



La *Minotaura*, the Female Minotaur: Aida Toledo's Version of the Classical Myth

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ABSTRACT: The poetry of the Guatemalan poet Aida Toledo, from its beginning, breaks away from the masculine and feminine images created and recreated through centuries by the owner of words and power, man. Toledo, as a consequence of her reflections on gender, questions, changes and pulverizes certain qualities considered to be unique and essential in defining each of the sexes. The poet starts with the Greek myths, as she considers them to be the sacred pillars in building the Western Culture. Aida Toledo, not satisfied with using the sword of extermination against the eternal masculine and feminine values, uses the ashes from that fire as fertilizer to sprout new life, a life that time and space will shape into new beings, new male and female Minotaur.

KEYWORDS: Female; Claims; Protagonism; Classic; Greek; Mythology

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RESUMEN: *La Minotaura: Aida Toledo y su versión de los mitos clásicos.* - La poesía de la escritora guatemalteca Aída Toledo, desde sus inicios, rompe con las imágenes masculinas y femeninas creadas y recreadas a través de los siglos, por el dueño de la palabra y el poder, el hombre. Toledo, como consecuencia de sus reflexiones de género, cuestiona, pulveriza y cambia ciertas cualidades y mitos considerados únicos y esenciales en la definición de cada uno de los sexos. La poeta empieza con los mitos griegos, por considerarlos sagrados pilares sobre los cuales se construye la cultura occidental. Aida Toledo no se conforma con empuñar la espada de la exterminación contra los eternos valores masculinos y femeninos. Usa las cenizas de dicho fuego como abono para hacer brotar nueva vida, una vida a la que el tiempo y el espacio irán creando y moldeando nuevos seres. Es así como nace su *Minotaura*, la protagonista femenina que estaba ausente en el mito clásico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Mujer; Reclamación; Protagonismo; Clásico; Griega; Mitología

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Beginning with the publication of her first collection of verses in the volume entitled *Brutal Batalla de Silencios* (Toledo, 1990), the poetry of the Guatemalan writer Aída Toledo, not only breaks away from the image of the female created by masculine writers throughout history, but also from the masculine image established, by those that controlled the pen, as an unquestionable truth about

themselves, the sacred truth that they perpetuated for centuries as the basic norm of the literary canon. Toledo questions, attacks, and lays waste to certain masculine myths that, for over two thousand years, have been considered strong and sacred pillars of masculinity. These are the Greco-Latin myths, on which are based the foundations and values of western culture. In addition, in *Brutal Batalla de*

Silencios, the writer does not content herself merely with brandishing the sword of extermination. She far surpasses this, breaking with the eternal essence of the masculine and feminine. From the ashes of the exterminating fire a new life rises, a life to which time and space will give a new form, a new body, a new soul, a new Minotaur and the new female Minotaur, the *Minotaura*. By creating her *Minotaura*, a being whose existence had been denied in classical mythology, Aída Toledo alters completely the meaning of Greek mythology. The sex and perception of the creator change, as does the act of creation and the space inhabited by the beings created.

The title of Aída Toledo's first collection of poems, *Brutal Batalla de Silencios (Brutal Battle of Silences)*, points to a reality that emanates from and takes shape in a void that predates sound. It points to a time that predates the demarcation of the senses, to a time that predates the existence of the word itself. It is precisely what is not said that engenders this reality. The *batalla* ("battle") is not a product of a declared war, loud and deafening; it is the product of an apparent calm that conceals the cosmic explosion of the universe. As in a storm, destruction and extermination are not wrought by noisy thunder. The unannounced bolt of lightning whose mere presence is, in itself, destruction, unleashes them. But, how can this reality be communicated through the poetic act without being mentioned? This is why the poet is forced to create the *Minotaura*, the feminine part of the Minotaur, in order to complete the myth and give it meaning. The male Minotaur cannot exist without his *Minotaura*, in the same way that man cannot exist without woman: each one exists within the other. As Jung says: "In the unconscious of every man there is hidden a feminine personality, and in that of every woman a masculine personality" (Jung, 1975: 284). The two together form a totality, a totality that has destroyed the existential hierarchies, including the sexual hierarchy, at the same time that it has liberated itself from the boundaries of time and space. Aída Toledo has chosen to follow a very different path from the one taken many years ago by the Spanish playwright, Ramón María del Valle Inclán, when he created his *esperpento*, a deformation of reality that emphasizes its grotesque and absurd traits.

Valle Inclán wanted to demonstrate that the classical Greek poets, dramas and revered models of greatness lacked meaning in the Spain of his time. Due to this and to his conviction that he would not be able to change those sacred myths, he decided to change the viewpoint, the lens through which we view and approach those myths. According to the words of the writer, Ramón María del Valle Inclán, "Los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos cóncavos dan el esperpento" (Valle Inclán, 1976: 106). Max Estrella, the main character of the play *Luces de Bohemia*, is blind and a poet, as was,

according to legend, Homer, the Greek troubadour from the 8th century B.C. (Montanelli, 1971: 31). Yet, time and space have glorified the latter and heaped scorn on the former. Aída Toledo, through the creation of the *Minotaura*, solves the problem of the distance between classical Greece and the present without altering the meaning of the original myth. As Lucrecia Méndez de Penedo points out:

Aída Toledo diseña la arquitectura laberíntica -precisa y lúdica- de su discurso poético, y lo sitúa en una realidad a veces más extraña que el sueño. Recorridos sin aparente salida, poblados por sus pequeños fantasmas y fantasías, proporcionan la reflexión aguda y desmitificadora no acerca del eterno, sino más bien del contemporáneo femenino, desde una perspectiva insólitamente irónica. (Méndez de Penedo in Toledo, 1994: 5)

What Toledo does, as Méndez de Penedo has pointed out, is to take the classical myth as the point of departure, updating it and transporting it into the present reality.

In the first poem where the recently created *Minotaura* appears in *Brutal Batalla de Silencios*, she has her own voice, and like any other lover, she demands the presence of her mate, the Minotaur. She does not bother to introduce or identify herself. She takes for granted that the reader knows who she is, and from the very first time she appears and speaks in her own voice, in a natural and direct way, without giving us any explanations, we know very well who she is. When we first come upon her she is fully involved in the search for the one she loves. To make sure that we help her in her search, and that we know exactly who she is looking for, she describes him to us in detail. So, in this poem, it is the Minotaur who must be introduced and who must justify his presence. In this case the *Minotaura* undertakes the search or mythical journey, traditionally assumed by the classical male hero. It will be the female protagonist who receives and answers the call to adventure, the one who moves the action along (Campbell, 1968).

¿dónde está?
indago
se fue
o está escondido
en las mil bocas de su casa
¿dónde está?
su ojo
pestañado y duro
¿dónde?
¿por qué no escucho
su bufar ronco
o
el violento pezuñar
de su retorno?
(Toledo, 1990: 30)

In this description the author also creates new vocabulary in order to give the reader a true image of the new Minotaur. In order to describe his heavily lashed eyes she does not use the attested adjective *pestañoso*; she uses *pestañado*. Normally the adjective *pestañoso*, and in this case *pestañado*, is used to refer to animals. This means that Toledo is talking about the most well-known version of the Greek myth, the one in which the monster has the head of a bull and the body of a man. The author describes the return, or the movement of the Minotaur as a *violento pezuñar* or a violent beating of the hooves. The verb *pezuñar* is not attested in the dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language either, but it forms part of the creation of Aída Toledo. The monster uses his hooves in a violent manner to go from one place to another. Toledo, when describing the movement as *violento pezuñar* is referring to the lesser-known version of the myth, the one in which the monster has the head of a human and the body of a bull. This means that the author is presenting us with the two versions of the myth, with the very specific purpose of making us question the veracity of the myth itself. The two versions of the myth will not only create doubt within the reader regarding which of the two versions is correct, but will also cause the reader to question the very existence of the Minotaur. Toledo draws into question the credibility of the classical myth, at the same time that she legitimizes her new myth, her creation, by using non-existent words, her own new words. Toledo emulates the Creator of the universe in the book of Genesis. First the word becomes flesh, and through it, God is able to give shape to the universe. Aída Toledo, creates her new words, and through her new words, creates her universe, her story, her new myth.

In this first poem, as we have stated, the poet does not devote any time to introducing the *Minotaura*, justifying her existence, or explaining her purpose in the text. The ease and artlessness with which the *Minotaura* presents herself at no time lead us to question her presence or her search for her mate. The *Minotaura* is claiming her time and space, a time and space that she had been denied in Greek mythology, a time and space that she believes she has a right to for the mere reason that she exists.

The Greek myth, as we pointed out, is insufficient to faithfully mirror the labyrinthine reality of human existence in the present. Due to these limitations, the poet found it necessary to add another element to the myth, the *Minotaura*. It was impossible for Aída Toledo to see herself reflected in the old classical myth for a number of reasons. In the Greek myth, the Minotaur is a monster, the product of the sin of Pasophae, the wife of King Minos of Crete. She had sexual relations with the bull that Poseidon, the God of the Sea, had sent to her husband, the king. As in all the stories produced by the masculine pen, the central theme of the story seems to be centered around the

feminine sin. Pasophae, because she fell in love with a bull, is punished by conceiving a monster, a monster as hideous as her own sin. In her womb there will grow a being that is damned, that will be half man and half beast, a son that will remind her incessantly of the depths to which she fell, and of the monstrosity of her sin. The themes of guilt, the settling of scores, and revenge, according to Toledo, lessen the weight born by the real tragedies that such a myth represents: that of the duality within every human being, part spirit and part beast, and that of existence as a labyrinth. The poet, by creating the *Minotaura* reestablishes the true meaning of the myth. Men and women, both, assume the human reality of two opposing forces locked in battle within the very depths of their being, throughout their labyrinthine existence, without ever arriving at a balance. Men and women, both, upon accepting this duality as an essential part of human existence, cease to perceive it as a bestiality, as an imperfection. This does away with value judgments regarding the human existence, and erases all the heroic and tragic elements we associate with our protagonism in this life. Existence is perceived in a very different way. Heroes and heroines disappear, as do the redeemers and the redeemed. Human life passes without a trace, without glory, without suffering or lamentation, on the same level as all existence not contaminated by the human mind, by reason.

The Minotaur, half man and half beast, cannot simply be reduced to a gender. He is, as we have said, the representation of every human being: mind and body, instinct and reason. The Minotaur is both masculine and feminine, man and woman. If he represented only the male, mankind as opposed to humankind, women would be excluded from the human race. Woman, incapable of thought, would be reduced to the level of a mere animal, who unlike the male Minotaur, is unable to grasp awareness of the labyrinthine nature of her existence:

Qué lejos la luz y
 Qué cerca la sombra
 la nada
 el vacío
 el saber que no eres sino punto lejano
 perdido
 entre millones
 de iguales
 solitarios
 minúsculos
 minotauros.

(Toledo, 1990: 31)

The Minotaur, as Aída Toledo presents him in this poem, is as aware of the tragic nature of his existence as his human brothers. Is his female companion also aware of it? This is precisely the question that masculine writers have refused to consider throughout the centuries, and that Toledo refuses to

ignore. The mere presence of the *Minotaura* is not enough. The writer wants to create a *Minotaura* of substance, in the words of Unamuno (1974),¹ a being of flesh and bone (*carne y hueso*) that will become part of the myth. As we have seen, in the beginning, the *Minotaura* created by Aída Toledo in *Brutal batalla de silencios* exists in the Minotaur's shadow. She continually searches for her mate because she draws her life from him and is reflected in him. Toledo is not satisfied with her creation, with the dependency of the creature she has engendered. Toledo once more imitates the Creator in the Book of Genesis, deciding to create a being in her own "image and likeness". She achieves her purpose in her next collection of poems, *Realidad más extraña que el sueño*, published in 1994, by endowing her *Minotaura* with a free will of her own and the disposition to exercise it. Her creature is a being willing to affirm her existence and decide her fate through the protagonism of her actions in forging a path through the labyrinthine reality she inhabits. The *Minotaura* created by Toledo will be the master of her own history, a history that she herself will create in the second part of the collection, a history that will not only have the strength and mythological power of the classical Minotaur, but will surpass it. It would appear that to alleviate Adam's boredom, the biblical Creator made Eve from Adam's rib. Man could endure his life only in union with a companion. If God created man in his own image and likeness, the implication is that the Creator also had need of a companion. But unlike the biblical Creator, Aída Toledo does not want the creature of her creation to depend on a companion. In her own likeness, Toledo wants her *Minotaura* to have the strength sufficient to survive on her own, to reveal herself, and to be who she is.

In the first verses of *Realidad más extraña que el sueño*, dedicated to the myth of the Minotaur, Aída Toledo presents the reader with the myth unaltered in any way, as we have known it for thousands of years:

Monstruo mitológico
Mitad hombre
Mitad toro
Muerto por Teseo
En el laberinto
¿Y yo?
(Toledo, 1994: 47)

After the introduction of the well-known character, the Minotaur, the poetic voice/the *Minotaura* realizes that once more she has been forgotten by the writer, and so she asks "And where am I?". With this "And where am I", she not only shows surprise that, as such an essential part of the myth, her importance has been overlooked, but she also asserts her existence. She can only ask the

question because she exists. Once more, the word creates and affirms existence. There is no answer, but this does not matter. In the next poem the *Minotaura* takes control of the word and incorporates her version of the story into the myth. She tells us about the love triangle that exists between the Minotaur, Theseus and the *Minotaura*:

Teseo entró por mí
Por mi mató
Deseosa
Noche a noche
Lo esperé.
(Toledo, 1994: 48)

With this version of the story, the *Minotaura* denies the classic myth. According to her version, Theseus, the son of Aegeus, King of Athens, did not enter the labyrinth to kill the Minotaur and liberate his kingdom from the tribute, seven youths and seven maidens, they had to pay King Minos of Crete to feed the monster. Nor did he enter the labyrinth moved by his love for princess Ariadne, daughter of Minos, as the classic myths suggests (Murray, 1995: 267–268). Theseus entered the labyrinth to make love to the *Minotaura*, and for her he killed, in the same way that, according to the Argentinean writer Julio Cortázar, Ariadne killed when she gave the hero a thread to follow out of the labyrinth:

La Ariadna de Cortázar ama a su hermano, el Minotauro, pero no podrá llegar a consumir ese amor incestuoso. Ella sabe que para lograr que las identidades de ambos se interpreten, su hermano deberá morir; de esa manera él quedará definitivamente instalado en ella. Por eso usa a Teseo como instrumento, aludiendo claramente al obstáculo que significa el cuerpo físico interpuesto entre la pasión amorosa y su objeto. (Planells, 1991: 198)

In Aída Toledo's interpretation, the love of Theseus for the *Minotaura* is as strong as Ariadne's love for her brother, and this love drives them both to kill. Moreover, in both cases, it is a love that is out of the ordinary. It is not love between humans; it is love between a human and an animal.

Torpe
Se aparea conmigo
Segundos después
Tendido
Junto a mis patas
Jadea.
(Toledo, 1994: 51)

As we saw in the previous poem, Theseus not only couples with the *Minotaura* but also undergoes a metamorphosis through which his human condition changes and he becomes an animal. Instead of lying down, he stretches out, and he also pants.

To comprehend the level of animalization to which the glorious hero has fallen, we need simply listen to the words of the *Minotaura*:

En los sueños de Teseo
Aparezco yo

En los míos
El Minotauro
(Con el rostro de Teseo).
(Toledo, 1994: 49)

In the poetry of Aída Toledo human images are intertwined with animal images, in a reflection of the irrational, the beast, that inhabits the human unconscious. As Jung points out, though not conscious of it, through time the human being repeats all the stages of evolution reached by the species, both upwards and downwards:

In so far as no man is born totally new, [he] continually repeats the stage of development last reached by the species, he contains unconsciously, as an 'a priori' datum, the entire psychic structure development both upwards and downwards by his ancestors in the course of ages. (Jung, 1975: 279–280)

Likewise, as Esther Seligson (1975: 9–10) says: “El sueño es la memoria del origen, el recuerdo de una pre-existencia fuera del tiempo, y el acceso a ese tiempo primordial”. This is why in the unconscious of Theseus, in his dreams, the *Minotaura* appears, and in the dreams of the *Minotaura*, the Minotaur appears, but with the face of Theseus. In the same way that the *Minotaura* cannot free herself from the face of Theseus, he cannot free himself from his *Minotaura*. As Ortega y Gasset (1964: 201) affirms: “No se trata de que el hombre está en la sociedad, sino que la sociedad está en él. Queramos o no, lo que otros hombres anteriores o de nuestro dintorno han pensado y hecho forma parte de nuestra persona, lo somos”.

The *Minotaura*, who is not able to forget her human part, seems to invoke the gods, as rational beings do, so that her lover will stop loving her and return to his humanity.

Oh dioses del vacío y
De la cuerda floja
Yo os invoco

El pobre Teseo
Musita mi nombre

Socorredlo.
(Toledo, 1994: 52)

This invocation is full of humor, irony and even mockery, when it addresses the gods as *dioses del vacío y de la cuerda floja*, gods of the circus. The divinities in this poem have plummeted to the level

of clowns. They lack credibility and respect. Their divine authority and power are reduced to a farce while their Olympus is a circus. Yet this circus is the perfect place for a better comprehension of the two worlds, the animal and the human. It is in this space that the barriers between animals and humans are eliminated, when the former behave as their superiors and the latter as their ancestors did.

The prayer of the *Minotaura* does not seem to reach the gods; it is not answered so she decides to speak to Theseus directly. It is in this moment that we realize the true motivation behind the *Minotaura*'s prayers. We, the readers, are tricked by our logical reasoning into believing that the “noble” *Minotaura* wanted Theseus, her lover, to restore himself, to embrace again a behavior appropriate of his human condition, and to forget her. However, the reasons for which the *Minotaura* wants to distance Theseus from herself are very different from what we expect. The *Minotaura* really wants to explain to Theseus that he does not satisfy her sexually, as we see in the following poem:

Nuestro efimero
Orgasmo
Continuamente
Me hace recordar
Al Minotauro
¿Lo entiendes Teseo?
(Toledo, 1994: 53)

This confession surprises us, the readers, because it comes from the *Minotaura*, not from Theseus. He appears to be quite contented with his relationship with the *Minotaura*. This outcome is significant for several reasons. First, it is the female who makes the decision, when in past literature, written by the male pen, it was the male who decided. How could the master of the word, the superior male being allow his female partner to contradict, to decide, particularly in none other than the realm of sexuality? The female, the being destined to be beneath during the sexual act, reveals her choice of partners, and selects the one who is most satisfactory. In classical literature this was taboo, never dealt with. That the male should express and proclaim his sexual preference to the ends of the earth was expected and accepted. That the female, the object on which the sexual act was perpetrated, should do the same was inconceivable. The female could not have sexual appetites, but Toledo's *Minotaura* not only has them, she celebrates her sexuality. This new mythical female hero is simply claiming and exercising the same rights exercised by her companions, the Minotaur and Theseus. Both have decided with whom they wish to couple, and she wants to do the same. For this reason the poem ends with a rhetorical question that is also an affirmation: *¿Lo entiendes Teseo?*

Classical values hold that decisions should spring from the conscious, from logic and reason, not from the appetites of the flesh. However, both Theseus and the *Minotaura* are moved by their instincts. Theseus, the classical hero, decides to make love to the *Minotaura* instead of to the beautiful Ariadne. The *Minotaura* exchanges the brave Theseus for the bestial Minotaur. As Carl Jung writes: “the fate of the individual is largely dependent on unconscious factors” (Jung, 1975: 282). In Aida Toledo’s poetry the subject and object roles of the traditional canon are inverted. The male becomes the object, and the female the subject. The *Minotaura* controls the situation, in the same way that the male, the Minotaur, and Theseus have across thousands of years. Now it is she, the *Minotaura*, the female, who decides when and with whom to make love, while the male waits, harboring hopes of being the chosen one, the object of pleasure.

The actions of the *Minotaura*, the beast, are seemingly the more intelligent and honest. When she realizes that she does not love Theseus, for though she mates with him the Minotaur occupies her mind, she finds the strength to confess the truth. According to her, the connection between her and Theseus is ephemeral, temporary. The sexual act culminates in an orgasm, an orgasm born, not of the passion that unites them, but of the memory that it provokes in her. It seems inconceivable to us that the *Minotaura* should want to separate herself from Theseus, should no longer desire to mate with him. It seems illogical that she should abandon the glorious classical hero, gifted with all the virtues of the great mythological characters and replace him with the Minotaur, but this is her decision. Perhaps, as Cortázar proposes, the *Minotaura* does not find the famous hero attractive:

Teseo es presentado como el héroe standard, el individuo sin imaginación y respetuoso de las convenciones, que está allí con una espada en la mano para matar a los monstruos, que son la excepción de lo convencional. El Minotauro es el poeta, el ser diferente a los demás, completamente libre. Por eso lo han encerrado, porque representa un peligro para el orden establecido. (Harss, 1968: 263–264)

Although the *Minotaura* wants to distance herself from Theseus, she does not want to cause him harm. Indeed, she seems to require and seek out his approval when she asks: *¿Lo entiendes Teseo?* A different interpretation is also possible, one that according to Antonio Planells is present in Cortázar’s affirmation that: “Teseo es el hombre-animal, mientras que el Minotauro es el animal-hombre. El animal que habita en Teseo mata al Minotauro (...) mientras que el hombre que habita en el Minotauro busca el suicidio” (Planells, 1991: 198). This interpretation once again changes the meaning of the

myth. In this case, the decision of the *Minotaura* may not have been sexually motivated; it may have been motivated by her sensitivity, by the spirituality of the woman who inhabits the beast. We may never know what reasons are behind the *Minotaura*’s decision, but the fact remains that she, like Pasophae, the wife of Minos and the mother of the Minotaur, preferred the beast when choosing a lover.

In the next poem, once again, Aida Toledo surprises us with more confessions from the *Minotaura*:

Sumergida
En el sueño
Inventaré de Nuevo
Al Minotauro

Al amante
Perfecto.
(Toledo, 1994: 55)

Far away from Theseus, who killed the Minotaur in order to mate with her, the *Minotaura* seemingly does not want to surround herself with memories of her ideal lover, the Minotaur, or memories of the joyous moments they shared. Instead, she is going to dream of new lovers and new adventures. She will use the dream as a vehicle to arrive at the unconscious. The *Minotaura* has decided to rid herself of all conscious traces of Theseus and return to her original state, return to the Minotaur, the being that mirrors her real image. The transformation that they had experienced in their relation, both, she and Theseus, was only apparent.

The search for perfect love or the perfect lover might have multiple interpretations, but there are two that manifest themselves clearly in the poetry of Aida Toledo, one on the philosophical level, and the other on the literary level. The Minotaur and the *Minotaura* represent the balance between mind and body. According to Ernesto Sábato, contemporary literature has imbued the human body with a new meaning, both sacred and mythical:

El sexo, por primera vez en la historia de las letras adquiere una dimensión metafísica. El derrumbe del orden establecido y la consecuente crisis del optimismo, ese famoso optimismo de la Locomotora y la Electricidad, agudiza este problema y convierte el tema de la soledad en el más tremendo de la literatura contemporánea. El amor, supremo y desgarrado intento de comunicación, se lleva a cabo mediante la carne; y así, a diferencia de lo que ocurría en la vieja novela, en que el amor era sentimental, mundano o pornográfico, ahora asume un carácter sagrado. (Sábato, 1967: 84)

In new literature the body and the sexual desires are not viewed in opposition to spirituality, but rather as a manifestation of the same. The *Minotaura*

celebrates life and love. It is her capacity to love that makes her look to the future with optimism. It is also the myth of the *Minotaura*, created by Aída Toledo, that gives the author hope for the future of the literature of women writers. Her *Minotaura* has allowed the female gender to acquire a mythological space parallel to that of its male counterpart, a space in which both sexes enjoy the same liberties and freedoms. As Lucrecia Méndez de Penedo states:

Ya no es éste [Teseo] quien busca desesperadamente a Ariadna, sino un fascinante personaje, la Minotaura, la que se regocija en los vericuetos -sobre todo de la fantasía- huyendo de un Teseo bastante desteñido a favor del Minotauro. Mitad humanos, mitad bestias, en paridad de deseo y transgresión, el laberinto no es cárcel; sino tálamo desprejuiciado. (Méndez de Penedo in Toledo, 1994: 6)

The myth of the *Minotaura*, created by Toledo, might also be interpreted from a perspective that is entirely indigenous. The deities of the indigenous cultures of the Americas, especially in Meso-America, are often represented on different levels, the divine, the human, and the animal. The hierarchies of existence in the indigenous cosmology are not as strictly defined as in the Western World. Everything forms part of the totality. The gods escape physical limitations, breaking the barriers of time and space. The representation of Coatlicue, the Mother Goddess of the Aztec Culture “es un monolito ciclópeo que muestra el contorno de una figura humana, solamente insinuada, ya que a través de ella se quiere expresar algo mucho más grandioso, que rebase todos los conceptos humanos” (Alegria, 1975: 44) [“is a massive monolith that only insinuates an outline of the human figure, because the desire is, through her, to represent something greater, something that will exceed all human concepts”]. The sculpture also has a skirt made of snakes and the claws of a bird. Coatlicue, as the creator of the universe, is the beginning and end of everything. She is the giver of life as well as the bringer of death. She is infrahuman, human and divine at the same time, like the *Minotaura*, because she is part of the “collective unconscious” that Jung explains in the following way:

This part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic or a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. (Jung, 1975: 3-4)

The *Minotaura*, like the Minotaur, has shown us through her actions she possesses all the same qualities as Coatlicue. The *Minotaura* causes the death

of the Minotaur, when Theseus kills him in order to mate with her. Her natural instincts make her reject Theseus so that she may couple with other bestial lovers. Nonetheless, she is sensitive and spiritual, as witnessed by her treatment of Theseus. Although she does not care for him as a lover, she is honest and respectful. Aída Toledo, as a *mestiza* (person with European and Native American ancestry), cannot accept the Greek myth without changing it, if she wants to see herself reflected in it. She has to adapt that myth to the other part of her being, her indigenous part. Toledo’s *Minotaura* is *mestiza*, just like her creator.

If we pursue the literary meaning of the *Minotaura*, created by Toledo, there is a possibility that she did not leave Theseus because he was not satisfactory as a lover. She left him because he represented the classic myth that Toledo wants to destroy. Theseus represents the literary tradition, the preordained hero, a slave to his role. When the *Minotaura* abandons him, Theseus becomes free and is able to leave the labyrinth. Thus, the recently created hero, the *Minotaura*, will be equally free and will be able to continue looking for her perfect lovers, just as the masculine hero has done in the past, beginning with Zeus, the father of the gods and ending with Minos, the husband of Pasophae.

NOTE

1. Toledo, as Unamuno, wants to create a character that will have the courage to confront and question the creator, as she has done. She wants a character that, like Augusto Pérez, will demand poetic justice.

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