

TACTICS OF PERSEUS: TACKLING THE INVISIBLE OTHER

KIKUKO TOYAMA

As is thoroughly articulated in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943), the gaze of the other self/subject has the quality of being unseen, for "'Being-seen-by-the-Other' is the truth of 'seeing-the-Other.'"¹ The moment the Other enters my universe, I feel de-centered and paralyzed, experiencing myself as an object to be seen. Yet, if such an effect reveals a certain vulnerability in our vision, the question arises as to how it ever becomes possible to see the Other, or, to see Medusa, a figure standing for the Other's petrifying look. This paper will refer to some representations of this monstrous Other and suggest that as possible devices to bypass the terror, various media of spectacle and of representation might be designed, notably painting, at times regarded as an "art of memory," rather than an art of direct perception.

The invisible Other: "mirror" and the "void"

Sartre distinguishes the eye as the object of a look from the look itself, putting emphasis on the nonreciprocity between the object and subject of the look: "my apprehension of a look turned toward me appears on the ground of the destruction of the eyes which 'look at me.' If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes," so that "The Other's look hides his eyes; he seems to go in front of them" (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 258). In this schema the Other's eyes become principally invisible, no longer given as a simple object to be seen, observed and remarked on, and the Other's look works as "a pure reference to myself." I recognize that I am seen, as "a body which can be hurt," as an object to be defined and judged at the Other's mercy. Here I no

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, London, 1986, p. 257. In this paper the book will be abbreviated as *Being and Nothingness* with the page number reference added.

longer act unselfconsciously, as a pure, unreflective consciousness, but become an inert matter “transfixed” in its complete passivity.

This of course covers only a part of the full range of the experience of being “looked at” by the Other. The Other’s gaze doesn’t necessarily petrify me/make me either an object or a vulnerable, defenseless being. The Sartrean Other, however, keeps a certain psychological distance, not allowing any dream of mutuality, co-existence, or of any personal relations at all.² The look of the Other here seems to operate impersonally, comparable to the effect of anonymous surveillance cameras, the Omniscient, a binding sense of one’s conscience/internalized laws/taboo.

As pointed out by Martin Jay, the origin of this effect might be found in the “constituent power” that adults exert upon an infant in his/her personal formation.³ The following passage of Sartre’s reminiscences clearly shows how the gaze of surrounding adults oriented his self-understanding as a child, casting a long shadow over his behavior and character. “My truth, my character, and my name were in the hands of adults. I had learned to see myself through their eyes.... When they were not present, they left their gaze behind, and it mingled with the light. I would run and jump across that gaze, which preserved my nature as a model grandson.”⁴ In *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, a similar story is told to describe the crucial biographical moment of Jean Genet: when the ten-year-old boy reaches into a drawer unself-consciously, “Someone has entered and is watching him. Beneath this gaze the child comes to himself. He who is not yet anyone suddenly becomes Jean Genet.... A voice declares publicly: ‘You’re a thief.’... The gaze of the adults is a constituent power which has transformed him into a constituted nature.”⁵ The Other

² For a compact summary clarifying where to place Sartre’s expanded suspicion of “the Cartesian perspectivalist gaze” in the history of the French anti-ocularcentric discourses, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley & London, 1993), pp. 264-282. My reading of *Being and Nothingness* is greatly indebted to Jay’s text. Jay also points out that Sartre’s treatment of “the look” is deeply affected by his “ocularphobia,” “obsessive hostility to vision,” which certainly invites accounts in biographical or psychoanalytical terms (Jay, pp. 276-277).

³ According to Jay, François George sees in Sartre’s work “le regard absolu,” the transcendent, nonreciprocal look of “an omniscient God,” which also could be associated with Sartre’s dead father or with his maternal grandfather (Charles Schweitzer), cf. Jay, pp. 277-279.

⁴ Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York, 1964), p. 158, quoted in Jay, p. 279.

⁵ Sartre, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York, 1963), p. 17, quoted in Jay, p. 295. Also in *The Reprieve*, Sartre has the homosexual character Daniel articulate his agonizing experience of being petrified by the look of some unspecific others. “They see me – no, not even that: it sees me. He was the object of looking.... I am seen. Transparent, transparent, transfixed. But by whom?” Cf. Sartre, *The Reprieve*, trans. Eric Sutton, New York, 1947, p. 135, quoted in Jay, p. 293.

who makes me see myself as an object is thus related to me as the third person, so to speak, designated particularly in the third person plural ("they"), or equated even with the impersonal "it." Certainly the Other appears each time in the form of a specific individual, yet simultaneously plays the role of an anonymous, unspecific being, the role of the Judge or whoever represents the imaginary community called the "world" or "society."

As a result of internalizing the Other's judgement, real or imagined, I come to believe I'm such and such (a handsome boy, an ideal grandson, a thief, etc.). If so, the Other's gaze is, as it were, a mirror that teaches how I appear to them, what attributes I'm given by them, while the mirror seems simultaneously to intensify and standardize the effect of self-reification. Both the mirror and the Other's gaze bring into relief a discrepancy between the "I" as a pre-reflective, unself-conscious subject of looking and the "I" belonging to the visible world, as an object for the Other to perceive. They both reveal the fact that I need to be mediated by and dependent upon the Other in order to be who I am/what I am.⁶

When this "mirror" function of the Other's gaze is activated, I am "petrified," too occupied with the image of myself in imagination to look at the Other in actual perception. If I manage to return the gaze, then the Other disappears, no longer reflecting my image in the "mirror." The incommensurability between perception and imagination, as formulated elsewhere by Sartre, reappears here, except that imagination is identified this time with "the paralyzing internalization of the Other's gaze."⁷

The mirroring gaze of the Other also creates a "void," opening up a "hole" in my visual field and destabilizing it. It is a process of the radical decentering of the subject, something Norman Bryson epitomizes as follows; once the Other enters into the world, "the center of the watcher's lived horizon" suddenly loses effect; "the watcher self is now a tangent, not a center, a vanishing point, not a viewing point, an opacity on the other's distant horizon. Everything reconverges on this intrusive center where the watcher self is not: the intruder becomes a kind of drain which sucks in all of the former plenitude, a black hole pulling the scene away from the watcher self into an engulfing void."⁸ Transforming the watcher self into the watched, a spectacle for

⁶ As Jay points out, there seems an undeniable parallel with the Lacanian ego of the mirror stage, for in both cases the ego is considered "as an illusory representation, as a source and focus of alienation," although Lacan criticized Sartre "for positing an irreducible core of subjective autonomy, a 'self-sufficiency of consciousness' prior to the intersubjective dialectic of desire" (Jay, pp. 346-347).

⁷ See *Being and Nothingness*, p. 258 and Jay, p. 288.

⁸ Norman Bryson, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," in: *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (New York, 1988), p. 89.

another's sight, the look of the Other is here comparable to a "drain," a "black hole," through which the universe as my visual field, concentrically unfolding before me, runs away at a gulp.

For the same process, Jacques Lacan introduces the concept of "scotomization:" "As the locus of the relation between me, the annihilating subject, and that which surrounds me, the gaze seems to possess such a privilege that it goes so far as to have me scotomized, I who look, the eye of him who sees me as object. In so far as I am under the gaze, Sartre writes, I no longer see the eye that looks at me and, if I see the eye, the gaze disappears."⁹ According to Jay, the term "scotomization" was first borrowed from ophthalmology by Jean-Martin Charcot, in order to describe hysterical vision, and later revived to designate a mode of psychotic unawareness, "a process of psychic depreciation, by means of which the individual attempts to deny everything which conflicts with his ego."¹⁰ In his re-working of the theme of vision from the well-known mirror stage theory, Lacan reintroduces the concept to suggest that "an actual blind-spot occurs when something is too threatening to be seen."¹¹

The emergence of the Other thus generates an excessive threat to our vision. Although the strength of this "drain" – whether the entire world of visibility fades away or only a tiny part gets stained – might fluctuate, the subject loses the former integrity of its visual world. The Other appears, as it were, so disturbing, so blinding as to burn into the retina. His/her eyes, the face, at least part of it, or even the entire body, at least its front part, turn more or less invisible – and oscillate between visibility and invisibility.¹²

As far as the Other is identified with the subject of the look, which as "the mirror" makes me see myself and as "the void" deprives me of the plenitude of visual perception, the Other remains, by definition, invisible. Looking straight at the Other is forbidden, in a way, as one would be petrified, even blinded like a hysteric. The Other is therefore a locus where our vision proves impotent – a malfunction paradoxically rooted in the age-old alliance be-

⁹ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York & London, 1981), p. 84.

¹⁰ René Laforgue, "Scotomization in Schizophrenia," in: *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 8 (1927), p. 473, quoted in Jay, p. 354.

¹¹ Jay, p. 356.

¹² The effect of the Other's gaze might be comparable to that of the sun as a source of potentially maddening, excessive stimuli for the naked eyes; without sunlight we cannot see, and yet if we look directly into it, we are blinded. See Jonathan Crary, "Modernizing Vision," in: *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (New York, 1988), p. 34, for his study on the early 19th century's "new centrality of the body in vision," manifest especially in some scientists' curious passion for "the experience of staring directly into the sun, of sunlight searing itself onto the body."

tween seeing and knowing. "In short, the Other can exist for us in two forms; if I experience him with evidence, I fail to know him; if I know him, if I act upon him, I only reach his being-as-object and his probable existence in the midst of the world. No synthesis of these two forms is possible" (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 302).

Slaying Medusa, or how to make the Other harmless

The paralyzing effect of the Other's gaze finds its classical representation in the figure of Medusa/the Gorgon. In Freudian symbolism and its application to iconography, Medusa conveys many-sided, layered meanings, yet it is basically associated with "the castration anxiety that comes from having looked at something."¹³ Here we could possibly discern another stratum of the visual (or anti-visual?) experience of the Other – a stratum in which traumatic signifiers are buried and expected to resurface.

It is on the theme of castration that Yve-Alain Bois plays variations in his provocative article "On Matisse: The Blinding" (1994).¹⁴ Comparing *Le bonheur de vivre* (1905-6) with Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907), Bois turns to Leo Steinberg's preceding study and points out, "The essential difference between the two canvases lies in their mode of addressing the spectator." In *Les Femmes d'Alger* "all the figures relate 'singly, directly, to the spectator;' they stare at us," and "it was in order to place the unity of his picture 'in the startled consciousness of a viewer who sees himself seen' that Picasso used everything in his power to prevent us from viewing it as a scene." These women are thus depicted as a cause of the sense of stupefaction, namely, "the cardinal symptom of castration anxiety."¹⁵

The psychoanalytical interpretation of the "Gazing Monster" Medusa is also adopted in Masayuki Tanaka's latest study on Man Ray.¹⁶ Fully aware of the possibility of decoding sexist traits in the Surrealist circle, Tanaka seemingly allows such an interpretation of Man Ray's work, in which women go through objectification and fragmentation in order to serve the desiring male

¹³ Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), in: *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, and "Medusa's Head" (1922), in: *Standard Edition*, vol. 18. See Jay, pp. 275-279.

¹⁴ Yve-Alain Bois, "On Matisse: The Blinding," in: *October*, 68 (Spring, 1994).

¹⁵ Leo Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel" (1972), reprinted in: *October*, 44 (Spring 1988), pp. 7-74. See Bois, pp. 103-104. Bois amplifies this point, combining it with another variation of "the theme of castration anxiety," that is, the blinding effect of the sun (pp. 79, 118-120).

¹⁶ Masayuki Tanaka, "Man Ray's Representation of Woman's Eye and the Uncanny," in: *Bigaku [Aesthetics]*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Winter, 1999), pp. 25-36.

gaze.¹⁷ And yet, he contends, Man Ray's representation of woman cannot be reduced to a feminist schema of this kind. Rather, deeply connected with Medusa and her fate of decapitation, it should be read as a visualization of the castration anxiety. Ultimately, through "<the return of the repressed> which is a threat to the rational subject," the artist realized the Surrealist ideal, an emancipation of the unconscious.¹⁸

However these two readings – the "objectification of the female subject" and the symbolic representation of castration anxiety – seem closely related to each other. As Tanaka himself articulates, violent manipulations of the female body – the eye, the face, or the head cut off or erased altogether – could be counted as variations of the Medusa theme. Opposite in appearance, one causing terror (a woman with evil eyes) and the other provoking desire (a woman without eyes, or faceless, headless), perhaps they only refer to different sides of the essentially similar reaction that the male subject entertains, confronted with the female Other. It might also be possible to see the original myth of Medusa and Perseus as in a way tinged with this same ambiguity. The Monster is evoked, only to be killed; the object of fear and the process of overcoming coexist there, just as the Freudian Medusa simultaneously represents the cause of castration anxiety, the image of castration, and its denial.¹⁹

According to Carol Duncan, "very often images of women in modern art speak of male fears," the story of man fighting and eventually transcending the monstrous woman/mother.²⁰ De Kooning's *Woman I* (1952) is a prominent example, one of those "distorted or dangerous-looking creatures, potentially overpowering, devouring, or castrating." Duncan points to a "striking resemblance" between this image and the Gorgon of ancient Greek art. Indicative of her origin as a fertility or mother goddess, the Gorgon often appears flanked by animals and adopting a characteristically self-exposing gesture, and yet de Kooning's figure "appears especially intended to conjure up infantile feelings of powerlessness before the mother and the dread of castration: in the open jaw can be read the vagina dentate – the idea of a dangerous, devouring vagina, too horrible to depict, and hence transposed to the toothy mouth."²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁹ See Bois, p. 104.

²⁰ Carol Duncan, "The MoMa's Hot Mamas" (1989) in: *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 189-207. Also see pp. 81-120 ("Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting" and "The Esthetics of Power in Modern Erotic Art") for her analysis of the development of representations of women in modern art, from the fin de siècle "femme fatal" to either a far more aggressive "praying mantis" or "an obedient animal/passive, available flesh" in the early 20th century.

²¹ Ibid., p. 197.

However, the painting doesn't simple-mindedly visualize "the dread of castration." Besides the image of the archaic goddess/monster, it also incorporates contemporary representations of woman in the mass media, by showing off her vulgarity or her "girlie" side. The woman here is, therefore, "simultaneously frightening and ludicrous," as de Kooning himself once described her. The monster that the male subject has to overcome, transcend, is already halfway made harmless. "The ambiguity of the image thus gives the artist (and the viewer) both the experience of danger and a feeling of overcoming it."²²

Given that iconic, frontal images of woman with staring eyes frequent the history of modern art, the next question is whether they really have the "uncanny" effect of awakening the unconscious, or repressed castration anxiety, that is, whether Medusa's petrifying power is kept intact even in those mediated images. "Castration" itself is in fact a dubious term and its phallocentric origin remains to be excavated,²³ but the issue has to be limited here to clarifying how the Other can be captured within visibility – within representation.

On the one hand, images which relate directly to the spectator somehow do simulate the effect of the Other's presence. As semi-subjects, or simulacra of the Other, they repeat the alternation between the Other-as-subject and the Other-as-object in what Richard Brilliant calls "the oscillation between art object and human subject."²⁴ However, while some of those images may well visualize monstrous, forbidden objects and touch the layer of the unconscious along with trauma buried in it, that visualization of terror is often accompanied by protection against itself, as the monster is shown in a lowered form, either deprived of her gaze or made ludicrous. In a way the protection is already there, or the attempt to translocate the monster into the world of the flat plane, of representation, in which she as an image never completely negates visibility.

Medusa and Perseus – this mythological pair – is in this sense suggestive

²² Ibid., pp. 198-199.

²³ For the issue as to how persistently "the privileged status of male viewers" has been preserved within the frame of modern art, as in the case of *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, see Duncan, p. 200-201.

²⁴ See Bois, p. 104, and Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 7. Brilliant here points to "the double nature of portraiture," which straddles both life and art:

"...the oscillation between art object and human subject, represented so personally, is what gives portraits their extraordinary grasp on our imagination." Images in successful portraits achieve the effect of presence via that of likeness, since they "pretend not to be signs or tokens invented by artists, but rather aim to represent the manner in which their subjects would appear to the viewer in life" (p. 20). Particularly a frontal, full-face portrait, compared to a profile, directly addresses the viewer in the first person and so functions like the "I-You" relation (pp. 27, 43-45).

of how to represent and thereby “slay” the Other, the function of which (as a mirror and as the void) would otherwise become intolerable. According to Thomas Hess, de Kooning’s Women grasp an elusive, dangerous truth “by the throat:” “And truth can be touched only by complications, ambiguities and paradox, so, like the hero who looked for Medusa in the mirroring shield, he must study her flat, reflected image every inch of the way.”²⁵

Immediate vision vs. mediate vision

While the body of the Other resists being seen, hiding itself behind the blinding gaze, in many cases the body is on display for us to devour and the human form is said to be “a magnet for the eye.” We should move on now to ask how and on which conditions it becomes less problematic to see the Other.

In Sartre’s schema, whether one remains a subject or degenerates into an object depends on the struggle for “the right to see without being seen.” I need to see without being seen in order to concentrate on seeing – if so, some devices or tricks have to be contrived to produce a solipsistic illusion of pure subjectivity, to cross out the fact that I am the body, a visible object for the Other.

With devices of this sort, surely our visual world changes. It seems possible, accordingly, to distinguish two types of vision, provisionally called <immediate vision> and <mediate vision>. When a subject faces another subject, they are both kept in each other’s <immediate vision>, each struggling for the right to remain the subject and never fully achieving it. The subject-state and the object-state alter, “for each has its own instability and collapses in order for the other to rise from its ruins” (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 297). Yet, it also seems part of our daily practice to switch from this <immediate vision> to <mediate vision> so as to make the Other a harmless object. Just as Perseus, in beheading Medusa, looks at the monster only in reflection in his shiny shield, so we capture the Other, not in the flesh / presence, but in representation, keeping the Other distanced ontologically and thus sealing up the power of the gaze. One exemplary case is the theatre, where the stage forms a world clearly distinguished from the auditorium. A spotlight is directed on the performers, while the spectators sink into the darkness. The same structure is followed by other media of spectacle, drastically expanding the language of technology for “seeing without being seen.”²⁶ And even without those spe-

²⁵ Thomas B. Hess, *Willem de Kooning* (New York, 1959), p. 7, quoted in Duncan, p. 198.

²⁶ Of course, not all the media for spectacle, for the mediate vision, have been designed entirely “to contain the Other within his objectivity” (*Being and Nothingness*, p.

cific, large scale settings, a temporary capturing of “the Other as an object” happens everywhere. When you stand in front of someone with a camera in your hand, its “Medusa effect” determines almost instantaneously who is looking/who is being looked at. Or when you lie down on the operating table, your body thoroughly becomes an object, as the gaze of medicine is authorized to examine it.²⁷ A similar asymmetric relation of “seeing without being seen” (and vice versa) could be observed in the structure of a panopticon, as well as in that of a peep show – although such relations seem easily destabilized, as in the case of Duchamp’s posthumous work *Étant Donnés* (1946-66), where the viewer’s body, supposedly invisible, becomes an object to be displayed.²⁸ Whether clothed or naked may also determine to some extent which one takes the role of the viewer, if as Sartre writes, “To put on clothes is to hide one’s object-state: it is to claim the right of seeing without being seen; that is, to be pure subject” (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 289).

In <immediate vision>, I see myself always exposed to the Other’s look and my vision easily hurt by its blinding effect. In <mediate vision>, as if enjoying seeing the world without belonging to it, the notion of “the disembodied eye,” “a view on the world, rather than in it” resurfaces. Naturally my eyes, constantly changing direction and refocusing, never leave my body, which itself is embedded in the world. However, there are moments I’m absorbed in and at the same time distanced from what I see in <mediate vision>, so that my object-state as a body sinks into oblivion. <Immediate vision> and <mediate vision> alternate and both constitute the landscape of our daily life.²⁹

By the same token, we may naturally imagine that a painter (male, nor-

297). In the midst of our daily life, which is endlessly overloaded with visual “noise,” raw, chaotic, non-oriented, and in flux, those visual media provide materials already selected, edited and restructured, less burdening on our vision – a rather comfortable “armchair” in which our eyes can relax and slow down the process of perception, ending up not seeing unless oriented to see. Such a way of functioning certainly reflects how our vision works, selectively and actively, shutting out and thus defending itself from excessive stimuli.

²⁷ The uncanniness of “my experience of my own body” is discussed by Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London & New York, 1996), pp. 34-35.

²⁸ For the ironical situation in *Étant Donnés* where “the viewer becomes the uneasy object of a gaze from behind – that of those waiting to stare at the peep show,” see Jay, pp. 169-170. Also for the role of a scopophilic viewer which affects the appearance of an object, see Brilliant, pp. 152-153.

²⁹ For this to be discussed further, Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the Cartesian geometer’s eye, which stays outside and above the scene it surveys, certainly needs to be reexamined, along with Bryson’s opposition between Gaze and Glance, or Walter Benjamin’s between *Sammulung* and *Zerstreuung*. See Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 87-131, Walter Benjamin, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” (Dritte Fassung), in: *Walter Benjamin Gessammelte Schriften I/2*, (Frankfurt an Main, 1991), p. 504.

mally) and his model (female, often naked) should be another conspicuous pair where <mediate vision> materializes itself against the field of <immediate vision>. And yet, portrait painters often prefer working with photos (or representations of other kinds), or from memory, rather than face to face with their models. In some extreme cases, a painter even blindfolds himself after working from a model. As reported by Bois, Matisse favored this fashion, since he believed, “if I close my eyes, I see objects better than with my eyes open.”³⁰

This paradox reminds us of a long tradition in which painting has been regarded not as an art of sight but as an art primarily based on memory. Placed in this tradition, the painter somehow comes closer to the poet/writer, as if painting and drawing were nothing but subdivisions of writing. Then, if “You only really see when you don’t look,” you give up your sight in the present tense – stop catching an object in its immediate sensation and turn to its shadow, its substitute, its image preserved in memory. In this shifting the original is replaced by the copy. A substitute as it is, the copy surpasses the original here, coming through a process of crystallization in memory <mediate vision>, while the original, that is, an experience of the Other <immediate vision>, always has some part blurred (or even “scotomized”). The copy supplements and modulates stimuli of the original, too intense to taste, too vague to articulate, too traumatic to live fully.

We may recall Jacques Derrida’s reinterpretation of an ancient anecdote which later became associated with the “origin of painting/drawing.” The story was initially taken from Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* (Book XXXV) in which Butades, a potter of Sicyon at Corinth, was introduced with his daughter, “who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by a lamp.”³¹ Referring to some exemplary representations in painting, Derrida brings it to our notice that this Corinthian girl wasn’t looking at her lover when she drew. “As if looking is prohibited when one is drawing, or one makes a drawing only on condition that one doesn’t look. As if drawing is a confession of love, destined to or organized for the invisibility of the Other.”³² Thus in the heart of drawing and painting, for which “replacing perception with memory” is essential, there lies “the absence, the invisibility, of one’s model,” “the invisibility of the Other” – if we follow Derrida’s own phrasing.

³⁰ Bois, pp. 77-78.

³¹ And “Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief, which he hardened by exposure to fire with the rest of his pottery.” Pliny, *Natural History* (Volume IX, Book XXXIII-XXXV), trans. H. Rackham (London and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952), pp. 371-373.

³² Jacques Derrida, *Motifs d’aveugle – L’autoportrait et autres ruines* (Paris, 1990), trans. to Japanese by Satoshi Ukai (Tokyo, 1998), p. 63. (Translation into English is by the author of the paper).

For the shifting from perception to memory, however, or from the original to the copy, at least two distinct sources should be considered, for painting either “from memory” or “from nature” is not an issue solely for portraiture but relates to painting/drawing in general. At one level, the shift is certainly necessitated by the presence of the Other; the Other doesn’t fully become visible in <immediate vision>, which proves deficient under the blinding gaze. And yet, a clear, detailed, and faultless picture – the product of a perfectly normal vision – could overflow and paralyze us so that directly perceived images must be replaced by images imprinted in memory. Already edited and reworked through a mental process of the subject, they are kept in store in a “powerfully selective,”³³ compressed form, ready to be unpacked at any time.

In making a portrait of someone – in capturing the Other via a medium of representation – you are thus doubly motivated to make a Perseusian detour, to switch from the immediate sensation of an object to its represented/reworked image.

This paper intended to argue that the Other can be a source of excessive stimuli, a burden much too heavy on our vision, so that various media or devices for “seeing the Other” have been invented. With them, the Other is removed to another world which is not ours, securing our position of “seeing without being seen.” The Other’s body thus generates one conspicuous locus, which manifests more than anything how our vision needs to be protected and assisted – how it needs to be mediated.

The petrifying, blinding effect is, needless to say, only one aspect of the Other’s look. And yet, within a cultural climate in which the human body is no longer a classical body but is represented dominantly as a grotesque body, it might perhaps obtain a new meaning to recognize rather dreadful aspects of experiencing the Other.³⁴ Moreover, we will hopefully contextualize better an alternative path taken by the descendents of Perseus, who choose a copy

³³ Thomas Crow, “Saturday Disaster: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol,” in: *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London, UK, 1990), p. 316.

³⁴ And we may also understand better today’s anti-ocularcentric discourse flourishing over the vulnerability of vision, as this “alternative way” might somehow lead to a middle ground between the “pure opticality,” the “disembodied eye” of the viewer of modernist painting or of pop art and the overemphasized physicality of minimal and post-minimal art. See Kikuko Toyama, “Carnality recovered and painting doomed: minimalism as a site of the redefinition of the aesthetic subject,” in: *The Ural International Journal of Philosophy*, No.1(2), 2000, pp.155-166, and “The Bodies after the ‘End of Painting,’” in: *Bigaku* [Aesthetics], Vol. 51, No. 2, Autumn 2000, pp. 1-12. Cf. Rosalind Krauss, “Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop,” in: *Dia Art Foundation: Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, No. 1, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, 1987), pp. 59-64.

on a shield <mediate vision> in order to kill, let go, the original <immediate vision> – as if one could be reunited with the Other only in such an action of mourning in advance. “Only the dead can perpetually be objects without ever becoming subjects” (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 297).