

Christopher Schliephake*

Orpheus in Black: Classicism and Cultural Ecology in Marcel Camus, Samuel R. Delany, and Reginald Shepherd

DOI 10.1515/anglia-2016-0006

Abstract: My essay brings cultural ecology together with classical reception studies – two paradigms of cultural theory that have rarely interacted so far, but, as I want to show, fit well together, because both deal with questions of cultural (self-)renewal and the mobility of symbolic forms of meaning making (between culture and nature and between different times and spaces respectively). As analytic examples, I choose three examples of the cultural reception of the myth of Orpheus, since it resonates strongly with cultural ecology and classical reception alike. In order to illustrate the cultural mobility of the myth in modern times, I want to look at African American and African Brazilian contexts in which it has figured prominently as a symbol for black artistic creation. This entails a discussion of the term ‘black classicism’ that has gained prominence in recent times as post-colonial and poststructuralist approaches have re-negotiated the cultural presumptions upon which the classical tradition rests. As the examples show, the myth is both used as a counter discourse against hegemonic readings of the classics that situate them within a Eurocentric and white context as well as a discourse that valorizes musical and bodily performance against textual practice and that celebrates biophilic life energies.

“What is the place and the time of our story? It is the privilege of legends to be timeless. They can take place wherever you want them to”, says the extra-diegetic narrator of Jean Cocteau’s classic 1950 movie *Orphée*. This statement can, in many ways, be read as paradigmatic for the reception of classical myths in general and for the myth of Orpheus in particular. Already in antiquity, various versions of his story circulated, presumably since archaic times.¹ The majority of which saw in

¹ Virgil’s *Georgica* (IV, 454–527) and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (XI, 1–66) are not the oldest, but the most comprehensive and influential versions of the myth. Despite their different conceptions,

*Corresponding author: Christopher Schliephake, Universität Augsburg
E-Mail: christopher.schliephake@phil.uni-augsburg.de

Orpheus a prince from Thrace, a son of Apollo (or of the king of Thrace) and of Calliope, the muse of epic poetry. The myth told about the enchantment of the world through song. Orpheus was a musician and a magician alike, who could alter the course of nature by singing and playing his lyre. He married Eurydice, who, due to a snakebite, died shortly after the marriage. Unable to accept her fate, Orpheus descended into Hades to rescue his love. With the help of his music, he implored the keepers of Hades to let her go under the condition that he would not look back until the pair had left the underworld. Yet, Orpheus turned around, full of doubt as to whether she followed him and thus lost her forever. Grief-stricken he wandered the world, shunning the company of women, until he was torn to pieces by raging Maenads. It was said that even after he had been decapitated, his head kept on singing as it floated down a river.

This is, in fact, a fitting image of the way in which his song has echoed through the millennia up to our present time. His story has turned into an allegory for the all-encompassing power and permanency of music. Every generation has found in the myth of Orpheus the poetic foundation upon which to creatively make and re-make the world. As Ann Wroe has put it in her formidable and imaginatively rich biography of Orpheus, “[t]o some degree you could argue that each age revisits him. Yet none puts its stamp on him definitively, because the young man with the lyre is different for everyone who meets him. Each encounter makes him anew” and yet, she continues, “the vulnerable human figure still conceals his most primal incarnation: the pulse of creation, the song of life, then, now, always” (Wroe 2011: 5).² Since Renaissance times, Orpheus has functioned as an emblematic figure for artistic creation, as a patron saint of music and especially of opera, and as an almost religious character, who has been associated with redeeming powers and the expression of life energies. For moderns, like Cocteau, Orpheus symbolized the quest for creative originality and his adventures in the underworld were read as psychoanalytic undertakings and the search for primal impulses.

they contain a huge array of motifs that has spurred the imagination of artists ever since. The earliest visual representations of Orpheus date back at least to black-figure vase paintings from the sixth-century BC.

2 Her comment echoes some of the central insights of contemporary theoretical reflections on myth and myth-making. Thereby, myths always appear in diverse aesthetic and cultural transformations so that the question of a ‘founding myth’ is undermined and questioned. “Myths are always already dispersed in aesthetic plurality, in rhizoid and transitory configurations” (Simonis 2013: 274, my translation) and the aesthetic recreation of myths often incites the creation of new myths. The cultural reception of myths is therefore marked by a dialectic between recreation and reflection.

The myth may have travelled far in time and space, but its essence has remained the same, telling about art transcending death and about artistic creation in the face of almost unbearable realities. In the way the myth tells about the life-redeeming power of song, it can be said to be a self-referential reflection on culture itself. Through the manifold variations and different versions in which it has re-surfaced over the millennia, it has become involved in the constantly evolving and ceaseless self-renewal of cultural expression. And, as I want to argue, it is exactly in this way that it has turned into a cultural ecological force itself. Cultural ecology studies the interrelation between cultural processes of symbolic reflection of the (more-than) human world and its natural processes of evolution and biophilic life cycles (cf. Zapf 2002; Finke 2006). Although the analogy between cultural and natural processes works on a metaphorical basis, it nevertheless transcends the realm of mere analogy, since it points to the interdependence of both aspects: On the one hand, culture is not an autonomous system detached from natural phenomena of the world; on the other hand, nature is made sense of through anthropogenic meaning-making discourses and is rendered discursively. To put it differently, both nature and culture can be said to appear in their, as Karen Barad (2007) puts it, ‘intra-action’, in their material-semiotic frameworks of interpretation. This aspect is itself an integral part of the myth of Orpheus, whose songs have an enchanting effect on humans, animals, and nature alike. His songs are an almost evolutionary force and, yet, they only gain their specific meanings through the contexts and frameworks in which they are related to the world: The poet or singer transforms or translates the natural energies around him into a lyric and, through incantation or performance, channels this energy back into the world, where it affects those (human or non-human) beings around him/her.

In the following, I want to focus on the transformative effect that the Orphic song has had over the millennia. In my first part, I want to bring cultural ecology together with classical reception studies – two paradigms of cultural theory that have rarely interacted so far, but, as I want to show, fit well together, because both deal with questions of cultural (self-)renewal and the mobility of symbolic forms of meaning making (between culture and nature and between different times and spaces respectively). As analytic examples, I choose three examples of the cultural reception of the myth of Orpheus, since it resonates strongly with cultural ecology and classical reception alike. In order to illustrate the cultural mobility³ of the myth in modern times, I want to look at African American and

³ In its myriad variations and heterogeneous personifications, the myth of Orpheus and its reception can be seen as examples of what Stephen Greenblatt and others have termed ‘cultural

African Brazilian contexts in which it has figured prominently as a symbol for black artistic creation. This entails a discussion of the term ‘black classicism’ that has gained prominence in recent times as post-colonial and poststructuralist approaches have re-negotiated the cultural presumptions upon which the classical tradition rests (cf. Schliephake 2014). As the examples show, the myth is both used as a counter discourse against hegemonic readings of the classics that situate them within a Eurocentric and white context as well as a discourse that valorizes musical and bodily performance against textual practice and that celebrates biophilic life energies.

Classical Reception Studies and/as Cultural Ecology

Classical reception studies and cultural ecology are still relatively recent paradigms of cultural theory.⁴ Although practiced – in different forms and disguises – for decades, they have only recently blossomed into vibrant fields of scholarly inquiry that attract ever new scholars. Yet, both paradigms have rarely converged. While cultural ecology has mainly been concerned with studying the interrelations between the non-human world and cultural formations, classical reception studies have explored how classical texts or images have constantly been re-employed, re-integrated and transformed by subsequent cultures all around the world. And although cultural ecology has dealt with how human culture has been transfused by ecological processes found in nature and classical reception studies have been interested in the way in which societies have used the ancient tradition to renew their own cultural formations and to construct their collective identity, both fields of research have more in common than one would usually suggest.

mobility’. The paradigm of ‘cultural mobility’ seeks to come up with theoretical models to analyze and “understand the vitally important dialectic of cultural persistence and change” (Greenblatt 2009: 2). It is based on a critique of old models of culture that highlighted their “stability” or conceptualized them as “virtually motionless” (Greenblatt 2009: 3). In the light of recent migrations and a heightened mobility on a global level, cultural mobility renders the “restless process through which texts, images, artifacts, and ideas are moved, disguised, translated, transformed, adapted, and reimagined in the ceaseless, resourceful work of culture” (Greenblatt 2009: 4). It has to do both with questions of transmission and influence as well as with the material and spatiopolitical processes that allowed the circulation of cultural texts and norms over the centuries (cf. Schliephake 2015).

⁴ For a good introduction into the respective fields cf. Zapf (2002) and cf. Hardwick and Stray (2008).

Both paradigms are very much about renewal: Where cultural ecology studies the way in which evolutionary processes akin to those found in nature are necessary for the dynamic and vibrant power of cultural expression (cf. Finke 2006), classical reception studies explore the way in which the new or renewed is made out of the old, which is both a cultural archive and a foil upon which to re-make the world. They are also both informed by a poststructuralist approach, which studies the discursive mediatedness of their respective subjects. This does not entail that both paradigms presuppose that everything is a social construct, embedded in a network of signs, but rather that they are sensitive to cultural processes of appropriation of the 'other' (i.e. of nature/of antiquity) into its fabrics and to the discursive practices through which these translations/transformations are mediated. I argue that it is along these lines of cultural (self-)renewal and symbolic transformation that both paradigms can complement each other and enter into a productive dialogue.

Throughout the centuries, the texts and images that now make up the 'classical tradition' have been the main objects in a long dialectic between remembering and forgetting. When Virgil and Ovid, respectively, worked on their particular versions of the Orpheus myth, it had already been a 'classic' in the true sense of the word. For us, it is a classic too, but mainly mediated through their texts – we can only catch slight glimpses of the stories of Orpheus that circulated before them. There must have been an Orphic tradition since at least the 7th or 6th century BCE, but in a culture steeped in oral performance and playful mosaics and paintings on walls that were, in most cases, not built to stand the test of time, these traditions are lost to us. What is interesting to note is that, although only short fragments of the Orphic tale have survived (both Ovid's and Virgil's versions only make up a small, rather indistinct part of their respective works), it has nevertheless remained a central cornerstone of that storehouse of stories and symbols upon which cultures and societies have drawn since the end of antiquity. During the Middle Ages, Orpheus was seen as a redemptive figure, akin to Christ; during the Renaissance, he was increasingly used as a personification of artistic creation. Recent studies like Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve* (2011), which examines the reception of Lucretius' poem *De Rerum Natura*, or Simon Goldhill's *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity* (2011), have shown how classical texts became a decisive cultural force imbued in many artistic, social, and political projects as well as how they themselves were altered in the process of reception. Greenblatt, for instance, illustrates how the reception of Lucretius' text from the 15th century onwards was integral part of an intellectual project that led to the challenging of the geocentric model and gave rise to the natural sciences – however, what is truly remarkable is that, although the poem's atheism and materialist conception of the world was at first rejected, its poetic beauty and

imaginative force led to its encompassing reception in the first place and was soon regarded as the prime example of Latin didactic poetry, whose style was to influence a plethora of Renaissance intellectuals. In the same vein, but with a different focus, Goldhill shows how the classical tradition played a foundational part in the cultural milieu of the Victorian Age by at once challenging dominant forms of discourse as well as by turning into an integral part of elitist learning and education. Both aspects do not, in fact, contradict each other, but rather represent the often conflicting and heterogeneous uses to which the classics have been put in modern history. They are always imbued in processes of appropriation and forgetting and in a process of cultural meaning-making in which different spaces and timeframes are brought together in the act of reception and, in consequence, comment upon each other.

In a cultural ecological perspective, classical texts are intricately connected to the constant (self-)renewal of culture, since they can be seen as a repository of the imagination: They present later generations with primordial symbols, which present humans in close relation to the (more-than-human) world, as well as with the possibility of a productive engagement that can spark creative energies and can bring forth new forms of expression. For instance, modern opera initially developed as an attempt to re-create the multi-sensory experience of ancient Greek drama, but subsequently turned into a new combination of performance, music, and lyric. Moderns, like Joyce or Eliot, took classical texts as the basis of their groundbreaking works, turning them into an imaginative source for the creative exploration of the deep structures of the psyche and of identity. Like the small matters of particles that Lucretius describes in *De Rerum Natura*, classical texts move around in our vast cultural frameworks. Their matter is part of the cultural base structure, but, in a constant dynamic process of change and recreation, their movement, from one author, one time, one space to the next, sparks new work. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* can, in this context, be seen as a central text that illustrates this multiformity and change on a thematic and formal level, highlighting the transformations that texts as well as beings undergo in the ceaseless process of natural and cultural evolution. As Zapf puts it, Ovid's work "not only posits the interrelatedness between culture and nature as a defining condition of human existence, but establishes its symbolic exploration as a central domain of the literary imagination" (Zapf 2008: 147). While this analogy works on a level of content – one only needs to look at the way in which Ovid explores the interplay between culture and nature – it works on a functional one as well. As Zapf continues, literature as a form of cultural ecology "acts like an ecological force within the larger system of cultural discourses". On the one hand, it can thereby "[appear] as a sensorium and imaginative sounding board for hidden problems [...] of the larger culture, as form of textuality which critically

balances and symbolically articulates what is marginalized, neglected, repressed or excluded by dominant historical power structures” (Zapf 2008: 148). Moreover, by integrating “plural perspectives, multiple meanings and dynamic interrelationships” in its imaginative fabric, “literature becomes the site of a constant, creative renewal of language, perception, communication, and imagination” (Zapf 2008: 148). I would argue that the receptions of classical works have functioned in exactly this way during the long history of their circulation. Classical reception studies have highlighted the same qualities in their discussion of classical texts: They may, again and again, be appropriated by different actors or collectives, but they nevertheless remain ‘other’. They are literally of another space and time and their reception always sparks a dialogical process of the negotiation of meaning. And although the classics have repeatedly served as foundational parts of hegemonic ideologies, they have also resisted any neat instrumentalization or interpretation, undermining dominant readings.

The difference between classical reception studies and cultural ecology (in the form I look at it here) lies in the respective interest with which they look at the texts they study: Whereas classical reception studies scholars are interested in the way in which individual authors or social groups have made sense of antiquity and use it for their present concerns, cultural ecologists have looked at the way in which literature works in the larger cultural realm and how it incorporates natural and cultural contexts into its narrative fabric. In my opinion, classical reception studies could greatly benefit from integrating cultural ecology into its theoretical and practical outlook. On the one hand, it is clear that some constitutive elements of classical texts, and especially of myths, continue to play a fundamental role in modern culture. More than an intertextual form of play, this might also have to do with the fact that biophilic memories and sentiments are, to a large degree, stored in ancient symbols. The myth of Orpheus, as pointed out before, thematizes the interrelationship between artistic and natural creation and does so in a fashion that has lost nothing of its validity even though our life style has changed drastically since antiquity. We still need mythical narratives – and traditions – to explain our world and our place in it. On the other hand, cultural ecology underlines how classical texts come to function as a kind of evolutionary forces in the larger framework of culture. They have constantly incited new works and they have done so in a way that has both supported as well as contradicted socio-historical developments. The classics have been part of historical processes at the same time that they have managed to resist total appropriation. They have possessed a degree of sameness and a degree of alterity and they have repeatedly functioned as counter discourses against ideologies of progress and cultural forgetting.

One area of classical receptions, which can exemplify this claim is what has, in recent times, been referred to as ‘black classicism’. Over the last two decades,

the picture of a uniform reception of antiquity and a hegemonic conception of a classical 'canon' has been broken up in favor of complexity and heterogeneity. The cultural authority of the classics is no longer solely associated with elitist learning and a Eurocentric, racialized framework of cultural dominance or superiority. Rather, they are now seen as cultural texts that do not miraculously stand outside of historical processes, but that "may be put to work in the service of various projects" (Goff 2005: 14) in a counter-discursive way so that they are constantly transformed themselves and re-read in different contexts. One strand of scholarship that has decisively contributed to this change is the study of the role that the classical tradition has played for African Americans and how it was used as a "counterdiscourse that writes back to racism and imperialism, or as a source of mythopoiesis in the formation of modern black identity" (Greenwood 2009: 281–282). What is now commonly referred to as 'black classicism' is, in this context, a provocation: the term undermines conceptions of the classics that have attributed to them the role of a dear-held cultural possession of Western imperial powers, illustrating how the classical texts have become racialized since early modern times. Deriving its main theoretical impulses from post-colonial models of cultural hybridity and from socio-political developments like increased migration and mobility,⁵ black classicism investigates what Homi Bhabha has referred to as the "in-between" (or "third") spaces between cultures, where "the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" can be witnessed (Bhabha 1994: 56). This impulse is apparent in many of black classicism's best theoretical and scholarly explorations, from Barbara Goff's and Michael Simpson's edited volume *Crossroads in the Black Aegean* (2007) to Emily Greenwood's monograph study *Afro-Greeks* (2010). As these studies show, the reception of classical texts opens up "a conjuncture between spheres of culture that are seemingly incommensurable" (Greenwood 2010: 8) and problematizes Eurocentric or monocultural models that connote the classical canon as a sphere of culture to which whites have a privileged access or prerogative.

Historically speaking, classical receptions had played an integral role in the formation of imperial ideology and were long regarded as emblems of white elitist education. Against this background, black classicism shows how African American or Caribbean authors have used the classics themselves as a source of emancipatory thinking and how they have challenged Eurocentric models of cultural supremacy (cf. Hairston 2013). Instead of formulating monoculturalist assumptions, black classicism can be seen as giving way to a transnational model of cultural creativity and influence, as a framework for thinking about the fluidity,

5 Cf. Schliephake (2014) who discusses black classicism in the light of post-colonial theory.

permeability, and inherent dynamic of identity concepts – rather than presupposing stable cultural entities or borders, it challenges dichotomies and political models of exclusionary thinking (cf. Schliephake 2015). As such, it can also be said to be an example of the cultural ecology of classical texts that can circulate in settings and times far removed from their origin, where they are, in turn, remade and influence the contexts in which they are received. By making classical allusions and symbols an integral part of their narratives, African American and Caribbean authors like Rita Dove, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, or Derek Walcott have all, in their respective ways, challenged dominant readings of the classics that connected them to Eurocentric and Western imperialistic ideologies. They have done so in ways, that do not only use the classics as a form of resistance against a hegemonic culture, but also in ways that use them to depict life energies and natural forces often left out of scientific reasoning, order, and Western rationality. In the following, I want to explore the cultural ecology of three particular receptions of the Orpheus myth that have re-located the setting of the story into African American/African Brazilian neighborhoods and contexts. Thereby, I want to discuss the mode of classicism that is at play in ‘black’ variations of the Orpheus theme. This will not only give me the chance to discuss the aesthetic and political undercurrents of black classicism, but also to illustrate the ecology and mobility of cultural symbols and expressions. My examples are Marcel Camus’ classic 1959 film *Orfeu Negro*, Samuel R. Delany’s 1967 science-fiction novel *The Einstein Intersection*, and the works of the American poet Reginald Shepherd (1963–2008). As I will show, their re-workings of the mythical story are concerned with the possibility of creative originality in the face of cultural traditions and with questioning hegemonic notions of cultural identity and difference in a framework that valorizes music, performativity, and human-nature relations.

Marcel Camus’ *Orfeu Negro*

Not long before Jean Cocteau filmed his poetic and visually spectacular *Orphée*, the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre wrote the preface to Léopold S. Senghor’s *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, published in 1948. In his influential essay, Sartre was the first to coin the term ‘Orphée Noire’ or ‘Black Orpheus’ in order to describe what he saw as the binding elements and main concerns of the poetry of the Négritude, namely a re-descent into ‘the bursting Hell of the black soul’. Sartre “name[d] this poetry ‘orphyic’ because this untiring descent of the Negro into himself causes me to think of Orpheus going to reclaim Eurydice from Pluto” (Sartre [1948] 1976: 22–23). It was a search for

cultural roots and identity that had to be asserted in the guise of the ‘other’, especially with and through the language of the colonizers, and that was accompanied by a liberating move away from the oppressive force of the so-called ‘cultural nations’ of the West. It was about evading the Eurocentric gaze of imperialism and about finding a common poetic language that would allow for the expression of own (political) concerns and for a re-inscription of African culture (and its diaspora) into the canon of world literature.⁶ With his essay, Sartre gave way to a re-interpretation of the Orpheus myth and formulated a counter discourse against Eurocentric interpretations of the myth that connected the ancient singer to a canonized high culture. It also re-located the myth into the setting of the so-called ‘Third World’, into landscapes and spaces ridden with abject poverty and deteriorating environmental conditions in the face of colonial enterprises and the mining of raw materials. The latter aspect, in fact, looms large in ‘black’ receptions of the Orpheus myth, which do not only render their hero as a cultural outsider, but also as a balancing force confronted with detrimental environmental conditions.

Alluding to the title of Sartre’s essay, the 1959 film *Orfeu Negro* by French director Marcel Camus can be seen as an example of how the motifs of the Orpheus story have been transferred to the cultural settings of the African diaspora and the sociopolitical contexts of the ‘New World’. Although Camus’ perspective was that of a white European filmmaker and of a cultural outsider within the Brazilian society in which his film was set, the movie was based on the play *Orfeu da Conceição* (1956) by the Brazilian poet and songwriter Vinícius de Moraes. As Moraes put it, his original intention was to re-interpret the myth within the cultural framework of Brazilian carnival and music. His aim was to ‘hellenize’ (“hellenizar”; Moraes, qtd. in Murillo 2010: 5) the lives of a predominantly black *favela*, to valorize and give meaning to their cultural expressions and creativity by bringing them together with a cultural set of symbols and motifs that had been inscribed into the cultural memory of the Western tradition and that had been brought to ‘Latin America’ by colonizers. In a way, Camus’ film can be seen as a re-doubling of this process. Yet, where the colonizers had originally brought their

⁶ Sartre’s essay has not remained undisputed. Critics question the universal nature that Sartre attributes to African culture and claim that Sartre had (implicitly) reproduced orientalist, romantic images of it, including racialized tropes of black sexuality (cf. Diop 2009). Nevertheless, with his article, Sartre was not only one of the first (white) intellectuals to recognize and formulate a programmatic statement of the Négritude movement but gave rise to a renewed interest in African literature that culminated in the implementation of the journal *Black Orpheus. A Journal of African and Afro-American Literature* by Ulli Beier and Janheinz Jahn at Ibadan in Nigeria in 1957 (cf. Riesz 2005).

cultural products with them as normative and hegemonic frameworks, *Orfeu Negro* constantly works to comment on and transform the canonized myth through the perspective of a marginalized African Brazilian population. Thus, Camus' "direction reflected significant involvement with" their culture and living conditions and he used a plethora of non-professional actors and local extras to imbue his film with a strong sense of authenticity and ethnic flavor (Perrone 2001: 50).⁷ Thereby, his film brings about a "transculturation of the myth via" what Murillo refers to as "its Cariocization" or "Riofication" (2010: 5). Drawing on the core elements of the myth, passionate love and the transcending power of music, the film highlights "carnival practices" and the "deep essence of musicality" (Santos 2003: 63) of the African Brazilian population. This has the effect of making "all three elements of the narrative – music, passion and carnival –" into "mythical elements full of transgressive power and capable of transcending social constraints" (Santos 2003: 63). Thus, Camus' film becomes a vehicle for staging cultural ecology, for illustrating what happens when divergent cultural elements are brought together and merge into new forms of cultural expression.

What connects *favela* life and Brazilian carnival with the ancient myth is music. From the opening of the film – a snapshot of an ancient relief – music interlinks the narrative strands, underlines and/or comments on the action. The emphasis on festive practices and Brazilian music, especially on percussive music related to carnival practices as well as on songs that attest to the development of Bossa Nova, which was taking place while Camus was shooting his movie, give the film a strong auditory quality that resonated deeply with audiences all over the world. Part of the originality and power of the soundtrack was that it was integrated organically into the movie. Almost all of it is intra-diegetic and comprises full performances of bands or individuals.⁸ It is the beating pulse of the city and connects its different topographic and socio-economic parts into a vibrant whole. *Orfeu Negro* presents its recipients with an audio image of Rio de Janeiro that comes alive under its pulsating rhythms. The focus on music as a corporeal practice is represented by the plethora of carnival groups and bystanders who do not walk, but rather dance through the city space. From the outset, this cultural practice is connoted as 'black': The protagonist, Orfeu, is an African Brazilian

7 Although Camus, for the most part, succeeds in presenting a convincing imaginative world, many commentators have criticized his presentation of *favela* life and Brazilian society as inauthentic and naïve (cf. Perrone 2001: 51; Santos 2003: 51–54; Murillo 2010: 2 and 7–9). The negative comments did not stop the film from winning an Academy Award and a Golden Globe, however, and with its inventive use of color and sound, *Orfeu Negro* can still be seen as a classic of modern cinema.

8 For a detailed discussion of the music heard in the film see Perrone (2001).

streetcar conductor, who is also a “cultural force” (Perrone 2001: 54). As a samba-school leader and singer, “he is a facilitator of the reversals that Carnival brings” and “entire parts of society are moved” by his musical performances (Perrone 2001: 54). His life is turned upside down when he falls in love with a young girl from the country, Eurydice, who has fled to her cousin Serafina, Orfeu’s neighbor in the shantytown settlement. Torn between his love for Eurydice and his jealous fiancée Mira, Orfeu tries to lead his samba-school into the carnival, when Eurydice runs away from a young man in a death costume. Hiding in a streetcar depot, she is accidentally killed when Orfeu switches on the lights in an attempt to rescue her. Orfeu tries to recover Eurydice and finally finds her in a morgue from where he takes her up to his *favela*. Eventually, he falls down a hillside after an assault by the raging Mira and is united with Eurydice in death.

The film works along a dialectic of ethnographic interest in a corporeal and performative culture of movement and sound and a re-creation of central elements of the myth of Orpheus so that both elements, in the end, comment on and transform each other. As Perrone puts it, “the film is structured around instrumental sounds, vocals, and performative material that reconstitute mythemes of the Orpheus legends and that are, inevitably, seen to represent real-world behaviors alike” (2001: 47–48). The landscape of Rio de Janeiro, the natural and the human-built environment as well as the ocean are integrated beautifully into the film, captured in visually stunning long shots. The characters both move along the horizontal axis of the planned streets as well as along the vertical hills that surround the inner city and that are mirrored in the images of staircases and escalators which dominate the last third of the film. The predominantly African Brazilian inhabitants of the *favelas* live in shantytown settlements located at the intersection of nature and urbanity and usually have to descend into the city proper. Although they are cut off from many of the comforts of urban life, including a functional sanitation system, their colorful parades during the carnival bring a subversive, transgressive element to the ordered urban life, which the police can only control with great effort. Their life has nothing in common with the idealized Hellenized society that the white marble stones of the establishing shot of the film embody. Theirs is a world that, with its dirt and simplicity, comes closer to what the archaic life on the barren mountains of Thrace might have looked like. And their rhythmic dances, colorful costumes, and symbol-laden masks express primordial life energies which, in their celebration of the movement of sun and moon, hint at biophilic memories and elements found in ancient rites. These aspects underline the trans-historical validity and relevance of the Orpheus myth that Camus’ film re-locates in a setting seemingly removed from modernity. The simple life of the black *favela* thus becomes, like the mythical elements themselves, timeless, at the same instance conserving and spurring

creative energies that speak to the human condition in general. This cultural ecological aspect of the film presents its viewers with an original creative element which has its roots in life itself and which Orfeu channels through his performances.

The latter aspect is illustrated by the importance of music as a sign of cultural possession and continuity. Although Orfeu is a gifted musician, whose songs charm women and, as his young admirers claim, can make the sun rise, the beginning of the film sees him re-trieving his guitar from a local pawnshop. The film uses the recurring image of birds kept in cages to point to the limiting circumstances of the singer who himself lives, together with a number of animals (including a rooster named Caruso), in a wooden shack whose pillars resemble bars. Yet, his poverty does not restrain him from singing his poetry tinged songs, which use the motif of tragic lovers, and from taking on the role of a community leader. And while his performances draw heavily on context and improvisation, Orfeu makes clear that there were “other Orfeus before” him. He is both a creator and a conserver, who stands in a long line of musical tradition passed on down the generations. Thus, he reveals to Eurydice that “thousands of years ago I was sad to die like a bird in a cage, then the guitar told me about Eurydice”. The narrative constantly works to re-embed its own structure and symbols in the canonized myth stored in the cultural memory, making clear that it, too, takes part in its constant renewal and transformation. Its adaption in the context of a black *favela* attests to the cultural mobility of the myth as such and has, in consequence, led to a heightened interest in Brazilian local culture on the part of the film’s audiences. The transnational imagination that is at play in the reception of the myth can thus be said to “work both ways” (Greenwood 2010: 2), since its contents have been actualized against the background of a culture where musical performance and non-literary forms of creativity and world making are still very much prevalent. Like this, *Orfeu Negro* not only views African Brazilian life through the lens of a highly canonized text of ‘Western’ culture, but also revalorizes and highlights those cultural elements, namely song and performance, that have made up the myth’s core from the beginning. In a cultural ecological perspective, the *favela*, as a signifier of cultural exclusion and poverty, is thereby transformed into an imaginative counterforce, whose own culture transgresses the physical boundaries of the city space and “the exclusionary force of the cultural power regime”, while “simultaneously” presenting “a dimension of elemental vitality, eros, and creativity” (Zapf 2008: 157).

Samuel R. Delany's *The Einstein Intersection*

Whereas *Orfeu Negro* underlines the orality and corporeality of black culture, black classicism also calls attention to the fact that African American culture has played an integral part in written culture and continues to actively partake in a literary re-working of the Western canon. More than a study of mere influence or intertextual relationships between modern and ancient works of literature, black classicism is about re-negotiating the cultural foundations upon which the classical canon rests in our present times (cf. Schliephake 2015). Samuel Delany's 1967 novel *The Einstein Intersection* (further references abbreviated as *TEI*) takes this aspect quite literally and makes the identity forming elements of myth, its poetic lure and socio-cultural mobility into the key elements of its intricately dense plot. Awarded with a Nebula award for the best science fiction novel, *The Einstein Intersection* problematizes questions of identity formation, cultural influence and outsiderdom against a fast-driven plot and beautifully crafted language. It interlocks a multitude of myths, which are the only cultural remains of a human civilization that had exhausted the planet and had finally left Earth, to illustrate how those that are different or 'other' can come up with their own interpretations and re-creations of stories which had, originally, not been intended for them. The novel, whose title refers to a theoretical concept according to which the orderly principle of scientific reasoning crosses the suprarational along a graph of time, makes intersections its main structural principle: namely those between the overarching norms of a hierarchical society and individual choices, death and (re)birth, nature and culture, sameness and difference, hope and despair. It follows the path of Lo Lobey, the member of an alien race that has settled on the ruins of the world which has begun to transform itself once again after the exodus of the human race and which is still marked by radiation from nuclear waste and facilities covered by/stored in the ground. The aliens do not only inhabit the places where humans once lived but also resemble them closely in shape and social behavior. As if they were retrieving a memory long gone, they try to figure out what it was like to be human and imitate their behavior, nesting in the *storied* worlds that humans had spun throughout the generations.

Myths abound in the novel: From antiquity and the Bible (the story of a savior, Green-eye, coming to redeem a world out of bounds is one of its narrative backbones) over the mythical tropes of the 'West' (Billy the Kid stages a comeback as Kid Death, an incarnation of Satan) to more recent pop icons like Ringo Starr or Jean Harlow. "But", as Witcover rightly claims, "the main mythic structure is simple and basic. It is the quest of Orpheus for Eurydice" (Witcover 1999: 9). Lo Lobey is a gifted musician, who can play what he "hears" in other beings' heads. His instrument is a machete with a "hollow, holey cylinder running from hilt to

point”, as the first-person narrator discloses right at the beginning of the novel, who, when he “blow[s] across the mouthpiece in the handle, [...] make[s] music” (*TEI*: 1). His instrument is, of course, also a weapon and Lo Lobey is a talented and fearless hunter. As Washington puts it, “Lobey uses his gift for music as both a creative civilizing force and destructive instrument for retribution” (2008: 249). Both aspects repeatedly intersect in the novel as Lobey first charms the girl Friza, who he falls in love with, and then, after she died due to a mysterious illness, goes on an adventurous quest to retrieve her from the dead. It is this quest that leads Lobey beyond the narrow confines of his almost archaic settlement to the hedonistic culture of the big city. Along the way, he undergoes numerous initiation rites, first by fighting a giant creature in the catacombs of an abandoned nuclear facility (it is here that he learns from a computer, PHAEDRA, that he can save Friza if he finds and faces Kid Death), then by being resurrected from the dead by Green-eye, a Jesus like character, who is part of a group of dragon herders Lobey follows. Only at the end of the novel does Lobey realize that his futile attempts to re-claim Friza are part of an overarching journey along which he has to choose between life and death, good and evil.

Delany himself underwent a personal journey when he, still in his early twenties, wrote *The Einstein Intersection*. By then, it was already his eighth novel and Delany, the child of an African American family, homosexual, and ceaselessly working creatively, was struggling to find his identity as a writer (cf. Lunde 1996: 116). Since then, Delany has evolved into one of the most prolific, innovative, and influential American science fiction writers and also serves as one of the genre’s most sophisticated and acclaimed commentators, but when he embarked on his ‘grand tour’, which led him from France and Italy over Greece and into Turkey, he was still trying to come to terms with literary style and tradition. “Just as Delany himself wanders through Venice and the twisting canals of literature and knowledge”, so too, as Lunde puts it, the “alien characters wander an Earth littered with the ruins of human civilization and permeated with its history and myths” (1996: 117). Apart from its setting and storyline – according to Freedman, “*The Einstein Intersection* gives us perhaps the most original postholocaust environment that science fiction has seen, combined with a remarkably subtle and intricate examination of both race and gender” – the novel also deals in meta-fictional reflection on originality and the meaning of mythical elements, trying “to introduce the formal techniques of literary modernism into science fiction, particularly in its use of myth” (2008: 401–402). Dispersed throughout the narrative, self-reflective journal entries by the author comment on the creative process and the journey through a Mediterranean world filled with the traces of an ancient world long vanished, but living on in the many stories connected to it. “[...] I wonder what effect Greece will have on *TEI*”, ruminates the author as he sails the

Aegean (*TEI*: 65) and writes that “[t]he central subject of the book is myth. [...] Drank late with the Greek sailors last night; in bad Italian and worse Greek we talked about myths. Taiki learned the story of Orpheus not from school or reading but from his aunt in Eleusis. Where shall I go to learn it?” The imaginative world of the novel and the extra-diegetic Mediterranean world that the author experiences thus comment on and transform each other. Writing about this process renders the ecological aspect of the reception of the myth on a meta-fictional level, as an interaction between past and present and a transnational link between different cultures that make the canonized world of myth a place in which to meet.

The transmission and transformation of myth is, in fact, equated with a move from one world to the next in *The Einstein Intersection*. In the primitive village where he comes from, Lobey learns from the elders various versions of the Orpheus myth, which is, in the process of the story, compared to his own adventures. However, rather than forming a coherent unity or stable set of normative elements, he learns that myths are dynamic in nature: “In myths things always turn into their opposites as one version supersedes the next” (*TEI*: 11). And although Lobey accepts the adaptability of stories, he does not want to believe in their authority – as he makes clear, he wants to author his story himself. When he is warned that the world of the aliens could await the same end like those of the humans before them (“We have the stories about what went on, what resulted when it happened to the others”), he rejects this claim and argues that new stories can be told on the remnants of the old ones: “I’m tired of the old stories, their stories. We’re not them; we’re new, new to this world, this life” (*TEI*: 78). In the novel, he takes on the role of a creator, who constantly transgresses the narrow boundaries between self and other, inside and outside, through his music and who brings order into chaos. His music is a subversive force that transcends the narrow confines of language and identity formation that surround him. The alien society is a strictly ordered hierarchy, where difference and functionality are marked by naming (cf. Gardiner 1977: 117–118; Witcover 1999: 9). The surnames “Lo” or “La” are not so much names as they are categorizations; they denote gender (there is a third gender “Le”) as well as physical and mental sanity. Beings that are “other” or do not correspond to the norms of the society do not have this “title of purity” (*TEI*: 5) and are kept in “kages”: “So much sadness and horror penned up there; it was hard to remember that they were people. They bore no title of purity, but they were people” (*TEI*: 21).

Friza, Lobey’s love, is one of those ‘others’, who do not correspond to the ideal images of functionality conservatively guarded by the elders and ‘folk-doctors’, but who may nevertheless possess special powers beyond those of the ‘functionals’. That Lobey falls in love with her and tries to rescue her in the course

of the narrative can be read as another subversive act, which questions the normative frameworks of the society in which he lives and which prove too confining for him. In this sense, he is also a liberator whose music expresses the silent emotions stirring in others and who gives voice to things that cannot be named. With this racialized discourse embedded in a science fiction novel, Delany invokes the struggles of the Black Arts and the Civil Rights Movement that he had witnessed and grown out of.⁹ The questions of difference and otherness and the access to social life and cultural knowledge were not the issue of a far-away imaginative world, but of the present. And *The Einstein Intersection* became a novel that tackled them head on in the guise of a futuristic parable in which the cultural canon became the possession of ‘others’ that had, originally, been far removed from it. The axe that Delany’s black Orpheus swung resonated deeply at the time of the publication of the novel and still attests to the liberating force that the adaption of a classical myth can have as well as to the cultural space in which it takes place. In a cultural ecological sense, variation and improvisation are thereby re-valORIZED as cultural forms of expression that break open conformity and paralyzed life energies. The confines of this space can be tested again and again but, in the end, the Orphic song remains the same.

“Orpheus in the Bronx”: The Works of Reginald Shepherd

Commenting on Delany’s re-working of the Orpheus myth in *The Einstein Intersection* and on the novel’s protagonists who try to live out the roles transmitted to them by the cultural canon, the African American poet and essayist Reginald Shepherd wrote that “[t]his has always resonated with me as an image of my own relation to the corpus, if not the corpse, of Western high culture, which is in my possession but does not belong to me”, since, as he continues, “we are simultaneously wholly part of and utterly other to one another. My language is both my most intimate possession and not mine at all, and that is a space of creation as well as of alienation” (Shepherd 2007b: 138). The questions of ‘otherness’ and the power of language to familiarize the strange and to de-familiarize what is known resonate strongly in Shepherd’s writings. In many ways, this interest was based on autobiographical experiences: Born in the Bronx to a single mother, where he

⁹ On the significance of the black arts/power movement for Delany’s early work see Rutledge (2000); on Delany’s experiences with racism cf. Delany (1998b).

grew up in housing projects, he felt the constraints of social marginalization and poverty early on. His homosexual orientation and a diagnosis of being HIV positive later added to his experience of issues of stigmatization and prejudice (cf. Philen 2010; Archambeau 2008). As he emphasized over and over in his theoretical writings, it was only in and through literature that he could break out of the confines of his world and enter an imaginative space, where his own feelings of alienation and loneliness were valorized and made meaningful. Especially poetry was for him a means of questioning the discursive formations upon which social constructs of identity and race were based. Poetic language offered, to him, “liberatory” potentials, “exceed[ing] social determinations and definitions” (Shepherd 2007b: 1) and opening up horizons that were at the same time tinged with the familiar and the strange. One of the defining characteristics of his writings was that he used the classical tradition in exactly this way, as a cultural foil upon which he could draw, and as a realm that enabled the confrontation with the ‘other’ of a distant world. His poetry became a framework for bringing hybrid concepts of identity together with motifs borrowed from the Western elitist tradition – in his imaginative landscapes, he fuses the world of Arcadia with the run-down waterfronts of post-industrial cities, where homeless people wander the streets as Eros, Achilles, or, indeed, Orpheus.¹⁰

Especially the Orpheus myth resonates strongly in his writings and Shepherd has repeatedly stylized himself as a mythological figure. One of his essay collections, published only shortly before his death in 2008, is titled “Orpheus in the Bronx”. It deals with the power and permeability of poetic world-making as well as with the social contexts that have influenced his own life. In the autobiographic essay that opens the volume, he relates the importance of Greek myth for his own education and emancipation from the world of the black ghetto. “Greek mythology played the role for me that it played for the Greeks, as a means to channel, order, and give shape to feelings and forces that would otherwise be completely overwhelming” (Shepherd 2007b: 14). In his essay “The Other’s Other: Against Identity Poetry, for Possibility”, Shepherd formulates an aesthetic and programmatic statement on poetry that can be read as the ultimate reflection on the cultural mobility of his classicism: “In my work I wish to make Sappho and the South Bronx, the myth of Hyacinth and the homeless black men ubiquitous in the cities of the decaying American empire, AIDS and all the beautiful, dead cultures, speak to and acknowledge one another” (Shepherd 2007b: 44). This can

¹⁰ For a more comprehensive discussion of Shepherd’s classicism cf. Schliephake (2015), who, in addition to a discussion of the Orphic elements of his poetry, also deals with the model of cultural hybridity and the transnational imagination that it inspires.

also be read as a characterization of the cultural ecology of black classicism in general, the meeting and contact of cultural expressions and contexts that are, at first sight, completely different, but that somehow interact, comment on and transform one another. A very distinct socio-cultural background, the African American ghetto life and the diagnosis of the “decay” of the American empire, is read against the classical tradition and the world of Greek myth. In this context, Shepherd’s black classicism is about interpreting and reading American (ghetto) life through the lens of classical texts and thereby about breaking up the narrow and enclosed world views which impose social identity roles on the cultures and people living there.

His 2007 collection of poetry, *Fata Morgana* (subsequently abbreviated as *FM*), opens with two poems that evoke the myth of Orpheus in their title: “Orpheus Plays the Bronx” (*FM* 6) is a deeply personal meditation on a traumatic incident in the life of the speaker, who remembers a suicide attempt by his (or her) mother.¹¹ From the opening line of the narrative (“When I was ten [...] / [...] my mother, / tried to kill herself [...]”; ll. 1–3), the lyric sequence is marked by a matter-of-fact tone that can be seen as a distancing strategy at the time of remembering as well as a duplication of how the younger self of the speaker saw the situation: While the mother lay in bed “all weekend” (l. 7), drunk with Gin (“Tanqueray bottles / halo the bed” [ll. 5–6]) and numbed by pills, her child watched the scene with only a book of myths to keep him/her company: “In the myth book’s color / illustration, the poet turns around / inside the mouth of hell to look at her / losing him” (ll. 6–9). The colorful picture in what appears to be a collection of ancient mythical stories (supposedly for children) finds its verbal expression within the poem: blue, red, yellow, purple, black, and white are all featured in it, while the names of the singers Al Green and Barry White, whose songs underline the scene, also evoke the impression of color. Of course, both were African American singers and the setting, which is only named in the title of the poem, is that of a black ghetto. “Color”, in every sense of the term, matters in this world and even “death” tries to “get some color to fill out / his skin” (ll. 20–22). The dichotomy between the “bony white boy” (l. 22) and the ‘colored’ community of the Bronx points to the ‘color line’¹² that had dominated the political climate and racial rhetoric of American policy well into the second half of the 20th century. While this is the social backdrop of the action of the poem, its mythological undercurrent is brought about both by the intermedial evocation of the

¹¹ The poem could be autobiographical in content, since it is in line with many aspects that Shepherd has referred to in his autobiographical essay discussed above (2007b).

¹² For a discussion of the ‘color line’ and its significance for Shepherd’s poetry cf. also Reed (2012: 141–142).

illustration of the Orpheus myth as well as by the equation of its contents with what the lyrical I saw: “Some say / she stepped on an asp, a handful of pills / littered the floor” (ll. 13–15). The story of the Greek myth (the multiple, unnamed speakers may invoke different versions of it) in which Eurydice is bit by a snake finds its equivalent in the pills that the mother spilled on the floor. The world of myth and that of a Bronx tenement are brought together, intersect and comment on one another. The death-in-life motif which characterizes them is both evoked as well as transcended in poetic speech.

Not only does the title of the poem designate the scene as a form of ‘play’, as a kind of conjuring trick as it were, which invokes a child’s play, it also points, on a meta-level, to the poet himself, who “turns around”, looking at a past moment. The self-referential variation of the Orpheus myth, then, is one way of characterizing the poetic world-making per se, as well as of making meaning of a traumatic incident, whose full complexity is only revealed at the end: “The pictures don’t prove / anything, but one thing I remember / about the myth’s still true: / the man can’t live if she does. She survived to die for good” (ll. 28–32). The memory of the lyrical I and the contents of the myth are both questioned in their stability and their meaning is only disclosed with regard to a present that is marked by absence. The fact that the last two verses are the only end-stopped lines in a poem which is otherwise characterized by its use of enjambments is an indicator that a kind of closure has been reached and that the lyrical I accepts the fate of his/her mother. “Five Feelings for Orpheus” (*FM* 3–5) is characterized by a similar verse structure and a paratactic syntax as well as a decentered speaker and a language that melds beauty and decay, bringing together an industrial Chicago riverfront with the motifs of myth. A searching, bewildered Orpheus watches as the river flows by and drowns in his memories, while the landscape becomes a fluid terrain that is as instable as the identity of the person in question. Vivid environmental impressions and the landscapes of the mind, the Chicago River and the river Styx flow into one another to create the image of loss and loneliness against the background of urban nature. Here as elsewhere in his poetry, Shepherd manages to create hybrid landscapes that bring contemporary (urban) America together with the worlds of a mythical Arcadia or the historic sites in ancient Greece, Egypt, or Rome. He thus confronts the brutal realities of life in the 20th/21st-century with the idealized worlds of fantasy and finds poetic beauty that attributes to the world of the outsider or other – the orphaned child, the homeless beggar, the lovesick homosexual – the status of myth. These realities are imaginatively re-figured in poetic speech and gain a new meaning and value in the face of social deprivations, disorientation or poverty. From a cultural ecological viewpoint, Shepherd’s poetry brings together culturally separated spheres, makes them confront and comment upon each

other. His poetry “derive[s its] special cognitive and affective intensity from the interaction of what is kept apart by convention and cultural practice” (Zapf 2008: 158) and transcends the death-in-life motif of the black ghetto with poetic speech. In his poetry as well as in his theoretical writings, Shepherd has used the re-vitalizing power of the imagination to confront past and personal trauma and to transform them into artistic expression, filtering those initially destructive emotions into creative impulse.

In the analytical part of my essay, I have looked at three modes of the reception of the Orpheus myth in African American (respectively, African Brazilian) contexts. The film medium, the science fiction novel and the hybrid lyrics of postmodern poetry have all adapted the myth and have made it a cultural foil upon which to weave ever new imaginative frameworks for thinking about originality, influence, and cultural identity. This underlines not only the cultural adaptability of the myth, but also points to the way in which black cultures have constantly appropriated and transformed it. Black classicism itself can be said to be a highly heterogeneous and multi-faceted undertaking that incorporates motifs and elements from the ‘Western’ canon and brings them together with the sociopolitical experiences and cultural expressions of the African diaspora. The mythical figure of Orpheus, with the archaic background of his art, his passion and the all-encompassing power of his music, has figured as a prominent figure in this context. The transgressive and subversive elements that characterize his myth offer cultural models themselves that artists all over the world have been able to identify with over the ages. The three modes of the reception of the Orpheus myth discussed above all use the motif of the transgression of boundaries as a guiding trope of their narrative patterns. In making an ancient text, which has travelled through the millennia and crossed continents, a foil upon which to interpret and re-make the present, these examples show that the Orphic chord still resonates deeply, creating cultural spaces in which we all can meet. They also show that black interpretations of the Orpheus myth can be seen as cultural ecological explorations of the transgressive and transformative elements of imaginative world-making. As I argued in the course of my essay, classical reception studies can benefit from a cultural ecological perspective in that it points to the biophilic life energies stored in ancient texts and in that it underlines the functional mode of cultural expression. As my examples illustrate, “the special generative and innovational power of” classical receptions “is always also a power of recycling and regeneration” (Zapf 2008: 161). Black adaptations of the Orpheus myth do not only re-invent a classical text in a new setting and a new social background, far removed from a Eurocentric classicism, but they enter into dialogue with an age-old tradition, imbuing both the traditional text as well as their contemporary sociohistorical context with new elements. “The discourses of

civilizational rationality” and “the living memory of those elemental creative energies which are stored in the history of the literary imagination” (Zapf 2008: 161) are thus brought together in different cultural media and texts and attest to the vitality of cultural expressions that can be re-newed by tying themselves to the old or ancient. It is in this way that, as Zapf puts it, culture “keeps alive its productivity by relating, in ever new forms, the cultural memory to the biophilic memory of the human species” (2008: 161).

Works Cited

- Archambeau, Robert. 2008. “A Portrait of Reginald Shepherd as Philoctetes”. *Pleiades* 28.1: 159–171.
- Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglements of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bhabha, Homi. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Delany, Samuel R. 1967/1998a. *The Einstein Intersection*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Delany, Samuel R. 1998b. “Racism and Science Fiction”. *The New York Review of Science Fiction* 10: 16–20.
- Diop, Babacar Mbaye. 2009. “‘Orphée noir’”: Une fausse idée sartrienne de la Négritude”. In: Babacar M. Diop and Souleymane Bachir (eds.). *Le Destin de la Négritude*. Levallois-Perret: De La Lune. 17–26.
- Finke, Peter. 2006. “Die Evolutionäre Kulturökologie: Hintergründe, Prinzipien und Perspektiven einer neuen Theorie der Kultur”. *Anglia* 124.1: 175–217.
- Freedman, Carl. 2008. “Samuel Delany: A Biographical and Critical Overview”. In: David Seed (ed.). *A Companion to Science Fiction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 398–407.
- Gardiner, Jane. 1977. “Images of *The Waste Land* in *The Einstein Intersection*”. *Extrapolation* 18: 116–123.
- Goff, Barbara. 2005. “Introduction”. In: Barbara Goff (ed.). *Classics and Colonialism*. London: Duckworth. 1–24.
- Goff, Barbara and Michael Simpson. 2007. *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldhill, Simon. 2011. *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction and the Proclamation of Modernity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 2009. “Cultural mobility: an introduction.” In: Stephen Greenblatt (ed.) with Ines Županov, Reinhard Meyer-Kalkus, Heike Paul, Pál Nyíri and Friederike Pannewick. *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1–23.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 2011. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. New York: Norton.
- Greenwood, Emily. 2009. “A Tale of Two O’s: Odysseus and Oedipus in the Black Atlantic”. *New West Indian Guide* 83.3–4: 99–107.
- Greenwood, Emily. 2010. *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues Between Classics and Anglophone Caribbean Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hairston, Eric Ashley. 2013. *The Ebony Column: Classics, Civilization, and the African American Reclamation of the West*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

- Hardwick, Lorna and Christopher Stray (eds.). 2008. *A Companion to Classical Receptions*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Lunde, David. 1996. "Black Man/Gay Man/Writer... Prodigy: The Quest for Identity in Delany's Early Work". *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 16: 116–124.
- Murillo, Edwin. 2010. "Orfeu Carioca: Reassessing Orphic Mythology in Rio de Janeiro". *Hispanet Journal* 3: 1–37.
- Orfeu Negro*. 1959. Dir. Marcel Camus. Alamode Film. DVD.
- Orphée*. 1950. Dir. Jean Cocteau. Pierrot le Fou. DVD.
- Perrone, Charles. 2001. "Myth, Melopeia, and Mimesis: *Black Orpheus*, *Orfeu*, and Internationalization in Brazilian Popular Music". In: Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn (eds.). *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*. New York: Routledge. 46–71.
- Philen, Robert. 2010. "Introduction". In: Reginald Shepherd. *A Martian Muse: Further Essays on Identity, Politics, and the Freedom of Poetry*. Ed. Robert Philen. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. 1–8.
- Reed, Brian M. 2012. *Phenomenal Reading: Essays on Modern and Contemporary Poetics*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Riesz, János. 2005. "Orphée Noir' – 'Schwarzer Bruder' – 'Black Orpheus': Quand les marges se mettent en marche vers un centre commun". *Revue de littérature comparée* 2.314: 161–177.
- Ruthledge, Gregory E. 2000. "Science Fiction and the Black Power/Arts Movement: The Transpositional Cosmology of Samuel R. Delany Jr.". *Extrapolation* 41: 127–142.
- Santos, Myrian Sepúlveda dos. 2003. "The Brazilian Remake of the Orpheus Legend: Film Theory and the Aesthetic Dimension". *Theory, Culture and Society* 20.4: 49–69.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. 1948/1976. *Black Orpheus*. Trans. Sidney W. Allen. Paris: Presence Africaine.
- Schliephake, Christopher. 2014. "Die Blendung des Kyklopen – Antikenrezeption und postkolonialer Diskurs". *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Europäische Kulturgeschichte* 22: 13–34.
- Schliephake, Christopher. 2015. "Classicism, Cultural Mobility, Hybridity, and the Transnational Imagination in the Works of Reginald Shepherd". *Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics* 15: 193–208.
- Shepherd, Reginald. 2007a. *Fata Morgana*. Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press.
- Shepherd, Reginald. 2007b. *Orpheus in the Bronx: Essays on Identity, Politics, and the Freedom of Poetry*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Simonis, Annette. 2013. "Repräsentation als literarische und ästhetische Reflexionsform: Mediale Transformationen von antiker Mythologie in der Moderne und Gegenwart". In: Bent Gebert and Uwe Mayer (eds.). *Zwischen Präsenz und Repräsentation: Formen und Funktionen des Mythos in theoretischen und literarischen Diskursen*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 274–297.
- Washington, Salim. 2008. "The Avenging Angel of Creation/Destruction: Black Music and the Afro-Technological in the Science Fiction of Henry Dumas and Samuel R. Delany". *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2.2: 235–253.
- Witcover, Paul. 1999. "A Fabulous, Formless Darkness: Some Infernal Remarks on Samuel R. Delany". *The New York Review of Science Fiction* 11: 8–10.
- Wroe, Ann. 2011. *Orpheus: The Song of Life*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Zapf, Hubert. 2002. *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie: Zur kulturellen Funktion imaginativer Texte an Beispielen des amerikanischen Romans*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Zapf, Hubert. 2008. "New Directions in American Literary Studies: Ecocriticism and the Function of Literature as Cultural Ecology". In: Ansgar Nünning and Jürgen Schläger (eds.). *English Studies Today: Recent Developments and New Directions*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier. 139–164.