

BOOK REVIEW

MYTH AND EMOTIONS, José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb (eds.), Newcastle upon Tyne (United Kingdom), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, xviii-345 p.

Myth and Emotions, a stunning deep reflection on classic, medieval and modern myths. A book that looks into the mythical-emotional phenomena through the vision of some incredible articles by experts in this field of study.

In October 2016, the IV International Conference on Myth Criticism 'Myth and Emotions' took place at the Complutense University in Madrid and later fostered this book, which compiles some of the papers from the conference and further, studies the mythical-emotional phenomena. It was edited by José Manuel Losada and Antonella Lipscomb, who selected twenty-five out of a hundred and fifty papers to be part of this collection.

Conferences like this one should not be forgotten as they prove that myths remain in literature, visual arts and performances; although in a hidden way that is worth investigating. Recently, there have been studies of how myths, which are made-up stories that spread over time, are connected to individual emotions and social psychology. This compilation allows the readers not only witness several great papers from the participants of that unique moment that took place in the Complutense University, but it also motivates them to start down the road that incredibly connects myths and emotions.

The 'Preface' and 'Theory' sections introduce the way myths could have an emotive essence. Starting with human behaviour, the number of studies about rational and emotional thinking did not focus solely on individuals; these sections also included social behaviour. As social beings by nature, we live in a society with culture, rules, mechanisms, and obviously, other humans. This book contemplates that the way we react to the external situations is as 'consequence of impulse' (Losada & Lipscomb, Preface, 2017).

Moreover, myths aimed to explain events that at that moment humans were not yet capable of explaining. Even though they make use of symbolism, made-up stories or literary devices, myths are intimately linked to feelings and sensations (whether positive or negative). This book offers an uncanny vision of how several stories are connected to man's deepest fears and dreams. For instance, with Prometheus, according to Karl Kerényi (page 61) it represents the injustice that humanity has always suffered. Another example, Pilar Andrade Boué's article (pages 97-105) explains the filial devotion that the Antigone character embodies.

Strikingly, José Manuel Losada and Antonella Lipscomb managed to classify how the human mind works when it comes to the interpretation of different situations. Positivity, Traumatic-Vulnerable Negativity and Violent Negativity perceptions would be the categories in which all the articles are classified. Therefore, each article belongs to one of these three categories.

The following part, *The Practice*, is a more detailed exemplification of these three types of situations. The richness all these papers offer is surprisingly engaging. Some authors focus on mythical influences in more contemporary readings such as Carmen Velasco's perspective on María Zambrano career or José Luis Aja Sánchez on Umberto Saba's poetry collection. Others present studies on the conception of the myth and the universal nature of emotions; for instance, María Do Rosário Girão and Manuel José Silva point out that "d'une emotion unique, grâce à laquelle 'hommeressent à la foissafugacité et son eternité" (page 189). It could be translated: 'thanks to a unique emotion, human beings could feel their transience and eternity at the same time'. And also there are authors that have written about retellings or adaptations of a particular myth.

It seems that the classic *Iphigenia* by Euripides could travel through time and space and be now situated in an unnamed Latin American country. The tragedy of the young girl remains the same, implying therefore that the actual society has been unable to resolve the social injustices. This is an amazing article by Sofia Stamatelou about a novel written by Caridad Svich. Likewise, Metka Zupancic, among others, wrote brilliant articles about other canonical pieces that were rewritten in order to create awareness of conflicts still present today.

All these twenty-five papers could have been classified in a totally different way: whether they are more inclined with mythological legacy or with the psychology of emotions; or whether they are based on ancient Greek themes or other cultures, for instance, '¿Tienen las Rusalki una vida sentimental?' (Do the Rusalki have a love life?) by Francisco Molina Moreno deals with Slavic folklore. Similarly, Saul Andreotti investigates folklore and German literature in *The Neverending Story*. Despite having a number of possibilities to classify the papers, Losada and Lipscomb decided to group them under the three categories mentioned above.

This classification successfully connects myth with emotions. While "emotions can be defined as impressions of diverse nature that provokes immediate effects" (Losada, p.7), when the feelings of the characters on the story are properly analysed and explained, then simultaneously, comes the empathy in the reader. Fears, dreams, anxieties, desire... they reach out from the book to arrive at the receptor's soul.

Hence, this classification is thought to be the most suitable for the purpose of the book, although, at the same time, it requires certain background knowledge to understand it. The two editors did not classify the myths as positive or negative depending on whether they are tragedies or comedies, or on the way the characters suffer. Conversely, the process is more complex. Instead, the classification is based first on how the author comprehends the inner essence and message of the story, and secondly, on the mechanisms that connect that myth with a later written story. Those mechanisms are related to the psychology of a

character, their personal maturing process, or even on sociology. According to the editors, Myth Criticism should study the individual and social psychology because they are related to cultural traditions (Losada & Lipscomb, Preface, 2017). For instance, with *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Losada explains the necessity of belonging to a group.

Losada and Lipscomb maintain the language the papers were written in, providing the reader with the original versions in English, French and Spanish instead of translations. However, at the end of the book, we find the abstracts of every paper in the original language and their English translations. Hence, if readers need help with a particular language, this aspect of the book provides that help for them. Furthermore, these abstracts explain the author's purpose plainly and simply.

It is important to highlight that some of the translations were made by Manuel Losada and Antonella Lipscomb. The editors took a risk in creating their own good quality translations of titles or parts of dialogue that have not been published in any article.

Beside the abstracts, the book practically ends with the last article. There is no conclusion. There is no need for one. It allows the reader to perceive perfectly the impulses and influences in the retellings of several myths that have survived from antiquity. Even further, some articles discover an unexpected hidden influence of a myth that help to understand the plot and characters' behaviour in the later story better.

Additionally, the final articles have a tendency to analyse the most contemporary versions; in other words, the ones related to cinema or the science-fiction genre. By this means, the book seeks to create a progressive effect, showing how society moves on but the myths remain. This creates the effect of a hidden component, which belongs to the foundations of human perception and sensibility, that will continue to be present in the future. Consequently, the next generations will also make use of them in order to express universal emotions.

From previous conferences, three other volumes have been published: '*Myth and Subversion in the Contemporary Novel*' edited by José Manuel Losada and Marta Girao in 2012; '*Mito e interdisciplinarietà. Los mitos antiguos, medievales y modernos en la literatura y las artes contemporáneas*' by José Manuel Losada and Antonella Lipscomb in 2013; and '*Myths in crisis: The Crisis of the Myth*' again this time by Losada and Lipscomb in 2015. I personally hope that the conferences will continue as well as this collection.

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