

**Albert Lewin. *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*¹:
the Semiologic Potential of a Greek Myth²**

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To Dolors Pons, Concepción Fernández & Ernest Marcos

It is well known that in our contemporary world Greek myths have become the symbolical expression of fears, desires, intuitions, etcetera. It is not surprising, then, that in *Pandora and The Flying Dutchman*, which has often been considered the true masterpiece of surrealist cinema, Albert Lewin transforms the association of the myth of Pandora with the legend of The Flying Dutchman into a universe of signs. After all, this contemporary world, which is addicted to pragmatism, thinks of all the eccentricities of romantic love as essentially excessive and foolish. “We live in a time that has no faith in legends”, states the archaeologist and narrator of this singular story –i.e. Lewin himself-, but the great potential of an avant-garde movement such as surrealism in addition to the excellent intellectual background of this Hollywood cinema director⁴ serve an apparently lost cause, though in private many men and women might also think of it as the only thing worth defending. It should be said finally that this film was shot in 1951 in the small Catalan village of Tossa de Mar -when it was still, quiet and free of the later tourist “invasion”-, and that it certainly made Ava Gardner herself a myth⁵, while Mario Cabré, on his part, proclaimed to the world his success as a bullfighter of Eros. Notwithstanding, I beg you not to think that I am going to transform my article into a shameless collection of mundane anecdotes about both the “conqueror” –Marius Cabré- and the “conquered” –Ava Gardner-, so that, leaving aside any further prolegomena, I invite you to accompany me on this analytic journey through the symbolical world of *Pandora and The Flying Dutchman*.

The first image we see on the screen is an intense blue Mediterranean sea whose waves crash into the rocks. We can read at the same time some verses of the philosopher, mathematician, astronomer and poet of the eleventh century, Omar Khayyám, from his *Rubáiyat* –that is to say, verses in four lines: “The moving Finger writes; and having writ, / Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit / Shall lure it back to cancel half a line, / Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it”⁶. Therefore, the sea, its immensity and power, its abysses which always seem well disposed to swallow everyone approaching it -or even surrendering to it-, as well as the inexorable Destiny,

¹ Directed by: Albert Lewin. Screenplay: Albert Lewin. Director of Photography: Jack Cardiff. Art Director: John Brian. Costume Design: Beatrice Dawson. Music: Alan Rawsthorne. Film Editor: Ralph Kemplen. Special Effects: William Percy Day. Cast: Ava Gardner (Pandora Reynolds), James Mason (Hendrick van der Zee), Nigel Patrick (Stephen Cameron), Sheila Sim (Janet Fielding), Harold Warrender (Geoffrey Fielding), Mario Cabre (Juan Montalvo), Marius Goring (Reggie Demarest), John Laurie (Angus), Pamela Killino (Jenny Ford), Margarita D’Alvarez (Signora Montalvo). Production: Albert Lewin, Joseph Kaufman for Dorkway Production and Romulus Film. Length: 119 min. Colour.

² This article was published in the *Actas (Proceedings) del VII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Semiótica*. Zaragoza, 1998, pp. 476-482 and it is presented now with some changes.

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⁴ See, e.g.: Felleman, S. *Boticelli in Hollywood. The Films of Albert Lewin*. New York & London: Twayne’s Filmmakers Series. Twayne Publishers. Prentice Hall International, 1997 and Brion, P. *Albert Lewin. Un Esthète à Hollywood*. Bibliothèque du film. France. Courbevoie, 2002.

⁵ See, e.g.: A. Pastor. *Pandora al paradís blau*. Argentona: L’Aixernador, 1996.

⁶ London: Penguin Books, 1995.

which both “writes” and “prescribes”, indicate from the very beginning that this story will be one of extremes, unsuitable for tempered spirits.

Albert Lewin adopts a “ring-composition”, so that he starts with the *denouement* and, afterwards, goes back by means of a long flashback. It is quite necessary, in fact, that the audience abandon as soon as possible the Aristotelian notion of human time –something similar to a horizontal line where past, present and future follow each other in an orderly way, since they will be asked to believe in a human being who wanders endlessly after having overcome different deaths –The Flying Dutchman- as well as in a woman, Pandora, who is reincarnated in order to share a common destiny with the man she has always loved.

Indeed, on the beach lie now the corpses of a man and a woman with interlaced hands, thus indicating probably that their love was so deep as the abysses of their marine tomb. Pandora and The Flying Dutchman have accepted the supreme authority of Destiny, as described in some verses in an old manuscript which has appeared next to their corpses, and everything takes place in Hope Harbour in 1930.

There have been long philological discussions on the true subject of Hesiod’s *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. Do they deal with an early Earth which gave everything (*pan-do*) both spontaneously and gratuitously, i.e. a Pandora-Earth, or rather with an early woman who was gifted by all the Olympian gods (*pan-do*)? And, on the other hand, there have been long discussions too which aim at discovering the true meaning of “hope”⁷, the only content left in Epimetheus’ *píthos* as a result of Pandora’s irrepressible curiosity. At any rate, it seems quite evident that its positive value steadies itself in Hope Harbour, which is chosen by Albert Lewin as sign and site of a woman, Pandora, who will give everything she has, i.e. her life, for The Flying Dutchman, so that he recognizes those signs immediately to the extent of anchoring his yacht off the coast of the small village. Anyway, it is much better to go on with the story now, thus postponing any sort of conclusions.

The archaeologist and narrator, Geoffrey Fielding, has just picked up the above-mentioned manuscript where he also reads: ‘the measure of love is what one is willing to give up for it’, and he appears later in his studio house about to join together, as usual, the pieces of an ancient piece of pottery. Here is, then, another sign which in my opinion might mean that the story he is going to tell us implies an urgent restoration of ancient values amid a world which seems to have other priorities.

Hope Harbour becomes, therefore, a magic place where successive civilisations have left their traces –many statues and objects are rescued constantly from its sea- and, at the same time, causes a real syncretism of Antiquity and Modernity. Whatever the case may be, Geoffrey, who has found an old Dutch manuscript (17th century), is tired because of the difficulty of reading it and, due to the presence of a moon ‘at the full, high over the sea, erotic and disturbing’, he goes to a gipsy tavern in order to meet some friends among whom there is, of course, Pandora.

⁷ This article focuses on what the title indicates and not in all these aspects. However, in the excellent edition and commentary of Hesiod’s *Theogony* by M. West. *Hesiod. Theogony*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, one can find the reference-bibliography. See as well: C. Miralles. “Hesíodo sobre los orígenes del hombre y el sentido de *Trabajos y Días*. *BIEH (Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Helénicos)*, Universidad de Barcelona, 1975, pp. 3-36; Hesíodo, *Erga* 42-105. La invención de la mujer y la tinaja”. *Estudios Actuales sobre Textos Griegos* (II Jornadas Internacionales), Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1991, pp. 33-45; and “La invención de la dona”, a *La dona en l’antiguitat*. Sabadell: AA.VV., 1987. And also: Angelo Casanova. La famiglia di Pandora: analisi filologica dei miti di Pandora e Prometeo nella tradizione esiodea. *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Filologia Classica “Giorgio Pasquali” dell’Università degli studi di Firenze*, 5, 1979 and A. Pérez y A. Martínez. *Hesíodo. Obras y Fragmentos*. Madrid: Biblioteca Clásica Gredos, 1978, nº 13, pp. 127-9.

Consequently, I would dare to suggest that a wide range of signs are already being sent to all those who are capable of interpreting them. Our minds are guided by the moon⁸ and the sea towards Pandora, certainly erotic and disturbing, and towards The Flying Dutchman too, who was condemned three centuries earlier to sail continuously all over an endless sea. Both are incomprehensible since ‘to understand one human soul is like trying to empty the sea with a cup’. However, the atmosphere is now completely gipsy –and there is room, then, for all sorts of premonitions- and we hear some men and women singing “quejíos (plaintive songs)”, that is to say, sad songs about a sort of love that really hurts.

Who could be a better reference than Pandora Reynolds to make us understand the magnitude of this tragedy? She has all the charms with which to “defeat” all the men around her⁹: the above-mentioned Geoffrey Fielding, her “slave”; Stephen Cameron, a race-driver whose highest desire is to beat the world record for speed, and Reggie Deverest who is always drunk in order to overcome her indifference. However, after having heard Pandora singing ‘Oh how am I to know if it’s really love that found its way here? Oh how am I to know if will it linger on and leave me then? I dare not guess at this strange happiness, for oh how am I to know can it be that love has come to stay here?’, accompanying herself on the piano, Reggie is still both romantic and lucid enough to poison a last drink and immolate himself before his goddess. Pandora is completely beautiful (*pan-do*) and loves, but she does not know yet to whom she will devote herself completely (*pan-do*). Up till now a man has been the first to take over the weight of her “panic” etymology and to find out that ‘death hath ten thousand several doors for men to make their exits and they move on such strange geometric hinges you may open them both ways’. Pandora, on the contrary, marvellously beautiful in her Greek-style dress and as indifferent as sometimes an Olympian goddess can be to human beings’ destiny, seems not to regret her friend’s death, completely unconcerned by reason of being already sick of his instinct for self-destruction. ‘After all’, she affirms, ‘life is not important’. And yet, we should not be mistaken, since, leaving aside the fact that Lewin uses now the unkindest features of the myth of Pandora –let us remember that, according to it, before her arrival men lived in peace¹⁰-, this

⁸ With regard to the relation moon-Aphrodite (and Earth), see, e. g.: Plutarch. *Eroticus*, 764B: ‘my father said that the Egyptians recognize two Loves, just as the Greeks do, Uranios and Pandemos, but they believe that the sun is a third Love; Aphrodite they reverence greatly’ -translated into English by W. C. Helmbold. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969.

⁹ Cf. Hesiodus. *Erga*, 79-82: “... and the Herald of the gods put speech in her. And he called this woman Pandora, because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread” (... ἐν δ’ ἄρα φωνήν / θῆκε θεῶν κῆρυξ, ὀνόμηγε δὲ τήνδε γυναιῖκα / Πανδώρην, ὅτι πάντες Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχοντες / δῶρον ἐδώρησαν, πῆμ’ ἀνδράσιν ἀλφειστῆσιν -translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Loeb Classical Library. William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954) and *Theogony*, 585-590: “But when he had made the beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing, he brought her out, delighting in the finery which the bright-eyed daughter of a mighty father had given her, to the place where the other gods and men were. And wonder took hold of the deathless gods and mortal men when they saw that which was sheer guile, not to be withstood by men. For from her is the race of women and female kind...” (αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τεύξε καλὸν κακὸν ἀντ’ ἀγαθοῖο, / ἐξάγαγ’ ἔνθα περ ἄλλοι ἔσαν θεοὶ ἢδ’ ἀνθρώποι, κόσμῳ ἀγαλλομένην γλαυκῶπιδος Ὀβριμοπάτρης / θαῦμα δ’ ἔχ’ ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητούς τ’ ἀνθρώπους, / ὡς εἶδον δόλον αἰπύν, ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισιν. ἐκ τῆς γὰρ γένος ἐστὶ γυναικῶν θηλυτεράων... -*idem*); *Erga*, 57-58: “I will give them as the price an evil thing in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction” (τοῖς δ’ ἐγὼ ἀντι πύρρος δώσω κακόν, ᾧ κεν ἅπαντες / τέρονται κατὰ θυμὸν ἐόν κακὸν ἀμφαγαπῶντες -*idem*).

¹⁰ Hesiodus. *Erga*, 90-2: “For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sicknesses which bring the Fates upon them” (Πρὶν μὲν γὰρ ζώεσκον ἐπὶ χθονὶ φύλ’ ἀνθρώπων / νόσφιν ἄτερ τε κακῶν καὶ ἄτερ χαλεποῖο πόνοιο / νούσων τ’ ἀργαλέων, αἶ τ’ ἀνδράσι

terrible woman already shows clear signs of self-redemption since otherwise she could not glimpse the still dark but deep conviction that her life will not be worthwhile if she does not devote herself (*pan-do*) to someone who is taking a long time to come.

In the meantime, Pandora looks for substitutes with whom to prolong her risky life, thus being loyal to the constant limit that the adjective *pan* (*Pandora*) demands from her. Stephen, her race-car driver friend who also tries to go beyond the limits, will be on this occasion the master of ceremonies and, as in the case of Chirico's metaphysical paintings, we shall see very soon, as in a dream, the racing-car running at high speed with a living goddess, Pandora, and going past another ancient one, i.e. a statue, since magical Hope Harbour, as said before, permits such juxtapositions¹¹. The race ends and, paradoxically, Stephen teaches Pandora about happiness, which lies in simple things, such as marrying him. It is a failed attempt since, when in her turn she advises him to marry Janet, a 'wonderful girl who adores you', the answer can only be that he aspires to everything, he aspires to *Pandora* and, therefore, how could he agree to anything less? On the other hand, Pandora, who is seduced as never before by an agonistic Eros which is measured in relation to what we are willing to give up for it, demands from her reckless suitor the sacrifice of the race-car -named obviously Pandora-, so that when we finally see it falling down the cliff, this image or sign will announce her own future death, when she is swallowed by the sea.

But there are more signs, because, if the sacrifice has taken place on the ninth day of the third month, the wedding will take place on the third day of the ninth month, when, as in the case of pregnancy, we shall see whether Eros is consolidated or becomes a victim of hate. According to the screenplay, it is quite evident that these two heroes of an epic legend –which should be Greek- have become completely mad, romantic or surrealistic. Indeed, Pandora's thoughts seem strange since, some minutes before on the cliff, when she saw the yacht, Stephen already guessed that she had seen her destiny on board of it with Nelson or The Flying Dutchman.

Albert Lewin justifies the surrealistic nature of his film by reason of his close relation to the realm of painting -all styles- and, above all, to surrealism¹², but I think that it could be very useful now to open a short parenthesis in order to present some significant paragraphs of André Breton's *First Surrealist Manifesto*:

“L'expérience tourne dans une cage d'où il est de plus en plus difficile de la faire sortir. Elle s'appuie, elle aussi, sur l'utilité immédiate, et elle est gardée par le bon sens. Sous couleur de civilisation, sous prétexte de progrès, on est parvenu à bannir de l'esprit tout ce qui se peut taxer à tort ou à raison de superstition, de chimère; à proscrire tout mode de recherche de la vérité qui n'est pas conforme à l'usage. C'est par le plus grand hasard, en apparence, qu'a été récemment rendue à la lumière une partie du monde intellectuel, et à mon sens de beaucoup la plus importante... Il faut en rendre grâce aux découvertes de Freud...

κῆρας ἔδωκαν –idem); cf. Plato. *The Statesman* 271e-272a: '... nor did men possess wives or children; for they all came to life again out of the earth, with no recollection of their former lives... they had fruits in plenty from the trees and other plants, which the earth furnished them of its own accord, without help from agriculture' (οὐκ ἦσαν οὐδὲ κτήσεις γυναικῶν καὶ παιδῶν· ἐκ γῆς γὰρ ἀνεβιώσκοντο πάντες, οὐδὲν μεμνημένοι τῶν πρόσθεν... καρποὺς δὲ ἀφθόλους εἶχον ἀπὸ τε δένδρων καὶ πολλῆς ὕλης ἄλλης, οὐχ ὑπὸ γεωργίας φυομένους, ἀλλ' αὐτομάτης ἀναδιδούσης τῆς γῆς –translated by Harold N. Fowler. *Plato. The Statesman*. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹¹ See, e.g.: W. Schmied. "Pictor Classicus Sum? De Chirico, Pittura Metafisica and Classicism. *Canto D'amore. Classicism in Modern Art and Music* 1914-35. Basel: Kunstmuseum, 1996.

¹² You can consult in this respect, for instance, the "dossier" devoted to *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* in the Biblioteca de la Filmoteca de la Generalitat de Catalunya.

L'imagination est peut-être sur le point de reprendre ses droits. Si les profondeurs de notre esprit recèlent d'étranges forces capables d'augmenter celles de la surface, ou de lutter victorieusement contre elles, il y a tout intérêt à les capter... ”¹³.

Pandora might be pursuing a dream, but the truth is that something impels her to swim until she reaches the yacht in order to welcome its enigmatic sailor. This time the image of her entering the sea probably indicates her premonitory affinity with this element, but a big surprise is waiting for her in the yacht when Albert Lewin decides to transform The Flying Dutchman into a surrealist painter who has assigned Pandora Reynolds' face to the Pandora of the picture he is just painting, although, if we must believe him, he had never seen her before. The *anagnorises* of Greek dramas might now be a useful reference, though at the moment both a logical and rational explanation of such a coincidence is intended. This living Pandora, regardless of her genuine nature, will even say that she is not interested in mythology, but The Flying Dutchman explains to her that “Pandora was the darling of the gods. They gave her the precious box which she was forbidden to open”.

Everything, then, has started with what could be considered a psychological automatism, as one of those in Breton's Manifesto:

“Surréalisme: ... Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale”¹⁴.

Nevertheless, the true psychological automatism will arrive very soon when Pandora, who is now offended because the enigmatic painter has attributed her instinct for self-destruction to her inner emptiness, will try to destroy the painting by means of some furious brush-strokes. Surprisingly, no fatal consequences derive from such a lack of self-control but, on the contrary and according to The Flying Dutchman's words: “No work of art is complete until the element of chance has entered into it... The unexpected and the surprising are indispensable”, so that with the help of some more brush-strokes -this time his own- the result will be excellent. The woman's face is no longer Pandora Reynolds' face but an egg, since:

‘Pandora was the first woman, the Eve of Greek legend, whose curiosity cost us our earthly paradise. I was wrong to portray her as a particular woman... Pandora should appear as woman in the abstract, bride and mother, the original and generic egghead from which we can imagine the whole human race to have hatched’.

We notice now that all the features of the myth of Pandora have already been used by Lewin. We have seen Pandora's irrepressible curiosity, which both has been and will be necessary for her to pursue, regardless of all kinds of conventions and commitments, the forbidden fruit, i.e. the most enigmatic man. We have also seen Pandora's total beauty which is fatally seductive and destroys the life of unwary men. And, finally, we have seen as well the wife and mother, the original and generic egg –or the Earth according to Hesiod-, who is really willing to give it everything (*pan-do*) without demanding anything in return.

Albert Lewin certainly found in the myth of Pandora all he needed, regardless of the fact that Pandora never had a box, as explained some years ago by Dora & Erwin Panofsky in their

¹³ In *Breton. Manifestes du surréalisme*. Paris: Gallimard (folio essais), p. 20.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

excellent book¹⁵. And one further remark: The Flying Dutchman has already perceived that this woman who entered the sea in the moonlight in order to welcome him might be his redeemer. Therefore, he should abandon the accursed eternity which has made him a prisoner for centuries and it is time for his hourglass to be counting the six months he has to test her. He might be fortunate, since Stephen Cameron, the race-driver, has rescued his race-car with Pandora's permission and now he is repairing it and singing premonitorily *La dona é mobile*, thus suggesting that in fact his *fiancée* is thinking of another wedding since, when Stephen took his race-car back from the sea, she felt that she was free again.

And now comes the moment when The Flying Dutchman –or, in other words, this Northern Odysseus- tells his story: he stabbed his wife by reason of unfounded suspicions of infidelity. When he was judged, he dared to blaspheme against God, Faith and Heaven; he even challenged Divine Providence affirming that, if he could sail till the Last Judgement, he would not find a loyal and good wife. God's punishment arrives immediately and seems to have a surrealistic nature. Indeed, this unfortunate Flying Dutchman, highly confused among successive oneiric and wakeful episodes during which it is difficult to know what is real and what is false, finds himself sailing on a ghost ship without a crew and realizing finally that he will do it for centuries. Particularly, he will be allowed to land for six months after a sailing period of seven years in order to search for a woman who is willing to die for him. A dream has revealed to him that he mistook his wife's courtesy for infidelity, and the lesson –I would dare to say the "moral"- seems quite evident: nobody is permitted to kill his/her beloved in spite of thinking that, acting in such a civilized way, he/she betrays the laws of a romantic and foolish love. The real "triumph" has nothing to do with the exclusive ownership of the beloved but with his/her free choice or sacrifice. God needs at this moment an Earth-Pandora ready to satisfy what his severe Justice demands. In fact, this God needs now the transmigration of souls –Albert Lewin is a true master in the realm of syncretism of cultures, religions and myths-, since otherwise he could not join again Pandora and The Flying Dutchman. Who knows, furthermore, if the soul of that unfairly sacrificed woman has appeared again in shape of a gull –i.e., a bird, its classical image¹⁶-. 'Above the main mast I saw a white gull circling; its wings were stained with blood'.

Whatever the case may be, everything seems unreal and the archaeologist, in front of whom The Flying Dutchman has just read his own story, discovers with astonishment that the translator of the manuscript is capable of repeating by heart long paragraphs without reading them. However, he is an archaeologist, that is to say, an expert at reaching the past from present times, so that this new *anagnórisis* is somewhat tempered.

Now, as never before, a happy ending seems possible since The Flying Dutchman might be finally rescued in order to die. But Literature, in this case in the form of a simple screenplay, has many means of hindering the two lovers from reuniting definitively. And so does Spain, this unusual country –from the American point of view, of course. Or, in other words, Lewin decides that another man who always goes beyond the limit in his risky art -thus being worthy of Pandora-, a bullfighter, arrives at Hope harbour and is welcomed as one of its favourite sons. He is also in love with Pandora and, having heard about her imminent wedding, this brave man must send his signs without delay. His name is Juan Montalvo and he fights with a bull in the moonlight in front of Pandora and her friends. As said before, this is a story of romantic love and Juan Montalvo's mission is to offer an additional excess. He is brave and used to the vision of blood, but he is also a man with a tormented mind who hates his father to the extent of stabbing his picture at his mother's house because of a childish Oedipus' complex. Another myth, then, appears as a reference through which such *anomic* behaviour as his can be

¹⁵ *Pandora's Box: The Changing Aspects of a Mythical Symbol*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992. See, however, Immanuel Musäus. *Der Pandora Mythos bei Hesiod und seine Rezeption bis Erasmus von Rotterdam*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004.

¹⁶ Remember, for instance, the palinode in Plato's *Phaedrus* (244a-257b).

explained. His gipsy mother's cards give clear sign of his future tragic death but his Oedipus complex prevents him from taking them into account.

Now there are three Pandora-men capable of giving everything for a woman. Stephen Cameron finally beats the world speed-record before his goddess' gaze and Juan Montalvo's natural jealousy. And, after the triumph, a nice celebration-dinner takes place in honour of the winner which also includes the most surrealistic ball on the beach, in the moonlight again, and amid classical statues. I have mentioned before the magic syncretism in Hope Harbour of Antiquity and Modernity, of myth and reality, which enables at this moment a sincere dialogue between Pandora and The Flying Dutchman. She is like one of those halves of Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* –the well known androgyny myth- and remembers *anamnetically* her lost previous unity:

‘There's something beyond my understanding, something mystical in the feeling I Have for you. I feel as if I'd loved you always, not only in this life, but in lives I've lived before and do not remember. It's as if everything that happened before I met you didn't happen to me at all, but to someone else’.

This is certainly the saving Pandora who intends to accomplish her *panic* mission. She has changed a lot since she met The Flying Dutchman. Now she knows perfectly well that her instinct of destruction is due to a true lack of love. But the man who is talking to her is also a man in love, incapable of exchanging his salvation for her death. On the contrary, he is jealous of his total sacrifice (*Pandora = pan-do*), so that he makes her believe that his rejection is due to her broken commitment to Stephen Cameron.

The third man, Juan Montalvo, who has seen them kissing each other, has been thought by Lewin as the one who goes beyond any kind of ethical or moral limit. “Laws are not for Montalvo” and, taking into account his *anomia*, it would be absurd to expect him to respect Pandora's true love. Stephen is not his enemy but Henrick van der Zee, The Flying Dutchman. He stabs, then, his only rival and, amid the fight, another hourglass falls, so that its horizontal position prevents time from going on. It might be the definitive sign of the happy end of his time, the months he had to gain Pandora's love:

‘Forgive me, Lord, for I have sinned. Forgive me. If I could die!... I pray God's mercy if I must live again. She's so young, so beautiful. Do not let her to die to save me. This was the doom, I know... Let her forget me. Let her not love me with this love that is as deep as death. If I could die’.

His desire is undoubtedly noble and sincere but, as three centuries earlier, he has just passed another sentence since it is precisely the abysses in the sea that will swallow him and Pandora. God seems now cruel and insensitive to Henrick's prayers, but Destiny, not God, prevails and its mission is to guarantee the entire completion of the punishments. The Flying Dutchman opens his eyes again and this simple fact confirms that his long exile through life will continue. The hourglass is there, on the floor, again in its right position thus certifying that, unfortunately, time goes on and Pandora's sacrifice is much more than a remote possibility.

And, if The Flying Dutchman sends his signs, Juan Montalvo, the bullfighter reaches his apotheosis. It is time for him to show his courage before all of Hope Harbour's inhabitants in the arena. He has not paid attention to his mother's premonitions, although he has drunk a potion intended to protect him. He is dressed in blue since his rival was The Flying Dutchman or, probably, because his love is as deep as the abysses of the sea. Needless to say, Pandora to whom he dedicates the “faena” is his final goal, the trophy he must “win” after having killed his rival. We contemplate the fight of a man who gives all he has (*pan-do*) for a woman named

Pandora, but Destiny is not a merciful god. Suddenly, a living Flying Dutchman enters the arena and Montalvo is disconcerted just before sacrificing the animal, and finally the bullfighter becomes the victim. Pandora visits him at the arena clinic and, before dying, Juan Montalvo confesses that he had stabbed Henrick the day before.

Everything is so strange, so surrealistic, that Pandora makes a logical decision. Pandora knew long ago that she was capable of giving all she had (*pan-do*) –i.e. she was loyal to her name-, but now she needs to recuperate her proverbial curiosity. She can wait no longer, she needs to know who Henrick is. She has decided, therefore, to open her box and meet the only man who can help her, the archaeologist, the logical bridge between her and a surviving past. Geoffrey, however, follows the dictates of *lógos* (logical reason) and leaves myths aside. He says to himself that it is not possible, that Henrick is not The Flying Dutchman, but, on the other hand, he already glimpses the possibility that he is still living just as a great number of ancient objects have survived in his hands. Consequently, he prevents Pandora from reading the translation of the manuscript till he has verified that Henrick's yacht is about to set sail. Notwithstanding, a disturbing lack of wind retains him, and Pandora, entering the sea once more, reaches the ship in order to release paradoxically her beloved from the prison of life. The Flying Dutchman is waiting for her and he knows that those verses: "The moving Finger writes; and having writ, / Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit / Shall lure it back to cancel half a line, / Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it" are the Truth, his truth, so that he has decided that the Pandora in his painting should regain her real face: 'We were man and wife, separated for centuries and meeting again. The moment I saw you, I knew that you would come back to me'. Both belong to an ideal world that they will reach very soon, although Pandora still shows some human fears: 'How long do you think it will be before... before? If we could have a year, a month, a week even'. It has only been a moment of doubt, but those who are in love know that they have abandoned definitively the burden of time:

H: 'How long do you think it's been since you came in here?' / P: 'Oh, I don't know, not very long. It seems timeless'. / H: 'Yes, timeless, as if we were enchanted. All my centuries of solitude when my despair was so great I'd pray to die, it's as if they'd never been. In a moment you've erased the memory of so many years, so many cruel years. This joy is so deep. I've almost forgotten what went before... Because yesterday and all that went before was imperfect, unfulfilled, unreal. But our love is real, has no sense of time...' / P: 'It is as if we were under a spell, outside of time, unending'.

And needless to say, after they have sealed their meeting with a kiss, the hourglass flies into pieces, thus indicating that its mission is over. All the rest -if one bears in mind the ring composition of the film- is highly predictable. The nice and "seductive" Mediterranean sea shows from time to time all its irrepressible power, irrepressible enough, at any rate, to welcome all those who show a firm desire to rest in its abysses. The epilogue is in the charge of the archaeologist and narrator, a man in love with a past which after all can be recovered. He asks himself if that book comes from outside the limits and brings a message not of death but of life. He wants The Flying Dutchman to enjoy his love as much as he suffered because of God's punishment. He really thinks now that he has two copies of the same writing but, if he said it, everybody would think in their turn that he has become mad by reason of his constant research on old legends. 'We live in a time that has no faith in legends', but 'The moving Finger writes; and having writ, moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it'.

Nobody thinks of *mýthos* and *lógos* nowadays as two completely opposite poles. We know now perfectly well that myth is also a rational and coherent way to seek all kinds of

explanations for all sorts of problems and mysteries. And Albert Lewin –let us remember that *Pandora and The Flying Dutchman* was shot in 1951- does believe in the true potential of myth beyond Western *lógos* and *empeiria*. He is an original Hollywood cinema director who speaks about a kind of love, i. e. the most romantic and mad one, in which he still believes. He has no part in the positivism that prevails in contemporary life and, on the contrary, he proclaims the advantages of Faith. His age did not believe anymore in legends or myths –and it has got worse and worse since then, I am afraid-, but he continues to vindicate them on account of their didactic potential. Here they are, neither acephalous nor apodous. The reverse is the case: they are a real structure which, furthermore, is both ancient and prestigious. And, if there is a model and it is considered a significant part of our cultural patrimony, why should we think of it as an antiquity in a museum? Why should be ashamed of it? In any case, surrealism in his opinion should have saved us from such stupid prejudices. Indeed, surrealism has certainly taught us to appreciate both irrationalities and automatisms and has exhorted us as well to mistrust reason and prudence. Human beings must aim at gaining and practising freedom all the time. They can move back towards the past, contemplate ancient paradigms of behaviour and recover them for present times. They can associate present times with past and future ones; they can believe in myths and legends without begging pardon for it, and, above all, they can go beyond the limits. At any rate, by means of this film Albert Lewin aims at persuading them that they might perfectly well be Pandoras and Flying Dutchmen willing to give all they have (*pan-do*) for others' benefit.

We have gathered here today to talk about the enigmatic world of signs. As a man who loves cinema, one among millions, and as a classical philologist, one among many, let me express my admiration for Albert Lewin's free and intelligent exercise of imagination in *Pandora and The Flying Dutchman* thanks to the semiologic potential of a Greek myth.