Vitalizing Ancient Cultures Mythological Storytelling in Metal Music

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INTRODUCTION

The myth, which has been emerged at first because of the need of the humans "to understand", then "to let the others to understand" by narrating, has a language structure full of symbols. This narrative characteristic of the myths leads this narrative genre to have a dynamic structure impeding it to be stuck in a certain period of time. Thereby, the myths have gotten a foothold existing in different narrative genres, and have even become a culture all by itself.

For instance, as the most known example, Classical-era Greek Mythology has been a part of the Western culture for centuries. It is known that Greek mythology has reached to this day nourishing various narrative genres. Aforementioned mythology is still in action in those genres thanks to its symbolic structure. Mythology enriches its own universe by interacting with different narrative genres. In fact, writers, artists and intellectuals have enhanced this enrichment including mythology in other fields such as literature, painting, sculpture, philosophy, theatre and music for centuries. The use of mythological motif in a work of art not only fosters the culture that it has emerged into, but also leads to a positive result for the recurrent mythology.

Today, the myths are used being included in different narrative genres. Thus, myths still continue to be active in cultural production. For instance, one can find traces of mythology in academic studies, literature, fine arts, theatre, computer games, TV series, movies and music. As it is seen, myths are positioned as a discipline that protects its dynamics in expressional fields, e.g., literary, visual and audio.

Today, the other factor that ensures that myths being active in the cultural field is the myths of different geographies can be included in the production field thanks to the increasing number of various narrative mediums in modern day. While in the past the motifs of the dominant narratives, e.g., Greek and Roman Mythology, were mainly used in the works that were created, in today's world almost every mythology that has been found and put together by studies may find itself a place in the cultural production. The narratives ranked among mythologies like Egyptian, Celtic, Norse and Hindu Mythology, used in fields like literature, films, painting and music is presented as an example for this statement.

The relation between music and mythology gets ahead of aforesaid narrative genres. The most important reason of this pioneering position of music is that music, just like mythology, is one of the ancient forms of narration. Music, whose origins go back to the sounds of nature, has a history of thousand of years. Cavidan Selanik (2010) defines music as "...with the aim of thinking with sounds, feeling and enhancing life through sounds, the art of researching and narrating the reality of man in all of its contexts". The desire of man to narrate the facts and the events around him with the aim of feeling and enhancing life is similar to the starting point of mythology, inasmuch as myths also emerged thanks to the effort of man to interpret and narrate 'the things' happening around him.

Among the music genres of this day, number one genre that includes mythology and the myths in its area of usage is metal music which has begun to evolve around the UK and the USA in the late '60s and in the early '70s. Many bands in the history of metal music have used mythology in their lyrics, the video images, on the album covers, for their costumes and stage shows. Hence, mythology is renewed and enriched also in today's cultural production process. The relation between two of the most ancient narrative genres, mythology and music, which maintains on a contemporary level, is a subject that has been manifested to be studied about.

Based on the manifested research subject, it is intended that the subjects of metal music and mythology are of the top priority to be analyzed. In the chapter of praxis, in the aim of showing the connections of mythology, the lyrics, album covers, videos and concert performances of contemporary metal bands such as Amon Amarth, Eluveitie, Týr, Therion will be analyzed briefly. In addition to the praxis, Swedish metal band Amon Amarth's album "Twilight of the Thunder God" (2008) will be studied using semiotic method of analysis.

BACKGROUND

In this study, principally the conceptual framework will be specified by surveying literature reviews on 'metal music' and 'mythology'. In the praxis, semiotic analysis will be practiced upon. The reason of utilizing this method is that the band Amon Amarth enables us to read and study the mythological images on their album cover under the light of semiotic analysis, inasmuch as the reading method which semiotic analysis offers, assists us to reveal the mythological meanings in the visual product that the band released.

As it is known, the fundamental principles of semiotics depend on the studies of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Saunders Peirce. Saussure approached se-

miotics within the limits of linguistics. According to Saussure, a sign is composed of the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the image of sound that the message is ensured to be heard by the receptor. The signified is the meaning that occured in the receptor's mind (Atabek & Atabek, 2007). The connection between the signifier and the signified is created by the rules and the codes that the society has determined. Dyer (2010) explains the arbitrariness between the signifier and the signified as: "The signifier isn't similar to the signified or the signifier doesn't cause the signified, but they are related by convention or 'contract' ".

On the other hand, Peirce made a connection between semiotics and logic, and saw every subject he had researched as a phenomenon of semiotics, and established the theory of signs in this context (Atabek ve Atabek, 2007). Peirce divided semiotic, which he argued that logic is formal semiotic, into speculative grammar, logic proper and rhetoric. In addition to that, Peirce divides the 'sign' itself into three. These are icon, index and symbol (Rifat, 2009). Icon is the sign that appears to have a similarity to the object (e. g., picture or photograph); index is the sign that is directly related to the signified (e. g., smoke, footprint); symbol is the sign that has a relation of arbitrariness with the object (e. g., flag, traffic lights)" (Atabek & Atabek, 2007). The arguments of Saussure and Peirce pioneered the development of semiotics. Thus, many semiotical applications that improved the conceptions of Saussure and Peirce have come to light since '20s. For instance, the semioticians in Europe have tried to contribute to semiotics based on the ideas of Saussure.

One of these semioticians, L. Hjelmslev, reconsidered the bilateral of 'signifier/signified' and 'form/substance'. In this context, Hjelmslev named them as the expression plane, which includes the substance of sound, and content plane, which is the conceptual manifestation of the sign, and he also distinguished between form and substance. According to Mehmet Rifat (2009) in terms of the semiotic studies, one of the crucial conceptual

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