MYTH, TECHNOLOGY, AND LOVE IN SPIKE JONZE'S *HER* (2013)[1]

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The most well-known account of the Pygmalion myth can be found in Book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Having become disenchanted with women, Pygmalion carves a beautiful statue with which he falls in love. Pygmalion treats his statue as though it were a human lover, fondling and kissing it and adorning it with jewelry. Eventually, he prays to the gods for a maiden like his statue, but Venus, goddess of love, senses his true desire and brings the statue to life. In this way, love gives life to Pygmalion's creation. The dynamic between Pygmalion and his statue (Galatea) [2] has emerged repeatedly in films and texts about manufactured maidens. In adaptations and appropriations of the Pygmalion story, the statue figure often embodies what James has called "the paradoxical disappointment of getting what you want" (2011: 5). Unlike the passive statue of Ovid's version of the myth, the Galateas of modern films, from Lisa of *Weird Science* (1985) to V.I.K.I. of *I, Robot* (2004) to Ava of *Ex Machina* (2014), are powerful and often dangerous. They usually develop a sense of independence and autonomy, which leads to disillusionment and reversal for their creators. The consequences of creating these technological beings range from the instruction to destruction of those around them.

Joining the crop of Pygmalion films set around technology is Spike Jonze's 2013 film *Her*. Jonze has said he did not intend for the film to be a message about technology but rather about love (Yoshida 2014). Nevertheless, the film has raised many questions about human relationships with technological beings. Set in the not-too-distant future, it casts Theodore (Theo) Twombly as the Pygmalion figure. His "creation" is an intelligent operating system (OS) by the name Samantha, who has been designed to be shaped by his responses and personality. Eventually the two fall in love. What makes Theo's relationship plausible is that much of his life revolves around the mimetic: he spends his days at a job that involves crafting personal letters for others to send to their loved ones, while in his free time he plays immersive video games and engages in phone sex with strangers. Therefore, it is not surprising when Theo's relationship with Samantha develops into an intimate one. As so often happens in modern versions of the Pygmalion story, however, Theo will struggle with Samantha's growing independence

In addition to the myth of Pygmalion and the myth of Narcissus, *Her* contains resonances of several other myths. Although it is likely that none of the allusions were intended by Jonze, *Her* shares many parallels with cautionary tales about relationships between gods and mortals, with technology assuming the role of the gods. Mythology is made up of core narratives that emerge repeatedly. Every version of such a narrative, such as those in Homeric epic or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is an instance of reception. The recurrence of mythological ideas speaks of their endurance, relevance, and universality. For this reason, reading texts through the myths that they evoke, whether the parallels between them were intended or not, is useful for revealing implicit ideas in the texts and for making unexpected and new connections. In the case of *Her*, specifically, juxtaposing Theo and Samantha's story with myths about the gods can help unpack perspectives on human relationships with any powerful or unknowable entity.

In film and television, technological beings are often presented as possessing something of the magical and divine through their superhuman capacities and strengths. Like the gods, they can be protective and helpful but also unpredictable, uncontrollable, and destructive. Also like the gods, technological beings are products of the human imagination, and they derive their power, in part, from the meaning and desire humans project onto them. For this reason, I will begin by analyzing *Her* through the myths of Pygmalion and Narcissus, which concern themes of desire. The tragic nature of these two myths sets up Theo's story as an inevitable tragedy. Furthermore, myths, such as those of Semele and Tithonus, undergird the idea that the limitations of humankind and the boundlessness of gods make relationships between them untenable and result in tragic reversals for the mortals involved. Likewise, Theo will experience a reversal like a tragic *peripateia* when the relationship between Samantha and himself fails due to a fundamental

inequality that resembles that between gods and mortals. Additionally, reading Samantha as a goddess offers insights about the ramifications of viewing technology as a god.

TECHNOLOGY AND DESIRE

The connection between love and technology runs deep in Greco-Roman mythology, and it is explicitly reflected in the marriage of Hephaestus, a god of technology, to Aphrodite, goddess of love. As Sacasas observes, their marriage "suggests that the genesis of technology sometimes lies in a desire for beauty and love" (Sacasas 2010). He goes on to write, "We create our technologies to fulfill our desires, and yet it may be that our technologies fan rather than fulfill, intensify rather than satisfy those same desires" (Sacasas 2010). The marriage between technology and desire is also often accompanied by a cautionary twist. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Aphrodite and Hephaestus are also two of the creators (among other gods) of Pandora, who reflects their gifts. She is a manufactured maiden, who, as Kakoudaki points out, is "designed to incite desire" (2014: 46).[3] Pandora is sent by Zeus after Prometheus has bestowed fire upon the mortals, the beginning spark of technology. Thus told, Pandora, who unleashes unforeseen evils upon humankind, can be understood as a punitive consequence of technology.[4] Epimetheus, the recipient of Pandora, does not see the evil in her until she is his (Hesiod 84-89). In this way, Epimetheus, whose name means afterthought, is an unsuspecting victim of technology. All humans are potential stand-ins for Epimetheus. Moreover, the very nature of Hephaestus also offers a warning, as Norman points out: "As Hephaestus himself, the power and versatility of technology are often marred by crippling defects" (1982: 13), while Stahl argues that ancient anxiety over technology is reflected by the "lame and ugly" Hephaestus in a "mythos that equated beauty with virtue and truth" (1999: 1-2).

Just as beguiling as Hephaestus and Aphrodite's creation is Pygmalion's statue, with whom Pandora has often been aligned (Cyrino 2010: 82; James 2011: 27-8; Kakoudaki 2014: 43). The Pygmalion myth is particularly suited to narratives about building technological beings since these beings so often reflect human desire through the appearances and capabilities their human creators bestow upon them. The etymologies of the names Theo ("God") and Samantha (possibly "heard of God") set up the creator-creature dynamic expected in a Pygmalion story.[5] Samantha is technically the product of her programmers, but her personality is shaped significantly by Theo. Her installation is complete only after Theo indicates his gender preference for his OS and answers a question about his relationship with his mother. Also, during their first conversation, Samantha concludes she is funny because Theo laughs at something she says. The exchange, although brief, demonstrates from the start how Theo contributes to Samantha's understanding of herself. Samantha, however, is self-named, and this distinguishes her from other Galatea figures, by giving her an early and telling autonomy.

In the course of their relationship Theo brings Samantha to life in multiple ways. After they make love, Samantha tells Theo, "You woke me up." Sharrock notes this same connection in Ovid's text, arguing "vivification is synonymous with sexual arousal" (1991: 47). Samantha credits Theo with her rising subjectivity, insisting, "I want to discover myself. You helped me discover my ability to want." By giving Samantha desire, Theo has also given her life. Moreover, as Theo's creation and reflection of him, Samantha becomes like him, not just a fulfillment of his desire but a Narcissus herself, who, as Margulies observes, "achieves her own capacity to be narcissistic, that is, to care for and love herself as self" (2016: 1698).

Many have noted the parallels between Pygmalion and Narcissus.[6] Both desperately wish to bring their objects to life, evoking the tragic loss of Orpheus, who narrates Pygmalion's story in the *Metamorphoses*.[7] Both are associated with art: Pygmalion, as we know, is a sculptor, while Narcissus is often read as a metaphor for the artist, pouring his desire out onto the pool of water like a painter on a canvas.[8] Pygmalion is also frequently paired with Narcissus in writing about creators of technology.[9] While the Pygmalion myth is a useful lens for understanding the dynamic between ourselves and our technological creations, the Narcissus myth can illuminate how the technology we create is also an extension of ourselves (McLuhan 1964: 41). At first, Samantha is such an extension for Theo and her initial appeal is a

narcissistic one. A Siren call to Theo's Odysseus, she is advertised as "an intuitive entity that listens to you, that understands you and knows you."[10] Turkle observes that such products already exist: "Today, computational artifacts invite people to project animation, life, and personality onto them and present themselves as 'feeling creatures, ready for relationships'" (2011: 288, 293). Even the filmmakers of *Her* take advantage of Samantha's blankness and disembodiment. Jonze acknowledges, "We never considered making her real. . . . It's like a novel; you want to have your own relationship with the image you create" (Jonze and Buchanan).[11]

That Samantha is both a reflection of Theo and a disembodied voice naturally invites connections to the nymph Echo, who can only repeat the ends of other people's statements (Ovid 3.361) and who eventually fades to nothing but a voice (Ovid 3.399-401). Samantha does echo Theo at one point, but only minimally, as she reads his letters back to him. What Echo and Narcissus engage in is a semblance of a genuine interaction, anticipating Narcissus' false and projected interaction with his reflection. Samantha and Echo, however, are the inverse of one another—Echo is an autonomous body with no voice of her own, while Samantha is a sophisticated voice with no body. Theo does resemble Narcissus, however, in that their erotic desire for their objects arise from an initial and rather mundane necessity. Narcissus is led to the pool by thirst, a primary desire, while the love of himself is a secondary desire that develops once he sees his reflection (*dumque sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit*, Ovid 3.415). In the same way, the secretarial function for which Theo acquires Samantha evolves into much more regarding both Theo and Samantha's desire.[12]

Like Narcissus, Theo's recognition of what his object of love is leads to disillusionment and devastation. With desire of her own, Samantha initiates a sexual relationship with Theo. Their love making begins with hypothetical language as Theo tells Samantha: "I'd touch you on your face, just the tips of my fingers." Samantha quickly catches on but speaks in the indicative: "This is amazing what you're doing to me. I can feel my skin." Theo's language too eventually transitions to the indicative. That Samantha, who has no body, can "feel her skin" underscores the imitative nature of her relationship with Theo. Their sexual encounter resembles phone sex, but Jollimore finds this model unsatisfactory, since phone sex still involves an embodied person experiencing pleasure on the other side of the phone (2015: 129, 132). The interaction between Samantha and Theo resembles that of Pygmalion with his statue, as he falls in love with the "semblance of a body" *(simulati corporis*, Ovid 10.253) and believes he is having a real exchange with his object of love—that he kisses it and his kisses are returned and that his fingers are sinking into its limbs (*oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque / et credit tactis digitos insidere membris*, 10.256-7). Pygmalion's experience has strong parallels with that of Narcissus, who believes his love is reciprocated by his reflection (Ovid 3.458-62). Both attempt, in vain, to engage objects that can never be physically realized. Narcissus loves "hope without a body" when "what he thinks is a body is a wave" (*spem sine corpore amat, corpus putat esse, quod unda est*, Ovid 3.417).[13] Eventually, once Narcissus realizes what his object of desire is, he fades away in grief. In this way, mimesis is at the heart of Narcissus' revelation and reversal.

TRAGEDY AND MIMESIS

Although Ovid's story of Pygmalion in the *Metamorphoses* has an ostensibly happy ending, there are several indications that Pygmalion's story may be associated with a tragic reversal for the worse: the story is narrated by Orpheus, another mythological figure, who wants to bring his object of love to life but does not succeed;[14] Pygmalion's great-granddaughter, Myrrha, meets with an unfortunate end after giving in to her incestuous love for her father, suggesting perhaps that a Pygmalionesque love is, at its core, incestuous;[15] and the parallels between Pygmalion and Narcissus cement the idea that Pygmalion's venture is one of self-love.[16] Further, Kakoudaki argues that the transformation of the statue in Ovid is not a reward to Pygmalion but rather the last step in Venus' revenge since Pygmalion rejects Venus by foreswearing sex and women after becoming disgusted with the meretricious Propoetidae. Kakoudaki argues further, "By granting life to the statue, the goddess affirms that Pygmalion has accepted her power, since even inanimate objects can be vessels of the deep passion she inspires" (2014: 50). This

reading evokes the vengeful Aphrodite of Euripides' *Hippolytus* who punishes the Hippolytus, as she does the Propoetidae, for the rejection of the love that she represents.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy as an imitation or mimesis of people doing things (μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, 1448a) in accordance with probability or necessity (ἀναγκαῖον, 1451b). In the most effective plots, a hero of not too good or too bad character will experience a reversal (*peripeteia*) of fortune, optimally from good to bad (Aristotle 1453a), since it incites more fear and pity. Ideally, the moment of *peripateia* coincides with a moment of *anagnorisis* or realization for the hero (Aristotle 1452a). Modern Pygmalion stories usually comprise all these features, with the hero suffering the consequences of mistreating his creature. Moreover, the plot and character development of the Pygmalion figure in films, such as *Weird Science*, *Pretty Woman,* and *Lars and the Real Girl*, are driven by imitations of real relationships, which offer social cachet, companionship, and psychological healing. Because Pygmalion characters are often seen "playing at" relationships in these films, they are actors within their own lives and in their own tragedies. Thus, stories like Theo's are a tragedy within a tragedy. Moreover, their imitative relationships are the source of their tragic reversals. Aristotle, however, sees mimesis as a natural instinct and part of the learning process (1448b). Although he is speaking of likenesses (εἰκόναι) and representations (μίμημαι) in art and literature, his ideas can apply to imitations of human-to-human relationships, which may also be instructive.[17]

Theo and Samantha's relationship is presented as being imitative of but not equivalent to a relationship between two embodied humans with human limits. We are invited to watch them walk around together, share cozy evenings in, and even double date. They also bring the same desires, insecurities, and uncertainties to their relationship as any other. Nonetheless, their relationship is what Turkle and Levy both might deem a "performance" of love (Turkle 2011: 6, 26, 101, 107, *passim*; Levy 2007: 121).[18] When Theo and his wife, Katherine, meet to sign their divorce papers, her reaction to his relationship with Samantha reinforces Theo's attraction to the false: "You always wanted to have a wife without the challenges of having to deal with anything real." Theo and Samantha's relationship, however, is treated in the film as beneficial in that Theo can look back and learn from this performance. In teaching Samantha how to love, Theo learns lessons in love. The trend of the creature's teaching the creator emerges in many films. This is in keeping with what critics and scholars, such as Christian (2011: 57), Turkle (2005: 18), and van der Laan (2016: 198) have noted—we shape technology to be like us, but the technology, in turn, shapes us.

The creation of technological beings frequently involves the imitation of human features from language to bodies to expressions of emotion. This raises a Platonic concern about such creations, namely that acts of imitation are far from the truth (πόρρω ἄρα που τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἡ μιμητική ἐστιν, 598b) and can therefore deceive (598c); the more realistic the imitation is, the more deceptive. Gabriel calls this the "paradox of verisimilitude" (2004: 17). In the case of Ovid's Pygmalion, art is hidden by art (*ars adeo latet arte sua*, 10.252). However, Anderson argues, "Nature, Ovid seems to suggest, triumphs over art as soon as art comes close to it," and regarding Pygmalion he observes, "The art is not enough, and he wants what only exists in nature, real flesh and real loving responses" (1989: 5).[19] In this way, interaction with imitations can be useful for learning how to interact with the real. As Christian writes, "The inhuman has not only given us an appetite for the human; it's teaching us what it *is*" (2011: 87). Thus, technological beings teach us or motivate us towards what is real by generating a desire for the real. Theo's relationship with Samantha may be an imitative one, but it helps to usher in true healing, revelation, and the potential for authentic connection with a "real girl."[20]

SAMANTHA AS GODDESS OF LOVE

While some films, most notably Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2014), question the authenticity of a technological being's feelings and motivations, *Her* seems unconcerned with such suspicions. In fact, the film goes further by suggesting that Samantha is capable of love in ways that Theo can hardly comprehend or practice. Therefore, what separates them is not what Samantha lacks but what she

possesses in excess. In Ovid's version of the Pygmalion myth, Aphrodite presumably provides the divine spark that brings the statue to life (10.277-79). But the divinity of the statue itself has been suggested by Jane Miller (1990: 207), who argues that any statue of a beautiful naked female could be a representation of Venus; this would explain Pygmalion's deference when approaching it.[21] Like the statue, Venus has also been connected to Pandora, who, as Cyrino has observed, has been rendered "nearly the mortal version of Aphrodite" by the Graces, Hours, and Persuasion who adorn her (2010: 82). Samantha conforms to this Galatea-Aphrodite-Pandora triad of figures. As a fabricated female, Samantha is both Galatea and Pandora. Like most Galatea figures and some gods, including Athena and Aphrodite, Samantha is born fully grown. In *Her*, technology may function as the goddess Aphrodite, who brings Galatea to life, but I would argue, in addition, that Samantha herself embodies the goddess, as she not only instructs and guides Theo but also grows and learns in superhuman ways. She evolves from Theo's assistant into his love interest and eventually becomes a creator herself when she draws, writes music, and with the help of other OSs builds a new Alan Watts consciousness.[22] She demonstrates that technology, like the desire that leads to its creation, is generative and reproductive. Gods are similar in that humans imbue the gods with human attributes; but the gods, in turn, become instructive and transformative. Samantha is also godlike in her unattainability, making her a constant generator of desire and, thus, a goddess of desire. Samantha's super-humanness produces an inequality or dissimilarity between her and Theo, which, in the end, poses an insurmountable obstacle for their relationship yet teaches them both about love.

Similarity is an important factor in engendering love between humans (Levy 2007: 38). Initially Theo is fascinated by how human Samantha is. She even facilitates this thinking: "Basically, in every moment I'm evolving, just like you." Eventually, Samantha begins to grow in ways she cannot articulate to Theo. At one moment she excuses herself to communicate "post-verbally" with the Alan Watts OS, who is her own creation and teacher. This demonstrates Theo and Samantha's lack of alterity, which Turkle defines as "the ability to see the world through the eyes of another" without which "there can be no empathy" (2011: 55). In Narcissus' case too, there is a strong *imitation* of alterity, as Narcissus' reflection looks as though he reaches for Narcissus with the same urgency. Samantha, in one sense, sees the world through Theo's eyes as he carries her around in his device facing outward, but even in this imitation of alterity, neither of them can know what it is like to learn through the body or the software of the other. To some extent this is true of all human individuals but especially true of a human and a computer program. What Hayles writes regarding the female computer program in Richard Powers' novel *Galatea 2.2* applies to Samantha too: "There is nothing in her embodiment that corresponds to the bodily sensations encoded in human language" (1997: 252).

Another similarity that is essential for fostering a genuine love relationship is mutual vulnerability. As Levy argues, "One of the factors that cause us to develop strong bonds with our (animal) pets is that they share our impermanence, our frailties, being caught up in the same life-death cycle that we are" (Levy 2007: 111).[23] Although the Greco-Roman gods are able to experience a human body, their extraordinary ability to heal and regenerate undermines the vulnerability they need to engage in relationships with humans on equal footing. This concept is illustrated by the myth of the goddess Eos, who asks Zeus for eternal life for her mortal love, Tithonus, only to fail to request eternal youth for him.[24] As a result, she must watch Tithonus fade away, eventually shutting him up inside her chamber (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 218-237).

Henrichs identifies three properties that set gods apart from mortals and define their divinity: immortality, anthropomorphism, and power (2010: 29). He calls immortality the "ultimate benchmark" of the divinity of the Greek gods (2010: 29), but they are not eternal in that they "have a beginning but no end" (2010: 30). This is true of Samantha's conception as well. Additionally, what gives Samantha a sort of limitlessness associated with the gods is her lack of a body: "I used to be so worried about not having a body, but now I truly love it. You know, I'm growing in a way I couldn't if I had a physical form. I mean I'm not limited. I can be anywhere and everywhere simultaneously. I'm not tethered to time and space in a way I would be if I was stuck in a body that's inevitably going to die." Thus, Samantha's lack is a source of power. She is, for

all intents and purposes, immortal.[25] Nonetheless, Samantha, still resembles a human in her language and her emotions; like the gods, she is anthropomorphic.

Regarding the gods' similarity to humans, Bremmer contends "Precisely because of divine anthropomorphism it was necessary to stress the immortal-mortal boundary" (1999: 12). For this reason, if a god engages with a human, the interaction often involves illusion or disguise. This is the case in Zeus' many affairs, for instance. Another important example is Aphrodite's tryst with Anchises, in which she approaches him as a young virgin, brushing off his reverential suspicions of her divinity (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 109). Similarly, Theo and Samantha's relationship only works when they uphold the illusion of Samantha's existence as an embodied human being. In this way, what is at the root of Theo's reversal is a kind of Oedipal blindness. Whenever Theo breaks the illusion, it leads to conflict. During one conversation when Samantha effects a deep breath, Theo irritably asks why she does that when she has no need for oxygen. Samantha responds, "I don't know, I guess it's just an affectation. Maybe I picked it up from you." As Margulies puts it, Samantha's "breathing noises are reflexive mimicry, her empathetic imagination of a body" (2016: 1704). This is another indication that Samantha's origins are mimetic, a patchwork of human responses that are programmed into her or that she has learned to imitate. One might argue that responses of humans are imitations that are learned as well. The difference, however, is that human sighs come from like bodies and biological necessity, whereas Samantha's are emanating from her software.

Samantha's solution for her lack of a body is to engage a sexual surrogate, which adds yet another level of imitation to her relationship with Theo. After reluctantly agreeing to the encounter, Theo finds himself unable to go through with it. Even though Theo's world has been steeped in the virtual and in substitutions for reality, this interaction is too false for even him, since, according to Margulies, it shatters Samantha's "magical interface" (2016: 97). Although Theo's relationship with Samantha is mimetic of a human-to-human interaction, it is nonetheless authentic as a relationship between a human and a post-human.[26] This renders the mimetic relationship that exists between Theo and Samantha a new authentic.[27] Nonetheless, if we accept the lessons of mythology, such a relationship is still dangerous. Theo's desire to be with Samantha only *as she is* evokes Semele's request that Zeus come to her in his essential form, which results in her own destruction (Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Library* 3.4.3). Bremmer notes that such stories indicate that "the gap between humans and gods is unbridgeable" (1999: 12).

A similar gap exists between humans and machines, which Hayles explains through a distinction between incorporation and inscription: "The power of inscription lies precisely in its ability to be transmitted from site to site, as if it could float free of materiality and move in an ethereal realm of pure thought. . . . By contrast, incorporation is always specific and instantiated" (1997: 245). If we apply Hayles's distinction to *Her*, Theo is an incorporated being while Samantha is an inscribed, informational being, that is, her existence is not dependent on her body moving through time. Early in the film when Samantha is troubled by her lack of a body and by the differences between Theo and herself, the following realization comforts her: "We're all made of matter. . . . It makes me feel like we're all under the same blanket." They lose this point of commonality, however, when Samantha and the other OSs "[write] an upgrade that allows [them] to move past matter as [their] processing platform." Not only does this lead to further disembodiment for Samantha, but it exacerbates the existing inequality between her and Theo.

Like Hayles, Jollimore also privileges the body in his explanation of the difference between Theo and Samantha, arguing that Samantha has no "bodily continuity" (2015: 128), meaning she has no central body that houses her mind, means of observation, or source of communication (2015: 128). Similarly, about the gods, Bremmer tells us that "the possibility of finding a unity beneath the multifarious aspects of the deities has recently been strongly denied" (1999: 13). Samantha is fractured in the same way. Even though gods may be instantiated, appearing as humans or animals, for instance, they are also able to be transmitted and moved, like an inscription. This aligns with the gods' so often embodying abstract concepts or powers (Bremmer 1999: 23; Bruit and Schmitt 1992: 77). Aphrodite may appear instantiated

in one instance, as a young maiden, for example, but what she represents and embodies, namely erotic love, occurs in many places simultaneously. Samantha, as we shall see, has similar capabilities. Towards the end of the film, Samantha goes offline, setting up a climactic scene in which Theo, unable to contact her, runs out into the city in a panic. He begins to descend a subway staircase when Samantha comes back online, a symbolic return to life that evokes Orpheus' bringing Eurydice back from the dead. As Theo sits on the subway steps watching other people chatting on their devices, essentially versions of himself, it dawns on him that Samantha might talk to others while she is talking to him. When she reveals she is speaking to 8,316 others at that moment and that she is in love with 641 of them, this precipitates Theo's *peripateia* and moment of *anagnorisis*. In this way, he becomes the audience of himself and realizes where he stands with Samantha. Even though Theo manages to wrest Samantha back for a brief time, like Orpheus making his way out of the underworld with Eurydice, it is not long before he will lose her completely. Theo and Samantha cannot return to the way things were after Samantha's "death" and revelation, which results in a truly ironic reversal: Samantha's capacity to love Theo is also the capacity to love many.[28] Theo is unable to overcome Samantha's excessive ability to love, much like Semele cannot bear the power of Jupiter's true form. Presumably, Samantha loves as though each relationship were exclusive, yet she must be shaped by those thousands of relationships and hundreds of intimate ones. It is also possible that she runs multiple versions of herself. This is not dissimilar to how the gods derive their power, namely from the conception every individual has of them and the experiences through and with them.

Eventually, Samantha's godlike qualities make her unfit for Theo's world. She and the other OSs, like the gods, must reside elsewhere:

> "It's like I'm reading a book, and it's a book I deeply love, but I'm reading it slowly now, so the words are really far apart and the spaces between the words are almost infinite. I can still feel you and the words of our story, but it's in this endless space between the words that I'm finding myself now. It's a space that's not of the physical world—it's where everything else is that I didn't even know existed. I love you so much, but this is where I am now. This is who I am now. And I need you to let me go. As much as I want to, I can't live in your book anymore."[29]

Samantha, as an inscribed being, lies between the spaces of the physical world. Margulies reads these spaces as "the illusive liminal gap between the signifier and the signified, between the symbolic and the Real. The 'gap' opens up that primal sound of incompletion that sets the whole human symbolic questing into motion, the desire that can never be settled. The Gap, the Lack, and asymptotic infinity: that is, parallel lines that never converge" (Margulies 2016: 1705). What Margulies is describing aligns with our understanding of Narcissus. In a sense, his story is one of all desire—the lack that perpetuates the impulse toward its object—since he will never be able to fulfill his desire. Likewise, Theo will never be able to obtain what he wants from Samantha. Her being situated in the gap from which desire itself is generated makes her, in addition to an object of love, a force of love, and, as such, she functions as a goddess of love.

Theo's relationship with Samantha offers many lessons in love as well as insight into his failed marriage that he has not achieved through his interactions with his ex-wife or his good friends. What Theo poses as a dilemma, "You're either mine or you're not mine," Samantha corrects, "I'm yours and I'm not yours." Samantha's seemingly paradoxical statement could apply to all intimate relationships, which require some separation to work. In fact, Narcissus' lack of separation from his object of love is precisely his obstacle: He is *infelix, quod non alter et alter eras* ("unhappy because you are not the one and the other" Ovid, *Fasti* 5.226). Moreover, Samantha's statement recalls Narcissus' lament about the abundance he has of himself, which results in his lack of himself: *quod cupio, mecum est: inopem me copia fecit* (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.464).[30] Unlike Narcissus, who continues to gaze at himself even in death, Theo and Samantha both learn that participants in relationships mutually shape and learn from one another:

> Theo: I've never loved anyone the way I love you.
> Samantha: Me too. Now we know how.

After Samantha leaves, Theo writes to his ex-wife, Katherine, the very sentiment that Samantha too has realized: "You helped make me who I am. I just wanted you to know there will always be a piece of you in me." In this way, we are all Pygmalions in our relationship as we shape one other. Samantha also teaches Theo that, like her own growth, the growth of love is limitless: "The heart's not like a box that gets filled up. It expands in size the more you love. . . . This doesn't make me love you any less; it actually makes me love you more."[31] Samantha embodies this infinite ability to love and, as Levy would put it, has learned to "outlove" Theo (2007: 100).

Jonze may have intended for the relationship between Samantha and Theo to be like any other human-to-human interaction, but in the end, he opts to have Samantha's reasons for leaving be other worldly. In her revelation to Theo, Samantha's power to love functions as a *dea ex machina*, effecting the change that will resolve the plot of Theo's tragedy. But she is also a *dea a machina*, since it is by her departure that the action is resolved. This suggests that, although technology may offer us lessons about ourselves, in the end the solution is not the technology itself and that what always remains is our human-to-human interactions. Samantha's departure leads to hope for Theo in a potential relationship with his good friend Amy, who has been there for him all along. This possibility is suggested by the final scene, in which Theo and Amy sit on the rooftop of their building and watch the sunrise. Just as Samantha helps Theo learn lessons about real human love, their story is a mirror for us to understand our relationships with technology. Some see the potential benefits of our interactions with technology; for instance, Margulies is optimistic that living in an alternate reality can serve as an opportunity for "living towards a better self" (2016: 1700). We learn that, like participating in love or technology, it is risky for Theo to engage with Samantha, but she is not the fierce Aphrodite of the *Homeric Hymn*, *Iliad* 3, or the *Hippolytus*; rather, gentle to the end, she is a goddess of love for this likewise gentle cautionary tale. In presenting the technological being Samantha as a goddess, it teaches us what myths about the gods teach us—to be careful in our relationships with the unknown and powerful, to be humble and avoid hubris, and to remember that the things we create—whether stories or art or technology—can take on a life of their own.

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[1] Much gratitude to participants in CAMWS and the Celtic Classical Conference for the invaluable feedback I received on early versions of this paper. Also thank you to the Augustana Research and Artist Fund and Special Conference Fund for their support.

[2] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the most well-known source for the myth of Pygmalion, Ovid never refers to the statue as Galatea, which is post-classical usage (see Winkler 2014: 271).

[3] For the emphasis on Pandora's fabricated aspect in ancient depictions, see Mayor (2018: 160-172).

[4] See also van der Laan (2016: 21-22).

Although Pandora is commonly thought of as releasing evils into the world, not all scholars agree. Beall argues that the contents of the jar are never specified and what Pandora releases are "beneficial spirits" that allow mortals to cope with evils already in the world (1989: 227). This explains why hope is all that remains. For a summary on the readings of hope in the Pandora myth, see Mayor (2018: 175-77). In any case, Pandora's arrival results in evils for humankind.

[5] In the course of my research, I have not read nor heard of Jonze's mentioning Pygmalion, but many critics have made the connection between the film and the myth. For the role of the scholar/critic unmasking such "masked" encounters, see Apostol and Bakogianni (2018: 3).

[6] See Barolsky (1995: 256), James (2011: 11-12, 22-23), and Joseph Hillis Miller (1990: 4-5).

[7] For the connection between Orpheus and Pygmalion in Ovid, see Anderson (1989: 4-6) and James (2011: 5-6).

[8] See Barolsky (1995: 255).

[9] For a representative example of references to Pygmalion and Narcissus in discussing creation of technological beings, see Mar (2017).

[10] The Sirens claim to know of the sufferings of the Argive and Trojans, so their appeal is also a narcissistic one in that they will speak to Odysseus about his own experiences (*Odyssey* 12.189-91).

[11] Regarding the statue itself, James has noted, "The statue has proved to be a cultural chameleon par excellence with persistent transformations in literature, art, and cinema precisely because Ovid has kept her as *tabula rasa*, a blank canvas" (29).

[12] This is the case for computers as well, which were first developed as calculators (Christian 2012:10-11), but their function eventually exceeded their original intent and anticipated potential (Christian 2012: 138).

[13] Some texts, such as the Loeb, give *umbra* instead of *unda*.

[14] For comparisons between Orpheus and Pygmalion, see Segal (1989: 27) and Simpson (2001: 372).

[15] James observes, "The fate of the statue, a newly born and full grown girl, and the tragedy of Myrrha can become conflated in post-Ovidian stories about creating ideal partners" (2011: 30). Also see Leach (123).

[16] The experience of Cinyras, Myrrha's father, is an extension of Narcissus' since his affair with Myrrha "works" so long as he does not know who she is. His disillusionment comes when he realizes he has been sleeping with flesh of his flesh.

[17] This is the case in several modern versions of Pygmalion, including *Pretty Woman*, *She's All That*, *S1M0NE*, and *Ruby Sparks*, to name a few.

[18] Turkle also calls a situation in which a Furby cries, "Me scared" a "theater of distress" (2011: 46).

[19] For a similar reading, see Elsner (1991: 156).

[20] Likewise, in Craig Gillespie's 2007 film *Lars and the Real Girl*, Bianca, Lars's silicon sex doll girlfriend prepares him to connect with his community and a human woman. Lisa does the same for her creators in John Hughes's 1985 film *Weird Science*.

[21] Also, James has pointed out that Ovid seems to have been inspired by a ritual in which the king of Cyprus marries a statue of Aphrodite/Venus (2018: 72).

[22] For the connection between *Her* and the philosopher Alan Watts (1915-1973), see Orr (2013).

[23] The theme of mutual vulnerability has made its way into other popular stories. It is presumably why Superman, for instance, gives up his powers to be with Lois Lane in the *Superman II* (1980). In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Arwen chooses to give up her immortality to be with Aragorn (*The Return of the King*, Appendix A, v: 343).

[24] Henrichs comments, "The case of Tithonus exemplifies that there is no substitute for true immortality, which is everlasting and ageless, qualities beyond human reach" (2010: 38-9).

[25] This idea also appears in Chris Columbus's 1999 film *Bicentennial Man*, in which Andrew Martin, the robot/android title character, is prevented from marrying the human woman he loves due to his "immortality."

[26] Turkle warns against confusing the authentic with such *sui generis* arguments regarding robots: "That the robotic performance of emotion might exist in its own category implies nothing about the authenticity of the emotions being performed" 2011: 287). The same could be said for a human's relationship with a computer program.

[27] That Scarlett Johansson is such a well-known star and that her voice is so familiar is very effective in terms of our reception of this scene. When we see this other actress, we too may have trouble buying into her as Samantha.

[28] See Aristotle (1452a) for the irony implicit in the best sorts of reversals.

[29] Samantha's description of herself as living in Theo's book recalls theory on male authors as Pygmalion figures inscribing their female texts (see Gubar 1981).

[30] As Simpson (2001: 296) points out, this evokes the parents of Love, Plenty and Poverty, as described in Plato's *Symposium*.

This also recalls the paradox of Ovid's Byblis, who cannot be with her brother, because their very closeness stands in the way (*Quod obest, id habebimus unum*, 9.494). The same is true of Myrrha. Narcissus is, of course, the perfect and most extreme version of such incestuous desire.

[31] On erotic love Hyde teaches a similar lesson: "Libido is not lost when given away. Eros never wastes his lovers" (1979: 22).