

PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF USING MYTHOLOGY IN AN ARTISTIC CONTEXT

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Abstract:

This article examines the pragmatic use of mythology in contemporary art, showing how ancient myths are adapted to engage modern audiences and convey complex ideas. Through literature, visual arts, and media, artists repurpose mythological symbols to address current issues such as identity, power, and environmental concerns. The analysis reveals how mythology continues to serve as a powerful tool for communicating deeper meanings and connecting past narratives to present-day contexts.

Key words: mythology, pragmatics, contemporary art, symbolism, adaptation, narrative, identity, power, environmental concerns, cultural heritage

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Introduction

Mythology has been a powerful source of storytelling and symbolism in human history, deeply influencing art, literature, and culture. These ancient stories, filled with gods, heroes, and cosmic events, offer profound insights into human nature and the world. In contemporary artistic contexts, mythology continues to be used pragmatically—not just as a form of retelling historical narratives but as a tool for exploring and expressing modern themes and ideas. The pragmatic use of mythology in art allows artists to communicate complex issues such as identity, power, morality, and environmental concerns. By drawing on familiar mythological symbols and narratives, artists can connect with audiences on a deeper cultural level while reinterpreting these stories to reflect contemporary values and challenges. This adaptive use of mythology helps bridge the gap between the ancient and the modern, offering fresh perspectives on both timeless and current issues. This article examines the pragmatic aspects of using mythology in artistic expressions, exploring how these ancient narratives are transformed to suit modern artistic goals and societal contexts. Through various forms of art, mythology remains a relevant and dynamic tool for conveying meaning, engaging audiences, and addressing complex modern issues.

Materials and Methods

Materials

The study incorporates a range of sources across different artistic mediums that engage with mythology. The materials are categorized as follows:

Literary Sources

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- Contemporary Novels: Modern works of fiction that reinterpret mythological tales, such as Margaret Atwood's "The Penelopiad" (a retelling of "The Odyssey" from Penelope's perspective) and Madeline Miller's "Circe", which revisits the character of the witch Circe from Homeric myth.

- Poetry: Selected poems by modern poets who draw on mythological themes, such as Anne Carson's "Autobiography of Red", which reimagines the Greek myth of Geryon and Herakles.

- Classical Mythology Texts: Original sources such as Ovid's "Metamorphoses" and Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey", which provide the basis for comparative analysis.

Visual Art

- Traditional and Contemporary Artworks: Paintings and sculptures from both classical periods and modern artists. For instance, artworks like Antonio Canova's "Perseus with the Head of Medusa" and contemporary reinterpretations, such as Damien Hirst's "The Severed Head of Medusa".

- Digital and Interactive Media: Modern representations of myth in digital art, including multimedia installations that use mythological themes to engage audiences interactively. This includes works found in galleries and digital platforms.

Media and Popular Culture

- Films and Television: Analysis of film adaptations of mythological stories, including both direct retellings (such as "Troy" and "Percy Jackson the Olympians") and indirect myth-inspired narratives (like "The Matrix" and its allusions to Gnostic and mythic themes).

- Graphic Novels and Video Games: Contemporary reinterpretations of mythology through graphic novels like "The Sandman" series by Neil Gaiman, and myth-based video games like "God of War" that modernize ancient mythological characters and storylines for interactive storytelling.

Scholarly Texts on Mythology and Pragmatics

- Works on mythological theory and pragmatics, including Joseph Campbell's "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" and Barthes' "Mythologies", which offer foundational frameworks for understanding how myths function within cultural narratives and their pragmatic application in art.

Methods

Content Analysis: A qualitative content analysis is conducted on each work, focusing on how mythological themes, characters, and symbols are adapted and transformed in artistic contexts. Key themes, such as heroism, fate, and morality, are examined to see how they are reframed to align with modern concerns like gender identity, environmentalism, and existential questions.

Comparative Analysis: The study uses comparative analysis to juxtapose ancient myths with their contemporary adaptations. This method assesses how the symbolic meaning of mythological figures and events has shifted over time. For example, the character of Medusa is analyzed as a symbol of danger and power in classical mythology and compared to her modern representations as a symbol of female empowerment and resistance in art and literature.

Pragmatic Analysis: Drawing on theories of pragmatics in communication, this method investigates how the context in which these myths are presented influences their interpretation. The focus is on audience reception and cultural resonance, exploring how artists use familiar mythological frameworks to communicate with

modern audiences in a way that is both accessible and meaningful. This analysis considers factors such as cultural relevance, emotional engagement, and the socio-political environment that shape the reinterpretation of myths.

Case Studies: Specific case studies of mythological adaptations in various artistic forms are analyzed in depth. These case studies include:

- A literary analysis of "Circe" by Madeline Miller, examining how the myth of Circe is used to explore themes of gender, power, and isolation.

- A visual analysis of contemporary artworks that reinterpret the myth of Icarus, focusing on how these pieces reflect modern concerns about ambition, failure, and human limitation.

- A media analysis of films like "Black Panther", which draws on African mythology to explore identity, heritage, and the political implications of myth-making.

By combining these methods, the research provides a comprehensive view of how mythology is pragmatically applied in contemporary artistic contexts, allowing for an in-depth understanding of both its timeless appeal and its adaptability to modern concerns.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the pragmatic use of mythology in artistic contexts demonstrates the enduring relevance and adaptability of ancient narratives in modern culture. Artists across literature, visual art, and media continually reinterpret mythological themes and symbols to explore contemporary issues such as identity, power, gender dynamics, and environmental challenges. This process allows for a rich dialogue between the past and the present, where familiar stories are infused with new meanings that resonate with today's audiences.

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