THE MAENAD IN EARLY GREEK ART*

SHEILA McNALLY

THE EXAMINATION OF WORKS of art can provide information about a culture which significantly changes what we would know from written sources alone. Examination of the role of maenads in early Greek art shows a striking development, namely the waxing and waning of hostility between themselves and their companions, the satyrs. This development is, I think, symptomatic both of strains developing in the Greeks' experience and of a growing complexity in their awareness of themselves and their universe. It reflects tensions between male and female characteristics in human nature, not necessarily tensions between men and women specifically.

We tend to think of satyrs and maenads as images of happy freedom. They first appear, dancing and carousing, in the painting of sixth century Greece, and wend their way with carefree sensuality through Western art down to the present day. There are, however, some startling early breaks in this pattern, eruptions of hostility such as that painted by the Kleophrades Painter around 500 B.C. (fig. 9). His maenad wards off the advances of a satyr with cool, even cruel effectiveness. This action sets her apart, not only from happier renditions of the same subject, but from renditions of other female figures in contemporary art. Contrary to what we might expect, no other female in Greek art defends her chastity so fiercely as the maenad. No other male figure is caught at such a disadvantage as the satyr – although he has his victories too.

Scenes of men and women in daily life, whether boldly erotic or quietly ceremonious, are invariably good-humored. In scenes from myth, most women carried off by gods or heroes are satisfied or resigned. Often they throw up both hands in despair, pleading, or simply in excitement – it is often hard to tell which. Occasionally, one may tug ineffectually at the ear or hand of her abductor. Stronger emotion is shown by the onlookers, who may rush to tell the father of his loss: the unceremonious transfer of ownership is the main source of dismay (although I will argue elsewhere that it is not so much simple transfer, as in human marriage, as it is translation from one sphere to another, union of anthropomorphic with nonanthropomorphic, which is
the basic subject of many of these scenes). Women attacked by centaurs are saved by their rightful husbands. Deianeira sitting on Nessos' back waits calmly for Herakles to appear, or holds out her hands trustingly toward him. The Lapith women in classical sculpture try harder, but still their salvation is not in their own hands. No one will come to the rescue of the maenad. If she is to escape, she must save herself: but why? All the other women, real or mythological, wives or hetairai or daughters-to-become-wives are playing expected parts in social contracts. The maenad is outside of those contractual relationships. We would expect her to be free of inhibitions as well.

The satyrs and maenads are the followers of Dionysos. Their images become one of the most effective expressions of the Dionysiac element in Greek culture, and freedom from ordinary restraints was certainly a vital aspect of that element. Commentators have differed about the nature of Dionysiac freedom: was it innocence or liberation from pressure, naïveté or wish fulfillment, enhancing or destructive, profound or frivolous, the health of the strong, as Nietzsche would have it, or a refuge for the powerless, particularly women, as more recent commentators have claimed? No one of these alternatives is satisfactory because the freedom takes various forms. The changing relationship between satyrs and maenads is particularly revealing as to those variations. If we look at depictions of satyrs and maenads in Greek art, we see that their natures, and the implications of their natures, change. In many of the representations joy is unconfined. It may be active or contemplative, energetic or gentle, but it springs from harmony among beings completely dominated by strong, simple forces. The harmony and therefore the freedom are not, however, absolute. The desires of satyrs and maenads may come into conflict, and so the freedom of one or the other may be sharply curtailed.

In an art full of eroticism and abduction sexual conflict is rare, and Dionysiac revelry produces most of it. The supposed release gives rise to unparalleled tensions. We might conclude that the Greeks felt the most natural sexual relationship to be one of hostility, only restrained by the contracts of civilization. The depictions of conflict between satyr and maenad are not, however, ubiquitous enough to support that interpretation. They are limited to specific situations and reach a climax at one period: the end of archaic and beginning of classical art.
There are two probable reasons why the deviation has not been adequately examined. In the first place, the evidence consists solely of scenes in art. In literature hostility may be directed from outside toward Dionysos or his followers, but they do not fight among themselves. In the second place, even among works of art the scenes of conflict are the exception, not the rule. The most striking examples are a few red-figure vase paintings executed between 500 and 470 B.C. The majority of Dionysiac scenes are indeed as carefree as one could wish.

These two factors, namely the discrepancy between artistic and literary attitudes, and the change in artistic attitudes themselves, help to define the puzzle which the conflict scenes present. Most of the remainder of this paper will be an examination of Bacchic scenes before and during the outbreak of hostility to see whether tracing the development helps to explain it. First, however, the problems of evidence need to be discussed more fully. There has been a fundamental gap in the relationship between artistic and literary studies which has led to underassessment of the changing, as against the enduring manifestations of Dionysiac belief. Many of the vase paintings have been brilliantly analysed in isolation, but they have not figured in more general discussions of Dionysos. These discussions (see note 1) start from literary evidence, drawing on art to confirm or complete it. However, the emphasis in literature differs from that in art. Most of the references in poetry, history, inscriptions, etc., are to the life of Dionysos, and to the rites observed in his honor. Commentators try to determine the original, and therefore presumably most fundamental, essence of the god, and to establish what the Greeks of historical times did to honor him. Then, from knowledge of the mythical origin and the historical rite, comes assessment of what Dionysiac elements meant in Greek society. This procedure has provided a rich and many-sided picture of the Dionysiac elements, as well as penetrating, if often contradictory, insights into their meaning. Certain things, however, which were important to the Greeks are missing; perhaps most important, the satyr-maenad thiasos.

Depictions of Dionysiac themes are exceedingly popular in the Greek visual arts, but scenes either from Dionysos' life or from the rituals performed in his honor account for a very small proportion of these, especially before the mid-fifth century. From the beginning of recognizably Dionysiac scenes the dominant theme is the mixed satyr-
maenad band, sometimes alone, sometimes with Dionysos, Dionysos and Ariadne, or Hephaistos. In literature, the mixed band is not mentioned until much later, and is never significant. There are obvious formal reasons why the different media choose different subjects: what is less clear, and cannot be discussed here, is the relative amount or level of significance which the pictures, as against the poems and plays, would have had in reflecting or forming the popular imagination. Still another basic problem is the degree or way in which either literature or art would have reflected contemporary social situations. Since no major literary treatments of Dionysos survive from the period under discussion here, they cannot be compared to the art as either molders or reflectors of their times. Some hypotheses about the ways in which contemporary drama or liturgy or broader social change might have affected the art will be discussed at the end.

In interpreting the art, literary references can be used only with caution, since they do not usually refer to the same subjects or reflect the same stage of development. They do not refer to the same subjects even when they use the same words. I have chosen to use the words satyr and maenad to refer to the members of Dionysos' band because those are the most commonly used words in English. Either silen or bacchante, being less common, would imply a technical precision in the nomenclature which is lacking: nymph, on the other hand, is too general a term. The Greeks used the words σάτυροι and σιλήνοι, μαινάδες and βακχαί more or less interchangeably to denote a variety of characters.

The satyrs and maenads discussed here, those found in early Greek art, are most clearly characterized by their relationship to each other, and by the strictly limited set of roles which they play. Among the satyrs there are variations, notably in their hairiness, which are visually striking but do not seem to lead to differences in their activities and so do not necessitate different names. There are, on the other hand, changes, to be discussed below, in the depiction of the female figures which do seem to affect their actions. Some writers have preferred to call the earlier females nymphs, and only the later ones maenads, but since the change is less in their identity than in their characterization, I have used the same name throughout. Beyond defining the roles they play, it is not always possible to say who they are: we cannot always be sure whether we are looking at mythical figures; at contemporary female worshippers who might have been
believed, or even have believed themselves to encounter satyrs at their rites; or at actors in the emerging satyr plays. In the second half of the fifth century types of Bacchic scenes multiply, and differentiations of myth from cult and drama are often clearly intended. For the period of the sixth and early fifth century, however, the period leading up to and expressing hostility, the differentiation is usually either impossible or unimportant. The similarity between most satyr-maenad groups (there are notable exceptions) shows that all are under the dominant imprint of the mythic thiasos, even if occasionally a re-enacted thiasos may be intended.

Furthermore, it is clear that the women in this thiasos should not be automatically equated with the female followers of Dionysos mentioned in literature, notably by Euripides in the *Bacchae*. Since that play is the earliest full account of maenads and of Dionysiac ὑπαλλήλων in literature, the temptation to make use of it to interpret the vase paintings is great, but must be met with caution. Euripides' maenads have no acquaintance with satyrs, and perform different actions from those usually found in vase painting.\(^3\)

This difference in subject matter is related to a difference in stage of development. Scholars dealing with the literature and religion have tended to de-emphasize development in order to isolate a basic continuum. In trying to establish the myth of Dionysos and piece together his rituals, they have assembled written evidence from various periods as relating to the same phenomena. The assessments have been historical in trying to isolate the oldest features in references from all periods, not in trying to see each reference as a manifestation of its own period. The underlying belief that the oldest is the most basic, that there is an unchanging kernel in the whole theme which provides the key to its deepest meaning may be true enough, but is certainly not the whole story. When we look at the art, we see that there are changes which are sufficiently great that they must have meant something important. Most obviously, just at the time of the *Bacchae*, the artists' image of Dionysos himself changes radically in form, a metamorphosis unique among Greek gods, and a sharp warning against transferring much later evidence to explain earlier attitudes.

For the period under discussion we must, then, depend almost entirely on the evidence supplied by the art – that is the vase painting itself, but that presents difficulties. Gestures, facial expressions and poses are ambiguous. One scholar sees a satyr playing gently
with a faun: another thinks he is about to rend it limb from limb. A maenad dancing uses the same gesture with which a woman fends off an attacking warrior: when a maenad alone uses the gesture toward a leaping satyr, we cannot be sure whether she is joyous or defensive. When a satyr creeps toward a sleeping maenad we assume he means to attack her, but when another creeps in just the same way toward the seated Dionysos his pose is dismissed as playful or meaningless. Sometimes we lack the knowledge of contemporary manners necessary to let us read what the artist has to say, but more often the confusion arises because the artist either depends on context to give significance to his forms, or uses stock figures without concern for their appropriateness in context, and because we cannot be sure which is happening. It is particularly difficult to judge the relative seriousness of a situation, or to distinguish between expressions of general excitement and those of a specific emotion.

But if depending on artistic evidence has its drawbacks, it also has its advantages. The literary evidence is sparse, and we know that most of the major works from the fifth century, perhaps about sixteen plays, dealing with Dionysiac themes are lost. The art on the other hand provides a small but presumably representative sample of what was originally made, and forms a continuous record. Sculpture provides no evidence for this period. The thiasos is represented on vases, particularly on Attic vases. Although there are one or two representations on non-Attic vases which add to the permutations, they will be omitted from this discussion because they cannot be fitted into a sequence. In Athens, a basic development in the relationship between satyrs and maenads is clear. It may be divided into four parts: 580-550, tentative beginnings; 550-500, development of amicable relationships; 500-470, sporadic expressions of hostility; 470 on, decline in the proportion and strength of hostile encounters. First, around 580, an animal-tailed, -eared, and -hoofed figure makes his appearance as an image of lust, linked with a nymph or woman; a little later, on the François vase, Dionysos appears in the company of three satyrs and four nymphs. By 550 the troup of satyrs and their female companions, whom we may now call maenads, are dancing around the god. (Literary evidence may indicate that women were the first welcomers and primary worshippers of Dionysos, but in art they appear first with, and subordinate to, the satyrs.) Through the second half of the sixth century the relationship of maenads to satyrs ranges
harmoniously through degrees of excitement and affection. At the same time, the female figures begin to acquire a clearer identity through the addition of characteristic attributes — things they hold or wear. On a few vases, mainly those in early red-figure technique, overtones of tension and trickery appear, culminating in the third phase. That phase begins when, around 500, the Kleophrades Painter gives dramatic expression to a new concept of the maenads, and to the hostility that concept causes between them and the satyrs. His themes echo through the work of numerous other red-figure vase painters of the early fifth century, although the amicable thiasos also continues to appear, especially in the work of late black-figure artists. The Brygos Painter, Makron and Douris are among those concerned with developing the possibilities of conflict. By mid-century the period of true hostility is over; the vehemence has largely gone out of the struggle. Hostile poses continue to be employed through the rest of the century and into the next, but without significant new developments of the theme. The execution is often limp, so that real conflict is hard to distinguish from play-acting or mindless capering.

Within this overall development a sequence of contributions by individual artists is also clear. Of course, given the accidental circumstances of the survival and recovery of the paintings, any statement that a certain artist introduced a motif, or that a subject appeared for the first time, can only be tentative; even statements of the relative popularity of certain themes at certain times never have statistical validity. The uniqueness of a total concept expressed in a major work, however, stands out undeniably.

The first satyrs who appear around 580 survive as isolated figures. One plays the flute, two dart forward in great sexual excitement, each grasping a female figure, probably a nymph, by the arm. The reactions of the nymphs are less obvious than the intentions of the satyrs. The nymph on the sherd from Lindos appears at least unconcerned, if not willing: the nymph on the sherd from the Athenian Agora (fig. 1) may intend, as Young suggests (see note 5), to cast a stone at her aggressor, but her other hand seems to invite. In other words the satyr's nature is established — it is rough, aggressive, lustful and music-loving, but whether the artists feel that this nature makes him acceptably dominant, or innately threatening to the nymphs is not so clear. If there is in these first pieces a sense of innate conflict, it then all but disappears (there are one or two equivocal
Sheila McNally

scenes) for about fifty years. Certainly, while the sexual excitement is a regular characteristic, and the vigorous stride a frequent occurrence, the aggressive grasp of these first satyrs is rarely repeated before the fifth century.

Fig. 1. Sherd from the Athenian agora. Courtesy of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens.

On the François vase Kleitias expands the role and number of nymphs and satyrs, creating a troup parading after Dionysos. The vase marks the first certain appearance of Dionysos in Attic, and probably in Greek art. He appears twice, once staring out from among the Olympian gods, and once leading Hephaistos back to Olympos. In the latter scene (fig. 2), the drunken Hephaistos is followed by three satyrs (labelled silenoi — see note 2) and four nymphs (so labelled). The first satyr labors under the sack with Hephaistos’ wine: the next plays the flute, the third carries a nymph. Although she looks a little startled, her basic complacence is indicated by the fact that three more nymphs tag along behind, the last clashing cymbals. By adding wine to the two other preoccupations of the satyrs — women and music — and by allying them with Dionysos, Kleitias has created the germ of the Bacchic thiasos.
Fig. 2. Drawing of detail of the François vase, 
Furtwängler and Reichold, 
Griechische Vasenmalerei.
Succeeding artists develop the thiasos, the dance or procession honoring Dionysos, into an independent theme. They integrate the satyrs and maenads, and exploit the various effects of wine (or divine intoxication), music, and love. During the next fifty years these effects may lead to scenes of wild physical excitement, scenes of gentle affection, and of various states in between, but while light-hearted play may develop erotic overtones, there is seldom any aggressiveness or explicit sexual activity. Among the major painters of the latter half of the sixth century, Exekias avoids the thiasos; Lydos creates one of its earliest expressions; while the Amasis painter is distinguished by the variety of interpretations which he creates.

In dances the satyrs and maenads are integrated in alignment, and often in action. Unlike the François vase, where satyrs are followed by nymphs, the later vases show them alternating with the maenads, sometimes all facing in one direction (or in two rows facing the middle), sometimes facing each other in pairs. Satyrs often dance alone, maenads less often. On Lydos' great column krater (fig. 3) done in

Fig. 3. Column krater by Lydos, detail. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Fletcher Fund, 1931.
about 550,\(^4\) the change is underway. Hephaistos is still present, as he continues to be in many thiasos scenes, but he is the middle of the band, not at its head: the story-telling connotation, the here-to-there progression, recedes before the endless pleasure of the dance. The alternation of maenads and satyrs is not yet completely regular. They are clearly dancing, but the dance movements are slow, and there is no relationship between the movements of the various figures. Throughout the remainder of black-figure, the dance often remains a mere shuffle, in which each figure may seem to act independently. There soon begins a parallel development, however: a crisply energetic dance in which there is more interaction. Many of the best examples of this dance fall between 530 and 510, or a little later. They include several examples by the Amasis Painter, including a cup and narrow strips on top of his amphora panels;\(^9\) cup exteriors and interiors by the Oakeshott painter;\(^10\) and the Nikosthenic vases by painter N.\(^11\) On these, the dance varies from sprightly to wild, as the figures scamper, bound and lunge. As in the more sedate dance, each figure is separate: although the outlines may impinge, the figures do not deliberately touch (a rare exception is mentioned below). Each assumes something like a swastika shape by the full extension and crisp bending of limbs. There are elements of rhythmic repetition, but basically each figure creates its own configuration, and yet clearly the wilder the dance becomes, the more the patterns interlock. Each dancer improvises vigorously, but improvises in response to the steps and gestures of the dancer next in line. The action is therefore extreme but controlled, individualistic in a framework of mutual response. It is kinetic,\(^12\) showing figures totally alive in every joint. Single pairs of energetic dancers occur on cup interiors such as that of the Siana cup in the Metropolitan\(^13\) or the Oakeshott cup in Boston\(^14\) (fig. 4), which shows the satyr and the maenad tightly related in a stamping and clapping dance. The satyr is as hairy as the one created by Sophilos a half-century earlier, but neither here nor on many other vases does this stress on his animal nature prevent his enthusiastic accord with the maenad.

That handclapping is the closest which the energetic dance comes to the expression of affection. This dance is an end in itself, but the action of the slower dances can easily develop into sexual foreplay. A number of vases on which satyrs lift maenads show the way in which erotic implications can come and go. The gesture seems
to begin as a prelude to sex, then to become a formal dance movement, while always retaining its sexual possibilities. It occurs first, of course, on the François vase, before the procession became a dance. Between 550 and 540 it is repeated on a vase in Würzburg. On each side of the vase there is a slow dance which brings the satyrs to sexual climax. In the center of one side a maenad is flourished aloft as the object, the willing object, to be penetrated by the two satyrs who hold her. Later there are a number of vases where the maenads sit on the satyr’s back or shoulders, often playing the flute or the krotala. The lifting has become a jeu d’esprit, an extension of the self-fulfilling energy of the dance. That several stages in a movement
(from lifting to carrying) are represented suggests that it may have formed an actual dance passage.¹⁴ The figures on these vases slip easily from enjoyment of music and dancing for their own sakes into enjoyment of each other. For instance on a vase in Boston from the end of the century¹⁷ there are similar symmetrical scenes on either side: on one (fig. 5), two satyrs dance on either side of a maenad; on the other (fig. 6), a satyr holds the central maenad aloft, and she continues to flourish her hands in dancing gesture, while the flanking satyrs, poised on tip-toe, reach out gently to touch her.

Both lust and affection develop still further on another vase in Boston done by the Dayton Painter around 520, where "a satyr carries a naked maenad toward a couch,..."¹⁸ The maenad has her arms lovingly around his head and shoulders (fig. 7). This pair are on one side of Dionysos and Ariadne, while on the other a satyr and maenad kiss. The mood is quieter than on the dancing vases. On those, Dionysos may or may not be shown. The intoxication of the movements does not depend on his physical appearance. The quieter scenes of greeting or worship, however, demand the presence of the god (with or without Ariadne, whose presence or absence does not affect any other variation). The Dayton Painter's vase is an unusual example of this quiet type, which shows a satyr and maenad pair on either side of the god. They usually stand quietly, close together; and out of their closeness, as out of the slow dance, degrees of warmth may develop. The activity on this vase goes further into energetic movement and overt sexuality than in most of these scenes. Kissing is more frequent;¹⁹ but most commonly the satyr slips his arm around the shoulder of the maenad.

The Amasis Painter is even more fond of these quiet scenes and their potential tenderness than he is of the wild dance. He is most adroit at combinations which suggest the kinship and easy passage between one moment and another, between dance and grape harvest, between common worship and mutual affection. He particularly enjoys showing figures linked by an arm around the shoulder: two lightly dancing satyrs;²⁰ a satyr and a clothed maenad;²¹ two pairs of satyrs and nude maenads;²² and paired maenads.²³ Fragments from Samos show warmer emotions: two satyrs carrying maenads, and perhaps (very little is left) a rare depiction of coupling.²⁴

The pair of embracing maenads (see note 23) on the vase in the Cabinet des Médailles done just before 525 is significant in another
Fig. 5. Amphora, side A. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Fig. 6. Amphora, side B. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Fig. 7. Amphora by the Dayton Painter, detail. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
The entrance to the eye of early mass-produced there are a few less often than satyrs, presumably because satyrs have a character of their own, while maenads depend on the satyrs to make them truly Dionysian. When they are alone (with or without Dionysos, but without satyrs) they are identifiable, as here, by the vines which they hold; and, less frequently, by holding animals, or wearing animal skins. The link to the animal world is developed elegantly but with an undertone of savagery on this vase. One maenad wears the skin of a dead panther, his head prominently displayed. The other holds a hare by its ears in a manner which makes one fear for its future. Possibly the Amasis Painter is here representing either the actual women worshippers of Dionysos, the thyiades, or bacchantes in the sense of Euripides' Bacchae, some of the women who, often in pairs, greeted Dionysos on various of his arrivals in Greece. However that may be, he is endowing the women with a richness and independence which anticipates the developments of the end of the century.

One fine example of those developments is the red-figure vase which Phintias painted about ten years later. It is of the "quiet" type, showing a pair of satyrs and maenads standing close together on either side of Dionysos. One maenad holds a bird, the other is accompanied by a panther. Their relationship to the animals appears to be friendly: the panther's feet are at the maenad's throat, while its hind paws are on the thyrsos she holds - the ivy-tipped rod which is also a new element at this time. Although the maenads now have more attributes defining their personalities than do the satyrs, the relationship between the two remains close.

The interference becomes explicit on another vase done about the same time, the Chelis Painter's cup in Munich. A satyr reaches out and grabs the skirt of a maenad who holds a snake and a thyrsos. Earlier maenads enthusiastically lift their skirts in invitation or acceptance of sexual advances. This maenad recoils and brandishes the thyrsos like a club over her head. The moment is not complete in itself; it implies a result. All the lines are full of a spikey nervous tension.

On the black-figure vases, satyrs and maenads are preeminently engaged in having fun: "an absolutely primary category of life." Their activity is an end in itself, the unfettered use of energy in the varying rhythms of worship and dance, or less often the related rhythms of the grape harvest or sexual foreplay - but not, typically, in sexual
coupling, a significant distinction. The distinction is certainly not due to prudery, since there are many depictions of far more erotic scenes on contemporary vases. It is due to the particular need which these scenes fill.

There is no before or after; the moment is complete in itself. That is one reason why the presence or absence of Hephaistos, or of Dionysos and Ariadne makes so little difference. Hephaistos, if present, is travelling, not setting forth or arriving: Dionysos is not discovering Ariadne, but is linked to her eternally. The actions may slip from one phase of pleasure to another, but they do not have to: fulfillment lies in each one.

Many red- and black-figure vases of the end of the century continue in this mood, but beside them appear such vases as the Chelis Painter’s, Oltos’ amphora in the Louvre or Epiktetos’ cup in Providence on which trouble is beginning. In that trouble the animals and the thyrsos of the maenad play an important part. Satyrs at this period seldom are shown with either attribute (although on Lydos’ mid-century krater discussed above a satyr flourishes a snake which does not seem to alarm anyone, fig. 3).

A figure who does have similar attributes at this time is the sea-nymph, Thetis, often shown with a small lion and snakes or sea-serpents. Abduction scenes were growing in popularity at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth centuries. Many of them involved one character who was not completely anthropomorphic – Europa and the Bull, Boreas and Oreithyia, Peleus and Thetis. The abduction of Thetis was much the most frequent of these scenes, and its popularity was probably due less to the importance of the story as a whole than to the implications of the way that one moment was visualized. Its most beautiful depiction, the cup interior painted by Peithinos at the end of the sixth century, shows striking similarities and dissimilarities with scenes of satyrs attacking maenads. The figure of Thetis is powerful and looks on with detached interest while her snakes and a small lion attack Peleus. As the story was later written down, she had the power to change herself into animals: certainly they here represent the expansion of her nature beyond the bounds of anthropomorphism, and it is this expansion which is inimical to Peleus. Both the expanded forces and the hostility they engender resemble those developing at the same time in Dionysiac scenes, but the outcome is different. Peleus differs in nature and aims from the
The Maenad in Early Greek Art

satyrs, and so he achieves a union where they fail, but both situations embody the same underlying tensions.

Just a few years later the Kleophrades Painter made a dramatic summation of these tensions on his famous painted amphora in Munich. In the center of the front (fig. 8) Dionysos holds vines which unfurl around him and out to either side to make a canopy over two flanking maenads. They each step toward him, and their thyrsoi impinge upon the vine, so that all three figures are linked in kinship to nature's greenness. Both maenads, however, look away from Dionysos toward satyrs tucked under the handles of the vase. The satyrs cannot

Fig. 8. Amphora by the Kleophrades Painter, side A. Courtesy of the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich.
be seen when one looks at the front picture. The typical five figure scene in which satyr-maenad pairs flank Dionysos has been spread apart so that Dionysos and the maenads have a relationship to which the satyrs are outsiders — hardly even intruders. The satyr on the right has caught the thyrsos of the maenad who moves sharply to pull — yank really seems the more accurate word — it away from him. On the left, the other satyr begins to catch at the hem of the maenad, who turns with severe grace to drive her thyrsos into his sex (fig. 9).

Fig. 9. Amphora by the Kleophrades Painter, side A, detail. Courtesy of the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich.

This juxtaposition makes the phallic implications of the thyrsos clear, and yet we would be wrong to identify it simply as a phallic symbol, and the expansion of the maenad's nature as simple androgeny. Phallus-tipped staffs do appear on some early red-figure Dionysiac scenes, and are used as weapons, but not by maenads. They belong to Dionysos, or the satyrs, whose essentially phallic character they reinforce. Soon after the painting of this vase, painters begin to depict maenads carrying torches. Although torches might seem to us
equally capable of phallic symbolism, they are seldom used as weapons. The thyrsos has a special power. It is the emblem of closeness to plant life, to growing nature and endows the maenad with a power which suggests androgeny, but is not exclusively genital. Similar expanded force is indicated by the close relationship of maenads to animals. Two maenads on this vase hold snakes. The snake has been considered as a phallic symbol or a vaginal one, and could be seen as completing the maenad’s specifically sexual power. I think we are safer in considering the snake, like the panther or other animals, as an indication of the breadth of vital forces which she subsumes. The satyrs do not have thyrsoi on this vase, or on most others of the early period. They are mixed beings, but the mixture appears to constitute a limitation rather than an expansion of their nature.

Since the expansion of the maenad’s nature transcends the bounds of her own body, it threatens the validity of the swastika dance. There are dancers on the back of this vase (fig. 10), but they dance in a radically new way. The three-figure composition reverses the usual order of the black-figure groups. A satyr assumes the central role earlier taken by the maenad. The latent sexual magnetism with which she inspired the action is replaced by his music making. In black-figure the group would have been physically responsive, but this is hardly a group at all. The satyr concentrates vigorously on his music, and each maenad is lost in a private experience, one, snake-wreathed, in gentle revery; the other in wild abandon, with flung back head (fig. 11). It seems to have been the Kleophrades Painter who introduced this latter pose which so effectively suggests religious frenzy. The figures do not express physical extension, but spiritual engrossment, which fills and at the same time isolates each maenad. This is barely a dance: it is certainly not “fun.”

On several other vases, both before and after this one, the Kleophrades Painter again depicts independent dancers, maenads in harmony with satyrs as long as they ignore them or only listen to their music. These paintings, especially the later ones, are powerful but more limited expressions of the new maenadism which finds its strongest and most subtle expression on the Munich amphora. “The painter’s mind that day was filled with giant women....”

Almost inevitably, there is another side to the Kleophrades Painter’s art: he moves from high seriousness to ribaldry in decorating a hydria now in Rouen which shows satyrs with a sleeping maenad.
The Amasis Painter may have employed this subject (see note 24); it had certainly appeared before this, but any innocent sensuality in

Fig. 10. Amphora by the Kleophrades Painter, side B. Courtesy of the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich.
the earlier examples disappears in this treatment. The garment which
the satyr pulls up, and the directness of his approach sharpen the ir-
reverence. At just this time the dramatic tetralogy was coming into
existence, with the satyr play forming its irreverent conclusion: a
conclusion often exalting trickery, and deliberately reversing the
morality expressed in the main pieces. The audaciously groping
fingers of the satyr in Rouen form a counterpoint to the thyrsos wielded
by the Munich maenad.

While the Kleophrades Painter sharpens the joke, the Brygos
Painter and Makron make it broader, inviting a snigger. Their sleeping
maenads are fully clothed, and the satyrs approach them more stealthi-
ly. The delight in getting away with something, the triumph of slyness,
is accented. On Makron's vase of about 480 the maenads are powerful
forms (fig. 12): their comparative size and outstretched pose combine
to suggest the quality of an earth mother. One is still fast asleep,
holding her thyrsos lightly. Satyrs approach from either side, one
grasping her hair, the other parting her legs. On the other side, the
satyrs' actions are much the same, the maenad has begun to awake,
to pull free, to wave her thyrsos — the issue is in doubt. All of these
scenes demonstrate a deliberate desire to shock which indicates the

Fig. 11. Amphora by the Kleophrades Painter, side B, detail. Courtesy of the
Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich.
gulf between satyr and maenad as much or more than does the violence in other scenes. To Makron, the Brygos Painter, and others of their generation, lust as a link between satyr and maenad can only be incongruous, the basis for a joke.

Fig. 12. Kylix by Makron, side A (above), side B (below). Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Each painter also did scenes of more active hostility. Makron takes over the gesture of the thyrsos-wielding maenad from the Kleophrades Painter, but apparently winces at depicting it. Once he partially cushions the blow by reversing the thyrsos; another time (fig. 13) he lets it slip by harmlessly.

Makron is also the creator of one surprisingly harmonious scene. A cup tondo in the Louvre shows a maenad with her arm around a satyr in the old, affectionate gesture. He gropes under her garment with the new deviousness. Is he taking her by surprise, or is she, for once, receptive?

Certainly the sexual hostility shown in both the satyr's snigger and the maenad's thyrsos-slash does not appear in other examples of

---

Fig. 13. Cup by Makron, interior. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1906.
Makron's work. The tenderness and relative equality of the sexual relationship between a man and a hetaira on one cup, the elegance of Helen escorted by Aphrodite and Eros on another show him to have been happily responsive to both physical and courtly aspects of love. If, as has been claimed, there was rising tension between men and women in the Athenian society of the early fifth century, it was certainly not finding expression in most vase painting.

There is a great increase at this time in two types of scenes implying some degree of conflict: abductions and pursuits. Something has already been said about the former (p. 101 and p. 118). Although they, like the Bacchic scenes, show concern for relating non-anthropomorphic and human energies, as well as male and female, they are for the most part diagrams of union, not expressions of incompatibility. The compositions do not resemble those used in most depictions of satyrs and maenads. Pursuit scenes on the other hand can involve satyrs and maenads as well as all sorts of other couples, identifiable and unidentifiable. Pursuit was a popular artistic convention for displaying action, and only seldom provides insight into a particular relationship. We have, for instance, no way of knowing whether the satyr will catch the maenad — although it is significant that the question can be asked, that once again the moment, unlike the sixth-century ones, demands a sequel. One of the earliest Dionysiac pursuits, painted by the Brygos Painter on a rhyton in Boston is an exception to these generalities. He reinterprets the convention to suit the participants. The movement of each figure is sharply characterized. A satyr bounds nimbly after a maenad whose running is enframed with crisp lines and angles conveying her desperation. Then comes the final touch which ties this to the 'sleeping maenad' scene and differentiates it from conventional pursuits — the maenad looks back in terror, while there, in front of her, but out of sight, another satyr crouches to spring. It is all a trick.

Like the Kleophrades Painter, and other less important painters of the era, both Makron and the Brygos Painter can still envisage a dance which in many ways resembles those on black figure, a dance in which all is well so long as there is no physical contact between dancers. Often the row of alternating maenads and satyrs survives, although many of the most active figures no longer show any mutual responsiveness. Therefore maenads can now frequently be found dancing on their own, as for example, the Kleophrades Painter's late
kalpis, or the Brygos Painter's cup tondo in Munich. The dancers perform the same "swastika-like" movements as before, but now the artist may stress a difference between the robust prancing of the satyrs and the lighter movement which drapery imparts to the maenads. Often, especially when the "wing-sleeve" convention is used, as on the kalpis, the drapery is startlingly successful in isolating and decorporealizing the female figures.

The earlier dances could easily lead into sexual foreplay; while now any dance in which the dancers respond to each other seems to be on the verge of conflict. The constantly underlying sense of tension can be seen, for instance, on the cup in Cleveland which Douris painted around 480, with its "effect of continuous movement, and sense of intended violence and determined opposition."52 Movements are ambiguous; one can hardly determine whether the maenads are dancing or striking, only that they are ready to do either. One satyr on this vase holds a thyrsos, which is unusual at the beginning of the fifth century but becomes common later. His head is thrown back: the vases discussed so far have not shown satyrs capable of ecstasy; their fulfillment had remained free extension of physical energy; only the maenads had changed.

Toward the end of his long career Douris created the last significant new version of the conflict of satyr and maenad. On the interior of cup in Boston (fig. 14)53 he depicted an exceptional scene: the triumph of the satyrs. In the center, a satyr grasps a maenad around the body, rather than merely catching at her arm or skirt. She pulls at his ear and he does not look pleased, but his grip is firm. Two more satyrs frolic on either side, and phallic flowers thrust into the scene. The viewer might feel a momentary doubt about the satyr's success because of the maenad's size — as on many vases of this period, she is larger than the satyrs — and her upright stance. Similar power is, however, shown by female figures in many abduction scenes of the time and indicates the dignity of the forces which are being joined, rather than any doubts about their joining. The unusual determination of the satyr abductor on the Boston vase, together with the delight of his companions and the impact of the flowers (which seem to set nature itself for once on the side of the satyrs), all combine to express their victory.

This scene may be influenced by those of Peleus or Boreas grasping their brides. The total composition however, seems to come
from Douris' memories of his boyhood, of the joyously uplifted maenads in late black-figure, a motif which had died out, and which he revived. When we look back at an earlier example (fig. 6), we see that the woman does not struggle, but throws up her arms in a dance gesture: she is not hostile, but open to pleasure. Douris apparently cannot any longer imagine such harmony, but he is also unwilling to accept incompatibility.

This vase brings to a close the period of major innovations on the theme of hostility. It does not usher in a new era of carefree play. After this one example, lust or affection do not again succeed in linking the satyrs and maenads. There are many amicable scenes in
the second half of the century, but they are highly decorous relationships. Any time a maenad is touched, she resents it.

Sometimes she even resents being looked at: the satyr's overture is often tentative, and seems to be quelled with an icy glance. There continue to be fights and pursuits, but the tension slackens. When physical struggles occur, the poses are conventional. The artists are not trying to work out the implications of a new situation as they were in the late sixth and early fifth century. Rather they are repeating accepted patterns, which tend to drift into play-acting, so that on some vases the mixture of enticing and repulsing begins to suggest a game. Of course there are others where there can be no doubt that the maenads are in deadly earnest, and repulse the satyrs with unabated vigor.

Still, their motives may now be different. The latter part of the fifth century sees a flood of new Dionysiac subjects which involve a broad range of characterizations and activities. The simple thiasos remains important, but can no longer be studied without reference to many more specific situations which also involve the relationship of satyrs and maenads. This is a time of great change, culminating in the transformation of Dionysos himself. It will require separate consideration.

Two minor innovations which occur in old situations may serve to indicate something of the changing characterizations, and the resulting tendency to play down violence. In both situations the satyr and maenad are separate, and seem unlikely to touch. One is the moment, developing out of the dance or procession, when the satyr accosts the maenad. Often on these later vases instead of either fighting or fleeing she simply stands coldly and interposes her thyrsos as a barrier, holding it as a vertical staff which establishes her dignity and distance without further ado. The second innovation is in the scene of the "sleeping maenad." On several vases she is shown sitting upright, more self-possessed but less elemental than before, while the satyr creeps or capers uncertainly in front of her, not quite daring to come closer. The source of the humor shifts from his irreverence to his timidity.

Analysis of this sequence of vase paintings has shown that the relationship between satyr and maenad (or nymph) begins, about 580, with sex, and develops after 550 into exuberant play in mutual responsiveness. Then the nature of the maenad changes. By 500 that
change brings about her rejection of the satyr’s sexual advances, a rejection which can lead to one of three results: to isolated ecstasy, to struggles which she wins, or to the trickery in which he excels. In the latter part of the fifth century the maenad still rejects the satyr as a partner in lust or affection, but their interests are diverted into new channels.

Hostility between maenad and satyr emerges as a sudden and radical departure from earlier attitudes, related to, and I think caused by the maenad’s new closeness to the world of plants and animals. Some aspects of this development, namely the greater differentiation of types of people and types of activities, are common to all of Greek art in the later archaic and early classical period, but many aspects are peculiar to this subject matter. We may look for explanations in the development of drama, liturgy, or the social structure, but we know too little about any one of them to find satisfaction. Several possible influences should be mentioned however, if only to indicate the problems they raise.

Some influence certainly came from Attic drama. The introduction of a “story line” into the thiasos suggests the requirements of the dramatist as he changes dance into theater. The juxtaposition of serious and ribald views of the same subject, the development, in fact, of the dirty joke — there had been much sex, but little or no pornography in sixth-century painting — also reflects dramatic conventions. The development of the dramatic tetralogy was a striking advance in self-consciousness, in the analysis and definition of character and action.

Developments in worship may also have been influential. Here we have no independent evidence at all. It certainly seems possible that maenads, rather than satyrs, first appear with thyrsoi and snakes because the painters had seen Athenian women with these attributes. The clinical accuracy of the head thrown back in ecstasy may indicate that painters had had opportunities to see “spontaneous outbreaks of religious hysteria” or the liturgical channelling of that hysteria. Before the middle of the fifth century, however, there are very few scenes which bear a clearly liturgical interpretation, and they are not ecstatic: they show women alone (or with Dionysos, but without satyrs) engaged in solemn action.

A deeper explanation would lie in the assumption of growing tension in contemporary society. In general terms I think we must conclude that there was such tension, but not that it can be easily
defined. Some commentators have claimed that a deep hostility between men and women, which resulted in the suppression (and occasional religious explosion) of women’s energies, was developing at this time. The evidence is unclear. In any case, the development, if it existed, had little effect on art. Certainly the otherwise satisfactory relationships depicted between the sexes in vase painting and sculpture at this time may be due to repression, but why would the truth break through only in Dionysiac contexts?

It might seem briefly tempting to combine the last two explanations – the rise of Dionysos worship, and the growth of social tension – into one. There is no question that women played a prominent role in Dionysiac religion. The mysteries might have renewed women’s sense of their own significance: a kind of “consciousness-raising.” The men might then be thought to view the “raving” of the bacchante as some today do the “craziness” of liberated women: thyrsos-flourishing as equivalent to bra-burning. We might then interpret the outbreak of hostility as fear of the Dionysiac devotee losing touch with the normal, losing her place in society. This is patently ludicrous in terms of the visual evidence. The female figures are strong and successful. They are not comic; that role is reserved for the satyr. The tension here has nothing to do with any contemporary Athenian’s concern about the behavior of his wife or daughter. The ecstasy envisaged is not really “consciousness-raising” – it is escape from consciousness into another sort of existence, and that may be the most significant factor.

Bruno Snell has traced the “development of the mind” in Greek civilization.57 Man became increasingly self-aware, aware in particular of his power to reason. (I say “man” intentionally. We know very little about the experience of Greek women, and certainly we do not learn more from the vases examined here. They reflect the concerns of the people – the men – who made and used them.)

This rationality created divisions between man’s mental and his physical existence, between him and the rest of the universe. A fundamental problem throughout Greek art is that of the interrelationship between humans, animals and inanimate nature. There is a continuous process of separating and recombining them in various ways. The satyr and the maenad are such combinations, the satyr from the beginning, the maenad in the course of her development. They represent two stages in the attempt to establish connectives, while the
hostility between them testifies poignantly to the fissures opening in human experience.

In Jungian terms (if I may borrow them without implying a consistently Jungian outlook, supposing there to be such a thing) the development of consciousness may be characterized as the separation of *logos*, the masculine force, rational and analytic, from *eros*, the feminine force, irrational and connective. This formulation echoes the intuitions expressed in the Pythagorean Table of Opposites (of uncertain date, but certainly later than the period we are discussing) pairing ten principles: limit and unlimited; odd and even; one and plurality; right and left; male and female; resting and moving; straight and curved; light and dark; good and bad; square and oblong.\(^5\) Whatever the Table as a whole may mean, it seems to indicate that the Greeks recognized a force which was feminine, many-sided, and boundless, and that they feared it.

The duality just expressed is too simple however, because the emerging *logos* is at the same time a degrading of the genital aspect of masculinity. By the end of the fifth century Greek writers were calling for sexual moderation or abstinence to preserve energy for higher activities.\(^5\) Whether or not there was tension between men and women, there was certainly tension within human nature. The satyr is a mixture of animal and human which emphasizes the basically physical, especially the sexual. At first that was fine. He danced along, sometimes hairy, sometimes smooth, and the maenad liked him either way. Then she became full of her own less definably expanded powers, and firmly rejected his.

There is no single force which can be called "maenadism" in sixth- and fifth-century art. The maenad's appearance and actions change. At least in the present state of our knowledge, that change cannot be linked to any specific development in contemporary social structure. It did make a significant contribution to the struggle to understand human nature and its place in the universe. Greek self-awareness reached a crucial stage at the beginning of the fifth century. That is obvious in the transition to classical art, in the evolution of drama, and in the beginning of history writing, still another attempt to organize experience. The ecstatic dance of the maenad, and her hostility to the satyr, embody some of the richness and the strain of that awareness.

*University of Minnesota*
NOTES

*A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the Women's Caucus session of the Midwest Art History Society meetings, 1977. Its development owes much to the comments of students in a course on Greek Vase Painting at the University of Minnesota in 1977, especially those of Marie Friederichs.

Abbreviations:

ABV Sir John Beazley, Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters (Oxford 1956).
ARV Sir John Beazley, Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1963).
CVA Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum. Volumes are identified by city and by number in the series for that city.
Para Sir John Beazley, Paralipomena: Additions to Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters and to Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters, Second Edition (Oxford 1971).

1 E. R. Dodds is perhaps the outstanding compiler of evidence not only from the ancient world but from comparative sources, published in several places but most extensively in this edition of Euripides' Bacchae (2nd ed. Oxford 1960). The most recent general interpretation is Karl Kerényi, Dionysos, Archetypal Symbol of Indestructible Life (Princeton 1976). Earlier literature is cited in these books.


3 Pentheus' death is introduced to vase painting in the late sixth century, but was not a popular subject then. Sir John Beazley, Vase Painting in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, II (London 1954) 1-2; Frank Brommer, Vasenlisten zur Griechischen Heldensage. 3rd ed. (Marburg 1973) 485-6.

4 Dodds (above, note 1) xxviii-xxxiii.


6 Florence 4209. ABV 76 #1.

7 Ernst Langlotz identifies a figure on a Corinthian vase as the earliest Dionysos: "Dionysos" Antike 8 (1932) 181, fig. 14.

8 New York 31.11.11. ABV 108 #5.

9 Cup Louvre F75 ABV 156 #81; amphorae Berlin 3210. ABV 151 #21, Würzburg 265 ABV 151 #22.

10 New York 17.230.5. Para 78 #1.


12 Cf. Lillian B. Lawler, "The Maenads," Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome 6 (1927). This term seems more appropriate to the sixth-century dances than to those she is analyzing.
New York 12.234.3. ABV 69 #3.
Boston 69.1052.
Würzburg 252. ABV 315 #1.
E.g., Berlin 1935. ABV 431 #10, Berlin 3765. ABV 259 #25, Boston 01.17 ABV 319 #2, Oxford 208. ABV 256 #15.
Boston 76.40. Para 133 #2.
As early as 550; cf. Würzburg 246. ABV 296 #8.
Würzburg 265. ABV 151 #22.
Basel, Antikenmuseum, Para 65.
Berlin 3210. ABV 151 #21.
Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 222. ABV 152 #25.
Samos, no number. ABV 151 #18.
Kerenyi (above, note 1) ch IV.
Tarquinia Mus. Naz. RC 6843. ARV² 32 #2.
Munich 2589. ARV² 112 #1.
E.g., Bologna 1430. CVA 2, III H e pl. 5. Würzburg 178. Ernst Langlotz, Griechischer Vasen in Würzburg (Munich 1932) pl. 38.
Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens (New York 1950) 21. Since these figures are not human, some of Huizinga's discussion does not apply to them, but much is apropos.
Huizinga (above, note 29) 63-64.
Louvre G 2. ARV² 53 #2.
Providence 25.077. ARV² 73 #34.
The death of Pentheus first appears in Greek vase painting about this time (see note 3). The women who have killed him carry thyrses. The thyrsi are not used as weapons against him until later.
Frank Brommer (above, note 3) 321-9.
Berlin 2279. ARV² 115 #2.
Munich 2344. ARV² 182 #6.
Heinrich Bulle, "Zum Pothos des Skopas.", Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 56 (1941) 137.
E. R. Dodds The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley 1951) Appendix I: "Maenadism" 273-5. His argument that this gesture is a proof that maenadism arose from "spontaneous attacks of mass hysteria" seems open to question because of the date and circumstances when the trait appears.
E.g., early psykter Louvre G 57. ARV² 188 #65; early krater Harvard 1960. 236. ARV² 185 #31; later krater Louvre G 162 ARV² 186 #47; late kalpis Basel, Wilhelm ARV² 189 #73.
Rouen 25. ARV² 188 #68.


Munich 2654. *ARV* 2 462 #47. New York 06.1152. *ARV* 2 463 #52.

Louvre G 144. *ARV* 2 462 #43.

Gotha 49. *ARV* 2 467 #119.


Boston 03.787. *ARV* 2 382 #189.

Maenads dancing alone, e.g., *kalpis* note 40; Makron’s cup, Berlin 2290. *ARV* 2 462 #48; Brygos Painter’s cup tondo Munich 2645. *ARV* 2 371 #15. Douris’ cup Boston 00.499. *ARV* 2 435 #89.


Boston 00.343 *ARV* 2 438 #141.


Sir John Beazley, CVA Oxford. 1, p. 34.

See note 39.

