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THE MINOTAUR – PUNISHING OR THE PUNISHED

Ancient mythology abounds in different images of monsters; however, the Minotaur holds a particular place. If other monsters are normally treated negatively in ancient tradition, the image of the Minotaur invites double approach as early as ancient times. First of all, there was no common consent on the very existence of the monster: antiquity offers two versions: according to the first one, the Minotaur did exist, and his slaughter was among Theseus' renowned deeds, while the second version says the monster did not exist and was invented to either facilitate the understanding of certain notions, or is merely the product of someone's fancy.¹

¹ The first version is more reliable. According to the most popular version of the myth, the Minotaur (or the Asterius) was the son of Pasiphae and Poseidon (or the bull sent by him). He had the body of a man and the head of a bull. Minos, in shame at the existence of this monstrosity, commissioned Daedalus to construct a labyrinth and had Pasiphae's child shut up there (Apollod. 3.8-11). (Interestingly, Pasiphae asked that very Daedalus to help her gratify her passion for the white bull. At her request, Daedalus cut out a wooden cow and covered it with skin. Pasiphae got into it to await the excited bull – as a result, the Minotaur was born). The Labyrinth was so tricky that Daedalus himself was nearly lost in its corridors and found the way out with difficulty (Ovid. 8.130). The Minotaur, shut up in the Labyrinth, was fed on boys and girls whom Athenians offered to the beast as a tribute (Apollod. 3.213, Diod.Sic. 4.77.1). On the third occasion, the Minotaur's "menu" included Theseus; however, the monster failed to digest him – the hero killed it with the help of Ariadne and even succeeded to escape (Apollod. E1.7-1-9, Diod.Sic. 4.61.4). Plutarch, too, was familiar with this version (Plutarch, 15.1, 17.3, 19.1). According to Pausanias, the struggle of Theseus and the so-called Tauros (bull) of Minos was depicted on the frieze of the Acropolis (Paus. 1.24.1). Theseus' killing of the Minotaur is mentioned by Hyginus as well (Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 38). As stated above, according to the second version, the Minotaur did not exist. Plutarch, referring to Philochorus, says that Cretans had no idea about the story and that the Labyrinth was just a palace which was impossible to escape. Athenian boys and girls used to be shut up there – they were then offered as a prize to the winners of the competitions held in honor of Andro-

The 20th century artistic culture treats the Minotaur in even more diverse ways. In this epoch, the image became the object of a deep conceptual perception. In certain cases it was transformed into the creator's prototype or alter ego; on other occasions, it became the general symbol of a human desperate from the vanity of the world and so on. Naturally, all this has affected the approach to the Minotaur's function.

It is quite difficult to consider all 20th century interpretations of the Minotaur's image as their number proves unexpectedly big. The paper will focus only on those ones that obviously tend to rehabilitate the Minotaur.

The revival of the myth about the Minotaur and the Labyrinth is connected with the development of the surrealist trend. As early as the outset of the 20th century, André Masson offered Albert Scira, publisher of a popular surrealist magazine *Le Minotaure*, to design the cover of the magazine. Scira liked the idea but committed the job to Picasso. The magazine, with Picasso's Minotaur on its cover, was published from 1933 till 1939 and evidently, the spirit of the epoch was best demonstrated through that very image of the Minotaur shut up in the Labyrinth. The theme of the Minotaur was widely borrowed by artists of that period. Among them were Henry Matisse, Max Ernst, Giorgio de Chirico, etc. However, its most vigorous and unusual interpreter was Pablo Picasso. He dedicated to it a series of paintings. Picasso's Minotaurs are quite peculiar. The painter presented the beast either affectionate, or wild and lustful, or sad and frustrated with its own ugliness, or meditative. Despite such diversity, the paintings are distinguished for two principal points: 1. in the image of the Minotaur, they accentuate the sexual-hedonistic principle and 2. the image is somehow identified with the author's own self. Picasso cardinaly changes the traditional attitude to the Minotaur and presents it as the creature that corresponds to the principles of his life.²

From Picasso's paintings, the Minotaur penetrated literature which added new touches to his transformed image. Among the first writers who created the Minotaur's altered image in literature is Jorge Luis Borges. Evidently, his story *The House of Asterius*³ compelled a number of modern poets and prose-writers to dedicate literary works to the image of the Minotaur.

geos, Minos' son. Among the winners was Minos' chief commander called Tauros, who was notorious of ill-treating the gift. Presumably, he was associated with the Minotaur through the name "Tauros"; or, may be, the story generated the myth. Correspondingly, the version, according to which the offered young men and maidens died because they were lost in the Labyrinth and not because they encountered the Minotaur who devoured them, existed already in antiquity.

² Picasso and the Myth of Minotaur, Art Journal, winter, 1972-73, XXXII/2.

³ Хорхе Луис Борхес, Проза разных лет, Москва 1984.

The paper does not aim to discuss in detail Borges' fiction; readers are sufficiently well aware of his works. It will highlight only those points that make Borges' Minotaur different from its ancient prototype. These very properties are, as a rule, accentuated by the writers of the subsequent period. 1. Borges' Minotaur is a lonesome creature;⁴ 2. The Minotaur, similar to a lonely individual, entertains himself all alone; sometimes, he plays hide-and-seek all by himself, and sometimes wonders in the labyrinth or jumps down from its top); 3. His favorite pastime is talking with the imaginative Minotaur – in fact, with his own self – another trait typical of a lonely individual; 4. Analogically with the myth, nine youths and maidens appear in the labyrinth once in nine years; however, in this case, they are not victims sacrificed to the Minotaur; they come into the labyrinth to be "rescued from the evil" by the creature; 5. The Minotaur is aware that some time his "deliverer" will appear; after he finds this out, he does not feel lonely any more; he expects, he tries to imagine his rescuer – "will it be a bull or a man? Or a bull with a human head?"⁵

The myth about the Minotaur holds a central place in Friedrich Dürrenmatt's works. This is testified not only by *The Minotaur*, which the author called the ballad, but his extended comment, which states in detail his ideas about the myth of the Minotaur and the Labyrinth, and how much important they are to the writer.⁶ If Borges' character is a sensible creature and understands that death is his deliverance and deliberately awaits it, Dürrenmatt's Minotaur is naïve. He is enclosed in a glass labyrinth, and his image is everywhere.⁷ He is unaware of the life outside; more than that, he can hardly identify himself with his own images. He believes the world consists only of the creatures like himself, and does not even suspect the existence of someone different: of a stranger who can hurt him because of his own phobias. The

⁴ Although the myth pictures the Minotaur as the only tenant of the Labyrinth, it makes no allusions to its loneliness.

⁵ Three years before his death, in 1983, Borges, old and blind, arrived in Crete: "Este es el laberinto de Creta. Este es el laberinto de Creta cuyo centro fue el Minotauro. Este es el laberinto de Creta cuyo centro fue el Minotauro que Dante imaginó como un toro con cabeza de hombre y en cuya red de piedra se perdieron tantas generaciones. Este es el laberinto de Creta cuyo centro fue el Minotauro que Dante imaginó como un toro con cabeza de hombre y en cuya red de piedra se perdieron tantas generaciones como María Kodama y yo nos perdimos. Este es el laberinto de Creta cuyo centro fue el Minotauro que Dante imaginó como un toro con cabeza de hombre y en cuya red de piedra se perdieron tantas generaciones como María Kodama y yo nos perdimos en aquella mañana y seguimos perdidos en el tiempo, ese otro laberinto", Atlas, 1986.

⁶ Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Erzählungen*, Berlin 1986.

⁷ The writer purposefully resorts to alliteration and recurrence of words with the same root (Spiegelbild, Spiegelbilder, widerspiegel) to make up the impression of multiplication and alteration.

Minotaur tries to play with a strange man who enters the labyrinth, but the man is frightened and stabs a knife into the beast. The kindly Minotaur, who has never ever in his life hurt anyone, and has never known pain, is embittered and before dying, tears to pieces the young men and maiden dancing round him in the ecstasy of happiness. Moreover, the intimidated Minotaur stops to trust his own reflections – he shakes his fists at them, and seeing the same responsive gesture from the mirror, he crashes violently into it and breaks the glass. In the end, the Minotaur is killed by his "counterpart": despite all the adversities and confusions he had to face, he still welcomes amiably the other Minotaur, a guest to the Labyrinth, and starts to dance, which in fact turns into his death dance – the guest draws a dagger and thrusts it into the dancing Minotaur ... under the bull's guise is Theseus.

The ballad is not Durrenmatt's only work based on the theme of the Minotaur. As stated above, the writer devoted an extended comment to the great conceptual importance he attached to the myth about the Labyrinth and the Minotaur. After having considered its many different versions and interpretations, he concluded that the Labyrinth and the Minotaur are the symbol of paradoxicality. For instance, what he admitted as the Minotaur's only fault is his being the Minotaur: "Die Schuld des Minotaurus besteht darin, Minotaurus zu sein, eine Ungestalt, ein schuldig Unschuldiger; und darum ist das Labyrinth mehr als ein Gefängnis – es ist eine Unbegreiflichkeit -, es hält uns allein durch diese seine Eigenschaft gefangen und wird darum auch als seine letzte Paradoxie davon unabhängig, ob der Minotaurus existierte oder nicht, weil ein jeder, der es betritt, zum Minotaurus wird". He perceived the Labyrinth and the Minotaur as politically relevant images. The writer, desperate from the vanity of the war, identified himself with the Minotaur, the inmate of the Labyrinth. That was his way of protesting against his own birth, as the world he was born to was the Labyrinth for him, the physical image of the "mythic world", which he failed to understand. All related to the Labyrinth were either the members or parts of that paradoxical world. Therefore, he identified himself with those sent to the Labyrinth to either tear up others or become lost, and also with Daedalus, its designer, as well as with Theseus. The writer felt increasingly helpless in the face of the Labyrinth; "he, who designed the Labyrinth, knew all", but those who found themselves in it, are hopeless like the author himself, whose unceasing efforts to approach the outlet were all vain: "Am Ariadnefaden seines Denkens beginnt er, nach dem Minotaurus zu suchen, in den verschlungen Gängen beginnt er zu fragen, zuerst, wer denn Minotaurus überhaupt sei, später, ob es ihn überhaupt gebe, und endlich beginnt er zu überlegen – wenn er ihn immer noch nicht gefunden hat -, warum denn, wenn es den Minotaurus nicht gebe, das Labyrinth überhaupt sei: Vielleicht deshalb, weil Theseus selber der Minotaurus ist und

jeder Versuch, diese Welt denkend zu bewältigen – und sei es nur mit dem Gleichnis der Schriftsteller -, ein Kampf ist, den man mit sich selber führt: Ich bin mein Feind, du bist der deinige". With regard to the artistic and philosophical interpretation of the mythological image, Durrenmatt exceeded the rest of writers as he developed the image of the Minotaur, paired with that of the Labyrinth, into the generalized symbol of the paradoxicality of the world. Thus he perceives all (but the creator of the Labyrinth) as the "characters" of the paradoxical world – they have to exist therein having no slightest idea of it. Durrenmatt's appeal is the protest of a man who feels he is guilty only because he was born to this world.

Although the Minotaur is not the central character of *Theseus*⁸, a story by André Gide, I will still dwell on it, as the story presents quite an interesting image of the "monster". On entering the labyrinth, Theseus comes across the sleeping Minotaur. "The hero" is enchanted with its beauty: "Fortunately, the Minotaur was asleep. I had to hurry. But something stopped me: the monster was beautiful... the man and the beast combined harmoniously in him ... One fights best when one hates. But I could not hate him," says Theseus. The very title of the story reveals that it is the reception of the myth about Theseus and does not aim at endowing the Minotaur with a special function – such a presentation of the "monster" is targeted at exposing Theseus' negative properties.

Nikos Kazantzakis' play *Kouros*⁹ offers an altogether different and original interpretation of the well-known myth about Pasiphae's child by the bull. Its characters are Minos, Ariadne, Theseus, the Minotaur, the Captain and thirteen young men and maidens. Like the majority of Kazantzakis' works, the play is difficult to understand as it is filled with controversies. All the characters have double images and their positions are difficult to identify: Ariadne, on the one hand, implores Theseus not to kill her brother, and on the other hand, she herself helps him escape from the Labyrinth; at first, Theseus rejects the maiden's love, but when he understands he can achieve his own goals through Ariadne, he starts to treat her differently; Minos sees in Theseus sometimes the enemy, and sometimes the rescuer; as regards the Minotaur, as the play starts, he is the fearful monster, and in the finale, he turns into a good-looking Kouros. In his letter to B. Knosis, Kazantzakis wrote the following about the characters: "Minos is the last product of the great civilization, and Theseus – the first flower of the new culture, while the Minotaur is the primordial essence of subconsciousness which possesses all, and in which the three major stages of development, the beast, the human and the god, have

⁸ Andre Gide, *Theseus*, <http://spintongues.vladivostok.com/Gide.htm>

⁹ Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Κούρος*, Θέατρο, τ.1, Αθήνα 1964.

not so far separated. And Ariadne is the love herself".¹⁰ A young philologist, Z. Vacheishvili, offers quite an interesting interpretation of the play.¹¹ In his opinion, Theseus is the symbol of Christ. Like Jesus, he is ready to sacrifice himself; he goes down to Hades of his own will to fight the Minotaur – the Death. Besides, the researcher points to a number of details that bear allusions to the Gospel. He links Ariadne, an ambiguous character, to the image of Mary Magdalene, which in Kazantzakis' works is represented in a double way – as a temptress and as the person who helps the Son of God gain the victory over the evil. The Minotaur's metamorphosis can be interpreted as the apokatastasis of the soul – the sinful soul acquires back its initial state and is reconciled with God. Whether such an interpretation is acceptable or not, one thing is beyond doubt – Kazantzakis offers an altogether unusual interpretation on the myth, and his Minotaur stands apart from the rest of its artistic images.

The Labyrinth can be of different kind: made of stone, glass or even books. The characters of Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*¹² are lost and die in the labyrinth of books, while monk Jorge bears allusion to the Minotaur – although it has a concrete and real prototype.¹³ In the library, the same fate awaits all the characters, who are after banned (tabooed) books: they all die from the poison on the book pages – the poison kills those who wish to know more than monk Jorge finds it admissible. The monk, after his secret is revealed, commits suicide by eating the poisoned pages of Aristotle's

¹⁰ Ελένη Καζαντζάκη, Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, ο ασυμβίβαστος, Αθήνα 1998.

¹¹ Z. Vacheishvili, *The Struggle Between Civilizations and N. Kazantzakis' Tragedy Kourous*, Kutaisi 2003 (in Georgian).

¹² Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 1980.

¹³ According to U. Eco's *The Postscript to the Name of the Rose*, which in fact represents comments on the novel, the protagonist is Jorge Luis Borges, who continued to head the Argentine National Library despite his total blindness. Remarkably, in his description of the library offered in the essay *The Library of Babel* the word "library" can freely be replaced with the world "labyrinth" as it better fits the description: "El universo (que otros llaman la Biblioteca) se compone de un número indefinido, y tal vez infinito, de galerías hexagonales, con vastos pozos de ventilación en el medio, cercados por barandas bajísimas. Desde cualquier hexágono se ven los pisos inferiores y superiores: interminablemente. La distribución de las galerías es invariable. Veinte anaqueles, a cinco largos anaqueles por lado, cubren todos los lados menos dos; su altura, que es la de los pisos, excede apenas la de un bibliotecario normal. Una de las caras libres da a un angosto zaguán, que desemboca en otra galería, idéntica a la primera y a todas. A izquierda y a derecha del zaguán hay dos gabinetes minúsculos. Uno permite dormir de pie; otro, satisfacer las necesidades finales. Por ahí pasa la escalera espiral, que se abisma y se eleva hacia lo remoto. En el zaguán hay un espejo, que fielmente duplica las apariencias. Los hombres suelen inferir de ese espejo que la Biblioteca no es infinita (si lo fuera realmente ¿a qué esa duplicación ilusoria?); yo prefiero soñar que las superficies bruñidas figuran y prometen el infinito... La luz procede de unas frutas esféricas que llevan el nombre de lámparas. Hay dos en cada hexágono: transversales. La luz que emiten es insuficiente, incesante".

Treatise on Humor. Although the work makes only a faint allusion to the point of my immediate interest, it still stirs associations with the Minotaur, the Labyrinth and their innocent victims.

Borges' *The house of Asterius* inspired Georgian poet Archil Sulakauri to compose a poem *The Minotaur* (1994).¹⁴ It starts with an epigraph that quotes the last phrase of the story: "Will you believe, Ariadne?" Theseus said. "The Minotaur did not even attempt to fight me." Similar to Borges' story, the poem is written in the first person, and in fact, represents the Minotaur's monologue. The beast is confined to the Labyrinth "with hundred gates", all of which are entrances and none is an exit. The Minotaur, wondering in its corridors, would come across dead bodies with unnaturally tortured expression – the one that results only from the fear of solitude. The Minotaur understands that solitude is he himself, that Athenians sacrifice the young men and maidens not to him but to the god of solitude which is within him: "Gods made me a man with a bull's head, a monster in fact, but breathed into me the spirit of loneliness. They made of me such a fearful image of seclusion, and enclosed within myself solitude – in the same way I am confined to the Labyrinth". Through killing the Minotaur, "the solitude imprisoned in him was returned to the humankind". Similar to Borge's character, neither Sulakauri's Minotaur offers resistance to Theseus. He knows in advance that he will be killed by the Athenian hero, but like Borges' and Durrenmatt's character, he expects death as the deliverance. The ending of the poem proves likewise interesting: "By the way: it should not be so much difficult to go to the Minotaur when one has in hands the thread of Ariadne".

The poem *The Minotaur in the Labyrinth*¹⁵ by a Russian poet Alexey Alyokhin was composed in approximately the same period. However, unlike its Georgian counterpart, which does not aim to make the mythical event appear modern, it is set in the 20th century environment and represents a grotesque of the ancient myth. The setting for the poem is the Soviet Union, and the Minotaur is the manager of the Labyrinth. Despite the properties Sulakauri's and Alyokhin's poems have "in common", it is impossible to trace any kind of influence; however, they are interrelated with remarkable typological links (which can not always be explained by their common prototype – Borges' story): in both cases, the Minotaur is a definitely amiable and positive character; he is cheerless and lonely. Besides, the young men and maiden

¹⁴ Archil Sulakauri, Collection of Works, in 3 volumes, vol. 1, Tbilisi 1997 (in Georgian). The comparative analysis of Archil Sulakauri's And Borges' works is given in the paper by K. Gardapkhadze *The Minotaur by Archil Sulakauri and The House of Asterius by Jorge Luis Borges*, Tbilisi 2004.

¹⁵ Алексей Алехин, Вопреки предвещаниям птиц, Москва 1994.

that enter the Labyrinth are rather scared and even faint at hearing the name of the Minotaur: "The young men and girls ... desperate from the fear of my image, were lost in the dizzy vortex of the Labyrinth, and intimidated, dashed against the corridor walls" (Sulakauri); "...I used to receive visitors who almost fell faint at the sight of a young manager in an austere blue suit", "...And I noticed how the girls from the typing pool turn pale as they meet me in the corridor" (Alyokhin). In Alyokhin's poem, the outcast Minotaur would howl at night. The howl was audible outside as well, which enabled cheating captains to frighten young sailors by composing fearful fables about the Minotaur. Likewise, in Sulakauri's poem, the stories about the Minotaur's mischief are attributed to malicious gossip. The Minotaur rejects the rumors as if he has slaughtered and devoured boys and girls: "That is not true! The boys and girls, horror-stricken in advance, desperate from the fear of my image, were lost in the dizzy vortex of the Labyrinth, and intimidated, dashed against the corridor walls". The final part of Alyokhin's poem is different from all other versions: "Last fall, under the press of the production plan¹⁶, he was directed to the slaughter-house, so that they could pay out the premium to sambist¹⁷ Theseus who represented the region".

Another artistic work inspired by Borges' story is Victor Lyapin's play *The Happy Eyes of the Minotaur*¹⁸. The play accentuates the same points; however, the genre it belongs to requires sharper plot elements and more distinct properties of its characters, who are more in number – the Minotaur, Ariadne, Pasiphae and Theseus. The Minotaur is lonely not because he has been shut up in the Labyrinth, but because he is God (the Son of God) and humans are unable to understand him. His dream is to meet another Minotaur, the one like him, whom he will speak to and will be understood. The play includes three scenes: the first one starts with the Minotaur's auto dialogue: he is alone and speaks to the imaginary Minotaur: "I have been waiting for you so long... I will never ever be alone... At last you have come... My sufferings are over..." – this is how the real Minotaur addresses the imaginary one. He awaits someone who will rescue him from the solitude. In the finale, Theseus kills (rescues!) the Minotaur. However, Theseus avoids killing him with his own hands and tries to deceive him: "I am the Minotaur... your elder brother. I've come to your rescue, to save you from the solitude, from stupid people, from the labyrinth that crumbles. I will give you back your sky... I

¹⁶ In the Soviet Union, the government used to assign standard production plans for all industries. Overproduction was encouraged with a subsequent bonus.

¹⁷ A sportsman practicing sambo – samozashchita bez oruzhiya (Rus) – a self defense without weapon; an international style of wrestling employing judo techniques.

¹⁸ Виктор Ляпин, Счастливые глаза Минотавра, <http://lia-victor.narod.ru>

will fix a dagger in the rift of the hill... and you will throw yourself down from its top and right on the point of the dagger". The Minotaur: "And then, I will no more be alone? I will get back my starry sky...". Theseus: "Farewell to you, Minotaur!" The Minotaur: "Farewell, Theseus!" The playwright introduced into the play the elements of incest (Ariadne, the Minotaur's sister, and Pasiphae, his mother, are both in love with him), of jealousy (Theseus, being in love with Ariadne, wants to kill the Minotaur), and of revenge (Pasiphae wishes to get rid of Ariadne, her rival); however, they are intended to add more tension to the plot and have nothing to do with the central motifs of the play – the solitude, seclusion and the deliverance from it.

The theme of the Minotaur has not lost its relevance. A few years ago, a novel by Steven Sherill *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break*¹⁹ was published. The plot is rendered in modern terms. The setting is a small town in one of the US states. The legendary Minotaur, who works as a cook in a roadside restaurant, is a lonely and miserable creature. He tries his best to come into contact with the people around, to join average people in the rhythm of their life, and to find his own place. Though the Minotaur is no more shut up in the labyrinth and can communicate with the outer world – he has friends, even a girlfriend – he can not get rid of the feeling of loneliness: he is confined to his own micro cosmos, the invisible Labyrinth. Recollections of the tragic past and uncertain future prospects make his complex and faceless life even more burdensome.

Another recent edition based on the similar theme is *The Helmet of Horror*, an audio book by Victor Pelevin.²⁰ It offers quite an interesting interpretation of the Labyrinth theme. Its characters are engaged in on-line chat. The author presents the on-line network as the Labyrinth, and the characters as its captives. Due to individual character traits or certain circumstances, each of them faces his/ her own labyrinth to go through. Although my opinion of the text is far from being high, one thing is beyond doubt: if today anyone ever attempts to offer a new reception of the Labyrinth myth, Pelevin's version (i.e. presentation of the Labyrinth as an on-line network) seems the best as its reinterpretations similar to those mentioned above would nowadays appear commonplace and mediocre.

The works considered above form only one part of the artistic production that reflect the image of the Minotaur. However, their number enables us to state with certainty that the 20th century was quite prolific at developing the theme. The question that naturally raises sounds as follows: what accounts for such popularity of the myth in the 20th century artistic culture? Why was it

¹⁹ Steven Sherill, *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break*, 2000.

²⁰ Victor Pelevin, *The Helmet of Horror, The Myth of Theseus and Minotaur*, 2005.

transformed in this way? Why do modern authors try to find positive traits in the ruthless and perfidious monster and provoke readers' sympathy for him? If the tendency to "deheroize" even the traditionally greatest heroes that runs throughout the 20th century literature can be explained by certain arguments, it is interesting to find out the causes that generated the opposite tendency – authors' attempt to make readers sympathize with the traditionally negative character.

I propose to distinguish three aspects that could compel artists to resort to the transformation – personal, psychological and philosophical-religious.

The first one – personal – reflects the conflict between the artist and the environment: the artist is not known, he is not understood, and all he creates encounters aggression. He is enclosed in his micro cosmos and feels outcast. Although the artist repeatedly attempts to break through the isolation and become assimilated with the outer world, he still faces negative appreciation – he is different (does not resemble others), and correspondingly, he is negative. Even if an artist is "accepted" and widely recognized, the public attitude towards him is often antagonistic because he is not forgiven his unusualness (like the Minotaur who is the descendant of the god). He believes he will be rescued by his "counterparts", only the one like him will understand him. However, such a hope frequently appears illusive as he never meets his "kin". The Minotaur does not resist Theseus who comes to kill him – this, in fact, equals suicide as the Minotaur, the offspring of the god, can easily defeat a mortal (Theseus). The Minotaur's deliberate and easy acceptance of death may even reflect the strong and widespread tendency among the 20th century artists to commit suicide.

The second aspect – the psychological one – that may also contribute to the transformation of the monster – is the hard social and political environment which the 20th century artists had to endure. People, exhausted with revolutions, civil and world wars, social hardship, totalitarianism and dictatorship, gradually lost humane qualities and came to resemble a monster, while technological advancements placed individuals in isolation and deprived them of the notion of social intercourse – forced them to forget how to communicate with their kin. Compared to the brutality of humans turned into beasts (like the characters who enter the Labyrinth in Durrenmatt's, Kazantzakis' and Gide's above-mentioned works), the monstrosity of the real monster is somehow tarnished and the beast appears far more naïve and harmless than human beings.

And finally, let us consider the third aspect which can be called philosophical-religious. It corresponds to the basic postulate of different religions (ancient, Christian, Buddhist) – a human is punished immediately at his/her birth for the original sin. It was not the Minotaur's fault that it was shut up in

the Labyrinth and recognized as the "monster". What accounts for the punishment are the sinful circumstances of his birth, and he was to pay for that; to put it in Durrenmatt's words, he was "Ein schuldig Unschuldiger" – "an innocent offender" punished because of others' misdeeds.

P.S. The paper was already written when J. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* was screened. It also touched the theme of the Labyrinth: to fulfill one of the tasks, Harry Potter was to enter the maze. Professor gave him advice: Do not be afraid, there is no danger in the maze – it comes from the people who enter it. These words reminded me of Kavafis' *Ithaka*: "Lais-trygonians and Cyclops,/ with Poseidon – you won't encounter them/ unless you bring them along inside your soul,/ unless your soul sets them up in front of you". Does the Minotaur exist after all? Or is he the product of our imagination? Or, may be, he is the result of the "invented" phobias that people carry in themselves. If one succeeds to overcome the phobias, one may pass through its Labyrinth without even catching the glance of the Minotaur.