

**RECONSTRUCTING THE ANCIENT MYTHEMES:
THEMATIC ENCLOSURE OF DR IANNIS AS A
POSTMODERN ODYSSEUS IN *CAPTAIN CORELLI'S
MANDOLIN***

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Abstract

Louis de Bernières' novel Captain Corelli's Mandolin revives some of the mythemes of the Odysseus myth, such as the hero's encounter with monsters and the hero's dominance by intelligence, among others. In the process of using these mythemes, the novelist revises and challenges both their structures and earlier established meanings. This study focuses on the representation of the character Dr Iannis as an Odysseus figure. In doing so, the novelist deconstructs the essence of Odysseus myth, namely the hero's assertion of his wisdom, supremacy and victory in each enterprise, and reconstructs the mythemes anew. By juxtaposing the old meanings with new ones, Louis de Bernières stresses the incapability of the earlier mythical units to serve forever as fixed signifiers. In Louis de Bernières' reworking of the myth, Dr Iannis as a postmodern Odysseus fails to rise to the expectations of the mythical paradigm, presenting instead his limits concerning intelligence, knowledge and authority.

Keywords: *Myth, Mytheme, Binary Oppositions, Identity, Hybridity, Self, Other, Autoimmunity.*

Öz

Mit Ögelerini Yeniden Yapılandırarak: Kaptan Corelli'nin Mandolini'nde Dr. Iannis'in Postmodern Odysseus Olarak Tematik Temsili

Louis de Bernières'nin Yüzbaşı Corelli'nin Mandolini romanı, kahramanın canavarlar ile karşılaşması ve kahramanın zekasını kullanması gibi Odysseus mitinden tanınan mitsel öğeler ("mythemes") üzerine kurulmuştur. Romancı, bu mitsel öğeleri kullanma sürecinde onların hem yapılarını hem de belirlenmiş anlamlarını revize eder ve sorgular. Bu çalışma, Dr. Iannis karakterinin bir Odysseus figürü olarak temsil edilmesi üzerinde durmaktadır. Romancı bunu

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yaparken, *Odysseus* mitinin özünü, yani kahramanın bilgeliğini, üstünlüğünü ve zaferini her macerada ispat etmesini bozar ve mitsel öğeleri tekrar oluşturur. Eski, ve yeni anlamları yan yana koyarak, Louis de Bernières eski mitsel öğelerin sonsuza dek belirli kalıplar içinde kalma yetisine sahip olmadıklarını vurgular. Louis de Bernières'nin miti yeniden işlerken, Dr. Iannis'in postmodern bir *Odysseus* olması mit paradigmasının beklentilerini karşılamaz, bunun yerine zeka, bilgi ve otorite konusunda limitleri olduğunu gösterir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Mit, Mitsel öğeler ("mytheme"), İkili karşıtlıklar, Kimlik, Hibridite, Kendi, Öteki, Otoimmünite

I. Introduction

The Homeric epos has definitely established the parameters of some important myths for the Western culture and among the most appealing mythic narratives produced by Homer's works is the myth of *Odysseus* or, in its Latinized form, *Ulysses*. Louis de Bernières, like many other writers of Western background, discovered the inexhaustible power of this myth. His novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1995) is based on some easily recognizable mythemes of the *Odysseus* myth, such as:

1. The hero's journey as an autodidactic experience;
2. The yearning for the native island;
3. The encounter with Polyphemus: the hero's dominance by intelligence;
4. The hero's interaction with other people;
5. The re-creation of the hero's identity;
6. The hero's re-encounter with a monster;
7. The final experience: death.

By creating the character of Dr Iannis, Louis de Bernières re-contextualizes the mythical units of *Odysseus* scenario and manages to supply this myth with new metaphors and associations driven out of contemporary concerns.

The present article focuses on several of the above mentioned mythemes in order to reveal the emergence in literature of a new, postmodern hypostasis of *Odysseus*.

II. The Encounter with Polyphemus: the Hero's Dominance by Intelligence

One of the distinctive features of the mythical *Odysseus* is his journey. So frequently was the hero depicted in his expeditions (in which he learns

something new each time) that the journey itself became the metaphor for knowledge. The hero extends his horizon and explores his world both literally and symbolically, since he dares to stretch out his limits more and more through every new enterprise, always gaining more knowledge. It is also important to stress the hero's ingenuity that emanates from his famous intelligence, the feature that makes Odysseus unique in the long line of ancient heroes, as to mention just Achilles, Aeneas and Hector. Unlike these mythical heroes of Antiquity who gain control in each situation by displaying physical strength, Odysseus' distinctiveness emerges from within his capacity to subdue, impress, dominate and manipulate by virtue of his wisdom. This particularity of *métis*/intelligence transforms the mythical hero into a symbol of civilization.

Louis de Bernières' Odysseus, Dr Iannis, has travelled a lot in his youth, and in his voyages by the sea he has seen much and has learned even more. The novelist presents this character as a complete autodidact. It seems that he has gained all his knowledge just through his enterprises. Louis de Bernières extends the boundaries of Odysseus myth when presenting his character, Dr Iannis, in the hypostasis of a doctor, a hypostasis that opens new dimensions in the character representation. As we learn later in the novel, he has acquired the knowledge of medicine during his journeys from various men and under the most unusual circumstances.

Although in the present time of the narrative Dr Iannis is already an old man and his journeys are reduced to the daily itineraries to *kapheneion* or visits to his patients, it does not diminish at all the Odyssean spirit of this character. It is his practice of medicine that gives him the power, enthusiasm and the joy of life, and places him into the favourable frame of hero-civilizer. Moreover, due to his capacity to heal Dr Iannis is able to control and manipulate the people of his island.

It would be interesting to look at Dr Iannis's profession in relation to the encounter with the monster mytheme, as in the famous Cyclopes episode from the Homeric epic. The reader has always found this passage appealing due to the hero's capacity of manipulating reality by the power of language immediately after he blinds Polyphemus. However, beyond this delightful aspect, the cruelty of Odysseus' act is often mentioned, because as a result of Odysseus' verbal trick, the monster is isolated from his fellow Cyclops.

Louis de Bernières reworks this mytheme and treats it with great liberty when he inverts the wounding/blinding of Cyclops with the curing of an ear of the old man Stamatis who has been deaf in that ear since childhood. The novelist uses this mytheme latently, making the relation visible through the

repetition of an initial scheme of Odysseus' rod penetrating the orifice of the monster's eye. Surprisingly, this thematic unit is represented in the novel by the doctor's attempt to infiltrate a fishhook and a hammer into the old man's ear. This reworking is both incredible and amusing, since in the myth we observe the abuse of the Cyclops by Odysseus, while Louis de Bernières inverts it into an episode of healing. Dr Iannis treats the old man's ear – a source of suffering since childhood – with great ingenuity, providing an opportunity for the old Stamatis to connect to the people of his world.

Stamatis episode is extremely amusing because the doctor discovers a hard brown detrimental pea in the old man's ear. Similar to the mythical hero, Dr Iannis uses the situation to his advantage. He refuses to divulge the triviality of situation; instead he prefers to give an illusion of an operation that will last the entire day. In a trickster-like manner, as cunning as Odysseus, Dr Iannis speaks:

You have an exorbitant auditory impediment', (...) ever conscious of the necessity for maintaining a certain iatric mystique, and fully aware that 'a pea in the ear' was unlikely to earn him any kudos. 'I can remove it with a fishhook and a small hammer; it's the ideal way of overcoming un embarrass de petit pois'. He spoke the French words in a mincingly Parisian accent, even though his irony was apparent only to himself. (De Bernières 2-3)

Dramatic irony seems to help the reader a lot in deciphering Dr. Iannis' character and the entertaining tone of this situation is sustained by the doctor's constant manipulation of old people by the help of words, like "It's very papilionaceous, is it not?", making the old woman nod, as if she understood, "which she had not, but with an expression of wonder alight in her eyes" (De Bernières 3-4). The doctor's tenacity is admirable when he adapts himself rapidly to a new challenging situation, wisely using language in order to favour him. His versatility favours him not just in his control over language, but also in his capacity of manipulating reality. Stamatis' disordered world is completely transformed by Dr Iannis' miraculous intervention: 'I've had an operation', said Stamatis complacently. 'I'm the only person I know who's had an operation. And now I can hear. It's a miracle, that's what it is' (De Bernières 4). For a person with congenital hearing disorder that has been recently treated Stamatis speaks rather fluently, and Dr Iannis' medical practice equals a miracle.

Louis de Bernières plays extensively with the binary opposition of wounding vs. healing and that of order vs. disorder. In the Cyclopes episode, Odysseus seems to be a symbol of civilization by trying to force the benefits of interaction with other cultures upon the wild world of the monster, but, actually, by his intrusion/wounding, he causes chaos in the savage but

ordered world of Polyphemus. In the same manner, Dr Iannis' "miraculous" healing of Stamatis' ear, which is supposed to bring clarity/order into the old man's world by connecting him to others (since the old man becomes able to hear everything around himself), conveys chaos instead when he is not capable of perceiving the "new reality" disclosed to him by the "civilizing" doctor. Although the novelist re-contextualizes this mythical unit, we, as readers, are aware of the constant presence of the aspect of penetration/intruding into one's world and of depraving him of his tranquillity.

The relationship between signifier and signified in the context of the civilizing role of a hero, which is a widespread motif in Western literature, assumes a floating meaning such as that of colonization or invasion, especially in the light of the Nazi intrusion on the island of Cephallonia. In other words, Dr Iannis' act of curing/cleansing a handicap foreshadows the later Nazi's "noble", "civilizing" attempt to cleanse the human race.

Louis de Bernières skilfully depicts this parallelism in the following fragment:

[Dr Iannis] knew that everyone thought that he was odd on account of his compulsion to heal, and indeed he himself also believed it peculiar, but he also knew that every man needs an obsession in order to enjoy life, and it was so much better if that obsession was constructive. Look at Hitler and Metaxas and Mussolini, those megalomaniacs. (De Bernières 60)

This obsession that some men need in order to feel the joy of life, engaging themselves in constructive enterprises, is ironically attained only at the expense of others' suffering. Dr Iannis' practice of medicine is both a moral obligation and a great satisfaction, which should result in a beneficial act for the people to which it is applied. At first, in Stamatis episode, it truly seems so. However, when Stamatis begins his interaction with the "new world", Dr Iannis' constructive "healing" equals a crime, since "the deposal of the pea from his ear had exposed him not only to the irritations of marriage, (...) to Kokolios' shockingly unpatriotic anti-monarchism", but also to the hearing of the news of invasion so outrageous to him (De Bernières 62). Therefore, Dr Iannis' compulsion to heal only reassures his supremacy over other people. In this case, the binary oppositions of wounding vs. healing and intruding vs. liberating alternate with that of order vs. chaos, gaining an ambiguous significance, especially in the context of the Nazi occupation of the island.

III. The Re-creation of the Hero's Identity

The re-creation of the hero's identity is another thematic unit in most mythical scenarios. Many heroes assert their desire to go beyond the ordinary frailties of human life, which is limited by time and chance, and establish instead an alternative version of the self as an invincible hero who attains *kleos* and by this immortalizes himself in a fixed and unchanging pattern.

Odysseus, like other heroes, is also willing to assert himself through glorious deeds and to create an impressive identity; however, unlike other heroes, he does not want to be entrapped into a fixed and invariable model of the self. One of the peculiarities of Odysseus rests on his capacity to construct different images of the self. He creates himself anew through each situation that he faces and through the stories that he tells others about himself. He chooses to reveal himself as a stranger, or a murderer, or a beggar, or a hero, and it is important to mention that he always holds control over every version of the self. The fluidity of his identity represents, in fact, an operation of power, which is likely to serve his authority and maintain his *status quo*. He himself decides on his identity which will be preserved by history.

It is exactly this aspect of the Odysseus myth which is remarkably captured by Louis de Bernières in his presentation of Dr Iannis. We are not told who Dr Iannis truly is. We know that he travelled a lot in the past, but we do not know the reason for any of his journeys. We do not know what made him abandon the adventurous life which he led in his expeditions. We know that he learned medicine during these journeys, but we do not know what prevented him from accomplishing a medical education. We realize that the only things we know about Dr Iannis are those that he himself tells and we are inclined to accept them as true, although we would rather lack confidence in such a cunning and manipulative character.

Thus, he calls himself a doctor and no one ever doubts the truthfulness of this identity until very late in the novel, when it is mentioned that he has never possessed a medical diploma. We know that he loved his wife very much and suffered enormously after her loss, but we do not know where and when the events took place or why he and his wife were victimized. We know that he has grown accustomed to the importance that he has gained in his community as a result of his wisdom, a position which is created by Dr Iannis prudently: "He had not elected himself as a leader of the community, but had become one by a process of invisible franchise, as though an

autodidact such as himself must possess uncommon common sense as well as recondite knowledge” (De Bernières 144-145).

Obviously, Dr Iannis, as Odysseus, does not want to be entangled into a fixed and invariable model of life and, at the same time, into an inflexible image of the self. Victimization and idleness are sure ways to such entrapments. Therefore, he carefully tries to control every image of his self, exposing only those characteristics of his identity which reveal him as powerful and, above all, active. Activity has to be understood primarily as a form of freedom which can be exerted by a human being/subject at his will.

In this respect, Hegel’s vision on subject is extremely communicative: “the subject (Subjekt) is the activity (Tätigkeit) of satisfying impulses, an activity of (at least) formal rationality, as it translates them from the subjectivity of the content (which so far is purpose) into objectivity, where the subject is made to close with itself” (Hegel in Cassinari 28). To Flavio Cassinari, subject represents also “that which acts: what does not act cannot be considered as “subject”” (28).

The supremacy of subject has been considered as a fact by Dr Iannis; therefore he, as a rational being/subject, searches for action as a purpose that will prove his freedom in this universe, because “as activity directed towards an end, the subject is defined as essentially free and, therefore, as self-determined” (Cassinari 33).

The practice of medicine and the status of a “councillor” that he has achieved by his merits on the island provide Dr Iannis with a great degree of both freedom and satisfaction. However, as a rational subject, he realizes that the goals that he has attained are temporary and, by the rules of mutability, are subdued to a short-span existence. His self-determined intention of writing “A Personal History of Cephallonia” represents his will of exerting his freedom and worth beyond the limits of the transitory life. Like Odysseus, who wants to attain a god-like status of immortality through his acts as well as his stories, Dr Iannis expresses the same intention, resisting the obliteration by the passage of time through his new history. In fact, both the ancient and the postmodern Odysseus create their identities through the construction of their narratives. As Daiute and Lightfoot claim, “narrative discourse organizes life – social relations, interpretations of the past, and plans for the future” (xi).

Dr Iannis begins his plight of writing history and in doing so he inserts his own self and identity in the constituted discourse. As a result of his storytelling, he produces descriptions and evaluations about the self and the

other, emphasizing some identity aspects and concealing, at times, various “inconvenient” identity aspects:

The Balkans have always been the instruments of foreign policy of the Great Powers, and have failed since ancient times to reach even a resemblance to advanced civilization because of the natural indolence, fractiousness and brutality of their peoples. It is true to say that Greece has fewer of the Balkan vices than other nations to the north and east, however, and it is also undoubtedly the case that, of all the Greeks, Cephallonians have the greatest reputations as wits and eggheads. Readers will remember that Homer came from these parts and that Odysseus was famed for his cunning. Homer also describes us as fierce and ill-disciplined, but we have never been accused of cruelty. There are occasional deaths due to the disputes over property, but we possess little of the bloodlust that is the characteristic defect of neighboring slavic peoples. (De Bernières 145)

Dr Iannis’ historical narrative invites readers to meditate upon some aspects of the past. As readers of this fragment, we adopt a position similar to the one that we experience while reading some ‘grand narrative’, as Lyotard put it. We grow aware of the flexibility of the past, since it is never solid, immutable or a factual reality. In our individual memories, the past becomes a malleable substance that can be easily reconstructed, adjusted or even erased. At the same time, we comprehend the fact that every representation of the past becomes ideologically loaded. Moreover, as an author, Dr Iannis tries to impose his own authority upon the narrative discourse, his desire of bringing the past under his own control revealing thus the self-conscious insistence on selfhood.

In fact, Michel Foucault’s concept of “discursive production of the subject” from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), suggests that identities/subjects are seen first of all as resulting from dominant discourses which are related to social adjustments and practices. The concept also implies that human identities are inscribed in the existing discourses produced by the operations of power and it can generate social inequalities or what Howard describes as the “ideological construction of the self” (Howard 385). In this rendition, the individual’s growth assumes the form of a process of attaining an ideological account of the world, bound to serve the aims of power and maintain the *status quo*. Thus, the identity formation

evolves into a colonizing force, which does not allow any exertion of free will; instead, it shapes and leads the individual.

The theory of transmigration is embedded in the acceptance of the past as living on in the present. For instance, Dr Iannis' reference to Homer, as well as to Odysseus who "was famed for his cunning", is intended to reveal the pride of Cephallonians, who gave to the world heritage such a poet as Homer, and, naturally, all the Cephallonians experience an admiring identification both with the great poet and his "cunning" hero Odysseus. Curiously enough, in this narrative a dialogic relationship is made not only with Homeric text, but also with Vergil's *Aeneid*, especially the famous theory of transmigration as revealed by Anchises, Aeneas' father. A ruler like Augustus epitomizes Aeneas, whereas the development of Roman history is invariably glorious due to the metempsychosis of a heroic spirit which is revived in every new generation of Romans.

Consequently, Dr Iannis points out proudly that the souls of Homer and his heroes are reawakened in every new Greek generation, and, since Ancient Greece had an outstanding contribution to the world history and civilization, it should preserve the benefits of the legendary Greek civilization in the present as well. Obviously, Dr Iannis tries to represent his own identity as an amalgamation of both Homer (as a poet and writer of history) and Odysseus (as a wise and cunning man), and to emphasize that the past lives on in the present through his selfhood.

Ironically enough, when Dr Iannis strives as hard as possible to define himself as a free and self-determined individual, his connection to his past binds him into a predetermined scenario of life. Moreover, through the implication made by the term "ideological construction of the self", the individual acquires inevitably a specific ideological version of the world, which suggests already an anti-essentialist view of identity.

Since Derrida's famous statement in his *Of Grammatology* (1967) that "there is no outside-the-text" we have become accustomed to the view that an attempt to find the truth is impossible and this is not just in its transcendental philosophical sense, but also in the prospect of a material and historical referent (Derrida 158). The reality is always a representation and the "I" of the subject is constituted by language through the process of signification. Laclau's and Mouffe's "Discourse Theory" also stresses the fact that social space and identity must be evaluated as discursive (1985).

Such postmodern views promote the idea that "the self" is not a free or self-determined essence; it is rather a mere description provided by a semiotic system such as language. This perspective represents a challenge to

the status of identity, conceived as essential and unified, viewing it instead as constructed and fragmentary. Due to the temporary identifications that we experience with innumerable and conflicting texts our sense of self fails to conceive and maintain a coherent and stable identity.

As Dr Iannis continues in his endeavour of writing *A Personal History of Cephallonia*, his incoherent and unstable selfhood is clearly revealed:

The reason for our occidental orientation is that the island was occupied by the Turks for only twenty-one years, between 1479 and 1500, when they were expelled by a combined Spanish and Venetian force. They returned only for one raid, in 1538, when they left with thirteen thousand Cephallonians to be sold into slavery. The short period of their stay, combined with their genius for torpor and inertia, ensured that they left behind them no permanent legacy in cultural terms. (...) The reader will readily see that to all intents and purposes the island was Italian for about six hundred years, and this explains a great many things that may puzzle the foreigner. The dialect of the island is replete with Italian words and manners of speech, the educated and the aristocratic speak Italian as a second language, and the campaniles of the churches are built into the structure, quite unlike the usual Greek arrangement (...). The architecture of the island is, in fact, almost entirely Italian, and is highly conducive to a civilized and sociable private life on account of the shady balconies, courtyards, and external stair-cases. (De Bernières 145-146)

The world we live in has been frequently characterized in such terms as fragmentation, relativism, and a conjunction of public and private spheres, which are aspects of human existence having an inevitable influence on the development of the self. The fragmentation can be also considered as a *sine qua non* part of Odysseus' character because of the unstable, agonized life that he lives during the Trojan War and its aftermath. In a constant flux of events and exposed to different cultures and identities, he becomes inevitably affected by them. His exposure to a multitude of cultural differences produces a split personality, an ambivalent subject, and prevents the establishment of a unified self. We can say that Odysseus, *par excellence*, is internally split and an agonistic subject, a case of what Ernesto Laclau terms as "dislocated" self. In Laclau's opinion, the human being experiences "dislocation" of the self inasmuch as identity "depends on an

outside which both denies that identity and provides its condition of possibility at the same time” (39).

In Louis de Bernières’ novel, Dr Iannis, as an Odysseus figure, also represents a clear case of “dislocation” of the self, his position in relation to the notion of “the Greek” or “the Italian” describing a situation of inexorable ambiguity. As the above extract gestures, both his culture and his identity have been exposed to the Italian culture, clearly admiring the Italians and, at the same time, denying any affiliation. Dr Iannis is proud of his Greek origin and mocks the Italians when the time comes, yet the fascination of Dr Iannis with the Italians, in particular with their European outlook, modernity, civilization, architecture, manners of speech, and even their language, is hinted at in the text. He admits that the Italians have granted upon themselves a degree of “aristocracy” of which they are all very proud; however, he also satirizes their “habit of poisoning inconvenient relatives”, dishonest eccentric Italian rulers, their arrogance and “deplorable preoccupation with sin and guilt”, their corruption, machinations and above all, their violence (De Bernières 146).

Dr Iannis is selective with the material that he tries to inscribe in his *Personal History*, avoiding the uncomfortable heritage, on one hand, and, on the other hand, stressing the convenient aspects of his identity, such as his relatedness to Homer and the Homeric hero on the grounds of his Greek origin. As a Homeric hero, Dr Iannis is an industrious man, wise and cunning at once, and his self-determined attitude also serves as a proof of this legacy.

Additionally, his experienced “mimicry”, to use Homi Bhabha’s term (based on the Lacanian concept of mimicry as camouflage), is revealed in his attitude toward the colonizer: Dr Iannis accepts and imitates the foreign culture, since he enjoys speaking Italian and French, teaches Pelagia Italian language, educates his daughter as a free and superior woman, and his self-imposed aristocratic outlook renders his claim for his absolute authority and indisputable authenticity over his identity and that of the villagers. In fact, the binary opposition between autonomy and domination is revised anew, since “a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification (...) occurs precisely in the elliptical in-between, where the shadow of the other falls upon the self” (Bhabha 85). Exactly from this shadow arises a cultural difference as a distinct category and “the ‘between’ that is articulated in the camouflaged subversion of the ‘evil eye’ and the transgressive mimicry of the ‘missing person’” (Bhabha 85). We acknowledge that Dr Iannis inescapably, as any other man in his position, becomes entrapped in the

process of the colonial transgressive mimicry as a product and as one that produces ambivalence and hybridity.

Hybridity, as explained by Bhabha, represents a philosophy of identity which originates in the Bakhtinian motif of hybridity (a notion which stresses that two types of discourse merge in one utterance), and which designates the subversion of the classical binary oppositions and myths concerning cultural homogeneity. Although one might expect that hybridity refers to the act of fusion of at least two cultural identities, it mostly implies the supremacy of the dominant power and culture upon a dominated community.

Dr Iannis fits exactly into the parameters implied by the concept of hybridity, foreclosing any forms of purity embraced by essentialist theories. As he explicitly states:

We were immensely pleased when they [the Italians] left, unaware that there were worse things in store, but on account of the length of their stay they were undoubtedly, along with the British, the most significant force that shaped our history and culture; we found their rule tolerable and occasionally amusing, and, if we ever hated them, it was with affection and even gratitude in our hearts. Above all, they had the inestimable merit of not being Turks. (De Bernières 147)

The extract above reveals that Dr Iannis thinks and behaves as Italians do, and he develops a superior attitude of a dominant power toward an “inferior culture”. Statements such as “the Italians left us a European rather than an eastern outlook on life” and “Above all, they had the inestimable merit of not being Turks” reveal the highly-sophisticated strategies of authority and dominance of the colonial power that becomes enrooted in the consciousness of the colonized and guarantees the supremacy of the colonizer for a long span of time.

After a series of inclusions and exclusions of cultures and identities, Dr Iannis is capable of denigrating the others in the attempt to promote the hegemony of his self. As we are told in the novel,

He had become a kind of Aga to replace the Turkish ones that the island once briefly possessed, except that, unlike the Ottoman headmen, he had no particular interest in lying about on cushions all day (...) [in] prodigious extremes of idleness. (De Bernières 145)

He naively believes that these inclusions and exclusions prove politically empowering, as in the example of his own association with and differentiation from a Turkish Ağa, or his striving to write a personal history.

The irony emerges inevitably in this case, since the doctor tries to fabricate and formulate a social identity and, concurrently, inscribe it in a discourse that should confer him a privileged status. Instead, the “doctor put down his pen and read over what he had just written. He smiled wryly at his last remarks, and reflected that under present circumstances it was unlikely that the gratitude was likely to survive” (De Bernières 147).

Neither the construction of his social identity nor its inscription in a discourse proves efficient in the context of the Italian invasion of Cephallonia. Whatever strategies he developed along his life – that should have provided him with a politically and socially empowering identity – fail to provide him with a sense of security. The construction of one’s identity and its writing in a discourse simply represent a “prescriptive, limiting and unselective, rather than something politically empowering” (Benwell, Stokoe 29). It is a mere fabrication with a floating significance and no fixed referent in reality.

When the Italians invade again the island of Cephallonia, they do not search for the doctor’s Italian legacy or aristocratic attitude or intellect. Dr Iannis becomes automatically reduced to the position of the other/inferior from the colonizer’s perspective. His earlier indulgence in Italian heritage proves ephemeral and leaves him only with a traumatic mark.

IV. The Hero’s Re-Encounter with a Monster

In *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin*, the famous mytheme of the hero’s encounter with a monster has also undergone different modifications. Primarily, we observe Louis de Bernières’ ingenuity when he presents his character, Dr Iannis, a culture hero, as reduced to an inferior position of the oppressed. The readers make a relationship with the Odysseus scenario, Dr Iannis’ entanglement in this inescapable situation reminding us again of Odysseus’ entrapment in Cyclops Polyphemus’ cave. In this famous episode, Odysseus reveals ingenuity, showing that in such circumstances there is no meaning to revolt by the display of physical strength. As usually, what differentiates this hero from many others is his ability to adapt himself to every new situation and, by the power of his reason, to reverse the situation to his own benefit. In a problematic situation which is apparently without a solution, Odysseus manipulates the blinded Polyphemus and escapes on the undersides of sheep. Moreover, by his verbal power, he transforms the earlier entrapment into a space used for his own advantage.

Louis de Bernières relies on this mytheme when he inverts the traditional binary opposition oppressor vs. oppressed. Like his mythical counterpart, Dr Iannis tries to preserve his authority and manipulate every situation to the benefit of his community. First, he advises all the young men in the kapheneion – “Let us use our anger wisely” (De Bernières 199) – understanding that any violent resistance is a dangerous act with short-term results. Since their military strength does not suffice, he tries to calm down the yearning young men’s desire to fight back the oppressors, suggesting that the violent resistance does not necessarily shorten the period of their subjugation. However, his wisdom and authority seem to be inadequate, since many young men of their community involve themselves in a movement of resistance that, in time, instead of “liberating the masses” turn out to be destructive for the local inhabitants.

Second, although it seems a paradox, Dr Iannis, as an entrapped Odysseus, wants to explore all the advantages produced in his oppression by the monster. He investigates all possible experiences provided by war and invasion, as when he exclaims: “all this time I have been writing history, and now history is happening before my very eyes. (...) I have always wanted to live in history” (De Bernières 187). The doctor’s frenzy is not produced by fear, as it is by the excitement over the event. This situation gives the impression of ambiguity because any act of invasion should frighten an ordinary man. However, Dr Iannis never accepts the human condition of an ordinary man. For him, this war produces the opportunity to write history, to create a historical truth and to define himself against the past and present. His impulse to write history may be also connected with his tendency toward emplotment. As an eye witness and a first-hand source, he should feel empowered by this perspective. In other words, Dr Iannis, as Odysseus, looks at this event from the perspective of preserving his own hegemony even in the most desperate situations. The war, as in the case of Odysseus, provides him with a possibility to explore new experiences and gain new knowledge. Moreover, the act of writing *A Personal History* as an eye witness endows him with the possibility to impose a dominant discourse and inscribe a self-conceived cultural identity. After all, history, like fiction, shares the same conventions with the narrative, such as “selection, organization, diegesis, anecdote, temporal pacing, and emplotment” (Hutcheon 111).

The power of language has also been consistently highlighted and questioned by postmodern discourse. Richard Terdiman (whose ideas rely heavily on Michel Foucault’s theories), in *Discourse/Counter-Discourse*, explains the following:

Engaged with the realities of power, human communities use words not in contemplation but in competition. Such struggles are never equal ones. The facts of domination, of control, are inscribed in the signs available for use by the members of a social formation. The weight of tradition, the promise held out by reputation, the fear of repression, all contrive to establish what we call an 'establishment' and an established language. (38)

We may say that the purpose of the discourse which is inscribed in Dr Iannis' *Personal History* is mostly to compete with the dominant discourse, to impose a supremacy or control that could not be achieved by him through any other means due to the social and political instability. At the same time, the sense of competition with the discourse of the other should not necessarily be destructive. As Terdiman explains, this competitive spirit usually has a tendency to create cohesion and a sense of inclusion within a community: "discourses are complexes of signs and practices which organize social existence and social reproduction. In their structured, material persistence, discourses are what give differential substance to membership in a social group or class or formation, which mediate an internal sense of belonging, an outward sense of otherness" (54).

Although there are various combatant discourses within the same community, the language, in a way, regulates the social existence and the social continuity. The following fragment is revelatory in this respect:

An officer looking for his men stopped and questioned the doctor anxiously, waving a map in his face. 'Ecco una carta della Cephallonia,' he said, 'Dove'è Argostoli?'

The doctor (...) replied, in Italian, 'I don't speak Italian, and Argostoli is more or less opposite Lixouri.'

'You speak very fluently for one who doesn't,' said the officer, smiling, 'so where is Lixouri?'

'Opposite Argostoli. Find one and you find the other, except that you must swim between them.'

(...) the officer sighed, lifted his helmet, scratched his forehead, and glanced sideways at them. He returned a moment later, presented Pelagia with a small yellow flower, and disappeared once more. 'Extraordinary,' said the doctor, scribbling in his notebook. (De Bernières 188)

At the same time, it is interesting to note that when Dr Iannis has the false impression of dominance by the power of language, ironically, we discover that it is the discourse that actually dominates him and not the other way round. The American pragmatist Richard Rorty suggests that “there will be no way to rise above the language, culture, institution, and practices one has adopted and view all these as on par with all the others (...). Or, to put it in Heidegger’s way, “language speaks man,” languages change in the course of history, and so human beings cannot escape their historicity” (50). In accordance with Rorty’s ideas, the competitive spirit that exists between various discourses within a community create only an illusory freedom of choice.

Therefore, Dr Iannis’ rescuing solution of empowering himself by the help of language or the cunning resolution to impose his discourse and inscribe a wished cultural identity over a dominant one remains a mere illusion. In fact, he cannot impose any authority on a language or culture since he is never a “free agent”. Although the mythical Odysseus manages to escape the entrapment in the Polyphemus’ cave and to manipulate language in his favor, Dr Iannis is entrapped by the power of language, this situation reducing considerably his chances for the exertion of his free will. As Cornelius Castoriadis explains:

It is one thing to say that we cannot choose a language with absolute freedom, and that every language encroaches on what ‘is to be said’. It is something else again to believe that we are fatally subject to language and that we can never say anything except what language makes us say. We can never get outside of language, but our mobility within language is limitless and allows us to question everything, including language itself and our relation to it. (126)

A degree of freedom within the structures of a language exists, but we should be aware that this freedom is a limited one and, consequently, confines the individual to the borders of a language. The cave metaphor has been inverted here, because the hero has only an illusion of his cunning escape from the cave’s entrapment, whereas, in truth, he remains confined to the space of the cave/language forever.

Third, Louis de Bernières presents the Odysseus-Polyphemus mytheme in relation to the traditional binary opposition of host vs. guest. *The Odyssey*, in general, and the Polyphemus episode, in particular, refer to a major principle of antiquity, *xenia*, or hospitality, and the host-guest relationship. It has been always difficult to define the concept of hospitality, since its

principles are constantly suspended or betrayed when being applied in practice. The conditions of hospitality have been always imposed in order to preserve the host's control over his home or space. The maintenance of the control is essential, because the stranger/guest who crosses the threshold of a foreign space may represent a threat to the sovereignty of the host and his space. There is always a possibility that the stranger/guest may jeopardize the comfort and the security by occupying the host's house/space and the host may be forced to abandon the position of a host.

John D. Caputo views the aspect of hostility as being perpetually present in the concept of hospitality. He notices that the etymology of the word "hospitality" already implies an opposition: "The word "hospitality" derives from the Latin *hospes*, which is formed from *hostis*, which originally meant a "stranger" and came to take on the meaning of the enemy or "hostile" stranger (*hostilits*)" (Caputo 110). We see that the origin of the word "hospitality" points to the interchangeable status of host and guest. Furthermore, the potential menace implied in the concept of hospitality suggests the possibility of the host to be dispossessed or even consumed by the guest.

Louis de Bernières explores at length the space opened by this mythical unit, where initially the Cyclops Polyphemus is both the oppressor and the host of the island and cave, while Odysseus is a guest and later an oppressed subject in the cave. This binary opposition has been completely deconstructed, because the doctor/hero is the host on the island and a Master in his house, while the invader Captain Corelli/Cyclops (who is supposed to dominate the doctor's space), becomes victimized in the house. This situation is made explicit when Captain Corelli, as an officer of the Italian Army, is billeted in the doctor's house. The sacred guest-host relationship is simultaneously respected and rejected when Dr Iannis gives to Corelli his daughter Pelagia's bed to sleep in, a situation that would normally generate much speculation and humour. However, in the present circumstances, Corelli's humour is drying to dust, and he feels so inadequate that he thinks to be necessary to request an alternative accommodation. The dominant's position has been inverted here, the novelist exhibiting much playfulness when the doctor gives orders to the captain: "Young man, (...) you are staying here, whether you like it or not. It is quite possible that your quartermaster will decide to impose someone even worse" (De Bernières 204).

When we expect to find a cruel and domineering officer/monster, surprisingly, the doctor's adversary is tremendously sympathetic. Instead of oppressing the doctor and his daughter Pelagia, as in the case of monster

Polyphemus, the situation of victimization grows extremely ambiguous. Corelli is victimized by various tricks of the doctor, adding to them each time a verbal oppression, as in the following example:

Father and daughter sat down to eat, both of them clattering the cutlery on the plates, and waited until they were sure that the Italians must be dying of hunger and feeling like a ragamuffin boy who has been sent to Coventry at school, and then they invited him to join them. (...)

‘This is Cephallonian meat pie,’ said the doctor in an informative tone of voice, ‘except that, thanks to your people, it doesn’t have any meat in it.’ (De Bernières 206)

The cave metaphor reveals a process of designing self vs. other, together with their interdependence. Otherness is of course expectedly inscribed in the violent encounter between Odysseus and the Cyclops. Although there are multiple perspectives of approaching otherness, most frequently it is presented as dark or suspect, which often stimulates fear, rejection or at least disapproval. Certainly, there are strong reasons to understand these reactions, since otherness may assume the most unexpected forms. One is always hesitant, suspicious, or hostile while meeting a stranger/other, since the other, as unknown, may always pose a threat to one’s world. At the same time, from the social and ethical perspective, the other must be treated honourably in terms of guest-host relationship. Richard Kearney suggests the interchangeability of host-guest relationship, claiming that the “very reversibility of host and guest, citizen and stranger, self and other, challenges the fixed binarism of ontological substances and invites every citizen to question his or her own sovereignty” (243).

Dr Iannis’ reluctance to welcome his guest emerges from the experience of what Heidegger calls “not-being-at-home”, as the presence of a guest/stranger in his home/space makes him feel the inadequacy of being a stranger in his own house, in his country, and to his own self. He desperately demands the sovereignty of self, which is required by his position of the host, by resisting the charms of his guests. He tries to preserve his *status quo* when he instructs Pelagia to abort any sympathy vis-à-vis the guests: “‘Don’t laugh,’ ordered the doctor, sotto voce. ‘It’s our duty to hate them’” (De Bernières 189).

Dr Iannis uses all possible situations to impose his own authority both in the house and on his land. We, as readers, experience mixed feelings towards the monster/Corelli who, under doctor’s demands, grows extremely

vulnerable. Dr Iannis thrusts his supremacy over Corelli as displayed in the following fragment:

‘I want to know why you have defaced the monument.’

‘The monument? Forgive me, but...’

‘The monument, the one in the middle of the bridge that de Bosset built. It has been defaced.’

The captain knitted his brows in perplexity, and then his face lightened, ‘Ah you mean the one across the bay at Argostoli. Why, what has happened to it?’

‘It had “To The Glory Of The British People” inscribed on the obelisk. I have heard that some of your soldiers have chipped away the letters. Do you think you can so easily erase our history?(...) The doctor raised his voice to a new note of vehemence, ‘Tell me how you would like it if we defaced the tombstones in the Italian cemetery, Captain.’

‘I had nothing to do with it, Signor. You are blaming the wrong man. I apologise for the offence, but ...’ he shrugged his shoulders ‘...the decision was not mine, and neither were the soldiers.’ (De Bernières 203)

The incident of Polyphemus’ blinding by Odysseus has been often interpreted as a penalty for the breaking of the rules of hospitality, because the enormous Cyclops holds his guests as captives in his cave and eventually devours them instead of being hospitable, or feasting, or exchanging gifts with them. The relation between magnanimous host and the wretched other is also present in the relationship between Dr Iannis and Captain Corelli, and to a degree that leads us to think that the doctor, and not the captain, represents the Cyclops. Dr Iannis claims that he knows to be hospitable when he accepts Corelli in his house, but he transforms his house into a prison-like space, where the guest becomes metaphorically sequestered and subdued by the rules of the so-called “generosity” as defined by the host patriarch.

The doctor’s house becomes a closed space in which the host enjoys the torment of the guest. Like Polyphemus, who has attacked his guests because they invaded his private world, Dr Iannis subdues Corelli to regular assaults, without giving his guest the opportunity to defend himself:

‘I must protest,’ he [Corelli] said feebly.

‘You cannot protest, because there is no excuse. (...) Why is everyone being obliged to learn Italian, eh?’
(...)

The captain felt himself wanting to squirm like a little boy who has been caught stealing sweets from the tin reserved for Sundays. 'In the Italian Empire,' he said, the words tasting bitter on his tongue, 'it is logical that everyone should learn Italian... I believe that that is the reason. I am not responsible for it, I repeat.' He began visibly to perspire. The doctor shot him a glance that was intended to be, and was, deeply withering. 'Pathetic,' he said, and turned on his heel. He went indoors and sat down at his desk, very satisfied with himself. (De Bernières 203-204)

At the same time, the doctor's house paradoxically corresponds to "the imprisoned space which we ourselves inhabit" (Sencindiver, Lauritzen, Beville 25). In other words, we all maintain a space for the guest whose arrival we unconsciously desire, because the guest/the other "may facilitate the interruption of alterity in the same, that is, liberate us from the shackled sameness of our monotonous, habitual patterns of living, knowing and being that circumscribe our horizon" (Sencindiver, Lauritzen, Beville 25). This is exactly in the character of Dr Iannis, who, like Odysseus, loathes the sameness and forces the limits of his space/horizon in order to discover new dimensions of existence. That is why he does not completely exclude the other from his space/world.

Driven by his curiosity, Dr Iannis tries to learn and co-exist with Corelli as the other. He allows the possibility of creating and admitting some thresholds that define and maintain the differences between them. By acknowledging and accepting these differences, the two opposing parts establish an alternative space, presented as liminal, a space in which the reality is not dictated by an oppressor for the oppressed, but becomes negotiated by the authority of both sides.

For Homi Bhabha, this liminal space, also called as the "Third Space", becomes "the site of enunciations (...) the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference" (56). Bhabha also stresses the "productive capacities of this Third Space", and, by exploring it, Bhabha claims that "we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others to ourselves" (56).

However, according to Ernesto Laclau, the openness to the other should be approached with extreme care because it always presumes a threat, since it is rather impossible to attain the co-existence of the two oppositional predicates. He explains that "openness to the heterogeneity of the other is an ethical injunction. If one takes this proposition at face value, one is forced to

conclude that we have to accept the other as different because she is different, whatever the content of that heterogeneity would be” (Laclau 93).

At the beginning of the Italian dislocation on the island of Cephallonia, for Dr Iannis, Corelli represents the other, acknowledged and treated as a different one who has occupied his country and house, a fascist who has invaded both his public and private space. The reason dictates him to stay away from him and to protect the thresholds, which mark his sovereignty, as a self-legitimate act. Nevertheless, while living together and sharing the same space, Dr Iannis negotiates his space and, as a result of this negotiation, he learns to respect, to trust and to love Corelli/the other. In this situation Dr Iannis chooses to rely on his intuition or instinct and to abandon the warning produced by his reason when he decides to behave kindly, hospitably to his guest/the other and even dares to entrust him his most precious treasure – his daughter Pelagia – a fact which can be considered as a supreme form of hospitality.

As a sovereign identity, Dr Iannis tests the limits of his freedom when he decides to blur the boundaries of the otherness in his relation to Corelli. Michael Naas states that the relationship between the sovereignty and the democratic ideal of freedom is

grounded in the autos, that is in the self or the selfsame, in the sovereignty of a self-positioning, self-asserting, and deciding self that has the capacity in and of itself to choose something for itself, to vote one way or another by itself, to affirm or deny from out of itself in order to sustain itself and assert its sovereignty as a self. There would be no freedom, no freedom to choose, to vote, to assemble, to speak, to pledge allegiance, without the notion of a selfsame self that does the choosing, the voting, or the speaking, that is, without the authority or capacity of some sovereign self. (125-126)

Relying on his subjective sovereignty, Dr Iannis freely welcomes Corelli as his guest. At the same time, while creating a liminal space for both of them, a space in which each is capable to exert his authority or sovereignty freely, both men have an opportunity to acknowledge that they are very similar. As Corelli mentions,

Pelagia has said to me that you and I are very alike. I am obsessed by my music, and you are obsessed with your medicine. We are both men who have created a purpose for ourselves, and neither of us cares very much for what anyone else may think of us. She has only been

able to love me because she learned first how to love another man who is like me. And that man is you. (De Bernières 355)

It is also interesting to notice that the meeting and the co-existence with Corelli provides an opportunity for Dr Iannis to explore the threshold separating his self from the external other and a chance to discover and acknowledge the other within his own self. In her work *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva stresses that “the foreigner is neither a race nor a nation (...) we are our own foreigners, we are divided” (181). Kristeva explains that the man may come to realize one day that the stranger within us is psychically projected as the stranger among us. This psychic division or split is visibly revealed when Dr Iannis discerns the other within his own self, claiming the following:

‘Every Greek [...] has two Greeks inside. We even have technical terms for them. They are a part of us, as inevitable as the fact that we all write poetry and the fact that every one of us thinks that he knows everything that there is to know. We are all hospitable to strangers, we are all nostalgic for something, (...) we all hate solitude, we all try to find out from a stranger whether or not we are related, (...) we all think that we are the best.’ (De Bernières 355)

The mythical confrontation with a monster generally ends in the hero’s victory over the beast. In Odysseus myth, the hero always prevails over the external assaults of the monsters/others. In the case of Dr Iannis, seen as an Odyssean figure, the external monster/the other does not pose any threat to the hero because the “monstrosity” disappears in the moment in which the other/the monster identifies himself with the hero and the two of them resemble each other. The greatest danger emerges when Dr Iannis acknowledges that the inner monsters are mostly threatening. These inner monsters/drives split the single and sovereign self into two parts which engage in a dialogue that will lead to the ultimate destruction of the self.

V. The Final Experience: Death

In this confrontation, Dr Iannis, as a good host, simultaneously admits and excludes the inner other, acknowledges and represses the other, welcomes and fears this other, a situation which produces ambivalence and inevitably hosts a threat to his self. We can relate Dr Iannis’ situation to a late-Derridean concept of “autoimmunity”, which is based on the theory of body’s immune system.

Jacques Derrida started using the term “autoimmunity” in the mid-1990s, in one of his influential essays entitled *Faith and Knowledge*, but the term expanded its impact especially after the 9/11 event. Derrida appropriates the term from biology, where it stresses the possibility of a body – which is invaded by foreign agents or antigens – to react through its immune system which, as a result of this invasion, after evaluating the invading cells, creates some antibodies which have the purpose of destroying the antigens, thus trying to protect the body’s immunity. Paradoxically, instead of securing the immunity of the body, in autoimmunity, the immune system malfunctions. It creates some antibodies that start to attack body’s own cells, leading thus to the destruction of the whole organ.

Derrida applies this biological system to social body, that is to say, the community and its members. Derrida stresses that immunity and autoimmunity function mechanically, spontaneously, and inevitably. They cannot be regulated as a result of the free choice of an individual or a group. Although every community aims at preserving itself as pure and uncontaminated by foreign agents, and even if it manages to keep its safety from the intruding foreigners, it always preserves an inner threat, and there is always a possibility that this community will destroy itself from within.

In this respect, autoimmunity refers to an inevitable and complex process which affects every sovereign identity. In the light of autoimmunity, one should reconsider the concept of self-identity, in general, and those of freedom, spontaneity, and even life, in particular. Autoimmunity inevitably compromises and destroys the integrity and identity of the sovereign forms. As Derrida explains,

Sovereignty neither gives nor gives itself the time; it does not take time. Here is where the cruel autoimmunity with which sovereignty is affected begins, the autoimmunity with which sovereignty at once sovereignly affects and cruelly infects itself. Autoimmunity is always, in the same time without duration, cruelty itself, the autoinfection of all autoaffection. It is not some particular thing that is affected in autoimmunity but the self, the ipse, the autos that finds itself infected. As soon as it needs heteronomy, the event, time and the other. (109)

Dr Iannis is an individual who has always given importance to his sense of authority and sovereignty. To him, the sovereignty of his self is unquestionable and it does not need any logical justification. To him, the sovereign self should be always indivisible; it should constantly assert itself

and face whatever challenges are posed to it. But in the process of its assertion, his wanted sovereign self becomes compromised by the gradual acknowledgment of its absence. As autoimmunity exposes in fact the impossibility of any self-identity to be suitable to itself, Dr Iannis accepts that the preservation of any presumed identity is always jeopardized by its own internal division.

The inner split between Hellene and Romoi only strengthens the meltdown of his sovereign self, and of his immune system. The earlier admitted loss of confidence in a rational order also contributes to the loss of his autonomy and hegemony. Autoimmunity compromises his integrity even with the moments of self-doubt or self-critique manifested during his intense self-questioning of his identity. As a rational being, Dr Iannis questions the impact of the Italian and German presence on the island. In addition to being rational, Dr Iannis thinks that after the foreign agents have abandoned Cephallonia, the Greeks, his own people, will secure his life and welfare.

Ironically, the greatest damage to his body's system is produced not by the foreign intruders but by his own Greek people who claim to establish order on their land. As we are told in the novel:

On the mainland they seized Red Cross provisions, poisoned the wells of hostile villages with dead donkeys and the corpses of dissidents, demanded a quarter of the food landed at Piraeus for the relief of Athens, (...) disposed randomly of anyone inconvenient on the grounds that they had been 'collaborators', (...) disguised themselves as British soldiers, Red Cross workers, as police or members of the Mountain Brigade, and used children carrying the white flag to work deceptions that were to lead to ambush. They fired shells at shoppers and at British soldiers ladling food out to the starving, took 20,000 innocents as hostages, shot 114 socialist (...), and destroyed factories, docks and railways that the German had left intact. (De Bernières 442-443)

Derrida stresses the fact that in the process of autoimmunity, the body of a state is destabilized from within. He admits that violence could be produced from "armed" and "trained" forces, that violence cannot be stopped by dominant authority, and that the opposition leads only to further reprisals. But the mostly stressed one, as he explains in a footnote, "the worst threat would be the one that comes from "within", from this zone where the worst "outside" lives with or within "me"" (Derrida 188).

If we return to the mythical Odysseus' encounter with external monsters which become tamed by the hero's authority and power, we discover that Dr Iannis, as an Odyssean figure, ironically finds out that the monstrosity lives within "me"/himself. When he protects his identity and his sovereign self from any foreign intervention, he ends up being destroyed from forces "within", which is by Greeks:

Dr Iannis returned after two years, shuffling into the kitchen supported upon the arms of two workers of the Red Cross, ever speechless and emotionally paralysed (...). It was enough for him to understand that the world had forked along a path that was inapprehensible, alien, and opaque. It had become a mirror that reflected dimly the grotesque, the demonic, and the hegemony of death. (...) He would hear the cries of villagers as their houses burned, the screams of live castration and extracted eyes, and the crackle of shots as stragglers were executed, and he would witness over and over again Stamatis and Kokolios, the monarchist and the Communist, the very image of Greece itself, dying in each others' arms and imploring him to leave them in the road lest he himself be shot. (De Bernières 455)

When Dr Iannis suspends the immunity that protects him from the other, he discovers an unpredictable, unforeseeable other who lives within his own self. This acknowledgement disables his own immune system and leads him to the autoimmune autodestruction. Instead of creating an impact with his words or act upon the others as in the past, he ends up being moved and under complete control of the others. This aspect represents the final blow for our hero, who has rationally protected himself throughout his entire life against all possible outer threats, just to discover, as a final knowledge, that the danger has been always within himself.

Conclusion

To conclude the discussion on the ways in which Louis de Bernières deconstructs and reconstructs the mythemes of the ancient myth of Odysseus, our main premises is that the essence of Odysseus myth lays in his assertion of his identity as well as in the assertion of his victory through his every accomplishment. In this respect, Dr Iannis emerges as a man who tries to revitalize and confirm the humanistic aspirations which are based on Odyssean characteristics of intelligence, search for knowledge, infliction of his authority, and perpetual expansion of boundaries. Dr Iannis, this postmodern Odysseus, contrary to the paradigm revealed by his mythical

counterpart, reaches a limit and comes to an end through responding to alterity. The mythical Odysseus stands as a symbol of limitless existence, reason, and potential. Dr Iannis, however, though struggles very hard throughout his entire life to fulfil his aspirations of intelligence, knowledge and authority, simply strengthens the awareness of the limits of man whose only *auto* leads him to the inevitable autodestruction.

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¹ Except two books (Golban, Tatiana. *Rewriting the Hero and the Quest: Myth and Monomyth in Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis de Bernières*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014, and Reynolds, Margaret, and Jonathan Noakes. *Louis de Bernières: The Essential Guide*. London: Vintage, 2002), which are of little relevance to our approach, there are no other in-depth secondary sources on Louis de Bernières' novel as to be listed among these references.

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