

Demythologization of the Mythic Representation of “Woman”: Critical Reimagining of the Archaic Stories

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Abstract

Ancient Greek myths, as the architect of the patriarchal ideology, serve as a panorama of the reality, which women in all ages around the world face and are forced to experience. Based on the fossilized ideas of the archaic philosophy, the mythological narratives are at the center of a canon which reveals, internalizes and legitimates the binary oppositions between the sexes. Although myths are set in the past and thus seem to be bygone, the events and characters still mirror the modern age: nothing seems to have changed concerning the negative perception of womanhood. This essay does echo the feminist writer Cixous’s challenge to awaken all women to discover their own power by not yielding to man-made stories but writing their own realities. In this direction in this study, the classical myths are reimagined within the concept of “feminine writing” with the purpose of subverting the dynamics of patriarchy and phallogentrism.

Keywords: classical myths, gender stereotypes, patriarchal ideology, phallogentrism, Hélène Cixous

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Mitik Kadın Temsilinin Mitolojik Unsurlardan Arındırılması: Antik Hikayelerin Eleştirel Bakış Açısıyla Yeniden Tasavvur Edilmesi

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Öz

Eril ideolojinin mimarı olarak bilinen Antik Yunan Mitolojisi, dünya çapında her kadının her çağda yüzleşmeye ve yaşamaya maruz bırakıldığı durumun gerçek bir resmini sunar. Geleneksel felsefenin fosilleşmiş fikirleriyle beslenen mitolojik anlatılar, cinsiyetler arasındaki kutuplaşmayı ortaya çıkaran, içselleştiren ve meşrulaştıran bir düzenin tam da merkezinde yer alır. Her ne kadar mazide kurgulanmış ve bitmiş gibi görünse de, mitolojik olaylar ve karakterler günümüzü yansıtmaktadır: geçmişten günümüze menfi kadın algısıyla ilgili olarak hiçbir şey değişmemiştir. Bu makale, erkek eliyle yazılmış hikayelere razı gelmeyip kendi gerçeklerini yazmasına olanak sağlayacak saklı güçlerini keşfetmek üzere kadınları uyanışa geçiren feminist yazar Cixous'nun yankılarını taşır. Bu doğrultuda, bu çalışmada mitolojik hikayeler, ataerkil ve fallus merkezli düzenin dinamiklerini altüst etmek amacıyla "dişil yazı" kavramı dahilinde yeniden tasavvur edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Klasik mitoloji, toplumsal cinsiyet kalıpları, ataerkil ideoloji, fallosantrizm, Hélène Cixous

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Introduction

“The myth is a “waking dream” and [...] in actual dreams or in myths, man gives expression to the basic fears and anxieties which he otherwise keeps suppressed deep in his subconscious” (Walcot 1984, 39).

Classical myths offer the essence of a culture’s way of thinking and of the naturalized standards of the world besides providing key questions concerning why and how things happen. In this direction, in order to understand the origin of oppression/violence against women and to find out the source of female marginalization, classical mythology provides satisfying answers. Because Greek culture and literature have been regarded as the source of all literary production, it makes sense to understand why we make reference to Greek mythology to reveal how the gender ideology in new-wave societies has taken

form (it really doesn't in this sentence).

Territorialization of woman's body/mind, and herewith the female isolation and marginalization is based on the history of humanity, and the mythological ideology, having the nature of historicity, is pertinent to be considered one of the instruments which legitimates the ramification of women from every aspect of life. The oppositions between the sexes are revealed through the portrayal of the female sex as deviant and other, and the gender oriented mythological stories give the message of unavailing struggle of women to exist in the hegemonic world of men because the mythological ideology does establish the pivot for the superiority of the male sex and the inferiority of the female one. As a matter of course, woman has always been subjected to act and feel like a pet in the hands of a male master who regards to have the right to claim sovereignty over her body and mind. Rather than accept her as a "self", man has attempted to enslave woman by dispossessing her of identity.

The study of classical myths has been considered central to the feminist thought because mythological narratives have been regarded as the main tools that function to reinforce the patriarchal logic. Similar to gender roles, myths are also the fictional products of the societies, through which ideas, roles, rules, and concepts that societies adopt are imposed upon individuals insidiously. To put it differently, the patriarchal ideology, along with the mythological discourse, has made up many stories under the name of history and thus has found opportunity to impose illogical ideas on societies. Within mythology, the patriarchal precedence manifests itself in almost all stories by characterizing women as always beautiful but vulnerable and trouble-maker; thus, they have been treated as the objects to be abused and ignored by the gods, demigods, heroes, and even by the goddesses. Therefore, feminist studies are the key points to highlight and challenge the ideological tricks played on women through myths. Theorized by H el ene Cixous and Luce Irigaray with the aim of

unmasking and challenging the absurdity of female marginalization and gender oppression, feminist revisionist mythology includes many writers, poets, and theorists such as Margaret Atwood, Carol Ann Duffy, Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, and Mary Shelley who make the most of mythological accounts not only to manifest the role of ideology but the subversive nature of feminine writing as well.

Through the portrayal of the mythological character, Medusa, Cixous in her article presents the patriarchal tricks played on female identity. The opposition between mythological tales and feminist understanding is illustrated through the stories of gods/goddesses and mortal men and women. The mythic narratives are the products of non-feminist understanding which legitimates male superiority through psychoanalytical approach. Thus, Cixous claims that it is psychoanalysis which is responsible and blameworthy for the invention of the binaries between the sexes. What women experience is generalized and internalized by the societies, and today we have the concept as “universal women”: all suffering, all exploited, all oppressed by the male hegemony.

In *Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous criticizes Freud’s spearheading explanations about women’s origin and Lacan’s degrading definitions and evaluations concerning women which guaranteed the phallogocentric regime because male subjectivity has always been nourished by the patriarchal legitimations. Psychological forces, inherent in the individual, are revealed through myths, and gender roles through which the ideology glorifies men and imposes the idea of inferiority upon women are just the products of this morbid psychology. Cixous states that it is merely the misogynistic perception which male psychology adopts, and thus they internalize their role of dominating and oppressing the female sex. However, it is possible to subvert all fictional realities by denouncing the unnatural yet produced realities of the patriarchal law.

Cixous also claims that the conventional and stereotype definitions of

womanhood are not unwavering patterns but are the productions of the old system which are possible to be altered by the new ones: "This Woman – Other – Monster takes back into herself what is born from her" (1976, 880). Medusa, thus, represents the figure of female power. Contrary to the previous interpretation of the myth, Medusa is gifted by Athena in essence; she seems to be bereft of her beauty as a punishment; but her ugly appearance is supposed to be interpreted from a different angle: Medusa declares her power without any stereotype definitions of womanhood: without bodily stance or physical beauty she can exist.

"Myths may be the home of the miraculous, but they are also mirrors of us" (Haynes 2020, 3). The parallelism between the past and present condition of women does reveal the fact that the male anxiety of superiority over women has been reinforced by the rule makers (men) with the purpose of warranting their actions against and social sanction on women. However, there is always a possibility to root around the system by re-expressing and rewriting the history from a different perspective. By creating a new discourse, women have the potential to enable themselves to subvert the stereotypes directed against their sex throughout the centuries. Rather than yield to the so-called universal truths which legitimate the binary oppositions and fixed rules/roles, it is time for breaking away with the hierarchy and the absolute law by focusing on the individual self and limitless possibilities of existence. Cixous in *Laugh of the Medusa* declares the necessity for the feminine writing as a way to make away with existing power relations. Thus, the reversibility of the myths will inspire the female voices to exclaim their autonomy by manifesting the possibility and accuracy of subversion through a new language.

In this study, mythological stories, as a sort of foundation for the contemporary discrimination of women, are discussed within a varied gallery of female portrayal within the selected tales. Within this context, the ideological meaning lying behind the stories are interpreted by making reference to the

Foucauldian notion of ideology. The manipulative power of phallogentrism and traditional philosophical thought is subverted within the theory of *écriture féminine*¹, and thus the selected female character types are deconstructed and re-constructed by rewriting their stories free from the masculine discourse by touching on the Cixous's prominent article *Laugh of the Medusa*. In this study, the women characters, Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, Psyche Persephone, Galatea and Helen are the ones who have subverted gender norms and challenged the prearranged roles. Becoming the emblems of self-determined and self-conscious womanhood, these new women are able to express themselves through (re)writing their own stories.

Mythological Ideology and Phallogentrism as the Instruments of Patriarchy

Virtually in every mythological story, woman is depicted as weak and vulnerable; she is unable to control and maintain her own life unless being kept under the discipline and dominance of a man. Either as a goddess or a mortal young girl, woman takes part in the stories as a sexual object existing for the satisfaction of the desires and needs of gods, or as a passive entity which needs guidance in order to uphold her life. As an example, in the ancient Greco-Roman myth *Cupid and Psyche*, the latter, who is depicted as a young woman with an exceptional beauty, suffers from her curiosity and suspicion. Especially out of her sisters' jealousy – with an emphasis on female nature which causes trouble –, Psyche is convinced to break her promise of being subordinate. In Psyche's story, the message is concerned with being a good wife by being loyal and obedient.

The philosophical ideology is among the fundamental instruments which nourishes the male mind since ancient times: beginning with Plato and

Aristotle, fostered by Hegel, Descartes and many others, the archaic tradition has frequently focused on the opposition between man and woman with respect to their on shaky ground judgments. "The Greeks chose to equate the good wife and the bee" (Walcot 1984, 45): a good wife is supposed to be chaste and moral in her actions and dissociate herself from sex. Once a woman becomes wife and mother, like Hera, she is supposed to forget or renounce her sexuality while accepting the immoral affairs of her husband (Zeus); yet she should dedicate herself to her function as a good wife. It does not matter whether a goddess or a mortal, a woman is coded with definite roles because the biological disposition determines the formation of relations and categorization. Based on her sex, a woman is expected to perform her femininity in accordance with the roles cast for her as silent, passive, chaste, obedient, m(other), giver, etc., "stressing the importance of the family and of women's roles within it as nurturers and continuers of the race" (Lefkowitz 1985, 218). On the condition that a woman acts against the rules put forward by the male hegemony, she deserves the worst punishment. Disregarding their cowardice and indecency, men, on the other hand, sustain their plans on women with shiftiness.

A mortal princess, Coronis, shares the tragedy that all women experience in the world. After being raped and fell pregnant by Apollo, she is forced to accept her submissive stance in life. When Coronis falls in love with Ischys, she is blamed to be unfaithful to Apollo. As a result of Apollo's anger, she is punished and struck by an arrow. Such examples clearly make sense that male autocracy has ensured and naturalized to have a free hand in everything women are subjected to experience as the embodiment of nonbeing or nonexistence.

Idealist philosophy sets up the dualities between form and matter, thought and nature, by rooting them in sexual difference [...], for example, matter desires form as male desires female. Man constitutes the form, woman the matter. Matter has no organizing principle, no

order. Thought and meaning are “other” to matter. (Female) matter is amorphous, transitory, and inessential (Vallury 2008, 72).

The chimerical idea which does legitimate the male transcendence roots in the scope of power relations. Through the instruments of the ideology, the power structure does reinforce the fictive ideas as truth. Brown states that “discourse conveys the construction of knowledge in a given period (or episteme)”, it is a changing “non-material entity, expressed in a language system (words, images or another medium) [...] that conveys a meaning, in the form of a duality” (Raddeker 2007, 22). As Foucault states, power produces knowledge and language as the “ultimate constitutor of knowledge” (ibid, 22) legitimates the discourse spoken. In this regard, classical myths, in a way, are responsible for establishing the foundations for baloney gender definitions which function to exploit and marginalize women from every aspect.

Pandora’s coming into being serves as the basis for the male fantasy concerning creating, dominating, exploiting, etc. In the very beginning of her creation, Pandora is presented as a gift; however, the real meaning of her name is “all-giving².” Pandora is fated to give without receiving. Indeed, she was created as a punishment and warning for mortal men who acted and would act against Zeus. Pandora, so beautiful, sexy and attractive thus would function as an evil matter to tempt men by her mere possession: femininity. Worse still, she is created as a weak character in that she is depicted as a curious thing which caused the world to contain negativities. “Pandora is very different from Eve: Adam and Eve will be the ancestors of all future men and women alike, but Pandora will be the antecedent of women alone” (Walcot 1984, 22).

In *Theogony*³, Hesiod states that Zeus created the first female “to look like a shy virgin” (1988, 574). Her external appearance is “all dressed up in silvery clothes [...] wonderful to look at” (ibid, 576-8), but underneath her veiled face, her “golden tiara” (ibid, 581), and her “wreath of luscious

springtime flowers" (ibid, 580), she is simply a danger constructed and sent to men by the gods. In a word, the creation of woman is designed deliberately for the purpose of portraying the female sex as an "abusive kind" (ibid, 614) and "evil conspirator" (ibid, 606). Accordingly, Hesiod claims that Pandora represents the "deadly race of women" (ibid, 595). Today, women are just seen as the versions of Pandora. In other words, women are coded with the characteristics of Pandora; they are expected to be beautiful, fascinating, but the real nature of women is believed to symbolize the curious, destroyer, and evil. While ancient philosophy opposes men and women, psychology opposes masculine and feminine. In both cases it is woman who is immanent and thus excluded. Phallogentrism defines man as the autonomous subject and as the primary signifier of masculinity. For Lacan, being a subject requires a language and this language is patriarchal. Phallogentrism centers around the phallus and thus privileges males while regarding females as inferior. In this sense, the myth of Persephone reveals the fact that men consider women just material objects which can easily be manipulated and misused. She is kidnapped and abducted by Hades. Demeter, on the other hand, is portrayed as a weak woman who laments for her daughter rather than holding firm as a goddess. However, Zeus himself causes his own daughter's misery in order to emphasize the ineluctable fate of women: victimized commodity under the sovereignty of male hegemony:

This heart-rending concern stands in marked contrast to the attitude of Zeus, who, as we have seen, planned the abduction himself. This set of circumstances, in which a father is the motive agent in his daughter's abduction, acting against the wishes of the girl and her mother (Lincoln 1979, 226).

Not only Zeus but also other gods, demigods and mortal men believe in

the power of the phallus: Cassandra, a Trojan priestess having an astonishing beauty, is gifted with prophecy by Apollo; yet she is cursed soon after she denies the advances of the god; thus, Apollo's gift turns out to be a disappointment and despair for Cassandra. Worse still, Cassandra is abducted by Ajax and given to Agamemnon as a concubine. Her position as a possession is the outcome of a phallogocentric perception. Euripides's tragic story of Iphigenia's sacrifice, along the same line, is among the greatest examples of the patriarchal law and of the helpless condition woman is within. Iphigenia is sacrificed by her father out of his desire for authority. She does not have the power to resist or speak out. Silent and admissive, Iphigenia submits to his father's decision to put an end to her life under the law of patriarchy. Equating himself to the gods, Agamemnon declares his right to decide over the life of his daughter.

The tale of *Pygmalion and Galatea* is a highly impressive example to explain the impact of the phallogocentric view: Pygmalion, a young sculptor, is a misogynist: "Detesting the faults beyond measure which nature has given to women" (Hamilton 1998, 145), he concludes that he should never marry. When he makes an ivory statue of woman, he falls in love with the stone he made: it is silent, unresponsive and motionless. However, the ideal female image Pygmalion created does not satisfy him after a point, and Venus hears his prayers, she animates the statue whom Pygmalion names Galatea; they get married and have a son (the ultimate aim of a woman!). In this story, everything is planned and fulfilled in accordance with male drive. Galatea's voice is never heard and it is never known whether she really wants him. Just like the creation of Pandora, Galatea is created and her fate is determined just as a result of the desire of a man.

Being female is the cause of categorization, and having or lacking penis is the determiner factor for existence or non-existence. Women's subordination to the patriarchal ideology is indeed the result of castration complex. Zeus, as the supreme power, represents the phallogocentric power

which has direct concern with castration complex. Freud explains the concept as “the discovery of anatomical differences that brings the necessary end to the sexual puzzlement of children and paves the way for their further psychosexual development” (Sultana 2018, 52). The possession of a penis is the key point for Freud to reveal what castration is. The sex distinction which privileges the male does provoke females to condemn themselves guilty of not “having”. As a man, Zeus or any other im/mortal male claims that he has the right to have countless affairs with many young girls because he has the phallus/power. Since it is men who have superiority over women because of what they have is regarded as a privilege. Especially through the characterization of Zeus, the mythological narratives do reveal the real nature of the ideological structure of the Greek society:

The royal virgin even dares to sit on the bull’s back, not realising whom she presses on, while the god, first from dry land and then from the shoreline, gradually slips his deceitful hooves into the waves. Then he goes further out and carries his prize over the mid-surface of the sea. She is terrified and looks back at the abandoned shore she has been stolen from and her right hand grips a horn, the other his back, her clothes fluttering, winding, behind her in the breeze (Ovid 2000, 127-128).

In Europa’s and Io’s stories, the condition of woman is portrayed as helpless and failed because both are unable to resist the sexual pleasures of Zeus, through which the authority proves that it is man who has the overall sovereignty over women, and therefore he obtains whatever he regards as his right. The nymph Europa is portrayed as the symbol of feminine beauty, through which Zeus is captivated with a strong desire to possess. Upon making plans to trick Europa, Zeus does disguise himself as a bull and rapes her easily.

Because of her predetermined role in life, she is forced to accept her position as a consort. “He is so mild and dear and gentle to behold. He is not like a bull, but like a good, true man” (Hamilton 1998, 102). The beautiful princess Io is another target of Zeus: his sexual desire causes him to make plans to trick her. The virgin Io is raped by Zeus and transformed into a heifer soon after his betrayal of Hera. The exposition of her abuse reveals the uncensored and insolent face of patriarchy.

The archaic philosophy considers woman slavish by nature and thus to be tamed and disciplined by a warden. Being a woman means being an open territory in which any man is free to mess around. Semele, for instance, is depicted as the one who cannot resist Zeus’s sexual tricks and desires. As a woman, she does never have the right to say “no”; otherwise she would be castrated. On the contrary, Zeus is the symbol of the absolute authority – if he wants, he gets. Metaphorically, Semele (representation of all women) is the target of the male world: weak and vulnerable resulting from the fact that she is lack by not having the phallus. Yet, the womanizer Zeus (representation of patriarchal hegemony) is proud of himself as he believes that it is a sort of victory being a master rapist.

The girl appears as the passive protagonist in a distorted fairy tale – one in which wishes, hopes, and tenacity of purpose are not just thwarted, but presented as impossible of fulfilment right from the start (Zajko and Leonard 2006, 23).

Since those archaic times, women have been considered the domestic slaves of the patriarchal ideology. Women are claimed to be the ones who are unable to control themselves because of their nature; for this very reason, they need to be dominated. Foucault explains this issue from the ideological angle: patriarchy transforms women into passive objects without any force, and they

become their own policemen. They accept the judgments directed to them and internalize their so-called inferiority. In order to be accepted by the system they turn out to be the docile bodies. Accordingly, within the Foucauldian schema, the power pervades all society and individuals; yet, there is no force or external compulsion to be submissive to the structure.

Hera, for example, accepts the infidelity of Zeus and her inferior status in the eyes of her husband. As being one of the mistresses of Zeus, Leto is defined as a quite beautiful young woman that she is forced to wear a veil to hide her beauty. She is punished by vengeful Hera without any sisterhood but with the feeling of revenge and jealousy. Her punishment is not to be able to find a place to give birth to her children. Because she is the goddess of motherhood, such a punishment is extremely agonizing for her to bear with. Despite the sanction she has as a goddess, Hera uses her power merely against other women since she feels inoperative towards Zeus. "The only solution envisioned by the myth is the retaliatory defeat of this self-willed female principle whose potency is still a living malignant force" (Zeitlin 1978, 157). Paradoxically enough, Hera adopts that it is her sex which is to be controlled and dominated by force. Under the great influence of the archaic philosophy, Hera, just like many other im/mortal women, has been convinced to respect men as the ultimate power: "no woman is subject to any form of oppression simply because she is a woman; which forms of oppression she is subject to depend on what "kind" of woman she is." (Spelman 1988, 52). The only way to survive in this regime is to submit to male authority; Hera, unable to resist the oppressive regime, does internalize female submission. To put it differently, as Cixous does express in *Laugh of the Medusa*, women are persuaded to regard their fellows as enemies:

Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies,

to mobilize their immense strength against themselves [...] They have made for women an antinarcissism! (1976, 878).

Helen's story is yet another example to explain the mythological ideology. By the time we come into the world, we, as infants, are called male or female, and after this moment we are coded with the gender roles as masculine or feminine. The ideology, in this regard, does label individuals with the purpose of categorizing and keeping them under control. Becoming "subjected subjects", women are forced insidiously to perform their femininity under the name of submission. Helen accepts her stance in life as a passive and inferior object. On the other hand, she is considered the most beautiful among mortal women and seen as the representation of the ideal beauty; however, it is her beauty which is regarded as the cause of the Trojan War. Her escape with Paris and leaving Menelaus behind is portrayed as the revelation of the evil and tempting nature of womanhood. Nothing is known about her relationship with her husband, or we can never be sure whether she really wants to escape with Paris or not. Helen is the one whose voice is never heard; thus, it is clear that Helen is portrayed as an example of feminine weakness. No matter what the reality is, Helen is condemned to suffer and has been labeled as evil and trustless. Helen's example is a sort of generalization about the nature of women: beautiful and thus tempting; so the source of all evil. Accordingly, the male hegemony infers that women are not to be trusted: the loser Helen and thus loser womanhood are to be blamed. Helen, just like other women in mythology, represents the formation of subjectivity in accordance with the patriarchal ideology.

"In myth, there were essentially two main courses of female existence: celibacy or involvement with males and (inevitably) childbearing" (Lefkowitz 1985, 210). Because being female corresponds to being "pseudo-wombs", women seem to have a duty to secure male dominance by stressing that women

are just bodies, and their sexuality and beauty are the mere weapons they could use against men. Medusa, as an example, is portrayed as a very beautiful priestess of Athena whom everybody admires. However, upon breaking her vow of celibacy – although it is Poseidon who has raped Medusa without her consent – she is punished by Athena. Through this example, the significance of having phallus is emphasized one more time by the male cosmos. Regarding themselves as the macrocosm, men believe that exploiting and then oppressing and repressing women is highly mundane, and thus they lightly cause women to be the fingers of blame.

Submissive to her husband as ordered, Gaia cannot resist the oppression by Uranus despite her maternal instincts because “sky” dominates and overtops “earth”. However, she is resolved enough to get rid of the images she is coded with and makes a plan to debunk her husband. By the time she gives birth to Zeus, Gaia hides him and swaddles a rock into a blanket instead. Uranus swallows the rock supposing that it was his offspring. Gaia’s plan proves her intelligence and maternal power over anything. However, ideologically, her act of deceiving Uranus is considered a proof of her evil nature. That is, she becomes the symbol of womanhood with a head for malignancy. The portrayal of Gaia as a negative image is nothing more than the deliberate target of the patriarchal and thus of the phallogocentric Greek society. Accordingly, the underlying message of the mythological narratives concerns the nature of women as “the bitch, a mischief maker just like her mother” (Gabriel 2016, 10-11).

Demythologization of the Patrilineal Imperative

The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable – it is still unexplored only because we’ve been made to believe that it was too

dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to lack (Cixous 1976, 884-85).

The two interdependent weapons the male hegemony uses against women – phallogocentric worldview and the patriarchal ideology – have been challenged by Cixous in her enchanting manifesto *Laugh of the Medusa*. As one of the precursors of *écriture féminine* and of second-wave feminism, Cixous announces that the phallogocentric tradition which has taken hold of the literary, cultural and political fields so far should be subverted right away. In order to subvert the phallogocentric narratives written to honor the male hegemony, Cixous creates a new Medusa which is absolutely different from the mythical Gorgon one: “You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she isn’t deadly. She’s beautiful and laughing” (ibid, 885). In contrast to the previous image portrayed by the patriarchal regime as a sort of warning and threat, the contemporary Medusa is powerful and subversive. Therefore, Cixous proves that by writing beyond the limits and codes, it is possible to subvert stocked ideas and value judgments; resistance against the roles inspires women to express themselves with a new language. Metaphorically, the new Medusa stands for all “individual” women who are decisive enough to write their own stories by making away with the predetermined definitions and roles that victimize them.

The mythological tales, recited by the male mind, are possible to be reimagined and rewritten from a feminist perspective. Because gender is composed of a series of performed and repeated acts, these reinforced and naturalized acts are doable to be overleaped. Cixous states that women have remained unrepresented for centuries because the discourse empowered by the ideology is under the hegemony of men. The universal language is masculine, spoken by and for men, through which women are forced to learn their role

in the world as passive and silent. The way to get rid of such conventional female roles is to awaken to manipulative instruments of the ideology. Women are supposed to remind themselves of the man-made gender roles and of their invalidity in reality. Accordingly, the first thing to do is to get rid of the language men use as the representative of their power. Cixous claims that if speech is under the control of men, writing is the tool which allows women to exist without boundaries.

The new version of Iphigenia's story brings to Agamemnon's senses not only as a parent but also as a leader. Upon realizing her father's intention to sacrifice her for the sake of his own satisfaction and advantage, Iphigenia raises her voice against Agamemnon and thus against the system which has captivated her sense of reason so far. She condemns Agamemnon for hunting and killing a deer; what he did was an unjust treatment against nature. Iphigenia never allows to be treated in the same manner; she resists being a victim of his wrongdoings. She does not accept to be a relief for him to get rid of his sin against Artemis. Artemis also rejects the idea of Iphigenia's sacrifice as it is out of justice: the one who has to pay for his own shame is Agamemnon. He is punished with tilling corvidae throughout his life, and Iphigenia is memorialized as the representation of resistance and consciousness. Just like Cixous's Medusa, Iphigenia creates her new sense of self and she is laughing at the absurdity of male authority by disregarding her father's decisions about her.

But we are in no way obliged to deposit our lives in their banks of lack, to consider the constitution of the subject in terms of a drama manglingly restaged, to reinstate again and again the religion of the father (ibid, 884).

Cixous declares the need for a new world which denies the outdated

understanding through which women have been repressed for centuries: “It is time to liberate the New woman from the Old by coming to know her” (ibid, 878). Postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches challenge the conceptions of fixed meaning and unified subjectivity which attempt to underline the difference between male subjectivity and female objectification. These theories also point out the limitation of Freud and of Lacan in categorizing the sexes under uncertain justifications. Cixous, in this regard, attacks the “marked language” of masculinity as it does not reflect reality. Despite the predetermined roles and definitions of being female and feminine in a society, Clytemnestra represents just the opposite in a sense that she knows how to use her reason and wit against the manipulative forces of the male hegemony: “Clytemnestra, the female principle, [...] is a shrewd intelligent rebel against the masculine regime” (Zeitlin 1978, 151).

Now women return from afar, from always: from “without,” from the heath where witches are kept alive; from below, from beyond “culture”; from their childhood which men have been trying desperately to make them forget, condemning it to “eternal rest (Cixous 1976, 877).

Discarding the reality of unjust treatment and the victimization Clytemnestra suffers from, the ideology penetrates into the minds of the individuals in a sense to convince them about the devilry of her. The same authority never talks about the concubines he receives as a spoil of war; Agamemnon’s unfaithfulness is never of concern. In a similar way with the new Medusa, the new version Clytemnestra neither feels obliged to be feminine by using her beauty or sexuality as a power against men nor needs to act like a man to display her power – she does not murder him. Rather, she reveals her mental capacity by taking a stand against Agamemnon and blaming him of his inefficacy to resume his authority without devastating the life of his daughter.

She never lets Agamemnon think even about the possibility of sacrifice. In other words, she achieves to write her own story by forgetting or unthinking the fixities which captivated her in the past. The tragedy in Clytemnestra's story, thus, would be resolved by changing the male-authored work: In the new version, Clytemnestra is neither a victim nor a villain; but, she reacts both with her reason and her emotions which concerns her maternity. "Clytemnestra is guilty of not needing the protection of men and therefore of not remaining in her proper place" (Komar 2003, 120). While she is lynched due to her unbending stance against a male authority, Clytemnestra is the one to be proud of her gender-free attitude.

Women [...] must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word "silence," the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word "impossible" and writes it as "the end (Cixous 1976, 886).

In the story of Psyche, the sublation of phallogentrism is achieved by the time she rejects to submit from the very beginning. Her father's losing his temper in search of a husband for Psyche is not reasonable from her angle. She does not let others, even her own father, mess with her own decisions or take away the qualities that shape her sense of self: marriage, serving as an ideological weapon against women, forces her to unthink "her right to herself" (ibid, 888). However, marriage is not a compulsory issue in her life, especially without love. Thus, she rejects to marry to a so-called serpent; she rejects to be a victim of the patriarchal law and "masculine-conjugal subjective economy" (ibid, 888). Being quite beautiful does not require her to pay for it. She does not accept to be under the discipline and authority of a male master; thus, she

chooses to remain unmarried forever. By undertaking the revolt against the fixed definitions of being a woman, Psyche, just like the Cixous's Medusa, achieves to explode the fictional history of man.

“The tragic female characters are representative of something much more complex” (Gabriel 2016, 18). Consuming the female mind by the idea of castration has always been oppressive on women as stated in the previous part; however, from feminist perspective, castration complex represents female power and challenge over the male strength. In psychoanalysis , penis is interpreted as the supreme power a man has and the thing through which one heightens his masculinity. However, this point is highly intricate: behind the Zeus's phallus-centered self-confidence, which makes him a womanizer, is a great trauma: castration. Zeus castrates his father, Cronus, upon the directive of her mother, Rhea. Ere this castration, Cronus himself castrates his father, Uranus, listening to the advice of his mother, Gaia. From these stories it is inferred that Zeus has fear of castration which is based on his genealogical traumas. In these examples, women's influence is greater than the act of castration itself. In other words, women represent the driving force behind castration. Cixous declares the fact that Medusa has never been castrated but strengthened instead: laughing Medusa means that she has realized the invented castration story of men for centuries; she dries her tears now since it is her turn to laugh rather than mourn for her fate.

The story of Persephone is subverted after letting her call her own shots: no matter what Hades feels for her, Persephone has the decision-making mechanism. Upon being kidnapped and abducted by Hades, Persephone is rescued from prison in the underworld with the power of Demeter who also has power and weight over the matters that distemper her. In other words, Demeter is not the one who laments for her daughter, but actively taking part in the war against male egoism. Demeter, along with many other female aides, defeats Hades by depriving him of his power: he is castrated. On the other

hand, Galatea, after being sculpted and shaped by Pygmalion and animated by Venus upon the desire of her creator, claims that it is her turn to come. She stands out against the decisions Pygmalion takes concerning her own life: she does not love a misogynist; instead, the inspirited new version Galatea speaks aloud to claim her rights. She changes her name with a mind of her own; something emphasizing her unleashed identity. She does not consent to get married to Pygmalion; but rather, she regulates her life in accordance with her own decisions. For Pygmalion, she prays for the goddesses to punish him because of his egoist desire to possess her. Her prayers come true: since he is originally a misogynist, he is castrated in order not to forget his previous prejudice against women. Based on the Cixous's argument, Galatea renews herself and rejects "a desire originating from a lack" (1976, 891). She is determined enough to express the reality that the repressed woman is just the woman of yesterday.

The pre-existing norms which encapsulate women and their femininity are to be regarded as the things time immemorial. The re-articulation of man-made stories seems possible by unlearning the normative practices which have entrapped women within their femininity for centuries. Through subverting the conventional legitimation of exploitation and oppression, it is time for rewriting and crying out the power. To illustrate, Helen, contrary to the traditional image, resists Paris and his insistence on kidnapping her. She begs for help from the goddesses while he tries to repress her voice; the goddesses as a group catch up on immediately to save Helen. Together they achieve to overcome the insistency of Paris. He is castrated by the goddesses as a punishment to attempt to kidnap Helen without her consent. Through this retribution they teach him the inevitable ending of any man who considers himself the owner of any woman. It is time for her now to reveal a highly significant reality that it is not women but men who are castrated.

Conclusion

Keeping in mind the literal meaning of “myth”, we force ourselves to think that those written and told are in the far past; yet the real life justifies just the opposite. By revealing the psychoanalytical and ideological aspects of gender-oriented myths, the nature of the patriarchal ideology is discussed within this study. The progenitors of the phallogocentric idea have imposed the regulatory patterns upon women for centuries; contra Cixous does criticize such standardization of women through which the authority of patriarchy is guaranteed. In preliterate societies, women were considered evil and lacking by nature; however, in modern times, the discriminatory and oppressive conduct against women must be remedied at once. Rather than take shelter in the ideological constructionism, it is time for the subversion of the trite doctrines by writing the new ones with a new language which is written for and by women. With this purpose, Cixous deliberately chooses Medusa as her subject-matter because she is one of the most violently victimized women in mythology. Albeit projected to be the symbol of warning and a case in point for all women, Cixous subverts the masculine discourse by creating a new one which takes its power not by marginalizing the other sex but by expressing the subjective subject – woman – as is.

Woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow: my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs (ibid, 876).

Mythological narratives function as the representation of the stocked ideas and because human ontology is considered merely male, myths originate from the male fantasy of domination. Within this context, the gender roles through

which the ideology glorifies men and imposes the idea of interiority upon the women are just the products of this psychology. In other words, feminine or masculine things are not natural but invented by the male mind which dreams of a world of man-power. Accordingly, because gender roles are the products of ideological standpoint, the necessity to get rid of the unnatural but invented identities as masculine and feminine is urgent. Being a woman is not to say that anyone can shape, change or make pursuant to his own dream. On the contrary, the insistence of the dualistic ontology must be replaced with a more responsive and critical epistemology so that it would be possible to prevent humanity from becoming either the oppressor or the oppressed; the persecutor or the persecuted.

In this study, some of the selected women characters - Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, Psyche, Persephone, Galatea, Helen, and Demeter - from classical mythology are reimagined and their stories are rewritten by deconstructing the never-forgotten images of being a woman. Once culturally repressed women are no longer the passive victims of the society. These new women are threatening and subversive in their attitude against the norms. Cixous not only portrays almost all women's condition in the world realistically, but she provides ways for subversion as well by encouraging women to realize their own power to change the world. In this study, through throwing off the ideological mask which is nourished by the tyrannical stance of patriarchy and phallogocentric understanding, the significance of the subjectivity of woman is stressed within the stories. By creating gender-neutral stories and disregarding the male discourse, it is possible to look from different but optimistic perspectives for women. Although neither philosophy nor history of humanity has treated fairly to women, the feminist epistemology achieves a mediation of the oppositions: rather than the reversal of the roles attributed to the sexes, both male and female are supposed to left to their subjectivities, and the reversibility must be achieved in the stereotype definitions of the sexes and gender roles.

¹ a term meaning women's writing and coined by the French feminist Hélène Cixous as a way to break away with the masculine discourse.

² *pan* meaning all and *dora* deriving from the verb *didomi* meaning giving.

³ a poem written by Hesiod which is about the genealogy of the ancient Greek gods.

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