

Agora

Issue 9

CLASSICS TO SHARE & ENJOY

Spring 2023

Agora has returned for its ninth issue, packed full of work great from our wonderful and hard-working Classics Ambassadors celebrate another successful six months at the LSA CA. From the role of empathy in Aeschylus' Persians to the problems surrounding the end of the Aeneid, we've got a great range of interests on display that you're guaranteed to love! Not to mention the latest Classical Crossword, with a chance to win a copy of Colm Tóibín's House of Names!

As usual, it's been an actionpacked season for us, with lots of fantastic speakers and events. In January we welcomed back President Michael Scott for his fascinating Presidential talk

on Machu Picchu, the 'Rome of South America', giving us a sneak peek into his upcoming book X Marks the Spot (and providing him with opportunity to indulge his obsession with Indiana Jones!). This was followed by a delicious dinner at Tiggis and our annual Classics quiz — a delightful evening, as always.

We have also had talks on a great variety of other engaging topics throughout the past few months, from Plato to Roman Britain to Egyptian hieroglyphs. We are never left without something new and exciting to learn speakers, from our testament to wonders of the Classical world and the success of our Association.

Another highlight of the season came in March, with the final of our 2023 Classics Competition, where four

students from across the country told us about the ancient discoveries that interest them the most. Author Bronwen Riley, who delivered our November lecture, was faced with a difficult choice between the finalists' erudite talks; after much deliberation, Imogen Reid was crowned winner for her presentation on the Cyrus Cylinder, while the People's Choice Award went to runner-up Elise Withey, who spoke about the discovery of the Epic of Gilgamesh. The Lancashire Award was presented to Lauren Aston.

On behalf of the LSA CA team, I hope that you have all had a fantastic season with us and that you enjoy this issue of *Agora*!

Declan Boyd, Editor

The final lines of the Aeneid

by Sophie Bassano

In this Issue:

The final lines of the Aeneid

The ending of Virgil's epic masterpiece is notoriously a controversial one which has sparked great debate over the years. In this article, Sophie Bassano uses both Greco-Roman philosophy and Augustus' self-presentation to explore the significance of Aeneas' killing of Turnus.

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Waterhouse's Circe Invidiosa

In this Artwork of the Issue, Declan Boyd explores the myth behind one of Waterhouse's most famous paintings, depicting Circe's transformation of Scylla from a beautiful young woman into a terrifying sea-monster.

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Aeschylus' *Persians*: a glimpse into the opposing camp

Lauren Heilman tackles the themes of empathy and memory in our oldest surviving Greek tragedy, showing the ways in which Aeschylus was attuned to the duality inherent in the divine, the uncertainty of life and the necessity of seeing things from the perspective of the fallen enemy.

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The omni-pot-ence of the divine on fifth-century Athenian vase paintings

Taking a look at the paintings on four classical Athenian vases, Esmé Goodson considers the ways in which the Greeks attributed importance and power to their gods through visual artworks.

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'So saying, burning with rage, he buried his sword deep in Turnus' breast: and then Turnus' limbs grew slack with death, and his life fled, with a moan, angrily, to the Shades.' So ends the Aeneid, not with ensuing peace or the construction of what will one day become Rome, but with Aeneas, overcome by intense, Achilles-like rage, fuelled by grief for Pallas and an unbridled lust for retribution, killing Turnus. Not only does he give in to this fit of furor (rage), but he supplication rejects Turnus' admission of defeat, thereby seeming to kill him to placate his own anger. This is problematic for Virgil's epic poem in terms of its representation of Aeneas as a Stoic hero whose behaviour reflects Augustus' clementia (mercy) and the institution of the pax Augusta (Augustan peace). However, the nuance of this ending lies in the fact that, while it poses questions regarding the limitations of pietas (piety, devotion), it also allows the reader to decide for themself if Aeneas' killing of Turnus is justified, perhaps even necessary for the foundation of Rome.

Virgil is arguably consistent in his portrayal of Aeneas as a man who is dutiful towards his family, the gods and his sense of patriotic and civic duty. This can be exemplified by Aeneas' deference to the will of Jupiter, relayed to him by Mercury in Book 4: the king of the gods instructs him to leave Carthage and abandon Dido in order to reach Italy and establish a city there. Aeneas' duty to the future city of Rome is intrinsically inseparable from his duty to his son Ascanius, the ancestor of the Julian family, of which Augustus was a member. Such duty can also be seen, crucially, in Evander's request that Aeneas mentor his son Pallas in warfare, with the implication that he is to keep him safe. Needless to say, Aeneas fails in this regard when Turnus kills Pallas in Book



Aeneas Defeats Turnus, Luca Giordano, 1688

Another of Aeneas' duties is that of upholding *clementia*, with a focus on being merciful to those who have surrendered. Anchises instructs him in Book 6 to 'spare the conquered and war down the proud'. Therefore, when Aeneas kills Turnus in Book 12, rejecting his convincingly genuine supplication in which he admits total capitulation, he defies his father's words and fails to uphold the key virtue of *clementia*, one of the virtues on which Augustus focused his imperial image.



A replica of the *Clipeus Virtutis*, or Shield of Virtue, consecrated to Augustus in 27 BCE as part of the First Settlement; the virtues are *virtus* (bravery), *clementia* (mercy), *iustitia* (justice) and *pietas* (duty)

But is Turnus' death not required if Aeneas is to uphold his duty to Evander? Aeneas, when facing Turnus and seeing Pallas' baldric upon Turnus' shoulder (another reminder of the satisfaction and honour Turnus obtains from killing in war), says, 'Shall you be snatched from my grasp, wearing the spoils of one who was my own? Pallas it is, Pallas, who sacrifices you with this stroke, and exacts retribution from your guilty blood.' Clearly, besides the grief he feels, Aeneas is influenced by his feeling responsibility for the 'one who was [his] own', and a need to rebalance the scales of justice. Of course, this conflicts with his duty to uphold clementia, and the reader must decide what would be the most appropriate response from Aeneas. Virgil is careful not to give us an indication of what we should think.

Aeneas' defeat of Turnus is the ultimate portrayal of how the demands of *pietas* are in perpetual conflict, and that it is virtually impossible for someone to obey and uphold each branch of it. When applied to Augustus, whose career the poem frequently reflects, it is a reminder that he did not always exercise *clementia* when he believed his duty to protecting Rome was compromised, as in the proscriptions of 43 BCE.

However, there is a way in which Aeneas' presentation as a virtuous character may not be undermined by the killing of Turnus. To understand this, we must examine anger. It is generally understood that Greek and Roman Stoics saw anger as a passion (pathe) or a subcategory of another passion, namely appetite, which an agent can undergo but should not, if possible, let themself be mastered by it. The Stoics argued that the passions should be avoided and advocated the eupatheiai, the good passions. However, some individuals and some schools of such Epicureanism, thought, as acknowledged anger as a virtuous emotion if used sparingly and with just cause, not as an end in itself but as a way to inflict a penalty on someone who deserved it. Aristotle, for example, thought of anger as morally ambiguous: it could be acceptable if directed towards the right person in the right place and when its duration was appropriate.

The Epicurean philosopher Philodemus approached anger in a similar way, arguing that it should be a painful emotion but that it was permissible, even appropriate and virtuous, when acted on in a pursuit of just revenge. Karl Galinsky has applied Philodemus' philosophy to Aeneas in Book 12, concluding that his rage was an aspect of Roman *pietas* required to be victorious in warfare. The first reason for this is that nowhere in the *Aeneid* does Aeneas indicate that his anger outlasts what it seeks. For example, when he kills Lausus in Book 10,

he may do so in a fit of rage, but this rage is necessary to sustain his military prowess against Lausus and the Etruscans, and it is appropriate within the context of warfare. When Lausus is dead and Aeneas' anger has completed its goal of defeating the enemy, it fades, and we witness a moment of great pathos when Aeneas sees Lausus' dead body: he is reminded of his love for his own father, the filial love which drove Lausus to try and kill Aeneas. (Lausus is the son of Mezentius, an Etruscan king who fights alongside Turnus.)

From this it is clear that Aeneas does not revel in his anger; it is painful for him. Painful, yet necessary. Galinsky, although he does not mention the example above, contrasts Aeneas' discomfort in killing with Turnus' pride gloating after killing Pallas, highlighting not only the pleasure Turnus gained from his anger, but also that his anger sustains itself by pursuing more pleasure. However, Book 12 ends before Aeneas can feel any pathos for killing Turnus or reflect on the sadness of war. Perhaps such an omission is significant, signalling an emotional change in Aeneas and his transition from a pious man to a warrior more akin to the Iliadic Achilles. Alternatively, it may be of no significance to the character of Aeneas, and Virgil may be emphasising that death is still death and that peace, much like in Augustan Rome, is bought only with the coin of violence. Indeed, the fact that the epic ends not with Aeneas but with Turnus' soul flying down to the underworld implies that this is a fact that is fundamental to the Aeneid.

In dealing with the rejection of Turnus' supplication, Galinsky suggests that this is legitimated through Turnus' contravention of the agreement that he and Aeneas should end with war with single combat: in Book 12, Turnus orders the Rutulians to join battle with the Trojans, thereby breaking this treaty.

The killing of Turnus and rejection of his supplication are therefore justified not only as ultio foederis rapti (revenge for a broken oath), but also because the very act of breaking an oath, in tandem with the fervour with which Turnus pursues war in Book 12, reveals that he will be a threat any peace which is instituted after the fighting is over. As Aeneas is permitted to enact revenge for a broken oath and, it must not be forgotten, to avenge Pallas and uphold his duty to Evander, so too is there justification for the revenge Octavian (the future Augustus) took on his adoptive father Julius Caesar's assassins at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE.



Ruins of the Temple of Mars Ultor (Mars the Avenger) in the Forum of Augustus, commissioned in 42 BCE as a commemoration of Octavian's victory at Philippi (construction finished in 2BCE)

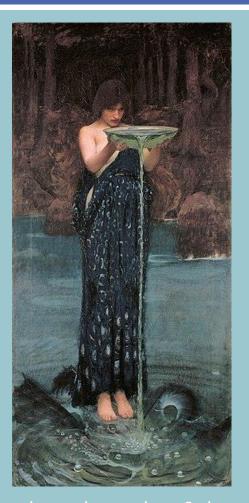
Although this article has not been an entirely comprehensive analysis of the end of the *Aeneid*, I hope to have shed some light on why Aeneas' killing of Turnus is not entirely a morally abhorrent act, and that it was, in the context of Augustan Rome, a necessary evil in order to facilitate peace. Yet at the same time, it is a deeply human portrayal of the needlessness of warfare and the sacrifices made for Rome, and the reader must decide whether or not these sacrifices are acceptable.

Artwork of the Issue: Waterhouse's Circe Invidiosa

By Declan Boyd

John William Waterhouse was a nineteenth-century painter known for his depictions of mythology. This painting visualises an episode from Ovid's Metamorphoses, where the sorceress Circe transforms Scylla into a sea-monster. In the myth, Scylla and the sea-god Glaucus are lovers, but Circe becomes jealous when she too falls in love with Glaucus. Of course, Circe is famous for her powers of transformation, and in her envy she takes action by transforming her rival Scylla into a savage creature which has, to quote the Odyssey, 'twelve feet, all misshapen, and six very long necks, and on each a frightful head with three rows of sharp and closely-packed teeth, full of black death'.

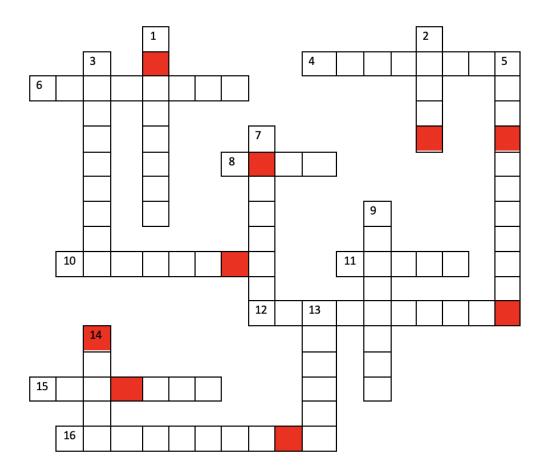
The myth depicted in this image connects two of the obstacles which Odysseus must overcome on his journey home to Ithaca from Troy, giving them a shared history which can cast a new light onto how we read Circe's warnings to Odysseus to avoid Scylla in Book 12 of the Odyssey. This reimagining of monsters from early Greek mythology becomes common later on as writers start to experiment more with myth: besides making the dreadful Odyssean Scylla into a pitiable creature, Ovid also



writes about the Cyclops Polyphemus (another of Odysseus' adversaries) in a rather comical way as he tries (unsuccessfully) to seduce his own love interest, the nymph Galatea

Waterhouse was not alone in the nineteenth century in his interest in this 'prequel myth' of sorts to the Odyssey. John Keats' narrative poem Endymion includes an encounter with Glaucus, who has been cursed by Circe to live out 1,000 years of old age as her prisoner. In Keats' version of the story, the hero Endymion helps Glaucus to escape from Circe, and Glaucus and Scylla are ultimately reuinted in love (apparently ignoring the fact that Scylla was ever turned into a monster!).

Classical Crossword



Across

- 4. Egyptian queen whose lock of hair was transformed into a constellation (8)
- 6. Jennifer Saint's latest novel (8)
- 8. City sacked by Rome in 396 BCE, apparently after a ten-year siege (4)
- 10. Late antique epic poet who wrote panegyrics of Emperor Honorius (8)
- 11. Roman historical figure played by Kasia Smutniak in the TV series *Domina* (5)
- 12. Father of Pericles (10)
- First name of the architect who designed the replica of the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee (7)
- 16. Name shared by the identical twins in a comedy of Plautus (10)

Down

- 1. Brother of Sappho, according to Herodotus (8)
- First name of the fourth legendary king of Rome, surnamed Marcius (5)
- 3. Brother of Hannibal who fought the Romans at the Battle of the Metaurus in 207 BCE (9)
- 5. The two royal families in Sparta were the Agiads and the ______(10)
- 7. Roman emperor whose name means 'stubborn' in Latin (8)
- Thessalian witch in Book 6 of Lucan's Civil War
 (8)
- 13. Late antique Greek poet, author of a 48-book epic about Dionysus (6)
- Ancient Greek novelist Longus was the author of *Daphnis and* ______, adapted into a ballet by Maurice Ravel (5)

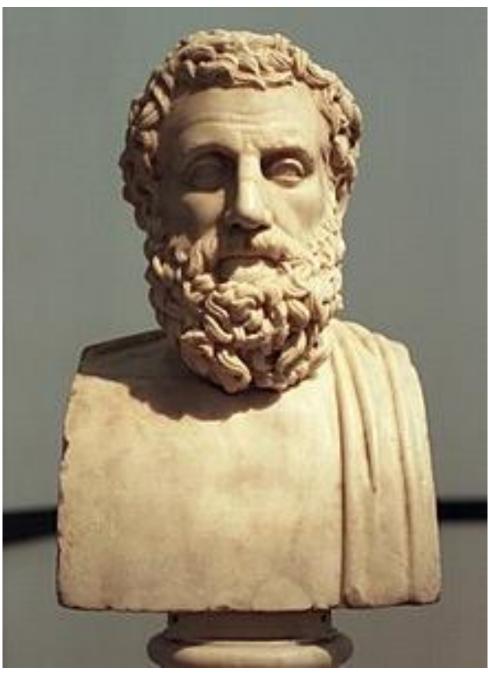
Use the letters in the boxes highlighted in red to find the hidden word.

Aeschylus' *Persians*: a glimpse into the opposing camp

by Lauren Heilman

In the *prooemium* of his *Histories*, Herodotus states that he does not wish glorious deeds, performed by both Greeks and barbarians, to go unsung (*aklea*). And in 472 BCE, there was another man who, like Herodotus, wished to memorialise a key moment in history—albeit very recent history—for

all time. That man was Aeschylus, and his medium of memorialisation was his play, *The Persians*. It remembers the Battle of Salamis eight years onwards, depicting the Greek naval victory through the lens of the defeated. And yet, it is not merely an opportunity for Greek boasting. The play is simultaneously a song of victory



Bust of Aeschylus

and of lament, a reminder that, while victory may be savoured for a moment, there is a cycle to life. And that, in seeing the Persian losses, the Greeks would be reminded of their own.

The Persians took first prize at the dramatic festival of the Dionysia. Aeschylus himself was a veteran of the theatre of war as well as of the theatre proper. He had already written much of his corpus and had fought at Marathon, Plataea and Salamis itself. While he could easily have signalled individual Greek soldiers, or even himself, for glory, he refrains from doing so. Instead, he provides a catalogue of Persian dead in a scene reminding one of the poignancy of Hilton's novel Goodbye, Mr. Chips when the British schoolmaster reads out a list of World War I casualties including the German dead. The glory of the victory belongs not to Greek individuals but is rather divided between Athens, where the people are 'slaves to none' (a powerful statement in favour of democracy) and the divine.

Aeschylus, like Herodotus after him, appears convinced that the gods deserve credit for the Greek victory. Darius claims that 'a great divinity deceived [Xerxes'] sense', and Xerxes himself remarks that they 'bear god-routed fortunes'. Near the beginning of the play, Xerxes' mother Atossa bewails a divine vision in which Athens cannot come under the Persians' voke, and the outcome of the battle would indeed have seemed to be the work of the gods as much to the Greeks as to the Persians, given the far from even odds. As the herald tells Atossa. 'Had numbers counted, the barbarian warships surely would have won. Some deity destroyed our host, who weighing down the balance swung the beam of fortune. The gods saved the city of the goddess.'

By emphasising the miraculous nature of the victory, Aeschylus mitigates the Greek 'boasting', placing the Athenians instead, like the Persians, in a place of dependence on the gods. Herodotus too in his account of the battles leading up to and including Salamis emphasised the role of the divine through oracles, earthquakes, prophecies, divine cries and gigantic demigod warriors. Yet the

presence of the divine comes with a warning: an oracle may be misread and result in the loss of lives, or, as the reader of Herodotus will remember, in the loss of a kingdom. In Book 1, the Lydian king Croesus famously misinterprets the oracle of Delphi. After asking what will happen if he attacks the Persians, he learns that he will destroy a great kingdom; he does not realise that this kingdom is his own. If this account from Book 1 is compared with the oracles in Book 7, the Greeks are reminded of the fragility of their successes, and as Aeschylus reinforces, there is a cyclicity to victory and defeat. As Solon told Croesus, 'Over a long period of time, a man will see and experience many things he would rather not ... and one of these days brings something completely unlike the other.' Therefore, it is better to look to the end of one's life before congratulating oneself on success. Both Greeks and Persians are, to the Greek mind, subject to fate. And that knowledge allows the Greeks to sympathise with their enemy.

In composing *The Persians*, Aeschylus allowed the Greeks to relive their own sufferings by watching the sufferings of the Persians. Aeschylus' Persians call upon Greek gods-Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Ares—making their laments mimic more closely those the Greeks would have uttered. But on one occasion Atossa does invoke the name of Baal, demonstrating that Aeschylus was not ignorant of the Persian appellations. Instead, by choosing to depict them calling on Greek gods, he appears to emphasise that they live under the same deities and are subject to the same shifts of fortune.

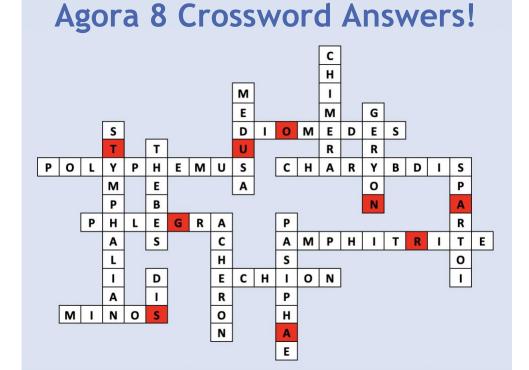
This is particularly evident in his selection of historical figures. If Aeschylus had wished merely to write a Greek propaganda play, he might have included invective against Artemisia, the Greek woman who had aided Xerxes and had a price of ten thousand drachmas on her head. Herodotus' account emphasises her role in advising Xerxes and her ruthlessness on the sea, willing even to sink a ship on her own side to protect herself. Yet in Aeschylus' account, she does not even receive a mention. Instead,



The Ghost of Darius Appearing to Atossa, George Romney, 1778-79

the female role is given not to a warrior but to a mother, to Atossa. The role of mothers awaiting their sons universalises the Greek/Persian grief: 'Laments, consumed by desire; and parents and wives counting the days tremble at the lengthening time'. And while we know from Herodotus that Atossa had been influential in persuading her husband Darius to attack the Greeks and in securing Xerxes' position as king, in Aeschylus she appears only as the wise but mournful mother, bemoaning her son's choice to (according to the Greek mindset) seek excess by attempting to

subjugate all peoples to himself. She summons Darius from his grave, and he tells her to clothe Xerxes, who will return home in rags. This image is significant, as clothing, particularly a woman's weaving in the ancient world, would be connected to her voice and her continued fame. 'Clothing' Xerxes, then, might represent Atossa's transferral of that fame to Xerxes. However, it is worth noting that, while Atossa exits to find the clothes, she never in the course of the play provides them. Instead, Aeschylus himself 'clothes' Xerxes by giving him the shortest, yet in many ways the most poignant, part in the play. He enters alone, having torn his clothes and lost all his companions, and is reduced to singing the lament with the chorus which closes the play. Like many heroes of the Greek stage, his fall is a mixture of divine destiny and his own delusion. Incarnating this pitiful image, some believe, was Aeschylus himself. If this is true, then Aeschylus quite literally stepped into Xerxes' shoes to perform his play. And in composing The Persians, he allows his fellow Greeks to do the same.



The hidden word was... ARGONAUTS!!!

The omni-pot-ence of the divine on fifth-century Athenian vase paintings

by Esmé Goodson

Among the wide range of subjects depicted on fifth-century Athenian vases, one that crops up in a variety of contexts is the importance and superiority of the divine. In this article, I shall look at how four Athenian vase painters have chosen to depict the divine.

Panathenaic amphorae provide our first example of the Athenians' concern with the dominance of the gods. These vases were given to victorious athletes who had competed in the Panathenaic Games, a festival which celebrated the goddess Athene's birthday, and would have been filled with oil from the olive trees sacred to Athene. They illustrate divine superiority through their representation of Athene, as shown in Figure 1. First and foremost, the goddess' inclusion on the vase emphasises her central role in the Panathenaea. This reinforces the fact that it was in honour of Athene that athletes competed in the Games, which were depicted on the other side of the amphora in Figure 1. By reinforcing the connection between these games and the worship of Athene, the artist emphasises the dominant position of the gods over men. This emphasis is further highlighted by the organisation of images on the amphora: whereas Athene's helmet begins to reach into the neck of the amphora, extending out of the surrounding frame, the wrestling men remain contained within. Athene's larger-than-life height far surpasses that of the mortal men, and a sense of her dominance is thus conveyed through her size.

This depiction of Athene's power and importance is not unique to this particular amphora. Both earlier and later Panathenaic amphorae depict an image of Athene with this superhuman stature. The depiction of men partaking in an athletic event was another constant on these vases, and the artist always depicted the men as being smaller than the goddess they were worshipping. The decoration of these amphorae followed a standard pattern, showing that the goddess was always more powerful than men and that what mattered most to the





Figure 1: Panathenaic amphora, 480-460 BCE

Athenian polis was its patron goddess and her festival.



Figure 2: Red-figure Nolan amphora depicting a libation, c. 440 BCE

Unsurprisingly, the clearest example of divine dominance might be found on pottery depicting religious acts, such as the pouring of libations and the performance of sacrifice to the gods. These choices of imagery depict fifthcentury Athens as a city concerned with order. For example, Figure 2 depicts a man and a woman performing a libation. While a sense of divine dominance may not appear obvious at first, upon close examination of the image's composition, it is evident that it is not devoid of a hierarchy. Firstly, the artist has positioned the altar in the centre of the space and thus makes it the focal point of the image. A further emphasis has been cast onto this central space through the positioning of the figures' arms: the women's arm extends forth with the libation, which allows the viewer to trace their gaze towards the man's arm; this arm is angled downwards towards the altar, which guides the viewer towards it. The man's knee also points inwards towards the altar, and both figures' heads are lowered, again towards the

By continually bringing the viewer's gaze back to the altar, the artist emphasises its

prominence in the image and thus highlights the importance of the god being worshipped. The artist thereby conveys the importance of this act and so illustrates the importance of the gods and divine worship in society. Another way of viewing the bowed heads could be as an act of reverence or piety towards the god being worshipped, which further emphasises the subordinate mortal position of the figures with respect to the divine. Not only thus, but the bowing of heads was a sign of concentration, indicating that the figures are focusing on what really matters here: the god. Again, this illustrates the dominance of the divine in the daily lives of the Athenians.



Figure 3: Red-figure *krater* depicting a sacrifice, 440 BCE

sacrifices further Depictions of contribute to this image of the centrality of the divine. Figure 3 depicts the sacrifice of a sheep by a company of men. As in Figure 2, the artist has directed the viewer's gaze towards the altar: not only do the hands of the central men extend down towards the altar, but the assistant boy's hands, which hold the sheep, are also angled in that direction. Additionally, the musician's aulos is also directed that way, along with the righthand man's staff. Just as before, this focus on the altar emphasises the subordinate role of the humans in relation to the gods they worshipped, and therefore also reflects the power of these gods.



Figure 4: Kylix depicting drunken revelry at a symposium, 480 BCE

The prominence of the divine in Athenian thought made its way too into images of the symposium. In Figure 4, the artist has chosen to depict the various drinking vessels with wreaths of ivy, a plant associated with the god Dionysus. The significance of this lies in the fact that wine was a gift from Dionysus to mortals, and the connection between the ivy, the wine and Dionysus would not have been lost on the Athenians who used these vases. This indicates that it is the gift and power of the god that allows the men at the symposium to enjoy their state of revelry, which is shown through the flailing of their limbs at various angles. The focus on the power of the wine as having a divine origin allows the artist to indicate even in a sympotic context that the gods held power over mortals.

In conclusion, these four examples illustrate how the divine play a prominent and omnipotent role in Athenian vase paintings in the fifth century. They illustrate the dominance of the gods in their festivals, their centrality to sacrifices and libations, and the power and sway they hold over mortals. This concern with the divine reflects the importance of the gods in fifth-century Athenian life and thought.

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