

Elena Theodorakopoulos – *Myths of matriarchy in the work of Laura Riding and Robert Graves*

Like many of their contemporaries, Laura Riding and Robert Graves were inspired by the idea of prehistoric matriarchies which were the focus of anthropological and archaeological works of the late 19th and early 20th century. For both authors the myths of ancient matriarchy provided a productive alternative to the oppressive literary classicism that they saw as artificial and inauthentic. Both saw in the ancient mother goddess figures ways of thinking about gender and women that were free from classical constructs. This paper will compare the works of the two authors, while working as creative partners for most of the 1930s, and examine the very different conclusions they reached on the power and role of women in myth, and in the world.

Jacqueline Fabre-Serris – Original Nature, Mother Goddess, Divine Maidens, and Gender Relations in *I Dialoghi con Leuco: Il toro, La belva*, Pavese’s rewriting through the ‘modern science of myth’ (Otto, Kerényi, Freud, Jung)

Pavese edited of a *Collezione di studi religiosi, etnologici e psicologici* (published da Einaudi) and also wrote essays on myth. Focusing on *Il Toro* and *La Belva* in his *Dialoghi con Leuco* (1947), I will argue that he sought to ‘understand’ Greek myths through the ‘science of myth’ of his time (especially Walter Otto, *Die Götter Griechenlands*, 1929; Károly Kerényi, *Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie*, with Jung, 1942; *Töchter der Sonne*, 1944) and psychoanalytic theories (Freud, Jung). Pavese drew on the theories on original nature, the divine and the feminine (the Mother Goddess of Minoan Crete/the divine maiden in the Olympian religion), but also on his own reflections on the wild, sex and blood, in order to nourish a personal view of gender relations. I will suggest the possibility of interpreting these two dialogues in the light of contemporary theories such as ecocriticism and ecofeminism, asking the following question: what difference does it make to our reading of these texts from the first half of the 20th century?

Rosario López Gregoris y Begoña Ortega Villaro - “Disidencia o conformidad: los mitos grecorromanos como estrategia para generar discursos de género en la narrativa del período franquista. El caso de *Ifigenia* de Torrente Ballester.”

Durante el franquismo, debido a la fuerte censura institucional, las obras literarias adquirieron un peso ideológico importante. Por eso, algunos personajes del mundo grecorromano se usaron como estrategia de refuerzo de una masculinidad alentada por el régimen o como disidencia de esa masculinidad y como reivindicación de unas relaciones de género en que las mujeres pudieran tomar la palabra para proponer otras formas de construir la sociedad española de la época. Esa tensión ocupó la escena teatral, la poesía y en menor medida la narración, lo que ya es un dato en sí mismo. Los instrumentos de análisis de estos discursos han de ser los estudios de género, los estudios de recepción y los parámetros históricos-literarios necesarios para entender el contexto: desde el Medievo la llamada tradición clásica no penetró en la cultura española con la misma intensidad y resultado que en otras naciones. Esta situación siempre ha lastrado el conocimiento básico de los textos clásicos apenas incorporados en los planes de estudio (considérese el hecho no menor de que en la difusión de las historias míticas grecorromanas no hubo en España en el siglo XX fenómenos editoriales tan determinantes como el caso de Robert Graves para Inglaterra o Pierre Grimal para Francia).

El objetivo de esta propuesta es abrir una línea de reflexión sobre los significados y usos que adquieren algunos personajes de los mitos grecorromanos en la narrativa de ese período y, especialmente, investigar qué discursos de género se construyen a través de según qué personajes elegidos (Medea, Ifigenia, Ulises, etc.), atendiendo al hecho de que son escasas las voces femeninas que se sirven de los referentes clásicos. ¿Están invisibilizadas por un prejuicio de género, asociado al régimen, o las escritoras de esa época decidieron no usar personajes míticos antiguos porque estos referentes estaban colonizados por la dictadura y usarlos o no usarlos significaba una toma de posición? ¿Cabe la posibilidad de que simplemente no los conocieran?

En este primer acercamiento, proponemos un análisis de la novela *Ifigenia*, de Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, autor franquista de la periferia (era gallego y estaba lejos de la ideología más radical que emanaba de Madrid), y buen conocedor de los relatos mitológicos grecorromanos. Interesa explorar la construcción de género que se plantea a través de la figura de Ifigenia y las relaciones entre género y poder político que el relato propone.

Brenda López Saiz - Greek Myth, Gender, and Nation-Creation: Antigone's Transformation in Marechal's *Antígona Vélez* and Andrade's *Pedreira das Almas*

In this presentation, I would like to address the reception of Sophocles' *Antigone* in two Latin American dramas produced in the same period: *Antígona Vélez* by Argentinian author Leopoldo Marechal (1951) and *Pedreira das Almas* by the Brazilian playwright Jorge Andrade (1957).

Although the plays present important differences, both in dramatic aspects and in the political approaches of both authors, they share two fundamental characteristics: on the one hand, they both rewrite the basic situations and figures of Sophocles' tragedy to reflect on their respective nations in historical moments in which Argentinian and Brazilian governments are carrying out what are presented as great projects of national construction and transformation. Therefore, both plays participate in these socio-political processes of constructing an image of the nation and a collective national identity. On the other hand, they focus the reception of the tragedy on three central elements of *Antigone* –the funeral rite, Antigone's opposition to authority, and her relationship with Hemon- which are taken up and reworked from gender perspectives that share points in common. In this presentation, I will address how, in the transformation of these aspects, nationalist perspectives and Christian religious and gender views combine to transform Antigone into an image of sanctity and national motherhood.

Walter Penrose - A New Dawn for the Amazon: Myth, Feminism, and Psychology in William Moulton Marston's *Wonder Woman*

The original creator of Wonder Woman, William Moulton Marston, imbued his reception of the Amazon myths with first-wave feminism and his own brand of early 20th century psychology. While Marston achieved little-to-no success as an academic author and professor of psychology, his creation of the *Wonder Woman* comics brought him fame, fortune, and a platform to dispense his psychological theories. In this paper, I will explore the means by which Marston used his own feminist ideology in order to develop characters such as Diana, Wonder Woman, and other Amazons. I will also explore the ways in which the women in Marston's polyamorous life partnerships contributed to and inspired his rich reception of the Amazons, in addition to the World War II context which necessitated, more than ever, peaceful solutions to the conflicts of "the world of men."

Hunter H. Gardner - Woman in Pieces (or Dis-assembly required): Pygmalion's Ivory Maiden in Contemporary Horror

Twenty-first century horror films continue to reanimate myths of manufactured women, drawing partly on a tradition born from twentieth-century cinema (*Bride of Frankenstein* [1935], *Les Yeux Sans Visage/Eyes Without a Face* [1960], *The Stepford Wives* [1975]), but originating primarily with Ovid's myth of Pygmalion. Ovid's version of the myth in *Metamorphoses* 10.243-97 introduces and crystalizes aspects of the ivory maiden's creation that have persisted: the artist as both lover and creator (thus also serving problematically as a father figure), the malleable but unpredictable nature of the creation, often referred to as Galatea, and the misogyny driving the entire project of wo-manufacture.

In this presentation I discuss a twentieth-century example of Pygmalion in one horror film (Franju's *Les Yeux Sans Visage*), as well as the contemporary, early 1960's gender norms that shape portrayal of the Pygmalion figure and his creation. I then address three horror texts from the twenty-first century: *May* (2002), *Splice* (2009), *La piel que habito* (*The Skin I Live In*, 2011). As the roles of artist and creation shift, as well as the response of the creation to an embodied self, we can observe filmmakers shuffling the dynamics of power within the context of changing gender norms. Despite such changes, the very conventions of the horror genre underscore the troubling undercurrents that mark Ovid's version of the myth as a cautionary tale rather than a love story. In closing, I discuss a relatively new entry to the sub-genre, *Poor Things* (Yorgos Lanthimos' 2023 film based on Alasdair Gray's novel): while not strictly horror in tone or degree of suspense, the film draws heavily on the Pygmalion mythos as well as its cinematic forerunners to explore the occasionally unsettling consequences of autonomy and heightened sexual promiscuity for a new Galatea figure.

Jesse Weiner - Prometheus, Pandora, and Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*

In the decade since its 2014 release, *Ex Machina* (dir. Alex Garland) has only become more prescient as artificial intelligence has developed to become part of our everyday lives. The film's title signals Greek tragedy, and the plot of this science fiction movie adapts the myth of Prometheus and Pandora (cf. Hammond 2018). This reception is both direct ("It's Promethean, man.") and filtered through Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (one film review describes *Ex Machina* as *Frankenstein* reimagined as a battle of the sexes). Through the character AVA's allusive name, the film also joins its Pandoran filiations to the biblical story of Eve.

In this talk, I interpret how Garland uses the mythological figures of Prometheus (in both roles as *pyrphoros* and *plasticator*) and Pandora. Intersectionally, I join issues of gender with race, voice, and ecocriticism. Beyond Pandora and through its Frankensteinian influence, the film also conjures Pygmalion and other mythological life-creators, and it asks pressing questions about our relationships to beings we create.

Maria Cecília de Miranda Nogueira Coelho Cecilia Coehlo - *The New Helen* – an anthropophagic rereading to the ancient drama by Francisco da Silva's comedy.

In this paper, I propose to analyze some aspects of the reception of the myth of Helen in the comedy *A Nova Helena* (1957) by Francisco Pereira da Silva (1918-1985). The complete dramatic works of this author who was born in the northeast of Brazil (Piauí), but who lived in Rio de Janeiro from 1942 until his death, were published in three volumes (2009). This edition allowed access to his unpublished texts, although they were not unknown in the Brazilian

theatrical environment from the fifties. In his transposition of Helen's myth to Brazilian rural countryside, the references (direct and indirect, as his title indicates) show a dialog with Greek Ancient drama, in a decolonial (*avant la lettre*) perspective, mainly with Euripides' *Helen* and Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae*. Silva's comedy seems to be a very instigating case to show how the "new helen" (τὴν καινὴν Ἑλένην μιμήσομαι, *Thesm.* 850) shed light to problems and possibilities of a conscious rereading of Ancient Myth with a peculiar anthropophagic (to bring this important concept from the modernist movement in Brazil) approach.

Olakunbi Olasope - Kumbi Olasope - Gender and Politics in *MEDAAYE* (Femi Osofisan's African Re-reading of Euripides' *MEDEA*).

Greek tragedy is a dramatic/ choral presentation of an action usually taken from legend, myth or history. The Greek playwrights were playing with and adapting stories which is what Femi Osofisan and other playwrights are embarking upon in their adaptations of Greek classics which melds the mythical and the contemporary. These textual adaptations and their theatrical performance of ancient drama address the turbulence of the twentieth century and the dilemmas of present-day realities and also emphasize the striking kinship between the Greek pantheon and mythology, and their West African counterparts.

This paper will investigate whether notions of performance of the classics and concepts of adaptation are in a constructive relationship with each other. In following the practice of drawing on traditional mythology as a means of re-examining contemporary realities, Femi Osofisan bases the plot of his *Medaaye* on Euripides' *Medea*, which itself is built on a Greek myth of inordinate conjugal love. Osofisan, a prominent Nigerian playwright, delves into traditional myths and narratives, infusing them with fresh interpretations that challenge conventional gender roles and norms. In his *Medaaye*, he examines power dynamics, societal constructs, and the role of women in both traditional and contemporary contexts. The essay highlights Osofisan's unique approach to storytelling, shedding light on how his works contribute to ongoing conversations about gender equality and representation in the realm of drama and literature.

Jacqueline Klooster - A transgender Achilles in a globalized world: Maya Deane's *Wrath Goddess Sing* and its inspirations

This paper studies the depiction of the figure of the hero Achilles in the novel *Wrath goddess sing*, by Maya Deane (2022). In the novel, the mythological detail of Achilles' being dressed as a girl by his mother Thetis on Skyros as a ruse to keep him from fighting in the Trojan war is changed in an important way. In *Wrath Goddess sing*, the male Akhilleus actually feels like a woman in a man's body; nobody has to force her to wear women's clothes. Initially dressing like a woman rather than a man, Akhilleus is turned into a biological woman, henceforth called Akhilleas, by intervention of the goddess Athena. Warlike Akhilleas departs for the Hittite city of Wilusa (Troy) to fight with the Greeks under Agamemnon's command.

Among the many remarkable features of the book are Akhilleas' relations to the transgender man/former Amazon Brisewos (based on the Iliadic figure of Briseïs) and that to her lover king Agamemnon, who eventually becomes the father of her son Pyrrhos. Other noteworthy aspects concern the conscious globalizing of the world of Homeric myth to emphatically include Hittite and Egyptian characters, texts and cultural lore, and the depiction of the Olympian gods, which have very little in common with the traditional Greek pantheon.

As a result, the book sparked online controversy by its depiction of Achilles as a trans woman, its depiction of Briseis as an enslaved trans man of colour and by the many changes to the original myth it was – as some readers thought -- supposed to be retelling.

Approaching the novel as ‘Canon fanfiction’ (Schott 2023), I intend to focus on the controversial aspects of this retelling of Achilles’ myth, asking which queer constructions of gender and sexuality, and which decolonializing influences can be traced in the author’s depiction of the Trojan war and why, and what precisely caused the fierce controversies on online platforms such as Goodreads, LGBTQreads and reddit.

Alexandra Meghji - Thetis and the Watery Phenomenology of Metamorphosis in Elizabeth Cook’s *Achilles*.

Engaging with feminist phenomenology and the Blue Humanities, this paper explores the relationship between water and Thetis’ embodied experiences in Elizabeth Cook’s *Achilles*. While the primary classical interlocutors of *Achilles* are Homer’s *Iliad*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and Statius’ *Achilleid*, this paper concentrates on its Ovidian intertexts, particularly the tale of Peleus and Thetis in *Metamorphoses* 11.

I argue that Cook uses water imagery to explore the details of Thetis’ embodied subjectivity in two ways. Firstly, Thetis’ liquescent and metamorphic body attests to the ambiguities of experience, and characterizes her as an assemblage of corporeal forms. Cook’s Thetis is thus a plurality of bodies rather than a singular and unified body. Thetis’ literal and philosophical corporeal fluidity also prompts a feminine (re)conception of embodiment in which the self is never monolithic but is constituted by multiplicity and flux. Thinking of the body as fluid also creates space for thinking about the intercorporeal flow between bodies, and prompts reflection on the complex ways that the self is enmeshed within the matter of the world.

Thetis’ liquid and metamorphic embodiment also figures prominently of her experience of sexual violence in *Achilles*. I go on to argue that Thetis’ metamorphic movement in both *Achilles* and the *Metamorphoses* can be understood as a kinetics of defense. My primary theoretical interlocutor here is Iris Marion Young, who engages with phenomenology to contend that women move their bodies differently, defensively, and restrictedly under patriarchy in order to avoid male violence. That Thetis changes her form to elude Peleus’ sexual advances speaks to the defensive potential of shapeshifting and affirms the vulnerability of the female human/anthropomorphic body within patriarchal settings which effectively condone male access to women’s bodies. The significance of this reading lies in its exploration of patriarchy’s enduring impact on women’s embodiment and experience of patriarchal space.

Sophia Seidler - “the daughter is just meat”: Analyzing and Rewriting Persephone and Demeter in the Time of Anorexia

Since the 1990s, Persephone features prominently in research on modern eating disorders. The myth serves as a model for *anorexia nervosa* (voluntary self-starvation), her consumption of the pomegranate being understood as a first step towards recovery after a phase of restriction. Diagnosing mythical goddesses with modern mental health issues is a bold enterprise today: expectable objections are that the retrospective identification of Persephone’s abstinence with an anorexic patient’s food-refusal dismisses the historical context and the myth’s religious aspects; that a condition only defined a couple of decades ago cannot be projected onto a distant past with values so different from those of today’s Western society; and that the world of myth is a symbolic realm rather than a manifestation of women’s lived experience. To complicate things even more, reformulating the myth in terms of modern eating disorders runs the risk of reproducing sexism by glossing over misogyny and violence, romanticizing the rape Hades

commits, or villainizing Demeter. But the parallels between Persephone's troubled relationship to food, sex, and her mother on the one hand, and the risk factors and family histories of anorexia patients on the other, keep being drawn, in psychology and in poetry.

In the works of Louise Glück, Lotta Olsson, Lisa Russ Spaar, Rita Dove, Nan Fry, and Nikita Gill, to name just a few, we find not only poems about pomegranates, the goddesses, or the underworld, but also, and often inseparably juxtaposed, poems about anorexia. In contemporary Persephone-poetry that is informed by modern eating disorders (often by autobiographic experience), Persephone's relationship to Hades is depicted in a positive light – liberating, healing, and empowering a girl who previously engaged in self-destructive behavior. Post-#MeToo reception studies are understandably suspicious of such renditions. Yet against the backdrop of anorexia – a condition largely characterized by self-renunciation and fear of corporeality and sexuality – the abundance of “romantic” reinterpretations of the myth becomes slightly better understandable.

Discussing some examples of contemporary post-anorexic Persephone-reinterpretations, I want to ask how the modern medical condition of anorexia influences the ways poets, patients, and psychiatrists read and interpret the Greek and Roman material on a myth that prominently features food-refusal, mother-daughter-relationships, and sexual violence.

Florence Klein - Réécritures de la Daphné ovidienne dans deux romans contemporains (Valentine Goby, *Tu seras mon arbre* (2018); Siri Ranva Hjelm Jacobsen, *Métamorphosées* (traduit du danois par Andreas Saint Bonnet, 2024).

Deux récits contemporains proposent une réécriture de l'épisode ovidien de Daphné poursuivie par Apollon (*Mét.* I) en l'adaptant à notre quotidien moderne et en l'articulant aux grandes questions actuelles d'un monde post-#MeToo et interrogé à l'aune du post-humanisme et de l'écoféminisme. Dans *Tu seras mon arbre*, court roman illustré, Valentine Goby réécrit l'épisode ovidien en l'adaptant à notre quotidien et en prenant le point de vue d'une jeune femme harcelée et poursuivie par un inconnu inquiétant. *Métamorphosée* de Siri Ranva Hjelm Jacobsen est découpé en trois parties : la première raconte, du point de vue d'un jeune adolescent de 14 ans son idylle amoureuse avec une jeune fille prénommée Laura ; la deuxième donne la parole à la mère de Miki, qui a transcendé la condition humaine, par sa métamorphose ; la troisième fait enfin parler Daphné, devenue laurier, dans un monologue poétique où elle s'exprime au nom de toutes les femmes violentées au nom de l'amour. Le but de la communication sera de voir comment le mythe ovidien d'Apollon et Daphné a pu, en se prêtant à ces réécritures, être renouvelé pour s'adapter aux préoccupations de notre époque ; mais il s'agira aussi, et avant tout, de se demander ce qui, dans le texte d'Ovide, déjà pouvait déjà offrir par avance le potentiel de ces réinterprétations ultérieures.

Emily Hauser - Making and Breaking Myths in the Modern World: The Theory and Practice of A Feminist Rewriting of Greek Myth

In this paper, I explore the theoretical landscapes and contemporary movements that have influenced my rewritings of Greek myth in my novels – *For the Most Beautiful* (2016), *For the Winner* (2017), and *For the Immortal* (2018) – as well as my forthcoming book, *Penelope's Bones* (2025), that rewrites the legends of the women of Troy. I take three examples of contemporary movements, loosely defined: (1) feminist re-voicing, where women reclaim their own stories (particularly around sexual violence); (2) social justice; (3) environmental questions and ecofeminism. I investigate how the re-visioning of mythical stories through the lens of

gender – first expounded by Adrienne Rich in ‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’ (1972) – has informed feminist treatments of myth over the last fifty years, and how the spotlight that has been shone on women’s narratives and experiences of sexual violence through #MeToo sharpened my re-writing of mythical violence against women, and issues of consent, in my novels. I then explore the ways in which postcolonial and intersectional theories around enslaved women as (to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s words) ‘doubly subaltern’ wove through my presentation of enslavement and enslaved female communities – both in my novels, and in *Penelope’s Bones*, where I discuss how re-orientating both a fictional and a non-fictional lens on women in Homer through women’s enslavement makes us read the epics – and rework them – differently. Finally, I investigate how mounting environmental concerns and their interaction with ecofeminism has led me to re-interpret two legendary women – Cassandra and Calypso – as ways into thinking through climate change and the impact of fast fashion on the global environment: making it possible to pen a new narrative about the past that speaks directly, and urgently, to contemporary concerns.