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## Whatever You Want Me to Be: The Purse, Identity, and Exchange in Ancient Greece

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Whatever You Want Me to Be:  
The Purse, Identity, and Exchange in Ancient Greece  
Qualifying Paper  
Submitted by Zachary John Forstrom  
December 2015  
The University of St. Thomas  
Master of Arts in Art History Graduate Program

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Abstract

Since the 1930's, scholars have interpreted the motif of the coin purse in Greek pottery imagery in a variety of ways, often treating the exact same image to vastly different iconographic readings to effectively define the purse in the world of 'genre' images. Not only do many of these studies often neglect chronology or distribution, they also confine themselves to a set, often repeated handful of purse-images without considering the massive scale and repetition found in Greek vase-production. This study will utilize evidence that includes provenance, shape, and chronology, in addition to analyzing patterns of gestures and gendered interactions within a large number of purse scenes. This study will examine the "purse" as an iconographic element within Greek pottery through the construction of a catalogue of images built from the Beazley Archive

Pottery Database. It is through this analysis that the image of the purse, within the data provided, does not confine itself to a singular, definite reading, but is instead a nuanced motif containing many different potential meanings. Thus, due to the ambiguity of the purse motif, a multivalent approach is necessary when interpreting the potential meaning(s) of the purse for an ancient viewer.

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## INTRODUCTION

The identification of women as overwhelmingly and instantaneously representing prostitutes is deeply entwined with the roots of Greek scholarship, from countless museum placards all the way to large scholarly studies citing pottery as evidence of female ‘status.’<sup>1</sup> This study of ‘status’ and the use of a few visual examples as evidence ripples through the whole of modern understanding about the way in which one pervasive, everyday element existed in the minds of the ancient Greeks, money. This motif, of the “coin purse,” can be seen on a cup attributed to Makron and dated to 490-480 BCE (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> On this vessel one sees a youth (far left, as indicated by the lack of a beard) and an adult man (center-right with a beard); each of them is approaching a woman and holds a small bag in his left hand. The youth on the far left holds a small bag; the lowered right hand behind his hip holds a flower. The seated woman in front of him turns her head back and away from him in right profile. In both hands she holds flowers. The bearded man stands in a similar pose to the youth, extending a small bag forward to the standing woman facing him. Unlike the seated woman, she looks directly at her male counterpart.

Although the Makron scene appears like a straightforward interaction between men and women, understanding the specifics of the scene relies upon a large number of interpretive assumptions, including the identification of various objects, the gestures and their social meaning, and the various roles (e.g. gender roles, social status) played by the participants. So a question must follow, what is this small bag? The difficulty of

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<sup>1</sup> See Bazant 1981, 13-22; Ferrari 1986, 173–226.

<sup>2</sup> Attic Red-figure cup attributed to Makron, Toledo, Museum of Art 1972.55, BAPD (Beazley Archive Pottery Database) Vase Number 7766.

identification can be seen in another scene found on a krater, attributed to the painter Polygnotos and dated to 450-425 BCE. (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup> Hanging on a wall between two youths is what Beazley identified as a “purse.” However, the strigil held by the youth on the far left creates a problem for this “purse” identification; the strigil, along with the fact that there are multiple youths, places these characters within a public setting such as a *palaestra* (or gymnasium), hardly a place where one would hang up a purse.<sup>4</sup> The “purse” here is more likely a sponge bag such as that seen in Figure 1, and, much like the strigil, is used for bathing after athletic activity. In returning to the Makron cup, one should ask what the figures are doing with the purses: are the various characters involved in an act of gift giving or of economic exchange? If the interaction of the man and woman, along with the purse, signifies a gift exchange, it would be odd to see coins as opposed to a small, more appropriate gift object like knucklebones.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, if the interaction with a purse signifies an economic exchange, it would be odd to see small gifts like the knucklebones.

These interpretive decisions, especially when they are based on potential misidentifications and assumptions, can have great effects on the understanding of Greek culture and social life as a whole. Even within a specific interpretation like an economic transaction, there is yet another interpretive layer: are these women engaged in selling themselves, their own bodies, for sexual purposes, or are they engaged in trade as economic agents selling a particular good, such as the flowers, or a service that is non-sexual? The tondo of the Makron cup contains a woman holding an oinchoe (a vase used

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<sup>3</sup> Attic Red-Figure Calyx-Krater attributed to Polygnotos, Würzburg, Universität, Martin von Wagner Museum: L521. BAPD Vase Number 213576.

<sup>4</sup> A strigil is a small, curved tool used for scraping oil off the skin when cleaning.

<sup>5</sup> Knucklebones were most often used for playing the game astragaloi (similar to the schoolyard game of Jacks) or as dice. For a brief introduction to knucklebones see Ferrari 1986.

to hold water) and a basket, at an altar, in what is most likely a ritual scene, suggesting that such non-sexual services could be for ritual purposes. This is an important distinction to make in using these images to support arguments regarding the treatment and economic agency of women in ancient Greece. As for representations of gift exchange, is a woman's status as 'engaged in courtship' being indicated with a purse, since a dowry was often paid to the bridegroom for a bride? If a couple is engaged in courtship the purse could just as easily have no relation to any kind of exchange, whether gift or monetary, and merely indicate the wealth or status of the suitor through his display of a coin purse.

An entirely different set of issues arises when a man is offering a purse to a youth. This can be seen, for example, on the interior scene of a cup attributed to Douris, dating 480-470 BCE (Figure 3).<sup>6</sup> Here one sees a man (bearded-right) with a small bag in his left hand approaching a seated youth (no beard). In such scenes, the interpretation of the purse as economic exchange runs into difficulties that do not exist with heterosexual encounters. Pederastic practices, the relationships between youths and their male suitors/mentors, did not allow for the purchase of sexual services, unlike interactions between men and women.<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that male prostitution did not exist in ancient Greece, merely that its relationship to the depiction of a purchase would not have been outwardly socially acceptable. In this case, one would lean toward interpreting the purse as containing knucklebones or other small gifts, but one cannot be entirely certain since the viewer can never see the objects in the purse. If these purses, however, do not

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<sup>6</sup> Attic Red-Figure Kylix attributed to Douris, c. 500-460 BCE. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art: 52.11.4, BAPD Vase Number 205160.

<sup>7</sup> Lear and Cantarella 2008, 110.

contain coins, must the same be said for the identical object in a picture with a man and a woman?

One should also note that the pottery vessels themselves are economic objects, to be bought and sold (they could be gifts in their own right). Thus one has to consider how a scene was selected and composed in relation to a potter/painter attempting to meet the interests of buyers and trying to appeal to as many potential buyers as possible, both locally in Athens and throughout the Mediterranean, since most Attic red-figure pottery was exported. This opens a door to the possibility that there is a certain amount of intentional ambiguity utilized by the producers of the vessels.<sup>8</sup> Considering the provenance is important when one thinks about how non-Athenian buyers may differ from their Athenian counterparts in their interpretation of the images, due to their particular local customs and perceptions about gender relations.

As one can see, there is a need in any analysis of the purse for a more rigorous and consistent definition of the object as well as a wider range of representations to be included when drawing conclusions. Based on this, an evaluation of available representations can help provide a more determinate perspective of how the purse motif functions within Greek art and culture, while also allowing one to consider and evaluate the various interpretations that have been proposed in the literature, as well as alternative hypotheses. Thus, this study constructs a catalogue of images, which is a necessary starting point for analyzing the purse motif, in order to help define the “purse” as an iconographic element within Greek pottery. This focus upon data derived from a catalogue of available images, such as the gender of participants, gesture, find-spots, etc, will offer the basis for a more systematic, rather than anecdotal, interpretation.

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussions of ambiguity and the marketplace, see Bundrick 2012, 18-20.

It is through this analysis that the image of the purse, within the data provided, is not confined to a singular, definite reading, beyond acting as a broad indicator of exchange or status. This perspective is not intended to imply that ancient viewers could not have had a specific meaning when the purse was viewed, but that the purse as a sign across an entire range of its representations does not hold a consistent meaning. This study should not be considered stable when considering the ancient viewer (our evidence, even at best, is scant), but for the modern viewer the data-informed approach will help provide a larger frame in which one can attempt to understand the myriad ways that the purse could have been understood in the ancient world.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purse scene has been largely interpreted by scholars through an iconographic approach that links the motif to literary sources, particularly those that primarily describe women as belonging to various categories in Athenian society: the proper wife (*gyne*), the entertainer/prostitute (*hetaira*), and the prostitute or *porne*. G. Rodenwaldt offered one of the most foundational interpretations of the motif, published in 1932.<sup>9</sup> Rodenwaldt argues that the women in the pictures were expensive prostitutes who displayed the outward traits of an “honest wife.” The “Geldbörse,” money purse, would represent the payment of the woman for her services at a later symposion, the male drinking party that was an important social institution in ancient Greece involving wine, music, poetry, conversation, and occasionally sex. In a similar vein, for R. Sutton, seated women

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<sup>9</sup>Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21. This is the same article in which Rodenwaldt introduced the idea that the *hetairai* are synonymous with textile spinning. For a similar study of the iconographic element of the spinning wool-worker see, Wrenhaven 2009, 367-386.

became the ‘madams’ of brothels.<sup>10</sup> In the case of pederasty, young boys are *pornoi*, and their male counterparts become ‘johns,’ through the identifying purse. D. Williams, in examining the purse scene, states that the display of women in Attic vase painting, other than *hetairai*, tended to be rare.<sup>11</sup> According to Williams, many of the scenes must be interpreted within the context of the symposion, where the images of the *hetairai* rather than other “respectable” women, a wife (*gyne*), would be more appropriate.

M. Meyer expands upon the prostitution-style analysis, exploring the problems of distinguishing between wife and *hetairai*, but for Meyer this distinction does not concern the social status of the women, but rather the state of their femininity, or how the purse object is an attribute in gender identity.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, E. Keuls in *The Reign of the Phallus* describes the purse as displaying a scene of a woman receiving money from her husband as a “good provider,” and relating this reading to gender identity in power relations.<sup>13</sup>

To the contrary, G. Ferrari questions the interpretation of these small bags as even coin-purses.<sup>14</sup> Ferrari makes the argument that these bags may not hold money at all, but are bags of *astragaloi*, knucklebones, introducing a whole world of love-gifts and courtship.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the possibility of containing *astragaloi*, Ferrari suggests that the meaning of the money purse itself is more fluid in its interpretation than merely an incontrovertible sign for prostitution. The difference between a transaction on the one

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<sup>10</sup> Sutton 1981, 281. For Sutton’s full discussion of the purse see Sutton 1981, 276-369.

<sup>11</sup> Williams 1993. Williams does acknowledge some of the problems in cases where it is difficult to identify specific women as *hetairai* based on their dress or action alone, but these tend to be scenes only involving a group of women together with no male presence.

<sup>12</sup> Meyer 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Keuls 1993, 260. For example see Fig. 9. Keuls does not see the other people in the scene as belonging to a ‘brothel’ community, as Sutton (1981, 281) would, but a home. For Keuls (1993, 260), this signifies the dominant power of a man as the one “who controls the purse strings...”

<sup>14</sup> Ferrari 1986. Here the narrative of the entire scene, made up of a variety of potential signifiers, is the primary focus, rather than reading certain iconographic motifs to provide identification for the entire scene.

<sup>15</sup> Ferrari 2003a, 15-16 also Ferrari 1986.

hand and gift-giving on the other hand is a complicated but important distinction to make in how one forms relationships with others. J. Davidson presents the various ways in which the concept of money fits into the distinction between *hetairai* and *pornai* (or other relationships), and how money can act as either pure commodity, or as constituting a relationship between two people.<sup>16</sup> In the most extreme form of categorizing the two types of prostitutes, *hetairai* are associated with the gift, symposion, and elitist ideology while the *pornai* are associated with commodity, the city, and a ‘middling’ ideology.<sup>17</sup> Thus the contents of the purse can determine, if the women are prostitutes, where a woman’s identity would fit within the distinction.

Although not found in current purse literature, there is ambiguous language surrounding the contents of speech when Greeks are engaged with the *hetairai* versus *pornai* distinction according to L. Kurke’s literary analyses of 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-century Greek texts.<sup>18</sup> One such example of the discursive shift from *hetaira* to *pornē* is found near the end of the first book of the *Theognidea*, a work containing the poems attributed to the lyrical poet Theognis of Megara, where one finds a sympotic confrontation. In this section the speaker of the poem lashes out at a *hetaira* who “mocked his parentage.”<sup>19</sup> The attack, in its final wordplay, consigns Arguris (the *hetaira*) to “grievous slavery.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, in order to keep the symposion an aristocratic event, the *pornē* connotation of slavery is used to maintain difference from the *hetaira*. The same ambiguity surrounding the contents of the purse in images could mirror the slippage of the *pornai* versus *hetairai*

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<sup>16</sup> Davidson 1999, 109-136. Davidson’s discussion of differences and similarities of these two types confirms the difficulties art historians have had in distinguishing gifts and commodities transaction when analyzing coin purse imagery.

<sup>17</sup> Glazebrook and Henry 2011, 76.

<sup>18</sup> Kurke 1999, 175-187, 199-219.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 217. The writings of Theognis usually range from early 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, yet the dates and attributions of Theognis is a major area of scholarly debate.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 218.

distinction of prostitutes.<sup>21</sup> Thus the bag could contain coins or gifts, even simultaneously, in a similar manner to the slippage of the identity of the female prostitutes as either *pornai* or *hetairai*.

In *The Athenian Woman*, S. Lewis examines women's role in the Greek economy and *polis* through the lens of pottery images.<sup>22</sup> In examining the purse motif, Lewis states there are no explicitly sexual images showing a woman engaging in purse exchange in all of painted pottery.<sup>23</sup> According to Lewis, the purse is never in a scene showing sex or other sympotic entertainment. Lewis suggests a reinterpretation of many scenes as showing the woman in a commercial setting, selling goods such as oil, food, or craft items, with the men or youths offering payment through the display of the coin purse.

Following a more contextualized approach, S. Bundrick argues for a more fluid range of meanings for purses in Athenian vase iconography, rather than a single, set definition.<sup>24</sup> Bundrick's contextual approach focuses on how provenance and the indeterminacy of viewership effected the production and reception of the imagery. She argues that in creating ambiguous images, as demonstrated through the variety of interpretations that Bundrick reviews in the scholarly discourse of a single vessel,

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<sup>21</sup> See Glazebrook and Henry 2011, 75-78 for an introduction of scholarly debate around these two terms.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis 2003b. Similar to Ferrari (2003a), takes a more post-structuralist approach, where the image's interpretation is combined with provenance, iconographic accounts, and the image as a functional object itself (a vase to be used).

<sup>23</sup> Lewis 2003b, 110. Lewis goes on to state that there is generally a lack of representations of women in the workplace (besides prostitution), and that some of the images involving purse exchange are misidentified as prostitution because of the iconographic reading of 'purse as prostitution' (2003b, 93-95). Lewis states, "...that just as in reality there was no method of distinguishing a prostitute from any other woman simply by looking, so there is no immediate way of telling the status of a woman on pottery" (2003b, 111).

<sup>24</sup> Bundrick 2012. After reviewing previous studies on the interpretations of *hetairai* and *pornai* within the purse scenes, Bundrick's analysis suggests the possibility of gift-giving (either with money or knucklebones), and the role of the purse as a signifier of the man or youth's elite status.

craftsmen were attempting to widen their potential market and appeal to a variety of buyers both at home in Athens and across the Mediterranean.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast to the almost exclusive focus on the purse in scenes between men and women, A. Lear and E. Cantarella look specifically at the motif in scenes of exchange between youths and men.<sup>26</sup> According to Lear and Cantarella, the coin purse is absent in more obviously erotic pederasty scenes: the “*eromenos* [the youthful beloved, object of attention] must not accept money from his *erastes* [the adult lover].”<sup>27</sup> Thus, it is difficult to interpret the images with purses as representing “improper” pederasty.<sup>28</sup> As can be seen, the scholarly literature about purses lacks a consistent and uniform definition of the bag and its contents, leading to a wide range of proposals for the motif’s meaning in the image. Therefore, based on the variety of previous interpretations in the literature, this study will demonstrate that the purse must be broadly defined in its meaning, and cannot be limited to a specific definition. The purse is not a singular, definite marker that fits into an either/or model of interpretation; rather, the purse is multivalent in its meaning, and so can only be understood as the broadest possible signifier of exchange and/or status.

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<sup>25</sup> Bundrick 2012, 20. Bundrick analyzes one vase by the Harrow painter found throughout much of the discussed scholars’ research. Bundrick’s analysis allows for a variety of perspectives and interpretations in the meaning of the sign, while also taking into account the actual economic, mass-produced aspects of Greek pottery.

<sup>26</sup> Lear and Cantarella 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Lear and Cantarella 2008, 80.

<sup>28</sup> A pederasty relationship would center on acts of gift-exchange rather than a monetary transaction. If the pair is engaged in a financial transaction, it is possible that the pair is engaging in strict prostitution (*pornai*), although Lear and Cantarella (2008), are hesitant in accepting this possibility.

## METHODOLOGY

The purse acts as a kind of nexus of interpretation and the underlying assumptions about issues such as gender, sexuality, class, and social relationships. A more systematic approach or survey of the motif of the purse does not exist within the literature, which would allow for broader patterns or complexity of usage to be discerned and potential conclusions to be drawn, as this project will seek to demonstrate.

The literature review has demonstrated that the study of the purse and its association with defining gender, sexual, and social relations has been limited by a number of factors: there is not a clear consistent definition of the purse, there is no systematic survey that takes into account the variety of its representations, there is a lack of definitional vigor that results in anecdotal modes of interpretation in earlier scholarship, there is a strong reliance on iconographic analyses that mostly allows for singular readings of the purse, and, relatedly, there is a lack of a consistent methodological approach that considers the signs within a broader image system that, as a whole, creates meaning for the viewer.

This study is essentially one with an iconographic thrust to better define the meaning of the purse in Greek imagery, and it is with iconography in mind that I will utilize the approach described by E. Panofsky in his introduction to *Studies in Iconology*.<sup>29</sup> For Panofsky, the first account of pre-iconography is that of identifying an object based off of resemblance; for the purse scenes this would be recognizing the sack-like form in vase-painting as a purse.<sup>30</sup> The identification of a purse, although seemingly

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<sup>29</sup> Panofsky 1939, 3-17.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 5.

simple, is in fact rather complicated (especially with a large set of images) and will be discussed later on with other limitations of the study. The second, and for this study, more important step in Panofsky's system of iconography is that of identifying the "conventional" subject matter. This is moving beyond a system of identifying similar motifs (purses) through simple identification and into similar "themes."<sup>31</sup> The theme, in the case of the purse, would be identifying the purse as an object with a specific meaning, such as prostitution or monetary transaction, rather than identifying the purse as merely a purse. Important to note here, and the major distinction this study makes in attempting to identify the thematic content of the purse motif, is in the type of evidence Panofsky uses in order to achieve thematic understanding. For Panofsky, one achieves this understanding of thematic meaning through the use of literary sources and allegories to describe the way in which a motif is constructed. For example, this would mean understanding what a male holding a purse out to a woman meant for an ancient Athenian based on what could be discerned from say, the Platonic dialogues or mythological allegories in which a purse appears. This literary evidence is not discarded here, as the study still utilizes previous literature on the purse as a basis for interpretation, but only after surveying a larger number of images in order to provide a greater picture of the overall visual syntax of purse-images.<sup>32</sup> In this way, one can attempt a less anecdotal and more thoughtful analysis that is capable of discerning differences between many images to come to a more appropriate thematic meaning for an entire motif.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>32</sup> In a sense, by way of technology and new methodologies, we are able to overcome the limitation of "an individual work of art" at a time, but are still working within Panofsky's framework. See Panofsky 1939, 11 footnote 3.

In order to understand a large number of images with the possibility of thematic shifts based on a wide variety of differences found in the images, a structuralist approach will also be used. The structuralist aspects will primarily take example from C. Sourvinou-Inwood's research, particularly *Reading Greek Culture: Texts and Images, Rituals and Myths*.<sup>33</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood provides a model of visual analysis that is "textual," by examining individual aspects of a particular image as words or signs that interact as subject, action, or object. Through examining a number of these visual 'texts' she deduces certain characteristic tendencies in the use of a motif in combination with other elements in the picture to generate meaning. In one model for this study, Sourvinou-Inwood's analysis of the sword-bearer versus the spear-holder in pursuit scenes, a similar problem of previous interpretations was present, where few literary examples ruled the interpretation. In this case the sword-bearer and the spear-holder were both identified as Theseus, and the interpretation was applied ad infinitum. It was only through Sourvinou-Inwood's examination of the images that a difference was discerned between the ways in which the spear-holders versus the sword-holders would hold their weapons. This allowed for an identifiable difference of intent for the pursuers depending on which weapon they were holding. The sword signified the intent of the pursuer to harm, lethally, and the spear was a signifier of the pursuers erotic intent.<sup>34</sup>

Sourvinou-Inwood's structuralist approach involves examining individual representations to determine patterns in the imagery, and comparing them directly against, in the case of her research, the interpretations of the motif(s) she is investigating. For the sword-bearer versus spear-bearer study, this involved examining studies of

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<sup>33</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 1-98.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 41-46.

mythological pursuits as interpretations, and comparing them to the results found in the related imagery. In the case of the purse I will look at how a variety of factors, such as vase shape, provenance, gesture, and genders across the sampled images can help determine the veracity of previous scholarly interpretations of the motif. Sourvinou-Inwood's methodological example is most heavily engaged in this study when examining the actual interactions found within the purse scene, determining trends in the individual gender/social status of the various 'players' (is it a man and a woman interacting or a man and a youth?), and in codifying gestures under various groups that would indicate or imply certain types of interactions, much like the spear as erotic and the sword as harmful. This will be followed by comparing the results found with previous accounts of the purse-image provided in the literature review.

Another related interpretive approach that draws upon information theory that will be utilized is found in A. Steiner's *Reading Greek Vases*.<sup>35</sup> Here repetition of an image, or an aspect of an image, is pushed to the forefront. Steiner focuses on reading repeated images and motifs like messages, and from reading their similarities and differences, being able to 'decode' the overarching language of 'meanings'. It is through understanding the interpretive value of a repeated shape, formula, scene, object, etc. on the visual field of a 'vase-text' that overarching meanings can be communicated. Repetition allows for and complements a data-informed approach, where actual patterns in the representation of a motif or action can be discerned, allowing for meaning to be decoded through repeated use. That is, from a series or field of images, one may be able to discern cultural phenomena or conventions embedded into the visual language of the purse motif as it was produced in Athens. The importance of repetition of purse images

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<sup>35</sup> A. Steiner 2007, 1-40.

for a foundation of understanding cannot be underestimated here, especially when using a data-informed approach that attempts to understand a motif across a wide-range of vases. This study brings more attention to what Steiner calls the repetition of ‘types.’ This would include repetitions found across different vases of a particular scene in order to determine common themes, shapes, examinations of provenance, etc, that can help inform the meaning of the particular repeated motif.<sup>36</sup> This study, in building off of Steiner’s repetition in types and Sourvinou-Inwood’s structuralist aspects, helps define the iconography of the purse within the corpus of Attic pottery.

Steiner’s discussion is not limited to broad aspects of repetition such as the ‘types’ found across entire motifs. In fact, many of Steiner’s major methods of analysis for studying repetition are still defined within single vases, this would include something like a repeating character or theme on opposing sides of the same vase in order to build a narrative that includes the entirety of a vase rather than a single scene.<sup>37</sup> In this study I will not consider this aspect, of other scenes on the vase, beyond occasional anecdotal examples. In this way the study moves away from a Panofsky iconological analysis, where various motifs or ‘types’ share similar ‘themes.’<sup>38</sup> The lack of analysis regarding other motifs on vases containing a purse scene should be considered a limitation of this study; an ideal analysis would include an analysis of the varying connected motifs, in order to create a dialogue of narratives and themes across representations, and would include all available representations of the purse. Thus this study acts as both a

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<sup>36</sup> Steiner 2007, 40-51.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 74-194. This includes Steiner’s later chapters that discuss specific interior aspects of repetition when ‘reading’ a vase.

<sup>38</sup> Panofsky 1939, 15.

demonstration of the purse's potential meanings, and as an analysis of this 'type,' by using a sample of available images.

Images are largely taken from the Beazley Archive Pottery Database (BAPD), a database of Greek pottery maintained by the Beazley Archive of Oxford University.<sup>39</sup> This database includes a large number of images along with the individual entries on data such as artist, shape, provenance, and subject matter; some additional images for non-illustrated entries will be found through citations in the bibliography.

Gathering data from the Beazley Archive does face certain limits and difficulties. The data is limited in its quantity, and most of the data gathered by the Beazley Archive is limited to pottery fabricated in Athens. Thus any conclusions about production of vases from this research must be limited to conclusions about Attic vase production. There is also a limitation in the availability of images. The Beazley Archive does attach certain descriptive attributes to what is contained within a scene (e.g. purse, youth, 'erotic'), to provide information on a motif when there is no image, but these cannot be entirely relied upon to be accurate, as the example of the sponge bag found in Figure 2 demonstrated.<sup>40</sup>

Important for the purse, and a major hindrance in conducting this study is the most baseline aspect of iconography, that is, identifying objects. For Sourvinou-Inwood that would be identifying that this object is a spear, and this object is a sword. The purse does not have such a clean distinction in its identification at this pre-iconographic, fundamental level. What is the difference between a 'bag' and a 'purse?' This problem of

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<sup>39</sup> See [beazley.ox.ac.uk](http://beazley.ox.ac.uk), Sir John Beazley, for whom the archive is named, was a major figure in the attribution and cataloging of Greek pottery. Through his legacy and the University of Oxford one can examine these images made available through the Beazley Archive.

<sup>40</sup> Throughout this research many, where images are available, sponge bags have been identified as "purse\*" by the Beazley Archive. Those with no images must be taken on a certain amount of faith regarding correct purse identification (and should be largely correct if they follow the image-available trend of purse to spongebag).

inconsistent terminology and basic identification is found within the Beazley Archive Pottery Database's identification of the purse. This has resulted in a number of objects identified as 'purses' that are actually sponge bags, athlete's kits, etc. This same misidentification was mentioned earlier in relation to the sponge bag found in Figure 2. Furthermore, the term 'bag' is occasionally attributed to describe objects that are a purse, as can be seen in a cup attributed to the Splanchnopt Painter (Figure 15). The figure, a youth, on the far left is seen holding a purse (in the same familiar pose of holding it out to a woman), but is instead identified by the BAPD as a bag. There are even more ambiguous 'bags' that are entirely indeterminate as to whether the object is a purse or a bag, often hanging in the background of scenes.<sup>41</sup> This labeling appears to be a small interpretive act, but when dealing with over a hundred images it can mount into a major project quickly, especially when one considers how many 'bags' can be found in Greek vase painting. There is also the additional problem of the term 'bag' being attached to vases without available images, making identification or verification of the purse difficult (and when an image is found, it may prove to be just a bag and not a purse). Thus the data used in this analysis will be limited to what is designated as 'purse' by the BAPD, and exclude those that are sponge bags, etc. A more systematic database, for future consideration, would contain the interpretation of any possible designation a purse could attain (e.g., bag, sack, pouch).

Connected to the notion of hard-to-identify bags and the purse's previous interpretations is another contentious arena of scholarship, that of 'genre' painting on

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<sup>41</sup> This is a constantly updating area of research, and perhaps indicates a further need of research regarding overlapping motifs, or the difficulty of creating singular 'motifs' as areas of defined research, on top of the already precarious ways in which previous identification of this 'bag' object was based in more anecdotal studies.

Greek vases and its ‘ambiguities.’<sup>42</sup> Traditionally, the scene of the purse would be one of ‘genre’ as opposed to ‘myth.’ This difference was set in place to distinguish between scenes of so-called everyday life and those of mythological character. Thus if you had a man wearing a lion-skin with a club, it was Herakles in a scene of the ‘myth’ type, and if you had a group of youths, such as those seen in Figure 2, it was a scene of the ‘genre’ type. Instead, when considering the approach to images of ‘genre,’ it is suggested here to adopt J. Hurwit’s distinction of weak versus strong narrative, which is one that acts on a sliding-scale basis, rather than two diametrically opposed concepts.<sup>43</sup> Strong scenes, as opposed to weak, are determined, above all, by their concreteness of description. The ‘stronger’ the image, the more concrete the interpretation. For example, one could say that the purse as a signifier of prostitution is not as concrete in its interpretation as Sourvinou-Inwood’s sword-bearers and spear-bearers as Theseus. And neither of these could be considered as strong as an image of a man wearing a lion skin with a club as Herakles. A strong image has a more immediately determinative meaning, in Panofsky’s sense of ‘conventional subject matter,’ than a weak image, like the purse. This is exactly why an examination of patterns, through differences and repeated themes, as suggested in the methodological approach provided by Steiner and Sourvinou-Inwood, can assist in determining the meaning of these images (and their placement on this spectrum of weak versus strong).

Various data points will be examined for each vessel; artist, date, shape, provenance, actor, recipient, and gesture. Analysis of the frequencies for each of these variables will provide the opportunity for systematically examining the “texts” or

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<sup>42</sup> For an introduction into genre versus myth see, Bažant 1981, 4-7.

<sup>43</sup> Hurwit 2011, 1-18.

“messages” using Sourvinou-Inwood’s and Steiner’s models. This consists of data that can help answer questions such as; how much does a certain shape occur in the total population of purse motif vases, are there particular artists who created many examples of the scene, what gestures occur most often when certain genders of people are interacting together on a vase, etc. Conclusions will be drawn from the way in which the “data,” that is the discernable semantic language of the images, compares to the available purse-literature. For example, in Sourvinou-Inwood’s research this would be taking the difference between the sword-holder and the spear-holder and comparing the results found in the images with previous literature and interpretations of the motif in order to come to a conclusion that takes account of these newly discovered differences.<sup>44</sup> In order to effectively use this methodological approach the vases must be considered the first source of knowledge. The patterns, whether through difference or repetition, found within the images creates a framework that interpretations must necessarily fit within. In addition, this analysis attempts to move beyond the iconographic readings currently available by taking an approach that is more data-informed. The trends, or lack of trends, found within the data will help provide a basis for a more thoughtful consideration of the previously discussed literature, in addition to formulating a basis of information that can help inform future interpretations of the purse motif.

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<sup>44</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 1-98. In Sourvinou-Inwood’s examination of the “spear-holder” and “sword-holder” it was found that there was a key difference between the two, spear-bearers in pursuit were more erotic towards the victim while sword-bearers were read to be more lethal. Both could denote an idealized male.

## DATA INTRODUCTION

When looking at the primary example, the Makron cup (Figure 1), one can break down the image into a variety of data fields to determine a variety of outcomes about the meaning of the purse motif. In this case, the attributed artist is Makron. By comparing different artists through this data field, one can determine whether certain artists specialized in these scenes, how different artists designed the scenes, and what the artist repeated in similar scenes. This field also allows for examining repetition of the “sign” (purse) by a particular artist or ‘sender’ to test for consistency in its use. The artist/workshop field also helps to identify specific periods of production. For example, the Makron cup is dated to between 490-480 BCE (Figure 1), and the workshop’s production would fall into the 500-475 BCE quarter-century period. Examining quarter-century periods provides a framework for viewing how changes in purse images or pottery occurred over time, or if there were specific times when certain motifs or shapes were more popular than others. Basically, the date field provides for a diachronic analysis of all other fields.

The shape of the Makron vessel is a cup, or *kylix*. Shapes indicate how a vessel was used, and so allows for a certain amount of contextual analysis. For example, certain vases, such as a hydria, can have various contexts: used to store water, where the water could be stored for everyday use in the home, used for the mixing of water and wine at symposia, or used as a funerary vase, either as a grave good or cinerary urn. A cup or *kylix* is used for drinking; whether at a symposion, a banquet, or in the home, it can generally be concluded that you drank in a social setting and that cups have various social

functions in these settings. The interior scene within the bowl of the cup, or *tondo*, would be seen by the drinker in brief instances of drinking, one exterior scene would be seen by other sitters at the party, and usually a different exterior scene would be there for the cup's viewer to enjoy.<sup>45</sup> The shape also can be seen as particularly important for the analysis of the distribution of pottery and to consider whether the shape of a vase tends to be a more important factor in pottery trade than, say, a particularly popular motif. Shapes can also be used differently in foreign contexts, and some can even be used as grave goods. The cup is especially common in Etruscan graves, but not in Attic, where the *lekythoi* predominated. So shape should be considered in relation with other fields such as provenance.

The Makron cup has no available provenance, but for similar vessels that do, the sites allow the identification of regions for distribution of pottery, primarily Greece, Sicily, Southern Italy, and Etruria. Provenance is important for seeing where certain motifs, shapes, or a particular artist's work ended up and whether the motif was directed at a particular audience. This provides an opportunity to better understand what was popular in different regions, what might have been made by the potters to be sold to other regions, and when combined with dating, how this changed over time. Provenance further allows for a discussion regarding how purchasers used and viewed these objects, as opposed to the producer-centered focus of many previous iconographic approaches.<sup>46</sup>

In the Makron cup the variable 'actors' are identified as the youth and man, and the recipients as the two women. The actor is defined as the individual(s) engaged in 'action' and handling the means of exchange, while the recipient(s) is the receiver of the

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<sup>45</sup> For an example of the various shapes see Figure 12.

<sup>46</sup> A producer focus is even found in Steiner 2007, 66-67.

purse/exchange. The actor/recipient fields provide a way to distinguish who is engaged in the action of handing off the purse (the actor) versus those receiving. The actor/recipient fields will distinguish between youths, women, and men, providing information on what type of exchange occurs most frequently between genders.

The gesture field provides a framework for interpreting *what* exactly is going on within a single ‘frame’ in terms of the actions of the actors and recipients. For the Makron cup, this would include the way in which the man and youth hold their arms out, lean on their sticks, and how they present themselves to their female counterparts in a communicative act (Figure 1). For the recipients, it would include the way in which the women react (or their lack of reaction), how, for example, the woman on the left looks away, the raising of a hand, and so forth. Gesture is a very important field in determining and codifying the *communication* between actors and recipients.<sup>47</sup> Codifying the gestures allows one to understand and make associated trends, for example, when looking at the gestures of those holding the purse one can determine the frequency of those who are actively handing the purse with their hand out versus those that are holding the purse against their body. The purse being proffered results in a more active reading of exchange, while those not actively holding the purse outward must be read with more ambiguity. These trends enable one to determine the associated actions with the purse and make a meaningful contribution to its interpretation. The gesture field provides an avenue of meaning in combination with all other aspects; actor/recipient, etc. Gesture informs us as to how the various ‘players’ are expressing themselves to one another and so provides assistance as to how purses are being used. Furthermore, gestures will tell us what the

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<sup>47</sup> For an expansion of meanings in gesture see, Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006; Rautman 1999; Cohen 1999, 71-97; Boegehold 1999.

purse might mean in different settings or contexts. Repetition of gestures, as Steiner has made clear, in combination with other elements, is very important in decoding an iconographic meaning or role to the purse itself, and so is one of the most important, but also the most flexible, points of interpretation.<sup>48</sup>

Actual data regarding the purse will be examined from the collected images and information provided by the Beazley Archive. Examination will begin with ‘simple’ data fields that do not engage directly with the image, but help to identify the contextual background for the imagery: shape, provenance, period, production groups or individual artist attributions. Following these tables and analyses will be a look at the more nuanced interactions found in the available images: identifying gender for the actors and recipients in individual purse scenes, identifying various gesture groups for recipients and actors, and other miscellaneous aspects such as dress/clothing and location. Analysis of the frequencies of the values for each of these variables will provide an opportunity for systematically examining the “texts” or “messages” using Sourvinou-Inwood’s and Steiner’s models.

Each individual table or discussion of data will include definitions of the terminology (e.g. what is an ‘actor?’ how are dates determined? etc.) as well as indications of how data trends and information fit into scholarship of the purse motif discussed earlier. The sample database consists of a total of 155 pots, for which 110 images have been found in the BAPD or in other bibliographic sources. Of the 45 pots without illustrations, they will be used for analysis of aspects such as provenance, shape, artist, and period as recorded in the BAPD.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Steiner 2007, 17-39.

<sup>49</sup> See note 27.

## CHRONOLOGY AND PERIOD

Since the dating of pottery by stylistic analysis cannot be more precise than a ten- or twenty-year range, the use of quarter-century periods is a more reliable means for discussing the chronology of Attic vase painting and the activity of workshops.<sup>50</sup> The number of vases for each period is shown in Table 1, along with the percentage of the total number of vases with the purse motif. As can be seen in the data, the vast majority of the purse motif is concentrated between 500-450 and declining in popularity in the third quarter of the fifth century and virtually disappearing after 425.

One explanation for the sudden emergence of the motif at the end of the sixth century is that the motif of a ‘coin purse’ would not have existed prior to the existence of coinage.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, as L. Kurke has noted, there was a certain ‘language of metal’ that also arrived in a similar manner to the purse motif, focusing on the use of coinage.<sup>52</sup> It is in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century that coins began to be widely minted and used across the Mediterranean world. It is also important to note the Peloponnesian War heavily disrupted trade during the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>53</sup> This disruption of trade may have led to changes in both production and subject matter.<sup>54</sup> If the motif is related to the minting of coins and coins continued to be produced after and during this disruption, the Peloponnesian war cannot be considered a potential factor in the motif’s disappearance.

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<sup>50</sup> This is an adoption of the model discussed and used by Stansbury-O’Donnell 2006, 29-30. For the limitation of dating pottery see Saperstein, 2013.

<sup>51</sup> See Schaps (2004) or von Reden (2003) for information on the introduction of coinage and monetary systems of thought in the Greek world.

<sup>52</sup> Kurke 1999, 45-60.

<sup>53</sup> Trendal 1989, 18-18; Matheson 1996, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata 2012; Saperstein 2013; Acton 2014, 82-106.

Given the narrow range of time in which the purse was used as a motif and the use of coins for real economic transactions before and afterward, the purse as ‘coin purse’ cannot be tied exclusively to the signification of economic or monetary transactions, whether with *hetarai* or in the trade of goods. The relationships of exchange continued to exist after the 5<sup>th</sup> century while the purse scene no longer appeared. If the purse were a motif that necessarily contained themes of the symposium or economic exchange, then it is safe to assume the motif would have continued as long as these activities continued to exist in the lives of vase users and producers. This means that the appearance of the purse should not be simply linked to some reality of monetary exchange, but might more readily be connected to the ever-shifting interests and tastes of artists and/or consumers.

Since the purse motif was so short-lived other factors could help to explain its interest amongst artists and consumers, such as shape or provenance, which will be discussed below. Shapes provide information on the particular use of a vase containing the purse scene, and so, along with provenance, provide a basis of context for how a vase was used.

### SHAPE

Shape, as indicated in Table 2, indicates a strong association of the purse motif with cups, as well over half (59.35%) of the vases with the purse motif are cups.<sup>55</sup> The heavy concentration of purse motifs on cups from 500 to 450 parallels the high point of Athenian production for this shape in the same period. This can be seen in Table 3 where shape is compared directly with period: cups with the purse motif are most heavily

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<sup>55</sup> See Figure 12 for examples of the various shapes found within the purse data.

produced during the first two quarters of the fifth century.<sup>56</sup> Yet even when one considers that cups are the most popular shape within this period, the association of purses with cups compared with other shapes is still statistically significant. In looking at the total production of red-figure pottery found in the Beazley Archive, one sees that cups make up 13,522 (27.71%) of the 48,807 total red-figure population.<sup>57</sup> The total population of purse-motif vases is 155; within this population there is a 59.35% occurrence of cups, more than twice the percentage of the overall occurrence of red-figure cups in the Beazley Archive. When running a chi-square statistical analysis of the amount of cups one would expect to find in the purse-motif population (27.71% of 155) versus the actual observed amount (59.35% of 155), it results in statistical significance for the occurrence of the cup as a shape for the purse motif.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the purse motif can be strongly connected with the cup shape in terms of provenance, use, and general context. Since the cup shape is most commonly associated with symposion and the consumption of wine, this would suggest some support for previous interpretations about the purchase of *hetarai* for sympotic entertainment.<sup>59</sup> However, these conclusions were based on the Greek symposion and the cultural life in Athens.<sup>60</sup> As shall be seen later, however, many cups are found in Etruscan contexts, where circumstances for the shape and the consumption of wine differed from Athens. Etruscan women participated in household banquets, making the reading of the purse as

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<sup>56</sup> See data analyses provided by Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata (2012, 28-31) for information on total production in quarter centuries by shape, exact numbers are not given in their analyses, but they do provide lists of ‘most popular’ for various periods and geographic regions; see also Saperstein 2013, 494-497.

<sup>57</sup> BAPD accessed October 14, 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Chi squared equals 77.275 with 1 degree of freedom. The two-tailed P value is less than 0.0001.

<sup>59</sup> Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21; Sutton 1981, 276-369; Williams 1993.

<sup>60</sup> Bunderick 2012, 17; Williams 1993.

an indicator of prostitution difficult in that context.<sup>61</sup> Questions about where the vases are found remain and will assist in reading the purse motif on particular shapes, especially one as popular as the cup.

Another shape to consider in analyzing the purse-scene is that of the pelike. The pelike is an early amphora form, and was usually used for the storage of oil or water.<sup>62</sup> The pelike reached its height of production during the same fifty-year period of purse-motif production.<sup>63</sup> Further, the proportion of purse scenes on the pelike, much like the cup, is large enough to be considered unusual. Although there are fewer pelikai than cups in the purse-motif sample (9.03%), the proportion of pelikai among red-figure vases in the Beazley Archive is about half of that (4.76%). When running a chi-square in relation to the pelike one finds an association of shape and motif: although not as significant as the cup, there is still a trend towards statistical significance for the occurrence of the purse-motif on pelike as a shape.<sup>64</sup> Pelikai were most commonly used for the storage of oil or water and, in H. A. Shapiro's brief study of shape and subject on earlier black-figure pelike, there was a heavy association with so-called 'genre' or 'everyday' scenes of oil vendors, musical competitions, or games.<sup>65</sup> The purse, if following the model of black-figure pelikai, would function well in the reading of an economic exchange, especially with vendors selling goods. This would follow closer to Lewis's thesis about the purse scene as signifying women engaged in the marketplace.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Lewis 1997.

<sup>62</sup> Shapiro 1997, 63-70, relates the pelike shape to commerce, although this when examining earlier black-figure pelikai.

<sup>63</sup> Further confirmed, again, by Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata 2012, 28-31.

<sup>64</sup> Chi squared equals 6.235 with 1 degree of freedom. The two-tailed P value equals 0.0125.

<sup>65</sup> Shapiro 1997, 63-70.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis 2002, 110-111.

Other shapes were also popular during the life of the purse motif, including the krater, which can be seen on Figure 12.<sup>67</sup> From Table 2 one can see that 6.25% of vases with the purse motif are kraters. In the overall BAPD red-figure data, however, kraters account for 15.55% of all vases.<sup>68</sup> When running a chi-square for the krater one sees that it is statistically significant that there are *less* kraters found in the purse population than in red-figure production.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the krater (and other shapes with even lower occurrence rates) appears to be actively avoided in the depiction of purse motifs. The resulting chi-square should also be considered conservative due to issues of accurately identifying the ‘purse,’ where a repeated pattern of kraters with spongebags and not purses was found, such as the bag found hanging in Figure 2 mentioned earlier.<sup>70</sup> This shows that while some shapes were actively favored, the cup and pelike, other shapes were actively avoided or considered unsuitable for the motif. In considering the motif, one should consider how these two shapes, the cup and pelike, might have some link to interpreting the motif. However, some questions remain. How is the reading of a motif on a certain shape changed when one understands the broad cultural context of the shape? Is the reading of the cup as symposium vessel, or the pelikai as associated with economic exchange, appropriate to different geographical regions? Could cups include the motif for particular reasons not of the artists, but of the consumers?

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<sup>67</sup> Eight out of the ten kraters occur during the last major period of the purse motif, 450-425.

<sup>68</sup> 7598 red-figure kraters out of 48807 red-figure vases. Data taken from the BAPD accessed October 2015.

<sup>69</sup> The Chi squared value is 9.663. The P-Value is 0.002. The result is significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ .

<sup>70</sup> A range of misidentified purses within the Beazley Archive were found on kraters (many associated with the Polygnotos Group), these have been removed, but some did not have images available, and so remain but may contain the same problem of misidentification. If misidentification is a factor in those without images this would only improve the resulting chi-square test, suggesting an even greater avoidance of the krater shape. This further suggests a problem in purse-scholarship at the most basic iconographic level of identification.

## PROVENANCE

Provenance is a very important data point for giving the purse motif context. This is especially true of symposium interpretations for vessels found outside of the Greek world. When looking at the purse data, about 38% of the BAPD purse vases have a recorded provenance.<sup>71</sup> Table 4 indicates the provenance of vases, showing a tendency for the purse-motif to end up in Etruria (44.07%) or Southern Italy (15.25%). It is important to note that six of the nine South Italian vases were found in Nola, an Etruscan dominated site, placing over half of the vases in Etruscan sites (54.24%).

This association with Etruria for the purse motif finds a parallel in the strong overall desire for cups found outside Greece, as demonstrated in the large data analysis provided by Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata. Giudice et al. tells us the shape of the cup was the most popular vase shape in Etruria during this period, and the results found in Table 2 supports the tendency to create cups.<sup>72</sup> Since Giudice et al. have only published summaries of their data without providing access to it, one cannot use it to provide a statistical analysis to test for a goodness of fit between the overall trend and the cup provenance rate in Etrurian sites. What one can say about the rate of Etrurian provenance,

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<sup>71</sup> 62% of the 155 vases do not have a known provenance. When one examines similar studies of different motifs, such as Stansbury O'Donnell (2006, 35) there is the same difficulty in the overall provenance of Greek vases. For Stansbury O'Donnell's spectator data a CVA census produced a roughly 50% provenance occurrence; see Bazant (1981 and 1990) for an introduction into the scholarly debate surrounding the issue of provenance on Greek vases. Especially considering the difficulties of determining scale, trade, and production.

<sup>72</sup> For an overall trend of cup production during this period see, Saperstein 2013; Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata 2012. See Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata 2012, 29, for the attachment of Etrurian provenance with the cups, where cups are listed as the most popular shape in the region. See Stansbury O'Donnell 2015, for pursuit scenes and cups as an example of a similar trend in shape.

just as others have pointed out in regards to the period purses have confined us to (500-425), is that there is a strong sense of trade and context outside of Attica.<sup>73</sup>

When one looks at Table 4 for purse vases found in Greece (16), all but two were found in Attica or Athens, one from Rhodes and another whose provenance was listed only as “Greece.” Thus there is about a 24% occurrence rate of the purse motif in Attica. If the majority of purse vases are found in Etruria (as per the BAPD) while all were made in Athens, the meaning of the purse according to pot-makers and painters was most likely not read by the eventual users. Associations of meaning had to be transmitted by intermediary groups engaged in trade, or by others traveling between regions. Yet, a 24% provenance rate in Athens is nothing to ignore, and demonstrates a certain amount of appeal for the motif amongst both Athenians and other Greeks abroad. While it is hard to determine the strength of the provenance trends within Attic and Etrurian sites, especially with regard to the limited amount of provenance records and the unavailability of larger studies, one does find the purse occurring at a reasonable rate within both sites. This, while still a very general finding, does give us some information about the appropriate perspectives to take when reading these vases.

Vases moved around, were traded, and could change hands many times within their lifetimes. One must consider these objects to have existed under different potential viewers, at different times, for different reasons. Any solitary reading based off of a single use of a particular shape will be problematic. A motif or narrative that gained popularity had to appeal to a variety of audiences and needed the ability to be read in various contexts, such as Etruria and Athens. This means that associated readings of the purse, such as exchange or gift-giving, do not fit into an ‘either/or’ perspective, but are

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<sup>73</sup> Steiner 2007, 234-235.

multivalent, simultaneous, and are more appropriately read in a ‘both/and’ perspective. Certain cultural regions could have their own particular practices surrounding the implications of coinage or gifts. Many of the interpretations provided in the purse scholarship are limiting for certain cultural regions, generally only from a Greek perspective, and would limit the reading of the purse motif. For instance, an artist that produced a cup with a purse scene would have read the motif quite differently than someone in Etruria with their own set of cultural tastes and values. Etruscan viewers, even if reading the images as coins, would be receiving the content of the images in a very secondhand way, as a Greek object that contained Greek themes.

In a study of sympotic pottery Steiner mentions that some vases were produced, at least partially, to respond to Etruscan taste, but these are often connected to desired shapes rather than specific iconography, although specific iconography does occur.<sup>74</sup> Steiner, in discussing Greek pottery found in Etruria states, “Once Attic pottery reached the Etruscans, they did not always use it in the same ways as the Athenians, and within Etruria pottery played different roles in different Etruscan communities.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, one can consider as to whether the purse as a motif was targeted at a particular population, such as Etruria, or a motif that painters found was popular in Etruria, and so continued its production. And even if Etruria was not a specific target in production, but merely the destination of an Athenian scene, the understanding of the motif would change depending on specific find spots. Overall, in considering the provenance data, any ‘singular’ reading must be taken with due caution when positing a meaning for the purse motif.

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<sup>74</sup> Steiner 2007, 234.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 235.

The possibility of multivalent perspectives is most readily utilized in S.

Bundrick's article, "Housewives, Hetarai, and the Ambiguity of Genre in Attic Vase

Painting." Regarding the Harrow Painter vase (Figure 9), Bundrick states:

In the complex social and political environment of early classical Athens, we can imagine the Harrow Painter and other Kerameikos craftsmen attempting to create images that would simultaneously appeal to different groups, whether Athenians at home (male/female, native/metic, aristocratic/democratic), Greeks abroad, or foreigners even further away. Designing scenes multivalent enough to be read and understood by a variety of viewers seems a strategy designed for broad marketing and maximum sales.<sup>76</sup>

Although Bundrick's conclusions are limited to the analysis of one particular purse image, they have so far proved accurate when considering the circumstances of the purse-image data with regard to shape (and especially the production of cups) and provenance in the first half of the fifth century.

Bundrick's more recent article written on Athenian eye-cups is also an effective parallel in examining the production and trade of pottery and its imagery.<sup>77</sup> Although the eye is a different type of motif and was largely produced slightly earlier on black-figure pottery, it was mainly produced on cups like the purse motif. The fact that the eye-cup drops off quickly in production, as indicated in Bundrick's research and data, provides an example of Athenian painters and potters adopting, adapting, and entirely abandoning motifs over time as their markets developed and changed. As Bundrick points out, the eye-cup has traditionally been read as related to masking, but when examining the particular find-spots of the motif Bundrick finds that this interpretation loses its foothold. Instead the eye-cup must take on a new interpretation based on funerary practice at

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 19-20.

<sup>77</sup> Bundrick 2015.

Etruscan tomb sites.<sup>78</sup> This does not mean the traditional eye-cup reading is false, but that interpreting an image must adapt as the viewer-context changes.

Similarly for the purse motif, in Bundrick's research on the Harrow Painter (Figure 9), the discussion of the purse has centered heavily around ideas associated with the Athenian symposion.<sup>79</sup> In this scene there is a seated woman, within an architectural setting, with a mirror in her hand. In front of her stands a line, from left to right, of a youth, a man (bearded), and another youth. The bearded man holding the purse while leaning on his staff, in addition to the seated woman (with alabastron hanging above her), is often interpreted as the center or nexus around which the image is interpreted. The notion of symposia and the purse is especially true in the notable associations of the purse with *heterai*. This is usually involving the purchase of a *heterai*'s services as later entertainment for what is often claimed to be the symposia. This interpretation is found within many of the 'purse as prostitute' readings of the motif.<sup>80</sup> The cup shape, with its association with symposia, would seem to confirm this type of reading yet the provenance tells us that the Athenian symposion is not the exclusive market for these objects.<sup>81</sup> In addition, Etruscan banquets did not exclude women from the household from attending, as in the Attic symposion. The cup shape does not remove the interpretation of the vase as one that existed in a social setting that involved drinking, but one should consider the complexities of interpreting the scene when different contexts had different attitudes towards women. Previous interpretations that attempted a singular focus for a motif have prevented more nuanced, contextualized readings, in which multiple

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 297-298, 305-307.

<sup>79</sup> Bundrick 2012, 20.

<sup>80</sup> Rodenwaldt, 1932.

<sup>81</sup> Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata, 29.

perspectives should be considered simultaneously. Regarding the eye-cup, Bundrick states, "...distribution and data demonstrate that these vases were not exclusive to the Athenian home market..."<sup>82</sup> Much is the same in regards to the purse images and the overall trend the provenance data has provided.

Just as Bundrick and the provenance data has suggested, the tastes of consumers and how middlemen transmitted that information likely determined the way in which vases were produced and subject matter selected.<sup>83</sup> There is an obvious tendency in the literature to focus upon Attic Greek cultural norms while most of the vases with purses, as seen in Table 4, are found on the Italian peninsula. This is not to say that a particular approach from an Etruscan standpoint would be 'more correct,' but that the vases were made for a marketplace that the producers themselves did not always have access to except through "middlemen" such as traders, just as the eventual consumers did not have direct access to any supposed intentions that the artists may have had. Greek themes were known outside of Greece, yet given the weak narrative when interpreting a purse-scene its interpretation cannot be so clear-cut across space.

Thus the overall tendency for the motif as based on provenance, shape, and period directs us towards a more fluid and viewer-specific meaning. This does not mean that the purse image is necessarily passive or devoid of specific meaning, only that the image of the purse was integrated into a new cultural language to suit specific regional needs and values. One also doesn't want cultural fluidity to result in mere greater numbers of 'groups' determining their own meaning (this would be an infinite and indeterminable

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<sup>82</sup> Bundrick 2015, 309.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Osborne 2004, 78-81; Bundrick 2012, 17-20.

endeavor); rather the purse should be considered an area of cultural intersection.<sup>84</sup> In terms of the purse motif's production, the intended audience's preferences would have been transmitted or at least understood by those acting as intermediaries in trade. Greek potters repeated themes and images that appealed to the buying region and worked to satisfy these needs within the confines of their particular knowledge.

### ARTIST

Investigating the artist or workshop for the vases can inform one about how a particular motif was handled in its production, especially over time. Was the motif handled and repeated by a few specific artists or workshops? Was the production of the motif determined by a high demand market with relatively few specialized artists, or was the motif something many different dissociated artists 'dabbled' in? Investigating the details of an artist or workshop that took up the motif repeatedly can provide a 'snapshot' of the motifs popularity amongst both particular groups of artists and their associated vase consumers. With this information one can ask; where did the motif end up for a particular artist who repeated the motif? With this in mind, was there a specific market in mind? Or was the motif of broad popularity? Is there any significance with other fields investigated, such as shape?

Artist or workshop is a field designated by Beazley's own stylistic attributions of pottery and has become fundamental to the study of ancient Greek pottery for identifying particular vase painters and potters. The BAPD attributions are used here to identify both artists as well as the chronological production periods. P. Saperstein in "Painters, Potters,

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<sup>84</sup> For a similar discussion in the interpretation of Greek art see Schultz 2007, 182-183.

and the Scale of the Attic Vase-Painting Industry” informs us that originally there was a greater tendency for a potter-painter, or a single individual who would act as both painter and potter, during earlier black-figure periods. Yet as time moved forward and specialization increased with the introduction of the red-figure technique, soon there were dedicated potters and painters, resulting in a heavier reliance on connected groups usually designated as ‘workshops’ or ‘groups.’ Saperstein suggests that many, but not all, painters using the red-figure technique would repeat specific stock characters/themes for their image subjects and, amongst potters, often repeat a shape.<sup>85</sup>

Table 5 shows the distribution of purse-motif artists by period and total number.<sup>86</sup> At first glance, the data shows a very diverse model for purse-motif use, with many artists dabbling in the motif, but very few repeating it in large quantities. This may not seem like very many pots, but Saperstein’s research indicates the scale of pottery creation to be something like 800-1700 vases a year for a single group based on a recovery ratio—the percentage of vases that have survived to the present—of .5-1.0%.<sup>87</sup> If one considers these raw numbers, then, as a percentage of an artist’s or group’s total production of vase, a notable amount would be at two or more percent of their output. So, for example, if one looks at Splanchnopt Painter on Table 5, his 14 vases with the purse motif are 6.8% of his total surviving production of 205 vases. Using Sapirstein’s calculation, one could roughly assume that there were 41,000 vases, at a rate of 1,640 vases a year, created over his career. This would mean that there might have been roughly 2700-2800 purse-motif pots by this single artist. What one should understand from this 2% rate is that some

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<sup>85</sup> Saperstein 2013, 508.

<sup>86</sup> Due to the fact that periods are determined by artist or workshop attributions, tables will be broken down listing each artist under its associated period. Artist combinations due to multiple overlapped attributions have been combined.

<sup>87</sup> Saperstein 2013, 508.

artists may have only had a slight interest in the motif, but that those painters with a higher proportion dedicated a fair amount of time and interest to the subject.<sup>88</sup> Overall, artists that break the two percent point must have held the purse within their available repertoire of iconography in the creation of vases.

Some of the individual artists listed in Table 5 can be linked into a larger workshop or group, further concentrating interest and use of the purse-motif. Of particular note is the Penthesilea Group. In Table 5, the Penthesilea Painter is marked as a single painter, but in accordance with Beazley's system, the Penthesilea Painter was one of several painters working together in the Penthesilea Group or workshop, including the Painter of Bologna 417, the Veii Painter, the Splanchnopt Painter, the Curtius Painter, the Painter of Brussels R330, the Aberdeen Painter, and many others.<sup>89</sup> These artists are heavily represented in the purse data, and many of the individual hands sit above or near two percent of their total production. R. Osborne notes how the Penthesilea Group's vessels were often painted with many hands on a single vase, for example where the Splanchnopt Painter would paint the interior and the Penthesilea Painter would paint the outer walls of a cup. Thus the trend of a tight knit artist group agrees with the idea of specialization during red-figure pottery production, especially for repeated figures in painting.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to using heavily the purse motif in their work, the Penthesilea Group attached this particular motif almost entirely to cups, as can be seen in Table 6, where the

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<sup>88</sup> Other motifs were more popular, in total numbers and across many periods. See Stansbury O'Donnell 2015. Here motif production for certain painters can reach beyond 30% of production, indicating the popularity of other motifs; there is plenty of major research to be conducted in dividing and testing motif patterns across the whole of the BAPD in order to give more useful results for particular motif popularity in relation to a potter's career.

<sup>89</sup> Osborne (2004, 80) maps out Beazley's connection between the various painters and artists. This would also include artists listed as "In the manner of..."

<sup>90</sup> For an examination of the 'workshop' and 'industry' size see, Acton 2014, 83-86.

vast majority of the Penthesilea Group's vases were in the cup shape. In addition to this association of the Penthesilea Group's use of the purse-motif on the cup, the vast majority of the Penthesilea Group's vases with the purse motif were found in Etrurian sites, as can be seen in Table 7 (approximately 75% of the Penthesilea Group's purse motif vases with provenance are found in Etrurian sites).<sup>91</sup> Thus the Penthesilea Group's use of the cup motif should be seen as linked to export to the Etruscan market.

The Penthesilea Group strongly represents the peak of purse motif production when one considers the strong tendency of the purse motif in each of these data categories; the group's career-span during the 475-450 period, their connection to trade outside of Attica, focused in Etruria, and their intensely consistent creation of the cup shape. The Penthesilea Group's strong connection to non-Attic provenance also indicates a production that was heavily involved with non-Athenian consumers.<sup>92</sup> Just as was suggested in earlier discussions of provenance, the linkage of the motif with Attic symposium (and through this a relation to prostitution and entertainment) must be approached with due caution, particularly for workshops like the Penthesilea Group.<sup>93</sup> One also finds that the original intentions of the painters must have necessarily been connected to the foreign trade they were engaged in, often creating subjects or motifs intended to be vague but exact enough to appeal to consumers.<sup>94</sup> This type of trade reading is provided by Bndrick, who describes the importance of 'middle men' in the production of vases for trade.<sup>95</sup> Even if meanings attached to the Attic region were

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<sup>91</sup> The 75% Etrurian provenance found in the Penthesilea Group is statistically significant against the provenance rate found in the overall purse motif data, but given the low quantities one cannot outright reject the null hypothesis, i.e. need more data.

<sup>92</sup> Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata 2012, 29.

<sup>93</sup> Lewis 2003a, 93-95.

<sup>94</sup> Bndrick 2012, 18-20.

<sup>95</sup> Bndrick 2015, 308-309.

included in the original creation of a vase, the eventual consumer would create their own meanings to suit their particular regional and personal values, and it is possible that interest in the motif, as in other aspects of subject, shape, and style, might have been conveyed by merchants to the potters and painters in Athens.

One can see the importance of a motif like the purse in the iconography of a workshop when one compares the Penthesilea Group to another large workshop, the Polygnotos Group, that was active in the third quarter of the fifth century. The group is named after the vase painter Polygnotos who was a very prolific painter, and was also part of the much larger Polygnotan Group (none of whom besides Polygnotos are included in Figure 5).<sup>96</sup> In Bundrick's research, there was a period of decline that indicated changing tastes amongst Etruscan consumers for the eye cup, and the same situation would appear to apply to the purse motif.<sup>97</sup> The purse motif appears to decline, even when attempted by the Polygnotos Painter, a painter who was still very prolific for this period range (he peaked around 440, shortly before the start of the Peloponnesian War).<sup>98</sup> This indicates a potential shift in consumer taste for the purse image – where different motifs were becoming more popular, or regional applications of the purse motif may have dropped entirely.<sup>99</sup> The restrictions on later trade, due to factors such as the Peloponnesian War, would have only increased the disappearance of the motif after 425.

The trend found in the artist data matches those trends found in the other data fields examined earlier. This demonstrates artists finding a particular market niche,

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<sup>96</sup> See Stansbury O'Donnell (2015) pursuit data on Polygnotos Group. It should also be noted that there can be some confusion as there were many separate but connected attributions of a Polygnotos (such as many artists who 'copy the Polygnotos P' or are 'in the manner of Polygnotos P').

<sup>97</sup> Bundrick 2015, 332-334.

<sup>98</sup> See Matheson 1996 7-9, 81-85.

<sup>99</sup> See Stansbury O'Donnell 2015. Where the pursuit scene still retains its popularity and is produced at a rate of 10.39% for the Polygnotos Painter.

creating vases to match the particular demand while maintaining a certain amount of consistent integrity in terms of the imagery, and continuing to produce the vessels until the tastes and values of consumers underwent change. The change is indicated by the falloff of the motif, particularly by the Polygnotos Group in the later 5<sup>th</sup> century. This change in taste and motif for similar sized workshops as time progressed direct us to the more general trend that pottery in the 5<sup>th</sup> century was industrial in scale, and so underwent a variety of changes as competitive advantage had to be maintained within the vase industry.<sup>100</sup>

### GENDER

The interpretations of the purse motif are often centered on gendered interactions, such as the focus in the literature on male to female interaction for entertainment services at the symposion.<sup>101</sup> In order to test these interpretations against the data one needs to consider the gender of the figure, as well as their interaction through gesture.

When one defines the participants of a purse scene by gender there are three main groups: young men (those without beards), hereafter known as *youths*; adult men with beards, hereafter known as *men*; and *women* (who have no signs indicating relative age like men). The combination of youths and men will be given the term *male*.<sup>102</sup> As well as determining gender in order to approach previous interpretations one also needs to identify which gender is in the act of ‘using’ the purse and which gender is engaged in an

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<sup>100</sup> See P. Acton 2014, for an examination of the massive scale of the Greek economy, particularly Acton (2014, 73-108) for the pottery industry and also Acton (2014, 108-114) for a discussion of speculative changes in competition dynamics.

<sup>101</sup> Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21; Sutton 1981, 276-369; Williams 1993; Meyer 1988.

<sup>102</sup> This is the same arrangement as used in Stansbury O’Donnell (2006, 42). Based on the work of Ferrari (2003a, 84-88), who argues for the existence of three separate genders in ancient Greece.

act of ‘receiving.’ The actor is defined as the individual(s) engaged in ‘action’ and handling the means of exchange, while the recipient(s) is the receiver of the purse/exchange. This allows for a mode of identifying gender interactions, and later on gesture, of the varying ‘participants’ of a purse scene. Gender interactions will follow the model provided by Sourvinou-Inwood, where the gender of those engaged in sword versus spear interactions were an aspect used to help determine what type of interaction, whether lethal or erotic, was occurring.<sup>103</sup>

In order to determine the role of the purse in an interaction, it is essential to limit the data to those vases that have both an actor and a recipient visible in the picture. This means excluding vases that are merely fragments without two figures, or highly illegible images that do not retain full details of the actors and/or recipients. The greatest number of excluded vases occurs when ‘purse’ is included in the image description of the motif in the BAPD, but there is no actual image to determine who is actor or recipient, thus they are included in the overall data tables above but not included in the gender data discussed below. There are also problems regarding large scenes that contain more than one pair of individuals engaged in an act of exchange (Figure 4) potentially inflating the gender numbers beyond the total vases. Certain vases do not have a recipient, merely a lone figure holding the purse, occasionally with what would appear to be a scene that would expand beyond the confines of the frame (Figure 5). These lone figure vases drop the number of recipients in the analysis, and so lone actors are analyzed independently of other data fields. Finally, there are eleven vases of which contain a ‘hanging’ or ‘floating’ purse that is not held by any particular individual in the scene; these cannot be broken down into actor and recipient, and are discussed independently.

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<sup>103</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 41-46.

When one examines the gender of the actor by period, the window is almost entirely limited to the fifty-year period of 500-450, as virtually all the available images are within this range. Males stand out overwhelmingly above women as actors. Approximately 62% (54 out of 87) of all the vases with actor-recipient show youths as the actor, and 37% (32 out of 87) have actors represented as men (Table 8). As for the gender of recipient, 30% (18 out of 60) of purse vases have youths as recipients, while 63% (38 out of 60) are women, with a very few men in the remaining 7% (4 out of 60) (Table 9).

The information gathered from the data informs us of the almost exclusive tendency for women to be depicted as the recipient and a tendency for youths to be included in recipient depictions. Men are most often depicted in the role of the actor, as are youths. Males, as the combined men and youths, make up the virtual entirety of the actor field (with one woman valiantly defying this trend). Males have a definite hold on actors, and women, when depicted, are almost necessarily the recipients, yet the occurrence of youths as recipients, at around 30%, is strong. When interpreting the overall motif based on this information one must be cautious of approaches that center entirely on male/female interactions. Interpretations centered on interactions between males and females would be entirely thrown out in thirty percent of all instances of the purse motif. As Lear and Cantarella have mentioned, the interactions between men and youths is likely not one of prostitution if one views the pair engaged in a standard pederasty relationship. It was unlikely that money would be given to the *eromenos* (youthful beloved, object of attention) by the *erastes* (the adult lover).<sup>104</sup> Gift-giving, via

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<sup>104</sup> Lear and Cantarella 2008, 79-80.

Ferrari, is a possible reading here, and could include both Male→Female interactions as well as those with Man→Youth.<sup>105</sup>

In Table 10 one can see vase totals with specific gender interactions, e.g., total vases with a man actor and youth (Man→Youth) recipient, total vases with a youth and woman (Youth→Woman) recipient, etc.<sup>106</sup> There is a strong presence of Youth→Woman, making up 40% of vases with readable gender interactions. Following this is Man→Woman, making up 25% of the total vases with readable gender interactions. Thus 65% of vases with gender interactions of actors and recipients are Male→Woman. Man→Youth make up about 12% of the total gender interaction vases and Youth→Youth make up about 17% of total gender interaction vases. Those with Man→Man, and Woman→Man are very low, together accounting for about 7%.

The high occurrence of Male→Woman does tend to favor previous readings of the purse image that focus on centralizing the interaction between males and women. If one breaks down the Male→Woman into Youth→Woman and Man →Woman, one runs into a variety of interpretations. Here Sutton would argue Youth →Woman represents a ‘rite of passage’ and is a part of prostitution depictions, or for Lewis an interaction based on the purchasing of goods in the market by female vendors.<sup>107</sup> Man →Woman would propose the same interactions of prostitution and of women engaged in the marketplace in non-sexual or non-entertainment capacities. The relatively lower frequency of Man→Woman interactions makes Keuls argument about the reading of men and their

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<sup>105</sup> For gift giving see Ferrari 2002 15-16; Ferrari 1986.

<sup>106</sup> From here on a shorthand for these interactions will be adopted, with the first gender representing the actor and the second after the arrow representing the recipient in the interaction, e.g. Man →Youth; Youth→Woman, etc.

<sup>107</sup> Lewis 2003a, 93-95.

wives difficult, as it necessitates a ‘head of the household’ to interact with his wife.<sup>108</sup>

Likewise, the purchase of a *hetarai* for a later symposion would include a ‘head of the household’ making the purchase, so any reading that hinges upon *hetarai*, rather than a more broad ‘prostitution’ interaction is a less frequent interpretive possibility.<sup>109</sup>

When one further examines the data, in looking at the rates of all the various combinations of Youth→Woman, Man→Woman, and Youth→Youth, etc., one sees a trend of higher occurrence when the social, and possible economic, status of an actor is higher than that of his recipient.<sup>110</sup> This would explain why there are zero depictions of Youth→Man, and only one vase with Woman→Man (he is also wearing armor). This suggests that status is of high importance in depicting who holds the means of exchange. Interactions of Youth→Youth are difficult to place in the literature, as neither sexual interactions nor economic exchange between youths is a focus when interpreting the motif. Youth→Youth is generally open to any of the interpretations provided besides those that contain sexual content. This could include gift-giving, or economic purchase, or even perhaps an indication of status. One could say that the youths as recipients could involve prostitution or entertainment, but even scholars engaged in the study of pederastic relationships in Greece are wary of these claims (for both Youth→Youth and Man→Youth).<sup>111</sup> Gender interaction alone is difficult to determine specific meaning without further data for comparison. How does one know what vases these particular

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<sup>108</sup> Keuls 1993, 260.

<sup>109</sup> For the *hetarai* see, Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21; Williams 1993. Sutton (1981, 276-369) takes on a more broad prostitution interpretation, although does not ‘drop’ the *hetarai* reading. There is also some difficulty in earlier scholarship, as *hetarai* was sometimes used to indicate more broad prostitution practices.

<sup>110</sup> Determination of status was also attempted in addressing the various dress worn by actors/recipients in the purse scenes, but due to overwhelming homogeneity in dress, there was little evidence of social difference. See Von Reden, S. 2003a, 196-202, for a discussion of social difference in dress and its lack of social difference in the purse scene, especially regarding the identification of prostitutes.

<sup>111</sup> Lear and Cantarella 2008, 80.

images were found on? Whereas a pelike could be used during a symposion or in exchange, a cup would almost always be used in a social setting.

Table 11 breaks down gender interaction by shape. Although the number of vases with gender interactions is vastly decreased from the overall population of 155, the high proportions of pelikai and cups in the full data set remains. On cups, Youth→Woman makes up 43.75% of the gender interactions, perhaps giving some merit to potential readings about the purse as an object centered around youths engaging in sexual rites of passage, or the readings of the purse as an object signifying a much more general scene, an economic exchange of goods.<sup>112</sup> When combined with Man→Woman on the cup, the total Male→Woman frequency comes to 59.38%. This strongly suggests a tendency to favor opposite gender interactions on the cup, and can strengthen sympotic readings of the scene if assume a male user. The cup does associate itself with drinking, but can also serve a purpose in offerings or grave goods, especially as these aspects are dependent on particular customs and geographic location of the user.<sup>113</sup> On the cup, the interaction of Youth→Youth comes in second, at 21.88%. Here any readings about prostitution or sympotic behavior become difficult based on previous scholarship, and especially with the lack of sexual purchasing at symposion occurring between youths.<sup>114</sup>

Not contained within any category of actor and recipient are those images with hanging purses in the background. Table 12 shows us that the hanging purses contain near equal ‘interactions’ of all the various sexes in the relatively small sample. Hanging or ‘floating’ objects can take on a variety of meanings, from floating objects intended

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> See Bndrick (2015) for a discussion on the varying use of the eye-cup in different sites.

<sup>114</sup> For prostitution see, Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21; Sutton 1981, 276-369; Williams 1993. For non-sexual exchange see Lewis 2003b, 110-111.

only for the viewer (rather than those in the image) to read, or simply an object hanging in the background on the wall of a home.<sup>115</sup> Floating can also be interpreted as an intentional signifier of status for certain individuals within the image. Hanging purses are particularly difficult for any singular reading. Whereas actors or recipients and the frequency of their various genders can have weight when discussed in terms of previous scholarship, the hanging purse is even more vague as to who or what it is representing. The hanging purse favors the most general kind of interpretation, and requires the most from knowledge of specific viewership found in Bundrick's research.<sup>116</sup>

One must also consider lone actors as a separate category; this includes only male actors, with 12 of the 17 being youths (Table 13). Lone actors break strongly from previous interpretations of the purse motif, as the motif has virtually always been considered in terms of an interaction, and make up nearly 20% of all representations with actors. Lone actors can only inform us about the actor, and make any interpretation that contains interaction as a crux for meaning difficult if not impossible. Any interpretation of gift-giving or exchange is necessarily left to the viewer deciding what, if anything, is happening outside of the frame. Economic exchange can be easily read in certain instances, such as when one looks at a cup interior, or *tondo*, found in Figure 6. Here the youth is bending down to what can be easily assumed is someone selling wares. This image has the possibility to take on the broadest of Lewis's suggestion of the purse as representing exchange in a marketplace.<sup>117</sup> There is also the possibility of the purse as indicating an individual's social status or prosperity through displayed wealth.

Bundrick's reading of the image of the purse as necessarily fitting into a variety of roles

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<sup>115</sup> See for example, Mitchell 2009, 168, where visual humor is used in relation to the 'hanging object.'

<sup>116</sup> Bundrick 2015, 334.

<sup>117</sup> Lewis 2003b, 93-95.

would also fit the lone purse holder, allowing individual viewers to make their own interpretations, yet this perspective does not give much information as to what these various interpretations might actually be in the case of the lone actor.<sup>118</sup> If one takes the purse as a multivalent signifier, with a myriad of potential meanings or ‘signifieds,’ such as transaction, gift, or status, then a more detailed examination of the actors and recipients is necessary in order to move closer to determining these various potential meanings.

### GESTURE

If one sees there is a majority of male actors and women recipients, does this necessarily imply they are engaged in a scene of exchange? What if the man is holding his purse inward, not even making the most standard of gestures, an outward motion of offering or exchange with the purse, such as that seen in Figure 8? Here the man in the center holds the purse inward, making the interpretation of an exchange much more difficult. In order to approach this problem of interpretation, gestures must be categorized according to those that actively hold the purse outward in an obvious act of exchange, and those that are not active and instead hold the purse against their body.

Table 14 shows the overall frequency of certain actor gesture types within the total number of vases with actors where gesture can be discerned. It can be difficult to discern the meaning of a gesture when so many gestures appear on the vases. In order to simplify and provide a broader meaning gestures A1, A4, and A8 will be examined; these gestures all feature the actor outwardly handing the purse to the recipient, and make up

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<sup>118</sup> Bundrick 2012, 19-20.

76.6% of vases with readable actor gestures. An example of gesture A1, the gesture with the greatest rate of occurrence, can be found on a pelike attributed to Hephaistos (Figure 7). Here a youth offers his hand out to a seated woman with a lyre. The lyre suggests a reading of the *hetarai*, where the instrument would be played in order to entertain, along with conversation and/or sex. Yet this reading also runs into difficulties with youths not typically purchasing *hetarai* for symposion. Other actor gestures, A2-3 and A5-7, do not likely indicate an offer of exchange, as there is little to indicate if the purse is not held out, or perhaps the purse simply signifies the wealth and status of the purse holder. This type of scene can be seen on a cup attributed to Splanchnopt Painter (Figure 8), where a man is holding a purse inward while interacting with a woman in a wide continuing scene with multiple interactions between other couples. It is important to note that one of these other interactions is with a purse, but with a purse suspended in the air between a youth and woman on the left. Thus there is a strong tendency for the actors to be actively engaged in some kind of trade. This has obvious implications for the potential interpretations available in purse scholarship. The interpretations based upon various kinds of sexual relations in the purse motif, whether a man and a *hetarai* or a young man and a potential sexual partner, can be active in these instances.<sup>119</sup> Cases of the purse withheld by the actor do not remove exchange from the motifs reading, merely add others such as the signification of wealth or making the reading of exchange much more ambiguous and fluid for potential viewers.

The interpretation of recipient gesture is not so clear-cut, as the lack of a purse to determine the intent or meaning of an individual's action is no longer available to guide

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<sup>119</sup> For pederasty see Lear and Cantarella 2008, 78-80. For the *hetarai* see, Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21; Sutton 1981, 276-369; Williams 1993.

meaning. In A. Boegehold's *When a Gesture was Expected* there is an analysis of these types of scenes, particularly a cup with two simultaneous acts of exchange (Figure 1).<sup>120</sup> In this example Boegehold points out the particular importance not of the outward gesture of the men, but the hands of the women. Boegehold notes how women often have hands held upwards, as if in a conversation, or making some kind of deal.<sup>121</sup> Boegehold and others have created a kind of corpus of gestures for the interpretation of Greek imagery, and it should be noted that gesture, just as in modern interchange, was important in determining meaning and intent of various individuals within a seemingly mundane scene.<sup>122</sup> This type of gestural analysis is precisely what was used in the structural analyses of Sourvinou-Inwood in order to determine the meaning of, for example, different individuals holding swords or spears.

Returning to the Makron example (Figure 1), one can especially see the conversational hands Boegehold mentions with the interaction on the right half of the scene; the woman looks as though she is engaging in a conversation, although with nothing to offer except, perhaps, her own body. In many of the interactions that imply an economic exchange of goods, both individuals are represented holding an object; the actor holds a purse of money, and the recipient a potential good for sale. This distinction between the sale of goods and a negotiation for other services can be seen most clearly on a different scene, found on a pelike attributed to the Altamura Painter (Figure 13).<sup>123</sup> On this vase a woman has sent a servant to get an alabastron of oil from the perfume seller. Side A is clearly interpreted as a scene of exchange where the seated woman is selling

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<sup>120</sup> Boegehold 1999, 32-33.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> For gesture see Boegehold 1999, McNiven 1982.

<sup>123</sup> Osborne 2011, 134-135.

perfumed oil. The alabastron of oil is offered and the pelike, filled with perfumed oil to sell, suggests the merchant's space. Side B is more ambiguous, as it is not understood if the alabastron is being brought back to the woman who requested it or if there is a command being issued to fetch the oil. Regardless, side B is one of issuing a command or some kind of conversation around the alabastron. This distinction, of conversation or negotiation (side B) versus sale of goods (side A), will be carried directly into the interpretation of purse scenes.

An example of sale of goods in a purse scene can be found on a different cup attributed to Makron (Figure 10), where multiple interactions of Youth → Woman happen simultaneously. What is important about these women is their holding of wreaths in their hands, which, according to S. Lewis, would signify an object to be sold on the market.<sup>124</sup> There is also the passive gesture category, where there is little to no reaction to the purse or actor. This can be seen on a skyphos attributed to the Penthesilea Painter (Figure 11), here a man offers a purse and a woman stands, with no arms held out, and little interaction at all. She is in a more passive role, and makes any reading of exchange difficult. The purse here may be more indicative of an individual's status, or of a scene between a passive wife (*gynē*) and her husband.

Table 16 breaks down recipient gestures into three types: object for potential sale, active conversation, and a more passive lack of gesture. Table 16 displays the frequency of all gestures for recipients found on purse images that contain readily identifiable recipients. Those with active hands, where exchange is occurring without an identifiable object for potential sale, are listed as RH, RI, RJ, RF, and RG.<sup>125</sup> RF and RG are

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<sup>124</sup> Lewis 2003b, 110.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

potentially ambiguous, as one cannot discern if the women are being paid to play their instrument, but this would fit some prostitution readings like other ‘active’ gesture recipients that hold no objects. Women paid as entertainers often played music at symposion, and this could often include prostitution as well. There are examples of women identified as instrument players on erotic pottery in Greek vase painting, such as Figure 14 where a female companion is seen holding her flutes.<sup>126</sup> Thus the instrument players are included in the list of recipients that are active without a physical object to sell.<sup>127</sup> The potentially ‘active’ recipients with no objects make up about 43% of total recipients. The exchanges with recipients that hold objects are listed as RC, RD, and RE. These object-holding recipients make up slightly less than 15% of all recipients. And so the remaining RA, and RB passive roles make up the remaining 43%. This means that while actors, especially male actors, may be holding out their hands, the recipients, largely women and youths, are almost equally likely to be engaged in conversational gestures as they are to being in completely passive disengaged positions. The reading of passivity in women’s reactions can be interpreted as instances of the proper wife (*gyne*), as Keuls has argued in *Reign of the Phallus*.<sup>128</sup> Yet recipients are also often youths, and if there is a passive youth recipient one could read this as a vague reaction to perhaps pederasty, gift giving, or another form of exchange. The 15% object-holding recipients do fit quite well into Lewis’s interpretation about the selling of objects, especially if one is viewing the sales of typically feminine objects (such as wreaths).<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Cole 2013, 126-29.

<sup>127</sup> Lewis 2003b, 110.

<sup>128</sup> Keuls 1993, 260.

<sup>129</sup> Lewis 2003b, 109. Determining the setting of a scene was attempted in order to further distinguish between market space and private space. But problems with lack of identifying features for either setting became too much of a problem, and merely resulted in 69 vases being determined as definitely indoors, and 9 definitely outdoors.

In conclusion, it is the gestures that do give a tendency, at least overall, towards a meaning that contains an active actor with the purse, even if the recipient isn't actively engaged. It is clear that many of the vases do contain images of exchange, either of the body or of goods for sale.<sup>130</sup> Keul's approach of the husband handing the purse of money to his wife (*gyne*) could be suggested if there was an active actor interacting with a passive female.<sup>131</sup> The passive gesture of the recipient would be expected in this kind of relationship. Status can be easily read in these images of passive recipients, or when actors are not-outwardly holding the purse, suggesting the purse can take on meanings beyond mere exchange, in 43% of its depictions. Yet some questions remain unanswered, such as what is actually contained within the purse. Signification of trade for sex or otherwise, especially between males and women, or men and youths, could just as easily be an indication of gift giving.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, given the myriad interpretations, and the varied images, the purse can be a signifier of exchange or transaction, but not only and not always so.

### CONCLUSION

The gesture field for the purse makes it difficult to determine the meaning of the purse, but it is this difficulty of determining meaning that should be directly tied to how the purse is understood within vase-painting scenes. When looking back at Sourvinou-Inwoods analysis of the sword-bearer versus the spear-holder in pursuit scenes, there was a discernable pattern in how spear-holders and sword-holders would hold their weapons

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<sup>130</sup>Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21; Sutton 1981, 276-369; Williams 1993.

<sup>131</sup>Keuls 1993, 255-260.

<sup>132</sup> Ferrari 2002 15-16; Ferrari 1986.

and the meaning or intent of their action.<sup>133</sup> In the case of the purse as a signifier, we have seen that there is no similar consistency in the visual syntax of its imagery. The data from the Beazley Archive sample do show that the purse motif is concentrated in the period 500-450 and is favored by certain workshops. The motif is found primarily on cups and on some pelikai, and is actively avoided on other shapes like the krater. The majority of vases with purse scenes were found in Etruscan sites, with a notable few found in Attica. Within the purse scenes, the majority of recipients were female, followed by youths with very few men. Males are virtually always the actors, and the actor field favors youths. Interactions between genders were mostly youths paired with women or men paired with women. The most frequent male interaction was between youths and youths. The gestures for actors indicate a trend towards outward gestures handing off or proffering the purse, with some withholding, and recipient gestures are split between those that could indicate exchange, and those that are completely passive.

No singular interpretation arises out of the motif. The purse does feed into the broadest possible interpretation of ‘exchange,’ where gift-giving and monetary exchange are combined. This interpretation does follow the consistent application of exchange, in one form or another, found amongst previous scholarship. Yet, the purse can include other possibilities, especially as a signifier of social status, particularly when one considers: the consistent display of actors with the purse as socially dominant over their recipient counterparts, lone actors who have no recipient but merely hold a purse, and ‘floating’ purses whose meaning is of even greater indeterminacy (and are even seen on lone actor scenes). To summarize, there is little consistent correlation of the purse-sign and a specific meaning. This does not mean the purse contains no meaning when

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<sup>133</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 41-46.

interpreting a vase, merely that the purse can take on a variety of meanings determinant, according to the data, on aspects that lie beyond the image itself.

Returning to the purse scene on the Harrow Painter's hydria that was been a frequent example in the literature (Figure 9), one sees among the possible interpretations: a man purchasing a *hetarai* (Rodenwaldt), youths in line buying the 'services' of the prostitute along with the man (Sutton's 'rite of passage'), a man bringing money to his wife (Keuls), an exchange of goods for money (Lewis), or a small gift being given (Ferrari).<sup>134</sup> Yet, when one looks at the data, this configuration of the purse motif within a scene presents only one aspect of how purses are represented across the corpus of vases. The motif here is on a shape (hydria) that is not a pelike or a cup, and so must be considered unusual. Further, the interaction of Man→Woman would only occur on about 25% of vases, so should it mean the same if the youth behind him were to hold the purse? Finally, only a small minority of women recipients hold objects (14.29%). Thus, this vase is atypical among purse representations, raising questions about its paradigmatic status in the literature. Since this object has a provenance record, it offers a further nuance in that it was found in a tomb in Vulci in Etruria. As Bndrick points out, there was no coinage being minted in Vulci when this vase would have been in use, and so it is highly unlikely that an interpretation of exchange of goods/services for coins would have been placed on the purse-motif by its final users/viewers.<sup>135</sup> Bndrick instead focuses on the image as one of reciprocity, perhaps of the gift-giving of knucklebones, objects often found in Etrurian gravesites.<sup>136</sup> Interpreting a motif with a specific and singular meaning,

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<sup>134</sup> Ferrari 2002, 15-16, Ferrari 1986; Bndrick 2012; Rodenwaldt 1932, 7-21; Sutton 1981, 276-369; Williams 1993; Lewis 2003b; Keuls 1993, 260.

<sup>135</sup> Bndrick 2012, 17-18.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

as noted in the earlier hypotheses, especially on a medium intended for mass consumption across a wide area, does not hold up when you engage in studying a single object, or a very small group of objects.

Interpreting the motif of the purse requires consideration of all the variables found in the data sample. The period field indicates the concentration of the purse motif production in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when the overall production of vases was at its peak, and the market was becoming much more specialized in its production of particular shapes.<sup>137</sup> This shift into a larger, more driven form of market production is reinforced when examining the large amount of purse motifs that were discovered in non-Attic sites, especially Etruria.<sup>138</sup> One cannot ignore that the motif was also found in Athens, and so cannot discredit the interpretations that focused upon Greek cultural practices involving the purse as possible interpretations. The combination of purse scenes arriving in different cultural areas informs us of a certain market ambiguity suggested in Bundrick's research on the Harrow Painter's long-discussed depiction of a purse scene and in the eye-cup study discussed earlier.<sup>139</sup> Bundrick states, "For the Etruscan viewer, the bearded man's purse might have held not money but dice or other gaming implements commonly found in tombs and sanctuaries..."<sup>140</sup> While Bundrick's interpretation of the Harrow Painter scene is probable for a potential viewer in Vulci, interpretations about coinage and economic exchange in Athens or other places cannot be entirely thrown out for the entire purse motif.

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<sup>137</sup> Saperstein 2013. For the subject of market production see Lewis 1997, Osborne 2001, and Lynch 2009.

<sup>138</sup> Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata 2012, 28-31.

<sup>139</sup> Bundrick 2012, 3-7; Bundrick 2015, 295-341.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

The tighter perspective of individual artist trends also points out the importance of market forces, with the shift from the Penthesilea Group's keen focus and reproduction of the purse scene on cups to the decreased interest in the motif for the succeeding Polygnotos Group. Just as is found in depictions of the Greek symposion, depictions and motifs transformed with the changes in cultural taste and changes in the surrounding socio-political climate.<sup>141</sup> Again, this indicates the complex social and political environment found in early classical Athens. One can imagine various painters and potters, with the help of various 'middle men,' attempting to create images that would appeal to a wide variety of consumers, whether Athenian, Greeks outside of Attica, or foreigners. Scenes had to be multivalent enough to be read and understood in a variety of contexts so as to appeal to the broadest market possible.

The popularity of the cup shape follows the same pattern of outside market forces, as the cup was a very popular shape both inside and outside of Greece.<sup>142</sup> Here the cup shape for the purse motif might not necessarily indicate a reading of the purse as related to symposion. That is not to say the symposion reading would not have occurred; it would be a very easy connection for a viewer in Athens, especially in regards to the high rate of interactions between men and *hetairai* at the symposion. The way in which gendered interactions and gestures are seen within the data could also be interpreted as the result of the multivalent approach vase-producers would have adopted during the Classical period. The choices artists made, found in the more popular interactions of males and women and between men and youths as indicated in the data, may have been the 'type' that held on to broader audiences. These particular interactions would allow for

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 19; Lynch 2007, 246-248.

<sup>142</sup> Giudice, Scicolone, and Tata 2012, 28-31.

greater transitional ease of meaning-making amongst people of different cultures, social statuses, genders, etc.<sup>143</sup>

In returning to the Makron example used to introduce the purse motif (Figure 1), one is left to decide the fate of the woman's identity, and reflexively, the fate of the actor's identity. The Makron cup is only one example, and any example of the purse should be treated on an individual basis. The purse motif, as an indeterminate motif, cannot provide an instant textual reading that one can apply to the whole of its representations. The modern viewer should rely more heavily on the specific ways in which a single vase can be read, while still considering the broad set of circumstances the purse can apply to an image, exchange or status. The purse is a weak narrative and so relies more heavily on aspects of interpretation that lie outside of the frame of the image. From the results found in the data, because of the weak narrative of this 'genre' scene, and even given the difficulty in properly identifying the object itself, the purse is found to be an indeterminate object lacking in concrete conclusions, and can only be considered (in the broadest sense) as an indicator of status or as representing a scene of exchange.

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<sup>143</sup> For Athenians, Bundrick (2012, 20) lists this as, "(male/female, native/metic, aristocratic/democratic)".

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