Mantle Figures and Visual Perception in Attic Red-Figure Vase Painting

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With these words by Plato, we focus on a central element of poetic staging: the audience. In fact, the existence of a narrative can only be explained by the presence of spectators willing to hear or see – and thus to experience – the narration. The poet, and so the painter, who is without a public to speak to, to draw the attention of, to involve in the illusion, does not need to create a narrative. Plato’s consideration on the effect of the poetry on listeners or viewers gives us the occasion to consider how the audience was never understood in ancient Greece as a passive receiver of the narrative, but as an agent requiring interaction. Thus, artists have to understand what kind of audience they are addressing in order to make the expected effects of the narrative actually work.

Shifting from the poetic performance to the imagery of vase painting, we have to deal with difficulties in order to reconstruct the

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2 Plat. rep. 10, 605c–d. "I think that the best of us, listening to Homer or any other Tragedians, who imitate one of the heroes mourning, or indulging his whining in a long speech, or singing and beating his chest, are pleased and follow deeply affected and interested" (translated by the author).

3 Which he considers here to be negative, since this citation is contextualized within the discussion on mimesis’ effect on the soul (about it cf. Catoni 2005, 71–78. 293–355; Giuliano 2005, esp. 102–118. 263–282).

involvement and the reactions of the viewing audience. In the Attic vase painting, the presence of a different kind of onlooker on stage provides an anchor to interpret the ideal response of the ancient public to visual narratives. One of the oldest representations of an audience sitting on bleachers on the dinos fragment of Sophilos shows us the public’s reaction to the plays put on in honour of Patroklos. Here, spectators are clearly separated from the action, although they are meant to react directly to what they see. Most often, onlookers simply remain besides the action taking place in the middle of the decorated field; they can be men or women and react more or less directly to the events, for they are visually located on the same spatial level. Such spectators appear seamlessly on black- and red-figure attic vases, although their characteristics, roles and positions in the images changed over time.

The red-figure vases produced in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, in particular, had male mantle figures as onlookers framing the narrative. During the fifth century, they were gradually displaced onto other decorated fields (fig. 1). Groups of mantle figures, so called conversation pieces, especially, seem to be isolated on a secondary side,
detached from the narrative contest of the other image. Thus arose as yet unanswered questions about the iconographical development of these kinds of onlookers and the reason behind their different positions on vases. It remains to be clarified how those mantled spectators were integrated into the pictorial narrative at that time, to re-invest them with meaning and investigate their influence on the perception of the external viewer with regards to the ancient cultural context.

Fig. 1: Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2188 (Photo courtesy: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz; Photograph: Johannes Laurentius).

**Spectators and mantle figures: studies and open questions**

Previous studies on spectators focused on the so-called *bystanders* of the black-figure production\(^{10}\) (fig. 2). Their calm attitude and ceremonial clothing\(^{11}\) were connected to controlled behaviour in the civic context.

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11 The clothing and the use of arms, esp. spears and swords, were interpreted as an expression of social status (Fehr 1996, 829; van Wees 1998, 352–358; Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 183–184). The growing success of the *himation* over time leads to the gradual
public sphere, and were thus seen as an expression of political and social *sophrosyne* in the citizens\(^{12}\). Furthermore, the anonymity of these figures highlights the equality of the society they represent, as the basis to preserve stability and good order in the polis\(^{13}\). In some cases, however, these figures are treated pejoratively: they are considered secondary and supernumerary decorative figures, thus not requiring particular interpretation\(^{14}\). Bert Kaeser refers to these viewers as witnesses of the actuality and importance of the action taking place before them\(^{15}\). At the same time, they were models for the viewer


\(^{13}\) Fehr 1996, 831–833.

\(^{14}\) Bothmer 1971, 124–125; Bothmer 1985, 70; Carpenter 1986, 53 (although he recognises a Dionysian meaning for some onlookers).

\(^{15}\) These onlookers are then "[...] ‘Zeugen’, welche die Realität und Wichtigkeit der Tat anzeigen – und zugleich die Bedeutung der Gesellschaft, für die solche Taten wichtig sind" (Vierneisel – Kaeser 1990, 156); cf. also Vierneisel – Kaeser 1990, 151–156; Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 230–233.
and were therefore compared to a chorus. Recently Mark Stansbury-O’Donnell has dealt intensively with the topic and classified different kind of male and female spectators: the presence of such spectators helps to “encode” the behaviour of different gender groups within the polis, indicating to whom the story is addressed.

We also owe Stansbury-O’Donnell a precise definition of the onlooker as “a figure who observes the action of the nucleus but is not involved in it, or will not immediately be affected by it physically.” The premise of this definition is therefore the presence of an action, which constitutes the nucleus of the narrative. The strict distinction between myth and genre scenes operative in hermeneutic research has led in the past to consideration of mythological representations only as narration. New methods and approaches have attracted further scholarly attention to so-called genre scenes. By dissecting images in minimal formal units, every detail, character, gesture and attribute together create a sort of readable code. By putting together the pieces of this code and interpreting it correctly, it is possible to follow more or less evident plots of narration. Each image, mythological or not, in which a diachronic development or a sequence of

17 Stansbury-O’Donnell considers spectators as a phenomenon of archaic attic vase painting between 575 and 490 BC, rather than as a general characteristic of Greek art (Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 50–51). Therefore, he does not pay any particular attention to the later red-figured mantle youths. As Sian Lewis has pointed out in light of some consideration of Stansbury-O’Donnell, we are currently lacking a new interpretation of mantle figures and conversation scenes of red-figured vase painting (cf. Lewis 2007, 227).
19 Steiner 2007, 56; cf. also Scheibler 1988, 551–555.
21 Using Roland Barthes’ term, indicating the central point of a narrative (Barthes 2001, 265; cf. also Stansbury-O’Donnell 1999, 18–19).
22 Since the hermeneutic work of Carl Robert (Robert 1919) scholars have often focused on the interpretation of mythological representations (as representatives cf. Brilliant 1984; Carpenter 1991; Shapiro 1994; Giuliani 2003).
23 About the application of semiotic and anthropological methods in the hermeneutics of vase painting, cf. esp. Durand – Lissarrague 1980; Lissarrague – Schnapp 1981; Bérard et al. 1984; Lissarrague 2009. An example of a different approach considering representations of violence is provided by the works of Matthias Recke (Recke 2002) and Susanne Muth (Muth 2008). The first examines only mythological representations; the second
different moments of an action can be seen by reading the different compositions’ details, is therefore a medium for narrative. What changes is not the manner of narrating using images, responding to the same logical schemes and mental archetypical compositions, but the content of the narration. That content clearly refers to mythological tales through the introduction of an additional interpretative level, or represents generic situations that can be repeated and adapted to different subject matter without the need for precise definition of the protagonists. Thus, both mythological and genre images convey narrative content and must be considered as the background for the spectators.

The use of spectators, who correspond to this definition, is not a peculiarity of black-figure production since they also appear copiously on red-figured vases. There are, however, relevant stylistic and iconographical differences, especially if spectators are mantle figures, i.e., males of different ages, characterized by a single piece of clothing, namely, the himation, in contrast to black-figured onlookers, who wear a chiton underneath their himatia. From the second half of the sixth century BC onwards, the appearance of mantle figures spread also takes into account non-mythological images, like hoplite scenes. Due to a perspective change proposed by Giuliani, the images can be incorporated into two new categories: narrative and descriptive (Giuliani 2003, 282–285). Nevertheless archaeological research is still influenced by an artificial distinction between myth and genre scenes, denying to the second a narrative aspect. Recently, Giuliani has revised his model, recognising the mutual interdependence between myth and genre (Giuliani 2014, 221–222). For a critical analysis of the problem of classification of narrative and non-narrative images and a positive reconsideration of genre scene, see Harvey 1988; Stansbury-O’Donnell 1995, 319; Stansbury-O’Donnell 1999, 31–53; Ferrari 2002, 17–21; Ferrari 2003; Elsner 2005; for an overview of former theories on visual narratives see Bracker 2015, esp. 334–338.


26 Scenes of pursuit, for example, mostly have similar compositions, with the actual pursuit framed by spectators and fleeing figures, if a god, hero or anonymous warrior is involved; cf. Bologna, Mus. Civico, 204 (BAPD 206076; CVA Bologna [1] III Ic pl. 40, 1); Bologna, Mus. Civico, 195 (BAPD 207886; CVA Bologna [1] III Ic pl. 26, 1); Istanbul, Archaeological Mus., 2914 (BAPD 206979); Vienna, Kunsthist. Mus., 642 (BAPD 206217; CVA Vienna, Kunsthist. Mus. [2] pl. 88, 1).
until the fourth century BC. Several scholars, including Beazley, have considered mantle figures to be purely ornamental decorations to avoid having an unpainted side of the vase (thus, the so-called B-side)\(^{27}\), and which had no function or meaning other than to witness their presence\(^{28}\). Consequently, in the twentieth century mantle figures were mentioned mostly marginally and sporadically as secondary motifs\(^{29}\).

In fact, if we think about mantle figures, firstly we have to deal with the numerous *conversation pieces* of the fifth century\(^{30}\) and, above all, with the more frequent and monotonous representations of the fourth century\(^{31}\) (fig. 3). At a cursory glance, these images can give an inaccurate and inchoate impression, making the viewer doubt that they can contain a deeper meaning.

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27 Beazley 1959, 51; CVA Rennes (1), 23–23 pl. 23 (Laurens-Toucheufeu), cf. also Langner 2014, 396, about mantle figures of the fourth century BC.


29 Mantle figures were only briefly mentioned in connection with different kinds of scenic contexts, e.g., sepulchral (Schmidt et al. 1976, 25 n. 27), athletic (Kocharzou 1962, 446–458; Jüthner 1968, 161–170), or erotic (Koch-Harnack 1983, 60–61. 68; Shapiro 1981; Robertson 1982, 182–183). Among those of particular interest is the Dionysian interpretation by Isler-Kerényi (Isler-Kerényi 1993: Isler-Kerényi 1996). Heinz-Günter Hollein first attempted to classify and analyse the mantle figures extensively (Hollein 1988), although his study has several questionable aspects (Stahl 1990; Isler-Kerényi 1996, 50 n. 10). In the last few years, scholars have focused on the interpretation of mantle figures as citizens (Zanker 1995, 50–57. 62–69; Catoni 2005, 267–278; Franzoni 2006, 169–172. 192–197; cf. also Fehr 2011, 22–31. 84–91 on the Parthenon frieze) and on the transfer of the motif into other cultural contexts (Fless 2002, 99; Langner 2007; Langner 2012a). Thus, a wider and complete analysis of the motif is still outstanding.

30 E.g. Mannheim, Reiss-Mus., 60 (BAPD 203075; CVA Mannheim [1] pl. 29, 5); Kassel, Antikensamml., TT16 (BAPD 1205; CVA Kassel [1] pl. 33, 2; 36, 8); Madrid, Mus. Arqueologico Nacional, 32656 (BAPD 205606; CVA Madrid [2] pl. III Ic 15, 1b); Chiuse, Mus. Archeologico Nazionale, C1822 (BAPD 7566; CVA Chiuse [2] pl. 6, 2; 7, 2); Paris, Mus. du Louvre, G531 (BAPD 213806; CVA Paris, Louvre [4] Ill Id pl. 21, 10); Würzburg, Wagner Mus., 4919 (BAPD 213818; CVA Würzburg [2] pl. 21, 2); Bologna, Mus. Civico, PU426 (BAPD 215712); London, British Mus., 1898.7-16.6 (BAPD 217462).

Fig. 3: Berlin, FU Institutssammlung, G27/52 (Photo courtesy: Institut für Klassische Archäologie, Freie Universität Berlin).
However, if we consider the whole corpus of mantle figures, we gain a wider range of figure-types, compositions and themes, among which static, standardized mantle figures in conversation pieces only represent a minority. On the basis of different representations, where mantle figures appear as more or less interested spectators, it is possible to follow the significant iconographic and semantic development and standardization of this motif and to understand the progressive spread of conversation pieces.

**Iconography and composition of mantle-figure spectators**

The development of the iconographic and scenic standardization of mantle figures is a complex process, which leads to the crystallization of certain formal and thematic elements. In this paper, I will focus only on particular phases and aspects of the process affecting mantle figures as spectators.

The already mentioned bystanders of the black-figure productions are not really comparable with mantle figures, not only because of the chiton’s presence but also because the iconography, position and role of the audience changed since the beginning of red-figure vase painting. However, mantle figures were already appearing on the last black-figured vases, replacing the bystanders from 540 BC (fig. 4); henceforth, they were developed by the first red-figure painters and pioneers who seamlessly continued this experimental phase. As spectators, they are still closely related to the bystanders of the

32 In the numerous images, mantle figures show a significant potential to adapt to different roles and content, and thus to convey different messages. Mantle figures thereby mostly take on the role of active protagonist in the action. Among ca. 5,000 scenes with mantle figures produced between 540 and 380 BC, which I have classified in my doctoral thesis, only 25% are conversation pieces, not allowing a more precise thematic definition.

33 A wider and complete iconographical analysis will appear on the publication of my doctoral thesis.

previous vase production and they appear mostly on the edge, framing the action\(^{35}\) (fig. 5). Despite this marginal position, the figures can often also be assigned a central role in the narrative\(^{36}\). Furthermore, starting from the last decades of the sixth century BC, mantle-figure spectators are not always anonymous and static bystanders, they can also interact in some way with the protagonist of the action. They can be identified, e. g., as trainers or paidagógoi, who look with interest at their pupils\(^{37}\), can play an active public role and bring flowers to

\(^{35}\) For example compare the red-figure hydria London, British Mus., E160 (BAPD 202049; CVA London [5] III Ic pl. 72, 2) with the black-figure one in New York, Sotheby’s (BAPD 9050). See also: Basel, Antikenmus., BS491 (BAPD 200004; CVA Basel [3] pl. 1, 2; 2, 2); Paris, Mus. du Louvre, G1 (BAPD 200002; CVA Paris, Louvre [5] III Ic pl. 25, 3); Munich, Antikensamml., 2421 (BAPD 200126; CVA Munich [5] pl. 222, 1; 223). Sometimes, mantle figures wear a richly decorated himation in this phase.

\(^{36}\) As we can see in some of the examples in n. 35, mantle figures are mostly used as agents of action, not only as spectators.

the winners; or move with light dance steps besides the players. Thus the iconographic and semantic spectrums of the onlookers spread: they can now show different gestures and interact with other figures ideally without being physically affected by them, but clearly being involved somehow in the action.

This trend continues in the first quarter of the fifth century, when spectators move and interact more freely with the nucleus through their gestures. Spectators, leaning on their sticks, as in fig. 7, show their interest in the nucleus of the narration by leaning forwards and gesturing in the direction of the nucleus. In another example on a

Fig. 5: Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2279 (Photo courtesy: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz; Photograph: Johannes Laurentius).

stamnos in Basel\textsuperscript{39}, the mantle figure who looks at the conversing Odysseus and Achilles is also a hero, labelled as Diomedes, and can thus be considered part of the main narrative. In addition, if by taking a certain distance and looking quietly at the nucleus from the margins marks him out as a spectator, nevertheless, his posture and gestures communicate his attention and concern towards the central action\textsuperscript{40}.

About 490–480 BC, the first representations of lively conversation scenes appeared sporadically, for example on vases by Duris and the Kleophrades Painter\textsuperscript{41}. Thereby, the direct or emotional connection of the mantle figures to the events on the other side of the vase still appeared to be strong\textsuperscript{42}. Gestures are still the key to understanding the link between the sides of the vase, as on the Berlin Amphora where the mantle figures direct attention to the Minotauromachie on the other side with their hands\textsuperscript{43} (fig. 6.9). Simultaneously, representations of single mantle figures alone appeared on one side of the

\textsuperscript{39} Basel, Antikenmus., BS477 (BAPD 203796; CVA Basel [3] pl. 23.1); cf. Paris, Mus. du Louvre, G163 (BAPD 202217; CVA Paris, Louvre [1] pl. 8, 1–4; 9, 1–3); Malibu, Getty Mus., 86.AE.314 (BAPD 204682; Shapiro 1994, fig. 7–8).

\textsuperscript{40} This can also be seen as erotic interest, like on Berlin, Antikensamml., F2322 (BAPD 203389; CVA Berlin [1] pl. 39, 5–6); Vienna, Kunsthistor. Mus., 3729 (BAPD 202608; CVA Vienna, Kunsthistor. Mus. [2] pl. 66, 1–4); Stockholm, Medelhavsmus., 1963.1 (BAPD 275163).

\textsuperscript{41} E. g. Berlin, Antikensamml., F2288 (BAPD 205176; CVA Berlin [2] pl. 82, 1–2; 83,1–3); Boston, Mus. of Fine Arts, 00.343 (BAPD 205187; Buitron-Oliver 1995, no. 186 pl. 104). Sometimes the distinction between conversation or courtship scenes is unclear, e. g. on Künsacht, coll. Hirschmann, 34 (BAPD 7240; Buitron-Oliver 1995, no. 185 pl. 103).


\textsuperscript{43} Greifenhagen 1972, 13–16; Langner 2012a, 14; cf. also the Stamnos London, Coll. Malcolm H. Wiener (BAPD 202929), where the connection between the sides is purely emotional, as the women and the young mantle figures seem to await anxiously the outcome of Theseus’ mission. Isler-Kerényi suggests that they might be Athenian mothers and sons, destined for immolation by the Minotaur (Isler-Kerényi 1977, 65–69; Isler-Kerényi 1993, 97).
vase, like the majestic figures by the Berlin Painter\(^\text{44}\). By looking at their gestures, we see that these figures are even more closely related to the other side\(^\text{45}\) than the groups of mantle figures: their action and meaning cannot be understood if we do not link the two images correctly. These mantle figures, in a group or alone, are still to be

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\item [44] E. g. Boulogne, Mus. Communale, 656 (BAPD 201856); Philadelphia, University Mus., 31.36.11 (BAPD 201823; Isler-Kerényi 1971, pl. 8, 1–2); Vaticano, Mus. Gregoriano Etrusco (BAPD 201821); Baltimore, Mus. of Fine Arts, 48.57 (BAPD 201855; CVA Baltimore, Walters [1] pl. 9, 1–2; 10, 4–5); Paris, Mus. du Louvre, G214 (BAPD 201904; CVA Paris, Louvre [6] III pl. 40, 3–4, 7, 10).
\item [45] In the tondo of the kylix in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Mus., GR16.1937 (BAPD 201440; CVA Cambridge [2] pl. 6, 1; 8, 7) the mantle figure refers directly to the pictures on the other side. Not only do his gesture and position recall the other mantle youth between the warriors, but he also holds a helmet and flowers, which constitute a clear reference to the scene on the external side of the cup. Thus the figure in the tondo is meant to be part of a broader scene composed of all decorated fields; cf. also: Basel, Antikenmus., KÄ425 (BAPD 205075; CVA Basel [2] pl. 19, 2–4; 20); Dresden, Kunsthewerbemus. (BAPD 205077); Paris, Mus. du Louvre, G118 (BAPD 205079).
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thought of as spectators\textsuperscript{46}: their behaviours and gestures show their emotional involvement in the action on the other side and allow them to unify the narrative and the public, despite their physical distance from it.

In the following decades, until the middle of the fifth century, the mantle figures enjoyed the greatest popularity in Athenian vase painting. They were still present as spectators on the edge of the action and interacted at different levels with those shown at the centre of the narrative’s nucleus\textsuperscript{47}. Representations of \textit{conversation pieces} evolved towards further standardization and scheme consolidation: both the individual figures, whose gestures and postures appear to be more schematic and repetitive, and the images’ compositions simplify\textsuperscript{48}. The link between the two sides is not always clearly indicated as in the former phase, but it is mostly still recognizable because, for example, some mantle figures move or turn towards the other side\textsuperscript{49}.

From the third quarter of the fifth century, the tendency to reduce iconographic and thematic variations is confirmed by the rising num-

\textsuperscript{46} Such a connection between black-figure spectators and the other side of the vase was already underlined by Stansbury-O’Donnell (2006, 115–118).
\textsuperscript{47} E. g. New York, Metropolitan Mus., 41.162.20 (BAPD 205597; CVA Hoppin Gallatin [1] pl. 14, 3); Sydney, Nicholson Mus., 98.30 (BAPD 206294); Bologna, Mus. Civico, 195 (BAPD 207886; CVA Bologna [1] III ic pl. 26, 1).
\textsuperscript{48} The standardization started with the productions of Harrow Maler and his contemporary painters around 480–470 BC; cf. Bologna, Mus. Civico, 189 (BAPD 202882; CVA Bologna [1] III ic pl. 24, 5); Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 2464 (BAPD 202691); Montauban, Mus. Ingres, 87.4.14 (BAPD 202884). In later years, the process further developed, cf. Chiusi, Mus. Archeologico Nazionale, C1822 (BAPD 7566; CVA Chiusi [2] pl. 6, 2); Palermo, Mus. Nazionale, 2556 (BAPD 205729; CVA Palermo [1] pl. 45, 3); San Francisco, Legion of Honour, 1874A (BAPD 207135; CVA San Francisco [1] pl. 18, 2); Gotha, Schlossmus., 80 (BAPD 211961; CVA Gotha [1] pl. 47, 2–3). This fact does not affect the iconographical richness of the figure types negatively, which never simplified completely and did not result in any banalization (for a wider analysis I refer to the forthcoming publication of my doctoral thesis).
ber of extremely simplified and almost monotonous groups of mantle figures in conversation\(^{50}\). Mantle figures appear only sporadically as spectators on the same image field of the action\(^{51}\) and disappeared gradually over time. On the contrary, the series’ production of conversation scenes increased until the beginning of the fourth century. These compositions tended towards a further iconographic fixation and would proliferate in the fourth century\(^{52}\) (fig. 3), only rarely showing a clear connection to the other side of the vase\(^{53}\).

To summarize, mantle figures appeared as spectators since the beginning of the red-figure production, evolving from late black-figure models. Firstly disposed of on the margins of the action, these figures were gradually displaced onto the other side of the vase, taking their distance from the narrative’s nucleus. Parallel to this was the development of conversation pieces’ iconography and composition, which increasingly included mantle figures.

This process of standardization is not to be regarded as a purely iconographic and stylistic evolution, but involves important semantical changes in a component of the Athenian iconographic vocabulary, contributing to the shaping of new forms of visual communication. A further analysis of the meaning of the different stages of this process will provide plausible explanations for the increase of this kind of composition.


\(^{51}\) E.g. Gotha, Schlossmus., 51 (BAPD 213391; CVA Gotha [2] pl. 57, 2); Omaha, Joslyn Art Mus., 1963.485 (BAPD 215389; CVA Omaha [1] pl. 33, 2); San Antonio, Art Mus., 86.134.80 (BAPD 30962; Lezzi-Hafter 1988, 313 no. 17; pl. 12); Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Mus., GR 6.1955 (BAPD 214624); Athens, National Mus., 1466 (BAPD 215332).

\(^{52}\) E.g. San Francisco, de Young Memorial Mus., 253.24876 (BAPD 218052; CVA San Francisco [1] pl. 22, 2); New York, Metropolitan Mus., 08.258.20 (BAPD 230396); Stuttgart, Landesmus., 132 (BAPD 12597; CVA Stuttgart [1] pl. 33, 2); Edinburgh, National Mus. of Scotland, 1956.466 (BAPD 230472; CVA Edinburgh [1] pl. 27, 8); cf. also n. 31.

\(^{53}\) E.g. London, British Mus., 1923.10-16.1 (BAPD 214713); New York, Metropolitan Mus. of Art, 21.88.4 (BAPD 214487).
Mantle figures and external spectators

As we have seen, at the beginning of red-figure production, mantle figures appear at the edge of the action as more or less active onlookers\(^\text{54}\). Even if they do not take part directly in the action, their active emotional involvement in the events is clear, since their gestures express their reactions to the main narrative. Bringing the hand to the face or hiding the face under the \textit{bimation} show, for example, concern for the departing warrior\(^\text{55}\). Leaning on the stick while directing full attention to the action indicates a clear interest\(^\text{56}\) (fig. 7).

![Fig. 7: London, British Museum, 1843,1103.11 (Photo courtesy: © The Trustees of the British Museum).](image)

\(^{54}\) The mantle figures assume here the role of the former black-figure bystanders, framing the action, cf. Fehr 1996, 829–839; van Wees 1998; Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006; see also Fehr 2011, 24–27, where the author emphasizes the connection between archaic bystanders and the use of mantle figures as “watchers”, but without developing this argument.


In such compositions, spectators experience the visual narration as present and near: they are not only onlookers of the narrative but are also an essential part of it, inviting the external viewer to participate directly in the narrative\textsuperscript{57}. In this phase, mantle figures can also appear as a concert audience\textsuperscript{58} (fig. 8). If we consider both sides of the vase as connected, we may have the intriguing impression that the subject of the concert could be the narrative on the other decorated field, which at this time were mostly mythological events\textsuperscript{59}. We then register a change in the semantics of spectatorship: the viewer, who identifies himself with this audience, does not experience the narrative in the first person anymore, but through the mediation of an oral performance\textsuperscript{60}. Thus, a strong metanarrative element is created\textsuperscript{61}, increasing a sense of identification with the community taking part in the symposium\textsuperscript{62}, where the vase may influence the topic of the actual conversation\textsuperscript{63}. In this manner, we can imagine the audiences of the performance on the vase and in the symposium dynamically flowing together.

Gradually, the mantle figures are separated from the action and moved to the other decorated field\textsuperscript{64}. The repetition of syntactic elements, the gestures and the direction of the gaze\textsuperscript{65} of the figures help

\textsuperscript{57} On black-figure production, cf. Vierneisel – Kaeser 1990, 156.
\textsuperscript{59} On the cited Cleveland eye-cup 1976.89 (cf. n. 58) the concert appears between the eyes, intensifying the effect on the viewer’s perception (cf. Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 194–196; on this also Frontisi-Ducroux 1984; Ferrari 1986; Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 216–224; Neer 2002, 41–42).
\textsuperscript{61} On archaic spectators as “metanarrative signs”, cf. Steiner 2007, 53–62.
\textsuperscript{62} On the symposium as a context for the performance, e. g. Lissarrague 1987, 119–133.
\textsuperscript{63} Langner 2014, 385 n. 4; 395–396 (with further bibliography).
\textsuperscript{64} See above n. 44, 45.
\textsuperscript{65} The gaze is in these cases essential for establishing communication (Rizzini 1998, 97) and therefore completes the effect of gestures. Gaze, seen in literary sources as a very concrete experience, allows a direct connection between viewers and viewed, affecting both (Simon 1992; Rizzini 1998, 127–144; Snell 2002, 19–24; Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 61–67).
to restore the link between the two sides of the vase and thus understanding of these figures as spectators of action taking place in other images. Like these individual figures, the group of mantle figures may also show a direct connection to the other decorated field, as the brothers of Aegeus on a crater in Athens66, or the youths on the Berlin amphora (fig. 9). In these compositions, the image field seems to be extended in order to form a single macro scene67. Mantle figures are thereby re-integrated into the pictorial programme, establishing a more distant68 connection between the external viewer and the events depicted by directing the onlooker’s attention to the other side. The mantle figures are not only looking, but now also conversing with each other69. The narration is no longer sung, but told by the speaking mantle figure: thus, spectators of the narration became

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66 Athens, National Mus., 2.735 (BAPD 202955; Robert 1919, 143 fig. 112).
68 This is because the columns seem to frame and separate the conversing figures from the actual action on the other side and create a complementary world (Langner 2012a, 14; Stansbury-O’Donnell 2014, 375 with n. 6).
69 The youths on the Berlin amphora hold their open hands to their partner, which is to be interpreted as a clear communicative gesture, cf. Neumann 1965, 11–17; Greifenhagen 1972, 13–16 (who considered the erotic nuances of the conversation); Langner 2012a, 14.
the storytellers themselves. This aspect will be more and more strongly underlined in later productions with the increase and generalization of *conversation pieces*.

From the second quarter of the fifth century, direct references to the other side of the vase in *conversation pieces* are mostly neglected. Nevertheless, gestures and gazes still build in a more latent way a connection between the decorated fields, e. g., if mantle figures walk towards the other side\(^{70}\). Therefore, the subject of the narrative was no longer only mythological\(^ {71}\), but genre scenes became predominant\(^ {72}\).

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70 See above n. 49.
72 Aléria, Mus. Archeologique, 2155A (BAPD 10533); Budapest, Mus. of Fine Arts, 50.531 (BAPD 207208); London, British Mus., 1910.6-15.1 (BAPD 214855); New York, Metropolitan Mus. of Art, 21.88.73 (BAPD 213402); Göttingen, Universität, J36 (BAPD 207209); Oxford, Ashmolean Mus., V562 (BAPD 213813; CVA Oxford [1] pl. 24, 2; 25.
In the second half of the fifth century, mantle figures gradually became static: they now stood with their sticks or were completely wrapped up in their himation\(^{73}\) (fig. 1). Their relationship with the other side of the vase is difficult to recognize, so the figures appear to be isolated in their decorated field: their potential for communication no longer seems to be directed outside to the viewer, but remains enclosed within the conversing group. Following the former consideration about the development of the conversation pieces, we can still recognize the roles of spectator and storyteller in these mantle figures, even if they are distant and pensive, of narrations on the other side. Thus, mantle figures continue to constitute a metanarrative element involving external viewers in the action so that they might perceive the narrative in a newly personal way.

“Visual images have an almost infinite capacity for verbal extension, because viewers must become their own narrator, changing the image into some form of internalized verbal expression”\(^{74}\), Brilliant pointed out. The artists, he continued, do not leave the viewers in complete freedom; instead, they communicate with the viewers using a mutual grammatical code to construct the images\(^{75}\). Viewers do not only have to learn the story being told by the picture, they also need to react correctly to what they see. However, the manner of communicating using images also changes over time, parallel to the development of the mantle-figure spectators. Thus, we can assume that the painter helps himself by guiding the viewers through the images by using spectators. Archaic spectators have been compared to a theatrical chorus\(^{76}\), perhaps reflecting the intention of the painter that

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73 See above n. 50; cf. also lone mantel figures, e.g. London, British Mus., E344 (BAPD 205926; CVA London [5] III 1c pl. 69, 1); Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, XVIII.44 (BAPD 214919; CVA Leiden [3] pl. 137, 4); St. Petersburg, Hermitage Mus., ST1611 (BAPD 215021).

74 Brilliant 1984, 16.

75 Brilliant 1984, 17.

76 Stansbury-O’Donnell had already proposed comparison of black-figure viewers to choral performers (Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 109–126, esp. 110–111, cf. also Fehr 1996, 833), while the chorus represents the collectivity of citizens and civic harmony (Vernant
the image was to be perceived like a performance, as a vivid and animated narration, where the internal viewer sympathizes with the external audience. The external viewer is invited to behave like a chorus, to comment on and judge the action. With the appearance and development of mantle figures as spectators, not only do their position and composition change but, most importantly, the conceptual relation between spectators and the nucleus of the action also changes. The different approach to onlookers emerging during the classical period thus reflects changes in the ways in which external viewers are invited to perceive the depicted narration, dependent on more general cultural changes.

If the first mantle figures of the archaic period were still involved in the narrative like a chorus, allowing the external viewer to take part in action directly through the figures’ point of view, the distance between spectators and the nucleus grew gradually. Thus, spectators assumed a more active role in the transmission and mediation of the narrative messages to the viewers. First, they became the audience of music performances and experienced the action not directly but through oral transmission, thus introducing a further element of mediation to the perception of the viewers. Lately, mantle figures, alone on one side of the vase, distance themselves definitively from the nucleus, with which they are however still ideally connected through syntactical elements. This shift to the other side and, furthermore, the rising success of conversation pieces correspond reasonably well to the introduction of the third actor in the tragedy, so actors begin to speak between themselves, separate from the chorus, thus changing the nature and the relation of the audience to the illusion of the scene. A similar effect can be reached in vase painting through the

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78 Cf. Calame 2004, 128–129. As the chorus represents not only the position of the poet, but also the idealized spectator (Calame 2004, 125–126), the audience is required to actively take his point of view (Calame 2004, 149. 153).
use of conversing onlookers, who no longer reflect a chorus of Athenians but are Athenians themselves. They appear as metanarrative elements, which not only explain to the external viewer the nature of the pictorial illusion on the vases, but also invite them to think about and discuss what they see. Thus, mantle figures always show their interest in the nucleus by speaking about the action. Spectators who have experienced the action directly and objectively give up emotional involvements and develop a more pensive and subjective approach to the narrative; they became omniscient narrators in the imagery, as the external viewer had to be in his own world. A similar process stressing the development of the audience’s subjectivity and self-awareness also occurred in literature and philosophy during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Through the use of the mantle figures as actors and also spectators of the narrative, the painter suggests to the external viewer that he has to deal with an illusion of a world which is similar to his own world and, at the same time, shows him how to relate his own experience to this imagery, responding to different inputs of the period’s cultural spirit.

Furthermore, the mantle figures allow the localization of the imagery in the time and space of democratic Athens and the identification of the actual public of the narrative. Most importantly, they allow connections to be made between different nuclei of the narrative. As has already been pointed out, through specific use of these

81 This occurred in tragic poetry, as in art, in the early fifth century, while appearing in comedy and philosophy in the fourth century (mostly due to Plato’s new literary dialogue form, cf. Elsner 2006, 89–91) and corresponded chronologically to important changes in spectators’ iconography: their gradual displacement onto the other side and the final standardization of conversation scenes. In this regard, the influence of rhetoric on the construction of the images in vase painting ought not to be underestimated, as Stefan Schmidt has pointed out (Schmidt 2005, cf. esp. his conclusion p. 286–291).
82 Since they refer to the Athenian context and everyday life, cf. Langner 2012a, 12–14; Langner 2012b, 343–344.
83 We can perhaps claim that they work in a broader sense as indices and informants (Barthes 2001, 263–265, 267–268; Stansbury-O’Donnell 1999, 18–31).
spectators, different vase decorations had to be seen as a whole entity\textsuperscript{84}. Nevertheless, the redundancy of the mantle figure as an essential part of the narrative can have a greater potential by guiding the viewer to connect not only different vase fields, but also different vases\textsuperscript{85}. Hence, redundancy in this case allows the viewers to see a unified narrative system across the whole imagery of painted pottery, by linking different vases and images together through the constant presence of these spectators and anchoring this system solidly in the Athenian cultural environment. The standardization of mantled spectators had, in this sense, to be seen not as a simple formal and iconographical simplification but as hiding a deeper meaning, reflecting the fixation of narrative functions. The painter, sender of the narrative messages, fixes in this way a precise code and, by sharing it with the recipient\textsuperscript{86} in the same form consistently, makes that code clearly recognizable. Thus, the sure understanding of the role of mantle figures would be guaranteed and self-evident for the ancient viewer, by making both the internal and the external spectators of the narrative message communicate with and affect each other\textsuperscript{87}.

\textbf{Mantle figures and Greek identity}

Other than black-figure onlookers\textsuperscript{88}, spectators in the fifth century are mostly clothed like figures acting out the narration, with both wearing himatia. Thus, the narrative and spectators declare their belonging to the same world. Such a diffuse use of himatia had to be explained in light of the need to link the imagery with the world of the external viewer. Engagement with imagery is guaranteed for the

\begin{enumerate}
\item Thus, redundancy of iconographic elements also spreads diachronically from painter to painter (Steiner 1997, 167), creating a homogeneous communicative system surviving over time.
\item For the author having to use a shared code with his preferred recipient (Eco 1994, 7).
\item This is so not only because the mantle figure affects the external viewer, but because the gaze is mutual (cf. above n. 65) and cultural change in the viewer’s community also affects the ways that the spectators have to be represented, cf. above.
\item The clothing mostly distinguishes the onlookers from the acting figures (Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 119).
\end{enumerate}
external viewers through a process of identification\textsuperscript{89}, allowing them to be part of the narrative and perceive it in different ways, by recognizing themselves in the collective idealized viewer within the image. To enable this interchange between the internal and the external viewers, identification works on a subconscious level\textsuperscript{90}, requires anchoring points and familiar characteristics to be adopted and understood in the receptive context\textsuperscript{91}. Such common traits are provided in case of mantel figures by the \textit{himation}\textsuperscript{92}, symbolizing qualities and ideals, as literary sources suggest, that the external viewer shares with their internal counterpart and must make their own. Different forms and types of mantle overlapped or alternated chronologically in ancient Greece since the Homeric period\textsuperscript{93}. By focusing on the classical period, it is possible to outline some particular socio-historical aspect of the uses and contents of the \textit{himation} in Attic society and to define its importance in vase painting.

Firstly, the use of \textit{himatia} shows a clear gender differentiation. In Aristophanes’ \textit{Ecclesiazusae} women clothe themselves with their husbands’ mantles in order to take part in the \textit{Ecclesia}\textsuperscript{94}. Thus, \textit{himatia} appear to be a typical piece of clothing for Athenian men, expressing

\textsuperscript{89} Elsner 2006, 89.
\textsuperscript{90} Gombrich 1982, 27.
\textsuperscript{91} Cf. Stansbury-O’Donnell’s discussion of psychoanalytical approaches, requiring “the adoption of traits of the model” to construct identity (Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 59–60, 85).
\textsuperscript{92} Regarding the use of clothing to communicate and express identity, cf. Hall 2007, 343–344; Miller 2013.
\textsuperscript{93} The word \textit{i̱mati̱n} appears first in Aisopos’ \textit{Fabulae}; e. g. Aisop. fab. 36. 46. 179 (Haas – Hunger 1959); Aisop. fab. 216. 301; fab. Synt. 55 (Hunger 1970). The \textit{himation} is used here, like the chlaina, to protect from cold, and can be used differently depending on the weather. Another issue regards the theft of the mantle, implying its great economical value. In a fragment, Hesiod mentions “\textit{i̱mati̱n γυναι̱κε̱ι̱n}” (Hes. Fr. 194 [Merkelbach – West 1983]), however, it is only cited in a Byzantine scholion (Tzet. Schol. Exeg. Iliad. A 122) and, therefore, cannot be considered as the first mention of the himation. Henceforth, \textit{i̱mati̱n} was used until the sixteenth century AD with different meanings, sometimes diverging from the original use.
\textsuperscript{94} Aristoph. Eccl. 26–29, 73–75. Men’s \textit{himatia} differ from women’s, and seem to be thicker and warmer; (Aristoph. Eccl. 535–542); cf. also Xen. mem. 2, 7, 5, asserting the difference between “\textit{i̱mati̱n τε ἄνδρε̱ι̱α καὶ γυναι̱κε̱ι̱α}”.
equality among male bearers. Particular interest arises regarding the way that himatia should be worn, which is not arbitrary, but requires adherence to a certain etiquette. Conventionally and correctly, the himation had to be draped ἐπίδεξια, i.e., from left to right, as we read in Aristophanes’ Birds, where Poseidon, upset because of Tritaballus’ carelessness, bids him to wear the mantle the right way: βάρβαρος is the one who does not dress the himation properly. The correct wearing of the himation is therefore to be understood as a sign of civilized life, which reflects the values and ideals that characterize laudable behaviour. A sign of modesty and sophrosyne is to wrap oneself carefully in the mantle, while it was inappropriate and therefore to be avoided in Pericles’ time to speak in public while gesturing with the hands outside the himation.

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95 Although literary sources differentiate between himatia in material (wool, linen or cotton, e.g. Xen. oik. 7. 6; Plat. Krat. 389; Scamon Fr. 5, 57 [FHG]) and colour (e.g. Archipp. Fr. 39, 1 [Kock 1880]; Herakl. Hist. Fr. 1. 19 [FHG]; Crates Fr. 31, 1 [Kock 1880]; Xen. hell. 1. 1, 8; Plat. Krit. 44, a-b; rep. 8, 557, c; Aristoph. Plut. 530; Lys. 13, 40–41; Demosth. or. 21, 4; cf. Bieber 1967, 429–430; Pekridou-Gorecki 1989, 34–37), they are mostly undecorated in vase painting and thus equalized. Exceptionally, the mantle can be decorated with flowers or geometric elements, mostly in the early red-figure production; e.g. Basel, Antikenmus., BS491 (BAPD 200004; CVA Basel [3] pl. 1. 2; 2, 2); Munich, Antikensamml., 2607 (BAPD 200906). Esp. in white-ground vase painting and in sculpture polychromy in garments is attested (cf. Koch-Brinkmann 1999; Brinkmann 2003, esp. 51–54. 69–71; Koch-Brinkmann – Posamentir 2004; Brinkmann 2008, esp. 27–28; Brinkmann 2010, 58–60); e.g. Munich, Antikensamml., SS78 (BAPD 212459; CVA Munich [15] pl. 28); Vienna, Kunsthist. Mus., 143 (BAPD 217802; Koch-Brinkmann 1999, pl. 83–87; XIV); Basel, Antikensamml., KÄ413 (BAPD 217807; Koch-Brinkmann 1999, pl. 88–91); Munich, Antikensamml., 7706 (BAPD 9024408; CVA Munich [15] pl. 61); Sakai, Coll. Oka, 17 (BAPD 217647; CVA Japan [2] pl. 34, 5).

96 Aristoph. Av. 1567–1571; cf. also Plat. Phaidr 228. This way of wearing the mantle is also attested to in visual sources, where mantle figures stretch the right arm to dress or undress, hiding the left under the mantle; e.g. Havana, Mus. Nacional, 165 (BAPD 210032); Firenze, Mus. Archeologico, PD54 (BAPD 210136; CVA Firenze [4] III 1 pl. 128, 3); Boston, Mus. of Fine Arts, 21.4 (BAPD 217081; Lezzi-Haftner 1988, pl. 63 no. 84); Berlin, Antikensamml., 4052 (BAPD 207562); Tampa, Mus. of Art, 86.68 (BAPD 217140; Lezzi-Haftner 1988, pl. 107 no. 163); Erlangen, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, 290 (BAPD 217077); cf. Lezzi-Haftner 1988, 144–145.

97 Aristoph. Av. 1573; cf. also Ktesias Fr. F 45*, 23–24 (FGHist), where pygmies dress with their hair instead of wearing himatia.


and credibility of the public man is also emphasized in official situations\textsuperscript{100}. Furthermore, the *himation* also represents a certain lifestyle. In the famous duet from *The Acharnians*, while Lamachus takes his weapons and goes to war, Dicaeopolis, equipped with his *himation*, prepares for symposia\textsuperscript{101}. Thus, the *himation* is also connected with leisure and enjoyment of life\textsuperscript{102} for well-bred Athenians\textsuperscript{103}.

Literary sources clearly refer to an Athenian context\textsuperscript{104}, where mantle figures declare their affiliation to the polis by wearing *himatia*, and their acceptance of its cultural and social values. Therefore, the *himation* can be seen as a uniform by which the polis’ inhabitants might be identified, and which reflects their ideology. Thus, mantle-figure spectators always recognize the constant presence of the Athenian polis as an ideal background of narratives on vases. Furthermore, *himatia* were also intended to mark cultural differences between the Greeks and barbarians, and refer in this sense not only to an Athenian community but also to a wider perception of Greekness\textsuperscript{105}. Not only does the use of *himatia* in literary sources referring to other Greeks lead us to such an interpretation\textsuperscript{106}, but the iconography of mantle figures also spread with great success in other local red-figure productions besides that of Athens\textsuperscript{107}.

\textsuperscript{100} E. g., Plutarch points out that Agesilaus used to dress carefully with his *himation* in critical moments to gain authority (Plut. Ages. 32, 4).

\textsuperscript{101} Aristoph. Ach. 1136–1141.

\textsuperscript{102} Cf. Geddes 1987, 323–324.

\textsuperscript{103} Having a *himation* is also a sign of richness (cf. Ctesias Fr. F1q [FGrHist]; Xen. Kyr. 5, 2, 20; Plut. Alk. 1 122, b–c; the mantle can be used as article of exchange (Ctesias Fr. F45, 390 [FGrHist]; Demosth. or. 41, 27) and is listed under inherited properties (Demosth. or. 27, 10). Solons’ prohibition against offering more than “*ἱματίων τρίων*” at tombs is therefore interesting in this regard (Plut. Sol. 21, 5).

\textsuperscript{104} Although sometimes the word *ἱματίων* is standardized to indicate garment in general and is therefore also used for other contests; cf. Hdt. 2, 47, 95. 121; 3, 8; 4, 23; Xen. Kyr. 4, 5, 4; 5, 1, 11–12; 8, 3, 3; Plat. leg. 637, e.

\textsuperscript{105} On mantle figures as symbol for Greekness, cf. Langner 2012a, 20.

\textsuperscript{106} Cf. Ctesias Fr. F 45f*, 23–24 (FGrHist). *Himatia* can refer to Spartans (Critias Fr. 34, 4 [Diels – Kranz 1952]; Xen. Lak. pol. 2, 4; 3, 4; Plut. Ages. 32.4).

\textsuperscript{107} E. g., in Boeotia (CVA Paris, Louvre [17] pl. 43, 1; CVA Harrow [1] pl. 30, 1–3; CVA Berlin [11] pl. 71, 2; Sabetai 2014, 15. 17–20. 32–34), Corinth (CVA Athens, Benaki [1] pl. 70, 1–4; 71, 1–2; 72, 1–4; McPhee – Trendall 1986; McPhee 2014, 107–108. 111) and also in Macedonia (Akamatis 2014, 185–186). I would like to focus here only on Greek production, but certainly the use of mantle figures in regional vase painting in Magna Graecia...
Nevertheless, this Greekness expresses not just a political but also a cultural belonging, and therefore it is also possible for the Thracian singer Orpheus, the most Greek of the barbarians\textsuperscript{108}, to wear a \textit{himation}\textsuperscript{109}; both his figure\textsuperscript{110} and his mind appear to be Greek. The \textit{himation} characterizes, therefore, a wider Greek cultural identity\textsuperscript{111} and clearly connotes belonging to the Hellenic world, where Athens always functioned as a privileged model. The external viewer, who dresses like the mantel figures and shares the same cultural ideals, is thereby allowed to identify with them through the common attributes of the spectators on the vases. Thus, the ideal community of “mantel-spectators” in the imagery reflects the current polis community, and the \textit{himation} allowed both to converge and create a deeper sense of Athenian and Greek cultural identity.

In conclusion, the iconographic development of mantle figures as spectators reflects the historical and cultural background of the democratic polis. The ritualized presence of black-figure bystanders had to be replaced in the classical period with other models of self-representation. By then, mantle figures had developed parallel to the ongoing democratization of the polis and flourished together with the proliferation of new subjective, philosophical and rhetorical approaches and ways of thinking. Over the course of the fifth century,
the external viewers identified more appropriately with a pensive and conversing audience, reflecting on the narrative and so becoming narrating subjects in their own right. The mediation of internal spectators provides the viewers over time with direct access to the narrative and to the proper manner of entering it, by belonging to both worlds: the imagery of the Greek community and the Greek community itself. Therefore, the process of standardization and the redundancy of mantle figures in conversation pieces can no longer be considered a meaningless stylistic evolution, but rather as expressing a semantic fixing of mantle figures as the alter ego of a Greek community of active spectators, as a consequence of substantial cultural change.

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