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The Baker dancer and other Hellenistic statuettes of dancers. Illustrating the use of imagery in the study of dance in the ancient Greek world

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Citation

Naerebout, F. G. (2002). The Baker dancer and other Hellenistic statuettes of dancers. Illustrating the use of imagery in the study of dance in the ancient Greek world. *Imago Musicae*.

International Yearbook Of Musical Iconography, 18/19, 39-63.

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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**The Baker dancer
and other Hellenistic statuettes of dancers**

**Illustrating the use of imagery in the study of dance
in the ancient Greek world***

Frederick G. Naerebout

The ancient Greek world displayed a remarkable level of saltatory enthusiasm. A large corpus of written evidence and of images in several media mentions or depicts individual dancers, dances and events at which dance was apparently deemed appropriate or indispensable. Consequently, dance, together with the other performative arts with which it was combined in multimedial events, should be given its due in scholarly accounts of the society that gave rise to these documents. This is at present hardly the case: Greek dance has been much studied, but only rarely as an integral part of life in the ancient world. This tells us something about the ways in which twentieth-century Western society, or at least some of its intellectuals, regard the dance. But there is also the intractability of the sources themselves. Their interpretation involves one in many difficult problems. A phenomenon as evanescent as the dance tends to slip through one's fingers, as the non-verbal is by its very nature resistant to easy verbal analysis. *Unwritten* sources can obviously be helpful in analyzing the non-verbal, but bring their own difficulties.

In this article I want to explore some of those difficulties by looking in some detail at one particular series of dance imagery, the so-called mantle dancers (muffled dancers, *Manteltänzer*, *verhüllte Tänzerinnen*, *danseuses en manteau*, or, less accurately, *danseuses voilées*, *danzatrici velate*) in Hellenistic *Kleinkunst*. A mantle dancer is here understood as a portrayal of a female dancer wearing a *chiton* and over that a *himation* covering part of the body and usually the head, one or both arms and hands, and sometimes part of the face. *Himation* is usually translated as mantle or cloak, but shawl or wrap comes closer to what it is: a large shawl, like the Kashmir shawl and its locally-produced imitations in fashion from the last quarter of the eighteenth century onwards.¹

Indeed, the difficulties start before we have even got a series of mantle dancers. What images can go into this series? Hardly any image has come down to us labelled, so we have to decide what images we will call dance imagery. In order to establish some dance iconography we have on the one hand to formulate some definition of dance, and on the other hand carry through a thorough analysis of the system of the imagery as a whole, and of the artistic conventions which govern it. To single out a core of dance imagery is all about

* I want to acknowledge the help I received from Alice van Harten, Cambridge, who was instrumental in bringing together some of the sources and literature used in writing this article. I also thank Marjaana Vesterinen, Helsinki, who graciously sent me her manuscript list of dance terracottas.

1 On the *himation* and the ways in which it was worn: Higgins 1954-59: vol. 1, 13. Kashmirs: Jong, van Eijkern-Balkenstein and Mensinga 1986, with a good bibliography on shawls. But we will stick to the time-honoured designation of "mantle dancers". "Veiled" is less accurate, because not all dancers wearing a *himation* have their face veiled. Other designations such as "draped dancers", *danseuses drapées* and German compounds with *Gewand*-cover all images of dancers dressed in long clinging or swaying dresses, also those without the *himation*, or mantle, that gives the mantle dancer her name.

putting together several series of closely related material, and looking at the "niche" which those series occupy within the imagery of a certain time and place. Single unrelated artefacts have little or nothing to contribute. I am not going to discuss here the way in which I have selected the material for this article: about the general principles I have spoken at length elsewhere.²

This is not, however, to suggest that the establishment of different series of dance iconography in Hellenistic *Kleinkunst* is something that is easily done. Although we can build on many previous attempts at serialization, some material which has in the past been classified as dance is certainly not (for instance Niobids, Amazons, and other instances of running or flying females; or musicians, kanephores or other figures carrying something who have lost their burden and now seem to lift their arms in some dance movement). Also, there will always remain room for doubt in dealing with those images which do not show dress or paraphernalia peculiar to the dance, as is the case with our mantle dancers. I have looked for big strides, lifted legs, kicks, torsion of the body, "unnatural" positions of head and arms, swaying dress. But of course where big strides and strong torsion end and small strides and unexceptional *contrapposto* begin will always remain an arbitrary decision. Obviously, some of the images which I have not included may after all be dancers. Indeed, a cloaked woman serenely standing or even sitting could very well be a dancer, but there is no way to tell.³

Another problem which I cannot discuss here is the need to weed out the large number of falsifications amongst the unprovenanced terracottas, many of which go as yet undetected. This state of affairs of course strengthens my plea for working with series as opposed to unrelated artefacts, but that does not solve all problems created by the "contamination" of many terracotta collections. Without TL-tests, there can be no certainty about the authenticity of every single example which I have used to build up my argument.⁴

Although the mantle dancers, and many of their colleagues, have been studied for over a century, there is no up-to-date comprehensive account. As Daniel Graepler has recently put it: "[es] gibt [...] keine systematische Untersuchung zu hellenistischen Tänzerinnenfiguren" (Graepler 1994: 53). By this Graepler did not mean a purely art historical survey. Although for *Kleinkunst* in general we see in the twentieth century a growing concern with stylistic history, as opposed to the nineteenth-century involvement with questions of function and meaning, in the study of the mantle dancers but few archaeologists have contented themselves with the establishment of some typology.⁵ Most of them have attempted to explain what we see in terms of evidence exterior to the imagery itself. But they usually went about their task by what I have elsewhere dubbed the scrap-yard approach, casting about for bits of "evidence" regardless of time, place, or context, and not by any truly systematic analysis of

2 See Naerebout 1997: 209–53, partly summarized in Naerebout 1995. Naerebout 1997: 114–45 provides an extensive bibliography of ancient Greek dance to which I will not refer again below.

3 Graindor 1939: 113, no. 40 describes a sitting dancer from Egypt, but he has both paraphernalia and distinctive dress to help him out.

4 See Kriseleit 1994, on the Berlin collection, where as much as twenty percent were by TL-testing shown to be modern forgeries. Higgins 1986 and Peege 1997 are also illuminating.

5 Studniczka 1907: 26–38 is an interesting account, which has almost completely dropped out of the mantle dancers' bibliography, of a purely art historical nature: he seeks to derive the mantle dancers from a fourth-century prototype, which according to Studniczka is to be identified with the enigmatic Sosandra mentioned twice by Lucian (*Imagines* 4.6, *Dialogi meretricii* 3.2; translated in Pollitt 1990: 47) and created by the sculptor Kalamis (Studniczka 1907: 27, 37 presupposes, as do others, a younger homonym). These assertions are incapable of proof, but Studniczka makes some interesting observations on the way.

the iconography and its original context.⁶ I too want to concentrate on the relationship between the imagery and the society which produced it, but I hope to do this in a fairly systematic way, or at least indicate how one might go about this.

The type of the so-called mantle dancer is to be found in several different media, but most examples are small scale sculpture reproduced or mass-produced in terracotta. Indeed, in Hellenistic times miniature sculpture seems to have been the main outlet for dance iconography, and from the late fourth, early third century B.C. onwards, the leading genre of miniature sculpture in the Greek world is the terracotta statuette. Bronze statuettes similar to terracotta figurines in subject and treatment are virtually absent, at least in our record. Still, I want to take a well-known exception to this rule, the so-called Baker dancer, as my point of departure (*fig. 1*). The quality of this statuette, which fits in with the terracotta series, is uncontested and it has drawn much attention ever since it was first published in 1950.

The Baker dancer, so named after a previous owner, Walter Cummings Baker, and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York (inv. 1972.118.95), is possibly Alexandrian work, and possibly to be dated, on artistic criteria (drapery, proportions), to the late third century B.C.⁷ It is a hollow cast bronze, 20.7 cm in height, in excellent condition, probably with its original patina.⁸ Everybody writing about this object has obviously been captivated by its extraordinary charm, to which I can testify from my own observation. It even seems to have turned some commentators' heads. Recently the Baker dancer was to be seen in Paris as part of the exhibition "La gloire d'Alexandrie". In a newspaper review of this exhibition, the statuette, singled out as one of the highlights and illustrated, was described as "mysterious" in a passage which can count as an undiluted example of orientalism. From decadent Alexandria we have a draped and veiled woman, whose body is actually accentuated by her dress in a most alluring, not to say seductive way. The dance of the seven veils transposed to third-century B.C. Alexandria. We certainly can allow a journalist some licence. The catalogue of the exhibition, however, also speaks of "une artiste accomplie, une virtuose propre à séduire les Alexandrins et leurs rois".⁹ When we are back with both feet on the ground, we realize that we do not know who this dancer is, and whether she could, when seen within the context of her own time and place, be called a virtuoso, mysterious and seductive.

Before looking into some of the interpretations of the Baker dancer and comparable statuettes, let us first establish the contours of the series of which these form part. The account

- 6 Scrap-yard: Naerebout 1996. But things seem to be changing: Graepler 1994 is certainly systematic and careful, and so is, up to a point, Nicholls 1995: 450–2.
- 7 Thompson 1950 discusses the supposedly Egyptian features of the Baker dancer. But it worries me that mantle dancers are all but absent amongst Egyptian terracottas (while cloaked and/or veiled women are quite common). Thompson 1950 dates the Baker dancer to 225–175 B.C., with many arguments; True 1988 extends this to between 250 and 175 B.C., Pollitt 1986: 270 would rather put it at a later date, around 150 B.C. Cf. on dating of Hellenistic art in general the cautionary discussion in Pollitt 1986: 265–71, and 127 on Hellenistic "rococo" in particular. The treatment of drapery by artists shows quite some development, and is a relatively reliable criterion for dating. But styles were continuously revived, and there is always the possibility of overlap or contemporaneity. See also Morizot 1974.
- 8 All technical detail with an attempt at interpreting the statuette (much dependent on Thompson 1950) can be found in True 1988: 102–5. Boussac 1998: 265, the most recent publication of the Baker dancer, has nothing to add, nor has the essay in the same catalogue by de Polignac, where the Baker dancer is only mentioned in passing.
- 9 P. Steinz in *NRC Handelsblad* of June 12 1998, CS1: "een bronzen beeldje van een geheimzinnige danseres, die ondanks een baaiert van sluiers optimaal haar rondingen toont." Cf. Langlotz 1963: 96 about an originally religious *Schleiertanz* put to profane, titillating purposes, "wie heute noch im Orient". The Dutch *sluier* and the German *Schleier*, both meaning veil, are highly charged words. The French quote is taken from Boussac 1998: 265, cf. Thompson 1950: 385, "a riddle wrapped in an enigma [...] the lady who danced so alluringly to tantalize the citizens of Alexandria [...] such ladies, indeed, drew more than little boys to their destruction." I refrain from elaborating about the orientalist background, but for the potency of some of this, see several articles dealing with dance in Bernstein and Studlar 1997. Cf. note 22 below, and also Simon as quoted in note 19 below.



1. Baker dancer, front view. Bronze statuette. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1972.188.95. Photo: Author.

below is a rapid sketch of these contours. It is not intended to be exhaustive, and can in no way be called a catalogue. A proper catalogue of Greek dance iconography, that is a catalogue based on autopsy and a thorough study of every object included, and fully illustrated (preferably with the three-dimensional objects of some importance photographed from several angles), is a desideratum.¹⁰ Examples of statuettes of mantle dancers have been found, and have been

10 Queyrel 1988 is a model of editing. As to mantle dancers, the first, and excellent, attempt at putting together an overview of the whole series (taking in its stride much that does not belong) is Heydemann 1879, who covers all media. If we limit ourselves to terracottas, the most comprehensive is still Winter 1903: 145–54. Much is also in the footnotes of Thompson 1963: 102–5. Not everything is repeated here.



2. Baker dancer, side view. Bronze statuette. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1972.188.95. Photo: Author.

produced, all over the Greek-speaking world. About the spot where found we can only be certain in the case of well-documented examples from controlled excavations. Many terracottas, however, come from the legal or illegal antiquities trade and are unprovenanced or unreliably provenanced. However, the production centre of many terracottas can be established from an examination of the clay. This does not necessarily mean that the imagery itself was designed at that production centre, because it can have been reproduced or reinterpreted from a model coming from elsewhere, or archetypes or moulds may have been imported.¹¹ And of course

¹¹ Example: Leiden KG9 (Leyenaar-Plaisier 1979: no. 66) made of Boeotian clay, but most probably from Attic moulds.

concepts can travel as well as physical objects. Where a particular imagery originated or underwent some major adaptation can only be established by a careful relative dating of preserved examples, on the basis of stylistic analysis and of exterior evidence. But here we get onto very marshy ground: dating terracottas, whether relatively or absolutely, has proved a difficult thing.¹² In the overview below I have based myself mostly on recent publications from which I unquestioningly reproduce dating, make and provenance. Insufficiently documented items, however interesting stylistically, have largely been left out of account. All dates are B.C.

1. Attica.

Athens is generally supposed to be place of origin of the imagery of the mantle dancer, and the place where this imagery was first adapted for small-scale statuary (see Kleiner 1942, Neutsch 1953, Thompson 1966). Certainly the muffled figure was already present in other media. Precursors of our dancers can for instance easily be seen, and have often been seen, in the muffled women on a red-figure column crater by the Eupolis Painter, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, ca. 450–440 (ARV² 1074.1). The earliest examples in terracotta are instances of what Nicholls 1995, taking his cue from Trumpf-Lyritzaki 1969, has dubbed the "Rich Style", from the late fifth century to about 375. Agora T4147 is an archetype (not a mould, as stated in Grandjouan, Markson and Rotroff 1989: 4) of a draped dancer, dated around 400 (Nicholls 1995: no. 3; possibly it is a figure like Kerameikos T41, early fourth-century, Viemeisel-Schloerb 1997: no. 142, pl. 27, 2 and 5, rather different from the usual mantle dancer: T41 is holding one *krotalon* and standing next to altar). Determined as early mantle dancers are Agora T4140: a fragment of a plinth with a foot (Nicholls 1995: no. 55, pl. 110, and Agora T4139), a fragment of a left arm (Nicholls 1995: no. 56, pl. 110; no. 55 might be doubted as the preserved foot is bare while mantle dancers are usually shown as wearing shoes). Only a few pieces from elsewhere have been dated as early as the late fifth or early fourth century: from Boeotia (see below) and from Olynthos (34.212, Robinson 1952: no. 225). But even though the imagery may have originated in Athens, Attica does not provide many examples of mantle dancers: the best known is certainly Paris, Louvre D4 (CA462), the so-called "danseuse Titeux", Attic work, said to have been found on the Akropolis, dated to the third quarter of the fourth century (Besques 1971–72: pl. 1f; Schneider-Lengyel 1936: pl. 54). St. Petersburg, Ermitage A.1875.428, from Kerch, early fourth-century, might be Attic too (Boriskovskaya and Chodza 1976: no. 100). Two fragments in Leiden, RO.I.D.2 and 4, are supposed to be mid-fourth-century mantle dancers of Attic make (Leyenaar-Plaisier 1979: nos. 27–8). Thompson 1957: nos. 7–9 are small fragments of mantle dancers, no. 8 of a mould, all from Group B (a house cistern), and to be dated from the late fourth to the late third century. A few more tiny fragments from the Agora might be draped dancers. Athens, Kerameikos Museum T533a is an impression of the relief of a clay or metal vase, a loose find, dated to the mid-fourth century (Viemeisel-Schloerb 1997: no. 636, pl. 111, 6 and 7), and Kerameikos T147 is a fragment of an Attic mantle dancer, another loose find from the Kerameikos, dated to the end of the second quarter of the second century (Viemeisel-Schloerb 1997: no. 353, pl. 63, 4). Amongst the relief moulds from the Agora there are maenads and probably so-called kalathiskos dancers of the late fourth to, at the latest, the mid-second century. But the editors of this material explicitly note the notable absence of any "muffled dancers or dancing nymphs" (Grandjouan, Markson and Rotroff 1989: 18). But the muffled figure occurs frequently in Attic art in different media: see Feibel 1935, Fuchs 1959, Fuchs 1962 and Ridgway 1977; True 1988: 105, fig. 14a adds an intriguing third-century marble stele with a mantle dancer in a private collection in Stockholm.

2. Boeotia.

Boeotia has provided many examples of mantle dancer statuettes, from several different sites: some have been dated to the first half of the fourth century, or even to the end of the fifth century or early fourth century: Copenhagen, NM 8567 (Breitenstein 1941: nr. 301); Frankfurt a.M., Liebieghaus Museum 496 and 103 (Bol and Kotera 1986: nos. 57–8); Paris, Louvre C53 (MNC 231) (Mollard-Besques 1954: pl. 14;

12 About the difficulties surrounding the dating of terracottas, see Higgins 1967: 95, and Dunand 1990: 9–13. The relative chronology on stylistic criteria of Kleiner 1942 still stands, but not uncontested, and absolute dates put on the material are shifting, e.g. it is now uncertain how firm the *terminus ante quem* of the destruction of Olynthos in 438 B.C. actually is. Olynthos may have been inhabited down to 416, when people moved to the newly founded Kassandrea (see Nicholls 1995: 471–2, notes). And see note 7 above.

Schneider-Herrmann 1969: fig. 6). Most are ascribed to around mid-fourth century: ex The Hague, Gemeentemuseum (recently transferred to Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum) OC(ant) 6-39 (Leyenaar-Plaisier 1986: no. 27); Athens, Kerameikos Museum T146, fragment, loose find Kerameikos, probably Boeotian (Viemeisel-Schloerb 1997: no. 352, pl. 63, 2.3); Berlin 30.219.27 (Rohde 1968: pl. 29a; Vienna, Antikenkabinett 184 is identical); Berlin TC 6855, from Thebes (Rohde 1968: pl. 29b; Köster 1926: pl. 21); Berlin TC 6856 (Charbonneau 1936: pl. 39; Köster 1926: pl. 20); Boston 01.7923 and 01.7924 (Galt 1931: 376, fig. 3); Frankfurt a.M., Liebieghaus Museum 472 (Bol and Kotera 1986: no. 59); Karlsruhe B2202, from Smyrna (Schürmann 1989: no. 85, pl. 18); Leiden I.1946/3.1, third quarter of the fourth century (Leyenaar-Plaisier 1979: 67; Schneider-Herrmann 1969: fig. 3); Leiden LKA 943 (Leyenaar-Plaisier 1979: 65); Leiden S.v.L. 144 (Leyenaar-Plaisier 1979: 64); London 1885.2-19.3, said to be from Salamis, Cyprus, but rather from the island Salamis (Higgins 1954-59: 881); London 1895.10-29.6, from Thebes (Higgins 1954-9: 886); London 1931.2-16.36, from Kopais (Higgins 1954-9: 885); London 1949.2-20.26 (Higgins 1954-9: 882); London 1894.7-18.12, from Eretria (Higgins 1954-9: 884); Paris, Louvre C54 (MNC 730) (Mollard-Besques 1954: pl. 14); Paris, Louvre C55 (CA 2156) (Mollard-Besques 1954: pl. 14); Paris, Louvre C56 (S 2262) (Mollard-Besques 1954: pl. 14). Put at a later date are a mantle dancer of an uncommon type in a private collection in Frankfurt (Sammlung Senarclens-Grancy), Boeotian or possibly Attic, of late fourth- or more likely third-century date (Neugebauer 1938: no. 117, pl. 48; Hampe and Simon 1985: no. 34; Schneider-Herrmann 1969: fig. 4) and München 6790, another uncommon statuette, mid-third century (Lullies 1951: pl. 70; Schefold 1967: pl. VI).

3. Northern Africa.

Cyrenaica has examples from the mid-fourth century down to the second century. Most are dated to around the mid-third century. Early examples are London 1875.11-12.4, from Benghazi, mid-fourth century (Higgins 1954-9: 1521) and Paris, Louvre D4307 (N5882), dated to 340-35 (Besques 1992: pl. 26a). Third century: Paris, Louvre D4312 (N4483) (Besques 1992: pl. 27a); Paris, Louvre D4311 (N4472) (Besques 1992: pl. 26f); Paris, Louvre D4313 (N4517) (Besques 1992: pl. 27b); Paris, Louvre D4314 (CA968/7) (Besques 1992: pl. 27c); there are some more items in the Louvre catalogue which could possibly be third-century mantle dancers. London C809, from Benghazi, has been dated to the second century (Higgins 1967: pl. 64d). Compared to the Cyrenaica Egypt has but little to offer: Paris, Louvre D4513 (MNC327), from Alexandria, early third-century (Besques 1992: pl. 75a). Possibly also Alexandrian are the Baker dancer and the Industria dancer. The last, probably part of a bronze *alto relievo*, found at Monte da Po (ancient Industria) and now in Turin, may be a second-century A.D. (about 150?) copy of a Hellenistic Egyptian (Alexandrian) original (Heydemann 1879; Moews 1983: 35, with notes).

4. Southern Italy and Sicily.

Taranto (Taras) has produced examples of mantle dancers from the early second century: Taranto 52.089 (De Juliis 1989: 470, no. 18), and from the mid-second century: Taranto 4.106 (Langlotz 1963: pl. xvi; De Juliis 1989: 478, no. 18). For the possibility that the muffled female was a theme developed in Taranto without Attic or Boeotian influence: Herdejürgen 1978: 57, no. A57, a stunning terracotta fragment of a veiled woman dated to about 330, Paris, Louvre D3547 (Cp.4455), is Apulian and mid-third-century (Besques 1986: pl. 37d), Karlsruhe B822a might be from Campania and is dated to the first century (Schürmann 1989: no. 798, pl. 133). Sicily has third-century mantle dancers from Centuripe (Kontoripa): Catania, Museo Biscari 2347.1 (Libertini 1930: no. 1129 (no ill.); Kekulé 1884: pl. 45.2); Karlsruhe B448, probably Centuripe, from the first half of the second century (Schürmann 1989: no. 794, pl. 133); Paris, Louvre D3543 (CA6844) (Besques 1986: pl. 37a); from Morgantina a whole series, third century and later: Bell 1981: nos. 454-65 (nos. 466-8 are doubtful fragments). No. 458 was found in Morgantina, but might have been imported from Syracuse. Catania, Museo Biscari 2461 is from Troina (Libertini 1930: no. 1128 (no ill.); Kekulé 1884: pl. 45.1). A mantle dancer in Kurashiki, Kurashiki Ninagawa Museum, is from either Sicily or Southern Italy, third or second century (Simon 1982: no. 149).

5. Asia Minor.

Myrina has an extensive series of the second and first century. Early second century: Paris, Louvre MYR 228 (321) (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 129a); Paris, Louvre MYR 252 (448) (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 129d); first half second century: Paris, Louvre M 78 (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 130a); Paris, Louvre M 80 (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 130e); mid-second century: Paris, Louvre LY 1603 (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 129c);

Paris, Louvre MYR 227 (293) (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 129b); late second, first century: Dresden Z.V. 742 (Kleiner 1942: pl. 42b; Raumschüssel 1969: no. 27; Knoll 1993: no. 63); Paris, Louvre MYR 1150 (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 130f (not 130d as in the text), 254a); Paris, Louvre MYR 1163, "imitation of a second-century type" (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 130d (not 130f as in the text); Berlin TC 7631, "spät" (Schneider-Lengyel 1936: pl. 69; Kleiner 1942: pl. 43a). Paris, Louvre MYR 660 (MNC 535) of the second half of the second century is a very attractive piece because of its uncommon liveliness; it was found in Myrina but may not have been made there (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 131e). Troy has several fragments from the mid-third century onwards, mainly second and first century: Thompson 1963: 106-7 (nos. 90-101). A few pieces may be imported from Myrina. Pergamon also has fragments from the mid-third to the late first century (Töpperwein 1976: 43-5). Priene has fragments of mantle dancers dated to a range of years (Raeder 1983: nos. 88-94 = Berlin TC 8600-06). The terracotta object Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1910.720, Smyrna, dated to the end of the second century (Vafopoulou-Richardson 1981: nr. 41), is not a statuette, but curious enough to deserve a mention: it is a small round altar or base decorated in relief with three girls dancing muffled in their *himatia* much like the Attic marble reliefs with nymphs or Horai.

6. Elsewhere.

As was said above, mantle dancers have been found all over the Greek world. I can only mention a few of the more extensive series supposed to have been made locally. Rhodos has many fragmentary examples from Lindos (Mendel 1908: nos. 902-22; Blinkenberg 1931: nos. 2968-80, 2985, pls. 137-8). Cyprus has a number of atypical mantle dancers from Amathous, second and first century (Queyrel 1988). Kharayeb, in Libanon, has good examples of the same period, but more like the standard types: Kh260-266, 1017 (Chehab 1951-54: pls. 36.1 and 2, 87.2, 98.2).

Existing interpretations of individual items or of sequences from the series of mantle dancers outlined above form a tangle that is difficult to summarize. I have forcibly reduced the often muddled or contradictory accounts to four main questions that can be seen to have guided research in this matter. The first of these comes of necessity before all others, and asks whether the images of the so-called mantle dancers are true to life, that is to observable reality, to the actual practice of the dance. Put in this way the question is somewhat unsophisticated: of course no image ever coincides with what it portrays. Indeed, "real" versus "unreal" is no workable dichotomy. We are rather dealing with a spectrum ranging from a very strong to a very weak linkage to practice. Those instances where a conscious effort is undertaken to maximize the linkage to practice, I will call "documentary".¹³ This has not, or not immediately, to do with the issue of illusionism (what is often called "realism"). That the makers of our statuettes attempted an accurate or seemingly accurate representation of the human body and of textiles seems undeniable and also fits in with general opinion on the tendencies in Hellenistic art. But obviously an illusionistic portrayal might be true to life in its constituent parts, or in some general sense, without the image as a whole referring to some external reality. These might be dancers who never were, or dancers who once were, but not at the time when the images, or some of the images, were produced. Nobody, however, seems to have drawn either conclusion. Even the at one time prevailing view that items of Hellenistic *Kleinkunst* (and not even only *Kleinkunst*) were merely pleasing adornments of public or, above all, private space, went hand in hand with the assumption that these supposedly purely decorative items portrayed scenes taken from daily life — unless they obviously did not.¹⁴

13 Further references in Naerebout 1997: 233-4, 245-53 (where "documentary" is not yet used). See Pollitt 1986: 141, who defines realism as "an attempt to reflect one's experience of the natural and human world without the intercession of some notion of an ideal or perfect form", and Himmelmann 1983.

14 See Heuzey 1892: 83 where the producer is seen, anachronistically, as a careful observer: "là [during festivals] seulement les artistes ont pu prendre sur le vif les mouvements et les attitudes qu'ils ont reproduites dans un grand nombre de représentations [...] dont beaucoup échappent à toute interprétation symbolique."

The documentary nature of much of the Hellenistic *Kleinkunst* is accepted implicitly, without much argument. When we turn to the mantle dancers, there is a general conviction that the fully draped style was what was actually worn out on the streets: "so, von Kopf bis Fuss eingehüllt, pflegten ja die griechischen Frauen auf den Strassen zu erscheinen" (Heydemann 1879: 14). Most authors accept without any further ado that when everywhere in the Greek world women dressed this way, they also will have danced in the way the imagery shows. If the one is documentary, the other must be too. I find this an unwarranted conclusion. The supposed documentary portrayal of the dress is quite acceptable: we see it in all kinds of imagery from several different periods, not only in images of the dance, but also in iconography of which the documentary nature seems easier to defend. Although styles and fabrics may differ, the general look remains more or less the same. Besides, we have supportive written evidence.¹⁵ I would not, however, dare to conclude on this basis that the portrayal of the dance itself is true to observable reality, because we lack supportive evidence.

It seems *a priori* unlikely that there was little or no difference between the dance at the place where the motif was originally conceived (possibly Athens) and where it was adopted, or in, say, the early fourth and the late second century B.C.¹⁶ I feel we cannot go any further than saying that it is not unlikely that women dressed in *chiton* and *himation* will have been regular dancers, in whatever dance, wherever these terracottas were produced or imported on an appreciable scale, although we have to admit that the popularity of the motif itself cannot be used to prove this. It is only a hypothesis as long as no new evidence is forthcoming.

The second question in the existing literature on the mantle dancers asks whether these figurines portray one particular dance or moments taken from several different dances. From what I said above it will come as no surprise that I do not find this a legitimate question: we do not know to what extent the poses of the figurines are documentary. The appellation of mantle dancers should be nothing but an efficient label to distinguish a series of images of women who are both dancing and muffled in their *himatia*. But it has given rise, insidiously, to "the mantle dance", "the dance of the cloak", "la danse en manteau", as if this were a particular genre. Already in the nineteenth century Heydemann spoke of "eine Art 'Schleiertanz' [...] man könnte ihn genauer als 'Manteltanz' bezeichnen" (Heydemann 1879: 13–4). Seventy years later, Thompson tried to improve upon this and to recover the Greek name of this supposed mantle dance. She suggested the *baukismos*.¹⁷ About the *baukismos* we know next to nothing, about the *baukismos* in the context of the imagery under discussion

15 On the dancers' dress, see above all Galt 1931: 377–8 (who also introduces the interesting idea that many uncovered female faces in art are due to artistic licence) and Thompson 1950: 382–3. See on Hellenistic dress in general Bieber 1928, Bieber 1967, Heuzey 1922, Heuzey and Heuzey 1935, Losfeld 1991 and Weber 1938. Most studies of costume have little or nothing to say that is directly relevant to the subject of our dancers. Losfeld 1994: 457–68, has a section on "danse", which alas is not helpful at all. The most important literary texts about muffling and veiling (Herakleides 1.18 Pfister, previously ascribed to Dikaiarchos (fig. 59 Müller), Plutarchos, *Moralia* 232C.2, Pollux 10.127) you will find quoted in several of the above. On the issue of women veiling themselves in public, it is also useful to compare MacMullen 1980 and Sebesta 1994, esp. 48–9 on the *palla*. See note 31 below.

16 On dance as continually changing: Naerebout 1994b and Naerebout 1997: 258–68. But a motif in imagery (maybe at one time true to life) can survive relatively unchanged and might also be exported elsewhere as a pleasing motif without a parallel in observable reality. One certainly cannot help noticing "the amazing conservatism of Greek figurines" (in the words of Thompson 1959: 135).

17 Thompson 1950: 379. It caught on: Langlotz 1963: 96 on the terracotta Taranto IG 4106: "Baukismos-Tanz"; True 1988: 102–4: "As Thompson discussed in her thorough and masterful publication of this bronze, the dance that such figures perform may be the baukismos, which was believed to have originated in Ionia." On the *baukismos*, see Reisch 1897; sources: Hesychius s.v.; Pollux 4, 100 (pace Brommer 1989, see Naerebout 1997: 285 note 655). See note 35 below on *baukides*.

we know nothing at all.¹⁸ What is more, we have no reason to suppose that a particular "mantle dance" ever existed: there are only dancers wearing mantles (and dancers who do not). For all we know, they might be performing in as many different dances as we have got different types of figurines.

The idea that a particular "mantle dance" did exist, whether this is identified as the *baukismos* or not, can ultimately give rise to attempts to reconstruct this dance as a movement sequence.¹⁹ Any such attempt at reconstruction is a doomed enterprise.²⁰ It would also be when the documentary nature of the images were in no doubt. Obviously, the images of mantle dancers *might* tell us *something* about what dancing in Hellenistic days looked like. But we have to take into account all possible distortions, especially artistic formulas or conventions, and restrictions imposed by the medium. In the end, we are not able to say anything which goes beyond the banal, beyond what we can all see for ourselves, about the details of the movements performed by these figurines, or by the women on whose dancing these figurines may have been based.

The third question asks whether these are professional dancers or ordinary women. This turns out to be an exercise completely dependent upon the highly subjective ways in which the ethos of these figures is interpreted. Are they decorous, or are they teasing, are they "pious matrons" or "vaudeville dancers"?²¹ Much book learning is called to witness, but it is mostly badly digested nineteenth-century ideas about dance and gender and about professionalism in the dance which underlie the answers. We hear distant, and not so distant, echoes of the *pas de shawl* and the like as they were danced in supposed imitation of classical models since the end of the eighteenth century.²² Just looking hard at the statuettes will provide no answer, nor will a random collecting of ancient texts dealing with professional dancers.²³

The fourth question asks whether this dance is religious or secular. This question is wrong in itself, because within the context of ancient society the implied dichotomy is largely invalid. But even if we use religious and non-religious in a lax way, there is little we can say about this. The movements portrayed are no help. As we do not know about movements par-

18 But when Brommer 1989: 484 states: "Wir haben keine Vorstellung von ihm. Die Beziehung einer Gewandtänzerin auf ihn durch D. Thompson ist nicht begründet"; this is erroneous too. Indeed, Thompson's suggestion is gratuitous, because there is no way of telling whether it is right or wrong. But if she is right we have many images of the *baukismos*; otherwise, some other now nameless series of dance images might portray the *baukismos*. We simply do not know.

19 Heydemann 1879: 16-7 mentions *schemata*, which already hints towards the interpretation of the statuettes as portraying phases from a single dance. Weege 1926: 7 distinguishes the seven phases of the dance. He probably arrived at that figure because Heydemann had arranged his material in seven groups. Thompson 1950: 374 says that "a [terracotta] figure from Myrina [...] shows the phase of the dance just before that portrayed by the bronze [the Baker dancer]". Cf. Higgins 1954-59: 237, on his no. 886, which is a variant of no. 881: "It represents a different stage of the same dance." The same thing in Langlotz 1963: 95-6. Simon 1982: 218 apparently sees also terracottas of dancers without *himatia* as illustrating moments of the same dance: "During the dance the woman will shed the coat." This is quite like the reconstructionist efforts based on the imagery by Emmanuel, Prudhommeau and Delavaud-Roux (see Naerebout 1997: index). But note that Emmanuel (1896: 205) did not distinguish a mantle dance as such: "le manteau n'étant qu'un accessoire dont le danseur jouait à son gré, son usage ne détermine en rien la forme mécanique des pas" (see 1896: 205-8 on dances with the mantle).

20 On the problems involved in reconstructing dance from images, see Seebass 1991: 37 and Naerebout 1997: 234-40.

21 True 1988: 102: "As Greek women of the upper class were traditionally sheltered and were unlikely to have participated in a public display of such frivolity, she must be a professional entertainer", based on Thompson 1950: 385 ("a great artist"). Heuzey 1892: 73, on the other hand, says: "Il n'y a là rien de l'attitude provocante d'une danseuse de profession." Note that Thompson later retracted: 1963: 104 ("sober women and housewives", see note 205 on the Baker Dancer); 1966: 62 ("matrons piously draped in their himatia").

22 See Naerebout 1997: 47-8, and Naerebout 1998. Also relevant are several chapters in Kriseleit and Zimmer 1994 which deal with the 19th-century reception of terracottas. See also Higgins 1986: 162-78.

23 See for example Thompson 1950: 385 referring to papyri (bibliography: Naerebout 1997: 120). Others have followed suit. This material, almost all of it dating to the Roman period, is apparently thought to be relevant because the mantle dancers are thought to be essentially Egyptian. Thus Langlotz 1963: 96 even argues that the dress and dance of mantle dancers from Magna Grecia must hail from Egypt. All this because of the *unprovenanced* Baker dancer!

ticular to dances in a religious context (we do not know much about the movements at all), there is nothing to forbid the same movements to be portrayed (or used) in several different contexts. Nor are there any special paraphernalia to help us out. Debate about the religious nature of these dancers has centred on their dress. As said, everyone considers the dress of the mantle dancers to be ordinary wear. But it is the muffling of the hands and the covering of the face which are considered an indication of the religious nature of the dance portrayed. Indeed, the muffling is the linchpin in the interpretation of the mantle dancers.

Heuzey, in the nineteenth century, wanted to connect all dancers (and other women) with *himatia* draped over their heads to the Eleusinian goddesses.²⁴ This was something of a dead end, but it could easily lead the way to seeing the dancers as votaries of the goddesses.²⁵ Others interpreted the mantle dancers as cultic dancers in a more general sense, suggesting *inter alia* the cult of Adonis, Aphrodite, Artemis, Demeter, Dionysos, Isis, or Kybele.²⁶ Others again wanted the best of both worlds and suggested a cultic origin and a profane development.²⁷

Let us look at their arguments in some detail. First the hands. Here mantle dancers and all sorts of other dancers, or non-dancers, who keep their hands covered are being confused.²⁸ For a start, if images of non-dancers are invoked as comparative evidence, the many terracotta sisters of the mantle dancers who do not appear to be dancing but who are veiled or have muffled hands all the same, should be interpreted as taking part in religious ritual too. But they never are. Anyhow, several kinds of images are adduced as evidence, especially Attic vase paintings of the Dionysiac thiasos in general and of women involved in cultic acts on the so-called Lenäenvasen in particular. These are instances where I find the suggestion of the religious nature of muffling the hands quite convincing.²⁹ But one cannot conclude

- 24 Heuzey 1873–1874: 42: “j’ai prouvé...que les figurines de femmes voilées n’étaient pas le plus souvent des représentations de vie privée, appartenant à la catégorie des figures de *genre*, mais qu’elles représentaient souvent des divinités de l’ordre plus élevé”. Rusjaeva 1982: 62 goes beyond Heuzey in identifying terracottas of muffled women as Demeter without any qualifications.
- 25 We already find this with Heuzey himself, speaking about the statuette Louvre D4 (CA462, the “danseuse Titeux”): 1892: 83: the mantle dancers can be nymphs, Horai or daughters of Cecrops, but also mortals (almost quoting Heydemann 1879: 15–6); “elle [la danse voilée] répondait certainement à une danse réelle qui se dansait à l’occasion de certaines fêtes”, and 87: “sans pouvoir citer aucun texte positif, je continue à croire que le culte de Déméter était un de ceux qui fournissaient le plus naturellement aux femmes l’occasion de se livrer elles-mêmes à de pareilles danses, où les attitudes voilées présentaient d’intimes rapports avec la légende et avec le costume même de la déesse.” See Séchan 1909: 1036: “si l’on ne peut affirmer que les figurines voilées nous montrent les grandes déesses donnant elles-mêmes l’exemple de la forme des danses sacrées, il est possible que ces danses voilées aient eu, dans certain cas, un rapport avec le culte de Déméter ou celui d’autres divinités.” Repeated in Séchan 1930: 128–34.
- 26 For example Thompson 1963: 103–4, or Queyrel 1988: 104–6, who mixes suppositions taken from Thompson and Lullies into a heady brew of certainties. On the basis of 23 fragmentary statuettes, she reconstructs for Amathous sacred dances for Adonis, Aphrodite and Isis, of “oriental” origin. The most recent argument that these dances are cultic is in Nicholls 1995: 450–1, who first speaks of “women decked out in all their finery”, but goes on to ask whether they cannot actually be, or also be, *theai synchoreutai*, such as Charites or Horai.
- 27 For example Lullies 1951: 671, 673 on the terracotta München, Museum Antiker Kleinkunst 6790: “die Verhüllung des Körpers im Manteltanz (kann) ursprünglich nur kultische Bedeutung gehabt haben [...] Die Münchner Manteltänzerin gibt von den religiösen Vorstellungen, aus denen der Manteltanz erwachsen ist, zunächst nur wenig zu erkennen. Sie mögen auch damals, als die Figur entstand, schon stark verblasst gewesen sein”, or Bol and Kotera 1986: 113: “Die Verhüllung der ganzen Gestalt einschliesslich des Mundes war ursprünglich wohl als Ausdruck heiliger Scheu gemeint, doch dürfte mehr und mehr der erotische Reiz des Motivs zur Beliebtheit solcher Darstellungen beigesteuert haben.”
- 28 This confusion starts with Heydemann 1879. See also Latte 1913: 92: “Originem tamen huius saltationis e Bacchi religione me recte repetivisse spero.” It is propagated above all by Lullies 1951: 671, with reference to Albrecht Dieterich (Dieterich 1911).
- 29 See for instance Frontisi-Ducroux 1986, with further references. Most supportive is the Attic red-figure lekythos in a private collection (Collection Czartoryski) illustrated in Hoon 1951: fig. 40. I also find very persuasive a Danae on an Attic lekythos of about 470 (Athens NM 17640), illustrated by Papaspyridi-Karouzou 1946: 440, fig. 3. Brommer 1989: 484 creates a special category for the maenads in sleeved *chitons*: “Flügelanzug”.

from these examples that the so very different mantle dancers also belong in a cultic context. The covering of one's hands need not be a religious act, but is something normally expected of women and of the young as a sign of modesty.³⁰

Next the veiling of part of the face with a slip of the *himation*, and/or with an additional veil, the *prosopidion* or *tegidion*.³¹ As Thompson sensibly says: women covering their face do so in protection from divine anger, male effrontery or heat and dust.³² All we know about veiling points in the direction of its practical use as shielding the complexion from the elements, and at the same time underlining and safeguarding a woman's *sophrosyne*, her required modesty, chastity and so on. This could function in a religious context too: the one need not exclude the other at all. Only, scholars do not like to have several options open to them: they want to pin our mantle dancers down either as participants in a cult, or as worldly entertainers.³³

As we have seen, the covering of the hands and the face is unlikely to force upon us a religious interpretation. Mind, I do not say that the mantle dancers cannot be performing in what would usually be called a religious or cultic context (I prefer to speak of a public event), only that their muffling is no indication of this. I find support for this opinion in the fact that we encounter mantle dancers with one hand or with both hands covered, with the *himation* drawn up over the head, or not, with the face uncovered or with the face covered to a greater or lesser extent by a slip of the *himation*, or with an additional veil.³⁴ This in itself should raise some doubts about the way in which the covering of hands, head or mouth can say something about the religious contents of these images. Also the fact that so many women who are not dancing are portrayed muffled up, while women engaged in what seem to be cultic acts are portrayed without *himatia*, pleads against an interpretation of muffling as necessarily indicating that women are shielding themselves from the numinous (or the numinous from themselves, for that matter).

The outcome of all this seems to me that the swaddling of our dancers (and of other female figures) indicates both their modesty, in whatever context, and their wish to keep out of the sun: the covering of arms, hands, and head, the veiling of the face, the wearing of shoes instead of sandals, and the carrying of sun hats and fans show us women who want to

30 See Bremmer 1991: 31–2 for references; add Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 4.3.15 (1123b31). The muffled figures, men and women, in Attic and Magna Grecia vase painting are omnipresent. A common type of terracotta contemporary to the mantle dancers is that of a boy muffled in a *himation* and wearing on his head a cap called a *kausia*; e.g. Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum 25711, third century, from Alexandria, illustrated in Rausch 1998: no. 70. On this type, see Thompson 1963: 84.

31 See above note 15. A collection of images of separate veils, *prosopidia*, is in Himmelmann 1983: 67 with note 228 and pl. iv a–b. Add Queyrel 1988: no. 333 (pl. 34). Veils are mentioned in a second-century B.C. (not third-century, as in Pfisterer-Haas 1991: 102) inventory from Miletus of textiles dedicated to, probably, Artemis: Günther 1988: 227, text on p. 221 (*SEG* 1988: 1210).

32 Thompson 1963: 103, and Thompson 1950: 383. Previously argued by Galt 1931: 383 (*sic!*). It should be the heat rather than the cold, as in Heuzey 1873–4: 34, Heuzey 1892: 86, Pottier in Heuzey 1922: 220, Schneider-Herrmann 1969: 140 or Nicholls 1995: 451. As to the *himatia*, several of those worn by dancers appear to be of some sheer fabric; and Thompson 1950. Some might even be see-through: in the Museum of Dion there is a terracotta of two seated draped women, from the cemeteries of the North Pieria, fourth century B.C., with well-preserved polychromy; only their arms, which are underneath their *himatia*, are pink. The same effect can be seen on some pieces from Alexandrian necropoleis in the colour plates in Breccia 1930–4: pl. A.1 and M.2.

33 Thompson 1950: 379 first states: "At this period, the veiling can scarcely have a religious connotation": she defends a religious origin, but wants to get rid of any religious connotations because the Baker dancer is to be interpreted as a professional (and profane) entertainer. Later (1963: 103) she concludes, after discussing the worldly aspects of the veil: "We may well, then, assume, if other evidence acquiesces, that these heavily veiled figures are those cult dancers", which does not seem to follow. In Thompson 1954: 94, however, it is stressed that the *himation* drawn across the face is "not [...] essentially a ritual custom." Queyrel 1988: 106 knows no doubts: "le caractère rituel du voilement de la face par la pièce de tissu est assuré." If only it is right up your own street.

34 Examples are readily seen and compared in Winter 1903: 145–54.

safeguard their complexion, and to remain white-skinned all-over.³⁵ A sun tan is something masculine, or, along another divide, something for the commoner. All these wrappings are certainly a very interesting comment on the position of women in Hellenistic society and on class distinctions borne out by expensive textiles, but tell us nothing in particular about the dance of the mantle dancers.

The one thing which could possibly tell us something about a religious background to the mantle dancers is the provenance of the figurines. Mantle dancers have been found in houses, in sanctuaries and in graves, which does not sound very promising. But if some pattern could be established as far as these dancers and particular sanctuaries are concerned, we might get onto some clue.³⁶ But provenanced material is relatively rare, and even if it comes from a controlled excavation we have not always proper information about the actual assemblages of materials in whatever their context was, a point that we will come back to towards the end of this article. As a result, we do not know nearly enough about votive practices in Hellenistic days to say anything about the laws governing such behaviour.

A particular genre of dancing, part of cult or of more worldly amusements, performed by professional dancers or by ordinary women? We cannot tell: the images give no clear indication and direct textual evidence is lacking. As I hope to have shown, several of the reasonings behind some of the current interpretations are flawed, either because they were crooked right from the start or because they were incapable of being substantiated. An important object such as the Baker dancer, or a quite extensive series such as the terracotta mantle dancers cannot be allowed to remain uninterpreted, and scholars would rather jump to conclusions than admit defeat. We will, however, be running around in circles, as long as no new evidence is forthcoming. What is being written about these muffled women is a dead end. Either we give up interpreting them for the time being, and merely look on them as useful items in a stylistic analysis, and, at least in some instances, as aesthetically pleasing, or we approach the matter from a completely different angle.

I suggest that we turn to recent iconological research that deals with the uncovering of certain connotations, using visual representations as an entry into the *histoire des mentalités*.³⁷ Images relate to the mental life of the community that produced them, not only in the sense of reflecting a mental universe, mirroring developments outside the world of pictorial rendition, but also in the sense of functioning as a very part of a society's mental make-up. There has arisen a contextual approach that goes beyond iconography, and also takes us a step

35 Pollux 10.127 sums up: veil, sunshade, fan, sun hat. Morrow 1985: 122 discusses the shoes worn by the Baker dancer, probably *persikai*, and concludes from this that she is probably a non-Greek. But the parallels adduced do not really bear this out; indeed, Morrow 1985: 148, states that "examples [of soled shoes] are known from several sites, indicating widespread use." Most of the statuettes of muffled dancers show shoes being worn, see Nicholls 1995: 450. Speaking of shoes, we leave unmentioned that the name *baukides* for a particular kind of shoe was seen as a substantiation of the identification of "the mantle dance" as the *baukismos*; but the names of footwear are numerous (see Morrow 1985: 175-84) and the common name *persikai* could with as much, or rather as little, right be thought to refer to the dance called *persikon*.

36 Thompson 1963: 104, n. 202 gives a list of terracottas coming from sanctuaries. On Priene, add Raeder 1983: 39, nos. 88-97 on draped female figures and dancing girls from the Demeter sanctuary, and on Pergamon, add Töpperwein 1976: 43-5, pls. 25-6, fig. 161, 164, 165 from the so-called Demeterterrasse, and frags. T61/3 and T61/22 (mentioned p. 43 n. 84) from the Asklepieion. Other additions: Morgantina: Bell 1981: nos. 454-6; Daux 1963: 789, fig. 3: a veiled head, possibly of a dancer, found at the altar of Artemis, Olympia; veiled heads, possibly of dancers, in Dion Museum, found in a Demeter sanctuary; Aupert 1975: 619, fig. 62: a plaque with a mantle dancer from the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas at Epidaurous, fourth or third century; the place where the Industria dancer was found is now identified as a sanctuary, possibly dedicated to Isis, of the second century A.D.: Finocchi 1976: 410; Moevs 1983: 42, n. 200.

37 Frontisi-Ducroux & Lissarrague 1990. See Seebass 1991 who calls dance iconography "a very treacherous terrain" (33), but gives interesting indications of how it can be studied fruitfully nevertheless. The accents here are put somewhat different again, cf. Naerebout 1997: 240-53.

beyond iconology: imagery is seen as creative and contributing actively to the way in which people see and structure the world round about them. This implies that *every* image is useful as a source: it can, and should, be seen as a living, shaping part of the mental universe of ancient society. Every image: that includes those which can be supposed to represent observable reality in a more or less reliable way, and those which most likely do not. I do, however, again stress that we should concentrate on those images (the large majority) which form part of a series: the odd one out can be exactly that and tell us nothing beyond the fact that some individual maker felt in an idiosyncratic mood one day.

This does not exclude more traditional ways of putting imagery to use as evidence. We have to be acutely aware of the fact that an illusionistic or documentary rendering of "real life" and a connotative or symbolic dimension can perfectly go together. We encounter factual symbols, and symbolic facts. A successful combination of an illusionistic or documentary quality and a reference to the symbolic plane might very well make out much of the attractiveness of an image. A fruitful comparison here is the ongoing discussion on the symbolic nature of seventeenth-century Dutch imagery, where the illusionism was combined with a strong interest in electrifying this illusionism with a wide range of messages.³⁸

The ancient world has left behind enough written material on the dance to enable us to formulate (partial) answers to the questions of who, when and where, and to gain some insight into contemporary thought on the nature and the societal uses of dancing, but hardly anything worthwhile to respond to questions about what and how. Also, without supportive evidence hardly any image can be used just like that to reconstruct observable reality. Only a few images can be related to texts in an immediate way. If we acknowledge this, and turn away from the antiquarian concern with individual "dances", and towards the study of an undifferentiated concept "dance", we might reach the stage where the images can function as a source in their own right, a source which informs us about the ways in which dance was viewed and was put to use in ancient society.

The test of the cake is in the eating. Where does the Baker dancer come in? I suggest the following procedure. We immediately stop worrying about what dance she is performing: whether it existed, and if so, what it was called, where it came from and what its steps were. We could not care less. We look on her as one of a series, which is embedded amongst other contemporaneous series. We ask ourselves in what contexts dance was performed *or dance was imagined* in the period during which those series were produced and procured. Next we try to match our series of dance imagery with our overall view of the dance and see whether we can find some niche for our mantle dancers.³⁹ So let us first have a look at the other series which can be distinguished within Hellenistic dance iconography.

1. "Entertainers".

Thus I have dubbed the images of girls with rather less dress on than the mantle dancers. I do not mean to say that they can only have performed within a profane context; but they do look like professionals. Best example is the well-known acrobat dancer, Berlin, Staatliche Museen TC 7092 (F2919), from Megara, mid-fourth century (Charbonneaux 1936: pl. 40; Köster 1926: pl. 39). Maybe we can include here the dancers with *krotala* such as Paris, Louvre D289 (CA800), from Aegina, third quarter of the third century (Besques 1971-2: pl. 60b); Berlin TC 6822, Attic, from Athens, mid-fourth century (Rohde 1968, pl. 21; Köster 1928: pl. 38; Pernice 1903: pl. 13.1). Comparable are the so-called "dancing dolls", better named

38 Naerebout 1997: 251-2, with many references.

39 The best attempt to date to look at the mantle dancers in context is Nicholls 1995: 450-3, but he does not consider all that is relevant.

joined or articulated figurines (cf. Dörig 1958; Elderkin 1930): London, BM 1865.7-20.34, Attic, from Athens, early fourth century (Higgins 1954-9: 734; cf. Higgins 1954-9: 701, 721, 909, esp. text at no. 909, p. 248); London, BM 1852.7-7.7, Corinthian, early fourth century (Higgins 1954-9: 959); London, BM 1865.7-20.35, Corinthian, mid-fourth century (Higgins 1954-59: 973); Paris, Louvre D445 (CA1457), Boeotian?, 350-25 (Mollard-Besques 1971-2: pl. 97b); Paris, Louvre D3721 (N4646), Campanian (Besques 1986: pl. 69c). All of these are characterized by full nudity, or by a short skirt and bare breasts; most hold *krotala*. Possibly the famous Priene terracotta of a short-skirted dancer, Berlin TC 8551 (Raeder 1983: no. 2) should go here, but it is something of a unique piece.

2. Dwarfs and grotesques.

Dwarf entertainers and dancing grotesques are first and foremost (though not exclusively so) Egyptian (see Dasen 1993, Himmelmann 1983, Giuliani 1987, and Binsfeld 1956: 43-5 on dwarfs, possibly known as *grylloi*). See also 45-50 on so-called *Spitzhüttentänzer*, possibly known as *kinaidoi*). The outstanding examples of dancing dwarfs are the Mahdia bronzes, probably Alexandrian work, now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis (Fuchs 1963, Wrede 1988 and cf. note 43 below). Paris, Louvre D290 (CA803), from Aegina, dated to the third quarter of the third century, is a Greek terracotta of a dwarf with *krotala* (Besques 1971-2: pl. 60d). Berlin TC8630 from Priene is a grotesque dancer (Raeder 1983: no. 40). The other examples listed here are Greco-Egyptian: Paris, Louvre D4514 (MN1418) (Besques 1992: pl. 75); Alexandria 9787, a plastic vase or a vase-shaped terracotta, from Kom-el-Sciugafa (Breccia 1930-4: no. 405, pl. 32.1-2). Alexandria 8031, 22321, 23146, 23156, and 23290 (Breccia 1930-4: nos. 383-6, 388, pls. 75-6) are grotesques who might be dancing. But it is difficult to distinguish between the caricature of a dance pose and an accurate portrayal of malformation (see Grmek and Gourevitch 1998).

3. *Thiasos*.

I will not discuss the many statuettes of members of the Dionysiac *thiasos* (everything is there), except for maenads who come near the mantle dancers (for maenads in reliefs, see Touchette 1995: 15-31, on "the Greek originals", and cf. Grandjouan, Markson and Rotroff 1989: nos. 1-8). Examples of terracotta statuettes of maenads are: Paris, Louvre D3545 (N4553), Centuripe?, third century (Besques 1986: pl. 37b); Karlsruhe B442a, Centuripe, end of the third century (Schürmann 1989: no. 791, pl. 132); Karlsruhe B443, Centuripe, end of the third century (Schürmann 1989: no. 792, pl. 132); Karlsruhe B441, Centuripe, end of the third century (Schürmann 1989: no. 790, pl. 132; Maass 1987: no. 28); Karlsruhe B440, Sicily (Centuripe?), early second century (Schürmann 1989: no. 793, pl. 133); Karlsruhe B435, Centuripe, first half of the second century (Schürmann 1989: no. 795, pl. 134) and Taranto 52094, from Taranto (Langlotz 1963: pl. 145, right).

Very common in Magna Grecia are terracottas of a dancer dressed in a sleeveless *chiton* who is holding out her arms in front. The swaying skirts, the occasional bare breast, and the general similarity to the unquestioned maenads make me put these, at least provisionally, with the *thiasos*. Examples (including one from Asia Minor): Paris, Louvre D3546 (Cp.1541), Campania? (Besques 1986: pl. 37e); London BM D11, Centorbi (Higgins 1967: pl. 59b); Karlsruhe B436a, Centuripe, first half of the second century (Schürmann 1989: no. 796, pl. 133); Kurashiki, Kurashiki Ninagawa Museum, Centuripe, second century (Simon 1982: no. 148); Paris, Louvre MYR 250 (337), Myrina, early first century (Mollard-Besques 1963: pl. 131d); Taranto 4.092, from Taranto, second century (Langlotz 1963: pl. 147; De Juliis 1989: 477, no. 16); Taranto 4.096, from Taranto, second century (Langlotz 1963: pl. 146; De Juliis 1989: 478, no. 17); Taranto 4.098, from Taranto, second century (De Juliis 1989: 478, no. 19); Paris, Louvre D3544 (MNB1721), Taranto?, third century (Besques 1986: pl. 37c); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale CdM 124 (Bieber 1961: fig. 553, not 552 as in Bieber 1961: 138, n. 25). Egnazia (Gnathia) produced a variant in which the dancer wears a *chlaina* draped over her back and both her arms, as a kind of stole: Paris, Louvre D3548 (Cp. 5071) (Besques 1986: pl. 37f); Napoli 20401 (Levi 1926: no. 349, fig. 70).

A third group I want to include with the *thiasos* are *tympanistriae*: women playing the *tympanon*. Amsterdam, Allard Pierson, Boeotian, end of fifth century (Prins de Jong 1944: pl. 55); London, BM 1868.10-20.33, Cyrenaica, early fourth century (Higgins 1954-59: 1498); Olynthos, early fourth century (Robinson 1933, nos. 185-8); Paris, Louvre D368 (CA90), Eretria, end of third century (Mollard-Besques 1971-2, pl. 81a); Berlin TC 6853, Attic (Pernice 1903: pl. 14.2); Berlin TC 8821, Attic, from southern Russia, mid-fourth century (Rohde 1968: pl. 20b); Madrid, Attic (Laumonier 1921: no. 4, pl. 4.2), the last a group of two dancers, one with a *tympanon*.

4. Kalathiskos dancers.

On this type of dancer, short skirted and wearing a basket-like headdress, see Brommer 1989: 485–6, Thompson 1963: 100, and Grandjouan, Markson and Rotroff 1989: 5–6 (with references). Examples: Berlin TC 6851, Attic, from Athens, mid-fourth century (Rohde 1968: pl. 20a; Pernice 1903: pl. 12.1, 12.3); Athens, Kerameikos Museum T136A, Attic, late 330s (Vierneisel-Schloerb 1997: no. 356, pl. 63.7 and 8); Berlin TC 6852, Attic, fourth century? (Pernice 1903: pl. 12.2); St. Petersburg, Eremitage e.674, Attica?, early fourth century (Boriskovskaya and Chodza 1976: no. 101; Gorbunova and Saverkina 1975: no. 48; the last date it to mid-fifth century).

5. Oriental dancers.

These are in Phrygian costume and perform a crouching dance with both hands clasped above the head (the so-called *oklasma*): see Thompson 1963: 100–1, Brommer 1989: 488–9, and Nicholls 1995: 451–3. Some examples in Hellenistic terracotta: early fourth century: Berlin TC 7680, Attic, from Tanagra (Rohde 1968: pl. 28; München 5503 is identical, and was also found at Tanagra); London, BM 1868.10-20.9, Attic, from Cyrenaica (Higgins 1954–9: 716); London, BM 1907.5-19.3, Attic, second quarter of the fourth century? (Higgins 1954–9: 1705): a winged dancer in oriental costume striking a *tympanon* above its head (in a pose like the *oklasma*). Third century: Paris, Louvre D251 (CA1346), Macedonian, first half of the third century (Mollard-Besques 1971–2: pl. 52b); Paris, Louvre D252 (CA1946), Macedonian, mid-third century (Mollard-Besques 1971–2: pl. 52d); second or first century: Kharayeb, Kh 276–9 (Chehab 1951–4: pl. 98.5); first century: Morgantina (Bell 1981: no. 463).

6. Other.

At several places we find local peculiarities: for instance at Kharayeb, Kh 267–75 are examples of a dancing child dressed in a *himation*, legs showing. Some of these lift their left arm high so that the *himation* is pulled up just enough to show the male sex (Chehab 1951–4: pls. 36–8). In Priene there is a series of young girls holding up their skirts (Raeder 1983: nos. 95–7, Berlin TC8607-8609).

This listing does of course not so much solve, as increase our problems. As Pollitt has argued, we have all sorts of imagery produced between the third century B.C. and the Roman period which is difficult to classify, difficult to date, and difficult to interpret. The exact purpose of these large and small sculptures portraying satyrs, nymphs, female figures, children, animals, dwarfs, grotesques, actors, figures from daily life remains as yet fairly mysterious.⁴⁰ Something useful, however, may come from putting it all together.

Now the written sources: I cannot possibly discuss these at any length here, and there is no existing discussion or even a bare bones collection to refer to.⁴¹ We will have to make do with a *very impressionistic sketch*. The written evidence, often fragmentary, which with certainty dates from the Hellenistic period, comprises dramatic texts in which the dance in the theatre is spoken of in self-referential terms; several other kinds of poetry dealing with all kinds of dance, but often with the Dionysiac sphere and with entertainment, also by professional entertainers; learned poetry and prose discussing contemporary and past examples of dance in some cultic context. Much of this literary material deals with dance by supernatural beings and their mythic companions; only some of it describes or mentions the actual dancing by contemporary mortals. This picture, however, changes dramatically when we add the inscriptional evidence, which overwhelmingly deals with existing choruses performing at public events.

40 Pollitt 1986: 127, where he also characterizes the concept of Hellenistic rococo, as introduced by Wilhelm Klein and expanded by Margarethe Bieber, as a "junk bin".

41 There exists as yet no comprehensive collection of texts (with or without translation) on the dance in the ancient Greek world: Barker 1984 has quite some relevant material, and can stand as a model of what a collection of such texts should look like. In the Hellenistic period, textual sources other than inscriptions are somewhat meagre, and the inscriptions have been largely ignored: see Naerebout 1997: 189–208. A normative publication and discussion of inscriptions dealing with, amongst many other things, dance is Bruneau 1970.

The comparison between the several series of dance imagery and the overall picture which arises from the written evidence, emboldens me to hazard a hypothesis. As the mantle dancers are the only series of dance imagery which show ordinary human dancers clothed in ordinary dress worn in an ordinary way and not disambiguated by any paraphernalia, we can conclude that they do not belong in the theatre,⁴² nor in the sphere of Dionysiac myth or on some other supernatural plane, nor amongst the retinue of the Hellenistic ruler or other professional entertainers. That they are in a different sphere of their own seems to me to be underlined by the fact that they are sometimes mimicked or caricatured by representatives of the other categories, such as Eros, dwarfs, and actors/satyr.⁴³ So what niche is left for the mantle dancers? The one that as far as the written sources go is filled by the majority of the inscriptions. The mantle dancers are members of non-theatrical choruses which had always been and remained for a long time to come an essential ingredient of the public events which structured civic life, fulfilling an important communicative role.⁴⁴ These are ordinary upper-class women, dressed in a common outfit, performing at one of the many events of a public nature, such as a festival at a sanctuary. Occurring over much of the Greek world these dancers signify nothing in particular, just as a dancing satyr is not some particular satyr. The very existence of imagery specific to some locale points to the ubiquitous imagery being generic. The mantle dancers do not perform a particular choreography, and are not meant to portray a particular group of dancers participating in a particular event. They stand for dance as a part of public event, they call to mind whatever chorus, they evoke the connotation "dance by female community members in a public context."

- 42 Thompson obfuscates things by her suggestion that the terracotta statuettes in general, also the so-called mantle dancers, derive from theatrical sources; 1966: 57f.: "It even seems possible that the sudden appearance in the early fourth century of a new non-religious repertory among the terracottas may be due to this theatrical influence. We might venture to ask whether the lovely 'mantle dancers' of this period may not have been inspired by the choruses of dancing women which characterized the plays of Euripides [...] Though their typological ancestry may reach back into the religious forms of the classical period, their ethos, we suggest, comes freshly from another and more worldly inspiration"; n. 66: "it seems more likely that all media [...] whether they portrayed dramatic or religious dancers, were inspired by contemporary theater. This assumption explains the wide diffusion of these terracottas"; p. 62: "We suggest that as the trend toward naturalism asserted itself during the last half of the century [i.e., the fourth century], exact reproductions of actors in stage costume were replaced by humanized figures in part inspired by the popular drama of the day [...] [e.g.] matrons piously draped in their himatia for festivals"; p. 63: "It is life in the Athens of later comedy that is seen in the microcosm of the Tanagras." All this is accepted without comment by Higgins 1986. So the imagery is still supposed to be illusionistic, but looks at daily life at a remove, through a theatrically coloured imagination. This is not impossible: I could give a seventeenth-century parallel in several instances of Dutch genre painting, for instance in the work of Jan Steen, see Jansen 1996. But still it seems difficult to pin this down. Thompson does not make clear in which way these theatrically inspired figures take up motifs from daily life. If the stage and reality cannot be told apart, and Thompson's treatment of the mantle dancers invites us to conclude as much, there is little to be gained from insisting that the imagery derives from theatrical sources.
- 43 Examples: Leipzig T2186, Myrina, mid-2nd c. (Pfisterer-Haas 1991: nr.35; Paul 1961: nr.232); Leiden LKA 1028, Myrina, around 100 B.C. (Leyenaar-Plaisier 1979: 703); Karlsruhe B2237, Myrina, 1st half 1st c. B.C. (Schürmann 1989: nr.426, pl.75); Eros in a dancing movement with *himation* drawn up to his eyes; Dresden Z.V. 3867, Centuripe, early 2nd c. (Knoll 1993: nr.65); Germany, private collection, same provenance and date (Neugebauer 1938: nr.123, pl.50): a dancing actor with satyr mask dressed like a mantle dancer. Pfisterer-Haas 1991 interprets the head cover of the Mahdia dwarf not as a flute case, as does Wrede 1988, but as a woman's veil: the dwarf mimics a lady. The idea that the Mahdia dwarfs might be caricatures of elegant dancing female figures is also to be found in Pollitt 1986: 138. For what it is worth, I mention M. Robertson 1979: a dancing dwarf and a muffled dancer in a single image.
- 44 See Naerebout 1994a on the continuities in Greek polis religion. A long term perspective in MacMullen 1981: 20-5, esp. 24.

I can think of some counter arguments: has there not been kept back some evidence that might suggest we have got to do with entertainers or maenads after all?⁴⁵ Or are we unknowingly putting together as "mantle dancers" what are in fact different categories which should have been kept separate?⁴⁶ I find the idea that some mantle dancers might belong in a different category of their own, or might possibly have to be moved to other categories not unattractive: it is certainly better than forcibly making everything fit my hypothesis. I do not want to be, indeed I cannot be, dismissive about whatever alternative hypothesis, because we do not know nearly enough as yet to be dismissive about any well-considered and substantiated opinion about Hellenistic terracottas. I come back to Graepler once again, and to his plea for provenance and context. Graepler focuses on the necropolis of Taranto, a uniquely well-documented site. Four percent of the graves of this necropolis, mainly those of women and children, contained terracottas, with certain types linked to a certain sex or age group. But this is just one necropolis, and especially the statuettes portraying women without mythological attributes remain difficult to interpret. They might have some link to marriage iconography, which is what many grave gifts seem to be linked to. But other contexts cannot be excluded. What social roles are connected to dress, hair, poses and gestures? The semantics of such things have still to be studied.⁴⁷ A more thorough examination of the dance imagery of the Hellenistic period along these lines might substantiate my hypothesis as outlined above, and contribute some fine-tuning. Or lead us in very different directions. If only we shake off our old ways of looking at these objects and make a fresh start.

- 45 As to professionalism and entertainment, first there is the opinion of Thompson 1963: 102 that some of the mantle dancers perform on top of footstools. See Winter 1903: 146.8 for a type on a basis shaped like a low footstool. As Pernice 1903: 15 has it: "Die Basis ist wie eine niedrige Fussbank [...] gestaltet." A basis shaped like a footstool does not necessarily mean that there was an actual footstool involved. Not much was heard about the footstools until Nicholls 1995: 451 reintroduced the dancing on a footstool (he also mentions dancers mounting a footstool: I suppose he refers to Winter 1903: 148.4; I know no other examples; 148.5 is mounting a footstool, but no mantle dancer). But Nicholls thinks mantle dancers are sacred dancers because of, amongst other things, the performance on top of footstools. Secondly, there is the disconcerting statuette in Racz 1965: no. 93, in a private collection in Arlesheim and dated to the second century B.C.: a mantle dancer, with her mantle open and her chiton apparently slipped down from her left breast. I know of no parallel (Winter 1903: 146.7, see Higgins 1954-9: nos. 712-3, is quite different). Thirdly, amongst grave goods, mantle dancers and other dancers occur together: see De Juliis 1989: 468-73 and 476-81, for two Tarantine graves (one includes also satyrs, both have statuettes of non-dancers). More seriously, different types of dancers can be mixed within a single image: London E241, a red-figure Kerch vase, Attic, from Kyrene, ca. 350, is decorated with an Adonia-scene combining mantle dancers with a *krotala*-playing dancer without *himation* (Scheffold 1930: pl. 6a). Fourthly, there are maenads in vase painting who are muffled, but without any other characteristics (or it should be their bare feet), but of course they are disambiguated by their surroundings in way a statuette of a single individual could never be. This last might be a crucial point. For a good example, see the Attic red-figure fragment Leningrad, Ermitage KAB.16a, from Kerch (?), ca. 400 B.C., Scheffold 1930: pl. 5c. All this, I feel, rather inconclusive, but merits further research.
- 46 Nicholls 1995: 453 puts the intriguing question whether in studying the oklasma-type of dance imagery we might have been conflating "ordinary exotic entertainers" and "symbolic deities". Not so easily answered. And there remains the conundrum how the original consumers of this imagery managed to keep these categories apart if we cannot tell them apart. The best way seems to look for differences, not to impose them.
- 47 See Graepler 1994, esp. 52-3 and the copious notes. Alas, Graepler 1997 was not available at the time of writing. Also looking at the funerary context but arriving at a rather less sophisticated conclusion is Pelletier-Hornby 1998: 262: "elles [les terres cuites] seraient alors le reflet des processions et des célébrations qui accompagnaient le défunt dans sa tombe".

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