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Iris and Winged Personifications
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**IRIS AND WINGED PERSONIFICATIONS IN
CAMPANIAN WALL PAINTINGS OF THE
1ST CENTURY B.C. AND 1ST CENTURY A.D.**

By

Rachel Rosenzweig

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

IRIS AND WINGED PERSONIFICATIONS IN CAMPANIAN WALL PAINTINGS OF THE 1ST CENTURY B.C. AND 1ST CENTURY A.D.

By

Rachel Rosenzweig

This study examines iconographic issues of specific female winged figures in Campanian wall paintings of the first century B.C. and first century A.D.

Chapter I deals with the iconography of the goddess Iris. By investigating Iris's attributes, responsibilities, and context within which she appears in Greek art and literature, the Roman version of this goddess is identified in these wall paintings.

Chapter II examines a compositional formula appearing with marked regularity in wall paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum. This canon includes, as a principal component, a winged figure. The concluding remarks offer an analysis of the general characteristics of Roman wall painting as revealed by this investigation.

Chapter III is an addendum. Some of the more important and influential writings on the Dionysiac Frieze in the Villa Itern are brought together and critically reviewed, the main focus being the identity of the so-called winged daemon, depicted in the so-called Scenes of Flagellation.

To my Mother and Father

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor William Tyrrell and Professor Susan Madigan for their support and invaluable contributions during the writing of this thesis and at the time of my defense.

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INTRODUCTION

When an iconographic examination of a work of art is undertaken, it is with the hope that by carefully scrutinizing the appropriate literary sources and by way of analogy to other monuments, most questions will easily be answered. The scholars of Greco-Roman art may look to Homer, Virgil, or the Tragedies for their answers. The Medievalists may look to the Bible. Whatever the approach these investigations usually begin with much enthusiasm and high expectations that all the pieces of the puzzle will fall neatly into place. Possibly the greatest lesson to be learned by such an investigation is that there are always exceptions to these rules, many more than one would hope to find.

Such is the case with Roman wall painting. The frescoes which cover the interiors of Roman homes, in dinning rooms, bedrooms, and rooms devoted to the worship of divinities, find the human element ever-present. That is to say, the episodes of Greco-Roman mythology are not always rendered with thoughtful attention to the literature. Rather they are often fanciful embellishments of the original tale. This speaks to the presence of an artist or patron through which the mythology is filtered. The inclusion of ancillary figures which do not appear in the original literary sources is often the rule, not the exception.

This investigation calls attention to winged maidens who appear in Campanian wall paintings of the first century B.C. and first century A.D. And of course, the canonical method of investigation, that of looking to the literature and other monuments, both Greek and Roman, is used here to discover the identities of these winged creatures. They are found to be present in a variety of scenes from mythology;

Dionysos discovering Ariadne on Naxos, the abduction of Auge by Heracles, Heracles discovering Telephus in Arcadia, Thetis in the workshop of Hephaistos, the *hieros gamos* of Zeus and Hera, and others.

No investigation of winged women in Pompeian wall paintings would be complete without a contribution to the debate surrounding the Dionysiac frieze in the Villa Itern. That enigmatic creature with her large black wings, poised to administer a blow of her whip upon the back of the crouching woman, is possibly the most notorious example of the patron and/or artist creating a monument of art in which no literature exists to explain a figure's identity, or in fact the entire program of the frieze.

In view of this peculiar feature of Roman painting wherein embellishment and reinterpretation is the norm, it seems unfair to view their rendering of mythological scenes as "wrong" or "inaccurate." Rather they should be viewed as genuinely creative in their originality.

CHAPTER I
THE IMAGE OF IRIS AS DEPICTED IN
CAMPANIAN WALL PAINTING OF THE 1ST C. A.D.

The iconographic program of a Pompeian wall painting will typically contain sufficient obvious imagery which will suggest a well known episode from Greco-Roman mythology. What one readily finds among this imagery is the inclusion of ancillary figures, those which are not principal players in the story and whose identity is often indeterminate. These figures do not always lend themselves easily to interpretation and thus become the cause of much speculation.

A well known monument of Roman painting which is abundant with these so-called ancillary figures is that of Heracles discovering his infant son Telephus in Arcadia, from the Basilica at Herculaneum now in the Museo Nazionale in Naples (Figure 1).¹ The main characters are easily identified. The tan statuesque Heracles, draped in the skin of the Nemean Lion fixes his gaze upon his son who is suckled by the doe. This figure group is by no means original as it is found on Pergamene coins.² Telephus and the doe are regularly depicted in the company of Heracles yet nowhere in the ancient literature is such a meeting mentioned. According to Frazer, all monuments on which it is depicted are "somewhat late," and that the incident itself was a "...late invention by the people of Pergamus (*sic*), where Telephus was a national hero, and the

¹ Helbig, 1143.

² (i) Ernst Pfuhl, *Masterpieces of Greek Drawing and Painting*, trans. J. D. Beazley, (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979), 108. (ii) J. G. Frazer, trans., *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1965), Vol. IV, Commentary on Books VI-VIII, 437. Frazer notes the regularity with which the suckling of Telephus by the doe appears on many works of ancient Pergamene sculpture, paintings, and coins.



Figure 1. Heracles discovers Telephus in Arcadia.
 From the Basilica at Herculaneum.
 Museo Nazionale, Naples.
 (Curtius, *Die Wandmalerei Pompejis*, Figure 2)

people had an interest in associating him with his deified father Hercules." He further notes that his conjecture is supported by the discovery at Pergamum of a series of reliefs from the great altar on the Acropolis which depict scenes from the life of Telephus.³

The additional figures included in the painting are not identifiable without full knowledge of the story of the birth of Telephus. The story varies slightly from author to author yet is fundamentally the same.⁴ According to Apollodorus of Rhodes and Diodorus of Sicily, Heracles seduced Auge, daughter of Aleos, King of Arcadia. Aleos questioned his daughter "...when the bulk of the child in the womb betrayed the violation." Upon revealing the name of her abductor, Aleos would not believe his daughter and ordered her drowned in the sea. It is at this point in the tale wherein the most discrepancies begin to appear. According to Apollodorus, Aleos exposed the child on Mount Parthenium but it was saved by divine providence, for a doe suckled it. Discovered by shepherds, they named him Telephus from *θηλάν*, to suckle, and *ἐλαφος*, deer or hind.⁵ Diodorus tells that Auge gave birth on Mount Parthenium while being led off to Nauplia to be drowned. In either case, it is in Arcadia where the infant Telephus was suckled by the doe and it is the personification of that pastoral land which is depicted in the wall painting from the Basilica at Herculaneum.

That the large seated female figure is "Arcadia" is generally accepted.⁶ She embodies the fruitful and pastoral character of the region. Tiny berries bloom from the lush garland about her head and the fruits of the earth are depicted in the form of still

³ Frazer, *Pausanias*, IV, 437.

⁴ (i) Michael Simpson, trans., *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), II, 7.4 and III, 9.1. (ii) C. H. Oldfather, trans., *Diodorus of Sicily*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), Vol. II, IV, 33.7-12.

⁵ (i) Apollodorus, op. cit., II, 7.4. (ii) H. J. Rose, "Telephus," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. M. Cary, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 882.

⁶ Pfuhl, op. cit., 108.

life in the basket beside her. She is the largest figure in the group and is shown seated, resting her arm on a rock with her hand at her cheek as if thoughtfully pondering the scene. Behind her is a *paniskos*, a deity native to Arcadia. With his pipes and his shepherd's crook, he playfully grins at the scene before him. The eagle in the foreground is perhaps Zeus's eagle, depicted as a reminder of the immortal lineage of the infant. The lion in the lower right is a puzzle for it cannot be the Nemean Lion as it is that skin which is depicted under Heracles' left arm. The lion may merely serve as an allusion to the strength of the father and son. Thus its placement in the composition may be an afterthought on the part of the artist to round out the scene.

But this is surely a minor issue as opposed to the question of the winged woman in the upper right corner of the scene. She is depicted leaning over the edge of a rock, thus her lower body is obscured. Her gaze echoes that of Heracles. She not only stares directly at the nursing infant but makes an emphatic gesture with her right arm. She points directly at the child which further serves to unify the composition and direct the observer to the focus of the scene, the nursing infant. The figure's wings are outstretched behind her as if to suggest flight. She is, however, clearly at rest. That her wings are extended must be to draw attention to this important attribute, for if they were folded behind her back they would surely not be so easily discerned. Thus her wings must hold a key to her identification. She wears a reddish garment and a garland of leaves in her hair which is neatly bound up in a bun. Her left hand is obscured by the head of Heracles, yet it can be assumed with some certainty that she holds onto the bottom of some branches or stalks of grain, the tops of which are seen above her forearm. She does not seem to be a principal player in the scene for neither Apollodorus nor Diodorus mention the presence of any such winged woman in either version of the tale. Nor in fact do either writers tell that it was Heracles who discovered his son in Arcadia. Rather in Apollodorus's first telling of the tale, Telephus is

discovered by King Aleos himself.⁷ In Apollodorus's second version as well as Diodorus's telling of the tale, Telephus is discovered by herdsmen of King Corythus who name and rear him.⁸ H. J. Rose suggests that in Euripides's *Auge*, of which only fragments remain, quite possibly Heracles himself rescued Telephus but "...we cannot reconstruct the play from the little that is left of it, or say exactly how much of this story Euripides told."⁹ It may be assumed then, that this winged woman is an embellishment on the part of the artist.

The turning point in the life of Telephus's mother, Auge, is the subject of a wall painting from the House of the Vettii. In the triclinium off the small peristyle, the scene of the abduction of Auge by Heracles is depicted (Figure 2). As is the case with the scene of Heracles and Telephus, the anonymous artist has included the principal figures of Heracles and Auge along with ancillary figures not present in the literary accounts of this tale. In both versions, Apollodorus says simply that Heracles seduced Auge. Diodorus says no more than, "...Heracles returned to Arcadia, and as he stopped at the home of Aleos the king he lay secretly with his daughter Auge, brought her with child, and went back to Stymphalus."¹⁰ Here the artist depicts Auge, down on one knee, as a staggering Heracles, leaning on his club in his left hand, pulling aside Auge's garment, with his right, approaches. She shrinks away from him and her left arm, outstretched, as if to fend him off, suggests her unwillingness. To her right an attendant tries to aid her by reaching for Heracles's hand which has hold of Auge's garments. But of course he will succeed. Another maiden pours a lustration over Auge. In the background is a winged woman who conspicuously resembles that seen in the Heracles and Telephus picture. She stands behind the figures in the foreground and

⁷ Apollodorus, op. cit., II, 7.4.

⁸ (i) Apollodorus, op. cit., III, 9.1. (ii) Diodorus of Sicily, op. cit., IV, 33.10.

⁹ H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature; From Homer to the Age of Lucian*, 4th ed. (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1950), 203.

¹⁰ (i) Apollodorus, op. cit., II, 7.4 and III, 9.1 (ii) Diodorus, op. cit., IV, 337-12.



Figure 2. Heracles and Auge.
House of the Vettii, Pompeii.
(Kraus and von Matt, *Pompeii and
Herculaneum*, Figure 262)

her wings are fully extended. Again it can be assumed that this is to draw attention to this, her most distinctive attribute which will perhaps reveal her identity. She wears a garland of leaves in her hair and a pointed crown-like halo. Although her right hand is partially obscured it is clear that she holds a branch whereas the object in her left hand is not discernible. This scene is repeated in other wall paintings and regularly includes the additional figures of the two maidens and the winged woman.¹¹

The thematic relationship of the two pictures is evident as they both depict scenes from the life of Heracles. However, the extant literature provides no clues as to the identity of this winged woman who is featured so prominently in both paintings. Figures with similar iconographic attributes can be found elsewhere, leading to the assumption that they must indeed be the same figure.

The winged woman holding a branch or wand appears in Pompeian wall paintings which depict Dionysos discovering Ariadne on the island of Naxos. This scene is a type which can be traced back as far as the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries.¹² From the House of the Colored Capitals, also known as the House of Ariadne, the House of the Citharist, the House of the Vettii and the House of the Strada d'Olconio come wall paintings, all of Dionysos discovering Ariadne on Naxos. Their compositions are virtually the same and despite slight variations, the winged woman is recognizable in each. The scene from the House of the Colored Capitals depicts Dionysos, wearing only boots and a cape, being led by the hand by a maenad. Behind the deity, various members of the Dionysiac entourage follow. Maenads, each equipped with a *thyrsus*, peer out from behind the deity and a corpulent Silenos is helped to his feet by a strong young man. The deity's gaze is fixed upon the figure of the sleeping Ariadne in the foreground. An Eros draws back Ariadne's drapery with his left hand to reveal her nude body while with his right he gestures to the deity. Ariadne rests against a kneeling

¹¹ Solomon Reinach, *Repertoire de Peintures, Grecques et Romaines*, (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1970), 188, figs. 2, 3, 4, & 5.

¹² Pfuhl, op. cit., 113.

figure. This figure is so similar in appearance to the winged women from the Heracles and Telephus scene and that in the Heracles and Auge scene that she must be the same individual. Her wings are extended, she wears a garland of leaves about her head, carries a branch in her right hand and a small bowl in her left. She wears a long mantle yet unlike the other scenes, her legs are not obscured, revealing that she wears a pair of boots which reach to mid-calf, and are laced up and tied with a bow (Figure 3).

In each of the subsequent scenes, the composition is essentially the same. Dionysos enters onto the scene with his entourage in tow and the partially nude Ariadne is seen sleeping in the foreground with the winged woman nearby in attendance. The figure group from the House of the Citharist most closely resembles that seen in the House of the Colored Capitals (Figure 4). Ariadne rests her head in the lap of the woman with extended wings. Again the winged figure is depicted crowned with a garland of leaves, holding a branch and a small bowl. Due to the poor condition of the painting it is unclear whether or not she wears the high-laced boots.

In the scene from the so-called Ixion Room of the House of the Vettii (Figure 5), the winged woman, complete with boots and bowl in hand, stands over the sleeping Ariadne. Here she raises her hand over the head of Ariadne yet it is not clear if she holds the branch which has been ubiquitous thus far. Instead of a garland of leaves, she wears a simple ribbon in her hair.

The winged woman from the scene in the House of the Strada d'Olconio is most unlike the others in appearance yet because the context is identical she must surely be the same figure (Figure 6). Her wings are extended as are the others, yet she stands over Ariadne quite passively, as if she is standing guard. Her right hand rests on her hip, while in her left she holds a long staff which she rests on her shoulder. She has no bowl or branch, nor is she wearing any ribbons or garland in her hair. Her gaze is fixed on Dionysos and her demeanor suggests an attitude of irritation, as if she has been impatiently awaiting the arrival of the deity.



Figure 3. Dionysos discovers Ariadne on Naxos (detail).
From the House of the Colored Capitals.
Museo Nazionale, Naples.
(Photo courtesy of Museo Nazionale, Naples)



Figure 4. Dionysos discovers Ariadne on Naxos.
From the House of the Citharist.
Museo Nazionale, Naples.
(Photo courtesy of Museo Nazionale, Naples)



Figure 5. Dionysos discovers Ariadne on Naxos.
From the House of the Vettii, Pompeii.
Museo Nazionale, Naples.
(Curtius, Figure 178)



Figure 6. Dionysos discovers Ariadne on Naxos.
House of the Strada d'Olconio, Pompeii.
(Curtius, Figure 179)

As with the tales of Heracles and Telephos and Heracles and Auge, this seems once again to be a case of the artist including additional figures which do not appear in the various literary versions of the tale. Several reasons for Theseus's abandonment of Ariadne are given including forgetfulness, that he loved another, and even that Dionysos threatened him. Theocritus mentions Theseus's forgetfulness merely in passing. In the idyll entitled, *The Sorceress*, he says, "...May he forget his love as thoroughly as once they say Theseus on Dia forgot the lovely-haired Ariadne."¹³ Diodorus mentions her abandonment twice. His first version tells that she was not abandoned at all, rather she was snatched away from Theseus by Dionysos because the deity had fallen in love with her.

At this time, the myths relate, Dionysos showed himself on the island, and because of the beauty of Ariadne he took the maiden away from Theseus and kept her as his lawful wife, loving her exceedingly.¹⁴

In his second version, Diodorus tells of the threats made against Theseus by Dionysos.

Theseus, seeing in a dream Dionysos threatening him if he would not forsake Ariadne in favor of the god, left her behind him there in his fear and sailed away. And Dionysos led Ariadne away by night to the mountain which is known as Drius; and first of all the god disappeared, and later Ariadne also was never seen again.¹⁵

In the *Life of Theseus*, Plutarch notes the variations on the tale. He says,

There are many other stories about these matters, and also about Ariadne, but they do not agree at all. Some say that she hung herself because she was abandoned by Theseus; others that she was conveyed to Naxos by sailors and there lived with Oenarus the priest of Dionysos, and that she was abandoned by Theseus because he loved another woman:-

¹³ Thelma Sargent, trans. *The Idylls of Theocritus*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1982), II, 45-46.

¹⁴ *Diodorus*, op. cit., IV, 61.5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 51.3.

"Dreadful indeed was his passion for Aigle child of Panopeus."¹⁶

It would seem then, that not only is the inclusion of this winged woman an embellishment, but the depiction of Dionysos arriving on Naxos with such pomp and circumstance is, itself, an embellishment. Furthermore, the winged women who appear in the Telephus picture, the scene of Auge, and the scenes depicting Dionysos and Ariadne, are so closely related that a logical conclusion is that they are the same figure. It is with this conclusion that a search for her identity can begin. In each case the artist has taken great care to make clear that this female figure is winged. Thus, this, her most prominent attribute must hold the key to her identity.

The list of winged women in Greco-Roman Mythology is not a short one. However, if the context in which this winged woman appears is considered, a specific goddess is called to mind. In the case of the Telephus picture it is a discovery; Heracles discovers, or finds his infant son in Arcadia. In the case of the Heracles and Auge scene it is a union. The scenes of Dionysos and Ariadne are a discovery as well as a union. The deity discovers his beloved bride on Naxos and they are then united in holy wedlock, the *hieros gamos*. In Greek and Roman literature as well as in Greek art, the winged goddess Iris plays an active role in situations such as these. In seeking a logical conclusion to the question of the identity of these winged figures in the face of the somewhat illogical realm of Pompeitian painting, her responsibilities and the tasks she performs, point to Iris as the most logical choice.

As messenger of the gods, Iris is shared by both Zeus and Hera. Throughout the *Iliad* she is the principal messenger of Zeus.¹⁷ When Hera employs her it is either at Zeus' command or unbeknownst to Zeus. Hera dispatches Iris "...with all speed to Ida" to receive and deliver Zeus' message to Poseidon. When she and Apollo arrive, Zeus

¹⁶ Bernadotte Perrin, trans., *Plutarch's Lives, Vol. I*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1967), *Theseus*, XX.1.

¹⁷ Robert Fitzgerald, trans., *The Iliad of Homer*, 3rd. ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), II. 786, VIII. 399, XI. 185, XV. 159, XXIV. 144.

regards them, "...unstirred by anger, seeing their prompt obedience to his Lady."¹⁸ Later, Iris is dispatched by Hera to Achilles, "...All unknown to Zeus and the other gods she came, for Hera sent her down."¹⁹ When Iris is mentioned by Homer, he makes clear the rapidity with which she delivers messages. He calls her "swift as the wind," "golden-winged," "wind-footed," and "rapid." Her responsibilities are clearly expressed as well, as Homer refers to her as "messenger of the immortals," as well as "Zeus's messenger," and "Zeus's emissary." As well as bearing messages of the gods, Iris's appearance announces the sudden apparition or interference of a god. Whenever a god is about to appear on the scene, she is the first to arrive or when an event, brought on by the hand of a god is about to occur, she appears whether the god appears or not.²⁰ Although Homer gives her wings, she is never said to actually take flight. Rather Homer describes her as, "...Iris who runs on the rainy wind..." and, "Iris who walks on the swift wind."²¹ Thus in art her wings refer to her ethereal nature and are not always depicted. But more often than not, they are depicted either on her shoulders, her feet, or both.

Her fleetness of foot is also suggested by her frequent depiction in the so-called pinwheel pose; her arms extended on either side, her legs in the running position and her drapery flowing. She also carries the *kerykeion*, the distinctive staff carried also by the messenger god, Hermes. All these attributes contribute to her identification. On the François Vase Iris is seen in the company of Chiron, leading the procession of gods to the wedding festivities (Figure 7). Here in this early rendering, she is without wings yet is identified by the long *kerykeion* she carries as well as the inscription bearing her name. On a black-figure *dinos* by Sophilos which depicts the same scene, Iris again leads the procession (Figure 8). Here she wears her winged boots and carries her

¹⁸ *Iliad*, XV. 144.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XVIII. 166.

²⁰ Max Mayer, "Iris," *Ausführliches Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*, ed. W. H. Roscher (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1890-97): 320-58. {henceforth, *Roscher*}

²¹ *Iliad*, VIII, 409, and XI, 195 respectively.



Figure 7. Kleitias and Ergotimos.
 Iris leads the gods to the house of Peleus.
 François Vase, (detail).
 Museo Archeologico, Florence.
 (Line drawing after Mayer, "Iris,"
 Roscher, Figure 1)



Figure 8. Sophilos.
 Iris leads the gods to the house of Peleus.
 Black-figure *dinos*, (detail).
 British Museum, London.
 (Kossatz-Deissmann, "Iris," *LMC*, Figure 124

kerykeion. In both cases Iris is the first to arrive, leading the way as the other gods follow, pointing behind her with her left hand, indicating to Peleus that all his guests are close behind.

A responsibility of Iris which appears in the art but not in the literature is her role of spiriting away children born of gods and mortals to whomever was to have custody. From a red-figure *hydria* is a depiction of Iris, identified by her wings, the *kerykeion* in her right hand, and her running stride (Figure 9). She carries a small child in her arms whom she holds close to her breast. There is no doubt that this is Iris, yet there is no clue on the *hydria* itself with regard to the identity of the infant. Some scholars suggest that the infant is Telephus or even his father Heracles who is being carried off to be suckled by Hera.²²

In both the art and the literature the role of Iris evolves steadily. Her role as messenger to the gods diminishes. Iris begins to be associated with the service of the female gods, specifically Hera. The evolution of her role in the Homeric Epics is indicative of this phenomenon. In the *Iliad*, her role as principal messenger to the gods is evident, yet in the last book of the *Iliad* one sees a beginning of the gradual usurping of her responsibilities by Hermes. Early on in the last book, Zeus still utilizes Iris's

²² (i) Roscher, op. cit., 351. Mayer speaks of Iris's role in spiriting away children yet cites no sources for this responsibility. It is he who suggests that the infant is Telephus and again gives no supporting evidence for this assumption. (ii) J. A Hild, "Iris," *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*, eds. Daremberg et Saglio (Paris: Librairie Hachette et C^{le}, 1900), 574. (henceforth, *Dar.-Sag.*) Hild mentions this particular depiction yet speculates that the child is not Telephus, rather the infant Heracles who is being spirited to Olympus to be nursed by Hera. Hild draws this conclusion by analogy to a red-figure *lekythos* which depicts Iris engaged in conversation with Alcmene as they contemplate Hera suckling the infant Heracles. (iii) T. H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 206, 220 fig. 323. On Melian reliefs, c. 460, Winged Eos is represented in a pose which is strikingly similar to that of Iris which is depicted on the red-figure *hydria*. Eos carries in her arms a "youth," this in keeping with her penchant for youthful boys. The figure of the youth is so proportionately small that it seems to be more an infant than a youth. There are no definitive attributes which would suggest that this figure might be Iris, other than her large extended wings and her running stride. Yet the possibility that the relief depicts Iris carrying an infant or that it is derivative of the scene speaks to the confusion which results between various representations of female winged divinities such as Eos, Nike, Iris, and the Furies.



Figure 9. Iris spirits away a child.
 Red-figure *hydria*, (detail).
 Antikensammlung, Munich.
 (Line drawing after Mayer, Roscher, Figure 8)

talents and dispatches her to Thetis and to Priam.²³ With the last dispatching of a message by Zeus, it is as if Homer himself begins the division of responsibility, as it is Hermes who is dispatched to Priam, not Iris. Homer tells of Hermes readying himself:

He bent to tie his beautiful sandals on,
ambrosial, golden, that carry him over water
and over endless land on a puff of wind,
and took the wand with which he charms asleep-
or, when he wills, awake- the eyes of men.
So, wand in hand, the strong god glittering
paced into the air.²⁴

Hermes must ready himself to begin his duties whereas Iris, throughout the *Iliad*, is not described as having to prepare, rather she is ready at a moment's notice. It is as if Homer implies that until now Iris has been doing all the work whereas Hermes has yet to put on his shoes. With this first task, the usurping of Iris's role by Hermes begins as she does not appear at all in the *Odyssey*. Thus begins the division of labor. Hermes serves Zeus. Iris serves Hera.

The *Hymn to Delos* by Callimachus best expresses Iris's exclusivity to Hera. Leto, "holden in the pangs of childbirth," searches for a location to give birth to Apollo, her son with Zeus. As she wanders from island to island in the Aegean Sea, she is turned away by all as Hera, "who murmured terribly against all child-bearing women that bear children to Zeus, but especially against Leto, for that she only was to bear to Zeus a son dearer even than Ares." Hera set Ares to watch over the continent and Iris is given the task of keeping watch over all the far-flung islands.²⁵ Much to her dismay, Iris is unsuccessful in her task as Leto is welcomed by the small floating island of Delos which pays no attention to Hera's threats. Iris is now left with the unenviable task of bearing the bad news to Hera. In this passage, her fear of, and devotion to her mistress is clearly expressed:

²³ *Iliad*, XXIV, 78, and 144 respectively.

²⁴ *Iliad*, XXIV, 340-47.

²⁵ A. W. Mair, trans., *Callimachus and Lycophron*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1931), IV, 66-68.

O Spouse of Zeus, Lady of heavy anger,
 thou wert not to be for long without tidings thereof:
 so swift a messenger hastened to thee. And, still
 breathing heavily, she spake- and her speech was
 mingled with fear: "Honoured Hera, of goddesses
 most excellent fair, thine am I, all things are thine,
 and thou sittest authentic queen of Olympus, and
 we fear no other female hand; and thou, O Queen,
 wilt know who is the cause of thine anger. Leto is
 undoing her girdle within an island. All the others
 spurned her and received her not; but Asteria,
 that evil scum of the sea: thou knowest it thyself.
 But, dear lady, -for thou canst- defend thy servants,
 who tread the earth at thy behest.

So she spake and seated her beside the golden
 throne, even as a hunting hound of Artemis, which,
 when it hath ceased from the swift chase, sitteth by
 her feet, and its ears are erect, ever ready to receive
 the call of the goddess. Like thereto the daughter
 of Thaumas²⁶ sat beside the throne. And she never
 forgetteth her seat, not even when sleep lays upon
 her his forgetful wing, but there by the edge of the
 great throne with head a little bent aslant she sleeps.
 Never does she unloose her girdle or her swift
 hunting-boots lest her mistress give her some sudden
 command.²⁷

Iris's role as personal attachée to Hera is further expressed in Euripides's *The Madness of Heracles*. It is Iris who escorts Madness to the hero and announces the affliction which Hera thrusts upon him.

Fear not: this is the child of Night ye see,
 Madness, grey sires: I, handmaid of the Gods,
 Iris. We come not for your city's hurt;
 Only on one man's house do we make war-
 His, whom Zeus' and Alcmena's son they call.
 For, till he had ended all his bitter toils,
 Fate shielded him, and Father Zeus would not
 That I, or Hera, wrought him ever harm.
 But, now he hath toiled Eurystheus' labors through,
 Hera will stain him with the blood of kin,
 That he shall slay his sons: her will is mine.²⁸

²⁶ M. L. West, trans., *Hesiod: Theogony and Works and Days*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) Iris is the daughter of Thaumas and Electra. "Thaumas married a daughter of deep-flowing Oceanus, Electra, and she bore swift Iris and the lovely-haired Harpies..." according to Hesiod in the *Theogony*, 266-68

²⁷ *Callimachus*, op. cit., IV, 217-38.

²⁸ A. S. Way, trans., *Euripides, Vol. III*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1912), *The Madness of Heracles*, 822-32.

Throughout the *Aeneid*, Iris is Hera's personal attendant, bringing merciful death to Dido, instigating the torching of the Trojan fleet, as well as urging Turnus to lay siege to the Trojan camp.²⁹

In the art, the division of responsibility between Iris and Hermes is clearly expressed on a poly-chrome vase from Ruvo which depicts a procession of the divinities (Figure 10). Hera is depicted, majestically crowned, carrying a long scepter and lifting her veil with her right hand. To her left is Iris, her wings on her back extended as she gazes at her mistress with her right arm raised in Hera's direction. To their right Zeus is depicted seated on his throne, holding his eagle-topped scepter. Behind Zeus, leaning an arm on the back of the throne, is Hermes. With his cape around his shoulders and *petasos* hanging around his neck, he stands in the company of the god he serves, holding his *kerykeion* in his left hand.³⁰

As the delineation between the female god and her servant, and the male god and his, becomes more firmly established, Hermes's role as messenger to the gods grows as Iris's diminishes. When associated with Hera, Iris becomes less a messenger and more a personal attendant or handmaid. In his *Panegyric of Ptolemy*, Theocritus tells of Iris's role in the *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera.

So too in heaven was the holy wedlock
accomplished of those whom august Rhea bare to
be rulers of Olympus, so too the myrrh-cleansed
hands of the ever-maiden Iris lay but one couch for
the slumbering of Zeus and Hera.³¹

Nonnos also tells of Iris's role in the most supreme *hieros gamos* in his *Dionysiaca*.

He spoke, and assembling with a whirl golden

²⁹ Allen Mandelbaum, trans., *The Aeneid of Virgil*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), IV. 700, V. 601, IX. 2.

³⁰ *Dar.-Sag.*, op. cit., 575 fig. 4093.

³¹ J. M. Edmonds, trans., *The Greek Bucolic Poets*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1960), XVII, 131-35. Theocritus explicitly uses the term *ἱερός γάμος*.



Figure 10. Hera and Iris, Zeus and Hermes.
Poly-chrome vase from Ruvo, (detail).
Jatta Collection.
(Line drawing after Hild, "Iris,"
Dar. Sag., Figure 4083)

clouds like a wall, he arched them eddying above like a round covering dome. It was something in the shape of a bridal chamber, so contrived that the purple manicolored bow of heavenly Iris was then round it like a crown. Thus there was a natural covering for the loves of Zeus and his fairarmed bride as they mated there in the open hills, and there was the shape of a couch self-formed to serve their need.³²

The date of Nonnos's *Dionysiaca*, fifth century A.D., is quite late and is viewed as a fanciful version of the exploits of Dionysos and other mythology contained therein. Thus it is included here as a source of hindsight and its value as literary support should not be over-estimated.

The role of Iris as handmaid to Hera wherein she plays a part in the *hieros gamos*, is expressed by the art of both Greece and Rome. Possibly the most well known example from Greece appears on the Parthenon. On the east frieze the abraded figures of Hera and Zeus are seated majestically among the ranks of the Olympian deities (Figure 11). Zeus, seated on the right, looks to Hera, at his right, who turns to him, lifting her veil in a typical bridal gesture. On Hera's right, standing behind her, is Iris, her left arm raised and her right folded across her. The wings on her back are outstretched, yet not fully extended and are rendered in comparatively low relief. This, the classical Greek version of the *hieros gamos*, is depicted with elegance and simplicity, expressing the "economy of means" typical of Greek art. All the essential elements are presented with nothing extra.

For Roman depictions of the *hieros gamos* of Zeus and Hera, one need only look to Pompeii to discover one which is surprisingly succinct in its rendering. The wall painting from the House of the Tragic Poet is compositionally similar to that seen on the

³² W. H. D. Rouse, trans., *Nonnos Dionysiaca*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1960), XXXII, 76-82. According to the eminent scholar and translator of the *Dionysiaca* referred to here, it is a "...belated product of the learned fancy of Hellenized Egypt." and that "...anyone who uses Nonnos as a handbook to any sort of normal and genuinely classical mythology will be grievously misled," yet it should not be entirely neglected. As a late work it combines the near-original role of Iris, messenger of Hera in the battle against Dionysos, and the role in to which she evolves; the handmaid of Hera. See XX, 182, and XXXI, 106.



Figure 11. Phidias.
Iris and the hieros gamos of Zeus and Hera.
East frieze, Parthenon.
British Museum, London.
(Kossatz-Deissmann, *LIMC*, Figure 68)

east frieze of the Parthenon (Figure 12). Zeus seated on the right holds his scepter in his left hand and with his right, he holds the arm of his fairarmed bride, Hera, who stands beside him. She wears a heavily draped mantle with her veil about her head, yet her wide-eyed face and accoutrements of earrings and a diadem are not obscured. Behind Hera to her right, the winged Iris appears once again, peering over her mistress's shoulder and gently supporting her right arm.³³ This wall painting is not without its ancillary figures and embellishments but they are relatively minor. A votive column, tied with a ribbon and two bells occupies a rear and central position, while on the ground before Zeus are seated three nude children.

The literary and artistic versions of the *hieros gamos* of Zeus and Hera which tell of the presence of Iris, provide evidence to support the conclusion that the winged woman in wall paintings of Dionysos and Ariadne on Naxos, is Iris. The union between Dionysos and Ariadne is, itself, a *hieros gamos*³⁴ and the inclusion of Iris as an agent of the *hieros gamos* and as attendant to Ariadne who will become divine by way of the union seems logical. It may also be argued that here, Iris not only serves as attendant to Ariadne in the *hieros gamos*, but has also returned to her role as guide and messenger to both male and female divinities alike. She, appearing on the scene prior to the arrival of Dionysos, leads the way. In this, the apparent mingling of Iris's functions, further evidence is provided for the conclusion that this winged woman is indeed Iris.

Previous scholars have established the identity of the winged woman of the Dionysos and Ariadne scenes, not as Iris, but rather Hypnos, god of sleep.³⁵ Hypnos,

³³ (i) John Boardman, ed. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Vol. V, no. 2, (Zürich: Artemis, 1990), 490, fig. 75. (henceforth, *LIMC*) (ii) H. Graillot, "Hieros Gamos," *Dar.-Sag.*, op. cit., 178 fig. 3835. (iii) Karl Schefold, *La Peinture Pompéienne, Collection Latomus, Vol. 108*, (Bruxelles: Revue D'Études Latines, 1972), pl. 49.

³⁴ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), II, 7.7.

³⁵ (i) Ludwig Curtius, *Die Wandmalerei Pompejis*, (Darmstadt: Georg Olms, 1960), 308, 310, and 311. (ii) Edm. Saglio, "Ariadne," *Dar.-Sag.*, op. cit., 421 fig. 510.



Figure 12. Hieros gamos of Zeus and Hera.
From the House of the Tragic Poet.
Museo Nazionale, Naples.
(Photo courtesy Museo Nazionale, Naples)

also known as Sleep or Somnus, is brother to Death, known as Thanatos, who is his twin. As the son of Night, Hypnos is winged and brings sleep to both gods and mortals by touching their foreheads with a branch, wet with the water of Lethe, the river of oblivion, or Styx, the poisonous river of the Underworld.³⁶ He may also carry a horn from which he pours his sleepy liquid, or he may carry a bunch of poppies to induce slumber. A scene from a Greek vase found near Orvieto depicts Dionysos seated, and holding a *thyrsus*. Ariadne sits in his lap and embraces him, while to their right a young nude winged boy holds a vessel and touches Ariadne's forehead with a small wand.³⁷ Certainly Hypnos would be an appropriate inclusion in these wall paintings, particularly in view of the confusion with regard to Ariadne's abandonment. Whether she dies and is resurrected by Dionysos or merely falls asleep, there is no consensus. The writings of Nonnos tell of Hypnos being ushered away by Dionysos upon approaching Ariadne, yet the late date of his writings provide no firm evidence.³⁸ Furthermore Hypnos is decidedly male whereas the winged creatures that hover over Ariadne in the scenes from Pompeii possess a delicate and feminine demeanor. Then the question remains, why is Iris bereft of *kerykeion* in the scenes of Dionysos and Ariadne, and instead holding a small wand or branch and a small vessel?

Hypnos is not the only deity who brings sleep. Yet another responsibility of Iris, as told by Hesiod, is that she brings water from the river Styx to gods who bear false witness against one another. That god who "...swears false upon making a libation of that water, he lies without breathing for a full year, and never lays hands on ambrosia and nectar by way of food, but lies breathless and voiceless on his bed, wrapped in a malignant coma."³⁹ This action of Iris is depicted on various painted vessels, both

³⁶ *Aeneid*, V, 854.

³⁷ Edm. Saglio, "Hypnos," *Dar.-Sag.*, op. cit., 422 fig. 512.

³⁸ Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, op. cit., XLVII, 275-98.

³⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, op. cit., 774-806.

red-figure and white-ground *lekythoi*. Iris is depicted either drawing water from the river Styx, usually with an *oinochoe*, or making a libation by pouring the Styx-water from the *oinochoe* into a *phiale* held by the false-speaking deity.⁴⁰ It seems then that Iris, possessing the ability to render immortals unconscious, has usurped a responsibility of Hypnos in these artists's renderings. Thus in the series of Dionysos and Ariadne, Iris takes on all of her responsibilities: guide/messenger, attendant of a *hieros gamos*, and bringer of sleep.

If the identity of the winged women in these wall paintings is accepted as Iris, it must be concluded that, in view of the lack of literary evidence placing Iris at the scene of the crime, while recognizing her various roles which can be supported by both literary and artistic evidence, her inclusion must be a Roman interpolation.

Based on the lack of literary evidence to support the inclusion of various figures in the scenes of Heracles and Telephus, and Heracles and Auge, answers must be found elsewhere in order to identify the winged women contained therein. One must ask whether Iris fits the bill here based on her attributes and responsibilities. There is no doubt that the winged woman of the Telephus picture resembles both Greek depictions of Iris as well as the so-called Iris from the Dionysos and Ariadne series. She is winged, carries a wand or a branch, and her coiffure is similar as well. Her emphatic gesture of pointing to the infant suggests that she may have been the one who guided Heracles to his son. Furthermore, the existence of the red-figure *hydria* wherein Iris herself is depicted spiriting away a child whose identity has been suggested as either Heracles or Telephus himself, makes a strong case for identifying this winged woman as Iris.⁴¹ Yet there is an obstacle which stands in the path of accepting Iris as her identity. One must pose the question, why would the personal servant of Hera, assist Heracles in finding his son in view of the animosity which exists between Hera and Heracles?

⁴⁰ *LIMC*, Vol. V, no. 2, op. cit., figs. 25, 29, 31, 47, 49, 60, 61, 101, and 171.

⁴¹ See pp. 11-12, and n. 18.

Surely the goddess who sent snakes to his crib and Iris herself to escort Madness to him would not permit her personal messenger to aid the hero in the search for his son. The solution lies in the fact that the entire scene is an invention which does not appear anywhere in the ancient literature. As noted by Frazer, the depiction of Heracles with his infant son is a late invention by the Pergamenes who made the most of Telephus's immortal lineage.⁴² Furthermore the entire scene from the Basilica at Herculaneum, which includes the personification of Arcadia, the satyr, the eagle, the lion, and the winged woman, is but a subsequent invention which must stem, at least in part, from earlier Pergamene monuments. As artistic license abounds in this case, it is not unreasonable to assume that Iris, acting in her earliest function as servant to Zeus, as well as a later function, "rescuer" of divine and semi-divine children, is that who appears here.

Of all the winged women here in question, the most difficult to fit into the "Iris" theory is that which is depicted in the Heracles and Auge scene. Despite her strong resemblance to all the others dealt with thus far, the question of context hinders her identification as Iris. The abduction of Auge is certainly not a *hieros gamos*, nor is the rescuing of a child as yet an issue. Furthermore, there exists in the House of the Vettii, whence this image comes, a scene which includes a figure who is generally accepted as Iris yet in no way resembles these other winged women.

Iris is depicted in the scene which gives the Ixion Room its name. The so-called Ixion Room is in fact a dining room in the house belonging to the Vettius Brothers and also contains one of the scenes of Dionysos and Ariadne dealt with here.⁴³ In the scene depicting the punishment of Ixion, Hermes, *kerykeion* in hand, and Hephaistos, stand beside the wheel to which Ixion is bound (Figure 13). In the foreground, a veiled shade sits with a mournful expression and her left hand raised, alluding to the suffering that

⁴² See p. 2, and n. 2.

⁴³ See p. 11, Fig. 5.



Figure 13. Punishment of Ixion.
Ixion Room, House of the Vettii, Pompeii.
(Photo courtesy Professor Paul Deussen)

awaits Ixion in the Underworld. Behind her, Hera reclines, holding her scepter in her left hand with her right raised to her cheek. Behind Hera, a haloed Iris, her right arm extended, presents the victim and his punishment to the supreme goddess whom Ixion has offended.⁴³ That she is Iris is certainly a logical conclusion, as Hera's personal attendant would certainly be seen in her company. However, this figure possesses none of the attributes typical of Iris.

Still another artistic instance of Iris present at the Punishment of Ixion is known. From a red-figure Apulian volute *krater* found at Ruvo, now in the Hermitage Museum,⁴⁴ comes a scene of the Punishment of Ixion (Figure 14). Occupying a central position is Ixion strapped to the fiery wheel. To the left, a winged Erinye with snakes in her hair, grasps the wheel to send it flying into the air. On the extreme left, Zeus sits enthroned, watching the punishment being carried out. To the right of Ixion, Hephaistos, hammer in hand, leans on a tree stump. And lastly, on the extreme right, a winged Iris, *kerykeion* in hand, gestures toward the central figure of Ixion.

This figure possesses all the iconography appropriate to Iris whereas the figure from the House of the Vettii possesses none. It should also be noted that the figure from the Ixion scene in the House of the Vettii, with its distinct lack of "Iris" attributes, is located in the same dwelling as the scenes of Heracles and Auge, and of Dionysos and Ariadne which contain two of the so-called Irises which are here at issue. This begs the question; If all three of these figure are Iris, why are only two winged? Moreover, of the two literary sources which tell of Ixion's punishment, Apollodorus⁴⁵ and Pindar,⁴⁶ neither mention the presence of Iris. It is a confusing issue which may only be satisfied

⁴⁴ (i) August Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey, (New York: Caratzas Brothers, 1982), 339-40 fig. 171. (ii) A. B. Cook, *Zeus; A Study in Ancient Religion*, Vol. I, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1914), 203 fig. 147.

⁴⁵ (i) *LIMC*, Vol. V, no. 2, op. cit., 498 fig. 156. (ii) Cook, *Zeus*, op. cit., 201 fig. 146.

⁴⁶ *Apollodorus*, op. cit., III, 16. Epitome 1.

⁴⁷ Sir J. Sandys, trans., *The Odes of Pindar*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1968), *Pyth.* II, 24-49.

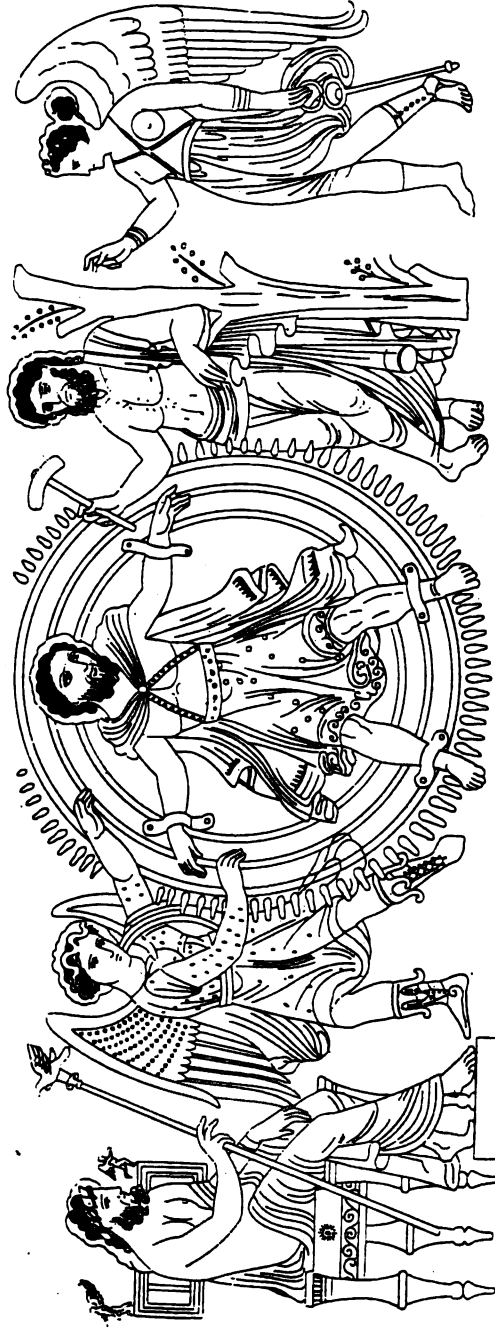


Figure 14. Punishment of Ixion.
 Red-figure Apulian volute krater.
 Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.
 (Line drawing after Cook, *Zeus*, Figure 146)

by claiming allowances made for artistic liberties. This may also serve as the answer to the questions which arise when attempting to identify the "Iris" of the Heracles and Auge scene, for, as this winged figure resembles so closely the others, she too must be identified as Iris despite the somewhat inappropriate context.

The context is inappropriate, to be sure. As noted, the union of Heracles and Auge is not a *hieros gamos*. However, the artist has here included imagery which would suggest that in this rendering of the abduction of Auge, it is to be viewed as a "sacred union." This imagery is that of the unveiling of the bride as she offers herself to her bridegroom. Here, Auge is clearly being unveiled as Heracles himself draws back her garments. As noted, this unveiling is seen in the depiction of the *hieros gamos* of Zeus and Hera which appears on the east frieze of the Parthenon.⁴⁸ Here, Hera exhibits this typical bridal gesture which can also be seen on the metope of Temple "E" at Selinus which depicts the same scene (Figure 15). Just as on the Parthenon, Hera with her left hand, raises her veil as Zeus accepts her offer by grasping her wrist. Furthermore, this gesture of unveiling the "bride" can also be seen in each of the scenes of Dionysos and Ariadne which are here at issue. In each case, the sleeping Ariadne is unveiled by either Eros or a Paniskos.⁴⁹ Thus the winged figure of the Heracles and Auge scene must be Iris in view of her appearance and the interpretation of the union as a *hieros gamos*.

The solution offered here in the analysis of these wall paintings and this particular winged figure may not thwart all the questions which may arise with regard to the iconography. Yet what has clearly been established is that throughout the tradition of ancient Roman wall painting, creativity and the embellishment of scenes from mythology are a common feature. For whatever reason, whether it be Pergamene patriotism, compositional unity, or mere decoration, the artists of ancient Rome felt a

⁴⁸ See p. 25, Fig. 11.

⁴⁹ See Figs. 3, 4, 5, and 6.



Figure 15. Hieros gamos of Zeus and Hera.
Metope, Temple "E," Selinus.
Museo Nazionale, Palermo.
(University Prints)

freedom to deviate from canons established by Greek art and literature and create new canons. This, of course, creates the iconographic mystery which is at issue here. Are these winged women merely watered down versions of the Greek Iris? If one considers the arc of Iris's career and the roles she plays in mythology as messenger to the gods, personal attendant to Hera, and her part in the *hieros gamos*, as well as the Roman artistic tendency for reinterpretation, these winged figures are Iris, carrying out all her various functions. Here Iris is not a shadow of her former Greek self, but rather a new Roman version.

CHAPTER II
OBSERVATIONS OF A COMPOSITIONAL
AND ICONOGRAPHIC FORMULA

Having explored the iconography of the goddess Iris, a further observation concerning yet another winged figure is in order. There exist three wall paintings from Pompeii which depict Thetis in the workshop of Hephaistos wherein she obtains new armor for her son Achilles, as told by Homer.¹ These three monuments resemble each other rather closely in composition and iconography. However, two of the wall paintings contain a winged figure, the depiction of which recalls those dealt with previously.

The house which is known only by its Region, Insula, and entrance numbers; IX. 5. 2., contains one of these three scenes of Thetis and Hephaistos (Figure 16).² In this version of the scene, the muscle-bound blacksmith stands on the left, hammer in hand, setting the newly completed shield upon his anvil so that the silver-footed Nereid may view the metalwork on its exterior. Thetis, seated on the right, raises her hand in alarm and amazement while on the ground before her lay the sword, cuirass, and greaves Hephaistos has fashioned for Achilles. What message or meaning the premier Nereid finds hidden in the images of a snake and the signs of the Zodiac which are rendered in the elaborate metal work on the shield's exterior must surely be the cause

¹ Robert Fitzgerald trans., *The Iliad of Homer*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), XVIII, 457.

² (i) Ludwig Curtius, *Die Wandmalerei Pompejis*, (Darmstadt: Georg Olms, 1960), 221, fig. 130; (ii) Otto J. Brendel, "The Shield of Achilles," *The Visible Idea: Interpretations of Classical Art*, trans. Maria Brendel, 79, fig. 13.



Figure 16. Thetis in the workshop of Hephaistos.
From House IX. 5. 2., Pompeii.
Museo Nazionale, Naples.
(Curtius, Figure 130)

of her alarm.³ The meaning is revealed to Thetis by a small winged creature just above her. With wand in hand, she points to the iconography on the exterior of the shield. As Brendel says, she instructs Thetis in "Homer Studies."

The scene from the house known as the Casa di Sirico, is essentially the same (Figure 17).⁴ It differs in that it is clearly by another hand, which in this instance, seems far more skilled. The draftsmanship is of a higher quality. The tall figure of Hephaistos on the left, again holding his hammer, supports the shield which rests upon a block of stone. The seated figure of Thetis, draped in a flowing garment, raises her hand to her chin to suggest her dismay concerning the message revealed to her in the shield. As before, Thetis is assisted in deciphering the hidden message by a winged maiden, again, pointing with her wand to the shield's imagery. In this case, the winged maiden appears to rest her hand on Thetis' shoulder as if to calm and console her.

The third example of this composition comes from the house known as Reg. IX, Ins. 1, n. 7 (Figure 18).⁵ Although depicting the same scene, it is conspicuously different in three significant ways. Firstly, Hephaistos is seated and is aided in supporting the shield by a member of his workshop, possibly a cyclops, but this cannot be established with certainty as the fresco is damaged in the area of this figure's head. Secondly, the shield itself no longer possesses the elaborate metalwork which Hephaistos labored to create and which Homer describes at length.⁶ The shield instead reflects Thetis' own image, this time looking rather disinterested, her hand no longer raised in alarm, instead supporting her head in boredom. Here there is no need for the

³ Brendel, op. cit., *passim*. By way of analogy to other monuments and the exploration of Greek hero-worship, Brendel sees the imagery of the snake and the signs of the Zodiac depicted on the shield as revealing to Thetis the fate of her son, "...which had often been prophesied-Achilles' fate which was seen in the stars, since by that time dead heroes were believed to be carried off to the infinite spaces of heaven rather than to the Elysian fields."

⁴ (i) Helbig, 1316; (ii) Brendel, op. cit., 76 fig. 9; (iii) Curtius, op. cit., 223 fig. 131

⁵ (i) Helbig, 1318c; (ii) Brendel, op. cit., 78 fig. 12; (iii) Curtius, op. cit., 227 fig. 134

⁶ *Iliad*, XVIII, 478-608.

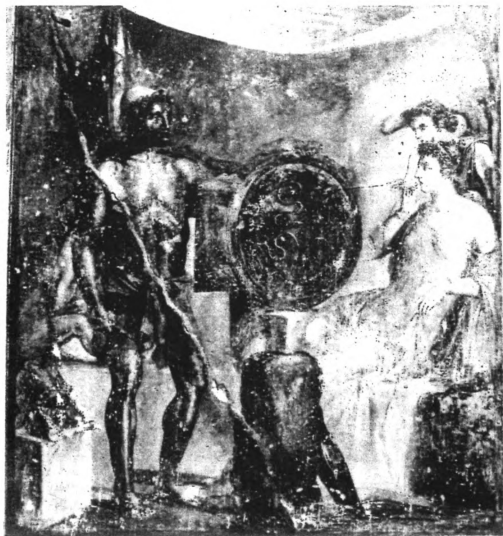


Figure 17. Thetis in the workshop of Hephaistos.
From the Casa di Sirico, Pompeii.
Museo Nazionale, Naples.
(Curtius, Figure 131)



Figure 18. Thetis in the workshop of Hephaistos.
 From House IX. 1. 7., Pompeii.
 Museo Nazionale, Naples.
 (Photo courtesy Museo Nazionale, Naples)

winged maiden to aid her in "Homer Studies." Instead, Thetis' companion is a wingless maiden who seems more interested than her mistress. It is tempting to view this work as having been derived from the other two. That is to say, it is copied after the others and the result being a dilution of the original. This is not a satisfying solution as the alterations seem far too intentional on the part of the artist.

In Ludwig Curtius' analysis of the works wherein he notes their similarities, he finds the scene from the Casa di Sirico and the house known as IX. 5. 2., to be examples of the Fourth or Intricate Style of Pompeian wall painting, and the scene from House IX. 1. 7., which lacks a winged "instructor" to be an example of late Third or Ornate Style of painting.⁷ This designation of styles does not necessarily indicate a sequential order which would place the scene from House IX. 1. 7. as first, suggesting that the winged figures are a later addition. The Third and Fourth Styles of Pompeian wall painting readily overlap and fall in and out of fashion. In view of such overlapping, the lines between the Third and Fourth Styles are often blurred.⁸

As with many Pompeian wall paintings, this scene does not occur in Book XVIII of the *Iliad*. Homer does not tell of the premier Nereid pausing for a sit-down to ponder the scenes which Hephaistos has forged on the shield. Thus, winged maiden and all, the scene is an invention.

The fact that this often-repeated scene is a fanciful embellishment and that these three versions contain obvious differences, must not overshadow their obvious similarities. The seated figure of Thetis resting her chin on her hand and attended by a

⁷ Curtius, op. cit., 226-228.

⁸ (i) August Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey, 3rd ed. (New York: Caratzas Brothers, 1982), 464-470; (ii) Amedeo Maiuri, *Pompeii: The New Excavations, The "Villa Dei Misteri"-The Antiquarium*, trans. V. Prestley, Guide Books to the Museums and Monuments of Italy, no. 3, 7th ed. (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico Dello Stato, 1955), 11. Mau is credited with designating the Four Styles of Pompeian wall painting. However, Maiuri provides a more succinct definition for each style. As defined by Maiuri, the Third Style is described as "...chiefly ornamental in character: columns, bands and friezes are enriched with decorative minutiae treated with extreme delicacy and a fine sense of color. Period: Early Empire to 63 A.D." And the Fourth Style as having "...a purely ornamental character," and having "...fantastic designs, unreal and overburdened with ornamental motifs. Period: from the time of Claudius to 79 A.D."

maiden, winged or not, is a figure group seen elsewhere. The scene of the punishment of Ixion from the room of the same name in the House of the Vettii,⁹ possesses characteristics which would suggest that this compositional arrangement was employed here. The large seated figure of Hera, raises her right hand to her cheek as she observes the punishment unfolding before her. She is attended by that still unnamed maiden with a halo who, with outstretched arm, directs Hera's attention to the action in the foreground of the large tanned figure of Hermes and Hephaistos preparing Ixion and his wheel to be flung into the air.

The scene of Heracles and Telephus from the Basilica at Herculaneum¹⁰ shares even more features with the scenes of Thetis and Hephaistos. The large seated figure of Arcadia, resting her cheek in her right hand and observing the scene before her, recalls the seated figure of Thetis in all three wall paintings. Furthermore, Arcadia is here assisted in her interpretation of the scene by a winged figure. Iris, wand in hand, points to the infant and the doe in the foreground. Here she seems to aid not only Arcadia but Heracles as well whom she has lead to his son. In this scene the artist has chosen to alter the prototype as he places the seated figure of Arcadia on the left and the winged maiden on the right. Despite this rearranging, the prototype is still apparent.

The scene of Daedalus and Pasiphaë provides still another variation on this formula (Figure 19).¹¹ Located in the same room in the House of the Vettii as the scene of the punishment of Ixion, it depicts the tall dark figure of the master carpenter presenting his fantastic invention of a hollow wooden cow on wheels to Pasiphaë. She, enthroned on a large chair and elegantly dressed, fixes her gaze upon the animal as Daedalus demonstrates its workings to her by removing the trap door on its back.

⁹ (i) Mau, op. cit., 340 fig. 171; (ii) A. B. Cook, *Zeus, A Study in Ancient Religion*, Vol. I. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1914), 203 fig. 147.

¹⁰ Helbig, 1143.

¹¹ Amedeo Maiuri, *Pompeian Wall Paintings*, Orbis Pictus Series, no. 4, (Switzerland: Hallwag Berne Ltd. 1954), fig. 11.



Figure 19. Daedalus and Pasiphaë.
Ixion Room, House of the Vettii, Pompeii.
(Maiuri, *Pompeian Wall Paintings*, Figure XI)

Behind Pasiphaë are two figures. To the left, a young maiden raises her hands to her lips in astonishment, and to the right, an old crone, gray and wrinkled with age, points to the opening in the cow. Strangely, her actions seem to be the opposite of the younger astonished maiden. She seems almost to encourage Pasiphaë in her insane plans as she knows it is an inevitability.

These varying uses of this formula of a seated figure aided by another figure who points to an action or objects to be observed, suggests that it is a device which is recycled over and over and used to unify a composition or to draw attention to the focus of a scene. However, the anomaly here is the scene of Thetis and Hephaistos from House IX. I. 7. wherein nothing more than Thetis' own image is reflected in the shield and thus the pointing figure is conspicuously absent. Only three artists have chosen to give their pointing maidens wings. They appear in the Heracles and Telephus picture and the Thetis and Hephaistos pictures from House IX. 5. 2. and the Casa di Sirico.

Despite the obvious use of this compositional arrangement by the artists of the Heracles and Telephus picture and of the Thetis and Hephaistos pictures, there is no strong conclusive evidence to suggest that the winged maidens in these scenes are Iris. Although Hera bore him no animosity, and in fact was quite fond of Achilles, as Athena says, "Hera sent me, being fond of both of you, concerned for both,"¹² there would be no cause for the fair-armed goddess to send her personal attendant to aid his mother, Thetis, in her interpretation of the shield's imagery. Brendel makes the suggestion that the winged maidens from the Thetis and Hephaistos scenes look like a winged version of the wise Muse of astronomy, Urania, who deciphers the signs of the Zodiac which appear on the shield and tell of Achilles' fate as seen in the stars.¹³

As observed, the nature of Roman wall painting is that of reinterpretation and invention, thus there is every reason to assume that this composition is uniquely

¹² *Iliad*, I, 208.

¹³ Brendel, op. cit., 79-80.

Roman. Yet there is always room for speculation. This action of pointing recalls that seen on the François Vase and the black figure *dinos* by Sophilos. In both cases, Iris leads the procession of divinities to the house of Peleus, and in both cases she, with her left hand, points behind her to the divine entourage that follows. This overt action of pointing used as a device by the artists of the Roman wall paintings here at issue begs the question; Is this small portion of the Roman formula an originally Greek artistic device which the Roman artists later appropriated? Admittedly, there seem to be no known monuments, classical or later, which could serve as a link between these early Attic and Roman works. Nonetheless, the observation should be noted.

To the realm of Pompeian wall painting go the honors of creativity and originality resulting in deviation from, or complete disregard for Greek originals. This is often a source of great frustration to many who hope to find clear and straightforward answers to iconographic questions. What these monuments do offer is a glimpse of an artistic tradition which is both entertaining and mysterious in view of such experimentation.

CHAPTER III
THEORIES CONCERNING THE WINGED DAEMON IN
THE DIONYSIAC FRIEZE IN THE VILLA ITEM

The painted frieze in the triclinium of the Villa Item, located outside the Porta Ercolanese at Pompeii, has been a source of much speculation, that to refer to it as the "Villa of the Mysteries" seems all too appropriate.¹ Some of the more relevant and influential writings on the Villa will be presented here. The writings of such renowned scholars as Amedeo Maiuri, Otto J. Brendel, Jocelyn Toynbee, Martin P. Nilsson, Michael I. Rostovtzeff, and others will be discussed. The issue which has been the main focus of much of this research is the identification of the so-called winged daemon and her apparent action of flagellating the initiate. This figure group, depicted in Scenes VII and VIII of the frieze, has greatly influenced the interpretation of the entire narrative (Figure 20). Some of the possible identifications of the winged daemon which have been offered up by these scholars are that she is Dike, Telete, Nike, a Fury, and even Ignorance. These insightful contributions have made the iconographic program of the Villa Item a hotly debated issue, and although their interpretations have not always brought about a sound solution, and instead further debate, their writings provide stepping stones for continued research. The goal here will be to address some of the more relevant iconographic theories and perhaps bring fresh insights, worthy of their efforts, to the debate.

¹ Amedeo Maiuri, *Pompeii: The New Excavations, The "Villa Dei Misteri" -The Antiquarium*, trans. V. Prestley, Guide-Books to the Museums and Monuments of Italy no. 3, 7th ed. (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico Dello Stato, 1955), 91.

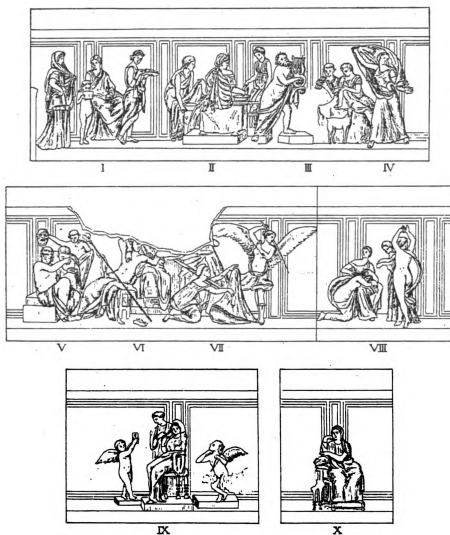


Figure 20. Dionysiac Frieze.
Triclinium, Villa Ippocampo, Pompeii.
(Line drawing after Brendel,
The Visible Idea, Figure 1)

Since its discovery in 1909, the program of the frieze has been interpreted as representing an initiation into the cult of Dionysos wherein actual rites mingle with mythological material. The deity himself is depicted on the back wall reclining in the lap of his beloved Ariadne. His presence makes the interpretation virtually irrefutable. Two assumptions will be made by the author. First, that the frieze should be read in a clockwise fashion, beginning with Scene I on the north wall which depicts the entry of the initiate. And secondly, that, based on the clockwise reading, the frieze is a continuous narrative which depicts, among its other imagery, the various steps through which a single initiate is passing. In surveying the frieze, those figures which most likely represent the initiate, based on appearance and action, will be identified.

All four walls of the triclinium are devoted to the frieze, interrupted only by a window, a small door leading to a marriage chamber (a *thalamos*), and a larger door which leads to an open loggia.² The frieze is dated to the early phase of the Augustan Age (although not firmly) and is of the second style of Pompeian wall painting. Megalographic figures dominate the zones wherein decorative elements are subordinated. The walls are flatly painted in bright Pompeian red, and divided into panels by vertical bands of green, yellow, and purple. An Augustan Meander spans the top, while the figures are firmly established on a green ground below. The vertical elements do not divide the scenes, nor do they interrupt the flow of the procession. Rather, as the figures pass before them, the *trompe l'oeil* element of the Second Style is maintained as the separation between the realm of reality and paint is challenged.

The frieze unfolds into ten scenes which begin on the north wall next to the small door. Scene I begins the narrative. The initiate enters onto the scene, dressed in a flowing mantle. She rests her right hand on her hip while with her left she conspicuously lifts her garments away from her breast. Her gaze seems fixed upon the next figure; a young nude boy. He reads from a scroll, wearing only a pair of boots

² Amedeo Maiuri, *Roman Painting*, trans. Stuart Gilbert, (Geneva: Editions Albert Skira, 1953), 51.

which reach to mid-calf. He stands before a seated matron who rests her right hand on his shoulder and holds a stylus and a scroll in her left. This scene is known as the "Reading of the Ritual."³ It seems the role of the only human male depicted in the frieze is that of reading what may be the secret writings of the cult.

The figure which links Scenes I and II is that of the initiate, however, here her appearance is altered. The garments that covered her head and shoulders now fall about her waist and reveal that she is crowned with myrtle of which an additional sprig is seen in her right hand.⁴ She carries into Scene II a platter of sacrificial cakes.⁵ Here in a scene of sacrifice, a priestess is seated at a table. Her attire resembles the initiate's as well as the other female participants' and similarly wears myrtle in her hair. With her back to the viewer, she, with the help of a handmaid, unveils a platter of unidentified objects at her left. Gazing to her right, she observes another figure pouring a libation. This may very well be the initiate appearing once again, crowned with myrtle and actively participating in the ritual itself which has now begun.

With the appearance of an old Silenos linking Scenes II and III, the realm of the cult, inhabited by its mythological constituency, is next depicted. This is the "initiation proper" as referred to by Toynbee. The corpulent Silenos, wearing the ubiquitous myrtle, rests his surplus weight against a *cippus*, while bringing music to the ceremony with his lyre. The portion of Scene III which follows, has been termed the "Pastoral Scene".⁶ Here, seated upon a rock, a Paniskos accompanies the old Silenos on a *syrtinx*, and a Paniska suckles a faun. Before them stands a young goat who stares out into the realm of the observer.

³ Maiuri, *Pompeii*, 95.

⁴ Jocelyn Toynbee, "The Villa Itern and A Bride's Ordeal," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 19 (1929): 73.

⁵ Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Mystic Italy*, The Clover Lectures, Brown University, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1927), 49.

⁶ Maiuri, *Pompeii*, 95.

Following the pastoral group is the last figure contained on this wall. She is the so-called "Frightened Woman."⁷ Although this designation remains somewhat suspect, as the cause of her alarm remains uncertain, her pose is unmistakably dramatic. Her feet are placed wide, her garments swirl about, and her gaze is over her left shoulder in the direction of the adjacent wall. Her right arm extends upward and her left has been interpreted as a gesture of aversion.⁸ In view of the direction of her gaze, and the direction of her flight, whatever has thrown her into such a state of alarm and dismay must certainly be contained within a following scene.

A turn of the corner presents the viewer with Scene IV wherein additional members of the Dionysiac entourage are depicted. Another old Silenos, this time crowned with ivy,⁹ glances over his right shoulder, in the direction of the frightened woman. He holds high in his right hand, a silver bowl into which a Paniskos peers. The exact nature of the Paniskos's activities remains a puzzle. It is generally accepted that the vessel contains liquid, yet with regard to the question of wine or water, there is no consensus. Behind these two figures is another Paniskos who holds aloft an old Silenos mask, an attribute and integral part of the Dionysiac Festivals. Cooke interprets the action depicted here as that of *lekanomancy*, the fortelling of the future through the interpretation of images reflected in water. Both Cook and Toynbee assert that the frieze, in its entirety, does not merely depict an initiation rite but a pre-nuptial ceremony as well, and that the inclusion of *lekanomancy* provides evidence for this. Cook states that the bowl is in fact the "mystic *kykeon*," and that the foretelling of the future from the images seen in the bowl is "...an ecstatic method of divination and is

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Maiuri, *Roman Painting*, 60.

⁹ Toynbee, op. cit., 74. Toynbee makes the distinction which is duly justified in that the leaves depicted are clearly larger and green, whereas the myrtle is depicted delicate and yellow.

therefore peculiarly adapted to the Bacchic rapture."¹⁰ Furthermore, Toynbee provides evidence that divination by water was an integral part of pre-nuptial ceremonies to determine the features of the future bride-groom.¹¹ It is reasonable to accept their pre-nuptial theory as there exists agreement on this point by other scholars.¹² Furthermore, the initiation into the cult of Dionysos is regarded as a *hieros gamos*, a sacred wedding wherein the soul of the initiate is united with the deity. However, there does not exist much agreement with regard to the *lekanomancy* theory. According to Toynbee, the reflection seen in the mystic *kykeon* is the image of the Silenos mask which causes the initiate great dismay and she flees.¹³ Compositionally this is impossible. Her distance from the *skyphos* and the peering Paniskos interfere with viewing the interior of the vessel. Zuntz concurs as it is his contention that this is not a scene of *lekanomancy* at all. He finds this theory to be "far-fetched and contorted beyond all credibility," logically asserting that silver would yield no reflection at all unless highly polished and the vessel depicted does not possess such a high gloss finish. Furthermore, he notes that the Paniskos has inserted his head so deeply into the *skyphos* that it would be too dark to see any reflection, if any merely his own and highly distorted. Zuntz instead suggests that the Paniskos is peering into an empty vessel in the anticipation that it will miraculously be filled with wine in the presence of the deity.¹⁴ Thus it is unlikely that the fleeing woman is reacting to a reflection of the old Silenos mask which she misconstrues as her future bridegroom. In fact, the blissful state of wedlock is expressed in the next scene, Scene VI, the depiction of Dionysos

¹⁰ P. B. Mudie Cooke, "The Paintings of the Villa Itern at Pompeii," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 3 (1913; reprint, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1966), 167.

¹¹ Toynbee, op. cit., 74-77.

¹² (i) Rostovtzeff, op. cit., 46. (ii) Margarete Bieber, "The Mystery Frescoes in the Mystery Villa of Pompeii," *The Review of Religion*, Vol. II, no. 1 (Nov. 1937): 7.

¹³ Toynbee, op. cit., 74.

¹⁴ G. Zuntz, "On the Dionysiac Frescoes in the Villa Dei Misteri at Pompeii," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 49 (1963): 184-85.

reclining languidly in the lap of his beloved Ariadne. They stand as the prototype of marriage. As Bieber states, "Ariadne abandoned by Theseus was a symbol of the transition from sorrow to joy, darkness to light. In Athens the maidens were introduced into the cult by the Basilinna, the priestess of Dionysos who, in the guise of Ariadne, married the God."¹⁵ Instead, two other possibilities involving subsequent scenes must be considered. Scene VII, which will be described in greater detail, depicts the revelation of the large phallos. Bieber astutely suggests that it is this imposing presence that may be the cause of the fleeing woman's anxiety. There is every reason to accept this worthy hypothesis, yet what must also be considered is Nilsson's logical suggestion that her flight is in response to the actions contained in Scenes VII and VIII; the flagellation of the initiate.¹⁶ This seems highly plausible in view of such unpleasantness to which she is witness. These events, as integral parts of the initiation ordeal, seem sufficient reasons for apprehension of the woman and just cause to flee.

The scene of Dionysos and Ariadne is destroyed to such an extent that the upper portion if Ariadne is missing. Despite this her identity is not questioned. Context alone would suffice but two monuments exist, both depicting this figure group from which the painting can be reconstructed; a cameo from Vienna and a coin from Smyrna from the Period of Domitian (Figures 21 and 22).¹⁷ Following the wedded pair is Scene VII, the so-called Scene of Revelation. A woman kneeling in the foreground is poised to uncover the large veiled phallos contained within the *liknon*. The symbol of Dionysos's procreative power, his attribute as fertility god as well as male bridegroom, needs little explanation. It is well known that phalloi were integral elements of Dionysiac celebrations, either carried in processions to honor the deity or used as votive gifts.¹⁸

¹⁵ Bieber, op. cit., 6.

¹⁶ Martin P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*, (Sweden: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 1957), 75.

¹⁷ Cooke, op. cit., 160, figs. 26 and 27.

¹⁸ Martin P. Nilsson, op. cit., 33.



Figure 21. Dionysos and Ariadne.
Cameo from Vienna.
Kunsthistorisches Museum.
(Curtius, Figure 201)



Figure 22. Dionysos and Ariadne.
Coin from Smyrna from the
Period of Domitian.
(Curtius, Figure 202)

Despite the destruction, the lower portions of two figures standing behind the kneeling woman are discernible. One holds a dish, the other, possibly the initiate, stands in attendance. As noted, the Scene of Revelation has been viewed by some scholars as that which causes the fleeing woman to bolt and it is this action which appears to be one of the more eventful in the course of the initiation ceremony. It is at this point that the symbol of the deity and the deity himself is introduced to the initiate.¹⁹

The final figure of Scene VII, the last figure on the back wall, is the winged daemon (Figure 23). The still unnamed figure has become such a mystery with regard to her identity, her activities, and the role she plays within the scope of the initiation process, that one might believe that in solving these questions, many of the issues concerning the frieze would be resolved. The winged daemon appears to have just entered onto the scene. Her large black wings are nearly fully extended. She stands high upon her toes and her short *chiton* is ruffled as if disturbed by a breeze or movement. Other than the *chiton* about her waist and the high boots she dons, she is nude. In her right hand she holds a long switch. She has raised it up behind her head and her left arm follows this motion. She is, without question, poised to administer a blow. There is little doubt as to where it will land. The direction of her gaze tells us. Her head is turned to her left. She looks across the corner to the adjacent wall and it is there that she finds her target. A woman, who must be the initiate, cowers in the lap of another, possibly a priestess. The cowering woman is nude about her upper torso. Her

¹⁹ (i) Bieber, op. cit., 8. (ii) Zuntz, op. cit., 183, 187. The nature of the initiation rite is that of an "ordeal" for the initiate. Evidence of this is seen in the program of the fresco, not only in the case of the "Frightened Woman," but in Scenes VII and VIII which depict the ritual flagellation, the content of which will be dealt with in following pages. In view of this interpretation, Zuntz sees both the "Frightened Woman" and the crouching initiate who receives the blows of the whip as "...enduring the agony of maidenhood facing the surrender in which it must lose self to find self." Furthermore, Zuntz emphasizes that the fleeing woman "...is not fleeing..." but *has been fleeing*, terrified at the presence of the God. In addition, he finds the actions of the woman to suggest that she has "...perceived the threat to her individuality..." and flees as she is "...unprepared for surrender." In this author's opinion, Zuntz has gone outside the realm of the program and imposed an unnecessarily "feminist" interpretation. The nature of the secretive cult suggests an atmosphere of acceptance of the individual rather than sacrifice of individuality.

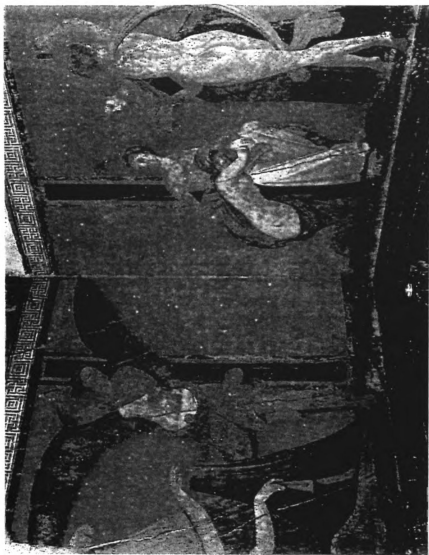


Figure 23. Scene of Flagellation, Scenes VII and VIII.
Dionysiac Frieze, Villa Ippolito, Pompeii.
(Brendel, Figure 14)

mantle has fallen about her legs, and that which covered her upper body and back is being gently pulled aside by the seated priestess to expose her back to the whip. These two scenes, combined, are the so-called Scenes of Flagellation, yet in order to fully understand the theories put forth with regard to their meaning, the various interpretations of the following scenes must first be introduced.

Two figures appear at the end of Scene VIII, following the cowering woman. A nude woman dances high upon her toes, clashing cymbals above her head as her garment swirls about. She celebrates the completion of the ordeal with Bacchic ecstasy appropriate to a maenad. She dances before a fully clothed member of the cult who holds a *thyrsus*, and peers out from behind the dancing maenad. It is tempting to interpret the maenad as the initiate but this cannot be so. The cowering woman is the initiate, for only she would be required to endure such a hazing ceremony. In the crouching position her hair falls about her face, quite disheveled, whereas the hair of the celebrating maenad is neatly bound up in a pony tail. Furthermore, the following scene has been interpreted as depicting the initiate composing herself and doing her hair after completing the initiation.

Scene IX is surprisingly tranquil when compared with the continuous action that has preceded it. It is here that the initiate is depicted recovering, so to speak, from her ordeal and readying herself for the next step. She is seated on a cushioned chair with elaborately carved legs. Her mantle is now neatly arranged and with the help of a handmaid seen behind her, she rearranges her hair which fell about her face in the Scene of Flagellation. To her right an Eros stands on his tip toes holding up a mirror in which the seated initiate's reflection is seen. Turning the corner, another Eros stands as part of the same scene. He leans against a pillar with his legs crossed, resting his chin in his right hand and holding a sprig of myrtle in the other. This scene is interpreted as an interim period for the initiate.

With the reading of the frieze thus far, Scene IX may be rightly interpreted as next in the sequence yet considerable debate exists on this point. Some scholars see it properly placed as ninth in sequential order, while other place it at the beginning of the entire frieze. The placement and interpretation of this scene is crucial to the interpretation of the frieze as a whole. In keeping with the contention that the entire frieze depicts a pre-nuptial rite, it is at this point that the initiate is preparing herself for the actual *hieros gamos* which follows the events depicted thus far. Toynbee rightly places these scenes at the end of the cycle. She sees them "...not as a quiet ending, but the entry upon a new stage to which the previous scenes were leading and of which the ninth scene is a culmination."²⁰ Maiuri interprets this scene the same way as he says, "After the ordeal comes the mystical marriage."²¹ Bieber concurs, furthering this by noting that the manner in which the seated woman is arranging her hair recalls the six braids (*sex crines*), typical of the coiffure of a Roman bride.²² The initiate has emerged, successfully, from her journey through the pre-nuptial rite and now must prepare for the mystical marriage with the deity. Nilsson takes a contrary position with regard to the interpretation of the so-called Bridal Scenes. He states, "Nothing warrants the assumption that this is the dressing of a Bride. Erotes are so common in scenes from the life of women that their presence proves nothing." He continues,

Behind this opinion lies the thesis of mystery theology that the neophyte was assured of (his) eternal bliss by being united with, wedded to the god. This is unfounded. There is another and more simple explanation of these two pictures, which are separated from the mystery scenes of the main part of the fresco, that is that they represent the preparations, perhaps of the Lady of the House, for partaking in the celebrations. The so-called mysteries were, to many, merely great banquets with a little thrill of religious ceremonies added, just as in certain modern

²⁰ Ibid., 71.

²¹ Maiuri, *Roman Painting*, 62.

²² Bieber, op. cit., 9.

orders. Naturally, people, especially the ladies, donned their best attire for such an occasion.²³

Nilsson's theory is oversimplified. The entire program is too specific with regard to the scenes the artist has chosen to depict. Scenes of women making ready for nothing more than a banquet is inconsistent with the context of the frieze as a whole. These scenes of the decking of the bride must be of equal importance as the others, for the artist would hardly devote a major portion of the room to such a minor activity as getting dressed for a party. To support the theory that it is the preparation of the bride that is depicted here, special attention must be paid to the furniture on which the bride is seated. The distinctively carved legs, rendered with great clarity, are that which are seen on a *kline*, signifying a bridal bed (Figure 24). It is also significant to recognize the similarity between these elaborately carved legs and those depicted in the so-called Aldobrandini Wedding wherein the subject of the "readying of the bride" is obvious (Figure 25).²⁴

Scene X, the last in the cycle, depicts a woman seated on a couch, upright and resting her cheek in her right hand. She possesses an air of authority which confuses the issue of her identity. She is known as the Domina; the matron of the Villa and the mother of the initiate, serving as the chaperone of the event.²⁵ Toynbee sees her as the initiate awaiting her bridegroom but this cannot be the case. The prominence of the ring on her finger has been noted, along with her elegance in dress and mood, thus establishing her in an upper and privileged level of Roman society. She is, in the words

²³ Nilsson, op. cit., 74.

²⁴ Otto J. Brendel, *The Visible Idea, Interpretations of Classical Art*, trans. Maria Brendel, Art History Series II (Washington, D.C.: Decatur House Press, 1980), 118-119 and Figs. 18 and 20. The correlation between the wedding beds, first noted by R. Herbig in his *Neue Beobachtungen am Fries der Mysterien-Villa in Pompeji* (1958), is discussed by Brendel, yet Herbig finds the correlation to be between the "bed" on which the Domina rests (Scene X) and that seen in the so-called *Aldobrandini Wedding*. I find Herbig to be in error on this point as observation will clearly show that the obvious similarity is between the *kline* on which the Bride sits while arranging her hair (Scene IX), and that depicted in the so-called *Aldobrandini Wedding*.

²⁵ Zuntz, op. cit., 180.



Figure 24. Readyng of the Bride, Scene IX.
Dionysiac Frieze, Villa Itern, Pompeii.
(Brendel, Figure 18)



Figure 25. Aldobrandini Wedding.
Musei Vaticani, Rome.
(Brendel, Figure 21)

of Brendel, a "matrona" as opposed to a "virgo."²⁶ Her ring may seem a minor point of focus, but as noted by Zuntz, in an "...almost obtrusive manner, nearly all the women, whose hands are visible, even Ariadne, wear rings. This stressing of their married state is one more Roman feature."²⁷ Ariadne is termed the bride of Dionysos, but as the two serve as the prototype of marriage, she is the *wife* of Dionysos. No longer is Ariadne a neophyte, as are the initiates, but a full fledged "matrona," as is the seated woman of Scene X. The Domina is not the initiate waiting for her bridegroom as Toynbee suggests, rather she is already married to the deity and most likely, married in life. These issues of marriage here, and throughout the frieze serve to support the theories put forth by Toynbee and Bieber independently, that it represents a pre-nuptial ceremony of the cult of Dionysos.²⁸

Before delving deeply into the meaning of the so-called Scenes of Flagellation, it must be stated that they do depict a scene of flagellation. It would seem that no scholar could doubt this in view of that which is depicted; the winged daemon, brandishing a whip in the direction of the nude cowering woman. Yet not all scholars agree on this point. It is the esteemed scholar Rostovtzeff who states categorically, "The theory of flagellation cannot be accepted, for there is no connection between the winged goddess and the crying girl."²⁹ This unequivocal declaration begs the question, who is the winged goddess and what is the action depicted if not a flagellation? Rostovtzeff identifies the winged daemon as Telete, goddess of initiation, by analogy to a depiction on a well known Greek bas-relief which bears the inscription "Telete."³⁰ This

²⁶ Brendel, *op. cit.*, 120.

²⁷ Zuntz, *op. cit.*, 193. The figures upon whose hand rings are clearly present are; the initiate entering in Scene I, the seated priestess in the scene of the "Reading of the Ritual," Ariadne, and the Domina of Scene X. These four all wear rings upon the third finger of their left hand.

²⁸ (i) Toynbee, *op. cit.*, *passim*. (ii) Bieber, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²⁹ Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, 54.

³⁰ Roscher, *Lexikon*, V. II, 2, 2124, fig. 12.

identification seems logical as the presence of the goddess of initiation at an initiation ritual would surely be à propos. However, if these scenes do not depict a ritual flagellation, as Rostovtzeff maintains, Telete would have no other role than that of a passive observer and this is clearly not the case. Furthermore, he surprises his reader by saving a detail for the endnote. The analogous Telete from the bas-relief has no wings. Rostovtzeff concludes that the initiate buries her head in the lap of her companion in response to the revelation of the phallos.

Rostovtzeff recognizes that the revelation of the phallos and the winged daemon are depicted side by side "monotonously" citing the so-called Campana Relief in the Louvre (Figure 26),³¹ a cameo in sardonyx in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and a mosaic from the Great Baths near Djemila, Algeria (Figures 27 and 28).³² Although he recognizes this ubiquitous figure group, he states that in the case of the frieze, the revelation of the phallos is intended for the cowering initiate who, in this case, is an anomaly.

Nilsson suggests Dike, Justice, as the identity of the winged daemon. He draws this conclusion based on her appearance which corresponds to an inscribed depiction of Dike on a South Italian vase of which large sherds with scenes from the Underworld were found at Ruvo.³³ He sees her as the goddess of the Underworld from Orphic literature who condemns and judges, yet there is no reason to assume that the initiate is being condemned or judged. Furthermore, there is no indication that in this context,

³¹ Rostovtzeff, op. cit., 54. On this point there is complete agreement among scholars who have undertaken the task of deciphering the fresco. See also Brendel, op. cit., 108, fig. 11; Karl Lehmann, "Ignorance and Search in the Villa of the Mysteries," *Journal of Roman Studies* 52 (1962), pl. IX, fig. 2; Amedeo Maiuri, *La Villa Dei Misteri*, 2nd ed. (Rome: La Libreria Dello Stato, 1947); Nilsson, op. cit., 128. Additional monuments depicting the same scene will be discussed below

³² (i) Brendel, op. cit., 108, fig. 12. (ii) Cooke, op. cit., 163, figs 29 and 30. (iii) Lehmann, op. cit., 64, fig. 2, and pl. IX, fig. 3.

³³ M. Jatta, *Monumenti Antichi*, 16, 517ff. and pl. III.



Figure 26. Revelation of the phallos.
Campana relief, Louvre, Paris.
(Brendel, Figure 11)

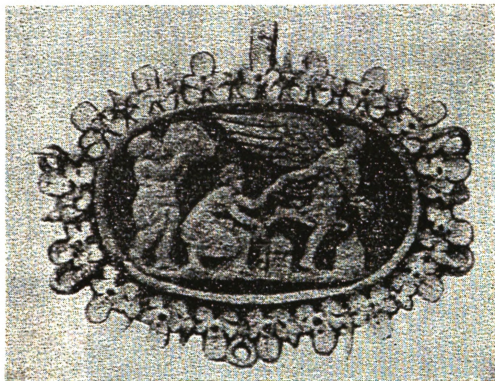


Figure 27. Revelation of the phallos.
Cameo in Sardonyx.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
(Lehmann, *JRS*, LII, Figure 2)



Figure 28. Revelation of the phallos.
Mosaic, Great Baths, Djemila Algeria.
Archaeological Museum, Algeria.
(Brendel, Figure 12)

Dionysos has adopted any other role than that of Fertility or Marriage Deity. He is not god of the Underworld here.

Maiuri has identified the daemon as "Aidos" or "Pudor" who has been outraged by the revelation of the phallos.³⁴ This seems incorrect as well. Brendel points out, and rightly so, that in Latin she would be "Pudicitia." This designation is in no way appropriate to her immodest appearance.³⁵ Furthermore, as the revelation of the phallos is an integral part of the Dionysiac festival, her presence as Aidos is not justified.

Zuntz identifies the winged daemon as a punishing Fury. The figure itself is, as he says, "...a Roman interpolation in the Hellenistic context." Zuntz finds the inclusion of the daemon to have "...moralizing messages associated with it; warnings which convey a deprecation (*sic*) of extra marital sexual relations. The infringement of the matrimonial code, so the allegory seems to say, incurs divine punishment." The Fury punishing for the violation of the sanctity of marriage is, as Zuntz states, "...well understood in the face of legislation set down by the Emperor Augustus, which strove to uphold the sanctity of marriage."³⁶ This thesis seems too speculative on the part of Zuntz. Why should the patron who commissioned a fresco, containing such specific imagery of the Dionysiac cult, devote such a major portion of their interior wall for the sake of a political statement? It simply does not belong in a chapel devoted to a religious ceremony, even in the face of the Roman interpolation theory. Furthermore, an envoy of the Underworld, such as a Fury has no place here. Assigning a Fury the task of issuing such a punishment which is out of her realm of responsibility is unjustified.

³⁴ Maiuri, *Roman Painting*, 62.

³⁵ Brendel, *op. cit.*, 107.

³⁶ Zuntz, *op. cit.*, 197.

The most puzzling theory must be that of Karl Lehmann who identifies the daemon as "Ignorance". His argument is based on the discovery in 1933, of a tomb at Hiermoupolis in Egypt which has been dated to the Hadrianic Age (Figure 29).³⁷ Contained within this tomb is a wall painting which depicts a scene of Oedipus killing his father Laios as indicated by the inscription. In addition, it depicts a figure identified by the inscription "ΑΓΝΥΑ." That this female figure resembles the winged daemon from the Villa of the Mysteries, this much is true. Yet their similarities are in gesture only; that being the arms raised in a gesture of aversion. It is a widely held view that the winged daemon raises her left arm and hand in such a way as to suggest her aversion to the revelation of the phallos.³⁸ Lehmann sees the gesture made by "Ignorance" as too close to that of the winged daemon to go unnoticed. Here he interprets "Ignorance" as urging Oedipus on in committing his crime; Ignorance as the source of his sin. He, as have others before him, cites the Campana Relief, the cameo in sardonyx at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the mosaic from the building of the Great Baths in Djemila, Algeria.³⁹ Although iconographic differences exist between these three, they are minimal. The object revealed in the cameo is the Dionysiac mask and the figure depicted in the mosaic exhibiting an averting gesture is without wings. That all three depict scenes of revelation, there is no doubt. That the figure depicted in each is "Ignorance," as that seen in the Hiermoupolis mural and in turn, the Villa of the Mysteries, is an assumption that is suspect at best. The three scenes of revelation; the cameo, the relief, and the mosaic, are interpreted by Lehmann as the rejection of knowledge by Ignorance, the knowledge that would be gained by knowing and

³⁷ Lehmann, op. cit., 63.

³⁸ (i) Rostovtzeff, op. cit., 54. Rostovtzeff states that the revelation is not for the winged daemon wherefore she makes her gesture of aversion. Yet by the same token likens her to the fleeing winged figures of the Campana Relief whose apotropaic gestures are for the phalloi depicted therein. (ii) Maiuri, *Roman Painting*, 62. Maiuri's argument of her identity as Aidos/Pudor is connected to her apotropaic gesture. She is outraged by the revelation which he sees as an appropriate reaction for the goddess of modesty.

³⁹ See figs. 7, 8, & 9, and n. 32.



Figure 29. Oedipus slaying his father.
Tomb-painting from Hiermoupolis,
Egyptian Museum, Cairo.
(Lehmann, Plate X, Figure 1)

accepting these objects of the Mystery. By their apotropaic gestures, he relates them to the Hiermoupolis "Ignorance" whose gesture is similar. With these elements of his equation in place, he then adds the winged daemon of the Villa to the list. As Lehmann sees it, she, because of her gesture, is deemed a logical inclusion as yet another representation of "Ignorance." Here Lehmann sees her role as "tormenting" the cowering initiate for her lack of knowledge. In the tomb painting and in the Villa, he sees the two daemons as playing active roles; one driving on to murder and the other causing pain, respectively. Lehmann's argument is passionate but it does not persuade. He, himself, chips away at it by admitting that they do not relate well iconiographically save the common gesture. He states,

The figure (from Hiermoupolis) it is true is fully draped and in this detail it is more closely related to the winged daemon of the terracotta reliefs and the mosaic than that of the Pompeian painting and the gems. It lacks the rod, which is absent in all the monuments with the exception of the Villa of the Mysteries, and it (again, the figure from Hiermoupolis) lacks the wings which are large in the latter, in the Campana reliefs and on the gems but are present in the mosaic only in a rudimentary remnant-if at all.⁴⁰

For the daemon to "torture" the initiate for her lack of knowledge seems without basis as the whole purpose of an initiation ceremony is to gain the knowledge which is kept hidden from outsiders. Why then would the initiate be tormented for her lack of knowledge if she was not meant to possess it until now?

It is easy to make a case for the so-called gesture of aversion based on that which appears in other monuments. However, a logical argument against it can be made. The action of the winged daemon is obvious. She is scourging the cowering woman. This is clear, even if the reasons why are not. This action is the daemon's principal purpose here and to assume that she would divide her attention to such a degree as to make an apotropaic gesture in regard to the revelation is illogical. Rather the daemon's gesture could be described as the natural movement of her body. The

⁴⁰ Lehmann, op. cit., 63.

swinging up of the opposite arm would be to gain greater momentum for the follow-through of bringing the whip down upon her target, much like that seen in the *Discus Thrower* by Myron (Figure 30). Here Myron depicts that tenuous moment after the wind up and just before the follow-through and release of the discus. It is this action that is seen here in the medium of paint rather than sculpture. Cooke supports this argument as she says, "The drapery shows that the return swing has already begun, while the position of the left hand is the result of the sudden upward turn of the body; the action is, in fact, almost exactly that of a golfer about to hit a ball in front and slightly to the left."⁴¹

The gesture of the winged daemon will require further consideration, yet that which is of greater importance is her action; she is whipping the crouching woman. That this is her primary purpose, there is no doubt, yet the question remains; why? Several theories have been put forth, yet none seem to hold the key to the mystery. The most convincing theory is that which both Toynbee and Bieber formulated independently.⁴² As noted, both scholars are of the opinion that the action of the winged daemon is that of a ritual flagellation which is intended to purify the initiate. The Why and the Wherefore of this theory depends on several things. Firstly, that the program of the frieze does depict the so-called pre-nuptial ceremony which precedes the *hieros gamos*. This is in keeping with the mystery theology of the neophyte joined in marriage with the deity. Secondly, that evidence of ritual flagellation can be found among the ancient religious festivals of Greece and Rome, and that the purpose of such scourging fits the goal of the *hieros gamos*. Both Bieber and Toynbee find much evidence to support their argument, that the action depicted represents the purificatory rite of ridding women of those "evil" spirits which inhibit the natural abilities of bearing

⁴¹ Cooke, op. cit., 161.

⁴² (i) Toynbee, op. cit., *passim*. (ii) Bieber, op. cit., *passim*.



Figure 30. Myron.
Discus Thrower.
Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.
(Becatti, *The Art of Ancient
Greece and Rome*, Figure 121)

children. Evidence of such festivals exists from classical antiquity, yet that which best supports the theory is from Rome itself; the festival of the Lupercalia.

The Lupercalia festival took place at the Lupercal Cave at the Palatine Hill, the location where Romulus and Remus were suckled by the She-Wolf. It is Ovid who tells of the origin of the name

The she-wolf
{lupa} gave her name to the place, and the place gave
their name to the Luperci.⁴³

Upon gathering at the Lupercal, the festival began with the sacrifice of goats. Strips of skin were taken from the goat hides and used to whip those women who offered themselves up for the effects, those being to rid the body of that which inhibits fertility.

The ancient sources are clear with regard to the purpose of the whippings.

Thou bride, why tarry? Neither potent herbs,
nor prayer, nor magic spells shall make of thee a
mother; submit with patience to the blows dealt
by a fruitful hand, soon will your husband's sire
enjoy the wished-for name of grandsire.
(Ovid, *Fasti*, II. 425-29)

At this
time many of the noble youths and of the magis-
trates run up and down through the city naked,
for sport and laughter striking those they meet with
shaggy thongs. And many women of rank also
purposely get in their way, and like children at
school present their hands to be struck, believing
that the pregnant will thus be helped to an easy
delivery, and the barren to pregnancy.
(Plutarch, *Lives*, Caesar, LXI)

Plutarch is more explicit in his explanation of the festival in his *Life of Romulus* XXI:

As for the
Lupercalia, judging by the time of its celebration,
it would seem to be a feast of purification, for it is
observed on inauspicious days of the month of
February, which name can be interpreted to mean
purification, and the very day of the feast was
anciently called Febrata. But the name of the
festival has the meaning of the Greek "Lycaea,"
or *feast of wolves*, which makes it seem of great
antiquity and derived from the Arcadians in the
following of Evander. Indeed, this meaning of

⁴³ Sir J. G. Frazer, trans., *Ovid: Fasti*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1989), II, 419-421.

the name is commonly accepted; for it can be connected with the she-wolf of story. And besides, we see that the *luperci* begin their course around the city at that point where Romulus is said to have been exposed. However, the actual ceremonies of the festival are such that the reason for the name is hard to guess. For the priests slaughter goats, and then, after two youths of noble birth have been brought to them, some of them touch their foreheads with a bloody knife, and others wipe the stain off at once with wool dipped in milk. The youths must laugh after their foreheads are wiped. After this they cut the goats' skins into strips and run about, with nothing on but a girdle, striking all who meet them with the thongs, and young married women do not try to avoid their blows, fancying that they promote conception and easy child-birth. A peculiarity of the festival is that the *Luperci* sacrifice a dog also.⁴⁴

The purificatory purpose of the scourging is etymologically related to the month in which the festival is celebrated; February. The term *februa* refers to the object used to purify and does not exclusively indicate strips of skin. Again the ancient sources explain;

Our Roman fathers gave the name of *februa* to to instruments of purification: even to this day there are many proofs that such was the meaning of the word. The pontiffs ask the king and the Flamen for woolen cloths, which in the tongue of the ancients had the name of *februa*. When houses are swept out, the toasted spelt and salt which the officer gets as means of cleansing are called by the same name. The same name is given to the bough, which, cut from a pure tree, wreaths with its leaves the holy brows of priests. I myself have seen the Flamen's wife (*Flaminica*) begging for *februa*; at her request for *februa* a twig of pine was given her. In short, anything used to cleanse our bodies went by that name in the time of our unshorn forefathers.

[Ovid, *Fasti*, II. 19-32]

From this evidence, both Toynbee and Bieber view the winged daemon as a representative of the Lupercalia Festival. Toynbee further supports the argument with additional examples of ritual flagellation from classical antiquity. The Nones Capratine and the Bona Dea are but two other examples she cites as festivals which included

⁴⁴ Bernadotte Perrin, trans., *Plutarch's Lives*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1967), Romulus, XXI; See also Plutarch, *Roman Questions*, IX

flagellation as an integral part of the ceremony. Furthermore, there is the well known instance of the scourging of women at the festival of Dionysos at Alea in Arcadia which is mentioned by Pausanias in his *Description of Greece*.⁴⁵

The Flagellation Theory is the most convincing argument set forth thus far. However, other than in the case of the Lupercalia festival, the purpose of the scourgings is dissimilar. According to Plutarch, at the Nones Capratine, serving maids beat each other with branches from wild fig-trees yet they did this "...in token that on that earlier day they assisted the Romans and shared with them in their battle." not for the ridding of spirits obstructing fertility.⁴⁶ Furthermore it is the case that Faunus beat his daughter Fauna (ie Bona Dea) with a branch of myrtle when she rejected his incestuous advances. In the case of the Dionysiac festival, Pausanias gives us no reason at all for the whippings.

Toynbee notes that in the case of the Nones Capratine and the Bona Dea, the *februum* used are taken from plants sacred to a fertility deity. For the Nones Capratina it is the wild fig-tree, sacred to Hera who is the female principle of life and the goddess of childbirth, and for the Bona Dea it is myrtle that is used, sacred to Venus. This correlation between Venus, myrtle and the inculcation of fertility through the use of myrtle as *februum*, does not go unnoticed by Toynbee who observes that it is myrtle that is seen in the hair of the initiate and other figures depicted within the frieze.⁴⁷ Toynbee acknowledges that in the case of the Nones Capratine, the Bona Dea and the Dionysiac festival at Arcadia, there exists no specific statement in the ancient sources that these scourgings were to promote fertility. In spite of this, the case made for ritual flagellation is quite convincing in view of the purpose of the Lupercalia festival. In this case the ancient sources are quite explicit, thus there seems no reason not to deem this

⁴⁵ Sir J. G. Frazer, trans., *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, Vol. I (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1965), VIII, 23, 1.

⁴⁶ Plutarch, op. cit., *Lives*, Romulus, XXIX, 6.

⁴⁷ Toynbee, op. cit., 73.

theory correct. It has been well established that the two scenes depict a ritual flagellation occurring within the course of an initiation ceremony of the Dionysiac cult; the so-called pre-nuptial ceremony. Furthermore, the goal of the Lupercalia is in keeping with the *hieros gamos* to the extent that it is a "symbolic" goal of feminine fertility on the part of the bride, as well as that of Dionysos as fertility deity.

In attempting to identify the winged daemon, each scholar has argued a relationship to another known personification or deity based on shared attributes. Whether it be as overt as her actions as flagellator or as subtle as the apotropaic gesture of her left hand, each scholar picks and chooses to suit his or her own theory. However, the attribute which is so prominent yet treated so parenthetically are her huge black wings. Thus far, she has been compared to Telete, but that to which she is compared is wingless. Furthermore, neither Dike nor Aidos nor ΑΓΝΥΑ are winged with any regularity. Toynbee addresses the issue with great conviction. She sees the winged daemon as the goddess Nike based on her attire, or lack thereof, consisting of boots and a short *chiton*, and her strength in demeanor. Toynbee asserts "...she surely stands for the victory of fertility in the wedded pair," referring to Dionysos and Ariadne as well as the *hieros gamos* of the initiate and the deity.⁴⁸ She further argues that Nike must be the logical choice for dispensing the blows of the pre-nuptial flagellation rite. She supports her argument with a convincing list of extant monuments in which Nike represented as playing a part in actual marriage scenes. She finds Nike present, "...on an *oinochoe* in the British Museum with figures painted in white and red on a black background is represented the mystic marriage of Dionysos and the Basilinna; to the right of the bride is Eros, carrying a casket and to the right again Nike in attendance, holding a torch in either hand (Room of Greek and Roman Life, wall-case 53, no. 636). Another British Museum Vase, a model *loutrophoros*, shows on one side Eros and a girl, with attendants holding caskets, on the other a marriage scene: below is Nike, bringing

⁴⁸ Ibid., 86.

gifts {Room of Greek and Roman Life, wall-case 53, no. 634}. On a small sarcophagus-relief, also in the British Museum, we have a marriage scene in which Nike, holding a palm, crowns the bridegroom {Room of Greek and Roman Life, wall-case 53, no. 641}; and on another marriage-sarcophagus, in Leningrad, we see Nike, with her palm, standing behind the bridegroom."⁴⁹ These monuments, which place Nike in the appropriate context of participant in a marriage ceremony, are that which Toynbee cites in support of her theory of Nike as agent of the pre-nuptial flagellation and the victory of fertility over those forces which hinder it.

Toynbee has established the theory of the ritual flagellation by analogy to the Lupercalia festival so successfully that it has become part of the puzzle permanently and is regularly offered up by other scholars for consideration. Of all attempts at identifying the winged daemon, it is the theory which is the most thoroughly supported by analogy to other monuments which exhibit related iconography and content. Yet identification of the winged daemon as Nike, although well supported, must still be questioned. In each monument cited for comparison; the *oinochoe*, the *loutrophoros*, and the sarcophagi, Nike is not depicted administering any blows. Although Toynbee's conflation is, to a great extent, justified, there exist further issues which require consideration.

There are several elements which must be considered; authorship of the frieze, its composition, the distinctive pose of the daemon apart from her action as flagellator, and lastly, her position within the composition of the frieze as a whole. Since its discovery, questions have been raised with regard to the painter; who he was and whether he drew from an earlier Greek model for all or parts of the frieze. Despite what may seem to be a coherent and well organized program, some scholars find figures to be out of order, and others to be crowded together. Some scholars argue that essential elements must have been rearranged, even omitted to suit the plan of the room itself.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

That parts of the frieze have been derived from other monuments has already been well established in view of the Campana Relief, the cameo in sardonyx and the coin from Smyrna. Evidence of Greek prototypes are also well known. The figure of the initiate, carrying sacrificial cakes, which links Scene I and Scene II is related to a statue-type known as the Maiden from Anzio, and is normally dated to the third century B.C.⁵⁰ If it is to be argued that the winged daemon is a personification, that alone must indicate a Roman interpolation within a Greek model. Surely the fact that the Dionysiac Religion itself is Greek in origin and is in this instance the greatest "borrowing" of all, cannot be ignored and must contribute to the iconographic program.

A definitive solution to the question of copying on the part of the artist may never be found, yet we have already been provided with a figure group seen monotonously in other monuments and in the frieze as well; the revelation of the phallos with a winged figure making an apotropaic gesture. It has been noted that within the scope of the frieze, these two figures, the revelation and the winged daemon, do not relate to each other. That they do relate to each other when seen elsewhere cannot be denied. Again, I remind the reader of the Louvre Campana Relief, the cameo in sardonyx, and the mosaic from the building of the Great Baths in Djemila, Algeria. All three monuments depict scenes of revelation that resemble, so closely, the figures from the Villa Igem that it seems logical to conclude that these ubiquitous figure groups indicate the existence of a compositional canon. This would further suggest that in creating this composition, the artist of the Villa Igem has drawn from this canon yet has made adjustments. The intent was to depict a scene of revelation as well as that of a ritual flagellation. In view of compositional problems, the artist has solved his dilemma by inappropriately conflating the two scenes. The result is that the winged demon seems to be involved in two actions; she makes an apotropaic gesture towards the phallos to her right, and scourges the crouching woman at her left. Thus we see the

⁵⁰ Roger Ling, *Roman Painting*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 103.

imagery of the Campana Relief, the cameo, and the Algerian Mosaic combined with a ritual flagellation. It seems too harsh to call it a mistake on the part of the artist. A misinterpretation, or better still, a reinterpretation of an original is perhaps the term which least eclipses the accomplishment of an artist who has left one of the greatest extant monuments of painting in the history of Western art.

CONCLUSION

The preceding investigation of the iconographic program of the Dionysiac frieze in the Villa Igem has perhaps raised more questions than it has answered. Admittedly, no new suggestions have been put forth with regard to a possible identity of the winged daemon. Rather, this research has established who she is not.

Rostovtzeff's suggestion that she is Telete, goddess of initiation, cannot be accepted as the Telete to which she is compared is wingless. Furthermore, if, as Rostovtzeff states, the scene does not depict a ritual flagellation, what is the so-called Telete doing here? This he leaves unanswered. Nilsson's theory of the condemning and judging Dike is also unsatisfactory as there is no reason for the initiate to be condemned or judged by an envoy of the Underworld. For much the same reason this discredits Zunt's theory that she is a punishing Fury. The initiate has committed no crime for which to receive punishing blows from yet another emissary of the Underworld. She is not the modest Aidos that Maury finds her to be, nor is she AΓNYA, "Ignorance" who torments the initiate for her lack of knowledge as Lehmann suggests.

Although I am unable to agree with any of these theories, what cannot be argued is that the images of the Campana relief, the cameo, and the Algerian mosaic appear in the frieze. The revelation of the phallos alongside the figure exhibiting an averting gesture is seen here in the frieze. However this imagery has been altered. The revelation is not intended for the winged daemon. It is very likely intended for the initiate. Consequently, in appropriating this image of the winged daemon, an echo of the gesture of aversion remains although transformed into the action of the

upswing of the arm as the daemon winds up to administer a purifying blow to the initiate who will be joined to Dionysos in the *hieros gamos*.

Throughout the frieze there is evidence of additional appropriated imagery; the cameo from Vienna and the coin from Smyrna which depict Dionysos in the lap of Ariadne, and the so-called Maiden from Anzio carrying sacrificial cakes from the third century B.C. The figure group of the revelation with a fleeing woman making an averting gesture is simply one more example of this "habit" of appropriation and in this case the composition has been conflated to accommodate the inclusion of the ritual flagellation.

The fact that there is no surviving literature to aid in the solving of this puzzle of the Dionysiac cult is par for the course in Roman painting. The scenes which contain depictions of Iris; the scene of Heracles and Telephus, Dionysos and Ariadne, Heracles and Auge, all lack literary evidence providing word for word corroborating evidence for the inclusion of Iris and many of the other ancillary figures. This lack of literary evidence is the common variable in each of these investigations. In each case one must look to other monuments of art, both Greek and Roman, and *related* literature to solve these iconographic conundrums.

As we have seen, the nature of Roman painting is invention and embellishment and the artist engages in this practice for a variety of reasons. The scene of Heracles and Telephus is an invention resulting from Pergamene patriotism. The artistic inventions and appropriations contained within the Villa Igem may be the result of some unknown facet of the Dionysiac cult which necessitated the depiction of particular images for the initiation ritual and its protocol. As for the other scenes; Dionysos and Ariadne, and Thetis and Hephaistos, a reason for their embellishments may not be discovered and we may be left with no alternative but to claim allowances made for artistic liberties.

It is true that the art of the Romans is not as self conscious and deliberately intellectual as the art of the Greeks. Where Greek art avoids excess, Roman art revels in it. This does not make Greek art "better" or Roman art "worse." Rather, the clarity which is often lacking in Roman art makes it more interesting.

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