

Rodica Gabriela Chira, Emilia Ivancu, Gabriela Chiciudean and Natalia Muntean (Eds.), Myth, Music and Ritual: Approaches to Comparative Literature, 2018. Pp. ix-221. ISBN 978-1-5275-0792-0

Abstract:

The book titled Myth, Music and Ritual: Approaches to Comparative Literature comprises 14 contributions by academics and researchers from various geographical spaces such as Brazil, France, Poland, Mexico, South Africa and Romania, focusing on a wide array of pluridisciplinary topics, among which literature, folklore, classical and traditional music, philosophy, science-fiction and religion.

The volume is structured into two main parts: Reflections on Myth (seven sub-chapters) and Myth, Music, Ritual (seven sub-chapters), with a view to deepen an understanding of myth seen as an overarching concept encompassing imaginary narratives, political agendas, modes of expression and communication, transgressing cultural or historical confines.

The first contribution to Chapter one, Sensualité, sexe(s), féminité. Éros et le genre, is authored by Horia Lazăr, who tackles the issues of sensuousness, sexes, femininity, Eros and genre theories. He delves into manifestations of ancient sensuousness seen from the perspective of feminisation of actions, attitudes and behaviours, in an attempt to position femininity against theories of the genre and feminism. The concept of sex, as different from sexuality which is restricted to individual sexual experiences, represents the locus of pulsations defined as bodily experiences, shaping a space in which generic femininity defies physical, anatomical, physiological and ideological differences.

In Les Bacchantes. Sacrifice du taureau et sublimation de la Libido. Mythe, rite et psychanalyse, Corin Braga focuses on the archaic cult of Dionysus and brings forth a possible re-reading of the myth of Cadmos, the legendary founder of Thebes, considering that the death of Pentheus represents a sparagmos ritual in the purest Dionysian tradition. In other words, Pentheus is punished by God to become a sacrificial victim of his own orgiastic cult. This mythological interpretation is further enhanced by a psychological analysis, mainly based on Jung and Kerényi. Braga interprets self-sacrifice, particularly embodied in a bull, as a symbolic sublimation of primal instincts, of the Libido, in order to attain cultural creation.

The Myth of Electra in Theatrical Representations, by Gabriela Chiciudean, focuses on the myth of Electra and its interpretations in literary and theatrical works. Reference is made to Aeschylus' Oresteia, Sophocles' Electra, Euripides' Electra, as well as to more modern plays, such as Sartre's The Flies, J. Giradoux' Electra, Eugene O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra and Victor Eftimiu's Atrizii (The Atrides). In particular, the author discusses the staging and screening of the ancient myth of Electra as represented in Orestia and Orestia II directed by the Romanian Vlad Mugur, Choeforele (The Libation Bearers) by Romanian Aurel Stroe, directed by Lucian Pintilie, and the movie Electra, directed by Mihalis Kakogiannis, starring Greek actress Irene Papas in the female leading role.

Cristian Stamatoiu's Anthropological Archaeology of the Builder's Myth (Manole Handicraftsman) and its Echoes in Romanian Drama analyses the Balkan roots and variations of the Manole Handicraftsman Myth and how these evolved in the opinion of the celebrated Romanian philosopher and writer Mircea

Eliade. The author further identifies subtle interrelations between mythological heritage transmitted through ballads and modern drama, stating that modern age playwrights make a bridge between epochs by regaining the lost paradise in unifying essence and appearance.

Mythological Archetypes in Hardy's Jude the Obscure, by Monica Hătegan achieves an integration of all archetypal features peculiar to Thomas Hardy's personal myth into the novel under scrutiny. Fundamental myths, such as that of the hero – Jude or that of Gaia (the Mother Earth) – Arabella Don, Kronos – “Little Father Time” (Arabella and Jude's son), Anima – Sue Bridehead. The author identifies metaphors and intertextual elements to support her theory, presented from the perspective of psychoanalytic literary criticism, in the tradition of Jung's archetype theory and collective unconsciousness philosophy.

In Exploring the 'Spirits' in Shōjo Culture: Anime and the Bishōnen Trope, Alice Teodorescu investigates the bishounen ('pretty boy') trope, in particular the supernatural type, seen as a new form of Japanese popular culture, addressing mainly a feminine audience, the so-called shoujo culture or girl/lady culture, which is integrated within the consumerist kawaii or the 'cute' culture. The author sees the 'demonic' bishounen as the embodiment of the shoujo imaginary in which tradition, lovability and technology are merged (be it in a comic book, in a graphic novel or in an animated series).

Rodica-Gabriela Chira's The Audiovisual, the Myth of Possession and Speculative Fiction is the last contribution in the first part of the book. It warns against the danger of the audio-visual taking hold of our lives in an insidious manner, unknowingly, but completely. The author argues that literature could offer us the necessary tools to fight this phenomenon, i.e. the negative effects of television, its controlling power upon us. Chira illustrates her point through an analysis of George Orwell's 1984, Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, Susanne Collins' Hunger Games, which are examples of how the myth of power and possession is associated with a loss of consciousness, a loss of equilibrium between mind and soul.

The second part, Myth, music and ritual starts with María Noel Lapoujade's Music and Rhythm as Vibrations Inherent in Human Being, which puts forward a new concept of homo imaginans, seen as the species capable of imagining, imagination representing a bio-psycho-socio-cosmic whole (p.126). According to the author, myths are a specific syntax of original images, so-called images primordiales, or archetypes, taking shape as part of the cultural collective imagination. Lapoujade further states that music and rhythm are traits pertaining to mankind, to homo imaginans, however encapsulating the specificities of different cultures. The author makes a comparison between the meaning of music and rhythm perceived by Eastern versus Western cultures.

Kanteletar or the State of Song by Emilia Ivancu and Tomasz Klimkowski investigates on the one hand the lexis which unifies the concept of poetry with that of music, while on the other, it attempts at deciphering the meaning of the word Kanteletar. This was the title of Elias Lönnrot's collection of texts published in 1840, making reference to the Finnish instrument kantele, which is an example of how meanings of both the instrument and the lines of the song overlap in the creation of music.

Sibusiso Hyacinth Madondo's “Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein”: Myth, Enchantment (Fascination) and Ritual indicates the century-long indissoluble bond between myth, music and ritual, with an emphasis on the spellbinding power of music, in particular in performing a ritual. In mythical narratives songs are used to enthrall, i.e. bewitch or captivate the victim, the prey of the magician, poet or musician. The author makes reference to Goethe's “Erlkönig” (The Erlking), Joshua's battle of Jericho, the Pied Piper of Hamelin. The issue of the unifying effect of music in various sporting events is also tackled.

In Mechanical Musicality of the Profane and the Seduction of Sacredness, by Petru Adrian Danciu the focus is on the process of the sacred falling into the profane through musical enchantment. The author refers in particular to The Queen of Fairies, in which the main female character acquires corporeality through the mechanical music of a clock. The Romanian fairy-tales are exploited to prove the theory of enchantment that the profane has on the sacredness.

Graciela Ormezzano and Fabiane Burlamaque's Imaginary of Missions in St. Ignatius Mass: Music, Ritual and Myth analyses St Ignatius' Mass, composed by Domenico Zipoli (1688-1726), an Italian organist and musician, with a view to understanding the symbols, archetypes and myths found in the imaginary of the

Paraguayan Missions. The authors investigate the myth of St Ignatius as a warrior-saint and the father-founder of the Society of Jesus and Jesuit Missions using a research methodology based on Gilbert Durand's theory.

Imagery and Symbols of a Former Kanak Myth Bound to the "Round Dance" and Its Rites by Hélène Savoie Colombani explores the meaning of ancient songs and dances of Kanak people, especially of the 'round dance' or 'the night dance', which epitomises the myth of creation. The author makes a parallel between the richness of the imagery and symbols of the creation myth in the Kanak culture with similar myths of origins and creation belonging to other cultural and geographical spaces.

Liliana Floria (Danciu)'s Myth, Song and Ritual in the Modern World tackles the issue of music as present in Mircea Elade's novel The Forbidden Forest (Noaptea de Sânziene). The author identifies several instances in which songs acquire symbolic, mythical value: the Symphony No 5 Op. 67 by Beethoven is connected with the door knockings at Stefan's "secret room"; similarly, the rhythm of an old Romanian song (The mill's wheel) are likened to other door knockings or those in Bibicescu's drama The Return from Stalingrad. The knockings on Stefan's door equal the call of Destiny.

All in all, the abundance and variety of approaches to myth, music and ritual, from different angles and cultural spaces add value to the current literature of the imaginary, a field which is gaining more and more territory lately in literary theory.

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