Transfigurations of the Myth of Narcissus - Intertextuality, Re-Contextualization and Symbolism of Reflection: Oscar Wilde’s "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and Ernest Koliqi’s "Pasqyrat e Narcizit" (“The Mirrors of Narcissus”)

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Abstract

Narcissism has long been a significant topic in various fields, including art, literature, and the sciences. In contemporary times, its relevance has only grown due to the modern obsession with self and self-reflection. This paper explores the theme of narcissism as a literary motif in two works: Oscar Wilde’s "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and Ernest Koliqi’s "Pasqyrat e Narcizit" (“The Mirrors of Narcissus”). By examining the transfigurations of the narcissistic model, the study seeks to analyze the intertextual connections between the original myth and its recontextualized versions presented by these authors. The article aims to present the abstract interpretations of this myth that these authors have crafted in their literary works, employing dialectical approaches. The recontextualization of the narcissistic motif through literary aesthetics opens up opportunities for valuable comparisons, analyses, and interpretations of the symbol of reflection, the search for meaning, inter- and hypertextual relationships, as well as the exploration of pathological or social identity aspects associated with this figure.

Keywords: narcissism, literature, motif, recontextualization, hypertextual, pathological elements, search

1. Introduction and Methodology

The statement "All literature begins with myth and ends with myth" is widely embraced by researchers when examining the intricate connection between myth and literature. Myth serves as an abundant wellspring of inspiration for literature, allowing for the reconstruction and reinterpretation of primal archetypes. Moreover, myth has not only been influential in literature but has also found applications in various other domains of art and sciences.

The myth of Narcissus holds a prominent position in literary studies, being a subject of great
fame and ongoing debate. With its pervasive model and symbolism, this myth has left a lasting impact on literature. However, selecting a specific focus for this paper proved challenging due to the vastness of its scope. After conducting a thorough analysis, I have chosen to explore two contrasting works that offer distinct recontextualizations of narcissism: Oscar Wilde’s "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and Ernest Koliqi’s "Pasqyrat e Narçizit" ("The Mirrors of Narcissus").

While both works address the issue of social determination and relative autonomy, they diverge significantly in their treatment of narcissism. In the case of Dorian Gray, his pathological obsession with eternal youth leads to social uncertainty, ultimately resulting in a tragic fate. On the other hand, in Koliqi’s work, Narcissus’ social uncertainty becomes a catalyst for his search for true identity, leading him towards self-discovery. These divergent narratives provide contrasting perspectives on the challenges associated with self-identity, the symbolism of mirrors and reflection, social insecurities, and more—elements that emerge from the myth of Narcissus.

In order to attain the desired outcome, it is essential to engage with some of the surviving versions of the myth of Narcissus from antiquity. This approach allows for a comparative analysis between the original versions and the recontextualized renditions, particularly in terms of the symbolic remodeling of the myth as portrayed in the aforementioned literary works.

2. Recapitulation of Versions of the Ancient Myth of Narcissus

The myth of Narcissus has consistently proven to be a rich source of inspiration in various artistic and scientific disciplines. The symbolism associated with this mythical figure carries profound connotations and has given rise to countless adapted versions stemming from its original model. However, it is noteworthy that even in its earliest iterations, the myth of Narcissus appears in several versions that share commonalities rather than significant differences.

"Echo and Narcissus" is considered the oldest, most well-known, and classic version of the Narcissus myth, written by Ovid in his work "Metamorphoses." The myth begins with a prophecy made by the Theban prophet Tiresias, who is asked by Narcissus' mother about her son's destiny to live a peaceful life in old age. Tiresias cryptically responds, saying that Narcissus will indeed live a long life if he remains unaware of himself (Ovid: 3:348: p.149).

As Narcissus reaches the age of 16, he possesses youthful beauty combined with the physical stature of a grown man. It is during this time that Echo, who has been punished by Juno for her role in betraying the supreme deity, encounters Narcissus in the forest and becomes enamored by his beauty. However, Echo's punishment renders her unable to speak her own words, but only able to repeat what she has heard. When Echo tries to communicate with Narcissus, he misunderstands and rejects her, leading to her disappointment. Echo retreats into a life of seclusion, hiding in various caves until only her voice remains.

Witnessing Narcissus' behavior, the goddess of revenge, Nemesis, decides to seek retribution. She compels Narcissus to approach a pool of water where he sees his own reflection. Narcissus falls in love with his own image and, unable to possess what he desires, wastes away. When the nymphs prepare his funeral pyre, his body transforms into a white and yellow flower that bears his name.

Ovid, known for his penchant for paradoxes, demonstrates his preference in the construction of this version of the Narcissus myth. Hermann Fränkel, a researcher, points out that the distinctiveness of Ovid's version lies in the transformation of motifs from punishment to symbolism through reflection and visualization (Fränkel, 1945, p.370). This shift adds a layer of complexity and depth to the myth, setting it apart from other versions. Ovid's skillful manipulation of motifs and themes enhances the myth's enduring appeal and invites further exploration and interpretation.

Numerous interpretations have been offered regarding Ovid's version of the Narcissus myth. The transition from the Greek context to the Roman context has resulted in abstractions and modifications, giving rise to a myth that emphasizes the logic of doubling and mirroring. Through these cultural adaptations, the myth has undergone transformations, and its cultural impact has been shaped accordingly. The emphasis on doubling and mirroring reflects the cultural significance and
fascination with self-reflection and introspection. This evolution of the myth highlights the enduring cultural effect of the Narcissus model, as it continues to resonate with audiences and provoke contemplation on themes of self-identity and self-obsession.

Another version of the Narcissus myth, as recounted by Pausanias, introduces a different narrative. According to this version, Narcissus was born in a place called Thespeia in Boeotia. He possessed extraordinary beauty, which made him the object of intense love from people of both sexes. However, Narcissus held a disdainful attitude towards them and even towards Eros, the god of love. Due to his selfish behavior, all those who loved him eventually abandoned him, except for Ameinias.

Ameinias, expressing his love for Narcissus, faced rejection and was further humiliated when Narcissus sent him a sword as a symbolic dismissal of his feelings. Overwhelmed by heartbreak, Ameinias took his own life with the very sword and implored Eros to seek vengeance on his behalf.

When Narcissus caught sight of his own reflection in the water, he fell deeply in love with himself, becoming his own first and only lover. Convinced that his suffering was a result of his disdain for Ameinias’ love, Narcissus believed that he deserved punishment. Consequently, he chose to end his life, perceiving it as the fitting consequence for his actions. Thus, in this version of the myth, the love he held for himself becomes his own undoing.

Indeed, this variant of the Narcissus myth serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the tragic consequences of narcissism and the destructive power of self-obsession. It underscores the theme of hubris, where Narcissus’s excessive self-love and disregard for others’ feelings lead to his downfall.

This version of the Narcissus myth introduces an innovation by incorporating the element of homosexuality. It portrays the love between Narcissus and Ameinias as a same-sex relationship, offering a different perspective on the dynamics of love and desire. The inclusion of homosexuality in the myth adds depth and complexity to the narrative, emphasizing that love knows no boundaries of gender or sexual orientation.

In addition to these popular and well-founded versions, there exists another lesser-known variation of the Narcissus myth. According to this version, Narcissus had an identical twin sister. They shared not only a striking physical resemblance but also dressed alike and engaged in activities together, including hunting. However, an unexpected turn of events occurred when Narcissus found himself falling in love with his own sister.

"But when she died, he continued to visit the pool of water to gaze upon his reflection, even though he was aware that it was his own image. For him, it served as a source of solace, as he imagined seeing his sister instead of himself.” (Pausanias, p.376.)

This particular version of the myth, as mentioned by Pausanias, introduces elements of rationality and suggests the presence of incestuous feelings. The story implies that even after his sister’s death, Narcissus seeks comfort by looking at his reflection in the water, projecting his desire to see his sister instead of himself. This interpretation adds a complex psychological dimension to the myth, exploring themes of longing, loss, and the blurred boundaries between self and other.

Besides these, there are other versions not only in the field of literature but also in other arts. However, they are less well known and therefore have had less influence on later re-creations of this myth. The eternal spirit and the countless possibilities for reconstructions and recontextualizations, both as a metanarrative and as a metadiscourse, in various forms and discourses have ensured the enduring presence of this myth across different fields.

3. Modern Narcissus – His Insecure Social Identity

In the reconstructions of this mythical model, the figure represented by Narcissus undergoes various transformations and adaptations. Throughout these reinterpretations, elements from the original myth are often present in different versions. One consistent theme that pervades almost every retelling is the issue of Narcissus’s identity and his ongoing search for it.

In "The Portrait of Dorian Gray," a new model of Narcissus is presented from a fresh perspective. The text delves into the character of Dorian Gray, a narcissistic individual grappling with
the uncertainties surrounding his identity. Through Dorian’s social interactions and the reflections they provoke, the novel explores a range of metaphysical and aesthetic questions that challenge both the contemporary narrative and the ancient archetype of Narcissus.

Love, selfishness, social distancing, beauty, and other thematic elements intertwine to shape the plot in Oscar Wilde’s "The Portrait of Dorian Gray." These elements propel the narrative forward, drawing parallels to the myth of Narcissus. In both stories, the protagonists experience unrequited love: Narcissus rejects the nymph Echo’s affection, while Dorian humiliates and abandons Sibyl Vane, who loves him deeply. The consequences of rejection ultimately lead to tragedy, as both Narcissus and Dorian face the repercussions of their actions. Their deaths, driven by revenge, underscore the destructive nature of selfishness and the repercussions of their treatment of others.

Consumed by an insatiable desire for eternal youth and beauty, Dorian Gray willingly surrenders his soul to the devil, marking a significant and innovative element in the narrative’s reconstruction of the modern Narcissus figure. Alongside the introduction of phantasmagorical elements, the author confronts Dorian, a narcissistic character, with a pathological self-love. The portrait of Dorian, displayed on the wall, becomes a metaphorical prison from which he can only escape by destroying it. However, this act of destruction also signifies his own demise. Throughout the story, the protagonist grapples with issues of identity. His social life revolves around promiscuity, trapped within a vicious cycle that begins and ends with him. Dorian Gray embodies the image he seeks to discover, as self-knowledge serves as the culmination of his social world.

In Ernest Koliqi’s work, the search for identity and the resulting uncertainty are also central themes that reflect the spirit of the Narcissus model. The protagonist in this work grapples with a sense of insecurity regarding his social identity, embarking on a profound journey of self-discovery. Koliqi’s adaptation of the mythical model from antiquity introduces innovative elements, reshaping the symbolism of search, indifference, denial, and love to align with the culture of the author’s country.

According to Lotman, a renowned scholar, a noteworthy work carries the informative essence of its cultural system, encapsulating the collective memory and intertextual references of that culture (Lotman, 1976, p.127). I fully endorse Lotman’s perspective regarding Koliqi’s work, as the symbolism of Narcissus serves as a vehicle for revealing traces of the culture and ethnicity that the author represents. Through this intertextual exploration, Koliqi’s work sheds light on the cultural heritage and distinctiveness of his society.

The connection to the myth of Narcissus is evident right from the title of the work, establishing a mythical element that immediately engages the audience. Additionally, the displacement of the narrative in terms of time and geographical setting contributes to the originality of this modern adaptation. In this rendition, Narcissus’s search for identity is intricately linked to his sense of autochthony and the quest to identify with his ancestors.

However, the potential identification patterns that present themselves to him are not aligned with his own beliefs and values, leading to a continued search for a more authentic self. This quest for identity persists until the final revelation or discovery, which carries significant weight in the narrative. Through this exploration, the work delves into the complexities of self-discovery, cultural heritage, and the search for personal authenticity.

When discussing the comparative levels between these two versions of the figure of Narcissus, the motif of ‘recognition’ cannot be avoided. This is because the search for identity inherently involves the process of recognition. However, there is a significant difference in the outcomes of recognition between the two versions.

In the myth of antiquity, recognition leads to a tragic end for Narcissus. When he recognizes himself through his reflection in the water, it ultimately results in his death. This underscores the destructive consequences of his self-obsession and serves as a cautionary tale about the perils of excessive self-love.

In contrast, in "The Mirrors of Narcissus," recognition brings salvation and peace to the modern Narcissus. It implies that through recognizing and accepting his true identity, he is able to find a
sense of fulfillment and resolve his internal conflicts. This presents a more positive and redemptive perspective on the theme of recognition.

Thus, while recognition has a tragic outcome for Narcissus of antiquity, it brings about positive transformation for the modern Narcissus. These contrasting outcomes highlight the evolving interpretations and cultural shifts surrounding the myth of Narcissus, showcasing the different perspectives on the consequences of self-recognition.

4. The Essence of Narcissism – The Pathological Face and that of Reason

The model of Dorian Gray can indeed be seen as closely aligned with the myth of antiquity in terms of its pathological level of narcissism. Dorian Gray’s character embodies the destructive consequences of excessive self-love and vanity. Furthermore, his narcissism can be associated with the concept of "narcissistic personality disorder,” which is a psychological condition characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, a constant need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others.

The term "narcissistic personality disorder" indeed represents a medically recognized condition characterized by self-centeredness, a lack of empathy, and an excessive need for admiration. In the book "What Makes Narcissists Tick – Understanding Personality Disorder" by Kathy Krajco, the author explores the various problems and traits associated with individuals who exhibit narcissistic behavior. By examining Krajco’s study and understanding the concept of narcissistic personality disorder, we can identify multiple levels of compatibility between the condition and the character of Dorian Gray.

According to Krajco’s research, the classification of individuals who exhibit characteristics of pathological narcissism falls within the category of mental disorders. This classification is based on their manifestation of behaviors such as transfiguration, abuse, obsession, and other related traits. These aspects highlight the distorted self-perception and dysfunctional patterns of interpersonal relationships associated with pathological narcissism (Krajco, 2007, pg. 61).

Dorian Gray, in addition to embodying the symbolism of searching and finding, introduces the model of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), which takes the antique model to a pathological level. This modification goes beyond portraying a handsome young man who is self-conscious about his appearance. Instead, Dorian Gray becomes a character who is dangerously obsessed with his looks and eternal youth, displaying the characteristics associated with NPD.

Beauty and youth assume paramount importance in Dorian Gray’s life. He becomes obsessed with preserving these divine elements for himself, to the extent that he is willing to sell his soul. This Faustian element enters the narrative, drawing intertextual connections with Goethe’s "Faust." Dorian Gray’s pact with the devil, ensuring him eternal youth and captivating beauty, establishes a parallel with the themes explored in "Faust." The incorporation of gothic elements, alongside the pathological aspects, distinguishes Dorian Gray’s story from both the original myth and the rendition presented by Ernest Koliqi.

5. The Antipode of Dorian Gray

The work "The Mirrors of Narcissus" by Ernest Koliqi can be seen as an antipode to the model represented by Dorian Gray. In this work, the protagonist’s love for himself extends beyond a personal obsession with his own beauty and youth. Instead, it encompases his connection to society, his sense of belonging, and his ancestral roots. The focus shifts from individual narcissism to a broader exploration of identity within a collective context.

Even in Koliqi’s model of Narcissus, a new image of Narcissus emerges. In this interpretation, the narcissistic spirit is portrayed with positive qualities rather than being characterized by destruction or denial. The protagonist is depicted as someone who possesses qualities that they share with others and themselves. Additionally, they have a strong desire to seek the truth and hold themselves to high standards in this pursuit. This portrayal of a more benevolent and truth-seeking
narcissist deviates from the traditional understanding of the myth.

In Koliqi’s work "The Mirrors of Narcissus," the protagonist’s obsession is not with destructive or denying behaviors, but rather with the pursuit of truth. This truth holds great value for him, specifically in terms of his ancestral identity. Remarkably, throughout his obsession, the protagonist maintains his reason and his search remains guided by logic. Contrary to the assumption that his search would result in blindly identifying himself with his desired image rather than with reality, Koliqi presents a challenging version of Narcissus who undergoes a profound journey and ultimately finds himself and the art that represents his genesis.

According to Macaj-Tonuzi, Koliqi’s poetic portrayal of Narcissus involves a series of transformative experiences that reshape his perspective and way of life. Unlike the ancient myth where Narcissus meets his demise, Koliqi’s Narcissus continues to live and experiences a rebirth. He is depicted as a free and modern Narcissus, characterized by universal thoughts rather than being confined to a confused state of emotions.

Through Koliqi’s innovative interpretation, Narcissus emerges as a multi-faceted character, challenging conventional notions and offering a fresh perspective on the myth while remaining rooted in the search for self and the cultural heritage he represents.

6. Intertextual, Hypertextual Relations and Recontextualization

The notion of intertextuality, developed by Julia Kristeva in the late 60s, represented a significant departure from traditional understandings of authorship, subjectivity, and form. Building upon the concepts of dialogism pioneered by Michail Bakhtin, Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality expanded the scope of literary analysis by emphasizing the interconnectedness of texts and the multiplicity of voices and meanings within them. This theoretical framework challenged conventional notions of originality and autonomy, highlighting the ways in which texts are shaped by and refer to other texts, creating a network of interwoven meanings and references.

"No text can be written regardless of what has already been written, and it carries, in a more or less visible way, the traces and memory of a heritage and tradition" (Piegay-Gross, 2011, pg.15). This statement by Nathalie Piegay-Gross acknowledges the inherent interconnectedness and influence of previous works on any new writing. Intertextuality, as a concept, involves the process of rewriting a text within another text, enabling the discovery of traces from different intertextual levels and referencing various works. It highlights the ongoing dialogue and interplay between texts, shaping meaning and creating a rich tapestry of literary connections and references.

Gerard Genette’s perspective on intertextuality emphasizes that it is not a central element in itself, but rather a relationship that exists among other elements within a literary network. According to Genette, intertextuality plays a significant role in defining the uniqueness of literature (Piegay-Gross, 2011, pg.20). Intertextuality serves as a means through which cultural references are made and remade, contributing to the continuous process of marking and remarking within a given culture. These theoretical frameworks, including those that view literary works as traces and reconstructions of what came before, have facilitated the identification of intertextual connections in the analyzed works. They have allowed for the exploration of the intricate web of references and influences that shape and enrich literary discourse.

It would have been sufficient if there were only a single version of the myth of Narcissus that could serve as a foundation for cultural expression in various forms. However, the existence of multiple versions of this myth, along with other myths, provides greater opportunities for cultural reinterpretation and reshaping. Dorian Gray and Koliqi’s Narcissus are just two examples among many models that have been closely examined. In fact, culture encompasses numerous multimedia renditions of this myth. These diverse interpretations offer a broader range of perspectives, artistic representations, and thematic explorations related to self-obsession, identity, and human nature. The existence of multiple models and versions of the Narcissus myth enriches our cultural landscape, stimulating creativity and allowing for continuous reimagining and reinterpretation.
It is evident that intertextuality serves as a repository of cultural memory, with intertextual references acting as conduits for this transmission. In the work "The Mirrors of Narcissus," the figure of Narcissus not only establishes a connection with the original myth but also embodies a strong link with the culture of the country it represents. The concept of narcissism it portrays extends beyond the inherited notion of self-love from the myth; it acquires a broader significance. Love, in this context, takes on a positive connotation and becomes a pursuit of inner peace and the resolution of one's search for identity. As stated by Lesenciuc (2017), "The myth of Narcissus in Albanian literature transcends being a mere theme reflected in the textual waters of a literature. It reflects a vibrant Albania, its identity, evolution, delays, and mesmerizing aspects, but above all, its inner beauty within the realm of European literature" (pg. 186). The myth of Narcissus, as interpreted in Albanian literature, becomes a powerful vehicle for expressing the essence of Albania and its rich cultural heritage within the broader context of European literature.

Indeed, not every remake adheres strictly to the original in all its forms, as intertextuality introduces specificities that allow for different references within the text. Lachman also emphasizes the importance of considering various parameters such as the text of the manifesto, the reference text, reference signals, and intertextuality itself. This perspective finds its best exemplification in "The Portrait of Dorian Gray," where intertextuality manifests across multiple categories, intertwining elements of the original myth with the process of remaking. The focus of this discussion lies in the phenomenon of narcissism, particularly the portrayal of a young man consumed by self-obsession and self-love. However, the other narrative elements emerge as superstructures, involving remodeling and recontextualization, with distinct traces of the cultural context in which Dorian's story unfolds, thereby setting it apart from the myth of antiquity.

Certainly, according to N. Piegay-Gros, the presence of intertextuality places a significant demand on the reader. It is the reader's responsibility not only to perceive the intertext but also to name and recognize it before proceeding with interpretation (Piegay-Gross, 2011, pg.131). Therefore, the reader plays a crucial role in identifying and understanding the intertextual connections within a text. It is through the reader's active engagement and discernment that the intertextual relations can be fully appreciated and comprehended.

However, in addition to intertextual relations, it is important to consider the presence of hypertextual relationships as well. By employing Genette's concepts and terminology, specifically the notions of hypotext and hypertext, we can explore the hypertextual relationship between texts. In the case of Ernest Koliqi's "The Mirrors of Narcissus," we observe a distinct hypertextual relationship between text A (hypotext) and text B (hypertext). This relationship highlights the dynamic and transformative nature of the narrative, as the hypertext builds upon and recontextualizes elements from the hypotext in a unique way.

Thus, in the hypertextual relationship between the original Myth and Koliqi's Myth, a noticeable distinction can be observed. This distinction becomes apparent as the involvement in the hypertextual relationship appears to be a combination. Instead of focusing solely on narcissism, the emphasis shifts towards the search, which becomes synonymous with self-love. The concept of self-love in Koliqi’s work encompasses notions of origin, bloodline, and identity, which are conveyed through the interplay of symbols and imagination.

In this case, the hypotext of the original Myth serves as a reflection that influences the hypertext, creating a complex imaginary reality. Through this reflective process, the myth is recontextualized, not by adhering rigidly to its original form, but by blending and merging with it. This fusion allows for new interpretations and dimensions to emerge, adding depth and complexity to the myth's narrative.

By using the original myth as a symbolic reference, Koliqi transforms and enriches it by introducing new elements and a fresh perspective. In his reinterpretation, the focus shifts from the individual to encompass a wider circle that includes society and culture. This expansion of inclusion lends the myth a universal character, extending its relevance beyond the individual to the masses. Therefore, it can be said that Koliqi both demythologizes and mythicizes, as he not only...
recontextualizes the original myth but also creates a new myth, one that is uniquely his own. In this process, the archetype serves as a foundation for Koliqi to create a new "type" or myth, which reflects his own artistic vision and cultural identity.

The creation of the myth of Dorian Gray follows a similar pattern, where the hypertextual relationship intertwines existing elements with innovative ones. At first glance, Dorian appears to be a faithful representation of the Narcissus archetype from antiquity. The hypertextual connection with the original myth can be found in the themes of self-love, the pursuit of beauty, and the tragic outcome. However, in Dorian's case, the search is centered around eternal youth and beauty, and his self-love becomes destructive not only to himself but also to his surroundings. The tragic end is brought about by Dorian's Faustian pact, which unleashes a series of dramatic events. The narrative of Dorian Gray expands the scope and incorporates various intrigues, adding layers of complexity to the mythic framework.

The pathological nature of self-love is depicted differently in the two models. In the case of Dorian Gray, he is aware of his narcissistic tendencies and willingly engages in destructive behaviors to preserve his beauty and youth. He makes a conscious choice to sell his soul to the devil, driven by his intense self-love. On the other hand, the unconscious Narcissus, as portrayed in some versions of the myth, falls in love with his reflection without realizing that it is his own image. In this case, the love for beauty sets the narrative in motion, but the phenomenon of self-love is depicted as an unconscious and involuntary attraction. These different treatments of self-love highlight the contrasting ways in which narcissism is explored in the respective narratives.

7. The Mirroring Complex and Self-Awareness

In the discourse surrounding the myth of Narcissus, encompassing its various reconstructions and adaptations, the motif of 'mirroring' emerges as the fundamental catalyst driving the narcissistic phenomenon.

The protagonist's journey, marked by discontentment and alienation from others, initiates a quest for resolution. The culmination of this quest occurs when he encounters a mirror, beholding his reflection, and experiencing a moment of self-recognition that can ultimately lead to his tragic downfall or redemptive salvation, depending on the particular version of the Narcissus myth being considered.

When Narcissus gazes upon his reflection in water, a mirror, or any other reflective surface, a profound dilemma arises regarding whether he perceives his true self or merely an idealized image. This introspective moment gives rise to the creation and re-creation of ideas and symbols, as the various Narcissus models navigate their paths of self-discovery.

In the discourse surrounding the symbolic poetics of these texts, the notion put forth by Gide that "the work of art is a symbol that embodies an idea most effectively" (Gide, 1985, pp. 189-200) is widely acknowledged. According to this perspective, a work of art is regarded as a pristine and crystallized symbol, intimately intertwined with its underlying idea.

Narcissus symbolizes the self-created idea of himself. In the case of the ancient Narcissus, he suffers from this idea. After seeing his reflection in the river, he develops the notion of self-satisfaction and self-love. Similarly, Dorian Gray constructs the idea of his own image, symbolized by the portrait he keeps on the wall. He also grapples with the concept of the inevitable passage of time and the consequences of aging. Consequently, his true self and the idealized image he has crafted become two symbols that cannot reflect each other. Dorian's genuine self belongs to a tangible world where beauty and youth are relative, while the symbol he has recreated contradicts this reality. Dorian's reflection, embodied by his portrait on the wall, represents both his salvation and his impending downfall.

Ernest Koliqi, being fond of symbolist poetry, was well-versed in its techniques. In his reinterpretation of the figure of Narcissus, he skillfully employs this poetic style to capture the essence of his native culture. The symbolism of mirroring in "The Mirrors of Narcissus" takes on
various forms, ranging from the reflective surface of water to that of a mirror or glass. Among these symbols, the mirror holds particular significance for Koliqi, as it allows him to vividly portray the ethnic identity his protagonist seeks to discover. Through the mirror, the essence of his character's heritage is effectively brought to life, enriching the recontextualization of this mythical archetype.

Koliqi cleverly incorporates the symbol of the mirror throughout his work, starting with its inclusion in the title and extending to the titles of each of the seven poetic proses that comprise the piece. By associating the mirror with the fluidity of water and its ever-changing reflections, the author instills a sense of uncertainty and suspicion within the character of Narcissus. This motif reinforces Narcissus' relentless search for truth and identity, as he remains dissatisfied with the fleeting and unreliable nature of his own reflection.

In contrast to Dorian Gray, who idealizes the idea he creates of himself, Koliqi's Narcissus embodies an inquisitive and skeptical nature towards the concept of his origins. Instead of idealizing his genesis, he critically examines and questions it.

G. Genette, in his structuralist analysis of the modern function of the Narcissus myth, defines "instability" or the "oscillating character" as the essence of the image of Narcissus. He emphasizes that it symbolically embodies the merging of two motives within the myth: reflection and transfiguration. This symbolic essence is systematically highlighted through the concept of the mirror, which takes on various dimensions and forms. It is represented as a reflective surface in water, such as a well, creek, stream, waterfall, or sea wave, and often portrayed in a glass version, such as glass and mirror.

8. Conclusion

At the conclusion of this paper, it is important to emphasize that the myth of Narcissus stands as one of the most fertile myths across various domains of art and culture. The symbolism and the diverse range of interpretations associated with this figure have provided fertile ground for numerous creators and researchers to reconstruct, personalize, modify, or even estrange it.

The purpose of this paper was precisely to explore these transformative models and recontextualizations, focusing on the triangular relationship between the ancient versions, Oscar Wilde's rendition, and Ernest Koliqi's adaptation. As discussed earlier in the paper, the portrayal of narcissism in these works can both closely resemble and significantly diverge from the original concept. However, the paper successfully illuminates the diverse interpretive possibilities that arise from these transformations, highlighting the innovations they bring to the models, the transfigurations of the symbolism of reflection and exploration, the exploration of pathological dimensions beyond narcissism, and the characters' struggles with identity issues.

I agree, exploring narcissism in the context of contemporary digital culture could be a fascinating topic for a separate paper. The pervasive presence of social media platforms and the emphasis on self-presentation and validation in the online realm have undoubtedly influenced the way narcissism manifests itself in today's society. Examining the parallels between the myth of Narcissus and the modern-day obsession with self-image, virtual connections, and the blurring boundaries between the real and the digital could provide valuable insights into the psychological and social implications of this phenomenon. Such a paper would contribute to our understanding of the complex interplay between technology, identity, and narcissism in the digital age.

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