

## **Screaming Silence: Medusa and the Enlightening Darkness of Ancient Texts and Modern Science**

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**Abstract:** *A controversial episode from Alice Walker's novel The Temple of My Familiar (1990) – about ancient Greek cultural colonisation of Africa – suggests that the Greeks' Medusa may be more than meets the eye or ear. This paper investigates the Medusa myth enshrined in ancient Graeco-Roman texts and its resurfacing in eighteenth-century biological taxonomy, with a view to identifying telling silences, if any, in the patriarchal construal of Medusa as woman/monster. I use a broad feminist approach to examine the en-gendering of the silence–speech continuum, for whose conceptualisation I draw here especially upon Hélène Cixous and Teresa de Lauretis. My concern is not so much whether, as claimed by diverse contemporary feminists, Medusa can be used as a potent empowerment figure for women, but rather what her silencing indicates about the patriarchal epistemic project.*

**Keywords:** *Medusa, Perseus, The Temple of My Familiar (Alice Walker), Greek/Roman mythology, Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, (Pseudo-)Apollodorus, Pausanias, Ovid, Fulgentius, biological taxonomy, Linnaeus, women's silencing, monsterisation*