CHAPTER FIVE

DIONYSIAN HAPPINESS: CUPS AND OTHER SMALL VASES FROM THE SECOND HALF OF THE 6TH CENTURY BCE

Little Masters cups

These kylikes are to be dated in the decades between 560 and 530 BCE¹ and form the logical continuation of the Komast cups and cups of the Siana type of the first half of the century². The figured decoration is reduced, especially in the so-called lip cups. In most cases it consists of individual animals or hybrid beings such as sphinxes and sirens taken from the repertoire of the animal frieze³. Mythological figurations such as the birth of Athena or events from the life of Herakles are much rarer⁴. There are not many explicitly Dionysian images listed by Beazley: two cups show satyrs in the act of masturbation⁵ (a motif to which we will return). Among the pieces not included in the lists are examples that attest the persistence of motifs present on cups of the Siana type in this production and other shapes typical of this period: Dionysian dancers and the thiasos⁶. The Dionysian bride who meets Dionysos and the mule-rider are not missing from the thiasos either⁷. In the medallion of a large band cup, we find Dionysos wreathed with ivy between a satyr and a dancing nymph⁸, in another an ithyphallic satyr running with a face

Fig. 96–97

¹ Boardman 1974, 61.

² Schauenburg 1981, 333ff.; KdS 46f.

³ KdS 83f. and 96–107.

⁴ London 1867.5–8.962 (B 424): Beazley Addenda 48 (168); art market: Beazley ABV 181; ex Deepdene, Hope: Beazley Addenda 51 (184).

⁵ London 1846.5–12.1 (B 410): Beazley Addenda 50 (181.3); ex Berlin 1766: Beazley ABV 188.2. On the subject: Beazley JHS 52, 1932, 172 (“it seems to have been a family favourite, for Nearchos/Tleson’s father/has it on his aryballos”). On the aryballos see below p. 195.

⁶ Louvre F 74: LIMC III.2, Dionysos 809; Munich 2170 and 2212: KdS 146–150; Amsterdam, Theodor Coll. nos. 34 and 43: Heesen 1996 figs. 96 f. and 128f.

⁷ Louvre F 75: Beazley Addenda 46 (156.81); Cracow 30: Beazley Addenda 46 (156.84); New York 17.230.5: Beazley Addenda 51 (188. 1) and LIMC IV.2, Hephaistos 139a.

⁸ Munich 9436: KdS 148, 23.1.

like a mask that seems to want to interact with whoever is looking at the image⁹. Among the figurations of a thiasos, one with a naked woman pursued by a donkey stands out (in the presence of youths at the climax of sexual excitement, in another of running satyrs) on both sides of the vase¹⁰. This motif is reminiscent of the nymph followed by a satyr astride a mule on a bellied lekythos from the beginning of the century¹¹; in both cases we find a paradoxical situation and an antithetical attitude in respect of the norm of the symposium.

Fig. 98

Fig. 99

Only one cup by the Little Masters shows Dionysos together with other deities, the one signed by *Xenokles*¹². In this case also, experience acquired during the course of this study prevents us from conforming to the traditional tendency of always and only looking for mythological names—and therefore identities¹³—when a god or a hero is present in the figurations. In the upper band of the cup we see four characters. On the right, Dionysos is moving towards the centre, with a huge vine branch loaded with bunches of grapes in his left hand and a large kantharos in his right. In front of him is a young woman with a conspicuous bud held firmly over the kantharos and other flowers in her right hand¹⁴. The young woman is wearing a cloak which distinguishes her from the hetaera-nymphs on kylikes by the Little Masters and the Kallis Painter that we will look at shortly: so the interpretation as a hetaera-nymph is not the most plausible. A revealing iconographic element is the flower, probably an allusion to the domain of Aphrodite: a domain to which both hetaera-nymphs and young brides belong. The three elements listed—a vine, Dionysos with a kantharos in his hand, a young woman—have already been seen on a Tyrrhenian amphora¹⁵ and on amphorae with figurations of the thiasos especially after about 530 BCE¹⁶: from them we have deduced that the grapevine evoked the attainment of Dionysian happiness. The woman is followed by Hermes who is

⁹ Munich 9408: KdS 148, 23.2.

¹⁰ Munich 7414: KdS 150, 23.6.

¹¹ Buffalo (NY) G 600: discussed on p. 67.

¹² London 1867.5–8.1007 (B 425): Beazley Addenda 51 (184); Schauenburg 1974, 202 figs. 5 and 6.

¹³ See the text of A.H. Smith, F.N. Pryce and others in respect of this cup in CV 2, 5 (pl. 13.1).

¹⁴ The only legible illustration is in Hamdorf 1986, 83 fig. 45.

¹⁵ Louvre E 860: discussed on p. 150f.

¹⁶ See p. 115f.

greeting Dionysos with his left hand. The last of the four is another woman, dressed in chiton and stole, who is making a gesture that could be either a farewell or a greeting¹⁷. The contents of the image can be explained as follows: a woman—a nymph in the widest sense¹⁸—having left her female companion, is accompanying Hermes to Dionysos. The presence of the divine messenger, who is also a psychopompos, suggests an underworld journey; and the kantharos, a heroic attribute¹⁹, is not alien to that sphere nor are the flowers. But it is still difficult to say whether the female protagonist is Persephone or Ariadne, or a human figure who is identified with either of them. However exceptional on a lip-cup this image is, it is not without analogies, as we will see shortly.

Less obvious is the Dionysian meaning of another motif that often recurs on the Little Master cups, the bust of a female²⁰. An indication is given in two cases by the fact that a male bust, bearded and wreathed in ivy, is placed opposite the female bust²¹. The presence of the wreath, however, confirms both variants, female and male, as belonging to the Dionysian sphere, whether it is a god or a human prototype taking on his role and his looks. But, as we will see, the connection with Dionysos will become explicit. Above all, we will try to determine the meaning of these strange images. They are always of young women, perfectly dressed, coiffured and bejewelled. Some of them wear bonnets, more an attribute of a hetaera than a lawful wife²². On one of these cups, instead of the potter's signature, there is praise of a hetaera²³. The identification of these women as

Fig. 100–101

¹⁷ In fact, no iconographic element exists to call her Demeter, as in the text of the CV. The image on the other side, with Zeus and Poseidon on the right, each with his own attributes, in front of a third bearded and cloaked male character who is approaching from the left, the whole thing framed by winged horses, remains enigmatic and provides no further elements for reading the image of Dionysos.

¹⁸ See p. 86f.

¹⁹ Isler-Kerényi 1990b, 45f.

²⁰ A first list is given by Beazley, JHS 52, 1932, 174f.; other examples are illustrated in KdS 67, 8.4b, 85, 10.9 and 143, 21.6 (Munich 2165); 85, 10.10 (private coll.); KdS 91, 11.5 and 143, 21.4 (Munich 2167); KdS 142, 21.1 (Munich 2163); KdS 143, 21.5 (Munich 2164); Berger/Lullies 1979, 50f. Basel Lu 18.

²¹ New York 25.78.4: Beazley Addenda 33 (119. 9); private coll.: KdS 85, 10.10. For Beazley it is Dionysos, cf. also Friis Johansen 1959–60, 137f. who proposes the name Semele or Ariadne for the female protome.

²² Keuls 1985, 260–273 with figs. 237ff.; cf. the images of hetaerae from the final decades of the 6th century in Peschel 1987, figs. 7–45.

²³ Munich 2167: KdS 143,21 4 with the corresponding text by N. Hoesch.

hetaera-nymphs is thus likely if we consider that the supports of these images were intended for the symposium.

The tradition of this motif in Athens goes back to the belly amphorae of the first quarter of the century on which the female bust is equivalent to the equine protome, and like the contents of the vase, both are used as status symbols²⁴. In some cases, the female bust accompanies the male bust on the platform of the handles of column-kraters from the time of Lydos²⁵: in this case the primary allusion seems to be to the status of a mature male. Being a companion either of the hetaera or of the lawful wife, he is not able to throw light on the identity of the female figure. The iconographic situation in Attica tells us basically one thing for certain: the female bust is in some way Dionysian and we can call it nymphe. However, once again we are faced with the problem, as previously with the François krater²⁶, of identifying the woman. This problem must be considered also in the light of the fact that the figure is not depicted completely but only in part. There have been many discussions on whether it is a character emerging from the ground or an 'abbreviated' representation. The most satisfactory interpretation is to give it essentially a ritual reading²⁷: this does not exclude, as we have noted several times in the course of this study, that the same formula could allude simultaneously to mythological events from which the rituals were derived. Soon we will return to this problem.

Outside Attic pottery the iconographic precedents of the motif of the female bust are found, for example, in medallions of *Middle Corinthian kylikes*²⁸. In one case among those listed there are two busts, facing each other, accompanied by the names "Nebris" and "Glyka": the second ("the sweet one") suitable for a hetaera, the first for a Dionysian nymph²⁹. This confirms the reading just proposed that the

²⁴ See p. 113f.

²⁵ See p. 95f.

²⁶ Florence 4209: discussed on pp. 75–92.

²⁷ Bérard 1974, 72f.

²⁸ Amyx 1988, 195.3 (Boston 12.422 /F 479/); 200.1 (Athens 992 /CC 621/); 204.4 (Louvre CA 2511); 204.5 (Athens 945 /CC 566/). The motif occurs also, in couples or alone, on Corinthian aryballois: Amyx 1988, 163.5 pl. 63.1 (London 1933.10–26.1); 163.4 (Heidelberg 84); 164.7 (Nîmes). Another thirteen Middle Corinthian aryballois with a female bust on the handle are listed in Amyx 1988, 164f., one of which is illustrated on pl. 63.2 (Florence 3750).

²⁹ Amyx 1988, 200.1. For the name see 563.25 with the comment on pp. 554f.

Attic equivalents are nymphs and that the female companions of satyrs are substantially identical with hetaerae, as already hypothesised in respect of the female figures of the Dionysian repertoire of the Amasis Painter³⁰.

The cup by the Kallis Painter and its forerunners

The Dionysian female busts on Attic cups by the Little Masters are the iconographical precedent of a cup that bears one of the most important and enigmatic figurations of Dionysos, that is, the cup by the Kallis Painter³¹. However, its reading requires considering first an intermediate piece both for chronological location and for decorative formula, attributed to the same painter: a *Droop cup in Athens* with male and female busts intercalated with palmettes³², still close, for the type of decoration, to the Little Master band cups. The decoration of this kylix has been discussed extensively and accurately: but the reading proposed seems too linked to the presupposition that the persons depicted must be mythological: while in the course of this study we have often established that, in the same image, mythological figures can quite well occur together with prototypical figures, such as for example the ephebe, the matron-bride, and the nymph.

The cup in question shows three human protomes intercalated with palmettes on both sides. A serpent is leaving from each of the four attachments of the handles: all this evokes the chthonian sphere and is, perhaps, to be connected with the fact that the vase has been used in a funerary ritual³³. On side A, in the centre, a young woman called KALITINE (perhaps for Kallitūme) is portrayed with long hair, in which Callipolitis-Feytmans would like to recognise Aphrodite, while she is probably more a nymph in the broadest sense, prototypical, of the term: a female figure at a sexually interesting age³⁴, who therefore identifies herself with Aphrodite. The male bust on

³⁰ See p. 130ff.

³¹ Naples Stg.172: Beazley Addenda 55 (203.1 above); LIMC III.2, Dionysos 55, VII.2, Semele 35, VIII.2, Mainades 1, VIII.2, Silenoi 38a; Hamdorf 1986, 78 fig. 40; Isler-Kerényi 1997c.

³² Athens 17873: Beazley Addenda 55 (203.2); Callipolitis-Feytmans 1980. Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 90ff. fig. 9.

³³ Callipolitis-Feytmans 1980, 322.

³⁴ Andò 1996, 55.

the right is wearing a strange head covering: the identification with Hermes³⁵ is of course acceptable. For the other bust the name of Adonis has been proposed³⁶, one of Aphrodite's lovers, whose presence in Attic vases of this period, however, is very unlikely. This character³⁷, mature but youthful, must be the companion of the nymphs and, at the same time, an alter ego of Dionysos like the bearded male figure seen in medallions of kylikes of the Siana type³⁸, called Ikarios in the past, but without foundation. If the latter were the prototypical groom, he would have had the same role in the symposium and in relation to the hetaera-nymph. As in many other cases, Hermes would have had the function of intermediary between the woman and the bearded youth.

On side B there are three busts of young women each wearing a bonnet and so connecting with most of female busts on Little Master kylikes: the most plausible reading is therefore hetaera-nymphs. Then we would have complementary images on both sides of the cup: on one side a group of nymphs in a setting characterised by plants and serpents, i.e. in the underworld, on the other a single nymph who, in the same setting, through the mediation of Hermes, is meeting a male partner. In this case, the generic allusion to the situation of a symposium, present on cups of the Little Masters with male and female busts, has been modified in a funerary sense.

To the same painter, the Kallis Painter, we owe the kylix already mentioned with a well-known figuration of Dionysos and Semele³⁹. Before considering this image we must spend some time on the shape of the vase. In fact, we are no longer faced with a Little Master or Droop cup but with a deep kylix with a low foot, also similar in detail to the profile of the famous eye cup—considered to be the first one known—by Exekias⁴⁰. With this type of cup an innovation was introduced into the repertoire of Athenian painters which rapidly was destined to replace the kylikes like the Little Masters which had been the dominant versions during the third quarter of the century. However, this invention, attributed to the potter Exekias, had not

³⁵ Callipolitis-Feytmans 1980, 328.

³⁶ Callipolitis-Feytmans 1980, 328ff.

³⁷ Callipolitis-Feytmans 1980, 319 fig. 2.

³⁸ For example, Louvre CA 576: discussed on p. 45f.

³⁹ See n. 31 above. Interpreted in great detail by Isler-Kerényi 1997c.

⁴⁰ Munich 2044: Bloesch 1940, pls. 1,1c and 2,1b.

been born in thin air. The cup with the deep bowl and a continuous profile is connected to a tradition, secondary in respect of cups of the Siana-type and the Little Masters, present well before the middle of the century. To it belong the so-called Merrythought cups⁴¹, two of which have already been discussed⁴². Among the Graeco-Oriental precedents from the first half of the 6th century there are also some *with the bust of a young woman flanked by two large star-shaped rosettes*⁴³.

The *kylikes of the Berlin Group 1803*, in terms of shape and decoration, are closer to the cups by the Kallis Painter⁴⁴. They have a woman's bust holding a large flower as decoration on each side. The best-preserved exemplar, which has disappeared, shows other flowers next to the central figure that start from the attachment of the handles, and a swan under each of the handles. The flowers and swans evoke the sphere of Aphrodite⁴⁵ and so the same female setting of the symposium evoked by the busts of hetaerae on kylikes by the Little Masters and on the Droop cup of Athens⁴⁶.

In light of the iconographic situation already described, we will continue with a reading of the *Naples kylix*. On the side that is correctly considered the most important are depicted busts of Dionysos and Semele, face to face, both indicated by their names. Between the two, in the centre of the image, a wreath is hanging and a big kantharos is clearly shown by the god wearing an ornate diadem of single ivy leaves on his forehead and the nape of his neck. In addition, one hand of Semele, also wearing an ivy wreath made conspicuous by the leaves with added white, is shown: it is her right hand, turned towards her face in an enigmatic gesture: we will return to this problem. A second difficulty is that the mother of Dionysos

Fig. 102–103

⁴¹ Also “Knopfhenskelschale”: Bloesch 1940, 3.

⁴² Munich 2016 and Berlin 3151, discussed above p. 49f.

⁴³ Callipolitis-Feytmans 1979, 202 fig.4; Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 90 fig. 7.

⁴⁴ Ex Berlin 1803: Beazley ABV 202.1; Athens Acr. 1534: Beazley Addenda 55 (202.2); Bloesch 1940, 3 no. 3; Callipolitis-Feytmans 1980, 322f. fig. 5; Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 90 fig. 8.

⁴⁵ Delivorrias 1984, 96. On flowers as erotic symbols see Koch-Harnack 1989, 17–185.

⁴⁶ In addition cf. the contemporary skyphoi that have, together with an anonymous female bust, cockerels and flower-buds: ex Mannheim 129 (Beazley Para 85, 37); Louvre CA 1919 (Beazley Addenda 54 /199.38/ and LIMC II, Aphrodite 1092); Munich (Beazley Para 85, 39). On the cockerel as a symbol that is both military and erotic: KdS 108–110.

is presented not as a matronly figure but as a nymph. Therefore it is not—or at least not directly—the mythological episode of the deliverance from the Underworld of the mother by the divine son⁴⁷. In fact the two characters are not imagined as emerging: this is shown by the way in which the bust of Dionysos is finished off towards the lower end.

The space between the two figures and the attachments of the handles is filled with enormous grapevines loaded with heavy bunches of grapes: they are reminiscent of the grapevines on some of the Tyrrhenian amphorae or in images of the vine harvest and of the symposium in the open⁴⁸, evoking an atmosphere of paradise. A tiny satyr with horse's ears but no tail is climbing up the one on the right: as in many examples already considered, especially on more or less contemporary amphorae, the missing tail could be a deliberate omission to allude to the phase of transition between man and satyr. Another two satyrs, also much smaller than the protagonists of the image, are dancing in the direction of the central figures under the handles, in this way stressing the rank of the side just described as superior to the other.

On side B Dionysos is depicted wreathed in ivy and accompanied by his name. Instead of a kantharos here he is holding a drinking horn in the centre of the image. The female bust represented in front of him is called KALIS and is portrayed, in both hairstyle and dress, as a hetaera-nymph. Her hand is also visible, but in a different gesture from Semele's. This character is followed by another nymph facing the same direction, holding two ivy branches in her hand, who is called SIME, a recurrent name of Dionysian nymphs⁴⁹. A third female bust is positioned behind Dionysos: this woman also holds two ivy branches in her hand. From the top of the picture hang three wreaths. The figurations show no difference in rank between the nymphs.

The obvious similarity between the images on sides A and B of the Naples cup make the different iconographic components stand out, among which two are illuminating because we are able to relate them to remarks made in previous chapters. While the side with Semele is characterised by the presence of a vine, the side with Kalis

⁴⁷ Callipolitis-Feytmans 1980.

⁴⁸ Discussed on p. 151f.

⁴⁹ Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 88 n. 9.

is dominated by ivy: not as a plant but in the shape of branches with a ritual function. We have already noted in respect of the amphorae by the Amasis Painter⁵⁰ how ivy and vine symbolise two successive moments in the Dionysian course from the ephebe to the satyr. The two sides of our kylix could be in a similar temporal relationship. This is confirmed by the second iconographic difference: on the side with the ivy Dionysos holds the drinking horn, on the side with the vine, the kantharos⁵¹: a container for wine, but more ritual in nature than referring to the symposium and with a clear heroic meaning⁵². Therefore the rest of the figuration, i.e. the female figures accompanying Dionysos, will also have to be read in this sense. On the side with the ivy and the horn there are three nymphs, with no difference in rank: from the temporal point of view they would represent a moment prior to the side with the vine and the kantharos, where there is only one nymph, who is the mother of Dionysos.

The third difference, which is more difficult to decipher, is set in line with the kantharos at the centre of the image: the hands of the characters. On the side with the three nymphs the god is holding the horn as a simple attribute: the hand fills the minimum space and there is nothing special about it. Kalis makes a generic gesture of greeting, like the one that the satyr's female companion makes towards Dionysos in the first image of grape-treading by the Amasis Painter⁵³. On the side with Semele, instead, Dionysos is holding the kantharos emphatically raised, with his fingers in a sophisticated position: it is some sort of sacred gesture. The kantharos, then, is much bigger and fills the whole space of the figuration right to the rim of the cup. This gesture of the god corresponds Semele's, which cannot be a greeting. The difficulty in interpreting it stems from the fact that it has no known parallel of any kind. In addition, as far as we can see, there is no useful text reference⁵⁴. As we will see, the modern use, which could be called apotropaic, of a similar gesture, is not meaningless.

⁵⁰ See p. 141f. and 156.

⁵¹ On the relationship between the drinking horn and the kantharos see p. 141f.

⁵² Isler-Kerényi 1990b, 45f.

⁵³ Basel Kā 420: Isler-Kerényi 1990a, 73 fig. 4.

⁵⁴ Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 95f.; Quintillian, *Inst. or.* 11, 93. On this work see Schmitt 1992, 46ff.

It will be useful to describe it exactly. Semele is holding her right hand close to the lower part of her face. Her two middle fingers are bent under her thumb and the index and little fingers are stretched out⁵⁵. The direction of the gesture must be emphasised: it is not towards her partner, i.e. Dionysos, but towards herself. This detail is prominent if we compare Semele's gesture with those belonging to eloquence and rhetoric, where their most striking common characteristic is their being directed towards the audience⁵⁶. The out-stretched finger is and was used to point. But here it is not the only finger to point because the little finger is in a parallel position: thus there are two things being pointed at, not one, two equivalent things to be sought in the direction indicated, that is, on Semele's face. Therefore we have to think of ears or eyes: this would also explain the modern gesture against evil eyes, i.e. the Evil Eye. The other three fingers kept closed probably allude to something closed in Semele's face: in this case to the part nearest her hand, i.e. her mouth. Read like this Semele's gesture means: "I have heard", or rather, "I have seen but I do not speak".

This reading leads us completely naturally to see in Semele's gesture an allusion to mystery celebrations. Elsewhere we have considered the broader problem of the existence of Dionysian mysteries in the years around 540 BCE in Athens⁵⁷: but there is no reason at all to exclude this possibility. In fact, as we will see when connecting the progress of Dionysian iconography with the historical situation, there are good arguments in favour of this hypothesis⁵⁸. Here we will limit ourselves to explaining what results from the proposed interpretation of the enigmatic gesture. The two images wish to say that while the nymphs, in the sign of the ivy and therefore of Dionysos, are about to begin a mystery-journey⁵⁹, Semele has already emerged

⁵⁵ The bent fingers could also be the ring and index fingers: the painter's intention, struggling with a completely new motif, is not very clear. However, this does not affect our reading of the gesture.

⁵⁶ Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 95 with n. 66.

⁵⁷ Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 96ff.

⁵⁸ See p. 221f.

⁵⁹ Cf. Henrichs 1982, 157: "Yet it is evident that the ivy-leaf served indeed in certain cases as a sign of recognition among Bacchic initiates". Cfr. also Daraki 1985, 26: "plante d'ombre, voire de mort: le lierre".

from it: and she has reached the sphere of the vine, the heroic condition⁶⁰, Dionysian happiness. The diminutive satyrs in the vine indicate the mythical moment in which Semele's mystery transition took place: it is positioned between the gift of the vine from Dionysos and the first grape-harvest. As we will see⁶¹, the satyrs have their own independent link with the Bacchic mysteries.

From this hypothesis, two facts emerge. On the one hand, the women in the setting of the symposium had a special relationship with Dionysos: a relationship in which males were relegated to the background and the god's mother had an important role. On the other, the meeting with Dionysos was shaped like a journey, a transition: which, then, implies the presence of Hermes. Here we can recall the other kylix by the same painter on which we were able to identify Hermes in his capacity as intermediary⁶² and also the cup signed by Xenokles⁶³ with Hermes accompanying a woman going to meet Dionysos.

Elsewhere⁶⁴ we have examined Semele in detail, who is the mother of Dionysos and in spite of this, a nymph: the son, having been born by a paternal as well as a maternal pregnancy, is the most legitimate of the sons of Zeus. In addition we have discussed the problem of the abnormal relationship between the mother of Dionysos and his bride attested in the iconography, between Semele and Ariadne: where the mother, who is a nymph, can appear younger than the bride who is a matron. Furthermore, mythology draws attention to important affinities between the mother of Dionysos and his bride. In fact, in the course of their own lives, both have a deep caesura at the moment of childbirth: Semele dies, Ariadne, according to the versions known to us⁶⁵, is killed or at least falls asleep before meeting Dionysos. If she succeeds in giving birth they could be twins: in this she shows, as we have seen, her affinity with the symposium rather than with the *oikos*. Both heroines finally attain immortality: Semele, redeemed from the Underworld, would be

⁶⁰ We will return to the *kantharos*, the symbol of this new condition, when discussing the Chalcidian eye cups at the end of this chapter.

⁶¹ See p. 222f.

⁶² Athens 17873; here p. 163f.

⁶³ London 1867.5-8.1007 (B 425); here p. 160f.

⁶⁴ Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 94f.

⁶⁵ See p. 121f.

accompanied by her son to Olympus, the marriage of Ariadne with Dionysos would become a symbol of everlasting happiness⁶⁶. A journey of this type is the exact prefiguration of the mystery itinerary that always implies, at least on the emotional and metaphorical levels, death and rebirth with a new, evidently better identity⁶⁷.

In the end, then, the problems connected with the ambiguous iconography of Semele and Ariadne confirm the hypothesis that, in the female perspective, the meeting with Dionysos takes the form of an initiation and mystery event, whereas in the male perspective the same meeting takes place in the semi-sacred, ritualised setting of the symposium. The respective symbols are not identical: for men it is wine, for women a flower; in comparison, common symbols are the ivy⁶⁸ and the vine. Common to these meetings is the crucial role of Dionysos, the real protagonist of both scenes. This explains the fact that, in spite of the female theme, the support of the images analysed is really a cup, the Dionysian vase par excellence.

With this cup, alongside the whole range of women of the Dionysian world already met (the prey of the wild satyr; the female companion of the "tamed" satyr; the matronly bride; the mother of twins; the young Sapphic girl) the mother as the father's privileged erotic companion emerges: like the woman who could attain the status of a mother of legitimate sons⁶⁹. From what has been set out here and in the previous chapter in respect of the mother of twins, the logical conclusion is that, in a female's life—whether of Semele, Ariadne or mortal women—Dionysos comes into action at the moment of motherhood. Because motherhood, whether divine or human, legitimate or not, is always equivalent to a metamorphosis: and as such is to be compared with the metamorphosis that makes an ephebe into a satyr: who in fact appears together with Dionysos in images with young Dionysian mothers on amphorae⁷⁰. It is not by chance that the "mystery" motif of female busts occurs, as we have just seen⁷¹, also on skyphoi: a shape preferred by women whenever they

⁶⁶ Kerényi 1994, 222f.; Merkelbach 1988, 58f.

⁶⁷ Burkert 1990, 83.

⁶⁸ On ivy in a mystery context: Dickie 1995, 84.

⁶⁹ Cf. Keuls 1985, 272.

⁷⁰ See p. 117. Shapiro 1989, pls. 42.d-e; 43b; 54b.

⁷¹ In n. 46 above.

drank wine⁷², as shown especially by representations of rituals on red figure vases⁷³, but also by the images of hetaerae⁷⁴.

With the kylix by the Kallis Painter we are able to grasp, even if vaguely, an aspect of Dionysos which the preceding iconographical tradition, directed chiefly towards the male sphere, had left in the background and which only through amphorae had begun to take shape: the aspect directed towards the female world. Together with this aspect, and in view of the historical setting to which the pottery belongs—6th century Athens—a problem emerged that the community could not ignore: how to define the status of female categories intermediate between hetaerae and normal wives, i.e. mothers of twins, for example Ariadne, or illegitimate mothers of legitimate sons, whose mythical model was Semele.

The eye cup by Exekias

As we have already noted, with this new type of cup, among the most frequent type of vase that was produced in the Kerameikos of Athens, we are witnessing a caesura and a deliberate new beginning⁷⁵. The symbolic piece of this new beginning is *the kylix by Exekias found at Vulci*⁷⁶, considered to be the ancestor of a type that was to dominate the pottery production of Athens for more than a generation until about 500 BCE⁷⁷. There are many novelties: the most important innovation, compared with the preceding kylikes by the Little Masters, was the new concept of shape: what mattered more than the elegant effect of the whole was the “architectural” balance between the individual parts. The second innovation, which would form a precedent for more than a generation, was the placement of large eyes on the outside of the cup. The third innovation—exceptional even among the eye cups—was to make the bowl a round frame with a single image, so giving it the character of an independent work of art, not subject to a practical function. Later, this last idea

Fig. 104—

⁷² Scheibler 1983, 20.

⁷³ Frontisi-Ducroux 1991.

⁷⁴ Peschel 1987, *passim*.

⁷⁵ Bloesch 1940, 2: “Das gab wohl einen Aufruhr im Kerameikos, als Exekias seine Augenschale mit dem segelnden Dionysos erstmals zur Schau stellte!”.

⁷⁶ Munich 2044: Beazley Addenda 41 (146.21); LIMC III.2, Dionysos 788.

⁷⁷ Beazley 1986, 62. On this problem see Hannestad 1989, 42; Oakley 1994, 16.

would be adopted on a reduced scale and often executed carelessly on a group of lesser cups from the last quarter of the 6th century⁷⁸, in which, typically, the Dionysian theme (Dionysos often with the characters of his thiasos) is predominant.

The eyes

Firstly, let us examine the external decoration of the kylix by Exekias, made up of two elements: the large eyes on both sides which dominate the central space⁷⁹, and the groups of fighting hoplites arranged on the two sides of the attachments of the handles. The most enigmatic element, and the most discussed, is the motif of the eyes, giving the cup a life of its own unknown until that time. The immediate meaning of the motif is obvious at once: to transform the kylix into a mask as soon as the drinker lifts it up. This becomes a problem if we consider that, in Greek thought, the function of a mask is not to hide one's face, to create duplicity, but to be placed over a face and erase it⁸⁰. In fact, the eyes of the eye cups are not the eyes of a mask, because they are not empty, but are endowed with their own look.

In order to understand the meaning of this strange decorative formula, scholars have logically wished to go as far back as geometric pottery⁸¹. It has become clear that the eye, whether on its own or in a pair, had above all the sense of giving life to the object on which it was applied, whether ship, lyre or shield. However, it is precisely the comparison with objects endowed with eyes or even the comparison with vases of other shapes that has highlighted the special, unsurpassed effectiveness of the motif on eye cups, only comparable with 7th century Chalcidian and Ionian cups⁸². The new shape of the cup and the formula of the eyes have a special affinity

⁷⁸ Collected together by Beazley, ABV 212–215 under the heading “The Segment Class”, because usually the round interior is split into a large panel and a segment that acts as a platform; cf. also the more recent survey by Schauenburg 1970, with additions by Boardman 1976, 289 n. 29.

⁷⁹ Lissarrague 1987, 134–136. In this essay, the reading of images on vases—chiefly red figure—is often very like our own. However, the approach of the work is different: it does not intend to be a systematic presentation of the Dionysian repertoire but a reflection on the symposium and on symposium pottery based also on literary evidence.

⁸⁰ Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 100f.

⁸¹ Steinhart 1995.

⁸² Steinhart 1995, pl. 20.

to each other: which explains the success of Exekias' innovation among his colleagues and successors at the Kerameikos of Athens. In fact, that is how the kylix in Munich is to be considered, even if in reality it was not the only one, but the only one we know⁸³, and even though it was not the first vase to be decorated with eyes in the history of pottery.

At this point it will be useful to relate the eye cup with the archaic period's thoughts on the functioning of sight. According to Greek concepts, "the eye is the most important and most noble part of the human body", synonymous with sight⁸⁴, and functions like "a sort of centre of irradiation"⁸⁵. There are pre-Socratic theories according to which, in vision, two elements come into play: fire and water⁸⁶. In addition, in lyrical poetry, wine is also compared with fire⁸⁷. Therefore, the eyes of the cup refer to the liquid contained in the vase, the mixture of water and wine, rather than to the actual vase. Whoever drank wine in the symposium was struck by inspiration; saw through the wine—i.e. through Dionysos—beyond appearances: the truth behind the evidence.

Sight is a reciprocal phenomenon because seeing presupposes a direct link between the one looking and the one being seen⁸⁸. So the eye cup also always has an interlocutor. How is the situation seen by someone looking at the kylix? On being looked at, he would see a Dionysian character, a satyr, a nymph or even an animal, depending on the case, instead of the person who a moment previous was his table-companion⁸⁹: that is, he would be present at a

⁸³ On the numerical ratio between vases produced and known vases see Bentz 1998, 17f.; but now Kratzmüller 2003.

⁸⁴ Nenci 1994, 112f.

⁸⁵ Nenci 1994, 114; cf. also Balensiefen 1994, 305–314 and Frontisi-Ducroux/Vernant 1998, 117, for whom a ray springs from the eye which connects it with the object being looked at.

⁸⁶ Simon 1992, 232; Frontisi-Ducroux/Vernant 1998, 111: For Alcmaeon of Croton "fire is involved to explain the luminous impression caused by a blow ... undoubtedly as a factor of luminosity. The role of water, instead, is fundamental: the object is reflected in it ... Vision is essentially an aquatic phenomenon"; 11f.: for Empedocles also the inside of the eye is made of fire.

⁸⁷ Privitera 1970, 97 n. 4: "... Like lightning, by striking wine also deifies, makes Archilocus theios ..."; 103 (wine which warms like the fire in Alcaeus).

⁸⁸ Frontisi-Ducroux/Vernant 1998, 114. The fundamental difference between the modern concept and the ancient concept is that the latter does not take light into account as a third factor: Simon 1992, 231f.

⁸⁹ Steinhart 1995, 55ff.

metamorphosis⁹⁰. This explains the emphasis that the painter places on the eyes, indeed to the look⁹¹.

Furthermore, this reciprocity of looking and being looked at constitutes the nucleus of the Dionysian mystery experience⁹². Viewed in this way, the kylix by Exekias is connected with the cup by the Kallis Painter not only for its shape but also for its content: both would refer to Bacchic initiations. This formal and conceptual link finds confirmation in some later Attic eye cups⁹³ which show, between the eyes, parallel anonymous busts of a woman with bare arms in the foreground and a bearded character in the background: an allusion, perhaps, to the status of privileged female partner of some hetærae, equivalent to the Bacchic initiate⁹⁴. Confirmation of the fact that the eyes on kylikes have an explicit connection with the mystery experience may also be found on a Chalcidian eye cup (we will discuss this production later) where the whole space between the eyes is filled with a large kantharos exactly like the one on the kylix by the Kallis Painter.

On the other hand, it has already been pointed out that the invention of the eye cup coincides chronologically with the introduction of tragedy to Athens⁹⁵. Being a spectacle, tragedy is based on seeing. Thus it is no surprise that there is a structural affinity between the genre of tragedy and the mystery rituals⁹⁶ and no accident that tragic texts in particular prove the mystery experience also to have culminated in seeing things that could not or should not be described in words.

⁹⁰ Kunisch 1996, 110.

⁹¹ The eyes found on vases before the kylix by Exekias are in fact less dominant in the decorative system as a whole: Steinhart 1995, pls. 20.3, 21.2, 24.1, etc.

⁹² Schlesier 1998a, 49. On the central nature of this "exchange of looks" in the Bacchae 470 see also Massenzio 1995, 29 and 34f.

⁹³ Altenburg 224,2: CV 1, 39, 1–3; Christchurch N.Z. 56/58: Beazley Addenda 55 (203.2bis); Paris, Louvre F 136: Beazley Para 93 (203). Similar images on other shapes, such as the lekythos and the krater, have been discussed by Bérard 1974, 63 (in respect of figs. 15 and 16) and related specifically to Semele (171).

⁹⁴ The same formula can also be adopted for the warrior (Paris, Louvre F 137: Beazley ABV 203 below. 1): and in fact warrior status is a goal similar to mystery status. In one case, together with the eyes there is a bust of Herakles among busts of warriors (Rome, Villa Giulia: Schauenburg 1974, 152f. fig. 5; Schauenburg 1981, 342 fig. 21) There are two characteristics of Herakles that could explain his connection with mystery rituals: his apotheosis and the fact that, in Eleusis, he was considered to be the protomystes.

⁹⁵ Ferrari 1986, 18f.

⁹⁶ Schlesier 1995.

We see, then, in the decade between 540 and 530 BCE, in Athens, a threefold coincidence: the invention of the eye cup, the introduction of tragedy, and the institution of Bacchic mysteries: an illuminating coincidence. However, it is insufficient to hypothesise on a direct connection between these three events: to hold, for example, that the eye cup was used during the mystery celebrations. The emergence of a new type of vase endowed with a look is only one of the symptoms of a cultural climate in which, also in other fields and on occasions different from the symposium, eyes and looking have become a topic for reflection⁹⁷. To look and to see—as also to be looked at and to be seen—cease at this moment to be an obvious fact: “what is looked at”, i.e. appearance, no longer necessarily coincides with “what is seen”, i.e. reality.

At this point it is worth taking into consideration the opposite of sight, that is, blindness. In tragedy, the non-agreement between apparent identity and real identity has as a consequence two similar punishments: blinding (e.g. Oedipus and Lycurgus)⁹⁸ and the distortion induced by madness (e.g. Agave). Whoever refuses to see loses his sight. But the same fact can be expressed in another way: Oedipus blinds himself when, finally, he has seen, when his seeing coincides with his knowing. The culmination of the tragic event is, in respect of the culmination of the mystery event, the exact opposite: the two experiences reflect and illuminate each other.

The eye cup functioned in a similar way. Whoever looked at it found himself facing a different person than before: he was present at a metamorphosis⁹⁹. This remains valid even if the intention of the gesture had been, as is plausible in the setting of a symposium, of erotic appeal¹⁰⁰. Whoever looked also felt being looked at, perhaps “unmasked” even. On the other hand, whoever used the eye cup knew that he looked different from what he was before. In the same instant, and in his original role as symposiast, while imbibing the wine, he also came to be looked at: not by his real interlocutor

⁹⁷ Nenci 1994, 112f. on eyes as a political metaphor explicitly attested after the Persian wars.

⁹⁸ Edmunds 1986.

⁹⁹ On these mechanisms see the reflections by Frontisi-Ducroux 1991, 177ff.

¹⁰⁰ Steinhart 1995, 63. On the role of the eye in the erotic sphere see Calame 1996, 31ff. However, an apotropaic meaning is to be excluded because it is incompatible with the symposial use of the object: Kunisch 1990, 20. On the improper use of this concept in archaeology see Schlesier 1990a, 43.

whom the raised kylix concealed from his view but by the gorgoneion in the centre of the kylix: which, at least metaphorically, immobilised, petrified him¹⁰¹. To imbibe the wine from the eye cup was equivalent to two things: externally to a metamorphosis, internally to a death.

This new sense of the importance and problematic of seeing, documented both by the invention of the new type of cup and by the introduction of tragedy and the Bacchic initiations, once discovered and acquired, must gradually have become custom. In every dynamic society the dominant themes are gradually replaced by others that are more current. It is plausible, for example, that during the following years in Athens with the reform of Kleisthenes and with the Persian menace looming, other topics were more prominent. As also, in the humbler and narrower world of the Kerameikos, the invention of the eye cup could have been put in the shade by the even more showy invention of the new red figure technique launched in following decade by the greatest of Exekias' 'pupils', the Andokides Painter. And in parenthesis: Was this change of technique not equivalent to an experiment of an optical type? Does this not explain the execution of the same motif on the same vase, using different techniques¹⁰²? In any case, this would explain the circumstance, enigmatic till now that, towards 500 BCE, the eye cup was no longer in fashion¹⁰³.

The battle

The second topic on the eye cup by Exekias to be considered is developed in the *areas of the attachment of the handles*. This is also an innovation: in the previous types of cup—by the Komasts, of the Siana type, by the Little Masters—this part of the vase had not interested the painters at all, except to place palmettes¹⁰⁴ as on the metal vases. In some cases the palmettes were replaced by other subjects, for example sphinxes or lions¹⁰⁵, remote descendants of the

¹⁰¹ Frontisi-Ducroux 1996, 65ff.

¹⁰² Beazley 1932, 168f. Examples: Boston 01.8037: Beazley Addenda 149 (4.7); Munich 2301: 149 (4.9); Boston 99.538: Beazley Addenda 150 (4.12). Particularly instructive is the example illustrated by Sparkes 1996, 16f. fig. I:10 (Palermo V 650).

¹⁰³ Kunisch 1996, 11.

¹⁰⁴ KdS 174 and passim.

¹⁰⁵ KdS 26, 2.2 and 100, 12.18 (Munich 2172): sphinxes; 140.20.1c (Munich 2243): sphinxes; 95, 11.12 (Munich 2193): lions.

animal frieze or even by dolphins that allude to the sea¹⁰⁶, and as we will see, form an integral part of the decorative repertoire on cups of these decades. In the tradition of cups this area is neutral. On kraters, instead, it has a well defined significance as an area of transition, indeed of death¹⁰⁷. And it is from here that Exekias must have taken the idea of placing there groups of warriors fighting for the corpse of a fallen man. The motif is not new; it goes back to the repertoire of the 7th century¹⁰⁸. A beautiful orientalisising example is on a Rhodian plate¹⁰⁹, with Menelaus and Hector as protagonists fighting for the corpse of the Trojan Euphorbus, an episode from book 18 of the *Iliad*. It is interesting to note that here already, in the field between the duellists, there is a pair of eyes: in looking at the image one feels that one is being looked at, but by whom?

However, the motif of the disputed dead man is not common in pottery painting before Exekias. We have already discussed the example on the jug by Lydos in Berlin with the duel between Herakles and Ares over the body of Kyknos¹¹⁰, chronologically not far from the kylix by Exekias. Later the subject would become widespread, especially with the creation of the new type of kalyx-krater in the last phase of Exekias' activity. In the first half of the 6th century, the similar theme of Hektor's corpse lying under the kline of Achilles is much better documented¹¹¹.

It has already been noted that Exekias developed the motif in non-identical ways on the two sides of the kylix¹¹². In one case we see two groups of three warriors facing each other in completely corresponding positions, even if there are slight differences in their individual armour. The dead man at the centre is dressed and is still wearing his helmet, whereas his weapons and shield are missing. It is noteworthy that he is portrayed not supine but face down and not yet completely extended: the only comparable images are of Ajax having committed suicide¹¹³, particularly suitable for decorating the

¹⁰⁶ Cups intermediate between those of the Siana type and by the Little Masters: Athens 534 (Beazley ABV 56.105); Kassel T 663 (Beazley Addenda 15/56/).

¹⁰⁷ Isler-Kerényi 1997a, 530f.

¹⁰⁸ Isler-Kerényi 1990b, 41.

¹⁰⁹ London A 749: Steinhart 1995, pl. 24.1.

¹¹⁰ Berlin 1732: discussed on p. 128f.

¹¹¹ Isler 1986, 109f.

¹¹² Beazley 1951, 67f.; the two sides are reproduced side by side in Schefold 1978, 227 figs. 305–306, but the reading proposed is arbitrary.

¹¹³ LIMC I 1, 300 s.v. Aias I.

side areas of vases or at any rate curved spaces¹¹⁴. As the sword with which Ajax stabbed himself is missing, the identification of this fallen warrior remains open. We find Ajax again with the same unusual white armour, still active in battle, on an unattributed amphora that is slightly more recent than the kylix by Exekias¹¹⁵, stylistically related to it. But other heroes also wore this armour¹¹⁶.

On the other side, the group of three warriors to the right is similar to the image already described: the only difference lies in the way in which the last of the three is holding his shield aloft, which is difficult to understand. The group to the left is far less homogeneous than the others because the warrior in the foreground is bent down to drag the dead man to his side, grasping him by his right arm. The fallen warrior is completely stripped and lies supine. It seems possible to interpret the hoplites on the right, who are advancing as a unit, as the victors whereas those on the left find themselves in a defensive position.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify the characters, not even the combatants of the two scenes. There are neither inscriptions nor a univocal iconography. The closest parallels are to be found on two calyx-kraters attributed to Exekias and to his style¹¹⁷, a late amphora by the same painter¹¹⁸, and a slightly more recent amphora, unattributed, with scenes of a Trojan battle¹¹⁹. The fallen warrior is named on the two sides of the amphora by Exekias now in Philadelphia: on side A is Achilles who, dressed and armed with great accuracy, is being dragged off the field probably by Ajax. The action unfolds from left to right and the Greeks are fighting on the right, as shown by the figure of Menelaus in combat with Amasos, an African. On side B the fallen warrior, dressed but without a helmet, is Antilochos. In the corresponding scene on the calyx-krater found in the agora of Athens, the three Greeks fight on the left: the last of the three is called Diomedes. Of the Trojans on the right the

¹¹⁴ Isler-Kerényi 1997a, 533.

¹¹⁵ Munich 1415; CV 1 pls. 45.2 and 47.3.

¹¹⁶ For example, by Memnon on an amphora by Exekias, London 1849.5–18.10 (B 209). Fraser 1935, 37: "This fashion of body armour was coming into vogue in the time of Exekias . . .".

¹¹⁷ Athens Agora AP 1044: Beazley Addenda 40 (145.19); Athens (ex Volos): Beazley Addenda 41 (148.9).

¹¹⁸ Philadelphia 3442: Beazley Addenda 40 (145.14).

¹¹⁹ Munich 1415: CV 1 pls. 45.2 and 47.3.

name Hektor remains. Above the face of the dead man who, strangely, lies with his head to the right, the name Patroklos can be read, partially but with no possibility of doubt. There are no names at all on the Volos krater, which is thought to represent the same event. It is interesting to note the high crest of the combatant in the centre. On the unattributed amphora in Munich, the composition has been modified. We do not have two groups of combatants facing each other but two duelling couples (Aeneas and Neoptolemos, and Menelaus and Paris) arranged in the two halves of the image over a fallen warrior: the one on the left is stripped and supine and his name is illegible, the one on the right is an oriental archer who still manages to remain seated. Ajax, in the centre, is supporting Achilles, dead but still upright, completely naked. This is strange because the iconography of this period always shows Achilles completely clothed and, as a rule, armed with his shield¹²⁰.

The iconographic situation described, then, does not provide enough elements to name the combatants and the fallen on the kylix by Exekias. They are related to the duelling hoplites on the outer sides of cups of the Siana type from the second quarter of the 6th century, and like those evoke the warrior identity of the mature symposiast. However, the combat is no longer the sum of individual duels, but rather of a group action: from this can be derived the emergence of a new ethic of the collective that would result, a generation later, in the reform of Kleisthenes. The two episodes are deliberately rendered differently in order to attract attention from anyone looking at the fallen warrior. The intention is not to refer to specific episodes of the epic: what matters is death on the field of battle as such, evidently for the polis. The fallen warrior is anonymous and the reading remains open. In spite of these new emphases, the image remains substantially faithful to the decorative tradition of Attic cups as a synthesis of two elements evocative of death already present in the first half of the century: war and the gorgoneion (to which we will return).

Exekias' idea of using the lateral area of the cup to remember death in battle was reinforced, not long afterwards, by an unattributed *eye cup*¹²¹, chronologically close to the kylikes by Exekias in

¹²⁰ Woodford/London 1980.

¹²¹ New York 44.11.1; Bloesch 1940, 8 no. 3; CV 2 pl. 25, 39a-f. Cf. also the fragments of early eye cups published by Hannestad 1989.

Munich and the Kallis Painter in Naples. Between the eyes, the somewhat bloody battle episodes around the handles are combined with duellists fighting each other on one side and with the abduction of a veiled woman by a warrior on the other. Hoplites duelling over a kneeling warrior are also in the same position around the attachments to the handles of an *eye cup* in Paris¹²², attributed to the same hand that decorated the phallic kylix in Oxford which we will discuss later. First, however, we will see the motif pass to the red figure repertoire¹²³. In the same period, the idea of death in war was also expressed on the inside of the cup: for example, on another *eye cup*, one of the last works that can be attributed to Lydos¹²⁴, with two duels between Greeks and Trojans almost coming to an end. On the outer sides of this cup, between the eyes, we see crouching sphinxes and, under the handle, a dolphin. With the dolphin the idea of the sea emerges: we will return to this motif as well.

Considered as a whole, the outside of the kylix by Exekias presents contradictory dynamics: on the side the action takes place parallel with the wall of the vase without the spectator being involved, in fact, leaving him excluded; the central area, instead, functions on an axis that unites the look of the vase, i.e. of the wine, with the one who is looking at it: the cup takes on a life of its own and interacts with external interlocutors. These contradictory dynamics associate the cup by Exekias with the image of Dionysos in the main frieze of the krater by Kleitias¹²⁵ and the message is similar: however inevitable death may be, in wine there is life.

The inside of Exekias' cup

This message is confirmed, as we will see immediately, by the *image on the inside of the cup by Exekias*, which is exceptional for various aspects, especially the red surface applied intentionally¹²⁶. This characteristic, which excludes a practical use of the vase, reveals its purely artistic significance. To approach the meaning of this image we will proceed as we have in this study: determining the tradition to which

¹²² Louvre F 130: Beazley Addenda 68 (262.49); Boardman 1976, 289 n. 32.

¹²³ Palermo V 650: Beazley Addenda 67 (256.21 and 150 (5.14); Sparkes 1996, 17 fig. I:10.

¹²⁴ New York 25.78.6: Beazley Addenda 32 (116.9); Tiverios 1976, 75 pls. 68–9.

¹²⁵ Florence 4209: discussed on p. 78f. See also Frontisi-Ducroux 1991, 177f.

¹²⁶ Daraki 1985, 31ff.; Lissarague 1987, 116ff. fig. 94.

it belongs, in spite of its originality; that is, what are the ideas that underlie the artist's choices.

In the light of the cup's tradition, what would have been the most obvious choice? Evidently, the gorgoneion, already present in the repertoire of kylikes of the Siana type and remaining in vogue for the eye cups even after the introduction of the new red figure technique¹²⁷. As we know, the Gorgon's face is a metaphor of death¹²⁸. The Gorgon's staring eyes look, but the look is lethal. It has often been asked why such a motif was the most common in the bottom of Attic cups. We have looked for an explanation by drawing attention to how the cup "functioned": in imbibing wine one would meet the Gorgon's look, one would experience, at least metaphorically, the horror of the end. This matches the hypothesis already proposed in the preceding pages according to which being at the symposium evoked—or celebrated again—the condition of "(being) in suspense" induced by wine, between different phases of life.

Normally it is the drinker who is confronted by death and not his table-companion. However, there are exceptions: for example, cups with a running Gorgon in the space between the eyes¹²⁹; or the famous *eye cup*¹³⁰, certainly still of the first generation, which shows the same number of Gorgon faces in the pupils. In this case the interlocutor of the symposiast who is using the kylix sees himself looked at by the Gorgon, in fact by two Gorgons. The gorgoneion in the pupil, called *kore* in Greek¹³¹, is evidently a manifestation of the goddess of the Underworld. But for the Greeks the pupil is also a mirror of the one being looked at¹³²: whoever stood in front of this kylix saw himself identified with the infernal *kore*. Besides the eyes and the gorgoneia, the decoration of the cup in Cambridge comprises of a standing (not dancing!) nymph instead of the nose and male figures, bearded and standing, wreathed in ivy and holding the drinking horn, between the eyes and the attachments to the handles: characters who obviously identify themselves with Dionysos.

¹²⁷ Oakley 1994, 17.

¹²⁸ Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 65ff.; Massenzio 1995, 45.

¹²⁹ For example Amsterdam, Theodor Coll. 48: Heesen 1996 pl. 48.

¹³⁰ Cambridge GR 39.1864 (61): Beazley Addenda 54 (202.2).

¹³¹ Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 102: "...le nom de la pupille, *corè*, est aussi celui de la jeune fille, et plus particulièrement de celle qui devient la souveraine des Morts, *Corè-Perséphone*, avec qui Gorgo a quelques affinités".

¹³² Frontisi-Ducroux/Vernant 1998, 117.

The whole space between the various elements of the decoration is covered with ivy branches. So once again we find, in an allusive and less accurate execution, most of the motifs already noted on the cup in Naples. It seems, then, that here too we can extract an allusion, perhaps in parody, to mystery celebrations¹³³.

Dolphins, ships and the sea

Inside his kylix, instead of the obvious formula of the gorgoneion, Exekias shows Dionysos on a ship, with a grapevine and a swarm of dolphins. Here the dominant idea is certainly the sea, an idea induced also by the dark red of the background. It is, in addition, well known that sailing is a metaphor, often used in archaic Greek poetry, for the symposium¹³⁴. In this choice, Exekias also had important predecessors. The oldest among them known to us is Painter C with a *cup of the Siana type*¹³⁵ showing, in the medallion, Triton surrounded by a ring of dolphins. Three dolphins also adorn the centre of the *Gordion cup* with the signatures of Kleitias and Ergotimos¹³⁶; and the same motif recurs, but with one of the dolphins playing the aulós, on a *cup of the Siana type*¹³⁷: thus the sea is also music, a motif to which we will return. With these three cups we are still in the decade 570–560 BCE. Slightly more recent is the *Little Master cup*¹³⁸ with, on the inside, Herakles fighting Triton, surrounded by various fish and a dolphin, the whole set in a circle of dancing marine nymphs. In all these cases, marine symbols and characters replace the gorgoneion, evocative of death: the bottom of the cup is assimilated to the sea and the bottom of the cosmos, i.e. the Underworld.

This idea of the sea is expressed more explicitly on Attic eye cups¹³⁹ that show, along the inner rim of the bowl, a series of ships (like the dinoi of the second half of the 6th century starting with

Fig. 113

¹³³ Allusions to mysteries may be present in other cases as well, as for example in the eye cup Würzburg 427 (Beazley, ABV 202.1), with Dionysos holding the drinking horn in front of a standing nymph, and Munich 2036 (Bloesch 1940, 8.1 pl. 2.2), where, between the eyes, is a praying nymph and the side area shows a large vine.

¹³⁴ Lissarrague 1987, 104–118; KdS 319–324 (H.B. Siedentopf); Oakley 1994, 23 with n. 76. On the ship as a metaphor of the polis in Alcaeus' poetry: Gentili 1995, 262–284.

¹³⁵ Rhodes 15368: Beazley Addenda 13 (52.16).

¹³⁶ Berlin 4604: Beazley Addenda 22 (78.13).

¹³⁷ Rome, Villa Giulia 64608; KdS 322, 55.3.

¹³⁸ Tarquinia RC 4194: CV Tarquinia II pl. 21.5–6.

¹³⁹ Oakley 1994, 16–23.

Exekias)¹⁴⁰ and a gorgoneion in the medallion¹⁴¹. In one case, which is particularly elaborate, in which the band with the ships is very wide and enriched with dolphins between the ships¹⁴², we see Poseidon on a seahorse in the medallion. In two cases the decorative formula of the series of ships on the inner rim is attested on late Little Master kylikes, which are also particularly elaborate¹⁴³. But there is also a variant attested with a circle of dolphins around a central gorgoneion and an ivy wreath along the inner rim¹⁴⁴. In both cases the medallions have a couple of hoplites in combat: obviously another way of evoking a military death. It is no surprise, then, to find again the hoplite (next to his horse) between the eyes of one of the most accurate of these marine cups¹⁴⁵. Here also the side area has rich vine plants. It is reminiscent of the kylix by the Kallis Painter in Naples, and from this fact it follows that this cup—and many others like it¹⁴⁶—as in the female mystery passage, could have been an allusion to the passage to a new male status, as a warrior. The sea and sailing become metaphors, not only of the symposium but also of the transitional phase, lived “in suspense”, which that new goal presupposes.

Fig. 111–112

We have noted how, in eye cups, the motif of the hoplite in combat, originally placed in the area of the handles, can also be in the space between the eyes or inside the bowl. The same fluctuation applies in the case of the ship which we find again, in some cases, in the side area¹⁴⁷, in the form of two prows arranged symmetrically to right and left of the attachment of the handles. The subject of

¹⁴⁰ Rome, Villa Giulia 50599: Beazley Addenda 41 (146.20). Isler-Kerényi 1997a, 527.

¹⁴¹ Würzburg ZA 68b (Fujita loan): Oakley 1994, 19 fig. 30; Brussels A 3645 and Haifa, Maritime Museum: Schauenburg 1970 pl. 12.2 and 13.1; Paris, Cab.Méd. 322: Beazley Addenda 101 (380.296).

¹⁴² Louvre F 145: Schauenburg 1970, pl. 12.1. The dolphins between the ships (but two or three instead of one) reappear on a cup of the same type, but with a red figure medallion: London E 2 (Beazley Addenda 198/225.1; Schauenburg 1970, 34 pl. 13.2; Lissarague 1987, 111 fig. 87).

¹⁴³ In fact they are painted with figures even under the foot: Berlin F 1800 and Thera (Greifenhagen 1971, 80 no. 1 and 83 no. 7).

¹⁴⁴ Malibu 82.AE.120: Jordan 1988, 21ff., no. W131; Shefton 1989, 65ff.

¹⁴⁵ Würzburg ZA 68 b: Oakley 1994, 18 figs. 26–28.

¹⁴⁶ For example Cambridge GR 13.1937: Oakley 1994, 21 figs. 31–33. In addition cf. the cup illustrated in Schauenburg 1970, pl. 22 (private collection) with a series of youths, each accompanying his horse, arranged around a central gorgoneion.

¹⁴⁷ Sydney 47.03: Beazley Addenda 56 (207); Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek 3385: Beazley Addenda 57 (215). A third example is mentioned in Beazley, ABV 223 under no. 65.

the ship is then repeated on the outer sides of a *type A kylix*, but without eyes¹⁴⁸, signed by Nikosthenes. Instead, the dolphins are, as in the case of many late black figure cups¹⁴⁹, under the handles and can be winged¹⁵⁰. But not even the eyes remain excluded from this game of sliding and substitution when, instead of on the outside, we find them inside the bowl, apparently to strengthen the efficacy of the Gorgonic look of the central medallion¹⁵¹. The second of the cups mentioned shows Dionysos as a symposiast on the outside, wreathed in ivy and surrounded by vine branches¹⁵², as in the kylix by Exekias that we are discussing: hereby it illustrates well how an individual painter felt free to distribute the various motifs as he wished on his vases. Such freedom also allowed him to give back, maybe ironically, a mythological meaning to the gorgoneion, as we see on an *eye cup*¹⁵³ already mentioned with regard to the prows of ships, slightly more recent than the one by Exekias.

We now turn to the image in the bowl of the kylix by Exekias. Of the elements present—dolphins, music, the ship, the vine, Dionysos as a symposiast—we have already considered the ship motif, a sign of a sea journey and a metaphor for being “in suspense”, in the symposium, between different moments and conditions. To the same order of ideas belong the dolphins¹⁵⁴, the immediate import of which is certainly nautical¹⁵⁵. In addition, the symposial equation sea-wine puts them in close affinity with Dionysos: which is confirmed by the fact that we also find them on the inner rim of an Ionian kantharos in the shape of a female head¹⁵⁶. We know of the Dionysian significance of the kantharos already from the 7th century BCE¹⁵⁷.

¹⁴⁸ Louvre F 123: Beazley Addenda 60 (231.8).

¹⁴⁹ Beazley, ABV 629ff.

¹⁵⁰ Cleveland 26.514: Beazley Addenda 145 (630.3); Amsterdam, Theodor Coll. 49: Heesen 1996 pl. 49.

¹⁵¹ Oxford 234: Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 101 and fig. 56; Schauenburg 1970 pl. 16,2; Arlesheim, private coll.: Schauenburg 1970 pl. 16,3; Nicosia C 431: Beazley Addenda 57 (213.13).

¹⁵² Schauenburg 1970 pl. 17.1–2.

¹⁵³ Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek I.N. 3385: Beazley Addenda 57 (215).

¹⁵⁴ On the typology and possible meanings of the dolphin see Isler 1977, 23ff.; Vidali 1997, 105ff.

¹⁵⁵ Lissarrague 1987, 112–116.

¹⁵⁶ Munich 2014: Walter-Karydi 1973 no. 484 pl. 56; KdS 321, 55.2. We will discuss this vase further on.

¹⁵⁷ Isler-Kerényi 1990b, 45.

The question must be raised why, of all the marine animals, it is specifically the dolphin and not merely a fish that lends itself as a Dionysian symbol. The interpretation of Dionysos as a god of all metamorphoses, proposed in this study, highlights one particular quality of the dolphin, which distinguishes it from fish, for example. In fact it lives not in one but in two elements, water and air (which, as we have seen, some painters express by giving it wings): it moves swiftly through the water, but all of a sudden it appears with a leap. For it, life is a continual passage below and above the surface of the sea, between swimming and flying: a transitory and changing way of life. Another obvious characteristic in the image by Exekias and in other contemporary examples¹⁵⁸ is the appearance in swarms the dolphin is not solitary but forms part of a group and by this is reminiscent of the fighting hoplites in the handle zone.

The vine

Besides its obvious connection with wine we have already intuited its 'paradisiacal' significance in respect of the Dionysian amphorae¹⁵⁹. A similar meaning is derived from the interpretation of the kylix by the Kallis Painter in Naples, where the vine indicates reaching an existential objective. This explains, for example, the presence of the vine in depictions of the apotheosis of Herakles¹⁶⁰, understood as a passage to ultimate happiness. We have already considered a particularly explicit image of Dionysian happiness on an amphora from the final decade of the century with a symposial couple in the shadow of a grapevine¹⁶¹. Exekias' paradoxical combination of the vine with the mast of the ship is reminiscent of the famous adventure of the young Dionysos kidnapped by Tyrrhenian pirates¹⁶², later transformed into dolphins. As Exekias had wished to represent Dionysos as a bearded symposiast, the image on the vase cannot have depended directly on poetry: however, both express similar conceptions of the god.

¹⁵⁸ Besides the Ionian kantharos already mentioned, compare the Ionian dinos Zurich L 306 (Isler 1977, 15–33) and the Ionian cup in Berlin (Walter-Karydi 1973, 29 and 35 no. 476 pl. 53).

¹⁵⁹ See p. 151ff.

¹⁶⁰ KdS 335, 56.20 (Hydria Munich 1721) and 340, 58.3a (Amphora Munich 2301).

¹⁶¹ Munich 1562: KdS 330 no. 56.7; LIMC III.2, Dionysos 758.

¹⁶² Hymn. Hom. VII; KdS 321.

Dionysos

The figure of Dionysos has no precedents or obvious analogies. In fact, it is the first known representation of him as a symposiast. He is on the ship as if he were on the symposial kline, simultaneously in the shadow of the vine and on the high seas: a complete and happy person. In his hand he has a large drinking horn which marks him as a god of primordial time or perhaps also—if we think of the kylix by the Kallis Painter—as a mystery god.

The closest analogy is found on a more or less contemporary *Ionian lekythos-amphora*¹⁶³, with a symposiast holding a drinking horn, literally suspended, on side A, and an armed hoplite, standing, on side B: two equivalent and complementary ways of indicating the condition of completeness to which every citizen aspired. We find a similar conception on a *late black figure eye cup*¹⁶⁴ of exceptional size¹⁶⁵ with a symposiast musician in its medallion, maybe Dionysos himself, together with a crouching caprid and a wreath of ivy leaves and fruits that fills the rest of the bowl. On the outside, in the space between the eyes, is Dionysos, seated with a kantharos in his hand, between dancing nymphs. Vine branches loaded with grapes cover everything, even the handle area. Another image of symposial happiness is on an *eye cup*¹⁶⁶ slightly later than the kylix by Exekias. Inside its bowl are two symposial couples surrounded by satyrs and grapevines and, in the medallion, the usual gorgoneion: Dionysian happiness and the horror of death are present at the same moment.

The fluctuation of motifs considered in respect of the image of Dionysos in the cup by Exekias—the eyes, the dolphins, the ship, the vine, Dionysos as symposiast, music—from one side to the other and from the outside to the inside of the cup confirms the conceptual links suggested here; it is also a good illustration of a type of communication more like the symposium, “speaking in allegories”¹⁶⁷. As a consequence, also the decoration of the black figure eye cup, even in its rich and variable motifs, represents a coherent whole, suited to its twofold function of drinking vessel and instrument of metamorphoses.

¹⁶³ Rhodes 12396: Walter-Karydi 1973, 133 no. 555 pl. 71–2, see p. 58 n. 202.

¹⁶⁴ Rome, Villa Giulia 773: CV Villa Giulia 1, III He pl. 11; LIMC III.2, Dionysos 425.

¹⁶⁵ It is 26 cm. high.

¹⁶⁶ Boulogne 559: Schauenburg 1970, 35 pl. 16.1.

¹⁶⁷ Gentili 1995, 57.

Instead of death, in his kylix Exekias evokes the happiness of being in suspense at the symposium: Dionysian happiness. However, as is clear from the comparison with similar images, either contemporary or slightly earlier or later, this happy state always has death as either complement or presupposition. This death is not only of the warrior, at first glance final and definitive, but also the death implicit in every metamorphosis; and the death that, by means of the Bacchic mysteries, leads to a new life¹⁶⁸.

Cups by the Amasis Painter

The Amasis Painter, besides being one of the most original and productive painters of the third quarter of the 6th century, also proves to be one of the most versatile. This characteristic is evident especially in the particularly varied repertoire of drinking vessels decorated by him¹⁶⁹, a repertoire that includes various kinds of skyphoi and kylikes and also uncommon intermediate shapes. Among the kylikes there are shapes by now traditional, such as Little Master cups, and examples of the new A shape, with and without eyes¹⁷⁰. Dionysian themes recur repeatedly.

On *one of the band cups*¹⁷¹ we see on one side the mule-rider holding a drinking horn moving towards the right. He is preceded by a couple, i.e. Dionysos with a matronly figure, and followed by two ithyphallic satyrs who are making a sign of greeting, the second of whom is carrying a brimming wine-skin on his shoulders. A second matronly figure closes the procession on the left. On both edges of the figuration there are anonymous youths, the famous onlookers or bystanders representing the collective¹⁷²: the presence of the latter and the fact that there are two matrons, not just one, suggests, as we have already noted, that in this case too the motif of the mule-rider alludes to a ritual rather than to a mythological event¹⁷³. Side B of the same cup

¹⁶⁸ See also Massenzio 1995, 50f.

¹⁶⁹ Malagardis/Iozzo 1995, 202.

¹⁷⁰ The date of these cups and of amphorae has been clarified by Isler 1994, 99ff. and 113f.: Little Master Dionysian cups are dated to around 540 BCE while the eye cups belong to the final phase of the painter's activity between 530 and 515 BCE.

¹⁷¹ Cracow 30: Beazley Addenda 46 (156.84).

¹⁷² Fehr 1996, 831–833.

¹⁷³ See p. 85.

has a rigidly symmetrical image with a standing winged female figure in the centre, who could be Artemis, between armed males, young horsemen and onlookers. It cannot be excluded that there was conceptual relationship between the two sides: we have already noted similarities between Dionysos and Artemis in respect of Dionysian amphorae by the Amasis Painter. Furthermore, it may not be accidental that the horse-riders, a typical representation of young citizens, correspond to the mule-rider, at any rate a plebeian character. In this case the kylix would belong to the common setting of the symposium (evoked by the satyrs and the actual support of the images) and to civic ritual (evoked by the horsemen and the armed youths).

The same argument applies to the other *band cup* with a Dionysian subject¹⁷⁴, which on one side has a thiasos with satyrs and nymphs dancing around Dionysos who has a drinking horn in his hand, in front of a veiled female holding a wreath: once again a ritual situation, but this time explicitly nuptial. On side B various battle episodes can be seen: in the centre a duel between hoplites and on the sides young horsemen and foot soldiers. The theme of the young horseman in a military setting reappears both on a cup of hybrid shape (Little Master but with a foot of the Siana type)¹⁷⁵ and on kylikes of the new A type but without eyes¹⁷⁶.

The most original of the kylikes by the Amasis Painter has an enigmatic as well as a rough decoration¹⁷⁷. The shape is essentially the same as the eye cup by Exekias, slightly simplified¹⁷⁸. On one side a single eye is depicted, which is additionally the body of an enormous siren, who, with unfolded wings and open arms, fills all the available space. It is impossible to say for certain to whom her gestures and the whole figure refer: to the dogs defecating between the attachments of the handles, to the two males lying down on the other side, or else to whoever is looking at the image from the outside. Beazley's explanation, often repeated¹⁷⁹, is that the Amasis Painter had wished to parody Exekias' invention. To go further it would be

¹⁷⁴ Louvre F 75: Beazley Addenda 46 (156.81); LIMC III.2, Dionysos 714.

¹⁷⁵ Louvre CA 2918: Beazley Addenda 46 (157.85).

¹⁷⁶ Mainz 88: Beazley Addenda 46 (157); Dallas 1981.170: Beazley Addenda 46 (157).

¹⁷⁷ Boston 10.651: Beazley Addenda 46 (157.86).

¹⁷⁸ Bothmer 1985, 222: "The foot is of type A but lacks the fillet between the stem and bowl".

¹⁷⁹ Bothmer 1985, 222; Boardman 1974, 55.

necessary to be able to grasp with precision the meaning of the siren. The iconographical contexts place her in different settings¹⁸⁰: musical, funerary, but also Dionysian and erotic. So the combination on the same vase with the two symposiasts lying down intent on masturbating “in concert”¹⁸¹ is no surprise. This figuration is unique and even in the production of Athens has no direct precedents: however, let us remember some significant examples already present in the first half of the century in Corinthian and Boeotian pottery¹⁸², where, unlike Attic painting, which attributes this type of practice to satyrs¹⁸³, Dionysian dancers are the masturbators. However, the physical affinity of these two symposiasts with the dancers is noteworthy: this is adequately shown by the protruding belly, the bent legs and the gesture that the person on the left is making to tickle his buttocks. Note also, in the latter, his satyr-like aspect and the garland on his chest reminiscent of the one worn by the satyrs on the skyphos with a thiasos at Rhodes already discussed¹⁸⁴. The symmetrical arrangement of the two masturbators seems to be an intended reference to the eyes of the eye cups; as we know, these eyes can be of satyrs and make the transformation of anyone using the cup into a satyr. All this is not enough to decipher correctly the meaning of the whole: but it justifies the hypothesis that this kylix by the Amasis Painter also wished to allude to symposial metamorphoses: but unlike Exekias, who expresses himself in solemn language, he intends to emphasise the typical sexual and parodistic atmosphere of the symposium.

The atmosphere of the symposium is also present, even if in more neutral forms, in the *last two Dionysian cups by the Amasis Painter*. The first¹⁸⁵ shows a gorgoneion in the centre between the eyes made very conspicuous with white added to the pupils, on one side a komast, running with a small jug and a kantharos decorated with ivy branches in his hands, on the other a woman holding a lyre and a drooping ivy branch. The second cup, from its shape to be attributed to the end of the painter’s career¹⁸⁶, has no eyes. On one side can be seen

¹⁸⁰ LIMC VIII Suppl. s.v. Seirenes (E. Hofstetter).

¹⁸¹ Hedreen 1992, 130.

¹⁸² Chapter II: On masturbation in Greek culture see Licht 1926, 23–25.

¹⁸³ Hedreen 1992, 159f.

¹⁸⁴ Rhodes 11131: discussed on p. 50.

¹⁸⁵ Vatican 369a: Beazley Addenda 46 (157.87).

¹⁸⁶ Oxford 1939.118: Beazley Addenda 46 (157.89).

a bearded male running towards the right, his head wreathed in ivy, turning towards the left and holding a spear and an aryballos in his right hand. The corresponding figure on the other side is a male dressed only in a little cloak, with an oinochoe in his hand.

However, original, the Amasis Painter does not add new elements to the kylikes, as he had done in the amphorae. But through the Boston cup he takes us to a symposial atmosphere, which is explicitly sexual in character.

Phallic kylikes

To this setting belong the only two aryballoi decorated in black figure by Attic painters, to which we will return, and a strange group of cups, almost all eye cups, which have a penis instead of the usual foot¹⁸⁷. They belong to about 520 BCE or slightly later: *the best-known example is the one now in Oxford*¹⁸⁸. The external decoration shows, between the eyes, the frontal face of a satyr framed by ivy branches, while in the area of the handles grapevines loaded with bunches of grapes are growing. Inside there is a gorgoneion in the centre surrounded by a rich symposium scene: six mature table-companions are half lying in the shadow of a vine, served by a young cupbearer. Besides the consumption of wine, to which the cups and the kantharos in the hands of the symposiasts allude, the most typical elements of the image are music—with table-companion E playing the aulós and table-companion D singing¹⁸⁹—and homoerotic love, shown by the attitude of the couple of symposiasts B and C¹⁹⁰ and from the fact that table-companion A is about to throw a sandal towards the boy approaching with a jug¹⁹¹. To realise the homoerotic significance of these phallic kylikes even better, it is sufficient to imagine how they were actually used. This is evident from the figuration

¹⁸⁷ Boardman 1976, 287 nos. 19–21; Johansen 1976, 108 n. 31.

¹⁸⁸ Oxford 1974.344: Boardman 1976, 281–290; Lissarrague 1987, 56.

¹⁸⁹ Boardman 1976, 285 fig. 8.

¹⁹⁰ B has only a few hairs on his chin like some of the ephebes on amphorae by the Amasis Painter, see p. 138f.

¹⁹¹ To the comments by Boardman 1976, 286 on the erotic significance of throwing the sandal can now be added those by Weiss 1996 (with corrections to Boardman's list on p. 167 n. 87). The erotic symbolism of the sandal is also shown by the iconography of weddings: Oakley/Sinos 1993, *passim* (especially 33) and Säflund 1970, 105ff.

itself: in fact, the cups depicted were held not by the handles but by the foot. A phallic cup was held in the same way: the foot in the shape of a penis would be in the hand of the drinker: in this way the kylix was no longer only a device for drinking but also for erotic stimulation.

Apart from this peculiarity, the whole decoration of this cup supports and confirms what we have derived from the analysis of the kylikes by the Kallis Painter, Exekias and by the Amasis Painter: the equivalence, in the symposium, of wine and music¹⁹², the vine as a sign of happiness¹⁹³, death at the centre of symposial happiness¹⁹⁴. If ivy and the vine allude to a journey of metamorphoses, this journey foresees the coming into being of a satyr-like identity by means of the phallus: it is enough to note the correspondence, in the aspect of the kylix as a whole¹⁹⁵, between the satyr's face, the eyes and the penis. It can be emphasised that this correspondence belongs organically to the Greek mentality as also documented by tragedy in the case of Oedipus (and others)¹⁹⁶.

The cup in Oxford is quite close to *the phallic cup in Paris*, which, however, is not an eye cup and has suffered heavy modern interference¹⁹⁷. The outside shows, at least on the ancient side, a single scene with six naked heterosexual couples, in various positions but all standing, all engaged in making love in the shade of luxuriant grapevines. A single, smaller person is crouching alone beneath one of the attachments of the handles. In the centre of the inside there is a gorgoneion surrounded by a different scene, although it also takes place in the shadow of grapevines. For certain there is a male character seated on a diphros, Dionysos perhaps, in front of whom

¹⁹² Lissarrague 1987, 119–133.

¹⁹³ As we have suggested in respect of the Tyrrhenian amphorae, see p. 152.

¹⁹⁴ On the connection between love and death and between love and music at the symposium: Calame 1996, 49ff.

¹⁹⁵ Boardman 1976, 282 fig. 1–3.

¹⁹⁶ Edmunds 1986, 237f.: “The myth suggests this tripartite body by means of three relationships—between feet and genitals, between eyes and genitals, and between eyes and feet”. In fact it is the foot of the cup that is transformed into a phallus and it is not by chance that we call the support of the vase a foot, cf. Boardman 1976, 288: “The general principle of treating a vase as a human body . . . is of considerable antiquity. We acknowledge the propriety of it by our naming of parts of a vase . . . and the Greeks did the same”.

¹⁹⁷ Louvre F 130bis: Boardman 1976, 287 no. 20. Cf. the text concerning pl. 109, 5.8–11 in the CV Louvre 10, 97. This can be compared with the similar scene on a band cup: Berlin 1798: Calame 1996, 86f. pl. I.

is a male figure, possibly a satyr, playing the aulós. The company comprises of at least a mule-rider, a wine-skin bearer, other satyr-like characters and dancing women. They are all moving from left to right; only the seated figure is inclined the other way. Evidently we are in the presence of the mule-rider motif: but it is not clear whether on the mythical level, that is with Hephaistos¹⁹⁸ or on the ritual level. This figuration is reminiscent of a similar one on a *cup with a normal foot signed by the potter Nikosthenes*¹⁹⁹. In the central medallion, instead of the gorgoneion there is a Gorgon, running. The rest of the inside shows, between grapevines loaded with bunches of grapes, a male character seated with a drinking horn, who could be Dionysos, surrounded by a thiasos formed of two dancing women and three ithyphallic satyrs, one of whom is carrying a wine-skin and a second is playing the aulós. Here too Dionysian happiness is evoked, but on a mythical rather than a ritual level. This kylix can be set alongside *one with a picture of a grape harvest* no less rich than those already seen on amphorae²⁰⁰.

Fig. 118–120

Yet another decoration is to be found on a *third phallic kylix*²⁰¹ on the inside of which is only a gorgoneion and on the outside two different figurations between eyes. On one side we see a symposiast lying down with a kantharos in his hand, Dionysos himself or a mortal who is identified with him and, in front of the kline, a young woman in the act of pouring from a jug. Behind the kline is a grapevine with bunches of grapes. The setting is the same on the other side. But here are seen, on a single symposial kline, two naked couples who, in different positions, are giving themselves with obvious pleasure to erotic play while under the little table a white dog is gnawing a bone just as voluptuously. Note ivy plants here as well to complement the vine, although they are placed in the area of the handles.

The *fourth phallic kylix*²⁰² is smaller in size but executed more realistically. The decoration is also reduced, with a gorgoneion on the inside and a male figure between eyes on the outside²⁰³.

¹⁹⁸ See p. 84.

¹⁹⁹ Louvre F 124: Beazley Addenda 60 (232.15); LIMC III.2, Dionysos 405. On the outside there is only the potter's signature between flower buds.

²⁰⁰ Cab. Méd. 320: Beazley Addenda 102 (389); Lissarrague 1987 fig. 6; Hamdorf 1986, 64 fig. 19; LIMC III.2, Dionysos 407.

²⁰¹ Berlin F 2052: Boardman 1976, 287 no. 19; Johansen 1976, 103 fig. 38.

²⁰² Compiègne 1098: Boardman 1976, 287 no. 21.

²⁰³ Neither the set of photographs published in CV Compiègne pl. 11, 8.11 nor the corresponding text by M. Flot provide enough information to understand the images: but it seems that one of the ephebes is masturbating.

Although the phallic kylikes represent a tiny group in the totality of contemporary Attic cups, they confirm the general meaning of the decorative system of the eye cups from Exekias, which can be summed up, as we have seen, by the concept of symposial happiness: happiness connected with a metamorphosis and so with a death. More than the normal kylikes they point to the fact that this happiness also lies in sexual pleasure. The sexuality of the symposium, however playful and uninhibited, is then a phenomenon that belongs, no less than other phenomena we would consider nobler and more appropriate, to the sphere of religion²⁰⁴. This certainly does not exclude that these facts could be turned into irony: even heavy irony about the gods is not equivalent, for antiquity, to blasphemy. It is sufficient to consider how the figure of Dionysos himself could be presented in the *Frogs* by Aristophanes. The combination of the eyes, the “look of wine”, with the phallus wants to say, either seriously or jokingly—the symposial setting makes fluctuation from one register to another easy²⁰⁵—that sexual experience also, like the consumption of wine and like poetry²⁰⁶, makes one see fully, that is, able to see beyond appearances.

Figured aryballoi

Attic cups have brought us into the explicitly sexual atmosphere of the symposium in which heterosexual and homosexual and even autoerotic practices live together on an absolutely equal footing. Reconnecting with the second chapter of this study, we will now discuss at length Attic aryballoi together with the topic of masturbation. Especially in the 6th century, aryballoi are among the least frequent shapes in Attic pottery²⁰⁷. They are associated with the tradition of the Corinthian aryballos that had been, as we may remember, the most common support of the motif of the pot-bellied dancer²⁰⁸. We have already noted that this type of vase clearly belongs to the male sphere, as shown for example by the images of young

²⁰⁴ On the religious significance of the symposium see also Lissarrague 1987, 31f.

²⁰⁵ Cf. the relationship between elegy and iamb in the symposium: Gentili 1995, 45ff.

²⁰⁶ This is also how the terracotta phalloi decorated with eyes can be understood: Steinhart 1995, 82ff.

²⁰⁷ Boardman 1974, 190.

²⁰⁸ See p. 20.

athletes and warriors with the aryballos as an attribute on amphorae by the Amasis Painter²⁰⁹. In consideration of this and also of the hypothesis that has become increasingly consistent in the course of this analysis, that the figure of the satyr is equivalent to the Dionysian dancer during the symposium, “lapsing” back to a wild, semi-animal state, the origin of this type of unguent-vase becomes significant: the aryballos in pottery reproduces the little leather bag taken from the testicles of the young ram²¹⁰. Therefore, the link between this container of perfumed oils and the sexual sphere is prefigured by its very genesis.

Fig. 121

We have seen, in respect of the amphorae with Dionysos among ephebes by the Amasis Painter that ephebes belong to both the worlds of hunting and athletics²¹¹. These are indeed present on the *aryballos* by the Amasis Painter²¹², one of only two black figure aryballoi with a figured decoration, dated to the decade between 550 and 540 BCE²¹³. In view of the favour that Dionysos enjoys among ephebes in the work of this painter, it is no surprise to find him again in the scene on the outer side of the handle. Dionysos, wreathed as usual in ivy, is on the left with a kantharos in one hand while with the other he is making a gesture of greeting, a gesture emphatically reciprocated by two dancers—one an ephebe, the other bearded—who approach him from the right. Neither of the two have the ears or tail of a satyr: but their affinity with the dancing couple which we met on two of the Boeotian tripod pyxides, presumably a generation older²¹⁴, is not accidental. The two types of vase in question, the aryballos and the tripod pyxis, are in fact also similar in function as they are unguent-vases of the symposium and masculine. On one of the pyxides²¹⁵, one of the dancers is masturbating; the other has become a satyr: and the two scenes can be understood as successive phases of the same process.

²⁰⁹ See p. 139. The prevalent (but not exclusively) male and athletic connotation of the aryballos is also valid for the few Attic red figure examples: Schwarz 1983, 29.

²¹⁰ Hommel 1978.

²¹¹ See p. 143.

²¹² New York 62.11.11: Beazley Addenda 45 (155).

²¹³ Isler 1994, 113.

²¹⁴ See p. 36. The couple of fighters positioned precisely under the handle of the aryballos corresponds, in turn, to the couple of boxers on Boeotian pyxides Berlin 1727 and Dallas 1981.170.

²¹⁵ Athens 938: discussed on p. 37.

The affinity of the aryballos with male sexuality and symposial autoeroticism is confirmed by the direct predecessor of the aryballos just considered, *signed by the potter Nearchos*²¹⁶, dating to about 560 BCE, executed with extreme accuracy. The body of the little vase is decorated with half-moons; mythological figurations in miniature appear only on the edges of the lip and the handle: the fight of the pygmies with the cranes and—one could say in the position of spectators—Hermes and Perseus. In the same position as in the scene just considered by the Amasis Painter, there are three satyrs masturbating. The one in the centre in the frontal position has a masked face, turned towards the outside; the two lateral satyrs appear symmetrical in profile. The image could not be more explicit nor could it appeal to anyone looking at it. The same applies to the inscriptions placed between the figures, which are, from left to right, as follows: Chairei Dophios (the masturbator is glad), Terpekelos (the one who enjoys his own arrow) and Psolas (from Psolos which has the same meaning as Dophios)²¹⁷. The signature of the potter is positioned visibly directly beneath this figuration to emphasise its pre-eminent rank among all the others on the vase.

Fig. 122–123

The motif of satyrs masturbating, not exceptional in pottery as documented especially by Tyrrhenian amphorae²¹⁸, is only emphasising the motif of the ithyphallic satyr turning his face towards whoever is looking at the image, met in the figurations of the mule-rider. Various readings of it have been proposed, as for example a scenic reading²¹⁹: images of this type would refer to theatrical plays with satyrs involved in comical or obscene activities. This interpretation of the satyrs implies the transfer of the whole satyr repertoire to the theatrical level but suffers the twofold defect of leaving unexplained both the ubiquity of satyrs in vase painting and their mythical meaning. Another interpretation, instead, which is more plausible, places the satyr in the setting of the symposium understood as a mirror and an antithesis of reality²²⁰. In addition, such a reading has the advantage of making clear the distance between Greek mental

²¹⁶ New York 26.49. Beazley Addenda 23 (83.4); Boardman 1988, 424f.; Stähli 1999, 169f.

²¹⁷ AJA 36, 1932, 272–275; BSA 32, 1931–2, 21.

²¹⁸ See p. 149f.; Schauenburg 1972, 29; Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 108ff. fig. 64f.

²¹⁹ Hedreen 1992, 27 n. 51; 125ff.

²²⁰ Cf. Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 111f.

categories, and therefore the moral values connected with sexuality, and our own culture²²¹.

The interpretation that emerges from our analysis is similar. If, as we have deduced from Boeotian figurations²²², the satyr is the mythological prototype of the Dionysian dancer, that is, of the participant in the symposium, then the ithyphallic or masturbating satyr could mark the metamorphosis of the young male from ephebe to satyr, from eromenos to erastes, from the passive to the active role in love²²³. Definite proof that such metamorphoses, to our eyes strictly individual and private, also had a social meaning in the Greek world comes from images such as the one of a homosexual couple performing in the presence of several male spectators on an amphora by Lydos²²⁴.

Many other images on vases show, as has been indicated above, that the display of sexuality was not taboo at all—at least, let us reiterate, in the setting of the symposium—so that the exhibition, however strong, of one's own sexuality could not be provocative²²⁵. In fact, like all human displays, it too had its divine patron, namely Dionysos²²⁶: which could explain the ritual wreath hanging on a satyr's phallus on a Tyrrhenian amphora²²⁷. Therefore, autoeroticism could have been one way to transfer oneself mentally to a condition

²²¹ Schauenburg 1972, 29. But see already Licht 1926, II 23; and the conclusion of vol. III 238. Calame 1996, 93: "the author adopts a position similar to Frontisi-Ducroux's when he proposes to see in the satyrs the visual expression of anomalous sexual behaviour, the parodistic antithesis of the normal eros of the gymnasium and the symposium. Therefore, in the symposium the figures of the athlete and the satyr would have a function analogous to elegiac poetry (of praise) or vice versa, iambic (of disapproval)". However, this interpretation does not take the distinction made by iconography between a wild and a tame satyr into account. See Chapter 3 and Isler-Kerényi 2004.

²²² See p. 39f.

²²³ Cantarella 1992, 65.

²²⁴ Cab. Méd. 206: discussed on p. 126f.

²²⁵ As Hedreen 1992, 158 and Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 108 claim. Proof that male sexuality as well as the penis on which it is focused, far from being made taboo, enjoyed special attention in the setting of the symposium—and not only in Athens—is given by the phallic kylikes already discussed and by a series of phallus-shaped unguent-vases of various workshops: Boardman 1976, 288f. with n. 26–28; Johansen 1976. In one case (97 fig. 31) the penis has been given the shape of a bull's head; cf. the Corinthian parallels Amyx 1988, 659f.

²²⁶ Cfr. Devereux 1950, 202: "The Mohave believe that every human activity, good, bad and indifferent, was originally instituted by the Gods. Masturbation is no exception to this rule...".

²²⁷ Purmann Coll.: Schauenburg 1972, 24 fig. 30. See p. 150 n. 219.

before civilisation: to “become a satyr”²²⁸, and by so doing to approach Dionysos like the dancers on the aryballos by the Amasis Painter. And they would express in a different way exactly the same content of masturbating satyrs on the aryballos by Nearchos. This transfer required certain ritualised forms: the vase images of satyrs, by their very nature never realistic but allusive, must then have had the function of “representing”, of making present to the spirit, the metamorphosis of the symposiast into a satyr; or of stimulating it.

Attic mastoi

At this point we must take another group of vases into consideration: drinking vessels in the form of a female breast. The idea goes back to Corinthian pottery: in Athenian production it was adopted only during a few decades in black figure, from 540 BCE to about the beginning of the 5th century²²⁹. This period coincides with the fashion of eye cups: among the mastoi, there are eye decorations. It is a phase of particular creativity in pottery, probably connected with a time when the institution of the symposium was exceptionally flourishing.

Regarding the shape of the vase, the question arises on what the practical meaning of the handles could be. When there are any, they are arranged asymmetrically: one horizontally, as on a cup, the other vertically, as on containers used for pouring. There are also different handles in some classes of skyphoi²³⁰, another symposial drinking vase that is more female in connotation²³¹: one can imagine that they were finalised at the symposium games²³². The mastos was used for playing—and not only at the symposium—as proved by the fact that, in some cases, before applying the nipple, the potter had inserted a small pearl into the base of the vase, which, when the vase is

²²⁸ Calame 1996, 147 interprets the satyrs similarly but, as a whole, negatively (the satyr is the symposiast when he is not as he should be): “... sous l’effet du vin consommé au-delà de la juste mesure, les pulsions transforment les convives du symposium en satyres...”; Stähli 1999, 168ff.

²²⁹ Boardman 1974, 188.

²³⁰ On contemporary skyphoi with various handles cf. Sparkes/Talcott 1970, 86f. fig. 4 and pl. 17.361.

²³¹ See p. 170f.

²³² On the games of the symposium see Lissarrague 1987, 66–82.

handled, makes a special sound²³³. One could say, then, that the pottery breast had two orientations: towards the symposium and towards the world of babies: even though used for drinking wine it also evoked maternal milk. In fact, milk had a special role in non-symposial Dionysian rituals²³⁴.

This twofold connotation of the mastos, both symposial and infantile, is confirmed by its decorative repertoire. Of the ten examples in a sufficient state of conservation collected by Greifenhagen²³⁵, six are decorated with Dionysian or at least symposial motifs, two have generic figurations from the military sphere, and two instead show fights by Herakles with dangerous animals, that is, representations of heroic aretè. The mastos, whether intended for the symposium or for babies, therefore remains predominantly with male connotations.

Among the Dionysian themes are attested the dancers, the male homoerotic couples in action, the mule-rider, dancing satyrs and nymphs. Satyrs, wild women and black men occur on another four mastoi, all by the painter Psiax, one of them with a white background²³⁶.

Fig. 124 Dionysos himself is present on both sides of the *specimen in Würzburg*²³⁷: seated on a diphros between dancing satyrs²³⁸ on one side, and conversing with a young woman holding two babies on the other. This last image and the amphorae with images of the twin-bearing mother are probably from between 540 and 510 BCE²³⁹. The relationship with Dionysos, which as we have seen is ambivalent, is still the same: this woman is also looking at the god while she is on the point of moving in the opposite direction. Here too the central couple—but the woman is more at the centre than Dionysos—is set between dancing and gesticulating satyrs, like those surrounding the seated

²³³ Mertens 1979, 23.

²³⁴ Graf 1980, 214f.; Ricciardelli Apicella 1992, 33ff.; Camassa 1994, 177; Schlesier 1994.

²³⁵ Greifenhagen 1977, 135ff. His no. 7 in the catalogue is attested only in a tiny fragment without figured decoration, whereas no. 12 must be deleted. To this series about another ten can be added: Mertens 1979, 23 n. 16.

²³⁶ Mertens 1979, 22–30.

²³⁷ Würzburg L 391: Beazley Addenda 68 (262.45); Greifenhagen 1977, 136 no. 4; LIMC III.2, Ariadne 159.

²³⁸ The satyr playing the aulós on the left of Dionysos has horse's hooves like the satyrs by Kleitias on the François krater and so is far removed from the usual typology.

²³⁹ See pp. 117–121.

figure on the other side of the vase: we are now, clearly, in the setting of the symposium. But besides the satyrs there is also, on the right edge of the scene, Hermes. In the twin-bearing mother series, the joint presence of Hermes and satyrs is attested by the hydria²⁴⁰: in that connection it was suggested that Hermes and the satyrs allude to the harsh alternative—death or demotion—facing the women, who, because of the twins, had been considered adulteresses. The fact that the type of figuration appears, in this case, on a mastos, a shape with prevalently symposial connotations, confirms the hypothesis, also expressed on the basis of the iconographic link of this woman with Aphrodite, that the mothers of twins were destined for this setting.

To conclude we can say that the mothers of twins, perhaps to be identified with Ariadne, belong together with Semele to the group of Dionysian women of problematic status, since they oscillate between the “normal” condition of matron and nymph. Once again we get the impression that these non-standard women, or at least of uncertain status, constituted a problem for the archaic polis. The order of the polis was founded on the univocal and balanced distribution of roles between various categories of citizens, male and female: precisely because of its competence as guarantor of the institutions, the god capable of resolving critical situations, such as the case of the twin-bearing mother, can only have been Dionysos. Unfortunately, written information on the manner in which such critical situations in everyday life were resolved is missing, as in many other cases concerning real life in ancient Athens.

One of the mastoi²⁴¹ is decorated on both sides by eyes surrounded by vine branches which start from the area of the handles. On the two sides of the intertwined grapevines are two small satyrs. They remind us of similar satyrs such as on the kylix that we have interpreted in mystery terms²⁴², or in depictions of Dionysian happiness on amphorae, where we find them in the foliage of the vineyard of Dionysos²⁴³. The meaning of the mastoi as a whole will have been similar to the meaning of phallic cups: Dionysian happiness is equivalent

²⁴⁰ Art market: Christie's Geneva, Sale catalogue of 5.5.1979, 21 no. 61.

²⁴¹ London B 376: Greifenhagen 1977, 136f. no. 10 pl. 39, 1–3.

²⁴² Naples Stg. 172: discussed on p. 165ff.

²⁴³ Munich 1562: KdS 330, 56.7.

to a metamorphosis that can be induced either by wine or by sexuality, or by both. An important aspect of this condition consists in looking and seeing in a different and deeper way than happens in everyday life. Considering the symposial use of these objects, it is possible that this meaning is presented ironically: like the phallic cups the mastoi could allude to the Bacchic mysteries and at the same time parody them. But, unlike the phallic cups, the mastoi, besides their twofold function of drinking vessel and erotic stimulus, were reminders of childhood: and this condition is also Dionysian in every sense, belonging to a period of a man's lifetime that is marked by a series of phases and corresponding crises of passage. In fact, a baby could be considered a future symposiast²⁴⁴. And for an adult the symposium could be the occasion for recalling phases and conditions of the past life.

Head-kantharoi and Ionian Little Master cups

At this point we are examining a group of vases in Ionia that attest a way of imagining Dionysian effects similar to the ideas circulating in Athenian symposia; even—in view of the Etruscan provenance of most of the examples known—possibly also in Italy. It is a fairly homogeneous series—as they are in part obtained from the same mould²⁴⁵—of Janus-shaped kantharoi in the form of a human head attributed to Samian production and dated to the decade 540–530 BCE²⁴⁶. Among the human types there are the young male²⁴⁷, the satyr²⁴⁸ and the young woman²⁴⁹. The young bearded male, who is wearing earrings, reminds us of the anonymous partner wearing a

Fig. 125–126

²⁴⁴ A hypothesis allowed by the images of babies on the famous “Choenkannen” of the 5th century, cf. Hamilton 1992, 117: “... the child... playing... with the grapes that will eventually become the wine, just as he will eventually (we hope) grow up to take part in the Choes contest”. Cf. the review Isler-Kerényi 1995. Cf. also Daraki 1985, 87: “Moitié divin, moitié animal, l'enfant est un petit satyre qui se passe de déguisement”.

²⁴⁵ Walter-Karydi 1973, no. 480 (Boston 98.925), 482 (Berlin F 4013), 483 (Berlin F 4012), 484 (Munich 2014), 486 (Florence V 26).

²⁴⁶ Walter-Karydi 1973, 30f. with pl. 55–57.

²⁴⁷ Walter-Karydi 1973, nos. 480, 482 and, perhaps, fragment no. 485 (London 86.4–1.1324).

²⁴⁸ Walter-Karydi 1973, nos. 481 (Louvre H 42).

²⁴⁹ Walter-Karydi 1973, nos. 483 and 484.

small necklace of the young woman on the Droop cup decorated with human busts by the Kallis Painter²⁵⁰. Like the motifs of human busts and eyes, the kantharoi with human heads express, concisely and efficiently, the importance in a Dionysian setting of expressing oneself and communicating.

The other decorative motifs present in the series, rows of ducks and dolphins, are on the inner side of the rim, and so would have direct contact with the liquid contents of the vase. The dolphins evoke, as we have suggested in respect of the cup by Exekias²⁵¹, a mode of existence that fluctuates between two elements. The ducks could have a similar meaning: but instead of water and air, the elements are water and earth. Among the supplementary motifs of the decoration on the outer rim, there are also plants: ivy and laurel, both taken, like the dolphins, from the repertoire of the Little Master kylikes of Samian production²⁵². The laurel is a new element in our documentation. A fragmentary Little Master Samian cup²⁵³ with a laurel bush between young horse-riders suggests that this plant was linked with the ephebic and military setting. This setting is evoked in the production along with the setting of the hunt and in combination with dolphins, i.e. with the sea²⁵⁴.

If we agree with Walter-Karydi that the Samian kantharoi have come from the same workshops as the Little Master cups, and in view of the Dionysian repertoire of the latter and of slightly earlier or more recent related kylikes, a repertoire that includes the Dionysian dancers²⁵⁵, a satyr playing the aulós²⁵⁶, the mule-rider²⁵⁷ or the centaur²⁵⁸, we can deduce from it a fundamental identity with Attic

²⁵⁰ Athens 17873: see p. 163f. above. The latter can also be matched with those on the upper panel of a Rhodian jug from the first half of the century: Walter-Karydi 1973, 133 no. 530 (Rhodes).

²⁵¹ Munich 2044: see p. 171ff. above.

²⁵² Walter-Karydi 1973, pl. 45–54.

²⁵³ Athens SA 2295: Walter-Karydi 1973, 129 no. 439.

²⁵⁴ Bonn, privately owned and Vienna 279: Walter-Karydi 1973, 129 nos. 446 and 447.

²⁵⁵ Walter-Karydi 1973, 127 no. 335b (Vathy, Samos) and 128 no. 419 (Louvre F 68).

²⁵⁶ Walter-Karydi 1973, 129 no. 445 (Alexandria Egypt 17047 and 17145) and 130 no. 475 (Vathy, Samos).

²⁵⁷ Walter-Karydi 1973, 130 no. 475 (Vathy, Samos): apparently, fragments of an eye cup.

²⁵⁸ Walter-Karydi 1973, 129 nos. 446a (Bonn) and 447 (Vienna, Kunsthinst. Museum 279).

Dionysian conceptions of the symposium. It is not a coincidence that the combination of the gorgoneion with dolphins²⁵⁹, reminiscent of the inner decoration of the cup by Exekias, is found here in the inner panel of a cup, coming from at the latest the middle of the century. Consequently we can conclude that the symposial metaphors, reciprocal and intersecting, used by Exekias to evoke the Dionysian metamorphoses induced by wine, but also by music, were then well known well beyond Athens.

However, we do not wish to ignore subjects present on Ionian cups but missing from the Attic repertoire: such as, on the cup with a gorgoneion just mentioned, winged male characters that are revolving as if swimming around the gorgoneion. It is no accident that they remind us of the erotes in figurations of the Laconian symposium: in fact, we know of the links that existed between pottery production in Sparta and in Samos around the middle of the century²⁶⁰. On the other hand, at this point it is not necessary to explain why it came that Eros and the erotes were imagined to be present at the symposium.

A completely new and exceptional figure is the person between the trees on the inside of the *best known of the Samian cups*²⁶¹. In order to understand the meaning of this image we would need to identify the trees. We cannot exclude their being ivy plants or that the painter wished simply to evoke the poetry of nature in flower in which plants and animals live in perfect harmony with mankind. It needs to be emphasised that we are faced with an intense evocation of the perfect happiness of the symposium no less intense than in the Exekias cup. However, it is not a permanent, abstract state of being, but transient and fluctuating, again emphasised here by the anonymity of the person.

Chalcidian eye cups

At the end of this chapter we will discuss at length a production that has turned out to be of particular interest in light of the reading proposed here of the cup by the Kallis Painter in terms of mystery²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Walter-Karydi 1973, 127 no. 35 (Vathy, Samos).

²⁶⁰ See p. 52.

²⁶¹ Louvre F 68; Walter-Karydi 1973, 36 no. 419.

²⁶² Naples Stg. 172: see p. 165ff.

and in light of the resulting new evaluation of the eye motif on Attic cups. After Attic and Corinthian pottery, Chalcidian pottery is the richest in respect of figurative repertoire and therefore has a privileged status in pottery studies²⁶³. The most disputed question concerns the centre of production, about which diverse proposals have been made in the course of research²⁶⁴, from Chalkis in Euboea (hence the name of the style), to Eastern Greece, to Italy. The finds of recent decades suggest that the most likely centre is Rhegion in Magna Grecia²⁶⁵. The production of figured pottery in the various workshops of Rhegion began in about 570 BCE and came to an end at the close of the century²⁶⁶. Both the choice of shapes and the figurative repertoire correspond in broad outline to those in other Greek centres, even if with peculiar preferences. For us it is important to note that Dionysian themes are present already in the earliest phases of this production and include almost all the main types: grotesque dancers²⁶⁷, the thiasos of satyrs and nymphs (but without Dionysos)²⁶⁸, the mule-rider (with Dionysos)²⁶⁹, and the symposium²⁷⁰. There is an original figuration on a refresher-amphora from the first phase of Chalcidian pottery²⁷¹. In the largest panel one can see a satyr, fat and hairy, crouching in ambush behind a palm-tree in the centre of the image, observing a dancing nymph to the right. The

²⁶³ The "canonical" treatment is by Rumpf 1927, a model for the completeness of its photographic display, completed by Iozzo 1994, who makes all the material available that has emerged since 1927. There is a brief summary by Boardman 1998, 217–219.

²⁶⁴ Isler 1983, 17.

²⁶⁵ Iozzo 1994, 251; Isler 1983, 17 n. 6. Likewise now also Boardman 1998, 217.

²⁶⁶ Iozzo 1994, 150.

²⁶⁷ Examples: Amphorae Leiden 1626 (Rumpf 1927 pl. 2; Boardman 1998, 238 fig. 472) and Vienna 1041 (Rumpf 1927 pl. 209).

²⁶⁸ Examples: Amphorae Leiden 1626 (see previous note), Basle Kä 417 (Iozzo 1994, 15 with bibliography that needs correcting: Schefold 1960, p. 164 no. 153) and Vatican 224 (Rumpf 1927, pl. 206); krater Brussels A 135 (Rumpf 1927, pl. 27; LIMC VIII Suppl., Nymphai 41a); one-handled tankards Brussels A 3599 and New York 1981.11.4 (Iozzo 1994, pl. 12 and 13/4).

²⁶⁹ Amphora New York 1956.171.1: Iozzo 1994, 50 pls. 38–39. See also Iozzo 1994, 99f.

²⁷⁰ Side B of the amphora mentioned in the preceding n.; skyphos Copenhagen 64 (Rumpf 1927, pls. 37–39); amphora in the Churchill coll. (Rumpf 1927, pls. 52–53): these symposiasts are copying, in an exaggerated way, the symposiasts on Attic kylikes of the Siana type.

²⁷¹ Rome, Villa Giulia 50410 (Castellani 47); Rumpf 1927 pls. 118–119; Simon 1976, 63 fig. 40; Boardman 1998, 242 fig. 477; LIMC VIII.2, Nymphai 43.

situation is reminiscent of the one on the slightly older fragmentary Attic dinos²⁷² and attests a similar conception of Dionysian characters, documented in this vase also by the combination of this image with an extract from the Judgment of Paris (three women in the retinue of Hermes), a “nuptial” subject, on the other side. Even more noteworthy is the originality of the rendering of the satyr in respect of the Attic model, confirmed by the following Chalcidian images of satyrs: their most peculiar characteristics are large heads with thick hair, beards and a general aspect that is at once wild and comical.

The best known Dionysian decoration of Chalcidian production is found on an *extremely accurate eye cup* generally dated to about 530 BCE²⁷³. On the outside, besides the eyes, the ears and the satyr-like nose (which are typical of Chalcidian cups), a panther’s face can be seen in the centre, and on the sides of the attachments of the handles, erotic couples of satyrs and nymphs in various positions. Under the handle, a bird in the air and another on the ground show that the scene is in the open. The inside of the cup is more original, with a satyr mask instead of the gorgoneion in the central medallion and, along the rim, a band with rich mythological scenes. The first image contains marine and symposial allusions: in fact, the subject is the story of Phineus whose food the Harpies stole: they were pursued on the waves of the sea by the Boreads. In this scene, Phineus, lying on his kline and surrounded by standing elegant young women, one of whom holds a flower, is a symposiast manqué. On the right the scene has changed. Under a palm-tree in the shade of a dense ivy plant are three crouching nymphs, intent on washing themselves after removing their clothes, unaware of the two satyrs beyond the palm-tree approaching stealthily from the right hoping to surprise them. No notice is taken of all this by the couple Dionysos and Ariadne (?), standing solemnly on a cart pulled by a lion, a panther and two stags going towards a monumental fountain in the shade of a grapevine on the right. One of the two satyrs noisily accompanying the divine couple is expressing, one could say, his surprise at having found water²⁷⁴, the other is performing obscene acro-

²⁷² Athens, Agorà P 334, discussed on p. 65f.

²⁷³ Würzburg 354 (L 164): Rumpf 1927 pl. 40–44; Boardman 1998, 243 fig. 479; LIMC III.1, 487 Dionysos 763 and VIII.2 Nymphae 71.

²⁷⁴ According to a hypothesis of Simon 1980, 288, miraculously turned into wine.

batics on the lion's back. The atmosphere pervading the two scenes is one of erotic tension as well as joy derived from peace in nature (symbols of which are the four animals drawing the car, normally incompatible with each other and with this role): the symposial utopia expressed by many Attic cups from the same period.

This kylix is the best known—and the only one that also has internal decoration—of a series of Chalcidian eye cups²⁷⁵ which, according to what was originally thought, seems to precede the Attic cups. Instead the latter were inspired by the former (although retaining certain characteristics of their own, including the low splayed foot like the base of a column)²⁷⁶. Here the eyes are always those of a satyr, clearly an allusion to the metamorphosis of the symposiast into a satyr as with the mask in the centre of the cup by Phineus²⁷⁷. When figures are added to the eyes and sometimes to the ivy branches in the area of the handles, they are always satyrs and nymphs²⁷⁸. In one case the eyes are simultaneously the ship's sails²⁷⁹: an idea that reminds us of the ship on the cup by Exekias²⁸⁰ and the games of substitution and slippage among the various Dionysian symbols—marine, symposial, erotic, musical—present on many other Attic kylikes contemporary with the Chalcidian ones. The transformation of the ivy branch on the sides of the handles into a serpent is a similar game, but original compared to the Attic variants²⁸¹.

However, in two cases it is more surprising to find a large and elegant kantharos between the eyes²⁸², the handles of which, as on the Naples kylix²⁸³ actually touch the rim of the vase. There is a kantharos only on one of the sides, which emphasises its superior rank to other ornamental motifs. On the other side there is either simply a nose, or²⁸⁴ a siren: which instead reminds us of the enormous

Fig. 127

²⁷⁵ Rumpf 1927 pls. 177–190; Iozzo 1994 pls. 89–96.

²⁷⁶ Boardman 1998, 217; Iozzo 1994, 83f.

²⁷⁷ The permeability between the mythical and divine levels is evident even if erotic couples on this kylix are compared with human erotic couples on a cup on Madrid 10909: Rumpf 1927, pl. 44.

²⁷⁸ Cf. the list of cups in Rumpf 1927, 35ff. nos. 243–278.

²⁷⁹ Isler 1983, 21 and pl. 7, 3–5.

²⁸⁰ Munich 2044: discussed on p. 171ff.

²⁸¹ Madrid 10909: Rumpf 1927 pl. 44.2 and 183.

²⁸² Leipzig (with no number) and Louvre F 144: Rumpf 1927, pls. 188–189.

²⁸³ Stg. 172, discussed on p. 165ff.

²⁸⁴ Leipzig: Rumpf 1927, pl. 188.

siren with a body in the shape of an eye on the contemporary kylix by the Amasis Painter²⁸⁵. So the combination of the eyes with the kantharos on the Chalcidian cups confirms our hypothesis that there is a connection, in the setting of the symposium, between the formula of the eyes and the mystery institution: especially if we remember that the place where this pottery was made is in Magna Grecia, the region that has provided the greatest amount of documentation on mysteries²⁸⁶. And it shows clearly that the observed way of using the cup at a symposium was not peculiar to Athens but a custom spread throughout Greece and, in view of the area where the most prized pieces were found²⁸⁷, probably also Etruscan.

Conclusion

With the cups and the other symposial vases from the second half of the 6th century we are back in the setting of the symposium. The Dionysian repertoire coincides in part with the repertoire of the amphorae, but as a whole makes a more playful, more relaxed impression: it does not speak so much of heroes and memorable exploits nor of events that affect the proper working of the oikos. The polis counts for less: of more interest are things experienced by individuals and related emotions. In the foreground is the theme of sexuality in all its forms: hetero-, homo- and autoerotic. This does not constitute an innovation in respect of previous iconographic tradition. Instead, new and historically more relevant are figurative formulae and symbols that allude to mystery rituals, symptoms of a particular sensitivity for novel ritual experiences.

An argument that affects not only the strictly religious sphere but cultural interaction in general must have been the one concerning the eye: on seeing, on knowing by means of sight. It is not by chance that three cultural innovations emerged at the same time in Athens in the decade between 540 and 530 BCE: the eye cup, tragedy, and Bacchic initiations. Further on we will see, when connecting iconography with history, how plausible the last of the three is as well.

²⁸⁵ Boston 10.651: discussed on p. 188f.

²⁸⁶ Isler-Kerényi 1997c, 99.

²⁸⁷ From Vulci come both the cup by Exekias Munich 2044 and the one with Phineus Würzburg 354.

The comparison with Samian pottery and especially with “Chalcidian” pottery, i.e. from Magna Grecia, has then allowed us to grasp the vanguard position of the Attic capital in this respect: but on the other hand it illustrates also how the cultural innovations mentioned, more evident here than elsewhere, belong to the general course of Greek culture and its reflection on Dionysos.