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向母
又向风

*Fatherward
Motherward or
Windward*

布洛赫小说神话诗学研究

*A Mytho-Poetic Study
of Hermann Broch's Novels*

宋根成 著



外语教学与研究出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

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Preface

Hermann Broch, the Austro-American novelist in the late modernism, is cheered by some critics as a great modernist like James Joyce or Thomas Mann. However, due to certain historical reasons, Broch has been ignored by the majority of both scholarship and readership of the world. The three novels of Broch's lifetime: *The Sleepwalkers*, *The Death of Virgil* and *The Guiltless* are generally acknowledged as masterpieces that can better represent his artistic and ideological achievements, dedicated to describing a "no longer, not yet" era of crisis. He believed that the old myth of Christianity which had dominated European minds had been collapsing since the start of the medieval ages, and a new myth was yet to come and a world of totality would appear on the earth. Therefore, myth became the terminal direction of Broch's literary creation and mythic and symbolic theories stood at the core of his literary criticism. This prompted the writing of this dissertation from the dual perspectives of mythical criticism and psychoanalysis.

This dissertation consists of eight parts, and adopts the theories of Freudianism, Jungian Criticism and Lacan's Mirror stage theories to conduct an all-round analysis upon the spiritual pilgrimage of the modern ego or self, which constitutes the core of Broch's mythic poetics.

The Introduction first presents the definitions of poetics and mythic works. Then it conducts a brief review of Hermann Broch's life and writing career. The summary of the three novels in terms of plots and themes is presented subsequently. A literature review and reception of Broch's works are related in the scope of readership and scholarship in countries from the UK, to the US, Japan, France and China. A brief yet concise presentation of research purpose, significance and approach follows to conclude this part.

Chapter One summarizes the epochal settings against which the school of psychoanalysis rose, mythical writing revived and mythical criticism came into being in the early 20th century. Modern Europe in the late 19th century was entrapped into an unprecedented epochal crisis: the religious crisis was manifested in Nietzsche's direct statement of "God is dead"; philosophy had

reduced itself to a tool of advocating philistinism on the road of pursuing absolute reason; the dual face of science was acknowledged as enlightenment and blackmail. Hopefully, literature was trusted to shoulder up the hope of creating a new myth: a mythward movement grew into the mainstream of the epoch. Spurred by the new discoveries in the field of psychoanalysis, modernism entered into the era of mythic revival, witnessing the rise of a great many leading artists and writers with their myth-oriented works, such as T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Hermann Broch's *The Death of Virgil* as well as Picasso's cubic paintings. As a representative of late modernism, Broch applied his own mythic theories to his novel writing. He stressed the concepts of myth, totality, the Logos, the style of older age as well as individual personality in his works of literary criticism and novels.

Chapter Two focuses on the analysis of archetypal characterizations of Broch's three novels. Within the framework of Jungian criticism, this part explores the archetypal sources of Brochian protagonists, thereby analyzing the coherence between themes and mythical archetypes.

Almost all the Broch's figures are characterized in more than one single image, which reflects Broch's endeavor to capture the epochal spirit in general. The multiple mythic images of archetypes may propel the formation of the mythical dimension of stories, which sends forth a magic and weird illumination on the level of inner experience around the themes of crime and punishment.

Chapter Three formulates the relationships between the abundant yet abstract significance of symbolic images and the inner experiences of characters, and intends further to interpret the epochal style of a "no longer, not yet" era. According to Frye, symbol is a relation linking two metaphors. If a symbolic image recurs throughout the text, the association of its symbolic connotation can establish the inner structural totality. Hence, this part discusses symbols in terms of two categories: one is the images that pertain to one book and recur throughout it; the other is those that transcend through all the three novels.

The research shows that the symbols and images under Broch's pen can be divided into two stages according to whether their connotations have evolved

or not: the stage of concrete representation and the stage of abstract cognition. The former is represented by *The Sleepwalkers*, and the latter by *The Death of Virgil* as a starting line, including *The Guiltless*. This shift of symbolism convincingly proves a thing: *The Death of Virgil* marks the maturity of Broch and his entry into the style of older age.

Chapter Four attributes the quest for true self to the impetus of social and domestic life of both the writer and his characters. Within the framework of Freud's complex and Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage and three orders—the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, this part seeks to identify the modes of the protagonists pursuing their own subjectivity. Motherly love, eroticism and bridal mysticism are analyzed in association with the characters' personalities and tragic fates. Inspired by the fatherward movement of Jesus, this part contributes an original interpretation to the process of ego development of the main characters in the three novels. Their trajectories of growth, seen from the perspective of Lacanism, are marked respectively by motherward, fatherward and windward movements.

The writer of this dissertation argues here that Hermann Broch had practiced Lacanian theories of three stages well ahead of him in an artistic medium.

Chapter Five aims at an elaboration upon Broch's blueprint of myth or a world of totality. Broch had been very nostalgic and sentimental about the disintegration of the totality of Christian world established since the Medieval Era. However, the urgent sense of mission as a modern writer did not allow him to linger too much upon the memory of the past. Hermann Broch practiced his epistemological concept of "the earthly absolute" in his novels: to overcome the fear of death and master the knowledge of the Logos is the essential premises of establishing a world of ethical, political and scientific totality. This ideal requires that man should walk out of the City of Vanity to enter nature, to embrace love, a relationship similar to Martin Buber's "I and You" relation and away from "I and It" relation. On the basis of natural, authentic life and universal brotherhood, will be erected an ideal republic where man can enter the desired freedom, peace and order. Here one of the main argumentations is how Heidegger and Broch divided in terms of epistemology.

The last chapter starts with analysis of the historical and literary sources of aesthetics and redemption, and moves to interpreting the ethical aesthetics which takes the redemption of self as the core of Brochian myth. Brochian aesthetics appears to be ethics-oriented, redemptive and negative, affirming what is morally ugly by negation. This aesthetics is named by the author of this dissertation as “ruminational aesthetics”. To repeatedly look at a seemingly ugly thing or person manifests the redemptive consciousness of an anti-kitsch artist and his ardent aspiration to overcome the loss of creed and fall of humanity.

The concluding part subsequently deals with the structure of Broch’s mytho-poetics, the historical location of Broch on the literary history, and literary legacy and influences as a transitional figure between late modernism and postmodernism as well as a tentative prospect of future scholarship of Broch.

Contents

Introduction	1
0.1 A Review of Broch's Life and Writing Career	5
0.2 An Overview of Broch's Three Great Novels	12
0.2.1 <i>The Sleepwalkers</i>	12
0.2.2 <i>The Death of Virgil</i>	17
0.2.3 <i>The Guiltless</i>	19
0.3 The Reception of Broch's Novels in the International Critical Community	24
0.3.1 The Reception in the UK	25
0.3.2 The Reception in the USA	28
0.3.3 The Reception in Japan and France	34
0.3.4 The Reception in China	37
0.4 The Purpose, Significance and Approaches of the Study	40
0.4.1 The Purpose	40
0.4.2 The Significance	44
0.4.3 The Approaches	47
<hr/>	
Chapter One Yearning for a New Myth	49
1.1 An Epoch of Crisis	50
1.1.1 The Death of God	51
1.1.2 The Desertion of Philosophy	54
1.1.3 The Blackmail of Enlightenment	57
1.2 A New Myth: First Focus on Ego	59
1.2.1 The Rise of Psychoanalysis	60
1.2.2 The Rise of Modern Myth Literature	62

1.3 Broch's Theories of Myth	67
1.3.1 Myth and Totality	68
1.3.2 The Logos	70
1.3.3 The Style of Older Age and Individual Personality	72
<hr/>	
Chapter Two The Human Actors: Archetypes and Characterization	76
2.1 A Heroic Age of Sleepwalking	79
2.1.1 A Nostalgic Faust	79
2.1.2 A Juanist Don Quixote	82
2.1.3 An Oedipus Devil	86
2.2 Walk to the Garden of Eden	92
2.2.1 Virgil: Orpheus and Dante	92
2.2.2 Beauty Boy and the Slave	95
2.2.3 Plotia: Dido, Beatrice and Eve	99
2.3 The Guiltless Cains	102
2.3.1 Andreas and Hildegard	103
2.3.2 The Beekeeper and Mellita	109
2.3.3 Zerline and Juna	114
2.3.4 Zacharias and Philippine	117
<hr/>	
Chapter Three The Non-Human Actors: Images and Symbols	121
3.1 The Sleepwalkers	121
3.1.1 The Image of Sleepwalking	122
3.1.2 The Image of Horse	124
3.1.3 The Image of Trinity	127
3.2 The Death of Virgil	129
3.2.1 The Death-Ship	129
3.2.2 The Ring	133
3.2.3 The Grail	136
3.3 The Guiltless	139
3.3.1 Triangle	140

3.3.2 The Hat	144
3.3.3 Animals and Plants	148
3.4 Symbols Transcending through Broch's Novels	151
3.4.1 The City	152
3.4.2 Trees and The Forest	154
3.4.3 The Sun	163
<hr/>	
Chapter Four The Invisible Actors: Mystic Subject and Ego	174
4.1 Literature: the Path of Poetic Pursuit of Ego	174
4.2 Lacan's Subject Theory	178
4.3 The Process of Pursuing Subject	182
4.3.1 The Pattern of <i>The Sleepwalkers</i>	182
4.3.2 The Pattern of <i>The Death of Virgil</i>	185
4.3.3 The Pattern of <i>The Guiltless</i>	189
4.4 Movements of Pursuing Subject	192
4.4.1 Motherward Movement	193
4.4.2 Fatherward Movement	198
4.4.3 Windward Movement	200
<hr/>	
Chapter Five The New Myth of Broch	206
5.1 A New City of Man	207
5.1.1 Walk to Nature	208
5.1.2 Walk to Love	218
5.1.3 Walk to Republic	225
5.2 The Earthly Absolute	230
5.2.1 An Epistemology	231
5.2.2 Not "Poetic Inhabitation"	232
5.2.3 The Revulsion against Heidegger	233
<hr/>	
Chapter Six Aesthetics or Redemption?	238
6.1 A Path of Tradition	239

Introduction

Freud was one of the greatest influences on me. He made myth into psychiatry, and I've been trying to turn it back into myth again.

—Ross MacDonald¹

On a spring Monday afternoon of the first year of my doctoral program, when I was cracking my head for lifting up an alternative object of study among the sea of writers and literary critics, my mentor, Professor Gao Jihai, in his routine interview with his doctoral candidates at morning tea break in his office, tentatively suggested that Hermann Broch might be a desirable object of scholarship for me, for the man blessed with merits both in novel writing and literary criticism, just caters to my interest of research. It is when he was a visiting chair on the Fulbcenter program in Stanford University in 2010 that Hermann Broch came into his knowledge. Under Professor's guidance, I launched an uphill campaign of downloading or buying reference materials about Hermann Broch's novels from abroad as well as reading the English versions of this author's most important works. Then about two months later, I came up with a perspective of myth-poetical scholarship based on the combination of archetypal criticism and psychoanalysis.

Poetics is perhaps the most widely used term in literary criticism. Its multiplicity of connotation has much to do with the multiple references of poetry. Poetry generally refers to a literary genre, different from drama, novel and prose. In this original category, poetics deals with the study of genesis and

¹ Ross Macdonald (1915–1983) was the pseudonym of the American-Canadian writer of crime fiction Kenneth Millar. He is best known for his series of hardboiled novels set in southern California and featuring private detective Lew Archer.

appreciation of poems. It is known that the essence of ancient Greek and early Roman dramas was poetic, and Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica* dealt primarily with the arts of poetic dramas. With the development of literature, the scope of poetics has been enlarged with more and more new genres' entry into this family. As my supervisor, Professor Gao Jihai, points out in his monograph, *A Short History of British Novel*, "The telling of stories is the oldest of all the arts, but the novel is a recent appearance. The oldest form of literature was poetry, then there appeared drama, then prose, and finally came the novel" (Gao Jihai 1). Hence, people use poetry to refer to the whole canon of literature, even arts and philosophy. Accordingly, poetics is abstracted into cognition of a universal quality of humanistic works, dealing with the theorization of the artistic principles of literature and arts. This poetic view is shared by modern poetics, such as the school of formalism and structuralism, etc. A third case is about an innerward reference, a poetical philosophy, which expresses a subjective experience of the subject at the sight of the reality, a yearning for a spiritual home on the level of existence and cognition. For instance, Heidegger argues in his lecture entitled *Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry*:

Human existence is "poetic" in its ground. But we now understand poetry as a founding—through the naming of gods and of the essence of things. "To dwell poetically" means to stand in the presence of the gods and to be struck by the essential nearness of things. Existence is "poetic" in its ground—which means, at the same time, as founded (grounded), it is not something earned, but is rather a gift. (Heidegger, The Heidegger Reader, 124)

In essence, Heidegger's poetics is poetically philosophical about humanity's being in a godless world, serving as a good paradigm of the third category of poetics. Likewise, Hermann Broch's poetics is a myth-ward or myth-oriented and lyrical philosophy of pursuing man's true self in a Nietzschean God-is-dead world.

Mytho-poetics did not appear until the rise of mythicism in the first half of the 20th century. According to the Russian critic, E. M. Meletinskij,

mythicism is a unique phenomenon of modernism. A batch of modernist writers self-consciously adopted myth as the instrument of artistic creation. This dissertation will deal with Broch's novels which are mytho-oriented from the third dimension of poetics, that is, the spiritual pursuit of subjects envisioning a terminal salvation out of worldly suffering: a Brochian nostalgia for the old "no longer" myth and a quest for a new "not yet" one. To approach such a topic entails a dual vision of mythical criticism and psychoanalysis on reading Broch's three most important novels: *The Sleepwalkers*, *The Death of Virgil* and *The Guiltless*¹.

With mytho-poetics as the core of this research, two unavoidable questions occur to me. What is mythic writing? Could the novels of Broch be credited as mythic writings? Let's tackle the first one. Simply speaking, a mythic writing is a work that consciously employs mythic thinking. Then what is mythic thinking? The American scholar Alan Gulette says in his essay, "Myth as a Way of Thinking," that the expression of the absolute goal in terms, symbols or images, is myth. By extension, so-called mythic thinking is to think how to express the absolute goal of human life with the aid of a common language of symbols or images. For the Chinese scholar of mythic criticism, Tian Zifu, mythic thinking is essentially a symbolic or metaphoric thinking. He points out as the following translated: that so-called symbol or metaphor refers to a link between some specific object-image and some specific significance. The features of primitive thinking determine that the primitive people could not use abstract concepts to think independently. However, with the development of culture, the human endeavors of tracing history, exchanging ideas, summing up

1 These three novels were all published before Hermann Broch's death in 1951. This dissertation does not mean to include the other novels which were published posthumously by Broch's relatives and friends who helped in finishing them, or Broch's second novel *The Unknown Quantity*, which is relatively weak in greatness. One of the major reasons for avoiding those posthumously published novels is out of concern for objectivity in following Broch's own intention and excluding the interference from others, although these books are perhaps equally great in literary canons. This academic caution is based on the lesson of Nietzsche, whose later thoughts were greatly twisted by his sister Elizabeth, who published Nietzsche's unfinished works that she revised with her own ideas of anti-Semitism, thus causing modern intellectuals to take Nietzsche mistakenly as a source of Nazism.