XANTHUS’ PREDICTION

A memory of popular cult in Homer

by B. C. Dietrich
( Rhodes University, Grahamstown)

At the end of Book XIX of the Iliad, Achilles, about to go forth into battle, enjoins his two horses Xanthus and Balius to carry him safely from battle, when they have had their fill of fighting, and not leave him there dead like Patroclus. Xanthus is given a voice by Hera, and he tells Achilles that they will bear him safely on this occasion, but that it is decreed that Achilles be overcome by destiny and a god, for his day is drawing near. Then the Erinyes stop Xanthus’ voice.

This is an interesting passage, because it contains some unusual features which find no parallel in Homer. The speaking horse, for instance, is a miracle without precedent in the Iliad, and Hera clearly transgresses her office in bestowing such a gift on Xanthus. Unusual, too, for Homer is the function of the Erinyes who are said to stop Xanthus’ prophetic voice. The brief interlude altogether does not seem to play a significant part in the narrative of the poem where the poet might have wished in a picturesque manner to describe Achilles’ imminent fate. Achilles, however, was well aware of the fact that his life was short, and that he was destined to die immediately after Hector. It is more likely that the Homeric poet here adapts a memory from popular thought and in a colourful way puts it to literary use.

This paper will attempt to uncover from myth and cult the original idea which prompted Xanthus’ speech. It will also try to show that the Xanthus episode was patterned on a better known model in mythology. The route to be followed in this investigation will consist of two main discussions of which the first will deal with the Erinyes’ part in this episode—and this will include a short evaluation of the Homeric Erinyes—and the second with the figure of the horse in popular cult, and the connection of the horse with the figure of Erinys.

The Homeric Erinyes

The action of the Erinyes in this episode is commonly explained by a reference to their function in post-Homeric literature, in particular in the tragedians and in philosophy. They stayed Xanthus’ voice in their capacity

1. ll. XIX, 400 ff.
2. ll. I, 352. But see IX, 410 f. where he speaks of a choice.
3. ll. XVIII, 96.
of guardians of natural order. Miss Harrison similarly supposes the horse to speak as ‘the mouth piece of the fates, the Erinyes’ and that, when he has said enough, they stop his voice, again presumably as guardians of the natural order. The main objection to this last suggestion is the fact that it was Hera who granted the voice to Xanthus. A more important point is mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph: there are no grounds for supposing the Erinyes to have held such an elevated moral position in Homer. Leitzke and Rose draw from a developed aspect of Erinys which is more at home in philosophical thought, for e.g. Heraclitus was not thinking of Homer when he states that the Sun does not transgress his bounds, or the assistants of Justice find him out. In Homer the functions of the Erinyes may show traces of a moral development, but they have not achieved such a high plane, where they can be called the ἐπίκουροι of a Δίκη which is expressive of the natural order of the universe. A brief survey of Homeric usage will make this obvious.

The Erinyes, Erinyes occur 12 times in Homer, and their functions in both the Iliad and Odyssey do not significantly differ, except that in the latter poem a tendency to make the Erinyes into an impersonal force becomes more apparent. Thus in 6 out of the 12 instances the Erinyes assume the aspect which most appealed to the dramatists: they stand for a curse or for vengeance. Also in this meaning they are generally confined to family relationships. Telemachus’ mother will invoke the hateful Erinyes against him, she will curse him, if he should send her away. The same idea is expressed in a more imaginative way in Od. XI, 280: Epicasta in death left many ills for her son, such as a mother’s Erinyes execute. A father, too, may send effective curses against his son. In the same way the Erinyes follow an elder brother in the family.

As a development of the previous examples we see the Erinyes in Od. XVII, 475 function together with the gods as protectors even of beggars. In the last instance the Erinyes are ranged beside the gods, a promotion

7. Frg. 94, Diels.
8. II IX, 454; XV, 204; XIX, 87; 259; 418; XXI, 412; Od. II, 135; XI, 280; XV, 234; XVII, 475; XX, 78.
10. Cf. II IX, 571; and II. XXI, 412.
11. II IX, 454.
12. II. XV, 204. This concept of the Erinyes = ‘curse’, ‘vengeance’ that follows infractions of the laws within the family here and in II. XXI, 412 is also transferred to the family of the gods. See also Heden, op. cit. 132.
which they experience on two other occasions,\textsuperscript{13} when they are imagined as giving \textit{Ate} to a person.\textsuperscript{14} This last function the Erinyes clearly owe to their epic development rather than to their position in religious belief. Nevertheless a few echoes of popular belief can be found even in Homer in 2 instances out of the 12. Firstly, an old function of Erinyes in popular belief\textsuperscript{16} was her connection with the taking of oaths; she ensured that an oath should not be violated, in her capacity as a chthonic figure in belief.\textsuperscript{16} It is the Erinyes, therefore, whom Agamemnon invokes together with Zeus, the Earth and Sun in his solemn oath in Book XIX of the \textit{Iliad}.\textsuperscript{17}

Of more immediate interest to our theme is the second instance, where the Erinyes play a prominent part which they probably retained from popular thought and which has nothing in common with their ordinary functions in literature. In \textit{Od.} XX, 78 we hear of the fortunes of Pandareus' daughters. It is said that while Aphrodite was on her way to entreat Zeus to grant them marriage, the Harpies seized Pandareus' daughters and gave them to the Erinyes to serve as handmaids. The Pandareus myth is not well known beyond the barest outline given here in Homer and the scholiasts on the passage,\textsuperscript{18} but it does seem to establish a connection between the figures of the Harpies and Erinyes, a connection which is borne out by art as well as literature.

In vase painting, for example, from as early as the sixth century B.C. the Harpy and even the Gorgon are often indistinguishable in design from

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{Il.} XIX, 87; \textit{Od.} XV, 234.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Although \textit{Ate} in the last two examples is equivalent to \textit{Hybris}, we can here see the outcome of a conscious development of the figure of the Erinyes from agents of vengeance to a higher station where they are no longer so far removed from their position in Aeschylus and even from Heraclitus' idea of the Erinyes = guardians of limits etc. This, however, is merely hinted at in Homeric epic.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Our evidence is of necessity late but nevertheless bespeaks popular custom which can be assumed to have taken its beginning in pre-Homeric times.
\item \textsuperscript{16} She shared this function with the Praxidicae who had a cult at the Boeotian Haliartus as 'Schwurgöttinnen'—Paus. IX, 33, 3; cf. H. Usener, \textit{Götternamen}, Bonn 1896, 237—also, of course, with the Semnae in the Areopagus, see e.g. Deinarch. I, 47, p. 96; cf. Hesiod, \textit{W. \& D.} 803. For a similar belief in a cult at Erythrai see the third century inscription in \textit{Syllog.} 3,150 ff., no. 1014b, 67. See further on this subject C. Robert in his ed. of L. Preller, \textit{Griechische Mythologie},\textsuperscript{1} (1887) 840 n. 3; E. Rohde, \textit{Psyche},\textsuperscript{t} transl. by W. B. Hillis, London 1925, 178, 212 n. 156; M. P. Nilsson, \textit{Geschichte der griech. Relig.},\textsuperscript{2} München 1955, I, 139. For the identity in cult of the Praxidicae, Semnae, Erinyes, Eumenides etc. see Paus. I, 28, 6; cf. II, 11, 4; VII, 25, 2; Helladius in Photius, \textit{Bibliotheca} 535a, 4 ff. (ed. Bekker); see also Aeschin. \textit{in Timarch.} 188: τρεῖς ἦσαν αὐτοὶ ἀληθῶς καὶ σεβαστοὶ θεοὶ Ἕρμος Ἡρώδης Ἑρώνεας. . . Most of these figures find as chthonic spirits a common link in cult with Demeter especially in Arcadia and Boeotia. For a different opinion see Harrison, op. cit., ch. V, whose view can not be argued out in detail here, but cf. Usener, op. cit. 225 f.
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Il.} XIX, 258 ff. Cf. \textit{Il.} III, 276 ff., where in all likeliness Agamemnon also alludes to the Erinyes in his oath.
\item \textsuperscript{18} They—Ambros. B.—record the names of two daughters: Cleothena and Merope. For the story, such as it is, see Heden, op. cit. 118 f. Another daughter mentioned in \textit{Od.} XIX, 518 as slaying her child Ifts probably belongs to another Pandareus unconnected with the Harpies and Erinyes, see H. J. Rose in the \textit{Oxf. Cl. Dict.} q.v. 'Aëdon' and 'Pandareus'.
\end{itemize}
the Erinys; one need only mention here a black-figured Amasis vase in the British Museum\(^{19}\) depicting the beheading of a winged Gorgo with the attributes of Harpy and Erinys, e.g. the high huntress boots with wings, the snakes in her hair and the wings on her back. The only apparent difference consists in the Gorgo mask. But the mask is not a necessary adjunct of this figure, as we can see from another black-figured vase in the Berlin Museum\(^{20}\) which shows the same scene of the killing of Medusa, but two of the fleeing 'Gorgo' women have no masks, and indeed by the inscription on the vase are marked out as APEIYIA. Compare these figures with those winged females with huntress boots and swords raised in their right hands on the Würzburg kylix\(^{21}\) which are marked out as Harpies by the inscription on the cup.\(^{22}\) The Erinys, too, is identical with Harpy and Gorgo in art, so that all three figures come to be interchangeable. A good instance of this can be seen on an early black-figured cup in the Louvre,\(^{23}\) depicting a scene which has been correctly identified with a version of the Pandareus myth by Miss Harrison.\(^{24}\) On it we see Pandareus fleeing with his head turned and looking back at a dog, while he is being pursued by the typical winged female figure who in turn is followed by Hermes. Behind Hermes stand two women spectators whom Miss Harrison identifies with Pandareus' daughters: Merope and Cleothena. As Miss Harrison points out, the winged figure could be either a Harpy or Erinys, and we would be left in doubt about the true identity, but for the part played by the Harpy in the myth as told by Homer.

The important consideration in all these examples is that to the artist, and therefore presumably to popular belief, the functions and the appearance of Gorgo, Harpy and Erinys do not differ: they hold the same position in the imagination of the people. Neither is the possession of wings a necessary distinguishing mark of the Harpy, because the Erinys is just as often shown winged, and she owes the loss of this attribute to the tragic stage and in particular to Aeschylus.\(^{25}\) The literary evidence supporting the harmony

\[\begin{align*}
19. & \text{Cat. B. 471.} \\
20. & \text{Cat. 1682; Arch. Zeit. 1882, Pl. 9.} \\
21. & \text{Würzburg, Inv. 354.} \\
22. & \text{These and other vases are discussed by Harrison, op. cit. ch. V.} \\
23. & \text{Pottier, Cat. A. 478, pl. 17, 1; cf. Barnett in Hermes (1898) 639. This vase is discussed in this connexion by Miss Harrison, op. cit. 226 f.} \\
24. & \text{Ibid. This version is in schol. on Od. XIX, 518 and mentioned in schol. on Pind. Ol. I, 90.} \\
25. & \text{Who still likens her to the Gorgo, see Eum. 48 f.; 51; 250; Choeph. 1048 ff. The provenance of wings on deities is a problem which cannot be discussed in full here, but see n. 46 below. It is doubtful whether Erinys was always conceived of as winged in cult. Winged deities or demi-gods very often give an indication of Eastern influence, although, of course, not always so; see e.g. Nilsson, Gesch. I, 308, who remarks that the addition of wings to goddesses is common and not out of place on an Athene and Nike. The case of the winged Potnia Theron, however, offers an instructive example of Eastern influence, firstly because she has much in common with the figures under discussion (for Potnia}
\end{align*}\]
between these agents is fairly plentiful, although outside Aeschylus of necessity late; but it can safely be taken as a reasonable indication of popular belief.\(^{26}\)

There evidently lingers in Homer a vague memory—whose true significance seems to have fallen into obscurity—of a connection or identification between Harpy and Erinys: these figures were linked in popular imagination by virtue of their similar function, rather than because of cult connection, for the Harpy had no history as a real divine or semi-divine chthonic being that might have deserved a cult like Erinys. It would lead too far afield to explore the Harpy’s provenance, but essentially in art and in myth she appears as a daemon with chthonic connection\(^{27}\) whose element was the wind: she was—and here she meets with the Erinys\(^{28}\)—one of the agents of the fate of death imagined as seizing their prey while roaming in the air above the earth.\(^{29}\) This was an early concept of the working of fate, as of other destructive agents that swooped down upon the unsuspecting victim, as can be seen from many metaphors from Homer onward.\(^{30}\) Nor was this idea confined to Greek religion but finds an analogy in the German Valkyri and Ídísí, the Gallic Cathubodua, the Irish Badb, and the Indian Kheacaric.\(^{31}\)

It is this very function that both Harpy and Erinys exercise in the Pandareus myth\(^{32}\) of which we have only a fragment in Homer; and it is immaterial whether in the Homeric version the Harpy usurps an office peculiar to the Erinys—the avenging of a broken oath\(^{33}\)—when one considers the lesson of this tale that Harpy and Erinys are closely akin, as Miss Harrison also concludes.\(^{34}\)

Thus the part played by these two agents in the myth is not Homeric

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\(^{27}\) Cf. e.g. her interchangeability with the Gorgon and, of course, the Erinys.

\(^{28}\) See F. de Ruyt, Charun, Démon Etrusque de la Mort, Bruxelles 1934, 233.

\(^{29}\) Apart from the passage under discussion, cf. Od. I, 241.

\(^{30}\) E.g. Il. V, 438; 459; 884; XVI, 703; 786; XX, 447; 493; XXI, 18; 227. Aesch. Pers. 515 f.; 921; Agam. 1660; Soph. Antig. 1346; Oed. Tyr. 1300; Trach. 1028; etc. Cf. the bird-like appearance of the Etruscan daemon of Death Charun, de Ruyt, op. cit. 189.

\(^{31}\) Wüst, op. cit. 91.

\(^{32}\) For Hedén’s and Roscher’s views about the nature of these daughters see Hom. Göttersstudien 118 f.; Rh. Mus. LIII (1898) 169 ff.

\(^{33}\) Harrison, Prolegomena 228.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.: 'so fluctuating are the two conceptions'.

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invention but bespeaks a tradition in religious thought which is of some significance to our search, for we find an echo of their alliance in the Xanthus passage. Like Balius, Xanthus whose prophetic voice is stopped by the Erinys is an offspring of Zephyrus and a Harpy: Ξάνθος κυία

... Ποδάργης.

Now, if, as seems certain, Harpy and Erinys are related in myth and belief, it is peculiarly appropriate that the Erinys should stop Xanthus’ voice; and they do so by virtue of their intimate connection with Xanthus’ parent and with the horse, as we shall see below, rather than because of their developed post-Homeric function as guardians of the natural order. Further, the episode dealing with the fate of Pandareus’ daughters allows us to suspect popular belief to have been responsible for the description of Xanthus’ prophesy at the end of Book XIX of the Iliad.

The horse in cult and its connection with Erinys

The Harpy will have to occupy us here a little longer, because she was, as seen above, allied to the Erinys as a destructive agent of fate; but apart from this she found a common link together with the Erinys in the figure of the horse. This link has to be explored further, because the horse has two aspects one of which it achieves by virtue of its swiftness—a faculty that brings it close to the winds—and the other is contained in the part played by the horse in chthonic cult. The Harpy has in fact a foot in both camps contrary to the belief of a number of scholars who see in the Harpy no more than a personification of the wind, and in this way account for her position as mother of Xanthus. The ἄρχαυαί are said to be identical with θύσῳλατ, that is: they are storm winds which, of course, later on come to be thought of as capable of impregnating mares directly. But it remains doubtful, whether here we are not dealing with a much later stage of popular imagination which has deprived the Harpy of her entire personality.

This chthonic connection of the Harpies is not always obvious, because they were not figures of cult, and because they were usually thought of as active in the upper air. The Harpies, however, also bore the horses of the Dioscuri, Phlogoeus and Harpagus, and in a later version a Harpy replaces Demeter as the mother of Areion, the horse of Adrastus. This shows the chthonic association of the Harpy who could be substituted for Demeter here as Poseidon’s partner in the alliance. Further proof comes from the

35. Il. XVI, 149 f.; cf. Il. XIX, 400.
37. See Virgil Georg. III, 271; Pliny N.H. VIII, 42.
38. The νεωτροπ, schol. on Hom. Il. XXIII, 347; Quint. Smyrn. IV, 570.
north-eastern part of the Peloponnese, where in Corinth we have notice of a cult which is clearly modelled on the Arcadian union of Poseidon and Demeter—parents of Areion: Poseidon is said to have produced a horse together with Medusa. Medusa, of course, is another name of Gorgo the pre-Olympian chthonic creature which can be identified with the Harpy.

Again, Poseidon and Medusa are the parents of Chrysaor and Pegasus in a myth which contains evidence of a certain amount of confusion. Pegasus is out of place among the chthonic figures, because his connection with chthonic cult is tenuous at best. Homer, who fully relates Bellerophon’s myth, does not know him, which is not surprising when we consider that Pegasus, like other winged divine and semi-divine figures, was of Oriental origin. Thus in the story of Pegasus’ birth from Poseidon and Medusa—a chthonic equivalent of the Harpy—we discern a mixture of two different aspects of the figure of the horse in popular belief. Such a mixture is paralleled to some extent by the twofold nature of the Harpy: a chthonic being in one—perhaps older—form and a wind demon and eventually personification of the wind in the other.

Pegasus is always depicted with wings, an attribute which is not necessary to underworld beings. His home is with Zeus on Olympus and not below the ground, and Schachermeyer has shown that Pegasus was absorbed in Greek myth from the East, for Anatolia was the pre-Greek home prior to the eighth century—of the winged horse. Once arrived in Greece, however, Pegasus is given a genealogy to bring him into contact with chthonic beings, and variants are introduced into myth to connect him with springs and water in general, although his nature places him together with that type of Greek horse which is either derived from the winds or in swiftness compared with them.

Schachermeyer in fact separates those mythological horses that were born from the winds, like Kairos, the companion of Arion, the mares of Neleus and Erichthonius, the horses of Laomedon and Admetus, etc., from the

40. For the sources see Schachermeyer, op. cit. 31 ff.
41. Cf. e.g. P. Grimal, Dictionnaire de la Mythologie Grecque et Romaine, Paris 1958, q.v.
42. Cf. Schachermeyer, ibid.: ‘Der Name Medusa gehört zur Kategorie der Deckbezeichnungen von Unterweltsgöttheiten . . . ’
43. See e.g. Hes. Theog. 278 ff.; 978; Hygin. Fab. 151; Apoll. Bibl. II, 4, 2; 5, 10.
44. Such connexions are based on the etymology of his name which may originally not have been Greek at all.
45. II, VI, 152 ff.
47. Cf. Schachermeyer, op. cit. 181.
48. Schachermeyer, op. cit. 181 and n. 23, where instances are cited from Assyria.
49. See e.g. Grimal, op. cit. q.v. ‘Pégase’.
offspring of Poseidon who by virtue of their parents were chthonic creatures. The beings of the wind were merely part of popular imagination, but had no cult as true personalities. When the wind was thought to father a horse, this was a mythological way of expressing the speed of the animal.\(^5\) This, too, explains the Harpy’s name Podarge who was the parent of Xanthus and Balius, the horses that ran like the wind;\(^5^2\) indeed Podargus is sometimes used as the name for a horse.\(^5^3\)

Thus it would seem, especially from \textit{Il. XVI}, 149, that Xanthus and Balius are two typical ‘Sagenrosse’ with no chthonic connection, but allied to the Harpy in her capacity as wind daemon only and therefore classifiable with Schachermeyr’s first group, were it not for Xanthus’ special ability and the intervention of the Erinyes in the episode at the end of Book XIX. Here, just as in the Harpy’s nature, we can detect another face of the coin which divides Xanthus from the Pegasus and Podargus type of horse. Schachermeyr states that Poseidon’s offspring were always chthonic creatures on account of Poseidon’s function as a chthonic vegetation deity. This point will have to be discussed more closely below. Apart from this association with Poseidon, the horse in its own right can claim a place in ‘Totenkult’, although our evidence for Greece is not always particularly strong.

The scholar who first explored this subject scientifically and on a large scale was A. B. Cook,\(^5^4\) when he tried to show, unsuccessfully on the evidence, that Greek religion in its first stages, like most primitive creeds, was totemistic. Farnell\(^5^5\) has pointed out the slightness of Cook’s evidence for Greece, quoting as he did only one cult in Sparta which is described by Pausanias,\(^5^6\) where the sacrifice of horses might have obtained, and which therefore could be considered to have a positive bearing on the question.\(^5^7\) There is, indeed, some further evidence of Greek and Indo-European practice which includes the sacrifice of horses to deities of water and nature in general. Such offerings were normally cast into the sea or waters of the cult locality.\(^5^8\) This practice, of course, illustrates the affinities

\(^{51}\) See \textit{e.g.} the horses of Rhesus which ran swiftly like the wind, \textit{Il. X}, 437; cf. \textit{Il.} II, 207 of an eagle; \textit{XXIV}, 342 of Hermes. Apoll. Rhod. imitates this expression to describe the speed of a ship: \textit{I}, 600; \textit{IV}, 1624.

\(^{52}\) \textit{Il. XVI}, 149; see also Eusth. on \textit{Il. XVI}, 149.

\(^{53}\) \textit{Il. XXIII}, 295: Menelaus’ horse; \textit{Il. VIII}, 185: one of Hector’s horses.

\(^{54}\) In his long article, ‘Animal Worship in the Mycenaean Age’ in \textit{J.H.S.} (1894).


\(^{56}\) III, 26. 9.

\(^{57}\) Farnell does not go into this question too deeply, but is mainly concerned with establishing his theory of the invasion of the cult of the horse from the northern regions of Greece.

\(^{58}\) \textit{E.g.} \textit{Il. XXI}, 132. For Argolis, Arcadia, see Paus. \textit{VIII}, 7, 2; for non-Greek instances see Nilsson, \textit{Gesch. I}, 231 n. 1. Cf. his \textit{Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung mit Ausschluss der attischen}, Leipzig 1906, 72 n. 1, where he explains the comparative rarity
of the horse in cult with chthonic deities of vegetation and nature, by reason of its close connection with the water of founts and rivers. Accordingly beings of the water in European belief to this day are frequently pictured as possessing the shapes of horses, just as in Greece numerous founts and streams bore the names of horses. Founts and streams spring forth from the ground, so that their association, and that of all creatures combined or connected with them, with the underworld was a natural step to take for popular imagination.

Thus the part played by the horse in the sphere of nature and vegetation religion assured it a place in chthonic cult; and Schachermeyr with some reason supposes that from a chthonic animal the horse became allied with the wind—in a later stage of religious development—not only because of its speed, but also through its affinity with the wet element which quite naturally linked the horse with the racing clouds whose appearance in any case often resembled the horse. Then the horse as a wind daemon, like the Harpy, was not entirely divorced from its chthonic sphere. Even apart from its association with vegetation and vegetation deities, the horse had other chthonic affiliations, part of which were for instance responsible for the practice of holding horse races during funeral celebrations, as e.g. the race in honour of Patroclus in II. XXIII, whose religious significance, albeit pushed into the background by Homer, nevertheless is obvious and must go back to Mycenaean times.

It is possible and even likely that the horse, like snake and bird, originally in Mediterranean thought was a daemon of death, a “Totenross”, a function which it may well be exercising in the painting on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus. In this case the horse did not owe its chthonic nature to its alliance with Poseidon as a god of vegetation, but belongs to the underworld, as it were, prior to this and, as suggested by Schachermeyr, in the post-classical era once more emerges as the “Totenross” in popular belief after more and more shedding its alliance with Poseidon.

of this sacrifice as being due to its great expense. Significant is the note of Polemon in Athenaeus XI, 462 b, c, which describes a similar offering at Syracuse and enumerates the sacrificial objects which consisted of honey and flowers—in a cup—precisely the same as to underworld deities, as for instance the Erinyes and the Moirae. Cf. E. Delebecque, Le Cheval dans l’Iliade, Paris 1951, 239, and Schachermeyr, op. cit. 97–100.

59. E.g. Hippocrene, Aganippe, Callipia etc., see Nilsson, Gesch. I, 242, who gives the relevant sources. Compare the type of goddess on horse-back at Lusoi, Thompson, J.H.S. (1909) 288, 301; see also Delebecque, op. cit. 241 f.

60. Cf. Schachermeyr, op. cit., 115.


62. Cf. Schachermeyr, op. cit. 151 f.; for similar practices of long standing in other countries, see Bleichsteiner, in Wiener Beiträge IV (1936) 413 ff.


65. Schachermeyr, op. cit. 169; cf. 100.
This subject has been fully discussed by Malten and no longer requires a detailed examination. Malten established that in popular thought in Greece the horse was an agent of death which was imagined as carrying the souls of the dead to the underworld. He also discusses the popular concept of Hades with horse and chariot receiving the souls of the dead and conveying them to his realm below, and he believes it to have been responsible for the epithet 
\[\text{κλαυτόπωλος}\] well known to Homer. This function of the horse in popular belief remains to this day in Greece, where Charos—the god of death—is still imagined as riding away to fetch his prey which he suspends from his saddle.

There are a number of points of detail in which Malten’s thesis stands open to correction, but as a whole it cannot be refuted, as becomes evident from the full discussion of Schachermeyr. Further, there is some archaeological evidence which we may finally adduce regarding the chthonic nature of the horse as a symbol of death. Here belong, for example, the cylindrical vessels from Camirus showing the gates of Hades adorned with snakes and horses in relief. This type of vessel was used as a tube through which libations to underworld spirits were poured.

The horse, then, in Greek belief and in cult plays a variety of parts which, though basically interconnected, develop along different lines and therefore range from the agent or daemon of death to the sphere of water and vegetation and finally, together with the Harpy—whose original chthonic features are still evident—became a wind daemon. In this last field, of course, a ‘contamination’ with the Eastern motive of the winged divinity

68. Cf. the picture on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus.
69. He further maintains that this was the original form (‘Urf orm’) of the myth of the rape of Kore. In support of this Nilsson—Gesch. I, 453 n. 5—quotes the relief of Echelus and Basilie, and two similar reliefs from Rhodes and Chios without inscriptions, in addition to the relief from Trieste dedicated to Zeuxippus and Basilie.
70. See Nilsson, Gesch. I, 454 and n. 1 for the relevant sources. For parallels in European belief see also Schachermeyr, op. cit. passim and e.g. 97–103.
71. These have been best put by Farnell in his Cults, Vol. III, e.g. regarding the epithet 
\[\text{κλαυτόπωλος}\] (p. 60) as evidence for the ’Totenross’, and in particular the use of the hero-reliefs—depicting the dead together with his horse—as evidence in support of the chthonic connection of the horse (see Malten, op. cit. 179 ff.). Farnell (ibid.) reasonably explains the presence of the horse on these reliefs as being due to the desire to bury ‘his favourite charger with the warrior’. Nilsson (op. cit. I, 382 f.) similarly speaks of the horse here as a ‘badge of rank’.
73. C. Picard, Les Religions Préhelléniques (Crète et Mycènes), Paris 1948, 134. He also gives further examples of the horse as a symbol of death, pp. 171 f. etc. In Etruscan art representations, too, the horse was frequently connected with death, see e.g. de Ruyt, Charun 199. De Ruyt, op. cit. pp. 198 ff., similarly suggests that the association of horse with death arose from the fact that the horse in popular imagination was fancied to convey the dead to the underworld, ‘Mais le cheval funéraire évoque moins le coup de la mort que le mythe du voyage vers l’au delà’. Cf. Picard, op. cit. 171 f.
or creature—viz. Pegasus—was inevitable. The horse of the storm, winged or without wings, becomes a beast of myth and superstition entirely leaving the sphere of religious cult. As such ‘Sagenrosse’ Xanthus and Balius appear in the *Iliad*, but they have not yet shed all memory of cult, for Xanthus prophesies Achilles’ early death until the Erinyes stopped his voice. The Erinyes, we saw in our brief survey, were chthonic creatures that enjoyed cult in a number of forms. The horse, as a figure of vegetation cult, was connected with Poseidon, naturally in his capacity as vegetation god associated with springs and water as which he could appear, and perhaps originally was thought of, in equine form: this can be substantiated at least for Arcadia, Boeotia and Attica.\(^74\)

Certainly the myths and cults dealing with the horse-shaped Poseidon are pre-Dorian in all these regions, and therefore belong to a period prior to 1200 B.C.\(^75\) Poseidon’s original function and varied aspects we cannot establish here, because they do not concern us beyond the fact of his alliance as a vegetation god with Demeter and his association with water. His name already betrays his connection with that goddess\(^76\) and is amply borne out in cult where the important and presumably theriomorphic Poseidon Hippius\(^77\) comes into such close contact with Demeter and indeed with Erinys\(^78\) that Demeter and Poseidon have been called όννυμοι.\(^79\)

\(^{74}\) In Arcadia Poseidon often has the epithet Hippius, see W. Immerwahr, *Die Kulte und Mythen Arkadiens* 1891, 33 ff. See also Pausanias VIII, 8, 2: Mantinea—cf. Schachermeyr, op. cit. 15; the most famous instance in Boeotia is Poseidon’s union—in horse-shape—with Erinys: e.g. schol. on I. XXIII, 343, and Eust. ad loc.; Callimachus in schol. on Lycophron 1225; also cf. the myth of Poseidon’s union with Melanippe, the black mare, daughter of Hippo and granddaughter of the centaur Chiron, whence sprang the eponymous heroes Boeotus and Aeolus; in Euripides, see Nauck *Trag. Graec. Fragm.* p. 509. For Attica see the story of the birth of Scyphius from a rock at Colonus where Poseidon’s sperm had fallen—schol. on Lycophr. 766. Schachermeyr, op. cit. 38, rightly argues that the father of the horse must have been thought of in the same form. Cf. the myth of Hallirrhothius—epithet of Poseidon: schol. on Pind. *Ol.* X, 83a—and Alcippe in Apollod. III, 14, 2.

\(^{75}\) For a discussion and for sources see especially Schachermeyr’s second chapter 13–49, where he convincingly shows the antiquity of this concept of Poseidon.

\(^{76}\) This is the most likely and widely accepted etymology of Poseidon, and it replaced that which makes him Zeus in the water (πόσις, ποτίς, ποταμός) where Δάω according to Herodian (Nilsson, op. cit. I, 445 n. 2) is a Boeotian form of Zeus. See A. B. Cook C. R. XVII (1903) 175 f., who later changed his mind (Zeus, Cambridge 1925, II, 582 ff.), and H. L. Ahrens, *Philologus* XXII (1866) 1 ff.; 193 ff., cited by Nilsson, ibid. *Hoistikov is most often derived from πόσις Δα = husband of Demeter, see P. Kretschmer, Glotta 1 (1909), 27 f.; K. Brugmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik d. Indo-Germanischen Sprachen*; 1911, II, 135; U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, repr. Basel 1956, I, 207; Cook, op. cit. II, 582 ff. For discussions of this etymology see Nilsson, ibid.; Schachermeyr, op. cit. 13 f. For a less satisfactory derivation from δά ‘humide’ see Carnoy, *Dict. Etymol.*, Paris 1957, q.v. ‘Poseidon’.

\(^{77}\) Farnell, op. cit. IV, 14–26.

\(^{78}\) For sources of the wide-spread Poseidon Hippius cults, especially in Arcadia, see Immerwahr, op. cit. 35 f.

\(^{79}\) *Plut. quaest. conviv.* 668 F.
Hippius and Demeter shared a number of cults, on the road from Athens to Eleusis, in Eleusis at the Haloa, at Myconus, and at Tröizen. In these vegetation cults, a number of which are of long standing, the figure of the horse plays a significant part; the horse in point of fact unites Demeter, Poseidon and Erinys. This—apart from Boeotia—is especially true of that part of Greece where the oldest and sometimes most strange chthonic cults survived into historic times, namely Arcadia. The cults which are of interest to us here are at Phigalia, Thelpusa and Tilphusa; the last two in particular, for there we meet with the figures of Demeter Erinys and Erinys. These cults are old and present problems of interpretation dealt with elsewhere, wherefore we need not discuss points of detail which are not strictly relevant. But they do establish beyond doubt the intimate connection between Demeter, Erinys, Poseidon, and the horse Areion.

The myths—which are related—attached to the Arcadian and Boeotian cults mentioned above are described by Pausanias who tells us that in Thelpusa Poseidon pursued Demeter in search of her daughter. Demeter changed into the form of a mare and grazed with the horses of Oncius. But Poseidon saw through her deception, changed into the shape of a horse also and so violated the goddess. From this union were born the horse Areion and a daughter whose name may not be divulged. Demeter herself had a temple in Thelpusa with two statues within: one of Erinys and the other—a smaller one—of Lusia. The myth attached to the Demeter cult in Phigalia is identical with the local version at Thelpusa except that—perhaps by reason of a ‘Gleichschaltung’ with the Eleusinian Demeter—the horse Areion was later omitted and Demeter given Despoina as the sole offspring from her union with Poseidon. Also, the name Erinys does not occur in Phigalia. In the Boeotian cult, however, at Tilphusa we meet with Erinys alone who is violated by Poseidon in horse-shape and gives birth to Areion. The mother Erinys, unlike the Thelpusan Demeter, need not suffer a metamorphosis but already possesses the shape of a horse.

The resemblance between the Thelpusan and Tilphossan cults is striking, so that it was realised some time ago that both have a common origin.
and it is possible that the Arcadian cult was at some stage transferred to Boeotia.\(^{90}\) The point which emerges from these cults is that, if not identical in every detail, they are closely related\(^{91}\) and show that the original form of Demeter, Erinys and Poseidon in this area might well have been that of the horse.\(^{92}\) In fact the important offspring from the union of Poseidon with Demeter and Erinys is Areion, and Areion is an extension, so to speak, of Erinys and also equivalent to all the horses born from the unions of Poseidon with chthonic deities like Medusa, Erinys, Melanippe, Demeter, Melaina (Phigalia), etc.\(^{93}\) Areion is nothing more or less than the horse Erinys, a point made obvious from the etymological affinity of '\(\text{Ἀρειών}\)' and '\(\text{Ερινώς}\)' which again is strengthened by the find in Thelpusa of some fourth century coins on which the name is written '\(\text{Επινώ}\).\(^{94}\)

Now this chthonic Areion—the equivalent of Erinys—assumes importance only when he enters myth and is given a prominent place in Theban saga. For first the property of king Oncus, he becomes the horse of Heracles and eventually he passes to Adrastus whom he carries to safety from Thebes.\(^{95}\) Thus Areion tends to become a typical 'Sagenross' like Pegasus and Skyphios, and in some later versions is duly given a Harpy for his mother,\(^{96}\) although in the Theban myth he still betrays his alliance with Erinys by the interesting notice that he carries Adrastus home, probably to Sicyon, the

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90. This must remain doubtful, however, especially since a number of scholars, notably Mannhardt, Hecken, Preller, Krappe, and Immervahr—see Hermes ibid. 132 n. 11—argue that Boeotia was the original locality of this cult, mainly on the grounds that in Thelpusa Erinys already possessed the shape of a horse when Poseidon violated her. On our present evidence this is an insoluble problem, as equally good arguments can be adduced in favour of Arcadia—which in any case was the home of the most archaic cults. See e.g. Wilamowitz, Gl. d. Hell. I, 394; Nilsson, Gesch. I, 447 n. 5.

91. See Farnell, Cults III, 52 ff., who speaks of a 'community of divine nature'.


93. Cf. Schachermeyr, op. cit. 179.


95. Cf. Imhoof-Blumber, Zeitschrift für Numismatik I (1874) 125 ff.; J.H.S. (1886) 106; cf. Malten, Jahrb. archäol. Inst. XXIX (1914) 131 n. 3. For a description of these coins showing Demeter, Erinys and Areion on the obverse, see Schachermeyr, op. cit. 16 n. 6.

96. See Strabo IX, 404; Hygin. Fab. 70, 71; schol. on Eur. Phoen. 409. See also Tzetzes on Lycolphon 153; 166; Apollod. Bibl. III, 6, 8. Homer II, XXIII, 346 f. and Eusth. ad loc., who on 1.344 of the same Book adds Kopleus between Poseidon and Heracles in the described succession of owners.

97. See above n. 38.
site of an important Erinys cult. As a horse in myth, Areion, of course, like his peers is also endowed with the swiftness of the winds which he already displays at the funeral games founded in honour of Archemorus. The history of Areion, however, is clear proof of the alliance, indeed identity, of this type of horse with Erinys, and of the connection with archaic chthonic cult. Furthermore, Areion's development in myth also shows the path travelled in saga—as seen above—by the horse in Mycenaean and Homeric society, where references to the horse's religious background tend to fall away to be replaced by more mundane characteristics of wind-like speed. It is at this best known point of transformation or development of Areion's nature that the Homeric poet finds his legend most attractive and alludes to it in his poem. And it is at this very moment—when Adrastus and Areion are brought together—that we begin to suspect that Homer modelled the team of Xanthus and Achilles—Balius being of lesser importance—on the famous Theban Areion and Adrastus.

The names alone of Xanthus and Balius, Achilles' horses, point to no position in religious belief. They simply follow the normal Homeric rule of calling warriors' horses after their colour or speed, so that Xanthus simply means Bayard, and Balius Piebald. If, however, we make the reasonable assumption that Xanthus—Achilles are modelled on and equivalent to the popular Areion and Adrastus, then Xanthus' prediction assumes a fresh significance. The skill of speech and of prophesy is commonly associated with the horse in Indo-European belief as part of his chthonic nature, and therefore quite properly belongs to Areion too whose gift in effect is transferred to Xanthus in the episode at the end of Book XIX of the Iliad. The Homeric poet further endows both Xanthus and Balius with characteristics more naturally part of Areion, when he

98. Wilamowitz, Gl. d. Hell. I, 392; the Eumenides had a temple at Sicyon, Paus. II, 11, 4; and Malten, Jahrb. archäol. Inst. XXIX (1914) 202 rightly suggests that in this legend Areion returned to his mother Erinys. In an Attic version of the legend the locality changes to Colonus Hippius in Attica, Wilamowitz, op. cit. I, 393; Jacoby, Frg. griech. Hist. III Teil b (Suppl.), II, 350. Colonus was the site of an entrance to Hades and therefore an appropriate home for Areion. In any case, these parallel versions need only signify that both localities laid claim to an Erinys-Eumenides cult.

99. See also Wilamowitz, 'Lesefröhliche' Hermes XXXV (1900) 565; and Heden, Hom. Götters. 136 ff.

100. In myth they were a present to Peleus from Poseidon on the occasion of Peleus' marriage to Thetis: see II, XXIII, 277 ff.; Apollod. Bibl. III, 4, 4; Diod. Sic. VI, 3.


102. Cf. Eust. on II, XVI, 149. This practice is not always confined to Homer, see Steier, R.E. s.v. 'Pferd', XIX, 1437, who compares the names Korax, Pyrrhus etc.

103. See Herod. III, 84; 85; Isid. XII, 1, 44; Tac. Germ. 10. Cf. Schachermeyr, op. cit., especially pp. 80; 98; 100; 106; 117; 119; 145.

describes them as originally the property of Poseidon and as descended
from a Harpy. Yet his memory is vague, for, allowing the Erinyes to stop
Xanthus’ voice, it slips his mind that—if in truth he is thinking of Areion
in this connection—he makes the horse stop itself.

In order to illuminate our subject fully, it has been necessary to take our
evidence from a variety of discussions which we shall briefly bring together
in conclusion. In Mycenaean society and, of course, in the Homeric poems
the figure of the horse loses contact with its past history concerned with the
underworld and vegetation cult. Nonetheless, even in epic poetry traces
of older cult remain which allow the researcher occasional glimpses into
the beginnings of chthonic cult. Often a somewhat circuitous route needs
to be travelled in the pursuit of this object. Thus in the episode under dis­
cussion our guide consists in the fact of Xanthus’ miraculous speech and
the part played by the Erinyes which appeared to run counter both to
normal Homeric practice, and to the commonly accepted concept of the
Erinyes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. An investigation of some other passages
in Homer, however, where Erinys or Erinyes occur does reveal aspects of
these figures which are alien to them in literature, and tragedy in particular,
but point to an older significance enjoyed by Erinys in popular cult, where
they have much in common with the horse.

Again, the genealogy of Xanthus and Balius is similar to that of horses
more famous in myth, such as Pegasus and the horses of the Dioscuri.
In these and other instances the mother is said to be a Harpy—sometimes
given the name Podarge which associates her with the winds. Schachermeyr
in this connection, while strongly emphasizing the chthonic history of the
horse in religious thought still obvious from the association with Poseidon
in historic times, justly points out that in the Mycenaean aristocratic society
of the second half of the second millennium B.C. interest in chthonic asso­
ciations dwindled, so that the horse became an instrument, as it were, of
daily use. It was then compared to and derived from the winds and notably
the wind daemons like the Harpy; in fact the horse could—usually through
Eastern influence—assume wings in legend like Pegasus. The Harpy as the
Snatcher in art and literature, who swooped upon her victims from the air,
became a suitable mother for many ‘Sagenrosses’; and yet she too was not
only a chthonic being in popular belief but indeed closely related to Erinys,
wherefore the Harpy’s function as parent of so many horses in legend may
well point back to a common origin. The unusual parts in the Xanthus
episode, then, lead to older pre-Homeric popular belief overlayed by epic
invention. It is not surprising, therefore, when in Arcadia—the home of
many archaic observances—we meet with some interrelated cults which

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105. Cf. Schachermeyr, op. cit. e.g. 151.
combine the important elements previously discussed.

In Thelpusa and in the interdependent cult at the Boeotian Tilphusa we find the important union of Poseidon in horse form with Demeter Erinys and with Erinys alone (Tilphusa) from which sprang the horse Areion. Areion is identical with Erinys and therefore possesses the typical characteristics of a being of nature and vegetation. Like a number of other horses in Indo-European belief he is also endowed with the gift of speech and prophesy. In subsequent mythology Areion becomes famous in the Theban cycle as the horse of Adrastus, in which capacity he still retains some chthonic aspects that help to serve as our guide when the Homeric poet uses the Adrastus–Areion team as a pattern for Achilles and Xanthus.

If then, as indeed seems likely, the horse Xanthus in Homer is modelled on the Areion in myth, the mention of the Erinyes seems particularly appropriate. Perhaps Homer had this old identity of Erinys and Areion in mind when he makes the Erinyes intervene in this passage. The part played by Hera, however, may have nothing to do with myth, but may possibly have been added by Homer. Again, Xanthus' prediction forms a fitting part in the story of the Iliad, but the intercession of the Erinyes does not, because by then the prediction had already been made. The identification of Xanthus with Areion, and the latter's intimate association with the Erinyes could easily have been responsible for their appearance here. Thus the episode at the end of Book XIX of the Iliad performs two useful services for the religious historian. Firstly we are given a memory of the function of the horse and Erinys in popular belief, and secondly we find that Xanthus owes his miraculous skill to an older pre-Homeric tradition of which we can find other examples in Homer, such as the weighing of fate and the spinning of fate.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{106}. Discussed in a forthcoming article in Rh. Mus. \\
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