7-21-1976

Apollonian and Dionysian Aspects of Greek and Roman Antiquity in Pablo Picasso's Prints

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This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of The University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Title APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN ASPECTS OF GREEK AND ROMAN ANTIQUITY IN PABLO PICASSO'S PRINTS

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BY
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B.U.S, University of New Mexico, 1972

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Art History

in the Graduate School of
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 1976

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Howard Rodee and Dr. Peter Walch and especially my Chairman, Dean Clinton Adams.

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ABSTRACT

Greco-Roman antiquity strongly influenced Picasso's work--particularly his prints. This influence extends beyond the "classical" aspect of antique culture--called by Nietzsche the Apollonian aspect after Apollo and his attributes of reason, balance, etc.--to include the emotional, bacchanalian aspect as well, which Nietzsche called the Dionysian, after Dionysus, the god most associated with these qualities.

Picasso's early training included neo-classic exercises; drawings from plaster copies of antique sculpture, which were to form his first impression of antiquity, and remained an important influence throughout the history of his "antiquarianism." By 1907 however his exposure to non-classical art and to the revolutionary influence of Nietzsche caused him to abandon the neo-classic tradition in favor of modern cubist experiments (which Apollinaire characterized as Dionysian in spirit). Antique art itself was forgotten until 1917, when Picasso's visit to Italy showed him the erotic murals of Pompeii, and the rape, a major Dionysian theme in his later work, began to appear. This emotional excess was restrained by the Ingres-like, classic line that he had developed in his early neo-classic exercises, and that was the most important Apollonian

element in his print oeuvre. He worked on several antiquarian plays, Antigone (1922) and Mercury (1924) and illustrated Metamorphoses (1931) and Lysistrata (1933). In the Vollard Suite he adapted Greek myth to a personal mythology which included a bacchic, then tragic Minotaur, as well as Dionysus (Bacchus) himself, and the classically-profiled Marie-Therese. These works ceased abruptly in 1935. Antiquarian works resumed in 1944 in a pastoral spirit heralded by The Triumph of Pan, and included the works from Antibes, The Two Stories, and the bacchanalian linocuts (1959). After a few sporadic works of interest, be began a series of prints in 1966 whose spirit is closely affiliated with the phallic dances which were an early form of Greek drama.

Thus antique culture, and Picasso's perception of it as well, included not only the classic, Apollonian side, but also the equally important Dionysian side. For this reason, the influence of antiquity cannot be called "neo-classic," which would imply the primacy of the classic aspect, but should instead be called "antiquarian" --a term which includes not only the classic/Apollonian but also the Dionysian aspect of antiquity.

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Abbreviations and Symbols

B= catalogue number from Georges Bloch's Pablo Picasso, 2 vols., (Berne: Editions Kornfeld et Klipstein), 1968.

Z= catalogue number from Christian Zervos' Pablo Picasso, 27 vols., (Paris: Cahiers d'Art), 1949-74.

APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN ASPECTS OF GREEK AND ROMAN ANTIQUITY IN PABLO PICASSO'S PRINTS

"If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks . . . of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was."[1]

--Picasso

Introduction

The art of Greece and Rome has lived in many ages. For centuries artists have evoked antiquity--ancient Greece and Rome--in their works. Medieval artists and writers sometimes used antique myths as prefigurations of events from the Bible, and antique styles were revived in the Carolingian period. The Renaissance thought of itself largely as the revival of antique civilization and art, while Mannerist painters often created "classical" allegories after the Greek and Roman legends. The classicist Poussin and later David and Ingres held the art of antiquity as the model for their own work, and in the nineteenth century artists such as Canova and Powers retained antique subject

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[1] Alfred Barr, Picasso: Fifty Years of his Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1947, p. 272.

matter and form. Even at the close of the century we can see re-creations of Greek myths like Böcklin's Battling Centaurs (1873) and Franz Von Stuck's Fighting Fauns (1889) and Bouguereau's many paintings. The inspiration of antiquity--"antiquarianism"--even continued into the twentieth century in the work of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973).

The influence of antiquity is evident in much of Picasso's work--particularly in his prints. A glance at the catalogue raisonné by Zervos[2] or the catalogue of Picasso's prints by Bloch[3] will reveal many drawings and etchings that resemble Greek vase painting in style and sometimes in subject matter as well (Woman with Bowl of Fruit, 1902-3, fig. 1).

The earliest published drawings by Picasso include many youthful academic studies of plaster copies of Greek and Roman statues. These drawings (e.g., fig. 3) are a reflection of the "classic" qualities of "noble simplicity and calm grandeur" (to use Winckelmann's famous phrase) that various Neo-Classicists had discovered in antique art. Though they are only exercises, they testify to the continuation of the neo-classic

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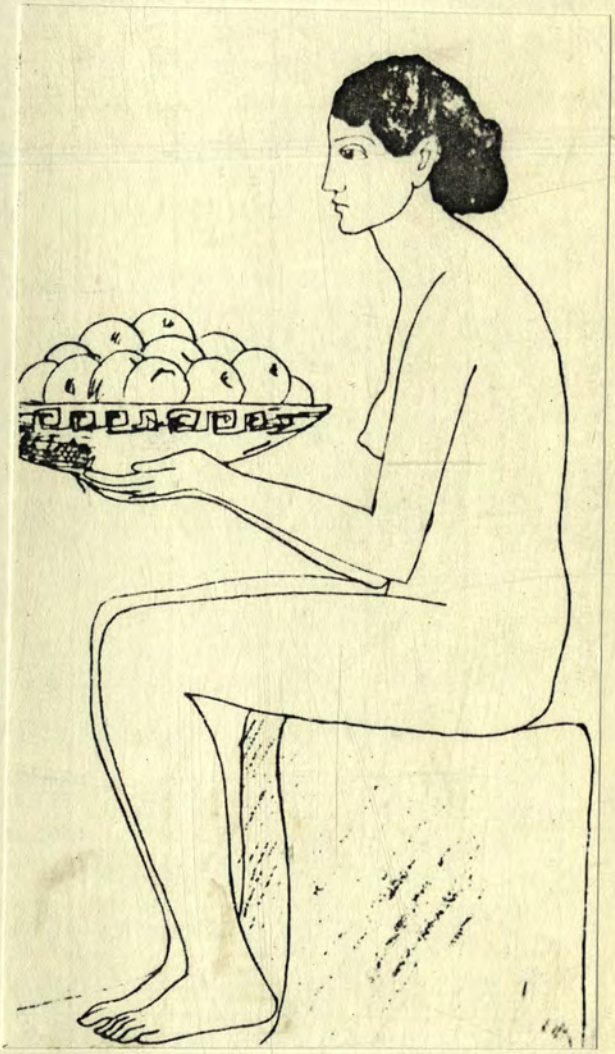
[2] Christian Zervos, Pablo Picasso, 27 vols. (Paris: Cahiers d'Art), 1949--.

[3] Georges Bloch, Pablo Picasso, 2 vols. (Berne: Editions Kornfeld et Klipstein), 1968.



Left: The Achilles Painter, Detail of Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440-430 B.C., 40.7 cm., Munich, Antikensammlungen.

Right: Pablo Picasso, Woman With Bowl of Fruit, c. 1902-3, drawing; Z I 146.

Figure 1

tradition into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries[4]--a tradition that was to affect Picasso deeply.

Neo-classicism however was only one perception of antiquity--a perception that was attacked in the last half of the nineteenth century by Friedrich Nietzsche. Picasso had read all of Nietzsche's works by the time he was seventeen[5], and his own conception of antiquity was greatly influenced by Nietzsche's ideas. Nietzsche contrasted the traditionally recognized "classic" aspect of Greek culture to the emotional, bacchanalian aspect which had been neglected by the neo-classicists, though it is evident in many works of Greek (and Roman) art, and in most of the Greco-Roman myths. Nietzsche called these two aspects the classic and the bacchanalian, or the Apollonian and the Dionysian, respectively: "Apollonian" after the god Apollo and his attributes of calm rationality and order, and "Dionysian" after the god Dionysus (called Bacchus by the Romans) and his characteristic emotionality, drunkenness, and animal abandon. An example from Greek sculpture (fig. 2) which illustrates the way in which these two forces interact is from the

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[4] Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (Great Britain: Phaidon), 1971, p. 31 et al.

[5] Anthony Blunt and Phoebe Pool, Picasso, The Formative Years (New York: New York Graphic Society), 1962, p.7.

Apollo, Lapith and Centaur, from west pediment of Temple of Zeus at Olympia, c. 460 B.C., marble, over lifesize, Museum, Olympia.

Figure 2

west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (460 B.C.) in which a calm and expressionless Apollo casually restrains the flailing centaur which personifies the chaotic forces of Dionysus.

Ironically, Nietzsche's exhortation of the Dionysian spirit contributed to the spirit of anti-classicism and of artistic rebellion that opposed all antique art, in favor of "modern" art. Picasso himself abandoned antique art for more than a decade (c. 1905-17) in order to pursue his own modern explorations. When he returned in 1917 to an antiquarian style it was with full awareness not only of the classic Apollonian side of antiquity which he understood from his neo-classic heritage, but also of the bacchanalian, Dionysian aspect that Nietzsche had emphasised. Throughout his mature work Picasso, true to the Greek spirit outlined by Nietzsche, showed a marked preference for subject matter relating to Dionysian myths, often, though not always, restrained by a classic Apollonian form and line.

Beyond the continuous Apollonian/Dionysian dialectic, Picasso's antiquarianism developed in several fairly distinct periods, each described here in a separate chapter. Following the first period of neo-classic studies from plaster statues was the cubist period in which Dionysian rebellion contributed to the rebellious spirit of the

evolving forms of "modern" art. Next were the years dominated by the influence of Rome and Pompeii, beginning in 1917. Following this was a "literary" period, in which Picasso was involved in the production and illustration of several Greek and Roman plays (1922-35). The "literary" years came to an abrupt end around 1935, and antiquarian works did not resume until 1944, when Picasso began to create a large number of prints and paintings with pastoral settings and characters (like his centaurs and fauns). Finally, around 1966, he etched a number of scenes that clearly recall his early experience with Greek and Roman drama.

The Apollonian: Plaster Casts and Neo-Classicism

The earliest antiquarian works by Picasso are drawings from plaster casts or other plaster copies of Greek or Roman sculpture. It should not be assumed that these are unimportant early works that were to have no influence on the mature Picasso. The plaster models were to make ghostly reappearances years later in Picasso's work, and for this reason these early drawings are worth examining.

Possibly the earliest drawing of Picasso's which has been published is one which he did in 1890 at the age of nine from a plaster model of Hercules.[6] The cast was owned by his father Don José Ruiz Blasco, who was a drawing professor at the San Telmo School of Art in Málaga, and who probably used it in drawing exercises. In the following year, 1891, Don José became lecturer in art at the La Guarda Institute in Corunna. There Picasso made many studies from plaster models, mostly between the years 1893 and 1894 at the age of twelve. Don José transferred to the Barcelona School of Fine Arts--the "Llonja"--in 1895, and Picasso enrolled in the 1895-96 course of studies there. The admission requirements consisted of three drawings: an acceptable drawing from a plaster model, one from a print, and lastly one from

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[6] Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, Picasso, Birth of a Genius (New York: Praeger Publishers), 1972, ill. 1.

life. Theseus (fig. 3) may have been done in fulfillment of the second requirement, since it was evidently not of a plaster model itself, but was a copy of a print depicting a plaster model (cf. fig. 4).

The drawings from the plaster copies are nearly indistinguishable from those by numerous academic neo-classicists of the nineteenth century, the most prominent of whom was Ingres (1780-1867). As in Ingres' neo-classic style, the line of these drawings ultimately derives from the engraved backs of Etruscan mirrors and the figures on Greek vases. The Ingres-like outline of these academic studies was to become the keystone of Picasso's print vocabulary, and is the most consistently classic (Apollonian) element in his print oeuvre. The astringency of the line tempers everything that it depicts.

The delineation of antique copies forced the student Picasso to scrutinize them more closely and helped him to become more aware of their aesthetic qualities. The plaster statues were certainly fairly accurate reflections of the original Greek and Roman sculpture. Beyond this the plaster copies also had their own characteristics as copies. They had their own surface texture and color which differed from the more translucent marble of the Greek and Roman originals. Furthermore, they were not as remote as the originals which were nearly all

Picasso, Theseus, c. 1893-4, drawing; Z VI 4.

Figure 3

Torso, Male

Excavated at Argos, in 1892, under the direction of the American School of Archæology.

In the National Museum, Athens

No. 542 Height 2 ft. $6.00

Theseus (so called). In the British Museum

From the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, Athens

No. 545 Height 4 ft. 4 in. $75.00

3616 ,, 1 ,, 6 ,, ... 6.00

Hercules

Augustus Cæsar. In the Vatican

Detail of page from Catalogue of Plaster Reproductions (Boston: P.P. Caproni & Bro.), 1911, p. 22.

Figure 4

enshrined in museums. The plaster copies were more like familiar companions to the neo-classic sculptor whose studio was filled with them. In the 1930's these statues were to appear as familiar friends and onlookers in the series of Picasso's prints which composed the Vollard Suite.

Thus the plaster statues were to influence Picasso in three ways: (1) as a fairly accurate reflection of antique sculpture, (2) as themselves: the familiar plaster models of the artist's studio and (3) as the inspiration for Ingres-like drawings. These developments are all in the future, though, and will be considered in greater detail as they develop chronologically in Picasso's oeuvre.

Although their influence was to surface later, Picasso made no more drawings from plaster casts in the years after 1897. In Barcelona he had discovered the more contemporary art of such figures as Cézanne. In the autumn of 1900 he made his first visit to Paris, where he saw the Louvre and in general absorbed the artistic ambience. The World Fair was being held that year in Paris, and it included "two large retrospective exhibitions of paintings. . . . For the first time he saw the work of the great nineteenth century masters of French

painting."[7] Although many of these artists opposed neo-classicism, many still held an admiration for the underlying structure of antique art. In the paintings of Renoir, Seurat, Cézanne and Degas (among others) "classic" qualities of compostion can be seen. A contemporary account of Cézanne (read and evidently approved of by him) stated that he had learned from the ancients the way to logically order his work, in a serious and classical manner.[8]

At this time Picasso alternated between France and Barcelona, where there remained a general interest in reviving "the true Mediterranean tradition"[9] taken up by acquaintences of Picasso's like Andre Salamon in his magazine Vers et Prose. Many friends of Picasso "became influenced by the new Classicism, such as Maolo and Médislas Golberg, who then decorated his walls with reproductions of ancient Greek masterpieces."[10]

Picasso also visited the museums and saw the original works themselves. His visits to the Louvre are well-known, and isolated works from this period, such as the Woman

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[7] Jean Leymarie, Picasso: The Artist of the Century (New York: Viking Press), 1972, p. 204.

[8] Phoebe Pool, "Picasso's Neo-Classicism: First Period, 1905-6," Apollo 81, Feb. 1965, p. 124.

[9] ibid. p. 125.

[10] ibid. p. 127.

With Basket of Fruits (fig. 1) have figures which resemble those of late Archaic and Attic vase paintings.

In the museums Picasso could have discovered another side of the Greeks, different from the austere classicism of the plaster statues--the eroticism of the Greek vases showing him the Dionysian face of the art of antiquity. At this time Nietzsche's championing of the Dionysian might easily have opened Picasso's eyes to that more volatile side of the Greeks and of their art. Some of the best examples in Europe of Dionysiac reliefs were in the museums of Madrid, and one of them inspired a later painting, The Race (1922, fig. 5).

By 1900 it is evident that the one-sided, classic perception of the Greeks was coming to an end as far as Picasso was concerned. The "centaur embrace" appears for the first time in his work.[11] This motif, as Dionysian as the centaur and Apollo from the Temple of Zeus (fig. 2), prefigures the theme of the rape, which was to be a favorite of Picasso's. By 1904 the Dionysian spirit had begun to contort the faces of the Madman (fig. 6), the Crazy Man (Z I 184) and the Bearded Cripple Z I 222). The face of the Madman in particular takes on

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11 Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, Picasso, ill. 903.

Above: Picasso, The Race, 1922, tempera on wood, 12 3/4 x 16 3/4", Owned by the Artist.
Below: Greco-Roman Dionysiac Procession, n.d., stone relief.

Figure 5

Picasso, The Madman, 1904, gouache, 33 7/8 x 14 1/8", Museo Picasso, Barcelona: Z I 232.

Figure 6

an animal distortion that gives it a striking resemblence to the satyric faces from antiquity and to the face of Bacchus himself, as he appeared in Picasso's later prints. The Madman, with his satyric leering face, and his mad brothers, the Crazy Man and the Cripple, symbolize the spirit of craziness and mad rebellion that attracted Picasso at this time. He was turning away from a conventional, neo-classic perception of antiquity toward what could be called a "Neo-Dionysianism".

The Dionysian: Rebellion and Nietzsche

Apart from Picasso's own reading of Nietzsche, he could hardly have missed hearing about him. Throughout Europe and particularly in Barcelona commentaries on and interpretations of Nietzsche flourished. Anthony Blunt and Phoebe Pool include in their book, Picasso--The Formative Years, a discussion of the Nietzschean ambience in Barcelona and Madrid. "In the reviews to which Picasso contributed," they say, "such as Pel i Ploma, Joventut and Catalunya Artistica, there were frequently translations from German literature and articles on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche."[12] Significantly, perhaps, the articles included a long article by Pompeyo Gener entitled "Arte Dionisiaco." Blunt and Pool go on to say that "the version of the international fin-de-seicle movement flourishing in Barcelona emphasised 'Sturm und Drang,' a Nietzschean energy and defiance of the bourgeoise. . . ."[13] They also speculate:

> Nietzsche's doctrine probably reinforced Picasso's temperamental unwillingness to be a good apprentice, like Matisse, with steady artistic aims. His inclination towards constant changes of style would have fitted in with Nietzsche's belief that art proceeds by violent explosions. The Nietzschean cult of unhindered self-expression and contempt for Philistine and bourgeoise values may have helped Picasso to

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[12] Blunt and Pool, p. 7.

[13] ibid.

> disregard criticism and with 'Les Demoiselles d'Avignon' even to invite it."[14]

They emphasise the "cult of self" which had developed as an adaptation of the "will to power"--both stressing the importance of being strong and self-willed, in order to destroy the old values and to create new ones.

Although the conjectures of Blunt and Pool seem plausible, it is necessary to look more closely at Nietzsche's writing to understand its full significance, which is its characteristicly Dionysian spirit.

Dionysus, says Nietzsche, stands partly for "sensuality and cruelty. The perishable nature of existence might be interpreted as the joy of procreative and destructive force, as unremitting creation."[15] This statement echoes another from Sabartes describing Picasso as destroyer-creator:

> The problem which faced him was this: To begin anew, to create from the start or, as was his first impulse, to destroy the old idols, to shake the old temples to their very foundation, to appropriate the field wherein he could express himself in freedom. To renounce such a task would have seemed too facile to Picasso. To him, facility has always been, and continues to be the cause of all error, a pretext to abandon the struggle.[16]

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[14] ibid.

[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power (1872; rpt. New York: Russel and Russel), 1964, vol. 2, p. 417.

[16] Jaime Sabartés, Paintings and Drawings of Picasso (New York: Tudor), 1946, n.p.

A definitive statement from Nietzsche will also help us to clearly see the Dionysian essence of the rebellious spirit that was to lead away from representationalism and toward the cubist distortions of 1906:

> [For the creation of art] "a certain preliminary physiological state is indispensable: ecstasy. This state of ecstasy must first have intensified the susceptibility of the whole machine; otherwise, no art is possible. All kinds of ecstasy, however differently produced, have this power to create art, and above all the state dependent upon sexual excitement--this most venerable and primitive form of ecstasy. The same applies to that ecstasy which is the outcome of all great desires, all strong passions; the ecstasy of the feast, of the arena, of the act of bravery, of victory, or all extreme action; the ecstasy of cruelty; the ecstasy of destruction; . . . and finally the ecstasy of will, that ecstasy which results from accumulated and surging will-power, --the essential feature of ecstasy is the feeling of increased strength and abundance. . . . In this state a man enriches everything he sees, what he wills, he sees distended, compressed, strong, overladen with power,--until they are stamped with his perfection. This compulsion to transfigure into the beautiful is--Art."[17]

This Nietzschean description of the "highest" (meaning Dionysian) artist could serve as a description of Picasso: a man aware of the importance of the sexual and other passions, fascinated by the "arena" (of the bullfight) and the "ecstasy of cruelty", creating from his willfulness an incredible abundance of work, and a powerful, distorted vision expressed in his art. Certainly Salome for instance (1904-5, fig. 7) depicts sexual

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[17] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Twilight of the Gods (1889; rpt. New York: Russel and Russel, 1964), p. 66.

Picasso, Detail of Salome, 1904-5, drypoint; B 14.

Figure 7

passion in the figure resembling a Pope who observes the dancing Salome, as well as Dionysian cruelty in the presentation of John the Baptist's bloody head. The cubist "distention of form" (though not yet evident in Salome) is Dionysian as well, as Apollinaire (spokesman of the early Cubists) noted in 1912. Apollinaire heralded the Nietzschean and ultimately Dionysian origin of artistic distortion, which he called "The new measure of perfection that allows the artist to give objects the proportions appropriate to the degree of plasticity he wishes them to attain." He noted:

> "Nietzsche foresaw the possibility of such an art: 'O divine Dionysus, why are you pulling my ears?' Ariadne asks her philosophical lover in one of the famous dialogues on the Isle of Naxos. 'I find something very pleasant, very agreeable about your ears, Ariadne. Why aren't they even longer?'"[18]

Thus the distortion of form by the Cubists was, according to Guillaume Apollinaire, Dionysian in spirit.

There is a restraint on the Dionysian ecstasy of Picasso's distortionist art that prevents us from calling it unreservedly Dionysian. Even in Salome the sexual passion and cruelty is restrained by the Ingres-like

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[18] Guillaume Apollinaire, (from Les Soirées de Paris, April-May 1912; rpt. Apollinaire on Art, Essays and Reviews 1902-1918, ed. LeRoy C. Bromig, New York: Viking Press, 1960, Eng. trans. 1972), p. 223.

line that Picasso developed in his early, Apollonian drawings from the plaster casts. The simple, crisp, wiry line gives a clarity to everything it depicts, lifting it into a cooler, more lucid atmosphere than the subject matter might itself suggest. When the Cubist distortions became extreme they were often balanced with a stable grid-like structure of line and form and a concern with formal and abstract perfection that can only be described as "classic." Here the dialectic of the Apollonian and the Dionysian follows the same pattern established in the example (fig. 2) from Greek sculpture, in which the Dionysian excesses are held back by the forces of Apollo.

In 1915, after nearly a decade of fairly abstract works, Picasso returned suddenly to a realistic style (in his drawings and etchings). He had reverted to a style similar to that of his youthful academic exercises. The Ingres-like portrait of Vollard (Z II 922) reminded the sometimes grudging world that his works were distorted by choice, not by his inability to draw. There are many possible reasons for this return. He may have felt the need for representational works to preserve the likenesses of his friends and family. These portraits (as they are for the most part) might

also have been drawn as a complimentary opposite, as a discipline, or as a traditionalistic sounding board to his Cubist distortions.

The conservative impulses that led Picasso to turn back to a traditional realism also led him to turn again to the art of antiquity two years later, in 1917.

Rome and Pompeii

During the initial period of cubist exploration (c. 1907-17) the Dionysian spirit was alienated from its origins in Greek art: its original subject matter was forgotten or ignored. Modern, Cubist art was thought of by many (like Apollinaire) to be Dionysian, but Greek art was not. Apollinaire took Dionysian art to be the "indictment of Greek art"[19] rather than an intrinsic part of it. But when in 1917 Picasso made his miniature "Grand Tour" of Italy (Rome, Naples and Pompeii) he rediscovered the Dionysian side of Greek art itself. It was a major turning point in the development of his antiquarianism. He again turned his attention to Greek art, and especially to its Dionysian elements. He began moving toward his mature antiquarian style: a synthesis of his childhood neo-classicism and the Dionysian spirit. This synthesis is true to antique culture itself. As Nietsche said,

> "Whenever [we have] Apollonian culture, we must first triumph over titans and kill monsters. . . . Apollonian consciousness [is] but a thin veil hiding the Dionysian realm. . . . In order to comprehend this, we must take down the elaborate structure of Apollonian culture stone by stone until we discover its foundation."[20]

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[19] Apollinaire on Art, p. 223.

[20] Rose Pfeffer, Nietzsche, Disciple of Dionysus (Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press), 1972, pp. 37, 38.

Picasso, Rape, 1917, pencil drawing, 27.9 x 20.3 cm., Private Collection.

Figure 8

on an impressive volume and mass. His first such work was a print entitled Italian Woman from 1918/19 (Bloch no. 34). Italian Woman is shaded with parallel lines which, like the shading of woodcuts, curve around the body to indicate mass. The forcefulness of these lines emphasizes the monumentality of the figure. The next major work which summarizes these researches into monumentality is The Rape (fig. 9) done in 1920. Its resemblence to metope sculpture of the Parthenon has often been noted by art historians. William Rubin, for instance, has commented:

> "Its monumental, triangular figure group unquestionably evokes antique sculpture. . . . The proportions of the figures are not classical, yet it is precisely their exaggerated bulk which, like their terra-cotta color, which makes them seem more like sculptures than living figures."[21]

The Rape represents the culmination of several years' assimilation of the Roman influence. It takes up the Dionysian subject matter of the only sketch we have which was definitely done at Pompeii: the drawing of this same subject and title (The Rape, fig. 8). To restrain this emotional subject Picasso utilized a Roman, monumental volume. But the source of these bulky figures might not be just the Roman sculptures themselves: "Exaggerated

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[21] William Rubin, Picasso in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1972, p. 111.

Picasso, The Rape, 1920, oil on panel, 23 x 32 cm., Collection Philip L. Goodwin, New York.

Figure 9

bulk . . . , terra-cotta color . . . more like sculptures than living figures" might indicate that it was the plaster casts and copies remembered from Picasso's youth that inspired this painting and others like it. The blurring of surface articulation in plaster copies contributes to an exaggerated bulk, and the lightness and absorbency of plaster also suggests "bulk" rather than weight (as well as a "terra-cotta color," since the plaster absorbes paint and gives it a pastel appearance). The opaque, matte surface of plaster also gives it a "dead" effect that more translucent marble does not have, and, combined with its blurred appearance, the effect of a plaster copy is of a statue rather than a "living figure."

Whatever the source, the monumental style was to dominate Picasso's painting for several years, during which there are many paintings of massive women such as those we see in The Race of 1922 (fig. 5) and The Rape (fig. 9). The graphic work continued in much the same mode with drawings and prints of statuesque women (Z IV 359) dressed in classical robes. A 1923-4 lithographic series featured women who resemble the Three Goddesses from the east pediment of the Parthenon, with their blocky mass and flowing drapery (B 64-68).

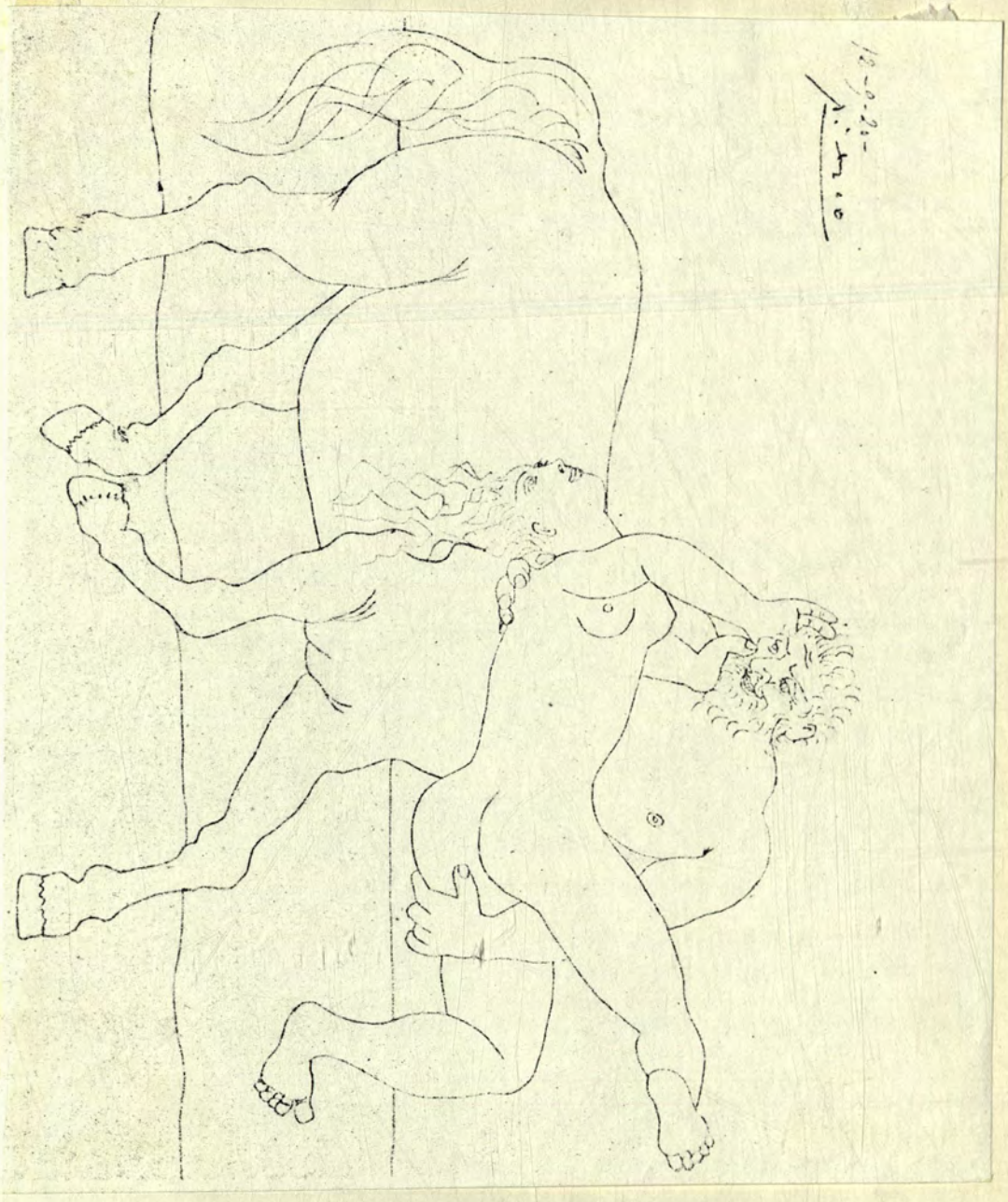
The net effect of Picasso's visit to Italy was to revive an interest in antiquity that had been dormant during

the initial period of Cubist experimentation (c. 1907 -17). The eroticism of the Pompeian frescos contributed to a growing awareness of the Dionysian aspect of antique art which he developed primarily in theme of the rape. The monumentality of Roman art influenced Picasso as well, and called forth a new influence from the classic plaster statues of his earliest years.

The Literary Period, 1920-35

Picasso's curiosity about antiquity had been stimulated by the visit to Italy. By 1920 he had begun to look into the literature of Greece and Rome, and from about 1920 until 1935 he produced scores of prints inspired by what he had read. It was during this "literary period", from 1920 to 1935, that Picasso achieved and brought to fruition a complete antiquarian style--a classic line depicting subjects from Greek myth--which clearly resembles the engraving on the backs of Etruscan bronzes and the paintings on Greek vases.

The classic line that was an important element in this style had long been developing in Picasso's oeuvre. Beginning with his academic studies of plaster casts, it reappeared in Salome in 1905, in his cubist prints (c. 1906-9) and in the Ingres-like drawings of 1915. It developed into pure outline in the drawing of the rapist from 1917 (fig. 8) and in the drawings of bathers from 1918 (Z III 233). It was with Nessus and Deianira, one of several drawings of that subject from 1920, that the fortunate marriage of Picasso's classic outline with Greek subject matter was first consummated (fig. 10). The carefully rounded, regular line suggests a deliberate emulation of Etruscan bronze engravings (fig. 11). Picasso drew several versions of this scene in which one can see



Picasso, Nessus and Deianira, 1920, pencil; Z IV 184.

Figure 10

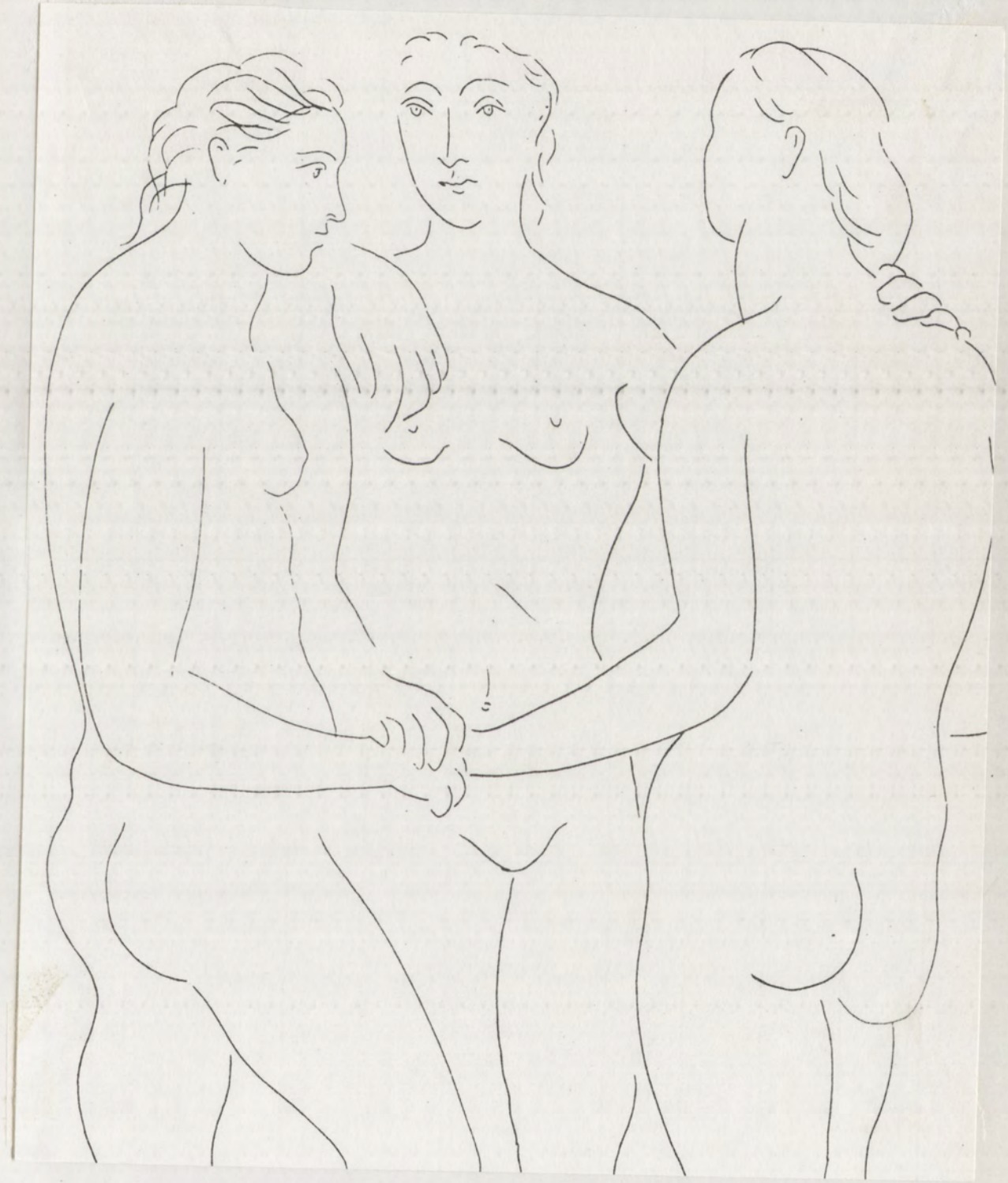
Etruscan Bronze, end of 3rd cent. B.C., 35.5 cm., J.P. Morgan Library, New York.

Figure 11

the progressive, careful adjustment of edges that is so critical to the expressive purposes of the outline style.

The smooth outline proved ideal for the etching needle, and in 1922 Picasso began to produce an intermittent series of nudes which eventually became the Three Graces (fig. 13). In this series he explored the nuances of composition and coincidence of edge that are part of the language of pure line. As he experimented with different poses, developing his ability to compose small groups, he also trained his hand to the tense responsivity that was necessary to follow the rippling curves of the nude. These skills were to be essential for his later book illustrations. In the meantime some works of a very different nature intervened when Picasso assisted in the production of two plays, Antigone (1922) and Mercury (1924).

Picasso's friend Cocteau produced Antigone, adapting Sophocles' version of the play (c. 411 B.C.) without changing its plot. The story of Antigone is a continuation of Oedipus: when Oedipus was reduced to a blind beggar, it was his daughter Antigone who tended him. The play begins after the death of Oedipus, when Antigone and her sister are bemoaning the more recent death of their two brothers, who have killed each other. Antigone attempts to bury at least one of them, Polynices, even



Picasso, Detail from The Three Friends, 1927, etching, B 76.

Figure 12

though it had been prohibited by the local ruler, Creon. As punishment, she is buried alive in a vault. Finally she kills herself, followed by her lover Haemon and Creon's queen Euridice, who stab themselves from grief. Cocteau's version ends with Creon begging for his own death. Picasso designed the decor for the 1922 production and painted a number of the masks of the chorus that were part of the set (which has since disappeared).

Mercury (1924) was a ballet widely conceded by the other contributors to be largely Picasso's own work.[22] It was constructed on "a succession of episodes in which Mercury figures, and was described in the program as 'Poses Plastiques.' That is to say, it evolved by grouping."[23] Picasso and Massine, who wrote the libretto, denied any "erotic or provocative intentions"[24] but most reviewers found it "derisive, erotic and intended to shock."[25] Cooper described the scenes of the play:

> "The first tableau consisted of an amorous scene at night between Apollo and Venus, who were attended by the Signs of the Zodiac. Mercury, furiously jealous, appeared and slayed Apollo,

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22 Douglas Cooper, Picasso Theatre (New York: Harry Abrams), 1967, p. 54.

23 ibid.

24 ibid., p. 56.

25 ibid.

> but immediately used his magic powers to revive him. The principal numbers in this tableau were Night, The Dance of Tenderness, the Signs of the Zodiac and the Dance of Mercury. The second tableau centered around the Three Graces, who were shown bathing, Mercury appeared, took advantage of the situation to steal their pearls, and then ran away hotly pursued by Cerebrus. The principal numbers of this tableau were The Dance of the Graces, The Flight of Mercury, The Wrath of Cerebrus. The third tableau showed a feast in the house of Bacchus. Mercury, attended by Polichinel (sic), invented the alphabet and performed some wierd dances to amuse the guests, among whom was Prosirpine, [sic?] who was discovered by Pluto and carried off with the help of Chaos into the Underworld. The main numbers in this tableau were The Polka of Letters, The New Dance, Chaos and the Rape of Proserpine."[26]

The "Three Graces" did not much resemble the delicate Graces of the prints which Picasso was making at that time: these Graces were "men, wearing wigs of long black hair and outsize false breasts painted red."[27]

The eroticism and violence of Antigone and Mercury did not appear immediately in Picasso's prints (or in his paintings). His first reaction to these excesses was evidently to draw back and take a calm look at his recent exposure to Greco-Roman drama. Among the clutter on the table of Still Life With Antique Head (fig. 13) from the following year (1925) we can discover several objects which symbolize a new regard for antiquity gained from Picasso's reading and experience. The painting is

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[26] ibid., pp. 56, 57.

[27] ibid., p. 58.

Picasso, Still Life With Antique Head, 1925, oil, 38 1/4 x 51 1/4 cm., Museé national d'Art moderne, Paris.

Figure 13

dark in tone, as if it were painted in a walnut-paneled study. An antique bust on the right shows two views simultaneously--one a three-quarters head facing an open book and a mandolin, and the other a profile that seems to be turning an ear toward the columns of what might be a Greek temple in the background.

The bust in Still Life is greenish-black. The features and contours have been outlined by some sharp instrument (presumably) that has scratched through the paint, leaving a thin white line of exposed canvas showing through. The method and effect is nearly identical to Attic black-figure painting of the sixth century B.C. It is also an etching technique: the incised outline developed in the series of the Three Graces had not been forgotten, and neither had its ultimate origin in Greek vase painting.

Reading from antique literature for subject matter, using antique busts for models, and drawing with a classic line derived from Greek vase painting in the tradition of Ingres, Picasso might have recalled his early neo-classic days, drawing from plaster copies of antique sculpture. The neo-classicist's studio began to haunt him. The Studio, a painting from 1925 (fig. 14) collects the attributes of the neo-classic painter in a still life: "a stage set, an antique bust, an open book, fragments of

Picasso, The Studio, 1925, oil, 38 5/8 x 51 5/8 cm., Private Collection.

Figure 14

arms and hands . . . the square and the laurel branch."[28]

Picasso must have puzzled about the relationship of his antiquarian style to his modern Cubist style (which was more evident in his paintings than in his prints). In this mood he consented to illustrate Le Chef Oeuvre Inconnu--The Unknown Masterpiece--by Balzac. The Unknown Masterpiece concerns the dilemma of an artist who worked for years on a mysterious masterpiece which, when it was unveiled, proved to be a nearly undecipherable scramble with only a foot discernable. This artist as Picasso interpreted him became a nearly nude bearded man--clearly a Greek--who personified the neo-classic, traditional artist, in a puzzled relationship to his modern, abstract work (fig. 15) and to his often classic models. In his studio classic allusions abound, from living and plaster models that resemble the Three Graces (B 90) and women in antique dress with laurel crowns (B 83) to busts that might well have been Greek (B 82). The Unknown Masterpiece series of etchings is done in the classic line (which is ultimately Greek) that is by this time omnipresent in Picasso's prints.

The quality of line was commented on by Picasso in connection with a discussion on his next major illustrated

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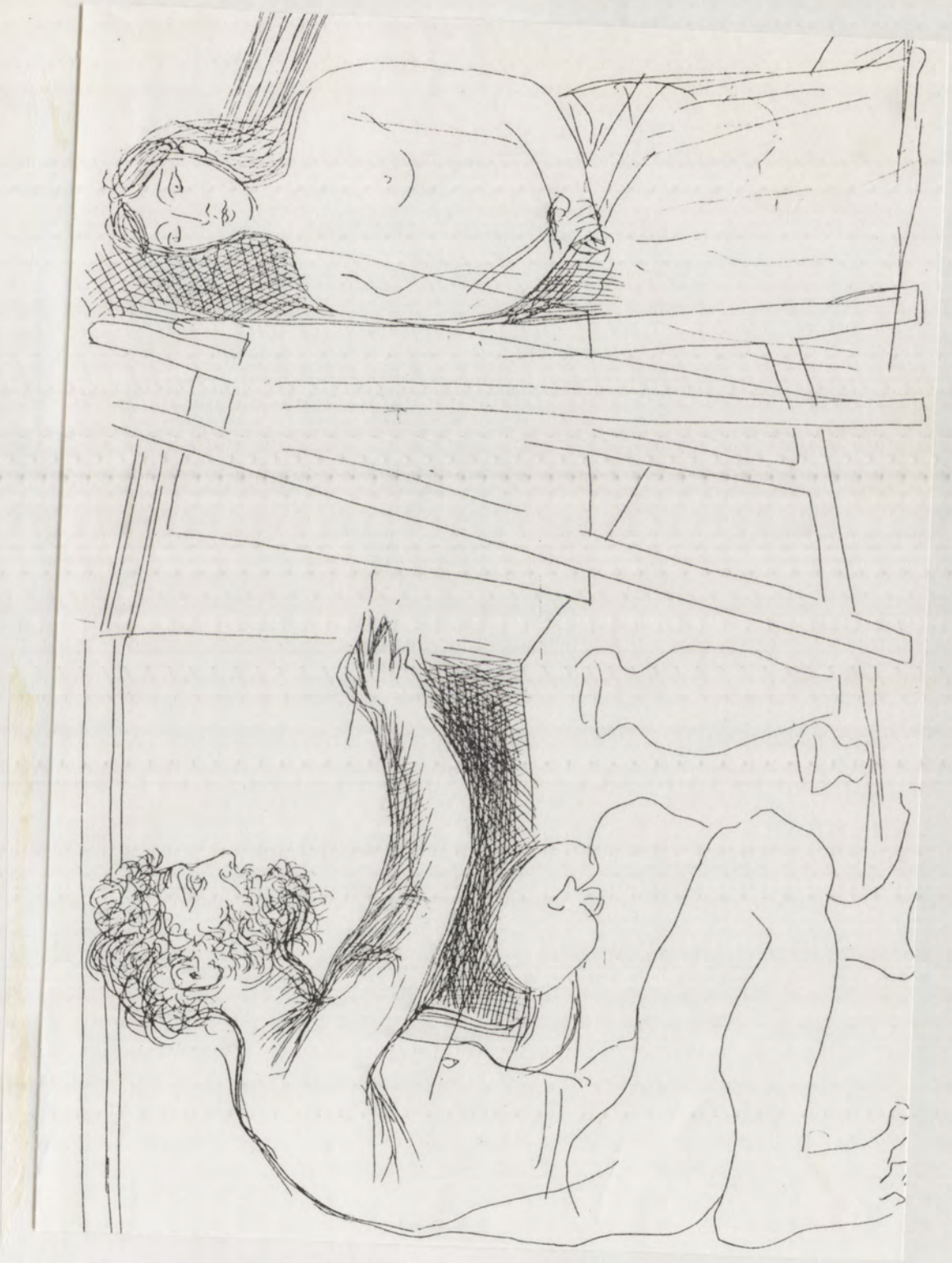
[28] Jean Leymarie, Picasso: The Artist of the Century (New York: Viking Press), 1972, p. 172.



Picasso, Artist and Model from Le Chef Oeuvre Inconnu, 1927, etching: B 93.

Figure 15

book, Metamorphoses:

> Picasso: "Obviously, line drawing alone evades imitation. That is why I was telling you the other day how much I like Metamorphoses. . . ."
>
> Kahnweiler: "Yes, in line drawing there is no imitated light, whereas the very purpose of painting is to imitate light."
>
> Picasso: "That's right, line drawing has its own light, self-created, not imitated."[29]

The diagrammatic simplicity of the line and the "bloom" of the white paper create a timeless, classic atmosphere.

In Metamorphoses, classic line and Dionysian myth were again united as they had been in 1920 with Nessus. Picasso began to etch the illustrations for Metamorphoses in 1930. The book, by Ovid, is a collection of mythological tales centered around the theme of miraculous transformation. It was known as "the painters' Bible" by neo-classic painters, who perused it for their subject matter. It seems likely that Picasso was as attracted to the overriding theme of transformation as much as to the individual myths, since his own work was constantly "metamorphising" (referring to the fluctuations of style which occured throughout his life, and to the various "transformations," in Nietzschean language, to which he subjected the human figure).

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[29] ibid., p. 243.

Chief among Picasso's interests in mythology were the myths relating to Dionysus. Although Dionysus is not openly depicted in the illustrations to Metamorphoses, Dionysian themes are found in the myths that Picasso chose to illustrate, including some of the most important of his illustrations. Significantly, the first known print for the book was of Orpheus being torn apart by Meanads (or Bacchantes, female followers of Dionysus) because he preferred the worship of Dionysus to Apollo. This is a key work because it demonstrates Picasso's interest in the conflict between Apollo and Dionysus. He did two versions of it: the first (fig. 16) which was not published in the book, and the second (fig. 17) which was published. If we examine these two prints we can tell a great deal about Picasso's attitudes toward the two poles of Greco-Roman culture. The first plate is more deeply shaded than the second, and does not possess the smooth, confident linear style of the later, complete series. In this first plate we find a chaotic jumble of limbs and heads, with a compostionally very strong V -shape (formed by two narrow staffs) meeting at the exact point where Orpheus' head is about to tear from his body. In conjunction with another line the V-shape becomes a chevron enclosing Orpheus, and is about to break him in two. The V-shape points to the subject with the incisive-

Figure 16: Picasso, Orpheus, 1930, etching; B 1317.

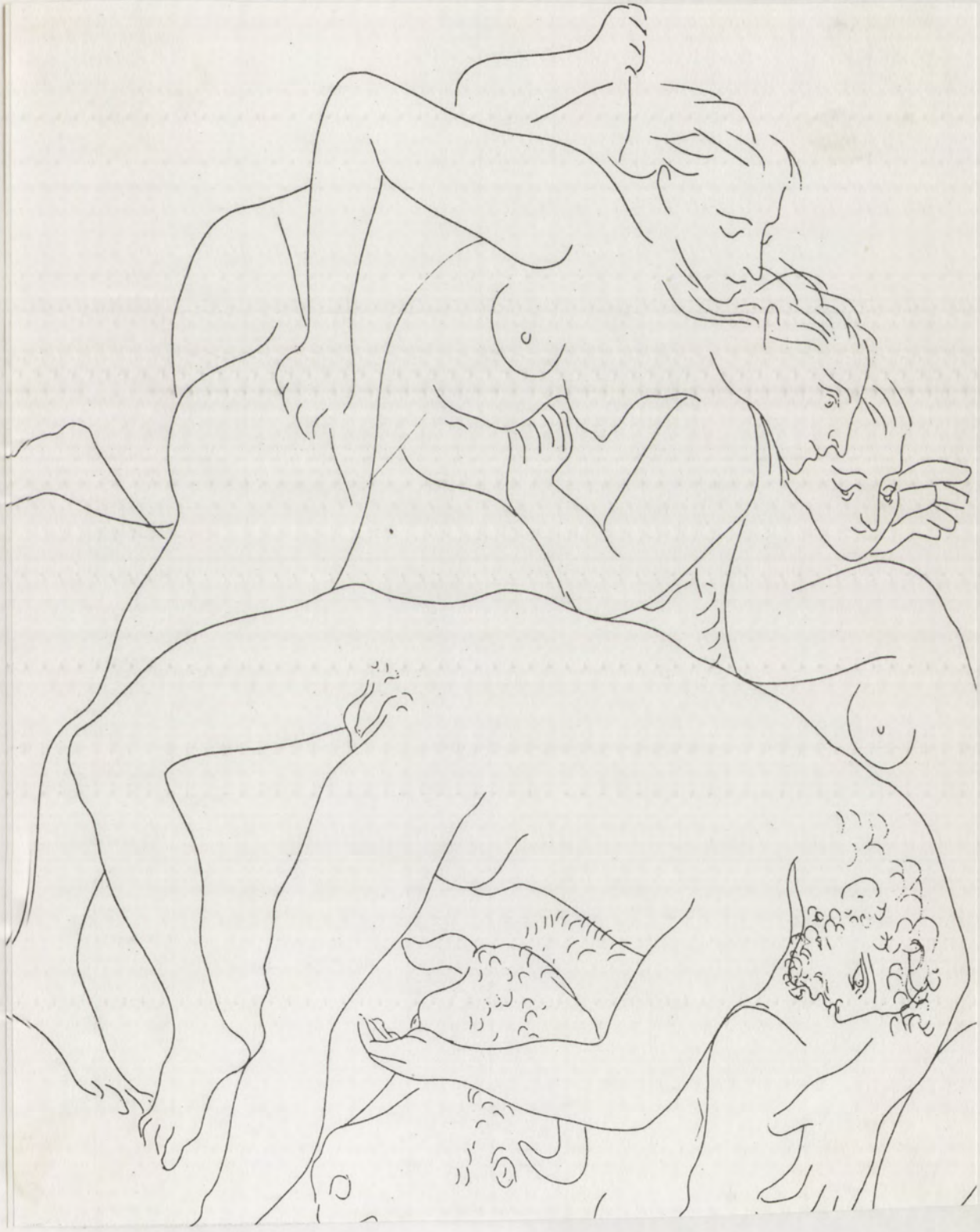

Figure 17: Picasso, Orpheus, 1930, etching; B 120.

ness of an anatomy lecturer's pointer, but this device is crude in comparison with the later print. The final print is more confident in composition and style. A roughly triangular group of women visually on top of Orpheus seems to be breaking his back with its sheer weight. Both prints contrast the essentially changeable nature of the Dionysian maenads to the essential inflexibility and fragility of the Apollonian Orpheus. As Picasso has drawn the maenads, they are easily capable of fluid metamorphosis, even to the extent of exchanging heads. (The ownership of their heads is in question--several of them could easily belong to several different bodies.) Orpheus, by way of contrast, is not as flexible or adaptable as to have (potentially) several heads or bodies. His head is firmly fixed and does not bend or shift: it breaks.

Among the other scenes from Metamorphoses which Picasso illustrated was The Love of Jupiter and Semele (fig. 18). This was the liason that produced Dionysus, but distroyed Semele, his mother, who was disintegrated by the energy of Jupiter. One of Picasso's preliminary studies for Metamorphoses was of this scene--much the same in style but less confident in composition than the later published state (cf. B 104 and B 1371). In these prints, as in the others in the series, a wiry but fluid

Picasso, Detail of The Love of Jupiter and Semele, 1930, etch.; B 104.

Figure 18

line defines but does not restrict the bodies of Jupiter and Semele, who appear capable of changing into any shape the composition might require. The boundaries of Jupiter's shoulders shift, on closer observation, from a side view, shielding Semele in the crook of his arm, to a massive frontal view in which Jupiter threatens Semele with brutish destruction. (This is just one adaptation of the technique of Cubism, which presents many views simultaneously or, as we might alternatively perceive them, the metamorphosis of one form or shape into another.) In the suggestive curves in Jupiter's hair we might find the hint of an animal face, gaping with horror at the unwilled destruction, and, in Semele's, the upturned despairing face of a mortal doomed to destruction by her love for a god--but these things are uncertain. Overall, these pictures are more taciturn--it is the classic repose we see most clearly. If we can see any of the cruelty and bestiality of the gods and of Nature it is very faintly. But whatever the case may be, it is safe to say that there is, in the shoulders of Jupiter for instance, the hint of the Jupiter whose visitation means annihilation for Semele. Less ominously, we can see in the shifting perspectives derived from Cubism an analogy to the idea of metamorphosis.

The third reference to Dionysus in Picasso's etchings

for Metamorphoses occurs in the scene in which the daughters of Minyas denied that Bacchus (Dionysus) was the son of Jupiter, and failed to go to an important festival in his honor (B 106). As punishment, they were turned into bats. The failure to recognize the divinity of Dionysus relates to an important fact about the early recognition of that god. An early Greek myth regarding Dionysus has it that in his first years among men he was not accepted as a god. It is likely that this myth refers to the historical fact of the reticence of the Greeks to accept as a god a figure who represented the chaotic and the bacchanalian--qualities which might have seemed to be in need of suppression instead of recognition and encouragement.[30] However, Dionysus was accepted and incorporated into the Greek pantheon, and probably for reasons similar to Nietzsche's advocacy of the Dionysian. (The central reason being that to fail to recognize the Dionysian is to be blind to an important side of human existence. As Nietzsche claimed, it is no solution to the problem of man's animal nature simply to ignore it--better to recognize it, and ultimately exalt it.) For the Greeks, the penalty for rejecting the animal side of

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[30] This is somewhat speculative, but based on the standard accounts of the importation of Dionysiac worship from Thracian religion, opposing an extant Apollonian religion in Greece.

man, as did the daughters of Minyas when they refused to attend the orgiastic festival in honor of Dionysus, was to be turned into something as unappealing as a bat.

Reading and illustrating the myths collected by Ovid in Metamorphoses apparently stimulated Picasso's interest in Greek myth even more than his vist to Italy had. After discharging his obligation to his publisher by completing the illustrations to Metamorphoses (1932), he began a series of prints in which a very personal interpretation of Greco-Roman myth can be found. In these prints, many of which were later to appear together in the Vollard Suite (1939), Picasso distilled from his readings a personal mythology, adapted from the old myths, much as they had been adapted in Mercury (1924). The parallels with the play, in fact, are important. In each print a number of mythic figures (i.e., Bacchus, the Minotaur, a faun, etc.) are grouped in a symbolic tableau, as they were in Mercury. As the story of Mercury progressed by a series of tableaux and "poses plastiques," Picasso's personal mythology progressed print by print, tableau by tableau. The significance of each configuration, and of the succession of the prints, undoubtedly had some highly personal overtones for Picasso, some part of which a perceptive viewer can discover.

The sequence of these highly personal prints that Picasso undertook soon after completing Metamorphoses began with a revival of the Greek hero-artist in his studio (fig. 15). In contrast to the artist in The Unknown Masterpiece, the artist here is not a painter, but a sculptor, and not only his living models but also his statues (not always easy to distinguish) resemble the plaster statues which Picasso had used as models years before (fig. 19).[31] These prints are related to the paintings of the neo-classic studio (see above) and to the illustrations to Balzac's and Ovid's books. They reflect Picasso's relationship to his past and specifically to his early neo-classicism.

It was Picasso's meeting with the classically-profiled Marie-Therese Walter in 1932 that electrified the series of prints. Marie-Therese, with her Greek features and smooth robust form must have seemed to Picasso like one of his Three Graces come to life. No less entranced than Pygmalion, Picasso fell in love with her and she became his mistress and model. Henceforth in Picasso's prints the Greek sculptor's model was less aloof, and could often been seen lounging familiarly with him (fig. 19) on some studio couch.

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[31] Leymarie has noted (Picasso, p. 198) that "nothing visual is ever lost on Picasso, and . . . in the drawings of his maturity, we find the exact patterns of his early studies and sketches from plaster casts."

Picasso, Sculptor, Model, and Sculpture, 1933, etching; B 147.

Figure 19

Marie-Therese called up for Picasso many bacchic visions which appear in the prints of the Vollard Suite. For the first time in the prints, Bacchus himself appears. Fleshy, leering, boldly-drawn, he lies among sprawling female bodies, toasting his half-animal companion, the Minotaur, in Bacchic Scene With Minotaur (1933, fig. 20). This print and others symbolize an attitude that must be described as Dionysian. In more modern language, it might be called "animalistic": exhibiting the belief that men are also animals, and that they should be allowed the free exercise of animal desires. In fact, it is the half-animal Minotaur that shares the bacchic role in this period.

A more reflective mood pervades the Young Man With Mask of a Bull, Faun and Profile of Woman (1934, fig. 21). In this print we can see how the elements of Picasso's antiquarianism have been related to each other in a kind of tableau. Within the print a darkly chiaroscuroed classic profile of a woman on the left, possibly Marie-Therese (one is tempted to say that every such profile in this period is of her) gazes into nothingness with the solemnity of a stone sphyinx: she represents the calm contemplative mood of the Apollonian spirit. A youth to the right of her holds the mask of a bull which looks as if it might be his own head (making him a Minotaur):

Picasso, Bacchic Scene With Minotaur, 1933, etching, B 192.

Figure 20

Picasso, Young Man With Mask of Bull, a Faun and a Profile of a Woman, 1934, etching; B 279.

Figure 21

he turns his head with a roguish expression to the whispers of the classical past, undecided between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. On the far right a boldly-drawn faun/Bacchus balances both with a leer, squinting into his wine glass and holding onto his beard as if his head, too, was a mask which might might easily fall off because of the wine he has drunk. This figure clearly represents Dionysus.

The masks suggest that Picasso was in one of his reflective moods and was trying on a number of antique masks, like the youth above, to see how they suited him.

Antique heads have been seen in The Studio (fig. 14), in Still Life With Antique Head (fig. 13), in the various prints of the artist in his studio, and throughout the Vollard Suite. At about this time they began to interest Picasso to an even greater extent. He did a plate of nine Pompeian-style heads which reproduced the appearance of flaking fresco or encaustic (1934, B 285). But it was the plaster bust that interested him most. Picasso about this same time created a number of famed plaster busts of Marie-Therese at Boisgeloup. In these busts Picasso explored the rounded forms of her face in the white plaster that he still associated with classic form.

The next tableau in this continuing drama inspired by Marie-Therese was a more ominous one. Picasso's affair with her was beginning to disrupt his marriage to Olga. Picasso at this point decided to illustrate Lysistrata--a comedy by Aristophanes (c. 411 B.C.) concerned with the power of women and of sex in the lives of men (fig. 22). Although this subject may have been suggested to Picasso by one of his publishers, as some of his subjects were, its relevancy to his marital situation must have helped influence him to illustrate it. The setting of the story is the war between Sparta and Athens. Since the men had failed to bring the war to an end, it occured to Lysistrata (whose name means "Disbander of Armies") that she and the other women could force the men to make peace by taking a "sex strike" until they ended the war. Peace was soon concluded. All in all, the play is a farcical but half-serious plea for peace, as well as a wry comment on human nature.

The first preparatory work for Lysistrata which has been published was of the subject which probably inspired Picasso's choice of this play: The Complaint of the Women (B 1371). The first work which was published with the play itself was The Accord Among the Warriors

267 Serment des Femmes

Eau-forte et aquatinte
15 janvier 1934
22,0×15,3 cm (G. 387/II/B)

268 Couple et Enfant

Eau-forte 24 janvier 1934
20,6×13,6 cm (G. 388/B)

269 Cinésias et Myrrhine

Eau-forte 17 janvier 1934
22,2×15,3 cm (G. 389/II/B)

270 Deux Vieillards et Voilier

Eau-forte 4 février 1934
21,0×13,9 cm (G. 390/B)

271 Accord entre les Guerriers de Sparte et d'Athènes

Eau-forte 13 janvier 1934
21,1×15,3 cm (G. 391/II/B)

272 Le Festin

Eau-forte 17 janvier 1934
22,3×15,1 cm (G. 392/II/B)

Picasso, Lysistrata illustrations, 1934, etching;
B 267-272.

Figure 22

of Sparta and Athens (1934, fig. 22). Within the stiff military panoply of the Accord is a subtly funny psychological exchange between the men and the women in the scene. The haggard appearance of the man on the right takes on, when we know the story, a fuller meaning than just battle-weariness. The handshake between the leaders of the two armies, with the woman in the background looking on with smug satisfaction, becomes a wry acknowledgement of human foibles. This is a different kind of peacemaking--not the noble surrender of a worthy but defeated foe, but an admission of common weakness by both sides. (It might be added that this is also an acknowledgement, symbolically speaking, of the power of the sexual aspect of Dionysus.)

One of the last works for Lysistrata, in the order of completion, is the festival (fig. 22) in which the men and women are reunited in a bacchanal. In the very center of the print is the wine vessel which only a short time later appears in another print in the hands of Bacchus, who is leering at the blank-looking bust of a woman (B 274). Possibly the Lysistrata series, with its theme of the triumph of women over men, seemed too humiliating to Picasso, so he produced his own alternative ending to the play, in which a male-virility

figure (Bacchus) confronts these presumptuous women.

If there had been any such confrontation between Picasso and the two women in his life at that time, there is no record of its success. The anticipated birth of a daughter (Maia, possibly named after the Roman goddess) by Marie-Therese in 1935 precipitated a growing crisis that disrupted Picasso's marriage and eventually disolved it. During this period the Minotaur, once so confident, becomes a tragic figure. The Minotaur finds himself perplexed at the illogic of the world of which he is now the victim, as a bull in a ring (fig. 23).

In the print masterpiece of Picasso's oeuvre, the Minotauromachia (1934, B 228), the Minotaur stands blinded, beset by a female toreador. Here, as in other prints of this period (fig. 24), the influence of Antigone finally surfaces. The Minotaur is blind and helpless, like Oedipus, and must also be led by a woman, as Antigone led her blind, wandering father. (The daughter-like woman in these prints seems again to be Marie-Therese.)

By the summer of 1934 the once-powerful Minotaur had packed up his belongings, and was pulling them and his broken horse along in a cart (Z VIII 211). The birth of Maia had contributed to the breakup of the Picasso

Picasso, Minotaur Defeated by Youth in Arena, (Dying Minotaur), 1933, etching; B 198.

Figure 23

Picasso, Blind Minotaur Led Through Night by Girl With Fluttering Dove, 1934, combined technique; B 225.

Figure 24

household. For a while prints of the Minotaur as a tragic figure continued. Picasso's work then ceased completely (or has been withheld because of its personal nature) for a period of about twenty months beginning early in 1935.

There have been no prints published from the year 1935. From that year, there is only Picasso's statement (to Christian Zervos) which disowns traditional, Greek-inspired art, and which for all practical purposes ends this period of influence of Greco-Roman literature (1920-35):

> "Academic training in beauty is a sham. We have been deceived, but so well deceived that we can scarcely get back even a shadow of the truth. The beauties of the Parthenon, Venuses, Nymphs, Narcissuses, are so many lies. Art is not the application of a canon of beauty but what the instinct and the brain can conceive beyond any canon. When we love a woman we don't start measuring her limbs. We love with our desires--although everything has been done to try and apply a canon even to love. The Parthenon is really only a farmyard over which someone put a roof; colonnades and sculptures were added because there were people in Athens who happened to be working, and wanted to express themselves."[32]

It seems that when Picasso's affair with Marie-Therese soured his family life, he turned against the antiquarian art that the affair had inspired. Love and antiquity,

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[32] Alfred Barr, Picasso: Fifty years of His Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1947, pp. 273-4.

conjoined in the above statement as they were in the Vollard Suite, were apparently both destroyed in Picasso's eyes with the breakup of his marriage.

Besides his personal life, there were other events that contributed to the abandonment of traditional art. The beginning tremors of the Spanish Civil War and Picasso's growing sympathies with the Communist Party led him into a concern for public affairs, and he began to demand revolutionary solutions. "There is nothing more dangerous than . . . a paintbrush in the hand of a painter. Just think of the danger to society!"[33] The past was irrelevant or reactionary. He spoke against painters who were "absorbed with bringing the past back to life--when truly the whole world is open before us, everything waiting to be done, not just redone. To repeat is to run counter to spiritual laws; essentially escapism."[34] Whatever his motivations, for a long time after 1935 there were very few works employing either an antique motif or a classic style, and the period of Greco-Roman literary influence was over.

The main inpact of Picasso's reading from the works of antiquity had been to increase his knowledge and

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33 ibid., p. 272, (1935).

34 ibid., p. 274.

interest in the ancient myths, comedies and tragedies. He turned to the creatures of mythology, like Bacchus and the Minotaur, in order to have some personifications for the many aspects of the confusion around him. From his readings he distilled a private mythology adapted from the old myths. Picasso created a Greek hero-artist (in The Unknown Masterpiece) in whose studio the confrontation between his neo-classic heritage and his modern Cubist style was met. Bacchus and the Minotaur were adapted to personify his Dionysian moods (largely inspired by Marie-Therese). As his personal life began to be disrupted he turned to an increasingly tragic Minotaur for a symbol, who then took on overtones of the blind Oedipus that Picasso had known from Antigone.

Soon however, even the tragic Minotaur was inadequate to symbolize Picasso's distress, and his work ceased. When he roused himself enough to make a statement to Zervos in 1935 it was in favor of a break with the past, and a new start. The contradictions of world affairs, of art and of his personal life seemed to preclude anything except a revolutionary solution. His work took on a political dimension in Guernica (1937) and The Dream and Lie of Franco (1937) and sometime later (1944) he joined the Communist Party. Antiquarian work declined, almost ceased, and did not fully resume until 1944.

The Pastoral Period: The Triumph of Pan

In August 1944, with his windows rattling from the fighting around Paris, Picasso began an interpretation of Poussin's Bacchanale: The Triumph of Pan (1638-9). He was reported to have said that at the time he felt the need for "a more disciplined art. Less unconstrained freedom in a time like this is the artist's defence and guard." Furthermore, "it was an exercise, a self-discipline. . . ."[35] This is probably as perfect an example as can be found of Picasso's turning to the stability of the Apollonian, or the neo-classic, as an antedote to chaotic forces when they threaten to overwhelm the artist.

In Greek myth, Pan is a native of Arcadia, the half-goat son of Hermes (Mercury). Pan shares many characteristics with the goat; his amorous nature being among them. In this period of confusion during the approach of the Allies outside Paris, and with the possibility of revengeful destruction in Paris by the retreating German Army, another of Pan's characteristics might have been foremost in Picasso's mind: his ability to cause stampede-like panic among men.

The riot-torn last days of the war in France may

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35 Barr, Picasso, p. 242.

have caused Picasso concern, but it also meant that he was to be freed from the grip of the Nazis (who considered him to be a degenerate artist). For the first time in many years he was free also to return to the Mediterranean beaches where he had summered every year from 1919 until 1939, when the war had restricted travel. With the end of the war he returned to the seaside that inspired his mythological creatures. Henceforth there was to be little restraint on the exuberant Pan and the other creatures of Arcadia beyond, at first, a faint memory of the war.

During the war years it would have been unwise to express any overt comments on the war, but in freedom in Golf-Juan, a Mediterranean town near Antibes, Picasso produced a long series of drawings of the combat of a faun and a centaur (Z XV 203 ff., Aug. 1946). A few lines from Nietzsche capture the post-war mood of Picasso:

> "Nature speaks to us through Dionysian art and its tragic symbolism in a voice that is true and undisguised. 'Be like me, the original mother who, under constant changes of appearances is eternally creating and eternally giving birth and finding joy and satisfaction.' . . . In spite of pity and terror we are happy in having life, not as individuals but as part of a life force with whose procreative lust we have become one."[36]

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[36] Rose Pfeffer, Nietzsche; Disciple of Dionysus (Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press), 1972, p. 63.

The "tragic symbolism" of the warring centaur and faun soon changed into a bucolic celebration of life in a cycle of paintings at Antibes, the best known of which is the Joy of Life, from 1946.

In Antibes in the summer of '46 Picasso found he lacked space for a studio, and was offered a floor of the Antibes museum in the refurbished Grimaldi Palace. Picasso had first seen the palace around 1920, when, walking along, he saw some small boys disappear into a hole in a wall, and following them found himself in the Palace Grimaldi. The palace had been built over the ruins of a Roman castrum which had supplanted the even earlier Phocaean city of Antipolis. This setting, saturated with the history of the Mediterranean, crystalized Picasso's interest in antiquity in 1920 (when he drew the Nessus and Deianira series) and his return in 1946 inspired a whole new series of antiquarian works characterized by a pastoral spirit (fig. 25). As Picasso said;

> "Every time I come to Antibes, it takes hold of me; it takes hold of me over and over again. . . . I cannot explain the call. Here at Cannes I don't think about it. Why? But in Antibes this antiquity seizes hold of me every time. . . . [emphasis Picasso's]. I had painted centaurs and satyrs before; I did plenty of them Menerbes, but I had come to Antibes long before. . . ."[37]

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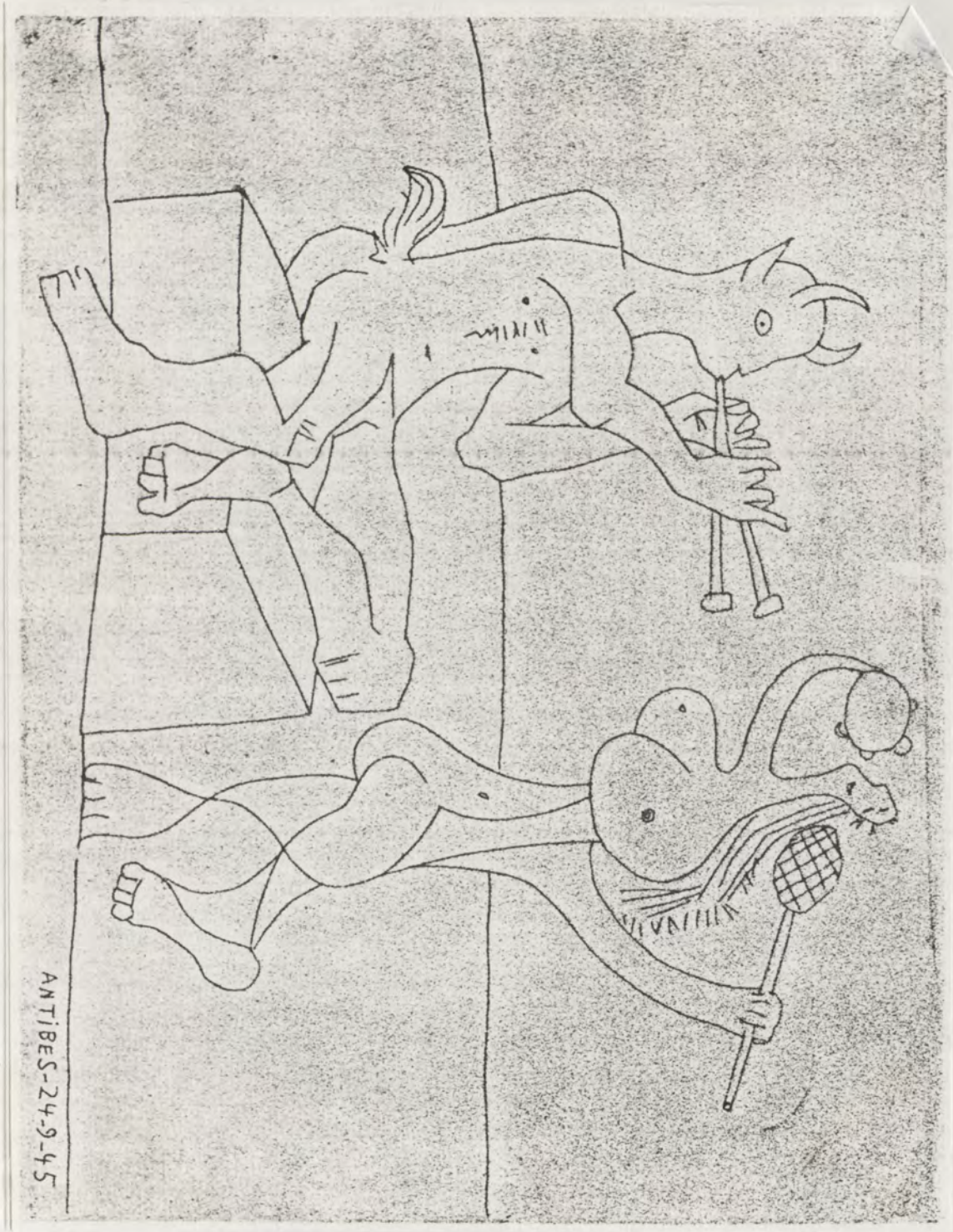
37 Dor de la Souchere, Picasso in Antibes (New York: Pantheon Books), 1960, pp. 55,6.



Picasso, Pan and Dancer, 1945, etching; state of B 1341.

Figure 25

Centaurs, satyrs, bacchantes, and other pastoral creatures fill Picasso's work after the war. They are symbolic of the Dionysian "procreative lust" of the "life force." Furthermore, for perhaps the first time, these creatures are unconstrained by classic form. Now their form as well as their content is Dionysian. In Picasso's prints as well as his paintings the classic, restraining form was fast disappearing. The wiry, Ingres-like line that had dominated his work during the Literary Period was replaced at first by a more expressionistic line, and then by painterly efforts in media like lithography and the sugar-lift process of etching.

As the Minotaur had been the most important character in the unhappy days at the end of the Literary Period, the centaur becomes the primary mythological creature in this pastoral period. The centaur is a very important member of Picasso's mythological menagerie, because it appears so frequently and because it is an almost perfect personification of the Dionysian spirit. (This role of the centaur has been seen in the example of the centaur fighting Apollo from the pediment of the Temple of Zeus.)

In 1947, shortly after his visit to Antibes, Picasso illustrated Dos Contes--Two Stories--written in Catalan by one of his old Catalonian friends, Ramon Réventos.

The first story is about a "Catalonian, who takes into his employment a Centaur, with whom he passes through various adventures until he finds the right job for him --as tutor to his children."[38] The second tale is about a faun, the sole survivor from antiquity, who emigrates to Spain and becomes, after a series of jobs, a variety artist. He falls in love with a woman who deceives him, and he returns to the forest where he dies.

There is a low-keyed humor in this work--the domesticated centaur, the Dionysian reveller tamed (fig. 26) --but Picasso interprets the story in a serious and sympathetic way. His centaurs and fauns are drawn with strong, tapering, almost cuneiform lines. These creatures are angular and clumsy in their unaccustomed roles, and share the same animal bewilderment which we saw in the Minotaur.

The importance of these illustrations is that they are a summary of the nature of the centaur: part animal and part man, like the Minotaur, he suffers various misadventures in a human world. The centaur is also a symbol for the "animalistic" man that Picasso championed: the man at ease with his animal nature and his physical

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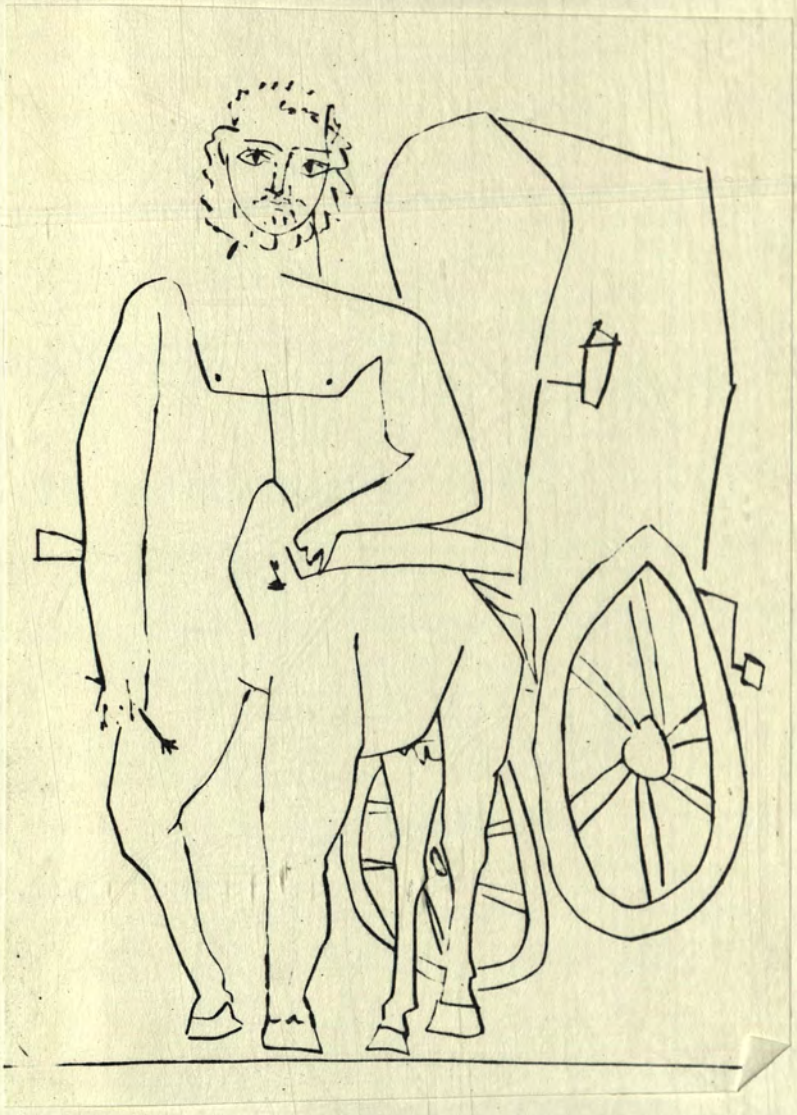
[38] Abraham Horodisch, Picasso as Book Artist (London: Faber and Faber), 1962, p. 66.



Picasso, Centaur from Two Stories, 1947, etching; B 416.

Figure 26

body. Picasso might have concurred with his friend Ramon, the author of the Two Stories, that a centaur would make an ideal tutor for his children. But the pathos of Picasso's illustrations of these creatures from antiquity suggests that he knew that they are out of place in the modern world, and rather than finding a place like the centaur, they might be doomed to extinction like the faun.

The centaurs did survive in Picasso's prints, and were even domesticated. There are posed portraits of centaur family groups, in which the centaur resembles Françoise Gilot. The forties and fifties seem to be, for Picasso, a time when he was occupied with his family, which at that time included Françoise Gilot and later her son. He did many lithographs, mostly of his family, or Françoise as the sun or, interestingly, as a faun or centauresse. In Centaur and Bacchante With a Faun (1947, B 417)--a whimsical group of mythological figures, a pipe-playing faun and staff-carrying centaur (possibly Picasso)--we can see how this period of domesticity, when transposed into "the antique", becomes an idyll. When we see that the brush the woman is holding seems to be a horse brush intended for the centaur, we realize that this is probably the mythological equivalent of a domestic scene.

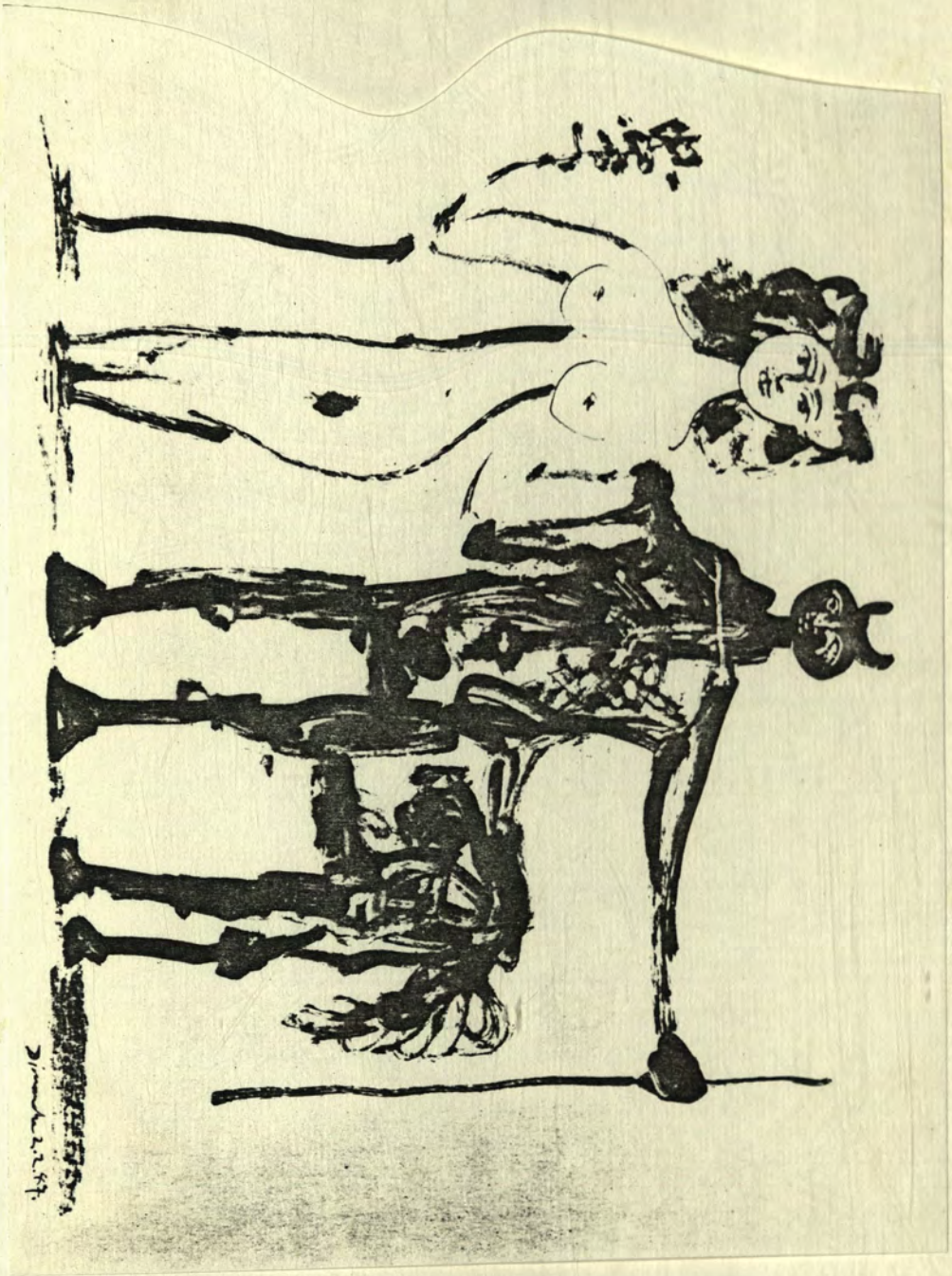
In The Fauns and the Centauresse (1947, fig. 27), a sketchy, textural rendering of the furry fauns is contrasted with the chic, simple line of the centauresse. The faun looks out at us with a knowing glance, as he holds the mirror for the centauresse, primping herself before it, modeling her new necklace. Obviously, this is a tongue-in-cheek observation of a typical domestic situation. The centauresse may be Gilot, as the bacchante clearly is in Centaur and Bacchante (1947, fig. 28). (The scene also recalls countless Toilet of Venus scenes.) All memory of the tragic days in 1935 is gone. Even the bacchante is not at all like the bacchantes that tore Orpheus to shreds in Metamorphoses: she is standing hand-in-hand with her companion centaur, and the mood is idyllic.

After Antibes (in 1948) Picasso worked with ceramics at Vallauris, another Mediterranean town. His subject matter included the Minotaur, Greek idyls, and human figures which look like the terra-cotta figures of the Aegean. The Mediterranean had worked some influence on him and recalled to his mind the airy vivacity of the Greeks.

Occupied with his ceramics and his paintings, Picasso did few antiquarian prints, though a rare work of this kind does call attention to itself: the lithograph The

Picasso, The Faunes and the Centauresse, 1947, etching; B 413.

Figure 27



Picasso, Centaur and Bacchante, 1947, etching; B 416.

Figure 28

Italian Woman from January, 1953 (B 740). It is a photo-lithograph from a photograph of a painting, over which Picasso drew Grecian figures. Picasso started with the photograph of a sweet-faced young woman, looking like the quintessence of motherhood, and surrounded her with a vignette of affectionate fauns and women. There is also a ghostly Bacchus-like figure above her, as if Picasso meant this to be a bacchic homage to motherhood. In this period of Picasso's work Bacchus himself had become less the symbol of animal rapaciousness than a symbol of vegetable abundance.

At about this time (1953/4) Picasso separated with Françoise Gilot. The effect on his prints was not as dramatic as the separation with Olga in 1935, but some ominous undertones do appear in his paintings: in the giant mural for the Temple of Peace--Picasso's chapel at Vallauris--under the dove of peace on the warrior's shield can be seen the faint image of Medusa.

In 1959 Picasso indulged himself in a long series of linoleum cuts of largely bacchanalian subjects, from pastoral pipe-players and orgiastic dancers to bulls and bullfighters. In the soft linoleum Picasso made broad gouges that when printed in a few simple colors gave an effect reminiscent of Matisse's Dance (1909). In the hilly meadow landscapes fauns and Panes live precariously

formed out of spring-like lines that might, in a moment, fly apart (fig. 29). These prints are wholly bacchanalian in subject as well as in form, unlike the restrained prints of the twenties and thirties.

Following the linocuts there were many antiquarian works which do not seem to follow any strong pattern. Many repeated earlier classic styles of Picasso. The next major series of prints, after the 1959 linocuts, began in 1966, when Picasso again became interested in Greek theater.

Picasso, Bacchanalia, 1959, linocut; B 931.

Figure 29

Greek Drama in the Last Prints

In a sense, Picasso's whole print *oeuvre*, particularly in the Literary Period, could be seen as a play, with a number of regularly-appearing characters such as the bearded Greek hero-artist, the Marie-Therese Greek bust, the Venus-model, the Minotaur, the satyrs and Panes, and Dionysus (Bacchus) himself. These characters intermingle in different *tableaux* in the prints, and their succession over a period of time enacts a drama of "Poses Plastiques," as similar characters did in Picasso's *Mercury*. In other words, the progression from print to print forms a narrative which uncovers the associative progress of Picasso's thought. This narrative effect was deliberate in *Mercury*, in the illustrations to *Lysistrata*, and in a work wholly his own, *The Dream and Lie of Franco* (1937) in which scenes are arranged in a series framed like a comic strip. In the works of 1966 as well as those of 1968 (which are collected in the so-called Suite 347) can be seen this same kind of progression. "Suite," after all, is nearly synonymous with "series" and implies a continuity or even, as we will see, a narrative.

The complexity of the prints produced between 1966 and 1968 makes it difficult to make a strictly continuous narrative from each print to the next, but if we follow

one or two themes, skipping over individual works which are not directly relevant to our purposes, it is possible to discover a meaningful progression.

The antiquarian theme in these prints is closely tied to the theme of the phallus (fig. 30). This is not new for Picasso, since this connection is implied in the incest of Antigone, and in the character of Mercury in Mercury. (Mercury's Greek ancestor was Hermes, who from early times was show as a herm, "a mere stock or stone . . . having generally a human head carved at the top and a phallus half-way up to it. The latter is, indeed, a characteristic of the god, who was always interested in fertility.")[39] The phallus is also clearly implied in Lysistrata and in the many rape scenes which Picasso depicted with Bacchus, a centaur, or the Minotaur as the rapist.

It is clear that not only the phallus and antiquity but also the stage are all linked in Picasso's mind. Interestingly, this link is historically correct, since early Greek drama was a form of phallic worship. The developed forms of comedy and tragedy had their roots in different forms of the Dionysian revels--the comedy

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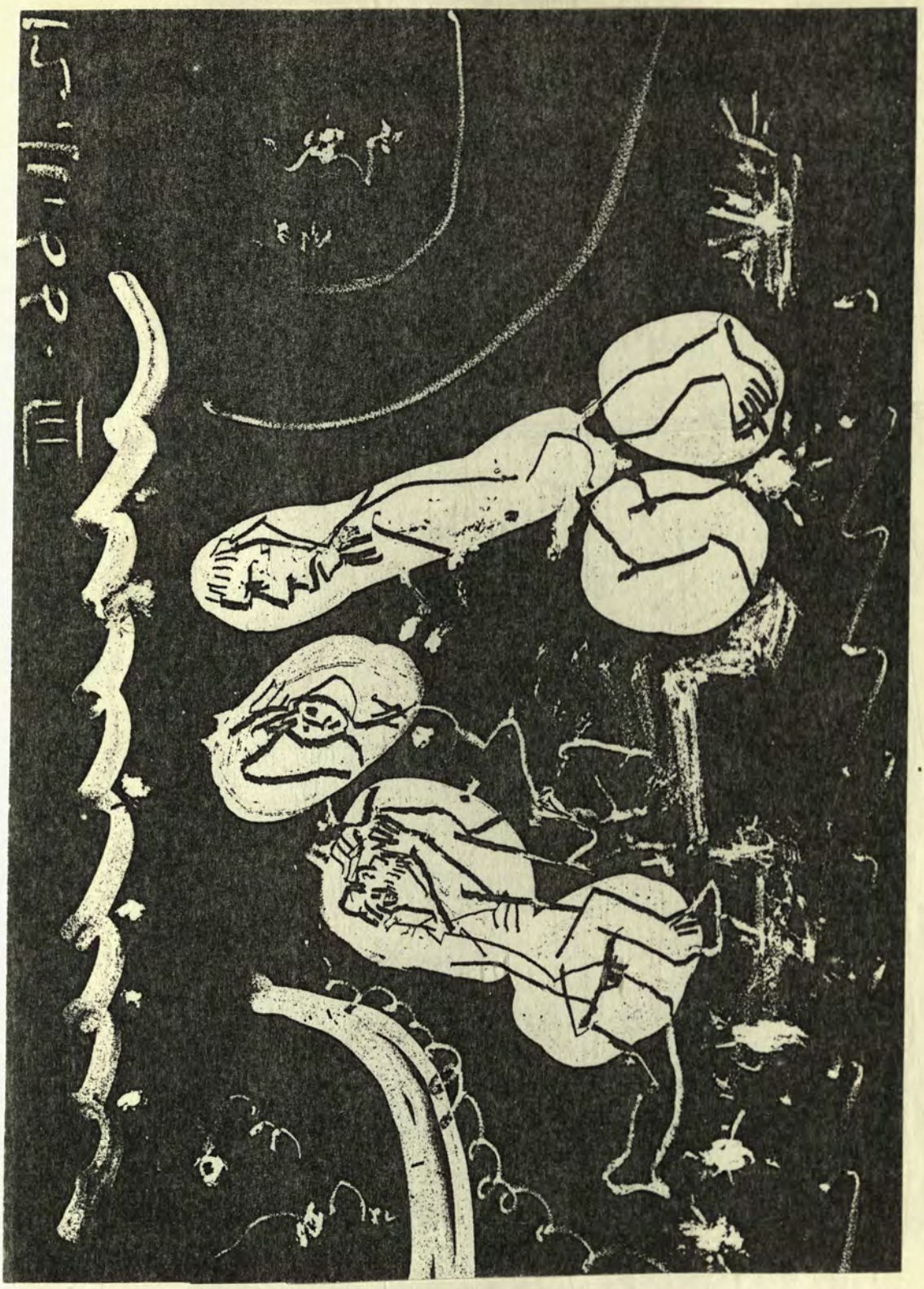
[39] Oxford Classical Dictionary, N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1970, p. 503.



Picasso, Untitled, 1966, etching; B 1415.

Figure 30

in the worship of Phallus (according to Aristotle). "In Greece the phallus was especially associated with the worship of Dionysus, the god of fertility (whence its connexion with comedy; the Athenian actor of the Old Comedy commonly, though not always, wore the Phallic emblem): of Hermes, the god of pastures, crops and herds; and of Pan, the protector of flocks."[40] According to Aristotle, comedy came from "the leaders of the phallic songs."[41] As for the derivation of the word, it is now agreed that it comes from the word komos, which means "revel." "There were several kinds of komoi and they took place on festivals, particularly of Dionysus, and consisted of or wound up with a procession of revellers, singing, dancing, and bantering the onlookers. . . ."[42]

Another important form of Greek drama, that of tragedy, also originated in a revel song called the dithyramb. Satyric drama was related to the dithyramb and apparently incorporated it into its ceremonies. Tragedies and comedies both were performed in the theater of the sanctuary of Dionysus at the foot of the Acropolis

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[40] Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, Sir Paul Harvey, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1937, p. 320.

[41] ibid.

[42] ibid., p. 117.

from about the fifth century B.C.

Although almost all modern drama could be said to originate with the Greek forms explained above, it is clear that Picasso's work as a whole retains much of the original Dionysian character of Greek drama, and that the spirit of the 1966 and Suite 347 (1968) prints relates very closely to the spirit of the early phallic revels.

It was in the 1966 prints that the phallus made its appearance. In these prints dark acts begin to appear on a stage dramatically lit by footlights (B 1405). Precipitously intent onlookers stare from their places (B 1407) at women undressing before prompting-boxes (B 1410). The women are then pursued by Greek-looking phallic males (fig. 30) who murder them in a mad rush of scratched lights (B 1419-24). After the homicidal excesses, a tragic robed sage, leaning on his staff, stares with philosophic melancholy (B 1423) at his dark hand which he holds in front of his face, and beyond his hand at the decapitated head and body of the nude woman.

At about this time (November and December, 1966) Picasso illustrated Le Cocu Magnifique--The Magnificent Cuckold--which focused his attention even more on the phallic theme. The series of Cuckold-related prints began with a horned figure (horns being one of the attributes

not only of the Cuckold but also of Bacchus and of the Minotaur) on a stage proclaiming himself to an acquiescent crowd (B 1428). His main attribute, the phallus, appears next like a cucumber in a razzle-dazzle swarm of glitter and confetti (B 1429). After this fanfare the scene cuts again to a much less dramatic Bacchus (fig. 31). His women attendents, for their part, are hardly overawed by his presence, and the male figure himself is a little confused and suspicious of their activity. They might just as well be picking off part of the laurel on his head rather than adding to it after the previous display of phallic grandeur, while another wreath, apparently about to be awarded by an attendent at the right, might be intended for his staff rather than for Bacchus (Cuckold) himself. As for the phallus that is the finial of his staff, it resembles the preceding one only in kind, not in stature. The next appearance of Bacchus is even less impressive--he is reduced to a pot-bellied, comic fool (B 1443).

The Suite 347, done between March 16 and October 5, 1968, includes many antique motifs, but they are too sporadic to construct a simple story line from them. Generally, the theme of the Suite 347 is the admiration of the nude woman--as in Suzanna and the Elders or the Judgement of Paris. A chariot is often the vehicle for

Figure 31: Picasso, Untitled (related to Cuckold), 1966, etching; B 1430.

this woman, which with its Greek face embossed on the front, is clearly a reference to antiquity. Various bacchic figures also appear.

The prints of 1966 and 1968 are the last prints by Picasso which are available as of this date. Picasso almost certainly completed more works before his death in 1973, and, judging from the prints of the late sixties, it is likely that more than a few of them will reflect his long-standing interest in the motifs and styles of ancient Greece and Rome.

Conclusion

> "'A little Olympus outside the greater': with these words Walter Pater, in his "Study of Dionysus,' describes that population of satyrs, maenads, sylvans, and Nereids which represented, in the Greek imagination, the irrational elements of human nature, the remnants of animal impulse that the Olympian religion had attempted to sublimate or to subdue. And in art too, beside the embodiments of measured harmony and justice, of celestial beauty and determination, were lesser embodiments of impulse, of abandonment to enthusiasm or panic or to the mysterious influences of nature."[43]

This quotation, from Kenneth Clark's The Nude , is a reasoned look at the Dionysian aspect of Greek civilization which had been largely ignored before Nietzsche. But Nietzsche would say that this is not enough--that the ecstatic animal impulse has a positive value equal to the Apollonian "embodiments of measured harmony"--and that it even exceeds in importance those "classic" values. Even Kenneth Clark, however, says that Dionysian works have had "a longer and more fruitful life, diffusing classical [Greek] forms to the rim of the Antique world, and reappearing as soon as the figurative arts could receive them."[44]

The importance of the Dionysian--the divinity of Dionysus--was well-known to the Greeks. We have seen

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[43] Kenneth Clark, The Nude (New York: Doubleday), 1959, p. 385.

[44] ibid.

in the myth of the daughters of Minyas the consequences which the Greeks knew would follow from the failure to acknowledge Dionysus (when the recalcitrant daughters were turned into bats). Dionysus played a very important role in their culture, especially in the bacchic revels that were the root of Greek drama. The most important theater in Greece was in the sanctuary of Dionysus, at the foot of the Acropolis, where the plays honoring the great Festival of Dionysus were performed.

It was the investigation of the origins of comedy and tragedy that lead Nietzsche to the Sanctuary of Dionysus. There he discovered the value of the Dionysian, the animalistic, the ecstatic.

Picasso's reading of Nietzsche probably helped make clear to him the importance of the Dionysian, in distinction to the classic or Apollonian, qualities of antique culture that he had known through his early neo-classic training. Recognizing the authority of the Dionysian, he became a living embodiment of Nietzsche's Dionysian artist: willfully rebelling against traditional values, transforming the appearance of Nature to conform to his own vision, producing from out of his abundance great quantities of work. He turned away from academic neo-classicism, but retained what was of value of the Apollonian--exercising the cool, conceptual quality of

the classic line to restrain bacchanalian excesses.

Following the initial period of cubist experimentation (c. 1905-17) Picasso visited Italy--a visit which stimulated his interest in antiquity. Antique motifs of a Dionysian nature, like Nessus and Deianira, began to appear, probably due to the influence of the Pompeian murals. On the other hand, classic qualities like monumentality and clarity of line appeared as well.

During the Literary Period (c. 1920-35) Picasso's growing interest in antiquity led him to begin reading from the literature of Greece and Rome. He became involved in the production of antique-inspired plays; Antigone in 1922 and Mercury in 1924. After reading and illustrating Metamorphoses in 1931, Picasso had a great store of mythological knowledge from which he then constructed, in the Vollard Suite primarily, a personal mythology. Creatures like the Minotaur appeared to symbolize, at first, the bacchic spirit he must have felt in the early days of his affair with Marie-Therese. Later, however, the Minotaur became a tragic figure, like the blinded Oedipus remembered from Antigone, as Picasso's affair began to disrupt his personal life. His decision to illustrate Lysistrata at about this time was probably motivated by his marital situation. In 1935, with the birth of Maia and the crisis it caused,

Picasso's infatuation with antique myth came to an end.

It was not until 1944 that antiquarian works resumed. The Triumph of Pan of that year marked the liberation of Picasso from the Occupation, and his reaction was to create an effusion of bacchanalian creatures at his many homes on the shores of the Mediterranean. From Antibes in 1947 to Vallauris in 1959 (with the linocuts) this pastoral mood persisted in his prints and paintings.

The last major series of prints which included an important reference to antiquity were the prints of 1966, along with the related ones of 1968 which were collected in the Suite 347. These prints reveal the ultimate origins of the phallic theme--the satyric dramas and other Dionysian festivals.

Thus there are two major aspects to the history of Picasso's antiquarianism that has been outlined above: the classic, Apollonian aspect, and the emotive, Dionysian aspect. Picasso's first exposure to antiquity was to the Apollonian side. His drawings of plaster copies of antique sculpture reflect the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" that many neo-classicists discovered in Greek and Roman art, and which are the essence of Apollonianism. This side of antiquity was present in many of the antique motifs which Picasso took up, primarily in the classic, Ingres-like line that derives ultimately

from the Greek vase paintings and Etruscan bronze engravings.

It is the other side of antiquity--that is, the Dionysian--that is both more important and more often neglected than the Apollonian. It is the emotional, bacchanalian side which we find primarily in the Greco-Roman myths which Picasso employed. There we commonly find rape and violent death, incest and all the instruments of the cruel god as well as many more pastoral but still non-Apollonian themes like drunkenness and sensual abandon.

It is because of the Dionysian aspect of Picasso's prints that we cannot call his references to Greek and Roamn antiquity "neo-classic." "Neo-classic" implies that it is the classic side of antiquity that is predominent, whereas it is certain that there is a very non-"classic" aspect to Greco-Roman culture, and to Picasso's perception of that era. For this reason, the only accurate term for Picasso's reference to antiquity is "antiquarianism'--a term which includes not only the classic, but also the Dionysian side of antiquity.

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