THESIS SAMPLES

**Minotaur on the Run: The Monster, The Myth and the Human in Between**

Pursuing a close reading of Steven Sherrill’s *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break,* and tracing the origins of its protagonist back to his Cretan roots, my aim in this paper is twofold. On the one hand I wish to explore the ways in which the novel revisits the mythical archetype and creatively rewrites it in a globalized, post- and neocolonial world, and, on the other, to examine the employment of the myth as a means for broaching the highly controversial and deeply problematic issue of racial, ethnic, and cultural diasporic minorities in Western societies. Drawing on the writings of Gayatri Spivak, Jacques Derrida and Maria Boletsi, I will pay particular attention to the minimal and—more often than not—unintelligible attempts of Sherrill’s erratic protagonist to articulate his thoughts and emotions, and, therefore, read the mythical Minotaur as the quintessential metaphor for ‘barbarity’ in culture. The Cretan Labyrinth, a product of utmost human craftsmanship and ingenuity, functions, for the purposes of this paper, as the complex and multifaceted network of social and political procedures, discourses and apparatuses, methods, practices and institutions that condition, delimit and dictate who is to be included in the conceptual category of the human. The half-human and half-monstrous Minotaur, whose hybrid identity—a par excellence characteristic of diasporic encounters—is teetering between nature and culture, barbarity and civilization, animality and humanity, serves, I will argue, as the fictional embodiment of the diasporic subject, the latter one being either forcibly removed, internally displaced or deracinated from his/her homeland, or self-exiled in search for improved social, political, and—of course—material conditions of existence. In light of this analysis, Sherrill’s very original treatment and adaptation of the myth ventures to flesh out a new subjectivity for this archetypal hybrid, quasi-monstrous, incomprehensible, threatening, and undefinable Other, the migrant (neo)subaltern subject, whose different and distant cosmology is deemed ominous, provokingly eccentric, sinister, and even threatening to the hegemonic order of the new country he/she aspires to reside in. *The Minotaur Takes A Cigarette Break,* therefore, is Sherrill’s literary attempt to not only reimagine and breathe new life into the mythical archetype of the past whose perspective has been silenced and unaccounted for, but also to democratize the present by insisting on the humanity that perseveres, on the part of the human which escapes the penetrating and dehumanizing grasp of hegemony and power, opening up to the “occasional hope” that promises a brighter future-to-come (Sherrill 312).

Prospective Bibliography

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**Sophocles’ *Ajax* in Contemporary War Theatre:**

**Cases of Occidental Interventionism, Historical Amnesia and Combat Trauma in Ellen McLaughlin’s *Ajax in Iraq* and Timberlake Wertenbaker’s *Our Ajax.***

Known as the bulwark of ancient Greek mythology and as a hero only second to Achilles, Ajax found his way from the Trojan battlefield to the Sophoclean stage. Along the lines of Sophoclean tragic tradition, Ajax, the individual Homeric hero, sacrifices himself for the well-being of the collectivity of the Polis. In this thesis I will attempt to use Sophocles’ *Ajax* as a paradigm in order to build a theoretical scaffold regarding the significance of ancient Greek tragedy in the political *vios* of classical Athens – not merely as an artistic representation/ reflection of the political structures and processes but as an indispensably internal mechanism of Athenian democracy. From there on, I will engage in a transhistorical examination of the dramatic appropriations of Ajax in order to debate, through the theoretical perspectives of George Steiner and Raymond Williams, the political significance of Greek tragedy and of its various appropriations transhistorically. The aforementioned methodological framework which I aspire to establish will be instrumental in order to explore the political significance of ancient Greek tragedy in postmodern theatre and drama. Specifically, I will examine how Ellen McLaughlin and Timberlake Wertenbaker, in their plays *Ajax in Iraq* (2005) and *Our Ajax* (2011) respectively, conjure Sophocles’ *Ajax* so as to comment upon the thorny issue of the American imperialistic interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Through Fredric Jameson’s theoretical texts on globalization and postmodernity, and through writings on the aforementioned wars by Edward Said and Noam Chomsky, I will attempt to prove that *Ajax in Iraq* and *Our Ajax* are desperate cries for political responsibility and democracy within a globalized, postmodern Polis characterized by apathy and historical amnesia. To this end, I will engage in a close comparative study between the classical and contemporary texts in terms of language, stage directions and character appropriation.

***LIFE OF PI*: A POSTCOLONIAL *ODYSSEY***

*Life of Pi* by Yann Martel is the story of an Indian boy named Pi who manages to survive in a lifeboat with a tiger after a shipwreck in the Pacific Ocean. My aim is to present the novel in comparison to Homer’s *Odyssey* since Pi’s struggles in the Pacific can be compared and contrasted to what Odysseus had to go through in his effort to reach home. After investigating different readings and analyses of the *Odyssey*, I will attempt to find the way in which Homer’s epic is revised and retold through Martel’s contemporary tale. Finally, through the comparison between the two heroes and the application of post-colonial theory, I will try to provide a reading of the novel that would reveal how *Life of Pi* is essentially a post-colonial *Odyssey.*