



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 34 | Number 2 | Issue 128, Spring/Summer

Article 7

4-15-2016

The Helmholtz, the Doctor, the Minotaur, and the Labyrinth

Buket Akgün
Istanbul University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Akgün, Buket (2016) "The Helmholtz, the Doctor, the Minotaur, and the Labyrinth," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 34 : No. 2 , Article 7.

Available at: <http://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol34/iss2/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.

The Helmholtz, the Doctor, the Minotaur, and the Labyrinth

Abstract

Compares the use and resolution of Minotaur and Labyrinth themes and imagery, and the identification of the Theseus hero-figure with the monster, in Victor Pelevin's novel *The Helmet of Horror* and the sixth season Doctor Who episode "The God Complex."



THE HELMHOLTZ, THE DOCTOR, THE MINOTAUR, AND THE LABYRINTH

BÜKET AKÇAN

JUST LIKE THE EVER-DYING AND EVER-LIVING MOON-BULL, the classical myth of the Minotaur and the labyrinth of Crete is reborn with its every retelling, reception, and appropriation. Victor Pelevin's novel *The Helmet of Horror* (2006) and Toby Whithouse's *Doctor Who* episode "The God Complex" (2011) draw on the classical myth to display how the consumerist culture, along with art, appropriates myths. Each retelling serves as a labyrinth in itself. Both retellings question the possibility of progress and civilization. Both claim that Theseus and the Minotaur, the hero and the monster, might as well be the one and the same depending on the reception of the same myth.

To start with a brief summary of the classical myth, Minos prays to Poseidon to send a bull as a sign to prove that the throne of Crete is his by divine right. Upon ascending the throne, Minos does not sacrifice the bull to Poseidon as promised. For this reason, Poseidon punishes him by making his wife Pasiphaë fall in love with the bull. Pasiphaë copulates with the bull, hiding inside a wooden cow built by Daedalus. She has a son, nicknamed the Minotaur, with the upper body of a bull and the lower body of a man. Minos keeps his wife's son from the bull hidden and locked up in an underground labyrinth yet again built by Daedalus. After a while a war breaks out between Crete and Athens, which the latter loses. As a tribute, every nine years, seven young male and seven young female Athenians are sent to Crete to be devoured by the Minotaur. Theseus, the son of the Athenian King Aegeus, volunteers to be one of the sacrifices so that he can slaughter the Minotaur and make an end to this tribunal sacrifice. Ariadne, the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë and the half-sister of the Minotaur, falls in love with Theseus. She helps him to find his way out of the labyrinth by giving him a ball of thread. She tells Theseus to tie one end of the thread to the only entrance and exit of the labyrinth, to unravel it as he walks through the labyrinth, and to follow its trail on his way out of the labyrinth. After killing the Minotaur, Theseus escapes with Ariadne. He promises to marry her in return for her help. However, on his journey back to Athens, Theseus abandons Ariadne sleeping on an island. He eventually marries her sister Phaedra.

THE HELMET OF HORROR

The Helmet of Horror is a contemporary reception of the classical myth. In the novel eight kidnapped characters, while trying to escape from their rooms and labyrinths, replace the tribunal sacrifice just as a virtual reality game replaces the actual sacrifice. The entire novel is written in the form of a cyber chat on an internet thread. Ariadne, one of the characters, has started the thread, typing the question that a dwarf asked her in her dream before locking her in a room: "I shall construct a labyrinth in which I can lose myself, together with anyone who tries to find me—who said this and about what?" (Pelevin 1). At first the readers may be inclined to think that the answers must be Daedalus and the labyrinth of Crete. After all, he built the labyrinth. He was put into it by Minos as a punishment for helping Ariadne and Theseus. Nonetheless, it is eventually hinted that the labyrinth that the dwarf mentions actually refers to the helmet of horror. Asterisk, who happens to be the Minotaur and Theseus at the same time, built the helmet of horror. The helmet's contents, that is the characters of the novel and everything else such as the many wires, tubes and parts, are all created inside the helmet to pass the time.

Each character in *The Helmet of Horror* has supposedly been kidnapped. Each one wakes up alone in a locked room with a labyrinth outside his/her door, not remembering how he/she has gotten there. UGLI 666's labyrinth is a mosaic on the floor of a Gothic cathedral. She walks through it on her knees. The two canons at the cathedral explain to UGLI 666 that a labyrinth illustrates the Christian path, which is "as simple and straight as an arrow. And the twists and turns and dead-ends of the labyrinth symbolise sin, in which fallen souls wander, hopelessly lost" (Pelevin 135). As critic Arthur Asa Berger remarks, labyrinths in churches lead to a central place, representing godhead (103). Both unicursal labyrinths, with a single path meandering most often toward a center, and multicursal labyrinths, with more complex designs and multiple paths and dead-ends, signify artistic order and chaos at the same time, as well as a laborious progress from disorientation to awareness and understanding (Aarseth 6). The canons show UGLI 666 the plans of other labyrinths on the walls and columns of the cathedral. There are endlessly long labyrinths, such as the labyrinth of the Church of Santa Maria-di-Trastavera in Rome, along with much shorter ones, such as the labyrinth at Poitiers Cathedral shaped like the Tree of Life, the labyrinth from an ancient basilica in Algeria, which is the first known early Christian labyrinth (fourth century), and labyrinths on the church walls and columns that one can go through by tracing the way with one's finger. As faith declines, the site of pilgrimage is relocated to monasteries and abbeys, and it becomes gradually shorter and easier to go through. The labyrinth represents spiritual rebirth; the hero passes the threshold of self-annihilation only to be reborn (Campbell, *The*

Hero with a Thousand Faces [Hero] 91). It brings to mind the Cretan tradition of periodic regicide for the rejuvenation of the power of the sovereign (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* [Primitive Mythology] 428, 427), which is reflected in the myth of the Minotaur through the repetitive killing of the tribunal sacrifice.

The character Romeo-y-Cohiba has a replica of the Hampton Court maze, Britain's oldest surviving hedge maze built in the late 1600s, while Isolda has a replica of the labyrinth at the gardens at Versailles with its thirty-nine groups of hydraulic statuary representing the fables of Aesop built in the late 1700s. Similar to Umberto Eco's view, Isolda claims that it is impossible to get lost in her labyrinth in spite of its complexity. In Isolda's case, however, it is because there is a plan hanging at every place where the path branches. Monstradamus has a few-meters-long corridor ending in a blank concrete wall. There is, as Monstradamus puts it, a depressing graffiti of a gigantic seal on the wall. The graffiti looks like a unicursal labyrinth with the Roman numeral VII in its center from which an endless string of symbols run in a spiral. The Roman numeral not only refers to the seven girls and seven boys sent to Crete periodically as tribunal sacrifice, but also reminds us of the eight and seven snatched characters respectively in *The Helmet of Horror* and "The God Complex." At the end of Monstradamus's labyrinth there is a table against the wall, a stool by the table, and a blank sheet of paper, a pencil, and a pistol with a single bullet on the table. It almost feels like Monstradamus is being pushed to commit suicide just as the tribunal sacrifices are sent to be devoured by the Minotaur. Organizm(-: has both a software and a hardware copy of Windows 95 screensaver called Maze instead of a traditional labyrinth. The latter has an installation in its middle which resembles one of the parts of the helmet of horror, namely Tarkovsky's Mirror. Ariadne's labyrinth is yet another room. It is a chic bedroom with a comfortable bed and a mini bar full of sleeping pills. Sartrik has two refrigerators full of alcohol.

Nutcracker's labyrinth is a TV editing room with Betacam tapes of people applying for the job of Theseus and presenting their own readings of the classical myth. A priest asserts that the Minotaur is the creator of the labyrinth and our savior. A professor of history argues that the Minotaur is the animal part of the mind and Theseus is the human part. He, thus, equates the labyrinth with the human brain. He claims that we must kill the animal, and then rename the Helmet of Horror as the Helmet of Civilization and Progress. This argument highlights the concept that the purpose of civilization and progress is to get rid of our bestial nature. Both *The Helmet of Horror* and "The God Complex," nevertheless, portray Theseus and the Minotaur, the hero and the monster/sacrifice, as the same being whose role and function change in accordance with the reception of the same myth. Accordingly, a French

philosopher on one of the tapes explains that we are either the Minotaur or his victim. Whenever there is a discourse and we make a choice between several alternatives, we opt for being either the Minotaur or the victim. The labyrinth thereby offers a plurality of discourses. The philosopher echoes Michel Foucault when he claims that “[e]ven the discourse itself can only come into being within the discourse” (Pelevin 204). Likewise, everything is created inside the helmet of horror. Indeed, the helmet of horror is reminiscent of “new ‘technologies’ for the government of people” (Simons 304). It is a virtual reality helmet used to control the characters. Foucault argues that “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed [...] to avert its powers and its dangers” (216). Similarly, in Pelevin’s novel the moderators constantly monitor, manipulate, and censor the communications and acts of the characters. A psychiatrist states that we all pursue our own Minotaur. She claims that the only way to defeat him is to stop thinking of ourselves as victims. An American maintains that the labyrinth is the worldwide web and that the Minotaur is a soul-sucking spider-man hacking into our minds. A German calls the Minotaur *Zeitgeist*, spirit of the time. An Italian suggests that the Minotaur is an evil spirit whose body is the gross dollar supply and the labyrinth is his intestines. In his *Prison Notebooks*, the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, likewise, regards the state and fascist “corporativism” as the embodiments of the economic world and criticizes American pragmatism (Guido 1). The intestines of the gross dollar supply bring to mind what Gramsci calls “the rule of the bank vaults” (“The problem of power”) and “the pragmatist who judges from immediate reality, often at the most vulgar level” (*Selections from The Prison Notebooks* 373). The Minotaur uses the helmet of horror to control its victims like the state uses hegemonic apparatus and coercion to manufacture consent (Gramsci, *Selections from The Prison Notebooks* 387). Similarly, Berger draws a connection between the consumerist, capitalist economy and the myth of the Minotaur and the labyrinth of Crete. He argues that the customers assume the role of Theseus, trying to find their way through modern labyrinths in supermarkets where all paths lead to the cash registers. The clerks and the cash registers assume the role of the Minotaur, in that they devour our money just like the Minotaur devours the tribunal sacrifice (104). The final kidnap victim, Sartrik, believes that he is the only real human on the thread and everyone else is just one of the parts or contents of the helmet of horror. He reckons that Monstradamus and Nutcracker are the horns, Ariadne is the labyrinth, UGLI 666 is the past, Organizm(-: is the future, and Romeo-y-Cohiba and Isolda together are the double-headed axe.

These interpretations illustrate only some of the contemporary receptions and appropriations of the classical myth. They represent what Lyndon Davies refers to as “a retelling, a recasting of a recasting for each particular age” (213). The entire myth is like an archetype, a vessel, to quote Jung, which endures time, which can never be emptied or filled, but forever needs to be re-interpreted (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* [Archetypes] 179; par. 301). Monstradamus suggests that different civilizations and cultures have different receptions of the same place, of the labyrinth of Crete in this case. Hence the multiple forms that the labyrinth reveals itself in *The Helmet of Horror*. Pelevin’s novel, written in the form of an internet thread in a chat room, is in itself a manifestation of the labyrinth of Crete. As suggested by Jorge Luis Borges in the epigraph to Pelevin’s introduction titled “Mythcellaneous,” “the book and the labyrinth were one and the same” (Pelevin vii). According to one of the characters, the screen design in the novel is reminiscent of yet another manifestation of the labyrinth, the chat room on the website of *The Guardian Unlimited* with hundreds of threads instead of one. Just as Theseus had to follow the thread to find his way out of the labyrinth, so do the readers need to follow the internet thread to ascertain if and/or how the characters will find their way out of their labyrinths.

Indeed, both *The Helmet of Horror* and “The God Complex” are labyrinths in which the readers/audience can get lost. Espen J. Aarseth calls such texts cybertexts: “the idea of a narrative text as a labyrinth, a game, or an imaginary world, in which the reader can explore at will, get lost, discover secret paths, play around, follow the rules, and so on” (3). Correspondingly, at the end of his introduction, Pelevin invites or rather challenges the readers to take a walk in the labyrinth, that is, to read his novel. However, he warns them that so far nobody has returned (xi). Aarseth notes that the readers/audience, be that as it may, cannot have the player’s pleasure of influence because their pleasure is that of the voyeur, which is “Safe, but impotent” (4).

Time and space are relative inside the helmet of horror and for the Helmholtz who is wearing the helmet. The time and date showing when Ariadne started the thread are censored, but we can see that the date is stated as “BC,” most probably to emphasize that progress is impossible for we “never moved anywhere at all” (Pelevin ix). As implied by the dead ends of their labyrinths, the characters have never left where they are. It is noteworthy that the labyrinth of Crete, too, was actually one giant dead-end labyrinth with only one locked door as its entrance and exit. All that the characters in the novel see, feel, and think takes place inside the helmet of horror. In other words, they are all wearing virtual reality helmets even if they may not be completely aware of it. The internet they have is not real, in that they do not have access to anything but Ariadne’s thread. Like the chitons they are

wearing, the labyrinths outside their rooms are mere replicas, simulacra of the actual labyrinths, which are in turn simulacra of mythical and historical labyrinths. The asterisk sign on all the toiletries and the double-headed axe design on the doors of their rooms are reminiscent of the Minotaur and Crete respectively. The Minotaur's real name was Asterius, which means "starry" in Greek. It was long forgotten, for everyone called him by his nickname the Minotaur, which means "the bull of Minos" in Greek (Parker and Stanton 156). The double-headed axe is originally from Crete. It is called *lábrys* in Greek and the word "labyrinth" derives from it.

Roland Barthes avers that "myth is speech *stolen and restored*"; "time or knowledge will not make it better or worse" (125, 130). *The Helmet of Horror* abounds with intertextual references, combining myths and contemporary culture. The novel, thus, proves that what we call progress is merely the same old myths being retold. The bronze statues in Ariadne's dream are inspired by Japanese erotic art and tentacle erotica, a subgenre of *hentai* (変態), in which monsters with tentacles engage in sex with or rape young girls. Monstradamus explains that the raped schoolgirl symbolizes the Japanese national spirit, devastated after the Second World War, while the rapist monster with tentacles symbolizes the Western corporate economy (Pelevin 19). The bronze figures of animals from fables in Isolda's labyrinth combine art and literature while the fables combine man and beast. The poster of Pavlov's dog illustrates that the snatched characters, wearing the helmet of horror (that is, the virtual reality helmet) are conditioned and manipulated by the moderators. As Barthes says, myths can "transform a meaning into form" and pictures can turn into a form of writing once they become meaningful (Barthes 131, 110). Accordingly, the lotion for dry skin named Ariadne's milk, the Centaur on the Remy Martin bottle, *The New Yorker* cover combining Monica Lewinsky and Mona Lisa, are examples of the use of myths and archetypes in contemporary consumerist culture. Among the contemporary representations of the Minotaur in the novel are the Merrill Lynch bull, the Chicago Bulls/Bears uniforms, Bill/Bull Gates, Batman/Bruce Wayne (not to mention the Batman symbol which looks like a double-headed axe), Darth Vader, and the Man in the Iron Mask.

The screen names of the characters are assigned to them aptly as well as mockingly. Ariadne, a poet, obviously plays the role of the mythical Ariadne. In Pelevin's novel, Ariadne has started the internet thread. Like the mythical Ariadne, whom Theseus abandoned on an island where she has fallen asleep, Ariadne falls asleep right after the dwarf locks her in a room. She continues to sleep a great deal throughout the novel. Joseph Campbell argues that "myths are of the nature of dream" (*Hero* 255). Moreover, in Jungian and Eliadian terms, archetypes emerge from the collective unconscious through dreams and visions (Coupe 139). What the dwarf tells Ariadne in her dreams is

but a reception of the myth of the Minotaur, too. Ariadne tells the others what she learns about Asterisk and the helmet of horror in her dreams so that they can figure out what is going on and how they can escape. Each character's waking up in a strange room, not remembering how they got there, and starting to chat on a thread throughout the novel is also reminiscent of Sartre's existentialist play *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*, 1944). Hence, Sartrik is most probably named after Jean-Paul Sartre. Nutcracker, who seems to be a computer game programmer, is named after E.T.A. Hoffman's short story "Nussknacker und Mausekönig" ("The Nutcracker and the Mouse King") and Tchaikovsky's ballet score *Щелкунчик, Балет-феерия* (*The Nutcracker*). Monstradamus's screen name derives from *monstrare* meaning "to show, to demonstrate" in Latin. Some characters call him Monster. They think that he is either the Minotaur or Theseus, or both. Not to mention that like Nostradamus, he interprets Ariadne's dreams and other characters' daily quests in their labyrinths. He also translates for them the texts they encounter. Romeo-y-Cohiba and IsoldA become star-crossed lovers, manipulated by the helmet of horror. Indeed, their conditioning and manipulation starts with their being named after literary lovers. As Monstradamus suggests, "[a]ccording to their names they have to be" in love (Pelevin 72). IsoldA becomes Romeo-y-Cohiba's Juliet while Romeo-y-Cohiba becomes IsoldA's Tristan. There are Cuban cigars named Romeo y Julieta and Cohiba, and the cigar can also represent a penis. So, the screen name of Romeo-y-Cohiba conforms with his overly masculine appearance and character, too. UGLI 666 is a very devout Christian. The first part of her screen name UGLI is actually an abbreviation for Universal Gate for Logic Implementation while 666 is the number of the beast in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, which symbolizes the Antichrist. Appropriately, in the novel she is asked to repent and walk the League, that is, the church labyrinth.

"THE GOD COMPLEX"

"The God Complex" (2011) is the eleventh episode in the sixth series of *Doctor Who*, written by Toby Whithouse and directed by Nick Hurran. Before the title sequence of the episode, Lucy Hayworth, a policewoman, is seen taking notes. She is writing down what has happened once and is happening again. Therefore, she brings to mind Karen Armstrong's definition of myth—an event which happened once and all the time (7)—and Pelevin's claim that there is no progress but merely repetition. By unraveling the plot of the episode, Lucy plays the role of Ariadne not only to the next group of victims, but also to the audience. Her notes replace the ball of thread Ariadne has given to Theseus to aid his escape from the labyrinth. The Eleventh Doctor, a Time Lord played by Matt Smith, travels through space and time in his

spaceship the TARDIS together with his human companion Amy Pond and her husband Rory Williams. They accidentally arrive at the same 1980s hotel. The hotel eventually turns out to be a fully automated space prison for the Minotaur, a bull-like humanoid alien species and a distant cousin of yet another alien species called the Nimon.¹ So, in “The God Complex” the labyrinth is replaced by a space prison designed to look like a 1980s hotel with constantly changing rooms and corridors. The camera angles further emphasize the idea that the hotel is one giant three-dimensional and multi-layered labyrinth. For instance, the camera looks up and down at the Doctor, Amy, and Rory, who are standing at the stairs. They look down and up at the camera in turn. These shots make the balustrades look like the walls of a unicursal labyrinth. Aasperth mentions that the inscriptions on the walls of ancient Egyptian temples were likewise connected two- or three-dimensionally, that is on one wall or from one wall or room to another respectively. Thanks to this nonlinear arrangement, the religious text was enabled to parallel the temple’s symbolic architecture (9). Similarly, the Doctor has been playing with a Rubik’s cube. In one scene he throws it in the air and catches it right in front of the pigeonhole at the front desk. The Rubik’s cube, especially in this scene, hints at how the uncanny architecture of the hotel works. It displays the mechanics behind the constantly twisting and shifting corridors and vanishing rooms popping up somewhere else. As the Minotaur is dying, the hotel simulation of the space prison gradually breaks down. It eventually reveals the control room on an endless maze made of grids akin to the surface of the Rubik’s cube. The prison has a program designed to snatch people from planets with belief systems, and to expose them to their primal fear, which lurks in one of the hotel rooms specifically designed for them. Once confronted with their fear, the snatched victims fall back on their faith, which is converted into energy, a food source for the Minotaur. Right after being robbed off of their faith, the victims die.

As mentioned above, the Minotaur is actually an alien. He is a distant cousin of the Nimon, who descend on planets as gods and make the inhabitants worship them. “Which is fine,” as the Doctor puts it, “until the inhabitants get all secular and advanced enough to build bonkers prisons” (“The God Complex”). The Minotaur and the space prison are re-modulations of what Jean Baudrillard calls a simulated God and the faith system as a simulacrum: “What if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be

¹ As mentioned above, the Minotaur in “The God Complex” is actually the distant cousin of an alien species called the “Nimon,” who were first encountered in the Fourth Doctor serial *The Horns of Nimon* (“Minotaur”; “*The Horns of Nimon*”). However, for convenience’s sake, I shall refer to him as the Minotaur.

reduced to the signs that constitute faith? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum" (5-6). It is exactly what a secular and advanced society has done to the alien Minotaur by trapping him in a simulacrum of a 1980s hotel. The Doctor, Amy, and Rory have been snatched because of Amy's faith in the Doctor; she believes that the Doctor will always save her and will never let her down. The hotel keeps showing Rory a way out instead of a room with his fear in it because Rory has no faith or superstitions. Shortly after their arrival, the Doctor, Amy, and Rory meet four other characters who have been snatched just like them. Joe is a gambler, who believes in luck. Rita is a believer; she is a Muslim. She believes that the hotel is Jahannam, the hell for Muslims. Howard is a conspiracy theorist; he believes that the CIA is responsible for everything. Gibbit is an alien from Tivoli, the most invaded planet in the galaxy. Hence, he has a pathological compulsion to surrender. He believes that an invading force will save him.

As stated earlier, the seven snatched characters meeting at the lobby of the hotel in "The God Complex" bring to mind the seven girls and seven boys sacrificed to the Minotaur. So do the eight snatched characters in *The Helmet of Horror* although the mythical Ariadne is not the sacrifice but the guide. Brian Attebery points out that fantasy authors "spin cultural memorates to remind us that we are, and have always been, part substance and part story" (116). The Minotaur and all his manifestations, including the Doctor in "The God Complex" and the eight characters of *The Helmet of Horror*, represent the moon-bull, the ever-dying and ever-living god. It should also be noted that the Doctor in "The God Complex," being a Time Lord, can cheat death by regenerating in a new body, too. Campbell argues that the image of the Minotaur amalgamates the moon-bull, the moon-man, and the moon-king. He suggests that a bull might have replaced the king in Crete (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* 60, 61).

Correspondingly, in *The Helmet of Horror* Ariadne composes a poem about the Minotaur and dedicates it to Monstradamus because some characters believe that he is either the Minotaur or Theseus, or both:

The Minotaur lurks at the door,
His axe it gleams moon-bright.
"Dear Watson this could not be more . . ."
Then silence in the night. (Pelevin 50)

By saying that the Minotaur's axe shines like the moon, Ariadne draws a parallel with the Minotaur and the moon, and thereby with the moon-bull. It is most probably a double-headed axe—a *labrys*. By using "Dear

Watson" as an interlocutor, Ariadne's poem also refers to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes books. Like Sherlock Holmes, the characters are trying to deduce what is happening and how they can escape by piecing together the pieces of the puzzle in Ariadne's dreams and each characters' labyrinths.

In *The Helmet of Horror*, Asterisk, who is later revealed to be Theseus and the Minotaur at the same time, is angry with people because they have killed or will kill him. Since or until that time people send Asterisk a tribute of people—like the eight snatched characters—to join his games and die in his arena. Both *The Helmet of Horror* and "The God Complex" demonstrate that Theseus and the Minotaur can be the one and the same character while the myth of the Minotaur and the labyrinth can be interpreted as the homebound quest of the hero as well as the brutal sacrifice of the monster. Asterisk is wearing a bronze helmet, which is the helmet of horror. He is half human and half machine just like the Minotaur was half human and half bull; technology has replaced myth. When Theseus looks in the mirror, he sees the Minotaur because he is wearing the helmet of horror. "If you put on a Batman mask and look in the mirror, you'll see Batman," Monstradamus explains. "But the mask will never see itself" (Pelevin 221). Just as there cannot be a Batman without Bruce Wayne, so too there cannot be a Minotaur without Theseus. Rosemary Jackson regards the mirror, likewise, as a metaphor to produce other selves (87).

Returning to the "The God Complex," the space prison program changes the snatched victims. It changes their thoughts as it converts their faith into some form of energy, on which the alien Minotaur can feed. Reminiscent of Lacan's mirror stage, the victims experience a fragmentation of character upon seeing what they fear most in their rooms and seeing themselves through the looks of others. Rita sees herself through her father's gaze as a failing student of medicine who got a B grade. Howie sees himself through the gaze of a group of school girls who make fun of his speech problem. Amy sees herself as a little girl waiting for the Doctor who said he would be back in five minutes, but returned twelve years later. Moreover, the characters see their reflections on mirror-like surfaces, such as the gold fish bowl, the glass picture frames, the reception bell, the kettle, the door knobs, the room number plaques, and the computer monitor in the control room of the space prison. The Doctor, initially, avoids looking at the Minotaur directly. He gazes at the Minotaur using mirrors or through an eye hole and a fake waterfall. Water is the most commonly used symbol for the unconscious; it is either a life-threatening or a life-furthering image in mythology (Jung, *Archetypes* 18; par. 40; Campbell, *Primitive Mythology* 62; Jung and Kerényi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of*

Eleusis). The Doctor uses the fake waterfall as a means of protection when he finally confronts the Minotaur. As water is both transparent and reflective, the fake waterfall acts as some kind of a see-through mirror. It allows the Doctor and the Minotaur to see both their own reflections and each other at the same time when they have a conversation through it.

What is more, the audience does not hear or understand what the Minotaur says. They hear only the Doctor translating and thus speaking the Minotaur's lines as well. So, this dialogue between the Doctor and the Minotaur feels like a dialogue the Doctor is having with his subconscious, like a monologue. Jung expresses that looking into the mirror of the water requires self-confrontation, for the mirror shows the true face that lies behind the persona, behind the mask (*Archetypes* 20; par. 43). In "Monsters from the Id," Margaret Tarratt argues that "battles with sinister monsters or extraterrestrial forces are an externalization of the civilized person's conflict with his or her primitive subconscious or id" (347). The Minotaur, therefore, is the Doctor's projection, representing all that which the Doctor refuses to recognize in himself. Just as the Minotaur's real name is forgotten, so is the alien Minotaur's name lost because he has lived so long. The Doctor's name, too, remains a mystery throughout the series so far, which is one of the many similarities between the alien Minotaur and the Doctor. While the Doctor tries to steal a glance at the Minotaur using mirrors, the Minotaur holds a metaphorical mirror to the Doctor and shows him his dark side.

In "The God Complex" the Doctor is associated with the Minotaur starting with the very title of the episode. Rita, one of the snatched victims and a medical doctor, asks the Doctor why he has to save everyone. She tells him that he has quite a god complex. The alien Minotaur also comes from a species that liked to play gods. Eventually, the Doctor sacrifices Amy's faith in him to save them. He thereby kills the Minotaur by cutting his energy source/food supply. This reminds us of Jung's metaphorical interpretation of the myth of the ever-living and ever-dying god. Jung sees it as a transformation of attitude which brings with itself "a new manifestation of life" (*Psychological Types* 193; par. 325). The Doctor's sacrificing Amy's faith in him and deciding to travel without companions in order not to risk anyone's life at the end of this episode marks "a kind of temporary death of the ego" in Robert A. Segal's words (113). It is temporary because afterwards the Doctor explains to Amy why he had to crush her belief in him.

Furthermore, through the death of the Minotaur, the Doctor also vicariously experiences a kind of temporary death of the ego. Jackson points out that the double most often dies so that the self can unite with the other (91). Accordingly, the Minotaur dies right after pointing out the remarkable similarity between himself and the Doctor: "An ancient creature drenched in

the blood of the innocent, drifting in space through an endless, shifting maze. For such a creature, death would be a gift" ("The God Complex"). By "an endless, shifting maze," the Minotaur might as well be referring to the TARDIS, the Doctor's time machine and spacecraft, or the space and time vortex through which the TARDIS travels, rather than the Minotaur's space prison. The TARDIS is bigger on the inside as suggested by its name, which is an abbreviation for Time and Relative Dimension in Space. Like the Minotaur's space prison, the TARDIS changes inside out every time it renovates itself. The space and time vortex through which the TARDIS floats in the title sequence of the episode brings to mind a unicursal labyrinth, too.

Baudrillard notes that "simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false,' the 'real' and the 'imaginary'" (3) and maintains that

[T]he icon worshipers were the most modern minds, the most adventurous, because, in the guise of having God become apparent in the mirror images, they were already enacting his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations (which, perhaps they already knew no longer represented anything, that they were purely a game, but that it was therein the great game lay—knowing also that it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them). (5)

Kerényi, in like manner, maintains that human beings fashion their gods after their own selves and surroundings. Jung argues that the hero himself is "a being of more than human stature." Segal affirms that the emergence of science triggered the decline of religion and a need for secular myths about superhuman heroes if not gods (cf. Kerényi, *Athene: Virgin and Mother in Greek Religion* 8, Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* 391, Segal 116).

At the end of *The Helmet of Horror* Theseus is finally seen on the thread for a short time. Theseus and the Minotaur appear and disappear at the same time, once again underlining that they are both the one and the same character. In addition, Theseus's screen name on the thread changes into TheZeus the second time he addresses the Minotaur. This corresponds with the dwarf's definition of Asterisk at the beginning of the novel: "some boundlessly and infinitely powerful being" (Pelevin 23). The change in his screen name suggests that Theseus assumes the role of Zeus, the supreme Olympian deity. That Zeus was worshipped as Zeus Labraundos in Caria, and that he was depicted carrying a *labrys*, a double-headed axe, associates him, like the Minotaur and all his manifestations, with the ever-dying and ever-living moon-god mentioned above (Williamson 95; King and Hall 125). Besides, the snatched characters' names form acrostics as they take on the roles of the Minotaur, Minos, and Minosaur, the ancient serpent, respectively. This

suggests that they have been, unconsciously or not, role-playing throughout the novel:

Theseus

MINOTAURUS!

Monstradamus: Ah?

IsoldA: Ah?

Nutcracker: Ah?

Organizm(-: Ah?

Theseus: Ah?

Ariadne: Ah?

UGLI 666: Ah?

Romeo-y-Cohiba: Ah?

[...]

Ariadne

Hang on, papa.

Monstradamus: My son!

IsoldA: My son!

Nutcracker: My son!

Organizm(-: My son!

Sartrik: My son(-:

[...]

Monstradamus: I feel sick, xxx.

IsoldA: I feel sick, xxx.

Nutcracker: I feel sick, xxx.

Organizm(-: I feel sick, xxx.

Sartrik: I feel sick, xxx.

Ariadne: I feel sick, xxx. It's time to get out of here . . .

UGLI 666: I feel sick, xxx.

Romeo-y-Cohiba: I feel sick, xxx.

(Pelevin 258, 261, 273)

Laurence Coupe underlines that Jung exposes the mythic life as a kind of role playing (144). Aarseth, correspondingly, compares the text in a multi-user dungeon to an endless labyrinth because it has no end or beginning (2). Likewise, reminiscent of the Cretan sacrifice, the characters in *The Helmet of Horror* and "The God Complex" are being/have been sacrificed *ad infinitum*.

Just as the snatched victims in "The God Complex" are being constantly monitored by the security cameras of the hotel, so the conversation of the characters in *The Helmet of Horror* is being monitored, delayed, censored, and edited. What kind of information they can share and how they can

communicate is determined by the moderators. Once Organizm(-: notices and shares this with the other characters, the moderators mockingly prove that he is right by filling their messages with spelling mistakes, and making communication almost impossible for them. They make Monstradamus misspell the word "moderators" as "mooderattors" (45), which associates the moderators with the Minotaur. Although we never learn who the moderators are, Monstradamus claims that their moderator is "our bronze mushroom" (Pelevin 47); he means Asterisk who becomes the Minotaur when he wears the helmet of horror. The word "mushroom" has connotations of the mushroom which berserkers eat to fight in a crazed fury and the mushroom in Wonderland which can make anyone who eats of it smaller or bigger. Hence, it indicates that the moderators have been intoxicating and manipulating the characters along with modifying what they type in on the chat thread. From the very first pages of the novel, it is hinted that freedom of choice is a myth because the characters are manipulated. It is also suggested more than once that the characters might already be wearing the helmet of horror, which is a virtual reality helmet. For instance, towards the end of her second dream, Ariadne sees a mirror on the wall, goes over, and looks into it. At first she sees herself wearing a straw hat with a veil of thick lace. Then, she suddenly realizes that what she is actually wearing is a bronze mask, the helmet of horror. This realization frightens her and causes her to wake up from her dream. The computer game developer Nutcracker explains that the person who wears the virtual reality helmet is called the Helmholtz. The Helmholtz is located in an artificial dimension completely isolating them from the real world. They are led to make all the required decisions. In the meantime, the Helmholtz believes that they are not under any influence whatsoever. Once the helmet and the Helmholtz "fuse into a single whole, you can edit the reader as well as the book" (Pelevin 99). Therefore, Monstradamus is afraid that they will not be able to take off their helmets in the end.

If the book and the labyrinth are one and the same as suggested in Pelevin's introduction, then we the readers are being manipulated, too. Berger, in the same manner, suggests that our future is based upon the choices that we constantly make and are forced to make (104). Nutcracker explains that complete and yet indiscernible manipulation is possible through the use of coercive orientation; infrasonics; conditioned reflex editing such as blurring and rippling vision, buzzing ears, electric shock; electrodes, pharmacological means, or entraining the brain to delta rhythms so as to stimulate the pleasure centre (Pelevin 103, 105). To list a few examples of the helmet's manipulation in the novel, each character sees rainbow-colored patches of light on his/her wall the moment Ariadne wakes up and starts to write on her thread. It conditions the characters to see Ariadne as their guide and to trust her dreams.

Ariadne knows how to take the right turns in the labyrinth in her dream. Isolda feels happy walking in her labyrinth. Romeo-y-Cohiba feels terrified and even gets a pounding in his temples when he forces a locked door in his wall. Romeo-y-Cohiba and Isolda feel like it takes too much effort to think of anything but each other. No matter which way UGLI 666 turns while walking her labyrinth, she can see the crucifixion above the altar with a ray of sunlight falling on it.

As Nutcracker demonstrates, if it is the helmet that simulates everything, then it becomes life itself rather than a mere helmet or simulation. The helmet of horror not only stimulates, but also creates everything and everyone. In "The Precession of Simulacra" Baudrillard states that what we call real is produced and can be reproduced innumerable times "from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control" (2). Appropriately, one of the many parts of the helmet of horror, namely Tarkovsky's *Mirror*, takes its name from Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* (1975). Tarkovsky's film is a collage of contemporary life, dreams, and the childhood memories of the protagonist who is about to die. The film is also akin to the separator labyrinth in the helmet. The separator labyrinth is a Cretan coin with a diagram of a labyrinth on it. The stream of impressions arises in this separator labyrinth. For this reason, it is the most important part of the helmet. It produces everything—including Asterisk, that is both Theseus and the Minotaur. As for the Tarkovsky's *Mirror*, it is "a small, fogged-up mirror set at an angle of forty degrees between the region of future and the now grid" (Pelevin 85). This exact alignment of the mirror aids its function to give the illusion of progress/future. It reflects the bubbles of the past in such a way that they appear to be further than they actually are. It is also emphasized that there is nothing but the bubbles of the past in the helmet, for the bubbles of the past occupy it entirely leaving no space for anything else. The bubbles of the past decompose into the past, the present, and the future in the helmet. It means that the present and the future are mere reproductions of the past. In Nutcracker's words, "[t]he future is produced from the past" (Pelevin 156). That the separator labyrinth has not changed for thousands and thousands of years and that it produces the present and the future out of the past echoes the idea that everything is a reception and retelling of a limited number of myths.

The repetitive killing of the Minotaur and the characters in *The Helmet of Horror* and the Minotaur's repetitive killing of his victims in "The God Complex" underline yet again that what we call history, progress, and/or civilization is but the repetition, reception, retelling, and appropriation of the same myth. Each telling of a myth is actually a part of that myth reproduced and retold over and over again (cf. Warner 9, Attebery 198). Every new story is a labyrinth with many paths and turns, which create the illusion of choice and

progress. It is actually one long single line with one door as its entrance and exit like the numerous labyrinths in *The Helmet of Horror*, the Rubik's cube-like design of the space prison, and the space and time vortex in "The God Complex." In *The Helmet of Horror* the characters wearing the helmet may be doomed to experience the retellings of the same myth *ad nauseam*. Notwithstanding, in "The God Complex," by killing the Minotaur, the Doctor not only saves his companions, but also liberates the Minotaur himself.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is a revised and extended version of a presentation given at the Translating Myth conference, Colchester, UK, 2013. I would like to thank Janet Brennan Croft and the anonymous referee for their most helpful suggestions and comments. I would also like to thank the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of Istanbul University for funding support. Project number UDP-31721.

WORKS CITED

- Aarseth, Espen J. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.
- Armstrong, Karen. *A Short History of Myth*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005.
- Attebery, Brian. *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra." *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 2006. 1-42.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. *Media, Myth, and Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of Forking Paths." Trans. Helen Temple and Ruthven Todd. *Ficciones*. New York: Grove Press, 1962. 89-101.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. London: Fontana Press, 1993.
- . *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*. New York: Penguin Compass, 1991.
- . *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. New York: Penguin Compass, 1991.
- Cotterell, Arthur. *The Encyclopedia of Mythology*. London: Select Editions, 2001.
- Coupe, Laurence. *Myth*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Davies, Lyndon. "Orpheus, Eurydice, Blanchot: some thoughts on the nature of myth and literature." *Myth, Literature, and the Unconscious*. Ed. Leon Burnett, Sanja Bahun, and Roderick Main. London: Karnac, 2013. 211-227.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.
- "The God Complex." *Doctor Who*. Writ. Toby Whithouse. Dir. Charles Palmer. BBC One, London. Seson 6, Episode 11. 17 Sept. 2011.

- Gramsci, Antonio. "The problem of power." Trans. Michael Carley. *L'ordine nuovo* 29 Nov. 1919. *Marxists Internet Archive*. 14 Feb. 2016. <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/1919/11/problem-power.htm>>.
- . *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971.
- Guido, Liguori. *Gramsci's Pathways*. Trans. David Broder. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- "The Horns of Nimón." *Doctor Who: The Classic Series*. BBC, 24 Oct. 2014. 1 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/doctorwho/classic/episodeguide/hornsofnimon/detail.shtml>>.
- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Methuen, 1981.
- Jung, C.G. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Trans. R.F.C. Hull. *The Collected Works*. Ed. Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler. Vol. 9. Part 1. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- . *Psychological Types*. Ed. and Trans. Gerhard Adler and R.F.C. Hull. *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. Vol. 6. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976.
- . *Symbols of Transformation*. Ed. and Trans. Gerhard Adler and R.F.C. Hull. *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. Vol. 5. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976.
- Jung, C.G., and C. Kerényi. *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*. Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Bollingen Series XXII. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963.
- Kerényi, C. *Athene: Virgin and Mother in Greek Religion*. Trans. Murray Stein. Woodstock: Spring, 1978.
- King, L.W., and H.R. Hall. *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Discoveries*. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Écrits: A Selection*. London: Routledge, 2005. 1-6.
- "Minotaur." *Doctor Who*. BBC. 2016. 1 Jan. 2016 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/447FRsQ0z5StssHllhppp4R/minotaur>>.
- Parker, Janet, and Julie Stanton. *Mythology: Myths, Legends & Fantasies*. New Jersey: Wellfleet Press, 2004.
- Pelevin, Victor. *The Helmet of Horror*. Trans. Andrew Bromfield. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2007.
- Segal, A. Robert. "Freudian and Jungian Approaches to Myth: The Similarities." *Myth, Literature, and the Unconscious*. Ed. Leon Burnett, Sanja Bahun, and Roderick Main. London: Karnac, 2013. 101-119.
- Simons, Jon. "Power, Resistance, and Freedom." *A Companion to Foucault*. Ed. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary, and Jana Sawicki. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 301-319.
- Tarratt, Margaret. "Monsters from the Id." *Film Genre Reader III*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: U of Texas P, 2003. 346-365.
- Warner, Marina. *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time*. The 1994 Reith Lectures. London: Random House, 1994.

Williamson, Christina. "Power of Place: Ruler, Landscape and Ritual Space at the Sanctuaries of Labraunda and Mamurt Kale in Asia Minor." *Locating the Sacred: Theoretical Approaches to the Emplacement of Religion*. Ed. Claudia Moser and Cecelia Feldman. Joukowsky Institute Publication 3. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014. 87-110.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BUKET AKGÜN is Assistant Professor of English at Istanbul University, where she has taught courses on Chaucer, fantasy fiction, mythology, visual narratives, witches and witchcraft in fiction among other topics. She contributed a chapter to *The Language of Doctor Who: From Shakespeare to Alien Tongues*.

