



**You're  
Wrong  
About  
Medusa.**

**A Zine About  
the Monstrous  
Depiction of a  
Sexual Assault  
Victim**

**By Emily Ozer &  
Pelin Arhan**



# The Purpose of Our Zine

THIS ZINE WILL REVOLVE AROUND THE GREEK MYTH OF MEDUSA, AND ITS OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE. WE WILL TOUCH ON HER DEPICTION AS THE VILLAIN IN VARIOUS FORMS OF MEDIA, DESPITE HER SAD BACKSTORY WHERE SHE IS TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF AGAINST HER WILL. MANY ARE UNAWARE OF THE ORIGINAL STORYLINE AND ONLY VIEW HER AS AN UGLY MONSTER WHO HAS THE ABILITY TO PETRIFY AND TURN HER VICTIMS TO STONE. MEDUSA HAS BECOME A SYMBOL TO SOME, REPRESENTING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT.



## The Three Gorgons...

GORGON IS DERIVED FROM THE GREEK WORD 'GORGÓS,' MEANING DREADFUL.



- THREE WINGED SUPERNATURAL FEMALE CREATURES
- EURYALE, STETHNO, AND **MEDUSA** IN MOST STORIES
- **MEDUSA IS THE ONLY MORTAL**
- DESCRIPTIONS VARY THROUGHOUT DIFFERENT ART AND LITERATURE
- MOST COMMONLY DEPICTED AS SUCH...

“FEMALES WITH GOLDEN WINGS, BRAZEN CLAWS, SNAKE-LIKE FANGS OR TUSKS, AND SERPENTS CURLING IN THEIR HAIR OR IN THEIR HANDS.

THEY POSSESS A PETRIFYING GAZE AND CAN TURN THEIR VICTIMS TO STONE” (WEINSTOCK 297).

## Where Do We See Gorgons?

HAVE BECOME A SYMBOL OF PROTECTION AND CHARM DUE TO THE POWER OF THEIR HEADS.

PLACED ON “GATES, WALLS, FLOORS, COINS, ARMORS AND SHIELDS, GRAVES, AND EVEN POTTERY AND DAILY USE ITEMS”  
(WEINSTOCK 297).



### *The Gorgoneion*

ORIGINALLY A PENDANT. USED ON SHIELDS AND ARMOR TO FRIGHTEN THE ENEMY.



**Her Story...**

## **Medusa & Poseidon**



MEDUSA WAS ONCE A MAIDEN SO BEAUTIFUL THAT POSEIDON WAS ENTHRALLED BY HER CHARM. AFTER HE ATTEMPTED TO VIOLATE HER, MEDUSA SEEKED SAFETY IN ATHENA'S TEMPLE. POSEIDON WOULD NOT ACCEPT DEFEAT AND WENT ON TO RAPE MEDUSA IN FRONT OF ATHENA'S ALTAR...



# Medusa & Athena

MEDUSA WAS A PRIESTESS OF ATHENA, WHO SERVED UNDER ATHENA'S RULE. ATHENA CHOOSES TO PUNISH MEDUSA FOR DESECRATING HER SANCTUARY, PLACING ALL THE BLAME ON HER. SHE TRANSFORMS MEDUSA INTO A MONSTER WITH VENOMOUS SNAKES FOR HAIR. SHE ALSO CURSES HER WITH THE ABILITY TO TURN PEOPLE TO STONE WITH A SIMPLE LOOK.



# Athena and Internalized Misogyny

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT ATHENA NEGLECTED TO PUNISH POSEIDON FOR VIOLATING MEDUSA AGAINST HER WILL. INSTEAD, SHE CURSED MEDUSA SO THAT SHE WAS NO LONGER BEAUTIFUL AND NO ONE (MEN INCLUDED) COULD SEE OR LOVE HER EVER AGAIN.

MEDUSA WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL, BUT SERVED BELOW ATHENA. PEOPLE WERE SAID TO COME TO THE TEMPLE IN SEARCH OF ATHENA, BUT WOULD BECOME DISTRACTED BY MEDUSA AND HER APPEARANCE. THIS ANGERED ATHENA.

ATHENA WANTED HER PRIESTESSES TO BE VIRGINS. AFTER BEING ASSAULTED, MEDUSA WAS NO LONGER VIEWED AS PURE IN ATHENA'S EYES.



# Medusa & Perseus



- PERSEUS IS SENT BY A KING TO BEHEAD MEDUSA
- HEAD IS USED AS A WEAPON AND BLOOD DROPLETS TURN INTO SERPENTS



IN PERSEUS' HAND, THE HEAD IS USED TO PETRIFY AND BECOMES "A WEAPON USED TO DEFEAT FOES BOTH HUMAN AND MONSTROUS" (WEINSTOCK 56).



# Athena & Perseus

PERSEUS RECEIVES HELP FROM ATHENA ON HIS QUEST. SHE LEADS HIM TO THE HESPERIDES, NYMPHS WHO ARE IN POSSESSION OF WEAPONS ESSENTIAL FOR DEFEATING THE GORGON.

THEY PROVIDE HIM WITH WINGED SANDALS, A SWORD, A CAP OF INVISIBILITY, AND A MIRRORED SHIELD.

PERSEUS USES THE SHIELD TO LOOK AT MEDUSA WITHOUT TURNING INTO STONE. HER HEAD IS LATER MOUNTED ONTO ATHENA'S SHIELD AS A SYMBOL OF VICTORY.





## Greek Mythology and its Overall Significance

THE GREEK PEOPLE AND PRIESTS/RULERS CREATED AND CHANGED STORIES OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY OVER TIME TO REFLECT THE LESSONS OR IDEALS THEY WANTED TO INSTILL IN THEIR PEOPLE. THE ORIGIN PLOT OF MEDUSA WAS MADE TO TEACH THE VALUE OR SUPERIORITY OF MEN OVER WOMEN. THIS LESSON IS TAUGHT THROUGHOUT GREEK MYTHOLOGY, AND IMPACTS CULTURE AND THE SOCIETIES THAT VALUE THESE STORIES.



# Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief (2010 film)



I used to date your daddy.

THE FILM  
CONVEYS A  
WRONGLY  
CONSENSUAL  
RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN MEDUSA  
AND POSEIDON.

THE PORTRAYAL OF MEDUSA IS AS A  
SEDUCTIVE, DEADLY MONSTER.



All you have to do is look.

BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT SHE  
IS STILL BEAUTIFUL AND CLASSY.  
SHE IS DRESSED ELEGANTLY AND HAS  
FAIR, FLAWLESS SKIN AND BLUE EYES.



# Clash of the Titans (2010 film)

THE STYGIAN WITCHES INSTRUCT PERSEUS THAT IN ORDER TO DEFEAT THE KRAKEN, HIS GROUP AND HIM MUST VENTURE INTO THE UNDERWORLD AND FIND MEDUSA'S LAIR.

MEDUSA KILLS EVERYONE EXCEPT PERSEUS.



WITH THE USE OF A REFLECTIVE SHIELD TO SEE MEDUSA, PERSEUS SUCCEEDS IN BEHEADING MEDUSA AND HER LIFELESS BODY LANDS IN THE LAVA.

WHILE THIS VERSION OF MEDUSA KEEPS HER FORMER BEAUTY, HER MURDEROUS GLARE CREATES A MORE MONSTROUS APPEARANCE.



# Dungeons and Dragons



MEDUSA IS PRESENT IN SOME OF THE EARLIEST VERSIONS OF THE POPULAR GAME, *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS*. THE GAME ORIGINALLY USED CLASSICAL AND WELL-KNOWN MONSTERS TO FEATURE IN THEIR STORYLINES, MAKING THEM A MAIN FOCUS. MEDUSA'S CHARACTER IS FOUGHT IN BATTLE AND HAS MULTIPLE DIFFERENT ATTACK TECHNIQUES. THE GAME DESCRIBES HER AS "LAWFULLY EVIL."



## Madame Medusa - UB40 (1980)

“FROM THE LAND OF  
SHADOWS  
COMES A DREADFUL  
SIGHT  
LADY WITH THE  
MARBLE SMILE  
SPIRIT OF THE NIGHT”



“SEE THE SCOURGE  
OF INNOCENCE  
SWINGING IN HER  
HAND  
HEAR THE SILENT  
SUFFERING  
THAT ECHOES  
THROUGH THE  
LAND  
FROM THE TOMBS  
OF IGNORANCE  
OF HATE AND  
GREED AND LIES.”

“RUN FOR YOUR  
LIFE BEFORE SHE  
EAT YOU ALIVE .”





## “Madame Medusa” and its Meaning

UB40’S ALBUM, *SIGNING OFF*, IS A POLITICALLY-CENTERED UK ALBUM THAT REVOLVES AROUND THE UNPOPULAR POLICIES OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THIS PARTY WAS RUN BY MARGARET THATCHER AT THE TIME. “MADAME MEDUSA” IS A SONG THAT EQUATES MEDUSA TO THATCHER. THEY DESCRIBE HER RISE TO POWER AS EVIL AND GROSS, AS WELL PAINT HER AS AN OVERALL VILLAIN.





# Medusa in Paintings

ARNOLD BÖCKLIN |  
MEDUSENSCHILD  
(SHIELD WITH THE  
HEAD OF MEDUSA)



IN THIS WORK, BÖCKLIN HAS MOUNTED MEDUSA'S HEAD ONTO THE SHAPE OF AN ACTUAL SHIELD. THIS HELPS CONVEY THE TERROR AND ALLURE THAT IS BROUGHT UPON BY HER APOTROPAIC IMAGE.

HER EXPRESSION IS FROZEN AND TERRIFIED, THIS IS IRONIC IN THAT IT RESEMBLES THE PLIGHT OF HER VICTIMS, WHO WERE RENDERED MOTIONLESS AFTER BEING TURNED TO STONE.



# Medusa as the Modern Evil Eye

A PREVAILING INTERPRETATION OF MEDUSA PROPOSES THAT SHE IS AN APOTROPAIC SYMBOL. THIS MEANS THAT SHE CAN BE USED TO AVERT AND SHIELD AGAINST EVIL INFLUENCES, LIKE THE EVIL EYE DOES.. SHE SYMBOLIZES A DANGEROUS THREAT WITH THE PURPOSE OF REPELLING OTHER DANGEROUS THREATS.

TERRACOTTA  
PAINTED  
GORGONEION  
ANTEFIX  
(ROOF TILE)  
CA. 540 B.C.



THE GORGON FUNCTIONS AS A PROTECTIVE SYMBOL, MAKING IT A SUITABLE DECORATION FOR SACRED ARCHITECTURE.

## Reason + Medusa... How Do They Relate?

OUR CLASS HAS DISCUSSED THE THEORY THAT WOMEN LACK THE ABILITY TO REASON, WHICH IS PRESENT IN DESCARTES' WORK. THIS ENFORCES THE IDEA THAT WOMEN ARE THE PROPERTY OF MEN AND POSEIDON'S ACTIONS ARE ACCEPTABLE.

GENEVIEVE LLOYD'S "MAN OF REASON" SAYS WE ASSIGN REASON TO THE MALE AND IRRATIONALITY TO THE FEMALE.



WE SEE POSEIDON AS RATIONAL/PROPER.





MOST ONLY KNOW OF MEDUSA FOR HER ABILITY TO TURN PEOPLE INTO STONE, AS WELL AS HER FRIGHTFUL APPEARANCE. HOWEVER, SHE WAS ORIGINALLY A BEAUTIFUL GODDESS WITH MANY REDEEMING QUALITIES, AND WAS SADLY VIOLATED AGAINST HER WILL. THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF BOTH THE MISOGYNY AND THE DOWNPLAY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN MODERN MEDIA. VICTIM BLAMING HAS OCCURRED FOR CENTURIES.







MEDUSA HAS BECOME A SYMBOL FOR THE FEMINIST AND ME TOO MOVEMENTS AS SHE REPRESENTS LIBERTY AND FEMINE POWER. SHE IS A POPULAR EXAMPLE OF RAPE-VICTIM BLAMING AND THE UNFORTUNATE IMPLICATIONS IT HAS.

MEDUSA STATUE OUTSIDE OF SUPREME COURT.

THE ARTIST, LUCIANO GARBATI HAD A GOAL TO REVEAL "THE WOMAN BEHIND THE MONSTER" (JACOBS).





# Medusa in Poetry

CAROL ANN DUFFY WROTE  
THE POEM *MEDUSA*,  
HIGHLIGHTING VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN, AND  
RAMPANT VICTIM-BLAMING  
IN SOCIETY.

And here you come  
with a shield for a heart  
and a sword for a tongue  
and your girls, your girls.  
Wasn't I beautiful?  
Wasn't I fragrant and young?

Look at me now.

IS MEDUSA DEMANDING THAT THE AUDIENCE  
LOOK AT HER SO THAT SHE MAY FIERCELY UTILIZE  
HER PETRIFYING GAZE?  
OR IS HER FINAL LINE IN THE POEM A DESPERATE  
CRY OVER LOSING HER PAST LIFE TO ALL THE  
VIOLENCE?

DUFFY'S POEM AND GARBATI'S STATUE DISPLAY  
THE IMPACT OF CONTINUED VIOLENCE AGAINST  
AN INNOCENT WOMAN WHO HAD NO CHOICE  
BUT TO TURN INTO A VENGEFUL MONSTER.

# The Importance of Accuracy

THROUGH THE RETELLING OF THE TALE AS MEDUSA BEING A VAIN WOMAN TURNED INTO A MONSTER, RAPE CULTURE IS ENFORCED AND POSEIDON IS NOT HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR HER ONGOING DEMISE.

INSTEAD, THE PATRIARCHAL VALUES THAT ALLOW FOR PEOPLE TO DEMONIZE SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS ARE SUSTAINED.

WHEN PORTRAYED ACCURATELY, THE STORY OF MEDUSA CAN BE USED TO DEMONSTRATE HOW WOMEN ARE OFTENTIMES BLAMED FOR THE ACTIONS OF MEN.



## Closing Thoughts...

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM HOW SOCIETY AND PEOPLE HAVE TREATED MEDUSA THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES. HER STORY IS AN UNFORTUNATELY FAMILIAR ONE AS MANY OTHER VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT HAVE FACED THEIR OWN VILE TREATMENT.

MEDUSA IS STILL A VICTIM TO THIS DAY.

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EMILY AND PELIN ARE BOTH JUNIORS AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY. EMILY IS AN EXERCISE SCIENCE MAJOR STUDYING TO BE A PHYSICAL THERAPIST. PELIN IS A PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR STUDYING TO BE A THERAPIST.



BOTH AUTHORS CHOSE TO TAKE THE “UNRULY BODIES” SEMINAR DUE TO THEIR INTEREST AND CURIOSITY ABOUT SUCH UNIQUE SUBJECT MATTER. EMILY AND PELIN ARE BOTH PASSIONATE ABOUT WOMEN’S RIGHTS ISSUES AND BELIEVE THAT MEDUSA’S STORY IS AN IMPORTANT LESSON MORE SHOULD BE AWARE OF.



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