

Eszterházy Károly College

“The Individual is not born, he is thrown into
existence”

A theoretical analysis of the interpretation of the Columbus Myth

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Introduction

As it seems to me it is hard to find a more controversial figure than Christopher Columbus. The reason why I am of this opinion is that, there are too many unknown or inaccurate dates in his life which contributes to the fact that the Mariner sharply divided the scholars. Due to this, it was impossible to develop a united standpoint of inquiry, as I stated in my previous BA thesis. Since we do not know the accurate date of his birth, besides, his origin is also questionable as well. In order to solve this enigma I came up with different kinds of theories related to the possible origins of the Admiral. Hence my BA thesis summarizing my previous research efforts was devoted to the exploration of the real personality of Christopher Columbus. Still, I found the task challenging because his personality was built up by controversial features. Due to this, I was unable to find even two scholars who could develop the same position on him.

For instance, in the BA paper, I examined the characteristics of seamanship. Even this very simple feature seems to make the scholars enter into a controversy with one another. It is known that Columbus was a great seaman because he managed to get three times to America, thus, Samuel Eliot Morison in his revolutionary book, *Christopher Columbus: Mariner* (1959) arrived at the following conclusion considering Columbus' great ability. "There was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities – seamanship" (Morison, "Mariner" 218). In spite of this convincing position I have found a scholar namely, Kirkpatrick Sale who cast a cold light on the outstanding quality undermining his abilities as a discoverer. As Sale states, "It is a disappointment nonetheless that the Discoverer of the New World turns out to be quite so simple, quite so inexperienced, in the ways of discovering his environment" (Sale 103-4).

Although this statement does not play utterly down the significance of seamanship, it implies that a great Discoverer must show some interest about the surroundings as well. Aside from this, other controversial characteristics can also be found and presented. For example, the question of "*genocide*" a technical term borrowed from Latin used for the eradication of the natives also caused a stir as well. I based my conclusion upon the fact that the act of the so- called genocide was quite a delicate matter. As Felipe Fernandez Armesto said Columbus cannot be accused directly of genocide: "The Discoverer was often rough towards the Indians and his measures sometimes were not in favor of the Indians, it would be quite an exaggeration to say that he directly made serious efforts in order to exterminate the natives" (Fernandez- Armesto 3). As opposed to this respective

position the distinguished anthropologist, Jack Weatherford held a rather different conviction. “As he had found neither China nor Japan therefore, he had thought that the Taino Indians would be the suitable subjects helping him to discharge his debt” (Weatherford 2).

My research primarily utilized Zsolt Virágos and Gabriella Varró’s revolutionary case study entitled. *The Legacy of Jim Crow: Myth and Stereotype in American Social Consciousness and Culture* (2002). In this book Zsolt Virágos defined the M2 myth as: “self-justifying intellectual constructs combining false and valid information functioning as cognitive filters promoting the production and interpretation of meaning” (Virágos - Varró 30). Besides these, the BA thesis introduced the concept of myth and it also made a difference among the three types. While the so-called Columbus Myth is considered to be a combination of the three sorts of myth, the M1 (the prehistoric myth), the M2 (the prejudice-based myth) and the M3 (Myths with a creative force) I put a great emphasis on the prejudice-based M2 myth type. A piece of evidence to this definition is found in Bíróné Nagy Katalin’s article entitled *A Kolumbusz jelenség: Kultúrkincként tisztelt faji diszkrimináció. (The Columbus Phenomenon- Racial discrimination respected as a Cultural Heritage)* 2008. Highlighting the process of self-justification: “Despite the fact that he was of low birth and quite uneducated he had been able to find patrons with whom his dreams could be fulfilled” (Bíróné 261). Still, an M1 element is embedded in the M2 myth.

As Fernandez-Armesto puts it:

Columbus had successfully identified himself with the legend of Saint Christopher, thereby calling himself Christo ferens. And the so-called book of Prophecies which was compiled by him contained such predictions that he was going to make great discoveries. (Fernandez- Armesto 1)

What is more, several examples can also be given to the M3 sort of myth as well. The simplest example is the fact that Columbus wanted to rediscover the islands of Japan and China, contrary to this, he discovered an unknown land. Unsurprisingly, the most important elements of the Columbus Myth are the components of the M2 sort of myth. For instance, the story of the false log or the pawned crown jewels. Having seen that the Columbus myth cannot be utterly interpreted by applying only the second type of myth, since the main task of my previous thesis was to represent the great Discoverer by relying on Zsolt Virágos’ Myth theory, so the paper concentrated mainly on the M2 sort of myth claiming that in the narrower sense, the Columbus myth can easily be interpreted utilizing

mainly the prejudice-based myth. So, the MA thesis will apply a rather meticulous approach than the BA paper did.

The current thesis requires a more scientific approach, thus the legitimacy of the research will be the interpretation of the Columbus Myth in the broader sense. The present work will faithfully introduce all the three sorts of myth as the Columbus Myth is a combination of the three types. The theoretical framework of the paper will be based upon Zsolt Virágos' Myth theory relying mainly on his recent work entitled *The Modernists and Others: The American literary culture in the Age of the Modernist Revolution* (2007), Vincent B. Leitch: *American Literary Criticism from the Thirties to the Eighties* (1988), Leslie Fiedler: *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960). Apart from these, the paper will use such historical sources as Samuel Eliot Morison: *Columbus, Mariner* (1959), and Kirkpatrick Sale: *Christopher Columbus and the Conquest of Paradise* (2006) and other sources such as scientific articles.

The main task of my thesis is to give an overall introduction to Myth Criticism by introducing the main achievements and representatives of this tendency on the one hand. The other task of the paper is to prove that the Columbus Myth cannot be interpreted only through the M2 type of myth. Hence, the key of the successful interpretation of the Columbus Myth is to examine all the three sorts of myth because it is essential to the faithful interpretation of the Columbus Myth.

Therefore, the task of the first chapter is to present the main representatives of the movement of Myth Criticism such as Maud Bodkin, Giambattista Vico, Leslie Fiedler, Philip Wheelwright and Daniel Hoffman. Besides, the first chapter will make an attempt to represent different approaches toward the interpretation of Myth Criticism. Chapter Two will deal with the first type of myth, the M1 or pre- historic myth by highlighting the embedded M1 elements. The penultimate chapter, Chapter Three will continue the examination of the myths by dealing with the M2 or the prejudice-based myth on the one hand, and it will also gain ground to the concept of "otherness" to be identified and examined. The task of the closing chapter, Chapter Four is to introduce the last sort of myth, the M3, myth with a creative force by justifying the fact that the Discovery of the New World was an unintentional act. Last but not least, Chapter Four will present the Columbus Myth from the viewpoint of literature as well. Besides, each chapter is built upon certain theoretical framework which means that throughout the four chapters, the following crucial concepts will be defined: the definition of myths, the ideologically burned M2, which calls for cultural consumer in order to get justification. And I will also

tackle the predicament of the different views offered for the interpretation of myth on the one hand, and to make it easily palatable for the average person on the other.

CHAPTER ONE: MYTH CRITICISM

1.1. The movement of myth criticism

As I said in my introductory part, the main task of the First Chapter is to give a painstaking analysis to the movement of myth criticism by presenting the main representatives of this movement on the one hand, and to grasp this vague term, “*myth*” on the other. Therefore, this chapter will mainly be based upon Vincent B. Leitch’s revolutionary book, entitled *American Literary Criticism from the Thirties to the Eighties* (1988) and Zsolt Virágos’ prominent work, entitled *The Modernists and Others. The American Literary Culture in the Age of The Modernist Revolution* (2007).

First of all, it is essential to know what were the main stages of the development of the movement of myth criticism. As Leitch clearly states; “Although myth criticism had been studying from the end of the thirties to the eighties, the golden age of the movement was considered to have been from the forties to the eighties” (Leitch 118). What is more, the movement had plenty of representatives, namely Richard Chase, Francis Fergusson, Leslie Fiedler, Daniel Hoffman, Stanley Edgar Hyman, Constance Rourke, and Philip Wheelwright. Despite the fact of such great names, I will be looking at the standpoint of the most important ones, as the scope of the thesis is limited. Hence, this chapter will concentrate mainly on the following scholars: Leslie Fiedler, Maud Bodkin, Joseph Campbell and Daniel Hoffman.

To start with, Leitch states the following: There has been a boom in the movement of Myth Criticism due to Kenneth Burke, Joseph Campbell, William Troy, the British Maud Bodkin and the Canadian Northrop Frye” (118). In addition, the scholar also adds that myth criticism was considered to be rather a movement than a school. Since the movement neither has a current journal nor was based on institutional or geographical background.

Notwithstanding the movement united another way. Namely, that these scholars were thinking about literature and criticism similarly. Moreover, they based their convictions on Myth theory which was originated primarily from “European anthropology, philosophy, and sociology” (118). Furthermore, myth was considered to have been essential for the representatives of the movement. As the following line justifies this position: “Without myth man becomes an abstract, homeless, roaring creature” (119). The scholar refers to Giambattista Vico who anticipated this situation, because Vico holds science responsible for the “destruction of myth.” Nevertheless, it is the so-called Modern

culture that requires the rebirth of myth. “Without myth every culture loses its creative force” (119).

Aside from Vico, the author mentions other scholars who tend to approach the issue of myth rather differently. Leitch refers to Sir James Frazer who was able to make his contemporaries see the concept from another perspective. “Rituals were originated from magic, primitive peoples were performing rituals in order to set forces in the service of different sorts of social aims” (120). From another perspective, we learn that those intellectuals who follow the so-called Cambridge tendency give a rather different interpretation of the above mentioned concept. For instance, Hyman and his followers interpret this crucial term as the following: “Myth must primarily be interpreted according to its ritualistic view” (120). In opposition with this firm belief, other professor such as Richard Chase urges that the concept was created due to the creative abilities of mankind. Moreover, Chase was utterly against the popular conviction that myth exhibits any kinds of cognitive functions.

Hence, natural forces are endowed by supernatural in order to achieve particular aims. Thereby, the impersonal forces of the universe are grasped and continuously being guided in order to satisfy certain emotional necessities. By extending Cassirer’s views, Philip Wheelwright was on behalf that myth should combine rituals, narration and cognition while magic must entirely be excluded. (Leitch 121)

For another thing, Leitch raises his readers’ attention to the psychoanalytical views. “The Jungian views of myth are seen as a prehistoric notion which says that just like visions, myths are eternal messages from the unconscious with the aim of revealing human desires and problems” (121). Thus, Jungian psychoanalysis fostered the cognitive, narrative functions and it gained elbow room of the spiritual interpretation of the different sorts of products of myth. After having seen the different kinds of interpretation of myth in general, let me move on to Zsolt Virágos’ definition of myth.

1.2. Myth as a tripartite concept

Firstly, Zsolt Virágos in his prominent book entitled *The modernists and Others: The American literary culture in the Age of the modernist Revolution* lays down that myth must be considered as a “crucial notion”. As he puts it: “It will be helpful to bear in mind that myth is far from being a monolithic product, and it would be misleading to assume that all myths have the same kind of origin and function” (Virágos, “The modernists” 177).

In his previous prominent book, entitled *The legacy of Jim Crow. Myth and stereotypy in the American Social consciousness and culture* (2002), he warns his reader to the apparently imminent simplicity of the notion of myth. In order to successfully struggle with the concept and penetrate into myth, we must be aware that myth is a polysemy, which means more than one meaning can be attached to this special conviction. As Virágos says; “In literary studies myth can be identified with more than one meaning. It can mean story, narrative or the sequential order of words” (Virágos- Varró, “The legacy” 29). Still, we have the opportunity to grasp this crucial term and unravel its nature as Virágos encourages us to do. In the narrower, sense myth can be defined as the following: “Self-justifying intellectual constructs combining false and valid information, functioning as cognitive filters promoting the production and interpretation of meaning” (31). Although we have successfully defined the term, “myth”, what we have to bear in mind is that myth is a so-called “tripartite” concept. As the following explanation makes it clear: “The tripartite conceptual division of myth is thus premised on the assumption that myth is a broad category within which distinctive forms and function require different kinds of explanations” (Virágos, “The modernists” 177). Although I mentioned the three types of myths, they will be amplified later on, in the following chapters. Despite the fact, on first consideration they must be defined here.

To start with the ancient myth, M1 “is made to mean the ancient myth. It is thus recommended that this code should variably connote the archaic, the primitive, the sacred, the traditional, the high-prestige, the canonized, as well as the time-honored and time-embalmed phenomenon” (177). In opposition with M1, the so-called M2 is the contradiction of the previously described myth. What is more, as the author clearly states the current type of myth applies different sorts of applications. “Defined here as an ideologically attuned, self-justifying, intellectual construct, M2 is capable of penetrating any of the forms of social consciousness” (178). The ultimate sort of myth is the so-called M3 type of myth. “M3 type constructs operate in the imaginative realm and they are both probative and creative products of mental operations triggered by and in answer to ontological challenges and epistemological gaps” (178). As a next step, I will present the different versions of mythopoetics.

1.3. The different versions of mythopoetics

As Leitch writes:

Thematically, literature just like myth, it deals with such eternal topics as the creation of Humans and Universe, the basics of law and society; furthermore, it also covers the popular theme, the nature of Gods and Evils. Contrary to this, historically, myth often seen as the basics of literature as it serves as a source and model to literature. (Leitch 123)

Besides, from the viewpoint of culture, Leitch reveals the correlation between myth and literature. As he says: “both myth and literature functions as a narrative which capable of conveying knowledge and wisdom. Moreover, it enhances social and spiritual beliefs as well” (123).

Most of the critics, such as Maud Bodkin and Leslie Fiedler were inspired by the popular views of either Freud or Jung. Firstly, Leitch mentions the pioneer work of Maud Bodkin entitled *Archetypal patterns in Poetry* (1934). In this renowned book, Bodkin managed to successfully combine the Jungian theories, primarily, the so-called archetypes and collective unconsciousness. Besides, the scholar was able to put the most important concepts into practice.

What is more, he gave a detailed description to such interesting themes as Rebirth, Eden, Satan, and the Hero. And the betrayed woman, who wanted to take revenge in every possible way. Apart from this, he dedicated quite a number of pages of those works which exhibit the earlier phases of the English Language. Nevertheless, he was against the so-called Jungian temptation. Still the role of consciousness and society were put a great emphasis on Bodkin’s literary theory. (126)

“Similarly to Bodkin, Leslie Fiedler also relied heavily on the Jungian psychoanalysis when he developed his own mythopoetic method” (126). In his distinguished work, *Archetype and Signature* (1952), he applied another terms instead of myth, namely archetype and signature in order to explain his poetics. Fiedler’s view of Literature was the following: “When the archetype is signed we can speak about literature”. Moreover, Fiedler’s conviction managed to get ground the autobiography, history, and aesthetics, besides these, ritual, folklore, and myth also played a significant role in his works.

As Leitch pointed out, Fiedler was able to live up to his opportunities, because he was fortunate enough to examine new American myths besides the ancient myths. For our part, the most significant work is *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960).

In his work, he describes the nature of fear, as the most common theme of the average American Novel. What is more, he utterly depicts the situation.

As the protagonists of the novel were afraid of homosexuality and responded to the issue of black and white relationship with atrocity. According to Fiedler, ‘anything that is being smothered by the society will return in its literature’. (Leitch 127)

To understand the role of myth either related to the figure of Columbus or to literature, we have to rely on the views of Giambattista Vico. As Vico heavily emphasized, “Myth should be one of the first fields of knowledge to deal with. Because it is essential to interpret the term myth as it built up the history of the heathens” (130). Vico believes that the sources of myth are hidden in history; hence the most important task of an intellectual is to interpret the different sorts of myth of the culture of mankind. Its main aim is to examine “the history of the ancient customs, deeds for the purpose of figuring out the principles of human nature and history” (130).

1.4. The Ulysses review

Besides Leitch’s reference, Zsolt Virágos pays much more attention to the issue of the ancient myth. As he strengthens this position; “literature is the virtually unqualified affirmation of the heritage of the ancient myth” (Virágos, “The modernists” 178). The author wants his reader to see beyond the problem of ‘myth creating and recycling’ and, therefore raises his readers’ attention to the 20th century writers’ quandary. To solve this problem we will firstly turn to T.S. Eliot’s famous book review, *Ulysses, Order, and Myth*, as Virágos describes: “One of the most famous book reviews in the Anglo-American literary culture, Eliot’s oft-quoted, four page text, published in the Dial in November, 1923, is a symptomatic critical writing in more senses than one” (179-80). On first consideration, our author suggests that we must take a good look at the title before dealing with the review itself. What Virágos finds interesting is ‘the added cultural significance of the second word, order,’ which was in Eliot’s time much more crucial and privileged than the term myth.

What is more, in my understanding, Virágos clearly implies that myth is subsumed to the higher concept, order. For us, it means in the Ulysses review the term order is in dominant position, while myth is what we call one of the possible building blocks of the previous concept, order.

Surprisingly, myth loses its vantage point, in view of the above mentioned views, when I stated the importance of myth. In our current case, myth is an auxiliary device that helps to give the work the desired order and “narrative shape” otherwise; we will get

nothing but a shapeless, incoherent writing. In his review, Eliot remained faithful to the original Homeric model. Like in Homer's *Odyssey*, the main plot is based upon the following chain of events. As Virágos describes: "A 'resourceful, middle-aged wanderer' makes his way through trials and temptation towards his home, wife and his son, while a young man sets out into life, which tests and educates him as he has made his way towards his lost father" ("The modernists" 181).

What we can actually deduce from the aforementioned is that "myth is the bringer of order and form" as Virágos says. Hence, if we want to remain faithful to our original statement, we will see the review in a different light. So, Virágos raises the following question: Why would the *Odyssey* have more order than any other subsequently created picaresque or any other kind of pattern? (180). This question is worth mulling over. Nevertheless, Virágos comes up with a quite reassuring answer. "The *Odyssey* provides order just as *Tom Jones* or the *Knight's Tale* or any other carefully designed plot might have done" (181).

Virágos suggests a rather different interpretation if we abandon the role of myth in general. "This epic is not really 'myth' in any pure sense of the word. It is a retelling, thus a 'translation' of sorts, a so-called 'intermediate myth from a preliterate age, that is, the conscious artistic reworking of mythological material" (181). What this explanation suggests to me is that, here we cannot speak about myth in its own value, as myth was used as a structural device. Thus, this is just a reworking of a well-known ancient myth.

Apart from this issue, another problematic issue cries for an explanation, which is Eliot's theoretically ambiguous formulation.

As Virágos puts it:

Eliot's formulations remain theoretically ambiguous, that he himself failed to consistently execute his own recommendations in practice, and that in his subsequent works he abandoned the 'mythical method' almost completely his insistence on the artistic uses of myth as a contributory stream in the inner chemistry of artistic synthesis that has had a profound effect on the literature of subsequent decades. (182)

Personally speaking, as Virágos has shed light on the fact related to myth, in *Ulysses*, myth had a subsidiary role because it was the term, order which was in dominant position, thus myth played a less important role. In the remainder of the First Chapter, I will examine the main characteristic features of a typical American hero besides; I will also take a closer look at the leading critics' different kinds of approaches toward myth.

1.5. The original American hero

First of all, it is essential to mention the most distinguished works of the era of myth criticism.

From our viewpoint, these works contributed to the flourishing of myth criticism. Constance Rourke: *American Humor* (1931), Henry Nash Smith: *Virgin American Novel and its Tradition* (1957), Leslie Fiedler: *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), and Daniel Hoffman: *Form and Fable in American Fiction* (1961). One can ask why these works are so important from our point of view. The answer is quite simple, as these books made the fact obvious that the American Land is considered to be the breeding ground of myth, folklore and the archetypes as well. As Leitch says: We had to wait until the 1960s, when it became the indisputable fact. (Leitch 134).

Furthermore, Leitch comes up with Daniel Hoffman's conviction. Daniel Hoffman in his pioneer work entitled *Form and Fable in American Fiction* (1961) examined ten exemplary works from the genre of romantic poetry. According to Hoffmann the most important "mission" of the American hero is the quest of what he calls as "National Identity". Furthermore, our would be hero must cut all his ties with the Old World in order to search for new types of myth. For instance, when Columbus had launched his enterprise for centuries even before we started thinking about the role of myth and reveal the connection between validity and falsity of his great plan. "To become an American citizen we have to rebel against our Fathers, Kings, Societies and traditions" (134).

For my part, I utterly agree with Hoffman's conviction. As rebel is not only essential but also an inevitable consequence of the quest for freedom and democracy. Had Columbus remained loyal to the Old Sovereigns, he would not have become a self-made man. Hence, rebel is often necessary to break out of the oppression. No doubt, the most important ability that is essential to be a self-made man is a firm belief in our desired goal and of course, bravery and talent in order to launch our enterprise. So, that is the reason why I consider that Columbus had successfully taken the first steps to be called as the stereotype of the American hero. To revert to our original subject, Hoffman's description of the original American Hero.

His watertight definition is the following: "The American hero differs sharply from the great mythical heroes" (135). This statement can be justified easily because it is known that as Leitch refers to Hoffman's words: "the American Hero is in lack either of forefathers or successors. Hence, he did not have lifecycles as he never marriages anyone

or produces offspring. What is more, he rarely dies” (135). All in all, the American Hero embodies a new society that is independent from the old one in every respect.

In addition to this, the type of a New Hero can also be approached from another perspective as Joseph Campbell did. He depicted Myth Criticism from the point of view of religion. In his distinguished work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he emphasized heavily that:” Every hero is a hero and every myth is a myth” (135).

His main views can be summarized in the following way, Americans believed themselves to be Christians which means that they were not born as sinners. Besides, it is ambiguous what we actually mean by the term human being. And he firmly believed that no matter what sort of religious belief a man has or where he was actually born these are the additional facts of life. (136)

After having given my thesis a theoretical framework by introducing the movement of myth criticism and its outstanding representatives, in the following chapter, I will introduce and go into details of the ancient myth in general. And I will be examining the Columbus Myth and enhance its interpretation as an M1 myth.

CHAPTER TWO: THE COLUMBUS MYTH AS AN M1 TYPE OF MYTH

2.1. The M1 as an ancient myth

In the previous chapter, I provided the definition to the M1 type of myth. Still, to be able to interpret the Columbus Myth as an M1, ancient type, or in other words, the pre-historic myth, first and foremost, we have to extend our previously given definition. Thus, the first part of the paper will meticulously examine the M1 Type of myth, besides giving the concise definition of the term; it will give a lengthy description of the M1 myth by providing some examples. I mentioned earlier that the M1 myth is made to mean the ancient myth. As Virágos says: “It is recommended that this code should variably connote to the archaic, the primitive, the sacred, the traditional, the high-prestige, the canonized, as well as the time-honored and time-embalmed phenomenon” (Virágos, “The modernists” 177).

What is more, Virágos keeps amplifying the main features of the term. Technically, we can consider the concept as a “fundamentally pre-modern, indeed pre-literary phenomenon, a treasured relic of man’s childhood and of the dawning of human speculation about the world and its parts” (177). Hence, myth is seen as ‘received material,’ ‘borrowed ’substance: as a contributory stream to subsequent cultures and literatures” (177). Developing this train of thought, we have to rely on *The Legacy of Jim Crow* to study the different sorts of functions of the M1 myth. From our viewpoint, it is useful to take a closer look at the nature of the M1 myth. This sort of myth is really interested in the ancient or in other words, “the speculative and existential issues” mainly concerning the creation of the Universe. Unfortunately, besides being interesting, the term is also considered to be troublesome as well. The main reason for this as Virágos says is the following;

The prehistoric myth wants us to understand why we, human beings inhabited this planet on the one hand, and the question of mortality is also on the agenda of the M1 myth. Why do people have to die? What kinds of missions do we have to fulfill? The latter question alludes to the fact that we have to face mortality still we were not born in vain into this World. Thus the M1 myth will always be on the scholars’ agenda due to its paradigm and archetype-creating ability. (Virágos, “The Legacy” 32)

To understand the role of the M1 myth better, we will also have to deal with stereotypes and see how myth correlates to stereotype as well.

As the M1 sort of myth is responsible for the so-called cultural continuity, thus this type correlates with the first sort of stereotype, namely ST1. As Virágos writes: “The M1 coded myth correlates to ST1 as it serves narratives and paradigms to the cultural discourse” (32). To put Virágos’ theory into practice, I will examine some ancient type of myth by relying on Harry Slochower’s article entitled *The Function of Myth in Existentialism*. Slochower has made a different approach toward myth than his contemporaries have. “Myth is the celebration of the high recognition- moment of man’s collective status” (Slochower 43). Being a reliable scholar, Slochower leaves no stone unturned to get elbow room for further explanation of his concept. What immediately comes to light is the following:

In reality the hero always raises his voice against his commune nevertheless; he only walks out against its ‘static forms’. Yet in his revolt he becomes aware of his own evil and by accepting it, he learns to control it which means he is ready for realignment. What is more, he successfully overcame his ‘demonic powers’ but he is still subordinated to them. In addition, there is room for redemption only in a ‘new home’ as he had left his old home. (43.)

Before dealing with the Columbus Myth, let me come up with an example to the pre-historic (M1) myth. “The characteristic mythical hero of Existentialism is not Prometheus created by his mother, Terra, and finally coming to terms with Zeus, the father, but Sisyphus” (Slochower 44). Moreover, the author here is arguing for the fact, Prometheus failed to free mankind from fear.

Due to this, the author gives credit to Sisyphus. As he describes:

Sisyphus who was doomed to roll a rock to the top of the mountain, with the rock always falling back of its own weight. Nevertheless, Sisyphus is happy because he believes that ‘his destiny belongs to him’. Despite the repetition of the unconnected actions, he is satisfied with his fate, because he is the one who is responsible for this repercussion. Funny enough, he is happy because even in his punishment, he is able to rebel against the system. (Slochower 44.)

Let me come to the point by unraveling the M1 elements of the Columbus Myth.

2.2. M1 elements in the Columbus myth

Personally speaking, the easiest way to describe the personality of Columbus is the application of the following quote from Slochower: “The individual is not born—he is thrown into existence. And as he has no parents, he produces no offspring” (Slochower 43). Here, we can draw a parallel with Daniel Hoffman’s distinguished taxonomy concerning the original “American Hero”. As Hoffmann stated: “The American hero differs sharply from the great mythical heroes. The American hero is in lack either of forefathers or successors. Hence, he did not have lifecycles” (Leitch 135). For us, this quotation suggests that we are only interested in the present and the future of our hero. As Slochower points out: “It even speaks of the past and tradition. But this past is freely created, not discovered as an objective existence” (44).

Closely related to this current observation, in my previous thesis I amplified the point that Columbus must be seen as an “Adventurer” because to a lesser extent he was attached to his home, on the contrary, he found his “real” home at sea. As the following few sentences taken from Kirkpatrick Sale clearly verifies our standpoint. “The darkness suggests rather that he was a man truly without a past that he could define, without a home, or roots, or family, without ever a sense, or love, of place” (Sale 53). A few lines below, Sale makes clear what has been ambiguous so far: “Nowhere does he talk about growing up with his father or mother or whatever other family he had” (53). It does not mean of course, that Columbus had either no family or home. Abstractly speaking, Columbus had no ancestors and successors because not only the experts in the field of myth criticism have outstripped the existence of family in importance, but also the readers of the “*Columbus Myth*” as well. What is more, Sale continues to support this idea by claiming the following: “He was peculiarly, a man who never knew a settled way of life or an identity with any one stretch of earth, whose only real home from childhood on seems to have been at sea” (Sale 54).

My firm belief is that, even this quotation testifies to unravel the extraordinary abilities of Columbus, as our hero sharply differs from the average man. I base my surmise upon the fact that he lived an unsettled way of life on the one hand, and he considered that his home was found at sea on the other. Inasmuch as sea is seen to embody no permanence, therefore, man is always being forced to go somewhere else, so he embodied the Original American Hero. Hence, he always has to fight with the unknown powers of sea. Likewise, Bettina Knapp in her article entitled Paul Claudel’s: *The Diary of Christopher Columbus*:

A Demiurge Journeys Forth, reveals the outstanding characteristics of the “Discoverer”, implying that this is not surprising that even Paul Claudel was inspired by the grandeur of Columbus. “He saw him as a giant ‘assembler’ and ‘re- assembler’ of disparate earthly factors, of land masses a man who succeeded in bringing together divergent segments of life and humanity” (Knapp 145-6). What this quotation justifies is that; Claudel just like many other authors gave credit to the extraordinary abilities of Christopher Columbus. Apart from Bettina Knapp, Felipe Fernandez- Armesto also sheds lights on the extraordinary visions of Columbus: “He was a loquacious and indefatigable self-publicist, who bored adversaries into submission and acquired a proverbial reputation for using more paper than Ptolemy” (Fernandez-Armesto 1). In my interpretation, Fernandez-Armesto acknowledges the outstanding communication skills of the “Discoverer”, and his extraordinary bravery which made him capable to launch his enterprise to the unknown. Besides, his outstanding skills concerning his rhetoric also contributed to the fact that he became a legend of his own time. As Fernandez- Armesto strengthens this claim: “To a leading astrological guru at the court of Spain, he was 'like a new apostle” (1). To put all the aforementioned into practice, in the remainder of this Chapter, I will take a closer look at the writings of Christopher Columbus, concerning the remnants of his Diary and his letter to Luis De Saint Angel. The reason, why I will rely on these sources is to represent the M1 elements of the Columbus Myth on the one hand, and to illustrate the extraordinary zealousness of the “Mariner” on the other.

A piece of evidence to the necessity of Columbus’ revelation can be found at the beginning of the journal.

The Rulers of Catholic Europe who are against the Doctrine of Mahomet and any kinds of heresy determined to send Christopher Columbus to the said countries of India, in order to encounter its princes and people. And to learn their respective position regarding their religion, besides, to find the proper method of converting them to Holy Faith. (*The Journal of Columbus* 1)

These few lines are the material proof of the firm belief of Columbus.

What is more, the “Discoverer” persuades the Monarchy by referring to the Catholic principles. The creative force of Columbus’ rhetoric is seen by continuously raising the Sovereign’s attention to his enterprise. Firstly, he is emphasizing the importance of the Catholic Faith, and his main task which is to promote “The holy Christian Faith”, thereby alluding to the fact that “the doctrine of Mahomet” must be eradicated. Secondly, the

“Discoverer” sees himself as an envoy whose main mission is to turn the heathens into Christian believers.

For another thing, his way of thinking concerning his voyage well underpins his extraordinary abilities. By choosing to ship out following a Westerly route, he jeopardized not only the success of the journey but his reputation was also at risk because of the malicious remarks concerning his enterprise as well.

Apart from this issue, the “Admiral” compares the significance of his mission to the Jewish leader, Moses. “The sailors murmured, saying that they had got into smooth water, where it would never blow to carry them back to Spain; but afterwards the sea rose without wind, which astonished them” (*The Journal of Columbus* 5). Hence, Columbus felt that the grandeur of his enterprise was equal to the deed of Moses. “The rising of the sea was very favorable to me, as it happened to formerly to Moses when he led the Jews from Egypt” (5). Obviously, this quotation suggests that Columbus was aware of the fact that he was going to make great Discoveries. Thus, this quotation is the proof to the M1 element as Columbus utterly justified his mission to the greatness of the biblical figure, Moses’ miraculous deed. This is a typological argument, as he compares himself to the leading figure of the Old Testament. Following the Augustinian hermeneutic explanation, it can be argued that by his allusion to the Old Testament, he anticipates the New Testament that is his assumption of the Christ figure. I am expected to give a further explanation to the notion of the “Christ figure” which will be amplified with the help of András Tarnóc’s article, entitled *Narratives of Confinement. Revisiting the Founding Myth of American Culture* (2011).

2.3. The notion of the Christ figure

In order to achieve the desired goal, I will utilize Philip Wheelwright’s Mythopoeic mode of consciousness model. Tarnóc describes Wheelwright’s respective taxonomy as the following:

Mythmaking as a psychological and social activity is divided into three stages. The primary or mystic phase, in which the repetitive activities and the individual perception of the mythmaker dominate; the romantic phase emphasizes the social function of the given myth, while the consummatory level transcending the narrative’s logical and linguistic forms enables the protagonist or mythmaker to act as a prophet (Tarnóc 1).

Regarding the relevance of the present chapter, the romantic and the consummatory level are the most crucial phases.

First and foremost, I have to augment the ultimate, consummatory level as it is the basic of the ancient sort of myth. Especially, I should put weight on the last few words of the definition, “the protagonist or mythmaker acts as a prophet.” As Fernandez-Armesto describes the phenomenon: “he called himself ‘*Christo ferens*’ and compiled the book of what he said were biblical prophecies of his own discoveries. Enough contemporaries were convinced by his gigantic self-esteem for him to become literally a legend in his own lifetime” (Fernandez-Armesto 1).

What is more, the author extends his position by claiming that “To a humanist from Italy who taught the would-be Renaissance men of Castile, he was the sort of whom the ancients made Gods” (Fernandez-Armesto 1). Evaluating these train of thoughts utterly reflect the phenomenon of the consummatory level. Fernandez-Armesto’s words not only shed light at the attitude of the prophet, but also to the fact that his convictions have been accepted by the target group, the representatives of his contemporaries. Besides, the so-called romantic phase is also an element strongly attached to the ancient myth. As the following quotation justifies: “As I saw they were very friendly to us, and perceived that they could be much more easily converted to our holy faith by gentle means than by force” (*The Journal of Columbus* 9). What these few words depict is the following: the indigenous people are amiable on the one hand, and their comprehension is above the expectations on the other. Due to this, the role of religion comes to the fore by developing a positive image of the natives as serving the interest of the society. Hence, the firm belief of Columbus also gets a crucial role. To approach the issue of zealousness from a more tangible way, we have to take a look at the “perception of land”. The significance of the moment is follows from when Martin Alonso Pinzon cried out for land. The Admiral uttered, when he heard Pinzon stated the existence of land, he retired into his room in order to pray to God and so did the entire crew of the Mariner by repeating many times, Gloria in excelsis Deo (*The Journal of Columbus* 6).

Furthermore, Columbus verifies the fact of the natives’ conversion. As the natives are considered to be very industrious which means they would easily acquire the Christian morals. As the following quotation strengthens our position: “It appears to me, that the people are ingenious, and would be good servants and I am of opinion that they would very readily become Christians, as they appear to have no religion” (*The Journal of Columbus* 10). In addition, the protection of the natives’ rights also comes to the fore. As Fernandez-

Armesto writes: “The principal thing [...] is to take much care of the Indians, that no ill, nor harm may be done them, nor anything taken from them, against their will but rather that they be honored” (Fernandez-Armesto 2).

Nevertheless, the idea of conversion seems to be a very rude process as the indigenous people are expected to adapt to a new religion and be ready to acquire the language of an alien culture as well. Still to a certain extent; the natives’ rights are protected, at least, concerning the respect of their free will. Besides, Columbus stipulates his intention to the consent of God. “If it please our Lord, I intend at my return to carry home six of them to your Highnesses, that they may learn our language” (10). In my interpretation, religion has a crucial role, and as an M1 element, it determines the interpretation of the act of discovery.

In the remainder of the paper, I will take a closer look at Columbus’ letter to Luis de Saint Angel who was the treasurer of King Ferdinand.

2.4. The process of cultural continuity

Even at the beginning of Columbus’ letter it can be noticed that the natives are presented from a very advantageous viewpoint. As the letter describes: “they are so unsuspicious and so generous with what they possess, that no one who had not seen it would believe it” (*The Letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel* 2). What this quotation implies is that, Columbus depicts the natives from a vantage point, because it fosters cultural communication and helps to save the cultural heritage of the indigenous people. What is more, he continues praising the virtue of the Indians, as the following lines prove: “Whether it be anything of great or small value, with any trifle of whatever kind, they are satisfied” (2). As it is seen, Columbus highlights on the fact that the typical human features such as discontent or greediness were unknown feelings to the natives.

Moreover, they regarded everyone such as Columbus and his companions to be superhuman creatures with good intentions. As Columbus points out: “They firmly believed that I, with my ships and men, came from heaven, and with this idea I have been received everywhere, since they lost fear of me” (*The letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel* 3). Due to this, Columbus developed a quite flattering image of the Indians by saying: “They are, however, far from being ignorant. They are most ingenious men, and navigate these seas in a wonderful way, and describe everything well” (3). This quotation is viewed as a piece of evidence to a Noble Savage phenomenon. As the following quotation further explains: “the subcontinent for the first time had a firsthand, face-to-face

description of people actually living in that Paradise or Arcadia, or Elysian fields, envisioned by the ancients” (Sale 197).

Due to this, Columbus depicts the Indians as noteworthy as the Europeans, Thus, the “Discoverer” finds this people suitable to acquire the Catholic Faith. Hence, Columbus is eager to convince the Sovereigns of his conviction. As he says; “I hope that their Highnesses will decide upon the conversion of these people to our holy faith, to which they seem much inclined” (*The letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel* 3).

From another perspective, Columbus exhibits great respect toward the Catholic rulers, whom the new territories are devoted: “I have taken possession of all these islands, for their Highnesses, and all may be more extensive than I know, or can say, and I hold them for their Highnesses, who can command them as absolutely as the kingdoms of Castile” (*The letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel* 4). Last but not least, this letter also shed lights on the fact of the extraordinary zealotness of the “Discoverer”. As these few lines say: “our Redeemer has given victory to our most illustrious King and Queen, and to their Kingdoms rendered famous by this glorious event” (*The letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel* 5). Besides, references to biblical figures also play a crucial role of the M1 sort of myth.

2.5. The role of Biblical figures in shaping the M1 myth

Samuel Eliot Morison, the noted historian, in his book entitled *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages* (1974) writes the following:

When he had learned enough Latin to read ancient and medieval cosmographers, he ascertained that Aristotle was reported to have written that one could cross the Ocean from Spain to the Indies paucis diebus, and Strabo recorded that certain Greeks or Romans had even tried it but returned empty handed. (Morison 27)

Naturally, there were other significant figures, whom inspired Columbus with their grandeur deeds that they had accomplished. At this point, I come across the importance of biblical prophecies concerning the core element of the pre- literate myth. Among the prophecies, Seneca’s Medea was cherished by the would-be discoverer. As Morison puts it: “An age will come after many years when the Ocean will loose the chains of things, and a huge land lie revealed; when Tethys will disclose new worlds and Thule no more will be the ultimate” (27). Inasmuch as Columbus primarily was an “Adventurer”, the most prominent figure for him was Marco Polo. Kirkpatrick Sale in his prominent book entitled

Christopher Columbus: The Conquest of Paradise (2006), comes up with a quotation which anticipates the great enterprise of the “Mariner”. As the distinguished author says: “Possibly a reference to the story in Marco Polo that the rulers of the East were eagerly waiting to welcome Europeans and receive their doctrine of Christ” (Sale 23). Sale’s presumption is based upon an important letter utilizing Columbus’ words: “An all-purpose letter of introduction to foreign potentates from the sovereign king and queen, who ‘have learned with joy of Your esteem and high regard for Us and Our nation’” (Sale 23). Perhaps, the figure of Saint Christopher is the focal point of the M1 myth not only concerning the enterprise but also it is the core of the zealousness of the “Adventurer”. As Morison illustrates: “for thou hast borne upon thy back the whole world and Him who created it” (Morison 9). What is more, the Historian brings home the importance of this train of thought.

As Morison demonstrates:

As a child, Columbus became obsessed about the story of Saint Christopher. What is more, he believed that it was his mission to carry the word of the infant Jesus across the ocean in order to convert the pagans. Alas, many years had passed before anyone would afford him financial support to take up the burden. (9)

In light of this, it is seen that Columbus’ firm belief in God contributed to the fact that, his enterprise was regarded as a success. In the next Chapter, I will shed light on the twofold nature of the Columbus myth, by presenting the M2 type of myth.

CHAPTER THREE: THE COLUMBUS MYTH AS A PREJUDICE-TYPE OF MYTH

3.1. The contradictory features of M2

The Columbus myth is at odds with the expectations inasmuch as it is far from being the benevolent myth enhancing cultural continuity. Apparently, the M2 sort of Myth aspires to sustain this belief, in reality; it has a destructive power which is hidden from the addressed group. To unravel the contradictory features of the M2 sort of myth, I will rely on Zsolt Virágos' article entitled *Reflections on the Ideological Dimensions of M2 in American Culture*. Here, Virágos makes his reader aware of the delusive characteristics of the M2 type of myth. As he says, "M2 will be used in the present context as a self-justifying intellectual construct that is capable of neutralizing epistemological contradictions, thus claims truth" (570). What this definition claims is the recognition of the phony nature of this perilous myth. Perhaps, on first consideration it seems to be quite difficult to keep the balance by neutralizing the contradictory facts, still the M2 sort of myth is capable of sustaining this false image. As Virágos puts it: "M2 is also capable of performing a pragmatic trick of authentication: if rightly packed and adequately promulgated, through its devices of legitimation it can persuade believers to accept the untruth of a given M2-type myth as true" (570).

What is more, Elvira Vilches in her article, *Columbus's gift: Representation of Grace and Wealth and the Enterprise of the Indies* puts the theory into practice.

As Vilches highlights that:

Yet the goals of returning with gold, spices, and precious stones that would help liberate Jerusalem remained a problem. The promise of holy gold constitutes a long parenthesis during which Columbus provides symbolic substitutes of wealth. In the end, such a long delay escapes the temporal structure of the gift. (211)

What Vilches evokes is Columbus' outstanding skills concerning his convincing rhetoric which was essential to hinder and hold the monarchs under the delusion that it is worth supporting his enterprise. To offer a simple illustration of the point, I can evoke Columbus' writings as well. As the journal says, "the natives who wear it upon their arms and legs, and having ascertained that it is true metal by showing them some pieces of it which I have with me, I cannot fail, with the help of our Lord, to find the place which produces it" (*The Journal of Columbus* 13).

What we can deduce from this train of thought is the “Admiral” was about to maintain his position, nevertheless it was likely that he would lose the Monarch’s support, thus, he started to make good use of his rhetorical skills. Besides the other piece of evidence to keep the Rulers’ firm belief is, “I shall depart immediately if the weather serve, and sail round the island, till I succeed in meeting with the king, in order to see if I can acquire any of the gold, which I hear he possesses” (12). What is more, Sale further claims Columbus’ obsession for gold. As Sale’s poignant remark suggests, “Colón openly declared his single-minded interest in finding gold, and his every movement from now on was bent to that purpose” (Sale 67).

To understand further this twofold nature of the M2 type of myth first and foremost I need to amplify my theoretical framework. As Virágos pins it down, “M2 like many other artifacts of culture- is an ideological product, while it is also different from ideology” (Virágos, “Reflections on the Ideological” 570).

What is more, Virágos extends his definition concerning the crucial issue of “ideology”. As he defines, “A form of power to support the social and existential possibilities of the in-group and to weaken these same possibilities in and of the out-group” (571). As this statement exhibits, ideology plays a crucial role; hence ideology makes this type of myth not only self-justifying but convincing as well. For instance, Elvira Vilches highlights the dual nature of Columbus’ zealotry. As she puts it:

The most outstanding element of this presentation is the enactment of Columbus’s spiritual bond and religious persona. Dressed as a Franciscan friar, the Admiral performed a dramatic *mise-en-scène* in which the striking contrast between his humble monk habit and his gold samples enacts the symbolic disclosure of the gift by inscribing himself as *Christo Ferens*, a carrier of both God and gold. (Vilches 217)

Here, the duality of the M2 myth comes to the fore, thus M2 myth should aspire to keep the equilibrium and make the final product utterly acceptable for the target audience, in this case for the Catholic Sovereigns. As Vilches argues, “Sacred symbols of plenitude such as Paradise and personal covenant with the Lord prevail without disavowing the profane and the material” (217).

For another perspective, Virágos calls the attention to the distorting features of the M2 type of construction. As he says, “At a lower and more practical level of cultural analysis, myth may be used to describe a defunct or rival ideology, hereby labeled

negatively as ‘untruth’ or ‘bad knowledge’”(Virágos, “Reflections on the Ideological” 581). What is more, Virágos continues to amplify his definition, as he says:

In this kind of sorting out, much depends on who is doing the labeling: which definition of ideology we are talking about. This is almost the case when ideology is used with pejorative connotations to refer to the thoughts of others. It is primarily when we come to sorting out the functional aspects of ideology that it becomes almost impossible to distinguish M2 type configurations from ideology. In a broad sense, both constructs are focused on justification, rationalization, and legitimization of a given status quo, group attitudes, goals, or general life situation, and both can reflect, defend, support or weaken particular social, moral, religious, and economic institutional interests and commitments. (581)

From the relevance of the present discussion, I will primarily deal with the M2 type as an ideology-saturated distorting construct.

3.2. We-ness versus They-ness dichotomy

What Virágos also highlights concerning the M2 myth is its nature that it is susceptible to assert its own interest in contradiction with other groups. As Virágos states, “M2 is predicated upon a we-ness versus they-ness dichotomy, thus it can never be ‘disinterested’ or ‘innocent’”. In my interpretation, Virágos throws light on the fact that the M2 construct apparently serves as a useful myth while it is distorting with the aim of degrading the other group. As Virágos further explains, “Neither does it tend to be ‘historically blind’. Which means that of the three M-coded variants mentioned above M2 tends to be the most supremely ideological, while M1 is anchored in expressive, M3 in creative concerns and potentials”(570).

To be able to successfully utilize Virágos’ myth theory, I will rely on Margarita Zamora’s article entitled, *Abreast of Columbus: Gender and Discovery*. In as much as my main objective is to shed light at the fact of the ideologically attuned nature of the M2 by unraveling its phony features which are being represented as valid facts due to the convincing rhetoric of Columbus.

First and foremost, Zamora emphasizes the meaning of value which to a large extent determines the Admiral’s approach toward the issue of otherness. For instance, “And I believe that they would easily become Christians, for it seemed they had no religion” (Zamora 132). In my understanding this quotation is a piece of evidence how the

interest of a particular group has gained ground in order to force the weaker group into the yoke of European Civilization. Furthermore, Zamora further strengthens this observation, “I, if it please Our Lord will take from here at the time of my departure six to Your Highness(es) so that they may learn to speak” (132). To my mind this quotation suggests that the representatives of the newly found territories resemble to animals hence, the most important task of Europe is to tame them and make them acquire the language of the dominant group. From our viewpoint, the above cited quotation throws light on one of the main features of the M2 type construct which is the so-called “*propaganda*”. As Virágos and Varró elucidate, the main quandary is that how we should consider the nature of the M2 regarding its tendency to put the in-group into vantage point while it degrades the so-called out-group with its convincing propaganda. (Virágos- Varró, “The Legacy” 50)

In addition, they carry on unraveling the distorting features of the M2 type form. To understand the nature of the M2, it is essential to draw a parallel between myth and the ST2 stereotype as ST2 is the breeding ground for the M2, or in other words the prejudice-based myth.

At first, it is wise to define the term, stereotype, primarily ST2 in order to grasp the significant overlap that is found between these two notions. As Virágos and Varró state, “Stereotypy is what we call as ideological, intellectual and ethical phenomenon” (54). Even this brief definition contributes to the fact that stereotype exerts its influence upon to the M2. Besides, “stereotypy borrows the constructive elements of the M2 type configuration. Thereby, it takes the burden of the M2 and it usurps its compositional arsenal as well” (Virágos-Varró, “The Legacy” 55). To offer a simple illustration of the point, I will utilize Bíróné Nagy Katalin’s article entitled, *The Columbus Phenomenon. Racial Discrimination respected as a Cultural Heritage* (2008).

In this article Bíróné claims the following, “Natives are being degraded as the slaves of nature with good stature but they are considered to be primitive creatures” (264). Furthermore, she illustrates the dynamics of the stereotyping process.

Stereotypes serve similarly as myth. No matter which sort of stereotype we are talking about because the function of both sorts are the same. As it belittles the merits of the natives in order to make prosperity to view otherness according to the set of values of the dominant culture. (264)

Besides, Bíróné calls our attention to the phony feature of the positive stereotype as well. Naturally, the positive stereotype is being forced to cooperate with the M2 form.

As Bíróné asserts:

Columbus utilizes positive stereotype in order to keep the Monarchs' firm belief in him. What is more, his convincing rhetoric comes to the fore when he realizes that the newly found territories are beyond his expectations concerning material wealth. (265)

Hence, the expressive power of the M2 plays a crucial role and the "Discoverer" is able to exploit all the possibilities. Due to this, the chief concept "*legitimacy*" is successfully applied in this case; the New territories function as Eden in which the indigenous people live without any interference in their lives.

3.3. The manipulative functions of M2

To see the manipulative function of the M2, let me further illustrate the point.

As Vilches puts it,

Instead of gold, the Admiral sent to the king more wonders. This time erotic stands out as he sent a group of Cannibals along with their alleged concubines and some castrated young males, as well as many parrots that as he suggest, can be given away to different kings as signs of Castile's remarkable undertakings. (214)

My viewpoint is that Vilches has successfully pointed at the twofold nature of rhetoric being utilized as the tool of manipulation. As we have seen Columbus was able to compensate the absence of the desired material wealth with the exoticism of the New territories.

From another prospective, regarding its role, the M2 myth is to degrade the other group and emphasize the superiority of one particular group thus; I will provide further analysis to this issue. First and foremost, Zamora comes up with a definition that clearly reflects the approach toward otherness. As she states, "The development of a conceptual model of otherness manifested tropologically as a series of metaphors of difference" (Zamora 130). My interpretation is that the author alludes to the difference concerning the surroundings of the newly found land. As Zamora illustrates: The natives' gestures and countenances are so different from ours that I confess to my difficulty in representing them in words, or even in pictures" (132). What we can deduce from this is that Columbus measures everything to European set of values which means that the difference is depicted in favor of European viewpoint. As Zamora poignantly claims, "Dissimilarity in the natural landscape is initially articulated as a semantic void, thinly veiled in a discourse of the ineffable" (132). What is more, this quotation predicts that the approach toward the

animate things will be similar. In addition, difference plays a crucial role in the interpretation of the unknown. As the scholar claims, “Difference is not only a perceived, in passing but the very basis of representation in Columbian discourse” (Zamora 132). Zamora’s position can easily be substantiated with the following example: “They explored for three days and found countless small communities and people, without number, but with no kind of government, so they returned” (*The letter of Columbus to Luis de Sant Angel* 1). This quotation underpins that if something is different from the European value system, it is immediately announced to be nonexistent.

3.4. The catch of the European value system

Apart from this, Zamora further explains this European view. As she states, “lacking must be understood as a value judgment- the Indians had no religion or language or government worthy of the name where the standard was European” (Zamora 133). My persuasion is obvious that it was hard to meet the demands of European expectation. Still it does not mean that the Indians did exhibit no values at all. Ironically, the traces of human civilization can be found in the tarnished natives as well. As Zamora writes, “Arawak difference in three fundamental areas of human behavior- worship, speech, and government is expressed as a lack, probably not because Columbus had any reason to believe they did not have a religion” (133).

Due to this statement, it is evident that Columbus depicted the events from European perspective, thus subjugation is possible without any intervention as otherness is clearly justified. Alas, Indians’ beauty stature contributes to the fact that they are associated with inferiority. As the few lines underpin, “The Indians martial simplicity is related to their physical beauty” (Zamora 136-7).

For another thing, Indians face the inevitable catch of stereotype. Paradoxically, it is their stature which branded them to be morally deficient. As she says, “The Indians have the former but lack the latter. They are physically well endowed but morally deficient” (Zamora 137). Zamora’s position is not astounding inasmuch as it is hard to adjust to European values. Furthermore, physical features can foster prejudice; hence the function of legitimacy gains ground. Even natural landscape serves as a subject for subjugation as it embodies the characteristics of a female land. As the author puts it,

The land itself becomes the substitute merchandise, the desirable object to be possessed. In the letter to Santangel, Cuba is described in these terms; It is a desirable land, and once seen is never to be relinquished. The text

creates in the reader a longing for land. It employs a rhetoric of desire that inscribes The Indies in a psychosexual discourse of feminine whose principal coordinates are initially beauty and fertility and, ultimately possession and domination. (Zamora 134)

This train of thought suggests that the land is judged to be suitable for exploitation because of its feminine features associated with ultimate vulnerability eventually provided justification for the propagation of Christian morals. As Zamora observes, “He relates his search for an apt location to build a fort, describes their lack of military skill” (136).

Fundamentally, Columbus’ intentions are made clear in the Journal as well. As the Journal says, “Your Highnesses might order that all can be brought to Castile, or be held on the same island, for with fifty men you can have them all subjugated, and you would make them do whatever you might wish” (*The Journal of Columbus* 10). What this quotation underlines is that the function is reflected through the process of the emphasis of superiority. What is more, my firm belief is that the utterance, “do whatever you might wish” enables the dominant group to behave in whatever manner they like whereas the other group in this case the Indians is being muted and objectified. Besides Zamora, Sandra H. Ferdman eminent article entitled *Conquering Marvels: The Marvelous other in the Texts of Christopher Columbus* (1994), states the following, “The Letter to Luis De Sant Angel, the first Columbus text known in Europe, reveals a variety of wonders meant to impress and appeal to his contemporary readers, most importantly to the king and queen” (490). What Ferdman’s position clearly entails is that Columbus was able to make the event seen through his own eyes which means the mariner depicted sometimes insignificant effects as wonders. As Ferdman says, “There are also marvels that are simply called marvels. They may be called this for their abundance or quality, or perhaps for their strangeness or even monstrosity” (490). I believe this contributes to the fact that Columbus could easily maintain his position in the eyes of the sovereigns’ so there was no room for doubts in Columbus’ words. Furthermore, Ferdman unravels the Columbian secret. Columbus’ marvel like Polo’s claims newness for authority. “This claim to newness completely inverts the authority traditionally given to ancient texts whose weight lay precisely in their oddness” (491).

What is more, this oddness exerts a great influence on the judgment of the representatives of the New World. As Ferdman claims, “In numerous texts of the Admiral, who was once ‘other’ to the ‘I’ of American becomes part of the new ‘I’ which swallows up the old world, the old ‘other’” (495). No matter, which group represents which sign, as

the outcome will always be the same. Columbus will always represent the values of European culture which should be respected and his notions will always be considered worth following. Whereas the representatives of the New World will be seen as subject to domination, their voice will not be heard as she has been always depicted as the muted other. As Sale's quotation verifies, "The European, in Crosby's words, 'immediately set about to transform as much of the New World as possible into the Old World' (162). In order to reach the most appropriate conclusion, in my closing chapter, I will take a closer look at the M3 sort of Myth and I will also emphasize the role of coincidences that has built up the Columbus myth.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE COLUMBUS MYTH AS AN M3 TYPE OF MYTH

4.1. M3 or the advertisement of the mistaken landfall

The ultimate chapter is devoted to the issue of M3 myth, which anticipates the role of mistakes, as it is known that Columbus' primary aim was to rediscover the territories of China and Japan. Hence, his miscalculation of the route contributed to the fact he faced the New World. José Piedra in his article, entitled *The Game Of Critical Arrival* emphasizes Columbus' mistake: "The expected India of the East eventually becomes the West Indies, and Japan becomes Cuba" (38). Above all, the M3 configuration should be defined and presented in order to view the Columbus myth from the viewpoint of the M3 sort of myth. András Tarnóc in his book review entitled, *The Legacy of Jim Crow: Myth And Stereotypy In The American Social Consciousness And Culture* (2002). As it is defined "M3, or myths with a creative force continuously integrated into the general social consciousness" (Virágos-Varró "The legacy"33). Similarly, the M3 sort of myth embodies a construction with a manipulative function; at least the definition serves this presupposition. What is more, Virágos states the following:

The two chief concepts of the M3 myth. The primary concepts of the so-called M3 myth are myth making and mythopoeia. In opposition with the other type of myths such as M1 and M2, this current sort of myth is interpreted as the myth of modern age. Due to this, one must interpret this construction as a phenomenon continuously integrated into general social consciousness. (Virágos-Varró 33)

What this definition implies is that the M3 type is somewhat similar to the M2; in that respect it also distorts the valid facts thus its manipulative function comes to the fore. Thus, overlaps can be observed among the three mythical configurations. As Vilches verifies: "Columbus advertises his mistaken landfall as the Indies, thanks to his gift of writing and his ability to improvise conceptual tokens" (Vilches 208). Inasmuch as Columbus failed to achieve his original destination, the Indies thus the role of creative force gains ground. Due to this writing is viewed as a tool for myth-making. Additionally, it contributes to the fact that his error can be put into a vantage point. As Vilches puts it: "Among a long list of data describing routes, islands, peoples, riches, and manifestations of gratitude, this line, this line goes almost unnoticed even though it encapsulates a recurrent problem in the enterprise of the Indies: the materialization of the wealth that Columbus professes to provide" (208).

Contrary to this, the renowned Native-American scholar, Vin Deloria in his eminent book, *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1968), poignantly points at Columbus' failure. As he says: "After Columbus discovered America he brought back news of a great new world he assumed to be India and, therefore filled with Indians" (Deloria 16). Moreover, Deloria exhibits the most striking fact concerning Columbus' mistake. As the scholar states: "The absence of elephants apparently did not tip off the explorers that they were not in India" (13). To a certain extent I side with Deloria, but I should keep in mind that there were certain misleading facts which contributed to the fact of that Columbus' mistaken landfall.

Apart from this, the similar characteristic features of the new land to the land of the Great Khan made Columbus to commit this error. As Vilches writes: "The island is a wonderland of untapped, whose fort is conveniently located near gold mines, and close to the trade routes connecting with the main land where the territories of the Great Khan are found" (Vilches 209). My main concern is that, mysterious similarity played a crucial role in Columbus' conviction that he reached the realm of the Great Khan. Due to this, the myth-making nature of the M3 becomes of primary importance.

As Ferdman elucidates, "Columbus' marvels are narrative, speaking of things, previously unknown to Europeans and they are descriptive, describing what may have been previously known but not in this way and not in this place" (491).

As the Journal describes: "A few of the trees; however seemed to be of a species similar to some that are found in Castile, though still with a great dissimilarity but the others so unlike that it is impossible to find any in them to those of our land" (The Journal of Columbus 11). My conviction is that the words of The Journal underpin the fact that the Discoverer successfully utilized the possibilities of the New World for the purpose of creating his own myth.

Moreover, Ferdman further amplifies this assumption: "The Admiral's reshaping of the globe in the relation of the third voyage, the writer believes that he is bringing 'new' information which authorizes a new understanding of the world" (491). Nevertheless, Columbus committed several mistakes as he was unable to recognize certain species of the new world. Thus, Zamora poignantly refers to the shortcomings of the Admiral.

As she puts it:

For Columbus 'marvel' is analogous in the natural realm to 'miracle' in the realm of faith. - which cannot be expressed or explained. The exclamation may function here as an attempt to disguise the narrator's aphasia in the face

of difference, an aphasia that was the result not of some personal shortcoming but of the essential incapacity of the discourses at his disposal to express difference adequately. (Zamora 131-2)

For another thing, there was much inaccuracy concerning the circumstances of the Columbian discovery. As Zamora points out: “Striking in its absence is any reference to where or what those lands might be. No direct allusions were made to the Asiatic destination most historians believe to have been the explicit goal of the voyage” (127). Zamora a few lines above make allusions to the shortcomings of the Santa Fe document. As she explains: “In the Santa Fe document Columbus was commissioned by the Catholic monarchs to discover, take possession, govern and trade in whatever island and mainlands he might come across on his westward voyage”. (127)

Besides, the author further emphasizes the inadequacy of the process of discovery. As she claims: “The mandate of discovery, as Columbus realized, required not just physical exploration or renaissance but also reporting back on what was found” (130). In the remainder of this chapter, I will trace how the Columbus myth is depicted in literature.

4.2. The integration of Columbus into social consciousness

First of all, I will present Paul Claudel’s *The Diary of Christopher Columbus* by relying on Bettina Knapp’s case study entitled *Paul Claudel’s The Diary of Christopher Columbus: A Demiurge Journeys Forth*.

As Knapp enthusiastically describes “The Diary of Christopher Columbus combines the expressive power of Claudel’s poetics including religiously oriented themes and love affairs at the same time theatrically, it is full of adventure that makes the audience enchanted” (Knapp 145).

In case of Paul Claudel, the manipulative nature of the M3 also can be viewed as a striking fact. As Knapp indicates: “Claudel had said repeatedly, that the man, Christopher Columbus had ‘haunted’ him for many years. This quasi- legendary figure fired his imagination” (145). What is more, Knapp successfully points at the most striking features of Claudel’s character. As she explains: “Claudel certainly identified with the explorer’s creative spirit, which he looked upon as the prototype of the poet: a demiurge whose overwhelming ambition encourages him to break ties with his family and friends, as well as with his land” (145).

In addition a few lines below, Knapp alludes to the vicissitudes that Columbus had to face. “Compelled by a dream, he forges ahead into the unknown, the untraveled, a world

of mystery and terror; there he bears his solitude, living out his sacrificial role and torment” (145). Here at this point, Knapp’s respective position is intertwined with Samuel Eliot Morison’s view held in *Admiral of The Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus* (1942). As Morison holds the following position: “The ease with which he dissipated the unknown terrors of the Ocean, the skill with which he found his way out [...] led thousands of men from every Western European nation into maritime adventure and exploration” (Morison, “Admiral” 652). What the two positions utterly reflect is the following. In this case of the M3, the emphasis is on Columbus’ mistakes; still certain merits of Columbus are undisputable. Hence, I side with these positions, furthermore, both of them highlight an eminent feature of Columbus, he was definitely a single-minded person. And it contributed to the fact that he exhibited progressiveness that made him invincible concerning his enterprise. Due to this, Columbus became the emblematic figure. As Knapp puts it: “Columbus represented an ideal, a global force, he sanctified the profane” (146).

From my perspective, Knapp’s words verify the fact that, to a certain extent, the Discoverer showed extraordinary abilities. Besides Felipe Fernandez- Armesto in his article entitled *Christopher Columbus- hero or villain* also emphasizes heavily the merits of the “Discoverer”. As he states: “Columbus was in some ways a man of extraordinary vision with a defiant attitude to the art of the possible” (Fernandez-Armesto 6). Furthermore, he adds: “Yet he could not anticipate the consequences of his discovery or of the colonial enterprise confided to him” (6).

Besides Fernandez- Armesto, Knapp also points at the failure of Columbus. She says: “Columbus’s zeal did not flag. He still hoped to find Asia and left on yet another expedition. The hardships experienced this time were harrowing” (Knapp 147). In my reading, both positions to a certain extent reflect that the Admiral was an eminent figure, while he also embodied the average man, concerning he was susceptible to err as well. Hence the depiction of Columbus Arts for instance, in drama or poetry needs to apply a multidisciplinary perspective. As Knapp indicates to Paul Claudel’s brilliant strategy: “He distinguishes between the real Columbus and the legendary figure, who lives powerfully in the audience’s mind” (148). As a matter of fact, Columbus embodies a man with a twofold nature. As Knapp presents: “Columbus has few possessions left, among them a harness and an old and faithful mule, which he loves above all else. He is afraid that both mule and harness may be taken from him” (150). In contrast with this “vulnerable” Columbus, the other Columbus is entirely aware of his achievements. As Knapp demonstrates: “He knew what he was doing: ‘What I knew was infinitely greater than what I discovered!’ Eternity

belongs to him, the legend is his, the chorus declares, not merely the land masses stamped onto a map, delimited by the globe” (150).

Due to this, we have to face such dichotomy which can make the interpretation of the Columbus myth difficult.

4.3. The dichotomy of the Columbian interpretation

Thus, Claudel worked out a more reliable method to avoid confusion. As Knapp puts it: “to effect such a dichotomy, Claudel resorted to the techniques of *dédoublement*: he created two Columbuses” (150). My belief is that, by resorting to such a technique enhances the interpretation of the Columbus myth, as the real and unreal Columbus can be easily clarified. Practically, one’s imagination is less triggered by invalid facts so the emphasis remains on the role of verification. To enhance a better understanding, Knapp provides us with further description. As she reflects Claudel’s portrayal of the two Columbus: “Christopher Columbus I lives out the events in the proscenium as he experiences them during his earthly sojourn: as a man driven by a dream, compelled to act to travel to the ends of the earth by the force of God. Christopher Columbus II is the legendary figure who observes the actor completing his worldly existence. He sees things from another perspective, accepts matters objectively and enjoys the glory and fame which belong to legend. (150)

My main concern is that Claudel at least, in his play wanted to make his audience aware of the fact that a clear distinction should be made in order to successfully interpret the Columbus phenomenon. In addition, Knapp also supports my claim by stating the following: “Claudel’s use of the *dédoublement* technique increases the tension between illusion and reality, or fact and fiction, and adds to the fugue-like quality of the multiple activities ventilating a single theme” (151). It does, therefore calls for further illustration. As the following quotation illuminates: “The earth bound Columbus is forever attempting to purify his essence, to free himself from the dross and weight of the matter; while the celestial Columbus justifies and glorifies in his legend” (151). In my interpretation, Columbus I embodies the figure who constantly keeps justifying his own achievements, whereas, Columbus II is responsible for the maintenance of his legend. For the perspective of the M3 sort of myth, Columbus II exerts a great influence on the social consciousness. What is more, it is Columbus II, the legendary figure who verifies the right of the earthly Columbus, Columbus I to launch his enterprise.

As Knapp writes: “The earthly man dreams of leaving his home of sailing off to distant lands, but suffers because he knows his departure will bring pain to his family. His future is uncertain danger lurks all about. Tension rises. Columbus II intercedes, encouraging the wayfarer to break out of his constrained environment into the new world” (154).

Although the role of the M3 sort of myth is dominant, it is possible to encounter with M1 element as well. As the following example underpins: “As Abraham had left Ur when God called upon him to sacrifice the comfort and security of the known for the harrowing uncertainty of mystery” (154). My belief is that this example clearly shows how the M3 correlates with the M1 sort of myth. In this case, M3 utilized the biblical paradigm feature of the M1 construction. Thereby, the chief concept of the M3, “*creativity*” also comes to the fore as well.

As a result of this, the M1 myth functions as pattern embedded into the major myth, the M3 type. Hence, this is not a rare phenomenon as Zsolt Virágos and Gabriella Varró claim in their case study. As they indicate: “It can happen that a particular type of myth usually, M2 or M3 utilize the features of the M1 in order to strengthen its own public ideology or to verify its cultural strata” (Virágos-Varró, “*The Legacy*” 35).

4.4. Responses to the Columbian legacy

From another perspective, this chapter intends to shed light on the Columbian Legacy. To fulfill my goal, I will utilize Michael Hardin’s distinguished article, entitled: *The Trickster of History: The Heirs of Columbus and the Dehistorization of Narrative*. First and foremost, Hardin reflects the respective position of the Native- American authors. What is more, he emphasizes their positive responses.

As Hardin depicts: Instead of bemoaning their position as victims of history, and in the process reinscribing the hegemonic structure, these writers have chosen to challenge, undermine, or rewrite the historical narratives of the dominant culture (Hardin 25).

What is more, Hardin comes up with Gerald Vizenor’s outstanding approach concerning the depiction of Columbus. As Hardin describes: “Gerald Vizenor alters the myth of Christopher Columbus and makes him a Mayan descent, one cannot be an innocent and pitiable victim if one is also partially responsible for the atrocity committed” (25-6). In addition, Hardin also unravels Vizenor’s explanation. As it exhibits the following: “Vizenor determines who has the authority to label someone as ‘victim’; this also creates the potential for the individual to free him/herself from a binary past which does not allow for anything outside of the conqueror/conquered dichotomy” (26).

Personally speaking, Hardin's reference to Vizenor's words alludes to the fact, that the best strategy to apply is to be neutral. By choosing to be partial is the only way to avoid being biased toward a conviction. Furthermore, this approach also serves as a shield from pain as well.

As the following lines verify the fact:

When an individual is confronted with a history of continuous subjugation and repression, he/she can accept the history and thus continue being subjected by the dominant culture or, he/she beyond the restraints of conventional history. To escape the consequences of the colonizer/conqueror's history, one must forget the history, or must challenge the basic assumption that history is a true representation. (26)

In this light, Vizenor is compelled to represent one of the two possible alternatives.

As Hardin's words suggest to me: For Vizenor to ignore the past would be to deny the legitimacy that his identity as a Native American is made up by the elements of the history of wars, reservation and alcoholism. These are all stereotypes which repeatedly recall the Native-American of an impossible romantic past, unfortunately which was never part of their history. Contrary to this, the other way is to remain authentic to the histories of Columbus and the Native-American (27).

To my mind, there is one predicament to face with this approach. In other words, the quandary to interpret the events of both sides authentically. There is no doubt that one can make serious efforts in order to provide a faithful interpretation, still the possibility of being biased is inescapable. As Hardin emphasizes: "The problem with any claim that historical narrative is not to some degree fictitious, history is written from the perspective of a culture or group in power" (Hardin 27). In my reading, what these words pin down is that, to a certain extent, history is intangible as there is always one particular perspective accepted as authentic. Moreover, as Hardin states: "And further, each individual or perspective may choose different elements within an event from which to construct history" (28).

Apart from this, Hardin also presents the poem entitled *Prayer of Columbus* by Walt Whitman. As Hardin cites: "Thrown from the savage shore. By me earth's elder cloy'd and stiff'd lands uncloy'd, unloos'd / By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown to the known" (28). Obviously, as Hardin says, "This poem represents the positive response Columbus received in late nineteenth century America: Columbus opened up the Americas to European 'civilization' and 'cultivation'" (28). For another

thing, Hardin highlights Vizenor's questionable perspective: "By having the Mayans discover Europe and the Old World, Vizenor actively confronts the cultural superiority the West claims for having 'discovered' and 'civilized' the savages" (32). Hence, I side with Hardin because by depicting Columbus as a Mayan would make the act of discovery utterly impossible as it is publicly known that the act of discovery including such conviction as "civilization" is of a particular feature of the European mindset. On top of it, As Hardin suggests: "The act of 'discovering' is part of the Renaissance quest for knowledge, [...] according to Michel Foucault, for power, to discover the Americas and write its history is to create a system" (32). What these lines imply is that words are in subordinate position contrary to action. As Hardin refers to Foucault's words: "to create a system which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language; relations of power, not relations of meaning" (32).

Aside from this, Philip Burham in his article entitled *The Last Temptation of Columbus* presents Zvi Dor-Ner, a Native-American response to the Columbian legacy. As Burham introduces:

Zvi Dor-Ner is the happiest following in Columbus' wake- both spiritually and literally. Though cognizant of the admiral's shortcomings, Dor-Ner takes the story of an ambitious Genoan knocking down the doors of medieval geography and writes it up like a journalist doing an admiring profile of a nineteenth century robber baron. (Burham 126-7)

Surprisingly, as Burham adds: "He was in many ways a terrible man, Dor-Ner admits, but wasn't his vision impressive? His ultimate judgment of Columbus is vintage romantic with hints of chiascuro, citing his 'insight', his 'consuming passion,' and 'intoxication with discovery'" (127). In my reading, reinterpretation, a particular feature of the M3 myth, has contributed to the fact that Columbus is represented differently which provides an opportunity for the individual to make his/her own Columbus. Therefore, one can come across several interpretations, making either Columbus' virtues or vices come to the fore.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I aimed to provide a thorough analysis of the Columbus myth. As I said in my introduction, the Columbus myth is a very complex phenomenon, which means that it cannot be utterly interpreted relying on only one myth theory. To demonstrate this, I devoted my First Chapter to the possible interpretations of myth and the main representatives of the movement of myth criticism. What is more, I also put great weight on the fact that Myth Criticism was considered to be a movement rather than a school which was due to the absence of a current scientific journal. Apart from this, the introductory Chapter also provided with different interpretations related to myth. Among the possible interpretations, Giambattista Vico's theory is the most relevant related to the Columbus Myth. As he holds: "Without myth, man becomes an abstract, homeless, roaring creature" (Leitch 119). This Chapter of course, exhibited other respective positions as well. For instance, I mentioned Stanley E. Hyman's position which was the following: "Myth must primarily be interpreted according to its ritualistic view" (120).

To serve with an opposition, I came up with Richard Chase, whose respective position which exhibited that myth was created due to the creative abilities of mankind. Then, I presented Zsolt Virágos' myth theory which was based on the assumption that "Myth was far from being a monolithic product" (Virágos, "The modernists" 177). Hence, the concept myth requires a special treatment concerning its tripartite nature. Besides, Virágos' taxonomy, I have touched upon Daniel Hoffman's conviction as he promulgated that the original American hero did not have lifecycles, thus this statement clearly identifies our Columbus.

In Chapter Two, I gave the appropriate definition of the M1 myth. By doing so, I unraveled the fact that Columbus embodied the Original American Hero as he had neither past nor present, moreover, I stated that permanence was not part of his personality, thus he was attached to the sea, which symbolized not only the unknown but also temporary state as well.

For another thing, I also utilized Philip Wheelwright's mythopoeic mode of consciousness model in order to clarify the connection between Columbus and the so-called Christ figure. Hence, I listed the three phases, namely, the primary or mystic phase, the romantic phase, and the consummatory level. Besides, I pointed at the fact that for that respect of interpreting the Columbus myth, the so-called romantic phase and consummatory level are of primary importance. As the romantic phase was responsible for

the emphasis of social function of the given myth, while the so-called consummatory level made the protagonist entitled to act as a prophet. As we have seen, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's position clearly underpinned the fact, as he said: "He called himself 'Christoferens' and compiled the book of what he said were biblical prophesies of his own discoveries" (Fernandez-Armesto 1). Besides, the so-called romantic phase also played a crucial role in the interpretation of the M1 myth. As it was supported: "As I saw they were very friendly to us, and perceived that they could be much more easily converted to our holy faith by gentle means than by force" (*The journal of Columbus* 9). Aside from this, in this chapter two intentions intertwined with one another. Namely, the natives' good comprehension as I stated: "If it pleased our Lord, I intend at my return to carry home six of them to your Highnesses, that they may learn our language" (*The journal of Columbus* 10).

After having presented the Columbus myth as a useful M1 myth, in Chapter Three, I set out to unravel the twofold nature of the Columbus myth by presenting it as an M2, prejudice-based myth. My firm belief is that, the most important segment related to the depiction of the M2 sort of myth was the following conviction: "M2 is also capable of performing a pragmatic trick of authentication" (Virágos, "Reflections on the Ideological" 570). For us, it meant that the Columbus myth as an M2 was able to sustain its legitimation by promulgating the untruth elements as true on the one hand and to make it easily digestible with the cultural consumers on the other. In order to serve with a practical example, I utilized Elvira Vilches's position which was based on the fact that Columbus failed to provide the Sovereigns with gold, thus Columbus applied his rhetoric by creating symbolic substitute for gold.

Aside from this, I also managed to shed light on the ideologically-saturated feature of the M2 as well. By utilizing the following quotation: "The natives' gestures are so different from ours and countenances are so different from ours, that I confess to my difficulty in representing them in words, or even in pictures" (Zamora 132). Here, I threw light on the fact that the reason for degradation was found in Columbus' own set of values. As Columbus was a member of the European society, he measured everything according to European tendency. As a result of this, the degradation of the natives' was being justified. As the following quotation clearly justified the claim: "The Indians martial simplicity is related to their physical beauty" (Zamora 136-7).

Last but not least, in the ultimate chapter, Chapter Four, I presented the Columbus myth as an M3 sort of myth, regarding the creative nature of the M3 sort of myth. Firstly, I

revealed to the fact that the Columbus myth concerning it as an M3 construction was based on the role of mistakes. As it is commonly known that Columbus' main objection was to rediscover the territories of China and Japan. Contrary to this, "The expected India of the East eventually becomes the West Indies and Japan becomes Cuba" (Piedra 38). Besides, I demonstrated that this sort of myth was interpreted as the myth of the modern age. Hence, I utilized Paul Claudel's drama, entitled *The Diary of Christopher Columbus: A Demiurge Journeys Forth*. In his work, Claudel applied the technique of *dédoublement* in order to make a distinction between the two, the real and the legendary Columbus. What is more, by creating the real and the legendary Columbus, the author pointed out the fact that it was the legendary Columbus (II) who verified the right of the earthly Columbus (I) to launch his enterprise.

In addition, in case of Claudel's play, I came to realize that the Columbus myth is a rather complex construction which means that one can come across the phenomenon of embedding the element of the other myth, here an M1 element. "As Abraham had left Ur when God called upon him to sacrifice the comfort and security for the harrowing uncertainty of mystery" (Knapp 154).

Eventually, I examined some Native authors' perspectives related to the interpretation of the Columbus myth. Firstly, I examined Gerald Vizenor's position; he depicted Columbus as a Mayan descent. Henceforth, I revealed the problematic nature of this position. As Columbus embodied the act of discovery and civilization a typically European "invention" which means that Vizenor completely ignored the fact that such acts as discovery and civilization are the prerogatives of the dominant culture, a particular feature of the European mindset. Secondly, I presented Zvi Dor-Ner's position which represented Columbus from a vantage point. To a certain extent, Dor-Ner cast a cold light on Columbus reputation, contrary to this; he appreciated him by posing "Wasn't his vision impressive?" (Hardin 127).

After having devoted my thesis to the interpretation of the Columbus myth, I came to the following conclusion. To thoroughly interpret the Columbus myth, it is essential to utilize all the three types of myths. Being a complex phenomenon, it is not enough to base our analysis only on the interpretation of the M2 prejudice-based myth. The reason for this, is the following, the Columbus myth, as we have seen is a combination of all three sorts of myths. Since the Columbus myth is in fond of borrowing biblical elements and using zealotry as a tool for self-justification is the verification of the fact that the Columbus myth is an M1 type of myth. Besides, the Columbus myth emphasizes the "we (ness)"

versus “they(ness)” dichotomy which means that it is an M2 prejudice-based myth because it not only justifies the self, but also constantly keeps the Natives in a subordinated position by branding them as the other. Eventually, the Columbus myth is utterly an M3 sort of myth as it is based on the failure of the protagonist on the one hand, and by being an M3 the so-called modern myth, it is consciously integrating into social consciousness. In my reading, it suggests that this phenomenon has inspired several authors to depict the Columbus myth in literature. Still, my respective position is that, by applying all three types of myth, we tend to misinterpret the Columbus myth. As we have different sorts of convictions we have to face the inevitable consequence that is, to interpret the Columbus myth by leaving the trace of convictions of a particular social group. Hence, the Columbus myth will always be either black or white depending on who is doing the labeling as Daniel Hoffman once stated: “The individual is not born, he is thrown into existence.”

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