

THE HAMMER OF THOR – TRANSMEDIAL CONNOTATIONS

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The Song of Los
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Abstract: What connects a transmedia universe, widely known around the world, with the substantive and magical artistic world of a controversial poet? Where could we look for intersections between two worlds that at first glance seem to be situated on opposite sides of the grand cultural narrative? The following text aims to examine the migration of a character and the interpretative methods applied to actualize it in two cultural traditions – the poetry and illustrations of William Blake and the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The selected objects of the study will also focus on the hybrid model of distributing content across media platforms before and after this method is specifically named transmedia storytelling and applied in mass audiovisual production. The examples mentioned above will give us more insight on how each context calls for different approaches to interpretation. On the one hand, the appropriation of the character in accordance to the requirements of the era in which it is recreated, and on the other, its added value to the contemporary cultural and media situation will be revealed.

Keywords: mythopoeia, neomythologem, transmedia, William Blake, Marvel Cinematic Universe, screen interpretation in hybrid media.

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Introduction

In the modern media climate, the creation of entire narrative worlds is a widely used practice in the quest to conquer mass audience perception. In essence, this is not a new phenomenon, as it is known for its applicability in world literature, but it has been rediscovered in a time marked by the development of a digital media environment with the available capacity to absorb the ever-expanding and transforming hybrid screen narratives. As long as the narrative is unlimited in its development, it will lead to temporal, artistic and technological transgressions.

The interpretative nature and the augmentation of a literary and a screen character will be traced through two specific examples, as well as the specifics of perception in the eras of Early and Late Modernity. The character of the divine hammer bearer seen through the work of the poet and artist William Blake, creating and embodying the individual impulse for self-realization culminating in his character Los, and the global and penetrating gaze of Marvel's screen character Thor, whose essential characteristic is the transcendence of every medium and notion of individuality.

Los in the Mythopoeia of William Blake

The character Los occupies a central place in William Blake's mythopoeia. The object of study in this part are the manifestations of the main hypostases of Los the Eternal Prophet in the mystical poems by the author, especially the cosmogonic poems *The Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, and *The Book of Los*. The referenced sources, studied and used to build the main thesis, make it possible to create a reasoned presentation of various points of view and methodologies, which comment on the overall cosmogony of Blake and the central position that

the character Los has in it.

According to Bulgarian literary scholar Alexander Shurbanov (Shurbanov, 1983, 8-13), in his mystical poems Blake created a desired model for a new social rule, which would replace the existing one in England from the end of the 18th century. By coming into conflict with the church's undue authority, Blake offers a new understanding of the place religion should occupy in the social environment. At the top of the hierarchy of his divine system he places Los as Creator of the world and man. But at the same time, this Prophet, who is Los, is shown to be not only a supreme deity, but a god-man. According to William Blake, Los is a divine manifestation of human nature. Being participial to the divine and the human at the same time, he is a projection of the poet's individual nature – the so-called by him “poetic genius” that Blake places as the highest value in his system of mystical ideas. It was this position, elevating the nature of human beings to divine creators, that gave basis to the followers of his work to declare William Blake a forerunner of modern thinking in art.

The prophet in Blake's work is called Los. The creator prophet, who fabricated the character Los, however, is Blake himself. The poet is aware of his own divine destiny to create worlds in his imagination. Just as his Prophet Los does in the imagined by the poet. Symbolization in Blake's mythopoeia is a main key to represent Los.

In Blake's interpretation the Prophet Los was created as a dualistic deity – both as bearer of creativity and destruction. He has a dual nature, as is inherent in human beings. Good and Evil are both projected in Los – the nature of the Creator of the world and man, and the Destructive force of Satan. That is why in the mystical poems Los appears as the Creator of new worlds, in *The Book of Urizen*, as well as of the heavenly place Golgonooza in the poem *Jerusalem*, but also as a destructive force giving rise to negative incarnations in some of the four Zoas – in *The Book of Los*. In Los' divine nature the earthly world, where injustice reigns, is reflected with all its imperfections. Trying to establish a balance between the earthly and the divine limits, Blake himself created the Prophet Los as an image of the “enigmatic two-faced Janus, in whom both the lamb and the tiger coexist”, as defined by Alexander Shurbanov (Shurbanov, 1983, p. 14).

Different analyses expose varying ideas for interpretation of Los' symbolic status. Some authors write about the existence of Los as a Myth and Non-Myth character: “With his Lambeth Books and Prophecies of the 1790s, he began to address directly this fundamental issue with which all myth may be said to be concerned.” (Gallant, 1978, p. 9) Others comment on the varied relationships Los forms with some of the fundamental characters in the mystical poems, such as Urizen (Rose, 1971, p. 139). Another possibility is to interpret the character of Los

from the perspective of Jungian ideas about ancient archetypes and the structure of the human subconscious:

But whatever the dangers, Jungian psychology may still prove valuable in the analysis of this poem and Blake's poetry (in general). *The Four Zoas* is above all a study in man's psychology, and it seems entirely appropriate to use modern depth psychology in an attempt to understand it. It purports to take place "in the Human Brain (Gallant, 1978, p. 4).

These are exactly the dual functions that archetypes perform in *The Four Zoas*. As has been mentioned, "archetypes of the unconscious are prominent in the poem as Blake investigates those repressed chthonic realities... (Gallant, 1978, p. 52).

At this point we could try to extend the Jungian approach to interpreting the character Los and his position in William Blake's cosmogony by drawing an analogy between the poet's concept of the poetic genius and Jung's concept of the libido (Rattner, 2010, p. 66), which transcends the sexual and private nature the term has in Freud's theory (Freud, 2004, p. 103-104). In Jung's theory, libido is not limited to the sexual urge. It encompasses life energy, the creative drive, but also the potential that precedes it before culminating in its manifestation. The result of this manifestation is the creation of a work of art, or, as in Blake's case, various works that make up a whole cosmogonic system, together with the accompanying illustrations. Commenting on the mystical poems of William Blake, we come across an example of the construction of an entire narrative world by one author that is large enough and saturated with intertextual archetypes to allow different approaches in assimilating and interpreting it. Thus, in Blake's imaginary mythological world, and in the way it materializes, a basic feature is observed that a few centuries later will become characteristic of a specific method in the delivery of artistic texts called **transmedia storytelling**. Since the author did not have at his disposal a variety of digital media in which to place his own story, he relied on the means of expression available, simultaneously using two sign systems, verbal and visual, in building his mythopoeia. By doing this, he overcame the boundaries a single platform provides in dispersing information about the plots and the characters he used to develop them. As we go along, we will go through all three hypostases of Los in which he performs different functions. These are the different manifestations of Los and his gradation as a character in the imaginary world he inhabits, as we will see with Thor's character in the full-blown transmedia universe of Marvel. I will mention the role of Los as Creator of the world in Blake's cosmogony in passing, before it is given more serious attention. As such, the character exhibits his creative drive, his poetic genius, but Los himself is a manifestation of the poet Blake's poetic genius. This is very close

to the Renaissance man, but also to the Enlightenment man; to the idea of genius as formulated by both Kant (Kant, 2007, p. 136-137) and Hegel (Hegel, 2018) that culminates in an apotheosis of thought and the fruits of this creative drive.

The analysis of Blake's overall view of the characters' dual nature, uniting the masculine and the feminine nature through "higher" and through human love, is also related to Los. These functions of the character are introduced in *The Four Zoas*.

The fundamental themes established in *The Book of Los* with regard to Eno and Los begin in *The Four Zoas*, lines 1 to 23, including deletions. Los's predestined role is introduced through the words or song of the aged mother, the song of Eno or ONE. (Rose, 1971, p. 64)

Or in analogies to prominent figures from the past, artists and scientists of the epoch, "... an egoistic embryonic dot like Rembrandt's point of light. Newton is Los's "Mathematic power" perverted into "an instrument of illusionist effects." (Rose, 1971, p. 58)

The very nature of Los has been viewed by various researchers of William Blake's work, the referenced in this text Christine Gallant, Edward J. Rose, and Leo Damrosch, as a manifestation of a divine essence, but also a behavior associated with human nature through the relationship the Prophet develops with human beings as their creator. The connection of Blake's ideas about the equality of the nature of the divine and the human makes him a forerunner of modern thinking.

The main role of Los as a prophet is revealed in his hypostasis as Creator of the world – divine and earthly – and thus he is placed as a leading object of analysis in the studies and literary analyses of Blake's work mentioned here. In *The Book of Los*, transformed into a mortal, The Eternal Prophet is also portrayed as the ancestor of the human race, and through his relationship with Urizen, his spiritual and physical offspring, he is interpreted emotionally as a being of human essence. This is Blake's view of the nature of the divine which is itself manifested in human nature to form one whole. Of a higher value for Blake is the position of Los as a Poetic genius.

Blake's own life is filled with the desire to be recognized as a poetic genius and revolutionary. Creating a concept that man can be the embodiment of a divine essence was an innovative idea for its time.

In the preface to the Bulgarian translation of William Blake's early verses Blake is defined as "being not only beyond society, beyond tangible space, but also beyond time". (Shurbanov, 1983, p. 10). But at the same time, the briefly summarized biography of the "genius madman" highlights the rebellious spirit of the era that he lived in, the same one he was participial to in the turbulent years of the Jacobin revolution.

“Blake took part in the riots of London’s poor folk, walked the streets in a red Jacobin hat, hung out with the radical revolutionaries of the intelligentsia..., was a member of the revolutionary London Corresponding Society until it was banned by the government, and wrote his enthusiastic poems *The French Revolution* and *America*. In these peak moments of public excitement, the mystic-visionary suddenly came to the forefront.” (Shurbanov, 1983, p. 9).

Blake’s mythopoeia is revealed in his prophetic books. There appears the character of Los as Creator of the world and humanity, but also as Prophet, bearer of what is human and what is earthly in its essence.

Blake believes that a man’s soul has unlimited strength, that in his natural gifts man is godlike, and that by birth he is free to realize them as he has no being that is beyond him. There is no divinity but the divine essence of all men – what the author calls “poetic genius” (Shurbanov, 1983, p. 15).

In *The Book of Los*, Chapter III, Blake describes the final scene of Urizen’s creation by Los. At the same time, the texture of the world is created – the elements are formed, water spaces and droughts are identified.

5. He rose on the floods; then he smote,
The wild deep with his terrible wrath,
Separating the heavy and thin. (Blake, 2007, p. 289)

In the two mystical poems, *The Book of Los* and *The Song of Los*, Blake’s poetic metaphors are commensurate with Los’ artistic aspiration to create a new world. In this respect, Blake puts in the position of a prophet-creator even himself – the creator human being, poet of the divine, and artist. Thus, he binds the divine and the earthly in his cosmogony.

Los’ relationship with his female manifestation Enitharmon, with whose help the New World is reborn, is presented, on the one hand, as an event within the divine limits of Blake’s cosmogony. In Chapter IV, verse 2, in *The Book of Los* the poet describes how “creating an anvil and a hammer made of diamonds” Los yanks life from death in the forging of the New World with his divine instrument of creation – the Hammer of Los. On the other hand, the act of creation of mankind is “grounded” in specific urban sites of London, “From Hyde Park to the Alms-houses of Mile-end & old Bow”, and the people born of the divine providence of Los, his heirs, are defined as “the Three Classes of Mortal Men regulated by Los’s hammer”. This is a concrete example of the modern allusions Blake presents in his poetry, attacking the old social system and royal authority, and promoting the values of the French bourgeois revolution. He defines the place of the third class as equal to that of the other classes as divine providence. In Pl. 7 from the poem *Milton* he writes: “The first, The Elect from before the foundation of the World; The second, The Redeemed. The Third, The Reprobate & formed To destruction from the mother’s womb...” (Blake, 2007, p. 516).

Los' second hypostasis is as Savior of the world – a referential illustration of the artistic views of William Blake as both a poet and as an artist, related to Christian symbolism. The differences in the iconography are those that illustrate Blake's own gnostic views of the divine nature of man. *Albion rose* (by Damrosch) is a symbol of Los' connection to Creation, but also to death. In the process of the Creation of the world, Los reaches the bottom of Darkness, he falls into the depths of the kingdom of death, but that seems as an end, as well as a new beginning. In Blake's view, Golgonooza is a city of salvation. At the same time, he is at the fathomless gloom of the kingdom of death; therefore, he is both Hell and Heaven. Just as in Christianity the crucifixion of Jesus is symbolic, in this role (hypostasis) of turning the end into a new beginning, Los is the Savior. But Blake gives his own interpretation of the symbols in the depiction of the crucifixion scene which contrasts with the official religious view of the era and proclaims his revolutionary nature.

Again, in the tradition of dualism the Judeo-Christian imagery is discussed, combined with the mythopoetic tradition from Antiquity in Blake's work by Leo Damrosch in *Eternity's Sunrise*. It concerns the poet's approach in depicting the Crucifixion in the poem *Jerusalem*: "In Blake's terms, what Jesus has really done is sacrifice his own selfhood, not in order to propitiate a vengeful God, but to purge away the merely "natural" in all of us. Albion (whose name is visible in several copies of this plate) stands adoring Jesus, from whose head pours a radiance far brighter than that of the merely natural sun on the horizon. Albion's outstretched arms mirror the cruciform pose, and his posture recalls the "dance of death" in the print Albion Rose (color plate 11). Jesus is the only God—but so is Albion, and so are we all." (Damrosch, 2015, p. 256).

The role of God the creator, but also Savior of the world and mankind, in this case is given to Jesus and Albion, other manifestations of Los – Architect of the New World – in William Blake's work. The final phrase elevates man – "so are we all" – to godlike status.

There is another hypostasis – Los as a guarantor of the revolutionary change in the world. In William Blake's mythopoeia the creation of a new order in the divine limits is a symbolic expression of his desire to build one in the social structure as well, in order to eliminate the absolutism of royal power by means of revolution.

In Blake's cosmogony, Golgonooza, created by Los as Eden, is also an analog of Jerusalem. The images of this city are metaphorical and poetic, as well as visually illustrated with artistic mastery in many of the preserved prints of Plates – engravings on copper sheets by William Blake. In them we can find the image of the incarnation of Los and Jesus as a Rainbow. Blake accepts as worthy

of admiration the artist he presents as a Christian martyr, as Jesus. This way he himself is incarnate as the Creator and Savior of the world – Los.

As his hero Los, William Blake fought for a revolutionary change in the religious and social systems. He created his own cosmogony. He tried to reconcile the contradictions of human nature through the Four Zoas which carry both good and evil at the same time. Among them Urizen is the embodiment of all mankind. Forged by Los with his hammer in the flames of the underworld, the god-man Urizen marks the beginning of the human race. Its creator and patron, Los, becomes the protector of humanity, its savior. For him he created the city of Golgonooza – Paradise among the depths of hell.

The poet Blake lived between two worlds – that of art and the other of existing in the real society of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In his mystical poems he wanted to reconcile the contradictions between them – between his ideal and reality. He achieved this by creating ideal images in the fantastic world of poetry and art, engraving images and poetic verses. Thus, he left to the world self-printed engravings that his contemporaries did not acknowledge, but his followers continue to glorify to this day.

The poet himself is embodied in the Ideal through the images created by his imagination – the Prophet Los and the Four Zoas in his Lambeth Books. His alter ego is the Prophet Los, “the poetic genius”, creator of a new world, savior of mankind, creative force of the divine limits. Los carries divine strength, but also the weakness of a man. That is why in his hypostasis as Savior of the world he created the city of Golgonooza – simultaneously Heaven and Hell. Blake’s philosophy is dualistic. He did not accept the social environment in England that existed at a time of world transformations and the Great French Revolution. William Blake sought salvation for humanity in the creation of a new order within society. He presented his image of the ideal in his poetic works. His revolutionary idea is that man can be godlike. An idea that exists in the genesis of modern thinking about the world. That is why Blake is recognized by later poets and artists as a forerunner of Symbolist poetry and the Neoromantic tradition in art. He represents the uniqueness of the man-creator.

Thor with a superhero cape in Marvel’s transmedia universe

Northrop Frye places Los among the divine blacksmiths, whom we recognize as recurring characters in various mythological systems, especially in Western tradition. In the comparison between Hephaestus and Thor, Frye likens William Blake’s character to the Scandinavian deity because of his incredible physical strength and the symbolism behind the divine instrument – the hammer – as a distinctive and recognizable sign of Thor, associated with his potency to

perform his duties, rather than to the Ancient Greek blacksmith of the gods Hephaestus, whose genius Blake understands as compensation for his physical disability (Frye 1974). In any case, we can trace the use of a prototype with selected characteristics and its placement in different contexts. Such actualizations lead to the superimposition of different meanings on the character, which correspond to the time it is interpreted in and the goals that the author has set to achieve through it.

If Blake wants to use his poetry to transform the social environment of his time, along with all the factors that determine it, a character like Marvel's Thor is also part of a significant transformation process in the worldview of his own era, expressed in the evolving media environment. I specifically emphasize Marvel's Thor, because he will be the basis of this part of the analysis, as opposed to the character from Scandinavian mythology, although putting the prototype, known from Medieval Icelandic sources, against his variation in its modern existence as a superhero in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, is inevitable in order to be able to track how it has been actualized, or updated, to suit the needs of the commented shared universe to deliver content to its target audience. Even within the Marvel Universe, the screen Thor differs from the version that can be found on the pages of mid-20th century comic books when it first appeared, and whose screen adaptation he is. In the course of the text, some of them will be outlined.

Narrative approaches in the age of digital media and the unlimited field for creating content for the screen are concentrated on building a whole narrative world (we saw that Blake also has one) in which the abundance of characters can be divided into a series of seemingly individual texts, distributed in various media channels. Each story follows its own line of logic. Nevertheless, they all share a common chronotope that encompasses the rest of the texts belonging to the transmedia universe. This creates the potential for different storylines to be intertwined, and thus the macrotext brings together characters from different microtexts in the shared digital space. It is clear that in such a media environment the possibilities for expanding a transmedia universe are limitless, and this is evident in the impressive, in terms of quantity, production of audiovisual works bearing the Marvel stamp, requiring serious dedication on the part of the viewer to follow the entirety of texts that are very much alike. To the extent that one would have neither the time nor the mental resource to raise their head from the kaleidoscopic imagery and expand their horizons to another equally, or at least striving to be equally, resource draining series. After all, the scale must meet the demand for universal immensity. They are called universes because they allow additional texts to add to the genre multiformity. This is especially true of comic book series, whose practice in creating marketing strategies is to communicate with

its audience that a certain screen narrative is sustained in the style of a war film, the next adheres to the canons of political thriller etc., each carried out through the prism of the already established aesthetic, stylistic, and narrative norms of the transmedia universe in question. By doing this, there is an enunciation of signs that precede the new text and outline clear intertextual connections with cultural artifacts that the viewer can recognize and perceive in an interpreted version as part of a story with an unmistakable fantastical flavour to it. The ultimate goal of the transmedia universe is to gain as much popularity among the global audience as possible. That is why resorting to genre and media diversity is mandatory – it is constructed to reach the most diverse audience possible.

Regarding Thor, so far he has lead three stand-alone films (with an upcoming fourth one in 2022), had a cameo role in the film *Doctor Strange*, was part of the ensemble cast of *The Avengers* in four gigantomachy films, and appeared in an episode of the animated web series *What if...?*, distributed in the streaming platform *Disney+* and offering parallel developments in the multiverse of events known from the revised historical past of the series, transforming real historical events in ways serving the needs of the narrative. After going through Thor's serious screen presence in the Marvel Cinematic Universe since the first phase of its development, we see that he is an essential part of its structure and figures in the plans for its further expansion. Along with the popularity of the character among global audiences as part of the extended Marvel family and its transformation into a pop culture phenomenon with world recognition, Thor's actualized version opens the door to mass acceptance for actor Chris Hemsworth, who has been handling the legendary hammer Mjolnir in the film adventures of the northern god. The prospect of participating in the construction of neomythologems with wide distribution and proven box office appeal, that contemporary viewers can identify with, seems to be tempting enough to attract prominent figures from the stage and screen arts. Such a situation creates a premise for seemingly unexpected appearances in the field of superhero cinema, as is the case with the self-titled 2011 film *Thor*, directed by Kenneth Branagh.

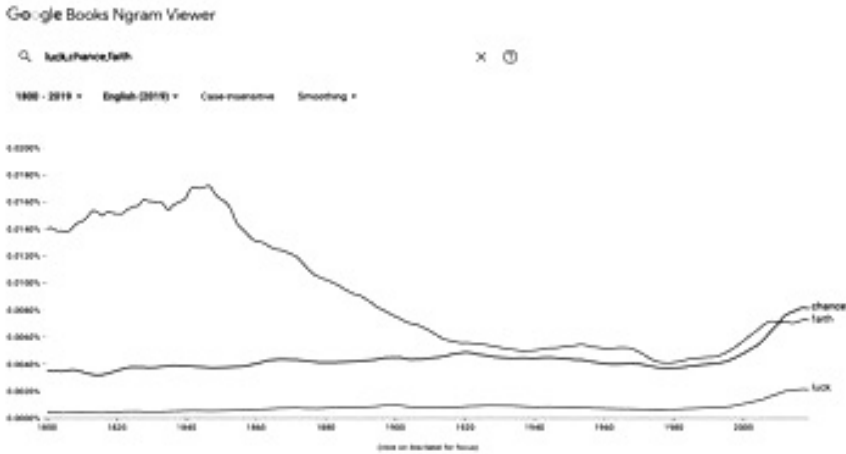
However, how can a character, who was borrowed entirely from an existing mythological structure, be transferred from one specific context to another specific context, where it will serve almost completely different purposes? After all, it is a character with significant influence in Western culture, to an extent that would justify its transformation into a commodity for mass consumption. Let us not forget that in the rhetoric of media conglomerates that finance the production of cinema for mass entertainment, one can rarely hear an address towards their viewers, as opposed to their consumers. This attitude is indicative of the global conceptions regarding the nature of the work of art-viewer relationship,

which has drastically changed to commodity-consumer. In the case of Thor, known to everyone as a divine figure from Norse mythology, this can be done by demythologizing him and equating him to the other characters in the fictional transmedia universe. All of them possess supernatural powers in their own way. Whether they came as a result of scientific achievements or by coming into contact with supernatural phenomena, they were acquired. With a character like Thor, all of his superhuman abilities he possesses precisely because of his divine affiliation. So, when his divine status is taken away, his powers, though remaining highly exaggerated, will at least be commensurate with those of the other god-men of the modern age.

It remains to be seen how Thor, when he is interpreted for the screen, strays from mythopoetic traditions and rather leans more towards recreating mythological motifs through the prism of the fairy tale. The genesis of fairy tale plots can be traced to mythological structures. They lead to the gradual demythologization of the mythical event, to the loss of belief in its authenticity and its reduction to a fantasy story. It is stories like these, with easily recognizable archetypal codes, that predominantly underlie the narrative in contemporary mass audiovisual series that occupy worldwide screens and rely on a multiplatform existence. In the example of Thor, this code is evident from the unchanged name of the character. When we talk about names, we talk about signs of perception.

Thor's name signifies our perception, the way we perceive the text before it is revealed to us. Knowing the name, we already have a predetermined knowledge, we have a sense of familiarity, of closeness to the matter. We have an expectation of what's to come from a character like Thor, although we approach it with the notion that he will have undergone some kind of transformation. This is the preliminary agreement that every viewer who is aware of the principles of migration processes of characters and topoi from world cultural tradition into screen adaptations makes with the creators of the work in question. If the viewer is unfamiliar with the interpretative patterns in fantasy narratives, he again realizes the different context in which an updated version of Thor is placed – he travels to parallel worlds, both in the story and in his existence as a cultural artifact, and finds himself in present-day America. Even those familiar with the comic book series of Thor, which precedes the film version by decades, are probably aware that in this second translation, from comic book to film, the character will not be exactly the same; some elements will be dropped, others will be added, depending on the logic that the story will take on and develop in the next appearances of the character. Just like the enunciation of signs pertaining to certain genre affiliation that precede the screen text and suggest the notion with which the viewer should approach it.

Theodore Adorno writes about the typologizing of television shows, offering referential patterns that determine the communication of the content that



is being broadcast with the viewer who perceives it. This model of communication, which he calls *presumptuousness*, predetermines the viewer's expectations with which they approach an audiovisual product (Adorno, 1954, p. 226). Adorno offers an example describing a stereotypical scene from a fictional television series called *Dante's Inferno*, which immediately signals the criminal nature of the program and therefore the viewer's approach to the narrative structure of the plot and its development. Adorno's text focuses on television programs and the requirements of television as a medium to produce a significant amount of material in limited time. Given the short duration each episode has to convey a certain message, this inevitably requires the use of narrative formulas and schematization of the work process. A similar pattern is observed in the series-oriented mass audiovisual production, the difference between the two remaining in the noticeably larger scale of production. In the increasingly strict adherence to the serialized format typical of television products, spectacle films, originally intended for the big screen, but in the past year adopting a hybrid model of distribution, impose easily recognizable plot formulas. This blurring of boundaries between the two platforms is part of the convergent nature of digital media, which also leads to the emergence of a phenomenon such as transmedia storytelling. Let's go back to the name of the fictional series, *Dante's Inferno*, which also happens to be the name of the dubious bar where the described scene takes place. By connotation, coming across the name makes the viewer form his own idea of the overall mood that the program in question should create. In the spirit of Umberto Eco, such a name is a fine

example of an intertextual archetype, precisely because of its load of meanings and because of its intertextual tradition. The same is true for the film titled *Thor*, which is the character's own name. His name is also an intertextual archetype on its own and an object of recycling. Thor's name functions as a signifier of a new virtuality that reflects themes relevant to the reality of the viewers. The names of the characters, in this case of Thor, but also of others that the viewer would naturally expect to follow him from Norse mythology in their modern myth-recreating context, reach us thanks to our archetypal thinking, formed through the metanarrative we are immersed in since an early age. The names in this case are participial to our archetypal thinking, as they are the carriers of this knowledge.

Thor's line of desacralization can be observed from his first encounter with the viewers in the aforementioned 2011 film. Terence McSweeney writes about the ambiguity surrounding Thor's divine affiliation throughout the Marvel Cinematic Universe as a narrative device that adds comedic value to the character (McSweeney, 2018, p. 73). Regardless of the manner of presentation, this ambiguity is also a narrative device that outlines the character's standing within the fictitious universe. Apart from the fact that the character is obviously archetypal, his storyline itself is also imbued with archetypal situations and oppositions that can easily be discovered by the viewer's competence. Thor finds himself on Earth by the will of his father, Odin, where he must learn basic human virtues. Along with the akin to every egomaniacal heir to the throne wounded sense of superiority and the deprivation of every benefit his former privileged life entailed, he has lost the ability to use the invincible hammer Mjolnir. The legendary hammer turns up stranded and ownerless in the same geographical place where its usual disgraced owner was exiled. The magical object arouses the interest of the locals, but more importantly, it attracts the attention of the fictitious spy organization, around which the team of the Avengers will later be formed. Summoned by the unusual events in a small town in the state of New Mexico, government officials erect a facility around the hammer, which is stuck in a rock, and no man's hand proves strong enough in its attempt to pull it out.

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, part of William Blake's prophetic books, the poet descends to Hell, by which Blake recreates a famous poetic trope from *Dante's Inferno*. In *Thor*, the powers that be resort to another recognizable motif from medieval literature, this time borrowed from the Arthurian cycle, in constructing the neomythologems about the demythologized Scandinavian god as part of the macrostructure of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The magical object in the stone is the narrative sign that charts the path in front of the hero to his initiation and acceptance of the function constantly considered to be his main characteristic from the earliest known poetic sources of Norse mythology

to his appropriation by various cultural traditions over time and his turning into a superhero – his devotion to protecting mankind from omnifarious evil, which happens to be identical to the second hypostasis of Los, as described earlier.

A basic principle in structuring stories about the adventures of comic book superheroes is the motif of dual identity, known to mythopoetic tradition since ancient times. Because of this motif superheroes are able to live among ordinary people and reveal their secret identity only when necessity requires it. In the textual tradition of comics, this suppression of the real identity often leads to disturbances of romantic and existential aspects in the inner world of the character. While in most cases a superhero uses a disguise to protect his side life, Thor's situation is different. He shares his double life with a doctor named Donald Blake. The reason he was exiled on Earth, identical to the film version, is in the form of punishment. There he must learn to live (literally) in the skin of a mortal and to master the principles that command him to transform from man into deity until he learns to do so at will. Thus, using a recurring comic book trope, Thor begins to emanate features that are actually close to Blake's Los – the character's layering of the divine and the human as a projection of his creator in the imaginary. This intertextual archetype, recurring in comic books and their screen adaptations but omitted from Thor's film version, is a significant difference between these two incarnations of the character. Despite its absence from the character's biography in the film series, the film refers to it when Thor uses a fake document with the name Dr. Donald Blake in an attempt to break into the facility surrounding the hammer Mjolnir.

Another intertextual archetype in stories about heroic persons is the motif of the hero's self-sacrifice, especially true of comic book characters who are portrayed as god-like. The reason being that they rarely actually die. When that happens, there's usually a way for them to be resurrected and keep on with their activities as the series continues to expand. This reveals how a character like Thor is actualized in a way that can convey certain messages to the predominantly teen audience he is aimed at. Christian symbolism, trivialized by its primitive recycling in the fantasy narratives of modern audiovisual production, intertwined in Thor's introductory film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, creates an interesting counterpoint to the exploitation of the character during the Christianization of the North Germanic peoples. Thor is a supreme deity, symbolizing the pre-Christian period in the Scandinavian territories. As such, he also was a symbol of the resistance against attempts at conversion, which in the Scandinavian and Baltic states lasted four centuries, which lead to him being depicted as the devil. This shows how, as cultural layers shift, a character can be *sacrificed* to benefit the story and its goals, while still retaining some of his original characteristics. Thus

Thor, who belonged to a culture that made sacrifices in his name, can himself be portrayed as a sacrificial lamb and continue the layering over time.

Conclusion

With the proposed examples we saw how the story of the divine hammer bearer continues in the context of two specific cultural and historical frames. In unison with paradigms of thought of the era that each of them was recreated in, the narrative is able to arise with new meaning. One time through William Blake, the other through Stan Lee and Jack Kirby.

Based on the theses considered above, the following comparison between Los and Thor could be presented, leading back to the Jungian approach, in relation to the concepts of introversion and extraversion. Georges Bataille writes about the placement of Blake's mythology in the category of introversion, expressed in the selection of myths the poet chose to interpret (Bataille, 2012, p. 58). Blake's mythological system focuses on the author's inner world. It is a projection of his worldview, and his interpretative approach corresponds to his own understanding of the social order and the spiritual state of his time. The opposite is true of Thor. He represents American mentality and political identity and their dimensions from the character's inception in 1962 onwards. Thor is turned to the outside world. A character like him aims to reach a mass audience and is stylized in a way that meets this requirement, while Los and all of William Blake's works are forged for a selected audience.

With Los we have a single author, creator of an entire mythological system, while Thor has one or two initiators who then let the character circulate through multiple navigators, following certain objective conditions. Blake belongs to an era in which the author possessed a halo that placed him above his works, as the Romantic doctrine commanded. In Thor's case, it can even be said that the doctrine imposed by Structuralism, that the text is of fundamental importance, is literally followed. We no longer need the author. When it comes to comic book characters and their placement in different media and narrative situations over time, tracking all the people who have signed on as authors is difficult, and more importantly, pointless. All of them, along with the readers, are implicit authors who continue the story and give birth to new implicit authors, because the narrative will never cease, just as the world will never cease to create new narratives that recreate preexisting ones.

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