

# THE MEDUSA'S HEAD: THREE TALES OF EMANCIPATION

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## INDEX

Abstract

Title - Quote from *Apollodorus*

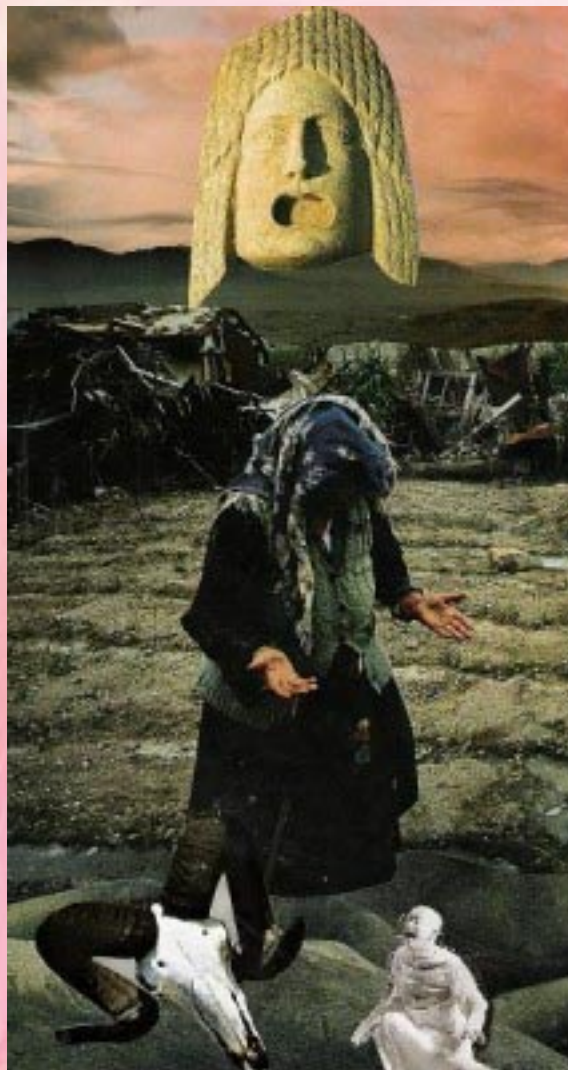
A Tale of Sexual Emancipation

A Tale of Existential Emancipation

A Tale of Esoteric Emancipation

Appendix A -  
"A brief story of Perseus"

Bibliography



Shakti Geraine

## Abstract

In this threefold work the myth of Perseus and the beheading of the monster Medusa is analysed in a psychodynamic, an existential and an esoteric point of view respectively. The three approaches serve to show the multiplicity of possible interpretations and the usefulness of each to the basic quintessential problem of human individuation process in late adolescence. The absence of a father figure is the key factor in this work that is effectively more focused on male adolescent behaviour. The object of the first part is final resolution of the Oedipus complex in adolescence observed under early Freudian and later object relations theories. Whereas in the second part the same inner conflict is approached in amore existential view as a struggle to find one's own self under the constant pressure of the absent but ubiquitous idealized father role-model. The third part is mainly a collage of mythic, religious and esoteric interpretations that correspond to this central myth and can provide further insight to a therapist primary tool concerning in depth diagnosis: symbolic correspondences.

### Three Tales of Emancipation

“[The Graiai] directed him [Perseus] to the nymphs. These nymphs had in their possession winged sandals and the kibisis, which they say was a knapsack. (Pindar and Hesiod in the Shield of Herakles, describe Perseus as follows: ‘The head of a terrible monster, Gorgo, covered all his back, and a kibisis held it.’ ..) They also had the helmet of Hades.. Approaching the nymphs he received what he had come for, and he flung on the kibisis, tied the sandals on his ankles, and placed the helmet on his head. With the helmet on he could see whomever he cared to look at, but was invisible to others. He also received from Hermes a sickle made of adamant.

Perseus took flight and made his way to Okeanos, where he found the Gorgones sleeping. Their names were Stheno, Euryale and the third was Medousa, the only mortal one: thus it was her head that Perseus was sent to bring back. The Gorgones' heads were entwined with the horny scales of serpents, and they had big tusks like hogs, bronze hands, and wings of gold on which they flew. All who looked at them were turned to stone. Perseus, therefore, with Athene guiding his hand, kept his eyes on the reflection in a bronze shield as he stood over the sleeping Gorgones, and when he saw the image of Medousa, he beheaded her. (As soon as her head was severed there leaped from her body the winged horse Pegasos and Khrysaor the father of Geryon. The father of these two was Poseidon.) Perseus then placed the head in the kibisis and headed back again, as the Gorgones pursued him through the air. But the helmet kept him hidden, and made it impossible for them to identify him ...

Phineus .. conspired against Perseus, but Perseus learned of the plot, and by displaying the Gorgon to Phineus and his colleagues in the conspiracy, turned them instantly to stone ...

He [Perseus] entered the royal palace where Polydektes was entertaining his friends, and with his own face turned aside he displayed the Gorgo's head. When they looked at it, each one turned to stone, holding the pose he happened to have been striking at that moment. Perseus made Diktys king of Seriphos, and gave the sandals, kibisis, and helmet back to Hermes, and the Gorgo's head to Athene. Hermes returned the aforementioned articles to the nymphs, and Athena placed the Gorgo's head in the center of her shield. (It is affirmed by some that Medousa was beheaded because of Athene, for they say the Gorgon had been willing to be compared with Athene in beauty.)” -*Apollodorus 2.38-46*

## A tale of sexual emancipation

Young Perseus is a child essentially without a father as his surrogate father is an old fisherman that acts more as a grandfather. The actual father is absent. He is occupied with greater things and although he exists somewhere, he will never give him any first hand mirroring to the young child. The security of his presence will never be there and no male role model will be available for the child to introject. The male introjection therefore is to come only from distant observations of non-significant males but mainly from the mother. The male aspect of the mother –possibly the Jungian *animus*- will serve a role model for the child. It is essentially a man with a woman's manhood, as extreme as this may sound.

The father is also a God. He is superhuman; he is a distant omnipotent figure that the young child can only projectively identify with. This is an aspect that can be the basis for a narcissistic aspect. The image of the father is perfect and totally sublimated as it is non-existent and its lack in the young soul makes for this perfectionist internal fatherly image and its ensuing wholesale integration in the ideal superego of the child. The child is therefore striving to become a God and if that is not possible, at least a hero with the mythological sense of the term. The subconscious identification with this aspect of his ideal ego can lead to a narcissistic personality. A person that deems others too low for his attentions unless they are great themselves. A person that thinks he is destined for greatness. A person that thinks himself entitled to take things and privileges just because of "godly" heritage. All these, young Perseus holds as character concepts. No doubt the life of an orphan has not helped these narcissistic notions to blossom into a full-blown narcissistic personality. The reality principle would have reassured itself too many times for Perseus to have lost his touch with the tenets of real life. He has lived the life of an unwanted guest along with his wife ever since he was born. Disinherited and scorned, his

mother Danae, seeks shelter in the courts of the wealthy nobles of the time until the time her son is big enough to protect her. She has been abandoned by his father and is making secret idealization of her son as the husband she never had. He will protect her, he will love her unconditionally, and he will restore her to her rightful place in society. Her torments as an outcast are only bearable because her ultimate hope resides in the child in her lap. This Oedipus complex is put upon the shoulders of young Perseus even before birth. The archetypal instincts of the mother that keep Danae through this birth give their way to a very intricate pleasure pattern of her eventual restoration into society by her young child-husband Perseus. At he first respite the mother dreams of happier times, hope flourishes in the tormented heart and what better place to lay a hope that on a newborn child?

Perseus is reared by a woman's standards. He is a man that serves only one purpose: to satisfy his mother. She is the only thing he has. The only one who loves the orphan bastard. The only parent and the only friend (most myths portray heroes to have a friend or allies but not Perseus). He is totally dependent on this woman and she is totally dependent on him. This intimate relationship is basically a non-resolved Oedipus complex. The son in effect replaces (the non-existent) father and the mother does nothing to stop the process. She nourishes his thoughts of grandeur and provides him with everything a wife gives to a husband except for sex. The relationship does not reach carnal incest but in all other effects it is a mixed husband-wife-mother-son complex. The young child cannot relate to his mother as a lover and the main exchange between them is security. Instead of sex they exchange the secure feeling of a stable relationship. Young Perseus lives the dream of every young man. A secure loving relationship with a woman that satisfies his every whim and is up to his every taste. This is not difficult for Danae because it is she who has sculpted his whims and tastes according to her own. This way Perseus can fulfill

all of Danae's whims and tastes. The match made in heaven soon turns into a match made in hell as Perseus discovers his sexuality. His mother is not capable of completing him as a man anymore. He needs a woman he can have sex with. And doing so is terrible in a dual way. On one hand leaving his beloved mother is like killing her in his mind. He knows he needs her to complete her dreams and she has invested everything on him both consciously (as her savior) and subconsciously (as her husband). On the other hand the girls around him are not up to the expectations his mother has introjected in him. They are hard to get and in the end none of them can offer him a perfect relationship as his mother can. In effect the earth is swept under his feet every time he tries to approach a girl. Who would want to sacrifice his security for sex? This absurd thinking is nonetheless very true for Perseus' subconscious. He has traded sex for security in his relationship with his mother for years. It has worked perfectly. Now he has to balance the two commodities and decide. Sex is bound to lose because it has itself been totally devalued in Perseus' eyes. His mother has been celibate all these years. She has been burned from sex and she shuns it as the root of all the evil that has befallen her. She is instead devoted as a perfect idealized mother figure in Perseus' eyes. She has no flaw in her strict celibacy. So the balance tips on security's side and young Perseus stays in his mother's folds for the time being.

This condition though is getting unbearable for young Perseus. His need for an equal constructive relationship that includes sex is getting bigger as he grows up. He finally reaches the age when he is considered a man. He has to assume a man's responsibilities. He must find a wife and get married. He also has to protect his mother from her suitors. She is still a beautiful woman and now she will not be burdened with a child so some men want her. Perseus is in a real confusion as the prospect of "losing" his mother is real and he has to protect a woman that is not his wife but has to protect her as a wife. He

also has to make a decision on a wife but he is still troubled by his mind that keeps making intricate patterns of pleasure and rationalizations on how his ideal wife should be so as to compare successfully to his mother-wife that he will eventually have to leave. This stored up anxiety reaches a peak when he is challenged by Polydektes and his henchmen, the king that has harbored him and his mother for years and now wants to marry his mother. The message is clear: if you can't protect-keep your mother, I will have her. So Perseus has to make a choice. He will be either be a subject that obeys and sees his mother married off to a lesser noble or he will live up to his mother's expectations and save her from this unwanted suitor to eventually restore her as a rightful inheritor at her father's side and away from any sexual partner so that he can preserve her immaculate in his mind's eye, since he cannot consummate his love for her. Will he be a servant or a king? A man and husband or a child and sexless pawn?

The answer miraculously comes not from the mother but from the father. He has to rise to be a hero and only his father can guide him to this path. His mother raised him up to be a good husband to her and a champion to her cause of restoration but she has not taught him how to fight or how to stand up for himself and prevail. Hers was a path subjugation and endurance, but Perseus needs individual courage and personal strength if he is to prevail in his quest. These qualities are things that exist in him only as an ideal. The young adolescent has had no significant other to teach him these things by example. He knows his father is all of these things and he thinks he can be all these himself if he tries. But it is the first time he will try to be a man and the test looms colossal in front of him. He has to overcome a great obstacle and he is left with no other choice. He will prevail or perish. The choices he avoided all his young life now loom before him as an unavoidable long overdue debt.

At the edge of the precipice, Perseus is aided by the gods Hermes

and Athena, knowledge and wisdom, quickness of wit and depth in thinking. He establishes the problem of his indecision and his twin paths to lie in the killing of the Medousa. A monster deep in his subconscious that is the source of his indecision. She has a head full of snakes. Each snake is a malignant pleasure thought pattern that Perseus has developed and cannot allow himself to express his inner libidinal needs as full-grown man. Everything his mother has put into his head is a logical obstacle to his sexual emancipation. His pleasure patterns involve life ideals that are both perfect and totally constricting. Every snake is a “want” that has maligned into neurosis. The real “need” behind the “want” is no longer fulfilled because the “want” has stagnated into something extremely specific and unattainable, intolerably attuned to his mother and not a living adjustable and interactive pleasure pattern. He has to be perfect for his mother and he has to find a perfect wife too. Every snake is a thought that strangles him and poisons him. New impossible “wants” are spawned all the time and he cannot cease the insecurity and the worthlessness that arise from these wants. He has to strike deep at the core of the problem. He can only kill the middle of the three gorgons sisters. Euryale and Stheno are immortal. They represent the dual pleasure principle. Pleasure seeking and displeasure (excitation) avoidance. Self-worth and security. These things are paramount. If you kill them you will die yourself. If you diminish them they will eventually rise again since there is no beating the *id* and *superego*. One can only hope to juggle between the two immortal sisters. And the *ego* is the only instrument in this struggle. The middle sister is mortal. She is existence herself. She represents the core of one’s being, the Self at its core. And it is an irony that she is the only mortal one. The ancient mythology seems to mock the human condition by saying that one can kill himself but he can never kill his instincts and inner needs. Another interpretation is that the two immortal sisters derive their infinity,

their immortality from the world and the middle sister is the person. Again we see man as impotent against the forces of the world but as omnipotent against himself.

The monster in his head has to die. But to gaze directly to his subconscious would be death for he would be overcome by his inner wants and the terrible *id* would overpower him. He would be turned into stone just by looking at his inner world. The demands of the medusa’s head with its unquenchable “wants” are enough to make any man ineffective under the burden projected on him. Just by addressing the demands of his mother to any other woman-spouse Perseus would feel totally ineffective because he was raised to be a perfect husband. But no one can be a perfect husband because only he is different from his wife. He cannot live up to her every whim and taste because they are not the same. This was true with his mother if they had a good relationship but it can never be true with his wife because she has not “raised” him. But amorous relationships are not based on unequal pathetic exact fulfillment. They are based on equal and interactive mutual fulfillment. The problem in this is the head of the medusa with its many illogical beliefs. It has to be cut off and it has to be cut off with power of will and determination – an adamantine sickle. It is a symbol of castration (Cronus used it to castrate his father Uranus). The castration is dual. By cutting off the medusa’s head he destroys the neurotic side of the ideal man in his superego and instantly utilizes the freedom from this death to give birth to a new concept of manhood. A manhood that is no more beholden to the mother as a sole source of pleasure but is now open to more versatile ways of pleasure seeking and sublimation of fears. He is no more afraid of being imperfect in his mother’s eyes. He turns his eyes to other women without impossible expectations. The multiple snakes are no more. He can see the world without sexual biases and he does not cling to ideals anymore. He realizes that ideals are just that: something to be strived for, not something that is a *conditio*

*sine qua non* for an amorous relationship.

With this new insight his sexual energy is released and from the head of the Medousa Pegasus and Chrysaor symbolically spring. The white winged horse is the purity of sexual energy that can help one transcend matter into spiritual approaches. The man with the golden sword is the perfect and immaculate use of matter and flesh in an ideal use of the golden sword-phallus in the sexual world.

Holding the head of his bane, Perseus proceeds to slay the beast-father of his bride and rescue her from her insecurities. Returning back he petrifies his enemies-contenders for his mother. They have not overcome their unconscious demands and are therefore vulnerable to petrification. Then he returns her to her to her rightful place: The palace of his grandfather where he is recognized as the son of a God and his mother as the rightful spouse-mistress of this God. We could say that according to the era's customs this is the perfect ending for a woman. But today's Danae might as well remarry a man of her own volition, and this would be acceptable to a Perseus of contemporary times. The head of the Medousa signifies not only the emancipation from the terrible mother but also his acceptance of the Mother's sexuality. And now that he recognizes it he can replace her with a real spouse of his own where sexual intercourse is not forbidden. Almost as a Freudian slip, Perseus kills his grandfather in a sporting accident and claims his rightful place as a king. Then he truly becomes his "father's son".

### **A tale of existential emancipation**

Speaking of "father's son", Perseus has a real cross to bear when it comes to claiming his independence and individuality in adolescence. He has been missing a real male archetype for all his life and no such worthy example has been close to him to help him understand the human side what it means to be a man. What it means to succumb to sexual urges, to fraternize with other males in

a male bonding ritual, to choose women and not to be chosen by them, to address his inner anguish of not being able to bear a man's burden all the times. These attributes might seem frail and baser, but they are nevertheless essential to a more "human" evolution of the young male. By recognizing his baser needs and addressing his frail side, the male adolescent can face the real problems of life in a more complete way. He knows his real needs and there is no reason for neurotic repression of needs that he would otherwise not accept as his own. And that is what might be happening with young Perseus. He has idolized his father -a distant and unattainable ideal- and he practically worships his mother -his only safe harbor in a hostile world. Both the ideal father role model and his mother's ubiquitous looming desire for reinstatement as a queen serve to place a heavy burden on the adolescent's shoulders. He has no father to tell him to take things easy, to make him understand that it's OK to fail and that the alternative to winning is not total annihilation. Even though Perseus' logic tells him that he doesn't have to be perfect all the time and that he is entitled to choose his personal happiness, his introjections cannot let his heart to rest. His emotional life is full of anguish and nightmares of not being the role model son his mother and father have demanded of him. The Medusa's head is teeming with snakes-neurotic thought patterns that make his life hell. He lives for the Medousa and not for himself. The snake head is his captor. A captor of his own self. He has to cut it off. The neurotic thoughts can only be terminated by a single beheading stroke. He has to find them deep within his unconscious at the end of the Ocean and use caution and stealth so as not to awaken the terrible monsters of his repressed needs, his scorned instincts turned gangrenous. The delving into his own inner self is dual. He has to find the things that are causing him all these psychological aches and diminish them utterly-abolish them. Then his second task is to replace the vacuum with new ideas and patterns, to keep the re-growing

of the old ones and to replace the cornerstones of his existence before the whole edifice crumbles upon him when left without behavior patterns to deal with the world.

This quest is effectively a quest to find his own true Self. He has to find who he is, what he really wants out of life, what it means for him to be a man, how he means to fulfill the tenets of his parents in his own particular way, what he means to keep and what he means to discard, how he is to implement his ideals into his life. He has made his choices of what he wants and his inner true Self is repressed below the snaked head. All he has to do is to cut it off and the new Perseus will rise to lead his own life. To truly be his “Father’s son”. To emancipate himself from the “curse” that was laid on him by his parents, that in itself was laid on them by their own all the way back to the beginning of existence. He has to lead the path of the hero and sever the head of sin going back generations. He has to transcend his own self and cut off his own head. To face his iniquities and his true unconscious would mean death. He would be stoned-isolation of affect- in front of the unbearable understanding and he would lose his ability to function to these aspects of himself forever. But by seeing through his introspective powers and using wisdom and balance of mature thought he manages to intellectualize what he cannot bear and “face” his inner opponent without destroying his vulnerable ego. He understands the part in him that is no more of use to his evolution, something that is no more part of him, something that is foreign to his true Self. From then on he can kill it since it is a “visible” enemy, something that exists within him and is recognizable. In psychological terms to realize the essence of the problem is half the task of therapy. The other half is to get over it. And Perseus takes the road less traveled when it comes to dealing with his problem. He deals with it head on. His sickle is like his will: adamant. He journeys to the graiai, the keepers of his grieving and within his personal lament of his lost life (a life without hope if he

continues to be plagued by his neurotic thoughts) he finds a small beam of light to follow-the sole eye (introspective transcendent understanding) of the graiai – the three fold sorrow of insecurity-rejection-false existence. This turns him his true needs, a return to nature in its purest form. The nymphs give him the way to be human again, to cherish his basic natural needs. He realizes how nice it is to have a love of life again, the right to have joy in his life. They arm him with the gift of peaceful sleep. For the *kibisis* they give him is essentially a knapsack, a place where he can transform himself through dreams in the security of sleep. His realizations of who he really is inside are nurtured in his sleep and are changing him on an unconscious level. So when he has developed a true substitute for the snaked head, he can cut it off. He journeys deep into his unconscious and he “reflects” on the problem on the reflective “shield” of the goddess of wisdom. He forces himself to kill a part of his own self, basically his own reflection is in the shield. His will is adamant and he forces the severing of his old redundant self from his new reborn true self. The lopped off head he stores in the knapsack of his unconscious but the reflection is also stored in the shield of virgin goddess. The head is a thing of the past for Perseus, something to be brought out of his knapsack-unconscious when the need is there. He has effectively become the medusa by killing her. What he has vanquished in himself, now he can show to others. He knows his true Self and he can withstand almost everything in life based on this inner wisdom. Others not possessing this wisdom from personal growth cannot lead the path of the individual conscious choice so fully. One has at times observed situations where at the critical time a person keeps his calm and maintains his principles and his composure whereas others may cringe and cower in indecisiveness and fear-almost *petrified*. When they see a person with a genuine belief many people stand in awe and admiration unable to say anything more in a conversation *petrified* by the understanding of their own false

existence, unable to face their inner abyss. Perseus has gone to the other side and he has come back. He has completed the journey of the hero where no other has ever gone before and now the road is open for others to follow until their footprints beat a path that can eventually be a full road for all humanity. The myth is a lighthouse that people can follow whether this is through introspective understanding or through the universal unconscious.

### A Tale of Esoteric Emancipation

In the pursuit of understanding the unconscious proceedings of the human psyche, a therapist's only true ally is the interpretation of the few manifestations of this hidden internal universe. Whether this is a dream, Freudian slip or a hint in the non-verbal behavior, the value to understanding and resolving the struggles underneath is immense. The art of interpreting these signs is ancient as it is controversial. It is no other than the art of correspondences. The use of symbols in this proceeding is quintessential. Symbols contain a vast amount of information due to their general nature. It is perhaps because of this attribute of theirs that the ever-economic human psyche utilizes them primarily in dream processes. Symbols are not only universal but also timeless. And it is based on this assumption that we can utilize them in therapy and the interpretation of archetypal myths like the present one.

Perseus is the *puer aeternus* that sets off the path of the Fool to fulfill the Titanic Work to free himself of the Dark Mother. To do this, he must prove himself to be the "Son of his Father" as he passes through all seven alchemical steps of transformation. Eventually, armed with his true will he vanquishes the dragon guarding the cave and regains Andromeda - his soul.

To elaborate further, Perseus is a child born in a motherly paradise from where he has no need to escape to something better. He is in effect the perfect child. He is charismatic and brilliant while his every need is nurtured

and seen to as if he was a king. But a time comes when there is a fall from grace and the king is eaten by the wolves, as the alchemical parable that signifies the catharsis from self-absorption-narcissism. His mother is no more the perfect creature for him because he cannot have a complete relationship with her in this paradise. Neither can he consummate his sexual desires with her, nor can he evolve as a person in her now dark embrace. She has become the dual being Echidna, a woman from waist up (nurturing mother) and a serpent from waist down (an abomination to sexual desire and creative libidinal expression). He has come to the point that he is to fall from grace and learn the price of distinguishing from good and evil - living in the real world. He has recognized his mother as both good and bad and he has to live like this. But it is not so easy for Perseus because he has to challenge his internalized mother, the Medusa that tyrannizes his every waking moment. The snakes are the endless sins of the pleasures as Hindu philosophy-religion teaches. If one is not careful "what is at first honey can later turn to poison" as the Bhagavad Gita teaches. The only true pleasure one can pursue without fear is Ananda - the King Cobra - the pleasure of Being itself. It is this pleasure that the nymphs teach Perseus. It is the most natural of pleasures. And it is this natural pleasure that can emerge sublimated from his central core, the awakened serpent, the Kundalini power that runs through the spinal cord energy conduit combining all the chakra energy centers in a fully awakened Jungian libido. It is through this conduit that Pegasus and Chrysaor emerge. The neck is the center of the fifth chakra attributed to mental cognition as well as a sublimated correspondence to the second chakra of sexual energy. Therefore in the opening of the chakra of mental processes the sexual energy is liberated in a sublimated way now that no mental obstacles bar its expression and the mental process is clear enough to guide the sexual process in a sublimated path.

The process of Perseus follows an alchemical path to transformation.

He delves in the deep recesses of the unconscious by visiting the Graiai and he finds their one eye-introspective access to the truth. He makes his decision of what he wants to accomplish by visiting the nymphs and seeing his true inner sublime pleasure patterns that he can follow to the end without fear of awakening Medusa again and he decides to kill his inner monster the Medusa. He fights the Medusa and shows determination and will. He makes the deed that comprises the energetic part of the Titanic Work. His heart is opened to the new self as Pegasus and Chrysaor-golden sword (golden is attributed to the heart) emerges from his neck and he realizes in his inner being the change that has taken place. His reward comes when he claims his bride Andromeda and he accomplishes the emotional bliss that comes from the change. Actually Andromeda here is nothing more than his own Soul, his eternal bride. One can clearly quote the myth of the Hindu hero Rama that seeks his bride Sita –non other than his own soul- but no sweeter love poem has ever been uttered to one's soul than the dying words of the stoic philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius: "Oh, my sweet little soul!" Then he returns with the head of the Medusa in a hermetically closed knapsack where he keeps his hidden knowledge just in case he needs it. It is kept in reserve just like the backpack of the "Fool" in the Tarot. A hermetic figure that can use his knowledge for many things but also possesses the wisdom of the transformation and chooses not to use it except in emergencies. And it is in the last step of the alchemical process that Perseus shows this effect of the total process. By using the head in an emergency he shows the ability to survive transformation to stone as he uses the head since he has been transformed inwardly to withstand the traps he has previously fallen into.

Thus he avoids the Dark Mother that smothers him and transforms her into a more human mother that is no more a threat since there is no place in his soul for her overbearing advances.

As the Greek poet K.Kavafis put it: "Have no fear for the Laistrygones and the Cyclopes, the wrath of Neptune, if you do not carry them in your soul". He has found the middle way through existence, his personal itinerary through life. Then he truly becomes a "Son of his Father", a true son of God.

#### **Appendix A** "A brief story of Perseus"

Perseus is the son of Zeus and Danae. His grandfather, Acrisius, tried to prevent Danae from having any children because of an oracle that foretold his grandson would kill him. So he locked her up in a room so no one could get her pregnant. However, Zeus came upon her in a shower of gold and impregnated her with Perseus. After his birth, Acrisius locked Perseus and his mother in a wooden ark and cast them out to sea. They floated along until they were found by a fisherman named Dictys, who lived on the island of Seriphos. He took them to the king, his brother, Polydectes. This guy had it bad for Danae, but she kept her distance. As Perseus got older, Polydectes got sick of Perseus protecting his mother and sent him on a mission for a wedding present. He claimed that he was intending to marry Hippodameia. He told Perseus that he wanted the head of Medusa and assumed that he was sending him to his death.

Perseus was helped by Athena and Hermes. He first went to the Atlas Mountains to see the Graiai. He stole their eye they shared between them and told them he needed to know where the Stygian Nymphs lived, from whom he needed some items to make his task possible. From the Nymphs, he obtained Hades' helmet of invisibility, a pair of winged sandals, and a magic wallet to Medusa's head in.

He put on the sandals and, with Hermes, flew to the Land of Hyperboreans in the far west to a cave where Medusa lived. She was sleeping when he arrived, and he crept up to her, watching her in his shield, and cut her head off with his sword. He put it in the magic wallet, put on the helmet

of invisibility so as not to be seen by the other two Gorgons, and headed back to Seriphos. Along the way, he passed through Ethiopia, where a princess named Andromeda was chained naked to a rock to be sacrificed to a sea monster because of her mother's boasts. He rescued her and beheaded the monster, then promised to marry her. Cassiopeia and Cepheus, Andromeda's parents, wanted her to marry Phineus, and started a battle, which Perseus won by turning them all to stone with Medusa's head.

They returned to Seriphos where they found Danae and Dictys hiding out. Polydectes, believing that Perseus was dead, was pretty surprised when he showed back up in his court. Perseus told him that he had gotten Medusa's head,

and Polydectes and his court laughed in his face. So Perseus pulled out Medusa's head and turned everyone there to stone. After this, he made Dictys king, gave Athene Medusa's head, and returned the sandals and helmet.

He, Andromeda, Danae, and some Cyclopes went back to Argos, stopping off at Larissa for some funeral games. Acrisius heard that Perseus was coming back to Argos, and he, too, went to Larissa where he thought he'd be safe. Perseus threw a discus while there, which the wind caught and blew into the head of Acrisius; thus, prophecy fulfilled. Perseus didn't want the throne because of this and traded kingdom's with Megapenthes and ruled over Tiryns.



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