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# The Myth of Materialism and the Subject of Modernity

Pygmalion in the Works of André-François  
Boureau-Deslandes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Міт про матеріалізм і суб'єкт модерності  
Пігмаліон у творах Андре-Франсуа Буро-Делянда  
та Жана-Жака Руссо

**Abstract.** The article argues that the Pygmalion myth in the works of André-François Boureau-Deslandes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau can be studied as a metaphor for the modern subject, highlighting the ambivalence of modernity. By closely reading the texts, the authors show that the Enlightenment versions of the Pygmalion myth present both a reality and an illusion, and the balance of knowing and not-knowing allows for their critical assessment. Drawing on academic publications on the subject of modernity, the study posits that it is split between myth and enlightenment, and the Pygmalion myth sheds light on this dichotomy. In the framework of conceptual metaphor theory, the study demonstrates that artists use this myth to contemplate on their works and present the mythical consciousness of the subject but they also strive to demythologize it according to their understanding or not-understanding of the miracle. Mythical consciousness enables Pygmalion to realize the miracle of animation either through the materialist philosophy of André-François Boureau-Deslandes or the sentimentalism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau but the sculptor risks becoming a slave to mythology or instrumental reason. The dialectic of the myth captures the moment when Pygmalion may either give in to the illusion or doubt the credibility of the miracle.

**Keywords:** André-François Boureau-Deslandes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Pygmalion myth, materialism, sentimentalism, Enlightenment, the subject of modernity.

## Introduction

This paper argues that the versions of the Pygmalion myth in the works of André-François Boureau-Deslandes (1689–1757) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) are attempts of demythologization, which are paradoxically destined to introduce their own mythology. The balance between critical knowledge of enlightenment and mythological belief is achieved through creative work, as well as through the reader's ability to suspend judgment and experience the work in the mode of not-knowing (Assmann, 1997; Didi-Huberman, 2005). The Pygmalion myth is reality

for protagonists in Boureau-Deslandes's novelette *Pygmalion ou la statue animée* (1741) and Rousseau's *Pygmalion, scène lyrique* (1771) but even for them it attains a controversial status of both an illusion and a miracle. Given that myths are refuted as illusions and new myths inevitably installed in their place, only the balance of knowing and not-knowing provides the possibility of critically assessing the process of enlightenment, endangered by the triumph of unreflective reason. Opening up the myth, Boureau-Deslandes and Rousseau imbue it with the inherent features of modernity: ambivalence and uncertainty.

### Literature Review

The Pygmalion myth can be applied as a metaphor to explain the modern subject. The myth's ambivalence and transitory state between reality and illusion resonate with the symptoms of the subject of modernity. Anthony J. Cascardi (2000, p. 2) discusses the "splitting of the modern subject" arguing that "the modern subject is in fact positioned within a field of conflicting discourses." The modern subject is split between myth and enlightenment, and the Pygmalion myth sheds light on the nature of this dichotomy. The myth itself is fraught with ambiguity because it is entwined as a foreign element in the fabric of the artworks, and the dynamic of the relationship between Pygmalion and Galatea destabilizes the myth. On the one hand, artists use the Pygmalion story to inform their works and to present the mythical consciousness of the subject. On the other, the Pygmalion myth is demythologized by artists, and is changed according to their understanding or not-understanding of the miracle. Every new version of Pygmalion aims to explain the old myth as fiction but ultimately reintroduces mythology.

Pygmalion's mythical consciousness enables subjective perception to realize the miracle of animation. As long as Pygmalion considers himself capable of rationally explaining the miracle and assuming the role of the dominant subject, he risks becoming a slave to mythology and instrumental reason. Here we follow Adorno and Horkheimer in arguing that the Pygmalion myth describes a subject-object relationship where "[m]an's domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972, p. 54). This amalgamation of power and reason means that Pygmalion's attempts to produce a miracle are efforts to gain power over his creation. To reach this goal, Pygmalion is ready to resort to mythology; but since the age of modernity encourages reflective reasoning, Pygmalion realizes that his domination and omnipotence are a mere illusion. The dialectic of the myth captures the moment when Pygmalion may either give in to the illusion or doubt the credibility of the miracle.

In Ovid, Pygmalion's mastery achieves a perfect delusion: "ars adeo latet arte sua" (*Metamorphoses*, X, 252). He believes in the possibility of animating his statue because it is so life-like. The original story—as we know it from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—treads the line between a miracle and self-delusion. After Ovid, its nature has remained ambivalent over the centuries. One can even posit an assumption that it has always been controversial in its animating the inanimate.

For Adorno and Horkheimer, mythology is not historically superseded by rationality but constitutes a human experience of reality and is common in everyday life. Hence, it is reasonable to consider the modern versions of Pygmalion as variants of the myth, in spite of the fact that most comparative studies tend to view Pygmalion as a theme or a story

(e.g. Dörrie, 1974; Joshua, 2001; Weiser, 1998). By treating the Pygmalion myth as a myth, it is possible to do justice to the modern interpretation of the Pygmalion mythology and to contribute to its comparative study.

The dialectic of myth and enlightenment is at the core of modern European philosophy and culture. It is inadvertently reintroduced with every new effort at critical thinking. As Adorno and Horkheimer have masterfully shown in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972, p. xvi). The dialectic of the Pygmalion myth lies in its complex relationship with enlightenment and its ambiguous interpretation of the subject of modernity.

### Methodology

We look at Pygmalion from outside mythical consciousness and interpret it as an allegory within the cognitive paradigm of embodied realism. The theoretical premise of our exploration of the Pygmalion myth is consonant with George Lakoff and Mark Turner's contention that myth is an unconscious metaphor, which makes human reasoning possible (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 215), and that it is therefore closely connected with, and constitutive of, the process of enlightenment. The conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) will be applied as an important methodological tool to ascertain what kind of mythology is created by modern authors in their interpretation of the Pygmalion myth.

By way of close reading of the modern versions of the Pygmalion myth, we will be looking for moments in the text, which complicate its reception, finding instances of subject-object relationship, and recognizing the underlying metaphors of animation and Pygmalion's subjectivity. We examine Boureau-Deslandes's novelette in order to see how materialism inscribes its ideology into the fabric of the Pygmalion myth. This work is one of the clearest examples of how one mythology supersedes another. Then we discuss Pygmalion's delusion in Rousseau's monodrama and try to show how Pygmalion views the process of animation. Rousseau's Pygmalion is an idealist rather than a materialist, and his animation of the statue is experienced as an illusion in contrast to Boureau-Deslandes's mechanistic philosophy.

### Aim of the Paper

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that behind each version of the myth, there is an unconscious metaphor, which presents the metamorphosis as rationally explainable, gives rise to mythical consciousness, and—because reason itself is largely metaphorical—cannot be eliminated by critical thinking. This exploration of the Pygmalion myth is intended to show how mythology is problematized in modern literary works, and how the dialectic of the Pygmalion myth relates to more general problems of modernity.

### Results and Discussion

How could a myth be reinterpreted to corroborate the ideals of the Age of Reason? An answer to this question can be found if one carefully reads Boureau-Deslandes's novelette *Pigmalion ou la statue animée* (1741). The Cartesian mechanistic philosophy equips the author with a tool to undo the myth, and present before the reader its materialistic version. However, the effort to dispel mythical consciousness reverts to mythology through the metaphors of enlightenment. The scientific undoing of the myth becomes its new incarnation. Being a work of art, the novelette internalizes the contradiction and problematizes its own status through symptomatic allusion to the illusory process of animation. The ambiguities of the story make it irreducible to scientific demythologization. Thus, it is impossible to consider Boureau-Deslandes's *roman philosophique* to be a pure exercise in materialism, or, rather, his work proves that early materialism is dependent on mythology.

The moment of not-knowing whether materialism may refute the myth and present a coherent realistic story is acknowledged many times in the text. The author recognizes this complexity already in the foreword to the novelette, describing his work as “mélange d'objets inespérés & frappants” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 117). In the foreword, Boureau-Deslandes deliberates about matter and its essence. He asks the reader to admit that “nous n'en savons rien” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 117), and this not-knowing allows him to suggest the possibility of thinking matter. “Un voile obscur couvre nos yeux” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 117) and will cover our eyes for a lot longer with regard to materialism. The veil which covers our eyes does not necessarily mean that we cannot know anything; it serves as an encouragement for human imagination. If one does not know what matter is, why not imagine that matter is capable of thought? Boureau-Deslandes is a veritable visionary in being so close to the ideals of enlightenment. It may sound absurd and impossible, but then there is no knowledge of the matter that would deny such a possibility. One simply does not know what it is and can easily create a myth of thinking matter: a story about “une Statue vivante & animée” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 117). Ironically, it is not-knowing that validates the materialistic view of the myth. Boureau-Deslandes repeats his justification of thinking matter, saying that “nous n'en savons rien; & le peu qui nous est connu, le peu qu'aperçoivent nos foibles regards” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 117) does not exclude its possibility. He closes the foreword with an appeal to forgive Pygmalion for his “bizarre passion,” “[I]'égarement & la folie” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 118). Pygmalion's illusion, which gives rise to the wish for animation in Ovid, is played out again in Boureau-Deslandes. Furthermore, the problem also lies in the controversial status of the animation, as “[t]out est illusion, [t]out est caprice dans la Vie” (Boureau-Deslandes,

1967, p. 118). Perhaps it is not the animation that is questioned in this text, but its materialistic explanation, provided by Pygmalion. The status of the whole story as an illusion grants the narrator freedom to creatively work on the original myth. It can be hypothesized that Boureau-Deslandes tried to distance himself from his own audacious plan to explain the story and demythologize Pygmalion from a materialistic standpoint.

Pygmalion is an artist whose power of deception is not limited to mimesis because his marble and ivory statues appear not only to be alive and breathe but also to possess “une ame & des passions” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 119). One day, he has a dream in which Venus asks him to create a statue and promises to guide his hand and “ignite” (*échauffer*) his imagination, to which he acquiesces. Imagination is conceptualized here as a flame within the human body that can be either extinguished or ignited (Kövecses, 2000, p. 38). The pleasant dream seems to be reality to Pygmalion, and hence it stays in his memory: “Un Songe si flatteur resta gravé dans son esprit, comme une réalité” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 121). The animation seems to be impossible until the dream encourages Pygmalion to think otherwise, and illusion starts the irreversible process of animation of the statue. The transformation commences after the dream. What if the dream does not come to an end here? What if we come to witness its magical continuation? On waking up in a magnificent studio, Pygmalion notices a huge contrast: “Quel contraste! Quelle métamorphose!” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 121). Inspiration suddenly comes to him; he sets out to work on a piece of marble, which becomes as soft as flesh: “le marbre devint docile, & prit quelque manière la mollesse des chairs” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 121). Softness—already present in Ovid—plays an essential role in Pygmalion's sensuous perception and conception of the statue.

Pygmalion is enchanted and petrified by the statue in the process of adoration. He admires the statue, and his adoration produces an unknown emotion. In his soul, *mouvements inconnus* arise. Pygmalion does not recognize his wish for animation and keeps it secret from himself: “je souhaite un bien que je ne connois point, ou que je cherche à me dissimuler” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 123). At last, he prays to Venus to animate the statue, to give it “la vie & le mouvement” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 123) but he has doubts about the possibility of animation. Because his wish may be superfluous and ridiculous, he does not hope that it is possible to fulfill his dream: “je demande ce qu'il m'est impossible d'obtenir” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 123). Animation is seen as granting the statue with “la pensée & sentiment” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 123), i.e. the subjectivity of the statue once animated will become its essence. At this point, materialism enters the discourse of the artwork. Thinking about the difference between him and the statue, Pygmalion

comes to the idea that “[t]out dépend peut-être d’un peu plus ou peu moins de mouvement, d’un certain arrangement de parties” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 123).

Materialism with its particles invades the Pygmalion myth. Small changes bring about complete metamorphosis. The changes do not come at once but gradually take the matter to a higher level of organization (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 123). Pygmalion rationally explains the possibility of animation, and his mythical consciousness eliminates the impossibility of creation. The nameless statue of Venus can be animated without breaching the tenets of materialism. Pygmalion sees the statue move upon his reflection and first thinks that it is a delusion: “Ne me trompai-je point? Mes yeux, serez-vous complices des égarements de mon cœur?” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 123). While Pygmalion is thinking about the nature of reason, the statue appears to come to life and tries to “à respirer, à vivre, à marcher, & encore plus, qu’elle s’essayait à penser” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 124). Thus, thought is introduced as the human essence in Boureau-Deslandes.

The narrator unravels the metaphor of human beings as machines: human beings are not different from machines in that they both gradually develop and then die; they both consist of opposing and complementary particles (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 124). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s study of this metaphor in *Metaphors We Live By* explores why it seems to be viable to the person who subscribes to it. Similarities between human beings and machines do not objectively exist but emerge as a result of a conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 147–155). Some of the associations between humans and machines are necessarily inhibited to support the resemblance between them. The trope is the machine here, and its subject is the human being. Pygmalion constantly deliberates on the nature of human beings, and his not-knowing about them makes the metaphor much more convincing. Therefore, he uses this metaphor to retrospectively explain the animation of the statue.

When the statue comes to life and acquires the ability to think, she asks herself what she is. She wonders how she was created out of nothing and, finally, recognizes that she does not know her own essence: “je ne connois rien à mon être” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 124). Paradoxically, thought is recognized by the statue as her only known trait and is simultaneously interpreted as her essence, which is unknown to her. Descartes’s *Cogito* enters the stage. Thought is the stamp of existence on the statue: “j’ignore tout le reste” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 124); it is her key feature: “le Sceau de mon existence” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 124). Conversely, thought remains not known, and it can be interpreted with the help of a great number of more concrete concepts, such as the machine.

Language is a tool of learning for the statue, and she comes to enquire into the state of things with a language

of her own. The statue acquires agency and independence from Pygmalion through language. The rise of subjectivity in Boureau-Deslandes marks the emergent mythology of the subject–object relationship in the age of modernity. The statue does not know much about herself, and hence she knows nothing about Pygmalion: “car m’ignorant moi-même, je dois encore plus vous ignorer, apprenez-moi quel est mon sort” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 124). She enquires about her nature, and Pygmalion answers that he has created her for his own sake and now she should live for Pygmalion: “Si vous vivez, vous vivez par moi, & vous devez vivre pour moi” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 125). Here is the symptom of Pygmalionism revealed in its most narcissistic and unequivocal form. His deliberations about thinking matter were necessary to animate the statue in a materialistic fashion but the consequences of such animation are not foreseen by Pygmalion, who wants to appropriate thinking matter and make it subservient to his own self, therefore revealing his narcissistic and incestuous desire. Pygmalionism is rendered impotent, and the passionate words are pronounced in vain, as the statue fails to understand their meaning and asks Pygmalion to teach her: “instruisez-moi” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 125). Pygmalion becomes an educator who destroys his own domination over the statue by endowing her with reason. Pygmalionism is questioned, and the order of things is undermined by the statue’s refusal to accept the social conventions.

When Pygmalion proposes to the animated statue after several days of education, she retorts “avec cet air froid” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 130). by refusing to marry Pygmalion, because it is not sensible to commit oneself to one person forever. She can stay with Pygmalion as long as they both love each other. Pygmalion is petrified and dumbstruck with such a twist of fate. Having invited guests for the dinner, he expected this gathering to become his triumph with the marriage proposal as its culmination but he was delusional. It appears that the statue may finally become free from Pygmalion. If Pygmalion does not recognize the statue’s otherness, he will lose her but recognizing her otherness also means losing the domination over the statue. Pygmalion’s dilemma cannot be resolved.

The mechanistic philosophy postulates irreducible difference between the two subjects, as they are free from each other. The meaning of the *deus ex machina* at the very end of the novelette acquires literal meaning, when Venus reappears and persuades Pygmalion to live with the statue as long as they both love each other. She explains to him how he can always be loved by the statue: “tâche sans cesse de lui plaire, & ne la force à t’aimer: c’est le moyen qu’elle t’aime toujours” (Boureau-Deslandes, 1967, p. 130). The possibility of realization of the ideological ramifications of materialist philosophy is endorsed and secured by the goddess: the dialectic of myth and enlightenment arrives at its culmination in this finale. Employing *deus*

*ex machina* as the ultimate resolution for materialism's antinomies confirms the preservation of mythical consciousness in Boureau-Deslandes's version of Pygmalion. The dialectic of myth and enlightenment is even more tangible when the effort at dispelling the myth is radically new and based on progressive ideas. The new mythology is used unreflectively, but its ambiguity is impossible to conceal in a work of art, where materialism is controversial because of its inability to provide the authentic reality of the myth. Pygmalion is discontented with the constructed materialist version of the myth, and the deity must be reintroduced to prevent Pygmalion from questioning the legitimacy of his mythical enlightenment ideals. The incompleteness of the materialist illusion must be veiled in old mythology.

Rousseau's *Pygmalion, scène lyrique* (1771) is a perfect example of how the myth can be presented in its entirety on the stage. Boureau-Deslandes's act of animation is within the myth of materialist philosophy, whereas in Rousseau's text, the miracle inhabits the subjective world of Pygmalion. Pygmalionism as a symptom of modernity is embodied in Rousseau's play with its maddening narcissism and self-delusion of the protagonist. Pygmalion's reflective consciousness animates the statue but at the same time corrupts the reality of animation: Pygmalion is aware of his self-delusion. It can hardly be called "a successful union" between Pygmalion and Galatea (Joshua, 2001, p. 42), because he must relinquish reflexivity for the illusion to be perceived as authentic reality, while it is through reflexivity that the process of animation commences in the first place. The illusory character of the act of animation cannot be dispelled with reflective thinking as reflection itself is the cause of the illusion of animation. Pygmalion's self-deception seemingly overcomes the difference between the subject and the object by dissolving the one in the other. Galatea bereaves Pygmalion of his essence, and he is only too willing to sacrifice his own self for her. The internalization of sacrifice misleads the audience into believing in the reality of the synthesis of the subject and the object at the end of the play.

The play opens with Pygmalion being frustrated. What is the reason? Pygmalion recognizes that his statue has neither life nor soul in it, and his imagination is *glacée*, because its fire "s'est éteint" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 7). The marble stays cold when it leaves his hands. The fire of passion and genius has left Pygmalion (Rousseau, 1786, p. 8). The juxtaposition of hot and cold strongly evokes life and death as one perceives them unconsciously. Pygmalion despairs because the fire of imagination is a reality for *him*, not merely a metaphor. Without this fire, Pygmalion is unable to create. Pygmalion is "un génie éteint" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 9), and his imagination is cold because it cannot animate the statue. Yet, as soon as Pygmalion reflects on the impossibility of animating the statue, his imagination springs to life, and the character is engulfed by desire. The secret wish for animation torments Pygmalion.

Pygmalion faces a dilemma. He is afraid of looking at his masterwork because admiring it may distract him, and therefore he covers Galatea with a veil. However, not-seeing the statue extinguishes his imagination. Pygmalion's genius is as cold as stone. Perhaps Galatea could animate him? This is her intended purpose in his eyes: "Peut-être cet objet ranimera-t-il mon imagination languissante" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 9). Pygmalion and Galatea reverse the roles; it is Galatea who animates Pygmalion. At this sentimental moment, Pygmalion admits that he has never examined his work, only admired it. Notice how the syncretism of perception is underlined by Rousseau: "je ne l'ai point encore examinée... je n'ai fait jusqu'ici que l'admirer" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 9). Pygmalion does not examine his work; he perceives it with all his senses. The statue appears to him in its entirety.

When Pygmalion takes off the veil, the process of self-delusion commences; he notices: "je suis trompé" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 10). Reflecting on his delusion, he is cognizant of it until the very last moment. As if in delirium, he descends into the depths of his imagination and animates the statue. Pygmalion constantly admires his work—"je ne puis me lasser d'admirer mon ouvrage" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 10), and by doing so he admires himself in it. He feels *amour-propre* towards his own self; his narcissism is ardent and transgressive. Pygmalion does not dare change anything in the statue, because to him it appears to be almost alive; the only thing that Galatea is bereft of is a soul. Suddenly, "le voile de l'illusion tombe" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 11), and Pygmalion realizes the impossibility of animation. Yet, is it truly so? What is the metaphorical meaning of the veil? Is Pygmalion trying to say that he has escaped the illusion? Does Pygmalion begin to see reality more clearly? Or is it the outcome of self-deception? It could be argued that his illusion becomes more real than the cold reality. When the veil of phantasy falls, Pygmalion's imagination starts the process of animation. The text demythologizes the myth by showing that the act of animation is only an illusion but the myth reasserts itself with Pygmalion's belief in the possibility of animation. Pygmalion sacrifices reality for the sake of the myth; the myth becomes more real than the self-consciousness of the cold, extinguished imagination.

Pygmalion calls the statue the "objet inanimé," "un marbre," "une pierre," "une masse informe" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 12) and even gives it a proper name before its animation. By giving a name to the statue, he asserts control over it. The act of naming establishes the authority of the subject over the object, and hence it inaugurates Pygmalion's appropriation of Galatea. Conversely, the name alienates the object and endows it with strangeness, as one relates to it and confronts its otherness. Although Pygmalion names Galatea and grants her his own essence, this process of self-sacrifice may be an illusion. Perhaps he can actually dominate Galatea and dissolve her otherness in his own self. Language as an emancipatory and simultaneously

manipulative force is both Pygmalion's enemy and disciple. Narcissism and self-sacrifice, realized within the medium of language, split the subject and present to us the moment of the dialectic of the myth. The subject sacrifices his own self to gain utter control of the other.

Pygmalion is misled by his passions; his desire induces an illusion: "Insensé... rentre en toi même... gémis sur toi... sur ton erreur... vois ta folie..." (Rousseau, 1786, p. 12). He appears to recognize his illusion and escape its power by accepting his madness. Yet he does not want to abandon his desire and finds excuses for his illusion: "Oui... ma seule folie est de discerner la beauté... mon seul crime est d'y être sensible" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 12). He gives in to self-deception because there is nothing perverse about his passion in his understanding of the act of animation. By refusing to recognize the transgressive element in this passion, Pygmalion surrenders to his illusion. He is petrified by adoration and does not feel shame when he animates the statue in his imagination. Just as the Propoetides lose their sense of shame and are not able to blush before they are turned into stone, Pygmalion is on the verge of indulging in the act of self-adoration, and shame is likewise banished from his soul. The cold and the hot collide in this struggle between the still-experienced-reality and the setting-in of mythical consciousness: "Quels traits de feu... semblent sortir de cet objet, pour embraser mes sens... & retourner avec mon ame à leur source" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 12). Pygmalion's cold imagination is ignited by the sight of the statue, and as his passion is aroused, he feels warmth and understands that the marble remains cold: "Hélas! il reste immobile & froid... tandis que mon cœur, embrasé par ses charnues, voudroit quitter mon corps... pour aller échauffer le sien" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 12). In his delirium, Pygmalion believes that he can share his warmth with the statue and animate it. He reflects on his *délire* but it does not prevent him from being overwhelmed by it.

Pygmalion cannot give the statue life without losing his own. It is remarkable how human essence is conceived as the content of the human body. Pygmalion confronts the inner incongruities of the conceptual metaphor of human essence as a substance within human beings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 282). In general, this association between the trope of substance and the meaning of life would be inhibited, as one can give life to somebody and not lose his own. In this particular case, the metaphor is realized in its entirety: life becomes an object that can be given away to others. Pygmalion does not accept this metaphor and wants to live in order to be able to love Galatea. Galatea is now the subject, and Pygmalion becomes the other but the dilemma remains.

Pygmalion is ready to realize his illusion. He addresses the gods, and for him the deity is "sublime essence," "principe de toute existence," "ame de l'universe," "feu sacré," and "céleste Vénus" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 13). Despite being given a number of names, it is obvious that the deity is an

abstract concept for Pygmalion, and *feu sacré* alludes to his own imagination, rather than to the goddess. Rousseau's Pygmalion animates the statue by himself. Mythical consciousness enters here: "deux êtres manquent à la plénitude des choses... Partage-leur cette ardeur dévorante qui consume l'un sans animer l'autre" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 14). He finds a solution by conceptualizing his essence as a divisible entity and asks the deity to let him share his essence—his divine fire within his body—with the statue to animate it. The statue may become "l'image de ce qui n'est pas" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 14). The phantom image of illusion is called to life with the help of a conceptual metaphor that allows Pygmalion to share his life with the statue.

Delirium seizes Pygmalion. He feels as if he recovered his senses and were sober again. However, Pygmalion is actually in the polar opposite condition, because he is destined to abscond from life and find reality in the myth: "Une fièvre mortelle embrasoit mon sang... Un baume de confiance & d'esprit coule dans mes veines... je crois me sentir renaître" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 14). He is confident about the fulfillment of his wish and feels that he is being reborn. Nevertheless, even in his delirium Pygmalion knows that he is giving in to self-deception: "mais cette injuste confiance trompe ceux qui font des vœux insensés" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 14). The climax of the struggle between myth and reality occurs during the final moments before the metamorphosis: "ton délire est à son dernier terme... ta raison t'abandonne ainsi que ton génie" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 15). Pygmalion does not regret succumbing to the illusion, as his perverse passion, his hideous transgression, is now covered by the veil of phantasy. He notices that his love of the inanimate statue is resolved through his becoming "un homme à vision," and the nature of his vision is "prestige d'un amour forcené" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 15). He enters the realm of "[r]avissante illusion" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 16) because of his passion. Losing his senses, Pygmalion finally sees Galatea come to life. When Galatea speaks and recognizes herself in Pygmalion, he projects his own self on Galatea and sacrifices his *être*: "je t'ai donné tout mon être... je ne vivrai plus que par toi" (Rousseau, 1786, p. 16). Pygmalion loses his own self in the object; Galatea becomes the true subject of the myth.

Proceeding dialectically, one can observe how Pygmalion exposes his illusion to manipulate it even better and animate the statue in his delirium. Galatea has no other essence but that of Pygmalion, and she is totally subjugated by his subjectivity. The reader cannot know whether there is the other in the play, or rather Pygmalion unfolds the whole process of animation in his perverse imagination. The dialectic of the Pygmalion myth is masterfully staged in Rousseau's monodrama. The status of animation is controversial, and the myth is reestablished as the authentic reality of animation which is made possible through the conceptual metaphor of human essence as a substance that can be either sacrificed or shared. The inconsistency

of this metaphor attests to the ambiguity of the metamorphosis. Rousseau's *Pygmalion* witnesses the birth of the subject in the world of modernity and simultaneously destroys the subject-object opposition, undermining the legitimacy of the subject. The tormented subject of modernity internalizes his relationship with the object and animates it by sacrificing his own essence.

### Conclusions

The discussion above gives support to our main thesis that every effort to unveil the myth ends in developing a new metaphor to explain the metamorphosis of Galatea, which leads to the reintroduction of mythical consciousness into the story. Boureau-Deslandes and Rousseau demythologize the Pygmalion myth and present creation as "eine vollkommene Täuschung" (Blühm, 1988, p. 22), a perfect deception.

This article has also outlined how the Pygmalion myth serves the purpose of metaphorical evocation of the subject of modernity with its inherent controversy and ambiguity, and has argued that the dialectic of the Pygmalion myth is characteristic of the modern age. The Pygmalion myth can be useful as a heuristic device in cultural studies, and its further application as a trope for interpreting the crucial facets of enlightenment and opening the unresolved questions which the literary and cultural studies have inherited from the age of modernity promises new insights into these fields and can provide a better understanding of the dialectic of myth and enlightenment.

The modern Pygmalion is a deceived deceiver who considers his work animated with his powers, whereas the texts undermine this conviction and make Pygmalion doubt the transformation. He is an artist whose art conceals artifice so well that he gives in to self-delusion only to question it again later. Galatea comes to life but her status is equivocal. The myth problematizes the story, and the reader has to combine its understanding and not-understanding. Understanding the myth demands either uncovering the underlying metaphor and exploring the complexity of its conceptual design or experiencing the myth as authentic reality and animating Galatea through empathy. Conversely, not-understanding the myth involves either withholding judgment and experiencing the myth in its absolute reality, or its critical analysis and the dismantling of its fabric. Consequently, the modern interpretations of the Pygmalion myth strive to achieve a balance between mythologizing and demythologizing, understanding and not-understanding, animation, and petrification.

Ultimately, the Pygmalion myth makes one aware of the subject-object relationship in the age of modernity, where Galatea's subjectivity is acknowledged by Pygmalion and her otherness disrupts his ability to dominate the animated statue. The awareness of ambivalence and contingency of the relationship between the subject and the object does not preclude the possibility of domination but it undermines its legitimacy by acknowledging the agency of the other. As a result, the subject of modernity remains split between myth and enlightenment.

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**Шопін П., Бентя Ю.**

**Міт про матеріалізм і суб'єкт модерності: Пігмаліон у творах Андре-Франсуа Буро-Деянда та Жана-Жака Руссо**

**Анотація.** У статті стверджується, що міт про Пігмаліона у творчості Андре-Франсуа Буро-Деянда та Жана-Жака Руссо можна розглядати як метафору модерного суб'єкта, що підкреслює амбівалентність доби модерності. Докладний аналіз текстів показав, що просвітницькі версії міту про Пігмаліона є одночасно відображенням реальності й ілюзії, а баланс знання і незнання уможливує їхню критичну оцінку. Спираючись на культурологічні дослідження про суб'єкт модерності, автори доводять, що він розколотий між мітом і прозінням, і міт про Пігмаліона проливає світло на цю дихотомію. У межах концептуальної теорії метафори розвідка демонструє, що митці використовують міт для осмислення своїх творів і презентації мітичної свідомості суб'єкта. Водночас вони прагнуть демітологізувати його відповідно до власного (не)розуміння природи дива. Мітична свідомість дозволяє Пігмаліону зреалізувати диво одухотворення або через матеріялістичну філософію Андре-Франсуа Буро-Деянда, або через сентименталізм Жана-Жака Руссо, але скульптор ризикує стати рабом мітології чи інструментального розуму. Діалектика міту фіксує момент, коли Пігмаліон може або піддатися ілюзії, або за сумнівами у достовірності дива.

**Ключові слова:** Андре-Франсуа Буро-Деянд, Жан-Жак Руссо, міт про Пігмаліона, матеріалізм, сентименталізм, Просвітництво, суб'єкт модерності.

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