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Imitation, inscription, antilogic

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Imitation, Inscription, Antilogic (pp. 17-38)

Le développement du raccourci, du clair-obscur et du paysage au cours du Ve siècle transforme de manière radicale l'utilisation des inscriptions, les ressemblances fonctionnelles entre les deux techniques désignées par le même terme graphein s'atténuant graduellement. L'analyse de deux vases du peintre de Lycaon et un du peintre de Pénélope permet de montrer comment l'écriture se développe et se pose comme une stabilité sémiotique face à l'ambiguïté de la peinture. Le peintre de Lycaon se sert des inscriptions pour signaler la dualité dans la représentation, en désignant par exemple Elpénor comme un eidôlon ou l 'homme-cerf comme Actéon et Euaion, personnage et acteur à la fois. De son côté le peintre de Pénélope utilise les inscriptions comme refuge contre les incertitudes de la représentation.

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IMITATION, INSCRIPTION, ANTILOGIC*

The Greek language, famously, makes no distinction between drawing, painting, and writing: the verb *graphein* covers all three activities. Although the fifth century distinguishes ordinary *graphê*, «writing,» from *zôgraphia*, «painting» (literally, «lifewriting»), the two words are clearly linked, and *graphê* continues to stand for painting as well as script throughout Antiquity². This lexical curiosity corresponds to the actual practice of Athenian vase-painters, at least in the Archaic period. François Lissarrague

^{*} The present essay differs substantially from the one read at the GRAPHEIN conference in Paris in 1998. As much of that earlier essay had appeared already (in Neer, «The Lion's Eye: Imitation and Uncertainty in Attic Red-Figure», Representations, 51, 1995, pp. 118-53), I have substantially modified the text and have added new material. The present essay still incorporates material from the earlier publication, but it is by no means a reprint. I am very grateful to François Lissarrague for inviting me to participate in the GRAPHEIN conference, and also for the many kindnesses he showed me during my time at the Centre Louis Gernet in 1997-98. I would also like to thank, for advice, encouragement, and commentary: Svetlana Alpers; T.J. Clark; Whitney Davis; Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux; Crawford H. Greenewalt, jr.; Leslie Kurke; Michael Rogin; Alain Schnapp; Andrew Stewart; Bernard Williams; Froma Zeitlin; and the audience, speakers, and organizers of GRAPHEIN. This paper has also benefitted from a session on orality, literacy, and the visual arts in Archaic Greece, organized by Rainer Mack at the 1999 College Art Association meeting in Los Angeles. Finally, I would like to thank the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Washington, for underwriting my time in Paris and for providing an ideal home on my return to the United States. Any errors are of course my

^{1.} On the language of images in Archaic and Classical Greece, see J.-P. Vernant, *Figures, Idoles, Masques*, Paris, 1990. The best and most recent general accounts of word and image in Greek thought are J. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: anthropologie de la lecture en Grèce ancienne*, Paris,1988; R. Osborne and S. Goldhill, *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture*, Cambridge, 1994.

^{2.} On metaphors and terminology of painting see the exemplary study in A. Rouveret, *Histoire et imaginaire de la peinture ancienne*, Rome, 1989.

has shown in a series of articles that the inscriptions on vases frequently have a non-textual, pictorial function: they guide the eye around the image, express lines of force or movement, form decorative patterns, and so on³. Pictorial practice is, to this extent, congruent with the vocabulary. Script and icon work in tandem: if they are not simply identical, still they share certain family resemblances.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this congruence is to be found in the work of early red-figure vase-painters such as Oltos and Euphronios. Instead of incising letters (as earlier, black-figure craftsmen did when writing on a black surface), or writing them in added purple glaze (as is usual for red-figure), they painstakingly drew each letter in red-figure, outlining each character, one by one⁴. There could be no clearer demonstration of the fundamental homology of word and image in Archaic vase-painting. On these vases, the painters treat letters and pictures as different aspects of a single phenomenon: marking, inscription, *graphê*.

In this paper, I shall argue that the development of foreshortening, chiaroscuro, and landscape in the fifth century utterly transformed this situation. In the works of certain painters, the family resemblances between word and image gradually became attenuated: the two aspects of *graphê* disengaged (though the separation would never be complete). The discussion consists of a few case-studies of this phenomenon, with an excursus into some parallel developments in fifth-century thinking about language and verbal representation. It focuses on three vases – two by the Lykaon Painter, one by the Penelope Painter – that formulate the issues with particular clarity, nuance, and complexity. In each instance, writing comes increasingly to stand for a kind of semiotic stability, over and against the ambiguity and duplicity of painting.

Under Fog and Darkness

In the years following the Persian Wars, muralists like Polygnotos of Thasos and Mikon of Athens developed a new technique for suggesting pictorial

^{3.} F. Lissarrague, «Paroles d'images : remarques sur le fonctionnement de l'écriture dans l'imagerie attique», in *Écritures* II, éd. A. M. Christin, Paris, 1985, pp. 71-93 ; *id.* «La stèle avant la lettre», *AION* 10, 1988, pp. 97-105 ; *id.* «Graphein: Écrire et dessiner», in *L'Image en jeu: de l'Antiquité à Paul Klee*, éd. C. Bron and E. Kassapoglou, Yens-sur-Morges, 1992, pp. 189-204 ; *id.* «Epiktetos Egraphsen: The Writing on the Cup», in Osborne and Goldhill, *op. cit.* (*supra* note 1), pp. 12-27.

^{4.} On incised inscriptions see B. Cohen, «The Literate Potter: A Tradition of Incised Signatures on Attic Vases», *Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal* 26, 1991, pp. 49-95. On reserved inscriptions see ARV^2 6 (top), 1617.

space. Instead of lining up all their figures on a single ground-line, they ranged them at different levels over the surface of the wall; the higher figures were understood to be further back, while those at the bottom were in the foreground. Though the murals themselves are lost, descriptions survive, and it is clear that their influence extended into the Potters' Quarter of Athens. Figures abandon the groundline and float over the whole wall of the vase. For the first time, painters are trying to create a consistent, enveloping sense of depth.

The work of the Lykaon Painter is a prime example of this new tendency: though retaining a single, flat baseline, he picks out the contours of rocks and hillsides to suggest a landscape setting⁷. A pelike in Boston, for example, shows Odysseus' visit to the Land of the Dead, «under fog and darkness», where he has come to ask Teiresias how he might return to Ithaka⁸ (fig. 1). As in the Odyssey, the hero sits on «a rock ... [at] the junction of two thunderous rivers», signaled by the tall reeds at left, while before him two rams lie sacrificed; at left the eidôlon – the «ghost» or «image» – of his dead shipmate Elpenor clambers «up out of Erebos»⁹. Elpenor died in an accident on Circe's island, where his body was left unburied by his comrades in their haste to depart. Even so, his soul has made its way to Hades more quickly than Odysseus' ship. The perplexed hero keeps the apparition at bay: «I myself, drawing from beside my thigh my sharp sword, crouched there, and would not let the strengthless heads of the perished dead draw near to the blood, until I had questioned Teiresias»¹⁰. Elpenor asks Odysseus to return to Circe's isle and cremate him, erecting a sêma or marker over his ashes; a

^{5.} Polygnotos and Mikon: M. Stansbury-O'Donnell, «Polygnotos's Iliupersis: A New Reconstruction», *AJA*, 93, 1989, pp. 203-15; *idem*, «Polygnotos's Nekyia: A Reconstruction and Analysis», *AJA*, 94, 1990, pp. 213-35; M. Robertson, *The Art of Vase-Painting in Classical Athens*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 180. Influence of vase-painting: E. Simon, «Polygnotan Painting and the Niobid Painter», *AJA*, 67, 1963, pp. 43-62; M. Robertson, *A History of Greek Art*, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 240-59; J. Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases, The Classical Period: A Handbook*, New York, 1989, pp. 11-15 (against a new spatial sense).

^{6.} The classic example being the Niobid krater in Paris (Louvre G 341; ARV^2 601.22; Para 399; Add^2 , 266): on this vase see now M. Denoyelle, Le cratère des Niobides, Paris, 1997, with earlier bibliography.

^{7.} The Lykaon Painter: ARV², 1044-46; Para, 444; Add², 320.

^{8.} Boston 34.79 ; ARV^2 1045.2 ; Para 444 ; Add^2 , 320. «Under fog and darkness» : Homer, Odyssey, 11. 57, 155.

^{9. «}Thunderous rivers»: Homer, *Odyssey*, 10. 515. «Up out of Erebos»: Homer, *Odyssey*, 11. 37. *Eidôlon*: e.g., Homer, *Odyssey*, 11. 83.

^{10.} Homer, Odyssey, 11. 48-50.

request to which the captain readily agrees. The two converse for a while – «So we two stayed there exchanging our sad words, I on one side holding my sword over the blood, while opposite me the phantom of my companion talked long with me» – then the shade departs¹¹.

Not without reason, this pelike has frequently been understood as the most «literary» of vases. The only substantial departure from Homer's version is the addition of Hermes at far right. The god's presence is usually explained by the fact that he is the *Psukhopompos*, the one who guides souls on their way to Hades (a role he actually performs in Odyssey, 24)12. In addition, Hermes is, like Odysseus, a master of deception or apatê. God and hero are both called polutropos, «of many turns»: an epithet which denotes vividly their crooked, crafty natures¹³. On the pelike, Hermes seems almost surprised at the sight of Elpenor, as if, like Odysseus, he cannot believe that the ghost has arrived in Hades so quickly¹⁴. At the same time, the vase is frequently cited as an example of the new, post-Polygnotan spatial sense. The figures move within a landscape setting of unprecedented detail, with groundlines set free from the bottom of the figure-frame. Polygnotos himself included Odysseus and Elpenor in his great Nekyia at Delphi, a mural which may have exerted some influence on this rendering¹⁵. In short, the vase is understood to be readerly in the extreme, its meaning predetermined by the Homeric text, its spatial sense by the new developments in pictorial naturalism.

^{11.} Homer, *Odyssey*, 11. 81-83.

^{12.} For this reading see, e.g., W. Felten, *Attische Unterweltdarstellungen des VI. und V. Jhs. v. Chr.*, Munich, 1975, p. 54; *CB* 2, p. 87.

^{13.} On Odysseus as trickster see especially D.N. Levin, «Odysseus' Truthful Untruths», Classical Bulletin, 37, 1961, p. 76; J. Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, Chicago, 1975, pp. 37-39; P. Pucci, «The Song of the Sirens», Arethusa, 12, 1979, pp. 121-32; C. Emlyn-Jones, «True and Lying Toles in the Odyssey», Greece and Rome, 33, 1986, pp. 1-10; P. Pucci, Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad, Ithaca, 1987, pp. 23-25 and passim. For an ancient opinion see Juvenal, 15.13-26. On Hermes as trickster see especially: L. Kahn, Hermès passe, Paris, 1978; W. Burkert, Greek Religion, tr. J. Raffan, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985, pp. 156-59 (with further references). Polutropos, cf. Pucci, op. cit. (1987), p. 24. The epithet is used of Hermes at Hymn. Hom. Merc., 13, 439; and of Odysseus at Homer, Odyssey, 1.1, 10. 330.

^{14.} Cf. CB 2, p. 88.

^{15.} It is important not to give too much weight to this influence. First, the Polygnotan Elpenor is clad in a mat, not nude, which in itself rules out any ideas of a slavish copy. Second, Polygnotos' *Nekyia* was a vast tableau populated by dozens of figures, without the focused intensity of the three figures on the vase; the overall effect must have been very different. Third, and most importantly, the Lykaon Painter's version is, quite simply, not the same thing as Polygnotos', and it must stand or fall on its own merits.

Of all the figures, Elpenor is certainly the most «advanced». He is located unequivocally in space, his head turned to three-quarters, his midriff twisting, his legs and fingers cropped by rocks, his whole body framed by reeds¹⁶. There is a real sense of three-dimensionality here. The painter goes out of his way to give corporeal weight to this figure who, with a palpable gesture, pushes himself upward with his right arm and pulls with the left. He is genuinely heavy, with the fingers of his right hand splayed over the rock to convey a sense of pressure and solidity. Odysseus and Hermes, with their resolute profiles, are flat by comparison. Indeed, the Lykaon Painter has done all in his power to emphasize this distinction, establishing a clear progression from right to left. Hermes' body remains hidden beneath a flat cloak, the surface of which is articulated only by a series of curls and arabesques that barely suggest depth. Odysseus is almost as two-dimensional, but a few details suggest a shallow space: the fold of cloth over his right thigh, the shading on his sun-hat, the slight twist to his upper torso, or the (impossible) turn of his right forearm. Last comes Elpenor, outdoing them all in a display of unprecedented virtuosity.

But there is a paradox here. For Elpenor is a *ghost*. Far from being weighty or ponderous, he is, as Homer tells us, no more substantial than «a shadow or a dream»¹⁷. This figure, for whom the painter has pulled out all the stops, on whom he has bestowed an unprecedented sense of corporeality, is precisely the one least deserving of that honor: the single most insubstantial, incorporeal, shadowy, dreamlike figure one could possibly represent. There is thus a contradiction between the style of the rendering – which suggests unprecedented physical presence – and the narrative, which tells us that Elpenor is a ghost. Just in case the viewer does not get the point, the Lykaon Painter writes the ghost's name in the genitive, not the nominative: not *Elpenor* but *Elpenoros*, «of Elpenor»¹⁸. The grammar of the inscription makes a clear distinction between the figure rising from the ground, and Elpenor himself. Between the *eidôlon* – the «picture / ghost» – and reality.

On the one hand, then, the Lykaon Painter has presented a supremely naturalistic figure, using every trick in the book to assert its weight and

^{16.} See B. Cohen, «Paragone: Sculpture versus Painting, Kaineus and the Kleophrades Painter», in *Ancient Greek Art and Iconography*, ed. W. G. Moon, Madison, 1983, p. 186.

^{17. «}Shadow or a dream»: Homer, *Odyssey*, 11. 207. The phrase is used of Antikleia, whom Odysseus tries three times to embrace (only to have her slip through his fingers), but it would presumably apply equally well to any of the dead. Compare Homer, *Iliad*, 23. 65-108, where the same thing happens between Achilles and the ghost of Patroklos.

^{18.} On the Archaic conceit of writing names in the genitive see J. Hurwit, *The Art and Culture of Early Greece*, 1100-480 B.C., Ithaca, 1985, p. 259.

presence. On the other, he has made it clear that the figure is nothing but a phantom, an illusion, an *eidôlon*. This contradiction between style and narrative recapitulates the more general contradiction between flatness and depth, between the mere arabesque of Hermes' cloak and the spatial halo surrounding Elpenor. In each case, and crucially, pictorial naturalism is the means of effecting paradox and uncertainty. It articulates a series of gaps or breaches within the pictorial field: between image and truth, man and ghost, genitive and nominative. The viewer's dilemma in this situation has an echo on the pot itself, in the contemplative, even puzzled figure of Odysseus. Just as Odysseus ponders but keeps his sword at the ready, unsure of what he sees, so the beholder can never be certain of the status of this image. The act of beholding is inscribed into the image, such that the depicted scene is, so to speak, an allegory of viewing. And the result? Nothing but aporia.

There is a telling analogy here with a modern painting: Holbein's *Ambassadors* in London (fig. 2). Like the Lykaon Painter, Holbein forces his viewers to operate in two distinct optics at once. Two courtiers stand facing out, rendered in a high mimetic style, surrounded by worldly bric-a-brac; at their feet, floating in mid-air, an anamorphic skull of grotesque proportions asserts a very different pictorial mode. This bizarre apparition ruptures an otherwise conventional picture-field. To be sure, it does not quite subvert the conventions of Renaissance naturalism so much as it supports that regime through the incorporation of its Other (under the sign of death, no less)¹⁹. Yet the key point is that, for Holbein, the way to figure such radical alterity is through a profoundly anti-mimetic, distortive technique.

The Boston pelike is equally death-ridden and reflexive: like the Holbein, it dramatizes breaches and disjunctions within representation, and presents them under the sign of mortality (this is, after all, the land of Hades). The irony, of course, is that between the two images the terms are neatly reversed. On the pelike, the destabilizing element is precisely the most imitative: the *eidôlon*, granted an extreme of presence and weight, ruptures an otherwise flat composition. What anamorphosis does in the sixteenth century, naturalism does in the age of Perikles; as much as it is a display of painterly skill, the ghostly Elpenor is an image of death, a trick, a reminder of ephemerality²⁰. The possibility of illusion haunts the image.

A deadlock, then, within the field of depiction. Gears crashing in a deliberately showy way. With writing integral to the performance. As noted earlier, the genitive Elpenoros informs the beholder that the figure at left is

^{19.} A point I owe to T. J. Clark.

^{20.} The poet Simonides used the image of a whirlpool to achieve the same dizzying effect: «All things,» he wrote, «arrive at one single horrible Kharybdis, great excellences and wealth alike». (Simonides, fr. 522 *PMG*).

an *eidôlon*: the inscription helps to direct attention towards the disjunction in the picture, marking the ghostliness of the apparation by means of grammar alone. The text thus subtends the pictorial paradox. It does so, moreover, by contradicting the picture's assertion of physical weightiness, by contradicting naturalism. Word and image are at loggerheads on this vase, and the resulting tension is productive. The situation is a far cry from the deep-rooted homology that is supposed to pertain between word and image in Greece. In effect, the whole conceit rests on the assumption that a label can point out pictorial ambiguity because it is not itself ambiguous. The ghostly Elpenor requires a puzzled stare, but his name alone reveals the truth. The legibility of writing enables the opacity, the uncertainty, of pictures.

Antilogic

The work of the early sophists, most notably Protagoras of Abdera, offers a compelling analogy to this line of thought. An exact contemporary of the Lykaon Painter, Protagoras was well-known in Athens by 444, when Perikles commissioned him to write a constitution for the colony of Thurii²¹. Though there is no evidence to suggest that he had any direct influence on Attic painting, his theories do provide a conceptual horizon for objects like the Boston pelike. They provide a vocabulary which one may bring to bear upon the imagery. As will become clear, Protagorean theories display the same uncertainty about signification which characterizes the Elpenor pelike. They share certain guiding assumptions.

Protagoras was the first Greek to put forward a consistent argument for subjectivism. «Man», he famously said, «is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, and of the things that are not that they are not»²².

^{21.} On Protagoras' time in Athens see G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 42. On sophism and material culture see I.S. Mark, «The Gods on the East Frieze of the Parthenon», *Hesperia*, 53, 1984, pp. 289-342; D. Placido, «Le phénomène classique et la pensée sophistique», *in Praktika tou 12 Diethnous Synedriou klasikes Arkhaiologias*, volume 1, ed. A. Delevorias, E. Zerboudaki, V. Labrinoudakis, A. Lebesi and V. Petrakos, Athens, 1985, pp. 221-25.

^{22.} Protagoras, fr. 1 DK. On the translation see W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Fifth Century Enlightenment*. A History of Greek Philosophy, volume 3, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 188-92. The reading offered here is perhaps a bit tendentious, inasmuch as it has been argued that the «man» to which Protagoras refers is actually mankind, not the individual. Though the weight of opinion does favor the individualist reading presented here, nonetheless there are dissenting voices. For a brief summary of the issues involved, see J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1982, p. 542. Barnes comes down in favor of the individualist view; contra, see L. Versenyi, «Protagoras' Man-Messure Fragment», *AJP*, 83, 1962, pp. 178-84.

As Sextus Empiricus put it, this dictum means that «truth is something relative because everything that has appeared to, or been believed by, someone is at once real in relation to him»²³. Or, in Plato's succinct paraphrase, «the truth is that things are as they appear to anyone»²⁴. Elsewhere Plato gives another example: one person may feel a breeze to be cool, while another may feel it to be warm — therefore the breeze truly is both warm and cool²⁵. Reality is measured by the individual.

Protagoras extended this subjectivism to rhetoric and language, entering an important fifth-century debate about the «correctness of words», *orthotês onomatôn*²⁶. Does language operate along pathways laid down by nature, *phusis*, or is it all just convention, *nomos*? Is truth to be judged by correspondence or consensus? Siding with the latter, Protagoras was an exponent of «antilogic» (*antilogikê*): the doctrine that there are two opposite arguments on every subject, each of which is equally valid²⁷. The breeze could be cool, it could be warm: one could argue either way and not be wrong. In antilogic, truth is constantly deferred in the face of two irreconcilable assertions. Moreover, what is true for a debate between two people holds for language in general: a word may have a plurality of meanings, and all may be equally proper. The only criterion for choosing one over the other is convenience: as Plato puts it, «Although some appearances are better than others, none is truer»²⁸.

This discourse has much in common with the Lykaon Painter's imagery: in both cases there is the same uncertainty about representation. On the vase it is an enterprise fraught with problems: the *eidôlon* both is and is not weighty, is and is not real. Elpenor thus comes as close to antilogic as is possible in visual art, a strictly undecideable combination of materiality and insubstantiality. Indeed, compared with this dramatic confrontation of living and dead, the sophist's breeze seems trivial. Although – to repeat – there is no question of direct influence, the Lykaon Painter dramatizes an anxiety shared by contemporary philosophers. Like Protagoras, he suspends meaning between two contrary *logoi*, admitting the possibility of naturalistic representation only to undercut it radically.

^{23.} Sextus Empiricus Adversus Mathematicos, 7. 60.

^{24.} Plato, Cratylus, 386 c.

^{25.} Plato, Theatetus, 152 b.

^{26.} On this debate see Guthrie, (*supra* note 22), pp. 204-19, with further references. That Protagoras participated in it is attested by Plato, *Cratylus*, 391 c.

^{27.} On antilogic see Kerferd (*supra* note 21), ch. 6. The word derives from *anti*-(opposed, counter to), and *-logos* (word, argument).

^{28.} Plato, *Theatetus*, 167 b. The complete phrase is, «Some people out of ignorance call appearances 'true', but for me, although some are better than others, none is truer».

Performing

The pelike is not the only vase to treat naturalism and language in this fashion. A second vase by the same painter, also in Boston, is equally complex. It is a bell-krater, showing the death of Aktaion²⁹ (fig. 3). For some sin (the accounts vary), this huntsman was transformed into a deer and killed by his own hounds. The scene is not particularly common, and the Lykaon Painter's version is unlike any other³⁰. At far right stands Zeus, one foot resting on a boulder, grasping his thunderbolt in his left hand and his scepter in his right. Next comes Lyssa («Madness») with a small canine emerging from the crown of her head, driving the hounds to attack their master. Aktaion, at center right, tries to defend himself against his rabid pack. He is in mid-metamorphosis, with his ears elongated, horns emerging from his head and fur sprouting on his face. At far left stands Artemis herself, watching and holding a torch. All of the figures are labeled for easy reading.

Once again, the Lykaon Painter has juxtaposed different spatial modes. Like Elpenor, Aktaion is drawn with face in three-quarters; and once again, the other figures are in profile. Also like Elpenor, Aktaion is set in a small landscape of rocks and plants. While there is no cropping of the kind seen on the pelike, patterns of overlapping do set the hunter in a shallow space. The dog at upper left, for instance, stands on a boulder in the background, passes in front of a tall shrub, and snaps at Aktaion's genitals; the net effect being to emphasize the distance between the victim and the rock behind him. In the same way, the lower corner of Aktaion's cloak passes behind his left leg but overlaps one of the hounds. Most impressively of all, Aktaion's right leg has been severely foreshortened; of the other figures, only Zeus can approach this suggestion of depth.

In short, the Lykaon Painter has once again set off a single figure from his fellows, isolating him in a sliver of three-dimensionality. And once again, there is uncertainty about that figure's corporeal status: Aktaion appears at the moment of his transformation, and so is neither man nor beast. He is caught, like Elpenor, somewhere in between full humanity and full otherness. In this intermediate state, Aktaion is a strictly undecideable figure: he exists

^{29.} Boston 00.346; ARV^2 1045.7, Para, 444, Add^2 , 320. An identical composition appears on a calyx-krater fragment by the same painter: Oxford 1980. 31 (289); ARV^2 1046.11, Add^2 , 320.

^{30.} On the scene in general: L. Guimond, *LIMC* 1, pp. 454-69, s.v. «Aktaion»; L.R. Lacy, «Aktaion and a Lost 'Bath of Artemis'», *JHS*, 110, 1990, p. 26 n. 1, with bibliography, to which add P. Jacobsthal, *Aktaions Tod*, Marburg, 1929; H. Hoffmann, «Eine Neue Amphora des Eucharidesmalers», *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen*, 12, 1967, pp. 9-34. See also A. Kossatz-Deissmann, *LIMC* 6, pp. 322-9, s.v. «Lyssa».

on the margins, a figure of antilogic for whom two opposing arguments compete with equal validity. Failure to recognize such distinctions is the mark of animals: the dogs, tragically, see only a deer³¹.

Were that the whole story, this krater would seem fairly timid compared with the pelike. Once again, however, writing complicates matters. Unlike the other figures, Aktaion is labeled not once but twice: with his proper name and with another, «Euaion», up above. The latter appears on several other vases and can be identified with a real person: Euaion, son of the playwright Aeschylus and a known tragikos or «poet / actor» in his own right³². On some vases he is even given his patronymic, «Aiskhylou»³³. Since Euaion was an actor, it has often been argued that vases with his name were inspired by his performances³⁴. That is, the figure of Aktaion on this krater is to be understood as Euaion in the role of the doomed hunter. The argument is particularly strong in this instance, because Aeschylus himself based a lost tragedy, the Toxotides («Archeresses»), on this very myth; his son Euaion may have played a role. Moreover, the sheer novelty of the Lykaon Painter's composition suggests some sort of outside influence³⁵. If such is indeed the case, then this vase is not a straightforward narrative but the record of a theatrical performance.

This realization has several effects. One is to render the central figure even more problematic: where Elpenor remained caught between substance and ethereality, Aktaion is at once deer and man, character and actor. This state is, once again, the visual equivalent of Protagorean antilogic, presenting two opposite arguments with equal validity. Yet the question of the figure's exact identity is only part of a broader uncertainty about representation itself: tragic drama, it will be recalled, is the definitive form of *mimêsis*. The

^{31.} On animals as bad viewers of pictures in Classical Greece, see W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, Chicago, 1994, pp. 329-44.

^{32.} Cf. A.D. Trendall, and T.B.L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama*, New York, 1971, pp. 4-5, 62, 65, 69; M. Robertson, *The Art of Vase-Painting in Classical Athens*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 207. For other instances of the name see *CB* 2, p. 85, to which add Malibu 83.AE.41; *Add*², 394.

^{33.} Agrigento, museum (ARV^2 1017.53; Para 440; Add^2 , 315); Malibu 83.AE.41 (Add^2 , 394).

^{34.} Robertson, *loc. cit.* Cf. Trendall and Webster (*supra* n. 32), p. 62. However, the Lykaon Painter's depiction of Euaion as a symposiast on a bell-krater in Naples is surely an exception: ARV^2 1045. 9, Add^2 , 320. The classic work on theatrical scenes is Trendall and Webster, op. cit, though the subject has attracted considerable attention. For a recent overview see J.R. Green, «On Seeing and Depicting the Theater in Classical Athens», GRBS, 32, 1991, pp. 15-50, with further references, p. 38, n. 77.

^{35.} Trendall and Webster (*supra* note 32), p. 4; *CB* 2, p. 84.

Lykaon Painter thus engages in a two-fold mimicry, presenting his viewer with the imitation of an imitation. For all the spatial effects lavished on him, Aktaion is but a copy, a product of *tekhnê*. Everything here is mere performance.

As this theatricality reveals, the vase is itself a spectacle for visual consumption. In a way the scene here may be best understood as a sort of embedded narrative, a play-within-a-play. It is a bold reduplication of *tekhnê*, at once exposing and celebrating the artifice behind representation. Thus Zeus and Artemis each play two roles: that of an actor in the unfolding drama, and that of audience, standing idly by while the main action takes place. While each plays a role in the narrative, each watches, stands outside the action and observes. Looking and acting thus merge into one, caught in aporia once again. The image is ruled by uncertainty: deer or man, Aktaion or Euaion, reality or counterfeit. Antilogic replicates itself constantly, with dizzying effect. Or, to use Charles Segal's description of tragedy, it «simultaneously culminates and dissolves the semiotic system behind the mythical material it uses»³⁶.

The situation becomes even more complex when one recalls the unshakable rule of Greek tragedy that all violence must occur offstage. In fact, a surviving fragment of Toxotides shows that the death of Aktaion was not acted out but was, instead, recounted by a messenger³⁷. In other words, the tableau which the Lykaon Painter presents as a scene from drama never happened onstage. It is a fantasy, a willful departure from fact: no Athenian would believe for a minute that it provides an accurate record of a performance. Yet, by naming Euaion, the Lykaon Painter makes precisely that claim. He seems, in other words, to be taking one step forward and two steps back. First he depicts a figure in illusionistic space, and then he undercuts that depiction by revealing it to be a performance – and not just a performance, but one that was not even staged. The scene is an imitation of an imitation that never was, an open and deliberate fiction. The image selfdestructs thrice-over: on the level of narrative (deer or man?), on the level of representation (hero or player?) and on the level of depiction (imitation or fantasy?).

Once again, writing is a key means of effecting this paradox. In a scene that is manifestly about recognition and error, the inscription gives both names, Euaion and Aktaion. If the former label were not there, few viewers

^{36.} C. Segal, *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text,* Ithaca, 1986, p. 66; J.-P. Vernant, and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, tr. J. Lloyd, New York, 1988, pp. 29-48.

^{37.} Aeschylus, fr. 244 TrGF.

would ever connect the picture to the theatrical presentation (after all, the death of Aktaion never took place on stage). In this way, the two inscriptions recall the genitive *Elpenoros* on the pelike: they mark the distinctive, pictorial ambiguity generated by foreshortening and landscape. Once again, however, this ostensive function sets writing apart. It does not share in the ambiguity so much as it marks it, identifies it, points it out to the beholder. Both inscriptions, both labels, are correct: and that is the point. The deer-man really is both Aktaion and Euaion, simultaneously. But where the picture is able to blend the various aspects into a single, polyvalent figure, the two texts remain distinct from one another. Taken singly, each label tells the truth.

To put it another way: the Lykaon Painter assumes that texts possess a certain quality that images do not. He assumes that texts are unambiguous, and that they can therefore serve as an effective means of pointing out the ambiguity and duplicity of pictures. He organizes the two Boston vases around this assumption, using labels – *Elpenoros*, *Aktaion*, and *Euaion* – to signal deep-seated uncertainties in the status of images. Writing, in short, has become antithetical to depiction. It can solve the problem which baffles Odysseus; it can distinguish between Aktaion, Euaion, and a deer. It is everything that pictures are not. In this way, the radical ambiguity of foreshortening, landscape, and the like positively require writing to become correspondingly lucid, straightforward, and trusty. It must name these forms of pictorial *apatê*, and thereby respond to them.

Scar and Loom

The Lykaon Painter was not unique in addressing these themes. Similar issues crop up in the work of other Classical painters. For example, a skyphos in Chiusi by the Penelope Painter may usefully be compared with the vases in Boston³⁸ (fig. 4-5). Active in the 420's, the Penelope Painter was a pupil of the Lewis Painter and one of the more careful draughtsmen of his time. He worked in a strong Classical style, mostly on skyphoi; the shape was not especially popular in Athens, but this workshop specialized in it. The Chiusi skyphos shares many themes with the pelike in Boston: once again, the narrative is Odyssean; once again, a dialectic of writing and depiction is the motor of the decorative scheme. It therefore may serve as a sort of counterpoint to the vases discussed thus far.

Side A depicts the return of Odysseus³⁹ (fig. 4). Disguised as a beggar, he

^{38.} Chiusi 1831; ARV² 1300. 2, Para, 475, Add², 360.

^{39.} Cf. O. Touchefeu, Thèmes odysséens, Paris, 1968, no. 455.

has entered his own palace as a guest. There he is greeted by his old nurse – Homer calls her Eurykleia, the painter labels her Antiphatta – who, in a famous scene, recognizes him by a scar on his leg as she bathes his feet⁴⁰. Off to one side stands the faithful swineherd Eumaios. Side B continues the Odyssean theme⁴¹ (fig. 5). It shows Penelope seated at right on a strongly foreshortened stool. She is clad in a chiton and a himation; the latter is pulled up to cover her head, a sign of grief. Standing at left is Telemakhos, wearing a himation and carrying two spears. A large standup loom serves as a kind of $sk\hat{e}n\hat{e}$, on which Penelope's famous shroud hangs; little blackfigure pegasoi, griffins, and a winged man (Boreas?) run across the design⁴². Telemakhos casts a pronounced shadow on the fabric; a fact which, in tandem with the foreshortening of Penelope's stool, has led to speculations about the possible influence of wall-painting⁴³.

If ever a vase offered a programmatic contrast between its two sides, it is this one. The iconography is not unique, but nowhere else do the particular scenes appear together, and the antithesis is visible even at the most superficial levels. Side A, for instance, is narrative (events are happening, it is the very moment of recognition) while side B is not (nothing is going on, the figures are still, and there is no way to situate the moment with any precision in the storyline of the *Odyssey*)⁴⁴. More importantly, however, the two sides show two very different sorts of visual sign. The obverse centers on Odysseus' scar, the unshakable mark by which he is recognized throughout the last books of the Odyssey, despite the hero's own constant oscillation between beggarly disguise and the unearthly beauty crafted over him by Athena⁴⁵. As Peter Brooks has pointed out, the scar «looks

^{40.} On the Odyssey passage (19. 467-70) see E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr. W.R. Trask, Princeton, 1953, pp. 1-20.

^{41.} E. Paribeni, *EAA* 6, pp. 26-27, s.v. «Penelope»; Touchefeu (*supra*, n. 32), no. 373; M.-M. Mactoux, *Pénélope*. *Légende et mythe*, Besançon, 1975, p. 73; S. Settis, «Images of Meditation, Uncertainty, and Repentance in Ancient Art», *History and Anthropology*, 1, 1984, pp. 193-237; W. Gauer, «Penelope, Hellas und der Perserkönig. Ein hermeneutisches Problem», *JdI*, 105, 1990, p. 33, no. 8; C. Haussmann, *LIMC* I, p. 292, s.v. «Penelope» no. 16.

^{42.} On the shroud: Homer, *Odyssey*, 2. 89-110; 19. 136-6; 24.125-50.

^{43.} E.g. Robertson (*supra*, note 32), p. 218; for proper skepticism see B. Andreae, and C. Parisi Presicce, ed. *Ulisse: Il mito e la memoria*, Rome, 1996, p. 387.

^{44.} The two scenes do not occur simultaneously, as is sometimes suggested. Penelope's ruse was discovered long before Odysseus arrived home: the fact that Penelope cannot hold out much longer precipitates Telemakhos' departure from Ithaka in search of news at the beginning of the poem.

^{45.} On Odysseus' homecoming see S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey*, Princeton, 1987, with earlier bibliography; F. Frontisi-Ducroux, and J.-P. Vernant, *Dans I'œil du miroir*, Paris, 1997, pp. 13-50, 253-85.

suspiciously like a linguistic signifier»⁴⁶. It allows Penelope and the servants to penetrate the changeable and shifting world of appearances – to look past the disguises – to see the truth beyond. In the picture, we see the very moment at which Eurykleia (or Antiphatta) «reads» this sign. And indeed, all the bodies here are singularly legible, marked off and categorized according to the conventions of Attic painting. Eurykleia (Antiphatta) is old, and her subordinate status is conveyed by the fact that she is kneeling; Eumaios is identified as a peasant by his chitoniskos, wrapped round his waist to leave the midriff bare, and by his stubbly beard. Odysseus, however, is a perfect physical specimen, wearing his distinctive pointed cap: though he is disguised, his true identity is obvious. His pose, one leg thrust forward, weight born securely on a staff, is particularly evocative in the present circumstances: Homer refers to the tokens of Odysseus' recognition as sêmata empeda, «firmstanding signs», and this term seems tailor - made to fit the hero as he appears in this image, one foot planted on the ground, his weight resting on a sturdy walking-stick⁴⁷. Lest the implications of all this be lost, the painter has included a skyphos dangling around Odysseus' neck: replicating the shape of the cup itself, it underscores the basic affinity between the signifying scar and the signifying vessel.

If side A thus shows legible signs in action, side B is all about deception and cunning, apatê and mêtis. Penelope's own dolos or «trick» is especially prominent: the famous shroud, which she pretended to weave for Laertes to fend off the suitors, and then unraveled every night. This deceptive fabric is adorned with painted figures in silhouette, all drawn from the stock repertoire of the ceramicist. These black-figure animals differ from Telemakhos and Penelope only in degree. As if to underscore this affinity the young man's shadow – a mark of illusionism if ever there was one – falls directly onto the cloth: his own silhouette lies side-by-side with the little black figures, making comparison inevitable. Penelope, meanwhile, is a quotation from a well-known statue-type: the so-called Mourning Penelope, known from fifth-century terracotta reliefs, Roman copies, and a marble fragment found at Persepolis⁴⁸. There is thus a *citational* aspect to this figure:

^{46.} P. Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993, p. 3.

^{47. «}Firmstanding signs»: Homer, Odyssey, 23. 206, 24. 346.

^{48.} On the «Mourning Penelope» type – there may have been two variants extant in the fifth century, one of *circa* 460, the other of *circa* 430 – see: E. Langlotz, «Die Larisa des Telephanes», *Museum Helveticum*, 8, 1951, pp. 157-70; D. Ohly, «Dia Gunaikon», in *Robert Boehringer: eine Freundesgabe*, ed. E. Boehringer and W. Hoffmann, Tübingen, 1957, pp. 433-48; E. Langlotz, «Zur Deutung des 'Penelope'», *JdI*, 76, 1961, pp. 72-99; B.S. Ridgway, *The Severe Style in Greek Sculpture*, 2nd ed., Princeton, 1970, pp. 101-5;

Penelope is an image of an image. One step removed from the narrative, she is separated from direct representation of an historical event by the intervening screen of earlier, pre-existing depictions. Lest there be any mistake as to the reflexive commentary on offer here, the painter indulges in an old Archaic conceit⁴⁹. The stool at lower right is strongly foreshortened, suggesting an enveloping pictorial space despite the overall flatness of the depicted figures. Yet the painter deliberately upsets this fragile construct by allowing a framing palmette-tendril to curl in behind the stool. The result is a patent contradiction. For the pictorial space to retain a shred of coherence it must distinguish itself from the frame. But the Penelope Painter deliberately interweaves the two. Overlapping, which is the simplest way of suggesting depth, runs counter to foreshortening: the tendril seems, impossibly, to occupy the same space as the stool. The painter asserts depth and flatness and the same time: and thereby leaves the viewer to switch back and forth endlessly between the two.

The two sides of the cup thus present a deadlock of *apatê* and the *sêma empedon*, deception and the firmstanding sign. The painter gives no particular endorsement to either one or the other: indeed, he likens both to his own enterprise, on the one hand suggesting affinities between Telemakhos, Penelope, and the black-figure shroud, while on the other dangling a skyphos from Odysseus' staff. Are these pictures as reliable as the scar, or as deceptive as the fabric? The result is an exact counterpart to sophistic antilogic: two contradictory propositions, left unresolved. More to the point, it is an exact counterpart to the work of the Lykaon Painter. The difference is that the latter combined into single figures (Aktaion, Elpenor) what the Penelope Painter juxtaposes on the two sides of a skyphos. But in each case, the fundamental confrontation is the same.

Here again, the depictive split or gap results in a new status for the written

H. Hiller, «Penelope und Eurykleia? Vorbemerkung zur Rekonstruktion einer Statuengruppe,» AA, 87, 1972, pp. 47-67; M. Robertson, A History of Greek Art, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 209-10; W. Gauer (supra note 41); K. Stähler, «Die Freiheit in Persepolis? Zum Statuentypus der sog. Penelope», Boreas, 13, 1990, pp. 5-12; A. Stewart, Greek Sculpture, New Haven, 1990, p. 275; Andreae and Parisi (supra note 43), pp. 378-95, 434-41 nos. 6.1-.15. On Penelope and her iconography see C. Hausmann, LIMC VII, pp. 290-95, s.v. «Penelope». Telemakhos likewise belongs to a pictorial type that goes back at least to the namepiece of the Achilles Painter (Rome, Vatican 16571; ARV^2 987.1; Para 437; Add^2 , 311).

^{49.} On this conceit see R. Neer, «The Lion's Eye: Imitation and Uncertainty in Attic Red-Figure», *Representations*, 51, 1995, pp. 118-53; and *idem*: *Style and Politics in Attic Red-Figure*, *circa* 520-460 B.C.E., Cambridge, forthcoming.

sign. As noted earlier, the all-important scar of Odysseus bears a strong resemblance to a linguistic signifier. It is replete with meaning: it marks, even guarantees, Odysseus' true identity beneath his disguise. Taken as writing, in other words, the scar is the very epitome of a «firmstanding sign». Everything hinges on the definitive legibility of this graphic mark, its capacity to body forth truth. In a familiar dialectic, moreover, the scar functions as a counterpoint to the tricky illusionism of Side B, to Penelope's shroud and its *apatê*. Here as elsewhere, writing can serve as the agent of pictorial deadlock or «antilogic» precisely because it is assumed to be different in kind from pictures. Perhaps for this reason, the painter does not actually draw the scar. Its existence is only implied: the scar itself is «outside» depiction – as it must be, if it is to serve as depiction's counterpoint.

Some confirmation for this reading (never was the word more inappropriate!) comes from the odd inscription naming the elderly nurse on A. As noted above, the painter has replaced the Homeric *Eurykleia* («Broad Renown») with another designation, apparently of his own invention: *Antiphatta*. This new name means «Counter-Talker», «She Who Contradicts»: it is, in effect, a synonym of the sophistic catchphrase, *antilogikê*, «antilogic»⁵⁰. Just as the scar is the definitive «firmstanding sign,» the definitive form of true and trustworthy *graphê*, only in response to the radical ambiguity of shadows and foreshortening, so the nurse who reads that sign is equated with the definitive, deadlocking reply. And that name, of course, is given by writing. Text, here, is always a way of thinking the unambiguous, the non-pictorial. It is the counter-argument to imagery, making up for its deficiencies and deceptions.

Conclusion

Although these vases record attempts to work out certain problems – problems of depiction, illusion, and naming – it is not necessary to suppose that these problems were ever formulated explicitly, as such. It is enough to insist that stylistic change did occur; that it did have consequences; and that these consequences were confronted, wrestled with, and worked over, with varying degrees of success. I would argue, therefore, that Lykaon and

^{50.} The name comes from *anti-+ phatâ* (verb *phêmi*). I am grateful to Andrew Stewart for reminding me of this etymology. The word *Antiphata* is a hapax: however, *antiphatikôs* is a technical term in Classical logic, meaning «contradictorily»: Aristotle, *De interpretatione*17b17, 22a34. See also O. Touchefeu-Meynier, *LIMC* 1, p. 860, s.v. «Antiphatta», where it is suggested that the painter has perhaps confused Eurykleia with Antikleia.

Penelope Painters are not theorizing those changes in the ordinary sense of the term. Rather, they are working them out, on the fly: and the vases are the fossils of that process⁵¹. A guiding assumption of this activity is that writing and painting are antithetical. This way of formulating the problem, moreover, has parallels in contemporary Greek rhetorical theory. The sophists perceived analogous problems and, apparently, dealt with them in analogous ways. Their texts provide some conceptual tools with which to approach the imagery, but there is no reason to suppose that they had any direct influence on it. The vases are material parallels to tragedy and antilogic. But they are not theory: they are practice.

To conclude. Vase-painters never took depiction for granted, and in works like the Chiusi skyphos and the Boston vases we can see something of the disturbing effect that this idea had on Classical art. The triumphal rhetoric so common in art-historical accounts of this epoch has little to do with the pictures themselves, which if anything treat the possibility of imitation as deeply unsettling. Naturalism – at least at the beginning; at least in vase-painting – is a way of thinking about ambiguity and difference: it brings with it not closure but an ever-more extreme conceptual deadlock. One consequence of this development seems to have been a reorganization of the role of inscriptions on vases. As pictures become uncertain, texts become a way – indeed, the preferred way – of thinking the «firmstanding sign». The process is automatic, like a reflex-action. For the Lykaon Painter,

^{51.} So, for instance, I do not think the painters had a conscious intention to comment on these issues: not, at any rate, if «conscious intention» is taken to mean an explicit, verbal sentence in the mind of the artisan («I hereby resolve to do such-and-such»). Arthistorical writing, by its very nature, trades in declarative sentences of this kind: but the actual process of making a picture is obviously more complex. Most of all, it is not a verbal process, but (in the most general possible terms) a bodily activity controlled by the eye. Painting, after all, is a medium, and a nonverbal one at that. Consequently, a painter's intention cannot simply be distilled into a written declaration of purpose. At most, a painting is a material trace or fossil of the working-through of an intention - an intention which is itself part of a psychological economy of delay and deferral (in Freudian terms, Vorspätung and Nachträglichkeit: cf. W. Davis, Replications: Archaeology, Art History, Psychoanalysis, University Park, 1995). A painter's intention cannot therefore be thought of as a pre-existing, stable logos incarnate in the material object, awaiting transcription at the hands of a critic or historian. Rather, we as critics are faced with the task of re-working and re-presenting the trace of a revision. One might therefore say that the fundamental word-image opposition is the one pertaining between pictures and criticism: the two orders are simply incommensurate. The response advocated in the present essay is that criticism should seek primarily to describe what an object does, how it functions, what it takes for granted, what it leaves unthought. To give a «perspicuous representation» of the object.

writing is a means of effecting deadlock, pointing to the doubleness within pictures: it designates the super-natural Elpenor as an *eidôlon*, a «ghost» or «picture», and it designates the deer-man as both Aktaion and Euaion, character and actor. But, in performing this task, it is also a counterpoint to the pervasive uncertainty of the pictures. Because it identifies pictorial contradictions so effectively, writing is outside contradiction and paradox. For the Penelope Painter, by contrast, naturalistic style does not entail a split within the image so much as a split between images: Sides A and B of the Chiusi skyphos are each self-sufficient, and the contrast emerges from the comparison between the two. Writing, here, is a general form the *sêma empedon*, the «firmstanding sign,» over and against the *dolos* of Penelope's shroud. In this respect, the Penelope Painter uses texts in a manner very similar to the Lykaon Painter: as a refuge from the uncertainties of depiction.

It is not especially surprising that the development of new pictorial resources – foreshortening, shading, landscape – should entail a split between word and image. After all, these new resources are, precisely, aspects of depiction in which writing cannot share. What is less predictable, however, is the nature of that split. The painters do not figure writing as the debased supplement of a radically true or natural mode of depiction. On the contrary, just because the new style is profoundly aporetic – because it is, exactly, not truth but *apatê* – writing must become the medium of true communication. It must identify Elpenor, Euaion, Odysseus. It must be the *antilogikê* or *antiphata* to depiction's duplicity.

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Fig. 1. Boston 34.79.

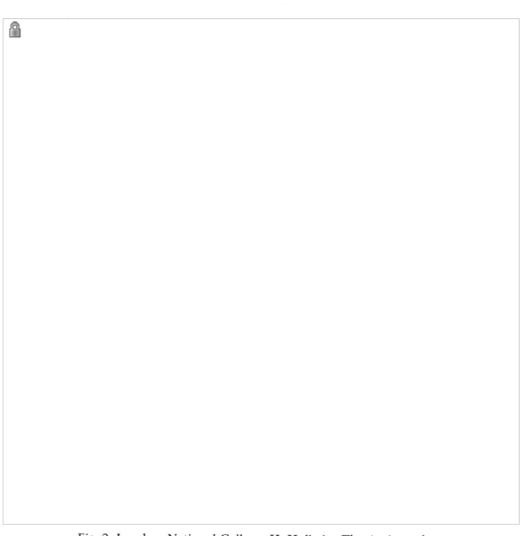


Fig. 2. London, National Gallery; H. Holbein, *The Ambassadors*.



Fig. 3 Boston 00.346.



Fig. 4. Chiusi 1831 (side A).



Fig. 5. Chiusi 1831 (side B).