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MARGUERITE YOURCENAR AND THE MYTHOLOGICAL DIMENSION
OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

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Century after century, the words uttered in the past have been echoed in the present. It is the epic that mediates between past and present days. It is the poet who succeeds in carrying the ardor of past ages through to this generation. For him, History is an attempt to explain a genealogy.

In the intellectual scenery of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the memory of the past is expressed as a mythical absorption. One wishes to meet the primeval facts which determined the evolution of the different societies — as well as the individual's role in this development. That explains why in the Greek mythology the goddess Mnemosene is the mother of the Muses. It is by her evocation that the poet gives shape and beauty to the "gests", being at the same time a messenger, who makes manifest to mankind the secret of its origin.

As Jean-Pierre Vernant puts it, (x)

"... the Muses sing the genesis of the world, the birth of humanity. This past, as it is revealed to us, is much more than the precursor of the present: it is its source. The mythical memory does not search to situate events in a temporal scheme ... it searches to discover a primeval reality, the origin and arrangement of the cosmos and the earliest stages in the development of the life of mankind..."

(x) Quoted from Mettra 1972, p.6

The poet is a messenger, because he is entrusted with announcing to us the origins of a belief. This definition of the poet we find in Socrates, Plato, and, later on, in the Gnostics. In the face of primeval events, those which we recognize as "historical facts" are of little importance. History, while an inventory of human deeds, is of little significance if not related directly to myth. Seen through the eyes of the great tragic writers, such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes, reconstituted history is much more loaded with meaning than the history of the chroniclers such as Herodotus and Thucydides.

At the core of the medieval world stands Dante's "Divine Comedy", which is also lacking in revealing the significance of historical facts. Dante's guide and companion to the bottom of the world and to purgatory is Virgil, the poet who wrote the "Aeneid". In Dante we find the symbol of the Middle Age's nostalgia for eternity, which would exclude all interest in history.. Certainly, Dante's Italy is far more complex than the Hellade of the Greek philosophers; in it we find the seeds of the modern world. But, for both of them, Dante and the Greek poet, true History is in the infancy of the world. Says Louis Gillet. (xx)

"... the "Divine Comedy" is a long 'vocero', interrupted from time with sobs blames, carrying mourning for a beloved hero; it is the dismal refrain weeping for the hero's fate; it is the lament for the shipwreck of a Golden Age, wistful for that past happiness of a Lost Paradise".

Up to the XVth century, History is sacral. In
(xx) quoted from METTRA, 1972, p.8.

the historical novel that makes references to the past, epic and folklore themes substitute for the true historical situation.

With the humanistic way of thinking, the European mind attempts to free itself from the sacredness of the cosmos. Since then, the different gods are no longer responsible for man's origin, for the totality of man's destiny and, then, history, as the result of human deeds has meaning. During the Renaissance, the mythical imagination accounts no longer for human actions because new experiments relegate to a secondary level the privileges of the deity. The essence of that which will define, later on, the historical novel is present in the beginning of the XVIth century. Nevertheless, the advent of Humanism, tragically interrupted by the religious zeal that followed the Protestant Reformation, Erasmus's, Leonardo's, Durer's Renaissance, has no immediate posterity. The exploratory research into the past carried out by the intellectual milieu of Flanders, Italy, or France, remain ethical models, which are timeless, the past being, through them, a mere source of imitation.

In the XVIIIth century, during the Enlightenment, certain thinkers foresaw that, besides that ethical bend, there hides in History motive forces in the evolutionary process of mankind. This is felt in Voltaire and especially in Diderot. But, these philosophers maintain that it is in the analysis of the historical fact rather than in the re-creation of history by the novel that we are going to give significance of revelation to the past.

As a matter of fact, the ground work for the

historical novel lies in Shakespeare's drama, in Goethe. It is present also in Cervante's Don Quixote, where History, present, past or future, only acquires meaning in so far as it is treated as literature. We recognize that it was during the second half of the XVIII th century that there was a transition from the essay to the novel, and consequently a differentiation in the relationship with the past, now mysterious and hidden. History, now, becomes a vacant lot, it is no longer an orderly catalogue. The novelist tries to recapture with his imagination what really happened to the people who lived in this world before him. In the pre-romantic sensibility, the present feeds on the past because it fears the future.

With the French Revolution, a study in depth of History takes place. The drama of metaphysics, where one dialogues with the absolute, is replaced by a more worldly scene where all the roles are given back to the community. With the French Revolution, the actuality of History is established, which becomes a bloody stain in the community. The function of the novel is to reflect this reality. History, from the earlier to later times, conceived to be on equal terms with life, a lively History, replaces the epic. Revolutionaries know they have already outgrown their models, and that the past prefigures the present, but dimly. The Revolution is the full realization of the future of mankind. It is on account of the hopes raised during the 1789 Revolution that European literature is going to feed on historic scenes of the XIX th century. George Lukács in his essay "The

Historical Novel"⁽¹⁾ fixes the boundaries between two different continents: at one side, there is a world where History makes the man - that is to say, mankind; at the other side, there is a world where mankind makes History. The function of the historical novel is, now, to give the human being consciousness of his power of choice which contrasts with the tragic determinism suggested by the epic excitement.

If we are to delineate the geography of the historical novel up to our days we would see it take three different directions: that of lyricism, that of social realism and that of myth. Lukács' approach is that of social realism, where History makes prominent man's role in the making of his destiny. In literary terms, though, the two other approaches must not be neglected.

In the lyrical writer we find a total inward History. This is the lyrical path followed by Chateaubriand. But beyond Chateaubriand's solitary lyricism, beyond Hugo's and Balzac's willingness to portray the social drama, according to Lukács' approach, there is another way to arrive at a complete view of History: through Myth.

In Flaubert we find both tendencies, that of realism and that of myth. In "Mme Bovary", but mainly in "Éducation Sentimentale", Flaubert reveals in a realistic manner his everyday habitat, but seen from a detached point of view, as is appropriate to a historic view-point, "Salambe" traces the rebirth of a colourful society with the utmost historical exactness, but Michel Tournier remarks that:

(1) G. LUKÁCS: Le Roman Historique. Paris, Payot, 1971.

"There is at every moment a gleam of a semi-divine humanity, overwhelmed by sadness, a noble melancholy, which is the greatest charm of tragedy. What better characterizes Flaubert's genius in this work of art is the mythological strength of the narrative, which is not present in works such as Sienkiewics' "Quo Vadis" which deals also with myth.

This mythological dimension is found and bursts out in Valery's and Saint-John Perse's poetry - but the novel has to count on Marguerite, with "Memoires d'Hadrien" to make this magical dimension prevail".(2)

Tournier ends his essay by saying that:

"... this mythological dimension is a common ground in the the contemporary historical novel. One chooses a historical character, deciphers his mythological riddle, and having these clues at hand, one involves the character in an adventurous plot, that may as well be the narrative of his real life events. Thus the hero becomes both, the characterization of a fabulous creature and a representative of each one of us. There is a mythological logic in the coherent presentation of the character's growth as a mythical figure and as a real historical character. What one needs then is to find an archetypal image".(3)

"... To fulfill this intention, the background of the novel has to have the qualities of a historical document, and the main character the density of a character that the common reader may acknowledge, because this is the way mythological heroes are, part of our unconscious memory even before they express themselves as literary subjects".(4)

(2) Michel Tournier: "La dimension mythologique". LA NOUVELLE REVUE FRANÇAISE, octobre 1972. Numéro 238 p. 126.

(3) Ibidem, p. 127.

(4) Ibidem, p. 129.

Who is Marguerite Yourcenar? The biography of any writer is his books, not less real than the real events of his life. It is through his books that the reader keeps up with the writer's gradual spiritual growth which is logical and, nonetheless, full of contradictions. His physical growth, thus, is of a second order of importance.

When talking about Marguerite Yourcenar, it is necessary not to give relevance to her biography. From the first readings of her work the absence of the writer becomes evident. We do not find in her books Marguerite Crayencour born in Belgium in 1903. She will only speak of her birthplace by describing XVI th century Flanders. Since 1939 she has lived in the United States, yet none of her novels has an American scene. France, also, where she spent her childhood, is avoided in her novels. Her experiences in the literary world and American university, are not spoken of. And, even more, no clues appear in her books showing the reader that she is a woman. She wants so much to remain in concealment that she did not even keep her family name: CRAYENCOUR is an anagram for YOURCENAR.

"Memoires D'Hadrien" is not an easy book, not being absolutely addressed to mass consumption. Is it possible that the aggressive "merchandising" was enough to justify the book's success? Is it possible that all the publicity around the novel was like a fashion and we should, like Roland Barthes, study the phenomenon on this aspect? Is it because the book is representative of certain minorities: the feminists, because the writer is the first woman to enter the French Academy and to break a taboo that dates from

1636; the sexual minorities, because of the love story it relives? All the different sides of these questions ought to be studied, but what calls our attention on the first critical reading is exactly its mythological structure, which subdues and charms. The analysis of the mythical structure in the novel is difficult, yet how much more attractive if compared to a sociological explanation of the work, which harps on the same string of the irrationality of a consumer society moved by materialistic selfinterests.

Therefore, I propose to study:

- The influence of Greece in the work of Marguerite Yourcenar;
- The two forms of her sensibility, the sense of time and the sense of myth;
- How these two forms converge in the mythical universe created by Marguerite Yourcenar.

In the first place, let us take a look at the influence of the Greek world in the writer's work. Yourcenar could be speaking for Adriano when he says that:

"Yes, Athens remains Beautiful and I do not lament having imposed upon my life the Greek disciplines. All we have in us which is human, ordered and clear we owe to them" (p. 222).

Greece, the country where the Myths which still inspire contemporary culture have originated, gives, since the beginning, a mythological dimension to Marguerite Yourcenar's works. In a long essay in 1932, one of her first works to be published, she speaks about the Greek poet Pindar (V th century B.C.), the character already assuming mythical proportion. In this essay nothing is missing to satisfy the scholar's curiosity.

There is a full bibliography which tells us about the oldest manuscripts, their dates, their upkeep. It also tells us that Pindar is "the symbol of an instant of man's life reflecting man's mind and heart". The writer says that: "Pindar's singing, remaining unknown or becoming celebrated, represents an instant of the individual heart which becomes an important part of man's culture."⁽⁷⁾

Half a century later, Yourcenar takes us back to Greece and its poets. She also admits that she writes about Greek poetry in order to become acquainted with Adriano's readings.

"It is expected that we read a lot when we love life in all its aspects, the past as well as the present aspects of life - simply because it pertains to the majority, being longer and bigger than the present. During many years I have read Greek literature, in order to build up a picture of Adriano's culture; I got acquainted then with his readings, and with his comments on the philosophers he had read. I believe it is essential that we should imbue ourselves completely with the subject we are getting acquainted with till it sprouts up like a carefully watered plant". (Galey, 148)

This quotation leads us directly to Yourcenar's conception of time. We have noticed that the novelist does not face Adriano directly in the past that comes close to him gradually, by means of the shortcut of another reality, represented by the Emperor's cultural past. This is a constant in the writer's work, as this is the technique she uses to make the past so real to us. The present life of historical characters impose on

[7] BLOT, J.: Marguerite Yourcenar. Paris, Seghers, 1980. p. 49.

us as we trace their steps.

What a strange perspective! We always find in Yourcenar a past seen from the point of view of another past, which becomes a present to us. Time in Yourcenar's novels is divided into compartments like space. It does not flow, it does not disappear, it splits itself. Beings and events do not die, they are always present, each one in its compartment, all contemporary. It is an eleatic time. It is not for nothing that the main character in her second novel is called Zeno.

The remoteness of eleatic time is only spatial and has an indefinite divisiveness. In the same way plastic arts have to transform time into spatial notations, in the same way past and future in the novels of Marguerite Yourcenar represent only a spatial distancing.

In 1964, Marguerite Yourcenar writes an essay on Piranesi, an Italian engraver, designer and architect (1720-1779). During an interview she declares:

"... Piranesi's carvings give us a sense of duration, a sense of things being corroded little ... the beauty of objects slowly destroyed and, at the same time, reconstructed, recreated by weather inclemency, vegetal excrescence, the crumbling, the entombment". (Galey p. 152)

This is the view held by Yourcenar when she contemplates the ruins of Rome or the carvings by Piranesi - a completely different view if compared with that of the romantics, who saw themselves in the monuments of the past, by reading in them their own melancholy, the transiency of life, and their nostalgia for past emotions. By contemplating the ruins, Yourcenar sees in the duration of things an archetypal

identity, a permanency of natural forces, always the same, limited, although capable of an infinite number of combinations.

In Yourcenar's novels, the compartments of time correspond also to the unconscious structure. In the essay on Piranesi she says: "Thus man's dreams beget each other". Thus, spatial time categories turn into psychic phenomena. Thus from Zeno of Eleus we arrive at Jung, from the eleatic time - a spatial pattern of time - to Jung's archetype.

What is myth? According to Jean Blot, Myth is a blocked religion, which, if it does not lead to God, is oracular.⁽⁹⁾ Through myth, we become conscious of our deep felt anxieties, thus succeeding in diminishing them; it also expresses the primitive man's anxieties, without trying to explain them.

Myth does not constitute itself into a coherent system, but it unfolds where there is disintegration, that is to say, in the pagan intellectual cosmology. Because of disintegration there is no cause and effect relationship that can guarantee the development of historical events. He has already seen that where Myth rules History is not part of man's concern. Also, because they orient and make manifest the primitive fears of mankind, myths become a landmark in the explorations of the unconscious, thus supplying the necessary terminology for this study. At a certain point, myths did not speak for themselves any more, nor underwent the many changes that made them so lively, active and accepted by the community. According to C.G. Jung, archetypes are symbolic clusters, deeply

(9) Op. cit. p. 76

registered in the unconsciousness, so as to become structures of the unconscious. He means to say that archetypes are clusters representative of the emotions of the human psyche, structured and having formative traits. Archetypes manifest themselves as a collective representation made evident by means of symbols. The archetype associates the universal with the individual.⁽¹⁰⁾

Maybe it is Thomas Mann the modern writer who best translates in words these hermetic concepts:

"When psychology reaches back to the infancy of the individual consciousness, it reaches back to the infancy of mankind, to the primitive being, to myth..."

We know that psychoanalysis is a psychological investigation whose aim is to make obscure, repressed desires conscious. This is what Thomas Mann calls "The Psychology of Profundities", and he adds:

"In the expression "Psychology of the Profundities", the word "profundity", is also a temporal reference since the "primal times" are also part of the profundities of human consciousness. During the earliest times, myth ruled among the primitive forms of life. Since myth is a formative principle of life, an eternal scheme, a sacred formula, tracing back to the unconscious and shaping life in it ... In the life of humanity, myth shows man in his prime, but in the life of fully developed mind". (14)

Thomas Mann says, then, that we find myth when civilization is in its prime. With the passing of time there is the sedimentation, myths become inward directed and part of the collective unconscious of

(10) CHEVALLER, J. Dictionnaire des Symboles - Introduction - Paris - Seghers - Vol. I - p. XX

that culture. The individual, since his early ages, carries those myths in his unconscious mind in the shape of archetypes.

Yet we should notice that the introduction of the word "archetype" leads us to rationalize the myth. "Archetypes are the preservation of the remnants of night-life that cannot be expressed in the day time."⁽¹²⁾

Yourcenar's resembles Jung's view. Like Jung, she focuses on typical representations which have marked and oriented the life of mankind; like him, acknowledging and situating myth by means of the archetype, she removes from myth its performative influence; as a counterpart, she introduces myth as an aesthetic object; an object of communication and expression of feelings. It is in this sense that we should understand the word "myth" in Marguerite Yourcenar.

It is Yourcenar herself who when speaking of her first publications says:

"... That was a period of chaotic production, based on very poetic feelings about life. My characters in this period remain very close to myth ... myth was to me a way of getting close to the absolute, a tentative effort to discover hidden in the human being a long eternal quality". (Galey 92)

Yourcenar's characters are masks. Behind their characterization stays hidden a "quid divinum" which is more essential than themselves. Yourcenar discovers and brings to life the archetypal character.

In "Memoires D'Hadrien, we meet Yourcenar's masterpiece. Finally, she succeeds in having with this book the reading public which she deserved.

(12) BLOT, J. Op. cit. p. 79

Adriano writes to Marco Aurélio, who must succeed him. He tells him about his imminent death. It is a double past, since it narrates Adriano's life as it is conveyed to the reader, but narrated by Adriano when he discovers that his life belongs to the past. But, soon, this past presents itself as being lively and contemporary:

"My dear Marco, this morning I saw my physician Hermógenes, newly arrived to this villa after a long travel through Asia".
(MEMORIES, p. 13)

This colloquial tone imposes from the very beginning immediacy. It is Adriano speaking but it is the reader who is involved in the state of spirit of the person who receives the letter, Marco Aurélio. Adriano speaks or writes yesterday - twenty centuries ago - and today.

Yourcenar keeps her hero in that scenery appropriated for the compartment of time to which he belongs. As we read through, we recall Latin texts we read and statues we admired in museums. Semiconscious images are set in motion in us. The Emperor who appears in the first pages of the book belongs forever to the realms of our cultural sensibility, after having exerted his power over two decades totally lost now to our historical memory.

Everything happens as if History had favored, at each step, the thriving of a certain kind of man. "History", - says Jean Blot - "is like the paintings in an art gallery where are brought update and exhausted every imaginable destiny of human kind". Certain ways of feeling, seeing, understanding, acting, loving, come into being if circumstances allow; there is a well

defined compartment in time, beautifully portrayed, virtually modern, which we might call by the name of Adriano.

Yourcenar's Adriano is not merely an emperor who lived in a historical period, above all, he represents, an atemporal instance of the sensibility or of the collective psyche, dimmed by the many centuries. These representations constitute the major values of a culture. It has a double source: art and events have contributed on equal terms to its expression.

This image of an unknown past can only become present through imagination, which we shall call "historical", because it has recourse to culture and learning as a guarantee. It is the imagination which bases itself on historical and cultural facts, socially acknowledged, and interprets them, not in the sense of an interpretation of the past, but giving them a timeless dimension. Since 1934, Yourcenar reveals her true calling in the historical imagination.

In her historical-apologetic imagination, Yourcenar does not revise established values, she merely lists and sanctions them. She is not interested in the historical moment, but in that which has sedimented, become substance, value, archetype. Yourcenar's historical research is never critical: she does not contest, but ratifies.

I must insist on the concept of art as the representation of a definite culture. Every work of art presupposes a daydream which emerges from concrete data drawn from observation. The novelist takes for models men and women he knows, mixes their traits, transfers his own obsessions to them, submits them to the

altering powers of the language he uses and to the style imposed by the period. Uses his imagination on objects, scenes and situations from his own experiences. *Yourcenar daydreams in front of statues, paintings, books.* The objects chosen by her imagination are cultural objects, found in museums and libraries and diffused by her. She brings back to life heroes who are latent in our culture. And it is exactly because she restores to life cultural objects, giving back to them a certain freedom, that she reveals the psychic archetype of these objects, explaining why they remain latent in the collective unconsciousness.

Adriano is well-suited to act this role, not because he is Roman, but Latin. As readers, we are like Marco, sons and heirs. In psychoanalytic terminology, we might say that Adriano is a father figure, in capital letters. In fact, the entire situation leads to this conclusion. We could even call him a grandfather figure, since Marco Aurélio was his adopted grandson and would become an emperor only after Antonio Pio. Thus Adriano had his succession assured for two kingdoms of the "Pax Romana".

Going back to that Father figure, Adriano is a pagan father, to whom there is nothing in this world which does not come from this world, although a stoic denial of all metaphysics reveals itself to be very difficult when one faces death. Let us only recall the last lines in the second chapter:

"... when the philosophers themselves have nothing more to tell us, it is excusable that we turn to the fortuitous chirp of birds or to the remote counterpoise of the stars" (34) (*Memories*)

The apology of the worldly life begins with the apology of the body. The praise of continence, austerity, expresses vaguely a Roman myth, because the Empire, although showing a certain decadence in its habits, benefits from the renown and virtues of the Republic. The description of Adriano's childhood, of the Spanish provincial environment in which he grew up, makes present to us the republican discipline. But, if the body has to have strength, this strength helps him harvest the fruits of spirit: "My first countries were the books". (MEMORIES p. 40) Both cultures, physical and intellectual, Spanish and Greek, grant his access into manhood.

Latin, vibrant, lively, Adriano is the spokesman for a rather restricted morality, since it inspires itself in the harmony of the body and establishes its model based on this harmony - it is the morality of Balance. It is the sense of measure which permits a "discipline which assists nature instead of containing it". This morality leads to the "freedom of compliance" and to the following apotheosis: "I came finally to accept myself". (MEMORIES p. 49)

While doing military service, Adriano serves his apprenticeship learning discipline and courage. Yourcenar declares in an interview:

"Adriano has great insights into worlds which were not his, the barbaric peoples, for instance. A minor Latin poet writes in a malicious epigram that "The Emperor likes to promenade in the cold countries, under the snow of the Citas and the rain of Britania" - Adriano answers, also rhyming: "Stay in Rome, in the taverns, to be bitten by the mosquitoes while you talk about literature!" (Galey, p. 162)

Equally new is Adriano's liking for the oriental world, with its religious zeal. While he was in the army, strange cults were practiced, such as the Mitra, for instance.

Back in Rome, as Trajano's relative, he is protected by the Empress Plotina, a beautiful feminine figure who never behaves sensually, in contrast to Sabina, Adriano's wife, whom he sacrificed to his love for young men.

Love being the classic theme of the novel, what the historical novel does is to integrate a love story in a historical context. Yourcenar succeeded in doing this. Antinoo represents the human ideal of the Emperor, as well as Greece and Asia.

Adriano's love for Antinoo is well documented, it belongs to a historical reality, transmitted by the two mentioned sources, art and books. Statues and coins bring back to posterity the remembrance of that great love. But, as to Yourcenar's position facing the problems of sexuality, I am going to permit myself to make a long quotation, letting the author herself speak:

"I feel together with Adriano a philosophical disposition. Spirit and flesh meet. Characters from Ancient Greece and Rome are rather bisexual than homosexual. There are, most surely, elements of homosexuality in Adriano, who would prefer beings other than those from the enclosed world of women which he considered insignificantly domestic, all the more if we consider that Adriano was unhappily married to a woman he did not love. This did not affect his love affairs with other women, which left many happy remembrances. It is quite rare to find in antiquity an exclusively homosexual human

type. It is in fact so rare that I can't mention one single example, not in the Greek world; maybe in the Latin world, but in the decadence. All those people marry, have lovers who belong to the opposite sex; they have a sense of freedom of choice, it is not absolutely a matter of compulsive or obsessive behaviour, as it happens in our times, when the homosexual creates a kind of a "myth of hostility" concerning women because he is afraid of them. This is quite evident nowadays. For all the minority groups, we must remember that, as soon as people are put into a state of inferiority, be it racial, sexual or ideological, they begin to suffer to the point of presenting some intellectual and moral deformations. This is as true here (in the U.S.) for the Negroes as it is true for the Jews in the anti-semitic countries; thus, a kind of psychosis is generated, which would have no reason to exist if any race, creed or sexual inclination were accepted. (Galey, p. 182)

In the first place, Adriano loves youth. His erotic life is centered on two ephebus: the Roman Lucius, and the young Greek, Antínoo. "The beautiful grey-hound lodged in my life". (MEMORIES p. 158) The ephebus is described with an astonishing richness of details in statues and medals. Antínoo never grows up to become a faulty adult, he remains a perfect object and animal.

"I became aware of his quiet presence, he followed me like an animal or like a domestic genius. He had the infinite talent for cheerfulness and indolence, savagery and trust, like a little dog". (MEMORIES p. 158)

Antínoo's suicide remains a mysterious and impenetrable holocaust. He sacrificed himself in order to pass his strength and youth on to his master, Adriano. Referring to this part of the novel, the author says that:

Antínoo must have believed in the importance of his sacrifice. It is also possible that, in his position as Adriano's favorite an almost ritual sacrifice was an escape. An escape from aging, the passion becoming worn out, the hateful scheme against him in the courts. Some chronicles say that Antínoo sacrifices himself for Adriano, or, as we read in a hostile chronicler, because Adriano demands that he kills himself. But this interpretation presented fifty years later does not seem to correspond to Adriano's character, such as we know him through the many documents. He was not a bloody tyrant and the hypothesis based on superstition that he demanded his friend's suicide cannot be accepted as truth. Nor could we speculate that Antínoo got involved with any plotting. He was a young Greek - whom we feel to be at the same time sensual and melancholic". (Galey, 164)

After the funeral ceremonies and the transformation of the young friend into a god the tone of the book changes. All the pleasures and sorrows exhausted there remains only the "Imperial Discipline". Myth reappears in all its beauty matured into loyalty and humbleness before reality, in passages which define Rome's substance for Yourcenar:

"Rome would live on in the most unimportant of towns, where magistrates cared to verify the balances of negotiators, to clean and illuminate its streets, to oppose disorder, carelessness, without fear, against all injustice, trying to reinterpret reasonably the laws. In this way, Rome would not die, even if it were the last city of men". (MEMORIES p. 118)

HUMANITAS? FELICITAS? LIBERTAS: these words are written in the coins from Adriano's time, a time when, as he himself declares, our vague and venerable religions are purged of all their intransigence",

whereas "the arts are still capable of producing some delicious fruit". (119) This is, in fact, much more than a historic period in the life of mankind, with its values, with its happiness. In this period, things achieve their full dimensions, a balance:

"When we have been set free from all servitude, avoiding unnecessary calamity, there will remain, to keep alive the heroic virtues of man, the long series of real griefs: death, aging, incurable diseases, love which is not shared, the mediocrity of a life less vast than our designs or more blurred than our dreams - in all, unhappiness caused by the divine nature of things".
(MEMORIES p. 120)

Adriano's age elected Rome as a symbol: a world where the State and its institutions meet the spiritual world and its requirements. Adriano in his Roman humanism declares: "All that is human satisfies me entirely, in the human I find everything, even eternity". (MEMORIES p. 148) The divine in life is not denied, at its maximum it is disassembled: "I could discern in a different way my relationship with the divine. I imagined myself assisting him in his effort to give shape and to order the world" (MEMORIES p. 148)

This man alone, who has become his own master and the world's, analyses his strength and his weaknesses, his pleasures and his sorrows: here is ADRIANO'S MYTH.

{Translated by Eliane Luz Bayer}

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FOUR ESSAYS ON CONRAD - AN INTRODUCTION

BY - JOHN DERRICK

To judge by the essays collected here, Joseph Conrad (1857 - 1924) is alive and well in Brazil. Whether they see him as some sort of reactionary Martin Bohmann, or as a stylist whose weaving of jungle vines and language still stands at the vanguard of Modernism, the four authors we present in this issue are clearly under his spell.

Conrad it must be remembered, was not English at all, but a Polish self-exile whose parents were broken in the czars' camps for their revolutionary sympathies.

He was also a dapper, formal little fellow who carried a goldheaded cane and liked to radiate the air of a Polish count. What wonder then that this man who claimed to dream in Polish, think in French, and write in English, should present contradictory faces to his interpreters: Is Conrad a dated victorian whose lush style, antiquated feudal codes and quixotically macho notion of women set him apart from our world, or is he our contemporary by his psychological depth, his open-ended symbolism, and his vision of a third world tormented by colonial powers?

Two of our authors approach Conrad more as a stylist. Carmen Gago Alvarez and Reynaldo Gonçalves emphasize imagery: Alvarez in the intensive context of a single story, "The Lagoon" and Gonçalves in extended patterns encountered in several works. To me their findings imply that even in his early "Eastern" stories, the author cannot be said to be merely laying exotic atmosphere with his metaphors, the way a cook frosts a cake. Though many critics feel these early settings are