Lisa Dunbar Solas, "Entry on: The Great Book of Mythology [El Gran Libro de la Mitología] by Julio Fuentes, Rosa Navarro Durán ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1358. Entry version as of November 02, 2026.

Julio Fuentes , Rosa Navarro Durán

The Great Book of Mythology [El Gran Libro de la Mitología]

Spain (2019)

TAGS: Acis Actaeon Anaximander Andromeda Apollo Ariadne Daedalus Daphne Echo Europa Eurydice Galatea Ganymede Greek Philosophy Heracles Icarus Jason Judgement of Paris Labyrinth Medea Midas Narcissus Orpheus Pandora Pericles Persephone Perseus Phaethon Philomela Phoenix (Bird) Plato Polyphemus Procne Prometheus Pygmalion Pyramus Sisyphus Socrates Tantalus Theseus Thisbe Tiresias



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General information	
Title of the work	The Great Book of Mythology [El Gran Libro de la Mitología]
Country of the First Edition	Spain
Country/countries of popularity	Spain
Original Language	Spanish
First Edition Date	2019
First Edition Details	Rosa Navarro Durán, *El Gran Libro de la Mitología.* Barcelona: Montena, 2019, 72 pp.
ISBN	9788423693214
Genre	Chapter book*, Illustrated works, Mythologies
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Lisa Dunbar Solas, independent researcher, drlisasolas@ancientexplorer.com.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



Julio Fuentes , b. 1980
(Illustrator)

Julio Fuentes is an illustrator and graphic designer. Born in Mallorca, he studied illustration at the Arts School of Palma, Mallorca and then later, graduated from a fine arts degree at the University of Barcelona.

Fuentes is an accomplished artist, who enjoys creating with different media types. His style has evolved from his love of drawing and also graphic design. During his creative process, he creates with a range of substances and materials, including paper. He also produces digital artworks. In more recent years, he has also been greatly influenced by screen printing.

Previously, he has designed for a range of companies and independent publishers, including MCI Ginebra and Bloomint Design. For Montena, a Spanish imprint of Penguin/ Random House, he has created illustrators of two titles for children, *Altas de los Lugares Literarios* and *El Gran Libro de la Mitologia*.

Sources:

bculture.org (accessed: October 7, 2021).

elculturista.cat (accessed: October 7, 2021).

The Author's website (accessed: October 7, 2021).

Instagram profile (accessed: October 7, 2021).

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Rosa Navarro Durán by Javierfresan. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 (accessed: February 7, 2022).

Rosa Navarro Durán , b. 1947
(Author)

Rosa Navarro Durán is a philologist and Professor of Spanish Literature at the University of Barcelona. Navarro was born in Figueras, a town located in the Gerona province, Catalonia, in 1947. She has enjoyed a long and distinguished career, making important contributions to the study of Spanish Literature, Classics and Education.*

For more than 30 years, Navarro has published extensively on Classics-related topics and has adapted classical texts for children. In 1996, she published the book, *¿Por qué hay que leer los clásicos?*, which examines why classical texts should be read in the modern age. Meanwhile, she has also strongly advocated for their adaptation. As she highlighted,** these texts are widely recognised as important but few can access them because of cultural and language barriers. For Edebé's *Classics Told to Children Collection*, Navarro wrote 13 adaptations of classical texts for children, including *La Ilíada* (2018), and *La Odisea Contada a los Niños* (2007). These books were illustrated by Francesc Rovira.

Throughout her career, Navarro has held a number of distinguished positions in organisations and committees related to education. Between 2001 and 2005, she was the coordinator of Philology and Philosophy for Administración Nacional de Educación Pública (ANEP). Then, between 2005 and 2009, she was the president of the Humanities Commission for teacher evaluation for La Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA). ANECA is the governmental body which is responsible for the planning and regulation of the Spanish education system. Subsequently, until 2014, she was a member of the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency's (AQU) Commision for the Evaluation of Research in Humanities.

For 19 years, Professor Navarro was on the panel for several prestigious awards. Between 2001 and 2020, she was on the panel for the "Princess of Asturias and Cervantes Awards". The Foundation honours individuals and organisations for their achievements in Public

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Affairs, Science, or Humanities. At the same time, she was also on the panel for the Edebé prize for Youth Literature. Between 2008 and 2020, she was also a panelist for the Gerardo Diego Prize for literary research.

In 2019, she was awarded the International Jovellanos Essay Prize for her work, Secretos a voz, which was first published in 1994 and celebrated its 25th edition in 2019.

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* Fresán, Javier, "Rosa Navarro Durán. De la mano del Lazarillo", Revista Clarín, 2008, p. 38 (accessed: June 20, 2021).

** Navarro Durán, Rosa, "¿Por qué adaptar a los clásicos?", Revista TK, núm. 18, 2006, 17.

Sources:

Author's profile on Edebe Group (accessed: August 12, 2021).

Author's profile on Wayback Machine (accessed: August 12, 2021).

Bio prepared by Lisa Dunbar Solas, independent researcher, drlisasolas@ancientexplorer.com.au

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Additional information

Summary

El Gran Libro de la Mitología is a beautifully presented compilation of selected Greek and Roman myths and legends. The book is divided into 27 short chapters and in each chapter, a myth is paraphrased, with key characters and the critical events highlighted. Where applicable, Navarro draws attention to the influence of the myths on the Spanish arts and literature.

Included in the compilation are the myths concerning the following major events and characters: Apolo y Dafane (Apollo and Daphne); Ganimedes (Ganymede); Acteón (Actaeon); Ave Fénix (Phoenix); Narciso y Eco (Narcissus and Echo); Pandora; el rapto de Europa (the rape of Europe); Tántalo (Tantalus); Midas; Pigmalión (Pygmalion); Sísifo (Sisyphus); el juicio de Paris (the judgement of Paris); Teseo y Ariadna (Theseus and Ariadne); Dédalo y el Laberinto (Daedalus and the Labyrinth); Ícaro (Icarus); Prometeo (Prometheus); Polifemo (Polyphemus); Galatea y Acis (Galatea and Acis); el diluvio (the flood); Faetón (Phaeton); Píramo y Tisbe (Pyramus and Thisbe); Orfeo y Eurídice (Orpheus and Eurydice); Tiresias; Perseo y Andrómeda (Perseus and Andromeda); the rape of Proserpina (Persephone); Filomela, Progne y Tere (Philomela, Procne and Tere); Medea y Jasón (Jason); and Hercules.

The book was created with close reference to *Metamorphosis* by Ovid and *Theogony* and *Works and Days* by the Greek poet Hesiod*. It also includes a glossary of key classical terms and concepts.

* See Rosa Navarro Durán, *El Gran Libro de la Mitología,* Barcelona: Montena, 2019, 71.

Analysis

El Gran Libro de la Mitología introduces readers to classical mythology. As Navarro highlights in her introduction*, classical mythology presents and represents the religious and sacred dimensions of the classical world. Notably, the classical world was polythestic; more than one deity was venerated. The gods were perceived as "greater" and "more knowledgeable" than humans and therefore, exercised influence over their decisions and actions**. As

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Navarro emphasises***, it is important to introduce the modern reader to classical mythology, as it underpins many aspects of contemporary western culture. In her opening sentence, she argues that the gods depicted in the stories were first "religion", then later became culture; "First they were religion, then they became culture" ("Primero fueron religión, luego se convirtieron en cultura"). It is not entirely clear how Navarro defines religion and differentiates it from culture. Religion is not easily defined, for many meanings and values ascribed to it, and scholars continue to debate whether it can be separated from culture****. From an anthropological perspective, religion can be viewed as a system of symbols which exert power and influence over how individuals and groups experience the world and how they define themselves*****. This influence can continue over a long period of time. Meanwhile, Geertz****** defined culture as a "system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms". These forms are the means by which individuals and groups 'develop' and 'communicate' their understanding and attitudes 'towards life.' Navarro's view of religion and culture seems to broadly correspond with Geertz's definition. Regardless of whether Navarro's assertion that religion precedes culture is correct, there is no doubt that religion, ethnicity and culture are interrelated and it is crucial to study how a culture has developed over time*******. In light of this, *El Gran Libro de la Mitología* serves to show readers that classical stories remain relevant to western culture, as they have 'reincarnated in artistic creations', including music and literature********. The symbols, motifs and characters of the classical world are displayed and represented not only in modern popular culture but also in public and heritage-related institutions, such as museums.

In particular, the book helps readers understand how classical myths have shaped Spanish culture over time. Navarro highlights especially where key characters, events and motifs were referred to by the poets and writers of the Siglo de Oro (the Spanish Golden Age). Beginning in the 16th century and lasting for more than a century, the golden age was a period during which literature and the arts flourished, while the Spanish empire grew politically under the Spanish Habsburg dynasty and the patronage of the Catholic Church*********. After its demise, Spain entered a difficult time. During this period, Spanish literature and art underwent several major transformations. Initially, it was influenced by late medieval and renaissance forms. These were replaced by the *picaresque* genre, typically written in first person and depicts the escapades of a lowly born and "roguish" hero (*pícaro*) as

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he tries to survive in a corrupt world**********. Baroque-style literature emerged during the golden age but extended into the 18th century and is characterised by themes of pessimism and disillusionment**********. In *El Gran Libro de la Mitología*, for example, Navarro********** cites the verses of the poeta sevillano Juan de Arguijo inspired by the classical myth of Tantalus, the king of Sipylus in Lydia. For example, the verses refer to his punishment by the gods for his crimes against them. Navarro acts as the reader's trained guide, explaining how he was punished, made to stand thirsty in a pool of receding water, as outlined in the homeric poem *The Odyssey*. Navarro later notes how this image was also evoked by Don Franciso de Quevedo, a writer, nobleman and politician of the Baroque period. By reading the classical myths, readers may not only begin to understand more fully how classical mythology has influenced Spanish culture but also how it has been used to convey the attitudes, beliefs and preoccupations of different periods of history, such as the Spanish Golden Age.

Meanwhile, Fuentes' colourful and humanised illustrations support the text, assisting readers to identify and relate to key characters, events and motifs of the myths. Most stories are accompanied with a full page flat illustration. They are commonly composed with the main character as the focal point and often their profiles are full-length. Stylised aspects of classical art and architecture as well as nature, such as flowers, fruit and animals, are integrated into the illustrations.

Generally, the classical stories are presented in an open manner, following a close reading of the original classical texts, and included in the collection are stories concerning sensitive topics, such as suicide and rape. Notably, Navarro does not address these topics directly in her introduction. For example, the story of the ill-fated lovers Pyramus and Thisbe deals with suicide. After their parent's oppose their relationship, the lovers agree to run away together and meet under a mulberry tree. Pyramus fatally stabs himself at this place after he wrongly concludes that Thisbe has been killed by a lioness. When Thisbe finds him dying, she then chooses to end her own life. Both Navarro and Fuentes graphically depict this critical but confronting scene. In the illustration**********, Pyramus is lying on one side with small white beady eyes, bleeding profusely. His hand holds the sword he plunged deep into his stomach. Meanwhile, in a small rectangular box at the top of the illustration, a lioness is depicted chasing Thisbes. Then, through a highly emotive character dialogue, Navarro evokes the anger, grief and despair of Thisbe when she

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discovers what her lover has done. This characterisation is confronting but its direct acknowledgement of suicide is important, as it opens an invaluable learning opportunity for readers.

It is vital that sensitive topics, such as suicide and sexual assault, within the classical context are taught in a safe and supportive learning environment. As Hong********** has argued in relation to teaching rape in the classical world, a framework should be developed and followed so that the readers are guided in a calm and clear manner. Meanwhile, it is also important for the reader's responses to be fully acknowledged. Hong recommends that teachers guide students to carefully reflect on questions, including how the events are characterised and undertake a comparative study of modern and ancient understanding of sex and rape. Notably, suicide and rape were conceptualised differently in the classical world. While it may not have been practised often, suicide was deemed a calculated and heroic act in response to various situations, including experiencing despair when a loved one died (as exemplified by the Pyramus and Thisbes)**********. Meanwhile, abduction without the legal consent of a girl or woman's father could constitute rape in the ancient Greek world**********. It is recommended that a framework similar to that advocated by Hong be developed when teaching relevant stories included in *El Gran Libro de la Mitología*.

El Gran Libro de la Mitología is a unique and important contribution to children's literature regarding the classical world. As a highly trained guide, Navarro helps the reader to explore the complex and religious nature of the classical world, as represented in Ancient Greek and Roman mythopoeia. The reader benefits greatly from Navarro's extensive knowledge not just of classical culture but also of the literature of the Spanish Golden Age. Through her introduction, the reader begins to understand how Eurocentric culture, and in particular Spanish culture, has been influenced and shaped by the classical world over time.

It is recommended that the compilation can be used to promote discussions about classical beliefs and customs and how they differ to our own. It can also be used as a reference in conjunction with other books to explore the nature of literature of different genres and time periods, especially the literature of the Spanish Golden Age.

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* See Rosa Navarro Durán, *El Gran Libro de la Mitología,* Barcelona: Montena, 2019, 5.

** Guilia Sissa and Marcel Detienne, *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods,* Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2000, 28.

*** Rosa Navarro Durán, *El Gran Libro de la Mitología*, 5.

**** See Jaco Beyers, *Religion and culture: Revisiting a close relative*, available at scielo.org.za (accessed: October 7, 2021); Braun, Willi, "Religion" in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the study of religion,* London: Cassell, 2000, 4.

***** Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, 90, 123.

****** Ibid., 89.

******* Jaco Beyers, *Religion and culture: Revisiting a close relative*, available at scielo.org.za (accessed: October 7, 2021).

******** Rosa Navarro Durán, *El Gran Libro de la Mitología*, 5.

********* Britannica and Thinley Kalsang Bhutia, *Golden Age. Spanish Literature*, available at britannica.com (accessed: October 7, 2021).

********** Ibidem.

*********** Ibidem.

************ Rosa Navarro Durán, *El Gran Libro de la Mitología*, 20.

************* Ibid., 46–47.

************** See Yurie Hong, "Talking About Rape in the Classics Classroom," *The Classical World* 4 (2013): 669–675.

*************** See Anton J. L. Van Hooff, "The Image of Ancient Suicide," *Syllecta Classica* 9 (1998): 48–69.

**************** Paul Chrystal, *In Bed with The Ancient Greeks*, Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2016, 78.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Acis Actaeon Anaximander Andromeda Apollo Ariadne Daedalus Daphne Echo Europa Eurydice Galatea Ganymede Greek Philosophy Heracles Icarus Jason Judgement of Paris Labyrinth Medea Midas Narcissus Orpheus Pandora Pericles Persephone Perseus Phaethon Philomela Phoenix (Bird) Plato Polyphemus Procne Prometheus Pygmalion Pyramus Sisyphus Socrates Tantalus Theseus Thisbe Tiresias
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Coming of age Humanity Individuality Intellect Knowledge Love Religious beliefs Science Sexual abuse Students Subjectivity Suicide Teachers Utopia and dystopia

Further Reading

Beyers, Jaco, ed., *Religion and culture: Revisiting a close relative*, available at scielo.org.za (accessed: October 7, 2021).

Braun, Willi, "Religion" in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the study of religion*, London: Cassell, 2000, 3–18.

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