

Analysis of the Influence of Greco-Roman Mythology on Modern Western Culture

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Abstract

In English, a large number of words and idioms are derived from Greco-Roman Mythology. These words have become an indispensable part of English culture and have influenced the pragmatic culture and way of thinking in modern Western countries. In order to resolve cultural conflicts and deepen mutual understanding in cultural exchanges, it is necessary to conduct a study on the influence of Greco-Roman mythology on modern western culture, so as to understand the causes of differences.

Keywords

Greco-Roman Mythology; Cultural Diversity.

1. Introduction

1.1. Greece-Roman Mythology

Greek mythology originated from the ancient Aegean civilization, who were the ancestors of Western civilization, with superior nature and extraordinary imaginations. In those primitive times, they felt mysterious and difficult to understand the natural phenomena, the life and death of human beings, so they continued to fantasize and ponder. Fairy tales were originally handed down orally until the seventh century BC when the great poet Homer compiled them in his Epic.

1.2. The Literary Importance of Greece-Roman Mythology

In Greece-Roman mythology, which has a profound impact on western culture and personality, ghosts and legends of heroes are the two main subjects, which contains people's yearning for a better life, unremitting pursuit of ideals and praise and respect for heroes, which are also a reaction against the oppression of reality. God and humans are homogeneous, both the body beauty of some people, but also the seven emotions and six desires of some people, know the joys and sorrows, and also participate in the activities of people. The only difference between God and man is that the former is immortal without a period of death; the latter's life is limited, living and dying. The gods in Greek mythology have distinct personalities, no asceticism and little mysticism. Therefore, Greek mythology is not only the soil of Greek literature but also has a profound influence on later Western literature.

2. The Impact of Greece-Roman Mythology on Western Culture

2.1. Word Formation

Latin and Greek are the main sources of the modern English language, including the names of mythical people and places, gods and constellations. Words and phrases in stories are also the main sources of English vocabulary, forming new sentences on the basis of secondary processing of the original meanings of words. Each word has its own little story, and these stories are an important way to understand the meaning of the word. In addition, language is the root of culture, rather than random symbols. In the process of sustainable development of

human society, culture is accumulated and then formed into language. Therefore, culture and language are inseparable.

Although Latin is not the native language of the British people, its influence is enormous. Many technical and artistic words are borrowed from Latin, and many English roots are derived from Latin. There are two reasons for this. One is the influence of Roman Catholicism. The other is the history of Roman settlement in Britain. At first, there were only a few local words as core words in English, but with the development of history, English has absorbed many foreign words. In fact, about 80% of English words are made up of Latin and Greek roots or affixes.

To this day, Greece-Roman mythology has merged perfectly with English vocabulary. For example, hyper- is a Greek prefix meaning excessive, and English has hyperactive, hypercritical, and hypersensitive. There are many examples of this type, such as anti-, ant-, auto-, bio-, bi-, geo-, and so on. Not only prefixes but also mythological suffixes have also become an important part of the English language. For example, the suffix -ism means "state, theory, doctrine". The influence of mythology on affixes is not so great as that of Latin, because most of them have become roots or basic words in English.

2.2. Literature

The influence of Greece-Roman mythology on English literature is mainly reflected in the title, creative ideas, characters and plots. Writers can draw on these important elements to create well-rounded characters and plots. The Renaissance was extremely prevalent in Europe in the 16th century. During this period, British writers began to dig up ancient Greek and Latin works and read them widely, imitating them and borrowing from them, and creating a craze.

The most representative writer of the British Renaissance is Shakespeare, whose *Troilus and Cressida* borrows from the *Iliad*. Shakespeare mainly borrows from the type of war in the story. *Venus and Adonis* is also a famous work by Shakespeare. The title is derived from ancient Roman mythology, and part of the plot was extracted and adapted so that many of the characters created by Shakespeare can be found in mythology. His famous play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, also borrows scenes from Greek mythology to convey the idea of fidelity and greatness in love. In addition, Shakespeare's *Helena*, *Elizabeth* and other otherworldly female archetypes are goddess *Athena*, which shows the deep influence of Greece-Roman mythology on his plays.

Keats wrote a poem about his excitement when reading Homer's *Epics* and many romantic poets, including Keats, used mythological plots and characters in their poems. The most typical example is Byron, whose hero is enthusiastic, tough and has strong vitality. He is willing to give everything to resist evil, which is undoubtedly the deification of the hero.

The characters in Shelley's *Ode to Apollo* can also be found in mythological archetypes, and Shelley also adapted many mythological stories, and finally created a poem with the shadow of Greek mythology and modern characteristics, and opened its creative ideas, and explored its profound influence in the field of literature. Eliot was also a famous poet who used Greek mythology to portray the post-war depression in Europe. In addition to poetry, *Women in Love* by Lawrence also draws on characters from fairy tales and has similar plots. Joyce's *Ulysses* is difficult to understand at first sight, but if we can compare it with the *Odyssey*, it will help us to understand the play and find similarities in content and structure.

3. The Impact of Greece-Roman Mythology on Daily Life

3.1. Brands and Trademarks

In the process of communication between brands and consumers, the product name is the first visiting card of products, and a good brand name itself is the shortest and most direct advertising language.

The brand logo refers to the part of a non-verbal visual image that is easy to recognize and remember in the brand, including symbols, patterns or obvious colours and fonts. In Greek mythology, people were drawn to Medusa uncontrollably, and those who looked into her eyes turned to stone. Versace is an Italian luxury brand, with the Greek myth of the "Gorgon Medusa" as a spiritual symbol, representing fatal attraction. Starbucks' logo is based on a wood carving of Sirens, the Siren's song is said to fascinate people, which reflects the founder's hope that people love Starbucks as much as they love Sirens' song. Denmark's top hi-fi, Gryphon, is modelled after the Gryphon, the Greek mythology. Lamborghini's logo is a powerful bull, it is said to have been inspired by the constellation Taurus, Zeus and the Phoenician princess Europa legend. Maserati's logo is Poseidon's trident. Rolls-Royce's beacon is a "flying Goddess".

3.2. Idiom

Ancient Greek and Roman myths and legends have a long history and are rich in content. The most allusions to Myths in English come from Greek and Roman myths.

3.2.1. Pandora's Box

In Greek mythology, the first woman was made of clay by Hephaestus and given to mankind as punishment for stealing fire from Prometheus. The gods joined in to make her more attractive. According to the myth, Pandora opened a magic box out of curiosity and released all the evil in the world -- greed, nihilism, slander, jealousy, pain, etc. When she closed the box again, the only hope was left inside. So, Pandora's Box became synonymous with "the root of disaster."

3.2.2. The Sword of Damocles

Damocles was a minister of Syracuse who envied the king's wealth. One day the king sat him on his throne and hung a sword from a hair above Damocles' head, telling him that the danger of kingship, like the sword, could come at any moment. Thus, the word "the sword of Damocles" is synonymous with "danger hidden in riches and honour". It can also refer to a situation in which there is a critical or dangerous moment.

3.2.3. Damon and Pythias

Damon and Pythias are good friends. Pythias is sentenced to death after an accident, and Damon is held hostage in prison so he can visit his family. If Pythias does not return, Damon will be executed. As a result, Pythias came back just in time for his execution when the time was up. The king was deeply moved and set both men free. Later, Damon and Pythias were used to mean friends of life and death.

3.3. Other Aspects

Not only in these aspects but also in many other aspects that have more or less the shadow of the Greece-Roman mythology.

In Greek mythology, there was a handsome Trojan prince named Ganymede. Zeus, the king of the gods, looked down from his throne on Mount Olympus and saw Ganymede, a handsome boy, playing with his friends in a meadow on the island of Crete. The king of the gods was immediately attracted by his beauty and swooped down in the form of a great eagle and carried Ganymede to Mount Olympus. To please Ganymede, he planted golden vines for the beautiful youth with his own hands. Zeus not only brought Ganymede to Olympus but also canonized him as a "water-bearer" in an effort to keep him around. From then on, Ganymede remained in heaven forever, standing beside Zeus, smiling, and pouring the delicious wine for the gods. Jupiter is the fifth planet to the Sun and the largest planet in the solar system. The Romans named the planet after the god Jupiter, who was Zeus in Greek mythology. Galileo found the four brightest moons of Jupiter in 1610. He named Ganymede, the largest, Ganymede. The first moon of Jupiter is the closest of Jupiter's four Galilean moons. It takes its name from IO, one of

the lovers of Zeus, the king of the gods, and is the priestess of Hera. Europa gets its name from the Greek princess Phoenicia, Europa. Callisto was named after another lover of Zeus, Callisto. According to legend, Poseidon married a young girl whose parents had died and gave birth to five sets of twins. He divided the island into ten districts, each to be ruled by one son, with the eldest son as supreme ruler. Because the eldest son was named Atlas, the country was called the Atlantis. Plato also recorded Atlantis in the Dialogues: far west of the Mediterranean, in the Atlantic Ocean, lies a vast continent of high civilization. The mainland produced gold and silver, and all the palaces were surrounded by walls of gold and silver. The walls of the palace were gilded with gold. There are well-equipped ports and ships, and there are objects that can fly people. Its influence is not confined to Europe but extends far beyond Africa. It's tempting that Plato mentioned the island 2,000 years ago, but no one has produced hard evidence.

Legend has it that Atlantis disappeared after a massive earthquake and flood caused by a volcanic eruption and sank into the sea. According to Plato's account, due to the high level of civilization, Atlantis became rich and powerful, and gradually corrupt, they launched a war to conquer the world but were defeated by the powerful Athenian soldiers. This betrayal of God caused the wrath of the gods, called upon the forces of nature, and destroyed the Island of Sin. Many historians believe that Atlantis is a myth and that Plato used it as a metaphor for the values of Athenian society, but many archaeologists and historians hope to find a truth about it. In the legend of Atlantis, the shadow of Greek mythology is everywhere. The name of Atlantis comes from the name of the giant god Atlas in ancient Greek mythology. The destruction of Atlantis is also due to the anger of Zeus, the head of the gods, to punish people's corruption, caused earthquakes and floods, and the kingdom of Atlantis was sunk into the sea in a day and a night.

4. Conclusion

English is the language of western social culture. Greek and Roman mythology has penetrated into all aspects of English culture, promoting the enrichment and perfection of the English language, and extending all the contents, characters and extended meanings in the mythology to all aspects of people's social life. Discover the source of mythology in English vocabulary, taste the abstract understanding brought by mythological characters to westerners, and then understand the immortal charm of ancient Greek and Roman mythology in the reinterpretation of mythology.

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