

*Diglossia: The Early Modern Reinvention of Mythological Discourse.* Sofie Kluge. Teatro del Siglo de Oro: Estudios de Literatura 122. Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2014. xii + 350 pp. €62.

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*Diglossia* explores the emergence of Baroque mythological literature in a literary-historical context using the examples of three different Spanish subgenres: Quevedo's love sonnet "Hero and Leander," Góngora's epyllion *Polifemo*, and Calderón's play *Eco y Narciso*. Although the term *diglossia* typically denotes bilingualism, Kluge expands the term to refer to literary variations of ancient myths and, in particular, of the Ovidian tales in early modern Spain. A priori, authors seem to have used myths as a literary vehicle to address issues averse to contemporary Spanish ideology, such as the representation of "irrepressible but reprehensible sexual desire, [inexplicable] and irrational hunger for scandalous fiction . . . [through the transmission of] pagan tales of rape and incest, lasciviousness and adultery, tragic deaths and malevolent destiny [in a] carefree or even irresponsible fictitious form" (7).

So, what did erotic literature mean to early modern Spanish writers, what was the cultural significance, and, most importantly, what was the role of ancient mythology in the individual works? While the Baroque interpretations of these tales have engendered various scholarly debates on the controversial subjects of morality and poetry, Kluge's work can be seen as an interesting, albeit not unique, contribution to answering compelling contemporary questions, such as why did certain types of literature and themes emerge at this specific period, and what aspects of early modernity contributed

to the renaissance of ancient myth (11)? Keeping in mind the dichotomy between aesthetic and moral, between *engaño* and *desengaño*, illusion and reality, Kluge shows how Spanish mythographers created their own genuine literarily and historically significant space while taking a “mediatory, dialogical or dialectical” (308) standpoint toward opposing views — this constitutes the double game of Baroque diglossia, which can be explained as a particular form of literary allegory.

Kluge’s study has five main chapters, each divided into two distinctive parts, combining methodological and generic approaches. Chapter 1, “Myth,” offers a detailed explanation of the historical framework necessary for any close reading of Baroque myth. Next follow three analytical chapters. Chapter 2, “Desire,” discusses the particularities of mythological lyric poetry, demonstrating the theoretical and analytical aspects of the Baroque mythological sonnet with the examples of three love sonnets (Juan de Arguijo’s rewriting of the Narcissus myth, Lope de Vega’s Europa sonnet, and the portrait of the mythological lovers Venus and Mars in an anonymous erotic sonnet drawn from the *Libro romanzero de canciones*). These examples of Baroque erotic poetry present the reader with vivid illustrations and reinterpretations of the topoi of amorous passion and burning desire and provide an excellent transition to Kluge’s close reading of Quevedo’s Hero and Leander poems. Conversely, the third chapter, “Fiction,” focuses on the mythological epic, in particular the differences between the Baroque fable — Cossío’s *fábulas* — and the epyllion, which, in Kluge’s words, “became [the] essential seventeenth-century medium for venting the precarious issue of ‘fiction’” (153). Kluge concludes this chapter with a detailed discussion of Góngora’s *Polifemo*, where, in almost the same words, she stresses again the precariousness of mythological fiction (163). Section four is rounded off by an analytical chart presenting variations of the Polyphemus myth (174). Chapter 4, “Tragedy,” opposes first the tragic and comic aspects of Baroque allegories and then offers specific insights into the ambiguities of mythological drama and comedy using the example of Calderón’s mythical play *Eco y Narciso*. This section, probably one of Kluge’s most convincing, could have been improved by the inclusion of a chart similar to that illustrating the concept of Baroque diglossia in the analysis of Góngora’s *Polifemo*. Chapter 5, “Literature,” discusses these three humorous early modern adaptations of ancient myth from the standpoint of “literary modernity” (33). The concluding section of this chapter convincingly highlights the significance of early modern mythological discourse with the examples of Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* and Marino’s *Adone*.

*Diglossia* explores the relation between the creative rewritings of ancient myths in early modern Spain and the breadth of new literary and historical realities. It is an interesting read for both scholars and students eager for new insight into the significance and double nature of Baroque mythological literature.

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