



~ SATYRS & CENTAURS ~

Compare and contrast satyrs and centaurs. Explain the key differences.

In the modern mind it is convenient to assume that satyrs and centaurs were inextricably linked in ancient Greek mythology by their masculine, bestial, human-equine physiognomy—in short, their hybridised (*diphues*: ‘double-natured’) form. That Nonnus, writing his epic *Dionysiaca* in the 5th century AD, should reiterate the misconception that the companions of Dionysus, ‘the heroic breed of farscattered champions, the hairy Satyroi’ were of ‘the blood of the Kentauroi tribe’ would seem to forgive the modern inference.¹ Indeed, we find the connection to operate vice versa, for the particularly hospitable centaur, Pholos, is said to have been a ‘son of Silenos [father of the Satyrs] by a Melian nymph’.² Beyond these few references to similar ancestry, we find little in the vast repertoire of Greek myth to suggest that the ancient Greeks actually viewed satyrs and centaurs as being explicitly related. From the outset, the earliest literary references to the two creatures centre upon the polarity of their mythical contexts.³ Even so, we discover the relationship between these two hybrids to typify the complexities of Greek myth, so that even amongst these complexities, common denominators can be drawn from the prolific literary and artistic representations of both, such as a mutual affinity for wine and sex, or their allocation of specific social roles. Therefore a comparative study of the nature of the literary and artistic representations of satyrs and centaurs in these areas, can in turn allow us to determine the exact role and stigma these hybrids would have held in the Greek psyche and society as a whole; and thus their relative disparateness or resemblance to each other.

The predominant feature in the mythical representations of satyrs and centaurs is their propensity to experience that delightful and dangerous substance—wine—in its potent undiluted state: *akratos*. In this respect, both satyrs and centaurs similarly transgress the Greek custom of drinking wine exclusively in its diluted, mixed form, and in so doing, both are precluded from a distinctive trait of civility as they

¹ Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 13.43, trans. Rouse, W.H.D., (Cambridge, Mass., 1940-42). An example of the modern inference is seen in T.H. Carpenter (*Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art* (Oxford, 1986), pp.95-96) who generalises the artistic links between Dionysos, satyrs, and centaurs (such as their bushy beards in the Kleitias painter), to suggest that (1) the iconography of satyrs emerged from the centaur, and (2) that the Kleitias painter perhaps viewed satyrs, centaurs, and even Dionysos as “wild men from the north”. This view is decidedly too narrow, see Lissarrague, F., ‘On the Wildness of Satyrs’, in (eds) Carpenter, T.H. & Faraone, C.A., *Masks of Dionysus* (Ithaca, 1993), pp.212-213.

² Apollodorus, *The Library* 2.5.4, trans. Frazer, J.G., (Loeb: Cambridge, Mass., 1921).

³ On the one hand we have ‘the race of lazy good-for-nothing Satyrs’ in the *Catalogue of Women*—disassociated with any particular personage (i.e. Dionysos) or myth (Hesiod, frag.123, Merkelbach, R. & West, M.L., *Fragmenta Hesiodica* (Oxford, 1967), (quoted in Lissarrague, *op. cit.* (1993), p.208). On the other hand, we find Nestor describe the *strength* of the ‘beast men’ later known as centaurs (Homer, *Iliad* 1.260-272, trans. Lattimore, R. (Chicago, 1961); and the centaurs feature in the mythic battle with the Lapiths (Homer, *Iliad* 2.741-744 (catalogue of ships); *Odyssey* 21.295-304 trans. Lattimore, R. (New York, 1967); Hesiod, *Shield* 173-190 trans. Athanassakis, A.N., (Baltimore, 1983). Evidently, the satyr plays a subordinate role in the Greek consciousness, displaying the ignominious trait of ‘laziness’, without reference to its interaction with humanity or divinity; conversely, the centaur is found directly involved in struggles against humanity, where they display traits of activity, ‘strength’: a worthy opponent of the idealised male. Most notably, the satyr is not punished for its indolence, while the centaur is punished for its activity—its actions as the “Other” (as will be discussed below).

encounter the potentialities of wine as an agent of madness and death.⁴ Despite both the satyr and centaur sharing a mutual encounter with wine, the nature of the actual experiences had by them as a result of consuming it, sees the two hybrids radically diverge.

The satyr is markedly able to take wine, in all its potency, to its utmost extremities, and to little ill effect. For Silenos, father and eldest of the satyrs, is only lured into a trap by King Midas by the excess of wine in a veritable fountain.⁵ In Euripides' satyr-play *Cyclops*, where wine is the catalyst in the play's plot-progression,⁶ the notion of drinking to excess is reiterated and expanded. Silenos makes it clear that his thirst is not sated by a mere wine-skin,⁷ he needs more, so it comes as no surprise that upon discovering the regenerative properties of Odysseus' bottomless wineskin, he proclaims it to be 'the fountain of my youth!'.⁸ Moreover, the satyrs are only stirred out of their accumulated despondency as the slaves of the Cyclops on tasting the 'fine bouquet' proffered by Odysseus for trade.⁹ The wine (and the excessive consumption of it) is therefore not only a weakness of the satyr in its hypnotic irresistibility, but it also acts as a basic stimulant, a motivator, which allies the satyrs with Odysseus (at least superficially) against the Cyclops, and summons up the convivial character of the satyrs: inviting dancing, hospitality, and Dionysian imagery to the scene.¹⁰ The stimulating impact of wine on the satyr, is also a commonality on Greek vases, as we find numerous depictions of satyrs engaged in frenzied dances or acrobatics involving the tableware of the symposium, or more directly, with the wineskin, whereby they stretch the limits of the symposium.¹¹ So despite their indecorous consumption of it, wine is seen to permit and encourage the cultural transgressions of the satyr, as they become an 'expression of that radically Other element buried deep within every civilised man, which drinking can bring to light'.¹²

Above all, it is the inexhaustible sexual capacity of the satyr which is aroused by the presence of wine. We find in the *Cyclops* that wine is the catalyst for the satyrs' sexual activity, so that immediately after

⁴ Lissarrague, F., *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet. Images of Wine and Ritual*. (Princeton, 1990a), p.6: wine is both a poison and medicine, known by the Greek term *pharmakon*; see also pp.13-14 for the satyr's disparagement of the 'rules of decorous drinking'.

⁵ Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 1.22 (trans. Fairbanks); Herodotus, *Histories* 8.138.3 (trans. Godley); Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.4.5 (trans. Jones); Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 2.45c (trans. Gullick); Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 4.27 (trans. Conybeare): on Atsma, A.J., 'SILENUS: Greek god of drunkenness and wine-making; mythology; pictures; SEILENOS' (2000-2008): <http://www.theoi.com/Georgikos/Seilenos.html>

⁶ Konstan, D., 'An Anthropology of Euripides' *Kyklops*', in (eds) Winkler, J.J. & Zeitlin, F.I., *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context* (Princeton, 1990), pp.212-216.

⁷ Euripides, *Cyclops* 160, trans. McHugh, H., intro. & notes Konstan, D., (Oxford, 2001).

⁸ *ibid.*, 166. One might wonder whether Euripides drew upon the myth of Midas for the fountain image.

⁹ *ibid.*, 172.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 196-197 (Allied to Odysseus: 'To hell with the Cyclops!'); 44-49, 178-179, 227-232 (dancing & Dionysian procession); 185-190 (hospitality, but only toward Odysseus).

¹¹ See fig.7, 9 (for excessive consumption in contravention of the rules of the symposium) and 1-6 (for acrobatics/dancing antics induced by wine) cf. *The Anacreontea*, frg. 47, trans. Campbell: on Atsma, *op. cit.*, 'SILENUS...'. Here the use of wine implements in satyric dances in the 5th c. BC is intimated: 'I am an old man, but I drink more than the youngsters; and if I have to dance, I shall imitate Seilenos and dance in the middle of the ring, with my wine-flask as my support since my fennel stick is useless'.

¹² Lissarrague, *op. cit.*, (1990a), p.12.

Silenos tastes the wine of Odysseus, the language of the play is infused with sexual innuendo,¹³ and the valuable connection between wine and sex is established:

SILENOS: ‘...The man who doesn’t love a drink has got a few screws loose: one swig and look! Your stick stands up, your hand gets deep in cleavage and you start the breaststroke toward her burning bush, you’re dancing with the Nereids, nary a care in the world. I could kiss a drink like this!’¹⁴

Thus wine and sex are indubitably partners in the satyrs’ social vocabulary. Further still, in another satyr-play, Aeschylus’ *The Net-Draggers*, we find in one fragment, Danae and the infant Perseus washed up on an island, only to be confronted with Silenos and his satyrs, who attempt to coerce Danae into sexual intercourse.¹⁵ Indeed the literary evidence is permeated by the sexual voracity of the satyrs, which is then translated into the overt depictions found on Greek vases, where the satyr’s sexual capacity is enunciated by their exaggerated ithyphallic anatomy and the unusual means by which they fulfil their seemingly insatiable sexual appetites. To be sure, we again see wine literally partnering sex in representations of satyrs fulfilling their desires most unusually with wine amphorae, as the satyrs ‘confuse the neighbouring but separate domains of *eros* and drink’.¹⁶ Most significantly though, satyrs are rarely shown in heterosexual intercourse with maenads (their female counterparts), and it is more often the desire or pursuit of them which is shown, so that in the absence of suitable sexual partners, satyrs resort to the use of amphorae, animals, their fellow satyrs, or the practice of masturbation.¹⁷ Satyrs, for all their hypersexuality and visual virility, are in Greek eyes the representation of unfulfilled fantasies, of pursuit and desire for, but not the execution of the conventional Greek equation of sex.¹⁸ For as Lissarrague points out, the sexual world of the satyrs as contained in the vase, is close enough for the Greek male to project

¹³ Euripides, *Cyc.* 174-175 (SILENOS: ‘...I can smell some serious deflowering to come’); 200-209 (the Chorus of satyrs asks Odysseus whether he and his men took turns having intercourse with Helen of Troy, while also making the general statement: ‘Ah, womankind! I say let *all* of them go down on me – and preferably on *me!*’).

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 190-195 cf. 547-562; 647-661: in this episode the *Cyclops* also explores the various sexual appetites wine can induce, for the Cyclops is spurred by wine into raping Silenos in the manner of Ganymede.

¹⁵ Aeschylus, *The Net-Draggers* frg. 275 (Papyri Oxyrhynchus, no translator named): on Atsma, *op. cit.*, ‘SILENUS...’ cf. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.23.6, trans. Jones: on Atsma, A.J., ‘SATYRS: Greek nature spirits; rustic daemons; mythology; pictures: SATYROI, FAUNS...’ (2000-2008):

<http://www.theoi.com/Georgikos/Satyroi.html>. Pausanias describes the mythical islands called the ‘Satyrides’, inhabited by satyrs, which sailors would hurl a foreign woman onto, to prevent the satyrs raping their own women.

¹⁶ Lissarrague, F., ‘The Sexual Life of Satyrs’, in (eds) Halperin, D.M., et al., *Before Sexuality. The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Greek World* (Princeton, 1990b), p.61. See fig. 10-11.

¹⁷ See fig. 14 (for the pursuit of the female, in this instance the mule seems to be more successful, judging by the body language of the *hetaira*); 32 (another instance where the sexual intent of the satyr toward the female or maenad is shown but not fulfilled, we might even suggest that his fellow satyr intends to undertake intercourse with him if the attempt with the maenad fails); 10-11 (for the use of amphorae as vessels of *eros*); 12-13, 15-18 (for the satyr’s sexual association with animals); 21 (satyrs engaging in sexual intercourse with each other, and one satyr also possibly intends to involve the usually benign sphinx); 22 (satyrs masturbating, note the appropriate names). For the connection between wine and sex in imagery other than the explicit use of the wine amphorae, see fig.2, 5, 6, 9 (where wine vessels are seen in conjunction with erect phalli).

¹⁸ Lissarrague, *op. cit.* (1990b), p.57, 63, 66.

himself into it, yet far away enough so ‘that he is in no danger of confusing it with the world he inhabits’.¹⁹

Wine is evidently the genesis of all modes of activity for the satyr, it is their lifeblood, and hence why we find them depicted drinking to excess with little ill effect, wherein wine is undoubtedly their especial domain.²⁰ To comprehend the importance of this, we must consider the paradox of the Cyclops in the *Cyclops*. It is here that we find the traditional and communal use of wine in the symposium to be ironically advanced by the Cyclops—who disregards the fundamental Greek notion of *xenia* (hospitality) with regards to Odysseus and his men²¹—and yet wishes to share the wine amongst his ‘brothers’.²² Strangely then, for a brief moment, the Homeric role of monstrous “Other” ascribed to the Cyclops in the *Odyssey* is discarded by Euripides, as the wine is seen to have a civilising effect on the Cyclops.²³ In opposition to this, Silenos joins with Odysseus in successfully dissuading the Cyclops from the very idea of a cyclopean symposium.²⁴ Underlying this episode then, is the fact that the beast—in this case the Cyclops—is denied access to the Dionysian world and to civility, by the allied satyrs and Odysseus, just as he would deny it to them (by enslaving/eating them with his brothers). Thus both satyr and man share an inherent commonality in their exclusive claim over wine and its symbolic quality of civility, to the mutual exclusion of all others (especially “Others”).

Distinct from the satyr’s relatively benign anthropomorphic activities involving wine and sex, and their distinctive ithyphallic imagery, the centaur’s genitalia are comparatively muted in art,²⁵ while their experiences in these domains are characteristically violent, and have the tendency to pose a direct threat to Greek society. Further to this, centaurs—in their violent reactions toward humanity in the presence of wine—are like the Cyclops: decidedly excluded from the world of civilisation that wine has to offer. This is epitomised in the conflict that arises out of Herakles’ encounter with the centaur Pholos and his fellow centaurs, which stresses the propensity of the centaur to disregard the precepts of *xenia*. Although Pholos exhibits the expected hospitality toward Herakles, and even goes against his better judgement in opening the centaurs’ communal wine jar to fulfil his guest’s wishes, his brutish compatriots quickly arrive, and are angered by their wine being offered to an outsider. There follows a near formulaic ending: the centaurs destroy the hospitality of the banquet and jeopardise their only claim to civility—Chiron and

¹⁹ Lissarrague *op. cit.* (1990b), p.66.

²⁰ See fig. 7-9, esp. 8 (and image at top of page 1).

²¹ Euripides, *Cyc.* 335-339; Sutton, D.F., *The Greek Satyr Play* (Hain, 1980), p.146.

²² *ibid.*, 594-606 cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 9.345-370. In Homer’s original, the Cyclops only reaffirms his violation of *xenia* after tasting the wine: ‘Then I will eat Nobody after his friends, and the others I will eat first, and that shall be my guest-present to you’ (369-370).

²³ Konstan, D., *op. cit.*, pp.215-216.

²⁴ Euripides, *Cyc.* 607-636; earlier Silenos had offered up the lives of his satyr sons to the Cyclops as a guarantee of his word (293-299); See Sutton, *op. cit.*, p.139: in satyr-plays Silenos is typically ‘portrayed as a caricature of an unprincipled and self-seeking entrepreneur’. See fig.8 for a satyr who could very well be the Silenos from the *Cyclops* in a scene where he is either fulfilling his duties as the cupbearer of his Cyclops master, or intends to take a sip of his own.

²⁵ Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p.96; Lissarrague, *op. cit.*, (1993) p.214.

Pholos, who are both accidentally killed by the arrows of Herakles.²⁶ Hence the philosopher Xenophanes' was apparently justified when he was of the opinion that the symposium was no place for the brawls of Titans, Giants and *Centaurs*.²⁷ Likewise, even when sober, the centaur is seemingly ignorant not only of *xenia*, but the sanctity of marriage too, for the destruction of marriage is a focal concern when the centaur-come-ferryman, Nessos, attempts to rape the wife of Herakles, Deianeira. Nessos' severance of the ties of marriage via his attempted rape of Deianeira—though initially stopped with his death by Herakles' bow—are consummated by his poisonous advice for the preservation of Herakles' marital love, (to anoint the shirt of Herakles with a mixture of Nessos' semen and blood), which in a harsh irony results in Herakles' death.²⁸

It comes as no surprise then, that wine and sex, with all their implications for *xenia* and marriage, converge in the myths involving centaurs. While the centaur is seen in a positive light at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, where they are described by the Chorus in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* as the 'revelling company' who came 'to the feast of the gods and the *wine-bowl of Bacchus*' with favourable prophecies from Chiron;²⁹ such an amicable picture terminates there. It is violence and discord which features in the most famous of the myths involving centaurs, wine, and matrimony; such as the wedding of the Lapith, Peirithous, which quickly spirals into a pitched battle between centaur and Lapith.³⁰ It is not a mere coincidence that the culprits in the conflict are specifically wine and sex. Pindar relates that it was 'the over-powering aroma of honey-sweet wine' and their 'drinking, unasked', which caused the centaurs 'to wander in mind'.³¹ Thus, irresponsibility and ignorance of *xenia* are brought on in the presence of wine and quickly progress to wandering thoughts of sex, and as a result the conflict only begins when the centaurs attempt to carry off the bride and the other *married* women.³² So that where the satyrs used the

²⁶ Apollodorus, *The Library* 2.5.4 cf. Diodorus Siculus 4.12.3 trans. Oldfather, C.H., (Loeb: Cambridge, Mass., 1933). Apollodorus' comment about the communal nature of the centaurs' wine jar, demonstrates that like the Cyclops, it is not the centaur's ignorance of the communal use of wine which excludes them from the civilising benefits of wine, but that it is their hostile relationship with mankind which decides their exclusion from, and the satyrs' inclusion in, all that wine has to offer. The distinction between the only "good" and civil centaurs, Chiron and Pholos, as opposed to the "bad" is appropriately made explicit in their different genealogies (besides further distinctions, such as Chiron's association with medicine, wisdom and mentoring heroes): Chiron is the son of Cronos and Philyra (Apollonius of Rhodes, *The Argonautica* 2.1240 trans. Seaton, R.C., (Loeb: Cambridge Mass., 1961) while Pholos is of different parentage (see n.2). This stands in contrast to the other centaurs who are generally agreed to be descended from the pejorative union of Ixion (Titan) and Nephele (a cloud) (see Diodorus Siculus, 4.69.1-5).

²⁷ Xenophanes = Athenaeus, *Scholars at Dinner* 11.462f, trans. Gulick, quoted in Lissarrague, *op. cit.*, (1990a), p.27 cf. Plato, *Laws* 7.815c trans. Bury, R.G., (Loeb: Cambridge Mass., 1925): Plato classes satyric dancing as 'unfitted for our citizens'.

²⁸ Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.151 trans. Aldrich; Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fabulae* trans. Grant: on Atsma, A.J., 'CENTAURS, NORTHERN: Centaurs of Magnesia in Thessaly: Greek Mythology; Pictures: KENTAUROI' (2000-2008): <http://www.theoi.com/Georgikos/KentauroiThessalioi.html>; Diodorus Siculus, 4.36.3.

²⁹ Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1058-1075, trans. & ed. Morwood, J. intro. Hall, E. (Oxford, 2000), my italics.

³⁰ Ovid's rendering of the battle (put into the mouth of Nestor, who first mentions the myth in the *Iliad*, see n.3) is particularly gruesome and of epic proportions, see *Metamorphoses*, 12.208-536 trans. Miller, F.J., (Loeb: Cambridge Mass., 1968).

³¹ Pindar, frg. 166 trans. Sandys: on Atsma, *op. cit.*, 'CENTAURS, NORTHERN...'

³² Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* E1.21 trans. Aldrich; Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fabulae* 33 trans. Grant (they 'attempted to carry off the *wives* of the Lapithae'): on Atsma, *op. cit.*, 'CENTAURS, NORTHERN...'; Plutarch, *Life of Theseus* 30 trans. Perrin, B. (Loeb: Cambridge Mass., 1914); Diodorus Siculus, 4.70.2-4.

implements of the symposium in their acrobatic antics, the centaurs are seen to utilise them in battle.³³

Wherefore the myth clearly positions centaurs as breaking the bonds of marriage and the decorum of the symposium in their reaction to wine, as they become symbols of that behaviour classed in Greek society as “Otherness”.

Yet this in itself raises the question as to whether the satyr and centaur commanded the imagination of the Greeks because of their mutual “Otherness” or for distinctly different reasons of their own. Osbourne argues that in Greek vase-painting we find the satyr juxtaposed against the centaur in such scenes where a satyr and maenad are set against a scene depicting a centauro-machy or Herakles and Nessos, and in doing so, the viewer is asked ‘to adjudicate whether [in sexual terms,] maenad is to satyr as lapith is to centaur’.³⁴ Moreover, Osbourne suggests a vase by the Sotades painter, depicting a centaur and satyr attacking each other, to pose the question as to ‘how satyric is the centaur, [and] how centauric is the satyr’.³⁵ The centaur and satyr are no doubt linked in vase painting for a particular purpose, but to equate one to another is to misinterpret the distinctive role and context each commanded in the social psyche of the Greeks.

For when one examines the social position of the satyr, as communicated in the satyr-play and in artistic examples, the satyr possesses its very own contradictions, symbolised in its slavish and animalistic, yet civilised and human characteristics. We have already seen that the satyrs are slavishly subject to the power of wine, and in the *Cyclops* Odysseus’ humanity is marked out by his independence and manipulation of wine, while the satyrs’ possess a lesser, servile humanity that arises from their dependence on wine. In another satyr-play, Sophocles’ *Ichneutai* (*The Trackers*), Silenos and his satyrs are only spurred on their quest for the missing cattle of Apollo with the promise of ‘freedom from toil’ and gold, so though wine is absent from the scene, the satyrs are still slavishly driven by a *desire*.³⁶ In both plays, the satyrs having been tasked with some measure of responsibility are quick to fall into apathy or cowardice,³⁷ and it becomes clear that they require a master with a superego, as they seemingly derive their purpose from their master-slave relationship with Dionysos, the Cyclops, Odysseus, and Apollo.³⁸ Put quite simply, they are allocated the position of subordinates in the Greek social consciousness.³⁹

³³ See fig.31 for the centaur’s use of the wineskin as a weapon cf. fig.1-6.

³⁴ Osbourne, R., ‘Framing the centaur: reading fifth-century architectural sculpture’, in (eds) Goldhill, S. & Osbourne, R., *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (Cambridge, 1994), p.55. See fig. 23-25.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.55. See fig. 26.

³⁶ Sophocles, *Ichneutai* 63 (quote); Silenos makes it clear that he must be paid to do anything for Apollo (50, 54) as does the nymph Kyllene (448-452), in the end this desire changes from want of eternal leisure to the hypnotic music produced by Hermes’ lyre, whence the satyr Chorus is enraptured by it and it becomes their reward in a sense (604-621, 679-680, 697-701), trans. Green, R.L., (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1957).

³⁷ Euripides, *Cyc.* 704-728 (ODYSSEUS: ‘My cohorts are turning to cowards’), 729-741 (the satyrs are reduced to cheering on the sidelines for Odysseus and his men as they gouge out the Cyclops’ eye); Sophocles, *Ichn.* 158-181, 217-227 (Silenos attempts to abandon the quest when he hears Hermes’ lyre).

³⁸ *ibid.*, 32, 83-84 (slaves of the Cyclops), 80-81, 828 (slaves of Dionysos).

³⁹ Griffith, M., ‘Slaves of Dionysos: Satyrs, Audience, and the Ends of the *Oresteia*’ *Classical Antiquity* 21 (2002) 226-227: Griffith deals with the question of whether the satyrs should be seen as childish or slavish, he finds them to

Parallel to this theme, it has been demonstrated that the satyr's hyper-sexuality and self-gratification portrayed on vase-painting is more conducive to the role of a slave. Besides the satyr's abnormal sexual partners (i.e. animals, amphorae, themselves), the satyr's body language is characteristically dishonourable, featuring animalistic crawling and crouching positions, while they are further distinguished as subordinate by the fact that their master, Dionysos, is rarely seen to be sexually aroused.⁴⁰ Yet for all their slavish connotations, satyrs are also depicted as any other civilised Greek might be: anatomically, they are pictured predominantly with human limbs, and with infibulated phalli like athletes; they can be adorned in a chiton and himation, with a groomed beard and neat chignon; they are intergenerational, and thus can even feature as the wise elder in a scene.⁴¹ So while the satyrs are subordinate to Odysseus in their dependency on wine, we have seen the satyr to possess a unique and inseparable relationship with wine as a symbol of civilisation, which places them—even as slaves—on the level of the humane. With these apparent contradictions between baseness and civility in mind, we might then suppose that satyrs are 'on the borderline between the extremes of wildness and culture, animality and humanity',⁴² so that they offer their Greek male audience a suitable outlet for satyric fantasies where the lines defining cultural prohibitions are conveniently blurred.

Satyrs evidently do not present a threat to Greek society or culture;⁴³ indeed they seem to stretch the parameters of both, so that rather than just symbolising another degree of the "Other" they are aligned with the psyche of the Greek male.⁴⁴ Where then does the centaur stand in comparison? Clearly the centaur does pose a threat to two fundamental Greek social customs—marriage and the symposium—thus designating them as the "Other", to be exterminated for their ignorance of, and threat to, Greek

be more childish, cf. Lissarrague, *op. cit.*, (1993), pp.219-220; Sophocles, *Ichn.* 395-400: KYLLENE: 'But you [Silenos] have always been quite a child in your behaviour: you forget that you're a man full grown...'

⁴⁰ Lissarrague, *op. cit.* (1990b), pp. 56-59; Hoffmann, H., *Sexual and Asexual Pursuit. A Structuralist Approach to Greek Vase Painting* (London, 1977), p.6. See fig. 8 (for a satyr surreptitiously taking wine, perhaps much like the subordinate role Silenos plays as the Cyclops' cupbearer, see n.24), 14-20 (for the dishonourable positioning/body language of the satyr, especially their equation with animals), 32 (for the satyr's covert sexual enterprises toward a maenad, which are not fulfilled, a further indication of their lowly status).

⁴¹ Lissarrague, *op. cit.* (1993), pp.209-217. Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p.6: 'One begins to understand why satyrs form by far the most common subject in Greek vase painting. These are in all respects creatures of the betwixt and between: Culture/Nature, mortal/immortal, man/animal, elder/slave, white man/black man, adult/child, ithyphallic but impotent'. See fig.27-28. Note that infibulation of the phallus was a practice of the athlete which restricted the movement of the member, it is then strangely ironic that the ithyphallic satyr should be pictured as such.

⁴² *ibid.*, p.213. R.A.S. Seaford (*Euripides. Cyclops* (Oxford, 1988), p.33) conveys a similar understanding of the satyrs' purpose in the satyr-play: 'The satyrs belong to the wild, and to the very point indeed at which culture is created out of nature: when wine is for the first time ever extracted by a god from the grapes, or the sound of the lyre from a dead tortoise, they are there as the first to enjoy the invention'.

⁴³ Collinge, A., 'The Case of Satyrs', in (eds) Mackenzie, M.M. & Rouche, C., *Images of Authority: papers presented to Joyce Reynolds on the occasion of her seventieth birthday* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 82-91: Collinge offers further arguments not detailed here, which suggest that satyrs were not seen as a threat to Greek society, despite the satyr's desecration of herms and tombs.

⁴⁴ R. Buxton (*Imaginary Greece. The contexts of mythology* (Cambridge, 1994), p.198) asks some important questions: 'Is the rampant sexuality of the satyr really something which the male reveller would wish to avoid? Could it not (also?) be a condition which he might aspire?'. Griffith (*op. cit.*, p.217) puts it more explicitly: 'The satyrs are our friends. Indeed, if we happen to be leisured young Athenian men, they may be said to be versions (inversions, caricatures) of ourselves.'

conceptions of civilisation. It is within this mould that the centaur is separated from Greek society under the descriptor: ‘beast men living in the mountains’,⁴⁵ so that accordingly they are depicted more commonly with all of their limbs in equine form (unlike the satyr), while the weapons they wield, the tree-branch and stone, reflect this bestial physiognomy.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, they infiltrated Greek art in the most public way, with the centaumachy commanding a significant place in the architectural sculptures on the Parthenon and the temples of Zeus at Olympia, Apollo at Bassai, and the Hephaisteion at Athens and more besides.⁴⁷ Modern historians have attempted to delineate the purpose of the centaumachy in various terms, from their exploration of the relationship between Herakles’ *physis* (Nature) and *nomos* (Culture), to a Greek attempt at publicly differentiating themselves from, and triumphing over, the “Other”: whether it be the beast, the enemy Greek, or the foreign, “barbarian” enemy—Persia.⁴⁸

All of these approaches, though valuable, neglect to consider how the centaur stood in relation to the satyr. If we consider the fantastic possibilities which the satyr masqueraded before its audience, we might see the boundaries imposed on these possibilities in the centaur. The satyr may not be chastised for its transgression of Greek social taboos,⁴⁹ but the complete extermination of the centaur throughout its mythological existence, would have sufficed to check any behaviour beyond the satyric and into the realm of the centauric “Other”. The juxtapositions of satyrs and centaurs in Greek vase-painting, when viewed within this framework, are therefore easily accounted for. We might even extend this conception to the polarisation of public space in the theatre and temple, where the satyr-play served to advertise and entertain satyric fantasies, while outside of this arena, the temple centaumachy, negated the acting out of that world via the harsh realities faced by the centaur.⁵⁰ Thus while we find the satyr and centaur to possess a unique affiliation with each other, this centred and functioned upon their differences as distinct binary oppositions in the Greek consciousness.

⁴⁵ Homer, *Iliad* 1.267-268; see Buxton, *op. cit.*, p.88.

⁴⁶ Kirk, G.S., *The Nature of Greek Myths* (London, 1974), p.195, 209; Buxton, *op. cit.*, p.202. The tree-branch and stone stood as symbols of the wilderness, unharnessed nature, as opposed to the civility of the urban centres, see fig.29 for a typical representation.

⁴⁷ See Osbourne, *op. cit.*, pp.52-84 (for the Parthenon, and the temples at Olympia and Bassai); Boardman, J., *Greek Sculpture. The Classical Period*. (London, 1991), pp.36-37, 104-105, 146, 171. See fig.30 for an example from the Parthenon now part of the infamous Elgin marbles in the British Museum.

⁴⁸ For *physis* and *nomos* in the centaur-Herakles relationship, see Kirk (*op. cit.*, pp.207-209); for the adaptability of the centaur as the “Other” for different audiences in different contexts, see Osbourne (*op. cit.*, pp.52-84); for the influence of Theseus and the Persian wars, see Boardman (*op. cit.*, p.171) and S. Colvin (‘On Representations of Centaurs in Greek Vase-Painting’ *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1 (1880), p.109).

⁴⁹ The one exception is Marsyas who was skinned alive by Apollo after having the hubris to challenge him to a musical contest upon discovering Athena’s discarded flute (see: Diodorus Siculus, 5.75.3; for Ovid’s retelling of the myth, see Feldherr, A. & James, P., ‘Making the Most of Marsyas’ *Arethusa* 37 (2004) 75-103).

⁵⁰ Indeed with reference to the satyr-play, G.M. Hedreen (*Silens in Attic black-figure Vase-painting. Myth and Performance*. (Ann Arbor, 1992), p.156) argues that the only possible explanation for the development of a distinctive iconography of the satyr must be due to the satyr-play and its importance in Greek culture.

APPENDIX:
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A list of the illustrations referred to throughout this essay is provided below with relevant explanatory notes. N.B. descriptions and photos/line drawings are drawn from the indicated source. All dates pertaining to vases and sculpture (i.e. 'ca. 500') are from the 'B.C.' period.

1. Satyrs juggle wineskins in a drinking game. Red-figure cup, ca.500. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.54, p.73.
2. A satyr riding a wineskin while attempting to pass a drinking vessel (*kantharos*) under his arm, another drinking antic of the satyr. Note the erect phallus. Red-figure cup, proto-Panaitian group, ca. 490. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.56, p.75.
3. Satyrs riding wineskins in the pursuit of another satyr holding a krater. Red-figure cup, wider circle of the Nikosthenes painter, ca.510. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.57a, p.75.
4. Satyr balancing a cup on foot. Red-figure pelike, Flying Angel painter, ca.480. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.63, p.79.
5. Satyr balancing cup on back. Note the erect phallus. Red-figure cup, Hermaios painter, signed Khakhrylion, ca.500. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.64, p.79.
6. One satyr holds an empty amphora toward his phallus in a suggestive manner, while another balances a wine cup on his erect phallus. Red-figure cup, Ambrosios painter, ca.500. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.65, p.79.
7. Satyr reclining on cushion in the traditional pose of the symposium, however at the same time he transgresses the rules of the symposium by guzzling unmixed wine from an amphora. Red-figure cup, signed Epiketos, ca. 510. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.3, p.13.
8. A satyr (perhaps surreptitiously) draws wine from a krater in a low crouching position. Red-figure amphora, Berlin painter, ca.490. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.24, p.38.
9. A satyr pours wine from a wineskin into a krater with presumably no water. Note the erect phallus. The inscriptions read: "wine is sweet", "a Silenos enjoying himself", "Epeleios is beautiful". Red-figure cup, Epeleios painter, ca.510. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.25, p.39.
10. A satyr inserts his phallus into an amphora, presumably for sexual intercourse. Red-figure amphora, Euthymides, ca. 520. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.66, p.80.
11. A satyr inserts his phallus into an amphora, presumably for sexual intercourse. Red-figure kylix. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990b), fig.2.18, p.75.
12. A Satyr and deer sniff each other (perhaps with sexual connotation?). Black-figure kylix. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990b), fig.2.19, p.76.
13. Two satyrs grasp a deer in the presence of a volute krater, perhaps displaying an erotic interest in the deer. Red-figure hydria. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990b), fig.2.20, p.76.
14. Top: Naked *hetaira* in crouching position approached by satyr from behind. Bottom: Naked *hetaira* in supine position approached by ithyphallic donkey. Red-figure skyphos. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990b), fig.2.26-2.27, p.80.
15. Satyr stalking bull in low position. Red-figure askos. *Source:* Hoffmann (1977), pl.VI, no.1.
16. Satyr stalking hound in low position. Red-figure askos. *Source:* Hoffmann (1977), pl.VI, no.2.
17. Satyr advancing with body hunched forward and arms extended to grasp bull-calf. Red-figure askos. *Source:* Hoffmann (1977), pl.VI, no.3.
18. Satyr squatting frontally, arms extended sideways; goat approaching cautiously. Red-figure askos. *Source:* Hoffmann (1977), pl.VI, no.4.
19. Satyr crawling; parallel image. Red-figure askos. *Source:* Hoffmann (1977), pl.VI, no.5.
20. Satyr on one knee, the other leg extended, beating the ground; squatting satyr, arms extended, in front of him is a drinking horn. Red-figure askos. *Source:* Hoffmann (1977), pl.VI, no.6.
21. Five satyrs and two sphinxes in full erotic frenzy, no holds are barred. Red-figure kylix. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990b), fig.2.28, p.81.
22. Three satyrs engaged in masturbation. Inscribed names: Dophios ('to knead oneself'), Psolas ('erect'), Terpekelos ('shaft-pleasure'). Black-figure aryballos by Nearkhos. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990b), fig.2.6, p.71.

23. Fragments of a red-figure cup by Oltos, depicting Herakles, Nessos, a satyr and maenad, and a mule, ca.525-475. *Source:* The Beazley Archive, no.200527, online: <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/databases/pottery.htm>
24. Phaedra's love-sickness; battle between Lapiths and centaurs at the wedding of Pirithoos; on alternate side (not shown in photo) Dionysos is depicted with satyrs and maenads. Red-figure 'Ornate' Apulian; ca.350. *Source:* Trendall, A.D., *South Italian Vase Painting* (London, 1976), pl.A.
25. Depictions of agriculture, satyrs and maenads, with one treading grapes in a basket; juxtaposed against the central warrior and centaur in combat. Black-figure amphora, signed Nikosthenes P, ca. 550-500. *Source:* The Beazley Archive, no.302763, online: <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/databases/pottery.htm>
26. A centaur attacks a satyr; this is perhaps the only example of such a composition. Red-figure vase fragment, Stoades P Painter, ca.500-450. *Source:* (photo) F. Lissarrague (lecture slide no.56 from the lecture 'Satyrs & Centaurs', on 06/08/2008); (catalogue description) The Beazley Archive, no.209507, online: <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/databases/pottery.htm>
27. A satyr dressed in a chiton and himation with a petasos on his head stands in front of a herm. Note the tied back hair and groomed beard. Red-figure column krater, ca.500-475. *Source:* Lissarrague (1993), fig.15, p.211.
28. A satyr with an infibulated penis like that of athletes, stands holding a lyre. Note the neatly tied back hair. Red-figure amphora, Kleophrades painter, ca.500-475. *Source:* Lissarrague (1993), fig.14, p.210.
29. A centaur wields a boulder and tree-branch, the symbolic weapons of the wild. Red-figure cup, signed by Phintias, ca.550-500. *Source:* Buxton (1994), fig.17, p.203.
30. A fight between a young Lapith and a centaur. Marble metope no.27 from the southern end of the Parthenon on the Acropolis Athens (now in British Museum), ca.440. *Source:* The British Museum, online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/m/marble_parthenon_metope.aspx
31. The battle between the Lapiths and centaurs after the wedding of Perithous, note the way it is set amongst the scene of the banquet, and that one centaur is actually about to hurl a wineskin at an attacking Lapith. This stands in contrast to the comical way satyrs employ wineskins and wine vessels in their interpretation of the symposium. Red-figure krater, painter of the Woolley satyrs, ca.460. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990a), fig.14, pp.30-31.
32. Two balding, garlanded satyrs approach a sleeping maenad with lascivious intent, but notably the fulfilment of this intent is not shown, and we are left to wonder whether the kneeling satyr perhaps is positioned for sexual intercourse with his fellow satyr. Red-figure hydria. *Source:* Lissarrague (1990b), fig.2.25, p.79.

APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIONS

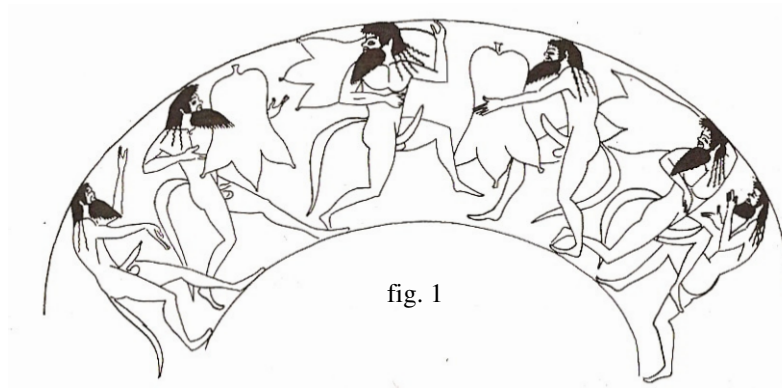


fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 4

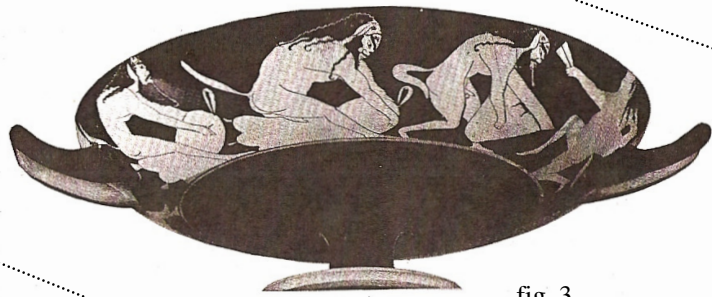


fig. 3

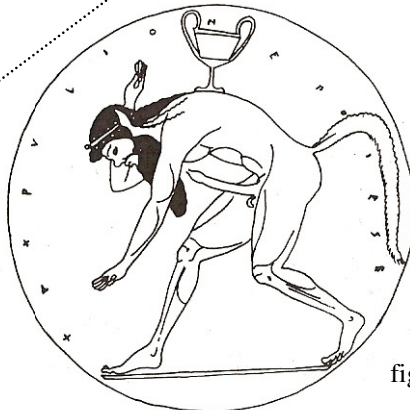


fig. 5



fig. 6

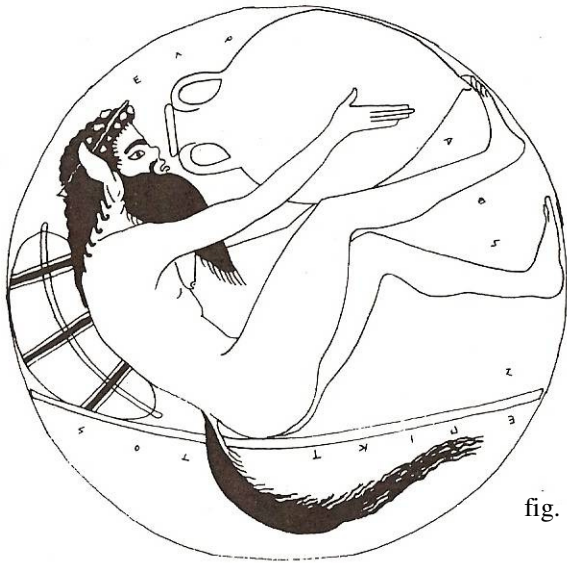


fig. 7

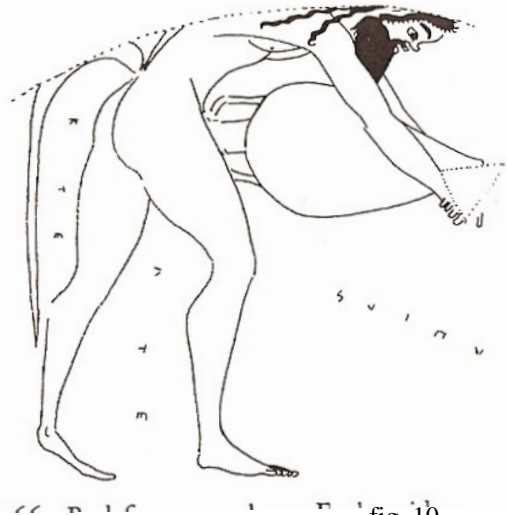


fig. 10



fig. 8

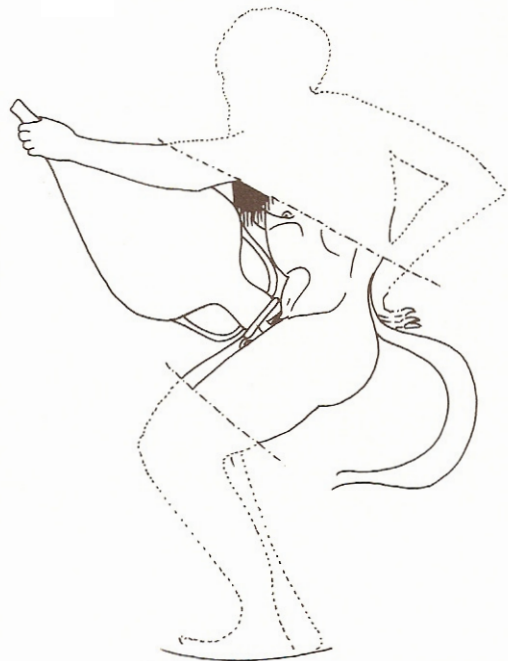


fig. 11



fig. 9



fig. 12



fig. 13

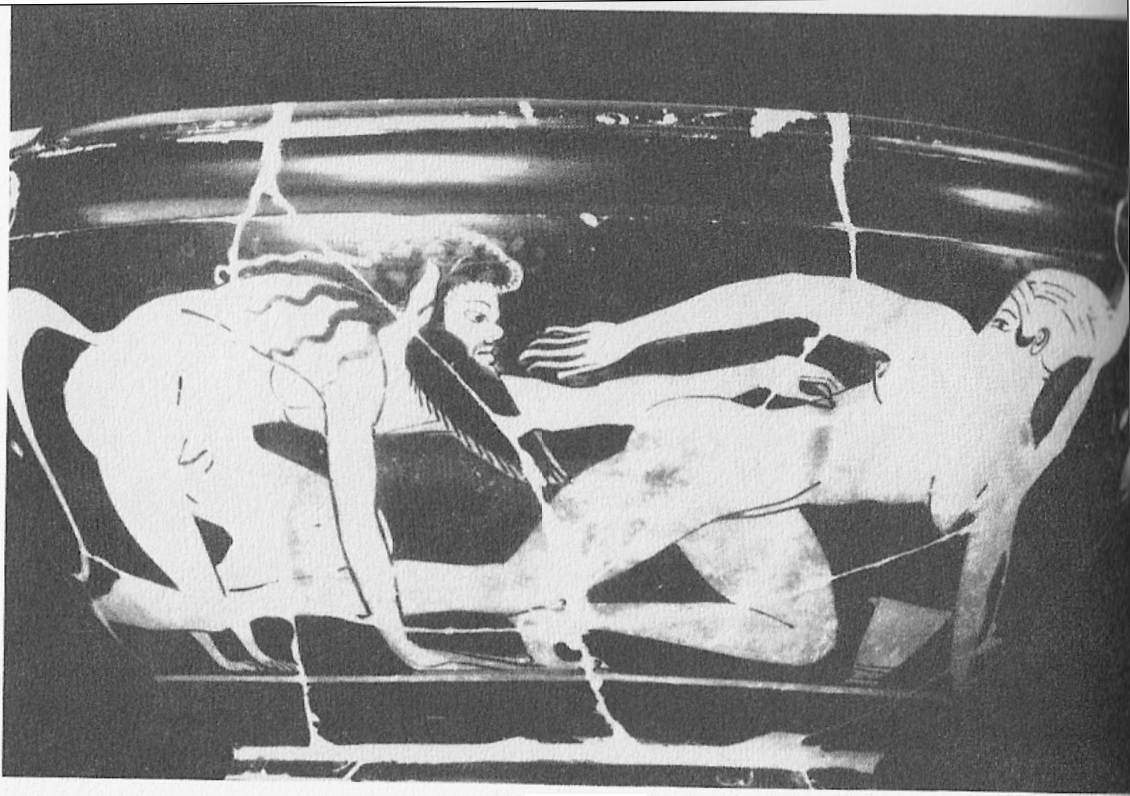
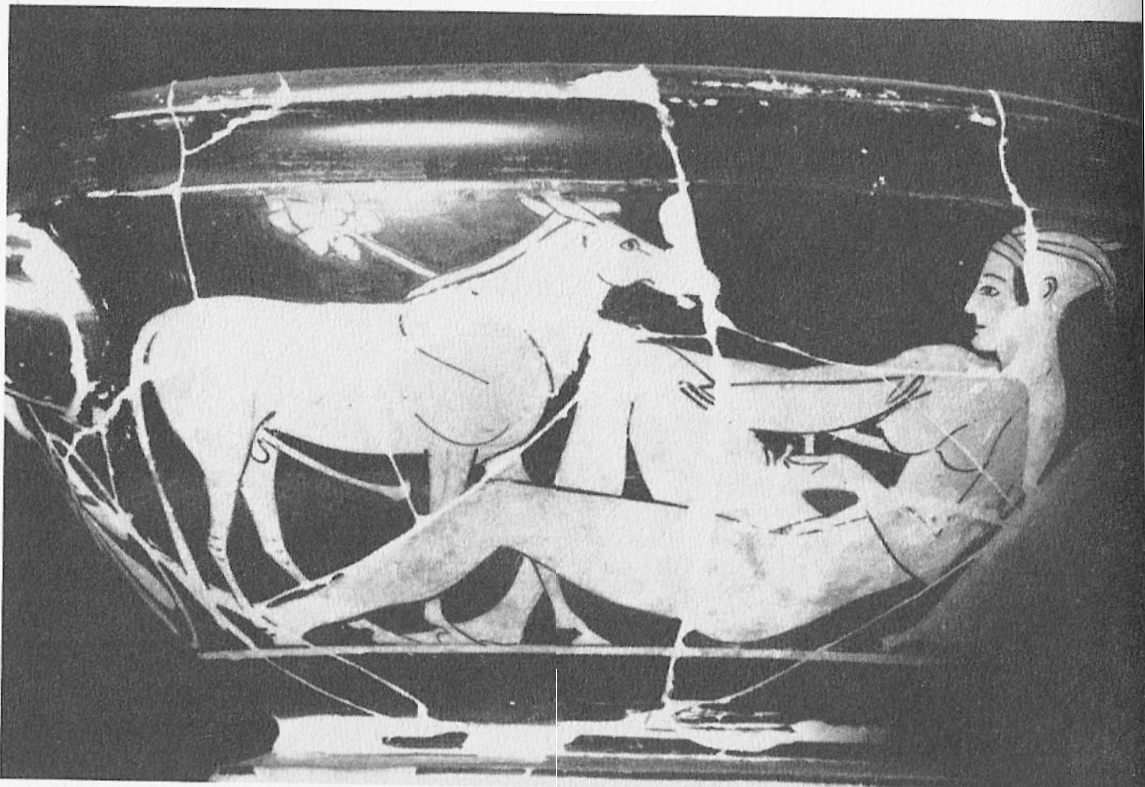


fig. 14



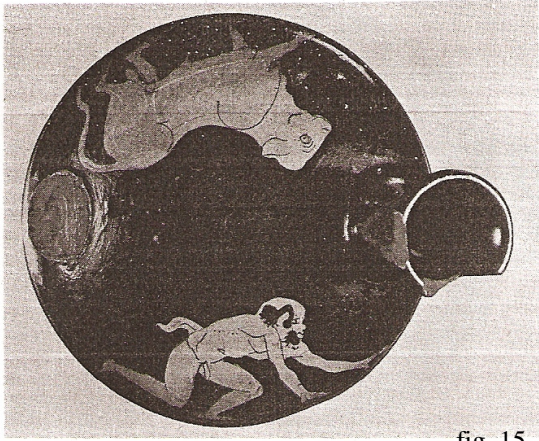


fig. 15

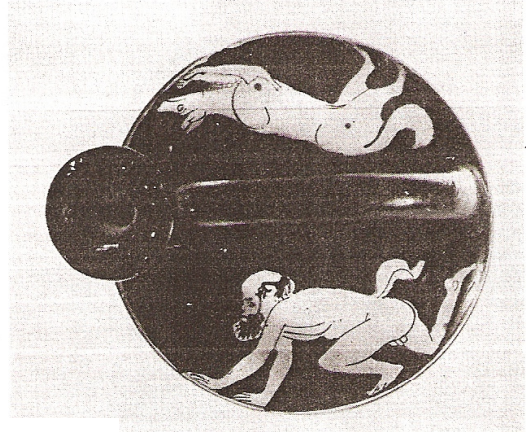


fig. 16

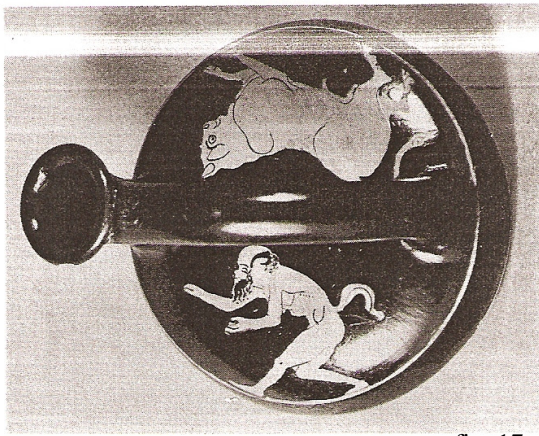


fig. 17

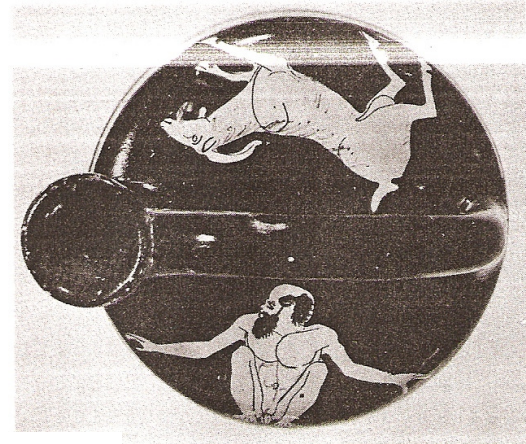


fig. 18



fig. 19

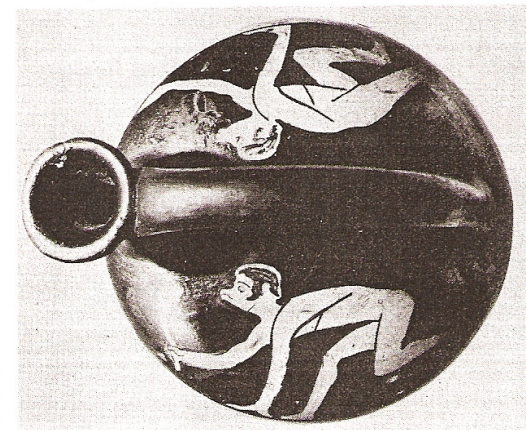


fig. 20

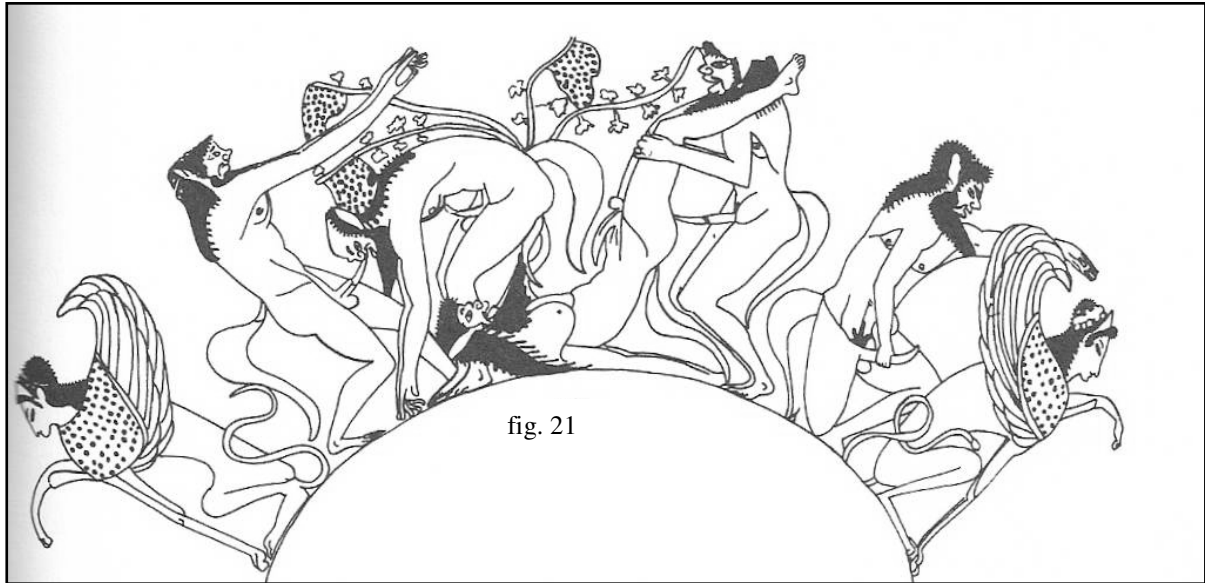


fig. 21

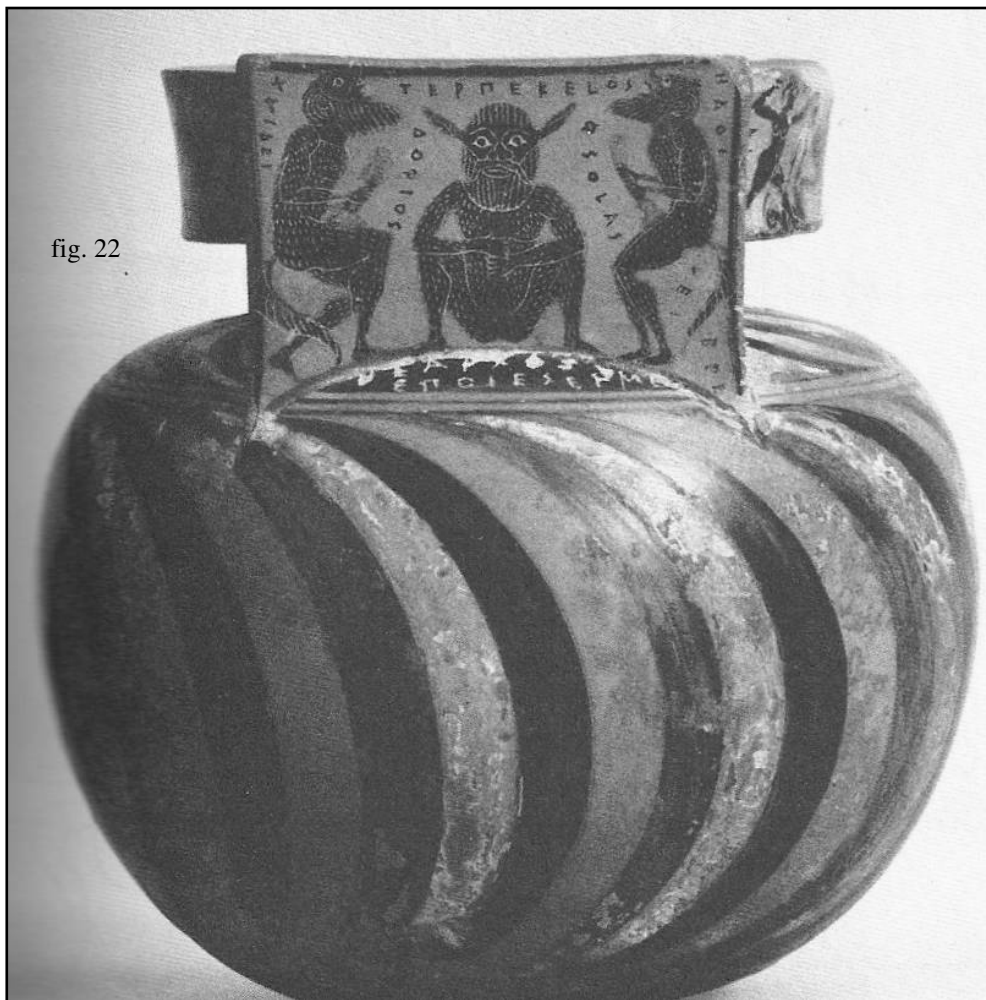
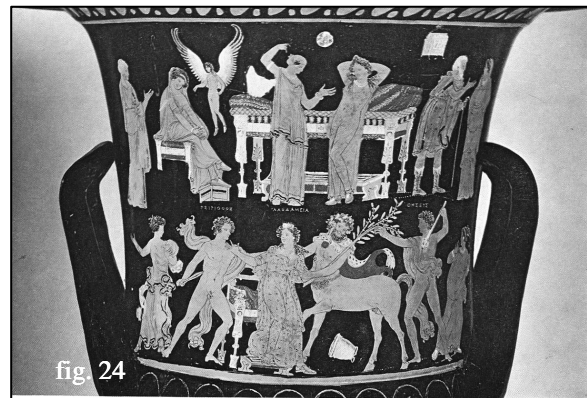
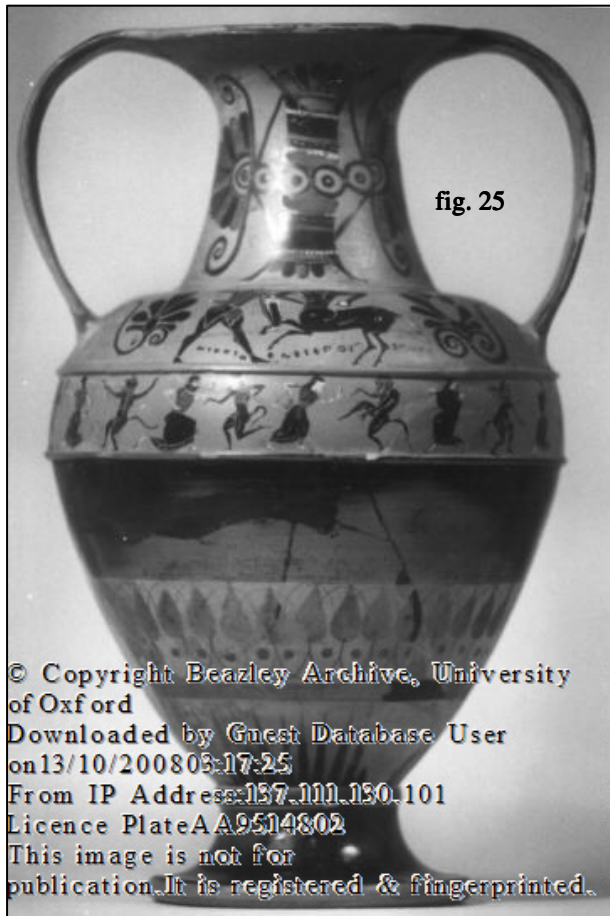
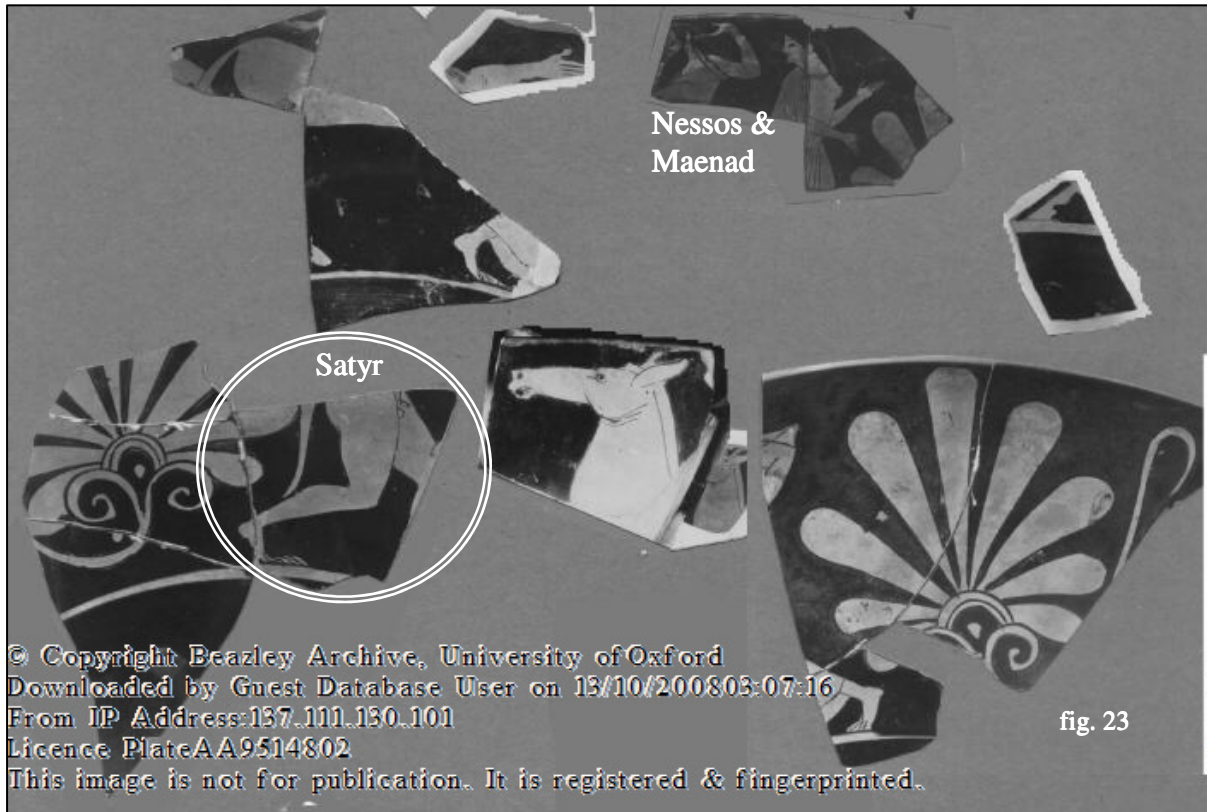
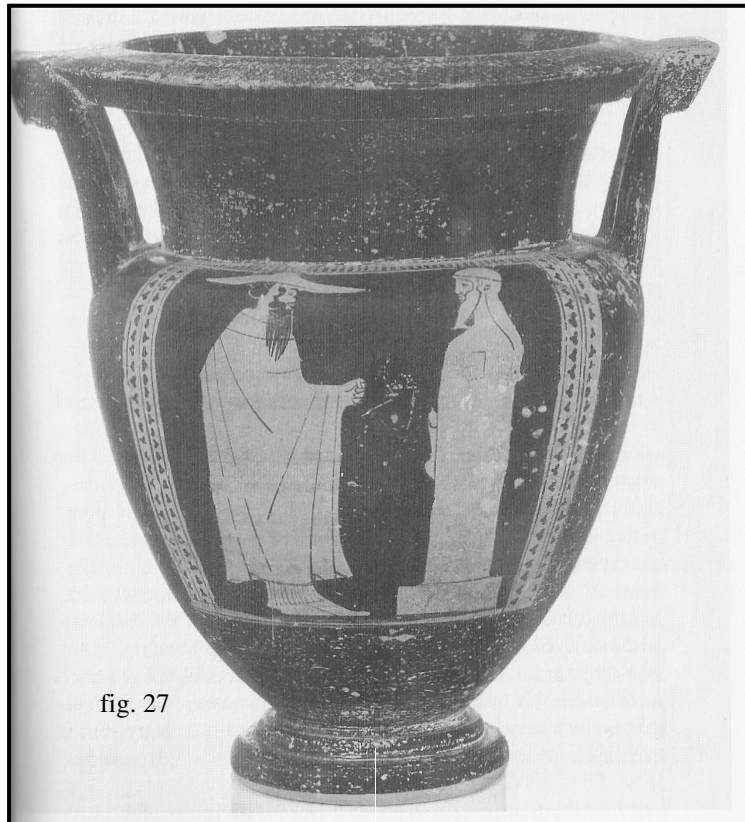


fig. 22





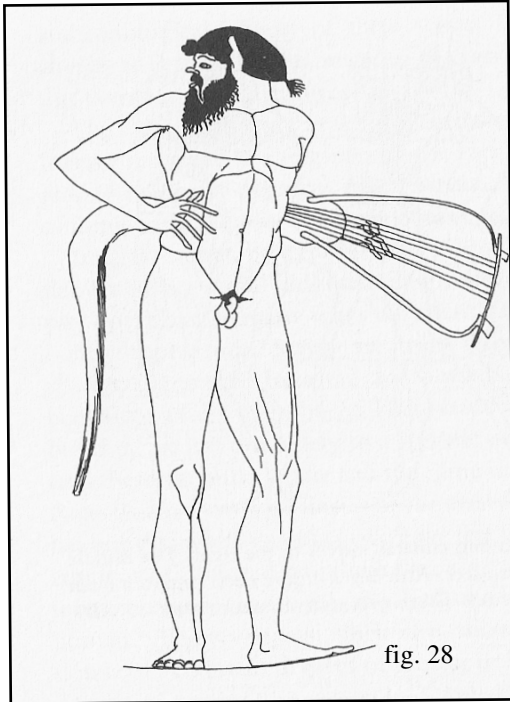


fig. 28

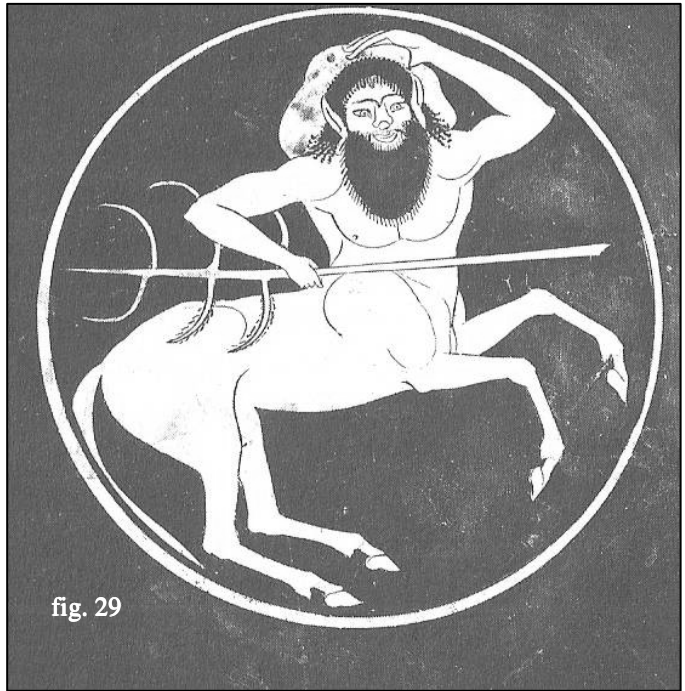


fig. 29

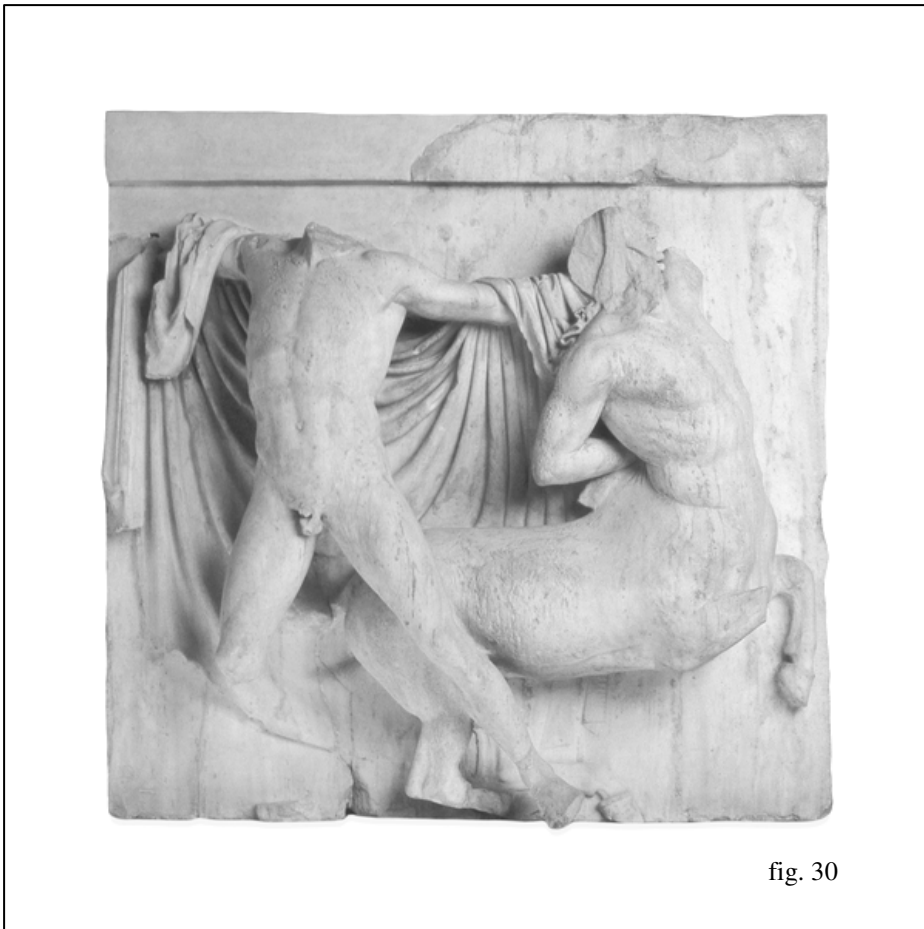
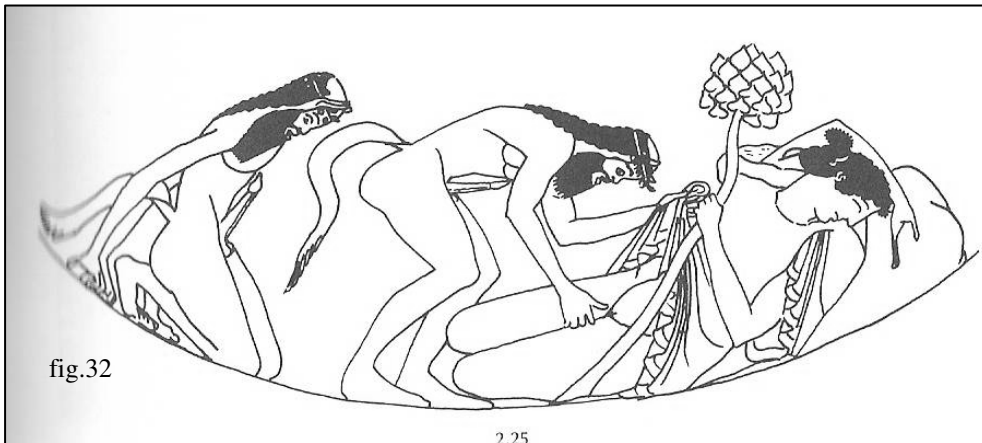
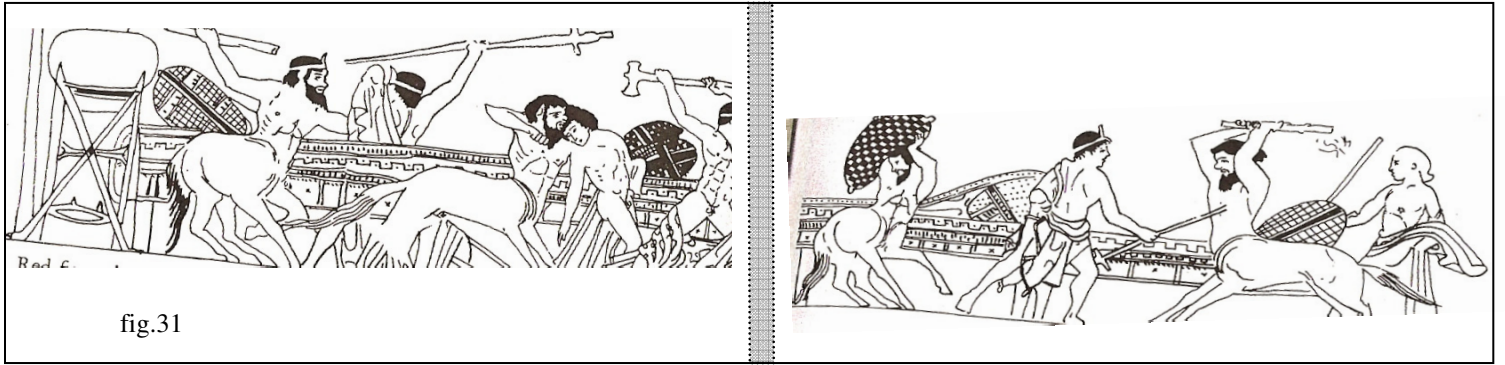


fig. 30



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