

Canon is Written Back: Mythological Intertextuality and Gender in Michèle Roberts's "Anger"

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Abstract

Certain theoretical premises, largely influenced by Saussure's linguistic system and Bakhtinian dialogism, consider the practice of telling and/ or writing stories as a repetitive form of discourse as according to those theorists every act of writing is a rewriting of some former narratives, and creative writers throughout the ages reread and rewrite the canon for their creative practice. The methods of rereading and rewriting are often studied through the lens of intertextuality, a postmodern proposition that claims obvious connections among texts. Contemporary writer Michèle Roberts, half-English and half-French, is popularly known for her revisionist rereading technique of different versions of folklore, scripture, and historical narratives. She is a writer known for her feminist cause and is considered by critics as one of the leading supporters of second-wave feminism. In her short story "Anger", we see her rereading and rewriting two legendary tales, of Melusine and Thetis, to promulgate the fact that independent and grotesque females with talent and skill are seen as monsters, and are not usually provided with personal rooms to foster their creativity. In this paper, I will try to posit critically Michèle Roberts's intertextual strategy while borrowing resources from two prior gendered texts and transforming them for contemporary readers. I will also try to explore how the writer changes the gender dynamics in a known cultural setting to achieve a specific end.

Keywords: Rereading, Rewriting, Intertextuality, Myth, Gender