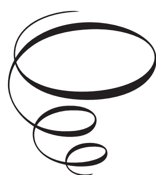
Breaking with Convention in Italian Art

Breaking with Convention in Italian Art

Edited by

Julia C. Fischer

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



Breaking with Convention in Italian Art

Edited by Julia C. Fischer

This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2017 by Julia C. Fischer and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-9502-4
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9502-6

For Hallie Schneider Borellis

Tempus fugit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One 1
Introduction
Julia C. Fischer

Chapter Two 7
Death on Display: “Breaking Bad” with Etruscan Funerary Imagery
Laurel Taylor

Chapter Three 26
Establishing an Augustan Date for the Tazza Farnesse
Julia C. Fischer

Chapter Four 48
The Dramatic Side of Breaking Bad: Raphael, Peruzzi, and a Remarkable Revival of Vitruvius’ *Scaenae Frons*
Alexis R. Culotta

Chapter Five 72
Michelangelo: Going against the Grain
Tamara Smithers

Chapter Six 87
A “Red-Headed” Temper: Rosso Fiorentino and Vasari’s Fiery Portrait
Tiffanie P. Townsend

Chapter Seven 99
Caravaggio’s *Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt*: Breaking Bad with Tradition in the Portrait of the Ultimate Christian Knight
Shannon N. Pritchard

Chapter Eight 119
Felice Beato, Pioneering Travel Photographer
Julia C. Fischer

Chapter Nine 137
A Painter's Leeway: Mario Schifano's "Break" with the Sonnabend Gallery and the *Anemic Landscapes* of 1964-66
Christopher Bennett

Contributors 161

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

JULIA C. FISCHER

Popularized by the hit television show, the phrase breaking bad is defined in urban slang as someone who challenges convention, defies authority, or rejects moral and social norms. Running from 2008-2013 on AMC, *Breaking Bad* featured one of the most unforgettable characters in television history: Walter White, a high school chemistry teacher, husband, and father, who is diagnosed with terminal cancer. For five seasons, fans watched as Walter White tried to secure financial security for his family by using his chemistry skills to manufacture drugs. Throughout the series' run, Walter White was the epitome of the phrase breaking bad, as he broke the law and continually rejected the social mores that he had dutifully followed until his cancer diagnosis.

Taking its cue from Walter White, *Breaking Bad in Italian Art* explores the various ways in which artists, patrons, and art historians throughout history have broken bad by defying authority, challenging convention, or rejecting the norm. For example, artists also sometimes break away from tradition by using unconventional iconography, as is the case in Chapter Two, which investigates how Etruscan tomb reliefs show mourning rather than celebration. *Breaking Bad in Italian Art* also includes a chapter in which an art historian breaks bad by challenging the conventional interpretation and date of an object, thus eschewing tradition and defying authority. In this case, Chapter Three disputes the largely accepted Hellenistic date and interpretation of the Tazza Farnese and instead asserts that the cameo must be Roman.

Spanning the art of ancient Etruria to the twentieth century, the eight chapters in *Breaking Bad in Italian Art* explore the theme of breaking bad from a variety of time periods and artistic media, from Etruscan mirrors and Roman cameos to Baroque portraits and Italian Pop Art. Scholars approach the topic of breaking bad from a number of interdisciplinary perspectives, including examining the artist, patronage,

reception, propaganda, iconography, methodology, and use.

Inspired by the 2016 Southeastern College Art Conference session, *Breaking Bad in Italian Art* is designed for an academic audience of not only specialists in Italian art, but also undergraduate and graduate students. Ideally, the volume will serve as a complementary text for students taking art history courses in Etruscan, Roman, medieval, Renaissance, or modern Italian art and will highlight the many ways in which artists, patrons, and art historians have broken bad throughout the history of Italian art. Furthermore, *Breaking Bad in Italian Art* will complement the Cambridge Scholars Publishing book of 2016, *More Than Mere Playthings: The Minor Arts of Italy.*[1] Taken together, these two books are the ideal texts for a course on Italian art from antiquity through the twentieth century.

Following this introduction, the following eight chapters proceed chronologically from the Etruscan era to 1960s Pop Art in Italy. In Chapter Two, Laurel Taylor investigates the ways in which Etruscan funerary imagery (the largest surviving category of Etruscan art) generally avoided the depiction of dead bodies. The famous tomb frescos at Tarquinia, for example, are replete with life-affirming images, of dancing, eating, music and games. And, while later Etruscan tombs show horrific demons of death, representing the corpse of the deceased—unlike in the Greek world—seems to have been taboo. A category of relief monuments from the Etruscan city of Chiusi, however, defies this norm and shows a range of images capturing a moment in the death drama—the ritual exposition of the corpse and the attendant mourning surrounding death and burial. This imagery not only breaks bad within the conventions of Etruscan visual culture but is also ritually subversive within the larger Mediterranean. The performance of elaborate mourning rituals surrounding the corpse was almost exclusively associated with women in many ancient societies. The reliefs from Chiusi, however, depict women, men and children as mourners, all displaying gestures and interacting with the corpse in ways that are exclusively gendered female in analogous Greek imagery. Taylor's chapter explores how the monuments subvert visual norms within Etruscan representational culture and the ways in which they illuminate aspects of ritual and gender within Etruscan art.

In Chapter Three, Julia C. Fischer breaks bad by challenging the traditional Hellenistic date of the Tazza Farnese and provides convincing evidence that the gemstone is instead Augustan. This chapter will first scrutinize the reasons why scholars typically assign a Hellenistic date and

[1] Julia C. Fischer, editor, *More Than Mere Playthings: The Minor Arts of Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

interpretation to the Tazza Farnese. But as Fischer reveals, these scholars assign a Hellenistic date to the Tazza Farnese based on one or more of the following problematic and subjective criteria: its Hellenistic style, its Egyptian iconography, resemblance of the figures to certain portraits of individual Ptolemies, and direct comparison to other Ptolemaic cameos and gems. The most convincing evidence, as will be seen, points to the Tazza Farnese dating to the early Augustan period or the late 30s or 20s BCE. Fischer will more conclusively date the Tazza Farnese to the Augustan period through an examination of the economic history of the Hellenistic and early Augustan periods, the material used, the shape of the dish, comparisons with other cameos, the gorgon, the billowing mantle, and other iconography. These are aspects of the Tazza Farnese that are usually ignored by scholars who date the cameo to the Hellenistic period. In the end, this chapter breaks bad by refuting the conventional Hellenistic date of the Tazza Farnese and presents compelling evidence that the famous gemstone is Roman, while also providing a new, Augustan reading of the cameo.

In Chapter Four, Alexis R. Culotta examines Agostino Chigi's sixteenth-century Roman villa, known today as the Villa Farnesina, and reveals that it was a landmark of architectural and artistic ingenuity thanks to its key players who broke with convention and thereby changed the course of visual culture in early *cinquecento* Rome. One of these unconventional elements was architect Baldassarre Peruzzi's quotation of Vitruvius' prescriptions for the *scaenae frons* in his design for the villa's main entrance façade. Building on the proposal put forth by Mark Wilson Jones as to Peruzzi's adherence to Vitruvian proportions within this design, this chapter argues for the significance of this inaugural revival of the ancient stage within the context of both Peruzzi's interest in scenographic design and the artistic decoration intended for the entrance façade. This transformation of the façade into a dynamic visual backdrop set the stage, so to speak, for an innovative working relationship between Peruzzi and colleague/collaborator Raphael that revealed their shared passions for architecture, artistry, antiquity, and the emergent field of theatrical design.

Tamara Smithers turns to Michelangelo in Chapter Five. Few artists before his time ignored convention as much as Michelangelo did, especially in regards to established social norms, working practices, and artistic style. When dealing with colleagues and patrons, his no-nonsense, larger-than-life personality cast a large shadow; he was, after all, described at the time as having terribilitá. Whether requesting double pay or refusing pay in order to maintain full creative control, Michelangelo practiced art

his way. For the most part, he refused to work with apprentices; the attempts to teach a singular student how to draw were so comical that the two could only laugh at how bad the drawings were. In his pursuit of artistic freedom, Michelangelo rejected the traditional *bottega* system (by claiming not to run a typical workshop) and eschewed guild membership. Moreover, his individualism reveals itself in his personal style, especially his carving technique. His tendency to refine parts of his sculptures while leaving others rough suited his multi-faceted persona, as he claimed to be both rozzo and aristocratic. As explored briefly in this chapter, Michelangelo went against the grain in more ways than one.

Tiffanie P. Townsend investigates the Mannerist artist, Rosso Fiorentino, in Chapter Six. Rosso Fiorentino is described in highly laudable terms by Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Artists*–graceful, sublime, masterful; having a beautiful presence, a gracious manner of speech, and a fine knowledge of philosophy … the praises go on and on. Yet nuances of Rosso as a bit of a bad boy also emerge in many of these accolades–Vasari tells us repeatedly of Rosso's excellence and worthiness of achieving recognition for his craft, to the point of making the reader wonder if he protests too much. Mixed in with his ample compliments are details of a life filled with upheaval and mayhem. If the warp of the biography is Rosso's talent, the weft is the catalogue of eccentric anecdotes recounting Rosso's bizarre working methods, strange behavior, and violent actions. He paints saints his patron flees from, believing them instead to be devils; he owns a mischievous, even malicious ape as a dearly loved pet; he fights with priests in a church where swords are then drawn again him; and after achieving one of the best positions for an artist in all of Europe, as court painter to Francis I, he ends his finally glorious career in guilt-ridden suicide by a poison so virulent it ate away the thumb of the servant who transported the bottle. In keeping with so many of Vasari's written portraits of artists, there is a correlation between the painter's works and his character: his ekphrastic descriptions of works of art illuminate the personality of the artist. Vasari uses the words bizarre, bold, and fanciful repeatedly to describe Rosso's images: these are clearly the product of a man who himself is bizarre, has a bold nature, and is frequently overcome by a too fanciful imagination. This chapter investigates the fortune and misfortune of Rosso Fiorentino, literally the Florentine Redhead, who, according to Vasari, clearly fits the old cliché of the "red-headed temper:" fiery, and soon to flame out.

In Chapter Seven, Shannon Pritchard turns to the Baroque period with her investigation of Caravaggio's *Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt with a Page* (1609), which was painted during the artist's exile in Malta and is the only multi-figure, full-length portrait of the painter's career. In it Wignacourt stands against a monochromatic background in an outdated, ill-fitting full-length suit of armor, being attended by a young page. While Caravaggio characteristically captured Wignacourt's physical appearance with fidelity, the portrait seems designed to convey a very specific message about the personal history and identity of the sitter beyond merely recording his likeness. And it is the suit of armor that delivers the message. As one might expect from an artist like Caravaggio, in this portrait, he both follows and breaks from tradition. As this chapter demonstrates, the general composition of the Wignacourt portrait is derived from Tintoretto's portrait of Sebastiano Venier. Tintoretto's portrait, in contrast to Caravaggio's, contains a specific referent, the Battle of Lepanto of 1571. This is a key to deciphering the message of Wignacourt's portrait, who at this time was the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta. Through the adaptation of the Venier prototype, along with the selection of an outdated suit of armor that was laden with symbolic meaning, Caravaggio and Wigancourt set out to reference the Grand Master's own participation in the legendary battle of the Christians against the Infidels, and thus connect that history with his current status as Grand Master, and ultimately as the quintessential Knight who was ever ready to defend the Christian Empire.

Julia C. Fischer examines the medium of photography in Chapter Eight, specifically the work of Felice Beato. Born in Venice in 1825, Felice Beato was one of the world's first travel photographers and this chapter investigates the Italian's pioneering role as a commercial photographer in Japan in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Swarms of westerners, including Beato, arrived in Japan in the early 1860s to witness with their own eyes the exoticism and tradition of the Japanese people and landscape and also to cash in on this allure. Western commercial photographers established studios, particularly in Yokohama, and began compiling stock images of the Japanese countryside and its people, selling these souvenir travel photographs and albums to tourists as keepsakes of their journeys. By the late 1860s and early 1870s, the production of these photo albums became a prosperous and competitive commercial enterprise, primarily pioneered by the European photographer and entrepreneur Felice Beato, who would leave an indelible impact on subsequent photographers in the country, both western and Japanese. Felice Beato broke bad not only by being one of the first to photograph East and Southeast Asian countries,

but also by pioneering the new genre of travel photography. Furthermore, this chapter will explore how Beato was a quintessential example of breaking bad because he lied to his audience, filling his souvenir albums with images of what westerners wanted and expected instead of photographs that depicted what was actually occurring in the rapidly industrializing nineteenth century Japan.

Finally, in Chapter Nine Christopher Bennett takes us to twentieth century Italy. In early- to mid 1963 the Italian Pop painter Mario Schifano dissolved his exclusive contract with the prominent gallerist Ileana Sonnabend. This chapter explores a sequence of paintings undertaken shortly after Schifano's split with Sonnabend, namely, the *Paesaggi anemici* or "Anemic Landscapes" of 1964-66. Occupying a space, or instance of "leeway," falling somewhere between an out-and-out break with the gallery system, on one hand, and utter compliance with it, on the other, the *Anemic Landscapes* functioned as a laboratory of sorts in which a number of discreet transformations proved possible and quickly took shape. This chapter reviews the *Anemic Landscapes* with reference to their historical context and some of the critical voices that have grappled with them so far, including a wealth of commentary by Italian critics translated into English here for the first time. Schifano, I intend to argue, approached 'landscape' as a phenomenon that is both derived from the natural world and indicative of a cultural break with it. The *Anemic Landscapes* thus suggest a kind of third entity encompassing both nature and artificiality, engaging in each without excluding the other or ever settling permanently on either one of these two sides.

CHAPTER TWO

DEATH ON DISPLAY: "BREAKING BAD" WITH ETRUSCAN FUNERARY IMAGERY

LAUREL TAYLOR

Etruscan funerary imagery, the largest surviving category of Etruscan art, generally avoided the depiction of dead bodies. The famous tomb frescos at Tarquinia, for example, are replete with images of dancing, eating, music and games. And though late Etruscan tombs show horrific demons of death, representing the corpse of the deceased—unlike in the Greek world-- seems to have been taboo. A corpus of relief monuments (Figure 2.1) from the Etruscan city of Chiusi, however, defies this norm and shows a range of images capturing a moment in the death drama—the ritual exposition of the corpse and the attendant mourning surrounding death and burial. This imagery not only 'breaks bad' within the conventions of Etruscan visual culture but is also ritually subversive within the larger Mediterranean. The performance of elaborate mourning rituals was almost exclusively associated with women in many ancient societies. The reliefs from Chiusi, however, depict women, men and children as mourners, all displaying gestures and interacting with the corpse in ways that are exclusively gendered female in analogous Greek imagery. This paper explores how these monuments subvert visual norms within Etruscan representational culture and the ways in which they illuminate aspects of ritual and gender within Etruscan art.[1]

[1] I would like to express my thanks to the panel organizer, Julia Fischer, for the invitation to present this paper at the Southeastern College Art Association Annual Meeting, 2016 and to be a contributor to this volume.

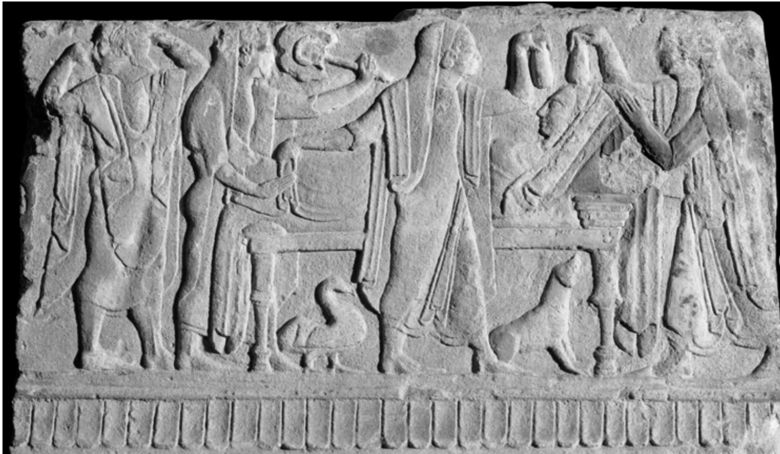


Figure 2.1: Relief from Chiusi showing prosthesis, c. 490, Louvre (MA 3602). Source: Laurel Taylor.

Most of our knowledge about the Etruscans comes not from the world of the living but rather from the world of the dead. In other words, what remains of Etruscan visual and material culture is almost exclusively associated with funerary contexts. One could say that this is largely the result of Etruscan success. Despite being assimilated into Roman culture, the Etruscans established cities—Siena, Florence, Arezzo for example—that were so successful they have been continuously occupied since and, thus, largely unknowable in terms of their Etruscan phases. So while much remains to be known from the world of the living, imagery from Etruscan tombs and associated material culture has provided the critical window into Etruscan culture. The rich and allusive imagery found within Etruscan tomb painting, ceramic art and sculpture, reflects complex ritual behavior surrounding death and burial and, arguably, notions about the afterlife. The tombs from Tarquinia (Figures 2.2 and 2.3) demonstrate a wide spectrum of imagery with themes that may reference activities in the life of the deceased or in the afterlife or, conversely, have some other symbolic value. Thus, images of banquets, dancing, hunting or fishing, music and games, even references to fertility or sexuality fill the walls of these tombs. These are images that are life-affirming even joyful without a hint of the sorrow or tragedy of death. Overt references to death are notable by their absence. It is, thus, particularly noteworthy that a group of relief sculptures from the somewhat insular but powerful and wealthy town of Chiusi in northern Etruria breaks this taboo.

Figure 2.2: Tomb of the Leopards, Tarquinia (c. 480-450 BCE).

Figure 2.3: Tomb of the Leopards, Tarquinia (c. 480-450 BCE).

During the Archaic period, a vigorous production of relief sculpture flourished at Chiusi.[2] Nearly 300 examples in a variety of formats – urns, sarcophagi, bases—make up the corpus, a corpus that is formally and iconographically without parallel in Etruscan art. The thematic repertoire of the reliefs revolves around a number of subjects (Figures 2.4 and 2.5) including dancing, games, banquets, processions, assemblies and, remarkably, dead bodies. For their spectrum of imagery, the reliefs are the sculptural equivalent of tomb paintings at Tarquinia with the key difference being that death is explicitly depicted in Chiusine reliefs and assiduously avoided at Tarquinia and elsewhere in Etruscan art of the archaic period. The image that appears over and over within the reliefs is one that was originally adopted from Greek iconography, known as the prosthesis or lying in state, yet is also an image that has some relationship to actual ritual practice in Etruria. As early as the seventh century BCE, increasingly elaborate ritual behaviors centered on death and burial became part of elite Etruscan culture and reflect increasing socio-political complexity.[3] Monumental tombs indicate huge expenditures on death and burial while other material evidence points to a new spectrum of ritual behaviors performed in the context of burial. Tomb altars become the focus of graveside libations centered around the ancestor cult and artifact assemblages used in the presentation and consumption of food and drink also confirm the widespread practice of funerary banqueting. Performative mourning centered around the ritual exposition of the corpse marked another crucial moment in the death drama and occurred across time and space within Etruscan culture, as in most ancient cultures. Yet while the ritual was practiced widely, its visual expression was somewhat limited and ephemeral within Etruscan visual culture unlike in Greek culture where there was a long tradition of showing performative lamentation and corpse exposition. I want to first briefly look at Attic models and the ways in which these were adopted but altered in form and, to some extent, in meaning for an Etruscan audience.

---

[2] The reliefs were first studied by Enrico Paribeni in two articles "I rilievi chiusini arcaici," *StEtr* 12 (1938): 57-139 and "I rilievi chiusini arcaici." *StEtr* 13 (1939): 179-203. The most comprehensive study is that of Jean-Rene Jannot, *Les reliefs archaïques de Chiusi* (Rome: Collections de l'Ècole française de Rome, 1984). Most reliefs are carved from *pietra fetida* with some examples in alabaster, limestone, terracotta, and travertine.

[3] See Laurel Taylor, "Mourning Becomes Etruria: Ritual, Performance and Iconography in the Seventh and Sixth Centuries." *EtrStud* 14 (2011): 39-54 with previous bibliography.

Figure 2.4: Cippus with cortege of men, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, HIN 81. Source: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

Figure 2.5: Cippus with assembly of women displaying textiles, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, HIN 81. Source: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

Though adopted rather late in Etruscan visual culture, prosthesis and lamentation scenes had a notably long history within Greek art. As early as the eighth century, Athenian vases depict what becomes an important subject within Attic funerary art: the lying in state of the deceased on a funerary bed surrounded by groups of mourners.[4] From Geometric period monumental amphorae to late Classical white-ground

---

[4] Gudrun Ahlberg, *Prothesis and Ekphora in Greek geometric art.* (Göteborg: Åström, 1971); Donna.C.Kurtz, "Vases for the Dead: An Attic Selection, 750-400 B.C.," In *Ancient Greek and Related Pottery.* ed. H.A.G. Brijder (Amsterdam: Allard Pierson Series, 1985), 314-328; H. Alan Shapiro, "The Iconography of Mourning in Athenian Art," *AJA* 95: 4 (1991): 629-656. See also John Boardman, "Painted Funerary Plaques and Some Remarks on Prothesis," *BSA* 50 (1955): 51-66; Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); and John H. Oakley, "Women in Athenian Ritual and Funerary Art," In *Worshiping Women: Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens,* eds. N. Kaltsas and A. Shapiro (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, 2008), 334-341.

lekythoi, the prothesis finds its most consistent expression within ceramic art. Though stylistic changes occur throughout the long ceramic sequence, there is an essential conservatism to the thematic and compositional characteristics of these scenes. While the number of figures may vary, what is remarkably consistent is the prescribed gender behavior depicted on the vases. Men and women, both in gesture and in interaction with the deceased, display gender-specific behaviors. Women mourn dramatically and physically, tearing at their cheeks, ripping their hair or holding both arms above their heads, often grabbing a wrist, in a dramatic arc. A well-known Attic black-figure plaque (Figure 2.6) attributed to the Sappho Painter, illustrates some of these typical "female" gestures. Women also appear in close contact with the corpse. Whether cradling the head of the deceased or otherwise surrounding the body, their proximity to and interaction with the corpse is intimate and tactile. Men, by contrast, typically raise a single hand, palm facing the corpse, in a gesture usually interpreted as one of valediction.[5] Emotional comportment distinguishes men from women and children in Greek prosthesis scenes. The adult male in his prime, having been conditioned to do so, refrains from uncontrollable displays of emotion.[6] Men are often arranged in pairs at the foot of the bed (Figure 2.7), giving the impression of a chorus arrangement, as they perform a *threnos* or formal dirge. Most striking is that they have almost no physical contact with the deceased and, indeed, are rarely depicted any closer than the feet of the corpse. This spatial segregation, in which men and women occupy distinct spaces with respect to the corpse, vividly mirrors Greek notions of pollution. The two natural sources of *miasma* – childbirth and death – were inextricably linked in Greek thought with each other and with women.[7] Having already been polluted through giving birth, women, unlike men, were naturally suited for the contamination

[5] Eliane Brigger and Adalberto Giovannini, "Prothésis: étude sur les rites funéraires chez les Grecs et les étrusques." *MEFRA* 116 (2004): 226; Shapiro, 634; Kurtz, 326; and Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 6.

[6] John H. Oakley, "Death and the Child," In *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past*, ed. Jennifer Neils and John H. Oakley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003) 163-194.

[7] Shapiro 634 and Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 33 but see Christine Havelock, "Mourners on Greek Vases: Remarks on the Social History of Women," In *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard, (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 45-61 who also notes that the role of women as caregivers for the dead in ancient Greece as the complemented of their caring-giving role for children.

inherent to physical contact with the corpse. Accordingly, Greek artists were careful to reflect this lived reality.[8]

Figure 2.6: Prothesis, Attic black-figure plaque, attributed to the Sappho Painter, ca. 500-490 BCE. Source: Paris, Louvre, MNB 905.

Figure 2.7: Prothesis, Attic black-figure plaque, Gela Painter, ca. 500 BCE, Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, 48.225. Source: Walters Art Museum.

[8] Oakley 2003, 167, references a few Attic protheses where young boys attempt to have direct physical contact with the corpse, reversing the accepted behavior of adult men. Lesley Beaumont, *Childhood in Ancient Athens. Iconography and Social History* (New York: Routledge, 2012) 202 and 209 notes that boys sometimes display expressive, feminized mourning gestures and are occasionally placed in physical association with women and the corpse.

Though the prothesis was both persistent and consistent within Greek visual culture, its appearance within Etruscan art was comparatively late, occurring first around 580-570 BCE.[9] By the second half of the fifth century, the subject seems to vanish completely. It is noteworthy that the subject appears on about twenty per cent of the reliefs from Chiusi but almost nowhere else in Etruria. Within these reliefs, there is a remarkable diversity in conception, execution and figuration not only with respect to their possible Greek source material but also with respect to each other. It is this variation that, I think, is crucial to understanding how these visual constructions provide a commentary on social roles that outside of Eturia would have been subversive.

All prothesis scenes on the Chiusine reliefs consistently exhibit a single design principle of organization (Figure 2.8): a horizontal bed (kline) occupies the focal space, while strong verticals are represented by the multiple figures who surround the bed or are placed on either side of it. Beyond these elements, however, the reliefs vary in the number of figures included, their ages, gender, gestures, and interactions with the corpse.

A four-sided base now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen contains one of the most complete examples of prothesis iconography in Etruria.[10] In addition to the prosthesis (Figure 2.8), there is also a lamentation dance scene (Figure 2.9), a cortege of men (Figure 2.4) and an assembly of women (Figure 2.5). In the prosthesis, a deceased female lies under what appears to be a tent. Immediately behind the funerary bed are two men, both of whom raise their arms above their heads and seize their wrists in dramatic mourning gestures. In front of the bed, a female figure raises both hands towards the deceased in the gesture of a lament while another woman, at the head of the bed, lacerates her cheeks. Standing closest to the veiled head of the deceased is a male child, with his left hand raised to his head in a formulaic mourning gesture. Several features distinguish this lying in state from the Attic examples. In gesture and in proximity to the corpse, these figures both display body language

---

[9] Giovannangelo Camporeale, "Le scene etrusche di protesi," *RM* 66 (1959): 31-44 and Brigger and Giovannini 218-220 and 237-238, discuss protheses within Etruscan art, focusing largely on the three Tarquinian tombs and four vases. No examples of Attic pottery depicting the prothesis have been found in an Etruscan context though a prothesis scene on an Etruscan kantharos from the British Museum (Inv. no. 1899.7-21.1) shows dependence on Attic models (e.g., men emerge from the left, hands in valediction, towards the feet of the corpse; women from the right at the head of the bed).

[10] Inv. no. HIN 81 (formerly H 205): Jannot 81-82 (C II 35) with preceding bibliography.

and occupy space that in Attic representations are gendered female. With arms above their heads, each grabbing a wrist, these men's gestures are notably distinct from the controlled valedictions seen in Greek protheses. Finally, the inclusion of the child is also noteworthy as children appear very rarely within Etruscan Archaic art.[11] Here, and in many other scenes from the Chiusine corpus, children are visually prominent. They serve not only as visual tokens of the deceased's parental status but also as important agents in funerary performances.

Figure 2.8: Cippus with prothesis, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, HIN 81. Source: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

[11] Sybille Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization: a Cultural History* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2000), 245.

Figure 2.9: Cippus with lamentation scene, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, HIN 81. Source: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

In Attic prothesis scenes, children occasionally appear as mourners but are rarely the object of mourning.[12] On another Chiusine urn (Figure 2.10), a child occupies the funerary bed as the focus of a mourning scene.[13] At the foot of the bed stands a male with both hands raised above his head, while two women surround the small corpse; one stands behind the bed, leaning over the child, while the other, at the head of the corpse, places her left hand on the bed beside the child's head. Not only do children appear in the Chiusine prothesis as mourners and as objects of mourning, they also appear in lamentation scenes depicting groups of mourning figures. A circular base in Perugia for example (Figure 2.11), shows male children of distinct ages in mourning postures.[14]

---

[12] Oakley 2003, 165 notes that a few examples of white lekythoi of the Classical period show children as the deceased.
[13] Inv. no. 93488: Jannot 27-28 (B II 2).
[14] Inv. no. 634.

Figure 2.10: Urn with prothesis of child, Museo naz. Florence, 93488. Source: Soprintendenza per i Beni archeologici della Toscana.

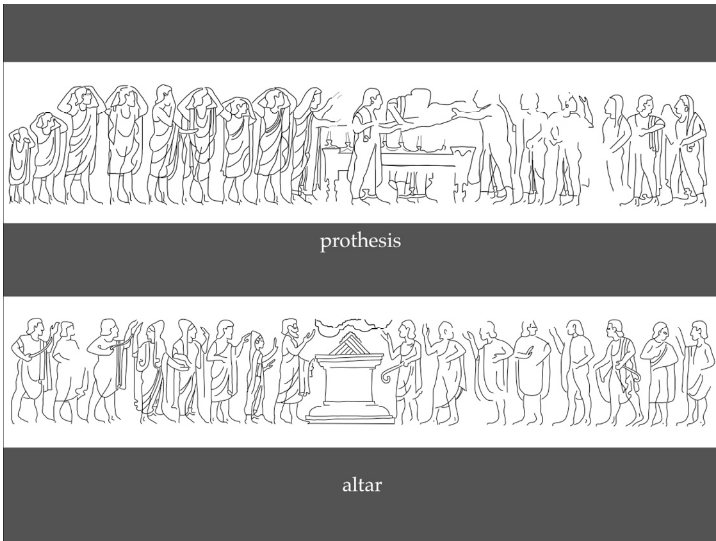


Figure 2.11: Perugia circular base with prosthesis and altar scene. Source: Drawing by Laurel Taylor.

While the most readily visible signifier of gender was often clothing in ancient contexts, body language, behaviors and spatial relationships were also important markers of identity. In Attic prothesis scenes, gesture and spatial positioning are representationally consistent with respect to gender-- figures are gendered female not only through clothing but also through a variety of mourning gestures and spatial positioning: that is, they tear at their hair, lacerate their cheeks, and touch the corpse with which they are in close proximity. Conversely, figures gendered as male raise a single hand (or sometimes both) in farewell and occupy space that is not contiguous to the corpse. When one looks at the same subject in Etruscan scenes, gendered nonverbal behavior is remarkably absent. All genders and ages interchangeably display a variety of gestures and occupy diverse spaces. An urn fragment in Florence (Figure 2.12), for example, confirms this assessment:[15] it shows both women and men in mourning gestures and in close proximity to the corpse. A relief fragment from a circular base now in Palermo (Figure 2.13) illustrates this interchangeability as well as the distinct diversity of

[15] Inv. no. 72750: Jannot 47-48 (C I 7).

the Etruscan prothesis scenes.[16] On the preserved fragment of this multi-figured scene, a deceased woman occupies the funerary bed while a man, behind the bed, embraces the legs of the woman with both his hands. In front of the deceased is a female child, possibly an adolescent, who touches the face of the deceased woman, most likely her mother. To the right of the bed are two women who appear to beat their chests while two men located to the left of the bed repeat this same gesture.

Figure 2.12: Urn fragment, Museo naz. Florence, 72750. Source: Soprintendenza per i Beni archeologici della Toscana.

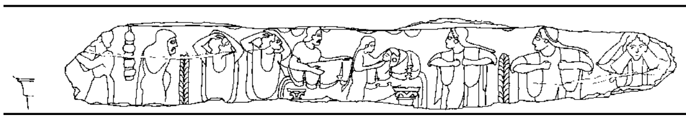


Figure 2.13: Circular base, Museo naz. Palermo, 8435. Source: after Jannot 1984.

Another fragment in the Collezione Feroni in Florence shows a prothesis with what could be called an inversion of Attic gendered gesture and spatial positioning.[17] At the foot of the bed are two women in mourning gestures while immediately behind the bed and, thus closer to the corpse, are two men. A woman appears in front of the bed not touching the corpse but raising an outstretched hand towards the deceased. This is

[16] Inv. no. 8435: Jannot 29-31 (B II 6).
[17] Jannot 47 (C I 6).

the farewell gesture that, in Attic reliefs, is performed by men. A relief in the American Academy in Rome shows other notable variations.[18] At the foot of the kline are three figures-- a woman at the very left and two men closer to the deceased. Two other women behind the bed lean over the body of the deceased man and touch the corpse while to the right of the bed a male figure stands with his hands placed beside the deceased's head. Although his proximity to the corpse is not unusual among the Chiusine reliefs, his position at the head of the bed is the only example where this occurs. It is worth noting that in the two other Etruscan prothesis images found outside of Chiusi, there is similar variability in spatial arrangement, gestures and figuration.[19] In the *Tomba del Morto* at Tarquinia (Figure 2.14), for example, a woman arranges the drapery covering a deceased man while another man stands at the foot of the bed, leaning over and touching the body of the deceased with his right hand and raising his left in a farewell salute.[20] A *kantharos* now in the British Museum, shows a figural arrangement more typical of Attic models – women are to the right of the corpse while men are to the left – but deviates notably with a centrally located man behind the bed in intimate contact with the corpse over which he drapes his right arm.[21] Any notion of pollution, as with the reliefs, seems to be absent.

---

[18] Jannot 32-33 (B' II 2). The two other preserved sides of the monument show a banquet scene and a martial dance.

[19] Supra n. 9.

[20] Stephan Steingräber, *Abundance of Life: Etruscan Wall Painting* (Los Angeles: Getty Press, 2006), 101.

[21] On the Micali hydria, four men approach an entirely covered corpse from the right while the hydria from Cerveteri shows a deceased infant with a man and woman at the head of the bed, hands raised in mourning, and another man with a veiled head – possibly a priest – who approaches the bed from the left. For prothesis examples on tombs at Paestum, see Angela Pontrandolfo Greco, A. Rouveret, and Marina Cipriani, *The painted tombs of Paestum* (Salerno: Pandemos, 2004).

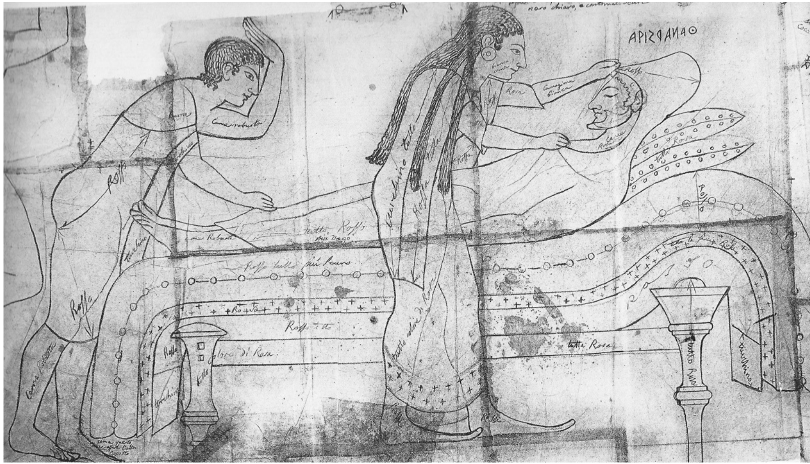


Figure 2.14: Prothesis, 'Tomb of the Dead Man' (Tomba del Morto), Tarquinia. Source: after Steingräber 2006, 101.

As with many stimuli from the Greek world, the prothesis image was adopted but quickly altered in form and, to some extent, in meaning for its Etruscan audience. Not only was it adapted from ceramic to stone, but it also, I would argue, changed in ways that reflect socially sanctioned roles and ritual praxis. Greek textual sources are unambiguous about the inherent pollution of women, and the Greek visual record is a consistently accurate reflection of these beliefs: women attend to the corpse, they occupy space immediately surrounding the body and their tactile and intimate interaction with the deceased reflects and reinforces their own "pollution" and the pollution of death. In the absence of textual evidence relating to Etruscan beliefs about pollution the Chiusine reliefs are revealing. The visual evidence suggests that the notional idea of physical and/or spiritual contamination, if it existed, was not inherently connected with biological sex as both men and women equally engage with the corpse. Similarly, gesture as a gendered, nonverbal behavior is substantively recast in the Chiusine reliefs. Women display stereotypically female mourning gestures but, equally as often, so do men and children. Gesture inversions go both ways and one can see female figures in the Chiusine reliefs displaying the emotionally controlled, male "valediction" of Attic protheses. While the full range of Greek mourning gestures appears in Etruscan prostheses, they have no strict associations with gender. Consequently, the engenderization process that can be observed in Attic prostheses – where older boys begin to display the controlled gestures of