In the Mirror of the Past

In the Mirror of the Past:
Of Fantasy and History

Edited by

Bogdan Trocha, Aleksander Rzyman
and Tomasz Ratajczak

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INTRODUCTION

This collection contains seven essays by researchers at universities in Canada, U.S.A., and Poland: Terri Doughty of the Vancouver Island University, Brian Attebery of the Idaho State University, Jesse Hudson and Marek Oziewicz of Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Bogdan Trocha and Aleksander Rzyman of Uniwersytet Zielonogórski, and Monty Vierra of Karkonoska Państwowa Szkoła Wyższa w Jeleniej Górze. The authors' focus is fantasy's reference to the past as a way of seeking solutions to modern problems.

Brian Attebery discusses works by E. R. Eddison, H. Mirrlees, Ch. Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien in which myths are part of a larger entity and not a mere collection of autonomous elements. Such approach allows those writers to make up worlds which, unlike those of Eliot or Joyce, have a structure which is laced with hope rather than apocalypse and at the same time make ironic and critical allusions to the world we live in.

Marek Oziewicz's case for "healing" fiction is based on an analysis of *Major* trilogy by M. Ciszewski in light of the theories by C. G. Jung, J. Hillman, and M. Eliade. This literary triptych is an example of a compensatory journey from "historical" history to "imagined" history which helps the Polish reader break free from the throes of a collective trauma of the lost defensive war of 1939 and the failed uprisings in the Warsaw's Ghetto in 1943 and in Warsaw in 1944.

Terri Doughty, too, refers to M. Eliade's theories – those dealing with metahistory – in her study of *Fionavar Tapestry* trilogy by G. G. Kay in which the protagonists happen to live both "inside" and "outside" history. By experiencing an eternal return to childhood, in order to get to know themselves and their place in the universe, each of them becomes an embodiment of a mythical or archetypal figure, thus gaining a vantage point from which to see their lives' sense in a wider perspective.

Aleksander Rzyman tracks down the interplay of historiography and fantasy in D. Gemmell's *The Lion of Macedon* and *Dark Prince* which draw heavily on historians' accounts of the ancient Greece. The discussion focuses on the intertextual treatment of historical data due to which Gemmell's 'Greek' duology takes pride of place amongst the many fantasy novels which merely pretend to have anything to do with history.

Monty Vierra's interest centres around an alternative history of the turn of the XX century found in A. Hairston's *Redwood and Wildfire* which resurrects the migration of the black people from the American south to the booming Chicago, a theme so neglected by American history books. Hairston "physically" restores the history and, by doing so, gives back to a whole social group a place in history it deserves.

Jesse Hudson sees *Earthsea* cycle by U. Le Guin as a bridge between then and now: the positive aspects of the past affect and intertwine with the present. Although it takes place in some quasi-medieval times, the cycle is an example of a story which deals with the problems always present in man's life.

Bogdan Trocha's reflection concerns the mythopoetic speculation found in *Heros powinien być jeden* by Ukrainian writers D. Gromov and O. Ladyzhenskyi (better known under their pen name Henry Lion Oldi), who pose questions about the nature of human memory and imagination. B. Trocha views the questions from the perspective of the metaphysical reflection on the sense of human existence. As he notes, suspension of disbelief is supplemented here with the hermeneutic 'food for thought' in the form of mythical and religious symbolism, with the resulting up-to-dateness of myth in the modern world.

Tomasz Ratajczak

"MAKE IT OLD": THE OTHER MYTHIC METHOD

BRIAN ATTEBERY

For several years now I have been rethinking the relationship between fantasy and myth—not so much individual myths as myth as a cultural practice and as what we might call "equipment to think with." I am focusing on the generation of writers that included J .R. R. Tolkien. The question is what changed in their version of fantasy as compared to the previous century and how those changes relate to the concept of Modernism—the usual framework for looking at the period 1910-1950 or so.

Underlying this question is the assumption that simply living through an era together is enough to make it worth examining people as a group, even if some of those people, like Tolkien, loathed what was going on in the literary world of their day. I'm looking at early twentieth century fantasy as not an anachronistic alternative to Modernism but as one of its important manifestations. Fantasy is usually seen as a residual component of the era (to borrow Raymond Williams's vocabulary), while the aggressive modernism of a Stravinsky, a Picasso, or an Ezra Pound—with his slogan "Make it new"—is seen as emergent. Both, though, belong to the same era, partaking fully in its cultural convulsions. Tolkien and his fellow fantasists could not escape modernity. They too lived through the Great War, confronted the same horrors as the Modernists, made in their daily lives the same adjustments to new ideas and devices. If we define the modern not as a style but as a condition, everyone living through the 1910s and 20s shared that condition, just as everyone who lived through the turn of the millennium shares a set of experiences that define postmodernity. We are all postmodern, whether or not we consider ourselves Postmodernists. Fredric Jameson, drawing on Williams's work, defines postmodernism as a "conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features" *(Postmodernism* 4). Modernism similarly includes a range of features, including two versions of the return to myth.

The idea that links Pound's era with Tolkien's, the Lost Generation with the Inklings, can be found in T. S. Eliot's 1923 review of *Ulysses*, where he identified something that he called "the mythical method":

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him... a way of controlling, or ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history... Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art ... . (177-78)

Everything Eliot says in his description of *Ulysses* applies as well not only to his own work but to texts like *The Lord of the Rings*. Everything, that is, except for the phrase: "instead of narrative method." The principal difference between the Modernists' mythic method and that of fantasy is that the latter constructs apparently seamless narratives that put the mythic on the same plane as modern sensibility.

Instead of Tolkien, I've picked two other writers about the same age: Charles Williams and Hope Mirrlees. In each case, I am looking at a work of fantasy in conjunction with a modernist poem and a theoretical model. I pair up Williams's 1930 novel *War in Heaven* (1930) with Eliot's *The Waste Land* and with Eliot's "mythical method," and Mirrlees's *Lud-in-the-Mist* (1926) with her own poem "Paris" and also with the myth theories of her partner Jane Harrison.

Imagine that "The Waste Land" were not a densely allusive and cryptically fragmented poem but a novel. Such a novel would juxtapose the Holy Grail and sterile urban life. There would be charlatans masquerading as prophets, like Eliot's Madame Sosostris. Characters would undergo spiritual crises and transformations. There would be sinister Easterners and scenes of sexual degradation. Visions of hell would be counterpointed with moments of redemption. The desired and forbidden other (Eliot's Phlebas the Phoenician) would be expelled. Novelistic discourse could fill in the gaps left in Eliot's poem with realistic settings, dramatic scenes, internal monologs, and a plot. It would not matter too much what sort of plot: the function would be to carry readers along and perhaps distract our attention while the symbols did their work. The novel could be a romance, an adventure, or perhaps a detective story.

War in Heaven starts with a dead body found incongruously under the desk of a London publisher. Detectives are called in, suspects identified,

clues gathered. The scene shifts from London to the Agatha Christie-esque village of Fardles, where another crime is committed: someone knocks the Archdeacon over the head and makes off with the communion chalice. The murder mystery opening gives way to something more mystical when the chalice is revealed to be the Holy Grail, or Graal.

Both crimes in this case are the work of the retired publisher Gregory Persimmons. Persimmons is a would-be mage who wants the Graal as an object of power. He seeks out a character called "the Greek," who, like Eliot's Mr. Eugenides, is a decadent Easterner and a seller of shady merchandise. The Greek's chemist's shop is a black magic store in disguise. Instead of an illicit weekend at the Metropole, he offers an ointment that provides both magical and sexual release. As Gregory works his way toward damnation, the Greek is supplemented by an even more sinister tutelary figure, the Jew. Where the Greek offers sensuality and power, Manassah the Jew offers only destruction. He seeks to destroy the Graal rather than make use of it:

> "To destroy this is to ruin another of their houses, and another step towards the hour when we shall breathe against the heavens and they shall fall. The only use in anything for us is that it may be destroyed." (144)

This is all too close to Eliot's vision in "Gerontion" (1920), conceived of as a preface to "The Waste Land." In that poem, a bitter old man meditates on the downfall of European civilization, abetted by Jews:

> My house is a decayed house
> And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner
> Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
> Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London. (Lines 7-11)

Christian myth is difficult to disentangle from such antisemitism. It shows up in Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale" and it shows up in present-day versions of the same blood libel. The myth authorizes us to blame corruption and violence and decay on some outsider group. Williams, like Eliot, often creates villains who are or appear Jewish.

The narrative logic of Williams's story, unlike Eliot's poem, does not lead toward inevitable ruin. Against the cabal of Jew, Greek, and black magician, another coalition forms. The Archdeacon, a poetry-writing Duke, and the Persimmons's employee Mornington are explicitly compared to the three Grail knights, Bors, Percivale, and Galahad. As these three ally against the three black magicians, the murder mystery plot returns in the form of an odd sort of caper, complete with a car chase. The Graal is stolen, stolen back again, and hidden in plain sight like the McGuffin in a

Hitchcock film, and in the meantime the forces are engaged in a metaphysical struggle between being and nothingness. The Graal has a different significance to each character. To Persimmons, it is power; to Manasseh, destruction; to the Duke a restored Catholic church; to the Archdeacon, the consummation of his religious vocation; to Mornington, a vision of myth channeled through literature: as he says, "Malory—Tennyson—Chrétien de Troyes—Miss Jessie Weston. *Romance to Reality*, or whatever she called it" (121).

It is Mornington's immersion in the literature of the Grail that overcomes his doubts had about the supernatural intruding on ordinary English reality. Some such rationale is necessary in this second mythic method. Whereas poetry can leave its mythic basis on the figurative level, a unifying conceit for all of Eliot's observations and allusions, fantasy has to bring the impossible into the narrative "reality." Magic in a poem can be like background music in a movie: pervasive, unexplained, guiding the viewer's emotional response without being noticed by the characters. Magic in a fantasy is like diegetic music: if there is a string quartet playing on the soundtrack, the camera must at some point pan over to four players (usually actors miming badly) on the set.

Williams makes use of a number of fictional techniques to anchor the magic in his fictional reality. One is borrowing a plot from a popular formula, the detective story. Another is the adoption of multiple points of view. He freely shifts narrative focus among his characters, letting their perceptions guide the narrator's attention and vocabulary. A third technique is letting the characters themselves puzzle out the symbolic level of events and objects. What does a seemingly random murder mean? What is the value of a religious relic? How are names significant? A fourth is the pairing of black and white magics. Evil rituals are elaborate, coercive, and self-indulgent. By contrast, anything simple, cooperative, and self-denying becomes not only good but magically effective: the Archdeacon's prayers counteract an evil spell. Confronted by black magic, simple virtue becomes a magical force.

The payoff for accepting the intrusion of myth into the modern world is a kind of poetic-metaphysical language intended to represent spiritual vision. Here is a sample, representing the Archdeacon's thoughts: "Faster and faster all things moved through that narrow channel he had before seen and now himself seemed to be entering and beyond it they issued again into similar but different existence—themselves still, yet infused and made one in a undreamed perfection" (254). This sort of prose was the despair of Williams's Inkling friends, but one sympathetic reader explained its difficulty in terms of the limits of language itself: "What he had to say

was beyond his resources, and probably beyond the resources of language, to say once for all through any one medium of expression." This reader was T. S. Eliot, in an introduction to Williams's *All Hallows' Eve* (xi.). Eliot and Williams were friends, colleagues (Williams was Eliot's publisher at Faber and Faber), fellow Christian mystics, and in a sense co-workers. Says Eliot:

> My play *Murder in the Cathedral* was produced at the Canterbury Festival in 1935; Williams's *Cranmer* was the play for the following year, and I went down . . . to see the first performance. (Eliot, "Introduction" x).

Hence it is not surprising that Williams might wish to translate poetry's mythic method into narrative terms. Like "The Waste Land," his novel uses the Grail story to tell us how to cope with modernity. That coping strategy has four components. First, the contemporary world must be organized somehow, and myth offers a structure where history seems to offer only struggle and accident. Even if, for Eliot, myth itself has shattered, he still suggests that the fragments can be gathered up against ruination. For Williams, myth is not broken, but lurks half-forgotten in places like Fardles.

Second, the mythic structure offers a way to isolate and expel aspects of the self that cannot be acknowledged but only abjected (to use Julia Kristeva's term). These may be projected onto various sorts of outsiders: for Eliot, the merchant, the Jew and the homosexual, and for Williams, the merchant, the Jew and the power-seeker. Of Williams's villains, the one who is truly abject, the thing that must be brought down because it is desired, is the mage Gregory Persimmons. Williams himself desired mastery over mystical things: he was drawn to the notorious occultist Aleister Crowley and groups like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Persimmons might be a portrait of Crowley or of Williams himself. In each of Williams's novels, a similar mage figure must be defeated and humiliated, but he reappears in the next, since Williams's own inner mage has not gone away.

The third component of the mythic method is its ability to validate moments of glory. Eliot said of Williams, "He knew, and could put into words, states of consciousness which many people have once or twice in a life-time" (xvii). One reason Williams could put such states into words is that he had a literary model that allowed him to do so. In a fairy tale, heroes may undergo terrible trials and evil beings might thrive temporarily, but good will triumph in the end in what Tolkien called *eucatastrophe*, the good reversal. For Williams, triumph consisted not of marriage and half a kingdom, as in traditional tales, but in moments of mystical union with

God. The mythic pattern converges with and underscores his own experience.

But mystical visions cannot truly be communicated, only pointed toward. Moments of rapture are necessarily private; what can be shared is the mythic pattern that creates a space for such a vision. Turning Christian beliefs into fantasy requires the freedom to treat them as myths rather than as doctrines and scriptures. Williams found this freedom by approaching Christian themes through stories associated with Christian belief but not governed by official teachings. This is the fourth component of Williams's mythic method: play. He gains license to play by working not directly with core Christian beliefs but with those beliefs filtered through half-pagan offshoots, such as the Grail and the legends of Prester John. These are theologically safer than stories about the Hebrew prophets or Jesus's miracles, in that they have no scriptural justification or correct doctrinal spin. They are also accessible to a non-Christian readership, which is free to read them metaphorically, looking for psychological rather than theological validity.

Williams encodes literal and metaphoric readings into the text. By employing the novel's capacity to shift among varying points of view, he can affirm orthodoxy through one character, while another tries to explain everything in materialistic terms. As Eliot says,

> In reading *All Hallow's Eve*, we can, if we like, believe that the methods of the magician Simon for controlling mysterious forces could all be used with success by anyone with suitable natural gifts and special training. We can, on the other hand, find the machinery of the story no more credible than that of any popular tale of vampires, werewolves, or demonic possession. (Introduction xv)

By playing freely with mythic motifs while asserting their continuing relevance, says Eliot, Williams's stories can "make you partake of a kind of experience that he has had, rather than to make you accept some dogmatic belief." Fantasy's mythic method thus makes the modern world possible, not only for art but for vision. Not all modern fantasists found that vision in Christian doctrine, as Williams did, but all found myths to be powerful tools for investigating the self, morality, and transcendence.

My second example is closer to Tolkien in that it involves a secondary-world fantasy, as opposed to Williams's urban, "real-world" version of the genre. The novel *Lud-in-the-Mist*, published in 1926, demonstrates how myth's powerful play can emerge from pagan, rather than Christian traditions. The author of that novel, Hope Mirrlees, was as closely connected to major figures within Modernism as Williams was to Eliot,

and those biographical links point toward the historical relevance of the other mythic method.

Our clearest portrait of Mirrlees was drawn by Virginia Woolf. An entry in Woolf's diary describes Mirrlees as "over-dressed, over elaborate, scented, extravagant, yet with thick nose, thick ankles; a little unrefined" (cited in Carpentier 172). In a 1919 letter Woolf complains that

> Last weekend... we had a young lady who changed her dress every night for dinner—which Leonard and I cooked, the servants being on holiday... Moreover, she knows Greek and Russian better than I do French; is Jane Harrison's favourite pupil, and has written a very obscure, indecent and brilliant poem, which we are going to print. (Quoted in Boyde 2)

Woolf is clearly irked by the affected stylishness and perhaps jealous of the success of her younger guest. In addition, she and Mirrlees were rivals for the attention of their mutual mentor, the Cambridge don and classical scholar Jane Ellen Harrison. The poem that Leonard Woolf was preparing to publish (immediately after publishing T. S. Eliot's *Poems*) was called "Paris." It is a montage of the city as it recovers from war, experimental in typography and daring in its choice of detail—hence Woolf's "obscure, indecent and brilliant." Its techniques presage many of Eliot's choices in "The Waste Land.," including the inclusion of explanatory (or diversionary) footnotes.

The poem's first lines suggest the brash obscurity of an Ezra Pound:

> I want a holophrase
> NORD-SUD
> ZIG-ZAG
> LION-NOIR
> CACAO-BLOOKER
> Black-figured vases in Etruscan tombs (3)

The obscurity decreases, however, with a footnote that explains "Nord-Sud" as a line of the Paris underground, and "Zig-Zag," "Lion-Noir," and "Cacao-Blooker" as posters on the walls of Metro stations. The Etruscan vases represent traces of the past beneath the surface of the present, a theme throughout the poem. Most importantly, the word *holophrase* is glossed in the work of Jane Harrison. A holophrase is a single word that carries the meaning of an entire sentence, a phenomenon that Harrison associates with a pre-Modern, unalienated state:

> The Fuegians have a word, or rather holophrase, which means '*looking-at-each-other,-hoping-that-either-will-offer-to-do-something-which-both-parties-*

> *desire-but-are-unwilling-to-do.*' This holophrase contains no nouns and no separate verbs, it simply expresses a tense relation—not unknown to some of us, and applicable to any and every one. [...] As civilization advances, the holophrase, overcharged, disintegrates, and, bit by bit, object, subject and verb, and the other 'Parts of Speech' are abstracted from the stream of warm conscious human activity in which they were once submerged. (*Themis* 474).

Mirrlees therefore starts her poem with a sort of plea to the Muses: she wants a primitive, undivided poetic language to convey her kaleidoscopic vision of Paris past and present. Part of that vision is mythic: it includes not only the Eiffel Tower and cafés and war memorials but also Etruscan vases and nymphs and fertility gods. More importantly, Paris holds

> Stories. . . .
> The lost romance
> Penned by some Ovid, an unwilling thrall
> In Fairyland,
> No one knows its name. (17)

Mirrlees was to find that lost Ovidian romance—and a holophrase of sorts—in her only major fantasy.

Lud-in-the-Mist, Mirlees's third novel, was nearly forgotten until when it was republished in 1970, the wake of the Tolkien boom. Nothing about the book proclaims it as Modernist. It is set in an imaginary country called Dorimare: quaint, charming, and bordered by Fairyland. The main character is a middle-aged burgher named Nathaniel Chanticleer. At the beginning of the book, Nathaniel is mostly concerned with his duties as Mayor of the town of Lud-in-the-Mist and with the quality of his Moongrass cheeses. Yet there is an underlying unease in both Nathaniel and the country, and a deeper theme signaled in the epigraph from Harrison:

> The Sirens stand, as it would seem, to the ancient and the modern, for the impulses in life as yet immoralised, imperious longings, ecstasies, whether of love or art, or philosophy, magical voices calling to a man from his "Land of Heart's Desire," and to which if he hearken it may be that he will return no more—voices, too, which, whether a man sail by or stay to hearken, still sing on. (Xiii)

This epigraph not only suggests a mythic dimension to the story but also connects it with Harrison's belief in the present-day relevance of myths. Harrison is not so well known today, but she was a major myth scholar on the order of James Frazer. She said, by the way, that she envied Frazer's gift for titles. In place of *The Golden Bough*, she offered the

world a *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, which might explain his greater visibility—or maybe it was the fact that she was a woman scholar.

Like Eliot, Harrison believed that modern art needed myth. Although it must include, "among other and deeper forms of life, the haste and hurry of the modern street, the whirr of motor cars and aeroplanes" (*Ancient Art* 236-37), it must also look back to the rituals that once grounded us in the cycles of nature, allayed our fears of the dead, and offered glimpses of mystery. Harrison's star pupil Mirrlees found a way to suggest modern alienation and ancient ritual without depicting either directly. Instead, she constructed a halfway point, the imaginary land of Dorimare, and then gradually revealed connections forward and backward.

Present-day Dorimare is a practical and prosperous realm, lacking religion or artistic ambition. It has been ruled by the middle class since the overthrow, two centuries ago, of the infamous Duke Aubrey, a cruel and capricious ruler but also a poet and priest of sorts:

> For three days a bloody battle raged in the streets of Lud-in-the-Mist, in which fell all the nobles of Dorimare. As for Duke Aubrey, he vanished—some said to Fairyland, where he was living to this day.
>
> During those three days of bloodshed all the priests had vanished also. So Dorimare lost simultaneously its Duke and its cult. (11)

Yet neither Fairyland nor the Duke is completely gone. Both live on in the practices and sayings of country folk:

> He was a living reality to the country people: so much that, when leakages were found in the vats, or when a horse was discovered in the morning with his coat stained and furrowed with sweat, some rogue of a farm-hand could often escape punishment by swearing that Duke Aubrey had been the culprit. (18-19)

If bourgeois secularism is the dominant culture of Lud-in-the-Mist, fairy lore is its residual culture. It is connected with the very phenomena Raymond Williams specifically identifies as residual: monarchy, country life, and religion—that last with an ironic twist, since fairy faith fills the niche occupied in our world by the church. The story describes an upheaval by which the residual becomes emergent, with the reluctant cooperation of the unlikeliest of heroes. Nathaniel, like other members of his class, detests the idea of Fairyland. Fairy fruit is contraband, anything magical or mystical is considered obscene, and "Son of a Fairy" is a deadly insult (14). Yet fairy influences pervade Dorimarean culture. A few years before the book takes place, an anonymous tract called *Traces of*

Fairy in the Inhabitants Customs, Art, Vegetation and Language of Dorimare point out the prevalence of red hair (indicating fairy ancestry) and archaic oaths like "by the Sun, Moon and Stars, by the Golden Apples of the West; by the Harvest of Souls" (15). More importantly, the tract said that "all artistic types, all ritual acts, must be modelled on realities; and Fairyland is the place where what *we* look on as symbols and figures actually exist and occur" (15).

Dorimare's fairy lore—adapted from English traditional songs, tales, dances, foods, customs, and beliefs—helps validate the story's magical component. Nathaniel and his friends find all this lore old-fashioned, countrified, and embarrassing: they are too modern to take much stock in it. The rural culture turns out to be even older than it appears. Unnoticed among the farms and villages are ruined castles. Nonsense songs document forgotten rituals. A simple country dance was once "danced in the moonlight when Lud-in-the-Mist was nothing but a beech wood between two rivers" (77). Farmsteads are guarded by ancient stone figures called herms.

A herm is a column topped by a male head, phallic in shape and often with an erect phallus of its own. The herm in the story is characterized as "the spirit of the farm" (210). A character named Portunus, whom Nathaniel takes for simple-minded, is often found dancing in front of this herm. But Portunus is not simple-minded, but one of the Silent People—the dead—and both he and the herm point toward Mirrlees's use of myth.

Harrison discusses herms in conjunction with Greek deities: "in art Hermes and Dionysos appear, as they were worshipped in cultus, as herms; the symbol of both gods as gods of fertility is naturally the phallos." Gods are missing from *Lud-in-the-Mist*. Their place is taken by the fairies and by Duke Aubrey (Aubrey equals Oberon). The herm marks an older time when the gods were known and worshipped not as Olympian figures, distant and beautiful, but as the cultic gods Harrison sees as the original basis for Greek religion. They are local, dark, and dangerous. The purpose of ritual is not to please them but to ward them off:

> To our surprise, when the actual rites are examined, we shall find that they have little or nothing to do with the particular Olympian to whom they are supposed to be addressed; that they are rites not in the main of burnt-sacrifice, of joy and feasting and agonistic contests, but rites of a gloomy underworld character, connected mainly with purification and the worship of ghosts. (*Prolegomena* 10-11)

The gods Harrison describes are not distinguished from spirits of the dead. The same rituals that keep the gods away also fend off angry ghosts.

A single word, *ker*, was used for both the dead and godlike beings, as well as, according to Harrison, "Ghost, bacillus, disease, death-angel, death-fate, fate, bogey, magician" (*Prolegomena* 212). In *Lud-in-the-Mist*, all of these meanings belong to the inhabitants of Fairyland.

> The country people, indeed, did not always clearly distinguish between the Fairies and the dead. They called them both the "Silent People"; and the Milky Way they thought was the path along which the dead were carried to Fairyland. (12-13)

And some of the dead return, especially those who, like Portunus, want revenge upon their murderers. Harrison describes a particular variety of ker that doubles as a Fury: "The Erinys primarily is the Ker of a human being unrighteously slain. Erinys is not death; it is the outraged soul of the dead man crying for vengeance . . . (*Prolegomena* 214).

Nathaniel Chanticleer comes into contact with these mythic forces through the actions of a physician named Endymion Leer. Leer was involved in the death of Portunus; it is he who arranges to have Nathaniel's son eat the addictive fairy fruit. He is also the author of the anonymous pamphlet about Dorimare's suppressed fairy past. When Nathaniel's daughter dances off with the other enchanted pupils of Miss Crabapple's Academy and Ranulph is sent over the border to Fairyland, Nathaniel must face the fact that his secure life has been an illusion; that Duke Aubrey and the Silent People not only exist but have the power of life and death over Dorimare. It is Leer, their agent, who plots the overturning of order in Lud-in-the-Mist and the downfall of Mayor Chanticleer.

But Nathaniel is not to be counted out so easily. Like Dorimare itself, his prosaic surface hides mythic depths. Since childhood, he has been troubled by what he calls the Note, which he first heard in his family's attic:

> Master Nathaniel seized one of the old instruments, a sort of lute ending in the carving of a cock's head, its strings rotted by damp and antiquity, and, crying out, "Let's see if this old fellow has a croak left in him!" plucked roughly at its strings.
>
> They gave out one note, so plangent, blood-freezing and alluring, that for a few seconds the company stood as if petrified. (5)

The sound of this note changes Nathaniel's life and haunts his dreams:

> It was as if the note were a living substance, and subject to the law of chemical changes—that is to say, as that law works in dreams. For instance, he might dream that his old nurse was baking an apple on the fire

> in her own cosy room, and as he watched it simmer and sizzle she would look at him with a strange smile, a smile such as he had never seen on her face in waking hours, and say, "But, of course, you know it isn't really the apple. *It's the Note*." (5-6)

Nathaniel's reaction to this unsettling experience is to bury himself in the mundane, but he cannot ultimately escape the Note. It returns to his life in the form of his son's illness, his daughter's abduction, even the country tune he hears Leer singing to Ranulph on his sickbed. The Note is fairy fruit in another form, and the Fairies are not to be denied, but the Note suggests something more. The cock-headed lute is himself, Chanticleer; he is the Note's herald.

It is this streak of the dreamer and the melancholic, paradoxically, that allows Nathaniel to rouse himself, to solve an ancient murder case (like Williams's *War in Heaven*, Mirrlees's book combines fairy tale and detective story), and ultimately to travel to Fairyland in search of his children. He becomes an unlikely Orpheus bringing a loved one back from the dead and reinventing Dorimare's religion. Nathaniel ends up as an agent of Fairyland, replacing Endymion Leer. In place of Leer's intoxicating physic, he employs the Law to negotiate with the dangerous gods, restraining the Dionysiac side of Duke Aubrey and bringing out the Apollonian.

In the book's climax, Nathaniel ventures to Fairyland to rescue first the troupe of schoolgirls-turned-Maenad and then the captive Ranulph. As Nathaniel crosses the border, the narrative grows opaque, scenes shift and transform as in dreams, and it is hard to figure out exactly how he effects the rescue. It is clear, however, that the power he invokes against the Silent People is the Law. In an earlier scene, Nathaniel himself refers to the Law as the cure for the Fairies' perfidy: "the homeopathic antidote that our forefathers discovered to illusion" (156). When he sees his daughter and the other Crabapple pupils in a Fairy slave market, he cries foul:

> "They cannot be sold until they have crossed over into Fairyland—I say they *cannot be sold*." All round him he heard awed whispers, "It is Chanticleer—Chanticleer the dreamer, who has never tasted fruit." Then he found himself giving a learned dissertation on the law of property, as observed in the Elfin Marches. The crowd listened to him in respectful silence. Even Willy Wisp was listening, and the Crabapple Blossoms gazed at him with inexpressible gratitude... "Chanticleer and the Law! Chanticleer and the Law!" shouted the crowd. (248-49)

But what has the Law to do with life, death, myth, and magic? Again, the answer can be found in Harrison. She was always interested in the

difference between the depiction of gods in literature and their ritual importance, and she was particularly interested in the cultic goddess Themis, or Justice, who barely registers in Homer. For Harrison, Themis represents the social function of myth, and thus her worship is an advance over the more ancient rites of fear and propitiation. It is through Themis, cognate with the English word Doom, that the terrible mysteries of life and death are brought into harmony with human needs:

> The thing greater than man... that makes for righteousness,' is... not the mystery of the universe... but the pressure of that unknown ever incumbent force, herd instinct, the social conscience. The mysterious dominant figure is not Physis, but Themis. (*Themis* 490)

If Endymion Leer is a physician, a follower of Physis or Nature, Nathaniel is a lawyer, priest of Themis. By calling on the Law, Nathaniel dissolves the Fairy assembly and sends his daughter home. When he returns to Lud-in-the-Mist, he enacts a new regime that acknowledges Fairyland. New laws allow the importation of fairy fruit, but in moderation, as homeopathic cure rather than addictive drug. The worship of Dionysos is tempered with Apollonian sobriety; both are seen as necessary parts of the social compact. Calling on human Law on the very borders of Fairyland is a bold and perilous act, but it brings the two aspects of Dorimare and of Nathaniel himself back into a balance that neither has had for some time.

All of this points out the mythic dimension underlying Mirrlees's fairy tale, but it doesn't show how *Lud-in-the-Mist* relates to the contemporary world. How is this novel a Modernist text? As in *The Lord of the Rings*, the story's images, events, and characters all have analogues in the real, historical world. The symbol of fairy fruit, for instance, manages to convey not only poetic inspiration and Romantic longing, but also youthful rebellion, sexual license, and the cocaine craze of the 1920s. The trial of Endymion Leer suggests any number of tabloid-fodder murder cases. Unrest among the working classes of *Lud-in-the-Mist* brings echoes of bolshevism and anarchy. The unsettled postwar literary scene is transcribed into the complex relationship between Dorimare's dominant middle class and its residual and emergent subcultures.

But the modern world and Modernist sensibility are most clearly represented in Nathaniel himself and in the winds from Fairyland that sweep away his beliefs and way of life. The opening of *Lud-in-the-Mist* resembles a Dutch genre painting, with jolly burghers sitting in front of their substantial houses, but that appearance is deceptive. Everything Nathaniel fears—that life is uncertain and chaotic, that the reassuring

epitaphs in the graveyard are lies, that even death is not a release from change—turns out to be precisely true. Nathaniel brings the modern world into Lud-in-the-Mist. He resembles one of Virginia Woolf's characters in crisis—perhaps Septimus Smith quietly going mad in *Mrs Dallaway*. The Waste Land is there in Nathaniel's thoughts:

> With which familiar object—quill, pipe, pack of cards—would he be occupied, on which regularly recurrent action—the pulling on or off of his nightcap, the weekly auditing of his accounts—would he be engaged when IT, the hidden menace, sprang out at him? And he would gaze in terror at his furniture, his walls, his pictures—what strange scene might they one day witness, what awful experience might he one day have in their presence? (6)

As Nathaniel rides into the Elfin Marches, the narrative becomes a sort of Modernist poem filled with disturbing imagery of silent crowds, a solitary child trapped on a merry-go-round, human souls advertised as carnival attractions, a house full of "creatures made of red lacquer" (250). Fairyland resembles Eliot's image of the "Unreal City" where "I had not thought death had undone so many." Yet when these surrealistic scenes lead him at length to Duke Aubrey, their source, the meeting is a moment of tender vision:

> At these words the uplands became bathed in a gentle light... And everything—ships, spires, houses—was small and bright and delicate, yet real. It was not unlike Dorimare, or, rather, the transfigured Dorimare he had once seen from the Fields of Grammary. (254)

The four components of Williams's mythic method likewise operate in Mirrlees's novel. *Lud-in-the-Mist* uses myth to organize and interpret the contemporary world. Instead of the half-Christian, half-pagan myths of the Grail and the Priest-King, she employs a combination of English fairy tradition and archaic ritual as interpreted by Harrison. Christianity is absent, but suggested by the residual and re-emergent social roles played by fairy beliefs and folk rituals.

Part of myth's organizing power is its ability to isolate and expel the dangerous and disturbing. Mirrlees makes use of this power in a way quite different from Williams's. One character is indeed unmasked, humiliated, and ultimately killed: Endymion Leer, the foreigner, the poisoner, the hypocrite. Yet Leer is also the true priest and agent of Duke Aubrey. He is Nathaniel's double and predecessor: the other thoroughly Modern point of view in the novel. In the process of bringing him down, Nathaniel also brings back the previously exiled Silent People and their forbidden fruit.

Abjection, for Mirrlees, is part of an ongoing cycle along with rediscovery and restoration. The difference between this and Williams's version is Mirrlees's choice of myth: Christian myth is moralized, black and white; classical myths and fairy lore are not. Leer kills but he also does good; fairy fruit is both poison and cure; Duke Aubrey is both cruel and tender.

And existential angst is also epiphany. On the first pages of the novel, as the narrator lovingly details Dorimare's charms, she drops a hint about the interconnectedness of terror and transcendence in the description of the Chanticleer gardens:

> To the imaginative, it is always something of an adventure to walk down a pleached alley. You enter boldly enough, but very soon you find yourself wishing you had stayed outside—it is not air that you are breathing, but silence, the almost palpable silence of trees. And is the only exit that small round hole in the distance? Why, you will never be able to squeeze through *that*! You must turn back... too late! The spacious portal by which you entered has in its turn shrunk to a small round hole. (3)

So the most familiar of scenes can transform without warning into Fairyland. This is exactly what Nathaniel most fears—and most badly needs. He combines Williams's opposing figures, the mage and the priest. In the mythic system underlying this novel, the Grail can be approached by either route: dark magic or light, occult ritual or spiritual discipline. The result will be the same. Nathaniel finds this a rather bitter lesson. The mythic method makes the modern world possible for art, but it does not make it comfortable.

The fourth component of Modernist fantasy is play. Authorized by Harrison's theories, Mirrlees playfully tosses together classical Greek myth and English folk tradition, the remnants of ancient rituals of fear and propitiation. By setting up the cult of Duke Aubrey as Dorimare's suppressed religious past, she puts Christianity into the same category of rationalized primitive ritual, thereby freeing us to tinker with Christian myth. Mirrlees also sports with levels of reality, making history a mask for myth and letting magic leak into the daylight world. She invites us to extend the game into our own reality. As we share Nathaniel's experiences, we too begin to question appearances and to doubt common sense. We sense hidden forces at work, or at play, in the world. Fantasy is a game, and a game is a form of ritual. As we play the game, we venture, into the ancient world of gods and sacrifices, but we retain the prerogative of changing the rules: for instance, introducing a power such as the Law to alter the game's outcome.

Williams and Mirrlees offer two versions of fantasy's mythic method, one of which gradually transforms the known world into a battleground for

competing visions of the divine while the other constructs an imaginary realm as a ludic—or Luddic—space where observed reality and symbol interact on the same plane. Other fantasies from the first half of the twentieth century use one technique or the other, or sometimes a combination: the patterns show up in stories by G. K. Chesterton, Lord Dunsany, James Branch Cabell, E. R. Eddison and C. S. Lewis. All bring to the world of myth and magic a contemporary sensibility and skepticism that asks what myth has to offer here and now. For Jane Harrison, myth was something to do, rather than something to believe. Hence a myth enacted was a living myth, still potent against darkness and despair. Hope Mirrlees put this idea into a form that was pleasingly old-fashioned, yet conceptually innovative and attuned to a modern consciousness. This version of the mythic method makes it new by making it old. For Mirrlees, Williams, Tolkien, and others of their generation, fantasy became a way of living out, rather than simply retelling myths. By challenging perilous enchantments and negotiating fairy-tale laws, their characters forge new relationships with the oldest mysteries. That may be why fantasy has emerged, in our postmodern world, as one of the most popular, and perhaps most powerful, forms of cultural expression.

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DAVID GEMMELL'S INTERTEXTUAL TREATMENT OF THE ANCIENT GREEK HISTORY IN HIS *LION OF MACEDON* AND *DARK PRINCE* NOVEL DUO

ALEKSANDER RZYMAN

Introduction

David Gemmell is best known for his bestselling fantasy fiction, but he also dabbled in something closer on what is defined as historical fantasy (Pustowaruk 2009: 182) or "New Histories, stories set in alternate versions of Primary history" (Waggoner 1978: 117) or historical fiction ('David Gemmell' entry in Wikipedia). This paper's focus is on his 'Greek" series, comprising just two novels: *Lion of Macedon* and *Dark Prince* (his other historical series is made up of three novels whose plots revolve around the ancient city of Troy). Arguably, the 'Greek' series belongs in a more 'proper' historical fiction, since the historical times—spanning the period of 389-323 B.C.—with their personages, events, and even topography which this series draws upon are far better documented than those of the 'Troy' series, set in the second half of the second millennium B.C., where legend and myth take over the scarce generally accepted historical knowledge.

Assuming that the average reader likes to have a closer look at a book before reading, it may be proposed that the reader quickly finds the 'Greek' books to be somewhat peculiar as they offer not only maps of Greece and Middle East in the plot-related ancient times, but—lo and behold—a proper academic bibliography, containing works by renowned contemporary historians, such as N. G. L. Hammond, Chester G. Starr, as well as ancient Greek historians and philosophers, such as Aristotle, Plutarch, Flavius Arrian, Xenophon. The obvious question arises about the purpose of such a bibliography. Although the author does not give any clue, this bibliography seems to serve as an invitation for the reader to

discover the scope of historical intertextuality in these works of otherwise literary fiction.

Historical Personages, Events, and Topography

In order to find out about the degree of the saturation of David Gemmell's 'Greek' duology with historical data, one has to consult history books and compare a historian's description of that particular period in the ancient Greek history with the one given by Gemmell as part of the plot. Such a comparison finds the 'Greek' duo studded with real historical personages, tribes, and events, complete with topography and horsemanship.

The historical figures that appear in the novels are: Xenophon—historian and soldier, Cyrus the Younger and his brother Artaxerxes II—heirs to the Persian throne, Parmenion—Macedonian general in the service of Philip II and Alexander the Great, Agesilaus II—king of Sparta, Epaminondas—Theban general and statesman, Cleombrotos—king of Sparta, Pelopidas—Theban general and statesman, commander of the Sacred Band made up of select Theban warriors, Perdiccas III—king of Macedon, Philip II—king of Macedon, Amyntas—father of Philip II, Ptolemy of Aloros—king regent of Macedon, Attalus—courtier and general in the service of Philip II, Bardyllis—long-lived Illyrian king, Audata—Illyrian princess, daughter of Bardyllis, married by Philip II, Aeschines—Athenian statesman and orator, Antipater—Macedonian general in the service of Philip II and Alexander the Great, after Alexander's death regent of all his empire, Argeus—Macedonian commander of Athenian mercenaries, pretender to the throne of Macedon, Nicanor—son of Parmenion, officer in the service of Alexander the Great, Philotas—son of Parmenion, general in the service of Alexander the Great, Coenus—general in the service of Alexander the Great, Olympias—princess of Epirus, wife of Philip II and mother of Alexander the Great, Aristotle—philosopher and tutor of Alexander the Great, Alexander the Great—son of Philip II and Olympias, Demosthenes—Athenian orator and statesman, Grabos—Illyrian king after Bardyllis, Onomarchos—Phocian commander, Ptolemy I Soter—general in the service of Alexander the Great, Nearchus—officer in the army of Alexander the Great, Craterus—general in the service of Alexander the Great, Pausanias—aristocrat, member of Philip II's bodyguards and his murderer, Cleopatra Eurydice of Macedon—the last wife of Philip II, Hephaestion—nobleman and general in the service of Alexander the Great, Arridaios—feebleminded son of Philip II, Alexander the Great's step-brother, Cleitus the Black—officer in the army of