

The Survival of the Bronze-Age Demon

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There exist numerous representations on Minoan and Mycenaean objects of creatures that have generally come to be known as "demons" or "genii." The material has been conveniently collected and surveyed in an article entitled "The Minoan 'Genius'" by M. A. V. Gill.¹ In what follows, the objects will be referred to according to the numeration of Gill's catalogue, which contains 59 items and which can now be supplemented as follows:

60. Seal impression of a fragmentary haematite cylinder from Enkomi, Cyprus. A demon holds a libation vessel in a religious context.²
61. Cypriot haematite cylinder in a private collection. Two demons holding libation vessels face each other in a religious context.³
62. Steatite lentoid from Medeon, Phocis. Two demons face each other; between them are three dots and stylized vegetation (?).⁴
63. Agate amygdaloid from Nichoria, Messenia. A demon holding a libation vessel stands facing a low column or altar.⁵

¹ M. A. V. Gill, "The Minoan 'Genius'," *AthMitt* 79 (1964) 1-21, with a catalogue (15-21) containing 54 items, extended to 59 items in Gill, "Apropos the Minoan 'Genius'," *AJA* 74 (1970) 404-06. See also G. E. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton 1966) 166-68; S. Marinatos, "ΠΟΛΥΔΙΨΙΟΝ ΑΡΓΟΣ" in L. R. Palmer and J. Chadwick (eds.), *Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies* (Cambridge 1966) 265-74; F. T. van Straten, "The Minoan 'Genius' in Mycenaean Greece," *BABesch* 44 (1969) 110-21; J. H. Crowel, "The Minoan Genius in Mycenaean Greece: a review," *Talanta* 2 (1970) 23-31 (with a reply by van Straten, pp. 33-35); R. Hampe and E. Simon, *The Birth of Greek Art* (New York 1981) 191-95; C. Baurain, "Pour une autre interprétation des génies minoens," *BCH Suppl.* 11 (1985) 95-118. The reader should be alerted to the following abbreviations, which will be used below:

AGDS = *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Schmuckungen* (Munich 1968-75)

CMS = *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (Berlin 1964-)

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² V. Karageorghis, *Mycenaean Art from Cyprus* (Nicosia 1968) 42, Pl. 38. 4; Crowel (*supra* n. 1) 24, no. 3.

³ J. Boardman, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings* (New York 1970) 106, Pl. 206.

⁴ CMS V.2 no. 367.

⁵ CMS V.2 no. 440.

64. Steatite cylinder from Palaikastro, Crete. A demon stands facing two females (wearing animal masks?) and two aniconic goddesses.⁶
65. Glass paste plaque from Mycenae. No further details are available.⁷
66. Stone rhyton in the form of a conch from Malia. Part of the decoration consists of two demons facing each other; one holds a libation vessel.⁸
67. Haematite lentoid from Cyprus. A demon with a dog on either side runs.⁹

While the vast majority of these representations are engraved, we also find these creatures occasionally on ivory reliefs, on the handles of bronze urns and, once or twice, in fragments of fresco paintings. It is difficult, if not impossible, to assign precise dates to many of the objects; still, it is clear that the demons continued to be represented over a fairly long period, from the time of the First Palace at Phaestos¹⁰ to the very end of the Bronze Age.¹¹ On these objects the demons appear singly, in pairs antithetically disposed or, rarely, in larger groups. They are depicted as engaged in a variety of activities of apparently ritual character. Most often they are holding ewers, but they are also shown leading, carrying or, in one instance, slaying large animals. In appearance these demons are quite striking: they are quadrupeds standing upright on their hind legs and their most conspicuous feature is a "dorsal appendage" that reaches from the top of the head to about the middle of the calf or to the ankle.

So much can be said without fear of provoking controversy and disagreement. Beyond this there is little consensus among experts regarding the nature of these demons, their sex, their origin, the significance of the dorsal appendage or even the species of animal that they are intended to resemble. Concerning the nature of these creatures the most sensible remarks are those of Martin Nilsson, which it is worth while to quote here:

The daemons . . . are intimately associated with the cult. They appear as ministrants of the cult and . . . as guardians and attributes of a deity, or rather as his servants and subjects over whom he exerts his power. But a daemon appears also as the central figure exerting his power over lions and in another case with a man on each side of him. That he occupies the place usually set apart for the deity, or his symbol or shrine, can hardly be explained except on the assumption that he is of the same divine, or at least

⁶ V. E. G. Kenna, *AJA* 72 (1968) 331-32, Pl. 108, fig. 22; Crowel (*supra* n. 1) 24, no. 5 (with Addenda, p. 31).

⁷ G. E. Mylonas, *Praktika* (1963) 101; cf. van Straten (*supra* n. 1] 111, n. 10), who adds two further possible examples. But these are so fragmentary that it is not even certain that it is the demon that is represented.

⁸ C. Baurain and P. Darque, "Un triton en pierre à Malia," *BCH* 107 (1983) 3-58.

⁹ *CMS* VII no. 126.

¹⁰ No. 8 (= *CMS* II.5 no. 322); cf. D. Levi, *ASAtene* 35-36 (1957-58) 124-25.

¹¹ Nos. 17 and 18; cf. H. W. Catling, *Cypriot Bronzework in the Mycenaean World* (Oxford 1964) 156-61 (who strangely refers to "winged Genii"); Karageorghis (*supra* n. 2) 29-30. Crowel (*supra* n. 1] 29-30) however would assign these to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

semi-divine, nature. The nature of these demons is consequently in a certain respect ambiguous, but seems easily intelligible. They are not gods themselves, but the stuff of which gods are made, daemons or beings of popular belief.¹²

Nilsson's use of masculine pronouns to refer to the demons is indicative of his belief that they are of indifferent gender.¹³ In this regard Nilsson is at odds with the majority of scholars, who consider the demons to be definitely female. The reason for this is that, in most instances, scholars' views of the sex of the demons have been linked with the consideration of the demons' origin. As early as 1890 it was suggested that the Minoan artists modeled these creatures on representations of the Egyptian goddess Ta-wrt, familiar in Crete from Egyptian imports.¹⁴ General (but not universal¹⁵) acceptance of this explanation for the origin of the demons has tended to influence the view that they are female. It will be best, however, to separate the issues of sex and origin in the discussion below.

If we regard, for the time being, the derivation from Ta-wrt as irrelevant to the question of gender, we find that there is very little in the iconography of the demons that helps us determine whether the artists regarded these creatures as male or female. That they hunt in the wild is not decisive, for females as well as males are so depicted in Minoan art.¹⁶ Their dress may suggest that they are male since (disregarding the mysterious dorsal appendage) they are naked apart from the belt that adorns the slender waist of some of the demons. But the same belt is found worn by women¹⁷ and, as far as the nakedness (which is uncharacteristic of the representation of Minoan women) is concerned, we are here dealing with creatures that are near, or indeed on the other side of, the borderline between the human and the animal. As is the case with Minoan griffins and sphinxes, even though they are female they need not be clothed. That the demons are in fact female is strongly suggested by the fact that, on the fresco fragment from Mycenae,

¹² M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*² (Lund 1950) 381; cf. C. Picard, *Les religions préhelléniques* (Paris 1948) 89–92.

¹³ "The Nature daemons . . . are both male and female, their sex being a matter of slight importance" (Nilsson [previous note] 383).

¹⁴ F. Winter, *ArchAnz* (1890) 108, followed by A. Evans, *JHS* 21 (1901) 169 and *The Palace of Minos at Knossos* (London 1921–36) IV 431–41; S. Marinatos and M. Hirmer, *Crete and Mycenae* (New York 1960) 176; E. Zwieler-Diehl, *AGDS* II 31–32; Boardman (*supra* n. 3) 53; Hampe and Simon (*supra* n. 1) 191.

¹⁵ Rejected already by A. Milchhoefer, *Die Anfänge der Kunst in Griechenland* (Leipzig 1883) 56 note. See also C. Tsountas, *ArchEph* (1891) 35–37; A. B. Cook, *JHS* 14 (1894) 82; A. Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen* III (Leipzig 1900) 41; R. Dussaud, *Les civilisations préhelléniques*² (Paris 1914) 382; D. Levi, *ASAtene* 8–9 (1925–26) 192; E. Herkenrath, *AJA* 41 (1937) 421–22; D. Isaac, *RHR* 118 (1938) 67–68; R. Dussaud, *Iraq* 6 (1939) 61.

¹⁶ Cf. the comelian lentoid from Crete, *AGDS* II no. 20; Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 366.

¹⁷ E.g. the sardonix lentoid from Elis, *AGDS* II no. 21; the gold ring from Vaphio, *CMS* I no. 219; the sardonix amygdaloid from Vaphio, *CMS* I no. 226.

they are painted white.¹⁸ Still, it must be admitted that the same argument that allowed for the possibility of naked females may be permitted to allow for the possibility of white males. But there is, in the end, no positive evidence that requires, or even encourages, us to regard the demons as male. Thus, while we cannot claim that the case is proved, it seems that, even disregarding the possible derivation of these demons from the goddess Ta-wrt, on balance the evidence inclines us toward the view that they are indeed female.

But it is impossible to disregard the connection between the Minoan demons and the Egyptian goddess, as it has been emphasized by the majority of scholars who have concerned themselves with the question of the nature of the demons. Indeed Margaret Gill, in the most comprehensive discussion of the question, has shown that it is unreasonable to deny the connection. But we are not compelled to agree with her when she says, "Once derivation from Ta-wrt is accepted the physical characteristics of the 'genius' are no longer a problem."¹⁹ On the contrary, acceptance of the derivation from Ta-wrt generates more problems (and not about the physical characteristics of the demons alone) than it resolves. For, while there are arresting similarities between the appearance of the hippopotamus-headed goddess and that of the mysterious demons, there are also numerous and significant differences, and these differences must be accounted for. Now, some of the differences can be readily explained. For example, the elimination of hippopotamus-features is explicable on the grounds of the absence of that animal from the territory and consciousness of Minoan and Mycenaean Greece, and the reduction of the potbelly is understandable in terms of the conventions of Minoan artistic representation. But how can we account for the fact that, while Ta-wrt is a single deity with an identity of her own, the demons are multiplied like the satyrs or nymphs of later Greek art? And, more importantly, how can we account for the iconography of the demons, who are regularly represented as engaged in activities that have no associations with the Egyptian goddess? Even from its earliest appearance in Crete the demon leads a life of its own. The sealing from Phaestos, for example, already depicts the demon with the characteristic ewer and vegetation and, perhaps, also the heap of stones that is found elsewhere in Minoan art.²⁰ We would have to make the assumption (which, I think,

¹⁸ No. 25. (For color illustrations see *ArchEph* [1887] Pl. 10. 1; Marinatos and Himer [*supra* n. 14] Pl. 43; Hampe and Simon [*supra* n. 1] Pl. 33.) Likewise on the fresco fragment from Pylos (no. 55), if indeed it is a demon that is represented.

¹⁹ Gill (*supra* n. 1) 4.

²⁰ No. 8. For the ewer, see nos. 2-9, 13, 18, 20-23, 26, 46, 47, 52, 58-61, 63, 66; for the vegetation, nos. 10, 11, 14, 19, 23, 26, 47, 54, 59. On one of the Zakro sealings (no. 27) a demon spears a bull over a heap of stones. On a glass plaque from Mycenae (no. 20) two demons hold ewers over a heap of stones. More commonly, demons are depicted holding ewers over an object described as an altar or a pillar (nos. 13, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 56, 58, 63). There may be no practical difference between these latter objects and the heap of stones, as there is

cannot easily be paralleled) that Minoan artists adopted a distinctive Egyptian deity, multiplied her, modified some details of her appearance and associated her with the conventions of Minoan cult. Artists, particularly those whose medium is the "minor arts," simply do not have the authority to make the kinds of innovations that we are here asked to assume. It is much more likely that these demons correspond to something already existing in Minoan cult and belief. If, as seems likely to be the case, Tawrt has exercised some influence, it is not a matter of the demons owing their existence to artists' acquaintance with representations of the Egyptian deity. Rather she has contributed some details to the iconography of a native divinity.²¹

If this is the case, we cannot simply dismiss the details of iconography as arising from misunderstandings on the part of artists.²² The artists were not copying, at several removes, a foreign original which they were unable to comprehend. Rather they were attempting to depict a being that had an objective reality in the context of the local cult. When the Cretans spoke of these creatures, even worshipped them, they referred to them with a specific name (not the vague "demons" or "genii" which we are forced to use), applied to them pronouns and epithets that were either masculine or feminine in gender, used vocabulary that was appropriate to creatures of leonine or asinine (or some other) character, and surely did not employ the Minoan equivalent of the expression "dorsal appendage" in reference to the demons' most distinctive feature. Our task, then, is to attempt to determine, in the first place, the kind of animal that the Minoan artists were attempting to represent and, in the second, the nature of the material of which the "dorsal appendage" was thought to be composed.

It has been variously suggested that the demons' appearance is that of a horse, an ass or a lion. And indeed some of the representations are strikingly equine, asinine or leonine. But the features that make one identification attractive would seem to rule out the others. The clear representations of paws, for example, on the demons of the famous gold ring from Tiryns²³ render impossible the supposition that we are dealing with a hooved creature, while the long, pointed ears in the fresco from

later no practical difference between a herm and a heap of stones; cf. W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley 1979) 39–43; van Straten (*supra* n. 1) 114; Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 256; Evans, *Palace of Minos* (*supra* n. 14) IV 455. Thus the activities of the demons have several points of contact with the ritual (described in detail at Plut. *Arist.* 21) in honor of those who died at Plataea, with its branches of myrtle, sacrifice of a bull and washing of stelae with water from a ewer.

²¹ Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 381; Baurain (*supra* n. 1) 98–102.

²² So Gill (*supra* n. 1) 4.

²³ No. 26 (= CMS I no. 179).

Mycenae are obviously not those of lions.²⁴ Either, therefore, we are dealing with a creature that is sometimes represented with the attributes of one species and sometimes with those of another, or we need to find some other species which possesses all the various attributes with which the demons are endowed. But first a word must be said about the significance of these attributes. Minoan and Mycenaean artists (or, at least, some Minoan and Mycenaean artists) were quite capable of representing convincingly a hoof or a lion's head. The lentoid from the tholos tomb at Vaphio, for example, which depicts a two-horse chariot,²⁵ illustrates well the care that the Mycenaean engraver takes in portraying a horse's hoof. And the lions on the famous inlaid dagger blade from Grave Circle A in Mycenae are gloriously and realistically leonine. But it is unnecessary to deal in generalities when we can compare directly two representations by the same artist in the same work. Several seals show the demon carrying, leading or subduing a stag or a bull, and in every instance the artist has been careful to distinguish the paws of the demon from the hooves of its victim.²⁶ In similar fashion we can compare lions and demons on the same engraving. A cornelian lentoid in Berlin has a demon carrying a pole with the body of a lion suspended from each end.²⁷ Unfortunately, while the demon is represented in profile, the lions are shown from above, so that the comparison is not exact. Still, comparison is instructive: the paws are similar (though not identical) but, of even greater interest, while the lions have the lunate ears that are characteristic not only of lions but, more importantly, of Minoan and Mycenaean representations of lions, the demon has the long, pointed ears that these demons often display.²⁸ Not only are

²⁴ No. 25 (see n. 18). Also against the identification of the demons with lions is the fact that there is never a trace on the visible part of the demons' neck of a lion's mane. For, to the Minoan artists the mane was such a distinctively leonine feature that they regularly furnished even lionesses with it: e.g. conglomerate lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 106; cornelian lentoid in Boston, *CMS* XIII no. 26; cornelian lentoid in Oxford, V. E. G. Kenna, *Cretan Seals* (Oxford 1960) no. 314; two cornelian amygdaloids in Munich, *AGDS* I nos. 41 and 42; marble lentoid in Munich, *AGDS* I no. 43; agate lentoid in London, H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems . . . in the British Museum* (London 1926) no. 48. Compare Anacreon's antlered doe (fr. 408 Page); H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (Oxford 1975) 295.

²⁵ *CMS* I no. 229; color illustration in Hampe and Simon (*supra* n. 1) Pl. 264. It is instructive to compare also the heads of these horses with those of the demons. It will be seen that there is no resemblance. In any case, the demons cannot be modeled on horses, as these demons appear earlier in Minoan art than does the horse; cf. Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 19.

²⁶ Nos 27, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 54. For no. 54, see now S. Symeonoglou, *Kadmeia* I (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 35 [Göteborg 1973]) 48-52, Pls. 70-73.

²⁷ No. 41 (= *AGDS* II no. 28).

²⁸ Furtwängler (*supra* n. 15) III 39) recognizes that the demons regularly do not have lions' ears, but he is clearly mistaken in regarding the ears as belonging with the dorsal appendage. The fresco from Mycenae as well as other representations make it clear that the appendage is entirely separate from the ears.

Minoan and Mycenaean artists generally capable of depicting a convincing lion's ear,²⁹ but this particular artist is capable of so doing. Yet he has chosen not to. He does not conceive of his demon in leonine terms.³⁰ Rather it is an animal with paws and with long, pointed ears. Nor is this artist alone; the paws and long ears are plainly visible in a number of other representations of the demon, including the gold ring from Tiryns.

An animal which has paws and which can have long, pointed ears is the dog.³¹ But of greater relevance than the actual appearance of dogs is, of course, the practice of Bronze-Age artists when dealing with canine representation. To be sure, there is great variety in the depiction of dogs in Minoan and Mycenaean art. Nor is this surprising considering the diversity of breeds. Indeed, this diversity may account for the variation in the appearance of the demons. But the long, pointed ears are very much in evidence, sometimes pricked up, sometimes laid back along the head.³² And the faces, some short and square, others long and pointed, bear close resemblances to the faces of many of the demons.³³ These resemblances,

²⁹ E.g. the gold rhyton in Athens, from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae; rock crystal lentoid from Knossos, Kenna (*supra* n. 24) no. 315; jasper lentoid from Athens, Kenna, no. 318; agate lentoid from Vaphio, *CMS* I no. 243; onyx lentoid from Vaphio, *CMS* I no. 248; jasper prism bead in the British Museum, *CMS* VII no. 115c; comelian lentoid in the British Museum, *CMS* VII no. 118; comelian lentoid from Athens, *AGDS* II no. 34; sardonyx lentoid from Pylos, *CMS* I no. 277. Unfortunately Hanns Gabelmann (*Studien zum frühgriechischen Löwenbild* [Berlin 1965]) does not concern himself with Bronze-Age art.

³⁰ Similarly the other artists who depict lions and demons side by side: no. 43 (= *CMS* I no. 172); no. 44 (= *CMS* I no. 161); no. 46 (= H.-G. Buchholz and V. Karageorghis, *Altägäis und Altkypros* [Tübingen 1971] no. 1753); no. 50; no. 61.

³¹ It seems not to have been previously suggested that the demons are dogs, although Hampe and Simon correctly observe, "Scholars have generally regarded the head and paws as those of a lion, though the ears are often elongated and more like those of a dog" ([*supra* n. 1] 191), and Walter Burkert notes their "dog-like snouts, pointed ears, and paws" (*Greek Religion* [Oxford 1985] 35). In later antiquity demons often have the appearance of dogs: *JHS* 100 (1980) 161, with n. 23.

³² Onyx lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 81; lapis lazuli lentoid from Vaphio, *CMS* I no. 255; seal impression from Vaphio, *CMS* I no. 256; conglomerate lentoid from Pylos, *CMS* I no. 294; sardonyx amygdaloid from Crete, *CMS* I no. 480; comelian lentoid in London, *CMS* VII no. 66; steatite prism bead from Zakro, *CMS* VII no. 216b; steatite prism in Paris, *CMS* IX no. 14c; jasper lentoid in Paris, *CMS* IX no. 195; steatite prism bead in New York, *CMS* XII no. 50a; jasper lentoid from Crete, Kenna (*supra* n. 24) no. 240; seal impression from Knossos, Kenna, no. 40S; ivory half cylinder from Crete, Evans, *Palace of Minos* (*supra* n. 14) I 197, fig. 145; haematite lentoid from Crete, Evans IV 581, fig. 586; seal impression from the "Little Palace" deposit, Evans IV 608, fig. 597A g; frescoes from Pylos, M. L. Lang, *The Palace of Nestor* II (Princeton 1969) Pls. 64 and 116.

³³ Compare the face of the demon on the agate amygdaloid from Vaphio (no. 2) with the dog's-head seal impression from Phaestos, *CMS* II.5 no. 300; the face of the demon on the comelian lentoid from Crete (no. 41) with that of the hound on a comelian amygdaloid in Munich, *AGDS* I no. 37; the face of the demon on the haematite cylinder from Crete (no. 13) with that of the dog on a haematite lentoid from Knossos, Boardman (*supra* n. 3) Pl. 115; the face of the taller of the two demons on the steatite lentoid from Crete (no. 16) with the faces of the dogs on an agate lentoid in Athens, *CMS* I Suppl. no. 109; the faces of the demons on the

along with the pointed ears, paws and variation in the depiction of the face, make it quite likely that the appearance of the demons is intended to be canine. This identification is securely confirmed by two observations. In the first place, on a number of occasions the demon is represented with what appears to be a collar around its neck,³⁴ and collars are a regular feature of the portrayal of dogs in Minoan and Mycenaean art.³⁵ In the second place, the rôle that the demon frequently assumes is that of the hunter, and in art (as in life) the dog is the companion of its master on the hunt.

Unfortunately, recognizing the canine character of the demons does not help with the identification of the dorsal appendage, for there is nothing that is commonly associated with dogs—the same is true, of course, of lions, horses and asses—that can plausibly be related to this particular appurtenance. Clearly the demon is, like the sphinx and the hippogriff, a composite creature, having the shape of a dog, the posture of a human³⁶ and an additional element derived from elsewhere. Various attempts have been made to explain and identify this element³⁷ but, according to Margaret Gill, who considers the demons to be descended from Ta-wrt, “there is no need to try to explain the dorsal appendage as part of the costume assumed by a human worshipper masquerading as an animal nor attempt to account for it by comparison with a variety of animal forms. . . . That no single explanation based on comparison with natural objects could be found to fit

fresco from Mycenae (no. 25) with the face of the dog on a fresco from Pylos, Lang (previous note) Pl. 116; the face of the demon on the serpentine lentoid from Crete (no. 35 = *AGDS* II no. 29) with the faces of the dogs on an onyx lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 81. (These Mycenaean dogs look somewhat horse-like and may help explain the occasional equine identification of the demons.) Finally, the faces of the demon and the dogs on no. 67 are strikingly similar.

³⁴ Nos. 3 (= *AGDS* II no. 26), 8 (= *CMS* II. 5 no. 322), 23 (= *CMS* I no. 231), 25 (see n. 18), 58, 61, 63 and 66.

³⁵ Frescoes from Pylos (Lang [*supra* n. 32] Pl. 116) and Tiryns (G. Rodenwaldt, *Tiryns* II [Athens 1912] Pls. 13 and 14.6). Frequently on seals: *CMS* I nos. 81, 255, 256, 294, 480; V.2 no. 677a; VII nos. 66 and 115; IX no. 135; XIII no. 71; *AGDS* I no. 37; Kenna (*supra* n. 24) nos. 237, 238, 239, 240, 40S; Evans, *Palace of Minos* (*supra* n. 14) II 766, fig. 496.

³⁶ Another element that is possibly human is the forelock (clearly visible in nos. 2, 25, 26, 49 and 59), which can be compared with, e.g. those of the figures on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus; of “la Parisienne” from Knossos; of the woman on the fresco from the cult center at Mycenae; of the women on the fresco from Tiryns; of the bearded man on the amethyst disc from Mycenae (*CMS* I no. 5). Cf. Crouwel (*supra* n. 1) 24–25.

³⁷ “On the back of each lion is, apparently, a hide, possibly covered with a net,” A. W. Persson (*The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times* [Berkeley 1942] 78, of the demons on the ring from Tiryns, no. 26); “a beetle-like covering. . . . It seems . . . to be taken from the insect world, specifically from butterflies and their larvae,” Hampe and Simon (*supra* n. 1] 191); “der Rücken ist mit einem anscheinend losen, borstigen Fell bekleidet, das in eine Wespentaille endet,” M. P. Nilsson (*Geschichte der griechischen Religion*³ I [Munich 1967] 296); “the crocodile hide and tail is [*sic*] quite unmistakable,” Catling (*supra* n. 11] 158, of the demons on the bronze urn handles, no. 18). According to Baurain (*supra* n. 1] 103–10) the dorsal appendage is a figure-eight shield.

all examples is not surprising since the Minoan craftsman was copying not from nature but from a picture, and that in a foreign artistic style and possibly in a different medium."³⁸ But, as indicated above, the demons undoubtedly possessed an independent identity apart from their appearances on works of art, and the artists were attempting to depict—granted in a stylized manner—a feature to which they could most likely apply a name and which they no doubt thought had a purpose. Still, it is not surprising that scholars have either produced wholly unsatisfactory identifications or have despaired altogether of identifying the appendage. For, while its general shape is fairly consistent in the various representations, its decoration varies considerably. Occasionally it is without decoration entirely,³⁹ but more commonly it is decorated either on its surface or with protrusions on the outer edge, or both. The protrusions sometimes have a spiky appearance,⁴⁰ sometimes are spherical in shape,⁴¹ and sometimes appear to be spikes terminating in balls.⁴² The surface decoration sometimes consists of striations,⁴³ sometimes of a combination of stripes and circles,⁴⁴ and sometimes of a crosshatching or scaly effect.⁴⁵ The protrusions belong to the repertory of contemporary glyptic⁴⁶ and are reminiscent of the purely decorative elements with which Minoan and Mycenaean engravers like to adorn, for example, goats' horns and griffins' wings.⁴⁷ If they serve any purpose at all, it is a conceptual one rather than a pictorial: they indicate that the dorsal appendage, whatever its actual shape and nature, serves as the demon's mane.⁴⁸ Indeed, in some representations the appendage looks shaggy or bristly. But this need not mean that the

³⁸ Gill (*supra* n. 1) 4.

³⁹ Nos. 13, 20, 31, 40, 41, 50, 52, 53, 58.

⁴⁰ Nos. 2, 5, 6, 11 (?), 16, 19, 20, 33, 34, 35, 37, 42, 43, 45, 48, 49, 51, 60, 61, 63.

⁴¹ Nos. 3, 8, 14, 21, 22, 23, 27, 46.

⁴² Nos. 26, 29, 30, 32. For the aberrant and problematic no. 38, see Gill (*supra* n. 1) 3.

⁴³ Nos. 2, 8 (?), 11, 12 (?), 14, 15, 16, 18, 25, 29, 30, 42, 45, 49.

⁴⁴ No. 23.

⁴⁵ Nos. 4, 17, 26, 27, 39 (?), 54.

⁴⁶ It is therefore perhaps significant that they are missing from the representations on the frescoes from Mycenae and Pylos (nos. 25 and 55).

⁴⁷ E.g. agate lentoid from Megalopolis, *AGDS* II no. 54; agate lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 74; conglomerate lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 115; two gold rings from Mycenae, *CMS* I nos. 119 and 155; jasper lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 168; agate prism from Midea, *CMS* I no. 193; jasper lentoid from Pylos, *CMS* I no. 266; two agate lentoids from Crete, Kenna (*supra* n. 24) nos. 286 and 320; sardonyx lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 73; agate lentoid from Mycenae, *CMS* I no. 98; haematite lentoid from Crete, Kenna, no. 342; serpentine lentoid from Crete, *CMS* IV no. 287; steatite lentoid in New York, *CMS* XII no. 301.

⁴⁸ I am thinking not so much of lions' or horses' manes, but of those of wild boars and goats, which extend the length of the animal's body, e.g. *AGDS* I no. 58; II nos. 23 and 56; *CMS* I nos. 158, 184, 192, 227, 276; IX nos. 136, 139, 140, 141; XII nos. 215, 261. We may also compare the spherical protrusions on the dorsal appendages with the series of dots that represent the flowing locks of some of the human figures on the gold rings depicting the vegetation cult, e.g. *CMS* I nos. 17, 126, 127, 191, 219, 514.

artist considered the appendage to have the appearance of a boar's or a goat's mane—the shape of the appendage and the fact that in many instances it lacks these protrusions indicate otherwise—but merely that it takes the place of a mane.

But the shape of the dorsal appendage indicates that the artists had something specific in mind which was transferred from elsewhere to serve as a mane. The shape and, I think, even the surface decoration show that it is intended as a snake-skin. It will be readily conceded that the shape of the dorsal appendage has more in common with that of a snake-skin than with that of anything from the insect-world. And the surface decoration, even by its very variety, proclaims its serpentine, or at least reptilian, origin. We can classify the method of decorating the surface of the dorsal appendage in three general categories, none of which is inconsistent with the representation of a snake. Some demons have appendages that are without surface decoration entirely, indicative either of the smoothness of a snake's skin or of the artist's inability or unwillingness to adorn so small a detail.⁴⁹ Others have appendages with a crosshatching very similar to the appearance of scales.⁵⁰ The rest have appendages that are decorated in such a way as to imitate the various patterns of stripes, spots, etc. that so colorfully embellish the skins of many snakes.⁵¹ The most striking example of this last category is the fresco from Mycenae, which shows the dorsal appendage decorated with wavy chevrons of red and blue.

If we summarize here what we now know about these demons it will become apparent what we are dealing with. They are divinities of a somewhat lesser status than the purely anthropomorphic deities in whose company they are occasionally found; they are concerned both with hunting and with the propagation of vegetation; they appear singly or in groups; they are apparently female; they are basically canine in appearance, although their upright posture anthropomorphizes them to some degree; they have a

⁴⁹ We must bear in mind that the majority of demons appear on surfaces the largest dimension of which is less than an inch. Not surprisingly, when snakes are seen on Bronze-Age seals (as they occasionally are: *CMS* II.1 no. 453c; IV no. 54; IX no. 86; *AGDS* I no. 24) they are typically without any sort of decoration. The same is usually the case with later engravings (see, for example, Boardman [*supra* n. 3] Pls. 219, 289, 372, 494, 509), but we do on occasion see the artist attempting to suggest the texture or pattern of the snake's skin. When he does this, he frequently employs a technique similar to that used by the Bronze-Age artists to decorate the demons' dorsal appendage (see Boardman, Pls. 378, 486, 503, 699). Of perhaps greatest interest in this connection is the sea-serpent (Scylla [?]; note what appears to be a collar on its neck) on an island gem of the seventh century: J. Boardman, *Island Gems* (SocPromHellStud, Supplementary Papers 10 [London 1963]) no. 293. The artist has represented the serpent's scales with a pattern of lines and dots that resemble the protrusions on some of the demons' dorsal appendages.

⁵⁰ See n. 45.

⁵¹ For snakes in Minoan art see especially Evans, *Palace of Minos* (*supra* n. 14) IV 138–99, although it is not necessary to accept Evans' derivation (178–92) of the "wave and dot" motif from the pattern on the skin of *tarbophis vivax*.

mane (if that is the right word) consisting of a snake-skin. They are, to give them the name by which we must now refer to them, Erinyes.⁵²

That the Greeks worshipped the Erinyes (or, at least, an Erinyes) in the Bronze Age is proved by the appearance of *E-ri-nu* in the Mycenaean tablets.⁵³ That they are to be identified with the demons that we have been concerned with is shown by the remarkable coincidence of attributes and associations. To begin with, the demons have the appearance of dogs, and the Erinyes are frequently referred to in canine terms.⁵⁴ To be sure, it has been asserted that the canine aspect of the Erinyes is a late invention⁵⁵ and even that the original character of the Erinyes was equine rather than canine.⁵⁶ But neither of these assertions is provable. Indeed, both are unlikely. The association of the Erinyes with horses is very tenuous and is supported by such "evidence" as the fact that Sophocles applies the same epithet (*χαλκόπους*) to the Erinyes that Homer applies to horses⁵⁷ and the

⁵² The demons were earlier identified as Erinyes by Milchhoefer (*supra* n. 15) 58–64, but only because he considered the demons to be horse-headed. For the alleged equine character of the Erinyes see below. I have not seen M. Visser, *The Erinyes* (Diss. Toronto 1980).

⁵³ M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*² (Cambridge 1973) 306–07, 411, 476; M. Gérard-Rousseau, *Les mentions religieuses dans les tablettes mycéniennes* (*Incunabula Graeca* 32 [Rome 1968]) 103–04; G. Neumann, "Wortbildung und Etymologie von 'Ἐρινύς,'" *Die Sprache* 32 (1986) 43–51; A. Heubeck, "Ἐρινύς in der archaischen Epik," *Glotta* 64 (1986) 143–65. Reference to the deity on the tablets from Knossos is in the singular but, since the usual procedure is for an individual divinity to be separated out from a collective group rather than for a group to come into being from the multiplication of an individual (Wilamowitz, *Kl. Schr.* V.2 34; M. P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion* [Oxford 1925] 111–13; Burkert [*supra* n. 31] 173), we must assume that, even in the Mycenaean Period, the Erinyes are now plural, now singular, just as they are in Homer (e.g. *Il.* 9.454 and 571; for the number of the Erinyes see Jane Harrison, *JHS* 19 [1899] 207–08; E. Wüst, *RE* Suppl. VIII [1956] 122–23). Similarly our demons are sometimes shown as an undifferentiated collectivity and sometimes as a single divinity.

⁵⁴ Aesch. *Cho.* 924, 1054, *Eum.* 132, 246; Soph. *El.* 1388; Eur. *El.* 1252, 1342, *Or.* 260; Hesychius s. v. κύων; Eustathius on Homer *Il.* 9.454 (763.40); Horace *Serm.* 1. 8. 35; Lucan 6. 733; Servius *Aen.* 3. 209; W. H. Roscher, *Das von der "Kynanthropie" handelnde Fragment des Marcellus von Side* (*AbhLeipz* 17. 3 [Leipzig 1896]) 46–50. In the visual arts the Erinyes are not depicted as dogs (or, indeed, with any other theriomorphic appearance, apart from their snakey locks) but they are often portrayed as huntresses; cf. A. Rosenberg, *Die Erinyen* (Berlin 1874) 85.

⁵⁵ "As soon as the Erinyes develop out of ghosts into avengers the element of pursuit comes in, they . . . become all vindictive; they are no longer δράκαινας but κύνες," Jane Harrison (*JHS* 19 [1899] 220). But we now see that the element of pursuit and the chase is as old as the Minoan Period.

⁵⁶ S. Eitrem, *Die göttlichen Zwillinge bei den Griechen* (Christiania 1902) 61–63; Wilamowitz, *Kl. Schr.* VI 224 and *Griechische Tragödien*⁵ II (Berlin 1907) 225–31; E. Hedén, *Homerische Götterstudien* (Uppsala 1912) 135–38; L. Malten, *JDAI* 29 (1914) 200–02; A. H. Krappe, *RhMus* 81 (1932) 305–20.

⁵⁷ *El.* 491; *Il.* 8. 41, 13. 23. See B. C. Dietrich, *Hermes* 90 (1962) 141–42. (That brazen foot and canine attributes are not incompatible is shown by *Ar. Ran.* 292–95.) Eitrem ([previous note] 62) even considers the possibility that the goad, which is an occasional attribute of the Erinyes, can be explained with reference to their equine origins. If the archaeologist of the

fact that the grove of the Eumenides (!) in Attica was at Colonus Hippius. A somewhat more direct connection is provided by a myth recounted by Pausanias, in the course of which Poseidon mates with Demeter Erinys and the product of their union is the horse Areion (Erion). Whatever the significance of this myth may be,⁵⁸ it is surely not evidence that the Erinyses were originally equine in character, or even that there was any particular connection between the Erinyses and horses. In fact, the mating of Poseidon and Demeter appears to be a late element in the myth, as there is a strikingly similar Hittite myth from which horses are absent.⁵⁹ In addition, the ritual which Pausanias describes in connection with the myth is a form of sacrifice characteristic of the Bronze Age and is appropriate to the myth in its earlier (i.e. horseless) state. The focus of this ritual at Phigalia, where the goddess is called not Demeter Erinys but Black Demeter, is a wooden cult statue which had been destroyed by fire long before Pausanias' day. Nevertheless, Pausanias records what he had been told of its appearance: "She was seated upon a rock and had the appearance of a woman except for the head. She had the head and mane of a horse, and snakes and other creatures were represented as growing from her head. She was dressed in a *chiton* which reached to her feet and she held a dolphin in one hand and a dove in the other."⁶⁰ The rock, the snakes and the dove are all elements that are familiar from Bronze-Age iconography and they, in conjunction with the evidence of the ritual, indicate that the statue was itself very old.⁶¹ It is interesting that one parallel that Frazer produces for this horse-headed female divinity is precisely a representation of the Bronze-Age demon on a lentoid seal which was supposed to have come from Phigalia.⁶² Just as the seal misled Frazer, Cook and others, so the venerable *xoanon* misled the

future follows this reasoning, when confronted with a picture of Wilhelm Tell he will identify it as one of St. Sebastian.

⁵⁸ Paus. 8. 25. 4-10. For the enormous bibliography concerned with this myth, see E. Wüst (*supra* n. 53) 94-101; B. C. Dietrich, "Demeter, Erinys, Artemis," *Hermes* 90 (1962) 129-48 and *Death, Fate and the Gods* (London 1965) 118-38; R. Stiglitz, *Die grossen Göttinnen Arkadiens* (Vienna 1967) 110-34.

⁵⁹ Burkert (*supra* n. 20) 123-29. According to Burkert (126) the ritual "is strangely reminiscent of Bronze Age religious practice." Cf. also Burkert (*supra* n. 31) 68. It is unclear to me whether A. Schachter (*Cults of Boeotia* I [BICS Suppl. 38. 1 (London 1981)] 164) agrees that the horses are secondary.

⁶⁰ Paus. 8. 42. 4.

⁶¹ The demons are sometimes shown in conjunction with birds (nos. 13, 24, 26, 30, 46, 53, 58) and once (no. 46) in conjunction with a dolphin. For the survival of Mycenaean *xoana* into the archaic period and later, see Marinatos (*supra* n. 1) 270, with n. 1. It is perhaps also significant of the antiquity of the cult of Black Demeter that she is worshipped in a cave (Paus. 8. 42. 1); Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 53-76; R. F. Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals* (London 1962) 141-47.

⁶² No. 48. J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece* IV (London 1898) 407; cf. A. B. Cook, *JHS* 14 (1894) 138 ff. Above (n. 33) I noted the similarity of some Mycenaean representations of dogs to horses.

Phigalians, who interpreted the features of their Demeter as equine and concocted, or adopted from another context, a myth to explain her appearance.

The connection, on the other hand, between the Erinyes and dogs, although it cannot be proved to be of very long standing, is more widespread and is more directly attested. It is explicit first in Aeschylus, but it makes its appearance in such a way as to indicate that Aeschylus expected his audience to be familiar with it. At *Cho.* 924 Clytaimestra warns Orestes to “beware a mother’s angry hounds” (μητρὸς ἐγκότους κύνας) should he kill her, and Orestes replies that, if he does not kill her, he will be unable to escape his father’s (hounds). Orestes and the audience know what she means. She means the Erinyes, as is confirmed by the fact that later Orestes uses precisely the same expression to refer to the Erinyes, whom he sees before him.⁶³ As is well known, Aeschylus will develop further in the *Eumenides* the image of the Erinyes as hounds tracking their quarry.⁶⁴ But it is important to note that at *this* point in the trilogy (*Cho.* 924) that development has not yet taken place. Furthermore, when the Erinyes are actually seen on stage they do not have the appearance of hounds.⁶⁵ If Aeschylus had himself been responsible for the identification of the Erinyes with hounds, he could not have referred to them with no explanation as hounds in *Cho.* and then produced them on stage as women in the following play. Aeschylus and his audience were accustomed to the identification of the Erinyes with hounds but, for reasons of propriety connected with the conventions of the stage,⁶⁶ he and they had to be content with an anthropomorphic chorus. How long before the time of Aeschylus this identification existed we cannot be certain⁶⁷ but, if we are right in equating the Minoan demon with the Erinyes, it goes back to the Bronze Age.

The most common association of the Erinys with an animal is with the snake,⁶⁸ and the iconography of the Bronze-Age demon enables us to

⁶³ *Cho.* 1054 μητρὸς ἐγκοτοι κύνας. With this phrase compare μητρὸς Ἐρινύας Homer *Il.* 21. 412 and *Od.* 11. 280, Ἐρινύς πατρὸς Hesiod *Th.* 472, Ἐρινύς πατρὸς Aesch. *Sept.* 70 (cf. 723, 886-87; Soph. *OC* 1299, 1434; Hdt. 4. 149. 2). Cf. E. Rohde, *Kl. Schr.* II 233-35.

⁶⁴ Cf. G. Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus*² II (Amsterdam 1966) 195 (on *Eum.* 130-39) and add ὡή (*Eum.* 94) which, to judge from Xen. *Cyn.* 6.19, is part of the vocabulary of hunting with hounds.

⁶⁵ The priestess’ description: *Eum.* 46-54.

⁶⁶ Compare Griffith on *PV* 588 (bovine Io).

⁶⁷ It is perhaps significant that, according to Homer, the daughters of Pandareus are given to the *Erinyes* to act as their servants (*Od.* 20. 78). For, according to later accounts, their punishment is occasioned by their father’s theft of Zeus’ dog and takes the form of an affliction called κύων (see Roscher [*supra* n. 54]).

⁶⁸ Aesch. *Cho.* 1049-50, *Eum.* 128; Eur. *IT* 286-87, *Or.* 256; Jane Harrison, *JHS* 19 (1899) 213-25; E. Wüst (*supra* n. 53) 124-25; E. Mitropoulou, *Deities and Heroes in the Form of Snakes* (Athens 1975) 46-47. If K. Scheffold (*Götter- und Heldensagen der Griechen in der spätarchaischen Kunst* [Munich 1978] 261-62) is right to identify one of the metopes from the Heraion on the Sele as Orestes and the Erinys, we have evidence of the Erinys in serpentine form from the middle of the sixth century.

understand how the Erinyes can be at once canine and serpentine. The association with snakes has been readily accepted by scholars primarily because the Erinyes has been felt to represent the spirit of the dead, which in turn is often represented in serpentine form. But the Mycenaean evidence shows that it is incorrect to regard the Erinyes as the hypostatization of the spirit of the dead: *E-ri-nu* was worshipped as a goddess in her own right already in Mycenaean Crete. Also, if our identification of the demon is correct, it is clear that the character of the Erinyes as individual avenger is a later development.⁶⁹ In fact, we can now follow that development with some confidence. The demon wears the snake-skin as an emblem of death and renewal. She is (originally) a satellite of the great Cretan nature goddess and it is her function to see to it that the processes of nature are carried out. These processes include the termination of life as well as the continuation of growth. And so the demon is portrayed as the hunter, serving notice to the lion, the stag and the bull that the inexorable law of nature is to take effect. She is depicted either as doing this by violent means or simply as carrying off or leading the victim whose appointed time has come or, in one instance, as binding the victim with a rope.⁷⁰ This last may remind us of the *desmios hymnos* of Aeschylus' Erinyes and of the bonds that are so frequently associated with those deities who are concerned with the workings of fate.⁷¹ But "fate" is perhaps too abstract a concept to use in this connection; better to speak here of "the inviolable order of nature," an expression that Werner Jaeger uses⁷² to characterize the Dike of Heraclitus, whose ministers, the Erinyes, will find out if the Sun should overstep his

⁶⁹ Cf. also E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 7-8; Dietrich (*supra* n. 58) "Demeter" 142 and *Death* 139.

⁷⁰ Violence: nos. 27, 50 (?). Carrying: nos. 31-35, 38, 40, 41, 54. Leading: nos. 30, 42. Binding: no. 29. (The similarity of nos. 29 and 30 [= Kenna (*supra* n. 24) nos. 306 and 307] may indicate that the artist of no. 30 also intends to depict the bull as bound.) It is difficult to tell whether the object over the shoulders of the demons on the fresco from Mycenae (no. 25) is a pole or a rope. In view of its helical striation and in view of the evidence of no. 29, perhaps rope is more likely; cf. Crouwel (*supra* n. 1) 26. According to Gill, "It is interesting to note the realistic distinction made between the domestic animal, cow or bull, that could be led to the slaughter guided by a stick or rope or controlled by its horns, and the wild animals slain or wounded in capture that had therefore to be carried to the offering table" (*supra* n. 1] 10). But this distinction does not hold (cf. the lion being led in no. 42) and, in any case, there is no question here of sacrifice. (There is, after all, no evidence of Minoan lion-sacrifice.) Rather the action depicted testifies to the *power* that the demon is capable of exercising over the beasts. The same power is wielded by the *Potnia theron*, whose satellites the demons are: Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 356-60. The Erinyes are themselves *πόντιαι*: Aesch. *Sept.* 887, 987, *Eum.* 951; Soph. *OC* 84; Eur. *Or.* 318.

⁷¹ Aesch. *Eum.* 306, 331-32; cf. D. L. 8. 31; R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought*² (Cambridge 1954) 331-33, 368, *et passim*.

⁷² *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford 1947) 116; cf. 229, n. 31: "The Erinyes avenge every violation of what we should call the natural laws of life." Jaeger aptly compares Homer *Il.* 19. 418, where the Erinyes prevent Achilles' horse from continuing to speak.

measures (fr. 94 D-K = 52 Marcovich). Thus the original function of the Erinyes is to serve as the overseers and executors of the laws of nature in a general sense.⁷³ As a specific application of that function, they become the deities who are responsible for avenging human crimes that are perceived to be contrary to nature. In this capacity their composite nature is particularly appropriate. Their character as hounds enables them to track down and pursue their victim, while their serpentine nature associates them with the chthonic world in two respects. The snake-skin, which they had originally worn as a symbol of regeneration, becomes a wreath of snaky locks,⁷⁴ which enhances the hideousness of their appearance and forecasts their victim's imminent demise. And at the same time this aspect associates them with the angry spirit of the dead, calling out for vengeance.⁷⁵

But, in addition to their connection with death, they have a beneficent side as well. For their most characteristic pose on Minoan and Mycenaean seals is holding a beaked ewer of peculiar shape. What the function and contents of this ewer are is not clear, but scholars are generally agreed that it has ritual associations.⁷⁶ A vessel of similar shape is found in a clearly ritual context on the sarcophagus from Hagia Triada and the demons themselves are sometimes portrayed as using it in a way that suggests a ritual character. On the lentoid from Vaphio, for example, a pair of antithetic demons hold these ewers over the "horns of consecration."⁷⁷ And on the gold ring from Tiryns four demons with ewers are standing before a seated female, presumably a divinity. The nature of this ritual (or these rituals) is revealed by the vegetation that springs up between the "horns of consecration" on the seal and that stands behind each of the demons on the ring.⁷⁸ Similar vegetation is elsewhere associated with this type of ewer

⁷³ E. Peterich (*Die Theologie der Hellenen* [Leipzig 1938] 224), whom Jaeger (previous note) appears to be following, refers to Achilles' horse and to the Erinyes who is sent in response to the complaint of the vultures at Aesch. *Ag.* 59. But these vultures explicitly represent the (human) Atreidae. Likewise in the fable that was (according to Martin West, *CQ* 29 [1979] 1-6; cf. also *CQ* 30 [1980] 291-93, *Hermes* 109 [1981] 248-51) Aeschylus' inspiration, the animals allegorically represent humans. Cf. rather the proverb εἰσὶ καὶ κυνῶν Ἐρινύες, E. L. von Leutsch and F. G. Schneidewin, *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum* (Göttingen 1839-51) 397 and II 161.

⁷⁴ First in Aeschylus, according to Pausanias (1. 28. 6). This had been a feature of the Gorgons (to whom Aeschylus assimilates the Erinyes, *Cho.* 1048, *Eum.* 48-49) at least by the seventh century: K. Scheffold, *Myth and Legend in Early Greek Art* (New York 1966) 34-35.

⁷⁵ E. Rohde, *Psyche* (London 1925) 179; Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1908) 214-15.

⁷⁶ Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 147-52; Gill (*supra* n. 1) 6-7; C. R. Long, *The Ayia Triadha Sarcophagus* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 41 [Göteborg 1974]) 65-66; V. Stürmer, "Schnabelkannen: Eine Studie zur darstellenden Kunst in der minoisch-mykenischen Kultur," *BCH Suppl.* 11 (1985) 119-34; A. Onassoglou, *Die "Talismanischen" Siegel* (CMS Suppl. 2 [Berlin 1985]) 12-22.

⁷⁷ No. 23; cf. no. 52 (= CMS V.1 no. 201) which, however, may be a forgery.

⁷⁸ No. 26; cf. nos. 8, 10, 12 (?), 14, 17 (?), 19, 24, 35, 47, 54, 62, 63.

even when not held by the demons.⁷⁹ Obviously the ewer has a connection with a ritual that is concerned with the growth of vegetation and, since the ewer is so common an attribute of the demons, they are themselves to be seen as divinities that ensure the fecundity of the earth. That the Erinyes too are fertility spirits is clear from their chthonic character, from the identification of Demeter and Erinys at Arcadian Thelpusa and from the blessings on the land that Aeschylus' Erinyes confer at the end of the *Eumenides*.⁸⁰ It is this dual nature of the Erinyes, concerned alike with destruction and with propagation, that makes their identification with the Bronze-Age demon especially attractive.⁸¹

If the Erinyes are not the demons, we are presented with a peculiar and complex situation which we will have difficulty accounting for. We know that the Greeks of the Mycenaean Age worshipped a divinity called *E-ri-nu* and that they made images of a divinity with the following characteristics: capable of being conceived of as a plurality; apparently female; responsible for bringing death as well as for promoting fertility; portrayed as a hunter; having characteristics of dogs and snakes. We know that the Greeks of the fifth century recognized divinities called Erinyes, who could be referred to in the singular, were female, were regarded as bringers of destruction and as promoters of fertility and could be portrayed by contemporary poets as hounds, as hunters and as serpents. We can account for this situation either by assuming a degree of continuity between the Bronze Age and the Classical Period—let us not forget that Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hermes and Athena were worshipped in Mycenaean Crete and by the emperor Julian

⁷⁹ Evans, *Palace of Minos* (*supra* n. 14) IV 446–50; Nilsson (*supra* n. 12) 262–64; Kenna (*supra* n. 24) 68–69; S. Hood, *The Arts in Prehistoric Greece* (Hammondsworth 1978) 220; Stürmer (*supra* n. 76) 128–31.

⁸⁰ Aesch. *Eum.* 938–48. When the chorus say *δενδροπήμων δὲ μὴ πνέει βλάβη, / τὰν ἐμῶν χάριν λέγω* (938–39), they are alluding to the name Ἀβλαβία, under which name the Erinyes were worshipped at Erythrae in Ionia: *RE* VI.1 (1907) 588; Rohde, *Kl.Schr.* II 243; O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* II (Munich 1906) 763.

⁸¹ The dual nature cannot have been purely the invention of Aeschylus. It is difficult to imagine how the Athenian audience was duped into conferring first prize in the tragic competition on a poet who, utterly without precedent, included as the climax of his trilogy a bizarre and unpalatable identification between two sets of deities that were felt to have absolutely nothing in common. Either Aeschylus was not the first to identify the Erinyes with the Semnai Theai (not the Eumenides, as A. L. Brown has now convincingly shown: *CQ* 34 [1984] 260–81), or the two groups of divinities have a great deal more in common than we are usually led to believe. There is, in fact, no evidence for the identification before Aeschylus, so it is reasonable to believe that the Erinyes were enough like the Semnai Theai that the mature dramatist did not feel that he was risking ridicule and defeat by asking his audience to believe that they were one and the same. Why, then, do we assume that the Erinyes were loathsome and malignant while the Semnai Theai were benevolent and gentle? Surely the reason is that our conception is determined to a great extent by our knowledge of Aeschylus' drama, and Aeschylus has himself engaged in considerable exaggeration (see especially F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* [Ithaca 1949] 178–91) in order to lend dramatic force to a transformation that was, if not familiar, at least not surprising.

1,700 years later—or we can posit a remarkable series of coincidences, whereby the attributes and associations of a defunct Mycenaean divinity later individually and by separate routes clustered about another divinity whose name (but not attributes) had happened to survive from the Bronze Age.

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