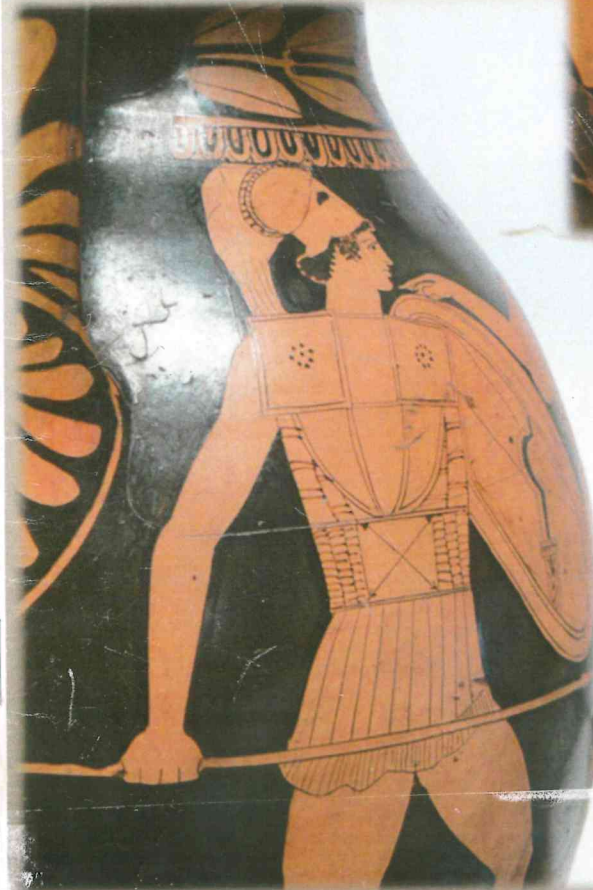




UCD School of Classics
Classical Museum

*Heroes and Mortals
in Ancient Greece
An exhibition*



Celebrating
100 Years of
the Classical
Museum

Heroes and Mortals
in
Ancient Greece

An exhibition of the Classical Museum
University College Dublin

November 2010 – November 2011

Preface

Over the years the UCD Classical Museum has produced a number of scholarly publications, but it has been a long-standing wish of those involved also to produce a book on the Museum's antiquities that would serve the increasing number of students with an interest in classical art and archaeology, as well as informed visitors from outside. For a variety of reasons this has not yet come to fruition. However, small thematic booklets, such as this one, that accompany the exhibitions regularly mounted by the Museum, have managed to fill the gap up to a point.

This year's exhibition marks a special occasion: the centenary of the Museum's foundation, by the Rev. Henry Browne, as a teaching resource for UCD. The energy that was instrumental in its creation was not always sustained over the years, but thankfully it has enjoyed a renewed burst in the last few years, on the part of staff and students alike.

The inspiration for the theme of the exhibition came from our Level 2 course on "Myth in Greek Art and Architecture", for which the museum has been an invaluable resource. It brings together Greek vases that have been used for teaching purposes over the years, supplemented by seven fine vases and two bronze helmets kindly loaned for the occasion by the National Museum of Ireland. These have added a wealth of visual evidence on this wide-ranging subject.

The exhibition could not have been mounted but for the assistance of committed postgraduate and undergraduate students, for whom it has also been a most valuable learning experience. This catalogue is dedicated to them, and to others who have lent their assistance, in the hope that they will find it useful and enjoyable, and a help in understanding how the ancient Greeks made sense of and related to that special breed of demi-gods that were their mythical heroes.

We are greatly indebted to the National Museum of Ireland for their collaboration and support. All the artefacts loaned were treated by specialist conservators, specifically for this occasion, and we wish to thank the conservation department of the National Museum for their work under considerable pressure of time.

Christina Haywood

Lecturer and Curator of the Classical Museum, UCD

'The gods are remote, the heroes are near at hand'

Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (1985)

The existence of mythical 'heroes' or 'demi-gods' who occupied a place between gods and men is particular to Greek mythology. Unlike their gods, the Greeks integrated their heroes in their history, believing them to have participated in events in historical times. Although at least one of their parents was believed to be a divinity, and like the gods, they were endowed with super-human qualities or strength, due to which they had performed glorious deeds, heroes shared with humans their mortality; except in the special case of Herakles, no hero becomes a god in Greek mythology. All heroes had once been alive, but were now dead. Unlike gods, heroes were particularly connected with their tombs, where they were worshipped, even if these tombs, and their location, were invented.

Greek heroes had 'real' personal lives, and there were stories about their birth, childhood, adulthood and death, often different versions of them. They had happy times, as well as distressing experiences. During their lives heroes were confronted with moral choices and they often transgressed. These aspects of their existence placed them closer to the human experience than divinities. Moreover, the relationship between living mortals and heroes was not complicated by the 'will of god', which often interfered in the relationships between humans and their gods.

This is why heroes were better suited as models and paradigms for the living mortals, though gods had this function too. Art illustrates this role of heroes clearly. The repertoire of scenes from myth in art is enormous. Artists illustrated all the stages of their lives and deeds. These lively narratives and evocative images are often used to create connections between heroic undertakings and contemporary social history and values, or were used didactically to educate and moralize.

This small exhibition attempts to illustrate some of the ways in which the Greeks made sense of their heroes, particularly as seen through the eyes of their artists, and the connection that they sought to make between the human and the heroic condition.

1. Cypriot bull-shaped rhyton

H. 12 cm, L. 17.2 cm
Probably from Enkomi

Late Cypriot II, 15th-13th century BC

UCD 18; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood, C. 2004, *Cypriot Antiquities in Dublin*, Nicosia, p. 46, no. 78, with bibliography.

Rhytons are containers used in cult for offering libations. In the case of the bull-shaped rhyton the liquid would have been poured through its pierced mouth. At Enkomi, such rhytons were found in tombs as well as domestic contexts. The artefact was handmade in a ceramic ware called Base Ring ware II. The grey-fired clay was decorated with white stripes.

The bull, which in classical antiquity had a special place in mythology as the beast from Knossos that both Heracles and Theseus fought as part of their labours (see no. 19), had already acquired an important place in the religion of Bronze Age Greece and Cyprus as a symbol of power and fertility. The bull was a special sacrificial victim in the classical age (see no. 7), as it was already in the Greek Bronze Age.

Select bibliography: Hellenic Ministry of Culture 2003. *The Bull in the Mediterranean. Myths & Cults*, Athens.



2. Late Geometric neck-amphora

H. 29.5 cm

On front and back panels, armed men each leading a horse. They wear crested helmets and hold a "Dipylon shield" and double spears. The subsidiary decoration on the vase consists of checkers, zig-zags, and crosshatched lozenges.

Late Geometric II, 8th c. BC

NMI 1921.103, *PRIA*, no. 286.

The horse in Greek Geometric art signifies high status, but it also has heroic connotations. In the art of this period the figures associated with horses are often shown as helmeted warriors holding large shields. The type of shield, which has inward curving sides, is known as "Dipylon shield", and is thought to have its origins in the large figure-of-eight shield of the Late Bronze Age. The Dipylon shield, which is standard in Middle and Late Geometric art, has not survived as an artefact, and there has been a long-standing debate about whether it was an actual piece of defensive armour or a symbol used by artists to express either the heroic values of the epic heroes, or a "heroic ambience". Jeffrey Herwit (1985, 122) has proposed a compromise interpretation: "the Dipylon shield was indeed real, but it was not ordinary. It was a means of bridging the gulf between the heroes of the Mycenaean Age and the Geometric aristocrats who in actuality used it. The Dipylon shield made them *feel* like heroes." Recently, the discovery of miniature Dipylon shields in votive deposits which display technological details of real shields suggest that Herwit may be right. The Dipylon shield was the precursor of the "Boeotian shield", a type of shield, which was used in the iconography of the 6th century, specifically to signify heroic identity.

Select bibliography: Herwit, J.M. 1985. "The Dipylon shield once more", *Classical Antiquity* vol. 4(2), pp. 121-126, with earlier bibliography.

3. Red figure lid of pyxis (box)

D. 7.3 cm

Galloping horse.

Attic, late 5th c. BC

UCD 194, *PRIA*, no. 106 ; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 34:13.

This lid belonged to a small jewelry box of a woman, possibly from a prosperous family. In the classical period, horse ownership and breeding were a privilege of the rich. Their social significance is clearly documented



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in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, where the breeding, morphology and methods of training and use of horses are discussed at length. Horse-back racing (*kalpe*) as a sport was introduced as an event at the Olympic games in the 33rd Olympiad (648 BC), but never became as popular as chariot racing.

4. Black figure neck-amphora

H. 43 cm

Side A, departure of a warrior for the battlefield in the presence of chariot. The charioteer is mounted on the chariot and a Scythian archer stands behind the chariot facing left towards the charioteer. To the right, a woman stands at the head of the horses.

Side B, Dionysos with maenads and satyrs.

Attic, about 515 BC.

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland, NMI 1921.93; *PRIA*, no. 332.

The well equipped hoplite at the foreground is the ideal warrior of the 6th century BC, who is departing for war, presumably in the company of the Scythian archer. The chariot is added to enhance the meaning and add a heroic and aristocratic element to the scene. The Greeks associated chariots with the heroic activities of the past. Homer had dedicated a large number of lines to chariots in his epics, both their use in war and in racing. In the classical age, the war chariot was no longer used for war. But chariots featured in festivals and particularly in elite competitive racing. What is illustrated here is indeed a racing chariot, a *tethrippon* (four-horse drawn chariot). The charioteer stands upright holding the reins and dressed in his belted long white tunic. The *tethrippon* race was the most popular of the several equestrian events included in the Olympic games (it was introduced in 680 BC at the 25th Olympiad). The race with two-horse chariots (the *synoris*) was not introduced until 408 BC, although it was most likely older.

The chariot in combination with the hoplite serves to underscore the connection between war and sport (see also no. 15) as well as to exalt the social status of the warrior. Although it was the charioteers who drove the chariots to victory, the glory was reserved for the owner of the chariot.

The Scythian archer may also reflect contemporary life. The popularity of Scythian archers in scenes of battle or in association with hoplites between 530 and 500 BC (which also appear on sides 2 of nos 15 and 22) is thought to reflect the hiring of these foreigners by the tyrant Peisistratus, although they are now known to have appeared in art before his time.



4



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Select bibliography: Greenhalch, P.A.L. 2000. *Early Greek Warfare. Horsemen and chariots in the Homeric and Archaic Age*, London etc; Ministry of Culture and Hellenic Committee, I.C.O.M. 1988. *Mind and Body*, pp. 103-104, 292-99.

5. Black figure lekythos

H. 17.3 cm

Chariot scene with women.

Attic, about 480 BC

UCD 129. *PRIA*, no. 964; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 17: 6-8

The scene of a four-horse chariot with women is suggestive of a festival at which women would have taken part. The chariot is a common theme on black figure lekythoi, which were buried with the dead, so it may also have some funerary connotations.

6. Red figure bell-krater

H. 37 cm

Side A, a scene from a hunt. A young man, partly nude, is sitting on an imaginary rock holding double spears. He is approached from the right by a woman holding a scepter (a goddess?), and on either side by three other male and female figures. All the figures wear leafy wreaths with berries, and their garments are decorated with florals.

Side B, three draped male figures.

Attic, late 5th c. BC. By the Dublin Painter.

UCD 195. *PRIA*, no.1042; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 27, 1-3; *LIMC VII Procris* 6.

The seated young hunter is identified as the main character by his large size and central position. Tillyard (1923) had suggested that the vase depicts the Athenian hero Kephalos, who had been hunting on Mt Hymettus when he was discovered by his wife Procris. She erroneously suspected him of adultery, and on that occasion killed him with her arrows after mistaking him for a stag. The iconography is not close to the myth, however, and John Beazley left the interpretation open. It is likely that the scene does not refer to a specific myth.

Scenes of hunting, including images of hunters themselves like here, are very popular in ancient Greek art. Although hunting had long stopped being an activity essential for subsistence, it remained of cultural importance in Greek society because of its heroic nature. In the classical age it was an occupation of the male aristocracy. Like athletics it was regarded as preparation for military training, particularly in some Greek states (Sparta, Crete). Anthropological and structuralist studies have shown that the hunt was also used in art as a metaphor. The theme



6

exalted the adolescent to adulthood and stood for erotic courtship (see also no. 24). In the scene on this vase an amorous element is introduced through gesture and the eye-contact between the heroic hunter and the female figure (goddess?) to his right.

Bibliography: Barringer, J. 2001. *The Hunt in Ancient Greece*, Baltimore; Tillyard, E.M.W. 1923. *The Hope Vases*, Cambridge.

7. Red figure bell-krater

H. 31.5 cm

Nike leading a white bull. Two partly nude torch-bearers hailing ahead.

Attic, about 375 BC

UCD 197. *PRIA* no. 1043; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 26:3-4.

The scene is thought to illustrate a sacrifice at a religious festival which involved torch-racing, most likely the Athenian festival of the city Panathenaea. The torch relay race took place on the evening before the main event of this festival, the grand parade. The torch race was part of an all-night (*pannychos*) celebration. This was a two-mile long race, starting from the altar of Eros outside the Dipylon gate and ending at the Acropolis following the same route as the parade. In the 5th century the participants were four runners from each of the ten Athenian tribes. The object was to win the race without causing the torch to go out. The winning tribe received a bull and 100 drachmas. The winner was allowed to light the fire for the sacrifice of a bull.

The scene depicted here may be a conflation of two episodes of the events (athletes in the torch race and the bull sacrifice). The figure of Nike may stand for the winning athlete who will sacrifice the bull.

The nudity of the male characters on this and some of the other vases in this exhibition, usually known by the generic term "heroic nudity", needs some comment. A thorough study of nudity by Herwit (2007) has shown that the term includes different nudities in Greek art, with different roles (some of them contradictory), the meaning and significance of which is determined by the context. They include a nudity of youth, a "democratic nudity," and a nudity of status or class, from among a longer list. The nudity of athletes is the only real-life nudity as they did in fact train and compete naked.

Neils, J. (ed) 1996. *Worshipping Athena*, Madison; Parke, H.W. 1977, *Festivals of the Athenians*, London; Herwit, J. 2007, "The trouble with Dexileos", *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 111(1), 35-60.

8. Red figure lekythos

H. 15.5 cm

A Nike flies over a tymbos (burial mound) holding a sash.

About 460 BC

UCD 12, *PRIA*, no.1046; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 31, 1-2.

Nike was the goddess of victory, whose role was as mediator of success between gods and humans in all their earthly undertakings, particularly

war and agonistic competitions. Nike was depicted in ancient Greek vase painting with a variety of attributes: wreaths or sashes for the crowning of a victor, bowls and cups for libations, or a lyre for the celebration of victory in a song competition. The burial mound on this vase could be assumed to be the tomb of a 'heroic' warrior or a victorious athlete.



7



8

13

9. Black figure neck-amphora

H. 45.3 cm

Side A, boxers, with trainer on the left holding his switch (*rhabdos*) and another boxer on the left waiting his turn.

Side B, a *kormos*. A girl dancing between two youths.

Attic, about 510 BC. Leagros group.

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland. NMI 1921.94. *PRIA*, no. 333.

On Side A, there is a realistic scene of boxers exchanging punches, their fists clenched. The boxer to the left has punched the jaw of the boxer to the right, who appears to have opened his mouth in pain (?). As this vase and many other similar representations show, blows to the head were an essential tactic of boxing. The striking arm was usually extended as a guard, but was also used to punch. There were no rounds. The game continued until either it was a knockout or one of the boxer acknowledged defeat. The boxers in action have their hands wrapped with leather thongs (*himantes*) serving to protect their knuckles. The athlete waiting for his turn holds his *himas* in one hand. This is a common representation in art, which suggests that the hands were wrapped just before the fight (like boxers today would slip on their boxing gloves) although the thongs may have been as long as 4 m long! By the middle of the 4th century BC the soft *himas* was replaced by a hard (padded) one, which protected the hand better but caused more damage to the opponent. The switch (*rhabdos*) held by the trainer was cut from a *lygos* (a type of willow) bush, and was actually used to discipline athletes, as evidenced by both visual material and textual references. The athletes on this vase are muscular and rather overweight, a standard representation of boxers in art.

Select bibliography: Poliakoff, M.B. 1995, *Combat sports in the ancient world: Competition, violence, and culture*, pp. 68-88; Miller, S. 2004, *Ancient Greek Athletics*, pp. 46-60.

10. Red figure cup

H. 10 cm; D. of rim 27.3 cm

Interior, discus thrower, holding discus and sponge. A pick axe on the ground.

Sides A and B, athletes and trainers.

Attic, about 500 BC

NMI 1880.1101 . *PRIA*, no. 458.

This vase has a thematically unified iconography on both sides of the exterior and on the interior surface, which is athletics. The nude athlete



9



10



10a

on the *tondo* is about to compete in the discus, or has already done so, but may also be participating in the *pentathlon* (five event competition), which included discus and wrestling; the pick-axe, which is shown on the ground, was an implement often shown on images of wrestling (pick-axes were used to turn the soil before the event). The sponge, which he holds in his left hand, is wrapped around his *aryballos*, the small bottle used to store oil that athletes spread on their body before training or competing. After the event the oil was removed from the body, along with dirt and sweat, using a curved metal implement called the *strygil*.

The two vases displayed here are but a sample from a large body of vases illustrating sport in museums worldwide. Along with the images with indirect references to sport, of which our nos 4, 15, 17, 18 and 19 are clear examples, they serve to illustrate the exalted importance of athleticism in Greek society. Images of athletics on drinking cups, which, like this one, would have been used at *symposia*, convey clear messages as to the social significance of athletics.

Select bibliography: Ministry of Culture and Hellenic Committee, I.C.O.M. 1988. *Mind and Body: athletic contests in Ancient Greece*, pp. 99-100, 257-265.

Hero of the Past - Heroic Warrior of the Present

"I will speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and seemly that now, when we are lamenting the dead, a tribute should be paid to their memory. There has never been a time when they did not inhabit this land, which by their valour they will have handed down from generation to generation ..."
(from Pericles' funeral oration, Thucydides)

The heroes of the Greeks had risked their lives for honour and glory. They were models of behaviour for later generations. A heroic ideology is inherent in scenes of war in Greek art, which often relies on a deliberate ambiguity between epic hero and contemporary warrior in order to convey the message.

11. Corinthian bronze helmet

H. 22 cm

6th century BC or later

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland, NMI 1888:1061. Once in the Landsboro Collection, acquired by the NMI with other military items, some of 16th and 17th c. AD date.

The Corinthian helmet was the helmet most commonly used by the hoplite soldiers in both the archaic and the classical periods. This helmet can be classified as middle Corinthian, a type in use from the 6th century onwards. Although the late Corinthian helmet, which was introduced in the 5th – 4th century, showed several advancements in technology, many hoplites continued to wear helmets of middle Corinthian style.

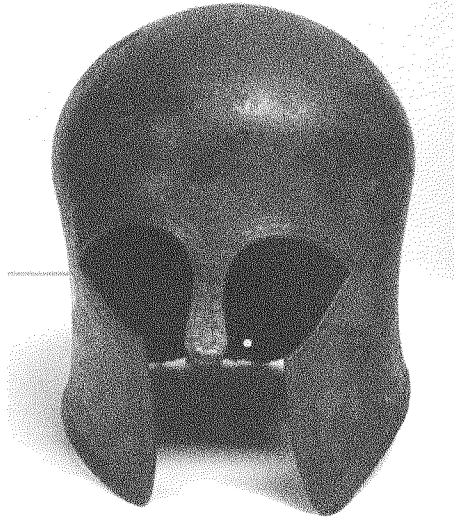
The Corinthian helmet was beaten out of a single piece of bronze. The lack of any joints made for an incredibly strong helmet, but also presented some disadvantages in war: vision and hearing were significantly decreased in favour of better all round protection. For this reason hoplites, when not in actual combat, often wore the Corinthian helmet resting on the top of the head, off the face (as seen on the warriors on no. 14). Helmets of this type were lined with leather for added protection and a degree of comfort. The lining of this particular helmet would have been glued in place as, unlike on early Corinthian helmets, there are no holes allowing for it to be sewn in place.

This example survives in remarkable condition. The four holes at the top of the helmet were most likely deliberately bored to allow for the dedication of the helmet at a sanctuary. Unlike this helmet, in most cases

where Corinthian helmets are dedicated, the cheek pieces and nose guard are bent out so as to render the helmet unusable in war.

Peter Myler

Select bibliography: Snodgrass, A. 1999. *Arms and Armour of the Greeks*, London; Wary, J., 1980. *Warfare in the Classical World*, London.



11

12. Warrior's *mitra* (abdominal plate)

H. 16 cm

6th century BC

UCD R2062. Replica in plaster.

Abdominal plates, serving to protect the warrior's lower abdomen, were commonly used with Cretan armour, but are rare elsewhere in Greece. This example is decorated with the protomes of two winged horses.

The most famous winged horse in antiquity was Pegasus, but there were a number of other winged horses in Greek mythology. The hero Pelops, one of the supposed legendary founders of the Olympic games, according to one version of the myth, won the chariot race against

Oenomeos, king of Pisa, with a chariot drawn by winged horses, a gift from Poseidon. The horses depicted on this piece of armour may have been used as a metaphor for the speed and skill of the warrior.



12

13. Black figure amphora

H. 43.5 cm

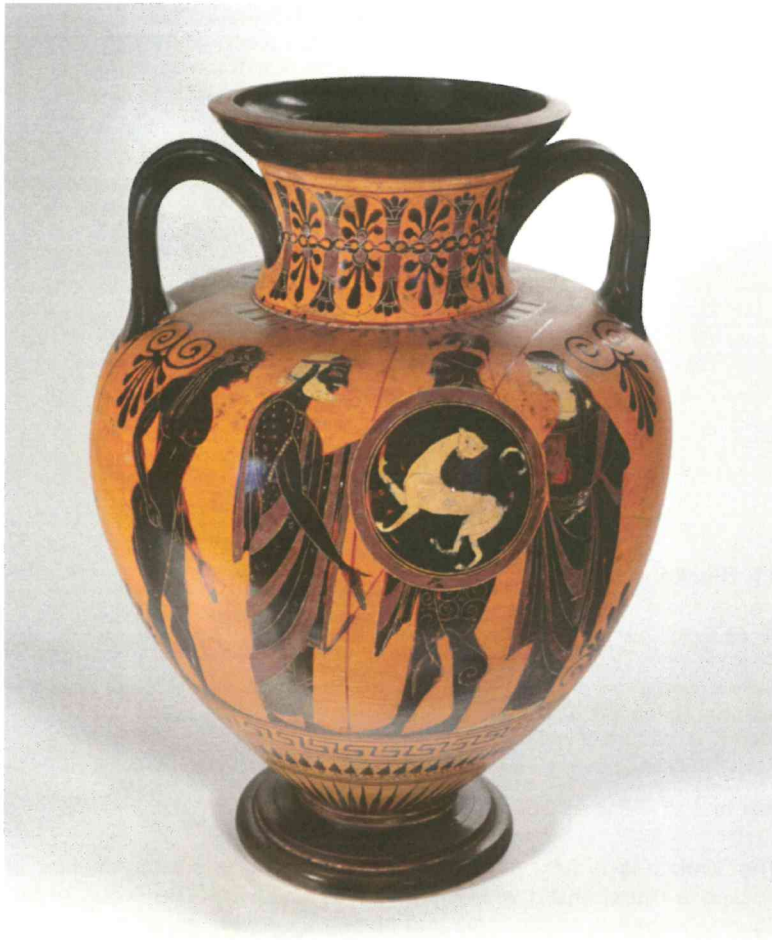
Side A, departure of a warrior for the battlefield between an older man and a woman. To the left, a nude male stands as observer in the scene.

Side B, departure of warriors on horseback with two women in attendance.

Attic, 6th c. BC

NMI 1921.97. *PRIA* no. 327.

The warrior is a fully dressed hoplite, wearing a crested helmet and holding a round shield with a panther as a device. The group of three figures (warrior between male and female figures) is canonical in scenes of 'departure of the warrior'. In these scenes the white-haired man facing the warrior is usually taken to be the father, and the woman the wife or mother. The male figure here holds his right hand in a gesture showing that he may be advising the warrior, or approving of the occasion. Vases with departure of the warrior themes on at least one side of the vase are very common in the 6th century. Warfare was very much part of life and often had traumatic consequences for the young males and their families. The panther depicted on the shield may have been intended as a protector of the warrior. There is a heroic element to this scene, conveyed through the size and aristocratic appearance of the hoplite, which recall representations of the departure of named epic heroes in art, for example the departure of Hector or the arming of Achilles. The deliberate ambiguity of the unnamed figures may have been intended to inspire the hoplite to emulate the epic heroes.



13

The nude and wreathed spectator, who stands somewhat apart from the group, is represented as a *kouros*, which suggests that he is an aristocrat. He could be an idealized heroized ancestor (condoning the departure with a similar gesture to that of the father) or a "real time" figure. His physical appearance suggests an athlete and his wreath a winning athlete. The link between warfare and athletics, the two elite activities of young Athenians, is frequently made in art (see no.4). Such images also make explicit the relevance of athletics as training for war.

20

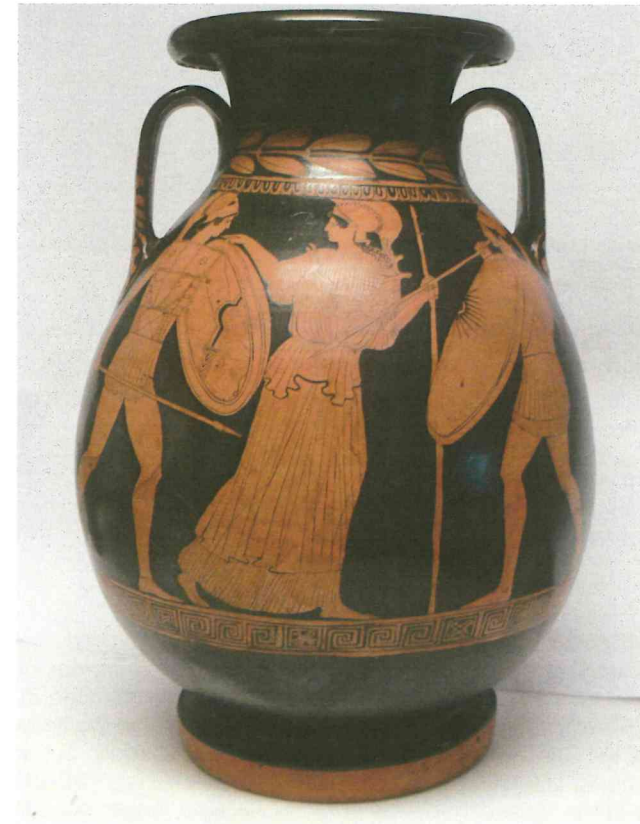
14. Red figure pelike

H. 44.5 cm

Side A, armed Athena separates two warriors. Both youths wear elaborate linen cuirasses. Their crested Corinthian helmets are "at rest" and they both hold spears.
Side B, three draped male figures.

Attic, 440-30 BC. Polygnotan workshop.

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland, NMI 1021.89. *PRIA* no. 420.



14

The scene on Side A of the vase is rare. The two warriors are fine examples of hoplites of the middle of the 5th century BC. They wear cuirasses of the type which replaced the metal armour in Greek warfare in the later part of the 6th century BC. These cuirasses were made of many layers of linen glued together to form a stiff shirt. The fan-looking

21

elements below the waist represent the lower part of the cuirass, which was made of strips to allow movement. The cuirass of the warrior to the left also shows the elaborate long shoulder straps, which were tied above the waist.

It is not clear whether the warriors were intended to be contemporary hoplites or heroes of the past since the figures are not labelled. Clearly the warriors have stopped fighting or are being prevented from engaging, presumably due to the intervention of Athena. The presence of the goddess suggests that a scene from the heroic age may be alluded to. Divine intervention in the affairs of the heroes features frequently in Greek literature, and in the context of war it is particularly evident in Homer. Athena's involvement in the Trojan war on behalf of the Greeks makes this scene particularly relevant to the epics. The young warrior to the left, on whose shoulder Athena places her arm tenderly, could be Achilles or another Greek hero. It is possible that this represents a quarrel in the ranks of the Greeks, but since Greeks and Trojans were represented in the same way in Greek art, a Trojan warrior cannot be excluded. Either way the scene seems to incorporate a moralizing element intended for the contemporary warrior, possibly the respect that should be shown to the will of the gods, and in the particular case of Athens, to the city's patron goddess.

15. Black figure neck-amphora

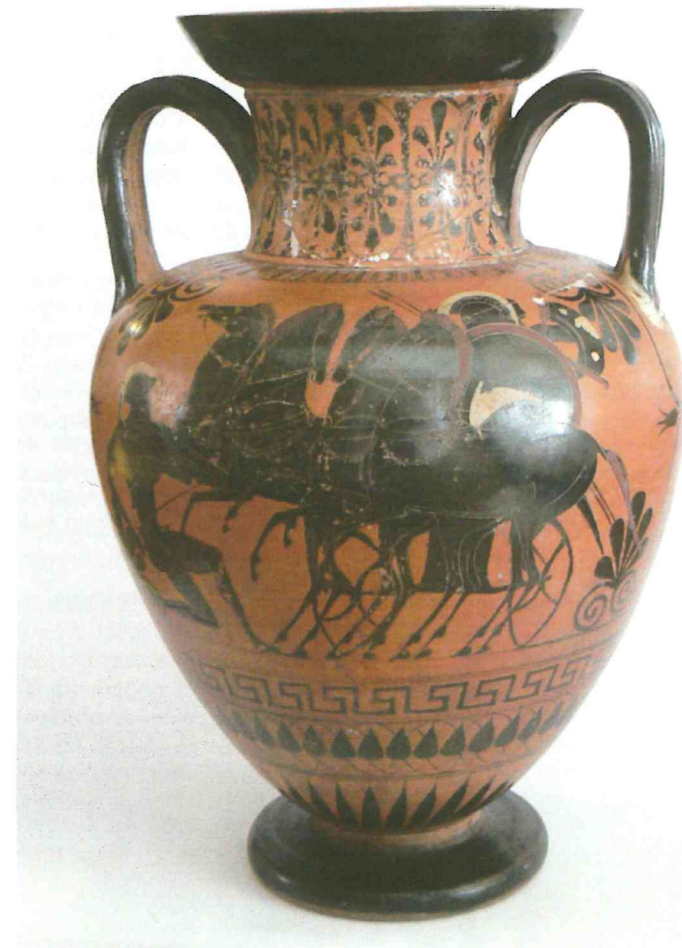
H. 39.6 cm

A chariot at full speed, mounted by a charioteer and a hoplite, runs down a warrior

Attic, about 520 BC

NMI 1903.316, *PRIA*, no. 331.

Unlike the chariot on no. 4, this four-horse chariot is clearly used in a scene of warfare. The combination of charioteer and warrior on board reflects Homeric descriptions of the use of chariots, although in Homer chariots were mainly used to taxi the warriors to the battlefield. The Greeks of the Bronze Age had used two-horse war chariots, but both two- and four-horse chariots are described in Homer. The war chariot was an archaism in the classical age, as chariots were no longer used in battle. The model for the vehicle depicted on this as well as other scenes of warfare involving chariots on Greek art is the contemporary racing chariot (see no. 4). But the character is clearly heroic. It is interesting to note that the scene on the other side of this vase illustrates a standard departure of a hoplite for battle (as on no. 13), the two scenes obviously set in paradigmatic relationship to one another. The real-time hoplite warrior leaving for war is elevated to the status of the chariot-using heroes of the past.



16. Chalcidian bronze helmet

H. 25 cm

Late 5th c. or later

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland. NMI 1947:32. Gift to the NMI from Edward H. Coulter Esq., Co. Wexford. Allegedly found in a local scrapyards.

This helmet is of the Chalcidian style, which was favoured in hoplite warfare throughout the classical period. It clearly has its origins in the

much more common Corinthian helmet. The Chalcidian helmet reflects the effort to allow for a better use of the senses in battle. Most notable amongst the changes introduced is the addition of large openings for the ears, the eventual disappearance of the nose piece and the curved nature of the cheek pieces. This particular example has no nose piece and preserves the remains of rivets for the attachment of hinged cheek pieces. For these reasons it fits comfortably into the Attic subset of the Chalcidian style, which was believed to be favoured among the *poleis* of the region. The addition of relief “rams’ horns” in *repoussé* style strengthens the possibility of an Attic origin for this helmet.

Although the Chalcidian helmet was in use from the 6th century onwards, the hinged cheek pieces, decorative “rams horns” and cranial ridge for extra protection would indicate a date around the late 5th to 4th century. Other variants of the Chalcidian helmet are known from Southern Italy and Sicily, where this style was favoured. The type was used there up until the late 2nd century AD, and highlights its success and popularity among the troops.

The type of damage to the rear of the helmet suggests that a spear butt (of a Greek *dori* or similar) was used and that, if it occurred during battle, the victim would have been lying face down.

Peter Myler

Bibliography: see no. 11.



16

The Heroes of Myth

17. Black figure neck-amphora

H. 25.2 cm

Herakles and the Nemean lion, wrestling. Herakles' bow, quiver and clothing are hanging on a tree.

End of 6th c. BC

UCD 103. *PRIA*, no. 959; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 13.

The killing of the Nemean lion was the first of the twelve labours that Herakles had to perform for the king of Tiryns, Eurystheus. It is thought that the lion skin that Herakles usually wore as a panoply in his other deeds was that of the Nemean lion, the skin of which was said to be impenetrable by weapons.

According to the myth, Herakles choked the lion to death. The vases showing Herakles fighting with the Nemean lion usually show him using wrestling tackles. Attacking the opponent from the front in a waist hold and attempting to hoist the legs into the air, which seems to be what Herakles was doing in a second stage of this fight, was used by actual athletes and is represented on scenes of actual wrestling. The formula used to show the attack on the lion emphasizes the status of Herakles as the supreme athlete of the ancient Greeks, one of the alleged founders of the Olympic games. Wrestling was one of the most highly regarded sports in ancient Greece, and was traditionally also associated with the qualities necessary for good leadership (see also no. 12).

Select bibliography: Poliakoff, M.B. 1995, *Combat sports in the ancient world: Competition, violence, and culture*, pp. 68-88; Miller, S. 2004, *Ancient Greek Athletics*, pp. 23-53.

18. Black figure lekythos,

H. 27.9 cm

Herakles fighting Triton; Nereus is watching and a Nereid flees to the left.

Attic, about 515 BC

NMI 1920.315. *PRIA*, 338.



17



18

The subject matter on this black-figured lekythos is Herakles fighting the sea monster Triton, who was a half-man half-fish being residing at the bottom of the sea. Triton's representation was identical to one of the appearances of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea, who was a fully human being but had the power to transform himself. Herakles attacked Nereus, who had refused him information about how to get to the garden of the Hesperides, and Nereus tried to escape by transforming himself into water and fire. The representation of Triton, who did not possess the power of transformation, replaced in popularity the theme of Nereus in art around the mid 6th century. The old Nereus often appears as an observer, as he does on this vase. Unlike his fight with Nereus, Herakles' fight with Triton is not known from any literary sources. Various interpretations for the popularity of the theme have been put forward. One explanation, based on the fact that the images show Herakles wrestling with Triton using an athlete's tackle, is the great interest in athletics at the time, with Herakles displaying his strength and skill as the supreme athlete like on no. 17, but using a different wrestling tackle.

19. Black figure cup

H. 8.2 cm, D. 22.1 cm

The two sides have similar scenes: Herakles (or Theseus) is attacking the bull head-on, with two women spectators on either side.

Attic, about 480-470 BC

UCD 113. *PRIA*, no. 973; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 20: 1-5.

Both Herakles and Theseus fought the famous bull of Minos. This was a beautiful and very strong animal, a gift from Poseidon to Minos, the legendary king of Crete. However, Minos broke his word to the god, refusing to sacrifice it to him. Poseidon punished Minos by making the king's wife Pasiphae fall in love with the bull, giving birth to the monstrous Minotaur, who was half man half bull. Later Herakles fetched the bull from Crete as his seventh labour, and brought it to Greece, by riding on its back. But later Heracles released the bull and it roamed the countryside until it arrived at Marathon in Attica. The young Athenian prince Theseus finally captured the bull (renamed the Marathonian Bull) and brought it to Athens where he sacrificed it.

The iconography on this vase is rather confusing as to whether Herakles or Theseus is represented. Columns usually appear in the scenes of Theseus killing the Minotaur and stand for the palace of Minos or the labyrinth itself. But it is possible that Herakles may be intended, as the cloak of the hero, which is hanging from a branch, resembles a lion skin.

20. Black figure cup, UCD 104

H. 8.1 cm

Similar scenes are depicted on both sides of this cup: the sphinx between two male spectators, in silhouette style.

Attic, 520-510 BC

UCD 104. *PRIA* no 974; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 21:1-3.

This is miniature art, but the sphinx is recognizable by its body, which is that of a lion, and its head, which is that of a woman. On one side she has both legs on the ground, while on the other she has one leg raised as if talking. The well-known myth about Oedipus and the riddle of the sphinx who plagued Thebes was told by the lyric poet Alkiesipiades (3rd c. BC), but appears in Greek art already in the 6th c. BC and continued until the 4th c. BC. The image is unlike the canonical representation of Oedipus visiting the sphinx. On the canonical representation, Oedipus is shown as a traveller wearing a travellers' hat, and the sphinx sits on a column or a rock. On this scene there is no differentiation between the two cloaked spectators on either side. It is likely therefore that the images

on this vase do not relate to the myth, although the raised leg of the sphinx on the viewing side does suggest that she is engaged in conversation with the spectator facing her.



19



20

21. Black figure neck-amphora

H. 43 cm

Side A, Herakles and Geryon.
Side B, Dionysus, satyrs and maenads.

Attic, about 535 BC or a little earlier

NMI 1921.95. *PRIA*, no. 328.

The scene of Herakles fighting with the three-bodied giant Geryon was extremely popular on vases in the second half of the 6th century BC. Herakles confronted Geryon as part of his 10th labour, which brought him to the Red island at the western end of the world. The object of the fight was the taking of Geryon's cattle. Although representations of the myth start in the 7th century, the popularity of the episode on vase painting in the following century has been attributed to a poem narrating the myth, which was composed by the Sicilian lyric poet Stesichoros at about the time that the images begin to proliferate. The poem would have been performed at festivals and other public occasions, thus influencing the artists. Over 200 vases with representations of Herakles fighting Geryon exist worldwide, two of which are in Dublin (in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland) and are displayed here.

Comparisons between the way Herakles is shown killing the monster on scenes depicted on vases and the narrative in the poem (see Shapiro 1994) reveal both similarities and differences. In the poem, Herakles attacks the monster with his bow and arrow, but the club (as on both Dublin vases) and the sword are also shown as his weapons in art. While this is an apparent contradiction, it has been pointed out that the different weapons may reflect different stages of the fight, which have not survived in the poem. According to the myth, the herdsman was killed before the fight. Here he lies on the ground as on many other images, but the savage dog Orthos, the mortal brother of the guardian of the Underworld, Kerberos, usually shown already dead, is absent. Another reason for the popularity of the myth on vases, however, may be the connection of the myth with death (the vases are normally found in tombs): Herakles' 10th labour, like his 11th, the "Apples of the Hesperides", takes place at the edge of the world and anticipates his descent to the Underworld and subsequent rise to immortality.

Select bibliography: Schefold, K. 1992 (1978), *Gods and Heroes in Late Archaic Art*, Cambridge, pp.121-129; Shapiro, A. 1994, *Myth into Art*, 71-77.



21



23

22. Black figure neck-amphora

H. 39.3 cm

Side A, Ajax carries the body of Achilles off the battlefield. A woman steps away looking back at the scene, and a small partly armed *eidolon* is pictured below.
Side B, departure of a warrior with a Scythian archer.

Attic, 520-15 BC. Circle of the Antimenes painter.

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland, NMI 1921.91. *PRIA* 329.

When Achilles was killed by Paris, his body was rescued by Ajax, after considerable struggle. This episode of the Trojan War took place after the events in the Iliad. It was recounted in the lost epic, the *Aethiopis*, which is thought to have been composed in the 7th century BC. The rescue first appears in art in the same century, but the most famous early representation is a small drawing on the handle of the krater known as the François vase, dating from 570 BC. On the vase illustrated here, dating from about half a century later a different formula is used. Ajax is shown carrying the body of Achilles over his back, bending forward under the oppressive weight. The formula, which was probably introduced by the master of black figure, Exekias, makes for a much more realistic representation than that on the François vase, which shows Ajax running regardless of the weight. The same schema (*formula*) was also adapted to show Achilles carrying the dead Amazon queen Penthesileia off the battlefield, as well as Aeneas carrying his old father Anchises away from Troy. In combination with the image on side B, the vase provides a unified narrative on the theme of war.

The Antimenes painter painted at least one more amphora on the theme of Ajax carrying Achilles, which is today in The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (Albersmeir 2009, p. 241 no.60).

Select bibliography: Albersmeir, S. (ed.) 2009. *Heroes, Mortals and Myths in Ancient Greece*, New Haven and London; Gantz, T. 1993. *Early Greek Myth, A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, vol. 2, 629; *LIMC*, Achilleus, 860-876; Woodford, S. and M. Loudon, 1980. "Two Trojan themes: the iconography of Ajax carrying Achilles and Aeneas carrying Anchises in Black figure", in *American Journal of Archaeology* no. 84, 25-40.

23. Black figure lekythos

H. 27.3 cm

Herakles fighting Geryon. Two female figures on either side.

Attic, about 500 BC. Probably by the Gela Painter.

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland, NMI 1917. 35. *PRIA*, 341.

Only Herakles and Geryon are relevant to the myth, but the female spectators add to the drama. Herakles is shown striding forward and attacking the giant with his club. For comments, see no. 21.



22



22a

Heroes, Transgressions and Moral Lessons

Selflessness and courage define the modern-day hero. Not so the ancient hero, who is defined by his death. The heroes of Greek antiquity earned their status through having experienced mortality. As mortals they had been liable to transgressions, often of the kind that tested the limits of moral behaviour: adultery, rape and murder. The artists were attracted to these stories, and often used them for didactic and moralizing purposes.

24. Black figure calyx-krater

H. 37.7 cm

On side A, a youth, possibly Theseus, striding in pursuit of a woman, who is recoiling. Another woman is taken aback by the event, holding up her hands in horror. Side B, three draped youths.

Attic, mid 5th century BC. Near the Painter of the Louvre Centauromachy.

NMI 1917.42. On loan from the National Museum of Ireland. *PRIA*, no 428. Ex Thomas Hope collection.

The image on Side A may represent Theseus in pursuit of one of the women he abducted as told at length by Plutarch, for example:

'Furthermore, the transgressions of Theseus in his rapes of women admit of no plausible excuse. This is true, first, because there were so many; for he carried off Ariadne, Antiope, Anaxo of Troezen, and at last Helen, when he was past his prime and she had not reached her prime but was an unripe child . . .' (From Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, 'Theseus')

Vase painters devised a way to show aggressive erotic desire leading to abduction and rape through the 'amorous' (sic) pursuit. The pursuer, whether god, hero or mortal, is shown running after the object of his desire. Here, the wreathed young man wearing a *chlamys* and holding spears is portrayed as a hunter hunting his quarry; the connections between hunting and erotic desire in classical myth is well known (compare no. 6).

See also nos. 26, 27 and 28.

Select bibliography: LIMC Theseus, p. 245.XII; Osborne, R. 1996. "Desiring women in Athenian pottery", in N.B. Kamden (ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece and Italy*, Cambridge and New York, pp. 65-80. Sourvinou-Inwood, C. 1987. "A series of erotic pursuits: images and meanings", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 107, 131-153. See also bibliography under no. 27.



24



26

25. Red figure bell krater, UCD 570

H. 28 cm.

Side A, Eos and Kephalos (or Tithonos)

Side B, three draped figures

Attic, about 460 BC

PRIA, no. 1044; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 26:1-2.

Eos, the winged goddess of dawn, runs after a youth, who is striding away looking back. Many restored gaps.

For comments and bibliography on the theme, see no. 27.

26. Red figure bell-krater

H. 33.5 cm

Side A, Achilles and Penthesilea. Achilles drags the dead Amazon queen off the scene of the battle with her horse fleeing to the left.

Side B, youth and woman.

Campanian, about 340 BC. By the Libation Painter.

UCD 1487. Ex Thomas Hope collection. *PRIA* no. 505; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 37:1-4; Trendall, A.D. 1973, *The Red Figure Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily* no. 3/335, pl. 41; *LIMC I*, pl. 465 and 235.

The story of the killing of Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, at the hands of Achilles, featured in the lost poem of the epic cycle, the *Aethiopis*. The event occurred after the death of Hector, when the Amazons arrived in support of the Trojans. Achilles fought with the Amazon queen and killed her. Following the killing of Penthesilea, Achilles was taunted by his fellow warrior Thersites for allegedly being in love with her, and Achilles slew him too, causing riots in the Myrmidons' ranks.

The theme of Achilles and Penthesilea appears in art in the 6th century BC and was long-lasting because of the pathos of the story. The most common iconography is the moment of the killing, with Achilles plunging his sword into the Amazon's neck and the two looking into each other's eyes. An alternative representation shows Achilles carrying the body of Penthesilea from the scene of the battle on his back, like Ajax carrying the dead Achilles on no. 22. The UCD vase, which shows Achilles dragging Penthesilea, is a unique representation.

In this episode of the epic, Achilles was guilty of major transgressions: falling in love with the enemy, salvaging the corpse of an enemy (the

dead enemies would normally be left for the birds and dogs), and killing one's own companion were perceived as major transgressions.

Gantz, T. 1993. *Early Greek Myth, A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, vol. 2, 621-622.

27. Black figure column-krater

H. 34 cm

Side A, The goddess of dawn, Eos, hands outstretched, is in pursuit of the hero Kephalos (?), who runs to the right, head turned back, holding his lesson book. A companion runs to the left.

Side B, three women probably in domestic quarters; the two on the right bring casket and plemochoe (a libation vessel) to the one standing to the left, probably the woman of the house.

Attic, about 450 BC. From the Mannerist workshop.

On loan from the National Museum of Ireland. NMI 1921.90. *PRIA* 426.

The image on side A of this vase, which is similar to the image on vase no. 25, reflects the popularity of the myth of Eos at the height of Athenian democracy. The winged goddess of dawn was infamous for her erotic desire for young mortals. Her victims included the Athenian hero Kephalos, son of Hermes, and the Trojan prince Tithonos, son of Laomedon. Both became her lovers, fathering a number of children. In both cases the outcome of these affairs was disastrous for the heroes: Kephalos was accidentally killed by his wife Procris who, while hunting, mistook him for a stag. Tithonos, on the other hand, according to the Hymn to Aphrodite, was granted immortality by Zeus at Eos' request; but Eos forgot to ask for eternal youth, and Tithonos became increasingly old and feeble, eventually being locked up in a room by Eos.

In the conventional iconography the myth is conceptualized in the form of the 'amorous pursuit', with Eos running behind the youths, as in the case of the two vases here. As mentioned above (no. 24), the iconography is a metaphor for love and erotic desire. The two young men are not easily distinguishable on the depictions. Although there is some evidence that a youth shown with a lyre is intended to be Tithonos, who was a schoolboy, other youths too, like the one depicted here carry lesson books. Rather the attributes seem to define a youth or ephebe. The youths are usually shown turning back gazing into the goddess' eyes, having fallen under her spell.

The popularity of the myth of Eos in art may be due to its moralizing quality. The visual representations would warn young men of the disastrous consequences of sexual desire for women. On this vase, the contrast between the image on side A, and the aggressive behaviour of the female goddess, with dire consequences for the young male, and the scene on side B, showing women holding objects that define accepted

female tasks, are set in paradigmatic relationship. Women could be dangerous to men if, like the goddess, they engaged in behaviour other than what was socially acceptable for their sex.

Select bibliography: Dipla, A. "Eos and the youth: a case of inverted roles", *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, vol. 9(2), pp. 109-133; Cohen, A. 1996. "Portrayals of abductions in Greek art: rape or metaphor?", in N. Kampen (ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Art*, Cambridge, 117-135.



25

28. Red figure pelike

H. 21.8 cm

On side A, a woman is chasing the man on side B.

Attic, about 450-25 BC

NMI 1903.515. *PRIA* no. 421.

The scene on this vase is similar in subject matter to that of sides A of vases nos 24, 25 and 27, and expresses the same preoccupations about the dangers of female sexuality and unacceptable social behaviour. Here, the images on the two sides should be viewed as one scene. The woman on side A, her short hair and exposed breasts defining her as of "ill repute", chases after an ephebe, who is carrying his pipes in a leather case, a symbol of his musical education. This vase is not illustrated.



27



27a

The Greek Heroes: A Miscellany

29 and 30. Parthenon frieze, section from N. and S. sides

Miniature replica by J. Henning (19th c)

These plaster casts of the Parthenon frieze, by a famous cast maker of the 19th century, which replicate the scenes of parts of the frieze in an imaginative way, are a reminder that the enduring interpretation of the frieze is of great relevance to the topic of this exhibition. This interpretation, first put forward by Stuart and Revett (1790), according to which the frieze represents a panathenaic procession, was further elaborated by John Boardman, who suggested that the cavalry portrayed the heroization of the *marathonomachoi*, the hoplites who fell at the battle of Marathon in 490 BC.

Select bibliography: Boardman, J., 1985. *The Parthenon and its Sculptures*, University of Texas Press; Boardman, J. 1999. "The Parthenon Frieze: a closer look", *Revue Archéologique*, 99 (2), pp. 305–330.

31. Black figure amphora fragment

Charioteer and hoplite

Attic, about 530 BC

UCD 109. *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 14:4

32-34. Chariot teams

The sherds from black figure vases depict chariot teams and serve to highlight the popularity of the depiction of chariots, particularly four-horse drawn chariots, in Greek art, either as war machines or as racing chariots.

32 UCD 344; 33 UCD 370; 34 UCD 373. *CVA Ireland 1*: Pls 18 and 20.

35. Red figure krater fragment

Side A, Herakles and the Delphic tripod.

Attic, 420–410 BC

UCD 462/468. *PRIA*, nos 447/449; *CVA Ireland 1*, Pl. 29:5.

The image is greatly damaged and the figures are incomplete or headless. Herakles is shown in the centre moving towards the left, in possession of the tripod, his lion skin hanging on his left side. Apollo is running towards him from the right holding a leafy staff. Athena is just recognizable on the left holding her spear.

According to the myth, Herakles sought an oracle from the Pythia at Delphi. When Apollo refused on the grounds that he had committed a murder (he had murdered Iphitos), Herakles in anger tried to steal the Pythia's tripod. Apollo took it back, and according to one version of the myth, he pardoned Herakles. On black figure vases the most common representation of the myths shows Herakles and Apollo fighting for the possession of the tripod, but here Apollo is shown as having just arrived at the scene.



35

36. Black figure lekythos fragment

Herakles, preserved below the shoulder, holds a sword and attacks an unidentified opponent.

From Rhodes, 520-10 BC

UCD 350. *PRIA*, no. 995.

Coins (37-42)

Several Greek cities appropriated Herakles as a hero of their legendary past and placed his image on the obverse of their coins. The reasons varied. Stymphalos was believed to be the location of Herakles' labour against the Hydra, Thebes was the city where Herakles was allegedly conceived and had spent his youth, and Herakleia aimed at asserting its Greekness. All coins are electrotypes of the early 20th century.

37. Silver coin

Baby Herakles strangling the snakes

From Thebes, 426-381 BC

39. Silver coin

Herakles fighting the Cretan bull

From Selinus, 466-415 BC

38. Silver coin

Herakles strangling the Nemean lion

From Herakleia, ca. 432 BC

40. Silver coin

Herakles with club strangling a head of the hydra

From Phaestos

41. Silver coin

Herakles in lion's skin wielding club

From Stymphalos



Coins 42-46

The dominance of the head of Herakles on the Macedonian coins of the 4th c. BC was due to the claim of the Argead dynasty that they descended from the hero. Amyntas was the first to mint coins with Herakles' head, represented as bearded. The beardless Herakles appears on the coins of subsequent members of the family, including Alexander III (the Great), when coins with the head of Herakles were struck throughout the empire. It has been suggested that Alexander identified himself as Herakles on these coins, but this interpretation is not generally accepted. His successors, however, did portray the deified Alexander the Great as Herakles in his lion skin on their coinage, for example Lysimachos (Thrace) on no. 46. All coins except 44 (which is an original) are electrotypes of the early 20th century.

42. Silver coin

Herakles in a lion's skin

Amyntas II or III ca. 392–370/69 BC

44.. Silver coin

Head of Herakles

Alexander III (the Great) 336-323 BC

43. Silver coin

Head of Herakles

Alexander III (the Great) 336-323 BC

45. Silver coin

Head of Herakles

Alexander III (the Great) 336-323 BC

46. Silver coin

Alexander III (the Great) as Herakles

Lysimachus, 306-281 BC



Corrections

p. 4, line 13: were have been = were

p. 20, line 2: groups=group

p. 36, line 5: Black-figure column-krater = Red-figure column-krater

p. 30: (fig.) 22 =23

p.32: (fig.) 23 and 23a = 22 and 22a

p.33, line 7: Black figure calyx-krater = Red-figure calyx-krater

Preface	3
Introduction	4
The Trappings and Symbols of the Greek Hero	5
Hero of the Past-Heroic Warrior of the Present	17
The Heroes of Myth	25
Heroes, Transgressions and Moral Lessons	33
Greek Heroes: a Miscellany	39

Abbreviations

CVA Ireland 1: Johnston, A.W & C. Haywood 2000. *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum Ireland. University College Dublin, University College Cork, Dublin.*

LIMC: Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae, Zurich and Munich, 1981- .

PRIA: Johnston, A.W. 'A catalogue of Greek vases in public Collections in Ireland'. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* vol. 73 (C), 1973.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank: Mary Cahill, Assistant Keeper, the National Museum of Ireland, Antiquities division; Lorna Barnes and Nieves Fernandez, the National Museum of Ireland, Conservation Department. UCD Students: Michael Ann Bevivino, Maeve Mc Hugh, Peter Myler, Dominique Geary. All the students of GRC 20050 over the last five years. Work experience student, Craig Arnott (Wesley College). Eric Haywood (UCD School of Languages and Literatures).

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