

The New Humanities

Recently I came across a book called *Achilles in Vietnam*, published in 1994, by Jonathan Shay, a sociologist and psychiatrist working with Vietnam combat veterans. Trying to make sense of the traumatized states of his patients, Shay found his way to anthropological studies on grief, rage, and warfare and from there back to his undergraduate studies of *The Iliad*. In *Achilles in Vietnam* Shay reads *The Iliad* alongside his patients' oral interviews on their Vietnam experiences, using the two corpora to illuminate each other. And they do. Through its resonances with the veterans' accounts of their experiences, *The Iliad* comes into view as a vivid ethnography of war; the ethics of war; the particular forms of suffering, rage, and grief that accompany war; and the resources on which people draw to face them. Read through and against *The Iliad*, the veterans' reflections become insights on the pathologies of war and those peculiar to the Vietnam conflict, helping Shay answer his questions on why this particular war produced so many veterans who simply could not recover psychic equilibrium. Studied together, the veterans' accounts and *The Iliad* produced an analysis of what vets call the "berserk state," revealing its links to unbearable grief. Many veterans have found this part of the text particularly valuable. The participation of the gods in the Homeric text led Shay to reflect on how Christian monotheism shaped soldiers' Vietnam experiences. Some of the most traumatized men had gone to war very young and inexperienced, with strong Protestant upbringings anchored in a benevolent God who was loving and good and saw people the same way. When this deity lost plausibility on the front, young soldiers' moral universes could simply fall apart. The capricious self-interested Greek deities, Shay concluded, were played in the Vietnam drama by officers who in Vietnam tended not to fight alongside the men, who instead issued orders by radio from safer locations. Shay concluded that the physical presence of leaders was a psychic necessity in warfare and that the betrayal of that requirement was a key cause of Vietnam's particular psychic destructiveness.

What makes this book a product of our time? Many things, some so obvious they may be hard to see. War itself, for instance. And the idea of placing an ancient epic alongside everyday discourse from a therapeutic setting, of enabling texts from radically separate textual orders to illuminate each other and then distilling historical and human insight from their resonances, intersections, and divergences—these are achievements of powerful methodologies that humanistic inquiry has developed and built on in the last thirty years. There is one discovery of our time that Shay seems to have missed: the centrality of gender as an analytic category. Women are everywhere in the quotations from Homer, as signs of victory and objects of possession and rape. Where were these elements, or their analogues, in the Vietnam drama? The opportunity is passed up, but the glaringness of the omission, the regret for the difference it would have made, is also a sign of our times.

The last thirty-five years or so have been an extraordinary time to be a humanist. A series of revolutions in knowledge have altered our objects of study, our corpora, our questions, our modes of understanding and explanation, our analytic categories and parameters, the geographic scope of our work. Every area of the humanities has been touched by these methodological changes and by the information technology revolution that has been enabling in so many ways. Humanistic inquiry has been an agent of important social change. This spring's Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action and gay rights, for example, mark sea changes in

which the work of humanists has played a central role. Area studies are moving in humanistic directions, partly because mathematical paradigms have temporarily taken over political science and economics but also because methodologies from the humanities have revitalized fields that had been trapped in an unreflective empiricism. Alongside traditional disciplinary formations, the humanities have been the core of ethnic and gender studies, whose curricular experimentations and serious interdisciplinarity are mapping possible futures for us all.

Institutional structures have not caught up with the changes in our modes of inquiry and objects of study. Many universities solve the problem through a division of labor between disciplinary departments and interdisciplinary programs. This arrangement becomes less and less satisfactory over time because departments tend to retain the powers of appointment and promotion. A familiar contradiction results. Programs are created to house kinds of inquiry not included in department-based disciplines, but scholars pursuing those kinds of inquiry must satisfy the requisites of the department-based disciplines whose parameters their work does not fit insofar as it is of interest to the program. Where traditional departments do not exist, interesting experimentation is going on. When a new branch of California State University was established at Monterey Bay eight years ago, for example, the founding faculty had a mandate to establish a nonconventional array of departments. A small core of humanists joined to form an integrated humanities degree program with a mission to prepare students to be ethical, creative, and critical thinkers and doers in a culturally diverse society and an increasingly interconnected world. Without prescribing set disciplines, this core group was placed in charge of its own growth. Today the department includes an expert in philosophy, communication, and legal studies; a United States cultural historian; a journalism and media studies specialist; an oral historian in Latina-Latino studies with a background in Spanish medieval literature; a leader in the creative writing and social action movement; a well-known Chicana poet with experience in law and business; an expert in rhetoric, religious studies, and gender studies; and half a dozen others with similar cross-disciplinary commitments. Majors choose one of several concentrations. The unfolding experiment is a good example of what is being discussed today as the "new humanities."

Defending against downsizing easily leads us to add bricks and mortar to departmental and disciplinary walls at a time when intellectual and pedagogical momentum would take us the other way.

Heroes of the Book

Last April, Alia Muhammad Baker, chief librarian of the state library of Basra, Iraq, single-handedly saved thirty thousand books and hundreds of periodicals—seventy percent of the library's collection—days before the building was destroyed by fire. In the weeks before the impending war, Baker filled her car with books each night as she left her job and stored them in her home. When the British entered the city on 6 April 2003, she enlisted the help of Anis Muhammad, a restaurant owner next door. Muhammad and his employees, neighbors, and family formed a brigade, passing bags of books from the library over a wall and stacking them in the restaurant until they could be transferred to Baker's home. After the burning of the library, Baker, who is fifty-nine, suffered

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a stroke. She will retire as soon as the library is rebuilt. Baker's heroic story sent me back to a letter that reached me ten years ago, from Basra. It was written on what looked like the cover of a school notebook, carefully folded and taped without an envelope. The writer was a scholar interested in linguistics. Could I please, she asked, send her my books and writings as she had no way of acquiring any reading materials in her field. You probably have no idea at all, she said, of how we are living here. I sent a packet and never heard whether it arrived. The books saved at Basra were unlikely to have included any recent acquisitions from abroad. This is where my other book hero comes in. Paul Bundy has lived for thirty years in a tiny house in Palo Alto, California, and drives

an aged Volkswagen van. His life is devoted to redistributing books, from the United States, where they abound, to places where they are scarce. If you are leaving town or moving, a phone call brings Paul to your doorstep to pick up your giveaway books. Chemistry textbooks go to medical schools in Latin America or East Africa. Children's books go to day-care centers in Soweto. History and literature go to Central America or China. After some twenty years Paul has an elaborate, constantly mutating network. His house looks like Alia Muhammad Baker's all the time. This is what he does, knowing that his committed life is no substitute for viable publishing systems, decent book distribution outside the rich countries, and an international order that would permit both to exist.

Mary Louise Pratt

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Nominations Sought for Director of Foreign Language Programs

Elizabeth Welles, director of foreign language programs and ADFL, plans to retire from the position following a decade of dedicated service to the MLA and the profession. The Office of Foreign Language Programs has undertaken many significant projects under Welles's leadership, and the ADFL continues to be a vital resource for department chairs.

These are important times for the study of foreign languages, literatures, and cultures. The next director of foreign language programs will have the chance to work with MLA members and with colleagues in other associations on a wide variety of projects related to the field. The opening of this position represents a great opportunity to work in an intellectually stimulating environment and to have an impact on the profession at large.

The MLA is seeking applications and nominations, and I ask your assistance in identifying candidates for the position. The description of the position follows. I will be grateful if you would send your nominations either by e-mail to me at rfeal@mla.org or by regular mail to the attention of Regina Vorbeck, the associate executive director. Your help in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Rosemary G. Feal
MLA Executive Director

DIRECTOR OF MLA FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AND DIRECTOR OF THE ASSOCIATION OF DEPARTMENTS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES (ADFL)

The association is seeking a Director of MLA Foreign Language Programs and of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL). The director initiates, develops, and coordinates new and continuing foreign language studies programs; edits the *ADFL Bulletin*; organizes two annual ADFL Summer Seminars; serves as staff liaison to the ADFL Executive Committee and other MLA committees; represents the MLA at various professional meetings; codirects the MLA's Job Information Service; initiates research and surveys of the field and analyzes resulting data; works closely with other national foreign language studies organizations and with college and university foreign language departments; reports directly to the executive director of the association; and works with other MLA directors on matters affecting the general administration of the association.

The ideal candidate will have a doctorate in an appropriate field; teaching experience in a college or university; administrative experience chairing a department or chairing significant departmental, institutional, or association committees; an interest in issues affecting the study and teaching of foreign languages; the ability to develop grant proposals and projects; and an imaginative approach to current professional problems and opportunities. Although this is a regular staff position, the MLA welcomes applications from candidates who can take a multiyear leave of absence from their teaching institutions.

This position includes some travel and a good deal of administrative work. Salary is commensurate with experience. Please direct letters of application, vitae, and the names of three references to Regina M. Vorbeck, Associate Executive Director, MLA, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789. The MLA is an equal opportunity employer. □

Online Job Applications

The Executive Council plans to consider the advantages and disadvantages of online job applications. We would appreciate hearing about members' experiences with online applications or their views on the subject. Please send responses to mlpratt@mla.org. □

Conference on Disability Studies

The MLA and Emory University are organizing the first national conference in the humanities on disability studies. The conference, to be held 5-7 March 2004 at the Emory University Conference Center in Atlanta, invites college teachers and administrators to consider what we have learned about disability and what disability studies has taught us about learning. Registration materials will be sent in mid-November; online registration will also be available. Space is limited, and registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. □

Letters on Members' Teaching Awards Sought

The president of the MLA, Mary Louise Pratt, invites MLA members to write with information on teaching awards they have received during their careers. The letters should identify each citation and indicate where and when it was granted.

Please address the letters to the executive director at the MLA office. □

energy, persistence, optimism, hard work, and steadily eroding innocence but really quite formidable productivity, plus plenty of fun and satisfaction along with growing pains (accent those last two words either way). Self-preservation, I add in passing, was by no means the driving force behind all those pages of prose fiction, but it was among their welcome by-products. Separately and together, the couple managed their difficulties as best they could within their capabilities: the usual problems and emergencies of parenthood; the expectable abrasions of a dozen years' intimacy after little prior experience, as also of growing into one's thirties in less than perfect synch. In the hiking shoes of marriage — as you yourself may have noticed, Jeronimo — some rough edges wear smooth, some make calluses, and some raise blisters that can end the trek.

"In short, I was right about you two."

You were right, Smegma Flake — but not in short. Even here in '62, with twelve rewarding though certainly not untroubled married years behind us, and Khrushchev and Kennedy head-to-head on the brink of apocalypse, and we spouses-errant coming onto the famous mezzo del cammin de nostra vita, it's going to take another eight years, with plenty of good things in them, to wind up the pas de deux that started under that Two-STEP sign in the Betterton Beach Casino in the summer of '48. I'd call that bonding.

"I'd call it innocence."

Long live innocence, then.

"Long-lived it was. Ur-myth, Oatmeal."
What?

"Next-to-last item, man: U R hyphen et cetera. Do your duty."

Duty-do aria: "The Ur-myth, yes"

The Ur-myth, yes. Doo dee doo, dum dee dum.

Once Jay Scribner had mentioned it vis-à-vis *The Sot-Weed Factor*, and I had gotten around as aforecited to checking it out, the thing possessed my imagination for nearly a decade: the century's Sixties and my thirties, when I was, in James Joyce's words,

still "jung and easily freudened" enough to be thus possessed. Passé now, a quaint late instance of the nineteenth-century passion for global syntheses, the cyclical pattern of ritualized heroic adventure (a.k.a. the Ur-myth) seemed to me then profoundly illuminative, a melody capable of infinite reorchestration.

Lecture time: Comparative mythologists in the nineteenth century (that is to say, philologists, cultural anthropologists, and comparative religionists, notably Max Müller and J. G. Frazer) had noted striking general similarities among the resumé's of mythical wandering heroes the world over, and had attempted to explain the common features of those heroes' careers as allegories variously of the solar cycle (diurnal or seasonal), the associated rhythms of agriculture, the stages of human life and the succession of generations, the rise and fall of civilizations — virtually whatever involves literal or figurative maturation, achievement, decline, dispossession, death, and rebirth or the promise thereof. In the first third of the present century, Sigmund Freud famously applied features of particular myths, most often classical Greek or Hebrew, to psychoanalysis, and vice versa (the "Oedipus complex," *Moses and Monotheism*, etc.); his breakthrough protégé Carl Jung more expansively deployed mythic archetypes to explain both normal and abnormal human psychological development, and, coaxially, accounted for the myths as common human psychodrama writ large, cultural expressions of the "collective unconscious." Lesser figures such as Lord Raglan itemized in considerable detail the biographical similarities of mythic and quasi-mythic heroes from widely disparate cultures, without presuming to explain the isomorphy.*

*In Chapter XVI of *The Hero* (1936), Raglan lists 22 salient features of the monomythic "pattern" and then measures against this template 21 several ritual heroes, from Oedipus and Joseph through Waru Gunung and Nyikang to Siegfried and Robin Hood, giving each a score. The items, in Raglan's words, are these: "1) The hero's mother is a royal virgin; 2) His father is a king, and 3) Often a near relative of his mother, but 4) The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and 5) He is also reputed to be the son of a god. 6) At birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him, but 7) He is spirited away, and 8) Reared by foster parents in a far country. 9) We are told

These pioneering studies much influenced the old masters of literary Modernism, especially T. S. Eliot and James Joyce, and by mid-century their work in turn had inspired a veritable industry of "myth-criticism," among whose notable practitioners were the eminent Canadian Northrop Frye, my Penn State Hemingway-piano friend, Philip Young (see whose beautiful essays on Rip Van Winkle, Pocahontas, and other classical American myths), and my later Buffalo colleague/friend Leslie Fiedler. Jay Wordsworth Scribner did not deign to dabble in the mode. "I want to be a mythic hero, man," he will declare to me in Rome in the spring of 1963, strolling with me in light April rain through the Villa Ada tourist campground. "And if I can't be one, I'd want to be the Magister Ludi in that field, like Joseph Campbell. You've read *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*?"

Nope.

"Jesus, Oatmeal!" He stopped us in our path, not far from the red-and-beige Volkswagen Microbus that I was living and touring Europe in with my young family. "You're trying to write that goat-boy novel without reading Campbell? No wonder the damn thing's stuck!" For so it was, or threatened to become, partly from the distraction of living and working for the first time in a foreign country (we had wintered in Andalusia) and partly from unresolved thematic problems.

nothing of his childhood, but 10) On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom. 11) After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast, 12) He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and 13) Becomes king. 14) For a time he reigns uneventfully, and 15) Prescribes laws, but 16) Later he loses favor with the gods and/or his subjects, and 17) Is driven from the throne and city, after which 18) He meets with a mysterious death, 19) Often at the top of a hill. 20) His children, if any, do not succeed him. 21) His body is not buried, but nevertheless 22) He has one or more holy sepulchres."

Among the heroes rated, Oedipus scores highest, with 21 points (he is not remembered as a lawgiver). Jesus, whom Raglan tactfully omits from his ratings (the argument of *The Hero* being that these chaps are mythical, not historical), would come in at 19 or 20, comparable to Theseus, Moses, and King Arthur. My sot-weed factor, Ebenezer Cooke, does less well as a solo act; taken in conjunction with his cosmophilist mentor, Henry Burlingame, however, he is in the league of Bellerophon and the Welsh hero Llew Llawgyfies.

I've read *around* him, I replied. I have some idea of Campbell's handle: an ex-Joycean hooked on Jung and the Ur-myth. . . .

"Some idea . . ." With the heel of his left hand, Jay batted his left temple. "Do both of us a favor, okay? Stop everything else you're doing. Let your bunkmate take the kids to the zoo for a day or two; there's a nice one in this town. I'll lead you by the hand to a first-rate English-language bookstore that carries the Bollingen series, and I'll buy you Campbell's *Faces* out of my Fulbright allowance, and you'll sit yourself down on the nearest Roman park bench and read it from cover to cover."

It's that good?

"Who said it was good? In my opinion, the whole business is a quaint late instance of the nineteenth-century rage for global synthesizing, like Freud's psychology and Einstein's Unified Field Theory. They're in the spirit of Darwin and Marx, fifty years too late for that sort of thing. When you guys finish inventing Postmodernism, people will appreciate what George Boas used to tell us: that those global generalizations are reached only by ignoring enough particularity. I myself happen to think that the *differences* between Oedipus and Jesus, or even between Perseus and Bellerophon, are at least as important as their similarities — but that's middling old me: Saint Hieronymus the Cross, patron of nitpickers. Campbell's handle on the myths might turn out to be exactly what you and your goat-boy need right now, the way you needed Machado ten years ago to get your *Opera* together; that's why I mentioned the Ur-myth up at Whipple Dam, when you were describing *Sot-Weed*. Who cares if the guy's a crank? Pliny's natural history is full of holes, but Shakespeare found it useful."

Et cetera: "Jay's" familiar, friendchippy mix of ego-deflation and heady praise (but in Rome that year, separated from Beth Duer, he had reverted to being Jerry Schreiber, the braw/brat redux, and insisted I call him by his East Cambridge name). It was the second time — in ten years! — that I had heard from him the term "Postmodern," which Jay/Jerome claimed to have picked up from somewhere in Arnold Toynbee's multivolume *A Study of History* ("One more twentieth-century regression to nineteenth-century synthesizing") and put a different spin upon. I filed it away

that the lad has to perform on the Main Campus. The first time out, Giles takes the language of the tasks literally, and fails them all. On his second go-round he reconceives the tasks in metaphorical terms, and flunks them just as miserably in some opposite way. That's about where I am now in the plot outline. On the third try, with a little applied Zen, he'll *transcend* the tasks somehow — at least the terms of their setting — and “pass” in some paradoxical way that rises above the Pass/Fail categories. After that, your guess is as good as mine.

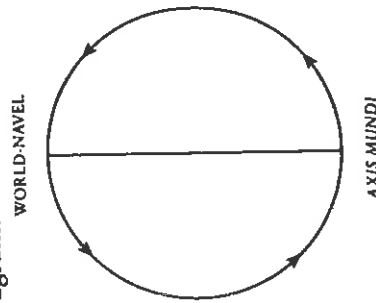
Schreib shook his head. “My guess is *better* than yours, Oatmeal. That's the plot in one sentence?”

In one syllable, I wish I had had the wit to say: the first — *Um*, close enough to *Om*. But Jer was already drawing me a picture, commencing with that mystic syllable's capital initial: a large *O* penned with my black-and-gold old Sheaffer (not yet cracked in Hamlet's castle) on the blank back of a campground map, both of which items he had peremptorily borrowed from my shirt pocket in mid-plot-summary.

“Campbell turns Raglan's linear catalogue into a counterclockwise circle, or cycle,” he declared, “because the hero's mysterious termination echoes his mysterious origination, and there's the suggestion that he may return. It turns out too that various points in his trajectory have their reciprocals on the opposite side of the circle.”

He drew a vertical axis through the diagram:

“The sacred grove, or World-Navel, for instance, here at the top, where he's conceived and finally apotheosized, is the counterpole of the *Axis Mundi* here at the bottom, where he consummates his sacred union, fathoms the great mysteries, transcends categories, steals the precious Elixir — all that crapola.”

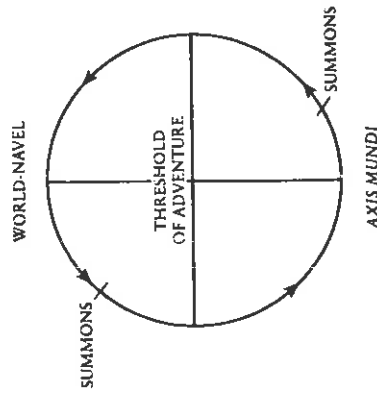


He drew a second, horizontal axis, quadrating the circle:

“He crosses a capital-T Threshold here to begin his adventures in the twilight zone — his westward Night-Sea Journey and the rest — and then he has to recross it over here to bring his illumination back to the daylight world and do work with it, William Jameswise. Up here in the northwest quadrant, he gets the summons to adventure, and he may have to be resummoned down here in the southeast quadrant, the heart of the mystery, where he's shackled up with the ogre's beautiful daughter or atoning with God. Et cetera: All that's in Campbell. Now, then: Assuming that your cockamamie campus allegory is really just a manner of speaking — programmatically *sophomoric*, as befits the University conceit — what you need to add to Campbell's schematic is something like this. . . .”

Vertically down the left-hand hemicycle (the quadrants of *Departure* and *Initiation*) my friend lettered in block capitals the word *MYSTERY*, its central *T* neatly crossing the circle's east-west “Threshold” axis. Vertically up the right-hand quadrants (*Return* and *Reign & Death*) he lettered the word *TRAGEDY*, its *G* the reciprocal of *MYSTERY*'s *T*, and then annotated the circle's whole perimeter:

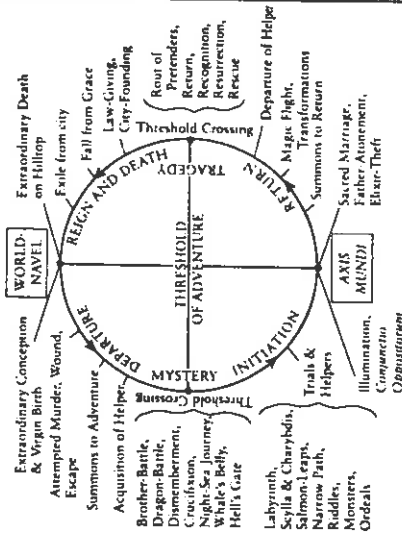
“The hero's apprenticeship,” Schreib pointed out with the butt of my pen, “is a penetration into capital-M *Mystery*. He has to shed identity-tokens — articles of clothing, maybe even his name and his physical body, the way Joyce's Stephen Dedalus sheds his family, his girlfriend, his religion, his country, even his language. You know all that, even though you yourself are trying to hang



on to as much as possible. The culmination is his unitive experience, literal or figurative, at the *Axis Mundi*: *Cathou's* backseat gone to heaven, you might say. All that's in Campbell and your plot synopsis: very Zen Buddhist, with a dash of

Plato and the Christian mystics. Over *here's* what interests me."

He poked the word *TRAGEDY*. "Here's where old Sophocles has his say, and West meets East, or parts company with it. Neither Campbell nor the other myth-meisters nor even William James pays enough attention to this side of the coin. They all acknowledge that the mystical experience is as ineffable as it's noumenal and enabling; they all remark that after the hero returns transfigured and routs the pretenders and founds his city and establishes laws, he unaccountably falls from favor and leaves his kingdom to close the circle, and that his children don't inherit the throne. But they don't confront the tragic aspect of that ineffability: that the message *inevitably* gets distorted in transmission, the spirit in the letter, the noumenal in the phenomenal — and that this discrepancy is both unavoidable and ultimately fatal to the message as well as to the messenger. Depending on how you look at it, this is either the tragic view of mysticism or the mystical view of tragedy, or both. In any case, it's the human heart of the matter, Oatmeal, and in J. W. Schreiber's Henry Street opinion, Sophocles has a better handle on it than the Buddhists do. *Colonus* is your goat-boy's final destination — but unlike Oedipus, he knows that fact from



Square One. If that's your particular spin on the Ur-myth, it sounds almost worth doing."

He returned my Sheaffer and the campground map. Twitched his freckled nose. Grinned, arms akimbo, thumbs hooked in jeans side pockets under the Villa Ada cypresses. "You're welcome."

Yeah, hey, thank you there, Jer, for sure and then some. Look: About some things that've happened between us . . . I'm sorry, needless to say.

"Maybe not so needless. On with your story, man — in which we come now to the Helper's Departure episode, right about here . . ." He touched the nine o'clock end of the Threshold axis on his anticlockwise diagram. "But sometimes here. . . ." He touched three o'clock, the far side of the Threshold. "Typically an affecting scene. Let's cut it short, okay?"

You've helped me indeed, I told my counterself. More than I quite realize yet, probably.

"Probably. Noise in the signal, and so weiter."

For one thing, I believe I understand now what you meant by my upcoming Night-Sea Journey. There's more to that than you quite realize.

"Yeah?" He seemed as pleased as I was sobered. "Buon viaggio, then. Have a good Ordeal, man. Maybe I'll see you on the far side of it."

May that be.

He regarded me. "It's no picnic, Oatsarino, that second quadrant. But at least you'll have a handle on what's hitting you. You'll know the script."

Right.

"The *paradigm*."

Paradigm, right.

"Buon viaggio."

The same to you, Jay.

"Name's *Jerome*. Like the saint?"

Right.

The Dynamics of Literary Response

NORMAN N. HOLLAND

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lowers; second, the triple goddess evoked by mythographers such as Freud or Erich Neumann and applied in literary criticism mostly by Robert Graves. Certainly, once you begin to look, you can find under every literary bush a vegetation god or great earth mother, coupled or separate. From Sumer to Saul Bellow, Melanesia to Malamud, vast masses of legend and literature, pagan, Christian, Arthurian, Homeric, red Indian or brown, fit the pattern of one or both of these two basic myths. Virtually any episode in a work of literature: feast, marriage, journey, struggle, quest for Grail or whale, will match one episode in Campbell's monomyth or Cornford's. Virtually any hero—Faust or Don Juan, the picaresque, the rogue-artist, the various lords of misrule—can be felt as gods dying with or without rebirth. Virtually any heroine can find her place in the Jungian pantheon of Virgin, Mother, and Crone. Even genres become the hardened crusts of myths. Comedy and tragedy (as the death or triumph of a hero) are where the theory started. Elegy, too, is obvious enough, as is epic: all self-respecting epics must have their journey to the underworld or, in mythic terms, a death-and-rebirth. Even pastoral has its link through the *bonus pastor*, the good shepherd, to Christ, dying and reborn; through *otium*, the leisurely pastoral life, to the mythic theme of the quest refused.

Clearly, one simple way of explaining the fact that these patterns turn up in all times, all genres, and all cultures is to say that we inherit these patterns as some kind of collective or archetypal or imprinted unconscious. But that is not the only possible explanation, and others do not require the troublesome assumption that our RNA and DNA, already so fraught with information, must carry Grimm's fairy tales as well.

The most obvious alternative is to say not that literature comes from myth, but that myth and literature alike stem from common psychological drives, universal because they are intrinsic to all human development. Thus, Freud in *Totem and Taboo* showed that tragedy and, in general, the myth of the slain, eaten, and reborn god act out a son's wishes toward a father (and, of course, one would now have to add the qualification from Malinowski, the

father-substitute in a matriarchy, typically the mother's brother). Similarly, in "The Theme of the Three Caskets," Freud showed (if we eke him out a bit) that the myths and cults of the triple goddess act out a son's attitudes toward a mother: as fruitful, bountiful, and nurturing; as sexually desirable but unattainable; as threatening and punishing, even killing. Unlike the collective unconscious used to explain the ubiquity of myth, such recurring fantasies about parents can be documented independently of myth by thousands of case histories from couch or clinic.

The myth critic, however, when he makes his assumptions explicit, feels that he is explaining something besides the ubiquity of myth, namely, that special feeling of resonance. The great myths and legends, he claims, because they express the deepest unconscious feelings of the race, have the power to evoke in literature our deepest responses. The dynamics or economics of this process myth critics, at least, do not make very clear—perhaps the simple notion of "resonance" will have to stand, though obviously there is more to it than that.

For one thing, although all works of literature embody myths, not all give that deep, rich feeling of resonance: not *Iolanthe*, for example (based on the Great Mother), nor *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (the Grail quest), to mention two such critical *trouvailles*. Another problem: merely pointing to the myth does not tell us what the work of art does with it. "The drama," C.L. Barber aptly insists, "controls magic by reunderstanding it as imagination."¹ But, unfortunately, very little myth criticism follows Professor Barber's warning. Very little tells us what has happened to the myth or ritual as it became art or how the effect of the work of art on us therefore differs from the effect of the myth.

There are, too, strong resistances to explaining the resonance myth evokes. One, I think, is something in the nature of apologetics going on underneath much myth criticism. That is, because the two fundamental myths seem to occur everywhere and always, the myth critic claims a kind of validity or authority for the one he prefers and therefore for the particular kind of religion associated

Freud set out to explain this "oceanic feeling" and arrived at an hypothesis later observers have confirmed and which we have used many times—the crisis of self-object differentiation.⁸ Originally, the child does not perceive himself as separate from his nurturing mother. In time, he learns she—and he—are separate beings, but even in adult life certain experiences will bring back that "oceanic feeling" of "limitlessness and of a bond with the universe," which had once been mother. Freud suggested that religious feelings brought the sensation back; Erikson has shown that ideological commitments also can. Now, it appears that mythic parallels in literature do, too. It is no coincidence, that Marvell's "The Garden" builds on the myth of the primal garden of at-oneness with God; we were thrust forth from it by knowledge, knowledge, in a way, of our own separateness from God, our own identity as man.

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden . . .

Thus, I am suggesting, the resonance we feel at myth represents a re-experiencing of that earlier sense of being merged into a larger matrix, a living forever in a role laid down from time immemorial.

"And eat." This sense of merging or resonance takes us back to a time when our life was primarily a life of the mouth, when our fantasies revolved around the two poles of "taking in": devouring and being devoured, as in "The Garden":

Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons as I pass,
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.
Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less . . .

Marvell images being fed as followed by the oceanic fusion; he thus suggests a check on our hypothesis. If the resonance of myth

comes from our re-imagining our original fusion in and separation from the primal matrix, then we should expect to find oral elements: motifs of being engulfed, of devouring and being devoured, in literary works where myth plays a role and where the feeling of resonance is strong.

Certainly, we find them aplenty in *Man and Superman*. Listen, for example, to this Don Juan on love: "While I was in the act of framing my excuse to the lady, Life seized me and threw me into her arms as a sailor throws a scrap of fish into the mouth of a sea-bird."⁴ By contrast, the true artist, "half vivisector, half vampire," "steals the mother's milk and blackens it to make printer's ink to scoff at her." While he still thinks Ann is in love with Tavy, Tanner tells him, "There is no love sincerer than the love of food. I think Ann loves you that way: she patted your cheek as if it were a nicely underdone chop." "Why, man, your head is in the lioness's mouth: you are half swallowed already . . . she breaks everybody's back with the stroke of her paw; but the question is, which of us will she eat? My own opinion is that she means to eat you." To Ann herself (after she has pretended to be a boa constrictor), he explains why he lost interest in her as an adolescent:

TANNER. It happened just then that I got something that I wanted to keep all to myself instead of sharing it with you.

ANN. I am sure I shouldn't have asked for any of it if you had grudged it.

TANNER. It wasn't a box of sweets, Ann. It was something you'd never have let me call my own.

ANN. (incredulously) What?

TANNER. My soul.

ANN. Oh, do be sensible, Jack.

Tanner's ambiguities make it seem as though Ann could eat up his masculinity like chocolate. Thus, on learning that Ann is in love with him: "Then I—I am the bee, the spider, the marked down victim, the destined prey," and he flees. At the end of the play, Tanner's engagement to Ann acts out an acceptance of his role as

vomiting up Henry IV, for "Their over-greedy love hath surfeited." Hal himself must put aside "the feeder of my riots" to become the hero-king; he must accept the crown that "hath fed upon the body of my father," that "hast eat thy bearer up." And when he rejects the "surfeit-swelled" Falstaff, he does so in terms of food and being devoured:

Leave gormandizing. Know the grave doth gape
For thee thrice wider than for other men.

Though, at the moment of the crowning, Falstaff called Hal, "My Jove!" thus identifying himself with Saturn who devoured his sons, he now must learn to accept a new identity, based on a new relationship between him and Hal. Where formerly Hal and Falstaff had been a unit ("Banish plump Jack and banish all the world!"), now Hal tells him:

When thou dost hear that I am as I have been,
Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast

(the converse of the way a new "I" grows out of the separation of two people). Hal has rejected this man he was taking in like a "strange tongue," and now he immerses himself in another matrix: God's, nature's, his father's. He tells Falstaff's enemy, the Lord Chief Justice, who was "the person of [his] father," "the image of his power,"

You shall be as a father to my youth.
My voice shall sound as you do prompt mine ear.

The image is the very one that Shakespeare used to harness our hunger and merge us into the play with its first words:

Open your ears, for which of you will stop
The vent of hearing when loud Rumor speaks?

In *II Henry IV*, myth serves, not to dredge up some hypothetical racial unconscious, but to make us experience for ourselves the characters' choices. They either find identities by merging into a primal, nurturing matrix, or they fail to fit the larger order because

of their own selfish appetites for food, drink, words, or power. For Hal, we feel this merging as triumphant, a kind of apotheosis. For Falstaff, we feel a wry and melancholy necessity. But for both (unlike the defeated rebels) we feel a reassuring return to a fore-ordained role.

Close chronologically and psychologically to *II Henry IV*, comes *As You Like It*.⁷ There, too, the oral theme is strong. The older brother makes the younger "feed with his hands," and the younger flees to join the banished Duke in a forest. He fights him for food first, but then learns that the forest nurtures like a mother, gives a "sweet" life ("Sweet are the uses of adversity") and the Duke and his men "flee the time carelessly as they did in the golden world." The action is for the brothers and the Dukes to find their proper social roles again. The bad brother improbably reforms as he is about to become "Food to [a] sucked and hungry lioness" "with udders all drawn dry." As for the good brother, Orlando, Rosalind's catechism of Orlando taught him love: "Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love." In the stately finale, Rosalind ritually pairs off the appropriate lovers, and again we get the sensation of a comfortable merging into a fore-ordained role. In the play as a whole, though, the role is not mythic but pastoral. Just as *Man and Superman* shows how legend can carry out the function of myth, *As You Like It* shows how the traditional trappings of a genre, perhaps even a simple phrase like "Once upon a time," can give the same resonant feeling of lapsing into a matrix, though to a lesser degree.

Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night*⁸ shows that even the mere awareness of myth without certain knowledge of it is enough to permit the feeling of mythic resonance. The film divides roughly into halves. The first presents (in a realistic setting) a series of mismatched couples: aging husband and young, virginal wife; theological son and sluttish serving-girl; motherly actress and murderous Count. This half of the film hints at a Phaedra plot, but

lack of it. We scarcely hear of him except to learn, at the opening, that his wife does not love him, that he goes "to town to some office," that he "never *would* be able to do anything worth doing," that he is "very unlucky." At the crucial discovery scene, when Paul's mother finds the boy collapsing on his rocking-horse, the father is downstairs "mixing a whisky-and-soda." The man who takes the father's place, who has money, leisure, luck, the boy's companionship, is his uncle—the mother's brother, that is, the man who would take the father's place in a patriarchal culture, particularly if the secret of fatherhood is not known.* His first name is Oscar, derived ultimately from Osiris; his last name is Cresswell, with overtones of growth and prosperity. Correspondingly, the mother's name is Esther, derived ultimately from Ishtar. In short, we seem to be dealing on the mythic level with some kind of cult of the Great Mother—though, in the actual story, of course, Esther-Ishtar is a cold, stunted, unloving mother.

The story has elements of a later religion, too. Paul, like his saintly namesake, has both pagan and Christian roles to play. He, too, falls from his horse because of a vision, ultimately blinding, that makes his eyes "like blue stones." Bassett, his gamekeeper-mentor, tells us, "It's as if he had it from heaven." Bassett himself, lowly, lamed, and priestly, talks of winning money "as if he were speaking of religious matters," "serious as a church." In effect, Lawrence sets off a slavish, money-grubbing religion of children and slaves against an ampler, patriarchal paganism.

Knowing this mythic side, however, gives no feeling of resonance to me—or to anyone to whom I have mentioned it—though the evidence is as ample as evidence usually is for mythic readings. Perhaps we can see why the resonance doesn't happen.

* It is some further confirmation of the reading to note that the same mother's brother role occurs in Strindberg's *The Father* where precisely the matters at issue are patriarchal rule as against patriarchal, the question hinging on knowledge of fatherhood. It would be possible to see Paul's need to know about riding-leading-to-multiplication as a symbol of sexual knowledge—but, if so, the Lawrence story disguises the theme much more than the Strindberg play.

Lawrence's "Rocking-Horse Winner," W. D. Snodgrass suggests,¹⁰ attacks masturbation (the boy's furious rocking on his wooden horse) as an inadequate substitute for union with another human being. We could look at the story in another, but related, way: as a tragedy of sublimation, of accepting more and more complex and devious substitutes for one's real desires. As Uncle Oscar concludes, "He's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking horse to find a winner." We can also think of it in still a third, but again related way: as the boy's trying to achieve a real relationship or union with the Great Mother by a devious Christian money-grubbing and money-charity.

But, of course, such union as he gets with his mother comes too little and too late—though it does come, towards the end of the story:

The Derby was drawing near, and the boy grew more and more tense. . . . His mother had sudden strange seizures of uneasiness about him. Sometimes, for half-an-hour, she would feel a sudden anxiety about him that was almost anguish. She wanted to rush to him at once, and know he was safe.

Two nights before the Derby, she was at a big party in town, when one of her rushes of anxiety about her boy, her first-born, gripped her heart till she could hardly speak. She fought with the feeling, might and main, for she believed in commonsense. But it was too strong.

His eyes blazed at her for one strange and senseless second, as he ceased urging his wooden horse. Then he fell with a crash to the ground, and she, all her tormented motherhood flooding upon her, rushed to gather him up.

But he was unconscious, and unconscious he remained . . .

In many ways, that horrible "But" carries the whole tragedy. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" is a story of desperate hunger, seemingly for money or luck, but actually for love, and there is no satisfaction of the hunger (unless we can see Paul's death as some kind of union with an ultimate mother). This lack of satisfaction shows another way: by the few references to the mouth. What few there are speak not of feeding, taking in, through the mouth, but instead

crets), the style and structure and action of the novel as a whole move against it. The book persuades us that to let oneself over the side into the dark, engulfing labyrinth of secrets would be dangerous or disgusting. The right action is to fight free of it. And we feel the myth as parody.

In short, where the literary work as a whole makes us feel that lapsing into a protective, nurturing, maternal environment is pleasurable (*Man and Superman*) or necessary (*II Henry IV*) or to be wryly accepted (*Smiles of a Summer Night*), we feel the resonance of myth, joyous in one case, melancholy in another, but in all, deepening and enriching. When, however, the work of art makes us feel that such a lapsing into a succored passivity is dangerous or disgusting (*The Secret Agent*) or impossible ("The Rocking-Horse Winner"), the work of art blocks whatever feeling of resonance we might get from our knowledge of a mythic substratum.

In effect, myths in literature either work with or work against our original merger with the text. Analyzing the "as if" or "willing suspension of disbelief," we found that we approach a literary work with two conscious expectations: the work will give us pleasure; it will not ask that we act on the external world. These two conscious expectations find a matrix in us, a memory of the primal at-oneness with a nurturing other. In "taking in" a poem, story, or drama, we partly regress to that state where we did not differentiate what happened "in here" from what went on "out there." Our conscious knowledge of a timeless, mythic substructure furthers this original "as if." It, too, offers us the chance to merge the plot, characters, and ourselves into a larger sustaining matrix—the myth. Really, then, myth works in our response to deepen and strengthen our existing introjection of the work—if the tenor of the whole permits it to.

The ubiquity of myth in literature and the feeling of resonance it gives—these have led most myth critics to lean on the hypothesis of a collective memory or racial unconscious. But surely this is a difficult idea to maintain, that we inherit brain-traces of such complicated and exotic matters as the Tibetan King of the Years.

Surely it is easier to believe that it is not some impersonal racial memory, but we ourselves who make the emotional experience of art out of our own drives released through our own conscious knowledge of meaning and myth.

Our study of resonance and particularly the sometime lack of it suggest a much simpler explanation of the role of myth. The mere presence of a mythic parallel in itself enables us to re-experience a total unity of self and nurturing environment, if we passively accept the parallel. The particular content of the myth will express for us fantasies derived from our experience of our own bodies and our parents', just as any plot or symbolism does. Then, in some literary works, the tenor of the whole may resist the passive acceptance of the myth, and we will feel it as parody or irony.

What is perhaps difficult to accept is that it is not the myth *per se* that makes the feeling of resonance possible, but the myth plus our conscious knowledge of it. This seems something of a paradox: that part of the effect of a work comes from something outside it—our knowledge of its mythic underside. But we have already seen (in Ch. 6) how we need a sense of meaningfulness in order to release and transform the fantasy a literary work embodies. Indeed, how could any plot or word release our unconscious drives unless we consciously understood it?

With myth, our conscious awareness (dim or exact) of the myth can provide (if the context permits it) a rationale that lets us gratify an unconscious wish to return to an ancient, timeless, and universal at-oneness with the world. The work of art itself allows us to submerge a complex and perhaps painful sense of personal identity. Then our knowledge of a mythic parallel offers us a still greater sense of some nurturing and sustaining role into which we can relax. At the same time, that conscious knowledge of the myth provides an Ariadne thread, a way out of that engulfing labyrinth and back to a sense of self. To put aside the notion of collective memory or racial unconscious, though, to accept the more rational explanation—this is, in an even larger sense, to escape into and from the labyrinth of myth.

From Schultz, William. Cassirer and Langer on Myth
NY: Garland / Taylor & Francis, 2000. 321-34.

CHAPTER 14

The Global Society Needs Myth Its Solutions to Problems of Modern Life

"In modern society . . . every person finds his Holy of Holies where he may: in Scientific Truth, Evolution, the State, Democracy, Kultur, or some metaphysical word like "the All" or "the Spiritual." Human life in our age is so changed and diversified that people cannot share a few, historic, 'charged' symbols that have about the same wealth of meaning for everybody. This loss of old universal symbols endangers our safe unconscious orientation. The new forms of our new order have not yet acquired that rich, confused, historic accretion of meanings that makes many familiar things 'charged' symbols to which we seem to respond instinctively" (PNK 288).

THE REGRESSION TO PRIMITIVE MYTH

Just as one of the main concerns of Cassirer when discussing myth in modern life was to analyze the resurgence of undesirable primitive myths in modern life, Langer is aware of the problem: "After centuries of science and progress . . . the pendulum swings the other way: the irrational forces of our animal nature must hold their Witches' Sabbath" (PNK 292). The myths she mentions concern the blind worship of power which remains as a feeling built into our language through idioms and which, even more striking, may become elements of new myths manufactured by governments for propaganda (*Mind III*, 76). They bring to mind the violent social forces of Nazism, fascism, anti-semitism, and terrorism in the world today. Concerning Nazism and antisemitism, Cassirer offers more ideas. Occasionally, Langer refers to the primitive regressions in the behavior of Hitler who, like the ancient practice of branding, burning, or cutting the human body with a social symbol, or perhaps like the modern commercial practice of burning a symbol into cattle to show ownership, had the swastika tattooed on his bodyguards

(*Mind* III, 128). In the current process of increasing globalization of economies Langer does say that some feelings of primitive tribal unity may lead to international wars with results much more disastrous than the sporadic limited fighting on the lower level of culture ("Why Philosophy? 56). On a smaller scale, the same desire for the sense of human community may regress to a desire for a primitive tribal feeling in the form of nationalism (*PNK* 292). Though she did not mention it, it seems also to apply to hooliganism at sports events.

According to Langer, modern society cannot but help inheriting some myths from the past, yet the ones that are inherited can be improved so as to play a positive role consistent with other cultural developments (*Mind* III, 4). A danger of ancient myths is that they are pre-ethical and so may lead to disastrous results; they are in a sense rationally "blind." Still, primitive myths left humanity with a lasting contribution in the collective memory, many of which function in the subjective experience of people today (*PS* 20). Sometimes they become changed so much that their primitive origins are obscured (*Mind* III, 22). Imagery, symbolism, and myths can acquire meanings on new levels.

Myths can remain especially on the lower or least developed levels of society, levels that tend to repeat the past more than lead the way to new ideas (*Mind* III, 113). The sociologist Jacques Ellul explained how traditional myths helped tribal societies maintain some continuity of personal life during the too rapid transition of modernization (*The Technological Society*). Eventually, though, the old myths disappear; they cannot have their old power in the new society.

The regression to primitive feeling can occur in times of trouble, according to Cassirer's interpretation of the Nazi nightmare and Langer agrees. Going one step further, Langer claims this regression shows a need for some type of myth ("De Profundis," 453). Then people know that they need something to believe in, they correctly choose myth, but they choose an inappropriate form of it (primitive myth). Langer mentions the odd appeal of cult religions in modern society (*PNK* 292). The social psychologist Rollo May, among others, also gives a similar explanation (*The Cry for Myth*).

THE LACK OF MYTHS IN MODERN LIFE

Much more than the potentially dangerous regression to primitive myth, Langer discusses the lack of myths appropriate for modern life. The edifice of modern civilization seems to make it difficult to have the needed myths:

In modern civilization there are two great threats to mental security: the new mode of living, which has made the old nature-symbols alien to our minds, and the new mode of working, which makes personal activity meaningless, unacceptable to the hungry imagination. Most men never see the goods they produce, but stand by a traveling belt and turn a million identical passing screws or close a million identical passing wrappers in a succession of hours, days, years. This sort of activity is too poor, too empty, for even the most ingenious mind to invest it with symbolic content. Work is no longer a sphere of ritual; and so the nearest and surest source of mental satisfaction has dried up. At the same time, the displacement of the permanent homestead by the modern rented tenement—now here, now there—has cut another anchor-line of the human mind. Most people have no home that is a symbol of their childhood, not even a definite memory of one place to serve that purpose. Many no longer know the language that was once their mother-tongue. All old symbols are gone, and thousands of average lives offer no new materials to a creative imagination. This, rather than physical want, is the starvation that threatens the modern worker, the tyranny of the machine. The withdrawal of all natural means for expressing the unity of personal life is a major cause of the distraction, irreligion, and unrest that mark the proletariat of all countries. Technical progress is putting man's freedom of mind in jeopardy (PNK 291–292).

In *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction*, by Robert Segal, the world is said to be demythologized, and social problems such as crime result (Revised Edition 176). Langer states why the modern world becomes demythologized. Furthermore, she implies what needs any remythologization should fill and these are to be discussed in the following pages.

THE IMBALANCE IN MODERN, GLOBAL SOCIETY

The lack of appropriate myth in modern society can result because of a fundamental imbalance unprecedented in previous cultures. In fact, a new type of culture may be dawning. In *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* human evolution leads up to the fifth qualitative shift called civilization, which has lasted for at least 3,000 years, but Langer suggests that this phase may be ending and a new one starting:

We may be at the very bottom of a new ladder of mental and moral ascent, in a human world stunned by civilization, and in a moment of

pause in its otherworldly concerns, meeting the challenge of its own technical and economic constitution of a world-wide civilized society (*Mind* III, 154).

Here she indicates the change in human culture to be the advent of the global society. At first the term global economy came into being until it became apparent that the internationalization is developing into a body of international law, regulation, and even common culture, including entertainment, food, and clothes.

In Part VI of *Mind*, the new subject "Mathematics and the Reign of Science" is discussed very little in proportion to the previous chapters, mostly on myth, but the position of this material suggests that the new, sixth qualitative shift in human culture, which we are probably now entering, is one dominated by science, as the words "Reign of Science" would indicate. In the passage just quoted in which the global society is being constituted technically and economically, the force of change would be science and technology.

In modern society Langer believes there is an imbalance due to the extremely rapid development of science and technology (218–219). Moreover, this development has gone unchecked because of the power of science and the unlimited global field for its dominance. Previously, cultural developments were usually limited by other cultures or by the immediate relationship to the sources of survival, that is, the environment. But now something unprecedented has occurred. Society has become so large and is becoming global with the result that the relationship of many people to the basic physical resources of survival is quite indirect while the life style also is quite mediated through human creations—it is more dominated by human products rather than things of nature. The result, claims Langer, is a dissociation from our biological natures, from our nature as a living organism, from our important sensory experiences (218–219). In the long passage quoted above, the common worker is felt to be deprived in many ways of the conditions of unity for personal experience. On a level more than the personal, Langer claims nations have not developed human sympathy enough in response to the ancient instinct of empathy with others of the same species, as the empathy in animal communication through smells and movements (*Mind* III, 141). Similarly, imbalance in the rate of development occurs in biological evolution (*Mind* III, 83).

"Great ages of myth-making are followed by eras of rationalistic labor," writes Langer about the situation of modern society as being in an

era of rationalistic labor (*The Practice of Philosophy* 193). In this idea the course of human culture is cyclic, from myth to reason and back to myth, supposedly myth of an improved type. To say that myth may become more rational may be a contradiction in terms, for its prerogative is just the feeling stratum of experience.

There is a need to restore "the balance between the mind's individuation and the earthbound hold of its roots in animal nature, the enormous potential of mental life and its tiny allowance of time for realization" (*Mind* III, 148). Careers have come to be more important than the personal, biological relationships with parents, family, places, and even the things in our environment, which may be all artificial, constantly changing or being changed for new ones, or are not the objects of much attention because time does not permit.

THE SOCIAL CAUSES OF THE LACK OF MYTH (DEMYTHOLOGIZATION)

According to Langer and so many other writers, the causes of many modern problems in life are grouped under the rubric "technology." She does, however, have some praise for some of its achievements (*PNK* 23).

Technology, propelled so fast by science, has advanced far ahead of the development of myth, art, and humanistic thinking, as it did in Langer's account of the Aztec culture, which built a vast city-kingdom in one-hundred years (*Mind* III, 178-79). If the rate of development is not the main problem, then the dominance of technical-practical thinking over the humanistic can be. The Incas, Mayans, and Toltecs all advanced their material developments without corresponding developments in the level of religion, art, or philosophy (193). The Egyptians, too, are thought to have lagged behind in the same activities. The same imbalance can occur in biological evolution when a hereditary trait becomes dominant and begins to make other traits rare, or an organ becomes overdeveloped so as to put in jeopardy the organism's adaptation to the environment.

Globalization causes the loss of the mythology of nations—and almost instantly in some cases. The role of myths to provide a sense of continuity with the past, community with one's people, customs of behavior, and common ideals for the future is undercut. The World Society may be too general to provide a specific enough sense for people who are still so different, so far from each other ("Symbols and Emblems" 338). One problem I might add is that in the past the modernization occurred

through the action of one country, with its own mythology, but now the globalization results from the influence of several countries at once on the underdeveloped ones. The country to be modernized does not have a single new mythology to substitute for its old one in a process which would be personally and socially unsettling even if it did.

Myths, rituals, and basic life symbols have been eliminated during the change to the modern life style. The conditions of work and the living environment have been mentioned. Langer mentions several others:

The marriage pattern of lifelong partnership is breaking up, divorce being quite generally countenanced. What becomes of our time-honored social unit, the family? If that disintegrates, what can be put in its stead? Probably nothing; you can substitute one element for another only where the same place is to be filled, but with a radical change in the social structure of all mankind, the place for a fundamental social unit is not likely to be the same ("Why Philosophy?" 56).

The passage suggests that myth helps to give humanity a matrix of the meaning of particular things, what Langer here calls a "place." Langer's generative ideas, which change other concepts in a new era, provide a new mythological beginning, a matrix of meaning.

As another social cause for demythologization, modern life is becoming secularized: "the great trauma that Western civilization has of necessity inflicted" (*FF* 201). Langer means that it was necessary because of the nature of Western civilization, not because it could not have been otherwise or because it could not be otherwise now. She seems to be suggesting that the process of Western civilization is to some extent one of constant demythologization and remythologization in a new—possible more "secular"—way due to the advance of science. Along with the end of myths there is the end of the primary source of religious feeling. Myth contains a religious drive toward more abstract spiritualization, while religion remains bound to its mythical material images: "All mythology requires the notion of a 'Beyond'" (*The Practice of Philosophy* 191).

Her idea of secularization, in the context of these ideas, is quite broad, meaning not only the reduction in formal religious practice but also the tendency to eliminate mystery from life, the elimination of the very special—sacred—status of many actions in life so that they become ordinary or little respect is held for them, or even the loss of the sense that the struggle of daily life is for some higher purpose even if only in a

general sense of a project guiding one's life. The daily events in life becomes dissociated from one another insofar as they lose their relationship to lifelong goals or ideals.

This interpretation of Langer's idea of secularization is based on the views of several sociologists, such as Philip Slater and Jacques Ellul. They describe the ways in which science and technology help to eliminate the sense of the mysterious in life, especially in nature, by explaining some mysteries, which is good, but at the same time by giving us the sense that there is nothing out of the ordinary or that we need not think of any such thing because science and technology will explain it very soon. Rituals have lost their significance; marriage is a contract, a piece of paper, a mere convention and a temporary one at that. Worst of all is the loss of life symbols and myths helping to give a sense of the overall meaning of life. Religion used to—and for some people still does—provide them. For others, myths of financial success attempt to fill the human need.

OTHER PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE LACK OF MYTH

There have been problems on the level of nations becoming unstable or beginning to engage in conflict with others and within their own borders (218–219). In an article written in 1950 she thinks there were thirty-five years of "political upheaval" ("The Deepening Mind" 119).

There is a problem of faith in the very general sense of what one is living for, doubts of the "meaning of life" (PNK 289). "The blind faith in science has ended in disillusion and no faith at all," writes Langer ("The Deepening Mind" 119). The cause for this loss of morale is the imbalanced importance of science and technology at the expense of myth, art, and humanistic activities. As Langer's view shows, people need myth but were denied it by science and technology; then people tried to find a fulfilling mythology through science and technology but it turned out to be unfulfilling; and this failure may show that myth is different from science and both have their own prerogatives.

There often is a lack of a sense of a general meaning to life. Few rituals remind people of a greater importance giving daily life its meaning (PNK 287). In modern terms ritual gives morale to the tribe while reminding its members of the importance of their actions by relating those to the universe as a whole. Rituals contain symbols charged with emotional meaning that give value to the activities they are related to. In

modern life the life symbols are all but gone and any remaining have lost their charge of emotion.

Psychologically, there is a diminution of personal identity with a loss of passion for life, a casual attitude toward the most important matters, such as politics, and a sense of indifference toward human and cultural values (*PNK* 290). Sometimes there seems to be no unity to personal life, which myths would make (*PNK* 292).

In addition, working conditions, and living conditions cause a "moral collapse" ("The Deepening Mind" 119). For instance, the rise of drug abuse on such a scale is a new phenomenon.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE DECLINE IN MYTH AND ART

The minimalized influence of myth and religion causes a general secularization of culture in Langer's view. Without a basis in myth and religion, art has become a matter for the academics, the elite, museums, or the rich collector rather than being something that people would see naturally and constantly in churches or palaces or universities or public places (*FF* 403). Then any positive healing effects on the culture would be reduced.

The secularization in the culture, a result of the decline in myth and religion, creates attitudes unfavorable to the improvement of the culture; indifference, casualness, and a taste for whatever is popular or entertaining. "The vulgarization of art is the surest symptom of ethnic decline," and another symptom of cultural languor is the current lack of growth in the arts (*PS* 84). An interest in religion or an active myth-making or symbol making would provide material for art to transform by its symbolic processes (*PS* 84). Even though Langer's views on the relation of myth to art are not simple, formalized ones, it is clear that myth initiates new ideas in a culture and that art can use them as its material ("De Profundis" 453). When there is little myth or religion in art, when its material is not new but comes from the common sense environment of conventional knowledge, it becomes literal and self-imitating, a stagnation preventing art from remaking society (*FF* 403). The "art" that is produced tends to be "corrupt" in the sense of producing "a shallow sentimentalism" as so much television does and so many films do. Though Langer does not state her objection to popular art in these terms, other thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse describe popular culture as being reduced to one common level of understanding, to the level most people are already on, so that it loses its character of presenting something

people have not as yet experienced but would benefit from if they would try to understand its meaning (*One Dimensional Man*). Traditionally as one function of myth, it could provide people with something fascinating to raise the level of their understanding.

SOLUTIONS BY THE POWER OF MYTH THAT REMAINS

Despite the minimalization of myth, some individuals still have been able to know what they need and have been able to create the conditions for themselves; they have some ritual, life symbols, humanistic activities, personal life, and a "mental anchorage" in a family, neighborhood, or awareness of their bodies and nature (*PNK* 288-89).

These individuals, definitely in the minority according to Langer, might serve as a model to others or the mythical elements in their lives may begin to change others. An interest in modern metaphysical myth must be inculcated:

even in modern society the average person has a deep need of asserting the nature of his [her] world, in order that he [she] may constantly realize and confirm his own being. The content of such assertions is, of course, no longer individual in the framework of a great religion" (*Mind* III, 22).

Some of the themes of myth continued beyond the primitive level are the origins of the world, the meaning of death, and the nature of a human being (*Mind* III, 25).

Myths themselves may suggest to people their need for them. They restore "the balance between mind and the powers of nature" (*Mind* III, 133). Since, according to Langer, modern culture may be imbalanced due to the rapid growth of technology, it is only a question of time before the growth slows down, society realizes the imbalance, and those myths promoting the right kind of new balance are immediately recognized as rapidly as the original imbalance occurred. After all, myth initiates new ideas in a culture; then, the change would have to involve the myths themselves ("De Profundis" 453).

It is a credit to Langer that she does not necessarily advise modern society to wait for its problems to be solved by the self-correcting forces present in social form generally. In "Symbols and Emblems for a United World" in a journal called *Common Cause* Langer attempts to provide the world with a symbol for the new global society: it is a design of a

circle with a spiral within it. Her reasons for attempting the project are that the emotional attitude of being a member of a world community cannot continue without a perceptible symbolism to fix the feeling, record it, transmit it, keep it stable, and keep it fairly common for all to refer to and become united by. She also mentions other means of creating a world symbolism and ritual (flags, ceremonies, etc.).

I might raise the doubt whether a consciously designed symbol could ever have the force of a mythical symbol which arises from the collective unconscious of the community and so it is public, and in a sense already in force because its expression coincides with its transfer from the collective unconscious to the collective conscious symbolism. A similarly doomed project seems to be the consciously designed universal language Esperanto, which has not caught on yet because it did not arise as languages do and then is not in some sense a living language or "alive and efficacious" in the sense a real, nonartificial language is. In contrast, the manufacturing of myths in the form of propaganda may have occurred in Nazi Germany, as Cassirer writes about; however, even in this case the myths had a long-standing tradition in Germany and the Nazi leaders kindled the passions still extant below the surface of public discourses and raised them again in a new way.

SOLUTIONS BY PHILOSOPHY AND MYTH

Philosophers can help to solve problems of modern life, Langer believes. They can offer a "general interpretation of experience" ("End of an Epoch" 772). This sounds quite a lot like the metaphysical myths, which are needed, except that Langer probably means the philosophers would reflect on myths, not make them. Their general interpretation could bring the imbalance of society, the demythologization, to light as a first step in changing the situation.

She believes the philosopher need not be active directly, need not engage in political actions. "A strong contemplative bent has kept me from entering directly into practical affairs, political, economic or social" [*The Saturday Evening Post*, May 13, 1961, and *Current Biography* 1963, page 235]. This issue was an important one in Cassirer's *Myth of the State*, which concluded that the philosopher must help society understand the dangers of its domination by bad myths and this is a kind of first action toward making the situation better. Publishing a book is a political act proper to intellectuals, or governments in several countries would not have attempted to censor publications.

Perhaps basing her ideas on Cassirer's, Langer does not discuss the specific problem of dangerous political myths very much but chooses to broaden the scope of the discussion to include an entire program of social reform, beginning with philosophy. First of all, intensive philosophical work is needed, especially work for a new science of society, one that would treat those aspects of society seemingly underdeveloped in the great wave of technological progress beginning with the Industrial Revolution. Not only would philosophy discuss those areas of society but also it would encourage research in the social sciences, in ethnology, psychology, and others to make up for their comparative underdevelopment in relation to the "hard" sciences like mathematics and physics ("Why Philosophy?" 56). Philosophy in combination with the other disciplines might be able to raise some public interest in new humanistic activities. Educational reform would change the curriculum by deemphasizing problem solving in the sciences in favor of understanding the more general significance of the developments, including the reason for the development of new ideas in the first place, the process of discovering them, and their value outside their own fields. In addition, there should be at least an equal emphasis on studies in the social sciences. Without this basis in the broad framework of society, without the highest concepts of philosophy having versions on various levels in society, Langer does not believe the program to balance the culture could acquire the sufficient support for an overall change.

Philosophy can also analyze the vast symbols in modern culture that still lack discursive content: Race, Unity, Manifest Destiny, Humanity, and others (*PNK* 293). While these have been provided by myth, their further development within the culture requires other activities besides myth. Among them religion or art could rework the symbols to help their meaning to grow in new ways, as philosophy could help the symbols to become more rationally complete and intelligible. As mythical symbols they can carry a great emotional force, one helping to unite some groups of people; however, they lack the rational articulation through clear language and logical argument to make them ethical for large, multicultural societies.

SOLUTIONS BY ART AND MYTH

Just as philosophy can reinterpret the symbols of myth and religion, so too can art in its own way.

Most of all, argues Langer, "the function of art is to objectify feeling

so that we can contemplate and understand it. It is the formulation of so-called 'inward experience', the 'inner life', that is impossible to achieve by discursive thought, because its forms are incommensurable with the forms of language and all its derivatives (e.g. mathematics, symbolic logic) (*PS* 90). It is not every author of a famous book on symbolic logic that would claim something cannot be formulated in its terms. Art does something that the sciences cannot—not psychology nor sociology nor any other.

Indeed art does something beyond the work of myth. They can work together until art must perform its distinctive operations on the mythical symbols. If myth is the first means of having new feelings, modes of perception, and concepts, then art would de-existentialize the new content, formalize it, and present those formal aspects of the feeling that have aesthetic significance, relations formalized from the senses.

In this interpretation of Langer's view, art does not make the new feeling, it just gives it a new, perhaps more explicit, developed expression. I believe Langer also means that art creates new feelings, since she clearly states on many occasions and in many ways that "art educates feeling" (*FF* 401). This education is an "illuminating contact with symbols of feeling." Part of this education is the role of artists to "preform" "experience in the imagination before any of the actual experiences occur, which they do, sometimes generations later (*FF* 401). In a different way, art creates feelings when it gets the themes from the inner attitude of the artist and the collective unconscious before it has become symbolized and is on its way to becoming explicit self-knowledge. It is then art that adds these meanings to the themes of life under discussion. If art can change the feelings of nonartists, then it can be a force of social change, whether this is direct or not.

On these issues Langer's ideas are similar to those of Joseph Campbell. As in Segal's discussion, Campbell believes artistic rendering of technology will be the source of new myths (Revised Edition 177). It follows from Langer's view that, ironic as it is, art coming from technological myths could create new feelings against them. Her view entails a self-corrective tendency in the cooperation of cultural activities: myth, art, and technology, each performing different functions nevertheless related in the whole society.

If art cannot preserve physical life, as technology sometimes does, it has the equally important task of keeping the quality humanly acceptable (*FF* 402). It can preserve the spiritual life. Art in this role resembles other humanistic activities in culture. Religion, an example given by Langer,

helps people accept the end of life, gives meaning to it, and gives them moral guidance, perhaps courage (FF 402).

In relation to myth, art seems to have the power of correcting society more; myth, the power of renewing it. In the modern situation myth can also correct society by restoring the balance of a person, the appropriated balance between individual achievement, probably measured by technological criteria of success, and personal feeling, on the level of what she calls "animal nature," namely, basic desires, satisfactions, and relationships.

It is noteworthy that Langer seldom writes of the issues of pleasure or beauty usually discussed in aesthetics. True enough, these issues would lead the present discussion away from its proper subject, myth. The obvious emphasis shows art to be a kind of knowledge. Then its principles could apply to myth more directly than if it were discussed in another way.

CONCLUSION ABOUT LANGER'S IDEAS ON MYTH IN MODERN LIFE AND THEIR RELATION TO HER THEORY OF MYTH

Many of the ideas on modern life were written before the completion of her theory of myth in *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*, though the end of this work does add to those ideas. Most can be found in *Philosophical Sketches* (1962), *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942), and a few other essays cited previously. This dissemination of her ideas suggests that she never intended to write a philosophy of modern life. Instead, from the beginning of her reflections on myth, their importance to modern life became clear. A theory of myth is incomplete without some reference to contemporary society.

All theorists assume certain values that their theories have for their own societies and they condition the resulting theories. Obviously, Cassirer and Langer are concerned with understanding how a worldview is made, what the unity of culture is, and what role myth plays, then and now.

Langer's philosophical desire to understand the contemporary worldview conditioned her theory of myth in the following ways. She is led to form ideas on myth that she might otherwise have not. For example, does myth remain throughout human culture? She answers, it can in a changed form and sometimes as a partial regression. This question and answer are important if one aims to form a comprehensive theory, as

Langer does. Secondly, how does myth then function in modern society? She answers, myth can work in cooperation with other cultural activities, it providing the new feelings along with their symbols and other cultural activities reinterpreting them in valuable ways that myth cannot.

In conclusion, Langer's ideas on myth in modern life complete her theory by fulfilling the aim of a comprehensive theory of knowledge, coming under the rubric "a theory of mind." Furthermore, they may even help to change the mind of which they speak and thereby improve society.

MARIOS BYRON RAIZIS

INTERPRETING, EVALUATING, AND TEACHING
LITERATURE BASED ON CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

ΑΝΑΤΥΠΟ
ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ «ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗ ΕΠΕΤΗΡΙΔΑ
ΤΗΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΚΗΣ ΣΧΟΛΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟΥ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ»
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INTERPRETING, EVALUATING, AND TEACHING LITERATURE BASED ON CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

I. THEORETICAL PREMISES

Classical Myths—as they have come down to us primarily through literary, philosophical, or historical sources by Greek and Roman authors of Antiquity—have offered 'raw material' for the creation of original literary texts, in all genres, in most Modern languages ever since the Middle Ages and, especially, the Renaissance.

Although most of the principles applying to such an examination of literary texts based on Classical Myth(s) also apply while approaching, say, a Viking Myth, or a Medieval Legend, or a primitive Fable of religious or secular import¹, the fact remains that Roman and Grecian Myths had achieved such a high degree of cultural and psychological sophistication plus universal appeal, that specialized scholars readily demonstrate that non-classical mythologems are seminally contained or presupposed in rudimentary forms in the ancient Greek and Roman archetypes as they, in their turn, reflect the Jungian types and prototypes established by anthropologists and psychologists².

On the basis of the amount of Mythological material(s) used by a post-classical or modern writer, we may distinguish the following four categories of literature depending on Classical Myth:

- 1) Texts with ALLUSIONS to Myth(s).
- 2) Texts offering RE-INTERPRETATIONS or IMITATIONS of Myth(s).

1. The difference between archaic myths and medieval legends or fables is discussed by a host of popular scholars in *Myth or Legend?* compiled by Glyn E. Daniel. New York: Capricorn Books, 1968.

2. See, for instance William F. Lynch, *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination*. New York: Mentor, 1963.

- 3) Texts constituting comic or satirical PARODIES of Myth(s).
- 4) Texts utilizing functional or structural ANALOGUES to Myth(s)

Let me make it clear here that these four categories are by no means absolute or exclusive. Myth scholarship in recent decades has been enriched by the contributions of other disciplines, such as anthropology; or 'schools' of thought or method, like those of the structuralists, the Marxists, the de-constructionists and so on³. Since my purpose is not to discuss the structure and function of texts as such, but the function of classical myths as components of a text, I believe that the above four categories are both flexible and useful in their practical application, as well as encompassing in their coverage of literary works composed in various national traditions, ever since the beginning of the use of vernacular languages in post-Roman Europe.

By the term *modern* I certainly distinguish texts that do not historically belong to Classical Antiquity, and not merely those of our contemporaries or our immediate predecessors.

To clarify what I mean by the sentence "Literature Based on Classical Mythology", I feel I must establish some criteria which, first, define all such literature, and, then classify exemplary texts belonging to it on the basis of the degree of their dependence on mythology for the realization of their artistic goals. In the process of presenting examples, it will become increasingly apparent that interpretation, evaluation, and teaching of such texts is one tripartite but integrated scholarly activity, rather than a series or set of three independent and separate actions.

Borrowing some, but by no means all, categories and premises suggested by John J. White, in his article «Myths and Patterns in the Modern Novel», *Mosaic*, 2(1969), 42-55, and his monograph *Mythology in the Modern Novel; A Study of Prefigurative Techniques* (Princeton U.P., 1972), and completing them with my own categories and observations, I will be drawing a map, as it were, enabling the reader to follow my mental itinerary of approach. I will limit my examples to instances of use of the general mythologems of Odysseus (Ulysses) and Prometheus, for two chief reasons: a) Both are among the most interest-

3. For two useful collections of relevant studies see, Northrop Frye and others, *Myth and Symbol: Critical Approaches and Applications*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968. Also, John B. Vickery, editor, *Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973.

ing and fascinating myths with a lasting appeal to creative authors of all times, b) Both are widely known to scholars and readers, consequently they are instrumental to the understanding of my methodology.

1) Texts with Allusions.

One of the main characteristics of Odysseus, that of an adventurous traveller, and its usefulness as a means of instructing and enriching the individual, is found in Roger Ascham's prose text *The Scholemaster* (1570). Numerous other uses of, or allusions to, Ulysses are found in Renaissance and later texts, mostly dramas, where negative aspects (i.e., deception, lying) of his personality are remembered —of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* —more in keeping with unsympathetic interpretations of this Grecian hero, after Virgil's denigration in his *Aeneid*.

The Promethean allusions, by contrast, tend to be positive and more imaginative. For instance, in Shakespeare's *Othello* the tragic Moor says to his dead wife: «I know not where is that Promethean heat / That can thy light relume...» (V, ii, 12-13). In *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare remembers Prometheus's torture on the Caucasian rock (II, i, 16-17). The Titan's stealing of fire as well as his function as maker of mankind are alluded to by Thomas Campion in his *Lord's Masque*. John Donne uses the phrase «Promethean art» in his last Epithalamion (stanza I of «The Time of Marriage») to express the fervour of erotic desire.

These at random examples with Ulysses and the Fire-Bringing Titan are representative of the use of mythical allusions in prose or verse that, otherwise, has non-classical mythological subject-matter or thematic concerns. Rhetorical considerations, mostly, have occasioned their use, since through them these authors have a) enriched and embellished their poetic diction, b) offered *exempla* that illustrate a major or minor point in their discourse. Needless to say that this category is the most numerous, as such cultural allusions are part of the common heritage that all Europeans and Americans directly inherited and still share. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the continuing use of such elements in modern poetry, even prose, proves the lasting universality of their collective appeal.

2) Texts with *Re-interpretations or Imitations*.

Not as numerous as the first, still splendidly varied and rich, is the group of literary texts wherein authors of all periods and many nationalities have utilized a classical myth as their sole fabric component to weave a story and to create a hero who functions as their spokesman or exponent of the problématique of their times.

In his dramatic verse address «Prometheus» (1816) Lord Byron attacked the restrictions and absurdities of Calvinist dogma and aimed his personal anguish and justification of defiant attitudes by means of the persona of this Grecian Titan. Tennyson, in his recognizably Homeric «Ulysses» (1833), succeeded in expressing personal emotions, occasioned by the loss of his friend Hallam, as well as some characteristically Victorian ideals vis-à-vis the desire to travel, to explore, to get to know the unknown and so on. In both above instances, the poets' choice of mythological personae is quite felicitous.

Much later, in his verse drama *Der Bogen des Odysseus* (1914), Gerhart Hauptmann re-interpreted the character of Odysseus to suit his own modern and Naturalistic predilections as to psychological motivation and contemporary understanding of human nature and behaviour as these are conditioned by hostile and environmental factors⁴. Similarly, the American poet Robert Lowell composed in 1967 a prose 'imitation' (his term) of the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus. In it his hero and spokesman expresses Lowell's malaise at what was happening then in his own country and the world (the Viet Nam War, racial and civil strife, social unrest all over), thus also voicing the frustration of the modern intellectual, in general, as he realizes that his wisdom and foresight are not appreciated by the Supreme Power that arbitrariness controls human destiny⁵.

With some reservations, due to Shelley's strikingly original additions of characters and events to the Promethean mythologem, and its entirely romantic orientation, we could include his *Prometheus Unbound* here. Indeed, Shelley's lyrical drama is a re-interpretation

4. W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968), 195-8.

5. M. Byron Raizis, «Robert Lowell's *Prometheus Bound*», *Papers on Language & Literature: Studies in American Literature in Honor of Robert Dunn Farnet...* ed. by Robert Partlow (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 154-68.

and extension of the captivating story first mentioned by Hesiod and then splendidly dramatized by Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound* and the non-extant plays of his trilogy.

Of exactly the same nature is Nikos Kazantzakis's colossal modern epic, *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* (1938), since its central hero and background are initially Homeric but very soon develop into twentieth-century re-interpretations and extensions with a plethora of new data and details that help the poet to express a range of themes based on contemporary philosophies (Nietzsche, Bergson, Marx etc.) and concerns that have nothing in common with the Homeric culture and its lore⁶.

Kazantzakis's *Odyssey* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* have this one strong element in common: they both add substantially to the original mythologem; they proliferate its cast, motifs, and dynamics; and thus they succeed in expressing complex personal attitudes and beliefs with challengingly new values for their times. In the above telling examples we realize the tremendous potentialities of classical myths when they are used as the *only* means for the articulation of personal or collective *Angst*. The same is true when it comes to the expression of an author's *Weltanschauung*, be it Romantic, Victorian, Naturalistic, or Modern; English, German, Modern Greek and the like.

3) Texts with Comic or Satiric *Parodies*.

This category is less popular, and its texts less numerous. However, in some historical periods, such as the Augustan Age in England, we find comic and satirical literature inspired by, and based on, classical myths and their individual heroes. In 1724 Jonathan Swift published anonymously a poem in couplets, titled «Prometheus». To hit the target of his satire Swift capitalized on Prometheus' negative aspects (cheating, stealing) to castigate a certain Mr. Wood who had coined the infamous 'Wood's halfpenny' for circulation in Ireland. In «Prometheus» the poet did not hesitate to suggest to the ruling monarch that this 'Prometheus' (Wood) should be hanged for fraud—a punishment comparable to that suffered by the Titan.

Three generations later, in 1816, the popular dramatist George Colman Jr., published «Fire: or the Sun Poker», a humorous narrative

6. Stanford, 222-40.

poem of some thirty-five pages of couplets, where practically all traits of the Titan's personality are dramatized with gusto in a light vein with the sole purpose of offering entertainment. Indeed, this poem is quite witty and funny, and rather inoffensive to Prometheus, by contrast to Swift's polemic ridicule.

Parodies of Odysseus in quality literature are unknown to me⁷. By implication comic, as the cuckolded husband of playful and unfaithful Penelope, Odysseus/Ulysses characters are found, however, in fiction primarily in the form of 'confessional' accounts by Penelope, such as Kostas Varnalis's *The Journal of Penelope* (1946), where all Homeric heroes and their values are stripped of their ethos, and their humanism shown to be hypocritical, outdated, and void of any real substance.

4) Texts with Functional or Structural Analogues.

This is a rich and fascinating category with texts in various genres spanning several historical periods. By analogue I mean—in the case of these two mythologems—texts where one or more salient features, motifs, themes, or characters bear similarities or resemblances, of some degree, with corresponding details in the archetypal or original source in the literary tradition. What causes this partial and not absolute approximation of features is normally the transposition of time and place of action from those of Antiquity to other contemporary or even recent times and milieus. This subtle strategy implies a commensurate adjustment of persons and circumstances to express changing and different tempers. Often challenging originality is achieved through irony, and the ensuing characters and circumstances may be considered imaginative parodies of the established prototypes or norms, if the overall effect is comic, or just analogous approximations if the effect to be achieved is serious.

The foremost example in this category is certainly the celebrated *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce. Time, setting, protagonist, and supporting cast have some pronounced features in common with the Homeric tradition, though in other aspects they are miles apart. Much has been

7. In minor texts, like James Smith's *Innovation of Penelope and Ulysses*, written c. 1640, comic parodies of the archetypal hero exist, especially in burlesque verse comparable to Colman's «The Sun-Poker». R. R. Bond cites a few in his *English Burlesque Poetry, 1700-1750* (1932).

written about the Odyssean analogy of Leopold Bloom, and of the Molly-Penelope and Stephen-Telemachus 'parallels' in the novel. The same is true of most episodes, symbols, motifs, and themes (or parodies of themes) skillfully approximated or parodied by Joyce in contemporary equivalents in *Ulysses*⁸.

This kind of structural formula/technique achieves greater verisimilitude and aura of realism than the mixture of the ancient and the modern—no matter how cleverly done—that we see, say, in Anouilh's *Antigone*, or Giraudoux's *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, where the classical heroes talk 'modern sense' and dramatize concerns of the 1920s or 1940s while still acting in their traditionally mythical contexts.

Talking of analogues of this broad category we must mention the Promethean attributes of Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*, or even the quasi-Satanic qualities of some Byronic heroes, such as Manfred, Cain, or Lara. In post-War German fiction we have Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus* which is a very subtle analogue to the prototypes offered by Marlowe and Goethe, with all warranted adjustments to the modern temper made under various 'guises' or correspondences and in varying degrees of proximity.

Odyssean echoes as contemporary analogues are found in Du Bellay's Sonnet XIX, from *Les Regrets* (1558), beginning with the line, «Heureux qui comme Ulysse...» where the *nostos* (homecoming) motif and the name Ulysses are the only mythical allusions in a poem on an analogous theme, since Joachim Du Bellay was talking about his own longing to return to his village, Liré, and rest there among his compatriots and family in France. Similarly, names and echoes from *The Odyssey* of Homer appear under a familiar title in Constantine Cavafy's poem «Ithaca», a sophisticated poem about the process of the existential becoming of a modern sensibility. The opening lines are deceptively Homeric, whereas the concluding ones make it clear that Cavafy here is talking of all men at all times and places, including himself in early twentieth-century Alexandria. The analogue here functions almost as an 'objective correlative'—to borrow one of T.S. Eliot's popular terms.

Systematizing J.J. White's observations and theory, and applying some of them in a more specific and exclusive discussion of the story of Jesus Christ as subject matter, theme, or analogue in fiction, Pro-

fessor Theodore Ziolkowski made an ingenious use of the terms *pre-figuration*, *configuration*, and *post-figuration* in his treatise *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (1972). Although what he writes there applies only to fictionalized biographies of characters of undisputed universality some of his terms may be used along with my modifications to cast more light even on texts featuring mythological gods or heroes.

According to Ziolkowski's argument, the real story of historical Jesus, as recorded in the four Gospels, constitutes the *prefiguration* of any Christ figure found in subsequent literature. Thus, if a later text features a contemporary recreation of Jesus's character (what I termed an imitation or reinterpretation), such as the Christ in Kazantzakis's novel *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1951), then this 'hero' is a *post-figuration* of the original. Also, if an author develops a character with Christ-like qualities and a humanitarian mission *pro bono publico* in a modern setting, such as Manolios in *Christ Recruited* (The Greek Passion, 1948) by Kazantzakis, this is a *postfiguration* of the historical Jesus as well. The latter types are more numerous (for obvious reasons) in Western literature. For instance, Ignazio Silone's Pietro Spina in *Bread and Wine* (1937), and John Steinbeck's Jim Casey in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), constitute such *postfigurations*—what I would have classed as analogues of the Ulysses-Leopold Bloom type.

At this point I would like to differentiate in terms of time setting and, conversely, separate a character such as Leopold Bloom functioning in the Dublin of the early 1900s from an Odyssean figure functioning in a traditionally Homeric time setting of antiquity.

Following this differentiation and broadening its application to include historical as well as mythological figures, we realize that Joyce's Bloom is a modern *postfiguration* of Odysseus, whereas Kazantzakis's hero in his *Odyssey* is a different type because he is still functioning in a traditional setting. I propose to call this latter type a *configuration* of the original, to avoid confusion of settings and historical circumstances. When it comes to Prometheus, though, we realize that even this modification of Ziolkowski's categories is of little avail since the few 'modern' Prometheuses in literature—such as Lawrence Lee's *Prometheus in Pittsburgh* (1952) and Wallace B. Nichols's *Prometheus in Piccadilly* (1927)—are the very Grecian Titan of antiquity released after thousands of years to find himself involved with Londoners or Americans of our own century. To boot, these *postfigurations*—like most of those Jesus types mentioned by Ziolkowski—do not constitute great art. If we apply these modified terms, we realize that Robert Lowell's Prometheus,

or Giraudoux's Ulysses are *configurations* rather of the classical characters, while they express concerns and problematiques poles apart from those of the original sources, thus functioning, in effect, as *postfigurations* on the thematic level. This discrepancy between 'identity' and function of the characters poses problems not only to classification but to interpretation as well, and a certain doubt ensues as to their artistic effectiveness.

II. APPLICATION

The reader must have realized by now that it is not easy to separate interpretation from evaluation, and both from presentation, i.e., teaching. As a matter of fact, these three scholarly activities are inter-related, inter-dependent, and even overlapping.

A scholar who wants to write a publishable academic monograph or paper on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* or Joyce's *Ulysses* must certainly evaluate the role played by the mythological component in either text before feeling sure that he has comprehended the function and meaning of these texts as integrated artistic entities. Determining the category in which each belongs (2 and 4 in these cases) will enable him to ascertain whether Shelley and Joyce achieved their re-interpretation and analogue, respectively, with a commendable degree of artistic originality. He may then proceed to offer his own new way of evaluating, interpreting, or criticizing one or more salient features in these masterpieces.

The recording of his observations, critique, and conclusion constitutes an act of *instruction*. His readers are his class, his thesis is the lesson to be taught. If the scholar fails to be effective in the presentation of his thesis, his paper is flawed and, in all probability, will remain unpublished. Similarly, a classroom teacher must have researched all relevant data before attempting to convince the 'innocent' students that Shelley has done an ingenious job of continuing and concluding the Promethean legend by inventing and properly manipulating characters and events that were inconceivable in the times of Aescáylus. Since *Prometheus Bound* belonged to a trilogy, credit must be given to Shelley for conceiving and realizing a final and concluding part for such a trilogy. Of course, the English poet created an end-drama for a 'Prometheia' expressing his own idiosyncratic views within a larger romantic perimetre, by contrast to the classical temper of the Athenian tragedian.

These instances of imaginative originality in the work of Shelley—after they have been traced, interpreted, and evaluated—easily convince fellow-scholars, or 'innocent' students, that Shelley created a masterpiece. The only difference between the task of a teacher and that of a scholar-critic is in the *degree* of erudition and professional sophistication that will be employed in either case: to instruct erudite specialists, or to instruct young persons who must be initiated to the basic issues.

To facilitate his task, a teacher of *Prometheus Unbound* may prepare, and distribute to his class, an outline of what happens in Aeschylus's play by *whom, how, and why*. This outline must indicate main themes, symbols, motifs as well as how and why all these function as an artistic whole. The teacher will then show how Shelley's corresponding, or new, features function for the articulation of his own concerns as a romantic intellectual. A comparative examination of the original 'source' and the work produced in response, as it were, will enable the learner to master the target text, thus avoiding misconceptions, oversimplifications, or loss of key points.⁹

A comparable approach to a presentation of *Ulysses* for teaching purposes will warrant the making of a *chart* of sorts, wherein all Homeric characters, episodes, symbols, motifs etc., will be shown in their corresponding approximations (analogues) in each chapter of Joyce's novel. The student will then have made a big step forward in his process of deciphering and understanding the elements controlling the structure of this complex work—a prerequisite to the understanding of its themes and artistic purpose. The latter will be assisted by the teacher's explanation of Joyce's personal and contemporary preoccupations and concerns as an Irish intellectual. Once more, a comparison between what Homer offered Joyce as 'raw material', and what the Irishman achieved thanks to his ingenuity in his modern analogue, will convince the student that Joyce, indeed, created a novel of great originality and literary value.

The task of the teacher and that of the scholar thus coincide in their inter-related, inter-dependent, and overlapping function—to instruct others. *Instruction*, however, will not be effectively accomplished if the classification of data has not 'illuminated' their interpretation and

9. For a number of interpretations of Shelley's text see, M. Byron Raizis, *From Caucasus to Fitzburgh: The Prometheus Theme in British and American Poetry* (Athens, 1982), 84-95.

their critical evaluation as means to comprehend the overall meaning and function of a work of art based on classical mythology.

Determining the category is the first step. Texts belonging to Category I (allusions) require an equally responsible approach on the part of the scholar-teacher, as texts belonging to the other three. The reason is simple: students may form a vague idea as to the nature and general meaning of a poem like *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot even if not all allusions in it are explained. But they will never master it in all its dimensions if they remain uncertain, confused, or partly informed, about the meaning and function of its artistic cultural ingredients. As a matter of fact, students may even become embarrassed when asked to justify it as a modern masterpiece if they cannot understand and evaluate how effectively echoes and allusions function in it to turn it into a sophisticated and strikingly original poetic manifesto of the spiritual aridity experienced by Eliot in the aftermath of the Great War¹⁰.

Similarly, readers of as 'simple' a novel as *The Centaur* by John Updike, will certainly fail to relate its title to its contents, and its contemporary significance to the relevance of issues and problems that were first confronted by the ancient Greek myth-makers, if the instructor fails to explain the story of Cheiron (Caldwell); and the approximation (analogue) of the school Principal (Zimmerman) to Zeus, and the rest of the characters to gods, goddesses, and other figures of classical mythology. Classifying *The Centaur* (1963) as an analogue (Category 4) is then a necessary first step before attempting either to teach or criticize it as a competent work of recent fiction.

As I stated in the beginning of my paper, I consider these four practical categories extremely useful. Though I learned much from the scholarship and expertise of White and Ziolkowski, I based most of my approach on my own thirty years of experience as a college instructor and professor of anglophone and other literature—in Comparative Literature courses—related to Classical Mythology¹¹. The methodology

10. In a Note Eliot himself refers to Miss Weston's anthropological classic *From Ritual to Romance* (1920). Notice how close it is to the time when *The Waste Land* was written (1922). See, Jessie L. Weston *From Ritual to Romance*. New York: An Anchor Book, 1957.

11. For anthropological backgrounds to the Prometheus mythologem, as originating in fire cults, cooking habits, and the 'religion of the hearth' see Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks,

of my approach and its theoretical premises are not exclusive or unique, neither do they supersede others in their entirety. They are, however, useful and effective as a practical first step to be taken by a literary scholar about to enter his office to write an article, or about to enter his classroom to teach the innocent¹².

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Μάριος Βύρων Ραϊζής, «Έμφανεσία, αξιολόγηση, και διδασκαλία λογοτεχνικών κειμένων που βασίζονται στην κλασική μυθολογία».

Αυτή η μελέτη είναι προϊόν τής τριανταπεντάχρονης πείρας μου ως πανεπιστημιακού διδασκάλου διεθνούς λογοτεχνίας που πρόβλεπεται από τους μύθους τών αρχαίων Έλλήνων και Ρωμαίων λογοτεχνών, στοχαστών, και ιστορικών. Οι παρατηρήσεις μου είναι εμπειρικές και όχι τελικά συμπεράσματα από τις διεργασίες τών θέσεων και αντιλήψεων τρίτων. Ούτε είναι αποκλειστικές άλλων και διαφορετικών προσεγγίσεων.

Στό Α' Μέρος, θεωρητικές Αρχές, εξηγώ ότι οι διανοητικές γνωστικές λειτουργίες που αναφέρονται στον τίτλο αποτελούν, στην πράξη, μία ένια διαδικασία διότι είναι άπλοτα αλληλοσυμπληρούμενες, αλληλκένδρες, και αλληλοεξαρτώμενες διεργασίες. Δεν είναι λογικό να διδάσκει κανείς κείμενα τών οποίων το νόημα του διαφύγει ή τών οποίων το λογοτεχνικό ποινόν δεν μπορεί να αξιολογήσει με τή παραδεδομένη φιλολογικά κριτήρια.

Με κριτήριο τήν ποσότητα και φύση τού μυθολογικού ύλικού ή στοιχείου που ένας νεώτερος λογοτέχνης χρησιμοποίησε στη σύνθεση τού λογοτεχνήματός του, διακρίνω τέσσερις (4) κατηγορίες λογοτεχνίας αυτού τού είδους: 1) Κείμενα που περιέχουν ΑΝΑΦΟΡΕΣ σε μύθο, μύθους, ή μυθικά στοιχεία· 2) Κείμενα που είναι ΕΠΑΝΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΣ ή ΑΠΟΜΜΗΣΕΙΣ μύθων· 3) Κείμενα που συνιστούν κοινές ή σατιρικές ΠΑΡΩΔΙΕΣ μύθων και 4) Κείμενα που χρησιμοποιούν λειτουργικές ή δομικές ΑΝΑΛΟΓΙΕΣ προς μύθους. Παρέχω έναν παραδείγματα όλων τών κατηγοριών από κλα-

1958), 365 and 486; Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychology of Fire*, trans. by Alan Iltis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 35; Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. by John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), *passim*.

12. In its original short form this essay was delivered as a paper at the 16th International Congress of the International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures, at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, in August 1984.

σικά, άγγλόφωνα, και εύρωπαϊκά λογοτεχνήματα από τήν 'Αναγέννηση ως τή 1970 περίπου.

*Αναφέρω στις θέσεις και όρολογίες δύο διεθνώς γνωστών θεωρητικών, τών καθηγητών John White και Theodore Ziolkowski, τις οποίες και αξιολογώ ως προς τήν πρακτική χρησιμότητα, όχι μόνο ως προς τή σφαιρικό τους υπόβαθρο. Εύκολα εξάγεται τή συμπέρασμα, α) ότι και μύθοι τών προτογόνων ή θρύλοι τού Μεσαίωνα μπορούν άνετα να εξετασθούν είτε με τή μία προσέγγιση είτε τήν άλλη, άν και ή τού Ziolkowski προσφέρεται κυρίως για τή λαϊκού γούστου μυθιστορήματα (άστυνομικά, έρωτικά, γουέστερ κ.τ.τ.), τών οποίων ή αισθητική αξία είναι μηδαμινή. Κύριο μυθολόγημα τού εξετάζω είναι τού 'Οδυσσέα με παράδειγμα τή έμμετρο δράμα τού Hauptmann *Τό Τόξο τού 'Οδυσσέα* (1914) τή οποία κατατάσσω στη Β' κατηγορία (έπιανεμηνείες ή απομυμήσεις κλασικού μύθου από νεώτερος), όμοίως κατατάσσω στην Δ' κατηγορία (άναλογίες) τή γνωστό μυθιστόρημα 'Οδυσσέας (1922) τού Joyce, και τή δύο, φυσικά, προσερχόμενα από τήν Όμηρική 'Οδύσεια κυρίως.

*Αναλώντας τήν μέθοδο τού Ziolkowski, τήν όπεία ό ίδιος στηρίζει σε εξέταση μυθιστορημάτων Χριστολογικού περιεχομένου, όπως τού Καζαντζάκη και πολλών ξένων σε ένα τή τελευταία χρόνια, εξηγώ τή υπέρ και τή κατά τών όρων του: Configuration, prefiguration, και postfiguration, ως προς τή πρωτότυπο, δηλ. τήν Κανή Διαθήκη με τήν ιστορία τού 'Ιησού Χριστού. Έφαρμόζοντας τήν ίδια μέθοδο και σε μοντέρνα ή ρομαντικά κείμενα για τών Προμηθέα ή τών 'Οδυσσέα, καταλήγω στο συμπέρασμα ότι στην περίπτωση πολλών συγγραφέων, όπως π.χ. ό Giraudoux, ό μόν κεντρικός του ήρωας παραμένει οπιfiguration τού Όμηρικού, ενώ ή θεματολογία τού κειμένου είναι σαφέστατα τής εποχής 1940-50, συνεπώς ή μέθοδος και όρολογία τού διατρεπός 'Αμερικανού έχουν τή έλάττωμα ότι προκαλούν σύγχυση σε επίπεδα λειτουργίας τού λογοτεχνήματος.

Στό Β' Μέρος, Έφαρμογές, παρέχω λεπτομερειακό σχέδιο παρουσίασης (διδασκαλίας) νεώτερων κειμένων για τών 'Οδυσσέα και τών Προμηθέα άφου προηγηθεί σύγκριση τών κειμένων με τις αρχαίες πηγές τους, αξιολόγηση τών κύριων ιδεών τους, και, τελικά, εκτίμηση τού βαθμού επιτυχίας στη χρήση μυθολογικών μοτίβων, αναλογιών, χαρακτηρισμού, δομής, ύφους κ.τ.τ.