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Resumen

El propósito de este escrito es presentar el legado de las culturas griega y romana, principalmente sus literaturas, a través de la historia de la literatura. Aunque ambas tradiciones han tenido un enorme impacto en las producciones literarias de de distintos países alrededor del mundo, esta investigación está enfocada solamente a la literatura inglesa. Así pues, el trabajo iniciará hablando de la influencia de Grecia y Roma en el mundo actual para después pasar al área particular de la literatura. También se tratarán tres ejemplos incluyendo el análisis de tres obras literarias y un fragmento de otra comparadas entre sí. Los ejemplos que se examinarán son los siguientes: similitudes entre *Medea* de Eurípides y *Macbeth* de William Shakespeare, el proceso de adaptación del mito de Pigmalión de la *Metamorfosis* de Ovidio en *Pygmalion* de George Bernard Shaw, y el último apartado tratará sobre la influencia de la mitología clásica en el género emergente de la novela gráfica. La intención de esta estructura es hacer un periplo por la historia de la literatura inglesa de manera cronológica en el que se puede apreciar claramente que el legado de Grecia y Roma llega hasta nuestros días, que aún seguimos bebiendo de sus fuentes y que seguramente lo seguiremos haciendo.

1.Introduction: the legacy

Greece and Rome, two places that one time represented the top of the civilization and were the most powerful cultures fell. Nowadays, they do not have that influence anymore, but unexpectedly, they still represent an important part of western civilizations. How is that possible?

The originality in their creations and innovations in several fields are basically the pillars of the majority of the most prominent cultures nowadays. Their dedication to science, politics, architecture, art, philosophy, literature, music, economy and trading market represents the foundation of the present world. For example, in the area of mathematics and science, figures such as Archimedes, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, Hypatia, Thales of Miletus and Pythagoras are still very relevant; their investigations about mathematics are still used. In politics and philosophy, who does not know the importance of Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*? Also, Greece is known for setting the bases of democracy for later forms of government. Moreover, the organization, distribution and combat techniques and strategies of the Roman Empire were also relevant and used later in history.



Doryphoros (440 BC) by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos set the artistic canon of the perfect measure of the human body

Concerning art and architecture, Greek artists and Roman architects settled again, the main features of these areas. For example, the famous Greek canon used in sculptures and also other techniques that were repeated during the Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassicism and Romanticism. And not just that, the topics of the artistic production were also repeated being the mythological themes the most popular ones through history. Venus, Apollo, Zeus, Eros, Athena or Heracles are some of the most recurrent figures in art. On the other hand, Roman architecture represents an important part of the urban structure of several cities nowadays. Also their influence in the construction of bridges, walls, aqueducts and houses based in the Roman “domus”

is noticeable in different places around the world.

In literature, the Iliad and the Odyssey are one of the most important books ever. Their narrative style, poetry, structure and, their characters established a strong canon for epic poetry, war and fantasy novels and the figure of the hero in later literary periods. Also, Greek theatre and more specifically, the Greek Tragedy set the characteristics of the dramatic genre and events until today. That is why nowadays a dramatic novel can be read or a dramatic film can be watched and people will think that they have experienced an actual Greek Tragedy. Moreover, Classic mythology and figures persist even today in cinema and literature. Authors still write novels about mythology or retellings of Classical stories or even other stories with a huge influence of the Classical world. And in films, adaptations about Greek and Roman events or stories in which the Greek Pantheon is present can be seen easily.

All the things mentioned before belong to important influences in diverse areas of knowledge and culture. But the legacy of these classical civilizations can also be found in items, customs and vocabulary of daily life.



VERSACE

Versace logo with the image of Medusa and Meander

In the field of festivities, the majority of the traditions and events that happen during Christmas' celebration are a clear reference or adaptation of what happened during the Roman Saturnalia which was a festivity in honor of the god Saturn and celebrated the beginning of the lengthening of days. Concerning items and symbols, they can be easily spotted in jewelry, clothes and decoration. For instance, the owl is a very

used animal in jewels. This animal is one of the symbols of the goddess Athena and it is connected with knowledge. Also the Pegasus, the Eagle, the Minotaur and the famous motif called Meander or Greek Key are more examples of the use of Greek elements in fashion. Continuing with the topic of fashion, there are also brands and advertising campaigns which people are very used to see every day and are directly influenced by Classical tradition. Just to mention some examples related to this interesting subject, there is the use of the image of Medusa in Versace's logo, a fine jewelry manufactured called Pandora, an enterprise dedicated to produce items related to sports named Nike as the Greek goddess of victory, Kronos and Omega are two names of watch's brands and there are also numerous cars named with Greek names such as 'alpha', 'Clio' and 'Phaeton'.

Another important thing to mention is the incorporation of words and expressions of Greek and Roman cultures into nowadays vocabulary. The truth is that the influence of the Classical world is noticeable even in language. The addition of words, sayings and expressions into the English language is also a cultural legacy that people practice every day. For instance, the term “siren” or describing a situation as “an Odyssey” or a “Greek tragedy” are some examples of what it is explained here. But more curious words and sayings exist in the English language, such as the Trojan horse, Achilles heel, Herculean task, Pandora’s Box, to be an Adonis, wrong end of the stick and to be between Scylla and Charybdis.



Omega watch with the logo of the Greek letter of the alphabet

In conclusion to this part, the whole world is still influenced inevitably by Greeks and Romans. A very important part of these cultures is still alive with us somehow. In the following sections, the influence of Classical Literature in English Literature will be analyzed in depth. That will state a more solid evidence of this idea: although years and years have passed, we are still Greeks and Romans.

2. The Classical world in English Literature

As it was emphasized before, the importance of the Classical tradition through history is a key point to understand the world nowadays. The influence of Greek and Roman politics, economy, philosophy, ceremonies, art and literature have affected the majority of the western countries which usually based the most important principles in the guidance of the Classical world. In this part, only a small fragment of this huge historical period of influence will be considered: the impact of the Classical tradition in English Literature.

English literary tradition has been influenced by ideas and literature from different parts of the world through history. For example, Germanic and Norse cultures were –and are still – very important in English literature. However, Greek and Roman literature represents the most successful impact for English writers. It is very important to remark before starting that the main influences from Classic Literature are the ones who are considered ‘‘the biggest Classical writers’’ by the English people: Homer, Virgil and Ovid; but they are not the only ones who influenced the English literary tradition. And the extension of this impact covers the three main literary genres: narrative, poetry and drama.

Concerning this brief summary of the history of English Literature, it is necessary to say that it will be considered mainly original works by English authors who were inspired by Greek and Roman world and also original retellings or versions of Classical myths. All the translations of Classical Literature into English will be put aside on this occasion although this has its own importance and it is also a work that deserves to be recognized. And although this essay contains just a few relevant examples of these influences, there are also huge quantities of books written in English that meet all the requirements but they will not be mentioned. The works mentioned in this section are not the only ones that exist about this subject.

Following a chronological order, in the first place, there is the case of *Beowulf* and the question of the Classical hero. This epic poem written in Old English and dated between the 8th and 12th centuries approximately is one of the most important literary works of the Old English period. It tells the legend of Beowulf, a brave warrior who confronts different problems – in the form of three monsters known as Grendel, Grendel’s mother and the Dragon – and die, at the end, as a hero.

Although *Beowulf* took its influence from Germanic, Norse and Christian tradition and not from Greece or Rome, some similarities between the Classical world and the epic poem can be established. Their similarities come especially from Homer; the truth is that *Beowulf* could perfectly fit in the Greek canon for a hero. His qualities, his description and his actions could belong to one of those great warriors who appear in the *Iliad* such as Achilles and Hector. Also there is the fact that *Beowulf* during his journey, is fighting against three marvelous creatures as Odysseus does in the *Odyssey*. Even the appearance of the monsters of *Beowulf* could remind certain creatures from Greek mythology; Grendel and its mother to Giants or Cyclops and also the presence of the Dragon which is an important figure of the Greek mythology. Although *Beowulf* is based on elements from other cultures, it is very noticeable these big similarities between this epic poem and Homer.

Moreover, the canon of the Classical hero is present. And the truth is that this canon will be present in the rest of the history of literature. This model started by Achilles, Hector, Odysseus, Heracles, Jason, Theseus, Perseus and Aeneas among others have been influencing literature since they appeared. Afterward, this canon was adapted regarding the different issues and qualities that a man should have in different periods of history. For instance, in the Middle Ages there is the adaptation into the Christian hero formed by brave knights and righteous kings such as King Arthur, Lancelot and Sir Gawain. Then came the Romantic hero but this time, the authors tried to show that these heroes are not perfect and can commit mistakes. Don Juan, Ivanhoe and even Lord Byron himself are examples of these so-called Romantic heroes. Nowadays this canon is also present in literature and cinema Aragorn (*The Lord of the Rings*), John Snow (*A Song of Ice and Fire*), Superman, Batman, Spiderman, even Luke Skywalker (*Star Wars*) are some of this modern heroes and fulfills the Classical canon.

The next author is Geoffrey Chaucer and his peculiar approach to Greek and Roman mythology. His main influences were French and Italian literature close to his times. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had a direct impact on his main work *The Canterbury Tales*. Also, in some of their literary production appear some references to Ovid and some other elements of the Classical world. In *The Man of Law*, one of the tales which is in *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer mentions the Muses and tries to make a reference to *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's poem. Also in the same work, the author tries to make another reference to the Greek tragedies mistaking them with epic poems.

*"[...] tragedies wol I telle,
 Of whiche I have an hundred in my celle.
 Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
 As olde bookes maken us memorie,
 Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
 And is yfallen out of heigh degree
 Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.
 And they ben versified communely
 Of six feet, which men clepen exametron."*
 (The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer)*

This proves that although Chaucer was not a man with great knowledge about Classical tradition, he knew about Ovid and about the basics of Greek and Latin literature. He also told the tale of Lucretia in *The Legend of Good Woman* and knew about Vigil because he summarizes the story of the Aeneid in *The House of Fame*. Furthermore, he even wrote his own versions of two motifs of Classical literature: *Troilus and Criseyde*, about the Trojan War and *The Legend of Dido*, about this female character of the Aeneid.

Also, it is important to notice the beginning of The General Prologue of his most relevant work *The Canterbury Tales*:

*"Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
 Inspired hath in every holt and heath
 Tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
 Hath in the ram his halve cours yronne"*
 (General Prologue, *the Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer)

*Text taken from *Interlinear Translations of Some of the Canterbury Tales* online:
<https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/tr-index.htm>

It is very curious that he starts the story with the appearance of a figure of the Greek mythology. In conclusion, there is no doubt that Chaucer and his particular intrusion of the Classical tradition in his production could represent an important movement for the use of the Classics in later periods of English Literature.

During the Renaissance, the importance of translation was a significant point for the spreading of Classical culture and literature. After the dark period that was the Middle Age, the Renaissance meant a reborn of Greek and Latin traditions. The figure of the humanist appeared and those people were in charge to rescue, translate and spread Classic literature. So the biggest authors such as Homer, Euripides, Virgil, Ovid, Plautus and Seneca were translated into English with the result that more people got to know about them. But not only epic poems and dramas were translated, historical, philosophical and political works from the Classical period were also converted into English. So the influence of Greece and Roman Empires in literature increased considerably. This was also the period in which a huge number of prolific writers appeared. Among them, two of the most successful ones were William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser. And both of them took elements from the Classic mythology into their literary productions.

Although one of the extended examples that are going to be analyzed in this essay is about one of Shakespeare's plays, it is important to add some relevant data about him concerning this topic. His constant allusions to Greek and Roman mythology in his plays reveal that he was in contact with the Classic world. In his plays, some of the mentions related to this include Hecate, Phoebus, Juno, Cytherea, Hyperion, Mars and Mercury. Moreover, some of his inspirations for his works were the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe – that can be found in *Metamorphoses* by Ovid – for his play *Romeo and Juliet* and some characters like Medea for *Macbeth*'s female role, which will be discussed later. Also, his most popular works known as Shakespeare's tragedies are full of hints that prove that he knew the basics of the composition of a Greek tragedy. Furthermore, it can be also concluded that Shakespeare was familiarized with these Classical authors: Ovid, Seneca, Plutarch, Plautus, Vergil and Caesar since intertextual references can be found in his literary production.

Edmund Spenser was another of the most successful writers of that period. This poet is well known for creating the Spenserian sonnet in which he wrote his most

relevant work *the Faerie Queene* published in 1590. Although this long poem is an allegory about the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and it is set in a fantastic world, some influences of Latin literature can be perceived. In the first place, Spenser conceived *the Faerie Queene* as a narrative poem formed by twelve books, ending up writing just six of them. This idea came from the fact that Virgil's *Aeneid* is composed also of twelve books. He wanted to do an epic poem for the queen inspired in Virgil's work. Moreover, the way in which Spenser's poem is done has some similarities with the way of composition of the *Aeneid* especially in the books I to III.

Other things inspired in the Classical tradition that *the Faerie Queene* includes are for instance, a reference to the Muses; a very important element of the majority of the Classics. The role of the Muses in literature is mainly an invocation of the inspiration during an artistic task such as to compose a poem. Spenser might know this and used the appearance of the Muses as a way of finding his source of inspiration for the *Faerie Queene*. Moreover, in this poem, a Satyr appears as a character in one of the books. All of

this shows the relevance of Greek and Latin literature in their huge legacy.

THE FAERIE QVEENE.

Disposed into twelue books,
Fashioning
XII. Morall vertues.



LONDON
Printed for William Ponsonbie.
1590.

Front page of *The Faerie Queene* published in 1590

After, in the Romantic period, Classical mythology became one of the most popular topics of the poetry of that time. Romanticism was a period of youth, beauty, nature and feelings in literature. So they rescue again the ideas of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. The presence of the Greek gods in the poems was a common thing and also the retellings of myths or the references to them or to important legendary figures. Even in the most important pieces of art of that period such as paintings and sculptures Classical elements and characters can be found easily.

Those who used this kind of inspiration were, especially, the poets of the second generation of the Romantics. Percy Shelley, John Keats and Lord Byron are well known for including several mythological figures in their poems, and also the three of them are acknowledged for being highly educated in Classical tradition. For instance, Shelley and

Byron visited for a long time Italy and Greece. On the other hand, John Keats wrote a poem titled ‘‘Ode to a Grecian Urn’’, so he felt the necessity to claim this legacy and he did it constantly because among these three poets, he is the one who used more mythological characters in his poems. Lord Byron wrote his version of *Don Juan* in cantos as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and also his work *Hints from Horace*, a satire that includes numerous references to Greece and Latin cultures. And Percy Shelley who stated that ‘‘we are all Greeks’’ was deeply attracted to these exotic civilizations. His main concern in his poems was the social cause and the mistreatment of the middle and low classes but he also praised the importance of the Classical world in his period. In *Adonais*, an elegy that he wrote for John Keats’ death he used a way of composition taken from Virgil and also included Classical references in it.

*“Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have wak'd the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turn'd to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.”**

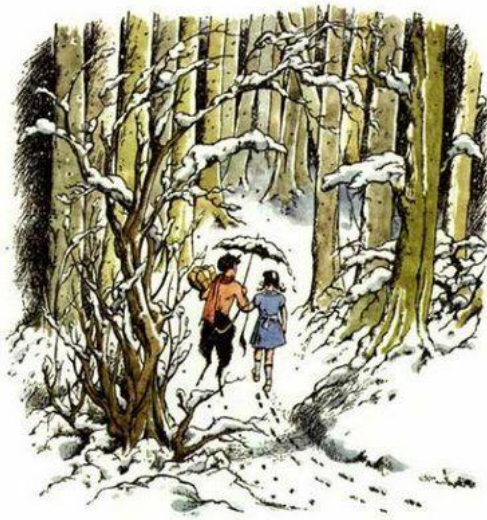
(*Adonais*, stanza XVI by Percy Shelley)

In the most recent periods of literature reminiscences of the Classical world can be also encountered. This is the case of the Modernism and Experimentalism. One of the most representative works of this period is *Ulysses* by the Irish writer James Joyce, published in 1922 and considered the best novel of the 20th century by some critics. Since the title itself, the reference is rather obvious. James Joyce used the *Odyssey* as a point of departure for his long novel. The plot and the characters of Homer’s epic poem are the basis of *Ulysses* although both works apparently have nothing in common apart from the reference in the title.

*text taken from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45112/adonais-an-elegy-on-the-death-of-john-keats>

This is where experimental writing takes an important part to understand the similarities between them. The story narrated in the *Odyssey* in the whole of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. His novel has a symbolic meaning in which a simple day of a man in Dublin can be compared to all the dangerous adventures of Odysseus until he finds a way to come back home. In fact, the titles of the chapters clarify this idea; every chapter is named as a character from the *Odyssey* (Telemachus, Calypso, Nausicaa, Circe, Penelope...) or as a danger that he faced during the journey in the sea (Lotus Eaters, Hades, Aeolus, Scylla and Charybdis, Sirens, Cyclops...). All of this and more elements create a symbol with a huge meaning of the whole novel. So somehow, James Joyce's *Ulysses* could be considered as a modern epic story adapted to new times and circumstances.

And even today, literature is full of Classical influences. Novels, comics – also known as graphic novels – and film scripts inspire their stories in Classical tradition. For instance, several books and films are set in the Roman Empire. *Ben-Hur*, *Quo Vadis*, *Gladiator* and *Imperium* among others are some clear examples of this. Another genre that is heavily influenced by mythology is young-adult fiction and children



A faun is one of the characters of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Illustration by Pauline Baynes, which appears in the first edition.

literature from the past century until now. The young-adult genre started to raise its popularity during the first decade of the 21st century and also the importance of film adaptations of famous books made the youngest audience to be interested more in literature. Moreover, some of the most popular sagas of young-adult fiction are influenced by Greek and Roman mythology. This has supposed a revival of the Classical tradition for this public. Some examples of this that everybody knows are *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S Lewis, *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R

Tolkien, the *Harry Potter* saga by J.K Rowling and *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* by Rick Riordan.

3. Lady Macbeth, the Scottish Medea

In this section, a comparison of similar facts between two of the most famous characters in the drama area: Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth and Euripides' Medea will be provided. These two women would probably be the first ones that will come to our minds when we are asked about strong female characters in plays. Regardless of the historical period where the plays were performed, these characters will shake the audience for any reason.

They two belong to different plays from different times and different plots with an environment that differs from one another. But the truth is that Lady Macbeth and Medea have very important features in common. So, the idea is to analyze the similarities of these women focusing on two main fields: their personality, concerning their behavior and nature, and their environment, related to their situations and events.

Although Ben Johnson wrote about Shakespeare that he knew 'small Latin and less Greek', it seems that this well-known Greek character might be an influence for the creation of Lady Macbeth.

- Similarities between Lady Macbeth and Medea

Lady Macbeth is the main female character of the play *Macbeth* (1606). She is the wife of the protagonist and is characterized by being ambitious and very intelligent.

Medea is the protagonist of the namesake play by the Greek tragedy writer Euripides wrote in the 5th century before Christ. She is a mythological character, daughter of the king of Colchis and priestess of Hecate which makes her a sorceress. Medea is deeply in love with Jason and helped him in some missions.

- Their personality

The first feature concerning the personality of these characters is that they are exactly the opposite of the way in which a woman had to behave at their periods. Lady Macbeth and Medea represented the contrary to the female role that the society had for them. Women were supposed to be always charming, weak, kind and submissive to men. For the viewers of the play, it had to be a shocking experience when they saw for the first time the behavior of these women. One of the first things which it is noticed is their violent conduct. Fierceness was a characteristic that only was related to men. They

were warriors, fought in bloody battles and were the ones that had to commit revenge, so violence was a strong issue connected with them. But in the plays of Macbeth and Medea, the female characters possess that quality and broke the roles of the society.

Lady Macbeth's violence promoted by her ambition was manifested when she planned the murder of King Duncan in her own castle when he was their guest which was the worst action a human can commit. Lady Macbeth trusted in the prophecy which said that his husband would be king and she was ready to fulfill those words:

*"We fail!
But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep--
Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him--his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince
That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep
Their drenched natures lie as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell?"**

(Lady Macbeth in act 1, scene 7, lines 60-72)

She directed the king's homicide and even she was the one who tried to kill the king initially when her husband had moral doubts about the terrible act. Moreover, Lady Macbeth offers one of the most violent images which can exist: the image of a mother killing her son with her own hands:

*"I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this."*

(Lady Macbeth in act 1, scene 7, lines 54-59)

*All *Macbeth* quotes are taken from : *Macbeth*. Oxford University Press. England. Oxford (2001)

This hypothetical example which she says, demonstrates one more time her firm determination to do what is necessary for the ambition of becoming his husband king. The curious parallelism between she and Medea is that Lady Macbeth suggested that she would be able to kill her own child if she would promise and Medea actually murders her children.

The violence that shows the character of Medea transmits an idea of ferocity as Lady Macbeth and also revenge. She previously murdered her own brother, cut him in pieces and threw them to the sea so her father could never give his son a burial. Her desire in the whole play is to revenge her husband Jason because he abandoned her to marry the princess of Corinth. In the work of Euripides, she describes with detail how she is going to kill the King of Corinth and her daughter and ends doing what she has proposed. But her violent acts do not finish there, she also planned to kill her own children to complete the revenge against Jason and end his offspring.

“My friends. I have determined to do the deed at once, to kill my children and leave this land, and not to falter or give my children over to let a hand more hostile murder them. They must die and since they must I, who brought them into the world, will kill them.”

(Medea in episode V, line 1235-1240)*

Both of them also are remarkable for being extremely intelligent, assertive and strong. Connected with strength which is another feature for men only because women had to be weak, they broke again the gender roles. Both characters wanted to be deprived of their femininity or female characteristics. This is another evidence of them being the opposite of what a woman had to behave and for that, Shakespeare and Euripides gave them ‘male characteristics’:

“They say that we (women) live a life free of danger at home while they face with the spear. How wrong they are. I would rather stand three times in the line of battle than once bear a child.”

(Medea in episode 1, lines 246-250)

*All *Medea* quotes are taken from Euripides. *Medea*, online translation by C. A. E. Luschnig.

<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/EuripidesMedeaLuschnig.pdf>

*"Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty!"*

(Lady Macbeth in act 1, scene 5, lines 39-42)

Lady Macbeth and Medea also share another feature: both have a deep love for their husbands. They are truly in love with the men who married and helped them with their plans (Lady Macbeth with the ambition of their husband to become a king and Medea with the Golden Fleece). Thus, love is one of the motives of the events of both plays and those feelings are usually a tragic factor in literature.

Another factor that they have in common is that they are manipulative. In the plot of both plays, they manipulate their husbands with the intention of doing something which they desire, that in both cases prove to be an assassination. The issue of women controlling men was connected with sorcery and evil intentions because a woman could never manipulate a man or give orders to him, women had to be subordinated to the male power. In *Macbeth* and *Medea*, the scenes where the female protagonists exercise control over the male figure present an important point of the plot:

*"What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you"*

(Lady Macbeth in act 1, scene 7, lines 48-54)

After appealing to the cowardice or the little bravery of Macbeth, his wife states that he is not a real man. Lady Macbeth questions his masculinity in order to manipulate him to kill King Duncan. Although Macbeth explains that he did not have reasons to do this action, Lady Macbeth convinced him and he committed the crime.

"I will lend a hand in this effort too. I will send her gifts which are the most lovely in all the world, I am sure of it, by far the most lovely: a fine dress and a tiara of beaten gold and my children carrying them. Quick, one of my servants, bring here the ornaments. Enter servant

with gifts. She will be happy not in just one but in countless ways: in you she has a most excellent husband and she will also possess these ornaments which Helios, the Sun, father of my father gave to his descendants. Take these wedding gifts into your hands, children, and give them to the happy royal bride. She will receive most perfect gifts”

(Medea in episode IV, lines 945-957)

In the play *Medea*, she pretends to accept the marriage of Jason and the princess of Corinth and manipulates him to believe her. Medea also wants to give the princess a wedding dress as a present and make her children deliver it to her. Probably by using her children Medea wanted to seem innocent and give that as a peace offering. Jason trusted in her and she could execute her revenge. Because of the dress and the tiara which were poisoned by magic, the princess and her father were killed.

- Their environment

In this part, it will be considered the common features of Lady Macbeth and Medea concerning their environment or their similar situation in the plot of the plays.

To begin with, both of them, Lady Macbeth and Medea belong to royalty. The ancestors of Lady Macbeth are not explained in the play but in that period, royalty men only could marry royalty women. Moreover, she is the wife of Macbeth who is a Lord and also the thane of Glamis and after Cawdor. That means that she has a high royal title. However, Lady Macbeth has a bigger ambition: to become queen.

In the other part, Medea was a princess. Her father was Aetes, the king of Colchis and her mother was a nymph. Furthermore, Medea's grandfather was the god Helios which makes her not only connected with royalty but also with divinity. She was expelled of her land because she helped Jason, the man who she fell in love with, who was also a prince.

Another remarkable thing is that they were married to men who were considered heroes. Lord Macbeth was a natural warrior as it is commented at the beginning of the play when he and other characters just have fought in a battle for King Duncan. In that conversation, Macbeth is highlighted for being the bravest and the best fighter. He was a good warrior, courageous and also loyal to his king and friends, qualities that make him called hero by the people. In the first part of Macbeth, the protagonist is worthy of that title by his environment but in the end, he happens to be the opposite, he is only an unfortunate and wicked man.

Medea's lover, Jason is one of the biggest heroes in Greek mythology along with Achilles and Heracles. Jason captained one of the most famous fleets of the mythological Greece and completed the mission of the Golden Fleece. He also fought against several creatures and counted with the blessing of some gods. In short, with all of this fame and glory which Jason had, it was normal that Medea fell in love with him but sadly he left her, the mother of his children for another princess. Although he was a great hero, the truth is that Medea helped him in various important tasks that without her he might have not achieved. And the same as the character of Macbeth, at the end of the play, Jason is a miserable man who is alone and cannot do anything to fix his situation.

These women also have in common the topic of their connection with the supernatural. Even though both plays have a close relation with supernatural elements (in Macbeth appears three witches, prophecies and ghosts; and in Medea sorcery and the will of the gods), the main female characters of both plays are linked in a special way with evil powers.

It is said that Lady Macbeth could represent the archetype of the witch. This role reserved only to the wicked characters of a story could fit in her situation. In the famous intervention of Lady Macbeth when she says 'unsex me', previously mentioned, she invokes supernatural forces in order to help her to fulfill the murder of the king. She also affirms that she would be able to kill her own son, something which only a witch could do and she believed the three witches when they said that Macbeth will be king meanwhile her husband did not believe so much in their words at first.

In the case of Medea, the connection is clearer. She is a sorceress and was Hecate's apprentice (famous mythological witch that also appears as a character in Macbeth). She knows about magic and how to use it; also she is famous for that.

"You are innately clever and skilled in many evils"

(Creon to Medea in episode I, line 284)

An obvious example is when Medea uses magic in the wedding dress of the princess of Corinth and gave her and the king a horrible death. She also owns the characteristics of the Greek mythological witches (along with Calypso and Circe): she is

related to the gods, she is independent and practically live alone and she is considered as an insane person by society.

Furthermore, Lady Macbeth and Medea are seen as murders, although the first one had a worse end than the other. Lady Macbeth felt repentant and lost her mind. In that situation, she left us one of the most famous scenes of the Shakespearean drama: when she was sleepwalking and tried to wash her hands which remind her of the crime that she committed:

"Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two: why, then, 'tis time to do't.--Hell is murky!--Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?--Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him."

(Lady Macbeth in act 5, scene 1, lines 31-36)

That leads us to their last characteristic concerning the environment: they have a bad reputation in society, especially in the period where they belong. As it is explained before, their characters represent the opposite of the conception of the woman in those times but also they were created to be seen as the wicked of the story. Even though



Medea about to kill her children,
by E. Delacroix (1838)

Lady Macbeth and Medea are powerful, independent and very clever, sadly they were made to demonstrate that this type of behavior is a bad way of living. In consequence, the public who watched or read the plays could think about them that they were very far for being good women and human beings. Maybe, the authors did a kind of double meaning creating these characters so we can analyze the real feeling and intentions of these women, or maybe this was no their purpose.

As a conclusion, it is worthy to mention the huge impact and legacy of Lady Macbeth and Medea for later periods and movements. These famous female characters had an especial influence on the Romantic Movement. In this period, there was a revival of fictional and real strong women from the past and one of

the most popular figures which they represented was Lady Macbeth and Medea. So, we can find several paintings and also written works of the Romanticism where they appear. Since that period, they both ceased to be viewed as evil beings and started to obtain a fame of empowerment and independence in defying the patriarchal society.



Lady Macbeth by George Cattermole (1850)

Also in recent times, they are used as an object of study for the feminist theory as examples of fictional women in literature who broke the gender roles and influence the feminist movement. There is no doubt about their importance nowadays. Although Lady Macbeth and Medea had an obscure past and were considered villains for trying not to be dependent on a man and be more intelligent than them, finally they have acquired the understanding and the importance they deserve.

4. Pygmalion: Ovid and George Bernard Shaw

One of the most interesting cases in English literature is the adaptation of the myth of Pygmalion to an updated version for the Victorian period. The myth is naturally told in a way in which every citizen can understand, giving strong features to the two lead roles of the play. Although Bernard Shaw's work has a strong didactic intention, the main plot is based on this famous Greek myth. The process of adaptation, the analysis of the two main characters and the influence of the myth and Bernard Shaw's play nowadays will be considered.

In the first place, it is a must to talk briefly about the origin: the myth of Pygmalion. This story belongs to the folklore of Cyprus Island, so the start of the legend belongs to Greek mythology. Pygmalion is one of the most famous figures in Cyprus. His story is about romantic love (do not forget that Cyprus is Aphrodite's island) and also about art and the creation of something ideal, the concept of perfection.

The most popular form in which this myth came to us today is through the book *Metamorphoses* by the Latin writer Ovid. This long poem compiles the mythical story of the classical Greek and Rome since the creation of the universe to Ovid's present time: Julius Caesar, to show how the Emperor of Rome is connected directly with the gods. It has fifteen parts and each of them contains some of the most famous stories of the Greek mythology being one of them the myth of Pygmalion.

The legend of Pygmalion appears in book X of *Metamorphoses*. It is the story of a king who did not like any of the women who surrounded him so he sculptured a statue of his ideal woman. After that, he fell in love with his own creation and begged the goddess Aphrodite to make the woman of his statue real. Finally, when he came to his palace, he kissed the statue and she came to life. This is the general notion of the myth told in *Metamorphoses*. But as this part of the poem is rather short, it is very interesting to see the original text of the myth below and then, compare it to the plot of *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw:

'Pygmalion had seen them, spending their lives in wickedness, and, offended by the failings that nature gave the female heart, he lived as a bachelor, without a wife or partner for his bed. But, with wonderful skill, he carved a figure, brilliantly, out of snow-white ivory, no mortal woman, and fell in love with his own creation. The features are

those of a real girl, who, you might think, lived, and wished to move, if modesty did not forbid it. Indeed, art hides his art. He marvels: and passion, for this bodily image, consumes his heart. Often, he runs his hands over the work, tempted as to whether it is flesh or ivory, not admitting it to be ivory. He kisses it and thinks his kisses are returned; and speaks to it; and holds it, and imagines that his fingers press into the limbs, and is afraid lest bruises appear from the pressure. Now he addresses it with compliments, now brings it gifts that please girls, shells and polished pebbles, little birds, and many-coloured flowers, lilies and tinted beads, and the Heliades's amber tears, that drip from the trees. He dresses the body, also, in clothing; places rings on the fingers; places a long necklace round its neck; pearls hang from the ears, and cinctures round the breasts. All are fitting: but it appears no less lovely, naked. He arranges the statue on a bed on which cloths dyed with Tyrian murex are spread, and calls it his bedfellow, and rests its neck against soft down, as if it could feel.

'The day of Venus's festival came, celebrated throughout Cyprus, and heifers, their curved horns gilded, fell, to the blow on their snowy neck. The incense was smoking, when Pygmalion, having made his offering, stood by the altar, and said, shyly: "If you can grant all things, you gods, I wish as a bride to have..." and not daring to say "the girl of ivory" he said "one like my ivory girl." Golden Venus, for she herself was present at the festival, knew what the prayer meant, and as a sign of the gods' fondness for him, the flame flared three times, and shook its crown in the air. When he returned, he sought out the image of his girl, and leaning over the couch, kissed her. She felt warm: he pressed his lips to her again, and also touched her breast with his hand. The ivory yielded to his touch, and lost its hardness, altering under his fingers, as the bees' wax of Hymettus softens in the sun, and is moulded, under the thumb, into many forms, made usable by use. The lover is stupefied, and joyful, but uncertain, and afraid he is wrong, reaffirms the fulfilment of his wishes, with his hand, again, and again.

*'It was flesh! The pulse throbbed under his thumb. Then the hero, of Paphos, was indeed overfull of words with which to thank Venus, and still pressed his mouth against a mouth that was not merely a likeness. The girl felt the kisses he gave, blushed, and, raising her bashful eyes to the light, saw both her lover and the sky. The goddess attended the marriage that she had brought about, and when the moon's horns had nine times met at the full, the woman bore a son, Paphos, from whom the island takes its name.**

In his play, George Bernard Shaw used the concept of this story, especially he used and developed the idea of the man as a creator who falls in love with his own creation and it also provides an analysis of what kind of love or relationship is that.



Pygmalion by Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1786)

*This fragment is taken from an online translation of *Metamorphoses* to English by tr. Anthony S. Kline that can be found in the following link: <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm#askline>

Moreover, the figure of the statue represented in the play by Eliza has her own voice and perspective which is absent in the original version of Ovid.

- The Victorian Theatre and George Bernard Shaw

The Victorian drama suffered several changes during the time. In the early years, drama was not considered part of serious literature but little by little some playwrights made themselves a name and the figures of the producer and the critic started to emerge. Some plays became very famous among the public of all classes especially comedies and plays about daily life situations with a domestic setting that dealt with concerns of the middle-class. The public wanted reality in the plot. Furthermore, this middle-class became a complete new audience which was a powerful public. A clear example of all of this is Oscar Wilde's comedies such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) which is considered one of the most important plays of the Victorian Period.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) born in Ireland is also one of the most popular playwrights of this era along with Oscar Wilde. Bernard Shaw moved to the United Kingdom where he started to write. He was characterized for writing plays about political and social controversies of his days such as *Widowers's Houses* (1892) and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1898). He was completely involved with politics and social causes of the country and used his works to transmit his ideas. Although his main influence in his writings was the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, Shaw was also familiar with the classical tradition. He wrote a play about the Latin topic of Caesar and Cleopatra in his namesake play in 1901 and also wrote another play with another classical topic *Androcles and the Lion* (1912).

But there is no doubt that his most popular play based in a story of the classical world is *Pygmalion* (1913). This work is not only one of his most important works but also the one that has the most relevance and influence nowadays.

- Transmission and adaptation of the myth

Although the foundation of the story is the story told by Ovid, George Bernard Shaw did a great achievement in extrapolating this ancient Greek myth to his daily life, to his present. It is like a modern and fresh version of the legend that maintains the essence of the original story but adding ordinary elements of the Victorian Period.

Following this idea, the setting, Cyprus, is now London a cosmopolitan and modern city and a place where a story like that could happen. The arrogant king Pygmalion who did not like any of the women of his place is Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics and a well-known bachelor. He is a rather misanthropist man who feels disgusted by the way people talk and pronounce the words, especially people from middle and low class. He is a very serious man that is always waiting for the opportunity to show his knowledge about phonetics. And finally, the statue – also known as Galatea – which is represented by Eliza Doolittle, a poor flower girl who lives with his father and sells flowers in the streets of London to gain some money. In the myth, the statue takes a passive role and only has a romantic function in the story but in the play, Eliza is a well-made character with an interesting development. Another important character is Colonel Pickering who is Henry Higgins' friend and helps him to educate Eliza. His role is more like a peaceful mediator and the only one who shows a calm and rational behavior.

In the original myth, Pygmalion got bored of all the in real life women and he started to make a sculpture of his perfect woman with the result of him falling in love with the sculpture, Galatea. In George Bernard Shaw's play, this theme, the part of the romantic relationship which is very significant in the legend, is controversial, literary speaking. Higgins shows interest in Eliza but not in her as a woman, his interest was just a curiosity of his profession. Higgins insulted her for her pronunciation of the English language but at the same time he was fascinated by the way she articulated those sounds.

"Woman: cease this detestable boohooing instantly; or else seek the shelter of some other place of worship."

*"[whipping out his book] Heavens! what a sound! [He writes; then holds out the book and reads, reproducing her vowels exactly] Ah — ah — ah — ow — ow — ow — oo!"**

(Henry Higgins in act I)

*All the fragments of *Pygmalion* used in this essay are taken from an online version of the book and it can be found in the following link:
https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/shaw/george_bernard/pygmalion/contents.html

Then, he accepted to teach her and bet with Colonel Pickering that she will pass as a high- class woman in three months if he taught her how to speak correctly. Later, at the end of the play, the reader knows that Henry Higgins feels affection for Eliza because of the way she has learned and because they won the bet. She is now his creation; he made a fake duchess out of a flower girl. She is important to him because he reinvented her. Even when they fought and she run away from his house, he looked for her and tried to fix things with her.

"I shall miss you, Eliza. [He sits down near her on the ottoman]. I have learnt something from your idiotic notions: I confess that humbly and gratefully. And I have grown accustomed to your voice and appearance. I like them, rather. "

(Higgings in act V)

This quote of the play shows that Higgins does not love her romantically, he loves the work he did with her.

The relationship between Higgins and Eliza is the most controversial point of the play. But it is very important to considerate this issue because it also makes questioning us about the romance between Pygmalion and the sculpture in the legend. This topic will be analyzed more deeply in the next section.

- Topics and influence of the myth in *Pygmalion* and its characters

The most important themes of the play can be summarized in these three terms: phonetics, low-class and appearances.

Concerning phonetics, during the time that George Bernard Shaw was writing his *Pygmalion*, this area of linguistics was starting to be very popular. Linguists were concerned about the right pronunciation of the English language and the different ways in which people could utter the same word. And Shaw was one of those who tried to find a scientific answer for the most important phonetic questions. This is one of the main reasons why he centered this play on that issue. He explained it himself in the preface to *Pygmalion*:

"The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it. They spell it so abominably that no man can teach himself what it sounds like. It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other

Englishman hate or despise him. German and Spanish are accessible to foreigners: English is not accessible even to Englishmen. The reformer England needs today is an energetic phonetic enthusiast: that is why I have made such a one the hero of a popular play."

(George Bernard Shaw in Preface to *Pygmalion*, a Professor of Phonetics)

As he said, the hero of his work is a professor of phonetics, Henry Higgins who is a perfectionist in this subject. And also, that is why one of the most prominent parts of the plot is Eliza's pronunciation and her evolution as a student of phonetics. So it can be concluded that *Pygmalion* is a partially didactic play and even though one of the intentions is to let people know about phonetics, the play has also comic points and relatable situations for the audience. All this combination made Shaw's work very entertainment for the public of his period and it was a success.

The next topic is related to the situation of the working class in London. Although Higgins is presented as a rich bachelor who is highly educated, the female protagonist and her father represent the condition of the low-class in that period. Eliza and her father live in a poor neighborhood and selling flowers in the streets is Eliza's only way to make a living. Furthermore, when she accepted to be taught by Professor Higgins in his house Mr. Doolittle, her father burst into Higgins' place and asked for money in exchange for letting his daughter to stay in his house. Even when Mr. Doolittle asked for financial compensation he could not stop repeating that they belonged to the working class and were very poor.

The previous matter is in connection with the following topic of the play: appearances. Pretending to be someone who you are not was one of Shakespeare's favorite themes. Maintaining the good face and being apparently correct to the society but being rotten to the core inside was a very used issue in literature since the Renaissance. In the Victorian Period, the game of pretending was also very popular in literature which sometimes led to a comic misunderstanding but that also showed the reality of the society. It is said that the Victorian era was a time in which appearances played an important role. People tried to behave in a polite and educated manner but it was a fake image of who they truly were. Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* is one of the biggest examples concerning this topic.

In *Pygmalion*, the theme of appearances appears when Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering bet about to make Eliza to speak and to look like a duchess. Professor Higgins taught her for three months and after that, he brought her to exuberant parties pretending to be an educated woman of an important family. As was said before, for the public it was comedy but also it reflected the reality of the Victorian Society.

Another aspect that is very relevant to analyze is the two main characters and the dynamic of their relationship. At the same time, it will be compared with the obvious influence of the characters of the legend of *Pygmalion*.

- Professor Henry Higgins as *Pygmalion*



Pygmalion's play performance in 1914

Pygmalion was the king of Cyprus so he was a very important person in the society occupying a prominent place but he was also considerate as an unconventional man who did not adjust to the normal view or thought in some aspects. For example, he was not married because none of the women that he knew were not considered interesting based on his standards. In the same way, Higgins is a rich gentleman and also very educated in linguistics, especially phonetics, area in which he works as a professor. He is also known for being single even though he is a grown man. Phonetics is not only his profession but also his passion; he is obsessed with the advances of phonetics and is always writing transcriptions of people's conversations and even he uses images and pictures to analyze the visible speech. But this character can be conceited and arrogant sometimes. He takes every opportunity to show his incredible abilities as a professor of linguistics. This can be found in act I when he is guessing the streets where the speakers live.

"Simply phonetics. The science of speech. That's my profession; also my hobby. Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby! You can spot an Irishman or a

Yorkshireman by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles. I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets."

(Henry Higgins in act I)

When he met Eliza he was taking notes of what she was speaking to study her personal slang and dialect which he hated and was amazed at the same time. She was a difficult case so he offered himself to teach her for three months. Later on, along with Colonel Pickering, they made a bet about her, so Higgins did considerate her as the greatest challenge in his profession. After the period of her instruction they were going to take her to high society parties and they would pretend that she is a woman of prominence. His ambition and dedication turned Eliza into a different woman that now could belong to the high class. When all of this ended, Eliza felt disappointed and thought that they were using her only for the bet so she run away. At this point, another important aspect between the myth and the play appears.

Pygmalion sculptured a statue himself representing his ideals of a perfect woman; he dressed the sculpture and talked to it as if it was a real woman. Then he realized that he was in love with the statue and begged the goddess Aphrodite to make it real so he can marry her. When Eliza escaped, Higgins went quickly to find her and when they met each other there was another argument again but the writer, in his attempt to make things clearer, he left the audience even more confused. In the legend, Pygmalion was in love with the sculpture that he made but, is it the same case for George Bernard Shaw's play? In their last conversation in act V words of admiration and appreciation for her can be found but is that necessary romantic love?

An important point to answer this is to analyze the following quotes of the play:

"Let her speak for herself. You will jolly soon see whether she has an idea that I haven't put into her head or a word that I haven't put into her mouth. I tell you I have created this thing out of the squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden; and now she pretends to play the fine lady with me."

"Rubbish! you shall marry an ambassador. You shall marry the Governor-General of India or the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, or somebody who wants a deputy-queen. I'm not going to have my masterpiece thrown away on Freddy."

" [...] If you come back, come back for the sake of good fellowship; for you'll get nothing else. You've had a thousand times as much out of me as I have out of you; and if you dare to set up your little dog's tricks of fetching and carrying slippers against my creation of a Duchess Eliza, I'll slam the door in your silly face."

(Henry Higgins talking about Eliza Doolittle in act V)

In these three quotes the words "creation" and "masterpiece" have appeared in the text. Henry Higgins wants to be in good terms with Eliza because he cares about her, because she is his masterpiece, his superior work of art. This admiration or "love" as a lot of people called this, is simply a question of art. Higgins watches Eliza with artistic eyes. Even George Bernard Shaw himself had to add a postscript in which he clarifies that *Pygmalion* is not a romantic story.

- Eliza Doolittle as the statue

The biggest difference between the original legend and Shaw's play is that in the second one, the reader has the perspective of the creation – or the statue – in the story. She has her own voice and a role as important as the male lead.

At the beginning, she is a flower girl at the Portico of Saint Paul's Church. She was there selling flowers when she met Professor Henry Higgins who insulted her pronunciation. She is assertive, extroverted and beautiful; moreover, she is not afraid of new challenges. Eliza is the one who went to Higgins' house and asked for lessons and she says that her aim is to work in a flower shop. Surprisingly, she turns out to be a fast learner and ends up pretending to be a high- class woman successfully. The interesting aspect of her narrative happens when the bet is over and Higgins and Pickering won.

"Nothing wrong — with YOU. I've won your bet for you, haven't I? That's enough for you. I don't matter, I suppose."

[...]

"Because I wanted to smash your face. I'd like to kill you, you selfish brute. Why didn't you leave me where you picked me out of — in the gutter? You thank God it's all over, and that now you can throw me back again there, do you?"

(Eliza Doolittle in act IV)

She realizes that she has been an experiment the whole time and now that is over they do not need her anymore and tired of the apparent mistreatment she run away concerned about her future now that she has to come back to the streets again. During that moment, Eliza is probably suffering an internal struggling about her identity. It is important to bear in mind that Professor Higgins has reconstructed her. He took away the poor flower girl and made a different woman and now, after all, she is not useful anymore. This is the main reason of her anger and the main subject of their last confrontation. Eliza is not a quiet girl, she expresses her disappointment to everyone and her fear about her future. Although she says that she has some friendly affection for him, they started to argue again.

"I want a little kindness. I know I'm a common ignorant girl, and you a book-learned gentleman; but I'm not dirt under your feet. What I done [correcting herself] what I did was not for the dresses and the taxis: I did it because we were pleasant together and I come — came — to care for you; not to want you to make love to me, and not forgetting the difference between us, but more friendly like."

(Eliza Doolittle in act V)

Some groups of readers and critics said that both protagonists had a romantic relationship and that *Pygmalion* is about a love story. Answering to this, George Bernard Shaw wrote in the previously mentioned postscript that Eliza "is not a romantic hero" and that "she is not flirting with Higgins". He also explained that he was not intended to write a love story.

Concerning Eliza's doubts about her future now that the bet has ended, she confesses that she was dependant of Higgins and Pickering because they were her guides but now she realizes that she can be independent and that she wants to be by her own giving an ending of self-empowerment to the play. The creation – or learner – does not need the master anymore. She is not dependent and can go in her own way.

"Oh, you are a cruel tyrant. I can't talk to you: you turn everything against me: I'm always in the wrong. But you know very well all the time that you're nothing but a bully. You know I can't go back to the gutter, as you call it, and that I have no real friends in the world but you and the Colonel" [...]

"You think I like you to say that. But I haven't forgot what you said a minute ago; and I won't be coaxed round as if I was a baby or a puppy. If I can't have kindness, I'll have independence."

(Eliza Doolittle in act V)

- The influence of Pygmalion's legend nowadays

The importance of this legend has endured until nowadays. The myth itself and its characters have been the subject of study of psychology and pedagogy. Even today there is a psychological phenomenon called "the Pygmalion Effect". This effect is based on the belief that a person can achieve their goals if someone trusts in them and mark a fixed target. The same as the myth where the king wished that the statue was real that it ended up to be real, an imaginary though in a human head (goals, aims, wishes...) can be also a reality.

This effect is used for teaching methods between teachers and students and also in enterprises and other working areas between the person in charge and their workers. It is also said that the ideas and expectations of society about women, men, families, jobs etc. are also part of the Pygmalion Effect.

In literature there are also plenty of examples about the influence of the concept of the myth of Pygmalion. As it was said several times during this essay, the Classics of Greek and Roman tradition have never died. Two of the most famous examples in literature that used the idea of this legend are *Pinocchio* (1882-1883) by Carlo Collodi and *Frankenstein* (1818) by the British author Mary Shelley. The desperate wish of Geppetto for being a father became real when his creation, the wooden puppet was brought to life. On the other hand, the ambition of Victor Frankenstein to create a resurrected automaton became truth although that drove to horrible consequences to everybody that he loved.

In cinema is also very easy to find films that talk about the concept of Pygmalion. The most important in this case is the film *My Fair Lady* from 1964, directed by George Cukor and starred by Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison. It is directly based on George Bernard Shaw's play but being this an adaptation as a musical. Nowadays it is considered a cult film but back in its times, it had a popular reaction from the public and won eight Academy Awards. However, the original ending of the

play was changed in the film where Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle are romantically involved.

Apart from the example of *My fair Lady*, the theme of a creator who falls in love with its creation, or the teacher who ends up loving his apprentice is very noticeable in modern cinema. The most relevant films that everybody knows which contains the concept of the legend of Pygmalion are *Vertigo* (1958), *Pretty Woman* (1990), *SlmOne* (2002) and the musical – also adapted to cinema - *The Phantom of the Opera* (2004, film) among other films which share this topic.



Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison in *My Fair Lady* (1964)

5. Upgrading mythology: the American graphic novel

During the 20th century until nowadays the graphic novel as an emergent genre became one of the sources of current culture. In the past century, the culture of the people also known as Popular Culture or Pop Culture took the main impact in society. This culture was approachable for all kinds of people, not only for the educated ones. Until that period, the cultural part of a society was only available for rich and educated people but then working classes could also enjoy music, art and literature among other things. Pop art, pop music, rock, hip-hop, graffiti, videogames, science fiction novels and comics belong now to nowadays culture. This phenomenon lasts until today and has influenced the majority of the people in the 20th and the 21st centuries.

One of the most innovative elements that brought this trend is the graphic novel, also known as comic. This form of expression combined two different types of art: images and text or narration. Through a series of printed pictures previously created by an artist, and an original written text people were able to read a magnificent story. In the United States, the graphic novel represented a completely new way to read, enjoy and share with other fictional events. Young people saved money to buy a brand new chapter and to continue the story.

But there is also a very important debate about this to comment on. Some scholars and other professionals of the literary world state that the comic and the graphic novel do not belong to literature. The two main arguments that lead these people to support this idea are that comics are generally a mainstream product and that comics are more focused on the graphic arts rather than the written part. But the truth is that these graphic novels normally take their sources from literary works. Although the comic is full of images, the story cannot be thought, formed and understood without words. Moreover, some of these stories and quotes taken from them became very relevant nowadays.



Crying girl (1963, 1964) by Roy Lichtenstein is an example of Pop art in comics

Continuing now with the central topic of this essay, American comics are one of the most important productions of this type in the world. And undoubtedly, some of these stories are inspired by Classical literature. In order to focus just on the elements that have more impact in today's society, it will be discussed the influence of the Classical world in superhero stories considering some relevant aspects of the most important comic universes: Marvel and DC.

Marvel Comics has been using different mythologies in their plots. It was explained that all gods and goddesses from different pantheons existed on planet Earth since a lot of time ago before human race did. These creatures belonged to another race which was extremely more superior to humans. And after that, when people started to dwell on Earth, they worshiped this superior race becoming gods and goddesses in title and characteristics. So in the comics themselves, it is very common to see the appearance of figures from different pantheons around the world as regular characters. But in Marvel Universe, there are two mythological groups that take more relevant roles in the stories: Norse and Greek gods. The gods of Asgard have a huge importance in this fictional universe. God Thor is one of the most relevant characters in Marvel Comics and one of the most acclaimed nowadays. Loki, Odin and the rest of the residents of Asgard have also several appearances in the plot.

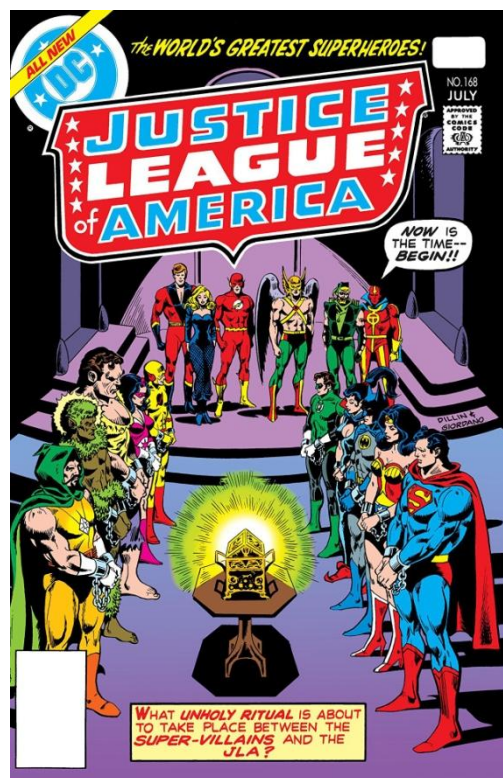
On the other hand, Greek and Roman Pantheon are considered as the most active ones along with the Norse. In the comics, they have numerous appearances in order to help the superheroes in their quests and fights and their race were known in the comics as "the Olympians". The most relevant cases that could be mentioned are Heracles and Elektra. Heracles debuted as a main character of a series of comics in 1965. The inspiration and references are taken directly from the Classical tradition since this Hercules is the same as the original. He eventually joined the Avengers and his plot is full of references and appearances of the Greek and Roman mythology. In the case of Elektra, she is one of the main characters of the comic series *Daredevil* being the love interest of the male lead. She is powerful and aggressive and she has Greek background so this remake of the original character is still having her essence.

Another interesting issue is the indirect influence and references of the Classical tradition in some characters of Marvel Comics. Although this is not legit information, some people are aware of it. So, for instance, it is easy to observe Heracles' bravery and strength in the figure of Hulk, the patriotism and invincibility of Achilles in Captain America or the similarities between Hephaestus and Tony Stark aka

Iron man. A person who is an excellent “blacksmith” since Tony Stark was related to arm industry and creation. He is also an amazing inventor and maker using his design to create his famous robotic costume.

In DC Comics the situation is similar. Figures taken from Greek and Roman mythology are frequently used in several situations. Dionysus, Ares, Hades, Zeus, Apollo, Circe and Athena are some examples of Greek gods who feature in the storylines. Even Heracles is also a recurrent character who appears in the comics. Moreover, one of the most influential and popular characters of DC Comics is directly based on the Classical tradition including her background, behavior and presence. This is the case of Wonder Woman. This heroine of DC Comics is one of the Amazons, according to Greek mythology the Amazons were a tribe formed and ruled only by women. Also, Wonder Woman is called Princess Diana, a clear reference to the Roman form of goddess Artemis. Her mother is Hyppolita, queen of the Amazons and two of her enemies in the plot are Ares and Circe. So the story uses numerous elements of the Classical tradition and rewrites them giving a new light over these old legends.

Furthermore, the same situation as Marvel Comics happens here. There is no confirmed information but many people have noticed the similarities between the characters and the storyline of some DC creations and Classical mythology. The most recognizable parallelism is the case of The Justice League. It is said that the superheroes that form this group have an equivalent in the Greek Pantheon and therefore, are slightly – or strongly – inspired by these mythological figures. For instance, Zeus, the leader of the Olympus and the most powerful of the gods could be Superman, who has a similar function in The Justice League. Aquaman, in this case, is a clear reference to Poseidon and Batman and Hades somehow share this aura of darkness. Flash could be inspired by the god Hermes and the two little wings of his mask could be a reference of Hermes’ wings on his sandals.



Cover of the issue #168 of *The Justice League of America* (1960-1987)

Green Lantern could be the representation of the god Apollo because they both are directly related to light. And as it was mentioned before, Wonder Woman represents Artemis goddess of hunting.

All of this proves that the Classical tradition is more alive than ever. Even today people still read about it, pages and pages of different stories are full of references to Greek and Roman literature. There is no doubt this form of surviving is singular and at the same time incredible.

6. Conclusion

Humanity has been surrounded by Greeks and Romans – or more specifically, their ideas, creations and discoveries – since they were in the spotlight of the world. And that is why they were precisely in the spotlight; Greeks and Romans were successful in everything they did because they were somehow ahead of their time. Their advances in science, philosophy, economy, politics, art and literature marked a very important point in history. People from later periods have been using Greek and Roman basis for almost the most important aspects of daily life: construction of cities, politics governments, military strategies, artistic, social and philosophical movements and new inventions. Even nowadays, people are still using information from thousands of years ago to create aesthetic and useful items.

Moreover, it was proved that English Literature is not free from the influence of the Classical tradition. Legendary and literary characters are still appearing in the most influential works and the most prominent authors of the history of English Literature felt the necessity to study the Classics and participate in their stories, using them as their main source of inspiration. Although Homer, Ovid and Virgil are the Classical writers who had a huge impact on English authors, it could be said that the majority of the written literary legends had their importance in many English books. Also some literary concepts such as heroism, tragedy, epic and even the famous plot twists that the majority of people know nowadays have their origin in the Classical world.

William Shakespeare took references from the Greek and Roman tradition in some relevant occasions in the literary area. The case that was analyzed in this essay, the similarities between Lady Macbeth and Medea is only one of the many times in which Shakespeare felt inspired by elements of the Classics. Both female characters stand out for their complexity and impact on the audience. Their personalities and environment are comparable to each other and it is easy to identify them with one another. There is no doubt that Euripides and Shakespeare created two of the most memorable and complex characters in the history of drama.

George Bernard Shaw gave a new light to the myth of Pygmalion by Ovid. The retelling of the story adapting their main characteristics to a completely different historical period was a successful task. Bernard Shaw preserved the essence of the original work but adjusted it to the necessities, issues and recurrent topics of the Victorian Literature. This is how Pygmalion, King of Cyprus became a prominent

professor of phonetics in London. And also, this is how George Bernard Shaw offered to the audience the point of view of the statue in the character of Liza. So the idea of the complex of Pygmalion in this work was emphasized resulting in an iconic play with a relevant influence in theatre and cinema nowadays.

Furthermore, today's youth still know about the Greek and Roman traditions. Thanks to the mainstream culture which is still using elements from the Classical world many people are interested in the original stories of some of their favorite superheroes. The most popular comic series have influence of Classic Literature. Their stories, characters and backgrounds came from ancient stories that do not want to be forgotten.

In conclusion, the majority of things that are commonly considered as original are adaptations of creations from Greek and Roman periods. People in consciously or unconsciously ways are still consuming and drinking from Classical sources. Humanity is still distant relatives of Greeks and Romans preserving numerous memories from their ancestors.

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