

5-18-2015

Mythological Influences on Southern American Authors

Natalie L. Hayden

Western Kentucky University, natalie.hayden036@topper.wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses

 Part of the [History Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America, Ethnic and Cultural Minority Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hayden, Natalie L., "Mythological Influences on Southern American Authors" (2015). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 582.

http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/582

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

MYTHOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON SOUTHERN AMERICAN AUTHORS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By:

Natalie L. Hayden

Western Kentucky University
2015

CE/T Committee:

Professor Walker Rutledge, Advisor

Dr. Richard Weigel

Dr. Clay Motley

Approved by

Advisor
Department of English

Copyright by
Natalie L. Hayden
2015

ABSTRACT

A major influence upon many parts of society is that of Greek and Roman mythology. While there are several interpretations of what myths are, this study will define them as stories from Greek or Roman origins that seek to explain some natural or social phenomena or to provide moral lessons. Myths were especially influential during the Southern Renaissance, a period of literary reinvention in America during the 1920s and 1930s. Authors used myths to give deeper meanings to their works as they struggled with issues of race, religion, and social changes. Myths appeared in plot lines, as major symbols, and even in the names of characters. This paper focuses upon mythological influences in short stories from Flannery O'Connor and Caroline Gordon, poems from Robert Penn Warren and John Crowe Ransom, a play from Tennessee Williams, and a novel from William Faulkner. It will explore the specific influence each myth has on its work and the way in which each work is shaped by that influence.

Keywords: mythology, Southern Renaissance

Dedicated to

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Stuart and Teresa Hayden, without whom I would not be the woman I am today. They have always encouraged me to follow my passions and taught me that with hard work and faith, anything is possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Professor Walker Rutledge and Dr. Richard Weigel for their guidance and advice throughout this project; without them, it would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Nicole Stambaugh and Haley Garrison for their unwavering support.

VITA

October 13, 1992.....Born – Louisville, Kentucky
2011.....Scott County High School,
Georgetown, KY
2015.....WKU Reach Week session winner

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: English
Concentration in Literature

Minor Field 1: History

Minor Field 2: Classics

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Vita.....	v
Foreword.....	1
Chapters:	
1. The Short Story	
a. Flannery O'Connor.....	5
b. Caroline Gordon.....	9
2. Poetry	
a. John Crowe Ransom.....	14
b. Robert Penn Warren.....	17
3. Drama	
a. Tennessee Williams.....	22
4. The Novel	
a. William Faulkner.....	28
Afterword.....	35
Bibliography.....	37

FOREWORD

Many aspects of culture today come from stories of the Classical past. For example, the Harry Potter series, video games such as *Kid Icarus*, and even brands such as Nike have roots that come from over two thousand years ago in Greece. What these three items, among countless others in the American culture, have in common are their references to Greek and Roman mythology. Greek mythology has no pinpoint beginning or original text like Christianity and the Bible. Instead, Greek mythology was passed down orally at first, and the first known myths came about in the Bronze Age (3300-1200 B.C.). It is widely believed that the poet Homer was the first to produce written records of mythology in his tales *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

What is a myth? According to Morford, Lenardon, and Sham, “the impossibility of establishing a satisfactory definition of *myth* has not deterred scholars from developing comprehensive theories on the meaning and interpretation of myth, often to provide bases for a hypothesis about its origins” (3). Essentially, *myth* is a very broad term that can have several different interpretations. While there is no concrete definition of *myth* that is widely used, there are several characteristics of myths that are known as fact. The origin of the word comes from the Greek *mythos*, meaning “word,” “tale,” or “story.” At its base, that’s what a myth is – a story. However, the reasons for the story and the messages the story sends are part of what makes a story a myth. Many aspects of myths have to do with the relationship between gods and humans, for myths were a religious tool to answer

questions about the origin of the universe, or the creation of islands and mountains. These types of myths were believed both spiritually and factually by people in ancient times. For the purpose of this paper, a myth will be defined as a story from Greek or Roman origins that seeks to explain some natural or social phenomenon or to provide a moral lesson, and it often involves mystical beings and elements of the supernatural. Some modern definitions of myth call out falsehoods; for example, google.com defines *myth* as “a widely held but false belief or idea.” However, this does not mean that all myths are rooted in falsehoods. Very little is known historically about the Trojan War, which is thought to have taken place during the late Bronze Age, yet there are still surviving myths that explain the origin of the war as well as give explanations for certain events. For example, the war is said to have started because of a feud between some of the gods; while this is obviously not factual, the myth, as it continues, does give more insight into an event that historians otherwise would know nearly nothing about. This is part of the reason that myths have endured throughout history. For a long time they were considered *true* history; even now that they are not, they give greater insight into events from long ago.

Another reason that myths have survived for so long is that they were adopted by other cultures. Greek mythology specifically was taken up by the Romans when they conquered Greece in 168 B.C. The Roman Empire was heavily influenced by Greek culture in terms of architecture, government, and sports. However, religion was one area especially influenced by Greek mythology. Roman mythology, while having some sharp differences (especially in regard to the founding of Rome), took most stories and gods from Greek myths. In fact, many myths are exactly the same except for the names of the

gods. For example, Greek Zeus, king of the gods, became Roman Jupiter, and Greek Poseidon, god of the sea, became Roman Neptune.

The idea of adopting myths from other cultures did not die with the Romans, for mythological characters, moral lessons, and puzzles have endured throughout the ages. Indeed, the period in America's history known as the Southern Renaissance saw a particular spike in Greek and Roman mythological references. The Southern Renaissance was a time of literary reinvention during the 1920s and 1930s. Between the era of Victorianism and Modernism, the Southern Renaissance characterized a time of changing culture in the South. Prior to the Renaissance, literature had mostly focused on the "Lost Cause" of the South in its efforts during the Civil War. Literature glorified the states, soldiers, and civilians for the cause. For example, Thomas F. Dixon, Jr. wrote a highly successful novel called *The Clansmen: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, which was adapted both into a play and a film prior to 1920. The novel exalted members of the KKK and their work during the Reconstruction era.

After World War I, the focus of literature began to change, and three major themes began to emerge during this time: the history of a place that struggled with slavery and a major defeat in the war, the struggle to maintain individuality in an area where groups such as the family and the church were more important than one's personal needs, and the history of racial issues. The new themes and subjects were the first major movements against criticisms of the South's lack of intellectualism pointed out by some. One particular critic, H.L. Mencken, viciously attacked several aspects of Southern culture and said that not only did the South lose "its old capacity for producing ideas; it [took] on the worst intolerance of ignorance and stupidity" (166). In response to this,

many intellectuals, specifically authors, reasserted unique aspects of the South's culture and gave the South a new identity.

It was during this time that Greek mythology began to play a bigger role in the authors' works. Several writers employed myths in order to give their writings a deeper meaning. The mythological influences could exert themselves in a work in different ways – as a symbol or as a thematic similarity – and represented a variety of genres – the novel, poetry, drama, and the short story. While many more authors than those presented in this study flourished during the Southern Renaissance, those included here not only used mythology in their works, but also utilized new writing techniques. For example, William Faulkner experimented with narrative style, and Flannery O'Connor was one of the pioneers of the Southern Gothic approach. Attention will also be devoted to a play by Tennessee Williams, a short story by Caroline Gordon, and poems by Robert Penn Warren and John Crowe Ransom.

CHAPTER 1

THE SHORT STORY

Flannery O'Connor

A deeply religious person, Flannery O'Connor was also interested in mythology. In a letter to "A" in 1955, she wrote that "the only good things I read when I was a child were the Greek and Roman myths which I got out of a set of child's encyclopedia" (*The Habit of Being*, 98). These were among the few things that she said influenced her work. One of the most obvious symbols from mythology that shows up in O'Connor's work is the bull, specifically in the story "Greenleaf." Here, Mrs. May is a widow who runs her late husband's farm with her two sons, Scofield and Wesley. The boys, however, have no interest in the farm; one works as an insurance salesman and the other as a professor, and they leave most of the farm work to their mother and her hired hand, Mr. Greenleaf. Mrs. May despises Mr. Greenleaf and his two sons, E.T. and O.T., because they are less educated and, according to her, incompetent. One day, O.T. and E.T.'s bull escapes from its pen and makes its way onto Mrs. May's farm. After failing to make O.T. and E.T. take care of the bull, Mrs. May demands that Mr. Greenleaf kill it. While he is out looking for the bull, Mrs. May impatiently waits in a field, sitting on top of her car. To hurry Mr. Greenleaf, she begins honking the horn, causing the bull to run out of the forest, charge, and impale her. Mr. Greenleaf arrives shortly thereafter and kills the bull.

Bulls are prevalent in many Classical myths. One of the most famous mythological bulls (or bull-like creatures) is the one present in the myth of the Minotaur. According to legend, King Minos prays to Poseidon for more power. Poseidon sends a large white bull to the king and tells him to sacrifice the bull after one year. When the year is up, however, Minos refuses to sacrifice it because he enjoys the power and wealth that it brings him. As punishment, Poseidon has Aphrodite, the goddess of love, curse the king's wife, Pasiphae, to fall in love with the bull. She is overcome by desire and, with help, constructs a device that allows her to mate with the bull. Thus, the Minotaur, a creature with a human body and a bull's head, is born. Held captive in a labyrinth, the Minotaur eats children that are sent as a sacrifice each year from Athens. Eventually, the Minotaur is killed by the hero Theseus.

In the context of this myth, the bull is a symbol of two things. One is of a destroyer – the Athenian children sent to the labyrinth are devoured over the span of a year by the creature. This coincides with the bull in O'Connor's "Greenleaf." Mrs. May thinks that the Greenleafs' escaped bull will "continue through the house, eating her and the boys, and then on, eating everything ... until nothing [is] left but the Greenleafs on a little island all their own in the middle of what had been her place" ("Greenleaf," 312). Aside from eating her plants, the bull destroys other things as well. It destroys O.T. and E.T.'s fence and car, Mrs. May's fence, and in the end, it takes Mrs. May's life. In fact, Mrs. May is similar to the sacrificial victims that the Minotaur eats. Try as she might, she cannot escape the bull, ordering Greenleaf to pen it up, ordering E.T. and O.T. to come get it, and trying to have it killed, but it always stays near and lurking. Mrs. May is trapped in a metaphorical labyrinth of her own, and her only escape is death.

Aside from representing a destroyer, this myth also employs the bull to represent desire and its negative effects. This is seen throughout the entire myth of the bull, from its creation all the way to its demise. King Minos began the cycle of desire and its negative consequences with his want for power, keeping the bull rather than sacrificing it as he promised, because he wanted more wealth. King Minos's wife, Pasiphae, is loved by her husband, but covets the bull as well. Although she is under a curse from Aphrodite, her lust still spawns a negative consequence – the birth of a horrific creature. The Minotaur itself also represents desire in the form of hunger; he forces Athens to send seven boys and seven girls to his labyrinth each year as a sacrifice. Each of these inclinations creates harmful consequences: King Minos's desire causes the curse on Pasiphae, whose passion in turn causes the creation of the Minotaur, whose desire for children begets his own demise when Theseus enters the labyrinth and eventually kills him. Similarly, in "Greenleaf," Mrs. May secretly longs for sons like O.T. and E.T. Her desire also has negative consequences and leads to her death.

Although Mrs. May often speaks and thinks negatively of the Greenleafs, she also is envious of them. The most obvious example of Mrs. May's jealousy occurs when she says to her own sons that "O.T. and E.T. are fine boys ... They ought to have been my sons" (321). While she never again in the story says anything positive about the boys, it is obvious that these words, said in a fit of rage, reveal her true feelings. There is much evidence for her hidden envy. Her two sons are not in the farming business like their mother, and Mr. Greenleaf "never [loses] an opportunity of letting her see by his expression or some simple gesture ... that in any like circumstance in which his own boys might have been involved, they – O.T. and E.T. Greenleaf – would have acted to

better advantage” than Mrs. May’s boys (317). Part of the reason that Mrs. May holds such contempt for the Greenleaf family is because if she were to die, the Greenleaf boys would be able to take over her farm and continue the work, whereas her own sons would sell it off because they don’t know how to keep it going. The entire Greenleaf family actually seems to enjoy farm life, which Mrs. May is not fond of; the land is all that her late husband had to leave her. Additionally, the Greenleaf children are close to their parents and share a loving relationship, while Scofield and Wesley constantly tease and nag their mother. Finally, the Greenleaf boys are more successful than Mrs. May’s sons. While Scofield and Wesley are single and live at home, O.T. and E.T. both have successful military careers, are married to French women, and have a fairly large piece of land. Mrs. May says that the boys live “on a piece of land the government had helped them to buy and in a brick duplex bungalow that the government had helped to build and pay for,” belittling their accomplishments as a way to make them seem less like the successful men that they are (318). She masks her jealousy of the Greenleaf boys with rude and condescending comments such as this because she can’t face the unhappiness that she feels inside.

This secret desire she feels ultimately leads to her demise, just like the Minotaur’s. Because she harbors negative feelings for the Greenleafs, Mrs. May wants to cause them loss in a petty, vengeful way; thus, she ultimately has the bull killed when the boys refuse to come pick it up. Not only will O.T. and E.T. lose their bull, but the animal will be killed at their father’s hands, which, when he is ordered to do so, causes Mr. Greenleaf to take a “rag from his back pocket and ... wipe his hands violently, then his nose” (330). He is distraught at having to shoot his sons’ bull because he is proud of their

achievements and truly cares about them, but Mrs. May is indifferent; she actually finds some pleasure in his distress. However, this pleasure for causing others pain, which ultimately stems from her desire, leads to her death, just as the Minotaur's excessive desire leads to its death as well.

Mrs. May's fate and the bull's are intertwined from the very beginning of the story – when she hears the bull from inside her bedroom, “like some patient god come down to woo her” (311). When the bull kills Mrs. May, it is also killed by Mr. Greenleaf. If the bull is representative of Mrs. May's desire, then the story's end is fitting; this woman is so unhappy with her life that she cannot exist without desire. The sexual undertones in this passage are also reminiscent of the sexual desire that Pasiphae feels toward the bull in the myth and enforces the fact that O'Connor purposefully alluded to Greek mythology in order to express certain themes in her writing. The bull is employed as a symbol of the negative effects that desire can have on one's life. By symbolizing the bull in a way that coincides with Greek mythology, O'Connor focused on a larger theme that is relatable to anyone regardless of where he or she might live.

Caroline Gordon

Caroline Gordon's use of mythology was heavily influenced by her father, who ran the Clarkesville Classical School for Boys in Montgomery, Tennessee, and who also educated his daughter. Gordon was extremely knowledgeable of myths, as evidenced in her short story “The Petrified Woman.” The story follows the Fayerlee family reunion and is told by Sally Maury, a young cousin. She is staying at the Fork, a house at the

meeting of two creeks, with her cousin Hilda and her father, Tom, and stepmother, Eleanor. Though Tom and Eleanor are married, they often argue because Tom has a drinking problem. While at the reunion, Sally, Hilda, and Tom meet a carnival man, who introduces them to Stella, the petrified girl. He claims that Stella is 116 years old; she is not moving and has her eyes closed. However, when he calls her name, she suddenly begins to breathe and sits up. She opens her eyes, and Tom immediately pays the man and leaves, taking Sally and Hilda with him. Later that night, at dinner, Tom proclaims that he has fallen in love with the petrified lady and is going to take her away from the man who owns the carnival. As he rises to leave, his foot gets caught in someone's dress under the table. He falls, breaking a wine glass and cutting his face. Sally says she never sees him get off the floor.

This story has many parallels to the ancient myth of Medusa. Medusa is a beautiful, vain priestess of Athens who catches the eye of Poseidon, and he rapes her in the temple of Athena. As is typically the case in Greek mythology, the woman is held responsible for the incident. After this violation of the sanctity of the temple, Athena curses Medusa. She turns Medusa's blonde hair into serpents and her skin into scales, declaring that whoever Medusa places her gaze upon will turn to stone. With the curse, Medusa is forced to leave Athens, and she travels to modern-day Africa with her two sisters. The three of them are now called the Gorgons. Eventually, the hero Perseus finds the sisters. While they are sleeping, he uses his shield as a mirror to cut off Medusa's head. Though Medusa is killed, her gaze is still able to turn others to stone, and Perseus fastens it to the front of his shield, using it as protection against enemies.

The myth of Medusa intersects with “The Petrified Woman” in the theme of women’s femininity. There are two Medusa-like characters in the story, and each serves a different purpose. The first is Stella, the titular petrified woman, who is a representation of Medusa before she is cursed by Athena. Like Medusa, she is beautiful, with “a white satin dress ... cut so low that you could see her bosom ... [her] lashes were long and black ... her face was dark and shone a little. But her hair was gold” (Gordon 10). Her beauty elicits attention from several men, including Cousin Giles Allard and Tom. The portrayal of Stella and the emphasis upon her beauty echo the ideas of femininity in the story of Medusa. In both works, the purpose of a beautiful woman is to please men. Medusa’s beauty goes so far as to fuel rape, and Tom alludes to the fact that Stella incites the same feelings in men when he tells the girls that he doesn’t want Giles snooping around her (11). Tom’s telling Giles to leave Stella alone places more responsibility on the man, because in the myth rape is the woman’s fault. The type of femininity that Stella represents places all of its emphasis on a woman’s looks and a woman’s willingness to subordinate herself to a man. While Stella’s beauty is what initially attracts the men, they are also entranced by her petrified state. Tom says, “I like a woman to look sweet ... Hell, they ain’t got anything else to do,” which implies that beauty is a good quality for a woman to have (14). Eleanor is vocal when she disagrees with Tom, so a woman who wouldn’t stand up for herself would be appealing to him. However, though Eleanor often disagrees with her husband, as a woman she ultimately has no influence on his decisions.

Eleanor represents Medusa after her curse, and therefore a second type of femininity. She is a woman who is “figuratively beheaded by a male counterpart” because of her unwillingness to be dominated in her marriage (Ehrhardt). Though until

the end of the story Tom gets his way, the important thing to note is that Eleanor constantly vocalizes her disdain rather than staying quiet, and in the end, she finally stands up for herself and divorces Tom. In the story, there are many instances in which Eleanor does not agree with her husband; however, as a woman she is expected to put up with whatever she may oppose. One instance in particular occurs when Hilda tells her cousins that her stepmother hates Tom's drinking habit, to which Susie responds, "she better get used to it ... all of the Fayerlee men drink" (Gordon 12). Susie is voicing the male-dominated perception of men's and women's roles in families; though Eleanor disapproves of Tom's drinking, she has no choice but to "get used to it." The metaphorical beheading occurs frequently throughout the story, every time Eleanor's desires are dismissed by her husband. This does not mean, however, that Tom is Perseus, sent to kill her. In the final scene, Eleanor's comparison to Medusa is truly revealed. When Tom proclaims that he has fallen in love with a petrified woman, Sally notices Eleanor's eyes:

I looked at her then and I wished I hadn't. She had blue eyes. I always thought that they were like violets. She had a way of opening them wide whenever she looked at you ... It was like the violets were freezing, there in her eyes. We all saw it ... I thought, 'Her eyes, they will freeze him, too.' (14)

This comparison to Medusa is blatant, though Eleanor in this situation is not a monster. Rather, she decides that she will take no more of Tom's irresponsible and harmful ways. While Eleanor's eyes don't actually freeze Tom, when he tries to leave the table, he falls, and Sally says she never sees him get up. This metaphorical freezing allows the woman finally to defeat her male counterpart; Tom may win several small battles throughout the story, but Eleanor wins the war.

These two types of femininity were important in considering women's place in society during the time of the Southern Renaissance. On one hand, women were seen as weaker than men and were supposed to look nice and not cause any trouble; however, during this time many women began to take stands for their independence. In looking at the historical events of the early twentieth century, such as the passage of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote, one easily sees how traditional female roles were changing. Rather than focusing on political equality, more women demanded social equality, both privately and publicly. Equality also included marriage, which Gordon made clear in "The Petrified Woman." Julia Ehrhardt argues that the Medusa imagery "serves as a literary manifestation of the gender anxiety that characterized the Southern renaissance; while also symbolizing the difficulties Gordon faced as a women writer struggling to make her voice heard." By juxtaposing these two women characters, Gordon drew attention to the oppression that women faced as well as their struggle to break free of these traditional gender roles. While the issues of gender equality were more prominent in large cities, Gordon focused upon small, rural areas like the one in which she grew up. Her story served as a feminist piece for small-town women.

"The Petrified Woman" is a product of skillfully blended mythology and Southern culture. Gordon not only set her story in the South but utilized many Southern cultural staples such as a family reunion, a travelling carnival, and rich family history. She took a large issue like feminism and channeled it toward a smaller audience, thereby producing a more specific study of how gender roles affected marriages in the South.

CHAPTER 2

POETRY

John Crowe Ransom

While studying at Vanderbilt University, John Crowe Ransom started working with the Southern Agrarians, a group of twelve Southern writers who believed that the agrarian roots of the United States were extremely important and that returning to those roots would be beneficial to the country. Together, the group wrote and published a pro-South manifesto, “determined to conserve their region’s distinctive literature and rural economy,” which directly contradicted the general idea of the Southern Renaissance (“Donald Davidson”). However, in time many of the members changed their perspective, including Ransom, to look toward a new future for the United States rather than focusing their efforts on the past.

Ransom’s work was greatly influenced by the Classics because of his time at Oxford, where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar. During his time there, Ransom focused on the Classics and read the “Greats,” which “demanded that Greek and Latin history, literature, and philosophy be read in the original languages” (Young xiii). One poem heavily influenced by mythology is “Philomela.” The poem begins by listing the characters of the nightingale creation myth. To the speaker, the myth does not seem as if it could be true. The speaker tells how Philomela comes to England, fleeing her husband

but always wandering restlessly; she does not come to America because the barbarous population is not worthy of her. At Oxford, the speaker finally hears her song, but it troubles him; he wonders if America will ever be good enough to see and hear her.

The title of the poem as well as its main symbol comes from the story of Philomela. According to the myth, the king of Athens has two daughters, Philomela and Procne, who marries Tereus, king of Thrace. One day, Philomela tries to visit her sister, but Tereus rapes her, cuts out her tongue, and hides her in a building deep in a forest. Though she is unable to speak, Philomela is able to tell the story of what Tereus did by weaving a loom. She gives the tapestry to a servant, who then takes it to Procne. Upon seeing the design in the cloth, Procne rushes to the forest to rescue her sister. She brings Philomela back to the palace and decides to exact revenge on her husband by killing their son, Itys. She stabs him with a sword, and then she and Philomela cut up his body and serve it to Tereus that night at dinner. When he realizes what has happened, Tereus chases after the sisters, who pray to be saved and are subsequently turned into birds by the gods. Early versions of the story state that Procne turns into a nightingale, mournfully singing her sad story for all time, while Philomela is turned into a swallow, because she has no tongue, trying in vain to tell her story as well. However, later in time the story changes to Philomela's becoming a nightingale and Procne's becoming a swallow; this is the version that Ransom would have read.

The myth is utilized in the poem as an allegory for poetry itself. Philomela represents the myth which started out in Greece before being brought to and studied in England. Through this allegory, Ransom critiques the South's ability to parallel Greek myth. The speaker in the poem never hears the nightingale's song, or myth, until he

studies at Oxford. If one takes Ransom to be the speaker in this poem, then this statement is highly unlikely. Most, if not all, scholars, especially those studying literature during this time, were well versed in mythology because it was a common subject in schools. In this case, Ransom isn't saying that myth doesn't make it to America, but rather that America doesn't have any myths that originated in the country; essentially, the United States is too young and doesn't have a rich enough history yet to have what are considered myths. This is evidenced in the fourth stanza, when the narrator exclaims

Not to these shores she came!

.....

How could her delicate dirge run democratic,

Delivered in a cloudless boundless public place

To an inordinate race?" (lines 16-20, 38).

Samuel Woods argues that the poem is about the difficulties presented to a writer in America because the land lacks "any settled cultural, social, and unified racial tradition to provide him with a myth, tradition, or comprehensive body of metaphor" (411).

When the speaker in the poem says that he has not heard myths until he comes to Oxford, he does not mean that literally, but figuratively; he does not fully study or grasp the influence of myth until visiting a country that respects and utilizes the ancient stories more than did scholars in the United States. The speaker goes so far as to question the worth of America to have myths when he says that the country has an "environ barbarous" and asks how the nightingale's song could come "to an inordinate race" (lines 17-20, 38). This is a much heavier claim than just that America doesn't have any myths

of its own; in fact, the poem belittles the United States in relation to myth, and, in a larger sense, art.

The poem was first published in 1924, when Ransom was still teaching in Tennessee and part of the Southern Agrarians. However, this was also the time when his beliefs are beginning to change. In a letter to friend and fellow Agrarian Allen Tate in 1937, Ransom admitted that his conviction in the Southern Agrarian cause had been waning for more than ten years and said that in the type of society that the Agrarians championed, there would be no “effective science, inventions, and scholarship” as well as no “art ... fine poems and their exegeses” (Hindle 14-15). Taken in this context, “Philomela” can be read as Ransom’s changing belief in the Agrarian cause; he is utilizing the poem to express his disappointment in the state of the American cultural art scene.

Robert Penn Warren

Robert Penn Warren was also a member of the Southern Agrarians, but like Ransom, he eventually came to change his views of the South and its position in the United States. He employed mythology in several of his works, one being his poem “Chthonian Revelation: A Myth,” which describes the meeting of two lovers in a cave. The pair has a difficult journey to their cave, which sits on a precipice overlooking the sea. The speaker notes that the cave is very mysterious and becomes even more so the farther they walk. However, the darkness of the cave makes the lovers surer of their direction, and they keep travelling farther back until they eventually stop, make love, and fall asleep. They wake at sunset, jump into the sea, and swim out into the water stroke for

stroke as night fades and the stars begin to show. The speaker ends the poem by describing the drops that fall from the lovers' fingertips as they swim, drops that in themselves contain their own universes.

The title of this poem comes from the Greek *chthóni*, which means “of or relating to the deities, spirits, and other beings dwelling under the earth”; essentially, the poem is dealing with spirits from the Underworld (“Chthonic”). While there are several Greek myths that focus on the Underworld, one that particularly relates to this poem is the myth of Demeter and Persephone. Demeter is the goddess of the harvest, grain, and fertility. One day, her daughter Persephone is kidnapped by Hades, king of the Underworld. Demeter becomes so depressed and caught up in looking for her daughter that she forgets her duties to the Earth: the seasons cease to change, plants stop growing, and the Earth becomes almost lifeless. In an attempt to save the Earth, Zeus demands that Hades release Persephone. However, Persephone is unable to be released because she ate some pomegranate seeds, which made her impure. Zeus works out a compromise so that Persephone may leave the Underworld during certain parts of the year.

The myth of Demeter and Persephone is used to explain the changing of the seasons; when Persephone is on Earth with her mother, Demeter is happy and does her duties as Goddess of the Harvest, thus the seasons of spring and summer. However, when Persephone is in the Underworld, Demeter becomes depressed, exemplified by her failing duties and the lifelessness that comes with fall and winter. On a deeper level, the myth also explores the importance of fertility as well as the cycle of life and death. The Earth would not survive without Demeter, who fertilizes the Earth, causes plants to pollinate, and therefore brings forth new life after winter is over. This parallels humans, whose

fertility keeps the human race alive. In some contexts of the myth, Persephone's eating the pomegranate seed is a metaphor for the loss of her virginity to Hades; he plants his seed inside of her, thus making her impure and unfit to return to a life outside of the Underworld.

Warren's poem relates to the myth in two ways; first, the couple's journey to the cave can be read as a comparison of the cycle of life and death. While the poem isn't necessarily a direct metaphor for the myth of Demeter and Persephone, the two do have much in common, and Warren's diction is important to look at when comparing the two. The language used to describe the lovers' journey through the cave could also be used to describe a journey to the Underworld; the cave has a "chthonian privacy" to it, and when the man turns around to look back, he sees "the world of light-tangled detail / where once life was led that now seems illusion of life / and swings in the distance ..." (16, 24-26). The latter phrases make it seem as if the lovers are slipping out of consciousness and into death, unable to remember the life that they led before. However, life goes on; the couple makes love in the cave until "... the first star is declared" (59). The star represents the new life that the couple creates when they sleep together. When the lovers are swimming away from the cave, the drops on their fingertips each contain "... a perfect universe defined / by its single, miniscule, radiant, enshrined star" (66-67). The description of the stars contained in the drops could be used to relate the story of a conception. At its immediate formation, a fetus is tiny, yet has the potential to grow into a human that contains a universe within its mind. Although the chronology of life's cycle does not match that of the events of the poem, the diction obviously creates a metaphor of life and death.

The second way in which the poem relates to the myth is in the importance that both place on fertility and therefore women. When Demeter is too grieved to fulfill her duties to the Earth, Zeus intervenes for fear that the planet will not survive, withering away by the lack of reproduction. It is only Demeter who has the powers to grow new life on Earth, despite the fact that Zeus is a more powerful god. Without women, new life would not be possible, and Warren places a special significance on a woman's body:

... she
Stands, face upward, arms up as in prayer or
Communion with whispers that wordlessly breathe—
There in columnar gracility stands, breasts,
In that posture, high. Eyes closed. And in
Such world of shadows, she,
From the light of her own inner being, glows (31-37)

No such description is given for the man's body in the entire poem; in fact, it isn't mentioned at all. While procreation between humans could not happen without man as well as woman, a man's body isn't the place where the new life is physically created and nurtured. Thus, Warren describes woman's body in a very regal way. He places a religious type of importance on it, recognizing that from within her, life grows. This parallels the importance of the goddess Demeter and the Earth's dependency upon her for new life.

In both the myth and Warren's poem, women figures are idolized for their ability to create life, whether that life be plant or human. While there are several myths that focus on events in the Underworld, the myth of Demeter and Persephone most closely

relate to Warren's poem in its theme. Warren's poetry is complex, and the added element of the myth adds to its allure.

CHAPTER 3

DRAMA

Tennessee Williams

As a child, Thomas Lanier “Tennessee” Williams III said that he “would rather read books in [his] grandfather’s large and classical library than play marbles and baseball and other normal kid games,” which may be where he learned of mythology (*Where I Live*, 106). Myth was a prominent feature in several of his plays, but so was the South, which not only provided a setting for Williams’ plays, but influenced his subject matter and characters as well. In one interview, Williams said that a theme he often used was a defense of the Old South’s attitude toward “elegance, a love of the beautiful ... and a violent protest against those things that defeat it” (Devlin 45). This was true for his 1940 play *Battle of Angels*, which was rewritten in 1957 as *Orpheus Descending*. *Battle of Angels* was considered Williams’ “first public failure” (Lutz 47) after bringing in less money than expected while it was performed in Boston. However, Williams did not stop working on the play. In a preface to the publication of *Orpheus Descending*, Williams commented upon his rewrite:

... on its surface it was and still is the tale of a wild-spirited boy who wanders into a conventional community of the South and creates the commotion of a fox in a chicken coop. But beneath that ... it is a play about unanswered questions that haunt the hearts of people and the difference between continuing to ask them ... and the acceptance of prescribed answers that are not answers at all, but expedient

adaptations or surrender to a state of quandary. (Williams, "*Orpheus Descending*," vi)

In the story, Val Xavier is a wanderer who has spent his life playing guitar and sleeping with women. After his thirtieth birthday, he decides that kind of life isn't for him anymore, and he ends up in a small Southern town, Two River County, where he finds work at a small local store. The owner, Jabe Torrance, is very sick, so his wife, Lady, takes over the store and decides to open part of it into a confectionery where teens can hang out. This is reminiscent of the vineyard her father owned, before it was burned and he was killed for serving alcohol to African-Americans. Because of his good looks, Val draws attention from every woman that walks into the store, but he and Lady end up falling in love and having an affair. One day, Val's friend Vee, the wife of the local sheriff, has what she calls a vision and is momentarily blinded. The sheriff sees Val trying to help his wife and becomes enraged, assuming that they are having an affair. Jabe also suspects that his wife has been having an affair with Val and overhears the two talking about it after Lady discovers that she is pregnant. Jabe shoots and kills Lady, then proclaims that Val is robbing his store. A group of men, led by the sheriff, takes Val out into the streets to kill him with a blowtorch.

The namesake of Williams' play is the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. In the legend, Orpheus falls in love with Eurydice and the two marry, but shortly after, Eurydice is killed by a poisonous snakebite. Struck with grief, Orpheus travels to the underworld and, with his sad and beautiful song, convinces Pluto, ruler of the underworld, to let him take his wife back to Earth. However, there is one condition: Orpheus cannot look back to see Eurydice until they reach the surface. The two walk along in silence until they are almost there, when Orpheus makes the mistake of turning around. Eurydice disappears

before his eyes, and he waits for seven days outside of the underworld begging to be given a second chance, but to no avail. Afterwards, many Thracian women try to comfort Orpheus, but he takes no notice. The women become so enraged that they eventually drown out the protective sound of Orpheus' lyre and tear him limb from limb, throwing the pieces of his body into a river. He now spends his time roaming through fields in the underworld with Eurydice.

The myth and play are connected in many ways, but at their core, both are stories of resurrection and ultimate failure. This is true symbolically and literally. Val wears a snakeskin jacket, symbolic of shedding one skin in order to begin again, which is his goal in moving to the small town. He wishes to shed his past life of promiscuity and wandering to settle down. He says to Lady that "we're all sentenced to solitary confinement inside of our own skins, for life ... for as long as we live on this earth," evidence that he is not happy with the way he is living, just as Orpheus is not happy in a life without Eurydice. However, Val finds solace and a companion in Lady. He is the obvious Orpheus figure, and having traded in his lyre for a guitar is sent to "lead her out of the hell/Hades in which she lives" (Pagan 48). While in the myth Eurydice is being brought back from death, Val is saving Lady from her lifeless existence in Two Rivers County. Before the time of the play, Lady's father's vineyard is burned, and she all at once loses her father, her home, and her lover, David Cutrere. She also decides to abort the child she is carrying, though she doesn't tell Cutrere, the father, until years later. She also tells him that she "wanted death after that," indicating that she had lost her will to live (Williams 61). Then, she marries Jabe out of necessity rather than love. She tells Val that Jabe "bought me at a fire sale, and not in fifteen years have I had a single good

dream” (Williams 42). However, when Val comes into town, Lady’s passion for life is resurrected.

Val resurrects Lady in more ways than one. He brings joy back to her life, giving her a reason to go on. Lady even knows this is true, telling Val that because of him, she is “alive once more” (Williams 109). The passion Val reawakens in Lady is also evident in her newfound desire to fix up the confectionery. When Lady begins to remember the happiness she once felt, she tries to bring back the place of those memories for her and others in the community by styling the confectionery as a sort of replica of her father’s vineyard. In a sense, she is trying to resurrect the place where she was the happiest, because she finally feels that happiness again after being lifeless for so long. Lady’s friend Beulah even notices the similarities, stating, “*Oh, I understand now! Now I see what she’s up to . . . Why, it’s her father’s wine garden on Moon Lake she’s turned this room into*” (Williams 100). Lady decorates the room full of trees, which also have a special significance; one night at the store, Lady tells Val about a tree that was barren for “spring after useless spring” until one day “she discovered a small green fig on the tree they said wouldn’t bear” (114). The tree is a metaphor for Lady’s body; not only does Val reawaken Lady’s will to live, but her ability to have children as well. Because she had aborted one child and had never gotten pregnant again, Lady thought she was barren. However, Val proves this wrong, and the news brings great happiness to the couple.

The tree is a symbol of new life, but Nicholas Pagan argues that trees “are also associated with mourning” (53). Thus, while the story is one of resurrection, it is also about failure. Orpheus ultimately fails in his goal to bring Eurydice back to earth, and the myth ends with his body being torn apart by women angry at his rejection. While Val is

successful in bringing Lady back to life, both protagonists are ultimately unsuccessful at sustaining this happiness due to the reactions of others in the community. Val, like Orpheus, is hated by the women because he rebukes their advances, and he is hated by the men because they are suspicious of him, especially in regard to their women. In fact, the trouble initially started because of these suspicions; when Val helps the sheriff's wife after she is temporarily blinded during a vision, the sheriff thinks something more is going on between the two. Although Talbott gives Val the opportunity to leave town instead of being punished, Jabe, overhearing Lady's declaration of pregnancy, shoots and kills her and blames it on Val, who is then killed by a mob of angry people, just as Orpheus is ripped apart by hoards of angry women.

The failure of Val and Lady is through no fault of their own, but that of a corrupt society which "utterly defeats and destroys those clear-sighted individuals" (Al-Ghoreibi 55). Orpheus is murdered because, when denying his women suitors, he is deemed strange in the eyes of society. So, too, is Val – an outsider intruding into Two Rivers County, stirring up waters in their generally lifeless town, which in its own way is a type of hell for those who don't conform to society's standards. *Orpheus Descending* constantly brings up "the status of the "outsider" ... through many facets"; not only is Val an outsider, but so is Lady, Carol Cutrere, and even Vee, the sheriff's wife (Reh 20). Although these characters have more moral fiber than the other Two Rivers County inhabitants, the isolation they feel as well as the rigid way of life by which they are surrounded inhibits their ability to bring change or live happy lives. Just as Orpheus does not find happiness because of Eurydice's failed resurrection, several of Williams'

characters cannot find happiness because society does not allow them to renew their passions for life.

The themes of failure may have been prominent prior to the Southern Renaissance, but Williams added the theme of an outsider with different values, values that conflict with those already in place. *Orpheus Descending* also touches on the blatant racism that still existed decades after the Civil War. Williams' work utilized the South not only as a setting but as a type of lifestyle, and illuminated how that lifestyle might affect those not used to it.

CHAPTER 4

THE NOVEL

William Faulkner

Of all the writers in the Southern Renaissance, Faulkner may have been the most influenced by his environment. Several of his short stories and all but three of his novels are set in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, based upon Lafayette County, where Faulkner lived throughout his childhood. It is this location where his novel *As I Lay Dying* takes place. This story follows the Bundren family, which consists of wife and mother Addie, father Anse, sons Cash, Darl, Jewel, and Vardaman, and daughter Dewey Dell. It is told in alternating points of view between the family members and begins when Addie is on her death bed. The readers learn that Cash has a broken leg and Dewey Dell is pregnant, though she hasn't told her family yet. The action begins when Jewel and Darl take a trip to earn some money for their father, while Cash works on a coffin for Addie, who can see it being built outside of her window. After her death, the Bundrens take a journey to Jefferson, where Addie wishes to be buried. While on the trip, the family tries crossing a river, which results in the death of their mules and the reinjuring of Cash's leg, which is then put into a cement cast by Anse, who thinks it will help. To buy new mules, Anse uses money that Cash was saving for a new gramophone and sells Jewel's horse, which makes the two brothers unhappy. The family stays at a

farmer's house overnight, during which time Darl tries to burn the barn down to cremate his mother, though Jewel gets the coffin out before it burns.

When the family reaches Jefferson, Dewey Dell tries to have an abortion, but the worker at the pharmacy tricks her into having sex with him for an abortion medication that does not actually work, and Darl is committed to an insane asylum for burning down the barn the night before. Cash learns that his leg will have permanent damage due to the cement cast, and Anse buys a new set of teeth. While burying Addie's body, Anse meets a new woman, whom he introduces to his children as their new stepmother.

While this story borrows from different parts of Greek mythology, it most strongly parallels Homer's *The Odyssey*, which is a sequel to *The Iliad*, the story of the Trojan War. *The Odyssey* begins ten years after the end of the war and focuses on hero Odysseus' journey home to Ithaca. While trying to get home, he faces the drug of the Lotus flowers, a Cyclops, the underworld, Sirens, and two monsters named Scylla and Charybdis before eventually losing his ship and all of his shipmates. He is then held as a captive by Calypso on her island for seven years until he escapes, only to wreck his ship on the island of the Phaiakians. However, the Phaiakians know of his great deeds in the war and supply him with treasure and a boat to return home.

The story up to this point is being told by Odysseus to the Phaiakians as he waits to start the last leg of his journey home. While he is telling this story, back in Ithaca several suitors plot to assassinate his son Telemachus and marry his wife Penelope in order to take over the kingdom. Penelope keeps the suitors at bay by telling them she will only remarry after she finishes a weaving, which she works on during the day but secretly unravels at night. When Odysseus finally returns, he is disguised as a beggar, though

Penelope recognizes him. She decides to hold a tournament; whoever can string Odysseus' bow and shoot it through twelve axes will be her new husband. Odysseus is the only one able to do this, and he reveals his true identity. Then, he and Telemachus kill the suitors who have been trying to take his kingdom.

One of the major similarities between *As I Lay Dying* and *The Odyssey* is the journey that the protagonists take. The Bundren family goes on their own odyssey to bury Addie in Jefferson, just as Odysseus works to make it back home to his family. Both journeys have similarities such as a river, sexual temptation, and death. It is from part of Odysseus' journey that Faulkner takes the title of his novel. In *The Odyssey* Book XI (1925 Oxford University Press translation by Sir William Marris), Odysseus visits the underworld. King Agamemnon tells him about the murder he suffered at his wife's hands:

... As I lay dying
Upon the sword, raised up my hand to smite her,
And shamelessly she turned away, and scorned
To draw my eyelids down or close my mouth
Though I was on the road to Hades' house (Serafin 8)

Agamemnon's being killed by his wife exemplifies one of the major thematic similarities between *The Odyssey* and *As I Lay Dying* – familial relationships. Citing Carvel Collins, Joan Serafin argues that both stories tell tales of a “tragic lack of family love, which ultimately [leads] to the psychological destruction of Darl, just as it led to the murder of Agamemnon” (9). However, the only family lacking love in the two stories is the

Bundren family. The parallels between the two stories are used as juxtaposition to point out the lack of love in *As I Lay Dying*.

The plot of *The Odyssey* is driven by familial love. Odysseus' love for his family is his main motivation to return home. Speaking to Calypso, he says that his wife

... Falls short of you

Your beauty, stature. She is mortal after all

And you, you never age or die ...

Nevertheless I long — I pine, all of my days —

To travel home and see the dawn of my return (Book 5, lines 239-243)

Despite the fact that Calypso is more beautiful than his wife, Odysseus truly loves Penelope and longs to return home to her. This shows that his love is not based on beauty but on a deeper level. He even tells Penelope that he comes "... home at last for her / after bearing twenty years of brutal struggle," acknowledging the reason for all of his troubles is to see his wife (461). Penelope's devotion to Odysseus is exemplified in her effort to keep from remarrying. She hasn't given up hope that Odysseus is still alive, and she has no interest in any other men. Despite the fact that she has several suitors and could have remarried long ago, she refuses all suitors to wait for her true love.

Odysseus and Penelope's relationship is juxtaposed to Anse and Addie's in Faulkner's novel to reveal the lack of love between the latter pair. Addie says that Anse "had a word, too. Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was like the others; just a shape to fill a lack" (Faulkner 164). Addie both admits to not loving her husband and having an affair with a man whom she does love. Out of this affair comes Jewel, who is Addie's favorite and whose relationship with his

mother is so different from that of his siblings. While Anse may have loved Addie at first, over time his love has faded; it is not out of familial love that he transports Addie's body to Jefferson after her death, but rather familial duty. He complains about Jewel riding his horse to Jefferson because he should have "respect for his dead ma, because it wouldn't look right, him prancing along on a durn circus animal and her wanting us all to be in the wagon with her" (99). By using the word *respect* instead of love, Anse shows how he feels about his wife as well as how he expects his children to feel. He cares more about how other people view his family than how his child is coping with his mother's death. He also finds a new wife in Jefferson while he is burying Addie; if he is able to get over her so quickly, he obviously is not in love with her anymore.

These two works also display child/parent relationships. In *The Odyssey*, Telemachus is fiercely devoted to his father. In the very first book, he tells the disguised Athena that

I would never have grieved so much about his death

If he'd gone down with comrades off in Troy

Or died in the arms of loved ones,

.....

But now the whirlwinds have ripped him away, no fame for him!

He's lost and gone now – out of sight, out of mind – and I...

He's left me tears and grief ... (Book 1, lines 274-282)

This passage shows Telemachus' love for Odysseus in several ways. He is upset that he doesn't know what happened to his father; at least if Odysseus had died in battle, Telemachus could have been sure of his fate. However, he is left to wonder whether his

father is alive or dead. There is also a second reason that Telemachus is upset his father didn't die: in Greece, dying in battle was honorable and led to fame. Knowing that fame would have made his father proud, Telemachus wishes that his death gave him some type of legacy. The love that he feels for his father is also evident in the anger that he feels toward the suitors. Though he is unable to do anything about it until his father returns, Telemachus' attitude reveals the deep loyalty that he feels toward Odysseus.

Telemachus' relationship with his father is placed in sharp contrast to the relationships of the Bundren children and parents. It is clear that the children love their mother, especially because they constantly compete for her attention and even after her death have conflicting ideas over what is best for her body. However, Jewel, spawned from an affair, is her favorite. The relationships that the children have with their father are more complicated. While Odysseus is an example of a good father, Anse is the opposite. There are several examples throughout the story of his neglect for his children's mental and physical well being: he sells Jewel's horse, incorrectly sets Cash's leg in cement, has Darl committed to an insane asylum, uses Dewey Dell's abortion money to buy a new set of teeth, takes a new wife immediately after burying his previous one, etc. Dr. Peabody verbalizes these injustices when Cash tells him that his broken leg doesn't bother him too much. Peabody responds, "You mean, it never bothered Anse much ... you all could have stuck his head into the saw and cured a whole family" (230). As a third-party observer, Peabody is an objective voice that explains to the reader exactly how bad of a father Anse is, so bad that his being gone would be considered healthy for the children.

Faulkner's references to *The Odyssey* serve to point out the negative familial relationships in his own novel. By focusing on a poorer, dysfunctional family as opposed to a family of the aristocracy, Faulkner introduces new types of characters into the literary world. During this time, the South began to "witness and participate in the disappearance of the Old South as a class- and family-based society and the decline of the family as an institution" (Minter 187). The Bundren family perfectly illustrates the declining family values.

AFTERWORD

There are various theories as to why the Southern Renaissance happened, though no single theory has emerged as definitive. Certainly, “exceedingly varied and dramatic material” became available during the 1920s and 1930s (Stewart 11). This material included leftover tension from the Civil War and Reconstruction, new experiences from the First World War, changing gender ideas, mass movements among the American population, and new economic standings of the public. The cultural turmoil, in turn, cultivated new themes in their writings. For example, Caroline Gordon’s short story “The Petrified Woman” is a commentary on the changing status of women during the 1920s. Without these many cultural changes, several of the stories that were born of the Southern Renaissance might never have come to fruition. However, Stewart also argues that the Renaissance was, in fact, no renaissance at all because “there had been no significant body of serious writing preceding it ... Then in the decade following World War I there suddenly appeared in the South a disproportionately large share” of important authors. These authors revitalized the art of writing about the South.

The Renaissance’s influence also reached long after the 1920s and 1930s, and its impact can be seen in later influential works, for example Harper Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird*, which was published in 1960. Though all the Southern Renaissance states are in the South, some, like Mississippi, are more “southern” than others. The stories, though, have not remained in the South, but have achieved universal recognition.

While the Southern Renaissance was a period of literary reinvigoration, authors obviously weren't using totally new material in their works. True, they were writing about new themes in America, but the tools they used to communicate them often dated back thousands of years. Specifically, the use of mythological references directly qualifies the theory that the Southern Renaissance was a time of complete reinvention in the arts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Al-Ghoreibi, Fathia. "Tennessee Williams' Orpheus Descending: A Modern Retelling of an Ancient Myth." *Gezira Journal of Educational Sciences and Humanities* 9.1 (2012): 40-66. Web.
- Andrews, William L. *The Literature of the American South: A Norton Anthology*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998. Print.
- "Chthonic." Def. 1. *Dictionary.com*. Dictionary.com, 2015. Web. 10 Apr. 2015.
- Devlin, Albert J. and Tennessee Williams. *Conversations with Tennessee Williams*. Jackson: U of Mississippi, 1986. *Google Books*. 12 February 2015.
- "Donald Davidson | Biography - American Author." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 23 July 2014. Web.
- Ehrhardt, Julia. "RBSC : 1999-2000 Visiting Fellows - Friends of the Princeton University Library." *Library Research Grants*. Princeton University, n.d. Web.
- Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. New York: Random House, 1930. Print.
- Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough; a Study in Magic and Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1951. Print.
- Gordon, Caroline. *The Collected Stories of Caroline Gordon*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981. Print.
- Gordon, Caroline, and Sally Wood. *The Southern Mandarins: Letters of Caroline Gordon to Sally Wood, 1924-1937*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1984. Print.
- Hamilton, Edith, and Steele Savage. *Mythology*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1942. Print.
- Homer, and Robert Fagles. *The Odyssey*. New York: Penguin, 1996. Print.
- Lutz, Norma Jean. *Tennessee Williams*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003. Print.

- Mencken, H.L. "The Sahara of the Bozart." Ed. Huntington Cairns. *The American Scene: A Reader* (1977): 157-68. Web.
- Minter, David. "Family, Region, and Myth in Faulkner's Fiction." *Faulkner and the Southern Renaissance*. Ed. Ann J. Abadie and Doreen Fowler. Jackson: U of Mississippi, 1982. 182-203. Print.
- Morford, Mark, Robert Lenardon, and Michael Sham. *Classical Mythology*. Ninth ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.
- O'Connor, Flannery. *The Complete Stories*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1972. Print.
- O'Connor, Flannery, and Sally Fitzgerald. *The Habit of Being: Letters*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979. Print.
- Pagan, Nicholas. *Rethinking Literary Biography: A Postmodern Approach to Tennessee Williams*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1993. Print.
- Ransom, John Crowe. *Selected Poems*. New York: Knopf, 1969. Print.
- Ransom, John Crowe, Thomas Daniel Young, and John J. Hindle. *Selected Essays of John Crowe Ransom*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1984. Print.
- Reh, Virginia. *Tennessee Williams' Orpheus Descending*. St. Catharines, Ontario: Virginia Reh, 2011. Print.
- Serafin, Joan M. *Faulkner's Uses of the Classics*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983. Print.
- Stewart, John L. *John Crowe Ransom*. Minneapolis: Lund Press, Inc., 1962. Print.
- Vann Woodward, C. "Why the Southern Renaissance?" *Welcome to VQR Online*. VQR: A National Journal of Literature and Discussion, 12 Dec. 2003. Web.
- Warren, Robert Penn, and John Burt. *The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1998. *Google Books*. 10 April 2015.
- Williams, Tennessee. *"Orpheus Descending" with "Battle of Angels" Two Plays*. New York, N. Y.: Laughlin, 1958. Print.
- Williams, Tennessee, Christine R. Day, and Bob Woods. *Where I Live: Selected Essays*. New York: New Directions, 1978. Print.
- Young, Thomas Daniel. *John Crowe Ransom: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland Pub., 1982. Print.

