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**HAUNTING ROMANTICISM: DAYDREAMING AND OBSESSIVE
IMAGERY IN THE WORKS BY EDGAR ALLAN POE AND PEYO YAVOROV**

Y.N. Daskalova, PhD, Assistant Professor

Faculty of Modern Languages, Department of English and American Studies
St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

Abstract. The article deals with daydreaming and obsessive imagery in select works by Edgar Allan Poe and Peyo Yavorov.

Keywords: romanticism, intertextuality, parallelism, spirituality, Edgar Allan Poe, Peyo Yavorov.

The article is an attempt at a comparative critical study, through the prism of intertextuality, of some of the seminal works of two lyrical-dramatic poets who represent two essentially different literary historical and cultural contexts: the American author Edgar Allan Poe, regarded as the forerunner of European modernism, and the Bulgarian revolutionary poet Peyo Yavorov (1876-1914), whose life and work remained so inextricably intertwined that “the Yavorov myth” and popular mythology created in his lifetime persisted long after his death. Although these poets’ lives and work diverge not only in their chronology, but also in terms of their geographical, geopolitical and cultural specificities, I will nevertheless attempt to deduce a concept of their “common typologies”, which will be defined and articulated through Yavorov’s and Poe’s own “philosophies” of love and composition and traced in their poetry.

The strategy of comparison and parallelism, which I employ in approaching their writings, draws on the haunting “gothicisms” which pervade their work, on the obsessive dark imagery and somnambulist daydreaming, which mark their destinies of *poètes maudits*. But I will also emphasize on the romantic redemptive and purifying power in the representation of the child-like and “angelic” female creatures in their love poetry, prototyped by Virginia Clemm and Mina Todorova, respectively, who died early in their youth to remain forever young – as living embodiments of pristine and untainted girlish beauty.

The two poets’ impulsive search for spirituality in the real personae of Clemm and Todorova eventually brought to the foreground an obsessive passion for “the woman-child” image in their poetry. As a result, imagined and contemplated in their purity and perfection, the female characters emerged as ideal paragons of impalpable and ethereal beauty and came to haunt Yavorov’s and Poe’s minds in the form of a vision. And the fascination with the cherub-like creatures became so obsessive in their poetry that it eventually came to function as a *sui generis alter ego* (or, rather, alter ego), as a crystal mirror in which the authors could find the reflection of their own soul.

In other works, however, in which the so-called “dark”¹ ladies figure prominently, the “epiphany” of the feminine is perceived as a disintegration of both flesh and soul and finds further expression in Yavorov’s *femme fatale*, and in Poe’s heroines who have “unexpected capacities for life beyond the grave” (Weekes 148). In Poe’s short stories, they are women who “have more strength and initiative than the delicate models of his verse” (148); in Yavorov’s poetry, they throw the frightening shadows of the demon-woman who overpowers the ethereal creature of his earlier writings. While in Poe’s tales the voices of the ghostly dark females make men perform macabre activities such as exhumation of corpses and cutting them to pieces, extractions of teeth and building bedrooms filled with sarcophagi, Yavorov’s fatal women annihilate the “fair” maiden’s pristine purity to emerge as “queens of the night” such as Cleopatra, Messalina and Sappho, as “monstrous children of crime and disgrace”², to use Yavorov’s own phrasing.

Both authors’ imageries have no doubt their own distinctive original aesthetic dimensions and the designs of the two poets were unquestionably realized on different levels and in different ways. But they were on common ground in their modernist challenge of metaphysical truths which ultimately found expression in the inevitable split between earthly and celestial love, whose reconciliation appeared to be unattainable.

Edgar Allan Poe and Peyo Yavorov received wide acclaim and popularity during their lifetime – probably due to the fact that they managed to create a unified vision of their life and work, or rather, to blur the boundaries between their biography and writings. The public fascination with their poems went hand in hand with the curiosity and interest in the authors’ personal lives. “Indeed, the frequent fusion and confusion of author and his works is one of the most pervasive aspects of the whole phenomenon”, wrote Mark Neimeyer. “The persistent identification of the two has accounted for much of Poe’s popular attraction” (Neimeyer 211). Similarly, the unity of life and poetry in Yavorov gave

rise to the so-called “Yavorov myth” which, as in Poe’s case, gained a widespread circulation in popular culture. His poetry was read extensively, it appeared to suit at once the popular and the critical tastes. His fame was further promoted by the identical perception of “myth” both in literary history and in the literary critical thought in the Bulgarian context. The joint touchstone for myth at the time as a unified version of life and work engendered and brought about the merging of Yavorov’s individual talent with the collective, “national” identity and enabled him to build up his fateful bond with the reading public. As a result, even today, “the Yavorov myth” still persists in the public imagination of the Bulgarian people.

Poe’s reading public was similarly enthralled by his personality and work. Jonathan Elmer calls Poe “a mass-cultural writer” (Elmer 4), but in no way does he mean to disparage Poe’s “literary” status. It is Poe’s “ambiguous position between highbrow and lowbrow culture, which made him especially appealing to the general public” (Elmer in Neimeyer 208). Poe himself states in his “Philosophy of Composition” that his goal in writing “The Raven”, one of his most popular works, was to produce “a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste” (*Essays and Reviews* 15). Mark Neimeyer further elaborates the point:

Clearly, it is not only Poe’s works in isolation that have fascinated generations. Poe has largely been taken up by popular culture because of its ability to exploit his personal suffering and the sad, sometimes strange, realities of his life as well as the even more fantastic myths that have grown up around him. Poe has become the archetype of the mad genius or the tortured Romantic artist, the *poète maudit* crushed by a crass and insensitive world (Neimeyer 209).

Poe’s innovative attitude in challenging traditional modes of writing, his insistence on originality and the celebration of pure forms of beauty is yet another factor, which contributed to his popularity during his lifetime and beyond, and brought his fame to the European continent. His rejection of “the heresy of the didactic” set forth in his theories of poetry (“Philosophy of Composition”, “The Poetic Principle” and “Rationale of Verse”) laid the foundations for a new movement in France and Europe whose major intellectual slogan became “L’art pour l’art” (“Art for art’s sake”) and whose representatives came to be known as aesthetes, symbolists and decadents. The principle of poetic originality was seen as achieved through a creative process aspiring to supernatural beauty not found in earthly forms. In his “Reviews of American Authors” Poe wrote, “This burning thirst belongs to the immortal essence of man’s nature. It is equally a consequence and an indication of man’s perennial life. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is not the mere appreciation of the beauty before us. It is a wild effort to reach the beauty above” (*Essays and Reviews*, 686).

The fame of Edgar Allan Poe’s innovative writing and originality spread well beyond his home country. The progenitor of modern tastes, the “one-man modernist” of American literature who had a huge impact on his own time, had also become, through his admirer Charles Baudelaire, a powerful literary-cultural influence on the whole European context in all its various avant-garde movements from the mid-nineteenth century through the twentieth century.

Edgar Allan Poe: the first *Poète Maudit* of Modern Literature

Poe’s masterpiece “The Raven” was first published in January 1845, in N.P. Willis’s New York *Evening Mirror* and was received in a flattering mode as a work which “in power and originality of versification [...] is no less remarkable than it is, psychologically, a wonder” (Brooks in Kopley and Hayes 195). When its second edition appeared in the February issue of George Colton’s *American Review* the same year, the poem was described as “one of the most felicitous specimens of unique rhyming which has for some time met our eye” (195). Although “The Raven”, both in its first and second editions was found extremely original in meter and rhyming, it has been argued that Poe’s masterpiece was indebted in its metrical scheme to Elizabeth Browning’s “Lady Geraldine’s Courtship”³, that his poem had been prompted by a particular line of her poem (Ingram in Kopley and Hayes 193). It is a fact that in January 1845 Poe reviewed Browning’s poem “Lady Geraldine’s Courtship”, which came out in 1884. What is more, he honestly acknowledged in his “Philosophy of Composition” that “there is little possibility of variety in mere rhythm”, that “the possible varieties of meter and stanza are absolutely infinite, and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing” (*Essays and Reviews* 20). Although Poe had employed the rhythm of each line of “The Raven” in previous poems, the originality of his masterpiece comes as a result of their “unusual combination” into a new form, a new rhyming scheme. “A work of imagination is akin to a griffin – wrote Poe – a creature half-lion, half eagle – that is, an unusual combination of already-existing elements” (in Kopley and Hayes 193).

No matter whether Poe was indebted to Elizabeth Barrett Browning or not, it remains beyond doubt that he has produced a highly original poem in terms of both rhythm and meaning, a work that demonstrates a perfect unity of form and content. “It is stamped”, as the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Examiner* John M. Daniel commented, “with the image of true genius – and genius in its happiest hour. It is one of those things an author never does but once” (in Kopley and Hayes 197).

Poe’s own essay “The Philosophy of Composition” is a useful guide to the creative conception of his masterpiece “The Raven”, but it also offers an extended exposition of the *modus operandi* of the process of writing poetry in general. In it he wrote:

It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition – that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem (*Essays and Reviews* 14-15). Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the denouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention. I prefer commencing with the consideration of an effect (13).

In this passage, Poe emphasized the complex mechanism of writing, a process, seen as a set of pre-conceived principles, which the writer / poet should follow in order to produce a good piece of writing. In his own description, composition cannot rely on accident or intuition. Rather, the perfect unity of rhythmical patterns and imagery, of form and content, can be achieved through long and meticulous work. Being engendered in the private corridors of the poet's "haunted" imagination and mind, the work of art finds its ultimate expression in a singular unit whose vastly important and defining artistic element is totality, or, in other words, what matters most, in the final analysis, is the impact, the effect which the poem produces on the reading audience.

In his attempts to accentuate on the meticulous work, which he performed during the creative process, Poe alluded to a note made by Charles Dickens on the mechanism of composition of a literary work: "By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his "Caleb Williams" backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done" (in Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 13). This comment came in response to Poe's examination and review of Dickens's novel *Barnaby Rudge* and was evidently intended to bring to the fore and emphasize the similarity of Dickens's own writing technique to that of Godwin. Although Edgar Allan Poe did not agree completely on this conceptualization, he nevertheless acknowledged the importance of commencing with the consideration of an effect, which is to say, not "to begin with the beginning" (Byron, "Don Juan"), but, rather, backwards. And if we follow Poe's own "philosophy of composition", we cannot but agree on the point that he followed "at least a somewhat similar process" (13).

Not only did he agree with Dickens on the notion of the reverse causality in the development of the "plot", but it is also probable that he distinctively outlined the image of the Raven in his imagination only after his encounter with the raven in Charles Dickens's novel *Barnaby Rudge*. He stated that the raven's "croakings are to be frequently, appropriately, and prophetically heard in the course of the narrative" (in Kopley and Hayes 192), most probably referring to Dickens's novel which he reviewed in 1841. What is more, Poe's raven has particular similarities to Charles Dickens's raven Grip, who can also speak, and is also tapping in a similar way at a shutter, like Poe's Raven – "gently rapping at [his] chamber door" (Poe, *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* 1370).

An interesting fact to note is that Poe's fowl had been initially designed as a parrot. He was thinking of a "non-reasoning creature capable of human speech" (*Essays and Reviews* 18), "and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended **tone**" (my emphasis) (18), he wrote in the essay. It is evident that the first thing which was settled in the composition was the **tone** of the poem, the general mood which it was meant to convey. It was the tune of monotonous grief for which he found the "motto" "nevermore." Subsequently, thinking "backwards", he started looking for a fitting emblem which might best suit the dominant mood of the poem. And, being evidently unable to associate his pre-figured conception of grief and despair with the clownish and motley aspect of the parrot, he sought for a more ominous creature. And the obvious image, a Raven, stared at him from Dickens's pages. After seducing the poet's mind and imagination, it would become Poe's own immutable lifelong companion and a visiting card in his contemporary literary world. It would give him the title, set the tone and pervade the whole content of the eponymous poem. The Raven would sit arrogantly above the protagonist's chamber door, linger on and throw the curse of his sinister inspiration on his life and soul.

In an attempt to follow backwards step by step the process of the poem's composition and to invite his readers to peep behind the scenes, "at the wheels and pinions [...], which constitute the properties of the literary histrio" (*Essays and Reviews* 14), Poe identifies the next prop along the way to completion of his work, the concept of Beauty, which he defines as "the sole legitimate province of the poem" (16). He thought that only the impact of Beauty is powerful enough to elevate the soul of the reader to the imperial heights of the Divine. Only Beauty, and not Truth or Intellect can provoke sublimity, which is not a property of the heart, or of the intellect, but a prerogative of the soul. He wrote:

That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect – they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul- not of intellect, or of heart- upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the "beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes – that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment- no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is most readily attained in the poem (*Essays and Reviews* 16).

It is evident that Poe's images of Love and Beauty fall more into the realm of the sublime⁴ and in his conception of beauty he emerges as a truly romantic poet. He even surpasses his romantic predecessors in his concept of the Beautiful, which necessarily implies a sense of deadly melancholy. In Poe's view, the **melancholy** (my emphasis) experience of Beauty is the most legitimate of all poetical tones worthy of eulogy. And the inspiration for the poetical experience of Beauty, "the most poetical topic in the world" (*Essays and Reviews* 19) is, paradoxically, in all its melancholic extreme, "the death...of a beautiful woman" (19). Respectively, it is "equally beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover" (19). Being thus "supplied" with the theoretical and contextual contours of the "story," we can move further into the realm of Poe's artifice to see how these principles function specifically within the texture of the poem itself: the endless melancholy and sorrow of a student contemplating the loss of his Beloved "Lenore";

the dreary midnight “in the bleak December” (Poe, *The Norton Anthology* 1370), the dying embers of the fireplace which throw their ghostly reflections upon the floor; the maiden, who had died in her perfect youth and beauty, preserving forever the lineaments of her eternal grace; the translucent radiation of her angelic nature and, of course, the haunting and persistent presence of the black intruder, the sinister bird of ill omen:

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; – vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow – sorrow for the lost Lenore –
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore –
Nameless here for evermore (*The Norton Anthology* 1370).

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door –
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door –
Perched, and sat, and nothing more (1371).

Like a solitary stranger crossing the witching spaces of the eternal Night, the student wanders and ponders gloomily over scattered patches of quaint and “curious volumes of forgotten lore” in an attempt to find solace for his ailing soul. But it seems that with his beloved’s death, Life had taken off its mask of supercilious supremacy over death, and the student has to succumb humbly to the mystical and almost mythical power of the latter over his consciousness. From this point onward Life is contemplated merely as a shroud, which, after being lifted, reveals the face of an impenetrable darkness, the vast immensity of life’s other side. At this very moment the stately Raven, with his “mien of lord or lady”, emerges fittingly as the very personification of death itself, or “the death impulse”, to use Freud’s own phrasing. The student’s helplessness and vulnerability are further emphasized by the haunting repetition of the croaking refrain at the end of each stanza “Nevermore” – “the pivot upon which the whole structure might turn”, to use Poe’s own phrasing (*Essays and Reviews* 17).

The effect, which Poe has achieved, is really stunning: by adhering to the monotony of the repeatedly spoken refrain, he makes it sound like an echo, but not simply an echo. It is the resonating sound of the student’s own voice, desperately seeking answers to the way out of his existential impasse. It seems as though he had been locked in a gloomy dungeon in which the only thing he can hear is the echo from his own call. Thus the haunting presence of “nevermore” turns to a question mark (instead of an answer) to the irrational sorrows addressed in the form of a question to the Raven, to the unreasoning creature, instead of a higher power, which further adds to the impossibility of any rational explanation for the speaker. This makes him feel all the more entrapped in the space of a vicious circle, re-echoing indifferently and monotonously only his own words, his own state of existential solitude and despair. “Man can embody truth but he cannot know it”, wrote the Irish poet W. B. Yeats. According to Poe’s own accounts in the “philosophy”, the gradation of despair and existential solitude of the student reaches its climax in the following lines:

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil! – prophet still, if bird or devil! –
By that Heaven that bends above us – by that God we both adore –
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore –
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore” (*The Norton Anthology* 1372).

In Poe’s own words, his true writing of the poem started only after he produced this climactic stanza. He shared:

I first established in my mind the climax or concluding query – that query to which “Nevermore” should be in the last place an answer – that query in reply to which this word “Nevermore” should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair. Here then the poem may be said to have had its beginning – at the end where all works of art should begin – for it was here at this point of my pre-considerations that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza (*Essays and Reviews* 19-20).

Obviously, he attempted to build up the poem's gradation by adding tension to the sorrows of the student. This effect he achieved by increasing the emotional intensity of the questions with which the student addressed himself to the Raven, the first query being a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less and so on, while the refrain itself remained inflexible, like an indifferent imperative, a final verdict which is not liable to appeal. By increasing the power of the student's suffering and by keeping the inexorability of the monotonous "Nevermore", he widens the gap between his human condition and the possibility for a happy denouement.

The passage in the "philosophy" which deals with the climactic stanza and in which Poe propounds the idea that the student's last queries expressed "that species of despair which delights in self-torture" (*Essays and Reviews* 24), came somewhat as a surprise to me, though. Despite the fact that Poe was often attracted to bizarre behaviours in his tales, i.e. emotionally deranged characters who entomb living women, or take out their wives' teeth to find relief from their threatening intellectual power, such examples do not generally appear in his poetry. His insistence on the importance of "the perverse" is never explicitly championed in his poetic output, which is permeated with pure lyricism. Although in "the philosophy" he wrote that the student "experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the expected "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrows" (*Essays and Reviews* 19), it seems more acceptable to me, as a reader, that this climactic stanza gives expression to a pure tone of endless despair, the irrational sorrow engendered at the borderline of the utmost experience in the life of every human being – Death. From this point onward, Poe immediately drops the fantastic tone for a tone of the most profound seriousness. The Raven emerges as a "grim", "ghastly", "ominous" bird, that is, in its naturalistic hues, a creature whose "fiery eyes" burn into the protagonist's "bosom's core". At the end of the poem, we can almost feel the physical presence of the Raven, the pain which the student feels when the fowl, driving his beak deeper and deeper into his devastated heart, would ultimately merge with his soul in a fatal bond that could be dissolved nevermore:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted – nevermore (The Norton Anthology 1372).

Peyo Yavorov: *Le Poète Maudit* of Bulgarian Literature⁵

Baudelaire, the major mediator in promoting Poe tastes in Europe, who became the emblematic *poète maudit* of the *fin-de-siècle* and a very significant cultural model to follow, inspired various trends and representatives of European modernism across the continent, including the Bulgarian poet Peyo Yavorov. Although Yavorov's writings were produced more than a half-century after Poe's own full-blown creative height, there were essential similarities in their tragic conception and depiction of the surrounding world. This was undisputedly fostered by the author's acquaintance with Baudelaire's work, which "translated" Poe's aesthetic ideas in the European context, to which the Bulgarian poet also belonged.

Peyo Yavorov is considered one of the finest poetic talents in the *fin-de-siècle* Bulgarian literature. He was a prominent member of the *Misal* circle, a leading group of the modernist literary trend in the first decades of the 20th century, one of the so-called "famous four" (Pencho Slavejkov, Dr Krastyo Krastev, Petko Todorov and Peyo Yavorov) who became "legislators" of the modernist tastes of the time.

The "tragic curse" in the poetry of P. K. Yavorov

Though Baudelaire's greatest literary fame in his lifetime came with the translation of Poe's writings, the depths of horror and despair he achieved in his own poetry significantly surpassed Poe's explorations of the "macabre". The themes of suffering and death, of loneliness and existential solitude, of profound darkness and complete isolation from the surrounding world became the dominant topoi of the symbolists. The symbolist view that no one understands the torture of what it is to be alone against the universe, finds reflection in Peyo Yavorov's work, which elevated morbidity, pain and suffering to the status of *absolute existential verity* as effectively as Baudelaire did in his scandalous masterwork, *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*). It can be argued that under the influence of Poe's, Baudelaire's and symbolists' ideas, Peyo Yavorov portrayed in his own poetry a Camus's world of absurdity, a poetic cosmos which emphasized the futile search for meaning, unity, and clarity in the face of an inscrutable sphinx-like world devoid of God and eternal truths or values. Like the mythical Sisyphus, who was condemned, "cursed" to repeat forever the same strenuous task of pushing a boulder up a mountain, only to see it roll down again, the poetic speaker in Yavorov's poetry performs similar activities, has a similar "cursed" destiny. The point of view of the protagonist is the existential stance at the fragile borderline of all contradictions, illogical discrepancies and meaningless activities because he has to vanquish death, to win victory over it in no other way than experiencing death over and over again. In my view, this is exactly what the modernist myth of Sisyphus which permeates Yavorov's work came to represent: the eternal titanic, albeit "cursed", struggle of humans against the inexorable laws of mortality in an attempt to achieve victory over death. And these attempts only SEEM meaningless, for the deepest meaning can be found not in victory but in strenuous struggle itself. The conceptualization of struggle as an inevitable and never-ending trial which has to be constantly surmounted is essential for the attainment of happiness. Constant struggle makes one a winner only if one loses over and over again. Camus's essay concludes in a similar vein: "The struggle itself [...] is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus 123).

In his Preface to the Second edition of Yavorov's collection titled *Poems*, the popular erudite and poet Pencho Slaveykov, a member of the "Great Four", wrote:

If Mr Yavorov in his further development as poet emerges as victor from the inner intellectual struggle which he depicts in his narrative poem "Night", he can, indeed, be considered as a true successor of Hristo Botev and of those elements in his poetry, in which the poet-revolutionary expresses what is characteristically "national," typically Bulgarian in its finest form (in Mihaylov 95).

Pencho Slaveykov had an astute perception of Yavorov's personality and writings but was unable to see through his true essence, through the profound existential tragedy of his life and being. As it would become evident at a later stage in Yavorov's development, his real goal was not "to emerge as victor" from his internal struggle, from his individual and universal suffering, but to give expression and put an emphasis on suffering itself which would subsequently become a representative emblem of his entire work:

I've been searching... All my life in suffering I've wasted,
In search of suffering itself, maybe (Yavorov 151).

He wrote in the poem "I Suffer." In yet another poem, similarly, the emphasis is not on the final goal but on the painful road to its attainment. In "The Poet's Glory," "uncompleted song" and "broken cord" are eulogized and seen as necessary prerequisites for fame:

Glory! I can sometimes hear this strange word
At the mournful mention of the poet's name.
It sounds like some calumny or cruel jeer.
The sound of it keeps ringing in my ear.

Glory! It's the glory of an uncompleted song.
It's the cry of a violently broken cord,
An echo in the souls covered with mould,
Spurned by the prideful soul (Yavorov 196).

The Bulgarian critic Vasil Pundev, a contemporary of Yavorov, made an insightful observation about Yavorov's poetry:

The poems are characterized by some kind of iron grip and submission to haunting and obsessive imagery. The interior arches of his lyrics suggest a somewhat implacable doom. The dialogue in them is marked by intrusive repetition and paraphrase... The words sound ominously. [...] The structure has the stony and petrified look of a mental labyrinth (Pundev 97).

Indeed, many of his later poems have a hermeneutic, closed and mirror-like structure, which seems to reiterate the echo of the speaker's own voice. The indifferent echo of the speaker's words in the poem "Adam's Song" "It seems that in a gloomy dungeon/ I hear only an echo from my call" (Yavorov 199) makes "man" feel entrapped within his own confused thoughts about earthly deeds. The only possible way to find out what is behind the impenetrable face of the echo is to be devoured by the dark bosom of death:

Death! It's all I see in the white arc
Of your secret tables, life! (Yavorov 174)

Here Yavorov introduces the theme of the extreme and mysterious experience of death itself, favoured by many of *les poètes maudits*. Life is seen merely as a shroud, a mask that the poetic speaker takes off and reveals the dark immensity of death. "It was a broad daylight / I took away its mask / And night came over me and sighed" (Yavorov 174).

The deliberate juxtaposition of life, symbolically correspondent with the carnival meaning of the mask, on the one hand, and death, which overwhelms the speaker, on the other, is intended to show the paradoxical convergence of the two mutually exclusive concepts. This ambivalent attitude becomes more and more pronounced in Yavorov's later work as the tragic split of personality emerges as the dominant motif and theme in Yavorov's "modernist decade" (1904-1914).

Yavorov's "curse" and the femme fatale

The recurrent topic of the tragically split ("cursed") personality in Yavorov's poetry, as in Poe's, acquires a particularly powerful note when it is engendered by the poet's yearning for the unattainable iconic image of the beloved woman (similar to Poe's poetic speaker's yearning for Lenore or Annabel Lee). The notion of ideal femininity in his later poetry is replaced by the image of the femme fatale (embodied by Lora Karavelova), seen as simultaneously angelic and demonic. As the attainment of the coveted "Holy Grail" by Yavorov, the romantic dreamer, turned out to be impossible, the frightening shadows of the demon-woman, "the monstrous child of crime and disgrace" (Yavorov 125), "the queens of the night" (Yavorov 201), the ambivalent nature of "sinful flesh and vision light" (Yavorov 154) crept

out from the deepest recesses of the subconscious poetic experience. These are the images of the unrealised Joan-of-Arc, which have lost their pristine purity:

Thou art a monster! Monstrous child
Of crime and disgrace,
In secret you were born by them
Away from even Satan's eye:
Born by filth and shame! And at your sight,
In horror, did they turn to stone (Yavorov 125).
or
O, cursed be the moment, woman, sinful flesh,
I saw you midst the cloud of my prayers.
My life has ever since been filled with haggard drowse...
My manly strength in battle hardened, is now gone!
My song has turned to wail for I have lost my way (Yavorov 162).

The male's "surrender" to a female's flesh evidently refers to the power of fatal femininity: to its mythical and mystical power over him: in yet another poem, the poetic speaker says: "...the strange perfume / of female flesh obscured my mind" ("The Mask"). Yavorov's obsession with Lora Karavelova, his femme fatale, especially after she committed suicide, precipitated his own suicide, which came to reaffirm the myth of Yavorov as a living embodiment of a poète maudit in the history of Bulgarian literature. In "The Cultural and Historical Significance of Yavorov's Tragedy" the famous Bulgarian critic Krastyo Kouyumdziev wrote,

Yavorov is a tangle of knots in which all the political, social and moral contradictions of our modern history are focused. They are not characteristic of his personality alone; they are characteristic of the society as a whole. However, he is the only one who elevated them to the status of sublime tragedy and paid with his life for doing so. In this way he proved that this tragedy is not literature, it is not poetry; it is rather the innermost substance of his spiritual being. In disentangling the knots of Yavorov's drama, we are in fact disentangling the contradictions of our cultural development. (...) The love of Lora and Yavorov and its tragic end reminds us of the ancient poems about love and death. Many people commit suicide out of love. But there is something else here, something which is not characteristic of our land. In her feminine grandeur Lora acquires the stature of a heroine from the legends who, through her own death wins the love of her beloved (Kouyumdziev 220-221).

The lives of Yavorov and Lora have become so inextricably bound that no biographer has so far succeeded in disentangling the myth from reality.

Notes

¹ All Poe's haunting and obsessive descriptions of emaciated bodies and consumption-like complexions of female creatures of his "Dark" ladies we find in the tales "Eleonora", "Ligeia", "The Oval Portrait", "Berenice", "Morella", "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Premature Burial".

² "Queens of the Night" is the title of Yavorov's cycle of narrative poems which envisage females as chthonic monsters, as "a monstrous child of crime and disgrace" ("Monster").

³ See Kopley and Hayes, pp.192-193. The line runs as follows: "With a rushing stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain" (193).

⁴ See Edmund Burke's essay "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful".

⁵ All translations from Bulgarian (poetry and prose) are my own (Y.D.).

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ЗАПОМИНАЮЩИЙСЯ РОМАНТИЗМ: МЕЧТАТЕЛЬНОСТЬ И ЧРЕЗМЕРНАЯ ОБРАЗНОСТЬ В ТВОРЧЕСТВЕ ЭДГАРА АЛАНА ПО И ПЕЙО ЯВОРОВА

Я.Н. Даскалова, PhD, ассистент

Факультет современных языков, кафедра англистики и американистики
Великотырновский университет "Св. св. Кирилл и Мефодий", Болгария

***Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматриваются мечтательность и чрезмерная образность в творчестве Эдгара Алана По и Пейо Яворова.*

***Ключевые слова:** романтизм, интертекстуальность, параллелизм, духовность, Эдгар Алан По, Пейо Яворов.*