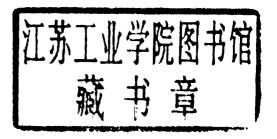Ashgate

Pygmalion and Galatea

The history of a narrative in English literature

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General Editors' Preface

The aim of this series is to reflect, develop and extend the great burgeoning of interest in the nineteenth century that has been an inevitable feature of recent decades, as that former epoch has come more sharply into focus as a locus for our understanding not only of the past, but also of the contours of our modernity. Though it is dedicated principally to the publication of original monographs and symposia in literature, history, cultural analysis, and associated fields, there will be a salient role for reprints of significant texts from, or about, the period. This, we believe, distinguishes our project from comparable ones, and means, for example, that in relevant areas of scholarship we both recognize and cut innovatively across such parameters as those suggested by the designations 'Romantic' and 'Victorian'. We welcome new ideas, while valuing tradition. It is hoped that the world which predates yet so forcibly predicts and engages our own will emerge in parts, as a whole, and in the lively currents of debate and change that are so manifest an aspect of its intellectual, artistic and social landscape.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

The story of Pygmalion and his statue is one of the most enduring tales in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It tells of a sculptor who, rejecting the women of his island, creates a beautiful woman from ivory. The statue, who in later literature comes to be known as Galatea, is brought to life when Pygmalion prays to Venus. *Pygmalion and Galatea* traces the development of the Pygmalion story in English literature from the Middle Ages to the present, following it through a wide variety of versions ranging from tales of love and ideal beauty to vehicles for philosophical, religious, political and aesthetic ideas. Retold for centuries, the Pygmalion story acquires its own distinctive stylistic and thematic marks in each age. It is the aim of this study to bring together these renarrations and examine the interaction between them.

Tracing the history of such a tale is problematized by its classification as a myth, though it is common to refer to it as such. Calling a narrative a 'myth' implies much about how it functions. Myth is associated with social and cultural practices, and has, therefore, been of great interest to anthropologists and psychologists. Indeed, whether one can meaningfully divorce myth (as narrative) from its societal function is a problem. The definition and usage of the word 'myth' has changed so much that it is impossible to give a universal explanation which does justice to all of its connotations. It is more practical to ask, rather, what is the status of a story from Ovid's collection? Most writers on myth concur that there is a difference between an artistic tale such as Ovid's and the story on which it is based. Martin Day suggests dividing the tale types into 'archaic', 'intermediate' and 'derivative' myths.[1] The pre-Ovidian Pygmalion story, as an 'archaic myth', functions only in the society to which it is indigenous. Only fragments remain of the Pygmalion story of this type. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* belongs to the category of 'intermediate myth'; it is the work of a 'highly conscious artist, dominated by aesthetic impulses and intent upon neat, attractive telling of a good story' (Day, p. 5). *Metamorphoses* contains many culturally important versions of myths.

Post-classical renarrations, such as are discussed here, are 'derivative' myths, and are distinguished from intermediate myths by their variety and flexibility. As a derivative myth, the Pygmalion story has undergone numerous changes over the years, and, like many classical tales, for much of its history it has been most often retold by men. In the past, male writers have had better access to classical education and have found it easier to connect with a story which describes the male artist's definition of the ideal female body and the role of that body as a

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[1] Martin Day, *The Many Meanings of Myth* (Lanham, Maryland, 1984), p. 5.

perfect wife. Women writers show an interest in the story from the late nineteenth century onwards, often giving it a feminist gloss. Re-readings of classical myths have come to the fore in feminist and psychoanalytical criticism (and in combinations of the two).[2] Both schools use myth as an archetypal or metaphorical narrative with which to explain human behaviour. Feminist critics argue that myths perpetuate masculine misogynistic constructs of gender, but that they can nevertheless be reinterpreted:

> At first glance traditional myths seem remarkably anti-woman. [...] Feminist critics argue that Graeco-Roman myths are often masculine constructs whose narratives only reflect the anxieties of male psyches. The main project of feminist myth-critics is to move away from these constructs, perhaps to find that myths are originally feminine or at least to discover the outlines of some earlier, more specifically female, mythologies (Humm, pp. 16–17).

In this type of criticism, the study of the overt renarration of the myth (i.e. a particular named version of the story) is passed over in favour of locating it as a general pattern in other narratives. This involves an '*overlay* [of] meanings *from* myths on to texts, forming filters of critical explanations' (Humm, p. 26). Mythic filtration of narratives necessitates an acceptance of the social function of myth (as an archetypal narrative with enduring significance within a community) and a willingness to combine this acceptance with the methods of literary criticism.

Myth as archetype is quite distinct from myth as (named or unnamed) text. Archetypes are by no means easily defined, but critics concur that there is a universal quality in archetypal narrative which leads to its transmission through the ages, and generates its applicability to texts that may or may not be intentionally alluding to it. Such narrative is 'perennial and recurring'.[3] When used as an archetype, a myth is extracted from its historical context and grafted onto another period. Northrop Frye sees archetype as an enlightening critical tool for understanding narratives:

> Rousseau says that the original society of nature and reason has been overlaid by the corruptions of civilization, and that a sufficiently

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²   See Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London, 1985), Adrienne Auslander Munich, *Andromeda's Chains: Gender and Interpretation in Victorian Literature and Art* (New York, 1989), Katherine Heinrichs, *The Myths of Love: Classical Lovers in Medieval Literature* (Pennsylvania, 1990), Maggie Humm, *Practising Feminist Criticism: An Introduction* (London, 1995) and *The Woman's Companion to Mythology*, ed. by Caroline Larryngton (London, 1997).

³   Alvin A Lee, 'Archetype', in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, ed. by Irena R. Makaryk (Toronto, 1993), p. 508.

courageous revolutionary act could reestablish it. It is nothing either for or against this argument to say that it is informed by the myth of the Sleeping Beauty. But we cannot agree or disagree with Rousseau until we fully understand what he does say, and while of course we can understand him well enough without extracting the myth, there is much to be gained by extracting the myth if the myth is, in fact, as we are suggesting here, the source of the coherence of his argument.[4]

Identifying the historical origin of the archetype and examining its method of transmission is less significant, for Frye, than the analysis of the archetype's effect on critical analysis. These effects are profound: 'all commentary is allegorical interpretation' (Frye, p. 89). Frye's archetypes impose a logic on the text, integrating it into a systematic framework, but they leave him open to criticism. The format of an archetypal story is never scrutinized, with the echoes of the myth being more important than its original instances.

The whole process of using archetypes has been seen as reductive: the reader prunes the narrative until it is recognizable as a version of an archetype.[5] This is often an unintentional attempt to universalize literature. Elizabeth Hayes reads Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* in terms of the Persephone myth.[6] Arguing that feminist versions of the Persephone archetype can be read as positive for women, the study implies that the African-American text needs to be somehow legitimized by filtration through a classical pattern valued by a predominantly white middle-class culture. Hayes observes that all three writers were aware of the Persephone story, and participated, to varying degrees, in the culture of the establishment through their academic interests. Morrison, however, denies that she 'consciously set out to write a reenactment of the Persephone story' (Hayes, p. 173), and Hayes falls back on the assumption that the myth must have affected the writer subliminally. In effect, Morrison's mind is colonized by this implicitly superior culture: 'Archetypes [...] can operate subliminally, through the unconscious, as well as through rational thought: that is precisely what gives them their astounding resonance, their numinosity' (Hayes, p. 173). While a case could be made for the cultural hybridity of these authors, this kind of approach appropriates the work to such a degree as to abrogate the cultural identity of the author. Furthermore, to read using an archetypal filter is to make a teleological imposition on a text: the text is only of value if it can be identified as, and perhaps

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⁴ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (London, 1957), pp. 353–354.
⁵ See Thomas Willard, 'Archetypes of the Imagination' in *The Legacy of Northrop Frye*, ed. by Alvin A. Lee and Robert D. Denham (Toronto, 1994), p. 20.
⁶ Elizabeth T. Hayes, '"Like Seeing You Buried": Persephone in *The Bluest Eye*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and *The Color Purple*', in *Images of Persephone: Feminist Readings in Western Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth T. Hayes (Gainesville, Florida, 1994), pp. 170–194.

moulded into, a predetermined pattern. Difficulty arises with the selection of archetypes. If one is to fix a classical story as an archetype, then a reason is needed for choosing the version deemed relevant to the narratives which supposedly echo it. Should this be the urtext (if there is one), or the most influential version (if this is different from the urtext), or a composite of different versions (such as the frequent association of Pygmalion's statue with the name 'Galatea' suggests)? When a version is agreed upon, we encounter further problems with the interpretation of the archetype which, like any narrative, is polysemic.

In the case of the Pygmalion story, Ovid's version is most often used by critics as an archetype. A variety of interpretations of Ovid's text, however, has lead to diverse emphases in the archetype. The Pygmalion archetype is often applied to stories about people being created (e.g. *Frankenstein* or *The Winter's Tale*) and it is also widely employed as an archetype for women being educated or socially improved by men (e.g. *Educating Rita*).[7] Analyses of the Pygmalion story as archetype have thus taken different routes. Gerald Gresseth, for example, strips away Ovid's literary expansions to reformulate the story as a Formalist paradigm based on Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*:

1. There is a young man without a wife
2. He makes a statue of a woman
3. He goes to the temple (or the like) to seek divine aid to bring this statue to life
4. After returning home the statue miraculously comes to life
5. There is a happy ending; they become man and wife.

Gresseth's analysis reduces the tale even further to identify it as a combination of abstract event-types which form part of Propp's finite list: '1. Lack [...] 2. Consent to counter-action [...] 3. Departure [...] 4. Liquidation of lack [...] 5. Return of hero [...] 6. Wedding'.[8] The Pygmalion story, unrecognizable from this second list, is construed as part of a greater set of abstract archetypal patterns.

Stephen Butler's construction of the Pygmalion archetype, in 'The Pygmalion Motif and the Crisis of the Creative Process in Modern Fiction' (1984), retains more of the character of the myth. Butler argues that the Pygmalion archetype (based on Ovid's version) has been reinterpreted by modern authors to reflect the

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[7] There are several studies of educational methods which discuss the "Pygmalion effect". See for example, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development* (New York, 1968) and John Honey, *Does Accent Matter? The Pygmalion Factor* (London, 1991).

[8] Gerald K. Gresseth, 'The Pygmalion Tale', *Journal of the Pacific Northwest Council on Foreign Languages*, 2 (1981), 15–19 (p. 15 and p. 18).

artistic struggle or crisis in the modern period.[9] He examines, as is usual in archetypal studies, texts which do not mention Pygmalion by name, such as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. J. Hillis Miller's *Versions of Pygmalion* (1990), on the other hand, postulates that the Pygmalion story is the 'literalising allegory' of prosopopoeia (the ascription of 'a face, a name, or a voice to the absent, the inanimate, or the dead').[10] Here, Pygmalion's desire to bring the statue to life is akin to the 'fundamental generative linguistic act making a given story possible' (p. 13). Echoes of it are found in Heinrich von Kleist's *Der Findling,* Thomas Hardy's *Barbara of the House of Grebe* and Henry James's *The Last of the Valerii*. Gail Marshall offers a convincing refutation of Miller's argument on the grounds that the name Galatea is a late addition to the myth:

> Pygmalion's desire to 'animate' his statue, which has only subsequently come to be known as Galatea, falls short of what Hillis Miller defines as the full narrativizing implications of prosopopoeia, that is, the ascription to entities that are not really alive first of a *name*, then of a face, and finally, in a return to language, of a voice. Galatea's name appears not to have been coined until 1770, and in the Ovidian legend she lacks her own voice.[11]

For both Butler and Hillis Miller, the Pygmalion story functions as an archetype based on an interpretation of Ovid's text; it acts as an organizational, associative device linking texts together for critical comment. In the same vein, Catherine Maxwell's 'Browning's Pygmalion and the Revenge of Galatea' (1993) filters Robert Browning's poetry through the Pygmalion story:

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[9] Stephen Henry Butler, 'The Pygmalion Motif and Crisis of the Creative Process in Modern Fiction' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Brandeis, 1984).

[10] J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990), p. 4.

[11] Marshall's dating of the first use of the name 'Galatea' for the statue is, however, incorrect. Walter Buske and Meyer Reinhold both conclude that the earliest use of this name for the statue is in a French novel, *Pygmalion*, by Thémiseul de Sainte Hyacinthe Cordonnier (1741). Reinhold's article is a refutation of Helen H. Law's suggestion that Rousseau was the first to give the statue this name. Walter Buske had, however, already settled this question some years before. Richard Jenkyns assumes incorrectly that Law was right in her suppositions. Both Reinhold and Buske agree that although Cordonnier's was the first use, Rousseau's play is likely to have been the most influential, and can therefore be regarded as the most likely source for subsequent uses of the name. Gail S. Marshall, 'Artful Galateas: Gender and the Arts of Writing and Acting in Novels, 1876–1900' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1992), p. 2, Walter Buske, 'Pygmaliondichtungen des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift*, 7 (1915), 345–354, Meyer Reinhold, 'The Naming of Pygmalion's Animated Statue', *Classical Journal*, 66 (1979), 316–319, Helen H. Law, 'The Name of Galatea in the Pygmalion Myth', *Classical Journal*, 27 (1932), 337–342, Richard Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (London, 1991), p. 115.

> Browning's real compulsion is Ovid's story of Pygmalion. [...]
> Browning lays bare the misogyny of Ovid's Pygmalion, for whom no
> living woman is good enough. His poems show how male subjects,
> threatened by woman's independent spirit, replace her with statues,
> pictures, prostheses, corpses, which seem to them more than acceptable
> substitutes for the real thing. Browning's male subjects typically invert
> Ovid's myth, reducing woman, even through her death, to a composition
> of their own creating.[12]

Browning, however, never mentions the Pygmalion story, and there is no hard
evidence to suggest that he actively intended to invert Ovid's version. Maxwell
reads Browning's poetry through an interpretation of Ovid's Pygmalion story as
archetype.

Gail Marshall's use of the Pygmalion myth is more subtle: she employs it as a
metaphor for an aesthetic (the 'Galatea-aesthetic') that defines the visual and
sexual personae of the Victorian actress, both on the stage and in her personal
life.[13] The 'Galatea-aesthetic' positions actresses as the objects of male control,
rendering them passive, statuesque and fundamentally heteronomous. Stressing
the attraction of the timelessness, silence and beauty of the female statue-form for
Victorian writers, Marshall locates an aesthetic of statue-simulation which points
at both innocence and overt but unselfconscious sexuality. I explore some of these
issues in my article 'The Mythographic Context of Shaw's *Pygmalion*', published
in the same year as Marshall's book, and which now forms the basis for Chapter
5.[14] Marshall's point is that, on the stage, actresses began as the demure Galatea,
shaped by Pygmalion, but developed into self-determining individuals, whether
through autobiography, theatre-management, or interpreting their own roles.
Marshall suggests that the Pygmalion myth 'operated both practically and
metaphorically to shape and define women's theatrical lives' (p. 6). Marshall's
aim is to draw on a nineteenth-century understanding of the story in order to
illustrate her conception of the statuesque aesthetic at work on the English stage
in that period.

Marshall's study is, however, marred by a few assumptions about the
nineteenth-century version of the Pygmalion story which do not stand up to
scrutiny given a more extensive exploration of the morphology of the tale.
Marshall attempts to give the Galatea-aesthetic historical authenticity by
identifying it as a generalized account of the Pygmalion story as it existed in

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[12] Catherine Maxwell, 'Browning's Pygmalion and the Revenge of Galatea', *English
Literary History*, 60 (1993), 989–1013 (p. 990).

[13] Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage: Feminine Performance and the
Galatea Myth* (Cambridge, 1998).

[14] Essaka Joshua, 'The Mythographic Context of Shaw's *Pygmalion*' in *Nineteenth
Century Theatre*, 26 (1998), 112–137.

English poetry of the period. Her claim that most nineteenth-century poets return Galatea to stone at the end of the narrative is factually incorrect:

> Most of the nineteenth-century poets [...] deviate from their Ovidian source in one particular which serves to confirm their sense of the greater desirability of the statue: with few exceptions, modern Galateas are returned to stone at the end of their narrative. This makes of the statue's 'life' rather a fleeting episode than the miraculous metamorphosis which is the climax of Ovid's story, and renders the marble state both the ultimate as well as the initial site of desire (Marshall, p. 23).

The majority of nineteenth-century poets, as I will later show, retain a human Galatea at the end of the narrative. (The exceptions are confined to a few dramas and a small quirky minority of poems in which either the narrative concludes before the statue changes or Pygmalion falls in love with someone else; occasionally Galatea is abandoned precisely because she is too human.) Marshall's understanding of the Pygmalion metaphor is tainted by her assumption that nineteenth-century poets privilege 'closure' (in the form of a symmetry embodied in a return to stone) over 'living form' (p. 24). Focusing on prosopopoeia, and on closure over transformation (pp. 23–24), Marshall overlooks more significant ways in which the story is used to explore questions of artistic creativity. I explore these issues in Chapter 3 below. Marshall omits to mention, too, something that reinforces her general argument: that, during the 1880s, feminist poets reclaim Galatea, giving her a voice with which to express her individuality and to protest against her yoke. It seems likely that feminist writers are drawing on the stage interpretations of Galatea's character which often conceive her, at least for a time, as contrary to conventional notions of femininity. Marshall's view of the Pygmalion poems is at odds with her thesis; just as Galatea as actress 'comes to life' and finds a voice at the end of the century, so it can be argued that in late nineteenth-century poetry Galatea likewise challenges the gaze of Pygmalion. Marshall's construction of the Victorian Pygmalion poem as a tale which has a 'greater concentration on, and frequent return to, the statue-state' (p. 25) is not backed by discussion of any examples, and it is difficult to see from where it originates.[15]

While Marshall's study is illuminating on the rhetoric of the statuesque on the English stage, her account of the nineteenth-century Pygmalion story is ultimately secondary. Marshall in effect constructs her own archetype of the Pygmalion story

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[15]   The short list of nineteenth-century Pygmalion poems Marshall cites in her notes does not contain a single version in which the statue changes back at the end of the narrative (Marshall, p. 193, n. 45).

in the same way that Butler and Hillis Miller do. The Pygmalion story's archetypal status is perhaps obscured in Marshall's study by its (supposed) derivation from texts belonging to the nineteenth century. Marshall's difficulty is that a narrative which acts as a text and as an archetype, supposedly revealing something universally significant for the nineteenth century, has to be confined to a single meaning. Once we expose to scrutiny the nature of the Pygmalion text in the nineteenth century, we see that to speak of a 'nineteenth-century Pygmalion' is to gloss over much, and that to define it in the way that Marshall does is misleading.

Butler, Hillis Miller, and Maxwell employ distinctive interpretations of the Pygmalion archetype, stressing creative crisis, the act of story-telling and the suppression of women's independence. Butler and Maxwell argue that the writers they discuss reject the Ovidian archetype, yet it is these critics themselves who have selected this version of the tale as an overlay. We may well question the relevance of an archetype that is rejected – especially if it is employed on the grounds that it is superficially similar to the stories studied; another interpretation of the archetype, or even a different archetype, would result in a different conclusion. Furthermore, the authors these critics discuss may have understood the Pygmalion story in a particular way that an archetype cannot reveal; nineteenth and twentieth-century writers may have been surrounded by other renarrations with different emphases. With the exception of Marshall's account, it is, nevertheless, assumed in these studies that Ovid's archetype has a direct relevance for the people of any time, and that writers react exclusively to Ovid's version. Whilst Ovid's Pygmalion is of great importance, only a study of the interaction of the many and various renarrations of the story can show us which version writers are responding to, and how they make a Pygmalion narrative that is appropriate for their age. If we are to claim a relevance for an archetype which is anything more than ephemeral, then we need to be sensitive to the historical circumstances which surround and inform each author.

In what follows, I will focus on myth as text and aim to show how the Pygmalion story has developed.[16] Writers do not necessarily respond to Ovid's myth directly. There are significant versions which redefine the myth, directing writers into diverse directions. Adrienne Munich asserts, in *Andromeda's Chains*, that

> by identifying momentarily with a classical myth, an artist leaps backward into the womb of civilization when the origins of the gender arrangements in the western world were being mythologized,

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[16] Some of the texts I examine here are briefly discussed in *Classical Mythology in English Literature: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Geoffrey Miles (London, 1999), pp. 332–345. *Classical Mythology in English Literature* includes a number of useful Pygmalion and Pygmalion-like texts and is well worth consulting in conjunction with the analysis I provide here.

reconceiving the importance of that binary arrangement of the sexes for his own times (Munich, pp. 5–6).

I argue, on the other hand, that in some cases writers may not be leaping back very far, but are reacting, instead, to other versions of the myth and to contemporary issues. The use of Ovid as an archetype obscures this, not merely because different critics interpret his work in different ways, but because archetypal criticism of this kind encourages us to stop at Ovid and to gloss over other versions. To focus exclusively on the Ovidian archetype is to deny what is at the heart of mythic stories: evolution. Myths are retold and redefined by their narrators, reflecting changes in culture and literary tradition. The Pygmalion story is not static; it is an evolving tale with a rich history. Consequently 'Pygmalion' does not signify one context but many. In this I echo Lévi-Strauss's comment on the Oedipus myth:

> It cannot be too strongly emphasized that all available variants [of a myth] should be taken into account. [...] There is no true version of which all the others are but copies or distortions. Every version belongs to the myth.[17]

To accept this view of myth is to accept that contextualizing a version of the Pygmalion story is not as simple as placing it within a classical context, viewing it as a pure and direct development from an intermediate myth. Rather, versions should be seen as part of a network of 'Pygmalion' contexts. For example, I read George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* not in the context of Ovid, as many prior critics have done, but in the context of nineteenth-century plays on the Pygmalion story. To exclude all versions of the myth except Ovid's has a significant effect on the way we view the play. Pygmalion stories are often contexts for each other. Freezing the Pygmalion myth in its Ovidian form and automatically bestowing a universal significance on Ovid is misleading. Rather, we should understand the Pygmalion story as an historically situated and changing narrative. If we were to suppose that the story could work as an archetype, then we would still have, nevertheless, to find out what form the archetype should take ostensively and empirically, by looking at all the cases there are.

This book looks at how writers treat the Pygmalion story when they are explicitly directing their readers to its tradition: they do this by using the name 'Pygmalion'. I am not arguing for, or even against, the identification of the story as a reflection of something universal in the minds of writers and readers, but rather that, irrespective of its (problematic) archetypal status, the Pygmalion story is a polysemic narrative which works within a literary tradition, and that this

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[17] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', in *Myth: A Symposium*, ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington, Indiana, 1965), pp. 81–106, p. 94.

tradition needs to be explored fully. My main aim is to scrutinize the changes in the meaning of the Pygmalion story by examining its principal renarrations. My intention is not as such to produce a theoretical work, but to discover how each age has redefined the Pygmalion story. I will be asking: what does the Pygmalion story mean? Which versions of the story are writers reacting to? Why does the Pygmalion story interest the writers who use it? What changes do the writers make?

My approach, not a new one, resembles that outlined by Theodore Ziolkowski in *Varieties of Literary Thematics* (1983).[18] 'Literary thematics', he argues, 'offers many possible varieties' of organization (Ziolkowski, p. 220). Ziolkowski advises that selectivity is the key to a successful thematic study. Much as the collector obsesses about including every version of the tale, ultimately she has to leave much out of the final analysis. The shaping of the material is the hardest task. In my case, I have found that the stories fall naturally into clusters of texts which share either generic or thematic affinity, or are otherwise similar in their outlook. As Ziolkowski points out, certain 'themes and motifs sometimes display an affinity for certain genres; periods and epochs in turn display a pronounced affinity for certain themes, motifs, and images' (p. 221). I have also found that, although all periods show some interest in the Pygmalion story, its heyday is the nineteenth century, and its favoured genre is poetry. The Pygmalion story was retold and reworked during the nineteenth century more times than in any other; and it is for this reason that I write at length on this period, whilst providing less-detailed sketches of the story before and after this time. The diachronic study of a story has an advantage in that the process can easily reveal precedents and authorial influences. These may escape those who study texts solely from the perspective of an individual writer's works or his or her socio-political situation. My chapter on Bernard Shaw is a case in point. This chapter overturns a mistaken belief that the Pygmalion story is an irrelevant context for Shaw's play *Pygmalion* – a context which has been dismissed by critics because the myth is assumed to be significant solely in its Ovidian form. Through the context of nineteenth-century renarrations of the Pygmalion story it is possible to understand why Shaw chose to write the play as an account of Eliza's social education.

The first chapter will establish the history of the Pygmalion story from its origins in early Greek myth until the end of the eighteenth century. At that point Jean-Jacques Rousseau grasped the importance of the myth for expressing his view of the relationship of the artist to the art-work. His depiction of the statue as an ideal, attractive to him because it is part of him, was admired by the English Romantics; but it was not fully accepted. Thomas Lovell Beddoes and J. H. Leigh Hunt reject Rousseau's Pygmalion's narcissistic egotism for a different kind of

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[18] Theodore Ziolkowski, *Varieties of Literary Thematics* (Princeton, 1983).

Romantic epiphanic moment (Chapter 2). Post-Romantic versions of the story emphasize the art-life debate by inserting a new episode into the story in which Pygmalion is given a vision of the statue in a creative dream (Chapter 3). By mid-Victorian times, this inspired vision is not enough, and moral questions begin to arise about the nature of Pygmalion's art: does his art represent the spiritual or the sensual (fleshly)? In this crisis of representation, known as the 'Fleshly Controversy', the Pygmalion story is a battle-ground for Victorian Hellenism's clash with moral obsession. Writers ask: does the animated statue possess a soul? Is she a beautiful body designed to tempt Pygmalion? (Chapter 4). These questions are also unavoidable in the physical art of the stage, where the tensions between naivety and sophistication, between intrinsic worth and cultural overlay, are debated by Gilbert and Shaw (Chapter 5). On the stage, Galatea, formerly a woman of few words, gains a voice and by the end of the century, the emphasis has moved from the sculptor to his creation. The voice which the playwrights gave to Galatea is now used to question Pygmalion's right to control her, a question which establishes the note for the twentieth century (Chapter 6). The metamorphosis of the Pygmalion myth involves a change from a 'patriarchal' interest in Pygmalion to the 'feminist' development of Galatea's character. Feminist revisionism, however, does not saturate the modern period, and the Pygmalion story is here connected with the theme of artistic crisis. Twentieth-century writers demonstrate a new-found interest in Pygmalion's frustration with his unfulfilled idealism.

This book will demonstrate the flexibility and dynamism of the Pygmalion story, a narrative which can tell us much about the representation of women and about the changing role of the artist. Like the stories of the Lady of Shalott, Mariana, and Andromeda, the Pygmalion story represents women as controlled, trapped, rescued, idealized, defined and owned by men, but it also communicates much about the aesthetics and psychology of the artist, and the relationship between the artist and his work. The experimentation with this story continues even today.

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