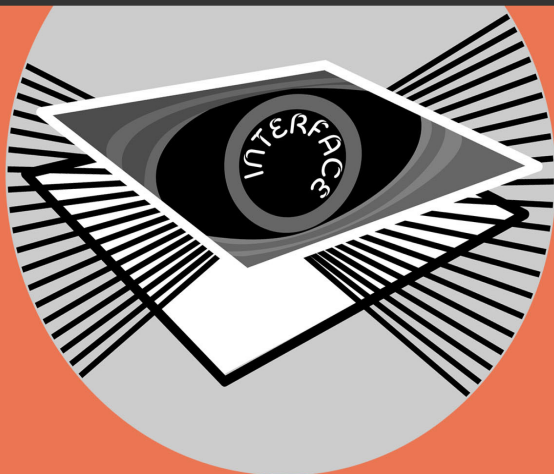


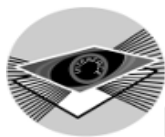
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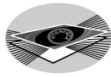
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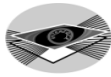


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El primer viaje a China en una máquina del tiempo.

Luces y sombras en *El anacronópete* de Enrique Gaspar

y Rimbau

RACHID LAMARTI

Tamkang University

Abstracto

Nadie discute a Herbert George Wells (1866-1946) como uno de los precursores de la moderna literatura de ciencia ficción. Su celeberrima *La máquina del tiempo*, además, le otorgó en 1895 el blasón de inventor literario de la máquina del tiempo. Sin embargo, contra la opinión general, la patente de esa invención no pertenece (al menos en exclusiva) a H. G. Wells. En 1887, es decir, ocho años antes de *La máquina del tiempo*, se publicó en Barcelona *El anacronópete* de Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau (1842-1902).

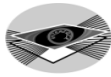
Este artículo se centra en dos de las anticipaciones de *El anacronópete*: la pionera fabulación de una máquina de retroceder en el tiempo y el primer viaje a China a bordo de una máquina así. También analiza las causas por las que *El anacronópete* no ganó altura, así como la nula visión de futuro de Enrique Gaspar: ¿por qué a las puertas de hacer historia recogió el paso y volvió a la fila?

Palabras clave: *El anacronópete*, Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau, ciencia ficción, viaje en el tiempo, máquina del tiempo, primer viaje a China en una máquina del tiempo.

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The First Trip to China in a Time Machine.

Lights and Shadows in Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau's

El anacronópete

RACHID LAMARTI

Tamkang University

Abstract

Herbert George Wells (1866-1946) is indisputably one of the forerunners of modern science fiction literature. In addition, his famous *The Time Machine*, published in 1895, earned him the accolade of the literary inventor of the time machine. However, despite the common opinion, the patent of that invention does not belong (at least, not exclusively) to H. G. Wells. In 1887, that is, eight years before *The Time Machine*, *El anacronópete* of Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau (1842-1902) was published in Barcelona.

This article focuses on two features anticipated by *El anacronópete*: the pioneering invention of a machine going back in time, and the first trip to China on board such a machine. It also analyzes why *El anacronópete* did not earn wider recognition, as well as Enrique Gaspar's null vision of the future: why did he shy away at the point when he was about to make history?

Keywords: *El anacronópete*, Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau, Science Fiction, Time Travel, Time Machine, First Trip to China in a Time Machine.

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El primer viaje a China en una máquina del tiempo.

Luces y sombras en *El anacronópete* de Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau

La historia comete injusticias con regularidad. Rara vez abjura o rectifica, pero si lo hace, arrepentida o puesta en evidencia, acaba readmitiendo en su curso a la víctima del histórico agravio. Valga el ejemplo de Nikola Tesla, o en el campo de la otra ciencia, la de ficción, el de Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau.

El anacronópete no pasó del todo desapercibida entre los coetáneos de Enrique Gaspar. El protagonista del cuento de Bertrán Rubio *Un invento despampanante* (1906) se jacta de que «ni el fonógrafo, ni el telégrafo sin hilos, ni el Anacronópete del malogrado Gaspar» resistirían la comparación con su «Psico-kinos-fono-fotocromógrajo instantáneo y reversible» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 426). Con todo, pocos años después, *El anacronópete* y su autor habían hecho mutis por el foro. No reaparecerían hasta finales del siglo XX.

Salió *El anacronópete* en la colada gracias a Saiz Cidoncha (1988), Santibáñez-Tió (1995) y Ayala (1996), adalides del pronunciamiento para impugnar el blasón de H. G. Wells y entronizar a Enrique Gaspar como verdadero artífice de la primera máquina del tiempo.¹ Su reivindicación no cayó en saco roto y *El anacronópete* se reeditó a principios del siglo XXI.

Conviene aquí, antes de proseguir, relativizar la gesta de Enrique Gas-

1 La literatura en español, preponderantemente realista, apenas contiene «elementos maravillosos» (Menéndez Pidal, 1971, p. 94). Menéndez Pidal, sin estar del todo en lo cierto, no yerra del todo: en lo concerniente a la ciencia ficción, ni España ni Hispanoamérica han dado autores equiparables a Isaac Asimov, Stanislav Lem, Arthur C. Clarke, Philip K. Dick o Ray Bradbury. Pese a ser la imaginación de un español la que fraguó la primera máquina para viajar en el tiempo, la ciencia ficción (no así otros subgéneros de la literatura fantástica) se ha cultivado en español menos que en otras lenguas (Saiz Cidoncha, 1988).

par: el anacronópete va sólo hacia el pasado. Al principio de la novela, escudándose contra posibles críticas u objeciones a su invento, don Sindulfo arguye que el retroceso en el tiempo representa «el más arduo problema que hasta hoy registran los anales científicos» y niega que *adelante* sea la clave del progreso (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 12). Tales argumentos, obviamente, no invalidan el concepto de futuro ni lo excluyen de la matriz del tiempo. He ahí que el anacronópete cojea: falto de futuro, es una máquina del tiempo a medias o demediada o media máquina del tiempo. El nombre de *máquina de retroceder en el tiempo* sería mucho más congruente con su unidireccionalidad.

Dicho esto, nótese que la novela de Wells tampoco presenta una acabada máquina del tiempo. Es la suya el reverso del anacronópete: una *máquina de avanzar en el tiempo*.² La nave española³ es de retrospección y la británica, de prospección. Sólo juntando ambas se obtendrá una máquina del tiempo completa, capaz de viajar tanto al pasado como al futuro. H. G. Wells y Enrique Gaspar comparten así méritos y una patente que en el siglo XX produjo máquinas para viajar por el tiempo tan alucinantes como el DeLorean de *Regreso al futuro*, la Tardis del *Doctor Who* o la cápsula con la que Trunks salva a Son Goku de una aciaga cardiopatía en *Bola de dragón*.

Es sintomático que el anacronópete vaya en sentido contrario al de la máquina del tiempo de Wells. La literatura es un espejo. Se miran (y se reconocen) en ella pueblos, culturas, civilizaciones, etcétera; refleja idiosincrasias, visiones del mundo, ideales. *El anacronópete* y *La máquina del tiempo*, navegando en direcciones opuestas, uno hacia atrás y la otra hacia delante, cobran tono de parábola si se compulsan con la realidad de las naciones donde se incubaron: a bordo del anacronópete, el decadente imperio español, preocupado por las causas del presente, glorifica el pasado; a los mandos de la máquina del tiempo de Wells, el

2 Antes de *La máquina del tiempo* Wells había escrito en 1888 un cuento sobre un viaje de quince años atrás en el tiempo a bordo una máquina de retroceder en el tiempo: *The Chronic Argonauts*.

3 La ciencia ficción en español propendió en sus inicios a las ucronías y a las distopías más que a los platillos volantes, los viajes intergalácticos, los robots o los extraterrestres. Díez & Moreno (2014) lo atribuyen al regeneracionismo finisecular y de principios del siglo XX, así como al atraso tecnocientífico de los países hispanohablantes. En posteriores etapas, la ciencia ficción en español importó conceptos como la hibernación, el teletransporte o el hiperespacio; curiosamente, la máquina del tiempo no reapareció en español hasta mediados del siglo XX, en la colección *Futuro* de José Mallorquí (Hesles, 2013).

pujante imperio británico, calculando los efectos del presente, apunta al futuro.

El anacronópete se rinde al pasado o le rinde culto. Enrique Gaspar estriba el busilis del presente en el pasado, adonde opina debe mirarse y no al futuro. Al pasar el anacronópete por China, por ejemplo, se critica a los arrogantes que desprecian lo antiguo, lo anterior o lo pretérito y se escarnece a aquellos que desdeñan a sus predecesores. El soberano Hien-ti⁴ pide a los anacronóbatas pruebas de que vienen del futuro, y Benjamín, seguro de asombrarlo con el arte, la tecnología y la ciencia que transportan, sale trasquilado: los chinos del siglo III igualan (y a veces aventajan) a los europeos del siglo XIX. Cuando Hien-ti les muestra un ejemplar impreso y «ricamente encuadernado» de las *Analectas* de Confucio, cunde el estupor y a Benjamín se le apoca y encoge el «orgullo europeo» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, pp. 134-135).

1 El viaje en el tiempo

La ciencia ficción nace en el siglo XIX auspiciada por el darwinismo, el progreso tecnológico e inventos como el barco de vapor, la locomotora, el generador eléctrico, la lámpara incandescente, el teléfono, etcétera. Poesía, literatura y ciencia no rara vez concurren, paralelan o se influyen: poetas que se inspiran en hipótesis científicas y científicos cuyas ecuaciones derivan de un poema; poetas científicos y viceversa que alternan ciencia, ficción y poesía. Ramón y Cajal leía a Julio Verne con fruición, e incluso dejó esbozado un cuento de fantasía especulativa titulado *La vida en el año 6000* (Hesles, 2013). Tampoco a Ramón y Cajal se le ocurrió vehículo mejor que el sueño para viajar en el tiempo.

Ciencia y literatura practican la elucubración a partir de intuiciones imaginativas. Tales elucubraciones producen por igual teorías científicas y poemas o textos literarios. Unas veces la literatura se adelanta a la ciencia (*De la Tierra a la Luna*, de Julio Verne); otras veces, la ciencia

⁴ Emperador Xian de Han (漢獻帝). Enrique Gaspar transcribe *Hien-ti*, en vez de *Hsien-ti*, (en pinyin: Xiàn dì): *Hien* [sic] es el nombre (獻) y *ti* (帝), la dignidad de emperador.

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se anticipa.

La especulación científica es, a menudo, mucho más extraña y absurda que cualquier cosa soñada por los escritores de ciencia ficción. Citaré como testimonio la historia de los miniagujeros negros, que se presentó en artículos científicos serios y, después, fue recogida por la ciencia ficción.

(Barceló, 2000, p. 12)

Hasta principios del siglo XX el tiempo era absoluto, universal y separado del espacio. Einstein lo relativizó, lo anudó al espacio y en un arranque de lirismo lo asimiló a un río que serpea por el universo, acelerándose y ralentizándose entre planetas, estrellas y galaxias (Kaku, 2009). Einstein tenía mucho de poeta y su célebre equivalencia entre masa y energía efunde poesía. No en vano a las teorías de la relatividad subyace un postulado esencialmente poético: el tiempo es sensible. La poesía adopta incontables formas, vías o medios de reducción y formulación: palabra, álgebra, pintura, química, música, etcétera. Einstein la redujo a matemática: $E=mc^2$. Tras un atisbo próximo al suyo, Gabriel García Márquez en *Cien años de soledad* (1999, p. 546) columbró que puede el tiempo astillarse y eternizarse, o concentrarse «un siglo de episodios cotidianos [...] en un instante».

Ambos descubrieron al mismo tiempo que allí siempre era marzo y siempre era lunes, y entonces comprendieron que José Arcadio Buendía no estaba tan loco como contaba la familia, sino que era el único que había dispuesto de bastante lucidez para vislumbrar la verdad de que también el tiempo sufría tropiezos y accidentes, y podía por tanto astillarse y dejar en un cuarto una fracción eternizada.

(García Márquez, 1999, p. 470).

En el antológico final de *Cien años de soledad* el tiempo se desovilla a saltos pasado adelante hasta el segundo en que Aureliano Babilonia comienza «a descifrar el instante que estaba viviendo, descifrándolo a medida que lo vivía, profetizándose a sí mismo en el acto de descifrar

la última página de los pergaminos, como si se estuviera viendo en un espejo hablado» (García Márquez, 1999, p. 547).

Deutsch & Lockwood (1994) aseguran que las leyes de la física (a veces tan contrarias al sentido común) admiten el viaje en el tiempo, lo cual, ciertamente, no es decir mucho o es lo mismo que decir que la química cuántica adviera la crisopeya. Las teorías general y especial de la relatividad, especulativamente y a diferencia de otras teorías, posibilitan viajar en el tiempo. Los relojes atómicos corroboraron que el intervalo entre dos sucesos depende del movimiento: a mayor velocidad, menor espacio de tiempo. Navegar por el espacio a un ochenta por ciento de la velocidad de la luz lentificaría el tiempo a tal extremo que al regresar a la Tierra habría transcurrido una eternidad (Davies, 2002). El problema, a efectos prácticos y en consonancia con otras teorías, reside en que los cuerpos provistos de masa no pueden viajar a velocidades cercanas (ni mucho menos superiores) a la de la luz.

El descubrimiento de partículas subatómicas capaces de retroceder en el tiempo llevó a especular con la reversión a nivel cuántico de procesos físicos ocurridos. Tales suposiciones enseguida toparon con el principio de incertidumbre de Heisenberg (Heisenberg, 1985; Navarro Faus, 2012), a saber: la imposibilidad de predecir simultáneamente la posición y el momento lineal de una partícula. Mientras no se salve ese escollo no habrá manera de devolver el color y la sazón a una manzana podrida.

De acuerdo con la física conocida, dentro de los límites de inverosimilitud inherentes a la propia idea de viajar en el tiempo, la máquina de Wells es más factible que la de Enrique Gaspar. Ignoto y abierto, el futuro ofrecería, además, la curvatura suficiente para ir y volver; el pasado, en cambio, fijo y concluso, privado de curvatura, no permitiría el tornaviaje, salvo (quizá) a través de un agujero de gusano⁵ (Davies, 2002).

Viajar al pasado con el anacronópete daría lugar, por otro lado, a para-

5 Singularidad cósmica no verificada que uniría dos puntos del espaciotiempo. Difiere del agujero negro en que tiene doble acceso: una entrada por donde podría salirse y una salida por donde podría entrarse (Hawking, 1988).

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dojas temporales. Recuérdese el cuento de nunca acabar del crononauta que viaja al pasado y asesina a su abuelo antes de que éste engendre a uno de sus progenitores. En tales circunstancias, el crononauta no llegará a ser y no viajará al pasado para asesinar a su abuelo, quien estará así en perfectas condiciones de tener un hijo o una hija que lo engendre, con lo que el crononauta podrá viajar al pasado para asesinar a su abuelo, etcétera.

A priori, sólo la retrospección (y no la prospección) causaría paradojas temporales. Un viaje al futuro en la máquina del tiempo de Wells no afectaría a la actualidad, por cuanto el futuro carece de ascendencia sobre el presente. Al fin y al cabo, es el futuro el que desciende del presente y no al revés: viajar al futuro consistiría en llegar antes o en menos tiempo, es decir, en acelerar la inercia natural de los acontecimientos, moverse, por ejemplo, a una hora por segundo. Ahora bien, sopeséense los efectos retroactivos del siguiente viaje al futuro: el crononauta entra en una librería, toma un poemario, lo lee, le fascina, lo fotografía a escondidas, regresa a su tiempo, copia los poemas en un cuaderno. Décadas después su nieto encuentra el cuaderno en un arcón del desván. Lo lee, se maravilla y decide publicar bajo pseudónimo el mismo poemario que un día su abuelo descubrirá en una librería. Por descontado, la poesía es un misterio; mas un caso así agigantaría el misterio o lo volvería infinito: el origen de esos poemas constituye un uroboros, una pregunta abismal y sin salida.

Stephen Hawking en *Brevísima historia del tiempo* (2005, p. 121) soluciona tales aporías con un golpe de determinismo: «el pasado y el futuro están predeterminados». El presente asumiría las consecuencias del viaje al pasado, o más aún: sería tal cual es gracias a ese viaje. Con todo y en previsión, por si el golpe fallase, Hawking había apostado por la teoría de los universos múltiples: viajando al pasado, se crearía un nuevo universo, donde la presencia y las acciones del crononauta no (re)configurarían el presente original, sino que configurarían otro nuevo. Este subterfugio rima con las teorías cuánticas de Richard Feynman, para quien el universo no narra una única historia, sino todas las posibles (aunque de probabilidad variable) y a la vez (Mlodinow, 2003).

2 *El anacronópete por dentro*

El sistema anacronopético y la teoría del tiempo de Enrique Gaspar se basan en las ideas del astrónomo Camille Flammarion, cuyas investigaciones versaron sobre topografía lunar y marciana, dinámica de las estrellas, fluctuaciones solares, etcétera: «El universo material produce medida y tiempo con sus movimientos» (Flammarion, 1874, p. 117). Conforme a tales pretensos, el inventor del anacronópete, don Sindulfo García, encadena premisas, conclusiones y razonamientos: la Tierra se mueve para hacer tiempo, destilándolo en sentido contrario a su rotación, es decir, de Oriente a Occidente (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 18); el tiempo es atmósfera y también movimiento incesante (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, pp. 19-20); en la inmovilidad no hay antes ni después (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 22).⁶

Sea como fuere, si bien *El anacronópete* se rige según las leyes de Flammarion, fue Julio Verne quien lo inspiró. Acicateado por el éxito de sus odiseas fantásticas, Enrique Gaspar quiso emularlo y componer su propia versión de *La vuelta al mundo en ochenta días*, trocando delfines, elefantes, globo aerostático, la India y un viaje alrededor del mundo por prostitutas francesas, una momia, el anacronópete, la China y una aventura si cabe más espectacular: un viaje atrás en el tiempo.

Las hipótesis del famoso Julio Verne tenidas por maravillas eran verdaderos juguetes de niño ante la magnitud del invento real del modesto zaragozano [...].

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 8)

Sabedor de que el musical de *La vuelta al mundo en ochenta días* triunfaba a la sazón en París, Enrique Gaspar concibió *El anacronópete* como zarzuela en dos actos y tres cuadros (Uribe, 1997). Pocas obras más audaces podían plantearse a finales del siglo XIX que una zarzuela

6 Excusa decir que el tiempo no guarda relación con la dirección en la que rota la Tierra y que girar a la inversa del planeta, en sentido dextrógiro, para rebobinar el tiempo es únicamente realizable en la ficción. Uribe (1997) recuerda que Superman, en la primera película de Richard Donner (1978), utiliza una técnica análoga a la del anacronópete para retroceder en el tiempo: vuela a la velocidad de la luz alrededor de la Tierra. Tanto Richard Donner como Superman obviaron que un objeto con masa no puede moverse a la velocidad de la luz.

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de ciencia ficción. Por desgracia, ningún teatro le abrió las puertas. Para los productores teatrales españoles *El anacronópete* resultaba desaforado, asaz heterodoxo, irrepresentable. Tampoco se acomodaba al gusto del público español de la época. Una zarzuela sobre una máquina que retrocedía en el tiempo, irónicamente, se adelantaba demasiado a su tiempo.

Enrique Gaspar no se desalentó, se sobrepuso y refiguró *El anacronópete* en novela sui géneris: una zarzuela novelada. El humor folletinesco y sainetero, unos personajes guiñolescos, enredos y peripecias hilarantes, mestizas de absurdo, sátira y astracán así lo delatan.⁷ Sus páginas rebosan, verbigracia, chistes dignos de las comedias de Jardiel Poncela o Alfonso Paso.

–[...]En los griegos se ha observado que, bien sea por los métodos de Pelasgo, de Cécrope o de Cadmo; participa aunque a lo oriental de dos especies; porque cuando escriben muchas líneas vuelven de derecha a izquierda. Esta dirección es la que empleaban los Hunnos.

–¿Y los otros?

–Hablo de los Hunnos, hoy zikulos de la parte de la Transilvania.

–¡Ah! Sí. Adelante, no los conozco.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 185)

La guasa de Enrique Gaspar, aneja a la socarronería y el acervo españoles, oscila entre el sarcasmo de Quevedo, el esperpento de Valle Inclán, las anfibologías de Gómez de la Serna y el humor chusco de los tebeos.

–Dominus vobiscum –le dijo al senador–. Brindo para que usiam reventatur como un perri de una indigestionem de morcillam. Salutem y sarnam.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 200)

⁷ Los personajes de *El anacronópete* transpiran zarzuela: dos cantantes protagonistas (don Sindulfo y Clara), un dúo cómico (Benjamín y Juanita), un coro masculino (los diecisiete húsares españoles), un coro femenino (las doce meretrices francesas), un gobernante o sátrapa (Hien-ti), un privado repulido (Tsao-pi), un militar discolo y seductor de criadas (Pendencia), etcétera.

A la ridiculidad de las situaciones y de la propia trama se suman unos *dramatis personae* caricaturescos:⁸ Benjamín persuade a la reina Isabel la Católica de prestar oídos a Cristóbal Colón y patrocinar su empresa; a don Sindulfo lo escupe el Vesubio (a cuyo cráter lo habían arrojado por cristiano felón) como un hombre bala de circo y se cuele encestado por una de las tuberías neumáticas del anacronópete; los anacronóbatas están a punto de morir de inanición cuando por las escotillas de la nave entran el maná y las codornices que Dios hizo llover sobre el desierto de Sin; en el siglo III, don Sindulfo se reencuentra con su esposa Mamerta, de quien había enviudado años atrás (o adelante, según se mire), reencarnada en una emperatriz china.⁹ Mención aparte merece King-seng, apuesto maestro de ceremonias de la corte de Hien-ti, a quien don Sindulfo se dirige en latín «por si las humanidades habían llegado hasta el celeste Imperio» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 145). King-seng es el primer chino laísta de la historia.

Hace como diez lunas que llegó de occidente un hombre fugitivo. Oculto en Honan encontró medio de ponerse en contacto con la emperatriz Sun-ché, la esposa mártir del opresor. Lo que la dijo lo ignoro...

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 146)

La misión del anacronópete es asimismo ridícula, tanto la declarada y falsa como la encubierta y auténtica. La que don Sindulfo finge en público recuerda el delito de elación cometido por los constructores de la torre de Babel: «acercarnos más a Dios» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 16). Huelga decir que don Sindulfo miente como lo que es (el lector lo

8 Repárese en que don Sindulfo y Benjamín remedan quijotesca (o deformados por los espejos del callejón del Gato) a los protagonistas de *La vuelta al mundo en ochenta días*, Phileas Fogg y Passpartout.

9 La emperatriz Sunché ama a don Sindulfo porque es la reencarnación de Mamerta. El ardor con el que lo hace evoca y bufonea el mito platónico: las dos humanas mitades que Zeus escindió, al reencontrarse, «se abrazaban y se unían, llevadas del deseo de entrar en su antigua unidad, con ardor tal que, abrazadas, perecían de hambre e inacción, no queriendo hacer nada la una sin la otra» (*El banquete*, p. 32). Esta anécdota introduce una de las materias predilectas de Enrique Gaspar: la metempsicosis, a cuyos misterios dedicó el cuento *La metempsicosis*. A caballo entre la chanza y la aporía, alguien que muere en el siglo XIX se reencarna en alguien que nace en el siglo III. Enrique Gaspar no previó los efectos paradójicos de reencarnar a Mamerta en Sunché o previéndolos le hicieron gracia y decidió seguir adelante con el chiste. Por supuesto, cabe otra solución: interponer el recurso de la navaja de Occam y revocar la aporía, a fin de cuentas Sunché renace (al retroceder en el tiempo) tanto antes como después de que Mamerta haya fallecido.

comprobará enseguida): un bellaco. Él y su adlátere Benjamín albergan otro propósito: apoderarse del secreto de la vida eterna. Aquí se cifra la gran broma de la novela. Ese secreto, el de la inmortalidad, está en manos de una muerta. Don Sindulfo, genio a todas luces, y Benjamín, erudito campeador, absurdamente, esperan aprender a no morir de una emperatriz china fallecida en el siglo III cuya momia han comprado de saldo en la liquidación de un museo particular.

En cualquier caso, don Sindulfo oculta otras y deshonestas intenciones. Al inventor lo empuja la libidine: un lascivo deseo por su sobrina Clara. Rechazado y sabiéndola enamorada de Luis, capitán de los húsares y también sobrino suyo, don Sindulfo urde un plan de locos: retroceder lo que haga falta hasta alguna de las épocas en las que el hombre podía imponer su voluntad a la mujer que se le antojase.

3 *El anacronópete frente a La máquina del tiempo*

Imaginar en el siglo XIX una máquina capaz de ir al pasado o al futuro y novelarlo era cuestión de tiempo; como en el siglo XX lo fue fabular encuentros en la tercera fase. El ser humano ha fantaseado con viajar en el tiempo, volar, la invisibilidad, teletransportarse o la juventud eterna desde que aprendió a soñar, si no aprendió a soñar con esos sueños. Viajar en el tiempo no era novedad en el siglo XIX. Se había viajado mucho en el tiempo a través de la magia (El ejemplo XI del *Libro del Conde Lucanor: De lo que contesçió a una deán de Sanctiago con don Yllán, el grand maestro de Toledo*), con ayuda de los dioses (la leyenda japonesa de *Urashima Tarō* [浦島太郎]) o mediante el sueño (*Los siete durmientes de Éfeso*).¹⁰

La mayor originalidad de Wells y de Enrique Gaspar radicó en concebir un viaje en el tiempo por medios no mágicos, sino tecnológicos: a bordo de una máquina. *El anacronópete* y *La máquina del tiempo* cumplen así uno de los principios básicos de la ciencia ficción: el conocimiento y la técnica desbancan a magos, dioses y demonios¹¹; las ciencias (no infu-

¹⁰ A diferencia de los acometidos en *El anacronópete* y *La máquina del tiempo*, estos viajes suelen ser accidentales o inconscientes: el viajero descubre el salto temporal a posteriori y con sorpresa.

¹¹ Suvin (1984, p. 26) define la ciencia ficción como literatura del «extrañamiento cognitivo»; pero

sas ni ocultas o sobrenaturales) sustentan la narración (Ayala, 1996). El anacronópete funciona con electricidad, energía limpia y ecológica, y no por brujería; escobas autómatas en vez de duendecillos mantienen el suelo pulcro; y el fluido García, administrado mediante descarga, contrarresta los efectos rejuvenecedores y de anonadación del retroceso en el tiempo.¹²

Las máquinas de H. G. Wells y de Enrique Gaspar divergen en hechura y en tamaño. En el anacronópete, «monstruoso aparato» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 13), «inmensa mole» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 32), «una especie de arca de Noé sin quilla» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 65), viajan los anacronóbatas: don Sindulfo, Benjamín, Clara, Juanita, doce meretrices francesas y diecisiete marciales polizones; la máquina del tiempo de Wells, por el contrario, cabe en un cuarto, se asemeja a un sillón y dispone de espacio para un tripulante único: el Viajero a través del Tiempo.

Constaba el Anacronópete, como hemos dicho, de un podio o basamento sobre el que descansaba el suelo de la bodega, y en el espesor de cuyo muro veíanse empotrados los escalones que daban acceso al portón, única entrada del vehículo. La forma de éste era rectangular. En sus ángulos erguíanse cuatro formidables tubos correspondientes a los aparatos de desalojamiento que, con sus bocas retorcidas en dirección de los puntos cardinales, parecían otros tantos enormes trabucos arqueados en figura de 7. En el piso principal y corriendo por sus cuatro lados, circulaba una elegante galería cuya puerta, como todas las demás aberturas del locomóvil, quedaba herméticamente cerrada en viaje. Un inmenso disco de cristal, rasante por cada viento a la pared, servía a los viajeros para desde el interior y con el auxilio de potentes instrumentos ópticos, contemplar el paisaje y rectificar la orientación durante la marcha. Dos frontones coronaban los testeros ostentando en sus tímpa-

este rasgo, el extrañamiento cognitivo, afín al sentimiento de lo fantástico de Julio Cortázar (1984, 2013), no delimita lo suficiente ni es definitorio de nada. Toda la literatura fantástica (no sólo la ciencia ficción) y otros géneros, subgéneros y corrientes literarios como el realismo mágico, la poesía surrealista o el teatro del absurdo concitan extrañeza y desconcierto cognitivos en la medida en que colocan al lector ante «lo sobrenatural, pero no como evasión, sino, muy al contrario, para interrogarlo y hacerle perder la seguridad frente al mundo real» (Roas, 2001, p. 8).

¹² Pues no se detalla su composición química, la naturaleza del fluido García vacila entre el adminículo tecnológico y el elixir mágico.

I N T E R F A C E

nos el nombre del coloso y sosteniendo en sus caballetes la cubierta en plano inclinado, así dispuesta para las paradas; pues en movimiento –navegando por el vacío– ni había que cuidarse de los desagües ni precaverse contras las afecciones atmosféricas.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, pp. 64-65)

Inventariar piezas, mecanismos y dispositivos caracteriza la ficción científica literaria, muy dada a los engranajes, las poleas, las turbinas, las válvulas, los motores, los gases cinéticos, las cámaras de hibernación, etcétera. *El anacronópete* prefigura o anticipa mejor que *La máquina del tiempo* esa tendencia a la especificación minuciosa. El detallismo vérnico de Enrique Gaspar contrasta así con el deliberado laconismo de H. G. Wells. Por otro lado, los materiales con los que está fabricada la máquina del tiempo de Wells (níquel, marfil, cuarzo, etcétera) evocan un elegante y fino mueble más que un artificio de ingeniería mecánica.

Tenía partes de níquel, de marfil, otras que habían sido indudablemente limadas o aserradas de un cristal de roca. La máquina estaba casi completa, pero unas barras de cristal retorcido sin terminar estaban colocadas sobre un banco de carpintero, junto a algunos planos; cogí una de aquéllas para examinarla mejor. Parecía ser de cuarzo.

(Wells, 2009, p. 7)

El anacronópete partía con ventaja respecto a *La máquina del tiempo*: se había publicado ocho años antes y estaba escrita a imagen de las populares aventuras de Julio Verne. El desenlace, sin embargo, fue otro, contra pronóstico y desventurado: *El anacronópete* naufragó en seco.

H. G. Wells y *La máquina del tiempo* eclipsaron a Enrique Gaspar y *El anacronópete*, por la fama y la mayor calidad literaria del primero,¹³ pero también por lo natural que resulta asociar la máquina del tiempo a una novela titulada *La máquina del tiempo*. Cualquier artefacto que

13 Mientras H. G. Wells cimentó el género con obras maestras como *La Isla del Doctor Moreau* (1896), *La guerra de los mundos* (1898) o *Los primeros hombres en la luna* (1901), el paso de Enrique Gaspar por la ciencia ficción es testimonial, de una sola obra. Debido a tan dilatada y exitosa trayectoria, Wells puso su epónimo en la Luna: el astroblema lunar H. G. Wells.

viaja atrás o adelante en el tiempo se llama hoy en español máquina del tiempo y no anacronópete. Enrique Gaspar no resistió la tentación¹⁴ de acuñar un neologismo con raíces griegas.¹⁵ H. G. Wells prefirió un título diáfano, menos rimbombante, más efectivo, cuya lectura desvela sin trampa ni cartón la verdad del libro.

Pese a haber perdido el duelo con H. G. Wells, Enrique Gaspar fue sin duda pionero por partida triple: (i) imagina el primer prototipo literario de máquina del tiempo: una nave que retrocede en el tiempo; (ii) relata el primer viaje a China en una máquina de retroceder en el tiempo; y (iii) describe por primera vez el salto al hiperespacio, anticipándose a la propia acuñación del término *hiperespacio* y mucho antes de que el Halcón Milenario lo popularizara.¹⁶

Aquello era horrible; las alternativas de luz y sombra se sucedían como las vibraciones de un timbre eléctrico en que la transición del sonido al silencio no deja espacio perceptible.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 224)

4 Ciencia ficción, literatura de viajes y sinología

El anacronópete abusa de los incisos. Hombre culto, curioso y de mundo, Enrique Gaspar enjareta digresiones sapienciales y extranjerismos sin son para (diríase) proyectar una imagen docta de sí mismo a la par que cosmopolita. Así, agolpa palabras en chino:¹⁷ *tie tséé, fei-sin, siepu-*

14 Por pedantería o, dada la bufa comicidad de la obra, en busca del disparate máximo.

15 *Anacronópete* plantea un enigma que resolver. Consciente de la dificultad del acertijo, Enrique Gaspar desliza la etimología del grecismo:

«El Anacronópete, que es una especie de arca de Noé, debe su nombre a tres voces griegas: Ana, que significa hacia atrás; crono, el tiempo, y petes, el que vuela, justificando así su misión de volar hacia atrás en el tiempo; porque en efecto, merced a él puede uno desayunarse a las siete en París, en el siglo XIX; almorzar a las doce en Rusia con Pedro el Grande; comer a las cinco en Madrid con Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra -si tiene con qué aquel día- y, haciendo noche en el camino, desembarcar con Colón al amanecer en las playas de la virgen América» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 26)

16 El término lo creó John Wood Campbell para el cuento de ciencia ficción *Islands of Space*, publicado en la revista *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* en 1931 (Tuck, 1974; Stableford, 2006).

17 Hoy el chino mandarín dispone de varios métodos regulados de transcripción fonética: zhùyīn fúhào (注音符號) o *signos de anotación fonética*, hànyǔ pīnyīn (漢語拼音) o *deletreo de los sonidos*

tsin, te-tsui, ki can, yeu-mau, tai-man, y dicta conferencias (no siempre pertinentes y a ratos estorbosas) con las que se resiente el ritmo narrativo.¹⁸ En el capítulo XVII, por ejemplo, las nubes tapan la luna y a Benjamín se le apaga la luz mientras descripta un quipus. El número de ventriloquía representado a continuación es soberbio. Enrique Gaspar pone en boca de Benjamín casi todo su conocimiento sobre la historia de la escritura, desde la traza: «por línea perpendicular, por orbicular o redonda y por horizontal» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 182) y a lo largo de ocho páginas. Quizá ello habría armonizado mejor en *Viaje a China*,¹⁹ relato epistolar sobre las maravillas y los horrores que Enrique Gaspar presencié entre 1878 y 1885, durante sus consulados en Macao y Hong Kong.²⁰

La más prolija de las lecciones que se imparten en *El anacronópete* se titula «Un poco de erudición fastidiosa pero necesaria» y versa sobre China. Este capítulo, preámbulo a las peripecias de los anacronóbatas en el Imperio del Cielo, epitoma las doctrinas taoísta, confucionista y budista, resume la historia de la filosofía china y compendia las enseñanzas de los antiguos pensadores chinos, desde Lao-tseu²¹ hasta

de la lengua de los Han, etcétera. El hànyǔ pīnyīn, adoptado por la Organización Internacional de Normalización (ISO) como sistema de romanización del chino, se inventó en la década de 1950; el sistema Wade-Giles, creado a mediados del siglo XIX por el sinólogo Thomas Francis Wade y perfeccionado pocos años después por otro sinólogo, Herbert Allen Giles, no se difundió hasta el siglo XX. Enrique Gaspar transcribía por intuición el chino que oía, reproducía las libérrimas transcripciones de los libros que leía o lo romanizaba siguiendo el *peh-oe-ji* (白話字 ‘escritura vernácula’) o algún otro sistema desarrollado por los misioneros europeos para las lenguas y los dialectos sīnicos sureños. A juzgar por sus transliteraciones, no siempre coherentes con la fonología del chino mandarín, parecen mezclarse diversas lenguas sīnicas: el mandarín, el cantonés y acaso el hakka.

18 Tales interpolaciones eruditas, verdaderamente, retardan la acción y socavan el relato; no obstante, dada la heterodoxia de la novela, no disuenan del todo. Al susodicho acento de zarzuela ha de sumarse la llamativa conjugación de dos literaturas: la de ciencia ficción (el viaje atrás en el tiempo a bordo del anacronópete) y la de viajes (el viaje de los anacronóbatas a China).

19 Libro de viajes aún más desconocido que *El anacronópete*. Ni siquiera figura (*El anacronópete* tampoco) en los actuales estudios sobre referencias chinas en la literatura española e hispanoamericana. Futuros compendios e investigaciones deberían reparar esta falta, pues *El anacronópete* y sobre todo *Viaje a China* superan en referencias chinas a la mayoría de obras inventariadas en Bayo (2013), Balcells (2018), etcétera.

20 Más azaroso que vocacional, su oficio diplomático lo llevó de aquí para allá, de Francia a Grecia, hasta recalar en China en 1878. Con todo, Enrique Gaspar no fue cónsul en la China de los Qing, sino en Macao y Hong Kong, colonias entonces portuguesa (Macao) y británica (Hong Kong). Fue en Macao donde en 1881 escribió la zarzuela fallida *El anacronópete* (Uribe, 1997).

21 Laozi, Lao-tse o Laocío (老子), pretense autor del *Dàodé jīng* (道德經) y creador de la escuela taoísta. Enrique Gaspar lo llama «gran metafísico de la China» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 108).

Meng-tseu,²² sin olvidarse del Y-king,²³ «enciclopedia puesta en orden por Fo-hi,²⁴ en quien los historiadores creen reconocer a Noé después de que salió del Arca» y «filosofía más remota del Celeste Imperio» (p. 109). Al sintetizar la doctrina de Lao-tseu (dominio de los sentidos, apaciguamiento de las pasiones, ascetismo, inacción, etcétera), Enrique Gaspar parangona el taoísmo con el cristianismo: Lao-tseu se le asemeja a Jesucristo por su lenguaje, por la tibia sabiduría que desprende.²⁵ Comparar a Laozi con Jesucristo o identificar a Fuxi con el Noé posdiluviano, sin embargo, no es excesivo ni tampoco estrambótico. Enrique Gaspar procede según lo prescrito por Epicteto: juzgar lo ajeno a través de lo propio, prescripción acatada por toda la literatura de viajes y los comentaristas de lo exótico. Siguiendo esa directriz, en pleno éxtasis pedagógico y a manera de colofón, traduce al español *Tao-té-King*.²⁶

Todo el tesoro de su inteligencia lo encerró en su obra titulada Tao-té-King. King significa que el libro es clásico: Tao y Té son las palabras por las que empiezan las dos partes de que consta su tratado y que, como sucede con el Pentateuco, le han servido para el nombre. Ambos títulos reunidos quieren decir *Libro de la razón suprema y de la virtud*.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 109)

Acto seguido, confronta al reformador Kun-futseu²⁷ con el meditabundo Lao-tseu. Mientras aquél aboga por «restablecer las bases de la moral

22 Mengzi o Mencio (孟子). Egregio discípulo de la escuela confucionista.

23 *Yì jīng*, *I Ching* o *I King* (易經) o *Libro de las mutaciones*. Libro oracular, uno de los Cinco Clásicos del canon confucionista, junto con *Shūjīng* (書經) o *Libro de la historia*, *Shījīng* (詩經) o *Clásico de la poesía*, *Lǐjīng* (禮經) o *Libro de los ritos* y *Chūnqiū* (春秋) o *Anales de primavera y otoño*.

24 Fuxi (伏羲), gobernador serpentiforme de la antigua China. Se le atribuye la invención de los sinogramas.

25 Las abundantes referencias bíblicas y cristianas en una obra de ciencia ficción como *El anacronópete* extrañan sobremanera, máxime si se examinan a la luz del darwinismo que profesaba Enrique Gaspar (Ayala, 1996) y su adhesión a las principales tesis científicas entonces en boga. Tal contradicción no traerá contrasentido siempre que tales referencias se entiendan como citas sapientes o efusiones cultas. Las humanidades tanto como las ciencias graduaban la sofisticación, la distinción y la ilustración (cualidades encomiadas en la época por todo europeo de alta posición social) de un hombre. Un polímata adonado con esos atributos debía (i) conocer los últimos avances científicos y (ii) versarse en historia, mitología, literatura, etcétera, de la propia tradición, y aún de otras tradiciones.

26 *Dàodé jīng* o *Tao Te Ching* (道德經), texto fundacional del taoísmo ontológico.

27 Confucio (孔子), insigne y crucial pensador chino del siglo VI a. e. c. Fundador de la escuela confucionista.

práctica de las sociedades primitivas» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 111), éste elige la soledad, el retiro y la no intervención. Enrique Gaspar condena la abulia frente a la crisis y acusa a los tao-ssé, adeptos degenerados del taoísmo, de haber pervertido la doctrina de Lao-tseu, cuya palabra desfiguraron con oscurantismo y «mágicas ficciones» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 114).²⁸ Obsérvese que los argumentos con los que encarece el confucionismo y abarata el taoísmo denotan un clasismo y un elitismo integrales: gentuza ignorante, embaucadora y perezosa desvirtuó la metafísica de Lao-tseu; mientras que la moral de Confucio, favorecida por los emperadores, fundó una escuela de letrados.

Enrique Gaspar conocía *grosso modo* la historia de China y en un alarde de erudición sinológica relata el juego del gato y el ratón entre confucionistas y taoístas, la Rebelión de los Turbantes Amarillos y el episodio en que los tao-ssé casi persuaden al crédulo emperador Wu²⁹ de haber despejado el enigma de la inmortalidad. Empero, su somera visión del taoísmo, sin ir más lejos, indirecta y con evidentes lagunas, no resiste una mínima inspección. La omisión de Zhuangzi,³⁰ cuya impronta está a la par y a la altura de la de Laozi, pone en jaque (si no desbarata) su ponencia.

De lado este defecto, es innegable que China lo fascinó, y esa fascinación no sólo le suscitó la idea (insatisfecha) de traducir el *Quijote* al chino, sino que se plasmó tanto en *Viaje a China* como en *El anacronópete*. Enrique Gaspar, no contento con haber viajado a la China de su tiempo, emprendió por fábula un viaje a la China del siglo III en una máquina de retroceder en el tiempo.

Ambos viajes literarios, el fingido y el real, se fundamentan en la cultu-

²⁸ El parangón que establece Enrique Gaspar entre el taoísmo y el cristianismo, aunado a su anticlericalismo, permiten sospechar que las acusaciones a los tao-ssé iban también (o en realidad) dirigidas contra la Iglesia.

²⁹ Emperador Wu de Han (漢武帝). Séptimo emperador de la dinastía Han, famoso por su afición a las ciencias ocultas, la alquimia taoísta, las pociones mágicas y las artes adivinatorias, así como por sus frecuentes visitas a la Reina Madre del Oeste (西王母), uno de los espíritus inmortales de la mitología china, comúnmente representada bajo apariencia humana (pero con fauces de tigre y cola de leopardo) y en compañía de un pájaro azul, un tigre blanco, un zorro de nueve colas y una liebre. La Reina Madre del Oeste conocía la ubicación de las hierbas de la inmortalidad.

³⁰ Zhuangzi, Chuang Tzu o Chuang Tse (莊子), maestro taoísta y base del taoísmo epistemológico.

ra sinológica de Enrique Gaspar, quien conocía China *in situ*, pero también a través de lo leído sobre historia, religiones y pensamiento chinos. Difícil de tasar es su grado de conocimiento del idioma. *El anacronópete* y *Viaje a China* acopian vocabulario chino, aunque no siempre acompañado de traducción o clarificando su significado. En Macao y Hong Kong pudo comunicarse en portugués e inglés, mas la curiosidad, el entusiasmo por lo exótico y la políglotía hubieron al menos de iniciarlo en una o varias de las lenguas sónicas autóctonas.

5 El primer viaje a China en una máquina del tiempo

Los anacronóbatas asisten a momentos históricos memorables, a cuál más convulso: la batalla de Tetuán en 1860, la caída del emirato nazarí de Granada en 1492, el naufragio de Pompeya en el mar de lava del Vesubio, el Diluvio Universal, etcétera. Entre tales lances se destaca uno: la China del siglo III, ocaso de la dinastía Han y albor de los Reinos Combatientes. Es el único destino prefijado antes de zarpar. A ningún otro tiempo o lugar consagra *El anacronópete* tantas páginas.

Un secreto como el de la vida eterna no podía adquirirse sino en China. El viaje al Celeste Imperio obceca a Benjamín, codicioso a toda costa de la inmortalidad. Es probable que este personaje fuese, si no su *alter ego* o trasunto suyo, el anacronóбата con quien más o mejor se identificó Enrique Gaspar. Benjamín es arqueólogo, paleógrafo y políglota, habla hebreo, sánscrito y chino, idioma este último en el que incluso sueña; a lo largo de la novela traduce nudos y otras varias escrituras, y sirve a sus compañeros de intérprete al interactuar con hablantes de otras lenguas. La inscripción en chino que descifra en la ajorca del tobillo de una momia echa a rodar el cuento.

Yo soy la esposa del emperador Hien-ti, enterrada viva por haber pretendido poseer el secreto de ser inmortal.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 36)

Don Sindulfo compra la momia *ipso facto* y corren de vuelta a casa

con los ojos haciéndoles chiribitas y una idea germinal: construir una máquina de retrogradación en el tiempo para viajar a la China del siglo III y hacerse inmortales.

El anacronópete aterriza en China en el 220, año funesto para la dinastía Han y fausto para el reino de Ouei.³¹ Esa fecha coyuntural brinda a Enrique Gaspar un fondo de ficción esotérica (durante la dinastía Han el confucionismo había absorbido las teorías del yin y el yang y de los cinco elementos)³² idónea para enmarcar la expedición de los anacronóbatas en pos de la vida eterna y el primer viaje a China en una máquina del tiempo. La descripción de la corte imperial china calca el exotismo de los palacios de *Las mil y una noches* y acusa la misma hipérbole, suntuosidad, pompa y maravilla de los libros de viajes: mármoles, gemas, tibores, doncellas y lujo en profusión. A la hora de exponer la cortesía y el ceremonial de los chinos, Enrique Gaspar cita a Cantú y parafrasea a «sinólogos» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 126) cuyos nombres no consigna.³³ Por otra parte, la pugna entre China y Occidente, que personifican Hien-ti y Benjamín con un intercambio de objetos, suspende a los anacronóbatas y les aplica (sobre todo a Benjamín) una cura rotunda de humildad. Con la derrota sin paliativos de Benjamín, no sólo se reafirma la tesis declinista de *El anacronópete*: todo tiempo pasado fue mejor, sino que se pone en solfa la creencia en la supremacía occidental y el eurocentrismo, muy extendidos en época de Enrique Gaspar y aún hoy día.

Benjamín media entre los anacronóbatas y los chinos (el lector aquí deberá conceder que la lengua china del siglo III se condice con la que Benjamín ha aprendido en el siglo XIX) y declara sin ambages quiénes son: «habitantes de la región occidental», de dónde (es decir, cuándo) y a qué han venido: «para inquirir el principio de la inmortalidad predicado por los Tao-ssé» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 130). Hien-ti y su valido Tsao-pi,³⁴ hijo del prócer Tsao-tsao,³⁵ juzgan a los anacronóbatas

31 Reino de Wei (曹魏), unas de las dinastías chinas de los Tres Reinos (三國).

32 Agua (水), tierra (土), fuego (火), metal (金) y madera (木).

33 Se refiere al historiador Cesare Cantú. *El anacronópete* es una de las primeras obras de ficción que recoge el tecnicismo *sinólogo*.

34 Cao Pi (曹丕), fundador de la dinastía Wei.

35 Cao Cao (曹操), último primer ministro de la dinastía Han, estratega legendario y figura primordial en el lapso histórico de los Tres Reinos.

sectarios taoístas; mas como el emperador, «hombre corrompido, de condición viciosa» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 125),³⁶ llamea de lúbrico entusiasmo por Clara, resuelven deshacerse solamente de don Sindulfo y Benjamín. Una vez ejecutados el inventor y el políglota, Hien-ti desposará a la muchacha y la hará su concubina.

La momia de la ajorca es la emperatriz Sun-ché (o Sun-che o Sunché),³⁷ a quien Hien-ti había emparedado viva después de sorprenderla en tratos con los tao-ssé. Retrotraída hasta ese instante, el de su momificación, sin el aislamiento que procura el fluido García, Sun-ché resucita y sale del sarcófago. Luis y los húsares, dados por muertos capítulos atrás, reaparecen a tiempo para cambiar la historia y acabar con Hien-ti a flechazos y al grito de «¡Viva España!» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 158). Es aquí donde la zarzuela alcanza su apogeo: de vuelta al anacronópete, Sun-ché se ha unido a la expedición, olvidándose de la rebelión que acaudillaba, presa de amor por don Sindulfo, con quien ya se imagina compartiendo el trono de Fo-hi.

–Partamos, que ya libres del monstruo, la que fue dueña de un imperio podrá abandonarse a la irresistible atracción que por ti siente y tendrá orgullo en llamarse tu esclava.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 158)

Sun-ché informa a Benjamín de que el secreto de la inmortalidad yace en Pompeya bajo una estatua. Retroceden hasta la ciudad del Vesubio, horas antes de su erupción, y exhuman de debajo de la estatua de Nerón la supuesta fórmula de la inmortalidad, escrita en nudos.

La elección de China no es arbitraria. Al hecho de que Enrique Gaspar viviese allí debe añadirse que China para Occidente ha sido tradicionalmente el país de las maravillas, de los elixires, de las alfombras voladoras y de los dragones. Maravilló a viajeros portentosos como Ibn

³⁶ Ante la falta de datos históricos que refrenden la depravación del emperador, cabe suponer que la descripción de Enrique Gaspar responde a un fin utilitario: la creación de un personaje vil y caricaturesco que despierte las antipatías del público (de la zarzuela) y de los lectores (de la novela).

³⁷ En la novela aparece escrito el nombre de la emperatriz de estas tres maneras. Tal inconsistencia parece sugerir el carácter ficticio del personaje.

Battuta, inspiró versos a Rubén Darío y cuentos, sueños y bestiarios a Jorge Luis Borges; atesora objetos encantados.

Al fin de las ciudades de China se conservaba en una gruta un tesoro fabuloso. Y lo más maravilloso era que en dicho tesoro había una lámpara prodigiosa.³⁸

(Anónimo, 2000, p. 122)

6 La decepción

A partir del siglo XX, la ficción científica de los viajes en el tiempo reta la inteligencia con paradojas temporales. *El anacronópete* (tampoco *La máquina del tiempo* de Wells), ciertamente, no juega con tales paradojas; sin embargo, encierra una paradoja (tan fortuita como el laísmo de King-seng) sensacional: la novela parodia un género en ciernes, el de la ciencia ficción. *El anacronópete*, queriendo o sin querer, parodia los viajes en el tiempo y las máquinas fabricadas *ad hoc* con ese fin. He ahí que parodiante y parodiado convergen en un mismo plano: *El anacronópete*. Al ridiculizar un género que inaugura o preludia (el de los viajes en el tiempo a bordo de una máquina), la novela de Enrique Gaspar deviene en paródica caricaturización de sí misma. Toda parodia requiere (piénsese en el *Quijote*) algo preexistente, por lo común, solemne o grave, cuyos rasgos deforma y exagera con ánimo de burla. En *El anacronópete*, al no haberlo, la parodia da vueltas en círculo o en espiral hasta precipitarse convertida en autoparodia.

El anacronópete es (salvando el abismo) a la ciencia ficción lo que el *Quijote* a los libros de caballerías. Hasta las últimas consecuencias: así como don Quijote retorna a la razón, que es como despertar del sueño, don Sindulfo despierta del sueño para poner las cosas en orden, esto es, entrarlas en razón y ofrecer una explicación razonable de lo ocurrido. Ahora bien, la novela de Cervantes termina en alto; *El anacronópete*, por el contrario, arruina el no escaso crédito que había acumulado con

³⁸ También para los árabes China era fuente de fascinaciones, tanto que el objeto más fabuloso que fabricó su imaginación, la lámpara mágica de Aladino, se escondía en el interior de una de sus cuevas.

un paño caliente vergonzoso.

Corrían los últimos años del siglo XIX y Enrique Gaspar, escarmantado por el fiasco de *El anacronópete* teatral, quizá se acobardase o cuando menos temiese una reacción adversa por parte de los lectores de su novela. Viajar al pasado, además de inverosímil, atentaba contra los usos de una sociedad tecnófoba y mojjigata (Saiz Cidoncha, 1988). Tal vez por ello, para dotar el relato de pies y cabeza, culpase a Morfeo del embrollo. Fruto de un sueño no turbaría a nadie, o turbaría menos que asumir la probabilidad cabal del hecho.

Llegado el momento, el visionario pisa al frente, se distingue y abre paso. Enrique Gaspar recejó o se quedó en la fila y emplastó unas líneas nefandas para amortiguar la novela. El autor de *El anacronópete* fue consciente de haber dejado la obra *in albis* y cometido traición imperdonable al desguazar el anacronópete por bajeza o cobardía. De ahí la escritura sincopada, el tono contrito y derrotista, la falta de convicción de este emplasto final.

Y no obstante hay que reconocer que mi obra tiene por lo menos un mérito: el de que un hijo de España se haya atrevido a tratar de deshacer el tiempo.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 227)

Para Hesles (2012), la impericia de Enrique Gaspar echó la novela a perder. Es poco plausible, acaso también ilógico. El *fiat lux* (*fiat umbra* más bien) en un teatro donde se representa *La vuelta al mundo en ochenta días* no obedece a ineptitud, sino a apocamiento. Sin ser un escritor extraordinario, Enrique Gaspar conocía el oficio. Antes de *El anacronópete* había escrito cumplidamente numerosas obras, juguetes cómicos, sátiras, zarzuelas, etcétera (Kirschenbaum, 1944): *El piano parlante* (1863), *Las circunstancias* (1867), *La can-canomanía* (1869), *El estómago* (1871), *Atila* (1876), *La resurrección de Lázaro* (1878), *La lengua* (1882), etcétera. No parece pues de recibo concluir que no supo zanjear o resolver la novela, sobre todo habiendo dejado escrito, párrafo arriba, un final magnífico, deslumbrador, donde ciencia y fe, Darwin y

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Dios, libran un pulso (o un baile) mayestático.

(...) Benjamín con la vista clavada en el telescopio asistía al desfile de la descomposición de la naturaleza. Ora, al cruzar la antigua Hélade, robaba sus secretos a la mitología apercibiéndose de que los cíclopes no eran más que los primeros explotadores de las minas bajando a las entrañas de la tierra con una linterna en la frente, convertida por los poetas en un ojo; ya al cortar los confines de Asia y de las Américas, sorprendía que los siberianos habían sido los pobladores de las regiones descubiertas por Colón, pues los veía atravesar en caravanas, lo que entonces era un istmo, abierto más tarde por las aguas para formar el estrecho de Behring; el Mediterráneo no existía; los Alpes eran una llanura; el desierto de Lybia un mar. Tras los hijos de Caín, aparecía el cadáver de Abel: después del Paraíso la Creación.

(Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 224)

Un fognazo de luz formidable que no hace presagiar el indigno telón de oscuridad que acto seguido y a plomo horrorizará al lector actual: don Sindulfo «se había dormido y había soñado» (Gaspar y Rimbau, 2005, p. 226).

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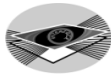
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Gateways, Placements, and Grouping: Automating the C-Test for Language Proficiency Ranking

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Abstract

Foreign language departments with the goal of advanced literacy require optimizing student learning, especially at the initial stages of the program. Current practices for admission and placement mainly rely on students' grades from previous studies, which may be the main reason why intra-group language proficiency often varies dramatically. One essential step for creating an environment that enables students to progress according to their skill level is the development of assessment procedures for admission and placement. Such assessment must prominently include proficiency in the target language. This article promotes the incorporation of an automated C-test into gateway and placement procedures as an instrument that ranks candidates according to general language proficiency. It starts with a review of the literature on aspects of validity of the C-Test construct and contains an outline of the functional design of such an automated C-Test. The article highlights the economic benefits of an automated C-Test platform and the central role of proficiency-based student placement for the success of programs aiming to develop advanced literacy in a foreign language. The findings implicate that developing and using the outlined C-Test platform has the potential to increase student achievement in advanced foreign language instruction significantly.

Keywords: Admission Gateway Testing; Language Proficiency Testing; Homogeneity; Grading; Differentiated Language Instruction; Ability Grouping

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Gateways, Placements, and Grouping: Automating the C-Test for Language Proficiency Ranking

One of the pervasive challenges of foreign language classrooms is the diversity of students' levels of language proficiency (Sun, Fan, & Chin, 2017, p. 249; Cohen & Lotan, 2014, Chapter 2; Daud, Daud, & Kassim, 2005, p. 3 ff. Dutcher, 2018, Chapter 6; Harmer, 2010, pp. 14–19; Reese, 2011; Wunsch, 2009). MA programs admit students from different universities according to their BA grades, and advancing through the stages of any program requires a passing grade in the previous level (Mozgalina & Ryshina-Pankova, 2015, p. 347). However, grade-calculation principles vary between institutions and even between teachers in the same institution (cf. Alderson, 2017; Alderson, Brunfaut, & Harding, 2015, p. 242 ff. Xie, 2015; Gamaroff, 2000). Grades therefore do not reflect an objectively comparable selection factor.

For all students to achieve the same educational goal, proficiency-heterogeneous classrooms require differentiated educational measures according to their different proficiency levels (Tomlinson, 2014; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014; Stöger & Ziegler, 2013, p. 7). Provisions against unintended heterogeneity in the admission process, such as requiring a certified advanced Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) proficiency level,¹ often fail due to issues with inter-rater reliability (e.g. Huang, Kubelec, Keng, & Hsu, 2018; Deygers, Van Gorp, & Demeester, 2018; Díez-Bedmar, 2012). The results of those tests are considered valid and reliable, but there are significant differences between a passing grade and full points (Dunlea & Figueras, 2012). Furthermore, the question of equivalence of test results and the comparability between testing facilities is still under debate (Alder-

1 In the field of German as a Foreign Language (GFL), the established testing institutions – Goethe, Telc, TestDaf, ÖSD – offer summative German GLP assessment according to the CEFR as a paid service. These widely recognized benchmark-assessments test the four foundational language skill areas of reading, writing, listening, and writing in multi-hour sessions.

son, 2017; Xie, 2015; Newbold, 2012; Knapp, 2011, p. 652). Therefore, whenever language skills are a factor, grouping according to the results of an in-house general language proficiency (GLP) test is a viable alternative (Norouzian & Plonsky, 2018, p. 396). Administering a reliable language test, which produces a ranked list of all candidates according to their current overall language proficiency, would be a consistent instrument for informing admission decisions regarding a candidate's language skills and allow grouping admitted students accordingly (cf. Norouzian & Plonsky, 2018, p. 396; Mozgalina & Ryshina-Pankova, 2015). Selecting the most suitable candidates according to GLP could simultaneously raise admission fairness and have positive effects on students' achievement. Students' general language proficiency is the key study tool for any foreign language-related program, regardless of the program's specialization, be it literary studies, teacher training, or translation studies.

One reason why foreign language departments, especially smaller ones teaching other than the mainstream languages, shy away from testing candidates in-house may be rooted in test economy:² Designing a reliable and valid test each year is a very demanding and specialized task. Deploying and grading tests also consumes resources, even if – for the sake of economy – they do not contain lengthy written parts.

This article proposes an online GLP test as an economical solution to the gateway problem. Taking its cue from the writing section of the TestDaF, one of the most prominent German-language tests,³ it outlines

² Test economy here refers to the cost/benefit ratio in testing. For detailed definitions of terms used in this article, refer to section 1.4 below.

³ The 'Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache' (TestDaF) is a standardized language test for foreign students applying for entry to an institution of higher education in Germany. Non-native speakers planning to study at a German university have to pass either TestDaF or DSH. TestDaF is offered in 96 countries worldwide and counted more than 44,000 test takers in 2016 (Norris & Drackert, 2018, p. 149). Normally level 4, the second of three levels (with 3 being the lowest and 5 the highest), is sufficient for passing the language requirements of German universities (Gesellschaft für Akademische Studienvorbereitung und Testentwicklung e. V. & TestDaF-Institut, 2017b). The same institution develops the 'Online Language Placement Test' (onSET formerly onDaF), an online placement test based on the C-Test. Currently available for German and English, it aims to "offer online placement tests for a whole range of modern languages at as many university language centres as possible" (Gesellschaft für Akademische Studienvorbereitung und Testentwicklung e. V. & TestDaF-Institut, 2017a).

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the design of an automated C-Test platform for gateway and placement testing. Relying on an expandable corpus of texts, the proposed platform produces a vast quantity of different C-Tests for any number of candidates while minimizing administrative time and effort. Supervision and test administration modalities can be adapted according to the stakes in the outcome. High- and medium-stakes testing, such as gateway and placement testing, need to have some level of supervision as precaution against cheating. Individual students may take the test unsupervised at their leisure as an economical screening-test.⁴

1 Introductory Considerations

1.1 Research Question

In order to solve the above outlined problem of test economy, the question this article aims to answer is how to design an automated test that improves the existing gateway and placement system of foreign language departments. It departs on the proposition that in a situation where language proficiency is the major factor for students enrolled in an advanced language program being able to graduate, a test for general language proficiency is an adequate basis for admission to and for placement in language programs. Bachman (2005, pp. 18–21) states that as long as the test's ability to measure what the program requires, testing is a superior alternative to relying on previous grades. This paper's base hypothesis is that test economy is the major factor preventing institutions from using in-house generated test data (Bachman, 2005, p. 24). Administering and grading tests is work intensive and time consuming – especially if one needs to create a new test every time the program admits or places students. Only extensive, long-term qualitative studies may provide an answer to the question whether institutions and teachers will actually revert to testing if the tests are economical, i.e. easy to administer and effortless to grade. Here the focus is set on the question:

⁴ Before taking an expensive official test, some students wish to confirm their proficiency with the results of an independent and objective C-Test.

How can language proficiency ranking be automated to the point of effortless efficiency?

1.2 Method

Based on the hypothesis that institutions avoid using their own tests in gateway and advancement decisions for reasons of test economy, this article analyzes the bottlenecks in testing by means of literature review. The problematic points are then individually resolved by sketching out an automated test for general foreign language proficiency.

The aim is to outline the design and functionality of an automated C-Test platform for language proficiency testing for the purposes of gateway testing and student placement in institutions for advanced foreign language studies. Secondary purposes, such as self-evaluation, are not the focus of this article.

The C-Test is a summative test for GLP and not intended for diagnostic or formative purposes. An automated version of the C-Test solves problems of test economy, thereby allowing foreign language institutions to do their own testing. Being able to rank students according to identical standards allows institutions to admit candidates who fit their requirements and place them in groups with peers who show similar language proficiency. This study relies on secondary literature when concerned with the theory of testing in general and the C-Test as measure for GLP in particular. The fundamental outline of the technical aspects of the proposed platform is based on general computer and web programming facts and the author's personal coding experience.

1.3 Outline

This article consists of three parts. The Literature Review summarizes and discusses the theory of general language proficiency testing, the evolution of the C-Test, and its validity as a test of GLP. After intro-

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ducing the historical development from cloze to C-Test in terms of construct principles, this section will make the argument that the C-Test is well-fitted for automation, and that with regards to test economy, a web-based, fully automated C-Test platform is an excellent solution for gateway and placement testing (Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006, p. 290). It also discusses the argument for in-house testing as opposed to relying on previous grades.

The second part outlines the functional design of an automated online C-Test platform with usage examples for its practical application. It will give two examples for using the platform, one for institutional testing and the other for individual self-administered assessment, followed by an outline of how academic research may profit from it. The aim for this section is to invoke examples of general usage in institutions teaching foreign languages; readers may be inspired to infer approaches fitting their unique testing needs. The third section discusses several technical details crucial to the functioning of the platform.

1.4 Operational Definitions

This article frequently uses the key terms Ranking, Tracking, and Test Economy, which in different contexts might have different interpretations and need clarification.

Ranking: The C-Test construct is designed to measure general language proficiency (see sec. 3). Its output can take the form of an absolute statement (see Figure 3: Results of a Self-administered C-Test in sec. 4) or a list that ranks candidates hierarchically in relation to their respective results. The aim of ranking candidates according to their general proficiency in the target language is to draw inferences about each candidate's relative performance in order to select and group students with similar GLP levels. This kind of test is summative in nature, and it is not part of the teaching process (McNamara, 2011, p. 613; Huhta, 2008, p. 473). Contrary to the binary logic of a benchmark test such as level A, B, or C according to CEFR, where the goal is to determine whether

or not the candidate's skills conform to a predetermined standard, ranking candidates according to their skill-level demands an open-ended rating scale of assessment (Jones & Saville, 2008, p. 498; Knapp, 2011, p. 646).⁵

In gateway testing situations where all candidates fulfill the basic requirements and the number of admission slots is limited, ranking allows administrators to fill these slots with candidates who are most proficient in the tested skills. For placement purposes, a ranked list allows administrators to decide on homogeneous or intentional skill-heterogeneous groups. Therefore, in the context of this article, ranking denotes the presentation of a test outcome in the form of an ordered list with the highest scores on top.

In contrast to Steenbergen-Hu et al. (2016, p. 850), this article does not limit the purpose of placement ranking for ability grouping to produce homogeneous learner groups. Planned heterogeneity or “cluster-grouping” (ibid., 851) may be very effective under certain conditions (cf. Odendahl, 2016) and improve peer-assisted learning results (cf. Nesmith, 2018; Odendahl, 2017; Smith, 2017; Tempel-Milner, 2018). Unplanned heterogeneity in language proficiency may result from inadequate selection procedures and is generally undesirable in foreign language classes. Therefore, regardless of the grouping goal, it is imperative to have reliable evidence to base the grouping on.

Ability grouping and tracking: In placement practice, the terms ability grouping and tracking are often used synonymously. Some academics use the term tracking in reference to distributing students into different classes, reserving the term grouping for placement within classes (Loveless, 2013, p. 13). The usage adopted by this article concurs with researchers such as Tieso, who define tracking as “[placement of students] into streams or tracks from which they never escape” (2003, p. 29). By contrast, ability grouping is a more flexible, non-permanent form of distributing students in homogeneous learning groups (Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016, pp. 850–851). Tracking, under the name

5 For a detailed discussion of proficiency scales and problems of validation see North (2000).

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of ability grouping, was widely practiced in U.S. school systems from the 1960s to the 1990s, when vocal criticism from equity advocates,⁶ most notably Robert Slavin (1987, 1990, 1993) and Jeannie Oakes (1985, 1986a, 1986b), contributed to its disuse in the public school system. Very similar practices, however, remain in use under different aliases, such as “streaming, setting, sorting, classroom organization or composition, and classroom assignment” (Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016, p. 856).

Test economy: The overall ratio between cost spent for testing and its benefit is here referred to as test economy.⁷ The cost of testing includes aspects of money, time, and effort spent on creating, administering, and grading (cf. Moosbrugger & Kelava, 2011, p. 21; Gnamb, Batinic, & Hertel, 2011, p. 8; Hornke, 2006, p. 434). Furthermore, testing takes not only a toll on teachers and administrative staff, but also on the candidates, who take the test and deal with its outcome. These expenditures have to be matched by the benefits from its outcome. It is therefore of utmost importance to determine exactly what purpose a given test should serve before proceeding. Here, the intended outcome is to find the most fitting students to join an advanced program, thus heightening the chances that participants will be able to graduate. While it seems worthwhile to expend a lot of effort on such an important goal, the most economical ratio always is to spend as little as necessary in order to gain as much as possible. With a favorable ratio, the same test can also be deployed for secondary goals, such as grouping students into skill-homogeneous classrooms. These requirements build on and conform in essence with Lienert and Raatz (1994, p. 12), who define a test as economical if a) its administration requires little time, b) it consumes little material, c) it is easy to handle, d) it may be administered as a group test, and e) its grading is fast and convenient. Hornke (2006, p. 434) enumerates the stakeholders in economical testing as the candidates, the department, the administering staff, and designers.⁸

6 Advocates for equity, or social equality “have opposed the practice [of ability grouping/tracking] on principle as undermining social goals of equity and fairness in our society” (Braddock & Slavin, 1992, p. 5). Relying on Deutsch (1975), Messick (1989, p. 86) discusses the multiple sources of potential injustice which may be salient in any particular setting.

7 For an overview of the impact of language testing and washback effects, see Shohamy (2017); for the impact of computer technology on testing see Chappelle & Voss (2017).

8 Hornke, departing from a standardization standpoint with ISO norms in mind, uses the terms

Therefore, in judging the economic properties of the proposed C-Test platform, the key metrics are availability, reliability, affordability, and convenience.

- In terms of availability, a test needs to be always accessible, using as few tools as possible. For example, an online version of a test will score higher in availability than the paper equivalent, which has to be physically carried around and distributed. It is more available than a specialized computer program or app, which are custom-made for one platform, such as Windows[®], Macintosh[®], Linux[®], iOS[®] or Android[®]. This class of computer programs need advance installation on a machine present at the time of testing. In addition, a mobile-accessible user interface scores better on availability than one that can only be accessed on larger computer screens.
- Reliability includes the specialist term from testing research as likelihood of getting the same result when testing several times under the same conditions (cf. Feldt & Brennan, 1989; Haertel, 2006; Dunlea & Figueras, 2012; Newbold, 2012). Here, it also refers to the stability of the test medium – an unreliable computer program or wet paper tests would get a lower score.
- The criterion of affordability includes monetary expenses, labor cost, time, and effort. Affordability affects both administrators and candidates.
- Convenience covers aspects of affordability and availability and applies to administrative aspects as well as the candidate's perspective.

Test economy is a major factor when considering in-house testing. In a medium-stakes situation like admission for a master's program, the admitting institution might be willing to spend considerable time and effort to devise their own test for establishing candidates' language proficiency. However, in order to prevent leaking, such a test would have to be modified for each use, which poses a major drain on resources. This

client and contractor instead of department and administrating staff, and the term researchers instead of designers. In his words, the candidates do not want to be unduly strained with testing, the client does not want to spend more money than necessary, the contractors needs to keep their efforts in relation to a reliable outcome and the researchers need to optimize the test according to their grants (Hornke, 2006, p. 434).

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holds true for gateway and placement testing alike.

Homogeneous versus heterogeneous grouping: The practice of placing students homogeneously according to their current proficiency is the topic of an extensive ongoing discussion (Brulles, Saunders, & Cohn, 2010; Henry, 2015; Kim, 2012; Missett, Brunner, Callahan, Moon, & Azano, 2014; Nesmith, 2018; Robinson, 2008; Schofield, 2010; Tempel-Milner, 2018; Vogl & Preckel, 2014). The dispute whether or not homogeneous ability grouping benefits student achievement is mainly a controversy about educational values revolving around equality and is still unresolved. In an oft-cited meta-study, Slavin (1990) concludes there is no evidence for positive or negative effects of ability grouping on student achievement. However, Slavin's sources all use academic achievement as the norm of measurement instead of independent testing with compatible standards. Newer studies, still based on academic achievement, suggest a significant impact of homogeneous ability grouping on students' academic achievement (cf. Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016).

The most-cited risk of homogeneous placement is the phenomenon of fixed tracking, where students are stuck with a label after one-time placement. On the positive side, as Oakes stated early on, tracking might prevent “less-capable students [from suffering] emotional as well as educational damage from daily classroom contact and competition with their brighter peers” (1986a, pp. 3–4), a claim repeated up to the present time (eg. Glock & Böhmer, 2018, p. 244). On the other hand, Oakes found that “literature suggests that students at all ability levels can achieve at least as well in heterogeneous classrooms” (1986a, pp. 3–4), which also applies to recent research (eg. Francis et al., 2017; Hornstra, van der Veen, Peetsma, & Volman, 2014). A large meta-analysis on the effects of ability grouping indicates that subject grouping and special groups for the gifted have positive effects on the performance of gifted students (Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016). Negative effects of ability grouping have been shown for low attaining (Francis et al., 2017), socio-economically disadvantaged (Henry, 2015), or ethnic minority (Glock & Böhmer, 2018) students. Permanent tracking not only influences stu-

dents' self-esteem, but also leads to varying teacher expectations, thus perpetuating the initial placement in a vicious cycle (Bernhardt, 2014; Harris, 2012; Oakes, 1985, p. 8).

With regard to equity and equality in education, increasing placement frequency helps avoid the negative effects of tracking. Re-placing students in frequent intervals means increased mobility between groups and counters the negative effects of tracking on student performance. Robinson (2008) found that level-appropriate instruction as the result of homogeneous grouping significantly helped with reading literacy instruction. The same may also apply to the field of foreign languages. With homogeneous groups, administration and teachers can customize their learning environment and progression speed to their students' current proficiency. Differentiated syllabi for parallel classes cater to the student's needs and allow for focused contents. When aiming for teaching efficacy, regardless of one's views on heterogeneous versus homogeneous ability grouping, the ultimate prerogative is having valid data on the current level of students as the deciding placement factor.

In summary, grouping students in classes according to their current proficiency does not necessarily mean homogeneous placement. Since there is ample evidence that low-achieving students' academic performance benefits from interacting with high-achieving classmates (Schofield, 2010, p. 1505), testing for valid and current proficiency data also provides a chance for planned heterogeneity.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of the C-Test

The C-Test is a special form of cloze test developed in the beginning of the 1980s by Christine Klein-Braley and Ulrich Raatz (Klein-Braley, 1983; Raatz & Klein-Braley, 1983). It measures GLP by reducing redundancy in texts with fixed-ratio deletion of the second half of every sec-

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ond word. The various claims made by this short definition of the C-Test have been the subject of extensive academic discussion and need to be qualified. With the goal of ranking students according to their proficiency in a foreign language in mind, the following paragraphs will discuss the validity of the C-Test construct and match it to its practical application as an automated platform for gateway and placement testing.

Having language students⁹ fill in blanks in a text is a traditional measure in language teaching and testing. By filling in the right word and adapting the grammatical form of that word to its surroundings, students can demonstrate their grasp of the subject matter, the extent of their vocabulary, and their grammatical prowess.

One of the features of fill-in-the-blanks tests is their adaptability for specific¹⁰ purposes, but the resulting tests often lack the authenticity of natural language. Another major drawback, especially when grading tests with the help of templates, is the occurrence of unplanned ambiguity, i.e. multiple solutions applying to a blank without the designer realizing this during construction. In language testing, carefully designed and targeted fill-in-the-blanks tests can serve in assessing certain specific language phenomena, but fall short when evaluating general language proficiency.¹¹

GLP testing is summative¹² in nature and often includes a whole battery of vocabulary, phonetic, and grammatical tests for the different skills, such as reading, listening, writing, and speaking. In order to render

9 In many subjects, teachers design fill-in-the-blanks tests in order to test specific factual knowledge, acquired skills, or proficiency. Where history students might need to provide the exact date of the battle of Hastings, students of German would have to fill in, for example, the gendered articles for nouns, subjunctives, or the declension of adjectives.

10 In theory, very long fill-in-the-blanks tests will eventually present a blank for most morphological and semantic phenomena, thus revealing the candidate's general language proficiency. The practicality of this approach is severely limited by the size of such a test, a fact that has contributed to developing the fixed-ratio approach used by the cloze procedure.

11 Spolsky (1985, p. 180) identifies three areas of language proficiency: Structural proficiency in the form of grammar or structural description of a language, functional proficiency in the various uses to which a language can be put, and general proficiency, which sees language as an indivisible body of knowledge that can be measured in individuals.

12 The purpose of formative testing is to assess a candidate's mastery of a given program's objectives, thereby simultaneously obtaining information on the efficacy of the program itself. In summative evaluation however, the question is whether the candidate can use language efficiently outside the classroom and the limitations of textbooks (cf. Bachman, 1990, p. 62).

summative language testing more economical, Taylor (1953) introduced the cloze test as a single test unit to replace the battery of tests involved before. Cloze is a variation of fill-in-the-blanks tests, where instead of purposefully deleting certain morphologically meaningful entities, every n^{th} word is automatically replaced by a blank. This kind of systematic deletion regardless of morphology or semantics is called fixed-ratio deletion as opposed to rational deletion (cf. Bachman, 1985, p. 536). Cloze tests may be an indicator of lexical and grammatical competence (cf. Jonz, 1990; Alderson, 1979a, 1979b) as well as of discourse competence (John W. Oller & Conrad, 1971; John William Oller, 1979). Although there is “no firm consensus as to what aspects of linguistic competence cloze tests measure, their scores correlate highly with standardized proficiency scores” (Tremblay, 2011, p. 344).

The cloze procedure makes use of one of the “vital truths about language, the fact that language is redundant” (Spolsky, 1968, p. 5). Redundancy in natural language is important in order to convey unequivocal meaning and to overcome disruptions, such as acoustic interferences during a conversation or bad print in written communication. These disruptions, summarily called noise, make comprehension difficult by overlaying meaningful parts of the message and thus causing a reduction in the original amount of redundancy.¹³ Spolsky goes on to analyze that the ability of understanding a distorted message can be taken as a sign that the recipient has a thorough understanding of that language and that “someone who doesn’t understand the language well [...] just cannot function” with distorted or incomplete messages (Spolsky, 1968, p. 9). Thus, being able to understand a distorted message is a strong indicator of language proficiency in learners.

The principle of fixed-ratio deletion simulates naturally occurring communication noise for the purpose of GLP testing. Although cloze tests can produce reliable assessments, they have a considerable number of deficiencies in practical usage (cf. Khoshdel-Niyat, 2017, pp. 1–2). (1) In

13 This lack of redundancy has turned out to be a technical problem for the engineers of early telephone companies (cf. Shannon, 1948), who battled with severe acoustic interference threatening the efficacy of telephone conversations. Having the financial interest of industry backing may have helped motivate further research into the phenomenon of reduced redundancy.

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order to have a sufficient number of items, cloze tests need to be very long. (2) Using one long text may turn the test overly specific and thus biased; it might occur that a participant gets a bad result because of her lack of understanding the contents of the text rather than due to her lack of language skills. (3) The blanks in cloze tests still are prone to unplanned ambiguity, which makes scoring time consuming and sometimes subjective. (4) Cloze tests are not automatically valid tests of language proficiency; their difficulty depends on the deleted words rather than on the deletion method (Alderson, 1983, p. 213).

The C-Test was designed to overcome the drawbacks of the cloze procedure (Raatz & Klein-Braley, 1983). Where the cloze eliminates every *n*th word (usually every 5th) from a given text, the C-Test erases the second half of every second word.

“Indeed, the weakness that Klein-Braley (1981) spotted in the cloze test was its use of the word, a more or less linguistic unit, as the unit to be deleted, and as she showed, this very fact meant that a specific cloze test was biased towards measuring specific structural features. The new C-Test that Raatz and Klein-Braley (1982) have proposed overcomes this by deleting not words but parts of words; it is thus further from being a measure of structural ability, and so closer to a general measure.”

(Spolsky, 1985, p. 188)

A C-Test normally consists of five¹⁴ increasingly difficult, content-neutral, target-group adequate, non-fictional, non-dialogical, authentic short texts of 80-100 words each, each containing approximately 20 blanks, resulting in 100 blanks per test (cf. Klein-Braley, 1997, p. 64).

The increased frequency of deletions allows the combination of five short texts with 20 blanks each, thus reducing problems (1) and (2), i.e. the economy/ bias/ validity complex.¹⁵ The measure of replacing

¹⁴ Raatz and Klein-Braley (1985, p. 20) use “six texts with around 60-70 words” which are then turned into C-Tests for calibration with native speakers. After an extensive calibration process, only four texts remain, resulting in a C-Test with 80 blanks.

¹⁵ “A classical cloze test using a 5th word deletion rate would have to be at least 500 words long

the second half of words with blanks makes use of the redundancy in natural languages, tests grammatical knowledge simultaneously with vocabulary, and addresses the ambiguity problem (3) of cloze tests.¹⁶

C-Tests are a summative form of assessment and instructionally insensitive, i.e. they do not per se refer to any specific teaching material, nor do they reflect the teacher's educational skills (cf. Popham et al., 2014, p. 305). C-Tests have been developed for more than 20 languages (Eckes & Baghaei, 2015, p. 85). Among other advantages, the C-Test as a highly computer-adaptable test for GLP is ideal as a ranking tool for purposes of gateway testing and placement testing (Eckes & Baghaei, 2015, p. 85; Klein-Braley, 1997, pp. 65–66).

2.2 C-Test Validity Studies

The question of validity of the C-Test construct has been the topic of papers spanning four decades. Today, there is ample evidence that the C-Test is a valid measure of GLP (Drackert, 2016, p. 184; Sumbling, Viladrich, Doval, & Riera, 2014; Baghaei & Grotjahn, 2014; Tabatabaei & Mirzaei, 2014; Khodadady, 2014; Rouhani, 2008; Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006, pp. 294–300; 315; Chapelle, 1994, p. 175). Strong indicators for this claim are the high correlation between C-Tests and other language tests, factorial structure, and its fit to the Rasch model (Khoshdel-Niyat, 2017; Eckes & Baghaei, 2015; Baghaei, 2010; Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006; Sigott, 2004).

In particular, Eckes & Grotjahn (2006) have shown a significant correlation between C-Tests and other language tests in both receptive and productive skills. Pointing to the consistent correlation of the C-Test's results with other language tests, the vast majority of research confirms the constructs' validity as a test of GLP. Nevertheless, disputes about

to contain 100 items. A C-Test consisting of five texts with 20 half-deleted words would be only approximately half as long." (Klein-Braley, 1997, p. 65).

¹⁶ Grotjahn, who did not adhere to the strict rule of deleting exactly half of every other word, encountered several problems with ambiguity in French and Spanish C-Tests, which forced him to increase the number of texts used in the calibration phase. He recommends to "start developing a C-Test with at least twice as many texts as the test will eventually consist of" (Grotjahn, 1987, p. 223).

the validity of C-Test results regarding isolated skills exist (cf. Chapelle, 1994). Roos (1996a) tried with limited success to adapt the C-Test to the agglutinating language Japanese. Arras and Grotjahn (1994) found that Chinese C-Tests tend to test rather the ability of reading and writing Chinese characters than GLP, a result that Roos (1996b) reproduced for Japanese kanji characters. Jafarpur (1995) criticizes a lack of face validity, when his candidates compared the appearance of a C-Test to a puzzle rather than a language test. Therefore, the C-Test construct is valid for testing GLP in inflected languages, but if the goal is assessing isolated skills in listening, speaking, or grammar, one should resort to specialized tests (cf. Dresemann & Traxel, 2005, p. 278).

3 The Case for an Online C-Test Platform

The proposed automated platform can generate, administer, and grade unique C-Tests for any number of candidates. Generating a new C-Test only requires filling in five items of information, which should take less than a minute (see Figure 1: Gateway Testing – Creating a Unique C-Test in the Platform below). The preset testing time for a standard five-text, hundred-item test is 40 minutes, and grading is instantaneous. It is therefore an economical solution for ranking large or small groups of candidates according to their general language proficiency. As Dresemann and Traxl (2005, p. 277) pointed out, many teachers shy away from testing because of a lack of time or a perceived lack in competence. Once testing does not take much time and very little effort, the C-Test platform could also help individual teachers with in-class grouping,¹⁷ assess the overall success of a course, serve individual students as an indicator of personal learning progress, and help students decide whether to commit to a fee-based official assessment test.

Making the platform web-based further helps with test economy. It satisfies the three key areas of availability, affordability, and convenience:

¹⁷ The composition of work groups can be heterogeneous or homogeneous, according to the pedagogical needs of the task (cf. Odendahl, 2016).

Anyone with an internet connection can access it at all times, access can be free of charge, and users can access it using any computer or mobile device with an internet connection.

3.1 Automating the Test: Web-Based General Language Proficiency Testing

Only an economical test that strikes a positive balance between cost and reward has the potential to sway foreign language departments and teachers in favor of testing over traditional gateway and placement procedures.

What is the potential reward from using a GLP test in admissions and placement? Being able to select the students with the best language skills and then grouping them according to the same principle is a very motivating outcome. The cost of a valid and reliable test comprises financial cost as well as time, personnel, and effort spent on design, administering, and grading. As demonstrated by TestDaF and onSET, the C-Test takes little over half an hour and can be administered and graded by computer. The following section will introduce the design principles of the C-Test and the history of its validity debate. It will then proceed to lay out an online C-Test platform which is able to produce, administer, and grade a unique C-Test at the press of a button.

3.2 Institutional Gateway Testing

Gateway testing for an advanced language program at university level, such as admission to an MA program, can be classified as high-stakes testing, where candidates need to be reasonably supervised to verify identity and prevent cheating (American Educational Research Association, 2014, p. 188).

In this setting, a staff member needs to spend a few minutes before the test to fill in (a) the test name and (b) the test date, (c) determine the way

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in which candidates identify themselves, and (d) set an access password which allows candidates to take this test.

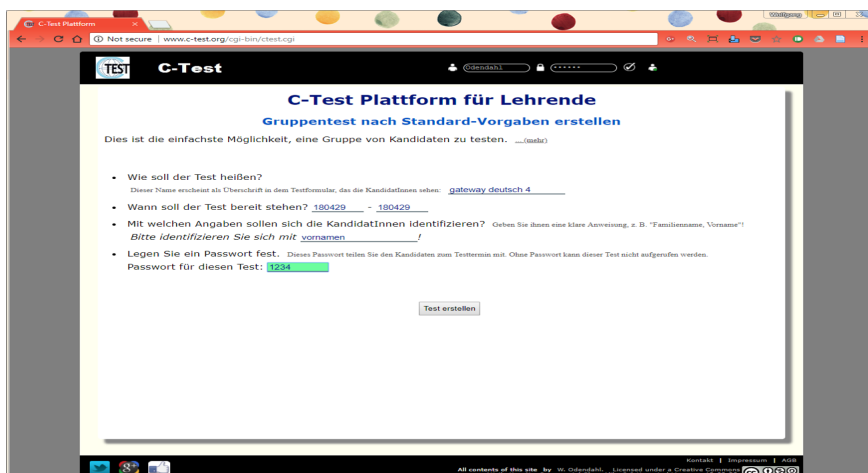


Figure 1: Gateway Testing – Creating a Unique C-Test in the Platform

Based on these variables, the system generates a unique C-Test, which will only be accessible during the predetermined dates and with the correct password. On the test date, the candidates will assemble in a computer-classroom, where they will be instructed about the test modalities. Afterwards, they open a web browser and log in to the test with the URL and the password provided on the blackboard. Each candidate's time will individually start after they successfully log in; in case of computer problems, the candidate may just switch to a different machine without suffering any disadvantages.

While taking the test, the candidate's name is displayed in the upper right corner of the screen. Generally, this feature signals the user that she is logged in; in a medium-stakes test setting such as described above, the teacher might use this information to verify the identity of the candidate taking the test. After the preset amount of time (cf. Figure 1: Gateway Testing – Creating a Unique C-Test in the Platform), a message tells the user to submit their results or suffer overtime deductions. Once every candidate in the room has submitted their test, the teacher may access the ranking list of results.

Rank	Name	Percent	Date	IP	Begin	Duration
001	b04303097	86	180228	220.136.109.199	03:09:26	00:44:00
002	r06524019	85	180228	220.136.109.204	03:09:15	00:31:05
003	b03105028	83	180228	220.136.111.108	03:08:10	00:36:00
004	b06703027	80	180228	220.141.109.187	03:10:01	00:40:05
005	b04901179	78	180228	220.136.109.113	03:10:10	00:41:00
006	b03901085	73	180228	220.141.109.108	03:12:23	00:38:02
007	b06102015	69	180228	220.136.111.101	03:07:02	00:33:00
008	b04901179	68	180228	220.141.109.128	03:09:03	00:39:12
009	b03105028	65	180228	220.136.109.114	03:09:26	00:44:00
010	b06703027	65	180228	220.141.109.109	03:09:15	00:31:05
011	b04901179	64	180228	220.136.111.102	03:08:10	00:36:00
012	b03901085	63	180228	220.141.109.129	03:10:01	00:40:05
013	b06102015	63	180228	220.136.109.115	03:10:10	00:41:00
014	b04901179	62	180228	220.141.109.110	03:12:23	00:38:02
015	b03105028	61	180228	220.136.111.103	03:07:02	00:33:00
016	b06703027	60	180228	220.141.109.130	03:09:03	00:39:12
017	b04901179	60	180228	220.136.109.116	03:09:26	00:44:00
018	b03901085	59	180228	220.141.109.111	03:09:15	00:31:05
019	b06102015	58	180228	220.136.111.104	03:08:10	00:36:00
020	b06102016	58	180228	220.141.109.131	03:10:01	00:40:05
021	b06102017	57	180228	220.136.109.117	03:10:10	00:41:00
022	b06102018	56	180228	220.141.109.112	03:12:23	00:38:02

Figure 2: Ranking List of Test Results

Figure 2: Ranking List of Test Results shows the ranked list of results which the teacher can pull up after the candidates completed a C-Test on the web-platform. Here, the teacher’s mouse cursor rests at No. 018, at the boundary of 60 points, highlighting the first candidate who did not achieve this arbitrary limit – or maybe the program the candidates apply for has just 17 slots available which are awarded to the 17 best candidates.

When creating the test (cf. Figure 1: Gateway Testing – Creating a Unique C-Test in the Platform), we asked candidates to identify themselves with their matriculation number, which here is shown in the sec-

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ond column, labeled “Name.” The percentile refers to the candidate’s correct answers. The following columns show the same date, similar IP addresses, and starting times for all candidates. This is owed to the test setting in a computer classroom. Candidates No. 006 and 014 seem to have started significantly later than the others, which might point to problems with their original computers. The time limit was set to 40 minutes, so candidates 001, 005, 009, 013, and 017 went overtime and had points deducted for each minute they delayed submitting their results. It is remarkable that the highest-scoring candidate still holds first place even after having been fined for overtime.

The teacher/staff member may project the results immediately after the test with the candidates still in the testing room, announcing something along the lines of “These are your results. We are now going to take a short break. Candidates 1 through 17, please return after the break for more information about our program. The others may leave at their leisure. Thank you for participating.”

The only limit to the number of candidates in such a gateway setting is the number of available computers. If students are allowed to bring their own devices, there is virtually no limit to the number of testees.¹⁸ The four-step effort for preparing and administering tests (cf. Figure 1: Gateway Testing – Creating a Unique C-Test in the Platform) remains the same regardless of the number of candidates.

3.3 Individual Self-Administered Assessment

The second usage example covers self-administered language testing by individual students. In this setting, a student is unsure whether she should invest time and money for an official language test and wants to know her chance for succeeding. Her teachers might encourage her, but she needs an independent and objective assessment of her overall language skills before committing herself.

¹⁸ Computing power will go down with increasing numbers of simultaneously submitted test results. For groups exceeding several hundred candidates, advance notice to the technical staff of the server administrators would be advisable.

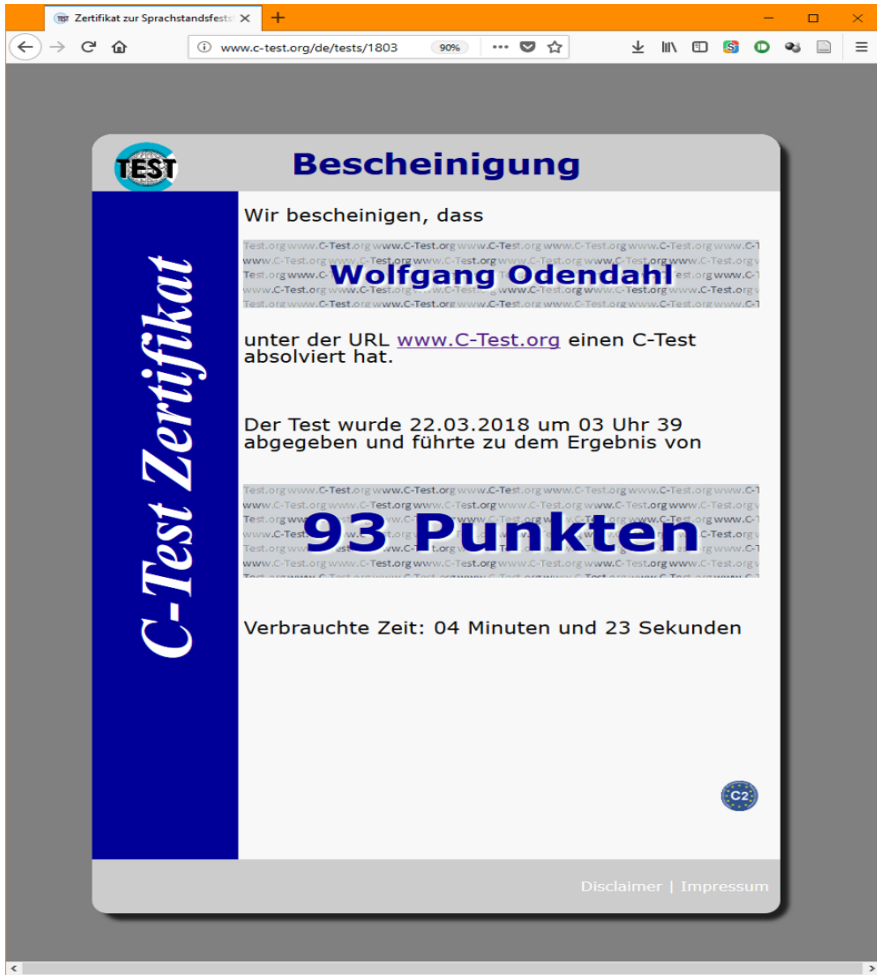


Figure 3: Results of a Self-administered C-Test

In order to get such an independent assessment, she pulls out her smartphone or sits down in front of her computer, accesses the C-Test web platform, skips registration, and directly accesses a test by pressing the “start” button. Immediately after submitting her test, the results display on her screen, giving the achieved percentage points and an estimate of the corresponding language level according to the CEFR.¹⁹

¹⁹ Matching results from a C-Test to CEFR definitions is a tentative process. It makes use of the fact

In this example, the student just had to press one button in order to have the platform generate and administer a unique C-Test. The printable certificate issued by the server states the data submitted by the candidate and the test results. The mark in the lower right corner indicates an estimate of the equivalent proficiency level according to CEFR. Besides getting a second opinion on their language skills, students might want to independently and objectively track their progress by regularly taking tests in the privacy of their home and at their convenience. They will get a different test every time they choose to take it.

4 Technical Details and Inner Workings of the Platform

4.1 Automated Test Generation

The platform relies on a corpus of edited and calibrated texts indexed by a database. Whenever a user presses the start button on the test webpage, the system randomly picks five texts with three different difficulty levels and arranges them in ascending difficulty. It then iterates through each text, counts the number of words while omitting those marked as exempt from mutilation,²⁰ randomly determines a starting point between words 15 and 25, splits 20 words in half while replacing the second half with a blank and recording the eliminated part as the solution. The process of randomly selecting and matching five texts from the database in combination with a random starting point for mutilation assures the uniqueness of each different test.

Although there is currently only a German language version with an uncalibrated²¹ corpus of 63 texts, the core system is language indepen-

that C-Test results have a high correlation with modular standard tests of general language proficiency (Baghaei, 2010, 2011; Eckes, 2007, 2011; Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006; Khoshdel-Niyat, 2017; Raatz, 1984; Tabatabaei & Mirzaei, 2014; Tremblay, 2011) and assumes that the reduced redundancy principle of C-Tests actually measures general language proficiency (Asano, 2014; Baghaei & Grotjahn, 2014).

²⁰ See the following section for an extended discussion on how to determine which words should not be tested.

²¹ The calibration of texts for use in C-Tests has been the topic of several academic papers (cf.

dent and theoretically works with any alphabet-based language.²² Two steps are involved in adding a language set, namely, adapting the user interface and adding a calibrated and edited text corpus.

4.2 Choosing Texts for Use in the C-Test Database

The details of finding texts for use in a C-Test can lead to very complicated problems. What appears to be a rather easy text when read as a whole can become very difficult once the second half of every second word is replaced by a blank. The following section will first discuss the implications of following the C-Test construction principles for choosing texts, and then explain the pragmatic approach in solving these problems.

The construction principles, as laid down by Raatz and Klein-Braley (1985, pp. 20–22), ask for five texts of increasing difficulty with 20 blanks each to constitute one set. Mutilation starts after the first sentence, which is left complete in order to provide some context. Once the predetermined number of blanks is reached, mutilation stops and the text comes to a natural end. The texts should be authentic, short, relevant to the intended user group, and arranged in order of ascending difficulty.

The problems in following these requirements are:

1. Where to find an authentic text of advanced difficulty with only 60-80 words?

Arras, Eckes, & Grotjahn, 2002; Dresemann & Traxel, 2005; Traxel & Dresemann, 2010). Calibration should involve anchor-items of known difficulty as points of reference and several stages of testing with native and non-native speakers. Since the main intended usage for this platform, ranking, can be reliably achieved with uncalibrated texts, the task of calibrating texts from the database will be postponed until its usage has produced sufficient data for analysis.

22 There have been experiments with non-alphabetic languages, such as Japanese (Roos, 1996a, 1996b) and Chinese (Arras & Grotjahn, 1994; Lin, Yuan, & Feng, 2008). However, the construction of C-Tests for these languages requires such a lot of adaptations and deviations from the C-Test principles as laid out by Klein-Braley and Raatz, that it may be argued to be a different testing system altogether. Furthermore, since the written and oral forms of these languages have only little (Japanese) or no (Chinese) relation to each other, the results of such tests cannot be accepted as an indication of general language proficiency.

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2. How to ensure enough context if the first sentence is very short?
3. How to handle words that would pose unsolvable difficulties or ambiguity when cut in half?
4. How to determine the difficulty of texts where every second half of every second word is replaced with a blank?

The pragmatic answers to these problems are as follows: Problem (1) is based in Raatz' and Klein-Braley's (2002, p. 75) demand that texts should be non-dialogic and authentic. In terms of content they should pose no difficulties for the target group – here university students – so that the validity of the construct will not be affected by extra-linguistic factors such as personal experience, expertise, or qualifications (Messick, 1989, p. 14). However, finding authentic texts for the database can pose serious obstacles, because authentic texts with a very low readability index²³ are rarely found outside of textbooks. Similarly, at high levels of language competency, authentic texts with only 70-100 words are hard to come by.²⁴ Cronjaeger et al. (2010, p. 75) argue that authentic texts may altogether be too variable in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structures for use with beginning learners. Although textbook texts could offer the advantage of explicitly being written for learners with a specific level of language skills, copyright issues and the possibility of prior knowledge by some candidates effectively prevent us from using them. Therefore, all texts for consideration in the database originate from authentic sources, but are subject to radical revision, calibration, and partial re-writing before usage.

The pragmatic solution to the second (2) problem, how to ensure enough context if the first sentence is very short, is to not rely on punctuation

23 A common approach to determining the difficulty of texts is readability indices, which use elements like content, style, structure, and design to determine a text's reading ease (DuBay, 2004, p. 18 f.). For German, LIX is a reliable freeware readability index software (Lenhard & Lenhard, 2011). It has to be noted, however, that readability formulas are of limited use when determining the difficulty of texts after they have been mutilated according to the C-Test principles. Aside from language-specific difficulties, such as compound nouns in German, researchers found significant differences in the ability of candidates to solve blanks in content words as opposed to structure words (Chapelle, 1994, p. 176). These would not make a difference in LIX scaling.

24 The CEFR defines competent language use at level C1 in reading comprehension explicitly by stating that the learner "... can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts [...]" (Trim, North, & Coste, 2009, Chapter 3.3).

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as end-of-sentence markers, but to randomly assign between 15 and 25 words as an introductory passage. As an added benefit, this solution helps randomize the C-Tests generated from the database, effectively increasing the number of possible C-Test passages created from each source text 11-fold.

The third (3) problem concerns unsolvable difficulties and ambiguity created by eliminating the second half of a word. Research indicates that in C-Tests, blanks resulting from certain word-groups are easier to solve than others. In German, unintended ambiguity may arise with words containing prefixes or suffixes and with combined nouns (cf. Arras, Eckes, & Grotjahn, 2002, p. 184). Furthermore, there is a difference in the difficulty of content words versus structure words. Correctly restoring content words requires knowledge of the formal features of the word as well as processes for composing the morphologically fitting form for a given context (Chapelle, 1994, p. 176). It seems that the ability to solve mutilated content words in C-Tests is a better measure for the general language proficiency of more advanced language learners, whereas weaker candidates tend to show differences in the ability of solving structure/function words (Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006, p. 294). Since in ranking, differences in test performance are the decisive factor, both content- and structure words can be part of C-Tests. In order to further quantify the question of how to adapt C-Tests or candidates of different levels of language proficiency, researchers could create a specialized databank with texts intentionally tweaking the amount of structure- versus content words and comparing the results of different learner groups.

Concerning the usage in C-Tests, the question of text difficulty (4) naturally follows the third (3) problem. The platform relies on a stock database of texts, the index of which includes topical keywords and the readability level of each text. These texts stem from internet blogs, novels, and newspaper articles and are edited for usage in C-Tests.

Since the main purpose of the C-Test platform is to produce rating scales for language proficiency as a gateway tool, the difficulty of the

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undamaged texts is not the most important criterion; even with the occasional ambivalent blank, the ranking hierarchy of candidates still remains valid, because all take the same test (cf. Dresemann & Traxel, 2005, p. 277). Concerning individual assessment, however, having flawed texts in the database will lead to inaccurate individual evaluations, which poses a problem for individual students who use the platform as a screening-test before applying for language certification. For this user group, the texts need to be calibrated by means of monitoring test outcomes and running statistical analyses of problematic blanks to provide data for manual editing and modification. After accumulating a sufficient number of modifications, the validated text corpus will deliver more reliable test results. Another source of calibrated texts could be the project of Dresemann and Traxel (2005; 2010), who have assembled a reliability-calibrated database of German texts for the use in C-Tests.

The pragmatic solution for awarding difficulty ratings to the texts is modification rather than calibration. This means that competent native speakers re-write the texts in order to avoid ambiguities and other pitfalls, thereby sacrificing some of the texts' authenticity. During editing, special attention is given to compound nouns, names, and other words considered problematic when mutilated.²⁵ While rewriting problematic passages in the original text is the most efficient way to eliminate undesirable words, there are two other ways to mark these words for exemption from the automatic mutilation process. First, words with an asterisk at the end are exempt from mutilation, which will make the mutilation process shift one word to the right. The second option is to shift mutilation by one or two letters to the left or right by adding $\pm n$ to the end of a word in order to make it solvable: The German combined noun Schiffahrt, for example, contains eleven letters and would regularly be mutilated to Schiff_____, which can be solved in several semantically fitting ways. The editor would therefore change the original to Schiffahrt+1, which tells the system to leave one more letter and mutilate the word to the non-ambiguous Schiff_____.²⁶

25 In C-Test research, the process of deleting the second half of words is commonly referred to as mutilation (Klein-Braley & Raatz, 1984; Raatz & Klein-Braley, 1985; Grotjahn, 1987; Klein-Braley, 1997; Babaii & Ansary, 2001; Baghaei & Tabatabaee, 2015; Khoshdel-Niyat, 2017)

26 One of the most basic rules in creating C-Test blanks calls for deleting half of the word. In the

5 Conclusion

This article shows that a web-based C-Test platform offers an economical alternative to accepting candidates' previous grades as the basis for gateway testing. It further argues that ranking students by general language proficiency also allows for meaningful grouping in other settings, such as class placement and in-class grouping. The article rebukes the allegation of tracking by the argument that knowing the skill level of students allows for homogeneous grouping as well as according to patterns of planned heterogeneity. Increasing the frequency of placement and regrouping helps to avoid restricting students to a fixed group and promotes mobility according to their current language skills.

In gateway testing, using the same test for all students will set objective standards for admission. Frequent placement tests and regrouping increases the efficiency of instruction by assembling learner groups according to their actual and current language skills. The C-Test construct is an adequate, valid, and reliable means of testing general language proficiency. Conforming to the definition in section 1.4 of this article, the platform proposed here is an economical testing tool. It presents the results of individual tests as a printable diploma, and groups tests in list form, ranking candidates according to their test results. An automated C-Test generating internet platform makes testing universally available with very little preparation, minimum time loss, and considerable benefits.

The data derived from an automated C-Test platform can support research in numerous fields, including the C-Test construct, general language proficiency testing, autonomous language acquisition monitoring, and others. Metadata, like geographical user distribution, frequency of deployment in different circumstances, and the perception of C-Tests by users and administrators, provides answers to a wide array of questions concerning foreign language acquisition.

An interesting area of research will be TestDaF, the admission test for

case of Schiffahrt, the word has 11 letters. The division in halves would therefore result in 5 letters and 6 blanks or 6 letters and 5 blanks, i.e. Schiff/fahrt

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German universities, which includes a C-Test. Will students who are acquainted with C-Tests from the platform do significantly better with TestDaF? Also based on statistical analyses, another valid question concerns the significance of the mistakes candidates make in filling in the blanks. In concurrence with Klein-Braley, who states “wrong answers provide us with more insights into text processing strategies than right answers do” (1996, p. 39), an analysis of a large number of wrong answers from language students might reveal new insights for test validity, reduced redundancy, and – more generally – basic processes involved in language testing and learning.

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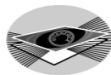
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Alexander the Great in Macedonian folk traditions

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the figure of Alexander the Great in a set of Macedonian folk traditions circulating in Northern Greece in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Macedonian Alexander-folk traditions represent a peculiar set among the other Hellenic folk accounts, because they convey chiefly the idea of familiarity with the hero, who seems to be still living and influencing the people's everyday life. This bond – almost a mutual ownership between Alexander and the Macedonians – is in fact constantly highlighted by the choice of the themes treated, such as the attribution of monuments to the great conqueror and the use of his historical and mythical persona to explain local customs, features of the landscape, or toponyms. Moreover, (pseudo)-aetiologies, etymologies, and/or descriptions of facts of local interest populate these narratives which, according to their content and purpose, are here grouped into two main categories, geographical and aetiological, and into two subcategories, geographico-aetiological and aetiologico-mythological. The aim here is confined to the discussion, the categorisation, and the translation into English of the Macedonian Alexander-traditions; I hope that this paper will make this notable and lively material accessible to a wider public and help the preservation of its memory.

Keywords: Alexander the Great; Classical Reception; Reception Studies; Hellenic Folklore; Macedonian Folklore

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Together with myths and folk tales, traditions are amongst the most productive genres of the Greek folkloristic production on Alexander.¹ Notwithstanding the different scholarly attempts made to clarify the core features of each of these genres, a common consensus has not yet been reached internationally.²

According to the terminology adopted in this paper, a myth is a story which usually involves gods, heroes, and exemplary figures who lived in a far away, undefined past; yet the events described still matter for a certain community living in historical times. Myths are thus handed down orally within a group of people who feel these narrations to be important, by reason of both their entertaining nature and their cultural bearing: in a way, they hoard information on the life, customs, and beliefs of the ancestors (Burkert, 1982, pp. 23; Bremmer, 1987, p. 7; Dowden, 1992, p. 120).

A folk tale is to be understood as an amusing, comforting, didactic, and often moralising account which deals with the ethical values, aspirations, hopes, longings, and social dilemmas of a community. The protagonists are common figures, often described with stereotyped names. Even when the characters are granted extraordinary powers by luck or magic, or when they are presented as humanised animals, the community is still able to identify itself with them and, at the same time, to amuse itself, thanks to the introduction of various fabulous elements into a familiar geographical setting (Kyriakidis, 1965, p. 265; Kirk, 1970, pp. 38-40; Bremmer, 1987, p. 6; Dowden, 1992, pp. 4-5).

1 To these genres, there could be added vernacular poems, sayings, spells, theatrical plays, and folk art and songs. Worth mentioning are the Karaghiozis shadow-theatre play *ο Μεγαλέξαντρος και ο καταραμένος όφης/το καταραμένο φίδι*, (*Alexander the Great and the cursed dragon/snake*) and the demotic songs, mainly reworkings of famous Greek ballads in which the usual protagonist is substituted or flanked by the Macedonian conqueror.

2 For an overview of the scholarly discussion on the definition of mythology and its distinction from folklore, see Kirk (1970, pp. 1-41); Hadjitaki-Kapsomenou (2002, pp. 32-44).

Folk traditions deal with a set of historical people and facts which are a source of pride for a community. They are a treasure-trove of moral and religious values for new generations, they help the conservation of historical and mythological cultural baggage, and they explain the features of the surrounding reality (Hadjitaki–Kapsomenou, 2002, pp. 35-36).³ As much as folk tales and myths, traditions are also product of the popular imagination and myth-making capacity, but they are felt as unquestionably true (Kyriakidis, 1965, p. 168; Ioannou, 1973, p. 8): protagonists are national heroes, common people, and sometimes personified natural phenomena which characterise the life of the community; the plot evolves in a historical time and within a geographical background which the community is acquainted with.

This paper focuses on the figure of Alexander the Great in a set of Macedonian folk traditions circulating in Northern Greece in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The study is part of a wider research project investigating the role that the Macedonian hero played in Neo-Hellenic folkloristic production; in fact, numerous folk accounts are still transmitted orally today in little towns and villages of the Greek-speaking world, and their diffusion covers a great number of regions of Modern Greece, such as Thrace, Thessaly, Epirus, the Ionian Islands, Laconia, Naxos and Crete, and of Turkey (Eastern Thrace and Pontus).⁴ Moreover, it is worth noticing that similar accounts on Alexander's deeds are also attested in small communities in Romania and FYROM, due to the general influence of Hellenic culture in the Balkans, and to human interactions and circulation of ideas in bordering lands. The aim of this paper here is confined to the discussion, the categorisation, and the translation into English of the Alexander-traditions developed and attested in Macedon, for this region has a predominant position: it represents the great conqueror's motherland and his cultural and political

³ See also Kyriakidis (1965, pp. 168-173), who divides folk traditions into four categories, according to the function they are bestowed: 1. mythological and personifications; 2. historical; 3. aetiological; 4. religious. The division followed in this paper is different, since it is based on Macedonian folk material only.

⁴ In the last two decades of the nineteenth century the founder of Greek folklore, Nikolaos Politis, and his collaborators gave way to the collection and systematisation of folk material by travelling throughout Greece and asking elderly people to recount their traditions and tales; the traditions here examined are based on Politis and his collaborators' transcriptions and records. For the various methods of collection of folktales adopted by folklorists, see Thompson (1977, pp. 406-412).

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background. I hope that this paper will make this notable and lively material accessible to a wider public and help the preservation of its memory.

The Macedonian Alexander-folk traditions represent a peculiar set among the Hellenic folk production: they outnumber the folk narratives from the other Greek lands and they convey chiefly the idea of familiarity with the hero, who seems to be still living and influencing people's everyday life. This bond —almost a mutual ownership— between Alexander and the Macedonians is in fact constantly highlighted by the choice of the themes treated, such as the attribution of monuments to the great conqueror and the use of his historical and mythical persona to explain features of the Macedonian landscape, geographical names, or folk customs. Moreover, (pseudo-)aetiologies, etymologies, and/or descriptions of facts of local interest populate these narratives which, according to their content and purpose, are here grouped into two main categories, geographical and aetiological, and into two subcategories, geographico-aetiological and aetiologicalo-mythological.

1 Why is Alexander a folk hero?

Alexander had already become mythical during his lifetime: according to the ancient historians, during his childhood his parents fostered in him a strenuous admiration for his heroic ancestry;⁵ moreover, his recognition as the son of Zeus-Ammon, duly supported by the intellectuals of his entourage,⁶ played an important role in the empowerment of his political agenda and plan of conquest. The insistence on Alexander's alleged descent from Zeus and his heroic status grows bigger in the descriptions of the events in India, as a way to excuse some of his risky or irrational decisions: the attack to the Aornos Rock was thus undertaken to outdo Heracles, who had failed in the attempt,⁷ and the *bacchanalia*

5 Plu. *Alex.* 2. 1-2: Alexander was an Heraclid from his father's side and an Aeacid from his mother's side; cf. D. S. XVII. 1. 5.

6 Callisthenes, *FGrH* 124, F14a (= Str. XVII. 1. 43).

7 D. S. XVII. 85. 2. See also Arr. *An.* IV. 29. 7-30.1.

in Carmania to imitate Dionysus.⁸ In 324 B.C., close to the end of his life, Alexander was also recognised as θεὸς ἀνίκητος (*invincible god*)⁹ by the Greeks living on the mainland, a title which he gained as an acknowledgment of his numerous victories, bravery, and the great military acumen displayed during his campaign.¹⁰ Immediately after his death, his idolisation reached new dimensions with the flourishing of numerous legends about his sayings and deeds.¹¹ Notwithstanding the disputable historicity of these narrations, Greeks welcomed this legendary material as if true and perpetuated it for centuries.¹²

If we compare Kirk's list of the twenty-four most common themes in ancient Greek heroic and divine mythology (Kirk, 1970, pp. 187-189) with the Hellenistic and early Imperial¹³ traditions on Alexander, thirteen contact points can be seen. In the same way as many ancient Greek gods and heroes, Alexander has an unusual birth (no. 23),¹⁴ either because of the strange phenomena which characterised his conception and his natal

8 Plu. *De Alex.* I. 10 (= *Mor.* 332A); Arr. *An.* VI. 28. 1-2. Arrian doubts the veracity of Alexander's Bacchic pomp; nevertheless, the passage – even if invented by a later source – still proves the importance of Dionysus in Alexander's campaign in India. See also Goukowsky (1981, pp. 32-33).

9 The idea that Alexander was invincible was already growing in the Greeks' mindset at an earlier stage of his life: Plutarch (*Alex.* 14. 4) describes the Macedonian's visit to Delphi in order to consult the oracle before his Persian campaign. Since Alexander arrived during the so called ἀποφράδες ἡμέραι – days on which no business was done, Pythia did not want to deliver the oracle; thus he tried to drag her to the temple. At this point, overwhelmed by his ardour (σπουδή) and on the spur of the moment, the priestess said that he was invincible: ἀνίκητος εἶ, ὃ παῖ. Cf. D. S. XVIII. 51. 3, who sets the story in Libya, where the oracle of Ammon bestowed Alexander the title of *invincible* (Tarn, 1948, pp. 342-343; Goukowsky, 1978, pp. 60-61).

10 Hyperides, *Against Demosthenes*, fr. 7. Mossé (2004, pp. 81-82) highlights that the acknowledgment of Alexander's divinity by the Greeks was not a religious act, but simply a political one.

11 For a discussion on the chronology of the legendary material on Alexander contained in the Vulgate and in the various recensions of the *Alexander Romance*, see Stoneman (1991, pp. 8-17). For the Diadochs' emulation and use of the image of Alexander in their political agenda, see Goukowsky (1978, pp. 116-135); Dahmen (2007, pp. 9-18).

12 For the Ancient Greeks' attitude towards their myths, see Veyne (1988, p. 60): for the Greeks, a mythic tradition is true despite the marvellous; they sought a kernel of truth behind the lies.

13 With 'early Imperial' I mean the Greek literary production during the first three centuries of the Roman Empire.

14 Numbers refer to Kirk's list.

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day,¹⁵ or because of Olympias' recourse to Nectanebo's magic in order to conceive a baby.¹⁶ Alexander's longing for the unknown leads him to undertake a long campaign, which encompasses city foundations (no. 17),¹⁷ contests (no. 7),¹⁸ revenge (no. 11),¹⁹ the quest for (no. 6) —and the loss of— immortality because of his deceitful daughter (no. 14).²⁰ Furthermore, during his peregrinations Alexander has to solve riddles and to find promptly ingenious solutions to problems (no. 1),²¹ he goes through transformations and disguises (no. 2),²² he meets imaginary people living in fabulous far-away places, and he fights against monsters (no. 4).²³

In ancient lore, the Macedonian is generally considered pious: he reveres the gods, he takes care of the displacement of both his enemies and kinsmen (no. 9),²⁴ and his death is regrettably foretold by prophecies and seers he trusts (no. 19).²⁵ On the other hand, his excessive desire for conquest is considered hubristic (no. 8),²⁶ and he accidentally kills his friend Cleitus (no. 3) because of an incomplete sacrifice.²⁷

This comparison shows that during the Hellenistic and the early Imperial period Alexander was deeply transformed into a myth, one destined to last in the Greek tradition. In fact, the core of the story which later became known as Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance* started being developed around the third-second centuries B.C. and flourished particularly in the third century AD. During these six centuries, the narrative of the *Romance* was constantly enriched with new legendary

15 See Plu. *Alex.* 2-4.

16 Ps.-Call., *Alexander Romance* (recension α), I. 4-7 [hereafter: *AR* (α)].

17 Plu. *De Alex.* I. 5 (= *Mor.* 328E); *AR* (α) III. 35.

18 *AR* (α) I. 18-19: Alexander's travel to Italy (Pisa) to compete in the Olympic games.

19 Arr. *An.* II. 14. 4: revenge on the Persians for having burnt the Acropolis in the fifth century B.C. during the Persian wars against Greece; cf. *AR* (α) I. 23.

20 Ps.-Call., *Alexander Romance* (recension β , MS L), II. 39-41 [hereafter: *AR* (β)]; cf. *AR* (α) II. 39-40.

21 *AR* (α) III. 5-6; *AR* (β) II. 23.

22 *AR* (α) II. 14-15; III. 22-23.

23 D. S. XVII. 77. 1-3; *AR* (β) II. 23-44.

24 D. S. XVII. 69. 3. *AR* (β) II. 21; cf. *AR* (α) II. 21.

25 *AR* (α) III. 24; III. 30; *AR* (β) II. 44.

26 *AR* (α) II. 40.

27 Plu. *Alex.* 50-51.

facts and curious details about the Macedonian's life and campaign, in consonance with the great interest roused by the exoticism, *mirabilia*, and the lives of sages and holy men (Stoneman, 1991, pp. 8-17).²⁸ This hodgepodge of curiosities, mythology and historical events was not forgotten but, on the contrary, further developed in the Byzantine²⁹ and Ottoman periods through the *Rhimada* and the *Phyllada of Alexander* (Holton, 1973). These narrations kept alive in the Greeks' memory the image of a heroic Alexander, who in the nineteenth century was then ready to become the protagonist of different narrative genres of the Modern Greek folk production.

2 Macedonian folk traditions

2.1 Geographical traditions

Geographical traditions are oral accounts which link Alexander the Great to a place familiar to the community, to a specific manmade infrastructure, ruins, archaeological sites, and bridges, or to natural elements, such as mountains, rivers, and water springs. These attributions, scattered throughout the Macedonian landscape, are kept alive especially among peasants living in small villages, where one can trace a greater tendency to ascribe buildings and areas to a blurred ancient era *when Philip II, Alexander III, and Heracles ruled Macedon* (Abbott 1903, p. 279).

(a) In the province of Grevena (Western Macedon), a local tradition maintains that on the banks of the river Venetikos traces can be found of Bucephalus' horseshoes on a rock close to the stone bridge (Spyridakis, 1953, pp. 388).³⁰ They were left there when Alexander passed from the

²⁸ For the literary production of the culturally thriving Hellenistic period, see Whitmarsh (2010).

²⁹ Vasilikopoulou-Ioannidou (2015): Alexander the Great is considered the first king of all the Greeks and, therefore, the ancestor of the Byzantine Emperors.

³⁰ Many geographical traditions featuring Alexander and his horse are attested in Greece; for now, it will suffice to compare the Venetikos tradition with the one attested in Philippi and in Polythea (Thessaly), where people claim that they can still see the traces of Bucephalus' horseshoes and his manger (τὰ ἴχνη τῶν πετάλων καὶ τῆς πάχνης).

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area and crossed the river on horseback with a single leap. The animal's imprints are a matter of pride for the locals, for they provide "solid evidence" of the hero's passage in their region, which allows them to partake in his glorious deeds.

With his long jump from one bank to the other of the river, Alexander is subtly presented as a heroic, gigantic figure gifted with supernatural powers, in the tradition of the Ancient Γίγαντες (*Giants*), the Byzantine Αντρειωμένοι (*Antreiomenoi*, "the valorous, brave ones"), and the Modern Σαραντάπηχοι (*Sarantapechoi*, literally "those as tall as forty cubits", i.e. the very tall ones), whose footprints on the soil "are traced" in different areas of the Greek countryside (Kyriakidis, 1965, pp. 176-178).

(b) The inhabitants of Stavros of Chalcidice (about thirty km far from Amphipolis) maintain that the mountain stretching above their village belongs to the Macedonian hero, and they call it Βουνὸ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου, *Mountain of Alexander*, (Abbot, 1903, p. 280; Spyridakis, 1953, p. 388). They also interpret columns found in the surroundings as the ruins of Alexander's νομισματοκοπεῖον, the mint "he built" there time ago. As Abbott has noticed, the attribution of the mountain to Alexander is entirely appropriate in a district already associated with his tutor and his mother: Stavros is geographically very close to Olympiada, a village bearing his mother's name, and, more crucially, to Stageira, Aristotle's birthplace.³¹ On the other hand, I would argue that reference to the mint in the Chalcidice area goes beyond folk associations and is based on a solid historical kernel: Philip II is famous for having taken great advantage of the mint of Amphipolis, and Alexander followed his fathers minting policy and types probably until 332 B.C.³² The great conqueror's first coins were silver tetradrachms with the head of a beardless Heracles on the obverse, and an eagle or an enthroned Zeus on the reverse, in line with the symbols of power already long established in the

31 Olympiada is about thirteen km far from Stavros; Stageira ca. fifteen km.

32 See Troxell (1997, pp. 86-89); cf. Le Rider (2007, p. 41): "gold and silver coins with the name and types of Philip II would have constituted Alexander's principal currency between October 336 B.C. and April 334 B.C.". For an overview of the scholarly debate about the chronology of Alexander's first coins, see Le Rider (2007, pp. 8-19).

iconography of Macedonian royal coinage (Kremydi, 2011, pp. 161-168; Price 1991, pp. 30-31); furthermore, archaeological excavations have proved that the Amphipolis mint constituted the most important one in Macedon during the first years of Alexander's Persian campaign.³³

(c) On the way from Drama to Cavala, near the archaeological site of Philippi, a group of four small columns is acknowledged by the locals as τὸ Παλάτι τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀλεξάνδρου (*the Palace of Alexander the Great*). At Drama, the inhabitants maintain that the palace of Alexander the Great can be found there (Abbott, 1903, p. 279).³⁴ The attribution of ruins in Eastern Macedonia to Alexander is, as in the case of Stavros discussed before, a natural choice in an area rich in archaeological sites closely related to the Macedonian kingdom. Specifically, Philippi is a colony built by Philip II in 356 B.C. on the site of the Thasian city Krenides, which had called upon the Macedonian king for help against the Thracian threat.³⁵

Moreover, according to one of the numerous traditions concerning the toponym Cavala, the name commemorates Alexander's taming of Bucephalus and is derived etymologically from the Late-Latin word for horse, *caballus*.³⁶ The story is that, in order to win the steed's trust, the Macedonian took it for a ride eastwards, since he had noticed that it was afraid of its own shadow.³⁷ Only when they reached Cavala was Bucephalus completely tamed.

33 See Troxell (1997, pp. 19-40) for a list of Amphipolis issues dated ca. 332-310 B.C.; p. 73 for the list of hoards containing Amphipolis silver Alexanders; pp. 86-90: Troxell argues that some of the coins normally attributed by the scholarship to the Amphipolis mint might be assigned to a mint in Philippi. Notwithstanding this, a mint in Philippi does not undermine the argument: the site is close enough to Stavros of Chalcidice and it is highly possible that in the folk memory the two mints have been merged together.

34 Cf. this tradition with the "historical" folk tale from Alistrate (Serres), which ascribes the area to the kingdoms of Philip and Darius, providing a folk etymology for the name of the inhabitants, Darnakides. The tale also links Drama and the toponym Cavala to Alexander; cf. Spyridakis (1953, pp. 386-387).

35 D. S. XVI. 8. 6-7.

36 For an overview of the different etymologies put forward for the name Cavala, see Lykourinos (2005, pp. 71-72).

37 Plu. *Alex.* 6. 3.

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(d) Τὰ Λουτρά τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀλεξάνδρου (*the thermal baths of Alexander the Great*) is the name given to a stone complex belonging to the water-mill used by the *Colonia Pella*, the colony founded by Octavian in 30 B.C., 1.5 km from the Macedonian's birthplace (Chrysostomou, 1995, p. 117). When the tank of the Roman thermal baths was cleared during archaeological excavations in the 1970s, a huge quantity of coins of different eras was found, including 4,500 ancient ones and many issued by the Hellenic Republic. This heterogeneous coinage certifies that in Pella the custom of throwing coins in the hope that a wish would be granted by the divinity started centuries ago; in modern times, locals appointed Alexander as the lord of the hot springs, having forgotten their Roman origin (Chrysostomou, 1995, p. 118).

2.2 Geographico-aetiological traditions

The following geographico-aetiological traditions make use of the image of Alexander to explain and describe the natural and architectonic elements which shape the surrounding landscape. These accounts present the Macedonian taking active part in the erection of new buildings, in order to embellish the environment or to commemorate an important event. The “Alexander the strenuous builder” folk motif has its archetype in the ancient narratives of the Alexander-historians, who highlighted the pains that the Macedonian conqueror took in the majestic foundation of Alexandria of Egypt, and his eagerness to found new cities as landmarks during his campaign in the Eastern regions of the Achaemenid Empire.³⁸

(a) In the plain of Serres, two big rocks are called Πέτρες τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀλεξάνδρου by the inhabitants of the town of Nigrita, for they believe that Alexander had cast them there “when god still ἀξίωνε τοὺς ἀντρειωμένους (*considered the antreiomenoï worthy*)” – as muleteers of the region used to say (Abbott, 1903, p. 280; Kyriakidis, 1965, pp.

³⁸ For the foundation of Alexandria of Egypt, see Plu. *Alex.* 26. 3-10; Arr. *An.* III. 1. 5-2. 2. For Alexander's numerous city-foundations, see Plu. *De Alex.* I. 5 (= *Mor.* 328E) and *AR* (α) III. 35; cf. D. S. XVIII. 4. 3-4 for the Macedonian's last plans.

176-178).³⁹ This tradition underlines once again the Macedonian hero's abiding presence in the area: in fact, "Alexander's Rocks" are important not inasmuch as they have reshaped the landscape, but because they are an eternal reminder of his heroic physical strength, for he was able to lift and cast these two big stones. This is made clear by the association between Alexander and the *antreiomenoi*.

Heroic deeds and an implacable superhuman force make of Alexander almost one of the mythological giants, the oversized creatures who dared to wage war against the Olympian gods. This underlying resemblance constitutes a common trend in demotic songs on Alexander and Diogenes Akritas of the Byzantine period (around the tenth and the eleventh centuries and after), and it happens in Modern Greek folk tales as well: the two national heroes are said to have the power to lift mountains or to knock down trees, and are characterised by excessive reactions and gluttony (*ἀδηφαγία*).⁴⁰

(b) In the small village of Aghios Basileios (close to Lake Koroneia, South-East of Laghadas), the ruins of a Byzantine tower are still visible to the passer-by. According to local tradition, the tower was erected by Alexander in the exact place where his daughter's wedding was celebrated. This account is peculiar for two reasons: first, a private event in the Macedonian hero's life is the occasion of the erection of a tower that changes the landscape of the village; secondly, the nature of the "private event" itself. The report that Alexander celebrated his daughter's wedding is not only an almost unique reference to the Macedonian king's family life, but also one of the rare allusions to the existence of a daughter. In fact, in folk traditions Alexander normally appears to be childless, while historical accounts attest that he had two sons. The first one, Heracles,⁴¹ was born in 327 B.C., his mother being Barsine,⁴² a Persian

39 These traditions on gigantic figures spring from the belief that ancient times were better and happier than the present, since they were populated by heroic figures. This seems to be a seamless motif in Greek literature: Hesiod's mythological giants become the Akrites and the Antreiomenoi of the Byzantine period, who then evolve into the Modern Sarantapechoi.

40 For example, cf. Alexander's deeds in Minotos & Kyriakidis (1953, pp. 687-688, n. 1; p. 692, n. 9), with the giants in Politis (1975, p. 145); Kyriakidis, (1965, pp. 176-178).

41 Berve (1926, p. 168, n. 353); Heckel (2008, p. 139).

42 Berve (1926, pp. 102-104, n. 206); Heckel (2008, p. 70).

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princess, daughter of the satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia Artabazus II, and the ex-wife of Memnon of Rhodes, the commander of the Greek mercenaries in the service of the Persians. After the battle of Issus in 333 B.C., Barsine was captured in Damascus by Parmenio and Alexander decided to take her as a concubine, not only for her political status, but also appreciating her beauty and her profound Greek education.⁴³ In the aftermath of the great conqueror's death, Heracles was backed as a pretender to the throne by his brother-in-law Nearchus,⁴⁴ who was married to Barsine's first daughter,⁴⁵ the young boy and his mother were eventually killed by Cassander around 309/308 B.C.⁴⁶

The *Metz Epitome* informs us that the Macedonian hero, while still in the Indus River valley in 326 B.C., had a second child by Rhoxane,⁴⁷ the daughter of Oxyartes, the Persian ruler in Sogdiana. This child is said to have died soon after his birth.⁴⁸ Rhoxane was pregnant for a second time in 323 B.C.⁴⁹ and, a little after Alexander III's death, she gave birth to Alexander IV (Heckel, 2008, pp. 18-19) who, being the only legitimate son of the great conqueror, was designated to reign alongside his uncle Philip III by the Macedonian army at Babylon.⁵⁰ In ca. 311 B.C., Alexander IV and his mother were assassinated by the ambitious Cassander, who wished to eliminate Alexander III's offspring in order to put an end to the Argead dynasty and take control of the kingdom of Macedon himself.⁵¹

The earliest precedent for an allusion to Alexander III's fictional daughter comes in the first letter addressed to Olympias in the β version of the *Alexander Romance*.⁵² In this letter, the conqueror tells his mother about the journey to the Land of Darkness and how his unfaithful and

43 Plu. *Alex.* 21. 4. Cf. Just. XI. 10. 2-3.

44 C. X. 6. 10-12.

45 Arr. *An.* VII. 4. 6.

46 D. S. XX. 28. 1-2; Just. XV. 2. 3.

47 Berve (1926, pp. 346-347, n. 688); Heckel (2008, pp. 241-242).

48 *Metz Epitome*, 70.

49 Curtius (X. 6. 9) says that Rhoxane was six months pregnant at the time of Alexander III's death, whereas Justin (XIII. 2. 5) states that she was in her eighth month.

50 Just. XIII. 4. 1-3.

51 D. S. XIX. 105. 2; Just. XV. 2. 5.

52 *AR* (β) II. 41.

cowardly cook Andreas had found by chance the Source of Life, long coveted by Alexander. The story is that when the army reached a place where the air was less dark and fragrant, the cook was sent to prepare food and, upon washing dried fishes in a clear spring, he noticed that, once rinsed with that water, they came back to life.⁵³ Fearing his king's reaction, he decided to keep what had happened secret, but, before leaving the place, he drank from the spring and stored some of the water in a silver vessel. When Alexander discovered his secret, the cook was punished severely; angered by this, Andreas decided to give the remaining water of life contained in the vessel to Kale, Alexander's daughter.

Kale and her mother Ounna, one of Alexander's concubines, are fictional characters unknown to the Alexander-historians of the first and second generation; but the Macedonian's siblings, relatives, and concubines often populate Hellenic folklore and play an especially prominent role in the copious versions of the Mermaid and Nereid tales, which have their archetype in the Late Antique/Proto-Byzantine β recension of the *Alexander Romance*. In fact, the Mermaid and the Nereid folk tales start from Pseudo-Callisthenes' story of Alexander's quest for immortality through the pursuit of the water of life. In the version featuring the Mermaid, the hero's sister, not knowing what the liquid is, pours it on wild onions and – either because of her distress when she understands her mistake, or because the conqueror curses her – she turns into a fish from her waist down and goes to live in the sea. In the Nereid version, Alexander's sisters steal his water of life, drink some, and bathe in the rest. Having turned into immortal fairies, they live in woods on the mountains.⁵⁴

In *AR* (β) II. 41, Alexander confesses to his mother his distress at having missed the magic water of life, and he admits that *he cursed his daugh-*

53 The dried fish coming back to life is an overarching motif in the Greek mindset: attested already in the fifth century B.C. in the Herodotean account of the prophecy of Artayctes' end (Hdt. IX. 120), it reappears in Pseudo-Callisthenes' narration and via the *Romance* it finds its place into modern folklore. One famous example is the Thracian demotic song featuring Alexander the Great and Mikrokonstantinos drinking and eating together at the time of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. In the song, the fish coming back to life is a symbol of the fall of the city into the enemy's hands.

54 For a discussion of the Mermaid/Nereid tales, see Nikolaides (1899, pp. 226-230); Spyridakis (1953, pp. 404-414).

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ter and the cook out of envy of their immortality:

“λαβοῦσά σου τὸν ἱματισμὸν ἔξελθε τοῦ προσώπου μου· ἰδοὺ γὰρ γέγονας δαίμων ἀπαθανατισθεῖσα. Καλὴ μὲν τῷ ὀνόματι ἐκλήθης, ἀρτίως δὲ καλέσω σε Καλὴν τῶν ὀρέων, ὅτι ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῦ λοιποῦ κατοικήσεις. ἔση δὲ κεκλημένη Νεραΐδα, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ νεροῦ τὰ αἶδια δεξαμένη, τουτέστιν τὰ ἀθάνατα.”

[...].

τὸν δὲ μάγειρον προσέταξα δεθῆναι μύλον ἐν τῷ τραχήλῳ αὐτοῦ καὶ ῥῖψαι αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ. ὁ δὲ ῥίφεις ἐγένετο δαίμων καὶ ἀπελθὼν κατώκησεν ἐν τινὶ τόπῳ τῆς θαλάσσης.

[Alexander says to his daughter:] “Take your clothes and get out of my sight; see there, you have become an immortal spirit. You were called Kale, and now I shall call you Kale of the mountains and the hills, as from now on you shall dwell there. You will be called Nereid, for from water you received the gift of immortality.” [...].

As for the cook, I ordered that he had a millstone tied around his neck and be thrown into the sea. He thereupon became a spirit himself and went away to live in a corner of the sea.

[AR (β) II. 41; translation by Stoneman, 1991].

From a comparison between the folk-tale and what appears in Pseudo-Callisthenes, it follows that the Nereid tale is based on Kale’s story, as it presents all the main motifs: i) the stealing of the water of life, ii) the curse, iii) the transformation into an immortal fairy, and iv) the mountains. It is interesting to notice that in Macedonian folklore, Kale/Kalo (Κυρία Κάλω) has become the leader of the Nereids,⁵⁵ who are said to bring hurricanes and to steal at night σημαδεμένα κορίτσια, girls with a “special mark” of beauty or, more frequently, of ugliness; people can calm their peevishness only by assuring them that Alexander is still alive.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Stoneman (1991, p. 193, fn. 87); Henkelman (2009, p. 338, fn. 67; p. 339, fn. 69).

⁵⁶ Nikolaidēs (1899, p. 227). Variants of the spell and of the Nereid tale, which feature witches and other minor deities of nature, are also attested in Thessaly and in the Ionian Islands: Spyridakis (1953, p. 409, n. 6).

By contrast, the Mermaid tale shares motifs of the cook's story: in addition to the theft of the water and the curse, there is metamorphosis into a sea daemon and eternal dwelling in the sea.

2.3 Aetiological traditions

In Hellenic aetiological traditions the presence of the Macedonian hero is required to give the reason for a certain phenomenon or custom. These accounts often share the same motifs present in the *Alexander Romance* and developed in folk tales and myths, such as the quest for immortality, gigantic strength, Bucephalus' supernatural features, Olympias' difficulty in remaining pregnant, and a confused memory of the Macedonian's relationships with Philip, Darius, and Rhoxane. Nonetheless Alexander's historical semblance is pursued through his acting for a definite purpose within a defined community.

A folk tradition about women gifted with great courage is attested both in Macedonia, in the area called Roumlouki of Emathia (Ρουμλούκι Ημαθίας) around Yiannitsa, and in Southern Thessaly, at Pharsala and Sophades.⁵⁷ The inhabitants of these small towns claim that, when the Macedonian army lost bravery at the sight of the enemy and the soldiers started to withdraw from battle, the women stood up and promptly helped Alexander to win the fight. For this reason, the Macedonian conqueror ordered the men to wear kerchiefs and women to put on helmets.

Through a role reversal, which portrays humiliated soldiers with female scarves and honoured women with a *perikephalaia*, the ancient helmet, this oral account provides a curious explanation of the peculiar hairstyle and headdress of the women living in Pharsala, Sophades, and in the area of Roumlouki. I give here the Thessalian version of the folk tradition, entitled *ἡ βασιλιᾶς Ἀλέξανδρου καὶ οἱ Καραγκούνισσις* (*King Alexander and the Karaghounisses*).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Politis (1904, p. 640, n. 8).

⁵⁸ The Thessalian version is provided because already attested on paper by Politis (1904, p. 6, n. 8. Karaghounides is the name of the inhabitants of Eastern Thessaly.

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Τὸν παλαιὸ κηρό, εἶχι μιὰ φρουρὰ ἢ βασιλιᾶς Ἀλέξαντρος πολέμου ἰκεῖ κατ' τὰ Φέρσαλα. Οἱ Θεσσαλοὶ ποῦ ἦντασαν μαζί του ἤρθι στιγμή κ' ἰδείλιασαν κὶ τὸν ἄφ'καν κ' ἐφ'γαν. Τότις οἱ γυναῖκις τουν ποῦ φέρναν νηρὸ 'ς τοῦ στρατό, καθὼς εἶδαν τοὺς ἄνδρις νὰ φεύγουν, ἄρπαξαν τᾶρματά τουν, στάθ'καν, πολέμισαν κ' ἰνίκησαν.

Ἡ Ἀλέξαντρος λοιπὸ γιὰ νὰ τιμήση τὴν παλληκαριά τουν κὶ γιὰ νὰ ντροπιάσ' τοὺς ἄντρις, ἔβγαλε διαταγὴ νὰ φορέσουν τὰ μαντήλια τοῦν γυνικῶν οἱ ἄντρις καὶ τοῦν ἀντρῶν τοῖς πικεφαλαίς οἱ γ'ναῖκις. Κὶ ἀποὺ τὸν κηρὸ ἰκεῖνου φοροῦν οἱ Καραγκούνηδες μαῦρα μαντήλια 'ς τοῦ κηφάλι, κ' οἱ γ'ναῖκις τουν φοροῦν πικεφαλαίς.

Long ago King Alexander kept his troops at a military post under Pharsala. The Thessalians who were with him cowered when the moment of the fight came; so they abandoned him and fled away. Thus their women, who were bringing water to the army, after seeing the men flee away, grabbed their weapons, stood there (in front of the enemy), battled and won.

In order to honour their intrepidity and to shame the men, Alexander ordered that the men would wear the women's kerchiefs and the women the men's helmets.

Since antiquity, the attention Alexander devoted to his attire has been a matter of interest: Ehippus of Olynthus says that the Macedonian used to don sacred vestments during his banquets (e.g. clothing and horns of Ammon), adopted the guise of Artemis or Hermes while driving his chariot, and wore Hermes' sandals and *petasus*⁵⁹ when spending time with his friends.⁶⁰ During battles Alexander wore a κράνος (*helmet*), which, for example, protected his head from the unexpected severe blow of Roisaces' sword in battle at the Granicus River, as Diodorus,⁶¹ Plutarch,⁶² and Arrian⁶³ attest in their accounts. In particular, at chapter

59 The *petasus* was a wide-brimmed hat with a conical crown worn in Ancient Greece; the one worn by men had a low crown, while that worn by women a tall one.

60 Ehippus, *FGrH* 126, F5 (= Ath. XII. 53, pp. 537E-538B).

61 D. S. XVII. 20. 6.

62 Plu. *Alex.* 16. 4.

63 Arr. *An.* I. 15. 7-8.

16.4 of the *Life of Alexander* Plutarch states that Alexander was notable for his light shield and his helmet's crest (τοῦ κράνους τῆ χαίτη), on both sides of which there was fixed a plume admirable for size and whiteness (ἐκατέρωθεν εἰστήκει πτερόν λευκότητι καὶ μεγέθει θαυμαστόν). This image of the Macedonian hero with his impressive helmet adorned with plumage and a high crest has surely left a mark in the Alexander-reception during the period of the Hellenic Revolution against the Ottoman rule (1821-1832). A fine example of the use of Alexander III with the aim of inspiring the awakening of patriotic consciousness in the Greeks is Rigas Pherraios' portrait of the Macedonian conqueror in his *Pamphlet* (1797), in which the helmet with a crest is clearly visible. Alexander and his symbolic helmet played an important role in the Greek Struggle for Macedonia (1904-1908) too, as demonstrated by N. Engonopoulos' famous painting entitled *The two Macedonians: Alexander the Great and Pavlos Melas* (1977), where the brave heroes are standing alongside each other. A stylised Alexander – recognisable only by the tall red crest of his helmet – is depicted with his left arm on Melas' shoulder in a friendly gesture, almost creating a bridge between ancient and modern battles for freedom, between the fight against the Persians and the one against the Ottoman Empire.

Although the role of women in war is rarely displayed and often overshadowed by that of men, we can assume that with this folk tradition the inhabitants of Pharsala, Sophades, and Roumlouki wanted to praise their women for their endurance in crucial moments of the forging of the Hellenic Nation. A precedent to this tradition is attested by Plutarch in his account of the war between Sparta and Argos in 494 B.C.

When Cleomenes, king of the Spartans killed many [Argives] (but not as many as 7,777, as some people fabulously say) and marched up against the city, divine resolution and courage made the young women resist the enemy on behalf of their fatherland (ὄρμη καὶ τόλμα δαιμόνιος παρέστη ταῖς ἀκμαζούσαις τῶν γυναικῶν ἀμύνεσθαι τοὺς πολεμίους ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος). Under Telesilla's leadership, they took the weapons and surrounded the walls standing alongside the battlements (ἡγουμένης δὲ

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τῆς Τελεσίλλης ὄπλα λαμβάνουσαι καὶ παρ' ἐπαλξιν ἰστάμεναι κύκλω τὰ τεῖχη περιέστεψαν).

[...] Some say that this fight was on the seventh day of the month; others that it was on the first day of the month, which is now called the fourth, but was anciently called Hermaeus by the Argives. On this day, even now, they perform the Hybristika, a festival in which women clothe themselves with men's coats and cloaks, whereas the men put on women's veils and head-dresses (καθ' ἣν μέχρι νῦν τὰ Ὑβριστικά τελοῦσι, γυναικάς μὲν ἀνδρείοις χιτῶσι καὶ χλαμύσιν, ἄνδρας δὲ πέπλοις γυναικῶν καὶ καλύπτρας ἀμφιεννύντες).

Plutarch, *Mulierum Virtutes* 4 (= *Mor.* 245C-245F)⁶⁴

The Macedonian and Thessalian traditions are based on the ancient Argive story, since the two key motifs of the plot are the same: the women defend their country and clothing customs are reversed in order to commemorate and honour the women's courage.

A variant is also known in Velvento (Pieria), where women say that they wear the γκιβιζί (*ghivizi*), their traditional red silk foulard, to commemorate a war around Palaiokastro in which men fled away and women took over the fight, eventually defeating the enemy. The king of Velvento is anonymous, but the plot remains similar to the Karaghounisses' tradition in all its basic elements (Politis, 1904, p. 640, n. 8).

2.4 Aetiologico-Mythological traditions

The following Macedonian folk accounts explain the origin of tornados through a modern reception of the mythological Νύμφαι (Nymphs).

As discussed above, the *Alexander Romance* introduced the Nereids and the Mermaids into Alexander-folklore, where they took on the role

⁶⁴ See also Hdt. VI. 77-82; Paus. II. 20. 8-10. A similar story featuring women at war is described by Aeneas Tacticus, *Poliorectica* XL. 4-5.

of sisters, mothers⁶⁵ or fiancées;⁶⁶ they surely are the queen of the Hellenic mindset, for they represent a link between the modern and the ancient mythological world. In fact, modern Nereids remind us of the ancient Nymphs, minor goddesses presiding over various natural phenomena and taking care of the flora and fauna of their domain. Classified into different families according to their duties and characteristics, the fifty nymphs of the sea, called *Ἀλῖαι/Ἀλιάδες* (Haliad Nymphs) or Nereids, were depicted as beautiful maidens riding on sea-horses, dolphins, or sea-monsters, very similar to mermaids. Furthermore, Lady Kalo's substitution for the mythological Thetis, the mother of Achilles and Alexander's "ancestor", gives an additional spin to the multi-layered tradition in Macedon, developed through a continuous process of adaptation of ancient and new material by the Greeks.

In Macedonian folklore, Nereids keep their mythological power over the natural world, for they are believed to bring tornados and hurricanes. People can calm their wrath only by whispering three times "Μέλι γάλα· κα'π' ἀπ' ἐδῶ πέρασεν ὁ Βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος· ζῆ καὶ βασιλεύει (*Honey and milk! From here too King Alexander has passed; he lives and reigns*)" or "Στὴν ψυχὴ τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ Ἀλέξανδρου, κακὸ μὴ μου κάμετε! (*For the soul of King Alexander, do not harm me!*)."⁶⁷ Variants of these two Macedonian spells, often embedded in "Nereid-type" tales, are told also in other Greek regions and on the islands.⁶⁸ Sometimes the spell is uttered in shorter forms, but the fortune and the persistence of the Nymphs-motif surely give evidence of the Greeks' attachment to their superstitions; core characteristics of these spells are the mention of King Alexander and/or the pair honey-and-milk, which probably refers to a real offering that used to be made to the Nereids in order to "mellow" their bad temper.

65 See Politis (1931, p. 224); Spyridakis (1953, p. 406): a folk tale from Eastern Thrace (modern province of Edirne, Turkey) portrays Alexander's mother, named Φώκια (Seal), causing tornados and whirlpools in the sea.

66 See the Macedonian aetiologico-mythological tradition *Ὁ βασιλιάς Ἀλέξανδρος κ' οἱ Νεράϊδες* below.

67 Nikolaides (1899, p. 227); Politis (1931, pp. 54-59). Kyriakidis (1965, pp. 194-196).

68 See Spyridakis (1953, pp. 404-414), especially p. 409, n. 7: in a tradition from Kastoria Alexander's sisters are called the *Μελιτένιες* (Melitenies, "made of honey") and are deities dwelling in the countryside close to crossroads and dells.

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In a Macedonian tradition attested in the Western part of the region,⁶⁹ Alexander the Great guards the water of immortality from his sisters, who are described as three witches (στρίγγλες).⁷⁰ Once, during his absence, they steal and drink the precious water. When the Macedonian understands what his sisters have done, he is seized by anger and kills them. Afterwards *he incinerates them and throws their ashes in the air*. This tradition projects the (unusual in Hellenic folklore) image of a choleric and resentful Alexander, which offers the pretext to the introduction of the folk aetiology: tornados in Western Macedon are said to be caused by the ashes of the three witches. As solid evidence in favour of the presence of the three sisters in the air, people say that these violent meteorological phenomena cease only when someone shouts: “Ζεῖ ἀκόμη ὁ Μέγας Αλέξανδρος, τὸ ἄτι του καὶ τὸ σπαθί του (*Alexander the Great is still alive, his steed and his sword too*).”

The enraged Alexander of this tradition is a more human figure than the heroic king of the folk tales, with good qualities but also with flaws. Similarly, in another Macedonian tradition, entitled *Ὁ βασιλιάς Αλέξανδρος κ’ οἱ Νεραΐδες* (*King Alexander and the Nereids*),⁷¹ Alexander is a failed hero: due to his irascibility he loses his realm and power. This time, the (usually wicked) Nereids play the role of the good characters of the story, and they hold no grudge against Alexander for his excessive anger at them. Because of their generosity, people pray them to stop tornados, which the Nereids immediately dissolve as soon as they hear that Alexander is still alive.

3 Conclusions

In this study on Hellenic folklore, my main focus has been the understanding of the use of the historical persona of Alexander III in Mace-

⁶⁹ Spyridakis (1953, p. 408, n. 5).

⁷⁰ Cf. the folk tale *Oi Stringles* from Paxoi: Salvanos (1929, p. 151, n. 9). For the Stringles in ancient mythology and modern folklore, see Politis (1871, pp. 172-181); Kyriakidis (1965, p. 200).

⁷¹ Spyridakis (1953, p. 409, n. 6). In this tradition, one of the Nereids is presented as Alexander’s fiancée.

donian traditions. The survey includes:

- Seven geographical traditions, in which natural environmental features or buildings are ascribed to Alexander and to his horse Bucephalus. Macedon, being Alexander's motherland, holds the majority of these traditions, but similar attributions are found in Thessaly, Schinoussa, Zante, Crete, and at Cape Sounion, where the temple of Poseidon is said to be the Macedonian's palace.
- Two geographico-aetiological traditions, representing Alexander taking active part in the reshaping of the land, with a show of gigantic strength (the Rocks from Serres) or of building skills (the tower of Aghios Basileios). The former account reminds us of the Cyclopic walls built in Mycenae and Tiryns in the second half of the second millennium B.C., whereas the latter is the folk reworking of the ancient reception of Alexander as strenuous builder and city-founder.
- One aetiological tradition from Roumlouki, a variant of which is attested in Pieria and one in Thessaly. The motif of the brave women fighting for their country is ancient and it finds its literary archetype in Plutarch's *Moralia*.
- Two aetiologico-mythological traditions about the Nereids, a prolific motif in modern folklore, with tales and spells attested throughout the Greek-speaking world.

The geographical distribution of the Macedonian Alexander-traditions here studied runs across the entire Northern Greek region, with some accounts attested in a single area (Western, Central, or Eastern Macedon) and other widely popular in different Macedonian villages.

The themes treated draw upon ancient mythology (Nereids, giants), history (Alexander's political agenda and minting policy), and Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Romance* (Kale, the water of life); via Alexander they are all put into dialogue with the present. Alexander is transformed into a king

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living in the countryside, into a national hero, or into a mythological giant; however, he is also a more human figure, not errorless but liable for violent actions and capable of repentance. Concluding, the great conqueror is charged with characteristics, symbols, and ideologies belonging to later historical periods and experiences of the Greek *ethnos*; thus, he has a unique role in the Macedonian mindset: he is both the recipient and the bearer of the Greeks' cultural identity, who will teach the values of the past to future generations.⁷²

⁷² Cf. Nikolaidis (1899, p. 230): no other hero has personified so much the spirit of the Hellenic people, especially for the inhabitants of the country-side, the hills, and the islands. To the Greeks, notwithstanding his conquests until India, Alexander has remained a "Macedonian King".

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