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THE "MONSTROUS VENUS" OF PREHISTORY
OR GODDESS CREATRIX

Marija Gimbutas

The term "palaeolithic Venus" by which the small ancient figurines were first characterized by scholars is obviously an ironic misnomer. "Venus", commonly understood as the apotheosis of erotic beauty, as personified by the Indo-European Goddess of Dawn and Love, is a concept which by no means fits the prehistoric portrayals of women. Palaeolithic as well as subsequent engravings, reliefs, and sculptures frequently represent the female body in forms which seem to us absurdly abstract or absurdly grotesque—so deformed or unrealistically exaggerated as to have been termed "monstrous" by some prehistorians and art historians. Only in the recognition of the presence of a preeminent deity is the class term "Venus" justified.

To this day the prehistoric "Venus" remains a puzzle. Why is she monstrous? Why "steatopygeous" (with pronounced buttocks), and with enormous breasts hanging over the equally enormous belly? Why has she in many portrayals no human head, but only a snake neck? Why bird-like posteriors? Why was she schematized to such a degree that only buttocks are modelled, head and legs left as mere cones? We shall seek some answers to these and other questions, and give some hint as to what she may have been.

Over the last hundred years or so some 1000 engravings, reliefs, and sculptures of female images from the palaeolithic period have been found, dating from c. 33,000 to c. 9,000 B.C. The earliest are Aurignacian engravings of vulvas and the earliest "Venuses" are from the East Gravettian period of central Europe, dated 27,000–26,000 B.C. Female images are found in a territory of roughly 3000 km. across, between the Pyrenees in the west and Siberia in the east. In Europe, most have been found in France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and the Ukraine.

Modeling or engraving of the female body or of its parts, such as vulva, breasts, and buttocks, did not stop at the end of the Palaeolithic, but continued into the Neolithic and beyond and still survives in corrupted form in graffitii. Clay or marble figurines abound in southeastern and east central Europe of 6500–3500 B.C., their number approaching 30,000. Monuments with female features, figurines, and anthropomorphic
Pendants or plaques are also known from the central and western Mediterranean, and from Atlantic Europe, where they date between c. 5000 and c. 2000 B.C. The island of Malta is famous for over life-size goddesses found in temples carved in soft stone as well as miniature figurines of clay and stone. In most of continental Europe, figurine art tapered off during and after 4500–2500 B.C., the period of gradual transformation from female-oriented to male-oriented family and religion. Only in the Aegean and Mediterranean islands and coastal regions did the old tradition persist through the third, and even into the second millennium B.C.

A number of books and articles published during the present century are dedicated to the problem of “Venuses”, and various explanations of why they were made have been offered. Among the more influential are those by Piette (1907), Luquet (1934), Passemard (1938), Hančar (1940), Sacassyn della Santa (1947), Pales (1968), and Delporte (1979), not to mention the general books on prehistoric art where the female images are also cursorily mentioned. The naturalistic forms of painted or carved animals, as more spectacular, have attracted far more attention.

Without going into a detailed review of the various explanations offered, one striking fact should be noted: none of the above mentioned researchers advanced the hypothesis that the images are symbolic or mythical figures, which may have been used to commemorate or reenact seasonal or other rites. The majority of scholars have, however, implied that the “Venuses” have to do with magic, or more concretely, were imbued with the magical power of fecundity. Della Santa, in summarizing the views preceding her (1947), summarized the postulated explanations as follows: the “Venuses” are 1) portraits of real women; 2) aesthetic or erotic ideals; 3) images of fecundity; 4) priestesses; 5) ancestresses. Even in 1979, Delporte, whose book on The Image of Woman in Prehistory (in French) gives a comprehensive treatment of much that has been written on the subject adds only the possibility that the “Venuses” may express a symbolic vision of femininity and may therefore portray both mothers and lovers. Leroi-Gourhan in the luxurious and significant book The Treasures of Prehistoric Art (1967) considered it to be premature to speak of the existence of a religious system (although he has shown that the depictions in caves are not random), but emphasized that the system may have been based on opposition and complementarity of male and female values, expressed symbolically by animal figures and by abstract signs. A new approach was presented by Marshack in The Roots of Civilization, the Cognitive Beginnings of
Man's First Art, Symbol and Notation (1972). He finds scenes engraved on mobiliary art connected with time-factored ideas, such as the coming of spring, death, and the renewal of life. He sees "storied images" and does not agree with Leroi-Gourhan's polarity of the female and male principles. In my book, The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe, 7000-3500 B.C. Myths, Legends, and Cult Images (1974), which deals with the figurines and cult objects of Old Europe, I have presented my own conviction that the images—animal, male or female—are inseparable from the mythical world, and that the "Venuses" are either representations of various aspects of the Goddess Creatrix, or are portrayals of participants in rituals dedicated to her various aspects and reenacted with the medium of figurine.

In order to approach an understanding of the mythic-cosmogonic system which must have existed in the Upper Palaeolithic, the consideration of later prehistoric materials, such as the treasures of the neolithic, chalcolithic, and copper age periods of Old Europe (pre-Indo-European Europe)—is of utmost importance. It is also necessary to extend research in the direction of the mythological evidence of historic European and Siberian peoples.

The quantities of neolithic-copper age figurines, their association with other cultic objects, their finding in house-shrines or in communal temples on altars or in other well documented contexts add to the possibility of interpretation or at least to an attempt at relevant meaning. Finding conditions and associations of palaeolithic female images are rarely known; in most cases the figurines have little or unknown context. With engravings the situation is better; sometimes a series of female images are engraved in rows or groupings (about 500 engravings were found at Gönnersdorf, in the Rhine area north of Koblenz: Boinski, 1968).

The continuity from the Palaeolithic into the Neolithic of the portrayal of certain features of the human female body, which we may call stereotypes, is certain: it is a potent argument for the continuity of a philosophical idea; the repetitious occurrence of certain postures and other peculiarities throughout the millennia cannot otherwise be explained or understood.

We begin, therefore, with the period which provides such rich evidence—the Neolithic-Copper Age of Old Europe—and project backward. We can also project forward from that time and link various aspects of prehistoric female images with those known from earliest historic periods and the still extant archaic features of European mythologies.
The millennial continuity of myth will be here regarded as a principal source in the search for the meaning of the prehistoric “Venuses”. I see a single line of development of a religious system from the Upper Palaeolithic through the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Copper Age, based on a matrifocal social organization. Old Europe ended, and her cultural system ceased to develop at the beginning of the Indo-European era when a very different social and religious system, dominated by males and male gods, began to supersede it. Thus the era of female dominance in religion is documented as continuous throughout some 25,000 years. After the major part of Europe was Indo-Europeanized in the period between 4500 and 2500 B.C., the two cultural systems were more or less fused, the Old European system continuing as an undercurrent. The fusion of the two systems can be traced in practically all European mythologies. Even present myths, composed of many layers and with an accretion of features acquired through time, often retain the ancient features of certain figures at the core of the myth. This is particularly true in the myths of cosmogony, where the most ancient aspects of the Goddess Creatrix appear. In many beliefs, fairy tales, riddles, etc. of European peoples, mythical female images continue some characteristics of that prehistoric Goddess of Life, Death and Regeneration. Even when severely demonized during the Christian era, their archaic features can be reconstructed. Such are the Slavic Baba Jaga and Paraskeva-Piatnitsa, the Baltic Laima and Ragana, the Irish Machas, Morrigan, or Queen Medb, the Germanic Nerthus, and many others. The Fates—Norns, Moirai, Parcae—, the apportioners, givers and takers, clearly go back to the prehistoric “Venus” and are not Indo-European in origin.

To return to the peculiarities of the palaeolithic “Venus”—the large vulva, pregnant belly, steatopygy, exaggerated breasts, and schematization of the rest of the body: These peculiarities have a very long life; they occur in the Palaeolithic and Neolithic and cannot therefore be accidental occurrences. Consistently the head, except perhaps for the coiffure, is unimportant. If shown, it rarely has normal human features; sometimes it has a nose or beak, and eyebrows, or is masked. Hands and arms, if present, are reduced, and feet are important only as pegs or stands. The study of the various postures of female images, their association with certain symbolic signs, and their association with cult places in the Neolithic and later, permits the conclusion that there was a long-lasting series of stereotypes or aspects of the Goddess which can be linked with certain philosophical ideas.

We shall first discuss several aspects of the Goddess which link her
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FIG. 5

with the ideas of 1) birth-giving, life-promotion, and regeneration and 2) life-taking, or death.

1. Birth-giving and promotion of life

Among the earliest representations of the human female principle are engravings and reliefs of vulvas from the Aurignacian period (Fig. 1).
They are conceptually metaphoric, "figural synecdoche" where a part stands for the whole. To show the magic vulva (of the Goddess) was the single purpose of the artist; it was not his object to create a female body, but to make corporate a symbol. Such symbolic representation in prehistoric art continued beyond the Palaeolithic. Throughout the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Copper Age, and even Bronze Age of southern Europe, the concept of the supernatural vulva is expressed as clay triangles, or as round pendants with a lens or seed in the center, probably worn as amulets; the symbolic significance of the vulva remained universal throughout Europe for some 30,000 years! The key to this symbolism can be seen in associations of the vulva sign with plants and seeds; it is symbolic not of human birth alone, but of all birth in nature: plant sprouting, seed germination, springtime, regeneration. Furthermore, the conjunction of the vulva and phallus, or, in a different expression, of a more naturalistically portrayed female body with a phallus-shaped neck—a peculiar form that appears both in the Palaeolithic and Neolithic—was apparently the accepted form of depicting life-promotion or the strengthening of life powers (figs. 2-4). This symbolism emerges as philosophical rather than sexual or pornographic. The phallus, as well as the snake, is endowed with the mysterious power of spontaneity; they are not necessarily "male symbols". Further associations are with geometric signs—meanders, chevrons, parallel lines, and nets, symbolic of the aqueous sphere. Good examples of such association are ivory figurines from Mezin, in the Ukraine, from the late Upper Palaeolithic, probably 14,000–12,000 B.C. The vulva, engraved over the whole front of the figurine, is the center of attention. Meanders, chevrons, and parallel lines are engraved on the back and sides. The phallic neck and protruding posteriors of some figurines clearly depict a form not quite human, but a hybrid of water bird and human female. Here we have an accumulation of symbols linked with the idea of the origin of life: the water sphere, where all life begins, and the magic vulva of the Goddess in combination with her water-bird shape (fig. 5).

Other portrayals of a supernatural vulva appear on figurines in a birth-giving posture, or with clearly pregnant bellies and "pregnant" buttocks. These associations again, have a very long life throughout the Palaeolithic and Neolithic. One example from the Upper Palaeolithic is a miniature figurine of limonite from Monpazier, the Dordogne, southern France (fig. 6). Note the accentuated parts of the body: the large vulva in relief, the pregnant belly, the protruding posterior. There are no arms, and the head is featureless. It is a true "monstrosity" in terms of modern aesthetic norms, but it certainly conveys its symbolic message.
As in the Mazin figurines, a combination of symbols links generation and reproduction: the vulva, the pregnant belly, and the protruding posterior, which can be called "pregnant" since always paralleled with the pregnant belly. The signs incised or painted over such buttocks during the Chalcolithic and Copper Age of Old Europe, as in the illustrations below, characteristically mark such posteriors as symbolic of generation/reproduction. The same combination of exaggerated vulva, belly, and buttocks continues into the agricultural era, even into the Copper Age (fig. 7), asserting the continuity of the popular concept of an image of the Goddess who creates out of her body.

Another closely related symbolic series are figurines in a birth-giving posture, with upraised legs and exposed vulva (fig. 8). The toad/frog-shaped amulets of clay, alabaster, green or black stone, are known from the Neolithic and later times in Europe and must be related to the figurines in the naturalistic birth-giving posture (fig. 9). Several upper palaeolithic sculptured and engraved figures with upraised legs may also portray a birth-giving posture. The figurines from Sireuil and Tursac, Dordogne, can be considered as such (fig. 10). The peg of the Tursac...
figurine may be just a peg—but it may also symbolize the emergence of life or the promotion of life (if it is a phallus). The two lines incised on the peg are probably not accidental; on Old European cult objects the two-line sign appears in association with sprouting seeds, pregnancy, and wherever the message of generation is accentuated.

The association of vulva, toad, and birth-giving posture is of particular importance because of its persistent continuity throughout prehistoric and historic times, up to our own century. There is a good deal of evidence, both folkloristic and historic (Egyptian, Greek and Roman myths), that the toad is the Goddess herself, and that she is also the vulva or uterus. Hence the belief in the "wandering womb", recorded in Egypt, in classical Greece, and still extant in European folklore. In Lithuanian folklore, Ragana, the Goddess of Life and Death, now a witch, can change into a toad and cause death as well as birth. The toad in folklore is considered to have healing powers as well as venom. The
portrayal of woman-toad hybrids is evidenced throughout the millennia and up to the twentieth century, usually exhibiting a supernatural vulva, as the examples from Bronze Age and modern Germany illustrate (fig. 9, 2, 3). It is interesting to observe on a modern ex-voto tablet from the Catholic southern Germany, the toad with a human vulva on its back next to the portrayal of the Virgin (fig. 9, 3). The toad as symbol of regeneration can be seen in the cemetery of Nida, western Lithuania, where many tombstones are in the form of a toad with a lily sprouting from its head (fig. 11, 1). The combination of a toad with a bud is attested as early as 6000 B.C. in neolithic Greece (fig. 11, 2). In the Upper Palaeolithic, the association of vulvas with plants suggests a related symbolic content.

In summary, through the ages, the symbolism of the vulva, and particularly its association with the symbols of becoming—seeds, buds, sprouts, aquatic signs, pregnant bellies, and prominent buttocks, suggests that it was an image central to birth-giving and regeneration, an organic, not an erotic, symbol.

The suggestion that unreal, exaggerated buttocks are symbolically related to the idea of germination or life promotion may on first consideration appear strange, but the long continuity of this configuration and its association with eggs, seeds, and other symbols of becoming is very persuasive. Some scholars have thought that the large posteriors of the palaeolithic and neolithic figurines are intentionally pornographic (Absolon 1949) or erotic (Onians 1978), others regarded them as barbaric ideals of beauty. It is my contention that it is the shape of a sculpture or engraving, and the association of symbols, such as engraved or painted signs over the buttocks that reveal its symbolic meaning. The associated symbolism of the egg or double-egg is attested in the European Copper Age, particularly by pictorial painting on Cucuteni vases of the early fourth millennium B.C. (fig. 12). The symbolic intention can be seen in the famous Perigordian-Gravettian “Venuses”, their buttocks and breasts shaped like double-eggs. One of the best examples of this symbolism is the “Venus” from Lespugue, southern France (fig. 13). The “Venus” of Willendorf (not illustrated); those from Grimaldi in Italy (fig. 14) and Gagarino in Russia (fig. 15) are similarly shaped. Within the buttocks of one Magdalenian engraving is a circle, probably an egg (fig. 16). Hundreds, if not thousands, of Magdalenian, neolithic, and later images with exaggerated posteriors reiterate again and again the cosmic myth of the Goddess as a water bird, carrying an egg or a double-egg, in her body.
FIG. 8

Gimbutas: The "Monstrous Venus" of Prehistory of Goddess Creatix
Variously abstracted female, human and bird forms are continuous from the Magdalenian epoch through the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Copper Age; thus a series of upper palaeolithic figurines depict nothing but the buttocks, the upper and lower parts of the body reduced to cones, and small carvings or pendants in the shape of buttocks or in double-egg form continue down to the Maltese culture of the fourth millennium B.C. In Cucutenian and Minoan art the buttocks symbol became fused with the double-fruit symbol (fig. 17). In European folklore to this day, the symbol of a double-fruit, double-leaf, or double-ear signifies good luck and fertility.
2. Life-giving and Life-taking

In her aspect as Life-giver, the Goddess is best represented as a female with exaggerated breasts, or by breasts alone. The breasts were usually marked with parallel lines, chevrons, or crosses (whirls). Thus the celestial Breasts become an icon of the source of nourishment (milk or rain), or of life maintenance in general. The use of parallel lines and chevrons as symbolic marks on figurines occurs as early as the East Gravettian (Pavlovian) mammoth ivory carving from Dolni Vestonice in Moravia of c. 26,000 B.C. (fig. 18, 1).

Only the breasts are naturalistically rendered on the abstract rod-shaped human figure; neither belly nor legs are indicated. The featureless head merges with the neck to form a single column, and groups of parallel lines are incised at the upper end of the rod and below the notched breasts. From the same site an even more abstract rendering of the female principle,—the breasts alone—is an ivory pendant-bead in the pyramidal form of two breasts at the base of a conical neck (fig. 18, 2). The aspect of nourishing or life-giving is very early associated with the ornithomorphic shape of the Goddess. Bird-beaked "Venuses" in the upper palaeolithic cave of Pech-Merie, Lot, southern France, are finger-painted portrayals of female bodies with bird masks, wings, and pendulous breasts (fig. 19).

Figures of the Goddess with large breasts and ornithomorphic features continued down to the Copper Age, and in some areas of Europe into the Bronze and Iron Age. After the invention of pottery,
another symbolically related series appeared: the Goddess as the nourish­ing vessel. Such anthropomorphic or ornithomorphic vases have breasts and are marked with chevrons (Goddess sign) or with spirals, meanders, parallel lines, or streams (liquid sign). (Fig. 20).

The life-giving, nourishing Goddess with breasts appears in the form of menhirs, or is engraved on slabs of megalithic tombs. The images range in western Europe from Italy to the British Isles, where they date from the fourth and third millennia B.C. In most cases the sole attributes of the Goddess are simply breasts and a necklace. Occasionally, ornithomorphic features—eyes and browridges, apparently of an owl—are present, linking the megalithic Goddess with the archaic Bird Goddess (fig. 21). Her presence in connection with the megalithic tombs suggests that the same Goddess of Death aspect prototype of the ambiguous Fate Goddess of European mythologies who is both the apportioner of good or bad in life and the determiner of its length. In European folklore the owl is the bird of death; her appearance portends the end of life. The marble figurines deposited in Cycladic graves wear masks with owlish features; owl-shaped urns, or better said, urns in the shape of the Bird Goddess with owlish features, dating from the end of the fourth and early third millennia B.C. are known from Troy (fig. 22) and from the Baden culture of east central Europe (Hungary).

Conclusion

We have seen that there is ample evidence to support the hypothesis that the "monstrous Venus" of prehistory was one manifestation of a long-enduring tradition of cosmogonic myth as old, perhaps, as human culture. Its evolution may be seen in later forms even in historic times.

The "monstrous Venus" is a religious representation—the reification of the Life Genetrix. Those body parts which in our eyes seem exaggerated or grotesque are those...
FIG. 15

Gimbutas: The "Monstrous Venus" of Prehistory of Goddess Creati

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parts of her which are most significant, magical, and sacred, the visible, productive source of cyclic life continuance. The images discussed in this article seem to be shapes of the life generating Great Goddess in her various aspects and functions. The life-producing (generating) feature was not only the pregnant belly or the vulva, but also buttocks and breasts—often depicted as double-eggs: She was Giver-of-All. These functions were retained by the European Fate Goddess and other de-based forms of the Goddesses of Life, Death, and Regeneration, still extant in the folklore of christianized European peoples. Her epiphanies were many: she generally appeared as a human female, but frequently as a water bird, snake, owl, toad, bear (and probably as she-bison in the Upper Palaeolithic). She was the more-than-human Mother. If the term “Great Mother” is used, it should be understood as “Universal Great Mother,” whose powers pervade all nature, human life, the animal world, and all vegetation.

It is thus likely that Goddess images were produced for the reenactment of seasonal communal and family rituals. After the rituals they were probably kept for some time, to assure well-being. In Old Europe of 6500-3500 B.C., the figurines were kept on altars in domestic shrines, on oven platforms inside and outside the house, or in other places of cult activities. From the Upper Palaeolithic to the beginning of the patriarchal, Indo-European, era in Europe (roughly around 3000 B.C.), the worship of the Great Goddess was universal in Old Europe.

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REFERENCES CITED


CAPTIONS

Fig. 1. 1, Engravings of vulvas on stone slabs from the cave of Blanchard des Roches near Saint-Léon-sur-Vézère, Dordogne, southern France, probably Aurignacian. 2, vulva or seed signs—engravings from various palaeolithic sites in southern France.

Fig. 2. A carved schematic figurine of reindeer antler with a raised vulva in the focal position and a long phallic neck marked with chevrons from the cave of Le Placard, Charente, France, of the Magdalenian I–II period. H. 15.3 cm.

Fig. 3. "Venus" with a phallic head, pronounced buttocks, breasts, and a pregnant belly, carved of steatite; Savignano, on the border between the provinces of Bologna and Modena, Italy. Assumed to be Gravettian (Grimaldian). H.22.5 cm.

Fig. 4. "Steatopygeous" marble figurine with phallic neck from Attica, Greece. Neolithic, probably c. 6000 B.C.

Fig. 5. Ivory figurine from Mezin, western Ukraine, probably 14,000–12,000 B.C. Note that the shape of the statuette is that of a water bird shape, but has a large human vulva. The figurine is marked with chevrons in front of the neck, and parallel lines and meanders over the back. H. 5 cm.

Fig. 6. Miniature figurine of limonite from Monpazier, Dordogne, southern France, with supernatural vulva, buttocks, and pregnant belly. H. 5.5 cm.

Fig. 7. Neolithic and chalcolithic terracotta figurines with large vulvas and exaggerated buttocks. 1, Achilleion, Thessaly, classical Sesklo culture, 6100–6000 B.C. 2, Kalojanovets, central Bulgaria, Karanovo IV, 5200–5100 B.C.

Fig. 8. Figurines in birth-giving posture, 1, black stone pendant from Achilleion, Thessaly. Ib period, 6400–6300 B.C., proto-Sesklo culture. H. c. 4 cm. 2, Terracotta figurine (reconstructed) with an exposed vulva. Achilleion, Thessaly, period II, 6300–6200 B.C.

Fig. 9. Female-toad hybrids with accentuated vulva, probably epiphanies of the Goddess in the birth-giving aspect. 1, Neolithic alabaster figurine from Anza, central Macedonia, 5800–5600 B.C. H. c. 7 cm.; 2 Maissau, a Late Bronze
Age cemetery in lower Austria, c. 1000 B.C.; from an ex voto painting in southern Germany, dated 1811 A.D.

Fig. 10. Upper palaeolithic female images from Dordogne, France, very probably portraying a birth-giving posture. 1, Sireuil. Calcite. H. 9 cm. (head broken). Considered either Aurignacian or upper Périgordian; 2 Tursac figurine of calcite with radiocarbon date of 21,200 b.c. H. 8 cm.

Fig. 11. Modern and neolithic images of a toad combined with a bud or flower. 1, a wooden tomb marker from the cemetery of Nida, western Lithuania; 2, Sesklo terracotta figurine, c. 6000 B.C.

Fig. 12. Double-egg inside buttocks of terracotta figurine (broken below the waist), c. 4500 B.C., Novye Ruseshty, Moldavia, Cucuteni-Tripolye culture. Note the symbolic decoration on exterior which repeats the double-egg motif. H. c. 4 cm.

Fig. 13. The “Venus” of Lespugue, Haute-Garonne, Pyrenees, carved of mammoth ivory; c. 24,000 B.C. Breasts, buttocks are a double-egg form. H. 14.7 cm.

Fig. 14. The “Venus” of Grimaldi (cave of Tunnel), carved of steatite, with double-egg buttocks, breasts, and pregnant belly. H. 6.1 cm.

Fig. 15. Ivory figurine from Gagarino, central Russia. Although found far from southern France and Italy, the figurine has egg-shaped buttocks, breasts, and pregnant belly. H. 12.7 cm.

Fig. 16. 1, Late Magdalenian engraving of schematized female figure with egg inside the buttocks. The figure is crossed with two lines, probably representing magic, connected with the promotion of life. 2, Engravings of “buttock figures” on a stone slab from La Roche at Lalinde, southern France.

Fig. 17. Buttocks or double-fruit symbol painted in the central register of a Cucuteni vase (frequent motif of pictorial art of Old Europe). The upper register features a seed or vulva crossed by two lines and flanked by chevrons. Nedeia at Gheluaesti, Moldavia, northeastern Romania. Cucuteni B culture, dated c. 3800–3600 B.C.

Fig. 18. 1, Schematized human figure with large breasts, incised with groups of parallel lines; 2, pendant-bead in the form of breasts. Dolni Vestonice, Moravia, Czechoslovakia. East Gravettian, c. 26,000 B.C. Carvings in mammoth tusk.
Fig. 19. Female nude with pendulous breasts, wings, and bird head from Pech-Merle, Cabrerets, Lot, southern France. Cave wall finger-painting. H. approx. 70 cm. Probably Magdalenian (earlier considered to be of the Aurignacian epoch).

Fig. 20. Anthropomorphic vase with breasts and upraised arms (or feet). Decorated with snake-spiral design (lower register) and panels of meanders (upper register). Gradešnica, early Vinča site, northwestern Bulgaria. Date: c. 5000-4500 B.C. H. 30 cm. Color: red with encrustation in white.

Fig. 21. The owl-faced Goddess of Death. Gravure on the wall at entrance to the rock-cut tomb. Coizard, Marne, France.

Fig. 22. Urn from Troy V (end of the third millennium B.C.) with an owl face on the lid and breasts; handles as wings.