

## **Medusa Myth: Reflecting Human Collective Experiences of the Femaleness**

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**Jiratorn Sakulwattana<sup>1</sup>**

*Department of English, Thammasat University,*

*Bangkok, Thailand*

### **Abstract**

This essay deliberates on an interpretation of the Medusa myth in Greek mythology through two psychoanalytical approaches: Sigmund Freud's theory of castration, and Carl G. Jung's theory of the Archetype. Based on psychoanalytical concepts, certain logical conclusions regarding sexuality that differentiate men and women are reflected in this myth, serving as a part of human psychological development established in the society in the form of social norms and rites. These logical conclusions, illustrated and interpreted through characterization in the story, bring to light psychoanalytical concepts toward sexuality related to the following: 1) why the character Medusa is presented as a monstrous creature with destructive powers to turn men who gaze at her into stone, and 2) how the relationships between this female character and other characters including Perseus, the protagonist in this hero myth, Goddess Athena, and Danaë Perseus's mother apply.

**Keywords:** Greek mythology and psychoanalysis; Medusa and psychoanalysis; sexuality in Medusa myth; Medusa myth

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<sup>1</sup>Email: jiratorns@hotmail.com

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะนำเสนอการตีความเรื่องของเมดูซาในเทพปกรณัมกรีกผ่านมุมมองทฤษฎีจิตวิเคราะห์ว่าด้วยการตอน และปมการตอน โดยซิกมุนด์ فروยด์ และทฤษฎีเรื่องแม่แบบ ของคาร์ล จี ยุงซึ่งทั้งสองทฤษฎีที่นำมาใช้นี้ได้เสนอให้เห็นวิธีการอธิบาย การให้เหตุผลเรื่องความแตกต่างระหว่างความเป็นชาย และความเป็นหญิง อันเป็นผลมาจากความแตกต่างทางกายภาพของเพศชาย และเพศหญิงที่ได้ผ่านพัฒนาการทางบุคลิกภาพในวัยเด็ก และกลายมาเป็นความเชื่อสถาปนาที่มีต่อคุณค่าความเป็นชาย และความเป็นหญิง ผ่านวิธีการคิด ระเบียบแบบแผน พิธีกรรมต่างๆ รวมทั้งเทพปกรณัมดั้งเดิมเรื่องเมดูซาที่ได้นำมาเป็นกรณีศึกษาในบทความนี้ โดยความเชื่อว่าด้วยการแตกต่างระหว่างเพศแบบแนวคิดจิตวิเคราะห์ทั้งสองแนวคิดนี้ ได้ถูกนำเสนอผ่านกระบวนการสร้างตัวละครหลักอย่างเมดูซา ซึ่งถูกสร้างให้มีลักษณะเหมือนกับสัตว์ประหลาด และมีพลังวิเศษในเชิงทำลายล้างโดยสามารถทำให้มนุษย์กลายเป็นหินได้ นอกจากนี้ความเชื่อเรื่องเพศโดยเฉพาะที่มีต่อเพศหญิงยังได้ถูกนำเสนอผ่านความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างตัวละครหลักอย่างเมดูซา และเพอร์ซิอุส เทพอาร์รีนา และ นางดาเน ในลักษณะความสัมพันธ์เชิงคู่ตรงข้าม

**คำสำคัญ:** เทพปกรณัมกรีก เทพปกรณัมกรีกกับจิตวิเคราะห์ เมดูซา กับ จิตวิเคราะห์

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**Jiratorn Sakulwattana**

*Department of English, Thammasat University,*

*Bangkok, Thailand*

The ability to compose stories creatively is one feature that distinguishes man from beast. As a kind of such creative stories, mythology is the literary work personifying nature. For instance, different aspects of nature in myth are associated with certain human attributes as presented in gods and goddesses in Greek myths. However, two questions to consider are: 1) Do these characters reflect the way nature actually is? Or 2) Do they elucidate the way human beings see themselves and the world they are living in? With regard to the latter, it is possible to perceive myths as the reflection of humanity for it is an attempt of mankind to make sure of one's existence as well as the physical and psychological connection to the surrounding conditions. While delivering such explanation, specific ideas have been conceptualized in human mind, inevitably relating myths to human psyche.

When considering a myth in relation to understanding the human mind, there are countless ways to arrive at an interpretation. As a response to this, Geoffrey S. Kirk states in his book *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* that "there is no one definition of myths, no Platonic form of a myth against which all actual instances can be measured. Myths, as we shall see, differ enormously in their morphology and their social function."(p. 7)

Certainly, there are innumerable features of human psyche to be explored via the interpretation of myth. Among them, the notion and understanding of gender conceptualized by myths from different cultures can be analyzed with a focus on how certain beliefs and logics about gender and sexuality of men and women, have been established. Biologically, there are merely male and female. But what factors differentiate them apart from physical appearance? Myths, as the reflection of human psyche, is placed at the center of the analysis in this article in order to highlight certain logics about sexuality as a part of human psychological development which plays out in the form of social norms and rites.

In this respect, the story of Medusa in Greek mythology will be employed as an example regarding this issue: myth reflects the psychological mechanism of mankind which can be interpreted through application of multiple approaches. According to Marjorie Garber's *The Medusa Reader*, the figure of Medusa has been interpreted in different ways in different areas of study; from the signifier of Castration threat in psychoanalysis to the representation of powerful womanhood in feminism. However, two major characteristics of Medusa are generally suggested in almost all the interpretations; either fascinating or terrifying. (Garber, 2003)

This analysis thus aims to demonstrate two different psychoanalytical interpretations of the Greek myth of Medusa and in this respect Freudian theory of castration and C.G. Jung's theory of the Archetype will be applied. Based on these theories, how the characteristics of Medusa can be related to the concept of castration, which is associated with the female gender, will be elucidated. Considering myths as the "ultimate expressions of archetype" (Walkner, 1995), Jung's theory of the Archetype will be applied to explore Medusa as the Great Mother figure afterwards.

### **The story of Medusa**

In accordance with Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths: I*, Medusa is the only mortal sister among the three Gorgons: Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa. Originally, Medusa is a very beautiful woman. The daughter of Phorcys and Ceto, she is raped by Poseidon in the shrine of Athena. Athena then turns her into a monstrous serpent-haired creature whose face is so terrible to look at that anyone who gazes at her turns to stone. Assigned by King Polydectes of Seriphus, Perseus is sent to fetch Medusa's head in exchange for the freedom of his mother, Danaë. To accomplish the task, he gets some help from the deities, particularly Athena, who lends him her shield so that he can see Medusa from the reflection shown on the shield without being turned to stone. Patronized by Hermes, Perseus gets an adamantine sickle, a pair of winged sandals, a magic wallet to keep the Medusa's head in, and Hades' helmet to make him invisible. Eventually, Perseus successfully beheads Medusa. Since he is wearing the magical helmet, the two sisters of Medusa cannot pursue him. On his way back to Seriphus, Perseus has Atlas see Medusa's head so that he is transformed into a mountain. Again, while he is travelling back, few drops of blood from Medusa's head fall on the desert and become poisonous snakes. After his quest, Perseus returns the shield to Athena and gives her the head which is decorated on the shield afterwards. (Graves, 1960)

To Garber, as she explains in her *The Medusa Reader*, the Medusa myth contains a particular political message. The head of Medusa possibly represents rebellious and competitive ideas as well as sexual desirability which are finally defeated by Athena. According to the story, Perseus finally gives the head to Athena, the character who turned Medusa to the monstrous being, and Athena wears the head on her shield later on. Thus, the head on the shield signifies the "civic and martial strength" which are

defeated and under control according to Athena's attributes in Greek mythology where she is regarded as the goddess of heralds and the image of Medusa's head is normally found on a warrior's weapon (Garber, 2003)

Garber then further illustrates that the term "Medusa" in Greek originally refers to ruler or queen. The word has been standing for female rulers and the Amazons. Moreover, Medusa is associated with several other political features. For instance, the image of Medusa is used to represent the French Revolution, verbally and visually. Also, Medusa's serpent hair is connected to Hydra; the creature with many heads that grow back after being cut off, thus symbolizing political chaos.(Garber, 2003)

On the other hand, from a feminist point of view, the figure of Medusa symbolizes the idea of emancipation as well as the rebellion against matriarchal ideology. Similarly, Garber suggests that in Momist perspective, Medusa is related to the negative features of the powerful woman figure. (Garber, 2003) In this respect, Freudian psychoanalysis concerning sexuality can be applied to illustrate the process of how the image of Medusa, in relation to Freud's notion of the female, is perceived by individuals as a threat.

### **Medusa as the threat of castration**

Freudian theory concerning sexuality may be applied here as an approach to interpreting the Medusa myth. As clarified by Jerome Neu in *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*, to Freud, how the world works is based on the symbolic order and the binary oppositions which are positivity/negativity and inferiority/superiority in terms of relation. Accordingly, only man exists in the symbolic order for he has a penis while woman, born without one, is regarded as the castrated being, and she is therefore marginalized from the order. This inferiority of woman

is emphasized in Freudian theories of “female castration” and “penis envy” which were published during the 1920s and 1930s. To Freud, female “castration complex” refers to the belief that women have an “envy for the penis”, causing them to desire to have a baby since it signifies the penis of man, and if the baby were male, it would be preferable that the male baby biologically has a penis, which was their “missing organ.” (Neu, 1991)

With this particular view of female sexuality, to Freud, “the terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something.” (Garber, 2003) Freud then further explains that several researchers mention that Medusa’s serpent hair is the metaphor for the hair surrounding woman’s genital area, which suggests the castration complex of individuals. As this belief of the castration threat is conceptualized in a boy’s subconscious mind, to the boy, the area, especially that of his mother’s, is frightening in much the same way that the character Medusa is petrifying. As the penis is missing and is replaced by female genitals, the sense of horror emerges: the multiple snakes, the symbol of male sex organ, on Medusa’s head then becomes the emblem of castration. (Garber, 2003)

Similarly, Sándor Ferenczi mentions in “On the Symbolism of the Head of Medusa” that Medusa’s head signifies the terror of female genitals. The snakes surrounding the head do not only suggest the absence of a phallus but also a nightmare-like experience a child has when seeing the castrated area. (Ferenczi, 2003)

According to the analysis of Medusa by Garber and Ferenczi in relation to Freud’s concept of sexuality, the myth is thus clearly portrayed as the metaphor for the psychological development of a boy who is able to overcome his castration complex. And considering the story of Medusa as part of the hero myth of Perseus, this psychoanalytic theme of a boy overcoming

his castration complex coherently relates to the concept and function of the hero myth in general.

As characterized by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the hero in myth is the person; either male or female, who is able to overcome the weakness caused by personal and historical factors. (Campbell, 1993) If the hero myth represents the process of how individuals become either physically or mentally mature through an experience of a quest, Perseus here signifies the boy whose task it is to cut off Medusa's head, as assigned by Polydectes, who in-turn stands for the boy's psychological state which is conducted by the symbolic order: woman does not have a penis and her existence is the reminder of castration, therefore she is the threat that needs to be gotten rid of. So Medusa is the conceptual image of a woman in the boy's mind for her appearance is monstrous, and the notion that she is able to turn men to stone illustrates the dangerous attribute a female is associated with.

Furthermore, that Medusa's hair features many snakes, the symbol of a penis in Freudian perspective, also emphasizes the perception a boy has towards women, particularly when gazing at their genital area, The sight is frightening, for the snakes remind him of the fear of losing his penis.

As a solution, the boy needs to eliminate this nightmare-like image so that he becomes mature. Accordingly, that Perseus is able to behead Medusa represents the idea of the boy overcoming the castration complex. And since this is regarded as a stage of individual psychological development, Perseus is accepted as the hero who successfully becomes mentally mature through an experience of a quest. (Campbell, 1993)

Apart from reading the hero myth of Perseus as a psychological development process of a boy, it is also interesting to consider the role of Athena who supports Perseus from the



beginning. While Medusa plays a major female role as the villain, the role of Athena is also significant, for without her it is possible that Perseus may never be able to accomplish his task. Both Medusa and Athena are female. So if a boy sees women as the threat of castration that needs to be gotten rid of so that he could become mature, how could the female role of Athena be read for she is not the villain like Medusa but the opposite one to whom Perseus worships?

When considering their sexuality, it is possible to regard Athena as Medusa's counterpart. Even though they are both female, Medusa is the one who has experienced sexual intercourse through her rape by Poseidon. And such, rape then becomes the cause of her transformation from a beautiful maiden to a monstrous being. On the other hand, Athena has been recognized in Greek mythology as the goddess who pledges her chastity. Due to her immortal state as a goddess, the chaste Athena is worshipped while Medusa, on the contrary, is mortal, unchaste and feared by people. The analyses by Garber and Ferenczi appear to focus only on Medusa as the signifier of the threat of castration while the roles of other female characters: Athena and Perseus's mother Danaë, in this hero myth of Perseus, are absent.

Accordingly, if Medusa represents the threat of castration to Perseus, who takes the role of a boy experiencing and overcoming his castration complex because she is female, why does Athena not represent the same threat as well? In this respect, it is possible to relate Medusa's experience of sexual intercourse to the state of fertility: she is capable of having a child. On the other hand, Athena lacks this capability due to her chastity. Thus, fertility may be considered as a key attribute when considering the idea of female signifying castration: the physical appearance alone does not make a female function as a castrated being in a boy's perception but a female with the fertility capability does.

Accordingly, as Athena is associated with chastity, her sexuality in this myth is removed. Therefore, she is unable to be perceived as the castration threat to Perseus. In other words, she is not regarded as a woman for her female genitals are not attached to any notion related to the sexual difference between men and women. As a consequence, the representation of Athena in Perseus myth is not the threat but the opposite one—the patron who is worshipped by Perseus.

### **Medusa as the terrible mother in Jungian theory of the Archetypes**

Another interpretation of the Medusa myth can be considered through Jung's concept of the Archetypes where Medusa is interpreted as the figure of the Great Mother. In accordance with Steven F. Walkner's *Jung and the Jungians on Myth: an Introduction*, from a Jungian point of view, it is man who establishes certain meanings of myths. Moreover, a myth is sensible and is experienced as long as it delivers an emotional effect on one's psyche. Thus, so quality as Jungian an emotional response from the individual to the myth is tantamount needed.

Walkner states that myth is not really the "spontaneous products of the psyche" for it is "culturally elaborated." In other words, how a myth comes into being is based on inner and outer factors-- the psychological state of individuals and the influence of the environmental conditions they live in, which here relates to culture. He further elucidates that although myths, from different socio-cultural contexts, are told differently due to socio-cultural differences, they, in fact, have certain features in common; the archetypal images which relate to the collective unconsciousness of human psyche. Similarly in *Jung and the Jungians on Myth: An Introduction*, myths can demonstrate psychological structures relating to human instinct and the unconscious. (Walkner, 1995)

In Walkner's reference to Jung, archetype is defined as a kind of image which involves a sequence of habitual events relating to psychic energy. To clarify, they are rather like instincts and forms which are psychologically expressed. The archetypes are expressed in two forms, as the passive reflection of the conscious mind and the "suggestive effect" which is similar to that of instincts resulting in certain actions. The archetypes, therefore, do not only form the images but also establish certain principles of human nature throughout history.

One of the Jungian archetypes is the archetype of the mother. In his work, Jung highlights how a mother psychologically influences her children, along with the notion that maternal love involves a mix of positive and negative aspects. Such dual characteristics of the mother usually appear in the myth of male heroes. As an example of this, the tale of a hero's victory over the dragon is applied here. The dragon signifies the mother's negative quality that needs to be defeated by the son: the idea of the hero overcoming the dragon is the developed consciousness of the son which makes him finally become a man. (Walkner, 1995) When comparing the story of the hero fighting against the dragon to the story of Perseus beheading Medusa, Medusa here can be regarded as the mother with the negative attribute. She is the dragon who is finally defeated by the hero, the son, as her head is finally cut off by Perseus.

Further details about Jungian archetype of the mother are elucidated in Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother: an Analysis of the Archetype*. As described in his book, the archetype of the Great Mother is not presented in a concrete form but in a kind of universal conceptualized image which reflects psychological perception of mankind; different figures of the Great Goddess in myths, for example. This universal image of the Great Mother can also be seen in a variety of forms like myths, rituals, symbols, dreams, and fantasies. Furthermore, the archetype exists in the

conscious and unconscious areas of human mind, the existence of which is elicited in the forms of emotions involving positive and negative feelings. (Neumann, 1991)

Neumann sees the Great Mother as part of the Archetypal Feminine. And to elucidate the conceptualization of female sexuality, he compares the early state of human psyche, where the consciousness and ego are undeveloped, to the Uroboros which is the symbol of the chaotic state in the form of “the circular snake biting its tail.” The round shape of the Uroboros suggests the psychological conditions of individuals in which the elements of consciousness and unconsciousness remain undifferentiated. The Uroboros thus exists in the area between the “formless” and the “already specified figures of the primordial archetype.” When considering the Great Mother figure, three forms to keep in mind are the good, terrible, and good-bad mother.

The Archetypal Feminine has two characters, the elementary and the transformative. The elementary character features superior power to ego as well as the maternal quality, which can either be a positive or a negative attribute. On the other hand, the transformative character, as it relates to “feminine symbolism,” tends to be more dynamic, when compared to the elementary character, for it points to change and transformation. Originally, the elementary character dominated that of the transformative, which attempted to separate itself from its elementary counterpart. The transformative character was also regarded as the Maternal-Feminine fundamental function appearing in different forms, such as child bearing and feeding. In this respect, the woman served as the instrument of the transformation not only of her structure but also of her child’s, when considering maternity in relation to the consciousness and ego development of the child.

As already mentioned, the Archetypal Feminine may appear with positive or negative attributes, the figure of the Great Mother may share two traits, the Good Mother and Terrible Mother. However, these traits can be interchanged, and in this respect the Good Mother is predominated by elementary character which relates to the infantile ego experiencing a negative psychological development. (Neumann, 1991) As suggested by Neumann, the witch in the story of Hänsel and Gretel can be an example of how the characteristics of the Good Mother and that of the Terrible Mother are able to coexist: the witch has both characteristics as expressed through the exterior of her house which is decorated with sweets to feed children, while on the inside, she waits to eat them. (Neumann, 1991)

In order to exemplify the figure of the Great Mother who shares dual characteristics of Good and Terrible mother, the Medusa myth can be applied accordingly when related to the following three counterparts of characters that reflect positive/negative attributes including: the beautiful Medusa and the monstrous Medusa, Athena and Medusa, and Danaë and Medusa.

### **The beautiful Medusa and the monstrous Medusa**

According to the myth, Medusa once was a beautiful woman; a normal woman, before being transformed into the monstrous creature by Athena after being raped by Poseidon in Athena's shrine. Such transformation of Medusa's appearance is a metaphor for the elementary character of the Feminine in which positive and negative qualities coexist. Like the witch in Hänsel and Gretel, Medusa has the characteristics of the Good Mother for she has a beautiful physical appearance and is productive: her physical beauty attracts Poseidon and leads to the sexual intercourse. At the same time, she also has the quality of the Terrible Mother as she becomes the monstrous creature with

living venomous serpents as hair and the destructive power to turn people who look at her into stone.

This transformation of Medusa also reflects the transformative character of the Feminine wherein Medusa's raped by Poseidon in Athena's shrine may be regarded as a kind of transformative mystery for the bleeding from her loss of virginity, also referred to as the blood mystery, and the psycho-biological development of woman which also involves her experiences of menstruating, pregnancy and giving birth. (Neumann, 1991) Thus this loss of virginity through the rape as a kind of transformation mysteries is the turning point where the virgin Medusa, who is presented a physically attractive young woman, is transformed into the evil and fierce one.

### **Athena and Medusa**

In the myth, the role of Athena as the patron of Perseus can also be considered here as the figure of the Good Mother, the counterpart of Medusa who signifies the Terrible Mother. Considering Perseus a child, the two traits of the Great Mother are highlighted through his relationship with Athena and Medusa. Athena represents the Good Mother for she features nurturing as well as protective qualities: she supports Perseus by giving him her shield, an obvious symbol of the sense of sheltering and physical protection. As a result, Perseus pays respect to her as he gives Medusa's head to Athena after he finishes his task. On the contrary, Medusa, as the Terrible Mother, has destructive qualities as portrayed through her appearance of the live serpent hair as well as her destructive power of turning people who look at her into stone, which is a stark contrast to Athena's protecting feature. Similarly, Medusa is associated with the imagery of death as in Neuman's *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* sees the Good and Terrible Mother as the oppositions in terms of mobility in any life form where Medusa is described as "the

womb of death” while Athena is seen as the, “the life womb.” As a result, from a child’s perspection, Medusa, as the Terrible Mother, needs to be gotten rid of, thus Perseus cuts off her head. In addition, that Medusa’s head finally becomes a part of Athena’s shield clearly illustrates the characteristics of the Great Mother: she features both the qualities of the Good Mother as signified by the shield, and also that of the Terrible Mother as represented by Medusa’s head. However, the attribute of the Good Mother appears to be preferred since the characteristics of the Terrible Mother are overpowered by the Good Mother as conveyed in the story: Medusa’s head is cut off and becomes part of the shield which belongs to Athena. Thus, in terms of relation, the role of the Good Mother, as represented by Athena, is superior to the role of the Terrible Mother, as symbolized by Medusa.

### **Danaë and Medusa**

In order to set free his mother Danaë, Perseus has to accomplish his quest to kill Medusa. Here the dual characteristics of the Great Mother are portrayed the same way. The role of Danaë is compared to that of Medusa. It is also an allegory of the nature of a Great Mother. Obviously, Danaë stands for the Good Mother: in order to get her back from being captured by Polydectes, Perseus needs to kill Medusa. Such condition can be looked at in the same way as the relationship between Athena and Medusa. From the child’s perspective, the Good Mother is preferable to the Terrible Mother: the child psychologically gets rid of the Terrible Mother in order to maintain the Good Mother. Therefore, the idea is made concrete as Perseus starts the quest and is finally able to cut off Medusa’s head.

### **Conclusion**

Myth is considered the reflection of humanity due to its capacity to elucidate certain logical conclusions man creates in

order to make sense of his existence as well as his connection to the world. In other words, myth can be regarded as a way to understand how human psyche functions in certain ways via certain analytical apparatus. Thus, one myth can be interpreted in different ways by different approaches. As one feature of human psyche that can be understood through myth, certain concepts about gender, especially that of woman is placed at the center of this analysis in order to highlight specific logical conclusions concerning sexuality as part of human psychological development. These conclusions are then concretely expressed in forms of social norms and rites. To demonstrate this, the story of Medusa in Greek Mythology is applied in order to exemplify not only the psychological mechanism of mankind but also how one myth contains pluralistic ways of interpretation. Accordingly, two different areas of psychoanalysis are employed to interpret the Medusa myth: Freudian theory of castration and Jung's theory of the Archetype.

Firstly, Freudian concept of sexuality is applied as an approach to interpret the figure of Medusa as the castration threat. To Freud, Medusa's serpent hair signifies the hair surrounding a woman's genital area, the reminder of an individual's castration complex. The area is thus frightening and that is why the character Medusa contains a petrifying image: the penis is missing and is replaced by female genitals. Suggested by Freud and Ferenczi, as a consequence, the sense of horror appears in the form of the serpents on Medusa's head, the symbol of a penis. In conclusion, Medusa is a particular image of woman in a boy's fantasy whose appearance is frightening due to her existence as the castrated being and reminder of castration threat in a psychoanalytical perspective. Thus, through the threat of castration, the boy's fear of losing his penis is then emphasized in the form of many serpents on Medusa's head, the symbol of woman's genital area where the penis does not exist.



Furthermore, considering Athena, the other female character in this myth and Medusa's counterpart, a question of whether or not the physical appearance of being female alone creates the image of woman as the castration threat is raised. Even though they are both female, only Medusa is perceived as the threat while Athena bears a totally contrasting image as she takes on the role of the patron of Perseus and is worshipped by him. Their sexuality which is the key difference between these two female characters can be considered in this respect: Medusa is not only female, she is also productive due to her experience of having sexual intercourse, which Athena does not have. Henceforth, the state of fertility of a woman is an additional factor which an individual would consider to identify a woman as a threat of castration from the psychoanalytic perspective.

Secondly, Jung's theory of the Archetypes suggests that Medusa can be interpreted as the figure of the Great Mother. According to Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother: an Analysis of the Archetype*, since the figure of the Great Mother features the dual characteristics of the Good and Terrible Mother, the relationships of three pairs of the characters are analyzed as an emblem of the positive/negative features, these being the beautiful Medusa and the monstrous Medusa, Athena and Medusa, and Danaë and Medusa. In the analysis of these counterparts, the aspects of the Good Mother and the Terrible Mother are clearly portrayed in the form of the characterization applied to the story: the monstrous Medusa represents the Terrible Mother whereas her beautiful version, Goddess Athena and Perseus's mother Danaë signify the Good Mother. Moreover, the idea that the quality of the Good Mother is preferable is also implied as Medusa is killed while her counterparts are still alive in the end.

## Biodata

Jiratorn Sakulwattana completed her M.A. in Film and Literature from the University of Essex, UK. Currently, she is a lecturer at the Department of English, Thammasat University. Her research interest lies in film, gender and cultural studies.

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