Odysseus had remained far from his own people, immortal, "hidden" by Kalypso.[25]

To the feminine figure who incarnates that which is beyond death, in her double dimension of erotic seduction and temptation to immortality, the Greeks preferred the simple human life—under the light of the sun, the bittersweetness of the mortal condition.

[25] "It is a maxim among men that when an exploit has been accomplished it must not remain hidden [*kalupsai*] in silence. What it requires is the divine melody of praising verses" (Pind., *Nem.* 9.13–17).

Chapter 6

DEATH IN THE EYES: GORGO, FIGURE OF THE *OTHER*

WHY STUDY Gorgo? The reason is that for a historian, and a historian of religion in particular, the problem of alterity or "otherness" in ancient Greece cannot be limited to the representation the Greeks made of others, of all those whom, for the purposes of reflection, they ranked under different headings in the category of difference, and whose representations always appear deformed because these figures—barbarian, slave, stranger, youth, and woman—are always constructed with reference to the same model: the adult male citizen. We must also investigate what could be called extreme alterity and ask about the ways in which the ancients attempted to give a form in their religious universe to this experience of an absolute other. The issue is no longer one of a human being who is different from a Greek, but what, by comparison to a human being, is revealed as radical difference: instead of an other person, the other of the person.

Such, we think, were the sense and function of this strange sacred Power that operates through the mask, that has no other form than the mask, and that is presented entirely as a mask: Gorgo.

In certain qualities she is close to Artemis.[1] In the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta, among the votive masks dedicated to the goddess (the young had to wear likenesses of these in the course of the *agōgē* in order to execute their mimetic dances), there are many that reproduce the monstrous and terrifying face of Gorgo.

But the otherness that the young of both sexes explore under the patronage of Artemis seems to be situated entirely on a kind of horizontal plane where

The French text originally appeared as *La mort dans les yeux: Figures de l'Autre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1985), and its translation is published here with the kind permission of Hachette. In the original, the subject of Gorgo was preceded by an analysis of the roles and functions of the goddess Artemis. Because, strictly speaking, the title referred to Gorgo and because a number of other pieces on Artemis are included in the present volume, it seemed practical to separate the two parts, retaining the original title for this text about Gorgo, and shifting the general survey of Artemis, now called "The Figure and Functions of Artemis in Myth and Cult," to head those other essays, each of which treats specific aspects of Artemis in greater detail. A portion of the essay on Gorgo was given as a lecture in English at Princeton University in 1980 under the title "Face to Face with Terror: Gorgo," translated by the late Thomas Curley. The entire text was revised and completed by Froma I. Zeitlin.

[1] Both have affinities with the *Potnia therōn*, the great feminine divinity, mistress of the wild beasts and of wild nature, who preceded them in the Creto-Mycenaean world and whose legacy each inherits in her own way by profoundly transforming it in the context of civic religion.

the question is one of time or space. This is the kind of alterity that marks the first moments of human life, which is punctuated by various stages and passages until the time when a man and a woman become fully themselves. This same alterity rules over the frontiers of civic territory, uncultivated lands, far from the city and civilized life, on the margins of the wild. The wildness Artemis seems to share with Gorgo, however, is manifested by her in a different way in that Artemis emphasizes the wild and gives it a place only in order better to relegate it to the periphery.

In determining that the young, in their differences from the group, may experience different forms of alterity on the boundaries, Artemis sees to it that they embark correctly on their learning of the model to which, one day, they will have to conform. From the margins where she rules, she prepares the return to the center. The nurture of the young she practices in a zone of the wild aims at their satisfactory integration into the heart of civic space.

The alterity Gorgo incarnates is of a very different type. Like that of Dionysos, it operates according to a vertical axis. This alterity no longer concerns the early part of life nor those regions far removed from the civilized horizon. Rather, it is one that, at any moment and in any place, wrenches humans away from their lives and themselves, whether with Gorgo, to cast them down into the confusion and horror of chaos, or with Dionysos and his worshippers, to raise them up high, in a fusion with the divine and the beatitude of a golden age refound.[2]

The Mask of Gorgo

Plastic representations of Gorgo—both the *gorgoneion* (the mask alone) and the full feminine figure with a gorgon face—appear not only on a series of vases, but from the archaic period on, they can be seen on the façades of temples or as *acroteria* and antefixes. We find them as emblems on shields or decorating household utensils, hanging in artisans' workshops, attached to kilns, set up in private residences, and also, finally, stamped on coins. This representation first appears early in the seventh century B.C.E., and by the end of the second quarter of the same century, the canonical types of the model are already codified in their essential features. Leaving aside the variants in Corinthian, Attic, and Laconian imagery, we can, on a first analysis, identify two fundamental characteristics in the portrayal of Gorgo.

First, frontality. In contrast to the figurative conventions determining Greek pictorial space in the archaic period, the Gorgon is always, without exception, represented in full face. Whether mask or full figure, the Gorgon's face is at all times turned frontally toward the spectator who gazes back at her.

[2] Cf. Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux and J.-P. Vernant, "Figures du masque en Grèce ancienne," *Journal de Psychologie* 1–2 (1983): 68.

Second, monstrousness: whatever kinds of distortion are involved, the figure systematically plays on the confusion of human and bestial elements, juxtaposed and mingled in a variety of ways. The enlarged rounded head recalls the face of a lion. The eyes are staring; the gaze is fixed and piercing. The hair resembles an animal's mane or bristles with snakes. The ears are overly large, deformed, at times like those of a cow. Horns sometimes grow from the skull. The gaping, grinning mouth extends so far that it cuts across the breadth of the face, revealing rows of teeth, fangs, or wild-boar tusks. The tongue thrusts forward and protrudes outside the mouth. The chin is hairy or bearded, and the skin is sometimes furrowed with deep wrinkles. The visage looks more like a grimace than a face. In disrupting the features that make up a human face, it produces an effect of disconcerting strangeness that expresses a form of the monstrous that oscillates between two extremes: the horror of the terrifying and the hilarity of the grotesque. Despite the evident contrasts between the horror of Gorgo and those Satyrs and Silenoi, who, on a scale of monstrosity, tend more toward the grotesque, there are still significant collusions between them. These two types also have noticeable affinities with the stark and crude representation of the sexual organs—both masculine and feminine—a representation that, just like the monstrous face whose equivalent it is in certain respects, also has the power to provoke both sacred fear and liberating laughter.

To clarify the play between the face of Gorgo and the image of the female sexual organ—as between the *phallos* and the figures of Satyrs and Silenoi, whose humorous monstrosity is also disturbing—a word should be said about the strange figure of Baubo, a personage with two aspects: a nocturnal specter, a kind of ogress, related, like Gorgo, Mormo, or Empusa, to infernal Hekate,[3] but also like an old woman whose cheerful jokes and vulgar gestures provoke Demeter's laughter and thus induce the goddess mourning for her daughter to break her stubborn fast. The correlation between the relevant texts[4] and the statuettes of Priene, which represent a female reduced to a face that is also a lower belly,[5] gives an unequivocal meaning to Baubo's gesture of lifting her dress to exhibit her intimate parts. What Baubo actually displays to Demeter

[3] Cf. Orph., *Fr.* 53 (Kern); Orph., p. 289.3.2 (Abel). A first version of this part of the text appeared in a shorter and somewhat different form in *Pour Léon Poliakov: Le racisme, mythes et sciences*, ed. M. Olender (Brussels, 1981), 141–55.

[4] Clem. Alex., *Protrep.* 2.21 = Orph., *Fr.* no. 52 (Kern); Arnob., *Adv. nat.* 5.25, p. 196, 3 Reiff = Orph., *Fr.* 52 (Kern).

[5] For these statuettes, see J. Raeder, *Priene: Funde aus einer griechischen Stadt* (Berlin, 1983), especially figures 23a, b, c. On the entire collection of evidence pertaining to Baubo, see Maurice Olender, "Aspects de Baubo: Textes et contextes antiques," *RHR* 1 (1985): 3–55, and see the English translation in abridged form in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, 1990), 83–113. See also the remarks of Froma I. Zeitlin in "Cultic Models of the Female: Rites of Dionysus and Demeter," *Arethusa* 15 (1982): 26–34.

is her genitals made up as a face, a face in the form of genitals; one might even say, the genitals made into a mask. By its grimace, this genital face becomes a burst of laughter, corresponding to the goddess's laugh, just as the terror of the one who looks at Gorgo's face corresponds to the grimace of horror that cuts across it. The *phallos*, one of whose names is *baubōn*,[6] emphasizes the relationship with Baubo and acquires a symmetrical function at the opposite pole of the monstrous. Normally, the *phallos* adds to the humor and accentuates the grotesque quality of those amusing monsters who are the Satyrs, but in initiations it produces an effect of sacred dread, of terrified fascination, which is expressed by the gestures of certain feminine individuals, who shrink away from its unveiling.

Moreover, there are two mythic versions of Demeter's laughter during the time she is searching for her daughter, and in each, the protagonist, in order to produce a liberating shock as an antidote to grief, resorts to indecency in different ways. According to the first version, Iambe, *graia Iambē*, the old Iambe, as Apollodorus says (1.5.1),[7] mocks Demeter and interrupts her mourning with the obscene jokes, the *aischrologia*, used at the Thesmophoria or at the *gephurismos* of the Eleusinian procession.[8] Iambe can be considered as the feminine of Iambos, the iamb, with its musical element of satyric song and its poetry of invective and derision. The liberating effect of an unbridled sexuality, close to the monstrous by virtue of its anomic character, operates in and through language: insulting witticisms, obscene insults, and scatological jokes—everything the Greeks understood in the expression *skoptein* or *paraskoptein polla*. In the second version, Baubo replaces Iambe and puts the same procedures on the visual level; she substitutes spectacle for words, she displays the object rather than naming it. When she crudely exhibits her genitals with a kind of obscene wiggle, Baubo makes the merry face of a young boy peep out, that of the child Iacchos, whose name evokes the mystic cry of the initiates (*iachō*, *iachē*) but who also is related to the *choiros*, the piglet (Athen. 3.98d), and likewise, of course, to the feminine genitals.[9]

Frontality and monstrosity: these are the two features of Gorgo's iconography that suggest questions about her origins. Antecedents have been sought in the Near Eastern, the Creto-Mycenean, and the Sumero-Accadian worlds.[10] Some scholars have suggested parallels with the figure of the Egyptian Bes

[6] Cf. Herod., *Mim.* 6.19.

[7] Cf. the three Graiai who are the sisters of the Gorgon.

[8] *Aischrologia*: to speak of vulgar and shameful things. On the *gephurismos*, cf. Hesych., s.v. *gephuris, gephuristai*; on the ritual exchange of insult and abuse among women at the Thesmophoria, cf. H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London, 1977), 86–87.

[9] Cf. in particular, Aristoph., *Ach.* 764–817.

[10] Bernard Goldman, "The Asiatic Ancestry of the Greek Gorgon," *Berytus* 14 (1961): 1–23; Spyro Marinatos, "Gorgones kai gorgoneia," *Arch Eph* (1927–28): 7–41; and Ernest Will, "La décollation de Méduse," *Rev. Arch.* 27 (1947): 60–76.

and especially with that of the demon Humbaba as he is represented in Assyrian art.[11] Despite their value, these studies miss what I consider the essential fact: the specific form of a figure that, whatever borrowings or transpositions may have taken place, still stands out as a new creation that is very different from the antecedents invoked to explain it. The originality of this image cannot be grasped without considering how it is related in Greek archaic life to ritual practices and mythic themes, and above all, to a supernatural Power, which emerges and asserts itself just when the symbolic model that represents it is constructed and fixed in the particular form of the Gorgon's mask.

For this reason, Jane Harrison's efforts at interpretation seem finally unsuccessful. Relying on several figurative analogies among Harpies, Erinyes, and Gorgons, she tried to connect them all to the same "primitive" religious base and make them different types of "Keres"—evil spirits, phantoms, pollutions.[12] But it is not methodologically recommended to combine five different figures in the same vague category without concern for the clear and distinct differences that give each its appropriate significance and particular place in the system of divine Powers. The Erinyes have neither wings nor masks; the Harpies have wings but no masks. The Gorgons may be winged, but they are the only ones represented with the face of a mask (cf. Aesch., *Eum.* 48–51). The affinities between Gorgo and the Mistress of the Animals, the Potnia, as Theodora Karagiorga strongly emphasizes,[13] are more promising. There are shared contacts between the two types, and their iconographical representations reveal resemblances or, at least, parallels with each other. These should be taken into account. In certain of her aspects, Gorgo appears as the dark face, the sinister reverse of the Great Goddess whose legacy Artemis, in particular, will later inherit. But even here, the fact that there are also differences and discrepancies between the two models ought to warn us against a pure and simple assimilation. It still remains crucial to understand why and how the Greeks developed a symbolic figure that, in its combination of frontality and monstrosity in a single form, can be clearly distinguished from all the others so as to be instantly perceived for what it is: the face of Gorgo.

Let us take an example to illustrate these rather abstract ideas. On the François vase (ca. 570 B.C.E.), all the gods are represented in stock form. All are shown in profile with the exception of three figures: the Gorgon, represented on the internal side of the two handles; Dionysos, carrying an amphora on his shoulders; and Calliope, one of the Muses. In the cases of Gorgo and Dionysos, whose faces are treated like masks, frontality is not surprising; in a way, it is self-evident. For Calliope, this same frontality would be a problem were

[11] Clark Hopkins, "Assyrian Elements in the Perseus-Gorgon Story," *AJA* (1934): 341–53, and "The Sunny Side of the Greek Gorgon," *Berytus* 14 (1961): 25–35.

[12] *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903; reprint, New York, 1957), chap. 5, "The Demonology of Ghosts and Sprites and Bogeys," 163–256.

[13] *Gorgeie Kephale* (Athens, 1970).

this Muse not represented in the procession of the gods as playing the syrinx—that rustic flute called the pipe (or flute) of Pan. I will later argue, expanding on the pertinent observations of Paul Laporte,[14] that to blow into the flute is for many reasons equivalent to becoming the head of the Gorgon. On the vase, however, the images of the Mistress of the Animals on the outside correspond to the Gorgons painted on the inside of the handles. This design simultaneously associates and opposes the two types of Powers with each other. The contrast can be seen on several planes. First and foremost, the Gorgons are shown full face, the Mistresses in profile, like all the other gods or heroes on the vase. In addition, the Gorgons are running, their knees bent, while the Mistresses are immobile, standing erect in a hieratic pose. The Gorgons have short *chitōns*, the Mistresses long tunics that cover them down to their feet. The bristling hairstyle of the first contrasts with that of the second, which is drawn back on the shoulders with a band, in the more typical way. The mask of the Gorgon's face, as depicted in images, has a value, therefore, that fits in with a whole series of other indications, which unambiguously marks its difference from the model of the Potnia, the Mistress of Wild Beasts.

If this were an iconographical study, the task would be to explore this network of signs and draw up an inclusive list of the image's significant elements and the interactions of these in various similar series—grouped by their place of origin, the nature of the objects, and their representational themes. Not being an archaeologist, I can only point out the place occupied by certain animals (snakes, lizards, birds, wild animals, even hippocampi) in the imagery of the Gorgo, especially the horse. In figural representations, the horse (or horses, when two are placed symmetrically) is associated with the Gorgon, sometimes as a part of herself, her extension or emanation, sometimes as the little one she nurses and protects, sometimes as the progeny to which she gives birth, or the mount on which she rides, and sometimes, finally, in connection with the myth of Perseus, as the horse Pegasos, who at the moment of her death leaps forth from her slashed neck. In contrast to the myth, therefore, the imagistic associations between the Gorgon and the horse provide a surplus, even an overflow, of meaning.

A Face of Terror

But let us turn now to the texts and the indications they give about the myths and ritual elements that belong to the Gorgon so we may illuminate her character, her modes of action, her areas of intervention, and the forms of revelation assigned to this Power become a mask.

With Homer the stage is already set on which Gorgo will make her appearance and play her various roles. In the *Iliad*, the scene is martial (5.738ff.;

[14] "The Passing of the Gorgon," *Bucknell Review* 17 (1969): 57–71.

8.348; 11.36–37). Gorgo figures on Athena's aegis depicted on Agamemnon's shield. On the opposing side, when Hektor, bringing death into the fray, tosses his hair in all directions, "his eyes have the look of the Gorgon." In this context of merciless confrontation, Gorgo is a Power of Terror, associated with "Fear, Rout, and Pursuit which chills the heart." But this terror, whose presence she incarnates and which in some way she mobilizes, is not "normal"; it does not result from the particular situation of danger an individual may confront. It is pure fright—Terror—as a dimension of the supernatural. This fear is not secondary, nor is it motivated, like the kind aroused by an awareness of some danger. It is primary. Gorgo instantly and on her own inspires fear because she appears on the battlefield as a prodigy (*teras*), a monster (*pelōr*), in the form of a head (*kephalē*), terrible and frightening both to see and hear (*deinē te smerdnē te*), possessed of a face with terrifying eyes (*blosurōpis*) that cast a fearful glance (*deinon derkomenē*).

In the *Iliad*, the Gorgon mask and eye operate in a strictly defined context; they appear as an integral part of the equipment, the mimicry, and even the grimacing expression itself of the warrior (man or god) who is possessed by *menos*, battle fury. The face and eyes somehow concentrate the power of death that radiates from the body of the warrior, who is clad in armor and ready to manifest the extraordinary battle strength, the valor (*alkē*) residing in him. Gorgo's flashing gaze acts in conjunction with the dazzling gleam of bronze that rises up to the sky from helmet and armor, spreading panic. By its gape the monster's distended mouth evokes the fearful war cry that Achilles raises three times before the battle as he shines resplendent in the flame that Athena causes to flash forth from his head. "One might say it was like the piercing sound of the trumpet," and it is precisely this "brazen voice" in Achilles' throat that is enough to send shock waves of terror through the enemy lines (*Il.* 18.214–21).

It is not essential to accept Thalia Howe's etymology connecting *Gorgō*, *gorgos*, and *gorgoumai* to the Sanskrit *garg*,[15] in order to appreciate the aural connotations of the Gorgon mask. Howe states: "It is clear that some terrible noise was the originating force behind the Gorgon: a guttural animal-like howl that issued with a great wind from the the throat and required a hugely distended mouth." Our observations will be more limited and more precise. We know through Pindar (*Pyth.* 12.6ff.) that a piercing groan (*eriklagtan goon*) issues from the swift jaws of the Gorgons pursuing Perseus, and that these cries escape both from their maiden mouths and from the horrible heads of snakes associated with them. This inhuman, shrill cry (*klazō*, *klangē*) is the same one uttered by the dead in Hades (*klangē nekuōn*, *Od.* 11.605). We shall

[15] "The Origin and Function of the Gorgon Head," *AJA* 58 (1954): 209–21. Under the name Thalia Feldman, the author developed and extended her analysis in "Gorgo and the Origins of Fear," *Arion* 4 (1965): 484–94.

have occasion to return to the implications of these auditory features. But to underline the connections, on both visual and aural levels, between the mask of Gorgo and the facial mimicry of the berserk warrior, we will press one significant detail. Among the elements that, in addition to the terrifying cry, the gleam of bronze, and the flames leaping from his head and eyes, invest the warrior with the power to cause fear, there is one expression that Aristarchus already noticed: the gnashing or grinding of the teeth (*odontōn kanachē*). Françoise Bader has clarified the meaning of this audible "rictus" by connecting it through parallels in Irish legend with the image of the Indo-European warrior as reconstructed by Georges Dumézil.[16] Ps. Hesiod, speaking in his poem the *Shield* about the "heads of terrible snakes" that cast fear (*phobeeskon*) over the tribes of men, takes up the Homeric expression: "the gnashing of their teeth echoed" [*odontōn kanachē pelen*]" (164). At line 235, referring this time to the snakes worn by the Gorgons, hot on the heels of Perseus, the poet says that these monsters "thrust forth their tongues, gnashed their teeth in fury [*menei d'echarasson odontas*], and cast wild looks." When Achilles, blazing in his armor, his eyes shining with a ray of fire, grimaces, gnashes his teeth, and hurls an inhuman battle cry in the manner of aegis-bearing Athena (Pind., *Ol.* 6.37), the enraged hero, possessed by *menos*, displays a face in a Gorgon's mask.

Blazing brilliance of arms, unbearable radiation from head and eyes, violent war cry, gaping grin, and gnashing of teeth: one can add to this list yet another feature linking the monstrous face of Gorgo to the warrior possessed by *menos* (murderous fury), namely, the terrifying effects of hair. When we come to mark the horse's place in the bestiary closely associated with Gorgo and indicate Medusa's equine affinities, we will point out what the adjective *gorgos* means when used of the horse. For the moment, let us note that it is the same term Xenophon uses to characterize the quality ascribed to young Spartan warriors by virtue of their long hair. That the young men do not cut their hair after leaving the *ephebeia* has nothing to do with stylish appearance or personal choice. It is the mark of a strict obligation for a whole-age class, and it consecrates their status: "Lycurgus enjoined on those who left the *ephebeia* to wear their hair long with the idea that they would thus appear taller, more noble, and more terrible [*gorgoterous*]" (*Rep. Lac.* 11.3). Plutarch confirms and clarifies Xenophon:

> In time of war, too, they relaxed the severity of the young men's discipline, and permitted them to beautify their hair and ornament their arms and clothing, rejoicing to see them, like horses, prance and neigh for the contest. Therefore they wore their hair long as soon as they ceased to be youths, and particularly in times of danger they took pains to have it glossy and well-combed, remembering a certain

[16] "Rhapsodies homériques et irlandaises," in *Recherches sur les religions de l'antiquité classique*, ed. Raymond Bloch, Hautes études du monde gréco-romain, 10 (1980), 61–74.

> saying of Lycurgus, that a fine head of hair made the handsome more comely still, and the ugly more terrible. (*Lyc.* 22) [trans. B. Perrin]

A gloss tells us that the name given to this procedure for glazing long hair is *xanthizesthai*, that is, a term used "among the Lacedaimonians" meaning "to attend to one's hair."[17] *Xanthos* means "blond" in the sense of "gilded," suggesting the idea of a brilliance that describes both gold and fire. *Xanthos* is different from *chlōros* (yellow-green), which connotes paleness, even weakness. (Fear, *deos*, is called *chlōron*.) Xanthos is also the name of a horse, an immortal warrior horse. One of the horses of Achilles, sprung from Zephyr and Podarge, is called Xanthos. Xanthos is also the name of the horse of Castor, who of the two Dioscouroi represents the young man and the knight. Among the Macedonians, the term designates the festival of purification for the cavalry, the *Xanthika*, in the course of which sacrifice was made to the god Xanthos.[18] There is a connection between the wild manes of war horses and the coppery blond color of the hair that the young warrior, once having left the *ephebeia*, wears like a flowing mane.

In the *Life of Lysander*, Plutarch mentions, but rejects, another interpretation also found in Herodotus.[19] This explanation connects the Lacedaimonian custom of keeping the hair long with a battle over the territory of Thyrea when there was a clash between two elite corps of three hundred combatants, who represented the flower of warrior youth for the two contending cities, Argos and Sparta. The Argives were finally vanquished. "From this moment on," says Herodotus, "the Argives shaved their heads while beforehand, custom had obliged them to have long hair. . . . The Lacedaimonians, who until this battle had kept their hair short, promulgated the opposite rule and now take pride in wearing long hair" (1.82). Plutarch protests this explanation that ascribes the Spartan custom to the victors' desire to distinguish themselves from the vanquished: "It is not true that the Spartans, seeing the Argives cut their hair as a sign of mourning after the serious defeat they had undergone, let their own hair grow to emphasize their victory and to do the opposite of their enemies. . . . It is rather an institution of Lycurgus who said that long hair enhances beauty and makes ugliness more terrifying" (Plut., *Lys.* 1.2).

Nevertheless, if we retain not so much the "historical" basis of Herodotus's story that it claims to give to the Spartan regulation, but rather the relation of opposition established between shaved hair, the shame of defeat, and mourning, on the one hand, and on the other, long hair, victory, and celebration, we can see that the two explanations of the custom are not contradictory. Heightened by long, flowing hair, the manly beauty of the warrior contains a "terrifying" aspect whose effect on the battlefield is, in the active meaning of the

[17] I. Bekker, *Anecdota Graeca* (Berlin, 1814), 284.

[18] Hesych., s.v. *Xanthika*. Suda, s.v. *enagizōn*.

[19] Herod. 1.82; cf. Plat., *Phaed.* 89c.

word, a "sign" of victory, just as shorn hair, along with other manifestations of mourning, is one of the ritual means used during the funeral to link the survivors to the dead. With their faces disfigured and made ugly, the living are connected to that world of dim and feeble phantoms to which the dead, whose disappearance one mourns, must descend.

The contrast between long and short hair clarifies perhaps another Lacedaimonian custom. At Sparta the tradition was kept of marriage by abduction of one's future wife. "The young woman, thus carried off, was put in the hands of a woman called *numpheutria*, who shaved her head, and decked her out in the dress and shoes of a man" (Plut., *Lyc.* 15.5). That this is a rite of passage, replete with disguise and inversion of sexual status, no one will deny. But that is not the whole of it, nor even perhaps the essential, if we consider that the young boy, having become a complete man when he leaves the *ephebeia*—as the girl becomes a complete woman on entering into marriage—keeps his hair long precisely as a sign of his full virility. In the hoplite formation, this same virility preserves the memory and, as it were, the trace of the "fury" that in heroic times had to inhabit the soul of the young warrior in order for him to bring terror into the enemy camp. In shaving the head of the young bride, everything that could be still considered masculine and martial—and wild—in her femininity is extirpated in her new matrimonial state. The face of Gorgo must not be introduced into the husband's house under the mask of the bride.

Hesychius notes that at Sparta, the name of *pōlos* was given to the young person, whether boy or girl, both of them equally noncivilized and not yet integrated into the community. *Pōlos* is the young horse, the colt or filly. In *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes evokes the *korai*, the young virgins of Sparta: "Like fillies, the girls bound with quick steps all along the river Eurotas, raising up the dust; and their hair is tossed like those of the bacchants who brandish the thyrsus and frolic about" (1308ff.).

The wild quality of the male warrior is expressed by his long hair, which flows like a horse's mane. The wild quality of the girl shows up in her loose hair, which makes her like a frisky and unconstrained filly. In the case of the young married woman, the ritual of the shaved head plays with these two contrasting symbols, which are reinforced in their opposition, since if the wife must be marked off from the *parthenos* on entering into the conjugal state, she must by the same ploy be clearly distinguished from her husband.

In cutting the hair of new brides, the idea is not only to domesticate these untamed fillies, but also to exorcise the disturbing wild quality that Athena and Artemis, the two virgins excluded from marriage, retain, each in her own way: Athena the warrior with the face of Gorgo she wears on her breast, Artemis the *kourotrophos*, the wild one, with the Gorgon side of her character and with the masks used in initiatory rites for the young over which she presides.

With the *Odyssey*, the setting is changed. The scene has shifted from a martial to an infernal locale. The underground haunts and the realm of Night are not, however, a world of silence. In book 11 (632ff.), Odysseus recounts his arrival in the land of Hades. The assembled crowd of the dead raises a prodigious clamor (*ēchē thespesiē*). "Green fear gripped me," explains the hero, "lest from the depths of Hades noble Persephone send me the gorgonean head of the terrifying monster" [*gorgeiēn kephalēn deinoio pelōrou*]" (633–35). Odysseus immediately turns away. Gorgo is at home in the land of the dead and she forbids every living man entrance into that domain. Her role is symmetrical with that of Kerberos: she prevents the living from entering the realm of the dead, while Kerberos prevents the dead from returning to the land of the living (Hes., *Theog.* 770–73). Like Homer, Aristophanes locates the Gorgons in Hades next to Kerberos, Styx, and Echidna (*Frogs* 477). Apollodorus relates how all the *psuchai* fled before Herakles as he descended to the underworld, all except Meleager and the gorgon Medusa (ps. Apollod. 2.5). From the very depths of Hades where she lives, Gorgo's head, like a vigilant watchman, surveys the borders of Persephone's realm. Her mask expresses and maintains the radical otherness, the alterity of the world of the dead, which no living person may approach. In order to cross the threshold, one would have had to confront the face of terror and, beneath its gaze, to have been transformed oneself into the image of Gorgo, into that which, in fact, the dead already are: heads, empty heads, robbed of their strength and *menos*, the *nekuōn amenēna karēna* of the Homeric formula (*Od.* 10.521, 536; 11.29, 49).[20]

The face of the living human being, in the particularity of its features, is one of the components that make up the individual. But in death, this head to which one is reduced, this head that from now on is weak and without vigor, comparable to a man's shadow or his reflection in a mirror, is submerged in darkness. It is a head clothed in night, the equivalent in Hades of those faces that, in the light of day, certain heroes such as Perseus cover with the helmet of Hades to make themselves imperceptible to the eyes of the living. The *Aidos kuneē*, the dog-skin cap, which serves as the head-covering for Hades of the underworld, "contains the gloomy shadows of Night," as Hesiod puts it in the *Shield* (226). It envelops the whole head as if in a dark cloud; it masks it, and just as with someone who is dead, it makes the wearer invisible to all eyes.

The affinities of Gorgo with the underworld turn the inquiry in two directions. In the first place, they suggest we make a detour to Etruscan data and insert a parenthesis for Altheim's thesis, taken up and modified especially by Agnello Baldi and J. H. Croon.[21] Recalling the derivation of the Latin *persona*

[20] Cf. R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1954), 98ff.

[21] Franz Altheim, "Persona," *ARW* 27 (1929): 35–52; Agnello Baldi, "Perseus e Phersu,"

(mask, role, person) that comes from the Etruscan Phersu, Altheim proposed an equivalence both between this Etruscan Phersu and Greek Perseus and between Phersipnai and Persephone. Phersu figures on two frescoes from the so-called tomb of the Augurs at Tarquinia (ca. 530 B.C.E.). On one of the lateral walls of the mortuary chamber two personages confront each other. One wears a dark mask that hides his face and a white beard that seems to be false. An inscription names him Phersu, which would therefore mean masked man, mask-bearer. This masked figure holds onto a long cord, which is wound around his adversary's arms and legs. One end of this leash is attached to the collar of a dog who bites the left leg of the second wrestler, whose head is enveloped in a white cloth and who grasps a club in his right hand. Blood flows from his wounds. The same group of two figures is represented on the facing wall. The masked man no longer has a leash or a dog. He is in full flight, pursued by his adversary, toward whom he turns his head and stretches out his right arm with raised hand. It is difficult to interpret these two scenes, and no explanation seems fully satisfying. Altheim suggests a ritual struggle to the death in a funerary game in honor of the dead man. The term Phersu would designate the Bearer of the mask who officiates at the ceremony. For J. H. Croon, the mask constitutes a mode of representing the spirit of the dead in funeral games. During a ritual dance, the Bearer of the mask mimes and actualizes the Power of Beyond-the-Grave, just as Persephone, through the mask of Gorgo she controls, herself presides over the lower world. Onians, however, interprets these scenes differently:[22] the fighter, armed with the club and attacked by the dog, would be Herakles in his descent to the underworld; Phersu must then be interpreted as Hades, who is finally vanquished and put to flight. For Agnello Baldi, Phersu, Perseus, and Hades are one and the same divinity. Whatever he may be, on the Etruscan mural paintings of Orvieto and Corneto, Hades is depicted with a cap of wolfskin or dogskin, which recalls both the *kuneē* which Perseus uses and the mask of Phersu.

The second direction offers us more secure terrain. It lets us follow Hesiod to the ends of the world where the *Theogony* places the Gorgons and associates them with the whole lineage of their monstrous relatives. The Gorgons belong to the offspring of Phorkys and Keto, whose names evoke both a monstrous hugeness and the cavernous depths at the bottommost points of land and sea. In fact, in addition to their common feature of monstrousness, all the children of this couple live "far from gods and men," in subterranean regions beyond Okeanos, on the border of Night, there to play the role of watchmen, even bogeys, who bar the way to forbidden places.

Aevum: Rassegna di scienze storiche, linguistiche, e filologiche 35 (1961): 131–35; J. H. Croon, "The Mask of the Underworld Daemon: Some Remarks on the Perseus-Gorgon Story," *JHS* 75 (1955): 9ff.

[22] Onians, *Origins*, 429 n. 1.

Born from the union of Pontos and Gaia, Phorkys and Keto first produce the Graiai, maidens old from birth, who combine within themselves the young and the old, the freshness of beauty and a wrinkled skin like the rough film that forms on the surface of chilled milk and which in fact bears their name: *graus*, wrinkled skin.[23] The first of the Hesiodic Graiai is named Pemphredo; *Pemphrēdōn* is a species of voracious wasp that burrows holes underground.[24] The second is called Enyo, which brings to mind the mistress of battles and the violent war cry (*alalē*) raised in honor of Enyalios.[25]

Sisters of the Graiai, the three Gorgons, whose group combines mortal and immortal qualities,[26] live beyond the boundaries of the world in the direction of Night, in the land of those nymphs, the Hesperides, maidens "with shrill voices" (*liguphōnoi*). The mortal Gorgon, whose name is Medusa, coupled with Poseidon in a soft meadow of spring flowers, like the one in which Hades ravished the young Kore in order to transform her into Persephone. When Perseus cut off Medusa's head, Chrysaor sprang forth from her gaping neck and so did the horse, Pegasos, who flew off into the heavens.

Chrysaor begot three-headed Geryon, he who makes his voice heard (*gēruō*), who lets a *gēruma* burst forth like the *hupertonon gēruma*, the very shrill sound that the piercing Etruscan trumpet produces (Aesch., *Eum.* 569). Geryon is associated with one of the offspring of the third brood of Phorkys and Keto, the horrible Echidna, half maiden, half serpent, who lives in the secret depths of the earth, far from gods and men. Among other monsters, this Echidna in turn gives birth to two roaring, growling, and barking dogs, Orthos, dog of Geryon, and the corresponding Kerberos, dog of Hades, the beast with fifty heads, "with a voice of bronze," who guards the echoing halls (*domoi ēchēentes*) of his master and of the dread Persephone.

In these same infernal places, this realm of shadow and terror, drips the water of Styx, the great oath of the gods. This primordial water (*hudōr ōgugion*) brings to those gods guilty of perjury the equivalent of the death they can never undergo: a temporary *kōma* that enshrouds them, depriving them of breath and voice for one great year just as death enshrouds the head of men with eternal night. In this sense, Styx represents for the gods what Gorgo does for human beings—an object of terror and fright. Just as Styx is *stugerē athanatoisi*, horror for the immortals (Hes., *Theog.* 775), so too the Gorgons, on whom no human may look without immediately perishing, are *brotostugeis*, horror for mortals (Aesch., *Prom. vinct.* 799). Styx is also the screech owl,

[23] Arist., *de gen. anim.* 743b6; cf. Athen. 585c.

[24] Arist., *Hist. anim.* 623b10 and 629a22.

[25] Xen., *Anab.* 1.8.18, 5.2.4; Heliod., *Aethiop.* 4.17.4–5.

[26] The two sisters of Medusa are immortal. Perseus kills Medusa. But the head of the monster, once cut off, keeps all its deadly power: it changes to stone those who gaze at it, and continues to do so forever as did the living head of Medusa.

the sinister double of the owl, the ill-omened bird characterized by its large head, evil eye, and nocturnal cry.[27]

In the netherworld regions of Hades, Darkness, and Fear, monstrous sights and sounds combine to express the "alterity" of those powers as alien to the realm of the celestial gods as they are to the world of humans. They constitute an entirely separate jurisdiction of beings with whom, as Aeschylus says of the Erinyes—the *graiai palaiai paides*, the ancient maidens—neither god nor man nor beast will consort (*Eum.* 68).

Disquieting noises are so much a part of the universe to which the Gorgons belong that in the verses of the *Shield* that describe how they run, Hesiod adds auditory details to the purely visual indications that until now were used to portray the decoration on Herakles's shield: "Beneath their feet the shield clattered with a great strident and resounding noise [*iacheske sakos megalōi orumagdōi oxea kai ligeōs*]" (232–33). The only other references to noise in the text, as we have seen, have to do with the clacking jaws of snakes that terrorize humans or of those that coil around the Gorgons's waists.

Snakes take pride of place among the monstrous offspring of Phorkys and Keto. The shrill sounds that issue from the Gorgons's throats or are produced by the vibration of their jaws are also those of the snakes that gnash and clack their teeth in concert. Along with the snake, the dog and the horse complete the trio of animals whose shape and voice enter most particularly into the composition of the "monstrous." If the "brazen voice" of Kerberos (*chalkeophōnos*) resounds in the halls of Hades, so too we hear the Erinyes, when Aeschylus compares them to Gorgons, producing a strident growling and groaning (*oigmos, mugmos oxus*). They groan (*muzō*) just as the extended moans of tortured men "groan" in the underworld (*Eum.* 117, 189). They "make sounds like a dog" (*Eum.* 131) and the term used, *klangainō*, recalls the *klangē* of the dead in the *Odyssey* as well as the shrill complaint (*eriklagtēs*) of the Gorgons and their snakes.[28]

The horse too, by its behavior and the sounds it makes, at times betrays the disquieting presence of a Power of the Underworld manifesting itself in animal form. The horse is skittish; it tends to bolt abruptly as a result of a sudden fright like that provoked by the demonic power of Taraxippos, the Terror of horses (*to tōn hippōn deima*; Paus. 6.20.15), and it can become wild and frenzied enough to devour human flesh. It also bristles, drools, and perspires with a white foam. Added to these qualities are its neighing, the din of its hooves hammering the earth, the dull gnashing of its teeth (*brugmos*), and finally, the sinister sound of the bit between its jaws that induces terror by "making murder resound" (Aesch., *Supp.* 123, 208). In equestrian vocabulary, *gorgos* takes on a quasi-technical meaning. For the horse, *gorgoumai* is to paw the

[27] Hesych., s.v. *stux*; Ant. Lib., *Met.* 21.5; Ov., *Fast.* 6.33.

[28] *Od.* 11.605; Pind., *Pyth.* 12.38.

ground. Xenophon notes in the *Equestrian Art* that the nervous and impetuous horse is terrible to behold (*gorgos idein*), that its widely flared nostrils make it *gorgoteros*, and that when horses are mustered as a troop, with their pounding, neighing, and snorting amplified by their numbers, this is the time when they appear most spirited and fiery (*gorgōtatoi*, *Eq.* 10.17; cf. 1.10, 14; 11.12).

The Flute and the Mask: The Dance of Hades

Certain musical instruments, when used orgiastically to provoke delirium, play on this scale of infernal sounds. The effect of Terror these produce in their hearers is all the more intense when the musicians and their instruments are not seen and the source of the sounds is concealed. These sounds seem to rise up directly out of the invisible, to come up from the beyond like the disguised voice of a ghostly Power, an echo come from afar and mysteriously resounding here on earth. A fragment from Aeschylus's *Edonians*, quoted by Strabo (10.3.16), is significant in this regard: "One, holding in his hands the pipe, the labor of the lathe, blows forth his fingered tune, even the sound that wakes to frenzy. Another, with brass-bound cymbals, raises a clang . . . the twang shrills; and unseen, unknown, bull-voiced mimes in answer bellow fearfully, while the timbrel's echo, like that of subterranean thunder, rolls along inspiring a mighty terror."

But among all the musical instruments, the flute, because of its sounds, melody, and the manner in which it is played, is the one to which the Gorgon's mask is most closely related. The art of the flute—the instrument itself, the way it is used, and the melody one extracts from it—was "invented" by Athena to "simulate" the shrill sounds she had heard escaping from the mouths of the Gorgons and their snakes. In order to imitate them, she made the song of the flute "which combines all sounds [*pamphōnon melos*]" (Pind., *Pyth.* 12.18ff.). But the risk in playing the role of the shrieking Gorgon is actually to become one—all the more so as this *mimēsis* is not mere imitation but an authentic "mime," a way of getting inside the skin of the character one imitates, of donning his or her mask. The story is told that Athena, wholly absorbed in blowing into the flute, did not heed the warning of the satyr, Marsyas, who, when he saw her with distended mouth, puffed-out cheeks, and a face wholly distorted by the effort of getting a sound from the flute, said to her: "These ways do not become you. Take up your weapons, put down the flute, and compose your features." But it was only when she looked at herself in the waters of a river and saw that what the mirror reflected was not the beautiful face of a goddess but the hideous rictus of a Gorgon that she threw away the flute once and for all, crying "be damned, shameful object, outrage to my body; I will not surrender myself to this ignominy." Frightened "by the deformity that offends the sight," she gave up the instrument that her intelli-

gence was able to invent. Nevertheless, the flute was not altogether lost for everyone. Marsyas seized it; the flute became the pride and joy of the satyr, "the brute who claps his hands," a monster whose ugly face harmonizes with the melody and playing of the instrument.[29] Marsyas's glory is also his misfortune. Athena discovered that by playing the flute she had descended to the level of monstrosity. Her face was demeaned to become a semblance of a Gorgon's mask. Marsyas, however, thinks that by playing the flute he can raise himself to the level of the god, Apollo. He claims victory over the god in a musical contest. But in the hands of Apollo, the lyre produces a melody in harmony with human song and its accompanying words. On the other hand, in the huge mouth of the satyr, even when it is covered with a piece of leather, the *phorbeia*, and a halter to soften the violence of his breathing and mask the distortion of his lips, the *aulos* or *syrinx*, the double flute or the flute of Pan, leaves no room for human song or voice. At the end of the contest, Apollo is declared the winner; he flays Marsyas alive, hanging his skin in a cave at the springs of the Meander[30]—just as Athena, according to certain versions, wears over her shoulders as an aegis, not the head but the flayed skin of Gorgo.[31]

What do these stories about the affinities between the flute and the mask of terror teach us?[32] First, of course, that the sounds of the flute are alien to articulate discourse, poetic song, and human speech. Second, that the flutist's distorted face, deformed to look like a Gorgon's, is that of a person possessed by madness and disfigured by anger and who, as Plutarch observes, ought, like Athena, to look at himself in the mirror in order to calm himself and recover his normal human state (*De tranq. an.*, 456a–b). Aristotle's remarks go even further. If Athena rejected the flute, he observes, it was not only because this instrument deforms the face, but also because the flute contributes nothing to the improvement of intelligence (*Pol.* 1341bff.). The goddess is opposed to the kind of instruction that prevents the use of speech. And, above all, flute music has the least ethical and the most orgiastic character. It produces its effects not through a mode of instruction (*mathēsis*) but by purification (*katharsis*), "for everything that belongs to the Bacchic trance and to all impulses of this sort depends, from the instrumental point of view, on the flute" (*Pol.* 1342a3; 1342b5). Thus the flute is the instrument par excellence of trance, orgiastic celebrations, delirium, and of rituals and dances of possession. Citing mothers, whose children have difficulty sleeping, and who, in order to calm them, rock them and sing them lullabies instead of leaving them alone in silence, Plato declares: "It is as if, in the full sense of the words, they play the flute in front of their children [*katauloust tōn paidiōn*] as before frenzied bacchants [*ekphronōn bakcheiōn*], who are cured by the use of the movements of both dance and music" (*Laws* 7.790d). To play the bacchant or corybant is to hear or to think one hears flutes. Corresponding to Plato's remark, "those who play the corybant think they hear flutes" (*Crito* 54d), is Iamblichus's assertion: "Certain ecstatics hear flutes, cymbals, drums or some melody and are thus in a state of enthusiasm [*enthousiōsin*]. . . . Flutes both excite or heal passions of frenzy; some melodies cause a trance [*anabakcheuesthai*], others put an end to it [*apopauesthai tēs bakcheias*]" (*De myster.* 3.9).

[29] Arist., *Pol.* 1341bff.; ps. Apollod. 1.4.2; Athen. 14.616e–f; Plut., *Mor.* 456bff.

[30] Herod. 7.26; Xen., *Anab.* 1.2.

[31] Eur., *Ion* 995–96; ps.Apollod. 1.6.1, Diod. Sic. 3.69.

[32] In addition to the two versions of the laughter of the Mother, distracted from her mourning by Iambe and Baubo, Euripides adds a new one that is different and instructive. This time, it is the Mother's act of taking up the flute that, along with the noise of cymbals and tambourine, takes the place of the obscene joking and exhibition of genitals. "Then Kypris, the most beautiful of goddesses, for the first time made echo the bronze with the infernal voice and seized the tambourine of taut leather. And the goddess mother began to laugh; charmed by the sounds, she took into her hands the low-sounding flute." *Hel.* 1338ff.

There are several ways, however, of being a bacchant, and in states of possession, it is not always the same divinities who take hold of their worshippers, put the bit and bridle on them, and ride them into the cavalcade of madness. In contrast to the bacchant of Dionysos, whom the imagery associates with figures of Maenads along with their exuberant escort of Satyrs and Silenoi, we must distinguish what Euripides calls a "bacchant of Hades" (*Haïdou bakchos*, *Her. fur.* 1119) who is compelled by the rabies of a frenzied madness, *Lussa*, to dance while playing a tune of terror (*Phobos*) on the flute. What is this sinister power of enragement that finds its rhythm in the flute, "the music of madness"? The tragic poet supplies the answer: "It is the Gorgon, daughter of Night, and her vipers with their hundred clamorous [*iachēmasin*] heads; it is Lyssa of the petrifying gaze" (884). In this dance, which transforms Herakles into Terror itself—both the internal terror that possesses and torments him and the external terror he stirs up around him—"neither the tambourines nor the friendly thyrsus of Bromios appears. She [Terror] wants blood, not the bacchic libation of the juice of the vine" (891–95; cf. Eur., *Or.* 316–20). During the attack of frenzy in the course of which Fright, like a supernatural power, takes possession of Herakles, the music of the flute and the hero's face both take on the hideous appearance of Gorgo's mask: "Horrible, horrible is the music of this flute [*daion tode daion melos epauleitai*]," sings the chorus. As for Herakles, at the onslaught of the trance, "already he tosses his head and silently, with terrifying looks, rolls his twisted eyeballs [*gorgōpas koras*]" (*Her. fur.* 868). A little later, "the face distorted, he rolled his eyes where there appeared a network of blood-red veins and foam trickled on his thick beard. . . . He rolled the wild eyes of a Gorgon [*agriōpon omma Gorgonos*]" (931, 990).

In addition to the evidence from tragedy, whose import for our understanding of possession phenomena Jeanmaire has already observed,[33] several other similar texts can be added. According to Xenophon, those who are possessed

[33] *Dionysos: Histoire du culte de Bacchus* (Paris, 1951; reprint, 1970).

by certain divinities "have a more gorgonlike gaze, a more frightening voice, and more violent gestures" (*Symp.* 1.10). In Plato's *Laws*, Clinias questions the Athenian stranger about the nature of the sickness that both keeps children awake during the night and agitates those bacchants hearing the flute. The Athenian stranger replies: "Each sickness consists in being afraid [*deimainein*] and these fears [*deimata*] arise from a weakness in the soul. When one opposes an external impulse to such perturbations, the motion coming from outside masters the internal motion of fear and frenzy, and in mastering it, brings calm and tranquillity. . . . Every soul which from its youth is haunted by such fears will become more and more the prey of panic frights" (7.790e–791b). In the Hippocratic *Sacred Disease*, the author enumerates a series of divinities to whom people refer the perturbations that trouble them. "To those who are subject to fear [*deimata*], terrors [*phoboi*], and deliriums [*paranoiai*] at night, who leap from their beds or rush outside the house, they say that attacks of Hekate are responsible and assaults of heroes [i.e., the dead]" (4.31ff.). Like Gorgo, whom in certain respects she resembles closely enough to be sometimes invoked by her name (Hipp., *Ref. her.* 4.35), Hekate, who "sends ghosts" (Eur., *Hel.* 569) and whom the Orphic Hymn celebrates as "she who plays the bacchant with the souls of the dead," appears here as the Power of Terror, risen from the other world to take possession of humans during the night in the form of a dread that casts them outside themselves.

According to Plato, fears of this kind in the adult have their origin in childhood. Citing the childish anxiety that the wind, especially a strong one, will blow on the soul to disperse it on its exit from the body, he says in the *Phaedo* that perhaps "within us there is, as it were, a child whom these sorts of things frighten. Try to persuade the child not to have the same fear of death as it does of *mormulukeia*, hobgoblins" (77e). The Socrates of this dialogue then observes that getting rid of such fears requires an accomplished charmer and a daily incantation until the child is pacified by these spells.

Since these texts attribute our irrational fears to holdovers from childhood,[34] it pays to reexamine the dossier assembled by Rohde[35] and to look in the sphere of popular superstition and the child's world for the expressions of this same Power of Fear—fear as a category of the supernatural—that Gorgo's mask seems to embody, be it in a martial or an infernal context. Lamia, Empousa, Gello, and above all, Mormo translate into the world of childhood what Gorgo represents for adults. The *mormulukeion*, the bogeyman, corresponds to the *gorgoneion*.

For the child, Mormo is a mask, a head. As we see in Callimachus's *Hymn to Artemis* (50ff.), this can be Hermes's face, daubed with ashes, that, in order

[34] Cf. also Plut., *Mor.* 1105b.

[35] *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, 8th ed., trans. W. B. Hillis (New York, 1925; reprint, 1966), vol. 2, app. 5, 588–89.

to frighten children by imitating Mormo, has been transformed into a strange visage, a face enveloped in darkness and with no recognizable features. By this otherness, this alterity, it resembles the monstrous face of the Cyclops with his gorgonlike eye and the din that accompanies him, reverberated, amplified, and displaced by a formidable echo. In Theocritus (*Id.* 15.20), Mormo no longer resembles the Cyclops's face but rather that of a horse. To scare her child and keep him quiet, the mother cries out: "Mormo, horsey bites [*daknei hippos*]." These terrifying monsters in the shape of masked heads, looking like the Cyclops or a horse, are thought to seize and steal children, devour them, and give them over to death. These figures are in proximity to death; they belong to its domain, even when they wander in the midst of the living. They are a variety of revenants, phantoms, Doppelgänger, *eidōla*, and *phasmata*, like those sent by Hekate and called *Hekataia* (schol. ad Ap. Rh. 3.8–1). When a man is possessed by *Lussa* and imitates the Gorgon in his gestures, facial expressions, and cries, he becomes a kind of death-dancer himself, a bacchant of Hades. The terror that shakes him and compels him to dance to the horrible melody of the flute rises directly out of the lower world: it is the power of a dead man, an avenging demon pursuing him for expiation or vengeance, an *alastōr*, a criminal defilement (*miasma*), that weighs on him personally or that he has inherited from his ancestors. The author of the *Sacred Disease* observes that magi, exorcists, beggar priests, and other charlatans claim to heal those afflictions he has just mentioned through "purifications" and "incantations," and he remarks that they treat such invalids "as the carriers of *miasma*, as *alastoras*, those stained with blood, and as *pepharmakeumenous*, expiatory victims" (4.37–39). Euripides saw matters no differently when in his *Orestes* he portrayed the young man in a delirious state after the murder of Klytemnestra. The chorus addresses Orestes to propose as the cause "some *alastōr*, which allows your mother's blood to enter the house, the blood which arouses your madness [*ho s'anabaccheuei*]"—more precisely, "that which agitates you like a bacchant" (337–38). Louis Gernet has pointed to the ambivalence of such terms as *alastōr*, *miastōr*, and *aliteiros*, which apply both to the phantom of the victim of violent death who vengefully pursues his murderer and to the criminal who is the object of that pursuit. The same demonic power of terror engulfs them both and binds them to each other. The reason is that the culprit himself is troubled, agitated, and terrorized because the dead person cannot rest in peace and "returns" to trouble, agitate, and terrorize the one whose mind he haunts and who in turn becomes this fury, this rage, this Fright of which he is both cause and victim.[36]

[36] Louis Gernet, *Recherches sur le développement de la pensée juridique et morale en Grèce* (Paris, 1917), 146, 320. On this reciprocity of terror and trouble—*phobos*, *deima*, *tarassō*—in the victim's ghost and in the murderer stained with his blood, see Plato, *Laws* 9.865d–e. It is said that the man who has died a violent death "is no sooner dead than he is irritated against the one who killed him and himself, full of terror and fear [*phobou kai deimatos*] because of the violence

The Goddess-Heads

Until now we have only referred to mythic stories and iconographic representations that treat the monstrous face of Gorgo. Medusa is not the object of any cult that would serve either to honor her or to ward her off. But in Greek religion there exist fearful Powers, related to Gorgo in the sense that they appear only in the form of heads. These goddess-heads, the Praxidikai, have the ritual task of executing vengeance and guaranteeing oaths. According to Hesychius, Praxidike is a *daimōn* who finishes things off, bringing matters, both words and deeds, to their appointed term. This is the reason why her images are heads, and the same goes for the sacrifices made to her. Photius and the Suda (s.v.) confirm the fact that only the head of this goddess is set up.[37]

The chthonic or netherworld aspects of Praxidike are emphasized in an Orphic Hymn.[38] Assimilated to Persephone, Praxidike is hailed as "queen of those beneath the earth," *katachthoniōn basileia*. She is also called "mother of the Eumenides," those figures whose "frightening faces," *phobera prosōpa*, according to Aeschylus (*Eum.* 989–90), express clearly enough the role they play in the city—to incarnate Fright and the terrible (*Phobos* and *to deinon*). At line 19 of the Hymn, it is said that she supplies the fruits of the earth (providing, of course that this earth, free from all defilement, is not smitten with sterility by the goddess).

What happens in her cult? Pausanias recounts how after the destruction of Troy, Menelaos, on his return home safe and sound, had built on the very site where Paris and Helen first consummated their adulterous union an *agalma* of Thetis (out of gratitude for his safe return) and of Praxidike, to thank her for the punishment of the guilty (3.22.2). At Haliarte in Boeotia, near Mount Tilphossion and the spring Tilphousa, there is an open-air sanctuary of the Praxidikai used for oath taking, but not for oaths sworn lightly (*ouk epidromon ton horkon*, Paus. 9.33.3). The meaning of this stipulation is clear in light of the sanctuary of the Eumenides, founded by Orestes at Keryneia, that does not give access to all and sundry, nor *ex epidromēs*. The reason given is that anyone who enters stained with blood or burdened with some impurity immediately loses his mind under the sway of terror (*autika . . . deimasin ektos tōn phrenōn ginesthai*, Paus. 7.25.7). At the sanctuaries of both the Praxidikai and the Eumenides, whoever was imprudent enough to risk swearing an oath lightly, without having made sure of his perfect religious purity, immediately found himself suffering an acute crisis of fear, like the one that struck Orestes

done to him, cannot look at his murderer . . . without being seized with fear [*deimainei*] and disturbed himself [*tarattomenos autos*], the victim disturbs [*tarattei*] his murderer as much as he can, using his memory of him as an aid in order to disquiet him in his soul and acts."

[37] On the head as the element necessary for completeness, cf. Plato, *Gorg.* 505d, *Tim.* 69a.

[38] Orph., *Hym.* 29.5–6 (Quandt).

precisely in the place called *Maniai* (Madnesses), a name, that, according to Pausanias, designates the Eumenides (8.34.1).

There is another sanctuary in Arcadia where the most serious oaths on the most important matters are sworn, that of Eleusinian Demeter at Pheneus (Paus. 8.15.1–3). There one swears by the *petrōma*, the rock. Constructed of two interlocking stone blocks (they conceal writings concerning the mysteries that are taken out every other year and read to the initiates), the *petrōma* has a sphere on top in which is contained the mask of Demeter Kidaria. During the Great Rites this mask is worn by the priest, who with his rod strikes those who dwell underground, *tous hupochthonious paiei* (that population of the dead of whom Praxidike is called queen). The epithet given to this masked Demeter, who is associated with the underworld and is a guarantor of solemn oaths, comes from the word *kidaris*, which has two meanings: first, that of a cap or mask (Hesychius s.v.), and second, an Arcadian dance Athenaeus compares to the *alētēr*, the "wandering dance" of the Sicyonians (14.631d).

The Praxidikai, goddess-heads, and Demeter Kidaria, the goddess of the mask, guarantee the inviolability of an oath that is meant to inspire men with the same sacred terror as that aroused in the netherworld by the water of Styx, the primordial water (*ōgugion hudōr*) on which the gods swear. *Ogugios* is an adjective formed from the name of Ogugos, a primordial mythic being, the doublet of Okeanos, who, according to certain traditions, seems to have been the first king of the gods. The first flood is supposed to have taken place in his time, before the one associated with Deucalion, and the surface of the earth was submerged by the eruption of a mixture of subterranean and celestial waters. Ogugos is best known in Boeotia (Paus. 9.6; 9.33.5) where he is specifically associated with the Praxidikai.[39] According to Photius (s.v.), the daughters of Ogugos are Alalkomene, Thelxinoe, and Aulis, "who were later called Praxidikai." Panyassis, according to Stephanos of Byzantium (s.v. *tremilē*), speaks of an Ogygian nymph called Praxidike.

The Boeotian Praxidikai are not only associated with the Stygian waters and with Ogugos. They are related to a spring, rising from underground, whose name is Tilphousa and whose waters, again like those of Styx, are fatal for all human beings. Tiresias, whose tomb is nearby, died for having drunk of it. Corresponding to the deadly spring of Tilphousa is the spring of Ares, which is at the origin of the foundation of Thebes and feeds the river Dirke. The serpent (*drakōn*) who guarded this spring to prevent any access to it and who is sometimes said to have been the progeny of Ares and Ge, seems in fact, as the scholia to Sophocles's *Antigone* (126) claims, to have been the offspring of Ares and the Erinys Tilphossa. Another tradition, preserved by Callimachus (frag. 652 Pfeiffer), represents matters differently. Having coupled in the form of a mare with Poseidon, the Erinys Tilphossa (or Telphousa) gives birth to

[39] See Francis Vian, *Les origines de Thèbes* (Paris, 1963), 230ff.

the horse, Areion, just as Medusa, coupling with the same god, gives birth, along with Chrysaor, to Pegasos, the horse, whose name recalls a spring (*pēgē*) or, according to Hesiod, the flowing waters (*pēgai*) of Okeanos, the boundary of the world.

Several observations should be made at this point:

(1) From the regions where he was born, beyond Okeanos and in the direction of Night, Pegasos flies skyward, to dwell there with Zeus. But because his function is to transport (*pherōn*) thunder and lightning, he hovers between the aether where he resides and the chthonic realm (*chthōn*) to which he belongs (Hes., *Theog*. 284–86).

(2) Styx is that daughter of Okeanos whose waters flow at the deepest point below the earth in the abode of Night, where murmur the springs (*pēgai*) of the Earth, Tartaros, the Sea, and the Heavens, whose waters are still conjoined and mingled with one another (*Theog*. 736–38; 807–9). This is a frightful chaotic region (*chasma mega*) "which the gods abhor [*ta te stugeousi theoi*]" (739). The primordial waters of Styx represent this original chasm not only because of the *kōma* in which they shroud perjured gods or the death they bring to mortals, but by their strange location. Already in Hesiod, Styx, situated underground in black night, in the shadowy land of the house of Hades, inhabits at the same time a dwelling "surrounded by towering rocks with silver columns raised heavenward on all sides" (775–79). The "primordial" meaning of Styx establishes it at the lowest and highest points as if it contained both extremes, just as the Graiai combine the young and the old, and the Gorgons, the mortal and immortal. The same is true for the Arcadian Styx described by Herodotus (6.74) and Pausanias (8.18.4). The waters of Styx, waters of the nether depths, bring death to every living being; no receptacle, no material, not even gold (except, to be sure, "the horn of a horse's hoof") has the power to contain them, and they trickle down from a lofty, rocky cliff, so towering that Pausanias says he knows of "no others that rise to such a height." Thus the waters of the underworld flow from on high, as if from the heavens.

(3) In J. H. Croon's work mentioned earlier,[40] the author observes that representations of the *gorgoneion* can be found in most of the places where hot springs exist. Thus of the twenty-nine ancient cities whose coins bear the figure of Gorgo, there are at least eleven where we know of a spring in the vicinity. This is true, in particular, of Seriphos, a rocky island, a place about which Croon insists that, apart from the hot spring where festivals take place every year even to this day, no reason can be found to account for the central role it plays in the legend of Perseus and Medusa.

(4) The spring Tilphousa with its deadly waters, associated with the Praxidikai and the Erinys Tilphossa (or Telphousa) of Boeotia, who in the form of a mare gave birth by Poseidon to the horse Arcion, has its double in Arcadia

[40] Croon, "Mask," 11ff.

in the personage of a Demeter Erinys, who is located at Thelpousa on the banks of the Ladon and whose waters rise from several springs in the area (Paus. 8.25). This Demeter couples in the form of a mare with Poseidon, himself turned into a horse, and gives birth to the stallion, Areion, and to a girl with a secret name that suggests she is a doublet of Kore, the maiden who is shared between the darkness of the underworld and life in the light of the sun. The Demeter of Thelpousa has two aspects and two names. Her "furious" side is matched by a "calm" one. When she has appeased her anger and bathed in the waters of the Ladon, she is Demeter Lousia, "the bathed one," "the cleansed."

The same polarity between a power of madness that causes delirium and an assuaging power that produces calm and a return to a state of normality is evident in another Arcadian form of the raging, equiform Demeter. At Phigalia there is a cave consecrated to Demeter Melaina, "the black one" (Paus. 8.42.1–7). The Phigalians agree with the people of Thelpousa about the union of Demeter. According to them, however, the fruit of this union was not the horse, Areion, but she whom they call Despoina, the Mistress. Like the Erinys, Melaina oscillates between a state of frenzy and one of calm. Her name, the Black One, recalls those divinities that appeared to Orestes at Maniai under two guises: black, as long as he was insane and a prey to panic; white, as soon as he cut off a finger in atonement for his criminal defilement and recovered his sanity at a place called *Akē* (i.e., Remedies) (Paus. 8.34.2–4). Demeter Melaina, in her maddened state, was portrayed seated on a rock. Her body was that of a woman but she had the head and hair of a horse. Figures of snakes and other wild beasts rose up from this horse's mask, in a manner similar to Gorgo.

The Despoina, daughter of Demeter the mare and Poseidon Hippios, had her temple at Lycosura where she was worshipped by the local people above any other divinity. Excavations have restored fragments of her cult statue, particularly her drapery, on which are seen eleven female figures with animal heads (notably horse heads) who play various musical instruments while they dance. Small terra-cotta statues have also been found, and these too are of draped women with animal heads. One last detail concerning the sanctuary of the Despoina: toward the exit from the temple a mirror was hung on the wall. If one looked in it, one did not see oneself. The mirror did not reflect human faces. Like a window opening onto the beyond, all it reflected clearly on its surface were the statues of the gods and the throne where the Mistress sat in state with the procession of masks on her drapery.[41]

(5) The polar extremes of these goddesses, who can sometimes inflict the confusion of madness and at other times bring a cure, are matched by the polarity of the springs and waters sometimes associated with them. Above

[41] See "In the Mirror of Medusa," below, chap. 7.

Nonacris, in the neighborhood of Arcadian Styx, there is a cave where the daughters of Proitos went to hide when they were struck by madness and were wandering in a trance. Melampos came there with his secret rites and purifications to lead them in the direction of Cleitor, to a place called Lousoi, which recalls the Demeter Lousia. There they were calmed and cured in the sanctuary of Artemis Hemerasia, the Assuager (or one who tames; Paus. 8.18.7–8). Just previously Pausanias had noted (17.6) that a traveler who sets out westward from Pheneus, comes to a fork in the road: the path to the right leads to Cleitor and Lousoi; that to the left, toward Nonacris and Styx. Further on in the text he is more precise. The guide points out that in the land of the Cynaethaeans, which borders that of the Pheneates, there is found a cold water spring called Alussos, because it is a remedy for *lussa* (rabid madness) and because to drink from it cures rabies. Pausanias concludes, "In the waters named Styx which are near Pheneus, the Arcadians possess something which has proved a bane for men, while the spring among the Cynaethaeans is a blessing to make up for the evil of the other" (8.19.2–4).[42]

Death in the Eyes

If we were to analyze the myth of Perseus—which tells how, with the aid of the gods, a hero dares to confront the lethal regard of Medusa, how, by cutting off her head, he comes to conquer the face of terror and escape the pursuit of the two remaining Gorgons—we would be obliged, for purposes of comparison, to take up the different versions of the story: from Hesiod and Pherecydes to Nonnos and Ovid. To keep to the essentials, we will only indicate some important points, starting with the presence in myth of the traditional heroic pattern—the exposure of the newborn hero and the trial imposed on him in his adolescence that takes place during a festival banquet in a context of boasts and challenges.

Let us briefly summarize the outline of the story: Akrisios, king of Argos, has a daughter, Danae. If she gives birth to a boy, the oracle announces, the grandson will kill his grandfather. Akrisios immediately immures Danae in a subterranean chamber with walls of bronze. But Zeus comes to visit the girl in the form of a shower of gold. After the birth of their offspring, named Perseus, the cries of the infant attract Akrisios's attention. To escape his predicted fate, the king places Danae and the child in a wooden chest, which he throws into the sea. The waves propel the chest safely to the island of Seriphos where Diktys, a fisherman, brings it back in his nets, shelters Danae, and raises Perseus until his adolescence. Seriphos is ruled by the tyrant Polydektes who covets Danae, but Perseus keeps watch over his mother. Polydektes sum-

[42] On *lussa*, see Bruce Lincoln, "Homeric *Lussa*, Wolfish Rage," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 80 (1975): 98–105.

mons the youth of the country to a festive banquet (*eranos*) where all, to put up a good show, vie with each other in parading their generosity. When his turn comes, Perseus, to outdo everyone else, boasts he will offer his host, not the horse he demands, but the head of the Gorgon. Polydektes takes him at his word. Perseus has no choice but to fulfill his promise.

Supernatural birth, expulsion from the human world, abandonment of the infant in the space of that other world symbolized by the immensity of the sea, survival and return among men after going through the ordeal whose normal outcome ought to have been death: Perseus's biography from the very outset, even before the career of his exploits begins, contains all the ingredients needed to give the young man his properly "heroic" dimension.

But the story continues. With Athena and Hermes as guides, Perseus sets out on the journey. To kill Medusa, he must obtain from the Nymphs the instruments of victory over the monster with the fatal gaze; in particular, the helmet of Hades, the *kuneē*, and the winged sandals. And to find the Nymphs, he must first constrain the Graiai to reveal the route that leads to them. Sisters of the Gorgons, the Graiai are also dreadful figures, although they have only one single tooth and one single eye among the three of them. Always on the alert, there is always one who, when the other two sleep, keeps the eye open and the tooth ready at hand. Perseus confronts them and defeats them as in a parlor game of "pass the slipper." He snatches the eye and the tooth at the precise moment when, passing from hand to hand, they are out of service for any of the sisters.

One theme is central to this chain of episodes: the eye, the gaze, the reciprocity of seeing and being seen. This theme appears already in the sequence of the three Graiai with their single tooth and eye, which they pass back and forth so the trio will never be caught by surprise without any defense—without a tooth for eating and an eye for looking (the single tooth is that of devouring monsters and of toothless hags; the single eye that of beings with an ever-vigilant gaze, but whom a bold maneuver can blind).[43] The theme is found again in the *kuneē*, the magical instrument of invisibility concealing from all eyes the presence of the one whose head it covers, and also in the detail that Perseus turned his eyes away at the moment of Medusa's death. He does this when he cuts the monster's throat, and later too, when he brandishes her head to turn his enemies into stone and prudently looks in the opposite direction. The theme finds its full development in those versions, attested from the fifth century on, that insist on the indispensable recourse to the mirror and its reflection that enables the young man to see Gorgo without having to cross

[43] To recover their eye and tooth, the old Graiai have to give over the secret of the Nymphs. These young rustic divinities give to Perseus the helmet that makes him invisible, the magic sandals that let him pass from one place to another, and the *kibisis*, the pouch in which he can bury the head of Medusa to hide it from view. To this equipment, Hermes adds the *harpē*, the machete in the form of a sickle used by Kronos to castrate Ouranos.

glances with her petrifying gaze. We should also note the role and meaning of the magical objects, which, more than mere instruments, are talismans that seem to be the true agents of the exploit. There is the cap of invisibility, which gives the living hero the mask of a dead man and thus puts him under the protection of the Powers of Death; the *harpē* and *kibisis*, the sickle and pouch, implements for headhunting;[44] and the winged sandals, which give Perseus a privilege like that of the Gorgons by allowing him to telescope all spatial directions, to reach both the heavens and the underworld, to pass from the shores of Okeanos to the land of the Hyperboreans. Finally, it is worth recalling several significant details: the hostility of Perseus to Dionysos, his satyrs and maenads, whom the hero, at the end of his journey, combats and pursues when they arrive in Argos, as if their frenzied band contained a gorgonlike element in its madness; the play of beauty and ugliness in the person of Medusa;[45] the emphasis on the theme of the mirror and its reflection in a late author like Ovid,[46] and its treatment in iconographic representations. In the images that illustrate the episode of the hero decapitating the Gorgon, Perseus, sometimes viewed full face, looks straight ahead, fixing his eyes on those of the spectator, with Medusa standing at his side. At times he turns his head to look the opposite way; at other times he looks at the face of the monster reflected in a mirror, on the polished surface of a shield, or on the surface of a pool of water.[47]

[44] [As the instrument used for both the beheading of Medusa and the castration of Ouranos, the *harpē* is another important indication of the correspondences between the upper and lower parts of the body, especially between the head (neck and mouth) and the sexual organs, that we have already seen in the dual aspects of Baubo. (For the female, see further Giulia Sissa, *Le corps virginal* [Paris, 1987], 76–93.) Both Ouranos and Medusa give birth from the place (or effects) of severing—Ouranos from his blood and semen, Medusa from her neck. If Medusa's decapitation can be construed as the "castration" of her genitalized head, the neck, in particular, is associated with female sexuality, in that, after defloration, the bride's neck is thought to thicken and her voice grow deeper (see the evidence in Ann Hanson and David Armstrong, "The Virgin's Voice and Neck: Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 245 and Other Texts," (*BICS* 33 1986: 97–100). The *harpē* is primarily an agricultural implement, used to cut off the "heads" of grain, but here too, the same correspondence is valid. A field of standing corn is also imaged as an expanse of bristling swords and warriors (cf. the birth of the Sown Men), and the *stachus*, or head of wheat, also represents the "virginal" young of both sexes (*Anth. Pal.* 9.362.24–27, and see "Artemis and Rites of Sacrifice, Initiation, and Marriage," below, chap. 12), who may be "harvested" in war, death, or defloration.] Ed.

[45] On the tradition that makes Medusa a ravishing young girl, desirous of rivaling the most beautiful goddesses, cf. ps. Apollod. 2.4.3; Ov., *Met.* 4.795ff.

[46] Perseus could only look at the hideous face of Medusa and her petrifying eye in its weakened reflection. The theme is taken up and redoubled by Ovid in the episode of the deliverance of Andromeda, saved by the hero en route while returning home. In his stupidity the marine monster who attacks Perseus throws himself, not on the young man, but on the young man's shadow; with his claws he vainly tears at the reflection that the hero projects on the smooth surface of the sea.

[47] For further discussion, see "In the Mirror of Medusa," below, chap. 7.

Some provisional conclusions to close this inquiry. In contrast to human figures and human faces, the mask of Gorgo, as an isolated head, contains elements in its composition that are marked with strange and unusual features. The usual conventions and typical classifications are syncopated and intermixed. Masculine and feminine, young and old, beautiful and ugly, human and animal, celestial and infernal, upper and lower (Gorgo gives birth through the neck like weasels are supposed to do, who, in producing their young from their mouths, invert buccal and vaginal orifices), inside and outside (the tongue, instead of remaining hidden within the mouth, protrudes outside like a masculine organ—displaced, exhibited, and threatening): in short, all the categories in this face overlap in confusion and interfere with one another. Thus this figure establishes itself right away in a realm of the supernatural that somehow calls into question the rigorous distinctions among gods, men, and beasts, as well as those between different cosmic elements and levels. A disquieting mixture takes place, analogous to the one Dionysos achieves through joy and liberation toward a communion with a golden age. But with Gorgo, the disorder is produced through horror and fear in the confusion of primordial Night.

The telescoping of what is normally kept separate, the stylized deformation of features, and the face breaking into a grimace convey what we have been calling the category of the monstrous, which, in its ambivalence, hovers between the terrifying and the grotesque, oscillating from one pole to the other.

This is the context in which to examine the frontality of Gorgo. The monstrousness of which we speak is characterized by the fact that it can only be approached frontally, in a direct confrontation with the Power that demands that, in order to see it, one enter into the field of its fascination and risk losing oneself in it. To see the Gorgon is to look her in the eyes and, in the exchange of gazes, to cease to be oneself, a living being, and to become, like her, a Power of death. To stare at Gorgo is to lose one's sight in her eyes and to be transformed into stone, an unseeing, opaque object.

In this face-to-face encounter with frontality, man puts himself in a position of symmetry with respect to the god, always remaining centered on his own axis. This reciprocity implies both duality (man and god face each other) and inseparability, even identification. Fascination means that man can no longer detach his gaze and turn his face away from this Power; it means that his eye is lost in the eye of this Power, which looks at him as he looks at it, and that he himself is thrust into the world over which this Power presides.

In Gorgo's face a kind of doubling process is at work. Through the effect of fascination, the onlooker is wrenched away from himself, robbed of his own gaze, invested as if invaded by that of the figure facing him, who seizes and possesses him through the terror its eye and its features inspire. Possession: to wear a mask means to cease being oneself and for the duration of the

masquerade to embody the Power from the beyond who has seized on you and whose face, gestures, and voice you mimic. The act of doubling the face with a mask, superimposing the latter on the former so as to make it unrecognizable, presupposes a self-alienation, a takeover by the god who puts bridle and reins on you, sits astride you, and drags you along in his gallop. As a result, man and god share a contiguity, an exchange of status that can even turn into confusion and identification. But in this very closeness, a violent separation from the self is also initiated, a projection into radical alterity, a distancing of the furthest degree, and an utter disorientation in the midst of intimacy and contact.

The face of Gorgo is a mask, but instead of wearing it to mime the god, this figure reproduces the effect of a mask by merely looking you in the eye. It is as if the mask had parted from your face, had become separated from you, only to be fixed facing you, like your shadow or reflection, without the possibility of your detaching yourself from it. It is your gaze that is captured in the mask. The face of Gorgo is the Other, your double. It is the Strange, responding to your face like an image in the mirror (where the Greeks could only see themselves frontally and in the form of a disembodied head), but at the same time, it is an image that is both less and more than yourself. It is a simple reflection and yet also a reality from the world beyond, an image that captures you because instead of merely returning to you the appearance of your own face and refracting your gaze, it represents in its grimace the terrifying horror of a radical otherness with which you yourself will be identified as you are turned to stone.[48]

To look Gorgo in the eye is to find yourself face-to-face with the beyond in its dimension of terror, to exchange looks with the eye that continually fastens on you in what might be described as the negation of looking, and to receive a light whose blinding brilliance is that of the night. When you stare at Gorgo, she turns you into a mirror where, by transforming you into stone, she gazes at her own terrible face and recognizes herself in the double, the phantom you become the moment you meet her eye. To express this reciprocity, this strangely unequal symmetry of man and god, in other terms, what the mask of Gorgo lets you see, when you are bewitched by it, is yourself, yourself in the world beyond, the head clothed in night, the masked face of the invisible that, in the eye of Gorgo, is revealed as the truth about your own face. This grimace is also that which shows on the surface of your own visage as a mask that is put there, when to the tune of the flute you deliriously dance the bacchanal of Hades.

[48] [Although women are, even more than men, subject to possession, madness, and bewitchment, the petrifying effect of the Gorgon seems reserved only for men, in a tête-à-tête between a male and the deadly gaze of the female. I know of no case in which Medusa engages with a female figure, although, for other reasons, she can, like Niobe, be turned into stone through excessive grief. Ed.]

PART THREE

Image

Chapter 7

IN THE MIRROR OF MEDUSA

AT LYCOSURA in Arcadia the most honored divinity bore the name of Despoina ("Mistress"). She was represented seated in her temple, enthroned in majesty alongside her mother, Demeter. On either side of the two goddesses and framing their double thrones stood Artemis and a Titan, Anytos. Toward the exit from the sanctuary, there was a mirror set in the wall on the right. Let us listen to what Pausanias says: whoever looks at it, our witness reports, either only sees himself as an obscure reflection, faint and indistinct (*amudros*), or sees nothing at all. On the other hand, the figures of the gods and the throne that supports them show up clearly in the mirror; one can gaze at them there distinctly (*enargōs*) (8.37.7).

In the sacred place where it is affixed,[1] the mirror inverts its natural properties and shifts from its normal role to another and exactly opposite function. Instead of reflecting appearances and returning the image of visible objects placed before it, the mirror opens a breach in the backdrop of "phenomena," displays the invisible, reveals the divine, and lets it be seen in the brilliance of a mysterious epiphany.

An extreme case, no doubt. Yet more clearly than other evidence we have about Greek practices of catoptromancy,[2] it emphasizes the ambiguous status of the image that is reflected in the polish of the metal. The image seems to oscillate between two contrary poles: at times just a sham, an empty shadow, an illusion devoid of reality; at other times, the appearance of a power from the world beyond, a manifestation of an "other" reality that shows up on its smooth surface as in the transparency of spring waters. Remote, foreign to the world of here and now, and ungraspable, this "other" reality is also one that is fuller and stronger than what the world offers to the eyes of mortal creatures.

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[1] The cult of the Despoina must have included masquerades: on the sculpted drapery worn by the image, part of which has been preserved, human characters with animal heads—ram, pig, ass, donkey—were represented in a frieze, dancing and playing to music; others, votive figurines, were found in the *megaron* where the mysteries were celebrated: figures molded in terracotta, upright, immobile, dressed in a himation with a head of a ram or an ox instead of a human face. Could there have been in the cult as in the myth a proximity of the mask and the mirror?

[2] Cf. A. Delatte, *La catoptromancie grecque et ses dérivés* (Liège and Paris, 1932).

In the daily life of the ancient world, the mirror is above all a women's thing. It evokes the radiance of their beauty, the brightness of their seduction, the charm of their look, their dressed hair and delicate complexions. Women use it to see themselves, to recognize themselves in self-contemplation. To gaze at yourself is to project your own face before you, opposite your own, doubled into a figure you observe as one does an other, yet knowing it is yourself. There is no other way to apprehend oneself in the singularity of one's physiognomy except in this face-to-face through the mirror where one sees oneself in the act of being seen, where one looks at oneself regarding oneself. The face is called *prosōpon* in Greek; it is what one presents of oneself to the gaze of others, an individualized countenance appearing before the eyes of anyone who meets one directly, and it is something like the stamp of one's identity.[3] In seeing your face in the mirror, you know yourself as others know you: face-to-face, in an exchange of glances. Access to the self is gained through an external projection of that self, through being objectified, as if one were an other, in the form of a visage looked at straight in the eyes and whose exposed features gleam in the light of day.

Nevertheless, on the mirror of the temple, the face of the living is murky or effaced. The worshipper who looks at himself when he leaves sees himself not as he is, but as he will be when he has left the light of the sun to enter the land of the dead: a dim shadow, blurred, indistinct, a head shrouded in night, a specter henceforth without a face, without a gaze. *Amudros* is a doublet of *amauros*, the term that in the *Odyssey* describes a nocturnal phantom, and in Sappho, the tribe of the dead.[4] A half-open door into Hades, the mirror recalls to the worshipper who passes before it that his clearly defined face of a living being is doomed to disappear into the kingdom of Night, when the moment comes, and to vanish, engulfed in the invisible. An invisibility by default, one could say, through the lack of light, which never penetrates into the infernal dwellings, hermetically shut off from the rays of the sun. But there is another invisibility that is founded, not on deficiency, but on excess. The brilliance of divine splendor is too intense to be met by the human gaze; its radiance blinds or destroys those who wished to contemplate the divinities face-to-face, to see them *enargeis* as they are in the full light of day.[5] The gods too, in order to show themselves to mortals without the risk of destroying them, clothe them-

[3] Cf. Arist., *De part. anim.* 3.2.662b19: "In man the part included between the head and the neck is called *prosōpon*, a name owed, as it seems, to its function. For because man is the only animal who stands upright, he is also the only one who looks you in the face and who speaks to you face to face." On the values of the term *prosōpon*, in its double meaning of face and mask, consult the exhaustive inquiry of Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, *Prosōpon: Valeurs grecques du masque et du visage*, thesis for the Doctorat d'État, 2 vols. (1988).

[4] *Od.* 4.824 and 835; Sappho 71 (ed. Edmonds, *Lyra Graeca*, vol. 1 [London, 1922]) = 68 Bergk.

[5] Cf. *Il.* 20.131; *Od.* 16.131; *Hom. Hym. Dem.* 111.

selves in appearances that disguise divinity as much as they reveal it. In the same way, the idols, which represent the powers of the world beyond to the eyes of their worshippers, incarnate the divine presence in the temple where they are offered residence without, however, being identified with that presence: the idol is godly, it is not the god. Still, if in the mirror of Lycosura, divine idols appear in their full clarity (*enargōs*), it is because a sort of transmutation is worked on its surface. In being reflected there, the images, fashioned by human hands in the "likeness" of the gods, gleam with an authentic—and unbearable—brilliance of the divine. Instead of being weakened by being doubled in reflection, the image is actually intensified, reinforced, and transformed; it becomes a divine epiphany. Made present as at the conclusion of an initiation, it is the divinity itself who looks you in the eyes at just the moment when you are about to take your leave of the temple.

We have lingered somewhat over the bizarre happening reported by Pausanias in his account of his visit to the Despoina's sanctuary because the anecdote marks in a striking way the particular place ancient culture assigned to the mirror. In the field defined by the ambiguous relations of the visible and the invisible, life and death, the image and the real, beauty and horror, and seduction and repulsion, this homely object occupies a position of strategic importance. To the extent that it seems able to join two normally contrasted terms, the mirror, more than any other device, lends itself to problematizing the entire realm of seeing and of being seen: the eye, first of all, with the shaft of light emanating from it in the act of seeing, just like that other eye, the glowing pupil that is the sun, the star that both sees everything and makes everything visible when it beats down with its rays and is the source of life; second, the real being with its double, its reflection, and its painted or sculpted image; then again, individual identity, the return back on oneself and the projection in the other, as well as erotic fascination; and finally, the fusion in the face of the beloved in whom one searches for oneself and loses oneself, as with a mirror, in beauty and death.

Three myths that, for the most part, inspired ceramicists, painters, and sculptors in their works of art, used the mirror as a device to dramatize these various themes, and to invoke, each in its own way, some aspect of their many implications: Perseus and the Gorgon Medusa, Dionysos and the Titans, and Narkissos.

We will limit ourselves here to the oldest, which is also the most richly attested in the ancient tradition, both literary and representational. We will refer here only to the relevant essentials of the legend of Perseus decapitating Medusa, the central core that has a direct bearing on this inquiry.[6] The whole story in its various sequences is actually constructed around the theme "see—be seen"—an indissociable pairing for the Greeks. It is the same light—emit-

[6] See also "Death in the Eyes: Gorgo, Figure of the *Other*," above chap. 6.

ted by the eye, bathing objects with its luminosity, and returned as in an echo by the mirror—that causes the eye to see and things to become visible. Gorgo and her two sisters carry death in their eyes. Their look kills. To see them, even for an instant, is to leave forever the clarity of the sun, to lose life along with sight: to be changed into stone, a blind object, as opaque to the luminous rays as those funerary steles erected over the graves of those who have descended forever into the obscurity of death. If the sight of these monsters is unbearable, it is because by the mixture in their faces of human, bestial, and mineral elements,[7] they embody the figure of chaos, the return to the formless and indistinct, and the confusion of primordial Night: the face itself of death, of that death which has no visage.[8] The Gorgons incarnate Dread and Terror as a dimension of the supernatural. They would instigate Panic, desperate Flight, and Rout, which seem to hover about their heads, if they were not first rooting you to the spot in frozen terror. Impossible to speak of, look on, or even think about, these monsters nevertheless have an imperious presence. If they appear, you will find them always in front of you, fixing you in the eye face-to-face. One glance in their direction and already their gaze reaches and strikes you. Like the image of yourself reflected by the mirror that always sends back your own gaze, the head of the Gorgo—contrary to the artistic conventions of archaic art where characters are always painted in profile—is always represented frontally. The glimmer of its staring eyes beams down on its spectators, sending them its fascinating frontal gaze. Whoever sees the head of Medusa is changed in the mirror of its pupils, as in the mirror of Lycosura, into a face of horror: the phantomlike figure of a being who, in passing through the mirror and leaping over the boundary that separates light from darkness, has immediately sunk down into formlessness and is now a nothing, a nonperson.

II

How will Perseus succeed in decapitating Medusa and appropriating her head? The story, as it proceeds, will put other, complementary questions into place. How is one to see something when the sight of it cannot be endured, see it without glancing at it and without falling under its glance? To exorcise, if not her death-dealing gaze, then at least the terror she inspires, how is one to master that by representing her, by figuring the traits of a monster whose horror thwarts every attempt at figuration? In other words, how is it possible to make seen—to visualize—the face it is impossible to see and the eye that is

[7] Cf. ibid.

[8] With a head shrouded in darkness, the dead are without a face. Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux rightly observes that the Gorgo is not called a *prosōpon*, "face," but *kephalē*, "head." And still this head is only represented as a face. When the invisible, in the form of Night, of total obscurity, appears to us, it is a face-to-face meeting with that which is not a face.

forbidden to the gaze in order to appropriate them and turn them against one's enemies?

Three episodes, three tests, three stages in the journey that leads Perseus to a successful confrontation with the horrible face of death. First, the Graiai: these aged maidens, these ancestral dames, born wrinkled and with white hair, sisters of the Gorgons, are possessors of a secret. They know the route that leads to the hidden Nymphs, invisible in a place where no one can find them. Only the Nymphs can furnish those talismans that can turn this impossible exploit into a reality—kill the Medusa, the one Gorgon of the three who is not entirely immortal, then detach from her dead body the head whose eyes and face still retain their lethal power, and finally, carry it off to bring it back into the world of men, escaping the pursuit and terrifying glances of the two furious survivors. Medusa has death in her eyes; the one who will be able to put the head of Medusa in his pouch and hide it there will be declared a master of Terror, *mēstōr phoboio*, lord over death.[9]

The Graiai form a disturbing trio: youthful old witches, they have only one tooth among them and only one eye, which they pass from hand to hand to be used by each in turn. Somewhat reassuring, then, at first glance. But one must not be too confident. Is the single tooth that of an old toothless woman or of a young ogress eating human flesh? One eye for three—this looks a little better. In reality, however, this eye, continually passed from one face to another, is always kept in service, always on the lookout; forever open and alert, it never sleeps. Just as one tooth, if it is a good one, is sufficient for devouring, only one eye is needed to see, providing it can never close. The single eye of the Graiai corresponds in symmetrical and inverse form to the hundred eyes of Argus whom only Hermes, the good voyeur (*Euskopos*), can take by surprise and kill. A hundred eyes for a single body means that Argus looks at all sides at the same time and never ceases to see. When fifty eyes slumber, the other fifty are awake. The result is similar with a single eye for three bodies. One of the three Graiai will always have the eye. To conquer these ladies of the eye and harsh tooth, Perseus, led by Athena and Hermes—the subtle and wily gods who protect him—will have to guess the weak point, leap to the occasion, and aim just right. As in a game of "pass the slipper," the hero finds the precise instant, the brief and mysterious interval where, in transit from one Graia's hand to another's, the eye has no place, not yet or no longer in anyone's use. It is at this moment that Perseus jumps up and puts his hand on the eye, and the Graiai are rendered blind and harmless. They ask for mercy. In return for the eye, they pass on the secret of where the Nymphs reside.

Perseus then goes to hunt down the Nymphs. Huddled together defenseless

[9] This is the name given to Perseus by Hesiod in the *Catalogue of Women*, frag. 129.15 Merkelbach-West; cf. on this point, along with others on which we agree, Ezio Pellizer, "Voir le visage de Méduse," *MÉTIS* 2 (1987): 45–60.

in their hiding place, they do not need much pleading to offer the young man the three means of magic defense against the visual ray of death. They give him first the *kuneē*, the helmet of Hades, the head-covering that, "containing the shadows of Night" (Hes., *Shield* 227), makes anyone who covers his head with it as invisible as the god of the Underworld and the hordes of the dead who populate his empire. To foil the gaze that dispatches the onlooker to the king of shades, Perseus is masked in night, indiscernible, and though alive, he assumes a dead man's countenance.

The Nymphs then give him winged sandals like those of Hermes. Thus in addition to the trait of invisibility, he acquires the faculty of ubiquity, the power to pass instantly by means of flight from one place to another, to travel the whole extent of the world from the subterranean dwellings on those frontiers of Night where the Gorgons live to the boundaries of Earth and Heaven. The helmet, the sandals, no face that can be spotted by the eye that tries to see you, no fixed place either where the gaze can reach you with its aim.

The third gift is the *kibisis*, the hollow pouch, the deep hunter's bag where one can bury the head of Medusa, once it is cut off. Enclosed in the darkness of its hiding place, the head cannot exercise its sinister power until it has been withdrawn and brandished about. As long as it is kept concealed, the head with the eye of death can neither see nor be seen. Like a veil cast over a mirror, the face-to-face meeting with the Gorgon can be interrupted at will. To these three gifts the gods add a fourth: the instrument of beheading, the curved sickle, the blade of close combat, of ambush, the weapon of those who cut off heads—the *harpē*.[10] Thus equipped, Perseus is now properly outfitted to embark on the ultimate phase of his drama. He is come into the presence of the three Gorgons. The moment has come for action.

In the most complete and consistent version, that of Apollodorus (2.4.2), the tale of the final action—decapitation—lists a whole series of seemingly indispensable precautions, even though any one of these would have probably sufficed to assure the success of the enterprise. In any case, since he is invisible and can fly through the air, does not Perseus already hold all the trumps for taking Medusa by surprise and cutting off her head? Still, he must be sure that the monster's gaze is not going to meet his eye and pierce the mask of invisibility the hero is wearing at the moment when he spies the head that has to be severed from its neck. The Gorgons must be approached under very specific conditions—when they are sleeping and the fire of their gaze is extinguished under their drowsy eyelids. But timing itself is not enough. Medusa is always just on the verge of awakening. Like Zeus, whose gaze strikes like a thunderbolt, she only sleeps with one eye. Care must be taken then not to repeat the misadventure that befell the monster Typhoeus (Epimenides 11 frag. B8 DK). Seeing the king of the gods asleep, he thought

[10] [Or genitals, as in the case of Ouranos and Kronos. Ed.]

he could take advantage of the moment to snatch his scepter and with it, the sovereignty of the heavens. But Typhoeus had hardly taken a first step when the eye of Zeus struck him and reduced him to ashes.[11] Other strategies must therefore be invented to counter the perils of the eye—the face-to-face ordeal with its exchange of looks and the inevitable reciprocity of seeing and being seen.

First solution: it is Athena who guides the hand of the hero, leads his right arm, and directs his act; Perseus with his eyes averted can see nothing. Second solution, which is added in the text to the first: Perseus acts from one side and looks from the other; to cut Medusa's throat without seeing her, he turns his head and eyes in the opposite direction. Third solution, which synthesizes the first two: Perseus performs by gazing not at the face or eyes of Medusa, but at the reflection presented on the polished surface of the bronze shield, which Athena uses like a mirror to capture the image of the monster. Because the ray is deviated when reflected, the mirror allows him to see Medusa without looking at her. He thus turns away from her as in the second solution, and in keeping his eyes elsewhere, as in the first, Athena's mirror lets him see Medusa from behind, without viewing the monster face-to-face—not in the mortal reality of her person but in an image. Medusa is an exact copy. It is as if the image were she, but also as though she were absent in the presence of her reflection.

Let us pause for a moment at this point when the eye of Gorgo—this mirror transforming the living into the dead—is deprived of its deadly power in and through the mirror where it is reflected. Before the fourth century B.C.E., the motif of reflection (first on the shield of Athena, later also in the waters of a spring, or on a mirror properly speaking) was absent from Perseus's exploit.[12] Now it is introduced on vases and in texts to explain the victory of the hero over Medusa. This then is a new element, something "modern" to the extent that it clearly contrasts the image and the real, the reflection and the thing reflected. The motif thus seems connected to the efforts of contemporary painters to give the illusion of perspective, to philosophers' reflections about *mimēsis* (imitation), and also to the beginning of experiments that, from Euclid to Ptolemy, will lead to a science of optics. Still, we must bear it well in mind that this "modernity" is not our own. In the context of a culture that cannot separate the seen and the visible, that merges them into the idea of a visual luminous ray—the sight that "knows color" in being colored, knows "white because it becomes white, black because it becomes black," as the

[11] Cf. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Les ruses de l'intelligence: La mētis des Grecs*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1978), 116.

[12] The motif appears in texts at the end of the fifth century B.C.E. (Eur., *Andr.*) and on vase paintings (southern Italian) at the beginning of the fourth.

great Ptolemy writes in the second century before our era[13]—in such a context, neither the image nor its reflection nor the mirror can have the status we recognize in these today.

In his treatise *De insomniis*, Aristotle indicates that mirrors tarnish when women use them to look at themselves during their menstrual periods (459b26). This tarnish forms like a bloody cloud on the surface; the stain is difficult to remove when the mirror is new. By just regarding themselves in newly polished metal, the women project their reflections there. Although it is a simple, look-alike image of themselves, it nevertheless impregnates the surface with a crimson haze. Something in the complexion of women, when their menses are flowing, reaches the mirror through reflected rays, is impressed there, and remains even after they have turned away from it. The mirror's image, declares Proclus in his commentary on Plato's *Republic* (290, 1–25 Festugière) acts "sympathetically" to retain the qualities of the bodies from which they came.

Would the reverse case, however, be true? Would the monster's image on the shield, which Athena turns toward Medusa's face to be reflected there, have entirely lost the noxious properties of the model? The answer given by the myth suggests that matters are not so simple as they seemed at first. True, the face-to-face, the shock of gazes, and the reciprocity of seeing and being seen have been avoided, to Perseus's greatest advantage, through the tactic of the mirror. In this sense, it is true that the image of Medusa is something other than Medusa. Yet is this to say that the image is nothing but an illusion, a subjective impression in the consciousness of the spectator? The myth claims exactly the opposite. The image of Gorgo, as presented in reflection on the shield, has a real efficaciousness, an active power that emanates from it in the rays it sends back with an impact like that of its model. It is just that through the intervention of the mirror or the use of some other mode of represented image, this power of radiation is controlled, used for certain ends, and directed according to the disparate religious, military, and aesthetic strategies required. In the "sympathy" they share, there is no absolute break between the image and the real, but rather affinities and means of passing from one to the other.

Athena knows what she is doing when she offers her shield so that the image of Gorgo can be inscribed at its center. She is adorning her defensive weapon with a traditional blazon, an *episēmē*, which the goddess's shield must have in order to fulfill its function: the Gorgoneion that, as its double, corresponds to the true head of Medusa that Athena has worn as the aegis on her breast ever since Perseus gave it to her as a gift. In this sense the detail added in the fourth century to the mythic episode of Medusa's decapitation acquires the value of an aetiological story, which justifies a posteriori the custom that is

[13] *Optics* 2.24. Cited by Gérard Simon, "Derrière le miroir," *Le temps de la réflexion* 2 (1981): 309.

attested from the earliest period of representing Gorgo on warriors' shields in order to heighten their prestige, provoke terror in the foe, and consign them in advance to flight and death. Exhibited as an image, Medusa's face makes the warrior a "master of Terror."[14] The Gorgoneion, however, is not only represented on shields. Its figure, multiplied over and over—on pediments of temples, on their roofs as *akroteria* and antefixes, in private homes, on fabrics, gems, seals, coins, the feet of mirrors, the belly of vases, and the base of cups—succeeds in visualizing the blinding black sun of death, and in this way succeeds in neutralizing its horror through the most conventional, even banal, images by mobilizing and exploiting the terrifying effects that emanate from this powerful sign. The image of this face that may not be seen[15] is a *teras*, a prodigy that can equally be described as "terrible to look upon" and "marvelous to behold."[16] As a prodigy, the *eikōn*, the image-reflection of Medusa, is also close to the *eidōlon* or the double (the image of a dream sent by the gods, a specter of the dead or the appearance of a phantom).[17] By establishing a bridge between our world and the one beyond and by making visible the invisible, the image of Gorgo combines the features of a disturbing and maleficent supernatural presence and a deceptive counterfeit, an illusionist artifice whose aim is to captivate the eyes. Depending on the case, Gorgo's image can lean toward either the horrible or the grotesque. It may appear terrifying or ridiculous, repulsive or attractive. Sometimes the charming traits of a feminine countenance are substituted for the traditional mask of the monster who grimaces in a hideous smile. From the late fifth century, at the moment itself when the motif of the mirror arises, the turning point begins that will lead to representing Medusa as a young woman of marvelous beauty. In certain versions of the myth recounted by Apollodorus, Pausanias, and Ovid,[18] it is the excess of this beauty and its radiance that constitutes the dynamic element of the drama, whether because it unleashes the jealousy of Athena and impels the goddess to slaughter her rival, or because it leads Perseus, dazzled by the

[14] See Pellizer, "Voir le visage," 53, on the links that join the exploit of Perseus to the theme of the shield as a defensive weapon casting terror into the enemy camp. Abas, great-grandfather of Perseus, is reputed to have invented the shield. Other traditions attribute this invention to the following generation during a war that pits the twins, Akrisios and Proitos, against each other, grandfather and great-uncle respectively of Perseus (unless one accepts that Danae was united with Proitos and not with Zeus).

[15] "How could [Perseus] have seen [the Gorgons]? They cannot be looked at [*atheatoi*]," Lucian has a Nereid say in his *Dial. mar.* 14 (=323), and see the commentary of Frontisi-Ducroux, *Prosōpon*, vol. 1, p. 163.

[16] Aesch., *Eum.* 34: *deina d'ophthalmois drakein*; Hes., *Shield* 224: *theama idesthai*.

[17] On the *eidōlon*, cf. Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs: Etudes de psychologie historique*, 10th ed. (Paris, 1985), 326–38, 339–51 ("From the 'Presentification' of the Invisible to the Imitation of Appearance," below, chap. 8); *Annuaire du Collège de France: Résumé des cours et travaux* (1975–76): 372–75; (1976–77): 423–41; (1977–78): 451–65. See also "Psuche: Simulacrum of the Body or Image of the Divine?" below, chap. 10.

[18] Ps. Apollod. 2.4.3; Paus. 2.21.5; Ov., *Met.* 4.754ff.; cf. Lucian, *Imag.* 1–3.

perfection of Medusa's face, to cut off her head after having killed her so he will never have to separate himself from this resplendent visage.

III

At Lycosura a double movement takes place through the medium of the mirror: the faces of humans darken and are obliterated as though swallowed up in the miserable darkness of Night; those of the gods shine with all the brilliance of an incomparable splendor. Superimposed on the mask of Medusa, as though in a two-sided mirror, the strange beauty of the feminine countenance, brilliant with seduction, and the horrible fascination of death, meet and cross.

Chapter 8

FROM THE "PRESENTIFICATION" OF THE INVISIBLE TO THE IMITATION OF APPEARANCE

The Greek Example

If anyone wants to consider, not only the forms that images have assumed at a given moment in a given country, but also, perhaps more profoundly, the functions of the image as such and the social and cognitive status of imagery in the context of a particular civilization, then the Greek case is certainly a very special example.

First, for historical reasons. During the so-called Dark Ages, that is, broadly speaking, from the twelfth to the eighth centuries before our era, Greece, which as you know has no knowledge of writing, also has no knowledge of imagery in the proper sense of the term, nor does it use systems of figural representation. The same word, *graphein*, it should be noted, is used for writing, drawing, and painting.

The establishment, under the influence of Eastern models, of what can be called a repertory of figures, a palette of images, and the elaboration of a language of art in pottery, sculpture, and relief, comes about toward the eighth century, as though it is starting afresh from a blank tablet. In this as in other areas, we are witness to a kind of birth, or at least a renaissance, which authorizes us to speak of the advent of figuration in Greece.

When the Greeks rediscover imagery, the form it takes amounts to a divestiture so absolute in comparison to the preceding period that, as Pierre Demargne observes, it can be regarded as a "creation *ex nihilo*."[1]

That is not all. In surveying the extensive, diffuse, and uncertain semantics in Greek pertaining to statuary, Benveniste claimed that the Greeks did not have any specific word to designate the statue in our sense of the term. As he states: "The people who fixed the most refined canons and models of plastic art for the Western world had to borrow from others the notion itself of figural representation."[2]

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[1] *Naissance de l'art grecque* (Paris, 1964), 317.

[2] E. Benveniste, "Le sens du mot *kolossos* et les noms grecs de la statue," *RPh.* (1932): 118–35.

Mortals and Immortals

COLLECTED ESSAYS

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