

Race-and-Genderbending in YA Adaptations of Classical Myth

Adrienne Rich coined the term “re-vision” to describe a narrative practice by women writers of revolutionizing their place in the world by rewriting—transforming—how they are portrayed in literature. Recent feminist transformations of Greek myth in Young Adult novels engage in *bending*, a mode of re-vision theorized by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo that enables historically marginalized voices to “restory” themselves into narratives from which they have been excluded. In featuring female heroines of color, *The Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall and *Promise of Shadows* by Justina Ireland explicitly challenge persistent assumptions that classical mythology and its legacy in the Western world are necessarily and exclusively white and male-centric. *The Summer of the Mariposas* retells the *Odyssey* by genderbending the figure of Odysseus into Odilia and sending her, along with her four sisters, into a borderland haunted by figures from Mexican folklore, while *Promise of Shadows* gives voice to Zephyr Mourning, a dark-skinned, dreadlocked harpy who seeks to avenge her murdered sister. Harpies are traditionally depicted as background figures or minor antagonists at most, not protagonists, while the act of genderbending Odysseus subverts gendered ideas about heroism in a narrative central to Western literary and cultural history. As they restory heroines of color into Greek myth, McCall and Ireland re-vision the heroic journey as a narrative characterized by longing for home and family and structured by tensions between empathy and violence.