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TELLING HISTORY IN THE SHAPE OF A MYTH

The Case of Stalingrad Narratives

ABSTRACT: The corpus of narratives produced in Germany since 1943 about the battle of Stalingrad appears as a multifaceted “grand narrative” in which historiographical and mythical morphology coexist. The Nazi myth of Stalingrad contributed to shaping the cultural memory of the event during the war, and historians lately integrated that myth into the historical discourse about the “overcoming of the past” (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). In the meantime, hundreds of veterans published their witness-accounts about the great battle, blending the two spheres of history and myth on the level of storytelling. While historiographical discourse aims to consolidate positive knowledge of the battle in terms of chronology, witness-narratives blur chronological storytelling with the mythical archetypes of conquest, defeat, fall, and resurrection. I will examine the morphological characteristics of the “grand narrative” of Stalingrad by combining the notion of “structure” (Koselleck) with that of the narrative archetype (Frye) and by integrating these tools with the theory of adaptive and evolutionary narratives (Carroll; Scalise-Sugyama) to claim that the “grand narrative” of Stalingrad can be read as the mythic-historical account of how the German community survived defeat and was reborn from its own ashes.

KEYWORDS: Myth and history, Stalingrad, WW2, German history, Personal narratives, Adaptation.

Introduction

As the German 6th Army surrendered in Stalingrad on 31st January 1943, the Nazi leaders realised that the people could not be confronted with a catastrophe of such magnitude without the intermediation of some substantial manipulation. Thus, on 2nd February, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the speech that Hermann Goering had pronounced in Berlin on 30th January. On that occasion, he had mourned the heroic fall of the German soldiers in Stalingrad by recalling the story of Leonidas – the Spartan king who sacrificed himself with 300 warriors at the Thermopylae to stop the advancing Persian army – and the myth of the Nibelungen slain in battle by the Huns. These stories were supposed to serve as inspiring examples of heroic sacrifices, made by ancient (historical and mythical) champions of the Western civilisation to repel the barbaric invaders from the East.

Since the first day of the encirclement of the 6th Army in the area of Stalingrad, which began on 19th November 1942, the main themes and keywords of the Nazi propaganda changed: the concept of defence (*Verteidigung*) replaced that of crusade (*Kreuzzug*), and Stalingrad was called a fortress (*Festung*).¹ With the defeat, the very notion of heroism (*Heldentum*) became another word for martyrdom and downfall, which the Nazi propagandists used later to urge the people to fight fanatically to the last man, as Victor Klemperer pointed out in his diary (1996, 13-14 and 241).

In both Western and Eastern German republics, veterans' autobiographical accounts remained the most relevant sources of information about the battle for at least three decades, before historians began to investigate archival sources systematically. One can acknowledge two different trends in interpreting the event: in Western Germany, the myths of the fallen heroes and the "betrayed army" were used to rehabilitate the *Wehrmacht* and to depict the German people and soldiers as victims of the Nazi treason (Wagener 1977, 241); in Eastern Germany, an effort was made to invent a tradition capable of cutting off the bonds with old capitalist Germany, by blaming the military caste for being involved in the Nazi imperialistic politics (Cinelli 2015, 277).

Thus, the same historic event produced three different narratives: 1) the Nazi myth of the fallen heroes; 2) the Western myth of the Nazi "betrayal" on the German people; and 3) the Eastern myth of the birth of the new socialist nation. The meaning of the defeat, thus, was stretched from *total continuity with the past*, in the Nazi myth (where the German heroes were *the same as* their Greek predecessors), to *total discontinuity*, in the socialist myth (where Stalingrad preludes to the foundation of the new State). In the middle, the Western version was more ambiguous insofar as it claimed that some *ideal continuity* existed between Stalingrad and past values such as honour, military ethics, the historic mission of the German nation, and so on. At the same time, it rejected the recent Nazi past that had jeopardized the course of Germany's historical development (Kumpfmüller 1995, 168-170).

The corpus of the Stalingrad-narratives roots in this terrain in which history intersects myth, where myth means that narrative structure that

¹ This shift in language clearly emerges from the letters of German combatants in Stalingrad, who gradually "inserted" in their texts such words (and metaphors) as *Abwehrkampf* (defensive battle), *aussichtslose Lage* (hopeless situation), *Befreiung* (liberation), *Durcheinander* (mess), *Einkesselung* (encirclement), *Elend* (misery), *Erfrierung* (frostbite), *Festung* (fortress), *Heldentot* (heroic death), *Hexelkessel* (witches' cauldron), *Hoffen/hoffentlich/hoffnungslos* (hope/hopefully/hopeless), *Hölle* (Hell), *Höllenklima* (hellish atmosphere), *Hunger* (hunger), *Kessel* (pocket), *Niederschlag* (defeat), *Opfer* (sacrifice), *Traurigkeit* (sadness), *Verluste* (casualties), *Vernichtung* (annihilation), *Verteidigung* (defence), *Verzweiflung* (desperation), *Wahnsinn* (madness), and, of course, *Ende* (the end). See Golovchansky (1991, 149-239) and Ebert (2003, 68-330).

finds and attests to an order and provides teleological justification of historical events, to claim that their meaning has universal validity and duration (Frank 1994, 110-112).

In this article, rather than discussing the historical context in which the myth of Stalingrad was born,² I will interpret the mythical and archetypal narrative of the battle as an adaptive-evolutionary strategy of survival.

Why Telling History in the Form of a Myth?

The defeat in Stalingrad was for long told in the form of a myth because myths provide, as Geoffrey Kirk wrote in 1973,

an apparent way out of the problem, either by simply obfuscating it, or making it appear abstract and unreal, or by stating in affective terms that it is insoluble or inevitable, part of the divine dispensation or natural order of things, or by offering some kind of palliation or apparent solution for it. Such a solution must itself be mythical. If the problem could be resolved by rational means (in terms of the accepted belief-system of the community, however strange that might seem to us), then its solution would take the form not of a myth but of a revised terminology, an altered institution or a direct statement. (258)

Like any other form of explanation, myth offers simplification and a grid where we can place events and assign them meaning. Unlike science, though, myth demands faith as far as its explications are assumed as valid per se because they repeat some pattern that “has always been so”. In the face of mythical explanation, one can believe or not without expecting to be persuaded by any rational argumentation.

One first attempt to reflect thoroughly on this myth-historiography can be found in Alexander Kluge’s *Schlachtbeschreibung* (1964), a remarkable piece of historiography written as a novel (Ebert 2003, 381). By polemically arguing that the cause of the German defeat in Stalingrad lay 72 days (which is the duration of the encirclement) or 800 years before, Kluge meant to say that the Nazi aggression on the USSR was in some ways a repetition of the war that Fredrick Barbarossa waged against the Slavs in the eleventh century. In both cases, the justification of the war lay in the idea that the German people must conquer its “vital space” in the East. In such continuity, Kluge recognised the tragic repetition of an archetype,³ and he understood that the linear

² As to that specific aspect of the topic, see Baird (1969), Ebert (2003, 333-350), and Cinelli (2016, 71-93).

³ I would like to recall here the definition that Kurt Hübner (1985) gives of mythical archetypes as explanatory schemes or paradigms that repeat themselves identically in innumerable forms. They are identical repetitions because they precisely recall the same original sacred event that occurs over and over again.

temporality of history had thus been replaced by the cyclic temporality of myth.⁴

To better outline my point, I would like to recall Reinhart Koselleck's notion of "structure". This is the conceptual and descriptive form (like a pattern or design) that binds facts into a narrative continuity, within which events fulfil their premises while revealing further implications (Koselleck 1989, 151). The authors of the Stalingrad-narratives interpreted the events according to the linear-causal structure of historical progress (WW2 as a watershed in European history) *and* to a system of mythic archetypes (the rise of the German nation and the expansion to the East as its "destiny"; the decline and fall of the West in the fatal struggle with the Eastern civilizations; and the resurrection of the Western culture beyond defeat and death) (Hermand 1979, 29).

In this sense the defeat was embedded in the "structure" of *crisis*. According to Koselleck, this concept "has become an expression of a new sense of time which both indicated and intensified the end of an epoch" (Koselleck and Richter 2006, 358).⁵ The very practice of autobiographical writing implies the notion of crisis as a basic structure as far as autobiography is not much the attempt of recapitulating but rather of acknowledging the relevant moments of disruption in the history of one's own life, in order to make some meaning out of them (Gusdorf 1980, 43). The goal of autobiography is to understand the sense of one's own life, and the best way of achieving such an end is to look at that life from the perspective of a crisis (or crises). It is essential, that the author recognizes the meaning of such disruptions and, based on this, recomposes a new signification of the past (Weintraub 1975, 824-826).

Stalingrad-narratives have their barycentre in the idea of crisis as disruption: historical (as a breaking point in the causal chain of events) (Kumpfmüller 1995, 10); mythical (as a turning point in the cyclical repetition of time) (Kluge 1964); medical (as the overcoming of a dangerous state of disequilibrium);⁶ and religious (as a secularised version of the Armageddon according to Schiller's words: "*die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*"). Klemperer noted, to such regard, that Nazi propagandists used the

⁴ Consider to such regard Finley's acute observations about the "timelessness" of myth and its intrinsic difference from history that requires "coherent dating schemes" to frame the events (1965, 285).

⁵ According to Italian philosopher Sergio Givone, crisis encompasses a widespread feeling of "belonging and distancing, confirmation of an order of values and suspension of judgment, affirmation of a historical identity, and recognition of its dissolution" (2003, 19).

⁶ Authors such as Friedrich von Paulus, Joachim Wiedner, Udo von Alvensleben, or Franz Halder speak in their memoirs and diaries of "tired", "debilitated", "weakened", and "exhausted" troops.

word *Krise* in spring 1943 to replace the term *Niederlage* (defeat) when the capitulation of the 6th Army in Stalingrad made the news in Germany.

Crisis, Survival and Regeneration

Storytelling provides several fixed forms, figures, and *topoi* that can re-configure the chronological sequence of the historic event into a layered, mythically shaped narrative. This permitted the witnesses to embed their stories within a trans-temporal sphere of cultural and moral values. The traumatic experience of each individual could thus be absorbed as a part of the broader life and cultural identity of the community.

Considered from such a perspective, the use of mythical morphology to account for a historical event reveals something unexpected: that the corpus of the narratives accounting for the great battle on the Volga makes in its entirety *one single story of survival*. The survival of single witnesses matches, metonymically, with the survival of their people: by unfolding the *crisis* to its bitter end – that is, annihilation – the heroes of the tale (both the witnesses *and* their people) access a new stage of their development. Something similar occurs in the letters from the front, among which I would like to quote one of 14th January 1943, whose desperate author wrote: “If we come out of this Hell, we will say that we have received life again as a gift” (Golovchansky 1991, 220). Personal narratives tell a story of survival both as linear historical progress and as a cyclical repetition of archetypal, i.e. mythical, structures. In the former case, Stalingrad is just a moment, although crucial, in Germany’s history; in the second, Stalingrad becomes a recurring structure of Germany’s destiny (Kumpfmüller 1995, 237).

The “great narrative” of Stalingrad builds on a number of archetypes (the permanence and continuity of past events; rites of initiation, purification, and atonement; fulfilment of destiny through a quest; and so on). Such symbolism contributes to redesign the historic event in the fashion of a parable, which according to Mark Turner “serves as a laboratory where great things are condensed in a small space” (Turner 1996, 5). I would here claim that the blurring of historic and mythic temporalities makes the “great narrative” of Stalingrad an allegorical story of adaptation and evolution.

The authors of a consistent number of personal narratives begin to tell the story of Stalingrad from summer 1942, when the Army Group South launched a vast offensive on the river Don, in southern Russia. The offensive should conquer the oil fields in the Caucasus region and the river Volga, fundamental route of the Russian supplies of troops and weapons. Some authors claim that the *Wehrmacht*, for the time being, had lost a good deal of its military power, that the ranks were tired, and that the appalling casualties had weakened the

companies.⁷ That would therefore be the *origin* of the following crisis and fall of the German army, as veteran officer Hans Doerr wrote in his memoir *Der Feldzug nach Stalingrad*:

The 23rd of July can be described as the day on which Germany's Army High Command evidently announced that it would disregard the classical laws of warfare in order to wage war in new, own ways, which were imposed more by Hitler's irrational and demonic powers than by the rational and realistic way of thinking of the military. (Doerr 1955, 26)

Many authors maintain alike that the actual cause of the catastrophe was Hitler's will to conquer the city named after his rivalling dictator. That was a risky decision that put at stake the stability of the entire southern sector of the Eastern front.⁸ What is remarkable, though, is that some authors like Doerr came up, after the war, with a peculiar explanation of such a contingency, as far as they justified Hitler's firm decision as an effect of his "demonic nature", which was apparently able to subjugate the will of the higher commanders of the *Wehrmacht*.

The scenario of the final catastrophe is built backwards in the personal narratives: insofar as the bitter end is already known, the authors stream back looking for the *origin* of it. Now, the notion of origin is not historical (historical events have a beginning) but rather mythical. Once the origin has been pointed out, the whole story unfolds under an ominous light, as the events spiral out of control towards the final catastrophe. One should bear in mind that a catastrophe is only one possible outcome of a crisis: this is, in fact, an open-ended moment of disruption that allows for a number of options. The downfall of the *Wehrmacht* in Stalingrad, as many veterans depict it, recalls the medical sense of crisis as the moment in which a disease enters its final stage, as far as "the concept of illness itself presupposes a state of health – however conceived – that is either to be restored again or which will, at a specified time, result in death" (Koselleck and Richter 2006, 361).

I argue, therefore, that the corpus of the Stalingrad witness-narratives represents a special case of mythical re-elaboration of a historical event, in which the defeat is accounted for as the inevitable destiny of the German nation. To heal from the Nazi infection, Germany had to fall and perish. Thus,

⁷ General Franz Halder noted in his diary that on August 10, 1942, the overall German casualties on the Russian front already amounted to 46% of the 3.200.000 soldiers who had attacked the USSR on June 22, 1941 (1964, 505).

⁸ On July 23, 1942, Hitler ordered the Southern Army Group to split into the two subgroups A and B, which were respectively assigned to conquer the Caucasus and Stalingrad. This decision weakened the southern front because the number of German divisions on the river Don shrank from 68 to 57 while the allied ones (Italian, Romanian and Hungarian), which were much weaker and could not rely on tanks, passed from 26 to 36 (Cinelli 2016, 80).

Stalingrad becomes the symbol of the apocalyptic annihilation of evil and purification through rebirth. The myth-historical narrative of Stalingrad is a parable that tells how the German people overcame a critical stage of its biography, by falling, atoning (or healing), and being born again.

As one can see, this is a well-consolidated structure of ancient myths. As far as mythical narratives grow thicker through repetition and variation of patterns, themes, episodes, and archetypes, the Stalingrad-narratives fulfil several gnoseological demands of storytelling as they make sense of past events by recurring to such archetypes as “origin”, “destiny”, “quest”, and “mission”. The “great narrative” of Stalingrad, made of hundreds of memoirs, diaries and autobiographical reports, builds upon the archetypes of the four seasons (spring, summer, autumn and winter) and ages (childhood, youth, maturity, and old age), corresponding to the existential experiences of growth, fulfilment, decline, and dissolution. Each archetype is in turn connected to symbolic actions (the quest, fighting, enjoying the fruit of conquest, suffering and decaying, and eventually dying to be born again) and narrative forms (romance, idyll, tragedy, and parody). These archetypes, which Northrop Frye (1957) catalogued with their variations and combinations all over the Western literary tradition, represent the deep structure by which the whole German war in Russia (of which Stalingrad is only one chapter, albeit fundamental) was told (Cinelli 2016, 28). Of course, tragedy and parody prevail on romance and idyll, which in the Stalingrad-chapter are limited to the early, short stage of conquest and victory that saw the *Wehrmacht* reaching the city in July-August of 1942. The “apocalyptic” symbolism of tragedy and parody prevails as the description of the battle reaches its acme: the burning metropolis “devours” the men; the steppe is an icy desert interspersed with frozen bodies; the dying city is a labyrinth of rubble and a graveyard full of rotting corpses; and the cellars where thousands of soldiers hide and fight are open graves (Welz 1964, 16, 65-66, and 70-72). In Stalingrad, depicted as the “place of the inhuman” (*Ort des Unmenschlichen*) the German warriors and their people come to grips with their tragic destiny.

Autobiographical testimonies are, therefore, precious because they help us understand how communities embed critical events in the “great narratives” by which they represent and understand themselves. Witnesses are like Carlo Ginzburg’s ancient hunters, who made up stories by collecting and connecting traces, thus paving the way toward historiography (Ginzburg 2000, 166-167). In the specific case of Stalingrad, the witnesses are the soldiers who had to get through the ordeal of defeat and captivity before they could go back home and resume their lives, although they remained indelibly marked by those traumatic experiences. By telling their stories, they largely contributed to shape the myth of the fall and resurrection of Germany, that is, the story of

how the German national community re-elaborated its own trauma-ridden post-war identity:

Stories are essential to a people's survival as a culture and to us as individuals within it. This is why storytelling is central to all traditional warrior societies in the processes of homecoming. Storytelling for (combat) trauma transforms the collage of incoherent images into one's mother tongue, the language of one's home. It stitches the world together as an inhabitable world again and brings veterans back into it. (Brooke 2017, 186)

In other words, witness-narratives help us understand how cultures "seek" their own traditions in the historical experiences they go through. In Stalingrad-narratives, the witnesses talk for themselves, even though they are aware of having participated in something that affects their community as a whole. Nonetheless, when we consider the entire corpus of testimonies, we have the impression of reading, rather than many a personal-narrative, one single anonymous "great narrative", an epic. As Ricoeur once wrote, when we change scale, we do not only see things differently, but we see different things (2000, 270).

Mythical Storytelling from the Perspective of Evolution

This transfiguration of actual experience into narratives based on mythical archetypes suggests to me the idea that tales are an original and universal cognitive product of the human mind that, preceding all written literary systems (Scalise Sugiyama 2001, 234), contributes to enhancing the adaptive abilities of the species (235), not only through "information-gathering" (237) but by replicating critical experiences that in real conditions are dangerous or even life-threatening. Because narratives "neutralise" dangers by translating them into symbols (238-239), this permits the audience (or readers) to make a risk-free experience of crises, catastrophes, dangerous situations, and so on. Such mediated experiences become "instructive" as parables because

narrative imagining – story – is the fundamental instrument of thought. Rational capacities depend upon it. It is our chief means of looking into the future, of predicting, of planning, and of explaining. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally. This is the first way in which the mind is essentially literary. (Turner 1996, 4-5)

Relying on archetypes (which are fossilised stories) and other more or less codified morphological devices facilitates the processes of memorising, recognising, learning, and repeating. These operations depend on "pre-existing cognitive abilities" or "biological constraints operating on the first

storytelling practices in an evolutionary past which have shaped the biological proto-type of narration that still influences our intuitive concept of ‘story’” (Mellmann 2012, 34).

Witness-narratives of the great defeat in Stalingrad eventually provided insight for coping with trauma and dealing with the disastrous aftermath of war. They provided a bottom-up perspective to understand which bonds of continuity with the past, visions of the world, and cultural paradigms were still valid and which ones were to discard. Thus, as the “embodied narratives” contribute to “make up” the individual self in terms of temporal evolution (Menary 2008, 68), so do narratives that recount the events that build and shape the collective identity: “they do so by providing an explanatory framework for understanding the rationale for acting; they constrain the choice of actions available to us and [...] arrange and order temporal experience” (69). Because, as Joseph Carroll has it, “all our actions take place within imaginative structures that include our vision of the world and our place in the world” (2011, 59-60), Stalingrad-narratives are more than mere witness-accounts: they served as milestones and parables in post-war Germany because they paved the way towards the “domestication of the past” (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), for the better or the worse.

This last perspective should remind us that the mythical transfiguration of the battle of Stalingrad affected, first of all, the historical understanding of the event. Insofar as myth shares with history morphological aspects, such as narrative and rhetorical forms, it also provides a scheme to make sense of past events. In witness-narratives, the mythical and the historical narrative modes meet (Heehs 1994, 2). Besides, myth and history often cooperate to build traditions through a “process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” (Hobsbawm 2000, 4). In this sense, the mythical way of narrating “‘founds’ and legitimates a social order”, providing a “teleological justification of life for both individuals rather than groups” (Frank 1994, 96), thus organising historical experiences within a framework that gives them meaning, universal validity, and duration (97). It is no accident, therefore, that Stalingrad founded in post-war Germany a mythical narrative capable of providing the national community with an epic tale that, after all, also worked as a healing ritual.

Literary critic Helmut Peitsch argued that the many novels published in East and West Germany, although written by authors who had different political opinions, “served one primary function: the shaping of the dominant public memory of the Nazi past” (1995, 191). Most authors, critics, and the public engaged in the joint effort to build a collective and official representation of the German soldier as an innocent victim of the war. Such an idea found an authoritative champion in former General Erich von Manstein, who stated that “the soldier in the field is not in the comfortable position of a politician, who can leave at any time if things go wrong or if he

does not like the course of government. He has to fight where and how he is commanded" (1955, 392). Since many novels borrowed Manstein's theory of the non-political soldier, "the war novel's main contribution to public memory of the Nazi past, therefore, can be seen in the construction of continuity from Nazism into the West German present through concentration on the private (but nevertheless nationally representative) as opposed to the political aspect" (Peitsch 1995, 293).

One can acknowledge this ideological implication not only in the broad corpus of the witness-narratives but also in many fictional stories about Stalingrad that deeply impacted the imagery of the German society. The first and most influencing work was Theodor Plievier's novel *Stalingrad*, published in 1945 in the Soviet Occupation Zone (adapted for the television in 1963) and followed in Western Germany in 1956 by Heinz Konsalik's best-selling *Der Arzt von Stalingrad*, which became a movie in 1958. In 1956 and 1957 appeared two fundamental autobiographical novels, *Der verratene Armee* by Heinrich Gerlach, and *Hünde wollt ihr ewig leben?* by the Austrian veteran Fritz Wöss. Both depicted the German warrior in Stalingrad as a honourable soldier who was betrayed and abandoned to a horrible destiny of suffering and death by the Nazi leaders. These witnesses published two further influential autobiographical novels, *Odyssee in Rot* (Gerlach 1966) and *Der Fisch beginnt am Kopf zu stinken* (Wöss 1960), in which they recounted their experience of moral "resurrection" as POWs during their captivity in Soviet concentration camps. In 1964, Alexander Kluge published *Schlachtbeschreibung*, an experimental novel that revised the myth of Stalingrad. Comparing these post-war novels with Jonathan Littell's *Les Benveillantes* (2006), in which the depiction of Stalingrad goes on for dozens of pages, one cannot help but note that the fictional representations of the great battle have not changed much. Here again, the horror, the suffering, and the psychological breakdown of German soldiers prevail on other aspects (such as political analysis of the Nazi war in the East), as though the existential meaning of the defeat remained the only emotionally and aesthetically relevant echo of the historic event.

Conclusions

To tell historical events by using the archetypal structures of myth can disclose the gnoseological function of the "narrative mind" that projects history on a broader narrative horizon, where the past appears to us as a story of evolution and adaptation. In my opinion, to conclude, the idea of crisis plays a paramount role in understanding the adaptive and evolutionary function of historical narratives, because crises are disruptive experiences of loss of homeostasis that force us to make decisions and take action. However, a crisis

is often a painful and challenging experience, and it might be severe enough to trigger stress, anxiety, fear, and eventually to traumatise those who go through it. To arrange a crisis through storytelling means to try and find the most viable and bearable way to look at the truth of it, and to find a way out of pain. What is at stake here is not much the coincidence of actual historical events and their repetition through individual storytelling, as the formal process of the storytelling itself:

The great literature of the modern age is, and remains, mythical in this sense, that it refers to the contingent and mortal form of human existence. This is all the more so as myth itself is deeply embedded in language, the medium of literature, in the form of images and metaphors in which the finite and worldly forms of human existence are expressed and written out. (Uerlings and Vietta 2006, 9)

Dealing with critical or traumatic experiences by means of mythical storytelling, i.e. by transfiguring those experiences into archetypes that permit to re-enact them in a ritualised way, tells something about the way in which the human mind responds to stressful or harmful historical contingencies through imagination. Because crises never leave things as they were, they are in a certain sense historically irreversible. However, the basic circular structure of myth offers the opportunity to mitigate such distressing experience of irreversibility by implying that imagination can go through the past over and over again: by replaying the same trauma without enduring it in the flesh, one can learn how to live with it. Thus, death is never the end, because archetypal transfigurations make rebirth and new life-cycles possible. Insofar as crises are experiences of discontinuity, imperfection, and impermanence that imprint the human “embodied mind”, they are the very flywheel of the idea of a non-linear time, which puts a consolatory stopper in our most distressing fear: the darkness at the end of the line.

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