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Rosamond: A Look at the Importance of Mythology

In the true story of King Henry the II's mistress many troubadours, poets and playwrights found an ample muse. Rosamond's story--though quite simple at the time--was shaped and changed by troubadours and minstrels to a tale of entertainment and legend. Eventually in the sixteenth century it found a home in the pen of Samuel Daniel and then in the eighteenth in the stories of Joseph Addison and John Brand. Addison and Brand have a similar viewpoint when it comes to how to tell the story of Rosamond, which is far from the truth, because they wrote happy endings. The three versions, *The Complaint of Rosamond*, by Samuel Daniel (1592), *On Illicit Love*, by John Brand (1775), and *Rosamond; an Opera* (1707), by Joseph Addison, all provide an opportunity to scrutinize the legend of Rosamond. Telling the tale though is not their only focus, as you read the stories, the use of Greek Mythology brings to attention the various ways that Rosamond is treated whether good or bad. What is to be examined is the way the authors use Greek mythology in their version of the tale. Why do the authors utilize these myths? How do the myths assist in the telling of Rosamond's tale? I argue that by embedding the Greek Myths into their tales each author adds depth to Rosamond's personality and expands upon the way each author views the story of Rosamond. I will show how the authors wish to tell Rosamond's story has them turning to the Myths to assist in the explanation. Samuel Daniel's version has him employing the Myths to emphasize that Rosamond was raped and murdered. John Brand uses the Myth's to discuss Rosamond's story after she has died to show a more

peaceful Rosamond story. Joseph Addison uses the Myths to add an entertainment quality to his “Opera.”

Virgil B. Heltzel gives an excellent summary of Rosamond’s history.

“Rosamond Clifford, destined to be known to posterity as “Fair Rosamond” because of her exceeding beauty, became the mistress of Henry the Second, King of England, by whom she had two sons. To protect her from the increasing jealousy of his consort, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, King Henry secluded her in a palace which he had caused to be built at or near Woodstock—a bower surrounded by an intricate labyrinth or maze to which he alone (and sometimes a keeper) had the clue. Taking advantage of Henry’s absence from England, the Queen by one means or another threaded the maze, and, confronting Rosamond, compelled her to choose between a dagger and a bowl of poison in expiation of her sin. Rosamond chose to drink the poison, and her body was interred at Godstow Nunnery. For her act of treachery Queen Eleanor was imprisoned by the king for the remainder of his reign” (Hertzell 1).

Samuel Daniel’s version of Rosamond’s story is told from Rosamond’s viewpoint, which is why Daniel titles it, *The Complaint of Rosamond*. In it, Rosamond tells of how she is a victim of the King and Queen. The Kings desperate need to possess Rosamond results in her rape. The Queens rival jealousy results in Rosamond’s death. Stephen Guy-Bray writes that, “Fame is what Rosamond wants, but only if she can control it: she feels that Fame should report what she wants it to report, rather than the truth” (341). It is true that Rosamond wants her story told in a certain way, she admits that fact; but since this story is her autobiography she should have the right to control how her story is told. The totality of her argument though is that she wants to rectify the

problem of her grave story almost being lost to time. To do that Rosamond will utilize the tragic stories of other Greek Mythology characters to use their stories as pre-established examples of what happened to her; if she happens to impart some wisdom to others that is also good.

Rosamond says to Daniel,

“Then write quoth shee the ruine of my youth,
Report the downe-fall of my slippry state:
Of all my life reucale the simple truth,
To teach others, what I learnt too late” (Daniel 3).

Guy-Bray’s point of view is close to what Rosamond says but according to her, from this fame, she also wants to teach a lesson to young girls, so the same does not happen to them; the lesson being that girls should be cautious around powerful men and conniving older women who give bad advice. By imparting this wisdom to others who would read it, Rosamond will have her story told and reawakened by the Muses. The “fame” that she gains from it may help her to convince Charon to allow her to cross over because she then has proof that she was victimized by everyone in her life and in her afterlife.

According to the tone of Daniel’s story, she has been forgotten to the annals of time and she must use Daniel to finally have the truth be told. From Daniel’s own writing he says that, she cannot allow him to sleep until her story has been truthfully presented to the public.

“Although I knowe thy just lamenting Muse,
Toylde in th’ affliction of thine owne distresse...
Delia may happe to deynge to read our story...
Where by thou might’st be grac’d, and I be blest” (Daniels 2).

She is the victim from beginning to end. The Muses make her a victim by allowing her story to be forgotten. She wants to point out that though the Muses seem to have abandoned both her and Daniel by writing her story they will both now become known. She will no longer toil in the darkness of obscurity and she hopes that by writing her story Charon, the guardian of the doorway to the afterlife, will finally allow her to cross over. Rosamond tells Daniel that she is in torment in the depths of Hell:

“From the horror of infernall deepes,
My poore afflicted ghost comes here to plaine it,
My soule is nowe denied,
Her transport to the sweet Elisean rest” (Daniel 1-2).

She has been denied passage to the afterlife. She uses the Grecian word of Heaven, Elysian, to promote the idea of the peaceful rest that the afterlife should be and so far has been denied her. Rosamond has been raped, murdered and placed in a sinful position according to church law. A lady of standing, and possibly one that was at court to find a husband, needed to remain pure for her intended. The ability to confess her sins on a deathbed or in the church as a weekly ritual is kept from Rosamond because the Queen forced her to commit suicide and the King kept her locked away in a labyrinth. The forced silence and forced death are two sins that cannot be absolved by a priest when you are dead. This makes her into an unvirtuous and unclean woman in the eyes of the church. Unworthy of joining either Heaven or the Elysian Fields she has been trapped in Limbo since she died. Because she has toiled so long in Limbo without anyone helping her gain retribution, she turns to the Myths to help give explanation as to how she was wronged while alive and how she is still being wronged after death.

Rosamond thinks that nobody knows her true story because it has lain dormant so long in the annals of time, forgotten by even the Muses of inspiration. “No muse suggests the pittie of my case, Each penne dooth ouerpasse my just complaint” (Daniel 2). Daniel writes that Rosamond is first denied the beauty of Elysium by Charon, the first sentry to the underworld. “Caron denies me with the rest. And says my soule can never passe that River...Rosamond hath little left her but her name” (Daniel 2). Rosamond is bereft of the purity of soul that the period’s religion would give her to pass over without sin. As far as it could be known Rosamond did not have last rites or proper internment. She was buried at Godstow nunnery but, “Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, upon a visitation to Godstow in 1911, found the nuns performing special rites over Rosamond’s body, ordered it to be removed from the church” (Hertzel 1). Rosamond needs her tale to be told by Daniel through the idea of inspiration from the Muses so that her eternal soul can finally rest. Her virginity was taken from her and then her life, Rosamond just wants to be redeemed and exonerated by someone and Rosamond has chosen Samuel Daniel to fulfill that task.

Caron or Charon, is the ferryman for the souls of the dead. He carries the souls, of all who have payment, over the river Styx and Acheron to deliver them to the afterlife whether it is the Elysian Fields or Tartarus. In ancient times people made sure that their loved ones were buried with coins over their eyes or in their mouth so that they would have payment to give Charon so he would carry them over the River Styx (Evslin 37). Without that payment the souls are forced to wander on the other side of the river for a hundred years (Hamilton 238). Rosamond becomes one of the wandering souls without purpose or rest not because of the lack of a coin but lack of purity of soul. The Queen forced Rosamond to commit suicide by drinking poison.”She forc’d me take the poyson she had brought: To end the lyfe that had her so abused,

And free her feares, and ease her jealous thought” (Daniel 15). The Queen then had her body put in a grave not on holy ground and had not allowed Rosamond to have a priest perform last rites over her body. “My body found a grave where to containe it, A sheete could hide my face, but not my sin” (Daniel 2). This left her bereft of any comfort in the afterlife. Rosamond says that her soul cannot cross the water, meaning that she is the same as all the other souls that are lost and do not have proper payment for Charon, and she does not deserve what has been heaped upon her. She only has her name left to help her try to reverse the injustice done to her. She hopes that it is enough to sway Daniel to her side and encourage him to tell her story so she can have her soul finally taken to Elysian or Heaven. Rosamond is telling Samuel Daniels as simply as she can that she has been denied transport, by Charon, to the afterlife. This is her last chance to be allowed to pass over, as time has wiped out the memory of her story and she needs someone to tell the truth and set things right in not just her world but his as well.

Rosamond claims that not even the Muses remember her. They cannot give her story to some writer for inspiration to free her soul because her story has been lost to time. Rosamond says, “No Muse suggests the pittie of my case, Each Penne dooth overpasse my just complaint” (Daniel 2). She is upset that the wrong done to her by the Queen continues to remain unknown. The Queen got to confess to a priest and have her sins absolved when she died, but that release was denied Rosamond because she not only committed suicide, a sin to the church, but she could not talk to a priest and be forgiven as well. The Queen is remembered and has passed to the happy afterlife, while she must spend her time in limbo denied eternal rest.

“Shores wife is grac’d, and passes for a Saint;

Her legend justifies her foule attaint;

Her well-told tale did such compassion finde,

That she is pass'd, and I am left behind" (Daniel 2).

Rosamond only has her name left to her and she must use that hoping that Daniel will recognize it and help her reveal her plight. Since she has been ignored by the Muses and has found her own way to inspire someone to write her story, she can hopefully start her trip to the other side.

Now that Rosamond has decided that Daniel is the best one to write her story, she starts to explain the real reason why she thinks she was targeted by the King to become his mistress. Rosamond admits to Daniel that she knew her beauty was going to cause her problems. "My birth had honor, and my beautie fame: Nature and Fortune ioyn'd to make me blest"(Daniel 3). Rosamond presents her beauty as a fact but it is a blessing of nature not something she has control over; so, she can't help what may happen to her because of it. Rosamond goes on to say that because of her beauty she caught the eye of the King while she was at court. King Henry was a great conqueror so he did the same with her. "For after all his victories in Fraunce, Tryumphing in the honour of his deedes...Against all which my chastitiy opposes, The field of honour, virtue neuer loses"(Daniel 5). Rosamond is asking what she could do against a man whose his occupation is to conquer all he comes across. Rosamond says she thought at first she was safe from the King's advances: but then a matron of the court under the guise of being a kind wise woman told Rosamond to give in to the King. "A seeming Matrone, yet a sinfull monster, As by her words the chaster sort may conster" (Daniel 6). This matron did not stop with just telling Rosamond to allow the King to rape her. Rosamond talks with this older, past her prime matron, who tells Rosamond that it is too late for her to reap the rewards of youth but Rosamond can have everything she didn't.

"Reade in my face the ruines of my youth,

The wracke of yeeres upon my aged brow...

But were I to beginner my youth againe,
I would redeeme the time I spent in vayne” (Daniel 7).

This matron continues to tell her how she will be showered with riches and this will be her comfort in old age when she is wrinkled and alone; just like she is. “Thy pleasures want shall be supply’d with gold, Cold age dotes most when the heate of youth is gone” (Daniel 8). Thanks to this matron, Rosamond is forced into a situation where she no longer has control of her life; this is the beginning of her life as a victim of circumstance. Rosamond reflects upon all this matron says to her and comes to the realization that it does not matter what she wants if the King wants her, he will have her. “He is my King and may constraine me, Whether I yeelde or not I live defamed” (Daniel 9). This entire story that Rosamond is telling Daniel is rife with her having her choices taken away from her. She goes on to say that she accepted her fate and agrees to become the King’s mistress. Before the first time they are together the King gives Rosamond a gift, “The day before the night of my defeature, He greets me with a Casket richly wrought: So rare, that arte did seeme to striue with nature” (Daniel 10). On this casket are images of women being raped. The first that she identifies is Amymone.

Rosamond compares herself to Amymone, the girl that the god Poseidon/Neptune raped. The story of Amymone is that she was drawing water when a satyr saw her and began to chase her to rape her. Amymone prays to be saved by Poseidon/Neptune. The God does intervene by throwing his trident at the satyr and hits a stone thereby scaring the satyr away. Poseidon/Neptune was so taken with Amymone’s beauty that he then claimed her as his own. When he pulled his trident out of the stone water poured out and created the fountain that then flowed as a river (Hamilton 302, Buxton 159). There is one alternate story where Amymone is hunting and hits a satyr when he then wants to rape her. Amymone prays to Neptune to save her.

Neptune drives the satyr away and then claims Amymone for himself. There is still a fountain/river created in her honor (Trzaskoma 266). When reading the original story of Amymone, it can be interpreted that while the satyr wanted to rape her, Neptune only lay with her. This was then followed with a gift of gratitude from the God. A river of water that is closer to her home. Ira Clark notes that, “Daniel has modified the Amymone story in order to sustain the moral allegory of his own myth. He has diverted a tale usually interpreted pleasurably (the rewards of prostitution) into one exemplifying the brutal rape of a subject by a god or prince and the suffering of the victim” (156). Clark is interpreting the story as one where Amymone gave herself to the God in gratitude of being saved and he in turn gave her a gift, a river, the reward of her prostitution. Judging by the terminology that Daniel uses on behalf of Rosamond, she was brutalized against her will just like Amymone.

Amymone how she with Neptune stoue.

Amymone old Danaus Fayrest daughter,

As she was fetching water all alone

At Lerna: whereas Neptune came and caught her,

From whom she striu'd and struggled to be gone,

Beating the ayre with cryes and pittious mone.

But all in vaine, with him sh'is forc'd to goe:

Tis Shame that men should use poore maydens so” (10).

Daniel makes Amymone a victim of rape in order to give continuity to the story he is telling. He needs to show, on Rosamond's behalf, that forcing any maiden is an act of brutality against her. When reading the myth from the sources that were found, Amymone was taken by Neptune, or raped; that a gift was given is not the point. Ira Clark wants the reader to think that the sex was a

mutual one, which both parties were willing, or at the very least Amymone was willing to have sex in order to get her payment of the river. It is interesting that Daniel chooses Amymone because “the story of Amymone is obscure even in classical art and literature; Daniels is one of only a very few authors after the classical period who refers to the story” (Guy-Bray 346). That he not only finds but then uses Amymone’s story shows how much he wants to prove, on Rosamond’s behalf, that Rosamond is a woman who was misused.

The other brutalized woman that Daniel utilizes is Io. Daniel relates Io’s plight to Rosamond’s and Amymone’s as well. They are all women who were taken, used, brutalized, and then discarded by men. “Figured I found within the other squares: Transformed Io, loves deerly loved...turn’d to a Heiffer” (11). These two stories and possibly others are on a casket that Henry gives to Rosamond before he takes her. Io is a princess and a girl that caught the eye of Zeus like so many before her. In some stories Io is a virgin priestess in one of Hera’s temples. Zeus’s attentions still caused Hera to turn her wrath upon this poor innocent girl. In order to make Io safe from Hera, Zeus turned her into a heifer and not just any heifer but the most beautiful black and white heifer to have been created. Hera knowing what Zeus had done asked him to make the heifer a gift to her; he could not say no because that would expose what he had done. Hera, knowing that Zeus would try to change Io back and sleep with her as soon as her back was turned, she placed Argos, a creature with one hundred eyes, to watch over her new gift. Zeus seeing how he cannot change Io back without proving to Hera what he had done, sends Hermes, the swiftest and most cunning of the Gods to free Io. (Bullfinch 23, Buxton 71& 98, Evslin 112-13, Ovid 38-47,). The story of Io is the one that is the closest to the story of Rosamond. Both have had their ability to speak for themselves taken away from them. In the book by Ovid it is written, “for a time [she] feared speaking, lest she moo, and so quite timidly

regained her speech” (45). Within this timidity it shows how Io needs a champion to help her tell her story, just like Rosamond. Daniel takes it upon himself to become both of their voices. By adding Amymone a woman who has toiled in obscurity and ignored by the Muses as well, Daniel creates a platform for Rosamond to stand up and tell her story so all may know it and learn from their mistakes. The high and mighty King is not to be disobeyed. The Queen becomes vengeful and tries to hurt the maiden. The difference is that Hera forgives Io and Elenor kills Rosamond. Both scenes depicted on the casket are vile choices to Rosamond. In either one she loses her purity and virtue and becomes a soiled woman. An interesting point is that Daniel writes a whole paragraph devoted to Amymone the obscure girl, while Io, who is better documented in Ovid, a text Daniel would have read in that time period, only gets one line. It can be supposed that since Io is a more read story, the readers of Daniel’s poem would know her story. Amymone is a story that may not have been as well known, so Daniel adds a longer passage for her than he did Io.

Regardless of the story used, both point out that Rosamond is an innocent being coerced or convinced by this matron into sleeping with the King. He is a powerful man and he would have most likely killed her anyway if she said no. It should be noted that Daniel is the first recorded writer to write about Rosamond since the actual century that it happened in. Having chosen Rosamond and then the subsequent examples of Io and Amymone one can wonder if Daniel was trying to bring to light the woman’s plight in the current world.

He may have also been using these women to put all of their souls at rest; as the truths of their rapes are brought to light. It is said that the truth shall set you free and that is exactly what Daniel is trying to do. He is using the story of Rosamond to help show that women have always been forced by man and that the woman cannot protest the eventual debasement of their bodies. Even under the guise of being kind to the woman the respective God in each story just takes what

he wants from them and then leaves. Amydone was “paid” with a fountain and Io became the mother to a God in Egypt. Rosamond receives as her reward the jealousy of the Queen and death. But truly looking at all three events from the viewpoint of the woman shows that the gifts are not welcome considering what they went through to receive them. This is why Rosamond wants her story told, as stated earlier she wants other young women to learn from her mistakes and by adding the other two women as examples with her own story it shows that the prize is not worth the pain they must endure to receive it.

The final Greek Myth that is utilized is the Minotaur. This creature was created because the queen, under a spell, defiled herself with a bull using a complicated system of ropes and pulleys. “When Daedalus the exile arrived, she [Pasiphae] asked him for help. He built for her a wooden cow and covered it with the hide of a real cow” (Trzaskoma 229). This bull was no ordinary bull though; he was a gift to King Minos by Poseidon for all the victories Minos had dedicated to him. “Poseidon had given this bull to Minos in order that he should sacrifice it to him, but Minos could not bear to slay it and had kept it for himself” (Hamilton 157). The creature that she gave birth to as a result of the escapade was an oversized man with the head of a large bull. He was not just any man though, he was vicious and deadly and because of that he was locked away in a labyrinth that he could never find his way out of. The labyrinth was so complex that the man that built it around the Minotaur just barely found his own way out. Another country, which had been conquered in battle, was forced to send tributes each year of seven boys and seven girls for the Minotaur to eat. The Minotaur is eventually killed by Theseus when he is sent as part of the annual tribute sacrifice.

Rosamond is locked away in a labyrinth or more accurately a bower with a garden maze around it. There is only a silken chord that can lead to the center where she is being kept. “Heere

I inclos'd from all the world a sunder, The Minotaure of shame kept for disgrace: (12) Rosamond believes that she has committed so terrible a crime that she has to be hidden away so no one will see her shame. She has disgraced her family and herself for giving into the King even though she had no true choice in the matter. She also points out that at the same time she is so precious to the King he wants to keep her locked away like the priceless jewel to him that she is. "H'is driuen to devise some subtile way, How he might safeliest keepe so rich a pray" (Daniel 12). The maze and bower that the King kept Rosamond in was as beautiful as Rosamond and did not lack any comfort; for the King wanted Rosamond to be happy in the dwelling, the gilded cage, he had created for her.

"Within the closed bosome of which frame,
That seru'd a Center to that goodly round:
Were lodgings, with a garden to the same,
With sweetest flowers that eu'r adorn'd the ground.
And all the pleasures that delight hath found" (Daniel 12).

So while Rosamond sees herself as the Minotaur, the King keeps and sees her as a precious jewel. This created a contradiction within the two stories. While one character is beloved and treasured the other one is a feared monster that eats human flesh. This is how Rosamond's story runs parallel to the story of the Minotaur; both are in situations that they are unable to escape and did not ask to be put into. They are both put into lives of semi-servitude. Rosamond serves the King as his mistress and the Minotaur serves as a threat to all the countries that are yet to be conquered. The Minotaur is also not given any choice in his diet; he is left starving for most of the year and then when he gets the annual tributes he is too hungry to not become a cannibal. In these two stories there are nothing but characters that are victims; the tributes sent to be eaten by

the Minotaur, the Minotaur who was fed only once a year and because of this was starved to the point of insanity that he would eat anything, to Rosamond who was never given an avenue of escape because she did not know where the silken thread lay, all characters, Rosamond and Myths alike, had their direct choices taken from them.

The King has attached a nearly invisible silk chord that only he and a few attendants could find. Though Rosamond has a silk string she cannot see, the Minotaur does not even have that hope of escape. The only time a rope of escape is brought into the labyrinth is when Theseus enters to kill him. Somehow the King has managed to hide the silken chord from Rosamond and, for a while, the Queen. Unfortunately the Queen finds the thread by following one of the maidens tending Rosamond and follows it to the center where she finds and poisons Rosamond.

“In absence of the King, to wreake her wrong,

With such reuenge as she desired long.

The Laberinth she entred by that threed

That seru'd a conduct to my absent Lord” (Daniel 15).

Rosamond knew that she was at the mercy of not just the King that had put her into the inescapable labyrinth but of anyone else that finds their way in. Rosamond and the Minotaur both die terrible deaths. These deaths are inflicted upon them by humans that did not place any value upon any other life but their own. The other parallel between the two stories are the roles of the Queen and Theseus. While one is a hero the other is the villain: an odd position to be placed in at the center of the labyrinth. Both of the people that enter the labyrinth have intent to kill who is at the center. The Queen has poison to kill her Minotaur and Theseus has a sword to kill The Minotaur of legend. The goal of both of the people entering the labyrinth is to disperse with the one in the middle that they perceive is standing in the way of their happiness. Rosamond

and the Minotaur only thought that they had the choice placed in front of them. This is the pain that Rosamond shares with Daniel as she tells her story to him. As she tells her tale to Daniel he realizes that her story is not one to be treated with beautiful and flowery phrases and words, but with examples of what the past had to offer in the form of the ancient Greek Myths. With this Rosamond finally leaves him alone to write, *The Complaint of Rosamond*.

Virgil Hertzell discovered in his search that, “although we have no explicit evidence regarding the nature of the complete story as it may have existed in oral tradition in the time of Queen Elizabeth, we may notice the components of the legend as it had appeared in printed record before William Warner and Samuel Daniel decided to make it the subject of a narrative poem” (122). Again the evidence that is pointed out that it will forever be impossible to have true stories before a time when history was chronicled as diligently as we do now. A fact to be noted is that Samuel Daniel was the first author to revive and put to paper the story of Rosamond since it occurred in the twelfth century.