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ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

MYTH AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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(I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.)

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Děkuji svým rodičům za všechnu lásku a podporu, kterou mi během mých studií věnovali a panu Prof. Procházkovi za jeho cenné rady při vypracování této diplomové práce.

Abstract:

The thesis aims to explore the relationship between national identity and the myth. Key to the analysis are the questions of the manner in which a collective identity becomes dependant on literary narrations as well as the particular motives that constitute these narrations. The analysis of the relationship is carried out in reference to particular literary texts. The discussion is based on the critical approach of literary theory and the analyses of relevant socio-political aspects.

The discussion is based on a comparative approach to the chosen literary texts. The comparative method focuses on the socio-political and historical contexts of the literary works, as well as on the different concepts of communal identity portrayed. Key texts to the debate are the collection of poems of James Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, Sir Walter Scott's historical novel, *Waverley*, and the Czech *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora*.

This thesis commences the discussion with a theoretical approach to the relationship between myth and history. The discussion aims at the manner in which both the mentioned elements constitute collective identity. The thesis emphasises those aspects which give rise to manipulative statements and conceptions that shape the discourse. To the fore thus comes the question of traditions, conventions and notions of heroic age that the particular collective consciousness relates to. The attention is paid to the socio-historical context in which the afore-mentioned primary texts were produced. The discussion attends to the era of Romanticism and the relation of the romantics to the notions of nature, ballads, and tradition. These conceptions are being perceived through the reality of the arising national revival, and through the manner in which folk literature and the romantic production affected nationalist aspirations. In the concluding part, the thesis aims to synthesise the introductory theoretical approach to the origin and manifestation of myth with the reflection on the primary texts.

Abstrakt:

Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl rozkrýt vztah mezi mýtem a národní identitou. Zásadními otázkami jsou míra, do které je společenská identita závislá na literární naraci a jaké motivy tuto naraci konstituují. Analýza tohoto vztahu je prováděna na vybraných literárních textech s ohledem na kritické přístupy literární teorie a relevantní společensko-politické aspekty.

Rozbor je prováděn na základě komparativního přístupu k vybraným textům. Komparativní metoda se zaměřuje na společensko-politický a historický kontext vybraných literárních děl, stejně tak jako na různé přístupy k otázce, co tvoří společenskou identitu. Texty, na které se pozornost zaměřuje především, jsou básnická sbírka James Macphersona, *Poems of Ossian*, historický román Sir Walter Scotta, *Waverley* a *Rukopisy Královédvorské a Zelenohorské*.

Tato diplomová práce otevírá diskusi teoretickým přístupem ke vztahu mezi mýtem a historií. Diskuze se zabývá způsobem, kterým obě zmíněné složky konstituují kolektivní identitu. Práce se snaží zdůraznit především ty aspekty, které dávají vzniknout manipulativním výrokům a představám, které následně ovlivňují diskurz. Do popředí tak vystupuje otázka tradice, konvence a představy o heroické době, na kterou konkrétní kolektivní povědomí navazuje. Pozornost je tak věnována společensko-historickému kontextu, ve kterém zmíněné literární texty vznikaly. Diskuze předkládá období romantismu a vztah romantiků k pojmům příroda, balada, tradice. Tyto pojmy jsou nazírány skrze realitu nastupujícího národního obrození a způsob, jakým lidová slovesnost a romantická tvorba působila na nacionální snahy. Závěrem se práce snaží skloubit úvodní teoretické pojednání o vzniku a projevech mýtu s reflexí na primární texty.

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1 Introduction

Collective identity has proved an important factor in the formation of the modern civilisation and the manner in which we perceive the surrounding reality. On the basis of their particular allegiances, individuals interpret and re-interpret the events and relationships of the present as well as of the past. In this plurality, there necessarily arise moments when particularism and subjectivity claim authority over other notions and perceptions. This authoritative stance usually finds its basis in traditions, conventions, and historical precedents. However, many of these instances of alleged authority are projections of myths and manipulation.

The thesis aims to explore the relationship between national identity and the myth which often finds its haven in historical and literary narration. The focus shall be aimed at the origin of myth and the manner in which it manifests itself in relation to history and tradition. To illustrate this impact of myth the thesis shall focus on concrete historical and literary texts that have been written under the influence or have been employed to serve the purposes of nationalism. Key texts to the analysis shall be the collection of poems of James Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, Sir Walter Scott's historical novel, *Waverley*, and the Czech *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora*.

The opening chapter shall aim to discuss the notion of the authority of history as the instance of objective representation of the events of the past. To illustrate this, the thesis shall focus on the relationship between history and memory. The aim is to depict the value-judgements and partiality that are necessarily inherent to traditional historical narrations. Developing on this notion further, the thesis shall aim to discuss the question of tradition as another source of accepted authority. However, since traditions prove unable to reflect the changing reality, their preservation becomes problematic. New traditions thus arise, claiming the same authority as their predecessors. Unavoidably, this re-presentation of reality becomes an act of manipulation which distorts the perception of the reality. What we experience is thus a manifestation of myth taking over a certain set of practices and claiming its validity.

The subsequent section shall reflect the already discussed in the debate on the relationship between facts and fiction, when dealing with historical narrations. The thesis shall emphasise the dilemma of the notion of the authority of the printed text. On the basis of historical

excursion, the thesis shall aim to depict the role of editing and publishing in re-interpretation of presented text. Written historical accounts of the past, aim to present arguments and facts in manner that shall be credible. It needs credibility and therefore it contains a moment of responsibility. In literature, or rather the fictional accounts of reality, there is no need for responsibility or any need for the author to respond to the reality. However, this becomes an issue when literature is used as a tool of mediation between facts and fiction. The following chapter of the thesis shall aim at the era of Romanticism and the arrival of historical novel and the question of narration and the rise of nationalism.

The thesis shall set the literature of the Romanticists into a cultural context and aim to arrive at identification of certain prominent characteristics. Developing this notion further, Romanticism shall be placed in relation to nature. This section shall show a link between the oral tradition and the romantic notion of the primordial human being and the primordial language. Oral tradition, as the instance of reflection of the remnants of the past, shall thus come to fore as the subject of study of the thesis. The debate shall then move to the endeavour of James Macpherson and the Ossianic phenomenon. The focus shall be aimed at the historical and cultural context of Macpherson's work and its relation to the historical novel of Sir Walter Scott, notably the novel *Waverley*.

Following the debate, the final chapter shall open with the discussion of what is a nation and nationalism. The topics of this chapter shall be set in the context of the historical reality of the Czech National Revival Movement and the allegedly genuine texts *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora*. The debate shall then move to the analyses of particular instances or the manner where the literary texts mentioned overlap and/or reflect the particular aims of the nationalist aspirations. The aim shall be to set the works in the context of nationalism and analyse their individual roles in the formation of collective identity. The concluding section shall aim to synthesise the reached findings and identify the manner myth plays in the formation of collective identity.

2 Text and the Past

2.1 Telling of the past – History and Memory

The man of the contemporary is an adherent of immediacy, plurality, selection, and consumption. The preferred vocation is to apply, alter, advance, and focus on the immediate rather than dwell on the past. Conventional norms of behaviour are being affected by the growing emphasis on the individual while the notion of community slowly diffuses into vagueness. New traditions replace the old and history seems to have lost its former authority. The present is not concerned with the past; rather, the present is concerned with what should follow. This opening section aims to deal with the notion of the past and the manner in which the treatment of the past had been employed to form the anticipation of the future.

In the words of the French historian Pierre Nora, we have been and are experiencing “rapid slippage of the present into a historical past.”¹ This ‘acceleration of history’² is nothing but the perception that the present is already the past and whatever is generally considered as being the ‘past’ is only that, which has “shrunk into the immediate foreground”³ of our attention. The present ceases to be the contemporary as soon as it has had its effect on the present. Its significance slips into the background of our attention and becomes vulnerable to individual interpretations and misleading generalisations.

The past has become relative and therefore unstable. It is only natural that the line dividing the past from the present is constantly moving, thus creating a linear progress. However, the post-modern epoch seemed to have rejected the notion that history is certain, concrete and therefore unalterable. Once we accept this stance and look closely and critically at history, many of the relationships and meanings the man has given to the surrounding reality become disrupted. The notion of a clear division between the present and the past then necessarily falls, and as Norra notes, “there is a rupture of such equilibrium.”⁴ Necessarily this stance translates itself into the manner other spheres of human activities are perceived and consequently become relativised.

¹ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representation* Vol.0, Issue 26, 1989: 11.

² Nora 13.

³ Nora 13.

⁴ Nora 15.

The past, traditionally accepted as unquestionable, has suddenly lost its general validity and became understood only in the terms of the relative, of the individual contemporariness. Traditional narrations and practices become superseded or are given different emphasis. In this sense, “everything and anything may disappear,”⁵ or anything and everything may be re-created. Without any tangible certainty, any notion may come to life and be claimed as existent and historically given as well as any fact may be turned into fiction. Where then should we seek the authority to support or uproot these claims? In other words: how can these acts of suppression and accentuation be de-masked and tackled?

Conventionally, this vocation has fallen within the realm of the historians, yet as shall be discussed and illustrated later on in this work, the historian’s narration becomes necessarily influenced by the subjectivity and emotionality of the narrator. The addressee of any historical narration, having reflected on the this reality, may thus realise, that most of the aspects that claim traditional value and objectivity are in fact individual projections and acts of materialisation of the narrator’s specific aims. This becomes even more noteworthy once we realise that concrete selected aspects from the past, depicted precisely in this manner and supported by the authority of the figure of the historian, become perceived as vital for the life of the contemporary society.

Once we accept that the present state of the society and the manner the society develops is to a certain degree dependent on concrete historical notions and symbols, conventions and practices, it is possible to visualise what impact it would have for the society once these notions and symbols become proven that are based on falsification. These then would lose their credibility and in turn disrupt the whole concept of communal history.

The relationship between history, historical narration and the manner it influences our behaviour is a complex one and calls for attention. Though the present seems to be constantly slipping into the past and the ‘now’ seems to be more influential for the future than the more concrete ‘ago’ or the blurred ‘before,’ traditions still possess a great capability to influence the contemporary man. Despite the fact that they may not be accepted and followed consciously, they necessarily shape and influence the behaviour and actions of any individual who claims his identity on the basis of belonging to a concrete community. The tradition of passing on

⁵ Nora 19.

narrations of old ages, as well as the convention of preserving the family name after the marriage, are accepted unconsciously while others, such as paying homage while listening to national anthem become acts of conscious identification with certain mode of behaviour of a given society. Traditions, therefore, create and preserve certain sets of values, shared by the concrete society. Using the words of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger,

(Tradition) ... is a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.⁶

However, as Hobsbawm and Ranger note, traditions inevitably prove to be unstable. "Traditions which claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented."⁷ This implies that the narration of the past which has found its reflection in most of the everyday rituals has an origin that was invented for a specific purpose. Furthermore, where the old ways are not alive or the link with them has been broken, the process of creation and/or adaptation of traditions becomes potentially infinite.

Consequently, traditions are doomed to face a paradoxical situation. It is their nature that they function as the agents of the unchanging aspects and the predominant characteristics of a community existing within the constantly changing modern world. The key feature is invariance and the purpose is the fixation of practices.⁸ However, this clashes with the constant change and the innovation of the modern world. The rigid and the constant thus come to oppose the developing. Necessarily, some parts of social life become subject to changes but Hobsbawm identifies these rather as 'customs' or 'conventions.' The former of the two do not preclude innovation but in fact are capable of changing only as long as they appear compatible with the precedent.⁹ The latter are defined as "a routine that has no significant ritual or symbolic functions"¹⁰ Nevertheless, this routine is "readily modified or abandoned to meet changing practical needs;"¹¹ necessarily they reflect great deal of pragmatism.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 1.

⁷ Hobsbawm and Ranger 1.

⁸ Hobsbawm and Ranger 2.

⁹ Hobsbawm and Ranger 2.

¹⁰ Hobsbawm and Ranger 4.

¹¹ Hobsbawm and Ranger 4.

Both the customs and the conventions thus seem to move within a certain fixed frame of reference which is defined by the tradition. The changes are not radical in the sense as threatening to the ideology of the tradition. However, it is the clash of the rigidity with the conventionality and the pragmatism that may lead to the realisation that the authoritative tradition is no longer suitable. Since life never appears stable, no rationally acting society that hopes to survive these changes should adhere to any rigid dogmatisms and ideologies. It is this moment of realisation that the older forms of community and authority are unacceptable that new sets of values are sought for. The process of inventing traditions occurs “most frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which the old traditions had been designed.”¹² Once the old traditions can no longer be applicable or prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, another set of practices and a new discourse is being designed and institutionalised.

Traditions thus become subject to changes and manipulation where in the process of formalisation and ritualisation¹³ new ones are formed. In this process old forms are used in new conditions or for different purposes. As Hobsbawm puts it, “sometimes new traditions could be readily grafted on old ones, sometimes they could be devised by borrowing from the well-supplied warehouse of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation.”¹⁴ Such a claim necessarily means that the authority of the traditional, based on its historicity, becomes weakened.

Hobsbawm and Ranger have set out to identify the various appearances of the traditions and the manner in which these have been established. By doing so they have come to the realisation that any community, when having found itself in a state of historical discontinuity, in order to re-vive or re-create certain values necessary for its survival or any other reasons, “where possible, (... attempts) to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.”¹⁵ However, since there is the constant shift of the present to the past, it becomes difficult to de-mask and therefore understand the real purpose of the traditions.

¹² Hobsbawm and Ranger 4.

¹³ Hobsbawm and Ranger 4.

¹⁴ Hobsbawm and Ranger 4.

¹⁵ Hobsbawm and Ranger 1.

Hobsbawm points out why attention should be paid to traditions. For him, these represent important “symptoms and therefore indicators of problems which might not be recognized otherwise.”¹⁶ They become the witness of and provide explanation for “the human relation to the past,”¹⁷ for it is history, that functions as the “legitimater of action”¹⁸ The attention we pay to traditions thus brings us closer to understanding the constructions that stand at the foundation of collective identity in national states.

Referring back to Norra’s notion of the ‘acceleration of history,’ let us consider what Vratislav Doubek, a Czech historian and pedagogue, notes about the post-modern society and its relation to history. He argues that the contemporary society has been consciously and relentlessly compressing its historical consciousness into the space between the recently past and the contemporary.¹⁹ At the same time, however, we are being constantly, and perhaps improperly, disturbed by the mementos of the ancient history. It distracts our focus from the immediate present and our sensation of ecstasy from the forthcoming future. The necessary outcome of such an approach leads to the loss of the connection between the present and the long-ago-gone. “All will be lost, enclosed within the grey covers of the old book that no-one shall ever read.”²⁰ The implications are only too obvious; the roots, the origins, traditions, conventions, and identity shall experience the never-ending circle of procreation and dissolution, wherein none shall be stable. Such a point of view is a grave one. History would then become a stock of alternating narrations that could be used according to particular needs, for justification of individual purposes.

Doubek notes that history, determining itself as science, should stand the guard of the past and “be obliged to preserve the most faithful and the most complete portrayal of the preceding.”²¹ However, such a call to the arms is not troublesome. The discipline hence claims its role of the preserver and the sole interpreter of the past events. Historical events become the subject-matter of exploration, arrangement, and scheming. Historical narrations aim to produce a narration in comprehensible and complete packets. Necessarily then, such a methodological approach becomes reductive. It is therefore necessary to ask, whose narration

¹⁶ Hobsbawm and Ranger 12.

¹⁷ Hobsbawm and Ranger 12.

¹⁸ Hobsbawm and Ranger 12.

¹⁹ Vratislav Doubek, *T.G.Masaryk a česká a slovanská politika 1882-1910* (Praha: Academia, 1999) 7.

²⁰ Doubek 10. (The translation is mine.)

²¹ Doubek 11.

it is and what are the implications of what has been said and, more importantly, of what has been left unsaid.

To ask these questions and to grow critical of the supplied facts seems to be characteristic of the world of modernity. The foundations of the respected authorities have been scrutinised. Attention has been paid to voices that have offered a different narration and have not had the chance to speak yet. In 1957 Karl Popper published a series of essays under the title *The Poverty of Historicism*. It was dedicated “in memory of the countless men and women of all creeds or nations or races who fell victim to the fascist and communist belief in inexorable laws of historical destiny.”²² Popper critically focused in the texts on the methodology in social sciences. He defined historicism as “an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim.”²³ Professor Martin Procházka comments on this:

According to Popper, the historian should neither theorize nor speculate about the facts but should try to record history by a simple narration of events. The ‘historicist,’ however, analyzes instead of narrates, using history for the interpretation of contemporary problems, and even for the prediction of future developments.²⁴

Concerning the historical narration, Popper sees a clear distinction between a historian and a historicist. Both treat the past events with different approach, the historian hopes for an unbiased account of relevant junctions, while a historicist searches for a dynamics in the past events and hopes to find an all-explanatory theory that would show the direction in which the civilisation is developing. This view, that there are two types of approaches to history, is not acceptable to Hayden White. Procházka summarizes White’s stance that states that is “no substantial difference between the historian and the historicist because the common framework of their thought is not a method or historical fact, but language.”²⁵

White notes that the historian is not independent from his own shaping of the material according to “the imperatives of the narrative discourse.”²⁶ He stresses that it is in the very

²² Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) v.

²³ Popper 3.

²⁴ Martin Procházka, *Literary theory: an historical introduction* (Praha: Karolinum, 2008) 102.

²⁵ Procházka, *Literary Theory* 102.

²⁶ Hayden White “Historicism, History and Figurative language” *History and Theory* Vol. 14, No. 4, Beiheft 14: Essays on Historicism (Dec., 1975): 49.

“language that the historian uses to describe his object of study that he subjects that object to the kind of distortion that historicists impose upon their material in a more explicit and formal way.”²⁷ Any narration is thus necessarily weighed by particular interpretation. White notes that this is inherent to any report or area of interest that does not fall within the realm of exact sciences. Paraphrasing White’s words in his introductory chapter to the *Tropics of Discourse*, any mimetic text either lacks certain particularities or contains elements that a reader invested with authority would consider as redundant.²⁸ Historical texts thus become projections of particular points of view which enhance the sought for argument using adequate tropes. The reader may thus unconsciously accept certain position as the only starting-point and grow mistrustful of any differing or opposing narrations. As White puts it,

A rhetorical analysis of historical discourse would recognise that every history contains not only a certain amount of information and an explanation but also a message about the attitude the reader should assume.²⁹

In *The Tropics of Discourse*, White focuses on the manner in which tropes – the mechanisms of a discourse – constitute the presented reality as objective. It is often the choice of figurative language that projects a secondary set of meanings to the phenomena being described. It is therefore highly problematic to arrive at knowledge that should not be cloaked with claim of objectivity and totality.

White develops the question of the use of tropes and the implications by pointing the attention to the theory of knowledge as perceived by Claude Levi-Strauss, who claims that “history has no method unique of its own, nor indeed any unique subject matter.”³⁰ Extending this argument further, all sciences can be claimed to be “constituted by arbitrary delineations of the domains that they will occupy between the poles of mythic comprehensions of the totality of experience and the confusion of individual perceptions.”³¹ Any historical debate thus depends on the choice of methods and tools and the selected topics. Necessarily, in history there arises a dilemma with the “amount of information and the kind of comprehension we can have of it.”³²

²⁷ White, *Historicism, History and Figurative language* 49.

²⁸ Hayden White, *The Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 11.

²⁹ White, *Historicism, History and Figurative language* 53.

³⁰ White, *Historicism, History and Figurative language* 49.

³¹ White, *Historicism, History and Figurative language* 50.

³² White, *Historicism, History and Figurative language* 50.

To sum this argument, both the historian and the 'historicist' shape their materials "in response to the imperatives of the narrative discourse ... These imperatives are rhetorical in nature."³³ The narration is therefore dependent on the form and the purposes of the narrator. Through literary devices the narrator expresses his authority over the reader and presents his work as a finished, objective entity. Developing this further, it may find a reflection in Barthes' concept of dichotomy between 'work' and 'text,' where 'work' is the closed, finished, representational object, a reliable narration.

On the other hand, 'text' is perceived as a material that is open to an infinite number of processes of transformation.³⁴ Text, or rather a texture, then becomes a material that changes its meaning with every new reading. A 'text' thus becomes rewritten and re-interpreted. In this sense, history may be understood as an attempt to produce a 'work', however, in fact, it becomes another example of 'text'. It is the question of authority of the narration that causes the reader to accept such a narration as objective and therefore permanent. History determining itself as science seeks to present timeless works, draw clear parallels and formulate valid laws. However, what it produces is necessarily a literary text, because, by giving the facts order and scheme, it produces an interpretation which claims objectivity and totality at the same time.

The question of authority and objectivity relates to the already mentioned reflections of Pierre Nora on the relationship between history and memory. He becomes concerned with the question of the purpose of places and events that commemorate a particular event or a tradition from the past. He focuses on the relics of experience, and the way in which these are presented, accepted and exploited.

Nora opens the argument with reference sites of memory, which he terms *lieux de memoire*. These are such objects as statues, cenotaphs, even annual events commemorating the happenings of the past. These are being created because what he refers to as *milieux de memoire*, the real environment of memory, no longer exists.³⁵ He gave the example of the disappearance of peasant culture in France as the inevitable influence of the process of democratisation and the growth of mass culture on a global scale. Maurice Halbwachs, in his

³³ White, *The Tropics of Discourse* 102.

³⁴ Barbara Johnson, "Writing" *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. ed. F. Lentricchia, T. McLaughlin, 1964: 40.

³⁵ Nora 9.

essays on the collective memory, quotes Marc Bloch who develops the notion of the disappearance of the traditional rural life of the French society.

Bloch mentions that in rural societies, it has been the custom, that, traditionally, while the adults have been employed by the harvest, spending the whole day in the fields, the children have been looked after by the elderly. They then had been passing down on to the children, in a larger extent than that of the parents, the various old traditions and customs that they have learned in the same manner about the society that they have been part of.³⁶ Certainly, the grand-parents could not have been objective and had recalled and therefore passed on only those values and traditions they had experienced and accepted, but the child perceives these as unalterable and total. More importantly, it is not the facts that shape the mind of the child; it is the narrated way the society has lived in the past that settles in the memory of the child³⁷ which would consequently translate into the practices of the child.

Therefore the rupture Nora has mentioned, the rupture modernity has brought to the traditional rural societies, has necessarily resulted in a discontinuity of such a practice of passing down certain values and traditions vital to the historical consciousness of the society. Certain traditions have been pushed into the background to make space for new ones. What has been accepted as given has suddenly, in the era of modernity, become rigid and alterable. This realisation may force us to ask about our own traditions and identities; to bring the traditions back to life, to remind ourselves of the roots, memories materialise into the sites of memory.

History, on the other hand, is a general construction where the present is connected to the past on the basis of a model. It becomes problematic and incomplete. Because it is intellectual and secular production, it calls for analysis and criticism. Halbwachs gives a metaphor where history is compared to a cemetery with precisely marked boundaries. For any new grave, new space need be found and prepared within these fixed limitations.³⁸ History is thus an activity, with strict limitations and objectives. It is an activity that relies on multiple narrations and therefore is in need of sorting; it builds on records and re-telling of

³⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, *Kolektivní paměť*, trans. Yasar Abu Ghosh. (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2009) 106.

³⁷ Halbwachs 107.

³⁸ Halbwachs 96.

the past. It is an act where instead of collecting relevant records one finds himself in the process of selection and deletion of events considered at the moment redundant. The claimed subjectivity of history thus, by having the power to, replaces, reshapes and reinterprets, leaving behind blurred, 'white spaces'³⁹ in the same manner fog covers moors on an early autumn morning.

Nora therefore sees history and memory as absolute anti-poles. Memory to him is life, borne by living societies. "It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived."⁴⁰ Since it is individual, it becomes specific and plural; however, it is also collective because it is acknowledged by the concerned community. Memory is a phenomenon which is continuously actual; a bond tying the individual to the present. It blesses the recollection while history secularises it.

Memory is blind to all but the group it binds-which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.⁴¹

This is in line with White's reaction to Popper, that any narration of the past is necessarily subjective. Nora thus focuses on modernity as the generator, which causes us to experience the end of traditional societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values. He closes the argument with a claim that where one lives within the memory, there is no need for *lieux de memoire*.⁴²

The modern memory has become archival; it has become entirely reliant on the materiality of the trace. Archives are the answer to our modern fear of losing the present. The modern society conserves every piece of information, be it the DNA, weather reports, sport results, or

³⁹ Vojtěch Mencl, *Křížovatky 20. století – Světlo na Bílá Místa v Nejnovějších Dějinách* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1990) 5.

⁴⁰ Nora 9.

⁴¹ Nora 10.

⁴² Nora 22.

economic data. We are no longer in the possession of living memory. Nora goes as far as to state that “the archive has become the deliberate and calculated selection of list memory – it adds to life a secondary memory.” He continues, “We are being faced with a ‘terrorism of historicized memory.’”⁴³ This terrorism is nothing but an expression of the practice of dominance in any institutionalised form over the concerned society. It is the ability of such institutions as official texts to influence and convince the consciousness of the society to accept the desired interpretation. It is the power that Foucault mentions when he states that “each text is a discourse which produces authority and shapes our perception of reality both by individual ‘representations’ and by their ‘order’.”⁴⁴

This means that any text is more than an object. Text becomes a means for a particular representation. It is a vehicle of a narration that is not independent from the influence of its author. This is in line with White’s previously discussed criticism of Popper, that authors, with however sincere attempt to provide us with an objective work, shape their narration, perhaps even unconsciously, to their needs. Any relevant text becomes a part of a ‘discursive practice.’⁴⁵ Texts are thus levied by the purpose of the author. Procházka notes that “most historical documents are not innocent texts, they were written with a specific purpose (e.g., to accuse or to defend) and even their further interpretations are not innocent because they serve various ideologies and beliefs of their authors.”⁴⁶ In fact, any record becomes manipulated because it need be interpreted. Interpretation thus becomes the necessary reductive power that, for the sake of clarity, focuses the attention on what the authority behind the text perceives as decisive. Author’s subjectivity thus most strongly influences the portrayed.

This is in line with Foucault's approach to texts where, as Procházka points out,

(Foucault) problematizes the notion of the author. The author's subjectivity does not inaugurate his freedom and independence. Rather it shows its dependence on the power operating in discourses which shape his texts. At the same time, the text, as a discursive field, is the only place where the author can articulate his subjectivity.⁴⁷

⁴³ Nora 14.

⁴⁴ Procházka, *Literary Theory* 102.

⁴⁵ Procházka, *Literary Theory* 102.

⁴⁶ Procházka, *Literary Theory* 102.

⁴⁷ Procházka, *Literary Theory* 103.

This thematic detour has been offered only to supply us with a view on the problematic notion of accepting historical texts as objective, complete, valid. This becomes most evident when we consider what these texts have left unaddressed.

Instead of one History (or master narrative), there are only individual REPRESENTATIONS (texts of signs), DISCOURSES (representations organized according to an order), and DISCURSIVE PRACTICES (discourses which become part of the operation of power for they create strategic distributions of power, e.g. the discourse of police as a way of improving the welfare of citizens leads to the creation of police forces, police academies).⁴⁸

Therefore, the question to ask is whether it is even possible to think about any reliable narration or about the completeness of the depiction the academic texts that deal with social sciences offer. But it is perhaps the sign of modernity that the individual has started to put down these questions and has started to perceive the mechanisms and their potential dangers that stand behind any narration that is accepted as absolute.

To support this critical stance, let us consider briefly, for the sake of argument, the narration of the Venerable Bede in *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. It is considered a source vital to the history of the conversion to Christianity of the Anglo-Saxon tribes. In five books Bede recorded events in Britain from the raids by Julius Caesar to the arrival of St. Augustine in Kent. For his sources, he claimed the authority of ancient letters, the ‘traditions of our forefathers,’⁴⁹ and his own knowledge of contemporary events. Perhaps this is an extreme example since we now regard the chronicles of the past as a blend of facts and fiction. However, most traditions expressed in such texts have been addressed or referred to as the constitutive moments of societies in the age of the wake of nationalism. It is perhaps the cynicism of the age of modernity that has caused the reader to challenge the authority of such a narration.

In the essay *Bede's Ecclesiastical History and the Material Conditions of Anglo-Saxon Life*, Joel T. Rosenthal opens his argument with a statement that “Bede was writing sacred, not secular, history.”⁵⁰ According to Rosenthal, Bede gave himself “time and space for whatever

⁴⁸ Procházka, *Literary Theory* 103.

⁴⁹ A.M. Sellar, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907) 27 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/bede/hist141.htm> > .

⁵⁰ J.T. Rosenthal, “Bede's Ecclesiastical History and the Material Conditions of Anglo-Saxon Life” *The Journal of British Studies* Vol. 19 No. 1 Autumn, 1979: 2.

interested him ... his narrative therefore does not necessarily reflect the 'ways of this world'."⁵¹ Bede was not predominantly interested in the institutions. The depiction of the political system, the system of powers, thus necessarily does not have to be complete and, therefore, the selection of themes, considered by Bede as more usable to his purposes, shapes the reader's understanding of the portrayed era. "His (Bede's) narrative is a blend of myths, political history and gossip."⁵² Bede became more concerned with social customs only when turning his attention to the history of North Britain; this is the moment that he refers to other historical authorities for support of his argument.

Bede saw the world systematically and therefore applied a systematic model. However, any model is necessarily reductive. In his own particular point of view, Bede believed that "the separate components of human society were all parts of a grand design, a larger unified construct."⁵³ He saw that parts of the secular are being interrelated and capable of casual explanation. Though the *Ecclesiastical History* was written for spiritual ends, Bede used this opportunity to demonstrate how he perceived the universe; he stressed the organic nature of human society that had both structural coherence and a functional utility. In the same line of narration, Bede portrayed foreign elements as though they contained the same constitutive moments. Bede presented the barbarians using the reality known and accepted by the society he lived in, however, missing thus on aspects that Bede's contemporary society could not accept or did not comprehend. The barbarians were thus pictured as a social structure with its kingship, land tenure, priesthood, literature, trade networks, and court ceremonial. All this has been bound together in the same light as the traditions and values shaped Bede's contemporary universe.

This short excursion was aimed only to show how instructive and formative a text, considered authoritative, may be. It aimed to focus on and stress the issue of objectivity and power in historical texts. Billie Melman, in the essay *Claiming the Nation's Past: The Invention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition*, argues that "an invented past, wisely manipulated, not only 'explains the present,' but 'moulds the future'."⁵⁴ Thereby, Melman subverts the

⁵¹ Rosenthal 2.

⁵² Rosenthal 4.

⁵³ Rosenthal 4.

⁵⁴ Billie Melman, "Claiming the Nation's Past: The Invention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition." *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 26 No. 3/4 Sep., 1991: 578.

trustworthiness of these texts, or rather, he invites us to consider the extent to which fiction and personal interpretations have replaced the sought for facts.

Similarly, this is what White has been aiming at with his identification of the four types of tropes employed by the authors he focuses on in *Metahistory*. The historians concerned, Michelet, von Ranke, de Tocqueville and Burkhardt, preferring one set of methods of approach to historical data over another, and the philosophers in question, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Croce, aiming to enhance a universally applicable law of historical development, share in common the practice of employment of literary strategies to support their view-point. However, as Procházka notes, “none of these literary features (e.g., the use of metaphoric or synecdochic figures, the narrative in novelistic form, the pattern of tragic conflict) can be privileged as the only ‘method’ suitable for the representation of ‘historical reality’.”⁵⁵

In his analyses, White reflects Giambattista Vico’s observations on the matter of the origin of language, especially there, where Vico identifies the four literary figures of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony in human narration. As Hrbata and Procházka note in *Romantismus a romantismy*, Vico has related the poetics with the belief of there being a logical cycle in the development of history.⁵⁶ Vico presented the four tropes in relationship to the stages of the development of human behaviour and perception of the reality. At the moment of the forming of philosophy within a specific society, it is first of all metaphor that is formed. In its light then the surrounding reality is perceived and described. Paraphrasing Vico, the perception through metaphor arises from the man’s ignorance of the true nature of the reality wherein the man sees himself the rule of “the universe.”⁵⁷ Consequently, there comes the metonymy and the age of the heroes and the moment individuals perceive differences between each others. Synecdoche follows and the society starts to formalise its rules and order. Finally, there comes the epoch of irony and the downfall of the civilisation.⁵⁸ The society finds itself in the age of the divine and the age of the metaphor once again,

⁵⁵ Procházka, *Literary Theory* 101.

⁵⁶ Zdeněk Hrbata and Martin Procházka *Romantismus a romantismy – Pojmy, Proud, Kontexty* (Praha: Karolinum, 2006) 24.

⁵⁷ Giambattista Vico *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* trans. Bergin, T. G., Fisch, M.H. (Cornell University Press, 1984) 129.

⁵⁸ Hrbata and Procházka 24.

giving rise to another cycle of development – ‘ricorso.’⁵⁹ This brief excursion shall prove illustrative later on in this paper when focusing on the debate about James Macpherson’s *The Poems of Ossian*, especially its critical appraisal by Hugh Blair.

Referring back to White, it might be helpful to remind ourselves of White’s notion that every historian creates his own narration, selects and organizes the records in the archives.⁶⁰ Thereby, the historian-narrator gives rise to what White terms ‘Metahistory.’ For White, historical works are first of all “coherent and ordered representation of events or developments in sequential time.”⁶¹ Furthermore, “all historical explanations are rhetorical and poetic by nature.”⁶² These texts therefore, should be treated in the same manner as any other narration; submit them to criticism and penetrate through the seeming authoritativeness.

In his interpretation of White, Paul Sutermeister notes that treating historical narration as prosaic narrations has wide implications. *Inter alia*, “it led to the postmodernist debate about historiography.”⁶³ Since Postmodernism is sceptical to any claim of general validity of universal truths, recorded history is thus no more than a literary narration. Perceiving the text as a literary narration, White enables the reader to accept the notion that the historian purposefully employs and selects facts in order to achieve a specific goal while channelling to the reader his own attitudes to the discussed topic. In the same manner as fictional tales give rise to emotions and the reader of the tale is placed into the point of view that the author wanted the reader to experience, historical narration causes the addressee of the communication to experience the same.

To illustrate his point, White points to Roman Jakobson with whom he shares the notion that when considering a historical work, it is not only the knowledge and the explanation that is fundamental. In the text, there is “a more or less overt message about the attitude the reader should assume before both the data and their formal interpretation.”⁶⁴ White argues that both

⁵⁹ M.H. Fischer *Introduction* in Vico, G. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* trans. Bergin, T. G., Fisch, M.H. (Cornell University Press, 1984) xliii

⁶⁰ Hayden White “Interpretation in History” *New Literary History* Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter, 1973: 281.

⁶¹ White, “Interpretation in History” 282.

⁶² Hayden White *Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973) ix.

⁶³ Paul Sutermeister “Hayden White, history as narrative: a constructive approach to historiography” 27 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.grin.com/e-book/109135/hayden-white-history-as-narrative-a-constructive-approach-to-historiography>>.

⁶⁴ Roman Jakobson “Linguistics and Poetics” *Style in Language* ed. Sebeok, T.A. (1960): 350 – 377.

the fictive tales, as well as the historical texts claiming authority and validity, “carry the reader smoothly but directly to the conclusion the author has in mind.”⁶⁵ Both are thus ‘verbal fictions,’ and their contents are as much invented as found. “Their forms have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences.” White claims that, “while historical narratives proceed from empirically validated facts or events, they necessarily require imaginative steps to place them in a coherent story.”⁶⁶

Whether or not we share White’s critical stance it must be stressed that he has articulated the doubts that many a man of the post-modern era has felt. Considering the practices of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, we see a strong parallel to the question of validity of historical texts. Power and narration have thus always been inseparable, and the authority of the narration shapes our perception of the reality concerned. Misconceptions lead to subjectivity and delusion. Reality is unreachable because it becomes masked and encoded. Meaning has become twisted and particularities attempt to be perceived as universals. This is the moment when the myth takes control over the way we understand the presented reality. We come fully under its influence. The following chapter shall deal with myth and the manner it comes to existence, its behaviour and the possibilities how to escape it.

2.2 The Myth and the Past

In the book *Mythologies*, Ronald Barthes opens the discussion of the nature of the myth by asking a simple question: what is a myth? He immediately offers a straightforward answer: “Myth is a type of speech.”⁶⁷ But it is not any type of speech because myth requires certain conditions in order to originate. To begin with, the fundamental condition for myth to take place is “a firmly established ... system of communication; that it is a message.”⁶⁸ It does not necessarily need to be a language system; it may be any form of communication as long as a message is transmitted and allows for a certain interpretation to occur. An example of such a communication may be found in a painting, a photograph or in the order objects are set behind a shop-window. Myth comes out of interactions where the key elements are our senses and the meaning we give to certain phenomena. Therefore, myth cannot be tackled by sciences that deal with empirical findings but rather with sciences that tackle “meaning and

⁶⁵ Sutermeister, P. “Hayden White”

⁶⁶ G.G. Iggers *Dějepisectví ve 20. století: od vědecké objektivitě k postmoderní výzvě*, (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2002) 2.

⁶⁷ Ronald Barthes *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001) 109.

⁶⁸ Barthes 109.

value.”⁶⁹ Myth is thus not defined by the object of its message but rather by the question whether it does or does not contain meanings that become a meaning of another object.

To clarify this, it must be stressed again that myth is a complex relation, or rather a correlation,⁷⁰ between the signifier (image) and the signified (concept). However, this relation stretches to another level, where the sign has already “become the secondary signifier.”⁷¹ Sign, traditionally considered as the associative total of a concept and an image,⁷² is thus not to be perceived as neutral and finite object since it possesses the capability to form another level of meaning. Myth is therefore the resultant of the second-order semiological system. In other words, since the image and the concept give rise to a sign, which in turn becomes a signifier, which in relation to another signified produces a new sign, there are in fact two semiological systems, where one is incorporated into the other. It is the myth that now gets the hold of the language. Barthes thus refers to myth as ‘metalanguage’ because it is a second language in which one speaks about the first. For myth thus “ordinary language becomes its raw material.”⁷³

Since myth is the association of the sign and the signified, and since both the terms are “perfectly manifest,”⁷⁴ the result becomes obvious. Myth therefore does not hide anything; myth blurs. It pushes certain notions into the background, while moving other forth. On the surface of language, myth “steals and than restores the speech,”⁷⁵ however, it does not place it at exactly the same place. This is the moment, when I, the perceiver, see, unconsciously, the known and the given in a new light and accept it fully, because for me, myth looks neutral and innocent. This is because I do not see myth as a language system or in fact as a system at all. The correlation between the image and the concept seems natural and genuine to me and I see no reason why not to accept it or even why I should start thinking about whether or not I should accept it.

Myth, therefore, is dangerous, as it distorts the truth and the effects become irreversible. Its end is to immobilise the world so that it will remain in its pleasant ignorance. “What allows

⁶⁹ Barthes 110.

⁷⁰ Barthes 113.

⁷¹ Barthes 114.

⁷² Barthes 114.

⁷³ Barthes 114.

⁷⁴ Barthes 121.

⁷⁵ Barthes 125.

the reader to consume myth unknowingly is that he does not see it as a semiological system but as an inductive one.”⁷⁶ The consumer accepts the presented as a fact and the myth in turn becomes unquestionable. For Barthes, myth is thus an ever-present assault on meaning. Everything and anything may become subject to myth, though some languages resist it more successfully. This is an argument, which shall be repeated again, when discussing McNeill and the concept of mythistory.

Barthes stresses that in such environments, where myth cannot take a particular, singular meaning, for example as the language of mathematics, it assaults the language as a whole. It is thus impossible to escape the myth. To destroy it, therefore, myth must be *mythified* in turn by producing an artificial myth.⁷⁷ Barthes thus suggests us to start a third semiological chain, where the second sign is again taken as the first term of the new myth. By such a subversion of literature we realise that language is a signification and not an expression of reality. This allows us to deal with and acknowledge the existence of myths.

How does this realisation then relate to the issue of history, memory and national identity? As Renan puts it, for a successful formation of a nation, “getting the history wrong”⁷⁸ is thus as important as getting certain narration right. Remembering, recalling, and emphasising certain events therefore becomes as important as leaving other issues unanswered and hidden in the past. Perceiving certain moments in the narrated history as constitutive is therefore a part of a myth, which may in turn have grave consequences. Fictional foundation of a national pride may be as easily discredited as soon as the myth becomes identified. On the other hand, as has been shown earlier, myth transforms itself with time and in relation to different environments into a new myth. Thus the second-order semiological system, the notion that the sign becomes a second order signifier and in turn becomes empty of its original meaning, finds its counterpart in the real world, where texts acquire new importance and new meanings. Myth thus becomes an ever-present element in the search for the past as it becomes entangled in the roots of the many historical texts. Any recollection of the past events may take on individual forms depending on the different values and meanings attached to them.

⁷⁶ Barthes 131.

⁷⁷ Barthes 135.

⁷⁸ Ernest Renan *What is a Nation* Nov. 27, 2010 <www.tamilnation.org/selfdetermination/nation/renan.htm>.

Interestingly enough, similarly to Barthes' position, Peter Heehs comments on the relation between history and myth. For him, they represent two antithetical modes of explanation. There is the 'logos' against which the myth stands; antithesis between the concepts that are thought to represent the world as demonstrable truth and the world as authoritative pronouncement, or rather as a series of un-examined assumptions. History, in Heehs' terms, can be viewed either as an account of what happened in the past or what actually happened in the past. Heehs thus deals away with the issue of historian versus historicist by stating that history can be seen as an interpretative narration or as an account of facts. Myth, on the other hand, is understood by Heehs as a sacred narrative of traditional societies, wherein such a narration there is an element of superhuman being.⁷⁹

To picture the difference between myth and history, Heehs follows other thinkers in their handling of the two concepts. He stresses Jürgen Habermas' notion of the logos, as the fundamental element in history, which seeks to convince through "the unforced force of the better argument." Myth, on the other hand, takes its stand on the "authoritarian normativity of a tradition."⁸⁰ This is in line with Barthes, when he states that myth is another word for 'DOXA,' a common "unexamined assumption rooted in the prevailing political order."⁸¹ Myth thus becomes accepted, uncritically, unconsciously, and at the same time being used to affirm the sense of existence of the community.

In his essay *Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians*, William H. McNeill opens the debate with the identification of the particular intentions that affect the perception of certain sources of narration. He stresses the vital need for revisiting acknowledged truths because even "Newton's truths needed adjustments."⁸² Natural sciences then need to alter and adapt their theories and models in order to provide us with answers to newly arisen questions. Social sciences, therefore, should not follow a different path and remain rigid in their modelling of the reality. Sciences are historical and evolutionary, if they do not undergo such a process of critical approach; they remain closed within the shell they have made around themselves. In turn, they will become dependent on narration that shall become self-

⁷⁹ Peter Heehs "Myth, History and Theory" *History and Theory*. Vol.33, (1994): 2.

⁸⁰ Heehs 3.

⁸¹ Barthes 9.

⁸² W.H. McNeill "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians" *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 91, No. 1 (Feb., 1986): 3.

validated. Therefore, as McNeill stresses, our understanding of truth should be 'elastic' and not fixed.⁸³

Resting strictly on the same principles, despite the reality having evolved in different direction perhaps due to a sudden invention or a better understanding of the past, is therefore misleading. Accepting other notions thus becomes difficult, if not impossible.

Our common parlance reckons myth to be false while history is, or aspires to be, true. Accordingly, a historian who rejects someone else's conclusions calls them mythical, while claiming that his own views are true. But what seems true to one historian will seem false to another, so one historian's truth becomes another's myth, even at the moment of utterance.⁸⁴

Thus there exist opposing conceptions of narrations that stand against each other, because their view is based on different perspective or experience of different reality. Perhaps, as McNeill assesses, this is the nature of liberalism. The individual has become aware of his own potentials and of his own singularity because the social mobility has given him tools to break the traditional ties. He has found new attachments and has formed new social consciousness while at the same time he was experiencing the world of pluralities and confusion. In the world of many identities, where many of the groups have begun to express their opposing goals, the individual has intensified his personal attachment. Firstly he expressed his ties to national and then to sub-national groups. Each of these groups then possessed its own distinct ideals and practices.

This has been immensely efficient in forming a sense of communal memory and identity. Necessarily then, this finds its reflection in the forming of historical narrations because the historical profession has reflected these changes in group identities. The historians of the particular groups thus, by their attempts to "exert themselves to produce a presentation of 'truths' that is credible and intelligible to a given audience, (produce and are responsible for what) might best be called mythistory."⁸⁵ In other words, it is a narration created within and for the purposes of a specific group, wherein these narrations attempt to picture the reality. However, it does so only from a single point of view. Thus, mythistory cannot claim any

⁸³ McNeill 3.

⁸⁴ McNeill 1.

⁸⁵ McNeill 8.

totality. McNeill accepts that certain narrations are more close to the reality than others but it is still in their nature to distort the presented.

However, living in a myth is not necessarily a problem. For Heehs, as well as for McNeill, “the problem is not the myth itself but the myth-mongers who demand that their story be validated by the logos institutions.”⁸⁶ Hayden White notes that once the myths and the ideologies based on them become questioned and scrutinised, the entire ‘cultural edifice of society’ goes into crises.⁸⁷ The accepted models are not sufficient to explain the new reality and the group has lost its certainty. This is because myth has already taken absolute control over the narration and has not allowed the acceptance of any other of the existing alternatives, yet it cannot deal with the new. Such crises are then irreversible.

Once someone starts to question the aims and strategies of the nationalist politics, the proponents of the ideology allow no space for alternative views. Any doubt undermines their collective attempts. Nationalism is not only a choice; it becomes a set of beliefs. Any opposition to the nationalistic stance is a direct assault on the essence of its being. Myth and nationalism in this respect share more in common than would be evident at first. Both come out of a necessity to react to some impulse and to manipulate with a certain mass. Nationalism provides not only an escape but also a possible hope for the future. Its aim is to achieve change but its form is rigid and cannot last as a permanent state. Myth changes the meaning and gives a subjective interpretation although it hopes to be accepted as the truth. Myth builds upon incomplete images.⁸⁸ Nationalism uses historical inaccuracies to its advantage as it takes over the space for the possible speculation and makes a strong claim on certain theses. However, as Barthes assured us earlier, new myths will take over and produce their own narrations. New modes of explanation will prevail and the whole cycle shall start anew.

In order to become objective and critically open to accepting the validity or the falsity of presented reality, we must learn to find and decode the hidden myths. Thus we will be able to

⁸⁶ Heehs 14.

⁸⁷ Hayden White *The content of the form: narrative discourse and historical representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) x.

⁸⁸ Barthes 109.

put ourselves at a distance and judge to what extent are our identities, our prides and self-assurance based on myths and false narration.

With the basic knowledge of the myth and its manifestations we may proceed to tackle the question how written narrations, be it factual or fictitious, shape our identity and what role myth plays in this process. The relation between history, literature and myth will be the subject of the following chapter.

2.3 History and Literature

When attempting to reflect the reality of our lives, be it the physical world or the state of mind, any writing, as a form of expressing our endeavour, becomes necessarily reductive. We aim to enhance in print what we perceive through senses and emotions. With a two-dimensional representation and a set of symbols we hope to grasp and preserve the ungraspable three-dimensional reality and the images of our creativity. The task is literally in-accomplishable for we leave too many blank spaces in the desired description. Consequently, the reader finds and fills these blanks with his own notions and his own concepts. The writing thus ceases to be a closed unit and becomes a body that generates new readings and new assumptions. The writing becomes an initiator of a further process. Necessarily then, there arises a moment of conflict when the reader, equipped with such an ability to perceive the blank spaces, tackles texts that present themselves as closed works. By arriving at a specific interpretation, the authority of such texts becomes relativized and therefore threatened.

This may be no such large a matter when considering the text as an expression of individual statement or imagination; however, this stance is of a grave consequence when considering texts that claim authority and subjectivity. Therefore, before tackling the question of history and literature, it may be worthwhile to consider the influence of the form on the subject-matter presented and the manner in which the reader treats it.

To understand the role and power of the text, the origin of the written need be considered. Before the era of Gutenberg' printing mechanism, the created and re-created writing reflected the power and the attempt to preserve power over a society. Benedict Anderson noted that in

the pre-1500 era of all the books written in Anglophonic world, 77% were in Latin.⁸⁹ The subject-matter and the form of the majority of the books therefore related to the secular and the spiritual. The origin for these texts was to be found predominantly in the monasteries and the centres of political power. The form therefore expressed the authority of the body that became responsible for the written. The subjects to these bodies of power therefore accepted the written as given. Consequently, the text became more than a mere expression of recording; writing has become an entity of its own quality and power. It has become the mark of civilisation, the symbol of control, and the supplier of meaning.

Once the written ceased to be the realm of the authorities and the technological advancement allowed the individual and the private to be produced and re-produced on massive scale, the written had lost its formal authority. The printed and the re-printed word began to expand into other genres. The written became subject to individual reading and critique. Along with this appropriation of the printed, sacred texts became privatised and therefore re-interpreted. The institutions that had traditionally based their own authority on the written consequently began to perceive the non-orthodox reading as a direct threat. Translations, be they into a different language or into a different context, therefore posed the question of the controllability of the desired meaning. Any individual reading of the written, without the authoritative and explanatory guidance, could cause the message contained within the text to become blurred or misinterpreted.

Those who treated the sacred texts liberally were therefore penalised or ostracised. As a natural reflex, the texts of the institutions became rigid and totalitarian. It is therefore considered inappropriate to translate the Quran into non-Arabic languages for any translation necessarily becomes an interpretation and therefore the alleged truths implied in the original writing may be lost, deformed or perverted.⁹⁰ The example of Quran is even more illustrious when we consider the actual text, its content, and its history. Traditionally the origin of the text is to be found in the messages of Allah as revealed by the archangel Gabriel to Muhammad. The origin is therefore set in the oral tradition and, because Muhammad is claimed to be illiterate, the message was passed on orally. All the revealed 'suras' have been

⁸⁹ Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2000) 18.

⁹⁰ For the discussion on the theme of translation of The Quran, see: Sheikh `Atiyyah Saqr, "Translating the Glorious Qur'an." 23. Aug. 2003, 27 Dec. 2010
<<http://infad.usim.edu.my/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=4469>>.

thus learned by heart and in this manner passed on to other generations. However, Islam is a religion comparably more strict in the question of keeping to the divine word than Christianity, for Quran is claimed to be more directive and unambiguously instructive in the code of behaviour Muslims are to follow.⁹¹

The problem arises when considering the era of its origin and the existence of different narrations that did not coincide in certain constitutive details. Only decades after the death of the Prophet Muhammad the text of the Quran was codified and became unalterable. The existence of the different narrations in the early ages of the forming religion provided space for area of severe disagreement. One of the key problems was the existence of the so named 'satanic verse' where, unlike the tradition of Islam being strict in the question of the existence of one god only, the text of Quran in some of its older narrated versions recognised the existence of the goddesses al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat. The issue has been resolved by replacing the problematic part of the text with a more suitable narration and subsequently codifying the version as the official text. The written has thus become perceived as a closed unit that allows no opposition or alternation and therefore becomes authoritative. Furthermore, the text has been pronounced as unalterable for the text is recognised as the exact message as passed from the divinity.⁹² It is therefore the form and the authority behind the text that effects the perception of the content.

Modern Islamists acknowledges the necessity of mediation of traditional texts to non-Arabic speakers, if the religion hopes to expand its influence. Yet, these translations need be perceived and presented as mere reflections or individual representations of the original. In this sense the reader unconsciously encounters the issue of truthful representation since what he arrives is a mediated image. The reader therefore need to rely on a given interpretation or form his own approach to the presented.

The question of authenticity, interpretation and editorial practices that shape meaning may be also noted in the Christian tradition. Unlike the Islamic tradition, Christian religious texts have been widely translated; the oldest translation going back to the fourth century, the most recent being in print at the moment. Christianity thus reflects the reality that the world we live in is changing and at concrete eras concrete themes must be emphasised. That does not

⁹¹ Crofter Warren *Velká kniha Koránu* Ed. Chaloupka, O. (BVD, 2006) 62.

⁹² Warren 63.

imply that the message of the text is different from its older versions, rather, unlike from Quran, it is the language of these translations of Bible that is accustomed to the new environment.

Besides this generalisation, let us consider the translation of the Gospel according to John and the question of editing. The focus shall not be the manner this text relates to the Synoptic Gospels but rather the manner in which the Gospel according to John has been recreated by the scribes. First of all, the style of this particular gospel is very interesting and different from the previous three, for the narration moves in what seem to be thematic circles or even a spiral. The moment of departure of the narration becomes its end, though a new detail or perspective is being added, and a new spiral starts again. The narration therefore develops as well as repeats itself. Without this realisation it is then difficult to re-construct the narration, especially when the original Gospel has been kept on unbound sheets.

According to Pokorný, the scribes not aware of the specificity of the text found the sequence illogical and rearranged the order of the pericopes.⁹³ However, by imposing what they considered as a logical order gave rise to new readings. Similar deviation of meaning may be illustrated on the case of the ‘Comma Johanneum.’ The text in question is 1 John 5:7, where there is the mentioning of the Holy Trinity which has been added into the Gospel in the translations following from the seventh century on.⁹⁴ The heat of the discussion is about whether the notion of Trinity has actually been in the original text or whether the text was amended in later years and the reference in question added in order to suit the religious more effectively.

The above stated excursion aimed to stress the manner in which writing had and has shaped and limited meaning of the content presented. The significance of this realisation is noteworthy when dealing with writing that claims subjectivity and offers data and facts that are not verifiable. Writing, dealing with the narration of the past, where the overall portrayal is hazy and incomplete or based on partial re-presentation, becomes in fact indistinguishable from fiction. History and literature thus seem to intermingle and anything becomes questionable.

⁹³ Petr Pokorný *Literární a Teologický Úvod do Nového Zákona* (Praha:Vyšehrad, 1993) 136.

⁹⁴ Pokorný 146.

In this sense the narration of the Venerable Bede should not be approached as the truthful account of the past but rather perceived and valued for the literariness and vivid portrayal of mythical events. Seemingly then, history and literature, should both be assessed only on the basis of its aesthetic merit and any relation to the reality should be ignored. However, the human memory is similar to the sand on the beach where the footprint of the past remains impressed into the soil and thus shapes the landscape. In the same manner, the society of today need be aware of its past and the movements and undercurrents that have shaped its progress. Therefore, a question need be raised: where is the line between the writing that aims to represent the past and the writing generally referred to as literature? In other words: What makes the reader accept the presented as truth or as a fiction and what is he able to infer from such a realisation?

To commence the discussion on the relationship between literature and history, it might be stimulating to start with the deconstructionist approach to the text. The term 'Deconstruction,' in general, refers to the method of literary criticism which assumes that language relates only to itself rather than to an extra-textual reality. The deconstructive approach is based on the close reading of the given text and it emphasizes multiple conflicting interpretations of the presented. These are based on the implications of the text, rather than on the author's declared or un-declared intentions.

In December 1976 the Modern Language Association hosted a debate on the deconstruction approach to literature. M.H. Abrams presented a paper "The Deconstructive Angel,"⁹⁵ which acknowledges the importance of pluralism of points of view at an observed object, because such an approach allows the observers to see deep into the roots of the object. However, Abrams repeated his fear that the approach of deconstructionists, such as J. Hillis Miller, is too radical, as it allows the observer to claim that nothing may be considered as literature. Abrams claims that any history is based on written texts. Consequently, Abrams emphasizes the ability of the historians to choose, process and interpret the historical events for the readership. Once the reader reads and interprets any passage of the presented text in the same manner as the author, it may be claimed that the text is objective. Only in such a case, when the reader finds the presented as linguistically unreliable, incoherent or suspicious, only then does the reader interpret the text as a fictitious work of literature and not an objective

⁹⁵ M.H. Abrams "The Deconstructive Angel" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Spring, 1977): 87.

historical narration. However, besides the stance of the reader towards the text, besides the reader's ability or willingness to accept any text as non-fictional, what Abrams stressed is his conviction that the author is and has been aware, and therefore is in full control of what he has written.

In response to the Abrams' paper, Miller contributed the debate with his text, "The Critic as Host." Miller picks up on Abrams' notion that if the approach of deconstruction is taken in the assessment of history as we know it now, as being based on the written account of the past events, then such history would be unimaginable.⁹⁶ Furthermore, Miller acknowledges that such would be the case but he does not see the same grave implications that Abrams derived out of this vision. Instead, Miller seems to stress that such would be the inevitable end because the idea that there exists a singular, subjective interpretation of history, culture, or art is unattainable.

Furthermore, in the essay, Miller uses the deconstructive approach to show the antithetical nature of the words 'host' and 'guest.' Hereby he hints at the complexity of what seemed to be a clear and comprehensible concept. Deconstruction thus is not for him an act of annihilation of any meaningful sense of a concerned text but rather a discipline that focuses on the intricacy of figurative and metaphorical representation of reality. Deconstruction thus stands as a rhetorical discipline that asks and seeks rather than prescribes. In the words of Peggy Kamuf, deconstruction implies "the distance from the structuring or construction of discourses ... that have uncritically taken over the legacy of Western metaphysics. ... It does not mean the destruction of any legacy or heritage but taking a responsibility for it and rethinking its terms and strategies in the course of their redeployment."⁹⁷

This depiction of the debate between Abrams and Miller is illustrious of what the deconstructionists criticised in the general perception of texts and especially in the perception of texts claiming historical evidence and historical truths. They stressed the principle that language itself is a product of history, culture, and politics. Any narration thus acquires the characteristics of what has permeated it. The received text therefore refers to more than what is stated. History, or in other words the commented narration of the past, is therefore not a

⁹⁶ J.H. Miller "The Critic as Host" *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 3, No. 3. (Spring, 1977):445.

⁹⁷ Jacques Derrida *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* Ed. Kamuf, P. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 83.

mere explication but rather a new creative endeavour. The written thus becomes an amalgam of many individual acts of writing, or in the reversed logic, interpretation becomes an act of reading.

This radical approach to literature is generally ascribed to Jacques Derrida. For him, the decisive moment is the realisation that any name, sentence, icon or image in the text can be perceived as fictional. Derrida has attempted to prove by the examination of the nature of speech and writing that utterances are irreducibly polysemic. They give rise to a range of possible interpretations of which none can be determined as primary.⁹⁸ In his criticism of Austin and Searle, Derrida has come with the notion of 'iteration.' Literature is a variable medium that generates individual meanings. These do not depend on any outward condition, as suggested by Austin, or on any grammatical patterns as suggested by Searle.

For Derrida, literature is based on the possibility that any utterance, writing or work can be 'iterated.' Iteration therefore refers to the moment when these utterances and writings can be repeated in the absence of the addressee or the author, context or reference. In other words, these are repeatable but their repetition embraces alteration. As Halion explains it:

The repetition of an utterance is not the repetition of some self-identical unit—the repetition will be both the same and different. This factor can be seen to account for citationality: every utterance can be cited in different contexts which will modify it. And there is no criterion for selecting just one context as the proper one. ... (Iteration) is basically the notion of sameness in spite of difference.⁹⁹

Since there are no genuine, inborn characteristics that define proper literature, it is impossible to state what is not. Any text can thus be claimed to be literature and in turn texts become detached from the reality they reflect. On the question of literality,

Derrida states the following:

There is no text which is literary *in itself*. Literarity is not a natural essence, an intrinsic property of the text. It is the correlative of an intentional relation to the text, an intentional relation which integrates in itself, as a component or an

⁹⁸ Kevin Halion "Deconstruction and Speech Act Theory: A Defence of the Distinction between Normal and Parasitic Speech Acts." 27 Dec. 2010<<http://www.e-anglais.com/thesis.html>>.

⁹⁹ Halion.

intentional layer, the more or less implicit consciousness of rules which are conventional or institutional – social, in any case. Of course, this does not mean that literarity is merely projective or subjective – in the sense of the empirical subjectivity or caprice of the reader. The literary character of the text is inscribed on the side of the intentional object, in its noematic structure, one could say, and not on the subjective side of the noetic act. There are ‘in’ the text features which call for the literary reading and recall the convention, institution, or history of literature. This *noematic* structure is included (as ‘nonreal,’ in Husserl’s terms) in subjectivity, but a subjectivity which is non-empirical and linked to an intersubjective and transcendental community.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, in any writing there exist certain features that call for the literary reading; these features remind the readers of the conventions of literature. This is a specific subjective act that claims authority and objectivity. In fact, it becomes the act of pronouncement by which a text is declared to be a literature. This has grave implications as the text gains a new form with every new reading. Under different conditions and under different prisms, the identical text has the potential to be read differently. Derrida seems to suggest that there exists no such notion as responsibility for the text because the text that has been produced soon sets off to take on different meanings. Furthermore, this stance does not address only language but in fact any social activity and events. The same act of violence may be as well praised, as well as denounced.

Concerning the debate of the relationship between literature and history, this excursion aimed to show that any narration may be re-interpreted and therefore any ideological claims based on the historical narration do in fact stand on uncertain foundations. Does it therefore make sense to ask whether there is any history or any objective narration of the past events? This leads to another question: What is history?

In general terms, history, or rather the written historical accounts of the past, aim to present arguments and facts in manner that shall be credible. It needs credibility and therefore it contains a moment of responsibility. In literature, or rather the fictional accounts of reality, there is no need for responsibility or any need for the author to respond to the reality. Fictional writing depends on the perceptibility of the reader; it poses situations that are only hinted and incomplete. In order to grasp the full picture, other pieces of information are required which in turn need other pieces of information, however such cycle is without end

¹⁰⁰ Jacques Derrida *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 44.

for no literary text can be fully penetrated nor presented. The text presents the reader only with what the text intended to and the reader shall never find out what was meant to be hidden away from him. For instance, the reader shall not know more of the London business of Edward Waverley's father than what the text allows him to. It is impossible to know or to learn anything more than that which is hinted at or shown. Literature is thus the realm of finding and creating the unmentioned.

History, on the other hand, does not seek such a vocation; although it has been based on the same form that literature creates. The concept of history has traditionally been dependent on the oral tradition or the already discussed textual representation of the past. In its form it combined the poetics with the alleged real. It is therefore plausible to claim that before history attempted to stand as an academic discipline with its methods and own philosophy, it had been a genre of literature. However, with the revolutionary era of the rise of modernism, new entities have arisen, claiming their own specific histories. In order to escape this fragmentation, history had to be re-defined and re-conceptualised.

As Linda Orr comments on the development, the modern historians have sought to make history escape literature in order to become attached to the social sciences and with the sector of their interest.¹⁰¹ There was a sensible reason for constructing a scientific approach to the past, allowing methodology and argumentation to replace the subjective notions. However, as Orr argues in her text, literature did not retreat so easily. By the nineteenth century every writer seemed to be in fact a historian. "History came to provide the main common denominator for the many hybrid genres that characterised the Romantic period, combining epic, utopia, political economy, political philosophy, fiction, religion, and lyricism."¹⁰²

The process of liberation from literature thus came in the wave of the turbulent era; the period of the French revolution, the Napoleonic experience, the industrial revolution. Interestingly enough, this break finds its beginning in the period following the initial wave of the rise of nationalism, as well as the rise of the many myths that surrounded the origin and traditions of these newly formed societies. Subsequently, history attempted to tackle areas that have not been considered as historical before. "The historical object has multiplied,

¹⁰¹ Linda Orr "The Revene of Literature: A History of History" *New Literary History* Vol.18, No.1. (Autumn, 1986): 1.

¹⁰² Orr 5.

spatially and temporally.”¹⁰³ The realm of history has grown enormously. In response to this expansion, more literature based on the achievements of history has been written and new genres found its audience. On the other hand, even though history aims to liberate itself from metaphors, it returns to the usage of figures and literary devices of representation. How does then history become accepted as objective? In fact, it cannot, because for any certain moment there evolves a different perception of the past. In history, the reader sees the past through the prism of the present and at the same time with the intention of looking at the future. However, the present is not “a mere neutral vehicle for the content or tenor of the past,”¹⁰⁴ nor will the past remain in its place. With every new moment, the perspective shifts.

What is it then that makes the reader accept history as factual and seemingly objective, despite the observation that has been just mentioned? It is the question of ‘verisimilitude;’ it is the notion that in a written text there is the semblance of reality. The concept implies that either the action represented must be “acceptable or convincing according to the audience's own experience or knowledge or, as in the presentation of science fiction or tales of the supernatural, the audience must be enticed into willingly suspending disbelief and accepting improbable actions as true within the framework of the narrative.”¹⁰⁵ This carries another problem, for “the writer who wishes to be believed as a teller of truth must stay a step ahead of current literary practices.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, the writer – the teller, author, and narrator – need adhere to the same practices that are characteristic of the fiction.

A past so deformed resembles an image of the reality rather than the reality itself. History thus becomes an amalgam of constructed and re-constructed images. How to escape this notion that any historical account of the past is fallible? The reader ought to acknowledge that there is no objective truth but rather only particular presentations. Therefore, history should be open to opposing points of view and different interpretations and this is what differentiates it from literature; literature does not require any confirmation or denials. Literature is an individual activity, where it is the individual reader that decides on the relevance of certain aspects and notions. History on the other hand, in its effort to provide

¹⁰³ Orr 5.

¹⁰⁴ Orr 15.

¹⁰⁵ “Verisimilitude” *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002 Delux Edition*, 2002 ed.

¹⁰⁶ Orr 14.

explication need be aware of its own limitations and reply to the critics. It is based on concepts and the acts of selection, justification and actualisation As Ferguson writes, “history, after all, does not operate on pure reason or mathematical logic;” it is always specific and uncertain.¹⁰⁷

The following chapter shall focus in greater detail on the era of Romanticism and the arrival of historical novel as the medium between the fictional and the factual. History and literature shall take on new disguise as they turn to depict and shape new memories of the recently awoken young nations. The following pages shall therefore deal with the question of narration and the rise of nationalism.

3 Romanticism and Nationalism

3.1 Romanticism and romanticisms

*The word ‘romantic’ has come to mean so many things that by itself it means nothing.*¹

Arthur Oncken Lovejoy

To define the term ‘romanticism’ it would seem most elegant to present the movement as a monolithic aesthetic movement that has its clearly identifiable predecessors and its main protagonists who shared a set of specific values and notions. Yet, there is cost to any such simplification for it becomes necessarily reductive and misses out on what makes romanticism so fascinating – the plurality and its timelessness. As the opening quotation of this chapter suggests, the term has often been used liberally in addressing tendencies and projections that in certain cases stood in opposition to each other. In the opening essay of Abrams’s compilation *English Romantic Poets - the second edition*, Lovejoy gives a brief account of the attempts of Mr. Dupuis and Mr. Colinet to define ‘romanticism’ through the perspective of its opposition to classicism and their subsequent realisation of the vast area of human endeavour the term refers to. As Hrbata and Procházka note in their reflection on this particular endeavour, the difficulty with such an approach is caused by “the absence of any

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson, W. *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historical Quest* (Edinburg University Press, 1998) 2.

¹ A.O. Lovejoy, “On the Discrimination of Romanticism” *English Romantic Poets* Ed. Abrams, M. H. (New York: Cornell university Press, 1975) 6.

central, generally valid aesthetic criterion.”² What we see in romanticism is not a single movement with a unique origin; rather, romanticism should be thought of as existing in waves and tendencies that originated in different times as well as at different places. These waves in turn permeate as well as supplement each other; it is therefore the lexicological plural form of the term that should be used to refer to the aesthetic ventures of the 18th and 19th century – ‘romanticisms.’

In order to explain the plurality of the term, Lovejoy suggests almost a psychoanalytical, historical approach, tracing its genesis. Lovejoy mentions England of the 1740s, France at the turn of the 19th century, and Germany of the 1790s as being the places where at various times, romanticism has been formed. He notes that each of these represented highly complex and usually exceedingly unstable intellectual compounds.³ Hrbata and Procházka summarise Lovejoy’s stance as consisting of three grand structural complexes. The first finds its origin in the England of the 18th century, where it stood as a reaction to the classicist normative aesthetics.⁴ The first notable manifestation of romanticism is John Warton’s poem ‘The Enthusiast: or, The Lover of Nature’ (1744), a poem where the poet encounters personified Virtue, Innocence, Philosophy, Solitude and Wisdom. The poet favours the true beauty of the nature while escaping the artifice of the contemporary culture. It is the superiority of the nature to culture that Lovejoy notes as romantic;⁵ the expression of naturalism and the independence of the form from the conventional rules are the elements that characterised the new form. The creation by the nature is thus more pure and innocent than the produce of the civilized culture. Noted by Hrbata and Procházka,⁶ this seems to be furthermore intensified by the contacts made with America, where the vision of a human being taking energy and inspiration solely from the nature materialises in the shape of the ‘savage.’

The other source of romanticism both the authors identify is the early German wave of romanticism. However, this wave seems to represent an antithesis of the former, since for the German context “it is the culture that is important, because it has the potential of becoming universal.”⁷ This viewpoint seems a repudiation of the naturalist approach. Lovejoy points to

² Hrbata and Procházka 10.

³ Lovejoy 12.

⁴ Hrbata and Procházka 10.

⁵ Lovejoy 12.

⁶ Hrbata and Procházka 10.

⁷ Hrbata and Procházka 10.

the essay 'On Naive and Sentimental Poetry' (1796) where Schiller arrives at a conviction that "harmony with nature (meaning the opposition to culture) is neither possible nor desirable for the modern man."⁸ The primitive does not therefore provide the sought-for models or ideals; it is rather the creativity implied by the sophistication of the artificial that should be inspiring. In comparison to the naturalist romanticism of the English, Lovejoy notes that the German romantics identified the movement mostly with Christianity, for it represented for them a truly unifying element that drew individual nations together.⁹

Besides these two movements there was a third identifiable line of thought which in many aspects adopted features of both the former movements. Hrbata and Procházka saw it as a certain form of a middle position that did not reject culture in the same manner the naturalists did nor accepted it as openly as the German romantics.¹⁰ It was predominantly the thought that culture should not be perceived as the key unifying central thought but rather it should function as a type of continuity and gradual transformation of aesthetic forms.¹¹ As the representative figure of this particular movement, Lovejoy identifies here the work of Chateaubriand, especially his novel *Atala* (1801).¹² It tells the story of a Christian girl who has taken a vow to give her affection solely to God, yet falls in love with a Natchez Indian. Torn between love and religion, she poisons herself to keep from breaking her vow.

In the essay 'Motifs of Kingdom and Exile in *Atala*', Joyce O. Lowrie notes the notion of the exile and asks what is sought for. Lowrie claims, that in Chateaubriand, the 19th century common portrayal of man "as an expatriate who is in literal and symbolic exile from his true abode," has been elevated to a privileged position, wherein the exile itself becomes a "precondition for the search of the kingdom."¹³ Both, Chactas and Rene, are removed from their origin not only symbolically but also literally, as their conversation takes place offshore on a boat. The notion of exile implies, as Lowrie terms it, the inability to "find a refuge in the constantly shifting world."¹⁴ The ideal universe is represented by the sun, which of course is

⁸ Lovejoy 12.

⁹ Lovejoy 16.

¹⁰ Hrbata and Procházka 10.

¹¹ Hrbata and Procházka 10.

¹² Lovejoy 16.

¹³ J.O. Lowrie "Motifs of Kingdom and Exile in *Atala*" *The French Review* Vol.43, No.5 (Apr., 1970): 755.

¹⁴ Lowrie 756.

unreachable. The protagonists cannot rest and are in search for something comforting. However, Chateaubriand does not explain, but rather manifests.¹⁵

In comparison to the concept of the noble savage, it is religion that is seen as superior, yet only for its ability to “delight the sense by beauty”¹⁶ and not for its lasting qualities. Nature, as Lowrie puts it, becomes part of the man’s exile but cannot bring any “stability nor felicity to him.”¹⁷ Therefore neither nature nor religion can be the sought for kingdom, Lowrie aims to identify in Chateaubriand. It is not even love that provides the paradise lost and regained. It is the exile itself for it shows the ability and will to escape and aim for something unreachable. However, Chateaubriand only celebrates; he does not explain. Therefore, Lowrie arrives in her conclusion at the notion that it “the telling that is the thing.”¹⁸ It is the recounting and the poetic “exaltation” rather than “an ideological elevation” that should be sought from the novel.¹⁹ Only beauty is taken seriously, the rest becomes a topic for artistic expression. Chateaubriand therefore seems to take religion as well as the nature as two fundamental concepts and does not place them in opposition. He employs both to arrive at his own, personal expression of beauty and not as his sole goals. Thereby he seems to stand in between the two afore depicted movements.

Perhaps this different approach and set of values were what made Lovejoy consider Chateaubriand as noteworthy. Foremost, it might have been the psychology of the heroes and Chateaubriand’s own nostalgic experiences and emotionality that find their way into the narration of the Indian chief Chactas. The novel *Atala* combines the simplicity of a classical idyll with the more troubled beauties of romanticism. In the light of the above mentioned attempt to classify romanticism into different movements, Chateaubriand is on one hand seen as a keen reader of Rousseau, yet, on the other hand *Atala* depicts the concept of the noble savage in a rather different light. It seems that Chateaubriand unites intensity and strong perception of the nature with Christian morality.

However, this excursion into the different notions of romanticism reveals its complexity and again becomes in turn another attempt to generalise and schematise. Only by focusing closely

¹⁵ Lowrie 759.

¹⁶ Lowrie 761.

¹⁷ Lowrie 761.

¹⁸ Lowrie 763.

¹⁹ Lowrie 764.

on individual works of art can the observer realise that what is shared in common is not necessarily the relationship to the state and progress of the western civilisation or the nature, but most importantly the intension with which the author reveals his or her inner excitements and visions. The English authors should thus not be seen in strict opposition to German romantics, for in many cases the spheres of influence and inspiration have overlapped having thus been reflected in the works of art.

It is perhaps more useful to consider every individual expression of romantic art as an object that has its origin at a certain point that is in fact a conjunction of contemporary aesthetical approach, personal experience and historical context. Looking closer at the English romanticism, we also see particular waves and acts which in certain cases even oppose each other. Marilyn Butler discusses the nature of English romanticism more closely in her essay “Romanticism in England.”²⁰

First of all, Butler warns us that it is problematic to set the English romanticism into fixed temporal boundaries. It is mostly the practice of the 19th century to adopt the German term to refer to the aesthetic movement starting in England around 1750s; furthermore, it is, as Butler notes, the contemporary convention to insist upon resemblances among those artists, though such extrapolations and forceful reconstructions may be misleading. Rather, the artists were being, or if they themselves inclined to, identified themselves with their contemporaries from their closest environment on the basis of having in common the subject-matter and/or the approach to art.

However, if we accept that romanticism, as an aesthetic movement, has evolved in phases, then, as Butler suggests, we should settle for a time span starting in the 1750s and ending in the 1820s.²¹ The beginning is marked by the moment of reaction to classicism as well as the advancement of printing industry which in hand with the improvement of education and road systems made literature more accessible. The sociological milieu of the readership underwent a change and culture has slowly become transformed into a consumed commodity. The era of romanticism has underwent decades of evolution losing on its intensity in the mid of the 19th century.

²⁰ Marilyn Butler “Romanticism in England” *Romanticism in National Context* ed. Porter, R., Teich, M. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp 37 – 67.

²¹ Butler 40.

By locating the origin of the English romanticism to the mid 18th century, Butler emphasises its independence and therefore its different nature from the French post-revolutionary or even the German romantic manifesto. The English romanticism was thus formed by an impulse that was of a different nature than revolutionary; in its origin it was a cultural movement of a civic nature that has in turn become the fundament for the post-revolutionary moods. The post-revolutionary era however finds romanticism of a different nature than that of its predecessor. Butler thus implies that English romanticism should be perceived as having evolved in certain distinguishable phases defined by the choice of subject matter and approaches. The initial group of romantic artists should be seen as expressing “a challenge from the disenfranchised middle and provincial classes before the French revolution.” Butler has in mind Blake and the early works of Coleridge and Wordsworth.²²

Following this phase, there comes another group that reflects the reality of the time Britain has found herself at war with Napoleon; 1790s to 1815. Butler notes that the romantics “continue to use the similar provincial landscapes and a ‘natural’ tone but drastically revise the oppositional message in favour of a religiously orthodox and politically loyal one.” Here, Butler identifies the mature works of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Finally, Butler identifies the final group of artists as having pronounced themselves most notably in the 1810s leading to early 1820s. The figures of Lord Byron and Shelley portray the challenging attitude to the policies of the British government and their less distinctive provincial approach.²³

The reference to Butler’s schema shall become useful once we consider the contexts in which the works that are subject to this thesis have been composed and the manner in which they have been perceived or referred to in other contexts. The focus shall now be placed on what Butler sees as the first phase, for it is the moment when nature and country stand as key concepts for the English romantics. As Butler notes, the term ‘country’ carries a double-play of meanings, whereas it refers to the nature or rather the not-town environment as the opposition to the produce of the civilisation, the term also stands as a reference to nation and the concept of identity.²⁴ The term ‘country’ thus brings forth the question of one’s own individuality and an individual’s relationship to his environment. The following section shall focus on the relationship of the English romantics to country.

²² Butler 40.

²³ Butler 40.

²⁴ Butler 41.

3.2 Romanticism and Nature

The approach to life under the influence of romanticism has necessarily re-shaped the perspective in which the human being has been portrayed in his relation to the universe. His own subjectivity has been redefined and emphasised. By elevating those aspects of the human endeavour that does not carry any connotation of the civilised nor of the modern, the romantics emphasise that which has still remained natural and in a sense truthful to the origin. It is thus the authenticity and immediacy that comes to the fore more prominently as opposed to the normativeness of the classicist approach to art.

In this sense, the romantics recover devotion and faithfulness to nature, for in the nature the human being is most truthful to his emotions and opens up to his own creativity. It is the authenticity the romantics seek in this quest for the origin; it is the immediate experience and mediation rather than restrictive sets of instructions and imposed orders. It is the fascination with the variability and plurality encoded in the nature and their inspiration by it that often differentiates them from the approaches of the classical era of classicism and of the reason. Any attempt to create and institutionalise an order is necessarily reductive and therefore it can never grasp all the individual variations; rather, it prefers and emphasises uniformity and causality. The romantics could no longer feel obliged to follow the restrictions imposed on art by their predecessors. The form needed to have become untamed in order to reflect the reality and the authenticity of whatever has still remained truthful to nature.

Yet this does not mean that the age of classicism did not recognise the importance and value of nature because of its adherence to fixed form and imposed patterns and orders. On the contrary; as Procházka and Hrbata note, the classicists turned to nature through the forms of the Antiquity, because they “no longer had a close relationship to the nature.”²⁵ In other words, the classicist aimed to arrive at and experience a truthful sensation of beauty but aimed to do so by adhering to the ancient values and patterns. Rather than focusing on the poet and his emotional experience, or rather focusing on the human being as an agent of creative powers, the classicists dwelt on form and criticism was founded on normative grounds. In other sense, unlike the classical perception of the work of art as an act of presenting improved aspects of reality, the romantics have considered the work of art as a

²⁵ Hrbata and Procházka 11.

creative process of imagination wherein the poet adapts or imitates the nature as truthfully as he or she is capable of doing. The romantics thus become sensitive to all aspects of authenticity and translate them in form and subject into the works of art.

It is the notion of authenticity that brings the romantics to the idea that the primordial language of the people, before they had departed from nature and had come to form a society, was poetry. In the antiquity, the origin of language was perceived as being associated with the emotional experiences of the primordial humans. Language was thus understood as an authentic and spontaneous expression of a human being's capability to perceive and react to the surrounding reality. As Lucretius states, language is thus not a system of names that would be given to the human by a divine force but rather a system of communication that has developed from simple sounds, where these have been primarily associated with concrete emotions or objects.²⁶ Furthermore, Lucretius "posits primordial man to have been endowed only with instincts, passions and the potentiality of reason."²⁷ This aspect of emotionality as standing at the origin of language has later been "merged with the concurrent belief that the first elaborate form of language was poetic,"²⁸ which gave rise to the belief that poetry preceded prose "because poetry is the natural expression of feeling."²⁹

Poetry has thus been associated with immediacy and authenticity. Abrams notes that this approach is traceable in the works of the already mentioned Giambattista Vico and his *Scienza Nuova* (1725). Vico claimed that the first people after the Biblical flood acted and spoke "imaginatively and instinctually and therefore poetically."³⁰ It was then again the emotional and the imaginative aspect of the human capacity to reflect on the reality rather than abstractness and the rationality. Following this notion, Vico claimed, that human beings express themselves "under the impetus of violent passions." Yet, since "men vent great passions by breaking into songs," the primordial language must have been "at the same time poetry and song, and of necessity, densely figurative."³¹ Procházka and Hrbata summarise the notion by stating that the primordial human beings thought and acted on the impulses of

²⁶ Abrams 78.

²⁷ Abrams 78.

²⁸ Abrams 79.

²⁹ Abrams 79.

³⁰ Abrams 80.

³¹ Abrams 80.

passion and emotion, wherein the language had not been poetic for its melodiousness but primarily for its figurativeness.³²

Abrams notes that the notion that poetry was “coeval”³³ with the birth of the language has become a certain manifestation of a vogue which has found its reflection among many academics and intellectual elites. “Theorizing about linguistic and poetic origin became a popular occupation among Scottish writers of the mid-eighteenth century,”³⁴ among which Abrams included such scholars as William Duff, Hugh Blair or Adam Ferguson, of whom the latter two shall be mentioned later on in the thesis in relation to the works of James Macpherson. What united these men, and many others, was as Abrams notes, mostly their deep “interest in the reconstruction of the genesis and prehistoric development of human arts and institutions.”³⁵ This stance falls within the line of the argumentation of the romantics who claimed that it was the original man, yet outside of what is now termed civilised society, who was pure and authentic. Poetry thus resonates with purity and authenticity that the romantics so longed to enliven and re-experience.

This stance carries a distinct feature of the works of Jean Jacque Rousseau and his concern for the human being, where the contrast between the individual and the civilised society was perceived as the contrast between the natural and the artificial, between an original nature and a highly organized and contrived set of institutions.³⁶ As Smith notes, “it is important to bear in mind, that (Rousseau) clearly presupposes the existence of individual nature which needs only to be provided with a proper environment in order to flourish.”³⁷ In other sense, in order to remain free and authentic, the human being should “keep to (his) appointed place in the order of nature and nothing can tear (him) from it.”³⁸ It is therefore again the notion of authenticity and immediacy that resonates throughout the eighteenth century literary movement.

³² Hrbata and Procházka 11.

³³ Abrams 81.

³⁴ Abrams 81.

³⁵ Abrams 81.

³⁶ J. E. Smith “Rousseau, Romanticism and the Philosophy of Existence” *Yale French Studies*, No. 13, *Romanticism Revisited* (1954): 54.

³⁷ Smith 55.

³⁸ J.J. Rousseau, *Emile* (The Echo Library, 2007) 46.

The concept of poetry as the primordial form has also found its reflection in the concept proposed by Johan Georg Hamann where he related the poetical features to the notion of its divine origin. Hamann's views were always provoking and inspiring, for he based his reflections on the poetic and prophetic functions of scriptural language on the implications of Augustine's views on language and on the Socratic method of philosophizing.³⁹ Isaiah Berlin states that Hamann's greatest discovery is that language and thought are not two processes but one. "Language ... conveys directly the inner-most soul of individuals and societies; that we do not first form (or receive) 'ideas' and then clothe them in words, but that to think is to use symbols."⁴⁰ In other words, language as well as reasoning are processes and thus should not be seen as static but rather as developing and changing. There is a relation in which both the language and the reason exist and function. Language can thus give rise to understanding as well as misconceptions. And at the same time, Hamann stresses that language had not been invented or given to the humanity but evolved from the needs of the primordial humans.

However, he also disagrees with the notion that language originates from the expressions of emotionality that are comparable to animals. The origin of language, in Hamann's view, is to be seen in the relationship between the God and the humanity. For Hamann, "God is the poet who speaks for the man through his creation."⁴¹ The presented 'poem' of this creation is however chaotic and none but the poet can imitate and adapt what seems as disordered fragments. The poet finds a divine unity and poetry thus becomes "the mother-tongue of the human race."⁴²

Johann Gottfried von Herder, Hamann's close friend and often a philosophical opponent, exclaimed that the language had been both "expressive and mimetic in its origin, and therefore doubly poetic."⁴³ Herder then, as well as Hamann, notices the "collection"⁴⁴ of poetry and the primordial language. Consequently, Herder formalises his assumption that poetry, or in the general sense the language itself, does not find its origin in the general nature of the human beings, but rather, it becomes an expression of the divergence of

³⁹ Albert Anderson "Philosophical Obscurantism: Prolegomena to Hamann's Views on Language" *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Jul., 1969): 251.

⁴⁰ Anderson 247.

⁴¹ H.B. Nisbet and C. Rawson "Biblical scholarship and literary criticism" *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) 772.

⁴² Nisbet and Rawson 772.

⁴³ Abrams 82.

⁴⁴ Abrams 82.

reasoning of individual groups and nations. Herder sees the basis for these differences in the natural specificities to which the concerned communities had been exposed. In this sense Herder claims that poetry, culture in general, of different communities shall differ. Necessarily then these different realisations and forms of poetry would stand as testimony to the nature and the cultural uniqueness of the concerned society. Herder thus indirectly opens the sluice to what shall later translate into nationalistic quest for mythical and poetical past and cultural heritage.

Along the similar line with Herder's realisation of the relationship between a particular society, the natural specificities and its language and culture, Hugh Blair notes that there are vast differences between the poetries of different ethnics. For the sake of the argument let us not judge, for a moment, the tendentiousness of Blair's text but rather consider what may be parallel to what has been said above in relation to Herder. In the foreword to James Macpherson's collection of poems, *The poetical works of Ossian*, Blair states that it is typical to find crude, wild and dark themes in the irregularly formalised poetry of the ancient Nordic tribes. In this sense Blair evokes Herder's claim of the influence of the nature on the poetry, since Blair indirectly hints at the harsh environments the Vikings come from and the crude narrations they have been producing. However, despite the theory, Blair values Macpherson's collected poems much higher, thereby hinting at the different nature of their origin.

The poetry is, as Blair claims, full "of tenderness, and even delicacy of sentiment, greatly predominant over fierceness and barbarity."⁴⁵ He acknowledges and in fact celebrates the poems as the proclamation of the immense creative force of the primordial society Ossian had been the heir to. However, Blair's text does not pay true respect to the text since it uncritically dwells on the notion of the genuineness of the text, which he aims to support by drawing parallels between Ossian's and Homer's art of narration. By the manner in which Blair addressed the readership in support of the uniqueness of the collection of the poems, he aided the rise of the myth of the historicity and the alleged authenticity of the text. Yet, Blair's text must be perceived through the prism of the national movement of the period that was aimed primarily at the revival of the lost cultural heritage and there where the heritage

⁴⁵ Hugh Blair "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal" James Macpherson *The Poetical Works of Ossian* (Ex-classic Project, 2009) 52.

was not to be found or never to have been had to create it all a new, but disguise it as traditional.

In other words, the early romanticism gave rise to the fascination with what may be termed as unofficial culture; the culture of the periphery, the culture of the rural societies and the narrations of the forgotten past. The poet of the past as well as of the contemporary has become, in the Herderean sense, the only being able to experience the authenticity of nature. The figure of the bard has come to fore and along intensified the general interest for the folklore. Ballads have been collected and recollected as literary antiquities. This is in line with O'Halloran's claims, when she stresses the eighteenth century popular enthusiasm for the oral had been related to "the vogue for the primitive, encapsulated in the belief that the best condition of man and human society was the earliest, when the world had a simplicity since (then) lost."⁴⁶

Referring briefly back to Herder's views on the origin of language, it is noteworthy to stress their relation to the view of the naturalists that language is to be accounted for in terms of the development of human consciousness in the context of man as a social being. Without language, then, any thought and consequently communication would become impossible.⁴⁷ Accordingly then, as has already been shown by Herder and before him by Hamann, reasoning cannot be separated from language, and therefore culture cannot be separated from language. There are different types of languages that account for different types of communication.⁴⁸ Similar to the development of a human being, language of a society evolves in accordance. Therefore, language may be perceived as the symbol of social advancement. In different moments, then, on the basis of different stages of the development of the language, the society perceives reality in different terms. This has already been discussed in relation to Giambattista Vico's observations on the matter of the origin of language.

Spoken language thus comes to the fore as an authentic form of communication where what is emphasised is the immediate experience as well as its figurativeness. In literature, as the

⁴⁶ Clare O'Halloran "Irish Re-Creation of the Gaelic Past: the Challenge of Macpherson's Ossian" *Past and Present* No.124, (Aug., 1989) 70.

⁴⁷ Edward Sapir "Herder's 'Ursprung der Sprache'" *Modern Philology* Vol. 5, No. 1 (Jul., 1907) 114.

⁴⁸ Sapir 142.

symbol of the cultural heritage, the oral becomes perceived as the counterpart to the written. The oral form employs other systems and practices than those which the written formalisation requires; i.e. the notion of abstractness and reduction that is implied in any system that aims to embrace all the variables. On the other hand the oral necessarily expresses notions that the written does not imply. The text may be re-read and preserved for the experience of other readers but it loses the immediacy of the oral. The oral is often thought of as unbound by the form as it is the content of the narration that is emphasised. Therefore, even though bards use a fixed set of devices such as alliteration or kennings, the same story told will be more likely to have adopted an altered form. It is therefore the written that conserves the form and at the same moment allows for other literary devices to develop.

The tradition of folk tales collection in England has its origin in the Romantic literary circles. It was spurred by the discovery and subsequently the appreciation of the merits of popular poetry which was formerly ignored and despised by the neo-classicist academics. The beginning of the trend may be ascribed to the year 1711 when Joseph Addison published papers in which he defended “the darling Songs of the common People.”⁴⁹ However, the ‘ballad craze,’⁵⁰ as McLane terms it, started in 1765 when Thomas Percy published a collection of English and Scottish traditional ballads under the title *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Ballads were collected and recollected as literary antiquities. Many men of letters and academics including Walter Scott ventured the countryside and the Scottish highlands in search of forgotten tales and songs. These collections were greeted as “true voices of primitive poetry.”⁵¹

Marilyn Butler notes that the vogue for the folk traditions and histories found its resonance not only in art but also in the individual’s sense of identity. “The country movement,”⁵² the term Butler employs to refer to this wave of general interest in the rural, has addressed not only the not-town reality that the noun ‘country’ refers us to but also to the national aspects encoded in the term. To the fore, with a stronger voice, suddenly came the previously unaccented notions of provincialism that seemed to have been placed in opposition to the official discourse. From the historical perspective, it has not been long since the context of

⁴⁹ A.N. Bold *The Ballad* (Routledge, 1979) 7.

⁵⁰ McLane 425.

⁵¹ O’Halloran 69.

⁵² Butler 41.

the seventeenth century civil war and its aftermath as a result of which the term ‘patriot’ has begun to stand for a strong sentiment of unity on the basis of an individual’s nation. Consequently, as Butler notes, one of its practices was to “cite the nation in selective contexts, (frequently in the sense of standing) to the opposition to the crown and the centralised bureaucracy.”⁵³

Yet, in the course of time, especially in the context of the aftermaths of the French revolution, the meanings behind the term ‘country’ begin to be appropriated by numerous groups, which, consequently, perceive and present it in different light. In the England of the early 19th century, “the government supporters captured the patriotic rhetoric”⁵⁴ and creative writers, as Butler claims, have moved to “a modern form of nationalism.”⁵⁵ The terms ‘country’ and ‘nation’ thus begin to stand out as “images” that aim to “inspire emotion, idealism and loyalty.”⁵⁶ Poets turn the countryside both beautiful and familiar; there is no more need to travel far to experience fascinating landscapes in order to mediate to the reader the experience of the natural human being. The immediate and reachable environment of the contemporary western readership had begun to be re-introduced and re-portrayed and in a sense re-familiarised. The poets created accounts as well as new folk histories. Butler notes, that it had been only until then that the court seemed to be the centre of any historical narrative for “it held the keys to the written historical records;”⁵⁷ by such a practice the central administration had laid claims to legitimacy. However, because of this new general fascination with the old tales and ancient traditions that seemed to have resembled the age of primitivism and purity of the primordial human beings, fragments of particular, older societies had started to emerge out of the dark. A sense of new consciousness of an individual’s own identity and relation to the past had begun to formalise.

Butler traces this development of the romantic approach to nature, and a country in particular, in England to the works of James Thomson whose attitudes, she notes, “(had not) so much (been) anti-aristocratic as (rather they had been) sympathetic to middling and the common people.”⁵⁸ It was only after the events of the 1740s that Thomson’s poems began to

⁵³ Butler 41.

⁵⁴ Butler 41.

⁵⁵ Butler 41.

⁵⁶ Butler 41.

⁵⁷ Butler 42.

⁵⁸ Butler 42.

be politically weighed. Nature and country were represented as “populated, productive, technological even.”⁵⁹ Moreover, as Butler comments, “Thomson as a Scotchman, in all his later work tends to equate the nation’s past with the story of all its peoples which means going back beyond the arrival of the English to the cultures of the aboriginal Welsh and Scots.”⁶⁰

This concretisation of national sentiments, alongside the links made to the past, brought to the fore the symbolic figure of the druid, which stood mostly as “the archetypal poet and the archivist of the collective popular wisdom.”⁶¹ There was a tendency to trace the literary tradition to its mythical beginnings, emphasising its common origin. It was an “all-inclusive, non-centralist conception of literary history.”⁶² The contemporary periphery was beginning to realise its own particular past culture and its unique collective memory. Out of the attempts to collect and reproduce folk histories and poems there has risen a new sense of communal consciousness and subsequently aspirations to self-determination in certain aspects of life such as language or religion. Works of art had the potential to become a manifestation of cultural independence of the peripheral or the marginalised societies; they became a witness of national pride and a hope for its own future survival.

This is in line with the already mentioned approach to language and culture as expressed by Herder. He draws an allegory of a world-order wherein every nation stands as a workshop that produces values that are of use to the others. Unless the nation can supply these beneficial added values and remain in this sense productive and practical, only then the nation deserves the right to self-determination and survival. Paraphrasing Herder, what he envisions, therefore, is not a centralised collectivism in the sense of political, economical or cultural homogeneity, “in which constituent parts are forged into unity by a dominant centre of power,”⁶³ but rather a kind of partnership between distinct entities within a structure free from any major pressure point. It is therefore the plurality of values and concepts and the ability of the individual parts to provide for the needs and desires of the others that make every individual element valuable and therefore vital.

⁵⁹ Butler 42.

⁶⁰ Butler 42.

⁶¹ Butler 42.

⁶² Butler 42.

⁶³ F.M. Barnard *Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History* (Québec: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2003) 27.

In the context of the discussed topic, it may prove illustrative to note Goethe's notion of the relationship between the work of art and a natural organism. Influenced by the Plotinian aesthetic tradition, Goethe stresses that, "a work of art must be treated like a work of nature," in that "the value of each must be developed out of itself and regarded in itself."⁶⁴ As Frederic Will notes, "a being must freely will to be what its nature requires it to be."⁶⁵ In other words, work of art is related to organism that strives to fulfil its ideal design; every expression of art thus contains its individual unity and its own meaning. Therefore, particular nations shall formalise individual concepts of art wherein they shall emphasise their own individuality and their own sense of the ideal. Since it is the poets who reflect most genuinely the manifestation of nature, it is art rather than philosophy that stands as the symbolic structure of the particular nation's vitality.

In the context of the competitive reality of the systems in which nations exist, it is thus mostly the history of the nation as well as the culture it produces, which decides whether the nation is doomed to remain a cultural serf to a dominating nation or become self-sufficient and thus enriching the others. Similarly, for Hegel, it is first of all the language and the origin that constitute the commonly shared sense of identity. Culture thus, in the organic sense, becomes an expression the ability of a nation to survive and evolve to higher forms. The historical narrations of the romantics and their fascination with the intangible past only helped to serve the belief that the present-day nations that find themselves under the dominance of a foreign dynasty have no reason to suppress their individuality and submit themselves to cultural assimilation for they, too, possess and can derive from their mythical roots that are equally important and inspiring.

In relation to the discussed importance of nature and country to the romantics, it is illustrative to focus here more closely on the works of James Macpherson and the notion of orality. The following section shall therefore deal with a general introduction to the myth surrounding the figure of Ossian and the manner in which it has translated itself into other contexts.

⁶⁴ F. Will, "Goethe's Aesthetics: The Work of Art and the Work of Nature" *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No.22 (Jan.1956): 56.

⁶⁵ Will 56.

3.3 James Macpherson and Scottish orality

The fascination with the natural as well as with the genuine and the ancient lured the romantic poets to wander through the nature and search for traces of folk ballads and collective memories. Encouraged by his Edinburgh professors and friends such as Adam Fergusson and Hugh Blair, young James Macpherson set off to walk the Scottish Highlands in hope for forgotten poems of the Gaelic culture. Between the years 1760 and 1763 he produced three collections of poems, which were, in the words of O'Halloran, "purported to be translations of the works of a third-century Scottish bard, Ossian the son of Fingal, king of Morven, whose many battles they celebrated."⁶⁶

Although, as O'Halloran comments, these were greeted with acclaim all over Europe "as the true voice of primitive poetry,"⁶⁷ there were immediately doubts about the authenticity of the poems. O'Halloran concludes her introduction to the Ossian phenomenon by stating that James Macpherson, "the self-proclaimed translator had in fact composed the poems himself, drawing to some degree on the traditional tales and ballads of the Highlands of Scotland as his raw material."⁶⁸ From these he then obtained both the main characters and many of the plots, but "made so many alterations and amalgamations that they bore at times only a vague resemblance to the original tales."⁶⁹

Butler notes that by his find, Macpherson aimed to "demonstrate the heroic and war-like character of Scotsmen along with the legitimacy to the soil and the age of their culture."⁷⁰ Culture in this sense becomes an argument for claims of national sovereignty and for the perception and interpretation of the contemporary political reality. In the preface to the collection of the poems, Macpherson states that the people of Highlands had always been "free from inter-mixture with foreigners."⁷¹ Thereby he infers that the language had been "pure and original," and remains witness to "the manners if the ancient and unmixed race of men."⁷² Thereby he leads his argumentation in the direction of denouncing the notion of Irish origin of the collected poems as well as against the notion that Scotland had been colonised

⁶⁶ O'Halloran 69.

⁶⁷ O'Halloran 69.

⁶⁸ O'Halloran 69.

⁶⁹ O'Halloran 69.

⁷⁰ Butler 44.

⁷¹ James Macpherson *The Poetical Works of Ossian* (Ex-classic Project, 2009) 34.

⁷² Macpherson 34.

by the tribes coming from the northern coast of Ireland. Oral literature thus becomes a medium for materialisation of a concrete myth. Yet, this stance was met with great applause especially by those members of societies where their own identity had been subject to the dominance of the majority rule. In relation to Macpherson's strong national sentiments, Butler notes that "it was Macpherson's elemental reduction of provincial patriotism to cultural and historical first principles that made him reusable elsewhere."⁷³

James Porter notes that the significance of Macpherson's works is not so much the literary merit but rather the psychological and social forces that "impelled Macpherson to undertake the Ossianic project ... and subsequently defend his treatment of the traditional Gaelic song and prose material."⁷⁴ Porter takes a note of some of Macpherson's biographical details on the basis of which he depicts him as being "caught between the older world of the Scottish Highlands with its long-lived oral traditions and the fashionable world of literary London."⁷⁵

Macpherson therefore seemed to be caught between two allegiances which necessarily hurt as well as momentarily support the arising national sentiments. Porter states that the issue of authenticity of the poems is not so much seen as the key issue because "authenticity is itself an evanescent value."⁷⁶ Furthermore, folk traditions, as has been discussed earlier in the text in relation to Hobsbawm, are not seen as unchanging or "inviolable."⁷⁷ Porter thus mostly aims at the influence of and the passions provoked by the work, not only in England but rather throughout the western civilisation.

In a similar manner of work to that of an antiquarian, Macpherson collected and re-collected memories of traditionally orally passed on folk material. However, as an artist, Macpherson adapted "the genuine material, arranging it into a pattern that fitted current ideas of epic poetry."⁷⁸ It was mostly the sensibility of emotions so much unlike the taste of the classical models that attracted Macpherson's readership. The romantic approach has united fully with Macpherson "(seeing) himself as a Gael who had witnessed the aftermath of the Battle of

⁷³ Butler 44.

⁷⁴ James Porter "Bring me the head of James Macpherson: The Execution of Ossian and the Wellspring of Folkloristic Discourse" *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 114, No.454 (Autumn, 2001) 397.

⁷⁵ Porter 397.

⁷⁶ Porter 398.

⁷⁷ Porter 398.

⁷⁸ Porter 398.

Culloden.”⁷⁹ Art and claimed historicity have thus become a tool against the “Anglicization and commercialisation of the Highlands,”⁸⁰ which had undergone a disintegration of traditional ties and institutions. Forgery has thus become a defence mechanism that aimed to preserve and develop the culture of the Highlands, which found itself championed by the English traditions and the English language as a mode of everyday communication. It was then history of the particular people that came to the fore as the source of national and cultural spirit and consciousness. The echoes of the traditional way of life and the revival and adaptation of mythical narrations were aimed to confirm and validate the conscience of historical self-sufficiency and self-determinism. It was thus history and collective memory that were used as factors of concrete legitimisations and self-assurances.

In relation to this, it is interesting to note the position Macpherson advocated in relationship to the Irish traditions, historicity and culture. Porter notes that Macpherson reverses the historical roles of Scotland and Ireland by him adhering to “pseudo-scholarly footnotes based on sources like John Toland's *Critical History of the Celtic Religion and Learning* (1740).”⁸¹ Macpherson thus creates a historical distortion, giving rise to new mythology. He denies the claims, raised by the Irish, for their historical appropriation of the bard, who they name not Ossian but Oisín.

Consequently, the reaction to the poems in the north differed in many aspects to that which was received throughout the continental Europe. While the English and most of the continental readership acclaimed the texts for “the heroic-elegiac-pastoral mood,”⁸² the Irish perceived the text and especially Macpherson’s introductory chapters as an attack on their history and heritage.⁸³ To see the reasons for this different approach, it is useful to note the historical contexts of the relationships between England and the Irish. Despite the Scotophobia and the expressions of the English superiority over the Irish greatly felt in the contemporary London, it was mostly the attack on the remnants of the Irish heritage of a sovereign system and set of values and traditions that stirred the Irish antiquarians and academics to revive their national spirit and culture. The nostalgia for the primitive that was experienced when being exposed to Macpherson’s text, which was what mostly fascinated

⁷⁹ Porter 399.

⁸⁰ Porter 399.

⁸¹ Porter 406.

⁸² Porter 406.

⁸³ O’Halloran 72.

the English as well as the continental readership, thus could not be accepted by the Irish for it would stand a testimony to their alleged barbaric image and their contemporary “situation of colonial subjects.”⁸⁴

The Irish nationalism of the period, besides adhering to the grand narratives of the Irish glorious pre-colonial past, as depicted by Geoffrey Keating or Charles O’Connor, did not follow the romantic models of primitivism but rather attempted to undermine the colonial stereotype. The Irish writers thus “projected their desires for change on to a mythic past which was sophisticated and politically and culturally, rather than primitive.”⁸⁵ In this sense, there is the reserved stance towards the orality of Macpherson’s collected poems, for, besides the Irish origin of many of the lays of the poems, the Irish generally believed, as O’Connor states, “that the Irish were highly cultivated people who were literate long before Christianity arrived in Ireland.”⁸⁶ The image of the society “based exclusively on oral medium,” as portrayed in Macpherson’s poems, thus “undermines the portrayal of early Ireland as a sophisticated, aristocratic and, above all, literate society ... (and was therefore) attacked as part of the British tendency to depict the Irish as barbaric.”⁸⁷ O’Halloran thus claims that the reason for the reserved reception of the poems was the historical connotations and the light the text set the Irish past in, although what primarily caused emotion was the claim by the Irish that what Macpherson presented as originally Scottish had in fact Irish origin, namely, that it was the genuine production of the Irish bard Oisín.

However, in order to understand these conflicting positions, it is worthwhile to consider the origin and certain key features of oral art. Clark Murray thus takes us back to the times, “when an extraordinary event, instead of being laboriously referred to some recognized agency of nature, was at once explained as the work of some of those supernatural beings which peopled the fancy of our ancestors”⁸⁸ Murray notes that it is highly possible to observe “various shapes which the same primitive legend has assumed under the various influences to which it has been subjected at the different points where it has been deposited along the

⁸⁴ O’Halloran 72.

⁸⁵ O’Halloran 73.

⁸⁶ O’Halloran 77.

⁸⁷ O’Halloran 73.

⁸⁸ J.C. Murray *The Ballads and Songs of Scotland in view of their influence on the character of people.* (London: Macmillan and co., 1874) 193.

stream of the migration of the primordial people.”⁸⁹ Certain themes and images thus find their reoccurrence in the oral art of different communities, according to the environment and the historical context in which the songs and ballads have been formed. What is especially notable is the people’s superstition and emotional experience, for, as Murray notes, “ballads and songs necessarily reflect something of the nature of the people.”⁹⁰

As the illustrative example of the overlap of themes reoccurring in different cultures, Murray notes the introduction of Christianity among the Western nations. The influence of religion on the superstitions encoded in the songs and ballads of the original people was various. Those beliefs which were clearly incompatible with essential principles of Christian thought and life, were, “ultimately compelled to give way.”⁹¹ However, in some cases the Church was forced to content itself with a compromise, clothing a pagan ritual with a veil of Christianity. In this sense, this may be the reason for the conflicting claims for the appropriation of the mythical figure of Ossian; yet, the claim no longer seems to reflect only a cultural and historical interest of the concerned peoples in their heritage. The whole discourse has been shifted to a political level, where literature no longer functions as a cultural entity but rather as a tool for formation of nation consciousness.

Macpherson’s text has thus been re-appropriated and set in different contexts. What had initially begun as an imitation and re-creation of genuine, ancient orality, soon transformed into conscious attempts to create particular, concrete cultural signs that would stand as fixed basis for the revival of the awakening sense of national identity. Besides the monumentalised culture Macpherson’s poet Ossian narrates about, it was mostly the individuality of the voice that inspired and addressed the romanticist public. It was the sought for cultural wealth that found its resonance and gave rise to imitations in the decades following the publishing of Macpherson’s texts. However, it is no longer the archival reconstruction of ancient fragments into a grand narrative but rather adaptation and alternation of the form. There is the sense of the end of grand epic poetry; it was rather fragments that functioned as the form of the poems. Unlike the classicist form which is in itself a complete and unified entity, the romanticists, if the generalisation is possible, employed forms alternative to those of the Antiquity, showing the disunity and a different set of values.

⁸⁹ Murray 5.

⁹⁰ Murray 7.

⁹¹ Murray 7.

This excursion into the reception of the collected poems aimed to portray how different narrations and different genres may arise in particular contexts and consequently acquire different meanings and symbolisms. In the atmosphere of fascination with romanticism and the vogue for the discovery of marginalised histories, the folk tradition has returned to the fore of cultural interest, along with which came the ballad. However, as Stewart claims, perhaps because of the atmosphere any collected song or poem was considered as a relic of the traditional folklore. The reading public awaited, with expectations, new discoveries of folkloric forms. Stewart notes that “verbal art was collected for number of reasons,” be they attempts to establish a corpus in order to preserve or rescue national heritage, as well as presenting the material as a cultural curiosity.⁹² Furthermore, the process of commodification of literature and the growing market for these works must have been another decisive moment. At such an environment of fascination with the collections, the texts were accepted rather as the testimony of the past and not as literary productions and forgeries.

Yet, what these attempts shared in common was the transformation of speech into writing; the language and the production had been displaced from its particular context and moment and transformed into a fixed medium, where, as Stewart notes, “such separation may result in the singularity of the text.” In fact, the oral becomes a fragment which is placed into a new environment, weighed with the particular interests or interpretations of the collector. Orality thus, by becoming written, loses its context while acquiring a new one. Stewart therefore refers to the attempts to record the oral tradition as a form of irony, wherein certain plurality or rather variability and vitality becomes subject to particular concretisations, yet without it, it would probably become extinct.⁹³

Let us consider more attentively the origin and key features of the folk ballads and songs. To commence this, it is useful to find a definition to what is a ballad. Murray provides the following:

Without going into a history of the various uses of the term ‘ballad’, it may be defined as denoting a lyrical narrative, unguided by conscious art, of any event, real or imaginary, which is calculated to excite emotion. It need only

⁹² Susan Stewart “Scandals of the Ballad” *Representations* No.32 (Autumn, 1990) 135.

⁹³ Stewart 135.

be added, that, by this definition, our review is limited to the genuine ballad, and that therefore its modern imitations are excluded.⁹⁴

A song on the other hand is a lyrical utterance of an emotion, so, according to Murray, there may be some difficulty to distinguish one from the other. “But when the narrative of the event predominates over the mere utterance of the emotion which the event calls forth, the lyric becomes in propriety a ballad; and vice versa.”⁹⁵

Murray then attempts to provide a brief classification of ballads and settles down for a division on the basis of the themes and the period of their formation. All, however, share certain key characteristics. First of all, the poetry was not strained into accordance with rules. He terms this as ‘artlessness;’⁹⁶ while at the same time the whole style was of a spontaneous nature. This he refers to as ‘naturalness.’⁹⁷ Ballads thus possess a certain charm, for they stand as a copy of nature, and evoke genuine and unaffected sentiments. They are able to move the mind with the feelings of “compassion and humanity.”⁹⁸

In relation to its form, Murray notes the recurrence of certain incidents and expressions which among the production of the ballad makers. Similarly, there is a notable resemblance of the rhymes employed in the ballads. The minstrels had thus chosen from a limited common stock.

Besides Murray’s portrayal of the traditional folk ballad that was created for the entertainment of the peasantry, there were other types of ballads of which the most relevant to the theme of this paper is the ‘minstrel ballad.’ The gentry and the clerics of the seventeenth century usually kept a professional bard at their service for the purpose of self-entertainment. In contrast to the characterisation of the folk ballad, minstrels composed the song with the intention to portray a certain event in the favour of his patron. The subject matter was heavily influenced by the addressee of the ballad even though the bards themselves proclaim their objectivity and truthfulness. Formally, most of the poems therefore began with a genealogy of the bard’s patron and therein certain links to prominent characters were created. Thereby, to the portrayed patron there were ascribed those qualities that were

⁹⁴ Murray xiv.

⁹⁵ Murray xiv.

⁹⁶ Murray 170.

⁹⁷ Murray 170.

⁹⁸ Murray 171.

being referred to either in the genealogy or in the plot of the narrated event. Narration of battles, wars, loyalty and victory was made for the purpose of immortalisation of the patron. Often the performance of the ballad was divided into stages for the purpose of “forestalling tedium and building up suspense by delays and piecemeal revelations.”⁹⁹ Though weighed with such particular interest, these songs achieved a great influence and affected the manner of folk song or remodelled the already established ones.

The minstrel ballad therefore combined the tradition of folk narration of the past that had been in no other way in contact with the present, with the particularism of the narration of the contemporary. The fact that the seventeenth century form reshaped the narration of the preceding period is illustrative of the power of the text, as well as its relativity. As Stewart notes, “We find that a genre can arise in a particular context and can just as particularly disappear.”¹⁰⁰ Thereby she stressed the vulnerability of texts to become corrupted under circumstances when power is exercised. She develops her argumentation in reference to the spread of the general fascination with the eighteenth century collections of allegedly genuine folk songs and poems.

Furthermore, if the reader accepts the ballad as genuine, his comprehension of the collected poems is then endangered by the written form. As has been pointed out above, the writing has fixed the oral by which some of the qualities inborn to folk tradition have been lost or reshaped. It is the power of the text, the form that supplies the reader with the content that may potentially distort and/or manipulate the reader into accepting the suggested as a concrete notion of reality. This would not be an issue if the ballads were not claimed to be authentic. As Stewart states, authenticity is possible as a concept “only in a situation that *has* an external history;” in other words, if the presented is claimed to re-present reality. She continues, “The problem of authenticity arises in situations where there is a self-conscious perception of mediation, a sense of distance between one era and another, one world-view and another.”¹⁰¹

Murray then notes what has been already discussed in the paper in relation to history and the historicist: the artlessness of the ballads becomes more prominent in the form in which they

⁹⁹ “Minstrel ballad” *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002 Delux Edition*, 2002 ed.

¹⁰⁰ Stewart 135.

¹⁰¹ Stewart 137.

were preserved in the memories of the people, than in that which they had acquired in the collections of ballads. “For the collectors, to whose labours we owe the permanent preservation of the ballads in literature, generally make up the versions which they print from a number of versions which they have obtained from various sources.”¹⁰² Necessarily then, these texts are endowed with a different context and a form that may have been artificially imposed.

The issue stressed here is the notion discussed in the previous chapters on history and memory and the enclosure and emphasis of a particular experience over another one. With the advancement of the printing technology, the ability to duplicate and reproduce, the emphasis on the ‘first-hand experience’ has been weakened. At such a moment, experience becomes dependent on mediation and interpretation, therefore subject to manipulation and reduction. In this sense it is interesting to note what further inspirations and claims can ballads, perceived as remnants of the past, have for the present. In the following section the attention shall be aimed at the historical novel and the works of Sir Walter Scott and the relationship between past narrations and the power of contextualisation of these narrations.

3.4 Historical Novel and Walter Scott

It seems to be the nature of human kind that once capable of reasoning and conscious of time and his own temporality, he seeks to establish his own identity and find his own meaning of existence. In relation to this attempt to comprehend the present, history is often sought for as the tool to satisfy the need to learn. History thus provides him with particular interpretations and schemes that allow him to form a particular image and particular knowledge. In the interpreted past he often finds order and sense. For the romanticists, the history may be even more fascinating as it has the potential to reveal the sought for natural state of the primordial human being; there, in the past, the remnants of the authentic, the beautiful, the immediate are to be found.

However, as has been discussed earlier in the paper, history is weighed by reason and the methods of analogy and consequence; in any historical narration, there is a logic implied, which supplies the addressee of the particular history with a particular scheme. Once this

¹⁰² Murray 172.

frame is supplied it proves difficult to accept a different presentation or interpretation of the past events. Necessarily, history becomes a sphere of conflicts of tendencies, ideologies and opinions. Therefore, there arise different meanings and concepts of history which adhere to their positions strongly and obstinately. This is the reason why the novels of Walter Scott demand attention, for in their narration and the mixture of facts and fiction they provide us with irony; irony that focuses on the inability to perceive history in any other manner than through the mentioned schemes. It is the clash between different conceptions and unshakeable positions; it is therefore impossible to learn the true meaning of history for it is so ungraspable. This seems to be intensified by the format of the Scott's novels: a historical novel; facts creating a frame of reference to fiction, fiction developing and creating a certain portrayal of a society on the background of facts.

The origin of historical novel is generally considered to be set at the beginning of the nineteenth century when history was becoming subject to shared experience due to the historical turmoil and the Napoleonic experience. Social mobility and technological progress allowed individuals, as well as individual communities to become conscious of their identity and provided them with such tools as print to enliven their once forgotten or weakening traditions. Contemporary fascination with folk tales and songs soon translated into literary forms that combined romanticist notions with narrations of the past. History became a rich source of the subject matter but remained mostly at the background as the ingredient necessary for the overall tone. Rather than the actual account of a given reality, historical novel attempted to convey the spirit, manners and social conditions of the past. It was through the experience and the interaction of the protagonists rather than through factual depictions that the authors of the historical novels aimed to create the portrayal of the past.

The landmark of the genre is to be found with the emergence of Walter Scott and what was soon to be referred to as the 'Waverley novels'. Scott's first historical novel, *Waverley; or 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, was first published in 1814 even though Scott had been working on the novel since 1805. As the title suggests, the novel presents the reader with a plot developing on the background of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Concerning the actual time span, the timeline starts in summer 1744 and ends months after the battle of Culloden. Therefore it does not provide the reader with a detailed study of the development of the main protagonist as for example is the case with the novel *Tom Jones*. However, Scott manages to

use the space provided fully in providing the reader with a complex plot and lines of conflict that it resembles in form the German 'Bildungsroman.' The reader is given the origin and characterisation of Waverley right at the beginning. Thereby Scott already hinted at the weaknesses and strengths of the main figure and has allowed the reader to focus and follow concrete manifestations and development of Waverley's character.

Scott's choice of the subject matter was not accidental for it reflected his childhood although mediated, yet intense and exciting, experience of the Jacobite phenomenon. It was mainly due to the tales of the rebellions of 1715 and 1745 that Scott had heard from his grand-father and his friends. These particular memories were used to build a frame of the plot. Alongside with this source of inspiration Scott was an ardent reader of minstrel ballads. Becoming acquainted with Macpherson's collection of poems Scott witnessed that antiquity may not only be resuscitated but also imitated and stimulated.

Scott did not attempt to create a historical representation of the past, rather he made history to recede out of the immediate focus in order to provide space for the development of a fictional plot through which Scott aimed to emphasise those aspects of the society he considered conflicting. Therefore, the narration is focused on the experience and the interaction of the fictional characters rather than on historical figures. Paul Landis noted that Scott had tendency to "clear the plot out of his way in as much as one to six first chapters."¹⁰³ Scott's main focus was therefore on the development and the characterisation of the characters. Landis develops this further by treating Scott as the surveyor of a man's psychology. He described Scott as a 'humanist'¹⁰⁴ on the basis that, in his novels, Scott treats a man as the focal point of interest. A man thus becomes the concern and the sole object of exploration and study. History is important, but only as it provides an environment suitable for a better understanding of the human nature. The Battle of Cullodan therefore keeps coming to the fore throughout the novel, yet only as the vehicle or perhaps even a catalyst aiding the human nature in the plot to show its weaknesses and strengths.

One of the keynotes of the Waverley novels is Scott's deep interest in the relationship between imagination and reality. He raises the question whether imagination is a malicious

¹⁰³ Paul Landis "The Waverley Novels, or a Hundred Years After" *PMLA* Vol.52, Bo.2 (Modern Language Association, Jun., 1937): 464.

¹⁰⁴ Landis 465.

deceiver or a source of wisdom. In the third chapter of *Waverley* Scott stresses the nature of Edward Waverley's education and the manner in which he treats the objects of his interest. He becomes involved in many subjects but merely sees into the logic and mechanisms that are at their core. Therefore, his perception of the reality is necessarily distorted. As Jana Davis notes, "Waverley lives more in his day dreams than in the world around him in which he rapidly loses interest." Therefore, Davis develops the argument further, once Edward Waverley is forced to encounter and interact with the reality, "(he) sees the external world in terms of its similarities to the imaginative worlds of literature and art."¹⁰⁵ The realisation of the true nature of reality is learned at a cost. As Claire Lamont states in an introduction to *Waverley*, "When a belief becomes unachievable, while one must not make the intellectual or moral surrender of thinking it right, one may have to settle for the inevitable."¹⁰⁶ Though this claim seems defeatist, it reflects Waverley's vain attempts to win the heart of Flora, as well as his fascination and the consequent partake in the Jacobite cause.

Imagination and romantic notion, when left unbound and allowed to distort the reality, results in, as Davis states, "melancholy, misanthropy, superstition, religious and political enthusiasm, and blind idealism."¹⁰⁷ These are manifested especially in the manner how Waverley treats the meeting of Highland chiefs preceding the revolt. For him it is a mere materialisation of the image of the traditional way of living Waverley developed in his mind. Yet, it was myth that disabled him from perceiving the real aspects and meanings of the whole event. To alter these perceptions becomes a question of self criticism, yet, as has been stated earlier, myth does not allow for that, since myth never presents itself as myth but rather as the only acceptable reality. Waverley's identification with the Scottish rebellion is therefore caused by Waverley's own disordered perception as well as the manipulation of Fergus, who exploits the opportunity.

However, Scott makes justice to imagination by recognizing its positive moral role. As Davis termed it, "imagination shapes and preserves ethical ideals and inspires action to relieve trauma."¹⁰⁸ Edward Waverley becomes subject to his own visions and interpretations, yet his imagination allows him to stay morally unshaken. His moral integrity therefore remains

¹⁰⁵ Jana Davis "Sir Walter Scott and Enlightenment Theories of Imagination: Waverley and Quentin Durward" *Nineteenth Century Literature* Vol. 34, No.4 (Mar.1989) 447.

¹⁰⁶ Claire Lamont "Introduction" Walter Scott *Waverley* (Oxford University Press, 1998) xi.

¹⁰⁷ Davis 444.

¹⁰⁸ Davis 444.

unaffected. After waking from his fascination into the reality, Waverley still holds to his creed and principles but at the same time becomes aware of his own identity.

Besides these interesting studies of the human psychology, the Waverley novels were notable for the historicity and representation of the folk elements. This is in line with the contemporary general interest in what may be termed as 'collective cultural identities.'¹⁰⁹ In other words, the beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed increased interest in cultural nationalism. It was the belief that every individual social community, but generally seen on the level of nations, had from its earliest formation developed a culture of its own. Such culture was therefore distinguishable from others on the basis of particular features such as language, even though its language and culture might have near relatives over the frontier. Europe was therefore portrayed as a compact environment where diverse entities co-habited.

The notion of singularity and the sense of unique characteristics were related to the ideals of the French revolution and its emphasis on the people as the source of the political power. The former notion of a state as the sole unit where other identities have lost their political voices has no longer been valid. Nations claimed their recognition as well as their proper representation. Foremost, it was the attachment to the native soil and the sense of having an inborn and exclusive understanding of all that had been produced on it that made nations claim their sovereignty over it. The propagators of the national revival laid the claim that it is the people who are the creators of their culture. This explains the generated passion for history. The motion refocused its attention from the fascination with the age of reason and the advancement of civilisation to the popular or folk traditionalism. As has been expressed earlier, romantic attitude found its manifestation in the popularity of legends and folk songs, the study of dialects and superstitions. Scholars turned their attention to collecting and publishing of these materials and poets and storytellers consequently imitated them.

Before moving further on to discuss the influence of the works of James Macpherson and Walter Scott on cultural nationalism in more detail, let us focus more closely on the notion of nation, identity, and tradition in relation to culture. The subsequent chapter shall deal with the wake of nationalism and the manner in which it expresses itself in culture.

¹⁰⁹ S.A.B. Duncan "Mythscape: memory, mythology, and national identity" *British Journal of Sociology* Vol.No. 54 Issue No. 1 (March 2003) 70.

4 Romanticism and the Wake of Nationalism

4.1 Nation and Collective Memory

The image of a primordial human being has been inspirational to the romanticists not only for the notion of authenticity and immediacy but also for the manner in which the human being was assumed to have lived in and co-existed with the nature. The aesthetic feeling based on the subjectivity and emotionality found its reflection in the individual's perception of the surrounding reality; it became an expression of a certain moral stance. It was the sense of self-consciousness or rather of self-determinism, for the human being conformed to and followed what had been natural for him. David Aram Kaiser refers at this instance to nature as the important "vehicle to moral progress,"¹ for it portrays a human being at a peace with his own self as well as with the environment. This is the moment of the original state of existence where the individual lives under no oppressive conditions. This Kantian notion of moral progress, either perceived as living at peace with the individual's own nature or through democratic aspirations to reach it, is thus perceived not only in the individual willing to do what the moral law demands but also in the ability to embrace a better understanding of its requirements.

It is this realisation of the subjectivity of the individual that causes him to consider his conduct and his sole existence in relation to the others. By his authenticity and the right to express it and live in accordance with his inner nature, he becomes free. However, once this sensation becomes a collective experience, and the individual subjectivity becomes identified with those of the others, this endeavour becomes political. New sense of identity is being formed and a new state of natural order is being sought for. The following section aims to discuss the relationship between nationalism and romanticism.

Whenever the predictable patterns that govern the inner dynamics of a society fail or are threatened, turmoil of power and ideas breaks out spontaneously and particularity begins to dominate the discourse. The sudden disintegration of a society into groups on the basis of previously unrecognised lines of identification translates into all spheres of the society. The traditional links based on the authority and the sovereignty of the dominating culture is being

¹ D.A. Kaiser *Romanticism, Aesthetics, and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 1.

displaced by newly arisen consciousness. These are the instances, when, as A.D. Smith notes, “nationalism appears and re-appears.”²

As an intellectual and cultural thought, nationalism becomes essential for the initiation of the process of self-consciousness of a particular group. However, as a permanent ideology, that seeks to become a permanent political line of argumentation, it cannot withstand the particular pressures that naturally arise in any liberal community and the universality of nationalism fails to provide sound answers. Nationalism is valuable not for its permanence but for its contemporariness. Smith therefore perceives nationalism as a stage “in the evolution of humanity to ‘higher forms’ of society, one that must be endured or embraced, but is surely destined to pass after a few turbulent decades.”³ Necessarily then, nationalism comes at waves in different times and different contexts.

Nationalism may thus be interpreted as a political means to overcome a period of threat experienced by a community that feels a sense of strong bond and hopes to preserve its own tradition, unique to the surrounding environment. The community aims to sanctify its cultural roots and build its self-assurance upon the remnants of its heritage. It aspires to reach a higher phase of cultural development and achieve its liberation. The nationalist movement as such employs strategies that seek to fortify the bonds within the community, define themselves as different against the others, and gain access to economic and political power. A community becomes identified with a certain set of values and perceives itself as a unified body. Such marks of identification, as language, religion or ethnicity, become the new symbols of the new entity.

The concept of nationalism has been always rather evasive since it carries many connotations. Therefore, it is as well difficult to establish its historical source. The traditionally accepted origin of the continental form of nationalism is to be found in the period following the French revolution.⁴ The absolutist organisation of the private as well as of the public has been replaced by the notion of liberalism and the political power originating from the popular vote. Specificity, in the sense of particular allegiances and collectively shared world-views, has been granted representation and cultural homogeneity made way for

² A.D. Smith “LSE Centennial Lecture: The Resurgence of Nationalism? Myth and memory in the renewals of nations” *The British Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 47, No.4, Dec., 1996): 75.

³ Smith 76.

⁴ Andrew Vincent *Modern Political Ideologies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 230.

plurality. New histories have begun to form and new social links have been created or renewed. The remnants of the past, individual experiences and memories find a common denominator and form a coherent image. Initiated by an external process threatening particular, individual integrity, a sense of collectiveness comes to the fore; this is the moment of the rise of self-consciousness and collective identity.

Consequently, this new ideology, this new identification and belonging aiming to preserve the newly born or rather reborn entity begins to dominate the discourse. In the course of its existence, nationalism spreads into all the spheres of narration and refuses alternation. The notion of distinctiveness, loyalty to a particular community and cohesion with it substituted monolithic mass of undifferentiated peoples. Necessarily this reality has translated itself into art and historical narration. Before tackling the issue of history and nation, let us focus on the term 'nation' more closely.

There is no clear definition of what a nation is, for it is as much a social and political construct as a reflection of communal sharing of otherness. In 1882, Ernest Renan gave a lecture where he sought to provide satisfactory answer to the above mentioned question. However, the term proved difficult to grasp in all its variations and connotations as to provide for it a simple universal definition. On many instances, the term is used in the wrong context, where the term ethnicity should have been used instead. For the purpose of this chapter, the term 'nation' shall refer to the communal identification of the whole, including its spiritual, as well as cultural characteristics. Nation is therefore perceived as a collectively shared experience of fellowship; however this sense of community should not be limited to territorial boundaries. Soil is important as a symbol of materiality of the idea of community only, yet not the essential element. Spatial concurrence is not necessary; a particular territory may be one of the programmes of the nationalist wave, yet it is not the essential ingredient or the final objective. Nation is in this sense an intensive experience of identity based on certain values shared in common with other members of the particular society. It is not necessarily a predetermined state of mind; it is rather a choice of self-conception that can be materialised into reality. This is the argument behind Renan's famous remark, that "nation is an everyday plebiscite."⁵ To the fore thus comes the question how this plebiscite becomes possible and how it is achieved.

⁵ Renan.

Primarily, let us note how Benedict Anderson perceives nation-ness; for him it is “the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.”⁶ The problem with nationalism, Anderson says, is that it is treated as ideology, while, in fact it is a relationship comparable to kinship or rather religion.⁷ It is therefore, in the light of what has been addressed in relation to Renan, a matter of choice of allegiances. Anderson develops this notion by suggesting defining nation as an “imagined political community; imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”⁸ The sense of nation is thus limited in the sense of possessing finite boundaries beyond which there exist other nations; it is sovereign in the sense that the traditional legitimacy of the hierarchical dynasty is no more valid.

The imaginative aspect, that Anderson emphasises in his definition, is contained in the lack of the immediate contact with other members of the nation the individual identifies with. Such contact on this personal level would be theoretically possible only in the primordial, the original society. According to modern sociology, nation is the subsequent stage of development from tribal structure that has its beginning in the existence of families as the minimal atomic unit of community. Therefore, nation-ness is necessarily based on some sense of abstraction and belief.

Anderson quotes Gellner’s characterisation of a nation. Opposed to what has been stated above, Gellner depicts nationalism not as the “awakening of nations to self-consciousness,”⁹ but rather as an intellectual activity that seeks to invent nations where they do not exist. This implies that nation is an entity that has been artificially, i.e. not naturally, fabricated. Proclaiming the existence of nation has thus become a question of choice. Therefore, since all the communities are being imagined, the difference between them arises from the manner in which they have been invented. Procházka summarises Anderson’s concept as follows: “Communities are imagined either in a temporal continuum or in cross-time linkages between fragmentary and disparate discourses.”¹⁰ The first typical is represented by the religious based communities where a canon of literary texts is being interpreted as sacred history. The latter is symptomatic of the rise of the modern nation caused by the expansion of the administrative, by the influence of the printing press and newspapers.

⁶ Anderson 3.

⁷ Anderson 3.

⁸ Anderson 3.

⁹ Anderson 3.

¹⁰ Martin Procházka “Imagined Communities Revisited” *Time Refigured: Myths, Foundation Texts and Imagined Communities* ed. Martin Procházka Ondřej Pilný (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2005) 106.

Anderson bases his concept predominantly on the question of time; for it is time as the expression of the consecutiveness as well as the expression of the simultaneous that is vital for the act of imagining. In other words, in order to relate to past traditions and the image of the Golden Age, the mythical era of cultural flowering and the establishing of communal identity, a sense of temporal continuity is required. Every generation refers to different qualities and eras, therefore, individual nations refer to different historical moments as their models. Nations do not refer to their past on the basis of adhering to and adopting a foreign model; particular historical narrations portray direct relations in which projections of nationalistic desires are being expressed. Continuity thus becomes a sign of evolution and adoption. In the sense of Locke's notion of the original acquisition and the consequent transfer of the goods, traditions are passed on to the proper successor as heritage. At the same time, in order to identify with others as members of the same unique community, there need be a strong sense of simultaneity. In other words, it is the strong belief that although an individual is not aware of all the other members of the community with which he identifies, or with their momentary acts, he is convinced that there exists, at the time of his being, a commonly shared sense of identity.

Nation thus becomes a construct that takes on different forms in different times. These forms are being justified by purposeful narrations that base their authenticity and objectivity on myths. Myths thus become a vehicle for the realization of particular aims and desires. Myths therefore reshape the notion of identity for they distort discourse and replace one set of beliefs with another, claiming objectivity and authority. Procházka treats myths as 'machines' for these not only re-produce but also produce values, sentiments and desires.¹¹ Raymond Pearson notes that the critics of nationalism depict precisely this artificiality, this lack of genuineness and the purposeful self-interest that often lead to "ideological idolatry,"¹² over the cultivation of cultural and moral values that the individual members of the forming community believe to share in common.

In this sense, nation is not a stable unit nor a term, for an imagined community is always under external as well as internal pressure that aims at the core of identity. Because the sense of belonging is not prescribed on the basis of qualitatively measured indicators but on an individual, any sense of nationalism as a permanent state of existence is unbearable. The era

¹¹ Procházka, "Imagined Communities Revisited" 107.

¹² R. Pearson "Historicism and Nationalism" *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism* ed. A. S. Leoussi (Transaction Publishers, 2001) 42.

of political and economical liberalisation brought along the notion of identity to such spheres, which have not been previously aware of their own capacity to survive or develop its culture. From an undifferentiated mass or from an image of a homogenous allegiance, they moved to particularism and individuality of their community.

In the context of the Central Europe, the fascination with Pan-Slavism, was soon replaced by the realisation of the inability to resign particular national sentiments in favour of a monolithic, homogenous, political and cultural union. It had to be followed by a new set of identity; that is of a particular, coherent, sovereign nation with its own cultural and political representation, and most importantly, its language. In the essay *The Slav and the Czech*¹³ Karel Havlíček Borovský expressed that the contemporary notion of Slavism as the universal identity for the Slavic peoples is no more plausible.

Though linguistically and culturally there were certain links that connected the small Slavic nations with Russia, it did not mean for Havlíček that the individual nations did not have their own characteristics that would give cause for their unique individuality. The individual nations should develop and protect their own particularities and should not allow them to diffuse in a homogenous undifferentiated body or become subject to a dominant entity. He noted that the Czech nation has found itself between two mill-wheels, for it was exposed to the spread of the German dominance and sought to find safe haven in the vision of Pan-Slavism, dominated by Russia. Yet, both these phenomena would result in the conformity of the Czech identity to one or the other dominant entity.

Therefore, what Havlíček perceived as a temporal escape from the dilemma was to develop the cultural and moral strengths of the Czech nation within a frame constituted and guaranteed by the Austrian empire. The fact that his stance to this notion has eventually changed to a more radical stance of national self-determinism including a political frame of reference because of the development of the historical circumstances is now not the subject of argumentation, though it is an expression of an intense nationalist sentiment. Yet, for the sake of the argument, let us now consider Havlíček's initial position. In his essay, Havlíček strongly stands up in favour of the concept of Austro-Slavism and concludes the paper with the proclamation "always, (shall I say) I am a Czech but never (will I proclaim) I am a

¹³ K.H. Borovský "Slovan a Čech" *Český Liberalismus: Texty a Osobnosti* ed. Milan Znoj. (Torst, 1995) 68.

Slav.”¹⁴ It is therefore the particular and coherent, undivided identity over a sense of belonging on a higher level that becomes the only accepted way to cultural and moral survival.

Interestingly, this stance proves problematic, when applied to the national revival of the Slovaks. There then Havlíček notes that such attempts would unnecessarily destroy the unity of the Czech lands, for he perceived Slovaks as an integral and historical entity related to the Czechs. Nation thus becomes an expression of concrete sentiments that face concrete historical events and tendencies. Yet, it is a relative relationship that may find its own permutations in accordance to the changing environment.

This excursion into the Czech history aimed to portray the problematic notion of nationalism and the authority it claims. Nationalism therefore emphasises concrete interpretations of collective memory and derives strong positions which it is unwilling to leave. History and texts thus become the tools of the manipulation, whereby myth strengthens its own positions.

The following chapter shall deal in more detail with the relationship between concrete texts and the notion of nationality.

4.2 *Poems of Ossian and Waverley* in Relation to Cultural Nationalism

The nineteenth century Europe grew sensitive of the issue of individual and collective identity. Cultural heritage became the object of particular projections and aspirations. Ideology and politics has permeated the discourse and gave a new meaning to the public perception of history; history was no longer understood as an objective account of the past events but rather a particular, subjective narration of collective memory mixed with fiction. Culture became not only commoditised but also political; language, most importantly in the context of the Czech nationalist movement, was the first ingredient essential for constructing an image of autonomous and self-sufficient nation.

Macpherson and Scott showed the path to revival of the remains of the receding cultures of the periphery. They proved that the cultures of the past still had the potential to oppose the cultural dictate of the governing majority. It was therefore first through culture and language

¹⁴ Borovský 68.

that nations became aware of their collective identity, which soon transformed into political demands and claims. *Waverley* can thus be seen not only as the depiction of a mediocre English gentleman on his expedition to the Highlands and his adventurous realisation of his own self and his place in the society. Besides the already noted irony contained in Scott's novels, *Waverley* might be also understood as a depiction of the existence of an unknown and un-mentioned entity; existence that dwells on the periphery of political power, yet very much alive and potentially self-sufficient. An entity that preserves its own traditions, language, history and literature and which now lays down its political claims.

Similarly, though Macpherson's work is no more considered as authentic, it illustrates the existence of collective consciousness which differs from the majority in language, tradition and, what is more important, in literature. What should be stressed and what became so fascinating and inspiring was the recognition of the survival of the peripheral cultures. The sole existence and the history of this existence give a reason for the members of the particular community to relate to their roots and origin and enliven and preserve their identity. Therefore Scott has become translated and adopted all over Europe; in the regions and in those cultures that were exposed to the rise of nationalistic tendencies the texts, however, were embraced with a greater sensitivity to the historical aspects and the connotations of cultural identity.

It might be argued in this sense that Scott and Macpherson indirectly addressed and emphasised what has been seen as reflecting the particular needs and dreams of the newly born and emerging nations. They had electrified the atmosphere which sought for but has not yet reached the demanded change. It was not until 1871 that Bismarck united Germany; it was not until 1860s and 1870s that the Slavic people were given representation in the Austria-Hungarian parliament on the basis of the recognition of their nationalist claims.

In his essay on the reception of Macpherson's texts in the Czech lands, Tomáš Hlobil notes that the Ossian phenomenon reached Prague very early in its beginning. Though the reproduction and perception of the texts was initially based on German translations, by the end of the eighteenth century "there had been a sufficiently large number of Ossian admirers ... to enable a Prague publisher to venture issuing a recent translation."¹⁵ Hlobil notes that

¹⁵ Tomáš Hlobil "Ossianism in the Bohemian Lands" *Modern Language Review* Vol. 101, Issue 3, (Jul. 2006): 789.

the first wave of interest in the texts evolved around its subject matter and the form. The poems were thus perceived as an instance of work of art where “poet knew no rules yet whose poems had a considerable effect on the hearts of their audience.”¹⁶ It was the “moral virtue” and the “noble passions ... immortalized in the text”¹⁷ that the contemporary literates found the poems so fascinating.

A development in the apprehension of Macpherson’s texts came after the Napoleonic wars. Hlobil notes that after the defeat of Napoleon, “the texts were no longer discussed only in German, but (in greater extent) also in Czech;”¹⁸ what Hlobil hints here at is the apprehension of the texts within the Czech cultural context. The poems were thus being put in relation to the recently discovered *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora* (1817 and 1818 respectively); the alleged Old Czech works recording the heroic past of the Czechs. Both the compositions hinted at the cultural wealth of an oral culture of the past and heroic deeds of the Golden Age. However, later developments revealed that the link between the two forgeries was not more than coincidental or, as Hlobil quotes Jungmann, as testifying of “the mutual similar poetry that had once predominated throughout Europe; if not among nations ... then (among) the cultured intellects and bards.”¹⁹ It was proved that Josef Linda, in his forgeries, had worked systematically with “Ossianic diction, figures, similies, epithets, interjections and descriptions.”²⁰ What we are thus dealing with is not an authentic testimony of the past but rather a testimony of inter-cultural translation and adaptation.

The revival of the relics of orality and its subsequent monumentalisation became uncritically accepted as evidence of cultural heritage. This notion of escape from the contemporary reality by seeking refuge in the mythical past, materialised in the alleged relics of orality, is characteristic of the nationalist approach to identity. By adhering to historical moments, the Golden Age comes to the fore to define the normative characters of the coming community; it comes to define the ideal, the distinctive nature of the community; it comes to re-generate the communal consciousness.

Any adaptation or translation necessarily carries along a specific, inherent value-judgement and a particular comprehension of the original. Adaptation is a certain form of deviation from

¹⁶ Hlobil 790.

¹⁷ Hlobil 791.

¹⁸ Hlobil 793.

¹⁹ Hlobil 794.

²⁰ Hlobil 793.

the original, yet it shares certain, identifiable constitutive features. Translation is then generally thought of as aiming to represent fully and truthfully its original counterpart. In this sense, adaptation and translation may be perceived as certain opposites; yet, they both employ the same strategy. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, translation should not be perceived as a mere transfer of lexical equivalence but rather as the transfer of the coherence of the original.²¹ Procházka comments on this:

This coherence is much more determined by a specific cultural context for which the translation is made than by grammatical, stylistics or, more generally, semiotic correspondence between source and target texts.²²

Thereby, the produced text becomes a manifestation of particular representations which reshape the meaning of the original. Thereby it may give rise to new understandings and conceptions. Furthermore, in relation to cultural texts, this process may produce a distorted interpretation of the past. Translation may not be happening only on the spatial level but also in the temporal dimension. In this sense transforming the oral culture to the written form encompasses the same level of reduction and interpretation. Orality is thus placed within a certain schematised frame which gives rise to new symbols and perceptions. In relation to national identity this phenomenon is still more evident as it allows space for the creation of new narrations and new myths. Concerning the Czech reality, depicted in the preceding section, such re-narration of the past and such a translation of certain historical events and tangible cultural relics into the contemporary context becomes manipulatable.

This sense of re-adaptation and appropriation is a necessary feature that accompanies the wake of cultural nationalism. Romantic movements of the national emancipation are, as Procházka notes, predominantly characterised by the attempts to design and animate folklore traditions, whereby particular projections of collective identity are being applied to texts and events to create new consciousness.²³ This is the application of the already mentioned notion of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger: the notion of ‘invented tradition.’ The term is used to address a set of practices that are normally governed by accepted laws, which seek to

²¹ Samuel Weber and Walter Benjamin *Benjamin's - abilities* (Harvard University Press, 2008) 92.

²² Martin Procházka “Romantic Revivals: Cultural Translations, Universalism, And Nationalism” *Perspectives Cultural Learning: Language Learning* ed. Susan Bassnett and Martin Procházka (The British Council, Oct., 1996) 77.

²³ Procházka, “Romantic Revivals” 87.

include certain values and norms of “behaviour by the repetition to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.”²⁴

In other words, in situations when a collective body perceives a threat to its own distinctiveness and the link of the present with the past is becoming weak or non-existent, the concerned society stands in front of a decision whether to assimilate into a dominant culture and adopt the foreign practices as their own or whether to reconstruct the disintegrating self-conception. This has been the issue that governed the early nineteenth century discourse in the lands of the central Europe. The issue of becoming German, as was the case with the Czechs, in favour of which stood Franz Schusselka, or the opposing notion with František Palacký at its lead, or of becoming Hungarian as was the case with the Slovaks.

Those aware and convinced of the uniqueness and distinctiveness of their collective identity were forced to overcome the crisis of historical and political development by re-enlivening the collective consciousness. By emphasising memory as opposed to history, in other words, by stressing the individual and yet collective memory and historical interpretation over the narration of the official history of the majority, by the process of repetition and adaptation of foreign models in cases when such models were missing, the collective identity was hoped to be validated and consolidated.

Generally, the predominant distinctive features in the text of the particular collectiveness were either the language and/or the identification with the native soil. This has found a reflection in the nationalistic attempts during the period of the wake of National Revival, for it was predominantly the language that remained as the last link to the past. In the context of the Czech lands, it was difficult to base the identity on continuity with anything else but the language. After the 1620 defeat of the Czechs at the battle of White Mountain, the issue of religion or identity with the gentry could not suffice. Following the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, the Czech society experienced a fundamental change; the middle class has evolved and grown, whereby having adopted the culture and the language of the House of Habsburgs. The only continuity with the past tradition was to be found among the Czech yeomen and, most importantly, among the Czech speaking peasantry. It was therefore the language and consequently the education in general, which became the fundamental premise of the survival of the minority society.

²⁴ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* 1.

The national emancipation movement therefore had to rely on the cultural consciousness and the development and modernisation of the language. In the Czech case it was the linguistic enterprise of Josef Jungmann who compiled the Czech-German dictionary, thus proving that Czech was an alive and modern language that complied with the contemporary needs. Consequently, the emancipatory movement shifted its focus on the historical in attempts to draw parallels to the period of the Golden Age of the Czech cultural and political sovereignty. Along the line of what has been discussed earlier on the relationship between history and memory, it need be stressed that particular images and particular memories became shared and have been turned into 'places of memory.' Thereby, the discourse had materialised and evolved into other spheres of life. Nationalism translated itself into the political, the private, and the commercial. In 1862, Miroslav Tyrš and Jindřich Fügner founded a fitness training centre, the Sokol, which aimed to prepare physical, moral, as well as the intellectual training for the awoken nation.

Consequently, these attempts did stand on the general enthusiasm but had based the ideology on mythical depictions and re-interpretations. Myth therefore became the founding element of the movement for it provided the cause with arguments. However, since myth is a second-order semiological system, it implies constant reformulation. Consequently, the whole construction must become unstable. Its unity is held together only by the power and authority it has been given. To tackle the myth thus becomes un-accomplishable, for it means to tackle the whole construction that supports the national emancipatory movement.

It may be assumed therefore, that nationalism depends on the revival of folk tradition as well as on the process of self-affirmation. There opens thus space for the incorporation of the above described invented discourse into the already existing folk tradition.²⁵ This explains the reception of Macpherson and Scott all over Europe. They provided material and inspiration that could have been employed to particular interests. Translation of the texts has thus become a process which could have intensified these attempts. Translation ceased to be a linguistic activity but rather a purpose-built activity. The new texts have arisen not out of the need or the aim to reflect truthfully the linguistic reality of the text but rather out of the attempt to re-present the context. Thereby, the translated text could have allowed the reader to find analogies to his own reality.

²⁵ Procházka, "Romantic Revivals" 87.

In the Czech context, the works of Macpherson and Scott found an open and welcoming audience. Though Scott's translations were limited mostly to *Lady of the Lake*, the Waverley novels found their access to the audience later on. However, these have been often reinterpreted or adapted for stage performance. In his portrayal of the fate of the Scott novels in the context of the central Europe, Procházka notes that certain translations, based on the comparisons with translations of Scott made in other Slavic languages, have altered the meaning of some keywords. Procházka points to Čelakovský's translation of *Lady of the Lake* as having altered 'country' for 'nation.' The historical context of the Czech lands, as has been given in the above short excursion to the history of post 1620 Bohemia, has been the cause of the change. What the translation aimed to stress was not the identity bound to territory, for it was predominantly the German gentry coming to the Czech lands after the 1620 events who were related to the land. For Čelakovský, as for other later nationalists, it was rather the construct of nationhood based on the language.²⁶

However, these reflections were mostly instances of particular interpretations or adaptations of Scott's texts. In his study on the transformation of the Scottish society and literature, Craig Cairns notes that Scott's historical novels were predominantly the expressions of "the transformation which made the nation state the primary form of political and economical organisation."²⁷ Though this stance stresses an attitude similar to that of the Czech nationalists in relation to the nationalism as the driving force of national progress, it was rather the sense of collective identity in the form of a state-nationalism that Scott bore in mind. In this sense, Cairns notes that Scott had displaced the "real Scotland" in favour of "his romantic illusion."²⁸ What therefore Cairns seems to suggest is that Scott's novels should not be understood as reflecting the aspirations of the Scottish culture to sovereignty but rather as an attempt to formalise a state-cultural identity. In this sense then, Scott's intentions do not necessarily reflect the aspirations of the central-European national revival movements; however, they remain influential for the treatment of the reconstructed history and the emphasis on the folk tradition.

Furthermore, Scott appealed to the Czech public with his representation of the feeling of the others, their consequences and causes. The characters become believable and the portrayed

²⁶ Martin Procházka "From Romantic Folklorism to Children's Adventure Fiction: Walter Scott in Czech Culture" Murray Pittock *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (Continuum, 2006) 183.

²⁷ Craig Cairns *The modern Scottish novel: narrative and the national imagination* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999) 117.

²⁸ Cairns 117.

conflicts seem to reflect faithfully the contemporary conflicts. Necessarily, the nationalists associated Scott with the tradition of Ossian and the representation of national history, however, Scott's manner of writing became more accessible. On the other hand, Macpherson's text did not allow for the moment of identification to takeover the reader. Scott's narrations cannot be claimed to represent other than the English experience and the English context; however, Scott brings the attention to such issues that are identifiable and as relevant not only in the novel but also in the foreign reality.

Let us focus more closely on the aspects different to the Ossianic phenomenon and the endeavour of Hanka and Linda. The activity of the Czech writers had set off from "the same level as Macpherson's." Procházka notes that while "the Scotsmen used Ossian for creating a vision of Scotland as a centre of the ancient Celtic world," the Czech authors did not have the same aspirations in regards to the world of old Slavs. Instead, they focused on the materialisation of particular historical narratives; these they claimed to be an undisputed part of the folk tradition. This difference in the approaches to the folk and the invented traditions has its origin mostly in the different historical contexts that accompanied the birth of these works.

Procházka notes that the disappearance of the "Highland culture in the eighteenth century has not only led to the nostalgic idealization of the land and the people;"²⁹ it had led to the glorification of the notion of the poet's subjectivity "as a heroic voice surviving even after the deeds of the warriors have been forgotten."³⁰ The voice thus could not be associated with the predominant collective cultural consciousness but rather was perceived as an inaccessible heritage. Its sudden recovery has thus become a symbol of the ability of peripheral cultural heritage to survive the adversity of fate. In the Czech context, however, the discourse was developing in the direction that reflected the state processes of Germanization of the Slavonic peoples. Procházka notes that the attempt to make the oral tradition not only literary "but also literal, confirms the tendency in the Czech Revival Movement to use literacy as a means of legitimisation of Czech nationality."³¹

It was thus language that became the instrument of shaping a homogenous society. Language, tradition and historical narration have thus been used as a political instrument or a

²⁹ Procházka, "Romantic Revivals" 87.

³⁰ Procházka, "Romantic Revivals" 87.

³¹ Procházka, "Romantic Revivals" 87.

political signifier. The Scottish reality, on the other hand, could not employ such approach for it was “English that was accepted as a modern literary and administrative language.”³² Macpherson’s poems have thus not been aimed at a communal identification on the basis of language but rather it served to revive the national pride and emphasise the cultural heritage. If a nation aspires to liberate itself from a dominating foreign culture, it has to provide strong roots and supply its own narration. Historical events are being turned into monuments and myth materialises in scripts. However, the Czech nationalists were not in possession of any such historical, material evidence such as the *Poems of Ossian* or the German nationalistic epos *Die Niebelungen*. If the sought for forms are then nowhere to be found, they are being imitated. In the context of the emerging Czech nationalism, when the German presence was perceived as threat to the sole existence of the Czech element, culture became political. The alleged discovery of the manuscripts therefore embodied the desires for evidence of ancient high culture. The contemporary Czechs thus found their cultural roots through which they could overcome the dilemma of the White Mountain and the discontinuity that followed.

Furthermore, the texts, the collections of poems, reflected the social environment and the qualities of the protagonists that stood as prototypes. Similarly to *Ossian*, the manuscripts depicted glorious battles and the heroes achieving great victories as well as depictions of the home landscape. Yet, they were purely antipodal in relation to German traditions as is clearly shown in the poem *The Judgement of Lubussa* (also referred to as *Libuše*). The motive of the poem is a settlement between two brothers. They found themselves in a dispute about the inheritance from their father Klenovic. Chrudos wanted all this inheritance according to the German law of the firstborn son; however, princess Lubussa settled the dispute in a session of land assembly on Vysegrad. Chrudos, upset by the settlement, offended the princess, who refused to hold the judicial authority and called land assembly for the purpose of electing a ruler.

Therein, the nationalists saw the beginning of the tradition of land representations and of the assembly having the right to settle disputes. Such depiction of the ancient society was necessarily different from the contemporary reality. Culture and history thus became a political argument. Andrew Lass notes that the nineteenth-century Czech manuscript forgery illustrated the relationship between “invention and erasure that underlay the notion of selective tradition. The success of nationalist movements depended on meaning-fulfilling

³² Procházka, “Romantic Revivals” 87.

acts through which tradition was concretized as a part of the everyday spatiotemporal world. The process was paralleled by the forgetting and dismantling of these concretizations.”³³ Lass follows by suggesting that history,” in spite of its concern for continuity and factuality, is by definition self-destructive and that there exists a close relationship between literal-mindedness and the hegemonic power of selective traditions.”³⁴

Focusing closely on the *Manuscripts* and in relation to *Ossian*, it is possible to note a number of identical constitutive moments. However, on the plain of temporality, they differ. As Procházka notes, “Whereas Ossian’s world is modelled in the absolute epic distance as a totality of values and a full cycle of historical ‘ages,’ ... this all-comprising perspective is significantly missing in the Czech revivalist cultural invention.”³⁵ The purpose of the *Manuscripts* was to create a link between the past and the present; a link on which the national awareness would base its claims and national pride. It seems therefore that the evocation of history is not the main concern of the *Manuscripts*. It is the contemporary consciousness based on the sense of national self-esteem based on the narration that was the main aim. Starting with the imitation of the ancient Czech language, the text aimed to portray the contemporary language as having a heritage of a developed and self-sufficient origin.

A link may thus be traced to the nineteenth century Pan-Slavic movement by depicting the ancient Slavic language that has links to other contemporary Slavic languages. Consequently a sense of a language origin – perhaps the image of the language of the Babel tower – may come to mind. There is a link of this image to the messianic role and characteristics ascribed to an individual society. It is the heroic victory in the poem *Oldřich* over the occupying Poles, *Jaroslav*, the defeat of the Turks, the glorious campaign in *Čestmír*; the already noted origin of the delegating principles of politics in *Libuše*. All these images depict a nation as the carrier of concrete values that precisely address the national aspirations and demands of the nineteenth century Czech society.

It may be thus briefly concluded that both the forgeries stress the ancient while in fact their main concern is the future. Where *Ossian* portrays the total image of the cultural heritage, *Manuscripts* focus on the themes of territorial integrity and language as the basis of identity.

³³ Andrew Lass “Romantic Documents and Political Monuments: the Meaning-fulfilment of History in 19th Century Czech Nationalism” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Aug., 1988) 456.

³⁴ Lass 456.

³⁵ Procházka, “Romantic Revivals” 83.

Both the texts reinvent traditions and thereby revive culture. In the Czech context, however, the political implications and the emphasis on identity are more evident for they are more clearly addressed. As forgery, the Manuscripts are noteworthy as an illustration of the power of the discourse on the activity and ideology of a particular nation. When events or history itself cannot be transformed to the purpose of the narration a new history then necessarily becomes sought for and created. Myth replaces reality and becomes accepted as facts. Discovering and defeating the myth becomes almost difficult. A myth need be overcome only by a new myth. It takes a self-criticism and the ability to distance one-self from his own traditions and identity to become aware of the reality. Without this distance, the myth shall dominate the discourse and spread into other realms of man's intellectual activity.

5 Conclusion

It is always difficult to identify myth; in order to do that, the individual need be able to distance himself from any attachments to the specified object and study it objectively. This is not without a great effort when attempting to reveal myths in the history and the culture the individual has come from. Traditions and authorities have been generally accepted as lighthouses on the journey through life; however, once the individual realises their unsteady basis, subject to changes, he perceives their relativity and the threat of manipulation they may become a subject of.

Baring this notion in mind, any individual approaching history and other texts claiming authoritatively their objectivity, may thus treat any such narrations as an intellectual challenge and an initiative to adopt a critical stance to the presented interpretations of the surrounding reality. Only by such an approach can myth become demythologised and the individual may come closer to a clearer picture of undistorted reality.

The thesis aimed to explore the relationship between national identity and the myth. The debate aimed to focus at the origin of myth and the manner in which it manifests itself in relation to history and cultural tradition. To illustrate this impact of myth the thesis discussed concrete historical and literary texts that have been written under the influence or have been employed to serve the purposes of nationalism. The key texts to the analysis were the collection of poems of James Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, Sir Walter Scott's historical novel, *Waverley*, and the Czech *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora*.

In the opening section, the thesis aimed to discuss the relationship between history and memory. The aim was to depict the value-judgements and partiality that are necessarily inherent to traditional historical narrations, which necessarily influence the presentation of the depicted reality. Developing this notion further, the thesis discussed the question of tradition as another source of accepted authority. However, since traditions proved unable to reflect the changing reality, their preservation became problematic. Since new traditions arise to replace the old, yet claim the same authority, it becomes problematic to treat them as the preservers of moral values or the genuineness of the human being. The thesis aimed to show the ability to manipulate certain narrations and practices to emphasise particular notions or world-views.

The following section aimed to reflect on the relationship between facts and fiction, with particular interest when both the genres were employed in the narration of the past events. This had been developed in reflection on the dilemma of the notion of the authority of the printed text. The thesis thus aimed to emphasise the influence of text editing on the understanding of the presented text. In relation to this reflection, the thesis aimed to discuss the issue of recording and schematising the oral folk tradition in the written form. This had been discussed especially in relation to the Romantic Movement.

The thesis aimed to set the literature of the Romanticists into a cultural context by aiming to arrive at identification of certain prominent characteristics. Developing this notion further, Romanticism was placed in relation to nature. This section aimed to show a link between the oral tradition and the romanticist notion of the primordial human being and the primordial language. Oral tradition, as the instance of reflection of the remnants of the past, thus came to fore as the subject of study of the thesis. The debate then moved to the endeavour of James Macpherson and the Ossianic phenomenon. The focus was aimed at the historical and cultural context of Macpherson's work and its relation to the historical novel of Sir Walter Scott, notably the novel *Waverley*.

Following the debate, the final chapter was opened with the discussion of how to understand the terms nation and nationalism. The debate was set in the context of the historical reality of the Czech National Revival Movement and the *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora*. The debate then aimed to move to the analyses of particular instances or the manner where the literary texts mentioned overlap and/or reflect the particular aims of the nationalist aspirations. The aim of the thesis was to set the literary noted works in the context of nationalism and to analyse their individual roles in the formation of collective identity.

In relation to the studies of myth, this thesis aimed to be a synthesis of a general introduction into the problem as well as an attempt to tackle and unravel myth in its concrete forms. The main motive behind the thesis was the attempt to unravel the manner in which literary narrations claiming authority on the basis of their origin or their purpose are in general being produced, re-produced and accepted. It was hoped to show such literary text becomes a medium that is subject to particularism and manifold interpretations. The created distortion gives rise to a myth that becomes a potential foundation for further distortions. Any

collective claims finding support in uncritical acceptance of these re-presentations thus stand on uncertain foundations.

This thesis aimed to illustrate this assumption on particular instances where it was the national consciousness and the sense of cultural heritage that became the end purpose of the manipulations. Literature has in these instances become a tool of self-formalisation and self-confirmation, which, however, has not found its basis in reality. This realisation becomes even more central when placing it in the context of nationalism and national sentiments. This process of manipulation and re-creation may turn as inspiring as threatening. However, it is only through such a realisation and through our critical and unbiased approach to the presented that allows us to identify and eliminate myths and get a glimpse of the true nature of the reality. This thesis aimed to be just such an attempt.

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Resumé

Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl prozkoumat vztah mezi mýtem a národní identitou. Hypotézou této práce je, že literární narace dějinných událostí s sebou nutně nese partikulární stanovisko a proto je velmi obtížné tvrdit, že historie může být nestranná a všeobsažná. Literární díla vycházející z partikulárního vnímání minulosti se tak v důsledku stávají neúplnými a zkreslujícími. V kontextu společenského a politického vývoje však texty s touto tematikou nabyly na autoritě, na základě které ovlivňovaly nahlíženou skutečnost.

Tato práce si klade za cíl definovat fenomén mýtus a identifikovat jeho vztah k literatuře. Na základě bližšího čtení konkrétních literárních textů má tato práce snahu tento vztah mezi mýtem a otázkou národní identity rozkrýt. Texty, na které se pozornost zaměřuje především, jsou básnická sbírka James Macphersona, *Poems of Ossian*, historický román Sir Waltera Scotta, *Waverley*, a *Rukopisy Královédvorské a Zelenohorské*.

Smysl, který jakékoliv společenství dává svému dějinnému vývoji je nutně odlišný od interpretací jiných, mnohdy i soupeřících společenství. Jakákoliv snaha o prosazování totality svého nazírání na minulé události je tedy v tomto smyslu omezující. V důsledku toho tak není možné nahlížet na minulost jako na něco uzavřeného, zřejmého a neměnného. Ve snaze uchopit a přetvořit komplexnost dějinných procesů z minulosti do zhuštěné psané podoby tak autor nutně schematizuje a interpretuje a dopouští se tím hodnotových soudů. Vnímání minulosti prostřednictvím textu tak nemůže být oproštěno od vlivu partikulárních motivů a neúplnosti vzpomínek. Jakákoliv snaha o prosazování jediné koncepce a jediného náhledu se tak stává snahou o kontrolu nad vnímáním konkrétních událostí. Tato snaha o totalitu dějinné narace se tak stává projevem mýtu. Jakékoliv vztahy vyplývající z takto zprostředkovaného chápání minulosti tedy nutně s sebou nese určité rozostření a prostoru pro zneužití.

Tento vztah je předmětem kapitoly 2., kde pozornost je zaměřena především na vztah mezi historií a pamětí. Oproti oficiálnímu stanovisku ohledně dějinnému vývoji se tak postaví konkrétní vzpomínky a následně i interpretace dějinných událostí. Tato práce tak již od počátku staví proti sobě náhledy, které jsou skrytě nebo otevřeně osobní a tedy zatížené konkrétními představami, avšak přesto těžko připouštějí pluralitu interpretací. Tato kapitola má za cíl poukázat na vrozenou neschopnost historie stát se objektivním vyprávěním o minulosti, jelikož je nutně ovlivněna vnímáním oné dějinnosti konkrétním historikem. Paměť

však také není schopna minulost popsat v celé obsažnosti, právě kvůli své subjektivitě a jisté výsečnosti. Paměť se však stane zcela zásadní v momentu, kdy se stane společným prožitkem určité skupiny individuí, co se stane jakýmsi předstupněm pocitu sounáležitosti.

V obou naracích však v důsledku subjektivity a snahy o podání celistvého obrazu dějin vzniká prostor pro různé domněnky a účelová tvrzení. Tento je brzy obsazen mýtem. Následující část této kapitoly se tak posouvá k otázce vztahu mýtu a minulosti. Na základě definice mýtu Ronalda Barthes se diskuze zaměřuje na okamžiky vzniku mýtu a způsob, jakým mýtus mění vnímání a představování reality. Minulost se tak stává nástrojem pro realizace konkrétních zájmů a aspirací. Na základě úvah o aspektech, které tvoří pocit sounáležitosti, se diskuze posouvá k okamžiku, kdy kolektivní vědomí upřednostňuje ožívování a zároveň i popírání konkrétních dějinných událostí. Dějinné události a minulost jako taková se stávají ne předmětem zájmu a bádání, ale prostředkem utuzujícím kolektivní pocit stejnosti.

V následující části této kapitoly se pozornost věnuje vztahu mezi fiktivním ztvárněním minulosti a literaturou založenou na interpretaci a zprostředkovávání faktů. Důležitým momentem v tomto vztahu se stává technologický vývoj a nástup modernismu. Text se stává tržním zbožím a na základě technologického pokroku zároveň i přístupnějším. Psané slovo přestává sloužit normativním předpisům a přesouvá se do sféry osobního. Tištěné texty tak přestávají nacházet svůj původ v institucích představující autoritu a stávají se i osobní výpovědí. Ve vztahu k literatuře tak text přestává být vázán jen na nutné autorovo okolí a přestává tak být nutně jen osobní výpovědí. Psané slovo se tak stává prostředkem k šíření konkrétních představ a interpretací. Ve vztahu ke kolektivnímu povědomí se text často stává pojítkem ke kulturním kořenům a vlastní minulosti. Minulost se v důsledku vlivu romantismu stává předmětem literárního ztvárnění a posléze i re-interpretací. Na základě dekonstruktivního pojetí Jacque Derridy se tak stává nemožným, aby bylo možné identifikovat původ jakékoliv narace. Texty se stávají individuálními tím, jak každý čtenář vnímá prezentovanou realitu.

Kapitola 3. se zabývá kulturním a společensky-politickým prostředím, které doprovázely nástup modernismu a ono zmíněné vnímání textu a minulosti. Pozornost je nejdříve věnována otázce nástupu a vlivu romantismu. Na úvod se práce snaží postihnout ty prvky, které mohou být vnímány jako charakteristické. S odkazem na pojednání Arthura O.

Lovejoye o romantismu se tato práce snaží vytyčit ty nosné body, které jsou vlastní anglickému romantismu. Do popředí se tak dostává specifická anglická realita a její odlišnost od kontinentálního pojetí romantismu.

Ve způsobu nahlížení na realitu se pro anglické romantiky, ne nutně vždy pravidlem ale ve větší míře ano, klíčovým stává pocit, že pouze prvotní společnost je tou, která byla schopna vytvářet a udržovat hodnoty. V porovnání s klasicismem je však důraz kladen ne pravidla a modely, ale na prožitek a autentičnost. Vlivem civilizačního vývoje se však toto lidské, to autentické a blízké přírodě, začalo vytrácet a proto romantismus se zaměřuje na to periferní aby objevil ono původní a nedotčené. Tato fascinace stojí i za nástupem obliby balad a sbírek folklorních písní. Objektem zájmu se tak stává to, co není ovlivněno modernismem a tudíž zůstává nevinné, respektive blízké stavu dokonalé osobní i okolní harmonie. Přes původní fascinaci s orientální zkušeností se do popředí zájmu dostává domácí venkov a nedotčená příroda. Básnictví, vnímané jakožto prvotní projev lidské komunikace se tak stává výpovědí a připomenutí původního stavu. Její projev ve formě balad se tak stává výpovědí snah romantiků o návrat k původnímu způsobu sounáležitosti a spolužití ve společnosti.

Zásadní se však pro romantiky stává vztah k přírodě; nejen přírodě ve smyslu původního prostředí prvotního člověka, ale také k přírodě jakožto nositelem určité osobní identifikace. Následující část kapitoly 3. se tak věnuje vztahu romantiků ke konkrétním projevům opěvujícím minulost a kulturu současných předchůdců. Pozornost je tak věnována původu a vlivu balad; konkrétně je pozornost věnována sbírce *Poems of Ossian*, od James Macphersona. Předmětem debaty je vedle obsahové stránky sbírky i otázka autenticity a tedy i autority autora. V průběhu diskuze se tato práce zaměřuje na nástroje a způsoby, kterými se Macpherson snažil dosáhnout autenticitu textů, v důsledku čehož by byl schopen re-interpretovat dějinné události ve Skotsku a Irsku. Odkazem na soudobé i pozdější historické a literární studie se tato práce snaží poukázat na ono již zmíněné rozostření vnímání reality a nebezpečí, vyplývající z nekritického přejímání mýtů. Debata se posléze zaměřuje na způsoby, kterým text předává sdělení; v popředí zájmu stojí struktura textu a doplňující informace k textu. Následně se tato práce věnuje otázce možnosti zneužití těchto prostředků k dosažení legitimnosti těchto konkrétních představ.

Závěrem této kapitoly se tato práce věnuje nástupu historického románu a vzrůstající oblibě textů Waltera Scotta. Na úvod se práce zaměřuje na vznik historického románu a základní

charakteristické rysy těchto děl. Tématem této části práce je otázka role fikce při vykreslování určité historické společnosti. Na základě využití fikce a faktů nabývají ve Scottových románech určité charakteristiky a momenty z minulosti na specifickém významu. Text tedy kromě obsahového sdělení vytváří prostor pro další způsob komunikace skrze svou strukturu. Hlavním záměrem této části práce je však nastínit jakou mírou byl Scott inspirací pro probuzení pocitu národního uvědomění a identifikace.

Následující kapitola si klade za cíl definovat pojem národ a pokračovat tak dále směrem, který byl naznačen v předcházející části. Sladit tento pojem s tím, co bylo řečeno v této práci dříve o kolektivní paměti. Na základě textu *Imagined Communities* Benedicta Andersona, se tato práce zaměří na otázku národa jako na entitu sdílející společné povědomí a paměť aniž by se nutně toto uskupení zakládalo na každodenním kontaktu s jinými členy tohoto společenství. Národ se tak stává volenou entitou v tom smyslu, jak je v této práci citován Ernest Renan. Tato práce zdůrazňuje skutečnost, že takto volená sounáležitost se zakládá na určité konstrukci a tedy na základě představ a sympatiích. Nekonkrétní představy a re-interpretace minulosti tak otevírá prostor pro mýtus, který přebírá roli ručitele a spoluvůrce vynalezených hodnot. Národ tak není stabilní jednotkou, ale momentálním přiznáním si sounáležitosti k určitému souboru předkládaných hodnot a zprostředkovaných tradic individuem.

Následující část se snaží vztáhnout zmíněné poznatky o mýtu a národu ke kontextu střední Evropy a zcela konkrétně k *Rukopisu Královédvorskému* a *Zelenohorskému*. Na základě vykreslení vztahu sbírky Macphersona se tato práce snaží postihnout ty společné momenty, které ovlivňovaly soudobé čtení těchto textů jako výpovědí o kulturním dědictví a národní síle. Konkrétnějším pohledem na vybrané texty z *Rukopisů* se tato práce snažila ilustrovat ty představy a ty podmínky, které napomáhaly posílit české kulturní sebevědomí. Ve vztahu ke výše zmíněným textům, se tato kapitola snaží o sladění základních poznatků o mýtu a o způsobu jakým mýtus ovlivňuje vnímání prezentované reality.

Závěrem se tato práce snaží shrnout snahy a cíle, které chtěl autor této práce dosáhnout a popsat.