

Title: The Myth of Orpheus in the Poetry of Vladislav Khodasevich

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For European and Russian Symbolists alike, the myth of Orpheus embodied essential aspects of the Symbolist aesthetic – art as religion, the artist as a priest, the art object as revelation (see Kosinski xii-xiii). The main catalyst of the unprecedented interest in the myth of Orpheus in Silver Age culture was the group known as "young Symbolists" (Viacheslav Ivanov, Andrei Bely, Aleksandr Blok, and others). For them the myth of Orpheus was inscribed into a poetic-philosophical complex connected with Vladimir Soloviev's ideas regarding theurgical art, or with the overcoming of Friedrich Nietzsche's Apollo-Dionysus dichotomy so that both Apollo and Dionysus reveal themselves as Man-Orpheus.

My paper discusses the ways in which this Symbolist mythopoeia was rethought in the poetry of Vladislav Khodasevich in terms of his generational and affiliative in-between position. On the one hand, he subscribed to post-Symbolist poetics that "made myth part and parcel of the poetic function operating at the thematic level rather than a mere semantic referent of poetry or its ideological pretext" (Ronen 1985: 117) – for him the myth of Orpheus was not theoretically objectivized but poetically internalized. On the other hand, while his younger contemporaries, such as Osip Mandelstam or Marina Tsvetaeva, aspired to a new, post-Symbolist, mythologization, Khodasevich shared the late Symbolism's tendency to subvert its own mythemes (see Hanzen-Löve 1999: 13–19). As a result his émigré collection *The European Night* (*Evropeiskaia noch'*, 1927) emerges as a playground for essential demythologization and even travesty of the main constants of the myth of Orpheus. At the same time, this demythologization corresponds to the theme of dismemberment (*sparagmós*) in the myth and dramatizes the poet's coming into collision with the inimical reality of "the European night."

Bibliography:

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