

Zeinab Hussein

The narrator as a demythologizer: Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*

Zeinab Hussein

Department of English, Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt.

Abstract

This paper posits that Martin Ruiz, the narrator of Peter Shaffer's drama *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, serves as a catalyst for demythologization. The paper first offers a brief account of the concept of demythologization, coined by German philosopher Rudolf Bultmann, and heavily influenced by the writings of fellow German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Bultmann's two suggested phases of demythologization, namely, negative and positive demythologization are discussed in order to shed light on the role played by the narrator as a demythologizer of events. The narrator is dramatized as two distinct characters, Old Martin and Young Martin, each of whom represents a different perspective than the other, from a different temporal vantage point. Old Martin is the one who engages the audience in deconstructing the play's events and characters, while Young Martin goes through the events themselves, unaware of what the future holds. This elicits the collective engagement of the audience, even if unconsciously.

Keywords: *myths; Rudolf Bultmann; demythologization; existentialist interpretation; Martin Heidegger; Peter Shaffer; The Royal Hunt of the Sun.*

The narrator as a demythologizer: Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*

Zeinab Hussein

Department of English, Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt.

The Royal Hunt of the Sun (1964) is considered a turning point in the British modern dramatist, Peter Shaffer's (1926 - 2016) dramatic style. At the beginning of his writing career, Shaffer started out as a novelist, writing, alongside his twin brother, Anthony Shaffer, detective and mystery novels. Even though the detective novel style has later on seeped into his playwriting, he has only utilised it as a dramatic technique and not as a dominant writing style. After a short time spent as a novelist, Shaffer moved into what would become his passion, namely playwriting, writing for the radio first, and then moving to writing for theatre. His early plays like *Five Finger Exercise* (1958), and *The Private Ear* and *The Public Eye* (1962) have proven him "a master with social realism" (Gianakaris, Peter Shaffer 346). While those plays established Shaffer's distinction as a skilled dramatist, they did not define his style; for, shortly after being praised for being a capable realist, Shaffer abandoned the style into a fascination with theatricality. *The Royal Hunt* marks that shift in his style. It is a drama about Spain's invasion of Peru in the mid-sixteenth century. In the name of Christ and the Cross, one hundred and sixty-seven Spaniards set out on a quest to conquer Peru, a historical event of which most of the audience members are already aware. John Russell Taylor describes the play as "a spectacular drama and a think-piece written in a rather elaborate literary language" (319). The play is the first of a trilogy; *The Royal Hunt*, *Equus*, and *Amadeus*; together, they collectively examine existential concerns using a ritualistic and theatrical style.

This paper argues that Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt* utilizes the narrator of the drama, Martin Ruiz as a catalyst for demythologization. He is dramatized as two separate characters, namely, Old Martin and Young Martin, each representing a different

worldview from the other. It is Old Martin who engages the audience in demythologizing the events and the characters of the play. Martin facilitates this process of demythologization that takes place before the audience, while at the same time, provoking their collective engagement, if unconsciously.

Demythologization is a concept coined by German philosopher Rudolf Bultmann (1884 – 1976). In order to adequately discuss this concept, one must first define what myth is. Myth is a concept with a long history. A history of which Bultmann, and the writer of this paper, are aware. However, such history of the concept is also not relevant to the scope of this paper, for it is not ‘myth’ in its broad and varied sense that this paper is concerned with, but rather ‘myth’ in the way that Bultmann intended.

Bultmann has a very specific understanding of the concept. He writes, “I understand by "myth" a very specific historical phenomenon and by "mythology" a very specific mode of thinking. ... Myth is the report of an occurrence or an event in which supernatural, superhuman forces of an occurrence or persons are at work.” (*New Testament and Mythology* 95). In this sense, his concept does not deviate much from the traditional meaning of the concept. Myth is often thought of as “a narrative with a supernatural element.” (Walker 229) Such definition brings forth a pivotal question: Are myths limited to supernatural elements in a narrative only?

Bultmann offers an answer arguing that myths are also, what we think/believe because we choose to think mythically. According to him, “Mythical thinking is the opposite of scientific thinking ... It separates off certain phenomena and events as well as certain domains from the things and occurrences of the world that are familiar and that can be grasped and controlled” (*New Testament and Mythology* 96). Bultmann maintains that an urgent need is emerging to take a closer look at such myths, to question the mythical thinking.

Bultmann believes that to demythologize a text/narrative does not at all mean to subject it to a process of eliminating the mythical elements in it and accepting only what accords with our modern view of the world. It is not a process of picking and choosing what to believe and what not to believe. To do so is to impose a forced interpretation on a narrative; something that he completely rejects. The task of demythologization is neither that simple nor that easy.

Bultmann writes, "The real point of myth is not to give an objective world picture; what is expressed in it, rather, is how we human beings understand ourselves in our world" (New Testament and Mythology 9). Myth, according to him, is not about describing the world or explaining it; it is about describing how we, as human beings, perceive it. It follows, therefore, that "myth does not want to be interpreted in cosmological terms but in anthropological terms – or better, in existentialist terms" (9). He explains that when myth talks about supernatural powers for instance, "it talks about these powers in such a way, to be sure, as to bring them within the circle of the familiar world, its things and forces, and within the circle of human life, its affections, motives and possibilities" (9). For Bultmann, myth handles the "unworldly" as "worldly". The need to demythologize myth, thus, springs from the nature of myth itself, that is, "its objectifying representations, is present in myth itself, insofar as its real intention to talk about a transcendent power to which both we and the world are subject is hampered and obscured by the objectifying character of its assertions" (10). The mythology of a narrative is, then, "not to be questioned with respect to the content of its objectifying representations but with respect to the understanding of existence that expresses itself in them" (10).

In light of the aforementioned argument, then, it follows that Bultmann divides the process of demythologization into two main stages. First, negative demythologization and second, positive demythologization. "Negatively, demythologizing is criticism of the mythical world picture insofar as it conceals the real intention of myth. Positively, demythologizing is existentialist interpretation, in

that it seeks to make clear the intention of myth to talk about human existence” (*New Testament and Mythology* 99).

Before discussing these two phases in detail, one must ask first what a worldview is. “Man seeks to understand the world and safeguard himself in it by a *Weltanschauung* [translated as worldview]” (Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological* 73). A worldview is indispensable to man, since it offers him a way to comprehend and protect himself against the world in which he finds himself. “A *Weltanschauung* seeks to make even my destiny comprehensible on the basis of a general understanding of man and the world, as an instance of what happens generally” (78).

Hence, demythologization begins negatively with the realization that the prevailing world picture/worldview, whatever that may be, at any given place or time, is no longer acceptable at the present time. Therefore, demythologizing such world picture begins with challenging it.

Applying this first phase to his field of study, Bultmann argues that the advances our age has witnessed, both in the fields of natural science and technology, helped us gain more control of our world, and deemed such mythical world picture unbelievable. These advances do not constitute the only challenge to the mythical world picture, Bultmann argues that what poses an even bigger challenge is our fast and growing self-understanding. Advances in the field of psychology shake the image that mythical narratives tell about man at its very core. According to him, “we moderns have the double possibility of understanding ourselves either completely as nature or as spirit as well as nature” (*New Testament and Mythology* 5). On the one hand, if we understand ourselves as natural beings, we do not separate ourselves, then, from our nature, or see ourselves as dominated by alien powers that has utter control over us.. On the other hand, if we believe that we are spirits as well as nature, we believe that our physical bodies condition our true self, yet our 'spirit' is independent and can gain control over our nature.

Considering the above arguments, it follows that modern man is placed at the heart of a contradiction. He is torn between a mythical world picture and another modern one formed by natural sciences and psychology. Faced by such dilemma, modern man is left with two options and two options only. He either dismisses one of the two world pictures all together; believing only in one, or he tries to deal with the 'modern' world picture in his daily life, believing blindly, with no real conviction, in the 'mythical' world picture, even though he is convinced it is "a world picture of a time now past" (Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* 3).

Bultmann summarizes the contradiction when he writes, "no one can appropriate a world picture by sheer resolve, since it is already given with one's particular historical situation" (*New Testament and Mythology* 3). This means that we form our own world picture depending on our place in history and in accordance with the specific world picture that is prevailing at that time and place, however, such world picture is not necessarily static or unchangeable, he argues, "naturally, it is not unalterable, and even an individual can work to change it. But one can do so only as insofar as, on the basis of certain facts that impress one as real, one perceives the impossibility of the prevailing world picture and either modifies or develops a new one" (3).

After one's world picture is challenged by a new set of facts or when it fails to be proven true, one is forced, to either modify it or adopt a new world picture altogether. The question to ask now is, was the old world picture that was just challenged completely wrong? Is the solution to abandon said worldview, declaring it invalid? Or was there a truth lingering in such worldview, waiting to be interpreted and reinterpreted? Moreover, what is the use of such interpretation, and what is the need for it?

Bultmann believes that myths, though expressed in mythical language and imagery, are in fact talking about a true reality. He puts forth, however, the inquiry of how to understand such reality. According to him, a text has a 'kerygma;' i.e. intended meaning, such meaning may get lost in a mythical form of expression. The

reader, now interpreter, of said text is faced with the challenge of finding and understanding the 'kerygma'.

To reach an adequate understanding of said kerygma, Bultmann suggests that an interpreter demythologizes the text, preserving its kerygma. This brings forward the second phase of demythologization; namely, 'positive' demythologization. Bultmann concedes that this second phase can only be achieved through 'existential interpretation'. "Demythologizing seeks to bring out the real intention of myth, namely, its intention to talk about human existence . . . Such interpretation oriented by the question about our existence is existentialist interpretation." (New Testament and Mythology 99) Demythologization, then, is a process of 'existentially interpreting' texts. It is a hermeneutical process. According to Bultmann, existentialist interpretation is "the interpretation of history that is motivated by the existentialist question of the interpreter. It asks for the understanding of existence that is at work in a given history." (New Testament and Mythology 157)

Bultmann was heavily influenced by the teachings and writings of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. He explains how he understands and uses Heidegger's philosophical standpoint as follows, "For him [Heidegger] the chief characteristic of man's Being in history is anxiety. Man exists in a permanent tension between the past and the future." (Bultmann et al. 24-25)

Bultmann sees in Heidegger's philosophical views the conceptual framework needed to both understand and analyse a mythical narrative's view of man. Man is not at home in this world. Man is being thrown into this world, and he is confronted by his own boundaries and limitations, which throws him back into the present. Man is at a constant state of unease and angst. He is always provoked into a state of 'decision' by the choices he is facing. Hence, He could choose to exist either 'authentically' or 'inauthentically'; the first being open to the future and the possibilities it offers, the second is falling into bondage to the past.

Bultmann writes that according to Heidegger, "To be a man ... is something that uniquely belongs to the individual; and the being of man is a "possibility of being," i.e., the man who is involved in care for himself chooses his own unique possibility ... that grows out of man's seeing in death his properest possibility and letting himself be thrown back by death into the now." (Existence and Faith 102)

Man, thus, has the "possibility of being," i.e. he chooses between two modes of existence; namely authentic and inauthentic. He is forced into choosing because he is being 'thrown back by death into the now.' "Authentic human being is an existence in which we take over ourselves and are responsible for ourselves, authentic existence includes openness for the future or the freedom that becomes event in every new present." (Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* 157)

Hence, to exist 'authentically' is to assume responsibility for our existence, to understand that we are indeed in charge of our own possibilities, and to accept such choice freely. Authentically existing, man is "open for the future". He is neither limited by nor bound to his past. He is continually confronted with decisions. Either he can lose himself in the past constituted by his inner and outer world; i.e. existing 'inauthentically' or he can become a true new future self that is always being offered to him by future possibilities; i.e. existing 'authentically.' "According to Heidegger, man freely chooses his possibility of existing authentically." (Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* 107) Bultmann illustrates the difference between the two modes of existence more when he writes, "In inauthentic existence we understand ourselves in terms of the world that stands at our disposal, whereas in authentic existence we understand ourselves in terms of the future we cannot dispose." (Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* 158)

Therefore, one is always faced with the choice of existence, and one must assume responsibility for one's choice, since he can exist "in both an "authentic" and an "inauthentic" historicity." (Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* 105-106) This leads to the aforementioned question of what Bultmann means by 'history.'

History, according to Bultmann, is not just the course of historical events and/or historical facts. History to him bears a more personal meaning and has a more individualistic significance. He shows what he understands by history writing, "History is defined to be "the field of human decisions". Since all human beings in fact come out of a past in which certain possibilities of self-understanding are already controlling, in that they are offered or called in question, decision is also always a decision with respect to the past." (Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* 157)

According to Bultmann, then, history is *my own* personal history. History is the field where human decisions at large collide. To him, history consists of the collective decisions of human beings to exist either authentically or inauthentically. History comprises those individual moments when man is faced with the choice of either 'falling' into bondage to the past, or being open to the future. Such decisions is what stirs the course of history. Authenticity to Bultmann, thus, is a *decision*. It is not handed to us, it has to be chosen, and it has to be always anew. Man is always at the risk of falling back into a state of inauthenticity. "Our authenticity does not belong to us like some natural property, and we do not dispose of it. Naturally, philosophy does not think we do either, but knows that authenticity must constantly be laid hold of by resolve." (Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* 27)

While Heidegger believes that the source of man's anxiety is death, the latter believes it is man's temporality and the fact that we cannot hold unto time. "It does not have to be the thought of death itself that makes us uneasy; rather we all know that time is slipping away from us and that we cannot hold on to a single moment. We cannot achieve the eternity of pleasure; we cannot hold fast to time, we cannot banish death." (Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* 213)

Hence, Bultmann believes that there is a need within every one of us to create myth, or even to think mythically, to calm our anxiety that stems from a place of fear; fear of what we do not understand, fear of what to come, and fear of what we cannot

control. The way to understand such myths is to realize that they are talking about *our own personal* existence and *our own understanding* of our true selves. To demythologize these myths is to existentially interpret them in light of Heidegger's concepts of 'authenticity,' 'anxiety,' 'history,' and 'decision.' This leads to the second part of Bultmann's second phase of demythologization, namely 'interpretation.'

Interpretation to Bultmann is the process needed in order to demythologize myths. It is a guided hermeneutical procedure.

A comprehension--an interpretation--is, it follows, constantly orientated to a particular formulation of a question, a particular 'objective'. But included in this, therefore, is the fact that it is never without its own presuppositions: or, to put it more precisely, that it is governed always by a prior understanding of the subject, in accordance with which it investigates the text. The formulation of a question, and an interpretation, is possible at all only on the basis of such a prior understanding. (Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological* 239)

This poses the following dilemma; does this mean that an interpreter must have knowledge of what the text has to offer beforehand? Is Bultmann asking an interpreter to know about a text before they actually *know* the text? The answer lies in the definition of what Bultmann means by 'prior understanding.' Bultmann believes that "Prior understanding is the interpreter's grasp of the subject matter with which the text deals and not his comprehension of the meaning of the text *per se*." (B. A. Wilson 172)

No interpretation/exegesis "is without presuppositions, because exegete is not a *tabula rasa* but approaches the text with specific questions or with a specific way of asking questions and thus has a certain idea of the subject matter with which the text is concerned." (Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* 145) An interpreter is a subject approaching a subject. They come to a text with expectations of what the text has to offer. Their interpretation

is guided by their very own individuality. "In practice, a certain way of asking questions will always guide each individual historian." (Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* 136)

Bultmann believes that as long as a certain understating of a text is not dogmatized, brining such understanding above and beyond questioning and reinterpretation, an interpreter is safe. For him, an interpreter who shuts himself off to what the text has to offer "does not hear what the text says but lets it say only what he already knows. But even where allegorical interpretation is given up, exegesis frequently guided by prejudices. No exegesis that is guided dogmatic prejudices hears what the text says but lets it say only what the exegete wants to hear." (*New Testament and Mythology* 145) This is exactly the need for demythologization. Texts are open to interpretation. Hence, interpretation discloses itself always anew and is individualistic in nature. As argued before, history to Bultmann is *personal* history, it is belong to the individual. It is the individual's responsibility to decide on what the history will be. Interpretation occurs when that individual is moved by the historicity of a certain text or event.

In light of such definitions and the arguments laid by Bultmann, to demythologize is a twofold process. First, a negative process starts with the realization that one's current world picture has been challenged. Second, a positive process where in order to understand myth and/or mythical thinking, existentialist interpretation has to take place. Existentialist interpretation is an existentialist encounter between a subject and another subject, and not an object. Such interpretation stems from one's understanding of the possibilities of one's own existence; i.e. either 'authentically' or 'inauthentically,' one's knowledge of how one is always faced with the need to 'decide,' one's awareness of one's own 'historicity,' and one's openness to what the text/event has to tell about one's own self-understanding.

In this sense, Martin, the narrator of *The Royal Hunt* could considered the demythologizer in the play, starting from its opening

scene, which highlights a sense of confrontation and conflict. By breaking the fourth wall and having the narrator of the play address the audience, Shaffer invites the audience to be as much a part of this play as every other theatrical element. Shaffer skilfully forces the audience's consciousness, and at times even their unconscious, to demythologize the events of the play as the characters help unravel them before the audience's eyes. The play opens with Martin Ruiz's older self addressing the audience. He introduces himself as Martin, who is nothing but a soldier, which he has been all his life. He offers the audience what seems to be an incredible, even mythical, event in nature.

OLD MARTIN: I'm going to tell you how one hundred and sixty-seven men conquered an empire of twenty-four million. (Shaffer, *The Royal Hunt* 1)

Shaffer captures the audience's attention with this opening statement; their minds are aware that they are actively participating, with the help of Martin, in a process of demythologizing what could be deemed a mythical battle. The immediate inquiry that jumps to mind is how a few Spanish men could conquer a vast empire like that of the Inca. While the invasion of Peru is a documented historical event – a fact that could defeat the purpose of dramatically representing it as a mythical event – introducing it to the audience in this manner, as a riddle of a superhuman feat, gives it that sense of being a mythical occurrence. From the opening scene of the play, Shaffer uses Martin's character as a catalyst for enhancing the audience's feeling that they are about to witness an epic and equally mythical play.

OLD MARTIN: Soon I'll be dead and they'll bury me out here in Peru, the land I helped ruin as a boy. This story is about ruin. Ruin and gold. (1)

Those few words help set the tone of the entire play. They are uttered by what Taylor believes to be the most important character of the play right after its two central characters; "as old

Zeinab Hussein

Martin [, he] acts as narrator for us and as young Martin undergoes the torments of adolescence, the slow, ugly process of learning by disenchantment, reconciling one's ideals with the harsh realities of life" (320). Martin is the audience's first glimpse into the world of conflict that the play depicts. The first appearance of Young Martin on stage has him "*duelling an invisible opponent with a stick*" (Shaffer, *The Royal Hunt* 1). Side by side, both Young and Old Martin create the first dramatic clash of two different, even opposing, worldviews. Shaffer materialises on stage what is originally metaphysical in nature, namely, an encounter between the same character and its older self. Hence, Shaffer uses time as the horizon for analysing Martin's character, bidding him against himself in the process. Young Martin is a young boy of fifteen, while Old Martin is in his middle fifties.

Growing up in Spain at a time of victorious conquests and triumphant leaders, conquering and killing in the name of motherland and Christ, Young Martin's worldview is shaped by the war, the pride, the glory, and the dream of chivalry. His initial moment of negatively demythologizing these dreams is the moment he meets Francisco Pizarro. That is the moment when Martin sees in Pizarro the possibility of the actualisation of his worldview.

YOUNG MARTIN: If you could only imagine what it was like for me at the beginning, to be allowed to serve him. But boys don't dream like that any more – service! Conquest! Riding down Indians in the name of Spain. The inside of my head was one vast plain for feats of daring. I used to lie up in the hayloft for hours reading my Bible – Don Cristobal on the rules of Chivalry. (1-2)

Hence, still addressing the audience, Martin paints the world picture he is handed down due to his place in history. His world picture consists of several elements. First, there is service. This dream signifies obeying an authority figure reminiscent of a father

figure. Martin is searching for someone to whom he can look up. He is looking for guidance. Second, Martin is thrown into a world of conquest. This offers him a sense of purpose and direction. It gives his life-journey a meaning for which he displays a dire need on multiple occasions. Third, there is the Bible. The young boy is offered a faith system which fulfils his need for worship, another need that he discusses many times during the course of the play. Finally, there is the dream of chivalry. It is a dream of longing for perfection. This dream satisfies man's need to be almost superhuman. To dream of chivalry is to dream of nobility and its accompanying sense of perfection, a dream that haunts Young Martin's imagination. These are the elements that constitute Martin's worldview, a worldview that he thinks he is going to actualise when he meets Pizarro. That is the reason why Martin immediately becomes eager to obey and please Pizarro.

PIZARRO: You're a page now, so act like one.

Dignity at all times.

YOUNG MARTIN: (*Bowing.*) Yes, sir.

PIZARRO: Respect.

YOUNG MARTIN: (*Bowing.*) Yes, sir.

PIZARRO: And obedience.

YOUNG MARTIN: (*Bowing.*) Yes, sir.

PIZARRO: And it isn't necessary to salute every ten seconds.

YOUNG MARTIN: (*Bowing.*) No, sir. (6)

Martin sees in Pizarro the father figure he seeks. He believes that to fulfil his dream of service, he has to obey Pizarro's every order. In this sense, Martin believes that the road to reach his authentic existence starts with following Pizarro. However, in his search for that authentic existence, Martin loses his authenticity the moment he surrenders the task to the other, namely, Pizarro. Martin starts idolising Pizarro and begins to think of the latter as his

Zeinab Hussein

saviour, a mythical figure who lends meaning to his existence and provides that sense of direction and purpose he covets.

OLD MARTIN: I saw him closer than anyone, and had cause only to love him. He was my altar, my bright image of salvation. Francisco Pizarro! Time was when I'd have died for him, or for any worship. (1)

This mental image of ritualistic worship depicts Martin's desperate need to believe. That need stems from his worldview. The aforementioned scene of ritualistic blind obedience to Pizarro's orders asserts that need. However, in actuality, meeting Pizarro offers Martin nothing but a new worldview that contradicts, and at times clashes with, his original one. The worldview that Pizarro offers starts to slowly and steadily demythologize Martin's old one. In this sense, while the play deals with "traditional religious myths" at times, it also depicts "other types of myth as for example the dreams about chivalry and equality" (Westarp 128). As his younger self, Martin has not been aware of that process of demythologization yet. His naiveté and his need to believe in a father and/or a god-like figure prevent him from realising the contradiction between his worldview to which he aspires and the actual worldview to which he is introduced by Pizarro. However, as his older self, Martin addresses the audience and says, "And then he came and made them real. And the only wish of my life is that I had never seen him" (Shaffer, *The Royal Hunt* 2). This means that time is a crucial element that has helped Old Martin demythologize the encounter with Pizarro.

Consequently, Martin offers a demythologization of the characters and the events of the play on two levels. First, he demythologizes his young self by offering his commentary as his old self on his own earlier beliefs and actions. Second, he offers the audience an interpretation of the play as it unfolds before their eyes, an interpretation forcing them into a moment of existential decision

of whether to accept or refuse such interpretation. In this sense, Martin serves as a metacharacter explaining and commenting on the play as it unravels. This means that he could be considered a demythologizer of the play as if from the outside. Meanwhile, Martin's appearances provide an element of repetition which leaves the audience with a sense of a ritualistic occurrence. They wait for his appearance to help further their understanding of the events of the play. He provides a sense of comfortable transition from past events to the present and paves the way to the future.

Martin's narration is thus the audience's pathway to the world of the play. Through his narration, they get to meet the first of the two central characters of the play, namely, Pizarro. Upon first meeting Martin, Pizarro offers him a glimpse into the worldview of war and mercenariness. That moment signifies the clash between the two opposing worldviews offered to Martin. His old worldview is one of nobility, chivalry, and a search for meaning, while the one presented to him by Pizarro is one of nothingness, faithlessness, and material gain. However, eager to surrender his authenticity to a father figure, Martin does not realise that contradiction. He believes that the new worldview to which he is introduced is the start of actualising his old worldview; a paradox that, being young, he does not come to realise.

PIZARRO: Look you, if you served me you'd be Page to an old slogger: no titles, no traditions. I learnt my trade as a mercenary, going with who best paid me. It's a closed book to me, all that chivalry. But then, not reading or writing, all books are closed to me. If I took you you'd have to be my reader and writer, both.

YOUNG MARTIN: I'd be honoured my Lord. Oh please my Lord! (3)

In this sense, demythologizing Martin's ritual of obedience and surrender, one observes that Martin does not resolve the clash

or conflict between his two worldviews. Martin sees his journey as one of “ruin and gold” (3). This implies that he does not allow the new worldview to alter or modify his old one so as to achieve his authentic existence. If anything, his allowing Pizarro’s worldview to demythologize his original one leads to an inauthentic existence of living as ‘they do’. Martin falls victim to a meaningless existence, even though he sets out at first to give meaning to such existence. In his case, demythologization offers him a dogmatic interpretation of his reality as one of destruction and nothingness.

Hence, Martin’s character serves a dual dramatic purpose. First, the sense of resentment he realises as his older self continues to develop throughout the entire play, leaving the audience to ponder the idea of the need to believe in higher values. The audience is provoked by Martin’s character to contemplate the idea of identifying oneself with the surrounding world, represented by material gain, and with the others, as dramatized by Pizarro. Martin’s character engages the audience from the very beginning of the play in an unconscious process of demythologization, in which they are urged to think about the idea of existing authentically, the need to take over one’s own existence, and the desire human beings have to lend meaning to their lives by surrendering to a higher power.

Second, Martin serves as Pizarro’s foil and double at the same time. On the one hand, Young Martin is Pizarro’s foil. The juxtaposition of the two characters on stage throughout the play is meant to highlight the two completely opposing worldviews of these two characters. On the other hand, Pizarro is dramatized as Young Martin’s object of desire and vice versa. Pizarro sees in Young Martin a younger version of himself. Once upon a time, Pizarro used to have hope and seek belief just as Young Martin does now. However, as a man of sixty-three years old, Pizarro detests the optimism and naiveté of Young Martin. Pizarro no longer believes in anything or even sees the need to belong to a belief system. Young Martin represents a lost image of what Pizarro once wanted

to be. In the next scene, Pizarro expresses his current dissatisfaction and resentment of what his heart and soul once craved. As his older self, Pizarro loathes the hopeful and, for him, naïve Young Martin.

PIZARRO: Believe this: if the time ever came for you to harry me, I'd rip you too, easy as look at you. Because you belong too, Martin.

YOUNG MARTIN: I belong to you, sir!

PIZARRO: You belong to hope. To faith. To priests and pretences. To dipping flags and ducking heads; to laying hands and licking rings; to powers and parchments; and the whole vast stupid congregation of crowners and cross-kissers. You're a worshipper, Martin. A groveler. You were born with feet but you prefer your knees. It's you who make Bishops – Kings – Generals. You trust me, I'll hurt you past believing. (17-18)

This scene dramatizes a sense of animosity that is thinly veiled, if at all. Pizarro abhors the boy's need to believe or to worship, a need that Pizarro himself later in the play will realise and try to fulfil. For now, Pizarro denies Young Martin that need. That being said, in actuality, Young Martin is also Pizarro's double. The latter is what the former wants to become. Young Martin thinks of Pizarro as "the ideal self he wants to imitate" (Diniz, *The Double as a Literary Device* 47). Moreover, Young Martin signifies what Pizarro once aspired to be. He reminds Pizarro of his youth and his dreams. At one point, Pizarro addresses Young Martin as if he is addressing himself, "Strange eight, yourself, just as you were in this very street" (Shaffer, *The Royal Hunt* 18). This signifies how Pizarro used to think of himself as a teenage boy: the same exact image of Young Martin. The audience is introduced to Pizarro's adolescent self when he addresses Young Martin, "Little lord of hope, I'm harsh with you. You own everything I've lost" (18). In this sense, while Pizarro despises Young Martin's hopefulness, he

Zeinab Hussein

aspires to recapture that sense of purpose and belonging. This desire later finds expression in his obsession with Atahualpa and the Inca. At the same time, Old Martin becomes the Pizarro the audience meets at the very beginning of the play; the disenchanting, disbelieving, and crude Pizarro. One could argue that such dramatization of these two characters asserts the universality of our human existence, while at the same time confirming our individuality. Both Pizarro as a teenage boy and Young Martin share the same dreams and desires; however, those shared aspirations are for different reasons. Both men see the world from two different perspectives.

To conclude, Shaffer's play takes the audience on a journey of existentially interpreting the events that unfold before their eyes. The drama provokes the spectators to participate in demythologizing the world of the play. Hence, the audience is led to explore the play "as a kind of reinterpretation of past experience made present by the theatrical event and be struck by the similarity, implied in the play, between human relations in modern society and those between the Spaniards and the Inca people" (Diniz, *The Scapegoat* 169). It becomes apparent for the audience how primitivism is not a far cry from modernism. At any given point in history, unless they learn from their past mistakes, humans are doomed to repeat the exact same patterns over and over again. History becomes nothing but a ritual itself. People go through the motions in order to calm their existential anxiety without ever finding their true authentic self. In Shaffer's dramatic world, "human beings are treated as objects to serve others' interests, 'primitive' people's values and beliefs are trampled upon, men fail to acknowledge their own faults – all of which are to be found in contemporary patterns of behaviour" (169). Such representation of humanity evokes in the audience the feeling that unless a change is made, history will repeat itself. Thus, the play recalls, by means of myth, history, and literature, into the audience's consciousness these stable archetypes. Therefore, Shaffer, being a skilled dramatist, "has

revealed a primeval vision, a special sensibility to archetypal patterns and a talent to convey experiences from the 'interior world' to the external one" (170). In this sense, the third plane of demythologization in the drama conjures a moment of decision for the audience. They need to decide for themselves whether they are to repeat the same archetypes, or they will make a change and break the pattern.

Works Cited

- Bultmann, Rudolf. *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*. Trans. James C. G. Greig. New York: Macmillan, 1955. Online. <<https://www.questia.com/read/3534080/essays-philosophical-and-theological>>.
- . *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*. Trans. Schubert M. Ogden. New York: Meridian Books, 1960. Print.
- . *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*. Ed. Schubert M. Ogden. Trans. Schubert M. Ogden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. Print.
- Bultmann, Rudolf, et al. *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*. Ed. Hans Werner Bartsch. Trans. Reginald H. Fuller. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961. Print.
- Diniz, Thais Flores Nogueira. "The Double as a Literary Device: Peter Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun." *R.Estud.Ger.* 7.1 (1986): 41-51. Web. 30 March 2013. <<http://www.thais-flores.pro.br/inicio.htm>>.
- . "The Scapegoat: Theatre as Ritual or The royal Hunt of the Myth." 21 (2005): 169-170. Web. 10 July 2012. <<http://www.thais-flores.pro.br/artigos/PDF/The%20Scapegoat.pdf>>.
- Gianakaris, C. J. "Peter Shaffer." *British Playwrights, 1956-1995 : A Research and Production Sourcebook*. Ed. William W. Demastes. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996. 346-361. ProQuest ebrary. Web.
- Shaffer, Peter. *The Royal Hunt of the Sun: A Play Concerning the Conquest of Peru*. New York: Stein and Day, 1965. Print.
- Taylor, John Russell. "Peter Shaffer." *British Writers*. Ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987. 313-328. Print.
- Walker, Steven F. "Myth: Thematic Approaches." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. London: Routledge, 2008. 329-330. Print.
- Westarp, Karl-Heinz. "Myth in Peter Shaffer's The royal hunt of the sun and in Arthur Kopit's Indians." *English Studies* 65.2 (1984): 120-129. Web. 30 Novemeber 2009. <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=7895298&site=ehost-live>>.
- Wilson, Barrie A. "Bultmann's Hermeneutics: A Critical Examination." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8.3 (1977): 169-189. Online. 9 October 2010. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40036266>>.

