

The Influence of Classical Mythology and Its Interaction on English Literature

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Abstract: While myths have been created by people in all nations, times, and stages of civilization to explain the existence and operation of natural phenomena, to relate the exploits of gods or heroes, or to defend social or political structures, Greek mythology has continued to be the most creative and captivating source of ideas in the West.

Key words: myths, nation, Greek, classical, poetry, modern literature, English, Frye

INTRODUCTION

Greek mythology has served as a source of inspiration for poets and artists throughout history, who have also found modern relevance and meaning in classical mythological themes. According to Britannica. According to academics Maria Leach and Jerome Fried, mythology is defined as follows:

A myth is a story that is told as though it really happened in a bygone era and that explains a people's gods, heroes, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and other supernatural and cosmological customs. Myth serves as an explanation, and according to Sir G.L. Gomme, myths clarify concepts in "the science of a pre-scientific age." Thus, myths describe the origin of man, animals, and landmarks. They also explain the reasons behind the traits of particular animals (such as the bat's blindness or its preference for flying at night), the reasons behind the appearance of rainbows or the constellation Orion in the sky, the hows and whys of rituals, and ceremonies began and why they continue. (778)

According to Stephen Fry's book "Mythos: A Retelling of the Myths of Ancient Greece," other people have also created a rich tapestry of legends and lore from the perplexing fabric of life. If archaeological and palaeo-anthropological analysis is to be believed, the gods of Greece can be traced back to the sky fathers, moon goddesses, and demons of Mesopotamia's "fertile crescent," which includes modern-day Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Along with their languages, the creation stories and folk myths of the Babylonians, Sumerians, Akkadians, and other ancient civilizations—whose heyday began long before that of the Greeks—could be traced back to India and beyond, to prehistoric Africa and the emergence of our species. However, in order to establish a beginning point, we must always cut the narrative thread someplace while telling a story. Greek mythology makes this simple since it has endured with a level of intricacy, complexity, vitality, and color that sets it apart from other mythologies. It was recorded and handed down to us in an uninterrupted line from nearly the start of writing to the present day by the very earliest poets". (Fry, 10)

METHODS

Since the purpose of this paper is to examine how mythology and literature impact one another, it is also vital to explain the relationship and link that exists between the two. Over thousands of years,

humans have constructed myths for a variety of purposes. They are a rich repository of historical ideas and beliefs and an intellectual output of humanity. Mythology and literature are sustained by their remarkable and implausible qualities as well as the persistent notion that there might be something “out there”. Critiquing literature, Northrop Frye highlights the significance of cultural myths (e.g., sea, land and sky, control, creation, decay, regeneration, human 'fear') that underlie writing. Mythology stimulates our subconscious mind (dreams, for example), which is why mythology is mentioned in literature. According to Frye, mythology served as inspiration for some of the greatest plays ever written. Similar themes can be found in the literature of the Renaissance, Shakespeare (Hamlet, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, etc.), and contemporary poetry. As a result, mythology is important to literature. The book "A Short History of Myth" by Karen Armstrong explores how societal issues influenced mythology and literature. "Human beings fall easily into despair, and from the very beginning we invented stories that enabled us to place our lives in a larger setting, that revealed an underlying pattern, and gave us a sense that, against all the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary, life had meaning and value," writes Armstrong, mentioning the existence of mythology from an early period.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the advent of the "great revolutions in human experience," the theory of myth was rendered "useless, false, and outmoded" and science was employed to explain "facts." The next 'step' from mythology—that is, from an ignorant society to a civilized one—was supposed to be literature, which had the power to explain things that were never thought imaginable. There are both parallels and distinctions in the link between mythology and literature. Both of these are significant human creations that will always have a significant place in the intellectual community. There will always be some element of myth in literature, and myth will continue to influence our contemporary reality just as it did in the past.

There is a codependent relationship between mythology and literature. Neither mythology can be reduced to literature, nor literature reduced to mythology; as mythology will always be “an integral element of literature” (Frye 1989).

It is fair to say that the literary attractiveness of mythology is due to its enduring depiction of significant and sometime very uncomfortable relationships, some admittedly between man and his environment, but others of at least equal importance between man and his fellow men, and between man and his deities. (Workman 39)

Without a doubt the universality of the substance of myth tales or mythology, has made it –in fact- timeless. “Myth is the foundation of life; it is the timeless pattern, the religious formula to which life shapes itself...” (Mann 1936)

One could argue that mythology actually helps to establish the canon of World Literature by allowing literary works with mythological overtones or traces to be categorized as such. Furthermore, a literary work might be classified as "World Literature" if it reworks and transforms a widely used myth tale into a fresh, captivating story.

These are some of the oldest stories in the world, and they continue to have a great deal of influence, for whatever reason. From Homer until the present day, their significance has been such that studying literature would be impossible without them, just as it would be impossible to study literature without the Bible, which is the foundation of both Jewish and Christian tradition. The traditional patterns and characters still exist, even though their meaning has changed from writer to writer and from generation to generation. (MacPherson and Frye 277)

The purpose of this study was to illustrate the mythology and the range of ways that Ancient Greece and its mythology influenced modern culture. The scholar examined the origins of Classical Mythology and its infiltration into the works of Milton, Shakespeare, and subsequently Shelley, Keats,

and Byron. Because of this, one could claim that classical mythology has proven to be a rich source of inspiration despite its antiquity, as artists are still drawn to it and attempt to emulate its surrealism and inventiveness in their own works.

CONCLUSION

During the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, English interest in Greece shifted from Rome due to a number of contemporaneous changes. Ancient Greek and Roman literary works have traditionally been grouped together under the heading of "classical studies." Such studies usually began with Latin translations of Greek texts, partly because of the Greek language's difficulties (John Churton Collins). But over time, the Greek and Roman civilizations started to diverge, which led to a renewed appreciation for Greek writings as the archetypes of later Roman literature. Last but not least, experts in the field of Romantic literature explain how the aesthetic beauty of Greco-Roman or Roman forms of neoclassicism gave romantic literature a subtle elegance, and more specifically, how romantic poets' works are infused with a Greek taste.

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