

no entanto, perder de vista o sentido do futuro, ajuda a preservar a atualidade das suas ideias e a erudita fundação das suas descrições e conclusões.

Dos 22 artigos que compõem este volume, o mais antigo data de 1971, e o mais recente (inédito) de 2010. Isto quer dizer que a amostra de que se constitui este livro abarca quatro décadas de ideias e argumentos sobre as humanidades, nesse sentido amplo e tendencialmente universal que Aguiar e Silva lhe atribui, um sentido ao mesmo tempo histórico e patrimonial que assenta numa crença profunda nas virtualidades da educação e do humanismo. Um tal ponto de vista acerca das humanidades leva a que, inexorável e fatalmente, Aguiar e Silva abra as janelas e as portas da sua sala de aula, do seu gabinete e da biblioteca: em permanente (e só em permanente) interação com a realidade, o mundo, os outros e a história é que coisas como a língua, a literatura e a cultura fazem sentido. Esta perspetiva de perene diálogo é que é o motor das humanidades, e o garante do seu futuro. Contrariamente a Aguiar e Silva, não acredito que seja possível, na pós-modernidade estéril e desumana em que fingimos viver (e que o tal arqueólogo do futuro decerto já não experimentará), captar novos públicos e ensinar pessoas a ler bem, ou sequer a ler. Mas concordo com ele, em absoluto, acerca do modo como as coisas devem ser feitas para, pelo menos, preservar os leitores que já o são, e que se interessam por poemas e livros e outras

coisas que — repetem-nos até à exaustão — não servem para nada.

Algumas horas depois de encontrar este livro de Aguiar e Silva, o arqueólogo do futuro, cansado e ignorante, tirará uma revigorante sesta e não perceberá porque houve, em tempos distantes, pessoas que se preocuparam tanto com a educação, a leitura e a cultura. Mas para nós, os que cá ficamos e nunca lá chegaremos, só resta o (por agora) magro consolo de continuarmos a preocupar-nos com esse ramalhete de coisas «insignificantes». Escreveu Pascoaes, no seu *Napoleão*, que a ação de Deus na terra é exercida «por meio de um triste bípede implume». A acreditar em Aguiar e Silva, porém, cada um desses tristes bípodes implumes pode ser melhor, como a sociedade criada por eles pode ser melhor, como o mundo feito por eles pode ser melhor. Só se consegue isto tudo, no entanto, enfrentando a história, apontando caminhos e acreditando nas humanidades — como Aguiar e Silva, tão hábil e inteligentemente, nos mostra.

Ricardo Namora

**MODERN MYTHOLOGY: CREATING
AND EXPLORING THE NARRATIVES
WE LIVE BY**

JAMES CURCIO, Ed.

<http://www.modernmythology.net/>
em linha, 2011

THE METASTASES OF MYTH

The study of mythology is currently
out of fashion within the university,

and everywhere the word «myth» frequently carries a meaning other than its primary definition: a story that «embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon.» Rather, «myth», in the wake of the Enlightenment has increasingly acquired a different, derivative meaning: «a widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief; a widely held misconception; a misrepresentation of the truth... [or] something existing only in myth; a fictitious or imaginary person or thing.» («myth, n.» OED Online. June 2011. Oxford University Press. 22 July 2011). Not surprisingly, in today's university, comparative mythology, analytical psychology and philology have all but disappeared as legitimate academic disciplines. Myth, however, has not thereby become irrelevant; in fact, it could be argued that social media has augmented both our need and capacity for myth-making, blurring disciplinary boundaries and removing barriers to access.

It is thus all too appropriate that *Modern Mythology* (ModernMythology.net) is not only home to many innovative studies of mythology in today's world, but it is equally a collective endeavor aimed toward «the re-legitimization of myth and myth-making as one of the principal – if not the principal – means of human creative representation» (Curcio 2011a 9)... In February 2011, founder and editor, James Curcio

«opened up [ModernMythology.net] and made [it] into a group endeavor, a site dedicated to maintaining a platform for the discussion of mythology and the independently produced media that follows from this discussion. This project began a creative collective, and it remains one, for all of those who are interested in joining and driven enough to play on the level. Since February, the site very quickly grew to a steady 20,000 - 30,000 visitors a month. I hope for this trend to continue and grow, and serve as the platform for the creation of many more multi-media, modern myths» (Curcio 2011b).

Modern Mythology could be most aptly termed trans-disciplinary in orientation, insofar as the project aspires not to reproduce the «*the laws, norms, rules and practices of a given discipline*» by means of «interdisciplinary discussion», but rather it affirms that the «real discontinuity between disciplinary boundaries» must be transgressed, acknowledging that «radically new laws, norms, rules and practices are necessary» (Nicolescu 1-2). Articles such as «Red Riding Hood: Neurology, Narrative & Storytelling», «Mishima And Dying For Your Convictions», «Kairos I: Exemplary Acts of Revolutionary Potentiality», and some of the other six hundred plus articles run on this site transgress these boundaries, as well as the imagined boundary between pop culture and academia, such as «Towards A Philosophy of Gaming» and «The Cult of Personality».

Myth is always *mytho-poeisis* at the same time as *mytho-logos*: myth is at once to create, to tell stories, and at the same time, to make meaning – we are myth-makers at the same time as myth permeates our existence and the stories told to humanize and understand reality. *Modern Mythology*: the very phrase is ambiguous, or rather polyvalent. This phrase can best be understood in relation to the title of the accompanying anthology, *The Immanence of Myth*, published in August 2011 by Weaponized Press. The work of *Modern Mythology* is thus, as James Curcio writes, not «the study of classical myths, the study of what I would consider dead myths. Modern myths, what we more technically have referred to as ‘immanent myths’, are, quite plainly, *alive*. They represent not only our ideas about ourselves and the world around us... [they] exist at that juncture that lies *between* these things, and which defy our plain view» (Curcio 2011b, 2). Myth has not been eradicated by the progress of reason or by the continual growth of scientific knowledge; for, as Hans Blumenberg tells us in *Work on Myth*: «To bring myth to an end was once supposed to have been the work of logos. This... is contradicted by the fact that work aimed at putting an end to myth is again and again accomplished in the form of a metaphor of myth» (Blumenberg 629).

What do the various contributors have in common? All have an interest of in mobilizing the resources and

material of mythology for analytical, creative and programmatic work. If myth ever remains immanent, even in the (dis)guise of its absence, its resources must be mobilized so as not to cede ground to oppressive and repressive ideologies. The shared concern of the various contributors to *Modern Mythology* as well as *The Immanence of Myth* would, from this perspective be «the re-legitimization of myth and myth-making as one of the principal – if not the principal – means of human creative representation» (Curcio 2011a 9). This project requires a step outside of the confines of our comfort zones and of the extant order that has been continually reimposed upon reality, ideologically drawing upon the already rich resources of mythology. There is a dangerous or at least disquieting dimension to myth-making, as we find ourselves in «a new threshold situation that, seen as a need, comes under the heading of ‘remythicization’. What makes Nietzsche’s observation alarming is the further consideration that the new gods would not have to have the names and the stories of the old ones again... Do we feel the danger that lies in such a generous promise of something totally different» (Blumenberg 29-30).

Mythos has, since antiquity been set in opposition to, and subsequently subdued, transcended, superseded – dare I say *sublated* – by *logos*. The formula, «*mythos* to *logos*» is nothing more than «classical ‘disinformation’ ... that does not permit one to recognize in myth

itself one of the modes of accomplishment of logos» (Ibid 26-7). Rather, «the *mythos* is an indefinite set of articles, tales told for the telling itself, with no hard and fast authority, no assertable Ultimate Truth, no attributable origin grounded in cold solidity. It is *immanent* rather than *transcendent* because it is the codification of our direct experience, forms and ideas ground from our collective bones and flesh» (Curcio 2011a 82). Myth is in fact immanent in the *logos*, for «the position of immanence in myth finds its ground more readily in myths that recognize a primal chaos underlying the structures and laws even of nature and the gods... [such as] creation myths, where chaos is transformed into order, other into self» (Ibid 85). The Biblical creation myth of Genesis as found in the Septuagint, begins «*en arché logos*»; the only way to deny the immanence of myth in the *logos* and to preserve that transcendence upon which the order thus established was to affirm *creatio ex nihilo* over primal chaos.

On the one hand, classical, «dead», mythology has a long history of use and abuse in politics and culture, and on the other, «living» myth, our *mythology*, continues to make up «our symbolic interface with the world» (Ibid 7-8), and it thereby populates the worlds of experience and of fiction. The myths we make draw upon the symbolic resources available and, if necessary, imbue them with new life and new meaning. Mythology provides

the pattern and material that not only underlies the stories told or written, but that we use to make sense out of experiences and construct an identity, a personal mythology. Where once myth was seen to make us and our fates, we are now myth-makers in everything we create. Modernity was founded upon the assertion that we no longer have a «unifying myth, [which means] as Georges Bataille proposes: we live in a myth which is an absence of myth... We *do* have myths, though they often exist in mediums not surrounded by the aura of the sacred.... Modern myths are so pervasive that they are nearly invisible» (Curcio 2011a 21-2). The text of Bataille's essay in fact suggests that the more vital the myth the more difficult it is to be identified as what it is, he observes, «because a myth is dead or dying, we see through it more easily than if it were alive». Because this myth is still quite alive, even today it is far from an established truth that «the absence of myth is also a myth: the coldest, the purest, the only *true* myth» (Bataille 48). If thus «myth is something vital to our nature, then an absence of it... would be a deep cultural and existential crisis» (Curcio 2011a 20).

To say that there had been a «deep cultural and existential crisis» during the decade that saw the publication of *The Absence of Myth* (1946) and *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) would be an understatement. The events of the 1930s and 1940s revealed that myth had not and could never be eradicated

by the light of reason. As these catastrophes recede beyond the horizon of living memory, it become necessary for work such as that published on *Modern Mythology* to consider myth to be «something dangerous; full of falsities, dead ends and mazes luring the unwary into a fugue of superstition, then consider it a whispered pass-phrase into another world: the world beyond the wallpaper. A world that recognizes the real is in the effect rendered, rather than in the thing symbolized. Conflicting fictions drive Holy wars. How is a history born of spilled blood unreal? How is it meaningless, even if all the Gods are just shadows cast on the wall by finger-puppets? Myth is not dead, nor is it false; it is living, and misunderstood» (Curcio 2011a 82).

Myth then abides everywhere language is used in a literary, i.e. non-instrumental, language, in every story that we tell. When theory reflects upon experience it must do so by means of language which is likewise of a literary character and reproduces myth on an abstract plane. When theoretical reflection takes language as its object, language reflects upon itself autonomously and on its own terms. The vitality of literature and theory depends upon the reservoirs of living myth; only living myths will suffice, for «What... is a myth emptied of all life... if not an imposture, a pseudo-literature? ...myths can't be invented. Either you find them alive... or you must claim to offer a *revelation*» (Queneau 71).

What is to become of literature when all stories have been told, when either the absence or the immanence of myth rises to the level of explicit consciousness? Since «myths have been the lifeblood of culture since the birth of civilization, and they live on in all of the beliefs that structure our experience of reality» (Curcio 2011a 19), the first stories told by human-kind, we cannot tell stories without at least implicitly participating in the collective myth-making process. This is at least in part due to the fact that, as stories, myths are «distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core and by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation... [which] produces the attraction of recognizing them in artistic or ritual representation... [and] the attraction of trying out new and personal means of presenting them» (Blumenberg 34). Only the experiential inspiration can be truly original, but it cannot but be mediated by myth as soon as it is transposed into language and narrated.

Myth-making, especially in the literary milieu, takes place as a perpetual process of re-appropriation and revision. This is a consequence of the fact that, in the view of the pseudonymous contributor known as Mr. VI explained, «Myth is an an indefinite thing – a cushion between the linear particulate world of number and contoured form, and the impossible. It arises out of occluded circumstance, an attempt to apprehend apparitions which exist

on the edge of our perceptual horizon – a gnostic impulse born out of agnostic dread» (C. Slee, Personal Communication). Literary modernism attempted to attain complete verisimilitude – without omitting experiences that exceed our horizons – while retaining the conventional form of the novel. This effort gave rise to such monumental, expansive works as the seven-volume *In Search of Lost Time*, in which the sequence of events is of little importance relative to the elusive experiences about which they circle. Narrative and narrated time converges with ever greater fidelity to those most elusive singular experiences – in fact, in Proust's first account of *mémoire involuntaire* in *Swann's Way* narrative time dramatically outstrips the time narrated. In the opening paragraph of «Mythological Novels», Blanchot observes that the novel «has undergone a crisis», and that it seemed as though «the novel, an inextricable mixture of the ambitious and the facile, were destined to perish due to a monstrous growth or to purify itself to become other than what it is» (Blanchot 196). At any rate, it would prove impossible to express or represent the entire range of human experience, for those experiences once deemed «mystical» or «sacred» could not find expression in the absence of myth.

A recent article published on Modern Mythology.net, «Myth Against Myth», touched upon two widely divergent literary appropriations of the same

classical myth, that of Orestes Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies* and Georges Bataille's *Oresteia* present opposing interpretations of the figure of Orestes; in the first, Orestes embodies and signifies radical freedom within what amounts to a presentation of an essentially philosophical thesis; in the second, Orestes figures for inexpiable guilt and the sacred, this time within an ambitious project of myth creation involving multiple pseudonyms bordering at times on heteronyms, various and hybrid literary forms, and the creative resources provided by mythic stories already told.

Modern Mythology decidedly continues in the direction that Bataille's *Oresteia* marked a path: the contributors to this completely independent project hope that their readers might be inspired to create, following the same «wish to inform their work with knowledge of the internal world that myth connects us to [and] explore some of the endless possibilities provided by myth as a creative dimension» (Curcio 2011b 7). Myth cannot be owned; it is, as part of language and culture, a common resource that facilitates a creative, critical or pedagogical engagement with language, which as «a concrete object» (Motte 35) is the immemorial, material basis upon which it is possible to craft «a more singular mythology whose ways and abysses we must penetrate. Everyone can look for his own fable in it. We have the right to dream of this time, whose traces it is necessary

to erase so that memory remains empty and myths do not decompose» (Blanchot 198). One must not stop here but go one step further: if one is fortunate enough to discover one's own personal myth, it is only because discovery so often and so closely resembles creation.

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LITERATURA ELETRÔNICA: NOVOS HORIZONTES PARA O LITERÁRIO

N. KATHERINE HAYLES

São Paulo, Editora Global, 2009

208 páginas, ISBN 978-852-60-1415-2

Com uma formação inicial na área da Química, N. Katherine Hayles veio a centrar-se no estudo da literatura, nomeadamente no estudo da cultura digital, tecendo elos entre ciência, tecnologia e literatura. Para aqueles que seguem os passos da literatura eletrônica, N. Katherine Hayles tornou-se num nome incontornável. Autora das obras *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), *Writing Machines* (2002) e *My Mother was a Computer* (2005), em 2008 Hayles acrescentou um novo título à área de estudos literários. Trata-se da obra *Electronic Literature: New horizons for the Literary* (2008), agora também disponível em português.

A edição aqui apresentada conta com o prefácio de Tania Rösing e Miguel Rettenmaier, onde o leitor é advertido que o livro que irá ler foi produzido em meio digital. Publicada em 2009, a edição brasileira do livro *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008), apresenta um grafismo semelhante ao original em inglês, o qual procura espelhar as potencialidades do