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## The Medusa Complex: A Theory of Stoned Posthumanism

Ted Hiebert

Medusa was once a beautiful maiden, vying in beauty with Athene herself, until one night she slept with Poseidon in one of Athene's own temples. Outraged, Athene inflicted upon Medusa the punishment for which she is known, turning her into a winged monster with glaring eyes, serpents for hair, and a gaze that turned those around her to stone.[1]

This theory grows out of Medusa's shadow, in particular because the gaze of Medusa perfectly represents the intricacies of the question I want to address. For the gaze of Medusa can be seen as a convincing metaphor for the liberal humanist gaze—at essence an objectifying gaze, a gaze that constitutes its subjects according to rules, most often unchosen by them, but which never-the-less become the communal basis of Western living. But this metaphor functions no less well with regard to the postmodern gaze—a gaze that does not immobilize through bodily petrification but through the intellectual paralysis of uncertain subjectivity. And finally, for the question of the posthuman and its emphasis on all things self-reflexive, we need only ask: *what would happen when Medusa looks into the mirror and confronts herself in the deadly gaze of her own vision?* Here we find that Medusa's fate is also the fate of the posthuman, negotiating the psyche of one whose very gaze has become intoxicated by potentialities, a proliferating imagination given the power not only to conceive, but now also to still, to produce, to surround itself with the delirious statues of a fallen real.

The Medusa Complex is the operational psyche of syncretism, that which brings together not only disparate ways of perceiving and believing, but of being—that which transforms through precisely its refusal of traditional boundaries, of flesh or stone, of mythology or history, of intellect or art. But more than that, The Medusa Complex in fact reverses these boundaries, rendering them unintelligible, non-functional—fictional, but paradoxically present none-the-less. In this sense, contemporary

individuality has become performative to a point of excess—the intoxication with postmodern possibility becoming the grounding point for a discursive leap into the possibilities of imaginative formulation

The Medusa Complex is the governing psychological drive of a posthuman world, now stripped of its responsibility to remain fictional.

### **The Postmodern Mirror-Stage**

As we know, postmodern thought has been credited with what is referred to as the ‘crisis of meaning,’ in particular because postmodernism and poststructuralism in general tend to target the very bases of modernist and humanist structures of meaning, attempting to demonstrate that if doubt can be levied against the foundations of meaning, then all meanings derived from those foundations must also be called into question.

The most extreme formulation of this postmodern perspective is probably that of Jean Baudrillard who asks: ‘Is it thought which tips the world into uncertainty, or the other way round?’ and then concludes that ‘being without possible verification, the world is a fundamental illusion.’<sup>[2]</sup>

Baudrillard is not alone in this assertion however. Echoes of similar positions cut across the postmodern and poststructural spectrums, from Jacques Derrida’s ‘indeterminacy,’ to Michel Foucault’s ‘discipline,’ Roland Barthes’ ‘zero degree,’ and others.

There may, however, be a paradox in the general poststructural project, through which definitive voices on the uncertainty of thinking rise ironically to the theoretical stage. For example, where Barthes<sup>[3]</sup> suggests the ‘death of the author,’ he only peripherally alludes to his own role as one such ‘dead author’; where Paul Virilio<sup>[4]</sup> suggests a theory of ‘sightless vision,’ we are still expected to trust the way he sees; where Foucault<sup>[5]</sup> speaks of ‘normalization’ we do not suspect that his position is itself ‘normalized.’ There is, consequently, a potentially devastating irony present in the writings of many of these authors, one that might even be used to undermine the authority of their respective claims to uncertainty.

What this is to suggest is quite simply that there inevitably reaches a point at which the deconstructive gaze is turned inwards and the stakes of the poststructural question are reversed—the certainty of the conclusion is now inevitably tempered by the uncertainty of the voice concluding. Consequently, there persists within postmodern method the possibility of an uncertain confrontation with uncertainty itself. Indeed when thus

phrased, this confrontation with uncertainty becomes itself the very premise underlying postmodern analysis in general. Embedded within its own discourse of uncertainty, the postmodern subject is forced to confront not only the falsity of truth, but the falsity of his or her own self-conceptions as well. [6]

To argue this line of thinking is to self-reflexively embed poststructuralism in its own analytic process.[7] The attempt must then be made not only to re-read the self in face of an uncertain contextual world, but more importantly in face of its own uncertain status as a self to begin with. Until this point, the postmodern position that is credited with the crisis of meaning is not itself a position in crisis. Not, that is, until the gaze begins to turn its head on itself. For the breaching of boundaries knows no boundaries itself, not even the boundaries of self or perception. One might even posit this as the natural trajectory of postmodern theory, fated from the beginning to implode into itself as the only possible way of avoiding the paradox of its own methodology.

This is where the posthuman is born—in the embodied reflection of poststructural uncertainty looking for the first time at itself. Posthumanism is the *postmodern mirror-stage*,[8] one that looks into the mirror without recognition, for the boundaries of identity and body have dissolved into the uncertainty of perception, and the self no longer appears, even to itself, without the waverings of its own impossibility. Once the self turns its deconstructive gaze on itself, all other meaning needs to be recontextualized. The gaze is displaced, disoriented, disassociated, and it is not the world that is uncertain but more problematically the very site from which perception and cognition pretended to be born.

### **Posthuman Reflections #1**

Consider, for example, the fundamental mechanisms of perception itself, and more specifically, the trajectory of the mirror gaze that confronts its own illusion of being. We understand that the mirror image is *reflected* back to us, and that we consequently appear to ourselves only in a *reversed* form, and at a smaller than life-size scale. What we understand less is that *all* perception is reflected, in fact the very mechanism of perception relies on *reflected light* as that which gives form to the subjects and objects we see. This is true for photography as well, and photographers will often go to great lengths to *avoid* direct light, since it inevitably interferes with proper exposure and often obscures the details

of the image. And yet, photographers have a different word for this—the call it *incidence* light—and it is precisely the photographic *incident* that must be avoided at all costs.

The same is true for the mirror image, and the *incident* of self-observation is entirely undesirable to the pursuit of self-understanding. Instead, it is the safety of reflection that we covet—the *self-reflexivity* that allows a safe distance between ourselves and our image also is responsible for the inevitable deferral of the *encounter* of self in favor of its reversed reflection—smaller than life; indeed to be *larger than life* would mean that we ourselves were the reflections, ironically staring back at the incident of our own being.



Ted Hiebert, *glow-in-the-dark self-portrait: gargoyle*, 2004

Take as an example the glow-in-the-dark self portrait. There is no body that appears, for bodies require reflection. Instead, one observes only the painted bodily *surface*—the architectural frame for rhetorical self-declaration. This is the *incident body*, rhetorical because it has no self-image—in fact self-image is an impossibility for it. What is lost in the incident of self, what is lost in the encounter of self, is precisely the ability to self-represent. And this only occurs because there is a limit to self-understanding, after which selves must be content to sacrifice reflection, sacrifice recognition, sacrifice themselves, simply in order to encounter the world around them. The postmodern mirror-stage is precisely the abandoning of recognition that is required in order to make sense of the

world. This is syncretism not as a bringing together of disparate ways of looking, but rather as an emerging shadow of nothingness that allows for all forms of disparity on the condition that none of them are required.

### The Death of Falsity

Under the sign of subjectivity in crisis the postmodern conclusion is reformulated in inverse terms. For if postmodernism can be credited with the breakdown of ontological meaning, which is to say that if postmodernism can be credited with the 'death of truth,' then it must also most certainly be credited with the *death of falsity* as well—the spectral double of the ontological dialectic is necessarily rendered equally immobilized as its apparent counterpart. Under the sign of uncertainty, in other words, ontological contingency is the name of the game—a game now that no longer is simply content to de-throne a world of intellectual icons, but must face itself as merely another facet in the uncertainty of speculative contemplation. Under the sign of uncertainty, discourse no longer proceeds on the basis of ontology at all, but rather now merely on the contingencies of embedded possibility.

There is however, a nuance to this formulation that suggests that the deaths of truth and falsity may not be equivalent deaths. In part this is due to the embedded nature of poststructural uncertainty under the sign of the postmodern mirror stage – the point after which uncertainty itself becomes facialized as the endgame not only of discursive analysis, but of contingent subjectivity as well. One might pause briefly to reflect that what ultimately killed truth was its possibilities for deferral into uncertainty. In a postmodern era, no truth can be merely that which it pretends to be—rather each truth is itself subject to multiple deconstructive patterns which ultimately force it into a state of undecidability. Truth, in other words, can no longer be truthfully thought without either ignoring or suspending the self-reflexive contingency of conviction.[9]

The case is precisely the opposite for the question of falsity which, arguably, never had more than a spectral historical presence—the thinking of falsity has always itself been subsumed under the auspices of an ontological inquiry into the nature of truth. In other words, to claim a falsity is to constitute it as 'truly' false, and the gaze that concludes has only ever been the gaze of the illusion of truth, constituting falsity as the 'negative truths' that maintain the dialectic. However, the death of truth has real consequences for the repositioning of the question of falsity, for when the

negative truth that constitutes the false as false is itself rendered contingent; we find the very structure of falsity frustrated.

Until now, undecidability has never been an argument against falsity. For falsity has always relied on appearing as that which it is not. Until disproved, falsity masquerades as truth—*indeed the pretense of truth has always been fundamental to the makeup of falsity*. Consequently, one might argue that falsity, as a concept, always requires precisely the element of unverifiability that resists its entry into negative truth. Falsity, in order to remain false, must also remain in the realm of unverifiable possibility. It is not falsity proper that dies under the sign of the postmodern, but rather its ability to convincingly masquerade as true.

In this sense, with the death of falsity, the entire lexicon of contemporary discourse is structurally reversed. No longer do we live under the sign of scientific method and humanist analysis, but just the opposite. No longer are phenomena false until proven true, but rather all possibilities remain in flux, fictional masquerades that can be entertained and explored or dismissed and ignored but never proven. Under the sign of dead truth, falsity suffers an impossible fate: *death through fictional mobilization*, suspended into existence itself. Becoming true—which is to say becoming the general rule—is what ultimately kills falsity.

### Interlude

While the stories tell us that Athene was the one responsible for Medusa's transformation, it might just as easily have been Dionysus—with one difference. What was, for Athene, a terrible punishment, was for Dionysus just the opposite. Consider the story of King Midas, who was rewarded by Dionysus for entertaining the satyr Silenus:

[Dionysus] sent to ask how Midas wished to be rewarded. He replied without hesitation: 'Pray grant that all I touch be turned to gold.' However, not only stones, flowers, and the furnishings of his house turned to gold but, when he sat down to table, so did the food he ate and the water he drank. Midas soon begged to be released from his wish, because he was fast dying of hunger and thirst; whereupon Dionysus, highly entertained, told him to visit the source of the river Pactolus, near Mount Tmolus, and there wash himself. He obeyed, and was at once freed from the golden touch...[10]

How quickly the posthuman gift becomes a burden, whether it be stone or gold, the power of sight or that of touch. The touch of Midas is of course the same as the gaze of Medusa herself, this time however without the exit of holy baptism—condemned to the fate of our worst and best wishes, at the whim of imaginative fancy. *The danger of fictional mobilization is precisely the suspension of our own uncertainties of being in face of the prophetic gaze of masquerade itself.*

### **Aesthetic Suspension**

With the death of falsity we encounter a form of death not previously in our general discursive rhetoric. Here, we encounter precisely a form of possibility that has always existed only in the realm of *aesthetic* contemplation. For at the heart of the discursive possibilities open to a posthuman mind is a fundamental mechanism of suspension that is required to entertain what would otherwise belong only to the realm of the ironic. In fact, and in a strangely circuitous way, these observations about the trajectory of postmodern inquiry lead directly back to the 19th century and a written request by Samuel Taylor Coleridge who asks his readers for a 'willing suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith'.<sup>[11]</sup> This notion of 'suspended disbelief' is now exactly the same mechanism that is required for the possibility of critical thought in an uncertain, posthuman world.

This suggestion may seem controversial: *in our contemporary world, aesthetics precedes all other forms of intellectual analysis.* This, however, is the necessary consequence of the spectral persistence of dead falsity as the foundation for imaginative thinking. For the aesthetic gaze is the only residue of the history of philosophy that is left unshaken by the ontological breakdown of meaning—that gaze that persists beyond the crisis of meaning for no other reason than it only ever sought to *suspend* judgments of meaning in favor of *possibility*, and which consequently is now in a unique position to become the pervasive foundation of posthuman thinking in general. In other words, in contemporary times the gaze has itself become fundamentally aesthetic, suspended in disbelief, no longer by choice or even by strategy, but now in fact *structurally* suspended as the natural consequence of posthuman reflexivity and the death of falsity.

Interestingly enough, a similar conclusion to this can be found in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, and particularly in the preface to *The Birth*

of *Tragedy* where Nietzsche asserts that 'the existence of the world can be justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon.'<sup>[12]</sup> And it is significant here to note that Nietzsche's framework for such an assertion is remarkably similar to our own, growing from precisely the same observations on the impossibility of philosophical or subjective certainty in an age of deconstructed identities. We know, of course, Nietzsche's famous declaration that 'God is Dead.' What we hear less often, but is no less apparent in his writings is that with the death of God comes the death of authority in all forms, from the death of the teacher to the death of the author, and ultimately to the deaths of truth and falsity as well. One need only look to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to see this confirmed – the infamous assertion that 'God is dead' and its immediate contextualization within a larger project of declining authority:

Truly, I advise you: go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And better still: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you. ... One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil. And why, then, should you not pluck at my laurels? You respect me; but how if one day your respect should tumble? Take care that a falling statue does not strike you dead!<sup>[13]</sup>

And, even in the mere confluence of these concepts—the death of God and the death of the teacher—it is immediately apparent that for Nietzsche the question of belief is always already subject to the question of speculative possibility. In this sense, Nietzsche predicted what we are only just beginning to understand: thinking itself functions not according to the principles of truth, but rather those of *conviction*, and to doubt a conviction (in true poststructural spirit) is to question the believability of the *masquerade*. Zarathustra's declarations are those of Nietzsche's own voice—the posthumous voice of an already dead-author.

The importance of this position however, stems well past the imperative to self-determine. For one also repays a teacher badly if one assumes that one can teach oneself. And to mimic Zarathustra, in this case, is to remove the dynamic of authority from the interpretation and to say simply: 'take care that you do not strike *yourself* dead.' For this is much more than a repositioning of the student in face of the teacher—this, in fact, is a repositioning of the teacher in face of *himself*. And what needs to be emphasized here is that this death is self-reflexive, meaning that Nietzsche includes himself—even making an example of himself – in his own

declarations.

Consequently, what is true for the world may well be true for the questions of identity as well, and if the existence of the world is only justifiable aesthetically, one might assert—rather convincingly—that the *existence of the self*—or even *existence itself*—is also reducible to an aesthetic justification.

### Posthuman Reflections #2

The aesthetic suspension of contemporary discourse is not to be taken rhetorically, for it no longer has anything at all to do with the formulation of truth or the real. Instead, under the sign of dead falsity, all that now matters is the masquerade—the encounter, the incident—the self-fulfilling prophecy of existence is only self-fulfilling when it realizes it no longer has any conditions of being.

For in the end, being is—and must be—*blind to itself*. An incidental subject is *required* for such an encounter. And because there is no body present that is not itself merely the context for masquerade, even the *image* is liberated from form under such a paradigm. No longer is it required that we *put ourselves on* in order to participate in the masquerade of existence. Now, in fact, what is required is precisely that we take ourselves off. *The condition of subjectivity is not subject to error.*



Ted Hiebert, *glow-in-the-dark self-portrait: gargoyle*, 2004

And, if I were to consider myself a gargoyle—who could prove me wrong? I no longer claim my image as my own, and consequently I am not bound by the rhetorical arguments levied against appearance. The delusion is harmless, and yet it is none-the-less possible—perhaps even itself the operational condition of subjectivity in general.

This is syncretism as quixotic, for when there is no longer a singular site upon which to collapse the accusation of being, nor is there any requirement whatsoever that being take a singular form—in appearance or otherwise. And the self-portrait under such a sign is not to be taken rhetorically either, for the portrait of incidence will always be incidental, casually indulging in its masquerade with a glee usually reserved for the narcissist. But this time is different, for while Narcissus lost himself irreparably in the seduction with his own self-image, this time, while the image may well remain static, the site of perception begins to radically change—and it is a kaleidoscope of altered perceptions—a multiplicity of observing sites and bodies—that causes the image itself to appear destabilized, *ever fascinating because it can no longer ever be made to belong*.

### **Postmodern Dionysus**

The invocation of Nietzsche in this context is, of course, intentional. I would like to suggest in fact that because of the similarities between Nietzsche's proclamations on the death of authority and our own trajectory into the posthuman uncertainty of truth, Nietzsche's aesthetic theory is of particular importance to understanding the state of critical inquiry that persists beyond the death of falsity and the aesthetic suspension of discourse.

To simplify Nietzsche's aesthetics, for the sake of clarity, would be to constitute it as a model that fluctuates between two poles of artistic engagement, commonly referred to as those of representation and experience—as examples of Nietzsche's categories of the Apollonian and the Dionysian respectively. Nietzsche however, is somewhat more explicit and, in addition to the god of representation, Apollo is more fundamentally the god of dreams, illusion, appearances and the drive towards identity.<sup>[14]</sup> In this, one might suggest that Apollo is also the humanist god, and the god of autonomous being. On the other hand, in addition to representing the ecstatic moment of experience, Dionysus is the god of intoxication, forgetting and delirium, as well as he who is hostile and seeks

at every turn to destroy the identity principle.[15] Here, Dionysus might be seen as the postmodern equivalent to the humanist Apollo.

To read *The Birth of Tragedy* outside of its historical context would be to suggest a two-fold model of aesthetic engagement, in which the representational encounter is tempered by its experiential counterpart—a non-competitive model in which dreams can be seen as intoxicating and intoxication can be seen to yield its own form of dream. In other words, the interrelationship of experience and representation here begins to form a circular model in which the postmodern 'will to otherness' and the humanist 'othering of will' congeal as the contemporary dynamic between subjectivity and uncertainty, as the displaced dynamic of aesthetic engagement.[16] From this perspective, the Apollonian and the Dionysian can be seen as no longer necessarily in competition with one another. In fact there is the very real possibility that they may be complementary; a posthuman syncretism emerges with the fusion of intoxication and dreams.

A problem arises however, when one side of the equation begins to dominate the possibilities of the other. This was the problem in Nietzsche's time, and it is the reason why *The Birth of Tragedy* has been read largely as a critique of the representational emphasis placed on art. For this reason, the category of the Dionysian is privileged in *The Birth of Tragedy* as a call to artists to re-infuse their practice with an element of experiential commitment – a resistance to direct representation in favor of an experiential understanding of art-making, and a call for the dream of aesthetics to also embrace its intoxicating potential. This is also why, under the sign of a Nietzschean aesthetics, a Dionysian *condition* must be levied towards artistic production:

For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: intoxication.[17]

Given however, the emerging similarities between the Dionysian and the postmodern, it might well be suggested in this context that we have listened to Nietzsche all too well. In other words, there is one major difference between the historical context to which *The Birth of Tragedy* responds, and the contemporary instance in which we seek to apply it. Namely, if in Nietzsche's times the problem with aesthetics was that it was dominated by its Apollonian form, what we encounter in contemporary

times is rather a seduced Apollo, intoxicated by the uncertain proliferations of his own self-representations. In other words, Apollo has ceded to Dionysus as the dominant figure of contemporary aesthetics.

While this may seem, at first glance, counter-intuitive, one must remember that the postmodern decline of truth and certainty find correlatives in the contemporary theoretical drive *away* from identifiable identities, away from representations that are not themselves subject to constant scrutiny—in short away from the *dream* of humanist thinking, and into the delirium of postmodern *intoxication*.<sup>[18]</sup> Dionysus is the god of 'suspended disbelief'—the symbol of contemporary thinking under the specter of falsity. This, in other words, is the overarching consequence of postmodernism in general—not the seduction of the image as a representation of itself in the name of individuality, but rather an intoxication with itself at the *expense* of certainty and truth and individuality. Postmodernism is the intoxicated celebration of defeated humanism. Posthumanism, in equivalent ways, is postmodernism's hangover.

One does not, however, leave such intoxication without having been transformed, and the recovery of a lost humanism is no solution to the postmodern crisis. It is no longer as simple as to revert to an Apollonian aesthetic drive to recover the de-throned image of representational being. We have been well-trained to doubt the truth of the image, to doubt even its dream. Now, we must begin to doubt our doubt, to engage in full force with the death of falsity as that which suspends disbelief in the representational masquerade, suspends disbelief in subjectivity itself, in the name of the aesthetic possibilities for a posthuman existence.

### **Posthuman Reflections #3**

Gargoyles, of course, are those frozen monuments that are posed to ward off evil—forces of darkness that are unintelligible because they refuse reflected appearance and stem inevitably from the realm of the unknown. Chimeric in nature, the gargoyle is almost always a hybrid creature: part bat, part dragon, often part human as well – neither from here nor from any identifiable elsewhere. Poised between worlds, the gargoyle is the terrifying guardian of that which we refuse to acknowledge in ourselves.



Ted Hiebert, *glow-in-the-dark self-portrait: gargoyle*, 2004

Some rumors have it that in fact gargoyles are alive. Frozen as statuesque monuments by day, born into flesh at the fall of night. But one might well put this differently, for along these lines it might be suggested that gargoyles only come alive when reflections themselves cease with the light of day. Stoned by day, intoxicated at night. Quixotic censors, gargoyles are also reminders that all self-delusions are equivalent, and in each case depend on an intoxicated world of delusional encounter. The disparity of such behavior is lost, indeed disparity now only exists where it is constituted, and only for as long as the constitution is maintained.

This is syncretism intoxicated by itself—for paradox, contradiction and even hypocrisy no longer hold any meaning whatsoever. Their meaning is lost, with the death of truth, with the death of falsity, with the crisis of meaning. And yet, this is far from a utopian vision of potentiality, for the self—now accountable only to its uninhibited self-constitution—is nevertheless accountable to its own incidence of being. This, in fact, is syncretism as *consequence*—ultimately a consequence of incidence, in all its unintelligibility, in all its uncertainty, and in all its incoherence.

### **The Medusa Complex**

No longer intelligible through its traditional mechanisms of understanding, the posthuman self needs new tools for its formulations of subjectivity. From the moment of posthuman birth, out of the shattered reflections of the

postmodern mirror-stage, impossibility no longer exists except as a convenient aesthetic fiction used to ground the intoxication of an inverted narcissism. For the gaze no longer constitutes, but deconstitutes; and the possibility of an absented self is far more intoxicating in terms of potentialities for refashioning than one bestowed through humanist spirit. And while the self under the sign of intoxication is contingent at best, it nevertheless already realizes that its contingency cannot be avoided and the intoxication of possibility is equivalent to the suspended disbelief with which selves now return their own gazes.

To return then to the Medusa myth is to suggest that the complex of mind being negotiated as the aesthetic grounding for contemporary existence precisely is no longer able to convincingly embed itself in either the Apollonian tradition of humanist constitution, nor in the Dionysian tradition of postmodern deconstitution, but rather one in which the simultaneous existence of these two ways of looking has become itself intense to a point of unintelligibility. In other words, despite the rational paradox of such a formulation, the urgency of self-conception in fact requires a necessary syncretism of the contingency of masquerade and the suspension of self-image under the sign of a posthuman aesthetics.

Medusa's gaze has become the norm—Artaud's 'active metaphysics' of thought-as-incantation<sup>[19]</sup> is bested only by a gaze that acknowledges this same mechanism as its fundamental and necessary structural condition. And, under the sign of the posthuman, under the sign of the Medusa Complex as that state of mind that persists after the crises of meaning and subjectivity, the contemporary self has been rendered purely performative—an aesthetic refashioning of its own dreams of intoxication—stoned by its self-defined tactics of social and cultural engagement. The posthuman faces a creative and intellectual freedom for which it is entirely unprepared—the only condition upon which is the condition of suspended disbelief as the groundwork for the mobilization of falsity that would otherwise fade into nothingness.

Consider the story of Michelangelo, famed sculptor of the Renaissance, who believed that hidden within each marble block was an idealized human form, and who further identified the precise manner in which these forms could be discovered:

The marble not yet carved can hold the form of every thought the greatest artist ever has, and no conception can yet come to

pass unless the hand obeys the intellect. [20]

And isn't this the humanist dream as well? The revealing of form, the cultivation of truth, through the aspirations of intellectual reason? And might this not be why we look with terror upon the figure of Medusa, she who had no need of intellect to reveal the carved stone that each of us wears as our own humanist armor?

No longer does the hand obey the intellect. Rather now, the intellect obeys perception itself. And this is why Michelangelo's *non finito*, those sculptures left unfinished and rough are the most compelling and enigmatic part of his oeuvre, and indeed of ours as well—uncertainty left to roam unfinished, contingent, freed from a statuesque destiny, intoxicating both us and themselves through exactly their unfinished possibilities.

The Medusa Complex as a theory of posthuman intellectuality is consequently one that reanimates and reverses the terms of intoxicated engagement. No longer is the gaze of Medusa simply the gaze that freezes its objects in statuesque oblivion, but rather now that which remobilizes the stone itself. Under the sign of the Postmodern Dionysus, under the sign of intoxicated stone, fictions become golems, dreams grow legs and minds of their own, and the monuments to a frozen humanist history begin to proliferate and roam, decentered and uncertain about even their own status as the icons they thought themselves to be.

A theory of stoned posthumanism allows for the mobilization of dead falsity, resurrected into the aesthetic fictions of posthuman living.

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[1] Graves, Robert. *The Greek Myths*, vol.1 (London: Penguin, 1960), 127.

[2] Baudrillard, Jean. *The Vital Illusion* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000), 3.

[3] Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. S. Heath, trans. (London: Fontana, 1977)

[4] Virilio, Paul. *The Vision Machine*. J. Rose, trans. (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1994)

[5] Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. A. Sheridan, trans. (New York: Vintage, 1979)

[6] This is the conclusion come to by many prominent scholars of the postmodern future. See, for example, Caputo, John. *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987) and Kearney, Richard. *The Wake of the Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[7] This formulation suggests an understanding similar to that which John Caputo comes to in *Radical Hermeneutics*: Radical hermeneutics does not pass through a moment of deconstruction to get to the other side of the flow. Rather deconstruction belongs to its very makeup. (Caputo, 1987, 147)

[8] This term is, of course, from Lacan, who credits the child's confrontation with their mirror image as that which plays the formative foundation in the construction of a sense of selfhood. Lacan, J. 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,' in A. Elliott (ed) *The Blackwell Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

[9] In the construction of this formula I am indebted to the analysis of Ludwig Wittgenstein on the question of belief. Asserting that 'at the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded,' Wittgenstein sets the stage for precisely the formulation in which the question of belief cannot itself be believably thought, since all such attempts fall back onto unfounded belief as that which is required in order to formulate its position on the very question that is undermined in the process. The analysis of belief is always ultimately unbelievable, just as the analysis of truth under the sign of the postmodern is always reducible to the mobilization of falsity. Wittgenstein, L. *On Certainty*, D. Paul and G. Anscombe, trans. (New York: Harper, 1972).

[10] Graves, 1960, 282.

[11] Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*, J. Shawcross (ed) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), XIV.

[12] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*. W. Kaufmann, trans. (New York: Vintage, 196), 22.

[13] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. R. J. Hollingdale, trans. (London: Penguin, 1961), 103.

[14] Nietzsche, 1967, 101-3

[15] Ibid, 101-3

[16] Ibid, 64-5

[17] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols / The Anti-Christ*. R. J. Hollingdale, trans. (London: Penguin, 1968), 82.

[18] Consider, for example, Katherine Hayles' definition of the posthuman:...the posthuman is 'post' not because it is unfree but because there is no a priori way to identify a self-will that can be clearly distinguished from an other-will. (Hayles, 1999, 4)

[19] Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and Its Double*. V. Corti, trans. (London: Calder, 1993), 35.

[20] Jennings, E. *The Sonnets of Michelangelo*. (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1970), 36.

Ted Hiebert is a Canadian visual artist and theorist. His artwork has been shown in artist-run centers and public galleries across Canada, and in group exhibitions internationally. His published writings have appeared in *CTheory* and *Performance Research*. Hiebert is the Editorial Assistant for *CTheory* journal, a Research Assistant at the Pacific Centre for Technology and Culture (University of Victoria), and a Ph.D. candidate in the Humanities Doctoral Program at Concordia University (Montreal, Canada). <http://www.tedhiebert.net>