

*Medusa, He Writes*  
M R Weber

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**The following piece was produced for performance artist Miss Helen Schoene's recent work *Hair Piece*, which took place at Kaleid Editions, London, in 2010.**

**It is also reproduced in the artist's book which accompanied the piece. For more information, or to purchase the book, please visit [www.wurmpea.com](http://www.wurmpea.com)**

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The word hair, for it is only a word, wears some polyphemic mask. It is a single strand of extruded tissue, but is also a shifting accretion.

A single hair is an avatar of futile enumeration, hailing from a city composed of matchsticks. Hair, when reduced to hairs, is a representation of an imposed hierarchy - of a scientific absolutism carried to absurdity. This ceaseless naming has been called Apollonian, male, phallic. Medusa, the girl given auto-procreation, manifests this. Her hair is her hair, but her hairs are snakes. Given such a warped project, such a fossilising gaze, repulsion is inevitable. Only an Apollonian would, or possibly could, see her hair as individual strands. Only he could conceive of such an endless enumeration (fig. 7b), of an analysis so clearly futile. Futile, because it is based on a false proposition - that the knowledge of hair can be deduced from individual hairs. As though, in studying a grain of sand, we can predict pleasure beaches. Given this, it should come as no surprise that all he finds is himself, staring back snake-eyed from each strand.

Conversely, hair is unique. It is personal, and is the unity of creation - from the many, one. It's halonic mass is such that Medusa's hair, unlike her hairs, is an object of reverence. Yet, it is also a warning of the

danger of proximity, the futility inherent in analysis. It is this that makes it so disturbing, for it stands as a lonely cenotaph to the failure of logic. It may be contended that this failure extends only to a particularly Athenian form of logic. So be it. The myth was written by Athenians, and so were we.

In the face of such irreconcilable ambiguity, it seems language takes the only (ahem) logical course; it ignores it. It may be seen as a blessing that our speech is pliable enough to permit such gross inaccuracy - 1 hair, some hair (fig. xxC8).

And yet, the word "hair" itself is considered profane, taboo. There is no doubt that this is partly due to some genito-hygenic connotation, some association with an animal vision of our bodies. However, we also seem acutely aware that there is an element of inaccuracy involved in the use of the word, as though we ridicule our powers of speech every time it is uttered. Given this unholy coupling of sex with debasement, the word cannot help but be profane. Or sacred, for this amounts to much the same thing; It is a fact that "fuck" operates in the same way as "Jehovah". Hair is both shunned and venerated, taboo and godhead, and gains its power precisely through its own suppression.

So if Medusa is rhetoric, she is also syllables, words, sentences and everything in between. If she has hair, her hairs are snakes, delicately curled ringlets and incense-matted dreadlocks. She defies naming by her very nature, like art. A word is written, but it is not writing. A paint-stroke is painted, but it is not painting. At what point are we to define the habitation of the moveable feast? At what point are we to define the existence of art?

It is in this question that the greatest transcendent power is found. Medusa is the moon, the unblinking omnipotence of united beauty, but she is also the infinite snake-eyed stars, the gaze that freezes then shatters reality.