

Editorial

Virgil recounts how Eurydice died of a *hydrus* or water-serpent's bite. Afflicted and seeking consolation in song, Eurydice's husband, the poet Orpheus, entered the Underworld through the caverns of Cape Tenarus, searching for her. The narrative penned by Virgil, as well as that of his successor Ovid, appears to contradict *rational* logic, since it seems unreasonable, going beyond death to search for someone. Yet *emotional* logic readily accepts Orpheus's descent. In fact, there is nothing more natural than wanting the return of one's beloved, and undertaking any means—even an unnatural one—to make it happen.

Orpheus's sorrow was so great that the Dryads and Nymphs "flooded the mountains with tears" of compassion. Like those deities, the reader, too, feels compassion for Orpheus. Emotion also has a cathartic dimension: the audience becomes emotionally involved in the plot, experiences the character's passions and emotions, and, by suffering alongside Orpheus, come to a better understanding of themselves. This emotional logic works by allowing mythical stories to access hidden dimensions of the human mystery. The Orpheus myth reveals, albeit in a perplexing way, that physical death (whether one's own or that of a loved one) does not fully and satisfactorily explain life.

Biopsychology (or psychobiology) explores what emotions are, how they originate, and what they mean. Specialists agree on several basic traits of emotions: a) the existence and perception of a previous occurrence; b) intense, fleeting, and connected body-mind experiences; c) a distinction (with either a corresponding attraction or rejection) between agreeable and disagreeable circumstances. Emotion—in its interaction with feelings, moods, and affects—informs a large extent of our interaction with the world. It conditions our motivations, gives us energy, and orders our private and social behavior.

We cannot understand myth outside of its cultural environment. Myth proposes concrete solutions to individual and collective problems; it records an awareness of identity; it informs about origins and destiny, both individual and collective. Because myth is connected to the world, one appropriate explanation of myth could privilege emotional logic above other types of understanding and expression. Indeed, our mythical origins and destiny have emotional and affective derivatives: they are active rudiments for a world with which we feel closely identified and linked, or, to the contrary, from which we want to distinguish and disconnect ourselves. In this way, mythical eschatology and emotion are joined.

In George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*, Octavius hears with fear that his beloved, Ann, has been left in the care of Jack Tanner (a Don Juan figure): the destiny that unfailingly unites her with the seducer overwhelms him. In *El Señor de Pigmalión* (Jacinto Grau), the duke feels attracted to the doll Pomponina: an inanimate object comes alive and cruelly takes control of his heart. In Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*, the young man Naphta recalls his affection for the ritual practices of bloodthirsty Jews over those of bloodthirsty Christians: he ultimately rejects Christian rationality for Jewish savagery. In *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (Jean Giraudoux), Hélène reveals her unconquerable love for Pâris to Andromaque: her erotic impulses are Aphrodite's will. In all these texts, a character experiences an emotion that is motivated by a myth related to origin, destiny, the sinister or the fantastic. Here, then, is a promising field for research on the relationship between myth and the biopsychology of emotion.

Myth criticism should include the description and analysis of the paths whereby the rhetoric of individual and social psychology intersects with the cultural practice of myths. Thus, studies of mythology should include considerations of emotional logic, as well as of the consequences of an empathetic connection with myth (the cathartic dimension). They should also reveal the parallelism between "emotional origins" and "emotional destiny" (the cosmogonic and eschatological dimension). Finally, they should study the relationships between emotion, the sinister, and optical illusion (the mysterious dimension).

The articles offered here, selected after a double-blind peer review process among plenty of proposals, deal –accordingly with their author's will and interests, always observing our contemporary chronological frame– this entangled relationship between myth and emotions.

Good reading!

José Manuel Losada. General Editor of *Amaltea. Journal of Myth-Criticism*.

Madrid, 30th September 2015