



Jean-Léon Gérôme, "Pygmalion and Galatea" (c.1890)

Locus suspectus: Landscape and the Uncanny in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

A reading of *Met.* 4.772-781

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The Uncanny (*Das Unheimlich*)

- That which “evokes fear and dread” (Freud 2003:123)
- “[A]n uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary...” (Freud 2003:150-151)

Things that give rise to the uncanny

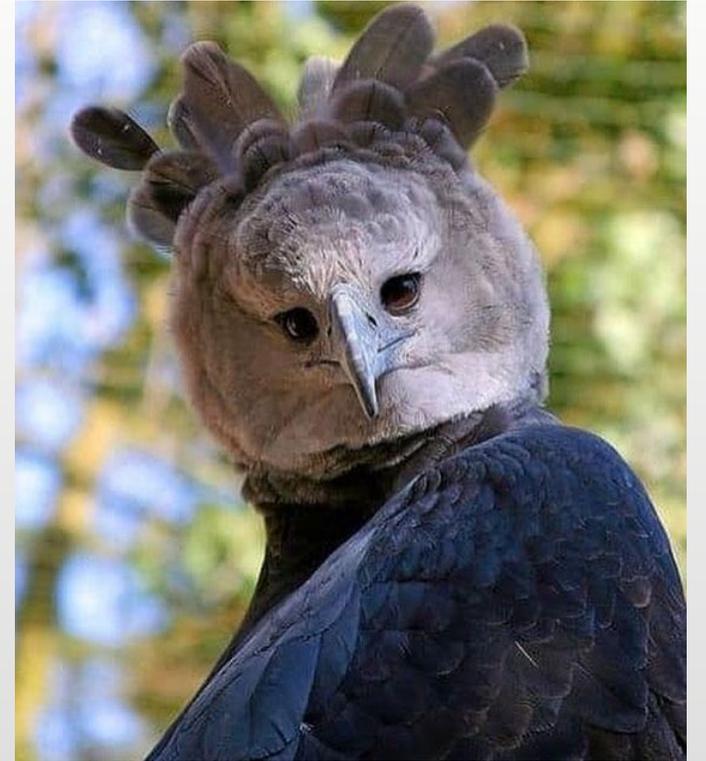
- Nearly animate inanimate objects
- Nearly inanimate animate beings
- Death, dying, disease, and corpses
- Animated severed body parts
- Doubles
- Unintentional returns
- The revealed (vs. *heimlich*, the hidden)
- Any of the above + intellectual uncertainty



Bugs



Ghosty twins



Harpy eagle

Met. 4.772-781

narrat Agenorides gelido sub Atlante iacentem
esse locum solidae tutum munimine molis;

Perseus, kin of Agenor, recounts that lying below frozen Atlas,
There is a place, protected by its solid mass;

Met. 4.772-781

narrat Agenorides gelido sub Atlante iacentem
esse locum solidae tutum munimine molis;
cuius in introitu geminas habitasse sorores
Phorcidas unius partitas luminis usum;

775

Perseus, kin of Agenor, recounts that lying below frozen Atlas,
There is a place, protected by its solid mass;
At its entrance lived identical sisters, daughters of Phorcys,
sharing only one eye between them.

Met. 4.772-781

narrat Agenorides gelido sub Atlante iacentem
esse locum solidae tutum munimine molis;
cuius in introitu geminas habitasse sorores
Phorcidas unius partitas luminis usum; 775
id se sollerti furtim, dum traditur, astu
supposita cepisse manu perque abdita longe
deviaque et silvis horrentia saxa fragosis
Gorgoneas tetigisse domos

Met. 4.772-779

Perseus, kin of Agenor, recounts that lying below frozen Atlas,
There is a place, protected by its solid mass;
At its entrance lived identical sisters, daughters of Phorcys,
sharing only one eye between them.
Perseus took it, mid-pass, stealthily, with cunning skill,
substituting his own hand, and then through far off hideaways
and wrong turns and rocks bristling with shaggy trees,
he reached the Gorgons' home;

Locus suspectus

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Gorgoneas tetigisse domos

Met. 4.772-779

domus est imis in vallibus huius

abdita, sole carens, non ulli pervia vento

Her house is in the inmost valleys

hidden, without sun, visited by no breeze.

Met. 2.761-762

Locus suspectus

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esse locum solidae tutum munimine molis;
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Met. 4.772-779

domus est imis in vallibus huius
abdita, sole carens, non ulli pervia vento
*Her house is in the inmost valleys
hidden, without sun, visited by no breeze.
Met.* 2.761-762

est locus extremis Scythiae glacialis in oris
*There is a place in the furthest shores of frozen Scythia ...
Met.* 8.788

Met. 4.772-781

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Phorcidas unius partitas luminis usum; 775
id se sollerti furtim, dum traditur, astu
supposita cepisse manu perque abdita longe
deviaque et silvis horrentia saxa fragosis
Gorgoneas tetigisse domos passimque per agros
perque vias vidisse hominum simulacra ferarumque 780
in silicem ex ipsis visa conversa Medusa.

Perseus, kin of Agenor, recounts that lying below frozen Atlas,
There is a place, protected by its solid mass;
At its entrance lived identical sisters, daughters of Phorcys,
sharing only one eye between them.
Perseus took it, mid-pass, stealthily, with cunning skill,
substituting his own hand, and then through far off hideaways
and wrong turns and rocks bristling with shaggy trees,
he reached the Gorgons' home; here and there through the
fields
and through roads he saw shapes of people and of beasts,
changed from their own selves into flint, seen by Medusa.

Simulacra

passimque per agros

perque vias vidisse **hominum simulacra ferarumque**
in silicem ex ipsis visa conversa Medusa.

Met. 4.779-781

here and there through the fields

and the through roads he saw **likenesses of people and of
beasts,**

changed from their own selves into flint, seen by Medusa.

Styx nebulas exhalat iners, umbraeque recentes
descendunt illac **simulacraque** functa sepulcris.

Met. 4.434-435

The motionless Styx exhales vapors, the recently dead
come down to that place and the **likenesses** of those given
burial.

Simulacra

passimque per agros

perque vias vidisse **hominum simulacra ferarumque**
in silicem ex ipsis visa conversa Medusa.

Met. 4.779-781

here and there through the fields

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Styx nebulas exhalat iners, umbraeque recentes
descendunt illac **simulacraque** functa sepulcris.

Met. 4.434-435

The motionless Styx exhales vapors, the recently dead
come down to that place and the **likenesses** of those given
burial.

sparsa quoque in vario passim miracula caelo
vastarumque videt trepidus **simulacra ferarum.**

Met. 2.193-194

Shaking Phaethon also sees portents scattered here and there
in various parts of the sky and the **likenesses of enormous
beasts.**

Met. 4.772-781

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Phorcidas unius partitas luminis usum; 775
id se sollerti furtim, dum traditur, astu
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Generic constrictions

- “Even when Pygmalion’s beautiful statue comes to life, this is hardly felt to be uncanny” (Freud 2003:153)
- “...feelings of fear, and therefore of the uncanny, are totally ruled out” (Freud 2003:158)

Met. 4.772-781

narrat Agenorides gelido sub Atlante iacentem
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cuius in introitu geminas habitasse sorores
Phorcidas **unius** partitas **luminis** usum; 775
id se sollerti furtim, dum traditur, astu
supposita cepisse manu perque abdita longe
deviaque et silvis horrentia saxa fragosis
Gorgoneas tetigisse domos passimque per agros
perque vias **vidisse** hominum simulacra ferarumque 780
in silicem ex ipsis **visa** conversa Medusa.

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Bonus: Georgics

at cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis
umbrae ibant tenues simulacraque luce carentum

Virgil, *Georgics* 4.471-472

But moved by Orpheus' song, from the deepest realms of
Erebus,

Slight shades came and **likenesses** of those gone from the light.