

FRI-116-1-LLH-01(S)

RECONSIDERING OF THE VALUES IN BLAGA DIMITROVA'S
NOVEL "FACE"⁵

Rumjana Lebedova, Assoc. Prof. PhD

Department of Philological Sciences, Silistra Branch,

"Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse

Phone: 086-821 521

E-mail: lebedova@abv.bg

***Abstract:** The text is an attempt to clarify the dual and ambiguous aspect of the realization of a mythologized figure in the novel "Face" by Blaga Dimitrova. The sacralized conceptions are both a moral support and source of faith in the spiritual power of man, however, when the past excessively domineers over the present, an identity crisis is inevitable.*

***Key words:** identity, demythologization, re-evaluation, values, society*

INTRODUCTION

The affective attachment to the past determines the propensity for mythologization of personalities and events that powerfully influence the present as well. The presence of traumatic moments catalyzes the birth of conceptions, where the biographical is cast into archetypes and symbolic figures are created - a projection of universal cultural patterns. These are idealized figures of the recollection that remain connected with another temporal field - different from the present, and therefore have the ability to maintain a viable relationship between past, present and future. They are dependent on "the specific correlation with time and space, as well as a certain group" [1] and reconstructing them from a constantly regenerating imagination is a guarantee of the continuity of this relationship.

The preservation of myths – both personal and communal, is in itself a kind of bonding with the past, a strategic guide to the present and hope for a meaning in the future. Experienced as a "vital necessity" [2] they are a source of stamina, a criterion for the presence of spiritual potential in the individual and the community, as well as a moral standard, rather than simply information about the past. In the novel "Face" by Blaga Dimitrova living with a personal mythology, however, is presented as a detachment from reality - a fact which determines the "takeover" of the present by the past. Rooted in one's painful personal experience, myths are manifestations of a super memory which betrays the present day identity crisis [3]. In that respect, the memory blocks, and even ousts the ability to adapt to the present and weakens one's sense of adequacy, which also critically wounds one's identity.

A different look at myths reflects a change in identity and a change in perspective. This process, urged by the controversy between Bora and Cyril, is experienced by both of them, and is equally painful for both - an initiation into a world on the edge between dream and reality, in which the mythical image of the past becomes ever more powerfully present in their lives. However, it brings no solace. Questioning its authenticity, and the cracking of one's unconditional trust in it leads to a crisis. This happens when the mythic concepts, which created the value landmarks for both the individual and the community, begin to lose their validity and shake the stability of the traditional perception. Starting from cracks of one's lost integrity, suspicion grows, deepening the process of fragmentation and desacralization and begins to detract from the meaning.

⁵ Presented a plenary report of May 20, 2016 with the original title: МИТ И ДЕМИТОЛОГИЗАЦИЯ В РОМАНА „ЛИЦЕ“ ОТ БЛАГА ДИМИТРОВА

EXPOSITION

Whether the single point of view, which has been assumed as the only and conclusive one, because it has been consolidated hard into the mythologems with an ideological charge and has frozen in the outline of the image that was mythologized, is the only one possible.

Becoming aware of the fact that the present requires a change of the status quo, unlocks new meanings of the images and perceptions that have been a pillar of stability and a foundation of the value system. This does not represent an erosion of the memory nor is it a denial of ideals, but rather a realization that the past is simply "an ossified myth." The new face of time and the new face of the person impose and require a new perspective – the historical change turns out to be surprisingly traumatic to Bora's identity. Demythologization of some of the perceptions that have been accepted and experienced with unconditional faith, creates a critical phase of her life. The process of resistance, rethinking, as well as the adoption of the new images is a painful but nonetheless a healing process in which the acquired clarity of knowledge and self-knowledge is catalyzed by Cyril. Bora experiences her metamorphosis fully aware that "if you are to have your own value system, you should destroy the current one and suffer for that destruction.

The mythologized image of Andrej is a projection of the cult of the dead. To a large extent, this image forms, activates and enhances the ideological symbolism in Bora's world view. Its imposition as a model of sacrifice and dignity is a reflection of a traumatic act that turns out to be an action program and imposes the parameters of moral maximalism, fueled by the emotional charge of the memory. This makes it difficult to overcome and impossible to forget. The mythologized memory, which has been zealously preserved, is an expression of the determination to protect the past from the "deadly undercurrent" of time, to preserve the sacral image of the beloved far from the twilight zone of oblivion. That is a strategy to overcome the uncertainty that the future holds in store. Through its constant reiteration, it re-experienced over and over again, but every time this is an experience of agony.

In the formation of this myth, the boundary between factuality and fiction is not clear and distinct, it is rather blurred and obscure. Fragments of memories, stories and notions are tightly-knit together following the principle of installation, thus creating an image that embodies, through the motif of stoicism and martyrdom, the idea of the sanctity of sacrifice in the name of ideals. This suggestion is reinforced by the leitmotif of the white shirt, which implies the idea of ritual purity and transition:

Even stronger than the urge for life was the desire to confront the barrels dressed in a white shirt. Superstition or an ancient rite - to attend his bloody wedding wearing a white shirt. To linger in the memory illuminated...

Living with the myths – myths about heroic death; the first; about a bloody wedding, the horse - often associated with the realm of the dead and a symbol of victory; about the two worlds - the boundary between which is the wall, and their experience as destiny, is like "a touch to the magnet of existence." These mythologems which represent the living memory of Andrej, are also associated with love - understood as only touching the horizon of ideological mutuality. For Bora, who experiences a metamorphosis, the awakened sense of femininity is the counterpoint of fate in her behavior imposed by her own ideals. The constant comparison with Vena – her nickname from the time of her youth in the Workers Youth League, the return to the same moments of experience envisage the need for a clear identity. Having identified with the heroic figure of the WYL member who is fatefully linked to Andrej, she consciously follows the mythologized model of self-denial and sacrifice. She does it to equal him. At this point the idea as a life cause is placed over one's own life. The elements of devotion, of excessive dedication are embodied in this way in one's own nature and this is built on loyalty as a way to assert oneself. Thus the poles of identity are formed and the individual's personal drama is born when he recognizes "himself as someone else" [4].

This image, however, belongs to another time and in the present it only carries the scars of ideological predisposition, dogmatism and lack of vital full-bloodedness. She turns out to be too

vulnerable in the present. Having replaced real life with myth, having transformed this into a tangible vital existence, having illuminated it with her own romantic idea, she turns out to be an anachronism herself. The insistent return to Andrej as a moral standard and a model for preserved dignity represents to the greatest extent her existential loneliness:

Only you can show me where the mistake lies – both mine, and the mutual...
Only you can give me the answer to the questions...
Only you withstood in the swirling currents of time...

Until the moment when the immortal is opposed to the mere mortal. One of them is sentenced to face the firing squad, the other is sentenced to live. Andrej's and Cyril's images are bound in her emotional world as if they were a pair of twins. The suggestion for this mutual transfusion is a leitmotif in the text. The feeling is visualized through the horse with two heads in her dream, "one of them is Andrej's, young and bright, the other - dark, wrinkles carved in, with hair graying near his temples – Cyril's head." The tragic attachment of these fates and their role in her life are like an illustration of the belief that "the voice of salvation comes from the bottom of the abyss" [5].

The execution of Andrej's lies at the core of Cyril's personal mythology as well - a situation which births an overwhelming sense of guilt which is invariably consistent throughout his life and will pursue him without fail. In fact, he is one of the victims of the cynical philosophy whereby when you are an accomplice in a crime, even when it is against your will, you are deprived of the sense of freedom.

The white shirt versus the blood-stained hands.

CONCLUSION

The two images of the same situation, conditioned by the different position, give birth to different myths. The memory and imagination generate the myth of the "heroic death" but they often change their capacity since they focus on certain areas or create prospects where reality loses its objective outline, in order to highlight the subjective - as a value and moral guidance. Becoming aware of the truth confronts man with his own nature, to discover that one is "invariably more than what one knows about oneself" [6] unsheltered and vulnerable to time and its vicissitudes, engulfed in an effort to get to know the world and see through the truth about one's place in it, in order to outline new identification circles of one's social and spiritual existence. The metamorphoses of self-determination create different modulations of experience - questioning former authorities and supports, but at the same time this is hesitation regarding the new such - "an erratic quest," in the course of which the only salvation is to become "out of one's own roots one real self" [7].

The creation of myths and demythologization are a projection of identity which is organically conditioned by the past. These images, which have been nostalgically poeticized and idealized, bear an emotional and spiritual charge, overcome time and represent an attempt at a reconciliation with death. They express the innermost essence of man and impact his existential choices. However, although they carry salvation messages of moral grandeur, dignity and achieved freedom, they cannot replace life with all its trials and unexpected collapses that wound the very core of the human individual. Nor can they obliterate the sense of guilt. However, they can become one's hope in the significance of the chosen path. For according to Blaga Dimitrova "ideals are stars - not accessible, but guiding stars."

REFERENCES

- [1] Assman Jan. Cultural memory. Sofia, 1997, p. 36.
- [2] Losev, Al. The Dialectics of Myth. Sofia, 2003, p. 19.
- [3] Znepolski, Iv. The woes of history in the present time: post-communist uses of memory.- In History. Story. Memory. S., 2001, p. 212.
- [4] Ricoeur, P. Myself as someone else. Pleven, 2004, p.194.
- [5] Campbell, J. The power of myth. S., 2001, p. 63.
- [6] Jaspers, K. The spiritual situation of time. S., 1996, p. 144.
- [7] Jaspers, K. The spiritual situation of time. S., 1996, p. 119.