The stuff of the gods

The material aspects of religion in ancient Greece

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ABSTRACT

The "material turn" in the humanities and social sciences has brought about an expanded understanding of the material dimension of all cultural and social phenomena. In the Classics it has resulted in the breaking down of boundaries within the discipline and a growing interest in materiality within literature. In the study of religion cross-culturally new perspectives are emphasising religion as a material phenomenon and belief as a practice founded in the material world. This volume brings together experts in all aspects of Greek religion to consider its material dimensions. Chapters cover both themes traditionally approached by archaeologists, such as dedications and sacred space, and themes traditionally approached by philologists, such as the role of objects in divine power. They include a wide variety of themes ranging from the imminent material experience of religion for ancient Greek worshippers to the role of material culture in change and continuity over the long term.

Keywords: Greek religion, Etruscan religion, Mycenaean religion, materiality, religious change, *temenos*, temples, offerings, cult statues, terracottas, *omphalos*, cauldrons, sacred laws, visuality, purity, pollution, gods' identities, divine power, inscribed dedications

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9. The affordances of terracotta figurines in domestic contexts

Reconsidering the gap between material and ritual

Abstract

Domestic religion has been the subject of renewed interest in recent years, yet much work remains to be done on the material dimension of ritual practice within Greek households. This paper focuses on a form of domestic material culture whose complex relationship to religious ritual bears further investigation. Terracotta figurines are common finds in Hellenistic houses, and discussions of domestic terracottas' function and perceived value commonly treat them either as cult objects or domestic decoration. However, the implied binary opposition of "religious" and "decorative" functions raises serious questions, as it presumes the relevance of modern distinctions between "sacred" and "secular" objects. Focusing on figurines from Hellenistic houses and concluding with a case study from Delos, this study uses material and textual evidence to investigate the multiple affordances of terracotta figurines in domestic contexts. Among other things, figurines might facilitate human-divine encounters, defend the safety of the *oikos*, impress or amuse viewers, present their owners as cultural sophisticates, prompt guests to contemplate their own social performance, or even take part in magical rituals. In generating, mediating, and participating in a wide range of domestic interactions, Hellenistic figurines inextricably interweave the human, divine, and material worlds.*

Keywords: domestic religion, household archaeology, terracotta figurines, archaeology of value, affordances, Hellenistic period, Delos

Introduction

While domestic cult has attracted renewed interest in recent years, much work remains to be done on the material dimension of ritual practice within Greek households.[1] This paper

examines a form of domestic material culture whose complex relationship to religious ritual bears closer investigation. Terracotta figurines appear in domestic contexts from the Archaic period on, becoming particularly numerous and iconographically diverse in late Classical and Hellenistic houses.[2] They may appear in any room of a house, seldom showing consistent patterning.[3] At many sites, imprecision in older excavation

[1] As noted by Morgan 2011; Tsakirgis 2011. Recent work on domestic cult: Zaidman 2004; Gherchanoc 2012; Boedeker 2008; Faraone 2008; Morgan 2011; Bowes 2015; Parker 2015, 73–78.

[2] Cf. Burn 2012, 226. Archaic and early Classical figurines from domestic contexts: Rumscheid 2006, 77–79. Domestic terracottas increase dramatically in the 4th century BC, largely thanks to finds from Olynthos: Cahill 2002; Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2006; Rumscheid 2006, 79–87. Within the past few years, a number of important recent edited volumes have significantly advanced research on Greek terracotta figurines; see Huysecom-Haxhi & Muller 2015; Muller & Laflı 2015–2016; Adam-Veleni *et al.* 2017; Papantoniou *et al.* 2019a.

[3] At late Classical Olynthos, limited patterning may be visible: the most common locations for figurines are "kitchen-complexes or similarly de-

records hinders quantitative analysis of figurine distribution, but such information as exists confirms the impression of widespread distribution, without consistent associations with any room type.[4]

Discussions of domestic figurines' function and perceived value frequently treat them either as cult objects or items of decoration. Many (though not all) domestic terracottas depict themes traditionally considered "religious," such as images of gods, and many domestic figurine types also appear in sanctuaries and graves. Accordingly, some scholars link these objects to household cult, while others, noting the general elaboration of domestic furnishings in the late Classical and Hellenistic periods, suggest decorative functions.[5] Others suggest that figurines might have served *either* religious or decorative purposes,[6] although this seemingly more agnostic position still reifies the idea of a binary choice between "religion" and "decoration".

However, the implicit opposition of religious and display value raises serious questions. Modern distinctions between "sacred" and "secular" are anachronistic, as Greek culture did not make such category distinctions.[7] The absence of a Greek word corresponding in all particulars to "religion" suggests that people did not conceive of "the religious" as a separate, clearly bounded sphere.[8] The existence of purely "decorative" art in antiquity has also attracted much debate.[9] Even if the Hellenistic period saw the emergence of new concepts of "art" based on aesthetic appreciation,[10] recent research demonstrates that aesthetic and ritual modes of viewing remained compatible and often co-occurred even in post-Classical contexts.[11] Ad-

ditionally, the distinction between "ritual" and "non-ritual" images appears increasingly ambiguous, given dispute over the existence of an emic category of "cult images".[12]

Accordingly, attempts to categorize figurines as either "religious" or "decorative" assume the importance of distinctions that were not necessarily meaningful to ancient consumers. Furthermore, many figurines might serve purposes that would strike modern observers as both "religious" and "decorative." A high degree of technical quality could make a figurine effective not only for displaying its owner's taste, but also as a pleasing *agalma* for the gods; a figurine's ritual functions need not stop viewers from admiring its workmanship; and even if a divine image did not receive regular offerings, it might still evoke thoughts of piety in viewers or reassure them of divine protection. Furthermore, seeking a single totalizing "meaning" for any figurine is misleading,[13] as different individuals might respond differently to the same object depending on background or context.

Rather than attempting to ascribe a single meaning to domestic figurines generally or to any figurine in particular, we may instead investigate the range of figurines' *affordances*: their potential for facilitating certain outcomes, actions, or behaviors.[14] Originally developed by James Gibson and refined by subsequent scholarship, affordance theory provides a way to integrate user choice with the agency of the objects themselves.[15] While figurines presented their users and viewers with a range of affordances, different users might make different choices about how to act on those affordances.

Because the increased use of domestic figurines in the Hellenistic period may suggest changes in associated practices and values, this paper primarily addresses terracotta figurines from Hellenistic domestic contexts (informed, when applicable, by references to parallels from late Classical Olynthos and the Roman Eastern Mediterranean). Space does not here permit a catalog of all Hellenistic figurines from household contexts or a discussion of every iconographic type attested in Hellenistic houses.[16] Space constraints also prohibit detailed discussion

signed secondary work spaces" (Sharpe 2015, 226; cf. Verhagen 2012, 33, who sees kitchen-complexes and courtyards as the most common locations for Olynthian figurines). However, such patterns are not apparent at later sites (Rumscheid 2006, 124).

[4] Rumscheid 2006.

[5] Terracottas as domestic cult objects: Ammerman 1990, 43; Frankfurter 1998, 136–142; 2015, 210–214; Barrett 2011; 2015b; Kosma 2015; Sharpe 2015; Rathmayr 2020, 248. Terracottas as domestic decoration: Robinson 1952, 63; Reeder 1990, 87; Kunze 1996, 115–116; Sharpe 2006, 16; Bobou 2015, 87. Historiography: Rumscheid 2006, 25–30. Similar questions about "religious" versus "decorative" value for domestic statuary and statuettes in other media: Kreeb 1988, 63–86; Bartman 1992, 44–48; Kunze 1996 (focusing on palace contexts); Walter-Karydi 1998, 70–71; Hardiman 2005; 2016; Sharpe 2006.

[6] E.g., Ammerman 1990, 43; Burn & Higgins 2001, 21; Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2006, 22, 28–29; Rumscheid 2006, 126–131, 177, 347–350; Jeammet & Mathieux 2010, 162 n. 3; Tsakirgis 2010, 441; Burn 2012, 231–232; Jackson 2015, 392; Minniti 2015, 157–158.

[7] Modern and ancient constructions of "sacred" and "profane": Bremmer 1998; Rebillard & Sotinel 2010; Rebillard 2012, 62, 91, 95–96.

[8] Greek vocabulary of the sacred, purity, and piety: Zaidman & Pantel 1992, 8–15; Casevitz 2010.

[9] E.g. Veyne 1990; Hölscher 2009; Swift 2009. Aesthetic considerations in producing and consuming ancient art: Tanner 2006; Platt & Squire 2010; Porter 2012.

[10] Tanner 2006, 246–264; 2010; critiqued by Squire 2009, 244–249.

[11] Platt 2010; 2011.

[12] Donohue 1997; more recently Platt 2011, esp. 77–123.

[13] This point—and, more broadly, my argument for multivalence and the emergence of meaning(s) from interactions between people, objects, and contexts—is also highly compatible with Gina Salapata's approach to votive offerings in *Chapter 13*, this volume.

[14] Affordances: Gibson 1986, 127–143, esp. 133–135; Knappett 2004; Costall & Richards 2013; Günther & Fabricius 2021.

[15] Object agency: *inter alia*, Gell 1998; Hodder 2012. Another perspective on the role of user agency in assigning functions and values to figurines was recently published by Lara Weiss (2019) while the present article was in press. While Weiss's focus (an investigation of a particular figurine type from Karanis) is more specific than that of the present paper, her arguments about the multifunctionality of terracottas are in many ways compatible with my argument.

[16] A partial such catalogue (though now requiring supplementation with more recent finds): Rumscheid 2006, 76–131.

of figurines' economic uses (e.g. domestic production of figurines for sale), practical uses (employment of figurines as, e.g., plastic lamps), or the controversial question of whether some figurine types served as toys.[17] Such issues will be explored further in forthcoming research.[18]

Concluding with a case study from Delos, this study uses material and textual evidence to investigate how a multiplicity of culturally recognized affordances might function in practice.[19] Beyond binary oppositions of "cultic" and "decorative" uses, material and textual evidence indicates that figurines could play numerous active roles within Hellenistic houses: facilitating human-divine encounters, defending the safety of the *oikos*, impressing or amusing viewers, presenting their owners as cultural sophisticates, prompting guests to contemplate their own social performance, or even activating spells designed to bend other people to one's will. In generating, mediating, and participating in a wide range of domestic interactions, Hellenistic figurines inextricably interweave the human, divine, and material worlds.

Material affordances

Terracotta figurines' material properties provide an initial set of affordances and constraints for their use. Hellenistic terracotta figurines are usually (though not invariably) mold-made, hollow, and thin-walled.[20] Most are relatively small (under a foot, *c.* 30 cm high), although some larger examples exist.[21] To prevent breaking during firing, producers frequently cut vents into figurines' backs. While some figurines are fully modeled in the round, many are roughly modeled or unmodeled on the back. Additionally, producers usually covered Hellenistic figurines with a white coating that served as a base for paint.

These small, lightweight objects afford easy grasping and carrying, but their fragility limits their use and display. Figurines had to be handled gently, decreasing the likelihood that many could have served as children's toys.[22] Other physical characteristics lend themselves to display in a fixed location. The frequent lack of detail, and presence of vent holes, on the back side encourages primarily frontal viewing. Many terracottas stand upright on attached bases, while attachment holes on others create opportunities for hanging on walls.[23] These formal characteristics invite relatively static modes of display and/or storage: e.g., on shelves, benches, wall niches, altars, or walls.[24]

Terracottas' cheap material and mass production generate further affordances and constraints. Although some figurines display more labor-intensive forms of production (see below), most were probably relatively inexpensive and widely accessible. While such features might limit figurines' usefulness for displaying wealth, their mass production and broad distribution created other opportunities. New iconographic types could rapidly disseminate widely,[25] a process enabled by the portability of figurines and molds. The process of derivative production facilitated both reproduction and alteration, as producers could cast new molds from existing figurines and modify those molds to create new types. Terracottas' accessibility promoted ubiquity, so that in some settlements, practically every house appears to have contained one or more terracottas. This proliferation of figurines and figurine types created opportunities for consumer choice, as coroplastic workshops offered numerous iconographic options.[26] The availability of choices enabled consumers to compare options, make purposeful selections, and deploy those selections according to individual preference.

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[17] Domestic figurine production: Reinders 1988, 117–134; van Boekel & Mulder 2003, 109–116; Haagsma 2010. Figurines as possible toys: see in the past 20 years Muratov 2004; Rumscheid 2006, 131; Dasen 2011, 56–57; Girveau & Charles 2011, 156, 167, cat. nos. 255, 285; Weiss 2015; 2019; Barrett & Darby 2016, 346; Palli 2017; Gutschke 2019.

[18] Barrett in preparation.

[19] By "culturally recognized affordances," I mean those affordances that ancient users would have been culturally habituated to see as salient. Terracotta figurines' entire field of affordances, in Gibson's sense, might be extremely broad: e.g., as small, detached objects, they afford wielding, throwing, etc. However, we have no evidence for the regular use of terracotta figurines as, e.g., hand-held missiles, and this does not seem to have been a widely acknowledged option for their use. As Knappett points out (2004, 45), people's perception of an object's affordances is shaped by "cultural information relevant to the situation and object in question." In this paper, I use material and textual evidence to explore which of figurines' various affordances Hellenistic viewers were most likely to *perceive* as salient in domestic settings.

[20] Coroplastic manufacturing techniques: Uhlenbrock 1990b; Muller 1996, 28–47; 2000; Barrett 2011, 89–118; multiple contributions to Muller & Laflı 2015–2016, vol. 1; Bechtsi 2017; Koukouvou 2017; Papantoniou *et al*. 2019b, 24–34.

[21] Most terracottas are thus miniatures, significantly smaller than the "real" entities (human, divine, or otherwise) they depict. The implications of this miniaturization are beyond the scope of this chapter, but will be explored in later work (Barrett in preparation). On miniaturization theory and figu-

rines, see most recently Martin & Langin-Hooper 2018; Langlin-Hooper 2020. For larger terracottas, see Rumscheid 2006, 125, 394.

[22] With some exceptions; see *supra, note 17*.

[23] Exceptions include figurines molded into a sitting position (likely intended for positioning on removable seats or shelves); winged Eros or Nike figurines with back holes for suspension from above (thus making them "fly"); and so-called "dolls" (of disputed purpose) with articulated limbs. See Uhlenbrock 1990a, nos. 24–26; Muratov 2004; Barrett 2011, 157–161.

[24] Kreeb 1988, 43–46 (on statuettes of multiple materials); Rumscheid 2006, 60; Boozer 2015, n. 53. Cf. figurines' placement in sanctuaries on altars, benches, or walls: Alroth 1988; Ammerman 1990, 42.

[25] See, e.g., Barrett 2011 on Egyptian iconography on Delos. On the mass production of terracotta figurines, see further Salapata, *Chapter 13* in this volume.

[26] On the range of figurines found in two Delian workshops: Barrett 2011, 354–366.

Fig. 1. Fragmentary terracotta herm from Room E, drain IV, House of the Comedians, Delos (Delos Museum 62-0-175). The head is missing, though part of the phallus remains visible on the shaft. Offerings (breads, fruits) are depicted at the base of the herm. Height: 143.5 mm. Photograph by Caitlín E. Barrett. © Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Culture and Sports, General Directorate of Antiquities and Culture Heritage/Twenty-First Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities.

Constructing and mediating human-divine interactions: Beyond "cult images" and "votives"

Some evidence suggests a role in domestic rituals for some, though not necessarily all, figurines. Classical through Roman-period Greek literary texts and papyri describe offerings, prayers, and lamp-lighting at domestic altars or shrines[27] and refer to divine images in the household.[28] Archaeological evidence, including finds of domestic altars, similarly testifies to domestic offerings and prayers to various deities.[29] Not all such deities would have received anthropomorphic representations (e.g., Zeus Ktesios could be worshipped as a jar[30]), but many Hellenistic houses contained statuettes of gods in various media, including terracotta. Houses at Hellenistic Priene, Kallipetra, Amphipolis, Pella, Petres, Morgantina, Kallithera, Chersonesos, Pharsalos, possibly Eretria, and late Classical Olynthos have produced terracottas in probable ritual contexts, as indicated by figurines' incorporation into assemblages that included altars, *thymiateria*, and/or miniature pottery.[31] Some figurines located on or near altars may have served as miniature cult statues[32] or as offerings.[33]

Terracottas could thus enable human-divine communications in multiple ways: *receiving* offerings, *constituting* offerings, and/or *performing* offerings. Some, like the terracotta herm in *Fig. 1*,[34] demonstrate the limitations of modern constructions of "cult images" versus "votives" by potentially taking on both roles. This figurine from a house on Delos depicts both a herm and a set of offerings at the herm's base—thus

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[27] Literary evidence (mostly Athenian) for domestic offerings of food, incense, oil, and garlands: Morgan 2011, 456–457. Ptolemaic papyri referring to altars or shrines in houses: *Sel. Pap.* II, 413; *P. Athen.* 60; *P. Enteux.* 13; Robert 1966, 187–188; Bowman 1986, 185; Lewis 2001, 23–24; Frankfurter 2012, 322. Lamp-lighting rites at domestic shrines outside Egypt: Nilsson 1950, 206; Bowes 2015, 216. Christian criticism of the domestic worship of divine images: Frankfurter 2012, 322.

[28] On divine images at the hearth: Pl. *Leg.* 11.931a (seemingly comparing an aged parent at one's hearth to a domestic cult statue, and recommending similar pious care for both); Schol. Ar. *Av.* 436. Two Theocritean epigrams purport to be inscribed on domestic statuettes or statues (Theoc. *Epigr.* 8, 13; Harward 1982, 94–99; Walter-Karydi 1998, 69–70).

[29] Cahill 2002, 99, 128, 252; Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2006, 23–24; Rumscheid 2006, 82; Bowes 2015, 211–212; Parker 2015, 76–77.

[30] Ath. 11.473 b–c; Boedeker 2008, 231–232.

[31] Intzesiloglou 1984; Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2006; Rumscheid 2006, 56–57, 74, 126–131, 347–350; Tsakalou-Tzanavari 2007, 118; Mili 2015, 88–89; Sharpe 2015; Ieremias 2019, 88–92. Cautions about using miniature pottery to identify cult sites: Horsnæs 2001. At Demetrias, a ritual assemblage containing figurines was originally attributed to a house, but the building has been reinterpreted as a Metroon (Batziou-Efstathiou 2002, 30–32; Mili 2015, 206; Ieremias 2019, 64–66). Ieremias interprets additional assemblages at Demetrias and Aiani as possible domestic shrines because of the placement of the figurines on a bench (Ieremias 2019, 85–89, 92–95). Some finds from Vardarski Rid may also derive from domestic shrines; see Blaževska 2016, with the comments of Ieremias 2019, 94 n. 591.

[32] Barrett 2015b, 416–417.

[33] E.g., Rumscheid 2006, 43–44, 349, 490–491 (no. 262).

[34] Delos Museum 62-0-17, previously published in Bovon 1970, no. B59; Barrett 2011, fig. D144. The findspot has been identified as an industrial room (Bruneau & Vatin 1970, 38–39) or possibly a bathroom later reused as a workshop (Trümper 1998, 202–205).

potentially embodying not only the recipient of worship,[35] but also the act of offering. Such domestic images parallel Pausanias's famous account of the offering of the Orneatai at Delphi. According to Pausanias, when the people of Orneai could not afford to perform the daily processions and sacrifices they had promised to Apollo, they dedicated bronze figurines of a sacrifice and procession.[36] The success of this device suggests that figurines could not only *represent*, but also permanently *instantiate*, acts of piety. In domestic cultic contexts, too, some figurines may have made the performance of offering permanently ongoing.

Protecting the household

Even if they did not participate in ongoing human cult performance, some figurines might enlist supernatural powers in another way, providing protection from threats. Some terracotta types from domestic contexts, such as *gorgoneia*, display apotropaic imagery.[37] Additionally, figurines appear in domestic foundation or wall deposits at some Hellenistic Egyptian sites.[38] At Tebtunis, excavators found a dancing figurine of the household god Bes in an apparent foundation deposit underneath a late Ptolemaic house, together with a plate and much carbonized wood.[39] Such deposits were probably intended to secure divine protection for the household.

Display and social interaction

Besides communicating with—or embodying—supernatural beings, figurines might also help mediate people's social relationships with other humans. In Hellenistic houses, stone statuary appears to be concentrated in areas that were accessi-ble and visible to guests, including *andrones* and courtyards.[40] Some indications suggest similar display locations for at least some terracottas. Courtyards are attested as findspots for some domestic figurines at Hellenistic Delos, Demetrias, Priene, Jebel Khalid, Ephesos, and Olynthos.[41] Although figurines appear in *andrones* less often than is sometimes assumed,[42] some sites—including Olynthos, Eretria, and Priene—have produced figurines in *andrones*.[43] Additionally, recent scholarship suggests that *symposia* and the reception of guests may also have occurred in spaces without architecturally distinctive marking.[44]

Certainly, many more figurines do *not* come from *andrones* or courtyards, and Hellenistic domestic terracottas are not consistently associated with any single room type.[45] Archaeological evidence thus cannot demonstrate that consumers invariably valued domestic figurines exclusively or primarily for display value. Additionally, visible locations' potential for display value does not eliminate simultaneous religious affordances. For example, at Olynthos, the figurines in one *andron* may have belonged to a household shrine,[46] while figurines in another house's courtyard may have been associated with an altar.[47]

The limited data on most domestic terracottas' contexts seldom permit clear distinctions between figurines that communicated primarily with gods, and figurines that communicated primarily with humans—and, more to the point, many might well have done both. Nonetheless, the evidence does suggest that terracottas were at least sometimes visible to guests.

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[35] Herms as recipients of cult: see *infra*, n. 96. Harward takes "terracotta herms accompanied by moulded offerings" as additional evidence for the practice of domestic offerings to herms (Harward 1982, 134–135).
[36] Paus. 10.18.5, discussed by Elsner 1996, 526–527; Faraone 2018, 114; Platt 2018. Other literary examples of model offerings ritually identified with "real" offerings: Patera 2015, 182–185.
[37] See, e.g., Metzger 1993, 118, no. 89; Walter-Karydi 1998, 65–66, fig. 53; Rumscheid 2006, 85–87, 130, 177; and on saic figurines generally, Kefalidou 2017. Cf. also a 2nd–3rd century AD terracotta plaque of Artemis of Ephesus (Sfameni Gasparro 1973, 179–180, no. 44), which Faraone (2018, 169–172) interprets as a protective amulet for a house or shop.
[38] Boutantin 2014, 155–156; Barrett 2015b, 411–412. Cf. a Bes-vessel from a possible domestic foundation ritual at Mut al-Kharab (Gill 2016, 30). Figurines are also common in Ptolemaic temple foundation deposits, although these are more often bronze (Gill 2016, 33). On the broader subject of figurines from Greco-Roman Egypt, Ballet's recent synthetic work (Ballet 2020) was published while this article was in press, and thus could not be consulted for the present study.
[39] Mathieu 2001, 548.

[40] Hardiman 2005, 131; 2016, 614, 616; and see already Kreeb 1988, 33–51, 80–83 on Hellenistic Delos.
[41] Cahill 2002, esp. 140–141; Rumscheid 2006, 74; Jackson 2015, figs. 18–19; Sharpe 2015; Ieremias 2019, 85; Rathmayr 2020, 243; and see below for an example from Delos. Later parallels also exist: e.g., many figurines at Roman-period Ephesos came from courtyards and other rooms associated with entertainment and display (Rathmayr 2015, 274).
[42] Rumscheid 2006, 28–30. An often-cited assemblage from House 33, Priene, may not actually come from an *andron* and may not be *in situ* (Rumscheid 2006, 51–56, 351–354, 404; Süvegh 2017, 181–182; for earlier interpretations, see Raeder 1984, 22–25; Ammerman 1990, 43; Cahill 2002, 140).
[43] E.g., at Hellenistic Priene (Rumscheid 2006, 74; 2014, 152), Eretria (Metzger 1993, 118–124; Hardiman 2005, 88–92; though see the cautions of Rumscheid 2006, 85–87), and late Classical Olynthos (Cahill 2002, 140–141, 187; Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2006, 23; Rumscheid 2006, 81; Barrett in preparation).
[44] Tsakirgis 2005, 77–78; Lynch 2011, 76–77.
[45] Rumscheid 2006, 124.
[46] Cahill 2002, 140–141; Sharpe 2015, 224–225; but see further Barrett in preparation.
[47] Sharpe 2015, 225.

Constructing, communicating, and considering social performance

When displayed in visible locations, figurines could help construct a social identity for their owner by impressing, amusing, or appealing to visitors. Although scholars often portray terracottas as low-quality knockoffs of marble or bronze figurines,[48] some Hellenistic terracottas display painstaking craftsmanship involving multiple molded parts and retooling.[49] The occasional presence of signatures and makers' marks may suggest ascription of value to the work of specific craftsmen or workshops.[50] Occasional use of gilding also cautions against assumptions that terracottas were invariably low-status objects.[51] Additionally, some figurines from Hellenistic domestic contexts emulate famous statues, such as the Athena Parthenos or the Diadoumenos.[52] Such visual allusions might portray the house owner as culturally sophisticated, displaying the connoisseurship that was emerging as a social value during this period.[53]

However, some domestic reproductions of monumental divine images might not only attest to connoisseurship, but also serve as objects of devotion or souvenirs of pilgrimage.[54] Figurines' messages to guests need not only involve status or sophistication: visible displays of cult performance might also make assertions about the host's piety. Objects' affordances for ritual performance and social display once again appear complementary, not contradictory.

In addition to constructing a persona for the host, some domestic figurines might also prompt guests to consider their own social performance. This possibility is especially relevant for figurines depicting humans, as well as figurines depicting activities characteristic of domestic socializing (e.g., feasting and drinking). Hellenistic figurines of humans provide numerous possible models, both positive and negative, for social performance—from representations of philosophers or of modest, finely dressed females ("Tanagra figurines"), to so-called "grotesques" depicting socially marginal individuals.[55]

Many coroplastic representations of banqueters both human and nonhuman—e.g., satyrs or humans carrying wine vessels, sporting *ithyphalloi*, or engaging in sexual display—may suggest excessive or potentially transgressive social performance.[56] When encountered by guests who had themselves gathered to feast or drink, such images might provoke viewers to consider their own behavior. This effect parallels that sometimes proposed for Classical sympotic vessels depicting carousing satyrs, or Roman wall paintings of wild Nilotic banquets.[57] Coroplastic images of excessive consumption or inappropriate activity might not only serve apotropaic purposes,[58] but also act as focusing devices for individual viewers' own social behavior.

While some figurines challenge viewers to consider their own social performance, some may reframe that social performance as potentially timeless and universal. Imagery associated with Aphrodite and Dionysos was generally popular in Hellenistic domestic assemblages, evoking a sense of *tryphe* and well-being.[59] These two deities, their entourages, and their attributes are similarly common in domestic coroplastic repertoires. Out of 295 figurines identified as deities, heroes, or "*images de cultes*" in Alfred Laumonier's catalogue of (mostly domestic) terracottas from Hellenistic Delos, over 40% represent Aphrodite, Eros, and Dionysos.[60] At Priene, Aphrodite and Eros are the most common divinities in the figurine rep-

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115–119; Rumscheid 2006, 495–496, no. 276. "Grotesques" from domestic contexts: Rathmayr 2015, 272 (including some from dining rooms, where they would have been visible to guests); Süvegh 2017. Some "grotesques" as socially marginal figures: Giuliani 1987; Trentin 2015. Other "grotesques" may serve different purposes (Barrett 2015a).

[56] Though note that in Ptolemaic Egypt, similar imagery might evoke religious festivals (Barrett 2011; 2019, 60–108).

[57] Satyr and Silenos figurines in possible *andrones*: see, e.g., Metzger 1993, nos. 90, 91; Rumscheid 2006, 44, 53 (though see also *supra*, notes *42*, *43*); 2014, 152. Satyrs as negative examples: Osborne 2007a, 46–47, 49; 2007b. Nilotic banquet scenes: Barrett 2017; 2019.

[58] Sexual imagery as apotropaic: Slane & Dickie 1993; Clarke 1998, 130–136; 2007.

[59] Kreeb 1988, 58–60; Zanker 1998; Hales 2008; Hardiman 2016, 615–620.

[60] Of the 295 figurines of 2nd–1st century BC date that Laumonier (1956, 111–174) classifies as images of deities, heroes, or "*images de cultes étrangers*" (p. 134), he associates 49 with Aphrodite, 66 with Eros, and 6 with Dionysos. Although figurines depicting Dionysos himself are not numerous, other Dionysiac themes are common: another 6 figurines of the 2nd–1st century BC represent Silenoi or satyrs, while 34 figurines represent theatrical themes (Laumonier 1956, 255–256, 262–267). (Note that these numbers follow Laumonier's iconographic identifications. However, there is room for debate about the identification of some figures in his catalog—see, e.g., Barrett 2011—so the final counts for particular "types" may in fact vary somewhat, depending on the iconographic criteria one follows. For present purposes, though, Laumonier's numbers make a useful heuristic). For Delian figurines published since 1956, see Bovon 1970; Hadjidakis 2003; 2004; Barrett 2011; Hermary 2015. On the contexts of Delian figurines, and the likely domestic origins of those found in residential areas, see Barrett 2011; Hermary 2015. On

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[48] E.g., Reeder 1990, 87; Sharpe 2006, 67; Burn 2012, 231.

[49] Cf. Uhlenbrock 1990c, 78; Rumscheid 2006, 393–394.

[50] Signatures and other pre-firing marks: Kassab 1988; Handler 2012, 170–177; Koukouvou 2017, 47; Ieremias 2019, 18; Papantoniou *et al.* 2019b, 24. Signatures as possible evidence for objects' valuation: Villanueva Puig 2007; Osborne 2010.

[51] Barrett 2011, 166.

[52] Uhlenbrock 1990c, 77; Rumscheid 2008.

[53] Increasing connoisseurship: Hardiman 2005; Tanner 2006, 246–264; 2010.

[54] Figurines as souvenirs: Leipen 1971, 12; Rumscheid 2008, 144–145. Some terracottas from late antique Egypt have inscriptions possibly suggesting they were purchased at a saint's shrine (Frankfurter 2014, 133; 2015, 210).

[55] "Tanagra figurines" from domestic contexts: Jeammet & Mathieux 2010, 162 n. 3; Verhagen 2012. Philosopher figurines: Thompson 1957,

ertoire; almost 10% of Priene figurines depict Aphrodite, and over 10% depict Eros.[61] Approximately 7% of figurines from Priene depict Dionysiac themes, such as satyrs, Pans, theatrical motifs, or figures carrying wine vessels.[62] In social contexts, such imagery not only invokes the "good life" and advertises the home's happiness and divine protection, but potentially also transports human viewers into the company of the gods. For example, the *andron* of House 14 at Priene contained two statuettes (both now lost): a terracotta Aphrodite and a 50 cm high satyr (probably stone rather than terracotta, based on height).[63] The satyr's presence implicitly transforms a social gathering into a Dionysiac *thiasos*, while the statuette of Aphrodite invokes—and potentially also makes present for viewers—a goddess whose powers included not only the erotic sphere, but also the bestowal of domestic harmony and prosperity.[64]

Figurines in domestic magic

Visible display is not the only way individuals could use figurines to influence their interactions with other people. Greek and Demotic magical papyri from Roman Egypt also testify to the use of figurines of various materials—clay as well as wax, wood, stone, or organic substances—in magical rites (*Table 1*).[65] These rites' relationship to domestic ritual is complex; some spells require practitioners to be inside their houses, some are set outside the home, and others do not specify location.[66] Accordingly, many (though not all) magical rituals could be performed at home, and some involved figurines of various media. Depending on the spell, such figurines may represent gods, daimonic helpers, or human targets. Although magical uses of figurines are best known from the Roman empire, evidence indicates that similar practices already existed in the Hellenistic world.

A useful case study comes from textual and material evidence for figurines in erotic magic. Two spells from the Roman-period Greek Magical Papyri employ figurines of Eros

to compel sexual attraction (*Table 1, nos. 5, 14*).[67] Though these spells use figurines of wood and wax, terracotta figurines might serve similar purposes, being similarly small-sized and made of easily obtained materials. In other erotic *PGM* spells, figurines stand in for a human target.[68] One spell calls for piercing a clay or wax female figurine with pins to obtain sexual fidelity,[69] paralleling a famous pin-pierced clay figurine from Roman Egypt (*Fig. 2a*).[70] While that figurine was probably deposited in a grave, a similar find comes from a private house. Under the floor of a house at Roman-period Karanis was a crude clay female figurine (*Fig. 2b*), burned and buried with three pins in an assemblage that Andrew Wilburn identifies as remains from an erotic binding spell.[71] Another bound, nude female figurine from Naukratis—tentatively dated to the Hellenistic period, and possibly also from a private house—probably also served magical functions (*Fig. 2c*).[72] Yet another figurine from a domestic courtyard at Roman Amheida may also have belonged to a magical assemblage, although this case is uncertain.[73]

Like the magical papyri, these figurines all come from Greco-Roman Egypt, but similar rituals were practiced elsewhere and at other periods. Literary evidence suggests the magical use of figurines of various media as early as the 5th century BC. Plato mentions wax images at doorways, crossroads, and tombs;[74] Hellenistic and Roman poets associate clay, wax, and wool figurines with erotic and other hostile magic;[75] and

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Aphrodite, Eros, and Dionysiac imagery in Greek domestic figurine repertoires more generally: Rumscheid 2006.
[61] Rumscheid 2006, 338, 344, 404.
[62] Rumscheid 2006, nos. 120, 255, 262–274, 376–388.
[63] Rumscheid 2006, 44.
[64] On Aphrodite as a goddess of domestic harmony and prosperity, see Theoc. *Epgr.* 13 (ap. *Anth. Pal.* 6.340), purporting to be engraved on a household statue or statuette.
[65] On organic substances, cf. also the Hecate figurine made from plant matter and lizard meat in *Chaldean Oracles* frag. 224. For previous discussions of the magical uses of figurines, see *inter alia* Faraone 1991; Ogden 2001, 71–79; Bailliot 2015; Barrett 2015b; Ball 2019; Wilburn 2019.
[66] See discussion in Barrett 2015b, 411.

[67] Cf. Lucian, *Philops.* 13; Collins 2008, 97–103. Erotic magic: Faraone 1999.
[68] Cf. Wilburn 2012, 77–78 on mimesis of the victim; cf. Gell 1998, 102–104 on "volt sorcery." I avoid the problematic term "voodoo doll," on which see Armitage 2015; Frankfurter 2019, 672.
[69] *PGM* IV.296–466, following Preisendanz's emendation: "λαβὼν κηρὸν <ἢ πηλὸν> ἀπὸ τροχοῦ κεραμικοῦ" (Preisendanz 1973–1974, I.82).
[70] Bourguet 1975; Wilburn 2012, 28–30. Found in a jar with the figurine was a lead *defixio* with an erotic binding spell (*Suppl. Mag.* 47; see Daniel & Maltomini 1990, 179–183).
[71] Wilburn 2012, 131–139. Some of the holes forming the figurine's features are the same size as, and may have been created by, the pins (Wilburn 2012, 132). Compare also the find of at least one pin-pierced clay figurine in the cellar of a late Roman building at Reims, although it is not clear if this structure was domestic (Bailliot 2015, 104).
[72] Dating: Thomas 2013–2015, 32, 55 n. 599; Villing *et al.* 2013–2015, cat. no. DC.277; Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge 2016 (s.v. NA494). Thomas has more recently suggested a stylistic date of 4th or 3rd century BC (Ross Thomas, pers. comm.), so the figurine may possibly be late Classical rather than Hellenistic. However, an early Hellenistic bound figurine deposited into an earlier tomb at Sovana (Faraone 1991, 202, no. 18, pl. 12) provides a close stylistic parallel. Context: Thomas 2013–2015, 55.
[73] Boozer 2015, 296–297, inv. 11920; only the head survives.
[74] Pl. *Leg.* 933a–b. A Sophocles fragment may also refer to melting wax figurines in erotic magic (*The Root-Cutters*, frag. 536); see Faraone 1999, 7.
[75] Theoc. *Id.* 2.28–29; Verg. *Ecl.* 8.80–81; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.30–33; Ov. *Am.* 3.7.27–37. Literary evidence for erotic magic: Faraone 1999. Figurines in erotic and aggressive magic: Gager 1992, 101–106, no. 30; Haggag 2004; Wilburn 2012, 56–58, 74–83; Hanses 2022.

Table 1. Spells from the Greek Magical Papyri *(PGM) and* Demotic Magical Papyri *(PDM) prescribing the manufacture or use of figurines[I]*

Cat. no.	Source[II]	Iconography and intended purpose of figurine, according to the spell (or explanation if the spell leaves these features unspecified)	Material(s) of figurine[III]	Is the figurine to be made by the practitioner, or does the practitioner use a pre-made figurine?
1	*PGM* III.290–321	Figurine of Apollo, for divination	Wood (laurel)	Unspecified
2	*PGM* III.410–423	Twelve female figures, for enhancing one's memory	Barley-meal dough	Made (and eaten) by practitioner
3	*PGM* IV.75–79	Invocation of a god whose face is seemingly described as clay; possibly referring to a terracotta figurine[IV]	Clay?	Unspecified
4	*PGM* IV.296–466	Bound, pin-pierced female figurine and figurine of Ares, for erotic magic	Wax or clay	Made by practitioner
5	*PGM* IV.1840–1870	Figurine of Eros, for erotic magic	Wood (mulberry)	Unspecified
6	*PGM* IV.1872–1927	Figurine of a dog, for erotic magic	Wax, fruit, and μάννα	Made by practitioner
7	*PGM* IV.2359–2372	Figurine of Hermes, for business success	Wax and plant matter	Made by practitioner
8	*PGM* IV.2373–2440	Figurine of a beggar, for business success	Wax	Made by practitioner
9	*PGM* IV.2943–2966	Figurine of a dog, for erotic magic	Dough or wax	Made by practitioner
10	*PGM* IV.3125–3171	Figurine of a composite theriomorphic deity, for prosperity	Wax	Made by practitioner
11	*PGM* V.370–446	Figurine of Hermes, for divination[V]	Clay, plant matter, and an ibis egg	Made by practitioner
12	*PGM* VII.862–918	Figurine of Selene, for erotic magic	Clay, sulfur, and goat blood	Made by practitioner

[I] This table includes only spells that refer to human-made figures, as opposed to, e.g., dead animals used in ways similar to statuettes (as in *PGM* I.1–42, where a dead falcon is set up in a shrine and given offerings). Also excluded from the present table are images to be engraved on gemstones (as in, e.g., *PGM* IV.1716–1840) or drawn onto papyrus or other flat surfaces (e.g., *PDM* Suppl. 101–116, 138–149). I additionally omit two *PGM* passages that are sometimes interpreted as describing figurines (*PGM* CIX, *PGM* CXI), as I believe their texts are not sufficiently clear to be certain of this interpretation. Versnel (1988) interprets *PGM* CIX as referring to a Hermes figurine made of animal fat, but Faraone's (1988) reading, in which the text actually describes the operation of a mill, is more plausible (cf. Daniel & Maltomini 1992, 30–32; Ball 2019, 22–25). Daniel & Maltomini (1992, 91) interpret *PGM* CXI as prescribing the manufacture of clay or wax figurines, but the highly fragmentary text makes no direct reference to such materials, and it describes images so elaborate that it would be very difficult for a non-specialist to sculpt them. The use of the word πλάσας (Daniel & Maltomini 1992, 92) does suggest sculpting, but it is not clear who is supposed to be doing it; the previous line refers to the god Kneph as a πλάστης μέγ[ας], so the text may well be describing Kneph's activities rather than the human practitioner's. "Magical" uses of figurines also appear in many texts outside this corpus, from literary texts to inscriptions to *defixiones*; see, e.g., the examples conveniently collected by Ogden (2002, nos. 16, 55, 89, 90, 91, 94, 98, 99, 124, 236–238, 242, 244; though on Ogden's no. 124, a purifi-catory law from Cyrene, see also the cautions of Dickie 1996 regarding the size of the images).

[II] *Editio princeps* of the *PGM* corpus: Preisendanz 1973–1974. Of the *PDM* texts cited here: Griffith & Thompson 1904 (*PDM* xiv); Bell *et al.* 1932 (*PDM* lxi); Johnson 1977 (*PDM Supplement*). English translations of the *PGM* and *PDM* corpora: Betz 1992.

[III] Here listing only the principal material from which the figurine's form is molded or carved, and not including any other materials subsequently inserted into the figurine to activate it. Many *PGM* spells call for inserting various additional materials—e.g., magic words on papyrus, animal parts, human bone, or other *materia magica*—to empower the image (see examples collected in Ball 2019, 39–41). These may be directly inserted into figurines made of soft material such as wax (e.g., *PGM* CXXIV.1–43), or placed inside a hole in the back of figurines made of hard material such as wood (e.g., *PGM* IV.1840–1870). These inserted *materia magica* raise complex issues of material agency that are beyond the scope of the present work (see further Barrett, in preparation). I will simply note here that, thanks to the practice of cutting vent holes into the backs of hollow terracotta figurines, many terracottas do have affordances for holding inserted materials.

[IV] See Betz 1992, n. 23.

[V] Regarding this entry and cat. no. 1, compare Nero's alleged use of a statuette of unspecified material for divination (Suet. *Ner.* 56).

Table 1 continued.

Cat. no.	Source	Iconography and intended purpose of figurine, according to the spell (or explanation if the spell leaves these features unspecified)	Material(s) of figurine	Is the figurine to be made by the practitioner, or does the practitioner use a pre-made figurine?
13	*PGM* VIII.1–63	Figurine of a dog-faced baboon wearing the helmet of Hermes[VI], for erotic magic and/or business success[VII]	Wood (olive)	Made by practitioner
14	*PGM* XII.14–95	Figurines of Eros and Psyche, for erotic magic	Wax and plant matter	Made by practitioner
15	*PGM* XIII.29–39	Figurines of the gods of the hours of the day, for obtaining initiation	Flour	Made (and eaten) by practitioner
16	*PGM* XIII.310–319	Figurine of a hippopotamus, for sending dreams	Wax	Made by practitioner
17	*PGM* XIII.320–326	Figurine of a crocodile, to ensure a woman's fidelity	Clay, ink, myrrh	Made by practitioner
18	*PGM* XIII.646–734	Figurine of Apollo, for divination	Wood (laurel root)	Unspecified; the practitioner is to carve inscriptions onto the figurine, but the text does not specify whether the figurine itself should be homemade
19	*PGM* XXIVb.1–15	Fragmentary spell seemingly providing instructions for engraving signs on a magical figurine (type uncertain); purpose unclear—erotic binding spell?[VIII]	Uncertain (text damaged)	Uncertain (text damaged); practitioner apparently engraves signs on the figure, but it is not clear whether or not practitioner also makes the figure
20	*PGM* XXXIIa.1–25	Erotic binding spell; does not directly mention figurines, but a mud figurine was attached to the papyrus[IX]	Mud	Presumably made by practitioner
21	*PGM* XCIV.22–26	Fragmentary instructions for making a magical figurine (type uncertain), for eye health	Uncertain (text damaged)	Made by practitioner
22	*PGM* XCV.1–6	Fragmentary spell seemingly providing instructions for engraving signs on a magical figurine (type uncertain); purpose unclear – binding spell?[X]	Uncertain (text damaged)	Uncertain (text damaged); practitioner apparently engraves signs on the figure, but it is not clear whether or not practitioner also makes the figure
23	*PGM* CI.1–53	Erotic binding spell; does not directly mention figurines, but was found in a clay vessel together with two embracing wax figurines	Wax	Figurines are handmade, probably by practitioner
24	*PGM* CXXIIIa.55–69[XI]	Instructions for using a marble statuette (type unspecified) to treat an illness	Marble	Pre-made
25	*PGM* CXXIV.1–43	Pin-pierced human figurine, for causing illness in another person	Wax	Made by practitioner
26	*PDM* xiv.330–334[XII]	Figurine of a baboon, for obtaining favor	Wax	Made by practitioner
27	*PDM* xiv.366–375	Figurine of the god Geb, for separating a romantic couple	Organic materials including gum, myrrh, and wine	Made by practitioner
28	*PDM* lxi.112–127[XIII]	Figurine of Osiris, for erotic magic	Wax	Unspecified
29	*PDM* Suppl. 117–130	Figurine of a jackal, for sending a dream	Clay	Unspecified

[VI] This figurine reflects Hermes' identification with the Egyptian god Thoth, who was commonly depicted as a baboon. The spell is addressed to Hermes, and the figurine is activated by the insertion of a papyrus on which the "name of Hermes" is written. This name consists of three *voces*, the last of which is Θωύθ (Thoth); see line 60; Preisendanz 1973–1974, II.48. On the identification of Hermes and Thoth, and Greek receptions of Egyptian images of Thoth as a baboon, see Barrett 2011, 299–301.

[VII] The title of the spell identifies it as a "binding love spell" (φιλτρο-κατάδεσμος), but as Betz points out (1992, 146), the spell itself speaks mostly of business success. Hermes does seem more appropriate for help with the latter.

[VIII] See Betz 1992, 264.

[IX] See Hunt 1929; Faraone 1991, no. 30. Faraone identifies the spell as *PGM* LXVIII (whose content is very similar), but the papyrus published by Hunt is XXXIIa in Preisendanz's edition (see Preisendanz 1973–1974, II.158, citing Hunt).

[X] See Betz 1992, 305 n. 1.

[XI] Edition and discussion of this passage: Maltomini 1980, 66, 86.

[XII] See Quack 2011, 69 (citing the text as *pMag*. LL. 11, 1–26).
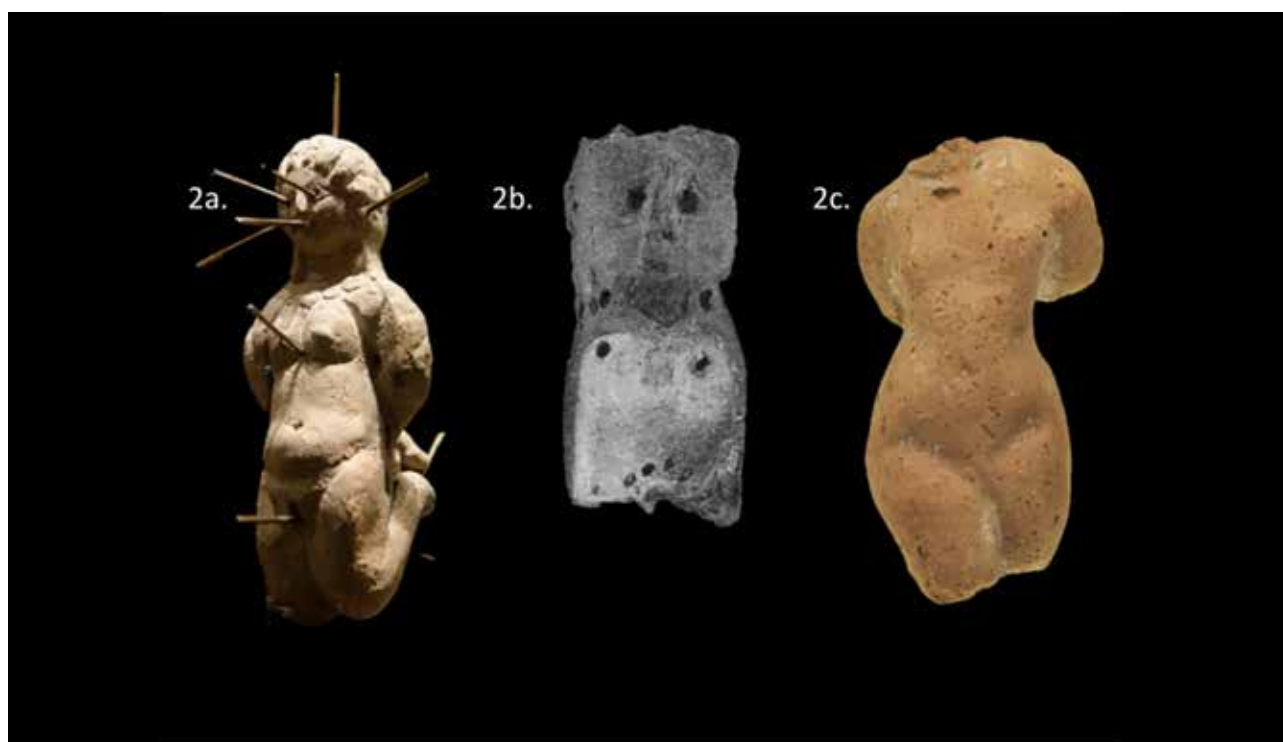
[XIII] See Dieleman 2011, 102–103.

*Fig. 2. Clay figurines from Greco-Roman Egypt, seemingly used for erotic magic (note: objects not shown at same scale). 2a: Clay figurine of a bound, naked woman (Musée du Louvre E27145A), pierced with 13 pins and deposited with a clay pot and a lead tablet engraved with an erotic binding spell (*Suppl. Mag*. 47). Height: 9 cm. Egypt, Roman period. Photograph by Georges Poncet. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Georges Poncet / Art Resource, NY. 2b: Clay figurine of a naked woman, excavated at Karanis (Kelsey Museum inv. 7525, University of Michigan). Wilburn (2012, pl. 13) describes the schematic representation as follows: "The figurine, which is roughly shaped, is indented to indicate a head; the eyes, nose and mouth were added with a tool. The head is topped with a variety of spiky protrusions meant to indicate hair. On the torso, two pinched knobs represent breasts, and an arc of further points indicates the genitals." Height: approx. 4 cm. Karanis, Egypt, 3rd–4th century AD. Photograph: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan. 2c: Terracotta figurine from Naukratis depicting a naked woman with her hands bound behind her back (Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, inv. no. NA494). Traces of white surface coating are present. The breaks at the neck and legs might result from either post-depositional damage or ritual destruction. Height: 5 cm. Naukratis, Egypt, possibly Hellenistic period. Photograph by British Museum staff. © Museum of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge.*

Apuleius was accused of keeping a magical wooden figurine in his house.[76] Curse tablets and bound figurines of various materials appear throughout the Greek world from the late Archaic period and on.[77]

While magical operations may represent another possible use of clay figurines in domestic contexts, archaeological and textual evidence suggests such rites often required highly specialized figurine types. Figurines depicting the human target of a spell have a distinctive iconography (bound, naked, sometimes pin-pierced figures); are typically handmade; and are often unfired or crudely fired via direct application of

flame. The rough workmanship of *Fig. 2b* suggests not only non-professional manufacture, but also disinterest in display value: this object was to be used in secrecy and buried, not displayed visibly. Literary references to the use of figurines in binding spells usually characterize them as handmade. A survey of *PGM* and *PDM* references to figurines (*Table 1*) shows that most are to be manufactured by the spell's practitioner, often following highly ritualized procedures and employing symbolically charged materials. In spells prescribing elaborate rituals for making figurines from ingredients such as clay, sulfur, and goat blood (*Table 1, no. 12*), both materials and manufacturing process are essential for efficacy.

Could people also use professionally manufactured figurines for erotic magic? This suggestion may initially seem unlikely; besides the *PGM/PDM* corpus's emphasis on ritual manufacture, a professionally fired figurine would be impos-

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[76] Apul. *Apol.* 61–65.
[77] Faraone 1991, esp. 189–196; Ogden 2002, 245–260; Collins 2008, 92–97. The earliest known curse tablets are from Selinus, *c.* 500 BC (Gager 1992, 117, 138–139).

sible to pierce with pins.[78] However, this consideration may be less relevant for Hellenistic figurines; the evidence for pin-piercing is primarily Roman-period, and the Naukratis figurine is bound but not pierced. Given the social stigma frequently associated with *mageia*, it is unsurprising that figurines of obviously "magical" types—e.g., bound, nude women—would not be readily available from coroplastic workshops. Since these objects would mark their possessor as engaged in socially undesirable behavior, individuals would have practical as well as ritual motivations to manufacture them at home.[79] Yet professional production cannot be ruled out for all figurines of this type: *Fig. 2c* is finely modeled, fired, and bears traces of white surface coating. Additionally, while the back of *Fig. 2a* is clearly hand-modeled, the front appears molded. The producer may have pressed the clay into a mold for another figurine type (most likely a nude female *orans*),[80] then twisted the limbs into the desired position and applied pins.

Besides images that stand in for the target of a spell, many other figurines in the *PGM/PDM* corpus represent deities or *daimones* who facilitate the ritual. Not all such spells require the figurine to be homemade. One *PGM* spell instructs the practitioner to use a marble statuette—apparently pre-made—in a healing ritual (*Table 1, no. 24*), and some spells employ figurines of deities or animals without specifying where they are to come from (*Table 1, nos. 1, 3, 5, 18, 28, 29*). Since figurines of gods or animals could be acquired without raising eyebrows, home manufacture would be less necessary. Indeed, *PGM* IV.1840–1870 (*Table 1, no. 5*) describes a wooden Eros whose appearance—winged and wearing a *chlamys*—closely parallels earlier Hellenistic terracotta Erotes.[81]

Archaeological evidence attests to some professionally made figurines in "magical" contexts. This is true not only for cast metal figurines, whose manufacture would have required some technical knowledge and resources,[82] but also some ter-racottas. At Ptolemaic Athribis, a mold-made Bes figurine was inserted into a wall in a manner paralleling *PGM* IV.2359-72 (*Table 1, no. 7*),[83] and excavators at Roman Karanis found a Harpokrates figurine in the same room as a magical ostra-kon.[84] As Wilburn observes, this figurine was probably not "created for use in the spell," but rather, "in the course of the ritual act, the practitioner could have assigned a particular role to this image".[85] A mold-made terracotta figurine from a 2nd century AD necropolis at Rome, depicting the busts of a man and woman with a small child, was inscribed before firing with what appears to be a binding spell.[86] This find recalls another assemblage from 1st century AD Minturno, where a burial contained both a curse tablet and a marble statuette, whose material would similarly have necessitated professional production.[87] An ambiguous case comes from Hellenistic Tel Kedesh, where, underneath a floor, someone buried a hoard containing a professionally made terracotta Eros figurine, a hairpin, game pieces, and writing equipment.[88] In light of the associations of Erotes, hair, and pins with erotic magic, Adi Erlich considers the possibility that this hoard reflects the remains of a magical ritual. However, she ultimately rules out this hypothesis, partly on the grounds that "the Kedesh Eros is a fine and rather large terracotta, not typical of the engraved or wax images made by magicians".[89] While I agree that magic is not the only conceivable explanation for the Kedesh assemblage, I question whether the professional manufacture of the figurine is enough to rule out a magical use *a priori*; the other examples, above, suggest this assumption may not always hold.

Accordingly, *mageia* may well have been among some domestic figurines' affordances. An example comes from Erotes, one of the most common terracotta types in Greek households of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[90] In both literary

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[78] Of course, a professionally fired figurine could be broken rather than pierced. However, the pin-piercing seems to have been intended not to injure the affected parts per se, but rather, to direct the target's attention toward the commissioner of the spell. In a set of instructions from Roman Egypt for piercing a figurine for purposes of erotic magic, the practitioner is to say that they are doing this "so that she may remember no one but me" (*PGM* IV.296-466, transl. Betz 1992, 44–47, quoting p. 44). See further Barrett 2022, 311–313. As a result, people may not necessarily have viewed figurine breakage and figurine piercing as equivalent acts. For studies of figurine breakage, see now Miniaci 2022.

[79] As also emphasized by Gina Salapata (pers. comm.).

[80] *Orans* figurines (females with raised arms, sometimes nude, often seated): see Barrett 2011, 179.

[81] E.g., Laumonier 1956, nos. 503–510; Rumscheid 2006, no. 234; Jeammet 2010, 146–149 (with nos. 109, 110 paralleling the *PGM* reference to an advancing right foot). The *PGM* figurine's hollow back also resembles terracottas, which are typically hollow with back vents.

[82] As recognized by Faraone 1991, 190. Faraone collects multiple examples of bound figurines made of metal (bronze and lead). While lead can be hand-modeled, bronze had to be cast (Ogden 2001, 72).

[83] Barrett 2015b, 411–413.

[84] Wilburn 2012, 118–129.

[85] Wilburn 2012, 83.

[86] Della Corte 1938; Solin 1968, 29, no. 33; Faraone 1991, 203, no. 22. The figurine comes from a double mold (Della Corte 1938, 1–2). If the inscription is indeed pre-firing, as reported by Della Corte (1938, 1–2, 10), then it would have been visible to the person who placed the object in the kiln. The figurine also bears a maker's mark, *Luci*, and shows traces of surviving paint (Della Corte 1938, 4), which last would presumably have covered any pre-firing inscription when intact. Travel disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic prevented me from examining this unusual object in person while completing this chapter.

[87] The comparison is made already by Della Corte 1938, 11–13, though we might question whether the Minturno figurine was necessarily supposed to represent the target of the curse tablet. For the Minturno assemblage, see Audollent 1904, 248–251, no. 190. *Defixiones* can also be associated with handmade figurines: e.g., Brashear 1992; Ogden 2001, 73–74; Bailliot 2015, 100.

[88] Erlich 2017.

[89] Erlich 2017, 52.

[90] Hellenistic Erotes: see *supra, notes 60, 61*. Eros figurines in Roman Greece: Handler 2012, 89–92; Person 2012, 178, 267, 268–269,

Fig. 3. Two terracotta herms from the same mold, from Hellenistic Delos. 3a: Terracotta herm from a street in the Lake Quarter (Delos Museum A3370), wearing a stylized Egyptian double crown flanked by two lotus buds. Height: approximately 150 mm, excluding modern plaster restorations to the shaft. 3b: Terracotta herm from the interior courtyard of House A, Insula VI, Theater Quarter (Delos Museum A3303). Height: 204 mm. Damage at the top of the head indicates the former presence of a crown like that in Fig. 3a. *Photograph by Caitlín E. Barrett. © Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Culture and Sports, General Directorate of Antiquities and Culture Heritage/Twenty-First Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities.*

sources and magical papyri, Eros figurines—some homemade, some not necessarily so—can participate in magical rites. By the 2nd century AD, Lucian refers to the animation of clay Erotes in erotic magic as though it were a common trope.[91] Accordingly, in addition to whatever decorative or cultic value Erotes possessed, we might also consider that at least some may have occasionally participated in *mageia*. This does not mean that we can point to individual Eros figurines from domestic settlements and identify them as "magical." As

PGM IV.1840–1870 suggests, Erotes used in magical ritual need not always look different from others. Additionally—and unlike figurines representing the victims of erotic spells, which are typically deposited in chthonic or otherwise ritually significant locations—the use of an Eros figurine in *mageia* need not have translated into any unusual pattern of deposition or discard. Neither the *PGM* spells nor the passage from Lucian's *Philopseudes* indicate what the magical practitioner is to do with the Eros figurines after completing the rituals. Such objects may have simply returned to any of the other roles that figurines could hold in a household, displayed or stored with any other statuettes their user may have owned.

Rather than labeling such figurines as *either* "magical" or "non-magical," we might describe them as possessing multiple affordances. The culturally recognized affordances of, e.g., Eros figurines could support many different types of human activity, whether social, cultic, magical, or all of the above; it was up to individual users to determine which of those affordances to act on. Furthermore, the lines between such activities are often blurry. The *PGM* spells treat the Eros figurines not only as magical equipment, but as miniature cult statues requiring sacrifices and prayers.[92] Such treatment suggests a fuzzy boundary between magic and domestic cult. Figurines of divinities employed in occasional magical rituals need not always look different from figurines of those same divinities at household altars, and some figurines may even have seen both types of use. Despite the frequently stigmatized status of *mageia* in Greek discourse, these objects' multiple affordances add to a growing body of evidence problematizing the borders between "religion" and "magic" and testifying to the interrelationships of socially approved and socially transgressive forms of ritual.[93]

Case study: A terracotta herm from Hellenistic Delos

Rather than having one predetermined function, terracotta figurines afforded numerous opportunities for interaction, communication, and performance within a household. People might value figurines for their ability to facilitate communication with divine powers; their power to impress or charm visiting friends; their formal, technical, or aesthetic qualities; their magical or protective properties; their origin, if acquired at a distant or significant location; and many other conceiv-

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282–283, 300, 302. Compare the continuing popularity of Aphrodite in Roman-period assemblages (e.g., Papantoniou *et al.* 2019b, 13).
[91] Luc. *Philops.* 13–15; Collins 2008, 97–98.

[92] *PGM* IV.1716–1870, XII.14–95; cf. Barrett 2015b.
[93] On "magic" and "religion" in Greek culture, see Kindt 2012, 90–122; Otto 2013. Problems with "magic" as a cross-cultural category: Bell 1997, 46–52; Insoll 2004, 5; Rowan 2012, 3.

able features. None of these potential sources of value excludes the others. Different individuals might value an object for different reasons, and the same individual might see different perceived values as more or less salient in different contexts or at different times.

An example of this polysemy and multifunctionality comes from one of the few terracottas from Hellenistic Delos (*Fig. 3b*) with a relatively precise recorded findspot: a domestic courtyard (*Fig. 4, room c*).[94] This object depicts a wreathed, bearded herm whose shaft displays Hermes' *kerykeion* as well as the usual phallus. Although the object's exact position in the courtyard is uncertain, this would have been a multifunctional space hosting various domestic activities.

Some such activities may have been cultic, given literary and archaeological evidence for ritual practice in domestic courtyards.[95] Since texts and vase paintings indicate that domestic herms received worship,[96] this figurine's iconography also potentially associates it with ritual practices. In order to explain the discrepancy between (1) textual and iconographic evidence for Athenian domestic worship of herms and (2) an absence of archaeological evidence for domestic herms, Lynch points to miniature terracotta herms from excavated Athenian houses.[97] In place of monumental stone herms, less affluent individuals may have directed domestic rituals towards smaller and more affordable terracotta objects like this one. Additionally, textual references to the magical powers of Hermes statuettes[98] may even suggest such properties as another possible affordance of this figurine.

Yet whatever role this object may have played in interactions with gods, its location also creates opportunities for in-

Fig. 4. Plan of House VI A, Theater Quarter, Delos (see detailed discussion of house and rooms in Trümper 1998, 291–292). Adapted from Trümper 2002, Beilage 2; reproduced by permission of Monika Trümper.

teraction with humans. Any guests who entered this house's main reception room (*Fig. 4, room g*)[99] had to pass through the courtyard. Objects in this space were thus potentially visible. Small though it is, this figurine is the closest thing to statuary recorded from this house. If displayed on a table or in a wall niche, like the one in exedra *d* at the east end of the courtyard,[100] it could have been visible (at least at close range) to people in the courtyard.

Although this small, simple object might not appear to possess great display value, it might still provoke responses in visitors. The image of the herm might evoke a sense of piety and well-being. Another aspect of the figurine would have communicated additional potentially relevant information. A break at the top of the head indicates the former presence of a projecting attribute. We can reconstruct the missing feature from another, better-preserved Delian figurine from the same mold.[101] As *Fig. 3a* indicates, both herms originally wore a stylized Egyptian double crown, traditionally an attribute of kings and certain Egyptian deities.[102] I have elsewhere discussed these figurines in relation to Egyptian cults on Delos, and their owners may conceivably have been interested in such

[94] Delos Museum A3303. Findspot: Theater Quarter, Insula VI, House A. Previous publications: Chamonard 1906, 603–604; 1922, 221; Laumonier 1956, no. 320; Kreeb 1988, 249; Tang 2005, 275; Barrett 2011, 332, 508–509). On the house's building history: Trümper 1998, 291–292. The figurine likely dates to the late 2nd or early 1st century BC (Barrett 2011, 60, 362–363). On domestic courtyards as contexts for Hellenistic-period herms (of various materials), see Sharpe 2006, 36. On the limited contextual data for most Delian figurines, see Hermary 2015.

[95] Zeus Herkeios and Ktesios in courtyards: Hom. *Od.* 22.334–337; Isaeus 8.16; Bowes 2015, 211–212. Altars in courtyards: Graham 1953, 196–198; multiple examples in Cahill 2002; and see also *supra, note 29*.

[96] Depictions of sacrifices to (or at least near) herms: van Straten 1995, 27–30; Lynch 2011, 163. Herms at house entrances: Thuc. 6.27. Offering to, and wreathing of, herms: Ath. 10.437b, 11.460e; Porph. *Abst.* 2.16. The "Hermaphroditos" that receives offerings in Theophr. *Char.* 16.10 may be a double herm with paired male and female heads (Harward 1982, 86–88; Sharpe 2006, 35).

[97] Lynch 2011, 163; cf. Sharpe 2006, 61. Jameson suggests that domestic herms were made of wood (Jameson 1990, 194), but Lynch points to the absence of suitable cuttings or bases (Lynch 2011, 163 n. 93).

[98] E.g., *Table 1, nos. 7, 11, 13*; and cf. Apuleius' *Apology* (61–65), in which Apuleius' opponents claim he owns a magical statuette, but he claims it is a statuette of Mercury. Aside from the skeletal appearance also alleged by Apuleius' accusers, is the difference between the two necessarily so great?

[99] Room g as *oecus maior*: Trümper 1998, 291.

[100] Wall niches appear in exedra *d* and in *b* (Trümper 1998, 291). Laumonier describes the figurine's findspot as "*cour intérieure*" (Laumonier 1956, 126), which Kreeb (1988, 249) plausibly, though not provably, suggests as a reference to exedra *d*.

[101] Delos Museum A3370. Findspot: street in the Lake Quarter, Delos. Previous publications: Laumonier 1956, no. 320; Barrett 2011, 347, 519–520, fig. D82.

[102] Barrett 2011, 298–304. Both figurines are locally made, and the iconographic type is seemingly unique to Delos.

cults.[103] However, the display of internationalizing imagery might simultaneously convey social messages. Given Delos' importance as an international trading port with a diverse, multi-ethnic population,[104] individuals might find it useful to position themselves as culturally cosmopolitan.

Additionally or alternatively, the herm might remind viewers of another set of political and ideological associations. Herms had close associations with the Athenian *polis*. Ancient commentators claimed Athenians were the first Greeks to make such images, and herms famously helped demarcate civic space in Athens; in 415 BC, the mutilation of herms in the Athenian Agora was taken as an attempt to subvert the state.[105] In Attica, viewers could perceive herms as powerful, emotionally resonant embodiments of local tradition. Since Delos had been under Athenian control and inhabited partly by Athenian colonists since 167/166 BC,[106] many viewers may well have perceived these Athenian political and cultural associations as salient. An Egyptianizing herm might thus remind viewers not only of the cosmopolitan and profitable world of international trade, but also of more locally significant traditions.

Conclusion

While the figurine in *Fig. 3b* possesses affordances for both cult and display, individual viewers' responses resist reduction to a binary choice between worship versus aesthetic appreciation. Modern categories of "religion" and "decoration" are overly blunt instruments for characterizing such objects' valuation and function. Like many other domestic figurines, this multivalent artifact might prompt much more nuanced responses and activate a wide range of political, social, economic, and cultural associations. While the object's affordances are varied, individual responses to those affordances would have differed according to context and user choice.

Terracotta figurines' multiple affordances testify to domestic material culture's active role in framing, mediating, and participating in people's interactions with other entities both human and divine. In many interactions, people appear to have treated figurines not only as objects upon which human agency could work, but as agents in their own right: capable of causing actions, influencing the world around them, and participating in social relationships that further enmesh the human, divine, and material worlds. Whether embodying divinity, facilitating human-divine interaction, instantiating ritual performance, constructing social identities, mediating communication between hosts and guests, or enchanting victims, domestic figurines entangled their viewers in a broad variety of social relationships. Just as human users constructed domestic material culture's functions and values through their choices, so too did domestic material culture construct the experiences and practices of its users.

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[103] Barrett 2011.

[104] On Hellenistic Delos' ethnic and cultural composition: Barrett 2011, 13–14, 119–120.

[105] Herms as Athenian inventions: Paus. 1.24.3, 4.33.3; Pl. *[Hipparch.]* 228c–229b. Herms as a Pelasgian invention that the Athenians adopted and spread to other Greeks: Hdt. 2.51.1. Herms in Athens: Thuc. 6.27–29; Osborne 1985; Furley 1996; Fredal 2006, 134–156; Barrett 2011, 302–304; Gaifman 2012, 66–69.

[106] See Gettel 2018. While the surviving evidence does not allow us to determine the precise date when this figurine first entered the house, the artifact itself likely dates to the later 2nd through early 1st century BC (see *supra*, *note 94*). We have no information about the identities of the house's inhabitants, who might have come from many different possible geographic, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds (Barrett 2011, 13–14, 119–120). However, we need not posit Athenian residents to observe that Athens was an important social and political point of reference for people on Delos.

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