

Mythology – archaic relics or an archetypal and universal source of constant renewal?

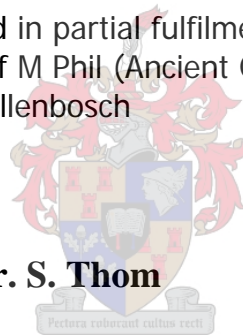
An exploration of the relationship between myth and archetype in the myth of Demeter and Persephone

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the connection between mythology and psychagogy, and a structured way of reading and using myth for personal development is suggested. The myth of Demeter and Persephone is used for this purpose, and the text of the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* is analysed as the basic (but not exclusive) text. In the modern world the psychagogic component relies on the work of Jung, which is seen as the most appropriate template available. His concept of the archetype is particularly useful, and the archetype of the mother goddess is analysed as a representation of the personal and spiritual development of modern women.

In the first chapter the nature of myth is defined and discussed. This is followed by an explanation of the methodology suggested for psycho-mythological analysis, which is based on Freud's model for dream analysis, Vladimir Propp's morphological analysis of Russian folk tales and their sequential actions, and on Jung's work, notably on archetypes. The method Jung devised for the amplification of dream material from myths and folk tales is also used in the proposed methodology.

Since the *Hymn to Demeter* deals with one of the great goddesses of antiquity, the question is then explored how mythology has been interpreted over the last century and a half. This is particularly related to the popular notion of a universal, peaceful matriarchy in antiquity, based on the mythology of the Mother Goddess. A brief review of contemporary feminist writing which may influence a reading of the *Hymn to Demeter* is also included.

In chapter three the concept "archetype" is explored, with a brief discussion of examples of psychological interpretations of mythology. This is followed in the next chapter by the text of the hymn in Helene Foley's translation, and a brief history of the text. This acts as a context for the investigation, and some features of the history are also seen as of direct relevance to the analysis in chapter five.

The methodology which is suggested in chapter one is subsequently applied to the *Hymn to Demeter*. A number of *motifemes* are identified, and these are discussed with reference to related literature, as well as through amplification by means of other myths with similar themes. The conclusion is reached that the methodology is valid, and that the *motifemes* discussed do correspond to archetypes which play a central role of constant renewal in the psychagogic process, particularly as represented by the work of Jung.

Opsomming

Die moontlike verband tussen mitologie en psigagogie word in hierdie tesis ondersoek en `n gestruktureerde model vir die gebruik van mites vir persoonlike ontwikkeling word voorgestel. Die mite van Demeter en Persephone word hiervoor gebruik en die teks van die *Himne aan Demeter* word as die basiese (maar nie uitsluitlike) teks gebruik. In die moderne konteks word die psigagogie verteenwoordig deur die werk van Jung, wat as die mees relevante model wat tans beskikbaar is gesien word. Sy konsep “die argetipe” word as van besondere belang beskou, en die argetipe van die moedergodin word gebruik om die persoonlike en geestelike ontwikkeling van moderne vroue voor te stel.

In die eerste hoofstuk word die konsep “mite” gedefinieer en bespreek. Dit word gevolg deur `n uiteensetting van die metodologie wat voorgestel word vir psigo-mitologiese analise, wat gebaseer is op Freud se model vir droomanalise, Vladimir Propp se morfologiese analise van Russiese volksverhale en die opeenvolgende aksies wat daarin voorkom en op Jung se werk, veral oor argetipes. Jung se metode vir die amplifikasie van droommateriaal deur gebruik te maak van mites en volksverhale met soortgelyke temas, word ook in die voorgestelde metodologie gebruik.

Aangesien Demeter een van die groot godinne van die antieke tyd is, word die vraag dan gestel hoe sy verband hou met die populêre idee van `n universele matriargale vrederyk wat op die mitologie van die Moedergodin gebaseer sou gewees het. Met die oog hierop word die interpretasie van mitologie oor die afgelope eeu en `n half oorsigtelik behandel. `n Kort oorsig word ook oor kontemporêre feministiese teorie gegee, wat die analise van die *Himne aan Demeter* binne `n moderne raamwerk sou kon beïnvloed.

In hoofstuk drie word die konsep “argetipe” ontleed, met voorbeelde van skrywers wat mitologie met `n sielkundige toepassing gebruik. In die volgende hoofstuk word die teks van die himne weergegee soos vertaal deur Helene Foley. `n Kort geskiedenis van die teks dien as konteks vir die analise, en sommige aspekte van die geskiedenis is ook direk op die analise in hoofstuk vyf van toepassing.

Vervolgens word die metodologie wat in hoofstuk een voorgestel is, in hoofstuk vyf op die *Himne aan Demeter* toegepas. `n Aantal *motifeme* word geïdentifiseer en bespreek na aanleiding van relevante literatuur, asook deur middel van amplifikasie deur verwysing na ander mites met soortgelyke temas. Daar word tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat die metodologie geldig is en dat die *motifeme* onder bespreking wel ooreenkom met argetipes wat `n sentrale rol van vernuwung in die psigagogiese proses, veral in Jung se formulering daarvan, speel.

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