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The myth of Gorgo/Medusa in ancient written sources

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ABSTRACT

The present article reports all ancient writers and poets who dealt with the Gorgoneian head and the Gorgon-Medusa related myth presented in a chronological order basically during the 1st millennium B.C. from Homeric epics to Late Antiquity of Fabius Planciades Fulgentius and Ioannis Malalas in the 5th and 6th c. A.D. Essentially it is a discussion on the ancient written sources, based on the original texts. Especially for the most ancient sources such as Homer, Hesiod, Cyclic epics – and references were made to known scholars in the field of philology. Particularly critical discussion and comments are made, along with the investigation of the primary ancient writing sources, as well as the related iconography. The final conclusions show the degree of influence of ancient written sources on art, but also vice versa, that is, how much art influenced ancient texts.

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Introduction

The fascinating and impressive myth of Gorgon Medusa and the Gorgoneion has inspired scholars and artists throughout the past at least three millennia to various expressions and allegorical manifestations. The introduction of such a topic of uttermost importance and attributing attraction inevitably leads first to the definition of the myth as an entity and then to the Gorgon/Medusa mythical accounts.

The theoretical discussion of myth is not much characterized by a critical approach to the relevant studies as by the convergence of many research methods and forms regarding the complex relationships between literature and myth. Such research is so heterogeneous and connected with so many scientific and interdisciplinary issues, that it may be better to think of the critique of myth as a field for a series of complex and intensely challenging questions, so that the interpretation of the content of the myth is an ardent endeavor of researchers (Auregan and Palayret, 1998)[1].

Myth and history are generally considered to be opposing modes of interpretation, with varying differences between scholars. Several modern historians consider it their duty to remove every trace of myth from the historical archive. Many scholars of myth, respectively, believe that the story has less explanatory power than traditional narratives. To the ancient Greeks, the concept of reason λόγος (proven truth, rationalization) was contrary to myth (an imperative statement). In more general terms, a myth can be defined as any set of uncontrollable assumptions. Some modern historians have realized that what is called true history is associated with such hypotheses. That is, what we call history is at best a novel. Some even argue that there can be no real distinction between the words of myth and history, between fact and fantasy (Heehs, 1994).

There are four basic theories of myth: the logical theory of myth (states that myths were created to explain natural events

[1] Throughout history there has been developed an authentic hermeneutics of myths, because they are an eternal "source of inspiration".

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and forces), the theory of functional myth (the so-called types of myths created as a type of social control), the theory of structural myth (myths were shaped by the human spirit and human nature) and the theory of psychological myth (states that myths are based on human emotion (Strenski, 1987).

There are seven basic types of myth theory and more specifically the type that: i) treats myth as a form of explanation and in particular a form that appears at a certain stage in the development of human society and culture (19th century intellectual way of anthropological thought); ii) treats myth as a form of symbolic statement that has the function, not of explanation, but of expression as an end in itself and that reflects a specific type of thought, myth-making; iii) treats myth as an expression of the unconscious; iv) in terms of function, is responsible for the creation and maintenance of social solidarity, cohesion, *etc*.; v) emphasizes with its function the legitimacy of social institutions and social practices; vi) is treated as a form of symbolic statement of social structure, which is probably related to the ritual; and finally, vi) there is the structural theory (Cohen 1969).

Although I agree with the classification of the basic theories of myth, I consider that the analysis of types of these four categories is sensitive to further themes, so that it is an open variable field (*e.g.* myth as poetry, as allegory, as meta-structuralism, as euhemerism, as linguistic weakness, that is, because of the inability of the primitive mind to grasp abstract concepts. However, the classification serves as a general indication of the character and diversity of perspectives in myth theories.

A diachronical perspective and interpretative approach to the myth

Three important approaches to Greek myths characterize the end of Antiquity: euhemerism (the term came from the Greek mythographer Euhemerus, who believed that the gods were originally human and more specifically, the first Greek leaders who were later deified), mythography (which indicates the elaboration of myths by scholars and grammarians) and allegory (hidden allegorical message beneath the literary surface of myths (Detienne, 1986; Graf, 1993; Metta, 1997). Allegory and euhemerism prevailed in the academic landscape throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Graf, 1993; Metta, 2002).

Many studies have been written on the myth in relation to history, its interpretation, beliefs after the Enlightenment (Weber, 1946; Habermas 1987; Habermas 1982; Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002). In the 18th century, the study of myths was adapted to the dominant discourse of the Enlightenment (Graf, 1993). The rational and anti-religious spirit of the time sought the explanation of the myths in their origin, something that is in distant prehistory (Graf, 1993). Models for the study of such a "primitive mentality" were sought in children, in rural populations, and in the "uncivilized" of the time (Graf, 1993).

Fontenelle, Latifau, Freret, Vico and Hume are some of the scholars who have worked in this direction, basing their studies on observations of modern "savages" (Graf, 1993). In the Romantic era, the second half of the 18th century, scholars Heyne, Herder and Moritz continued to develop this tradition, explaining the myth in awe as a reaction to the divine and because of an effort to explain the world, also promoting evaluation of mythology, through an aesthetic and poetic point of view (Graf, 1993). In the 19th and 20th centuries a trend emerged from "comparative mythology" and ritual in functionality and psychoanalysis, which was supported by several scholars (Frazer, 1911-1915; Brown, 1957; Burkert, 1957; Ackerman, 1975; Roberts, 1975; Caldwell, 1989; Kluckhohn, 1998).

In the 20th century, structuralism and post-structuralism are introduced (Levi-Strauss, 1970; Gras, 1981). Special mention is made of Nietzsche, the forerunner of many ideas that are vital in modern thought, but also a composer of his own mythology, which placed a special emphasis on the unifying power of beauty (Nietzsche, 1872) and Lévi-Strauss, a French anthropologist and one of the greatest thinkers of 20th century, pioneer of construction (structuralism) as a method of understanding human society and culture (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). For Barthes, one of the main proponents of mythological theory, myth is a type of speech, a communication system, or a message-carrying entity whose study is part of "semiotics" (Barthes, 1957). Cohen presents a general overview and critique of the various aspects of interpreting the myth (Cohen, 1969).

The understanding and interpretation of the myth of Medusa was also attempted by Jean-Paul Sartre, in the context of existentialism, which is close to the spirit of psychoanalysis and philosophy (Sartre, 1943;). On the other hand, Karl Marx in his "Capital" metaphorically uses the myth of Medusa and Perseus: Medusa represents the "evils" hidden in what seems to be a normal process of capital production, while Perseus symbolizes the proletarians and is accused by Marx of closing his eyes to the "evils" of capitalism hidden under the "magic veils", as the mythical hero did (Marx, 1867).

These successive theories related to mythology are characterized by diversity in plot, ideological context, and their own interpretation of myths. In fact, the definition and essence of the concept of "myth" changes dramatically from one interpretive theory to another. Because of this, I have chosen not to perceive myth through a particular mythological theory. After all, as Vernant and Kirk argue, a holistic approach to the interpretation and definition of "myth" is neither possible nor desirable (Kirk, 1972, 1974; Vernant, 2000). So "myth" as a concept cannot be understood through a single interpretive scheme, nor can or should individual myths be understood only through a mythological theory.

The Gorgo/Medusa myth

The legend refers to the Gorgon Medusa with the fossil power in her eyes, who was beheaded by the demigod Perseus and used her head to petrify his enemies. Most researchers make a plausible hypothesis, that the myth of Gorgo / Medusa, perhaps with some variation, as with most myths, dates back to prehistoric times probably in the Bronze Age and was passed down from generation to generation, reaching the historical times. Besides, Perseus is the founder of Mycenae and his worship in the area continued until Roman times (Pausanias, vol. 2; Nilsson, 1963).

The earliest written sources refer to an incorporeal head (gorgoneion), which causes terror to anyone who faces it. Subsequent sources, however, mention the head of the Gorgon / Gorgo or the Gorgons, with a unique definition of the terror they cause. Although the genealogy of Perseus was known to Homer (Homer *Iliad,* 14.319-320), this hero is first associated with the Gorgon in the *Theogony* of Hesiod. In this epic one meets the genealogy of Medusa, one of the three Gorgons, who is mortal. The beheading of the Gorgon named Medusa, the birth of Pegasus and Chrysaor, and the use by Perseus of the fossilized head, are mythical elements interspersed with other mythological events and intertwined with various mythical figures, inspiring

writers and poets up to the late antiquity as well as in the Renaissance (Figure 1).

At the same time, as it appears from the written sources, the individual Gorgon's head is going through a remarkable course, independent of Medusa. In the follow-up of our paper, the ancient sources will be examined, in order to make a comparative depiction of the demon who turns into a beautiful woman, either independently of the myth of Perseus or, in most cases, inextricably linked to him and the goddess Athena.

The eastern origin of the hero who kills the monster has been discussed in connection with *Gilgamesh'*s epic Humbaba monster, which dates, in various variations, from the 3rd millennium BC (Sumerian version) until the 7th c. B.C (Assyrian attribution). Although the Perseus-Andromeda episode has been interpreted as a borrowing of the Mycenaean times from the religion and mythology of the Syrian-Egyptian area or as a translation with some variations of Eastern epics, the available information rather sways to the opposite (Morenz, 1962; Hartland , 1894-96; Hopkins, 1934; Croon, 1955; Barnett, 1960; Thompson, 2019; Barnett, 1945; Guterbock, 1948; Albright, 1950; Webster, 1957 (and in Palace of Minos 1956, pp. 4, 108, 111; 8); Walcot, 1968; Dunbabin, 1957). In the Near East and in almost all coastal cities where there is a Greek presence after the first colonization during the 8th to 7th century B.C., Gorgons of Greek workshops are identified with originally Greek iconography (Stewart and Martin, 2005).

Medusa's genealogy, her union with Poseidon, and the existence of immortal brothers, as described, are of particular interest around her entity. There is no question of combining elements from other myths, on the contrary, it is an enrichment of the ancient heroic episode of Perseus by incorporating in it the "history" of Medusa. The narration of the feat is placed in the era of systematization and dissemination of the myths of the heroic past, which is identified with the flourishing of heroic poetry and goes hand in hand with the spread of heroism, although no hero has been found in the Eastern subject matter such as the precursor and the pattern of Perseus killing Gorgo/Medusa[2].

Before Homer: Cyclic Epics

The oral tradition was followed by the written epics whose primitive form was the partial creation of the *Cyclic Epics* that led to the later perfect works of Homer and Hesiod. Thus, the Homeric question, the environment of Homer and Hesiod and the role of the *Cyclic Epics*, return to the forefront with the critical investigation of modern research. The concept of the Circle implies a group of epics that are governed by a thematic sequence, since individual myths were connected and included in a set of mythological traditions.

Figure 1. Pedimental marble relief, Corfu, 590-580 B.C. (LIMC IV-2, 1988, 182, fig. 289). Credit: ©Ephoreia of Antiquities at Corfu, Hellenic Ministry of Culture. Photo: A. Lazarou.

The name Circle or *Cyclic Epics* is a conventional name given by the ancient scholars to all the other epics, except the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the epics of Hesiod. Unfortunately, only fragments have survived from the *Cyclic Epics*: titles and 120 verses in total, and for this reason their dating is difficult and doubtful. Information from antiquity is contradictory and the time their poets lived is often disputed (according to one point of view Mazarakis-Aeneian (2000) ,these epics are usually dated to the 7th century B.C.). According to Clement of Alexandria, these poets lived from 800-500 BC. Also according to Proclus the Trojan cycle included the following epics (*Christomatheia* of 5th c. A.D.): *Cyprian* (11 books) which include themes that preceded the *Iliad*[3]. A follow-up of the *Iliad* was *Aethiopis* in 5 books, which described the achievements of Achilles until his death. Then came the work *Little Iliad* (in 4 books) which described the events from the death of Hector to the fall of Troy. The fact of the Trojan War campaign, after all, is the first indication of a pan-Hellenic conscience, as can be seen in the gathering of all Greeks in Aulis to set off for Troy.

Other surviving epic circles are mentioned in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These were the *war for Thebes,* the *Argonautica (Argonauts Campaign)*, and the *hunting of the Calydonian boar*, composed before the two epics. The *Battle of the Titans*, an epic depicting the war of the Titans and the Gods, was overshadowed by Hesiod's *Theogony*. These references indicate that some of these epics were old and well-known long before the two great epics were composed. These epics, together with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, formed a cycle that thematically began with the creation of the world, at the union of Heaven and Earth as described by Hesiod, and ended with the death of Odysseus, who arrived last of all. in his homeland and thus closed the epic wanderings.

According to some views, the *Cyprian*, the *Aithiopis* and the *Iliu persis* (the sack of Ilion) are placed before the *Iliad*. Most scholars agree that there were oral Cyclic Epics in the form of hexameter poetic traditions that concerned mainly, but not only, the mythical material of the Trojan War before its final formulation in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Both these traditions and the Homeric epics probably contained some common basic elements, which in later times inspired the written epics of the meta-Homeric epic cycle (Tsagalis, 2016).

There is no accurate information about the poets of various epics that appear under various names, while at the same time there is ambiguity even as to the content of these epics. Only the information about the number of books and verses delivered by the Alexandrian philologists is reliable. In the epic Cycle, the poets' concern was to respect the narrative sequence by narrating the events from the creation of the world to Odysseus, for this reason the narrative interest was intense. The epics therefore had

[2] ll ancient sources in English are given in https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/

[3] The marriage of Achilles' parents, the crisis of Paris with the three goddesses, the abduction of Helen, the events in Avlis, the sacrifice of Iphigenia. There were stories from the Trojan War that preceded the story of the *Iliad.*

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a historical-narrative character, but also included many mythical themes, such as the invulnerability of the hero, as well as horror stories and romantic episodes. Due to these elements, the Cycles were considered unskilled, because they lacked the seriousness, stylistic rigor and poetic ingenuity of Homer's epics and were deemed unworthy to be preserved. Their value, however, lies in the fact that they managed to supply tragedy and the visual arts with rich epic material.

Cyprian Epics

The *Cypriot Epics*, in 11 books, together with the epics *Aethiopis*, *Little Iliad, Nostos* (Returns), *Iliupersis* and *Telegony*, compose the Trojan Cycle (Currie, 2015). Proclus writes that the Cyprian narrate the events before the *Iliad (*grammar of the 2nd century A.D.): they begin with the marriages of Peleus and Thetis, continue with the Paris judgment of the three goddesses, the abduction of Eleni and the gathering of the Achaeans in Avlida (or Aulis), and arrive as in the ninth year of the war, in the Achilles-Agamemnon controversy, a fact with which the Iliad begins. Most lyrics are not saved. The importance of the Cyprian is great. They include themes that completed the themes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and narratives from the Trojan War that preceded the narrative of the *Iliad*.

From a very small reference from the surviving *Cyprian Epics*, in just four verses with spaces before and after (*Cypria*, fragm. 30, LCL[4], *Herodian*, On Peculiar Words) the following emerges: the Gorgons, who were born to a female figure whose name is not preserved, are huge (Πέλωρα/pelora), terrible monsters. Here it seems that we have complete forms and not a single head. It is not mentioned how many Gorgons there were, nor is there a description of them. The other information we get is that they are situated on a rocky island, Sarpidon, located in a part of the Ocean with deep vortices. I notice that there is a correlation with the Hesiod Gorgons, who have parents of two sea deities and live beyond the Ocean, indefinitely (Hesiod, *Theogony*, line 270-286, at *Perseus*[5]).

Homer

The time Homer lived is not clear to this day. Herodotus writes that he lived 400 years before him, that is, around 850 BC, while other ancient sources date him earlier, near the Trojan War, which took place around 1150 B.C. (Herodotus 2.53.-Graziosi, 2002). Those who consider the Trojan War as coming from a specific historical battle that took place in the 12th or 11th century B.C., are usually based on Eratosthenes, who identifies the War in 1194-1184 B.C., a period in which archaeological data indicate the destruction of Troy VIIa by fire.

All the concerns related to the major issue of the historicity of the epics, substantiate what is known, in the scientific world, as a Homeric issue (Sherratt, 1990; Visser, 2006; Turner, 2009; Haslam, 2009; Pavel, 2014; Dickinson, 2017). There is also extensive commentary and rich bibliographic references to Ragoussi's work (2007). The Homeric question from ancient times, when it was first formulated as a historical question in the philological circles of Alexandria of the 3rd and 2nd c. B.C. and then revived by the German historian Friedrich August Wolf in 1799 in his work *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, it deals mainly with the origin and composition of epic poems by the poet himself or by a group of poets (West, 2011). The modern research effort contributes to the Homeric question with more and more specialized questions that broaden the horizon of scientific research, which in no case could however be considered to have received definitive answers. Thus, an extensive description of the research process and its results, as they have been formulated to date, is referred to in the literature (Visser, 2006; Raaflaub, 2006; Hall, 2013. For the connection of the Homeric epic with modern archaeological research see Wiener, 2007a; Giannakos 2013). The work of Mazarakis-Aeneian is also particularly informative (Mazarakis-Aeneian, 2000). The author supports the presence of at least four historical layers in the creation of Homeric epics: a prehistoric-Mycenaean, a post-Mycenaean (of the so-called "dark times" 11th-9th century B.C.), one of the 8th century, where the action of Homer, and finally another meta-Homeric (after the 8th century to the 7th century B.C.) in the form of later showcases, while at the same time trying to classify the Homeric references in each of these periods separately (Mazarakis-Aeneian, 2000). Crielaard since 1995 has the same position, while for the recapitulation of Homeric dating in five separate historical periods Snodgrass has been mentioned (Crielaard, 1995; Snodgrass, 2017). Finally, a thorough description and study of the Homeric question is made by other researchers (in the first chapter of the work of the Russian scientists Gindin and Tsymburskiy, 1996; see also Birgalias, 2014; Petropoulos, 2018). We must not forget that the world described in the verses of the Homeric work is certainly not limited to the narrow context of the Aegean, a wider geographical area of the Mediterranean is included, which probably includes Cyprus, while chronologically it extends from the 10th to in the 7th or even the 6th c. B.C. (Birgalias, 2014).

Although scholars today recognize the existence of a historical continuum from the Mycenaean years to the Homeric era, it is difficult to assume that Homer's epics describe Mycenaean society, from which the poet himself was already four centuries away (Karageorghis, 2006; Pavel, 2014; Petropoulos, 2018). But the echo of the glorious Mycenaean era was still present in people (Pavel, 2014). Some objections on the subject are reported by Davis *et al*. (2017) and Panagiotopoulos (2017). So the reconstruction of the past or the revival of the era of glorious heroes in the form of epic narrative in a later era, such as that of Homer, caused a tempting challenge (Maran, 2011) but also of particular interest. of certain social groups of the 9th and 8th c. B.C. (Grethlein, 2012). According to the results of recent archaeological research, the societies of the Late Bronze Age seem to have been much more complex than described in Homer's work, while the similarities with the Iron Age are clearly more obvious (Sherratt, 2004; Bennet, 2009; Crielaard ,2016; Scheppartz *et al.*, 2017). Based on the above, Homer through his epics presents poetic-artistic descriptions, as an oral poet of the 8th c. B.C. for the heroic past (Bennet, 2009).

Although modern Homer's doubts about the historicity of the epics and the credibility of Homer have some basis, one cannot ignore the fact that the poems contain valuable information to the historian or archaeologist in his attempt to reconstruct the image of their society of early historical times. (Mazarakis-Aeneian, 2000). Note, however, that regarding the identity of the creators of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, a recent study of stylistic analysis showed that the quantitative methodology does

[4] LCL: Loeb Classical Library, 497, West ML (2003). Greek Epic fragments, 7th to 5th c BC. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

[5] https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0130%3Acard%3D270

not refute the views of the unions. This means that in the light of the quantitative approach and analysis of both texts in a first phase of research effort, the two Homeric epics appear as works of the same author (Panas, 2008). From the above it seems even more difficult to identify specific episodes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It should be reminded here that the *Iliad* narrates part of the Trojan War and the *Odyssey* the adventure of Odysseus, despite the return of the Achaeans to their homelands (nostos). The Cyclic Epics covered these gaps. The School of Neoanalysis initially argued that since the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* clearly reflect the Circles of Epics, they should be considered chronologically later (Pestalozzi, 1945; Kullmann, 1960; Schadewaldt, 1965). Dihle expressed doubts about the priority of the Circles (Dihle, 1970). But Griffin argued that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* may have been influenced by other, older poems that dealt with the same subject (Griffin, 1977). After all, the old neo-analytical point of view wanted Homer to have written texts in front of him, such as *Achilleis and Memnonis* (Kopff, 1983; Dowden, 1996; Ballabriga, 1998).

But the school of Oral Theory denied the existence of written texts, at least as a condition for oral performance, while accepting with greater ease that Homeric epics represent poetic traditions created through interaction with other similar traditions, among which they held a prominent position the Epic Cycle traditions (Tsagalis, 2016). But despite the obvious discrepancy between the two theories, scholars agree that there were oral Cyclic Epics in the form of hexametric poetic traditions that concerned mainly, but not only, the mythical material of the Trojan War, before the final formation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. As for the reasons that the *Cyclic Epics* were preserved in the archaic period, there must have been an early stage of the phenomenon of pan-Hellenic consciousness of common origin, during which the strongest elements of local or local traditions managed to infiltrate this pan-Hellenic tendency which in the *Cyclic Epics*. At an early stage of this process, early poetry was characterized by: i) a mixture of material belonging to local epic traditions but also by a general trend imposed on local versions; ii) by a drastic reduction but not elimination of supernatural elements; iii) from the presentation of vile human types and motivations; and iv) from a strong episodic character (Welcker, 1865-1882; Rengakos, 2015; Tsagalis, 2016). Therefore, it can reasonably be assumed that the cyclic poetry is an early manifestation of the phenomenon of Panhellenicism and occupies the intermediate position between the pre-Panhellenic poetic traditions and the pan-Hellenic scope of fully developed and mature Homeric epics. The influence of the *Cyclic Epics* - such as the *Battle of Titans* and the *Cyprian Epics* - on the *Theogony* of Hesiod can also be seen. However, Vidal and Naquet consider the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to date between the early 9th and 8th centuries B.C., with the *Iliad* preceding the *Odyssey* by perhaps a few decades (Vidal-Naquet, 2000). The epics presumably preexisted as an oral tradition that was gradually grouped and recorded historically.

The Homeric epics first appear in a written text in the period of Peisistratus in the middle of the 6th c. B.C., where the oral poetic tradition is recorded that reflects events of a few hundred years before and specifically from the time of the Trojan War (Nagy, 1996). The Hesiodic epics are recorded for the first time at the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 7th c. B.C. and deal with completely different issues from the Homeric ones. Linguistic and formal similarities have led ancient critics to see both poets as part of a unified tradition known as epic ("epic" poetry), despite the contrasts between their works in extent, content, and authentic self-presentation. challenge modern notions of the "epic" genre. We tend to think of epics as poems like Homer's - very long narrative poems - dealing with heroes, often at war. However, Hesiod's poems are short (*Theogony*: 1022 verses. *Works and days*: 828 verses, have nothing to do with heroes and relate to war, mainly not between people). West in his commentary on *Theogony* but also in the discussion of Hesiod and Homer is one of the few recent scholars to support Hesiod's chronological priority (West, 1966, 1967). But, scholars confuse passages from *Theogony* and Homer from the time of Wilamowitz, when they consider that the Hesiod epic may have been written earlier (Wilamowitz, 1915).

West, however, sees the difficulty in establishing a relevant chronology, and his comments on the dictation of the passages indicate a common type of disagreement. He suggests that *Theogony* is the oldest Greek poem we have, with a proximity to 750 B.C. for Hesiod, evaluating archeological and historical data, but the dating of the real composition of *Theogony* in the 8th century is another matter (West, 1966). To do this, West relied on a series of controversial hypotheses about the dating of historical events, particularly the so-called Lilantic War, a seemingly intermittent conflict between Eretria and Chalkida (Janko, 1982). Even if we accept this argument, Hesiod's priority is also based on the controversial view that Homer's poems as we know them cannot be older than 700 B.C. (West, 1966).

In general, all the views on Homer and Hesiod have been affected by the differences between them, in terms of the subject they are negotiating and even the moral vision. But the careful focus on their respective poetry shows that everyone was deeply aware of the position which he had in a very different poetic tradition. Also, that everyone could fully articulate his individual poetic identity, both to himself and to his audience, creating it in relation to the many literary solutions available within that tradition (Rosen, 1997).

Even in these early times the Gorgon is presented as a remnant of primitive forces in the beliefs of the ancient Greeks, which preceded the historical tradition, according to the depiction on the chests of Athena and Zeus in the *Iliad* (Homer, *Iliad*, 18.203-229); and in the *Odyssey* the Gorgon is a monster of the Underworld, in which the earliest deities are known to have been created. Homer, then, in his heroic epics *Iliad* (*Iliad*, 5.740) and *Odyssey* (*Odyssey, 11.633)* refers to a gorgon head, a monster (*πέλωρο* means huge) that causes terror. It is an individual head without a body. No reference is made to the two epics to either the Gorgon or Medusa. Both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, he describes this frightening head in exactly the same words: "of Gorgon's terrible head" (Homer, *Iliad*, 5.740, and Homer, *Odyssey*, 11. 633). I note that writer N. Kazantzakis attributes the offensive designation "γοργείειν» (Gorgein) to Gorgon and Eftaliotis to Gorgo. The word «δεινοῖο» ("trouble") is translated by Kazantzakis[6] as "ανήμερο/savage beast" and Eftaliotis as "awesome" while the πέλωρον (huge) Eftaliotis[7] translates it as "monstrous".

The *Iliad* describes the magical properties of Athena. At the

[6] Homer, *Iliad*. In: (ed.) D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen. Oxford, 1920. https://www.oxfordscholarlyeditions.com/display/10.1093/oseo/person.00039609 Also: Translation by N. Kazantzakis-I. Kakridis, 1968 Homer's *Odyssey*, Athens.

[7] Homer, *Odyssey*. In: (ed.) D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen, Oxford, 1920. Also: Translation by A. Eftaliotis, 1900, Homer's *Odyssey*, Estia Press, Athens.

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moment when Achilles proceeds unarmed to prevent the Trojans from grabbing Patroclus's body, Athena intervenes, spreading the aegis on the Gorgon's head on his shoulder. Then a high flame emanates from Achilles' head and emits a piercing scream, like the sound of a trumpet causing panic in the enemy. Charioteers and horses are terrified when they see the flame on Achilles' head. Thus, the Trojans are prevented (Homer, *Iliad,* 18.203-229). This fact may indicate that the magic power of the auspices is due to the head of the Gorgon, which causes dazzling fire and thunderous voice and finally manages to paralyze the enemy.

I notice that the Gorgean head (γοργείη κεφαλή) is used for a completely different occasion in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad* the Gorgean head is a detail of the overall description of the auspices of Athena. In the terrible aegis, in addition to the Gorgean head, there are other frightening forms / concepts: *Fear, Eris* (*i.e.* the tendency to flee), *Alki* (the force), *Ioke* (the discord/faction), are concepts that potentially meet in a warrior during the war: fear, then, the tendency to flee, the physical and mental strength necessary in battle, the discord of Achilles with Agamemnon who brought so much suffering, are the concepts that have been personified and included in a shield-symbol. I find it remarkable that on the auspices there is only the gorgoneian head that refers to variations of ancient myths, such as that of the Titans, who want Athena to wear the scary gorgon head as a trophy under her auspices. Of course, in the *Iliad* it is clearly stated that the auspices belonged to Zeus, her father, who apparently gave it to her for protection (Homer, *Iliad*, 18. 203-229). In the *Iliad* there is an equally important reference to the genealogy of Perseus. Jupiter, listing his mistresses and children born from his cases, refers to Danae, the daughter of Acrisius, who gave birth to Perseus (Homer*, Iliad,* 14,319-320). I believe that the reference to the birth of Perseus by Danae demonstrates the antiquity of this myth and perhaps confirms the Mycenaean origin of the demigod.

In the *Odyssey*, with exactly the same verses, Homer uses the terrible, monstrous gorgon head on a different occasion: *Odysseus*, during his visit to Hades, described the souls of the dead and other scenes of the Underworld. While he was finishing his conversation with Hercules, he heard a terrible noise, a roar, which made him pale with terror. His first thought was that the terrifying noise came from the monstrous Gorgonian head that Persephone supposedly sent him (Homer, *Odyssey*, 11. 633). This is the last scene in Hades because then Odysseus returned to his ship. So, the Gorgoneian head was an individual head controlled by Persephone and spread terror to anyone who displayed it. She was a terrifying figure in Hades, incorporeal, not accompanied by other identifications, since Odysseus himself did not have time to face her in order to be able to describe her. The only information he gives us is that he was terrified. The other information is that he was associated with a chthonic deity, Persephone.

Delving deeply into the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, I conclude that the Homeric Gorgean head has no origin, it just pre-exists indefinitely in place and time. It is located either under the auspices of Athena, so it is associated with the war goddess in her very early forms, or in Hades as a terrifying undefined figure that causes an eerie noise. Both in the auspices, as a symbol of Fear, and in Hades, its primary role is to cause terror (Figure 2).

Hesiod

The question of Hesiod and his work has been extensively studied by the scientific world, ancient and modern. From the most recent studies, we quote here the work of Hunter, which deals with the role of the ancient poet in preserving the collective memory of the ancient Greeks, where in comparison with Homer's predecessor, his difference is clearly visible (Hunter, 2014). There are differing views on when Hesiod lived, but the general consensus seems to have been around the end of the 8th / early 7th century B.C. (West, 1996; Athanasakis, 2004; Hine, 2005). Cooper in her dissertation reservedly considers Hesiod to be earlier than Homer (Cooper, 2007): "Although I am erring on the side of caution in allowing a late date, I recognize both that Hesiod may precede Homer, and that the stories he records may have been in circulation long before they are recorded").

In a general overview of Hesiod's work, as well as his contribution to Greek mythology, Griffin is mentioned (Griffin, 1996). In general, the influences from the mythological tradition of the Near East in the work of Hesiod *Theogony* are mentioned by Penglase, Bremmer and Dongen (Penglase, 1994; Bremmer, 2008; Dongen, 2011). In *Theogony* there is a sample of mixed hybrid imaginary beings of great symbolism, such as the so-called "*lion-headed demons*" equally popular in the Mycenaean world, who as part of the theme of sacred iconography should adorn various places dedicated primarily to worship (Boulotis, 2000,). All these famous decorative representations were lost from the destruction in the early 12th century B.C. Yet no one can dispute the power of oral tradition, in which mythological beliefs and most likely descriptions of similar mythological beings should have survived (Petropoulos, 2018). From the end of the 8th to the beginning of the 7th c. B.C., -when the time of Hesiod falls chronologically-, artists begin to be influenced by the patterns of Eastern art, with mythological imaginary monsters, inaugurating the so-called *oriental style* in Greece, for which Hesiod was familiar with similar models known in the then Greek world (*e.g.*, the story with Bellerophon) (Noegel, 2010; *Iliad* 6.152-222). Kitts has been mentioned for various influences from the Near East, mainly the epic of *Gilgamesh*, as well as remnants of Indo-European mythology in the Homeric and Hesiod epics (Kitts, 2005). The question of the Achaeans' contacts with the peoples of the East and Near East, especially the Hittites, in the modern Bronze Age and the sub-Mycenaean period has been thoroughly investigated (Petropoulos, 2018). Therefore, the poetic work of Hesiod, which chronologically belongs to the 7th c. B.C., is full of elements that

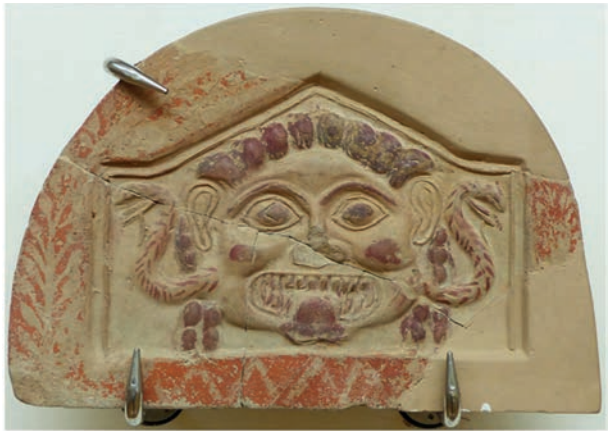

Figure 2. Acroterion with medusa head (gorgoneion), Olympia, Greece; end of 6th c. B.C. Archaeological Museum of Olympia. Credit: The object falls under the competence of the ©Ephorate of Antiquities of Ilia, Hellenic Ministry of Culture | Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development. Photo: A. Lazarou.

resemble patterns from the myths and literature of Mesopotamia, Syria (Powell, 2000), and Egypt (Rutherford, 2016).

Theogony, the greatest didactic epic, consists of 1022 verses where there are some attempts at lyrical writing (iambic and elegy) (West, 1974). It is considered a very important source for Greek mythology and describes local worship of deities and the genesis of the world. *Theogony* mentions, among others, the sea deities that give birth to the Graeae[8], and the three Gorgons, Stheno, Evryali and Medusa (Hesiod, Theogony, lines 270-281). The first two Gorgons were immortal, while the third, Medusa, was mortal. Medusa was beheaded by Perseus. From her severed neck were born at that moment of beheading Chrysaor and Pegasus, the winged horse, which was the fruits of the union of Medusa with Poseidon. Pegasus got this name because he was born in the sources of the Ocean and Chrysaor because he held a golden sword (Hesiod, Theogony, lines 270-286).

The double name "Gorgon / Medusa" indicates the merging of the myth of Gorgo with the local myth of Boeotia about Medusa. Poseidon, who was worshiped as a horse in Boeotia, slept with a female centaur, Medusa. The scene of Poseidon's love mentioned by Hesiod is indeed reminiscent of the mating of wild horses in a flowered meadow. Perhaps this match explains the genesis of Pegasus: the horse Poseidon and the hippopotamus Medusa gave birth to Pegasus, the winged horse. In the same verse of Theogony, the demon Gorgo and the religious-worshiping reality associated with him are interpreted with mythical images[9]. Due to her kinship with the chthonic powers, Gorgo belongs to the order of the Pelora (enormous monsters), and specifically to the genus of Cetus and Phorcys. Because this genus had to submit to the representatives of the state of Zeus -as required by the spirit of the 8th century BC-, the chthonic Gorgo is definitely exterminated, either by Perseus as the descendant of Cetus according to *Theogony*, or by Athena as the descendant of Earth, according to the tradition that has survived until Euripides. However, as far as the attribution of the myth to real events in the distant past is concerned, not every hypothesis that can be based on some sources and archaeological evidence is categorically rejected. Hesiod in his epic Works and Days divides human history into five eras (or genera) of which four correspond to kingdoms of the gods: the golden age reigns Saturn, the silver, bronze and iron eras (in which he himself lived) Zeus reigns, while the era before the iron corresponds to the genus of heroes. Hesiod characterizes the era or genus of iron as the most miserable, where with the myth of Pandora he interprets the appearance of evil. Indeed, archeologically, the Iron Age is placed between about 1200 and 800 BC and the Bronze Age between about 3000 and 1200 B.C., which is divided into early, middle and late. Thus, it seems reasonable to place the heroic myths at least before 1200 B.C. From the genus of heroes who fought in Troy, many found a happy afterlife at the ends of the earth. Here the line of fall seems to break, as does the series of metals, thus interpreting the foreign origin of the myth from Asia (Lesky, 1981).

Shield of Heracles

Shields and weapons in general were worthy of praise and description, because they were works of metallurgy in times when the art was attributed to exceptional creators. Metalworking was a sacred activity. In various mythologies, we find great weapons, such as the lightning of Zeus, the hammer of Thor, divine swords, etc. The shield is offered as a theme because its surface allows many representations in zones of concentric circles.

The poem *Aspis Herakleous* (Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles*, lines 216-237) consists of 480 hexametric verses and describes the battle of Hercules who is presented here as a defender of the Apollonian order, against the monster Cygnus, who is helped by the father of Mars. The poet sought to impress with the description of the shield, which gave the poem its name, a fact that is influenced by Homer (Lesky, 1981). The poem is unrelated in many places and disorganized - the 180 verses describe the shield of Hercules made by Hephaestus, while the remaining 244 are about the birth of a demigod and the duel with the Swan, but also facts about Danae, Perseus, and the Gorgon /Medusa. The first 56 verses are similar to the poem *Ἠοῖαι*.

The ancient critics disagreed about the authenticity of the poetic work *Aspis Heracleus* Ἀσπίς Ἡρακλέους. Its authenticity is disputed by Aristophanes and is not proved even by the testimonies of Stesichorus - perhaps it is not the choral poet - and Apollonius of Rhodes who accepted it as genuine, while Megaclides, who considers it genuine, disapproves. The non-authenticity of the Shield did not escape a philologist like Aristophanes the Byzantine. Mazon in the edition of Hesiod (Budé edition) argues that this work could not have been written before 590 B.C., that is, more than 100 years earlier than it is attributed to Pherecydes (Mazon, 1972). Another evidence that the work was written around 600 is that Hercules is not equipped with the skin of a lion, nor with the bat that accompanies him later. The work has been characterized as pseudo-Hesiodic and follows *Theogony*[10].

Compared to the corresponding description of Achilles' shield, Homer devotes many verses to describe many scenes (*Iliad*, 18. 478-608). It would be practically impossible to fit all these representations into one shield, but the poetic way in which all the iconographic elements that make up an organic unit are rendered is poetic. In *The Shield of Hercules*, an iconographic presentation of the world is attempted by the same divine craftsman as Homer, but no corresponding impressive result is achieved. While the shield of Achilles captures the variety of life in its scenes, the Shield of Hercules describes the sufferings of war and gathers the demons of destruction. Because it has been proven that the poem *The Shield of Hercules* does not ultimately belong to Hesiod, it seems that a poet with limited talents abused the epic tradition in his attempt to highlight it (Lesky, 1981).

However, it is worth noting that this is the first written description of the myth of Perseus and the Gorgon on a shield. Also, for the first time the scene of the persecution of Perseus by the Gorgons is described (*Shield*, 223-237). On the back of Perseus hung the kivisis, the sack with the huge head of Gorgo. Perseus wears the helmet of Hades that made him invisible, while two

[8] In a later written source, in Apollodorus, the Graiae are involved in the mythical episode with Perseus.

[9] In Hesiod (*Theogony*, 991) the term "demons" has its limited meaning between a god and a mortal being, which would eventually prevail until modern times. Homer uses the term synonymously with "god" and specific divine power, or abstractly and vaguely to refer to supernatural power. Empedocles is the only one to find the term "demons" with a content related to the cosmic power attributed to Potnia. "Demons" Empedocles characterizes Neikos and Philotia, the two great cosmogonic forces (excerpt B59), in the majestic image of their union ("εμίσγετο δαίμονι δαίμων") is the idea of the conflict of cosmic forces, which Hesiod had express with series of mythical images.

[10] The testimonies about the ancient controversy about the authenticity of the shield in W. Buhler, Beitr. Zur Erklarung der Schrift vom Erhabene, 1964;22, M. Vander Valk, Le bouclier du Pseudo-Hesiode, Rev. Et. Gr. 1966;79:450.

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scary snakes hang from his belt. *Aspis* (Shield) is the proof that the myth of Perseus has already been established.

Homer and Hesiod: comparative data

In post-Mycenaean Greece or even more specifically of the geometric years, the need arose for a final revision and shaping of the foundations of the Greek religion and the Greek pantheon, a reorganization of Greek society from the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., as well as the consequent emergence and consolidation of the new Greek cities, as at least shown by the findings of modern archaeological research (de Polignac, 1984). It is the time when our two great poets, Homer and Hesiod, had taken on the important responsibility of writing literary texts, in order to finalize and consolidate the basic principles of the Greek religion in their time, having as a starting point the already established until then principles of worship and guided by the social, political and religious mutations that took place in the Greek society of their time (Koiv, 2011).

As far as theology is concerned, the *Iliad* has set specific theological boundaries. Describes a composed theological scheme that works predetermined to regulate human fortunes and events. In *Theogony*, Hesiod combines concepts from the world of the Gods but also of the primitive forces that are the personified elements of nature (Titans, Giants, Earth, Uranus, Chaos, etc.), that is, he manages mythological material that Homer did not manage. Recent research suggests that the bizarre formations and mythological creations came as loans from the Middle East[11] but this position is not considered entirely valid, as the limits and scope of these loans cannot be clearly set (Alexiou *et al*., 2001). Hesiod incorporates many of these loans into his own logic and creates his own inventions. He tries to put order in the original forces and he achieves this by restoring relations with a process of reproduction. The sequence of beings that follows, with the successive births, is a simple sequence until it reaches Jupiter, where a rational order in the world is established forever (Alexiou *et al*., 2001). The two poets use epic language with minimal deviations, write in hexameter, while much of the vocabulary, style, descriptions and stereotypes are common. I believe that Hesiod has already been influenced by the *Iliad*, and especially by its countless battles, from which he has taken evidence of the descriptions he gives in the *Battle of Titan* (Titanomachia).

In his book *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns*, Janko uses linguistic phenomena to establish a dating of archaic hexameter poetry (Janko, 1982). Janko classifies the poems in chronological order as follows*: Iliad, Odyssey, Theogony, Works and Days* (Janko, 1982; see Nagy, 1992, who sees text correction as a more fluid process than Janko).

This conclusion is not revolutionary, as he emphasizes and acknowledges the inadequacies of the evidence, such as the inability to determine absolute dates, since the amount of material has now been lost (Janko, 1982: "At least as much epic poetry has been lost as has survived, leaving aside oral poetry there may have been which was never recorded"). while the problem of literary "hint" in an oral tradition remains (on the utility and validity of investigating examples and imitations in oral epics, see Janko, 1982, Appendix D, lines 225-28, see also Butterworth, 1986). But he has advanced the disagreement of dating one step further, offering logical arguments in the debate to a widely accepted consensus: that Homer composed before Hesiod. But, Janko continues, until we have more information, for example about the effect of rhapsodic tradition on the stabilization of texts, it is reasonable to assume that the texts of Homer and Hesiod, as a whole, offer us a primitive archive in a moment of their stabilization close to the period of their original composition (Rosen, 1997).

The myth in Argos, Arcadia, Corinth

The phantom of Hades, the Gorgo / Gorgyra, to which the Gorgon head belongs, is located in Argos (Karagiorga, 1970). It is annihilated by Argeios Perseas when he descends to Hades from the Arcadian Styx[12]. The latest research identified Gorgo with Gorgyra, Acheron's wife, whose severed head was floating in Acheron's waters (Karagiorga, 1970). The original myth of Poseidon-Medusa is found in Arcadia, according to which Medusa is a goddess in the form of a forb (Besig, 1937). Gorgo is necessarily mortal, as it must be beheaded by Perseus in order to justify the existence of the abominable mask. This is how the equestrian goddess Medusa becomes mortal since she joins the slow-headed gorges. In other words, the two myths are combined, Medusa is identified with Gorgo and the form Gorgo / Medusa emerges. With Pegasus and Chrysaor, the myth is "exorcised", while the gorgon head from Argos become a Corinthian abomination. This abomination is arbitrarily united with a winged female body that moves violently and thus creates the abominable demon who is now the mother of Pegasus. Therefore, the original equestrian goddess falls to an abominable demon and thus the Corinthian gorgoneion is created, which was then applied to Potnia (lady) of the animals and other mythical beings[13].

5th century: Pherecydes and Pindar

One of the oldest and most complete known sources around the myth of Perseus is the Greek poet Pherecydes, who probably lived in the first half of the 5th c. B.C. and wrote an epic in the Ionian dialect, before the Peloponnesian War. Morphologically it is definitely before the classical era. He ignored cosmogony but dealt with various genealogical myths. For Pherecydes, the genealogical trees of the heroes are the guiding lines and open the way that ends later in the mythological textbook of the type of Pseudo-Apollodorus, making his work a basic source for those who dealt with the ancient myth (Lesky, 2003). According to tradition, his work was divided into ten books. In the second book of the Genealogy, from which only excerpts from Apollonius the Rhodian are preserved, he narrates the myth in detail, starting with Danae, who was the only child of Akrisius, king of Argos and Eurydice, daughter of Lacedaemon, and mother of a demigod hero Perseus (the passages are quoted by Apollonius of Rhodius and preserved in two notes: schol. *Apoll. Rhod.* IV. 1091, 1515; Pherecydes: *FGrHist* 1, 61 f., fragments 10-11).

The new elements that enrich the myth are the assignment of the task of killing the Gorgon, the fossilization of Polydectes, the verification of the prophecy, and the end of Perseus after the death of his grandfather, as well as his association with the Persians. In the beheading operation he receives help from Athena and Her-

[11] For example, the myth of the succession of the gods.

[12] However, another entrance to Hades can be found in the Argolis, with which a different tradition about Perseus is connected.

[13] These local legends are mentioned by Karagiorga (1970) but were not confirmed by the written sources. Her reasoning, however, gives an interpretation to archaic works, such as the crater of Eleusis.

mes. The two gods secured the helmet of Hades for him to be invisible, winged sandals that would make him as fast as the wind and a sack (*kivisis*) to place the monster's head. Medusa's two sisters, seeking revenge for her death, persecuted Perseus, but he deceived them by wearing the helmet of Hades that made him invisible (Pherecydes, 5th c BC Genealogy, Book 2 (Pherecydes, Fragmenta), scol. *Apoll. Rhod*. IV.1091,1515 (Pherecydes: GGrHist1,61 f., fragments 10-11), 26.2-15 and 26.90-95).

I notice that from Pherecydes the whole story of Perseus and Medusa is delivered in every detail, as it is later mentioned by Apollonius the Rhodian. The end of Perseus in Asia, where he becomes the ancestor of the Persians, I guess is related to the victories of the Greeks in the Persian wars.

The *Epinikion* poems (victory ode) of Pindar (520-445 B.C.) present a uniform typology, *i.e.* fixed constituent elements. Initially, information is given about the winner and his family, as well as about the sporting event. Immediately after follows the narration of a myth. Finally, the poem closes with some opinions that help to make the transition from the mythical past to the present, while expressing thoughtful reasoning. The unity of *Epinikion* concerns the closed value system of the aristocracy in order to highlight its social superiority. The connection of the winners with the mythical heroic tradition aimed at highlighting their inherited value with new performances, since the origin, wealth, beauty and skills were emphasized. The language of Pindar is rich in Doric and Aeolian elements, with a strong presence of the linguistic richness of the epic, which composed an artificial language of his time. Characteristic were the many striking adjectives and metaphors he used (Easterling and Konx, 1985).

Contrary to the commonly accepted image of Medusa as a terrible monster, Pindar at the beginning of the 5th c. B.C. calls Medusa "beautiful cheek"» (Pindar, *Pythian Odes* XII, 16; see Sandys, 1915). The description of Pindar helps to change the image of Medusa, which first appears in vases as a beautiful, winged virgin around the middle of the 5th century B.C.[14]. There are reports of the Gorgon/ Medusa in three odes of Pindar:

Nemeonikos X (Pindar, 520-445 B.C., *Nemea*, Ode No. 10, Lines 1-5[15]) praises the victory of Theaios, his son Ulias from Argos, in the wrestling match, in Ekatombaia or otherwise Heraea, which were held in Argos in honor of Hera and had as a prize a bronze shield. The ode generally praises the athletic successes of the entire generation of the winner and ends with an anthem of the entire city of Argos. It first refers to a number of mythical figures associated with the city of Argos: Perseus, Gorgon, Medusa and Epaphos, who founded cities in Egypt.

Pythionikos X (Pindar, 520-445 B.C., *Pythian*, Ode No. 10, lines 70-74[16]) was written on the occasion of the victory of Hippocles, son of Phrikias, in the children's street race channel in Pythia in 498 BC. The legend at the central point of the ode refers to the people of the Far North, who lived in a state of absolute bliss (*Pythian Odes X*, 68-77)[17]. The Far North people were not mortal but immortal. The geographical location of the incident of the murder of Gorgon in the country of the Far North is remarkable. Also mentioned for the first time is the intervention of Athena (not in the murder but in the journey of Perseus). In his description of Gorgon, Pindar refers to her terrifying head with many snakes. The fossil property of the head is going to bring stone death to the islanders[18].

Pythionikos XII (Pindar, *Pythian*, Ode No 12, line 16) is the only one that praises the victory of a musical struggle. It refers to the success of Midas, the great piper and teacher, in Pythia, around 490 B.C. The central myth of the ode refers to the invention of the "multi-headed law" and attributes it, according to a tradition unknown to other sources to Athena. After the beheading of Medusa, Chrysaor and Pegasus jumped out of her body, with a loud noise that woke up her sisters. Then they began to persecute Perseus, leaving a terrible cry (Figure 3).

Athena, who was present at Perseus, played a melody in the flute, the law of many heads, which imitated the lament of Evryali and Stheno, but also the whistles of the snakes that framed her head. The "multi-headed law" was a kind of chant dedicated to Apollo and was established as one of the rhythms in which the pipers fought in Pythia. Pindar describes the technical characteristics of the flute, such as the bronze mouthpiece and the reed trunk of the city of Charita, where the sanctuary of Charita was located 120[19]. These reeds were called "dancers' witnesses" because they accompanied dance steps. I believe that the city of Charita, a remarkable center of Mycenaean times, was not chosen by chance. Details from the pan-Hellenic myth and the local traditions, such as the "multi-headed law" quoted by Pindar, are adopted over the centuries by later ones, such as Apollodorus.

Figure 3. Bronze episema, Olympia, 550-500 B.C. Archaeological Museum of Olympia. Credit: The object falls under the competence of the ©Ephorate of Antiquities of Ilia, Hellenic Ministry of Culture| Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development. Photo: A. Lazarou.

[14] Red-figured pelike by Polygnotos (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art 45.11.1: Plate 10).
[15] Simple reference to the story of the Gorgon-Medusa and Perseus.
[16] https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0161%3Abook%3DP.%3Apoem%3D10
[17] This recalls Plutarch's account on Ogygia in his Book On the Apparent Face in the Orb of the Moon (or abbreviated to De Facie) is the epitome of his work, found in the title *Moralia.*
[18] It alludes to Perseus' return to Seriphos, where he showed the head of the Gorgon to Polydectes and his mother's other would-be suitors to petrify.
[19] Of today's Orchomenos.

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5th century. The Athenian myths and the Athenian poets

Aeschylus makes two references to the Gorgons: in the *Eumenides* Orestes initially thinks that the Erinyes he first sees from afar are Gorgons, without mentioning the number of female figures and without any other description (Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, line 48). In *Libation Bearers (Χοηφόροι)* again, Orestes describes the Erinyes likening them to Gorgons, as they are dressed in ash-black clothes and girded with serpentine strings (Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers (Χοηφόροι)*, 1048). Referring to Pentheus, Euripides informs us that he was not born of a woman, but of a lioness or of the Libyan genus Gorgon. It is the first reference we find to the Libyan Gorgons (Euripides, *Bacchae*, 990).

K. Varnalis, in free translation, compares the gaze of Hercules with the wild gaze of the Gorgon (Euripides, *The Madness of Heracles*, line 990). He shakes his head and silently turns the pupils of his eyes upside down and a little later, with his face deformed, he turns a fierce look, like that of a Gorgon (Euripides, *The Madness of Heracles,* line 868). The condition of Hercules, who pushes him to kill his children and his wife Megara, is a state of demon possession similar to that of Creusa, when he tries to kill Ionas' son. There are many descriptions of demon possession in antiquity that state that those possessed by certain deities have a creepy voice, violent movements, a look that resembles a Gorgon (Jeanmaire, 1951). The adjective "gorgopos=fast", especially for the gaze, clearly shows that it comes from the tradition of the abominable gaze of Gorgo's, which in this case has no fossil property

Another tradition says that Gorgon was born to Earth and was killed by Athena in the Battle of the Giants. As booty, he took the Gorgon's head, the gorgoneion, and placed it under her auspices to neutralize her opponents (Euripides, *Ion*, lines 987-997). It seems that the recitations of the Homeric epics in Athens and the projection of the properties of the gorgoneion and the auspicious favored the combination of those elements, which formed the special mythological tradition that glorified the patron goddess. This Athenian myth gives a localistic explanation for the origin of the gorgoneion of the auspices of Athena, quite different from the myth widely known in various parts of Greece of the beheading of Medusa Perseus. In the *Battle of the Giants*, after all, Athena, Zeus and the other gods defeat enemies who embody insult and lawless violence. The symbolic content of the *Battle of the Giants* expresses the victory of the celestial gods against the chthonic deities, which symbolizes the domination of civilization against the equine forces of nature (Euripides, *Ion*, lines 205-211).

As the story unfolds in *Ion*, we receive a lot of information about the Gorgon, her nature and her qualities. A first piece of information about the rare myth of the birth of a different Gorgon comes from a verse tale between Creusa and her elder servant: Earth gave birth to Gorgon in Phlegra (Euripides, *Ion*, lines 987-997)[20] to help her other brothers in the battle against to the Olympian gods (Euripides, *Ion*, lines 987-994). According to this Athenian tradition, Gorgon who is born on the battlefield of the Giants with the Gods is the Chthonic Gorgon who gives birth to the Earth and has nothing to do with the Medusa that Perseus beheads. Athena can only fight the Gorgon with the heads of the snakes on her chest. Snakes were more suitable to deal with it, since their chthonic nature was related to an offspring of the Earth, the Chthonic Gorgon (Euripides, *Ion*, 1053). During the battle he uses no other weapons and avoids facing the Gorgon because he wants to avoid, apart from the flames and her deadly gaze (for Phlegra see Pindar, *Nem*. 1.67-72*, Isthm*. 6.33; Diod. Sic. 4.21.5-7 C).

In *Ion* another Athenian tradition is presented concerning the double drops of blood that spilled from a vein of the Gorgon and were given by Athena to Erichthonius (Euripides, Ion, lines 998-1003). He in turn delivers them to Creusa, who will use them to poison Ion. Creusa's servant gives Ionas the poison in a glass of wine, which the unsuspecting Ion does not drink but weighs it, emptying it into the Delphic soil (Euripides*, Ion*, lines 1193). At that moment a dove stops, accidentally drinks the poisoned wine and dies. The medicine that came from a chthonic deity returns to earth (Euripides, *Ion*, 1185). Euripides gives details about the properties of the Gorgon's blood (Euripides, *Ion*, lines 1003-1005 and 1011-1018). The deadly drops of her blood were likened to echidna venom (Euripides, *Ion*, lines 1053-1060, 1233-34 and 1264). This blood as a poison almost killed Ion, while as a medicine Asclepius or Erichthonius used it to resurrect the dead. As a doctor, Asclepius surpassed any of his colleagues, common mortals or heroes, because he had the ability to resurrect the dead. According to one tradition, he had shared with Athena the blood that had run from the veins of the beheaded Gorgon and had a dual power: either to save people by raising the dead, or to exterminate them. Some said that the destructive power was only as much blood had been shed on the left side of the Gorgon and that this was used by Athena and not by Asclepius (Papachatzis, 1986).

The correlation of this myth about Asclepius with the recent research of mythological interpretation of the healing and the abominable with the Asclepius and the oracles of Apollo, through archaeoastronomy, is remarkable (Liritzis *et al*., 2017). Apollo and Asclepius are related (father and son) and are healers who represent *service and aversion*. For the *service,* it is generally accepted that illness is a kind of divine punishment and some "signs" of disgust and / or repair were expected. In this sense, the Apollonian temples that were dedicated to the healing procedures (ordination) were oriented towards the constellation of *Corvus,* as a messenger of the god who caused the divine birth of Asclepius. Determining the relationship between the celestial bodies and the worship ceremonies in the temples was a long process in the Greek religion. *Salvation, healing, abomination (apotropaic), divination (oracle)* concerned the prediction of earthly and human events through the observation and interpretation of the fixed stars, the Sun, the Moon and the planets, which developed a kind of divination. Devoted believers believed that understanding the influence of planets and stars on earthly affairs would enable them to predict and influence the fate of individuals, groups, and ethnicities. Ancient astronomy has shown that the ancient believers created a relationship between heaven and celestial objects and human affairs. First of all, the themes of the prophecy seem to be connected with the duality of Apollo and Asclepius' son. The image of Apollo *Alexikakos* provides an indication of the role of this god in the twinned configuration of Asclepius-Apollo in several examined ancient temples[21].

To the average ancient Greek, the word "cure" covered a

[20] Phlegra was the birthplace of the Giants and the site of the Battle of the Giants. The Greeks placed Phlegra on the peninsula of Pallini (today's Kassandra) in Chalkidiki. The Romans, and later the Greeks, transferred the site and the name, "Phlegraean Fields", to a volcanic valley near the coast of Italian Campania. It is said that the struggle between Giants and gods possibly symbolizes the eruptions of Vesuvius.

[21] In ancient Greek, alexikakos is the averter of evil

large, perhaps the largest, area in the perception of his religion. In research, the concept of service (healing) reflects Asclepius and Apollo's father (as gods of medicine and healing), while the concept of abomination is generally reminiscent of an oracle of Apollo (Liritzis *et al*., 2017). Apollo's reputation as a god healer is followed by his son Asklepios in the Asclepieia such as Epidaurus, Kos, Argos, Messina and elsewhere. It is important to note here that the characters involved in the poison, namely Earth, the Gorgon, Erichthonius and Athena, have a role in the drama and their presence returns occasionally with sporadic recollections: the myth of the *Battle of the Giants* is mentioned when describing gable of the temple of Apollo at Delphi where Ion was a priest (Euripides, *Ion,* 206-218). At this point we get the information that the Gorgon also existed in the shield of Athena (Euripides, *Ion,* 210). The hide and the head of the killed beast will become the auspicious and the gorgoneion of Athena (Euripides, *Ion,* 995).

References to Gorgon are also frequent in many parts of the Ionian tragedy: many Gorgons adorn the navel of Delphi, but without being described (Euripides, *Ion*, line 225). Gorgon is mentioned (except under the aegis of Athena) for the first time in the shield of Athena (Euripides, *Ion*, lines 209-210). The figure of the Gorgon is woven on the baby diapers that wrapped Ionas when Creusa abandons him in the cave under the rock of the Acropolis (Euripides, *Ion*, line 1421). These diapers are also the identifying element that makes Creusa realize that Ion was her child.

The recitations of the Homeric epics in Athens seem to have played an important role in the variations of the myth with gorgoneion. Besides, the references in the *Iliad* speak of the gorgoneion under the auspices of Athena. It seems that the projection of the properties of the gorgoneion of the auspices favored the combination of the elements that composed the special mythological tradition that glorified Athena. This Athenian myth seems to give a localistic explanation for the origin of the gorgoneion and is very different from the pan-Hellenic myth with Perseus who presents him as the beheader of Medusa and the trophy bearer of the gorgoneion (Figure 4).

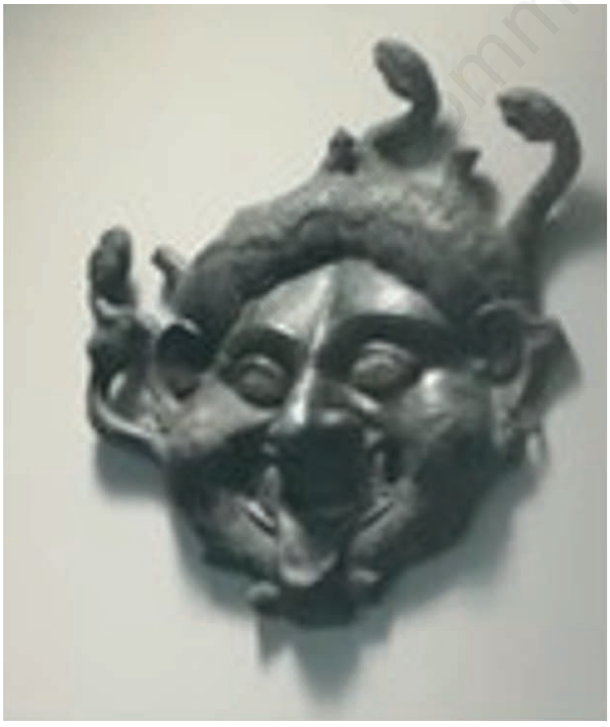

Figure 4. Bronze relief, Acropolis, late 6th c. B.C. National Archaeological Museum. Credit: ©Hellenic National Archaeological Museum, Hellenic Ministry of Culture. Photo: A. Lazarou.

Several references to the frightening status of Gorgon can be found in the secretariat. The tragedy *Rhesus* describes a bronze gorgoneion, forged on a shield (similar to the shield of Athena). Due to its repulsiveness, it causes terror to the horses that drag the chariot (Euripides, *Rhesus*, lines 305-308). Also frightening was the head of the "Mormon" in *Peace* by Aristophanes, where it has been translated as Medusa and in a freer version as a scarecrow, something that aims to scare (Aristophanes, *Peace (Ειρήνη)*, 473). In *Acharnians* he associates Gorgon with the noise of battle (Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, lines 596-598. No mythological references were found in historiography, perhaps because it focused on historical figures. From Herodotus, we learn that the name of Gorgo was attributed to relatives of famous men. Gorgo was the name of the daughter of the king of Sparta Kleomenis (Plutarch, *Conjugalia Praecepta*, ch. 48; Herodotus, *Histories*, Book 5, ch. 9) as well as his wife Leonidas (Plutarch, *Lycurgus,* Ch. 14).

In the 4th B.C. century lived Palaephatos, for whom there are few reports (Palaephatus, De incredibilibus, Festa, 1902). He was a friend of Aristotle. In his most famous work, On the *Unbelievers* (Incredible Stories) he mentions that Gorgon was a golden statue of Athena, while Medusa was a powerful queen. According to the version of Palaephatus, Medusa is not and does not become a disgusting monster. However, she is presented as a dynamic female being (Palaephatus, *De incredibilibus*, 31[22]) (Garber and Vickers, 2003).

In the 3rd B.C. century lived Apollonius Rhodius (295-215 B.C.), who is mentioned as a source from Loukanos. The learned interest in the mythical tradition directed his pen. Numerous and essential elements of the ancient epic have been preserved in his work. The mythical past is often associated with the era of the poet (Lesky, 2003). In the *Argonautica* he talks about the blue drops of Gorgon blood that dripped into the Libyan desert when Perseus flew over the desert holding her severed head. Poisonous snakes sprouted from these drops (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, Book 4, lines 1513-17).

Imperial times

From the mythological literature that was very rich from the Hellenistic era onwards, the *Library* that circulates under the name of the great grammarian Apollodorus of Athens, who lived in the 2nd c. *e.g.* As C. Robert has proved in his doctoral dissertation, it is a fraud and because the language of the *Library* is not Attic, it was considered to have been written in the 1st c. A.D. (Lesky, 2003). The book that was saved begins with *Theogony* and completing various mythical cycles stops at the mythical genealogy of Attica. The work displays the names of ancient writers but draws content from a textbook of the late Hellenistic period.

For the first time in the *Library* there is a complete and extensive recording of all the mythological events that mention

[22] Retrieved from: https://el.wikisource.org/wiki/%CE%A0%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%AF_%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%AF%CF%83%CF%84%CF%89%CE%BD_(%CE%A0%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%B9%CF%86%CE%AC%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85)#p31 [Accessed date: 23/12/2019]

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the Gorgon / Medusa, through different myths, with the myth of Perseus having a primary role and the myth of Hercules a secondary role[23]. Apollodorus mentions his written sources, such as Homer, Hesiod and Pindar. Apart from these, he seems to make use of local myths (as Tegea's myth). Mythologies are recorded with remarkable order and clarity, with respect to the primary sources, without commentary or other interventions. Starting from the myth of Pegasus, refers to his genealogy (Poseidon-Medusa) and his birth from the severed neck of Medusa (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 3.1 and Book 2, Ch. 4.2). Then he tells the story of Perseus from his birth until the assignment of the beheading of Medusa by Polydectes (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 4.2). In the search operation for Medusa, apart from Hermes and Athena who were mentioned by Pherecydes, the sisters of the Gorgons, old women by birth, are now involved. A fairy tale element is the one eye and the one tooth that they exchanged with each other in rotation and Perseus steals, in order to blackmail them to lead him to the Nymphs. From the Nymphs he took the winged sandals and the *kivisis* and when he finally beheaded the terrible Gorgon, he placed her head inside the *kivisis*, which covered his whole back (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 4.2). From the Nymphs he also took the helmet of Hades, which made him invisible and finally from Hermes a diamond scythe. Completing his voyage over the ocean, he found the sleeping Gorgons. Of the three of them, Stheno, Euryale and Medusa only the last one was mortal. Here for the first time, an extensive description of the Gorgons is given: Gorgons had heads surrounded by dragon scales (snakes) and teeth as large as wild boars, bronze hands and golden wings with which they flew (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 4.2). The description is clearly influenced by the iconography of archaic times. The use of the bronze shield as a mirror - in order for Perseus to avoid the petrified gaze of Medusa - is introduced for the first time and seems to have also been influenced by iconography (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book. 2, Ch. 4.2) (Figure 5).

The legend is enriched by the episode that unfolds in Ethiopia. And here are many fairytales' elements: the arrogance of the queen who provokes the wrath of the god and brings punishment with the sea whale, the oracle that requires the sacrifice of the princess, the hero who kills the monster, then frees the imprisoned princess and finally gets married. Perseus uses the magic head in a series of episodes. First, he confronts Phineas, who was Cepheus' brother and his rival for Andromeda and plots against him; when Perseus learned of the plan, he showed Gorgon's head to him and the conspirators and immediately fossilized them (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 4.3). The fossilization of Polydectes and his friends is mentioned by earlier poets (Apollodorus, *Library,* Book 2, Ch. 4.3). The new evidence here is that after installing the Net on the throne of Seriphos, he returned the sandals, the *kivisis* and the helmet to Hermes and gave the head of Gorgon to Athena. Hermes again gave the above back to the Nymphs and Athena placed the Gorgon's head in the middle of her shield (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 4.3). Another new myth that Apollodorus adds is that Medusa lost her head because of Athena, because she wanted to be compared to her in beauty (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 4.3). In Book 2 it is worth noting the differentiation of the two very detailed descriptions of Gorgon. The first version wants a scary monster, with a huge head, bronze hands, golden wings, a head with snakes, and wild facial features, such as wild boar teeth and fossilized eyes. The other version wants Gorgon so beautiful that Athena kills her because she had the arrogance to be compared to her in beauty.

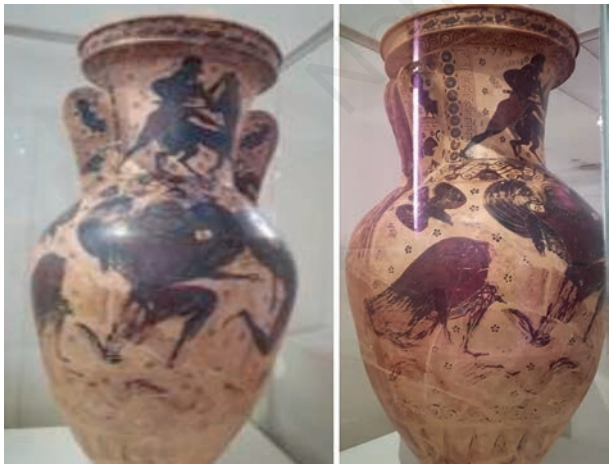

Figure 5. Attic black figure amphora, Athens, ~600 B.C. National Archaeological Museum, Same image from slightly left angle of the winged leg bended Medusa. Credit: Attic black figure amphora, ©National Archaeological Museum, Hellenic Ministry of Culture. Photo: A. Lazarou.

Regarding the mythology of Hercules, two references to the Gorgon are found in the *Library's* texts. One reference comes from the descent of Hercules to Hades[24] (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 5.12) It is obvious that the scene has been influenced by the *Odyssey* and specifically by the descent of Odysseus to Hades, where he met the scary head of Gorgon. Already in the iconography of the archaic period, Gorgo has been identified in Hades, which Hercules faces. The second report describes a copper jug containing the Medusa braid. If the enemies saw the urn raised on the walls, they would flee in panic (Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 2, Ch. 7.3).

I note that the story of the Gorgon's magic braid delivered to Hercules by Athena is described for the first time in the *Library* without ever being found in the iconography.

Diodorus the Sicilian (90-30 BC) wrote the *Library of History*. In this work he covers the wars of Caesar and during his efforts, he makes references to the various cultures of the regions in which the military operations are carried out. The passage about North Africa in Book III demonstrates a connection with the African continent. It refers to the Gorgons and Amazons of Africa, as well as their battles with Hercules and Perseus (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, Book 3, 52.4 and 55.3). These are two different female tribes from the many in Africa. They are similar in strength, intelligence and triumphs, but they compete with each other and are hostile towards each other. It is said that Perseus and Heracles chose to fight the Gorgons, considering this fight to be the greatest and most important feat of their time. Hercules - as a symbol of male power that does not accept female rule - finally destroys them (Garber and Vickers, 2003) (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, Book III, 55.3). The Gorgons existed until the reign of their last queen, named Medusa. At that time, they were defeated by Perseus and thus the legend of this hero is introduced. Along the way both female tribes were exterminated by Hercules

[23] A compendium of ancient Greek mythology.
[24] In Tainaros of Laconia, where is the mouth that leads to Hades.

when he headed west and built his column in Africa because he could not tolerate any more female rule[25].

Strabo (14-37 AD), in the *Geography* (Book 1, Ch. 2), mentions Gorgo along with Lamia, Ephialtes and Mormolyce as the subject of apotropaic myths for stories to young children[26]. In Book 8, Ch.6 he refers to Pegasus, who was born from Medusa's cutthroat [27]. In the story of Pegasus, it is worth dwelling on the charming description of the creation of the fountain of Hippocrene by the striking of his hoof on the rock.

Strabo separates Gorgo from Medusa in two different books. Gorgo is a scarecrow, Medusa is the mother of Pegasus.

Publius Ovidius Naso (Ovid) has received many influences from earlier writers and poets, such as Homer, Diodorus Siculus and Apollodorus. He uses existing myths and often involves and embellishes them. The character of his poems is narrative, and his descriptions are extensive and detailed. We would venture to speak of a global sweep of the then known world, from the empire of Alexander the Great to the Roman Empire. The events and persons of the *Metamorphoses* concern the entire Mediterranean basin, reaching as far as Ethiopia.

The Greeks with their exploratory voyages enriched their geographical knowledge and thus connected Atlas with the *Titanomachy,* effectively transferring an older god from Arcadia to the mountain range of northwest Africa and the ocean they named the Atlantic. The myth of the fossilized head of Medusa justified the transformation of Atlas into a mountain, while his mother Libya strengthened the documentation of his African origin.

Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses* describes the wanderings of Perseus with Medusa's head. Perseus is a hero with magical properties. He constantly flies from place to place, sometimes covered by clouds, carrying with him the gorgoneion as an all-powerful magical weapon. In the far West he went to find Atlas, after another great hero, Hercules. But Atlas did not welcome him, refused him hospitality and tried to kill him. Then Perseus showed him Medusa's head and petrified him. Thus Atlas was transformed into a great mountain located in Africa or somewhere further away. Others said that Atlas, as the first-born son of Poseidon, had been appointed by his father as king across the Ocean, on a fabled island named after Atlantis. Ovid's descriptions of this imaginary country and its all-golden trees with golden apples are wonderful.

After this incident with Atlas, Perseus arrives in Ethiopia, where he kills the cetus with his scythe, flying around it, and frees Andromeda. Finishing this business and being tired, he leaves Medusa's head somewhere on the beach to wash his hands. So that the head with the snakes does not damage the sand, he lays down leaves and bushes that grow in the sea and rests on them the face of Phorcys' daughter, Medusa. The bushes imbibed by the monster took something of his power and hardened, but the nymphs of the sea also rejoiced at this event and many times dropped seeds from these bushes into the waters of the sea. Even in corals the same hardness remains, which makes them look like sea stones. At the end, Ovid mentions the other version about Medusa, who was a very beautiful girl, but Athena transformed her hair into snakes, to punish her for being dishonored by Poseidon in her temple.

In Book 5 and as a continuation of the previous episode, a fierce battle is described between the wedding guests and Andromeda's former suitor, Phineas. After successive scenes of murders strongly reminiscent of Homer, Perseus, tired of the duels, takes the head of Medusa from his sack and begins to petrify the enemies with it, one by one. When all is over the story continues with his return to Argos and Seriphos and finally closes with his passing by Helicon to see the spring that Pegasus opened with his hoof. This tradition is mentioned, as we have seen, by Ovid's contemporary, Strabo. Finally, in his poem *Amores, Epistulae*, Ovid refers to Medusa, who did not yet have her hair entwined with snakes (Publius Ovidius Naso, *Amores*, *Epistulae*, poem 9, line 134).

M. Annaeus Lucanus (39-65 AD), in the *Pharsaliae* (Book 7.87) describes the head of Gorgo decorating the aegis of Athena. Specifically, it mentions that Pallas scattered the hair of Gorgo on her aegis during the Battle of the Giants. Scenes of the Giant Battle that took place in Phlegra of Pallini are mentioned, where the victories of the Titans over the Giants are described. The reference to "Sicilian anvils" leads to the assumption that the *Gigantomachia* (Battle of Giants) takes place somewhere in Sicily. Lucan's account is strongly reminiscent of the descriptions of the *Gigantomachia* and the placement of Gorgo (and not Medusa mentioned by Apollodorus) under the auspices of Pallas and not Athena, which Euripides handed down to *Ion.*

In Book 9, Lucanus refers to the General Cato, who led the troops in North Africa, after the death of Pompey. It tells the story of Medusa in the desert, associated with the heat of the sand and the poisonous power of the snakes of the area. Emphasis is placed on the snakes that Medusa had on her head. Whenever Medusa used a comb to comb her hair, the venom of the snakes flowed freely into her head. When Perseus went to kill her with the help of Athena, Medusa was asleep. The snakes also fell asleep before her face, except for some snakes that remained awake to sound the alarm in case of danger. One could face these snakes without becoming petrified. Knowing this information, Athena instructed Perseus to cut them off so that they would not have time to warn Medusa. Not even Athena herself could face Medusa's eyes and for this reason she quickly shuffled the snakes by placing them in front of her eyes, to protect herself from the monster's gaze. When the operation was completed and Perseus had to turn back, Athena would not let him travel the short way, because Medusa's blood and poison would wreak havoc on cities and crops. So, he traveled across Libya, through desert regions where only the sun and stars could be seen, aided by the west winds. In those areas where the blood and venom of snakes dripped, the desert sands watered. From this soil were born the most venomous snakes of all the snakes that exist in Africa. I notice that the emphasis has been placed exclusively on snakes, with a strong element of magic.

A different story is told by **Pliny the Elder** (1st century A.D.), in his work *Naturalis Historia*, about the Gorgades islands, which were once the residence of Gorgons and are two days away from land by boat (Pliny, Book 6, Ch. 36, line 200). When Annan, the general of the Carthaginians, explored these islands, he reported that he saw there the shaggy bodies of women, but also men who escaped thanks to their speed from the soldiers. Annon, for the sake of testimony and admiration, deposited two skins of Gorgades in the temple of Hera, which could be seen until the fall of Carthage (by the Romans in 146 B.C.) (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, Book 6, ch. 36, line 200). Moreover, **Plutarch** (*Ethics*, Vol 6, *Lacanian Apophtheg-*

[25] These are the Pillars of Hercules.

[26] In the first and second books are generally included the development of the work, in which it is emphasized from the beginning: ουκ εκτός φιλοσοφίας η γεωγραφική πραγματεία *i.e.* "the geographical treatise is not outside of philosophy".

[27] In the 1st book, Elis, Laconia, Argolis, Aegina, Corinth, Achaia and Arcadia are described.

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mata (Quotes), 1-6) also writes in the same century (45-120 A.D.) and he simply mentions Gorgo as a female name, like Herodotus, without any association with the Gorgo of the myth (see also Plutarch, *Ethics,* Vol. 6, *Apophthegmata Laconica*, 51).

Achilles Tatius, (2nd century A.D.) in his novel *Leucippus and Cleitophon,* refers to a diptych in an Egyptian temple, where the two aforementioned lovers describe a scene as they see Andromeda tied to a rock being threatened from a sea monster. The flying Perseus uses the head of Gorgon as a weapon against the monster. Tatius's description of the depiction is given with rhetorical acumen: Andromeda in chains looks like a statue, and Medusa's head appears as a "graphic outline of intimidation" (Achilles Tatius, Book III, 6.1-8.1).

Pausanias (110-180 A.D.), in his trip to *Corinth* mentions that on a hill near the market of Argos the head of Medusa was buried (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book 2. *Corinth*, ch. 21 (2.21.5) a fact that he considers childish and mentions the opinion that Medusa was a warlike queen of Libya. Perseus is presented as a Greek hero who was in a warlike relationship with the tribe of Medusa, (the myth is probably related to the warring conflicts of the Greeks with peoples of Africa). The reason Perseus cuts off Queen Medusa's head (according to Pausanias he did not kill her himself) is to show her indescribable beauty to the Greeks (another rationalist view according to the author). In other texts he describes buildings decorated with gorgoneion (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book 1.21.3, 5.12.4. and 2.20.7).

The stone head of Medusa, the work of the Cyclops according to Pausanias, (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book 2.20.7) and her tomb, which was placed in the market of Argos, bear witness to the fight against Dionysus and the Maenads, which goes back to the Mycenaean era. Especially the fight against the Dionysus believers is considered as proof of the antiquity of the Perseus myth, because it is interpreted as an echo of historical events of resistance of the inhabitants of Argolis to the invasion of the Dionysian cult (Wilamowitz, 1915, GdH II, 65).

In *De Domus* of **Lucian** (120-180 or 192 A.D.) some interesting aesthetic views are formulated. A detailed description of a lecture hall (auditorium) is provided, where, among other things, emphasis is placed on the special artistic sensitivity and aesthetic perception of the frescoes. Based on the argument that the pleasure of the eyes is stronger than the hearing and in order to support his point, Lucian compares the myth of the Sirens with that of Gorgons[28]. Describing a fresco, Lucian, explains that it is the beauty of Gorgons that captivates the viewers (Lucian, *De Domus* or The Hall, Ch. 2.19). There is no mention of Medusa's transformation into a monster. It also describes a wall hanging depicting Perseus gazing at the head of Medusa in his attempt to free Andromeda. The beauty of the Gorgons was so dazzling that it mesmerized those who looked at them, a phenomenon that in its exaggeration is likened to stone. He parallels them with the Sirens, who seduced travelers with their songs, so Gorgons captivated them with their beauty. In the theme of Andromeda, the reflection of the gorgoneion on the shield is mentioned (Garber and Vickers 2003, 43) (Lucian, *De Domus* or The Hall, Ch.2.25). More specifically, describing in another fresco the subject of the rescue of Andromeda from the whale he mentions that a part of the whale was petrified Lucian's opinion about the story of Perseus-Andromeda-Medusa is noteworthy, that it is a combination of the Argolic myth with the well-known Ethiopian story (Lucian, *De Domus* or The Hall, Ch.2.22).

Finally, **Athenaeus the Naucratite** (late 2nd-early 3rd century A.D.) in the poem *Deipnosophists* refers to a certain Cleo saying that "*you are our Medusa and we have been turned into stone not by the gorgonian, but by this huge eel...* ". A few verses earlier, in a satirical mood, he mentions the myth of the transformation of Zeus into golden rain that fell into the "*...cauldron of Acrisius*" (Athenaeus the Naucratite, *Deipnosophists*, Book 8, Ch. 34).

Late antiquity

Pseudo-Plutarch (3rd-4th century A.D.), in *On Rivers and Name Terms and Those Found in Them (De fluviis, Geographi Graeci minores),* mentions that Mycenae was originally called "Argeion", but the name was changed from the following incident: when Perseus killed Medusa, her sisters Stheno and Euryales pursued him without success. So during the chase, they stood on this hill. Out of their desperation and out of the extreme love they had for their sister, they made such a "mushroom" that the locals were moved and named the peak of the mountainous Mycenae after that (Pseudo-Plutarch, Ch. 18: *Inachus*, Vol. 2, 18, 6, 1-9).

The Latin author **Fabius Planciades Fulgentius** (late 5th - early 6th century A.D.) of North African descent wrote the *Mythologies (Mythologiarum libri)*, a collection of 75 short myths presented as allegories, clearly influenced by of the Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophers (*e.g.* Fulgentius, in Whitbread 1971). He, thus invents new imaginative interpretative approaches, symbolizing the existing mythological names. With the revival of classical mythology, it became very popular during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. His mythological allegories inspire writers and artists.

Medusa appears as a rich queen who, because of her cunning, is described as "having the head of a serpent." Fulgentius presents the myth as an allegory, where male strength (Perseus) and wisdom (Athena) destroy the three types of fear embodied in the Gorgon sisters. Medusa is the terror imposed on the spirit and the face. Perseus is said to have been the slayer of Medusa, one of the three Gorgons. References are made to Lucan (Marcus Annaeus Lucanus) and Ovid[29]. Queen Medusa gains power from agriculture, which in Fulgentius' version is related to the name Gorgo. Perseus eyed her rich state and beheaded her (called "winged" because he came in a sailing ship)[30]. Always carrying her head (that is, her essence) with him, he acquired wealth and power and entrenched his extended borders. He then attacked the kingdom of Atlas and forced him to flee to the mountains. He appears to have transformed Atlas into a mountain, using Medusa's head. Fulgentius claims that the Gorgons symbolize the three kinds of fear. One is the one that weakens the spirit, the other the one that fills it with fear and the third the one that not only oppresses the mind but also makes a person pessimistic. This is how the three Gorgons got their name: Stheno, which according to the author means weakness, so we call weakness a disease. Euryale means broad, as Homer mentions Troy with its broad shores. Medusa means she who cannot be faced. Perseus (power), aided by Athena (wisdom), destroyed the three terrors and flew away (again with the ships)

[28] Here he quotes *Herodotus*, who espouses the same view.
[29] Which are mentioned in Hesiod with the same names and events.
[30] This information explains Hermes' winged sandals and the winged horse, Pegasus.

with his face turned away from the terror, as if he did not count it. Thus, the terror was reflected not only in the heart, but also in the outward appearance, for Rome (the male power) never reckons with fear. They say that Perseus carried a mirror (mirror) because fears come not only from the heart but also from the outward appearance. Pegasus was born from Medusa's blood. It is said to have wings because fame is winged. Bellerophon, as a good counselor, rides a horse that was Pegasus, since "pegasius" means an inexhaustible source. Bellerophon had inexhaustible wisdom and traveled with Pegasus, who flew and thus from above could have a complete and global view of nature.

John Malalas (6th century A.D.) was the Byzantine chronicler from Syria who wrote the *Chronicle*. His *Chronicle* consists of 18 books written in Greek. In Book 2 he presents Medusa as a virgin village girl with wild hair and eyes, whom Perseus decapitates without mercy and transforms her through "disgusting magic" into a weapon against enemies (Ioannis Malalae, *Chronographia* L.ii, v14-v15-v16). Perseus seems to be a Minoite who was jealous of the children of Minos, the brother of his father Picus Zeus (Malalas, *Chronicle,* 1.10, 1.13). He received an oracle to kill Medusa whom he meets on the way to Libya. Medusa's head (skyphos) would be used to perform sacramental rites to deceive the magical power of the head, as directed by his father, in order to eliminate magic. When the power of the head was harnessed by Perseus, he used it as a weapon against enemies. He called it "gorgoneion" because it had a quick and immediate effect. He went to Ethiopia, where he was charmed by Andromeda, the beautiful daughter of King Cepheus, in the temple of Poseidon and made her his wife. Then he went to Isauria and Cilicia (Pontus), having encountered resistance and received the following oracle: "When you dismount from your horse and step on the sole of your foot, on that ground you will have a victory." He escaped to Andrasos and won with the help of the gorgoneion. He renamed this city Tarsus (Syria) and performed a sacrifice to purify the city with a virgin named Parthenope. Then he left for Mount Argaeus and attacked the Assyrians, where he defeated them and slaughtered their king Sardanapalus, who came from his lineage, enslaving the Assyrians and ruling them for 53 years. He called these Assyrians "Persians" after himself, that is, he deprived them of their empire and their name. Then he grew trees that he named "Perseus" there and in Egypt to remember him. He taught the Persians the repulsive and unholy magic of Medusa's scyphos ("*...he and the so-called Persian in her own name planted in all the land subject to him, and that of the wretched scyphos of her...*") (Georgii Cedreni, *Compendium historiarum,* 1, 40, 17)[31].

Because of this teaching he called their land the "land of the Medes", a name derived from Medusa. After some time, Cepheus attacked him. When Perseus went to fend him off, he angrily swung the gorgonian at him to immobilize him. Perseus did not know that Cepheus was blind and therefore protected against Medusa's expected influence. So, Perseus, thinking that the gorgonian head lost its power, experimentally turned it on himself, with the result that he was blinded and turned to marble (that is, died) himself. Perses, the son of Andromeda and Perseus reigned over the Persians and was proclaimed by his grandfather Cepheus king of Ethiopia. Cepheus then ordered Medusa's magical head to be burned. The descendants of Perseus remained there and ruled the land of Babylonia. I notice that Malalas uses in an imaginative way all the faces of the well-known myth, in a strange and unpredictable plot, with a different development and ending.

Interaction of ancient sources and iconography

From the study of the ancient sources, it does not appear with certainty that the gorgoneion, the Gorgon's head, was more ancient than the full body Gorgon. As observed in Homer, the passages speak only of a terrible head. Apart from the terror that this head raises there is no other description. Both in the aegis, as a symbol of Fear, and in Hades, its primary role is to cause terror. In Homer there is no mention of the Gorgon or Gorgons, the daughters of Cetus and Phorcys, nor is the name Medusa found anywhere. Medusa's genealogy and her relationship with Perseus are described by Hesiod, although incomplete and anonymous references to creatures that gave birth to the Gorgons and lived on a rocky island in the Ocean survive in the *Cyprian epics*.

The double name "Gorgon/Medusa" shows the merging of the myth of Gorgo with the local Boeotian legend of Medusa. Poseidon, who in Boeotia was worshiped as an equestrian, slept with a female centaur, Medusa. Perhaps with this match an interpretation is given to the genesis of the Pegasus horse. In the work *Aspis Herakleus* it could be said that the scene of the pursuit seems to be a continuation of the *Theogony*, something like the "next episode". Perseus' accomplices, such as Athena and Hermes, appear later, in the texts of Apollodorus, after they were primarily depicted in vase representations.

From the 5th B.C. the local Athenian traditions, but also the wider mythological tradition surrounding the goddess Athena include Gorgon and Medusa in different versions: the Gorgon of Attica, whom the goddess killed and skinned during the Battle of the Giants, the Gorgon Medusa who was decapitated by Perseus with her help, various manifestations that symbolize the multiple versions of a single one and basically suggest the pre-Olympic physiognomy of the goddess. Many important details characterize the oldest form of worship of Athena: the armor of the goddess with the skin of giant Pallas or the Gorgon or with the aegis of Zeus, which had monstrous apotropaic power and were immune to the attacks of Mars and the lightning of Zeus[32].The head of Medusa, whose gaze petrifies the enemies, and her braid whose mere display from the walls of a city is enough to break her siege. The blood of the Gorgon (in *Ion*) has a dual quality: it gives and takes life, all these elements of magic make up the oldest form of the worship of Athena (Roussos, 1986). When Athena from Pallas is transformed into Promachus, the elements and magic utensils become important for war. So, she uses the rocks and the lightning to hit the opponent, the skin, the gorgoneion, the hair and the mirror to defend herself and prevent evil (Kakridis *et al*., 1986).

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[31] Retrieved from: https://archive.org/details/GeorgiusCedrenus CompendiumHistoriarumLiberPriorCSHBGR/page/n1 Georgius Cedrenus, Compendium Historiarum Liber Prior (CSHB), Greece [accessed: 12/01/2020].

[32] With the fictions surrounding Pallas, Pallas as a friend of Athena and her effigy, the Palladium, and even Pallini of Attica as the site of the Gigantomachia, it is sought to be interpreted with the name of Pallas Athena, to connect the Pallantids (the lords of Athens) with their patroness and even to justify the special belief in the earlier palladia, which were effigies of the goddess and objects of her worship, usually stones or meteorites.

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evil. In Tegea, in fact, in the temple of Athena, they showed some hairs from the head of Gorgon that Athena herself had given as a talisman for the city, according to Pherecydes, who lived in the 5th century B.C. and his work has been recorded by Apollodorus in the 2nd century B.C. or the 1st century A.D. Even the flute, according to Pindar, was an invention of Athena because she wanted to imitate the hissing of snakes, likening them to the hair on the heads of Gorgons.

Pindar innovates by placing the episode of the killing of Gorgon in the land of the Hyperboreans. The other very important description that Pindar gives for the first time in the texts about Gorgon, is when he refers to her terrifying head with many snakes (snake hair) and the petrifying quality of this head. Pindar is also the first to call Medusa "fair-cheeked". After Pindar, many poets and writers praised the incomparable beauty of Medusa.

I notice that in both the tragedians and Aristophanes, Gorgon is an indeterminate figure associated with war, terror, fear, ugliness. In *Ion* we see how he is connected to Athena and how through this relationship a local myth is created, which gives us important information. So according to this Athenian myth, Athena during the Giant Battle at Phlegra in Attica killed Gorgon and bequeathed to Erichthonius, the old king of Athens, the Gorgon's blood, which had the power to give and take life. Thus, the myth of Athena was linked for Athens' sake with the myth of Alcyoneus in Pallini, Gorgona in Phlegra, Pallas (an Athenian version of the Gigantomachy) and others. The echo of the legend of Palls reaches as far as Lucanus, in the 1st century A.D. (*Pharsaliae*, 7.87). A possible variation of it, wants Medusa's head on his shield. In the above-mentioned myth, which shows Athena killing Gorgon herself, there is an echo of the fact that the goddess imposed her worship on a precursor chthonic deity of the Aegean and took from her all-demonic abilities, mainly the destructive power of evil gaze, which turned it into her weapon (Kakridis *et al*., 1986).

The oldest myth refers to sea creatures (*Cyprian Epics*), the three Gorgons, whose parents were sea demons (*Theogony*). So, the sea deities pre-exist, they give birth to daughters who consort with Olympian deities (Neptune) and these in turn have offspring who conquer the earth or fly through the air in magical ways (Pegasus-Bellerophon). The sea remains the eternal mother.

Undoubtedly, from the beginning of the 6th c. B.C. the role of Perseus in the myth of Gorgon is widespread throughout the known Greek world. Much later, in the 3rd and 4th c. A.D., Pseudo-Plutarch connects the Perseus and the three Gorgons myth with the area of Mycenae and Argos. Although the text where Perseus appears for the first time as the decapitator of Medusa was the *Theogony*, in the 8th c. B.C., in a later text of the *Library* the episode of the beheading is enriched with the synergy of Athena. Athena guided Perseus in his daring enterprise to exterminate Medusa. She saved him from danger, after she showed him the way to decapitate Medusa, directing his hand herself. He would see her image, not himself, through his bronze shield which he would use as a mirror. According to one version, Perseus offered Athena the head of the Gorgon, who placed it in the center of her shield, to petrify any enemy who stood against her.

I notice that Apollodorus, in Book B of the *Library*, gives two very contradictory descriptions of Gorgon: in the first he presents her as a fearsome monster, with a huge head, bronze hands, golden wings, a head with serpents, wild facial features, such as boar's teeth and eyes which petrified. The other version wants Gorgon to be so beautiful that Athena kills her because she had the arrogance to compare herself to her beauty. This contradiction gives an interpretation to the contradictory iconography, which from the 5th c. B.C. delivers both cases. The scene with Gorgo that Heracles meets in Hades is reminiscent of the corresponding scene in the *Odyssey*.

In the 1st century A.D. and while Roman rule was at its height, Strabo, Ovid, and Lucanus write. Strabo separates Gorgo from Medusa in two different books. Gorgo is a scarecrow, Medusa is the mother of Pegasus. From the title of Ovid's work, I noticed that as "transformations" the lithifications that Perseus did with the gorgoneion, such as the immortal Atlas and many other mortals, but even sea corals, are attributed. These were his own additions to the existing known story as far as Book 4 is concerned. Especially the death scenes following the wedding banquet are reminiscent of corresponding scenes from Homer. No originality is presented in Book 5. Ovid essentially consolidated the information from the sources that were already known and available in his time, from Apollodorus, Apollonius Rhodius, Diodorus Siculus and Strabo. But he ignores local myths.

I believe that Lucan tried to include the old myths that Euripides tells in the wider area of the Roman Empire. He does not change the legend of Phlegra. He uses the same names: Gorgo, Pallas, etc., the only change he makes is that he sets the action on Sicilian soil. He does the same with the myth mentioned by Apollonius of Rhodes about the creation of poisonous snakes in the Libyan desert from the blue drops of the blood of the beheaded Medusa. A century later Pausanias, in *Corinth*, mentions that Medusa was a warlike queen of Libya. This myth, as well as the myths that precede Pausanias, such as those of Apollonius of Rhodes, Lucanus, Diodorus Siculus, and Ovid, I believe allude to the relations or even the wars of the Greeks with peoples of Africa.

In Achilles Tatius and Lucian, we have descriptions on frescoes. I notice that while they write almost at the same time, in the 2nd c. A.D., Tatius' description of the release of Andromeda refers to a terrifying gorgoneion, while Lucian, describing the Gorgons, notes that their beauty was so dazzling that it had a petrifying aesthetic effect. The legend is thus preserved almost intact, with the detail of the reflection of the shield.

Athenaios in the 3rd c. A.D. he uses the elements of the Hesiodian myth with irony. The lack of respect for the divine shows that the twelve gods and the myths associated with it are now obsolete. Another interesting tradition that justifies the toponym of Mycenae, originating from the echo of the lamentation (μυκηθμός) of Stheno and Euryales, gives us the 3rd to 4th c. A.D. Pseudo-Plutarch, after the polycephalus law of Athena's court mentioned by Pindar.

The treatment of mythological allegories inspires writers and artists in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. In the texts of Late Antiquity and while the subject had become saturated, the symbolization of the elements of the myth was attempted by Fulgentius and an imaginative subversive variation by Malalas. However, Malalas presents the immortal and invincible hero Perseus petrifying and dying himself from Medusa's gaze. Medusa's head burns ending the unholy magic. The end of Medusa and Perseus, it marks the end of a centuries-old mythological tradition.

Medusa's head was not always clearly described. From the 5th c. B.C. Pindar called her "fair-cheeked" significantly influencing iconography, which seems to have interacted with poets and writers. So, while our primary written sources define it as terrifying, terrible, while they use other synonymous definitions, without any descriptions, they seem to operate arbitrarily in the imagination of artists, who create sometimes ugly and sometimes beautiful works of art, for different reasons. From the 5th c. B.C. that the beautiful heads appear to coexist with the ugly/hideous heads in interaction with the texts. Although the predominant description

in the ancient sources is the terrifying one, nevertheless from classical times onwards, the beautiful Medusa predominates in iconography (Figure 6).

Considerations of contemporary scholars and a general view about the myth

The myth of Medusa has been analyzed based on theories of the myth. With rationalization and allegory, it has attracted interest since antiquity while Medusa became a symbol of moral degradation for the Renaissance philosopher Leone, who, in the context of theological allegory, saw in Medusa the embodiment of earthly origin and evil, the which was defeated by the ingenuity of the moral Perseus (Ebreo, 1937).

In the twentieth century, but again with a similar perspective, John Freccero, a contemporary literary analyst, considered the danger of petrification to be a result of fatal love attraction. Gilman considers Medusa a deadly female symbol (Gilman, 1991). Garber and Vickers liken her to infected female seduction, with a "spider count" and "vampire power" (Garber and Vickers, 2003, 261). This persistent and timeless conception of Medusa as the embodiment of the diabolical and undiscerning woman is, I would say, a typical example of how myth can operate outside of academic boundaries. More specifically, the various theorists and their schools mentioned above, do not aim so much to scientifically attribute its irrational existence, as they speculate about its irrationality and the effect it has on people. Such a logical relationship is acceptable and quite understandable.

But, Medusa is something that everyone wants to face (otherwise it wouldn't be dangerous), but it is dangerous and deadly in advance. Medusa could, in other words, be seen as a metaphor for sin. Gilman's approach to the Medusa myth recalls Freud's psychoanalytic theory (Neumann, 1949; Freud, 1963,). This aspect is not far removed from the previously presented conception of the form of Medusa. Medusa is here again seen as the dangerous woman, with the difference that in this case she is not a destructive corrupting force but a despotic, tyrannical authority, which does not kill but "exterminates" the individual (Malalas, *Chronicle*, 1.10, 1.13).

Freud's and Neumann's interpretations are well-known, but in my opinion not very convincing, as interpretive efforts for the Medusa figure, since both tend to isolate Medusa from her mythic context and do not consider questions such as: whether the provoking terror is gradually replaced by the sight of snakes, so why and how did Medusa function as an apotropaic symbol? However, I would argue that these interpretations could be valuable, as a means of considering the coexistence, in one creature of main features of feminine and masculine nature, which conflict and at the same time balance each other. It is no coincidence that in the iconography there is Gorgo and gorgoneion with male features such as a beard.

Feminist discourse has contributed to the interpretation of Medusa. For example, Patricia Kleindienst Joplin in *The Voice of the Shuttle* captures the myth of Medusa in light of sexual violence and subsequent silence and characterizes it as a typical example of the oppression of women and the way in which this oppression can be stopped and perpetuated (Kleindienst, 1984). Feminist interpretations are, in my opinion, interesting and plausible readings of Medusa's symbolism, possibly of the original conception of the Medusa figure and myth. It is worth noting that the element of sexual tension is dominant here as well. Medusa is again deceptive, similar to the aforementioned allegorical and psychological interpretations, only in this case Medusa is awe-inspiring in a positive way. Here Medusa is punished by the man for fearing him instead of hating him.

As a general conclusion I could say that the myth of Medusa is discussed with reference to the flexibility of the concepts that have been attributed to it, over a long period of time and in the context of a wide diversity of schools of thought. More specifically, the interpretations that have been given to Medusa by the respective theoretical and philosophical schools have been seen in the light of rationalization, allegory, psychoanalysis, feminist thought, art history and many more approaches. Medusa has always impressed and will continue to impress with her unsolved mystery.

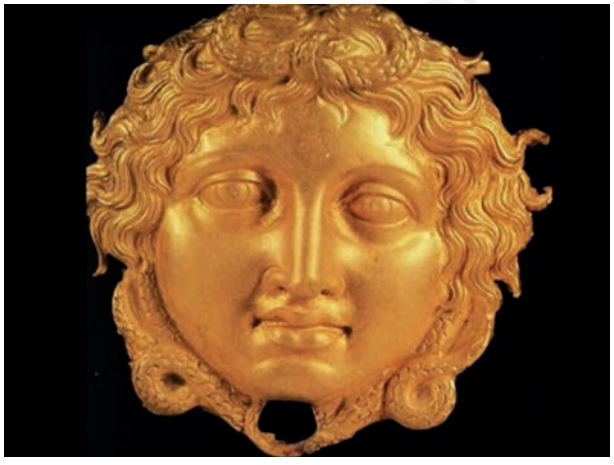

Figure 6. Gold gorgonian relief from the chest of the vestibule of the tomb of Philip II, 336 BC, Polycentric Aegai Museum, Royal Tombs-Treasures Exhibition (Andronikos 1988, 189-191, Fig. 152-153). Credit: ©The rights of the illustrated image belong to the Ministry of Culture Greece (Law 4858/2021). The artifact is under the jurisdiction of the Ephoria Antiquities of Imathia. Hellenic Ministry of Culture - Management and Development Organization of Cultural Resources (Hellenic Ministry of Culture / Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development).

Discussion and Conclusions

The reports of ancient writers and poets who dealt with the Gorgoneian head and the Gorgon-Medusa were presented in chronological order. Especially for the most ancient sources - such as Homer, Hesiod, and Cyclian epics - references were made to big names in the field of philology. At the same time, observations and comments followed. After the ancient writing has been primarily investigated, as well as the iconography in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, the final conclusions aim to show the degree of influence of ancient sources on art, but also vice versa, that is, the how much art influenced ancient texts. For example, did Pindar, rushing from the Kunòs Kephalaí to Thebes in the 5th c. B.C., see the "beautiful cheek" gorgoneion in Ptoon of Boeotia in the 6th century (Fig. A29 in Lazarou, 2021).

This thesis has shown that iconography is influenced by the ancient poets and writers, but this influence in many cases is outdated. Roman writers seem to echo as well as influence the iconography of their time, that is, an expanded interaction between

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pictorial arts and letters is evident. The possible explanation is that it is due to the revival of classicism from the Hellenistic period, which continues in the Roman period and in Late Antiquity. So, both the ideas and the philosophical tendencies of classicism influence the art of the Hellenistic and Roman eras. The revival and the great influence in literature and art I consider it to be interpreted with the "globalization" created by the two great empires, the Hellenistic and the Roman.

After all, the updating of older myths has served as a fundamental component of the socio-political structure: the idealization of leaders, historical events, the origins of a community or a nation, are some of the most common. Myth and structural mythologies have influenced many basic functions in human life: i) *epistemic*: myth explains the origin of all things, the reason for their existence, why life is as it is; ii) *ontological*: it connects the human life in a world with its archetypal rhythm; iii) *moral and psychological*: presents the conflicts inherent in human existence, the relationship between inner consciousness and the outer world, offering harmonious solutions to these conflicts; iv) *social and political*: creates the codes of collective identity, unifies the beliefs of social groups and legitimizes social and political institutions. However, we must distinguish between traditional myths that are religious in nature and later (modern) myths, which express primarily irreverence.

The Hesiodian myth, a myth with an eminently religious character, influences iconography from the 7th century onwards. In the poem 'Aspis' of Herakles - which was considered a pseudo-Hesiodian work and is placed by analysts in the 6th c. B.C.- the belt of the two snakes is described, which however already pre-existed in the iconography of the 6th century. Like the pseudo-Hesiod, the later pseudo-Apollodorus seems to have been influenced by existing iconography in the 1st c. A.D.

The primary designations for the Gorgons and the Gorgon head (gorgoneion) in the *Cyprian epics* were "awesome", "terrifying" and "huge". The terrible Gorgon that Odysseus meets in Hades is the subject of black-figure vases of the late archaic period. There the Gorgon is always presented with Heracles, as a fantastic quadruped, with a huge menacing head, in a scene where Heracles tries to tame her. This is type 5, the Chthonian Gorgon. This particular depiction is not encountered again after the late Archaic period, but it could be said to have provided a theme for the *Library* of Apollodorus, where Hercules meets the Gorgon in Hades.

Indeed, the individual heads had hideous features in the majority of archaic representations. They were often enormous in size or disproportionately large in relation to the rest of the body, in the case of full-bodied gorgons or mixed breeds, such as Gorgon in Hades. Besides, the gorgoneion is placed symbolically under the auspices of Athena, as mentioned in the *Iliad*. This is how the placement of the gorgoneion under the auspices of Athena is interpreted in the iconography. Additionally, Hesiod in his work *Aspis* mentions the *kivisis*, the bag in which Perseus placed Medusa's head and describes the scene of the pursuit by Medusa's sisters. It seems that the mythology of the gorgoneion on the shield also had a lot of appeal. Thus, can be interpreted its placement as a single subject in very many representations of shields on vases and other artefacts. In the iconography of the Archaic period, the two serpents are often placed as the girdle of Gorgon. The chase scene also first appears in the iconography of the Archaic period and lasts, with several variations, into the Classical period.

The gorgoneion of classical times emerged after a long process. Before being standardized it went through stages where each artist improvised, taking cues from local monster legends. The awesome mask becomes at a later stage a "bust", that is, a severed head. At the beginning of the 5th century, on the border of the archaic-classical era, the two poets, Pherecydes and Pindar, list two new elements that mark iconography. Pherecydes essentially enriches the myth of Perseus with the episode of the petrification of Polydectes and the synergy of Athena in the episode of the beheading of Medusa. Pindar wrote of the "fair-cheeked" Medusa which gave rise to the initially humanized and subsequently beautiful image. He described her snake-worn head for the first time, indicating the possible record of a related pictorial element that predated at least a century. Pindar spoke in the same century as Pherecydes about the petrification of Polydectes, which we finally met in the iconography of the classical period and not earlier. The beautiful form of Medusa was probably enhanced by Palaephatus in the 4th century B.C., who describes her as a powerful queen rather than a hideous monster. It is therefore no coincidence that Gorgon-Medusa is described by later 5th and 4th c. *e.g.* poets and writers as beautiful, a fact that goes perfectly with iconography.

Apollodorus of Athens gives two very detailed descriptions of Gorgon: the first as a terrifying monster, with a huge head, bronze hands, golden wings, a head of snakes, wild facial features such as boar's teeth and petrifying eyes. Here the remarkable thing is that the iconography precedes in time, because the description concerns artefacts of the archaic period. The other version wants Gorgon to be so beautiful that she is murdered by Athena for having the arrogance to compare with her in beauty. This contradiction gives an interpretation to the also contradictory iconography, which from the 5th c. *e.g.* delivers both cases. Apollodorus intersperses the pre-existing myth from Hesiod's poem '*Aspis*' and the whole story of Perseus as presented by Pherecydes, with the addition of the episode of Andromeda, her parents and the whale. We are already in the age of "globalization", that is, of empires, where the myth spreads throughout the ancient world. It is no coincidence that this episode inspires later iconography and is further popularized by Ovid in the 1st c. A.D., in the Roman era. Already with the transition from the Hellenistic to the Roman period, in the 1st c. *e.g.* Diodorus Siculus describes Medusa as a powerful queen of the Gorgons and Pausanias in the 2nd c. A.D. as a beautiful queen of Libya. She is also mentioned as beautiful by Ovid in Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses*. In the Roman period, the indescribable beauty of Gorgons is reinforced by Lucian in the 2nd c. A.D. in *about the House (On Domus)*.

In Late Antiquity, Fabius Planciades Fulgentius in the 5th and 6th c. A.D. presents Medusa also as a very beautiful and rich queen. Fulgentius also mentions that Perseus had wings, confirming his rendering of wings in the iconography of the decline period of the Roman period. In the same period, Ioannis Malalas also mentions that Perseus was winged, which is confirmed by earlier iconography of the heyday of the Roman period. These are of course the wings on the back and not the winged sandals, which are known from archaic iconography.

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