

Research In Practice Proposal Essay

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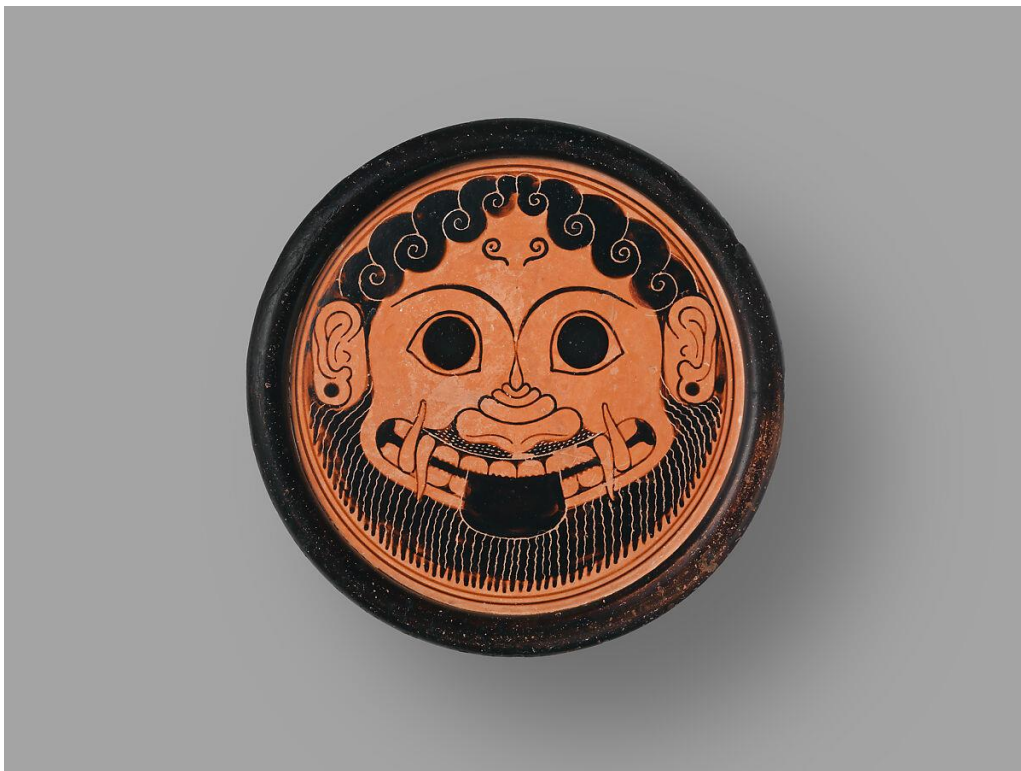
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Old Mythology vs the contemporary!!!

The question I am going to propose is how feminism and mythology has evolved since the original tales to the more contemporary telling of the stories and how they have changed and have different meanings behind them. The keywords I am going to be using for this proposal are *MYTHOLOGY*, *RE-TELLINGS* and *EVOLUTION*. "Without the knowledge of mythology much of the elegant literature of our own language cannot be understood and appreciated" (Thomas Bulfinch, (1796)). This is because they are all important when it comes to this topic to do the question and its use of grand themes. Mythology is a field I want to engage with because it has been changed throughout the decades with many factors being the evolution of censorship and the passage of time.

Mythology

Mythology which is currently referred to as mythos or myth was originally referred to as “fabel, Fable within the Greek language” (Gaier, 2009), The Allegorical theory supposes that ancient myths were allegorical and symbolic (Bullfinch, 1867) which suggests that all of the stories/ myths that exist all have a symbolic meaning behind them and that they have an importance. The area of focus is,” stories in which have female characters in which are the main focus of the stories for example, “medusa”, “selkies” , “sirens” though for now the story of medusa will be the main area in which I will be focusing on because they all have different stories but yet have a focusing point on the female characters in which are represented within their stories.



Fig,1: *terracotta stand* (Ergotimos and Kleitias ,570 BCE)



fig,2: Terracotta kylix (Nikosthenes, 530 bce)

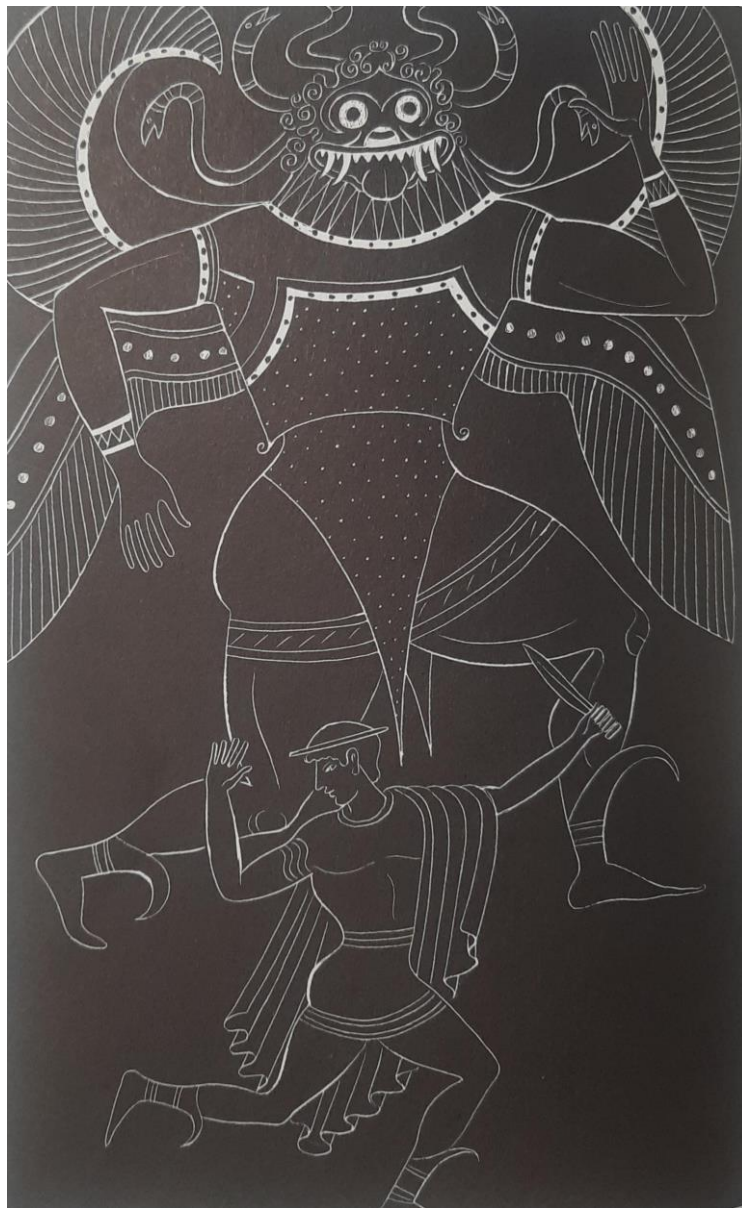
As it is most original designs and depictions of medusa is shown within terracotta pottery and small busts since there are no remaining paintings due to the passage of times and the only remnants of these paintings are literature and poems from back then and the pieces of pottery and architecture in which has been found by excavations. When looking at the pottery and sculptures in which have been found and put back together. Looking at (Fig,1) as reference it shows depictions of medusa being more snake like than human with the use of fangs within the work as well as the more recognizable feature of the snakes for hair but compared to the depiction in (Fig,2) the earliest piece out of the two images I have found appear to have no fangs, so within the space of 40 years the depiction of medusa has changed to a more horrifying face in but both of the images still retain the same face shape and general concept of the character. The general description of the characters being

“heads covered by black snakes, tusks like a boar, hands of bronze and wings of gold”(March,2009) as well as another description along the lines of “serpents for hair, protruding tongue along with a face that is so ugly”(Graves, 1999) this as a general description of medusa it shows how the original concept of her was to have her look monstrous and more on the animalistic side of the of character design compared to the more modern design of her being more human. And both of which have very similar descriptions shows the general evolution of the character and details in which are not present within modern day illustration.



Fig,3: *medusa holding head of Perseus* (Garbati, 2008)

fig,3 the statue of *Medusa holding the head of Perseus* in which has been presented is a statue of a new story of in which shows medusa still being alive and she is holding the head of Perseus, in which is a completely different interpretation of the original myth, as compared to fig,1 and fig,2 the illustration image of fig,3 has completely removed the animalistic features in which were originally present even as far as removing the boars tusks.



Fig,4: *Perseus and medusa* (Baker,1996)

The modern designs for the more modern designs have been praised and been shown to be more human in comparison to the original grotesque designs, the more modern designs lack the originality of the originals, the progression through time lead to renaissance period where the popularity of Greek and roman mythology had risen to new hights (Meredith, 2022).

This is mostly because of the popularity increase of the writer *Dante* AND the translations of *Dantes inferno*, this popularity increase was due to the antiquity and style of book (Highet,2015) as well as this Greek myth the story of *Medusa* has appeared in the writings of Homer, Dante, Shakespear and Goethe and with the prominence of these writers work in the 21st century due to the studies of different literature students to history and art students have all been inspired by their writings especially Dantes inferno (Barvricelli,1996) because of this mythology will always be present in a art form.

Re-tellings

Most often of not historical texts and illustrations are used as supplemental materials to understand social studies or literature curriculum (youngs,2012) this is due to the usefulness of the texts and images, this has brought the understanding that visual elements of storytelling stick more to the understanding of stories.

Re – Telling or as known as “Lesser Writers” (woodside, 2009) as stated by a lecturer at Sacramento state university, in which implies that re-telling are no more than a copy of the original that has faced or have had a certain number of changes put in place. PERCY SHELLY

the famous poet stated, "We are all Greeks, our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, Have their Roots in Greece" (Shelley, Viii-iX) this statement gives you an insight in which no matter what period or what type of story being told or re told will have the same effect and in this shows the importance of the stories as a whole.

Educators recognize that when a story is told students and children develop an interest in the story more than when compared to the original stories due to the translations and sometimes even the development of the story may have a different affect (Morrow,1985)

Re-telling stories doesn't just come into Greek Myths it's in everyday storytelling, for things such as *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Shakespeare's plays* and many children's books like *little red riding hood* and *three little pigs* even stories of Disney's princesses such as *Mulan* , *Cinderella* and *snow white*, the point of retelling stories is to make it easier for younger generations to understand the concepts of the stories (Gambrell,2010) this helps people comprehend what the original stories were trying to tell originally.

with retellings having the opportunity to change the stories they also change the way the character can and will be perceived for example in the way medusa gets changed from the more animalistic and terrifying character to the more well know human formed medusa that is just known for serpentine hair.

The retellings of Greek myths have become more of a common occurrence as of late because of the gripping storytelling and the characters in which match (Johnston,2023) and this is because of how well the stories can be adapted and changed but keep the same premise as the original story while still making it appropriate for this period but at the same time the majority of retellings completely re-invent the ideas of story for and designs of the characters. This gives characters a more depth and level of detail. Re tellings also protect

viewers from graphic content in most scenarios but there is the issue in which it can be hidden away due to aspects of the story being graphic “Let Them Know That Men Did This”: Medusa, Rape, and Female Rivalry in Contemporary Film and Women’s Writing (Johnston,2017) with this as a factor it comes across as there are things being hidden away.

Evolution

When it comes to original tales and stories there was little to no censorship in which would have the wrong idea portrayed, for example the fact that the majority of Greek myths have shown aspects of characters getting sexually assaulted, murdered and general mistreatment, this is where censorship can come into this because “increased exposure to an idea improves the acceptance”(Bergman,1996) and because of this it was ideal in which the stories have been censored in which allows it to still be taught and implemented into this generation in which censorship has played massively into our media. Along with censorship coming into literature due to certain aspects of it being loud/vulgar (Tziovas, 2006) in the sense that the way they are told are graphic and with this it makes it so it is not appropriate. Censorship as a whole is a fluid motion in the sense it has its negatives and positives, when censorship happens it mostly targets things such as “Hate speech, violence, sexual assault “(Berkwitz, 2021) in which it helps protects viewers from them certain aspects but then it also hides the fact that they were told in stories and now the knowledge that they have gained have then been altered from what they were originally meant to know.

When looking through the evolution of the *medusa* the 3 books in which have had a relevant effect and are more considered well known Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (Ovid, 7th Bce), the reason for this first book is because it was the first to talk about the story of medusa being written in the 7th century BCE while also including the poems written by Homer and Hesiod as they also were written and spoken around the same time. Using these books the information that is given and as well the illustrations from that time period (refer to fig,1 and fig,2) would give the main and beginning idea of which was the monster known as Medusa, by using this book the full uncensored version will give more detail and lead into the more grotesque details.

Book 2: the second book that is going to help with the story of medusa would be *Medusa in the mirror of time* this BY David Leeming, this book would be the next book in which i would research in and look through the story and how the character is portrayed and how the author has looked at the way to tell the story through censorship laws and what's in place for him to get published. As well as this it would show how the character has developed in the change of appearance and how they have evolved.

The 3rd book in which would help the investigation is *Medusa* By Jessie Burton (Burton,2021) the reason behind the research into this book is because it has a unique standpoint in the sense that it was written by a feminist and has been praised for its unique standpoint on the story of medusa and as well as that it has a different representation on the character as a whole and shows the story at a more censored standard taking in the perspective from a different gender and to be telling the story as the same gender as the character.

The books in which i have chosen to research are all different in the sense that the way the characters have changed the perspective of the character has changed as well by looking at character through different eyes. The evolution of medusa has changed and the description and the way she has been portrayed has been changed even in popular media, she as a character has been oversexualised (Johnston,2017) and with this its split between people who either see her as a strong character for the feminist movement (Whitings,1960) the start of the feminist movement in the 60s saw a rise in the re-tailings of the Medusan and the starting point for it was Whiting's *Iliad* showed the story from a feminists point of view and with this it had led to many re-telling's of Greek Myths

Conclusion:

The Research I have done within this essay and all the references in which I have looked at as well as indirect sources I have looked at that has also influenced me, they have led me to the question How does contemporary retellings of mythological tales affect the way characters are portrayed and how censorship plays into it? And with this question I would hope to be looking into the keywords I have investigated being mythology, re-telling's and evolution in which will further help investigate the stories even more, I am also looking towards Greek mythology and more over the story of medusa. With the influence of all of this I will be focusing on how retellings and all the retellings differentiate from the original and the feminist movement changed the story and how censorship has changed the way the way the current iteration of the story is.

When it comes to my practice for 3rd year i am looking to create a book/zine in which would focus on the story of medusa through the different mediums such as lino and etching as well as editing with the use of photoshop to adjust and tidy up the designs.

For the practice I would like to make a final zine in which would document and be associated with the topic in which would go under the influence how censorship and how the different retellings with the goal to have a more UpToDate illustrated story featuring the different retellings but keeping the character that was in the original design so it can have the more original style, with this I would hopefully have an outcome reaching the similar style of the multiple retellings in which I have already mentioned.

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