

Comparison of Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus in Mythologies through Lens of Cultures, Divine Identity, and Transformation

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Abstract: This article will focus on illustrating how two extremely similar mythical figures were produced under such differentiated Eastern and Western cultures, and how they manifested the social structures and spiritual systems of the two civilizations, and analyzes the parallels and distinctions between Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus as archetypes through the lenses of textual analysis and ritual performance. In the lens of textual analysis, Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus face similar obstacles in their journeys to the afterworld, representing the unbroken boundaries between the realms of the living and the dead. Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus, reflecting their own civilizations, communicate with the afterlife through music. Although it crosses borders, music still has limitations. Through recognizing the identity and shared traits of the two characters, together with their diverse cultural interpretations and historical contexts, the implications of social, political, and cultural frameworks become apparent. Cultural disparities in perspectives on marriage, family, and the afterlife are demonstrated by two stories. Meng Jiangnv stands for filial devotion and sacrifice that embedded in Chinese ideologies; whereas in Greek mythology, Orpheus represents artistic expression and independence, setting the foundation for future Western ideas, representing opposing ideals and gender roles. A legacy of Meng Jiangnv has evolved according to region and time, while Orpheus has transitioned into literature but has almost been forgotten in modern society.

1. Introduction

In this era of increasing cultural exchange between China and the West, the neglect of indigenous culture and superficial understanding of foreign culture have evoked my interest in the relationship between cultural differences. Due to regional characteristics and diverse cultures, the same traditional myths and stories tend to vary in narrative versions and performance styles across different regions.

Growing up in a traditional Chinese family, I practiced calligraphy and raised by grandparents who hold many traditional beliefs. However, as a student who attend to international school -- seeing and being exposure to different kind of cultural beliefs and practices -- I realize there are more similarities that shares between cultures than what I expected.

During my visit to the Guizhou Nuo Culture Museum last year, I realized this performing art is deeply imbued with indigenous Chinese cultural elements. Given the broad scope of discussion, I

decide to compare the local Guizhou ritualized performance of Meng Jiangnv with the classical Greek myth of Orpheus, as a representative myth figure from the western culture.

Meng Jiangnv is a very well-known character in Chinese folktales. She is an extremely tragically dramatic figure in Chinese mythical stories. Many people have heard of this story, but have little understanding of the specific plot details. Similarly, Orpheus was not a major character in Greek myths, but many people who have studied music are familiar with him.

The tragedies of Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus, echoing across cultures and time periods, offer a unique lens through which to explore the contrasting values and expectations placed upon women and heroes in their social context and historical background. The earliest Orpheus poems that have survived to the present-day date from the 6th century BCE., it has gone through many different historical stages, but mainly still remains as the origin. However, the story of Meng Jiangnv evolves into various different forms of performance and involves in the change of plot structures.

2. Literature Review

Introducing references that have contributed to this article, there are original texts of the two myths and major research on them that relate to the culture, ritual performance, and religious implications. However, acknowledging this research mainly lacks emphasis on its transformation and the comparison with other ancient civilizations. Also, without the consideration of cultural backgrounds and their social implication, myths seemed to be unrooted and depart from society.

There are very few sources that mention the divine talent that Meng Jiangnv possesses and sources try to conceal the religious implication the myth delivers. Although Orpheus' sources have mentioned the cultural and religious implications, few sources have compared Orpheus with characters from other cultures.

2.1 Meng Jiangnv Reference

The major source of Meng Jiangnv is Xu Hongtu and Zhu Hengfu's "Collection of Chinese Drama Scripts Volume 20: in Shaoxing are with The Story of Meng Jiangnv and The Story of Saving Mother" ^[1], which composes the script of Meng Jiangnv performance from a type of local opera Nuo. In the Gu Jiegang's "Studies on the Story of Meng Jiangnv and Others" ^[2] and "Collected Studies on the Story of Meng Jiangnv" ^[3], published in 1930s and 1960s, was one of the earliest scholarly works dedicated to analyzing the Meng Jiangnv story from a folklore and literature perspective, traced its evolution throughout the time period, and establish the academic foundations for comparative studies of the Meng Jiangnv.

In the article On the Characteristics of Inheriting Jianghu Playscripts - Taking Plays of Meng Jiangnv as an Example by Bai Haiying and Ding Chunhua [4], it demonstrates the spread of Meng Jiangnv myth into different area orally; however, some limitations included its narrow focus on oral performance traditions without comparing literary retellings and the influence of other cultures under the globalization context. Zhu Hengfu's article The Religious Functions of Jiangnv Plays [5] explored how performances served religious functions for local communities through exorcisms, prayers, and symbolic themes of salvation. However, there could be more discussion about their interrelation with established religious theatrical genres with more unique perspective. In the "Textual Verification of the Newly Discovered 'Meng Jiangnv Transformation Text' in the Ying Collections" [6], which providing a transcription and annotation of the contents of this "Meng Jiangnv Transformation Text" found in the Ying Collections.

2.2 Orpheus Reference

The book *Orpheus in Macedonia* by Tomasz Mojsik^[3] focuses on the religious cult of Orpheus in ancient Macedonia and analyzes how it became part of the construction of the legitimacy of rule by the local elite. The article systematizes the factual descriptions and analyzes them clearly and logically. However, it does not go into the religious and psychological meanings of music in mythology, nor does it compare Macedonian regional understandings with those of other cultures from a comparative literary perspective. It is to these two aspects that I would like to add: the deeper meaning behind the myths, and the similarities and differences in the understanding of the myths in different cultural contexts.

Performance: The Blunders of Orpheus by Joseph Roach^[4] explores imitation in performance by examining the relationship between literary analysis and performance through the lens of the myth of Orpheus. The framework of the myth focuses on Orpheus's "blunders" and how they help us understand performance and mimesis in a new way. Similarly, the article *Rethinking Orphic 'Bookishness': Text and Performance in Classical Mystery Religion*^[5] utilized the analytical tools of "material religion" and tried to explore Orpheus myth's further influence on performance practices. However, both of the texts include little focus on Orpheus myth's transformations. In the article, the "Double Orpheus": between Myth and Cult^[6] emphasizes Orpheus's connection with ancient Greece and tries to connect the myth with cultural background and its influence with the cult of Macedon. However, most of the research and study on Orpheus's myth is concentrated and limited to its influence and comparison within European countries or cultures.

The essay *Orpheus in Black: Classicism and Cultural Ecology*^[9] in Marcel Camus, Samuel R. Delany, and Reginald Shepherd put the myth of Orpheus into different cultural background, trying to link with cultural ecology and classical reaction. To better understand the interaction of culture and transformation of myth, it examines the story under African American and African Brazilian contexts. However, even though it includes and analyze the story with different cultural context, the limitation of mentioning the comparison of other cultures' myth still makes it limits to Western perspectives. In the article *Orpheus and Eurydice: Some Modern Versions*^[10], it elaborates the story of Orpheus in the perspective of spiritual journey, the power of music, and Orpheus's function as an initiate. However, it touches the various interpretations of the story and how the interpretations can lead to diverse understanding of the story, the article does not include the perspective of cultural comparison.

3. Characters Comparison

Ovid's "Metamorphoses"^[7] and Virgil's "Georgics"^[8] both provide valuable insights for the research on Orpheus and provide the foundation for this paper. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, demonstrates the power of music and poetry, the tragic nature of loss and love, and the boundaries between life and death. While Virgil's *Georgics* reflects more emphasis on the harmony between humans and nature and the role of music in agricultural rituals.

3.1 Texts, Ritual Performance, and Sites

In the aspect of the character's identity, according to *Collected Studies on the Story of Meng Jiangnv*, Meng Jiangnv was born originally as a goddess, born to human from a pumpkin, which proves her inherent divinity. What's the similar with this is Fuxi Nuwa is born from cushaw. Orpheus, as the son of Apollo and Muses, he is the son of king Oeagrus and the Muse Calliope. From this perspective, it demonstrates the divine origin of two God-like figures.

In both the texts of Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus, they describe their challenging journey to the afterworld with a similar purpose, and their approach to dealing with similar obstacles. These barriers

maintain the boundaries between the living world and afterworld by acting as checkpoints.

In the story of Meng Jiangnv, she across the Mountain of Knives, and this is the checkpoint to test one's purity and regrets, and the guards will check on souls' merits and sins. She passed the River of Three Crossings, which is to test one's filial piety, which is mainly to judge one's familial bonds and virtue of their lifetime. Such barriers are the only way that must be passed by the souls to enter the afterworld.

In the description of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, when Orpheus is trying to find Eurydice, he meets the Cerberus, hound of Hades. It has three heads and stands in front of the Hell, and Orpheus' lyre calmed Cerberus. Orpheus across the Phlegethon, the river of fire that separates the underworld from the living world. He crosses the river by soothing the river with his song.

Based on the texts related to Meng Jiangnv collected by Gu Jiegang ^[3], and the book "Chinese Opera Scripts Collection 20: The Story of Meng Jiangnv Saving Her Mother from Shaoxing" co-authored by Xu Hongtu and Zhu Hengfu ^[1], the variations of Meng Jiangnv's story can be seen across different regional texts and performance styles. Although the folk spread of Meng Jiangnv's story is still widespread, the contents would also be adapted according to different local customs.

We can clearly see that the description of Meng Jiangnv's performance is closely intertwined with folk religious beliefs. Meng Jiangnv performances must be held during rituals to sacrifice the deceased souls. The site needs to be spacious. The tables set up on stage symbolize the difficulties for souls to ascend. The continuation of incense is also extremely important, because once broken, it means the souls cannot be liberated. Staged in a bereaved atmosphere, the plays act as a collective grieving ritual by honoring those who have passed. Meng Jiangnv sympathizes with lonely ghosts in the narratives, emphasizing her folkloric role of bringing solace and connection to the deceased. Her ongoing quest reflects broader Chinese religious beliefs in an afterlife realm and the desire to ensure deceased loved ones find a place and purpose even beyond the human world. Meng Jiangnv's plays continue traditions of deriving spiritual meaning from folk texts.

Unlike many Greek deities whose widespread worship led to the lack of specificity, Mojsik ^[3] finds the intimate connection between Orpheus rituals and tomb side venues particularly unique. Through the perspective of detecting his subterranean journey within funereal architecture, local communities seem to have powerfully embodied his grief spirit through sacred geography. The tomb locales would have amplified performances' mortuary function, unreasonably placing audiences within Orpheus' legendary crossing into the underworld through song and poetry.

Comparatively, people may see the spread of faith and myth often via localized cult architecture and ritual representations. Lamentations amidst burial markers would have reinforced Orpheus' gravity as a model for divine communion and soulful mourning.

3.1.1 Textual Comparison

By examining the plot of these two myths, it is apparent that Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus faced similar difficulties that highlighted the rigid barriers between the worlds of the living and the dead, as well as the difficulties of finding or balancing with the deceased. In light of their unwavering devotion for their departed loved ones, both characters might be perceived as messengers, acting as a bridge between these two realms.

Meng Jiangnv overcomes these challenges by being persistent and adhering by traditional Chinese values, especially the values of kindness and filial piety. She passes these difficulties and enters the afterlife because of her unshakable devotion to her husband and her ethical nature. On the other hand, Orpheus uses his exceptional musical abilities to prevail over all the challenges he encounters. His underworld pass is his talent of music, which Orpheus and Meng Jiangnv's are both highly valued in the culture they lived in. They could be able to cross the limits of the afterlife because of the realization of cultural values. Orpheus's extraordinary musical skill and Meng Jiangnv's devotion to

ancient values enable them to overcome these obstacles and accomplish their goal. The parallel obstacles the two characters face in their journeys to the afterworld symbolize the unbroken boundaries between the realms of the living and the dead.

3.2 Divine Characteristics

The myths of Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus both consist of cultural implications regarding the time period they were created. Arise in the different cultural hearth, at first glance, two myths look nothing alike. However, through the lens of music and the characteristics they showed in the stories, their similarities still exist.

3.2.1 Role of Music

In traditional Chinese culture, rituals and music were considered as the fundamental structure to social order since long time ago. Figures like Huangdi and Confucius reinforced the integration of melody into ceremonial traditions, identifying its cultural and even sacred functions. Meng Jiangnv's lament illustrates how funerary dirges remained the indigenous ritual performance.

In the traditional Chinese tale, upon arriving at the Great Wall and learning of her husband's death, Meng Jiangnv began singing a lamentful dirge in mourning. Due to certain mistranslations, many have come to believe she literally cried so loudly as to bring down sections of the massive stone structure. Through her lamentful singing at the Great Wall, the story relates that Meng Jiangnv located her husband's soul. This led to her being seen as one who could offer warmth and guidance to the bereaved by connecting the living and ancestral realms.

Her ability to communicate with the dead through music fulfills an important psychological and spiritual role. Rituals emerged to help mourners cope with loss by affirming continued bonds with departed loved ones. Meng Jiangnv's expression was not simple crying, but rather a traditional Chinese folk-art form known as lament, or dirge singing. This type of musical tradition involved formalized, sustained vocalizations or singing as a means to release grief and communicate with the soul. Through her sorrowful lamentations, she is able to locate her deceased husband's soul - highlighting music's ability to cross boundaries between death and live realms. In this way, Meng Jiangnv elevated herself into a character that is no longer a simple female.

Portraying her as a supernatural figure has opposed both logic and subtle theological dimensions inherent to the story. Meng Jiangnv's actions symbolized her devotion and humanity's spirit, rather than simple supernatural power. Her sorrowful singing served to honor her husband through ritual performance and consolation to seek purposes aligned with ancient Chinese religious philosophy.

Through standardized rites, music united both the living and the ancestors in Chinese religion and society. Similarly in ancient Greece, the myth of Orpheus prominently features music's almost supernatural power over life and death. Orpheus bridged the human and underworld realms through his lyric and gifted music talent, in which demonstrate how music gave expression to the birth of civilization. His failure to save and take his bride back to the real world also underlines music's limitations under divine forces. Music, in many ways, become the connections in the spiritual expression.

Orpheus is the metaphorical representation of music just like Meng Jiangnv. Combined with his special identity (which will be further discussed in 3.3), proves that music is the center and origin of civilization. Music possesses the ability to overcome the barrier of death, and connect the afterworld, living world, and deity. Orpheus' lyrical song pacifies Hades enough to permit retrieving Eurydice, while Meng Jiangnv's lament leads her to her husband's soul. Music guided but conferred no supernatural power. As a tool symbolizing wisdom, moderation, and intellectual reflection, the harp reinforced how Greeks conceptualized music as the heart of civilization. Both Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

and Virgil's *Georgics* describe how Orpheus played intensely sorrowful songs on his lyre to grieve the untimely death of his wife Eurydice.

3.2.2 Supernatural Characteristics

Meng Jiangnv's characterization as a conduit between realms should not be taken as supernatural power per se, but as representing the performative religious function of music. Her lament penetrated spiritual domains not through personal supernatural abilities, but through the cross-boundary nature of ritual song as a meditative art form.

Crossing the barrier between life and death is not something that ordinary people can do, so her innate divinity explains as well as justifies this action. Since her husband's unexpected death, Meng Jiangnv also comforted the soul in the underworld. Similar to Orpheus's story, he entered the afterworld with his gifted musical talent. In most of the faith, music has spiritual significance. It has the ability to stimulate meditative and emotive states encouraging revelation, divination, or contact with deities. Just like Orpheus, Meng Jiangnv's lament serves to make tangible music's power to evoke emotional empathy for social functions.

While Orpheus and Meng Jiangnv both use music to interact with spirits, their characterizations differ in important ways reflecting cultural perspectives. Meng Jiangnv's laments symbolized harmony and balance upholding social order between realms, and this could also be explained under the Chinese traditional beliefs. Chinese ancestor worship emphasized familial and social responsibilities transcending death. Through cyclical regeneration and repayment of 4 kindnesses in Confucius beliefs, harmony prevailed over the finality of mortality. This diverged from Greek notions of the terrifying, immutable underworld ruled by Hades due to different historical context.

This shows that, from the Chinese perspective, ghosts can also be tamed and ordered as long as they are taught with rites and music. There is a difference between civilization and barbarism, between life and death. Meng Jiangnv saw the possibility of harmony through music, while Orpheus's existence seems to destroy such an unchangeable fate and adds up to more possibilities.

3.3 Comparison of Gendered Archetypes and Divine Quests

The portrayal of a semi-divine protagonist who enters the hereafter to reclaim their departed loved one is a recurrent theme in these traditional tales. Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus, in their devotional acts of song and lament, both undertake heroically superhuman efforts to transcend the bounds of death and face the gods of the underworld.

However, Meng Jiangnv has a very obvious difference with Orpheus, gender. As a female, she possesses the ability to connect the underworld and the real world, which makes her very different from other god-like figures. Traditionally, under the context of Chinese social structure, the patrilineal society should give an important position to the male. In traditional Chinese mythology, many prominent spiritual figures who took on roles of salvation and protection were female. Goddesses such as Nuwa who mended the sky, Xi Wangmu, the Goddess Beixia Yuanjun, and the Buddhist bodhisattva Guanyin, all embodied feminine characteristics of nurturing and saving others.

Ancient Chinese folks that contain religious meanings usually imply that women were actively interacting with higher divine forces compared to other cultures' folks. Witches, who were deemed to have supernatural abilities and serve as spiritual intermediaries between people and God, were considered mainly female. However, in Ancient China, such departure from patriarchal social standards, illustrates how Chinese religion views women as innately endowed with powerful, divined powers that are vital to existence.

In Meng Jiangnv, apart from their assigned social roles, women seemed to hold supreme authority spiritually. Crucial mythological stories about primordial creation or eternal existence were largely

taken by goddesses. They possess the supernatural power that creates respectful archetypes through scriptures and folklore and further reinforces ideas of femininity for centuries. By noticing religious beliefs gave women ultimate authority over ethereal realms, though the attitudes and social status regard to women's role in public and domestic domains did not improve. Such female characters in religious folklore still represent harmony, protection, and redemption via unselfish action – qualities that were eventually incorporated into Confucian and Buddhist ethical frameworks.

Rather than a female in danger and wait for rescuer as the typical princess story, Meng Jiangnv took on an active guiding role, leading lost souls out of each level of the underworld checkpoints along their journey and serves as a connective figure who bridging the worlds of the living and dead. This contrasts sharply with the depiction of women in the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. As Orpheus' new married wife, Eurydice seem to depended entirely on her husband to rescue her after she died. When Orpheus turns back in a moment of doubt while fleeing Hades, it is Eurydice who pays the price for his lapse in persistence and concentration, which makes her become a passive character of her fate.

In another version of Orpheus, he is the son of Apollo and one of the nine Muses, goddesses who inspired art and science, Orpheus came from a divine heredity tied to various arts but especially music. As the god of prophecy, disease, and music who created the lyre himself, Apollo embodied how Greeks viewed music as a civilizing, healing, and oracular meaning.

Unlike figures in Chinese mythology who navigated and guide the dead souls in the netherworld through thoughts alone, Orpheus' power derived directly from his godly heritage as the original musician. His music symbolized the civilizing force of art, granting him influence over the most uncivilized of domains - the realm of death itself. Orpheus has the special identity in Greek myth. He is not a warrior, conqueror, ruler or hunter, but a musician killed by women.

Orpheus uses music as a bridge to save his bride from Pluto, and Meng Jiangnv utilizes music to find his husband in the afterworld. Music possesses the ability of express emotions and being the tool for unspeakableness. Music's reverberations endure as civilization's lifeblood. People believe that instruments and music have the ability to access realms beyond ordinary perception structured interactions with metaphysical domains and deities, and this could be why many traditions and classical music is inevitably related to religion.

3.4 Marriage

In both ancient Chinese and Greek mythology, there are tragic stories of semi-divine heroes who go to rescue their lovers. In this article, Meng Jiangnv will represent the ancient Chinese as a typical myth, and Orpheus will represent Greek mythology because of the similarities he possesses that being discussed in the previous sections. The love stories of Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus both take place during newly-married period, but the attitudes of the two heroes towards their lovers and the functions of their rescue rituals are quite different.

Meng Jiangnv died for her husband, while Orpheus wanted to bring his wife back to the human world, but it didn't matter if he couldn't bring her back. These two attitudes reflect the attitudes of the two civilizations towards marriage, which actually reflects the importance of the family. The story of Meng Jiangnv reflects women held family as their priority in traditional Chinese culture. In ancient China, the family represents the highest symbol of women. Women's social status was highly link to their family background and who they marry to. This is why Meng Jiangnv spared no expense, even her own life, for the sake of her family. Her tragedy reflects the loyalty and dedication of ancient Chinese women to their families.

Both narratives contain with themes of love, loss, and the struggle against fate, it is undeniable that their underlying motivations and resolutions reveal sharp differences in their cultural contexts.

Meng Jiangnv's tragedy is where the family is the highest symbol of women, but Orpheus's tragedy is hero's rescue failed. In Meng Jiangnv's tragedy, the concept of filial piety and maintaining family harmony takes center stage. Her journey of finding her dead husband, Fan Xiliang, who being buried within the Great Wall, shows where the society put the responsibility of supporting husband and following their decision on women. As the embodiment of traditional virtue, Meng Jiangnv's actions are seen as fulfilling her duty to preserve the familial balance disrupted by Fan Xiliang's death. There is full of aspects of moral responsibility and familial concepts that drive the story and the marriage of Meng Jiangnv, which gradually leading the story to the tragic ending.

In contrast, Orpheus's tragedy seemed to be more like pure love in this perspective since Orpheus's actions were driven by an overwhelming love for his wife Eurydice. In the story, other than Orpheus's love of Eurydice, he has to play the role of a savior besides simply being the role of husband and lover. In the perspective of exploring what drive the main characters to find their love in the underworld and the obstacle they faced, Orpheus seems to be the one whose action is driven by love, while Meng Jiangnv's action is driven by complicated social expectations.

However, there are different explanations and interpretations of the two stories' endings. The central theme of Orpheus's tale is his heroic attempt to overcome death and the underworld. Both Eurydice's life and his pride are sealed by the failure. While, in the ending of Meng Jiangnv, Meng Jiangnv and Fan Xiliang are ultimately reunited in death, while Orpheus and Eurydice are separated forever.

These stories provide insight into the fundamental values and ideas that built their respective cultural landscapes by examining topics such as family harmony, heroic failure, and the role of women.

3.5 Formation and Transformation under Different Historical Context

The story of Meng Jiangnv as a religious folk based on local customs, has demonstrated itself to be flexible and transformed into many minority cultures. People can find diverse versions of its performance in different regions. Chinese culture and information processing incorporate its unique symbol and way of representation. Through fostering cultural integration and active changes, the story of Meng Jiangnv continues to appear even as modern Chinese society advances.

Greek myths were mainly in the domain of ancient Western civilization. It lacks strong integration and adaptation into the modern world culture, which could lead to the decline of religious overtone that removed their original context in lived experience. While spiritual representations like Orpheus connect with advanced art and philosophy, the wider societal shift of diverse belief systems lead to loss of appearance in the modern world. Without the ties to sociopolitical realities in the modern world setting, Greek mythology does not associate with a specific country in the modern world, but it is still rooted in Western culture and demonstrates the origin of civilization. Still considering Orpheus' myth as Greek mythology, it mainly remained unchangeable in its story setting and main plot, which made it gradually out of the public eye.

Orpheus' story merged with many civilizations as Greek civilization spread from Macedonia around the Mediterranean region. According to Mojsik [7], Orpheus was positioned distinctively among the regional death-related customs in Macedonia via placing ceremonial areas around tombs, which demonstrated sit as a spontaneous convergence. Mojsik and Ovid showcase regional reinterpretations enriched understanding of Orpheus as Greek ideas spread. Their works establish localization as vital for myths to dynamically accompany wider cultural diffusion, whether through adapted rituals, literature, or beliefs. Myths survive through creative adaptation, not preservation of origin forms. The transformation of myths and stories makes them closer to society, which is the main source of spreading them.

Such differences showed how Meng Jiangnv continues to present in people's lives and gives life to performances; however, the belief and the myth of Orpheus have vanished from the modern world. Her flexibility encouraged tenacity amid shifting belief systems, unlike gods who were excluded from mainstream religion. Meng Jiangnv's continuous changes and adaptations under the modern world setting reveal the change of society and regional lifestyle.

The story of Orpheus was once performed as a part of the wedding festivities of Medici and Henry IV of France; however, it ends with happy ending rather than the vanish of Orpheus's lover. The contradiction to the original Greek myth symbolizes how myth and ancient stories changed under the modern day. As myth is the network of interconnected stories, it generated diverse realizations and readings in different period.

It is accepted that the Greek conceptions of Orpheus are not accurately reflected in the Roman depiction of the figure. During the early Greek age, Orpheus did not always figure in religious literature and art. On the other hand, despite the fact that Meng Jiangnv's narrative has obviously evolved over time as a result of local modifications and variants, her legend is still performed often enough to keep the religious tradition alive in many regions of China. Local celebrations and exchanges of various Meng Jiangnv tales allow her mythology to develop while being deeply intertwined with folk religious customs. This distinguishes it from the gradual fading of Orpheus from cultural and spiritual relevance representations in contemporary Western societies.

Myths had been diverging noticeably according to the civilizational contexts in which they emerged. She gradually becomes a social figure that exemplifies women's roles and reinforces social order. On the other hand, Orpheus exemplifies Hellenistic ideals such as musical intellect with the power of artistic expression. Further, the diverging in the two characters' conceptualizations of post-life states symbolizes their differences. While Meng Jiangnv demonstrates a framework of reincarnation, Orpheus shows with deities like Hades as lord that appears in many other European cultures.

The legend of Orpheus build up from customs that emphasize Apollo. Apollo, the god of light, music, and prophecy, symbolized a spiritualization of the creative manhood and cultural refinement that Western philosophers admired. This probably played a part in Orpheus's pivotal position as a heavenly musician who used music to transcend the boundaries of life and death. In contrast, Meng Jiangnv does not challenge universal bounds in an individual power; rather, she performs the traditional feminine role of a mourner via sung lamentations.

4. Conclusion

Although Eastern culture leads its myths to emphasize familial concepts while Western culture demonstrates the concept of individualism, these seemingly completely different cultures have nevertheless given birth to extremely similar mythical stories. Both of them can demonstrate the concepts of the afterlife and the real world, showing the universal human quest to understand and explore the afterlife. Figures like Meng Jiangnv and Orpheus who possess the ability to navigate between realms show their semi-divine roles and address many potential cultural similarities they possess with remarkably analogous purposes under different perspectives.

Their ability to access the afterworld, normally as a forbidden domain for humans, demonstrates the different divine abilities they possess and distinguishes them from ordinary humans. Although the geographic and cultural distance between Europe and China had created unbridgeable barriers for ideas exchange, similar archetypes emerged reflecting the shared curiosities and limits facing life's inevitabilities.

In traditional Chinese culture, Meng Jiangnv came to represent femininity, sacrifice, and the desire to unite with lost loved ones in religious-related folks. As a psychopomp, she provided a view of the

afterworld from a women's discipline perspective. Her myth aligned with ritual practices like sending winter clothing, showing religious social function, and regional ritual practices. While Meng Jiangnv's legacy still survives regionally through performance and is protected as a cultural ritual, her religious purpose has faded and is valued in the art and cultural perspectives.

Comparatively, Orpheus in Greek myth was largely considered philosophically related and appropriate. However, it is detached from the lived cult, and combined with the fast cultural transformation that occurred in the West, Orpheus's myth gradually lost audiences and returned back to a section of Greek mythology. Without social embedment and transformation, figures like him transitioned to literature rather than spiritual faith.

Such divergence reflects how folk religion stories that are incorporated into practices last the longest in terms of cultural significance. The timeless question of grieving death and curiosity about the afterlife persist, but as the traditional worldviews weaken, the rise of philosophical thinking toward such questions leads to the decline of mythical articulations.

Modern society has a growing pursuit of happiness and perfection in family relationships that is embedded in the unconsciousness of people's minds. People wanted to have a unified family and perfect love. Following this trend, the tendency to prefer happy ending inevitably led to the transformation of stories. For old figures to stay impactful in modern society, it requires constant reinterpretation addressing contemporary needs. As Meng Jiangnv has demonstrated its changes, it seemed to be an alive myth, whereas being detached from modern desire creates obsolete beliefs and stories that are being left behind in history.

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