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INTRODUCTION

Before getting deeper into the subject of this essay, I would like to say that both Robinson Crusoe and Huckleberry Finn have been the subject for many critics and articles but I have found nowhere any comparison nor allusion to a comparison of the two books. This work tries to be a first step toward another understanding of those two master-pieces. I have not the cheek to condemn all the former critics, on the contrary, I tried to integrate as many of them as possible in this study. Because, except for a few of them who are unrightfully and on weak bases discriminating the author or his work, I think they are all right and going in as many directions as spokes in a wheel, and according to the sum of what we know by now about myth we can make an attempt to find the unseen centre of the wheel as N. Frye¹ says in his essay on The Archetypes of Literature. That is why it is important, even basic, to go back to the origins, as in all myths, to get as near to the centre as possible, even if it is impossible to rebuild the "primitive" thought, to be able to understand the cosmogony of literature in the same way as M. Eliade when he speaks about the necessity of going back, *ad originem*, for the diseased to be able to be reborn and live a new healthy life.

This image of the diseased man can very well be applied to literature now, when the critics seem to go deeper and deeper into details up to counting the words and making statistics. As told by R. Chase in his essay

¹ N. Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature", in Myth and Literature, ed. J.B. Vickery, 1951, p. 91.

called Notes on the Study of Myth : " A myth is a story, myth is narrative or poetic literature and myth is therefore Art and must be studied as such"¹ using the simplest Greek meaning of myth.

I am not going to talk about the origins now for I am going to discuss it later in further details, but I propose to make a quick bird's eye view of the evolution in the transmission of myth from the "primitive" society² up to now, as the thematic origins, and then to have an other bird's eye view of the artistic origins, or more explicitly, the evolution of the form, because as N. Frye says : " There is not a difference of genre between two periods : this is a problem of structure rather than origin and suggest that there may be archetypes of genres as well as of images."³

So, if we consider the evolution in the transmission of myth, we must go back to the "primitive" society, through the nearest position of anthropologists' studies, such as Turner's or Lévi-Strauss', on rites, which were basic for the telling of myth, but it was also a medium to "live" the myth. But little by little the rites were dropped and myths became only narratives which led some philosophers such as Euhemerus in the third century BC in Greece to a rationalisation of myth and combined with the deification of actual characters such as Alexander the Great, brought the people to see myths as historical narratives. But at the same time, as the Greek myths were dying new myths came on the stage with the arrival of the Bible, the supremacy of the biblical myth, which brought, in our part of the world, new rites, giving a new

¹ R. Chase, "Note on the Study of Myth", ed. J.B. Vickery in op cit., p. 68.

² The use of the definite article is justified by the fact that primitive thought and society are rebuilt ones.

³ N. Frye, op cit., p. 91.

cosmogony, as in the Genesis, or the rite of re-birth through baptism. This supremacy lasted until the Renaissance when the Christian Church "allowed" the combination of the Greek mythic characters to illustrate the biblical events, as David Bidney explains very clearly in his essay Myth, Symbolism and Truth.¹ This hybridisation has given birth to the European novel, in the same way as it gave birth to the first attested Greek novel called The Metamorphosis written by Apulia, II century AD, which, as we shall see later, is very close to Robinson Crusoe and Huckleberry Finn.

That is for the thematic origins, and now for the artistic one we must go back to the folktale, the epic, the picaresque novel, and eventually to the adventure novel, because Defoe's and Twain's books are always compared to those genres, as we shall see later.

Here it is important to follow Hyman's warning when he says that "the plays", as he is speaking about drama, "are neither myth nor rites but literature, but myths and rites underline their forms, their plots and their characters."² So he puts them together under the title of folk literature. And S. Vierne goes a bit further when she shows through Hesiod's Theogony, which is also a written myth, the persistence of the archaic mentality. This idea is very plausible if we agree that we have lived longer under a mythical and ritualistic "regime", as we have seen earlier, than under an "enlightened" one.

¹ David Bidney, Myth, Symbolism and Truth, ed. J. B. Vickery' in op cit.,p.3.

² S.E.Hyman, The Ritual View of Myth and the Mythic ed. J.B. Vickery, op cit., p. 57

I. ORIGINS OF THE TWO NOVELS

I. ORIGINS OF THE ORIGIN

A. MYTH AND RITUAL

One of the biggest problems when talking about myth and ritual is which of them came first : was it myth first and then ritual, which would mean that myth was first an intellectually created story which would have been "put on the stage" through physical expression : the rites. Or was it the reverse ? All along my readings I saw the two opposite points of view but if I had to take sides I would prefer the second one. Why do I have to give my point of view : simply because as I have to quote, my study is going to bear my underlying point of view.

But anyway, it is not an important problem because we have to study both and see what their origins are, their structures and their functions as if we took them as the two parts of Plato's ball. For Stanley E. Hyman¹ the origin of myth is an ancient anonymous collective ritual that has undergone an evolution in time and as we shall see later there is also an evolution in space, as the source of inspiration for the writer / narator is the milieu in which it is settled.

A further and more explicit definition of myth and ritual is given by Kluckhohn : "Both myth and rituals are symbolical procedures and are most closely tied together by these, as well as by others, facts. A myth is a system of word symbols, whereas ritual is a system of object and act symbols. Both are symbolic processes for dealing with the

¹ Stanley E. Hyman, *The Ritual View of Myth and the Mythic*. ed J.B. Vickery, op cit., p. 49.

same type of situation in the same affective mode."¹

But what does Kluckhohn mean by "word symbols" and "object and act symbols", as we are studying literature and not giving an anthropological view of myth and ritual? Frazer² gives means to link both when he says that myth is fiction and that fiction is rites which create myth. The two books we are going to study and link together are two fictions even if they are presented in an autobiographical form. If we go on commenting Kluckhohn's quotation we may wonder what he means by "affective mode" because even if we are touched, affectively, by the stories of Robinson Crusoe and Huck Finn, they may, in some ways, be more philosophical than sensible concerning the matters they are dealing with: God, morality, and the abstract concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity. So we may wonder what the link between myth and philosophy and its concepts is. For R. Chase: "myth is not philosophy but the emotional equivalent to philosophy" and he goes on with: "once disinherited from their literary matrix, concepts are not, properly speaking, myth", they are disinherited "mythical ideas" called paramyths.³

This is the risk of studying myth, but the curiosity of understanding myth in its origin, structure and function is stronger, as long as, as Philip Rahr says it, it does not become a kind of new religion and "we have to remember that all myths begin with the apprehension of some marvellous activity or potentiality."⁴ But the risk of

1 C. Kluckhohn, *Myth and Rituals: a General Theory*, ed. by J.B. Vickery, op cit., p. 39.

2 S.E. Hyman, op cit., p. 48.

3 R. Chase, op cit., p. 73.

4 Ibid, p. 73.

changing myth into paramyth seems, as S. Vierende says, not so great and dangerous when she says about Hesiod's Theogony : "Incidentally, we can notice that this cosmogonic poem, written down especially because the myths had lost part of their primitive value and religious power, shows the persistence, despite rationalisation, of an archaic way of thinking, for those who consider that every action must be related to the sacred."^{1*}

So now that myth is more clearly perceived, we can readily use Campbell's universal "great myth" or "monomyth", a concept itself derived from Van Gennep's Rites de Passage : "A separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return."²

To link myth, literature and initiation we can quote S. Vierende : "As initiation is so powerful on imagination, the obvious place where we should find it is literature."^{3*} But now we have to define what is the initiatory process, the rite de passage. As the subject of this study is the rewriting of the myth of Robinson Crusoe, my first aim was to try and define what this myth was. The answer was given in S. Vierende's book called Rite, Roman et Initiation : "The first novel is often the closest to ritualistic initiations, Apulia's Metamorphosis have a double reference to those rites : the novel is about the initiation of a man called

¹ S. Vieme, Rite. Roman et Initiation. PUF de Grenoble, 1979, p. 74.

* Translated by S. Guille, you can read each time the original french quotation.

" Il convient de noter en passant que ce poème cosmogonique, composé à une période où les mythes, pour avoir été écrits, avaient perdu de leur valeur et de leur puissance religieuse primitive, atteste bien la persistance en dépit de toute rationalisation, de la mentalité archaïque, pour qui tout acte doit avoir sa correspondance sacrée."

² S.E.Hyman, op cit. p. 52.

³ S. Vierende, op cit., p. 99. "Puisque l'initiation est un si puissant moteur de l'imaginaire, il est évident que l'un des lieux privilégiés où nous la trouverons exprimée est la littérature."

Lucius and it is based on an initiatory layout which links the different and somewhat disparate adventures throughout the book."^{1*} This summary of Apulia's novel can be applied both to Robinson Crusoe and to Huckleberry Finn.

1 S. Vienne, op cit., p. 100 "Le premier des romans est aussi le plus proche des initiations rituelles. Les Métamorphoses d'Apulée présentent une double référence à ces rites : le sujet du roman est l'initiation d'un certain Lucius, et il est construit sur le schéma initiatique qui permet de relier les aventures un peu disparates de l'œuvre."