

JENIFER NEILS

THE YOUTHFUL DEEDS
OF THESEUS

GIORGIO BRETSCHEIDER EDITORE

1987

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>List of abbreviations</i>	Page	ix
<i>Preface</i>	»	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	»	i
CHAPTER I: THE LITERARY TRADITION	»	5
Homer	»	6
Bacchylides	»	8
<i>Theseid</i>	»	ii
Tragedy	»	12
Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus and Apollodorus	»	13
CHAPTER II: THE PICTORIAL TRADITION BEFORE 520 BC	»	17
Mycenaean	»	17
Geometric	»	18
Orientalizing	»	20
Attic Black-Figure	»	24
Kleitias	»	25
Amasis Painter	»	27
Exekias	»	28
CHAPTER III: ATTIC VASE-PAINTING AND SCULPTURE 520-500 BC	»	31
Early Red-Figure Cup-Painters	»	32
Pioneers	»	40
Sculpture	»	43
CHAPTER IV: ATTIC VASE-PAINTING 500-480 BC	»	53
Myson and Other Early Fifth Century Krater-Painters	»	53
Onesimos and Other Early Fifth Century Cup-Painters	»	57
The Berlin Painter and the Kleophrades Painter	»	64
The Theseus Painter and Late Archaic Black-Figure	»	73

CHAPTER V: ATTIC VASE-PAINTING AND SCULPTURE OF THE SEVERE PERIOD (c. 480-460 BC)	Page	79
The Syleus Sequence	»	79
The Syriskos Workshop	»	84
Other Pot-Painters of the Severe Period	»	90
Douris	»	92
The Brygos Painter and His Circle	»	95
Other Cup-Painters of the Severe Period	»	101
Mannerists	»	104
Sculpture	»	107
CHAPTER VI: ATTIC VASE-PAINTING AND SCULPTURE OF THE EARLY CLASSICAL PERIOD (c. 470-450 BC)	»	109
Early Classic Pot-Painters	»	112
The Euaion Painter	»	116
The Penthesilea Painter and His Workshop	»	117
Other Early Classic Cup-Painters	»	121
The Villa Giulia Painter, the Lewis Painter and Related Works	»	123
« Hephaisteion » Metopes	»	126
CHAPTER VII: DENOUEMENT: THE SECOND HALF OF THE FIFTH CENTURY BC	»	129
The Kodros Painter	»	129
The Phiale Painter Workshop	»	132
The Polygnotan Group	»	133
Later Mannerist: The Hephaistos Painter	»	134
Classic Pot-Painters	»	134
The Dinos Painter and Related Vases	»	135
Aison	»	136
Late Fifth Century Pot-Painters	»	137
The Kadmos Painter and the Kekrops Painter	»	138
The Painter of London E 105	»	139
Sculpture	»	140
CONCLUSIONS	»	143
The Cycle of Deeds	»	143
The Political Context	»	148
CATALOGUE OF VASE-PAINTINGS	»	153
CATALOGUE OF SCULPTURE	»	177
INDEX TO COLLECTIONS	»	179
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	»	187

PLATES

PREFACE

My study of the youthful Theseus began in a graduate seminar dealing with classical sculpture and painting held at Princeton University in the fall of 1972. Since then my work has been assisted both here and abroad by a number of institutions and generous individuals. Foremost among them is Professor Evelyn B. Harrison, now of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York, who conducted the seminar and suggested the topic. Thereafter she has always been ready to discuss my ideas, willingly adding many of her own, and her insightful approaches to iconography have been an inspiration. At Princeton University I had the privilege to study with Professors William A. P. Childs and T. Leslie Shear, Jr., who kindly served as my dissertation advisors and offered much valuable guidance. A Whiting Fellowship in the Humanities facilitated my research, and the Spears Fund of the Department of Art and Archaeology of Princeton University enabled me to travel to Europe to consult much of the primary material. I sincerely thank the following for allowing me to examine vases in their care and for providing photographs: Mme. Aghion of the Cabinet des Médailles; Dr. F. W. Hamdorf of the Antikensammlungen in Munich; M. Alain Pasquier of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the Louvre; Dr. Margot Schmidt of the Antikenmuseum in Basel; Mr. Michael Vickers of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; and Professor Klaus Vierneisel of the Staatliche Museum, Berlin. The research facilities of the Beazley Archive were placed at my disposal by Dr. Donna Kurtz, and to her and her staff I am thankful for many photocopies. For the nearly two hundred vases discussed in this study, clear illustrations proved essential, and I thank the following for their generous gift of photographs: Herbert Cahn, Alexander Cambitoglou, Kenneth Hamma, Kurt Luckner, Maggie Mayo, Warren G. Moon, Martin Robertson, Ann R. Steiner, and Susan Woodford.

Since completing the dissertation in 1980, I have incorporated new material, revised the entire manuscript, and extended its scope by adding a chapter dealing with images produced in the second half of the fifth century BC. I am grateful to the library staff of the Cleveland Museum of Art for their assistance, and to Case Western Reserve University for a research grant that helped defray some of costs of preparing the manuscript for publication. Special thanks go to my publisher Giorgio Bretschneider for his great patience, support and interest in this project.

My deepest appreciation goes to my husband, James H. McInerney, Jr., for his encouragement and good humor, and to my son Jamie for his staunch belief in « super heroes ».

JENIFER NEILS

INTRODUCTION

In the art and literature of classical Athens, there was one Greek hero who surpassed all others. His exploits were celebrated on nearly all the major monuments of the city: the Parthenon, the Athena Parthenos and the Athena Promachos on the Acropolis, the « Hephaisteion », the Stoa Basileios and the Stoa Poikile in the Agora. His own principal shrine, where his hallowed bones rested, was situated in the center of the city, decorated with wall paintings celebrating his heroic deeds. Now lost, these are reflected in vase-paintings where he appeared with even more frequency, attesting his popularity in the minor arts as well. He was portrayed by the Attic tragedians as a just and wise ruler, and more importantly, as a symbol of democracy. In fact, he was credited with the synoecism of Attica and the foundation of the Athenian democracy, events which took place considerably after his time. A courageous hero and a democratic leader; this constitutes the dual image of Theseus in fifth century Athens.

However, this image of Theseus was not always so glorious, nor did his legend appear at once, fully developed, as our major source would lead us to believe. Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* is a biography of the hero from birth to death, and does not reflect the chronological stages of development, changes and accretions, or the many alternative versions of the legend. Before the fifth century, Theseus is virtually ignored by Greek authors. Homer, for instance, mentions the hero by name only three times, and has his deposer, Menestheus, leading the Attic forces at Troy. Likewise in the artistic tradition before the end of the sixth century, Theseus is primarily a one-exploit hero, the slayer of the Cretan Minotaur. Other deeds are represented sporadically, mostly abductions of women (Helen, Ariadne and Antiope) and escapades with his companion Perithoos (centaureomachy and voyage to Hades), but none is highly laudable. Essentially, Theseus is just another Bronze Age hero, neither particularly distinctive nor specifically Athenian.

Suddenly at the end of the sixth century, there develops an avid interest in the hero, and his legend undergoes a radical transformation. First, a whole series of *new* heroic deeds, many consciously modeled on the labors of Herakles, is added to his previously limited repertoire. They are celebrated in vase-painting, sculpture, and probably also literature, although the evidence for an epic *Theseid* composed at this time is slight. These deeds of personal prowess, which serve to fill

out his otherwise empty youth, include the killing of assorted rogues on the road from his birthplace, Troizen, to Athens, the capture of the Marathonian bull, and a visit to the undersea kingdom of his father Poseidon. In the fifth century, the tendency is directed more towards his idealization as a patriot and national hero. For instance, the Amazonomachy, which was originally an amatory expedition to the East, now becomes a battle in Athens against the barbarian, « the first brave deed of the Athenians against foreigners »¹, and the mythological prototype for the Persian wars. More obvious in its fabrication but probably no less believable to the Athenians, is the story told about Theseus actually arising from the plain of Marathon to aid his countrymen in 490 (*Theseus* 35.5). The overpowering of his contenders for the throne, the fifty sons of Pallas, was equated with the unification of Attica, and the frequent portrayals of him in the sculptural poses of the Tyrannicides at this time served to exemplify his democratic role. Thus, Theseus, as well as being transformed into « another Herakles » (*Theseus* 29.3), became the Athenian hero *par excellence*.

The reason for this increasing interest in Theseus can be found in the political and cultural situation in Athens. Historically, the late archaic and early classical periods are ones of new freedom and creativity in the areas of both politics and art. During this time the Athenians liberated themselves from tyranny, established a democracy, overcame the threat of a Persian conquest, and gradually built up a prosperous empire. Poetry, drama and art flourished, and the poets, sculptors and painters sought new themes to honor their flourishing city. The Athenians, needing a glorious hero to reflect their general prosperity, found him in a glorified Theseus.

The aim of this study is to analyze the development of the image of the Greek hero Theseus in the late sixth and fifth centuries. In particular it deals with those youthful exploits which first appear in Attic art in the last decades of the sixth century, namely the deeds performed on the Isthmian road from Troizen to Athens, his victory over the Marathonian bull, and his visit to Poseidon's kingdom. This analysis is an iconographical one, plotting the changes in the physical portrayal of the hero in both art and literature.

Many of these new exploits are combined and represented in cyclical fashion on a series of Attic red-figure cups, called cycle vases, as well as on the metopes of the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, and the « Hephaisteion » in Athens. Some of these representations were brought together with the literary evidence and studied by Emil Sarnow in his doctoral dissertation published in 1894². However he had not the advantage of the papyrus fragments which were discovered in Egypt in 1896, and which provided two previously unknown dithyrambs of the fifth century poet Bacchylides acclaiming the youthful adventures of Theseus³. Nor did he

1) Pausanias V.II.7. See also J. BOARDMAN, « Herakles, Theseus and Amazons », *The Eye of Greece, Studies in the Art of Athens*, eds. D. Kurtz and B. Sparkes (Cambridge, 1982) 1-28.

2) *Die zyklischen Darstellungen aus der Theseussage in der antiken Kunst und ihre literarische Quelle* (Leipzig, 1894). Another doctoral dissertation by E. ROHDE, *Theseusdarstellungen in der griechische Vasenmalerei von den Anfängen bis zum 4 Jh.* (Berlin, 1945) remains unpublished.

3) British Museum, Papyrus DCCXXXIII. Editio princeps by F. G. KENYON, *The Poems of Bacchylides from a Papyrus in the British Museum* (London, 1897).

know of the metopes from the Athenian Treasury at Delphi excavated in the 1890's; the nine from the south side each depict a different event in the life of the Athenian hero⁴. The important excavations at Spina have yielded three late cycle cups⁵, and those of the Athenian Agora yet another⁶. In 1937, the Ashmolean Museum acquired a late fifth century Attic calyx-krater depicting six deeds of Theseus⁷, and recently other cycle vases have turned up on the art market⁸. Thus, our primary source material, both literary and artistic, has been considerably amplified since the time of Sarnow's thesis. But this is not the only reason for a reexamination of the Theseus legend.

Since Sarnow's publication much work has been done in the field of Attic vase-painting, notably by Sir John Beazley, and considerable progress made in the areas of chronology, attributions, and shape development⁹. In the light of these refinements one is better equipped to trace the lines of development of and to reassess the contributions made by individual vase-painters, to the iconographic tradition. Hence, this study need not, like Sarnow's, limit itself to the cyclical representations, but deals as well with all known vase-paintings and sculpture which represent the youthful deeds of Theseus, and in this way attempts to achieve a clearer and more precise picture of the iconographical development¹⁰.

4) For accounts relating to the discovery, see *FdD* IV: 4, 8-II.

5) See N. ALFIERI, « Grande kylix del pittore de Penteseilea con ciclo teseico », *RivIstArch* 17 NS 8 (1959) 59-110, and nos. 94, 115, and 127.

6) Agora P 7585. Unpublished. See no. 148.

7) See J. D. BEAZLEY, *AJA* 43 (1939) 618-639, and *infra*, no. 126.

8) See R. BLATTER, « Unbekannte Schalenfragmente mit Theseus-Zyklus », *AA* (1975) 351-355, and *infra* p. 132, no. 113. See also nos. 2 and 26.

9) The basic texts for the chronological arrangement of attributed Attic vases followed here are those of J. D. BEAZLEY: *ABV*, *ARV²*, and *Para*.

10) The indispensable source for lists of iconographical representations in Greek vase-painting is F. BROMMER's *Heldensage*³.