Theses and Dissertations

2019-06-01

Myths on the Move: A Critical Pluralist Approach to the Study of Classical Mythology in Post-Classical Works

David Carter Delbar
Brigham Young University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Myths on the Move: A Critical Pluralist Approach to the Study of Classical Mythology in Post-Classical Works

David Carter Delbar

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Roger T. Macfarlane, Chair
Matthew Garry Ancell
Alvin F. Sherman

Department of Comparative Arts and Letters
Brigham Young University

Copyright © 2019 David Carter Delbar
All Rights Reserved
ABSTRACT

Myths on the Move: A Critical Pluralist Approach to the Study of Classical Mythology in Post-Classical Works

David Carter Delbar
Department of Comparative Arts and Letters, BYU
Master of Arts

The Classical Tradition, now more commonly known as Classical Reception, is a growing sub-discipline in Classics which seeks to trace the influence of Greco-Roman culture in post-classical works. While scholars have already done much to analyze specific texts, and many of these analyses are theoretically complex, there has yet to be a review of the theories these scholars employ. The purpose of this study is to provide researchers with a theoretical tool kit which allows them greater scope and nuance when analyzing usages of classical mythology. It examines five different approaches scholars have used: adaptation, allusion, intertextuality, reception, and typology. Each theory is followed by an example from Spanish literature or film: Apollo and Daphne in Calderón’s *El laurel de Apolo*, Orpheus in Unamuno’s *Niebla*, Dionysus in Unamuno’s *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, Persephone in del Toro’s *El laberinto del fauno*, and the werewolf in Naschy’s Waldemar Daninsky films. This thesis argues that a critical pluralist approach best captures the nuance and variety of usages of classical mythology. This allows for both objective and subjective readings of texts as well as explicit and implicit connections to classical mythology.

Keywords: classical tradition, reception, adaptation, allusion, intertextuality, typology, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Miguel de Unamuno, Guillermo del Toro, Paul Naschy, Friedrich Nietzsche, Euripides, Publius Ovidius Naso, *El laurel de Apolo*, *Niebla*, *San Manuel Bueno mártir*, *Bacchae*, Apollo, Cupid, Dionysus, Orpheus, Persephone, werewolf
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE................................................................................................................................... i
ABSTRACT.................................................................................................................................... ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS............................................................................................................... iii
Introduction..................................................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 1: Adaptation ..................................................................................................................... 4
  Identifying Adaptations .............................................................................................................. 5
  Identifying the Hypotext ............................................................................................................. 9
  Tension Between Adaptation and Originality........................................................................... 11
  Example: Baroque Binaries in El laurel de Apolo .................................................................... 13
Chapter 2: Allusion ....................................................................................................................... 21
  Function .................................................................................................................................... 22
  Types of Allusion ....................................................................................................................... 24
  Authorial Intent ......................................................................................................................... 26
  Significance ............................................................................................................................... 28
  Example: Playing Orpheus in Miguel de Unamuno’s Niebla ................................................... 33
Chapter 3: Intertextuality .............................................................................................................. 40
  Genetics ..................................................................................................................................... 43
  Subterranean ............................................................................................................................. 46
  Textile ....................................................................................................................................... 53
  Example: Dionysian Intertexts in Unamuno’s San Manuel Bueno, mártir .............................. 56
Chapter 4: Reception..................................................................................................................... 77
  Reception at Point of the Author .............................................................................................. 79
  Reception at the Point of the Scholar ........................................................................................ 82
  Example: The Death of Persephone in El laberinto del fauno .................................................. 87
Chapter 5: Typology ..................................................................................................................... 95
  Problems with Past Typological Approaches ........................................................................... 96
  Formation of Types ................................................................................................................... 99
  Typology as Methodology ....................................................................................................... 106
  Example: The Werewolf Type in Paul Naschy’s Waldemar Daninsky Films ......................... 111
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................. 124
Works Cited ................................................................................................................................ 126
Introduction

Classical myths are ubiquitous. They have seeped into films, television shows, music, advertising, video games, and nearly all other forms of media, and have long since formed the backbone of canonical western literature. Classical scholars are becoming increasingly interested in these proliferations of classical mythology in post-classical works, recognizing that its usage is a natural extension of the discipline of classical studies. Gilbert Highet’s *The Classical Tradition* (1964) inaugurated the eponymous sub-discipline while Charles Martindale’s *Redeeming the Text* (1993) revitalized the field and introduced Hans Robert Jauss’ reception theory to allow for multiple, reader-oriented interpretations of both ancient texts and their successors. His efforts ultimately redubbed the field as Reception Studies, which continues to grow to this day.

Most of the scholarship so far has focused on criticism of individual works, explaining how an understanding of classical myth and its “usage”\(^1\) in a post-classical text can enrich a reader’s understanding. Less work has been done to elucidate the overarching theories and underlying methodologies of the field. In 2008, James Porter wrote, “while so much of the new scholarship in reception is theoretically sophisticated, . . . to date no theory tailored to the specific exigencies of Greek and Roman reception exists.”\(^2\) Thus far the explanations of its methods are fragmented and scattered through many essays and books. This thesis attempts to gather and expand upon the various theories classical scholars have written which concern analyzing usages of classical myth. The goal is to produce a theoretical tool-kit for analyzing the uses of classical mythology in modern media. Rather than restricting the study to one method, I

---
\(^1\) It has become common parlance in classics to call all examples of classical references in post-classical texts “receptions.” However, reception is a specific theory which I address in chapter 4. In order not to confuse this with other theories, I call classical references “usages” as a neutral term.
will examine several different theoretical approaches. This allows scholars the freedom to analyze nearly anything by applying different methodological tools.

A central question still in debate is what counts as a usage of classical mythology. Considering the pervasive nature of the classics in Western civilization, how might one distinguish between the classical and the non-classical elements of a text? While some usages are explicit, others are implied or suggest a connection with the mythic past that is ultimately unprovable. Rather than thinking of the influences on works in a binary sense (classical/non-classical), it is better to visualize uses of classical myth as falling on a spectrum between the two extremes of “objective” adaptations and “subjective” archetypal groupings. Using this model, nearly all texts can be analyzed through the lens of classical mythology, and scholars can choose which analytical method best suits the text they are studying.

To this end I have organized the paper into five different categories of usages of classical myth. They are by no means discrete and represent different lenses through which to analyze texts rather than a strict taxonomy. One could formulate more or fewer categories, and this essay is only meant to organize the past conversation on the theories of classical usages and continue it in the hopes of sparking more theoretical development in the future.

The first category is adaptation; following the work of Linda Hutcheon and Gerard Genette, a usage of classical myth is acknowledged, sustained, and transformed within a modern work. The second category is allusion, which describes a series of named, brief usages to an ancient myth which color the meaning of the work without becoming central. The third category is intertextuality, which assumes classical myths have influenced all subsequent Western literature, even when the author may not be aware of it. The fourth category is reception, the most commonly known in classics due to Martindale’s work. It assumes that meaning is created
by the reader, which allows a scholar to either reconstruct an author’s reading of a myth or to use a myth as a means of interpreting a modern text even when a myth is not explicitly evoked. The final category is a form of typology based on Iser’s reader-response theory, which assumes that readers have already created a relatively stable pattern of a myth in their mind, which in turn influences how they interpret yet-to-be-encountered usages of the myth. Each chapter concludes with a brief example from Spanish literature demonstrating the theory of analyzing its classical, mythic contents.

Throughout this thesis I consistently explain analytical methods in textual terms such as author, reader, and text. However, many of these ideas can be adapted to other media such as film, art, theater, etc. and some of my examples are drawn from non-literary media. While I will not go into detail of how literature and other media differ in usages of classical mythology, I would hope that scholars will nonetheless find these techniques useful beyond the logocentric terms found here.

Scholars originally developed the theories and analytical techniques which I have gathered into this thesis to explain general phenomena in literature and other media, but I have limited their application to classical mythology. They have been applied to literature outside of Classics, and they could be applied to other classical material that is not strictly mythological. Yet again, for simplicity’s sake, I will limit my examples to classical myth and refer only to how these theories might explain their movement into post-classical works.

I hope that other scholars in Reception Studies and the Classical Tradition will find the questions, problems, and the proposed answers useful in their continued exploration of the rich afterlife of classical mythology.
Chapter 1: Adaptation

Mythic adaptations reinterpret an explicit classical precursor and rely on the reader’s knowledge of the base text to showcase the author’s innovation. According to Julie Sanders, adaptations “openly declare themselves as an interpretation or re-reading of a canonical precursor”3 while Linda Hutcheon defines them as “deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works.”4 The author’s overt insistence that the reader make a sustained comparison between a new and a classical text distinguishes adaptations from other mythic usages. Thus the new text’s relation to its classical predecessor becomes primary to its interpretation rather than ancillary.

Because adaptations are “openly declared” and “announced,” they are the most objective uses of classical myth, which is one of the great strengths of using the adaptive model for analysis. However, this need for objectivity makes the application of the adaptive model among the most limited in scope; a scholar must be able to show that the author intentionally employed a classical myth as the basis for the new adaptation. Many works that still draw on classical myth but do not do so explicitly are therefore excluded from the adaptive model.

The first half of this chapter focuses on answering the question of what “counts” as an adaptation: what proof is needed, where such proof can be found, and how to identify which version of a classical myth should be the basis of comparison. The second half is a close reading of an adaptation where the base text is obvious (Calderón’s El laurel de Apolo, which adapts the Daphne and Apollo narrative from Ovid’s Metamorphoses). Because this text does not require extensive proofs concerning the source myth, the example analysis focuses on how adaptation creates meaning through tension between the classical base text and the new reworked text.

Though the other brief examples in this chapter are specific, the principles should be broadly applicable to the study of classical adaptations.

**Identifying Adaptations**

The palimpsest is an especially useful metaphor for understanding how adaptations operate. The new work is a hypertext which the author writes over a classical hypotext. The reader simultaneously reads the new hypertext while he recalls the previously-read hypotext, which sometimes overlaps with the hypertext as a perfect match and at other times blurs the meaning into something unrecognizable. This double reading creates a palimpsestuous feel and is the central literary technique for adaptations. As Hutcheon posits, the palimpsest grants a “pleasure [which] . . . comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise.”

For this effect to function, however, the reader must know that the text is an adaptation of an earlier hypotext, and the author must somehow acknowledge which text the reader should know beforehand to gain the most pleasure from the hypertext. Hutcheon explains:

If we do not know that what we are experiencing actually is an adaptation or if we are not familiar with the particular work that it adapts, we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work. To experience it as an adaptation, however, as we have seen, we need to recognize it as such and to know its adapted text, thus allowing the latter to oscillate in our memories with what we are experiencing.

---

5 Michael Alexander first coined the metaphor of adaptations as palimpsests; Gérard Genette and Hutcheon later developed the concept further.
7 Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 120.
A key aspect of adaptations is therefore *how* the author chooses to communicate the presence of a hypotext.

An author can signal that his text is an adaptation in multiple ways. Perhaps the most common is by means of the paratext, which Genette describes as generally less explicit and more distant relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken within the totality of the literary work . . . a title, a subtitle, intertitles, prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers; dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic.\(^8\)

The title of a hypertextual art-piece may contain a reference to a classical myth, the synopsis on the book cover could make the connection explicit, and the opening or closing credits of a film will often indicate if a work is “based on” an earlier hypotext. The author may also declare his intentions in a foreword or introduction. In all these cases the author desires the reader to consider the work as a hypertext in connection with a specific hypotext and therefore ensures the connection is explicit. Because the palimpsestuous reading benefits from clarity, it is to the author’s advantage for the reader to keep the hypotext in mind from the beginning of the reading process to the end.

Another way to signal an adaptation is to reference the myth within the main text. Characters might bear the same or similar names as classical counterparts or a character could recount or recall the classical myth. If these signals are given early in the text, they serve a similar purpose of inviting the reader to consider the palimpsestuous nature of the text from the beginning. If, on the other hand, they are not revealed until later in the text, it may give the

---

reader a surprise as the already-read portions of the text suddenly snap into focus as a hypertext while foreshadowing the traditional ending of the hypotext.

There are times when a new work does not declare a mythic hypotext, yet the narrative or themes are so close to a recognizable classical myth that the connection seems unavoidable. These are what Gregory Daugherty calls “masked” adaptations, hypertexts which rely on a mythic hypotext but whose authors have deliberately concealed their source.\(^9\) Their motivations for doing so are varied; authors may wish to appear more original to uninformed readers or believe that their work may have a wider appeal if readers do not perceive their work as an “elitist” classical adaptation. Whatever the author’s reasons, once the reader uncovers the classical hypotext, the work functions much like other adaptations, comparing and contrasting the familiar and innovative.

Verification of an adapted mythic hypotext, however, presents difficulties when the author seeks to conceal it. Adaptations rely on intentional uses of myth; therefore a scholar must prove authorial intent. Sometimes an author will forego acknowledgement of the hypotext in the hypertext itself but will acknowledge it in other locations. This may be to create two ways of reading a text: as an uninformed reader who enjoys the hypertext as an independent work, or as an informed reader who enjoys the palimpsestuous reading. If the author is indeed inviting scholars to make an informed, adaptive reading, the scholar must look outside the hypertext itself for proof of this invitation.

Proof of adaptive intent is most often found in what Genette called epitexts, “any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating,

as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space.”¹⁰ The scholar places the
author under surveillance for any indication that he intended his text to be read with a mythic
hypotext. Possible sources include anywhere the author has spoken about his work:

newspapers and magazines, radio or television programs, lectures and colloquia, all
public performances perhaps preserved on recordings or printed collections: interviews
and conversations assembled by the author . . . or by the intermediary . . . proceedings of
colloquia, collections of autocommentary . . . Anywhere outside the book may also be the
statements contained in an author’s correspondence or journal.¹¹

Once a scholar determines which mythic hypotext the author uses, she can proceed with
analyzing the adaptation and her research becomes a transmitter of the informed reading.

James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) is a good example of a partially masked adaptation. The
title is an open acknowledgement that the text is an adaptation of Homer’s *Odyssey*; Joyce is
inviting the reader to compare the two texts. However, the chapter titles, which Joyce did not
include in his final draft, contain additional references to specific parts of the *Odyssey*, which
guide an informed reader’s interpretation of the text. Stephen Dedalus’ musings in the first
chapter take on the new meanings of youthful, unmentored restlessness and malcontent when the
chapter is entitled “Telemachus.” The disjointed beginning of chapter eleven, the intermittent
honking of Boylan’s car horn, and the tapping of the blind piano tuner’s cane create an
underlying musical rhythm, an appropriate theme for a chapter entitled “Sirens.” Here Leopold
Bloom desires to escape momentarily the pain of his wife’s affair through the nostalgic Irish
music of bar and hotel, just as Odysseus finds temporary respite in the Siren’s knowledge of his

Press, 1997), 344.
¹¹ Ibid., 344–45.
past exploits. The mythological reference brings music, with all its soothing dangers, to the foreground. Joyce shared these chapter headings with Stuart Gilbert and approved their publication in a commentary, which indicates that he intended readers to have them but wanted them to find this information in an epitext and not the hypertext itself. Authors mask adaptations not to permanently conceal their sources, but to encourage the dogged reader to unmask them.

When a scholar has exhausted the hypertext, paratexts, and epitexts and can find no conclusive evidence that the author had a classical myth in mind while constructing the narrative, she cannot classify the hypertext as an adaptation, no matter how tempting. It is not enough to prove that an author was familiar with classical mythology or even that he read a specific myth. Familiarity with a text does not guarantee that an author was consciously using a myth as a hypotext when writing, even when the connection is tauntingly obvious. To do so would be to read against the grain of the author’s intent, to read the text as an adaptation when the author has not instructed the reader to do so. There are other analytical methods which do not assume that the author must acknowledge his mythic usage, including the intertextuality, reception, and typology methods described in later chapters. But to insist without convincing evidence that an author knowingly worked with a mythic hypotext and concealed it is beyond the scope of the adaptation model. Authors are innocent of mythic collusion until they confess they are guilty.

*Identifying the Hypotext*

Readers should also consider which version of a hypotext they use when analyzing an author’s work. Scholars, particularly classicists, will often turn to Greek and Latin editions as the

---

comparative hypotext. It is usually safe to assume that the author would have consulted the hypotext in the original language for anything written more than one hundred years ago, when knowledge of classical languages was widespread. The edition an author uses may result in nuanced differences that surface in the hypertext, and scholars may want to work with the same edition for the best precision. It is also important to assess which version of a myth the author is referencing. A use of the Orestes story, for instance, could come from Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, or some combination of the four. Adaptation focuses on finding specific hypotext(s) for comparison.

However, many modern authors no longer learn classical languages and rely on translations for the hypotext. This makes the translator an intermediate interpreter, and the classicist’s penchant for assuming the Greek or Latin edition is the most reliable hypotext may lead him astray when analyzing an adaptation. An author can also use “a generally circulated cultural memory”14—preserved in various retellings, encyclopedias, mythology guides, textbooks, etc.—as a substitute for a hypotext. Margaret Atwood, for instance, wrote her Penelopiad (2005) using both E. V. Rieu’s translation of the Odyssey (1945) as well as Robert Graves’ The Greek Myths (1955) and other secondary sources rather than the primary Greek source.15 Atwood names her sources, but many authors are content to reference a myth without specifying which specific version they drew from. Scholars might then default to the Greco-Roman originals when looking for a hypotext, keeping in mind that the author may not have referenced them directly. This is one of the limits of the adaptive model; it can only work with direct and acknowledged antecedents and is less able to account for broader intertextual

---

15 Margaret Atwood, Penelopiad (Edinbourgh: Canongate, 2008), 197.
relations. However, when possible, identifying the translations or other sources an author used or had access to can help understand nuances which emerge in the hypertext.

**Tension Between Adaptation and Originality**

The adaptation model assumes the author has made clear his intention to rework a mythic hypotext and that this intention is unambiguous to the reader. While aspects of interpretation may be uncertain, the presence of a specific hypotext theoretically should be unquestionable. Yet in practice matters are not always so simple. Sometimes the hypertext and paratext of a work invite a reading as an adaptation, but the author’s comments in the epitext contradict this invitation. Such is the case for Joel and Ethan Coen’s film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000). The film is a named adaptation of Homer’s *Odyssey* and yet the directors deny having ever read the epic poem, even in translation. They do so in order to not be beholden to Homer and to claim artistic skill that is original and not derivative.

The Coen brothers refuse to acknowledge direct knowledge of their classical source. Numerous places in the text, paratext, and epitext indicate that the brothers invite viewers to watch the film as an adaptation of the *Odyssey*. In an interview two years before the film’s release, the Coens noted that they wanted to make “an American version of the *Odyssey*.”

The film itself opens with the first three lines of the epic modified from Robert Fitzgerald’s translation, and the opening credits proclaim that the film is “based upon ‘The Odyssey’ by Homer.” The main character is a fast-talking, fraudulent lawyer named Ulysses Everett McGill.

---

(i.e. Odysseus) whose wife’s name is Penny (i.e. Penelope). While journeying home after escaping from a chain gang, he and his companions meet enchanting women singing by the river (later explicitly called sirens), who ostensibly transform one of Everett’s friends into a toad (a Circe reference). They encounter a one-eyed Bible-salesman who roughs them up and steals from them (a Cyclops reference). Later the same man is almost blinded when they hurl a sharpened flag pole at his face, a clear reference to Odysseus’ blinding of Polyphemus. There is even an allusive bust of Homer in the mise-en-scène of a restaurant. All indicate that the Coens have a strong knowledge of the Homeric hypotext.

Because *O Brother* adapts the Homeric hypotext so well, some critics doubt that the Coen brothers are being truthful and in fact read the *Odyssey* quite closely while writing the script; after all, authors can lie and are especially liable to do so when it serves their artistic image.19 For the Coens, not acknowledging the *Odyssey* as a direct source adds an air of ambiguity to their film, which is consistent with their refusal to interpret their own work. Such a deception would also allow them more artistic license with the Odysseus story than viewers might otherwise condone, as the Coens make clear:

Ethan: We avail ourselves of [the *Odyssey*] very selectively . . .

Joel: Whenever it’s convenient we trot out the *Odyssey*.

Ethan: But I don’t want any of those *Odyssey* fans to go to the movie expecting, y’know…

Joel: “Where’s Laertes?” [laughter]

Ethan: Where’s his dog?” [more laughter]20

---


The Coens are concerned with a frequent expectation made of adaptations; some audiences demand a high degree of fidelity to the classical work, and the Coens know their adaptation of the *Odyssey* departs significantly from Homer’s hypotext. By disavowing the *Odyssey* as a direct hypotext in their interviews—despite directly naming the hypotext in their paratexts and in the text proper—the Coens seek to give themselves space for creativity. They are not telling Homer’s *Odyssey*, but rather the Coens’ “Odyssey.” While literalist viewers may insist on Homeric accuracy, most others believe that “adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication.” Purposeful infidelities are at the core of successful adaptations.

*Example: Baroque Binaries in El laurel de Apolo*

Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *El laurel de Apolo* (written in 1657, first performed in 1658) is one of several plays which the court playwright based on mythological hypotexts. As the title suggests, Calderón here adapts the Daphne and Apollo story from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The source-text is unambiguous; not only does the title give a clear indication, but the core characters and plot remain largely unaltered and some sections are Spanish paraphrases of Ovid’s Latin. As H. M. Martin remarks, “Calderon follow[s] Ovid with remarkable fidelity.” Yet Calderón creates no mere retelling of the myth; he expands Ovid’s 129 lines into a full production in the new genre of the zarzuela, which combines spoken and sung lines. José Manuel Losada Goya notes that:

---

22 Ibid, 7.
En efecto, si bien es verdad que ha conservado lo esencial de los modelos griego y latino, el autor da muestras de una extraordinaria facilidad para modificar aquí y allá los elementos que más le convienen.24

[In effect, while it is true that he has conserved the essence of the Greek and Latin models, the author shows signs of an extraordinary facility to modify here and there the elements that are most convenient for him].

In adapting the text to baroque tastes, Calderón develops and magnifies the antithetical binaries represented by Apollo and Cupid and mirrors them in new minor characters and sub-plots. The result is a hyper-focus on the themes of love and disdain reflected from multiple angles in governance, popularity, and control.

One of Calderón’s most effective innovations on Ovid is to take the conflict between love and disdain and multiply it throughout the subplots and minor characters of the play, allowing him to revisit the struggle again and again. According to A. Valbuena-Briones:

La obra se basa en un sistema de opuestos, con dualidad de funciones, que confiere al a acción singular dinamismo. El eje de este juego conflictivo es la oposición: Apolo-Cupido. La división binaria sirve para reunir a los personajes en dos grupos, de acuerdo con la fidelidad al concepto del desdén o del amor. Los cambios de actitudes emocionales añaden interés dramático al espectáculo barroco.25

[The work is based on a system of opposites, with a duality of functions, which confers the action with a singular dynamism. The axis of this agonistic game is the opposition: Apollo-Cupid. The binary division works to gather the characters into two groups, in

---

accordance with loyalty to the concept of disdain or love. The changes in emotional attitudes add dramatic interest to the baroque spectacle.

One illustration of this binary is how Calderón adds two minor suitors for Daphne: the shepherds Céfalo and Silvio. The first declares, “nací más al estudio inclinado que al amor” [I was born more inclined for study than for love] and “negué una y otra deidad de Amor y Venus, y sólo en las cátedras de Apolo mantuve me libertad” [I denied the divinity of both Love and Venus, and only through the professorship of Apollo did I maintain my liberty]. 26 Thus Céfalo begins the play aligned with the restraint associated with Apollo and ignores Daphne’s amorous interests in him. Silvio, on the other hand, begins, “Yo más ciencias no aprendí que el arte de amar” [I did not learn any more sciences than the art of loving]. 27 He is aligned with Cupid and has pursued Daphne, though she is not interested in him. Calderón has made Ovid’s mismatched couple into a more complex love triangle. Yet Céfalo admits that he has contemplated pursuing Daphne, while Silvio is growing weary of waiting for her to notice him. The two men, painted as opposites, are preparing to trade roles. Daphne, oddly enough, first plays the role of Cupid and encourages them to reverse their affections if they wish to receive her gratitude for saving her from a dragon. She demands that Céfalo feign affection while Silvio must pretend to feel nothing for her. Later in the second act, when Apollo and Cupid spread forgetfulness and love through the air, both men are infected, and their feigned emotions become genuine. They serve as foreshadowing of the emotional reversal Apollo and Daphne experience.

This same pattern of binary reversal is refracted throughout the play. Cupid calls on the nymph Ecco to repeat the word “amor” [love], infecting the peasants with his power. Apollo attempts to counter this effect by calling Iris to have the birds repeat “olvido” [forgetfulness] as

27 Ibid.
the antidote to love. Now those who loved hate, while those who hated love. The Rústico and Bata are the representative example of this reversal of affections, who parallel the shepherds, who in turn parallel Daphne and Apollo. Iris and Ecco return at the end of the play to perform similar yet distorted roles. Apollo calls on Iris to stifle Daphne’s cries for help, a reprise of her role as a messenger of “olvido.” Yet rather than countering love, she is now its agent so that Apollo can consummate his lustful desires. Daphne calls upon Ecco to multiply her screams so that someone will aid her, just as Ecco spread “amor” before. But now it is to thwart love so that Daphne will not be raped and Apollo will remain unsatisfied. It is a delicious example of how Calderón takes Ovid’s simple conflict between love and disdain and contorts it through a baroque lens.

Calderón also has Daphne and Apollo meet before Cupid’s interference in their lives, establishing Apollo’s initial disinterest and Daphne’s respect for the god before the emotional reversal occurs. Martin believes this “continues to adulterate the pure original by representing Daphne as infatuated with Apollo,”28 while Denise DiPuccio says the change “makes her a more vulnerable character and therefore adds dimension to her confrontations with love.”29 However, it is only after Cupid has struck Daphne that Ovid describes her antipathy towards men. The reader never knows what Daphne thinks about love before the god influences her. Calderón develops her as a normal maiden who first loves Céfalo, then Apollo. For his part Apollo is flirtatious, but exhibits restraint, and when Cupid has Echo fill the air with love, he takes a hard line against all things amorous. This is before Cupid has struck them with his arrows; Calderón is creating a parallel with Céfalo and Silvio’s initial responses and eventual reversals. By having Apollo and Daphne interact before Cupid interferes, Calderón makes the change in their

28 Martin, “The Apollo and Daphne Myth,” 150.
emotional states all the starker through contrast. The restrained Apollo becomes maddened with love, while the romantic Daphne comes to loath everyone.

This scene also uses adaptation to create dramatic irony through omens. As the villagers and nymphs celebrate Apollo’s victory, Daphne advances to crown Apollo’s head with a wreath of flowers, delighted that she has the honor of approaching the deity. But she accidentally drops her wreath, leaving only her hands on Apollo’s head. Because the audience is familiar with the Ovidian hypotext, this is an obviously ominous foreshadowing of Daphne’s transformation into the laurel tree, where her branches will form Apollo’s wreath. Daphne senses this and is struck with fear, but Apollo responds flirtatiously. Calderón uses both innovation upon and familiarity with Ovid to create this foreshadowing.

The structure of the play is baroque not only in its reversals, but also in its irregular parallels; the dragon Fitón is Apollo’s antagonist in the first act while Cupid is the parallel challenger in the second. The descriptions of the dragon therefore allude also to Cupid as a universal, dangerous, consuming force. The first act opens with “Huid, pastores, huid, / que anda en el monte la fiera”30 [Flee, shepherds, flee, for a beast roams through the forest], referring to the dragon Fitón. In the beginning of the second act, Iris shouts a similar warning about Cupid to the villagers: “Huid, porque anda otra fiera en el monte / y fiera más fiera en saña y rigor”31 [Flee, for another beast roams the forest, and a beast more beastly in cruelty and harshness]. Ovid does not make the direct parallel between the Python and Cupid, though the later Apollonius compares the god to a viperous monster.32 It is when Psyche’s parents seek an oracle from Apollo, and the deity, perhaps remembering his old quarrel with Cupid, gives a truthful but misleading description of Love:

30 Calderón, El Laurel de Apolo, 2173.
31 Ibid, 2184.
32 Note that this is an intertextual connection with Apollonius rather than an adaptive one (see chapter 3).
Nec speres generum mortali stirpe creatum,

sed saevum atque ferum vipereumque malum33

[Do not hope for a son-in-law born of mortal stock, but a cruel and wild and serpentine

evil]

Calderón seems to be drawing on similar language (cf. “fiera en saña y rigor” with “saeuum
atque ferum”) to describe Cupid. The direct comparison between the Python and Cupid also
allows him to unify the disparate stories more closely than Ovid’s narrative, highlighting the raw
and cruel power of love through baroque parallelism.

Calderón’s version also reframes the conflict in terms of political rulership, adapting the
tale for the concerns of his royal audience. Ovid does not state why Apollo slays the enormous
snake, but Calderón has the local Thessalian villagers pray to the nearby temples of Apollo and
Venus to send succor when they are tormented by the dragon, and the gods come in response to
these prayers. The dragon’s origins likewise tie into political strife. In both accounts the serpent
rises from the aftermath of the global flood. Ovid’s flood narrative results from Lycaon’s
outrageous sacrilege of human flesh as well as a generally pervasive wickedness. Calderón’s
flood is also a divine punishment of the people, but for the sin of visiting the necromancer Fitón
for divinations rather than the temples of the gods, a betrayal of proper authority. The peasants
believe the dragon is the reincarnation of Fitón, which means that the pretender to the gods’
power, though defeated once, has not yet been destroyed. Where once he ruled the population
through wise oracles, he now controls them through fear and violence. Calderón has thus
changed the slaying of the Python into a political action. To destroy the beast is to destroy a rival
clamant to the throne, demonstrate the ruling class’ power to protect their subjects, and thereby

33 Apul.Met.4.33.
solidify one’s position as rightful ruler. Though this has no historical parallel to Calderón’s contemporaries, the mindset and problems which the gods face are monarchical in nature.

Other subtle changes further the political dimensions of the adaptation. Ovid has Apollo and Cupid meet after Apollo has already slain the Python, but Calderón brings them together when they are both hunting the dragon in answer to their subjects’ prayers. Rather than an abstract question of honor, they are in direct competition for the accolades of their worshipers. Cupid is publicly humiliated in Calderón’s version when he drops his bow and arrows in terror upon seeing the dragon, whereas in Ovid he is privately insulted, and a large part of the play revolves around swaying public opinion after this incident. Christopher Gascón notes that Calderón “raises the stakes by making the rivalry a public event, eagerly observed by the villagers and nymphs. By adding the element of the ‘¿Qué dirán?’ [what will they say?] Calderón puts the honor of each god at stake.”34 In other words, the gods are as conscious of court politics and appearances as their seventeenth-century audience.

Calderón plays with the link between imperialism and Apollo imagery inherent in both the Roman and the Spanish tradition. From early on Augustus made Apollo a symbol of his imperial rule. In 28 B. C. E., he rebuilt his house as a temple complex for Vesta and Apollo, thus linking his rule with Apollo. The mythic depictions in the new temple not only honored the god, but mirrored Augustus’ achievements.35 In this context Ovid’s Apollo takes on political dimensions. Spain’s Hapsburg monarchs likewise had a long tradition of associating themselves with Apollo, and Calderón taps into “myths of imperial propaganda already latent in the Ovidian

version”\textsuperscript{36} to both praise and caution his royal audience. The playwright can conveniently adapt the same political symbolism to contemporary sensibilities.

To conclude, Calderón wrote \textit{Laurel} expecting his audience to know and compare his play with Ovid’s depiction of the Apollo and Daphne myth. The story remains essentially the same with no great innovations in overarching plotlines, providing a familiar framework for the audience. Yet the interior complexity showcases Calderón’s genius in melding baroque style with classical myth. The pleasure of the adaptation arises from how the author reflects the familiar story in unexpected places; the audience can watch the Apollo and Daphne story unfold multiple times as the new supporting roles mimic it. Calderón also adapts the myth to the political climate of the contemporary Spanish court, altering the motivations of the gods to suit his audience. He strikes the careful adaptive balance between homage to the hypotext and creativity in the hypertext.

\textsuperscript{36} Julio Vélez-Seinz, “\textit{Eros, Vates, Imperium}: Metamorphosing the Metamorphoses in Mythological Court Theatre (Lope de la Vega’s \textit{El Amor enamorado} and Calderón’s \textit{Laurel de Apolo},” in \textit{Ovid in the Age of Cervantes}, ed. Frederick De Armas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 228, 239.
Chapter 2: Allusion

Mythic allusions are brief evocations of a classical text through naming, quoting, or retelling within an unrelated story or poem. They are advantageous because they are succinct and semantically dense, making them a rich rhetorical technique. Perhaps the largest distinction between adaptation and allusion is the scope of impact; unlike Hutcheon’s qualification for adaptations, mythic allusions are not sustained throughout an entire work. Instead they are “a local small-scale device” or “a brief, local phenomenon” which impact the immediate context in which they are used without necessarily influencing the work as a whole. While adaptations rely heavily on a hypertext as a foundation for meaning—the substance of the textual meal—allusions are a sparingly-used spice. They are distinct, detectable, and can even point towards the overall meaning of the work, but they are peripheral rather than central.

Compared with other forms of mythic usage, allusions are an oddity. They are peppered throughout the western literary tradition, yet because of their brevity they are rarely studied at length. The methodologies of analysis discussed in other chapters focus on sustained and substantial connections between the new text and ancient predecessors, while allusions offer only passing commentary. Yet an understanding of how authors employ classical myth would not be complete without addressing how common allusions shape post-classical texts. Distinguishing between significant and insignificant mythic usages is also important when analyzing texts lest scholars place too much meaning on classical schemata beyond what the evidence in the text can support. Treating allusions as light touches to the base text is the key to understanding them.

37 Linda Hutcheon specifies that an adaptation must have “an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” and that “allusions to and brief echoes of other works would not qualify as extended engagements”: *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 8–9.
Allusions evoke the memory of classical myths without retelling them, and this power of suggestion is why they hold aesthetic appeal. In this way they differ from adaptations; a hypertext is a retelling of a hypotext, and to read an adaptation is to retrace the first myth in the process. Adaptations present the whole classical myth in altered form, rebuilding the context of the myth as it travels along the well-worn narrative road. But when a reader encounters an allusion, the narrative before and after the allusion does not refer to the myth. The reader suddenly encounters the myth as an unexpected crossroad to the story he is currently reading; the new narrative and the classical myth intersect briefly before both continue their separate ways. Yet the reader has walked down the classical road before and is familiar with where it begins and where it ends. Should he pause at the crossroads, he will recall the road’s full length. As Susan Stewart explains:

By the devices of allusion, the past is “brought to bear” on the present as if that past were somehow distant, now appearing in the situation with an accompanying flood of signification. The goal of the nostalgic situation is to give rise to tradition; to evoke tradition from the past, surrounded inimitably by its pastness.\(^{40}\)

The classical myth with all its richness of signification is brought to the fore of the reader’s mind. However, the reader only crosses a small section of the myth while traversing the new narrative. Because allusions are brief and narrow usages of myth, they allow only certain aspects of the myth to pass into the new text. Even though the entirety of the myth is evoked, only a small portion of it will be relevant to make sense of the allusion.

---

The context which the author places around the allusion is key to interpreting its meaning, as “considerable contextual setting is required for the allusion to succeed.”\(^{41}\) For example, a musician could be called “a second Orpheus” and the reader is to understand that the man has an extraordinary gift for music or can enrapture his audience. On the other hand, a lawyer could also be called “a second Orpheus,” but here the reader should understand the man’s persuasive skills are extraordinary. In this way allusions “subtly reinforce or qualify the phrase or other limited context in which they are manifested.”\(^{42}\) The author determines which aspects of the myth the new text absorbs by controlling the context around the allusion.

While the author sets up the context around an allusion to predispose the reader towards a certain interpretation, the reader must still make an intuitive leap to understand the allusion’s significance. When an author writes “the musician was a second Orpheus” instead of “the musician was so skilled in music that he held his audience spellbound,” the reader must somehow translate the allusive phrase into the second, direct phrase. As William Irwin explains, allusions are:

references that, for their correct understanding, depend crucially on something more than mere substitution of a referent. Certain associations are to be made . . . We are supposed to make unstated associations, and in this sense the reference is indirect . . . . We are asked to fill in the missing piece of a puzzle, to draw on some knowledge to complete the written or spoken word in our own minds.\(^{43}\)

Allusions thus use classical myths to encode meaning, and the reader must use his ingenuity and knowledge of the classical tradition to crack the code. Part of the pleasure of allusions is for the

---


\(^{42}\) Machacek, “Allusion,” 525.

reader to make this interpretive leap into sure understanding. And while only one aspect of the myth may complete the meaning of the allusion, secondary aspects of the myth still linger in the reader’s mind, briefly dyeing the text with mythic connotations. A musician compared to Orpheus may add tints of grandeur or tragic loss or great yet futile power. Some of these secondary associations will also be applicable to the character and broader text, enriching the narrative, while other associations will fade because they are irrelevant to the surrounding narrative. All these associations are suggested rather than stated.

**Types of Allusion**

There are various types of allusions, which can be explicit, either by drawing on a known name or a quoted phrase from an ancient mythic text, or can be subtle, hinting or suggesting at mythic stories without naming them. The easiest to identify use proper nouns (She shot like Artemis) or unambiguous periphrasis (She shot like the silver-bowed Huntress). Difficulty arises when the periphrasis is vague (She shot her bow like a goddess); here the author could intend Artemis, but there are other archer goddesses in the world. The author may or may not have intended the reader to make the classical connection.

In some cases, particularly in modern popular works where the author does not expect the reader to be familiar with classical mythology, the author may have a narrator or character recount the myth within the text. While not as brief as traditional allusions, these retellings still serve the same purpose. They can function as an in-text footnote, and after the author has made the reader aware of the myth through a retelling, the reader is still expected to make associations between the retelling and the context in which it is given.
A more complicated form of allusion is what Gregory Machacek calls “brief phraseological adaptations,” though I will call them phraseological allusions so as not to confuse them with Hutcheon’s sustained adaptations from the previous chapter. These incorporate phrases from classical texts into new works; sometimes they are delineated quotations such as epigraphs or noted aphorisms placed in a character’s speech. At other times they are incorporated seamlessly, perhaps stealthily, into the text as the author’s own words. For these incorporated phrases to work as allusions, the reader must be familiar enough with classical texts to recognize their origin. This can be difficult, especially since classical phraseological allusions are usually translated from Greek or Latin into a modern language; phrases may seem similar but are never exact duplicates. An author can take this infidelity a step further and deliberately alter the phrase, slightly misquoting to highlight a new meaning by contrast. This can make phraseological allusions almost impossible to identify with certainty.

One possible phraseological allusion is in the beginning of Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*. When introducing the protagonist Adrian, the narrator says he was “vom Schicksal so furchtbar heimgesucht” [by fate so terribly afflicted], which seems to verbally echo a line from the *Aeneid* introducing Aeneas, who was “fato profugus” [by fate an exile]. Both phrases describe the protagonist, both occur in the opening lines of their respective works, and both are syntactically similar, using “fate” in an oblique case (dative in the German, ablative in the Latin) to show agency or cause followed by an adjectival noun or phrase. The interpretive leap the reader is to make is that Adrian, like Aeneas, is fated for greatness, but only through tragic suffering. Mann alters the nature of this suffering, however. Instead of “profugus,” Adrian will

---

47 Verg.A.1.2
be “heimgsucht,” driven to madness by a venereal disease and his own genius. Both conditions are transformed through the allusion to Aeneas into unescapable, aggrandizing fate. While this connection is possible, this allusion can never be certainly proven. Mann does not set apart the phrase from the rest of his prose; it flows as his narrator’s own speech (though that narrator is, perhaps tellingly, a classicist). Mann leaves it to the reader to identify and unpack the phrase without any further hints, as is normally the case with phraseological allusions.

Authorial Intent

This leads into the question of authorial intent, which is difficult to establish for allusions. They work through suggestion, and the reader must interpret their meaning. Yet the more difficult challenge can be determining whether an author intended a classical allusion at all. Allusions with proper nouns, unambiguous periphrasis, or delineated phrases are clearly intentional, as are retellings. But ambiguous periphrasis and incorporated phraseological allusions could be intentional or not.

For example, Edgar Allan Poe asks in his “Sonnet—To Science” how science can be loved when it will not leave the man “To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies, / Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing.”48 The concept of a man flying to the sky on “undaunted” wings may be an allusion to Icarus. Like the boy who defies the advice of the scientific-minded inventor and reaches romantically for the sun, the man in the poem ignores rationalism and seeks the older myths. But by ignoring scientific reality, he also has Icarus’ doomed air; reality will force him back to earth as surely as Icarus once his wings melt. Poe uses this allusion to

---

acknowledge that nostalgia for classical myths as reality is dangerous, though he seems to think
the enchantment is worth the risk. But the allusion, if it is such, is not direct; Icarus is not
mentioned by name, nor is there identifiable iconography such as wax wings or references to the
sun. There is no way to prove that Poe intended the reader to read an allusion to Icarus here.

Irwin insists that allusion “requires authorial intent; it is a necessary condition.” He
differentiates between conscious and unconscious intent, specifying that if the author were asked
about a potential allusion in his work, he would be able either to say he intended it consciously
or acknowledge in hindsight that he must have unconsciously made the connection. However,
Irwin judges that “an accidental association on the part of the reader” that was not intended by
the author does not count as an allusion. The difficulty with this system is that it relies on the
author explaining each non-overt allusion, which few authors are inclined to do. Scholars cannot
ask Poe if he intended an allusion to Icarus, after all. And unlike adaptations, authors rarely take
time to explain each allusion in their paratexts and epitexts. It is often impossible to prove these
distinctions when the author is dead or reticent, making Irwin’s taxonomy more theoretical than
practical.

For authorial intent there are therefore two categories: obviously intentional allusions and
possibly intentional allusions. When dealing with the second category scholars cannot prove with
certainty that the author intended a classical allusion but may assume its presence and put
forward a plausible interpretation.

49 Irwin, “What is an Allusion?,” 290–92.
Significance

Not all allusions are created equal, and there can be “considerable differences in the intertextual intensity”\textsuperscript{50} from one allusion to another. Significance refers here to the scope of impact an allusion has on the interpretation of the work. Some allusions are so insignificant that a reader can ignore them without altering the overall meaning of the work. Others are central to a work’s interpretation, hinting at important themes or story points, and some allusions are so significant that they reveal a full-scale adaptation of a classical myth. Thus when analyzing an allusion, it is important to understand the variations of significance.

At the simplest level allusions function as learned adjectives, where the reference explains an aspect of a character’s personality or physical appearance (“he was an Adonis” for “he was young/beautiful/desirable”) or the situation in which a character finds himself\textsuperscript{51} (“between Scylla and Charybdis” for “a dilemma”). These allusions have a limited reach, coloring the meaning of a sentence or a paragraph at most. Even if the reader is unfamiliar with the myth, he could probably glean the meaning through the context around the allusion.

These allusions are usually not thematically significant. While any reference to classical myth draws the reader’s mind to ancient antecedents, at times an author will throw in classical allusions as a rhetorical garnish which is meant to decorate but not bestow additional meaning. For example, Louisa May Alcott calls the sisters in her novel \textit{Little Women} “Hebes”\textsuperscript{52} when they serve drinks at a wedding. The allusion is an apt one: it comments on the youth and beauty of the


sisters and their office as servers and compares the lighthearted atmosphere of the wedding to that of the gatherings on Olympus. It also draws attention to the lack of alcohol the girls are serving, which allows for a digression on temperance. But this allusion is not meant to tie into the book’s larger themes. Instead it is to be remarked and then passed over, a mere flourish. These mythic usages are usually not worth pursuing beyond explanatory footnotes for new readers.

As is often the case, the conventions of a device are easiest to see when they are exaggerated in parody. One mythic allusion in the second chapter of Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* is effective precisely because it is not significant nor appropriate. The would-be knight has sallied forth for the first time into the world and composes his own illustrious (and overblown) introduction for the history which a great author will one day write:

Apenas había el rubicundo Apolo tendido por la faz de la ancha y espaciosa tierra las doradas hebras de sus hermosos cabellos, y apenas los pequeños y pintados pajarillos con sus harpadas lenguas habían saludado con dulce y meliflua armonía la venida de la rosada aurora, que, dejando la blanda cama del celoso marido, por las puertas y balcones del manchego horizonte a los mortales se mostraba, cuando el famoso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha, dejando las ociosas plumas, subió sobre su famoso caballo Rocinante, y comenzó a caminar por el antiguo y conocido campo de Montiel.\(^{53}\)

[The rubicund Apollo had barely stretched over the face of wide and spacious earth the golden strands of his beautiful hair, and the small and painted little birds with their harp-like tongues had barely greeted with sweet and mellifluous harmony the coming of the rosy dawn, who, leaving the soft bed of her jealous husband, through the doors and balconies of the Manchegan horizon showed herself to mortals, when the famous knight]

\(^{53}\) Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Martín de Riquer (Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 2000), 42.
don Quixote of la Mancha, leaving lazy feathers, mounted upon his famous horse

Rocinante, and began to walk through the old and familiar field of Montiel].

Here don Quixote references both Apollo and Dawn, drawing on classical knowledge to compare these deities to the sunrise. Yet none of the classical stories about Apollo or Dawn give any additional insight into the themes of the work; it would be a needless chase down a rabbit hole to insist they are significant. Instead these are allusions to the epic genre (and its successor, the renaissance romance) rather than a specific mythic narrative. Cervantes employs bathos, comparing the mundane and ridiculous life of don Quixote to the great heroes that populate the stories which begin with such classical allusions. The style is out of place, just like don Quixote himself. In the parodic text, the allusion functions ironically by way of contrast precisely because it is ill-fitting.

When analyzing mythic allusions, scholars may be greatly tempted to read too much of the ancient myth into the new text. Classical allusions give a familiar tint to a new story, but do not overpower the new plot and themes. Once a scholar finds one named parallel, the natural impulse is to seek “a literal, consistent, one-to-one correspondence between [all] characters.” 54 If the author briefly compares a businessman to Agamemnon, his wife may seem to be a Clytemnestra, his mistress a Cassandra, his son an Orestes, his daughter an Electra, and his arrogant but physically-underwhelming rival at the office, an Achilles. While the author may have invoked the allusion only to convey the businessman’s leadership skills, the scholar has run

---

with it and fabricated an entire system of equivalents.\textsuperscript{55} Unfortunately such connections strain credibility; an allusion or even a series of allusions is not the same as an adaptation.

On a more complex level, allusions can explain central themes without overwhelming the distinct flavor of the author’s work. An author can derive a central theme from a classical text and use an allusion to signify it, but the plot may be entirely different from the classical myth. Or he might transplant\textsuperscript{56} a single character from the mythic world and identify her as such through a classical allusion, but she is not a central character or her story differs so much from her classical origins that the scholar cannot use the adaptation model. Allusions in this way are always characterized by their limitations.

In other cases, allusions are so central that they signal the presence of an adaptation. Normally an allusion by itself can only comment on the immediate context in which it is found. But if it is coupled with plots, themes, and characters taken from the same myth, and these devices form the main substance of the work, then the allusion is the author’s acknowledgement of adaptation. Allusions in the paratext, such as titles, often signal an adaptation. Joyce’s \textit{Ulysses}, discussed in the previous chapter, is one such example. Main characters named for classical characters can sometimes indicate an adaptation as well, though this is not always the case. A scholar must determine if the allusion points to classical plots and themes sustained throughout the work or if it has a more limited and localized reach.

There exists an intermediate step between a centralized allusion and a full adaptation. An author can use a series of allusions from the same myth, strategically placed throughout a work, to create a leitmotif. As Craig Kallendorf notes, “The most richly rewarding allusive contact will

\textsuperscript{55} Lorna Hardwick defines equivalents as “fulfilling an analogous role in source and reception but not necessarily identical in form or content.” \textit{Reception Studies} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9.
\textsuperscript{56} Hardwick defines transplant as “to take a text or image into another context and allow it to develop.” \textit{Reception Studies}, 10.
be systematic, one of a number of references that contribute substantially to meaning.”57 This allusive chain strengthens the intertextual, thematic connection between ancient myth and modern text beyond the single use of an allusion. Each allusion serves its usual purpose of coloring the local meaning. But because there are multiple allusions to the same myth in different parts of the narrative, it invites the reader to compare these allusive moments to one another. Allusions draw these points of contact together into focus while the other narrative elements found in between the points which are not tinged by the allusion fall away. They form an emergent pattern that would otherwise be obscured. The classical myth serves as an interpretive key not only to each individual allusion, but to a larger allusion that becomes apparent only through the examination of multiple, interconnected points. While the mythic narrative is still secondary to the main story-line (and therefore not an adaptation), it serves as a strong commentary on the new text through comparison and contrast.

Judging the level of significance of an allusion to the overall text is important because it determines the best analytical approach to take. Ornamental allusions should not be overtaxed to bear extended significance. Thematic allusions should not be passed over when they hold important clues to the text’s overall structure and meaning. Determining the difference between the two can be critical in understanding the allusion’s impact on the text.

Knowing the purpose of the allusion, the type, the author’s possible intent, and the scope of its significance can help the reader analyze how the author incorporates a classical myth in small and nuanced ways. Readers often misunderstand the significance of allusions when compared to other usage categories of classical mythology. Either references are so small that they are overlooked and discounted or they are strained to create a system of meaning that is

beyond the ability of the text to support. An allusion’s power is in its subtlety and its smallness. Through light flavoring of a text, often barely noticeable, allusions evoke classical referents that help shape the overall texture of the work. They are one ingredient that makes up the larger creative meal and should not be taken for granted.

Example: Playing Orpheus in Miguel de Unamuno’s Niebla

Miguel de Unamuno’s novel Niebla (1914) is an original story about an independently wealthy gentleman who suffers from too much existential thought. It is not an adaptation of the Orpheus narrative, but it does incorporate several allusions to the Orpheus myth. Most notably the protagonist Augusto finds a puppy whom he names Orfeo, and he keeps the dog as someone to listen to his monologues. After Augusto dies, the dog delivers a funeral oration before following his master into death. The allusions never overwhelm Unamuno’s original story, but they comment on the central theme of death and the desire for continued existence. When taken together they form an allusive chain that reveals a metanarrative of how Augusto affects a heroic purpose by reenacting the Orpheus role.

Scholars have noted the allusion in Orfeo’s name, though treatments of it have been brief. While Alexander Parker is the first to provide an extended treatment of Orfeo, he makes no reference to the significance of the dog’s name. Gayana Jurkevich examines Orfeo briefly through an archetypal lens, noting Orpheus’ role as a “Wise Old Man” figure who aids the protagonist. In this sense the dog serves as the mediator between Augusto and the rest of the

---

world as well as a manifestation of Augusto’s subconscious. Robin Fiddian, by contrast, focuses on Orpheus’ powers to resurrect, first as a manifestation of Augusto’s desire to resurrect his mother, and then as a means of resurrecting Augusto himself, since “Orfeo’s passage into the realm of the dead is followed years later by the appearance of Augusto in the dreams of Unamuno, as though the self-sacrifice of Orfeo had served at length to rescue Augusto from nothing.” Marsha Collins also notes the similarities between the Orpheus story and the dog’s role, noting that “Unamuno’s Orfeo also bounds out of a foggy netherworld, loses his loved one to death, and then regains Augusto after surcease of his own life.” But Collins focuses more on Orpheus’ role as poet and the use of ambiguous language to create reality and obtain immortality, as “Unamuno likewise immortalizes the mortal Augusto and Orfeo, and himself, in his nivola.” All of these scholars see the Orfeo allusion as pointing towards a central theme of death and a desire for some form of resurrection or continuation of consciousness beyond death.

While these interpretations explore one aspect of the allusion to the Orpheus myth, other related allusions operate in the relationship between Augusto and his love interest Eugenia. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is not limited to Augusto’s interaction with the dog but is subtly woven throughout the romantic plotline. Perhaps because Augusto’s climactic encounter with his own author at the end of the book is so innovative, the romantic plotline receives comparatively little attention. However, Unamuno uses allusions to the Orpheus myth to highlight existential themes in this overlooked section of the novel.

The first allusion occurs before the reader meets Orfeo, within the first few pages. After Eugenia crosses in front of Augusto’s door, he follows her home and sees her doorkeeper staring at him maliciously. “Ésta Cerbera aguarda—se dijo—que le pregunte por el nombre y circunstancias de esta señorita a que he venido siguiendo” 62 [“This Cerberus is waiting,” he said to himself, “for me to ask her for the name and circumstances of this Miss whom I have come following]. Taken alone this allusion would only be a flourish. It comments on the role of a minor character whose purpose is functional rather than interesting; the doorkeeper is an obstacle to Augusto’s advancement, a guardian like Cerberus. But when taken with the other Orpheus allusions, Unamuno gives the first hint that he is playing with the Orpheus and Eurydice story. Eugenia is a woman who is guarded beyond Augusto’s reach, and he must charm the ianitor before he can gain access to her, much as Orpheus had to charm the three-headed Cerberus to reach Eurydice.

The second allusion comes soon after, when Augusto finds a puppy stumbling out from the mists: “Luego hizo Augusto que se le trajera un biberón para el cachorillo, para Orfeo, que así le bautizó, no se sabe ni sabía él tampoco por qué” 63 [Then Augusto had them bring a bottle for the little puppy, for Orpheus, for thus he christened him; it is not known nor did he himself know why]. Unlike the earlier allusion to Cerberus, which was a rhetorical flourish, this allusion to Orpheus points towards the central themes of death and existentialism. Several scholars have noted how Orfeo serves as a double for Augusto, mirroring his innocence and inexperience. 64 Eugenia herself thinks of Augusto in canine terms, hating to look at “los ojos suplicantes del

63 Unamuno, Niebla, 110–11.
señorito don Augusto como los de un perro hambriento” 65 [the supplicating eyes of little mister Augusto like those of a hungry dog]. Her remarks evoke the idea of Orfeo, who only a few chapters earlier was found as a starving puppy in the streets. It is easy enough then to see Augusto—via his connection with the dog—as an Orpheus figure as well, albeit a bumbling one. By applying the allusive name to the dog, Unamuno also applies it to the protagonist, ensuring that the mythic allusion is in a central position to comment on Augusto’s problems.

In both these cases of allusion, Augusto is the one to assign classical names to figures in his life. He is tentatively trying to take control of his life and assume the role of author and actant after the death of his mother. As Carlos Blanco Aguinaga states:

In order to try to be what he appears to be—he must follow the classic pattern of the plot. He must because he wills it so, of course. Any plot—any role—would have been equally satisfactory to him, I am sure, for all he wants is an opportunity to act . . . As Augusto undoubtedly knows from having read Calderón, true freedom of the will consists in recognizing one’s role and playing it well.66

In other words, Augusto is trying to map a story onto his life in order to give it meaning. If he can will himself into a role, he will escape his mother’s control as well as the as-yet-unknown control of Unamuno as author. The question is, which story is he using as a model? His name is another classical allusion to Augustus, which implies that he is destined for greatness and grand deeds, but his situation as an aimless and unambitious man undercuts these pretentions of empire. If anything, the allusion becomes ironic. Instead Augusto subconsciously follows the pattern of the romantic Orpheus and Eurydice myth. He is the one naming others based on the

65 Unamuno, Niebla, 131.
Orpheus story. Ironically, this makes him both author and fictional character playing out a role in his own story, a clever parallel of Unamuno’s later intrusion on the novel as a character.

Augusto seeks a damsel in distress that he can rescue and love so that he can affirm his selfhood as an Orpheus figure. Yet Eugenia is in no kind of physical danger, so Augusto wishes to rescue her from her poverty through marriage. All is well except that Eugenia refuses to play her role, as she already has her boyfriend Mauricio and fully expects him to rescue her and not Augusto. Eventually she plays along and agrees to marry Augusto for his money and plans to leave him before the wedding.

The climax of the romantic plotline culminates in another possible Orphic allusion which concentrates on Eugenia’s piercing look. In both Virgil and Ovid’s version of the myth, Orpheus must not look at Eurydice while they ascend from the underworld, lest he lose her forever. Yet when Eugenia brings up another of Augusto’s love interests—the laundry woman Rosario—to bait Augusto into cancelling the wedding and saving face, it is she who does the looking: “¿No has vuelto a saber de ella?—y le miró con mirada de las que atraviesan” 67 [“You haven’t heard of her again?” and she looked at him with one of those piercing looks]. The cognate accusative (miró con mirada) draws especial attention to her gaze. This portrays Eugenia as an active Eurydice in what has traditionally been a passive role. Rather than be penetrated by the male gaze and die as a result, she penetrates him to keep him from the shame that will eventually cause his death. Unfortunately Augusto does not take the hint and Eugenia leaves him.

This allusion is far less certain than the others. Unamuno places this look right before Augusto loses his love interest, just like Orpheus looking at Eurydice. But if it were not for the earlier Cerberus and Orpheus allusions, this passage would not register as a possible Orpheus allusion at all. It may well be an “accidental association on the part of the reader,” and there is no

---

67 Unamuno, Niebla, 248.
way to ask Unamuno whether he intended a clever reversal of the expected Orphic gaze. If the reader chooses to take this as an allusion, however, it shows how Augusto’s will to existence through the Orphic story unravels. As Yolanda Melgar Pernias explains:

Augusto, pues, planea afirmarse como sujeto, como “experimentador”, pero su debilidad lo convierte en objeto . . . Vemos así que Augusto no puede superar la posición pasiva respecto a la mujer, no es capaz de afirmarse autónomamente—de desgajarse de la niebla que lo rodea.68

[Augusto, then, plans to affirm himself as a subject, as an experimenter, but his weakness changes him into an object . . . We see then that Augusto cannot overcome the passive position in respect to women, he is not capable of affirming himself autonomously, of breaking off from the mist which surrounds him].

Unlike Unamuno, who controls the will of all his characters through writing, or Orpheus, who controls the will of even gods through music, Augusto cannot compel Eugenia to marry him. His narrative as romantic hero is exposed as an affectation, as an overlay upon his nebulous and formless life. He has played through the role of Orpheus, complete with losing his love interest, and yet remains no more real than before. He was unable to look at Eugenia, to play the part of active gazer, and instead passively accepts her gaze and her definitions of his self. His last effort to will himself into existence is paradoxically to end his life, but Unamuno takes even the choice of suicide from him. Augusto remains passive to the core.

However, it is important to note the ways in which Niebla does not adapt the Orpheus myth. The plot is one of failed courtship, not the loss and recuperation of a lover. In Ovid’s account, Orpheus asks only for a respite from death so that he might enjoy Eurydice for a mortal

---

life span. Unamuno is concerned not with life or love but the inevitable cessation of consciousness upon dying and the loss of the self. Thematically the two stories are only loosely connected. In focusing on the Orphic allusions in the work, this analysis has necessarily drawn excessive attention to the importance and effect the allusions have on Unamuno’s story. But when placed back into the overall narrative, the effects of each allusion are localized and minimal. Niebla is not an Orpheus adaptation, but rather a different story that uses the Orpheus myth to point to the deeper existential questions that Augusto’s life raises. Augusto’s failure to make the Orpheus narrative central, to adapt the Orpheus story as his own, reveals the periphery position of the myth to Augusto’s questioned existence and to the narrative of Niebla. The classical allusions hint at a greater meaning, a means of fulfillment and purpose through connection and sacrifice, which the author then denies first through Eugenia’s rejection and then by Unamuno’s indifference. Orpheus’ songs echo through the text without ever coming to the fore.
Chapter 3: Intertextuality

Thus far I have discussed mythic usages that connect demonstrably to their ancient predecessors. Yet many usages lack overt signaling in the text and paratexts, which leads to Joanna Paul’s question: “If a film has no clear link with classical antiquity (and how do we discern and evaluate this ‘clarity’ anyway?), in what sense might we be able to understand it as a reception of antiquity?”69 If scholars cannot prove that an author was drawing on classical myth during her writing (i.e. if authorial intent remains uncertain), do they have any grounds for analyzing the text in terms of a mythological paradigm? Genette confronts a similar problem when he knows a hypotext must exist, but has no way of consulting it:

We are most likely faced here with hypertexts whose hypotexts are unknown; we are almost certain of their hypertextuality, but it remains beyond description for us and thus beyond definition . . . The curious (and ever frustrated) readers find themselves in the position of a paleographer who already knows that his text conceals another but does not yet know which one. This is the most irritating palimpsest of all, which reduces me to hunches and to questionings.70

This uncertainty has not deterred scholars in their analyses of potential mythic usages. Rather than use explicit references to a hypotext, they examine the work for “some core of character and causation for its [mythic] narrative to be recognizable.”71 This “core” or “spirit”72 of the myth is notoriously difficult to define. It can be “salient parallels,” a connection to the

---

70 Genette, Palimpsests, 381, 383.
72 Hutcheon, A Theory of Adaptation, 10.
myth which “reverberates” and “resonates”\(^73\) or be “in tune with” the myth to the point that it is “too [mythic] to be merely coincidental.”\(^74\) In other words, these scholars are following Lévi-Strauss’ reasoning, who says, “a myth remains the same as long as it is felt as such.”\(^75\) Scholars assert connections between modern works and ancient myths based on how familiar the modern work feels to an ancient story.

Most balk at a system of criticism based on feeling. Analysis may begin with an intuited connection, but usually textual and historical evidence must substantiate the initial hypothesis. But rather than search for a historical connection, as with masked adaptations,\(^76\) a scholar can instead assume the connection is present even when not provable. Adaptive and allusive models are not applicable in this situation, but other indirect analysis methods can yield insightful interpretations. Intertextuality, reception, and typology operate on the assumption that, although the connection to classical myth is unattributed and unprovable, it is nevertheless probable. In the case of the latter two methods, the scholar creates the connection through her own subjective reading. Just as Hutcheon points out that the reader can derive pleasure from the contrast between hypertexts and hypotexts, Sanders notes that “surely part of the pleasure of response for readers in these instances consists in tracing these relationships for themselves.”\(^77\) Scholars may especially enjoy the challenge of sniffing out traces of classical myth when they are not so readily apparent.

This chapter examines intertextuality, the idea that authors create texts by interweaving previous texts. Julia Kristeva first introduced the term, who “saw art, music, drama, dance, and

---

76 Daugherty, “Sullivan’s Travels.”
77 Sanders, Adaptation and Appropriation, 46.
literature in terms of a living mosaic, a dynamic intersection of textual surfaces.”78 According to this theory, each text is made up of hundreds if not thousands of previous texts, almost all of which are not formally acknowledged; to extend the theory to its extreme, “intertextuality speaks a language whose vocabulary is the sum of all existing texts.”79 Each new text carries within it the entire history of its cultural tradition. While the theory first developed from semiotics and explained how individual words carry meaning into new texts, “authors of literary works do not just select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of character, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from the literary tradition.”80 Scholars can therefore use intertextuality to explain the relationship between classical myths and subsequent usages, even when the classical text is an unacknowledged contributor, since “the intertextual relationship may be less explicit, more embedded.”81

While intertextuality does not require an explicit reference, it nevertheless works with specific antecedent texts. A new text does not weave in the incest taboo, or even the Oedipus story, but specific strands of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*. An author can use multiple sources; Eugene O’Neill’s adaptation of the Oresteia, for instance, draws on Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides’ versions of the story, as well as Sophocles’ *Oedipus* and Freud’s psychological interpretations. The strands may become so interwoven that they are indistinguishable from a distance, but careful examination reveals their discrete nature. Unlike typology, which uses abstractions and general mythic strains, intertextuality traces the sources of a text through concrete though unacknowledged vectors.

78 Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 3.
81 Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 3.
What follows are three analogies to better understand how myths move into new works through intertextuality: the genetic model, the subterranean model, and the textile model. Each gives a slightly different perspective to the method, and when taken together allow for better understanding of the theory.

*Genetics*

Myth can be described as “the common possession of a self-identifying culture group that subsequent historical groups, up to today, continue to claim as ancestral.”82 If classical myths are the common ancestors of all Western stories, then whatever stories Westerners create will bear the genetic imprint, however faint, of specific classical antecedents.83 An extended analogy between intertextuality and genetics can explore how mythic DNA is passed from one generation of stories to the next.

A storyteller’s mind is like a uterus which combines different genetic material and reforms it. However, instead of working with only two sources, authors can recombine the fragments of any story they have ever heard and birth it into the world, where the story will in turn procreate inside the mind of the next author.84 This makes tracing the genealogy of any story extremely complicated, as it may have dozens or even hundreds of parent stories. Classical scholars are like genetic researchers who attempt to locate strands of classical texts in the DNA of a story, sifting through countless influences to find them. Fortunately myths, like genre,
contain “pieces of cultural memory in condensed form.”⁸⁵ Because of this density of meaning they are frequently used in new stories and tend to be expressed as dominant rather than recessive traits. Oedipus’ unfortunate marriage to his mother, for instance, tends to stand out more than a narrative concerning a mundane trip to the barber. Once a classicist has identified the mythic strain, the next step is to examine what pieces of the mythic text remain, what has been removed, and how it combines with other genetic material to form a unique expression in that story. In other words, how does the original meaning of the mythic text function within the new overall context of the story?

This idea of genetic intertextuality assumes that older stories will leave what Kristeva called “mnesic traces (memories). They are carried intact from their own space into the space of the novel.”⁸⁶ Because traces remain intact, it is impossible to tell a story without invoking older stories, including texts of classical myth. As Mikhail Bakhtin explains:

> When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and evaluations of others, uninhabited by others’ voices. No, he receives the word from another’s voice and filled with that other voice. The word enters his context from another context, permeated with the interpretations of others. His own thought finds the word already inhabited.⁸⁷

Bakhtin’s idea can be especially useful when analyzing classical mythic usages. If individual words carry the genetic traces of earlier usages when placed in new contexts, it is understandable that stories do likewise. Every story about a musician who has lost a lover will carry traces of

---

Vergil and Ovid’s Orpheus, and every wife who murders her husband is a descendant of Aeschylus and Homer’s Clytemnestra. Stories are not created *ex nihilo*, after all; storytellers combine and recombine stories that they have heard before. In some cases, the classical myths are the parent, as the author read the ancient versions and based a story after it. In other cases the author read only the story based off the ancient versions, or the story based on that story, and so on. In this case the classical text may be like a grandparent or great-grandparent, with less direct influence but with a yet-discernible genetic resemblance. Most if not all stories have been combined with classical mythic DNA at some point in their ancestry. For this reason Lysl Walsh can claim that “Homer’s *Iliad* and its narration of the conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans, and Hector and Achilles, stands as the ur-text against which all subsequent tales of war, friendship, and revenge can be compared.”\(^{88}\)

One example of this genetic dilution is the Pygmalion myth. Ovid’s version in the *Metamorphoses* is a starting point and George Bernard Shaw’s adaptation *Pygmalion* (1913) is one of the text’s second-generation progeny. The title of the play and the thematic interplay between Ovid and Shaw’s versions would suggest that Shaw was aware of Ovid’s account and used an adaptive model in writing his play. The reader is meant to compare Professor Higgins to Pygmalion and derive meaning through the palimpsestuous relationship. When Alan Lerner adapted the play into the musical *My Fair Lady* (1956), he removed references to the Pygmalion myth. Because he would have read the play and seen the Pygmalion reference in the title, he must have made a conscious decision to remove that reference, thereby creating a masked adaptation in the third generation. Once the reference is masked, any further adaptations may be based on Lerner’s work without an awareness of Ovid’s version. Therefore when Michael Price

---

wrote the parodic episode “My Fair Laddy” (2006) for *The Simpsons*, any overt trace of the Pygmalion myth is gone. The episode’s title makes it clear that it is an adaptation of Lerner’s musical, but we cannot properly call it an adaptation of Ovid’s Pygmalion. However, this does not mean that the Pygmalion myth is altogether absent from its fourth-generation descendant. It still contains “mnesic traces,” fragments of thematic content which are inherited from the ancient source like strands of genetic material. For this reason it is still useful to analyze the *Simpsons* episode within an intertextual relationship with Ovid’s Pygmalion. After the story has been cross-bred with many other narrative traditions, the fragments and themes that remain manifest after so many retellings become especially significant to the interpretation of that work.

*Subterranean*

Intertextual relationships can be compared to the movements of a subterranean river. While it may occasionally surface and travel above ground, for the most part it flows beneath the earth. One could see two seemingly disparate stretches and not know they are the same river until something is thrown into the segment upstream and it miraculously surfaces in the stretch downstream. We know that the river is connected, but we are unable to see how.

Sanders makes the claim that “intertextuality operates in a subterranean mode, occurring beneath the surface narrative.”89 While the reader may not be able to see direct connections between ancient myth and modern text, she may note similarities between the two, where aspects such as plot, themes, and characters of the “upstream” classical text resurface in later “downstream” literature. Antony Keen calls this ghosting, which are “stories where no direct influence of classical originals can be established, but where nevertheless there are strong hints

---

89 Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 104.
of themes derived from antiquity . . . However, this category is inherently nebulous, and such connections can be difficult to establish.\textsuperscript{90} The genetic model of intertextuality can trace a classical myth’s usage through links of filiation, while the subterraneen model claims that classical myths are imparted through less direct or less evident means. Scholars can never be sure in this situation by what means an author received a classical myth, but they can examine several possibilities of how classical myths transmit and reform while underground.

An author may have direct, conscious knowledge of a myth and deliberately use it in crafting her story but conceal all direct evidence of the source text. This is another example of Daugherty’s “masked” adaptation discussed earlier, except here the masking is so complete that there is no way to prove that the author used a myth as a hypotext. The paratexts and epitexts are bare. If a scholar wishes to assert that an author deliberately concealed a source text in this case, he must do so on faith. A careful comparison of the new and ancient text may reveal an intertextual relationship but can only guess at conscious adaptation. So long as the author remains tightlipped about her sources, readers will never know for certain.

Alternately, an author may read an ancient text, either in Greek or Latin or in translation, and then draw on it unconsciously while writing. Those who are trained in classics (be it the British schoolboy of the nineteenth century, the classics professor, or the university student who took a general education course in classical mythology) are particularly susceptible to unconsciously channeling myth. According to Carl Jung, every source text an author has encountered remains in the subconscious and informs future creative endeavors, but the author need not be aware of this influence:

It can sometimes be shown convincingly that what he has written bears a striking similarity to the work of another author—a work that he believes he has never seen. I

\textsuperscript{90} Antony Keen, “The ‘T’ Stands for Tiberius.”
myself found a fascinating example of this in Nietzsche’s book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where the author reproduces almost word for word an incident reported in a ship’s log . . .

I wrote to his sister, who was still alive, and she confirmed that she and her brother had in fact read the book together when he was 11 years old. I think, from the context, it is inconceivable that Nietzsche had any idea that he was plagiarizing this story. I believe that fifty years later it had unexpectedly slipped into focus in his conscious mind.91

Therefore an author familiar with classical mythology could rework it into a modern text, even “almost word for word” and still not be cognizant of the action. In this case, authorial intent need not be proved to justify the presence of a myth in a modern work, even when the author himself does not recall reading the ancient versions of the myth.

In both these cases, authors have direct exposure to an ancient text, then consciously or unconsciously draw on it in their writing. But authors can also have indirect exposure to myths, which they then incorporate into their stories. Safran and Cyrino note:

Films frequently draw from myths that have become integrated into our wider cultural discourse after percolating through the ages into story-patterns and archetypes . . . In such cases where the myth in question may be fragmented or transmuted, the [scholar] illuminates how, in the absence of overt signaling, a myth operates at a cellular level to shape aspects of the screen text and becomes thrillingly recognizable upon explication of its subterranean presence.92

Intertextual mythic usages can be retellings of retellings of retellings, diffused in popular culture and “in the water,” as it were. The precise point of origin and its trajectory into the current work are untraceable, though real.

---


The classical tradition, which includes Greek and Roman texts and culture as well as their continued influence in the post-classical world, is one of the source-waters for the broader river of the Western cultural tradition.93 Subsequent works are like tributaries off the Western tradition. Because the classical tradition is upstream, all later texts mingle with classical influence. This is inevitable, since “to write a poem or a novel is immediately to engage with a literary tradition.”94 Classical myth has irrevocably shaped the way Westerners tell stories to the point that it is impossible to engage in artistic creation without drawing on them.

To continue the Pygmalion example from above, scholars can assume that any story about crafting and then animating the perfect love interest has a trace of Ovid’s version by virtue of its downstream location in the Western tradition. In the genetic example, scholars can trace the presence of the Pygmalion myth from Ovid directly into the Simpsons. However, in the episode “Dream Date” (1996) from the television series Sabrina the Teenage Witch (1996–2003), the Pygmalion myth is present, but its origins are obscured. Sabrina and her aunts use witchcraft to cook up perfect dates out of dough, which is more than coincidentally similar. There is no way to trace the trajectory from Ovid, but it is reasonable that it would be possible if only authors had documented the many small transmissions of the myth through the ages. Yet to do so is as difficult as tracking an individual water molecule through a river.95

It is easy to overlook these intertextual relations and exclude them from a “pure” classical genealogy, but we risk losing some truly brilliant transformations of the classics. As Sarah Annes Brown points out:

93 Cf. Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition, 541: “We have traced the river of Greek and Roman influence in literature from its first mingling with the life of modern Europe.”
95 There may be other Indo-European stories that also contribute to the general Western idea of the make-over motif. Ovid’s story is one of many source-waters; however, as a classicist I am focusing on the Roman story’s transmission.
Although most of the writers . . . seem to have derived their knowledge of the ‘classics’ from intermediate sources, or simply by cultural osmosis as it were, their lack of direct scholarly engagement with the Latin and Greek originals in no way detracts from their vitality as distinctive vectors of the classical tradition.96

Not only do texts unwittingly absorb classical myth, but myth also flows through them as channels into future works, making them valuable objects of study.

Subterranean intertextuality explains how authors can create texts that have an uncanny resemblance to classical texts even though they have never picked up a classical book. This is because “literature—like all other activities of wit—relies on conventions which, with some exceptions, it is ignorant of.”97 The story conventions themselves contain embedded myth.

A curious case of subterranean intertextuality is Gabriel Dawe’s *Plexus* series. Dawe uses multi-colored threads to form large rainbow sculptures that seem to shimmer in the museum light. While the individual threads are monochromatic, they overlap in layers and create the illusion of colors blending into one another so that the viewer cannot determine where one color ends and the next begins. Dawe’s sculptures can be seen as a reverse-ekphrasis of Ovid’s description of weaving from the Arachne narrative:

```
illic et Tyrium quae purpura sensit aenum
texitur et tenues parvi discriminis umbrae;
qualis ab imbre solent percussis solibus arcus
inficere ingenti longum curvamine caelum;
in quo diversi niteant cum mille colores,
transitus ipse tamen spectantia lumina fallit:
```

96 Sarah Annes Brown, “‘Plato’s Stepchildren’: SF and the Classics,” in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, 416. 
usque adeo, quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima distant.  

[Here both the purple which has felt the Tyrian bronze is woven and lighter shades of small gradation. Just as rainbows often dye the long sky with their huge bend when the sunrays are struck from a rainstorm, in which though a thousand variegated colors shine, nevertheless the transition itself escapes the notice of the watching eyes. What touches is continuously the same, but the ends differ.]

Ovid’s simile of colored threads as a rainbow is the “upstream” exposed point of the underground river, which disappears and resurfaces two millennia later in Dawe’s sculpture, which resembles a large loom prepped for weaving. While there is no visible connection between the two points, there are untraceable connections through the Western tradition that filter down from Ovid to Dawe. Ovid’s discourse was one of many voices that shaped the general portrayal of rainbows, which Dawe then draws on.

Dawe admits that he has never read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* but was aware of the story of Arachne (perhaps through oral transmission, popular culture, or general mythology textbooks). His grandmother also owned a reproduction of Velazquez’s painting *Las hilanderas,* which depicts Minerva and Arachne peacefully spinning wool in the foreground and the weaving competition in a tapestry in the background. This is an intermediate point of contact between Ovid and Dawe, a brief resurfacing of the mythic river. Although he denies a conscious influence from the story, the Arachne myth is present in Dawe’s subconscious; it is therefore possible for it to manifest in his art.

In examining the paratexts around Dawe’s art, other connections with the Arachne myth become apparent. Dawe works in textiles in order “to examine the complicated construction of

---

98 Ov.Met. 6.60–68.
gender and identity in his native Mexico and . . . to subvert the notions of masculinity and machismo prevalent in the present day.”

When asked about the motivation behind his art, he frequently cites a childhood memory with his grandmother: “He remembers being ridiculed for wanting to embroider like his grandmother, who held fast to her cultural belief that sewing was for girls, not boys. She taught his sister to embroider, but not him.”

The same person who owned the Velazquez painting of the Arachne story and likely told Dawe the myth forbade him from embroidery and the similarly feminine art of weaving.

The story of Arachne and Minerva plays out in the paratext (and by extension in the Plexus weaving sculptures). The grandmother, like Minerva, holds the power of weaving. While Minerva, disguised as an old woman, insists that Arachne acknowledge her as her teacher, Dawe’s grandmother refuses to teach him embroidery at all. Arachne’s weaving becomes a challenge to the gods, just as Dawe’s weaving sculpture defies the patriarchal taboos his grandmother embodied. Dawe competes, in a sense, with his grandmother and her worldviews, and his weaving is the means of his challenge. While Ovid’s story plays out the competition between the divine and the mortal, Dawe’s work shifts the conflict between machismo and “feminine” masculinity. The undeniable beauty of the Plexus sculptures parallels the undeniable skill of Arachne’s tapestry; while the established competitor exhibits unquestioned strength, the challenger proffers undeniable value. By examining how the Arachne myth flows into Dawe’s work, we can see how the themes of vibrant depictions of weaving lead to the theme of challenging established orders. As Sanders notes, “the reader who approaches the . . . [text] with

---

an active sense of the subtextual depth provided by the . . . myth has the opportunity for additional production of meaning(s), which can only enrich an experience of the narrative.\textsuperscript{102}

\textit{Textile}

The third metaphor to describe intertextual relations serves as a caution and an explanation of their limitations in identifying classical sources. Texts are like “a tissue, a woven fabric.”\textsuperscript{103} Each source material is a thread, and the author creates the pattern that combines many source threads into a new tapestry. As Kristeva explains with a related metaphor, “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.”\textsuperscript{104} However, this process of weaving destroys the source (the thread) as an entity of self-contained, individual meaning; it is lost in the larger design of the new text (the tapestry). This means that any attempt to isolate an individual mythic source in the larger text is like pulling on a single thread and unraveling the tapestry. Intertextual interpretations, while still useful, are inevitably distortions of the text.

This is due to Kristeva’s concept of transposition, which is “the passage from one sign system to another . . . an altering of the thetic position—the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one.”\textsuperscript{105} The context around the old mythic pattern is “destroyed” to make room for a new context; in Sophocles’ \textit{Ajax}, for example, Ajax slaughters sheep in a bout of insanity within the context of the Trojan War and the myth is enmeshed in a complex network of related stories. Here the madness is a mark of shame that leads to Ajax’s suicide, a divine

\textsuperscript{102} Sanders, \textit{Adaptation and Appropriation}, 99.
curse that lays a great warrior low. But when the myth is recontextualized to form the narrative of Don Quixote insanely slaughtering sheep, the larger Greek context is destroyed to allow for the new context of the seventeenth-century Spanish countryside and literature. Now the madness takes on a comedic tone; Don Quixote never was a great warrior, nor does the reader know him outside the context of his insanity. What’s more, he loses to the shepherds who defend their sheep, a parody of the Ajax story to the point of bathos. The myth’s transposition into a new surrounding context inevitably changes the meaning. The same thread is used in both tapestries, but the threads around it are what give it its meaning, not an essential meaning in the thread/myth itself.

The key to intertextuality is that a text is the combination of *many* texts, and that “in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another.” Meaning is therefore not created from the combined meaning of many texts, but rather the *annulment* of their meanings; a new text “admits the existence of an other (discourse) only to the extent that it makes it its own.” Like destructive sound waves, meanings of source texts are cancelled out as they meet each other within the space of the new text. Kristeva’s concept of binary themes negating one another can be extended to the larger question of how many intertextual sources negate, and thereby create, meaning:

The negation remains incomplete and unfinished unless it includes this doubly negative movement that reduces the difference between two terms to a radical disjunction with permutation of those terms; that is, to an empty space around which they move, dying out as entities and turning into an alternating rhythm.

---

107 ibid, 46.
108 ibid, 48.
Yet understanding how a myth operates as a source requires the critic to understand the myth’s former meaning in order to compare it to the new text. The myth was meant to be in the background, but the critic’s identification of the myth undoes the negation, highlighting the mythic thread above the other source threads and artificially bringing it to the fore of the story. Like the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, a myth cannot be observed as a source without altering the meaning of the overall text.\textsuperscript{109} For this reason Roland Barthes cautions against using intertextuality as a means of finding sources:

The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the ‘sources’, the ‘influences’ of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet \textit{already read}: they are quotations without inverted commas.\textsuperscript{110}

The “myth of filiation” is a direct challenge to the earlier genetic model of intertextuality. I contend that using intertextual assumptions is still a valid method to identify the influence of classical myth, but Barthes’ argument should give the scholar pause. To read with the sources functioning at a subconscious level is a different experience than when a source or sources are made apparent. Ultimately it is the choice of the reader that governs the way in which the text is read, and whether it is more enjoyable to trace the individual threads or to observe the larger pattern into which the threads disappear. A skilled critic should be able to alternate between the two modes of analysis.


\textsuperscript{110} Barthes, \textit{Image, Music, Text}, 160.
Intertextual analyses are also strengthened when not only the mythic threads are considered, but as many of the source threads as possible. As Sanders notes, “Perhaps it will increasingly serve us better to think in terms of complex filtration, and in terms of networks, webs and signifying fields, rather than simplistic one-way lines of movement from source to adaptation.” The new context of a myth is more important than any intrinsic meaning it might have had in an ancient context, as any such “original” meaning will not survive contact with multiple intertextual sources without radical transformation.

Example: Dionysian Intertexs in Unamuno’s San Manuel Bueno, mártir

As discussed in the previous chapter, Miguel de Unamuno knows how to weave named mythic allusions into his works. But as a classicist, his work bears mnestic traces of classical mythology even when such traces are not overt. His novella San Manuel Bueno, mártir (1930), for example, draws on Dionysian intertexts, both from Euripides’ Bacchae and Friedrich Nietzsche’s Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik (1872). It is clear from his other works that Unamuno had read both texts carefully before he authored San Manuel, and he could have drawn on them consciously or unconsciously while writing. Yet because he does not give any overt indication that don Manuel is a Dionysus figure (as would be the case in an adaptation or allusion), an intertextual approach best analyzes how these earlier texts influence meaning in San Manuel.

The story follows don Manuel, the kindly village priest who holds a terrible secret: he does not believe in the afterlife. He feigns belief for the sake of the simple-minded villagers, but initiates a brother and sister into his doubts, forming a new brand of existential Christianity. The

---

111 Sanders, Adaptation and Appropriation, 33.
story contains thematic echoes of introducing a new religion (Euripides) as well as the creative
tension between order and chaos (Nietzsche). These intertexts emphasize don Manuel’s
superabundant life as well as his hyperawareness of death, a Dionysian contradiction that the
priest comes to embody.

As the reader moves upstream in intertextual influences, he first encounters Nietzsche’s
interpretation and reworking of the Dionysus myth. Unamuno was not only well acquainted with
Nietzsche’s work, but Nietzschean philosophy often crept into his own writings. On the whole,
Unamuno disagreed with Nietzsche’s concepts of the afterlife, yet he returned to them as an
unexorcised fear of the dissolution of self after death. For example, when Nietzsche suggests that
humans obtain immortality through the recycling of the body’s atoms after death, Unamuno
rejects the notion because he believes immortality is the continuation of the self or mind.\textsuperscript{112} In
many ways, Nietzsche’s ideas came to represent Unamuno’s own crises of faith when he doubted
such a continuation, and the battle with the long-dead philosopher became an introspective
one.\textsuperscript{113} In 1913, Unamuno wrote \textit{Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los
pueblos}, which, as the title implies, is a reworking of Nietzsche’s ideas of the Apollonian and the
Dionysian, couched in terms of the conflict between reason and faith. Here he explains the
history of Greek religion as a movement away from nature worship to “la religión más espiritual
de Apolo, la de la redención” [the more spiritual religion of Apollo, that of redemption].\textsuperscript{114} His
use of “redención” in particular has Christian overtones. However, not content with such a
religion, “los primeros filósofos griegos afirmaron la inmortalidad por contradicción . . .

\textsuperscript{112} Unamuno, \textit{Del sentimiento trágico de la vida} (New York: Las Americas Publishing Company, 1964), 93. This
makes Francisco La Rubia Prado’s brief reading of don Manuel as an eternally cyclical Dionysus problematic,
though I have him to thank for the original germ of this essay; \textit{Alegorías de la Voluntad} (Madrid: Libertarias, 1996),
224–25.

\textsuperscript{113} Kevin S. Larsen, “Unamuno, Nietzsche, and \textit{San Manuel Bueno, mártir},” in Selected Proceedings of the
Singularidad y Transcendencia Conference (Boulder, CO.: Publications of the Society of Spanish and Spanish-
American Studies, 1990), 107.

\textsuperscript{114} Unamuno, \textit{Sentimiento trágico}, 59.
asentando un dogma dionisiaco y órfico, no apolíneo”\textsuperscript{115} [the first Greek philosophers affirmed immortality by contradiction... establishing a Dionysian and Orphic dogma, not an Apollonian one]. In \textit{San Manuel}, the protagonist plays out his author’s inner turmoil, making Nietzsche’s texts an important intertext for understanding the character’s struggle. Both author and character suffer from an acute awareness of absolute death, which drives them to impassioned life (the Dionysian), but they represent such incommunicable, existential secrets through the image of Christianity (the Apollonian).

Unamuno derives these concepts from Nietzsche’s definition of the Dionysiac artist as “gänzlich mit dem Ur-Einen, seinem Schmerz und Widerspruch”\textsuperscript{116} [“one with the primordial unity, with its pain and contradiction”].\textsuperscript{117} Dionysian men

haben einmal einen wahren Blick in das Wesen der Dinge getan, sie haben \textit{erkannt}, und es ekelt sie zu handeln; denn ihre Handlung kann nichts am ewigen Wesen der Dinge ändern . . . nicht das Reflektieren, nein! – die wahre Erkenntnis, der Einblick in die grauenhafte Wahrheit überwiegt jedes zum Handeln antreibende Motiv . . . die Sehnsucht geht über eine Welt nach dem Tode, über die Götter selbst hinaus, das Dasein wird, samt seiner gleißenden Wiederspiegelung in den Göttern oder in einem unsterblichen Jenseits, verneint. In der Bewußtheit der einmal geschauten Wahrheit sieht jetzt der Mensch überall nur das Entsetzliche oder Absurde des Seins.\textsuperscript{118}

[have gazed into the true essence of things, they have \textit{acquired knowledge} and they find action repulsive, for their actions can do nothing to change the eternal essence of things .

\textsuperscript{115} ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Nietzsche, \textit{Die Geburt der Tragödie}, 48.
No, it is not reflection, it is true knowledge, insight into a terrible truth, which outweighs every motive for action . . . There is a longing for a world beyond death, beyond the gods themselves; existence is denied, along with its treacherous reflection in the gods or in some immortal Beyond. Once truth has been seen, the consciousness of it prompts man to see only what is terrible or absurd in existence wherever he looks].

Upon realizing that the ordered universe is a lie that covers the underlying chaos, most Dionysian people lose all sense of purpose. They gaze into the existential abyss and realize that all action is impotent, for there is no larger organization to give context and meaning. Walter Otto, who wrote his *Dionysos, Mythos und Kultus* (1833) only three years after *San Manuel* was published, crystalizes the Nietzschean thoughts of the time:

Die vertraute Welt, in der die Menschen sich so sicher und behaglich eingerichtet haben, sie ist nicht mehr! Das Tosen der Dionsichen Ankunft hat sie hinweggefeht . . . Die Urwelt ist hervorgetreten, die Tiefen des Seins haben sich geöffnet . . . Bild der wohlgemeinneten Gewohnheitswelt zersprengt. Sie bringen keinen Trug und Traum, sie bringen die Wahrheit – einene Wahrheit, die Wahnsinnig macht.

[The world man knows, the world in which he has settled himself so securely and snugly –that world is no more. The turbulence which accompanied the arrival of Dionysus has swept it away . . . .The primeval world has stepped into the foreground, the depths of reality have been opened . . . .The innocent picture of a well-ordered routine world has been shattered by their coming, and they bring with them no illusions or fantasies but truth – a truth that brings on madness].

---

119 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 50.
Unamuno had a similar experience in 1897, when the well-ordered creeds and worldview of Christianity were swept away at the fear of a meaningless passing into nothing after death.\(^{122}\) This crisis of faith nearly broke him, and he would return to this uncertainty of the afterlife many times in his life thereafter.

Don Manuel too is a Dionysian man and suffers from the same pain and attraction to the void. He no longer believes in an afterlife, which makes his devotion to Christianity an absurdity. Without the hope of a resurrection, all that lies beyond death is the emptiness that so terrified Unamuno. When his follower Lázaro asks him why he doesn’t share the existential truth with his congregation, don Manuel replies “¿La verdad? La verdad, Lázaro, acaso es algo terrible, algo intolerable, algo mortal; la gente sencilla no podría vivir con ella.”\(^{123}\) [The truth? The truth, Lázaro, is perhaps something terrible, something intolerable, something deadly; simple people could not live with it]. This description of truth is the same as Nietzsche’s, where the Spanish adjective *terrible* equates to the German *grauenhaft*. Don Manuel is one of those who “haben erkannt,” as Nietzsche described, and now must live with the unbearable knowledge of what Unamuno called the pagan fear of nothing.\(^{124}\) It is the awareness that consciousness, and therefore the self, will die with the body. There is no sense of order in the universe beyond mortality, only chaos that will deny context and therefore existence to the individual after life.

And yet while don Manuel fears the void that awaits him after death, he is maddeningly drawn towards it. He often goes to the lake and contemplates his suicide, saying

¡Y cómo me llama esa agua con su aparente quietud! . . . Mi vida, Lázaro, es una especie de suicidio continuo, un combate contra el suicidio, que es igual.”125

[And how that water calls me with its apparent calm! . . . My life, Lazarus, is a kind of continuous suicide, a battle against suicide, which is the same].

Suicide into an empty void is, of course, the ultimate inaction of which Nietzsche speaks. What Unamuno describes as the water calling him with its calm is Nietzsche’s “Sehnsucht” (longing) for a world beyond death, where existence itself is denied. Don Manuel has encountered the Dionysian truth, and it torments him.

However, the Dionysian abyss is also the wellspring of life and creativity, to which Nietzsche ascribes the inspiration of all artistic endeavors: “die Kunst: sie allein vermag jene Ekelgedanken über das Entsetzliche oder Absurde des Daseins in Vorstellungen umzubiegen, mit denen sich leben läßt”126 [“Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live”].127 In many ways, don Manuel’s obras in service to the town become an obra de teatro; his entire life is one continuous act of Apollonian expression of his Dionysian pain. Through that artistic expression the infinite horrors of the Dionysian become bearable, compressed into a single image of the devout Christian priest serving his parishioners. As Nietzsche explains:

So entreißt uns das Apollinische der dionysischen Allgemeinheit und entzückt uns für die Individuen; an diese fesselt es unsre Mitleidserregung . . . es führt an uns Lebensbilder vorbei und reizt uns zu gedankenhaftem Erfassen des in ihnen enthaltenen Lebenskernes. Mit der ungeheuren Wuscht des Bildes, des Begriffs, der ethischen Lehre, der sympathischen Erregung reißt das Apollinische den Menschen aus seiner orgiastischen

---

125 Unamuno, San Manuel, 147.
126 Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie, 48–49;
127 Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, 40.
Selbstvernichtung empor und täuscht ihn über die Allgemeinheit des dionysischen Vorganges hinweg zu dem Wahne, daß er ein einzelnes Weltbild . . . sehe.128

[Thus the Apolline tears us away from Dionysiac generality and causes us to take delight in individuals; it attaches the compassion which has been awakened in us to these individuals . . . it parades images of life before our eyes and stimulates us to comprehend in thought the core of life contained within them. With the enormous force of image, concept, ethical doctrine and sympathetic excitement, the Apolline wrenches man out of his orgiastic self-destruction, deceives him about the generality of the Dionysiac event, and induces in him the delusion that he is seeing a single image of the world].129

The individuals Nietzsche discusses here are characters in plays or other artistic images, but Unamuno transforms them into the villagers don Manuel serves. The existential crisis awakens in him a compassion for his parishioners, and the core of life in each of them becomes most valuable to him. For this reason the death of children and suicides pain him so greatly, for they shatter the image of life he builds.130 Don Manuel attempts to escape his “orgiastischen Selbstvernichtung” with the dream images of the Apollonian and to keep his followers in the strictly coherent Apollonian world. Not only his charitable works, but also the dogma of Christianity present a well-ordered universe where the good are rewarded in an afterlife. But he himself is unable to escape the Dionysian truths that seethe within him, as he explains to Lázaro:

Démosle opio, y que duerma y que sueñe. Yo mismo, con esta mi loca actividad, me estoy administrando opio. Y no logro dormir bien, y menos soñar bien . . . ¡Esta terrible pesadilla!131

128 Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie, 117–118.
129 Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, 102.
130 Unamuno, San Manuel, 126.
131 Unamuno, San Manuel, 152.
[Let us give them opium, and let them sleep and dream. I myself, with this my crazy activity, am administering opium to myself. And I do not succeed at sleeping well, and less at dreaming well . . . This terrible nightmare!]

Dreams are an expression of the Apollonian, images that the brain creates to interpret and cover the subconscious. Yet the painful knowledge of awakened reality cannot be unlearned, and don Manuel cannot fully escape into the ordered images of the universe he creates.

The shift from a purely artistic expression to one of physical labor in Unamuno’s work is not surprising; elsewhere he said, “de este abismo de desesperación puede surgir esperanza, y cómo puede ser fuente de acción y de labor humana, profundamente humana, y de solidaridad y hasta de progreso.” [From this abyss of hopelessness, hope can rise, and how it can be a source of action and human labor, profoundly human, and of solidarity and even of progress]. Don Manuel’s humanitarian work is then but one more expression of the Dionysian abyss, which would otherwise be unintelligible to the villagers.

While don Manuel ultimately succeeds at shielding his parishioners from the brunt of the Dionysian abyss, he is able to communicate its life-bringing essence to them. The fullness of the Dionysian can only be experienced directly, and its power is incommunicable except to those who have already had a direct experience with the god. Thus Nietzsche writes “der dithyrambische Dionysusdiener wird somit nur von seinesgleichen verstanden!” [the dithyrambic servant of Dionysos can only be understood by his own kind!] However, a portion of the Dionysian can be expressed through an Apollonian image. Unamuno asserts as much when he says,

---

133 Unamuno, *Sentiminto trágico*, 117.
Lo absoluto, lo irrevocablemente irracional e inexpresable, es intransmisible . . . cuando algo que parece irracional o absurdo logra uno expresarlo y que se lo entiendan, se resuelve en algo racional siempre, aunque sea en la negación de lo que se afirma.136

[The absolute, the irrevocably irrational and inexpressible, is intransmittable . . . when someone succeeds at expressing something which seems irrational or absurd and they are understood, it always resolves into something rational, although it be the negation of what is affirmed].

Likewise, when Lázaro asks his sister to keep the villagers from learning don Manuel’s secret, Ángela replies,

Si intentase, por locura, explicársele, no lo entenderían. El pueblo no entiende de palabras; el pueblo no ha entendido más que vuestras obras. Querer exponerles eso sería como leer a unos niños de ocho años unas páginas de Santo Tomás de Aquino . . . en latín.137

[If I, moved by some madness, tried to explain it to them, they wouldn’t understand it. The town doesn’t understand words; the town doesn’t understand more than your works. Trying to explain that would be like reading some pages of Saint Thomas Aquinas to some eight-year-old children . . . in Latin].

The villagers respond to the Apollonian representations of don Manuel’s charitable acts and Christian teachings, but are incapable of understanding their source: the Dionysian existential abyss.

136 Unamuno, Sentimiento trágico, 116.
137 Unamuno, San Manuel, 162–163.
Beyond don Manuel’s charitable acts, Catholicism itself becomes an Apollonian image to mask and channel the Dionysian. For Unamuno, true faith was irrational and incomprehensible, yet extremely personal. Once someone holds a mental concept of divinity, God dies for that man:

Definir algo es idealizarlo, para lo cual hay que prescindir de su elemento incommensurable o irracional, de su fondo vital. Y el Dios sentido, la divinidad sentida como persona y conciencia única fuera de nosotros, aunque envolviéndonos y sosteniéndonos, se convirtió en la idea de Dios, . . . algo muerto.\textsuperscript{138}

[To define something is to idealize it; in order to do this one must dispense with its incommensurate or irrational element, with its vital depth. And the God who is felt, the divinity felt like a person and like the only consciousness outside of ourselves, although enveloping and sustaining us, was changed into the idea of God, . . . something dead].

Otto likewise disdains any concept of religion that reduces divinity to “nicht anderes als tote Begriffe”\textsuperscript{139} [“nothing but lifeless ideas”],\textsuperscript{140} echoing Tersteegen’s axiom, “Ein begriffener Gott ist kein Gott”\textsuperscript{141} [An understood god is no god]. Christianity, with its creeds and dogmas that give order and purpose to the universe and human life, are antithetical to the sublime experience of the Dionysian, which must be experienced directly and personally even as it destroys those it influences. And yet Unamuno acknowledges that “La fe pura, libre de dogmas . . . es un fantasma . . . La fe necesita una materia en que ejercerse.”\textsuperscript{142} [Pure faith, free of dogmas . . . is a ghost . . . Faith needs a material upon which to exercise itself]. All experiences, even the Dionysian, require context for the human mind to register them. Christianity allows don Manuel to channel his experiences into a comprehensible image without which he would be left

\textsuperscript{138} ibid. 144.
\textsuperscript{139} Otto, \textit{Dionysos: Mythos und Kultus}, 14.
\textsuperscript{140} Otto, \textit{Dionysus: Myth and Cult}, 11.
\textsuperscript{142} Unamuno, \textit{Sentimiento trágico}, 166.
completely mad. However, the Apollonian Christian concept of an afterlife cannot fully capture the Dionysian experience of nothingness after death, and the discrepancy takes a mental and physical toll on don Manuel.

In fact, the novella itself is an artistic expression of Unamuno’s ongoing battle between faith and reason. At the end of the story, Unamuno himself begins to speak and alludes to Augusto Pérez in *Niebla*. This strengthens the relationship between don Manuel and Unamuno, indicating that don Manuel is not merely wearing the mask of Christianity for his followers, but *embodies* Unamuno’s mask, his own Apollonian expression of inner turmoil.

However, don Manuel cannot contain the creative abyss of the Dionysian without consequence, and eventually it wears out his body. Not only must he endure the tension between his own Dionysian experience and the Apollonian illusion of belief, but the Dionysian elements themselves are in conflict with one another. Unamuno himself seems to have come to terms with the eternal conflict of the rational world and irrational faith, and even desires that it continue as a source of authentic life.¹⁴³ Yet for don Manuel the conflict brings only resignation. The certain knowledge of death brings about a frenetic superabundance of life, and unbelief, a saintly piety. But the contradictions are more than a mortal can bear:

The divinity of Dionysus is recognized in his superhuman ability to embody opposite qualities simultaneously. By the same token, the popular qualities that constitute the god also destroy his human followers, who cannot sustain the full force of both of the god’s sides at once.¹⁴⁴

The very Dionysian qualities that make don Manuel remarkable also bring about his demise.

¹⁴³ ibid. 103 and 110
The mountain and lake of Valverde de Lucerna also take on Nietzschean roles, and the geographical locations are in turn woven into don Manuel’s character. Both the lake and the mountain are used to describe don Manuel on many occasions,\(^\text{145}\) becoming a type of leitmotif that establishes the priest as a fixture of the town and part of its psyche. The lake itself is tied to Dionysus as a further embodiment of his contradictory nature:

Das Wasser ist für den mythischen Sinn das Element, in dem die Urgeheimnisse alles Lebens wohnen. Geburt und Tod, Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft schlingen hier ihren Reigen . . . Belebung, Erfrischung und Ernährung ergießen sich mit den Wassern durch die ganze Schöpfung . . . Das ist das Element, in dem Dionysos zu Hause ist.\(^\text{147}\)

[“To the mythopoeic mind, water is the element in which the primal mysteries of all life dwell. Birth and death, past, present, and future intertwine their dances here . . . With water come vitality, re-invigoration, and nourishment to flood through all creation . . . Water is, then, the element in which Dionysus is at home”].\(^\text{148}\)

The water’s depths are also one more symbol of the abyss, with its sorrow and promise of death, and don Manuel’s connection with the lake shows his preoccupation with Dionysian themes.

In the novella, the lake is a place of death that paradoxically brings life. The deceased ancestors of the village are said to reside in the waters,\(^\text{149}\) and both don Manuel and Lázaro are drawn to suicide while contemplating it.\(^\text{150}\) Don Manuel is especially connected to it: the sadness in his eyes is like the depth of the lake and the village of the dead also lives within his soul.\(^\text{151}\)

\(^{145}\) Unamuno, *San Manuel*, 116, 119, 134, 140, etc.
\(^{147}\) Otto, *Dionysos: Mythos und Kultus*, 146–47.
\(^{149}\) Unamuno, *San Manuel*, 123
\(^{150}\) ibid. 148, 161
\(^{151}\) ibid. 134, 140
The Dionysian abyss is again represented in the soundless depths of the water. It is a place of stagnation, but also the wellspring of life:

Aquí se remansa el río en lago, para luego, bajando a la meseta, precipitarse en cascadas, saltos y torrenteras, por las hoces y encañadas, junto a la ciudad, y así remansa la vida, aquí en la aldea. 152

[Here the river slows into the lake, so that later, flowing down to the plateau, it rushes into cascades, falls, and torrents, through the ravines and gorges, next to the city, and thus life stagnates, here in the village].

Although it is unmoving, the lake gives birth to flowing waters, and don Manuel does the same; although he is a continual suicide since his experience with the Dionysian, he brings life to his parishioners. During this parable, don Manuel directs Lázaro’s attention to “el remanso que espeja la noche de estrellas”153 [the stillness which reflects the night of stars]. It is difficult to find a better representation of the Dionysian depths, veiled with an image of the ordered Apollonian universe, than the lake reflecting the image of the stars.

Not only does Unamuno draw heavily from Nietzsche’s philosophical uses of the Dionysus myth, but he also incorporates many elements directly from the classical source which lies farther upstream in the Western tradition. Unamuno weaves thematic and iconographic elements from Euripides’ Bacchae into his narrative to highlight how don Manuel embodies Dionysian characteristics of ecstatic dance, soothing wine, and representational theater.

153 ibid. 148.
Most often scholars allude to Dionysus in order to prove that San Manuel belongs to the tragic tradition.154 While the mode may be tragic, the kind (or genre form) is much closer to gospel writings.155 Ángela, as her name implies, serves as the messenger and evangelist for a new form of Christianity that masks a Dionysian intensity. The second section of the novella especially resembles a gospel in that it is written in pericopes, of which the arrangement and relation is significant. Don Manuel exhibits Dionysian characteristics in three consecutive pericopes at the center of this section, denoting a purposeful highlighting of the priest’s devotion to engendering abundant life.

In the first of these pericopes, don Manuel incites the village youth to dance.

Solía ir al baile. Y más de una vez se puso en él a tocar el tamboril para que los mozos y las mozas bailasen, y esto, que en otro hubiera parecido grotesca profanación del sacerdocio, en él tomaba un sagrado carácter y como de rito religioso.156

[He was accustomed to go to dances. And more than once he was moved to play the small drum so that the young men and women dance, and this, which in another would have seemed a grotesque profanation of the priesthood, in him took on a sacred character and was like a religious rite].

While song and procession are a part of Catholic worship, dancing would be considered too secular for a priest to encourage.157 However, dance is an essential part of Dionysian worship. Every tragedy in ancient Greece would have a dancing chorus, and reveling dances were part of maenad devotion. Don Manuel here takes up the drum himself to inspire the Bacchic rite.

156 Unamuno, San Manuel, 126.
157 See also La Rubia Prado, Alegorias de la Voluntad, 225.
Frenzied dancing serves the same purpose as wine: it draws all the participant’s attention to the present, to a hyperawareness of one’s own body, and the adrenaline also intoxicates. Yet don Manuel here plays a dangerous game. One the one hand, ritual frenzy can induce an out-of-body experience, a contact with the god of undiluted life who gives humans the hope of immortality. On the other, this same god rules the abyss that torments the priest with its promise of eternal extinction. Perhaps this is why don Manuel tempers the dance with a prayer before it can go too far, once again casting an Apollonian veil over what he does not wish his followers to see.

The pericope immediately following has don Manuel wishing to turn the entire lake into wine:

En una boda dijo una vez: “¡Ay, si pudiese cambiar el agua toda de nuestro lago en vino, en un vinillo que por mucho que de él se bebiera alegrara siempre, sin emborrachar nunca . . . o por lo menos con una borrachera alegre!”

[He once said at a wedding: “Oh, would that I could change all the water of our lake into wine, into a little wine that, no matter how much of it one should drink, it would always gladden, without ever making drunk . . . or at least with a glad drunkenness”].

The reference to John 2:1–5 is obvious, where Jesus too turns water into wine at a wedding, but the reference to drunkenness is not biblical. Furthermore, Jesus pressed for greater enlightenment and control, an Apollonian sentiment, while don Manuel wishes to obfuscate through joyful intoxication. Here he is much closer to Euripides’ Dionysus as a god of wine, who in Euripides’ words can also bring forth the drink spontaneously when asked by his followers: “ἄλλη δὲ

---

159 Unamuno *San Manuel*, 127.
νάρθηκ᾿ ἐς πέδον καθῆκε γῆς / καὶ τηδε κρήνην ἐξανῆκ᾿ οἶνου θεός” 160 [Another woman placed a fennel into the ground, / and from the earth the God brought forth a spring of wine]. Wine can likewise bring a surcease of sorrow for the laboring class, another goal that both Dionysus and don Manuel share:

...ὁ παύει τοὺς ταλαιπώρους βροτοὺς

λύπης, ὅταν πλησθῶσιν ἁμπέλου ροῆς,

ὑπνόν τε καθ’ ἡμέραν κακῶν

[which thing gives rest to suffering mortals from pain, whenever they are filled with the juice of the vine, and gives sleep and a forgetting of daily evils, neither is there another cure for work]. 161

This pleasant drunkenness masks the darker side of the god, forcing the imbiber to forget his troubles. While don Manuel wishes to shield the villagers from the Nietzschean existential dread of Dionysian madness through the Apollonian religion of Christianity, he is not above using the wine god’s power to further dull their sensitivity.

The third pericope shows don Manuel’s mastery of Dionysus’ domain of theater. A poor clown and his family come to the village, and while he is putting on a show, his wife dies. Don Manuel helps her in her passing, and afterwards the clown calls don Manuel a saint. The priest responds,

El santo eres tú, honrado payaso; te vi trabajar, y comprendí que no sólo lo haces para dar pan a tus hijos, sino también para dar alegría a los de los otros. 162

160 E.Ba.706–07.
  161E.Ba.280–84.
  162 Unamuno, San Manuel, 128.
[You are the saint, honored clown. I saw you work, and I understood that you not only do it to give your children bread, but also to give happiness to the children of others].

This ability to gladden others is consistent with Dionysian traits: “In the eyes of the ordinary people . . . the Hellenistic Dionysos was first of all a savior god, a liberator from depression on earth and from suffering in the hereafter.” Of course, don Manuel himself is a kind of clown who entertains the entire village while he remains dead inside. This final pericope serves as the climax of the set, preparing the reader for the discovery that don Manuel has been feigning belief all along.

Don Manuel’s interactions with Lázaro closely mirror those of Dionysus and his initial followers in the Bacchae, where both parties, reluctant to engage in the irrational worship, are drawn in through the priest’s irresistible power.

Lázaro is the only educated man in the village, having studied abroad in America. He is an atheist and a communist, filled with progressive ideas of how to liberate people from religion and feudalism. He returns to Valverde to find the entire town ensorcelled by don Manuel’s vivaciousness. At first he is hostile towards the priest, insisting that “los curas manejan a las mujeres y las mujeres a los hombres” [the priests control the women and the women control the men]. Here he first parallels Euripides’ Bacchae, where Pentheus complains of Dionysus’ unique control over the women of his city. But soon he is consumed by curiosity to see don Manuel preach: “Lázaro, por su parte, ardía en deseos – me lo dijo luego – de ir a oír a don Manuel, de verle y oírle en la iglesia, de acercarse a él y con él conversar, de conocer el secreto de aquel su imperio espiritual sobre las almas.”

164 Unamuno, San Manuel, 136.
165 Unamuno, San Manuel, 138.
told me later) to go to hear don Manuel, to see him and hear him in the church, to approach him and converse with him, to learn the secret of that spiritual empire of his over souls]. This desire to see the god’s influence over his followers directly parallels Pentheus’ sudden desire to see the maenads. Even when repulsed by the religion, both Pentheus and Lázar are drawn to the strange power the god exerts. It is once again the Dionysian irrationality calling to one who has the potential to experience it without the Apollonian veil of Christianity.

Significantly, Lázar’s conversion to the Dionysian abyss does not occur in the church or town, but out by the lake and mountains, where Dionysian worship has always occurred. “Íbanse por las tardes de paseo, orilla del lago, a hacia las ruinas, vestidas de hiedra, de la vieja abadía de cistercienses.”[They went on walks in the evenings, along the shore of the lake, or toward the ruins, dressed with ivy, of the old abbey of the Cistercians]. The lake as a Dionysian symbol has already been discussed; the ivy-covered ruins, where Lázar receives most of his instruction, represents a cluster of themes. It is the ruin of a religious order, and it is here that don Manuel will shatter the religious veil over the Dionysian abyss. It is the equivalent to Semele’s tomb, which Bacchus covers in ivy upon his return to Thebes. The god calls it σηκόν, a sacred place worthy of worship. The phrase “vestidas de hiedra” is even set off in a parenthetical phrase, placing extra emphasis on this Dionysian detail. So these ruins, covered in a plant sacred to Dionysus, become a holy place where Lázar first sees the life/death contradiction of the Dionysian. He later takes communion before the entire village in an Apollonian illusion, but his true conversion occurs in an unmistakably Dionysian setting.

Lázar at first objects to don Manuel’s deception, but soon realizes that the priest is correct. The way to bring the villagers happiness is to deceive them into believing Christianity,

---

166 Unamuno, San Manuel, 139.
167 Unamuno, San Manuel, 141.
168 E.Ba.11.
lest they encounter the dread of the existential abyss. This “engaño”\(^{169}\) [deception] is equivalent to the κατάψευσις καλὴ [beautiful lie] that Cadmus suggests to Pentheus:

> κεὶ μὴ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ θεὸς οὗτος, ὡς σὺ φῇς,
> παρὰ σοὶ λεγέσθω· καὶ καταψεύδου καλῶς
> ὡς ἔστιν\(^{170}\)

> [Even if this god does not exist, as you assert, allow him to be spoken of in your presence; and lie beautifully that he exists].

The beautiful lie, written two millennia earlier as a minor line in the *Bacchae*, is the centerpiece of Unamuno’s novel. Don Manuel lies about the existence of the Christian afterlife for the benefit of his parishioners because he knows the lie is more useful than the truth.

Pentheus’ conversion ends with his death, dressed in full maenad regalia and completely at the god’s mercy. Lázaro likewise dies symbolically upon his conversion. After explaining his own continuous suicide by maintaining an Apollonian façade over the Dionysian emptiness, don Manuel orders, “Sigamos, pues, Lázaro, suicidándonos en nuestra obra y en nuestro pueblo”\(^{171}\) [Let us continue, then, Lázaro, to kill ourselves in our work and our town]. After don Manuel’s physical death, Lázaro experiences the same enervation from the impossibility of containing the Dionysian opposites of life and death while maintaining the Apollonian illusion, and follows the priest into the void of literal death when his body gives out from exhaustion.

Unamuno uses the Pentheus story to illustrate the transmission of the Dionysian religion, which is always a violent affair. On the surface, both characters want to stop the spread of religion: Pentheus wants to halt the spread of Dionysian worship, while Lázaro threatens to inculcate the villagers with atheism. Neither one understands the nature of the religion he

---

\(^{169}\) Unamuno, *San Manuel*, 142.

\(^{170}\) E.Ba.333–335.

opposes and how such religion is essential to life. Both Dionysus and don Manuel worship the life/death dichotomy; but, while Euripides’ Dionysus wants everyone to directly experience its wonders and horrors, don Manuel seeks to control its expression through the Apollonian. In the former case, Pentheus attempts to stem the dichotomy, while in the latter Lázaro threatens to unwittingly unleash it upon all the villagers. Don Manuel decides that the only way to stop Lázaro is to tear away the illusion and show him the full extent of the Dionysian void, what Nietzsche describes as “das ungeheure Grausen, . . . welches den Menschen ergreift, wenn er plötzlich an den Erkenntnisformen der Erscheinung irre wird”\(^ {172} \) (“the enormous horror which seizes people when they suddenly . . . lose faith in the cognitive forms of the phenomenal world”).\(^ {173} \) The priest thus converts him to the Dionysian dichotomy of life and death and metaphorically kills him in the process. Once don Manuel, Lázaro, and—eventually—Ángela die, the villagers are left in the Apollonian world, with the beatified San Manuel to continue the illusion. There remains the possibility, though, that someone will once again break through the veil and face the terrifying contradiction of Dionysian death and life.

Readings of San Manuel Bueno, mártir are enriched when the reader looks to both Nietzsche and Euripides for intertextual understanding. Nietzsche’s philosophy sheds light on the source of don Manuel’s motivations for playing the part of a priest when he no longer believes in an afterlife. His awareness of the Dionysian void of death grants him a superabundance of life, and the Catholic creeds allow his existential knowledge an Apollonian expression for his parishioners. Three of the more troubling pericopes that comprise the narrative take on new significance as aspects of Dionysian worship. Don Manuel is no longer an eccentric priest who condones drunkenness, dancing, and theater, but a Dionysian priest who knows how such

\(^ {172} \) Nietzsche, \textit{Die Geburt der Tragödie}, 24.
\(^ {173} \) Nietzsche, \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, 17.
activities engender a fuller life. And Lázaro’s passionate conversion to don Manuel’s cause can be traced back to Euripides’ Pentheus; he is compelled to acknowledge the power of the Dionysian contradiction of life and death. Overall, an account of the novella’s classical intertexts greatly enriches its interpretation.
Chapter 4: Reception

The methods discussed thus far have assumed a historical basis for the connection between myth and usage, that it was the author’s intention to draw on classical myth (adaptation) or that he subconsciously or unwittingly acted as a transmitter of the classical tradition (intertextuality). Reader response theory, by contrast, assumes that “meaning . . . is always realized at the point of reception.”\(^{174}\) It is the reader who receives the work and must interpret it, thus shifting focus away from authorial intent, considering “each moment of transmission as involving complex transformations, resulting in a plurality of ‘traditions’.”\(^{175}\) With no single correct interpretation of a myth or its receiving text, scholars are able to explore more possibilities in meaning. And like intertextuality, reception does not require the text to name its connection to classical myth. Instead the scholar as reader can make this connection in the analysis.

Reception assumes that the author and reader create meaning together, their interaction mediated through the text. While the text places limits on feasible interpretations, it is not so restrictive that only one reading is possible. Instead the reader brings to the text a “horizon of expectations” determined by what texts he has read before and by his own life experiences. It is through this lens that a reader interprets a text, therefore every reader produces a slightly different reading.

There are two main methods of reception criticism in Classics: the first attempts to reconstruct an author’s reading of a classical text and how the author encoded this reading into a


new artistic work (i.e. Dante’s reading of Vergil, as portrayed in the Comedia). This approach has much in common with the adaptation method described in chapter one, and answers the question, “How did an author interpret a myth while writing?” The second method allows the critic to read a myth into a modern text; she uses the myth as an interpretive lens to create new meaning, eliding any potential historical connection between the ancient and modern texts. This method answers the question “How would this text appear through a classicist’s eyes?” There is a great deal of tension between the two methods and no shortage of debate around the issue, as Paul notes in the study of Classics in film:

   The theoretical point on which this issue seems to turn is, in fact, the location – the ‘point’ – of the very process of reception . . . Do we understand ‘the point of reception’ to be located in the film’s reading of the classical past, or to be pushed back a stage into the reader (viewer) of the film? Or is it simultaneously in both? Christopher McQuarrie (The Usual Suspects’ scriptwriter) may not have thought of his film as a reception of Homer, but if [the scholar] Roisman reads Homer into it, does it then constitute a classical reception? This is a live issue for reception study in general, but it is particularly pertinent for a number of films which, by seeming to flaunt some kind of relationship to antiquity, lure the classicists in, only for them to find themselves tangled in a movie whose relationship to the ancient past is characterized by a complex mix of ambiguity, authenticity, and evasion.176

I would argue that both methods are valid, but that a scholar should make clear which method she is using. When she is making an argument about reception at the point of the author, historical evidence becomes necessary because she is making a historical claim about what the author thought during the creative process. When she is writing about reception at the point of

---

the reader, historical evidence is not necessary because she is instead inviting others to look at the modern text from a new angle (through comparison with classical myth), which highlights new patterns and aspects of the text that would not otherwise be apparent.

*Reception at Point of the Author*

Understanding how an author receives a text is similar in methodology to adaptation and represents a shift in focus rather than substance. Instead of conceptualizing two texts (the hypertext and the hypotext) and their relationship, reception emphasizes the author *as a reader* of an earlier text, and the new text as a byproduct and evidence of his reading. As Harold Bloom states, “Let us pursue instead the quest of learning to read any poem as its poet’s deliberate misinterpretation, *as a poet,* of a precursor poem or of poetry in general.”177 This assumes that each author/reader will have a unique interpretation of the classical myth and that a scholar cannot assume that the ancient or “canonical” interpretation was what the author had in mind when writing a new work. This is especially true because the standard interpretation of ancient works shifts through time and place; Vergil’s portrayal of Aeneas’ ambitions towards empire, for example, would have very different readings in 18th-century colonizing England and 21st-century post-colonial South Africa.

The scholar’s task is to reconstruct the creative process and historical context which led to the author’s interpretation of a classical myth, which was in turn re-written into a new text. As this method is most often employed on texts where the connection to a classical myth is clearly stated and not in question, scholars instead focus on why such a myth would have an artistic appeal to the author at that given point in history. As Jauss explains,

---

The reconstruction of the horizon of expectations, in the face of which a work was created and received in the past, enables one . . . to pose questions that the text gave an answer to, and thereby to discover how the contemporary reader could have viewed and understood the work.  

For example, Jean Anouilh chose the myth of Sophocles’ *Antigone* to explore the resistance of tyranny during the Nazi occupation of France. The pressing questions of the time period become essential to understanding the author’s interpretation of myth.

What steps can a scholar take when examining an author’s reading? Jorge Luis Borges plays with this idea of reception theory in his fictional short story “Pierre Menard,” where an author attempts to re-write the *Quixote* word for word but through his own semantic filter. His first attempt, however, was to recreate the novel through Cervantes’ perspective: “The initial method he conceived was relatively simple: to know Spanish well, re-embrace the Catholic faith, to fight against Moors or the Turk, to forget European history between 1602 and 1918, and to *be* Miguel de Cervantes.” This is, of course, impossible to do, so the fictional Menard quickly abandons it as paradoxically too easy and less interesting than pursuing his own reading of the *Quixote*. Scholars who attempt Menard’s first method may be met with skepticism, for their task of reconstructing the author’s reading is likewise impossible—even perfectly reconstructing one’s own earlier reading cannot be done since the self who read the book before has since changed. Yet impossibility has never stopped the quixotic endeavors of scholars, and while those seeking to reconstruct an author’s reading may never achieve objective certainty, they can at least uncover and add historical factors to the interpretive mix.

---

Borges’ ironic process is in reality a good start. Scholars are capable of partially (though not completely) compartmentalizing their information of what transpired in history after an author wrote and using contemporary historical sources to understand the general political and social climate of the time. Journals, letters, and essays also aid the scholar in reconstructing the author’s opinions, which in turn can help understand why a particular myth was relevant to the author’s new text. This reconstructed author becomes an interpretive lens to understand the mythic usage; but as Kallendorf notes, “The recreated reader-author . . . can merge with the author as actual reader if relevant external evidence . . . can be found.”180 Notes scrawled in the margins of the author’s personal copies of classical texts or his writings about the myths can allow for a more certain understanding of the author’s usage. Beyond this, the scholar must rely on similar methods of adaptation and allusion to understand how a myth operates in the text:

The critic, the second reader, works backwards and recreates this process as he or she is able to understand it, reading the second text and coming to a preliminary idea about what it means, then noticing a relationship to an earlier text that the author could have known, then going back and forth between the two to reconstruct the author’s reading of the first text on the basis of the allusions and what they appear to reveal.181

While Kallendorf supports Jauss’ idea of reconstructing the author’s horizon of expectations, Martindale has opposed it (or at least qualified it), noting that scholars are also readers and therefore subject to the same subjective interpretations of both the ancient work and the author’s text. He views reception as a way of escaping positivist assertions, denying that there is only one correct interpretation of ancient texts, and warns that scholars might make the same mistaken

180 Kallendorf, “Allusion as Reception,” 69.
181 ibid, 68.
assumption when examining a later author’s usage of classical myth.\textsuperscript{182} To the extent that all scholarship is subjective, as postmodern critics have shown, Martindale is correct. Yet reconstructing the author’s reading (a reading of a reading) is still a valuable interpretive tool when taken \textit{cum grano salis}. While each reader brings a new interpretation to a text, the author had his own interpretation while he was composing it. Understanding what that interpretation was, both of the classical myth and the process of incorporating it into a new text, adds to the collective understanding and scholarship on the text, even though later readers’ subsequent interpretations are no less valid.

\textit{Reception at the Point of the Scholar}

The second form of reception assumes that the meaning of the text is located in the scholar’s reading of the receiving text. Rather than objectively uncovering a historical meaning from the author’s reading or analyzing the text exegetically, the scholar can instead create meaning with equal value to the author’s original intent. As Bloom has noted: “There are no interpretations but only misinterpretations, and so all criticism is prose poetry.”\textsuperscript{183} Barthes likewise states, “There are no more critics, only writers.”\textsuperscript{184} A scholarly essay is therefore merely one more step in the creative process that shapes meaning, as inventive as the text it analyzes.

When scholars are no longer conceptualized as commentators, but as authors in their own right, they are just as influential as the original author in shaping the meaning of a text:

\textsuperscript{183} Bloom, \textit{The Anxiety of Influence}, 95.
The literary historian who classifies a work in its tradition and explains it historically are first simply readers before their reflexive relationship to literature can become productive again. In the triangle of author, work, and public the last is no passive part, no chain of mere reactions, but rather itself an energy formative of history.¹⁸⁵

Some have misgivings about such a method because they are accustomed to making substantiated historical claims to truth. They might worry they are committing the unpardonable sin of eisegesis, distorting the receiving text and reading into it what is not there, or that their analysis lacks academic rigor. But reception is less concerned with positivist assertions and more about the creative process of reading. It asks a different question from a text: if the horizon of expectations is replete with classical myths, how does this alter the reading of a text? How would a classicist read this text differently than one who does not have the myths in their personal repertoire? “Criticism then necessarily becomes . . . a series of swerves after unique acts of creative misunderstanding.”¹⁸⁶

With this method, the scholar pairs a modern text with a classical myth without any need to prove explicit, historical, or paratextual connections. The myth selection is often based on a “resonance” similar to that discussed with intertextuality; the scholar instinctively identifies similarities in plot, theme, symbolism, or character types. The story patterns in the myth (or rather, the story patterns which the scholar as a reader has read into the myth) become the framework for analyzing the modern text. Elizabeth Manwell employed such a method when comparing the animated film Brave (2012), in which the princess Merida transforms her mother into a bear, with the ancient female initiation rituals at Brauron, in which young women dress up as bears:

¹⁸⁵ Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, 19.
¹⁸⁶ Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 93.
There is no explicit connection between the Greek tales of girls and bears and the story that features in *Brave*; . . . Yet the resonances between these two sets of tales are provocative. In this section I set the tale of Merida alongside ancient Greek tales and rituals that link girlhood and bearhood, not because one is influenced by the other but rather because I think that Merida’s tale may offer us a new lens through which to examine a perplexing set of ancient stories and experiences.187

Here the theme of young women passing into adulthood and the symbolism of bears are present in both the ancient and the modern world, making the two ripe for comparison.

It is only when the modern text is viewed through the lens of a myth that certain patterns become visible. When the scholar overlays the mythic narrative, disparate aspects of the modern text may now appear connected through the mythic schema. Plot points or character traits that once seemed insignificant or relegated to the background now pop to the foreground because they deviate from the expected mythic patterns. Thus a scholar can create new, intriguing interpretations of texts that would otherwise be overlooked.

Reception also has the added benefit of forcing the scholar to re-examine the classical myth in light of the modern text. Because meaning is not located in objective, chronological history, but rather in the mind of the reader, modern usages of myth can also anachronistically influence the meaning of their classical antecedents. Influence then does not only flow from past to present, but from present to past. Martindale was among the first to note this in the field of classics, saying, “Homer has been changed for us by Virgil and Milton, who have left their traces in his text, and thereby enabled new possibilities of meaning.”188 Since then others have noted

---

187 Elizabeth A. Manwell, “Girls in Bear’s Clothing in Greek Myth and Disney/Pixar’s *Brave*,” in *Classical Traditions in Modern Fantasy*, 257.

that “the relationship between ancient and modern is reciprocal,”\textsuperscript{189} that “modern acts of reception challenge linear notions of time,”\textsuperscript{190} that usages “resists the easy linear structures of straightforward readings of ‘influence’ that seem to presume a greater value in whatever comes first,”\textsuperscript{191} and that reception “may subtly reinflect [ancient texts’] meaning . . . [as] the effect of influence is less bound by the laws of physics.”\textsuperscript{192} The same similarities and differences with the modern text can highlight new patterns in the ancient myth, allowing for new interpretations in even the most picked-over ground.

This method makes no claim to historical connections, but the interpretations it forms are just as “correct” as those obtained through more conventional means; as Jauss explains, “even when in the end significance apparently ‘springs out’ on its own, it nonetheless presupposes hermeneutically a preconception, however often unadmitted.”\textsuperscript{193} Therefore even traditionally historical interpretations of texts and influences contain subconscious subjective elements. The evidence from the text is always unintelligible until a reader shapes it into an interpretation. To use a classical myth as a starting point in this shaping process is just as valid as using historical records.

There are limits to reception, however. While theoretically any myth can be paired with any text, some myths work far better for certain texts than others. When a myth is matched with a text that has little to no thematic points of connection, the comparison will feel forced. The text as a concrete and fixed object provides a counterweight to fanciful comparisons, as the evidence that arises from it can only be stretched so far before becoming strained. If the scholar exceeds

\footnotesize{
\textsuperscript{190} Barbara Graziosi, “The Ancient Reception of Homer,” in \textit{A Companion to Classical Receptions}, 27.
\textsuperscript{191} Sanders, \textit{Adaptation and Appropriation}, 159.
\textsuperscript{192} Brown, “‘Plato’s Stepchildren’,” 416.
\textsuperscript{193} Jauss, \textit{Toward an Aesthetic of Reception}, 110.
}
the horizon of expectations set forth by the text, receptive interpretation is less effective, as Jauss explains:

As long as the interpreter claims to make concrete a specific coherence of significance from out of the horizon of meaning of this text, and would not, for example, exercise the license of allegoresis to translate the meaning of the text into a foreign context, that is, to give it a significance transcending the horizon of meaning and thereby the intentionality of the text. The interpretation of a poetic text always presupposes aesthetic perception as its pre-understanding; it may only concretize significances that appeared or could have appeared possible to the interpreter within the horizon of his preceding reading.¹⁹⁴

A good rule of thumb is to treat the mythic overlay as scaffolding to an interpretation rather than integral to its structure. Once the scholar gains new insights and connections through comparison with a classical myth, she should be able to remove all references to the myth and still have a coherent argument based on evidence from the modern text.

As long as scholars do not try to overextend their claims to either historicism or allegory, reception can be a useful analytical tool which allows for imaginative readings outside the normal scope of traditional interpretations. It taps into the wealth of texts stored within the reader’s mind, since “the literary academic or student reads many texts throughout their learning career and the more texts they read the more echoes, parallels, and points of comparison they identify in the texts they encounter.”¹⁹⁵ Key interpretations created through the mythic lens that would otherwise be invalid under the requirements of adaptation, allusion, or even intertextuality are now able to enrich the understanding of readers when they encounter a modern text.

¹⁹⁴ ibid. 142.
¹⁹⁵ Sanders, Adaptation and Appropriation, 1.
Example: The Death of Persephone in El laberinto del fauno

Guillermo del Toro’s *El laberinto del fauno* (2006) is a rich intertextual film that combines fairy tales, Spanish history, children’s literature, mythology, film homages, and the director’s own nightmares. Set in the aftermath of the Spanish civil war, it follows the struggle between a fascist military outpost and the remnant of resistance fighters in the woods, focalized through the fascist captain’s step-daughter Ofelia. The young girl, who is fascinated with fairy tales, meets a faun in a nearby ancient labyrinth. The creature sets her on dangerous trials to prove her worth and reclaim her place as the princess of a magical subterranean kingdom. Typical of the ambiguity of magical realism, it is never clear if the magic is a product of Ofelia’s imagination or a very real and secret underworld. At the end of the film Captain Vidal shoots his own step-daughter, but she appears to enter the mythic other world as she dies.

The very title of the film acknowledges two classical sources: Daedalus’ labyrinth which housed the minotaur and the frisky goat-men of the Italian wilds (and their Greek counterparts the satyrs). But instead of analyzing the explicit classical references, I will examine the film through the lens of the Persephone myth. I make no claim that this myth had any direct or indirect influence on del Toro while he made the film, but I will instead use the myth as a framework for understanding the theme of Death in the story. Like Persephone, Ofelia confronts death and remains in the underworld to rule. Her subjective, magical world-view allows the viewer to confront the difficult past through a narrative lens while her self-sacrifice allows for Spain to heal from the horrors of its civil war.

---

196 Guillermo del Toro, *El laberinto del fauno* (New York: The Criterion Collection, 2016), Blu-Ray. Subsequent quotations are from the film unless otherwise noted.
Of particular interest are the fairy tales Ofelia reads to herself, which in turn introduce the fantastic world around her. Ofelia never becomes directly involved in the political struggle which engulfs the adults; she never smuggles supplies to the rebels hiding in the woods or spies on her step-father, as the servant Mercedes does. Instead her contribution is one of commentary through storytelling; her magical adventures place the adults’ violent struggle into a larger, allegorical context.\(^{197}\) I will focus my analysis on these fairy tales, what new meanings become apparent when compared to the Persephone story, and how they fit thematically into the historical narrative of the film.

Both stories use a flower as a call-to-action at the beginning of the narrative. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Gaia creates a flower to lure Persephone; when she takes hold of the wondrous gift, the earth opens up and Hades drags her to the underworld. The flower’s beauty is real, but it causes Persephone’s figurative death as Hades abducts her into the realm of the dead. She becomes the literal bride of Death, a common motif in classical culture to describe a maiden who died before her time. Picking the flower is the impetus for the story.

Ofelia likewise creates a flower for her unborn brother’s bedtime story, one that grants immortality but is surrounded by venomous thorns. It thus represents a paradox: eternal life can only be reached by passing through death. No one dares approach it, so it remains “olvidada y perdida, en la cima de aquella montaña de piedra fría, sola, hasta el fin de los tiempos” [forgotten and lost, on the top of that mountain of cold rock, alone, until the end of time]. In contrast to Persephone’s flower, which she picks immediately, Ofelia’s story offers an alternate version where the incredible flower is never picked. The heroine’s story cannot begin until the flower is taken, but to pick it is to die. The same night Ofelia tells her story, a fairy leads her to the

\(^{197}\) Keith McDonald and Roger Clark, *Guillermo Del Toro: Film as Alchemic Art* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 72.
labyrinth to meet the faun and begin her quest. She, at least, is willing to risk the thorns and pass through death.

This story serves as a commentary on the rebels’ ongoing fight against fascism and the more general issue of risking death for a better life. Both Mercedes and the doctor, who work for Vidal but secretly aid the rebels with supplies and medicine, wonder if they are cowards for not confronting the captain more directly, or if they have already taken too great a risk with their clandestine defiance and will soon be killed. Their talk is an echo of Ofelia’s story: “Entre los hombres sólo se hablaba del miedo a la muerte y al dolor pero nunca de la promesa de la inmortalidad” [Among men only fear of death and of pain were spoken of, but never the promise of immortality]. The rebels never talk about winning, only about fighting and the inevitability of their death. They have no hope of a free and democratic Spain, the equivalent of the eternal life that the flower offers, but they fight anyway. In the original script, Ofelia’s story was more explicitly didactic: “Porque en los hombres pesaba más el miedo al dolor que la promesa de la inmortalidad”198 [Because fear of pain weighed more heavily on men than the promise of immortality]. Ofelia, however, for all her fear and despair, does have hope that she will pass into a magical underground “donde no existe la mentira ni el dolor” [where there is no lying nor pain]. Her youth and naivete grant her the optimism that the adults lack, and she is able to convey that hope through her stories, just as the director conveys hope through the story of the film.

Picking the flower leads to Persephone’s figurative death, but it also makes her queen of the underworld; Ofelia similarly sets out on her quest and dies but becomes a princess in the underground kingdom. To put it into the terms of her flower story, the poisoned thorns kill her,

but she still manages to reach the flower of immortality. And on a historical level, the rebels all
die in their conflict with the far more powerful fascist government, but eventually achieve a
democratic Spain decades in the future. Death then serves as a portal to something better, if only
the protagonists have the courage to pass through it.

In this quest, the faun serves both the role of psychopomp and Hades figure as an
ambiguous guide. Although Ofelia immediately trusts the imposing faun, the audience is never
certain whether he is friend or foe.\textsuperscript{199} Mercedes draws on folklore tradition and warns Ofelia,
saying, “Pues mi abuela decía que con los faunos hay que andarse con cuidado” [Well, my
grandmother would say that one must tread carefully with fauns]. Jack Zipes notes that the
“trustworthiness of the faun, who is immense and weird-looking, ancient and sphinxlike, is
clearly meant to be ambiguous; he appears to be kind and gentle sometimes and mean and
menacing at other times.”\textsuperscript{200} What makes him in part disturbing is his looming and brutish
figure; it hints at a violent masculinity prepared to pounce on the naïve and helpless young girl
when she is alone in the labyrinth or her bedroom. Fauns and satyrs, after all, are known for their
excessive concupiscence, which makes the faun of the film “a much more problematic,
transgressive and potentially dangerous character, forever on the edge of sexual maturity.”\textsuperscript{201}
While he never does cross a sexual line with Ofelia, he does lead her to the underworld through
her own death. This recalls Hades, who rapes Persephone (in the sense of both kidnap and sexual
assault) and brings her to the underworld, effectively killing her. Yet he also makes her a
powerful queen over the dead, as the faun makes Ofelia a princess in her underground kingdom.

\textsuperscript{199} María Gil Poisa, “¿Qué es un fantasma? Trauma pasado y fantasía en el cine contemporáneo sobre la Guerra
\textsuperscript{200} Jack Zipes, “Pan’s Labyrinth (El laberinto del fauno) (review),” \textit{Journal of American Folklore} 121, no. 480
(Spring 2008): 238.
\textsuperscript{201} McDonald and Clark, \textit{Guillermo Del Toro}, 45.
This reinforces the theme of death as an ambiguous force in life, one that is dangerous but also powerful.

The Pale Man is another incarnation of death: his pallor is that of a corpse, his frame is skeletal, and even his name evokes the pale horse of Revelations upon which Death rides. The sagging folds of his skin hint at an insatiable, ravenous hunger, while the pile of children’s shoes that Ofelia spies in his chamber are a testament to the many he has consumed before her. The pile also “alludes to the various Holocaust depictions of piles of victims’ clothing,” another connection with the destruction of fascism. In this way the Pale Man/Death is an obsessive consumer of lives. The only other figure in the film with a similar violent death count is the fascist Captain Vidal, which makes him an even worse monster.

The interdiction Ofelia receives for this task maps well onto Persephone’s story. As the faun is careful to explain, “Vereís un lujoso banquete. No comaís ni bebaís nada de él mientras estaís allí. Absolutamente nada—Os va la vida en ello” [You will see a luxurious banquet. You will not eat or drink anything from it while you are there. Absolutely nothing—Your life depends on it]. Ofelia, like all fairy tale protagonists, ignores the warning and eats two grapes; as a result the monster awakens and attempts to eat her, but she escapes. Persephone may likewise only leave the underworld if she has not eaten anything while there. She violates the taboo and can therefore leave the land of the dead for only a time. Ofelia’s escape from Death, like Persephone’s, is temporary. Just as the goddess must return to the underworld at the end of summer, Ofelia will die and return to her underground realm at the end of the film. As the faun said, her life depends on not eating, and her disobedience to the faun, mirrored in her

---

202 Rev. 6:8.
disobedience to Vidal, results in her eventual demise. The audience knows from the opening shot of Ofelia bleeding on the ground that she is destined to die, and it is only a question of when and how.

However, this death becomes a necessary sacrifice to continue a cycle of rebirth. A major part of the Persephone myth is its etiological explanation for the seasons. When Persephone is taken into the underworld each winter, her mother Demeter withers the world’s plants in sorrow. With Persephone’s return in the spring, the world once again becomes verdant and fertile. Humans depend on her figurative resurrection from the land of the dead, since their food supply is linked to her return. Ofelia also goes through a series of deaths and rebirths. She is presumably born in the underground kingdom (paradoxically born into death), then escapes to the surface world (comes to life), where she dies and is reborn as a human. She then dies but is reanimated in the underground kingdom where she rules for many centuries. Presumably she dies again after that. This series of births and deaths—as well as crossing in and out of the underworld during the film proper—links her to Persephone. She moves between the world of the dead and the living, the magical and the mundane. However, Persephone brings life by resurrecting each spring, while Ofelia brings healing by passing back into the underworld through death. She must pass down into the earth at the roots of the tree to kill the toad, down into the underground lair of the Pale Man to retrieve the sacrificial dagger, and finally pour her own blood into the subterranean heart of the labyrinth to open the portal to her father’s underworld kingdom. Death becomes essential to moving the fairy-tale world forward, just as the rebels’ sacrifice moves Spain past the stagnation of fascism.

Ofelia’s first task is especially one of restoring fertility for the benefit of others. She reads the mythic history of a tree she must heal from her story book:

At the beginning of time, when the forest was young, animals, men and magical creatures lived together in harmony. They protected one another and slept together under the shade of a leafy tree. Now the tree is dying. Beneath its roots has nested an enormous toad that does not let it heal.

In Ofelia’s tale the different factions lived together in harmony, and the tree they slept under becomes a symbol of this peace. With the death of the tree, it is implied that the former harmony is also fading, that the different creatures no longer protect one another and instead are either self-centered or outright hostile. The parallels with Spain become apparent in the real-world violence; her adventure with the tree and toad are intercut with scenes of Vidal’s first foray into the forest to an abandoned rebel campsite. The country had a time of peace and unity before the civil war, but this antebellum harmony has ended and the two factions are at war. Although the fascist government gained control, Spain still was not healing into unity. The brutality and monolithic nature of fascism made any reconciliation impossible. The tree, as a symbol of Spain’s harmony, cannot bloom while the poisonous toad of fascism sits at its roots.

Ofelia defeats the toad, and the final shot of the film is of a white flower blooming on the tree, demonstrating that she successfully healed it. The voice-over narration reveals, “dejó detrás de sí pequeñas huellas de su paso por el mundo visibles sólo para aquél que sepa dónde mirar” [she left behind her small traces of her passing through the world, visible only for those who know where to look]. Her repeated forays into the underworld allow her to fix what others
cannot. While her impact is clearer in the mythic world, it is more difficult to discern her influence in the historical parallel. The other characters are unaware of her interventions or openly scoff at them as childish imaginations. However, the audience knows and understands the significance of her quest; it is they who listen to Ofelia’s fairy tales. She must die both at the beginning and the end of the film in order to resurrect the memory of the civil war, to relive the conflict in all its gore through storytelling. After a decades-long taboo on this dark moment of Spain’s history, Ofelia’s experiences and narrative reconstruct the events and present them naked in their brutality, “exhuming that which has been hidden and silenced.”206 Rather than bringing spring back from the underworld, Ofelia brings dark memories that must be confronted. The film offers itself as a healing balm to the viewers, reminding them that their current peace is purchased with blood, and that historical divides can fester when left unchecked.

These thematic points concerning death, though already present in the film, take on new meaning when ordered through the Persephone myth. Death is inevitable, but ultimately ennobling. It is a sacrifice that requires courage but allows for a larger reshaping of narrative and perspective that can bring healing. While it would be a mistake to think of Ofelia solely as a Persephone figure and discount other aspects of her character, nevertheless it is useful to focus on these similarities (and differences) to illuminate both del Toro’s film and the ancient myth. Reception at the point of the scholar allows for this new reading to take shape.

Chapter 5: Typology

Typology takes many variants of a narrative and combines them into an abstraction against which new texts of the same type are compared. While other methods of analysis compare texts directly, typology acknowledges that much interpretation occurs through subconscious and imprecise abstractions. I have mentioned something similar in previous chapters; a nebulous “essence” can be found in both the classical and the new text that allows the reader to instinctively identify the two texts as related. This is the mind’s reflexive mechanism to understand the new in terms of the familiar; it compresses individual narratives into repetitive patterns, or in other words, as types. As Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich explains: “The idea of some basic scaffolding or armature that determines the ‘essence’ of things, reflects our need for a schema with which to grasp the infinite variety of this world of change.”207 Once a scholar becomes aware of his own typology, he can use it as an analytical tool to draw new connections between texts. As Roland Barthes succinctly states, “The analysis seeks to establish a narrative model—which is evidently formal—, a structure or grammar of narrative, on the basis of which (once this model, structure, or grammar has been discovered) each particular narrative will be analysed in terms of divergences.”208

Typology works somewhat differently than other methods thus far explored. Adaptation, allusion, and intertextuality all flow chronologically from ancient sources into later works. Reception, for all that it does not require historical links between the author and an ancient source, is still the reader’s deliberate comparison of a specific ancient text with a later work. With typology, however, all works are treated as ahistorical, where the ancient text and the

---

modern novel are contemporaries in the present mind of the reader. To quote Iser, “in the time-flow of the reading process, past and future continually converge in the present moment, and the synthesizing operations of the wandering viewpoint enable the text to pass through the reader’s mind as an ever-expanding network of connections.”

Classical myths are decentralized as only one more point of many, which are organized around an abstract idea. This gives a more accurate description of the subjective reading experience in the mind of the reader by comparing a gestalt type to a specific text rather than the objective, historical process of chronological influence.

Problems with Past Typological Approaches

Typology was more popular in the mid-20th century before the advent of deconstruction and poststructuralism, which led to many scholars discounting it because they saw it as a biased system of analysis which was unaware of its own lack of objectivity. Many were and are skeptical of efforts to create a “master narrative” for types. Carl Jung, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Northrop Frye all strove to discover a universal underlying structure to mythology and literature, but poststructuralist critics have called their methods into question. The primary criticisms are that typological structures are ahistorical, ignore significant differences between texts in favor of their similarities, and are interested only in advancing the master narrative at the expense of individual works. For Jauss, who emphasized the connection between literature and history, the ahistorical process was particularly egregious:

For Lévi-Strauss every work of art is completely explicable through its function within the secondary system of reference of society; every act of speech is reduced to a combinatory element in a primary system of signs; all meaning and individualization merges

---

into an anonymous, subjectless system, establishing the priority of a spontaneous natural order over any historical process.\textsuperscript{210}

If one desires an objective underlying structure, this critique is valid. Once a scholar has developed an interpretive system which he believes to have arisen naturally and without artifice from the texts themselves, the system remains inflexible and all contradictory variants of a type must be made to conform to his schema, oftentimes resulting in truly bizarre contortions to achieve the desired results. If evidence cannot be reconciled to the whole, it is discounted with no explanation as to why it could not fit into the organizational structure, which does not take into account historical transformations of types nor allows for adaptations in the analytical model. This presents a serious obstacle to claims of a universal, objective organizing principle. This was also a criticism of Frye’s work, whose approach “effaces differences in favour of transhistorical patterns and hermetically seals off literature from the world.”\textsuperscript{211} Types are therefore more subjective than objective, with only limited grounding in historical reality.

However, if one desires not an objective system but a description of the subjective organizing principles that occur during the reading process, typology can be a useful analytical tool. Even though they are not historically objective or universal constants, they nonetheless do function in literature as repeated and communicable patterns. Types remain a recognizable bundle of signifiers that are able to communicate an agreed-upon (though openly ambiguous) series of meanings. Rather than understand types as a naturally occurring pattern, it is more useful to see them as cultural constructs that guide the individual in interpreting newly encountered texts. As such, types are not rigid, unchanging universals but flexible, adaptive, and pliant. They are not pre-formed but are learned and constantly developing through life-long

\textsuperscript{210} Jauss, \textit{Toward an Aesthetic of Reception}, 67.
reading. The works that are excluded from the formation of a type are done on an individual and cultural basis. Each individual or culture decides what to include in the type and what to exclude, since the processes of categorization are unique. It makes no claim to universality but is a product of the individual’s reading history. Rather than insist on conformity and similarities, the differences between an individual work and its abstract type are just as important and revealing. This is in keeping with Genette’s concept of transtextuality, which focuses on the ever-changing relationship between text and the larger network of texts, which produces meaning.²¹² This allows for a permeable and fluid typology that nonetheless remains consistent enough to function as a reference tool for understanding the relationships between classical myths and other similar stories.

By drawing on Iser’s reader response theory to create a more malleable and individualized typology, scholars are able to use this method to compare classical myths to many other similar texts at once. Typology seeks to articulate the subconscious abstractions and amalgamations that occur regularly when people read. While each individual does this slightly differently, humans have enough in common, especially when they share a common culture such as the western classical tradition, to make individuals’ types mutually intelligible. Based on this more subjective approach, typology can be employed towards fruitful analysis without the drawbacks of earlier structuralist constraints.

---

In order to discuss types, a distinction must be made between the collective abstract type and the individual texts that comprise it. Just as Saussure observes how “language stands in opposition to utterance in the same way as does that which is social to that which is individual,”\(^{213}\) types are the general rule that govern the content of individual texts, which in turn are “utterances” of the type. To a young child, the individual text of a type is unintelligible, just as the culturally-specific text is unintelligible to a foreigner. In order to make meaning out of a text, one must place it within a larger typological structure, but these type-structures must first be constructed in the mind through exposure to multiple texts of the same type. A text in isolation is nonsensical, but after the reader encounters three or four similar texts, his mind begins to form patterns from the similarities. Eventually these patterns solidify into a type, a loose bundle of perceived similarities that the reader expects to be universal for all texts that can be categorized together. Once the type is so familiar that the reader no longer registers it as unusual, the type structure has established itself as part of the subconscious reading process, and the reader can be said to be fluent in this type. This is part of the process of mastering a language and a culture.

However, this process of categorization is subjective rather than scientific. It is here that Lévi-Strauss erred, believing that if a sufficient number of utterances were gathered, then the differences between them would fall away and that an underlying master type-structure would emerge as self-evident. Instead, the individual mind constructs types, both in the selection of texts to include in the type as well as how those texts are organized within the typological structure, meaning that Lévi-Strauss’ structure is more a reflection of his own mind’s work.

instead of a universal truism, no matter how many data points or myths he places into it. As Iser points out,

Consistency-building itself is not an illusion-making process, but consistency comes about through gestalt groupings, and these contain traces of illusion in so far as their closure—since it is based on selection—is not a characteristic of the text itself, but only represents a configurative meaning . . . It is the reader who unfolds the network of possible connections, and it is the reader who then makes a selection from that network.²¹⁴

Therefore, despite the subjective nature of types, their relative consistency in the reader’s mind is essential for meaning-making in the reading process. This conceptual shift from objective to subjective structure validates typological thinking.

Types do not hold a reified existence. As Barthes notes, types as narrative codes “are simply associative fields, a supra-textual organization of notations which impose a certain idea of structure; the instance of the code is, for us, essentially cultural.”²¹⁵ They are the summation of many different discrete utterances that are organized in the human mind. Or as Iser stated: “We do not grasp it like an empirical object; nor do we comprehend it like a predicative fact; it owes its presence in our minds to our own reactions, and it is these that make us animate the meaning of the text as a reality.”²¹⁶ To use another analogy, texts can be likened to projectors set up in a circle, all projecting different images onto the same central spot. The images overlap and create a composite image that cannot exist without the continued individual projections. If many of the projectors display the same or a very similar image, that part of the composite projection will become clearer and appear more solid. Where the images differ, the composite projection is

²¹⁴ Iser, The Act of Reading, 124, 126.
²¹⁶ Iser, The Act of Reading, 129.
blurred. In the same way, individual texts exist discretely, but project a gestalt type in the mind of a reader. The form of the type depends on the individual texts that comprise it. Repeated plot points, characters, and themes will become a clear aspect of the type, while variations will be marginalized. Thus, types hold only a theoretical existence dependent on concrete texts.

After the type has been established in the reader’s mind, it is paradoxically stable and in constant flux. When a reader encounters a new text, he uses the pre-existing type in his mind to understand it. Points of similarity to the type he has already developed strengthen the existing type, like ruts carved out by the passage of many wheels. However, the points of contrast destabilize the type. The reader must either ignore these differences, relegating them to the periphery of the type,217 or incorporate them into the type, which will restructure the concept he has developed in his mind. As Iser explains, this process of “the reader’s incorporation of the text into his own treasure-house of experience . . . [is an] aesthetic effect [which] results in a restructuring of experience.”218 On occasion a reader will encounter a text so radically different than his type that it will shatter existing patterns and reconfigure the type around the new text. This can be positive (epiphany and transcendence) or negative (existential crisis). The meaning of all previous texts that make up the type will also change based on their new position in the typological structure. But this type of drastic reconfiguration is far less common than the usually gradual process of type modification. Normally a reader will encounter texts with only slight variations from his typological schema, and the changes to his type are so minor that he does not notice the alteration. Over time these small changes can create large alterations in the type, but the gradual nature of the process gives the illusion of stable, consistent types:

217 “But selection automatically involves exclusion, and that which has been excluded remains on the fringes as a potential range of connections.” Iser, The Act of Reading, 126. Even though some texts are marginalized, they still exert an influence on the formation of the type.
Our image is therefore constantly shifting, and every image we have is duly restructured by each of its successors . . . the facets appear to clash, but we are then obliged to incorporate the new circumstances—which means retrospective changes to our past images . . . we do not try to seize upon one particular aspect, but we are made to view him as a synthesis of all aspects.219

Conceptualizing types as in flux allows for a more flexible analytical framework. Specific texts do not need to be mutilated to fit into a preconceived system, but can exist in contradictory terms alongside a reader’s current type. When the reader either places more weight to the significance of the discrepant text or he encounters enough similar contradictory examples, the entire structure of the type can shift. This enables a much broader scope than earlier structuralist conceptions because, as Barthes notes, reading “is observed not as a finished, closed product, but as a production in progress, ‘plugged in’ to other texts, other codes (this is the intertextual), and thereby articulated with society and history in ways which are not determinist but citational.”220

Not only do readers use types to understand texts, but authors draw on types to create texts in the first place. Explaining this process is difficult as the relation between text and type is ouroboric. The author draws on a pre-existing type to create a new text. The text in turn influences the cultural type, which will in turn spawn new texts as other authors draw on the type, and so on ad infinitum.

Performance theory is a useful means of understanding this relationship between the type and the author’s creation of new texts, since “texts and their readings can embody performance theory and practice.”221 Each type is like a script, while each reproduction of the type in the form

of a concretized text is a performance of the type. Yet as I have already discussed, the script is not static, but is altered in the very process of performing a new text. Thus, text and type mutually create each other. John Frow uses performance theory to explain genre, which functions in a similar way to typology: “Texts do not simply have uses which are mapped out in advance by the genre: they are themselves uses of genre, performances of or allusions to the norms and conventions which form them and which they may, in turn, transform.” This allows scholars to transition “to a more reflexive model in which texts are thought to use or to perform the genres by which they are shaped.” While texts rely on genre for form, they depend on types for content. In both cases larger cultural patterns govern the foundation of the text to which the author either conforms or rebels against.

Judith Butler likewise developed a theory of performativity to explain the cultural construction of gender, which functions in the same way as literary types. In many ways masculinity and femininity are specific types that are governed by the same principles of reflexive formation, which is

An expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this telopesis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.

 Literary types inscribe themselves onto the bodies of specific texts, which in turn become transmitters of the type in the creation of future texts. Types, like gender, are performatively,

---

holding no “natural” existence outside of humanity’s repetition and reenactment of what appears to be stable. Type gives rise to text, which gives rise to type. Although types appear to be the “origin and cause” of textual patterns, they are “in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin.”

In some ways, types are similar to Plato’s ideal forms. When an author wants to write a character, he draws on a type in his mind, mixing the abstract with concrete details to create a mimetic utterance of the type. All utterances of a type from the same author will have a common source. However, unlike the Platonic forms, types do not reside in a heavenly realm, but in the mind of each author. And while forms are unchanging constants, types are constantly changing. Each new utterance the author creates—as well as each utterance the author encounters as a reader—subtly (or radically) shifts the total composition of the type.

If types are formed in individual minds, how is it possible that types are mutually intelligible and communicable? If a type were wholly individualized, typology would be next to useless in analyzing usages of classical mythology because whatever system or structure a scholar develops would be incomprehensible to anyone else. The new text an author writes by drawing on types would likewise be nonsensical. Somehow each person’s type must be similar enough to others’ that they are able to communicate a semi-stable meaning.

It is useful to distinguish between an individual mind’s type and the collective cultural type. If the individual type is an abstracted gestalt of concrete texts, then the cultural type is a gestalt of individual types, an abstraction formed from many abstractions. It is an inversion of the Platonic form, where specific utterances are real and permanent and give rise to unstable abstract ideas. Types rely on communal knowledge to convey meaning, and “there are . . . particular bodies of texts and source material, such as myth . . . which by their very nature seem

224 Ibid., xxxi.
to depend on this communality of shared understanding and access . . . they participate in a very active way in a shared community of knowledge.” An author expects that he can produce an utterance from his personal understanding of a type and pass that utterance to the reader, who will place the utterance in her own type structure to interpret it.

Unfortunately, no two people ever have an identical conception of a type. Even if they were exposed to identical utterances, both through art and life experience, they would produce very similar but nonetheless minutely different typological concepts. Types shared within a culture (and some types which are shared across all human experiences) are similar enough to allow for communication. But types, like words, do not have a fixed meaning, which makes communication imperfect. As Gram Allen states, “Texts do not present clear and stable meanings; they embody society’s dialogic conflict over the meaning of words. If a novelist, for example, uses the words ‘natural’ or ‘artificial’ or ‘God’ or ‘justice’ they cannot help but incorporate into their novel society’s conflict over the meanings of those words.” An utterance attempts to convey an author’s concept of a type, but no utterance can ever hold an entire typological system, just as a word can never convey the full personalized connotation from the author to the reader. The meaning of a type is formed over years of coalescing utterances.

Likewise, the reader can only understand the utterance by receiving it into her own typological structure, which will necessarily alter the context of the utterance and its meaning. Thus, perfect typological communication is impossible.

However, the utterance still carries some of the author’s typology, and the structure of author and reader are similar enough that the reader will place the utterance into a similar position in her structure. Thus, the author succeeds in conveying a portion of his type. The

---

225 Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 58.
addition of the new utterance has now altered the total composition of the reader’s type, though not necessarily in the way that the author intended. This imperfect replication of types, however, allows for creative transformations; each new utterance is the result of an imperfectly communicated type.

Communication of types makes possible not only the creation and reading of new texts, but also allows scholars to outline their own typology and communicate it with others. This invites other scholars to momentarily organize their own typology in the same way in order to comprehend the new patterns that run through multiple texts that the scholar wishes to share. Typology can thus be employed as an analytical tool as well as a creative one.

Typology as Methodology

Usually types, as unconscious abstractions, function without conscious knowledge in the mind of the reader. But if a scholar wishes to use typology as an analytical tool, she must articulate her personal types to serve as a point of comparison. The first step in analyzing a text typologically therefore begins with writing out the first impressions that come to mind when one thinks of a type. This often results in a list of characteristics that a text should have in order to be categorized within a certain type, which is consistent with how types are formed. These are the clearest, repeatable aspects of overlapping patterns that jump to the foreground seemingly (but not actually) of their own volition.

This list format is not accidental. Types are not indivisible entities, but are rather bundles of ideas, traits, concepts, and actions. As Lévi-Strauss explains, “If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, this cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition
of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined.”

Lévi-Strauss later calls these smaller elements “mythemes,” but they have also been called “lexias,” “fabulae,” and other terms. For simplicity’s sake I will use mythemes. Brett Rogers notes how mythemes combine into a recognizable structure, a “particular narrative syntagm—a particular assemblage, possibly in an ordered sequence—identifiably derived from classical antiquity,” where syntagms are “the different elements of a narrative—such icons, plot points, and narrative themes—as ‘signifiers’.” When a reader recognizes a type, he is not responding to a single object but to the familiar configuration of many smaller mythemes. This is why different texts of a type are still identifiable as belonging to the same type. If some mythemes are missing from the reader’s preconceived type or new mythemes are added, he can still place it within a larger typological structure so long as enough of the new text matches. If too many mythemes are different, then the reader will not recognize the text as belonging to the same type.

Each scholar subjectively determines what is close enough to be a match as well as how broad or narrow he defines his type. Even the choice of how to determine mythemes depends on the scholar. As Barthes notes, the divisions of a type are “an arbitrary product” that differ between readers, and Robert Young elaborates that “the reader himself is implicated as the divider of the text into units, and thus has to be aware of his own psychic involvement in the analysis.”

While in the unconscious mind, types are not centered on any one particular text, and while some texts do exert more influence than others in forming the type, the type itself is

---

located between the projecting texts. However, this makes abstract types very difficult to articulate when a scholar needs an outline of the type to use in analyzing a text. One way around this is to start with a classical myth. A scholar can retell the myth from memory and then remove any specific details about the myth until only the bare bones of the plot and character remain. This uses classical myth as a scaffolding or ordering system in order to articulate types. While this remains problematic because it ignores the many other texts that form the type in the subconscious mind, it nevertheless gives the scholar a starting point from which she can begin to form an articulation of a type.

Types are, of course, formed not only from classical texts and the more influential of their adaptations, but from all major and minor utterances of the type. Until recently, academics have concerned themselves mainly with canonical texts, those judged as being of higher aesthetic quality or greater influence. But types are also formed from many “B-rated” literature and other media that classical scholars have traditionally avoided studying.233 The many secondary texts produced in between the canon are extremely useful for establishing typologies and further understanding the Western tradition. New additions to the canon are often a rebellion against stale stereotypes, and the new text will itself spawn many pale imitations until a new stereotype is established. As Barthes explains:

We must not be worried by the fact that we can constitute extremely banal notations into code: it is on the contrary their banality, their apparent insignificance that predisposes

233 Although not specifically about typology, Martindale makes a plea for a focus on the canon, while Paul and Rowe dispute his priorities. See Martindale, “Introduction: Thinking Through Reception,” in Classics and the Uses of Reception, 11; Paul, “Working with Film,” 304; Christopher Rowe, “Reply to Charles Martindale,” Bulletin of the Council of University Classical Departments 34 (2005): 15.
them to codification, given our definition of code: a corpus of rules that are so worn we take them to be marks of nature.\textsuperscript{234}

Those characters or plot lines that lack development or innovation are the closest to the reigning type of the time, and are therefore often the most useful in determining the nature of a type.

A type can focus on a character or a plot, which can in turn be deconstructed into its component mythemes. For example, the Old Man character type may be the nexus of many different attributes (wise, kind, senile, insane, frail, slow, grouchy, stubborn, nostalgic, regretful, melancholic, serene) that the author can pull from to create a specific old man character. Barthes calls these attributes semes, and when several are taken together from the typological possibilities they form a concrete character: “Characters in a narrative are basically a collection of semes . . . Characters are then names to which groups as semes are attracted . . . it is this build-up of semes which creates the impression of ‘depth’, and thus generates the illusion that these names refer to actual ‘characters’.”\textsuperscript{235}

The core of the Orpheus and Eurydice plot could be reduced to the following:

- There is a skilled artist.
- He marries.
- His wife is lost unexpectedly.
- He travels to a dangerous place to retrieve her.
- His art is useful on the journey.
- He regains his wife only to lose her again.

\textsuperscript{234} Barthes, “Textual Analysis,” 155–56.
\textsuperscript{235} Allen, Intertextuality, 84.
Roger Macfarlane calls this bare-bone outline the “zero-grade” myth, or the core narrative upon which individual iterations are built. The method is to compare multiple ancient versions of the myth and find the common points between them, ascribing variance to an author’s innovation. Details are stripped away until only the essentials of the narrative remain, which is recognizable in all utterances of the type. Scholars then analyze whatever an author adds or removes from the zero-grade as significant change.

Other scholars also make use of this listing method to articulate the mythemes of a type. Gregory Daugherty uses typology to create the requirements of what he calls a “Modyssey,” or modern Odyssey. Jon Solomon used a similar method to study many different versions of the Orpheus myth in film and opera. It is an efficient method to find commonalities between texts one wishes to study so long as the scholar remembers that the mythemes selected are ultimately subjective.

Once a scholar has articulated the type, he may begin comparing and contrasting it to a specific text. Any text is only intelligible when placed within a typological structure. By having articulated his type, the scholar is now able to consciously observe the points of similarities that reinforce the type and the points of contrast that disrupt and reform the type. Thus, typological analysis is merely an uncovering of the unconscious reading process. Inevitably, the type will begin to break down into its constituent texts as the scholar discovers more and more contradictions. The primary text under analysis will hold similarities to some texts in the type that contradict similarities to other texts also in the type. While these tensions prohibit any kind

236 Roger Macfarlane, personal conversations.
237 Daugherty, “Sullivan’s Travels.”
of universal or fixed structure, they do enrich the scholar’s understanding of the type and of the
text by revealing its multifaceted nature.

Example: The Werewolf Type in Paul Naschy’s Waldemar Daninsky Films

Spain is not known for its werewolf legends in comparison with other European
countries, but there is one notable exception. After living through Spain’s horrific civil war of
the 1930s, Paul Naschy, whose given name is Jacinto Molina Álvarez, left his mark on Spanish
cinema by writing and starring in a series of werewolf films featuring his own original character:
Waldemar Daninsky. Though the films have not aged well since the 1960s and 70s, at the time
they reinvigorated the horror genre in Spain. One way to understand the implications and impact
of these films is to examine them through the lens of the werewolf type. By drawing on many
different werewolf texts produced both before and after Naschy’s works to form an ahistorical
typological system, the films’ adherence and deviations from the werewolf mythos become
apparent and create meaning.

In many ways the films are Naschy’s way of processing the traumatic and violent events
of war from his childhood; they express both horror and fascination for blood and death. Unlike
del Toro, who uses violence as a critique of fascism, Naschy accepts it as a reality of his life.
This trauma brings on an alienation from the self and subsequent distancing from society, a state
which the duel nature of the werewolf can readily convey when other forms of expression are
unintelligible. As Naschy said in an interview about his films:

Quite simply, [the werewolf is] me. The pity is I can’t become a werewolf in true life. All
too often I would like to. It’s obvious that in the works of every man there is much of his
true self. Like Waldemar, I too have been left aside and misunderstood. I have spent all my life swimming against the current.\textsuperscript{239}

The films are also a vanity project; Naschy is able to bring his fantasies of power, sex, and violence to life on the silver screen and invites the audience to sympathize with his id, mediated through the werewolf figure. But ultimately the superego triumphs by the end of each film and societal order is restored. Any residual trauma from the civil war or unresolved anger against the current regime is metaphorically repressed with the death of Daninsky: the werewolf rages no more. Typology helps make this pattern clear.

Before I articulate the werewolf type, it is useful to note that it is already decentralized away from its classical components in the American mind, making it easier to work with in a typological structure. Although the werewolf makes several appearances in classical literature,\textsuperscript{240} many do not consider it classical in origin, as they do other monsters such as the centaur and the gorgon. Contemporary thought instead centers the werewolf type around newer utterances such as Lon Chaney Junior’s portrayal of the werewolf in \textit{The Wolf Man} (1948) and its sequels or the influential \textit{An American Werewolf in London} (1981). This makes it easier to focus typological analysis on the abstracted gestalt rather than a specific classical antecedent, which normally draws attention to itself due to its chronological precedence. Naschy’s films further lend themselves to typology because, though he made many werewolf films with the same character, each film is unconnected narratively from the others. As Naschy himself put it, “Unlike the films about Lawrence Talbot (Lon Chaney Jr.) which had a certain continuity, Waldemar Daninsky

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{239} Paul Naschy, quoted in Bryan Senn, \textit{The Werewolf Filmography} (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2017), 93.
\end{footnotes}
can move freely through space and time.”241 In each film Daninsky is infected and killed without any reference to the previous films. Naschy believes that “the werewolf should die in each film, only to be reborn in the next.”242 This loose narrative form works well with typology; just as each type makes related but unconnected utterances, Naschy draws on the same werewolf type to create similar but distinct iterations of the werewolf story.

The first step in typological analysis is to articulate the type in the scholar’s mind, a description of the general shape and characteristics of the type which are drawn from the combined texts the scholar has read. Then the scholar can proceed to map out the subjective connections and networks in greater detail. What follows below is therefore my own subjective gestalt of the werewolf type, formed from the hundreds of werewolf books, films, comics and other media which I have consumed. Unlike a traditional essay which is confined to a narrow thesis, this kind of analysis is expansive and nonlinear, jumping from one strand of web to another. The werewolf type in particular is especially multifaceted and variable over time, and I only include the aspects that touch upon Naschy’s films. In other words, the goal is to contextualize his films within certain sections of the werewolf type rather than stretch them to fit the entire expansive framework.

My werewolf type focuses on recurring plot points common to many different werewolf texts. Therefore, the following list will help the reader better understand how one might interpret Naschy’s Waldemar Daninsky within a typological schema. The mythemes are as follows:

- The werewolf is a cursed entity.
- The werewolf is a violent cannibal.
- The werewolf is an outcast, or Other.

• The werewolf uses his strength to save loved ones (the hero).
• The werewolf is obsessed with finding a cure.

Each of these plot aspects reveals the way in which Naschy revels in violence, highlighting the animal aspects of human nature evident in his lifetime, before turning to more altruistic concerns.

The werewolf type often involves a curse motif, in which his transformation is involuntary and controlled through greater supernatural powers. Among the classical sources, werewolves often became cursed through the will of deities: Zeus transforms King Lycaon into a wolf as punishment for serving human flesh to the god, while the goddess Circe likewise transforms men into animals, including wolves. Even the first werewolf story, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, is about how the goddess Ishtar curses a man to become a wolf. Naschy places his werewolves into a similarly religious context by drawing on the Catholic mythos and ascribing the curse to Satanic origins. While most often Daninsky becomes a werewolf through the bite of another werewolf, which follows the Lawrence Talbot pattern, in *El retorno de Walpurgis* (1973), Naschy lavishes attention on an extended origin story for the werewolf. Medieval witches have placed a hereditary curse on Daninsky’s ancestor, and contemporary Satan worshippers seduce and then activate the werewolf in Daninsky himself. In this way, the same supernatural motif from classical texts is transformed for a contemporary context.

This mytheme tends to highlight humanity’s lack of power against forces greater than themselves. The gods’ motives are different in each story (justice, boredom, vengeance), but in all cases the man is powerless to prevent the gods from stripping him of his very humanity. He is as the driven leaf, whose control over his own life can be removed at a whim. Although Daninsky chains himself up every full moon and isolates himself away from human communities, his wolf form inevitably breaks free and finds humans to hunt. The curse of
lycanthropy reflects the human propensity towards violence, which can surface so suddenly and uncontrollably that it can certainly seem like a curse bestowed by some supernatural entity.

On the other hand, the transformation could be viewed not as a curse which compels a man to violence but merely something which reveals his true nature. Ovid explains this succinctly when describing Lycaon’s transformation:

Fit lupus et veteris servat vestigia formae;
canities eadem est, eadem violentia vultus,
idem oculi lucent, eadem feritatis imago est.\textsuperscript{243}

[He is made a wolf and retains traces of his old form; his grey hair is the same, the same violent face; his eyes gleam the same; the image of beastliness is the same.]

Lycaon was already bloodthirsty, and the wolf form is hardly a change in nature. The curse of lycanthropy allows men to give vent to their darker urges, but these impulses already exist as a natural part of the human psyche. Naschy has plenty of unsavory human characters in his films, from a rapist handyman to superstitious villagers who mutilate corpses. They accord with the violent soldiers and townspeople from his life. The werewolf is just one more manifestation of humanity’s capacity for horror. Hundreds of werewolf horror films centered on gore follow Naschy’s lead, testifying to the staying power of the motif.

As a liminal figure that crosses boundaries, the werewolf is also a figure who can break engrained social taboos,\textsuperscript{244} and Sabing-Gould notes that cannibalism, a most severe taboo, is at the heart of many werewolf stories.\textsuperscript{245} This is how Plato interprets the myth when he compares werewolves to tyrants: both begin as men but become wolves when they first taste human

\textsuperscript{243} Ov.\textit{Met.} 1.237–239


blood.\textsuperscript{246} However, Naschy departs from this aspect of the type; his werewolf kills but never consumes his victims. There may be several reasons for this departure. One is that Naschy drew his inspiration most heavily from Lon Chaney’s Universal Pictures wolf-man, who was likewise a picky eater. Censorship during the fascist period may have also curtailed Naschy’s otherwise gruesome tastes. Yet the senselessness of the killing may be just as horrific as the cannibalistic predilections of other werewolf characters. Animals that hunt and eat humans, while fearsome, are nonetheless comprehensible. Hunger is a basic need, and while it is horrific that humans be made the object rather than the subject of this desire, it is still understandable. When a creature kills compulsively with no need to sustain itself, the viewer is faced with senseless and needless violence. Thus Petronius’ werewolf is extra fierce because “omnia pecora momordit, tanquam lanius sanguinem illis misit”\textsuperscript{247} [he bit the entire herd, just as a butcher lets out blood from them]. He killed far more than he could eat. And while a human butcher exsanguinates animals in preparation for other humans to eat them, Petronius’ werewolf seems to kill for the pure pleasure of letting out the blood. In Daninsky’s case his bloodlust seems to reflect the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War, which Naschy describes in terms of a nation cannibalizing itself: “Spaniard killed Spaniard in a war of bloody fratricide.”\textsuperscript{248} Although Naschy was exposed to intense carnage during the civil war at an early age and confessed that “those chilling images will be with me until the end of my days,”\textsuperscript{249} he nevertheless seems to revel in the bloodshed of his werewolf and acknowledges the heady appeal of bloodlust. Bryan Senn notes how apparent this is in Naschy’s first film, \textit{La marca del hombre lobo} (1968):

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{246} Pl.R 565de.
\item \textsuperscript{247} Petron.Sat.62.
\item \textsuperscript{248} Naschy, \textit{Memoirs of a Wolfman}, 16.
\item \textsuperscript{249} Ibid, 17.
\end{itemize}
It's a brutal, pitiless, and gruesome introduction to the monster Waldemar has become . . . it became the first to drag the werewolf’s nature from the darkness of suggestion into the blood-splattered light of undisguised savagery.”

Violence, usually considered a masculine characteristic, is here masculinity run amok. The same positive qualities valorized in Franco’s patriarchal state boil over the lip of their container and threaten the cohesion of society. In Jungian terms, the werewolf is the Shadow of the fascist regime, the chaotic violence that undergirds its call to order, prosperity, and safety. No matter how hard officials work to repress the violence, to kill the werewolf, it always comes back again. The werewolf cannot be denied and continues with its carnage unabated.

One way to cope with this uncomfortable reality is to project the undesired traits onto people outside the privileged group. Therefore, one common aspect of the werewolf type is to view the werewolf as the Other. He is outside of society, unable to fully integrate himself among normative people. As Jacques Derrida notes, the French word *loup-garou* can be translated both as “werewolf,” and “outlaw.” The wolf, being an animal, is properly a creature of the wilderness which exists outside the purview of human civilization and control, being fundamentally Other to it; the werewolf is a liminal figure which transgresses this boundary between the wild and the civilized. To confront the werewolf is to confront the human’s own abject, his animality, in a shockingly familiar humanoid form.

Even when encased in fiction, the fascist censors viewed the werewolf as a threat to Spanish identity and required Naschy to further otherize it. His original screenplay set the story in Spain with Spanish characters, but the censors deemed the material of the film to be

---

unbecoming of good Catholic citizens. Naschy was forced to alter the setting to another European country and change the name of the werewolf character to be more foreign. He complied with the censors’ requirements and channeled his own alienation into his werewolf character, focusing on “the ostracism of someone who is despised for being different”:\textsuperscript{253}

Daninsky is a Polish name I gave to my werewolf, thinking of the oppressed people of Poland. My character is bitter, persecuted and misunderstood, the bearer of a curse he cannot shake off . . . Like Waldemar, I too have been left aside and misunderstood. I have spent all my life swimming against the current.\textsuperscript{254}

Although the violence portrayed in the films bears a spiritual link to Spain’s own violence during the civil war, Daninsky’s Polish identity allowed Spain to suppress their own faults and memories and to instead project their violence onto foreign bodies. Non-Spanish people become monstrous and serve to distance the violence to where it can be viewed as entertaining rather than painfully proximate.

In keeping with this theme, Daninsky often begins as an outsider in the onset of each film. In \textit{La marca del hombre lobo}, he is a new arrival to the local community and lives in the dilapidated castle of his ancestors. In \textit{La noche de walpulgris}, he is killed by Austrian villagers when they discover that he is a werewolf, and after being resurrected he must flee to another remote village in France. Even here his home is a long distance from any other human habitation. Daninsky’s separation from other humans, both physical and social, conforms to the othered aspect of the werewolf type. Other authors have used the werewolf in similar ways to describe

\textsuperscript{253} Naschy, \textit{Memoirs of a Wolfman}, 150.
\textsuperscript{254} Naschy, quoted in Senn, \textit{The Werewolf Filmography}, 93.
the plight of marginalized groups such as the poor, racial minorities, women, and homosexuals.255

While the Other can be viewed as monstrous, the same supernatural abilities can also make him a hero. This is in keeping with the werewolf tradition in medieval romances, where the werewolves are often knights or kings who retain their noble nature in wolf form, helpful towards their liege and dangerous for their foes. Marie de France’s “Bisclavret” (circ. 1160–78) and the anonymous Guillaume de Palerne (circ. 1194–97) are examples of such. Their curse is being misunderstood or isolated from society (the Othered motif) rather than succumbing to uncontrollable bloodlust. These werewolves choose to use their supernatural abilities to protect rather than harm humanity.

This vein of sympathetic, protagonist werewolves continues to the present day. Some of the more recent iterations include Carrie Vaughn’s Kitty Saves the World (2015), where werewolf radio-show host Kitty Norvile saves the entire world from the Devil, or Patricia Briggs’ Fire Touched (2016), where a local werewolf pack decides to protect Tri-Cities, Washington from supernatural threats. The television series Teen Wolf (2011–17) makes the distinction even clearer when the heroic pack leader Scott McCall emphatically proclaims “You’re not a monster; you’re a werewolf, like me.”256 The identity of heroic werewolf is set in opposition to that of bloodthirsty monster. All of these narratives emphasize the way that human control can keep violent desires in check and channel them for the greater good.

Although Daninsky always falls short of this control, he nevertheless seeks to sacrifice his own life to end the carnage he afflicts on the nearby villagers. In Naschy’s eyes, this makes the werewolf figure heroic. After watching *The Wolf Man* as a child, he remarked: “Larry Talbot was my hero: After all, he was a good man whose only desire was to find a cure to free him from his need to kill.” Actor Jack Taylor, who worked with Naschy on a werewolf and Dr. Jekyll crossover film, likewise noted how Naschy’s werewolf is “a victim of destiny, a sensitive creature who suffers.” Naschy invites the audience to view the werewolf’s condition as tragic, to pity his lack of control and to fear that the same unbinding of their own id could result in similar othering and death.

Senn notes how Naschy plays up the positive, masculine, heroic, and romantic aspects of the werewolf type to the point where “he goes that extra mile to turn the sympathetic Waldemar into a veritable action hero”:

Naschy (who not only starred but scripted) takes great pains to make his tortured Wolfman the hero—a courageous character to be admired who inspires sympathy as much as terror . . . Still, while casting the werewolf in a heroic light, the sequence gruesomely illustrates his savage nature.

What makes Naschy’s use of the type different is that Daninsky combines the violence and alienation of the horror monster with the sympathetic hero trope. The audience is meant to look past the othering qualities of the werewolf and identify with the dashing and ultimately good man. Usually heroic werewolves eschew hunting innocents or killing humans altogether. While Daninsky kills film extras indiscriminately, he remembers not to attack his love interest even

258 Quoted in Senn, *The Werewolf Filmography*, 78.
260 Ibid., 249.
when in the throes of his transformation. He often fights off other monsters, such as vampires and Yetis, who threaten his woman. This ethos of protecting one’s own while savaging others echoes the mentality of civil war; although the most intimate of relations may remain intact, larger societal attachments are lost. To be a hero in this setting does not preclude violence towards one’s neighbor.

The search for a cure to the curse, of a way of restoring the superego and the safety of civilization, often becomes an all-consuming task for the werewolf. Even though he only becomes a wolf-man once a month on the nights of a full moon, the curse commands all of his attention for the rest of the month, as normal life cannot resume so long as the werewolf is a danger to others. This allows for Daninsky to be a sympathetic character because he is willing to sacrifice his own life to end the violence he inflicts involuntarily on others.

Most often the cure comes in the form of a permanent death, which is no easy feat for the nearly immortal werewolf. Although in one iteration of Daninsky’s story he manages to find a flower to cure himself, in the others his one goal is to release his soul from the curse in lasting death. Like other werewolves, silver is an effective way to kill Daninsky. But Naschy adds a twist—the silver must be wielded by someone who truly loves him. This means that even the romantic plot lines are subordinated to his desire to end the curse. As Naschy explains in an interview: “Aware that his romantic affairs have no future, he seeks them out only to get rid of his curse.”261 The women in each film are means to an end; Daninsky has no qualms manipulating them into loving and then killing him even when it places them in emotional and physical danger. He inevitably charms a young nubile woman (sometimes more than one) and leads them to bedroom scenes that miraculously slipped past the censors of the time. Women find him irresistible, leaving their normal lovers to pursue him. It is a male fantasy enacted on

261 Quoted in Senn, The Werewolf Filmography, 93.
the screen, where social conventions of sexual morality can be justifiably flaunted in the service of the greater good of killing the werewolf. In this way he differs from other werewolves who pursue the cure through more noble means. In the Victorian *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf* (1846–47), for example, the titular character is released from his curse only after he resists temptation from a seductive woman.

Again Naschy focuses on how the ends justify the means. The werewolf curse is a problem for society, and for all that Daninsky is a good and moral man (by Naschy’s standards, at least), he must die for the good of the community. Violence towards others and violence against the self are acceptable sacrifices to restore societal order, a central tenet of fascism. Although the films reveal the violence and death inherent in such political systems, Naschy projects it safely onto his own body made monstrous and foreign. For all the pleasure his gruesome antics produce for the audience, the werewolf must die at the end of the film. But for all that his death is necessary, it is likewise crucial that he and his violence be revived for the next film. And around and around he goes. Fascists cannot abide chaos and yet cannot survive without it, since the constant need for its suppression justifies their existence. Daninsky is a boogyman to be crushed and simultaneously a dark reflection of humanity’s own violent tendencies.

Naschy’s fascination with the werewolf type is an expression of both his own attraction to and his repulsion towards violence. By drawing on the type he is able to create werewolf texts that communicate these feelings, as well as portray the universal struggle to sublimate them for the sake of civilization. As he reflected towards the end of his career:

Waldemar Daninsky represents more than just a charismatic character of the silver screen. As well as being a fierce, persecuted, erotic, ambiguous hero/antihero who is
forever seeking deliverance in death, Daninsky is a kind of Don Quijote of the netherworld and only those love him can comprehend him. Really he has little in common with Lawrence Talbot or León Carido. Waldemar is the Sir Percival of Darkness, the result of a unique set of circumstances, at once real and unreal.262

By analyzing Daninsky through the lens of Naschy’s typology and my own, I hope to have shown the complex transformations of the type as Naschy concretizes it in his films. Perhaps in comprehending this, it is easier to appreciate a work that once dazzled Spanish audiences with spectacular gore as they sought to escape the all-too-recent memories of their own violent past.

262 Naschy, Memoirs of a Wolfman, 233–34
Conclusion

The field of classical usages is vast—far too vast for one or even five methodologies to dissect and classify neatly. What I have attempted here is only a cursory summary of some of the more prevalent approaches in a growing discipline. These methods still need to be refined and expanded; new methodologies need to be adapted from other disciplines; and novel theories of usages could be developed tailor-made for Classics. With more finely adapted methodologies and a greater variety of theoretical approaches, scholars should be able to yield quality analysis and expand the scope of texts which they are able to examine.

What I hope to have clarified in these pages are the underlying assumptions and the resulting theoretical frameworks which already govern the study of post-classical usages of classical mythology. This should aid scholars in asking new questions of texts and draft clearer answers. A common problem in studying these usages is to entangle different methods and overextend one’s claims beyond what one can prove (such as claiming a type is an adaptation). Understanding the multiplicity of ways that classical myths make their way into novel works will hopefully allow scholars to focus on the aspects of classical usages that best fit the text in question. These methods could also be effectively blended, particularly when the author is openly employing one myth and simultaneously weaving in others, be it secretly or subconsciously.

Regardless of the method one uses, studying a classical usage usually returns to the same two questions: How does understanding the myth help the reader better understand the new work’s meaning, and how does the meaning of the myth change in the context of the new work? What astounds is that despite the simplicity and limited scope of these questions, they nevertheless yield innumerable interpretations as they are applied to different texts. It is the
versatility of the classical myths, their ability to explain and be explained in such varied ways, which has assured their longevity and power.

This continued value and manipulation of mythology challenges the common idea that the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome are dead and buried. Even after 476 C. E., Greeks and Romans lived on, speaking their language and recounting their myths. Just as their speech evolved into the Modern Greek and the Romance languages, their myths adapted with the times, every bit as alive and thriving as when they first leapt from Homer’s lips. Classics as a discipline has traditionally focused on the past, on the molted skins of creatures who have long since grown and moved on. Only in the last few decades have classicists turned greater attention to the evolutionary process and the living iterations of Greco-Roman culture. Lately they have begun to examine the inundation of classical usages in popular culture, following the myths as they move from the purview of the elite and back into the possession of the folk. Myths have moved into all corners of the globe, stowing away with Western imperialists and rebelling with postcolonial reformers. They have settled in and hybridized, sometimes beyond recognition into unimagined entities, and continue to multiply with leporine intensity. With the accelerating pace of media production, there will be far more classical usages than classicists to analyze them.

As the field grows, so too grows the need for articulations of theories employed in the discipline. I hope that this work, a gathering and ordering of such theories, will be of use in furthering reception scholarship.
Works Cited


Mancuso, Gail, dir. *Sabrina the Teenage Witch.* 1,6, “Dream Date.” November 1, 1996 on ABC.


