VI IMAGES

As we have seen in previous chapters, throughout the Greek world, in cities, cemeteries, and sanctuaries, images, usually of figures in human form, were omnipresent, shaped at full and small size in wood, stone, and bronze, painted on panels and walls, and chosen as decoration for metal and clay vessels, for textiles, for jewellery and gems, for bone and ivory objects, and so on. Such images were constantly before the eyes of the men and women as they went about their daily lives. They acted as a visual language that was parallel to the oral versions in talk, recitation, songs, and plays. It is unlikely that the general public gave much thought to the men who made the images and gradually changed the look of the statues seen in the street, the reliefs that adorned the temples in the sanctuaries, the funerary monuments in the cemeteries, or the painted objects handled at home and elsewhere. They would have scanned the images for their content – figures created in their imagination or stories conjured up from the past that they had heard in public performance or private conversation, as well as scenes that related to the social life of their own day.

The limited range of images for public viewing comprised free-standing single statues, usually of deities, heroes and heroines from myth, and figures and reliefs erected as memorials by families or the state. Architectural sculptures that had room to tell stories were nonetheless restricted in subject matter.[1] Their most popular themes centred round the basic tales that recalled public threats successfully repulsed by the Greeks and the deities whom they worshipped – Giants in their attempts to overthrow the Olympian order; Amazons, foreign women who personified an alarming reversal of social roles; Centaurs, the half-human opponents of Greek civilization; and Trojans, who were the mythical prototypes for all the real adversaries the Greeks had to face over the years. The scenes that decorated portable objects, seen in private or in social gatherings, similarly retold those same stories and also many others. We shall concentrate on painted pottery, which carried much the most numerous forms and varied assortment of imagery.

[1] Ridgway 1999: ch. 5.

Modern approaches to understanding and interpreting the images are varied. For some, erudite explanations provide the basis for analysis – concepts such as semiotics, information theory, narratology, and structural linguistics are summoned, with help from literary theory, to decipher the meaning of the images and to invest them with deep significance. These sophisticated ways of studying the images have led to interesting results.[2] For others, such ideas are considered too high-flown and esoteric and are thought to misconstrue the reality of the situation. Vase-painters worked at a humble craft and 'were neither theologians nor philosophers – nor literary critics nor art historians… they were artisans who surely intended the imagery of their pictures (when they thought about it at all) to be accessible to the potential buyers'.[3]

Many dimensions

Given the mass of painted pottery preserved, different lines of enquiry may be adopted in studying the subject matter:

1. The classification of the images into those involving myth and those presenting genre is a popular way to progress, but the two categories cannot be considered mutually exclusive. The soldier's farewell that carries an inscription naming him Hector is otherwise indistinguishable from those nameless scenes that have reference to contemporary life. Genre scenes are not drawn directly from everyday life; they are selected and manipulated by the painters.
2. Images from different pottery-making centres have their own distinctive idiom. Though many, as time went by, came under the influence of Attic work, some continue to follow their own line in the choice of subject and presentation.
3. Painted pottery decorated with figured scenes was produced for over 500 years. During that time the choice of subjects changed, and the way of presenting them has to be considered against the background of each period.
4. Much has been written about the different ways in which painters solved the problem of making explicit to customers the essential

[2] E.g. Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006 on spectators; Steiner 2007 on repetition of images.
[3] Carpenter 1986: xvi.

elements of well-known myths. As the stories presuppose temporal progression, the strategy of dealing with that progression often included different stages, sometimes involving past, present, and future in one synoptic view (best instanced by some early versions of the blinding of the Cyclops). It is agreed that the synoptic approach, which was most often used in seventh- and sixth-century images, was a natural way for artists to present the stories; it was not a sophisticated choice.[4] As Himmelmann has remarked, 'Archaic Greek art does not want to admit any limits; it believes it cannot do enough for the viewer and wants to narrate everything at once'.[5] When the mythological figures began to be distinguished by recognizable attributes (e.g. the trident of Poseidon) and/or named by inscriptions written alongside them, or the myths included easily named characters (e.g. Minotaur, Hydra, Pegasos), the scenes were more usually presented as single episodes (monoscenic). There were also (but rarely) cyclic compositions that told discrete episodes side by side – for example, the early adventures of the young Theseus on his way from Troizen to Athens.

5. Another way of studying the images is to consider how they were chosen to match the context of use. Scenes of drinking and singing suit the different shapes of cups handled at symposia, and fountain-houses were a popular choice of subject for decorating water-pots. Similarly, trinket and powder boxes carry domestic scenes, with women at home, usually preparing for or taking part in a wedding. Here again, it is easy to see myth and genre mix, as certain mythological scenes fit easily into everyday settings: Herakles may recline as any other symposiast, Troilos accompanied his sister to the fountain, the bride Alkestis chats with her companions.
6. Each scene had to be organized to fit the available space, whether it was the upright area on some amphorae, the square of some mixing bowls, the complete surround of the vertical wall of a trinket box, or the *tondo* on the inside of a cup and the more awkward, frieze-like space outside. Shape affected the composition as well as the choice of the image.
7. The customers/viewers/buyers/clients have come to be seen as an important factor in the study of images (see Chapter V). They

[4] For the numerous terms that have been used to distinguish the different methods of presenting narratives, see Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 1–8. Stansbury-O'Donnell's book is a full study of narrative.

[5] Himmelmann 1998: 90.

wanted vases suitable for home, sanctuary, and grave, and craftsmen were astute enough to know their market, whether at home or away. They could rely on stock scenes: Herakles, Trojan War, symposia, athletes, and so forth; customers doubtless made their own suggestions, whether they were local buyers or traders back from a trip abroad with news of lines that had recently sold well or bringing requests from satisfied foreign clients. So there are three elements to take into account: artists, objects, and viewers who were free to interpret the image in the way they chose. A resident in Athens might interpret and enjoy a locally painted pot in the way the craftsman intended; a buyer in far off Spain might view the image in a very different way.

Oral and pictorial

Our present-day knowledge of Greek myths is primarily through reading the selection of literary texts that have been preserved.[6] The Greeks, by contrast, had multiple access to the stories. From early childhood they were told tales of their gods and goddesses, of heroes in bygone ages, and of fantasy figures that doubtless troubled their sleep. When older, they would have listened countless times over the years to the tales recounted in public performances, recalled them in conversation, and seen images in public and private contexts. The repertoire was always in flux, the stories never static, but the essence of the tales was ingrained in their minds. So, a 'literary text' had little meaning in the context of Greek contact with myths.

When artists started to decorate their wares with figures from the past, they naturally turned to myths, and we have to judge the relationship of artists to the literary versions we know. We may ask to what extent the myths that the early craftsmen painted on the vases related to particular epics. Was it the songs and recitations that they had heard that inspired them directly, or was that influence merely an aide-memoire for their own basic understanding of the story? Itinerant poets and other storytellers were creative performers, altering their stories as they chose to suit their varied audiences. In a search for ways of interpreting the early images, present-day arguments circle

[6] Books on Greek myth are legion. For some that deal with images, apart from the many by Schefold, see Carpenter 1991; Buxton 1994; Shapiro 1994; Giuliani 2003; Buxton 2004. Woodford 2003 is a readable guide to explaining how to sort out images.

round the fragments that remain from the poems of the epic cycle, but they more naturally centre on Homer and his own reshaping of the tales of Troy, with the added problem of dating the versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that are now attached to his name. Homer is a false trail until the creation of a written text of the two epics in Athens in the sixth century.[7] There was no standard version, and even later, although the versions recited were more fixed and may have had an effect on the images, there was no compulsion for the Athenian artists to follow them, not to mention those working in other centres. The painters themselves had to decide how to present the story on their static canvases in a manner that could be recognized, and they often went their separate ways. In the majority of instances, the images are to be understood as illustrations of a story, not of a text.

The lyric poets put their own spin on the episodes they chose to sing, updating the significance of the stories, altering their balance, and lavishing credit on the winners in their victory odes. With the introduction of drama and the performance of plays in Athens and other parts of Greece, these retellings of myths underline the ease with which the stories could be remodelled; the plots changed as society changed and as different dramatists chose to revise and deepen the stories, whether for political or for religious purposes. If vase-painters in Athens had the opportunity to attend each day of the play festival at the Great Dionysia, they would have been overwhelmed by nine tragedies, three satyr plays, and various choral works, all dealing in novel ways with the time-honoured stories. They were performed only once, with no possibility of a second hearing, and the following year there would be a fresh batch of treatments to confuse them (for vase-paintings and theatre, see below).

As Shapiro has well commented, 'In Greece, when a myth reached a version that was no longer open to reinterpretation or variant forms, it was dead'.[8]

Early images

By the middle of the eighth century, Attic vase-painters had begun to add figured scenes to the austere decoration that the shapes carried.

[7] Mackay 1995; Lowenstam 1992 and 1997; Snodgrass 1998. For a general study of text and images, see Small 2003.

[8] Shapiro 1990: 148.

Figure 40 Ship scene on an Attic bowl said to have been found at Thebes, *c.*725 BC. Height 30.9 cm.

Initially, the scenes on vases were generic, depicting various stages of funeral rituals, battles on land and sea, shipwrecks, dances, and the like; there were also some fantasy images of monsters and hybrids. By the end of the century, there are scenes with more specific images, which some researchers have thought to be based on myths, though others are unwilling to concede that such an interpretation is valid.[9] Figure 40, an Attic bowl found at Thebes, is one of the best-known images to have caused controversy. The main scene is dominated by a large ship manned by two banks of rowers. To the left, a large-scale man and woman face each other, the man gripping the woman by the wrist as he steps in the direction of the ship. Despite the fact that the Greeks had been using the alphabet for a few generations and had scratched letters on the pots once they were out of the workshop, painted inscriptions naming the figures had not yet been added to the scenes in-house. However, the desire to see myth given visual form and to find mythical names to the pair in what is assumed to be an abduction, with the getaway ship ready, has been overwhelming: Paris and Helen, or Jason and Medea, or Theseus and Ariadne. Of

[9] The fullest study of early mythological images is Ahlberg-Cornell 1992.

Figure 41 Herakles versus Centaur (?) on a Protocorinthian *aryballos*. Attributed to the Ajax Painter, *c.*680 BC. Height 7.3 cm.

these, the last pair is usually felt to be the likeliest choice because the woman holds a ring in her left hand, interpreted as the ring of light that Ariadne carried to help Theseus find his way through the labyrinth. However, bride abduction as the first step to marriage was not confined to mythical heroes, and others prefer to read this as a contemporary episode. Langdon has been the most comprehensive in her rejection of Geometric mythological episodes and sees this scene as an example of a stage in maturation rites, linking it with other images that show warriors, young women dancing, abduction from the dance, and so on.[10] She is reluctant to isolate the bowl from the series of images that, when linked with the archaeological contexts in which they have been found, make sense within the social practices of the day. A few other mythological scenes (e.g. 'Siamese twins', Ajax carrying the dead Achilles, Herakles and the Hydra) have been advanced to bolster the notion that such subjects were current before the end of the Geometric period, but there is still no agreement.

The invention of black-figure in the pottery workshops of seventh-century Corinth, together with the influence of images from the

[10] Langdon 2008: *passim* and 19–22 for a resumé of earlier interpretations of the bowl. See also Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 35–53.

Near East, enhanced the Geometric technique by the use of incision to clarify the figures and the addition of colour to highlight details. These changes helped the slow advances towards rendering the stories more recognizable. Within the images themselves, the gestures of the participants, the attributes that distinguish them, the individuality of the stories, and (in certain cases) the inscriptions that began to be written by the side of the figures all combine to help decipher them. Figure 41 is a prime example of the beginning of the process. It is an *aryballos*, made in Corinth *c.*680 BC, and has been attributed to the Ajax Painter, who has been dubbed 'the first truly narrative painter in Protocorinthian pottery'.[11] The main scene shows a 'centaur' moving to the right, a branch in one hand and a staff in the other. He is approached from the right by a bearded figure in human form, whose right hand also seems to be taking hold of the staff, while he wields an object in his left. Behind him a larger figure holding a sword runs to the right, where there is a cauldron on a stand with birds on and near it. Sadly there are no inscriptions to help identify the figures. It is not clear whether this is all one story, nor who the 'centaur' and his opponent might be. Two interpretations are possible: if the object in the left hand of the bearded figure is a thunderbolt (it certainly resembles later forms), then this will be Zeus. Given that we know of no fight in which Zeus ever confronts a 'centaur', either this is an early myth that has been discarded or the 'centaur' is not the Classical figure but a hybrid monster – Typhon, Kronos, or a Giant – whom we know that Zeus did fight. If we accept the 'centaur' as the Classical monster, then his opponent is likely to be Herakles.[12] We still do not have an answer to the staff they both seem to claim.

It was during the seventh century that the iconography was given more lucid form, and different regions took up the challenge of making the stories clearer to the viewers.

LIMC and *ThesCRA*

To gather together and publish a complete illustrated iconography of Greek myth needed an international campaign, and the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (*LIMC*)[13] is undoubtedly the

[11] Amyx 1988: 23–4 (quote), A-4, 367; Shanks 1996: 42–3; Padgett 2003: no. 31.
[12] Padgett 2003: 5–17.
[13] *LIMC* 1981–99.

most impressive publication on the iconography of classical myths ever issued. Under the expert leadership of Professor Lilly Kahil (1926–2002), it is now complete and is a product at the highest level of international scholarship. In eight massive double volumes in four languages (English, French, German, and Italian), the whole cast of mythological characters, both individual and group (e.g. Centaurs, Giants, Muses), Greek, Etruscan, and Roman, is paraded in alphabetical order. Each entry consists of a short introduction with emphasis on the literary sources, then a catalogue of images, divided into the iconographical stages of each individual's career, followed by commentaries on the material. The volumes are extremely expensive and are to be found only in national and major university libraries – so they are thus extremely useful but, sadly, not widely accessible. However, the archive is stored in various centres (Athens, Basel, Paris, Heidelberg, and Würzburg) to which new finds are sent, and online access is being prepared.

The distinction between iconography and iconology has been crudely expressed as 'the what of iconography' and 'the why of iconology'. The basic descriptive work on the images has been carried through in *LIMC*, so work on the messages of the images, and on the physical and conceptual worlds to which they belong, has now started to take centre stage.

Meanwhile, the LIMC Foundation has brought into being another major work, which concerns religion and ritual, the 'LIMC family' having stayed together to make use of the rich archive the programme amassed. *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum* (*ThesCRA*) consists of five volumes (in smaller format than *LIMC*) and deals with the main aspects of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman religion.[14] The volumes focus on activities such as sacrifices and processions, sites and architecture, personnel and instruments of cult, people's behaviour at times of marriage, death, and the like. The volumes form a modest counterpart to *LIMC*'s mythology for some scenes of genre.

Archaic and Classical myth and genre

From the end of the seventh century, the trickle of images on Attic pottery became a flood, and it is inevitable that, in considering imagery,

[14] *ThesCRA* 2004–6.

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the emphasis should fall on the three centuries of Athenian production of black-figure, red-figure, and white-ground. Other pottery-making centres present a slightly different picture but not wholly dissimilar.[15]

Division between myth and genre is neither radical nor clear-cut. Myths were always set in modern times (dress and military equipment, furniture, and so on, with no suggestion of archaism); conversely, in genre scenes, Athenian women, as they chat at home, are named as heroines of myth, such as Helen or Iphigeneia. For 300 years, subjects waxed and waned, and none were continuously popular. Choice and presentation were linked to various factors, both internal (shape, function, composition) and external (social and cultural background, customer demand, distribution).

In attempts to map the development of the imagery that includes both myth and genre, databases have become a fundamental method of proceeding. For many years, Giudice and his team in Catania (Sicily) have been developing and refining a method for organizing Attic vases to obtain a 'global vision of the themes represented on Attic pottery' and 'more precise answers about the relationship between subject and [social] history'.[16] Their broad-brush approach is based on the Beazley Archive, in full realization of the difficulties entailed in what is a complex procedure. They have divided the centuries by histograms into blocks covering periods of twenty-five years, and have formed categories covering both myth and genre under the major headings of Divine, Heroes, Mankind, and Animals, with various subdivisions (Figure 42). In so doing, they have had to abandon the role of individual painters in the broad sweep of the development; the significance of shapes, commissions, and distribution have also, for the most part, been disregarded.

The sixth century was a creative period for the development of scenes from mythology. In the early generations, monsters and animals were popular choices; heroes such as Perseus, Bellerophon, and Herakles fought formidable opponents, and incidents from the Trojan War were very much in evidence. The stories eventually became more varied but continued to present action narratives that feature the gods and heroes in deathly struggles against their enemies.[17] The gods fought against Giants and, in a rare lighter mood, Dionysos with the help (or hindrance) of satyrs engineered the return of the drunken

[15] E.g. Pipili 1987 (on Lakonian iconography); Tempesta 1998 (on east Greek images).
[16] Giudice and Giudice 2009 is the latest in a series of presentations. See also Bažant 1990.
[17] Shapiro 1990, on the enlargement of the mythical repertoire in the period 575–550 BC.

SUBJECT SPHERES ON ATTIC VASES (625–300 BC)
(numbers indicate popularity)

Divine	Deities (3) Nike (11) Dionysian scenes (2)
Heroes and Anti-Heroes	Heroes and various myths, inc. Herakles and Theseus (10) Trojan Cycle (13) Amazons (14) Giants (20) Centaurs (22) Griffins (28) Exotic subjects (25)
Mankind	Everyday life (4) Nikai and Erotes (21) Cult (16) Funerary scenes (12) Horsemen (15), military life (5), chariots (18) Sports (7) Musical scenes (23) Everyday pursuits (17) Hunting and fishing (27) Men, women, youth, boys (1) Wedding (24) Komos (8), symposium (9), running women (19), courting (26), erotic (29)
Animals	'Real' and 'fantastic' animals (6)

Figure 42 Subject spheres in Attic vase-painting (adapted from Giudice and Giudice 2009: figs. 2–3).

Hephaistos (Figure 43). Dionysos was the single most popular god at this time, and later, through his patronage of drama, his popularity was maintained throughout the centuries.[18] The gods protected their favourite heroes, who exerted themselves with great endurance when they faced monsters such as Centaurs, Gorgons, the Minotaur, and Polyphemos, and fought human opponents such as the Trojans in the many incidents that comprised that undertaking. During the sixth century, divinities were considered important elements in the presentation of heroic enterprises – men needed the protection that only the gods could give, and hence they laid their success at the feet of Zeus and his Olympians. Herakles was by far the main hero, both nationally and in Athens particularly (through the protection of its patron goddess); he was considered the supreme example of the alpha male, and the thrust of his stories emphasizes the macho adult who was the main embodiment of sixth-century man. The struggles that he and other heroes endured were heightened versions of everyday

[18] Dionysos: Carpenter 1986 and 1997.

Figure 43 Dionysos bringing back Hephaistos, fragmentary Attic black-figure column-krater, attributed to Lydos as painter, *c.*550 BC. Preserved height of vase 71.1 cm.

life, and human activities without the presence of gods or heroes ran in parallel, albeit less frequently – warriors armed themselves for war, bade farewell to their parents, fought their opponents, and returned, alive or dead. On a human level, athletes trained and struggled against one another as preparation for real war, while scenes of recreation such as hunting, music, dancing, and revelry showed a lighter side, with pederastic activity a concomitant routine.[19] Women had only a small part to play in the sixth century world of men – it seems that domestic tasks were of less interest to painters and their clients (fetching water is a favoured exception). There are also relatively few instances of cult activity.

In the Late Archaic period (525–475 BC), when the new technique of red-figure was developing alongside black-figure, the level of production of Attic pottery was at its height. The Persian menace

[19] Lear and Cantarella 2008.

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Figure 44 Sack of Troy on an Attic red-figure cup, found at Cerveteri, signed by Euphronios as potter and attributed to Onesimos as painter, *c.*490 BC. Diameter of bowl 46.5 cm.

advanced ever closer, and scenes of military activity that concerned the gods and heroes (e.g. Amazonomachy, Centauromachy) were the most popular because they dealt with conflicts that mirrored civilization against barbarism. Incidents from the sack of Troy that emphasized human savagery and human suffering on both Greek and Trojan sides (particularly, the death of Priam and the rape of Cassandra) and that were a mythical prototype of the struggles that the Greeks were enduring at the time were popular (Figure 44).[20] During this period, a career was invented for Theseus, to add to his Cretan struggle versus the Minotaur that had previously been his pivotal adventure. At the close of the century, he started to rival Herakles as Athens'

[20] Troy: Connelly 1993; Anderson 1997; Hedreen 2001; Lowenstam 2008. Odyssey: Buitron et al. 1992.

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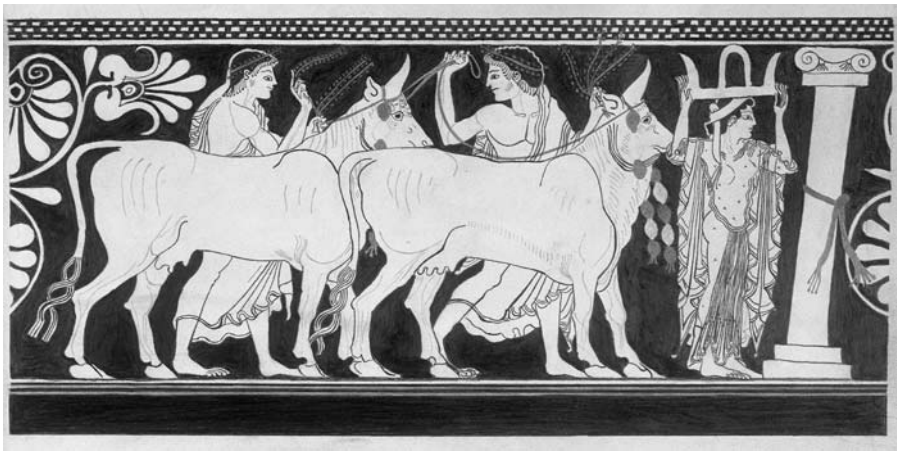

Figure 45 Procession to a sacrifice on a rolled-out drawing of an Attic red-figure *lēkythos*, attributed to the Gales Painter, *c.*510 BC. Height of frieze 13 cm.

new 'political hero', an image of beardless youth who uses brain as well as brute force, and after the Persian Wars he pulled ahead of his rival. For everyday activities, athletes now become the main choice.[21] Giudice and his team point out that wedding scenes make a brief appearance in this Late Archaic period and try to link them to the democratic reforms of Kleisthenes. They also comment on the popularity of 'escapist' themes that contrast with the military subjects at this time: *komos*, symposion, music, and 'explicit' sex (this last we have already noted: see Chapter V). They also point out that the sex scenes are actually relatively rare, a comment directed at the excessive interest shown in the subject in recent years.[22] Cult scenes also began to become popular – attendants lead animals (Figure 45), and priests and worshippers gather at the altar for public or private sacrifice.[23] Both black-figure and red-figure painters show an increasing interest in industry and commerce – carpenters, cooks, oil-sellers, potters, and painters[24] – are we to assume a different class of buyers? There are a few historical figures who appear on pottery at this time: Kroisos, Hipparchos, Sappho, and Alkaios, but they may already have started to merge into myth.[25]

[21] Webster 1972 has a helpful set of lists of everyday scenes. See also Bérard et al. 1989.
[22] Books and articles on sex are countless; see e.g. Kilmer 1993 and Johns 2002.
[23] van Straten 1995.
[24] Himmelmann 1994; Hadjidimitriou 2005.
[25] Boardman 1975: figs. 171, 199, and 261.

Figure 46 Cheiron and his bride on an Attic red-figure bell-krater, attributed to the Eupolis Painter, *c.*440–430 BC. Height 36.5 cm.

Not surprisingly, after the end of the Persian Wars Nīkē (Victory) became a much more important personification than she had been before,[26] and once we move towards the middle of the fifth century a conceptual change was really under way. The scenes were less full of action, quieter, and more relaxed. The world created in vase-painting had become a more private place, with conversation paramount. Myths are being replaced by genre scenes, with daily activities to the fore. The gods rarely engage in their old adventures; although the Gigantomachy is a theme that continues to be chosen, it is less popular than in the previous century. The gods are presented in their own sphere and are no longer so hectically involved with human affairs. They make music, offer libations, meet in assembly, pursue women (and Ganymede), enjoy their own sanctity outside human time, and Aphrodite and Eros are more major figures than before. The painters show people as less concerned with the lives of the gods.

[26] Personifications: Shapiro 1993; Stafford 2000.

What has happened is that humans have taken over, especially women – they had a much more important role to play in fifth-century images than earlier.[27] In the sixth century, mythological weddings were grand affairs, particularly the marriage of Peleus and Thetis attended by all the divinities (detail, Figure 28); in the fifth century such weddings are rare, and concern only the bride and groom: for example, Cheiron, the wise centaur (Figure 46), who casts a gentle eye on his timid and submissive bride – this is no mythological wedding, just an Athenian wedding with a rather unusual bridegroom.[28] Once again it has been suggested that the choice of the wedding theme may relate to recent political changes, particularly Perikles' decree of 451 BC, which limited citizenship to children born of parents who were both Athenian. The old 'aristocratic' scenes with *komos* and symposion, and the images of trade and commerce, fade. The scenes emphasize the more mundane aspects of domestic life – women feed their babies in the high chair and spin their tops (Figure 30), relax at leisure as they talk of love (Figure 47), take part in rituals, arrange family weddings and funerals,

Figure 47 Women and Loves on an Attic red-figure *pyxis*, attributed to the Meidias Painter, late fifth century BC. Height 19.7 cm.

[27] A small selection on women: Beard 1991: 21–34; Lissarrague 1991; Cameron and Kuhrt 1993; Reeder 1995; Ferrari 2002b; Lewis 2002; Kaltsas and Shapiro 2008.
[28] For weddings, see Oakley and Sinos 1993.

visit the cemetery, and have conversations with men on equal terms. Boys bowl hoops along and attend school, and, if approached by older men, are given gifts, not sexually touched as previously. Although scenes in the *palaestra* are no longer painted, sport remains a favourite subject, but the athletes compete less and less. They spend more time preparing to run and wrestle, and eventually they stand and sit in idle chat.

In the fourth century, a new mythological subject joins the earlier list, the Grypomachy: the battle of the Arimaspians against the griffins (see Chapter V), a special theme to serve the interests of foreign clients, particularly in the regions of the Black Sea and north Italy.

The 'other'

The male statues illustrated in Chapter II above (Figures 6, 7, 10, and 13) were created to stand in sanctuaries and cemeteries, and they demonstrate that nudity was the epitome of Greek self-definition – they are examples of the *kalos kagathos* ('great and good') individual. Gods, heroes, and athletes presented their worth without the need for clothing – nudity has been termed the costume of manliness.[29] The figures are male, free, young, healthy, Greek citizens. In opposition to these are all those who do not fit into those categories: female, slave, old, disabled, foreign – a parallel set of categories that has been termed 'not the Classical ideal'.[30] They have given rise to widespread investigation, much of which is centred on vase-painting. What are the visual clues that disclose the ways by which this substandard assemblage was distinguished from the elite unit?

If we once again centre our attention on Attic vase-painting and Athens, we see that body shape is a major distinguishing mark – the un-ideal were shown as short, fat, misshapen, and old, not without a hint of caricature.[31] Workmen, whose low status was clear from the fact that they were working, were usually small in stature and they were further distinguished by the artisan's clothing and their cap; a short hairstyle is another mark of inferior status. The images of men drafted into fighting units as archers and *peltasts* (light-armed troops)

[29] Nudity: Bonfante 1989; Himmelmann 1990; A. Stewart 1997; Osborne 1998b; Hurwit 2007.

[30] Cohen 2000. For a wide-ranging treatment of Greeks and others, see Cartledge 1993.

[31] Mitchell 2009.

were painted as small, indicating that they were not frontline soldiers and were inferior to the hoplites. Foreign slaves such as black grooms and Thracian wet-nurses who worked in Athenian households are marked out by physiognomy or by tattoos. Women, by virtue of their sex, are included under the heading of 'other' but their status is more complex. On Attic vase-painting they are shown at various household tasks but also have roles in public rituals – their position as priestesses gave them a role in state religion and placed them near to holding a political office. A study of the images of women shows that they were not as secluded or silent as some literary sources suggest, and, as we saw above, their increased popularity on vase-paintings from the middle of the fifth century may parallel a change in their status at that time.

When we leave the life as lived in Athens, we move to foreign lands and worlds of the imagination, both inhabited by 'others'. The vase-painters had formulae for distinguishing their 'barbarian' enemies, usually by means of their exotic outfits in war.[32] Foreigners were not painted nude – nudity was the major feature that marked Greek males from others. Skythians were shown with a patterned outfit complete with sleeves and trousers, high-crowned and pointed hats, and carrying bows; Thracians wore thick, patterned cloaks and fox-skin caps. As mentioned above, Thracian women were employed as nurses and the vase-painters used their tattooing as a mark of their origin. To mark out the inhabitants of Egypt and further south, the painters seized on their black colour and their negroid features (woolly hair, snub nose, and thick lips) and created some masterly and sympathetic studies. Pygmies are also easily distinguishable. Persians came to play a larger role in Greek history and in vase-painting. Their fighting outfits consisted of trousers, a decorated jacket, a second, sleeveless tunic, shoes with turned-up toes, and a soft hat that later became known as the 'Phrygian cap'. They carried wicker shields, bows and quivers, battle axes, and large curved swords and spears. There are a few rare instances of Persians overcoming Greeks (Figure 36), but naturally most underline the Greek victory, sometimes again in the manner of caricature.[33] A more subtle way of neutralizing the Persian menace was to turn them into characters from myth by painting the Trojans in Persian garb.

[32] Sparkes 1997.
[33] Mitchell 2009: 84–6 (on the Eurymedon jug).

Theatrical scenes

Tragedy and comedy are two of the most striking and profound literary forms that were developed in Athens for performance at the festivals of Dionysos, with the satyr-play, dubbed 'tragedy at play', as the third and least important element. For many years, the texts and content of the plays were considered to be sufficient reasons for studying them. Now, research into evidence for their staging is an ever more vigorous pursuit, and vase-painting plays a major role in the quest.[34] Study tends to concentrate on the imagery to be found on the vases made in Athens and southern Italy, what they can tell us separately of the relationship of the images to the different forms of drama, and what connection there may be between the two geographical areas. Researchers are on the lookout for any visual signals that a production or performance was in the mind of the painter – these are usually such items as a built stage, costume, masks, and a pipe-player accompanying singers and dancers. The urge to connect vase-painting and drama has persuaded some researchers to be over-optimistic; others are more critical and are reluctant to superimpose theatre and vase-painting on one another. Vase-painters worked within their own traditions, and factors such as the reason for the choice of a performance for the image need to be taken into account.

In Attic vase-painting there is little to connect the scenes directly with the stage. 'Pre-dramatic' performances on sixth-century black-figure vases (men decked out as horses, men as ostrich-riders, etc.) have been brought forward as evidence for unofficial play-acting, and the so-called 'komast' vases that were produced in many different centres are studied for what they can tell us of the early steps towards comic drama.[35]

In the fifth century, there are some Attic scenes that look like rehearsals – actors or chorusmen putting on their costumes and practising their parts, some already wearing masks, some holding them at their sides, but it would seem that, once the play had transferred to the stage, the painters had no interest (or were never asked to show interest) in the actual performances on the Athenian stage. There are

[34] Trendall and Webster 1971 is still the best illustrated volume, even though some of their ideas are being rejected. See also Green 1994 and, for a brief statement, Boardman 2001b: 209–17.

[35] See Rothwell 2007 on animal choruses and T. J. Smith 2010 on 'komasts'. Osborne 2008 queries the 'pre-dramatic' category.

no telltale signs via stage or masks that the tragic scenes were anything but the mythological tales that formed the basis of the plays. The story was their main interest, not a scene from a play. Some mythological subjects gain sudden popularity, which may be laid at the door of the performance of a tragedy, but these are few. Scenes that can be connected with comedy are very rare in Attic vase-painting; Taplin suggests that the reason for this is that Attic vase-painting 'has little taste for images that are grotesque, fantastical, satyrical, obscene – the very characteristics of Old Comedy'.[36] Whatever the reason, the inspiration for the images of staged comic scenes that are found in south Italian art is unlikely to have come from Attic vase-painting. Satyrs, the companions of Dionysos, had a vigorous life outside the theatre, though there were very few mythological stories with which they were connected, the best known being the return of Hephaistos, engineered by Dionysos with the help of satyrs (Figure 43). However, their physical appearance (hooves, tails, and large phallus) make them recognizable as imitation satyrs when human beings were equipped with mask and trunks (to which the tail and phallus were attached) and accompanied by a pipe-player. Even so, Attic vase-painters show no interest in the staged satyr-plays.[37] The most famous Attic vase that relates to satyr-plays is the 'Pronomos' volute-krater, with Dionysos and Ariadne surrounded by actors holding their masks, a playwright, and musicians, together with a chorus of satyrs and their leader.[38] It may have been specially commissioned to commemorate a prize-winning performance. The volute-krater is one of a number of large Attic vases found at Ruvo di Puglia, a flourishing native site in Apulia, and provides a link between Athens and Apulia, as well as suggesting that the non-Greek inhabitants of Apulia had a liking for satyr-plays as well as for tragedy and comedy.

When we turn to vase-painting in south Italy, we find that, at the end of the fifth century and in the early fourth, local artists in both Lucania and Apulia were painting men dressed as satyrs as well as mythological subjects that included satyrs. The best-known image is the scene of the blinding of Polyphemos, with satyrs assisting, and it has been connected with Euripides' *Cyclops*.[39] Whether this connection

[36] Taplin 1993 (10 for quote), but see Mitchell 2009 and Walsh 2009.

[37] Satyr plays: Krumeich et al. 1999. On satyrs, see Hedreen 1992, who favours dramatic inspiration for the 'pre-dramatic' scenes.

[38] Taplin and Wyles 2010 (*non vidi*).

[39] Carpenter 2005.

is valid or not, that the story in satyr form was brought over from Athens, either as a text or by a travelling dramatic group, is clear, as there is no suggestion that satyr-plays were being written locally.[40] The consequence would seem to be that the non-Greek locals knew and watched imported satyr-plays and presumably knew Greek. Later in the fourth century, comic scenes are much more popular, and here the setting is clearly theatrical: makeshift stages, masks, and short costumes with a large phallus showing beneath. They, too, are found at non-Greek sites. Carpenter has commented

> Scenes with figures acting on a stage must…depict productions, and the presence of these scenes at Ruvo and other Italic sites implies that the people who obtained them understood both the stage and the play. To argue that the locals bought them because they were pretty pictures that they did not understand or because they liked the shape is to revert to an outdated language for colonials.[41]

There are other Apulian vase-paintings of this time that show that a liking for burlesque was not limited to the stage. Figure 48 shows the grim story of the musical contest between Apollo and the satyr

Figure 48 The contest of Apollo versus Marsyas on an Apulian red-figure *oinochoe*, attributed to the Felton Painter, *c.*375–350 BC. Height 17 cm.

[40] On the subject of travelling text or players, see Dearden 1999.
[41] Carpenter 2009: 34.

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Figure 49 The dying Alkestis, Apulian red-figure *loutrophoros*, near the Laodamia Painter, *c.*340 BC. Height 1.29 m.

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Marsyas, which resulted in the satyr being flayed alive by the god. There is no suggestion that this is a staged scene, but the central group is incongruously framed by two ludicrous, dwarf-like figures.[42] Perhaps making a farce of the myth delighted the locals; it is unfortunate that we do not know the context in which the jug was found.

In the second and third quarters of the fourth century, Apulian potters and painters made and painted massive vases with scenes that relate to Attic tragedies (some are over a metre high and bottomless, so used for display or funeral ceremonies before burial).[43] Figure 49 depicts the dying Alkestis in the presence of her husband Admetos, her two children, and others. As with Attic versions, there are no stages and no masks; it is the myth that takes precedence and compositions often give visual form to incidents in tragedies that were not seen on stage, being, for example, recounted in messenger's speeches. In considering the relation of Apulian vase-paintings to Athenian tragedies, some doubt that the fifth-century tragedies were ever performed in fourth-century Apulia, but Taplin considers that the paintings 'were informed by the plays' and that 'the viewers of the vases were also viewers of the plays'.[44] It is now no longer possible to claim that it was only the Greek inhabitants of the two colonies at Taranto or Metaponto who attended performances, as the majority of these vases have been found at native sites.

Lettering on Greek pottery

'My attitude towards the study of script is that in a minor way it is a branch of the history of art and that its ultimate result is a better understanding of cultural development.' So wrote Immerwahr in his preface to *Attic Script*, in which he was mainly concerned with Attic vase-painting.[45] Nowadays, putting letters and words on pottery is unusual (apart from signatures and Grayson Perry); by contrast, inscriptions on Greek pottery were frequent, and their presence is of interest to students of many different disciplines: palaeography,

[42] Walsh 2009: 133–4.
[43] Todisco 2003.
[44] Taplin 2007 (quote on 25), where the Alkestis vase is no. 31.
[45] Immerwahr 1990: v. For a recent brief survey of work on vase inscriptions, see Oakley 2009b: 609–11. See also Sparkes 1991: 52–9; Steiner 2007: ch. 4: 64–73, and ch. 5. Wachter 2001 is comprehensive study of non-Attic vase inscriptions; Wachter is now expanding Immerwahr's 1990 book on Attic script.

Figure 50 A dancing chorus on a rolled-out drawing of a Middle Corinthian *aryballos*, early sixth century BC. Height 5.3 cm.

phonology, spelling, onomastics, dialects, and so forth, and, as Immerwahr proposes, the history of art. Study leads in various directions: for example, to a search for the occasions that gave rise to the words, their meaning, and purpose; on the levels of literacy that they reveal locally and chronologically; on the reason for the random nature of the 'signatures' of makers and painters; and concerning the part that the inscriptions played in the composition and decoration. A good example of the placing of the inscription in relation to the subject is to be seen on Figure 50, which shows how the winding lines of the painted lettering harmonize with the line of dancing figures – it is as much part of the decoration as the figures. It has recently been emphasized that even writers of graffiti are often careful to place their letters in a way that enhanced the decoration that was not designed to receive them.[46]

The gradual adoption of the Phoenician alphabet in the eighth century BC was a tremendous step forward in the development of Greek society, and the earliest evidence for writing is mainly to be found as graffiti, scratched on pottery after the pots were made.[47] From the later eighth century onwards, painted inscriptions were added in many centres of pottery production, increasing in frequency during the seventh and sixth centuries. The most common type of inscription in the seventh century was the name labels placed in the picture field that helped to distinguish the characters in the images,

[46] Osborne and Pappas 2007. Corinthian *aryballos*: Wachter 2001: COR 17.

[47] Coldstream 2003: 295–302 and 405–6. See Powell 1991: 119–86 for a collection of inscriptions, 'short' and 'long', mostly graffiti, down to 650 BC.

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and a small number at that time name the craftsmen. In the sixth century, Corinthian vases continued the tradition of name labels and carried a few names of painters; there are also some rarer bespoke inscriptions (Figure 50). Painted inscriptions are also found on the sixth-century vases produced in Boeotia and Lakonia, and the inscriptions on Chalkidian vases, wherever they were produced, show that one craftsman was particularly literate. Figure 35, showing the murder of the sleeping Rhesos before the Trojan camp, names him and his Greek killer, Diomedes (in *Iliad* 10, Diomedes kills no-one), with Odysseus named on the other side of the vase.

On present evidence, Attica was off to a slow start in the seventh century but, with the increased number of Attic vases produced in the sixth century, our attention inevitably moves to Athens for the next few generations, when inscriptions are much more frequent and varied. In both black- and red-figure they maintain the traditional emphasis on name labels of mythological characters (e.g. Figure 28) but expand the range to include animals, monsters, and even inanimate objects. Figure 43, attributed to Lydos, shows fragments of the return of Hephaistos to Olympos, with the donkey (*onos*) that the god is riding named with the god himself, and a helpless satyr on the ground named 'Careless' (*Oukalegon*). More rarely, the subject of the whole composition is added to the image, as the well-known 'games of Patroklos'. Other inscriptions extend greetings to the users of cups and invite them to 'rejoice' and 'drink up'. Others, less commonly, include speech bubbles in the scenes (an Attic invention): on a black-figure jug, Odysseus on shipboard begs his companions 'Free me', as he is desperate to follow the lure of the Sirens' song; and on a red-figure *pelikē*, a group noticing a bird have a conversation: 'Look, a swallow.' 'Yes, by Herakles.' 'There it is.' 'It's spring already.'[48] Letters that make no sense or mix sense and nonsense may just be part of the decoration and inscribed by literate painters, and were added to imitate words to deceive the illiterate or non-Greek customers; or may have been written by apprentices who carelessly scatter letters over the surface.[49]

The special category of lettering that has '*kalos*' ('handsome') added to compositions in the period from 550–450 BC continues to stimulate research.[50] Some are unspecific, but those that name figures known in

[48] 'Free me': Boardman 1974/1991: fig. 286; 'Look, a swallow': Immerwahr 1990: no. 415.
[49] Immerwahr 2007.
[50] Slater 1999; Lissarrague 1999; Neer 2002; Steiner 2007: 83–6.

Athenian politics of the time have attracted most notice; the intention or the context of the naming is still undecided. Researchers are more cautious than previously about the information such names provide for chronology and about the connection between the potters/painters and the members of the higher reaches of society that these names suggest. Another special category is the archons' names on Panathenaic prize amphorae that help in dating fourth-century painting.[51] Inevitably, the inscriptions that continue to arouse close interest are those that name the 'makers' and 'painters'.[52] It is difficult to avoid calling them 'signatures' but to what extent they are 'autographs' of the craftsmen is debatable; the painter may have signed for the potter or there may have been a letterer who was more expert than either (Figures 30, 33, 39, left). The rarity of craftsmen's names, even in Attic pottery, still raises the question of why they were so random; with such relatively few numbers, pride or the advertisement of the individual or the workshop are unlikely reasons. Viviers has recently made an another attempt to solve the riddle and has surveyed the incidence of signatures on sculpture as well as pottery. He asks us to consider the signing from the point of view not of the craftsmen but of clients who commissioned the work.

The distinction between lettering applied before and after firing is not always one between painted inscriptions and scratched graffiti. Letters incised before firing ('primary graffiti') are rare, but there are a number of potters' and painters' names that have been shown to be autographs (e.g. Figure 36).[53] The letters and words that were scratched after firing ('secondary graffiti'), such as *ostraka* and 'trademarks' on the underside of vases, take us out of the pottery and into the world of politics and trade.

The level of literacy within Athens that inscriptions presuppose may range from the modest ability to read each letter separately to a much more fluent competence. Debate now centres around the question of silent reading versus reading aloud.[54] Many inscriptions occur in the context of vases handled at a symposion, and it has been suggested that inscriptions were read aloud by individual symposiasts to the assembled group as the cups were passed round, with discussion among the drinkers of the story on view.

[51] Bentz 1998.
[52] Lissarrague 1994; Williams 1995; Viviers 2006.
[53] Cohen 1991a.
[54] Reading aloud: Svenbro 1993; Slater 1999; Snodgrass 2000 and 2006; Steiner 2007: 68–73.