

ISTVÁN SINKA: BOOK OF ISLANDS A BEAUTIFUL CONVERSATION OF SORROWS IN MUMM'S FIELD (MYTHOLOGIZING TENDENCIES)

Erzsebet VIRAG-HORVATH
GÁL FERENC UNIVERSITY
viragnehorvath@gmail.com

Abstract:

The study aims at presenting a posthumous work of one of the most popular writers in the South-East of the Hungarian plain, István Sinka. His whole activity creates a complex view of traditionalism and modernism, of realism and existentialism, combined with regional, local, real and abstract, cultural and trans-cultural aspects. The crisis related to long existing values, the existential conflicts, the trans-cultural nature of all transformations that mankind has experienced and gone through over the decades and centuries of its existence.

Key words: crisis, transculturality, existential and mythologic alternative worlds.

LITERARY MYTHOLOGIZING

It is a specific phenomenon of our time.¹ It creates alternative worlds that reflect on the crisis of existence; it searches for unchanging values in existing and mythical worlds.

The loss – the squandering of the full-valued world order of existence, assumed as a whole, triggers the meaning-making role of the systems of mythologizing perspective, especially in the era of postmodernity. It views both negative and positive phenomena in a mythical dimension. It simultaneously makes visible the mythical relations of crisis and existence against crisis (see Krasznahorkai's literature).

The mythological poetic world elevates world facts, concepts of fate and existence, and mosaic elements taken from reality into a new sphere of existence, thereby creating transformations that, due to their origin and transcultural nature, have an increased semantic and aesthetic impact.

THE BOOK OF ISLANDS

He created his posthumous work, *The Book of Islands*, between 1951 and 1972. The historical perspective inherent in life stories is a specific existential “roadmap” in epic format, the themes of which he presents as a home-making relation between the “I” and community history.

The Book of Islands is the hope of a “lower, popular Hungary”; an attempt to create opportunities for communal and subjective forms of existence; and at the same time, an attempt to recreate collective and individual identification.

His work creates images of existence and stories of fate that transcend the dominance of “external realities” and arise from the worlds of “internal realities.” The former nature and paradigm shift of the creative process in Sinka’s poetry is of significance in the history of poetry.

¹Cassirer, E.: *Mythical Aesthetics and Theoretical Space*. Vulgo 1-2, 1931-2000.

Mythic allusions and other mythical structures² are specific procedural forms and structures of fiction creation; they bring about the transubstantiation of the poetic world.

The dualities of the mythic nature of Sinka's poetry simultaneously evoke the relationships of modernity and archaic community and subjectivity; the sociohistorical allusions of community and individual culture.

The focus of the contemplation is on the historical and mythical mission of creating a community, the "Island Homeland". The hero of the story, the "Sinka alter ego", returns to this community to fulfill his own mission and play the role of "messenger"; he belongs to this world.

The sacred nature of collectively based mythological allusions can largely be traced back to community culture, to atavistic forms of pagan mythologies, and to reminiscences of biblical traditions. In the former type, the traditions of polyphonic forms of archaic cosmological order come to life (e.g. shamanism, elements of the Taltos myth; bipolar world orders; consciousness of origin, world of beliefs, etc.). The thematization of biblical knowledge elements, norms and beliefs, personified forms, and anthropological foundations of Christian culture becomes characteristic.

In the modern type of subjectively based mythic tendencies, the poet, who presents the crisis of personality, expresses the crisis of missional – representative legitimacy in the existential experience of transience. The erosion of peasant and shepherd communities intensifies the sense of uncertainty, the loneliness of exclusion, and the existential crisis, which is expressed in "I went alone, / there was no one else with me, / only my anonymous name." (II. 94.) The traumatic state of this existential situation is not offset by the attempts to reconstruct human dignity and human form of existence, they do not bring individual renewal, only self-criticism and epochal criticism. The erosion of artistic and social sense of mission. Yet, the message "Teach the multitude to love" (II. 586.) is a current command of national education; the re-creation of hope: the message of postmodern Hungarian literature as well (see Krasznahorkai's artistic commitment).

The traditionalism of The Book of Islands, together with the experience, hope and hopelessness of the eras of modernity, simultaneously voices the traditions and crisis of archaic peasant life; the contradictions of modernity, the personal and universal dissonances of the changes of eras.

Allusions³ of The Book of Islands, in its title and epic form, assert an approach referring to the topos of the intermediate theory, evoking the common poetic and social functions referring to the role of fiction and social communication:

*"This poem will not be a song,
but no idle talk;
put it between the two
and take it as you wish.
"Behold, I call it beautiful conversation." (II. 232.)*

The elements of the title, both separately and in their contexts, play a role fitting into mythical worlds; the distinctive "nice conversation" takes on an allusive role that can be applied to a valuable situation and message. "Islands" is a mythicized realization of the spiritual projection of existence, an attempt to create a home for the "underprivileged". The relational world relations of the "I" are given a role as a creator of the homeland and the world, raised to a universal level:

²Frye, M.: Mythical Structures of Literature. Europe K., 1998.

³Dumézil, G.: Myth and epic. Studies.Thought, Budapest, 1986.

*"... This is a turbulent life itself:
death and birth,
crying and joy,
and sweaty
the past, in its essence,
the dear, sweet*

Lower Hungary." (II. 232.)

The fate and forms of existence of the "ME" unfold in self-reflexive monologues, which take on a perspective intertwined with the creative process:

*"Years, years, how old they are!"
How old and how expensive!
They are mirrors, I look at myself in them
and are reflected from them;
cries, tears, sparkles,
and I am all that I have lived;
They are all a copy of my soul." (II. 552.)*

It opens up the processes of creating reality and the fictional world. At the same time, the mythicized realizations of the communities of the "Island World" are reflected forms of the mirror image of real existence; fictionalized relations. The Island is the temporary accommodation of "day-to-day living" (II. 238.), the lower social strata, as they call it: "the earthly prison".

The reciprocal relations between the social community and the individual's destiny are also the expression of the perception of existence and the existential crisis:

*"My traitors are the people,
The stars are my pursuers,
and the world... the world
shines last." (II. 296.)*

The loser's fate can be related to the loss of everything, which is why he leads himself back to the world of the underdogs, to his society, in order to still undertake his mission; to share their fate.

The double reference: the realistic and the mythic, the personal and the communal existence, is the prehistory of man's eternal struggle taking shape in the myths of the universe, with reference to the mythical laws of destiny.

The traditions of the myths of the heavenly and earthly principles, plays the role of the "wanderer of the worlds"; he presents himself as a participant and commentator in the fate of his community and himself. The heavenly and earthly origins of the mythical mission are the role of messenger sent by the Archangel Saint Michael and the "one book" inspired by Petöfi, which is about freedom. The Petöfi volume (II. 79.) is the intersemantic message of homeland and freedom, a literary allusion, and the spiritual "command" of his work and poetry.

However, the history of the development of individual destiny and the heroic role "soon disintegrated"; the fates of the fighter and the loser come to the fore.

*"Yes, my life has been a dream."
But it quickly dissipated...
This is how I became what I became:
Running against the wind, the servant of the moon,
For whom even small joys are great joys:*

*if it shines on your paths
each one a broken piece of pottery of the past... ” (II. 460.)*

The relational relationship between the variations of fate and self-image intertwined with the image of the moon aligns the future with the events of the past; its recursion indicates the questioning and crisis of the heroic myth.

The reminiscence of self-evaluation serves a relativizing function; yet, self-evaluation prompts a hymnic confession in the homeland's vision of communal destiny:

*“Oh, there is a dream and a reality.
Both are mirrors. Mirrors of each other.
One of your selves is filled with heavenly sounds,
the other is occupied by the earth:
and these two collide,
and between these two you will clash with yourself.” (II. 461.)*

The struggle between these worlds increases the truth values of the mythical clash taking place in the inner worlds of dream and reality, heavenly and earthly; and above all, it includes it in universal relations.

The struggle of "THE SONG" resolves the pain of the unfulfillment of the lonely hero myth, which is measured by the expansion of selfhood and the values of homeland integration:

*“Yes: here on earth the water of a lake is blue;
Yes: great rivers rush through the earthly landscape;
Yes: here is your homeland, a country between rivers;
Be faithful to him: the whip of fate will drive him through.
It's better if you just get a whip. For your foolish heart
it is also so huge – after all, this land is your homeland,
Your cradle and your cemetery... ” (II. 576.)*

The dream, the vision of the Island Homeland? After all, the interpretation of the historical, existential statelessness of the underprivileged is also his, because he himself is part of this community. In the reference to Kölcsey's Anthem, the image of the cradle and the cemetery frames the beginning and end of existence, the parable of the individual and communal common destiny.

The recurring contaminations of "Sinka" and "Nobody"⁴ connect the beginning and the end when, by confronting the meaning situations of "something" and "nothing", they increase the differences of identity deprivation.

The self-evaluation “I came early, I am myself. / Why didn't I come tomorrow” (II. 552.) is also a response to the question of whether recursion, return, and inner peace can be fulfilled.

István Sinka's art was discovered by the folk writing movement. The movement was one of the most influential intellectual movements of the 20th century (Borbándi 1989, Papp 2012)⁵.

⁴Sinka – Nobody: a mythical person who has become unlucky; or it can also be related to concepts meaning to sink, to disappear, etc. In: Etymological dictionary. Origin of Hungarian words and suffixes. Tinta Könyvkiadó, Bp. 2021.

⁵Gyula Borbándi : The Hungarian popular movement: the third reform generation. Püski, Bp. 1989. István Papp: The History of the Hungarian People's Movement. Jaffa, Bp. 2012.

The nationally oriented mission of his literary model is the social, societal and cultural "elevation" of peasant society, the interpretation and support of its integration process into the nation.

The modern, autonomous literary model, in the spirit of self-imposed progression, considers the synthesis of elite and popular culture as the authoritative aspiration.

Sinka considers István to be a representative of both literary historical trends, since his work developed in the spirit of creating synthesis: he combined the "popular" and the "peasant with the modern sense of life". (Tornai, 1984.)⁶He expands his poetry towards the synthesis of the universal and the personal. He leads the most individual and the most general contents from instinctive mythology to metaphysical dimensions. His poetry, which creates synthesis, is completed in the formal worlds of the mythologizing approach, which the fate-historical summary of the Book of Islands represents in the entirety of his oeuvre.

István Sinka is the poet of the historical Viharsarok and Partium; with the contradictions of the transience of borderland; on the borders of traditionalism and modernity. A few aspects of his epic The Book of Islands may draw attention to the diversity of his art, its human values, and its "liberating from oblivion" topicality.

The mythological tendencies associated with both archaism and modernity shape the existence, worldview, and identity motifs of the communal and poetic individual into a dialogical self- and community-image.

The poetic statement, "I am all, as I have lived,/each a copy of my soul." (II.552.) However, in the relationship between "I" and "Other," the "Other" asserts the dominances of communal society, of "lower Hungary," which also retunes the dual relations characteristic of its arspoetics.

The mythicizing phenomena of self-assertion in both relational forms (reality and mythicizing fictionality) become a fundamental issue; which is proven by the existential predicament, the experience of transience.

István Sinka's mythologizing poetry⁷ is linked to the lyrical historical trends indicated by the work of László Nagy and Sándor Weöres, which make it an integral part of the national literary "canon" from regional traditions.

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⁶József Tornai: "A star flares up above Hodály." (On folk poetry) Alföld/10. 1984.

⁷Source: Returning from Great Journeys – Collected Poems Volumes I-II; Püski, Budapest, 1993.

