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TRISTAN AND ISOLDE AS THE FOUNTAIN OF ETERNAL QUEST FOR LOVE

SUMMARY

The tragic love story of the medieval European myth *Tristan and Isolde* has served as a fountain of inspiration for different writers, composers and artists to form their view and inspire the creation of masterpieces of literature, music and art synthesizing their craft and elements of real life. This article focuses on the novel *Brazil* by John Updike (1932-2009), the three-novella book *Legends of the Fall* by James “Jim” Harrison (1937-), the myth of Tristan (whose name means “sad” in French) and Isolde (also known as Iseult, Isold, Isolt or Ysolde) as well as films based on both the myth and Harrison's book. Specifically, this article will explore parallels between mythical aspects of Tristan and Isolde as well as interaction of fictional and factual representation of everlasting love stories in life and actual existence in *Brazil* and *Legends of the Fall*. Although the intertextual references and the connection between Updike's *Brazil*, Harrison's *Legends of the Fall* and the myth of Tristan and Isolde, a myth central to Western civilization, are not complete, Updike's and Harrison's works contain ties to the myth's themes in the sphere of love, marriage and adultery, thereby linking American prose to medieval European myth and moreover, medieval and contemporary life. Tracing the European myth of forbidden and eternal love between Tristan and Isolde, the lovers whose unity can be accomplished only in death, to Updike's and Harrison's expansion of this notion from the point of view of cultural history and contrariness of love and marriage, as also Denis de Rougemont elaborates in his study entitled *Love in the Western World (L'Amour et l'Occident)*, we can see stylistic diversity of literary and artistic works synthesizing literature, art, contemporary love and actual existence. Such connections underscore Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) statement that life imitates art far more than art imitates life.

Keywords: *Tristan and Isolde*, *Brazil*, *Legends of the Fall*, the myth's themes in the sphere of love, marriage and adultery, the eternal quest for love

Tracing *Tristan and Isolde* to the 20th Century

The mythical tale of Tristan and Isolde was one of the most influential romances in medieval period. Since then, as one of the greatest love stories of all times, it has inspired numerous writers, artists, musicians and film-makers, and has had a substantial impact on Western literature. The myth almost certainly originated as a tale from oral tradition written down in a hypothetical original literary composition, often called the “Ur Tristan”, from which all later works are derived. The earliest surviving works concerning the legend originate from the 12th century. Thomas of Britain wrote one of the earliest, although incomplete, extant versions entitled *Tristan* (c.1170-1175) in Anglo-Norman French verse. At a similar time, Norman poet Bérout (c.1160-1190) wrote *Le Roman de Tristan*. Eilhart von Oberg, Marie de France and Chretien de Troyes, all wrote their own works soon after. These early versions have inspired many others to approach the legend:

Gottfried von Strassburg of Germany wrote *Tristan und Isolde* (c. 1210), and based his poem on Thomas' romance. His poem is acknowledged to be the father of modern variations of the original myth in Germany. Association with the Court of King Arthur appeared in early works, but was limited in scope. By c.1240, the *Prose Tristan* became the standard version of *Tristan and Isolde* and heavily tied the Celtic inspired legend to King Arthur. Subsequently, Sir Thomas Malory, incorporated *Tristan and Isolde* into his Arthurian masterpiece: *Le Morte d'Arthur* (c. 1470).⁸

The artistic pursuit of inspiration and secrets from myth of Tristan and Isolde declined from Renaissance to the 19th century when it made a revival of interest in the Arthurian legends and thus became what is known today as the legend of *Tristan and Isolde*. The story, originally independent of the Arthurian legend, was later incorporated in it. The Tristan legend inspired three English poets of the 1800s: Matthew Arnold (*Tristram and Iseult*, 1852), Algernon Charles Swinburne (*Tristram of Lyonesse*, 1882), and Alfred Lord Tennyson (part of the Arthurian poem *Idylls of the King*, published between 1856 and 1885). The American poet Edwin Arlington Robinson based his *Tristram* (1927) on the original version of the medieval European myth. One of the most famous works of the day to draw on the romance is the opera *Tristan und Isolde* written between 1857 and 1859 by German composer Richard Wagner. As probably the composer's greatest work, it is considered by many critics to be one of the finest operas ever written.

⁸ Available from: <http://www.tristanandisolde.net/tag/literature> (Last Accessed March 18, 2010)

While the Arthurian Revival has perhaps faded, the legend of Tristan and Isolde has continued to appeal to modern writers, but now more focused on the forbidden romance between the main characters than the chivalry of Tristan. In addition to John Erskine, Rosalind Miles, Anna Taylor, Rosmary Surcliff, Hannah Closs and Nancy McKenzie, who wrote modern Tristan and Isolde tales, the universal myth was also approached by John Updike in his novel *Brazil* (1994) and by James “Jim” Harrison in the three-novella book *Legends of the Fall* (1979), mirrored especially in his last novella by which the book is entitled.

The mythic story of forbidden and eternal love between Tristan and Isolde has never been connected with exclusively one form of art. Through history, following literary or musical works, it has inspired and illuminated the visual arts in a large variety of themes, styles and forms. Based on the legend or literary interpretations of the medieval story, many film adaptations have been made all over the world, too. The earliest example in film is probably the 1909 silent French film *Tristan et Yseult*, which was followed by a unique addition to the story in another French film of the same title made two years later. The 1920 third silent French version is closely connected to the legend. One of the most celebrated and controversial Tristan films is *L'Éternel Retour* (*The Eternal Return*), directed by Jean Delannoy, which appeared in 1943. The legend has been adapted to modern times relating the original story closely or tangentially in films such as: *Tristan i Izolda* (Ex Yugoslavia, 1970), the avant-garde French film *Tristan et Yseult* (1972), Irish *Lovespell* (1981), *Feuer und Schwert – Die Legende von Tristan und Isolde* (Ireland/Germany, 1982), the most recent Tristan film entitled *Tristan&Isolde* (USA, 2006), then *Legends of the Fall* (USA, 1994), the film based on the Harrison’s novella of the same title.

The Tristan myth is obviously an everlasting story. The original legend can be traced back to archetypal, Celtic romance, but it has become fully known in French medieval literature which abounds with references to Tristan and Isolde. Although the many versions of the story differ, the basic plot is much the same in all of them. Tristan is a descendant of the royal family but born in misfortune. Shortly after his father’s death, his mother Blanche fleur dies, not surviving birth. His name Tristan means “sorrow” and is actually given to him because of the loss of his parents, especially the loss of his mother at birth. Blanche fleur’s brother, King Mark of Cornwall, takes the orphan into his castle at Tintagel and raises him there. Tristan becomes a noble knight and kills the Morholt, an Irish giant harassing Cornish maidens, but he is wounded with a barb and, as French philosopher Denis de Rougemont in his study entitled *Love in the Western World* (1939, *L’Amour et l’Occident*; tr. 1956) notes, Tristan, having no hope of recovery, asks to be sent adrift on a boat. He lands in Ireland, where the Queen is sister to Morholt, who doesn’t know that his brother had been killed by Tristan’s hand. The Queen’s daughter, Isolde, who is also called “La Beale Isoult” or “Iseult the Fair”, takes care of him and restores him to health. Tristan comes back to Cornwall and is so full of stories about the beautiful Isolde that his uncle decides to marry her. De

Rougemont writes that a bird brings a golden hair to King Mark and he is determined to marry the woman from whose head the hair has come, who appears to be Isolde of Ireland. Tristan is sent to find her and brings her back to Cornwall to be the bride of his uncle. On the way back to Cornwall Tristan and Isolde mistakenly drink the so-called “the wine of herbs” which is a love potion brewed by the Queen of Ireland⁹ for her daughter and King Mark to be drunk after they have married. Tristan and Isolde fall in love and there is nothing that can separate them after that moment. In some versions, the potion’s effects last for a lifetime while in the archetypal version, the potion’s effects wane after three years. Tristan is still under obligations to his uncle which he fulfills by bringing Isolde to the King of Cornwall to be his bride. Although she is married, Tristan and Isolde are forced by the potion to seek out one another for adultery. Even on the wedding night, Isolde’s maid Brengain takes the bride’s place in the royal bed to save Isolde’s honor. King Mark eventually learns of the affair and resolves to punish them: Tristan is sentenced to death and Isolde is handed over to the lepers. On the way to the execution, Tristan escapes and rescues Isolde. The two lovers hide in the forest of Morrois where they spend three years until they are discovered by King Mark one day. There are different versions of this part of the legend, but in all of them the king forgives them and the lovers part. Tristan travels on to Brittany where decides to marry another Isolde, for her name and her beauty, who is called “aux Blanche Mains”, meaning the one of the White Hands. Later, wounded in an adventure and about to die, Tristan sends for his only love, Isolde the Fair, now the Queen of Cornwall; it is she who alone can save his life. As she arrives on ship, she hoists a white sail as a sign of hope, but Isolde of the White Hands, upon seeing it, runs to Tristan and, tormented by jealousy, tells him that the sail is black. Deceived into believing his beloved is not coming, Tristan dies of despair. Isolde the Fair lands, and on finding her lover dead she lies down beside him. Then she dies of grief. King Mark buries the lovers side by side in an oratory in Cornwall. As the legend says, rose bushes grow from the separate graves of the lovers and get interlaced for ever as a symbol that love survives to death as in many other love stories and poems.

The Tristan legend introduces death in love as the passion above passions in which a new life of divine passion in death triumphs over life. De Rougemont elaborates *Tristan and Isolde* as “an epic of adultery” describing their love as being in love with love itself. He points out that happy love has no history in European literature, but thinking of Hawthorne, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and then Harrison, Proulx, Updike, as in many other American writers, their themes and works show that eloquent traces of the same statement can incontestably be found in American literature as well. Judged not only by literature, but by different kinds of artistic expressions through history and contemporary life, adultery would seem to be one of the most remarkable occupations in both Europe and America, and what the French philosopher also recognizes in *Love in the Western World* as a part of

⁹ The Queen was a sorceress as well according to some interpretations of the legend.

people's common life, both once upon a time and in modern times. Writing about *Tristan and Isolde*, everlasting contradictions between the Norm of Day and the Passion of Night, and modern way of living, he says:

I fasten upon the Tristan myth because it enables me to offer a *simple explanation* of our present confusion and at the same time to set forth certain *permanent relations* which the scrupulous vulgarities of current psychologies submerge. Furthermore, I can lay bare a particular *dilemma*, the stern reality of which we are in process of overlooking as a result of our frenzied living, the state of our culture, and the purr of current moral doctrines (De Rougemont, 1974, p. 25.).

The romance of Tristan and Isolde can be viewed as a synthesis of the conflict between love and marriage or passion and marriage in the modern Western world, thereby linking fictional and factual shapes of love, as well as American modern prose to medieval European myth, and thus medieval and contemporary life.

John Updike's *Brazil* and *Tristan and Isolde*

Writing about spiritual dimensions of the modern world, John Updike, whom the critics place somewhere between Modernism and Postmodernism, returns to the mythical age of the Tristan legend in his novel *Brazil*. Connections between the myth and Updike's novel are not always obvious except partly in the names of the main characters, Tristao and Isabel, and then in love between them which is impossible or doomed according to the racial taboos and narrow minded social conventions. The novel portrays an interracial love between an upper-class white girl, Isabel Leme, and a poor black thief, Tristao Raposo. They meet by chance on Copacabana Beach and convinced their love is predestined, nothing can set them apart. The lovers decide to flee away and find the ways to their own future together in an astonishing journey through the vast country of Brazil both ancient and new. Spanning twenty-two years of their relationship, from the mid-sixties to the late eighties, Updike, as he claims, creates subtle, realistic spheres and resonances within the novel. He decisively rejects influences of magic realism or writers such as Marquez and Borges although he uses effects of a mythic fable in his *Brazil*. Furthermore, a distinguished American studies scholar, Zvonimir Radeljkovic, in his essay about John Updike, notices the American writer undoubtedly knows De Rougemont's study according to which *Tristan and Isolde* are a model or a general paradigm of modern conception of love and marriage. The novel deals with issues about the diversity of race, culture, class, gender and the quest for identity, which colors the fabric of *Brazil* from the very beginning. The first two sentences open a new vision of a factual world as they are: "Black is a shade of brown. So is white, if you look (Updike, 1996, p. 3.)." To sum up, Updike examines human destiny and future in a journey through the past and present, through civilization and wilderness

of a magical country which could be viewed as a pastiche of the contemporary world. The American dream is fallen ethos in *Brazil* and is closely related to the love of Tristao and Isabel. Hence, Tristao's dream comes true, he gets Isabel, money and all he needs for a better, richer and happier life, but his soul stays empty and without satisfaction. In the name of love, Isabel gives her own whiteness to Tristao and takes his race with the help of an old shaman's magic. She decides to make that extreme change in order to save her lover since she is convinced switching the races will provide him a better and prosperous future. Paradoxically, that very change will cause his death, a notion which is modern and realistic rather than mythical. All that is still connected to the Tristan myth through a "depiction of a dauntless love that transcends mere passion (Updike, 1996, p. 3.)" as it is put in one of the reviews of the Updike's novel. Tristao and Isabel fall in love at first sight and escape together from the wrath of her father. The Amazon rainforest is in a way their forest of Morrois.

Just as De Rougemont points out for Tristan and Isolde, passion means suffering for Tristao and Isabel. It is a fatal passion which he identifies "as a form of mysticism, more or less conscious and definite (De Rougemont, 1974, p. 141.)." Updike draws sexual and thus physical just as psychological passion and love, but romance is not romantic or mythical in the end. The closure is an actual representation of contemporary life and modern notions of love. Here, passion does not triumph over desire and death does not triumph over life although the ending echoes one of the Updike's mottos of the novel taken from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "Thou know'st 'tis common; all that live must die,/Passing through nature to eternity (Shakespeare, 1988, p. 657.)." Opposite to the Tristan myth, the novel ends up in an anti-divine tone:

She remembered a story she had once read, in the early days at the Serra do Buraco... told of a woman, long ago, who, her lover dead, lay down beside him and willed herself to die, and did. She did die, to show her love.

The body of Tristao had been dragged higher on the sand, to wait for the ambulance. Sand grains adhered to the corneas of his open eyes, and sugared his grimacing lips. She lay down beside him and kissed his eyes, his lips. A bitter seaweedy taste already flavored his skin. The crowd sensed the grand thing she was attempting, and grew reverentially hushed. Only her uncle marred the hush, crying out, "For God's sake, Isabel!" in sheer embarrassment at this vulgar display of Brazilian romanticism.

She inched her body higher and opened her robe so Tristao's marble face rested against her warm bosom, and curled one arm around him in his dank, drying suit, and asked her heart to stop. She waited to ride her lover's body like that of a dolphin into the submarine realm of death...

But the rising sun continued to redden her shut lids, and the chemicals within her continued their fathomless commerce, and the crowd grew bored. There would be no miracle today. Eyes still shut, Isabel could hear people resuming conversations and drifting off; a distant ambulance, like an evil clown with its self important, popping bleat, pierced the hum of humankind to come for Tristao, the piece of litter he had become. The spirit is strong, but blind matter is stronger. Having absorbed this desolating truth, the dark-eyed widow staggered to her feet, tightened her robe about her nakedness, and let her uncle lead her home (Updike, 1996, pp. 259-260.).

The stronger analogy between the Tristan myth and Updike's *Brazil* is credible in a panoramic social, psychological, sexual, and then geographical and historical picture and exploration of conception of love as a crucial concept of living in the modern world, which also connects *Tristan and Isolde* with Harrison's *Legends of the Fall*. Furthermore, all this contains ties to the actual world as well, especially the Western civilization.

Jim Harrison's *Legends of the Fall* and *Tristan and Isolde*

Harrison's trilogy of *novellas* is comprised of "Revenge", "The Man Who Gave Up His Name" and "Legends of the Fall", each of them echoing the old art of storytelling. The first and last *novella* create literary worlds of a unique mythmaking but still very realistic, universal representation of modern love and again historical creation of American Tristan myth. The "legend" in the middle of this collection¹⁰ deals with revenge, the American dream, identity, life, satisfaction, death, love, passion and marriage following the paths and days of a man whose name is Nordstrom. His name means "north-storm" but it is not much more helpful than, for example, "crow", as it is given like a description of the one "who gave up his name". Thus, there is no real connection between the Tristan myth and the *novella*, a conflict between love and marriage is again something that remains the true subject of occupation of both, and moreover of all *Legends of the Fall*. Although it may seem that Harrison's voice is retro compared to many other contemporary American writers, his *novellas*, both poetic and mythic, are closely intertwined with modern life and society in a completely new understanding and views of the twentieth century man.

In "Revenge", the main character Cochran, a retired air force pilot and Vietnam veteran, passionately falls in love and has an affair with Miryee, the wife of a Mexican friend and gangster millionaire, Baldassaro Mendez, also known as "Tibey", "the shark". Tibey immediately learns of adultery, so gives him hints and opportunities to end the affair as he loves his wife deeply, but Cochran ignores all of

¹⁰ It is "The Man Who Gave Up His Name".

that. One night, at the beginning of their disguised romantic trip, her husband, together with his men, finds and punishes them. Cochran is brutalized, forced to watch as Tibey takes a razor and deftly cuts an incision across Miryeya's lips, which is the pimp's ancient revenge for a wayward girl, and then they abandon him without clothes to the coyotes and vultures of a Mexican night. Thanks to a peasant, Cochran survives and wants to take revenge while trying to find his beloved. Miryeya is terrorized, drugged and first placed in a whorehouse where she kills a man whom she is being forced to have sex with. After the incident, which creates a scandal, Tibey has Miryeya placed in an asylum for insane women and girls run by an order of nuns. Although betrayed and hurt both intimately and publicly, Tibey still loves his wife in whose hands the dangerous man has been like a baby. While in mourning in his soul, he deflowers a number of Mexican girls in manic fits which alternate with periods of his own inner fights and deeper wishes to go to the whorehouse, and after that, to the nunnery and try to claim back the happiness that has been so briefly his. At the end, Cochran accomplishes his goals but yet his dreams will never come true. After an epic journey, he finds Miryeya, whom he will lose forever now. She dies while it is raining which recalls the theme of death in Hemingway. In a divine mythic tone a bird above the lovers croons as if it were the soul of some Mayan trying to struggle his way back earthward, but the lovers stay set apart forever. Cochran, like Tristao's Isabel, will not lie down beside his beloved and die like Tristan's Isolde. Nor Tibey will do that. Besides, a construction of a mythic fable is deconstructed at the end of "Revenge" by a modern vision of love, lovers, passion and marriage as much as life and death. Tibey is probably aware she will never be his again if she dies. Therefore, he only wants her to be well, so there is no fight for love or revenge when Cochran comes to the nunnery. As death emphasizes life, there is only fight for life. When Miryeya dies, Tibey even stays side by side with Cochran on her funeral.

In "Revenge", Tibey could be viewed as King Mark while Cochran and Miryeya in that vision would have the roles of Tristan and Isolde. However, all of them are just variations on the Tristan myth, accidentally or maybe deliberately given with Harrison's contemporary sensibility and a touch of the old values through mythic literary style, as well as spirituality and rituals closely connected with nature. The last *novella* in the book of the same title, "Legends of the Fall", is more connected to the Tristan myth on the surface. It contains ties to the myth's themes of the sphere of love, marriage and adultery, thereby linking American past and present, and moreover medieval and contemporary life in the deeper and wider context. The main character is Tristan Ludlow and his beloved is Isabel, an Indian girl named after his mother, but called "Two" by her father in order to avoid confusion. It is an American epic tale with Tristan of wild and untrammled spirit in its center. It is also a tragic love story of Tristan and Isabel Two and a contemporary saga about the Ludlow family covering the years 1914 – 1977 mainly in Choteau, Montana. At the beginning of the *novella* the three brothers, Samuel, Tristan, and Alfred ride off to Canada to enlist in the World War I. Samuel, the youngest, is

killed fighting. Out of revenge, Tristan, full of grief and sorrow, madly continues to fight with Germans. He even scalps the Germans he kills, but as a result ends up confined to a soldier's hospital, from which he then escapes. When he comes back home to the ranch in Montana, he marries his dead brother's girl, traditionally and symbolically named Susannah. The sole purpose of his marriage is to have a son with her to replace his brother, and nothing else. Later on, and still without children with Susannah who has loved him deeply, Tristan goes away, as he explains, to meet his grandfather's ship in Havana. After awhile she gets a fatal note saying that her husband is dead with a request for her to marry another, accompanied only with a word "please". She suffers agony, and then Alfred, the oldest brother who loves her with all his heart, marries her. Devastatingly for Susannah and her illusive outer peace, since she has never achieved the soul harmony, Tristan returns home during the Prohibition and marries Isabel Two for love. They have children while Susannah is still childless. Tristan becomes involved in smuggling bootleg liquor, which accidentally causes his wife's death killed by a corrupt Federal officer. The husband and wife stay apart in the cold rain because death separates them. He carries her dead body for miles through the canyon, howling occasionally in a language not known on earth, but doesn't follow her in death. Realistically, Tristan almost crushes skull to the one of the police officers, so must serve thirty days in the Helena jail for it.

Although still married to Alfred, Susannah, now mentally ill as a result of her passionate unrequited love for her husband's younger brother, believes her dreams might finally come true since there is no other woman in Tristan's life any more. He doesn't want her but is aware of the fact she will commit suicide once she learns the truth, so he lies to her in order to keep her alive. One day it happens that she shudders in his arms and as he gazes over her shoulder, her husband Alfred walks into the room. When he sees the scene, Alfred first says he wants to kill his brother, and then turns the pistol to his own head, but Tristan knocks it from his hand. Tristan leaves while Susannah stays with Alfred. She gives him a farewell kiss accompanied with the words that they would meet one day in hell or perhaps heaven, wherever people go if they go anywhere. In the fall of that year Tristan receives a telegram from Alfred saying he has won her and that he is sending her home. Loving Tristan for both women has been fatal. Meanwhile, Tristan avenges his dead beloved. As the opposite side wants revenge, they come to kill Tristan, but his old father saves him by killing the enemies. Tristan's epic journey ends up like every man's life, in death. The Epilogue of "Legends of the Fall" brings the change of modern times while the Tristan story, just as his grave and the spirit of the old days, stays apart, somehow solitary and slowly forgotten.

As an offence for Harrison's essential, mythic and therefore universal but still unique style of the old art of storytelling, which synthesizes past and present, and then nature, primitive rituals and the twentieth century man and society in his *Legends of the Fall*, stands the 1994 film based on the last *novella* of the same title. The Oscar winner film for John Toll's cinematography and directed by Edward

Zwick doesn't present the spirit of the literary masterpiece. Leonard Maltin, a U.S. film critic and film historian, gives the following opinion about Hollywood adaptation of *Legends of the Fall*:

Sprawling family saga about three brothers raised in Montana by their iconoclastic father – a former cavalry officer who turned his back on bloodshed and the exploitation of the Indians. Edne Ferberesque plot is rife with sibling rivalry, pregnant looks and heated exchanges. Many movie-goers – especially fans of red-hot Pitt – embraced this film, but its earnest, straight-faced story gets sillier as it goes along. Performances are fairly one-note, as will, except for Thomas as the youngest brother (Maltin, 2008, p. 790).

Harrison's *Legends of the Fall*, just as the myth about Tristan and Isolde, explores love as natural passion, love that becomes an eternal quest and a crucial aspect of living, even in modern and post-modern times.

CONCLUSION

The eternal quest for love is something that binds past and present, mythic and modern times; the Tristan myth remains close to the 20th century literature, arts and life. Updike's and Harrison's characters are dreamers who want to get more of life while attempting to survive in contemporary society and living on the edge of failure. Love in their literary worlds, just like in the myth and actual existence, is contradictory in itself but is necessary in human life. At the same time, love is their divine and fatal dream, their happiness and sorrow as it is in everyday life where the breakdown of marriage becomes a common thing all over the world. In the confusion of modern life as in difficulties of living in the old times, stability and joy of existence are derived from physical pleasures, passion and moreover, an individual notion of happiness assumed to be identical in the minds of both parties. Love is a crucial aspect of living in all times. Therefore, many want to get married for love and live happily ever after. Yet real life is not a fairy tale even though real people tend to be wanters and dreamers, just like Updike's and Harrison's characters, and just like Tristan and Isolde. The twentieth century men and women are analogous to these characters in representation of their wishes, hopes and dreams. They all are faced with the fact that happiness is fragile, as De Rougemont points out, since it vanishes as soon as it is gazed upon. While seeking to restore the myth of love to its original integrity, the French philosopher gives a perspective on modern marriage in *Love in the Western World*:

Married couples are not saints, and sin is not some error which we may renounce one of these days in order to adopt a more accurate

truth. We are unendingly and incessantly in the thick of the struggle between nature and grace; unendingly and incessantly unhappy and then happy. But the horizon has not remained the same. A fidelity maintained in the Name of what does not change as we change will gradually disclose some of its mystery: *beyond tragedy another happiness waits*. A happiness resembling the old, but no longer belonging to the form of world, for this new happiness transforms the world (De Rougemont, 1974, p. 323).

The strongest analogy between the Tristan myth, Updike's *Brazil*, Harrison's *Legends of the Fall* and the arts, and therefore between medieval European myth, and American contemporary prose and modern life, lies in the notion of love, passion, marriage and satisfaction as well as in conflict between these notions. Love remains the crucial concept of living in all times that life, literature and arts brings to *Tristan and Isolde* as a fountain of the eternal quest for love.

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**TRISTAN I IZOLDA KAO IZVOR
VJEČNE POTRAGE ZA LJUBAVLJU**

REZIME

Tragična ljubavna priča iz srednjovjekovnog mita *Tristan i Izolda* izvor je inspiracije za različite pisce, kompozitore i druge umjetnike u stvaranju i nadahnuću za mnoga remek-djela iz književnosti, muzike i drugih vidova umjetničkog izraza u sintezi njihove maštovitosti i elemenata stvarnoga života. Ovaj rad se fokusira na: roman *Brazil*, Johna Updikea (1932-2009), zbirku triju novella *Legende o jeseni*, Jamesa Jima Harrisona (1937), mit o Tristanu (čije ime na francuskom jeziku znači “tužan, tužni”) i Izoldi (koja je također poznata kao Iseult, Isold, Isolt ili Ysolde), ali i na filmska ostvarenja bazirana kako na tome mitu, tako i na Harrisonovoj knjizi. U radu će se posebno istražiti paralele između mitskih gledišta na Tristana i Izoldu, kao i međusobna prožetost fikcionalnih i činjeničnih prikaza priča o vječnoj ljubavi u životu i stvarnosti *Brazila* i *Legendi o jeseni*. Iako intertekstualne veze i povezanost između Updikeovog *Brazila*, Harrisonovih *Legendi o jeseni* i mita o Tristanu i Izoldi, koji je osnovni u zapadnjačkoj civilizaciji, nisu potpune, Updikeovo i Harrisonovo djelo imaju poveznicu s mitskim temama u domenu ljubavi, braka, preljube, te na taj način povezuju američku prozu i srednjovjekovni evropski mit, a time i srednjovjekovni i savremeni život. U književnim kretanjima od evropskog mita o zabranjenoj i vječnoj ljubavi između Tristana i Izolde, ljubavnika čije se jedinstvo može ostvariti jedino u smrti, do Updikove i Harrisonove razrade ove teme s aspekta kulturalne historije i suprotnosti pojmova ljubavi i braka, kao što to Denis de Rougemont objašnjava u svojoj studiji pod naslovom *Ljubav u zapadnom svijetu*, uočljiva je stilaska različitost književnih i općenito umjetničkih ostvarenja, a koja povezuju književnost i umjetnost sa savremenim životom i stvarnim postojanjem. Takve poveznice potvrđuje i mišljenje Oscara Wildea (1854-1900) koji kaže da život imitira umjetnost mnogo više nego što umjetnost imitira život.

Ključne riječi: *Tristan i Izolda*, *Brazil*, *Legende o jeseni*, mitske teme u sferi ljubavi, brak i preljuba, vječna potraga za ljubavlju