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**Figures of Comparison. A Study of the Potential for Animal and Bird ‘Similes’
in Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painting**
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Abstract

On many Attic black-figure vases, animals and birds are either included in the scene or juxtaposed in an adjacent zone. This paper will explore the potential for interpreting at least some of them as providing an additional lamination of meaning that often serves an adverbial function: commenting on how the action of the main scene was performed, for instance. It will be proposed that this is a system of meaning construction that is predicated upon the existence of a substantial corpus of folk-comparisons, and that it works in parallel to the process of iconographical meaning generation, so extending a communicative approach that is fundamental to the black-figure technique and central within the traditional repertoire of picture elements in the archaic period. The effect of these images will be compared with that of the familiar similes of traditional oral or oral-derived epic.