

RIDING THE PHALLUS FOR DIONYSUS: ICONOLOGY, RITUAL, AND GENDER-ROLE DE/CONSTRUCTION

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I. DIONYSUS

FOR OTHER GREEK GODS one can easily distinguish a personality, developed in myth and epic, from the rituals of their worship, which evolved in the separate sphere of cultic practice. Though the rituals are generally suited to the divine personality, they can hardly be said to express it, let alone contain it. It might be argued that Dionysus is unique in this respect: other gods may have developed rituals suited to their personalities, but Dionysus developed a personality to suit his ritual. Moreover, Dionysus, more than any other god, is the expression of a specific type of ritual, which is the most powerful form of ritual, emotionally and psychologically. This is the ritual of inversion, a phenomenon which, though well known and long studied, is variously interpreted. I have chosen (and slightly modified) a model suggested by Victor Turner to help explain the bizarre rite which is the main object of this investigation.

Scholars have already demonstrated the applicability of Turner's concepts of *liminality* and *communitas* to Dionysiac cult; they provide a model which is both simple and powerful and requires no lengthy explanation.¹ Turner picks up from van Gennep's tripartite division of rites of passage: separation from the community, liminality, reintegration. The second phase "liminality" is characterized by disorientation and a breakdown of normal concepts of identity and behavioural norms. Turner calls the social codes which govern behaviour "structure." Opposed to structure are what Turner calls "antistructure" and "interstructure," though he uses the terms indiscriminately in my view. For my own purposes I will call "antistructure" behaviour that is patterned in direct opposition to structural norms.² Both structure and antistructure, then, are clear and consistent codes, in fact the positive and the negative of the same code. "Interstructure" exists where there is a confusion of behavioural norms and their opposite, where there is ambiguity and indeterminacy, and a suggestion or illusion, through the disorienting mix of code and anticode, of a virtual codelessness (this meaning, at least, is more in conformity with Turner's usage, esp. 1967: 93–111).

¹For Turner's theories, see esp. 1969: 94–130, 166–203; 1982. The theories are applied to Dionysiac religion by Segal 1982: 13; 1986: 285; Hoffmann 1989.

²Turner (1982: 44) uses the term "to describe both liminality ... and 'communitas,' ... not a structural reversal, a mirror-imagery of 'profane' workaday socioeconomic structure." He is more interested in the experience of liminal rites; I am more interested in the actual mechanics of producing that experience, and so use it in precisely this sense, as a reversal of workaday structure.

There are two types of liminal rituals: rituals of status elevation and rituals of status reversal. Rituals of status elevation have to do with the permanent transition of individuals from one status category to another. They are organized according to the individual's life-cycle and create irreversible transformations. Rituals of status reversal by contrast involve the entire community, are calendrical, and end in a complete restoration of the status quo. The principal object of liminal ritual is to create "communitas." During these rituals the community is stripped of all social barriers and social distinctions so that members of the community can experience one another "concretely" as equals.

Many are the forms of Dionysiac cult and ritual. Some of them merely articulate or replicate social structure.³ But the most distinctive Dionysiac rituals are liminal rituals. Dionysus functions in both initiation and carnival rituals as the great leveller and dissolver of social boundaries. The worshippers of Dionysus, free or slave, male or female, young or old, find themselves exalted or humbled to a state of natural equality and cultural indistinguishability. When Dionysiac ritual is viewed in these terms, one can easily see how comedy emerged from the worship of Dionysus. Liminal rituals have a great deal in common with humour: laughter and *communitas* both spring from incongruity and aggression, the confusion of social categories, and the violation of social taboos. Attic Old Comedy in particular directs its humour towards social hierarchy, debasing the powerful and elevating the low. It is also easy to see why the cult of Dionysus was particularly cultivated by the Athenian democracy, a democracy which was largely content to be ruled by a governing élite, so long as that élite remained under its ultimate control.⁴ Liminal rituals dissolve social boundaries by rendering them ambivalent and paradoxical, confusing things with their opposites, until the social status distinctions between them appear artificial and meaningless. Since real community-solidarity can only exist in the most elementary precivilized social formations, where all really are undifferentiated and equal, a divided society will employ such expedients as rituals of status reversal to bolster its sense of community when its social divisions threaten to tear it apart. This function is also a matter of paradox and ambivalence. Though social barriers are temporarily destroyed in rituals of reversal, the destructive act, in the controlled ritual context, largely and normally serves to confirm the importance and sanctity of social divisions once the ritual is over.⁵ Like liminal ritual, "Dionysus operates as the principle that destroys differences," as Segal put it (1982: 234). He does so by

³ E.g., the observance of gender, age, and social divisions within cultic roles and hierarchies discussed by Henrichs 1982.

⁴ For the democratic appropriation of Dionysus, see Dodds 1960: 127–130 *ad Eur. Bacch.* 421–423 and 430–433; Connor 1989, 1990 (with Sourvinou-Inwood 1994: 273–277); Versnel 1990: 167; Seaford 1996: 48–49.

⁵ In Turner's view, liminal ritual is not, as some claim, a kind of social glue binding the community in its terror of disorder, but often more like a solvent, breaking down the rigidity of the social order and saving the community from excessive structuration through "deconstruction and reconstruction" (Turner 1982: 83). It is emphatically not, as some deconstructionists claim, a celebration of the chaos beyond structure, as an end in itself, but rather an adaptive mechanism for reconstruction (cf.

temporarily merging opposites and rendering them paradoxical. This is at least the principal idea behind Dionysus, and one that is expressed concretely in the god's icon.

Though a god "of many names" and "many forms,"⁶ the commonest form of Dionysus in Greek cult is as a post, pillar, or tree-trunk; as a mask; or as a combination of the two, a pillar or tree-trunk to which a mask is attached.⁷ These icons express his liminal personality. Masks express liminality in two ways. Modern interpreters tend to focus upon the mask's synchronic ambiguities: that a mask presents and conceals at once, combining an outward fixed personality and a mysterious hidden voluble one. The power of the masked personality resides in the possibility of difference, even polar opposition between the outside and the inside. On this interpretation, the masked icon is a representation of Dionysus' doubleness and duplicity. Indeed the Greeks also called him the "god of two forms,"⁸ and this doubleness of the mask might also find expression in the fact that the icon of Dionysus is frequently a double mask—a pillar with two masks affixed to either side and gazing in opposite directions. The uncanny combination of something presented to view and something hidden suggests the portrait of Dionysus we find in myth, with its paradoxical combination of the familiar and the strange. Dionysus is a thoroughly Greek god, yet he is always presented as a foreigner arriving over land or over sea: from India, Lydia, or Thrace.⁹ The story of Dionysus at Thebes best brings out this opposition of familiarity and strangeness: Dionysus comes as a stranger from Lydia to his own birthplace to visit his own family.

But the liminality of the mask may also be interpreted diachronically in terms of transition between states and identities. When you put on a mask you allow your own personality to be submerged in that of another. It is a form of possession and at least a partial expulsion of the familiar self. Frontisi-Ducroux argues that it is this, and not concealment, which the mask signified to the Greek mind: "When put on, the mask served not to hide the face it covered, but to abolish and replace it."¹⁰ If the logic of the mask's doubleness has to do with possession, there is

the criticisms of Friedrich 1996: 266; Seaford 1994: 363–367; 1996: 31, n. 25). Whether or not reconstruction simply refreshes or actually renovates depends entirely upon the social and historical context. Symbols and symbolic acts can acquire new meanings if a culture is ready to receive them. New symbols may be introduced. "Ritual liminality, therefore, contains the potentiality for cultural innovation, as well as the means of effecting structural transformations within a relatively stable sociocultural system" (Turner 1982: 85). For a survey of the literature on the relation of rituals of inversion to the social order, see Goldhill 1991: 176–188; Versnel 1993: 115–121.

⁶ Soph. *Ant.* 1115; Eur. *Bacch.* 1017–18; *Anth. Pal.* 9.524.13; Plut. *Mor.* 389b.

⁷ See esp. Casadio 1984.

⁸ Diod. Sic. 4.5.2. Dionysus' doubleness is a major theme of Otto 1948, *passim*.

⁹ See esp. Detienne 1986: 21–27; Henrichs 1982: 152–155.

¹⁰ Frontisi-Ducroux 1995: 40. The concept of the mask-wearer as displaced by the mask's identity accords well with the archaic concept of mimesis described by Nagy (1996, esp. 55–56 and 81–86) where the performer is conceived not as imitator but as (re)embodiment of the object of mimesis. Diodorus (4.5.3–4) reports two explanations for Dionysus being called the god of two forms, and

also a certain doubleness in the manner in which the mask seizes its victims. The mask-wearer is invaded by the persona of the mask, but so is the mask-viewer. The mask is a source of fascination, even in the etymological sense of casting a spell (Lat. *fascinare*). In Byzantine art the face of Judas is seen in profile, while all the other apostles are frontal. We are told that this is to encourage communion with the eleven and to avoid possession by Judas.¹¹ In Dionysiac cult, too, visual contact with the god had a special significance. In Euripides *Bacchae* the *bakchos* receives the rites of Dionysus meeting him face to face, ὁρῶν ὁρῶντα (470).¹² This is because true possession is what sets the *bakchos* apart from the thyrsus-bearers and the principal way of taking possession is through the eyes.

Archaic and Classical Greek iconography almost never show frontal faces, with a few significant exceptions.¹³ One exception is certain predatory beasts: the Gorgon whose sight turns her victims to stone; the snake whose name seems to come from its fierce glare (δέρκομαι, δράκων);¹⁴ the sphinx; the siren; the owl which mesmerizes its victims (and is even said to kill them with its fiery gaze);¹⁵ the lion and especially the panther (or *pardalis*). The latter's "bright eye" has "shining pupils which beneath their lids emit a steely glare (γλαυκιώσι), a steely glare and yet bright red inside, like burning brands they flash fire."¹⁶ What these animals all have in common is just this paralyzing "steely glare," *glaukotes*, a quality connected with the name of the owl (*glauux*), and associated, as are owls, snakes, and gorgons, with the war-goddess, "steely-eyed" (*glaukopis*) Athena (Sophocles calls her "Gorgon-eyed," *Ajax* 450, *TGF* F 884.2; cf. Alcaeus fr. 298 Voigt). "Because of her martial qualities," says Cornutus, "they suppose that Athena has . . . an abundantly grim appearance (*gorgopon*), something also revealed by the steeliness of her eyes (*glaukotes*), because the fiercest animals, such as panthers and lions, are steely-eyed, and from their eyes emit a gleam which is hard to withstand . . . Snakes and the owl are sacred to her because they resemble her steely glare" (*ND* 20).¹⁷ Gorgons, sphinxes, sirens, owls, and panthers are

neither has anything to do with hidden identities. One refers the epithet to an ambivalence in representations of the god's outward appearance, whether old and bearded or young and luxuriant, and the other refers to the two different psychological states induced by wine: mirth and pugnacity.

¹¹ See, e.g., Runciman 1975: 102.

¹² Frontisi-Ducroux 1987 and 1991 *passim*. In myth, the sight of Dionysus' icon drives Eurypylos mad (Paus. 7.19.6–7).

¹³ On frontal faces: Korshak 1987; Calame 1987; and especially Frontisi-Ducroux 1995: 65–130.

¹⁴ Cf. Snell 1953: 2. The snake is generally ignored in lists of frontal creatures. No doubt they go unnoticed because of their small size. When viewed from above with both eyes visible, they might be thought virtually frontal. But genuinely frontal snakes are common enough, as, for example, on the aegis of Athena on a Panathenaic amphora in London (GR 1842.7–28.834; *BM Cat Vases* 8130).

¹⁵ Auson. *Mos.* 308–310. Cf. Detienne and Vernant 1974: 176.

¹⁶ Opp. *Cyn.* 3.69–72; cf. Ar. *Byz. Epit.* 2.261, 2.281 (the panther has the eye of a lion); Steinhart 1995: 55–61, esp. 58.

¹⁷ *Glaukotes* is a sign of a fiery nature: Empedokles in Arist. *GA* 779b15–16. It is attributed to snakes by Pindar *Ol.* 6.45–46, *Pyth.* 4.249. For a diachronic assessment of the term, see Pötscher 1997.

common emblems on shields and armour, as indeed are single staring eyes: all mimic the “steady gaze” of the warrior which despoils the enemy of the will to resist. The panic-stricken, those about to be vanquished or killed in combat, the dead, and those paralyzed by sleep, “Death’s twin,” may also be shown frontally in Greek iconography.

Despite a certain pattern in this series, it is not the hunt, or war, or death, or the realm of “gorgon-eyed” or “owl-eyed” Athena that governs the logic of the frontal face. What these groups have in common is that they are such as can take possession of another’s wits or such as have lost their normal consciousness because themselves possessed. For this reason those overcome with grief for the dead can be shown frontally, as can those overcome with love. Since “the eye is the passage for love’s wound” (Ach. Tat. 1.4.4), both the lover and the beloved may appear frontally. For this reason also most frontal faces in art belong to the realm of Dionysus, the god *par excellence* of abnormal states. Even gorgons and panthers cross into the Dionysiac realm: in the Doric dialect, we are told, tragic masks were called *gorgeia*, after the Gorgon; Steinhart argues that the panther first came to be associated with Dionysus through the iconographic tradition of depicting the panther as a frontal-faced terror which gradually acquired a mask-like abstraction.¹⁸ Above all, the god’s icon, the mask, and the masks of the theatre may be depicted frontally.¹⁹ Frontal faces can also distinguish all those who are possessed by the god—his apostles: drunkards, satyrs, menads, ecstasies, actors wearing masks, musicians, and especially pipers (an instrument invented by Athena to imitate the sound of gorgons and which she discarded because it made her cheeks puff out like a gorgon’s).²⁰ All, like drunkards, are possessed by the power of Dionysus. But satyrs, pipers, masks, and actors in masks are not only possessed by Dionysus; they share the god’s power to take possession. The glare of the masked actor, like the Gorgon, casts a trance-like spell upon his audience, transporting them into different worlds and different identities. That the possessed can also take possession is an important expression of Dionysiac duplicity, which confuses active and passive, assailant and victim, god and worshipper. Masks are the concrete embodiment of the power of Dionysus, because Dionysus works

¹⁸ Doric γόργειον for tragic mask is a byform of γοργόγνειον, the regular word for Gorgon-face: see *Etym. Magn.* 238.46, 590.52; Suda s.v. γόργια. Cf. Σ ps.-Pl. *Axiochus* p. 507.15; Frontisi-Ducroux 1995: 10. Cf. the μορμολυκεία adorning the temple of Dionysus in Ar. *PCG* F 130. The word, which may include gorgon heads, is probably used figuratively of dramatic masks (cf. Ar. *PCG* F 31; Frontisi-Ducroux 1995: 14). Panthers: Steinhart 1995: 59.

¹⁹ Calame (1987: 79) is wrong to claim that in Attic red-figure only masks worn while acting are frontal and those carried in hand are painted in profile and that only the Pronomos vase is an exception to this norm. See, for example, the masks on the oenochoe fragment, Agora 11810, and the bell-krater from Valle Pega, Ferrara T 173C, both illustrated in Pickard-Cambridge 1988, figs. 32 and 33, or Samothrace 65.1041 and Ferrara T 161C illustrated in Green 1994: 80–81.

²⁰ Frontisi-Ducroux 1995: 74–75. See the frontal piper on Plate 5B. The power of the aulos to take possession of the mind and to induce madness, as well as the analogies between Gorgons, the aulos, wine, and Dionysiac madness, are discussed by P. J. Wilson in a forthcoming article.

his particular magic through possession, especially through the eyes, creating a kind of enthusiasm in the etymological sense of *entheos*, the god being inside one.²¹

Something of this symbolism also resides in the other component of Dionysus' icon, the column or tree-trunk. It suggests the upward surge of vegetation. Dionysus is the god of things that spring up, fountains, young shoots, and young animals, things that grow by leaps and bounds suddenly in spring, vines in particular, and the grape.²² Things that boil with a natural heat. Hot sap and hot blood. Wine, the Dionysiac liquid *par excellence*, connects all these categories: it is the juice of the grape which ripens in the hottest part of summer (when in Greece most other plants wither). It boils in fermentation and is thought of as liquid fire.²³ It resembles nothing so much as gushing blood. Timotheus calls wine "the blood of Dionysus" (*PMG* 780).²⁴ Others call the god "wine."²⁵ In the *Bacchae* Tiresias speaks of Dionysus being offered in libation to the gods "though he is a god" (284), a form of sacrifice, staining their altars like the blood of young animals. Drinking wine is also of course part of Dionysiac worship, so that the intoxicated worshipper literally has the god within. Here, once again, as so often in Dionysiac religion, there is a confusion between sacrificer, deity, and victim.

The mask added to the pillar has another dimension. It is phallic. Some icons of Dionysus are overtly so. An Attic black-figured lekythos of ca 490–480 B.C. shows satyrs singing and dancing around a phalliform icon with an eye on the glans;²⁶ a similar scene is found on an Etruscan amphora of the Micali Painter.²⁷ At Methymna an icon in the form of an olive-tree trunk shaped at the tip like

²¹ Carpenter (1997: 96) notes that only Dionysus, satyrs, and gorgons appear as disembodied frontal faces in archaic and classical Greek art. For disembodied eyes, eye-creatures, and eye-cups in Dionysian iconography, see most recently Steinhart 1995: 24–25, 55–63, 76–87, 104–106 (with extensive bibliography). For the concept of divine possession in Dionysiac religion, see Henrichs 1994.

²² Well treated by Detienne 1986: 79–99.

²³ Detienne and Vernant 1979: 247; Detienne 1986: 54–59; Sissa and Detienne 1989: 263; Triomphe 1992: 112–121.

²⁴ See Burkert 1983: 224–226; Burkert 1985: 164; Detienne 1986: 54–59; Drew Griffith refers me also to Ar. *Lys.* 205 and *Thesm.* 730–731. Egyptian cult labelled wine the blood of Osiris (*PMag* 2.10; *PLondon-Leiden* 15.13/14) or of the enemies of the gods (Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 353b).

²⁵ Ion *PMG* 744; Eur. *Cyc.* 156, 454, 519–527; Pl. *Leg.* 773d; Phanodemus *FGrH* 325 F 12; Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F 5; Men. *Dysc.* 946; Proclus in Pl. *Crat.* 406c; Dodds 1960: 106 *ad Bacch.* 284–285; Burkert 1983: 224–225; Henrichs 1982: 160.

²⁶ Name vase of Painter of Athens 9690. For the identification with Dionysus, see Beazley, *ABV* 505.1; Gasparri 1986: 440, no. 153; Steinhart 1995: 85.

²⁷ Würzburg L 796. See Spivey 1987: 14, no. 64; Steinhart 1995: 85, n. 781. On the Etruscan vase a satyr is perched over the icon in such a way as to suggest he will descend upon it with his rump. The same cannot be said of the satyrs on the Athenian vase. Herter (1938b: 1707) compares a third vase in the Villa Giulia. Casadio (1994: 306, n. 124) lists Athens 9690 twice and mistakenly claims that the vases listed by Herter show satyrs sitting on a phallus. For the behaviour of the Etruscan satyr, compare Matz 1969: 323–325, no. 176, pl. 196, where an ithyphallic Pan is threatened by a similar gesture.

a head (ἐξ ἄκρου κεφαλοειδῆς ὁ κόρμος) was worshipped by the eloquent name of "Dionysus Phallen."²⁸ No less eloquent is the cult title "Dionysus Thyonidas" given to an icon apparently carved from figwood at Rhodes, since "Thyone" is known to be a general Dionysiac cult name for phallus.²⁹ We also hear of a Dionysus "Enorkhes" (= with testicles) at Samos and at Phigalia.³⁰ The latter icon is described for us by Pausanias as having its lower regions concealed from view by laurel and ivy leaves, but the upper visible portion painted in a brilliant red (8.39.6). The colour suggests that it may be a phallus with the eponymous portions of the icon mysteriously concealed at its base.³¹ At Delos Dionysus was represented by an icon in the form of a crowing cock with its head replaced by a phallus (see Plate 1A).³² Some argue that Dionysus appears, juxtaposed to an offering table, on an Attic skyphos in the form of a large winged phallus with an eye on the glans (see Plate 1B).³³ The infant Dionysus was represented by a phallus when concealed in the mystic winnowing-fan/cradle (*liknon*): iconography shows the phallus in the *liknon* as early as 375 B.C., and perhaps as early as 440 B.C., if Tzachou-Alexandri is correct in her interpretation of the new "Anthestheria" vase.³⁴ We will see later that reliefs attest to the existence of winged phallus-icons in at least two other localities.

The phallic aspect of Dionysus is a mere extension of the others. Henrichs rightly dismisses interpretations of the Dionysiac phallus as a symbol of fertility, of aggression, or an apotropaion: "erections are external signs of a physiological

²⁸ Oenomaus of Gadara in Euseb. *Præp. evang.* 5.36.1–4 (= Oenomaus, fr. 13 Mullbach); Paus. 10.19.3. The Methymnian inscription IG XII.2 503 refers to a carrying about (περιφορά) of an image at the Dionysia. On Dionysus Phallen, see Frontisi-Ducroux 1991: 193–201.

²⁹ Hesych. s.v. Thyonidas: ὁ Διόνυσος παρὰ Ῥοδίοις. τοὺς συκίνους φάλητας. On "thyone" and related words, see Detienne 1986: 84–85. On this gloss, cf. Veyne 1985: 623, n. 8. See also below, 286.

³⁰ Hesych. s.v. Enorkhes; Lycoph. *Alex.* 212. See also Jameson 1993: 52–53. The Phigaleans also called Dionysus by the name "Acratophorus" (Paus. 8.39.6). For the aition, see below, 276.

³¹ Casadio (1984: 103–115), using a very promiscuous and decontextualizing comparativism, argues that the colour here symbolizes blood in all its ambivalent associations. On the use of red for phalli, see Herter 1938b: 1685; Fehling 1974: 12–13. For the icons of Dionysus with red faces at Corinth, see below, 284, and cf. Frontisi-Ducroux 1991: 189–193. At Phelloe the entire icon of Dionysus was painted red (Paus. 7.26.11, cf. 9.32.1). Note that the phalli of the phallophoroi on the Florence cup (discussed below, 268) are in added red. The actor's phallus is also invariably of bright red leather. This is particularly clear from the Gnathia "phlyakes," and from Ar. *Nub.* 539; Suda s.v. *Phallos* [Φ 60], s.v. *Libyphalloi* [I 258]. Comparable are the figures of Priapus, invariably *ruber* . . . *cum rubente fascino* (Priap. 83.8 Bücheler).

³² Vallois 1922; Bruneau 1970: 312–317. Jameson (1993: 52–53), playing down the evidence for phallic icons of the god, suggests that the Delian icon is "not the god himself but may be Dionysus' companion, Phalles." But the Delian inscriptions explicitly call it τὸ ἄγαλμα τοῦ Διονύσου: see Vallois 1922; Sissa and Detienne 1989: 258.

³³ Munich 8934. Robertson 1979, pl. 34.3–4.

³⁴ A phallus is visible in the *liknon* on an Apulian vase in Trieste, *CVA Italy 43, Trieste 1* (1969) IVD, pl. 5.3: see Guépin 1968: 289, n. 49; Bérard 1974: 9–10, pl. 2.3; Burkert 1987: 95–96. New "Anthestheria" vase: Tzachou-Alexandri 1997, esp. 484.

and mental condition that the Greeks ascribed to a divine agent and that Plato identifies as one of four types of 'divine madness' " (1987: 97).³⁵ The phallus is the symbol of the surging life-principle, but also an instrument of possession. Plato's Timaeus shows how these two Dionysiac aspects are conceptually linked. The divine part of humanity is located in the marrow which forms the brain and also male seed. It is described as "having a vital impulse to gush forth," which is also the essential quality of the Dionysiac, as we have seen.³⁶ Because of this impulse, says Timaeus, "it is the nature of male genitals to be disobedient and self-willed and, like an animal which will not listen to reason, out of a mad lust it attempts to take possession of everything."³⁷ The vital life-surge leads to the impulse to take possession, but through an instrument which virtually also takes possession of its possessor, reducing him to a bestial state of satyr-like frenzy.³⁸ Male genitals are conceived of as having a will of their own, as a sort of symbiotic animal.³⁹ The zoomorphic concept of the phallus is pervasive in Greek thought—one has only to think of the many representations of phallus birds in Greek art.⁴⁰ It is also essentially Dionysiac. The phallus icon of Dionysus and the phalli carried in Dionysiac processions are always regarded as independent living organisms, of which the glans is a head, equipped with eyes and sometimes with (phallic, horse-like) ears and other animal attributes (see Plates 1A, 1B, 1C, 3, 4, 8A, 8B).⁴¹ The eyes, ears, and the phallus are the essential organs of the Dionysiac creature, but especially the eyes and phallus, because, though one can be possessed by music through one's ears and possess others through theirs, it is by one's own eyes and phallus that one is both possessed and takes possession.

The pillar image is richly paradoxical: a tree-trunk, symbol of the surging life-principle, but also a dead stump. The contrast is brought out by the custom of dressing the stump in ivy, contrasting the dead tree-trunk with the green parasitic growth.⁴² The same ambivalence appears in that other Dionysian phallic symbol, the thyrsus, a hollow fennel stock wreathed in ivy at the tip.⁴³ But here is a further paradox: the thyrsus is a phallic symbol, but it is carried primarily by women. This ambivalence of gender reappears in the custom of carefully dressing the stump

³⁵ Cf. Burkert 1985: 166.

³⁶ Pl. *Ti.* 73b and 91b: τῆς ἐκροῆς ζωτικὴν ἐπιθυμίαν. For the marrow-brain relationship, see Onians 1951: 118, 149.

³⁷ Pl. *Ti.* 91b: διὸ δὴ τῶν μὲν ἀνδρῶν τὸ περὶ τὴν τῶν αἰδοίων φύσιν ἀπειθές τε καὶ αὐτοκρατές γεγονός, ὅλον ζῶον ἀνυπήκοον τοῦ λόγου, πάντων δι' ἐπιθυμίας οἰστρώδεις ἐπιχειρεῖ κρατεῖν. See also Olender 1983: 159–162.

³⁸ Esp. Lissarrague 1990: 59.

³⁹ Arist. *De motu anim.* 703b; Detienne 1986: 94.

⁴⁰ On phallus-birds see, most recently, Boardman 1992; Csapo 1993; Kilmer 1993: 193–197.

⁴¹ For eyes on phalli: Steinhart 1995: 82–87.

⁴² Cf. Dodds 1960: 77 *ad Eur. Bacch.* 81; Simon 1961: 1004.

⁴³ The phallic nature of the fennel stock has attracted most attention in relation to the Prometheus myth where it is used to steal the "seed of fire." The classic essay is Freud 1964 [1932]. See further Vernant 1988: 178–194; Triomphe 1992: 36–46.

and mask-icon of Dionysus. This god of the phallus, for all his phallic traits, appears in full and immaculate attire in both art and cult, at a time when nudity or scant dress was becoming the norm for other male gods. Other male gods reflect the athletic ideals of their male worshippers, but not Dionysus, who in the *Bacchae* (as the "Stranger") is called "womanish" (353 θηλύμορφος) because his hair is sleek, says Pentheus, from unfamiliarity with wrestling and his flesh white from deliberate avoidance of outdoor activities (453–458).⁴⁴

On the one hand, then, the phallus-god is very unphallic in his dress and comportment.⁴⁵ He is quite unlike Hermes, whose cult image, the herm, Dionysus most resembles: the icon of Dionysus never itself carries a phallus as herms do almost invariably; until the fourth century B.C. he is almost never shown naked; in myth his erotic pursuits are rare.⁴⁶ In Jameson's words, he appears to remain serenely "isolated from the sexuality that flourishes all around him" (1993: 61). Paradoxically, the phallus-god's dress and comportment are not only unphallic, they are unmanly. Frontisi-Ducroux notes that in vase-painting the dress of Dionysus' icon mirrors the dress of his female worshippers, a long chiton and himation, and sometimes ornate oriental overgarments.⁴⁷ The same clothing style can be seen on the image of the god when mythologized in art. Tom Carpenter recently denied that vase-painting dressed the god in "explicitly female clothing," a conceit in his view confined to comedy.⁴⁸ But while it may be true that Dionysus' ankle-length chiton was in origin gender-ambivalent rather than explicitly female, it is almost exclusively female dress after about 460 B.C. (the exceptions are the conventional garb of charioteers and musicians). The mitra, too, is normally feminine headdress in central Greece, but often worn by Dionysus: Bremmer characterizes it "the typical coiffure of a marriageable maiden," and later authors call Dionysus θηλυμίτρης, "of the womanly mitra."⁴⁹ In *Bacchae* the ankle-length peploi and the mitra are explicitly called women's clothing (828, 833, 836, 853, 855). Nor is it true, as Carpenter maintains, that this perception of Dionysus' apparel was confined to comedy, or even to the

⁴⁴ For the cultural logic coarse hair : smooth hair :: male : female, cf. Eur. *El.* 527–529.

⁴⁵ See esp. Kenner 1970: 116–125.

⁴⁶ Jameson 1993; Osborne 1997: 517–519.

⁴⁷ Frontisi-Ducroux 1991 *passim*, esp. 151: "partout . . . le pilier, quand il est dissimulé, est entouré d'une tunique ou drapé dans un manteau, et sur les stamnoi, c'est le chiton recouvert de l'himation, tous deux plissés et identiques à ceux que portent les femmes." In Athens oriental garments are more commonly worn by women: see Miller 1997, esp. 249.

⁴⁸ Carpenter 1997: 104–118. The *krokotos* worn by Dionysus in comedy is unambiguously feminine: Cratinus *PCG* 4 F 40; Ar. *Ran.* 46; see Dover 1993: 39–40. In the famous parade of Ptolemy Philadelphus a ten-cubit high fully anthropomorphic icon of Dionysus wore a "purple chiton extending to his feet covered by a diaphanous *krokotos*" (*FGrH* 627 F 2).

⁴⁹ Brandenburg 1966, esp. 133–148; Bezantakos 1987: 85–94 (reviving an older view that the mitra is *tainia*, but ignoring the iconographic evidence); Bremmer 1992: 193. Θηλυμίτρης in *Anec. Gr.* Stundemund 268, 282; Lucian *Dial. D.* 22.1; Brandenburg 1966: 141; cf. Soph. *OT* 209 (Dionysus "of the golden mitra").

Bacchae and comedy. In Aeschylus' *Edonoi* (*TrGF* 61) Lycurgus called Dionysus "effeminate" (γύννις), while speaking with direct reference to his dress (ποδαπὸς ὁ γύννις; τίς πάτρα; τίς ἡ στολή;), which is described elsewhere in the play as an ankle-length chiton and Lydian *bassara* (*TrGF* 59).⁵⁰ Even if it is true that Dionysus' garments might have been interpreted as archaic or foreign and that in themselves they were merely ambivalent, the fact is that they could be, and frequently were, perceived as womanly. To explain this, if we are not to look to the clothes themselves, we are surely to look to cultic practice.

The god's worshippers imitate his image (and *vice versa*). Cross-dressing is widely attested for both public and private Dionysiac ritual.⁵¹ We are generally better informed about cross-dressing and female impersonation in the private worship of Dionysus at symposia and in the *komoi* which resulted when drunken symposiasts took to the streets.⁵² Lucian recounts a notorious example of such behaviour (*Calumn.* 16):

... someone at the court of that King Ptolemy⁵³ who was nicknamed "Dionysus" slandered the Platonic philosopher Demetrius, because he drank water and was the only one of the company who did not put on women's clothing during the Dionysia. Indeed had he not started drinking early and in view of all, next time he was invited, and had he not put on a Tarantine wrap, played the cymbals, and danced to them, he would have been lost as one displeasing to the king's lifestyle.

Cross-dressing in private cult is also amply attested by Attic red-figured pottery, particularly the "booners" or "Anakreontic" vases which show Athenian men with effeminate robes and accoutrements performing a *komos* in the streets of Athens after the symposium, while the depiction of satyrs dressed in menad costume, satyrs with false breasts, and menads with the ithyphallic *perizomata* of satyrs may refer to official cult.⁵⁴

The custom of cross-dressing at the Dionysia was so popular that at the Quinisext Synod of Constantinople in 692 the Church Fathers felt it necessary to decree "that no man put on women's clothing nor any woman men's clothing;

⁵⁰ Possibly, as Deichgräber (1939: 261) argues, the *krokotos* was also mentioned in Aeschylus' play: cf. *Ar. Ach.* 137–138; Naevius *Lycurgus* (thought to be modelled on *Edonoi*), *TRF* fr. 18; Naevius *Inc. nom. rel.*, *TRF* fr. 4; Rau 1967: 109–110.

⁵¹ Gallini 1963; Kenner 1970: 112–132; Kolb 1976 (but see Henrichs 1982: 224, n. 97); Slater 1978; Henrichs 1982: 158–159; Casadio 1987: 229–233; Seaford 1994: 273; 1996: 222.

⁵² Duris *FGH* 76 F 12; Philostr. *Imag.* 1.2; Plut. *Flam.* 17.6, *De gen. Socr.* 596d; cf. Aristid. 41.9; Livy 39.15.9; other examples in Slater 1978: 190–191. In general, see Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague 1990.

⁵³ This Ptolemy has been variously identified: as Ptolemy IV by Fraser 1972: 343, n. 112, and 715–716, n. 140; and as Ptolemy XII by von Arnim 1901. For Ptolemy IV as "Neos Dionysos," see Frommer 1996: 97.

⁵⁴ On the "booners" see most recently Delavaud-Roux 1995. A new discussion by M. C. Miller will appear shortly. Transvestites on vases are collected by Caruso 1987. Dionysiac cross-dressing in later art: see Gallini 1963: 216–217.

that they not wear comic, satyric, or tragic masks; that they not shout out the name of the execrable Dionysus while pressing the grapes or while pouring the wine into kegs."⁵⁵ These commands had so little effect, it seems, that even in the twelfth century the commentator Theodor Balsamon regretted the continued popularity of such practices among rustics in his day (*PG* 137.731).⁵⁶

In public cult cross-dressing was common in rites of passage for maidens and youths, and Dionysus is prominent among the deities involved, as demonstrated, for example, by Hatzopoulos' recent study of Macedonian initiation rituals for Dionysus Pseudanor, "the False Male."⁵⁷ Seaford thinks cross-dressing featured in the major Dionysiac mysteries of Athens and Central Greece (1994: 270–274). Cross-dressing in individual initiation rites may differ in significance from collective rites of status reversal, but both demonstrate that play with gender distinctions was a basic feature of Dionysiac liminality.⁵⁸ Aristides interpreted the doubleness of Dionysus as the complete coalescence in one of male and female nature and observed that "the Dionysiac places women in the ranks of men no less than it causes men to act as women" (4.29.10–20, 30.13–15 Jebb).

In Athens cross-dressing in official cult is attested only for the *Oschophoria*. At the *Oschophoria* two young men of wealthy and noble family led a procession for Dionysus dressed in women's clothing. They were chosen, it seems, for their girlish good looks, prepared for the event with hot baths, kept out of the sun to whiten their complexions, had their hair trained and their skin made smooth with unguents, and were possibly also instructed in female impersonation.⁵⁹ The cross-dressers are *ephebes*, suited for these liminal rites by being themselves at the liminal stage between boyhood and manhood. Something similar is attested by *Suda* in the entry under the word for "tress" (s.v. *Bostrychos*): "to put unguents on the hair and arrange it in tresses, it is immediately apparent to everyone that this person has performed the rites of the Chian goddess and the *Ithyphalli*." The same work preserves the information that the *Ithyphalli* were followers of Dionysus who paraded in women's dress, specifically in ankle-length chitons and with embroidered sleeves, details of costume drawn from *Semus*, a Hellenistic

⁵⁵ Mansi 1765: col. 972.

⁵⁶ Casadio 1987: 231.

⁵⁷ Brelich 1969, *passim* (see index s.v. *travestimento*); Graf 1985: 405–406; Bremmer 1992; Hatzopoulos 1994, esp. 63–111 (he connects the epithet with both girls' and youths' initiations); Leitao 1995.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., the criticisms of Leitao 1995, esp. 149–156, though the structuralist model Leitao sets up for attack is unusually simplistic. Segal (1982: 168–177), Bremmer (1992), and Seaford (1994: 284–301) explain Pentheus' transvestism in *Bacchae* in terms of initiation ritual. For the question whether the cross-dressing at the *Oschophoria* represents an initiation or a rite of status reversal, see Calame 1990: 128–129, 143–148, 324–337 and Bremmer 1992: 195–196.

⁵⁹ Plut. *Thes.* 23 (= *Demon FrGH* 327 F 6); Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F 14–16; Procl. *Chr.* ap. Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 239, 322a13–30; Hesych. s.v. *Oschophoria*; *Anecd. Bekk.* 318. Cf. Philostr. *VA* 4.21 (men performing "womanly dances" at the Athenian *Antheateria*).

writer of ca 200 B.C., also cited by Athenaeus, who quotes a hymn which makes it clear that they are carrying a phallus pole.⁶⁰ Closely comparable is the rite depicted on a cup by the Sabouroff Painter which shows six transvestite men, apparently masked, who wear ankle-length chitons, like Semus' Ithyphalli, and are associated with a small thyrsus-sized phallus pole on the right of side A (Plate 1C, before handle).⁶¹ One can compare the "phallic staff" carried by an entertainer with a phallic mask and leopard skin on red-figured fragments by the Berlin Painter.⁶²

In addition to this ambivalence of gender, the god shares with his worshippers an ambivalence of species. His female worshippers are ambivalent in gender in that they carry the thyrsus, symbol of the god's phallic power, but they are also ambivalent in species, somewhere between human and animal, in that they wear the fawnskin, suckle wolfcubs, or adorn their hair or clothing with living snakes, symbols of the bestial nature of the god. These two aspects of the god's character, ambivalent and theriomorphic sexuality, are still more vividly represented by his male worshippers. Though she carries a phallic symbol, the menad remains female, but sexual ambiguity is incorporated bodily into one species of male worshipper from earliest Archaic ritual to the time of Aristophanes and beyond. Komasts frequently appear wearing body suits with feminine breast and buttock padding, often combined with masculine pot bellies and a limp phallus (Plate 2A). One of the many good reasons for connecting these early komasts with Dionysus-worship is the reappearance of these features in the standard costume of Old and Middle comic actors (Plate 2B).⁶³ In a different way the ambivalent attributes of the menads also correspond to those of satyrs, another species of male Dionysiac performer. But where the menad remains human, and expresses her theriomorphism through incidental symbols, the satyr, an ithyphallic horseman, bodily incorporates these bestial and phallic qualities. Both species of male worshipper express a different aspect of the god's sexual ambivalence: one is hygrophallic male with female traits, the other is ithyphallic human with bestial traits. Both forms represent the fundamental ambivalence of Dionysus, straddling categories that the structures of civilization keep apart. Though the categories sometimes merge, the satyr normally plays the aroused active male, but is the slave of his sexual urges, while the komast normally displays symptoms of passive sexuality. Both in their different ways reduce male sexuality to a paradox: sexual possession is not clearly active or passive, but, by this Dionysian logic, always both at once, because the phallus is objectified as an external force, a divine or bestial power which invades its possessor. The phallic power of Dionysus

⁶⁰ Suda s.v. *Phallophoroi* [Φ 58], s.v. *Semos*, s.v. *Ithyphalloi* [I 250]; Hesych. s.v. *Ithyphalloi*; *Semos ap. Athen.* 622a-c (= *FGrH* 396 F 24). Cf. Kenner 1970: 112.

⁶¹ Malibu 86.AE.296; *ARV*² 837.10. For the relationship between this vase and the "Anacreontics," see Price 1990: 164, with Delavaud-Roux 1995.

⁶² Athens Acr. 702; *ARV*² 213.238; Beazley 1930: 21, no. 202, pl. 13.3.

⁶³ Despite attempts at dissociation by Seeberg 1996: 5-6.

is a supreme expression of his character as interstructure precisely because of the symbolic importance of the phallus to social structure in ancient Greek society, and the habit of expressing social domination in the language of sexual domination.⁶⁴

II. PHALLUS-RIDING

Paradoxically it is in the most unambiguously “phallic” of rituals that Dionysiac gender ambiguity is most perfectly expressed. Phallic processions for Dionysus were practised throughout Greece and are attested for the Rural Dionysia and the *Pompe* of the Great Dionysia at Athens. We shall see that phallic rituals also had a place in certain Dionysiac mysteries. Of course, most of our information relates to the public rituals. The procession of the Dionysia ended with a phallus pole, or several phallus poles, which ancient writers describe as “a long piece of timber with leather [or perhaps “figwood”] genitalia at the top.”⁶⁵ But we do not need to rely on such descriptions, because a mid-sixth century B.C. Attic black-figured cup in Florence depicts a phallic procession. On either side of the cup we see men parading with elaborate phallus poles (Plates 3 and 4). The actual phallus pole has a complex form which is worth describing in detail. There are in fact two tree-trunks on each side: a smaller, slenderer timber, perhaps five metres in length, which serves as a support or a base for the larger upright pole, which is twice as thick and somewhat longer. Neither of the poles is perfectly straight, showing that they are rough-hewn and each formed from a single timber.⁶⁶ Both poles on Side A are decorated with an eye outlined in white near the tip of the pole (Plate 3). This is true also of the principal pole on Side B (Plate 4). On both sides the upright pole also has a series of eyes at regular intervals below the principal eye. Above we noted a pervasive homology between the eye and the phallus within the Dionysiac realm. Such stylized “eyes” are often associated with Dionysiac beasts. Eyelike feathers or spots sometimes cover the Dionysiac animal. Eye-dots frequently appear on either side of the *perizoma* of satyr costume, making the satyr’s loins appear like a grotesque mask with staring bestial eyes on either side of

⁶⁴ For the best statement of the general attitudes, especially as they pertain to Classical Athens, see Halperin 1990 and Winkler 1990. Cf. Bremmer 1980: 290–293. Exceptions can be found: see Hupperts 1988; Kilmer 1997. Passive homosexuality among citizens would not have been an issue, if the taboo was consistently observed by all individuals and all classes and at all times. There was certainly less inhibition among Archaic aristocrats and Classical conservatives.

⁶⁵ Σ Ar. *Ach.* 243, Suda s.v. *phalloi* [Φ 59, Φ 60]. Plut. *Mor.* 527d may be evidence for the position of the phallus at the end of the parade, followed by choruses (cf. Ar. *Ach.* 261). The phallus appears at the end of Callixeinus’ account of Ptolemy’s parade (Athen. 201e). The reading σῦκνον for the manuscripts’ σκότινον is proposed to me by David Braund. It is an easy corruption (cf. Antiphanes *PCG* F 120.4; Dover *ad Nu.* 880), and one perhaps inspired by the description of the comic actor’s phallus at Ar. *Nu.* 538. Both σῦκνον and σκότινον appear in the Suda manuscripts (which draw upon the same source as the scholiast).

⁶⁶ Cf. the *κεραία* which forms the phallus of the Delian icon: Vallois 1922: 96.

a phallic “nose” (Plate 5A).⁶⁷ The eyes can also be seen on the ithyphallic costume of actors dressed as fighting cocks on an Attic red-figured vase of about 420 B.C., but here, in addition to prominent “eyes” on either side of the loin cloth, the cocks (like the phallus pole on the Florence cup) are covered with dotted circles, which do double-duty in assimilating these Dionysiac eyes to bird feathers (Plate 5B).⁶⁸ To complete the apotheriosis of the phallus-poles on the Florence cup, horses’ ears appear on the main pole of either side and below them five wrinkly lines mark off the tip as if it were the head of an animal (cf. Plate 1C). The animal head and the eyes are symbolic expressions of possession by an alien and bestial power. The phallus poles, in fact, are said by our ancient sources, to commemorate an act of possession. The scholiast to Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* 243 recounts the *aition* for the rite:

The phallus came to be part of the worship of Dionysus by some secret rite. About the phallus itself the following is said. Pegasos took the image of Dionysus from Eleutherae—Eleutherae is a city of Boeotia—and brought it to Attica. The Athenians, however, did not receive the god with reverence, but they did not get away with this resolve unpunished, because, since the god was angry, a disease attacked the men’s genitals and the calamity was incurable. When they found themselves succumbing to the disease, which was beyond all human magic and science, envoys were hastily dispatched to the divine oracles. When they returned, they reported that the sole cure was for them to hold the god in all reverence. Therefore, in obedience to these pronouncements, the Athenians privately and publicly constructed phalli, and with these they paid homage to the god, making them a memorial to their own suffering.

The scholiast does not relate the full story behind the form of the phallus, which has, he says, to do with a secret rite, but only tells the story of its use in Athenian public ritual. Even here he speaks rather coyly about the details of the “disease” which afflicted the Athenian men’s genitals. To find out more we have to turn to another *aition* for the similar public cult practice, in honour of Dionysus, of fashioning phalli out of clay at the Haloa. We owe the information to the scholia to two different passages of Lucian: one explains a reference to “Icarius,” and the other to “Haloa”.⁶⁹

This Icarius was an Athenian farmer. They say that Dionysus gave the vine-cutting first to him, after whom the first vine was called “Icaria” as well as the territory which grew the plant. This Icarius gave some of the fruit to Attic shepherds to drink. They drank it and then thought that the others, who were gripped by a deep sleep from wine-drinking, were dead, and they killed Icarius thinking that Icarius had given deadly poison not only to those who were asleep but that he had also given a potion producing madness to those who were awake and in a drunken rage. So this is how Icarius died. When they recovered from their

⁶⁷ Compare the mask with phallic noses worn by the Dionysiac entertainer on the Berlin-painter fragments (above, n. 62). Hoffmann (1997: 56) thinks him the leader of the procession at the Anthesteria.

⁶⁸ For the symbolism behind these fighting-cocks, see Csapo 1993.

⁶⁹ Σ Lucian *Dial. D.* 1–5, ed. Rabe, p. 211.14–212.8; Σ Lucian *Dial. Meret.* 7, ed. Rabe, p. 279–280.

drunkenness, Dionysus showed the following sort of wrath towards them. He approached them in the form of a beautiful boy, drove them mad with desire for intercourse, and encouraged them to seduce him. But then he immediately disappeared. The shepherds, seeing that he kept promising to let them consummate their desires, were at the peak of excitation. Indeed they remained in this state of unabated excitation continually as a result of the wrath of Dionysus. Afterwards they propitiated the god by making such ceramic forms according to an oracle and setting them up as votive offerings as substitutes for themselves and they put a stop to their madness.

"Haloa": a festival at Athens which contains mysteries of Demeter, Kore, and Dionysus upon the cutting of the vine and the tasting of the wine already in store, taking place at Athens, in which they display things resembling male genitals, about which they relate that they came into being as a security for human procreation, because Dionysus in giving wine provided this drug as an incitement to intercourse. He gave it to Icarius, whom the shepherds killed out of ignorance of the effects of drinking wine. They then suffered madness from being incited to commit a sexual assault on Dionysus (πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον ὑβριστικῶς κινήσῃναι), and retained this position of the genitals. An oracle advised them to stop the madness by fashioning ceramic genitals and setting them up as offerings. When this happened, they were freed from the evil, and this festival is a reminder of their suffering.

From the Lucianic scholia and comparable stories from elsewhere in Greece it seems certain that the "disease" mentioned by the *Acharnians* scholiast is permanent erection.⁷⁰ Sissa and Detienne explain it as a conflation of two distinct conditions that ancient medical writers refer to as "satyriasis" and "priapism": the first is an obsessive sexual surexcitation, which can lead to exhaustion and death; the second, "priapism," is a permanent erection of the penis, permitting neither pleasure nor orgasm: "c'est la verge de bois, de bois sec," observe Sissa and Detienne, "souffrance plus impuissance."⁷¹ This may explain why one scholiast refers to the condition as a "madness," since satyriasis appears more like an obsession than a physical pathology, while the other scholiast refers to the condition as a "disease," since his tale is focused not on the seduction but on the priapism that results.

The myth of the disease inflicted on the Attic shepherds explains another detail on the cup in Florence. Of the eight men at ground level on Side A, the central six, who are bent under the weight of the pole, and who are otherwise unclothed, all have erect phalli added in red paint. Only these six central men on Side A,

⁷⁰The fragmentary third column of the *Monumentum Archilochium* related a similar tale: see Tarditi 1968: 7. If correct, the supplement [ἀσθενεῖς] εἰς τὰ αἰδοῖα would suggest a structural variant, but there is nothing in the text to prefer this to νοσώδεις *vel sim*. Insofar as the phallic rites are generally deemed to be commemorative, a disease of the sort mentioned by the scholiast to Lucian seems probable. Cf. the "disease" which afflicted the genitals of the men of Lampsacus after the expulsion of Priapus (Comes 1551, cited and discussed by Olender 1983: 149–150) and the myth explaining the ithyphallism of satyrs (Σ Clem. Al. *Protr.* 47.5, p. 314 Stählin).

⁷¹Sissa and Detienne 1989: 258. See Galen 7.728, 10.967–968, 13.318, 19.426 Kühn. The medical descriptions are studied by Olender 1983.

like the six men on Side B, are shown as actually carrying the phallus pole. The man facing them in front has no added phallus, and, as he is clearly differentiated in posture and position, standing straight and on tiptoes, we may infer that he is also distinguished by function. This is confirmed by the observation that he is not helping to lift the phallus pole since his hand is clearly outlined in front of the pole, not underneath it. We notice that he is matched by a man at the back, who also has no added phallus (there is a break in the vase here, but higher than we would expect to find the phallus), and who is also leaning towards the pole on tiptoes and apparently not bearing its weight. It is often thought that these two men are helping to balance the pole and keep it from toppling over.⁷² I doubt that men in this position could prevent such an accident.

Instead I offer the following explanation. Aristotle and Semus of Delos make it clear that the phallus-bearers also sang and danced as they carried the phallus, though no doubt, given the nature of their principal exertion, the singing was limited to periodic refrains and the dance to a few basic steps consistent with carrying the massive weight of the pole. As in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis positions himself ahead of the pole as he sings his hymn to Phales, so Aristotle, in deriving comedy from the "leaders" (ἑξάρχοντες) of the phallic songs, implies that most of the burden of song and improvisation fell upon an individual who was distinguished from the chorus of phallus-bearers.⁷³ We find a man facing a line of ithyphallic dancers on a Boeotian kantharos and making a comparable gesture by stretching out his arms towards them, to show that he addresses them with song (Plate 6A).⁷⁴ An Attic *komos*-vase of the early fifth century B.C. also reproduces the gesture, this time by a costumed man facing a line of ostrich-riders (Plate 6B).⁷⁵ We are probably to think of the man facing the others as the *exarchon* feeding the chorus appropriately obscene verses so that they may answer in refrain. As for the function of the man at the back, I am less certain, but will offer some speculation in a moment.

⁷² Carpenter (1986: 89) writes that "one [of the men on the ends of the pole] pushes against the prow of the platform, as if resisting its progress, and one seems to be pushing from behind as he stands on tiptoes." It is very hard to see why the man in front would resist the progress of the procession, or how he could. Steinhart (1995: 85) infers from the fact that men are pushing on either side that the parade has not yet begun. But why push in both directions? It does not really have a will of its own.

⁷³ Arist. *Poet.* 1149a10–12. Leonhardt 1991 argues that it is tragedy that Aristotle intended to derive from phallic processions, and comedy from dithyramb. Patzer 1995 offers a detailed refutation.

⁷⁴ Described by Baur 1922: 119, no. 184; his fig. 42 is barely visible.

⁷⁵ Attic black-figured skyphos, Heron Group. Boston MFA 20.18. With the *exarchontes* on these vases compare the stance of the figure who faces the procession depicting the return of Hephaestus, including costumed "komasts," on the Corinthian amphoriskos in Athens (NM 1092 [664]), illustrated in Csapo and Slater 1995, pl. 18c., and also the gesture of the man facing an "airborne thiasos" of maidens on a red-figured astragalos (London BM E804; *ARV*² 765.20). Hoffmann (1997: 107, figs. 60–63) describes the latter as "like a metteur-en-scène or a choreographer," who "motions to them excitedly, one arm extended towards them, palm down, the other arm raised high as if pointing to the airborne procession" (I thank Alan Griffiths for this last example).

The zoomorphic features of the pole are especially appropriate, given the concept of the phallus as the possessor of its possessor, a view we also saw expressed in the *aition* for the phallic procession, in which the genitals seemed to take control as if under the influence of an alien and hostile power (in that case the wrath of god). The *aitia* for the phallic procession of the Dionysia and the phallic dedications of the Halao both agreed that the disease or the madness, though provoked by the power of the god, resulted in a condition at least consistent with social norms of virile sexuality, insofar as the phalli in both accounts represent the phalli of the male population of Athens, and in the latter account, though the provocation is homoerotic, the Athenian shepherds play an active sexual role in the encounter with Dionysus, or at least would have, had they not been frustrated by the god's timely disappearance. This seems to be insisted upon by the fact that the phallophori on the Florence cup themselves sport erect phalli: the phalli they carry are both theirs. But a very different conceptualization of the phallus, not as phallus of the same, but as phallus of the other, as threatening and invasive phallus, is clearly expressed by the song of the Ithyphalli preserved by Semus of Delos: "Give way, give way, make room for the god; for the god wishes to march through your midst upright and bursting" (*FGrH* 396 F 24). This conception of the phallus explains some of the other features of the pole on the Florence cup.

Two Dionysiac creatures form part of the float, on Side A an enormous satyr, on Side B a creature, with enlarged breasts, belly, and buttocks, in imitation of the costumed komasts. Each has both feet joined to the horizontal base and each helps support the main pole, the satyr with both hands fixed somewhere beyond the halfway mark of the upright pole, the komast with his left hand fixed about two thirds of the way to the top of the pole. Incised lines describe the back of the satyr's right leg and show that the upright pole rises between his legs. On Side A there is another figure in addition. This time he is of normal human form and size and so must be one of the human entertainers, and is not part of the float. He rides the satyr like a horse and hits the satyr's flanks with a riding crop that he carries in his left hand. In his right hand he carries what is usually identified as a drinking horn, but its size and the manner in which it is held suggest that this horn may be a musical instrument (also called κέρας).

Cook first suggested that the figures on the Florence cup were string-puppets.⁷⁶ This was subsequently denied by Nilsson, Vallois, Deubner, Herter, and others, who thought that the "demonic figures," namely the satyr and the komast, were mythologized performers and not part of the phallus pole at all.⁷⁷ But a mythological interpretation does not square with the details of the vase. That men representing demonic figures should be mythologized and hence also represented as larger than life is not impossible, but it is hardly likely that the

⁷⁶ Cook 1914: 592 n.

⁷⁷ Vallois 1922: 96; Deubner 1932: 136, n. 3; Herter 1938a: 1674–75; Nilsson 1906: 265; Veyne 1985: 622. Carpenter (1986: 89) sees the riders as "effigies or statues."

satyr would receive this treatment and not the man riding on his back. Should we conclude that a realistically represented human performer rides the back of a mythological creature? More pertinent, perhaps, is consideration of the float from the perspective of a structural engineer. If the "demons" are simply more weight and not weight-bearing structure, there is no way of keeping the phallus erect. But the most crucial detail has been overlooked by all. The satyr's feet do not stand on top of the phallus pole. They are carefully shown descending to the side, not the top, of the base pole, indicating that the satyr is not standing on the pole, but riveted to it.⁷⁸ On Side B the komast's feet do not appear at all: his ankles emerge out of the base pole.

The pole on either side of the vase is fitted with a system of ropes. There is one large rope that descends like a rein from the neck of the upright phallus pole on either side. On Side A it runs between the ankles of the satyr before we lose sight of it. It seems to begin to curve back up, perhaps because the painter has united it with the decorative ivy that balances the composition in the upper left of the cup, but the rope and the ivy are kept discrete on Side B. Notice also that each float has a double rope about a third of the way up the upright phallus which joins the upright with the base and through which passes the first rope (that we referred to as the "rein of the phallus"). Neither of these is particularly decorative and neither could function as a structural support.⁷⁹ In addition there are two festoon-like objects descending from the nose of the upright, comparable to the "Kultbinde" of the diminutive phallus pole on Plate 1C. A clue to the function of this system of ropes could be offered by observing the man at the opposite end of the base-pole from the "exarchon." Whereas the six men on Side B and the six interior men on Side A are all bent beneath the weight of the float, the man at the end not only stands up straight, but appears to be on tiptoes. Moreover, his arms and shoulders do not appear underneath the pole but above it. I will propose that he is pulling the rein. If we imagine that the upright pole is hinged only between the satyr's hands and rests on, but is not fixed to, the base-pole, this would make the upright pole waggle up and down between the satyr's legs, provided there are proper counterweights in the head of the phallus, or supposing that someone is pulling one of the festoon-like ropes on the nose of the phallus. This may seem fanciful, but there is some evidence to support it.

When in Egypt, Herodotus attended a festival of Osiris, whom he equates with Dionysus (2.48–49):

The rest of the festival for Dionysus the Egyptians conduct almost entirely in the same way as the Greeks except for choruses. In place of phalli, however, they have other

⁷⁸ Veyne (1985: 623) imagines that the satyr, whom he supposes a man in costume, is managing to stay on the pole by squeezing his ankles against it. This would be very hard to do, especially with someone riding on your back.

⁷⁹ Cf. Nilsson 1906: 265: "Wozu sollten auch die an dem Phallos festgebundenen Tæue oder Stricke dienen? Sie können mit heiligen Binden nicht gleichgestellt werden."

contrivances—string-puppets as much as a cubit in height which the women carry about the villages, making their genitals bob up and down. These are not much smaller than the rest of the body. A piper precedes and the women follow singing of Dionysus. The reason why it has abnormally large genitals and why they are the only part of the body that moves—there is a sacred tale told about this. I think Melampous the son of Amytheon was not ignorant but familiar with this sacrifice, because Melampous is the one who explained the name of Dionysus and his sacrifice and the phallic procession to the Greeks. He did not understand everything securely when he gave the account, and later sages gave it better, but Melampous is the one who introduced the phallus in procession for Dionysus and the Greeks do what they do because they learned it from him.

Plutarch also mentions rites “resembling the [Greek] phallic processions,” which were performed for Osiris at a festival called the Pamyia (*De Is. et Os.* 12, 36 = *Mor.* 355e, 365c). The phallic icon paraded in Osiris’ honour was called “Pamyles,” said to be a “Priapus-like Egyptian god” by Hesychius (s.v. Παμύλης, cf. Phot. s.v. Παμύλης) and an apostle of Osiris by Plutarch (355e).⁸⁰ Diodorus was also of the opinion that the Greeks received from Egypt the custom of honouring the phallus “in the initiation rites and public sacrifices” of Dionysus (1.22). Notice also Herodotus’ strange reticence about a “sacred tale.” The tale Herodotus does not tell is probably not, as Plutarch and many subsequent commentators claim, the “sacred tale” of the dismemberment of Osiris, according to which the various parts of his body were strewn all over Egypt, or distributed to his murderers, while Osiris’ penis was thrown into the Nile and eaten by fish, so that Isis in piecing together his body again was forced to construct a facsimile of this member.⁸¹ That story purports to explain the dedication of phalli at Egyptian sanctuaries, but not why the genitals “are the only part of the body that moves.” The story Herodotus does not tell is most likely the following. Egyptian sources relate that Isis, when mourning over the corpse of Osiris, turned herself into a falcon, and flapping her wings and repeating magic incantations, managed to resuscitate and inflate Osiris’ penis, and alighting upon it, had intercourse and conceived Osiris’ posthumous son Hor (or “Harpocrates”).⁸² The phallus was the only moving part of the puppets because they commemorate the time when the genitals were the only living part of Osiris’ body and the time when, according to a hymn to Osiris, “by raising the air with the flapping of her wings Isis made rise up the helpless limb of him whose heart was still.”⁸³ Both stories are structurally similar, however, insofar as they describe the resurrection of the god through the reconstruction or revivification of his phallus. Herodotus’ reticence may have something to do with personal prudery, but it possibly has more to do with his

⁸⁰ Cf. Cratinus Junior *PCGF* 2, who also mentions the ithyphallic god Sokaris, the local Memphite version of Osiris.

⁸¹ Plut. *Mor* 358, 365; Diod. Sic. 1.22.6, 4.6.3; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 2.1.21–22, 2.2.13; Theodoretus 1.113–114; Herter 1938a: 1673; Lloyd 1976: 224. See the sources in Hopfner 1967: 1.38–39, 99–102.

⁸² See Hopfner 1967: 1.81–87; Herter 1938b: 1717.

⁸³ Hopfner 1967: 1.81.

respect for the secrecy of the Greek rites he believed to be connected to the Egyptian tale. We will see that both these "sacred tales" are closely analogous to the "secret rite," which the *Acharnians* scholiast also refuses to tell.

Several terracotta representations of Egyptian phallic processions survive, though only two have been properly published.⁸⁴ Both are of Hellenistic date. Surprisingly they depict a rite which resembles that of the Florence cup much more closely than that described by Herodotus. The fragmentary phallophoria in Berlin has long been known (Plate 7A).⁸⁵ The phallus is carried by four figures walking two abreast, the pair in front have the form of the god Bes (Weber [1914: 74] suggests costumed priests), while the two at the back are human (uncostumed priests). Bes figures frequently appear in groups, are associated with Osiris, music, and wine, and are often ithyphallic, so that Greek writers equated Bes with satyrs and sometimes with other Dionysiac beings like Pan or Priapus.⁸⁶ The terracotta in Berlin thus shares a number of features with the rite on the Florence cup, including an association with satyr-like creatures, but the phallus itself is much shorter and simpler than that on the Greek vase, and it carries no riders. The situation is somewhat different on the second terracotta, this one a complete group, excavated a quarter century ago at Saqqâra (Plate 7B).⁸⁷ Four figures carry a rectangular platform upon which sits a large phallus. Once again the front pair have the form of the god Bes, and behind them come a pair of human worshippers, probably priests. Here (and perhaps also on the Berlin group) the phallus pole is evidently abbreviated and further phallus-bearers are doubtless to be imagined following behind since the principal weight of the pole is at the back. The phallus is ridden by an icon of the god Harpocrates (?), who, like the priests, wears the tress of a youth on the right temple of his otherwise shorn head. It is clearly not his phallus since he is fixed to it by his ankles, just like the satyr on the Florence cup. And like the satyr on the Florence cup he himself also carries a smaller indistinct figure on his left shoulder, who seems to squat in a strange posture grasping his own phallus with both hands. Derchain (1981)

⁸⁴ Unpublished Egyptian terracotta phallophorai mentioned in the literature are: a piece from Naucratis said to be in the Cairo museum, and described as "a large terracotta of Egyptian style . . . which represents a procession of this sort [i.e., of the sort mentioned by Herodotus]: the chief personage holds a musical instrument and his phallos is supported by four women" (Hogarth *et al.* 1905: 130, n. 6); the former is possibly one of the two pieces in the Cairo Museum, Cairo Spec. Reg. 6240 and 6620, listed by Derchain (1981: 167, n. 3); a group in the National Museum at Athens (2632, formerly Dimitriou Collection); several unaccessioned fragments in University College, London, found by Petrie at Memphis (Martin 1981: 29, n. 1); a piece in the Forcart collection acquired by the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, described by Deonna (1924: 121, no. 122): "deux prêtres debout, côte à côte, portent entre eux, sur leurs épaules, un objet sacré, sorte de poutre horizontale d'où pendent des bandelettes"; and another piece of the "same type," lost from the collection, which had remnants of pink paint (Deonna 1924: 121, no. 123).

⁸⁵ Weber 1914: 102, no. 139, pl. 13; Stricker 1956: 40, fig. 10.

⁸⁶ See esp. Stricker 1956.

⁸⁷ Martin 1973: 11, pl. 9; Martin 1981: 29, no. 306, pl. 23; Derchain 1981.

interprets the terracotta as a votive “perfectly integrated into the Osirian context” relating both to sexual fertility and to the rebirth of the dead. The terracottas certainly show the close similarity between the Greek and Egyptian rites claimed by our Greek authors, but they do not reveal the significant differences reported by Herodotus.

Herodotus is generally taken to mean that, next to choruses, the chief difference between the Egyptian and the Greek rites is the use of string-puppets instead of phallus poles. The puppets he describes were apparently phallic icons of Osiris.⁸⁸ A relief from the Temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu may help us visualize the sort of thing Herodotus is describing (Plate 7C).⁸⁹ The relief shows a procession for the Feast of Min which is led by a float attended by at least twenty-five male figures, most of whom are evidently carrying the weight of a platform upon which stands the ithyphallic god Min Kamut-ef. (Min is identified by Egyptian sources with Osiris, and also by the Greeks with Pan or Priapus.) Some of the worshippers carry banners and ostrich feathers. But one holds, and apparently pulls upon, a rope which leads to the back of the icon’s head. Hopfner takes it to be a string connected to a mechanism within the icon which raises and lowers the god’s phallus in the manner Herodotus describes (1967: 1.84). Hopfner cites no parallels, and the interpretation of this “rope” must remain uncertain.

The actual wording of Herodotus’ testimony need not be taken to imply that mechanisms of this sort are unGreek. Perhaps Herodotus only means that the Egyptian rites differed from the Greek in that the former paraded with small figures sporting large phalli, rather than large phalli with or without smaller figures attached. But whether the point of Herodotus’ contrast is the string-puppetry, the size of the puppets, or the relation of the puppets to the phallus, Herodotus is contradicted not only by the Egyptian terracottas, but by Lucian who connects the string-puppetry not with Egyptian or any Eastern ritual, but specifically with the Greek (*Syr. D.* 16):

The Greeks raise phalli for Dionysus, on which they also carry something like the following, namely little men carved from wood who have big genitals. These are called string-puppets.

Athanasius also implies that this sort of thing was typically Greek (*Hist. Arian.* 57.4): he relates that in A.D. 356 in Alexandria a heathen entered an Orthodox church with phalli and “since he was Greek, he set them in motion with his hand” (καὶ ὡς Ἑλλήνων κινῶν αὐτὰ τῇ χειρὶ καὶ χλευάζων), and then, after subjecting

⁸⁸ It is generally assumed that Herodotus was describing the Pamyliia, but this is far from certain: cf. Lloyd 1976: 223. For ithyphallic Egyptian gods: see Stricker 1956, Martin 1973. For the widespread equation between Dionysus and Osiris: see Hdt. 2.42, 52, 144–146, 156; Diod. Sic. 1.11, 13, 15, 17, 25, 27, 4.1; Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 13 (= *Mor.* 356b); Hdn. *Prosod. Cathol.* 4; Paus. 10.29.5; Athenag. *Leg.* 22.9.4; Porph. ap. Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 3.11.50; Nonnus *Dion.* 4.269–270; Cosm. *Hierosolym. Comment. in Gregor. Nazianz. Carmin.* 44.260; Suda s.v. Ὀσῦρις; Hopfner 1967: 2.161–164 with further testimonia.

⁸⁹ Nelson 1940, pls. 196A, 201, 202. The relief appears on the North Wall of the Second Court of the Temple of Ramses III.

the congregation to verbal abuse, he deservedly suffered the wrath of God.⁹⁰ The Greek does not allow a confident reconstruction of the motion involved, but κινῶν more probably means "set in motion" than simply "shake about"; it is the same word Herodotus uses, though intransitively, to describe the motion of the phallus of the Egyptian string-puppets.

Apart from the nationality of these puppets, there is still a further important discrepancy between Lucian's string-puppets and those described by Herodotus. Herodotus' puppets are phallic, but are not set on phallus poles. Lucian, indeed, agrees with Herodotus in describing his "puppets" as "little men carved from wood who have big genitals," but they are also carried on much larger phalli. Herodotus gives the name "string-puppets" to the wooden figures because their own genitals bob up and down, but the case is much less clear in Lucian's account, where there are two phalli to choose from. Later in the same work Lucian returns to this theme, but there it emerges that the significant point about the wooden man is not that he has a giant phallus, but that he sits on one (*Syr. D.* 28):

In these propylaea also stand the phalli which Dionysus erected and these are of a height of three hundred fathoms. Twice each year a man goes up one of these and resides on the tip of the phallus for a span of seven days . . . I think that they do this also for Dionysus. I have the following reason. All those who erect phalli for Dionysus also set wooden men on the phalli. I will not tell you the reason they do this. But it seems to me that this man too goes up in imitation of that wooden man.

Given the evidence of the Florence cup and its Egyptian counterpart, we must consider the possibility of a rite in which the movable part was not the wooden figure's phallus but the phallus upon which the figure rides. Indeed the figures on the Florence cup do not have large genitals: the satyr's are not visible, and the komast's are so modest in size that they are hardly worth wagging. Perhaps there is no real discrepancy between the descriptions offered by Herodotus and Lucian and the details of the Florence cup, but only a difference of perspective. If the upright pole of the phallus on the Florence cup were lowered and its end raised between the legs of the satyr or fatman, the phallus would appear to be the puppets' genitals, as Lucian says. But if the phallus pole moves up and down, the "ownership" of the genitals is ambiguous. The equine imagery of the horse-face of the phallus, the reins, as well as the little man saddled on the satyr's back all suggest that the puppets are "riding the phallus." The phallus is the phallus of another and the rite has more than a suggestion of passive homosexuality. Burkert draws attention to the position of the satyr (1983: 69, n. 51). This is a stance frequently seen in erotic vase-painting, where one partner of a couple leans

⁹⁰ See Herter 1938a: 1678. Ritual hand-held phalli were found in archaic levels at Kourion which Cape connects with Dionysus (1985).

forward to facilitate anal penetration.⁹¹ Yet the phallus, when raised, is also the phallus of the puppet, larger than the puppet itself and closer to the proportions suggested by Herodotus' and Lucian's account (not to mention Plutarch, who gives a three-to-one ratio for phallus to puppet at *De Is. et Os.* 36). Indeed the same ambiguity is expressed by the phallic procession depicted on the terracotta from Saqqâra (Plate 7B). At first glance it appears as if the phallus is the phallus of Harpocrates, but a closer look reveals that Harpocrates squats over the phallus. Are we to think of him as a god with a large phallus or on one?

Both Herodotus and Lucian refuse to explain the rite, no doubt because it is a "sacred tale" and because Lucian is parodying Herodotus' style. Fortunately for us, however, Lucian's scholiast was learned, as ever, but less adept at keeping a secret. He blurts it out, almost in a figure of *paraleipsis*, apropos of the words "I will not say":

He says this because it is impious, I think, to give a reason which would bring an accusation of pathic homosexuality against Dionysus, insofar as the phallus is a memorial of Coroebus who made a prostitute of Dionysus when he paid him this compensation for information concerning his mother Semele.

So whereas, on the one hand, the phallus poles themselves commemorate an event of active sexuality (though not without some ambiguity, as we have seen, about what it means to be possessed by Dionysus, or possessed by one's own phallus), the phallus-pole riders, on the other hand, are thought to commemorate the passive sexuality of the god of possession himself, but also not without some ambiguity if I am right about the way the puppetry works. The complete story is told to us by Clement of Alexandria, who had no qualms about divulging ancient mysteries (*Protrepticus* 2.34.3):

Dionysus was eager to go down to Hades, but he did not know the way. A man named Prosymnos promised to tell him, but not gratis. The price was not a nice one, but Dionysus thought it was nice. Sexual favours were the price asked of Dionysus. To a willing god was the request made, and indeed he promised to provide them to him, if he returned, confirming his promise with an oath. Learning the way, he set off. He came back up again. He did not encounter Prosymnos, because Prosymnos had died. Acquitting himself of his obligation to his lover, Dionysus rushed to his grave-marker and was overcome with a desire to be buggered. So as it happened he cut off the branch of a fig-tree, fashioned it after the manner of the male part, and sat upon the branch to fulfill his promise to the corpse. Phalli are set up for Dionysus in the cities as a mystic memorial to this passion.

⁹¹ See Kilmer 1993: 22, 24, 33–40, 54, 76, 83 and figs. R518, R577, R361, R489A–B, R529, R543, R545, R1159A (cf. Csapo 1993: 17), R1155, R1184, R864. Cf. Ar. *Pax* 897 (ἐς γόνατα κύβδ' ἱστάναι, which I take to mean leaning forward hands on knees), *Thesm.* 489; Pl. Com. *PCG* 188.17 (a deity Κύβδασος, "Bendover," is named beside Λόρδων, "Twist," and Κέλης, "Jockey," all of them the personifications of sexual positions regularly adopted by females); Soph. *TrGF* F 314.128. On κύβδα and cognates see also Ferrari Pinney 1984: 182; Degani 1993: 29–30.

Several other late writers divulge this tale.⁹² Some of them give explicit details. Anonymous, Nonnus, Hyginus, and Tzetzes all locate the event in Argos, though the name of Dionysus' lover varies from Prosymnos, to Polymnos to Polysymnos. Explicit in another way, Arnobius, despite his professed disgust, is not content to say that Dionysus "sat" upon the phallus. No doubt his description of Dionysus' actions (*huc atque illuc clunes torquet*) is pure embellishment "alla sua fantasia di porno-grafo" (Casadio 1994: 295, n. 111), though on any account the myth requires more than idle sitting. The most interesting variation, in this context, is one found in Nonnus and Tzetzes. Both confuse the active and passive partner in this encounter. Nonnus describes Prosymnos as a "boy" (*adulescens* and παῖς), though he later refers to him as the "lover" (ἐραστής), while Tzetzes describes "Polysymnos" as "a youth" (τῖς νεανίας) and speaks of Dionysus fulfilling his promise by strapping a figwood phallus and testicles of deer-leather to himself, evidently to play the active role.⁹³ (Tzetzes specifically connects this event with the cult epithet "Enorkhes.") The tale sounds like the *aition* of a pederastic initiation rite, but there is no reason to think that actual pederasty was involved.⁹⁴ Pederastic initiation rites are well-attested by comparative anthropology, but all the evidence suggests that the Dionysiac rites, at least by the archaic period, whether secret or public, functioned at a purely symbolic level.⁹⁵

Pausanias also alludes to Dionysus' trip to the underworld, and localizes the event at the Alcyonian lake in Argive territory (2.37.5). He adds, by way of an already familiar refrain, "about the rites for Dionysus which are performed going to the lake at night every year it would be impious for me to divulge to the world at large" (2.37.6). But by now we have guessed what is going on. In

⁹² Ps.-Nonnus *Narr. ad Greg. invec.* 1.37, p. 139, in Westerman, *Mythographi Graeci, Appendix Narrationum* 22.1, p. 368; Anon. in Westerman, *Mythographi Graeci* p. 348; Arn. *Adv. nat.* 5.28; Hygin. *Astronom.* 2.5; Tzetzes, *Schol. ad Lyc.* 212; cf. *Etym. Magn.* 455 s.v. *Thriambos*: ... ἐπὶ μέσῃς διέβη. Brief references to the story are also found in Gregor. Naz. *Carm.*, in Migne, *Patr. Gr.* 37.1572, *Or. in Julian.* 127d, in Migne *Patr. Gr.* 35.705.3; Basil. Minim. *Schol. in Greg. Naz. or. 2 in Julian.*, in Migne *Patr. Gr.* 36.1145; Elias Cretens. *ad Gregor. Naz. or. 5* in ed. Colon vol. 2, p. 467b; Nicetas, *Commentar. in Gregor. Naz. or. 39* in ed. Colon vol. 2, p. 1016b. Various as they are, Jacoby thinks all these versions represent Argive tradition (*FGrH* IIIb, *Noten* 39, n. 35). I am attracted by the suggestion, made to me by F. McMurrin, that this ritual gives extra resonance to the joke in Ar. *Ranae* 197–199, where Dionysus, asked to sit to his oar by Charon, misunderstands and sits upon it. For other possible allusions, see Lapalus 1934, esp. 8–10. Note that the comic geography reproduces the features of the Alcyonian lake (Casadio 1994: 226, 288–290).

⁹³ A similar conception may be implicit in the name Polyhymnos, which Höfer 1909: 2660 shows = πόρνη (cf. *PMG* F 446, and Kurke 1997). For the significance of the name "Prosymnos" see Casadio 1994: 317–318.

⁹⁴ As does Casadio 1994: 309–311.

⁹⁵ The only suggestion of homosexual acts in the Dionysiac mysteries comes from Livy's account of the Bacchanalia scandal in Rome in 186 B.C. (39.10.8, 39.13.10), a testimony of dubious value (see Walsh 1996). Probably this is an official misconstrual of real for symbolic acts, comparable to the propagandistic portrayal of Christians as incestuous cannibals. For pederastic initiation rites in Greece and elsewhere, see Bremmer 1980.

Argos, at least, there was certainly a rite of phallus-pole sitting or phallus-pole riding.

The cup in Florence suggests that the practice extended beyond Argos, though here the phallic puppets riding the pole merely allude to the rite—and one could certainly argue that the little man with the riding crop is not very far removed from performing the rite alluded to by his mount, the satyr. Fortunately we have an example of a Dionysiac worshipper directly riding a wooden phallus.

Four fragments of a perhaps “Clazomenian” neck amphora offer more information about the nature and distribution of the phallic rites under discussion (Plates 8A and 8B). The fragments are roughly contemporary with the Florence cup (ca 550–540 B.C.) and are said to come from Karnak. Boardman thinks it possible that the vase was actually produced in Egypt though the subject is nonetheless Greek, even if its composition or purchase was inspired by a consciousness of Egyptian analogues (1958: 8–12; cf. Graf 1985: 386–387). Fragments e and f show men marching in procession to the right and carrying a solid object, which Boardman, judging by the larger size of the weightbearers on f, thinks must rise towards the front (1958: 5). Boardman, stressing the fragments’ Egyptian find-spot, notes Egyptian parallels for sacred ships being supported on men’s shoulders, though we may note that this does not really explain the rising of the object towards the front, since these sacred ships are carried on level platforms. Be this as it may, the details of the fragment seem to support his reconstruction of the scene as a depiction of a *katagogia* of Dionysus in his sacred ship.⁹⁶ He also notes a close parallelism with the phallic procession of the Florence cup and observes that the base pole on the Florence cup has a keel-like curvature (1958: 7). Fragments c and d show a still closer connection with the details of the procession on the Florence cup. Fragment c shows a satyr said to be “holding a giant phallus,” which is reconstructed by Boardman as the *akrostolion* above the prow of the ship.⁹⁷ Note that the phallus, like those of the Florence cup, has an eye (just barely visible) and equine ears, and the curvature of the *akrostolion* gives it a more horselike descending neck. Unlike the satyr on the Florence cup, this is not a wooden puppet. Boardman points out that this satyr is not a real satyr but a masked human actor: “this explains the loincloth worn by our satyr; it is to keep his tail on” (1958: 7). The Karnak fragments thus offer a direct testimony to a rite of phallus-pole riding, which the Florence cup showed only indirectly through puppetry. Fragment d is still more interesting for our purposes. It shows a komast riding a phallus pole equipped once again with ears and possibly an eye (not visible on Plate 8B), but as he does so, he holds in his right hand a small

⁹⁶ All other depictions of the Dionysiac ship show it as a wheeled object; the boar’s head, which is certainly to be reconstructed on fragment d, is a common protome for ships and also found in the iconography of the ship of Dionysus, usually associated with the procession at the Anthesteria, and the curvature of the phallus ridden by the man in satyr-costume indicates a common form of *akrostolion*. Boardman 1958: 5–7; Steinhart 1995: 96–102.

⁹⁷ Boardman 1958: 5. For the form of the *akrostolion* see Steinhart 1995, pl. 38.2.

portable phallus—evidently a double-ended dildo⁹⁸—which, as he leans forward, he lodges suggestively in his rump. It is not clear whether the komast's phallus pole is conceived as emerging from the boar's head or from some distance behind it (note the faded line of the pole, just visible on Plate 8B, as it extends in the direction of the boar's brow). The komast is smaller in size than the man in the satyr costume, but he wears the same kind of loincloth.

Also apparently connected with this rite is an inscription from Euboea (*SEG* XXIX 807, XXXV 967, probably third-century A.D.). I follow Veyne's interpretation with a few minor changes (1985): "To Junior. To M(arcus) Ulpus Callinicus Junior (fulfilling the sacred function of) the one carried, and the first to have made in the theatre in honour of Dionysus fifty-five laps, which was auspicious; and who went up to the Capitolium, alone, without (being aided by) the phallus-bearer, from the moment he picked (the phallus) up till the time he put it down; drunk throughout the whole dance and . . . the festival . . ." ⁹⁹ Veyne sees two rites described in this inscription. The first involves being carried around the theatre for fifty-five laps, evidently something of an accomplishment, and therefore surely alluding to a difficult ride in which one might be expected to fall much sooner. The other rite is carrying and dancing with the phallus pole, solo, not in the theatre, but from the theatre to a place called the "Capitolium." ¹⁰⁰ A very macho performance of which Junior was evidently proud. But perhaps not so unambiguously macho. Veyne quite rightly associates the first rite with the phallus-pole riding depicted on the Florentine cup. The key word here, φορείμενος, is certainly a dialect form of the passive participle of φορεῖν, "to carry about." The use of dialect words is common in designating sacral offices and institutions, as Veyne points out, but the form is not indigenous to Euboea and points to an origin at Delphi or in Northwest Greece. Quite remarkably, then, we have an attestation of the survival of phallus riding for over eight hundred years. Perhaps still more remarkable is the manner in which Junior expressed the active

⁹⁸ For the double-headed dildo, see Kilmer 1993: 67, 85, 115.

⁹⁹ Νεωτέρω. | Μ(άρκω) Οὐλπίω Καλλινείκω | νεωτέρω, φορειμένω, | καὶ πρώτῳ ποιήσαντι | ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ τῷ Διονύ|σῳ κύκλους πενήκον|τα πέντε ἐπ' ἀγαθῇ, καὶ | ἐλθόντι ἐπὶ τὸ Καπε|τώλιον μόνῳ, ἄνευ τοῦ θυω|νοφόρου, ἐ<ξ> οὐ ἐσήκωσεν | μέχρις ἀπέθετο, βραχέν|τι πᾶσαν τὴν χορείαν | καὶ περι|---|--- τὴν πανήγυριν ---. Veyne translates βραχέντι as "soaking wet"; I assume the metaphorical meaning of "drunk." Veyne may be right. If cross-cultural comparison is of any value, wetness and drunkenness go together in the very interesting procession at the Togata shrine, north of Nagoya, Japan, held in mid-March. This procession is described by Bergman 1997: "two dozen men in white garb who are wet and more than a little drunk" carry a "bright pink, five metres long, very realistically shaped" phallus. "The phallic symbol is heavy, the resting halts are frequent and *sake* seems to be the only liquid available. They shout at the top of their lungs as they march with a strange syncopated step, the double whistle of the team leader giving them the beat." The ceremony includes phallic cookies, women cradling phallus-babies in their arms, and moments when "the bearers ram the giant wooden penis into the crowd, which shrieks with excitement."

¹⁰⁰ It is not clear what connection if any this rite may have with the Dionysiac δένδροφορία mentioned by Strabo 10.3.10.

and passive aspects of this phallic dancing at different stages of the performance: first being carried by the phallus, then himself carrying the phallus.

The rite of phallus-pole riding appears to have been practised in Central Greece and the Peloponnese. We have looked at evidence for performance of the rite in Argos and Euboeia and have seen from imagery associated with the public processions of Dionysus that the rite was known in Athens. The rite had possibly spread to Argos' colony, Rhodes, and from the fact that Herodotus assumes that Melampous learned the Egyptian rites from Cadmus when on his way to Thebes (2.49), we might guess that something similar was known at Thebes.¹⁰¹ In a moment we will see that there is evidence to confirm the Theban association, and even to show some connection between the Theban rite and ritual practice in Corinth, Sicyon, and Phigaleia.

III. PENTHEUS ON HIGH

Tragedy frequently attained its emotional impact and its peculiarly unsettling "tragic" quality by playing with ritual frames. The language and performance of tragedy evoke the pattern of a sacred act and pervert it. Murder, for example, almost never happens in tragedy without evoking the language and imagery of animal sacrifice. Zeitlin showed that tragedy evoked sacrifice only to present it in a perverse and corrupt form (1965, 1966). Ritual in tragedy seems to trade upon social and psychological anxieties which, if we believe Freud, lie at the source of cultic no less than neurotic ritual. The failure of the ritual order with even the slightest deviation excites these anxieties. The use of ritual frames in tragedy is pervasive because corrupted ritual can create more tragic angst and fear than even the heinous mythic crimes beneath the metaphors.

Seaford writes that the *Bacchae* is "pervaded by ritual" (1996: 35). It is, more so than any other tragedy, though this is hardly surprising, given the subject of the play—the introduction of a new cult, and the god honoured by the cult, who is in the Greek pantheon the ritual god *par excellence*. The second half of the *Bacchae* is particularly rich in its use of ritual frames: the cross-dressing scene and the sacrificial language and imagery surrounding the death of Pentheus have inspired much comment.¹⁰² Seaford shows that both are subordinate to an initiatory frame (1994: 284–301). Between these scenes the presence of a third ritual frame has hitherto gone unnoticed. It may also have some connection with initiation.

Dionysus' invasion of Pentheus is carefully prepared. At the beginning of the *Bacchae* Dionysus appears in disguise. The character in the play is simply called

¹⁰¹ For the Rhodian rite: see Hesych. s.v. Θωονίδας (cf. Athen. 445a–b). The Cadmean mediation between the Egyptian and the Greek rites is also claimed by: Diod. Sic. 1.23; Conon *Narr.* 32; Anon. *De incredib.* 16 (p. 324 Westerman); Charax in Anon. *De incred.* 16, (p. 325 Westerman); Nonnus *Dion.* 4.269–270; Epiphanius *Panarion* 1.186, 4.26; Isid. *Etym.* 15.1.35.

¹⁰² The cross-dressing scene: esp. Gallini 1963; Seidensticker 1978 and 1982: 123–129; Segal 1982: 168–177; Bremmer 1992; Seaford 1996: 222–223. The sacrifice motif: Seidensticker 1979; Segal 1982: 36–45.

"the Stranger." There is no indication of his age, but from the frequent reference to his "womanly" good looks, we might infer that he is very young. Pentheus is also at a liminal stage in life, "hardly more than a boy," a very unusual age for a tragic tyrant.¹⁰³ He is nevertheless typical of a tragic tyrant in the fury with which he rejects his cousin, though even this is exaggerated beyond convention. He is most unlike any other tragic tyrant in the fascination he repeatedly reveals for the Stranger, and particularly for the Stranger's womanly appearance on which he comments at length (353, 453–459). Even if he knew no name for it, Euripides accurately describes the ambivalence which signifies an internal repression. The Stranger is Pentheus' double. Jung would have called him Pentheus' Shadow. The Stranger could be read not only as Pentheus' familiar, but as a representation of something powerful which Pentheus loathes and represses within himself.¹⁰⁴

Pentheus thinks the stranger is a pervert who takes women up into the mountains for sexual orgies. He is wrong, of course, for, as we see, despite the sexually charged atmosphere of the play and the overtly erotic symbolism of Dionysian cult, Dionysus, like his menads, is paradoxically asexual. Jameson aptly compares (1993: 61):

the embodiment of the epicene style of modern pop culture, the male leader of the pop group, who for all the violence of the music, gestures and words is neither traditionally masculine nor yet effeminate There is a fascination but also a certain horror about such a figure, who cannot be placed and straddles or crosses boundaries.

It is, however, Pentheus' perversity and prurience which leads to his undoing. He is overcome by a desire to spy on the women in the mountains and this desire puts him into the Stranger's power. The Stranger convinces him that in order to spy on the bacchantes in safety he has to put on women's clothing so as not to be a conspicuous intruder. When he does so, he suddenly seems to change personality. He is positively giddy. He sees double, fusses over his tresses and his dress, practises his walk with the thyrsus, and has hallucinations of superhuman strength. The clothing he wears is the costume of the menads and also the costume of Dionysus: mitra, girded ankle-length dress, and fawnskin. To the Stranger he says, "I am dedicated to you now" (934).

The scene is not quite tragic and not quite comic. The power of Dionysus confuses distinctions of genre as well as gender. In this interstructural space laughter mixes with pity and fear, increasing the horror and anxiety.¹⁰⁵ Yet despite the psychological preparation, the conversion of Pentheus is unnaturally

¹⁰³ Dodds 1960: 197 *ad Eur. Bacch.* 973–976, where he is called νεανίας, cf. 1185–87; Bremmer 1992: 190–192.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Segal 1982: 28–31, Casadio 1987: 196–198. For psychoanalytic interpretations of Pentheus, see the works listed by Seaford 1996: 33–34.

¹⁰⁵ On the "tragicomic" in this scene: Seidensticker 1978 and 1982: 123–129, Foley 1985: 205–206, Taplin 1986: 165. Note also the reservations of Dillon 1991, who, however, does not distinguish mockery from comedy.

abrupt. In the absence of a structure of genre or experience by which to comprehend the sudden reversal of roles and power between Pentheus and the Stranger, it is the ritual framework of Dionysiac cross-dressing which gives immediate intelligibility to the sudden change in Pentheus' personality. Pentheus himself signals the ritual context by using the ambiguous word *τελῶ*, "I will be classed from a man to women," which also means "I will perform a rite which will turn me from a man to women" (*ἐς γυναῖκα ἐξ ἀνδρὸς τέλω*, 822).¹⁰⁶

The framework is specifically that of a Dionysiac *komos*. Pentheus wants to be led in procession by the Stranger right through the middle of town for all to admire (as Pentheus puts it), or (as the Stranger puts it) to be a public laughing-stock (854–855, 962). The Stranger calls himself Pentheus' *πομπός*, a noun that evokes the formal word for a religious procession, and particularly the *Pompe*, the main procession for Dionysus at the Great Dionysia (965). This connection is later reinforced by the messenger's reference to Dionysus as the *πομπὸς θεωρίας*, since a *theoria* is an event at a religious festival, and often used of the festival itself, giving the ambiguous sense of "sponsor of the procession for the spectacle/festival" (1047).¹⁰⁷

Dionysus leads Pentheus in drag up into the mountains. There they begin to spy on the bacchantes who are playing "like fillies set free from the painted yoke" (1056). Pentheus complains that he cannot really see the debauchery, so he wants to get closer. Dionysus then miraculously bends down the fir, mounts Pentheus on the tip of it. Then Dionysus betrays his charge, calls to the bacchantes to destroy the intruder. The bacchantes wrench up the fir-tree and bring Pentheus to the ground. One can conceive of easier ways to bring Pentheus into their hands. "There can be little doubt that the perching of Pentheus has a ritual origin," writes Seidensticker.¹⁰⁸ Not all agree, of course, Wilamowitz thought that Euripides mounted Pentheus on the fir-tree simply "to give Dionysus something to do" (1906: 214). Segal sees it as just another manifestation of a deep-structure of oscillating highs and lows (1982: 144–147). But most agree that some ritual lies behind this unusual scene. Frazer, with Dodd's approval, thought that Euripides had included the detail because he had heard of a prehistoric ritual in which "human victims were tied to a pine-tree before being torn to pieces."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Segal also notes the ritual meaning of *τέλω*, but connects it with sacrifice (1982: 198 and n. 63).

¹⁰⁷ For the religious and Dionysiac connotations of this language, see Seidensticker 1979: 183; Seaford 1994: 274–275, 312.

¹⁰⁸ Seidensticker 1979: 184, n. 19. Cf. the references in the next note. Henrichs (1978: 159, n. 118) and Casadio (1983: 99, n. 18) note the echo in Tacitus' sketch of Messalina's bacchic revel (*Ann.* 11.31: *ferunt Vettium Valentem, lascivia in praealtam arborem conisum*). Casadio remarks that "climbing upon a tree, evidently, was an integral part of Dionysiac ritual." The fact that Vettius' act is characterized as *lascivia* may seem odd and unsuited to a rite with only sacrificial associations.

¹⁰⁹ Frazer 1911–36: 4.2.98, n. 5 (cf. Bather 1894); Dodds 1960: 209 *ad Eur. Bacch.* 1058–75; for the general approach see the literature cited by Casadio 1987: 195, n. 9 and Seaford 1996: 231–232, 234, especially Coche de la Ferté 1980. A more convincing sacrificial interpretation is offered by

One cannot help here feeling Frazer's characteristic enthusiasm for exposing the "savage" roots of Christian doctrine. But Pentheus' "passion" is of a different sort.

Perhaps now we are in a better position to judge the rite that is alluded to in the *Bacchae* just before his murder. The language of the passage is more than a little suggestive: the fir-tree is "high-necked" (1061); Pentheus wishes to "mount" it (1061); Dionysus, careful not to "buck" Pentheus, "quietly let the *erect* shoot go through his hands . . . and it stood up *erect* towards the *erect* sky" (1071-73); the tree holds Pentheus "seated on its back" (1074). Agaue refers to Pentheus as "the mounted beast" (1107). The passage abounds in both phallic and equestrian imagery.

Let us take a closer look. First the theriomorphic qualities of the fir-tree. It is endowed with a high neck (ὕψαύχην) and a back (ἔχουσα νότοις δεσπότην ἐφήμενον). Its back and neck are one and they serve to carry a human rider. When Dionysus "takes care not to buck him," μὴ ἀναχαιτίσειέ νιν, the metaphor is unambiguously equestrian. The word used for "mount," ἀναβαίνειν, is also used, among other forms of ascent, of mounting a horse and this is the principal meaning of the cognate noun ἀμβάτης, which is the word Agaue uses to refer to him a little later, when she calls him "the mounted beast." We can now relate this imagery to the equestrian imagery on the phallus poles of the Florentine cup, with its equine ears, its reins, and the little man equipped with a riding crop. Lucian also naturally lapses into equestrian language in describing the manner by which the pole-sitter mounts the phallus: "as he goes up he tosses the rope up from one side to another as one handling reins."¹¹⁰ It reveals the same deep-structural conception of the god, for, as we saw, the Euboean inscription makes it clear that riding the phallus pole resembled nothing so much as a rodeo.

The equine imagery is inseparable from the phallic imagery. It appears first in the description of the fir-tree as "high-necked."¹¹¹ Insofar as the adjective is also theriomorphic, we may note that the adjective "high-necked" is less applicable to any real animal known to fifth-century Athenians than to such creatures of cultic fantasy as the phallic icons of Dionysus and the phallus pole, which on the Florentine cup, as we saw, is all neck below the chin. The icon of Dionysus at Delos is known to be phallic, zoomorphic and high-necked, specifically taking the form of a cock raising its head in the act of crowing (an attitude described

Seidensticker, who, perhaps influenced by Frazer, speaks of the fir-tree as an altar (1979: 184). It might suit his interpretation better to suggest that raising Pentheus on high is the equivalent of the Greek custom of lifting the bull before the kill, and leaving the altar to be symbolized by the οἶδας upon which he falls "with ten-thousand yelps," and where the *sparagmos* actually takes place (Eur. *Bacch.* 1112-36). Seidensticker's interpretation is not incompatible with my own. This ritual (like the cross-dressing ritual) is overdetermined. The sacrificial is, however, not the primary ritual frame for mounting Pentheus on the fir-tree.

¹¹⁰ Lucian *Syr. D.* 29: ἀνὼν ἀναβάλλει τὴν σειρὴν ἀμφοτέρωθεν ὥκασι περ ἡνιοχέων.

¹¹¹ The tree has of course been interpreted as a phallic symbol on purely psychoanalytic grounds and without much regard for the specificities of the Greek cultural context: see Segal 1982: 204-205 with citations of further literature.

by Aelian as ὠπωναγεῖ), but with its head and neck replaced by a phallus (Plate 1A).¹¹² That this icon had movable parts (probably the wings) is suggested by the Delian inscriptions which mention axles and pins as components for the construction of the icon.¹¹³ A phallus-bird icon of Dionysus with a very long neck is depicted on a relief from Edessa, where it was carried on a wagon as at Delos.¹¹⁴ We can compare the long-necked aviform image of Dionysus (Plate 1B); perhaps a similar form of Dionysus is attested in the cult title *Psilax*: Pausanias explains the title by noting that *psila* is Doric for “wings.”¹¹⁵ The phallus paraded in the Dionysiac Katagogia at Ephesus was an enormous winged phallus with the hind end of a lion or wildcat: it is depicted on a pair of reliefs from Ephesus, on one of which the phallus seems to be supported in front by a man dressed as a satyr.¹¹⁶ Such Dionysiac imagery is doubtless related to the vernacular use of the word “neck” for “penis,” which we find in comedy and satyr play.¹¹⁷ Possibly these “high-necked” phallus birds were also subject to cultic equitation. There are four known examples of riders of phallus birds in Athenian iconography: two are naked women and their appearance on a phallus bird is strictly erotic.¹¹⁸ The other two, however, are satyrs, and the context for interpreting this ride, I suggest, is cultic.¹¹⁹ Of particular interest is the phallus bird on the Attic red-figured cup

¹¹² Ael. *NA* 4.29. For the identification of the icon, see above, n. 32. For the homoerotic connotations of the crowing cock, see Csapo 1993.

¹¹³ Valois 1922: 100–101, and no. 16. W. J. Slater suggests to me that the large amount of lead attested for the construction of the phallus-bird at Delos may have been used for counterweights to facilitate such mechanical tricks. Note that the inscriptions speak of workers who “carry the lead (counterweights?) and (those who?) lift them onto the wagon”; these are clearly participants in the procession since they are paid along with those who lead the wagon: Valois 1922: 103–104. The weights are not just ballast, since there would be no need for adjusting dead weights when the procession was already underway; still less are they weights used to sink the wagon when it is thrown into the river (Valois 1922: 105–106). For the attitude of the crowing cock, see Csapo 1993: 16–18.

¹¹⁴ Edessa: Daux 1970; Chamoux 1974; Nikolaou 1985. The stele includes a very charming verse epitaph to a pig which was run over by a phallus-wagon. The wagon is depicted on the relief and it contains a phallus-bird much like that known from Delos (Daux mistakes it for an amphora, not realizing that the pig used the phallus-wagon as a juggernaut [as Chamoux (1974: 161) saw]. This is surely the point of the epitaph’s Νῦν δὲ τροχοῖο βίη τὸ φάος προλέλοιπα, | Ἥμοσθιν δὲ ποθῶν κατιδεῖν φαλλοῖο δὲ ἄρμα). It is not clear why the phallus-bird lies on its side. Possibly it is also a kind of string-puppet which stands up and crows at climactic moments. See previous note.

¹¹⁵ Paus. 3.19.6. Cf. Gasparri 1986: 440, no. 152.

¹¹⁶ See Keil 1935: 91–92 and pl. 43; Manganaro 1996: 138 and pl. 13, fig. 9, with comparanda on pl. 12, fig. 7 and pl. 13, figs. 10 and 11. Four unpublished reliefs in the northeast corner of the courtyard of the Musée Archéologique in Nîmes contain similar phallic beasts. One of these, an ithyphallic feline with wings, phallic head, towering neck, and long phallic tail, has a rider in long skirts, standing on the tail as if it were a chariot board, and holding reins attached to the beast’s neck. (The relief is labelled 829-1-1.)

¹¹⁷ Seaford 1984: 139 *ad* Eur. *Cycl.* 184; Henderson 1991: 114; cf. Csapo 1993: 17 and n. 85.

¹¹⁸ Attic black-figured kyathos, Group of Berlin 2015, ca 500 B.C., Berlin 2095; *ABV* 610.1; *Beazley Addend.* 142. Attic red-figured cup, Epiktetos, ca 510 B.C., Rome, Villa Giulia 57912; *ARV* 2 72.24.

¹¹⁹ Attic red-figured chous, ca 370 B.C., Athens, Kanellopoulos 401 (illustrated in Greek Ministry of Culture 1989, no. 79); Attic red-figured cup, Proto-Panaetian Group, ca 510 B.C., Brussels A 723,

of the Proto-Panaetian Group, now in Brussels (A723), which is fitted with reins (in added red, just visible descending from the top of the bird's neck and looping twice in the satyr's left hand), and upon which the satyr seems to be having a very insecure ride.

Most suggestive of all is the description of the "erect shoot" released by Dionysus rising up "erect against the erect sky" (1072–74). Perhaps I am forcing the issue by translating words from the root *orth* as "erect" rather than "straight." Within the context, however, the use of this word seems chosen to reinforce the ritual frame of the phallic procession. We noted above the evocation of the *Pompe* of the Great Dionysia in the reference to Dionysus as *pompos*, parade-leader, and *pompos theorias*, "parade-leader of the festival," when he leads Pentheus through the middle of town for all to admire (964, cf. 961–962, 855, 1047). The *Pompe* was, of course, the occasion of the most elaborate phallic processions. From descriptions and drawings of phallic processions we know that some phallus-bearers wore women's clothing of the kind worn by Pentheus (above, 264). Another requirement was to keep the phallus pole "erect." The song of the Ithyphalli preserved by Semus insists upon the "erectness" of the phallus-pole: "the god wishes to march through your midst *upright* (*orthos*) and bursting" (*FGrH* 396 F 24). In the *Acharnians*, too, Dicaeopolis' phallic *pompe* is accompanied by the ritual cry for holy silence, instructions for the basket-bearer to lead the procession, and, possibly also a ritual formula, the instruction to the phallophoros to stand the phallus erect (*orthos*), later followed by a command to keep the phallus *orthos* (241–259). (It may be relevant that "Orthos" is a cult title of Dionysus in Athens, the epithet may suggest a phallic idol.)¹²⁰

Pausanias in fact tells us that by command of the Pythian priestess the Corinthians acquired the tree on which Pentheus sat and, dividing its trunk into two icons, set them up in their marketplace, to be worshipped "equally with the god." The two icons, named Lysios and Bakkheios, were each covered with gold except for the face which was covered with red paint, like the icon of Dionysus Enorkhes mentioned earlier.¹²¹ Unfortunately the description is rather spare, but the stated source of the icons suggest that they were very tall, and the colour scheme that they were divided into a very long neck and a red phallic head. Euripides was probably not alone in developing a phallic conception of Pentheus' fir-tree.¹²² In Sikyon, where "phallophoroi" are specifically attested (Athen. 621f),

*ARV*² 317.5, *CVA* ii, pl. 11 (64). For the detail of the rein consult the line drawing in Boardman 1992: 236, pl. 9 (after Hartwig). For the interpretation, cf. Vallois 1922: 99, n. 1.

¹²⁰ Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F 5. Cf. Nilsson 1906: 593.

¹²¹ Paus. 2.2.6–7. Dionysus Lysios was worshipped near the theatre in Thebes (Paus. 9.16.6). For Dionysus Enorkhes, see above, 259 and 276.

¹²² The fact that Pentheus sits on a fir-tree rather than a fig-tree may appear to hinder my interpretation of the passage, since the few descriptions of phallus poles that we have mention figwood as the preferred medium (see Herter 1938a: 1677; cf. the preference for figwood in carving icons of Priapus: *Anth. Pal.* 9.437; *Hor. Sat.* 1.8). It is perhaps worth questioning whether all phallus poles were

Pausanias tells us that, in addition to the cult statue in public view in the temple of Dionysus, there were two icons kept in secret (2.7.5, ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ). They are not coincidentally called by the same names, Lysios and Bakkheios, as the icons in Corinth: "Phanes of Thebes brought [Lysios] from Thebes at the command of the Pythia" (2.7.6). "On a single night each year," relates Pausanias (2.7.5) "they carry these icons from the so-called 'kosmeterion' to the sanctuary of Dionysus, and they carry them with lighted torches and local hymns." Casadio observes that Pausanias' use of the expression ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ implies that "the rite in which the images participate cannot be divulged because it is something reserved for the adherents of the cult alone, who normally are individuals who have undergone priestly initiation" (1987: 215). In neighbouring Megara, the trunk of the icon of "Nightly" (*Nyktelios*) Dionysus was also concealed, except for the face, like the phallic icon of Dionysus "With Testicles" from Phigaleia mentioned above (259 and 276).¹²³ Casadio thinks the images of Dionysus at Phigalia, Megara, Corinth, Sicyon, and Argos were all related iconic forms serving a local mystery cult (with Theban and Delphic connections).¹²⁴ It appears indeed as if the icon Lysios participated in the nocturnal phallic rites performed by the Argives at the Alcyonian lake. Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 35 = *Mor.* 364f) tells us a little more about this rite: a lamb was thrown into the lake as an offering to the Gatekeeper of Hades, while the worshippers summon Dionysus to rise from the lake with trumpet blasts (the trumpets are said to have been hidden amongst thyrsi).¹²⁵ This is evidently the same rite Plutarch alludes to in his attempt to identify the god of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles with Dionysus (*Quaest. Conv.* 671e). Among other significant points of comparison with Dionysiac worship:

of fig. Figwood was in fact notorious in antiquity for being weak, fragile, misshapen and full of holes, an *inutile lignum* in Horace's words (*Hor. Sat.* 1.8; Henderson 1991: 22; Olender 1983: 145–147). As such it was conceptually suited to the production of phallus poles commemorating a disease which combined the appearance of hyperpotency with virtual impotence (cf. Sissa and Detienne 1989: 258, above, 267, and cf. Σ Theoc. 10.45 on σύκινοι ἄνδρες), but from the point of view of architectural structure it is impossible to see how figwood could produce such elaborate products as the phallus pole on the Florence cup. It certainly does not produce such long and slender stems. The requirement that Athenian colonies provide phallus poles for the Dionysia each year (*IG* I³ 46.16–17; Accame 1941: 230, lines 4–5) no doubt served many functions, one of them probably the provision of suitable building materials, since Attica was largely deforested, and particularly from the Athenian colonies in Thrace, the home of the silver fir. Some close connection between Dionysus and the silver fir in Thrace is suggested by the coins of fifth-century B.C. Abdera which show the god holding a fir-tree in his hand (see Dodds 1960: 81 *ad Bacch.* 109–110). An elegant solution is suggested by D. Braund's proposed emendation to the text of Σ Ar. *Ach.* 243 (see above, n. 65). Perhaps only the tip of the phallus pole was regularly made of figwood. Note, however, the reported use of deer-leather on the Enorkhes icon (above, 276).

¹²³ Paus. 1.43.5: the wooden image of Dionysus was "covered up from view except for the face which alone was open to view."

¹²⁴ Casadio 1987: 216–218; cf. 1984: 102. It is perhaps significant that the images at Sicyon and presumably Megara are paraded at night and that the rites of phallus-riding at Argos are also nocturnal. Cf. Ar. *Ach.* 264 (νυκτοπεριλάνητε).

¹²⁵ Cf. Pollux 4.86; Σ Pindar *Ol.* 7.60.

they have a procession with figwood (κραδηφορία) and thyrsus-bearing, in which they enter the sanctuary carrying thyrsi and we do not know what they do there, probably they have a *baccheia*. Indeed they call upon the god using small trumpets like the Argives do at their festival of Dionysus, and others go in front playing the *kithara*, which they call *Leuitai*, whether the appellation comes from "Lysios" or from "Euion."

Although the reference to the practice of the Argives could strictly be confined to the use of trumpets, the earlier reference to a procession with figwood, a secret rite, and the etymology from Lysios all strongly suggest that Plutarch has in mind the Argive rite throughout this passage. Though the term *kradephoria* "figwood procession" is not found elsewhere in ancient literature, it is clear from the aetiological myths which describe Dionysus fashioning a phallus from figwood after his emergence from the underworld that at Argos the phalli used in the rites of phallus-riding were made of figwood.¹²⁶ This figwood icon at Argos whether or not called "Lysios," is clearly to be identified with the Lysios and Bakkheios icons found elsewhere in the Argolid and which at Corinth, at least, were made of fir.

Two myths are told of the Alcyonian lake. One that Dionysus went down to the underworld in search of his mother. Another that Dionysus' corpse was thrown into the lake when he was killed by Perseus.¹²⁷ To this double death of Dionysus, there corresponds a double resurrection in ritual: once when he is called forth through the lake from the underworld by trumpets; twice in Dionysus' resurrection of Prosymnos through the creation of the first phallus pole. The connection between these myths and these rituals is explicit, since, according to one myth, Dionysus descended to find his mother Thyone, and when he returned, he erected the phallus pole which was also called "Thyone."¹²⁸ Dionysus' phallic mother is an interesting structural parallel for his paternal womb: the god of ambivalent gender is born from parents of ambivalent gender. Whether or not the Argive mystery in which Argive youths rode the phallus pole was in fact brought from Egypt as Herodotus claimed, there were sufficient analogies between these secret rites and the myth of Osiris, to prompt the suspicion.¹²⁹ Osiris was drowned by his brother Seth,¹³⁰ just as the Dionysus of Argive myth was murdered by his brother Perseus and thrown into a lake. Isis resuscitated Osiris' genitals and mounted his corpse, just as Argive legend held that Dionysus resurrected the

¹²⁶ For Dionysus *kradiaios*, see Kerényi 1951: 150–151. The use of the word *krade* (= fig-beam) by comic poets for the crane in the theatre has never been explained (*POxy* 2742.3–19; *Ar. PCG* F 160; Strattis *PCG* F 4, 46). Possibly it is a humorous reference to this rite (it is very doubtful that the crane or its hook was actually made of fig; cf. *Zen. Prov.* 3.156). The term is generally used in metatheatrical contexts where the actor expresses anxiety about falling off the crane.

¹²⁷ Sources and discussion in Casadio 1994: 256–263.

¹²⁸ The structural equation between Dionysus' mother and the phallus is insisted upon in Hesych. s.v. Θωινίδας, where the patronymic "child of Thyone" is explained as "Dionysus at Rhodes; the figwood phalli."

¹²⁹ Casadio (1994: *passim*) argues that the Lernaean mysteries are indigenous, with origins in the Bronze age.

¹³⁰ Hopfner 1967: 2.121–135.

phallus of Prosymnos and mounted it. Moreover, as Plutarch notes (*Mor.* 364f), Dionysus was apparently tauriform in Argive cult: the Argives invoked Dionysus with the epithet “cow-born” (βουγενής).¹³¹ The soul of Osiris took the corporeal form of the Apis bull and Osiris, in the form of Apis/Sarapis (also said to be born from Osiris and a cow), was particularly worshipped as a god of the underworld.¹³² Pollux even suggests Egyptian parallels for the trumpet blasts which called up Dionysus (4.86–87).¹³³

If I am right in thinking that the language and imagery in this section of the *Bacchae* was selected with a view to establishing a ritual framework for interpreting the episode which falls between the cross-dressing and the sacrifice scene, then there is one other passage that should not escape our attention to linguistic detail. Dionysus’ penultimate words to Pentheus are φερόμενος ἥξεις . . . ἐν χερσὶ μητρός (968–969). Ostensibly this means “you will come carried . . . in the arms of your mother.” The words are interrupted by Pentheus, so that φερόμενος ἥξεις stands momentarily as an independent semantic unit. φερόμενος is the Attic form of the word φορεύμενος which appears in the Euboean inscription and which Veyne was surely right to suppose a term of sacral language. In the *Bacchae*’s final dialogue between Dionysus and Pentheus, in which almost every word is chosen for its ironic ambivalence, this might be taken to mean “you will come as ‘the one carried’,” the φερόμενος.

IV. CONCLUSION

The phallic rites do not simply show respectable citizen youths at the wrong end of the phallus; they also make it impossible to tell where the right end may be. Interstructure confuses structure and antistructure to the point of indistinguishability. The argument of antistructure may well be the same as structure. But the ritual product is not antistructure, but interstructure, not a negation of structure, but a denial of the possibility of affirming or negating it, not inversion, but confusion. It is not antistructure but interstructure which gives the ritual a meaning, if some remnant of cognition is carried from the festival into structured life. And surely some remnant of the experience does survive the festival and modify the experience of structure. Otherwise such festivals could have no function of any lasting benefit. Interstructure, itself an experience of ambivalence, also contains an ambivalent message. Insofar as interstructure depends on the introduction of antistructure, it makes structure seem necessary, though it admits variability in the highs and lows. Insofar as interstructure reduces both structure and antistructure to invisibility, however, it asserts that natural equality underlies all social structure and leaves the participants humbled or consoled by the realization that neither the order nor their place in it is

¹³¹ See discussion by Casadio (1994: 232–233).

¹³² Hopfner 1967: 2.121–135, 193–194.

¹³³ See Casadio 1994: 237–240, cf. 247–248. Compare also the musical (?) horn carried by the satyr on the Florence cup.

either necessary or ordained. It is this contradictory message, both an assertion and a denial of hierarchy, which allows the festival to perform a contradictory task, which is to reintegrate a society threatened by its social divisions while not threatening those social divisions.

The typical confusion between god, worshipper, and victim in Dionysiac religion and myth only makes sense in terms of a ritual of status inversion in which hierarchies and distinctions are systematically deconstructed. The difference between male and female, active and passive sexuality, and for the Greek world, most importantly, the difference between the active and passive role in male homosexual relations, came to be one of the most important structuring distinctions in Athenian and many other ancient Greek societies, and hence the source of some of the most serious social taboos and the most inflexible social boundaries. The rite of phallus-pole riding offers a particularly clear example of Dionysiac interstructure. The rite combines active and passive sexuality, "structure" with "antistructure" in such total confusion and such total ambivalence that any attempt to preserve the distinction is futile and meaningless. At one moment the phallus seems to belong to the god and at another to the worshipper. At the same moment it is both the god and the worshipper who is the object of phallic aggression. "Riding" a beast is a form of mastery, but riding the phallus allows no such distinction between the tamer and the tamed.¹³⁴ The satyr on the phallus pole is both rider and ridden, with his phallus which is not his phallus, and by a phallus which is his.¹³⁵

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¹³⁴ In this respect one should note that there is also a certain ambiguity in the words ἀναβαίνειν and ἀμβάτης used in the *Bacchae* of Pentheus mounting the fir-tree (1061, 1107). The verb can mean mount, as a male animal mounts a female, and this would be the natural meaning of the noun when juxtaposed to "beast," as it is when Agaue calls him the "mounted beast" (cf. Hesych. s.v. *anabates*: "a stud horse"). This ambiguity is yet another expression of the confusion of active and passive sexuality which we found in the form of the phallus pole on the Florence cup, in the aetiological accounts of the rite, and in the performance of the rite itself. The play between active and passive and between possessor and possessed in this rite is never so fully confused and deconstructed as in this equestrian imagery, since to ride a horse is to master it. Indeed Vernant and Detienne have shown that in Greek religious thought there is a marked affinity between the horse and the man who is possessed. The possessed man is thought to be ridden by a mysterious power which "reins him in," as in Eur. *Hipp.* 237–238, when the nurse speaks of the god who "reins in" Phaedra and is driving her out of her mind (Detienne and Vernant 1974: 182–183).

¹³⁵ I would like to thank D. Braund, K. M. D. Dunbabin, R. Friedrich, R. D. Griffith, A. H. Griffiths, R. Leprohon, F. McMurran, M. C. Miller, A. Suksi, and especially W. J. Slater for advice on various details. I am grateful to the SSHRCC for financial aid, to M. Vickers for permission to photograph the Ashmolean fragments, and to J. Schutz for updating my manuscript while awaiting publication.

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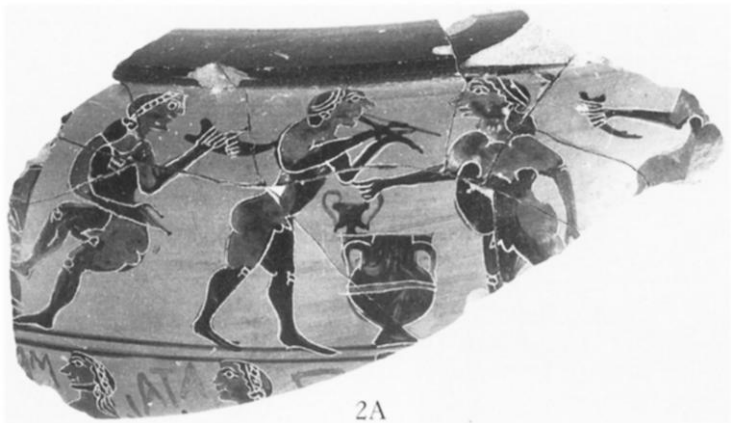
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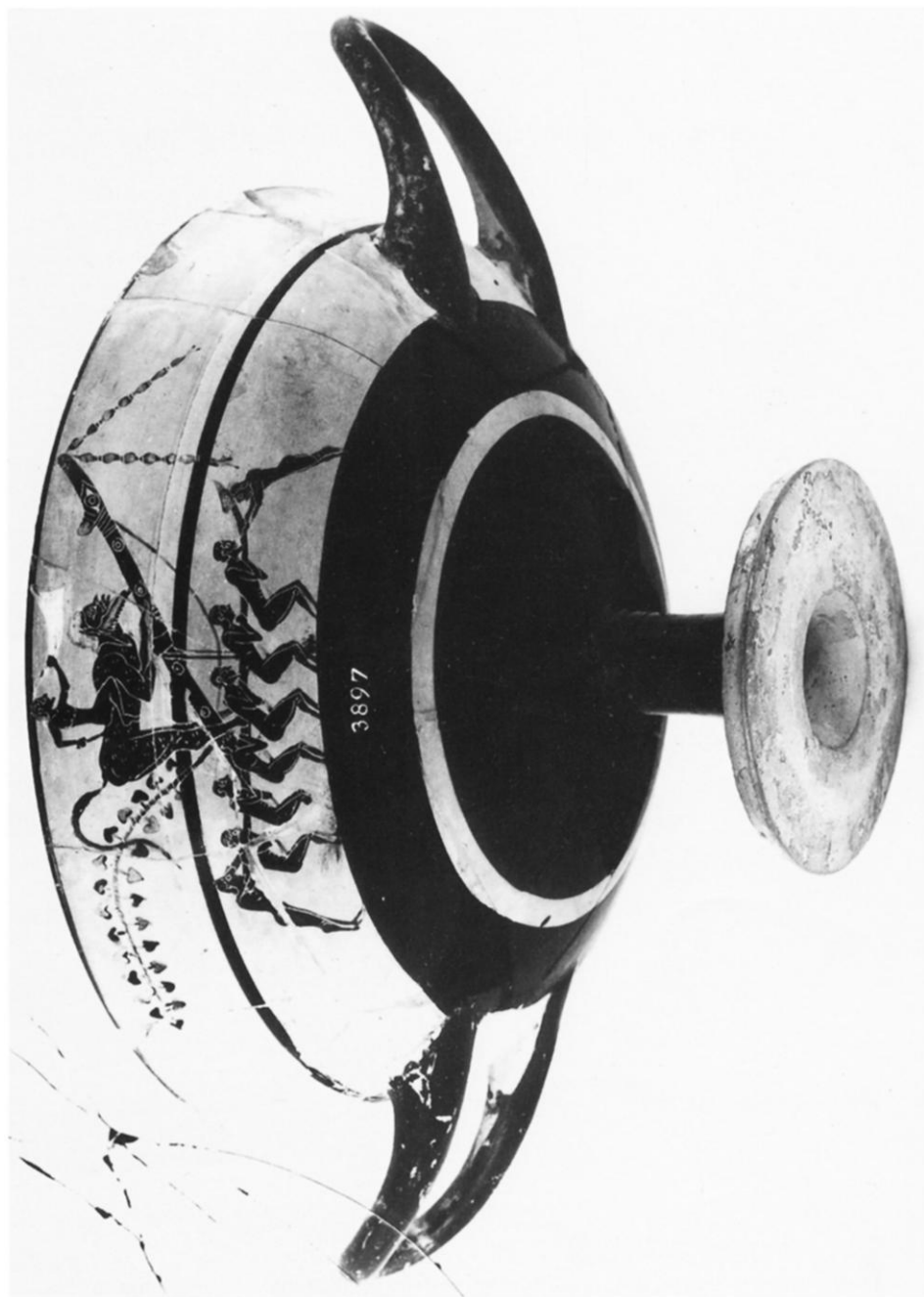


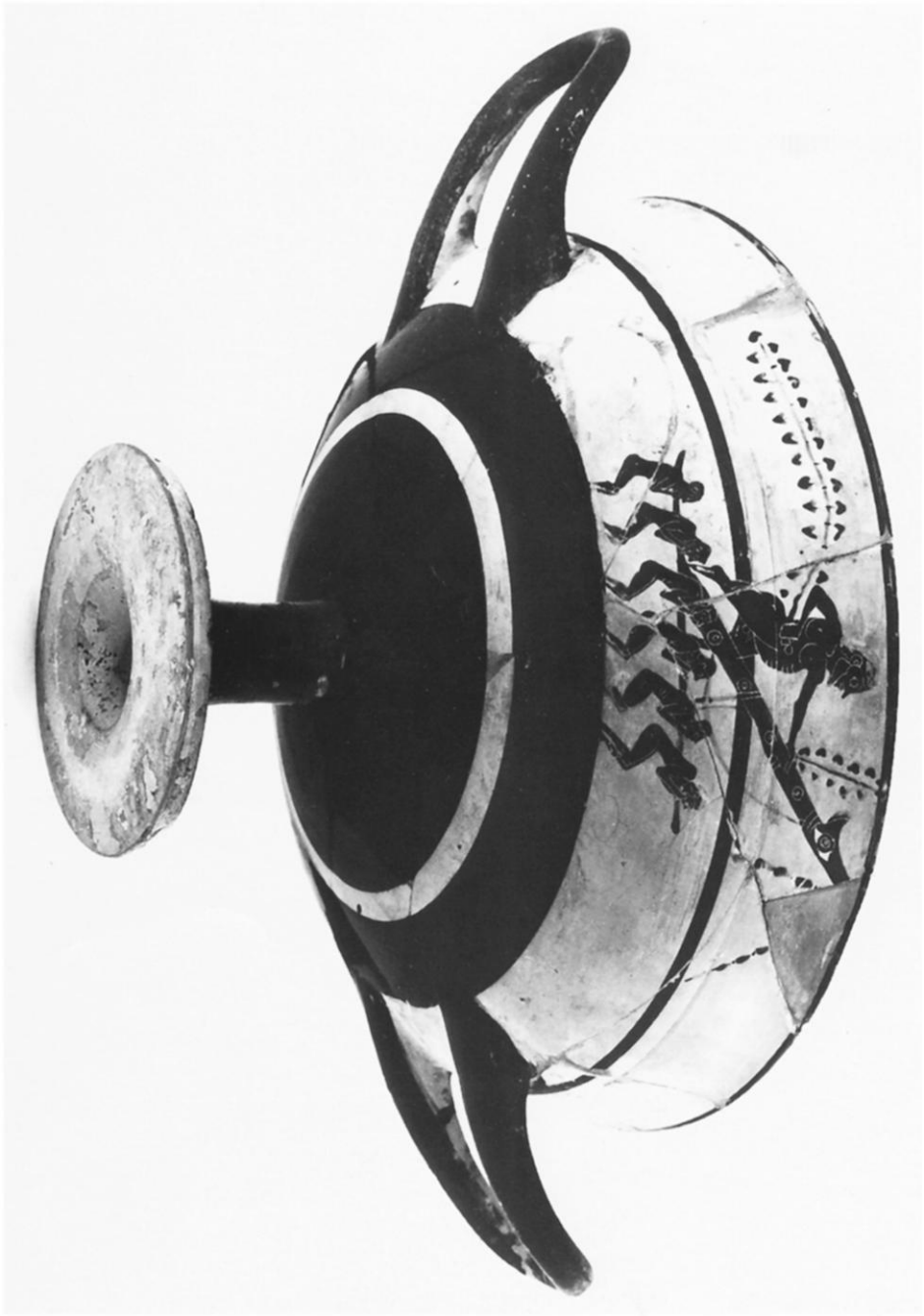
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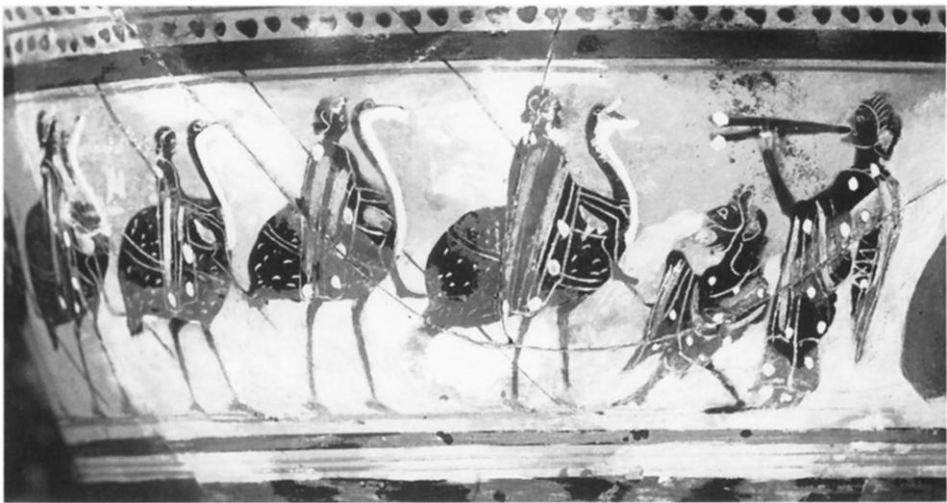
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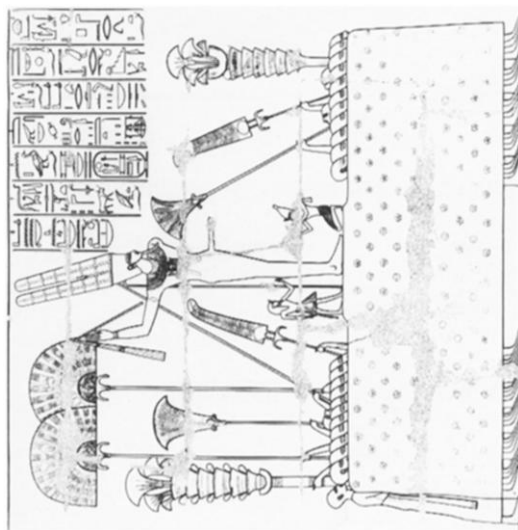
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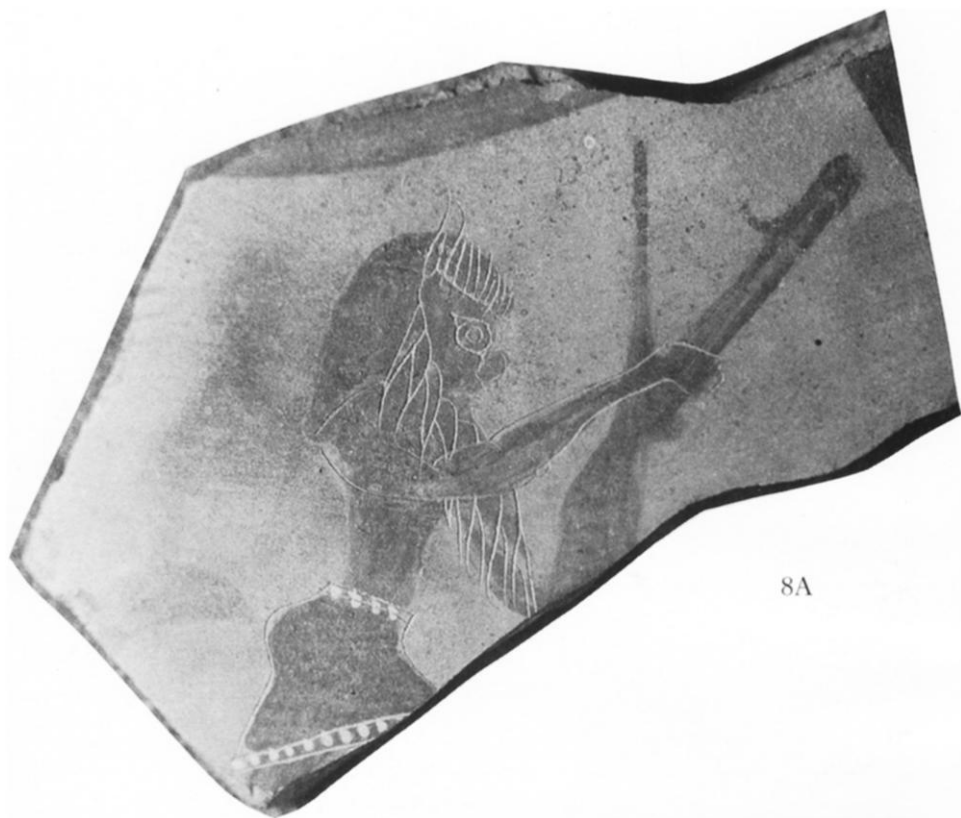


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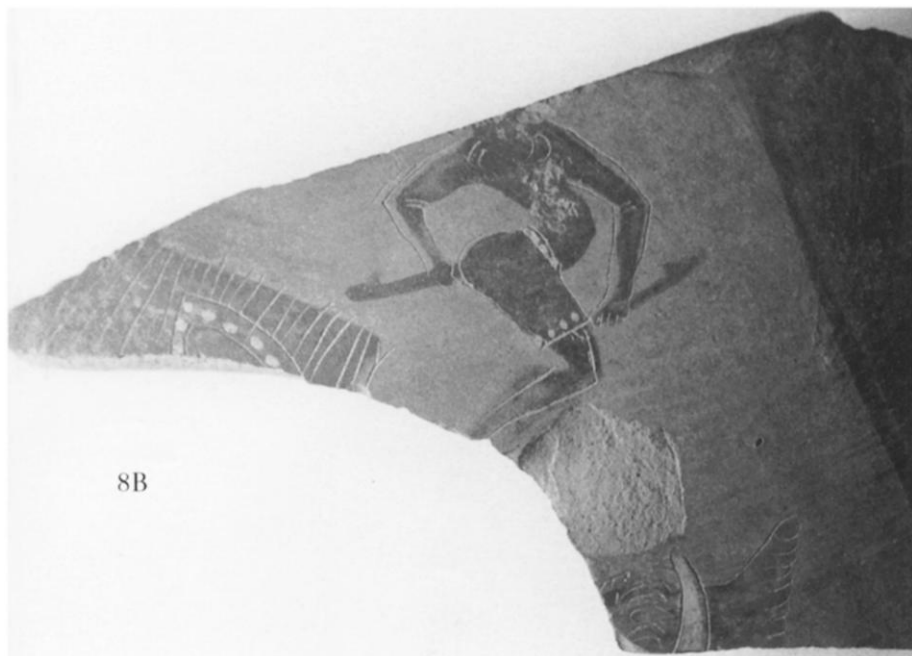


7C

7A



8A



8B