

Age, Ages and Ageing in the Greco-Roman World

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Edited by

Mary Harlow and Lena Larsson Lovén

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*TO THE MEMORY OF DR. AGNETA STRÖMBERG
(1951-2019), CO-FOUNDER OF THE ARACHNE NETWORK
AND SADLY MISSED FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE*

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PREFACE

This volume stems from the 8th *ARACHNE* conference held in October 2017, on the theme of age, ages, and ageing in the Greco-Roman world. *ARACHNE*, the Nordic network for the study of women and gender in antiquity was initiated in 1996 by Lena Larsson Lovén and Agneta Strömberg (University of Gothenburg) and began life as pan-Nordic symposium bringing together scholars of all levels who shared similar research interests. Its first meeting was in Gothenburg, Sweden in 1997. The focus has remained centered on the study of gender and women in the archaeology, literary and visual culture of antiquity from the Bronze Age to Byzantium. After the initial symposia in 1997 and 2000, conferences have focused on particular aspects of female and male life in Antiquity: public roles and private lives (2003), marriage (2006), family life (2009). Two later conferences have returned to focus on female lives (2012 – Arachne 15 years on, and in 2014 Women, power and agency). The early network of scholars from Scandinavia and Finland has gradually widened to include participants from across the globe, but the organization remains strongly northern European. Seven more meetings/conferences/symposia have taken place and several publications have resulted from these occasions.

Twenty years after that first *ARACHNE* meeting, the 2017 conference was held at the Wallenberg Center at the University of Gothenburg – a venue which allowed the participants to network easily while enjoying amazing catering. We would like to thank the city of Gothenburg who offered a generous evening reception and another possibility to socialize with old friends and new acquaintances. We are also indebted to the Swedish Research Council and to the foundation of Harald and Tonny Hagedahl for funding the conference and making it possible to extend invitations to the key-note speakers. We would also like to thank all the participants, some of whom travelled a great distance, for the many interesting contributions and fruitful discussions of ageing and age stages in the ancient life course that took place over the three days of conference in 2017. Many of these are included in this collection and we are grateful to all the contributors for their patience over the lengthy production of this volume. Finally, our thanks to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for help and assistance in the publishing process.

In 2019 Agneta Strömberg, our friend, colleague and one of the original co-founders of *ARACHNE* sadly and unexpectedly passed away. This volume is dedicated to her memory. Agneta was a great teacher and researcher and loved her subject, the art and archaeology of Classical Greece, especially from a feminist perspective. She was an advocate for young scholars and their inclusion in the *ARACHNE* network. We remember her with fondness and respect.

London, October 2021

Mary Harlow & Lena Larsson Lovén

INTRODUCTION

MARY HARLOW & LENA LARSSON LOVÉN

When the first ARACHNE (Nordic network for women's history and gender studies in Antiquity) meeting was convened in 1997 the focus was squarely on the study of women's lives and gender roles. Over the years the intersection of gender with other analytical categories has come to play more of a part, and the focus on women has shifted to be more inclusive of other genders and other age groups. This volume reflects those changes and offers a series of new reading on stages in the life course in ancient Greece and Rome from range of perspectives.

In the last twenty years or so the study of age and age-related behaviour has become one of the analytical tools through which we examine the social history of antiquity. Age is, of course, not a discreet category, it intersects with the status and gender of an individual, and with their position within a family structure, with other age groups as well as wider society. In the modern world with medical advances, cosmetic surgery and the capacity to live longer than ever before, conceptions of age and the stereotypes they embody are being challenged. We see these challenges in debates about the age of consent, the age of marriage, the ability of women to give birth at ever later ages, the right to choose a time of death, and in many other less momentous moments such as who is going to which music festival. Despite the much wider range of choices available to the modern western individual, age remains "part of the system of representation of the identity of both self and others".¹ Age and age-stages were also part of system of representation of identity in antiquity where certain stereotypes could be used to make rhetorical and political points.

The context within which a stage of life is analyzed tends to be relative to other ages-stages as well as peer groups: children and childhood are considered within the context of family or labour market; adult and adulthood in terms of political, military and civic life for men, marriage and motherhood for women. Age stages are themselves relational. Childhood for instance, particularly in the ancient evidence, is seen through adult eyes and through its non-adult status. As individuals age,

gender plays a strong determinant in the way they are viewed and socialised. The point at which an individual moves from one stage of life to another can be fluid, often there are no fixed moments of transition. For some, however, rites of passage are significant moments in their social development. The step into early adulthood may be marked by acceptance into a new social group of peers and a new form of dress for boys while for girls, marriage and movement to a new home might be the significant event. The ancient evidence makes it far easier to deal with norms and stereotypes than the everyday lived reality of life and social interaction but the contributors to this volume have all attempted to unpick some of the dominant images and in so doing have come to present new and original perspectives on lives in the ancient world. Scholars in this volume come from a classics, ancient history and art history background and their research covers a wide range of source material from vase painting to sculpture, from epigraphy to papyri, from history writing to poetry and romances to mythology. Thus, the book offers a kaleidoscope of stories of age and ageing across a time span that covers archaic Greece to Late Antiquity.

The volume is divided into three sections. The first is dedicated the early phases of life course: childhood, growing up and becoming an adult; the second to adulthood, age and gender in Roman society; and the third to interactions between the generations and old age. This lay out is aimed at constructing a volume that follows the progression of the life course but, as with the life course, sections are not discreet. There are many common topics which overlap between chapters and across sections. This introduction will highlight some of these overarching themes and draw out the links between the different chapters and their subject matter which might, at first glance, appear unconnected. The first seven chapters address the formative stages of the lives of children and their socialisation into adult life. Not surprisingly the themes here include the nurture and education of children and their assimilation into family life and wider society, and the people they are associated with. Underlying this are questions of how we read and interpret the evidence. The ways in which ideas of typical traits of particular stages of life can be manipulated by ancient authors and artists is a common theme across several chapters.

Education and socialisation, for instance, are addressed from very different perspectives and nearly every chapter mentions them. Holister Pritchett examines a corpus of Athenian vase painting which depict the childhood and "socialisation" of satyrs. These images provide glimpses into the care and education of young satyrs and offer insights into how a satyr acquires the elements of his "otherness". Young satyrs are depicted

as miniature versions of their adult selves, being shown with the characteristic equine ears and tail, balding heads, pug noses but often chubby bodies. As adults they have beards and as they age, their hair is often shaded white, thus they follow human adults in certain iconographic tropes of ageing. The imagery of satyr development mirrors that of human infants and children in terms of pose, activities and physical changes, as children they play with toys, are held by their parents and learn by emulating adults. However, Pritchett notes one particular difference in that satyr fathers appear generally more engaged with and affectionate towards their offspring than their human counterparts. Adolescent satyrs are shown indulging in behaviour that is more common to our conception of the race as taking part in Dionysiac rituals, drinking, general revelry and of course, chasing women. Using examples from her corpus of vase painting Pritchett demonstrates how young satyrs, like their human fellows, are educated to achieve adult roles and how artists use a visual language that is common to both humans and satyrs.

Louise Pratt explores the life of Eros, a god who, in contrast to normal development, gets younger over time. This "growing down" from young adult or juvenile to child to chubby infant *erotes* highlights several complex and interlinked attitudes to sexuality and to Greek pederasty, as the Eros figure does not appear to become any less powerful or dangerous as he becomes younger. In the poetry of Alcman and Anacreon, Eros is playful, but his games are those of Athenian youths and his role akin to that of a young *eromenos*. This ambiguity in his age is still evident in late classical literary representations but in images he is more obviously depicted as small child or baby, although his role appears to remain fluid. In wedding scenes, particularly in association with the bride, his presence may represent heterosexual desire, and the baby that the marriage hopes to produce. Hellenistic poets refine the idea of Eros as a baby and it is in this period that the role of Aphrodite as his mother becomes part of the canon. Pratt engages with the difficulty for the modern mind of the eroticization and sexual agency of Eros as baby and the havoc he can cause. She makes associations with the potential for sexual exploitation of slave children in particular. These opening chapters with their interrogation of childhoods of non-human players highlight the careful analysis that is required in examining both text and image and that there is a 'darker side' to the ways in which children and childish stereotypes can be used to express cultural attitudes.

The otherness of satyrs is one of their defining features but it also plays a part in Katerina Ladianou's study of Fragment 3C of Alcman's *Partheneion*, where the young women are not even permitted a voice in

their own chorus. In problematizing previous readings of the voice of the female chorus by noting that the young women act and perform like men and at the same time either speak using male language or with non-human voices, Ladianou reframes one of the socialising processes that young women absorb—their second class status. Thus, the feminine voice of young women is constructed as other and can paradoxically only fully express itself if talking in a male voice. When young women talk like men, or act like them, they are in fact accepting and reinforcing their subordinate role in the ideologies of patriarchal society (see also Place).

The ways in which ideas of typical traits of particular stages of life are manipulated by ancient authors is a common theme across several chapters. In analysing four episodes from the childhood of Alexander in the late antique *Alexander Romance* and comparing them with similar stories recorded by Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom, Jaakkojuhani Peltonen identifies certain long-lasting tropes in literary depictions of both "ordinary" childhoods and those of heroes. Capricious and unpredictable behaviour by the adolescent Alexander is demonstrated by his pushing the elderly Nectanebo into a pit, only to discover it is his father he has fatally wounded; the taming of Buchephalus in spite of his father Philip's expressed wish to the contrary is used as foretelling of his future power, that the adolescent is wiser, or at least more cunning than the adult. In correspondence between his tutors and his parents, Alexander is fitted into the *puer senex* model. As a young man, Alexander was a willing and intellectually ambitious student who could exhibit self-control beyond his years. Peltonen goes on to stress how late antique panegyrics used the model of *puer senex* and Alexander as role for young emperors to emulate: promising children will become promising rulers. Late antique attitudes to education are also addressed in Mikael Johansson's study of adult students in fourth century CE Athens, although this is a very different point of view from the panegyrics. Using the autobiographical writings of Libanius and others he examines the life and trials of the mature student, that is, those in their twenties, and their very critical attitudes towards their teachers and life in Athens. They appear to have different priorities to their younger comrades whose student life sounds remarkably similar to today's tabloid view of student life – full of drunken parties. Johansson has the luxury of particular genre of source material—the voice of an older individual looking back and commenting on his own youth—which offers particular, albeit slanted, insights.

The papyri of Roman Egypt provide a wealth of evidence for everyday life in the area and have been exploited here by Marianna Thoma and April Pudsey and Ville Vuolanto. Thoma looks at the lives of poorer

children and the choices made for them by their parents. The economic imperative is often the driving force behind lower class families' strategies. Thoma discusses apprenticeships but also the pledging of children against loans which left the child as a potential slave in another's household (see also Pudsey and Vuolanto). Thoma also provides insight into the affective relationships between parents and absent children shown through letters: parents send clothing at a child's request or are anxious about the health of their children. This relationship is reciprocal, the investment in a child's training or education brought a return to the family in more than finance, it was a buttress for the parent's old age when they could expect return in the form of care.

Investment in a child's future in order to maintain or enhance family standing forms part of Pudsey and Vuolanto's chapter on becoming an adult in Roman Egypt. The process by which young boys (about 14 years of age) of the local elites become members of the gymnasial group which included a formal application and examination of their status and lineage, meant the family were preserving their own position and social ideals as well as inculcating them into the next generation. The age of fourteen was a significant moment for a boy, as it marked the moving into a new social group, and could be marked by a family party (see also Peltonen on Alexander at this age). A similar coming of age did not happen for girls until they married (see also Larsson Lovén and Place) but this moment might also be the occasion of family festivities. Pudsey and Vuolanto additionally investigate the experience of young people themselves by examining specific moments and their implications for the young individual: networking, being exposed to a wider social group and becoming part of family traditions, experiencing a change of status that would form part of their adult identity. For girls a marriage also often meant a change of household and the learning of the social rituals of a new family and the skills needed to manage new relations. Letters between absent daughters and their parents are frequent and often express anxieties and tensions with in-laws (see also Thoma).

The remainder of the chapters deal primarily with adulthood in all its stages. Adulthood is often presented as a very undifferentiated stage of life existing in opposition to childhood at one end of the spectrum and old age at the other. In reality, it is of course, part of a continuum with several stages experienced differently by individuals depending on their gender, culture and economic status. The point that the early lives of boys and girls are not parallel has already been made but the differences become starker as individuals age.

Life stages for Roman freedmen (and women) defy the normative chronological system as while slaves they were viewed as children, *pueri*. They were also akin to children in that they were subject to their master's whims and the independence and agency that were elements in the construction of masculinity were not available to them. Lisa Hagelin argues this may be the reason why freedmen epitaphs often privilege marriage and fatherhood as markers of their newly achieved identity. The right to form a legitimate marriage and produce heirs was a defining element of Roman adulthood and masculinity and celebrating being a husband and father was a way of leaving the extended childhood of slavery behind, at whatever chronological age.

Moving to a very different social group, Marja-Leena Hänninen looks at relationships between the women of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. While she acknowledges the historical image of Livia as wicked stepmother she also uncovers a surprising amount of co-operation and solidarity between women of different generations. This is expressed in shared child rearing and shared anxieties over the marriages and behaviour of various Julio-Claudian offspring, as well as living together. Hänninen presents an image of the Palatine full of interrelated children in different stages of development with Livia, Octavia and Antonia the Younger fulfilling roles as mothers, sisters, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts and grandmothers. Hänninen also speculates on internal family dynamics and inner workings of a dynasty with a plethora of women, and even by using the evidence circumspectly throws light on moments of conflict and co-operation. That said, the stereotypes remain strong: jealousy and antagonism between women are depicted as almost self-evident, particularly among women who gain their own power through that of their son and/or closeness to the emperor. Such competition extended up and down the generations.

The following three chapters deal with age and dress. As a form of non-verbal communication dress can send a range of messages, not least to express gender but also status. Lena Larsson Lovén examines the wardrobe of ordinary adult Roman women, while Mary Harlow investigates the advantages of the toga for the ageing male body. Amy Place, like Landianou, looks at girls in a stage of transition but from the point of view of the Christian, Tertullian, and his proscriptions on dress. Dress can be used to mark stage of life and/or transitions. The laying aside of the *bulla* and assumption of the *toga virilis* are significant moments in a Roman boy's life, marking entry into adulthood (see Pudsey and Vuolanto, Harlow). The toga is also used in representations of freedmen to stress their status and right to citizenship (see Hagelin). Larsson Lovén discusses the significance of the bridal dress for women but also the

realities of having such an ensemble for "ordinary" women. She likewise queries the reality as opposed to the sculptural representation of the stola, the garment which identifies a woman as a *matrona*, a legally married woman. Women outside the monied classes probably had a far more restricted wardrobe but they could still indulge in colour and create shape and style with belts and other accessories. Adult age stages may be less marked by dress as, like the toga, the tunic and mantle outfit could suit all ages. Certain occasions such as mourning and perhaps widowhood might have required special garments but for most women their wardrobe did not change as they aged. Roman males followed a similar trajectory, once they reached adulthood the tunic was the primary garment. For those with a public image to maintain, the toga remained a necessary part of their self-representation. Taking Suetonius's comment on Augustus's need for several layers of tunic in the winter, Harlow examines the clothing of the ageing male and how feeling the cold became an issue. Visual and literary representations of the ageing body can differ markedly, while a portrait head might show signs of age in wrinkles and receding hairlines, the bodies tend to remain upright, straight backed and supporting of beautifully draped togas. Writers however can provide suitably horrific images of missing teeth, drooling, shaky limbs and slack flesh. For the upper-class Roman male, a toga had one great advantage – it could hide a multitude of sins in the form of underlayers and leg bindings worn for warmth and support. Wrapping up warm did not have to mean facing ridicule.

Head covering for young women and girls became an issue for Tertullian in early second century Carthage (see Larsson Lovén for veiling traditions in Italy). Amy Place examines his rhetoric of veiling and its explicit and implicit implications for his understanding of the subordinate position of women. Tertullian regards young virgins as having reached an age when a specific type of dress is necessary, in particular the covering of the head. His claim that girls should cover their heads at puberty reflects his stand that at this stage they become women, and regardless of their virginal status, should dress as married women do. Young women committed to life-long virginity become "Brides of Christ" which reinforces Tertullian's demand that they dress like matrons. The veil is a reminder of the subordinate position of women, and in Tertullian theology, their association with the culpability of Eve, thus marking their requirement to submit to male authority. The notions that the moment of female transition creates increased need for male dominance has resonances with Landianou's reading of Alcman's *Partheneion*.

The final section of the volume comprises four papers which deal specifically with old age. Eleni Papadiogiannki looks at conflicting views of life and politics between generations are represented by two pairs of fathers and sons in the comedies of Aristophanes: Strepsiades, an Athenian farmer and his son Phedippides in the *Clouds* and Philocleon, and his son Bdelycleon in *Wasps*. Full of typical Aristophanic comic stereotypes the disputes between the generations provides humour and light relief but also exposes underlying family tensions. In societies where the eldest male in a household holds most of the power, it is not difficult to imagine the potential conflicts with adult sons. These are expressed here in terms of politics in *Wasps*, but also in subverted expectations of behavioural norms: old men behaving like young men, young men attempting role reversals (Phedippides beating his father), and young men attempting to control the *oikos*. Aristophanes might play the situation for laughs but Papadiogiannki astutely highlights potential social realities.

The final three papers all deal with what we might term old-old age and grandparenthood in Roman contexts. Lisa Brunet and Sabine Armani investigate epigraphy to see how old age is represented. Geoffrey Nathan looks at the relationships between grandmothers and their grandchildren. Demography—the chances of living to over 60—and terminology—does *avia* translate easily as grandmother?—are problems all three address. Brunet deals expressly with problems of age in epigraphic commemorations. In her dataset, 84 inscriptions mention age at death, giving an average of seventy-two for grandmothers but as she notes this is problematised by the “epigraphic habit” and the cultural tendency of certain areas to exaggerate the age at death. Using three case studies from across the empire she examines the problem with recording longevity; the role of *pietas* in binding the extended family together; the still active grandmother in her role of patroness and educator of her grandson. These diverse grandmothers present a picture of a world where the active older woman remained part of social life and was not automatically marginalised due to age. They could expect care from offspring as they declined, and it was physical decline and incapacity that made a difference to their status. Sabine Armani focuses on epigraphic evidence from Hispania. Like Brunet, Armani questions the trustworthiness of age at death inscriptions – her corpus, for instance, has a slave who is eighty-five, this would be unlikely in the demographic realities of ancient slave life, but perhaps just lucky? Armani also highlights the problems in reading epigraphic records as family histories or of multigenerational families. In her case studies one great-grandfather, recorded as dying at seventy, appears to have known his great granddaughter. This would not be impossible given early age at

marriage but it is complicated by the fact that inscriptions can record generations who never knew each other in life. In another example, from Barcelona, the family of Q. Cornelius Sp. f. Secundus, does show three generations of the same family who may all have been living when the epitaph was created, but as Armani states, this is a rare find.

In the final chapter Geoffrey Nathan returns to the intersection of age and gender, this time with a focus on childrearing, recalling Hänninen's examination of the Julio-Claudian women. Nathan specifically examines the role of grandmothers in the socialisation of children and how their roles within the family were perceived. In looking at the relative roles of paternal and maternal grandparents, Latin authors tend to highlight paternal grandparents where matters of inheritance are concerned and maternal when nurturing is required. However, as Nathan shows there is always the counter-example: Octavia as said to treat her grandson Claudius harshly, and Livia as paternal grandmother equally dismissive (see Hänninen); Vespasian was raised by his paternal grandmother and honoured by him after her death. These examples and others all come with caveats but they make the point that there was a role for grandmothers to fill. Nathan's other main question is: did grandparents instil gendered virtues and attitudes into their grandchildren? Even with partial and fragmented evidence, Nathan can conclude that grandmothers were expected to have influence over their grandchildren's morals and characters, which should ideally be a reflection of their own. The relationship might of course always be reciprocal, in the absence of other relations, a grandmother might need her grandchildren for support.

To conclude, collectively the chapters in this volume offer a lot of food for thought. The intersections between age, gender, status and between different age groups and generations have become the focus of recent research and even well-trodden evidence such as the lives of Julio-Claudian women can be read in a new light. Different genres of evidence tell different stories and one of the advantages of collected volumes such as this, at least in the editors' opinion, is that we can piece the mosaic that is ancient life together more clearly when we learn from each other's expertise. There is also much here which speaks to the history of ages and ageing in other time periods. Education based on reading the Greek and Roman classics has a long reach and resonances of the opinions held by ancient authors might seem to appear in modern times but we have to remember we are dealing with concepts of family and society that existed in a culture very different to our own.

Note

¹ Harlow and Laurence 2007, 9.

I.

CHILDREN, CHILDHOODS, AND BECOMING ADULT IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

CHAPTER ONE

THROUGH A LOOKING GLASS: CONSIDERING THE ALTERNATIVE CHILDHOOD OF SATYRS

HOLLISTER PRITCHETT

Introducing satyr children as depicted on Athenian pottery

Depictions of human children, although relatively rare in Athenian art, allow us a brief glimpse into their childhoods. Children of all ages and developmental stages are represented and can be seen involved in various situations that include play, family activities, and learning environments. Athenian parents watched over their charges, nurturing, educating, and guiding them while they grew and matured into their adult personas, similar to the way that modern parents do. But there exists another type of child, and these children also are represented in all stages of childhood as they, too, are guided and nurtured as they grow into adulthood.

These are the children of satyrs – the ribald mythological creatures, with equine ears and tails, who are closely linked to the god Dionysos. Satyrs often are depicted in scenes that involve wine and/or inebriation. Satyrs are well-known for their particular lifestyle that sets them apart from the human world and places them on the edges of society—a lifestyle that is depicted on many Archaic and Classical Athenian vases. There are, in fact, thousands of Athenian red- and black-figure, as well as white-ground vases, produced in a variety of shapes, that are decorated with satyr imagery that form a well-defined corpus that illustrate their typical modes of behaviour and provide insight into the lives of adult satyrs. These companions of Dionysos are represented on Athenian vases in scenes that depict them participating in processions, in which they frequently carry wine sacks and drinking vessels, and playing musical instruments, such as the *aulos*, the double-pipes, or the *barbiton*, which resembles a lyre. Additionally, many Athenian vases are decorated with scenes that depict satyrs cavorting with women.

This paper explores the essence of the satyr child, in order to discern how the satyrs acquired their characteristic otherness, and how they adopted their satyr behaviour. As with vases that depict human children, vases that depict satyr children can provide insight into the upbringing and education of young satyrs and may show how the satyrs acquired their characteristic behaviour. In doing so, this paper investigates how and when this particular lifestyle developed—and to understand, not only what it takes to become a satyr, but when a satyr becomes a satyr.

Depictions of Satyr Children

There exists a relatively small corpus of Athenian vases, approximately one hundred,¹ the earliest of which dates to around 490 BCE that depicts satyr children at various ages and developmental stages. This paper looks at the images of satyr children that are depicted on Athenian vases and examines the settings in which we encounter satyr children, their guardians, their parentage, and the kind of training and education that was required to become a satyr.

As with adult satyrs, satyr children, for the most part, appear on vases associated with wine consumption and the symposium, and are depicted on vase-shapes that can be connected to the drinking, pouring, or storage of wine, such as *kylikes*, kraters, *amphorae*, and *stamnoi*. Satyr children also appear on other vase-shapes such as *choes* and *lekythoi*.

The images of adult satyrs on Athenian vases are fairly consistent. They are depicted with human bodies but with horse-like ears and tails. Images of adult satyrs appear in the Athenian vase repertoire beginning around 570 BCE. Although these early representations of adult satyrs depicted them with hooves,² in later images they are shown with human feet. As satyrs are, by nature, male, there are no satyr daughters, only sons.³ Although there is an exception in Athenian decorated pottery to this single-gender distinction. The exception appears on a vase in the British Museum that shows a procession in which at least one adult female participant has horse-like ears.⁴ Adult satyrs are bearded, normally bald, and have pug noses. They show signs of ageing in a similar fashion to humans, with their hair turning white as an indicator of advanced years.⁵ Representations of adult satyrs show them having lots of fun and chasing women. In many images, adult satyrs are depicted ithyphallic, meaning they are in a state of arousal.

Satyr children, like the adults, have pointed equine ears, a pug nose, and generally a bald or balding head. The satyr child has a tail that appears to lengthen with maturity, although not all representations of satyr children include tails.⁶ Additionally, the satyr child is normally beardless although,

as we shall see, there are exceptions.⁷ Satyr children have characteristics and bodily forms that change with age similar to their human ‘cousins’. Several images of the satyr child show him with a chubby appearance that is comparable to images of human babies and toddlers.⁸ In addition to the satyr’s tail lengthening with age, the body of the satyr child becomes more muscular as it matures, again, in a similar manner to maturing human children.⁹

These satyr children seem to perfectly fit the age-old question of Nature versus Nurture. How did the satyr child live and behave? Images of human children on vases trace their steps from infancy to adolescence, as they observe and participate in activities that help mould their future adult actions and behaviour. Were satyr children moulded in a similar fashion? We know that Athenian children, most assuredly the boys, and possibly girls, were sent to school to learn reading, writing, music, and, for the boys, athletics. But what about the learning environment for satyrs?

Considering the Parentage of the Satyr Child

The first item to consider is the parentage of the satyr child. Although their pedigree is only a conjecture, there are several possibilities. In addition to the adult satyrs who are typically depicted accompanying Dionysos, there also are women, both Maenads and Nymphs, who are part of the entourage. In Athenian vase painting, the two are difficult to tell apart, as iconographic indicators meld together.¹⁰ Like satyrs, Maenads and Nymphs dance and drink, often in a frenzied manner, all under the auspices of Dionysian rituals, and both are typically depicted holding a *thyrsus*, one of their main attributes. Numerous vases depict adult satyrs sexually pursuing these females.

As well as chasing Maenads and Nymphs, satyrs that have come of age, also pursue other Athenian females.¹¹ Moreover, not even divine females are exempt from a satyr’s notice and lustful attention. The goddess Iris appears on several Athenian vases.¹² Although equipped with wings, the goddess is helpless and defenceless as the satyrs pursue and ultimately restrain her. Thus, the mother of a satyr child might be divine or, more likely, she might be an Athenian female transformed into a Maenad during a Dionysian ritual. Although images on vases do not seem to depict the act of consummation between females and the ever-amorous satyrs, the narratives suggest that the satyr child may have been conceived during a frenzied, intoxicated evening.

A possible identification for the adult satyr, depicted in many images with a child satyr, additionally needs to be addressed. Many images that include both an adult and a satyr child often represent them displaying affection and, in some cases, they are depicted involved in interactions that can be identified as “play”. On vases that include images of the youngest satyr children, the adult satyr could be interpreted as being the child’s father.¹³

One of the differences between images of satyr children and images of human children, is with satyrs, the adults seem to be more attentive and affectionate. The tondo of a red-figure *kylix* depicts such an affectionate moment between an adult satyr and a satyr child.¹⁴ The setting is most likely a cave as rocks are indicated in the image (fig. 1-1).



Fig. 1-1. Tondo of a red-figure *kylix*, c. 460-450 BCE.

The adult satyr kneels on the rocks, bearded and bald, his tail curved out behind him. His left arm, bent at the elbow, supports the little satyr who stands on the open hand of his other arm. The little boy has bent his head toward the grownup and holds out both hands as if to touch or grasp the older satyr’s beard. The child is not bald nor does he appear to have a tail,

but he does have pointed ears and a pug nose that leave little doubt the child is a satyr enjoying a moment of play.

On vases that show Athenian human families, young children are most often depicted in domestic spaces, being cared for by the females of the household.¹⁵ The adult human males either are not present at all, or stand in the background observing.¹⁶ Criteria for recognizing domestic space and the interior of the women's quarters on vases include items that can be associated with "women's work", such as a loom, a wool basket, called a *kalathos*, as well as items of furniture, such as a chair or a stool.¹⁷ A red-figure lekythos depicts a bearded and bald adult satyr standing with his arms outstretched.¹⁸ He is preparing to catch a young satyr who is jumping off a chair. A *kalathos* has been placed under the chair. The presence of the chair and *kalathos* situates this narrative in a space that traditionally is considered the female space, yet in this depiction, it is dominated by males; an adult and a satyr child. The satyr child is bald but is depicted with an unusual addition of a beard.¹⁹ Although it could be argued that the existence of the beard indicates that the satyr is not a child but is, perhaps, a dwarf or miniature adult satyr, the indoor setting and the childish game may suggest otherwise. If correct, this *lekythos* suggests that the relationship between two generations of satyrs can be more affectionate and playful than that of Athenians.

The upbringing of the satyr child

The images on Athenian vases also depict similarities between satyr babies and children and human babies and children. Moreover, these scenes indicate that each type of child seems to be taught its own form of 'proper' behaviour, in its own way. A scene on a red-figure stamnos²⁰ shows three women preparing for a Dionysian festival, possibly the Attic Lenaea.²¹ A woman in the middle is reaching out to a small baby, wrapped in a blanket or shawl, who is being held in the arms of a woman on the left (fig. 1-2).