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Classical Mythology

Final Reflection

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As a Classics Major, much of my academic career has been governed by one specific myth. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. If I were Captain Ahab from *Moby Dick*, my white whale would be this myth. Naturally, the semester I decide to take a classical mythology class is conveniently the same semester that my college puts on a play and art exhibit inspired by the myth. In a sense, it reappears and has haunted me in various contexts. My project consists of two parts, an interpretive drawing inspired by a couple lines from Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, as well as a short "Homeric Hymn" style writing piece, which draws inspiration from both *The Metamorphoses*, and two secondary source materials. That aside, it is only natural that my final project should be primarily inspired by the rendition of the myth from Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*.

In the entirety of the myth, I found inspiration in one specific quote from book ten which says, "One final, faint 'Fairwell'--- so weak it scarcely reached his ears---was all she [Eurydice] said. Then, back to the abyss, she fell," (Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, 10.38-40). This quote is what my entire project is based off. The vision of Eurydice falling into the great abyss of the underworld, alone grabbed my attention. When I thought of this scene I envisioned a dark figure, maybe one of the fates, dragging her down as an unknown force that she could not see, but only feel. For this project I have drawn my interpretation of this scene. In my drawing I have shown Eurydice, she is falling backwards, her wedding veil being cast through the air, and her body

being dragged by a dark figure. In my own interpretation, I personally see this dark figure as the heaviness of death, pulling her down like an anchor to the depths of the underworld.

While I used Ovid's work as my primary source and inspiration, I also pulled from a couple of secondary sources. One of which is the theatrical production of "Eurydice," written by Sarah Ruhl, and performed by Skidmore College's theater department. In many of the renditions of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, there is very little mention of Eurydice's experiences. Because of this, I decided that I would make my own Homeric Hymn for her. I refer to how in the play it seems that her decision to call out Orpheus's name, causing him to turn and look at her might have been a conscious choice so that she could remain in the underworld. Finally, I also drew inspiration from a line in Jean Valentine's "Orpheus and Eurydice," a semi-modern poem. "A hissing second, not a word, / And there it was, our Underworld," (Valentine, "Orpheus and Eurydice," 3-4). This quote inspired me to add a snaking line that encases Eurydice's figure in my drawing. It is to represent the serpentine nature of her death, as well as the image of her spiraling down into the Underworld.

This project has given me an outlet to express the ways in which this myth has integrated itself into my life. I doubt that this will be the last time that I encounter it in my Classics-heavy education, however it has been refreshing to express artistically the ways in which this myth has manifested itself in my mind's eye.

References

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Valentine, Jean. "Orpheus and Eurydice." *Poetry* 110, no. 1 (1967): 3–4.

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