

Elaine Fantham - February 11th, 1990

## The Gaze of the Gorgon

A recent performance of a contortionist called to mind one alleged origin of the Medusa figure. The contortionist, a young, attractive woman, bent herself into such a position that her head, framed in long hair, was up between her legs, giving the appearance of a Hellenistic Medusa figure. Medusa, like the other gorgons, was originally horrendously ugly and frightful, but Hellenistic art turned her into a beautiful

In the literary evidence, Homer in the Iliad (see #1 and 2) links the Gorgon with the Aegis (the goat-skin breast covering of Zeus, also borrowed by