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When Beauty Becomes Authority: Mythic Aesthetic Jurisdiction and Female Personhood.

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Abstract

This essay raises the question: Who has the right to determine a woman's beauty, and how does an aesthetic judgment translate into the power to determine a woman's moral, sexual, social, and cognitive status? Existing research in feminist aesthetics has analyzed the social and cultural constructs of beauty; transnational feminism criticized universalization and colonial frameworks of knowledge; Myth-research, on the other hand, analyzed the gendered representation of female characters. But the interrelationship between how beauty judgment becomes social authority is relatively less discussed. This research examines Sita, Draupadi, Medusa, and Cassandra through Valmiki's Ramayana, Vyasa's Mahabharata, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Aeschylus's Agamemnon, as well as modern feminist rereadings, comparative close readings, and reception analysis. The analysis shows that beauty is not just a description of physical characteristics; it establishes a different kind of control over women, combined with purity and ideal femininity, desire and rights, demonization and punishment, and sexualization and cognitive disbelief, respectively. From this comparative framework, the essay proposes the concept of 'mythic aesthetic jurisdiction', which explains how permissible aesthetic hierarchies become the basis for regulating women's morality, sexuality, social legitimacy, autonomy, and credibility. This study redirects the aesthetic discussion from a question of criteria to a question of authority, representation and power, and proposes a comparative analytical framework in decolonial aesthetics. It simultaneously adds to the relationship between myth, aesthetics, feminist theory and decolonial thought in a new way and into debate.

Keywords: Interracial Feminist Aesthetics; Mythical Feminism; Colonial-Abolitionist Aesthetics; Aesthetic Authority; Mythic Aesthetic Jurisdiction; Feminist Mythology