 3). Instead of attempting to determine the historical truth about Plato, we can engage in a dialogue with him.

The possibility offered by Plato to the reader to actively participate is perhaps the reason why the Platonic tradition has generated such a number of diverse interpretations. It remains the responsibility of each reader to make their decisions. Just when (the interpretation of) Platonism as a metaphysics is overcome, Plato is back as a non-metaphysical thinker.

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Communist Revolution and Daedalus' Labyrinth: Confronting Two Concepts of Time, Confronting Two Types of Myth

VANESA MATAJC

I. Demythisation of revolutionary history: Slovene historiography and literature

One of the basic questions that have been addressed by contemporary Slovene historiography especially[1] since the independent state Republic of Slovenia was founded (1990), seems to be the question of historiographic demythisation.[2]

This demythisation refers to the communist mythisation of the historical events that had taken place on the Slovene linguistic (and, in this sense, cultural) territory during World War II. These historical events were conceived as an inseparable totality of the Slovene resistance/ liberation from the Nazis' occupation of the Slovene territory and of the (communist) revolution (on the territory of former Yugoslavia).[3] The experience of everyday life certainly provoked doubt about

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[1] Actually this practice began as early as the mid–1980s (Repe 2006: 285), when the political conditions in Slovenia started to change (Drago Jančar and the majority of the Slovene intellectuals were mostly engaged in this process.)

[2] See, for example, a collection of historiographic papers titled (Repe 2006: 285) *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino* (*Myths and Stereotypes in the Slovene View of History*), published in 2006 by the Slovene Historiographic Societies' Association.

[3] This is well illustrated by a quotation from a book titled *Slovenska zgodovina* (*Slovene History*), published in 1979: "in general people were supporting the communist government. Its opposition, on the other side, was pretty weak; it could be realised only as false propaganda or as collaboration with the foreign enemy."

the communist mythisation of history since the war was over and since the basic revolutionary goals – the organisation of classless society - should have been achieved. Critical letters sent to the president in 1945, were written by "common" people – even by former partisans or by other supporters of the revolution who were disappointed with the revolutionary practice.[4]

Slovene literature expressing the same doubt has been published more frequently since about the sixties (the conditions of publishing provided by political censorship varied from one period to another; some earlier and particular literary texts of this kind, as well as their authors, immediately became objects of political pressure).[5] By thematising the paradox which can be recognised in the strategies of the modern political revolution as such, this literature conceives every action or attempt at changing reality in the name of an ideal (or: ideology) as an auto-destructive (i.e., nihilist) action. Such actions were revealed in the revolutionary practice that represented the revolutionary achievements in everyday rituals, celebrations, and discourse. Proceeding from this insight, the recognition and demythisation of Slovene literature has often used the means of the "opposite" type of myth – ancient mythology or the Judeo-Christian myth. Vitomil Zupan's prison

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[4] "It is an unquestionable fact that the government re-established in 1945 was strongly supported by a certain part of the population; on the other hand, there were some others who did not agree with the government's political goals and, moreover, with its measures." Anonymous letters were being sent to the president of the Slovene National Government (Boris Kidrič) in the months just after he war was over; one of these letters, written by a "Catholic priest", called attention to the inhuman treatment of prisoners. Another letter, written by an "old partisan" (a member of the partisan movement, from which the communist government had arisen), noticed the privileges of the new social elite. However, such critical gestures shouldn't be conceived as a sign of the presence of a clear political opposition, organised in a political party, says Gabrič (2006: 303–305). These are voices of those who wanted the government to correct some mistakes in its practice. They are not voices of a clear political opposition (that had been eliminated in mass murders just after the end of the war or was escaping from Yugoslavia); however, these voices – willingly or not – have deconstructed the mythisation project of the communist government since the very end of the war.

[5] See, for example, a description of such a case in the article "Ideological Blocks to the Reception of Existentialism in the Cultural and Political Context of Slovenia: The Case of Edvard Kocbek" (Matajc 2006).

novel *Levitan* (1982) refers to the judeo-christian figure of Leviathan. Dominik Smole's drama *Antigona* (1961), using the myth from the Theban cycle, refers to the mass murders of war prisoners. (It was not allowed even to mention, or to remember, these events in the post-war Yugoslav society. The art of literary suggestion was the only possible way to articulate this hidden side of Slovene history in public discourse during the sixties.) Drago Jančar continues this practice of Slovene post-war literature with his drama *Dedalus* (1988) and his novel *Graditelj* ('The Constructor'). (Jančar's novel supplements the dramatic materials, motifs and themes with the narrator's explicit commentary of ancient myth and the revolutionary history: "The revolutionary myth was intertwined with reality, as it had used to be in ancient Greece." (Jančar 1988: 121)

II. Two types of myth: two concepts of time. Antiquity and modernity

Obviously the ancient myth and the Judeo-Christian myth, which have been used as a means of a literary suggestion, have assumed the role of a mythical "opposition" to the revolutionary mythisation practices. Both "oppositional" (ancient and Judeo-Christian) groups of myth are obviously conceived as a representation of a "more eternal" truth, or as an eternal pattern of human destiny in history. "Patterns of imagery /.../ derive from the epiphanic moment, the flash of instantaneous comprehension with no direct reference to time," writes E. Cassirer, addressing the question of myth (*Myth and Language*, 1925).

The first question that is addressed by this article is the question of the difference: the structure of the myth might be the same; however, its function – or practice of interpreting and performing it - in the cultural context might reveal a basically different effect, representing two concepts of time. The first concept is in fact a mythical, cyclic concept, characteristic of (ancient) myth as such; the second, or the revolutionary concept, which tries to synthesise the cyclic concept with the modern concept of irreversible time, inevitably reveals its inherent paradox.

Myth in a broader sense can be conceived as a "reality programme" (Veyne 1998: 39): myth, in this sense, organises one's conception of reality in patterns of relations.

According to the historical experience, myth follows the ritual, being linked with it. "Myth represents a spoken part of the ritual, a story performed by the ritual. A ritual is performed by a priest as a representative of the community and in the name of this community, with a purpose to refuse or to accept something;" however, myth in a broader sense starts "to designate every anonymous story that narrates of the origins and fate" (Wellek, Warren 1956: 221). Some people think that "the myths of the modern man shall be shallow, insufficient, or even false – a myth of 'progression', or 'equality', for example" (ib. 222).

In every case, however, myth obviously articulates the collective, common concepts of reality – the imagination of reality – including the ethical values of the community.

Human imagination, or representation of reality, is basically organised by sense of time. This sense of time can lead either to the cyclic or to the irreversible concept of time.

The cyclic concept implies "the absence" of history: it allows us to present different situations and events as "historiae" that cannot be linked up "metaphysically" to one "History" of changes proceeding from the "beginning" to the "end" (of something / everything that has ever happened) – that is, to *(hi)story* from some rational perspective of a higher cause (or idea).

The intersection of "historiae" and "history" can be represented as a ritual. Ritual is a performance of acts and statements in an immediate present. It activates and puts into shape the contents of a collective memory, i.e., it places the myth as its "spoken part" in the present time of the community. "The myth is a central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual and archetypal narrative to the oracle" (Frye 2001: 1452–3). Placing myth in the community's present rituals is an implicit explanation of the mythical function, or of the myth itself, which proceeds in two possible ways: the myth can function either as an explanation of recurrent human fortune or as an explanation of the (historical) process of events that are "now" concluded.

First, the present articulates itself as an endless recurrence of the same significant situation, which appears in the past as well as in the present. Its myth can assume a founding function (as the founding narration of a community); however, it implies no progression. It can only be repeated in an endless recurrence of performing this "eternal" present (presence). It implies a memory which cannot distinguish between the present and past.

Secondly, the present can be conceived as the effect of some former, basic and "founding" cause. Its myth can serve as a narration of the definite founding of the community; however, it implies a progress. It is repeatedly enacted for the purpose of a memory, which makes a distinction between the past and present and tries to synthesise them in a memorial ritual where myth can serve as an exemplary case – a model for the community's behaviour in the present and, morover, in the future.

In this second case, the ritual activates the imaginative sense, or knowledge, of the former origin to give a sense to the present (presence), achieved in the current of irreversible time.

The ancient myth could be interpreted as an implementation of the first ritual function. Its function is to be used as a means of organisation, or to represent a conception of reality as a rotation (of the seasons, as well as of the human situations) in a cyclic concept of time (inseparable from space). According to the function of its ritual performance, the ancient myth can therefore be conceived as the first type of myth.

The modern myth, on the contrary, could be interpreted as the second possible implementation of the ritual function. Its function is to represent a conception of reality as a progressive change from the present into the past with clearly definable differences (of the history of the human affairs) in an irreversible concept of time (once again inseparable from space, but this time linked up with it in unique, individual, and irreversible situations that can serve simply as models for future behaviour). According to the function of its ritual performance – a memory of the origin of this progress, which characterises the Modern Age as its basic idea of modernity – the modern myth can therefore be conceived as the second type of myth.

It comes close to the ancient myth when the modern revolutionary movements (of the political and aesthetic avantgardes) decide that they have already established their envisioned socio-historical conditions in the actual time and space of their communities. At this "stage", the irreversible time shall be abolished and replaced with a concept of a recently founded "eternal present" (presence). However, even at this stage, the "reality programme" of the (revolutionary modern) community cannot avoid being "contaminated" with the sense of historicity – of this *recently* founded present, clearly distinguished from the past.

III. Historicity and historiography at "the end of metaphysics" in the 20th century

The modern representation or imagination of reality also implies "the present" (presence) of *history*. However, in spite of the historical concept of the irreversible time it cannot avoid the present of the *past* in its historical sense (or experience). F. Nietzsche's "critical historicism" (de Man 1997: 146) motivated the insight of present (presence) inseparable from the past: thinking of a historical difference between an old and a new ("modern") phenomenon always presents the past implied in a new and present. This paradox of modernity, recognised at the end of the 19th century, i. e., at "the end of the metaphysics" by Nietzsche's concept of the "eternal reccurency", has been leading to the new concept of history which legitimises the modern (including a revolutionary) type of myth – as well as its demythisation in historiography and literature.

This "metahistory" has been described by a number of historians especially since the end of the twenties of the 20th century: "Every historical period creates its own image ("Bild") of the past." Therefore the "legend" can be the only form which enables us to think and to represent the past. "All history is a saga, a myth," a product of our sense of the world, writes Egon Friedell (*Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit,* 1927–31). "Every period spiritually produces its own representation of the historical past" and projects its own values to the past, writes Lucien Febvre (*Life in a Renaissance France*, 1925), known as one of the initiators of the French historiographical school (and its journal) *Annales*.[6] "Historian's scheme, reaching a certain level of generalisation, becomes a mythical pattern," the same has happened it has happened to Gibbon's or Spengler's historiography, writes Northrop Frye (2001: 1445–1457). Frye distinguishes between different kinds of historical myths (myths of creation, myths of apotheosis, myths of fall,

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[6] *Annales*' "histoire des mentalitetes" was leading to the "histoire de l'imagination sociale", or to the English variant of the "history of representations", which takes into account emotions, feelings, passions, tendencies, reflections, etc., of the so called common people. This historiographical consciousness evoked interest in the folk culture and its everyday rituals with the simbolic sense of the ritual gesture. It also evoked a renewed interest in the myth conceived as a means of organising the experience of reality (Paul Veyne and French "Nouvelle Historie"; "New cultural history").

etc.) This historiographic trend of "literarising" history culminated in Hayden White's *Metahistory* (1973): it introduces a doubt in Aristotle's difference between historiography and poetry, expanding the idea and strategies of the "emplotment" from the field of literature as fiction to the field of historiography as documentary writing on reality. Therefore the historian takes over the role of the poet: like the poet he either constructs the text by which he represents the past as an image of the past, or he constructs the past itself as a discursive construct of the (former) reality (Berger-Luckman's "social construction of reality"). This post-modern view of history brings historiography so close to myth (in Aristotle's sense of story and plot) that the difference between them obviously disappears.[7] Once again myth, replacing history, clearly and consciously assumes the role of being (Veyne's) "reality programme".

Maybe there has not been such a theoretically, i.e., metahistorically supported pursuit at work in constructing history from the revolutionary point of view, since – in general – about the twenties of the 20th century. In this period at least three political ideologies – communism, fascism, and national socialism – were trying to re-shape, (re-)interpret, or construct the present as well as the past according to their own conceptions of the reality.

Trying to legitimise their (different) conceptions of reality in the collective imagination, these political ideologies were producing their "reality programmes" by using a mythical pattern and ritual strategies in the way, described as the second mythical function, i.e., the second, or modern type of myth.

Literary, or historiographic demythisation of the revolutionary myths of the 20th century was therefore enabled by the revelation – or insight into – the paradox of modernity that had culminated in the avantgarde programmes.

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[7] "This is what leads me to think that historical narratives are not only models of past events, but also metaphorical statements which suggest a relation of similitude between such processes and events and the story types that we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meanings" (White 2001: 1718).

IV. Political avantgardes and the revolutionary mythisation of history

According to Matei Calinescu (*Five Faces of Modernity*) or Gianni Vattimo (*Finne della Modernità*), etc., progressiveness is basically inscribed in the concept of modernity. It means a progression (as an irreversible process) from worse to better socio-historical conditions for a human being, ie., for a community. Irreversible time, inseparable from its space, is therefore necessarily to be conceived as a historical set of changes that are recognisable in the socio-historical reality.

According to M. Calinescu (1987: 63–65, 90–93) or G. Vattimo (1997: 93), modern movements of the historical avantgardes realise themselves as the most progressive programmes of improving the socio-historical conditions. Every revolutionary avantgarde comprehends its own progressive programme to be so absolutely right, i.e., to be of such an absolute worth to the individual's / community's conditions that after each their succesfull accomplishment in the socio-historical reality in the form of an appropriate political regime (i.e., after the achievement their revolutionary goals), there would be no need for a further progression. Therefore the accomplished stage should be just confirmed in an "eternal reccurency" of the revolutionary "reality programme": confirmed in the gestures of everyday life including myths and rituals. By realising the revolutionary idea in the constructed socio-historical conditions, the concept of the irreversible time is necessarily abolished. The former history (past events, historically formed in the causal line of a progressive idea) is a cause, i.e., an origin of the present "golden age". "Accomplished" revolutionary movements (political avantgardes) therefore proceed with the mythisation of socio-historical reality. They construct the former events in the structure of a myth. Performing these revolutionary myths – "explaining" their sense in rituals like celebrations and gestures of everyday life, however, reveals a distinction from the view of the ancient myth: the modern revolutionary myth, contaminated by the (nihilistic metaphysical) idea of historicity / progression, reveals its inherent paradox, trying to synthesise the two concepts of time.

The insight into this paradox reveals the revolutionary myth as false. Linking the mythical story up to the historical origin (beginnings) provides its annihilation (the end of its exemplary value) in the future. The modern revolutionary myth reveals its temporary character.

While the ancient mythical narration recalls a very distant past, the revolutionary myth (according to the revolutionary idea) brings a sense, i.e., constructs a very recent past which could have been recently experienced, or which can be researched through documents (even if they have been hidden). The documents quite clearly reveal a programmatic purpose of the revolutionary mythisation programme.

While the ancient mythical narration deals with the relationship between human beings and gods, the revolutionary myth, according to the revolutionary ideas and ideals, explains the relationship between "more or less appropriate" human beings (unaware of taking away the sacred character of the myth).

Contemporary Slovene historiography reveals such nihilist gestures described in the documents of the period since 1945 (after the World War II and the communist revolution) that note down the strategies of the establishing of the communist regime on the Slovene / Yugoslav territory. In 1947, for example, Boris Kraigher, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs in the Slovene National Government, gave an order how to represent the judicial trial against the potentially political disidents (actually, the intelectualls, owners of factories, buildings and landed property, etc.) in public: the political opposition shall be represented as a "bourgeois" "bunch of secret agents, class enemies", etc., charged with "the character of a spy, of a state enemy" (Gabrič 2006: 304). Contemporary Slovene history reveals that there was no organised political opposition in Slovenia during this period. However, the government's strategy clearly reveals its purpose to assure and preserve the revolutionary power in the contemporary socio-historical reality by constructing stereotypes as a form of representing / constructing it. Such stereotypes have cooperated in the process of mythisation of the revolutionary past: the noted stereotype represents the "bourgeois" as foreign agents who are trying to destroy the revolutionary achivements, paid for "with our comrades' blood".

The documented government's gesture perfectly reveals the arbitrary nature of cultural phenomena, as it has been described in Roland Barthes' semiotics of the contemporary bourgeois societies (*Mythologies*, 1957). Moreover, this gesture systematically constructs the ritual (of a trial) as a sign that shall be realised as a spontaneous expression of the community's will; it is, however, the sign of a systematic distortion of its subject, which is liable at any moment to be de-historicised, 'naturalised', i.e., converted into "myth" (see Barthes 1972).

The mythisation process of "the age of revolutions" can be therefore seen as a constructing the second, modern type of myth, revealed as a "false" myth: the narration of a modern subject who performs a nihilistic action in the name of an idea(l). "It is the time when the gods have fallen; their place has been occupied by the resolute and brave, but also somehow brutal people," says Jančar in his novel *Graditelj* (34). Its retrospective narration starts at the point when the political regime, "the Great Age /.../ was coming to its end" (13).

Revolutionary "falsified" myth as the narration of a nihilistic action can therefore become the object of a literary demythisation. Its "falsified" character can be clearly represented by the narrative strategy of contrast, i.e., by being confronting it with the ancient, classical, pre-modern myth. Temporary value of constructing reality by the revolutionary myth becomes obvious by confronting the revolutionary myth with the classical myth of Daedalus, of "the constructor".

V. Drago Jančar's historical novel

Drago Jančar (1948) is a famous Slovene writer, dramatist, publisher, etc. In his novels, short stories, or plays he often deals with historical matter to form it into (his) post-modern view of history. Jančar's novel *Graditelj* (as well as its predecessor – the play *Daedalus*, 1988) belongs to the genre of historical literature. However, the post-modern historical awareness, i.e., meta-history has caused a basic change in the understanding of history: the historical knowledge seems to be losing its objective (scientific) status; (experienced or documented) historical events seem to be associated in a coherent "totality" (i.e., they get a historical sense) through the cultural semiosis, according to the arbitrary nature of signs (see Barthes 1972); discovering this "mythisation", historiography seems to be abolishing the distinction between factual historiography and the genres of historical fiction. In Hayden White's opinion (White 2001: 1718–19):

> Viewed in a purely formal way, a hystorical narrative is not only a reproduction of the events reported in it, but also a complex of symbols, which gives us direction for finding an icon of the structure of those events in our literary tradition.

> It seems to me that we must say of histories what Frye seems to think is true only of poetry or philosophies of history, namely that, considered as a system of signs, the historical narrative points in two directions simultaneously: toward the events described in the narrative and toward the story type or mythos which the historian has chosen to serve as the icon of the structure of the events. The narrative itself is not the icon; what it does is describe events in the historical record in such a way as to inform the reader what to take as an icon of the events so as to render them 'familiar' to him. The historical narrative thus mediated between the events reported in it on the one side and pregeneric plot structures conventionally used in our culture to endow unfamiliar events and situation with meanings on the other.

Jančar's former novels represent the post-modern view of history through a structure of events which annul the (modern historical) concept of irreversible time, transmitting the socio-historical situations to the representation of recurrent principles by which no one, no individual, can avoid the pressure of the historical conditions. There is no "Golden Age" in history: each historical situation reveals itself as a dramatic game played between the individuals and the strategists of power. Jančar's individual, either playing a social role or trying to preserve his / her authentic existence, can not avoid the mechanism of a historical "fortune". For the most part, Jančar's novels reiterate this structure. This recurrence inserts the concept of cyclic time in the irreversible current of history, or in the individual's temporal existence. This post-modern view of history represents the Nietzschean paradox, discovering it in the revolutionary socio-historical projects and programmes of the Modern Age. This view of history therefore constructs a special type of the historical novel: a historical-philosophical novel. Its philosophy of history presents (irreversible, progressive) history and / or the "falsified" revolutionary (modern) myth of the attained "Golden Age" as a fiction.[8]

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[8] Nadežda Starikova (2000: 25) distinguishes four types of the historical novel: a biographic-historical novel, a social-historical novel, a historical-philosophical novel, and a historical-fictional novel. V. Matajc (2003: 207) identifies a modification of the third and fourth types which is typical of a part

Jančar's novel *Graditelj* constructs it in such a consistent way that it forms a clearly allegorical relationship between the historical image and the explanation of a recent history. "The revolutionary myth was pervating the reality, likewise the myth used to have pervated the reality of the antique Greece" (121).

VI. *Graditelj*

The novel is written in a retrospective manner: the protagonist of the story tells his story to the narrator, a writer or / and historian who documents the story – and makes comments: he attributes a meaning to the set of events, i.e., reveals its meaning from his auctorial position, which enables him to make a comparison between Pavel's historical (revolutionary) destiny and Daedalus' mythical fortune.

The protagonist of Jančar's historical novel *Graditelj* is a pre-war communist and revolutionary named Pavel. The central motif of the novel seems to be his activity: he is ordered to be an architect, a constructor of a prison. The construction of the prison forms a subject that is shared by Jančar's novel and the classical myth of Daedalus. The "ancestor", the mythical figure of Dedalus is one whose fortune shall be repeated by a modern protagonist of the revolution, Jančar's Pavel. He is a pre-war revolutionary and partisan: this provides him with an appropriate social status in a post-war (revolutionary) society. By profession, he is a sculptor. After the war, when the revolutionary goals generally seem to be attained, Pavel's (former) comrades who represent power give him an order to construct a prison for the individuals for whom it is still inappropriate to live freely in a communist society; most of them supposedly represent the political opposition of the regime. – The existence of a political opposition in the Slovene territory after the war has been revealed as a communist myth, constructed by the systematically controlled semiotic process: the set of rules, codes and conventions through which meanings particular to specific groups (i.e. those of power) are rendered universal and 'given' for the whole society (see Barthes 1972). – The rhetoric of the order makes no

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of contemporary historiographic fiction; however, this new type of novel does not discuss the ontological uncertainty. From this aspect it can not be identified as post-modern historiographic metafiction.

difference between the community and its communist government: the prison should protect them both – the totality of a regime, i.e., the "uniformed" socio-historical reality – from the danger of political opposition. Revolutionary strategies of power seem to be defining every detail of everyday life, including the intimacy of erotic love and the rhetoric of "private" communication. Intimacy and privacy have therefore no right to exist. All gestures are public. According to Georg Lukàcs' *Die Theorie des Romans* (1920), such conditions should characterise a mythical "totality" (the world of the classical epic). Pavel "lives in an age of myth" (12), comments the narrator.

Pavel wants to prove his faith to the revolution: "Suddenly it had become a matter of course that he took responsibility for a really important task /.../, for our business /.../, our business, this shall be something that serves a higher purpose; and it's not always possible to understand such a high purpose down to the smallest detail. After all, people were dying for our purpose" (45). Pavel accepts (adopts) the revolutionary mythisation of recent history as a common and universal truth.

Pavel conceives the revolutionary prison in the shape of a double-edged axe. A simultaneous surveillance of all prisoners (a "totality" of the prison's reality) should be guaranteed by the guard's position at the centre of this axe-shaped building. Pavel's concept of prison therefore repeats the totalitarian gesture of an absolute surveillance performed by the revolutionary regime. According to this consequence, the double-edged axe reveals its double symbolic meaning: first, it refers to the Daedalus' myth and its context of Cretan royal ritual. Secondly, it refers to the "invisible Eye" of Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*, i.e., a (modern) concept of prison and its symbolic re-employment in Michel Foucault's (Foucault 1977: 197) description of *surveillance and punishment*, i.e., the strategies of power.

"Labris", a double-edged axe, presumably used to symbolise a royal, i.e., sacred power in the Cretan royal ritual of slaying a bull. In Minoian culture this ritual should confirm, legitimise, or enact the king's absolute authority and power. In Plutarch's opinion labris could explain the etymology of the word labyrinth. Refering to the double-edged axe, a labyrinth shall be conceived as a place where one can get lost – or lose one's freedom - even if he is the one who constructed this prison to protect the community from (Minotaur's) danger. Supporting the power, i.e., constructing an institution of the power can be symbo-

lically represented as (self-)imprisonment. Daedalus rescues himself at the price of losing a beloved person. Pavel's (mis)fortune repeats the classical myth.

When the construction starts to slip down the hill where it has been built, the regime proclaims the constructor, Pavel, a saboteur. Pavel is arrested and sent to the prison which he had constructed. (Pavel's) totalitarian nihilist action, i.e., supporting / constructing the power, reveals itself as an auto-destructive practice of construction that always implies destruction.[9]

Repeating Daedalus' fortune, Pavel's destiny implicitly announces the future of the regime and its "false", revolutionary myth, i.e., its mythistory. "My narrator constructed – a prison. No one knows the architects of the prisons. To say nothing of the prisons that should contribute to the expansion of freedom. However, it was precisely the constructor of a prison who had been set up as the most remarkable architect in history" (33).

VII. (De-)constructing history: Deconstructing mythistory by re-employment of a classical myth

Daedalus' myth was thematised, for example, by James Joyce (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* 1918), Michael Ayrton (*The Maze Maker*, 1967), and Viktor Pelevin (*The Helmet of Dread,* 2005) in the (post-)modern literature. Jančar's novel deconstructs the modern myth of a "golden Age" regained by revolutionary action. The novel reveals the revolutionary "reality programme" as a systematic mythisation of recent history. The modern mythisation must necessarily fail: it is contaminated with historical awareness, a modern sense of temporality, and the idea(l) of a rationally directed progression. Jančar's novel represents this post-modern view of history by using a classical myth in

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[9] "'Axe,' said Pavel. 'Why, on earth, the axe?' 'Because it cuts down /.../'. 'It cuts down the enemy.' /.../ 'The axe is a symbol of anger. The axe destroys and it builds up. The axe cuts down and gets free.' Thus spoke Comrade Marek" (61) – obviously repeating the nihilist rhetoric of Nietzsche's Zarathustra (*Also sprach Zarathustra*).

order to deconstruct the modern (falsified) mythisation of reality – modern mythistory.

A remarkable Slovene sample of this mythisation is represented by an essay published in 1945 in the newspaper *Slovenski poročevalec* (*Slovene Reporter*). It was written immediately after the war, taking into account the experience of the partisan movement. (Actually this was a mass movement in Slovenia. The percentage of partisans who shared the communist ideas and the percentage of those who joined the partisan groups to resist the German / Italian occupation is still to be discussed. However, the experience of a mass movement certainly contributed to the mythisation process that had been trying to unify different interpretations of recent history.) The essay was written by a poet (T. S.) who declared himself a committed supporter of the communist revolution. His view of history portrays a horribly inhuman revolutionary action at the moment when it is executing a final gesture before the "Golden Age" should be attained: a new, communist (and final) stage of history "breaks off" (!) the "heritage of the centuries" that had advocated the "humility" and "hypocrisy" associated with pity. The essay urges against the pity that one could have for the victims of the revolutionary trials. The government represents these victims as dangerous enemies that should be imprisoned,[10] erased, or excluded from the reality of the recently attained "Golden Age" even by being killed. Both gestures, the essay (see Jančar 1998: 11) and the president's order of how to represent trials, are the gestures of mythisation. The rhetoric of mythisation enacts an "appropriate" set of historical events; this other side of history is erased: it is covered up by the revolutionary myths.

This other side of history, hidden behind the revolutionary myths, is recalled and revised by a collection of documents and commentaries

[10] In 1945, 2.918 persons in the Slovene part of Yugoslavia were imprisoned. They were accused of collaboration with the enemy during the war. They were accused of enemy propaganda, economic sabotage, desertion from the Yugoslav army, attempts to escape from the communist state, prohibited trade business, etc. In 1947 there were 17 military prisons in Slovenia; the number of prisoners grew to 14.479. Standing orders in 1947 exactly provided the structure of prisons, as well as their function (see Stanič 1998).

titled *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1998).[11] Its co-editor and initiator was none other than Drago Jančar.

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[11] This is the title of a short story written by a poet and politician, a Christian socialist and personalist Edvard Kocbek. After publishing the collection of short stories (1951) he lost his political functions and was put under surveillance (see the poem *Microphone in the Wall* and the description of its context; in: Matajc 2006: 341–360).

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Belated Nations: Grand Apocrypha as a Challenge to the Mythic Establishment

LAURI PILTER

Institutionalized Narratives and Grand Apocrypha

The intention in this piece of writing is to make a clear distinction between grand narratives as ideological constructions (a concept developed from the propositions of Jean-François Lyotard) and the fictional grand narratives.

However, even achievements of grandeur in fiction can be institutionalized to serve power purposes, independently of their artistic value and occasionally against the authors' intentions.

Thus, for those who look at Estonia from a great distance and see the country geographically belonging to the same Russian plain as Russia – for those any fictional achievements, written in the complicated, little known language of Estonia are bound to be overshadowed by the fiction of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov. Quite obviously, the brilliant literary merits of those writers have become, among more respectable things, institutionalized myths, or master narratives in the Lyotardian sense, supporting, at the expense of Russia's neighbouring nations, the legend of the "great Russian soul".

That the works of outstanding Estonian fiction writers of the second half of the twentieth century have not attained a comparable fame is understandable, given their relative novelty as regards the Russian classics; but that even the Estonian novelist A. H. Tammsaare (1878 – 1940), a classic considerably distant temporally, still offers almost no interest to readers and researchers around the world, is a fact which evidently has to do with institutionalized tribal myths, with linguistic prejudices, a kind of cross-cultural nepotism among the bigger nations,

a power play determining in a plain politicized language who on the literary scene is significant and who is not.

By the strict aesthetic order of his masterpiece, the pentalogy of novels *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice), by the inventive application of the myth of Faust to that narrative to arrange, in a synthesis of realism and symbolism, the dissolute sociological material into a meaningful fabric of psychological poignancy, Tammsaare, having learned a lot from Dostoevsky, has turned a new page, in comparison with the Russian classics, in chartering down the aspirations of erring human nature, and could even offer a peculiar contribution to the modernist canon. Yet he is largely ignored in Western literary thought, as is his noteworthy contemporary short story writer, Friedebert Tuglas (1886– 1971), who ventured quite far into avantgarde modernist techniques. Both have remained apocryphal to the Western, or indeed the world canon.

Henceforth, the term "grand apocrypha" will be tentatively used as a way of distinguishing fictional narratives of aesthetic value from both the power narratives and the institutionalized aspect of established literary myths.

The appeal of such grand apocrypha is psychological, rather than sociological, oriented towards the presumption of the uniqueness of each individual microcosm. The response to that appeal should also be, primarily, one of psychological interest. However, part of the nature of apocrypha, or apocryphal myths, is that their messages tend to be obliterated by the levelling forces of socially widespread tastes and stereotypes. The collective manias for idolized value items and stereotyped opinions evade, as disposable, the individual psychic outputs, which, if they were given their due attention, could help develop the collective outgrowth of mythic landmarks into one of more refined aesthetic values.

Grand Fictional Narratives in the Post-Modernist Context. Hesse and Broch

Upon a consideration which is just a little deeper than average, of the history of culture since the beginning of the (early) Modern Age in the 16th century, it ought to be evident that the term "post-modernism" which is in current use for the developments in literature and culture that started roughly after World War II, is just a temporary label

invented to mark the period of the reception of the ground-breaking innovations that preceded it, and is to be discarded in the future for a better concept designed more adequately to describe an era only at whose beginnings we may now be. Most of the classical modernist writers were born within the span between the 1870s and the start of the twentieth century; suffice it to understand that these modernist classics could well have been the grandparents, or at the remotest, the greatgrandparents, of those present-day authors who have earned the laudation of post-modernist criticism, suffice it to understand how few years and changes in the soul of humanity separate today's literary world from modernist trailblazers, for the realization that any claims for a definitive watershed between post-modernism and what preceded it are arbitrary, overtly falsifiable constructions of recent literary theoreticians, presented with the aim to establish their own, allegedly unprecedented originality among the naïve and the adherents of consumerism in literature.

It is true that the period after World War II, overlapping with the establishment of post-modernism, is characterized by a new current in the reception of literature: it is that by the wide, but uncritical, consensus, the works of those who theorize on literature have become counted more important than the works of story-tellers. Two novels by two undisputed classics, both writing in the German language, of late modernism (by the currently used terminology) that date from the years just after World War Two, might be taken as means for two divergent interpretations of what was to happen on the literary scene in the decades forming the half-century after their publication.

Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* (*Das Glasperlenspiel*), published in 1943 and first translated into English as *Magister Ludi*, depicts a secluded world of men, striving for distinction and a rise in the hierarchy intricately built around intellectual games. That world is majestic in its noble rules and its ability to channel the scathing and grudges of rivalry into a solid system of accomplishment, with the meanness and pettily emotional undertones of intellectual spear-fights being kept at bay by the very suprahuman grandeur of the structure forming the hierarchy. Hesse's fictive world may serve as a splendid metaphor for the era of predominance of literary theoreticians, and for the status that has been accorded to the world of literature in the post-World War II consumerist society in general, a world as undemocratic and artificial in its interior as it is marginal externally. That world, as

Hesse's in *The Glass Bead Game*, is not without its classics, its wisdom, its timeless accomplishments, its majestic grandeur. But just as poetic metaphors, even the most successful ones, even those expanded into epic canvases, all remain just episodes in the unending creation of narratives, apocryphal fictional mirror-worlds of the sociocultural existence, so the citadel of post-modernism with all its self-flattering claims for immortal uniqueness, is to remain just one of the episodes (presently, the less than a century of its existence is not a long time for literary epochs) in the cultural developments of the Modern Age.

The other novel, whose judgments on aesthetics allow for a different interpretation (though also surpassing the partial claims, entailed by the self-interests of a theoretical movement), is Hermann Broch's *Der Tod des Vergil*, (*The Death of Virgil*), published two years later than Hesse's, in 1945.

Broch's book, an epic-size poem as it has been called, is about the Roman epic poet's last days alive. Virgil, aware of his approaching death, wants to burn his unfinished manuscript of *The Aeneid*, the Emperor Augustus convinces him not to do so. Finally the poet hands the manuscript over to Caesar (Broch 1994: 368, 372–373). Virgil, whom T. S. Eliot in one of his essays ("What Is a Classic?", Eliot 1970: 73) has titled the one indisputable classic of the whole of European literature, as the protagonist of the novel is a highly symbolic figure – symbolic of any individual wavering in the belief in his or her unique value in the face of annihilation by death or by the turmoil of history. As a person about to die knows that where he or she is about to enter there are no values, no memory, even those deeds that could be seen as granting him or her immortality (however impersonal, removed from the earthly existence), appear to be losing meaning as the physical frame is going to collapse and the soul to dissolve. He is especially symbolic of any person involved in artistic creativity and particularly in literature as one of the most spiritual, unpragmatic of human activities. Others assure Virgil that his poetry serves a high purpose. But the focus on him in the novel is not so much as one of the pillars of culture, a voice in support of the Roman statehood: it is on him as a solitary individual, on a par with everybody, in the millennia of human existence. The texture of the novel is of a highly lyrical quality, in fact it can be read as an inner monologue set in the third person. The sea and the landscape, the earth and the sky, the vegetation and the oscillations in moods caused by changes in light and shadows, by the alternating

day-times, the movements of people and the sudden utterances that penetrate his consciousness, the music he hears and the memories, the hopes, affections and disappointments of his whole life before these final hours are conveyed in long musical cadences, in an impressionist flow full of both the utterly abstract and of the tangibly concrete imagery (and often interpretable in both ways at once), which here and there are recognizably similar to the poetic periods of rhetoric in the fiction of William Faulkner (by the simultaneous density of abstractions and nature-images, by the long breaths of impressionist sentences suggesting incessant mental work, Broch's novel resembles such novels by Faulkner as *Absalom, Absalom!*, *The Hamlet* and *Go Down, Moses*). It is in placing an individual who has attempted to write something self-completely unique (and is later, for millennia, to be recognized as the paragon of a literary creator) face to face with the aeons of nature and impulses in humanity, august in their eternal power but indifferent to an individual fate, moments before his annihilation, it is in the bold juxtaposition of the elaborately specific and the timelessly general that the novel achieves its poignancy. By extension, the book is also a metaphorical assessment of the literary efforts, either suspended in the nets of theoretical abstractions, at worst mere juggling with words, or firmly placed on the empirical ground, depicting fictional characters entangled in the actual history, that were to follow.

The Challenging Qualities of Broch's Myth of Virgil

Virgil, then, is the one who gave poetic richness and mature form to the myth of Aeneas, the survivor of Troy and the forefather of the Romans – and who, after his work was finished, began to doubt its worth. The work survived because it served the interests of Rome whose reality the poet found repellent. Mostly *The Aeneid* was to serve as the tool for institutionalizing and spreading the myth about the Romans as the chosen rulers of the world – an interest utterly alien to the consciousness of Broch's Virgil. What the emphases in Broch's novel suggest is that more important than the creation of the myth in the form of the epic was its creator, himself the creation of something, or somebody, higher – and that even the inconspicuous, even the mediocre sides of such a created creator's life were valuable, though never

written down (excepting Broch's own work), only experienced by himself in their immediacy – themselves a myth, or the subject of a myth in the eyes of the transcendental creator and luckily, only because his epic survived, in the eyes of posterity, although the latter could only make guesses at most of them. Virgil is an excellent example of the conflict between sovereign aesthetic efforts, serving the ideal of beauty of creation, and the attempts of power structures to submit even such efforts to their institutionalized ends. Broch's merit is to have lowered Virgil from the pantheon to show his humanity. The Roman poet, who in the course of two millennia had become a myth, almost an institutionalized myth, in that book becomes another kind of myth – an apocryphal one. The mythicized creator, rather than the mythicized product of creation, is the subject of Broch's book; and as such, a subject of one of the most exemplary kinds in the history of civilization, it requires a critical look to be taken at the relation of creativity as an active, spontaneous, intuitive process and of a myth as a finished product.

Apocryphal Myths as a Process of Creation. Doderer, Faulkner, T. Mann

At best, a myth is edifying, exhilarating, aesthetically inspiring. At worst, a myth as a product is a pastime distracting one from important duties, confusing one's ethical vision, or it has the impact of an illusion, a hoax for the audience, potentially made with some hidden selfish aims. A myth as a product is often something to be consumed, with its poignant meanings lightly overlooked; creative works cannot be consumed, without neglecting their creative essence. A myth as a product is at best something to be lived by; a creative work is something to be lived through. Individual creative efforts are to lead a dialogue with myths, to achieve re-orientation within their patterns, to falsify the image of myths as mere products, to make an analytical shortcut through the inertia of the reception of myths, to make the interpreter take an active stance toward the sociocultural status of the contemporary reality, including the way the mythic heritage is shaping people's lives.

The critical participation in the operation of the mythic establishment requires a narrowing of authorial focus, which is in direct

correlation with the narrowing of the consciousness of a fictional character active in the mythical artefact. These two narrowings together are the inevitable foundation of any fiction (involving a plot and characters), as much as the fiction, paradoxically, strives to overcome them. The success of great fictional narratives lies in how precisely and resolutely these narrowings focus on how dominant mythic establishments, whose some falsifiable essential component they are to lay bare, respectralize to its overtly analyzable elements in the individual narrative.

The Austrian novelist Heimito von Doderer is a better example than the American Faulkner, because he is less cryptically removed from the real social storms of his day, of how a writer may be concerned with the authenticity of everybody's response to the world; with the primacy of his theory of "second reality" (Olles 1989: 735), caused by the narrowing of consciousness, more explicitly brought into prominence than the same problem in Faulkner's characters (in whose case the author seems to be revelling too long in the very narrowness of their perception, their hyperbolic self-indulgence), Doderer is a writer less centred on his artistic ego.

The inclination of modernist literature to use old myths as a framework or structural principle, to re-interpret or just re-employ, often ironically, commonly known, embalmed, as it were, myths in order to invest its contemporary reality with new meanings, is a well-known fact. Thomas Mann in his tetralogy of novels, *Joseph and His Brothers*, wrote a complement to the Bible – thus can be said, as the whole long narrative exactly follows the events from the 27th to the 50th chapters of the Book of Genesis, of the Old Testament. What Mann did was to take the laconic biblical skeleton of a story, so to speak, and rewrite it into a 1,500 page long epic, with the mythic dimension being enlarged and supplemented with meticulous observations of a considerable psychological depth, with an analysis of factors and motives, in the vein of modernist literature.

Along with all his other aims, Mann has done a lot to make that part of the Holy Scriptures more interesting a read. The topic of Hebrew history may have concerned Mann most personally. His wife was Jewish (Heilbut 1996: 168 – 169), accordingly also his six children were of Jewish ancestry. In the reconstructionist Judaist sense, along with a contribution to humankind Mann has enriched the Jewish heritage, opening a new door for the reception of the sacramentalized

tradition of Hebrew writings. Yet even by a wide stretch of the imagination is he not seen as having written a new holy book; even for the most grateful admirers, Mann still belongs to the ambivalent profession of a fiction writer whose message is of beauty but not of sanctioning religious communion; at its humblest, but not infrequently, his message is viewed as having to provide interesting pastime. The fact remains, even if reading Mann's accurate retelling of the lives of Hebrew ancestors is by far more fascinating and enlightening than reading the events in the corresponding parts of the Bible.

It might be said that in his tetralogy Mann wrote an apocrypha to the Bible. The word "apocrypha", derived from the same Greek root as "crypt", "cryptical", originally means something hidden, unofficial, unrecognized, though relevant. An apocrypha is what it is always in relation to something recognized; to other, even less recognized texts, it may be the established narrative. Thus, even the whole text of the Old Testament may be seen as having once been an apocrypha (not just the component stories outside the Catholic canon which are commonly known by that name) – that is so, because for the ancient Assyrians and Egyptians, the Hebrews were a recently formed, incoherent desert tribe, emerging with their brand new creation myths. Long before anyone had heard of the Book of Genesis, the Assyrians had had a rich literature and sacramental mythic establishment. To that tradition, the Hebrew stories must have appeared a belated and unnecessary apocryphal appendix. One may assume that such emergence of ever new apocryphas, with a potential of once becoming established artefacts, is a continuous historical process.

Joseph Urgo in his doctoral dissertation on Faulkner persists in referring to Faulkner's oeuvre as an apocrypha, rather than a myth or a saga (Urgo 1986: 221–223); extending his use of the concept, an apocrypha may be interpreted as any kind of myth-making literature that is more like a challenge to the recognized myth, that is based on too immediate social reality (which may have been unheeded or unrecognized by the audience) and too much suprapolitically valid neatly to fall into the class of works meant solely for entertainment or a detached form of edification.

Looking upon Mann's works as a whole, his theme appears to be that of a weakling of the society on a (symbolic or literary) journey in search of love (including social recognition). Because by writing an apocrypha, the author reasserts and redefines his own relation to a

mythic establishment, Mann's focus shifted from the overt mythic patterns of his day – Wagnerianism, Nietzscheanism, Social Darwinism – to the covert mythic resources for most people no longer in direct discourse with the contemporary society. Such a shift was a step in the author's own journey in the epistemological search for a meaningful, recognized role of an individual in the society.

The word apocrypha has been applied to the oeuvre of William Faulkner most persistently by himself. The implications of the word, as opposed to "myth" or "saga", are that the author's message, far from being a melodramatic tale to make one's spare time more exciting with, carries a validity for the actual sociocultural discourse; that besides being an inventor of fictional fates, the author is a researcher of real human predicaments, raising answers and drawing conclusions that are meant to achieve a political resonance; that by the synthesis of psychopolitical thinking and aestheticism, his oeuvre is to be regarded as a suprapolitical statement.

The roots of such fictional narratives are always in the present and the available, in the tangible and sensual, and they drink strength from former mythicized artefacts as from an unmediated, material substance. The everlasting subject of grand apocrypha is the lot of flesh-and-blood individuals attempting to meet their elementary needs for love and recognition in the here and now, within the suppressive medium of mythicized ideological establishment of their day; it is the ahistorical uniqueness of each individual counterpoised against the weight of historical specifics.

The concept of great literary myths as used in reference to the intense psychosocial narrative canvases by Broch, Faulkner, Doderer, Thomas Mann, among others, is a hyperbole, and needs to be interpreted as a literary device for the conveyance of the creation of cultural meanings in a world splintered by sociobiological impulses and contradictory national histories. Grand fictional narratives are grand because their authors, while sensitive and responsive to the urges of history (of civilization, of arts, of literature), partly set themselves outside the very history, in the animate continuum of life as a whole, ruminating, re-arranging, analyzing and re-synthesizing the psychic and spiritual factors that have given rise to particular historical facts and the myths surrounding, mirroring and dramatizing those facts.

Apocryphal Myths in Belated Nations

As noted above, the word apocrypha derives from the same Greek root as "crypt", and denotes something hidden (as in a cave), unrecognized. The focus here is on what apocryphal myths may be lying unrecognized, or even unrealized, in the collective consciousness in former Eastern bloc countries like Estonia.

It is noteworthy that while the countries of Romance populations, whose languages may be regarded as modern vernaculars, or at least descendants, of Latin, usually claim the most direct ties to classical antiquity, it is exactly in the non-Latin countries of European peripheries that the myth of the re-awakening of the aesthetic values of Mediterranean antiquity is the most persistent. With the verse epic seen as an ancient form of literature and Virgil regarded as the Western paragon of an epic poet, remarkably in the 19th and 20th centuries almost every ethnicity, however small, of the former Russian empire or the former Soviet Union, received its own national epic, while almost no epics of significance, excepting perhaps the endeavours of the Swiss Carl Spitteler, were created at that time in the West. For the West, of course, those Turkic, Finno-Ugric and Caucasian epics came as a belated, marginal phenomenon.

In the 19th century, before Otto von Bismarck united the country, Germany was referred to in Europe as "die verspätete Nation" (Schulze 2005: 28), a "belated nation".

Nowadays, from the Western perspective, the same term could be applied to the former Eastern bloc countries. The widespread Western attitude still is that those countries are belated – in the development of economy and statehood, and, however unjust it may seem to the "Easterners", in literary culture.

The extreme forms of such views may be discarded as mere stupidity, a display of obscurantism and national arrogance. However, in the aspects that may be truly belated the "Easterners" may have held intact values that are generally lost in the more "advanced" countries.

The main challenge of the apocryphal thinking in "belated nations" may rise from the potential of the new areas of learning, encoded into the impeded accessibility of the cultural peculiarity of those countries, on the background of the general recession of epistemological tension in contemporary Western literature.

The apocrypha about the re-awakening of the values of antiquity entails the question about what was unjust in the ancient world, such as the system of slavery. It is in this connection that the heritage of the antebellum South of the USA still appears valid for the modern world, even though nearly a century and a half has passed from the end of the Civil War.

The Heritage of the Antiquity, and the Myth of Anti-Emancipation as a Counter-Argument to Lyotard

Unlike the changing world around them, the Southern patriots were against change of any kind. The institution of the slavery of the Black people they saw as a guarantee, Hellenic in spirit, of the cultural flourishing of the white Southern society. The intolerable evil of the slave-holding South being a fact, the South with its racism and hypocrisies about women was far from being so hostile to culture as Nazi Germany with its racist laws seventy years later. Unlike the fake-democratic Third Reich, the Southern society produced not only single-minded racists and chauvinists, but also cultivated, however imperfectly, the ground from which talented artists of integrity could arise. The embarrassing fact about Thomas Jefferson, that pillar of democratic values, is that he was a slave-holder. After all, Edgar Allan Poe with his sovereign aesthetic ideals came from the antebellum South. The first major Black writers of North America also emerged from the Southern states. In an allegedly post-modern world in which emancipation from suppressions of all kinds has rather grown into a repudiation of and alienation from anything that can be held significant and dear, the most important thing inherited from the American South may be the unrecognized myth (in a counter-argument to Lyotard's claims, see Lyotard 1984: 35–36, 48, 49) of the ontological value of a feeling of anti-emancipation.

The Condensation in Fictional Narratives. Apocryphal Myths and Creativity

The reductive potentials of traditional fictional historiographic narratives, such as Virgil's *The Aeneid*, have led to the point at which in a

"belated nation" like Estonia, historiographic fiction of the classical Mediterranean style is treated with suspicion. The majority of Estonian authors have preferred not to reduce their focus to a single, crucially historic epic narrative, but rather to view the world in the inexhaustible totality of centres and margins, to embrace an imaginary all and nothing. The fact that life experience can never be wholly captured in language has served as the reason for a relative lack of condensation of the dissolute material into tight mythic forms. Epic narratives of a historically definitive nature like *The Aeneid* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, to give an ancient and a modern example, obviously have appeared too pretentious to Estonian authors. Among early Estonian classics, again, Tammsaare with his pentalogy, his biblical play *Judith* and his last novel "The New Old Nick of Hell's Bottom" (to give only three examples of his apocrypha, all dealing with injustices inherent in the unemancipated social relations), is a notable exception.

By challenging, in their fluid approaches, the rigid institutional narratives, the apocryphas are to astound the reader outside the established sociocultural fabric into the perception of a flow of existence of basic animate continuity, tying humanity to the natural world, as well as into the sensation of new cultural insights.

Regarding the Virgil myth, in Estonia, at least, there has been more fertility to the myth of a mythicized literary figure like Horace – well-defined, roundly self-contained in the perfection of his lyrical nature. But that lyrical roundness of perfection, holding the dynamics of experience in a seemingly static form, is by no means unrelated to the authors previously discussed. The ultimate, epiphanic "action-in-arrest" (a main Faustian motif) in Broch's, Faulkner's, Thomas Mann's, Doderer's, Tammsaare's case is the belief, apocryphal because inexhaustible, in the object of beauty whom or which the narrowing of consciousness and of focus cannot encompass, whose magic they cannot consume.

Ultimately it is the very representation of the world as seen through the narrowing of characters' consciousness and of authorial focus that allows itself to be regarded as the object of tragicomic beauty, by way of consummation of the creative act. With the force and impetus of large-scale fictional narratives being generally weaker in Estonia than in bigger nations, and the role of lyrical poetry correspondingly greater, an Estonian perspective on grand apocryphal myths may be that the same exhilarating discovery of the hidden can spring both from far-

reaching, comprehensive narrative journeys and from single poems, or lyrical passages, narrowing and re-widening the consciousness into a sensation of creative joy.

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Mythos Russland in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur

AIGI HEERO

Im Jahr 1900, als Rainer Maria Rilke zum zweiten Mal Russland zusammen mit Lou Andreas-Salomé bereiste, schrieb er in dem Brief an Sofia Schill (am 20.Juli 1900): „Mit diesen Tagen tun wir einen großen Schritt auf das Herz Russlands zu, nach dessen Schlägen wir schon lange hinhorchen im Gefühl, dass dort die richtigen Taktmaße sind auch für unser Leben." (Asadowski 1986: 173)

Diese Worte sind in zweierlei Hinsicht signifikant. Einerseits drücken sie die Begeisterung Rilkes aus: Die Begeisterung für das russische Leben und das gesamte Russland-Erlebnis übten auf ihn und auf sein späteres Schaffen einen nachhaltigen Einfluss aus. Des Weiteren jedoch muss das Rilke-Zitat im Lichte eines großen kulturellen Paradigmas betrachtet werden. Es ist seit langem bekannt, dass deutsche Geisteswissenschaftler und Dichter speziell seit dem 19. Jahrhundert das als geheimnisvoll empfundene Russland besser zu verstehen versuchten. Oftmals, so z.B. Peter Brandt, gelangten sie zu der Auffassung, zwischen beiden Völkern gebe es aufgrund einer Art Seelenverwandtschaft eine schicksalhafte Verbindung (Brandt 2002: 3). Nicht nur Rainer Maria Rilke, sondern auch Ernst Barlach, Lion Feuchtwanger, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Böll und viele andere begeisterten sich für Russland und empfanden mit dem großen Nachbarn im Osten eine starke geistige Verbundenheit. Dies verdeutlicht ein weiteres Zitat von Rilke. Am 20. Mai 1900 beschreibt er in dem Brief an Sofia Schill die Begegnung mit Lev Tolstoj als eine außergewöhnliche Erfahrung, bei der ein tiefes Verständnis zwischen ihm und

dem Grafen geherrscht habe: „(...) irgendwo [ging] ein Ausblick auf (...) helle Hintergründe tiefer Einigkeit [auf]." (Asadowski 1986: 160).

Auf ähnliche Weise sieht dies Jörg Plath, der Russland als das Land der Sehnsucht für viele Deutsche definiert: „Die russische Seele und das weite Land lockten und ängstigten zugleich. Sie waren nicht nur für Nietzsche-Leser dionysisch entgrenzend und doch voll ursprünglicher Sittlichkeit, grausam und rein, elementar und Gott nah. Russland stand zwischen Natur und Kultur." (Plath 2004: 2) Des Weiteren betont Jutta Scherrer, dass die Deutschen den Begriff „Russland" noch heute mit Bildern und Mythen wie die „russische Seele", die „russische Idee", das „heilige oder ewige Russland" konnotieren (Scherrer 2006: 1). Die Vorstellung von der Weite des russischen Raums und die hiermit gebundene Idee von der „weiten russischen Seele", russisches Sendungsbewusstsein oder Messianismus gehören ebenfalls zu dem Arsenal der Bilder, aus denen Mythen wurden (Scherrer 2006: 1).

Dabei war eine gewisse Spannung in den Beziehungen zwischen Westeuropa und Russland nicht wegzudenken. Die Diskussion, ob Russland überhaupt zu Europa oder eher zu Asien gehört, wurde des öfteren von gegensätzlichen Bildern begleitet. Ein gutes Beispiel bietet ein Zitat aus einem Geographielehrbuch aus dem Jahr 1908:

> Die Volksseele der Russen ist durch Sinnigkeit, Gemütstiefe und Nationalstolz gekennzeichnet. Wechsel zwischen Munterkeit und Schwermut sind den Russen eigentümlich. Groß ist ihre Verschmitztheit und Höflichkeit. Die unbezwingliche Rauheit der Natur hat sie zur Genügsamkeit, Geduld und Unterwürfigkeit, aber auch zum Fatalismus erzogen, so dass ihnen mit Ausnahme des großrussischen Stammes der Kosaken die Tatkraft verloren ging. Der lange Winter regte die Russen zu Handwerkstätigkeit an und erzog sie zur Handgeschicklichkeit, Handelstüchtigkeit (Hausierer) und praktischem Sinn, führte sie aber auch zu Trägheit und Trunksucht. Die russischen Stämme sind Halbasiaten. Ihr Geist ist unselbständig. Wahrheitssinn wird durch blinden Glauben ersetzt, Forschungstrieb mangelt ihnen. Kriecherei, Bestechlichkeit, Unreinlichkeit sind echt asiatische Eigenschaften. (Seydlitz 1908: 243f)

Diese Zwiespältigkeit wurde durch den Streit zwischen Slavophilen und Westlern in Russland selbst noch gestärkt. „Die wirtschaftliche, soziale und kulturelle Kluft zwischen Russland und Europa sowie die Versuche, den Rückstand der russischen Gesellschaft durch Modernisierung, Reformen und Technologietransfer zu überkommen, wird seit Ende des 17., vor allem aber seit Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts von russischen Zeitgenossen immer stärker empfunden und entsprechend thematisiert." (Scherrer 2006: 14) Für die Westler war die „Europäisierung" im positiven Sinne synonym mit Modernisierung und dem Ausstieg Russlands aus der Rückständigkeit, wobei sie den Westen jedoch keineswegs kritiklos nachzuahmen gedachten. Die Slavophilen dagegen plädierten für eine spezifisch russische, auf die patriarchalischen Einrichtungen zurückgreifende Entwicklung. Sie ein „organisches" Staatsgebilde im Rahmen der Autokratie auf den Grundlagen christlicher Ethik und Gemeinschaftlichkeit. Sie betonten die religiöse und moralische Eigenart und Selbständigkeit Russlands, deren Wurzeln sie in der Orthodoxie sahen (Scherrer 2006: 8).

Laut Brandt ging die Faszination der Deutschen, die sich im frühen 20. Jahrhundert noch steigerte, von eben dieser spezifischen Religiosität der Russen aus. Hinzu kam die zunehmende Begeisterung für die russische Musik und Literatur (besonders für Tolstoj, Tschechow und Dostojewski) (Brandt 2002: 4). Dennoch kann man nicht behaupten, dass es unbedingt mit dem politischen Konservatismus zu tun hatte.

> Es ging hier eher um eine Begleiterscheinung der gesellschaftspolitisch diffusen und disparaten bürgerlichen Zivilisationskritik, die in ihren verschiedenen Ausdrucksformen um und nach 1900 rasche Verbreitung fand. Der Mythos von der Urkraft der russischen Seele stand für die Sehnsucht nach einem weniger geschäftsmäßig-nüchternen, dafür authentischeren und geborgeneren Leben, als das im hochkapitalistischen Deutschland möglich schien. (Brandt 2002: 4)

Auch deutsche Intellektuelle und Künstler orientierten sich in Richtung Osten, da sie dort ein Gegenbild zur modernen westlichen und kapitalistisch geprägten Zivilisation sahen. Diese These kann durch die Ausführungen von Plath bekräftigt werden: „Russland aber war eine deutsche Seelenlandschaft, dessen Bild durch die zivilisationskritischen Strömungen des späten 19. Jahrhunderts (...) geprägt wurde." (Plath 2004: 2)

Mit der Gründung der Sowjetunion 1917 gelangten Deutsch-Russische Beziehungen auf eine neue Ebene. Gerd Koenen etwa sieht die Beziehung der Deutschen zu Russland bzw. der Sowjetunion nach der Oktoberrevolution durch Anziehung und Abstoßung, von Minderwertigkeits- und Überlegenheitsgefühlen geprägt. Zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts und in der Epoche der beiden Weltkriege, so Koenen, entstand in Deutschland geradezu ein „Russland-Komplex": Die siegreiche Oktoberrevolution schien vielen in Deutschland (nicht nur Kommunisten) der Auftakt zu noch größeren Ereignissen zu sein. In einer Zusammenarbeit mit dem bolschewistischen Russland wurde eine Chance gesehen, nach dem verlorenen Ersten Weltkrieg dem Diktat der Siegermächte von Versailles zu entkommen. Es entstand in Deutschland ein neues, teilweise schwärmerisches Interesse für Russland als Gegenpart und Gegenmodell zum Westen, ohne die eigenen politischen Werte grundsätzlich zu revidieren (Koenen 2005). Das heißt, wie schon im 19. Jahrhundert „galt jetzt wieder, dass man, häufig ohne die konkreten Zustände allzu genau zu prüfen, eigene Vorstellungen in Russland hineinprojizierte. Der ‚russische Mensch' – das war jetzt die Revolte der ‚Erniedrigten und Beleidigten', (...) wobei die russische Tradition des Messianismus stets mitgedacht wurde (...)." (Brandt 2002: 6; Koenen 2006: 11) Auch Koenen weist darauf hin, dass das sowjetische Russland für viele durch Dostojewski besser als durch Marx zu verstehen war (Koenen 2005: 205ff). Ähnlich verhielt es sich mit der Zeit des Dritten Reichs: Der teils ideologisch verfestigte, teils in naivem Wunschdenken begründete Probolschewismus etlicher Angehöriger des antifaschistischen deutschen Exils sollte das Gegenstück zum nationalsozialistischen Antibolschewismus bilden (Brandt 2002: 7).

In den 50er, teilweise noch 60er Jahren, das heißt, in der Phase des Kalten Krieges, konnte jedoch auf der Grundlage einer realen Kommunismus- und Russenangst erfolgreich der Abwehrkampf des ›Abendlandes gegen den Bolschewismus‹ beschworen werden; etwas vereinfacht könnte man sagen, dass die frühe Bundesrepublik ihre Identität zu einem beträchtlichen Teil aus der permanenten Feindschaft zur Sowjetunion, über den Bruch von 1945 hinaus, gewann (Brandt 2002: 11–12). Es ist jedoch klar, dass auch im Kalten Krieg das Wissen über Russland und die Russen in Deutschland nicht gänzlich in Propaganda und Gegenpropaganda aufging. Das betrifft nicht nur die nostalgische, teils betont unpolitische, teils dezidiert antikommunistische Pflege russischer Kultur und Folklore (Brandt 2002: 12);

viel wichtiger wäre an dieser Stelle das Engagement von solchen Menschen wie Lev Kopelev (1912–1997) zu erwähnen. Kopelev war ein russischer Germanist und Schriftsteller. 1980 ist er aus politischen Gründen aus der Sowjetunion nach Deutschland emigriert. Dort wurde Kopelev schnell zu einem Kämpfer für eine Aussöhnung zwischen Russen und Deutschen. In einem von ihm initieerten wissenschaftlichen Projekt zur Geschichte der gegenseitigen deutsch-russischen Wahrnehmung von den Anfängen bis zum 20. Jahrhundert (herausgegeben als 10-bändige Schriftenreihe *West-Östliche Spiegelungen* beim Fink-Verlag von 1988 bis 2005) wurde das Deutschlandbild der Russen und das Russlandbild der Deutschen herausgearbeitet, um so durch gegenseitiges Verstehen die alten Brücken zwischen beiden Völkern freizulegen und neue zu schaffen. Damit versuchte Kopelev auch, die durch Propaganda und ideologische Auseinandersetzungen geschaffenen Feindbilder zu zerstören ([1], am 20.12.97). So spielte Kopelev bis zu seinem Tod in deutschen Medien immer wieder die Rolle des „guten Russen", bzw. seine Persönlichkeit fungierte gewissermaßen als die Verkörperung der „russischen Seele".

Neben Kopelev wäre in diesem Kontext auch deutscher Künstler Joseph Beuys (1921–1986) zu erwähnen. Beuys zeigte schon früh vielseitige Interessen für Naturwissenschaften, Musik und Bildhauerei, Kulturgeschichte und Philosophie. Während des II. Weltkriegs wurde er bei der Luftwaffe ausgebildet und als Sturzkampfflieger in der Ukraine eingesetzt. Die Folgen eines Absturzes auf der Krim im Winter 1943 wurden für ihn zu einer auch künstlerisch prägenden Erfahrung. Nomadisierende Tataren bargen den Schwerverletzten und retteten ihm das Leben, indem sie ihn mit Fett einrieben und in Filz einwickelten. Filz und Fett wurden später zu den bevorzugten und symbolträchtigen Materialien seiner bildhauerischen Arbeit ([2], am 20.12.07). „Hätte es die Tataren nicht gegeben, ich wäre heute nicht mehr am Leben," sagte der Künstler selbst ([3], am 20.12.07). Ob sich die Ereignisse tatsächlich so zugetragen haben, bleibt ein Geheimnis. Der von Beuys glaubhaft verbreitete Mythos, die „Tatarenlegende", gehört dennoch zur‚gehobenen Allgemeinbildung' und wird etwa bei Beuys-Ausstellungen immer wieder gerne aufgegriffen: Erklärt diese Geschichte doch wunderbar die Verwendung der eigenwilligen Materialien Filz und Fett bei seinen Kunstwerken. Plath fasst dies wie folgt zusammen: „Beuys überliefert in seinem Werk eine spezifische Variante des zeitenhobenen

mythischen Bildes von Russland: Steppe, Nomadentum und Schamanismus." (Plath 2004: 3)

Dieses Bild des Mysthischen und Naturhaften wurde von deutschen Schriftstellern gerne anhand der literarischen Gestalten dargestellt. Als sehr gutes Beispiel kann hierbei der Roman *Der Zauberberg* von Thomas Mann dastehen. Mann gehörte zu denen großen Denkern, die glaubten, gar eine Seelenverwandtschaft zwischen Deutschen und Russen zu entdecken. Diese starke seelische Bindung symbolisieren im *Zauberberg* die Hauptfigur Hans Castorp und Clawdia Chauchat, eine Russin, in die er sich verliebt. Frau Chauchat fällt ihm sofort auf durch ihr unangepasstes, betont einfaches und natürliches Aussehen: „Sie war nicht sonderlich damenhaft, die Hand, die das Haar stützte (...). Ziemlich breit und kurzfingrig, hatte sie etwas Primitives und Kindliches (...); ihre Nägel wussten offenbar nichts von der Maniküre (...)" (Mann 1996: 109). Des Weiteren achtet sie nicht auf gute Manieren und benimmt sich in der Öffentlichkeit eher unhöflich: „‚Sie sollte die Tür ordentlich zumachen!' sagte Hans Castorp. 'Immer lässt sie sie zufallen. Das ist doch eine Unmanier.'" (b. 110) Doch dessen ungeachtet übt sie praktisch von Anfang an einen magischen Einfluss auf ihn aus, besonders dann, wenn ihr Verhalten irgendwie unmotiviert oder von unerfindlichen Gründen geleitet erscheint:

> Statt aber zum Guten Russentisch zu gehen, bewegte die unerzogene Frau sich ohne Laut auf Hans Castorp zu und reichte ihm schwigend die Hand zum Kusse, – aber nicht den Handrücken reichte sie ihm, sondern das Innere, und Hans Castorp küsste sie in die Hand, in ihre unveredelte, ein wenig breite und kurzfingrige Hand mit der aufgerauten Haut zu Seiten der Nägel. Da durchdrang ihn wieder von Kopf bis Fuß jenes Gefühl von wüster Süßigkeit (...). (b. 130)

Frau Chauchat verkörpert das Wilde und Ungebundene, vereint in ihrer Gestalt also viele „typische" einer Russin: „Ich kenne das, die russischen Frauen haben alle so etwas Freies und Großzügiges in ihrem Wesen." (Ib. 191) Ihre Freiheit ist „abenteuerliche Freiheit" (ib. 287). Als Castorp ihr eine wortreiche und leidenschaftliche Liebeserklärung macht, nennt sie ihn 'mein hübscher kleiner Bürger', der 'auf tiefe Weise, nach deutscher Art, um Gunst zu werben versteht' (ib. 472–473). Daraufhin verlässt sie ihn, zum Abschied bittet sie ihn, ihr ihren

Kugelschreiber wieder zu geben (ib. 473). In ihr vereinen sich also alle Züge, die man zu den „typisch russischen" zählen konnte: Sie ist frei von allen Konventionen, besitzt magische Kräfte und macht von denen Gebrauch, ihr Verhalten lässt sich nicht durch die Kriterien der Vernunft erklären. Deshalb kann auch die Figur der Frau Chauchat als ein Teil des „zeitenhobenen mythischen Bildes von Russland" (Plath) interpretiert werden.

Was die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen heutzutage betrifft, dann kann behauptet werden, dass mit dem Ende des sowjetkommunistischen Systems und der Wiederherstellung eines eigenen russischen Staates 1991 die ideologischen Gegensätze im deutsch-russischen Verhältnis verschwunden sind. Es scheint, dass nationale Ressentiments und Klischeevorstellungen über die letzten Jahrzehnte in den führenden Schichten Deutschlands wie in der Gesamtbevölkerung stark an Gewicht verloren haben. Das heißt natürlich nicht, dass das deutsche Bild von den Russen heute frei von nationalen Stereotypen ist; manche Elemente davon drohen im Hinblick auf die durchaus verständliche imperiale Nostalgie russischer Politiker, die ‚Nomenklaturdemokratie' mit starken autoritären Elementen, die desolaten Zustände in der Übergangsgesellschaft und die teilweise wenig erfreuliche Präsentation der neureichen Russen im Ausland sogar wiederbelebt zu werden (Brandt 2002: 16).

Brandt behauptet jedoch, dass die Zeit, wo die Rede von der „russischen Seele" als Zerrspiegel des Selbst zur Kompensation von Selbstunsicherheit und Selbstüberhebung diente, unwiderruflich vorbei zu sein scheint, auch wenn sich seit Mitte der 90er Jahre wieder stärker Tendenzen geltend machten, die auf eine eindimensionale Wahrnehmung hinausliefen (ib.). Das ehemalige Sehnsuchtsbild ist tatsächlich in den Medien durch eine Katastrophe ersetzt worden (was viele reißerisch gestaltete Berichte oder Meldungen in der *Bild-Zeitung* zeigen: Aus dem Osten kommt nicht mehr das Licht, sondern eine Masse von kleinen und großen Kriminellen, die extrem schlau sind und sich unbedingt bereichern wollen). Dementsprechend hat sich auch der literarische Diskurs über Russland geändert. Die Frage, wie sieht die Reflexion des Russland-Mythos in der heutigen deutschen Literatur aus, wird im Folgenden am Beispiel zweier Autoren der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur diskutiert.

Im Roman *33 Augenblicke des Glücks. Aus den abenteuerlichen Aufzeichnungen der Deutschen in Piter* von Ingo Schulze wird das heutige russische Leben in St. Petersburg sehr fantasievoll dargestellt.

Das „Neue Russland" erscheint in 33 Episoden als ein groteskes Gebilde von eindrucksvollen Szenen. So wird die Beschreibung des Kampfs zwischen den Mafiosos wird durch die lebensphilosophischen Gedanken einer alten Aufseherin abgebrochen, darauf folgen lyrische Bilder von romantischen Spaziergängen auf den Brücken von St. Petersburg. Das heißt, Schulze greift in seinem Werk neben dem russischen Mythos noch einen weiteren großen Diskurs auf: den der Stadt St. Petersburg:

> Die einzelnen Episoden dieses im besten Sinne elektischen Bandes erzählen von einer Stadt, die Generationen von Schriftstellern, Künstlern, Musikern – und Lesern – fasziniert hat. (...) ‚Piter' [eignet sich] vorzüglich als Projektionsfläche für Schulzes literarische Phantasien. Als Fremder hat er genau hingesehen und oftmals ein kleines Detail aus dem Alltag aufgegriffen, das sich in seiner geradezu überbordenden dichterischen Vorstellungskraft zu einer komischen, grotesken, manchmal auch tragischen Geschichte auswächst. Ein ausgeklügeltes Vexierspiel, das mit erzählerischer Verve die große Tradition der Petersburger Literatur aufgreift und zugleich eine ganz eigene, ganz unverwechselbare Stimme der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur präsentiert. ([4], am 20.12.07).

Vor allem scheint der Autor Schulze immer wieder von der überall herrschenden Gesetzlosigkeit, dem Chaos und der Unordnung fasziniert, die Episoden, in denen der alltägliche Irrsinn seinen Ausdruck findet, zählen zu den gelungensten dieses Buches. Insgesamt scheint Schulze die Auffassung zu vertreten, dass im heutigen Russland „staatliche Organe korrupt sind und die Menschen ohne Rücksicht auf Sitte und Gesetz allein ihr persönliches Glück verfolgen. Alkohol gilt als empfehlenswertes Nahrungsmittel, Promiskuität ist an der Tagesordnung und die Stimmung gedrückt, vor 1989 ebenso wie danach." (Plath 2004: 2)

Deshalb kann man sagen, dass das Buch von Schulze mit dem alten Russland-Mythos auf gewisse Weise bricht. Es werden zwar traditionelle Bilder und im Bewusstsein der Leserschaft konservierte Vorstellungen von dem „russischen Leben" bzw. der „russischen Seele" aufgegriffen, jedoch in den heutigen Kontext platziert und dadurch auch als solche entlarvt. So begegnet der Ich-Erzähler einer wunderschönen

und geheimnisvollen russischen Prostituierte, die Maria heißt. Sie ist gebildet, kennt sich mit Literatur aus: „Ich bediente sie mit ihrem Feuerzeug, damit sie nicht abgelenkt wurde im Erzählen über Margarita und Lolita, über den Vergleich von Soschtschenkos Sprache mit der Platonows, und meine Hände lagen flach auf dem Tisch, während sie Puschkin und Brodsky rezitierte, als stellte sie ein Menü nach dem Alter der Weine zusammen." (Schulze 1997: 11). Natürlich will sie den Ich-Erzähler gleich heiraten, damit er sie aus der materiellen Not retten und ihr die ganze Welt zeigen kann (wobei ebenfalls eine etwas klischeehafte Vorstellung angespielt wird: Angeblich wollen die deutschen Männer nämlich immer noch die Frauen retten und die russischen Frauen lassen es gerne zu; [5], am 20. 12.07):

> „Erzähl von dir," sagte Maria, drückte ihre Hand auf meinen Arm und küßte mir behutsam die Finger. Ich war erschienen, um Maria zu retten. Sie wußte nicht, wer ihr Vater war. „Vielleicht ein Italiener," sagte sie und hob mir ihr schwarzes Haar mit dem Handrücken entgegen. Maria würde eine Wohnung für uns suchen, wir könnten zusammenleben und morgens umschlungen aufwachen. Ich würde ihren größten Wunsch erfüllen und ihr ein Auto kaufen. Zusammen würden wir durch die Stadt und ans Meer fahren, tanzen gehen, Schuhe kaufen, ihre Mutter besuchen und reisen, zuerst nach Amsterdam, und mit ihrer Freundin die Hochzeit feiern, und dann nach Italien. (Schulze 1997: 12).

Nach der stürmischen Liebesnacht verschwindet die Frau aber spurlos, alle Versuche, sie wieder zu finden, schlagen fehl. Die nächste Begegnung der Hauptfiguren um etliche Zeit später findet dagegen in einer nüchternen Atmosphäre statt:

> Nach einem dreiviertel Jahr sahen wir uns am Eingang des Europa-Hotels wieder. Maria hatte zwei Sterne zugelegt und Hunger. Wir setzten uns in den Innenhof, tranken Kaffee und aßen Bockwurst. Nach einer Stunde gab es kaum noch freie Plätze. Wir bezahlten wie Studenten, jeder für sich, küßten uns zum Abschied dreimal wie die Russen, und Maria begann ihre Arbeit wie eine Verliebte. (Ib. 13)

Diese Geschichte könnte auch als eine Anspielung auf Lev Tolstojs großen Roman *Auferstehung* gelesen werden. Dort möchte die Hauptfigur, Fürst Dmitri Nechljudov als Geschworener die zu Unrecht bestrafte Prostituierte Katja Maslova aus dem Gefängnis retten, denn vor etlichen Jahren war sie seine große Liebe (und er die ihrige), die er jedoch belog, verließ und zu der er nie wieder zurückkehrte und fast vergaß. Langsam bildet sich eine Beziehung zwischen den beiden und eine Liebe, die sich mehr in Nuancen bemerkbar macht, als in großen Taten und leidenschaftlichen Szenen. Nechljudov erfährt die ganze Unvollkommenheit des damaligen Rechtsystems und folgt Maslova schließlich in die Zwangsarbeit und Verbannung. Doch eine Ehe mit ihm schlägt Maslova aus, obwohl sie ihn liebt und heiratet einen anderen Häftling ([6], am 20.12.07). Insofern lässt sich das Verhalten von Maria mit dem Verhalten von Katja Maslova vergleichen – auch sie benimmt sich irrational, indem sie während der Liebesnacht dem Ich-Erzähler die gemeinsame Zukunft verspricht und danach plötzlich verschwindet. Doch im Gegensatz zu dem Roman des russischen Klassikers erfährt Schulzes Prostituierte keine geistig-moralische Auferstehung. Genauer gesagt, sie möchte es gar nicht. Sie verkörpert also die Fantasie des Ich-Erzählers, will aber diese Fantasie gar nicht wahr werden lassen, sondern übt geschäftlich-nüchtern ihren Beruf als Prostituierte weiterhin aus.

Ein ähnliches Bild des postsozialistischen Ostens wird in der deutschsprachigen Literatur besonders gerne von den Vertretern der sogenannten multi- bzw. interkulturellen deutschen Literatur aufgegriffen. Es handelt sich hierbei um die Autoren, die ihre Werke auf Deutsch verfassen, für die aber Deutsch nicht Muttersprache ist. Der Bekannteste unter den Literaten mit osteuropäischem bzw. russischem Hintergrund ist vermutlich Wladimir Kaminer, ein im Jahr 1990 von Russland nach Berlin ausgewanderter Jude. In seinen anekdotenhaften Erzählungen über das Leben eines Russen namens Wladimir (es geht dabei um seine sowjetische Vergangenheit sowie um sein jetziges Leben in Berlin) wird das Bild der postsozialistischen Gesellschaft etwas übertrieben und ironisch ausgemalt.

So erscheinen Kaminers Russen als „ein Haufen von durchaus nicht unsympathischen Betrügern und Lebenskünstlern" (Plath 2004: 2), das heißt, von dem alten Bild der Natur- bzw. Gottesnähe und des Schamanentums sind in seinem Schaffen nur rudimentäre Stücke zu finden. Kaminer stellt Russen etwa als Menschen dar, die wissen, wie

man richtig feiert, z.B. treffen sich auf der Geburtstagsparty einer Russin alle möglichen Leute, die Wodka bis zum Umfallen trinken, Gläser gegen die Wand werfen (damit verwendet Kaminer eines der bekanntesten Klischees über die Russen) und alles kaputtschlagen (Kaminer 2001: 94–95). Das alte Motiv über die „Verschmitztheit" (Seydlitz) der Russen wird von Kaminer ebenfalls gerne aufgegriffen, in den Kontext der Wendezeit platziert und dadurch ironisch auf die Spitze getrieben. Im Roman *Militärmusik* z.B. beschreibt der Ich-Erzähler die Unternehmungen eines Freundes von ihm, der aufs Land zog und dort durch die „Zugwirtschaft" reich wurde:

> Eigentlich war die Idee einer Zugwirtschaft nicht neu. Wir hatten alle den DDR-Film gesehen, in dem deutsche Indianer laufend fahrende Züge überfallen und berauben. Neu bei Georg war, dass er die Züge nicht überfiel, sondern den Zugführern einen neuen Service bot: Die Zugführer hatten während der Fahrt Alkoholverbot, und Georg war auf die Idee gekommen, in dem verlassenen Dorf die Destillierapparaturen wieder in Betrieb zu nehmen. Den selbst gebrannten Schnaps tauschte er dann bei der Zugführerbrigade gegen wertvolle Gegenstände ein. Seine Gewinne waren enorm. (Kaminer 2003: 86)

In der dritten Erzählung mit dem Titel *Verschollen auf der Krim* des Bandes *Die Reise nach Trulala* beschäftigt sich Kaminer mit einem Urheber des deutschen Russlandbilds: mit Joseph Beuys. Martin, ein deutscher Freund des Erzählers reist an die Krim, um dort Spuren von Beuys zu suchen. Er findet aber Tataren, die fließend Deutsch sprechen, Ausflüge zur vermeintlichen Absturzstelle anbieten und einen florierenden Devotionalienhandel mit Filz und Wrackteilen betreiben:

> Der Absturzort von Beuys wäre ausgeschildert, erzählte er weiter, dort stünde ein Pfeil mit einem Schild, auf dem etwas auf Alttatarisch geschrieben wäre. Auf der Erde lägen die Reste von einem deutschen Kampfflugzeug. Fotografieren dürfe man allerdings nur gegen Gebühr. (...) Die Dorfbewohner sind unglaublich authentisch und nett, alle tragen volkstümliche Kleider aus Filz, und viele sprechen sogar relativ gut Deutsch." (Kaminer 2002: 127)

Später stellt sich heraus, dass es in der Gegend drei verschiedene Siedlungen gibt, die alle von Beuys-Legende profitieren. Die Konkurrenz ist aber hart, deshalb müssen die Dörfer sich jedes Jahr etwas Neues einfallen lassen, „um wettbewerbsfähig zu bleiben." (Kaminer 2002: 130) Des Weiteren findet Martin einen älteren Mann, der beteuert, der leibliche Sohn des Künstlers zu sein: Viktor Josefowitsch Beuys. Vor der Begegnung wird er aber gewarnt: „Ihr müsst ihm nur ein bisschen Geld geben, damit er sich nicht ausgebeutet fühlt." (Ib.)

Diese Erzählung ist ein Lehrstück über Mythenproduktion und Authentizität. Kaminer gestaltet den alten Mythos, der den Osten als Ort authentischer, ursprünglicher, elementarer Erfahrungen beschreibt, völlig neu, indem er dort zeitgenössische (westliche) Geschäftstüchtigkeit ansiedelt. „Die zentrale Pointe, die das merkantile Denken des Westens völlig ungebrochen in den Osten transferiert, lässt die Erzählung – wie oft bei Kaminer – flach wirken. Doch das Ziel einer umfassenden Mythenzerstörung wird erreicht – nicht durch kritische Mittel, sondern durch eine Neufassung, die den konstitutiven Gegensatz aufhebt." (Plath 2004: 3) Ein ähnlicher Zug ist bei vielen Autoren mit osteuropäischem Hintergrund zu betrachten, nennen wir hier etwa Radek Knapp, Vladimir Vertlib oder Artur Becker.

Die Popularität von Kaminers Werken hängt einerseits mit der „Ostalgie"-Welle in Westeuropa zusammen, andererseits scheint auch eine gewisse Marktlücke da gewesen zu sein: Die deutsche Öffentlichkeit brauchte die Literatur, die das Fremde, womit die Leserschaft von Tag zu Tag konfrontiert wird, erklärt. „Russland und die Russen, für viele Deutsche immer wieder eine Faszination als etwas anderes, Unbekanntes, Unerklärliches, ja Verruchtes, werden in Kaminers Darstellung irgendwie annehmbarer." (Heero 2007: 354) Bei Kaminers Schaffen handelt es sich damit um die Depotenzierung des alten Russland-Mythos, der sich in dieser Darstellung nicht mehr als großer Diskurs profiliert und an seiner „Bedeutsamkeit" verliert (Pelikan 2005: 28).

Zu Kaminer muss vielleicht noch vermerkt werden, dass er es innerhalb von wenigen Jahren geschafft hat, der „Oberrusse" Berlins und vielleicht sogar ganz Deutschlands zu werden. Das bedeutet nicht nur, dass er als höchste Instanz der Russlandkunde fungiert, ganz gleich ob es um Putin, Dostojewski oder russische Frauen geht. Der wichtigere Auftrag der deutschen Medien an Kaminer besteht darin, die Rolle des guten Russen bzw. die Verkörperung der „russischen Seele" zu spielen. Vor Kaminer hatte der Schriftsteller Lev Kopelev diese Rolle inne, nach

seinem Tod im Jahre 1997 war dieser Part für einige Zeit unbesetzt (Popov 2002: 2).

Der Unterschied zwischen dem Schriftsteller Kopelev und dem Schriftsteller Kaminer hat allerdings eine historische Dimension. Kopelev war die russische Stimme in der Bonner Republik vor der Wende, Kaminer ist der „Oberrusse" des wiedervereinigten Berlins. Zur Kopelevs Zeit war es die Sowjetunion, die als Negativ-Folie herhalten musste. Heute ist Kaminer der Gegenpol zum Lieblingsfeind von vielen Deutschen: der russischen Mafia. Beide Feindbilder sind eigentlich Phantome der Medien, jedoch unterscheiden sie sich gewaltig voneinander. Handelte es sich vorher um eine globale, aber ferne Gefahr, so hat man es heutzutage mit einer vermeintlichen Gefahr in der eigenen Nachbarschaft zu tun. Dementsprechend muss auch das Gute anders aussehen. „Nicht mehr die erhabene Epik und die bärtige Russische Seele, die gegen das Reich des Bösen auftritt, ist gewünscht, sondern der nette, gut aussehende Kerl mit ironischem Lächeln, der in jedem Interview nach der russischen Mafia gefragt wird und die Bundesbürger jedes Mal mit einem Witz beruhigt – es gäbe keine." (Popov 2002: 3)

Auffällig ist aber dabei, dass immer noch ein Schriftsteller den guten Russen verkörpert, und nicht etwa ein erfolgreicher Reiseunternehmer oder ein engagierter Politiker (wie im Falle der Türken). Das heißt, dass der Mythos der „Russischen Seele" im Bewusstsein der Deutschen trotz vielen Mutationen und Neugestaltungen immer noch lebendig zu sein scheint.

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'The Migrant must invent the earth beneath his feet': Mythologizing of Home in Migrant Literature

JEANNE E. GLESENER

> We pass through countries as through revolving doors, impermanent residents of nowhere. Nothing is strange to us, and nowhere is foreign. If all the world is alien to us, all the world is home.
>
> Pico Iyer

At first glance, the wording of the conference's title "Myths in Modern Times", as well as the juxtaposition of the words "myth" and "contemporary", might read as an oxymoron of sorts. At least since Max Weber, the tacit understanding holds that Modern Times have witnessed the continuous disenchantment of the world, and that consequently the world harbours no more place for the sacred, the mystical and the mythological. As Alain Quesnel, a French scholar on mythological studies has put it: static electricity is a much more convincing explanation for thunder than the wrath of Zeus, just as plate tectonics describe more accurately the causes of earthquakes than the furious beats of Poseidon's trident (Quesnel 2003: 1).

Gone are the days, or so it seems, where the reality of the contemporary could be explained through myths, legends and lore or religion. Their reign has been taken over by a new tutelary power: science. And yet, despite the transparency science claims to clothe all things complex and human behaviour with, the uncanny inherent in scientific and technological progress has not succeeded in obliterating the halo of mythology. Hence the blossoming of spirituality and cults, the continuing belief in the supernatural and the inexplicable, and as A.

Quesnel explains in *Les mythes modernes. Actualité de la culture générale*:

> La science apparaît donc comme une puissance tutélaire mais inquiétante, dont on relèvera plus souvent les maux supposés dont elle afflige le monde que les indéniables bienfaits qu'elle apporte. Ainsi appréhendée, elle a suscité toute une mythologie qui oscille entre l'espérance messianique et l'épouvante apocalyptique. (Quesnel 2003: 11)

As such then, the survival of myths or rather the need for mythology, is conditioned by the essence of myth itself, whether this essence is described psychologically as the "collective unconscious" or the utter human need to tell ourselves stories that either make sense of our world or that shroud it in the mystical Beyond.

A much discussed topic in anthropological and sociological studies today is the rise of modern mythology. The analysis of the emergence and the function of urban legends and of the almost primitive cult of Hollywood stars and the like, reveal these to be nothing less than the resurgence of ancient myths having undergone a radical metamorphosis. They too are a sign of the permanence of mythical thought (Quesnel 2003: 13) and they also stand for the contemporary need for myths and mythology[1].

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[1] Contemporary interest in myths is not limited to the scientific field alone. The English publishing house Canongate has launched, in 2005, an ambitious project entitled *The Myths*, initiated by Jamie Byng, the publisher at Canongate Books. He says about his brainchild that: "From the outset the idea was to approach top class writers from all over the world and invite them to retell any myth in any way they chose. And in turn their myths would be published all over the world. Already a wonderful array of writers [Chinua Achebe, Margret Atwood, Karen Armstrong, A. S. Byatt, David Grossman, Milton Hatoum, Natsuo Kirino, Alexander McCall Smith, Tomás Eloy Martinez, Victor Pelevin, Ali Smith, Donna Tartt, Su Tong, Dubravka Ugresic, Sally Vickers and Jeanette Winterson] has come on board as have twenty-four superb publishers. The fact that each publisher is going to launch the series on the same day is, as far as we are aware, unprecedented on such a scale." (http://www.canongate.net/myths (9.1.2007)). This unprecedented publishing venture and literary ambitious project, focussing on the vulgarizing of world myths for the larger public by taking it out of the expert's niche, and by

We can see this need in literature too. Literature, of course, has always been the supreme vehicle of mythology. As this collection of essays shows, literary texts are still very much wandered through by mythological figures, ideas and stories. Contrary to common understanding, the survival of myths in literature cannot be reduced to a subtle game of cultural references. The contention is that even today they hold the power, if not to explain entirely, at least to illustrate the human plight and destiny more accurately than dry rationalism and scientific language ever could, or to quote Aline Le Berre:

> Il existe donc une permanence des mythes, sans cesse repris et remaniés au fil des générations, objets d'inspiration, de réflexion mais aussi de caricature. Devant l'énigme de l'univers et de sa destinée, l'homme exprime son désarroi ou ses tentatives de réponse à travers les symboles, des récits allégoriques qui, par leur profondeur, leur caractère universel, accèdent à l'intemporalité. (Le Berre 2004: 7)

"Migration", writes Stuart Hall, "is a one way trip. There is no 'home' to go back to" (Hall 1987: 44). However, the longing and search for a home does not end with the observation of its supposed non-existence. On the contrary, in this genre of "writing of loss", which much migrant writing ultimately qualifies, loss being often one of its prime driving forces, the preoccupation with the lost home or homeland and the search for alternative ones, were they geographical, spiritual, linguistic, transitional or transcendental, surfaces as one of its most potent themes. As we shall see, in migrant writing the myth of home vacillates between the two definitions of the term: falsehood and misconception versus sense-making narrative or fabulation.

Myths and mythology have always been a part of migrant literature and have been drawn upon extensively, whether descriptively or contents wise. By focusing exclusively on the myths of home, this article will try to show that the sense of belonging, underlying both the myth of home and migrant writing, has been at the core of the processes of demythologizing and myth-making of migrant literature throughout.

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retelling (rewriting?) these myths through the narrative voices of internationally acclaimed authors, is yet another sign that myths are very much back on the agenda.

The texts to support this claim are chosen among early Black British Literature and writings by Salman Rushdie and Caryl Phillips.

References to myths are recurrent in the discourses on migrant writing as well as in the description of the experience of migration itself. A look at the semantic field pertaining to the discourse on migrancy reveals references to a number of myths deeply rooted in diverse cultural heritages. Among these references functioning as descriptive metaphors are allusions to and variations of the Exodus, the Lost Paradise, the Promised Land and the Wandering Jew and they are generally used to translate the homelessness and the uprootedness of the migrant; the Tower of Babel tends to refer to the transformation of the modern metropolis which has become the crucible of cultures and languages out of which rises a new intercultural and multilingual order and reality.

This list of mythological references is not restricted to the descriptive level only but their recurrence on the content's level has several determined functions too. One definition of migrant literature is that it arises out of the attempt to come to terms with the disruption that has occurred in the lives of the uprooted and the dislocated. Thus one finds that in much migrant writing the search for continuity in the personal or collective narratives of the migrant and/or the author's community is, if not explicitly in the forefront, at least implied. Furthermore, if the experience of migration and its consequences figure as main themes embedded in the texts are also references to the culture left behind. Among these myth, legend and lore are as prominent as references to the left country, its mother tongue and its history. This is one of the reasons why migrant literature is sometimes described as a cultural archive or a memory bank, seeing as:

> In our chaotically fast-paced history, minor literatures, which are increasingly transnational and bi- or translingual, assume the form of memory banks where fragments of different histories and languages, traces of cultural accents, and images of lost geographies are deposited. (...) Transnational writing transports these compact archives of memory across borders, redistributing their contents as idioms, metaphors, and discourses around which diasporic communities can forge new, nonterritorial alliances. (Seyhan 2001: 30)

The retelling and transmission of the community's cultural heritage fulfils a double function. If, on the one hand, they contribute to foster a sense of belonging among the community, on the other, they offer the 2nd and 3rd generation the opportunity to relate to and even identify with a culture, a history and a country they may not have had direct access to. Thus, literature becomes, just like rituals and customs, a medium to knit the community together.

Consequently, it can be argued that underneath the rendering, recalling, writing and rewriting of myth, legend and lore in migrant literature, a similar process is at work as the one that Benedict Anderson discerned as having been fundamental to the creation of the myth of the nation, or as he more accurately termed it, the "Imagined Community". Anderson's choice of words is highly revealing. The sense of belonging fostered between a mass of people – the so-called community that in its nature is so widespread, diverse and heterogeneous – can only be artificial, that is to say *imagined*[2]. And Anderson explains that: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson 2002: 12–13) And one might add, their sense of belonging.

A lot has been said and written about the myth of the nation and the ambiguous part it played in the colonial enterprise. If, on the one hand, the colonial subject had to submit him/herself to the colonizer's rule, s/he was on the other educated in the colonizer's language, traditions and beliefs. It was, however, the lie of empire, that which made the colonized believe that s/he was a full member of the imperial nation, and that the centre of the empire was his/her mother-country too, that had the more far reaching consequences.

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[2] Another point that leads us to compare migrant communities with Anderson's imagined communities is the way the written word is made use of to foster the said sense of belonging. In both cases, it provides the cement to patch them together. Anderson emphasizes that the means by which the imagined communities were knit together was writing and more precisely the medium of sacred language and written script: "But Christendom, the Islamic Ummah, and even the Middle Kingdom (…) were imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script. (…) All great classical communities conceived of themselves as cosmically central, through the medium of sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power." (Anderson 2001: 12–13)

The first West Indian immigrants to arrive in England on board the *Empire Windrush* (Phillips M., Phillips T. 1998), an immigrant Ship from the Caribbean to England from 1948 onwards, were soon to learn that their belonging to the mother-country was in fact nothing more than a myth. After World War II, over 400,000 West Indians emigrated to Britain in search of employment. They had been invited to the 'mother-country' by the labour government in an attempt to solve the immediate labour crises (Nasta 1995: 48).

Upon arrival, theirs was still a highly coloured image of the 'mother-country'. On the one hand, the 'mother-country' was a kind of contraction of both the myth of the Promised Land and of Eldorado, the land of plenty, where the streets are paved with gold. As soon as the reality of their situation dawned on them though, the extent of their illusion became only too clear, as Kenneth Parker explains by, incidentally, drawing extensively on biblical mythology:

> (...) the departure from their home islands was the equivalent of the Biblical story of the escape by the Jews from their Egyptian bondage. But standing on the banks of the Thames that is also the Nile, [they muse] that they may well have been led into bondage, rather than out of it. Where to establish roots in a society riddled with pervasive racism that is a major contributor to keeping the immigrants in the most menial jobs and abject poverty (...) (Parker 1998: 187)

But for these immigrants, the 'mother-country' had been far more than mere myth. Indeed, images and knowledge of it had dominated their whole life as Onyekachi Wambu remarks on account of the first generation of Black British Writers from the Caribbean:

> Like many of their fellow migrants they were arriving back to the 'mother country' as 'familiar strangers' – familiar with the English landscape, English manners and culture which had dominated the imagination of their countries through the works of writers and poets such as William Shakespeare, William Blake, Charles Dickens, and Jane Austen. (Wambu 1998: 2)

The arrival in the mother country and the subsequent disillusion with the place that they thought of as home are some of the main topics in early Black British Literature. Sam Selvon, George Lamming, Andrew Salkey and E. R. Braithwaite are but a few of those who wrote about coming to terms with the myth of the 'mother country'. In *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) by the Trinidadian writer Sam Selvon, the main character Moses Aloetta, a veteran black Londoner leads a group of unlettered immigrants like the sage figure Moses through the wilderness of an alien and alienating 'mother country' where henceforth, they will have to survive (Nasta 1995: 54).

Most of this early writing is also postcolonial in nature. The myth of London as the golden city and England as the mother country is gradually dismantled in the consciousness of these writers who are confronted with the harsh reality of surviving in a country which treats them with indifference and contempt. "(...) The entire phenomenon was complicated", writes David Dabbydeen, "by the assumption of a shared heritage with the mother country. It was really the shattering of the illusion, of centuries of expectation fostered by colonial dependency and consolidated by a colonial education that led to the trauma and alienation so vividly recreated by novelists like Lamming and Selvon." (Dabbydeen, Wilson-Tagoe 1987: 49)

In *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960) by the Jamaican Andrew Salkey, not only is the myth of London as the golden city shattered to pieces but in the main character's consciousness, quite another realization makes itself felt. Seeing all the monuments and historical places that he had read and been told so much about, he realizes that having been educated solely in this foreign heritage, colonization had deprived him of an access to the myths and mythology of his own country:

> I walk around London and I see statues of this one and the other (...) There's even a Stonehenge. And do you know how I feel deep down? (...) I feel nothing (...) We've been fed on the Mother Country myths. Its language. Its literature. Its Civics (...) What happened to me between African bondage and British hypocrisy? What? (Salkey 1960: 46)

Thus, the myth of the mother country was gradually demythologized[3], and the question of home and roots came to be discussed with even more urgency. Till today, the vexing question of belonging has not been entirely resolved as, in writings by the younger generations, the persistent use of the epithets 'unmoored', 'uprooted' and 'unbelonging' undoubtedly testifies. In his essay collection *A New World Order*, Caryl Phillips, writing on this same topic, describes this state of being in limbo as follows: "Our identities are fluid. Belonging is a contested state. Home is a place riddled with vexing questions" (Phillips C. 2002: 6). Drawing on his own history, he lays bare the different strands that make up – what to a monolithic conception of identity and ethnicity would seem to be – his "irreconcilable" origins, which in him, and in so many others, have merged to form new types of human being, as Salman Rushdie would say. And Phillips goes on to explain:

> (...) this boy has had to understand the Africa of his ancestry, the Caribbean of his birth, the Britain of his upbringing, and the United States, where he now resides, as one harmonious entity. He has tried to write in the face of a late-twentieth-century world that has sought to reduce identity to unpalatable clichés of nationality or race. He has learnt to accept his transgressive nature. (ib.)

If the first generation, despite the disillusion of belonging to the mother country, could at least still relate directly to their place of origin, for those born in migrancy, it is not so much the loss of home than the absence of home (or, as in Phillips' case, the surplus of homes) that is the crux of the matter. Furthermore, even if they would try to ignore this other origin that is also part of them, the host society despite its policies and discourses on assimilation and integration, often still makes them feel that they don't belong. Unlike the sedentary who never had to leave his hearth or uproot himself in some way and thus tends to take home for granted, the migrant knows that home is not a given. Rather, home is something that needs to be constructed, invented even.

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[3] "(...) the main difficulty was in coming to terms with the idea of London as an illusion, as a dream built on the foundations of the colonial myth; a myth which has to be demythologised in the mind of the artist who comes from a previously colonised world." (Nasta 1995: 50)

The loss of home is sometimes described as being deprived of history, a feeling derived from the discontinuous state of being[4] that ultimately defines migrancy. For many migrant writers, writing represents the medium by which a sense of home and belonging can be gained. For many, it is in the intimate relation between language and writing, that the lost home may crystallize itself, albeit in a new and ever so personal make-up, no longer something that has been given, but something that has been attained. If some, life Zafer Şenocak, locate their home in literature: "Literatur (...) ist die Heimat in unseren Köpfen" (Şenocak 2001: 86), for others it takes shape in their chosen language: "Für die meisten Schriftsteller gibt es ohnehin nur eine wirkliche Heimat, und das ist die Sprache, in der sie schreiben. Welcher Herkunft sie auch sein mögen, zu hause fühlen sie sich am ehesten in der Grammatik, die ihre Schreibsätze gliedert." (Frischmut 1999: 23) And in order to bridle this discontinuous state of being, many endeavour to recapture the past, history and the lost homeland through writing: "When history and geography are irrevocably lost", writes Azade Seyhan, "the past has to be reinvented to make the present bearable; it has to take on the form of a narrative, a fabulation. The misplaced nostalgia has to be dismantled and restructured as a tale of survival." (Seyhan 2001: 76)

The myths of origin, home and roots have lost nothing of their fundamental importance, especially if they are linked to the question of survival on foreign soil. Entire communities are known to have reverted to inventing a mythology of origin, as is the case for instance of the Chicano communities living in the Mexican-American borderlands. Discriminated by a society that exploits but does not recognize their legitimacy, they find solace in the idea of the imaginary nation of Atzlàn:

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[4] In more than just one respect, the predicament of the migrant resembles that of the exile. Some oft Edward W. Saïd's reflections on exile for instance can therefore also be transferred to migrancy: "Because exile, unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. (...) The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience." (Saïd 2001: 177–185)

> The recovery of a lost geography and history in the construction of the imaginary nation of Aztlán, independent of both the United States and Mexico, offered a space of retreat from repression. (...) The concept of a sacred mythical originary nation, Atzlán, developed at the height of the Chicano movement as a source of identification and identity formation in a diasporic community that could no longer claim Mexican homeland. (Seyhan 2001: 113–126)

It may be that if one is denied to feel at home, for whatever reasons, the only other choice there is, is to look to imagination and fiction, to story-telling and myth-making, to create, artificially at least, a sense of belonging. Meera Syal, an Anglo-Pakistani writer, says as much in the opening to her Bildungsroman *Anita and Me* (1996) : "I am really not a liar, I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history sometimes need to turn to mythology to feel complete, to belong." (Syal 1996: 10)

Salman Rushdie is undoubtedly one of the most significant contemporary migrant writers, a position due as much to his iconoclastic, exuberant, fantastical, erudite and complex novels as to his remarkable essays on postcolonial and migrant issues. His views on migration and his typology of the migrant are especially explicative of the migrant's Weltanschauung, as well as on his/her "other" perception of such monolithic concepts as home for instance. The migrant's condition is such that the very concept of home can no longer be only reduced to its erstwhile meaning of belonging to *one* geographical place and *one* cultural heritage. The migrant's plurality, his/her belonging to different geographical, cultural and linguistic spaces, his/her hybridity – all these aspects defy the established norm of the singular. Commenting on the hybridity and the Weltanschauung of the migrant, Rushdie writes: "The effect of mass migration has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things." (Rushdie 1985: 124) This leads us to infer that the migrant's understanding of the concept of home might essentially be a transcendental one.

Setting roots in transcendental ideas rather than in material things – or, phrased differently: to take up dwelling in writing or language – is not a characteristic of contemporary migrant literature only. Rather, it pertains to migrants and wanderers through the ages. We find its most

powerful representation in Judaism and in the plight of the Jewish people whose destiny it was to become the people of the book, or as George Steiner has put it in his essay "Our Homeland, the Text": "The dwelling assigned, ascribed to Israel is the House of the Book. Heine's phrase is exactly right: **das aufgeschriebene Vaterland**. The 'land of his fathers', the **patrimoine**, is the script." (Steiner 1985: 305)

In his autobiography *Minima Moralia, Reflektionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, Theodor W. Adorno, writing in the aftermath of World War II, at a time when for many dwelling and settling could no longer be perceived in the old way as so much more then mere geographies had been destroyed, explores the possibility[5] of "home-in-writing" (Israel 2000: 84): "In seinem Text richtet der Schriftsteller häuslich sich ein. (...) Wer keine Heimat mehr hat, dem wird wohl gar das Schreiben zum Wohnen." (Adorno 1951: 95–96)

To create a home by using the imagination which is Rushdie's contention when he writes that: "The immigrant must invent the earth beneath his feet" (Rushdie 1987: 149), shares cores with both Adorno's statement about 'home-in-writing' and with dwelling in the 'House of the Book'. However, it is the imagination and not the sacred text or the philosophical aesthetics that holds the main part here, for, as Rushdie writes: "Migrants must of necessity, make a new imaginative relationship with the world, because of the loss of familiar habitats" (Rushdie 1991: 125). Only through the imagination can the world be rethought and become a habitable place for the migrant 'misfits'. Only through the imagination can norms and concepts, like home, be unsettled, re-interpreted. Only through the imagination can their established and dogmatic[6] meaning be uprooted and actualized so that they may fit the contemporary predicament of the migrant.

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[5] As stated above, Adorno explores 'home-in-writing' as a possibility which, in the end, he finds is nevertheless doomed to fail: "Am Ende ist es dem Schriftsteller nicht einmal im Schreiben zu wohnen gestattet." (Adorno 1951: 96)

[6] As to the dogmatic and orthodox nature of such concepts as home for instance, Edward W. Saïd makes the point that: "(...) We take home and language for granted: they become nature, and their underlying assumptions recede into dogma and orthodoxy." (Saïd 2001: 185)

Significantly for Rushdie home, the place we come from but which can never stand the test of time[7], can only ever be recaptured through the combined efforts of memory and imagination. Falling back on the process of myth-making, the migrant writer, when writing about home, will only ever be able to create an "imaginary homeland" seeing as: "(...) our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely that thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (Rushdie 1982: 10).

Migrant writers such as Rushdie, Phillips and the Turkish-German author Kemal Kurt, who have to ask themselves "Was ist die Mehrzahl von Heimat" (Kurt 1995), find that they need to redesign the parameters of what and where they will call home. And some, such as Carly Phillips, proceed not unlike a cartographer in order to draw the imaginary geography of their transcontinental home(s):

> After thirteen years of compulsive itinerancy, I know my Atlantic 'home' to be triangular in shape with Britain at one apex, the west coast of Africa at another, and the new

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[7] The house uprooted by the hurricane in the story *The Wizard of Oz* can be read as a synecdoche for the migrant's loss of home and roots. Resembling the uprooted house carried away by the wind, the migrant, with only his memory, the shards of the past and his imagination to draw upon, must redesign the parameters of what he will call home. Interestingly enough, in his eponymic essay, where Oz reads as a variation of the concept of the "imaginary homelands", Rushdie makes a very significant point, seeing the loss of home not only as the predicament of the migrant, but as the one concerning all of us. Underlining the relation of home and childhood, he implies that homes do not get lost because we abandon them, but we loose our home as soon as we are adult, as soon as we are grown up. And thus, our erstwhile home, 'the place from which we began', can never be recaptured, only the memory of it remains and it will fade into a persistent dream: "So Oz finally became home: the imagined world became the actual world, as it does for us all, because the truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started out to make our lives, armed only with what we have and are, we understand the real secret (...) is not that 'there is no place like home', but rather that there is no longer any such place as home: except of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz: which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began." (Rushdie 1992: 57)

> world of North America (including the Caribbean) forming the point of triangle. (…) I have chosen to create myself an imaginary 'home' to live alongside the one that I am capable of fully trusting. My increasingly precious, imaginary, Atlantic world. (Phillips C. 2001: 305–308)

Imagined Communities and Imaginary Homelands, both artificial, imagined, invented fictions that may become real and that remain mysteriously powerful. At their core, they both express the innate human need for a sense of belonging. Are both of them not a kind of myth-making, a narrative, a fiction to believe in?

In migrant writing, home, the construction and the narrative of home, fuelled by the writer's imagination, takes on the form of a fabulation and functions thus not unlike a myth. In his essay "La construction du mythe", Guy Gibeau sketches the theoretical evolution of the myth by drawing on Plato's and Aristotle's understanding of the term. Given that the myth was seen as a narration whose authenticity could not empirically be verified, the *mythos* was, after the hegemony of the *logos* had been established, qualified as being inferior to the *historia* and the *aletheia*. However, the qualities and functions once ascribed to the *mythos*, as this essay has tried to show, have not been lost with the passing of time. On the contrary, as the myths of the imaginary homeland and imagined community show, these qualities and functions have not lost anything of their appeal, their usefulness and their necessity. As to the qualities and functions of the *muthos*, Gibeau writes:

> Bien qu'il n'adhère que très peu à ce qu'il est quelquefois permis de reconnaître comme étant la réalité ou encore la vérité, le mythe n'en représente pas moins une forme non négligeable de persuasion et peut, à l'occasion, alimenter l'enseignement. Ces bons offices, le mythe les remplit commodément grâce à la charge émotive dont il est le véhicule. Le mythe peut charmer l'auditoire, partant susciter l'adhésion collective. D'une certaine façon, il conserve ainsi son rôle, sans doute archaïque, d'instrument privilégié de la transmission de la culture et des modèles valorisés. (Gibeau 1994 : 2–3)

The migrant's alienation in space and time from his original home is one of the reasons why it must remain forever elusive. There can only ever be substitutes or self-fashioned ones. And if, as Chambers writes: "As long as homecoming [remains] an impossibility" (Chambers 1994: 5), the myth of home, its rhetoric construction or deconstruction in literature and philosophical thought will be among the more interesting themes to observe and study in contemporary and future migrant literature.

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Literature, Myth and Translation: Framing Literary Translation as a Variable of Cultural Identity

SONIA BRAVO UTRERA

This paper considers diverse expressions of Cuban identity within the USA. For nearly three decades, the subject has received extensive research work within the fields of literature, history, testimony, cultural anthropology and psychology, among others. However, this is not the case in the area of mythology and translation studies. Thus, when we research this phenomenon's development and its relationship to Cuban culture and literature in the Island in the 20th century and into the new millennium, it may be possible, in my opinion, to link the ideoesthetic orientation of the works of major Cuban-American authors (written in English in the USA) with Greek mythology, a tradition that has significantly marked Western literature, with a current, defining presence in post-modern and postcolonial times of migration and movements. I will attempt to link these expressions, especially culture and literature, with the Island's cultural system geographically speaking. In my approach to what constitutes Cuban culture and Cuban literature, taken as **primary system**[1] the formulations regarding the birth and current status of Cuban-American culture and, within this socio-historic construction, that of Cuban-American literature is analyzed (as a frame of mind) in two systems:

- the broad structure of Cuban culture within the geographic boundaries of that country, and

[1] The text is emphasized with underlines at various points.

– the culture of Cuban origin and topics beyond the country's shores, i.e. the diasporas' expressions of a disperse nation in several territories.

This research attempts to interpret Cuban and Cuban-American cultures and literatures, and especially the works of Cuban-American authors, written in English in the USA with a new focus on it comprehension, reception and translation. All this is considered in the light of the most revered Greek myths which have influenced Western literature, and whose presence is current and defining in post-modern and post-colonial times of migration and uprooting. Furthermore, we will discuss the translation of what is essentially Cuban as a semiotic cultural category from the Lotmanian theory of culture in its links to the post-structuralist proposition of the Russian thinker Bakhtin[2] who analyzed discourse characteristics in the context of **dialogism**, bestowing special relevance on the role of those carrying out the actions and establishing an affinity between the act and the word given that for the wise, an act is the concrete fact of communication. His biggest challenge was overcoming the traditional linguistic bias and proposing language study as a communication phenomenon. My research is based, first, on one of Bakhtin´s most important works, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act.* Establishing two types of thought (participative and performative); he indicated certain communication specificities between *Being* and *Reality.* As Bakhtin wrote (1986/1993: 34): "Actual act-performing thinking is an emotional, volitional thinking, a thinking that intonates, and this intonation essentially permeates all of our thought's content." As with Lotman, his theories have a social basis and are presented in socio-cultural terms. His analyses are based on the dialectic of communication as a socio-historical phenomenon. The researcher establishes similarity between Act and World. **The act is the concrete communication fact**, which distances his viewpoint from more traditional linguistics and **poses the notion of communication in context and cotext**, one of the basic requirements for decoding an utterance; constructing a theory of communication and reception, which later

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[2] I apply the work of Bahktin; especially his early *Toward a Philosophy of the Act-* appeared in Russian in 1986 and published in English in 1993- to Cuban-American writing. A further analysis needs two key works in this order: *The Dialogic Imagination* and *Problemy Poetiki Dostoevskogo.*

would give way to advances in the sociopragmatic work of Searle (1989) and in Nida's sociolinguistic (1996).

Indeed, dialogism is language's only possible form of expression, as Lotman also affirms. Bakhtin could be considered within the sphere of text semiotics and Lotman, one step further, explains why he considers texts in the field of culture, history, society thus **broadening the text concept to all sign systems**. Cesare Segre (1981: 7) maintains that "[...] semiotics is the most generous discipline, able to attain a fusion between language and text analyses and analysis of the pragmatic and ideological context." In fact, Bakhtin's textuality of culture was developed by Lotman (1993).

The last approaches culture dynamically within a semiotic system, in synchronic and diachronic relationships that are equally valid, far beyond Russian structuralism and formalism, but acknowledges its contributions and considers **translatability and entropy**, **establishing a coherence of culture**, a typology to explain the value of signs whilst highlighting the dynamic relationship between history and society as with texts and culture itself, along with texts.

He has posited that:

> Естественно, что при столь глубоком различии в структуре языков точность перевода заменяется проблемой смысловой эквивалентности. Однако тенденция к увеличению специализации языков и к предельному затруднению переводов между ними составляет лишь один аспект тех сложных процессов, совокупность которых образует интеллектуальное целое. Мыслящая структура должна образовывать личность, т. е. интегрировать противоположные семиотические структуры в единое целое. Противоположные тенденции должны сниматься в некотором едином структурном целом. Единство это необходимо для того, чтобы, несмотря на кажущуюся невозможность перевода $L_1 >< L_2$, перевод такой постоянно осуществлялся и давал положительные результаты. В тот момент, когда общение между данными языками оказывается действительно невозможным, наступает распад культурной личности данного уровня и она семиотически (а иногда и физически) просто перестает существовать (1992 [39]).

One of the main supporting points of my approach to Cuban-American culture and literature is deeply related to Baktin and Lotman's findings. I conceive Cuban-American culture and literature as ***memory saga***, identifying with a metaphor the current situation of this culture and literature in the US cultural system and the overall Cuban Diaspora. In addition, I would like to refer to some others issues needed for a more in-depth discussion. I mean entropy as disorder or chaos in the information systems, another concept that can be discerned in our ideas. Lotman applies Kolmogorov's formula:

$$H = h1 + h2,$$

in which H represents overall information whilst h1 is semantics, which Kolmogorov saw as linguistic synonymy in the widest sense and source of poetic information. Meanwhile, h2 refers to language flexibility, but he refutes it and does so by describing the conception, as in this paper, that by drawing on mythological texts, on the myth, in metaphoric and poetic texts we reach language flexibility (guibkost´yazyka) **so poetry can occur** . (Lotman 1992: [73]). Both, Bakhtin and Lotman, consider history and society as texts and the poetic text a special poetic entity which is not "odd." In this respect, Jorge Lozano has commented that: "Language and communication are, therefore, two great focal points dealt with by Soviet semiotics", and adds that "one of the characteristics of Lotmanian discourse is panlinguism" (Lozano 1979:25). In my research I endeavour to put theirs ideas and analyses into practice, try to describe the common ground between Bakhtin and Lotman[3], applying this to Cuban-American fiction works written in English. To do this I defend the idea of conceptual pertinence of the Cuban-American cultural system as part of:

- the nation in its territory, and
- in its Diaspora since 1959, with preference (though not exclusive) in the USA.

My work is based on the statism/dynamism and unity/plurality set out by Lotman in his analyses and in his notion of culture as signifying

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[3] Bravo Utrera, S. "Aproximación a la traducción literaria como variable de identidad cultural en los textos de la literatura cubanoamericana", in: *Virgilio Moya In Memoriam,* forthcoming, 2008 and "La traducción literaria: variable de identidad cultural en los textos de la literatura cubanoamericana", *TRADUIC*15/21, 2006. UIC: México.

information and as typology of culture codes. He observes that culture is the transformation of non-information in information. (1992: [34/35]). In previous works some of these issues presented here have already been discussed and here the reader may recognize my ideas, particularly those regarding translation of cultural systems and Cuban-American identity[4].

The basic cultural phenomenon is the existence of a series of fiction works with typically Cuban subject matter, written in English (many of which are translated into Spanish in the USA or Spain), which deal with Cubans' bilingualism and biculturalism in the second generation exile population: those offspring of the first exiles and those who travelled to the States in the waves of immigration between 1959 and 1980. As Gustavo Pérez Firmat termed it, they are the generation known as *one-and- a- half*[5].

He remembers the fact that:

> Aunque es un hecho cierto que, hasta ahora, ha habido poco de lo que pudiéramos denominar literatura cubano-americana, no hay duda de que por muchos años ha existido, vivita y coleando, una cultura cubano-americana. Lo que ocurre es que esta cultura no es erudita, ni artística, ni literaria. [...].He vivido en Miami el tiempo suficiente, y lejos de Miami el tiempo suficiente como para reconocer, dondequiera que voy, el germen de ese estilo: un estilo cubano-americano que se caracteriza por una mezcla fascinante de torpeza y nobleza, de kitsch y caché (1987). [6]

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[4] See, Bravo Utrera, S. *La traducción en los sistemas culturales.* Servicio de Publicaciones: ULPGC. 2004:131–180.

[5] This is the title given to those children of the first wave of exiles after the 1959 Revolution in Cuba: "one-and-a-half generation".

[6] Although it is true that, up until now, there seems to have been limited material which could be called Cuban-American literature, a Cuban-American culture has existed over the years. This culture is not erudite, nor artistic nor literary [...]. I have lived in Miami long enough and far from Miami long enough to recognize the essence of that style as Cuban-American, a fascinating hodgepodge of stupidity and nobility, of kitsch and cache.

These words reveal an acknowledgement of not only popular culture but of **culture as a living, dynamic sign, very much in line with Lotman**[7], in different verbal and non verbal semiotic systems: a culture of supermarkets, restaurants and discotheques; styles of dress, dance and behaviour; fashion and food, jewellery and Jacuzzis, publicity and popular music. All this is how I have defined cultural identity markers as a sociopsychological space of belonging (Bravo Utrera 2004: 155–180 and189–196) and it is a subject of considerable research.

We may also perceive the dialectic "culture-nature" debate or "culture-non culture" regarding the marginal quality of Cuban-American in relation to the centre, which is represented by the US model. This culture came to be recognized in the 1980s with its first literary expressions and over three decades Cuban-American culture and literature have been enhanced with regards to the US mainstream **in a piecemeal fashion**. This process has been attributed to different authors dealing with ethnic and minority cultures and literatures[8]. Throughout the 1980s[9], the decade in which Cuban-American authors and academics started to carry out sociological, history, anthropological and literary research, hybrid culture became a key term with only a passing consideration of translation issues regarding the influence of mythological conception on culture and on literary work expressing world knowledge through the **binary cultural system**, which corresponds to current Cuban culture. If we consider Cuban culture as a dynamic, **open binary system**, there are more than two systems that influence the birth and development of the Cuban-American system, which I set out in the following scheme, highlighting this aim as a **round-trip journey, from the centre to the periphery and from the periphery to the centre:**

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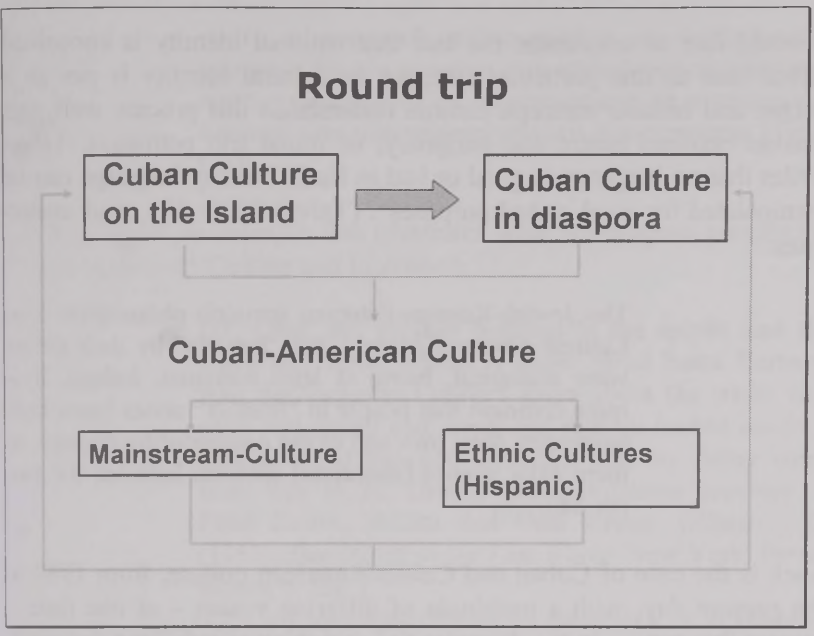
7 See, Pérez Firmat, G. 1999a and 1999b.

8 See, Rivero, E. 1998.

9 See, Pérez Firmat, G. 1987b.



This sphere accepts Cuban-American bilingualism and biculturalism as a given, which is transcended to observe it more objectively. In this respect, I have recalled the fact that:

> [...] nos encontramos cada día más ante la realidad de identidades bilingües y biculturales, cuya estructuración trascurre casi siempre de manera difícil, en un proceso de pérdidas y adquisiciones. [...] Sostengo que aunque la lengua sea factor de identidad, esta no se agota en las estructuras de una sola y única lengua, al menos cuando existe resistencia al proceso de asimilación. Es decir, cuando hay oposición consciente a la deculturación. (Bravo Utrera 2004:134).[10]

[10] It is: [...] we are increasingly faced with bilingual and bicultural identities, whose structuration develops with difficulty, within a process of losses and acquisitions. [...] We would maintain that although language is an identity factor, this identity may surpass one single language, at least when there is resistance to the process of assimilation. Thus there is conscious opposition to deculturation.

I would like to emphasize the fact that national identity is conceived rather than as one particular category as cultural identity is *per se* a deeper and broader concept. Estonia understands this process well, this tension between centre and periphery, of round trip pathways. Talvet writes that no language is good or bad in itself, but any language can be manipulated for good or bad purposes". (Talvet 2005: 37). And underlines:

> The Jewish-Russian-Estonian semiotic philosopher Yuri Lotman observed acutely that "borders" by their nature were dialogical, being at least bilingual. Indeed, it is quite common that people in "frontier" zones know both languages, their own and of the neighbouring country, as there exist intense (historical) contacts between the two (ib. 38).

Such is the case of Cuban and Cuban-American culture, from 1980 to the present day, with a multitude of differing voices – at one time – **almost** the same – in the dramatic and enriching search for a common, shared cultural identity – Cuban-American. This leads us to consider this issue bearing in mind certain basic semiotic principles (linguo-cultural ones and others within the field of translation studies) –, which we consider relevant here. Firstly, Lotman's concept of translation semiosphere and filters and Bakhtinian dialogism along with polyphony and heteroglossy which he found in every speech act. By re-defining the borders between national and cultural traits in the convergence of diasporic expressions within one single culture Lotman's semiosphere concept (1992), was, no doubts, taken on by Bhabha (1994) who referred to *in-between* (interstitial space). Semiosphere is defined as the joining of texts and language within a given cultural system; with Lotman's assistance Bhabha revitalized the idea of translatability using the **border concept**: whatever is different and comes into contact with two cultures has to be "clarified", re-signified. Lotman has pointed out that:

> Понятие семиосферы связано с определенной семиотической однородностью и индивидуальностью. Оба эти понятия (однородность и индивидуальность), как мы увидим, трудно определимы формально и зависят от системы описания, но это не отменяет их реаль-

> ности и хорошей выделяемости на интуитивном уровне. Оба эти понятия подразумевают отграниченность семиосферы от окружающего ее внесемиотического или иносемиотического пространства (1992: [13]).

Let's consider an example that illustrates what we propose concerning Cuban-American Culture and Literature:

> OT: Look, **my mother believes in the spirits and the Devil and Jesus Christ**. I know about Santa Bárbara! And the Virgin of Cobre! I know about **the white cassaba** and yucca and *arroz con pollo y lechón asado*... Machado and Maximo Gomez... and my father come from San Pedro, Oriente province, home province of Fidel Castro, Batista and **Desi Arnaz.** (Hijuelos, Ó. (1983) .*Our House in the Last World.* New York: Persea Books, p. 186.)
>
> TT: Oye, mi madre cree en los espíritus **y en el Diablo y en Jesucristo.** ¡Conozco a Santa Bárbara! ¡Y a la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre! Sé que es **la mandioca** y la yuca y el arroz con pollo y lechón asado... Machado y Máximo Gómez... Y mi padre nació en San Pedro, en la provincia de Oriente, la misma donde nacieron Fidel Castro, Batista y Desi Arnaz. (Hijuelos, Ó. (1991). *Nuestra casa en el fin de mundo.* Traducción de Jordi Mustieles. Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, p. 220.)

In the first underlined phrase, we find an odd lexical and syntactical combination for a Cuban who does not believe in Jesus Christ but rather in God. The fragment could be adapted culturally if we render it: "[...] mi madre **cree en los espíritus y en Dios y en el Diablo"**. In the second, Hijuelos, in the original version, manages to attain a nearly correct lexical term taken from the indigenous language in Cuba: **cassaba es casabe**, yucca bread from a different variety of the first inhabitants before the Spanish conquest and it remains an identity marker in the ancient Oriente province. The translator chose *tapioca*, which is not exactly *casabe* (or yucca bread), but a word for the tuber, the yucca, in South America, so he has actually repeated himself, a mistake which the author of the source text, Hijuelos, does not commit,

so the interstitial space between these two latter cultures has been taken up by a common referent, which is no surprise in intercultural communication, in Cuban culture and in recreating its space for other Spanish-speaking readers.

Lotman provides the following quote:

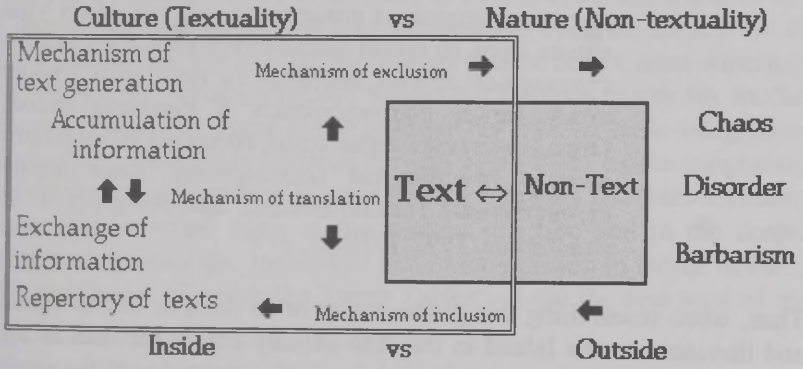
> Только творческое сознание способно вырабатывать новые мысли. А для реконструкции творческого сознания необходима модель принципиально иного рода.Представим себе два языка, L_1 и L_2, устроенные принципиально столь различным образом, что точный перевод с одного на другой представляется вообще невозможным. Предположим, что один из них будет языком с дискретными знаковыми единицами, имеющими стабильные значения, и с линейной последовательностью синтагматической организации текста, а другой будет характеризоваться недискретностью и пространственной (континуальной) организацией элементов. Соответственно и планы содержания этих языков будут построены принципиально различным образом. В случае, если нам потребуется передать текст на языке L_1 средствами языка L_2, **ни о каком точном переводе не может идти речи. В лучшем случае возникнет текст**, который в отношении к некоторому культурному контексту сможет рассматриваться как адекватный первому. (1992[35].

Words before illustrate the concept of adequate or right translations from a semiotic point of view[11].

I am recalling the fact that in the Cuban-Americans' original versions there are always **two discourses**: the Cuban-American and the Cuban, at least in terms of **two geographic spaces**: USA and Cuba. In the translation of Mustelies of *Our House in the Last World*, the Cuban discourse dilutes or evens out neighbouring cultures which are not equal, deforming them as an identity expression or remain unchallenged in the reference to Desi Arnaz; the "explicit nature" of the contextual implicature does not succeed in the reception and the entire work remains on the periphery of two systems: the Cuban and the Cuban-

[11] For a look in depth, see Lotman, 1991.

American, although it may suggest something to the English-domineering (prevailing) centre. So the filters do not situate the translation in the original cultural system, the Cuban culture in the Cuban-American one. Rather it is relegated to a general Latin limbo which **identifies it in another broader system: the generic ethnic Latin cultures**. The filter of the literary representation in Hijuelos suffers in translation because of incorrect lexical usage or presupposed knowledge which is actually not available to the receptor. Thus, some of the elements of this text, of the **translation-reading of Hijuelos in its origins** as literary narrative were marred by each text element on any plane which leads to meaning. Although the significational dimension may seem unlimited, there are, in fact, imposed limits because of the type of receptor and historic, anthropological factors, extra-literary ones which are part of the narrative semiosis, in its sense. **There is no appropriate semiotization of the periphery to centre movement**. As the Tartu School has posited **we're dealing with non-texts within the space of Cuban-ness that is presupposed in an adequate translation**. Who is the insider and who the outsider concerning Cuban-ness? Regarding this topic, I would like to remember the Tartu scheme below.



The borders of Cuban-American literature and its translations are spatial and unique because they bring two different systems into a new one, **depending on the two original spaces**. Lotman described *bilingual translation filters* and the need to find the proper code for each semiosphere, so it could take the originating space to new texts, from another culture and another space.

As Lotman's work in Tartu has referred to conscience linked to myth in culture characterization and knowledge types, in this sense myths and mythology in the Cuban cultural system and in the Cuban-American one, two diachronic and synchronically interrelated present day systems, is a fact of research. In *Myth-Name-Culture*, the academic presents the problem of myth as a phenomenon of the conscience and delves into its semiotic value, i.e. presents the problem of myth as a phenomenon of the conscious and delves into its semiotics. He finds opposing forces such as 'mythological-knowledge-historic-knowledge'; 'poetry-prose', among others and recalls:

> Мифологическому миру присуще специфическое мифологическое понимание пространства: оно представляется не в виде признакового континуума, а как совокупность отдельных объектов, носящих собственные имена. В промежутках между ними пространство как бы прерывается, не имея, следовательно, такого, с нашей точки зрения, основополагающего признака, как непрерывность. Частным следствием этого является «лоскутный» характер мифологического пространства и то, что перемещение из одного locus'a в другой может протекать вне времени [...] С другой стороны, попадая на новое место, объект может утрачивать связь со своим предшествующим состоянием и становиться другим объектом (в некоторых случаях этому может соответствовать и перемена имени). Отсюда вытекает характерная способность мифологического пространства моделировать иные, непространственные (семантические, ценностные и т. д.) отношения (1992: [63]).

Thus, when researching this phenomenon in its links to Cuban culture and literature on the Island in the 20th century and at the start of this new millennium, we can also link ideoesthetic orientation in the works of Cuban-American authors, written in English in the USA, with those Greek myths that have marked Western literature, including Cuban, and whose presence is current and crucial in post-modern and postcolonial times of migrations and movements, of cultural globalization and diversity. They are an intricate part of the Cuban cultural system's heritage on the Island and can be reinterpreted in times of exile and

borders by Cuban-American authors and of the Cuban-American cultural system, summed up as:

- an ethnic subsystem or minority for dominant English-speaking culture in the USA, and
- **a derived** system for the Cuban culture for the 20th and 21st centuries,

if we accept that the Cuban nation today is **trans-national**[12]**, diasporic, plurilingual and tending toward bilingual** (Spanish-English) due to historic imperatives and political events, results of the conversion of the democratic revolution of 1959 into a socialist system akin to the ex-Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern Block countries, almost immediately in the early 1960s.

Among the myths that could be chosen for this research paper, to apply to Cuban-American literature and its links to the Island[13], we consider Oedipus (1998): parricide and incest, assassin of the father and husband to the mother. As the story goes, Oedipus punishes himself by tearing out his eyes and traipsing off into ex-Ile [14] a path that included: **ex-Ile-return-ex-Ile=exile**. This would seem the essence movement of exile to emigrate and take as an extreme example, that of those who reconstruct their *Being* like the blind Oedipus, but with one notable peculiarity: stripped him/herself of his/her own eyes, which could be taken as a primary culture or essence, to live, in complete freedom as a Cuban-American. So we could say that, without eyes, the sockets are all the emigrant has left in exile, so to what system does Cuban American works belong? What literature? Where did Oedipus marry his mother Jocasta (Cuba) and where did he abandon her (USA)? Exile-emigration; Cuba-USA. Dichotomy between territory and nation; ex-Ile-emigration; monolinguism-bilinguism, beyond this the semiosis and inter-textuality expressed in verbal signs in the surface structure and in the deeper structure of meanings. Inquisitive and ironic allusion to Peirce in Pérez Firmat´s poem "Turning the Times Tables": /I am the sum total of my

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[12] I emphasize the implicit meaning, here and in other words, by creating hyphenated words.

[13] This is the term for geographic territory of Cuban islands, a paraphrase or *locus* of the primigenic nation.

[14] I write the word "exIlio" this way referring to the metaphoric possibilities of the sign in capital letters, **Ilion**, to establish the origin of the word and its current nature: **Ilion** and **Ithaca** are our two antithetic poles of departure and possible physical return in the Cuban individual and collective memory.

language/Charles Sanders Pierce[...] /¿En qué momento, en qué participio del mundo/ Se convierte tu suma en mi resta, Pierce?// Punished by the oracle of praise; but, at the same time, a rebirth far from Ilion and with no Jocasta; or rather, far from Ilion and with a new Jocasta, a new language distant from the previous ones:

> [...] si la literatura cubanoamericana mastica lo cubano hasta triturarlo, no por ello se traga el inglés. Algunas de estas obras están redactadas en una "lengua extraña", en un esperanto desesperado que hace difícil su incorporación a la cultura norteamericana [...].1999/2000: 134)...[15]

Transculturation and **translation** are the two constant factors that define the transformation of the exile in emigrant. The latter, physical **trans-lation** of the I and of its *Being*, the retranslation of the one to the foreign is its re-writing; implies the conquest of the stranger by the one: a new *Being* who is hybrid, who like Oedipus could exclaim that everything comes about with certainty and that we were born to those who are not our own, had relations with those with whom we should not have had them and put to death those who should not have died. As the following polyphonic dialogue demonstrates taking into account inter-textuality, if we work with myths and adapt them to the movement of physical and spiritual exiles of those condemned not of their own will but of the hand of Fate, make us to reflect on Cuban Fate:

> CREON. – All is well in its own good time.
> OEDIPUS. – You know under what conditions I will go?
> CREON. – You will tell me, and upon hearing you, I will know.
> OEDIPUS. – You are to banish me away from this land.
> CREON. – You request a quality befitting a deity.
> (Sophocles 1998)

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[15] [...] if Cuban-American literature chews up the essential Cuban element until it is shredded up, this does not mean swallowing up English. Some of these works are written in a "strange language" [...], in a sort of desperate Esperanto which hinders its incorporation into North American culture. [...]It is a heavily accented writing; the English is prejudiced by its proximity to the Spanish.

It is a painful process like that of Electra (Sophocles 1998), the daughter who must choose between the brave warrior father, the unfaithful mother and the brother Orestes, saved in exile, then exiled again of his own volition, only to return and join forces with Electra to avenge together Agamemnon's death killing their own mother and new husband. **Both are victims and murderers.** Cuban culture, gestated and ever enriched by the work of exiles, has recreated this latter myth in one of its most ingenious creators: the playwright Virgilio Piñera, author of *Electra Garrigó* (1959). The Cuban tragedy re-creates the ethic values of the Greeks and in it we find constant human development, movement, salvation or condemnation related to the exile, the fleeing to other lands: the post–1959 destination or Fate:

Agamenón. *(se acerca y se sitúa de espaldas a Clitemnestra)* **¿Quién de nosotros es el destino?**	**Agamemnon**: (approaches and stands with his back to Clytemnestra) **Who among us is fate?**
Clitemnestra. Yo	**Clytemnestra**: It ís I.
Electra. ¡Mentira!	**Electra**: That's a lie!
Agamenón. ¿Quién de nosotros es el Destino?	**Agamemnon**: **Who among us ís fate**?
Orestes. ¿Electra es el Destino?	**Orestes:** Electra is fate?
Clitemnestra. ¡Atrás, perra!	**Clytemnestra**: Get back, bitch!
Electra. ¡Perra, adelante!	**Electra:** Bitch, move forward!
Agamenón. ¡Destino, oh Destino!!	**Agamemnon: Fate oh Fate!**
Electra. ¡Sí, se acerca!	**Electra:** Yes, she is approaching.
Agamenón. ¡Destino, oh Destino!	**Agamemnon: Fate oh Fate!**
Orestes. ¿Hacia quién, Clitemnestra?	**Orestes: Toward whom, Clytemnestra**?
Clitemnestra. Hacia Electra Garrigó.	**Clytemnestra: Toward Electra Garrigó.**
Agamenón. ¡Destino, oh Destino!	**Agamemnon: Fate oh Fate!**
Orestes. ¿Soy yo el Destino acaso?	**Orestes:** Perhaps I am Fate?
Clitemnestra. ¡No, no, no eres tú el Destino!	**Clytemnestra:** No, no, you are not Fate!
Electra. **¡Sí, sí, si eres tú el destino!**	**Electra**: Yes, you are Fate.
Agamenón. ¡Destino, oh Destino!	**Agamemnon: Fate oh Fate!**
Orestes. ¿Quién me haría partir?	**Orestes: Who would get rid of me**?
Clitemnestra. ¡Nadie! No lo quiere el Destino.	**Clytemnestra: No one is not the will of Fate.**
Electra. Entonces morirás tú, Clitemnestra Plá.	**Electra:** So you will die, Clytemnestra?
Orestes. ¿Morirá Clitemnestra Plá?	**Orestes:** Clytemnestra Pla will die?

Clitemnestra. ¿Morirá Agamenón Garrigó?	**Clytemnestra**: Agamemnon Garrigó will die?
Electra. ¿Morirá Agamenón Garrigó?	**Electra**: Agamemnon Garrigó will die?
Orestes. ¿Morirá Agamenón Garrigó?	**Orestes.** Agamemnon Garrigó will die?
Clitemnestra. ¿Morirá Agamenón Garrigó?	**Clytemnestra**: Agamemnon Garrigó will die?
Electra. Morirá Agamenón Garrigó.	**Electra**: Agamemnon Garrigó will die.
Agamenón. ¡Destino, oh Destino!	**Agamemnon: Fate oh Fate!** Translated by David Shea

As in Pierce, the semiosis of the chosen fragments has no limit. One sign leads to another and inter-textuality, also unlimited, mixes tragedy and myth with Cuban society in 1959, when Fate for Piñera was completely unpredictable and hostile. The myth, applied to a structure, to a new semiotics system – the Cuban Nation and the Cuban-American essence- acquires material, cosmic dimension, as Lotman has stated. Another unique feature of the Piñera tragedy is **the crossing of sign systems: tragedy in verse and then the presence of the *décima*** (ten-syllable) verse, poetic and musical composition which constitutes an important part of Cuban traditional culture; the Greek chorus of *Electra Garrigó* present their song in this tradition[16]:/**Ya una ciudad se dispone/a presenciar un ejemplo/A ver derribar el templo/en que un tirano se impone**.//No lo consienta, y corone/de Electra el triunfo la frente, No lo consienta el potente/ ánimo de tal doncella: /roca en la que se estrella/un egoísmo demente/ (Piñera 1959).

Cuban-American writers and academics, from other lands and in exIle- exile-emigration, traverse similar paths to those taken by Oedipus and Electra and this essential dichotomy runs through all the Cuban literary work written outside the Island, in Spanish and English with Cuban tones. We can relate literature and myth with identity and translation from semiotic perspectives and study the Cuban-American writers' attitude to bilingualism and biculturalism in their environment

[16] A city prepares itself / To witness an example/To see the temple crumble/In which the tyrant imposes his will.//Do not consent and crown/ Electra the triumphant/Do not grant her power/To such a maid /A rock on which /The crazed selfish one crashes//. Translated by David Shea

and values involving the relationship of their writings to Cuban culture, taken as an diasporic entity displaced from the centre and moving toward the periphery (border) undergoing displacement and recreating it esthetically by accepting cultural hybridization or rejection, resulting from the events that took place in the late 1950s in Cuba.

I have considered a series of typically Cuban works of fiction, written in English, with different varied voices within it (Bakhtinian polyphony/heteroglossy), translated into Spanish in the USA –, that take up the Cuban reality from a bilingual and bicultural perspective. Within these fiction works references to a common, acknowledged Cuban space are ideoesthetic. Such cultural references (identitary) which clearly refer to Cuba and the common, shared identity as **binary system** poses, in literature and culture, in its links to myth, to explain this ideoesthetic sustenance of the Cuban-American work of recent decades and, also, from a translation studies perspective, **a new problem which has gone largely unstudied**: the task of how to re-create these works in a Cuban Spanish without damaging the cognitive-cultural aspects and preserving in the translations that define the Cuban essence. Translation has not been studied as part of the variables that form the cultural identity as language, race, gender, shared values. Literature, culture and translation have not been linked in the study of Cuban-American literature, the Cuban-American cultural system has not been explored in efforts to explain these phenomena which relate Bakhtin and Lotman, delving into the rich crossroads of ideas which both these researchers explored, applied to the study of the Cuban-American cultural system, its literature and its translation to Cuban Spanish.

The scholar J. Talvet (2005) has proposed the concept of symbiosis – a new vision of centres ands peripheries. In the Cuban cultural historical situation, from its route from independence in 1902 and in the current situation, nation ties it into the post-modern, postcolonial world as a **transnational and plurilingual nation, with two dominant languages in its transnational cultural system**: Cuban Spanish and North American English. Thus, if we intend to bring together a central system with the derived or peripheral one, observing the phenomenon from

- the idea of a single Cuban culture, or
- the perspective of a central English-speaking system and the periphery Cuban-American one,

the possible hybrid identity of the common concepts system, we need the analytical categories cited above. In this sense, we need to take into account that, as Bakhtin posited and Lotman developed, **discourse systems give acts meaning**; and delve into the concept of text and the different text types, because the text is the space in which the ideological systems cross with linguistic system leading to **concrete social subject**. The utterance becomes communication only this way. On the other hand, the relationships contained in a text are logic and dialogic: the linguistic analysis is monologue and abstract and thus **limited**. Artistic languages present communication systems, as I have suggested.

We need to explore beyond meaning and contexts, in a path from applied communication theory to the typology of culture. And concerning translation, consider what Lvovskaya termed *receptive meaning*, that is, the interpretative meaning, the one which derives from reading and interpreting creatively the translation, a bridge between the original (author) and the reception culture (reader). And the translator, therefore, is an actor on the high wire of the cultural periphery of a system and can be able to semitiotize and open the way for a new semiosphere to create the other. As Steiner affirms: [...] signs are incrusted beyond their lexicon-grammatical definition, in the allusions and in phonetic, historic, social and idiomatic nuances. [...] To listen to the words, read them, implies, consciously or unconsciously, a search for context, to place them in an overall meaning (1998: 33).

The concepts and theories cited above concern my translation of Pérez Firmat´ poem "A Likely Story". The level of identification and detachment characterize the Cuban nature of this poem, **its Cubanness** and Cuban features within the Cuban-American Culture in the United States.

A LIKELY STORY, Gustavo Pérez Firmat, 1989
CUENTOS CHINOS, Gustavo Pérez Firmat

Digging for roots in his grandmother's yard
between Little Havana and Coral Gables
(we're speaking English today)
David found two toy soldiers, green in their prime,
one kneeling with a bazooka ,
the other on his platform-feet aiming a gun
that wasn't there.

The story is this:
I brought them from Cuba in 1960.
Some time later (not too long,
Since I gave up soldiering at 12),
I lost them in the yard.
In the 1970s, Shotzie, our dog then
(now nothing) buried them in his pen.
And today (February 1987, dog and pen long
passed
David, accompanied by his grandmother
(whose story this is), finds them while digging for
roots
between Little Havana and Coral Gables.

David encontró dos soldaditos de plomo,
(en bastante buen estado)
buscando raíces en el patio de la abuela
entre Coral Gables y Little Havana,
(el inglés es ahora la lengua materna).
El primero, de rodillas y con bazuca
y el segundo, de pie listo para disparar
(sin la pistola de siempre en estos casos).
La historia es muy sencilla:
Los traje yo de Cuba en el sesenta
Un poco después (casi enseguida
porque a los 12 años acabó mi infancia)
murieron mis soldados
(olvidados en el patio).
En los 70, Shotzie, nuestro perro
(ahora sólo un recuerdo), los enterró en
su corral.
Hoy (febrero de 1987, con el perro y el
corral, sepultados hace tanto),
David, de la mano de su abuela,
(es ella la del cuento), encontró a mis
soldados, cavando en busca de
raíces, entre
Coral Gables y La Pequeña Habana

Traducción: Sonia Bravo Utrera

The translation of this poem is, of course, **the result of my particular reading** and an effort to reveal its idiosyncratic nature and analyze the role of memories from four points of view:

- that of the lyric hero,
- that of little David,
- that of the grandmother, and,
- that of the dog Shotzie,

posited in opposition and compliment to form a lyric narrative poem, **a polyphonic, heteroglossic narrative voice**, based on Lotman's concept of cultural semiotic system and also applying Bakhtin's methodology in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act,* distinguishing at least four spheres:

- Dialogue and dialectic rhetoric: the role of the actors because of the fact that all communication is social and considering the value and role of those carrying out the dialogue.
- Dialogue between Being & Language; between the World (Reality) and Thought (World & Mind), the Given and the Created.
- Diversity of voices, participative constructions, individual role of the world interpretation and its representation or capture in discourse: Bakhtin polyphony, and
- Relation between the world as experienced **in actions and the world as represented in discourse.**

This overall meaning provides the underpinning for our analysis and translation, as discussed previously.

In my conclusions I would highlight the essential Cuban elements as identity and cultural system are far broader in scope than an island territory and more than a language, Spanish (Cuban) and other languages of the diaspora in which the Cuban cultural identity **is already expressed**. Cuban-American culture and its *desperate Esperanto* (Pérez Firmat 1999/2000:134) within *mainstream USA* which is, itself, by no means part of the *melting pot/salad bowl*, **but only a part as the dominant centre is also influenced by Cuban-ness, which "slips in" from the periphery.** Assuming the challenges of Bakhtin and Lotman's theories of languages, translatability and culture, in general, the movement from periphery to centre should take place – in this particular case – with more possible adjustment to the binary origin system: Cuban culture and its diaspora expressions.

The conversion in diaspora of the Cuban emigration after 1959 also demonstrates that translation has always been an **intercultural communicative act**. When analyze deeper the translations of works of

hybrid identity the linguistic and cultural semiotics, the acceptance in a communicative framework of text transformation, expressly directed for insertion in the receiving culture, the cognitive-cultural aspects and those which attain communicative qualities are relevant. I have analyzed where and how they have failed **in creating the Cuban space (inside-outside; text-non-text)** in translated texts with regards **to the communicative situation and the context of reception in both (the original (OT) and target text (TT).** and have tried to indicate some of the specific assumptions of Cuban-American literary work **within general translation theory and in the scope of postcolonial translation, with the aid of Bakhtin and Lotman's cultural theories. These are applicable to the enriching translation and attendant theory and for translation as part of the cultural systems**.

In addition to the experimental application of the cultural theses of the researchers cited in this paper, I have left out general translation theory considerations and those specific literary translation theories applied to Cuban-American writings. Translation is a cognitive, communicative and cultural process, and so we must consider it, firstly, within the general theory of communication **in a broad cultural framework**. This assumption harmoniously links my position with the application and development of polyphony and dialogism and Bakhtin's participative and performative thinking, his act's theory, leading us to consider Lotman´s semiosphere and understanding the theoretical and practical utility of this concept in the translator's work, thus reinforcing Bhabha's interstitial space concepts. This also takes Translation Studies as an interchange of signs and explains the way in which the encounter between cultures by means of fiction translation is carried out. It helps me to study its peculiarities within the cultural systems and to base this approach on the contributions of semiotics and communication scholars, and also insist on the possibility of tying culture, literature, myth and translation. The artistic languages are communication systems. Literature interprets and assesses reality; is a communication system and the writer and the translator are mediators and, therefore, are readers and **writers as well**. Both (the author and the translator) create their own discourse, their purpose; they interpret it and evaluate it. This social framework in Cultural and Translation Studies presupposes heteroglossy or ambiguous nature of the words (Steiner 2006) and significant versatility of language in its historic projection and nowadays, once more time and deeper, give discourse a

communicative pragmatic dimension within the field of semiotics, the theory of communication and the typology of culture.

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Andreas Divus, Ezra Pound and the Fate of Elpenor

H. K. RIIKONEN

The reception of Greek myths in world literature is closely connected with translations and adaptations. They can pave the way to other translations as well as inspire later poets to write more original poems. Taken together, the myths as known from their ancient sources, the translations and adaptations as well as later poems based on myths constitute an immense network of texts. As I will show in this essay, even a dull and forgotten translation can give new ideas to later poets.

I will start with a book entitled *Kanapea*, which is certainly one of the most peculiar among the collections of poetry which have been published in Finland in the first years of the third millennium. The collection, the subtitle of which is "Börje Oinaan runot", "The poems of Börje Oinas", was published in 2001 by Henri Broms (b. 1928) and Matti Liinamaa (b. 1928), as was indicated on the title page. The relations between Börje Oinas, B.O., who has signed the introduction "Börje Oinas – Preludi" ("Börje Oinas – A Prelude"), and the actual authors is at least as complicated as the relations between E.P., Ezra Pound and the title person in Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. The poems of the *Kanapea* were written much earlier, probably at the beginning of the 1950s, when the authors were young students. At the time of the publication of *Kanapea* they were retired librarians, having been outstanding in their profession. As was stated in the introduction "Börje Oinas – Preludi", the book was originally inspired by a joke, a Swedish book entitled *Camera Obscura*, which was compiled by two Swedish students of technology who wanted to prove that anybody can write modernistic poetry (see Oinas 2001: 5).

Along with original poems, the collection included some translations from the works of John Milton and Ezra Pound. In many respects the translations were as idiosyncratic as those of Ezra Pound. The translators had chosen some minor poems by Pound, but there was also

one longer poem entitled "Odysseus". After the title some information was given in brackets: "(kreikasta latinaan A. Divus, latinasta englantiin E. Pound)" ("from Greek to Latin by A. Divus, from Latin to English by E. Pound"). The original Homeric text was a passage from the beginning of the eleventh song of the *Odyssey*, the so-called *nekuia*, where Ulysses tells about his visit to Hades. Börje Oinas (i.e. Broms and Liinamaa) had obviously translated the text which Pound had included in his essay "Translators of Greek", where Pound discusses Andreas Divus's translation of the *Odyssey*.

The Latin version by Andreas Divus, Ezra Pound's English version which was based on Divus's translation, two of Pound's Cantos (the last poem in *Three Cantos* and Canto I) based on the poet's own translation and Oinas's Finnish translation of Pound's version make up an interesting chain of translations. In this essay I will concentrate on these versions and the way in which Homeric material is used in modern poetry.

Ezra Pound's study "Translators of Greek" was written in about 1918 and published in *Instigations* in 1920. Nowadays it is mainly known through Pound's collection of essays, *Make it New*, published in 1935. "Translators of Greek" includes a section devoted to Andreas Divus; the section was originally published in *The Egoist* V:8–9, September and October 1918 (See Pound 1975: 357, n. 1; Bush 1976: 291–300). In his essay Pound tells that "in the year of grace 1906, 1908, or 1910" he had in Paris found a Latin version of the *Odyssey* by Andreas Divus Justinopolitanus (Pound 1935: 137). Divus's translation was originally published in Venice in 1537 and in the following year reprinted in Paris in the printing house of Christian Wechelius (the Wechelius family of printers was very influential in the 16th century). While the volume, which was in Pound's possession, includes the mock-epic *Batrachomyomachia* in Aldus Manutius's (1449–1515) translation, it is probable that Wechelius was in contact with Aldus in Venice (Pound 1935: 144, cf. Terrell 1980, 1). Ezra Pound refers to the Paris edition. The volume also included a Latin translation of the Homeric Hymns (*Hymni Deorum*) by a less known humanist, Georgius Dartona from Crete.

Andreas Divus's translation was an awkward interlinear word by word version.[1] Pound refers to the name of the translator, asking who

[1] Divus's translation of Homer was preceded by some other Humanist translations: Leonzio Pilato translated Homer in Florence in the 1360s, Lorenzo Valla's Latin prose translation of the *Iliad* was published in 1474, the *Odyssey*

might be behind that name. He reminds us that Jacopo Sannazaro had called himself Sanctus Nazarenus and that the children of James Joyce knew Pound himself by the name Signore Sterlina (Pound 1935: 137; cf. Pound 1967: 147–148).[2] Pound does not, however, engage himself in investigating the identity of Andreas Divus, although he mentions that the eponym Justinopolitanus refers to Justinopolis, which can be identified as Capodistria (Pound 1935: 138), the Italian name of a town (Koper) in present-day Slovenia.

However, we have to stop for a moment to consider Andreas Divus as a humanist. In a way it is somehow ironical, although typical of Pound's idiosyncracies as a translator, that he has paid attention to Andreas Divus and taken Divus's translation as his starting point for his own version of a passage of the eleventh song of the *Odyssey*. In the history of classical philology Andreas Divus has remained an obscure figure,[3] who became notorious for the bad quality of and mistakes in his translations. His only merit is that he made the first complete translation of the comedies of Aristophanes; his translations of some of the comedies were for a long time the only ones available. Even his translation of Homer was in long-standing use, although its weaknesses were obvious. Méric Casaubonus (1599–1671), the son of the famous classical scholar Isaac Casaubonus (1559–1614), wrote about the edition of Homer's epics by Cornelius Schrevelius (1656) and criticized the translation of Andreas Divus, which was included as an appendix in Schrevelius's edition (See Finsler 1912: 138).

It is also an interesting coincidence that Divus's successor as a translator of Aristophanic comedies was Florent Chrestien (Quintus Septimius Florens Christianus, 1541–1596), to whom Pound paid homage by translating a sequence of poems from the *Greek Anthology* (Pound 1990: 161–162; cf. Riikonen 2008).

Although Pound has some objections to Divus's translation, he still appreciates some of its qualities. According to Pound, Divus's Latin is

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was published in Raphael Volterra's prose translation in 1487 and in Gregorius Maxillus's translation in 1510; see Hermans s.a.; Wilson 1992: 2–4, 69.

[2] Ital. sterlina = pound. Pound 1935: 137–138 also says: "/…/ the phonetic translation of my name into the Japanese tongue is so indecorous that I am seriously advised not to use it, lest it do me harm in Nippon. (Rendered back *ad verbum* into our maternal speech it gives for its meaning, "This picture of a phallus costs ten yen /…/")."

[3] The dates of the birth and death of Andreas Divus are not known to me.

not without a certain charm: "it is /.../ singable, there are constant suggestions of the poetic motion; it is very simple Latin, after all, and a crib of this sort may make just the difference of permitting a man to read fast enough to get the swing and mood of the subject, instead of losing both in a dictionary" (Pound 1935: 143–144). Pound also makes some comparisons between Andreas Divus and his two successors as interpreters of Homer, Samuel Clark (1675–1729) and Johann August Ernesti (1707–1781): "For all the fuss about Divus' errors of elegance Samuelis Clarkius and Jo. Augustus Ernestus do not seem to have gone him much better – with two hundred years extra Hellenic scholarship at their disposal" (Ib. 144).

In his essay "Translators of Greek" Pound quotes the 105 first lines from the eleventh song of the *Odyssey* in Andreas Divus's Latin translation and then gives his own English rendering from the Latin translation. In the Swedish translation of Pound's essay, the English version is replaced by Lars Forssell's Swedish translation of Canto I, originally published in 1959 (See Pound 1975: 377–379).

Pound mentions in his essay that his translation was interpolated in the last poem of his sequence *Three Cantos* (Pound 1935: 141; cf. Albright 1999: 62–63; Bush 1976: 53–141 Moody 2007: 312–315, 343–344), but in "A Draft of XXX Cantos" it comprises the main part of the first poem. In the last poem of *Three Cantos* there is also a reference to Andreas Divus and the other texts included in the volume which Pound had bought in Paris. Pound also mentions the printing house and the year of publication in a very peculiar way:

> Lie quiet, Divus.
> In Officina Wechli, Paris,
> M.D.three X's, Eight, with Aldus on the Frogs
> And a certain Cretan's
> *Hymni Deorum*:
> (This thin clear Tuscan stuff Gives way before the florid mellow phrase.)[4]

The text then continues with a Latin quotation from Dartona's translation of the hymn to Venus. In Canto I the reference to Divus is somewhat shorter: "Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus, / In officina

[4] The form "Wechli" is probably a misprint. In Canto I there is the right form "Wecheli".

Wecheli, / 1538, out of Homer" (Pound 1993, 5). The first Canto concludes with the phrase "Bearing the golden bough of Argicida", which is a mistranslation of Dartona's "habens auream virgam Argicida" (Argicida who has the golden bough) (Terrell 1980: 3–4).

Piero Boitani, who has investigated the Ulysses theme, has appropriately characterized Pound's version as "a (subtly perverse) English translation, filtered through the sixteenth-century Latin of Andreas Divus and modelled on the rhythm of a twentieth century version of the old English poem *The Seafarer*" (Boitani 1994: 17). Boitani also reminds us that *The Cantos*, the most ambitious work of Pound and "the most abstruse, exciting, and magmatic 'epic' poem of our century [i.e. the 20th century]", begins with a journey to Hades.(Ib. 17, cf. 141–142) Gilbert Highet, like many scholars after him, has connected *The Cantos* to Dante and the first Canto to Inferno. Highet finds Pound's Canto I very difficult, which was the result of the use of the Latin version by Andreas Divus. According to Highet, "/.../ the story is obscured by a double layer of mistakes," but Highet also adds that Pound's eloquence anyway makes the first Canto readable (Highet 1965: 698), a view which from the present perspective seems to underestimate Pound's multifaceted way of rewriting the story of Ulysses.

I am not going to quote or discuss *in toto* the Latin version by Andreas Divus or Pound's English version. Nor am I going to investigate Pound's many-sided references to Ulysses and their background in *The Cantos* (see e.g. Bush 1976: 125–134, Sullivan 1969: 215–220, Terrell 1980, passim); instead I will concentrate on the episode where the fate of Elpenor, one of Ulysses' men, is told. The unlucky fate of Elpenor has fascinated several modern authors, beginning from James Joyce who in the Hades episode of his *Ulysses* describes the funeral of Paddy Dignam, the modern equivalent to Elpenor. Jean Giraudoux has written a parodistic novel called *Elpenor* (1919/1926), and the Swedish (originally Finland-Swedish) writer Willy Kyrklund's works include a very eccentric epic, also entitled *Elpënor* (1986).[5] As pointed out by David Ricks (2007: 238–242), the theme of Elpenor has proved prolific in describing and discussing the tragic events in the 20th century history of Greece. Here I have to leave

[5] Willy Kyrklund's *Elpenor* is partly written in prose, partly in metre. It also includes two studies, one on the one-eyedness of the Cyclopes. The other one thoughts on translating the dactylic hexameter into Swedish.

these works aside and to concentrate on Homer, Andreas Divus, Ezra Pound and Börje Oinas.

The accidental death of Elpenor is told by Ulysses in the tenth song of the *Odyssey* (vv. 552–560). Elpenor was the youngest of Ulysses' men, neither very brave nor very clever. Having drunk too much wine, he wanted to sleep on the roof of Circe's house. The noises of other men woke him up, but forgetting that he should use the ladders, he fell down and lost his life. Later on, in the eleventh song, Ulysses, after having arrived to Hades, encounters the ghost of Elpenor (vv. 51–83); this episode is referred to in Pound's translation which then became Canto I. Elpenor is also mentioned in Canto XX, which includes Homeric material. In the *Odyssey*, Elpenor is again mentioned in the twelfth song (vv. 8–15) where Ulysses briefly tells about Elpenor's funeral ceremony.

In Andreas Divus's translation Ulysses' account of his encounter with Elpenor in Hades runs as follows:

> Prima autem anima Elpenoris venit socii:
> Nondum enim sepultus erat sub terra lata,
> Corpus enim in domo Circes reliquimus nos
> Infletum et insepultum, quoniam labor alius urgebat:
> Hunc quidem ego lachrymatus sum videns, misertusque
> sum animo,
>
> Et ipsum clamando verba velocia allocutus sum:
> Elpenor, quomodo venisti sub caliginem obscuram:
> Praevenisti pedes existens quam ego in navi nigra?
> Sic dixi: hic autem mihi lugens respondit verbo:
> Nobilis Laertiade, prudens Ulysse,
> Nocuit mihi dei fatum malum, et multum vinum:
> Circes autem in domo dormiens, non animadverti
> Me retrogradum descendere eundo per scalam longam,
> Sed contra murum cecidi: ast autem mihi cervix
> Nervorum fracta est, anima autem in infernum descendit:
> Nunc autem his qui venturi sunt postea precor non
> praesentibus

Per uxorem et patrem, qui edicavit parvum existentem,
Telemachumque quem solum in domibus reliquisti.
Scio enim quod hinc iens domo ex inferni
Insulam in Aeneam impellens benefabricatam navim:
Tunc te postea Rex iubeo recordari mei
Ne me infletum, insepultum, abiens retro, relinquas
Separatus, ne deorum ira fiam
Sed me combure cum armis quaecunque mihi sunt,
Sepulchrumque mihi accumula cani in litore maris,
Viri infelicis, et cuius apud posteros fama sit:
Haecque mihi perfice, figeque in sepulchro remum,
Quo et vivus remigabam existens cum meis sociis.
(Pound 1935: 139–140)

Pound's translation, or adaptation, runs as follows:

But first Elpenor came, our friend Elpenor,
Unburied, cast on the wide earth,
Limbs that we left in the house of Circe,
Unwept, unwrapped in sepulchre, since toils urged
other.

Pitiful spirit, and I cried in hurried speech:
'Elpenor, how art thou come to this dark coast?
Cam'st thou a-foot, outstripping seamen?'
And he in heavy speech:
'Ill fate and abundant wine! I slept in Circe's
ingle,
Going down the long ladder unguarded, I fell against
the buttress,
Shattered the nape-nerve, the soul sought Avernus.
But thou, O King, I bid remember me, unwept,
unburied,

Heap up mine arms, be tomb by sea-board, and
inscribed:
"A man of no fortune and with a name to come".
And set my oar up, that I swung 'mid fellows.
(Pound 1935: 142–143)

Oinas's Finnish version from Pound's translation is as follows:

> Mutta Elpenor tuli ensin, ystävä Elpenor
> jäsenet jotka jätettiin Kirken taloon,
> hautaamaton, heitetty paljaalle maalle
> pyyhkimättömänä, arkuttomana, koska työt
> vaativat muuta.
> Säälittävä henki, ja huusin nopealla äänellä
> Elpenor miten tällä pimeällä rannikolla?
> Jalkaisin? Nopeammin merimiehiä.
> Puhuen raskaasti vastasi:
> Kova onni ja paljo viini. Nukuin Kirken takan edessä
> mennen alas pitkiä tikkaita varomatta
> liukastuin muuria vastaan
> murskasin napahermon, sielu valui Avernukselle.
> Mutta sinä kuningas, sinua pyydän muistamaan
> itkemätöntä ja hautaamatonta
> läjää aseeni, hautakivi meren rannalle ja kirjoitus:
> Mies ilman onnea ja nimellä joka on tuleva,
> pystytä airo jota työnsin toverien mukana
>
> (Broms & Liinamaa 2001: 74)

There are some common features in Pound's and Oinas's versions if we compare them with the text of Andreas Divus. Both Pound and Börje Oinas have left out Elpenor's apostrophe to Ulysses, "Nobilis Laertiade, prudens Ulysse", making the text sound more everyday. The Homeric phrase "psykhē Elpēnoros /…/ hetairou", which Andreas Divus translates as "anima Elpenoris /…/ socii", is in Pound "Elpenor, our friend Elpenor", which Oinas translates in a simple way as "Elpenor /…/ ystävä Elpenor" (Elpenor /…/ friend Elpenor). Divus's "socius" (companion), which would be "amicus" in Latin, is replaced by "friend" (Finn. ystävä). The common phrase "epea pteroenta" "("winged words"; Andreas Divus: "verba velocia") is replaced by Pound with "in hurried speech". Very interesting is also the Homeric phrase "psykhē d' Aidosde katēlthe", which Andreas Divus had translated into "anima autem in infernum descendit". Pound (and Börje Oinas), for his part, talks about Avernus, which reminds us rather of Virgil ("facilis descensus Averni", *Aeneid* VI, 126) than of Homer, thus adding another layer to the traditions in Canto I.

If we then compare Oinas's translation with that of Ezra Pound, it is easy to notice that the inverted commas have been left out. The grave inscription which Elpenor asks for himself, "A man of no fortune and with a name to come", and which in Pound's version is in italics, is in Oinas' version in the same style as the text in general. On the other hand, in Oinas's version there are no such old forms as "thou art". We can also mention that the phrase "Kirken takan edessä" ("in front of the fireplace of Circe") is somewhat anachronistic as compared to Pound's phrase "in Circe's ingle" (cf. Terrell 1980: 2). In the Homeric original or in Divus' Latin translation there is no talk about fireplaces or ingles. Homer only says: "In the house of Circe" ("Kirkēs d'en megarō"), while Andreas Divus says: "Circes ... in domo", the house being "megaron" in Greek and "domus" in Latin.

In a way Oinas's version is more modernistic than that of Pound. We can also say that the plain prose used in Andreas Divus's translation inspired Ezra Pound to free himself from normal poetic language, the use of any specific metre and verbal accuracy. Börje Oinas, for his part, went even further in this direction.

In the *nekuia* Ulysses wanted first to raise up Tiresias' ghost and to hear what he had to say; instead of Tiresias it was Elpenor who came first. The idea of raising up ghosts is in itself very important here. In a way it reflects Pound's poetic method. This is emphasized by Daniel Albright, who describes Pound's method as follows: "[in Canto I] Pound liked to conjure up some secondary conjuror, such as Andreas Divus, to do the work of conjuring in his stead: indeed, Pound like best of all a sort of infinite regression of conjurors, according to which Tiresias's ghost is raised up by Odysseus, and Odysseus is raised up by Divus, and Divus is raised up by Pound" (Albright 1999: 68). We can continue Albright's series and say that Ezra Pound, for his part, is raised up by Börje Oinas, Lars Forssell and his other translators. And every time, all these "ghosts" have undergone minor or major changes; to use Ezra Pound's term, they all have slightly different masks.

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History, Myths and Recycling Cultures and K. Abdulla's *Uncompleted Manuscript*

RAHILYA GHEYBULLAYEVA

Introduction

The focus of this article will be on history in the context of the old and renewal. The main issue with new historical reality lies in the border between truth and fiction. As an example of this issue, I will be examining *The Book of My Grandfather Gorgud* and its interpretations in modern literature, the depiction of historical facts within the context of deconstruction, with particular references to Post-Soviet Azerbaijani literature and with some comparative lines from other literatures.

For this I will apply the interpretation of history throughout, comparing *Wild Swans*, a novel by Jung Chang and the fiction of Aga Muhammad Shah Gadgar, L. Feuchtwanger's *The Spanish Ballad,* with a special focus on Kamal Abdulla's novel, *The Uncompleted Manuscript* (Kamal Abdulla, 2004).

Abdulla's novel, *The Uncompleted Manuscript*, offers a modern interpretation of one of the storylines from this epic, deconstructing it into a history of his nation through the prism of the epic, art, and literary fiction. The novel throws into question the nature of history as either science or "reality," pointing to the gray areas between truths and fiction. This paper will discuss the dichotomy between truth and fiction within history in a period of transition during which literature as history became a kind of historical form in itself as well as a form of cultural expression. Three primary issues will be discussed:

– Where are the margins between reality and opportunity, between historical truth and art/fiction?

- Is it enough facts in history as a science becoming habitual, why stereotyped, which from time to time called in suspicion?
- What is history? Fact or its perception? How does time express and re-contextualize history?

Maintenance

The source for the text of *The Uncompleted Manuscript* became the epic *The Book of My Grandfather Gorgud* and the history of Shah Ismail Khatai, which offered a new approach to stable facts and is replete with historical and literary deconstruction. This novel distinguishes itself with its unusual interpretation of history through literature. The essence of the novel calls for two research objectives: to examine truth and fiction with regard to the question of History in an old and new context, and to examine the artistic peculiarities of the novel.

The author's appraisal or level in the novel

Abdulla repeatedly came back to this epic as a source of Oguzs' history in which he finds and carefully investigates parallels with the Greek *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. His research comes through in his work, *Latent Grandfather Gorgud*, which also became the predecessor of the novel *The Uncompleted Manuscript*, which continued this interest in a completely new direction. The parallels in plot lines between the epic in its original interpretation and the original history represent a unity. As far as history is concerned: does it matter if the facts come from the epic or from another source? To give his novel a sense of realism, or a grounding in history, the author starts with a supposed story of an unexpected discovery of a manuscript at the Manuscript Fund of the Academy, which describes the history of the Gyandga earthquakes. He claims this to be an entirely real fact, and submits this as his foreword to the novel.

The novel consists of *three forewords and an epilogue*, which can be considered as the author's commentary, and the main part with two independent plot lines. If the author's opinions are difficult to discern in the main text, the author's estimation is precisely designated in two forewords. They represent an interpretation of the narration's compo-

sition, with a bent towards scholarly research. The third foreword is only artistic fantasy.

Thus, it is possible to define the text as being composed as a "framed novel," consisting of five parts of uneven length. This composition is traditional for old Eastern art, and not only in its literature[1]. It is possible to suppose that the author purposefully chose the framed narration, but also the pentalateral composition, is most likely a coincidence.

In the foreword, the author remarks that the unknown, incomplete manuscript includes details about the Gandzha earthquake. Perhaps, these details describe the marauding of Georgian military forces in Gandzha after the earthquakes. The reader then further learns that the earthquake itself may not have any relation to the content of the text – only that the first unfinished sentence makes reference to this earthquake. "But why the situation changed?" (Abdulla 2004: 6), inquires the author, trying to clarify his intentions. This also ensures that the reader will not lose his/her bearings in crossing the different lines of the text, and allows the writer to indirectly admit his own doubts concerning this moment.

The third foreword is like a recognition/justification of what has urged him to publish this manuscript about the known facts in an unexpected foreshortened form.

The second comment in the foreword emphasizes the single sense of two inscriptions that appeal to God: the hardly noticeable Muslim (Arabian) and clear Christian letters in the palace al-Gazer in Seville. It is a hint that the two independent plot lines of the novel are actually the same; it is first and foremost about the capability to love, hate, and to be faithful or perfidious, to suffer and be compassionate without depending on social status. In short, it is about the life of people in Oguzs society (ib. 17).

The main narration in the novel begins with the first plot line, which eventually dominates. It is given in the first person; the storyteller is

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[1] The same framed composition is in the eastern *epic* «One thousand and One Nights»; five framed Muslim *carpets*; famous literary works *consisted of five parts* in the East as did the ancient Indian epics '"Panchatatra", «Khamse». See researches related to framed composition in literary criticism, and also the fundamental book on this issue by V. I. Braginsky «Проблемы типологии средневековых литератур Востока [очерки культурологического изучения литературы». – М.: Наука, 1991. (in Russian).

Ashug Ozan, similar to the storyteller Grandfather Gorgud in the epic. He appears both as narrator and chronicler and, certainly, as a wise man.

It is not random to include the second plot line related with historical period of the 16th century Safawid ruler Shah Ismail Khatai. Being the founder of powerful state of Safawids, he was a descendant of Trapezund-Bezant rulers and grandson of the Azerbaijani ruler Ak-Koyunlu. The power of this state extended not only to Iran, but also to Transcaucasus and Iraq. He was a poet, writing in Azerbaijani, sharing his work with the elite that gathered at his court, organized a library in Tabriz, where his best specialists – manuscript makers – worked.

From another perspective, his poetry – as well as the poetry of his predecessors – was spread by the wandering ashugs and dervishes who propagated his ideas to Shies and Kizilbashes. There are also his own manuscripts, such as his *Divan*, kept in Tashkent and rewritten at the court of his son Shah Tahmasib by the famous calligrapher Mahmud Nishapuri.

Proportions of historical truth and art fiction in a literary text

The Uncompleted Manuscript crystallized out of the tradition of combining the epic with the historical plot. While the epic has been examined above, the historical plot came from the history of the Azerbaijani governors Safawids of Iran in the 16th century. The unexpected interpretation of both of these lines is also discussed in the outline of the novel.

Abdulla uses one plot and images from *The Book of My Grandfather Gorgud*, completely reinterpreting them by rearranging accents in the appraisal and the acts of the main heroes of the epic. He seems to conjecture, as such, the possibility of seeing the facts in another context or from a different perspective. For example, he questions whether or not Beyrek, one of the main heroes of the epic, should be thought of in a positive light, as has been the case through centuries. He also wonders, as in the famous refrain from the novel *The Life of Klim Samgyn* by M. Gorky "Was there a boy or not?" («А был ли мальчик?»). He also **questions if all of the events occurred as they were depicted** in the epic, or if these were subjective descriptions of one narrator/chronicler – in this case, narrator and wise man –

Grandfather Gorgud. Many wise men or chroniclers leave behind stories of unreal events, but what served as the impetus – his own reasons or the edicts of the main Khan of the Oguzs, Bayandur-khan?

First *literary-historical deconstruction concerns* the *reinterpretation of one of the idols* – heroes of Oguzs tribes. In an example of his own peoples' history, Abdulla raises the above mentioned question. The ***next question*** arises from the first point: where is the border between reality and opportunity? Is there any proportion between historical truth and artistic fiction? As was noted by Tofig Hajiyev (Hacıyev 2004), an attentive reading of the epic leads one to wonder: **why has Gazan-khan, in going hunting, left his children and women defenceless, or in a contemporary sense, without men?** This moment from the epic became the basis of a plot for a new literary text.

There are two possible answers. On the one hand, women in Turkic tribes were capable quite independently of guarding themselves and doing battle. There are a lot of examples in the epics and in the creativity of ancient Turkic authors that confirms this cultural tradition. For example, both Seljan Khatun and Banu-Chichek are able to demonstrate fighting valour with their beloveds, enemies, sometimes even surpassing the men. Another example is Burla Khatun and her forty female friends, who, taken into captivity, find a way to avoid the shame.

The novel continues the tradition of female military valour and *deconstructs (a second deconstruction) tradition of the faithful woman* in half tones (in its depiction of the attitude of Banu-Chichek and Burla khatun), drawing carefully on into the novel the non-standard image of the mother and the prostitute woman Fatma, the only one in all of Oguzs society. Following the sage council of Grandfather Gorgud, Fatma cheats, twisting around her finger all the beys (khans) for her son's to avert her son's death sentence.

On the other hand, in Central Asian tribes, in particular the Mongol-Tatar tribes, there exists the custom of wives and children following the cavalry in bullock carts during military campaigns (Aytmatov 1992). This tradition evolved as a result of their mode of life. Namely, enemy camps revenged each other at this time by exterminating women and children that were left unprotected. In one such incursion, the young Chingiz Khan's wife Borte was kidnapped. Afterwards, he managed to mollify the internecine strife. This gradually eradicated the tradition of dragging the families of warriors along on campaigns. Most likely, the

previous historical period of leaving family coincides with the hunting of Gazan-Khan, who left his tribe alone without any man for a guardian; that is, this hunt became the basis for one of the stories of the epic and is mentioned in Abdulla's novel.

The ***third question*** in this context of dichotomy of truth and artifact is: **what was necessary in juggling the facts in the chronicle or the epic**? The outline of the novel *The Uncompleted Manuscript* is based on the twelfth legend of the epos, which narrates the conflicts between Oguzs beys. This theme is, to a certain degree, conformable with the present times **and** with a trend to rewrite history.

The *theme of the split in society* allows the author to analyze reasons for the conflicts, to conjecture and reinterpret stereotyped actions and assess the epic heroes accordingly, and to suppose the existence of unknown variants of the epic's manuscript. Proceeding from this purpose, the author has created his own layer of events, involving elements of other fabulous tales of the epic with common heroes like Salour Gazan, Aruz, Tepegyoz, and Beyrek. In the novel, unlike in the epic, they are closely bound in a single situation, concentrated at some kind of **court**. Deconstruction requires subjective moments, as *who orders the chronicling* (it is known that in the Middle Ages, the famous historical epopee *Shahname* by Firdousi was written at the request of the Shah, as traditionally occurred in the East). It is also important to note that this court assumes very little in revealing the true culprit, thus leading to the right target for punishment, rather than a victim to put an end to the conflicts in Oguzs society.

Two histories are alloyed to amplify the theme of invariants of historical truth by chroniclers, narrators, etc. Parallel plot lines from the history of the same ethnos enter into the outline of novel, again with the central situational court[2]. This is not the chronicle as offered in the epic, but a later historical fact coming from the Iranian Safawid dynasty and ethic Azerbaijani that are successors of the Oguzs tribes. The symbiosis of heroes from the epos and historical heroes (Bayandur khan and his environment; Shah Ismail Khatai and his environment; real facts and fiction, conjecture; an interweaving of kindness and evil; lies and the

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[2] Literary chronotop in this novel differs from *the court* as philosophy category both in spatial and temporal relations. Parallels in function of court in both of plot lines influenced to further reception of historical fact (the first line) and even on turn of history (the second line), in this way changing into philosophical category.

truth; real culprits and the desirable object of punishment) all penetrate various parts of the novel and fuse in one question: do these things get written down in the epic, chronicle, or other sources of history as something besides the historical "snapshot" to satisfy someone?

The ***fourth question*** suggested by the novel **is whether there were inaccuracies or discrepancies in history as science.** The juggling of recent historic facts by *being later enmity people* at the end of the 20th century created an original "pseudo science." In the story of a Byzantine princess there is a moment when the monk Maxim the Greek has been invited by Vasiliy III, grandson of Sofia, to translate the *Explanatory Psalter* from Greek in 1516. Maxim had found variant readings of this text. These different interpretations were also already widespread in Russia. To avoid required changes of inexact data, the Moscow clergy decided to imprison the monk. (Разгадана тайна библиотеки Ивана Грозного 2006). The search for Liberia became the theme for the fictional works by Glebe Alekseev (*Underground Moscow*), Boris Akunin (*Altyn-Tolobas*), Sergey Alekseev (*Treasures of Walkiria: Standing at the Sun*) in the 20th century.

Thus, a historical chronicle, as well as literary fiction, does not exclude any fiction. The functions of artistic fiction distinguish it from literary creativity in the annals of history. The 19th century Azerbaijani writer A. Haqverdiyev used archival materials for writing his drama *Aga Muhammed Shah Gadjar*. These documents describe the governor, another Azerbaijani dynasty's ruler of Iran, in a more positive light. The author, however, emphasizes his malicious, extortionate features, describing him as someone twho takes pleasure in war's constant attributes (death and cruelty) and enjoys the burning of cities, etc.

N. Narimanov also uses historical episodes in his drama *Nadir Shah*; unlike Hagverdiyev, though, he purposely gives a positive image of the governor.

Nizami too, in his famous *Khamse*, depicted Alexander the Great, who conquered half of the world, as someone who learned to be a fair governor as the ruler of Barda. In addition, Nushaba is not only governor, she is woman, and *Khamse* corresponds to Nizami's ideals on both the fair governor and the respectful attitude to woman.

Fiction or nonfiction

The Uncompleted Manuscript once more makes the point that if history is a chronicle of events, fiction is an aspect of history *through concrete destinies, peripetias unavoidable neither for tsar, for folk*. Concerning the first, the literary genre obtains the status of historical, while the second variant is literature that has corresponding term "fiction" in Western literary criticism. Fiction[3] is full of narratives taken from history: of France depicted by A. Dumas and M. Druon; the history of Egypt as described by B. Prus, and Maria Stuart's tragic story by S. Zweig, to *Gadzhar* by A. Hagverdiyev, S. Vurgun, and Y. Samed-oglu, and plots from rather recent history involving, for example, leaders of the Soviet Union as portrayed by T. Abuladze, M. Zakharov (cinema and theatre), A. Rybakov, and A. Solzhenitsin. Where are borders between truth and fiction in these novels, as well as in the books from series like *Life of Celebrities*, *Napoleon* by Tarle, or *Marie Curie* by Eva Curie?

In this context, Abdulla's novel can be seen as "fiction." On the one hand, the heroes and events in the work are from history (i.e. as nonfiction). However, though the events are based on well-known epics and historical facts, they are invented and changed to the point of unexpectedness, though they are still quite probable, which makes a strong case for the novel's classification as fiction. It would be interesting to know how a novel of this genre would be defined in Western criticism.

This question is not rhetorical, as it takes into account, for example, that the trilogy by British-Chinese author Jung Chang *Wild Swans*, according to Western measures, is attributed as nonfiction, or, speaking in Soviet theory terms, documentation. In examining three generations of life experience as historical background, the novel describes a period previous to the Cultural Revolution in China, the period of Mao Zedong's power, and the historical moment following his death. The novel is written from positions of the standard modern assessment of known historic facts and differs from our habitual perception of literary

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[3] Literary work suppose *fiction* in some degree, but the western literary theory do not count works on historical facts as fiction (nonfiction), unlike Soviet and Post-Soviet Theory of literature where *fiction* means not only false, but also depiction.

fiction, according to which we would consider the work as fiction written in the style of the historical novel, and not as documentation.

Here arises the ***fifth question*: are there enough facts in history becoming habitual, so stereotyped, which underwent changes from time to time**? What can we tell about Spartacus, the leader of slaves' revolt in Rome in 70 BC? A new version about him has appeared in the book *Spartacus – The Myth and The Man*, by British historian M. J. Trow. He does not call into question his abilities as a brilliant commander, but only reveals unknown facts of his biography.

Referring to Plutarch, Trow writes that Spartacus applied severe methods of psychological warfare against his rivals' army, exposing at the front of the fighting lines a crucified captive before battle; hundred of executed were on Spartacus' conscience. Having been born in a free family in Thrace, he hated Romans. At first he was in the Roman army. Then deserting, Spartacus was forced into slavery. He stirred up mutiny with gladiators, using in his army the German tribes. From what is known about Spartacus, his skill as a military leader is undeniable. How, then, is it possible to apprehend a new deconstructed assessment, one that is not even widespread, found in R. Giovagnoli's novel-fiction *Spartacus*? (Рафаэлло Джованьоли 1985) Is it faithful to historical fact or is it fiction? What is a source of knowledge in this case: chronicle or literary text? Where is the border between truth and fantasy accepted as stereotype?

One more version on related history has appeared according to Greek anthropologist Theodore Pissios. In his opinion, "regardless of accepted thought, ancient Spartans did not kill" weak and unhealthy kids…», «this is not only myth, created by Athenians for demonstration of cruelty and inhumanity of their enemies the Spartans» (История: кого убивали спартанцы? 2007) .

Closer to today's history: the appraisal of communist leaders from Lenin, founder of the USSR to its last ruler Gorbachev – as well as Stalin, Brezhnev, and Mao Zedong – has changed in with the collapses of the Soviet Union and ideological values. Interestingly, all of them were exposed to revision posthumously, excluding Gorbachev. The alteration of political values deeply influenced culture and literature. As a matter of fact, Jung Chang's novel *Wild Swans* (Jung Chang 1993) is a perfect demonstration of this deconstruction of perception of recent history, when Mao Zedong was in favor or later how this interpretation was deconstructed.

The main difference between Chung's novel and Abdulla's is that the former describes known and relatively factual elements of recent history in new interpretation, common for this period of writing (1993), while the latter deals with ancient history and changes facts to question their veracity, thereby creating a new, unexpected interpretation that is very uncommon for that period of time (2004).

An example of an intended breach of truth is shown in *The Aeneid* by Virgil, written between 29–19 BC and devoted to the Troyan hero Aeneas. He moves to Italy with the remains of his defeated people. Chronology in *The Aeneid* is inexact; along with fallen Troy, there is not an exact chronology. The poem is not historical at its core and glorifies the Juliuan dynasty, which descended from Aeneas' son Julius.

In this relation arises yet another question: are there any guarantees as to whether or not there were any aims to breach this historic truth by the person who ordered this "truth's" chronicling, which is now considered a source of history?

When it concerns recent history, this is not so painful. It is different with ancient history. Probably, this detail – deconstruction of ancient history caused a number of discussions both pro and con for Abdulla's novel. The main subject of discussion was not the artistic features of the novel, as usually occurs with the advent of new literary work, but the unexpected change in its perception of accepted history. At once two historic facts are within the framework of one novel, combined as parallel lines and crossed from time to time in the semantic space of the court.

It seems that the author understands the weight of responsibility for such submission of historical material and thus provides the novel with three forewords and one epilogue, which appear quite real. It is possible that the reader quite easily accepts his claims of a new, uncompleted manuscript as real. Why would it not be possible to suppose that a document or documents – in which all heroes existed in the same historical events, but in opposite functions, and were passed over in silence by chroniclers – existed that described positives are negatives, and negatives are positives?

The author ponders on it in the first plot constructed in the court of Bayandur-khan. The great khan knows a fact of espionage, but others do not know about it; it appears finally, but for certain reasons it is necessary to garble the underlying reasons that motivated the events. In a similar way, counterfeit and fact enter into the second plot line,

related to Shah Ismail Khatai. After a well-known Chaldyran war in 1514, for what innocent Shah's double, chosen by Shah, beside double's will, involuntarily became victim.

Beside the literary tradition of using a person's double (*White Fortress* by Orkhan Pamuk, *Deceived Stars* by M. F. Akhundov), here exists a historic moment. So, in applying this device to history, the war between Shah Ismail and the Turkish Sultan Selim Yavuz I as defender of true believers from Shiites, ended with the Chaldyran war on August 23, 1514. The main battle was with the Turkish artillery, which consisted of 300 guns. Shah Ismail disregarded this type of gun, claiming that it was not honorable for a warrior to conceal himself using this kind of fortification. As a result, throwing his sword under fire, he was nearly taken captive: his horse has fell and he was saved only thanks to the courage of one of his warriors, who pretended himself to be the Shah for the Shah's sake.

Why do facts change?

In the first case, as a result of Bayandur-khan's court, an innocent victim Aruz is chosen for punishment instead of real spy, son f Fatma, by decree of the governor Bayandur-khan to maintain the unity of Oguz beys. In the second case, an innocent Shah's double becomes a victim, being unable to prove his guiltlessness in being chosen for this role by the dying commander and Shah to his country's unification. To paraphrase an expression: history demands victims, rather than "beauty requires victims" for some reasons. This is the core of the main author's task for this novel. It is not accidental that the title is *The Uncompleted Manuscript*, which can be translated as an unfinished or interrupted manuscript, which would be closer to an author's ideas about the impossibility to dot the "i's" in history – even if they relate to accepted facts.

In connection with the polysemantic assessment of many standard historic facts, we shall note one more moment. The **sixth question** is: **what is history – fact or a fact's perception?** Sometimes it depends on what people say about history. This question should serve as a reminder that history sometimes has two truths. The history of the Mongol-Tatar frontal advance into Europe in textbooks during Soviet times is presented as a "Mongol-Tatar invasion" or yoke. The same

textbooks on history present frontal advance and occupation of Asia by Russia as a "historical necessity" to connect Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia to Russia. Thus, the appraisal of the same historic fact depends on who or what is presenting this information.

This seemingly minor discrepancy is not so harmless, as it influences not only the interpretation of a historic fact, but also the perception of a people. Two centuries of time to assess the Mongol-Tatar powers by opposite sides has led to the development of different constructions. For example, there is a Russian proverb that states: "The unbidden visitor is worse than the Tatar." What's more, in English, the word "Tatar" has two variants: "Tatar" and "Tartar." While "Tatar" refers to the people of Tatar, "Tartar's" primary definition is "hell," associated as it is with ancient Greek mythology. Only its second meaning is people of Tatar; its third definition, significantly, is "wild, unrestrained." One can find a parallel with the word "Welsh." Primarily, this refers to the language of Wales, but its second meaning is someone who does not keep his/her promise, or to lie and not pay debts.

Another example concerns the recent definition of the author's origin and the evaluation of national literature. Is it casual or naturally a result of unfair historical stereotyping that Paul Theroux, the author of an afterword to the Anchor Edition of the Azerbaijan novel *Ali and Nino* uses the word "Tartar," instead of the unequivocal word "Tatar?" (Paul Theroux 2000: 277) In this epilogue, Paul Theroux offers sincere and high praises to the novel and its significance from both a literary and cultural perspective. He compares the novel's importance to other such pearls of world literature, like *Huckleberry Finn*, *Don Quixote*, *Madame Bovary*, *Ulysses* – novels "so full of information that they seem to define a people…" ((Theroux 2000: 279) One should be proud of the high esteem of one's own culture by a foreign researcher, but the attention points to another discrepancy: how had this Central Asian [Azeri? – R.G.] come to write his book in German and publish it in Berlin? Previously, Theroux had written about the author: "All that is known of him is this: he was Tartar [selected – R.G.] and he died in Italy," explaining that "a more correct word would be 'Azeri,' but not correcting the place of Azeri's residence. For the sake of fairness, we shall note that a similar mistake was also made in a Hollywood film, in which Azeri on Caucasus are dressed as typical Central Asians.

Paul Theroux is exact when he notes: "The word 'Tartar' is used in *Ali and Nino* (and in Azerbeidshan) as a general term for Muslim… The

real Tartars – that is, Tartar-speaking people – are found in and around the Crimea." (Ib. 278) Really, Tatar was used to define Russian Turkic-speaking Muslims (Tatar is a Turkic branch). Russia came to Caucasus in the 1930s, though it is necessary to add that there were also Azeri and Meschetian Tatars in the Caucasus. There really were also Crimean Tatars[4] (in Crimea) and Kazan Tatars (contemporary Tatarstan in Russia).

It is interesting to see, in the context of the last question (the contradiction of interpretations of historical truth) how the Japanese view the behavior of the Japanese in Manchuria as described by Jung Chang.

In Lion Feuchtvanger's novel *The Spanish ballad* (Л. Фейхтвангер 1959), Musa, a Jew and chronicler of events in Spain, changes his religion to Moslem by virtue of the circumstances during the epoch of the Crusades. How will he then survey the situation in recording it in the annals of history? Exploring this aspect is not, as it seems, an aim of Feuchtvanger. It is clear, however, that this fact will inevitably influence Musa's opinions, even though he aims to be without any position. How would the same history of the Jewish community, existing in the territory of modern Spain during the Crusades, be presented by someone other than Feuchtvanger or Musa, his novel's protagonist? How would Musa be presented, or, despite the doubts, be presented a positive image of the Jew Ibn Ezra? In a variant of Feuchtvanger and his hero-chronicler Musa, Ibn Ezra is a hero who rescued Jewish people during difficult times, helping them to avoid running away from territory they had rendered habitable during what was a very anxious time for Jews (and, it should be added, for Moslems) at the cost of his own and his family's honor. The seeming doubts of his estimation show nothing more than the courage and power of will of this savior.

Here again rises a question of historical or emotional values, culture in context of history or myth. Glancing over the encyclopaedic directory *Religions Tarigats* by the academic Z. Buniadov (Bünyadov 1997), there is an entry that describes Ibn Ezra or Avraam Ben Meir as a Jewish philosopher who was born in 1092 in Toledo. In latent form he expressed a courageous enough idea that the "Torah" could not be written by Moses, as it goes back to a later time – an idea that had been

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[4] Both Meschetian and Crimean Tatars were exiled during Stalin's campaign of national politics.

advanced by Spinoza in the 17th century. Such a coincidence of names (Ibn Ezra, the Arab name of Ben Meira, and Mousa, the Muslim version of Moses) and the role of the chronicler of the events in Toledo in the novel was used by the Jew Feuchtvanger, when writing his novel. Thus the writer had addressed deconstruction theories of other Jew – Ibn Ezra, encroaching on one of the bases of Judaism – the time and authorship of the Torah. Thus, fact and fiction are in line with historical truth and examples of culture, on the one hand, but both emotions and stereotypes on the other hand, are not new in literature. Attempt to destroy a stereotype or developed values – even within the context of literature – will always be counteracted by society.

Conclusion

Nowadays, there is a new tendency in literature to collapse former values with whole countries. In this changing world, both individuals and people try to find the basis for a national definition and to reconsider established values. Historical sources, especially the epic as an essential element of self-definition for people, has become a tool to explore and understand the past. As a literary tool, it becomes an object for literary deconstruction and for recycling cultures.

In this paper, the focus of the research has been on the dichotomy between truth and fiction, and history in an old and renewal context. For this I have considered both historical facts and their depiction in literature – the epos *The Book of My Grandfather Gorgud* and its interpretations in literature, and the description of other historical facts in literature, especially in Kamal Abdulla's novel *The Uncompleted Manuscript*.

One of the plots from this epic and historical fact from Safavids' ruling became the above-mentioned novel's modern interpretation and artistic fiction. The author, whose main line of creativity is a question on the Way – relations between the beginning and the end, life's peripetias, about philosophy of this way, whether of one person, whether whole people of a certain historical period. He reflects the history of his nation through the prism of the epic and the art of literary fiction, forcing the reader to think of history as knowledge and as realities, the ways between truths and fiction.

No less important for the writer in highlighting this dichotomy is, in my opinion, to draw attention to the latent side of known epics and the epos *The Book of My Grandfather Gorgud* is closer in essence and genre to the epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, rather than to modern historical novels. There is much mythological interlacing in the epics attributed to Homer, whereas only one mythological moment – concerning the One-eyed – dominates in the dastan of Oguzs. The question then arises: why is *The Book of My Grandfather Gorgud* not considered a historical source, as are the well-known ancient Greek epics and *Words About Igor's Regiment*?

In the foreword to the novel *The Uncomplete Manuscript* the author marks an important point that eposes are a certificate of relations of peoples in ancient mythological time. The peoples that possessed these eposes, had the political device, system of attitudes with neighbour peoples with which that were at war or were reconciled. Of modern Azerbaijanis, the Oguzs' tribes, during different periods of history, lived side by side with ancient Chazars, Indians, Egyptians, Greeks, etc. All these people created a unique culture. The epos *The Book of Grandfather Gorgud* is thus a chronicle of history.

In the functional context, this epic thus represents the same truth as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* do in their references to the culture and history of ancient Greeks. The comparative line of the Greek and Azerbaijani epic plots became the focus of the writer's research before it was turned into the main subject of his novel

It is not casual occurrence that one of plots of the epic *The Book of Grandfather Gorgud* became the basis for the modern interpretation and literary fiction of the above-mentioned novel of Kamal Abdulla: this novel stresses reflecting proportion truths and fiction in history as science, and the other issue for the writer is to draw attention to the latent side of the known epics. Namely: the epic *The Book of Grandfather Gorgud* as a genre and essence is closer to *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, rather than to modern historical novels. So much mythological interlacing in the eposes attributed to Homer whereas only one mythological moment – about Tepegyoz (One-eyed) dominates in the epos and is involved into a realistic plot. In this context arises the question: why is the epic *The Book of Grandfather Gorgud* not considered, as Homer's poems or the epic *The Words about Igor's Regiment*, a historical source?

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Myths and Folklore in the Contemporary Macedonian Literature

ANA MARTINOSKA

The paper "Myths and Folklore in the Contemporary Macedonian Literature" has an objective to present the specific condition of the Macedonian contemporary literature regarding the presence and reception of great cultural myths. It will illustrate that Macedonian contemporary literature encloses evidence of great myths from world literature, but even more that it is determined by the myths that are typical for the Balkan region. These instances are provoked by the specific, rapid and unconventional growth of the literature in Macedonia, but also due to the latest political situation in the ex-Yugoslav countries, that are facing the still ongoing process of establishing national identities. The changes of the national, ethnic, regional, social, historical and cultural sphere resulted in numerous evocations of the past, new readings of the history, mystifications of persons and events from the past, and all that considerably present in the everyday life, as well as in the contemporary art created in the country.

In the Macedonian study case, the folklore is the link between the history and the presence, the bond between the myths of the previous periods and the urge for their revival in the contemporary literature. Therefore, the paper will try to detect the main reasons for the frequent usage of the past and the tradition, the mythologisation and demythologisation of persons and processes, restoration and resemantisation of the folklore motifs and characters, their reflections, modifications and transformations in the contemporary Macedonian literature. We will make an attempt to read or reread few Macedonian authors and their work in the line of the intertextual and post-modern reading of the literature. Illustrations will include cases of upgrading of the mythical fables, unconventional, unconditional and often very complex usage of

the folklore elements, symbols, myths or motifs, along with an outline of their role and reception.

Historical background

As an introduction to the theme, we will briefly point at the some specific circumstances of Macedonian history, namely the numerous conflicts and the political, cultural, religious and assimilative pressures of many nations that obviously have had a great impact on the art creations of the Macedonians. Being denied the right for independence and even the right for declaration and preservation of their language and their own ethnical and cultural identity, the oral literature, as part of the broader system of folklore (understood as the unity of text, dance, music, custom and ritual), was perceived as the first stage of the growth of Macedonian literature in general. In that sense, the continuity of Macedonian literature from the medieval period to modern literature was provided by the folk literature.[1]

Folklore is articulating the life of one nation through the ages of its existence (Пенушлиски 1996: 11) and it "often reflects the historical reality in a fuller, more penetrating way than the other sources (iconographic, literary etc.) do, though on the other hand it has its limitations. That is, it does not reflect all the attitudes and stereotypes completely, its reflection of reality is specific and subjective." (Krekovicova 1994: 5) Thus, Macedonian folklore frequently focuses on themes, events and persons from history and mythology, but it also testifies to their reception among ordinary people and the new myths they were initiating. Having in mind the notion that folklore and identity are being treated as coexistent phenomena (Лафазановски 2002: 26)[2], Macedonian folklore

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[1] In her paper "The continuity of the Macedonian Literary History – Some literary-historical and theoretical-methodological", academician Katica Kulafkova claims that "What we call today Macedonian Literature includes several structural elements and areas: first – the total written fund from the old and medieval production (original and translated); second – the written fund from the oral folk literature of the Macedonians; third – the literary fund from the 19th century and fourth – the literature created during the 20th century, before and after 1945." (Literary context 1:27)

[2] "In the contemporary folkloristic, the concept of identity is found in the basis of its subject, because the folklore and the identity are coexistent

reveals a rather romantic image of ethno identity (attributing positive qualities to the group to which they belong and negative qualities to the others) as an attempt to preserve the basic characteristics of their Slavic background, their language, customs and religion, and at the same time an essential part of the process of becoming ethnically conscious, a vital part of the process of a marginalized group searching for their emancipation. On the literary level the establishment of self identity is perceived as a contra-cultural identity.[3] Needless to say this is not a unique Macedonian, but quite a universal process in the literatures of the other European countries, especially in the period of romanticism when ethno identity is often actualized at a point of comparison, when coming across outsiders not belonging to the same group. (Ilomäki 1994: 103–105)[4]

The period of domination of the oral tradition came to an end after the Second World Was when Macedonia become a republic within the framework of the former Yugoslavia, when it officially established its own alphabet, the grammar of the Macedonian language and therefore provided all the necessary conditions for the creation of contemporary Macedonian literature. In its earliest phase, Macedonian contemporary literature was largely rooted in the tradition of Macedonian folklore, a natural process. This influence was obvious not only in the usage of the folklore poetry motifs and traditional images, but also the folklore language, poetics, stylistics and semantics. As expected, as the Macedonian artistic literature gained ground, it distanced itself from the

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phenomena. It means that folklore cannot explain the change of the quality of its content without taking into account the identity of a certain group; and vice versa, if someone wants to look into the content, use and changes that are happening in that group."

[3] The legendary heroes are the images of the Macedonian longing for justice, they are fearless, invincible, honest, idealistic and, needless to say, always the winners. Everything about them is idealised and over proportioned, using the hyperbola and contrast as the most frequent semantic figures. There are even cases where they obtain mythological and supernatural features, being related to the fairies and dragons or being born as the "chosen" ones.

[4] The researcher Ilomäki from Finland claims that war is often what brings people together. The plot of people' war legends and stories has a certain pattern. According to it danger is caused by the attacking enemy and the situation is solved by the clever action of *us*. Telling these legends is a vehicle of pointing out the contradiction between the enemy and us, streghtening the feeling of sameness within one's own society.

traditional images, although they still remained quite common. One of the key reasons for this usage of the folklore canons is "to provoke familiar images in the people's minds, both good and evil, and to use this touch of the tradition as a base for the new ideas and poetry innovations". (Конески 1993: 9) This corresponds with the literary theories about literature as an art of ambivalence, resemantisation, restoration of the tradition, magical renaissance, actualization etc. and about the literary text defined as intertext. Therefore, we can say that folklore and myths are the most exploited intertexts in contemporary Macedonian literature, with paradigms of both the most eminent and the less known writers.

The Myth of King Marko

Trying to present the most illustrative pattern we will call to mind the folklore character of King Marko (Marko Krale), a historical person from the 14th century actively involved in fighting against the Ottoman Empire (which ruled Macedonia for five centuries), whose poetical and idealised image is well-known not only to Macedonians, but also to the other South Slavic and the Balkan Non-Slavic nations.[5] The precise historical circumstances are unclear, but it seems that Marko's historical significance is out of proportion to the greatness of his epic character and its huge popularity. (Пенушлиски 1983: 9) The scheme of King Marko's hyperbolic depiction in folklore is quite typical, he is a stereotyped hero, clever, wise and very brave. The myth of King Marko contains magical elements like his birth to a tooth fairy or a dragon, his supernatural strength, his magical assistants like a talking horse with wings and unique weapons, his battles against mythical monsters etc. The songs and stories abound in the epic glorification of this hero. His traditional opponent is an Arab who is an embodiment of absolutely negative characteristics, a rough, rowdy, violent person, constantly evoking the epithet "black" which is also present in his nickname the

[5] He is also the titular character in Marguerite Yourcenar's short story *Marko's Smile*, published in the volume *Oriental Tales*. His character, while showing extraordinary courage and endurance, is at the same time portrayed as selfish, ruthless and idealless.

"Black Arab" (original name "Crna Arapina")[6]. This might be the result of real facts about his appearance, a symbol of his cruelty or even a generic term left over from the 'black god" from pagan times and mythological stories. Numerous variants demonstrate the process of the mythification of these two opposing characters. What we specially want to emphasise here is the process of the modification of these characters in contemporary Macedonian literature, and even more the process of their de-mythologisation in some post-modern literary pieces.

In contemporary Macedonian literature, most literary pieces about King Marko use the already defined contrast and the same stereotypes as the folklore songs about the good Macedonian hero as opposed to the negative image of the enemies, the cruel and ruthless Turks. First I would like to call your attention to Blaze Koneski, who "relying on the mythological, ethnical and inherently mosaic Macedonian folklore, which to an author of his calibre is an empirical verifier, (he has) created incredibly original poetry." (Момировска 1999: 242) He has found a way to implement the old messages in contemporary contexts, varying them in a way that suits the interests of the modern people. (Конески 1993: 9–10) In the cycle of songs about King Marko, the leading person is an extraordinary man of specific uniqueness. His surroundings have been upgraded, he has been blessed with a spiritual and physical strength that is making him a man capable of any success; he is a person who, at the end, is suffering exactly due to this extra strength, this special mark which is turning into some kind of curse. He is suffering from *hybris*, the same as many persons from the Greek mythology and antique drama. (Урошевиќ 2001: 190) *Hybris* is a result of possessing an extraordinary power which gives a person too much self-confidence which results in imprudent gestures, entering into conflicts with gods and their principles. King Marko in Koneski's song is endowed with "unbelievable strength" and he is growing "muscular,

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[6] The "Black Arab" never has a personal name in Macedonian folklore. The Arab's character sometimes has monsterous features, but usually he is just a typical anti-hero, depicted indirectly through hyperbolisation of his monstrous acts (imposing huge taxes, not allowing people to get married for three years, asking for a different bride every night, in some variants he kills the girls after being with them etc.) or sometimes is portrayed as ugly and fat, with a head as big as a kettle, a huge mouth from the belly to the forehead, each day he eats bread from a whole bakery, drinks two bowls of wine and one brandy, eats three calves etc. (Пенушлиски, 2003:114).

as a tree". But that gift is in itself a challenge posed by fate. This excess disturbs the balance of the cosmos and leads to disaster. King Marko has the feeling that he is like a "dry underground river whose darkness still isn't calmed down from the roar of the waves"; His fate, his self-confidence and defiance amount to a tragic mistake the final consequences of which are horrible. *Hybris* is a Balkan fate reaching for the ones that are on top of their fame, power, glory, and the ones born with the feeling that they are the chosen ones. This Balkan curse spills over from ancient mythology into Greek tragedies, from the Greek tragedies into folklore, from folklore into the poetry of Blaze Koneski. (Ib. 191) This shows that Koneski's songs are not just about changing the composition and the metrics with free prosodic organization of the verse, but a complete remodification of the idea. Compared to folklore where we always have a happy ending and the triumph of our heroes, the final message of Koneski's poetry is profoundly tragic. (Мартиноска 2004: 77)

These Koneski's songs about King Marko are explicitly invoked in the novel *King Marko* by Slobodan Mickovic, which is perceived as an "essaystic-narrative prosede" created as an interpretation of these songs. The novel is dedicated to the memory of the distinguished collector of folklore Marko Cepenkov and the above mentioned poet Blaze Koneski, meaning it represents a continuation of the folk legends and the artistic songs, so it is a kind of palimpsest of the previous layers. In Mickovic's novel it is obvious that it is a matter of a text referring to another text, the folk legend of King Marko, upon which a procedure of heroisation is being used. In the new context it is being made ironical and gains an infantile dimension. Marko's heroic acts are turned into child's play, not applicable in the adult world. The seriousness of events turns Marko's strength into its opposition – a lack of strength to answer the challenge. The reinforcement comes from the collective that sees him as a hero.

The novel is constructed in five chapters, each dedicated to separate spiritual conditions of the central character. (Георгиевска-Јаковлева 2005: 766) The events are presented through the speech of the leading hero, but also through the speech of his collaborators, the unknown participants in the fights, the ones not remembered by history. The existing switch of several narrators contributes to the subjective attitude and personal aspect of history without it pretending to be the right or the only one. (Ib. 767) Actually the novel presents a lack of balance

between the historical facts and the myth of King Marko, as well as the power of the past to reshape the present.

Contemporary Macedonian literature also largely presents the myth of Marko's opponent – the "Black Arab", whose image often features a mythical dimension, as he is presented as "an incarnation of the entire metaphysical evil that is intimidating people" (Ѓурчинов: 139). In Radovan Pavlovski's songs[7] for example, he is portrayed once again as a stereotypical negative hero, but this time presented with slightly surreal images of grief, bells, white roads and an open black sward, rose evaporation etc. Poets sometimes present the relation between the two opponents with irony, so in Petre M. Andreevski their images are not labelled in the stereotyped and expected manner, but the Macedonian hero is pleading with the Arab to kill him.[8] In other instances, like in Jovica Tasevski – Eternijan's song, the "Black Arab" is just an atmosphere, so we note the typical epithet "black" in a few alternatives – the beat of the black drums in his veins, the defeat over the wild black dog and only in one verse the author expresses the desire to kill the "Black Arab" personally.

The myth of King Marko is still very much alive in contemporary Macedonian literature, but also in other forms of culture and social life. His mythical dimension is so broad in the collective subconscious, so many locations have toponyms associated with Marko (like his towers in Prilep, the city where he was born, churches and monasteries with frescoes depicting him), there are web sites and forums dedicated to him, he is even used in marketing and advertising. When I asked my three-year-old niece if she knows who King Marko was, she replied straightaway "King Marko is a beer."

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[7] Titles like "O Black Arab in foray" ("О Црна Арапина во поход"), "Three-headed song for the three-headed Arab" ("Троглава песна за приглавата Арапина") etc.

[8] In the song called "Take this shame away, Thessalonica" (Otsrami me, Solune) he says:

Одрачај ме, куршуме, кинисан кон мојто чело
Штом дојдов с бели коски, а без платно бело.
Одмоѓи ме, Арапино, на коњ што меркаш,
Ко среда на вселена со нежност на sверка.

The Myth of Alexander the Great

When discussing myths related to King Marko and the "Black Arab" above we were trying to prove that folklore is the link between history and the present, the bond between the myths of the previous periods and the urge for their revival or their demythologisation in contemporary Macedonian literature. But there are examples that are an exception to the rule. In the Macedonian case it is the issue of the myth of Alexander the Great. What we have had in Macedonia in the last decade is a double approach, on the one hand we have nihilism towards the history of antique Macedonia as a result of the long-lasting Slavic theory of the shared background and closeness of the Slavic nations and on the other we have the phenomenon of amplified interest in this period and an almost idolatrous approach to Alexander the Great. Right at the beginning of this topic, we want to exclude ourselves from the open issues of this topic regarding the conflict between Macedonia and Greece and present only the literary situation, not the historical or the political one.

The folklore position in Macedonia regarding this mythical character is usually put aside, because folklore materials are quite limited when it comes to this issue. The bulk of Macedonian folklore dedicated to this topic is limited to only six legends and only one song in two variants. (Пенушлиски 1996: 36) These legends have an interesting relation towards history with different levels of historical correctness, There are historically correct legends presenting the fights between Alexander and the Persian king Darius. Then there are contaminations of history with universal fantastic moments like in the legend for the quest for water of immortality by Alexander. Also there are moments of total incompatibility with the historical truth, such as the legends of his fight with the Turks. Actually, the last is a classic example of epic anachronism i. e. a transfer of his life from one period into another that is crucial for the Macedonian people. This tendency is regarded as understandable and justified having in mind that folklore often uses this principle of adapting famous heroes from the past to the new historical situation. (Вражиновски 1992: 27) Actually, this is a condition where the historical persons that played a great role in the existence of one nation does not die, but continues to live as a myth. For the researchers there is a dilemma why the number of these folklore creations is so

small, and vice versa, why today we are facing a rapid increase of contemporary literary creations on this topic.

One of the finest novels on Alexander the Great in Macedonia is called *Alexander and Death* by the already mentioned Slobodan Mickovic (published in 1992). In this novel the narrator is one of the unknown accomplices of Alexander's life. The novel has a double dialogue: the narrator Arhideus with the great emperor (that is still powerful although dead) and with the imaginary reader, in this case, the superior Aristotle, who would be a possible estimator of his writing. There is a fourth member in this complex communication – the contemporary reader whom the manuscript reaches through the centuries. The narrative strategy of the author forms the historically truthful but in fact a fictional literary world. (Прокопиев 2000: 79) This is not only a testimonial to the Great Individual, but also a perception of our own "tiny" individuality facing transience. Thus, Arhideus is emphasizing the human weaknesses of the king and he is giving needless details on his mummification in order to increase our awareness of death and mortality.

Eugene N. Borza distinguishes three levels of interpretation of Alexander's character: the mythological-romantic, historical and human. In Macedonian folklore and in the stories influenced by the medieval *The Romance of Alexander* the first type is predominant. In the novel *Alexander and Death* we have the human aspect in perceiving history, fortified with the choice of Arhideus for narrator. He is facing the paradoxical side of his existence. While Alexander was alive, he was his armourer, had subordinated his "self" to him. Now that Alexander is dead, he is still not liberated. "The lie, everything that I used to write, it became my only truth. But it is a lie, my whole life is a lie, because while I was writing about Alexander, he is already forgotten or remembered as fictitious and untruthful, as my actions seem to me now. These are just memories, where Alexander is the least of all." (Ib. 88)

The novel can also be regarded as an intertextual structure since Mickovic uses the documented historical background. However, filling in The Great Story, mythical or historical, without direct contact as the novel starts with the known end (The first line says: "Alexander died. He is dead."), he at the same time revitalizes and relativizes it, revealing provocative and stimulating meanings in the unknown details about Alexander. (Ib. 93) "Reading this novel in the hermeneutical key of identity and alterity opens multiple theoretical insights. That reading

reveals that although the artistic chronotope is set in the time of Alexander, the text itself reaches a high level of cultural vraisamblance (Jonathan Keller) with its contemporaneity, reaching for problems of timeless, universal character." (Шелева: 534)

The analysis could be taken further with the children's novel by Mitko Mandjukov named *The Home of Alexander* (1992), the numerous novelistic historical books (*History of Macedonia from Archaic Times till Alexander of Macedon* (1993) by Vasil Tupurkovski) etc., or the instances of other literary myths transformed in contemporary Macedonian literature (such as Odyssey for example in the novel *Odyssey* by Danilo Kocevski) but they will all bring us to the same conclusion.

Concluding remarks

The cases analyzed above of the myths of King Marko and Alexander the Great prove that myths are far more important than the reality of their lives, far more fascinating than history. Instances from contemporary Macedonian literature and especially its post-modern era prove that those myths are still alive and still provoke the interest of both writers and readers. The great myths of the previous epochs, especially the ones connected to the region, its history and its specific fight for identity, in contemporary literature are interpreted in the post-modern and intertextual mode, where the tradition and folklore images are re-established in a new manner, the plot is actualized and the myths are being modified.

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Don Juan, Town and Modernity, or the Myth Asks for Shadows

JÜRI TALVET

The greatest myths emerging from Western literature during the Modern Age are, in my opinion, limited to four: the myths of Hamlet, Don Quixote, Don Juan and Faust.

Without any doubt, there are other protagonists in great world literature whose stories are well know in the international cultural space: Romeo, Juliet, Othello, Desdemona, Shylock, Gargantua, Robinson Crusoe, Oliver Twist, Jane Eyre, Emma Bovary, Roskolnikov, Anna Karenina, Dorian Gray, and many others. They hardly amount to a myth. These are, above all, stories of some imaginary characters created by talented writers. They represent an idea, a theme, a type of a person or a universal motif, but there is a lack of anonymous obscurity and philosophic ambiguity that since ancient times have characterized some of the most celebrated myths of Western culture, like those of Ulysses, Orpheus or Oedipus.

These four great cultural myths, created, respectively, by Shakespeare, Cervantes, Tirso de Molina and Goethe, share, indeed, a certain darkness in their very origin. Shakespeare based his *Hamlet* on a semi-mythical story provided by the medieval historian Saxo Grammaticus. Cervantes claimed that he merely translated from Arabic the story of Don Quixote and Sancho, written originally by Cide Hamete Benengeli, and assured the reader that there had been other versions of the same story. Even in modern Spain many educated people think that the creator of the figure and the legend of Don Juan was the romantic José Zorrilla, while researchers continue to clash about the authorship of the play *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* ('The Trickster of Seville and the Stony Guest'), in the form it has reached us from the start of the 17th century. The origin of Faust is also quite obscure. Not

only did it exist before it was (re)modelled by Goethe in his *Faust* (1808–1832) in the anonymous German *Volksbuch* and in the drama by Christopher Marlowe, but the motif of a pact between a man and the devil appeared in the *Miracle of Théophile* by the French medieval poet Rutebeuf and, later, in the drama by Calderón de la Barca, *El mágico prodigioso* ('The Wonder-Working Magician'; Percy B. Shelley translated several of its scenes into English).

Thus, a myth asks for shadows. If the shadow is removed, the myth vanishes. Therefore, as great myths can only exist between light and shade, they contain a good deal of ambiguity.

Locus, Symbol and Myth

At the same time, although the idea of a myth seems to contradict the idea of history, the great universal myths have never left aside historical signs, above all those of place. All of them have in their source a definite historical *locus*. If such a *locus* is absent, the myth withdraws into total obscurity and becomes distant to us, the concrete historical receivers. To be accepted by the historical Reader, a myth requires a totally concrete and historical dimension, at least in its point of departure. A concrete *locus* humanizes the myth, allows it to penetrate our lives and, thus, to continue its existence in history. It has been a powerful instrument in the process of humankind's self-understanding.

In other words, a definite and historical place makes the a-temporality and the universality of a myth more dynamical, paradoxical as such a conclusion may seem to us.

The stories the characters of which from the very beginning have been conceived by a writer as symbols deprived of concrete and historical life, tend to wither the myth. It is true that departing, above all, from his research of Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* Mikhail Bakhtin introduced in literary-philosophical studies the notion of ambivalence or ambiguity. Yet it seems certain that even though one may speak of Rabelais's *grosso riso* and Gargantua's gluttony, as well as the Pantagruelian appetite, which have become proverbial, the work of Rabelais failed to create a myth. (It hardly had such a purpose). The kingdom of Pantagruel is called Utopia, a *non-place*, as it was conceived half a century earlier by the ingenious English humanist and Erasmus's friend Thomas More. The capital of France, Paris, appears

indeed vaguely in Rabelais's fantastic work, but only to be obliterated by the image of "christening", the deluge originated by cascades of urine of the young Gargantua. Rabelais explains that the young giant urinated *par ris* (for laughter's sake), an act in which the French capital was thus christened: Pa-ris. (*Gargantua*, Chap. 17).

In the same act of "christening" the town with its new name sinks into the dead waters of great Nature. The blessed celestial water (and similarly, the blessed drink of the Eucharist, as Gargantua promises to offer wine to the town citizens) transforms into an exemplary grotesque image in something that in its depth rejects the benediction of the Word. The town is not only a great *concentration of* peoples, houses and streets but also of words and signs. By his extraordinary imagination and word-coining skill, Rabelais creates, yet at the same time destroys and deforms them. He does not trust town, with its words and its rhetoric of progress. Instead, Rabelais sets his protagonists on the sea and makes them head towards deep sources of life, in search of a philosophic answer defying the civilizing absurd, full of vane discourses, dogmatisms, extremisms and verbal blindness.

The same can be observed in the majority of other works with an emphasis on symbols and allegory – in Baltasar Gracián's *El criticón*, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, etc. Because of the vagueness of their *locus*, they do not create myths.

On the contrary, in the literary works which have given birth to great universal myths, the place of action is situated in a region defined by historical features. Thus the action of *Hamlet* takes place in Denmark and, above all, in the castle of Helsingör. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza ride on the plains of La Mancha. In Part I of *Faust* the action is centered in Leipzig and in the outskirts of the Harz mountains. As the anonymous German book and Marlowe in his *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* tell us, Faust was educated at Wittenberg, the cradle of the Reformation. Later, Faust visited the Emperor Charles V in Prague. In Part II of *Faust*, the world surrounding the protagonists becomes gradually more fantastic and vague. Faust travels to ancient Greece where he meets in Sparta the woman of his yearnings, Helen. Even so, concrete names of historical places abound, many of them being linked to ancient myths.

The Irishman James Joyce understood very well the functioning of a myth, as in his *Ulysses* he projected the story of *Odyssey* on his contemporary Irish capital Dublin. The place of action in this great

experimental novel is concrete to the utmost. It is true that Franz Kafka, by contrast, hardly ever concretized the places of action of his narratives. Yet there is such an abundance of circumstantial detail that little doubt is left in the mind of the reader: the latter can only identify it with the Austrian-Hungarian Empire of Kafka's lifetime. Departing from this concrete historical *locus*, Kafka created his powerful myth of modern man's alienation and solitude. In some cases, like those of William Faulkner and Gabriel García Márquez, the places of action are imaginary (thus, Yoknapatawpha in Faulkner and Macondo in García Márquez). However, it is also clear that Yoknapatawpha can only be identified with the South of the United States, and Macondo, with Latin America in its Caribbean version.

Don Juan, a vicious modernist *macho* from Seville

In the context of great myths, the myth of Don Juan created by Tirso de Molina excels by its deep originality. On the one hand, it is the story that more than other myths has traveled in time and space. It means that despite all kinds of later modifications and fragmentation, the plot of the play, since Tirso de Molina created it at the start of the 17th century, has reappeared in the works of numerous writers of the subsequent centuries, as well as in cultural spaces quite far from Spain. Already in the lifetime of Tirso de Molina the story of the play transmigrated to Italy and, then, in the second half of the 17th century, French writers took possession of it. In the later history of Don Juan, already turned into a myth, writers have above all departed from the version of Molière, though other influences have converged.

It means that the original Don Juan, Andalusian and Spanish, has suffered a radical de-territorization. It is fully revealed in Molière's *Don Juan*, as the French comedy-writer situated the action of the work in Sicily and introduced a series of characters (Sganarelle, Pierrot, Charlotte, and others) that had little to do with Italy, not to speak of Andalusia, the fatherland of Don Juan.

The miracle of Tirso de Molina's creation can be seen just in the fact that the laterr de-territorization – a de-mythicizing process, beyond doubt – has not weakened the potentiality of the myth. On the contrary, Don Juan, always strong and young, has entered with us the 21st century.

I think the very title of Molière's comedy reveals the power of the *locus* of Tirso de Molina's original play. By the way, Molière who without doubt was the first great writer to resuscitate the theme, was also the first to eliminate from the title its second part, "the stony guest" (*el convidado de piedra*) which had started to dominate, being turned into an autonomous title (*Il convitato di pietra*, of Cicognini y Giliberto, *Le festin de pierre*, of Dorimon y Villiers) in the staging of the play in Italy and France. Even though the surrounding of Don Juan changed thoroughly in Molière's work, the protagonist, as the most intensive link to the original *locus* of the myth, not only reappeared, but also started to stand out in a special way.

I do not exclude here the influence of the social factor. It was above all in France of the second half of the 17th century, where lay and libertine ideas, notwithstanding the strong opposition on the part of the church, started to spread. Yet Molière to a certain extent mitigated the negativity of Don Juan, he turned him into a spokesman of social criticism. "I am not worse than the rest of society," his protagonist seems to tell us. "I am corrupt, because everybody is corrupt." Thus Don Juan voluntarily places himself on the side of the vicious part of society that the "good" part of society criticizes and condemns. In Molière, Don Juan becomes the forerunner of Gobsecs, Rastignacs and Goriots, of critical-realistic and naturalistic literature that started to dominate the Western literary scene with the work of Balzac. They are the flowers of evil of society. Little ambiguity is left in them. Writers condemn them, despite showing them as victims of a vicious society and calling forth some deal of compassion. Likewise, any good and ethic reader condemns them.

The myth created by Tirso de Molina seems to me much more complicated. It goes beyond social criticism, though it does not elude it by any means. It rather centers on man's interior contradictions. Don Juan of Tirso de Molina is not the man whom a number of Western languages have authorized to represent the human being: *hombre*, *homme, uomo, man.* Not at all. Here the talk goes exclusively about the *varón*, the *macho*, the male.

The story of Don Juan is a myth about the Western *macho* and, more exactly and essentially, about the *young* and *modernist macho*.

I have just mentioned that Molière's Don Juan is the forerunner of those characters that started to embody the vice of the town and civilization. A specification is needed. The image of the town appears

powerfully already in Tirso de Molina's work, including at the same time more ambiguity than most of the later stories of Don Juan.

The adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza were projected onto rural landscapes. The fugacious image of Barcelona, in Part II of Cervantes's novel, scarcely has a function apart. Prince Hamlet is a man of the court, the action of the drama takes for the most part place at the royal castle. It is true that like Hamlet, Faust has studied in Wittenberg, the very cradle of the Reformation. Towns have been the birthplace of universities, the germ of natural and positive sciences. Hamlet's doubts concerning traditional and monarchic values are inspired by the town, the origin of the civilizing process. However, Hamlet's doubt seems to transcend the town itself. Hamlet's creator Shakespeare was fully aware of the fact that the same feudal corruption of power would be transferred to town, in an ever more intense concentration. Therefore, Hamlet's vengeance does not really symbolize a progressive action, but rather a flight from reality by means of suicide.

An essential relationship with the town is not formed in the myth of Goethe's Faust either. It is true that the origin of the myth and, above all, its treatment by Marlowe orientated it towards progressive solutions. The image of technical work in the name of humanity, to tame the "blind forces" of nature, in the vein of the Enlightenment, briefly appears before the end of Goethe's philosophical drama. However, its nucleus differs from the earlier pattern of the myth: it reflects man in his search of love, departing from earthy love (Margaret), aspiring to ideal love (Helen) and finally ascending to solemn and religious love (the Virgin Mary). Love models man's relationship with the world, provides its meaning.

Don Juan's myth is very distant from Goethe's solemnity, in which a strong load of German idealistic philosophy, between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, can be felt. Tirso de Molina's Don Juan differs from Don Quixote, Hamlet and Faust by his *essential negativity*. He embodies evil. Gerald E. Gillespie, in his excellent study of Don Juan (Gillespie 1996: 207–220) traces an analogy between Don Juan and Faust, as the incarnations of the evil, in opposition to Don Quixote and Hamlet, as the incarnations of good. I believe, however, that just because of Goethe's treatment – and it seems to be certain that without Goethe the myth of Faust would hardly work – Faust has been radically improved. The Virgin Mary takes Faust in her lap and redeems him.

This does not happen with Don Juan, despite the efforts of European romantics to domesticate and improve him. (In fact, the germ of Don Juan's improvement can already be noticed in the final part of Molière's work, as *doña* Elvira would like to keep him away from his sins). Notwithstanding these attempts by the romantics, an obscure root of Don Juan's negativity persists, even though it is, one has to admit, a problematic negativity. Perhaps its relationship with the town can provide us with a key to the roots of this negativity.

Differently from Don Quixote, Hamlet and Faust, Don Juan is an *urban protagonist.* He is the trickster[1] of *Seville*. This link, I believe, is extremely important in his myth. It starts to disappear already in Molière, as we cannot see in the Frenchman's play Seville and there is no room for the large and deeply functional description of Lisbon, presented in Tirso de Molina's play by the character who in the final part of the drama turns into Don Juan's double or at least into a substantial and inseparable element of the myth: the *comendador* Don Gonzalo, or the stony guest. In Molière, the latter is created without any connection to the plot. The public scarcely understands from where and why he appears on the scene. To mitigate the artificiality of Don Gonzalo's image, Molière turns him explicitly into a spirit, an embodiment of time.

In Tirso de Molina, everything is more complicated by far. The myth in his play cannot be reduced to a comedy. It is neither a tragedy, similar to *Hamlet.* It is a human drama, a drama of the *macho*, or the male species.

Town and Woman

In Tirso de Molina's drama, projected onto a clear-cut urban landscapes and onto the relationship between the town and nature, woman has an irreducible role. Ophelia in *Hamlet* is a defenseless and humble maid, a victim of court intrigues and also of Hamlet's own egoism and

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[1] The notion of 'trickster' is strongly present in the postmodern vocabulary. When applied in retrospect to the original don Juan, it can easily lead to his "postmodern redemption". One should keep in mind that the Spanish word *burlador* is still closer to 'mocker', 'deceiver', 'joker', thus carrying a negative value.

brutality. Dulcinea is an imaginary woman who embodies – without showing her body! – the principle of noble love which, as Cervantes seems to allude, should orientate human existence towards a symbiosis of the spiritual and earthy values. The presence of woman in Goethe's *Faust* likewise tends to be merely symbolic.

The women of Don Juan are far from being only symbols. They are incarnations of the historical woman distant to any abstraction and idealizing. They are an essential part in the formation of Don Juan's myth. Without women the myth of Don Juan would not work. It would not work either without sexual and urban obscurity, bequeathed to posterity by Tirso de Molina.

I consider very important the observation by Ignacio Arellano (2003:2), according to which Molière's Don Juan, being a man of discourses, rather than a man of action, destroys the dramatic basis of the myth. Quite similarly, Yuri Lotman has wittily mentioned that authentic sexuality is least revealed in societies and times saturated by discourses about sexuality (Lotman 1992: 255–256). It is not of little importance that in Molière's *Don Juan* the town as the place of action disappears. The action develops in the palace and in the countryside of Sicily. The discourses of Don Juan represent the high Parisian society which above all since the 17th century, with Descartes in the background, strove ever more to submit reality to discourse, reason and intellect.

The deepest myths of humankind, however, have never been exclusive products of mere intellect.

Once again, the myth asks for obscurity and ambiguity, an ambience that would allow the emergence of man's / woman's integral being, including his/her biological-sexual basis as well as his/her cerebral capacity and spiritual dimension. Tirso de Molina provides us with such an integral ambience, departing from the modern and modernizing town. His Don Juan Tenorio comes from Seville, a big town where in *Burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* not only the royal palace is located. An important part of the action of the drama takes place in the "low" part of Seville. Don Juan, with other young men belonging to the nobility, is a frequent customer in Seville's brothels, where they "excel" by enjoying poor prostitutes without paying them anything for their intimate services. Thus, marquis De la Mota and Don Juan are rivals in mocking and jeering at the victims of their sexual hunger. Their visits to brothels have become for them a kind of sport and game.

The town with its great concentration of people and an abundance of dark streets and corners is revealed as an ideally anonymous and alienated *locus*, where man acts in unison with machine, another modernist invention of the town. To enjoy women *(gozarse)* and to jeer at them *(burlarse)*, profiting from the privileges of their social position as well as those granted by their being male and having money, becomes a serial, mechanical action and production.

It is sometimes thought that urban anonymity, ambiguity and alienation appear in great Western literature only with the images of Charles Baudelaire's poetry. It is thought so, because the work of Tirso de Molina has been allowed to sink into oblivion. When the cheated duchess Isabela, discovering that the man who has just enjoyed her was not really her bridegroom, duke Octavio, asks who the intruder was, Don Juan answers: "¿Quién soy? Un hombre sin nombre." ("Who am I? A man without a name"). (Scene I of Act I). Tirso de Molina's Don Juan represents the town as a potent sexual instrument of modernity.

Don Juan is an anonymous anti-hero and, as such, a character deeply rooted in mythical darkness. A great part of Don Juan's later embodiments have tried to draw the protagonist out of darkness, into the light of reason. Thanks to Tirso de Molina's genius, these attempts, however, have never had a complete success.

The *macho* double of don Juan: the stony guest

The town as the original contour of the myth is not limited in *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* to the character of Don Juan and his friends who link the image of "high" Seville, with the royal palace in its centre, to that of "low" Seville, with its brothels. The urban background of this extraordinary play is widened and strengthened by another key character of the drama, the *comendador* don Gonzalo. The lengthy talk about Lisbon presented by the latter to the King of Castile (the final part of Act I) is a detailed urban description as well as a eulogy of modern and modernist urban progress, exemplified by the capital of Portugal. Therefore, to imagine don Gonzalo as embodying in Tirso de Molina's play traditional medieval and feudal values, in opposition to Don Juan's challenging materialism, seems to me deeply erroneous.

Despite shades of difference and their conflict in the plot of the drama, Don Juan and Don Gonzalo belong to the same race of modernist urban men. They are twins, as they both have to do with diabolic darkness. Don Juan's amorous games are diabolic, nobody can rival him in combining situations favorable to his "nightly serial work" with women: to enjoy, to cheat and to abandon them. He has been a good apprentice of Seville's Sierpes (Serpents) street, with its great concentration of whoredom.

On the other hand, Don Gonzalo, once he has been killed and turned into a stony statue, scarcely resembles an ambassador of the heavens. He invites Don Juan, with Catalinón (whose name, by the way, can be associated with excrement) to visit him in the church where his sepulcher is. There he offers them for food scorpions and vipers, and for drink, vinegar and bile. Don Gonzalo seems to be an emissary of hell, rather than of heaven.

Don Juan and Don Gonzalo are thus doubles who designate different nuances of the modern and modernist man. Their difference, crucial for the dramatic action of the work, is their age. Don Juan is young, he does not only deceive women, but he also mocks at the whole generation of the old, his predecessors. This feature is essential in Western modernist man: ever trying to conquer time, against the laws and rules established by fathers, ever trying to widen the *locus* of his game and his tricking simulacrums. The stony statue at which Don Juan jeers, symbolizes, without doubt, the dead life of old age. The tragedy of Don Juan and, at the same time, of modernism, is that they strive to eternize youth, their own age, and in the end always fail, because another age, another generation defeats them, and they themselves occupy the dead *locus* of stony guests.

In the darkness of a myth, however, nothing is too clear. I do not think Miguel de Unamuno was right in claiming that don Juan's main vice was that he always only played and was not capable of entering the "intra-history", Unamuno's imagined domain of authentic feelings and passions. It is true that Don Juan plays and also takes the risks involved in any serious game. However, not always he plays, nor is a mere spectator and critic of vices (like in Molière). The aforesaid can be most eloquently observed in Act I of *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra*, where the fisher-maid Tisbea is the witness of Don Juan's brave fight with the sea, as risking with his own life he saves the life of his servant Catalinón. At the end of the play, when Catalinón abandons his

moralizing position, to assume the rationalism of his master, Don Juan himself, on the contrary, gives up his frolicsome role, to enter the darkness of the church, where the Stony Guest waits for him. Tirso de Molina's Don Juan remains faithful to his mythical essence until the end of his life.

It is true that making the amorous conquest of Don Juan serial, Tirso de Molina seems to exclude on the one hand the conclusion of Albert Camus – interpreting Don Juan as a man of the absurd, i. e. as one who is aware of the unattainability of love and, still, in the face of it, longs to repeat love and live loving for ever. There is another aspect revealing Don Juan's authentic belonging to myth. He is the man who awakens and evokes true love in women, even so he does so by cheating or, to apply a postmodern term, by provoking simulacrums of love. Hence the lyrical dimension of Tirso de Molina's work, a quality that almost entirely vanishes in Molière the de-mythicizer.

Lyrics and historical woman's manifesto

Myth is also a domain of poetry and lyrics par excellence. The great merit of Tirso de Molina is that he managed to transfer lyrics, born amid fields, meadows and woods, to an urban myth. Modernity, despite its simulacrums and games, is not deprived in its depth of love and lyrics. Often it hides in the darkness of town, among the "flowers of evil" of the town, as can be seen, for instance, in the work of Baudelaire.

Last but not least, about the great theme of woman in the myth of Don Juan. Woman has traditionally been seen as a victim of Don Juan's diabolic passion. It is clear that she is a victim, but it is also obvious that she herself is attracted by the diabolic passion of the seducer. By the means of his vice, Don Juan provokes women, extracts from them their deep essence. Very little of it is left in Molière, because simple village maids are just victims of Don Juan's tricks, while *doña* Elvira starts in the comedy to tame and improve Don Juan, an educational task that is carried out in the work of some romantic writers, notably, in José Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio.*

There is a deeper female root in the drama and the myth created by Tirso de Molina. One of its later revelations can be observed, for instance, in Ramón María del Valle-Inclán's *Sonatas*, a series of novels

(1902–1905) in which the marquis Bradomín not only seduces women. The accent manifestly shifts to the psychology of woman which by delicate touches of the marquis – in the role of a modern, modernist and urban Don Juan – opens in its deepest and most beautiful essence, in a variety of shades corresponding at the same time to the change of age, the great protagonist of Don Juan's myth, since Tirso de Molina. There are passages of breathtaking lyrics, admirably revealing woman's self in *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra*, above all in the episode with the delicate and valiant fishermaid Tisbea. (The humble ambient producing "high" emotions is one of the great features of the Spanish "Golden Age" literature; especially in Tirso de Molina and Calderón it carries clear-cut socio-philosophical undertones).

Of course, one should not idealize the topic. A part of historical woman – those prostitutes in the dark streets of Seville – will be sad victims of the historical *macho*, until social misery and poverty persist.

Still, it is for the first time in Western literature that *macho* the egoist faces *resistance* and *opposition* on the part of woman. Tirso de Molina presents it by a co-action of several victims of Don Juan: the duchess Isabela, the fisher-maid Tisbea, Don Gonzalo's daughter *doña* Ana, and the village maid Aminta. The larger part of historical woman rejects the serialization of love, or love as the product of urban sexual machine installed by men, and rebels against *macho* the violator.

From the first epoch of Modernity, I do not know any other work of great world literature that would manifest as expressively as *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* the capacity of historical woman to fight for her *natural rights*, for her dignity and equality with man.

Women in Tirso de Molina's work, both from "high" and from "low", claim their rights of human being above all in the last act of the play, where the king himself, as the highest representative and the guarantee of stability of social values, is ridiculed. The text recited by the fisher-maid Tisbea in the royal palace, in front of the king, should really be treated as the first open feminist manifesto as well as the first call to fight of the Western woman. Tisbea tells the king:

Si vuestra alteza, señor,
de don Juan Tenorio no hace
justicia, a Dios y a los hombres,
mientras viva, he de quejarme.

(If your highness, *señor*,
fails to sentence Don Juan
Tenorio, until I am alive,
I will appeal to God and people.)

The historical Tisbea is alive. It is proved by the powerful feminist movement of our days. The great Spanish "Golden Age" drama and, above all, the work of Tirso de Molina and Calderón incarnates – in the background of texts produced by European humanist writers and thinkers (Erasmus, Montaigne) – the ideas of human dignity and natural rights of human being, that is, the embryo-stage of Western feminism. I believe that that only taking into account this historical platform, it would be possible to explain and interpret justly the later stages of feminism, as reflected in the great literature of Romanticism and, then, throughout the 20th century.

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D.J. – Re-writing the Myth of Don Juan in Contemporary Bulgarian Drama and Theatre

AGLIKA STEFANOVA

The present article will examine the re-writing of the myth of Don Juan in contemporary Bulgarian theatre. The main subject of analysis will be the play of Georgi Gospodinov *D.J.*, written in 2004, and some theatre performances from recent years where the myth of Don Juan has been questioned.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Georgi Gospodinov (1968) became one of the most well known contemporary Bulgarian writers with his first novel, *The Natural Novel* (*Estestven roman*) published in 1999. It has been translated into nine languages and widely reviewed abroad.[1] Bulgarian critics defined it as "the first glorious example of a new generation of novels in the 90s" (*Egoist* Magazine). In the first chapters of the small book the author explains, "It is my immodest wish to create a novel of beginnings. A novel which continually begins, promises something, reaches page 17 and starts all over again... This novel of beginnings would describe nothing. It would only provide the initial impulse, move subtly into the shadows of the next beginning and leave the figures to interrelate exactly as they please. That is what I would call a natural novel." (Gospodinov 1999 : 7).

In his first theatrical play, written some four years after the novel, Georgi Gospodinov is trying to find a *natural* dramaturgical ending to the great myth of Don Juan. The play *D.J.* (initials of Don Juan) was

[1] Serbia (Геопоетика, 2001), France (Phebus, 2002), Macedonia (Темплум, 2003), USA (Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), Czech Republic (Lidove Noviny, 2005), Hrvatska (Profil, 2005), Slovenia (Beletrina, 2005), Denmark (Husets Forlag, 2006), Italy (Voland, 2007).

first performed at the Satirical Theatre in Sofia in 2004 and won the prize of the Union of Bulgarian Actors for the Play of the Year. The play has been translated into English, German, Polish, and French and has been published in Russian (Gospodinov 2006). In 2005 *D.J.* was produced by the Bulgarian National Radio and transformed into a radio-play by the young but famous theatre director Yavor Gardev. In 2006 it was premiered in Rouen and Caen, France, as part of the international theatre festival *Babel Europe*, directed by Patrick Verseuren. In 2007 *D.J.* was staged in Graz, Austria, in *Theater im Keller* by Magdalena Dimitrova. This great interest in the play indicates the efficacy of the new version of the myth, proposed by Gospodinov. The plot is *adapted* to our time, taste and storytelling strategies and it adopts the contemporary vocabulary. Thus the name of Don Juan is transcribed by the initials of D.J. (Disc Jockey) – the new authority who is in charge of managing the emotional level of groups and individuals. Today the DJs are vagabond stars, touring the big cities exactly as Don Juan did in his time. They are admired by the masses because of providing a momentary and spontaneous ecstatic experience close to the ancient euphoria. They have power over the spirit and imagination of the new generation.

Traditionally Don Juan is associated with the city of Seville although he might have some Arab ancestors and could be found in the Galician medieval novels under the name of "don Galán" (Said Armesto 1946). Tirso de Molina first gave a literary existence in 1630 to this medieval urban legend under the title *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra*. It is in Seville where the vagabond story of Don Juan stopped and managed to conquer the mass imagination. Maybe it was not a coincidence that some centuries later in the same town appeared a female version of the same legend – we all know the story of the passionate gipsy Carmen, great seducer, stealer and cold-blooded killer. Her lines from Merimée`s novella could be easily mixed up with the ones of Don Juan in Molière`s version: "I don't love you any more. You love me still, and that is why you want to kill me. If I liked, I might tell you some other lie, but I don't choose to give myself the trouble. Everything is over between us two… Carmen will always be free." [2]

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[2] Prosper Mérimée. *Carmen*. Translated by Lady Mary Loyd. http://www.galloway.1to1.org/classics.html

Today the names of Don Juan and Carmen have specific everyday use; they represent metaphors of extreme emotional existence/capacity. They are both respected as universal cultural figures and at the same time as representative of "Spanishness", while the names of their authors (Molina or Mérimée) are often overlooked. So, we see how Seville as a *situs* has an extraordinary capacity to support the continuous existence of great ancient vagabond stories (such as Don Juan), but also to transform the *status* of clearly literary characters (such as Carmen) into migrating plots. The gipsy first migrated into the opera and next, liberating herself from her authors (Mérimée or Bizet) started an independent existence as a pop-figure in the system of mass culture. Both stories about Don Juan and Carmen surpassed the authority of their authors, transgressed different genres (*novella*, theatre, opera) and became somehow collective works, both of the artists from different times and of the public of different times.

Seville was once one of the biggest and most powerful cities in Europe. It was the gateway to and from the Americas and its Royal Tobacco Factory served as the first port of call for all tobacco coming from the New World. Such extravagant characters as Don Juan and Carmen logically appear exactly in this *open city*, a true metropolis of that time, where anything goes, everything seems possible and every eccentric story sounds believable. By the way, the above-mentioned Royal Tobacco factory in Seville - the largest industrial building erected in Europe during the eighteenth century and where Carmen has been working at the beginning of her story (1845) today is occupied by the Law department of *Universidad de Sevilla*. There is something ironical in that fact, knowing that laws, social norms and traditional values are the biggest enemies of both Don Juan and Carmen, who operated in Seville as touring cheaters and killers, practiced and promoted alternative, *underground* moral existences and followed only the logic of their material or sexual success. Next, in the district of Santa Cruz we would find a statue, related to the myth of Don Juan. No, it is not the one of the Commander, who dragged Don Juan away to Hell, but a statue of Don Juan himself, labelled as *figura universal* and *orgullo de Sevilla*.[3] The right hand of Don Juan's statue is stretched

[3] The text written on the monument's base is says: "A Don Juan en homenaje a su figura universal y orgullo de su mito ARTECONSA dono este monumento al pueblo de Sevilla en la primavera de 1974".

towards the viewer, probably with the intention of grasping and shaking his/her hand... Where would this handshake lead us eventually? Into the middle of *grands feux* (great fires) after Molière, or into the kingdom of aesthetic existence, where no moral dimensions are supposed to exist, as would argue Søren Kierkegaard?

This Don Juan, welcoming the tourists, looks more like the Iron Host. Materialized as an official authority of Seville, Don Juan has lost the city as a stage design for his free deeds and has also lost his freedom. This statue, once representing the Commander and today the Sevillan seducer, reveals the unconscious fear of the society that the great myth is dying or that is not so effective or reliable as it once was in the classical age. Or, as says D.J. in the play of Georgi Gospodinov: "Comrade Persecutor, the world is full of death and monuments to death." Also, we could suppose together with Florence Dupont that this statue is a "Fetish of a civilization that, terrorized by forgetfulness, erects monuments of stone and paper in order to triumph over death and to challenge the passing time, accumulates the traces and evidence of a past of which it has forgotten what is worth remembering and what is not." (Dupont 1991 : 14).

In 1665 Molière's *Don Juan or The Stony Guest* premiered at the Palais Royal and opened by the author (in the role of Sganarelle) with the famous tobacco soliloquy. Around this soliloquy is organized the Georgi Gospodinov`s play *D.J.* He transformed into a central element what was a detail in Molière`s play. Being also a literary critic, he is opening his play with a kind of prologue "A few words about D.J." and "A Short History of Tobacco" where he shares his critical perception of the classical seducer: "Don Juan is a literary myth rather than a literary character, which accounts for his reproductive ability, his capacity to reappear in various places and times. Beyond his artistic incarnations, Don Juan has become a byname, a stock character within our stock culture, a paramour, a soap opera, a part of our collective imagination: the cloak, the sword, the mask. Or perhaps his thin moustache, his burning cigar, his sleek, shiny hair, the sparkle in his eye – a sort of a movie star from the 1940s or 50s. Thus, Don Juan successfully climbed to the top of the charts in the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Four centuries' hit. (...) If I may say so, this is a light play with low tar and nicotine content."

What Gospodinov is trying to blaze a trail through different versions of the myth of Don Juan and to propose an explanation why this hero

was so attractive for the classical imagination and why today he is so problematical and mostly laughable.

Don Juan has been impressing audiences for four centuries with his determination to follow the chosen path, with his consistency in his convictions and with his complete lack of interest in all the threats of eternal damnation. He never speaks or thinks about the consequences of his deeds. He has the extraordinary capacity to "forget" the past. This *ability of oblivion* is rather a contemporary instinct. Don Juan knew how to impose his private self on the world around. In his profile the classical perception detected something inhuman, something that exceeded the cultural norm, that transformed Don Juan into a tragic hero, unattached to no person or object, mobile, overactive and oversensitive, who has chosen to stay blind or deluded about the final bill to be paid to divine judgement.

But we have to admit that in the modern age the classical lover Don Juan has become somehow... banal and farcical, since the laws and social conventions governing the demonstration of feelings have gradually changed and the marriage institution has become more and more liberal. In 1843, Søren Kierkegaard wrote in *Either/Or*: "Don Juan keeps walking on stage with his 1003 lovers. Out of respect for the esteemed traditions, no one has the courage to laugh at him. If some contemporary poet dared to do something similar, he would be mocked." (Kierkegaard 1991 : 85). The problem is that in the classical age Don Juan represented freedom from social control but today he looks more like a prisoner of the clichés that poets, playwrights and opera singers have heaped on him. He also looks a slave of his passions and appetites, completely dependent on women's charm and opinions, not capable of controlling himself. And we know that emotional control is a value in itself in the contemporary world and a condition for prosperous life.

In his play Georgi Gospodinov is making fun of Don Juan in the same way that Don Juan mocked the Commander in the past. The play takes us to a utopian, reasonable, "cold and aseptic non-smoking world", where all vices and unhealthy passions are forbidden (*Lasciate qui ogni sigaretta* is the motto of this world). Before integrating completely into the new viceless world every citizen has the right to ten *vice* credits. Everyone can choose between cigarettes, a peep show or politically incorrect language. These vices could be practiced in a special phone booth, where a guiding voice of a personal DJ-therapist is

advising the citizens to renounce all vices and to accept the happiness deal proposed by the Department of Total Happiness and Inner Control.

Borrowing from Molière the detail about tobacco and the happiness of smoking, Georgi Gospodinov develops it into a metaphor of desire and the invisible spirit of things. As Dona Anna says: "Ever since we stared living in a smoke-free environment, it seems that romance has also vanished like smoke." As if smoke was drawing a secret alphabet of passion and was a secret means of erotic communication between individuals. Cigarette smoke has the power to animate places and situations, to activate imagination and creativeness. The abbreviation D.J. becomes a cryptogram of forbidden desire, of freedom and of risky living in an insecure world where *smoking kills*.

Gospodinov builds his *scratch* version of the myth of Don Juan by mixing all possible plot lines from the classical times like a professional Disc Jockey (DJ). His Don Juan is not an important, heroic figure. He is transformed into a banalized *universal figure*, a Kitsch object, accumulating offensive jokes. We meet the character Anna after she has used her last vice credit (she has chosen to smoke). She joins a resistance group of Actors Anonymous, who, although theatre is outlawed, continue to meet secretly. Those rebels are still continuing to smoke… imaginative cigarettes and to invent stories. In order to amuse themselves and to punish Don Juan who, as they say, has left them, they decide to compose stories about the end of Don Juan's life. "Let each of us share one awful, humiliating, amusing story."

This is a strategy of invoking the spirit of Don Juan – they provoke him to reappear. He is invented again as a degraded and banal character, ridiculous and unable to adapt to the abrupt changes of the modern world. In one of the short stories he appears during the 1930s in the Soviet Union, in front of a statue of Lenin, which he wrongly takes for the one of the Commander:

> **Don Juan:** This here must be your husband, or, more likely, your father, the Commodore of Seville. *(Drops on his knees.)* I swear to you, Donna Anna, I did not kill him.
>
> **Anna:** What's wrong with you? Please, get on your feet before they see us… *(Whispering.)* This is comrade Lenin.
>
> **Don Juan:** Comrade Lenin? And he is not your husband… Strange that you kneel in front of someone who is not your husband.

> **Anna:** Are you out of your mind? He is… the father of us all.. (…)
> **Don Juan:** I do not like this gentleman, my lady. I think he might betray your trust, his face is so deceitful. *(He approaches the monument.)* Commodore, will you try to bar my way to Donna Anna?... (*In the meantime, a militiaman jumps out of the trees. Don Juan is apprehended. Anna falls into a swoon. He's brought before a tribunal.)*

In another short story the old Don Juan is having a sex-phone conversation and is not capable to understand the language, the professional slang of the girl. He looks pathetic and deprived of his ancient power.

> **Don Juan:** *(Indignant.)* Senorina, I believe we have changed roles. I've been in command of this game my entire life.

The next image of humiliation: the actors are imagining the old Don Juan in a retirement home, with slippers, eyes glued to the TV screen and the "Episode nine hundred seventy seven…" of a Latin-American telenovela.

> **Sganarelle:** So what so tragic about it?
> **Joker:** Everything. You see, the old Spain (lovers, drama, betrayals) has managed to survive only in the soap operas. He, the serial seducer of women, the serial killer of happy families and cuckolded husbands (…) is desperately trying not to miss a scene from the fucking soap.[4]

Don Juan is described as inadequate according to the socio-cultural norms of 20th century. In the classical age he refused to obey any norm and authority, today he cannot understand even the simplest social convention. He is humiliated to the furthest limit, as if the modern age revenges him for having had so much power in the classical times. All five humiliating stories in the play demonstrate how the materialisation of the Great Myth today is farcical and how the modern age always

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[4] Unpublished translation of the play *D.J.* from Bulgarian into English by Dimiter Kenarov.

wins against the ancient power of seducer; how he fails in all his love projects and ambitions. Don Juan is inadequate, he lives in his past, incapable of adapting to the new emotional, erotic, sexual and social language. Today the telenovelas manage to overpower not only housewives but also DJ himself, tired of his four centuries' manifestation on the theatrical and literary stage.

Don Juan is incompatible with the stories told by the 20th century – communism, sex-phones, telenovelas. Georgi Gospodinov is describing the decline of the myth, expressing a fundamental doubt as to its efficacy, its actual meaning and the competence of its main character. Maybe the myth of Don Juan is tired? Tired of his constant and boring activity "to put his love all around" ("aimer de tous les côtés") as Sganarelle says in Molière`s version. The contemporary playwright is renouncing the classical lover, with his purposefulness and ambition. Briefly, being tired of the clichés about Don Juan, Gospodinov is mixing chaotically the different versions and deprives him of all accrued images. By this operation the author manages to bring Don Juan back to life, turn him into a concrete, exciting the imagination, feasible character; once ambitious, failing at present. A character who at the end of the play suddenly meets his ancient love – Anna (or may be Dona Anna?) and against all the rules and clichés, it seems that he will stay with her forever. This happy ending as in a telenovela is only possible after Don Juan has been humiliated and humanized by evoking and laughing at his megalomaniac stories. So, the Actors Anonymous as underground authors-terrorists drag Don Juan down from his traditional pedestal and rearrange his story, forcing him to live a non-heroic, normal, even banal life. By ridiculing and humiliating his old-fashioned poses they make him *natural* again. So, by that strategy of finding a *natural* ending to the myth of Don Juan, he is naturalised in our age.

Georgi Gospodinov creates several versions about the end of this great cultural figure. He restores to life and very efficiently up-dates the myth of the seducer of Seville – someone we thought we know very well as a banal and desperate lover and a stubborn loser of the eternal life.

The story of Don Juan had also had some interesting and very successful theatre readings in recent in Bulgaria. The theatre director Alexander Morfov staged Molière's play at the National Theatre in 2006. He insisted throughout the whole performance that he had been unable to ascertain who was the true hero of the story – was it Sganarelle or Don Juan? Thus, he put ontpo the stage four good-looking

young men and left it to the public to wander why any one of them should be considered exceptionally attractive, or exceptionally free of the common social restrictions, rewarded by a myth, pardoned by the society and transformed into a hero (*"orgullo de Sevilla"*). At the end of the performance there was a very strong moral point, when all the victims of Don Juan came together on stage and in a silent and motionless *tableau* looked at him accusingly. Morfov expressed a strong feeling of moral intolerance for Don Juan's manner of passing through life and people. The performance was asking where the possible limit of human freedom is.

Another very successful staging of the Don Juan story was the performance of Stefan Moskov's *Comedia del`Servitore* (2001) after Goldoni, Molière and Cervantes at the Theatre "Bulgarian Army". Here Don Juan is a comical figure, a slave of his sexual ambitions, a manipulator but also manipulated by his own myth (he is reading his own story on the stage from a giant book), dressed in a glorious costume with women's images on it, and followed by a crowd of women. The performance was invited to numerous festivals in Bulgaria and abroad, and was commented in many cultural magazines and revues.

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Kalevipoeg as a Core Text: the Island Maiden's Thread

MARIN LAAK

The Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg* (Kalev's Son, 1861) was at the latter end of Enlightenment and Romanticism. The epic is a socio-cultural monument of the late 19th century Estonian National Awakening – the principal idea developed in the epic is that of a nation and the fight for its freedom. Following the European epic tradition, *Kalevipoeg* is firmly centred on the story (myth) of a national hero. The genius of Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882), the author of *Kalevipoeg*, expresses itself in its ability to combine into an enduring whole the millennium-long tradition of the Estonian folk song, the Finno-Ugric folklore older still, and ancient literature, departing, at that, from the contemporary literary trends of his time. He combined the few legends about Kalevipoeg[1] found in the Estonian folklore with international literary subjects and arch-texts giving them a poetic form revealing also his personal tremors, passions and anguish.

Although *Kalevipoeg* has been translated into many languages we know that however masterful a translation, it always leaves one mournful. Comparing the translation with the original, we always find that something has got lost. The biggest difference the translations underline is perhaps the fact that the reception of an epic depends not only on its narrative structure but also on the linguistic and poetic form presenting the narrative so that in the original text one can recognize subtler, more lyric undercurrents (Talvet 2003a). An example of the different levels of reading are the articles of the Latvian researcher Sergei Kruks that have definitely enriched the reception of *Kalevipoeg*

[1] The legends about Kalevipoeg, see: http://www.folklore.ee/rl/folkte/myte/kalev (10.04.2008).

contrasting the Estonian epic and its Latvian counterpart *Lāčplēsis*, studying the impact of the two epics in shaping the national psychology and identity (see Kruks 2003, 2004, 2005). Kruks has written that he was astonished at the vitality and optimism radiating from *Kalevipoeg* (Kruks 2005: 140) but it is known that the author read Kreutzwald's epic in its translation into Russian. Studying the fate of *Kalevipoeg* in the contemporary culture, however, one can say in advance, that its impact on its native culture rests still on the possibility of recognizing in its deepest layers traces of tragedy or discern under its heroic plot the lyric and melancholy moods of its author that have frequently unleashed a peculiar linguistic madness, an inspiring power of the word that has kindled the inspiration of many later authors in different fields of art. It can be said that the text of *Kalevipoeg* has been etched into the creative body of the Estonian culture as its core text. The national epic as the root text of the culture has been turned to in the direst times but also in all the periods of the aesthetic break in the culture. The fruitful exploitation of the text of *Kalevipoeg* in the live contemporary culture is in conflict with the academic research of Kreutzwald's epic with both folklorists and literary scholars pointing at its formal and stylistic drawbacks since its publication in 1857. Researchers have questioned the folkloristic authenticity of the epic in its content and metrical form, not to mention the flaws found in its literary style.

The public opinion of the value of *Kalevipoeg* as an artistic text changed only a few years ago. The commemoration of the 200th anniversary of its author F. R. Kreutzwald in 2003 brought along a greater interest in studying also the epic. It became natural to interpret *Kalevipoeg* as "the root text" generating the nation (Undusk 1994) or "the sacred text" of the Estonian people assembling archetypal motifs and mythic states enabling both horizontal and vertical communication in the linguistic community (Veidemann 2003). In his essay published in a number of languages, Jüri Talvet stresses that in the world context *Kalevipoeg* is one of the best artistic epics and texts of Romantic fiction underlining its extraordinary influence on the national feeling, its myth-creating faculty that makes it a core text of the Estonian culture with its traces to be found on all the levels of culture (Talvet 2003a, b, c, d).

The present article is based on research conducted within the last three years by the international team[2] elaborating methods of intertextual analysis of cultural texts applying computer technology.[3] The paper will focus on mapping the textual traces of *Kalevipoeg* on the contemporary Estonian cultural landscape with closer analysis of the semantics of 4th tale as revealed in the theme of the Island Maiden. The treatment is based on the conviction that the meaning of *Kalevipoeg* as an artistic epic like that of any literary core text is shaped by the intertextual relations established between the text and all the other sign systems constituting it. Thus the meaning of the core text can be discovered studying not only the author's intention or the text itself but can also be (re)constructed by studyingthe text's reception by its later literary arrangements or the culture at large. A text, switching over from one sign system to another, need not be explicit about it or if, the hint may be covert, while overt in the intertext. It can be said that the intertextual analysis in a way "splits" the linearity of the core text revealing the intertexts hidden under its linear surface.

Modelling *Kalevipoeg*

In order to study the fate of Kalevipoeg as a big myth in the contemporary Estonian culture and the possible ways of its impact on the full text and meaning of *Kalevipoeg*, we used the so-called Hourglass

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[2] Assembling and research of texts related to *Kalevipoeg* was an international project of technology CULTOS (IST–2000–28134, 2001–2003) at the Chair of Comparative Literature of Tartu University led by Prof Jüri Talvet and including Piret Viires.

[3] In accordance with the purpose of the project, the term 'intertextuality' has been primarily used here as an umbrella term in its wider sense enabling it to explain relations between texts in various different critical approaches. A longer treatment of the theoretical assumptions of the research in comparison with the terms used by G. Genette can be found in the article "Intertextuality and Technology: The Models of *Kalevipoeg*" (Laak, Viires 2004: 287–291), and also in the articles "Monument vs the core text: reception and intertextuality of *Kalevipoeg*" (Laak 2003), "Adaptablity of *Kalevipoeg*: problems of the text and the context and possibilities of the Internet environment" (Laak 2005) and *Beyond Digital Labyrinth: Rethinking Literary History in the Age of New Media* (Laak 2006).

model. First we studied the relations of *Kalevipoeg* with the earlier core texts of European culture and with the Finno-Ugric folklore. Then we reversed the question, studying the intertextual relations between *Kalevipoeg* as the core text and the texts of the contemporary Estonian culture, primarily poetry. So *Kalevipoeg* in this study was the central text that was both the target text for older arch-texts and the source text for the later ones of mostly the 20th century fiction and also the 21st century pop culture.

The focus of the present article makes us pay more attention to the latter, i.e. the upper part of the hourglass, and follow the manifestations of the text of *Kalevipoeg* in later periods. Studying these texts we saw that it is not the lexical whole of it that has been active – all in all 20 tales and more than 19,000 verse lines – but only its certain small parts or pieces. These pieces of *Kalevipoeg* are its small linguistic units (phrases, lexia, verse lines). Also isolated motifs, scenes, themes or characters that have been picked out of the rich plot and numerous characters of the full epic and given an extremely heavy semantic load in later texts. One of the small units, for example, is the redeeming home-coming of the hero at the end of the epic:

> But one day an age will dawn
> when all spills, at both their ends,
> will burst forth into flame;
> and this stark fire will server
> the vise of stone from Kalevipoeg's hand.
> Then the son of Kalev will come home-
> to bring his children happiness
> and build Estonia's life anew.
>
> (Trans. by Jüri Kurman; Kreutzwald 1982: 266)

The Estonian postmodern literature has established a parallel between Kalevipoeg and Tarzan in an anonymous piece "Tarzan into a Hero" (2006) found in the Internet. The same motif has been used in the poem "The Son of Tarzan" (1998) by the popular author of youth culture Contra. As Kalev, the king in the epic came to rule from distant lands over the sea, his son could be expected to come from America. The poem could also allude to the popular Estonian political mythology of the 1990s with one of its then definite subjects being the American orientation of small Estonia the poet has treated here ironically:

Soon visas will be abolished
Then Tarzan will come home'
To bring happiness to the jungle peole
To drink beer in the yard of happiness
(Trans. by Jüri Talvet; Contra 1998: 32)

The same is the motif and similar is the approach in the poem "Kalev Comes home" by Kalev Keskküla from his collection "Songs of the Republic" (1998). Kalevipoeg has become an expatriate Estonian with a scholarship from an Indiana research foundation bearing his name:

Kalevipoeg
a Hercules of all-republican importance
wants to return home
he now has an American passport and hero's retirement fee
From a science foundation bearing his own name Indiana
(Trans. by Jüri Talvet; Keskküla 1998: 51)

Kalevipoeg has come home also earlier. Every historical period has set him its requirements he has had to fulfill. Udo Uibo has counted all the home-comings beginning with Kreutzwald's ballad "Kalev's Sohn" (1836) written in German[4] and ending with the year 1986 finding eight or nine of them (Uibo 1986). In the literature and art of the post-World War II Soviet occupation the final verses "But one day an age will dawn" had to be interpreted ideologically: the symbol of the state of happiness, the ancient king Kalev is coming home not in a distant and indefinite future but has come already with the Soviet forces in 1944. In the poem "A Fairytale Come True" (1955) by Paul Rummo the Kalevipoeg of the 1950s is similar to the ancient Russian heroes:

[4] The protagonist of Kreutzwald's ballad was the authentic Kalevipoeg of folklore who was not a romantic hero working for his people but a wicked giant turned in the end into a monster and chained for punishment. In the folk mythology the monstrous giant was feared by everybody until "a host of spirits" rushing past killed him. The joyful tidings of the death of Kalevipoeg spread over all the land (Metste 2004).

And moved, the ancient hero
Lays down his shield and says:

In times that passed my name has meant my nation,
My mightiness created by your dreams.
The dreams came true. You see now
How people's power has made life news.
The fairytale come true…
And there ahead of you
A world of dreams is waiting…
(Trans. by Kersti Unt; Rummo, P. 1955: 15–16)

Later poems have depicted the happiness Kalev could bring along. In modern poetry it has often been associated with the child's point of view: in the 1970s a pack of chewing-gum or felt-tip pens could make one happy in Estonia; outside Estonia poets could dream of computers already like in the poem "To Bring Its Children Happiness" by Ilona Laaman:

Kalevipoeg oli suure kasvuga.
Tal oli siilinahkne kasukas.

Näeks küll veider välja Broadwayl.
Nad ehk lavastaksid näidendi:
kuidas jalutu tuleb õnne
tooma oma lastele: šokolaadi,
elektronarvuteid ja kuulsulepäid,
külmutuskapp ja närimiskummi.
Naeratus läbi pisarate ja
Happy End[5]

As the intertextual analysis of Kalevipoeg with the hourglass model has shown the use of smaller isolated units of the text in later culture can be explained by earlier arch- and core texts of European culture that *Kalevipoeg* was linked to intertextually. The text of the epic amplifies

[5] Kalevipoeg was a tall man / he wore a coat of hedgehog skin / It would be fun to meet him on Broadway / Perhaps they would stage a play: / of how a legless will bring / happiness to his children, chocolate / electronic calculators and ballpoint pens / refrigerators and chewing gums / a smile through tears and / a Happy End. (Trans. by J. Talvet)

vertically certain arch-texts, themes and motifs that can be reproduced from under their numerous cultural layers opening deep vertical semantic dimensions.

The research of Jüri Talvet has shown that the text of *Kalevipoeg* contains many classical arch-texts and is related to the oldest European mythology and the later epics based on it. For example: military actions (*Iliad, Chanson de Roland, Cantar de Mío Cid, Nibelungenlied, La Araucana, Os Lusíadas*), the sea voyage (*Iliad, Odyssey, Aeneid, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, etc*), the auguries and predicaments (*Iliad, Odyssey, Chanson de Roland, Nibelungenlied, Os Lusíadas*), etc. *Kalevipoeg* is one of the few great epic works that introduces the image of Hell. This is the key element in the hero's fall and his trials (*Aeneid*, Dante's *Commedia (Inferno)*, *Faust, etc*). Hell is the place of both the ancestral souls (Hades) and evil forces. Kalevipoeg is finally sacrificed in the name of the future freedom of his people, as he crushes the forces of evil, and stays as the guard at Hell's doors to keep them away from his people (Talvet 2003a: 887–889, see also Oras 1982: ix–x).

In order to study the intertextual relations between the text of the epic and contemporary texts we restructured the narrative into smaller threads centred round a motif or a theme. Following the structure of the hourglass model we were able to unite the oldest arch-texts, the mythic situations to the representations of the textual pieces of *Kalevipoeg* in modern culture. As to their content these texts of different historical origin grouped into new cultural units relating via *Kalevipoeg* the oldest cultural layers to the newest.

The study of the intertextual threads of *Kalevipoeg* began by deconstructing the full narrative text of the epic into smaller subplots that we called: the God of Song, Lyre, Stone, Maiden, Journey, Sword, Hell, Fight, Sleep, Fate and Hope. These small themes were the starting point for collecting literary texts for the intertextual analysis.

As an example of the new semantic threads or new cultural units established by *Kalevipoeg* linking the oldest and the newest texts, we could look at the thread related to the motif of the maiden that has been called the thread "Island Maiden" to observe the text of the epic.

The Island Maiden's thread

The Island Maiden's thread has been formed following the 4th tale of *Kalevipoeg*. The thread is essentially connected with the sin of the hero, leading in the later development of the epic narrative to his punishment and the following self-purification. In a broader sense, the motif can be interpreted as reflecting the historical domination of male gender over woman-kind. An international archetypal motif of the drowning of a young maiden has an important role here.

The fourth tale of the epic narrates the story of Kalevipoeg's meeting with the young Island Maiden and her unhappy death in the sea. The story begins with the youngest son of the old king Kalev jumping from the coastal cliff of Estonia into the waves to swim to Finland looking for his lost mother. After a night of tiring swimming in the sea he reaches an island to have a rest. Suddenly he hears an enchanting voice singing about yearning for love and the "warmth of a friend's bosom":

> Kalev's valiant son
> turned his ears to hear her song:
> was the cuckoo chirping gold,
> spraying silver through her teeth,
> pennies from her mouth,
> ducats from atop her tongue?
> The young girl trilled a tale,
> the maiden's chirping went like this:
> "Far away is my sweetheart,
> my lover's across the sea…
>
> (Trans. by Jüri Kurman; Kreutzwald 1982: 49)

We recognize a clear parallel with the dangerous sirens charming and destroying sailors in Homer's *The Odyssey*. The events on the island develop quickly: Kalevipoeg and Island Maiden meet at night to make love, and the girl's father hears her daughter's shriek. As Kalevipoeg reveals his royal origin, he startles the maiden who falls off the cliff and drowns. The mourning of her seekers is heard in the sad song of Island Maiden from the waves.

Following the hourglass model and the thematic analysis of the text of *Kalevipoeg* the thread of Island Maiden was constructed as formed by six sub-threads: the integral text was divided into smaller thematic units: 1) Swimming over the Sea, 2) Singing on the Island, 3) Seeing, 4) Falling in Love, 5) Drowning, and finally 6) Singing from the Sea. These are the segments from the fourth tale that has been most productive in establishing intertextual links on the level of both ancient arch-texts and the contemporary Estonian culture.

Comparing the ratios of different types of artefacts in these sub-threads it turned out that in different fields of art different motifs of the epic have been productive. In general it can be said that in music and musical theatre more dynamic scenes have been used while in visual arts there have often been interpreted the same, more static scenes, e.g. the moment of shock of the Island Maiden and the Island Maiden in the sea. The Island Maiden's singing from the sea has been interpreted in Estonian art primarily as the hardships of human existence and struggle for life. (More shades to these interpretations have been given by different styles like ethno-cubist or expressionist styles, *e. g.* Eerik Haamer's pencil drawing "Song of the Shadows" (see Kreutzwald 1954) depicts the prototype scene in expressionist, enlarged vein showing the body of the maiden floating in the middle of wild elemental forces.) Literary texts are the least related to Kalevipoeg's swimming treating mostly the seduction and death of the Island Maiden.

The story of the Island Maiden has inspired many poets but also contemporary mass media. This is the story revealing grotesquely and in clear colours the new prosy mythology of Kalevipoeg created by contemporary mass media interpreting the personal qualities of the hero in an extremely simplified way if compared to Kreutzwald's original text: the hero has become a careless macho rapist. Kalevipoeg has been depicted as an inconsiderate but strong hero led by his uncontrollable desires.

However, the intertextual relations of the Island Maiden thread with fictional texts enable one to use the seemingly unambiguous story to point at deeper layers in the epic depicting the mystery of human existence. These are diametrically different from the media figure of Kalevipoeg bringing out the most lyric and poetic layers of the epic.

For example, Jüri Talvet is his poem "Yet Not Getting Accustomed" (2005) has given the Island Maiden story a deep philosophical meaning.

We see the song of the perished maiden heard from the sea turning into an eternal symbol. In the poem the song is as if heard from the flow of the river while the river is the symbol of human life. The river is flowing forever; one can never step into one and the same place twice:

> A salt-river
> flows through myself –
> yesterday it was green,
> today it's turbulent,
> still disquieting.
> /---/
> Under waters
> the Island Maid sings.
> (Trans. by Jüri Talvet; Talvet 2005: 19)

The Island Maiden's song under the water is sad like the general mood of the poem rich in layers taking one into the depths of culture. In the epic the story of the Island Maiden has been told by the Bard accompanied by the zither. According to the older Finno-Ugric mythology the sound of the zither is magical and chanting just because the musical instrument is made of the hair and the finger bones of the perished young maiden. This is the pain and the tears of the maiden that can be heard in the magical music of the zither. The poem "Yet Not Getting Accustomed" has been written remembering Salzburg on the banks of the Salza River where Mozart, Georg Trakl and Stefan Zweig have lived.

Kreutzwald has composed the story of the Island Maiden using quite freely songs of the Finno-Ugric folklore about copper, silver and golden suitors and/or sword coming from the sea. Kreutzwald has added to these two archetypal motifs the story of Aino from Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*. Both Aino and the Island Maiden slip on the wet stone and are singing later under the water. There is even word-for-word equivalence in the songs of Aino and Saarepiiga. Kreutzwald, like Lönnrot, has left the story of the Island Maiden's death consciously unclear and ambiguous, increasing this way the artistic quality of the text. Did the girl lose her balance on the wet stone or did she drown herself deliberately? Was it an accident or a suicide?

The death of the Island Maiden has explicit ties with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: Ophelia's death is an issue of debates in the *Hamlet* criticism up to the present. The Island Maiden story of *Kalevipoeg* and the motif

of an accidental death belonging to the arch-texts of European culture are present in the text "Still Half-Humming" by Paul-Eerik Rummo, the classic of Estonian modernism:

> the young girl the pink-flower
> fell to the sea of fish
>
> What happened then to the girl?
>
> The eyes became lampreys
> the teats became codfish
> the legs became roach
> the toes became vales
> (Trans. by Jüri Talvet; Rummo, P.-E. 1999: 33)

The song motif but also mental disorder is common for both the Island Maiden scene and for the death of Ophelia. In this poem the deaths of the Island Maiden and Ophelia have been related to the image of flower and the song heard from under the water. The latter with its metrical allusions reminds a reader familiar with the text of *Kalevipoeg* the Songs of Shadows heard in the sea (7th tale).

It can be said that on the internal, intratextual level, the story of forbidden love followed by the death of the Island Maiden triggers the theme of the fatal guilt of the hero that accompanies from this moment on all his undertakings, turning the epic *Kalevipoeg* into a tragedy of fate. The lyric layers of the epic can be heard in multiple voices in the modernist lyric poetry of intertextual character with the thread Island Maiden.

The events on the island have been often used in parodies. Although popular mythology has interpreted the tale as that of Kalevipoeg seducing the Island Maiden, many contemporary literary texts, especially prose fiction and parodies, have emphasized the active role of the Island Maiden. Parodists have seen the overbearing maiden as the initiator of the falling in love scene. The possibility is implicit in Kreutzwald's text that says: "The fine island girl/ herself sat down next to him/ and then, as foolish as a child, she sank down on the shore,/ slipped on the mossy bed of stone" (Kreutzwald 1982: 51). These lines have been used in *The Memoirs of Kalevipoeg* (1971) by Enn Vetemaa in his witty travesty of the exact text of the epic turning young Kalevipoeg into a victim and martyr who could not resist the wild lust

for love of the Island Maiden – Vetemaa has turned her into a Giant Virgin. Analogous is the interpretation of the motif by Friedebert Tuglas in his short-story "At the End of the World" (1919):

> She tried to catch me, her arms spread, as if I were a lamb. I did not know how to use my sword nor did I dare use it. She suddenly seized me by the shoulders and lifted me up to her face as if I were a little child. /---/
>
> It was terrible. A woman's passion is terrible.
>
> Nothing protected me. We fell down together in the cabin, we sank down in the yard amidst the sheep; the footpath between home and the sea was our bed.
>
> In the hot night, in the light of a red moon rising over the horizon she made love to me on scattered cushions and torn veils.
>
> She was lustful as nature herself and insatiable as the earth.
>
> (Trans. by Oleg Mutt; Tuglas 1982: 50–89)

The Island Maiden love scene has been treated also humorously. Andrus Kivirähk in his play *Kalevipoeg* (2003) has depicted the Island Maiden as the Finnish Sorcerer in disguise who had kidnapped Linda, the mother of the hero. The love scene of the Island Maiden and Kalevipoeg becomes a funny and spectacular trick.

Another layer in the Island Maiden tale has been hinted at in the poem "The Mum and Dad of the Island Maiden" (2000) by young Estonian poet Jürgen Rooste who has adopted the view-point of Island Maiden's parents. The author sees the deep human tragedy of the innocent, bored and lonely girl on a small island. Moreover, the poet sees also a more general meaning in the song of Island Maiden and the motif of her death, drawing from there a parallel with the Finnish-Estonian cultural contacts.

> the island-maid the old woman and the old man
> I and my girl
> we do hear the anguishing play
> guess the rough drive of kalevipoeg
> into the warm dry womb
> we have grown too much stuck
> to watermark culture

> I believe we are not entitled any more
> to intervene if somebody is raped somewhere
> /---/
> island-maid island-maid
> /---/
> what drags and tores you
> tores you
> out of culture so that
> a bloody ragged hole will be left
> in both
>
> (Trans. by Jüri Talvet; Rooste 2000:10–11)

It is not accidental that Jürgen Rooste has related the love-making of the Island Maiden and Kalevipoeg to "watermark culture". The Island Maiden either falls or throws herself into waves – the author of the epic has left it deliberately unclear – only after she has learned the name and origin of Kalevipoeg, the offspring of the famous Estonian king. The subtle hint in the epic enables to interpret the text of *Kalevipoeg* also on the national plane. The possibility has been used in *The Memoirs of Kalevipoeg* (1971) by Vetemaa from where it reached the comic book "The Son of Kalev" (1995) by Juss Piho amplifying it:

> "He is not Olafson, he is not the son of Olof!" the girl yelled and now, indeed, the cry came from the bottom of her heart. /---/ Like greased lightening the girl took off her clothes and jumped from a high rock to the sea.
> "Denuded, deflowered, discredited!" – such was her last heart-breaking cry, that was immediately deafened by a loud splash. /---/ "A wise child, at least she left behind her clothes," the old man sighed wiping his tears.
>
> (Trans. by Jüri Talvet; Vetemaa 1971: 49)

Thus, the Estonian-Finnish theme is another small "piece of culture" in the text of *Kalevipoeg* that has been treated differently in different periods acquiring new meanings. Interestingly enough, the Estonian-Finnish contacts as contacts between neighbouring and kindred peoples, could be referred to even during the Soviet period when Estonia was a part of the Soviet Union. So in 1979 the Soviet Estonian cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar* (The Sickle and the Hammer) republished the comic strip by Gori, the Estonian cartoonist of the 1930s, under the title

"Estonian History. The First Independence". In the Gori comic strip the first thing King Kalev did was to deepen friendly contacts with the kindred nation. In spite of his efforts, the Estonian policy was at first ineffective as the King attempted to draw the attention of the beautiful and democratic Island Maiden. The firm Finnish Bridge, Gori says, could be built only after Kalevipoeg had destroyed the Finnish Sorcerer and his men. This pleased the Finns and made them happy. Grateful for the annihilation of the terrorists, the Finns gave Kalevipoeg a sword. This was a sign meaning that Finland was ready to subject itself to our national hero.

To Sum Up

The major purpose of the Island Maiden's thread was to study the communication between the text of Tale Four of *Kalevipoeg* and artistic artefacts of different sign systems. While assembling empirical material we relied on Michael Riffaterre's concept of intertextuality as the linguistic network guiding any reading that connects a text with former and later texts (Riffaterre 1994: 779–877). The purpose established this way de-contextualised the central text, *Kalevipoeg*, focusing attention on different shades of the epic's meaning revealed by later texts.

Analysing the poetry of intertextual significance for *Kalevipoeg* we saw that allusions to the full text of the epic concerned its smaller segments. So the research supports an earlier hypothesis that instead of an integral linear narrative a culture carries its small units including semantically related intertextual threads. The new hypothesis I would propose is that these were the small textual units of greatest poetic and lyric tension that were intertextually most productive. This, in its turn, leads to the questions: what is the cause or creator of the lyric tension amplified text by text.

This question is the point of departure for my second hypothesis: the lyric tension of the text of *Kalevipoeg* that has inspired the creation of numerous artistic artefacts later is related to the classical European myths and arch-texts reproduced in the epic.

It was only the establishment of a set of definite motifs from the full text of *Kalevipoeg* that made us look for reasons in the internal, intratextual composition of the epic. Kreutzwald has used in *Kalevipoeg* the metrics and poetics of the Estonian runo song. For example,

parallelism repeating one and the same motif in many parallel verse lines every one of them adding a new shade of meaning widening it step by step. The meaning carried by a group of verse-lines composed of parallel verses is established on the general abstract level. Close reading the text of the epic it became clear that the same device of parallelism was repeated on a higher level in the full structure of the epic, its 20 tales. The same motifs and themes are repeated from tale to tale as the plot of the epic develops. The thematic thread going intratextually, horizontally through the epic, amplifies one and the same internal "piece" of it achieving its great aesthetic influence as the epic terminates. The themes gradually developed and repeated in the composition are the dreams of the hero, his meetings with maids, and journeys beginning with his throwing of stones and ending with his chaining to the rock. The repeated textual threads justify the presentation of the epic as an intratextual network of thematic thread. Probably these are the networks that influence the (literary) interpretation and reproduction of the epic's text at present.

The few examples given should make it clear that these are the small "pieces", isolated parts and signs expressed verbally, that influence the fate of *Kalevipoeg* at present – just as it has been described in his *Mythologies* (1957) by Roland Barthes. The myth-theoretical analysis of the literary representations of the epic is still waiting ahead while the material for it is abundant.

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Taking Sigtuna: Precolonial Time and Estonian Historical Fiction of the 1930s

TIINA KIRSS

In 1187 Sigtuna was attacked and destroyed completely. As one of four major, town-sized settlements in 12th century northern Sweden, it was an interim capital city, rising to power in the 11th century due to geo-political shifts in the Mälari valley. (Tarvel 2007: 25) Sigtuna was founded in the 970s, and from 1070 on it was the bishop's seat, until Uppsala came to the fore between 1134 and 1164. Its several stone churches were built like fortresses against Viking raids, and tradesmen used them as secure warehouses. From the 990s on until about 1130, Sigtuna was the first known location in Sweden for the minting of coins. If mythologized history recounts that after its destruction, the island town of Sigtuna was never to be rebuilt, and Stockholm replaced it as a centre of commerce, more balanced historical research accords less power to the invaders: city life went on in Sigtuna, as evidenced by the Pope`s plans in 1215–1216 to move the archbishop`s residence from Uppsala to Sigtuna, the establishment of a Dominican monastery there in 1237, and the building of the large, stone Church of St. Lawrence in the second half of the 13th century. (Ib. 27)

Who took Sigtuna? This question has provoked the curiosity of historians for hundreds of years, but remains an unsolved puzzle, only modestly treated in Swedish historiography. (Ib.) Is the identification of a perpetrator significant, in a time when ethnic attributions were differently inflected, far less determinate than in modern times – or is that question itself an artifact of retrospection? Was the destruction of Sigtuna a "small" event in a larger, pulsating pattern of raids and

skirmishes, or an event of significant scale, but far from a turning point? According to 14th century Swedish annals, Sigtuna was sacked and burned by "pagans." But which ones? Were they Karelians, with the backing of Novgorod, or Karelians in conjunction with another tribe, such as the seafaring *kurelased*? Or – as another compelling hypothesis would have it, did the Estonians destroy Sigtuna, with the participation of the Eskilskär colony of Estonian settlers? Support for this latter version does not emerge until the 16th century Swedish chronicles – Olaus Petri, Laurentius Petri, and Johannes Magnus, though there is a not insignificant weave of supporting evidence in earlier sources: In Book IV of his Gesta Danicorum, Saxo Grammaticus (1140–1206) gives a long description of battles between Estonians and Danes, indicating that it was within the realm of plausibility that raiders from the island of Öland might have attempted analogous raids elsewhere in the region. (Saxo Grammaticus, 847) If they had a trading quarrel, or in resistance to a local missionary effort, a raiding party might indeed have set forth from Öland to avenge a wrong that originated in Sigtuna. Henry (Henricus) of Livonia`s chronicle reports that on Bishop Albert`s return journey from Germany in 1203, while stopped on the shores of Denmark, bands of "pagan Estonians"in sixteen ships had just finished burning down a church, pillaging, killing, and taking prisoners; Henry adding that this was a pattern of behaviour for these tribes, both along the Danish and Swedish coasts. (Henriku Liivimaa kroonika, VII.1, 27)

If the destruction of Sigtuna has eluded Swedish historians, the intriguing gaps in the historical record around this event have offered imaginative space for historical mythmaking for those in search of heroes. Both in the second half of the 19th century and in the 1930s, Estonian writers staked a fictional claim on the destruction of Sigtuna, producing romantic historical novels and novellas that were both ideological instruments in the service of popularizing "national history" as well as a curious mixed breed of ethnography and romance. Jaan Kross, the acknowledged master of Estonian historical fiction in the 20th century has argued that "polar landscapes", only thinly covered by historical sources, are more suitable for the writing of historical fictions than the "jungle" landscapes of more thickly charted times. (Kross 1986) However, sparsity of historical sources alone cannot account for the siren song of Sigtuna: "polar" exploration of the past as a foreign country is driven by a desire to mythologize. Since the era of national

awakening in the second half of the 19th century, evoking the precolonial "era of ancient independence" offered an ideological foundation stone for projects of nation-making, and a compensatory counterweight to the subsequent "700 years of servitude" of Baltic-German colonization. The purity of a precolonial "golden age" raises a phantom to the status of a prosthesis. On the one hand, the remote past eludes recovery and reconstruction, despite some archeological and textual evidence: as a screen for heroic projections, there seems little to contradict it. That later colonial violence effaced its traces adds tragic allure. The constructed past, the precolonial golden age is a substitute that compensates, rhetorically and ideologically, for later complexes of inferiority, marginality, subalternity. But even this intent to supplement the past is contradicted by hybridity: the history of the eastern Baltic "Viking era" is an erratic array of culture contacts through trading, piracy, abortive missionary attempts, including the building of churches, and this blurs the pristine picture of "cultures unto themselves", living in arcadian harmony and trading peacefully with neighbours. Some additional distortion of perspective is doubtless due to the domination of a single source – Henricus de Lettis's *Livonia's Chronicle,* in forming an interpretive template for the early Christianization and colonization of the territory of Estonia and Livonia. Its tale of relentless, violent subjection of the native peoples felt raw to the nerves of men of letters in the second half of the 19th century concerned with giving the fledgling Estonian "nation" its history, engendering a number of vehemently reactive essays, which included protestations of ancient greatness.[1] The Sigtuna story-- with its hypothesis that "Estonian Vikings" once combined their forces and devastated a key international trading centre of their age-- was a tantalizingly heroic *sujet*, a counter-narrative node with respect to the colonial humiliation that followed, which deprived the native people of their land, social organization and customs, and their own religion. Ideologically, the Sigtuna story was framed with freedom, tense with tribal military agency, tempered by functioning, pre-colonial democracy, based on intertribal cooperation.

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[1] The *Chronicle* was translated into Estonian from a German edition by Jaan Jung, and published in 1881–83, with the ruse that it had been translated directly from the Latin. (Tarvel 2005: 5)

Both Estonian historians and writers of fiction followed the lure of the Viking era, as symbolized by the seductive punctiousness and totality of the Sigtuna event. The mythologemes seemed ready to hand: destruction of the city was summary and complete, extending to institutions and symbols of civil and religious authority. Churches and warehouses were ransacked; baptizing and trading interrupted. Other mythologemes shimmer beyond the basic structure of the event: the legend that even the city gates were removed and transported by ship to the Estonian islands and the tale of the killing of the bishop, suggesting that the action was not limited to Sigtuna, but spread to Uppsala and the surrounding region. Both of these latter events are evocative, but shrouded from overt factuality. [2]Aside from the double symbolic valence of annihilating symbols of civil-economic and religious power, the Sigtuna event is a compact kernel, ripe for narrativity, capable of being unfolded to epic scale, with room for great individual deeds and the backdrop of a flourishing, fully elaborated "homeland" society.

As a topos, Sigtuna diversified the repertoire of Estonian historical fiction, displacing the focus on tragic and failed rebellions, such as the St. George's Day peasant uprising in 1343 (Eduard Bornhöhe's *Tasuja* (The Avenger, 1880) and replacing it with a tale genuine victory.[3] Herbert Salu points out that the first fictionalization of the Sigtuna story by K. A. Hermann in his 1886 romantic short story "Auulane and Ülo" drew most directly on contemporary amateur historian Jaan Jung's essay on the topic (Jung 1897). However, the mention of Sigtuna can be traced further back to one of the chief ideologues of the national awakening movement, C. R. Jakobson, who mentioned Sigtuna in the first of his "Speeches on the Fatherland" in October 1868. If the destruction of Sigtuna signified that ancient Estonians were worthy equals in seafaring and military might to their Scandinavian neighbours, Jakobson conferred a further specificity on the events, even assigning a specific date, 1 July 1187, to the killing of Bishop Johannes of Uppsala. More intriguing still is Jakobson's (albeit dubious) claim to the persistence of memory of the event, that the link between the Estonians

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[2] The Gates of Sigtuna were actually taken to Novgorod, and were not gates but doors. According to Tarvel, Oscar Almgren demonstrated in 1922 that the legend of the carrying off of the gates of Sigtuna to Novgorod dates from the 16th–17th century. (Tarvel 2005: 25)

[3] Marek Tamm has written an intriguing study of the St George's Day rebellion as a text in Estonian culture. (Tamm 1998)

and the sacking of the town lived on into the second half of the 19th century in the oral tradition of the Swedes. As Salu explains, Hermann`s story and its "sources" partake of the "spirit" of the national awakening, in which drawing a clear boundary between history and fiction was not deemed crucial; indeed, aspiration to such boundaries was dismissed, as pseudomythologies and creative mixtures of "fairy tales and fantasy versions of the past" were rhetorically adequate for "awakening the people" to a sense of historical agency. (Salu 1965: 209)

Salu proceeds to show that the topos of Sigtuna resurfaced from historical obscurity a second time in Estonian letters almost half a century later – when the time again seemed ripe for a booster shot of national heroism rooted in the ancient, golden past, this time in the service of ideologically consolidating the Estonian republic by coherent, official accounts of the past. Professional history and historical fictions often march in syncopated rhythm in such circumstances: while eyeing one another with justified methodological suspicion, they nevertheless serve similar ideological imperatives. The "revival" of Sigtuna began at the end of the 1920s, when Hermann`s story "Auulane and Ülo" became the basis for Voldemar`s Loo's libretto for Eevald Aav's opera, "Vikerlased", which is considered the first Estonian-language opera. (Salu 1965) However, in the interim, historical fiction of the 1890s–1910s had taken a critical realist turn, partly due to the pressures of czarist censorship. The novels of Eduard Vilde *Mahtra sõda* (The Mahtra War) and *Kui Anija mehed Tallinnas käisid* (When the Anija Men went to Tallinn), chastened and cooled historical romanticism with subjects drawn from the era of serfdom, and submitted the power structures underlying the suffering of peasants at the hands of the Baltic-German barons to analysis. The focus in both novels was the episodic outbreaks of resistance to colonial oppression through appeals from Russian imperial authorities, and violent uprisings. Vilde often incorporated actual historical documents into his novels; characters reading, translating, and interpreting these documents are an important aspect of the "critical" realism and the symbolic economy of these historical novels.

Whether the return to topics from the distant "golden" past in the 1930s showed the signs of assimilating critical realist models or represented instead a repetition of romantic historicism is an intriguing question: paradoxically, the modeling of heroic characters was a

romantic throwback, while the fictional world was now stocked with "real" ethnographic detail. The novelist who "wrote Sigtuna" in independent Estonia in the 1930s could cast at least a sidelong glance at allied disciplines – the fruits of a cluster of "national sciences," folkloristics, ethnography, archaeology, and religious studies and consult works of "national history" with chapters on the ancient way of life. Indeed, historical fiction about the "ancient past" and comprehensive national histories meant for popular edification were being generated at the same time, based on fresh research results on Estonian antiquities (Libe 1932). The apparatus of newly-minted contemporary scholarship seemed readymade for the production of "l'effet du réel." This parallelism of fictions and histories is another example of Miroslav Hroch's call for "the analysis of the tension between the academic and the mythological poles of historical consciousness." (Hroch 1999: 99)

A meta-narrative shift occurred between the two waves of "golden precolonial historical fiction." If Jakobson, Hermann, and Jung struggled against the template of colonial history in the recently-rediscovered *Chronicle* of Henricus de Lettis, the narrativization of subjection, the novels of the 1930s seemed free of any such counter-narrative strain: they boldly and confidently proclaimed a proud, autonomous existence of a people at the height of their powers, while purporting to describe "the way things really were."[4]

Sigtuna was a focal point for a cluster of historical fictions about ancient Estonia written during the second half of the 1930s, two novels and one longer novella; K. A. Hindrey's novel *Urmas ja Merike* (1935), and August Mälk`s *Läänemere isandad* (Lords of the Western Sea, 1936, 2nd revised edition 1951) are novels set in the golden age of "ancient independence:" Hindrey's novel`s subtitle announces that it is set "somewhere around 1000", and Mälk subtitles his work more ambiguously, "A novel about the Estonian Viking Era." In both texts, the destruction of Sigtuna is not a central epic event, but rather a culmination located in the final chapter. While the second half of

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[4] W. Reiman wrote about the *Chronicle* of Henricus de Lettis in *Eesti kirjandus* III, 1908. Jaan Jõgever places Henricus's *Livonia's Chronicle* alongside Saxo Grammaticus' Historia Danica, and asks what relevant information each source contributes to a picture of ancient Estonians: "If Henricus de Lettis provides us with pictures of how Estonians lived in their own homeland, then Saxo does the same from a so-called international perspective."

Hindrey`s text slowly builds up to the grand undertaking, the Sigtuna chapter stands detached, a free-standing novella of psychological precision, told from the perspective of a Swedish nobleman caught in the destruction. This oddly grafted epilogue had been published separately under the title "Hukatus Mälaril" (Peril on the Mälari, 1937). However, Hindrey remained intrigued by the topic of Sigtuna, and went on to write a separate, longer novella on the topic, "Sigtuna häving" (The Destruction of Sigtuna, 1937), this time from the point of view of a young Estonian man who takes part in the attack and falls. As distinct from Mälk's novel, in which the destruction of Sigtuna is a collective act of vengeance for earlier brutality against the protagonist, Alar, and his tradesman compatriot Talpak, Hindrey's novella places the event in a ritual order of time, as one of the yearly military campaigns in which young fighters were initiated into masculinity. Like Karl Ristikivi's much later novella "Sigtuna väravad," to be discussed at the end of this article, Hindrey's novellas open the Sigtuna topos to a plurality of points of view, beyond the narrow aperture of nationalist interpretation.

While historical research failed to make significant headway in elucidating the facts of the raid of 1187, both episodes of fictional mythmaking around Sigtuna were successful and widely disseminated in Estonia – both in Hermann's case, where the inclusion of the story in the most popular genre of almanac fiction ensured a readership of at least 12,000, and in the case of Hindrey and Mälk in the 1930s, whose novels vied for a market with Mait Metsanurk's novel of ancient Estonia, *Ümera jõel* (On the Ümera river). (Salu 1965: 211).

That these works were enormously popular with the reading public of the late 1930s can be seen by the high frequency of children's first names taken from the novels` main characters Alliki, Urmas, Merike, Mehis, Maano, Alar. This choice of "ancient and folkloric" first names might be considered a complement to or an aspect of the 1930s campaign for the "Estonianization" of surnames (little studied as a nation-making practice among historians). Indeed, as later emerged, Hindrey's fictional couple`s names, Urmas and Merike, were entirely a matter of "invented tradition." The need for an ancient past also dovetailed with the revival of practices of traditional Estonian folk religion (Taara usk) in the late 1930s.

II

While it may seem easy cynically to discredit the "nationalist myth-making" around Sigtuna as romantic hyperbole, traffic across the open boundary between fiction and history in the 1930s calls for a more analytic look. August Mälk's *Läänemere isandad* will be the focus of this closer examination of the representation of Sigtuna. In her compelling study of the hybridity of the historical novel as a form, Ann Rigney points to three strategies by which Walter Scott, in the writing of *Old Mortality*, "mixed and matched historical information in constructing his story": selection, transformation, and supplementation. The transformation function entails not only "reworking of historical particulars," but "intensifying or inflating phenomena", while supplementation extends to the invention of characters whose convincing presence and ontological integration into the fictional world make them liable to be included as representative social types in an historian's account of the past, their prototypes even commemorated by gravestones laid by grateful readers. (Rigney 2001: 22–23) The result of this motivated set of narrativizing maneuvers, historical fiction, is a "mixed form", rejected by theorists, but accepted, even with alacrity, by critics and readers. Considering the density of Scott's available oral, written, and tangible source material on the Covenanters in the second half of the 17th century, Rigney identifies one of the larger implications of his historical fiction-making: "If Scott's manipulation of the historical record by selecting, transforming, and supplementing evidence is examined from the point of view of the purpose it ultimately serves, it becomes quickly obvious that it tends above all toward *reducing the figurative diversity* that characterized the historical record." (Ib. 27, italics mine).

The challenge of fictionality in cases such as the novelization of Sigtuna is opposite in several ways to Scott's task in writing a historical novel about events still warm in the living memory of his oldest contemporaries: for Mälk and Hindrey, it is not a matter of reducing figurative diversity, but rather amplifying and enhancing it, bringing the remote past closer without domesticating it or naturalizing it to a contemporary present, and filling the canvas with attributes of a "lived world." Selection in this context entails the *coupure* or cut made in the historical subject matter, locating and limiting it spatiotemporally, between two crises pegged to textual sources. A corresponding transfor-

mative strategy is to "read outward" from available textual sources, interpolating with ethnographic detail, and giving characters names, faces, implements and epithets. Mälk`s novel begins with the return of an Estonian islanders' (western Ölanders) trading expedition from the trading centre at Ükskŭla, on the banks of the Väina river. Implicitly, this opening evokes the beginning of Henricus de Lettis's *Livonia's Chronicle*, with its representation of Meinhard's mission against the background of Saxon traders, who enjoyed friendly relations with Livonians, and regularly sailed up the Väina River to visit them. (*Henriku Liivimaa kroonika*, I, 2, 25) The Saxon traders and the Christian missionary represent the ur-story of colonization. In Mälk`s novel, the shadow of the future menace of a more oppressive presence of the foreign traders is evoked in a conversation between protagonist Alar and his cousin, "Black" Olav. One of the Livonian elders tells of the Saxon traders` plans to winter in their common trading spot, increase the supply of goods, and to build a fortress there. "Will this not be a noose for the Livonians?" said Olav, doubtfully. "This is our land, and we are the lords of it. The fortress will remain, but the Saxon men can go their own way, if we or they get tired of one another." (Mälk 1951: 12) When the Öland men return to their own shores, the warning beacons are burning: a Danish raid has taken place, which has to be avenged without delay. Indeed, Mälk's novel is symmetrically framed by two avenging expeditions, one for a Danish raid on the island of Öland, for which retaliation follows in an expedition on Denmark, the other the raid on Sigtuna, which expiates the sufferings of Alar, Ata`s son during his initiation journey, the territory of the middle of the novel. For the first retaliation, Mälk sticks very closely to Saxo Grammaticus' account from Book XIV. Indeed, more representational risks are taken here than in the climactic scene of the destruction of Sigtuna.

Supplementation as a narrative strategy begins with the invention of individuals and incidents who are "native" to the story. (Rigney 2001: 23). In Mälk's novel, all characters are invented, exemplifications of broad types such as the elder, the shaman priest, the trader, the singer, and the warrior. How, then, to choose an angle of appropriate anachronism, especially in presenting "ethnographically correct" implements of daily life, rituals of communal observance, descriptions of fortifications and accounts of warcraft? Descriptions of the interior of the fortification of Lehholinn differ little from ethnographic thick descrip-

tions, with colours added. In *Läänemere isandad,* Mälk resorts to simulated folk poetry, which he puts in the mouths of his characters at the burial pyre of warriors, sacrificial ceremonies in the sacred grove (hiis), or ceremonies of farewell and welcome. To later readers, particularly those with an ear for traditional folk poetry, this compositional element may generate a sense of caricature and artifice.

Rationalization of the attack on Sigtuna is provided by the middle section of the novel, Alar`s initiatory journey to Sigtuna, where he is to learn as much as he can during Talpak`s winter of trading. As predicted by the shaman, Alar is smitten by Gyla, the local elder`s daughter, whom he attempts to abduct. Failing in his attempt, seriously wounded, and with Talpak killed in the skirmish, Alar is declared an outlaw, and spends the winter in hiding, aided by Estonian settlers. Mälk presents a convincing picture of masculine weakness as Alar gradually recovers from his wounds and relies on his true companion, the hunchback Jakar, to make the grueling return journey across the spring ice. Tried and proven worthy in his ordeal, and his father Ata having died (a peacetime death in a bear hunt) in his absence, Alar must assume leadership, dislodge the menacing rival and kinsman Black Olav, and plan vengeance on Sigtuna. Another motive for vengeance is Alar`s instinctive suspicion of Christian religion, which the author has grafted onto the Gyla plot in a compositionally risky episode in which Alar, before his wounding, visits the Christian priest and has a discussion with him about the old and the new religions.

In representing the climactic battle at Sigtuna, Mälk`s fictional focus is on the mobilization of a fighting company, arrival of the local elders, rituals of departure, and the sea journey, followed by the strategic deployment of the ships to best take the city. According to his biographers, Mälk made a research trip to Sigtuna, and was aided by a local history buff in acquainting himself with the geography of the area and available sources in Swedish. The specificity with which he describes the passage into the Mälari reads with the immediacy of an action film: precisely embodied characters are mapped onto a clearly drawn landscape. The battle scene is narrated similarly to the attack on Danish shores, with a more pronounced declaration of finality: "The city burned until dawn. The fire was reflected in the quiet waters, and the patterns of sparks crackled into the skies, the smoke glowed from within with fire: the lake mirrored back a second perishing world. But on the banks of the lake, men were shouting and brandishing their

swords of victory toward the sky. The wounded lay, holding back their moans of pain, since the work was done; there was joy rather than suffering on their faces." (Mälk 1951: 358) On the return sea journey, the wounded Alar certifies the success of the raid: "We have accomplished a great deed! We are the lords of this sea!" (Ib. 368) The only surprise element in the story is the settling of female accounts: the fact that Alar's bride Meeli has come along as a stowaway, donning warrior's armor to conceal herself. Meeli is given a limited role to show her warrior's prowess, but this is carefully subordinated to the romantic plot: she is afraid that Alar will succumb to the lure of Gyla, and uses her sword to release Gyla, whom Alar has bound to take home as a slave woman. Gyla`s release guarantees Meeli's unchallenged hold on the future of Alar's line of descendants. As a coda, the last sentences of the novel proclaim sovereignty into an indeterminate, mythic future, looking forward to the songs that will be sung in later generations of the great deeds of heroes: "...the voice of the singer will fail before it can tell of even a small part of those deeds; they will remain for the waters to guard, the sky to know, and descendants to share, since the strong walk on, along a path all their own." (Ib.)

The comparative reception of the wave of "golden past" novels in the 1930s indicated a keen interest in the intersection of fiction and history. While on the one hand, reviewers admonished writers to spend more time doing preparatory archival research (Merivälja 1935), especially in the ethnographic reconstruction of milieu, and accused them of costuming characters with modern psychological profiles in "old clothes," by 1940 critics who were themselves historians urged their colleagues to pay closer attention to the texture of these fictions. (Urgart 1940: 14) Indeed, in the case of the 1930s Estonian Sigtuna novels, one can argue that development in tandem of "national" scholarly disciplines (such as archaeology and ethnography) with a tradition of historical fiction provided a close counterpoint of "thick descriptions." This closer symbiosis of fictionalists and historians on the level of "life-world reconstruction" than their more common adversarial relation would suggest, and Miroslav Hroch`s point with respect to their motivated congruence is once again apt: "By and large, writers respected the results of historical research. In this sense the academic interpretation of the nature and tenor of the past was faithfully presented in the literary image of history. Historical reality was generally interpreted through the selection of facts and through

moral judgments and modernizing fiction in a form that corresponded to "present-day" demands – that is to say the contemporary phase in the process of nation-building. In other words, the effect on the writers of contemporary conditions made itself felt not only through modernizing love stories and psychological interpretations but also through the retrospective perception of national goals." (Hroch 1999: 107)

Hindrey's anomalous last chapter to *Urmas and Merike*, his novella "The Destruction of Sigtuna," and Karl Ristikivi's 1968 novella "The Gates of Sigtuna" resist the epic perspective of Mälk`s novel and the service to a meta-narrative prologue to the construction of nationhood; neither author makes any effort to give the taking of Sigtuna the shape of strategic or heroic action. This alternative mythography of Sigtuna points beyond nationalist imperatives and postcolonial Angst to an inescapable and irreducible hybridity. Instead of expanding to the scope of heroic deeds of a powerful people, the narrative kernel shrinks, without losing its lapidary shape, into the compass of lyric unity. Indeed, Hindrey`s struggle to end his novel of the era of ancient independence with a Sigtuna set-piece is strangely symbolic. Just as the expanded canvas of ancient Estonia is to find legitimation in heroic action, there is a rupture – and the novel ends in an entirely different key, with the transposed novella, narrated from the point of view of a master ironsmith, Egil son of Torgil, who on his return from Uppsala, hears the sound of the alarm bells from St. Per`s. The multiple turns of the story illuminate hybridization. As Egil leans against a runestone carved by his great-great-grandfather Asmund on the road from Uppsala to Sigtuna that tells of a man who fell in the land of Estonia ("eestide maal") a century and a half ago, he stops to rest and meditate. Though Egil can no longer read the runic markings, he contemplates the two religions that vie for control, the gods of the North, and the "new religion" with its churches and its bells. The dividing line runs through his own family, as his wife, Astrid, is of Lappish stock, and uses the potions and spells of her own people; Asmund already marked his runestones with the sign of the cross, though holding to the northern gods, while Asmund`s brother Torulf rejected Christianity and retreated from it further and further into the northern woods. With the runestone, Hindrey maps the temporal dimension of his story of Sigtuna, locating its "origin" 150 years before the siege of Sigtuna: this is the scope of the Estonian "Viking age, which by the time of Sigtuna, is already on the decline. Contours of the city of Sigtuna, under threat in the white

summer night, are given approximately, through symbolic touches; the loud sound of alarm bells from the several churches only gradually revealing the seriousness of this new siege. Egil witnesses the destruction of Sigtuna, and is briefly pulled into the city's defense, is hit on the head and losess consciousness. The story ends when he finds his wife`s charred leather glove in the ruins of St. Per's church. The focus of both of Hindrey's Sigtuna novellas, "Peril at Mälari" and "The Destruction of Sigtuna" is outside the action of taking the city; in the first, the crossroads of traditions and religions, in the second, warrior culture, individual male initiation, and the ethos of masculine solidarity in a warrior band.

Ristikivi's novella "The Gates of Sigtuna" is an elegant and cunning study of the afterlife of the Sigtuna myth, focused not on Estonian nationhood, but on the line of Swedish kings, and the mytheme of the gates of Sigtuna, supposedly carried off along with the church bells, after the siege that leveled the city. The tale is not a historical romance, but a parable, skirting the borders of a fairy tale. Set in the 14th century, the story begins in the house of Anders Persson, where the local nobles are plotting for Sweden to have its own king, one not under the thumb of Denmark, sharing their dream that Sweden must rise again to its former greatness. The legitimation of Swedish kingship depended on interpretation of a prophecy by Saint Brigitta of Vadstena – when the gates of Sigtuna are returned from the Church of St. Sofla in Novgorod to Nyköping, the troubles of Sweden will be over. Symbolic action must be translated into literal action, real deeds that both test and enact the prophecy. At this place in the novella, the conflicting historiographical hypotheses around the taking of Sigtuna cross: if the gates of Sigtuna were taken by the Estonian tribes, how did they get to Novgorod? Perhaps the raid on Sigtuna was not a testimony to the greatness of the Estonian Vikings, but a collective action by the Karelians and other Finnic tribes, lost in historical oblivion? The narrator plies the multiple strings of his tale, allowing these crossing threads to generate aesthetic patterns, the richer for their puzzling, knotting course.

When tradesman Nils Johansson takes on the expedition to Novgorod to reclaim the gates, not only do the "gates" of Sigtuna turn out to be much smaller than myth would have them – doors that a tall man could not pass through without stooping, but Nils' efforts at clever bargaining, in which the price named for the return of the gates is the

Swedish-held fortress of Nöteborg, are interrupted by a Muscovite siege on Novgorod, turning Nils into a prisoner for many years. The overdetermination of oracles leaves it up to the reader to decide – which is the new city, Nyköping or Novgorod: the names are synonymous. In the dénouement of the novella, on the eve of the battle of Brunkeberg, on 9 October 1471 (the historical date is specifically marked in the text), the prisoner Nils Johansson is brought before Sten Sture, who fears losing the battle, as the majority of Swedish nobles have sided with King Kristian. Sten asks after the gates of Sigtuna, and Nils replies: "Anyone who can speak any Russian knows that Novgorod means the same thing as Nyköping. And since Saint Brigitta always spoke Latin in her sleep, which language we use to name the city is of no importance whatsoever. Birgitta`s prophecy has long been fulfilled. There is nothing for it but to pick up our swords and get on with it!" (Ristikivi 1968: 201) The narrator closes the tale with three waves of a light hand, smoothing out the pleats of the historical canvas with irony: first, everyone knows how the battle of Brunkeberg ended. Second, Sten never allowed himself to be crowned king, while history is silent about the fate of Nils. And third, Anders Persson`s house, where the story began, is remembered, only, but widely, in a familiar Christmas carol, sung while dancing around the Christmas tree: in it Anders Persson's house burns to the ground. Just like Sigtuna, and the disappearing tale of its reflection, slipping into the sea.

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The Journey of the White Ship

RUTT HINRIKUS

In 1844 Elias Lönnrot, author of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*, took a walking tour through Estonia, and, having seen the circumstances in which Estonians lived, wrote that he would never choose to live there, not even for a day, and not even for a high salary.

One hundred years later, in 1944, approximately 75, 000 people fled Estonia. There were a great deal more who wished to flee – at least a tenth of the population, but, as it was said in those days – the white ship never came.

The origin of the Estonian local myth of the white ship can be traced to the beginning of the 19th century. The first half of the 19th century for was a bleak time in Estonia. Various efforts were made to curb economic decline. Estonian peasants were freed from serfdom in 1816 (northern Estonia) and 1819 (southern Estonia), and along with freedom they were assigned proper names. However, they continued to be completely dependent on the Baltic German landowners in a condition of corvee servitude, compensating for the use of the land by their labour. The ruling nobility tried to modernize the economy, but the crisis continued, and brought with it disturbances and uprisings among the peasantry. In 1848 a new agrarian statute was passed, which was later updated. The interpretation of the new law created disturbances among the peasantry, and these gave rise to a movement to change confession (conversion to the Greek Orthodox – in popular parlance – the Russian faith) and a wave of emigrations, since conversion was rewarded with the promise of land to till in Russia.

This period of deep hopelessness was nevertheless the prelude to a new rising. The period of Estonian national awakening began in the second half of the 19th century, largely initiated in the lower strata of

society. At the borderline of two eras – the transition from a tormented half-sleep to full awakening – modern Estonian culture was born and rapidly gathered strength. With the creation by F. R. Kreutzwald of the national epic *Kalevipoeg* (1853–1861), the foundation was laid for a national literature. During this same period there were weird movements among the people, which found their way from the realm of history into literature and folklore, living on in the form of legends and continuing their life in language, where they continued to generate tropes and images. In their oppressed circumstances the Estonian peasantry was attuned to every ray of hope, but when their hope was not fulfilled, rebellions broke out. At the same time, many peasants were ready to believe those preachers who promised them freedom, not in the immediate but in the indeterminate future, not even in this earthly life, but rather in the Garden of Paradise. The literate peasant who knew a little bit about world literature would have known about John Bunyan`s *Pilgrim`s Progress* ("Ristiinimese teekond Taewa linna poole")[1], reprinted many times in Estonian translation over the course of the 19th century. The subtitle of this text was "Explained in the form of parables for the sake of the soul of the Estonian people." But he certainly would not have known about Thomas More's book *De optimo statu rei publicae deque nova insula Utopia libellus vere aureus nec minus salutarius* nor about the island of Utopia, introduced to the world through this text.

Yet if Estonia`s men and women dreamed of a just world and an ideal society, more than anything else they dreamed of their own plot of land – a dream that belongs among the oldest fantasies of humankind. Since land was not to be had in the homeland, the longing for an unknown country, which does not exist in this life took stranger and more uncanny forms; on the one hand it spurred the search for a new homeland, on the other, it was transformed into a longing for a land that once was, but had been lost long ago. Thus utopia was filled with nostalgia, since it was a special form of the nostalgic longing for lost happiness.

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[1] The 1st Estonian language edition of he Bunyans book was: *Ristiinnimesse teekond Taewa linna pole: Tähhendamisse sannaga ärraselletud Eesti-ma rahwa hinge kassuks* [[John Bunyan; tõlkinud Caspar Franz Lorenzsonn] Pernos, W. Borm, 1842.

Estonian literature, which grew quickly in the last quarter of the 19th century, began with works focused on an idealized past (the historical novels of Andres Saal and Eduard Bornhöhe's cult youth novel *Tasuja* ('The Avenger',1880) all spoke of a primal era of independence). Thus, through the popular romanticism of storybooks, nostalgia became one of the mechanisms of constructing a national identity, confirming the myth of Estonians as a people with a great past.

In "real time," flight into the past was impossible; the real place to flee to had to be represented as a distant land, by means of analogies taken from the book the people were best acquainted with – the Bible; familiar metaphors included the longed-for country as the "new Canaan" that "flowed with milk and honey"; this land was the Garden of Eden, paradise.

At the time the people's knowledge of geography was as sparse as its knowledge of many other things, and thus those who took it upon themselves to lead the people held significant power over the masses. In actuality, two extreme possibilities were merged symbolically: the search for an unearthly or heavenly "new country", and the search for a real "new land" by means of the emigration movement.

The history of this first Estonian emigration was recorded in the 1880s by Gustav Malts, who by then was an old man, who had been among the ideologues of the emigration of 1860. At that time the pietist Herrnhuter movement, which spread to Estonia from Germany in the first half of the 18th century[2] was popular among the poor Estonian peasants.

In extreme cases this movement was accompanied by outbreaks of religious riots, and occasionally gave rise to "people's prophets". One of these – Juhan Leinberg (1812–1885) – became a popular prophet under the name Maltsvet. He was active in northern Estonia, and stirred the people to emigrate to the Promised Land in central Russia and the Crimea. "Prophet Maltsvet" made his first prophecies in 1853; his preachings about emigration from Estonia were based on the visions of one of his followers, the servant girl Miina Reinig, who was inclined to religious transports. The most ecstatic of the Herrnhuters were referred to as "visitors to heaven" (taevaskäijad); they would fall into a trance

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[2] See: Ilja, Voldemar. Vennastekogudusc (herrnhutluse) ajalugu Eestimaal I–V. /History of the Herrnhut Movement in Estonia / Logos, Tallinn 1995–2006.

and later tell about their heavenly revelations. These would lead in turn to a reaction very similar to the expectations of the "last days": in 1861 Miina Reinig and the other people (the majority of them were women) waited near Tallinn for the arrival of a special ship which would bring them to the promised land – they were expecting the white ship to come. Faithful believers waiting for the white ship were scattered in various places along the seashore.

"Prophet" Maltsvet's nephew, Gustav Malts, though one of the heads of the emigration movement did not belong to the "maltsvetites" himself. He referred to the widespread religious riots of the second half of the 19th century as "various kinds of ravings and visions" (*mitmesugused jampsimised ja nägemused*). Indeed, in the memoirs he left behind (stored in the Estonian Literary Museum: KM EKLA f 153, m 26), Gustav Malts expressed no particular compassion toward those who waited for the ship. The whole story is presented as something of a curiosity: "Every day there was more and more ridicule and laughter, not that there was little of it before." The crowd of people waiting for the ship was such an extraordinary and memorable phenomenon, that there was much to say about it for some time to come; the event almost spontaneously generated its own narrative.

In the first Estonian-language newspaper of the time, *Eesti Postimees*, there were also reports of how people went out to gawk at those who were waiting for the white ship. Many of those who were better informed expressed the pragmatic view that it might be easier to get to the Crimea by land than by ship. In his memoirs, Gustav Malts adds the comment, "What could the stupid, blind peasant know about what was possible or impossible?" (*Mis teadis see rumal pime talupoeg mis võimalik, mis võimata on*). (Käosaar 1961: 75–77)

> Around this time there was a great deal of material published in newspapers that ridiculed the Maltsvet movement. Though we do not have much oral tradition about this interesting motif, we do have plenty of printed sources.

What might be the popular sources of this belief in a mythic white ship? Of course the image of a ship is in itself nothing strange to a people living by the sea. The ship, especially the sailing ship, has a clear place in the repertoire of romantic symbolism. In both older and newer strata

of Estonian folksongs, there is a rich variety of texts about ships and sea journeys (for example the popular song of "A silk flag and silver sails/ a golden ship with silk flag turns to sea") but there are no specific texts about white ship. As we can see from what has been said so far, the basis for the motif of the white ship lies in historical events, but the image is of a folkloristic nature. Since we can chart the later course of the white ship, we can safely say that what we are witnessing here is the birth of a myth. In explaining the connections between myth and history, Roland Barthes has claimed that the task of myth is to allow certain concepts to reach their destination, to facilitate their acceptance; thus myth neither confirms nor lies, but only distorts the idea. (Barthes 2004: 253) The white ship is the symbol of of the peasants' longing, signifing not only their dream of liberation, but above all their longing for a land their own. This country is somewhere far away, and one has to get there somehow, in Barthes words, the myth distorts the thought into a form. (Ib. 256) As a form, the white ship is enchantingly beautiful.

There has been far more discussion about the dissemination of the myth than about the process of its creation. The extraordinary event of crowds waiting for the arrival of a white ship was quickly rendered in various literary texts, many of which fell into oblivion (Schultz-Bertram, and others). Nevertheless, it is literature which has had the greatest influence on the dissemination of the story.

The most influential of these is is popular realist writer Eduard Vilde's novel *Prohvet Maltsvet*, which treats of the first great wave of emigration of the 19th century, and which was first published serially in the newspaper in 1905. Vilde clearly used Gustav Malts' reminiscences as an important source for his research for the novel, in which people are forced to emigrate because of unendurable economic conditions, and the lack of any kind of human rights. Vilde describes how people travelled, often on foot, from Estonia to the Crimean peninsula, where land could be bought cheaply. One chapter of the novel describes a group of emigrants waiting in May 1861 (in reality 25–27 June) on the high bank of Lasnamäe near Tallinn, with the unflinching faith that a ship would come that would take their people to the Promised Land. Some of the women start screaming ecstatically, as if they could actually see the ship. Faith in the coming of the ship was not bound specifically to the cliff of Lasnamäe; rather, people waited for its arrival at various places along the coast. "That ship was born of the foam of

poetry, but it took more and more of a real shape on the seashore of Tallinn," the novella's author remarks. (Masing 1993: 142)

As a compelling symbol the white ship has enchanted several later fiction writers. On the basis of Vilde's novel, the Finnish-Estonian writer Aino Kallas used the story about waiting for the white ship from a woman's point of view in one of her own novellas *The White Ship* (1913). In her analysis of he novella Lea Rojola discusses the split of a personaliy caused by the discrepancy between the body and mind which in women result in hysteria. The climax of the tragedy is the death of the children and thus the white ship which is longed for becomes the children's coffin. (Rojola 1995: 78–79) The message of he novella by Aino Kallas is disillusioning: after five weeks of waiting the women conclude that the white ship does not exist.

In memoirs of the Maltsvetite emigration, the focus is not on the image of the ship, but on those who waited for it, who put their faith in it as a saviour. The most pertinent retrospective study of the Maltsvet phenomenon was written in 1937 by poet, theologian and philosopher Uku Masing, who thoroughly analyzed all of the available sources. He concluded that those who were waiting for the white ship on Lasnamäe were crazy, or had temporarily taken leave of their senses. (Masing 1993: 142) Masing likewise sketched out the scriptural parallels: if Maltsvet was Moses, then one had to suppose that life in Estonia was like slavery in Egypt, from which Maltsvet was to deliver them, taking them to freedom through the Red Sea. The land where Maltsvet promised to take them was phantasmagorical, a fairy tale kingdom; due to their lack of information, the people had no way of thinking of it any differently. It is claimed that "The funniest story about the emigration was that Prince Konstantin would come for the people in a ship, a white ship, to be exact, and take them over the sea to Crimea. The white ship finally turned into a white cloud, which was to raise up the travellers and take them to the promised land." (Masing 1993: 142)

In her article on Aino Kallas` novel *The White Ship*, Silja Vuorikouru has emphasized the role of nostalgic utopia, regarding those who waited on the cliffs of Lasnamäe as an "utopian community". She stresses the fact that this is a women`s utopia: "everyday life is so oppressive that to escape it, one has to flee into a utopia." (Vuorikuru 2007: 195) On this basis the figure of the white ship gathered strength, growing into a trope for the people`s despair and and their creative imagination. Belief in a mythic white ship has sources in popular

emotion: for a seaside people, every departing ship is charged with longing.

In Estonian folksongs, there is a rich variety of texts about ships and sea journeys. In Russian folklore we find a popular fairy tale about a flying ship. In one of the most visionary songs of the Estonian national epic, *Kalevipoeg*, the son of Kalev sets out in search of the end of the world on a ship named "Lennuk" (Airship). Among Estonian modernist writers of the beginning of the 20th century, the motif provided inspiration to Friedebert Tuglas, one of the leaders of the cultural renewal movement "Young Estonia".

Tuglas' own myth-making intentions and his yearnings for the fantastical reach their limit in his novella "At the End of the World," which connects Kalevipoeg's journey to the end of the world with a variant of the Estonian Tannhäuser. In Tuglas' tragic, skeptical, and romantic story a wanderer lands on an island where he is met with the love of a Giant Maiden. The story ends in death. The place where the action takes place – the end of the world – is as important as its tragic solution. The ship crosses the border from the ordinary world to the farthest reaches, the realm of the "world's end". Another piece by Tuglas was also inspired by the motif of the white ship. In 1908 he wrote a miniature entitled "The Black Ship", which ends with the cry of a child who is waiting for a ship to come: "Father! There is a ship at the edge of the sky! When the people get moving, ("faithful ones, the ship is coming, the ship is coming!",) the child shouts, "Father, father, the ship has black sails! The ship is all black!" Tuglas wrote the miniature in 1908 but first published in 1942 during the war.

Historical events may be forgotten, but their traces remain. According to Barthes, history can lose mythical concepts very easily, since these concepts are themselves historical. Likewise, he claims that the relationship people have to myth is not a relationship of truth, but rather one of practice; the myth can be depoliticized according to need. In our case we can see how both depolicitization and politicization can happen; in other words, we can regard the white ship as a sign consisting of a signifier and a signified.

However, in the 20th century the white ship continues to instill hope and inspire a search for hopeful analogies. For Estonians in the years following the second World War, the white ship temporarily stood for something analogous to what it was to the maltsvetites 100 years earlier – a symbol of nostalgic hope. This time they were no longer searching

for a utopian isle of good fortune, but rather mourning lost time. In his poetry collection *Džunglilaulud* (1965) Uku Masing returns to the motif of the white ship to confirm the fulfilment of dark visions of the future: over the white plain swims/the shadow of black mist/a coverlet is woven for the Milky Way/ by a crowd of the murdered – the agony of earth and sky/would cast me down/ though the white ship of rescue/cannot pull free of the ice. In life stories that tell about the postwar years, the metaphor of the white ship can be encountered quite frequently: "...stories spread that the "white ship" would come. The Americans would not allow things to stay as they were. Surely there would be a turn of events," one or another would confirm; that is, among those whom one could trust." (Hinrikus 2003: 39)

Neither has the motif disappeared from recollections of the beginning of the 1950s: "People were still waiting for a white ship. The Americans kept promising over the radio that they would come and liberate us. Because of this, even though they were already in collective farms, everyone kept ploughing their own field with their own horse." (Ib. 75) The same metaphor can be seen when describing the mood of the end of the 1950s: "The time of waiting for the white ship had long been over, and self-evident necessities of life forced people to make choices that they did not consider right. (Ib. 288)

In the database of sayings and phraseologisms in the folklore archives there are variants not of stories, but of idioms. There are not many of these, and they can be divided between two variants. The first is statements of the form "As if (they were) waiting for the white ship", and on some occasions, "The gentlemen and ladies took the white ship to Germany." The second of these refers to a specific event, the precipitate departure of the Baltic Germans at Hitler's summons in the spring of 1940. The first stands for the great flight into exile of 1944, and for the hope of those who stayed behind in Estonia that a change would come to their lives as well. Indeed, the white ship has been regarded not only as the symbol for flight or deliverance, but as a literal saviour. In a unique document from the postwar era, a diary kept over almost 10 years by school director and literary historian Jaan Roos, who was hiding from the Soviet authorities, there is a comprehensive record of rumours that flew in the postwar years. Among them is the recurring hope in saviours from beyond the border; stories also circulate either of a 100 000 man army waiting at the German border, or of a flotilla

arriving by sea. Prince Konstantin had been replaced by an almost-personified West.

The political meaning invested in the myth (or the lack of such meaning) depends on concrete circumstances. In her book *The Finnish* Boys, published in Finland in 1999, A. Isohella explained, "What they all were waiting for was intervention from the west – a new war – a white ship that they believed would appear one day in Tallinn harbour, in the form of a British warship, for example. Estonians awaited the end of the Second World War and the restoration of a just order in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter." (Isohella 2008: 392)

The 2005 collection of life stories from Russian-speaking residents of Estonia brought a text to the archive which contained an unexpected surprise in the form of a brightly rendered memory of childhood.

> What I clearly remember from my childhood is fear. I was afraid of the white ship. All of the children in our yard knew what would happen to them when the white ship came. My older sisters were apparently not interested in this question. And so it was that of all the children we played with, both in our yard and the neighbouring one, I was the only one with this problem. I even went to the seashore to see whether or not it would appear. If it was not on the horizon, I was safe for the whole day – the whole matter lay in the fact that the Estonian girls among my friends knew the white ship would bring them freedom; for the Russians, it meant they would have to hide. It seemed I was the only one who did not know what would happen to her. Not knowing was a sharp torture. They probably waited for the ship to come during my whole childhood. It was supposed to come from Sweden and liberate Estonia from the Russians. But since I did not belong completely to one or the other of these groups, it turned out that I did not know what would become of me. What kind of liberation it was going to be, noone could explain. What one should do, who should hide and where, noone knew that either. It was only that everyone knew the ship would come. I imagined it as a huge sailing ship. (KM EKLA f 350)

The author is a woman, born in Haapsalu in 1949. Let us call her Marina. From her life story we find out that she comes from an Ingrian family sent to Estonia during the war; more precisely she is of mixed origin, her father an Ingrian, her mother Russian. What the writer knows about her roots is that one of her forefathers came from Finland to Russia to earn money; he wanted to buy a house in Porvoo, but he fell in love and got married. The result was the writer's grandmother. She in turn married an Ingrian, and after the Finnish war most of the family members went to Finland; for some reason their family remained behind in Estonia. The text that was submitted by the author was only a few pages long; it was nothing more than a fragment, a description of a single episode in her life. In the accompanying letter, the writer notes: "Naturally I am not a professional writer, and I cannot even explain to myself why I am writing." Undertaking to record her memories meant to Marina that she was taking on the ambitions of a writer.

After some encouragement, the author submitted a slightly longer text half a year later, in which she had elaborated on the theme of the white ship. Marina admits that to this day she sees a certain parallelism between the white ship and her own life.

The life story is composed in Russian, but Marina's accompanying letters are in fine Estonian. What does she mean when she says that all of this is somehow parallel to her life? Does she mean a recurring psychological state or symbols by which she can interpret her life?

This rather short piece of writing brought up a number of questions. Why is the white ship a symbol of childhood for her? It seems as though the white ship is located at the crossroads of different sign systems. Yet one of the crucial reference points of a memory picture is time, and there is no direct reference to this in the text. In Marina's "individual time" it is her childhood.

Commonly in memoirs the past is narrated using the present tense. "To tell a story is to take arms against the threat of time, to resist time or to harness time." Marina tries to write her life story through the standpoint of the girl she once was, since she remembers what the white ship meant to that girl. A. Portelli refers to the remembered past in life stories as "time outside time," the time of certain personal recollections, or as a certain personal or family myth. (Portelli 1999: 59)

But we need other frameworks for time in order to map out a broader context for the story. Rein Veidemann, a representative of the Tartu school of semiotics claims that the whole nature of time tends

toward signification. Mikhail Bakhtin makes use of the concept of chronotope, in which time unites in itself the time of narration, the place, and the narrator. Thus in Marina's case we can derive the time of events from the narrator's date of birth and from known historical facts. Veidemann goes on to state that the question of time is a question of translation; time is a translation. Or rather, that in the textual field, time presents itself as an encoded text, which in turn organizes textuality. The presentation of text as a code can be clearly seen from Marina's story. If we can locate the time of events more specifically, we are in a better position to crack the code.

The time of Marina's story is Haapsalu in the middle of the 1950s, an idyllic resort town; since it was a border town with respect to the USSR, the Soviet era saw an influx of a large concentration of military personnel, for whom a military airfield was constructed. Haapsalu was a very typical occupied town, but Marina's Russian and Estonian playmates were not ordinarily conscious of this. Only Marina harboured an unconscious fear that a white ship would come and take all the Estonians away, and that she would be left behind; "since I did not belong completely to either one or the other group, it turned out that I had no idea what would become of me."

When Barthes affirms that myth is speech, or, in other words, "Myth is always stealing language" (Barthes 2024: 256), he also provides an explanation of the transplantation of the white ship from the realm of faith and poetry into speech and language. "Ordinary language", claims Barthes, "offers very weak resistance".

Thus we can see that the white ship has been regarded not only as a symbol of escape or rescue, but as the embodiment of a real saviour. In any event, the symbol is strongly bound up with waves of emigration, of fleeing to a new country.

Paradoxically, in the Soviet period the image of the white ship became the object of ideological struggle. Not infrequently, people were accused of "waiting for the white ship." To expose and demystify expectations of the coming of the white ship a film was even made in Estonia. The film, entitled *The White Ship* and released in 1971 (directed by K. Komissarov) was a Soviet propaganda film, intended to expose so-called western "secret fabrications." A group of young people falls under the influence of Estonians who fled to the west, and they flee themselves, over the sea to Sweden. The image of the white ship is used as a negative signifier of those who lament the loss of the

Estonian republic. At the same time, the film was supposed to dispel the hope of Western intervention and to confirm the belief that Soviet ideology was eternal. According to this film, the white ship is something that never arrives, and thus nothing to pin one's hopes on.

Marina's reminiscences also include a memory of how she saw *The White Ship* and was disappointed by it, sensing a certain falsehood in it. Rather, the filmscript is fighting against a collective myth of the arrival of a supernatural saviour. At the same time, the film tries to infuse the rhetorical figure with the opposite meaning. As such it is a stark example of the total failure of most such attempts to fight against collective myths.

We can assert that although the image of the white ship had a strong ideological charge to begin with, neither could it be resolved by negative symbolism. One reason is that the white ship is a very romantic image Marina states draws parallels from the white ship to her own life without explaining the basis for them. Is it her longing to escape and the lack of fulfillment of this hope? Perhaps it is a very personal wish that does not find fulfillment. In any case, Marina's clinging to the white ship, with its strong literary intention, is an expression of her status as a stranger, with no place of her own, her lack of belonging. Specifically, what she feared was that a white ship would come and take all the Estonians away, leaving her alone behind. From here we can doubtless begin to elaborate on the complicated relationships between "us" and "them", "our own" and "strangers".

For many centuries the Bible and ancient mythology has been a rich root system giving rise to a wealth idiomatic expression in everyday speech. The white ship is a recent water sprout, as it were, derived from this root.

Herbert Salu, who has also traced the motif of the White Ship in literature, calls to mind that the appearance of the White Ship has also been used to foretell the future. (Salu 1970: 135)

An example of the the literary productivity of this motif is Uku Masing`s cycle of poems "The Son of Man on the White Ship" includes a "Song of the White Ship", a visionary poetic text:

> Põlevad samblatordid riivasid sydame uksi,
> tuisus ei kustunud nemad, loitlesid oodates suve,
> oodates Valget Laeva, oi valget Laeva

(Burning tufts of moss brushed the doors of my heart/ their flame did not go out, but they blossomed in wait of summer/ awaiting the White Ship, o the White Ship)

Aino Kallas' novella of the white ship of Lasnamäe ends with the recognition that the white ship does not exist. All of the others who are waiting also conclude that the white ship will never come. Yet the white ship returns in recurrent fantasies, which are ever reborn, since Uku Masing calls it "the symbol of the people's soul".

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Biblical Myths and National Identity in Contemporary Estonian and Latvian Literature

ANNELI MIHKELEV

1. Myths and National Identity

The Estonian researcher Jaan Puhvel has written that a myth is not just a story but through myth the whole society creates its own self-awareness and self-realization, as well as explaining the essence of itself and its surroundings. (Puhvel 1996: 10). There has been no culture which has not generated a set of its own unique myths. These narratives have a great role in the formation of national identity and, most importantly, these myths originate and appear in the oral stage of human culture. Juri Lotman has precisely stated the idea of myth: the mythological space is small and closed, but at the same time the story itself is about cosmic proportions, about the whole universe (Lotman 1999: 196). Myth creates its own world, its own universe, sacred and whole. The myths and national identity work in a similar way and sometimes they are intertwined: the purpose of national identity is also to create a specific world, the national space where we can find the unique spirit and character of the nation or *Volksgeist* according to Herder. The national specific world is closed too, sometimes also small, and the story about the nation extends far back in history. We could say that it would be the universe of the nation.

At the same time national identity contains several myths which we call national myths. These are the "stories about who and what we are and where we come from… Of greater importance than their truth value is the role they play in the formation of cultural identity. These myths are embodied by various cultural artefacts, literary texts included."

(Lukas 2007: 75) Consequently, although the myths originate in the oral stage of culture, they appear in literature, in written culture. At the same time we can say that usually national literature may be closely linked to its cultural myths, but this is not necessarily true. Sometimes we can find the combinations of different national myths in the literary texts, also the myths from other nations which have a great role in the formation of national identity, for example the biblical myths.

However, it is still important that the sociological functions of oral myths and literature are different. Myths are sacred, but literature is secular in the original sense. The biblical myths are situated between the oral tradition and literature, or, in other words, biblical myths exist on the boundary between oral myths and written culture: on the one hand biblical myths are sacred, but on the other hand they represent written culture, although not secular written culture. So, we can see that the biblical myths connect two opposites: sacred and secular space. And it seems that in literature, if these two spaces exist in the literary text, they are mixed or, possibly, these two spaces exist as two separate spaces or worlds in the literary text.

2. Ene Mihkelson and Ahasuerus

The main themes of the Estonian writer Ene Mihkelson's novels are the severance of the identity of Estonians after the War and attempts to rediscover the deeper continuity of identity, which is often partly condemned to fail, the intervention of social and political rules into personal self-knowledge, and the forced (and unconsciously accepted) forgetfulness of past relationships and of natural sources of self-creation. The title of Mihkelson's novel *Ahasveeruse uni* (The Sleep of Ahasuerus, 2001) contains allusions to biblical myths, more precisely to two myths which are connected with the Bible and Christian tradition.

It is the proper name Ahasuerus which indicates the two myths. One of them is from the Old Testament, the Book of Esther, which contains the story of Ahasuerus, the Persian king who banished his first wife, the queen Vashti, because she did not submit to his commands. Then Ahasuerus married Esther, a Jewish girl who became the queen. Esther did not tell the king and his court that she was a Jew. But Esther had a stepfather, the Jew Mordecai, who was in conflict with Haman, one of the courtiers of Ahasuerus. The problem was that Ahasuerus supported

Haman, and he wanted all the people to obey him. But the Jew Mordecai did not do so. Haman was angry and persuaded Ahasuerus to allow the extermination of all Jews, including Mordecai. Mordecai told Esther what had happened, and asked her to ask the king for amnesty for the Jews. Esther's first answer was that she could not do that because the king had not invited her – everyone who went to the king's rooms without invitation would be put to death. Then Mordecai told Esther that it was not possible for her to remain silent at this difficult time for her nation; the royal house would destroy her as well as the other Jews. Mordecai, the stepfather of Esther, convinced her to speak to the king. Then Esther went to the king's rooms and Ahasuerus did not kill her. On the contrary, he asked what Esther's wish was. Esther asked for amnesty for all Jews. King Ahasuerus granted her will. He also promoted Mordecai, because Mordecai had exposed a plot against the king. So, the story of Esther and Ahasuerus is the story of the escape of the Jews, a story with a happy ending. And the most important person in that story is Mordecai, who was bold and spoke up.

It seems that the allusion in the title of Mihkelson's novel to the Book of Esther from the Old Testament is not connected directly to Ahasuerus, but to the story of Esther and Ahasuerus, as well as Mordecai. Ahasuerus is only a name and a king who has his own role in this story. As a proper name, Ahasuerus indicates mythological consciousness: on the one hand, it points to the old myth of Ahasuerus, while, on the other hand, it indicates mythical thinking in contemporary times, that mythical thinking is important also in contemporary culture, and it is important concerning national and personal identity. The protagonist of Mihkelson's novel also tries to discover her family's and her own history through the names. She searches for traces of her predecessors, asks who they were and what the secret of their identity is. At the same time, it also raises the question "who am I?", "what is my own identity?", and the answer depends greatly on the essence of her predecessors. All the work of discovery begins with a study of the names in the archives; it is the study of a family tree in which only the names have been written. A change in the family name creates a mystical situation: a name is a key aspect of personal identity; if it is changed, there must be a serious reason. And if the family has evolved from different nations and from individuals of different social classes, it is also possible to decide where you would like to begin your own identity. Each name of one's predecessors is surrounded by mystical

and mythical space. It is a space which includes events from the distant past. It is another world and we can only dimly imagine what happened so long ago. It is mysterious for us and also very magnetic because these people from the past were also our predecessors; they are not very close to us, but still close enough to feel the connection with them. And the same phenomenon also works if we read old myths, not only our own family myths, but myths which speak not only of personal identity but also of identity in a larger sense. So, the name Ahasuerus points to old myths which permit identification at a national and even larger level, not only a personal level.

The author uses both biblical myths and proper names to create the feeling of mythical or eternal time. This is characteristic not only of Mihkelson's prose, but also of her poetry. According to Janika Kronberg: "The main aim of Mihkelson's poetry is to give names to things. Memory and naming are her dominant motifs. Mihkelson names things and phenomena, as only those possessing names are able to persist. As regards the past, naming denotes saving something essential from oblivion and, as regards the present, it is an invitation for something essential to come into being" (Kronberg 2000: 22). Naming is also important in the novel *Ahasveeruse uni.* According to Lotman and Uspenski, naming is connected with mythological thinking, and a proper name is connected with a mythological consciousness.

It is important that the story of King Ahasuerus is the opposite of the story of another Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew. This is a medieval legend, where Ahasuerus, a shoemaker from Jerusalem, is condemned to roam the earth until the Day of Judgement, because he taunted Christ on the way to the Crucifixion, urging him to go faster, and did not allow him to take a rest. The punishment for Ahasuerus is everlasting, sleepless wandering. That curse presses him till the Day of Judgement, and he must remember everything about it.

According to Marju Lauristin, Ene Mihkelson's novel reveals the deepest pain: if we lose our name and ourselves, our familial memory, we have lost our personality. If we forget our real history and are complicit with violence, it is the same as putting the self-awareness of the nation to sleep. Indifference is a timeless crime (Lauristin 2002: 83). Personal identity and memory are connected with collective or national memory and identity.

If we think about the first myth of Esther and Ahasuerus, it is the same thing as what Mordecai avoided: he convinced his stepdaughter to

act against violence, and remember and save her family, as well as herself.

Although this is a legend from Jewish history, a parallel exists for Estonian history: first, the direct parallel between the Holocaust and Soviet repression and, second, the parallel with national identity, which is created through history, myths and literature. Marju Lauristin has written that Mihkelson's novel *Ahasveeruse uni* touches the Estonian identity very deeply, more than any other contemporary novel or writer (ib. 81). The function of the old biblical myths is to create the eternal, mythical dimension in the novel and create contact with old nations – perhaps this demonstrates that Estonians have not been the only nation in history to have very difficult problems, and if we know history and the old myths, then we can also learn something from the history and the old myths. Or, as Kajar Pruul has written, it is a feeling that we still live in the same primordial time when the universe was created (Pruul 2002). A continuity between different generations and different nations is needed for identity.

We can see the same effect also in our poetry: Kalju Lepik used allusions to the Bible which gave an eternal dimension to his poetry, which tried to remember and save the national identity in exile. And we can see the motif of Ahasuerus as well as the other biblical motifs in Ene Mihkelsaar's poetry. Perhaps the myth of Ahasuerus is one of the most impressive myths for Estonians after World War II: in 1944 our nation was cast out into the world and we had the experiences of exile, Siberia etc. Like Ahasuerus the Wandering Jew, we have looked for our own place in the world, and experienced limitlessness.

3. Nora Ikstena and Lazarus

We can find this mythical experience also in Latvian contemporary literature. Nora Ikstena's novel *Dzīves svinēšana* (Celebration of Life) was published in 1998, and it was translated into Estonian in 2003 by Ita Saks, and into Lithuanian in 2005. Nora Ikstena was awarded the Baltic Assembly Prize in literature in 2006.

The main motif in her novel *Dzīves svinēšana* is the motif of death. The Latvian researcher Guntis Berelis has written about Ikstena's novel: "What is the novel about? The answer is – it is about a funeral. (---) It is also possible to view *Dzīves svinēšana* as a novel about death"

(Berelis 2004: 8). In Ikstena's novel, Helēna's mother Eleonora has died, and when she invites seven colourful people to her own funeral, she also connects two worlds: the world of death and the world of living people. The situation is very mystical and mysterious; these seven people who have been invited are also very odd. The organizer of the funeral is the priest Adalberts, and he follows Eleonora's wishes concerning the funeral. Eleonora's daughter Helēna is against the clerical funeral, and she believes that nobody can bring her mother back to life. The text of the novel describes the clerical ceremony, full of quotations from the Bible. The atmosphere is solemn and horrible at the same time. The author also uses dreams – the novel begins and ends with a dream and it is Helēna's dream about a holy woman who is going to heaven and who says these words: Live, who is dead, and dead, who is living. It seems to be a paraphrase from the Epistle of John in the New Testament, the story of Lazarus, where Jesus tells Lazarus' sister Martha: 'one who believes in me lives, although he dies! And everyone who lives and believes in me does not die forever.'

Although there is not a direct allusion to a biblical myth or name, the overall atmosphere is similar to a biblical situation, not to the Old Testament as in Ene Mihkelson's novel, but to the New Testament. There are several stories about Jesus' miracles, how he brings the dead back to life: the story of Jairus' daughter and Lazarus are the best known. People come together to bury the dead; they weep and mourn. And then Jesus comes and awakens the deceased person, and admonishes that person to believe in Him.

In the novel *Dzīves svinēšana*, the situation is similar: Eleonora is dead and her daughter does not believe that it is possible to give her life again. In this story, Jesus does not appear, but there is an old priest who organises the funeral according to Eleonora's wish that her friends must read the psalms and tell stories about Eleonora's life.

In the novel, the situation is similar to that in the Bible: the boundary between death and life is ambivalent and delicate. The world of death influences the world of the living through memories and thoughts. Although Eleonora herself has died, her friends remember what has happened in the past. And through these stories, there is a celebration of Eleonora's life, and at the same time a celebration of Helēna's life, because Helēna begins to believe, and she becomes very similar to Eleonora. Through the funeral ceremony, where Helēna listens to these stories about her mother, she finds a connection with her

mother, with her predecessor, and as a result she finds her identity, which is connected with her national identity, because Eleonora's life also included living through the events of World War II.

Nora Ikstena's novel balances on the borders of the traditional novel, and it consists of different connected short stories. At the same time, all of the travelling in this novel takes place in the story-teller's memories; the real place where the funeral takes place is quite static and small. It is a framed space or room where different trips to the past take place. And through the past, Eleonora's and her daughter's lives are celebrated.

Conclusion

The motifs of death and the past are very important in connection with the Baltic identity: our history has been complicated and tragic, and we are still obsessed with it. From the beginning of the 1990s, after the Baltic countries become independent, we faced the essential questions, as who are we? and what is this world we see before us? Or in other words, we try to find or create our identity. Although Mihkelson's and Ikstena's novels are different, there are also some similarities, and they deal with the same problem: who are we? This seems to be the most important question in contemporary Baltic literature.

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Errare humanum est. Re-writing the Myth of the Wandering Jew after the Shoah

SIMONETTA FALCHI

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets.*

> The Holocaust should be recognized as a turning point in world history, a catastrophe that altered fundamental assumptions about the human condition. Pre-Auschwitz innocence has been forever obliterated. We no longer harbour the beliefs about God, civilization, and man that once assured us. (Kremer (1989: 7).

Man is dumbfounded when faced to this tragedy and vocabulary is not sufficient to express the horror of the tragic series of events defined as "the Holocaust". The common call for silence has been epitomized by Adorno's dictum "no poetry after Auschwitz". The importance of this catastrophe is evident in the simple fact that whenever one pronounces the determinative article 'the' in front of the word 'Holocaust" one knows exactly what we are trying to talk about, and nobody detects in this word the sacrificial connotations implied by such name in ancient times, which, alluding to some sort of providential finality, might result limiting and offensive when faced with the millions of Jews who died without a reason in which to foresee any providential design. Rather, this word, with its apocalyptic sound, immediately conjures up in our minds at once the Hebrew word *Shoah* "ruin, calamity, desolation" and the Yiddish *hurban* which alludes to the long history of Jewish

catastrophes by designating the destruction of the Second Temple and the dispersion of the Jews that followed it (Rosenfeld 1965: 4).

Even if no words will ever render the sufferings of the people involved, it is commonly accepted that one ought not think it pointless to talk about it, in order to make it more difficult for it to happen again: as Pope John Paul II (1994) stated on the occasion of a commemoration of the Shoah "Humanity cannot permit all that to happen again". But the pseudo-historiographic results of Holocaust Negationism – generated by historic revisionism – have recently led to the point that only a short time ago the news reported political and religious leaders who denied the very existence of the Holocaust and indicated it as a Sionistic deceitful myth, created with the intent to justify the occupation of Israel.[1]

Since for obvious thematic and competence reasons we may not here investigate the necessary psychological, political, sociological and historical implications of the Shoah, the present study will concentrate on how the aftermath of the Holocaust affected the development of myth in literature, focusing on the formerly anti-Semitic Myth of the Wandering Jew. The interest in this myth, is due to the peculiarity of its development in the twentieth century: it is in fact unique that a Christian racist myth would be taken up to represent the suffering of the Jews even by Jewish writers who felt the need to adopt an estranging character to describe their own tragic experience[2] which by virtue of its very extraneousness to the Jewish culture and its coexistent Jewish

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[1] "Iranian leader: Holocaust a 'myth'" CNN. http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/12/14/iran.israel/ Accessed 26–01–2008.

[2] Also in *Ahasveeruse Uni* (2001) and in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) the Wandering Jew appears in connection with the themes of genocide, the risks implied by oblivion and the subsequent necessity to denounce and preserve memory. It seems here relevant to relate Jüri Talvet's words in his review of Mihkelson's *Ahasveeruse Uni* "As for Ahasuerus and his sleep – or rather his sleeplessness – I presume the image is not applicable exclusively to Kaarel, the evil-doer, but also to the justs, who, in order to keep faith on the earth, cannot indulge in a comfortable sleep, even if they really deserve it" (Talvet 2002: 169).

The two novels will not be taken into the analysis in the present study because their authors are not Jewish nor the genocide removed is the Holocaust, but the role of the Wandering Jew is worth special attention and it will be material for a coming study.

name offered the possibility to detach from the abhorred past and to describe it from the point of view of the outsider.

Hannah Arent observed that human imagination will never be able to fully embrace the horror of concentration camps "for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death" (Kremer 1989: 13) and outside of life and death, is exactly the a-temporal/a-spatial condition of the Wandering Jew's eternal existence, compelled to roam the Earth, suspended in time for a curse launched by God himself.

From his English epithet we learn that intrinsic features of his myth are his Jewishness and his restless wanderings, while "der ewige Jude", the eternal Jew, the epithet used in the Germanic tradition, points out that he is not a mortal anymore. The origins of this myth date back to ancient times and show a connection between the Wandering Jew and archetypes like that of the "Sacred Executioner"[3] and the damned man and even to Jungian Shadow-figures (Körner 1998). In medieval legends, the miserable pilgrim made sporadic appearances as an edifying example and as a witness of Christ's Passion, and mainly kept such functions also in Reform and Counter Reform Times. It is not by coincidence that the legend of Ahasverus finds its canonization in 1602 with the *Kurtze Beschreibung*, after Martin Luther had publicly declared "next to the devil life has no enemy more cruel, more venomous and violent than a true Jew" (Kremer 1989: 18). In this brief description, the Wandering Jew was a mean cobbler of Jerusalem who refused Christ a moment of rest while He was carrying His cross on to the Golgotha. As the cobbler urged Him to go away from his home, Christ cursed him by saying "I WILL STAND HERE AND REST, BUT YOU MUST WALK" (Anderson 1965: 46). Since then, the Wandering Jew is compelled to travel alone till the end of Times and to tell his story to the people he meets in order to save their souls.

It is peculiar that a Christian Myth, with anti-Semitic roots, has become a Jewish hero by virtue of that loneliness, that diversity, that dignity and that suffering generated by the curse of an inscrutable divinity, which became the distinctive features of his tragic figure in the majority of the re-writings of his story. The first switch-point in the development of this character from merciless wrongdoer to suffering

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[3] The most influential study on the myth of Wandering Jew is Anderson's *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* (1965) which accounts its development in details.

victim, was the 18th century, especially after Schubart presented him as the symbol of *Weltschmerz* in *Der ewige Jude. Eine Lyrische Rhapsodie*[4] (1784) and Romantic poets identified him with the human intellect fighting against a malevolent God who inflicts continuous pain on human beings and tries to hide knowledge from them.[5] This identification brought the myth of the Wandering Jew to the acme of its success but also to its twilight, the gradual fading of it into two other great myths of Modernity who dwelt upon the controversial relationship between Man and the omnipotent God: Faust[6] and Prometheus[7]. These

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[4] "And for all the occasional ineptness of phrase, the arrant melodrama, and the fact that Schubart has a particular talent for showing how unmusical German language can be in the wrong hands, the poem remains memorable, a fitting source for much ensuing romantic poetry dedicated to the theme of the immortal mortal, and one to bear watching as we proceed through the nineteenth-century literature of the legend." (Anderson, 1965:172).

[5] It was particularly Shelley who contributed to the idealization of Ahasverus giving him a primary importance role in his macro-text: *The Wandering Jew's Soliloquy* (1810), *Zastrozzi* (1810), *Ghasta, or the Avenging Demon!!!*(1810), *St. Irvine: or the Rosicrucian* (1810), *The Wandering Jew or The Victim of the Eternal Avenger* (1810), *Queen Mab* (1813), and *Hellas* (1822).

[6] The fusion between the *maudit* characters of the Wandering Jew and Faust, frequently attested in English Gothic Literature, it's believed to have began with M. G. Lewis's *Ambrosio or The Monk* (1795). Railo in his monography *The Haunted Castle; a Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (1927: 200–201) explains how two such originally different characters came to coincide: "the legend of the Wandering Jew is a story of never-ending life on earth bestowed as a punishment; that of the selling of a soul to the devil is based on the idea of an exchange of eternal bliss for temporal sensual pleasures; combined, the two give rise to the legend of the exchange of eternal bliss for everlasting life and happiness on earth, or to the Faust-group, whose two chief elements Lewis thus came to utilize in his romance."

[7] The figure of Prometheus, whom Shelley later dedicated *Prometheus unbound* is clearly foreshadowed in *The Wandering Jew's Soliloquy*: "Tyrant of Earth! Pale Misery's jackal Thou!/ Are there no stores of vengeful violent fate/ Within the magazines of Thy fierce hate?/ [...]/ Where is the Noonday Pestilence that slew /the myriad sons if Israel's favoured nation?/ [...]/ Or the Angel's two-edged sword of fire that urged/ Our primal parents from their bower of bliss/ (Reared by Thine hand) for errors not their own/ By Thine omniscient mind foredoomed, foreknown?/ Yes! I would court a ruin such as this,/ Almighty Tyrant, and give thanks to Thee!-/ Drink deeply, drain the cup

two myths, apt to embody the ambition of modern man, gradually replaced Ahasuerus – who lacked both the power and the lust for it – to the point that many scholars believed his archetype to be undergoing a slow phase of agony.

During World War I and in the twenty-year armistice that preceded World War II there have been few re-writings of this myth, and they're all, but two, composed in German (Anderson 1965: 355). They are mostly racist pamphlets presenting Ahasverus as the stereotype of the cruel Jew, guilty of having killed the Lamb son of God. His Myth seemed to have extinguished its vital power, but the Holocaust, which tragically altered men's axioms, also shook Ahasverus fortunes: for Jewish writers and writers who had sympathy for the Jewish suffering, he became not only a symbol of rebellion against God but a manifest of the power of Jewish people and, more in general of human beings, to survive even the most dreadful tragedies.

If it is generally agreed that "at Auschwitz not only man died but also the idea of man" (Elie Wiesel) it seems appropriate to ask what happened to the Wandering Jew, who had been cursed to immortality by God Himself. Compelled not to die and to carry the overwhelming burden of testimony, Ahasuerus may now represent the survivor, the eyewitness, bound to tell the atrocious story of the Holocaust. He endures his duty with seemliness, but also with a feeling of despair, as if remembering Kierkegaard's words in *Journal and Papers* "the present time is the time of despair, the time of the Wandering Jew". It seems hence relevant to note that for Kierkegaard (*Sickness unto Death*) "despair is the advantage man has over the beast. And this advantage distinguishes man more than his erect posture, for it implies the infinite erectness and loftiness of being spirit".[8]

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of hate, remit!... Then I/ may die!" (Shelley, in Stableford 1991:31). See also Sirchia, 1993:162.

[8] I owe this observation to Rosette C. Lamont (1990) who in her essay *Samuel Beckett's Wandering Jew* concludes: "In *Waiting for Godot* Beckett invites all wanderers, all uprooted, exiled, estranged, alienated people, all Wandering Jews – and in this sense perhaps it can be said that all men of our time are like the Jewish people – to stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder, upon this stretch of road, like Gogo and Didi, feeling the warmth of another human being passing into their bodies, waiting with modest but unshakable hope, making of this expectation the very miracle."

His curse to roam the Earth, to *err*, which preserves the etymological Latin meanings of *errare*, to "wander" and to "make mistakes", is the very curse to become fallible human and to lead a precarious life: "Errare humanum est". In times of despair, when man is not allowed to succeed nor to surrender, Ahasuerus erects himself as the only hero suitable to embody the prototype of the Man who struggles to give meaning to his own life. It is not a coincidence if Joycean Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* is compared to the Wandering Jew for three times along the novel.[9]

Harold Fisch (1980: 129), who studied the relationship between Judaism and the Myth of the Wandering Jew, theorized that, as a hero, the Wandering Jew represents the man who does not have any certainties left, who can move in a hardly decipherable, discontinuous reality. Opposite to the self-assertive heroes predominant in Modernity – characterized by absolute values and sureness – in post-modern times, when everything is relative, he is a hero by virtue of his very fallibility. Ahasverus is, therefore, a new archetype which embodies the most durable quality of man: *persistence* (Walker 1988: 70) – in other words, the ability to live in the world notwithstanding a perilous wandering – meant both as the ability of human kind to continue to dominate Earth and as the tenacity manifested by single human beings in their everyday fighting for survival. In this point of view "the archetype of the Wandering Jew – being in motion – allows man a recurrent choice; a recurrence of recurrent choices. He can stumble, fall, pick himself up, leap and fall again." (Rovit in Fisch 1980: 129)

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[9] "– The wandering Jew, Buck Mulligan whispered with clown's awe. Did you see his eye? He looked upon you to lust after you. I fear thee, ancient mariner." (209); "– Charity to the neighbour, says Martin. [...] That's what he is. Virag /from Hungary! Ahasuerus I call him. Cursed by God." (324); "(STEPHEN TURNS AND SEES BLOOM.)//STEPHEN: A time, times and half a time. // (REUBEN I ANTICHRIST, WANDERING JEW, A CLUTCHING HAND OPEN ON HIS SPINE,/STUMPS FORWARD. ACROSS HIS LOINS IS SLUNG A PILGRIM'S WALLET FROM WHICH/ PROTRUDE PROMISSORY NOTES AND DISHONOURED BILLS. ALOFT OVER HIS SHOULDER/ HE BEARS A LONG BOATPOLE FROM THE HOOK OF WHICH THE SODDEN HUDDLED MASS/ OF HIS ONLY SON, SAVED FROM LIFFEY WATERS, HANGS FROM THE SLACK OF ITS/ BREECHES." (476)

Ahasuerus, is the hero of our times, desperate times, a hero surrounded by an halo of pessimism and nihilism, chained to his past, to memory, as if he only existed to testify the tragic experiences he lived and the unstoppable hunger for life. His recklessness, the inner impossibility to surrender, has therefore given a second birth to his myth that now inspires everyday's tormented heroes who like Moses Herzog,[10] Boris Makaver,[11] Asher Lev,[12] Yakov Bok,[13] express the tragedy of contemporary living in a "post-Renaissance, post-humanistic, post-Cartesian dissolution, next door to the void" (Bellow 1996: xviii).

As Fisch (1980: 132) argues, the Wandering Jew's heroism does not consist in great deeds or in obtaining exceptional power, wealth, fame,

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[10] This name, derived by one of *Ulysses* minor character, indicates an affiliation to its main themes and Moses, the Jew who guided the Jews in their forty years long wandering in the desert, establishes a connection to wandering Jews in a broader sense. Saul Bellow's Moses Elkanah Herzog whose influential book *Romanticism and Christianity* connects him with the historical moment when the Wandering Jew knew his maximum success, thinks of himself as a character which "in modern vocabulary, it was narcissistic; it was masochistic; it was anachronistic. His clinical picture was depressive – not the severest type; not a manic depressive." (Bellow 1996: 4). In the post-modern contemporary world he moves in labyrinthine directions, his travelling between Chicago, New York, Europe, his knowledge of history and philosophy will prove to be useless, for he will fail in his intentions. The author has him say: "I fall upon the thorns of life; I bleed. and what next? I get laid, I take a short holyday, but very soon after I fall upon those same thorns with gratification in pain or suffering in Joy – who knows what the mixture is".

[11] Boris Makaver is the mild and religious protagonist of Singer's novel *Shadows on the Hudson* (1957–1958) where the shadows of the title represent both those who died in the Holocaust and those who survived it and that will never be freed by the burden of memory.

[12] Chaim Potock's Asher Lev turns upside down the Jewish community of Brooklyn by arguing that Jewish tradition lacks an example of suffering as strong as Christ's and decides to paint the Crucifixion to represent Jewish and human tragedy. In his clash against tradition, he'll experiment the power of suffering and like Abraham will have to "sacrifice" his son to God's Will.

[13] A similar feeling of disheartening despair and of unwillingness to surrender is that of Bernard Malamud's Yakov Bok, protagonist of *The Fixer* (1966), who although secluded, is always in motion. In his prison, Yakov stumbles, falls and picks himself up and survives, just like Ahasverus, victim of an unjust sentence (Fisch 1980: 130).

but in what we might define as "post-Shoah virtues": the very capacity to survive and to remember that may not be taken for granted anymore. Such qualities cannot be possibly considered intrinsic qualities of man after the atrocious persecutions of the Second World War, when "simply to survive, simply to witness, simply to remember becomes the great achievement, the sign of spiritual victory" (Fisch 1980: 132). As a survivor, he represents both the difficulty of being in the world – carrying the burden of a horrible memory that goes beyond the most awful nightmares – and the hope that memory will prevent the future from being worse. He becomes by right the symbol of all the Jews who survived and is the living proof that they existed.[14] In this altered scheme of values mournfully begotten by the Holocaust, Ahasverus, with his twenty-century long life, becomes the perfect hero to bear the burden of memory, to single out the crucial moments of human existence and awaken man's consciousness.

With such connotations Ahasverus has then been described, among others, by Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Laureate philosopher, who had to confront the torment of surviving Auschwitz and Buchenwald and centred his narrative on the overwhelming dilemma of the necessity of giving testimony. As he acknowledges in *The Oath* (1973), although it will never be possible to recount the horror of the Holocaust, which is probably best described as a moment of silence of God, it is necessary to bring testimony in order to keep memory alive and to raise those questions about man and God that, if obliterated, might be dangerous for human beings. It is in this denounce function that Ahasverus is described in his short story, entitled precisely "The Wandering Jew"[15].

Wiesel's Ahasverus is a mysterious, rather disagreeable, Rebbe, unpleasant like his task: raising unsolvable questions for people who,

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[14] A connection made also by the Jewish painter Marc Chagall, who trying to explain the recurrence of this myth in his works said: "Via via che l'esercito avanzava la popolazione ebrea si ritirava abbandonando le città e i piccolo sobborghi. Avevo voglia di farli trasportare sulle mie tele, per metterli al sicuro" ("As the army proceded, the Jewish population retracted abandoning cities and villages. I wished I could have them transported on my canvases, to keep them safe" the translation is mine). Chagall, *La mia vita* (Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1960, p. 129) quoted in Ambrosioni, 1993: 356.

[15] The short story, was first published in *Le chant des morts* (1966). All quotes in this study are from the English translation in *Legends of our time* (1970).

sinning of pride, think there must be a rational explanation for everything. He has survived the upheavals of History and the horrors of the Holocaust by means of God's protection and his own cleverness, and appears in the contemporary world to challenge absolute values. The Wandering Jew is, therefore, "always dirty, hairy" (122) and looks "like a hobo turned clown, or a clown playing hobo" (122). He wears glasses that do not heal his physical impairment, but rather "with their thick, dirty lenses, blurred his vision" (122), as if they were still dirty with dust, or worse, with the ashes of his fellow prisoners. The act of not removing the ashes, protects him against the distraction of the jumble of contemporary world's visual stimuli, and forces his eyes to look inward, to develop insight and meditation, to see what other people do not. On these grounds he has developed an amazing knowledge he uses to astonish people in the synagogue and by virtue of which he becomes the Rebbe of the short story's narrator. The young boy, who wants to study philosophy because he generically is looking for an answer, is fascinated by the Wandering Jew to the point of undertaking a parallel journey toward knowledge. Such search, though, will be pointless in the end, because his aim is misdirected, a false one: all he longs for is a "beautiful answer", which, in the Rebbe's words is "Nothing more than illusion" because "Man defines himself by what disturbs him and not by what reassures him" (126). The student's aimless peregrinations, on the footsteps of the Wandering Jew, is though useless because he fails to "understand that [he's] living and searching in error, because God means movement and not explanation" (126).

God is unknowable, so the Wandering Jew does not bother to answer the question of the divine, "perhaps God is dead" but Ahasuerus "does not know it; and if he does know it, he acts as if it is of no concern to him at all…" (142) he believes his task to be an the earthly one, and that it is "to move fixed points, to destroy what seemed secure" (121) because after all "Yes and no ha[ve] the same value, good and evil pu[ll] in the same direction."

His aim is to warn against "the dangers of language and reason, about the ecstasies of sage and madman, about the mysterious progress of a thought down through the centuries and of a hesitation through a multitude of thoughts" (122) thus disclosing the pride – the capital sin – hidden in men's resolve to know and to penetrate with his thought all aspects of the Create. "Yes, he was the wandering Jew […] with him all

certainties turned to dust" (129). His continuous disdainful scepticism, his permanent dissatisfaction, his impenetrability together with his denial of communication leave his disciple (and the reader) unsatisfied: his existence, or better his persistence, seems meaningless, he is alive, but why? Like God he is impenetrable: "No one knew his name or his age: perhaps he had none. He wanted no part of what ordinarily defines a man, or at least places him." (121) His thoughts, his past, seem of no importance to him, his apparent confidences are only illusory, for he never revealed he anything "about the secret which consumed or protected him against a diseased humanity" (122). He "constructed and demolished his theories at a single blow. The more one listened, the less one learned about his life, about the world within him. He possessed the superhuman power of remaking the past for himself." (121)

The construction and de-construction of reality through words is not just a mere game played by a learned sadist, it is rather the representation of the incommunicability of the experience[16]. Although language proves continuously to be inadequate to communication[17], Wiesel seems to suggest that it remains a somehow useful means of expression, and while it leaves behind a sense of impotence and despair it may still convey meaning. As Wiesel explains in the preface to *Legends of Our Time*: "some writings could sometimes, in moment of grace, attain the quality of deeds" (viii) and a story may sometimes explain what happened better than history itself for "things are not that simple [...] some events do take place but are not true; others are – although they never occurred" (viii).

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[16] In an interview Wiesel commented "I deal with it in all my books, the incommunicability of the experience. I do not believe that there is only one proper solution, so I describe the impossibility of communication" (Franciosi 1987: 298).

[17] This interpretation seems to be confirmed by Wiesel's words: "What else is there except language? It is the only tool given to us – communication. There is a better one, of course: two persons meet, they don't have to talk. But it's only two persons. We would limit our universe. It would make it easier, but it's limited. Language is as old as human beings. Nevertheless it is inadequate, and nevertheless we must do something with it; hence the despair and hence the existential dilemma. I believe, of course, we must face despair and go beyond it. We cannot speak of hope without despair. And at the same time we cannot speak of despair without hope. It all depends on what comes first. I would like hope to be an outgrowth of despair, without ignoring it or denying it." (Ib.)

In the impossibility of telling us exactly what *reality* is, what the horrors of the Holocaust were like, the Wandering Jew stands against any exhausting definition of what is true, against any positive answer. With his contrasting revelations emphasizes that one ought to look more closely to "what lies *between* words rather than what is *in* words"[18] and this is the reason why, when he thinks his disciple is ready, he leaves him "without saying goodbye or farewell" (140) but with the instructions "think over my lesson and try to destroy it" (140).

The hunt of the hidden meaning, of the not-said, the psychological dissatisfaction it generates, is passed on to the physical level and transformed into a compulsion to move that the protagonist "I" describes as follows: "I was restless [...] For no reason travel appealed to me; I was pursuing someone without knowing whom" (140). The narrator guesses it might be the Wandering Jew he is looking for, but does not dare to confront him, for he still refuses to acknowledge the impossibility of a rational answer: he is afraid of meeting the restless pilgrim and moreover he is afraid of finding him unchanged and still full of doubts.

The Wandering Jew's defiance of time and death, is the proof of the Final Solution's failure but at the same time calls into question the impossibility of explaining the horrors of the Holocaust, the reasons why so many died and some did not, and ultimately the question of God's existence: "If, for him, the past is nothing, the future is nothing, then is death nothing either and the death of a million Jewish children? Perhaps God is dead, but he does not know it; and if he does know it, he acts as if it is of no concern to him at all..." (141–142)

For how horrible it may sound for a rationalizing mind, questions will never find a completely exhaustive answer and this is the Wandering Jew's message: man is not allowed to know the reasons "why we live and why we die" (141), but may only try to keep memory alive in order to protect future human beings from the repetition of past errors, and horrors. The eternal wanderer is the depositary of man's memory and of the memory of all those Jews who died in the extermination camps, and he will never let those dead bodies be rationalized by man's reasoning, for he knows that what has been rationally explained is also more liable to be accepted and then forgotten.

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[18] Wiesel in Franciosi, 1987: 291.

The world is afraid of him, refuses him and tries to exclude him, but he is not just an aimless wanderer on the face of Earth: as an outcast he finds a new purpose in the twentieth century, that of provoking restlessly with doubt the conscience of his disciples (and of any reader), to keep wide opened those questions that many try to close, to create a new awareness, and

> "that is what makes me tremble each time I think of him in Montevideo, where he awaits me, where he calls to me: I am afraid to plunge once more into his legend which condemns us both, me to doubt, and him to immortality" (142)

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