

REFLECTION OF CHINESE MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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Annotation: *The article is devoted to the direct influence of Chinese mythology and religion on the subjects of contemporary art, including their intersection with traditional images and values.*

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Legends and mythological tales are an integral part of the culture of absolutely any state. They begin to take shape long before the creation of a stable language system - writing, are spread orally and are an indisputable part of ancient knowledge, passed down from generation to generation.

Myths themselves were the basis of many ancient works, from pictorial ornaments covering ritual vessels and tomb walls to novels telling about certain mythological heroes, gods and goddesses, which even preceded the ideals of Confucianism and Buddhism. Myths are often based on a collective image of a person who should be a model of behavior for the entire nation, someone who sacrifices his own beliefs and desires for the sake of general well-being. Myths tell about the creation of the world, about how all life on Earth came to be. There are a huge number of interpretations of this or that myth, but in modern society the theme of myths is especially popular among the creators of various works of art.

So, the Chinese are very sensitive to films and TV series whose plots are based on mythological ideas. I would like to focus on one of them.

Every Chinese and many foreigners are familiar with the animated work "Mulan", based on the story of Hua Mulan. The girl, who pretended to be a man, went to war instead of her father and achieved great success. In addition to the famous Disney cartoon, there are many different screen versions of this story, and the image of Hua Mulan herself is associated with courage and feminine power, which suggests that women are in no way inferior to men, especially when it comes to defending their own country.

The earliest version of the legend of Hua Mulan belongs to the yuefu, a traditional genre of lyric poetry.

The image of Mulan, in many ways, contradicts the image of a woman familiar to the Chinese, she is alien to the tenderness and grace of noble ladies, but she still preserves love for the fatherland and fortitude in the face of danger.

In many ways, in most versions, the heroine's story does not end happily. In some versions, she goes crazy, in others, she takes her own life due to the tragedies of war and the death of her father. With each new version, writers adapted the story to the time they needed, rewrote the plot line, but the image of Mulan as a whole did not change much. Mulan also became a collective image of Confucian ideals, such as humanity, prudence, honoring parents, loyalty to the country and duty, and courage. Perhaps this is why she became revered by the Chinese.

During the creation of the cartoon about Mulan, the Disney employees considered a slightly different storyline, namely the story of the survival of a girl who was taken away from her home after marriage.

However, in the end, the creators came across "The Song of Mulan". Illustrators visited China, photographed not only local attractions, but also nature itself, in order to bring the project as close to reality as possible. However, some moments created by the animators did not please the Chinese people, although they were liked by Western viewers.

One of such details is the comic image of the dragon, the assistant of the main character. The Chinese considered such a move an insult to their own values, because in Chinese mythology, the dragon was a symbol of the power and authority of the wang – the emperor of China.

The answer to this was the 2009 joint project of China and the United States – the film "Hua Mulan". The main idea of the film was the theme of loyalty to one's own country and the hardships of military life. The war is shown in all its glory in the film, and Mulan herself is inextricably linked with it. However, the consequences of the war cast their shadow on Mulan's life and even successes in military affairs cannot heal her wounds.

Myths have also found their way into many modern books. Often, the story is based on a love story between a human and a mythological creature, telling about the hardships of their path and the difficulty of accepting their own feelings. One of the most beautiful examples is the book 三生三世，枕上书 (Three Lives, Three Worlds: A Personal Diary) written by Tang Qi Gongzi in 2012. The novel tells the love story of two descendants of mythical creatures: the queen of the fox clan and the first Lord of Heaven.

The Huli jing, to whose clan the main character belongs, are Chinese mythological creatures. The most famous representative of the Huli jing is the nine-tailed fox, "Jiuweihu". Depending on the work, nine-tailed foxes play both positive and negative roles.

It was considered quite normal that in traditional Chinese beliefs the fox carried a more negative image. Often, meeting this creature was considered a sign that promised bad luck. In other words, jiuweihu was a bad omen. It was believed that foxes carried misfortunes on their own tails, and the more tails, the more misfortunes. The howling fox was the prototype of the Irish creature “banshee” and foreshadowed a tragic death.

Gradually, a cult of the fox developed. Wanting to appease the mythological creature, people brought it food and drink from the human table as gifts. In addition, Huli Jing gradually became the patron of marriage and childbirth.

The story of the lovers from the novel “Three Lives, Three Worlds: A Personal Diary” is tragic in many ways, because due to the part of the divine In them, they are constantly reborn and are forced to look for each other in new lives. In many ways, the plot of the novel also touched upon religious Chinese ideas about the afterlife and life after death. The idea of reincarnation and the immortal love of two creatures is dramatic and lyrical, making readers experience a storm of emotions, from regret to happiness.

The novel was adapted into a film in 2017 and received many positive reviews. Beautiful views, stunning graphics and a great cast helped bring to life not only the love story but also the magical Chinese landscapes.

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