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TRADITIONS OF HELLENISTIC ROMANCE IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

Considering the influence of Antiquity on the English Renaissance, one can see the same tendencies as in other parts of Europe, namely that Humanism resulted in a high esteem and reintegration of various achievments of the classical period in scholarship and in literature. One can also notice, however, that it was not so much the high classical tradition with its ideals of tragedy and epic, rather the more synchretic Hellenistic period that fertilized the imagination of English Renaissance writers. In the following paper I am going to concentrate on two notable examples and thus showing two different patterns how Hellenistic romance inspired English literature. In the first case, Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* stimulated the birth of an erotic epyllion (Marlowe), in the second, an adventure novel, the *Story of Apollonius of Tyre* animated an outstanding, nevertheless curious dramatic production, Shakespeare's *Pericles*.[1]

Some Features of Manneristic Literary Taste

Since the beginning of this century, the term Mannerism has been subjected to numerous debates concerning its validity, range, and actual contents. By the late 1970s, early 1980s, however, one could witness a consensus emerging among literary and cultural historians about its interpretation.[2] According to this, Mannerism can be viewed as the

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[1] An early evaluation of this literary influence was offered by J.S. Phillimore, „The Greek Romances". In G.S. Gordon, English Literature and the Classics (Oxford, 1912), 96ff.

[2] From the voluminous literature of Mannerism I can recommend the following works: Max Dvořak, „Über Greco und der Manierismus" (1920), in Dvořak, Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung (München: R. Piper, 1923), 259–76; Gustav René Hocke, *Manierismus in der Literatur. Sprach-Alchimie und esoterische Kombinationskunst* (Hamburg, 1959); Arnold Hauser, *Der Ursprung der modernen Kunst und Literatur: Die Entwicklung des Manierismus seit der Krise der Renaissance* (1964, München: C.H. Beck, 1973); André Chastel, *La crise de la Renaissance* (Genève, 1968); Tibor Klaniczay, „La crise de la renaissance et le manierisme", *Acta Litteraria* 13 (1971), 269–314; Tibor Klaniczay, *A manierizmus* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1975); Claude-Gilbert Dubois, *Le Manierisme* (Paris, 1979); Gerald Gillespie, „Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque", in G. Hoffmeister (ed.), *German Baroque Literature, The European Perspective* (New York, 1983), 3–24; Maciej Żurowski, „Aktualna problematyka manieryzmu", in B. Otwinowska & J. Pelc (eds.), *Przełom wieków XVI i XVII w literaturze i kulturze Polskiej* (Wrocław-Warszawa–Kraków: Ossolineum, 1984); James V. Mirollo: *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984); György Kelényi, *A manierizmus* (Budapest: Corvina, 1995); and

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concluding, crisis-ridden phase of the Renaissance, more than a simple pictorial style of late-Renaissance Italian painting as the origin of the terms would suggest, but less than a complex period style such as the Renaissance or the Baroque. In expression it represents a transition between these two great style periods but in its doctrine it sticks more to the Renaissance ideals. Probably this persistence to a departing ideology explains the strong feeling of intellectual crisis which distinguishes the works of Mannerism. Since the elements of this crisis have been much discussed,[3] I shall only refer to some of the consequences on the contemporary literary expression.

If we turn our attention to the literature of the English Renaissance, we can see that its greates achievments were the products of the later Elizabethan and the early Jacobean age which era can be well described by the general features of Mannerism. The literature produced in this highly transitory and contradictory period also bears the attributes of the Manneristic artistic ideals. Mannerist literature is characterized by the cult of the fantastic as well as an obsession with the sexual. Extreme situations, incredible plots, indecorous, artificially complicated and fabricated language rich in concettos and suprising emblematic images in its formation, voyeur mentality and cool intellectualism on the author part make this literature recognizable. The sharp turn of mood, tone, and world picture which characterizes Shakespeare's art is perhaps the best indicator of the crisis. Enough to think of the difference between the first part of his *Sonnets* and those intemperate ones written to the Dark Lady, or the transformation between his histories and comedies to the tragedies and romances through the bitter, dark and utterly pessimistic problem plays (*Troilus and Cressida, Hamlet*). One can also remember John Donne's turn from frivolous love poetry to metaphysical religious intellectualism via a disillusioned summary of his age:

> *And freely men confess that this world's spent,*
> *When in the planets and the firmament*
> *They seek so many new; they seek that this*
> *Is crumbled out again to his atomies.*
> *'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone...*[4]

But even in earlier English Elizabethan literature one can see the signs of artificiality and a bend toward, at least, stylistic mannerism, as shown by John Lyly's *Euphues*, or Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia*.

Considering now from the viewpoint of the epic traditions of Antiquity, English Renaissance literature was particularly influenced by two classical literary achievments, the erotic epyllions and the prose romances, both of the Hellenistic period. I would like to argue that what I have said about Mannerism above, can explain why Hellenistic literature could predominantely be inviting for the writers of late 16th-century England.

Caroline Patey, *Manierismo* (Milano: Editrice Bibliografica, 1996, Storia dei Movimenti e delle Idee).
   [3] Especially from the works of Hocke 1959, Hauser 1964, and Klaniczay 1975.
   [4] John Donne, An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary, ll. 209–13, quoted from M.H. Abrams (et. al, eds.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: Norton, 1979), 1: 1084.

Erotic Epyllions

One of the important aspects of the sociology of Renaissance literary life was the system of patronage. In Elizabethan England, next to the Queen, two aristocratic groups can be listed among the main patrons – their ideology and taste had a strong imprint on the literary output of the period. According to A.L. Rowse's typology, the „Penhurst-Wilton" circle (named after the castles of the coterie of the Earl of Leicester, the Sidney and Herbert families) represented the high Renaissance ideals, a kind of lofty neoplatonism mixed with ardent protestantism and nationalism. Sidney's *New Arcadia* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* were the greatest expressions of the English Renaissance, „with Protestant views of the events of contemporary Europe, in deeply patriotic works".[5] In contrast to this mentality, in the early 1590s another intellectual group appeared, patronized by Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton. He was a Catholic recusant and because of this, his orientation was more of a politically cosmopolitan and religiously disinterested character. Southampton himself had university education and by the age of sixteen got an MA from Cambridge. After this he entered the London Inns of Court for legal studies and there he got acquainted with the so called „university wits", and – as a contemporary source says about him, – „passed away the time merely in going to plays every day".[6] His principal interests were literary and when he started collecting poets and playwrights around him, this coincided with the new cultural vogue of the 1590s, that is Italianism.

His literary friends, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Lodge, John Florio and the two giants, Shakespeare and Marlowe by this time became interested in the political philosophy of Machiavelli, were not untouched by some frivolous Catholicism sometimes even coquetting with scepticism and atheism, and in their literary interests they were just to rediscover the erotic aspects of Ovidian poetry, turning their attention from the universal mythical reconstructions of the *Metamorphoses* to the openly carnal *Amores, Heroides*, and the *Ars amatoria*.

English Renaissance translations of Ovid show an interesting pattern. In 1513, probably resulted from the liberal interest of early humanism, a bilingual edition of *Ars amatoria* was published (*De flores of Ovide de arte amandi, with their Englysshe afore them*) but unfortunately no copy of it survives.[7] From the 1560s we have a number of translations from the *Metamorphoses*, most famous of them became that of Arthur Golding, *The XV Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, Entytuled Metamorphosis* (1567) which was reissued six times till 1612. Also in 1567, Gerge Turbevill published his translations of the *Heroides* (reissued in 1570, 1580, and in 1600) but the most sensual elegies were only translated about 1584–86 by Christopher Marlowe. His translation had a curious career. The undated printed

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[5] A.L. Rowse, The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Cultural Achievment (London: Cardinal, 1974), 68. On the two intellectual circles and their literary ideals see pp. 65–71.

[6] Neville Williams, All the Queen's Men (London: Cardinal, 1974), 216.

[7] The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature (1972), 1:2173.

publication (of which at least six reprints are suggested from the late 16th century),[8] entitled *Ovids Elegies*, was bound together with Sir John Davies' bawdy epigrams, and the anonymous printer did not enter it in the Stationers' Register, in fact, pretended it to be issued in Middleborough, Holland. All this could not help the fate of the book which was publicly burnt on 4 June 1599, at Stationers' Hall, by the order of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London.[9]

These new translations of Ovid prepared the way for the 1590s vogue for erotic epyllions which treated love without the platonic idealization, often dealing with awkward, unnatural relations. Most outstanding works of this genre became undoubtedly Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1593, 1594) as well as Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1593).[10] Until recently not much critical attention was directed to this late-Renaissance English erotic Ovidian poetry but William Keach's monograph of 1977 placed them in proper context.[11] Although Keach's observations of the poetic traditions as well as of the sociology of the English Renaissance are correctly insightful, he curiously refrained from employing the term Mannerism. According to our present consensus about this style, we can conclude that the erotic epyllions are characteristic products of English Mannerism: their tone, ideology, and sociological genesis all point to an aesthetics of intellectual artificiality and an elite, aristocratic reception.

The highest artistic quality among this literature is attribted to Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. All critics have praised its perfect verse and powerful imagination. As for its ideology, opinions show a wider range: from labels such as being a „barbarous work, an extravagant Ovid, a demoralized Spenser" (Legouis),[12] to Keach's more temperate judgement: „Marlowe [...] set himself the challenge of treating a familiar myth with distinctive originality" (85). The epyllion is the paraphrase of the charming story of the Alexandrian Musaeus (5th century AD) which was extremely popular in Renaissance Europe.[13] Nevertheless, „Marlowe does not give us the 'unclouded celebration of youthful passion' which Douglas Bush have found in the poem. He gives us a poetic experience much more disturbing and ambivalent than that presented by Musaeus or by any other previous writer",

[8] C.F. Tucker Brooke (ed), The Works of Christopher Marlowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 553.

[9] Philip Henderson, Christopher Marlowe (Brighton: Harvester, 1974), 16–7.

[10] To mention a few such narrative „fine histories" before the achievment of Shakespeare and Marlowe: Robert Greene's Alcida (1588); Thomas Heywood's Oenone and Paris (1594); Lodge's Glaucus and Scilla (1589). The aftermath of the genre is marked by John Marston's The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image (1598); John Weever's Faunus and Melliflora (1600); Francis Beaumont's Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (1602), etc.

[11] William Keach, Elizabethan Erotic Narratives. Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and their Contemporaries (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1977).

[12] Émile Legouis, A History of English Literature. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance (1926, London: J.M. Dent, 1971), 312.

[13] Latin translation: Marcus Musurus (1518); Italian translation: Bernardo Tasso (1540); French translation: Clément Marot (1541); Spanish translation: Juan Boscán (1543).

concludes Keach.[14] In fact, Marlowe presents a gruff parody of pure love passions by turning Hero into a libidinous and carnal female who literally seduces the young and unexperienced Leander. The youth appears as an admirable and valuable object of desire, quite empty in himself, serving rather as aesthetic decoration, nevertheless animating sexual coveting in the woman:

> *I could tell ye*
> *How smooth his breast was, and how white his belly,*
> *And whose immortal fingers did imprint*
> *That heavenly path with many curious dint*
> *That runs along his back...(65–9)*[15]

The description is utterly sensual and paints Leander so feminine that unavoidably leads to homosexual appetite, too:

> *Had wild Hippolytus Leander seen,*
> *Enamour'd of his beauty had he been. (77–8)*

This conflict is soon to arrive when Neptune himself gets hit by an uncontrollable desire while seeing the beautifully swimming lad. From this point on Marlowe further satirizes carnal longing, since after Hero's failure now the elderly male-god's desire for the unresponsive youth becomes ridiculous. The first line of Leander's description – *His body was as straight as Circe's wand* (61) – offers an emblematic image about this body, which, like the witch's staff, turned everybody approaching it into a brute animal.

While Marlowe's poem extends enchanting poetical beauty, it also captivates the modern reader with its wild, subversive energies which transform the Hellenistic romance into a full-blooded contemporary material, boldly and sarcastically commenting on the problems of his age.[16]

Romace as literary expression

While the erotic epyllions attracted a smaller, mostly aristocratic audience, the most popular narrative genre of late-Renaissance Europe became the romance and England was no exception to this.

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[14] Op. cit., 86; he cites Douglas Bush' Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition (New York, 1963), 122.

[15] The text is quoted from M.H. Abrams et. als. eds.), The Norton Anthology of English Literature (New York: Norton, 1979), 1: 725–44.

[16] Cf. Gregory Woods, „Body, Costume, and Desire in Christopher Marlowe" in Claude J. Sommers (ed.), Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England: Literary Representations in Historical Context (New York: Harrington Park, 1992), 69-84; and Lawrence Normand, „Christopher Marlowe: Ideology and subversion" in Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (eds.), *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1996).

Modern literary theory has proposed various methods to distinguish among narratives structures, *romance* has an important place in all. Myth criticism enlists four types of plot-structures: tragic, comic, satirical, and the romance.[17] In other typologies romance is usually contrasted with the novel or wih the classical epic poem. As they say, in romances one finds extreme characters, exotic scenarios, exciting and adventurous episodes, they abound in motives of passionate love and/or mystical and supernatural encounters.[18] Taking more formal criteria into consideration, one sees in romances an aversion or neglect of the so called imitative realism; instead of naturalistic depiction of the Aristotelian „nature" they aim at expressing transcendent, moral, or philosophical contents. These characteristics explain why late-Renaissance Manneristic literature favoured the romance, a mode of representation which materialized in most various genres of fiction.

First the romance-epic comes in mind which was the invention of the Renaissance and tried to synthetize the world picture of the medieval romances with the formal excellence of the classical epic. Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto wrote epics which abounded in love intrigues, a multitude of episodes and had loose structure and a freedom of verse forms. On the other hand, they observed Virgil in creating their invocations, catalogues, epic similes, rhetorical speeches, intervening deities and other classical elements.

There was another literary mode, which, by the time of the late-Renaissance, melted with the romance and brought forth interesting fruits. This was the pastoral, originally rediscovered by the humanists as one of the important classical genres, but eventually perfectly suiting the mentality, especially in the courtly register, of Renaissance man. As it is known, pastoral became the vehicle of literary inversion, offering conventionalized tools to present complex contents as simple and unproblematic ones.[19] The union of romance and pastoral generated various genres: the already mentioned romance-epic was one of them, but one can mention longer prose narratives as well as dramas. The latter group is called romantic comedies or romances, such as Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*.

Literary antecedents

When Mannerist imagination turned to themes of thrilling adventures, it looked for a literary tradition to rely on ready-made plot elements, certain formal panels. The writers of the late-Renaissance found this source material in the romance-tradition and one can in fact see its almost uninterrupted career since its emergence in Classical literature.

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[17] Cf. Northrop Frye: Anatomy of Criticism (1957, Princeton, 1973), especially 36–7, 186–203, 316–8.

[18] Cf. René Wellek–Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (1949, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 216; Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), *passim*, also Frye, op. cit.

[19] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 99–101, 296–7. See also William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (Norwalk, s.d.).

The first romance-like adventure stories were the products of late-Hellenistic literature, inspired in many ways by an intellectual atmosphere similar to Mannerism.[20] While in the late 16th century people were lead into escaping to the fantastic by the weariness of religious strives and existential uncertainties, in the period of Imperial Rome, the intellectual vacuum before the victory of Christianity fostered a shallow but overdecorated, heated and decadent mode of fiction.[21] A typical representative of the genre was the *Babyloniaca* of Iamblichus (2nd century AD) which presented a series of adventures and love intrigues without any particular moral conclusion or philosophical teaching, instead, it proliferated in motives of Greek intellectualism and Eastern magic mixed with murders, shipwrecks and erotic scenes. These motives play also an important part in the best known specimen of the genre, in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* (3rd century AD) which features with some moral teaching, too. The hero and heroin, Theagenes and Charicleia, preserve their chastity through a series of rather incredible adventures while in the nearly tragic finale it turns out that the girl is the daughter of the king of Aethiopia and the lovers can happily marry one another. The moral of the work – virtue gains its reward in a *veritas filia temporis* scenario – excercised an important influence on the romances of the Renaissance. By the end of the 16th century, the *Aethiopica* was translated to almost all national languages in Europe.[22]

Medieval literature also favoured romance-like adventure-stories which were enriched by moral teachings reflecting Christian doctrines. The heroes of these romances were often flat characters, representing more abstractions and virtues than full rounded persons with realistic psychology. This mode of writing could easily accomodate insertions of allegoric visions, emblematic imagery, multiple layers of meaning.[23] If we look at the social context – as we know well from Huizinga's descriptions –, here, in the world of Gothic we also find a refined, sophisticated, courtly culture, similar to the circumstances of Hellenism earlier and Mannerism later. The term *romance*, in fact, derives from medieval times: originally it meant works written in old-French and since French literature abounded in adventurous chivalric narratives, such stories were eventually called romances.

The central motives of romances are the wandering and the 'quest'. The main hero usually is a lonely knight, who, looking for an idealized love, goes through a spiritual

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[20] Cf. the characterization of Hellenistic atmosphere by Frances Yates in her Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (London: RKP, 1984): „the mental and spiritual condition of this world was curious. The mighty itellectual effort of Greek philosophy was exhausted, had come to a standstill, to a dead end...", 4. Szepessy speaks of a „dense and suffocating atmosphere of homelessness and lack of perspective" (*Heliodóros*, 26–7, see next note).

[21] Cf. E. Rohde: Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer (Leipzig, 1914; Berlin, 1960), *passim.*; R. Helm, *Der antike Roman* (Göttingen, 21956); Tibor Szepessy, *Héliodóros és a görög szerelmi regény* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1987).

[22] The literary models for these were Warszewicki's Latin translation (Basel, 1552) and Amyot's French version (1546).

[23] V.ö.: Paul Zumthor: Essai de poetique médiévale (Paris, 1972); John Stevens: *Medieval Romance* (New York, 1973).

transformation, leading to a mystical metamorphosis and understanding of the transcendental truth.[24]

The writers of the Renaissance, as I have indicated, tried to bring the achievments of classical epic poems and the medieval romances into a synthesis by creating the epic-romance. This was especially important for the exemplary master, Ariosto, because he wanted to prove the tantamount excellence of national and contemporary literary models as opposed to the imitation of classical literature. He argued that modern literature should not be evaluated solely according to the norms of Antiquity. His *Orlando furioso* (1516–32) was a grandiose experiment to demonstrate: it *was* possible to create pure fiction which would not be strictly fastened to reality. With this, he not only challenged the subsequent generations of epic writers but also fuelled the Renaissance literary debates over theories of inspiration and imitation with argumentative materials. Nobody weighed these possibilities in a more monumental way than the English Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie*:

The poet's persons and doings are but pictures what should be, and not stories what have been, they will never give the lie to things not affirmatively but alegorically and figuratively written. And therefore, in poesy, looking for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative groundplot of a profitable invention.[25]

Sidney himself demonstrated the relevance of his theoretical arguments in his pastoral-romance, the *Arcadia* and nothing proves better the seductive power of this literary mode than Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, which concluded its author's literary oeuvre with a monumental allegorical romance, as opposed to his early career when he engaged in an ambitious project for the reestablishment of pure classical genres and versification in English literature.[26]

The limits of the present paper will not allow me to trace the full history of classical and medieval romances in the Renaissance period, instead, I will concentrate from now on the fortunes of a Hellenistic „fine history" which became the groundwork of one of the most peculiar romances of English Mannerism, that is Shakespeare's *Pericles*.

The Transformations of Apollonius of Tyre

One of the typical Hellenistic prose romances was the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* which survived only in the Latin but made a remarkable career as a favourite piece of „pulp

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[24] On the French origin of this narrative pattern see Pál Lakits, A kaland változásai. Az ófrancia udvari novella történetéhez (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1967), *passim*.

[25] I am quoting the Defense of Poesie from Roy Lamson and Hallett Smith (eds.), *The Golden Hind. An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose and Poetry* (New York: Norton, 1956), 294.

[26] These were the original aims of the literary circle, called Areopagus, the chief members of which were young Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser. A monumental monograph on the imitative classicism of Sidney and Spenser was offered by S.K. Heninger, Jr., Sidney and Spenser. The Poet as Maker (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1989). It is interesting that in this book the author develops an argument almost diametrically opposed to his earlier influential study, *Touches of Sweet Harmony. Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1974) in which he argues for the platonic-inspirative basis of English Renaissance poetry.

fiction" throughout the centuries. There are over 60 extant manuscript copies of it between the tenth and eighteenth centuries and already in the Middle Ages it found its way to famous collections (such as the *Pantheon* of Gotfried of Viterbo and the *Gesta Romanorum*). The *sujet* itself is rather flat: a usual love story mixed with adventures (pirates, bandits), episodes of lost and found children, and concluded with a miraculous reunion and recognition. The plot has layers which point back to folk tales, others to history (Alexander the Great); its literary texture bears the taste of Hellenistic Alexandria, its ideology is tinted with Christian moralizing.

The innumerable Renaissance paraphrases were all based on the 153rd chapter of the Gesta Romanorum.[27] English literary tradition paid a particular attention to this „fine history". The first vernacular version is known from the Old English period: a West Saxon rendering dating from the mid-11th century. Furthermore there were two middle English versions, one of which is John Gower's famous *Confessio Amantis* (1390). In 1510 a *Kynge Appolyn of Thyre* was published under the name of Robert Copland; then Laurence Twine translated again the *Gesta Romanorum* narrative (London, 1576). This, together with Gower's work were the sources of Shakespeare's *Pericles* (written in 1607–8, printed in bad quarto form in 1609). Shakespeare[28] followed quite faithfully the original plot, his major change was to rename the title-hero, after Pyrocles in Sidney's *Arcadia*, Pericles. The play may have inspired George Wilkins to publish his prose romance in 1608: *The Painfull adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, claiming itself to be „the true history of the play of Pericles, as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient poet, John Gower by the King's Majesty's Players".[29] Although many critics consider *Pericles* Shakespeare's worst play and some even deny that it could have been written by the Bard, in the concluding part of my paper I would like to argue that Shakespeare's play is by far the most superior offspring of the Hellenistic romance and that with a proper key to reception it offers a complex and memorable artistic experience.

Pericles, and the Use of Romance in Shakespeare's Theatre

[27] A German Volksbuch was published in 1471, a Dutch version in 1493. Several French paraphrases are known from the thirteenth century, the first printed version appeared in 1521. Antonio Pucci's Italian version dates from the mid-fourteenth century (Istoria d'Apollonio di Tiro) which inspired several subsequent paraphrases. There was a medieval Spanish rhyming history which was first printed in 1576. We know of a Czech version from the sixteenth century which was translated to Polish a few decades later. A Hungarian paraphrase in verse was made in 1588, it appeared in print in 1591 and had nine subsequent editions till the end of the 18th century.

[28] For quite a while Shakespeare's authorship was actually denied. Differences in the poetic quality and the rhetorics of the play suggest multiple authorship, too. Today's criticism suggests that „a much likelier hypothesis is that Shakespeare revised a play by another hand" (Hallet Smith, Introduction to Pericles in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1479).

[29] For background information of the History of Apollonius cf. Sándor Berecz (ed.), *Apollonius histórája (Kolozsvár, 1591)* (Budapest: MTA, 1912, Régi magyar könyvtár 31); and P.J. Enk, „The Romance of Apollonius of Tyre", *Mnemosyne* ser. 4, 1 (1948): 222ff. On the textual history of Shakespeare's *Pericles* cf. G. Bakemore Evans (et. als. eds.), *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 1479–82.

In his great tragedies, but perhaps even more in the problem plays, Shakespeare set himself face to face with the consequences of the Manneristic disillusionment and crisis, in his last plays he seems to have changed his artistic strategy: as if he has returned to the romantic world of his early comedies, a magic garden of tales and adventures. It would nevertheless be a mistake to see in the romances a faded echo of the old poetical voice, nor did Shakespeare simply concede to the demand of the new literary taste as it is so obvious with many writers of the Jacobean age. No doubt, he had to cope with the changing literary conventions, still, the romances clearly show an ideological synthesis, too: his aim seems to be to escape from the crisis even if in a resigned, aesthetical way.

The common denominators of Shakespearean romance are as follows: lost and found royal children, adventure-plot centering around a beautiful and chaste princess. The most important characters invariably get near to death, their escape is often miraculous or *deus ex machina*. The young generation has a central role, it is them who bring about the reconciliation of the elderly and the renovation of life, often in the context of magical and musical motives.[30] One also cannot help noticing that this renovation takes place in a dream-like, irrealistic framework. Wherever the poet admits this, his voice becomes resigned and acquiescent, like in Prospero's final withdrawal.

The four romances of Shakespeare have often been considered as parts of a whole work, treating different stories but expressing the same mythic or archetypical backbone. After the relative naturalism of the great tragedies these plays return to a more ritualistic level in which the story exists for itself, not in order to "hold a mirror up to nature". In respect of theatricality these plays are nearer to allegorical masques than to the public theatre productions of the preceding era. The dream-like, often mystical plays which are performed on a symbolic and emblematic stage, step by step reveal some sort of truth; this structure, the *veritas filia temporis*, has been called by some critics the principle of cohesion of the plays which proceeds from destruction to rebirth.[31] Others have also pointed out that 'Veritas' becomes not entirely unveiled even by the endings of the plays. Truth will become complete only after reading, or attending the performance, when we realize that the reconciliation and rapproachement are only part of a beautiful dream kept together by the fabric of art, providing an alternative vision against the rigid reality.[32]

At first sight *Pericles* appears to lack cohesion and proportion. Usually three main objections are raised. (1) First is the diversity of the action which hapens in six different places – „in several eastern Mediterranean countries", such as **Antiochia** (Antiochus and his daughter), **Tyrus** (Pericles, Helicanus), **Tarsus** (Cleon, Dionyza), **Pentapolis** (Simonides,

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[30] Cf. Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective (New York, 1965); Hallett Smith, *Shakespeare's Romances* (San Marino, Cal., 1972); Douglas L. Peterson: *Time, Tide, and Tempest: A Study of Shakespeare's Romances* (San Marino, Cal., 1973).

[31] Cf. Frye, A Natural Perspective and Tibor Fabiny, „'Veritas Filia Temporis': The Iconography of Time and Truth and Shakespeare". In Fabiny (ed.), *Shakespeare and the Emblem* (Szeged: JATE, 1984), 215–73.

[32] Cf. Alvin Kernan, The Playwright as Magician: Shakespeare's Image of the Poet in the English Public Theater (New Haven, 1979); Louis A. Montrose, „The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology" (*Helios* 7 [1980]): 51–74.

Thaisa, Lychordia), **Mitylene** (Marina, Lysimachus, the pimp, Boult), **Ephesus** (Cerimon, Diana, Thaisa) – plus in the prologues of each act features the character of the medieval poet, old Gower, and some dumb shows. (2) Secondly the sensationalist crowding of extreme episodes is blamed: one has incest; riddle solving leading to execution; chivalric tournament and combats; multiple shipwrecks, natural catastrophes (Cerimon's earthquake as well as numerous storms and tempests), delivering a child in storm on a ship, death and burial at sea; child murder done by supposed friends; pirates, forcing a fourteen year old child to serve in a brothel (in such a pestilent place that even a poor Transylvanian dies of it, 4.2.22) – any of these would make a full tragedy but by the end everything is tied together and turned into merriment and reconciliation. (3) Thirdly it is the lack of psychological realism which irritates modern critics. Most of the action consists of seemingly incomprehensible, unmotivated moves: why do Antiochus and his daughter hide their secret in a riddle to be solved? The discussion between Simonides and Pericles of Thaisa is full of surprising, ununderstandable turns. One cannot conceive the wickedness of Dionyza: she is ready to murder a child because of not even proved offences. And Pericles himself seems to have often strange reactions, all in all, the play contradicts our regular expectations for plot, conflct, motivation and action.

Perhaps this is the point where we have to start a new approach to *Pericles*: we should see how the play appears if we suspend our strategies of reception trained on naturalistic representations and psychological motivation. What sort of discourse do we encounter in *Pericles*, then? The artistic logic of romance follows allegorical and emblematic representation. This allows the author to step over the imitative mirroring of „nature" and the conventions of causal logic, in order to approach questions of reality and appearence from their metaphysical roots.[33]

The romance mode presupposes a strategy of audience-response different from tragedies: there the audience's knowledge coincides with the knowledge and experience of the *dramatis personae*, and we, the viewers do not have a greater share from the metaphysical and the transcendental than the literary characters. In the romances, on the other hand, both the characters and the audience from time to time receive revelative information. Such is the appearence of Diana in Pericles' dream and the participation of the audience in the epiphany-like illumination transforms the perfomance into a ritual. This ritualistic mode is supported by the dramatic role of the narrator/choir while on the level of verbal imagery, the emblematic „speaking pictures" (to borrow Philip Sidney's term) reveal the deeper layers of meaning beneath the historical verisimilitudo.

The emblematic meaning functions in such a way that in a pictorial or a poetical image its likeness to nature is overshadowed by another, usually abstract-ethical level of meaning to which the original contents have to be translated. The adventures of Pericles thus will not become significant as a conflicts-ridden plot, rather as the archetypical themes of human life. Pericles and Marina stand not as pseudo-historical characters in front of us, rather

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[33] Douglas Petersen, Time, Tide and Tempest. A Study of Shakespeare Romances (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1973). Petersen presents his theory in the first chapter: „Romance Convention and Modes of Dramatic Illusion", 3–70. I am greatly indebted in my following remarks to this chapter and the one treating *Pericles* (71–108).

as emblems of their most important characteristic feature: constancy. Other characters embody other positive and negative qualities: Thaisa is faithfulness, Marina is chastity, Helicanus is loyalty, Cerimon is the spirit of natural philosophy. On the other hand Antiochus and his daughter are equal with barren, destructive sensuality, Dionyza and Cleon with jealousy and false friendship, the bawds with greed devastating love.

All this would be no more than flat moralizing, leaving the souls of the audience untouched, however, if the author's genius would not have developed a monumental, complex and manyfold artistic system in which the embelmatic elements all fit. The layers of this emblematic system include the larger themes, the trends and episodes of the plot, and reach over to the texture of the rhetorics and imagery of the used language as well as the theatrical vision.

I would like to finish my brief review with three unforgettable images Shakespeare uses to describe Antiochus' daughter who has an infected and foul nature beneath the beautiful surface of her body:

> *Fair glass of light, I lov'd you, and could still,*
> *Were not this glorious casket stor'd with ill. [...]*
>
> *You are a fair viol, and your sense the strings, [...]*
> *But being play'd upon before your time,*
> *Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime. [...]*
>
> *And she an eater of her mother's flesh*
> *By the defiling of her parent's bed;*
>
> *And both like serpents are, who though they feed*
> *On sweetest flowers, yet they poison breed. (1.1.76–85; 130–3)*

It is true, that the *History of Apollonius* remained one of the most popular fruits of the Hellenistic imagination throughout the centuries, it is still Shakespeare's recycling that gave eternal freshness to it.