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12. Jane Harrison as an Interpreter of Russian Culture in the 1910s-20s

Alexandra Smith

Jane Harrison (1850-1928), a British classical scholar, belongs to the first generation of British women academics whose contribution to the intellectual history of the modernist period was highly praised by her friends and fellow scholars and writers, including Virginia Woolf, Gilbert Murray, Francis Cornford and Prince Dmitrii Sviatopolk-Mirskii. Harrison knew sixteen languages, including Russian, and had a broad interest in many aspects of European culture. These included Orphic mysticism, ancient Greek art and drama, Freud's interpretation of dreams, and Russian culture, albeit she is especially known for her contribution to the interpretation of Greek religion and art and her use of anthropological theory in Classical studies. Julie Peters praises Harrison's role in the history of the avant-garde theatre and performance. In Peters's view, Harrison's approach to ritualist anti-theatricality continues to be highly valid for neo-avant-garde performance today.¹ Harrison's interest in surviving primitive rituals stemmed from her disillusionment with the museum culture, which was based on hierarchical principles, and her growing Bergsonian belief in the power of the living creative impulse that,

¹ Julia Peters writes: "Frazer can arguably be seen as one of the first to place ritual at the centre of investigations of the history of religion, and he was unquestionably the most influential. But Harrison's earliest discussions of ritual precede the publication of *The Golden Bough*, and she and Frazer were developing their ideas about the role of drama more or less simultaneously" (Julia Stone Peters, 'Jane Harrison and the Savage Dionysus: Archaeological Voyages, Ritual Origins, Anthropology, and the Modern Theatre', *Modern Drama*, LI, no. 1 (2008), p. 32.

through performance, might be experienced in an ecstatic collectivity and an act of transcendence of both beauty and theatre.

Harrison produced numerous comments on Russian culture and published a book on the Russian language and literature. She taught Russian at Cambridge from 1917 to 1922 and from 1922 to 1925, lived in Paris where she befriended many Russians, including the prominent Russian writer Aleksei Remizov and the Russian religious philosopher Lev Shestov. Together with Hope Mirrlees, her long-standing friend and pupil, Harrison published her English-language version of Archpriest Avvakum's autobiographical book *The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum* (1924) and a collection of translations of several Russian fairy tales (both folk stories and literary ones) as *The Book of the Bear* (1926). According to Gerald Smith, *The Book of the Bear* "retains great value because of the literary quality of translations".² Smith also thinks that it brings together Harrison's strong interest in totemism and her Russophilism in an effective manner. It is not surprising that she described Russian folk traditions and performances as being truly beautiful. Harrison's enthusiasm for Russian folk drama is especially felt in her portrayal of Russian *Vertep* plays: the rites that take place on 23 June, the Eve of John Baptist's day and the worship of the pagan spring-god Iarilo. By concluding her account of the above mentioned performances with the statement that the reader should thank the Russian peasant for all the artefacts, Harrison encourages her readers to appreciate the universal aspects of Indo-European cultures and languages.

Harrison's empathy for Russian peasant culture stands in striking contrast to James Frazer's approach to the primitives: in the words of Martha Carpentier, Frazer "could vent an astonishing disdain for the peasant class whose religious customs he

² Gerald Stanton Smith, *D.S.Mirsky: A Russian-English Life, 1890-1939* (Oxford, 2000), p. 99.

analysed so closely”.³ According to Carpentier, Harrison’s disagreement with Frazer and other scholars who were involved in rationalising religion and hierarchical thought stems from her belief in the mystical aspects and vitalism of early pre-intellectual religious experience. “For Harrison,” says Carpentier, “primitives were not ‘purblind’ as for Frazer, but visionary”.⁴ To this end, Harrison’s interest in the personal experience and the sense of immediate intuitive revelation is especially strongly felt in her understanding of magic as the borderline between man and beast and a form of the spiritual protoplasm which “gives rise to Religion and other ‘civilised’ things”.⁵ Harrison developed a strong bond with the young writers who rebelled against the rational and patriarchal values of the Victorian generation. She sought to promote a psychological approach to the manifestations of creativity and spirituality, suggesting that true religious experience is not rationalised theology (Omega) but rather a lived, experienced thing (Alpha) – as in the mysticism of various matriarchal cults, especially the ones related to Dionysus. In Harrison’s view, primitive people participate in the natural cycle of life through performing magical dancing. She believed that the example of primitives should teach twentieth-century intellectuals to overcome their positivism and embrace the essence of religious life, including secular religiosity, rejecting thereby “the intellectual attempt to define the indefinable”.⁶

The growing interest in Russian and Slavonic studies found in Harrison’s works in the 1910s-20s coincides with the wider scholarly and political engagement with

³ Martha C. Carpentier, *Ritual, Myth, and the Modernist Text: The Influence of Jane Ellen Harrison on Joyce, Eliot, and Woolf* (Amsterdam, 1998), p. 51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Alpha and Omega* (London, 1915), pp. 162-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

Eastern European and Oriental studies at the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, the Deutsche Gesellschaft zum Studium Osteuropas was created in 1913; the School of Slavonic and East European Studies was established in 1915 at the University of London; the first Institut d'Études Slaves was opened in Paris in 1919; and in the United States, a Society for the Advancement of Slavonic Study was founded in 1919. Commenting on the rapid formation of the East European discourse in France after World War I, Ezequiel Adamovsky points out that “the beginnings of Euro-Orientalism are to be found in the second decade of the twentieth century, especially after World War I, when the Western powers had to redraw the map of Eastern Europe. In that context, interest in Slavonic studies spread to different universities in Europe and specialised institutes and periodical publications were established, forming a network of supporting institutions for the new discourse”.⁷

In the light of the growing interest in Eastern Europe as the exotic “other” in the 1910s-20s, it is not surprising to see that Harrison focuses on the magic qualities of Russian pagan beliefs linked to the tradition of equating word with deed: “Nowhere so clearly as in St John the Baptist’s year aspect not only known but felt. He is essentially a Solstice Saint – the rites of St John’s Eve, with its magical bathing, its magical Firewheel, and its magic flower gathering, are too obviously of the Solstice to need further stress”.⁸ The *Vertep* theatre, and a collection of marionettes, including the one with a head of Satan resembling a Gorgon mask, located in the Museum of the Imperial

⁷ Ezequiel Adamovsky, ‘Euro Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810–1880’, *Journal of Modern History*, LXXVII, no. 3 (2005), p. 609.

⁸ Jane Harrison, ‘The Head of John Baptist’, *Classical Review*, XXX, no. 8 (1916), p. 218.

Academy of Sciences at Petrograd, appear of special appeal to her because they represent objects of the living tradition she so cherished. Harrison also defines a reference found in Nikolai Gogol's story featuring the head of a roast ram served at supper as a remnant of the ritual myth. In Harrison's opinion, Russian performances related to "the loathsome story of the Head and the dance" displayed a sense of "a new ritual dignity".⁹

In her 1925 memoir, Harrison demonstrates the notion of ritual dignity embodied by her dream (seen soon after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution) about her imaginary dance with huge bears in a vast ancient forest. Harrison calls the space of her fantasy a "dreaming wood", linking the visionary nature of her dream to the archetypal qualities of the subconscious. The description of the dream in the memoir suggests that the bears refused to learn from her how to dance the Grand Chain in the lancers and shuffled away instead, "courteously waving their paws, intent on their own mysterious doings" which she felt obliged to learn and invoked in her an ecstasy of humility.¹⁰ This dream invokes Nikolai Rerikh's 1912 painting 'Forefathers' that some scholars view as a possible sketch for the opening of Igor' Stravinskii's 1913 ballet *The Rite of Spring*. As Peter Hill notes, Rerikh's painting presents Orpheus-like primitive man who charms with his piping a circle of bears, "reflecting the Slavic tradition that bears were man's forefathers".¹¹ In similar manner to Aleksandr Blok's historiosophical beliefs in the redeeming aspects of the Bolshevik revolution and the importance of Scythian traditions to the Russian identity, Harrison said to her friends: "The Bears revolution has made me so happy – it is the best and biggest thing the War has brought and does justify our faith

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹⁰ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (London, 1925), pp. 77-8.

¹¹ Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 5.

in them and it is splendid that there has been so little bloodshed”.¹² The dream described in Harrison’s book might be interpreted as an omen for a better social order to evolve.

Arguably, Harrison’s mythologised image of Russia – entwined with deeply personal overtones – articulates her own sense of displacement into the space that enables creativity and transcendence. The dream of bears invokes Harrison’s definition of the Dionysian dithyramb as a leaping inspired dance and her understanding of pantomimic dancing as a ritual bridge “between actual life and those representations of life that we call art”.¹³ According to Harrison, not all rites might be defined as art. Harrison gives an example from Russian peasant life that lacks artistic imagination: “In some parts of Eastern Russia the girls dance one by one in a large hoop at midnight on Shrove Tuesday. The hoop is decked with leaves, flowers and ribbons, and attached to it are a small bell and some flax. While dancing within the hoop each girl has to wave her arms vigorously and cry, “Flax, grow,” or words to that effect. When she has done she leaps out of the hoop or is lifted out of it by her partner”.¹⁴ Harrison suggests that such a practice (related to superstitions and primitive beliefs) constitutes neither art, nor ritual, since it is carried privately and not performed for public good by the authorised collective body.

According to Harrison, in order for acts of sympathetic magic to be considered art, they need to be subordinated to the imitation of life and go beyond the function of uttering emotion: “We must not only utter emotion, we must represent it, that is, we must in some way reproduce or imitate or express the thought which is causing us

¹² Jessie G. Stewart, *Jane Ellen Harrison: A Portrait from Letters* (London, 1959), p. 176.

¹³ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (London, 1913), p. 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

emotion. Art is not imitation, but art and also ritual frequently and legitimately contain an element of imitation".¹⁵ By contrast, Harrison's interpretation of the *Hymn of the Kouretes to Zeus*, in which god and worshippers leap together to bring fertility and ensure communal transcendence, points to the expression of ritualistic beliefs and communal experience of the divine. Harrison's examples of the acts of theatricality that occur both through a performer's relocation of the quotidian space that he occupies and through a spectator's gaze framing a quotidian space that he does not occupy, testify to her acute awareness of the necessity to revive the social function of culture as a counterpoint to the highly pessimistic modern world view. It is such a view that she felt led to the disintegration of morality into the plurality of subjective values. That is why Harrison praised the novels of Katherine Mansfield and John Galsworthy for reviving the novel's social function. As Carpentier stresses, Harrison valued "the collective emotional experience of primitive ritual and hoped to see art in her own generation assuming a similar socially cathartic function".¹⁶

Viewed in the light of her disillusionment with the novel's diminished role in a modern society, Harrison's dream about dancing with bears might be seen as a manifestation of theatricality as alterity that emerges through a split in the quotidian space. The dream of dancing with bears is reproduced in Harrison's memoir, and can be interpreted as a special kind of monodrama that gives the reader a sense of shared experience. Harrison's theatrical gesture might be compared to the views of Russian modernist critic Aleksandr Kugel', especially to his idea that every work environment, social group, and manifestation of ordinary life corresponds to certain rhythmical patterns, and his vision of drama as an artistic rendering of psychic life seen as the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Carpentier, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

intuitively comprehensible flow of existence. As Kugel' points out, "the task of art is to cognise life in such a way that it would be possible to capture its rhythm".¹⁷ Kugel's vision of monodrama as a manifestation of psychic life was developed in Nikolai Evreinov's book *Introduction to Monodrama*, which claims that the appropriate relationship between audience and performance in the theatre is one of sympathy; therefore, complete unity between character and audience is achievable if everything happening on stage can be subjectively perceived by one main character.¹⁸ By offering her readers a description of a dream of dancing with bears, Harrison moulds herself into the image of a modern artist and a religious-like figure capable of sharing her emotional experience with the audience and aspiring to represent psychological time in a Bergsonian manner.

In addition to creating her own image of Russia and Russian culture, Harrison claimed that the Russian language provided her with a refuge in the same way as painting, music and literature, thereby enabling her to have a parallel existence. Harrison writes of the Russian language in a very intimate manner and says that she fell in love with it in the same way she fell in love with the Greek language.¹⁹ According to Harrison, language is an artefact and "the *unconscious* or at least *subconscious* product of the group, the herd, the race, the nation".²⁰ Having praised the aesthetic qualities of the Russian artistic imagination that appealed to her, in her 1919 book on the Russian language she admits that her encounters with Russian culture were highly valuable for

¹⁷ A.R. Kugel', 'Utverzhdienie teatra', *Teatr i iskusstvo* (1923), p. 170.

¹⁸ Nikolai Evreinov, *Vvedenie v monodramu* (St Petersburg, 1909), p. 9.

¹⁹ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Aspects, Aorists and the Classical Tripos* (Cambridge, 1919), p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

her own personal development, insisting that the study of Russian language and folklore enriched her understanding of Ancient Greek culture. “To study the folk-epos of Russia alive in the mouths of the people up to and beyond the time of Peter the Great”, Harrison maintains, “is to look at Homer with new and wider opened eyes”.²¹

Harrison’s interpretation of Russian artistic imagination testifies to a special trait in her character – namely, her instinctive pacifism that over the war years grew into a coherent philosophy resembling Lev Tolstoi’s vision of peaceful co-existence of all nations. By drawing examples from Russian culture related to the expression of communal ties, Harrison articulated an alternative to the view found in Gilbert Murray’s pamphlet *How Can War Ever Be Right?*, asserting that “war is not all evil”.²² In this book, Murray welcomes war as an opportunity for heroism that enables common man to elevate themselves to the status of Homeric heroes and writes, “But, when all allowances are made, one cannot read the letters and dispatches without a feeling of passionate admiration for the men about whom they tell. [...] They were just our ordinary fellow citizens [...]. Yet, now under the stress of war, having a duty before them that is clear and unquestioned and terrible, they are daily doing noble things”.²³ Murray’s notion of “the common necessary heroism of the average men” is presented in his pamphlet as anti-Tolstoian. Commenting on a Russian officer described by the media as a person who had discovered a sense of freedom through war, and who claimed that all his fellow officers were fighting with tears of joy in their eyes, Murray suggests that there are seldom opportunities in everyday life that enable ordinary citizens to find the same sort of happiness. According to Murray, “this is the inward triumph that lies at the heart of

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²² Gilbert Murray, *How Can War Ever Be Right?* (London, 1914), p. 24.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

the great tragedy”.²⁴

One of Harrison’s letters to Murray states otherwise. Harrison feels strongly about the notion of individual freedom that should not be imposed upon people. Opposed to both the dark side of the herd instinct and the artificially constructed sense of community in the name of patriotism uncovered by the war, Harrison thinks that any power structures inflicted upon individuals lead to conformity. She writes, “I am beginning to feel as if the curse all over was the curse of a dominant *class*, a governing class, which I used to think it so natural and fine to belong to. No one – except perhaps you – is to have power over anyone else. I mean power to compel”.²⁵ Harrison’s 1914 essay ‘Epilogue on the War’ also denounces the outbreak of war and the propaganda articles that justify military actions.

According to Harrison’s model of a new social order, a modern subject should be able to overcome the fragmented state of mind through a universalist and comparativist outlook: “An accurate knowledge of the Greek and Russian languages together with an intimate understanding of the two civilisations should furnish a humanistic education at once broad and thorough”.²⁶ Yet it would be wrong to say that Harrison had developed such a model single-handedly. Harrison’s belief in the value of an anthropological approach to culture was shaped by various studies penned by the evolutionists, including E.B. Taylor, whose book *Primitive Culture* (1871) had a significant impact on the artistic imagination of many British modernist writers searching for a new world of religious meaning beyond Christianity. Harrison was also inspired by Nietzsche’s *The*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁵ Quoted in Annabel Robinson, *The Life and Work of Jane Ellen Harrison* (Oxford, 2002), p. 262.

²⁶ Murray 1914, *op.cit.*

Birth of Tragedy (1871) that presented the Apollonian and Dionysian principles of Greek religion in a new light. Harrison challenged Nietzsche's conception of the dominance of male archetypes in Hellenic religion and pursued a study of the Hellenic matriarchal goddesses.

It seems that Harrison's research into Dionysian rituals and Dionysian song and pantomime as manifestations of early Greek drama made her aware of the emergence of similar approaches to myth and ritual articulated by Russian scholars and thinkers, including Russian Symbolist poet Viacheslav Ivanov, whose article 'The Spiritual Face of Slavs' portrays Russians as true followers of the Dionysian principle of transcendental unity. Ivanov's poems and essays were well known in the West in the 1900s-10s and admired for their presentation of Dionysus as a powerful mystical god and dying god, the prototype of Christ. Clarence Manning's following words about Ivanov can easily be applied to Harrison herself: "Christ and Dionysus, mystery and drama, the theatre and the Church, all the forces from all directions which agitated the ancient world in the great crises of its history were felt by Ivanov" in such an intense manner that "he summed up religion, art, and thought in the ancient symbols" in order to present "a sympathetic and appealing figure of the dying god".²⁷

As Sandra Peacock maintains, "at the end of her life Jane perceived that neither individualism, nor collectivism alone could be the best way to live in the world. As she grew older she internalised Bergson's concept of life as change no longer felt threatened by the gap between youth and age".²⁸ Given Harrison's profound interest in Bergsonian

²⁷ Clarence A. Manning, 'A Rebirth of Dionysus: In Russia', *Classical Weekly*, XVIII, no. 4 (27 October 1924), p. 29.

²⁸ Sandra Peacock, *Jane Ellen Harrison. The Mask and the Self* (New Haven and London, 1988), p. 242.

thought that may have reflected a general modernist fascination with various aspects of a neo-Romantic organic outlook, it is not surprising that Harrison felt attracted to manifestations of intuitivism found in Russian religious thought and literature.²⁹ In the obituary he wrote at the time of Harrison's death, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirskii (a passionate admirer of Bergson himself) says that by the time Harrison wrote *Themis: a Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912) (hereafter *Themis*), "primitive religion had become for her a starting point for a general study of the human soul", suggesting that she passed to the Russians from Freud and Bergson who "attracted her by their broad and spontaneous humanity".³⁰ Mirskii's commentary invokes Bergson's criticism of neo-Kantian critical rationality.

Indeed, Jane Harrison's matriarchal anti-Kantian theories shaped Woolf's ideas about group psychology. Patricia Cramer points out that in her book *Between the Acts* (1941) Woolf "contrasts patriarchal with matriarchal configurations in order to provide a model for an alternative 'family of origins' – centered on women's values rather than on violent, dominating men".³¹ Cramer's article maintains that both Harrison and Woolf wanted to encourage women's active participation in the construction of a new culture opposed to heroic violence, male domination and war conflicts. Harrison's interest in memory studies and reconstruction of the past in the present (through the re-enactment of ritualistic activities or re-definition of tradition) is also comparable to T.S. Eliot's concept of tradition as a process of constant internal adjustment. According to K.

²⁹ Hilary Fink, *Bergson and Russian Modernism* (Evanston, 1999), p. xv.

³⁰ D.S. Mirsky, 'Jane Ellen Harrison. Died 15 April 1928', *Slavonic and East European Review*, VII, no. 20 (1929), p. 415.

³¹ Patricia Cramer, 'Virginia Woolf's Matriarchal Family of Origins in *Between the Acts*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, XXXIX, no. 2 (1993), pp. 167.

Phillips, T.S. Eliot shared Harrison's vision that modern artists need to transmute their private personalities in the style of ancient ritualists.³² Eliot's 1919 pronouncement that "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality"³³ echoes Harrison's description of ancient dancers who "sink their own personality, and by the wearing of masks and disguises, by dancing to a common rhythm, above all by the common excitement, they become emotionally one, a true congregation, not a collection of individuals".³⁴

Other contemporaries also valued Harrison's contribution to the elaboration of modernism in general. Harrison's interest in Russian culture and literature stems from her profound understanding of the modern individual's alienated position in social structures and a need for a compensatory staging of the self as a unified body. By drawing on examples from Russian culture and literature, Harrison produces a compelling argument that the organic work offers compensatory images and enables the decentred modern subject to discover a sense of wholeness. Harrison's preoccupation with emotion, evoked by ritualised actions and effects, positions her alongside many European avant-garde expressionists who were opposed to conventional organic work (due to its affirmative ideological function and reconciliatory use of social integration). According to Richard Murphy, one of the main goals of the avant-garde critique of the institution of art is to expose realism "as an institutionally-supported code which serves

³² K.J. Phillips, 'Jane Harrison and Modernism', *Journal of Modern Literature*, XVII, no. 4 (1991), p. 468.

³³ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London, 1920), p. 47.

³⁴ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis: a Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, pp. 45-6.

to legitimise only a certain concept of reality, and which lives out of account large areas of human experience that fall outside of this sanctioned category”.³⁵

Arguably, Harrison’s reading of realist texts (including Russian nineteenth-century literature) through a prism of modernist experience is comparable to the attempts of Russian theoreticians, including Ivanov and Viktor Shklovskii, to address the problem of overcoming the shift towards hermeticism, so it can help transform everyday life. In her 1915 book Harrison presents herself as the representative of the generation of art lovers fond of music-halls and Russian ballets.³⁶ In her 1913 book *Ancient Art and Ritual* Harrison writes proudly about the new aesthetic sensibilities developing in Great Britain:

We English are not supposed to be an artistic people, yet art, in some form or another, bulks large in the national life. We have theatres, a National Gallery, we have art-schools, our tradesmen provide for us ‘art-furniture,’ we even hear, absurdly enough, of ‘art-colours.’ Moreover, all this is not a matter of mere antiquarian interest, we do not simply go and admire the beauty of the past in museums; a movement towards or about art is all alive and astir among us. We have new developments of the theatre, problem plays, Reinhardt productions, Gordon Craig scenery, Russian ballets. We have new schools of painting treading on each other’s heels with breathless rapidity: Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, Futurists. Art – or at least the desire for, the interest in, art

³⁵ Richard Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 15.

³⁶ Harrison, ‘Crabbed Age and Youth’, *Alpha and Omega* (London, 1915), p. 10.

– is assuredly not dead.³⁷

According to Harrison, Diaghilev's Ballet Russes stands out as an exciting influence on the British audience.

The overwhelming fascination of British audiences with Diaghilev's experiments can be exemplified by Ellen Terry's book *The Russian Ballet* that presents Russian modern dance as a tool of transgression and transformation of everyday life. Terry's vision of a new art resembles Harrison's understanding of Russian literature and culture as a model of transnational unity exemplified by the works of Fedor Dostoevskii and Vladimir Solov'ev. To illustrate, Terry praises Russian ballet performances for their ability to re-invent the old forms and embrace the universal aspects of aesthetic experience thus:

I think they rather transport us into a country which has no nationality and no barriers, the kingdom of dreams. The Russian ballet has transformed itself in a little over a decade because its guiding mind has been more than national. The musicians, artists, dancers and ballet-masters have depended more on invention than on reality. Many stories of widely different character have been drawn on for the new ballets, but all have been treated with an imagination which is neither the property of a nation nor the result of patriotism.³⁸

The emphasis on the dream-like qualities of Russian modern dance conveyed by Terry and Pamela Colman Smith's illustrations, which featured Vladislav Nijinskii's androgynous self-

³⁷ Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, pp. 207-8.

³⁸ Ellen Terry, *The Russian Ballet* (London, 1913), p. 15.

representation, is akin to Harrison's description of an emotional and intimate appeal of the Russian verb, especially because of its aspects. In her 1917 book Harrison describes the Russian aspects in Bergsonian terms. In her view, while the imperfective aspect denotes internal time and can be visualised as a line because it has "duration, continuity, extension in space", the perfective aspect "is like a dot, a moment, as soon it is begun, it finished". Harrison suggests to perceive the imperfective aspect as the open hand and snowfield and associates the perfective aspect with a snowball³⁹, thereby poeticising Russian linguistic behaviour. In the same vein, Harrison draws the reader's attention to the irrational aspects of the Russian novel, which in her view emerges not from abstract concepts, but from lived experience: "The Russian novel is written in the imperfective, written from within not without, lived not thought about".⁴⁰

Similar pronouncements about the ability of Russian modernist and proto-modernist artists to overcome the fragmentation of modern life can be found in Harrison's *Themis*. In this work, she situates the origin of religion in collectively held emotion, and outlines the relevance of ancient rituals to contemporary re-evaluations of humanist values and ideas of national identity. In her book *Alpha and Omega* Harrison argues that the excesses of nationalism emerging in the 1910s stemmed from two major causes: collectivism, which had turned into a fashionable dogma; and the triumph of emotion over reason, which led those who favoured war. She offered Dostoevskii as an antidote to these excesses – a model of how a national identity could be defended without recourse to the kind of nationalism that, she believed, held sway in Britain. Harrison saw Dostoevskii's works as an embodiment of Russian transnational and dialogic thinking that differed from Russian imperialism, suggesting the English could profit by emulating it in order to embrace the patriotism "that is

³⁹ Harrison, *Aspects, Aorists, and the Classical Tripos*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

own sister to Peace”.⁴¹ While Harrison’s 1913 book *Ancient Art and Ritual* develops some of Tolstoi’s ideas manifested in his 1897 treatise *What is Art?*, in her 1921 book *Epilogomena to the Study of Greek Religion* Harrison refers to Vladimir Solov’ev, whose ideas shaped her own world-view and inspired her to publish two books on Russian grammar. They contain several innovative cognitive approaches to the expression of Russian beliefs and customs through language – *Russia and the Russian Verb: a Contribution to the Psychology of the Russian People* (1915) and *Aorists and the Classical Tripos* (1919). The latter was defined by Mirskii as “most remarkable studies of Russian linguistic mentality”.⁴²

Harrison’s analyses of the Russian language display her scholarly interest not only in the mythopoetic qualities of Russian imagination but also her awareness of the role of metaphor in the construction of the sense of continuity between the past and the present. Given Harrison’s belief that it is emotion that binds object and beholder, it seems that her interest in the psychology of the creative process and commemorative qualities of Russian language and traditions stems from acute realisation of the crisis of the European novel as a manifestation of the social ills of modernity. According to Boris Eikhenbaum’s 1924 assessment of the crisis of the novel, “The modern novel was thus simultaneously deprived of both plot, that is, of the individual acting in accord with his sense of time, and psychology, since it could no longer support action of any sort. The future development of the novel will be no less than the history of the atomization of biography as a form of personal existence; what is more, we shall witness the catastrophic collapse of biography”.⁴³ The loss of generic

⁴¹ Harrison, ‘Epilogue on the War’, *Alpha and Omega*, p. 245.

⁴² Terry, *op.cit.*

⁴³ Quoted in Alyson Tapp, “‘Kak byt’ pisatelem??’: Boris Eikhenbaum’s Response to the Crisis of the Novel in the 1920s’, *Slavonica*, XV, no. 1 (2009), p. 35. Please transliterate title

integrity reflects the severed relationship between the individual and the setting that either diminished or became arbitrary. Harrison's belief that the novel embodies a particular fullness of human experience implies that a broader context related to the fate of the individual in the social and historical milieu should be reassessed with the help of a study of ritual. Harrison writes:

The commemorative dance does especially re-present; it reproduces the past hunt or battle; but if we analyse a little more closely we see it is not for the sake of copying the actual battle itself, but for the emotion felt about the battle. This they desire to re-live... The habit of this mimesis of the thing desired, is set up, and ritual begins. Ritual, then, does imitate, but for an emotional, not an altogether practical, end.⁴⁴

Drawing on Tolstoi's emphasis on the unifying function of art and Ivanov's notion of collective identity, Harrison offers her own model of art. Like Ivanov, Evreinov, and Eikhenbaum, she called for the restoration of the collective self through the re-enactment of universal experiences and collective commemorative acts: "Art is in its very origin social, and social means human and collective. Moral and social are, in their final analysis, the same... 'Art,' says Tolstoy, 'has this characteristic, that it unites people'".⁴⁵ Arguably, Harrison's study of the Greek and Russian cultures not only broadened her own vision of herself as upholder of humanist values but also restored her sense of belonging to the European cultural tradition.

⁴⁴ Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, p. 23.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.