

Xanthus, Hera and the Erinyes * **(*Iliad* 19.400–418)**

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At *Il.* 19.400–403, Achilles tells his horses Xanthus and Balius, sons of the Harpy Podargê, not to leave him dead on the battlefield, as they had left Patroclus. Xanthus replies, saying that they will keep him safe for the moment, but that his death lies near (408–417). In line 407, Xanthus' ability to speak is credited to Hera: αὐδῆεντα δ' ἔθηκε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη. Later, in 418, the Erinyes are said to stop his voice: ὥς ἄρα φωνήσαντος Ἐρινύες ἔσχεθον αὐδῆν. The passage presents scholars of Homeric myth and religion with three questions: 1) Why is Hera involved with this horse? 2) Why are the Erinyes involved with him? and 3) Why are *both* Hera and the Erinyes involved?

The theories that have been brought to bear on these three questions have, by and large, been unsatisfying, particularly because questions “1” and “3” have been ignored almost completely.¹ Here I will suggest that the mention of Hera at *Il.* 19.407 draws on an epic tradition regarding heroic horses that would have been familiar to the ancient listener, and that the Erinyes' involvement in line 418 probably aligns with their consistent portrayal in the Homeric poems and elsewhere as chthonic deities. When the two types of divine influence are understood correctly, it becomes clear that they are not at odds with one another, but rather affected the horse in different ways and at different times. I also will revise a suggestion first made by Wilamowitz and Malten that the *Iliadic* episode as a whole reflects an epic scene in which the divine horse Areion prophesied to the warrior Adrastus.²

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¹Already in the second century B.C., Aristarchus (Arn/A) suggested athetizing line 407 because he thought it conflicted with line 418. The modern theories that have addressed the questions I list here will be dealt with as necessary in the notes below.

²Wilamowitz, “Lese Früchte” *Hermes* 35 (1900) 563–65, cf. *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (1931; rpt. Basel 1956) 1 149 n. 1; L. Malten, “Das Pferd im Totenglauben” *JDAI* 29 (1914) 203. Wüst, cols. 98–99, and Dietrich, “Xanthus” 22 n. 99, also cite E. Hedén, *Homerische Götterstudien* (Diss. Uppsala 1912) 136 ff. as having proposed this idea; I have not been able to obtain a copy of this work, however.

1. Hera and Warriors' Horses.

Homer tells us that Xanthus and Balius were the sons of Zephyrus and the Harpy Podargê (*Il.* 16.149–51; cf. 19.400 and 19.415), and that they were bestowed by the gods upon Peleus (*Il.* 16. 381 and 867, 17.443–44). At *Il.* 23.277–78 and in Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.5 we are told more specifically that it was Poseidon who gave these horses to Peleus. When we recall that Poseidon similarly bestowed his own son Areion on Copreus (Σ T on *Il.* 23.347 = *Theb.* fr. 6B and Σ D on *Il.* 23.346 = *Theb.* fr. 6C), we suspect that behind *Il.* 23.277–78 lurks an alternative tradition whereby Poseidon, not Zephyrus, was the father of Xanthus and Balius. From fragments of Alcman and Stesichorus, we can piece together yet another story, according to which Poseidon, having sired a horse named Xanthus and his brother Cyllarus (the mother is not named), gave them as a gift to Hera. She in turn gave Xanthus and Cyllarus to the Dioscuri, who, like Achilles, used their remarkable horses in battle. This Xanthus spoke to Castor, as Achilles' Xanthus did to him.³

We begin to suspect the conflation of three different traditions in the Iliadic portrait of Achilles' horses, probably occasioned by the coincidence of the name "Xanthus," which was a common one for heroic horses (cf. Hector's Xanthus at *Il.* 8.185; Diomedes' Xanthus at Hyg. *Fab.* 30, and Erechtheus' Xanthus at Nonn. *D.* 37.156–57). Clearly, Homer knew of a miraculous horse named Xanthus whom the wind had sired on a Harpy. He undoubtedly also knew of a story whereby Poseidon had sired two horses—one of whom was named Xanthus—and then bestowed them on Peleus; he alludes to this story at 23.277–78. Finally, Homer also knew of a third tradition that made Hera the owner of a pair of horses that she bestowed on warriors: both the horses were Poseidon's sons and one of them, named Xanthus, could talk.⁴ The third of these traditions probably included the story that Hera endowed Xanthus (and perhaps Cyllarus as well), with the ability to speak, just as she endowed the Iliadic Xanthus with this gift. The motif is paralleled nicely by the gods' bestowal on Jason of the Argo's speaking figurehead, a story referred to as

³Stesich. fr. 1 Diehl = fr. 178 Campbell; Alcman. fr. 25 Campbell; cf. Σ Verg. *G.* 3.89. The reference to Xanthus speaking in Alcman. is fr. 76 Campbell = Aelian, *HA* 12.3. Aelian presumed that Alcman was copying Homer in making a horse talk to its master.

⁴N. Yalouris, "Athena als Herrin der Pferde" *MH* 7 (1950) 79–88 has suggested that Hera was the mother of such wonder horses in earlier, lost traditions, for, as he has shown, Hera sometimes was Poseidon's partner in cults connected with horses. Such cults would be the remains of a lost tradition in which Hera was a πότνια θηρῶν. His main supports for this idea are her epithets βοῶπις, ταυρῶπις, and κυνῶπις and her occasional artistic representations with lions, e.g., on some Samian coins; overall, the argument seems weak.

early as Aeschylus and incorporated by virtually all subsequent treatments of the Argonautica. In Apollonius Rhodius and Apollodorus, the figurehead specifically is said to have been given to Jason by Athena; Valerius Flaccus says that “Saturnia,” i.e. Juno, bestowed it, although he later tells us that it was carved to look like Minerva.⁵ In constructing the picture of Xanthus that we get in the *Iliad*, Homer did not cleave to any one of the three traditions for heroic horses that he knew, but drew on all of them: he made Xanthus a son of Zephyrus, yet borrowed a detail from the story of Xanthus—the-son-of—Poseidon when he brought Hera into the picture. Later, when he said that Poseidon gave Xanthus and Balius to Peleus, he borrowed from a story whereby Poseidon himself, rather than Hera, bestowed his sons on favored warriors.

If we read *Il.* 19.407 carefully, we note that it does not say that Hera caused Xanthus to speak at the very moment that he replied to Achilles—nor does it say that she put the words of lines 408–417 in his mouth. Rather, line 407 says that Hera made Xanthus to be αὐδήεντα, a “speaking creature.”⁶ Hera could have endowed Xanthus with this quality at any time. And indeed, although we have no other certain scenes of Xanthus speaking in the *Iliad*, we do have a narratively earlier scene of Xanthus and Balius mourning in unmistakably human ways (*Il.* 17.426–440): they cry out (κλαῖον), weep (δάκρυα δέ σφι θερμὰ κατὰ βλεφάρων χαμάδις ῥέε μυρομένοισιν), and defile their hair (θαλερὴ δ’ ἐμιαίνετο χ αίτη) after hearing of Patroclus’ death. “Κλαίω,” which regularly is associated with spoken laments or cries for help (e.g., *Il.* 8.364 and 19.300, *Od.* 20.92), particularly suggests that the

⁵Aeschylus: fr. 20 Radt: †(ποῦ) ἔστιν† Ἀργοῦς ἱερὸν αὐδῆεν ξύλον. A. R. 1.526–27 (cf. 4.582–83); Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.16; V. Fl. 1.305 and 8.203. In other sources, cited at Jessen, “Argo” *RE* 2.1 cols. 721–22, the bestower is not specified.

⁶Cf. the use of αὐδήεσσα to describe Calypso at *Od.* 12.449, Circe at 10.136, 11.8 and 12.150 and Ino at 5.334; it does not describe these goddesses as speaking at any specific moment, but rather indicates the type of goddesses that they are—they speak with mortals. Cf. also Odysseus’ use of the word at *Od.* 6.125, where he wonders whether the inhabitants of the island on which he has washed up are “human,” or nymphs of the wild. (These, plus *Il.* 19.407, are the only Homeric passages in which the word is used.) One of *TAPA*’s referees points out to me that the noun αὐδή once has the same connotation as the adjective αὐδήεις: at *Il.* 18.419–20, Hephaestus endows his golden handmaidens with αὐδὴ καὶ σθένος. This seems to mean that he gives them the capacity to speak rather than simply a voice (cf. F. Krafft, *Vergleichende Untersuchungen zu Homer und Hesiod* [Göttingen 1963] 48, n. 2). However, in 20 of the 21 other uses of the word in Homer, αὐδή denotes the voice itself (e.g., Nestor’s voice at *Il.* 1.249) or a sound like the voice (the bowstring at *Od.* 21.411 has an αὐδή like a bird); the single possible exception may be *Il.* 4.430, which describes the Danaan soldiers marching silently, each man keeping his αὐδή in his chest. This suggests that we should not take αὐδῆν at *Il.* 19.418 to mean “capacity to speak,” but rather “voice.”

horses were speaking here rather than simply neighing or crying. Usually, κλάζω and μηκάομαι are the verbs used of animal cries (e.g., *Il.* 10.276, *Od.* 14.30; *Il.* 10.362, *Od.* 9.439).⁷

In short, I suggest that one of the traditions that underlay *Il.* 19.407 portrayed Hera as the owner of wonder-horses and as bestowing the gift of speech upon them before giving them to a favored warrior or warriors. The phrase αὐδήεντα δ' ἔθηκε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη, then, is meant to remind the listener of how Xanthus came to be the sort of creature that he was, rather than to explain what made him speak at that particular moment.⁸

2. The Erinyes as Chthonic Powers.

If Hera's manipulation of Xanthus occurred before the scene at *Iliad* 19, then the Erinyes stand forth more clearly as the immediate agents of his behavior in lines 404–418. Exactly what did they do to the horse, and how does it reflect their nature? Although the brevity of Homer's description makes it impossible to answer this question with complete security, examination of other information about these goddesses will suggest a solution that aligns well both with the Homeric passage and with what we know of the Erinyes from other sources. Before undertaking that examination, however, I would like to dispense with some of the most popular theories that have been advanced to explain the Erinyes' interaction with Xanthus.

B. C. Dietrich⁹ developed Wilamowitz and Malten's hypothesis that the scene between Achilles and Xanthus was modelled on a scene between Areion and Adrastus, who are linked as warrior and steed as early as the *Iliad*.¹⁰

⁷One of *TAPA*'s referees reminds me that at *Il.* 16.469, when Achilles' mortal horse Pedasos is killed by Sarpedon, he falls into the dust "bleating" (μυκῶν) as a normal animal would; at *Od.* 18.98 the same phrase is used of Irus—the bestial man becomes yet more bestial in his pain.

⁸To my knowledge, only two other scholars have addressed Hera's involvement in this scene directly. Edwards 283 suggests that Hera bestows speech on Xanthus because Achilles is a favorite of hers. His assumption that Xanthus "did not [normally] converse with his master" suggests that he believes the gift to have been bestowed immediately prior to Xanthus' announcement in Book 19. Dietrich, "Xanthus" 9, assumes that Hera gave the horse his voice at the moment of the prophecy to Achilles and then comments that she "transgressed her office in bestowing such a gift on Xanthus." What he imagines her "office" to have been is not stated. At 24 he says that Hera "was added to the original story by Homer," but gives no motivation for such an addition.

⁹Dietrich, "Xanthus" 23–24. Cf. his "Demeter," which explores the possibility that Erinyes herself was originally an equimorphic πότνια θηρῶν (the arguments seem inconclusive).

¹⁰Adrastus as Areion's master: *Il.* 23.346–7; Σ D on *Il.* 23.346 and Σ T on *Il.* 23.347 = *Theb.* frs. 6C and 6B; Paus. 8.25.7–8. = *Theb.* fr. 6A; Prop. 2.34.37–38; Stat. *Theb.* 11.443; Paus. 8.25.10; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8. Areion also carries Heracles into and out of battle: Σ T on *Il.* 23.347 = *Theb.* fr. 6B; Σ D on *Il.* 23.346 = *Theb.* fr. 6C; Hes. *Sc.* 118–20, Paus. 8.25.10.

Dietrich went further than his predecessors, however, and suggested that Xanthus was little more than a doublet for the better known Areion, whom epic made Erinyes' son by Poseidon.¹¹ He supported this by arguing that Harpies are to be equated with Erinyes: thus, Xanthus and Areion had the same sort of mother, and were essentially the same horse.¹² In other words, the Erinyes stopped Xanthus' voice because one of them was his mother. Dietrich is correct to follow Wilamowitz and Malten in looking for similarities and cross-influences between Xanthus and Areion, as I will argue towards the end of this article, but his development of this idea is flawed in several ways and does not adequately explain the Erinyes' actions in *Il.* 19.418. Most importantly, Harpies and Erinyes are not to be equated in Homer, and probably not to be equated in later literature and belief either. Harpies are wind demons who snatch people away; Erinyes are chthonic entities with a far wider range of activities (to be reviewed below, p. 92–93). Dietrich's attempts to argue the opposite are based mostly on post-Homeric iconographical traits that the two groups share (e.g., wings, snakey hair); many other female demons share these traits as well, however, and therefore their coincidence in Erinyes and Harpies would not be sufficient proof of identity, even if we were to assume, despite a lack of evidence, that Homeric Erinyes and Harpies bore these traits. Dietrich also adduces *Od.* 20.77–78 as proof of the identity of Harpies and Erinyes. There, however, the Harpies *steal* Pandareus' daughters and *give them to* the Erinyes; the difference, again, seems to be between “wind demons” who were popularly responsible for snatching people or souls away into death and demons of the Underworld itself.¹³

Copreus and Oncus also are mentioned sometimes among Areion's owners. Copreus: Σ T on *Il.* 23.347 = *Theb.* fr. 6B; Σ D on *Il.* 23.346 = *Theb.* fr. 6C. Oncus: Paus. 8.25.10. On the evidence for Areion's owners in the Epic Cycle and other early sources generally, see the thorough analysis of Janko 51–55, which, *inter alia*, convincingly supports the view that Σ D on *Il.* 23.346 should be accepted as reflecting the Epic Cycle if not the *Thebais* itself. Also Tümpel, “Areion” *RE* 2.1 col. 622.

¹¹Areion is said to be the son of Poseidon and Erinyes at Σ D on *Il.* 23.346 and Σ T on *Il.* 23.347 = *Theb.* frs. 6C and 6B; he is called the son of Poseidon and “Demeter Erinyes” at Paus. 8.25.4–7; see also comments at Tümpel (above, n. 10) col. 621. The epic poet Antimachus of Colophon, in his own *Thebais*, made Areion the son of Gê (ap. Paus. 8.25.8–9 = fr. 33 Wyss). Σ T on *Il.* 23.347 (= *Theb.* fr. 6B) says that although the old cyclic poets made Areion the son of Poseidon and Erinyes, the *neoteroi* made him the son of Poseidon and a Harpy—this looks like later confusion with the story of Xanthus and Balios.

¹²I base my summary of Dietrich's arguments primarily upon the last two pages of his article, where he himself summarizes the points he has tried to make. His discussions on pp. 9–22 are detailed, draw on a large variety of material, and are difficult to follow. Cf. the remarks of Edwards 284–5.

¹³On Harpies as wind demons, see, among recent treatments, G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore 1979) 194–96. Dietrich tried to argue that Harpies were essentially

Finally, Dietrich's argument fails because Erinyes' alleged identity with or similarity to Xanthus' mother does not explain in itself why she and her sisters stopped his voice, or why Xanthus prophesied in the first place. Dietrich never explicitly addresses the first point; to cover the latter, he adduces an "Indo-European" tradition of horses being innately prophetic (22). Greek or Roman examples are lacking, however—Dietrich can cite only Hdt. 3.84–85 (a passage that refers to the *Persians* prognosticating by means of horses' neighings), Tac. *Ger.* 10 (which describes the *Germans* doing the same thing as the Persians) and the seventh-century A.D. Spanish encyclopaedist Isidorus, *Orig.* 12.1.44, who mentions that some peoples believe that the outcome of a battle can be gauged in advance from the mood or behavior of the horses.¹⁴ This seems, on the whole, weak proof for a Greek belief that horses in general had innate mantic abilities, not only because two of these examples are not actually Greek themselves (the provenance of Isidorus' example is uncertain; see note 14), but also because all of these techniques are examples of "inductive" or "artificial" prognostication rather than "direct" or "inspirational" divination. Schachermeyr mentions a few more examples of Indo-European prophetic horses [Indian and Celtic beliefs (106); Slavic prognostication from horses' steps (98); possible Etruscan observation of horses' steps for prophetic purposes (92); Armenian divination by means of horses' steps and neighing (118)] but he adduces no Greek examples.¹⁵

Another theory commonly adduced to explain the Erinyes' behavior in *Iliad* 19 is that they are "guardians of the natural order"; they must put the

chthonic deities, rather than wind demons. His only evidence, however, was the fact that the Harpies bear several horses (Phlogeus and Harpagus as well as Xanthus and Balius); horses, Dietrich argues, always have chthonic overtones. But, as Schachermeyr has shown (*passim*, but esp. 16 n. 5; 116–17 and chpt. 7), there are two types of wonder horses: those with chthonic associations, born from "earthy" mothers such as Medusa, Erinyes, Demeter and Gê, and those born from wind or weather deities such as the Harpies, Boreas and Zephyrus, who are exceptionally swift. As Schachermeyr notes, the two types of horses inevitably become combined: Pegasus, for example, is born from chthonic Medusa yet has the wings of a wind horse; see also my comments on *Il.* 20.221–29 below, pp. 97–98. Nonetheless, wind horses and chthonic horses are of separate origins and the Harpies' associations with horses, therefore, are insufficient proof of their chthonic nature.

¹⁴Isidorus Hispalensis discusses a wide variety of beliefs and customs regarding horses in 12.1, gathered from races as disparate as the Huns and the Persians. When he says at 12.1.44, *solent etiam ex equorum vel maestitia vel alacritate eventum futurum dimicaturi colligere*; it is unclear who the subject of "solent" is.

¹⁵Edwards 283 alternatively suggests that Xanthus' spoken prophecy can be compared to the wise remarks of the hawk to the nightingale in Hes. *Op.* 203–12. The idea of animals speaking to one another, however—a very common feature of fables—is not the same as that of an animal speaking to a human.

world to rights by stopping the “unnatural” act of a horse speaking.¹⁶ There are several weaknesses here. First, if the Erinyes’ goal was to prevent a disruption of the natural order as manifested by a speaking horse, then they did a poor a job of it—they did not stop Xanthus’ voice until he had finished his statement to Achilles. The fact that Xanthus’ statement was complete and uninterrupted is confirmed by the phrase ὥς ἄρα φωνήσαντος, which always follows a finished statement in Homer, never an interrupted one. Second, speaking warriors’ horses are not actually contrary to the “natural” order of the mythic or epic world, as I already have noted. We know that horses spoke not only to Achilles but to Castor and Adrastus¹⁷ as well, and also that Jason was spoken to by a wooden figurehead—the closest thing to a warrior’s steed that this hero had.

Finally, the Erinyes show no evidence of being “guardians of the natural order,” in Homer or elsewhere. They interact with men and gods, frequently correcting or punishing an individual’s infringement upon the rights of another, but they show no interest in simply preserving the cosmic *status quo* at large. The passage that repeatedly has been used to support the idea that the Erinyes are “guardians of the natural order” is Heracleitus’ statement that “Ἥλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν (fr. 94 DK), but even here the Erinyes can be understood as guardians of the individual’s rights and the punishers of those who would ignore them. The passage is quoted in Plutarch’s *de exil.* (604A) in order to illustrate the idea that the celestial bodies enjoy felicity because they take precautions against the possibility that one may trespass upon another’s territory: “Each planet, revolving in a single circuit, as if on an island, protects its own place (τάξιν); indeed, ‘the Sun will not go outside of his limits, for if he does, the Erinyes, as ministers of Dikê, will seek him out.’” Plutarch understood Heracleitus’ statement to mean not that the Erinyes had an interest

¹⁶Notable proponents of the “natural order” theory include Dodds 7; C. Robert in his edition of L. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*⁴ (1894; rpt. Berlin, Zürich and Dublin 1964) vol. 1 835; O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1906) 764–65; E. Leitzke, *Moirai und Gottheit im alten griechischen Epos* (Diss. Göttingen 1930) 20, n. 22; H. J. Rose, *La Notion du Divin*, *Entretiens sur l’Antiquité Classique I* (Vandoeuvres–Gênerve 1952) 13; M. P. Nilsson, *GGR* 1³ 101; Wüst, col. 106, cf. col. 115, also seems to hold to this idea. Σ B ad II. 19.418., who says that the Erinyes are ἐπίσκοποι γὰρ εἰσιν τῶν παρὰ φύσιν, sometimes is cited in support of this argument, but this looks like a later misinterpretation of Heracleitus’ statement; see pp. 91–92 below. Edwards 285 suggests that Homer here is thinking of the Erinyes’ functions in punishing those who violated the rights of the gods and elder family members, and that these are extended to cover maintaining the normal rules of behavior, which bar horses from speech.

¹⁷On Castor and Xanthus, above, n. 3. On Adrastus and Areion, below, pp. 95–97.

in keeping nature at large running in any pre-determined “normal” manner, but rather that when any celestial body within the cosmos overstepped its bounds and thereby infringed upon the τάξις or μέτρα of another body, the Erinyes would help to punish the transgressor and reestablish what Dikê decreed to belong to the wronged party, just as the Erinyes would act on behalf of a parent, older sibling, or beggar who had not been given his or her due. Heracleitus simply extended one of the Erinyes’ duties in the human sphere to the celestial sphere.¹⁸

A third theory, although not so influential as the first two, deserves mention both because it was presented in two works still studied by those interested in the early nature of the Erinyes and also because, as I will suggest immediately below, it does contain a kernel of truth. In both an 1899 article and her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* of 1903, Jane Harrison argued that the Erinyes are to be identified with the Moirai. As such, she suggested, they inspired Xanthus to tell Achilles what his *moira* would be and then stopped his speech when that prophecy was completed: “The horse speaks as the mouthpiece of the fates, the Erinyes; they tell of what fate (μοῖρα) will accomplish... When Xanthus has uttered the mandate of fate, the Fates close his mouth, not because he transgresses their law but because he has uttered it to the full.”¹⁹ The Erinyes and *moira* are, indeed, connected in Homer, but as Dodds already has shown, Harrison went too far when she identified them; rather, the Erinyes sometimes help to fulfill an individual’s *moira*. Moreover, as Dodds notes, *moira* scarcely is personified in Homer; thus, it is hard to imagine it stopping—or starting—a horse’s voice.²⁰

All that consistently can be said about the Erinyes’ nature and behavior in Homer is that they are chthonic goddesses and display a variety of traits commonly associated with such deities. They are present when oaths are taken

¹⁸J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1903) 216–17 similarly remarked that Heracleitus’ Erinyes are “embodiments of the vengeance that attends transgression.” Cf. Dietrich, “Xanthus” 10, who, although agreeing with the common opinion that the Erinyes may be “guardians of the natural order” in Heracleitus, does not see them as such in Homer.

¹⁹Harrison, above n. 18, 216 and “Delphika,” *JHS* 19 (1899) 205–251, esp. 205–210.

²⁰Dodds, chpt. 1, esp. pp. 7–8. Harrison adduced the Erinyes’ statement that Apollo had “blighted the παλαιγενεῖς μοῖρας” (Aesch. *Eu.* 172) as early proof of their identity with the Moirai, but I would agree with the most recent commentator (A. H. Sommerstein, ed. and comm., *Aeschylus: Eumenides* [Cambridge 1989]) and with most translators of the passage, that the phrase accuses Apollo of disregarding the ancient dispensations. The only explicit identifications of Erinys/the Erinyes and Moira/the Moirai of which I am aware occur at *Hymn Orph.* 69.16 and Eur. fr. 1011 (Nauck), where Erinys calls herself Fortuna, Nemesis, Fata, and Necessitas (*ap. Serv. A.* 7.337).

(*Il.* 19.259–60) and correspondingly help to bring curses to fulfillment (*Il.* 9.454–56; *Il.* 9.571–72), they walk the dark and misty pathways of the Underworld (*Il.* 9. 571–72; *Il.* 19.87) and are called up when one beats upon the earth (*Il.* 9.568–72), they bring on madness or delusion or sterility (*Il.* 9.454–56; *Il.* 19.86–89; *Od.* 15.233–34), they associate with the souls of those who have died (*Od.* 20.78). Hesiod and other sources make them the daughters of Gê herself; cultic myths connect Erinyes with Demeter in her role as an earth goddess.²¹

The earth and its caverns frequently are portrayed as sources of prophetic inspiration, and many chthonic entities have prophetic interests. To cite but a few examples: at the oracle of Gê in Aegira, the priestess descended into caves in order to prophesy; there also had been an oracle of Gê at Olympia at one time (Plin. *Nat.* 28.147, Paus. 5.14.10) and Gê was called the original owner of the Delphic oracle (Aesch. *Eu.* 2; cf. Eur. *IT* 1248–83). Even after Apollo's arrogation of Delphi, there remained a shrine to Gê (Plut. *de pyth. orac.* 402C–E), and ancient sources portrayed the Pythia as descending into a cave or depression, assumedly so as to be in closer contact with the chthonic powers.²² At Claros, too, the prophet awaited inspiration in an underground room after drinking from a subterranean spring (Tac. *Ann.* 2.54). The epic *Eumolpia* made Poseidon Ἐννοσίγαιος another early owner of the Delphic oracle; an altar to the chthonic Earthshaker still could be seen in the temple when Pausanias visited (Paus. 10.5.6, 10.24.4).

²¹Daughters of Gê: Hes. *Th.* 185, Soph. *OC* 40 and further at Wüst col. 85. For Erinyes' connections to Demeter, see my article, "Penelope and the Erinyes: Interpreting *Odyssey* 20.61–82," forthcoming in the Spring, 1994 issue of *Helios*; W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley 1979) 125–29; B. C. Dietrich, *Death, Fate and the Gods* (London 1965) 118–38; *ibid.* "Demeter"; Wüst cols. 94–101. Generally on the Erinyes' chthonic nature, see Henrichs.

²²Citations of ancient sources and discussion of the "cave" or "depression" at Delphi in J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley 1978) 197–228; and H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1956) 1 17–30. As both works note, no underground chamber has been found at the site. The frequency with which sources refer to such a phenomenon, however, is hard to ignore, especially because there was no secrecy concerning the operation of the oracle: completely false descriptions would have been recognized as such by anyone who had visited Delphi. Already in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the god is said to ἄδυτον κατέδυσε (line 443) and even Plutarch, who generally is thought to be a highly accurate informant about Delphi, uses the verbs κάτειμι, κατέρχομαι, and καταβαίνω to describe the entrance of the Pythia into the *manteion* (e.g., *de pyth. orac.* 397A, 408D; *de def. orac.* 438B). The sources may have been referring to an artificial depression. What is important for our discussion is the persistence of the belief, even in connection with the oracle of an "Olympian" god such as Apollo, that mantic powers came up from the ground.

At the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone in Patrae, the sick descended to a spring that was known far and wide as a μαντεῖον ἀψευδές. By means of a cord, the questioner let a mirror down into the spring while praying to Demeter; when it was raised, the surface would display a portrait of the patient either alive or dead (Paus. 7.21.12). At the oracle of the dead at Ephyra, ghosts themselves were imagined to appear (Hdt. 5.92); we do not know how this oracle worked, although it may have been similar to that of Trophonius at Lebadeia, where the questioner descended into a chasm (Paus. 9.39.5–14). Trophonius is but the most famous example of what Rohde long ago identified as a widespread tendency for heroes and heroines—i.e., the famous dead—to be credited with oracular powers²³ (cf. Plutarch's discussion of the mantic powers of the dead and of chthonic daemones at *de def. orac.* 431E – 432E). Mantic dreams, too, regularly are said to rise out of the earth (e.g., Eur. *IT* 1261–83, *Hec.* 70–71). Achilles' description of the Dodonian Selloi as sleeping on the ground would seem to reflect a belief in the earth's prophetic powers as well, although the allusion is too brief for us to be sure of this (*Il.* 16.234–35).

Given the frequency with which the earth and chthonic deities are credited with oracular powers, it would be natural for the Erinyes to have them as well. And in fact, Euripides tells us that their sanctuary on the Areopagus included a subterranean oracle:²⁴ at *El.* 1270–72 the Dioscuri predict that, after Orestes' acquittal, the δειναὶ θεαί...πάγον παρ' αὐτὸν χάσμα δύσονται χθονός, σεμνὸν βροτοῖσιν εὐσεβέσι χρηστήριον. As Aeschylus' chorus of Erinyes prepares to descend into this same sanctuary, it describes itself as θεσπίσασα (*Eu.* 922).²⁵ Henrichs and Lloyd-Jones, among others, have argued convincingly for the great antiquity of this Areopagite cult. Although evidence from Athenian cults is not the securest *comparandum*

²³Further discussion of Poseidon's oracular associations at W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*. tr. John Raffan (1977; Eng. ed. Oxford 1985) 139. On the prophetic powers of heroes and heroines, see Rohde 133; on the prophetic powers of the dead and of chthonic entities in general, see further Th. Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*. Studien zur Paläographie und Papyruskunde 21 and 22 (1921 and 1924; rpt. Amsterdam 1974 and 1983) 1 §§ 256, 257, 266; 2, chpt. 8 (§§ 328–76).

²⁴The location of this sanctuary in a cave or cleft is confirmed by Aesch. *Eu.* 804–807, 838–873, 1006–1007, 1036. The cult is mentioned by Euripides at *IT* 968–69 as well. On possible locations, see W. Judeich, *Topographie von Athen* (Munich 1931) 299–300. On the identity of Erinyes, Eumenides and Semnai Theai, see most recently Henrichs and Lloyd-Jones.

²⁵I thank Don Lateiner for reminding me of the passage from Aeschylus. I also note that the chorus calls Erinys a παναληθής κακόμαντις at Aesch. *Th.* 722. It is unclear, however, how we are to take this description—it could mean simply that when Erinys appears on the scene, the destruction of Oedipus' house is imminent. Erinys does not seem to have any actual prophetic function in the play.

for Homeric religion and folk belief, taken in combination with the frequent attribution of prophetic powers to chthonic entities that I have demonstrated in the previous paragraph, it encourages us to reconsider Harrison's idea that Xanthus' prophecy at *Il.* 19.408–17 was inspired²⁶ by the Erinyes, even if we have rejected her identification of these goddesses with the Moirai. When the prophecy that they intended Xanthus to convey had been completed, the Erinyes would have stopped the horse's voice, as line 418 says—they no longer would have inspired him.

3. Xanthus and Areion.

Even when we use material that would have been available to the ancient audience to elucidate the roles of Hera and the Erinyes in *Iliad* 19, however, the episode seems allusive rather than descriptive: the poet neither specified when and why Hera gave Xanthus the gift of speech nor explicitly told his audience that the Erinyes inspired his prophecy to Achilles. To some degree, this cursory treatment of the episode may reflect the poet's disinterest in describing supernatural phenomena in detail (see note 26), but it also suggests that we still are missing background information that the ancient audience would have had. We must consider again the way in which *Il.* 19.400–418 may have been constructed.

I argued in the first section of this article that the phrase αὐδήεντα δ' ἔθηκε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη looks back to a tradition of which we now have only faint traces, according to which Hera endowed heroic warriors' horses with speech. Homer's inclusion of the phrase not only informed the audience of how Xanthus originally became αὐδήεις, but also placed Xanthus more firmly within the tradition of great horses, and in doing so, of course, placed Achilles more firmly within the tradition of great heroes. Similarly, I would argue, the phrase Ἐρινύες ἔσχεθον αὐδὴν looks back to a lost episode in which Areion prophesied to his master. Such an episode first was posited by Wilamowitz and

²⁶It used to be assumed by some scholars of Greek religion, including M. P. Nilsson (*GGR* 13 166) and Rohde (289) that Homer knew only of "inductive" divination, not "inspirational" prophecy, i.e., prophecy that demanded direct contact with a god or daemon. Theoclymenus' prophecy at *Od.* 20.351 ff. was explained away as "dichterisches Schauen" (Nilsson). This assumption has been challenged vigorously by others, however, including S. Eitrem, "The Necromancy in the *Persai* of Aischylos" *Sym. Osl.* 6 (1928), 1–16; Dodds 70; and G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi* (Baltimore 1985) 242, and now should be discarded. All three of these scholars argue that Homer avoided detailed descriptions of such spectacularly supernatural phenomena as inspirational prophecy out a concern for "seemliness and epic dignity" (Dodds). On Homer's avoidance of things weird or supernatural, cf. also the remarks of Janko 53; Edwards 283; J. Griffin, "The Epic Cycle and the Uniqueness of Homer" *JHS* 97 (1977) 39–53, esp. pages 40–42; and Lloyd-Jones.

Malten, who suggested that the master in question specifically was Adrastus. Although both the episode's existence and any involvement in it by the Erinyes must remain hypothetical, both of these ideas are worth a closer look.

We might begin by examining the evidence that Wilamowitz and Malten adduced in support of the first idea. In Statius' *Thebaid*, a poem that may have drawn on the earlier *Thebais*, Areion prophesied in order to warn Adrastus as he drove away from Eteocles and Polyneices' fateful duel (*Theb.* 11.442–43): *fata monentem / conversumque iugo propellit Ariona* (sc. Adrastus). At *Theb.* 6.424, Areion is described as *praesagus* as Polyneices drives him in a chariot race at the funeral games of Archemorus. The passage goes on to describe Polyneices' reckless driving, his narrow escape from death and Areion's forfeiture of the winning honors; it may be this danger and dishonor that Areion foresees, or it may be that the adjective *praesagus* simply describes Areion in general—he is a horse who is known for his prophetic abilities. Propertius briefly refers to Areion's ability to speak at 2.34.37–8, again with reference to the funeral games of Archemorus: *Adrasti fuerit vocalis Arion, / tristis ad Archemori funera victor equus*. The context of the passage—it appears in a list of favorite literary themes—makes it clear that Areion's behavior at the games was a well known story, which suggests in turn that it had roots in the epic cycle. G. P. Goold, who takes *tristis* with *Archemori* rather than with *Arion* in his new Loeb translation (Cambridge, MA 1990) 243, suggests in a note that we should understand *vocalis* to allude to the same prophecy that Statius mentioned at *Theb.* 11.442–43. This seems tenuous—perhaps both Propertius' *vocalis* and Statius' *praesagus* point to some now lost version in which Areion orally warned the inept Polyneices as he set out on the racecourse, to mention just one possibility—but however we read the passage, it is notable that one of the things that Propertius emphasizes in his brief mention of Areion is that he is *vocalis*. This confirms that the horse was well known for one or more things that he had said.

As a whole, these passages suggest that Areion was famed for prophetically warning one or more of his masters of danger. (Wilamowitz and Malten go too far, in my opinion, when they assume that Homer had Adrastus in mind when he composed *Il.* 19.400–418; he also might have been thinking of a story in which Areion warned Polyneices or of some lost episode in which Areion prophesied to Heracles or Copeus, who appeared as Areion's masters in the Epic Cycle.²⁷) We now can examine the second idea: is there reason to believe that it was Erinyes or the Erinyes who inspired Areion's prophecy in a

²⁷On Heracles' and Copeus' ownership of Areion, see above, n. 10.

lost episode? If so, then the allusive Ἐρινύες ἔσχεθον αὐδὴν makes more sense; like αὐδῆντα δ' ἔθηκε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη, it would have served to align the Xanthus–Achilles episode with a more fully developed episode that was familiar to the audience.

As I noted on p. 89 during my review of Dietrich's analysis, according to most authorities, including the epic *Thebais*, Areion was sired on Erinyes or Demeter Erinyes by Poseidon. Antimachus of Colophon said that he sprang from Gê herself, but this seems to be either a confusion with the story of Poseidon's siring of Skyphios on Gê or a reflection of Erinyes' own role as an earth goddess. (See note 21.) After Adrastus escaped from battle, Areion carried him either to Colonus, Argos, or Sicyon, all of which were sites of important cults to the Erinyes; it is as if the horse returned to his home.²⁸ Although chthonic entities could work to inspire anyone, we might imagine that those who had a special connection to them would be especially open to their manipulation. Areion—son of Erinyes—would be a perfect candidate for inspiration by one or more Erinyes.

I may seem simply to have returned here to the premise on which Dietrich based his analysis of *Il.* 19.418 in suggesting that the Erinyes' presence at *Il.* 19.418 reflects Erinyes' or the Erinyes' inclusion in a lost episode in which Areion prophesied. But my development of the premise differs from his in significant ways. I have argued that the Erinyes did not intervene in order to *stop* Xanthus from warning Achilles, but rather inspired the horse's prophecy, stopping it only when it was completed. I have supported this argument by suggesting that the Erinyes, like many chthonic deities, had general prophetic functions. This releases us from seeking some other reason that Xanthus would suddenly have become prophetic, such as Dietrich's tenuous "Indo-European tradition of prophetic horses" or Harrison's problematic identification of the Erinyes with the Moirai.

Epic poets had several traditions on which to draw when describing a warrior's horse, some of which I have explored in this article. Because a horse's lineage and affiliations were not important substantively, however, but rather served primarily as a means of marking that horse as an appropriately grand one for the warrior to own, epic poets were not overly concerned about whether their descriptions of any given horse or his genealogy agreed exactly with those of other poets, or even whether a single description of a horse cohered within itself. At *Il.* 20.221–23, for example, Homer says that the 12 wonder horses of Erichthonius were sired by Boreas, a wind god; in this he

²⁸Discussion of Areion's return to cult sites of the Erinyes at Malten (above, n. 2) 203.

follows the tradition whereby gloriously swift horses are born of the winds. Yet in the following line (20.224), he describes Boreas as having assumed the form of a κυανοχαίτης stallion to impregnate Erichthonius' mares; this detail probably is drawn from a story of how Poseidon, in the form of a κυανοχαίτης stallion, mated with Demeter Erinys in the form of a mare, in order to sire chthonic Areion.²⁹ Both details add to the prestige of Erichthonius' horses, even if they seem somewhat contradictory to a modern scholar who has the leisure to pause and cogitate over their implications.

I have suggested that Homer similarly drew on different traditions to compose *Il.* 19.400–418: 1) Hera's reputation as an owner of divine horses, and as one who bestowed those horses on favored warriors; and 2) an episode in which Areion, the son of Erinys, was inspired by Erinys or the Erinyes to prophesy to his master. In the passage as we have it, these traditions appear only in abbreviated, allusive forms. For the ancient audience, however, which was familiar with a larger corpus of epic themes and folk beliefs than we are, these allusions would have sufficed to sketch a picture that accorded with their conceptions of what a warrior's horse should be, and of how the divine, demonic, and heroic worlds interacted.

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²⁹Aside from *Il.* 20.223, I find only one passage in which κυανοχαίτης describes someone other than Poseidon or Areion: at *h.Cer.* 347, it describes Hades. Cf. Paus. 8.25.8–9: having just related the story of stallion-Poseidon's rape of mare-Demeter, Pausanias says that "some people say" that the *Thebais'* description of Areion as κυανοχαίτης proves that the story of Poseidon's paternity is true. Edwards 318 follows A. Heubeck, *Glotta* 50 (1972) 133, who suggests that both *Il.* 20.224, [Βορέης] ἵππῳ δ' εἰσάμενος παρελέξατο κυανοχαίτη and Hes. *Th.* 278, ...τῇ δὲ μῆϊ παρελέξατο Κυανοχαίτης (of Poseidon siring Pegasus upon Medusa) are adaptations of *τῇ δὲ Ποσειδάων παρελέξατο κυανοχαίτης.