

APOLLINIAN FORCE

I began the last chapter with a gesture to Apollo, the one who gives the power to figure the seemingly unfigurable Dionysus, and in this context I will valorize the violence of his figuration: Apollo is a figure who brings determination in the midst of nondetermination and in whose originary violence I find memory of both oblivion and nonorigin. It is no wonder that he is closely associated with Dionysus. The wisdom, foresight, healing, and purification that he brings, the restoration of order through redemptive cleansing, the blessing of catharsis for body and soul—his gifts are proximate to the Dionysian site of extravagance, violation, and destruction. Apollo's gifts can come to the one who has broken laws, who has brought sickness to himself and his community, who has disrupted harmonies in life, who has crossed a border of established patterns and customs or who has been scarred by the ec-stasis of unenlightened revelry. But Apollo is not lost to the darkness to which he brings illumination. Much other than light, healing, and order is remembered in his figuration. His mother, Leto, is a divinity of night, and he was born under a panoply of light-quenching water, provided by Poseidon, to protect his birth from the fury of Hera who would have prevented his arrival because of Zeus' infidelity with Leto and fathering of Apollo. In addition to being a healer, Apollo is a bringer of sudden death. As dream gives his element includes darkness. Although he is god of prophecy and the coming of knowledge, the enlightenment that he gives and the contact he provides mortals (with radiant Zeus) can come in the form of delirium and touch with the mysterious darkness whose interpretation spills forth without grammatical sense or clear meaning (thereby leaving room for self-serving or mad interpretations). While his songs can temper anger and rage, he himself is given to terrible jealousy and terrifying fits of destructive emotion: he is boastful and threatening in his promises; only Zeus could bring a halt to his fight with Heracles and to his murderous intent toward the young Hermes; he killed many Greeks before the Trojan walls because of what he took to be an insult; he flayed Marsyas, the flute player who challenged his musical prowess; and he attempted to rape Daphne. There is little that is clean and clear in this god who hates filth and is noted for his clarity of line and measure.

He was feared by gods and mortals. He was noted for being overbearing and violent, and tyranny is associated with this law giver and founder of new social orders. But much of his violence is found in his his-

toy before the full establishment of Zeus' rule on Olympus. His widespread acceptance in many "pre-Olympian" communities, his early Nordic and Asian life, his apparent distance from the Greeks—he supported Troy and was possibly at home among the Hittites—are carried in a figuration that became dominated by his service to Zeus. He is celebrated as protector of herds, patron of young men, deity of warm seasons and spring growth, overseer of the induction of new citizens. But although he is closely associated with social order, his many sexual exploits often have an unrestrained quality. He is found frequently on the boundary of the social order that he also protects. He is not a stranger to the margins where excess begins. There is something odd about this deity in his complex persona of order.¹

The oddity that I wish to emphasize is found in his gift of structure and clarity. In that gift we find the combinations of order and violence and of determination and indetermination. In this instance we find something like a memory of unordered in the coming of order, something like memory of indetermination in the establishment of the determinate forms. There is something utterly unclear in Apollo's shining clarity, and this unclarity includes memory of the boundaries where sense, significance, and sight fade out, a memory no less radical than Dionysian ecstasy, although its radicality is much less associated with body and is much more serene than that found in the train of Dionysus: a bloodless radicality, we might say, but nonetheless severe and relentless in spite of its association with beautiful form and harmonious social order.

Consider the coming of dreams. In dreamless sleep one seems to undergo something like an oblivion easily associated with a void or mere and undisturbed darkness. But a dream happens. In the midst of no image at all, nothing standing, no movement, there comes an event of images with sound, measure, and, for many ancient Greeks, message. The coming of a dream can be experienced as something coming out of nothing—rather like form coming from a mass of rock minus the hand of the sculptor. The presence of Apollo is felt in the radicality of such interruption by virtue of which the difference between image and no image at all becomes measurable. One is struck by an image, by a form that gives place to an indeterminacy that was no place before the image's arrival. Even if the dream is wild and incoherent, its coming—its happening—gives moment and determination and orders of formations. These passing images provide an order of things.