**Bronze Head of Pazuzu**

The British Museum

Neo-Assyrian, about 800-550 BC
Probably from Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), northern Iraq

**An ancient demon who appears in *The Exorcist***

Pazuzu was an Assyrian and Babylonian demonic god of the first millennium BC. He normally has a dog-like face like here, and where his body is depicted he has a scaly torso, a snake-headed penis, the talons of a bird and usually wings. He is often regarded as an evil underworld demon, but he seems also to have played a beneficent role as a protector against disease-bearing winds (especially the west wind). He was closely associated with the demoness Lamassu who stole babies from their mother's womb or when newly born. Pazuzu acted to counter her evil: he forced her back to the underworld. Amulets of Pazuzu like this were therefore placed in dwellings, attached to bedroom furniture. Smaller versions were hung around the necks of pregnant women.

Pazuzu’s most recent appearance is as the demon who possesses Regan in *The Exorcist* (1973) a film directed by William Friedkin. The film opens in northern Iraq where we meet Father Lankester Merrin (Max Von Sydow) at an archaeological dig. He discovers an ancient statue of Pazuzu...