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***FASCINUM:***  
**THE APOTROPAIC PHALLUS OF CAMPANIA**  
**IN THE ANCIENT & MODERN IMAGINATION**

**Volume I of Two**

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## DECLARATION

This thesis does not contain any material which I have used before or which I have previously had published. This thesis is my own work in its entirety. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis comprises a re-evaluation of the apotropaic Campanian Phallus: a highly familiar and desultorily implemented feature of our discipline's conceptual toolkit, as well as an enduringly conspicuous element of popular engagement with the ancient world. The nature of the Campanian phallus' apotropism varies hugely from scholar to scholar and is yet to be directly interrogated or socio-historically contextualised. Furthermore, its role as an apotropaic device is regularly conflated with the Enlightenment notion of universal fertility worship, most notably articulated by the antiquarian Richard Payne Knight.

This thesis' re-examination of the ideological genealogy of phallic apotropism in relation to late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century archaeological, anthropological and comparative-religious discourse highlights its particular import for the socio-cultural inquiries and concerns of that era. It will be demonstrated that the notion of the phallus as an apotropaic device has more in common with the nineteenth-century *reinvention* of Payne Knight's ideas, and with the Enlightenment phallus' coalescence with late nineteenth-century socio-cultural preoccupations, such as folklorism, mysticism and uncanny states of objecthood and representation. Accordingly, this thesis will expand our understanding of the place occupied by the Campanian apotropaic phallus in the modern imagination and the ways in which it relates to certain stages of our discipline's history.

Having evaluated modernity's ideological and intellectual relationship with this fabled semiotic conundrum, the latter part of the thesis will revisit the apotropaic phallus at the ancient sites themselves. In this section, it will be shown that the phallus is rarely wholly solemn, apotropaic and symbolic nor wholly sexual, humorous and literal: indeed, its depiction in different contexts throughout the towns regularly capitalised on its capacity for double entendre, reflexive humour, social satire and semiotic 'code-switching'. In this way, the apotropaic phallus proved a mercurial and perplexing image even for its ancient users and creators.

## INTRODUCTION

*“We find it difficult to conceive how the ancients, who have left us so many monuments of wisdom, who showed such delicacy and poise in all their habits, could allow themselves to consecrate a public cult to the secret parts of the human body whose very name when pronounced aloud today makes people blush and would outrage all proprieties.”<sup>1</sup>*

Pierre-Sylvain Maréchal (1803)

The rediscoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum during the mid-eighteenth century were to have a profound influence on European society and culture. News of the excavations and their progress had widespread effects on taste, kindling a craze for ‘antiquity’ that encompassed almost every facet of art, fashion and design. The writings of German classicist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the etchings of Giambattista Piranesi, the nine volumes of *Le Antichità d’Ercolano Esposte* published by the Accademia Ercolanese, as well as the works of François Mazois and William Gell, kept the European public informed as to what was being unearthed and served to popularise the excavations.<sup>2</sup> Artists, architects, ceramicists and furniture makers began drawing inspiration from Pompeii: interior design sought to mimic frescoed walls; stucco work, made popular in England during the eighteenth century by the architects James and Robert Adam, utilised Pompeian motifs; the so-called Louis XVth style of France incorporated Pompeian decoration; and the painter Jacques-Louis David and his students modelled their works on the excavations.<sup>3</sup> Naples, Pompeii, and Herculaneum became essential stops on the European Grand Tour. Many countries, given the new cultural significance of the area, opened academies in both Naples and Rome to accommodate and encourage the study of the archaeological sites.

Given the powerful socio-cultural effects of the excavations initiated in the mid-eighteenth century by the Bourbon King Charles of the Two Sicilies, it is therefore unsurprising that the revelatory presence of obscene material at the two

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<sup>1</sup> *Antiquités d’Herculanum* (1780-1803) Volume II, 103; see Manuel (1959) 262 for translation.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, J. (2007) 62-76; Ling (2007) 155-172. Parslow (1995).

<sup>3</sup> Harris, E. (2001). Johnson (2006) 62. Ramage (2013). For instance, see *Mars Being Disarmed by Venus*, Jacques-Louis David (1824) Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels.

towns shocked contemporary European society.<sup>4</sup> From the early stages of the excavations, reports detail the discovery of many erotic and apparently obscene objects.<sup>5</sup> How were excavators to classify and curate such artefacts? Accordingly, this era saw the intense development of new taxonomies and curatorial concepts according to which this problematic material was dealt with. One of the main tasks which many contemporary art historians, antiquarians and commentators set themselves was that of explaining the plethora of phallic objects found at the two sites. These items seemed to indicate a bizarre and confusing fixation with sex that presented especially difficult problems for categorisation and interpretation. Why were so many household objects decorated with images of male genitalia? Why were there phalluses found on the outsides of buildings? Why were male genitalia disembodied, winged, and seemingly carried on one's person? **[Figs. 1-3]** Hence arose the concerted effort to explain the apparent ubiquity of the Campanian phallus and its implications for understanding Roman culture.<sup>6</sup>

In particular, the apotropaic capacity of the phallus – the idea that representations of disembodied male genitalia were depicted in order to bring good luck and to ward off sources or forms of 'evil' – was to become, and to remain, one of

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<sup>4</sup> Travellers' accounts of visits to the sites from throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often convey either shock or disgust at the 'erotic' material that could be witnessed: "The foulest epigrams of Martial, the grossest descriptions in Petronius and Apuleius, are illustrated to the eye in the remains of these cities, in sculptured and pictorial representations, the very remembrance of which pollutes the imagination." Stillman Hillard (1853) 110.

<sup>5</sup> In 1771, the celebrated and much sought-after collection *Le Antichità di Ercolano Esposte*, published between 1757-92 to showcase all the objects acquired from the Bourbon excavations of the ancient Roman sites in the Bay of Naples, displayed an array of curious phallic figurines clustered together at the end of the sixth volume (pages 367 - 407).

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this investigation, I will use the term "Campanian phallus" to refer to the particular category of objects, images and concepts I am interrogating. I describe it as Campanian – rather than Roman, Pompeian, or apotropaic – for the following reasons, which I will demonstrate over the very course of the thesis: firstly, this term better reflects the way the concept under examination has been – and indeed, continues to be - (re)constructed in the popular and scholarly imagination; and secondly, the body of material at the centre of the intellectual narrative I intend to map out is, in fact, not limited to Pompeii or to ancient Roman culture, but hails from the Campanian area at large and from across a longer cultural duration. My coinage of this term does not itself preclude the existence of a peculiar, local sexual or semiotic culture in Pompeii and the surrounding area, and indeed this is not the concern of this thesis: rather, this term is intended to programmatically allude to the status and form of a concept which exists most identifiably in popular memory and academic discourse if not in actuality or archaeological testimony, the characteristics of and engagement with which it is precisely the objective of this thesis to both point out and cross-examine.

the central modes for explaining and classifying phallic artefacts from the sites.<sup>7</sup> Amidst the numerous modes of responding to these artefacts, then – which included censorship, comparative religious theory, and the anthropology of sex – from where did the notion of the ‘apotropaic phallus’ emerge, and how did it relate to parallel attempts to make sense of artefacts of this nature? The central aim of this thesis, therefore, is to situate the early conceptualisation of the apotropaic Campanian phallus - which, as will be demonstrated, took place over the course of the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - into a broader history and scheme of contemporary archaeological and anthropological discourse than has thus far been realised. In doing so, it will illuminate the intellectual character of the apotropaic phallus and the ramifications of its particular ideological pedigree for our continued engagement with sexuality - both ancient and modern - as well as with semiotics, material agency and the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum themselves. The history of thought on phallic apotropaism is a story of getting to grips with symbolical language and representation, of the perceived agency of imagery and scholarship’s historical attempts to articulate this agency, and the ways in which modernity continually grapples with and reframes its complex relationship to the ancient past. In turn, the ways in which phallic apotropaism plays out at the Vesuvian sites will be closely interrogated, and current attempts to explain its signification reevaluated in light of our improved historiographical and ideological understanding.

## **The Campanian Phallus: Obscenity, Fertility Symbol, or Lucky Charm?**

*“Ever since the rediscovery of antiquity in the Renaissance, sex has been one of the most controversial areas of our engagement with the classical world. [...] Nowhere have the problems been clearer than at Pompeii and Herculaneum, where from the earliest excavations some of the most startling finds included ingenious or lurid images of copulation and nudes aplenty, not to mention the ubiquitous Roman phallus. What was the modern world to make of a culture in which Pan penetrating a goat was thought a suitable subject for high-class sculpture and in which male*

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<sup>7</sup> See Johns (1999); Frost (2010) 144 & (2008); Clarke (1998); Clarke (2007); Clarke and Larvey (2003); Kampen (1996); Blanshard (2010) 32; Jacobelli (1995).



*genitalia could proudly hang over a bread oven or decorate an ordinary household lamp?"*<sup>8</sup>

Mary Beard (2012)

A large number of phallic artefacts have been found at the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum, buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Indeed, a significant proportion of our evidence for the Roman phallus hails from the ancient Bay of Naples area.<sup>9</sup> Countless attempts have been made to decrypt its significance: in particular, the distinctive ubiquity of the phallus at these sites – in streets, adorning wind chimes, above ovens, and myriad other places – continues to be debated and is continually revisited in a variety of socio-historical contexts (including the discussion of gender, sexuality, religion, feminist theory and cultural invective).<sup>10</sup> There are several prominent explanations for its presence. It has variously been considered: a fertility symbol; a device for asserting patriarchal dominance; as being intended to incite laughter; to be lucky; and, of course, to have signposted the nearest brothel or to have advertised the sale of sex.<sup>11</sup> In recent years, the prevailing notion has been that these images are not intended to be erotic or to denote prostitution and are in fact apotropaic.<sup>12</sup> This attribution continues, however, to incorporate or overlap with many of the others: for example, the phallus is often considered apotropaic precisely *because* it is a fertility symbol, or because it embodies a masculine patriarchal threat of gendered and sexual dominance which in turn provides a deterrent to the wrongdoer (namely: it threatened penetration). Efforts to explain the purpose of the

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<sup>8</sup> Beard (2012) 61.

<sup>9</sup> A search for Roman phalluses on the British Museum's online database, for instance, reveals that an overwhelming proportion of such material has been attributed to the Vesuvian cities. Even if some of this has been done so falsely or in error – which is conceivable given the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century demand for Campanian artefacts – this too would only serve to illustrate the prominence of these sites in our characterisation of such artefacts. See Yallop (2011). See also British Museum Inv. nos. 1865,1118.237; 1865,1118.236; 1865,1118.291; and 1756,0101.257.+.

<sup>10</sup> Vout (2013); Williams (2010); Richlin (1992).

<sup>11</sup> Johns (1999); Beard (2008); Richlin (1992); Clarke (2007); Wallace-Hadrill (1995); McGinn (2010); Laurence (2010) 92; Fisher & Langlands (2009) 179. This latter explanation is long-held: in the *Annual Register* of 1805, a visitor returned from Pompeii describes the phallus as “the indecent symbol of the brothel”; in 1835, Joseph Forsyth lists a couple of options - “some think it the sign of a brothel; others, of an amulet manufactory” (Forsyth (1835) 311); and in the early twentieth century, Parke (1906) wrote “The sign of the brothel in Rome was a clay phallus, baked or painted.”

<sup>12</sup> “More recently the fashion has been to deflect attention from their sexuality by referring to them as ‘magical’, ‘apotropaic’ or ‘averters of the evil eye’.” Beard (2008) 233. See also Kellum (1996) 173-4 & Clarke (1996) 193-5.

phallus at the Vesuvian cities, as well as its apotropaic value, often engage with wider cross-cultural discourse on the so-called 'evil eye', as well as that of fertility worship and structuralist approaches to symbolism and belief. Generally considered to be the *fascinum* described by ancient authors (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 28.7; St Augustine *De Civitate Dei* 7.21; Varro *De Lingua Latina* VII.97), our modern ideological relationship with this image and category of artefact nonetheless remains perplexing.<sup>13</sup>

Our current relationship with phallic imagery and objects from Pompeii and Herculaneum is inherently tied to the period in which the sites were being rediscovered and in which these artefacts were first encountered and interpreted. When the phalluses of ancient Campania were first unearthed, they caused shockwaves across contemporary European society – in terms of thought on religion, politics, art and morality – that continue to be felt today. Furthermore, due to their 'shocking' nature, our continuing attempts to make sense of these artefacts have been inevitably situated in a narrative of increasing liberalism towards them, a story which of course begins precisely with their discovery and interpretation in the eighteenth century. Accordingly, discourse on phallic objects from Pompeii and Herculaneum is frequently entangled with the effort to separate ancient cultures from more modern moral codes, meaning that the identification of apotropaism often comes about in the context of absolution for what was once considered depravity or lewdness. In this way, our discussions of this material cannot escape their original, eighteenth-century origins. The way in which we position ourselves in relation to these origins itself needs re-evaluating, given our enduring uncertainty over what phallic apotropaism

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<sup>13</sup> *Quamquam religione cum tutatur et Fascinus, imperatorum quoque, non solum infantium, custos, qui deus inter sacra Romana a Vestalibus colitur, et currus triumphantium, sub his pendens, defendit medicus invidiae, iubetque eosdem respicere similis medicina linguae, ut sit exorata a tergo Fortuna gloriae carnifex.* Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 28.7. "Varro says that certain rites of Liber were celebrated in Italy which were of such unrestrained wickedness that the **shameful parts of the male** [*pubenda virilia*] were worshipped at crossroads in his honour. [...] For, during the days of the festival of Liber, this obscene member [*illud membrum*], placed on a little trolley, was first exhibited with great honour at the crossroads in the countryside, and then conveyed into the city itself. [...] In this way, it seems, the god Liber was to be propitiated, in order to secure the growth of seeds and to repel enchantment [*fascinatio*] from the fields." 7.21. Translation Dyson (2002) 292-3. Varro tells us that the "*turpicula res*" hung from the necks of young boys, "*ne quid obsit*", is called a "*scaevola*, on account of the fact that *scaeva* is 'good'" ("*bonae scaevae causa scaevola appellata*"). Varro *De Lingua Latina* VII.97.

is or how it functions, as well as our current sense of the evolution of this discourse, which at present dwells heavily on censorship and the conceptualisation of the pornographic. Our estimations of what phallic apotropaism *might* be – an offshoot of fertility symbolism being the most commonly asserted – are, as will be demonstrated over the course of this thesis, necessarily tied up with the eighteenth-century intellectual milieu.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to the work of Giancarlo Carabelli, we are now familiar with the story of the phallic discoveries and in particular how they led to prolonged fascination for, and engagement with, the idea of priapic worship.<sup>15</sup> Here, however, we will investigate the ‘amuletic’ side to these events and engagement, which has been comparatively under-explored and the concept of apotropaism itself taken for granted. How or why are phallic artefacts from Pompeii and Herculaneum apotropaic? In what ways and to what extent might this attribution itself be intimately connected with the history of our relationship with these objects and the ways in they have provided a means for modernity to think through certain issues?

## The Campanian Phallus in the Popular and Scholarly Imagination

*“But other features seem bafflingly alien. No one, for example, has ever quite worked out how to explain the presence of so many phalluses all over the city, carved into the road surface, hanging over ovens, on jewellery around the necks of children, or made into novelty lamps.*

*Is it something to do with a lusty, uninhibited attitude to sex? A badge of patriarchal power? Or a magic symbol to avert the evil eye?”<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> Johns (1999) 10; 39-59; 143.

<sup>15</sup> Carabelli (1996). Indeed, Carabelli’s particular contribution looked in detail at the so-called ‘Great Toes’ of Isernia and the discourse which developed in response to their ‘discovery’ concerning the role of phallic simulacra in ‘primitive religion’ and medical belief. The Roman *fascinus* and its investigation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the apotropaism of the Roman phallus, is necessarily a part of Carabelli’s microcultural study; however, the author takes the phallus’ apotropaism for granted, seeing it once again branded an alternative or euphemistic explanation for the presence of these artefacts, not interrogating the concept or recognising its own epistemological ramifications. For example, he assumes that apotropaism, as well as early discourse on it, amounts to “the use of phallic images as an antidote for attacks on fertility” (Carabelli (1996) 96). This thesis will specifically examine Pompeian phallic artefacts, how they have been – and continue to be – intellectually characterised and popularly remembered, and the ramifications of this for further understanding our engagement with the high-profile sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum themselves.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/pompeii/9848596/Pompeii-exhibition-Mary-Beard-on-life-in-Pompeii-and-Herculaneum.html> Date accessed: July 7<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Mary Beard (2013)<sup>17</sup>

The apotropaic Campanian phallus is uniquely bound to a distinctive set of historiographical circumstances, which in turn provides a window onto the exploration of the issue of phallic symbolism in classical archaeology and anthropology at large and during the formative period of these disciplines.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, its very setting at the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum means that this image is uniquely placed in terms of public engagement, and the interface that public engagement has with the construction of academic 'knowledge'. Indeed, academic discourse and the popular imagination are not truly separate when it comes to Pompeii, and much of this relationship can be traced back to the eighteenth-century origins of the dialogue on this particular body of material. The Campanian phallus and the modern articulation of its apotropaism therefore merit close examination: Pompeii has long been considered representative of both 'antiquity' and modernity's relationship with it, as well as a locus of phallic material and of intellectual engagement with that material and its broader socio-cultural ramifications.<sup>19</sup> However, the perceived role which the attribution and conceptualisation of phallic apotropaism itself plays in this very dialogue with the wider public, the construction of global knowledge about antiquity, and antiquity's connection to 'us' remains uninterrogated and only cursorily understood.

This special position accorded to Pompeii, as well as its phallic material, is widely testified in popular culture. A tongue-in-cheek news report entitled 'Colossal Drawing of Penis that can be seen from Space Proves Humanity Will Never Change', reads:

*"In case you've been living in a cave for your entire life, you'll probably be aware that plenty of humanity – generally those with penises, mind – have been obsessed with phallic things since time immemorial. **From the murals of Pompeii and Herculaneum to graffiti you see in pretty much***

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<sup>17</sup> The use of **bold** font in direct quotations indicates emphases I have added. All other emphases are those of the original author.

<sup>18</sup> Sweet (2004); Sloan (2004); Schnapp (1999); Jenkins (1996); Potts (1994); Hales & Paul (2011); Coltman (2009); Heringman (2013); Harloe (2013); Mattusch (2013).

<sup>19</sup> Hales & Paul (2011).

*any country on Earth, there's always an unnecessary dangly, two-dimensional male thingymajiggy [sic.] somewhere nearby. [...] Penises you can see from space, then, are par for the course. There are a fair few all over the world, and nothing much has changed over time. Just look at the UK: long ago, a giant man with a ludicrous erection was carved into the chalk on the side of a hill in Dorset, where it is maintained to this very day..."<sup>20</sup>*

Pompeii and Herculaneum are frequently installed as a critical juncture in the popular narrative of human cultural evolution, which seeks to draw commonalities between different cultures and imply a sense of direct lineage from the present day – in this case, a giant drawing of a penis in a dry lake bed in Australia **[Fig. 4]** - back to an ancient past. The Campanian towns are billed as the place of phallic imagery *par excellence*, and their significance for cultural narratives and our understanding of these narratives is regularly extrapolated to other ancient civilisations (such as the Dorset chalk man mentioned here, the Cerne Abbas Giant **[Fig. 5]**).<sup>21</sup> This very habit of extrapolation – which, as will be shown, can be tied back to the intellectual buzz surrounding the Pompeian discoveries – will be illuminated, and its validity evaluated, by examining the Campanian body of phallic material and historical responses to it, as well as the legacy of these responses.

Indeed, the phallus is a foremost aspect of Pompeii itself, in both the public *and* academic imagination. The official giftshops at the site sell phallic keyrings, jewellery and reproduction statuettes of winged phalluses and the unofficial traders who flank the main entrances hawk an array of phallic idols of varying proportions **[Figs. 6a-e]**. These souvenirs are as familiar a part of the modern Pompeii tourist paraphernalia as replica vases, Roman helmets, or fridge magnets emblazoned with *CAVE CANEM*. The idea that Pompeii was overtly littered with images of the male

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<sup>20</sup><http://www.iflscience.com/space/colossal-drawing-of-a-penis-that-can-be-seen-from-space-proves-humanity-will-never-change/>\_Date accessed: March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Similarly:

<https://www.sciencealert.com/penis-satellite-space-google-maps-australia-marree-man-geoglyph>

<sup>21</sup> The Cerne Abbas Giant also which makes an appearance in Catherine Johns' exposition of the apotropaic phallus and its aetiology in fertility. Johns (1999) 37.

sex organs is an intrinsic part of the site and its dialogue with the public.<sup>22</sup> It proves to be an intrinsic part of academic discourse, too: as Beard says, “Ever since the rediscovery of antiquity in the Renaissance, sex has been one of the most controversial areas of our engagement with the classical world. [...] **Nowhere have the problems been clearer than at Pompeii and Herculaneum**, where from the earliest excavations some of the most startling finds included ingenious or lurid images of copulation and nudes aplenty, **not to mention the ubiquitous Roman phallus.**”<sup>23</sup> The Pompeian phallus *is* “the ubiquitous Roman phallus”; an investigation into this species of material thus also provides a vehicle for exploring our problematic habit of using Pompeii as a model for Roman culture at large.

The phallus of Pompeii and its interpretation is therefore a compound enquiry of tourism, global heritage, popular perception and the construction of ‘official’ knowledge. Popular travel website *Atlas Obscura*, which focuses on travel destinations deemed unusual or bizarre, declares that the site’s ubiquitous phalluses have “cemented the **fame** of Pompeii’s **secret** history”.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the same article – provocatively entitled ‘Classical Depravity: A Guide to the Perverted Past’ – asserts that “the phallus might well contend with the Parthenon as **the symbol of classical civilization.**” Such material powerfully indicates the extent to which the erect, disembodied and “ubiquitous” phallus has accordingly become an emblem for an amorphous ‘antiquity’ - often comprising, in popular culture and global heritage, concurrently ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt - characterised by “depravity” and licentious ritualism. In turn, it will be demonstrated over the course of this thesis that

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<sup>22</sup> See Fisher & Langlands (2009), especially 181-3. “Phallus reliefs are found throughout the city, carved into the paving stones or baked in clay tablets set into the walls, and tourists are routinely told (as in the blog extract above) that they function as signposts towards the city’s brothels. The ubiquity of the image serves to support the widespread idea that the Brothel on the Via del Lupanare into which they are herded was only one of many and that sex was something that you might stumble upon anywhere. “How Randy were the people from Pompei?” exclaims the title of one photograph of a phallus, and the caption explains: “all over Pompei are ‘cock’ markings on the ground, directing the people to where the ‘red light district’ is!”. It is clear from the abundance of gleeful citations that this notion of an X-rated treasure hunt through the city is very appealing to many tourists.”

<sup>23</sup> Beard (2012) 61.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Classical Depravity: A Guide to the Perverted Past’ Edmund Richardson March 24th, 2014. This popular website relies heavily on user-generated content and is thus a characteristic example of the modern-day mythos on culture and conspicuous curiosities into which the site and its phalluses have now entered, thus enjoying a kind of renaissance of notoriety. See Paul Sawers, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015: ‘Atlas Obscura raises \$2M to become a National Geographic for millennials’ *VentureBeat*. Date accessed: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

it is very much the phallus of *Campania* - first discovered in the late-eighteenth century and promulgated by the Grand Tour, comparative religious discourse, the burgeoning of anthropological inquiry and the rise of the public museum - which has become intellectually and popularly internalised as *The Phallus* of antiquity. The history of responses to Pompeii can thus be considered an intellectual frontier for developing the ways in which we think about the popular construction of 'antiquity' at large and, as will be shown, certain related issues of anthropology.

The Campanian phallus therefore enjoys a unique significance. Firstly, the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum have a prominent position in popular imaginings of, and engagement with, antiquity, and a correspondingly high profile in popular culture; they have made a famed contribution to classical archaeology and its development; they are distinctively tied to a historiographical moment which, in turn, has had a wider significance for the evolution of ideas on certain topics - particularly pertaining to sex, its representation and its ramifications for understanding culture and society. In turn, the phallus occupies a foremost place within this picture: Campania is famous for the phallus, and the archaeological phallus became famous because of Campania.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the phallus is the stage on which so much of Pompeii's socio-cultural significance has been played out. Therefore, what of the apotropaic in this story? When it comes to the apotropaic classification of the Campanian phallus, its conceptualisation, nature and implications have not been fully interrogated, its contribution to this narrative, and to Pompeii's position in the academic and popular imagination, habitually assumed to be a means of rationalising or negotiating ancient sex and obscenity.

### **Sex Sells: The Campanian Phallus and the Myth of Pompeian Nymphomania**

Ever since their rediscovery proper in the eighteenth century, the Vesuvian cities and their modern southern-Italian milieu have been associated with erotic freedom, antiquated lifeways and curious arcana. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1834

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<sup>25</sup> See Fisher & Langlands (2009) for extensive evidence of this.

novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*, hugely popular amongst Victorian élite, illustrates the extent to which the ancient site – by that time a well-established tourist destination – proved the perfect setting for a public that was hungry for a combination of archaeology and raciness [Fig. 7].<sup>26</sup> In more recent renderings of the ancient sites, Pompeii continues to represent sexual obsession and moral abandon. National headlines regularly report erotic findings and declare that the ancient inhabitants of Pompeii were nymphomaniacs.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, familiar instalments in the on-site bookshops of Pompeii and Herculaneum include: *Pompeii Prohibited* (first edition 1970, latest English edition 1993) by Michele D’Avino; *Eroticism in Pompeii* (2001) by Antonio Varone; *Pompeii: The Erotic Secrets* by Lucia Matino (c1988) translated into several languages; *Pompeii Vietata* by Erika D’Or (first published in 1960s); Michael Grant’s *Erotic Art in Pompeii* as well as his *Eros in Pompeii: The Erotic Art Collection of the Museum of Naples* (both 1975); and *Loves and Lovers in Ancient Pompeii: A Pompeian Erotic Anthology* (first published 1960) by Matteo Della Corte. All of these titles feature the now-infamous phallic material in their eroticising of the site. Many of these titles were first released several decades ago and have been continuously republished and rejuvenated for contemporary audiences ever since. Language such as “secret”, “prohibited” and “vietata” brazenly tempt the suggestible tourist, hungry for sordidness and revelation, with archaeological material that, due to its overwhelming popularity, is not actually secret at all. This salaciousness is a prominent part of academic reconstruction of the site, too: titles on Pompeii, its social history and later cultural significance include *The Last Days of Pompeii: Decadence, Apocalypse, Resurrection*, seemingly perpetuating the trope of situating Pompeii alongside Sodom and Gomorrah on account of its perceived vices and punishment by fire and brimstone.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For more in-depth information on the circulation and enduring popularity of the novel amongst upper-class Victorians, see St Clair & Bautz (2012) 56-7; Harrison (2011); and Harris, J. (2007) 192-210.

<sup>27</sup> In 2016, the *Mailonline* published ‘**Fifty shades** of Pompeii: Erotic wall paintings reveal the **x-rated** services once offered at ancient Italian brothels’ and similarly, *The Sun* ran the headline ‘ANCIENT EROTICA: Pornographic Pompeii wall paintings reveal the raunchy services offered in ancient Roman brothels 2,000 years ago’, whilst *Metro UK* baited us with ‘Up Pompeii! Erotic paintings **reveal sex lives** of ancient Romans’. May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Issued on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name at J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Villa Malibu, Sept 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012 – January 7<sup>th</sup> 2013; Cleveland Museum of Art, February 24<sup>th</sup> – May 19<sup>th</sup> 2013; and Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, June 13<sup>th</sup> – November 8<sup>th</sup> 2013.



The place occupied by the apotropaic phallus of Campania in most recent museological practice and public engagement also sees it feature prominently in recent exhibitions and engagement projects on sex.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the notion that such artefacts are also pertinent to the study of sexology and its development was evident in the Wellcome Collection's 'The Institute of Sexology' exhibition, which featured several phallic amulets, some *tintinnabula*, and – significantly – a copy of Payne Knight's 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, thus effectively pronouncing the latter an embryonic stage in the study of Sexology. Examples of Pompeian phallic apotropaia have featured regularly, therefore, as key instalments in the most recent research and public discourse on sexuality. Puzzlingly, their inclusion into such schemata has not negated their being classified as apotropaic: rather, their apotropaic symbolism has been configured as a part of historical attitudes to sex. The 2006 exhibition 'The Warren Cup: Sex and Society in Ancient Greece and Rome' featured sexual objects from antiquity which had never before been on public display together. One of these items, selected by a *Guardian* journalist as a highlight, was a "Roman wind chime [*tintinnabulum*], a flying phallus, complete with wings, its own phallus and a phallic tail, hung with a row of little bells."<sup>30</sup> The context in which this familiar example of phallic apotropaia was displayed saw it bracketed with other evidence not just of the "saucy side of the ancient world" but of a progressive movement towards 'lifting the lid' on issues of prejudice and ignominy which continue to

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<sup>29</sup> These include: 'Freud and Eros: Love, Lust and Longing' 22nd October 2014 – 26th April 2015, at the Freud Museum, London; 'The Institute of Sexology' 20th November 2014 – 20th September 2015, at the Wellcome Collection, London (part of nation-wide 'Sexology Season' at institutions across the country); 'Sex: A History In 30 Objects' October 17th 2015 - July 31st 2016, at the Penn Museum, USA; 'The Warren Cup: Sex and Society in Ancient Greece and Rome' 11th May - 2nd July 2006, at the British Museum, London; 'Sex and History' project based at Exeter University (stemming from 'Sexual Knowledge: Uses of the Past' 27th –29th July 2009); 'Rethinking Sexology - The Cross-Disciplinary Invention of Sexuality: Sexual Science Beyond the Medical, 1890-1940', a five-year Wellcome Trust funded Joint Investigator Award project (2015-2020) jointly directed by Professor Kate Fisher and Dr Jana Funke of Exeter University; 'Sexual Knowledge: Uses of the Past' 27th –29th July 2009 based at Exeter University; and the 'Sex in Six Objects' project, Cambridge and Exeter Universities (a collaboration with the 'Rethinking Sexology' project and the 'Sex and History' project at the University of Exeter). Furthermore, several Roman phallic objects, predominantly from Pompeii, are held in the Kinsey Institute collections, the "the premier research institute on human sexuality and relationships" named after Indiana University professor and entomologist turned sexologist, Alfred Kinsey (1894-1956).

<https://kinseyinstitute.org/about/index.php> Date Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Kennedy, M. 'British Museum exhibition reveals saucy side of the ancient world' *Guardian*, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Date Accessed: July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

hamper modern society.<sup>31</sup> Specifically, this *tintinnabulum* featured in Case 3 of the exhibition, entitled *Sex, Magic and Religion* [Fig. 8], reiterating the extent to which phallic apotropaia have been used to portray a religious and ritualistic element to ancient sexuality which frames a supposed absence of shame as a decision to eulogise sex rather than stigmatise it.<sup>32</sup> It is clear from these examples that the Pompeian phallus recurs both frequently and prominently in public engagement and stands at the forefront of how we attempt to get the wider world to interact with both a cultural and historical sense of sex and sexuality, as well as with the paradoxical nature of antiquity at large, being at once familiar and unfamiliar. In fact, it was recently announced that sex education will now be taking place at the British Museum, providing us with further impetus to assess how such objects and images will be implicated in *future* discourse on sex and society.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, it is important to unpick precisely how we brand this aspect of ancient life and species of material evidence.

The framing of the Campanian phallus as a part of ancient sex lives has seen a deluge of work in recent years fervently concerned with identifying the number of brothels in Pompeii, which has necessarily entailed the discussion of possible phallic ‘signage’.<sup>34</sup> In *Economy of Prostitution in the Roman World* (2010), McGinn directly responds to the continual fluctuation in the number of brothels estimated for the site: his choice of words in reference to the fact that the estimated number has recently fallen from “35 or more” to “only one certain specimen” that it has “**cleaned up Pompeii**” conveys our unerring fascination with pinpointing the sordid underbelly of the site.<sup>35</sup> McGinn is right to point out the ridiculousness of the assumptions such attempts have made, as well as the sheer number of seemingly purpose-built (or at least converted) brothels for a town of Pompeii’s size; but he misses the point

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<sup>31</sup> Grove (2013) 14.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/Warren%20cup%20final%20online.pdf> date Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/sex-education-british-museum/> Date Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/learning/schools\\_and\\_teachers/sessions/sex\\_and\\_relationship\\_education.aspx](https://www.britishmuseum.org/learning/schools_and_teachers/sessions/sex_and_relationship_education.aspx) Date Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

<sup>34</sup> See Laurence (2010); Varone (1994); La Torre (1988); Wallace-Hadrill (1995); Eschebach & Müller-Trollius (1993); Della Corte (1965); Guzzo (2000); Guzzo & Scarano Ussani (2000); Wallace-Hadrill set out criteria for identifying a brothel: 1., “structural evidence of a masonry bed set in a small cell of ready access to the public”; 2., “the presence of paintings of explicit sexual scenes”; 3., “the cluster of graffiti of the *hic bene futui* type”. Wallace-Hadrill (1995) 51-4.

<sup>35</sup> McGinn (2010) 3. See also McGinn (2002) 4-47.

altogether in that we need question quite *why* we are so obsessed at fixing upon a number and identifying the elusive ‘erotic quarter’ of the town. The image of the phallus plays a central role in this dialogue, in that: a) such images have been interpreted as signs to, or signs outside, brothels; and b) the very discussion of brothels is itself undeniably implicated in the wider attempt to explain the ubiquity of phallic imagery in the town, by attributing to it a commercial and pragmatic purpose. For instance, McGinn writes:

*“In regard to identifying the cellae meretriciae...as far as erotic art and graffiti are concerned, 7.11.12 has a **phallus made of tufa**, 7.13.15 a **phallic amulet**, 7.4.42 an erotic painting, 7.13.15, 16, and 19 show a price nearby, while 9.6.2 has sexual graffiti nearby, and 9.7.15 and 17 have several prices in the vicinity.”<sup>36</sup>*

In 2002, McGinn acknowledged that “erotic art turns out to have been a near-universal feature of Roman social life, a fact that has encouraged ‘brothel-spotting’ in some controversial places”;<sup>37</sup> however, he later asserted in 2010 that, whilst “the erotic significance of the phallus is open to dispute: Spano (1920) 25-7; Clarke (1998) 13; Varone (2000) 15-27 [...] here insofar as they appear in such venues, **I will place them in the category of erotic art for purposes of brothel identification...**”<sup>38</sup> Laurence has taken a similar approach, writing that “the person seeking the prostitute might notice a series of phalluses on the roads and walls of this insula, which would have guided that person...to the three *cellae* in this narrow street.”<sup>39</sup> In trying to consider whether or not phalluses either marked or gave directions to brothels in Pompeii, McGinn, in comparing instances of street phalluses with a geography of proposed brothels, teleologically falls into the trap of considering a phallus to be evidence of a brothel – and sometimes the only evidence.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, mapping the site’s phalluses against

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<sup>36</sup> McGinn (2010) 202.

<sup>37</sup> McGinn (2002) 10, note 35.

<sup>38</sup> For example, the House of the Vettii VI.15.1 & .27 bears an advert for a prostitute at its entrance (*CIL* IV 4592) and several erotic paintings, leading Varone to identify it as a brothel (Varone (1994) 133-4), later to be refuted by Clarke (Clarke (1998) 169-77). McGinn (2010) 202, note no.102.

<sup>39</sup> Laurence (2010) 92.

<sup>40</sup> See McGinn (2010) 288; 267-290, ‘A Catalogue of Possible Brothels at Pompeii’ – especially McGinn no.15, VI.16.32– 33; McGinn no.18, VII.2.32– 33; McGinn no.34, IX.2.7– 8; and McGinn no.40, IX.11.2– 3 on account of an ithyphallic lamp. McGinn also agrees with “Eschebach, “Casa di Ganimedee” (1982) 277, suggests, if I understand him correctly, that the entire Casa di Ganimedee may at some point have

the most recent topography of prostitution would prove futile. Also: if putting up a phallic 'sign' was meant to indicate that you were running a brothel, what did it mean to hang up a phallic *tintinnabulum*, or to set up a phallic scene in a private residence?<sup>41</sup>

### **Censorship: The Myth and Misdirection of the *Gabinetto Segreto***

Since the rediscovery of the Campanian sites, the history of our engagement with the phallic imagery and artefacts unearthed there has been heavily governed by modernity's continual and evolving attempts to police who could see them. The most famous of these is what is popularly referred to as the 'Secret Cabinet' (the Italian title has varied, from *Gabinetto Segreto* to *Gabinetto degli Oggetti Osceni*, *Gabinetto Riservato*, or *Raccolta Pornografica*) at what is now the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (formerly the Real Museo Borbonico).<sup>42</sup> [Fig. 7] In 1987, Walter Kendrick's book *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, and a subsequent television documentary inspired by his ideas broadcast in 1999, was highly influential in bringing the story of the Naples Museum's 'Secret Cabinet' - and the repressiveness of modern attitudes to antiquity it was supposed to exemplify - to popular and scholarly attention.<sup>43</sup> Kendrick was among the first to argue that the modern sense of the 'pornographic' was conceived of in order to deal precisely with the plethora of distressing artefacts being retrieved from the sites in the Bay of Naples during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>44</sup> The *Gabinetto Segreto* continues to draw in tourists from all over the world, fascinated by its contents as well as its taxonomical status.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, the Campanian phallus has simultaneously come to signify

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functioned as a brothel, partly on the basis of two representations of the phallus at different points of the facade." McGinn (2010) 281.

<sup>41</sup> Fisher & Langlands have demonstrated the significance of the Pompeian brothel in the modern tourist imagination: visitors to the site "provide their own thoughtful reinterpretations and re-appropriate the material as part of continuing deliberations about human sexuality, civilization and morality. In particular, many of those who visit Pompeii and then write about it on the web are drawn to it as a city where sex was celebrated and they work hard to preserve this vision by reinterpreting information they are given that seems to undermine it." Fisher & Langlands (2009) 178.

<sup>42</sup> Beard (2012) 62; also, Johns (1999) 15-31.

<sup>43</sup> Grove (2013) 18; *Pornography: A Secret History of Civilization* documentary, first broadcast in Britain in 1999.

<sup>44</sup> Kendrick (1996).

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/gabinetto-segreto> Date Accessed: 28th January 2019.

modernity's *own* fabled fascination with sexuality and eroticism: historical attempts to deconstruct and interpret ancient phallic artefacts are apparently a part of modern society's fixation with sex, the attribution of apotropaism repeatedly billed as a kind of enlightened realisation as to the 'innocent' nature of ancient sexual symbolism and how it thus differs from that of more recent times. Whilst we now try to approach these objects *without* a moralising eye – avoiding terms such as 'obscene' or 'pornographic' – the historical notion of the apotropaic phallus has been intrinsically implicated in an attempt to absolve the ancients from past accusations of moral degeneracy. Indeed, the history of the Secret Cabinet itself is routinely told as a narrative which maps its changing rules of access onto the chronological growth of cultural liberalism and political openness. Therefore, this story broadly depicts a two-hundred-year trajectory towards greater accessibility (indeed, today the Secret Cabinet is open to all, bearing only a gentle warning outside about the finds within). In actual fact, this history itself has seen more than a few fluctuations.<sup>46</sup>

Beard rightly points out, therefore, that the history of the Secret Cabinet itself is not that of a single room “variously locked and unlocked at different points in time”: viewing restrictions existed even as early as Portici, and visitors who were granted access were heavily censured as to what they could sketch or note down from their visit to the entire collection at this time; the numerous different locations of the Cabinet within the Museo Borbonico itself also complicate the picture - in fact, for

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<sup>46</sup> De Caro (2000a) & (2000b) 9-23; García y García & Jacobelli (2001) 17-26. For a critique of the 'myth' of the secret cabinet, see Fisher & Langlands (2011) 301-15. In reality, methods of restricting access to the 'erotica' had already existed in the old Portici Museum. For instance, in his 1762 letter Johann Joachim Winckelmann says of the notorious statue Pan copulating with a goat that when he visited Portici, a special license was required to see it (which he did not apply for). Mattusch (2005) 155-6; and translation of Winckelmann by Mattusch (2011) 87. Later, N. Brooke, in his *Observations on the Manners and Customs of Italy* (1798), only says of the famous Pan and Goat statue group that the work is “too indecent to describe” and recommends throwing it into the crater of Mount Vesuvius. Alden Gordon sketches the excavations in the 18th century and concentrates on the lack of openness in the world of the European Enlightenment. As we know from numerous records, visitors were not allowed to take notes, let alone make sketches, and some of them devised hilarious tricks to do what they wanted. Gordon (2007) 35-57. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only scholars and artists - with a permit - were permitted to the space; in the 1930s, archaeological superintendent Amedeo Maiuri (who governed the museum and excavations through the fascist era until 1961) retracted – and then later reinstated - all access again; by the mid-1960s any adult with clear forewarning about contents of the Cabinet could enter - although in practice, restorations and staffing issues saw extensive parts of the museum kept firmly shut. It was only as recently as 2000 that true public access was realised, showcasing, as Beard writes, “phalluses by the score...to a great fanfare in the international press.” Beard (2012) 64.

extensive periods in the museum's history there was never one single pornographic collection, but many collections of different material in different places and access restricted in only some, and even that at different points in time (take the 'Venus Room', for example); objects appear to have been moved from different locations, collated and then separated again, and controlled under different regimes of restriction; furthermore, a number of modern artworks were *equally* policed – such as Titian's *Danaë* (1544–1545) and Cambiaso's *Venus and Adonis* (1560-1565).<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the infamous Secret Cabinet was not a single room, with clearly defined contents, but a series of fluid groups of material, numerous locations, and a number of different and changing regimes. "In fact," remarks Beard, "the Secret Cabinet was almost as much a state of mind as any particular physical location."<sup>48</sup> We can take this one step further, and question to which era this "state of mind" belongs: indeed, it appears as if the Secret Cabinet exists most concretely and statically in the *current* popular and academic imagination, the context it provides for understanding the historiography of Campanian phallic artefacts is thus largely overestimated by recent scholarship.

Beard has also questioned our impressions of how many people saw Secret Cabinet material, and the actual preventative power of the permits.<sup>49</sup> Therefore our ideas of public engagement, exposure, the organisation of knowledge and the construction of public understanding of the material in question is, at present, disproportionately and reductively led by our ingrained and fantastical imaginings of the Secret Cabinet. Several illustrated catalogues of the Cabinet were available in Europe and America from the 1830s onwards: an interested person could therefore see these images sitting in an armchair at home. Two of the best known, Louis Barré's *Musée Secret* and Colonel Famin's *Cabinet Secret*, both published an almost identical set of around 60 images of erotica from Pompeii and Herculaneum, including several phallic *tintinnabula*, amulets and ithyphallic figurines, by the artist Henri Roux [Figs. 9-11].<sup>50</sup> What role, therefore, might such material have had in effectively

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<sup>47</sup> Beard (2012) 64-5.

<sup>48</sup> Beard (2012) 65.

<sup>49</sup> Beard (2012) 66-7.

<sup>50</sup> *The Royal Museum at Naples: Being some account of the Erotic Paintings, Bronzes, and Statues contained in that famous 'Cabinet Secret'*, Colonel Fanin (Stanislas Marie César Famin) 1836; *Musée Secret*, Louis Barré 1877 (first edition 1841) (García y García & Jacobelli, *Museo Segreto* 2001).

standardising the Secret Cabinet in both the popular and scholarly imagination, given that, whilst objects moved around the museum and regulations shifted back and forth, these editions and reprints stayed the same? This thesis will take a long overdue step away from the tyranny of the Secret Cabinet with regard to the story of our interaction with this material and the formation of our ideas as to its role in ancient society.

The oversimplified and quasi-mythologised nature of the history of the Secret Cabinet is relevant here for several reasons. For too long discussion of the material at the heart of this project has focused on the fluctuating restrictions and censorship imposed upon it which, as we are beginning to realise, now proves to be an inadequate and somewhat misleading narrative. Secondly, apotropaism has, in several contexts, become subsequently equated with the absolution and rationalisation of phallic artefacts; most people think only of the “phallic bric-a-brac” when we say ‘Secret Cabinet’, therefore the status and image of this taxonomical creation is intimately connected with the Campanian phallus, its designations and place in the popular imagining of antiquity. Furthermore, more material was actually involved in the Secret Cabinet than just phalluses, or even Pompeiana – the taxonomy is therefore much broader than we acknowledge, and the bearing of this breadth on the notion of Campanian phallic apotropaism has thus far been ignored. Finally - and most crucially - the long-prevailing focus on a narrative of censorship oversimplifies the other issues at stake in the history of our interaction with this material, when more was clearly going on than censorship alone (such as theories on universal phallic worship, the investigation of folklorism, and a fascination with mystical and powerful objects and arcana, all of which will be fully brought to light in this study).<sup>51</sup> The narrative on phallic artefacts has long been dominated, therefore, by the story of the Secret Cabinet and museological censorship, the former being the main construct which has governed the classification and understanding of these objects as well as the central point of departure for reflecting on our historical responses to them. Given that our impressions of the Secret Cabinet alone prove insufficient and oversimplified, it is clear that a narrative of censorship is now inadequate for

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<sup>51</sup> Also, Fisher & Langlands (2011); Grove (2013).

understanding the evolution of our relationship with these objects. Furthermore, at its core the concept of apotropaism as we presently define and implement it has little to do with eroticism or obscenity; therefore, how are we to fully triangulate the ideological development of the apotropaic phallus if we rely on censure alone? Phallic apotropaism intersects with a network of ideas concerning comparative religion, the evolution of belief and iconography, and the articulation of magical objecthood, in both our modern sense of the term as well as in our historical approaches to it; however, this multiplicity is yet to be fully illustrated.

With such repeated focus on censorship and embarrassment, the dynamics and shifting interfaces between the different modes of conceptualising Campanian phallic artefacts - *including* the synthesis of apotropaism – have been overlooked. Beard writes: “In 1848, for example, a question was raised about some of the ‘ithyphallic’ material; for if, as Arditì had argued, they were a form of primitive protection against the evil eye, rather than erotic in intention, then these works hardly belonged to a secret cabinet.”<sup>52</sup> She does not go into any further detail about this debate. Yet here, the very ‘obscene’ nature of these artefacts was up for grabs, the concept of apotropaism playing the central role in casting doubt on the curatorial framework which, already by this time, went hand-in-hand with these artefacts, their interpretation and reception. Beard’s throwaway comment is then cited in Roberts’ catalogue that accompanied the 2013 exhibition ‘Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum’ at the British Museum: “Uncertainty over the nature of ‘erotic’ talismans was expressed in Naples Museum in the nineteenth century, though the objects were eventually consigned to the *Gabinetto Segreto*”.<sup>53</sup> What was the nature of this uncertainty? Why did a possible attribution of apotropaism not win out over one of obscenity, and how were these two competing interpretations weighed up? Was the apotropaic pitched as a means of *absolving* what had thus far been perceived as ancient erotic excess, or did such an interpretation itself present *further* troubling ideas about the nature of sex in antiquity? Such unanswered questions epitomise the problem at hand, in that the changing perspectives on and modes of understanding

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<sup>52</sup> Beard (2012) 67.

<sup>53</sup> Roberts (2013) 52.



this material have been perennially glossed over and oversimplified, reducing the story of these artefacts to a monotone narrative of expurgation.

Similarly, the first wave of respondents to the rediscovery of Campanian phallic objects – namely, Sir William Hamilton and his *côterie* of artists, antiquarians and dilettantes – are often portrayed as ‘forbidden fruits collectors’ or tourists of ancient iniquity given their notable interest in the material.<sup>54</sup> Enlightenment historians have long emphasised the study of world religion and fertility in the treatment and understanding of this material and why it was of interest to these figures; they also consider the collectors and thinkers as being fascinated with social deviance, the exploration of Campanian phallic material most often tied to eighteenth-century sexual underworlds.<sup>55</sup> The popular notion that our earliest interactions with these objects represent a deviant or tarnished place in scholarly history do not stand up, however, when we reveal the extent of interest in this material as well as the variety of ideological spheres in which it participated. Furthermore, whilst so many of the obvious names were involved in the accumulation and distribution of Campanian phallic artefacts at major institutions such as the British Museum – such as Richard Payne Knight and Sir William Hamilton – several other figures, famous for vastly different (and less risqué!) contributions to archaeology and museum holdings, were *also* involved in cultivating both private and public collections of ancient phallic material.<sup>56</sup> Thus the study and collection of the

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<sup>54</sup> Rousseau (1987) 101-155.

<sup>55</sup> Rousseau & Porter (1987), Carabelli (1996), Redford (2013) and Kelly (2010). Indeed, Carabelli’s momentous contribution to this topic, whilst comprehensively shedding light on several aspects of the story of Payne Knight and Hamilton’s phallic discovery previously unknown to modern scholars, does not interrogate the notion of an apotropaic phallus. We are therefore left with an overwhelming sense of this era’s investment in the concept of phallic worship, but with little idea of how this related or might relate to phallic apotropaism.

<sup>56</sup> These included: Charles Townley; Sir Hans Sloane; Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks; Charles Roach Smith; Sir William Temple; Léon Morel; pharmaceutical magnate Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome; nineteenth-century physician-turned-banker-turned-phallicist George Witt; along with key dealers of the period such as Gavin Hamilton, Thomas Jenkins, the Baron D’Hancarville and Henry Osborne Cureton. The British Museum even contains a couple of phallic items acquired by the Italian jewellery heir and collector of antiquities Alessandro Castellani. Furthermore, several ‘phallic’ Roman items – particularly figurines, although not from Campania – were donated to the British Museum by the Reverend Greville John Chester, a benefactor of several British institutions (including the British Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum and Liverpool Museums) who had a particular interest in Egyptology and was a friend of the eminent Egyptologist Sir Flinders Petrie. On the continent, figures such as Jakob Salomon Bartholdy, a Prussian diplomat known for reviving fresco painting amongst German artists in Italy, and Friedrich Wilhelm Eduard Gerhard, professor of

Campanian phallus was intimately connected with existing channels of archaeological and anthropological enquiry, as well as with an interest in other small finds, and was therefore more integrated into mainstream antiquarian discourse than is currently reflected in scholarship. Any accounts of the contrasting efforts to offer an alternative explanation for these artefacts almost entirely focus on the work of Richard Payne Knight – particularly, his 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* – and the corresponding idea of universal fertility worship.<sup>57</sup> In this way, apotropaic functionality has long been conflated with the notion of fertility symbolism or phallic/sex worship, both in *current* interpretations of Campanian artefacts as well as accounts of the *history* of thought on the topic. This has in turn led to the dominance of Richard Payne Knight in the body of material that attempts to explain how we came to conceive of and identify phallic apotropism, itself portrayed as a kind of enlightenment in our engagement with this material.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, this thesis does **not** intend to assert that there **wasn't** a narrative of censorship and scandal which arose in responding to phallic artefacts from the Vesuvian sites, but rather that there were **other**, parallel – at times affirmative, at times conflicting – responses to this material before, during and after the fabled era of Bourbon-instituted censorship upon which scholarship and popular discourse has thus far fixated. Of course, such a picture of censorship - or, more accurately, modernity's obsession with censorship - comprises the central contribution of Foucault's *La volonté de savoir* (1976), the first volume of his four-volume disquisition on sexuality in the western world, *L'Histoire de la sexualité*. Over the course of this study, Foucault makes a case for sexuality as the archetypal example of cultural construction, critically arguing that the concept of individual sexuality is a relatively recent phenomenon in western culture. Significantly, Foucault seeks to both illustrate and criticise the "repressive hypothesis": the apparently widespread belief of

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archaeology and co-founder of the first international archaeological society, the *Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (founded in Rome in 1829), as well as numismatists such as Alexander Missong and Julius Friedländer, convey a similar story. In America, Maxwell Sommerville, who also wrote and collected prolifically on engraved gems, left a bequest in 1904 which thus comprises the entirety of the Roman phallic artefacts now held at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

<sup>57</sup> Johns (1999) 14-35.

<sup>58</sup> Johns (1999) 21-8.

twentieth-century western society that sexuality and/or the open discussion of sex was suppressed and stigmatised throughout the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century, with an eventual liberation of sexuality only coming about in recent times. Foucault asserts that in portraying *past* sexuality as repressed, grounds have been provided for the idea that - through the very rejection of antiquated moral codes - *future* sexuality could thus be contrastingly unrestrained, as both a reaction and remedy to the archaic laws and behavioural frameworks which supposedly nurtured moral infractions accordingly branded as perversion (such as homosexuality, for instance).<sup>59</sup> In critiquing the repressive hypothesis, Foucault is not necessarily concerned with invalidating it; rather, as with this thesis, his interest is the way in which sex produced a "discursive erethism" in modernity - how and why sexuality is made a pronounced object of discussion.<sup>60</sup> In short, why do we proclaim so vociferously that we are repressed, and why do we talk so much about how we *can't* talk about sex?

Indeed, classical antiquity itself was to occupy a prominent place in the wider story fleshed out by Foucault, constituting the primary case study for the second and third volumes of *L'Histoire de la sexualité*. In particular, Foucault believed that "the rudiments of the modern subject can be traced back to the Greek problematization of the self in the practice of the love of boys", and thus Foucault bestowed upon ancient Greek homosexuality a peculiar role and status in his wider project to understand the Western subject (which has persisted ever since: see the work of Davidson (2004)).<sup>61</sup> It is within this post-Foucauldian awareness of censorship mythography that we must situate the discourse of censoring and un-censoring of the Campanian phallus – and not just because the narrative of the latter's censorship proves both inaccurate and reductive. Indeed, the ramifications of the Foucauldian project enshrined the use of ancient sexuality as a vehicle for how modernity has architected its position and relationship to antiquity more generally. To begin with: *L'Histoire* dealt ostensibly with Roman society as well as Greek, but in practice it undertook what Richlin has termed an "erasure of the individuality of Roman culture":

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<sup>59</sup> Foucault (1978) 1-14.

<sup>60</sup> Foucault (1978) 32.

<sup>61</sup> Poster (1986) 213.

“...In the third volume he collapses Hellenistic into Roman, Republic into Empire, and all the emperors into each other, skipping a hundred years of civil war and the drastic social changes that accompanied it. [...] Indeed, most of the sources in this volume are Greek, not Roman. [...] Ironically, he was only able to make his argument for the difference between antiquity and the present by leaving out major differences between Greece and Rome, between Empire and Republic. The discussion of marriage is framed (1986: 147– 49) as if Rome of the high Empire could profitably be compared directly with fifth-century B.C. Athenian society, without consideration of earlier Roman society; and as if Plutarch (a Greek from Boiotia) and Pliny (a wealthy Roman from Cisalpine Gaul) shared the same culture...”<sup>62</sup>

Foucault’s influential treatment of Greek and Roman society therefore participates in the wider, popular habit of remembering Classical Antiquity as an amalgam. As Richlin rightly points out, “attention from **non-classicists** has turned toward antiquity” - broadly defined – “especially because of the picture Foucault drew of **an ancient sexuality different in kind from modern sexuality.**”<sup>63</sup>

Secondly: the conundrum of the Campanian phallus also has much in common with Foucault’s deployment of the classical world, in that both have resulted to some degree in antiquity being held up as an *excusable* other: that is, as being intrinsically different to - the polar opposite, even - of modernity, but as having been constructed according to similar or analogous – and thus more palatable – social codes. The clear example of this is the distinctive way in which Greek homosexuality has been transformed by modernity into a paradigm of the cultural construct (see Davidson (2004) 80-1). Statements of the kind such as “the ancient Greeks *did* engage in pederasty – but it’s ‘okay’, because this behaviour was heavily codified”; or “the ancient Greeks *were* culturally homosexual – but that’s because they didn’t have a concept of sexuality like ours” are highly familiar given the way ancient Greece is popularly remembered and continues to be deployed in modern social and legal debates.<sup>64</sup> This formula - “the ancients *were* different/*did* engage in this ‘strange’

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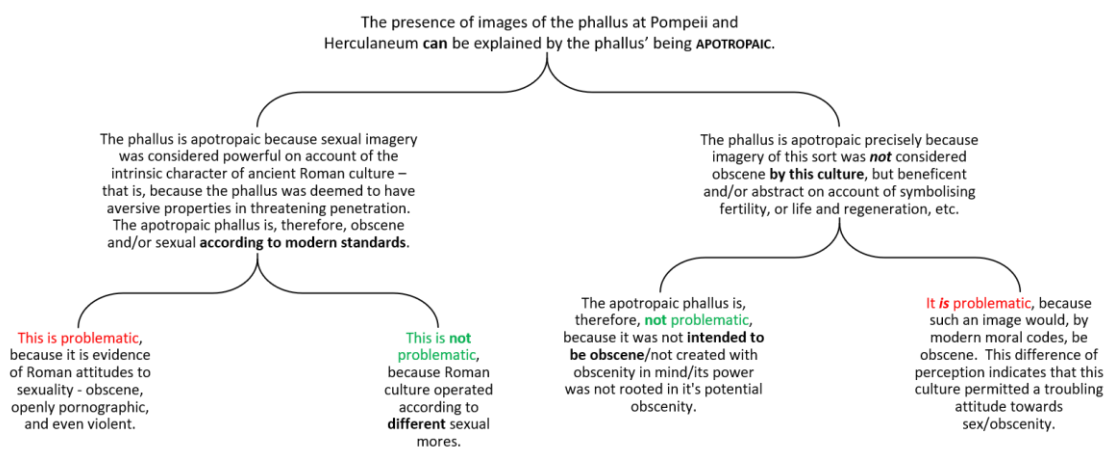
<sup>62</sup> Richlin (1992) xv-xvi.

<sup>63</sup> Richlin (1992) xiv.

<sup>64</sup> For further discussion of this, see Davidson (2004) 80-1.

behaviour; **but** it's 'okay', because they operated according to *different* social mores/applied regulatory codes of behaviour *differently* to how we do" – can also be observed in the way modernity has at times attempted to reconcile itself with the discovery of phallic imagery at the Vesuvian sites.

For in terms of our perception of both our historical and ongoing engagement with Campanian phallic material, the fixation on censorship and concealed iniquity has accordingly given rise to an ingrained and misleading narrative of our ascribing polarised classifications of either pornography or solemnity to the phalluses of ancient Campania. The apotropaic taxonomy plays various and often divergent roles within this narrative. It can be considered to stand at the top of a 'decision tree' predictive model of sorts, in which the phallus' being positively identified as apotropaic ultimately only ever leads to two possible outcomes. It - and thus Roman society at large – either *is* problematic on account of its indicating a troubling relationship with sexual imagery, or *isn't* problematic because its particular usage of sexual imagery has been misunderstood and unduly maligned by modern society:



The extent to which the Campanian phallus' potential apotropaism constitutes both/either the modern absolution of ancient sexual beliefs or a recognition (condemnation, even - see Richlin (1992), for instance) of their divergence is yet to be adequately acknowledged or grappled with.

## The Campanian Phallus and the Construction of Popular 'Knowledge' of Antiquity

A sincerer effort is needed more generally to examine the intersection between popular notions, public engagement, museology/curation, and finally research - as well as the *history* of these spheres and how they inevitably coalesce - in the construction of accepted knowledge of the ancient world.<sup>65</sup> The role of the popular imagination in the construction of our knowledge, impressions and interaction with the Vesuvian sites, as well as the foremost place which phallic images and artefacts occupy within this imagination, ensure that the investigation of the apotropaic phallus, the history of our responses to this concept, and its potential role in negating our anxieties about Roman phallic imagery hits right to the core of both our past and ongoing relationship with classical antiquity, and the ways in which we draw upon this relationship to inform modernity. We should not be hasty to dismiss the wider and frequently undervalued role of the image of the ancient world constantly being reinforced and perpetuated in popular culture, the persistent impressions and assumptions created by which are central to this thesis and its foremost questions. This exchange of ideas between different registers of knowledge and engagement is especially critical to understanding the ways in which we have framed our relationship with the Vesuvian cities and the phallic material recovered from them: it is undeniable that these sites occupy a distinctive place at the confluence of academic research, popular culture and global heritage, rendering these forces all equally as powerful in shaping the way Pompeii, Herculaneum and their visual-material culture have been - and will continue to be - received, and thus demanding that any investigation into the construction of meaning and perception as it pertains to the sites be truly reflective of this confluence.

Beard's *Pompeii: Life of a Roman Town* (2008) won the 2009 Wolfson History Prize, "Britain's foremost history prize, promoting standards of excellence in

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<sup>65</sup> In the manner of Hales & Paul (2011); but even more can be done to explore the construction of 'knowledge' in the era of digitisation and social media. Indeed, millennial wanderlust has seen a resurgence in unearthing 'secret' histories, places and beliefs, along with art and architecture that seems at once alien and unfamiliar. Fisher & Langlands have made a sincere and excellent start on this with "This way to the Red-Light District": The Internet Generation visits the Brothel in Pompeii': Fisher & Langlands (2009) 172-194

<https://travel.usnews.com/features/why-millennials-have-become-the-wanderlust-generation> Date Accessed: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019.

Sawers, Paul (February 27, 2015). "Atlas Obscura raises \$2M to become a National Geographic for millennials". VentureBeat.

scholarly history for a **general audience**”.<sup>66</sup> (Its status as a popular history book has, however, not prevented it from being regularly cited in even the newest works on Pompeii or ancient Roman society.<sup>67</sup>) Beard’s *Pompeii* is highly indicative of the wider way we have come to approach Pompeii and its ‘evidence’, as well as the ways in which we are in fact continually reconfiguring its significance. For what Beard has done for the collective Western popular imagining of Pompeii is closely tied with how she presents *herself* to the wider public and her role as a scholar in the public eye. Pompeii as a site has been inextricably conscripted into this narrative, in turn becoming an emblem of a wider effort to reinvigorate modern interest in the ancient world and its study, by packaging it as an analogue for our own contemporary issues and questions. Beard’s reputation for causing a stir and addressing uncomfortable topics head-on – in turn subtly shaping the perceived role of the study of the ancient world and the significance of the public voice of a classicist in modern society – regularly sees Pompeii and its phalluses drafted into her mission. Beard’s take on Pompeii’s phallic artefacts is in turn symptomatic of her approach to the site as a whole: her line on Pompeii centres predominantly around ‘myth-busting’, and it is within this context that her own discussion of phallic imagery can be situated.

In his review of Beard’s *Pompeii: Life in a Roman Town*, Ian Thomson writes:

*“According to Mary Beard, however, Pompeii was not the sink-pool of vice claimed by some historians. The phallic imagery provides no more evidence of widespread sexual depravity than does obscene bus stop graffiti in London today. Elsewhere in this history, Beard punctures the notion that Pompeians were surprised by Vesuvius while watching a gladiatorial combat. Other long-held popular notions are refuted along the way (Pompeian baths were not havens of hygiene; they were pullulated with germs).”*<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.wolfson.org.uk/history-prize/about-the-prize/previous-winners/> Date accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

<sup>67</sup> For example: Skinner (2018), Lovatt (2013), Toner (2018), Laurence (2012) and Heslin (2015).

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/standard-home/pompeii-the-life-of-a-roman-town-by-mary-beard-6839395.html> ‘Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town by Mary Beard’ Ian Thomson, Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008. Date Accessed: July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Pompeian sex lives and sexual imagery regularly prove central devices of Beard's wider attempt to tell a 'truer' story of Pompeii and bring the ordinary lives of its inhabitants back into focus. Indeed: "It's hard to keep Professor Beard off the subject of Pompeii and sex", John Walsh writes for the *Independent* in the wake of her 2010 BBC documentary on Pompeii [Fig. 12], "because a) it's one of her major hobby horses (many undergraduates at the Cambridge Classics Faculty have been startled by her introductory lecture on lewd Roman graffiti) and b) sex is everywhere in the ruined city. The Pompeians were a bizarrely sexualised bunch."<sup>69</sup> The sense that we are getting a refreshingly frank account of base human instincts and their depiction, particularly in the form this seemingly takes at Pompeii, thus constitutes one of the central and oft-quoted reasons for Beard's popularity amongst the wider public. It may or may not come as surprise, then, that Beard considers the Pompeian representation of the male genitalia to be exactly that, and not evidence of apotropaic belief or fertility worship:

*"And the phalluses that appear on every street corner? "If you consult the guidebooks," she says, "they'll tell you the willies point to the nearest brothel. [...] In Roman culture, however much women might get on, power and masculinity are co-related. When you find a sculpture of a willy over a bread oven, it's not to dispel the evil eye, it's simply to say, 'Look, it's me, the male baker.' I think, at some level, that's the answer.""*<sup>70</sup>

Given her wider approach to the site, does her take on its phalluses constitute a sexualisation or a desexualisation of Pompeii? That is, is it more or less sexual – and accordingly, more or less familiar – to imagine a place where phallic images were

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/queen-of-the-underworld-mary-beard-is-bringing-the-ancient-city-of-pompeii-to-life-in-a-bbc-2154808.html> John Walsh, Thursday 9th December 2010. July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/queen-of-the-underworld-mary-beard-is-bringing-the-ancient-city-of-pompeii-to-life-in-a-bbc-2154808.html> 'Queen of the underworld: Mary Beard is bringing the ancient city of Pompeii to life in a BBC documentary', John Walsh Thursday 9th December 2010.

Similarly: "To her credit, Beard does not give a carbonised fig for such ideas, the bulk of which - like the notion that a phallus was a directional sign to a brothel - are "certainly wrong". "All kind of puzzles remain," she writes sensibly. "The truth is we can only guess.""  
[https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non\\_fictionreviews/3560953/Review-Pompeii-by-Mary-Beard.html](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non_fictionreviews/3560953/Review-Pompeii-by-Mary-Beard.html) 20th Sep 2008, Nicholas Shakespeare. 7<sup>th</sup> July 2018.



concerned with mystical power, or with communicating male homosocial supremacy? And which of these is the more palatable for a modern (Western) audience? It perhaps makes sense that Beard would advocate such an interpretation, given her wider approach to ancient Campanians is at once about normalising them and demystifying them, but also about 'seeing them for what they are'. Indeed, Beard's colloquial use of the word "willies" here is emblematic of her distinctive approach to ancient history, simultaneously taking the high-brow bluster out of such discourse - with a view to making it more accessible - whilst vividly and compellingly intimating that the ancient people she describes are shockingly similar to ourselves. Beard's influential contribution to our knowledge of Roman antiquity is symptomatic of the issues at stake, therefore, when it comes to thinking about – and thinking about *how* we think about – Pompeii and its relationship to modernity. Whilst Beard, for all the significance we have accorded her, does in fact *not* actually consider the Campanian phallus to be apotropaic (or a fertility symbol, for that matter), the point is that her discussion of it underscores it as a contested issue, and something which has been - and will continue to be – debated, its apotropaism purely a perspective and not guaranteed. Not only this, but her approach to the Campanian phallus frames the issue of its interpretation as the negotiation of sex and its presence, with an inevitable reflection on modernity and our own construction of obscenity: whether we attribute sex or disavow it, the issue is the same - sex is at the centre of our engagement with Pompeii, either wholly ubiquitous (Beard) or conspicuously mistaken (apotropaism). Critically, therefore, it is this ideological space that the topic of this thesis presently occupies.

## **How or Why is a Phallus Apotropaic? Current Approaches to Apotropaic Material**

The apotropaic version of the phallus has thus been continually implicated, since the eighteenth century, in an erotic imagining. We are yet to establish whether an *apotropaic* phallus even *is* erotic; how might a phallus set up to bring luck or ward off the evil eye be erotic or involve sex? As we have already seen, modern scholarship

continues to disagree on this. In turn, suggestions of 'fertility worship' are regularly linked with sexuality and eroticism, conveying our persistent keenness as a public to picture the ancient past - and Pompeii in particular - as a locus of ritualised hypersexuality. Yet there is, and has historically been, more at stake in our efforts to make sense of Campanian phallic material. Indeed, how attuned are we to the genealogy of ideas concerning fertility symbolism and propitiation, the classification of talismanic or amuletic objects, or our early anthropological notions of the evil eye and its apparent omnipresence in a multitude of cultural traditions besides the Graeco-Roman?

The present state of scholarship concerning the apotropaic phallus of Campania exhibits problems with terminology, application, and the conceptualisation of the very attribution of apotropaism itself. We have not yet agreed as to how Pompeian phallic apotropaism functioned, and several competing and often overlapping theories proliferate. Beard asserts that the ubiquity of the phallus as an apotropaic device was grounded in the homosocial nature of Roman society, writing that in Pompeii "power, status and good fortune were expressed in terms of the phallus. Hence the presence of phallic imagery in almost unimaginable varieties all round [sic.] the town."<sup>71</sup> Warner-Slane and Dickie have argued that the apotropaic power of phallic imagery was based on the threat of penetration it posed to the wrongdoer, as do Sissa and Richlin.<sup>72</sup> Others see the phallus as being either humorous or grotesque, and therefore aversive in its ability to distract evil forces or inspire remedial laughter in would-be victims.<sup>73</sup> Barton situates the apotropaic phallus in a picture of the collective psychology of the ancient Romans, asserting that, through its ties to *Invidia*, it was one of the devices of their extreme emotional infrastructure, characterised by collective performances of despair, envy and

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<sup>71</sup> Beard (2008) 233. Also: "Similarly, though phalluses were prominently depicted everywhere in the city – "phalluses greeting you in doorways, phalluses above bread ovens, phalluses carved into the surface of the street" – Pompeii was far from a purely male-run show. In Beard's account, women emerge as important players in the city's commerce and politics."  
<https://www.thenation.com/article/city-unbottled-mary-beards-pompeii/> date Accessed: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Sissa (2008) 149-58 on *mollitia*. Richlin (1992).

<sup>73</sup> See Clarke (2007).

fascination.<sup>74</sup> Skinner argues that the phallus was apotropaic because it evoked generation and the continuation of the family line and was therefore 'lucky' (but confusingly says elsewhere that such an amulet was about "admiration for the well-hung male").<sup>75</sup> Johns has notably connected the Campanian phallus' supposed origins in fertility worship with its role as an apotropaic symbol, declaring that it kept away evil or brought good luck through its association with generativity and bountifulness.<sup>76</sup>

How might these theories have been shaped by more recent cultural and intellectual baggage accumulated by the phallus, thanks to the influence of figures such as Freud or Foucault? Since the second and third volumes of Foucault's three-volume *History of Sexuality* (1978, 1985, and 1986) dealt with Greek and (ostensibly) Roman cultures, attention has turned toward antiquity largely because of the picture Foucault painted of an ancient sexuality different in kind from modern sexuality.<sup>77</sup> In addition, we undoubtedly inhabit a post-Freudian era for thinking about phalluses – or rather, for *thinking about how* we think about phalluses. Any given phallic image is closely tied to psychoanalysis in the popular imagination, seemingly loaded with deep-seated truths concerning human desires and socialisation (think Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1899); indeed, at the turn of the Twentieth Century the phallus had a new set of art interpretations as a result of Freud's work.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, to what extent has the apotropaic in fact become a byword for the relative moral absolution of antiquity, or been confounded with a psychoanalytical reading of the Roman phallus' significance? And what did an 'apotropaic' phallus even have to do with sex from the perspective of its ancient user?

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<sup>74</sup> Barton (1993)

<sup>75</sup> Skinner (2013) 281.

<sup>76</sup> Johns (1999) 10; 39-59; 143. In her review of Johns, Richlin is tellingly and unsurprisingly shocked that Johns insists throughout that phallic amulets have "no sexual significance"; Richlin (1984) 257.

<sup>77</sup> Richlin has pointed out several key problems with Foucault's packaging of his "ancient" sexuality: Richlin (1992) xiv. See also Flynn (2005) 29-48 and Detel (2005).

<sup>78</sup> For example, the sculpture 'Princess X' (1915-16) by Romanian modernist Constantin Brâncuși is characteristic of post-Freudian responses to 'phallic imagery': the piece was intended, according to the artist, to depict a woman (Princess Marie Bonaparte, to be precise), but was widely mistaken for a penis. <http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/51035.html>. For more on Brâncuși, see Balas (2008). Date Accessed: 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

Elsewhere, other modern scholarship involving phalluses from Pompeii illustrates the different historiographical narratives these objects have come to equip. Indeed, other works concerned with ancient sexuality unfailingly encompass Campanian phallic artefacts, which in turn comprise a large part of the evidence for ancient notions of 'masculinity', homosocial structures and Roman gender hierarchy. In *Roman Homosexuality*, Craig Williams makes reference to the various incarnations of the "*fascinus*" to illustrate the "comfortable sense of humour with which phallic imagery could be disseminated among the Romans" and the often "witty" recourse to asserting "phallic authority".<sup>79</sup> He does not expand upon or explore the commonplace idea that the phallus was "invoked to ward off evil influences, above all the evil eye", or how this might relate precisely to the very "phallic authority" he seeks to lay bare. Indeed, Williams does not elaborate on implications of the apotropaic function of the phallus for his wider treatise which have been raised elsewhere – including ideas concerning the 'apotropaic' threat of penetration and sexual domination potentially posed by the phallus – by scholars of visual art, such as Warner-Slane and Dickie's study *A Knidian Phallic vase from Corinth*, or Dunbabin and Dickie's even earlier study *Invida Rumpantur Pectora*.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, in her book *The Garden of Priapus* (first published 1983) Amy Richlin asserts the idea that statues of the god Priapus, stationed in Roman gardens to warn potential thieves that the god would rape them if they attempted to steal from him, represent an endemic Roman attitude of sexual aggressiveness, observable in Roman satire from Lucilius to Juvenal. Richlin writes that she "chose the figure of the ithyphallic god Priapus, who threatens to rape thieves who enter his garden, as a synecdochic embodiment of the sexuality consciously constituted in these Roman texts: male, aggressive, and bent on controlling boundaries."<sup>81</sup> To Richlin, therefore, the ubiquity of not just phallic imagery, but *apotropaic* phallic imagery at that, is part of the assertion of a collective identity defined by sex.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Williams (1999) 91-3.

<sup>80</sup> Warner Slane & Dickie (1993); Dunbabin & Dickie (1983).

<sup>81</sup> Richlin (1992) xvi.

<sup>82</sup> The school of thought which conceptualises phallic apotropaism as a threat of penetration, often leading to broader comments on the nature of Roman society itself (as is the central premise of Richlin's 1992 *The Garden of Priapus*), clearly owes much to the series of historiographical shifts which led to increasing importance being placed on penetration in our reconstruction of Greek and, by

The Campanian phallus is also regularly implicated in discussions of the ancient sense of otherness. The multitude of figures and characters surviving from the Roman world which display some form of physiological divergence – including ‘ugliness’, grotesques, disfigurement, morbidity, ‘dwarfism’, ‘pygmies’, hunchbacks, and old age – often small in scale and made from bronze or terracotta, are regularly attributed apotropaic purposes.<sup>83</sup> Many of these figurines also exhibit either ithyphallism or hyperphallism, and it appears to be predominantly for this reason that they are thus categorised in this way.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, in his 2007 work *Looking at Laughter* - which came about precisely because Clarke “found so much visual humour in two previous investigations”, namely *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 BC–AD 250* and *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans* - Clarke argues that:

*“by placing images of deformed creatures in dangerous spots, the Romans hoped to incite salubrious laughter that would ward off evil forces. Such so-called apotropaic images instruct us about the kinds of bodies and behaviours the Romans considered to be improper. They also reveal that, for the Romans, it was perfectly fine – even salutary – to laugh at persons who were deformed or disabled.”<sup>85</sup>*

The ways in which such otherness might have been in dialogue with the phallus with which it kept company has not been fully unpacked, the very significance of

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extension, ‘ancient’ sexuality. Davidson has illuminated the “sexualization of Greek love” that took place from the late-nineteenth century to the nineteen-sixties/seventies – turning it from the sort of love “such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy” (Oscar Wilde), into one “defined in terms of sexual penetration and phallic pleasure”, in which “the physical act of sex itself required...a polarization of the sexual partners into the categories of penetrator and penetrated” (Halperin), irrespective of gender - giving a vivid account of the roles of Dover and Foucault respectively in this evolution (Davidson (2004); for the citations of Wilde and Halperin, see 78-80). A critical instalment of this story is Paul Veyne’s *La famille et l’amour sous l’Haut Empire Romain* (1978), in which **Roman** sexuality specifically was characterised as a stabbing, “*sabrer*”, and a “sexuality of rape [*viol*]” (see Davidson (2004) 87; Veyne (1978)). Even the harshest critics of Foucault’s legacy – such as Amy Richlin, for example – many of whom have in turn depicted the ubiquity of Campanian phallic imagery as being indicative of a culture of rape, intrinsically rely on the Dover-Foucault-Veyne picture of the ancient world as one centrally preoccupied with penetration, and with the poles of male-active and genderless-passive.

<sup>83</sup> Shapiro (1984); Clarke (2007); Garland (2010); Trentin (2015).

<sup>84</sup> “To effectively merge the apotropaic, phallic fascinum with human bodies and personalities, Roman artists had to invent two new types, the Aethiops and the ‘pygmy.’” Clarke (2007) 73. See also Clarke (1996); especially 193-5.

<sup>85</sup> Clarke (2007) 14.

combining such imagery - often ableist, xenophobic, homophobic and misogynist (by modern standards), and which work such as Clarke's thus assumes to be equivocal expressions of a single, characteristically 'phallic' power structure – superficially presumed to be about conspicuously performing your rightful place in the social matrix.<sup>86</sup>

When referring to apotropaic objects and images from antiquity more widely, some scholars use the term 'apotropaic', others 'prophylactic', and several extend the category to 'good fortune'. Similarly, many conflate apotropaim with ancient medicine and the prevention of disease, whilst others align it more abstractly to the acquisition and maintenance of 'luck'. Indeed, the breadth and parameters of the apotropaic have long been debated.<sup>87</sup> The closest we get to any attempt to pin down apotropaim itself is perhaps the plethora of scholarship concerned with the 'evil eye' or equivalent ideas. These treatises are often characterised by structuralist approaches to the supposed interconnectedness of global belief.<sup>88</sup> Such works thus stress the ubiquity of 'evil eye'-type superstition in a variety of religious and spiritual traditions, proffering it as a key to understanding previously concealed, deep-seated truths regarding the evolution and lineage of human belief systems. A study that epitomises this approach is Potts' *The World's Eye* (1982) which, through looking at a wide array of material evidence – “Greek vases and Peruvian bottles, Chinese bronzes

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<sup>86</sup> “The comic visual setup in them-us humour assures the viewer that he is socially better, more controlled, and detached from the person(s) he is to laugh at...The only way to maintain a position of superiority is to laugh at the image. Laughter itself becomes the power that upholds the viewer's moral and social integrity.” Clarke (2007) 231.

<sup>87</sup> For example, there remains especial variability and uncertainty in scholarship as to whether to consider motifs of good fortune as belonging to this category of material. In *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (2001), Dunbabin does not explicitly offer a definition of apotropaic art but does appear to include symbols of good luck in her discussion of such imagery on mosaics. For instance, whilst discussing the mosaic designs in the so-called Villa of Good Fortune at Olynthos, Dunbabin writes: “the inscriptions suggest that the motifs serve as **lucky and apotropaic symbols**, reinforcing the allusions to Good Fortune...” Dunbabin (1999) 8; 7-9. Thus 'apotropaic' and 'lucky' are here used interchangeably. Yet in *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa: Studies in Iconography and Patronage* (1978), Dunbabin maintains separate subheadings for apotropaic and beneficent imagery respectively. Dunbabin (1978).

<sup>88</sup> Joost Abraham Maurits Meerloo (1971) *Intuition and the Evil Eye: The Natural History of a Superstition*; Frederick Thomas Elworthy (1893) *The Evil Eye: The Classic Account of an Ancient Superstition*; Alan Dundes (1981; 1992) *The Evil Eye: A Casebook*; John H. Elliott (2015) *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World* (Volume I: Mesopotamia and Egypt; Volume II: Greece and Rome; Volume III: The Bible and Related Sources); Albert M. Potts (1982) *The World's Eye*. Many of these books remain essentially identical in content and approach to Elworthy's published in 1893.

and African masks, Tel Brak idols and Egyptian tomb paintings” – declares its ambition to “reveal man's universal fascination with the eye and his awe before its mysterious powers... [and] seek out its peculiar significance as symbol...” In drawing on “artefacts and texts, the folklore of our own times, and aspects of the unconscious revealed by Jungian psychology” Potts depicts a seemingly intrinsic and enduring network of symbols and precepts, whose apparent substantiation in psychoanalysis verifies their universality and significance beyond the confines of individual cultures.<sup>89</sup> Dundes’ *The Evil Eye: A Casebook* (1992) takes a similar approach, arguing that apotropaic practices “persist today when we drink toasts, tip waiters, and bless sneezers. To avert the evil eye, Muslim women wear veils, baseball players avoid mentioning a no-hitter in progress, and traditional Jews say their business or health is ‘not bad’ (rather than ‘good’).”<sup>90</sup> We need to reconsider the usefulness of the models which have become ingrained in our thinking on these areas, especially those seemingly susceptible to universalising approaches. The obvious reliance of these works on Enlightenment frameworks needs to be systematically laid bare, the intellectual and socio-cultural genealogy of the apotropaic, as we presently imagine it, fully illuminated, and the various ideological forces involved in that evolution exposed.

Conversely, studies on ancient ‘magic’ – including material such as inscribed gems and curse texts – have surprisingly remained more or less separate from any discussion of apotropaim. For example, the work of Christopher Faraone delves right into the notions of magic, mysticism, ritual, and the retaliatory capacity of religious worship, yet his work is rarely engaged with by the sorts of scholars who regularly seem to be encountering apotropaic imagery in other spheres of ancient life.<sup>91</sup> Certainly, gems and many of the other items Faraone deals with – including *lamellae*, *defixiones*, phylacteries and associated formulaic language and *voces magicae* – might be considered amulets and talismans *par excellence*, in modern popular imagination at least. Why have these areas seemingly evolved separately in the history of scholarship? Currently, the study of ‘magical’ materials appears largely to

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<sup>89</sup> Taken from backmatter of volume.

<sup>90</sup> Taken from backmatter of volume.

<sup>91</sup> See Faraone (1999); Faraone & Obbink (2014); Faraone & Obbink (1991).

be the preserve of philologists and papyrologists – receiving the attention of scholars including Faraone, Dirk Obbink, Georg Luck and Derek Collins – and those interested in Greek religion.<sup>92</sup> Thus there is a palpable disconnect or difference between calling an image – say, on a mosaic – apotropaic in a semiotic sense, as we have seen in so many examples above, and discussing aversive forms of ancient ‘Magic’ with a capital M. Similarly, Ogden’s work deals minimally with the apotropaic capacity of the phallus, but extensively surveys ancient references to the evil eye.<sup>93</sup> The work of scholars such as Wilk on the apotropaic symbolism of Medusa has also fed hugely into popular imagination of the concept and the wider cultural significance of material deemed apotropaic, encouraging us regularly to link such artefacts with mysticism, the evil eye, occult practice and early-modern European notions of witchcraft, but not necessarily with religion or more quotidian votive practice as is the case with epigraphic and inscribed material.<sup>94</sup>

## **This Investigation**

This thesis will therefore concern itself with images and objects from Pompeii and Herculaneum which depict the disembodied phallus or incorporate it when distinctly oversized or erect. It will investigate the many different strategies of explaining its purpose and presence which have arisen since its discovery in Campania during the late eighteenth century, with particular focus on the idea of the apotropaic phallus as it has pertained to these sites. The Campanian phallus occupies a prominent place in the popular imagination of ancient beliefs, ancient sexuality, and in public engagement with the ancient past. The high profile of Pompeii as a tourist destination, starting in the eighteenth century and continuing today, underpins this, and continual media articles on ancient sex and imagery at Pompeii demonstrate clearly the prevailing themes and perpetuated interpretations regarding the site and its phallic artefacts. Pompeii thus presents a unique opportunity to examine a long

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<sup>92</sup> See Faraone (1999); Faraone & Obbink (2014); Faraone & Obbink (1991); Luck (1985); Luck (1999); Collins (2008); Collins (2003).

<sup>93</sup> Ogden (2002) 225.

<sup>94</sup> Wilk (2000).



history of intellectual, artistic, touristic and taxonomical engagement with Antiquity, and the effect this has had on the construction of knowledge and ideas of wider cultural significance, especially regarding sex, religion and cultural evolution. Accordingly, this thesis will conduct an investigation of the historiographical place which the notion of apotropaic phallus occupies in our intellectual and cultural imagination, in order to illuminate more accurately the genealogy of the concept and its connection to other, potentially competing modes of thinking on phallic artefacts from Campania. How conscious are we of the epistemological baggage that comes with classifying an object as apotropaic? This project will focus its enquiry on the apotropaic phallus at the Vesuvian cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, it being a central and historical obsession of Classics as a discipline.

It is thanks to figures such as Christopher Stray, and his book *Classics Transformed: Schools, universities, and society in England, 1830–1960* (1998), that the history of the study of Classics and how the boundaries of the discipline were defined is now considered worthy of investigation. In taking a historiographical angle and contextualising the concept of phallic apotropaism - and its socio-intellectual ramifications - in terms of its contemporary articulation, this thesis will follow the likes of Dan Orrells, Constanze Güthenke, Katherine Harloe, Vicky Coltman, Shelley Hales, Joanna Paul, and Jennifer Ingleheart, who have also beneficially shed light on the evolution of the discipline of Classics and the importance of understanding this as we move forward in the field, as well as figures such as William Pietz, who has done similar work for the field of Anthropology with his work on the origin of the Fetish.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the classification of Campanian phallic artefacts is intimately connected with the birth and rise of the public museum, and key institutions of Campanian material in particular (The British Museum and Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli). Their stories and the story of this material are intrinsically intertwined. The history of collecting, the Grand Tour and the impetus to collecting, study and museology further provided by the rediscoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum have

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<sup>95</sup> Hales & Paul (2011); Harloe (2013); Orrells (2011b), (2015); Orrells, Bhambra & Roynon (2011); Coltman (2009); Pietz (1985); Pietz (1987), (1988), (1993), (1996); Pietz & Apter (1993); Ingleheart (2015); Güthenke (2008); as well as Zajko & O’Gorman (2013); Hughes & Buongiovanni (2015); Dufallo (2017); Sachs (2010); Heringman (2013); Fisher & Langlands (2015); De Francesco (2013); Hamilakis (2009); and Wyles & Hall (2016).

been well documented: this thesis will add to this body of historiography by considering a key element of our conceptual toolkit which in fact emerged from this particular moment in the history of our discipline.<sup>96</sup>

### **Thesis Structure**

The first four chapters of this thesis will reassess the different modes of interpreting Campanian phallic artefacts which came about during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Here historiography will be moved on from a reductive and cursory focus solely on the work of Richard Payne Knight and the notion of phallic worship, to consider what was in fact a breadth of different - though intrinsically interrelated - discourses taking place at this time. The links between these responses - as well as the ways in which they conflicted with each other - will be brought to light, thus building a more accurate ideological picture.

Chapter One will look at the ideas and subsequent influence of Richard Payne Knight, specifically that of his 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, and will re-examine his text in order to evaluate the ingrained connection between comparative religious ideas of fertility worship and the concept of phallic apotropaism. It will demonstrate our perceived ideological debt to Knight as well as the longevity of his contribution, and the extent to which it is cited and popularly referred to without actually being accurately reflected. Accordingly, this chapter will show that the concept of the apotropaic phallus as we presently conceive of it should more truthfully be thought of as a product of the ways in which the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reimagined Knight's ideas. Indeed, thus far only a story of the conceptualisation of so-called 'priapus worship' has been told and responses to, and attempts to make sense of, these objects seem to exist in Campanian, Hamiltonian isolation.<sup>97</sup> This thesis will reconnect the discourse on the phallic discoveries with a wider intellectual context of nineteenth-century anthropology and folklorism, in turn shedding light on the evidence for the amuletic side to this story and the ideological relationship between the notion of phallic worship and phallic apotropaism.

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<sup>96</sup> Jenkins (1996); Potts (1994); Hales & Paul (2011); Coltman (2009); Mattusch (2013).

<sup>97</sup> Carabelli (1996).

The following three chapters will then shed light on other, lesser-acknowledged socio-cultural and intellectual modes according to which the Campanian apotropaic phallus was attributed agency and meaning during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and according to which – as will be shown - we still largely characterise it. The first of these is that of nineteenth-century folklorism, and in particular a Grand-Tourist fascination for south-Italian folk life, traditions and beliefs. It will be demonstrated that the ways in which contemporary thinkers nurtured a sense of continuity between ancient and modern Naples was central to classifying the social register of practice and material culture to which phallic apotropaism was deemed to belong; moreover, apotropaism itself will be shown to have been a central topic of folkloric-type interest during this period, too.

Following the spotlight on the interest in contemporary Naples which took place alongside, and intermeshed with, discourse on the archaeological discoveries, the third chapter of this thesis will address the ideological influence of the discovery of Catholic phallic wax votives elsewhere in the Bourbon Kingdom of Naples. These objects were ‘discovered’ and publicised by Sir William Hamilton, who in turn commissioned Knight’s *Discourse*, and his letter to his fellow dilettanti describing these objects, their role in local Catholic worship and their status as ‘evidence’ of the survival of pagan priapic worship into modern Christian ritual practice was published as the preface to Knight’s very treatise. Little exploration has been conducted as to the effect of the supposed material and functional kinship between these two sets of phallic objects as intimated by Hamilton’s coterie. It will accordingly be shown that their being bracketed together in the intellectual milieu which dealt precisely with the nature and meaning of the Campanian phallic artefacts had long-lasting effects as to the conceptualisation of their agency and representational status, in turn proving key to informing modern notions of phallic apotropaic power.

The final segment of the historiographical part of this investigation will look at the ideas of Michele Arditi, articulated in his 1825 tract *Il Fascino*. Despite being a central figure in the Campanian archaeological sphere during the nineteenth century, Arditi’s work on the topic of phallic artefacts has not been the subject of direct discussion. This is especially significant, given that the very interpretation of ancient

phallic imagery put forward by Arditì in fact challenged contemporary prevailing taxonomies conceived of to deal with this material.

We presently think of the apotropaic phallus as being all about sex and negotiating its presence, both in our historical encounters with Roman culture and in Roman culture itself, too; but as will be shown, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Campanian phallus was also intimately tied up with the exploration of material simulacra, mysticism, and the classification of folklore. It remains, therefore, for us to unpack the import of this concept for the era in which it emerged. How might the Campanian phallus be considered an *objet chargé*, whose ideological heritage and position in the popular imaginings of both foreignness and antiquity is intrinsically linked to the negotiation of self, civilisation and belief? The concept of the apotropaic phallus of Campania emerged from a composite intellectual history, which saw the entanglement of anthropology, comparative mythology, spiritualism, western esotericism, folklorism, psychoanalysis and comparative religion. The concept is precisely a product of this entanglement, the narrative and implications of its composition demanding thorough investigation and illumination.

Having assessed the various modes of response which came about in relation to the Campanian phallus during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the final chapter of this thesis will offer a reassessment of the apotropaic phallus at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Here we shall approach the evidence as an interconnected corpus and a semiotic topography, leaving us open to recognising the sorts of cross-references, iconographic parody, and visual 'intertextuality' that an ancient Campanian viewer would have been able to spot, given their exposure to a broad and multifaceted range of phallic imagery throughout the urban landscape in which this material was encountered. Accordingly, we will discover that the phallus is rarely wholly solemn, apotropaic and symbolic nor wholly sexual, humorous and literal: indeed, its depiction in different contexts throughout the towns regularly capitalised on its capacity for double entendre, reflexive humour, social satire and semiotic 'code-switching'. In this way, the apotropaic phallus proved an ambiguous and perplexing image even for its ancient users and creators.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Richard Payne Knight and Universal Phallic Worship

This chapter will examine the most prominent and enduring intellectual response associated with the eighteenth-century phallic discoveries of the Bay of Naples: the comparative religious theory of an underlying phallic aspect to religious belief systems. The British antiquarian and dilettante Richard Payne Knight is the most recognised early proponent of this theory and his treatise, *The Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786), was considered a seminal exposition of the topic long into the twentieth century.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, modern discussion of ancient phallic imagery, especially concerning art and artefacts which hail from Pompeii and Herculaneum, continue to place particular importance on Knight and his role in shaping the interpretation of this species of archaeological material.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, Payne Knight occupies a foremost position in our understanding of the history of our engagement with these artefacts, as well as in our supposedly ‘enlightened’ understanding of the ancient material itself.<sup>100</sup> However, there exists a deeply ingrained conflation, as will be demonstrated, of his very idea of phallic worship – itself often varyingly conceived of as fertility worship, or even sex worship – with phallic apotropaism, which persists in even the most modern scholarship on the topic, and therefore the precise relation – both ideological and historiographical – between these two concepts demands unpacking and reassessing. Carabelli has fleshed out the story of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fascination with priapic worship set in motion by Campanian discoveries; yet already by the nineteenth century, the phalluses that could be seen at Pompeii were being explained to tourists as being “for the purpose of averting the evil eye”.<sup>101</sup> Where did this latter explanation emerge from? How did it line up with

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<sup>98</sup> Ryley Scott (1941); see especially 248-254, 284, and Plate XXIII.

<sup>99</sup> Johns (1999) 21-8.

See also <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/nov/14/romans-invent-dick-pic-young-man-penis-roman-toilet-turkey> Date Accessed: January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>100</sup> In particular, Johns’ (1999) use of Knight in the narrative construction of her own contribution to this topic will be interrogated.

<sup>101</sup> “[In the streets of Pompeii] on the other hand, an occasional phallus is seen, for the purpose of averting the evil eye; and one or two large snakes, the emblems of the Lares, the gods of the hearth and of cross-ways, are very common.” *Italy: Handbook for Travellers* Karl Baedeker (1867) 136.

or map on to priapic worship, if at all? In what did these two concepts perhaps compete with or reinforce one another? And why do *we* conflate the two today?

In this chapter, we shall therefore explore what it was that Richard Payne Knight contributed ideologically to the conceptualisation of the apotropaic Campanian phallus, along with what he didn't contribute; following this chapter, we shall shed light on the other, less-acknowledged areas of discourse and response to the Campanian phallus and the role they have played in concretising the popular impression of its apotropaism. The work of Richard Payne Knight and the wider notion of phallic worship can be considered a good place to start with this material, given its popular position; the worthiness of this position will be assessed and deconstructed, and other factors which have played a role – but have received markedly less attention – illuminated. In this way, subsequent chapters of this thesis will also seek to reframe the 'big-ticket' ideas, namely that of phallic worship, which have come to be intrinsically associated with Campanian phallic material and its interpretation for global cultural purposes. The story and context of Payne Knight's renowned *Discourse* – including the key figures, places and events entailed in its production – will be discussed, along with the broader intellectual and social context of the treatise – including comparative religious thought, libertinism, anti-Catholic sentiment and other contemporary social issues and cultural trends. In doing so, we shall assess the extent to which the apotropaic phallus of Campania might in some ways be considered a product of such Enlightenment thinking. What exactly does our modern notion of phallic apotropaism owe to the theological concept of universal phallic worship, which is so emblematic of Enlightenment thought? How closely linked were these ideas in terms of their conception and evolution, and how closely linked are they now? What precisely do we consider to be the relationship between the notion of worshipping the phallus in a religious sense, as a deity and/or symbol of life, and employing images of the phallus as apotropaia?

## **Universal Phallic Worship: Making Sense of 'Phallic' Material**

The concept of phallic worship asserts that ancient or cultural images of the phallus attest a deep-seated, universal human impetus to venerate that which gives us life and ensures our species' continued survival.<sup>102</sup> In this way the phallus, seemingly a stylised symbol of the male reproductive organs, stands for generativity and the miracle of life, and is deemed the iconic focus for worship, ritual or the conceptualisation of the divine (in turn reckoned to be the force of life itself, or the deity which grants it).<sup>103</sup> This well-established concept, which seeks to demonstrate an innate, collective characteristic of humankind, has long been attributed to phallic imagery and artefacts of many ancient cultures, and is a well-known response to such material in both popular and academic discourse. Examples from scholarship on a range of visual and material culture from over the last 50 years testifies the lack of progression in this idea and our uncritical recourse to it. In 1971, Lucille Armstrong concluded that a statue of the Virgin in a Galician church incorporated a phallus on the figure's back to "assure the congregation they would have a fruitful harvest of both fish and in the fields".<sup>104</sup> A 1979 article on the folk customs of rural twentieth-century America similarly sought to draw connections between phallic imagery and the instigation of fertility through the apparently phallic shape of a home-made instrument for bread baking: accordingly, the author concludes that "the ithyphallic doughtray scraper then is probably a homeopathic charm appropriate for this moment [that is, the successful and customary baking of bread]."<sup>105</sup> In 1986, William Ravenhill offered a reassessment of a filigranic Christian watermark on a sixteenth-century atlas, in which he asserted that the symbol – comprising a kneeling figure holding a crucifix – could, through its phallic associations and potential denotation of a "phallic" Christian saint, symbolise "post-mortem revival, the conquest of death, and a sign of resurgent flesh" as well as specific saintly powers of "overcoming infertility".<sup>106</sup> The discovery of so-called "Mushroom Stones" in the ancient cultures of Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia have regularly been interpreted as "idols in

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<sup>102</sup> Herter (1932). Hirschfeld (1935). Herter (1938). Berger (1966). Vanggaard (1972). Ravenhill (1986). Kimmel, Milrod, & Kennedy (2014). Funke, Fisher, Grove & Langlands (2017) 324-37.

<sup>103</sup> As seen for example in Blum (2011).

<sup>104</sup> Armstrong (1971) 306.

<sup>105</sup> Barrick (1979) 217. See later discussion of Frazer for the significance of Barrick's use of the term "homeopathic" to describe the perceived agency of this object.

<sup>106</sup> Ravenhill (1986) 34-35.

phallic worship”, thanks to their glans-like shape [Fig. 13].<sup>107</sup> Phallic-looking imagery in Magdalenian cave drawings of Upper Palaeolithic Europe have also been considered indicative of an intrinsic human impulse to make manifest the primal forces of life: in 2011, psychologist Harold Blum said of prehistoric cave art that its imagery “was created in identification with pregnancy and birth...and endured as reassurance against permanent darkness and death. Entering and leaving the cave could also represent coitus...”<sup>108</sup>

The idea that phallic imagery, apparently detectable in a broad range of cultures and time periods, was evidence of a recurrent and pervasive human impulse to propitiate a central requirement of human existence, that of fertility and regeneration, through setting up and engaging with images deemed emblematic precisely of that core requirement, is therefore a prominent popular and academic response to such material in a number of intellectual contexts.<sup>109</sup> The concept has been reprocessed several times over the course of the twentieth century, but at its heart it relies on the same principles: the ‘worshipping’ of the phallus as an icon, and the supposed universality of this behaviour on a structuralist, quasi-psychoanalytical level. This framework has been repeatedly invoked as a means of explaining the variety of phallic imagery at the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum and, given the high profile of phalluses at the sites in the global imagination, the concept is intimately associated with the culture and significance of the sites themselves.<sup>110</sup> Catherine Johns’ hugely popular *Sex or Symbol? Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (first published 1982), looked extensively at Pompeii and Herculaneum and their phallic artefacts as a central case study for its wider demonstration that many of the ancient Greco-Roman images a modern viewer might consider sexual or obscene in fact had a religious and/or apotropaic purpose. Indeed,

*“Considerably more widespread...was the existence of phallic objects and representations which had a more peripherally religious meaning,*

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<sup>107</sup> Mayer (1990) 101-2.

<sup>108</sup> Blum (2011) taken from backmatter.

<sup>109</sup> For example, see Sütterlin (1989).

<sup>110</sup> “The sexual energy of the phallus was tied directly to its power in reproduction”, the classicist Anthony Corbeill explained to *Atlas Obscura*. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/romans-used-to-ward-off-sickness-with-flying-penis-amulets> Date Accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018.



*as amulets to keep misfortune at bay. The importance of the image of the phallus, and some other sexual motifs, as apotropaic devices probably stems originally from fertility cults...*"<sup>111</sup>

In recent decades one can observe how this idea has (re)entered popular culture, with unofficial traders who flank the main entrances to the sites gleefully exhibiting an array of 'authentic looking' phallic idols, conjectured accoutrements of ritualised depravity, of varying proportions [Fig. 6d]. These wares clearly interpret the notion of ancient fertility worship in a tongue-in-cheek way: as tourists at the sites we are repeatedly told - by museums, in guidebooks and at exhibitions - that whilst phallic artefacts may *look* erotic to us they are, in fact, religious or apotropaic and therefore a perfectly reasonable artistic manifestation of an entirely natural aspect of human life; yet they would not be appealing to us as souvenirs if they were not amusing and emblematic of a side of 'antiquity' that we find so intrinsically bizarre and outrageous. Nonetheless, they epitomise the extent to which the concept of phallic worship has infiltrated the popular imagination of these artefacts and of the development of our understanding of them.

The concept of phallic worship is closely entwined with that of phallic apotropaism: at present, there is little sense of distinction between these two explanations of Campanian phallic imagery and indeed for some scholars one clearly equates to, or is an extension of, the other.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, examining this intellectual framework proves highly important for our dissection of the ways in which the apotropaic Campanian phallus is and has been conceptualised. If it is the case that the deployment of phallic imagery for apotropaic purposes and its veneration as an emblem of life and fertility are intrinsically linked, then given the intellectual import – as will be demonstrated - of the latter concept in terms of Enlightenment-era discourse, what might be the significance of this interrelation for the way in which we deploy the concept of phallic apotropaism? Indeed, this potential relationship

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<sup>111</sup> Johns (1999) 143.

<sup>112</sup> Johns (1999) 10; 39-59; 143. Henig (1984). The work of Crummy, especially (2010) 51. Parker (2015). *Atlas Obscura* cites Corbeill on the Campanian phallus' 'fertility apotropaism': "The sexual energy of the phallus was tied directly to its power in reproduction,' according to classicist Anthony Philip Corbeill. The fertile power of a phallus, it was thought, would keep them safe." <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/romans-used-to-ward-off-sickness-with-flying-penis-amulets>

and its consequent contextualisation has not yet been interrogated. In view, therefore, of the high profile of this material and the appealing conundrum of its interpretation – that is, the periodic narrative of mistaken depravity followed by the ‘enlightened’ attribution of religious-cum-superstitious significance, as testified by numerous tourist-oriented exploitations of the material - as well as the light recently shed on modern constructions of sexuality, sexual knowledge and the role antiquity plays in this, this area demands close examination.<sup>113</sup>

The conflation of the proposed fertility symbolism of the phallic image with its apparently apotropaic capacity, as ingrained in our engagement with this material, along with the ramifications of this conflation, will thus be examined here. The concept of phallic worship itself has been configured in various ways. Some – particularly those eighteenth-century commentators at the centre of this chapter – have regarded it purely as fertility worship in the abstract sense, having no sexual overtones whatsoever, the phallus merely providing “the greatest analogy with the divine attributes which they wished to represent”.<sup>114</sup> In more recent times, it has regularly been conceived of as sex worship *so as to propitiate* fertility: Ranieri-Panetta writes of the Campanian phallus that “the origins went back years and were **tied strictly** to the fertility of the land” and “...**did not conceal any erotic mischief**”; yet, commenting on the famous travertine relief from the House of Pansa at Pompeii [Fig. 52], she writes “sculpted in Red Stone, a triumphant male member seems to represent a successful trade, good products on sale (made from wheat, the **epitome of fertile lands**) **and – why not? – the sexual prowess of the owner.**”<sup>115</sup> Such deductions have likely been complicated further by the work of figures such as Richlin, who asserted that the Roman phallus’ apotropism was derived from the threat of sexual assault it denoted.<sup>116</sup> Occasionally, phallic images are deemed to denote the worship of the straightforwardly erotic (this has particularly been the case for phallic symbolism identified in Indian religions, the connection of which to Campanian discourse will

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<sup>113</sup> See Grove (2013), as well as Funke, Fisher, Grove & Langlands (2017) and Funke & Grove (2019) for a detailed exploration of the role of such artefacts in the construction of modern sexual knowledge. Such work in turn provides further impetus, and poses ever-increasing implications, for the recontextualisation of these ideas and their evolution.

<sup>114</sup> Knight (1865) 17.

<sup>115</sup> Ranieri Panetta (2004) 216.

<sup>116</sup> Richlin (1984).

be elaborated on in due course).<sup>117</sup> The varying conceptualisation of phallic worship is itself relevant to this investigation: acknowledging these unchecked inconsistencies forces us to consider precisely what is sexual about an apotropaic phallus, or about a phallic symbol for that matter. Can a phallus ever *not* be sexual? Are certain meanings mutually exclusive of each other? The variance in this concept's deployment highlights its participation in a broader semiotic dialogue, particularly pertaining to how we have dealt historically with image, representation and meaning. What does it mean to be ithyphallic; to be a phallic symbol?<sup>118</sup>

The idea of universal phallic worship possesses obvious mileage for sensationalism, especially in popular culture. For example, the notion of fertility cults and the role they are deemed to have played in cultural evolution has been invoked regularly in recent media publicity on many ancient civilisations. In 2003, a *Daily Mail* article tellingly entitled 'The First Sex Gods' informed readers that "performances of **outrageous sexual acts**, often acrobatic, known as the nude mimes, had long been part of regular theatrical performances...These *nudatio mimarium*, as they were called, **originated in fertility cults** but, by the second century BC, had become **outlandish explorations of sexual play**."<sup>119</sup> [Fig. 14] This sensationalism, whilst perhaps not all that unexpected in a tabloid context, nonetheless plays a role in our underlying confusion when it comes to our approaches to the material at the heart of this thesis: is the concept of phallic fertility symbolism concerned with the rationalisation of something perfectly natural and wrongly mistaken for obscenity, or is it about uncovering ancient licentiousness? Such reinventions of the concept and the material it purports to explain feed into our engagement with the Vesuvian sites and the construction of our wider relationship to antiquity at large. We frequently tie seemingly sexual aspects of antiquity to what we conceive of as primitive forms of natural or scientific knowledge; thus the recurrent trope of fertility worship as a device illuminating or mitigating ancient sexual imagery, and in turn of the

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<sup>117</sup> See especially discussions of phallic imagery in Hindu culture and concerning the lingam and yoni. Doniger (2011). Kimmel, Milrod & Kennedy (2014) 107. Urban (2009).

<sup>118</sup> A question patently raised by Barrick's article on doughtray scrapers!

<sup>119</sup> Significantly, this article was written as part of the publicity drive for John R. Clarke's recently published book *Roman Sex 100BC to 250AD* (2003) and quotes him at several points throughout.

symbolisation of fertility morphing into that of the outright sexual, of innocent and purposeful iconological origins being forgotten and subsequently corrupted.

This chapter will demonstrate that these conflation and inconsistencies exist largely because present scholarship on Pompeii is not attuned to a highly contextual set of circumstances which led to this intellectual framework, and which we have persisted in applying to this material until very recent times. Accordingly, it will illuminate the socio-historical import of the concept of phallic worship and its development, as well as its effect on subsequent thought and culture. It will then reevaluate, in light of its evolution, how phallic worship relates to the notion of phallic apotropaism at the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and to our sense of what an apotropaic phallus actually *is* and how it functions. The Vesuvian sites are, we shall find, emblematic of the conceptualisation of phallic worship and the space it occupies in our engagement with antiquity; this is largely thanks to the central role which ancient Campania played as the catalyst for formulating this idea in the eighteenth century. We shall also examine the intersection of this concept with other cultures of contemporary interest, especially that of India, and the role this intersection played in popularising and developing a concept that was, in its conception, intrinsically Campanian and classical-archaeological.

## **Richard Payne Knight and the Concept of Phallic Worship**

Various ideas of fertility worship are often employed in the explanation of phallic imagery at Pompeii and Herculaneum and, at present, are seemingly not considered mutually exclusive with the notion of phallic apotropaism. The model of phallic worship centres on the idea that there is a phallic root to all systems of belief, and that there is a persistence of phallic imagery, therefore, in many world religions, including Christianity. Visual and material culture - particularly that of religious symbolism, cult images and the interpretation of both iconic and aniconic idols - take a central role in the illustration of this genealogy. The concept asserts that the supposed omnipresence of phallic imagery is the result of a deep-seated human impetus to worship the creation of life; the phallus is considered the ultimate symbol

of this phenomenon, representing either life and regeneration itself, or the deity which grants it. The employment of this model in the interpretation of artefacts and images deemed phallic has historically asserted that all religions are, ultimately, concerned on an essential level with the veneration and propitiation of life, and that this preoccupation is in turn both cross-cultural and innate. It has also often taken the form of a *defence* of phallic symbolism and, in particular, of those cultures whose more overtly phallic imagery has historically earned them accusations of being depraved or obscene. This idea germinated amongst antiquarians during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and by the end of the nineteenth century had been put forward by several thinkers and was a pervasive concept in early archaeology and anthropology. The beginning and the most important of these was the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786) by the British antiquarian, connoisseur and politician Richard Payne Knight **[Fig. 15]**. His long disquisition on phallic cults focuses chiefly on Greek and Roman antiquities, predominantly the phallic material newly discovered in the excavations at Herculaneum.<sup>120</sup>

### **Who was Richard Payne Knight?**

Richard Payne Knight (1751 – 1824) was an art collector, antiquarian, arbiter of taste and Member of Parliament.<sup>121</sup> **[Fig. 16]** Privately educated in ancient Greek at home, Payne Knight did not attend university, but on coming of age and gaining access to a sizeable fortune he embarked upon the Grand Tour in 1772, travelling through France to Florence, Rome, and Naples. He was to travel to these areas frequently throughout the rest of his life: after spending some time in Rome, Knight undertook an expedition to Sicily in April 1777 with the German landscape painter

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<sup>120</sup> Formal excavation of Herculaneum began in 1738, led by Spanish engineer Rocque Joaquin de Alcubierre, under the patronage of the King of the Two Sicilies. See Parslow (1995).

<sup>121</sup> Knight was returned as Member of Parliament, first for Leominster in September 1780, and then for Ludlow in April 1784. He represented Ludlow until 1806, aligning himself with the opposition Whigs against Pitt's government. Sponsored by Charles James Fox, he became a member of Brooks's Club in 1788 and opposed the administration's conduct of the war with France in the 1790s. Although active in Westminster affairs, Knight pursued his interests on the continent more avidly than his political duties. Messman (2015) 13-58. Clarke & Penny (1982) 1-18. Ballantyne (1997). See also Stumpf-Condry & Skedd (2015).

Jakob Philipp Hackert and the English shipbuilder and amateur artist Charles Gore.<sup>122</sup> Likely inspired by Winckelmann's writings on the inimitability of Greek art (1764), they explored the remains of Greek architecture in Italy.<sup>123</sup> With Hackert and Gore recording their journey in sketches, Knight kept a diary of their travels, and this stands as testament to his extensive knowledge of classical art and literature.<sup>124</sup> Knight became a trustee of the British Museum in 1814, and he bequeathed his own collections to the museum in order that they could be put on display alongside those of Charles Townley and Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode. Payne Knight's bequest comprised over 1,144 drawings, 5,205 coins, and around 800 small bronzes.<sup>125</sup>

In his *Discourse*, Payne Knight brings the artefacts being unearthed at Herculaneum into dialogue with contemporary phallic imagery – particularly from Catholic traditions in nearby regions of Southern Italy - to convey that the universal origins of religion lie in the worship of procreation. Knight's thoughts were also influenced by the recent Western discovery of erotic Hindu art, further fuelling his cross-cultural comparative approach.<sup>126</sup> However, the debt to classical cultures is clear in the title of his survey: Priapus, the phallic Greco-Roman god, was to become permanently associated not only with all Roman but with *global* fertility rites from all cultures and historical periods thanks to the influence of Payne Knight's work on subsequent discourse and culture. His thesis, which sought to defend phallic imagery and worship in the face of contemporary allegations of moral depravity, purports to illuminate the hidden meaning of such objects which has, according to Knight, since been forgotten and left open to perversion and misinterpretation.<sup>127</sup> The status he thus bestows on material objects in his *Discourse* is highly typical of antiquarian and scientific writings of the time, and uses the contemporary appeal and perceived credibility of material remains to vouch for the unrecognised importance of ritual practices relating to sex across human societies, consequently arguing that historical

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<sup>122</sup> Stumpf-Condry & Skedd (2015).

<sup>123</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764).

<sup>124</sup> Knight *Expedition into Sicily 1777* (eds. Stumpf (1986)).

<sup>125</sup> Stumpf-Condry & Skedd (2015).

<sup>126</sup> E.g., Knight (1865) 54. See also Rousseau (1988) 116-7; Funnell (1982) 52; and Haskell (1984) 187.

<sup>127</sup> "Of all the profane rites which belonged to the ancient polytheism, none were more furiously inveighed against by the zealous propagators of the Christian faith, than the obscene ceremonies performed in the worship of Priapus." Payne Knight (1865) 14.

phallic objects provide evidence of less restrictive past sexual attitudes than those the Western world in which he was writing.<sup>128</sup> Payne Knight's *Discourse* set in motion similar works on and collections of phallic material, as well as other socio-cultural effects.

Knight's *Discourse* opens thus:

*"Of all the profane rites which belonged to the ancient polytheism, none were more furiously inveighed against by the zealous propagators of the Christian faith, than the obscene ceremonies performed in the worship of Priapus; [...] Even the form itself, under which the god was represented, appeared to them a mockery of all piety and devotion, and more fit to be placed in a brothel than a temple. But the forms and ceremonials of a religion are not always to be understood in their direct and obvious sense; but are to be considered as symbolical representations of some hidden meaning, which may be extremely wise and just, though the symbols themselves, to those who know not their true signification, may appear in the highest degree absurd and extravagant. It has often happened, that avarice and superstition have continued these symbolical representations for ages after their original meaning has been lost and forgotten; [...] Such is the case with the rite now under consideration...which will be found to be a very natural symbol of a very natural and philosophical system of religion, if considered according to its original use and intention."*<sup>129</sup>

From the outset, Payne Knight's treatise sought to absolve phallic imagery from being considered obscene. The work argues that many symbols – the phallus included – were originally chosen for their suitability to embody and represent certain fundamental truths and ideas, and that they are now misunderstood due to their gradual dissociation from their original purpose and meaning as time and knowledge has progressed. In this way, Knight assures us that "no impure meaning could be

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<sup>128</sup> Funke, Fisher, Grove & Langlands (2017) 324-337. Schnapp (1999). Schnapp (2013).

<sup>129</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 14-15.

conveyed by this symbol [the phallus]; but that it represented some fundamental principle of [the ancients'] faith."<sup>130</sup> Indeed, Knight continues:

*"This interpretation will perhaps surprise those who have not been accustomed to divest their minds of the prejudices of education and fashion; but I doubt not, but it will appear just and reasonable to those who consider manners and customs as relative to the natural causes which produced them, rather than to the artificial opinions and prejudices of any particular age or country. There is naturally no impurity or licentiousness in the moderate and regular gratification of any natural appetite; the turpitude consisting wholly in the excess or perversion. Neither are organs of one species of enjoyment naturally to be considered as subjects of shame and concealment more than those of another; every refinement of modern manners on this head being derived from acquired habit, not from nature [...] As these symbols were intended to express abstract ideas by objects of sight, the contrivers of them naturally selected those objects whose characteristic properties seemed to have the greatest analogy with the Divine attributes which they wished to represent. In an age, therefore, when no prejudices of artificial decency existed, what more just and natural image could they find, by which to express their idea of the beneficent power of the great Creator, than that organ which endowed them with the power of procreation, and made them partakers, not only of the felicity of the Deity, but of his great characteristic attribute, that of multiplying his own image, communicating his blessings, and extending them to generations yet unborn?"<sup>131</sup>*

Knight thus conceived of obscenity as a contextually-determined, social construct – and a modern one at that - inappropriately imposed upon ancient artefacts and which thus prevents them from being understood correctly and according to their original, blameless purpose. Hence the phallus, according to Knight, was not an emblem of

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<sup>130</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 16.

<sup>131</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 16-17.



obscurity or turpitude, but a “very natural symbol of a very natural and philosophical system of religion”. For Knight, the modern moralising which saw ancient phallic material branded as evidence of pagan depravity was an ignorant fallacy, declaring that “neither are organs of one species of enjoyment naturally to be considered as subjects of shame and concealment more than those of another,” given “every refinement of modern manners on this head being derived from acquired habit, not from nature.” In fact, the phallus was not only a misunderstood symbol of human belief, but innocent and even *worthy* of veneration, being the very thing that “endowed [humanity] with the power of procreation” and which thus came closest to any real human conception of the divine.

Payne Knight made frequent reference to many of the objects recently unearthed at Herculaneum, and the collections being accrued of such material at Portici. The phallic discoveries at Herculaneum thus came to the aid of, and took a foremost role in, Knight’s aim to illustrate not only the apparent ubiquity of the phallus in world symbolism, but the interconnectedness of this symbolism at large. For Payne Knight’s *Discourse* argued for the universal and recurring characteristics of religious practice and belief, especially with regard to mythology and iconology, and thus in many ways his shedding light on the centrality of sexual rites and phallic symbolism simply provided the vehicle for this wider exposition.

*“The ancient Theologists...finding that they could conceive no idea of infinity, they were content to revere the Infinite Being in the most general and efficient exertion of his power [...] This power, being personified, became the secondary Deity, to whom all adoration and worship were directed, and who is therefore frequently considered as the sole and supreme cause of all things. [...] The great characteristic attribute was represented by the organ of generation in that state of tension and rigidity which is necessary to the due performance of its functions. Many small images of this kind have been found among the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii, attached to the bracelets, which the chaste and pious matrons of antiquity wore round their necks and arms. [Fig. 17] In these, the organ of generation appears alone, or only accompanied with*

*the wings of incubation, in order to show that the devout wearer devoted herself wholly and solely to procreation, the great end for which she was ordained.”*<sup>132</sup>

The hugely popular Campanian archaeological developments provided a working showcase and test bed for Knight’s treatise, and the regular links he made between his theories and certain Herculaneum artefacts ensured that whilst his essay was addressed to world religion at large, its immediate ramifications were very much being played out at the excavations taking place in the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>133</sup> With this the newly-uncovered Vesuvian cities were placed at the centre of a wider discussion about the interconnectedness of diverse belief systems and the role which imagery played in this.

Payne Knight and his contribution to the interpretation of Campanian phallic art and archaeology are accorded a prominent place in modern scholarly narratives of the perceived development of our understanding of Greco-Roman phallic artefacts. Since its publication, Knight’s work has been regularly cited as a pivotal stage in the history of interpreting and classifying such items.<sup>134</sup> His position in our understanding of the history of our engagement with these objects, as well as in our supposedly ‘enlightened’ understanding of the ancient material itself, is crucial for shedding light on modernity’s development of the concept of phallic apotropaism and its place, in turn, in our understanding of antiquity.<sup>135</sup> An intrinsic part of the

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<sup>132</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 27.

<sup>133</sup> For more on the intellectual hotbed of contemporary Naples, see Schnapp (2013) and Imbruglia (2009).

<sup>134</sup> Knight even occupies a prominent place in popular renderings of this topic: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/nov/14/romans-invent-dick-pic-young-man-penis-roman-toilet-turkey> Date Accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

<sup>135</sup> The idea that Roman phallic imagery served what we call an apotropaic purpose is testified in several literary and mythological traditions surviving from antiquity. Ancient authors have recorded several different instances of phallic imagery playing a protecting or magicalised role: on jewellery or charms (Varro *De Lingua Latina* VII.97); positioned at crossroads (St Augustine *De Civitate Dei* 7.21); and serving as effigies or totems (Pliny Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 28.7). Indeed, there existed a particular word for images of the male genitals with this remit: it is widely accepted that the term for the apotropaic phallus in ancient Roman culture was *fascinus/um*. Lewis and Short record *fascinum* as “membrum virile (because an image of it was hung around the necks of children as a preventative against witchcraft)”, citing Varro: “Perhaps it is from this that **a certain indecent object [turpicula res]** that is hung on the necks of boys, to prevent harm from coming to them, is called a *scaevola*, on account of the fact that *scaeva* is ‘good.’” (“*Potest vel ab eo quod pueris turpicula res in collo quaedam suspenditur, ne quid obsit, bonae scaevae causa scaevola appellata.*” ‘An amulet in the shape of a membrum virile, as a charm against the evil eye.’ – Kent’s footnote on “a certain indecent object”).

wider objective of this chapter - to assess the link between the 'comparative religious phallus' and the 'apotropaic phallus' - therefore constitutes positing whether or not Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* can be considered a radix for the apotropaic phallus, as is currently intimated in scholarship on the topic. Catherine Johns' *Sex or Symbol?*, first published in 1982, is highly indicative of how we currently think about Knight and his work in our modern engagement with the idea of phallic apotropaism, and is itself hugely responsible for setting a standard for our present approaches to phallic and erotic material from Greece and Rome - namely, for shedding light on the apotropaic function of otherwise 'erotic' artefacts.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, the intrinsic objective of this work from the outset is concerned with reconfiguring our perceptions of, and busting myths on, the role and meaning of 'erotica' in ancient culture and is still regularly cited as the 'correct' way to read such material, the central premise of the work being to sift those images which were truly intended to be 'titillating' - "reflecting the classical delight in erotic art for its own sake" - from the great many which actually had a "religious and apotropaic" purpose.<sup>137</sup> In addition, the work has enjoyed a popular readership, and is thus emblematic of the overlap between academic and popular discourse and the effect of this on shaping 'accepted' knowledge of the ancient past (of course, accessibility to the general public was likely Johns' aim, reflected by her decision not to include a full bibliography or footnotes; furthermore, the work was also published by *British Museum Press*).<sup>138</sup> The work is constructed as a narrative of typological progress, guiding the reader through the various different registers and modes according to which a phallic or sexual image might have been deployed in the classical world, the

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Kent (1938) 333. The final chapter of this thesis will revisit ancient evidence for the apotropaic phallus at the site of Pompeii and Herculaneum themselves, with a view to getting to bottom of how its apotropaism was asserted and functioned in the day-to-day urban landscape of the towns.

<sup>136</sup> Henig (1984). Crummy (2010). Parker (2015).

<sup>137</sup> Johns (1999) taken from backmatter. See Polinger-Foster (2001) for an example of the reliance on Johns' assertions with regard to approaching phallic imagery: the "nonerotic, nonthreatening, apotropaic meaning of Roman phalli" is central to Polinger-Foster's discussion. Polinger-Foster (2001) 52.

<sup>138</sup> "Her decision not to include a "full bibliography" or footnotes leaves her generalizing casually about the prevalence of flagellation in Victorian England and much else that demands explicit support. The narrative in fact seems aimed at the general public, but any audience would have benefited not only from clear current documentation but from better alignment with ancient literary sources." Richlin (1984) 257.

outcome of this journey being that we are fully at ease with the idea that “ancient objects with sexually explicit ornament were not all made for purposes which can be properly termed ‘erotic’...but they in fact fall into several quite distinct categories”.<sup>139</sup> The linchpin of these categories – and of the reader’s journey to an enlightened understanding of such material, free from modern ideas of obscenity or morality - is the notion of phallic apotropaism:

*“Considerably more widespread...was the existence of phallic objects and representations which had a more **peripherally religious** meaning, as amulets to keep misfortune at bay. The importance of the image of the phallus, and some other sexual motifs, as apotropaic devices probably stems originally from fertility cults...”*<sup>140</sup>

Johns thus constructs her own narrative of enlightenment, and within it Knight is framed as an early pioneer of sorts - a precursor, even, to Johns herself. For Johns opens *Sex or Symbol?* with a lengthy account of the embarrassment suffered by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarians on discovering and attempting to categorise the phallic objects from Campania. Johns’ backgrounding of this early shock and censorship ushers in her own agenda to remedy the very impact of Victorian prudery on our own perception and study of such objects. Within this account, Payne Knight is presented as the first commentator to approach and categorise such objects ‘correctly’, rejecting such prudery and taking a detached, scholarly attitude to the significance of such material: “The true scholars of the second half of the eighteenth century were able to face the facts of Greek and Roman impropriety...”<sup>141</sup> Given that the revelatory apotropaic function of such objects amounts to the emblematic achievement of Johns’ book in terms of its status and its reception in both popular culture and scholarly memory, positioning Knight in this way has the effect of implying that his *Discourse* was perhaps the first to suggest the apotropaic as a means of classifying and interpreting the existence of ancient phallic material. This is indeed reinforced in the concluding segment of Johns’ book, where Payne Knight is referred to in a manner that renders him emblematic of our earliest

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<sup>139</sup> Johns (1999) 143.

<sup>140</sup> Johns (1999) 143.

<sup>141</sup> Johns (1999) 21.

steps towards decrypting these artefacts and reaffirms his status as the first commentator on their 'true' – that is, apotropaic - nature: "History had to make sense as a story written by a nineteenth-century Christian. This is one of the reasons why Richard Payne Knight's sincere attempts to study the religious symbolism of sexual imagery in antiquity met with such savage condemnation".<sup>142</sup> Johns does not unpack this ideological genealogy sufficiently, thus reinforcing the unchallenged conflation of the 'fertility cult' phallus and the 'apotropaic' phallus. Furthermore, in dividing the material between the "erotic" and the "religious", the latter incorporating the apotropaic, the book serves to set up the apotropaic in opposition to the modern conceptualisation of the erotic, reinforcing the revelatory status of an apotropaic attribution, aligning it with the supposed blameless solemnity – as asserted by Payne Knight – of fertility worship, and rendering it mutually exclusive of any interpretation of humour, eroticism or crudeness.<sup>143</sup> Richlin has pointed out Johns' evident "indignation" towards early antiquarians in Chapter One; this feeling serves to establish an oversimplified polarity between Knight and his contemporaries and does not accurately reflect – as will be highlighted during subsequent chapters of this thesis – the wider tapestry of ideas in this period that came about in response to the Campanian phallic discoveries.<sup>144</sup>

At no point in Johns' history of our encounter with obscene artefacts, in the account she mobilises of modernity's journey to identifying and appreciating apotropaism, does she discuss the content of Payne Knight's work.<sup>145</sup> The 1786 *Discourse* is only alluded to in her comment that "earlier antiquaries were naturally perfectly well aware of the **religious connotations of many 'indecent' representations**, as evidenced by work such as Richard Payne Knight's..."<sup>146</sup> Therefore, in the reader's sense of modern society's progression from condemning such objects to recognising their supposedly original meaning, Payne Knight's work is affixed as the first step in correctly attributing what eventually

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<sup>142</sup> Johns (1999) 148.

<sup>143</sup> Indeed, Richlin makes clear in her review of Johns her disbelief at the former's insistence that phallic amulets have "no sexual significance". Richlin (1984) 257.

<sup>144</sup> Richlin (1984) 256-7.

<sup>145</sup> Johns (1999) 21-8.

<sup>146</sup> Johns (1999) 59.

amounts to apotropaic function and context. This is reinforced by the fact that *Sex or Symbol?* is essentially divided into the erotic and non-erotic – with the latter predominantly amounting to the apotropaic – function of sexual imagery. Knight’s specific contribution to this narrative, the actual premise of his approach to the existence of phallic imagery and material – namely, an ecumenical theory of universal phallic worship, a religious mode for which he found evidence across history and culture – is left out and thus not appropriately evaluated for its role in shaping what Johns terms “the effect on the sensibilities of the acceptance of phallic motifs in art for **reasons which are not sexual at all**”. In what ways did Knight’s particular theories which, in actual fact, extended *beyond* Classical material and far beyond the phallic, actually contribute to the eventual classification of Campanian items as apotropaic? Johns, and those who defer to her, do not say.

The absence of any real interrogation of Payne Knight’s comparative religious principles is especially conspicuous, given that the chapter following Johns’ discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century responses to erotic artefacts is entitled “*Fertility and Religion*”, a seemingly ideal place to showcase the development of thought on this very aspect of phallic symbolism, and yet which jumps straight in to a discussion of ancient material itself, for “it is well known that fertility was a major preoccupation of most early religions” – case closed.<sup>147</sup> Within this section of the work, the apotropaic is presented as a subset of fertility worship; Johns’ disquisition assumes that the phallus’ apotropaic capacity stems from its fertility symbolism, but what precisely is the sexual significance of the ‘evil eye’ and the practice of warding it off? Johns purports to answer this very question, but does not attempt to disentangle a ‘fertility worship phallus’ from an ‘apotropaic’ one, and this is what we must do here – at least in a historiographical and ideological sense. It is equally significant, therefore, that Johns does not appear to recognise any kind of historiographical precedent for making such a link between fertility cults and apotropaism, even though *Sex or Symbol?* is patently operating, as will be shown, within a late-Enlightenment legacy.

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<sup>147</sup> Johns (1999) 39.

## The Birth of the Discourse on the Worship of Priapus

In 1781, King George III's ambassador to the Kingdom of Naples from 1764-1800, the antiquarian, volcanologist and connoisseur Sir William Hamilton [Fig. 18], wrote a letter to Sir Joseph Banks, esteemed naturalist and future President of the Royal Society (1778-1819), detailing a rural ritual practice he had tell of which seemingly testified the continuation of pagan Priapus worship within a contemporary Catholic setting.<sup>148</sup> Hamilton described the dedication of wax phallic votives to the Catholic saints Cosmus and Damianus by local women at a shrine in the town of Isernia, Abruzzo (southern Italy). Hamilton writes:

*“...in a Province of this Kingdom [The Bourbon Kingdom of Naples], and not fifty miles from its Capital, a sort of devotion is still paid to Priapus, the obscene Divinity of the Ancients (though under another denomination). [...] ...a person of liberal education...chanced to be at Isernia just at the time of the celebration of the Feast of the modern Priapus, St Cosmo; and having been struck with the singularity of the ceremony, so very similar to that which attended the ancient Cult of the God of the Gardens, and knowing my taste for antiquities, told me of it. [...] In the city, and at the fair, ex-voti of wax, representing the male parts of generation, of various dimensions, some even of the length of the palm, are publickly [sic.] offered to sale [...] The Vows are chiefly presented by the female sex...”<sup>149</sup>*

And thus, the pretext was provided for Richard Payne Knight's disquisition on the universal traces of phallic symbolism in the various religions of the modern world: in 1786, Hamilton's letter was to be published by the Society of Dilettanti, a group of scholars and noblemen, founded in 1734, of which he and Banks were members, which sponsored the study of Greek and Roman art and archaeology as well as the creation of new works in classicising styles [Fig. 19].<sup>150</sup> The letter was published at the beginning of, and served as a kind of preface to, Payne Knight's *Discourse on the*

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<sup>148</sup> For more on Hamilton, see Morson (2014), as well as Jenkins & Sloan (1996).

<sup>149</sup> Hamilton (1781) 'On the Worship of Priapus in the Kingdom of Naples', pp.5-6 in Knight (1865).

<sup>150</sup> See Redford (2008) & (2013), and Kelly (2010).

*worship of Priapus and its connection with the mystic theology of the ancients*, a treatise which sought to illustrate this very survival of phallic worship in Christian religious practice, and ultimately suggested that sexual symbolism and its veneration constituted the origin of all world religions. It also drew heavily upon the nearby excavations at Herculaneum, which Hamilton and the Dilettanti were similarly fascinated by, for evidence of its principles as well as to illustrate their timeliness. The distinctive interconnectedness of Sir William Hamilton and his coterie at Naples and the intellectual, connoisseur atmosphere which these figures fostered, with the contemporaneous archaeological excavations at Herculaneum (and later, Pompeii), and Hamilton's simultaneous discoveries at Isernia constituted the unique and central backdrop, therefore, against which formative discourse on the phallus as an object of art and archaeology took place.<sup>151</sup> The implicit links nurtured by Hamilton and Knight between the festival at Isernia and the material emerging from the archaeological sites meant that such discourse was inherently characterised by back-and-forth alternation between Isernia and Herculaneum, Catholic and Pagan, Ancient and Modern, as well as explaining the existence of depictions of the detached phallus as a kind of universal phenomenon. In this way, Campanian phallic objects have been, from the outset, not just an archaeological concern, but an anthropological one.

### **The Intellectual and Cultural Context of the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*: Enlightenment Thought and Contemporary Social Issues**

Richard Payne Knight's 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* - and in turn, the modes according to which it sought to make sense of the Campanian phallic discoveries - can be considered highly typical of Enlightenment thought. The universalising framework within which it situates its subject-matter, and the desire to identify cross-cultural similarities and consistencies in belief, symbolism and practice, are highly indicative of an era which saw an increasingly globalised awareness of culture and religion.<sup>152</sup> This exposure to new and strange peoples

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<sup>151</sup> Schnapp (2013). Imbruglia (2009).

<sup>152</sup> See especially Gascoigne (2014).



provoked introspective discussion as to what constituted 'civilisation', and the *Discourse's* interest in religion, belief, art and culture testifies to the impetus of this period to better understand the mechanics and development of society. The contemporary notion of art and material evidence as key to understanding a culture is apparent from the fascination with monuments, architecture and jewellery, together with the array of attempts to infer ritual behaviour and theological ideas from them. Furthermore, works such as Knight's often exhibited a distinctly non-judgmental and even antinomian attitude to the more incendiary aspects of ancient and foreign cultures, specifically those pertaining to sexuality and pleasure.<sup>153</sup> In particular, Knight's treatment of the phallus was inherently a product of two central aspects of Enlightenment culture - that of anti-Catholic thinking and Libertinism - and the evolution of Comparative Religious and Anthropological discourse, as well as the ways in which these two trends intermeshed and perpetuated each other. Given Knight's pervasiveness in our historiographical conceptualisation of our engagement with, and understanding of, Campanian phallic material, these aspects and the ways in which they may – or may *not* – have provided a context for the genesis of the apotropaic phallus demand evaluation.

### **Libertinism and Anti-Catholic Sentiment**

Having made it clear from the outset that he did not consider the phallus a symbol to be identified with shame or depravity but rather an earthly homage to divine agency, Knight went on to illustrate the presence of the impulse to worship this symbol across all world religions. Most notably – and inflammatorily – Knight made a case throughout his discourse that the cross of Christianity, "*in the form of the letter T*", was, in origin, an "*emblem of creation and generation, before the Church adopted it as the sign of salvation; a lucky coincidence of ideas, which, without doubt, facilitated the reception of it among the faithful.*"<sup>154</sup> According to Knight, therefore, even

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<sup>153</sup> The radical Whig politics of eighteenth-century Britain to which Payne Knight essentially belonged was closely associated with individual liberty and non-conformist sexuality and can be considered reflected in the philosophies and goings-on of groups such the Society of Dilettanti and the Hell-Fire Club. See Kelly (2010), Ashe (2005), and Redford (2008).

<sup>154</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 28-9.

Christianity had geneses in the worship of fertility. Indeed, Knight's claims on the origin of crucifix symbolism and Christianity's shared origins with other world religions were not only intellectually motivated but fuelled by his own anticlericalism, a commonly-held attitude of many contemporary thinkers. Such figures opposed the traditional and absolute authority of religion – namely, the Catholic Church – in social and political matters.<sup>155</sup> Knight himself asserted that “two of the greatest curses that ever afflicted the human race” were “Dogmatic Theology, and its consequent Religious Persecution”.<sup>156</sup> Payne Knight was a member of the Whig party, and his own anti-clericalism dovetailed with that of his politics; indeed, radical Whig policies were intimately linked with individual liberty and non-conformist sexuality in eighteenth-century British society, as evidenced by the activities of groups such as the Society of Dilettanti – which published Knight's *Discourse* – and the Hell-Fire Club, which shared many of its members with the former.<sup>157</sup> Thus it is easy to see why Payne Knight's work was received – both positively and negatively – in its contemporary time as a manifesto of sorts for liberties exemplified by ancient culture.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed, anti-clerical sentiment was often expressed in this era as libertinism, a stance on morality and behaviour which shunned traditional – and particularly religious – restraints on sexuality, pleasure and belief. Such an attitude frequently saw classical antiquity upheld as a model for personal freedom, subsequent cultural success attributed to this, and a fulfilling, naturally-intended lifestyle. Knight's choice of vehicle for his scholarly exposition is indicative of those contemporary

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<sup>155</sup> See Ditchfield (2001); especially his assertion that, by 1800, anticlericalism can be equated to “a guarded and coded republicanism”. 104.

<sup>156</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 109.

<sup>157</sup> See Ashe (2005), Redford (2008), Redford (2013) and Kelly (2010).

<sup>158</sup> Knight's own writings, which eclectically spanned phallic symbolism, garden design, and aesthetics, attest a wider, long-term interest in the revival of classical art and culture in modernity. See Messmann (1974); Clarke and Penny (1982); Rousseau (1987); Carabelli (1996); Ballantyne (1997); Orrells (2013) 47 & 49; and Davis (2010). In fact, Knight's work on the picturesque used landscape as a metaphor to pursue his political and moral preoccupations: the hypocrisy and dogmatism of the Christian church; his belief in freedom of expression; and his general opposition to personal oppression of any kind. He developed these ideas further in a second long, didactic poem, *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796), an encyclopaedic investigation into the history of mankind, progressing from international to national, and personal interrelations between peoples and people. Knight controversially ended his poem with an enthusiastic endorsement of the French Revolution, which, despite his condemnation of the violence of the terror, understandably further antagonized his critics, who attacked him in conservative journals such as the *British Critic* and *The Anti-Jacobin*.

libertine thinkers – among them several fellow antiquarians - who particularly deemed the sexual and erotic to have been undeservedly repressed by Catholic teaching, and which they similarly deemed to have been a healthy facet of those classical cultures they considered so exemplary. For many Libertine intellectuals, discourse on contemporary phallic discoveries enabled a retaliation against the sex-negativity of contemporary Western culture, and phallic worship in turn represented a primal but enlightened attempt to comprehend the generative nature of the cosmos. An example of such a thinker is that of the self-titled Baron D’Hancarville (real name Pierre-François Hugues), a prominent connoisseur and collector of antiquities [Fig. 20].<sup>159</sup> Under the patronage of Charles Townley, one of Britain’s most illustrious late eighteenth-century collectors, D’Hancarville wrote a work in three volumes entitled *Recherches sur l’origine, l’esprit et les progrès des arts de la Grèce* (1785–6), in which he argued, using Townley’s sculpture collection as evidence, that all ancient art had an erotic origin, and that ithyphallic imagery was the survival of humanity’s primordial worship of the “*Être Générateur*”.<sup>160</sup> Knight’s plea that “what more just and natural image could [the ancients] find, by which to express their idea of the beneficent power of the great Creator, than that organ which endowed them with the power of procreation?” echoed D’Hancarville’s impassioned sentiment that:

*“The Ancients did not look upon the pleasures of love with our eyes; ...they could attach no kind of turpitude to actions which they regarded as the goal*

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<sup>159</sup> For more on D’Hancarville specifically, see Haskell (1987) 30-45.

<sup>160</sup> For more on Charles Townley, see Cook (2014). For the art-historical and comparative-religious significance of the relationship between D’Hancarville and Hamilton, see Heringman (2013) 125-218. Orrells points out that D’Hancarville’s theory of ancient art was in direct competition with Winckelmann’s, who believed that the best art encouraged the viewer to look beyond the concrete, embodied sculpture, to contemplate abstract truths and beauties (see his account of the Apollo Belvedere). D’Hancarville was interested in how the abstract principle of generation became **embodied** in material and visual representations, such as phallic objects and gems and cameos representing Bacchus. Whereas for Winckelmann ancient art moved the viewer from looking at the physical body to contemplating the abstract, for D’Hancarville, the history of ancient material culture was essentially attempt after attempt to represent materially the generative, creative First Cause, and thus to make concrete the abstract. Orrells (2013) 50; Haskell (1987) 30-45; Moore (2008); Winckelmann (2006) 334 and Squire (2009).

Following D’Hancarville’s earlier thesis, Payne Knight’s *Discourse* (written but a year later) focussed mostly on the phallic symbol. His concurrence with D’Hancarville is clear: “these symbols were intended to express abstract ideas by objects of sight”, and so “the contrivers of them naturally selected those objects whose characteristic properties seemed to have the greatest analogy with the divine attributes which they wished to represent”. Knight (1865) 17.

*of nature and the height of felicity...How can one reconcile the idea of a religion founded on kindness and clemency [Christianity], yet which still rigorously condemns such natural pleasures, and ones to which we seem driven by an irresistible urge?"*<sup>161</sup>

The objective theological framework expounded by the two commentators, along with their fundamental libertinism, is clear. The manifold polemical nature of Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* led to his being accused of blasphemy, sensualism and even of sodomy. In the eighteenth century, being branded a sodomite implied not only sexual nonconformity, but religious and political transgression as well, often in tandem with unwarranted 'foreign' influence.<sup>162</sup>

A treatise that implicitly dismantled Christianity's claims to exceptionality, compiled by an outspoken critic of its bigotry, and which apparently sought to make a case for the return of debauched pagan behaviours proved highly provocative and thus garnered many outspoken critics. The most notable of these was Thomas Mathias (1754-1835), who in his major work *The Pursuits of Literature* (1794), an exhaustive satire of his contemporaries, wrote thus of Payne Knight and his *Discourse*:

*"A friend of mine would insist upon my perusing a long disquisition in quarto, ON THE WORSHIP OF PRIAPUS, (printed in 1786) with numerous and most disgusting plates. It has not been published, but distributed liberally, without any injunction of secrecy, to the emeriti in speculative Priapism, as one would think. As I hope the treatise may be forgotten I shall not name the author, but observe, that all the ordure and filth, all the antique pictures, and all the representations of the generative organs, in their most odious and degrading protrusion, have been raked together and copulated (for no other idea seems to be in the mind of the author) and copulated, I say, with a new species of blasphemy. Such are, what I would call, the records of the stews and*

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<sup>161</sup> D'Hancarville *Monumens du culte secret des dames romaines* (1784) iv & xix.

<sup>162</sup> Knight is in fact known to have visited the infamous Villa of Cardinal Albani in Rome and, according to Rousseau, it was during his stay there that he first conceived of setting down a history of Priapic imagery: Cardinal Albani, a prolific collector of antiquities – of which many were phallic – was the patron of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and owned two revered likenesses of the emperor Hadrian's lover Antinous. It is no surprise, then, that Rousseau terms the Cardinal's villa "an unrivalled nerve-centre for combined antiquarian and homosocial activity". Rousseau (1991) 28.

*bordellos of Grecian and Roman antiquity, exhibited for the recreation of antiquaries, and the obscene revellings of Greek scholars in their private studies. Surely this is to dwell mentally in lust and darkness in the loathsome and polluted chamber at Capreae.*"<sup>163</sup>

The *Discourse's* replication of such imagery through its printed plates was thus perceived by some as the production and distribution of pornography, and the "raking together" of these images under the aegis of interrogating religion and its evolution – an enquiry which intrinsically posed a threat to the authority of the Catholic Church - was regarded as blasphemous.<sup>164</sup> Much of this Mathias attributes to the perverted self-indulgence of antiquarians, who were simply feigning intellectual justification in order to "dwell mentally in lust" "in their private studies".<sup>165</sup>

For figures such as Mathias, antiquity was a model of immorality and corruption. Indeed, the supposedly debauched nature of the classical world was frequently used as a counter to those who asserted it as a model for the cultural achievements of social freedom. Payne Knight's ideas were branded an attempt to defend radical emerging politics that went hand-in-hand with a decline in morals and the *Discourse*, along with the perceived socio-political implications of its subject-matter, were in fact taken up by French Republican intellectuals.<sup>166</sup> One clear example

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<sup>163</sup> Mathias attacks Payne Knight and his *Discourse* no fewer than four times over the course of his poem, at one point even suggesting that the P in his contemporary's name does not in fact stand for Payne, but for Priapus. Mathias (1798) 182, note *n*.

<sup>164</sup> Some marginalia on a copy of one of Payne Knight's later works, *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805) made by Samuel Taylor Coleridge gives us a good indication of his reputation following the publication of the 1786 *Discourse*. "I have opened the Book on this Page: and this single Period contains an absolute Demonstration that Mr Knight is just as ignorant in head of Taste, and its Principles, as the Author of the Priapus &c must needs have been **ignorant in heart of Virtue & virtuous feelings**. S. T. Coleridge." Note made on page 176 of the manuscript. Shearer & Lindsay (1937) 75.

Shearer & Lindsay also record that, in 1892, another edition of Knight's *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology* was released, edited by Alexander Wilder (the first edition was privately published in London in 1818). In this release, Knight is described on the title-page as the author of *The Worship of Priapus*. Wilder, in his *Preface* to the text (pp.iv), states that this treatise he has edited contains the fundamental components of "the older work" – that is, the 1786 *Discourse* - stripped of what had been found offensive. According to Wilder, Knight had brought disgrace upon himself due to the "indelicate" nature of the subject matter and the implications as to religious origins. Indeed, Knight had tried to destroy as many copies of the original circulation of the *Discourse* as he could. Shearer & Lindsay (1937) 75.

<sup>165</sup> For more on Mathias specifically, see Baines (2016).

<sup>166</sup> Manuel (1959) 259–70.

of this was that of Charles-Francois Dupuis and his mammoth, seven-volume *Origine de Tous les Cultes, ou Religion Universelle* (1794). Dupuis was an important political figure and republican *idéologue* of France during the last decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>167</sup> In 1803, Pierre-Sylvain Maréchal, the French poet and playwright responsible for the idea behind the secular French Republican Calendar and famous for his utopian socialist views, would write in his own *Antiquités d’Herculanum*, a twelve-volume work detailing the ancient discoveries, that the very idea the ancients would “consecrate a public cult to the secret parts of the human body” had the power to “make people blush and [...] outrage all proprieties.”<sup>168</sup> Maréchal’s feigned embarrassment – he was a well-known Libertine and critic of the Church - satirised contemporary reactions, particularly amongst Christian commentators, as well as the intrinsically close association that the interest in such material had with undermining Catholic dogma.<sup>169</sup> This association between phallism and political transgression was widely invoked in this period: the *Presentation of the Mahometan Credentials, or the Final Resource of French Atheists*, a 1793 political cartoon by James Gillray, depicts a diplomatic mission sponsored by the Sultan Selim III of the Ottoman Empire to set up permanent embassies in Prussia, France, Russia, and England; the cartoon uses phallic symbolism to suggest that the corruptive presence of the Turkish embassy in the country will send British women “down the slippery slope towards French atheism” [Fig. 21].<sup>170</sup> Like the phallic treatises which inspired it, the circulation of this cartoon was suppressed during the Victorian period.

## Comparative Religion and Anthropology

By the end of the eighteenth century, a scholarly interest in ancient phallic worship was essentially equated with sexual tolerance, liberal politics, and the

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<sup>167</sup> For more on Dupuis specifically, see Manuel (1959) 259-70.

<sup>168</sup> Maréchal (1803) Volume II, 103; published in twelve volumes between 1780 and 1803. It was in fact Maréchal, described by Manuel as a “militant atheist and libertine”, who was the first to print the phallic artefacts recovered from the Vesuvian cities, excepting their recording in Vol VI of *Le Antichità di Ercolano Esposte*. Manuel (1959) 262. Orrells (2013) 40.

<sup>169</sup> Manuel (1959) 262.

<sup>170</sup> British Museum Inv. 1851,0901.673.

retrieval of classical ideas which had been defamed by Christianity.<sup>171</sup> However, these socio-political motivations also participated in a wider intellectual turn, of which the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* is especially emblematic. This was the flourishing of comparative-religious and anthropological discourse, which sought to make sense of the increasing number of religions and cultures available to study as a result of the geographical discoveries and imperialism of the era.<sup>172</sup> Situating the *Discourse*, as a key response to the Campanian phallic discoveries, into this intellectual milieu highlights the role of sex and material culture - especially archaeological evidence - in long-held, colonial constructions of 'civilisation' and the cultural evolution of society. Knight's universalism, which underlined the cultural similarities between ancient Egypt, India, Greece, Rome, and Britain, should indeed be understood as belonging to the early forays into anthropology manifesting during this period. Works which prefigure Knight's, or were kindred to it, include *Le Monde Primitif* (1775-1784) by Antoine Court de Gébelin;<sup>173</sup> *Origine de tous les Cultes*, 3 vols (1795) by Charles Francois Dupuis; Charles Wilkins' 1783 translation of the Bhagavad Gita; the reports of recent travellers, such as Sonnerat's and Niebuhr's *Voyages* on Indian religious practices; *On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India* (1784) by Sir William Jones; *Histoire du Christianisme des Indes* (1758) by Maturin Veyssière De la Croze; and *Pantheon Aegyptiorum* (1750) by Pauli Ernesti Jablonski. These works all flesh out ideas of cross-cultural identity and syncretist mythography, with many also concerning themselves with the "dual energies" of nature, orgiastic rites and phallic veneration. The *Discourse* came about in the era of the intellectual institutionalisation of Indo-European linguistics, and of William Jones' famous lecture to the Asiatic Society on the similarities between the Sanskrit, Persian, Greek, Latin, Gothic, and Celtic languages (published in 1788).<sup>174</sup> In turn, Payne Knight's treatise anticipates many of the well-known nineteenth-century works in Comparative Religion and Anthropology, such as Ferdinand C. Bauer, *Symbolik und Mythologie* (Stuttgart, 1824-5), Georg F. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der Alten Volker* (Leipzig, 1810-1823) and

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<sup>171</sup> For more on this see Manuel (1959) 259-270.

<sup>172</sup> See for instance Gascoigne (2014).

<sup>173</sup> For more on de Gébelin specifically, see Manuel (1959) 250-9.

<sup>174</sup> Franklin (2011). On Enlightenment orientalism, see also Aravamudan (2012); Cannon & Brine (1995); Franklin (1995); Singh (2004). See also Said (2003).

Karl O. Muller, *Prolegomena zu einer Wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* (Gottingen, 1825), and *The Golden Bough* of Sir James Frazer (first published 1890).

The cross-cultural outlook of the *Discourse* was further fuelled by evidence hailing from the recent 'discoveries' at the Hindu temples of India, and the subsequent rise in the study of Indology which came about in this era.<sup>175</sup> Many such Indologists cited a debt to Knight's theories in their own approaches to the visual and material culture of Hinduism, which also featured phallic and erotic imagery [Fig. 22]. Edward Moor was a Lieutenant for the East India Company and wrote travel narrative and war correspondence describing his experiences fighting the armies of Tipu Sultan: in the 'Notes and Illustrations' section of his account, Moor conveys his observations on Hindu religion, particularly "the worship of Priapus, the Phallus and the Lingam" in India. In Moor's writings, Knight is depicted as a "defender" of such material in the face of overzealous Christian stricture on sexual matters: Moor writes that whilst he is aware of those authors who "anathematise the depravity of this dissolute and vicious system", he wants to draw attention to those other commentators who are its "defenders; who by their logical ingenuity, metaphysical reasonings, and charitable indulgence, can acquit votaries of this worship, not only of criminality, but of any immoral tendency, in their sensual and voluptuous excesses."<sup>176</sup> Similarly, the celebrated philologist and Indologist Sir William Jones, who was of course responsible for fleshing out other, deep-seated links between the cultures of Europe and India through their languages, commented on the frequent use of the phallus as a symbol in "the writings and temples of Hindoostan".<sup>177</sup>

Indeed, the discoveries and activities of this era established a particular legacy concerning the Western branding of India as an exotic, erotic, hyper-sexualised Orient: the Enlightenment conceptualisation of the Lingam and Yoni, as well as other

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<sup>175</sup> See Rousseau (1988) 116-7; Funnell (1982) 52; and Haskell (1984) 187.

<sup>176</sup> Moor (1794) *A Narrative of the Operations of Captain Little's Detachment* 392-393.

Due to Moor's own "defence" of Priapic worship, *The British Critic* accused Moor and those he cited with being "apologists" for Hindu lingam worship. ('Article IV: Lieutenant Edward Moor's Narrative', *The British Critic* Volume IV (London, 1794) 381-391, 387.)

<sup>177</sup> Along with Henry Thomas Colebrooke and Nathaniel Halhed, Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784.



aspects of Hindu religion such as Tantra, contributed centrally to this.<sup>178</sup> For although popular culture represents the Lingam and Yoni as male and female sex organs, many scholars now trace this belief back only to the nineteenth century, when scholars inherited and doubled-down on Enlightenment ideas of sex worship and others believed that Hindu practices such as these had rendered the ‘natives’ idle and sex-crazed.<sup>179</sup> The lingam’s status as a phallic symbol remains a topic of contention in contemporary scholarship in the field.<sup>180</sup> The Enlightenment discovery of the ubiquitous image of the erect penis, and the formulation of a framework for its interpretation spurred by the discoveries on the Bay of Naples had a critical role in this, therefore.

The fact that Moor and other Indologists used the word “Priapus” to describe the phallic images they found in India demonstrates the centrality and reach of Knight’s work in this field, and his position as a pathfinder for approaching such material. But it also indicates the status of Campania as the hub for such studies and thinking – indeed, of the popular and scholarly centrality of the Campanian phallus even when *other* phalluses were discovered. The discoveries of phallic cults in the ‘savage’ territories of Britain’s ever-expanding empire continued to make the news over the course of the nineteenth century. Readers of *The Times* were regularly informed throughout the 1890s, for example, of the phallic symbols uncovered in Mashonaland (northern Zimbabwe) by the celebrated English explorer and archaeologist, James Theodore Bent.<sup>181</sup> Even when the discussion of phallic material and symbolism moved beyond Campania or took place in relation to other cultures, a Pompeian lexis was still being used, and commentators were still opting to look at the material through a Pompeian lens. We have seen how this continues to be the case in even the most modern popular culture concerning phallic imagery: the Campanian sites continue to be the formative showground for consolidating modern society’s ideas about phallic symbolism. In many ways this Campanian perspective

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<sup>178</sup> Urban argues that, in the eyes of many Hindus, much of the most recent western literature on Tantra represents a form of neo-colonialism. Urban (2009).

<sup>179</sup> Dasgupta (2014) 107.

<sup>180</sup> Doniger (2011) 485-508.

<sup>181</sup> ‘Mr. Bent’s Explorations in Mashonaland’, *The Times*, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1892, p. 8; and ‘The Ruins of Great Zimbabwe’, *The Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1904, pp. 8.

resembles a pre-existing mode established by philology: indeed, the influential Indologist Wendy Doniger has described herself as “a recovering Orientalist, of a generation that framed its study of Sanskrit with Latin and Greek rather than Urdu or Tamil.”<sup>182</sup>

## **Universal Phallic Worship: A product of Enlightenment Thought**

Therefore, whilst the concept of universal phallic worship appears to have constituted a refreshing, scholarly approach to imagery and artefacts, it should very much be situated in the anti-clerical, counter-cultural politics of the late eighteenth-century dilettanti – antiquarians whose interest in the classical was not only scholarly, but moral and social. Phallic symbolism can be considered a useful tool in Knight’s criticism of Catholicism, which was in turn facilitated by comparative religious enquiry: through its interpretation as a fundamental fertility symbol, phallic imagery fast became the poster-child in this era for the newly-illuminated universal character of religious belief which intrinsically undermined the dominance of the Church. In turn, its obvious libertine appeal and antagonism towards Catholic dogma meant the phallus was, in essence, an emblem for disobedient, dangerous political views (of the sort deemed to have triggered the French Revolution).<sup>183</sup> It is according to this historical context that we should frame our conceptualisation and usage of the notion of fertility symbolism and universal phallic worship which, whilst the socio-political motivations entailed in its conception are no longer felt, still seek to establish cross-cultural consistencies in iconography, religious belief and ritual behaviour.

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<sup>182</sup> Doniger (2010) 35.

<sup>183</sup> It is of course important to note that, in the wake of both Jacobitism and the Whig Supremacy, British politics at this time was itself anti-Catholic. See Harris (2006); Szechi (1994); Parrish (2017). In this way, Payne Knight’s approach to formal religious doctrine and his embrace of the personal freedom he saw emblematised in primordial phallic worship should be considered intrinsically Whiggish. Whigs of the mid-to-late eighteenth century opposed the Catholic Church because they saw it as a threat to true individual liberty: as the elder Pitt stated, “The errors of Rome are rank idolatry, a subversion of all civil as well as religious liberty, and the utter disgrace of reason and of human nature”. Williams, B. (1949) 75. Pitt’s comment sounds rather a lot like Knight: “two of the greatest curses that ever afflicted the human race” were “Dogmatical Theology, and its consequent Religious Persecution”. Knight (1865) 109.

As part of its coalescence of socio-political discontent and intellectual enquiry, enlightenment discourse on phallic artefacts generated important semiotic questions. For the ways in which Payne Knight and his contemporaries absolved phallic images of indecency by conceiving of them as a survival of older ideas put a spotlight on the ways in which art potentially made manifest intangible concepts and values. Where Winckelmann's theory of ancient art asserted that it guided the viewer from looking at the physical image to contemplating the abstract, D'Hancarville and Payne Knight conceived of ancient material culture as a history of repeated attempts to represent physically the "First Cause", and thus to make material the immaterial.<sup>184</sup> In this way, many phallic symbols constituted an altered, corrupted form of even earlier attempts to render the abstract generative power concrete given that, in the first place, the male genitals were deemed to provide "the greatest analogy with the divine attributes which they wished to represent", and thus when the penis was *itself* depicted symbolically – such as, according to Knight, in the case of the Christian cross – these subsequent images "might properly be called the **symbols of symbols**."<sup>185</sup> It is in this bubbling of semiotic ideas that we might detect the apotropaic phallus' debt to Richard Payne Knight: how might our sense of phallic apotropaism be tied to Knight's exploration of the outward efficacy and function of an image and the socio-cultural role of symbolism? Considered in this light, it will be shown that the apotropaic phallus almost feels like a distortion of the semiotic assertions made by Richard Payne Knight.

## **The *apotropaic* phallus of Campania in the context of Enlightenment thought**

Our present notion of the Campanian apotropaic phallus clearly owes a lot to Richard Payne Knight and his subsequent influence, as we still largely understand phallic apotropaism through the concept of fertility symbolism. Indeed, it seems to be the underlying assumption in present scholarship that a phallus served as an

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<sup>184</sup> For more on this, see Orrells (2013) 49-50. See also Heringman (2013) 183-218.

<sup>185</sup> Knight (1865) 28. As will become clear, this fittingly represents our own relationship with Knight's ideas, and our somewhat muddled perception of our ideological debt to him.

apotropaion precisely *because* of its evocation of fertility; that is, in evoking generation, it serves to cancel out destructive forces. The dichotomy of the erotic and the spiritual of the sort that has come to be exemplified by the Hindu lingam as a result of its incorporation into antiquarian discourse on Campania is highly indicative of the issue at stake in our inheritance of the Enlightenment conceptualisation of phallic artefacts: is the phallus apotropaic because it is not sexual, or precisely because it is? If the phallus simply constitutes “the greatest analogy” for our early understandings of the cosmos, does reading anything sexual into its meaning constitute an anachronism? Accordingly, as subsequent incarnations of “the symbols of symbols” came about, did they become increasingly sexual the more they sought to represent the penis, rather than what the penis itself was first deemed to represent? Might the apotropaic incarnation of the phallus therefore be considered a later corruption of this system of representation, itself a misapplication of the significance originally attributed to the male genitalia and their depiction?

### **Generativity and Apotropaism**

In actual fact, Knight makes little direct mention of *apotropaic* functionality of any kind during his *Discourse*; the single instance in which agency of this kind is explored explicitly occurs in the following discussion of objects which create noise:

*“The clattering noise, and various motions of the rattles being adopted as the symbols of the movement and mixture of the elements from which all things are produced; the sound of metals in general became an emblem of the same kind. Hence, the ringing of bells, and clattering of plates of metal, were used in all lustrations, sacrifices, etc. ...The use of [bells] was early adopted by the Christians, in the same sense as they were employed by the later heathens; that is, as a charm against evil daemons; for, being symbols of the active exertions of the creative attributes, they were properly opposed to the emanations of the destructive.”*<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Knight (1865) 96-7.

Knight's one explicit reference to the aversive capacity of symbolical meaning does not even take place in conjunction with phallic imagery; it does, however, posit a link between evocations of generative power and the capacity to protect against – or, more accurately, *ward off* - oppugnant forces. Does this constitute the ingrained relationship between so-called 'fertility worship' and apotropaism, in that the anthropological evolution of the latter as a form of material, visual and symbolical agency began as an outgrowth of sorts from the natural inclination to venerate and emblematised the former? Indeed, this is precisely the line taken by Johns, who writes that "the importance of the image of the phallus, and some other sexual motifs, as apotropaic devices probably stems originally from fertility cults".<sup>187</sup> She elaborates:

*"Rituals designed to ensure fertility or to celebrate successful breeding or harvest are **universal**...the desire that [Palaeolithic man] should succeed in his hunting, and that the hunted animals should themselves prosper and multiply, was **expressed by sympathetic magic**..."<sup>188</sup>*

Following Payne Knight, Johns situates her Greco-Roman subject matter into a universal framework in order to reveal its true meaning. Notably, Johns conceives of the *propitiation* of fertility as that of sympathetic magic, a concept by which a desired outcome is achieved through correspondence or imitation. Thus, according to Johns, phallic images function as a kind of sympathetic device, their power deriving from a 'doctrine of signatures' of sorts, their resemblance to male genitalia serving to promote sought-after fertility and abundance. In this sense, phallic apotropaism is more truthfully conceived of by Johns as a good luck charm, its evocation of generativity serving to bring about a positive, desired outcome rather than avert – or as Knight suggests, *cancel out* - an unwanted one. Whilst theories on the meaning and function of the phallus have clearly been advanced little since the work of Payne Knight, it is clear that our debt to him is not straightforward.

Furthermore, apotropaism was not so much tied to the phallic in Payne-Knight's work as it was to the representation of generativity more broadly: "...being symbols of the active exertions of **the creative attributes**, they were properly opposed

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<sup>187</sup> Johns (1999) 143.

<sup>188</sup> Johns (1999) 39.

to the emanations of the destructive.” Yet the manner in which it has been perpetuated by Johns and recent scholars is very much tied to phallicism, whether this be through distinctly *male* generative potency (Johns), or male homosocial dominance (Beard, Richlin), or the notion of phallic aggression – i.e., penetration – as suggested by Warner Slane and Dickie.<sup>189</sup> In reality, *all* these latter manifestations conceptualise the apotropaic as being inherently *male* – a distinction which is decidedly absent from Payne Knight’s brief discussion of the aversive function of images and objects. Throughout his treatise as a whole, Payne Knight in fact emphasized the “double nature” of the ultimate deity, which was possessed of “the general power of creation and generation, **both active and passive, both male and female**”.<sup>190</sup>

### **Semiotics and the Agency of Images**

Knight’s *Discourse* is characterised by a protracted grappling with representation and meaning, as well as a frequent sense of disjunction between these two things. In his opening statement, Knight declares that “the forms and ceremonials of a religion are not always to be understood in their direct and obvious sense, but are to be considered as symbolical representations of some hidden meaning.”<sup>191</sup> As we have seen, this assertion proved programmatic for the rest of the disquisition, forming the crux of Knight’s analysis of a variety of symbols (“as these symbols were intended to express abstract ideas by objects of sight, the contrivers of them naturally selected those objects whose characteristic properties seemed to have the **greatest analogy** with the Divine attributes which they wished to represent”<sup>192</sup>). Hence male genitalia did not denote intercourse, but a more abstract sense of the creative powers of the universe. Therefore, Knight persistently tries to demonstrate

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<sup>189</sup> Johns (1999); Beard (2008); Richlin (1992); and Warner Slane and Dickie (1993). Further work in this area might also consider how things may differ from Greece to Rome – namely, how an apotropaic ‘threat of penetration’ might vary from a Greek context to a Roman context. Warner Slane & Dickie discuss Greek evidence (a Knidian phallic vase from Corinth); however, they nonetheless conscript Pompeii into their discussion of the role of phallic imagery.

<sup>190</sup> Knight (1865) 17-18.

<sup>191</sup> Knight (1865) 14.

<sup>192</sup> Knight (1865) 17.

the disjuncture between surviving visual manifestations and their original meaning, arguing that in many cases the latter has been completely lost, thus leaving behind a dislocated image devoid of the original socio-cultural context which created it and leading to frequent misinterpretation by later people.<sup>193</sup> Therefore, the endeavour to articulate visual agency and its socio-cultural function is a pressing aspect of the *Discourse*, contextually intertwined with its concurrent goal to diminish Catholic authority by situating it within a wider comparative-religious scheme.

Another of Payne Knight's works, *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology: An Inquiry* (1818), testifies his semiotical aims. In many ways this later work repackaged the previously incendiary material of the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, seeking to place greater focus on the mechanics of visual symbolism and the agency of images.<sup>194</sup> In his introduction to *The Symbolical Language*, Payne Knight declares:

*“Religions were born from the human soul, and not fabricated. In process of time they evolved a twofold character, the external and the spiritual. Then symbolism became the handmaid to worship; [...] The sun and the moon, the circle of the horizon, and the signs of the Zodiac, the fire upon the altar and the sacred enclosure which from temenos became temple, the serpent, most spirit-like and like fire of all animals, the egg which typified all germinal existence, the exterior emblems of sex which as the agents for propagating and thereby perpetuating all living beings, clearly indicated the demiurgic potency which actuated the work and function of the Creator – these, and a host of other objects naturally and not inappropriately became symbols to denote characteristics of Divinity.”*<sup>195</sup>

Therefore, Knight's writings demonstrate a continued interest in how abstract concepts were made material, mankind's innate desire to worship its cosmological

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<sup>193</sup> For example, see Knight (1865) 14, 28-9, 48, 68, 94-5, 97 & 113.

<sup>194</sup> The 1892 edition of Knight's *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology* was edited by Alexander Wilder. In his Preface to the text (pp.iv), Wilder states that this treatise he has edited contains the fundamental components of "the older work" – that is, the 1786 *Discourse* - stripped of what had previously been found offensive. Shearer & Lindsay (1937) 75. Wilder had released his own work on phallic worship, together with Hodder Michael Westropp and C. Staniland Wake, entitled *Ancient Symbol Worship: Influence of the Phallic Idea in the Religions of Antiquity* (1874).

<sup>195</sup> Payne Knight (1865) xiv-xv.

origins chiefly responsible for powering the evolution of art. At the heart of his various expositions on an array of “ancient and mystical” symbols was the enquiry as to how visual and material culture can be considered vehicles of meaning, as well as how both vehicle and meaning continued to evolve. We must recognise that the idea that a particular image can be apotropaic takes this dynamic to the next level, therefore, in that the characteristics and qualities of an image and its representation actually invest it with a magnetism of either outward repulsion or inward attraction. The concept of apotropaism itself might be considered an evolution of the ways in which images came to carry meaning in society and thus a kind of semiotic survival of the kind traced by Knight; or indeed an intellectual corruption of Knight’s ideas themselves, in that way in which Knight attributed spiritual meaning and power to images of early human societies came to be misunderstood as apotropaism.

### **The afterlife of Payne Knight’s ideas and the development of phallic apotropaism**

Although our current sense of phallic apotropaism might well be considered emergent from Enlightenment intellectual priorities, clearly the debt to Payne Knight’s work itself is not so straightforward. Indeed, it will be demonstrated that we are more accurately indebted to the nineteenth-century *revival* of Knight, the evolution of his ideas alongside subsequent antiquarian and anthropological developments and events, and the ways in which the *Discourse* was arrogated for other socio-cultural ventures during the Fin de Siècle. In what ways, therefore, is the apotropaism of the archaeological phallic image a construct of those who received Knight later or sought to take after him? Indeed, the Victorian inheritance of Enlightenment thought regarding religious fundamentalism, the homogeneity of human culture and beliefs, and the undercurrent of liberalism towards sex and spirituality (and their frequent concert) is widely accepted.<sup>196</sup> Our debt to this era and its relationship to the contribution of Richard Payne Knight’s response to the Campanian phallus is in fact twofold: for there is what this era did with Knight’s

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<sup>196</sup> For example, Goldhill (2011).



intellectual framework and how this has informed our modern engagement with phallic apotropaism; and there is what it did with the phallus itself, and how this has shaped popular understanding of phallic objects and images.

### **What the Nineteenth Century did with Enlightenment Thought: Knight's Intellectual Framework and the Development of Comparative Religion**

Let us begin with how the nineteenth century can be considered to have perpetuated and furthered the ideological modes which Payne Knight put forward for understanding phallic artefacts. The nineteenth century saw the publication of several of the most famous works of anthropology to date, including Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) and *Anthropology* (1881), and Sir James George Frazer's *Golden Bough* (first published, in two volumes, in 1890). Stocking has characterised the development of anthropological thought as the "systematic study of human unity-in-diversity", and indeed this summation accurately captures the spirit and aims of Payne Knight's early forays into anthropological principles via comparative religious schemata; the nineteenth century thus witnessed the growth and formalisation of a discipline which strongly took after the comparative religious milieu to which Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse* belonged.<sup>197</sup> In his *Les Primitifs* (1885), Élie Reclus writes:

*"Already in the last century it was distinctly stated by De Brosses: 'The only way to really understand what took place amongst the nations of antiquity is to know what is taking place amongst modern nations, and to ascertain if something of the same sort is not happening somewhere under our own eyes.' It is a deep saying often repeated, 'To travel over space is also to travel over time!' And indeed, certain unexplained rites, certain customs the meaning of which has never been suspected even by those who practise them, are in their own way as interesting as it would be to an archaeologist to unearth a lacustrine*

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<sup>197</sup> Stocking (1983) 5.

*city, or to a zoologist to discover a pterodactyl dabbling in an Australian marsh.*"<sup>198</sup>

The subject of Anthropology in this era - the 'Primitive' - was of interest because of what it could supposedly tell us about the previous stages and earlier eras of modern, contemporary civilisation. In turn, modern, contemporary civilisations of foreign, faraway countries served as models and case studies for the archaic past of their 'more advanced' counterparts in developed societies. This belief was based on the rationale that all societies progressed through the same stages of art and knowledge towards the same goal of 'civilisation'.<sup>199</sup> Therefore, not only do vastly different cultures of different nations share the same developmental and socio-cultural characteristics, but those which were deemed 'less advanced' were thus considered akin to the previous iterations of 'more advanced', contemporaneous societies. This framework draws heavily on the aspects of eighteenth-century comparative religious thought which stressed the cross-cultural consistencies of different belief systems and the commonality of certain rites and objects of worship: for example, Knight's account of humanity's repeated, evolving attempts to depict the generative nature of the cosmos speaks of an inevitable trajectory of evolution undertaken by all cultures in which, as a culture becomes more advanced, it moves further away from the first principles which saw the creation of phallic imagery, being humanity's earliest attempts to understand and represent life. We can see the consolidation of these ideas in Edward Burnett Tylor's evolutionary model for cultural development presented in *Primitive Culture* (1871).

Therefore, the rationale according to which nineteenth-century anthropology operated, as expounded by Tylor in 1871 and described by Reclus in 1885, built observably upon the developmental narrative outlined by eighteenth-century

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<sup>198</sup> Reclus (1885) ix (unnamed translator). For more on de Brogues, see Manuel (1959) 184-209.

<sup>199</sup> "In taking up the problem of the development of culture as a branch of ethnological research, a first proceeding is to obtain a means of measurement. Seeking something like a definite line along which to reckon progression and retrogression in civilization, we may apparently find it best in the classification of real tribes and nations, past and present. Civilization actually existing among mankind in different grades, we are enabled to estimate and compare it by positive examples. The educated world of Europe and America practically settles a standard by simply placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other, arranging the rest of mankind between these limits according as they correspond more closely to savage or to cultured life." Tylor (1920) 26.

comparative scholars, such as Knight and his attempt to contextualise the naturalism and solemnity of phallic artefacts. Knight's treatise especially foreshadowed much of nineteenth-century anthropological discourse on fertility. One nineteenth-century figure who has had a particular effect on our ideas of fertility worship and its place in human cultural development is that of Sir James George Frazer, through his seminal work *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (retitled *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* in its second edition), first published in two volumes in 1890, in three volumes in 1900, and in twelve volumes during 1906–15.<sup>200</sup> Ostensibly, the subject of the work is the analysis of a strange rite that took place in Nemi, not far from ancient Rome: in a grove sacred to the goddess Diana, a slave would battle several challengers in one-on-one combat in order to be crowned 'King of the Wood' [Fig. 23].<sup>201</sup> Frazer was one of the renowned Cambridge Ritualists - a group of anthropologists and classicists including Jane Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray and Francis MacDonal Cornford - who shared an interest in rituals and myths.<sup>202</sup> Specifically, they theorised on the ritual seasonal killings of *eniautos daimon*, or the 'Year-King', which they considered to be a periodically re-enacted fertility rite to ensure successful harvests and other benefits.

In the *Golden Bough*, Frazer conceived of the Year-King as a universal fertility myth, with various evolutionary incarnations identifiable in all world cultures: for instance, Osiris, Adonis, Dionysus, Attis and many other Greek mythological figures were considered indicative of this archetype.<sup>203</sup> Ultimately, the subject of *The Golden Bough* was the identification and explanation of the overarching elements of human belief, and thus the idea that all mankind progresses from magic through religious belief to scientific thought (indeed, Frazer's ideas were hugely influenced by Tylor's evolutionary model for cultural development).<sup>204</sup> Thus Frazer's work not only served

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<sup>200</sup> Ackerman (2004).

<sup>201</sup> "Who does not know Turner's picture of the Golden Bough? The scene, suffused with the golden glow of imagination in which the divine mind of Turner steeped and transfigured even the fairest natural landscape, is a dream-like vision of the little woodland lake of Nemi, 'Diana's Mirror', as it was called by the ancients [...] In antiquity this sylvan landscape was the scene of a strange and recurring tragedy..." Frazer (1894) 1-2.

<sup>202</sup> For more on Jane Ellen Harrison specifically, see Beard (2000).

<sup>203</sup> Frazer (1894) 278-329.

<sup>204</sup> E.g. Frazer (1894) 33-4.

to reinforce the evolutionary model underlying Knight's explanation of the existence of phallic imagery, but he popularly expounded the centrality of fertility worship to human belief systems and its cultural ubiquity, as initially asserted by D'Hancarville and Knight over a century earlier. Frazer's work was widely and popularly received: many contemporaries took up amateur investigation of similar primitive 'hangovers', such as morris dancing and maypoles, and his theories were notably referenced in literature, such as in the work of James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.<sup>205</sup> Frazer thus served to consolidate and add mythographical flesh to the bones of developmental theory that came about during the Enlightenment as a result of comparative religious discourse. Indeed, our debt to Frazer is apparent even today in Johns' work. At certain points in *Sex or Symbol?*, Johns appears to paraphrase Frazer, with some segments of her explication of fertility cult sounding eerily reminiscent of *The Golden Bough*: "Rituals designed to ensure fertility or to celebrate successful breeding or harvest are universal...the desire that [Palaeolithic man] should succeed in his hunting, and that the hunted animals should themselves prosper and multiply, was expressed by sympathetic magic..."<sup>206</sup>

Frazer can also be considered emblematic of the Victorian inheritance of Enlightenment thinking in his attitudes to religion, which strongly resemble Knight's anti-clerical sentiments and intellectual dismantling of Christianity's pretensions to uniqueness. Frazer was one of the foremost proponents of secularism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Christianity was not exempt from his treatment of world religions, which incorporated the story of Jesus and the Resurrection in its comparative survey.<sup>207</sup> Frazer considered religion to be an obligatory stage in the development of humankind, but one that is nonetheless indicative of irrationality – and is thus necessarily destined to be superseded by

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<sup>205</sup> In notes added to his poem, Eliot described himself as being "indebted" to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which he considered to have "influenced our generation profoundly". Specifically, Eliot draws attention to "the two volumes Adonis, Attis, Osiris. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies." For more on this see: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-golden-bough-a-source-referenced-in-the-waste-land> Date Accessed: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018.

<sup>206</sup> Johns (1999) 39.

<sup>207</sup> Frazer (1894) 278-96.

science.<sup>208</sup> The educated public of Fin-de-Siècle, post-Darwinian Britain lapped up Frazer's work: the three editions of *The Golden Bough* - especially the one-volume précis released in 1922 - sold in their tens of thousands.<sup>209</sup> Indeed, Frazer's files at Trinity College, Cambridge include many letters from readers thanking him for revealing to them the 'true' nature of Christianity.<sup>210</sup> Frazer's theories therefore bear strong resemblance to those expounded by Knight in the 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, in that they seek to throw a spotlight on the fallible and unexceptional components of Christianity and, as a result, call into question its authority. However, the *Golden Bough* can be considered an escalation of Enlightenment anti-clericalism in that it unabashedly characterised Christianity as belonging to a phase of human credulity and strongly hinted at its redundancy in an era governed by positive science. Frazer's work was more widely received than that of Payne Knight, and despite also gaining criticism for blasphemy, was not subject to the same censorship and limited circulation which shaped the reception of Payne Knight's *Discourse*.<sup>211</sup>

Frazer's conceptualisation of fertility rites through the Year-King archetype was indicative of the nineteenth-century theory of 'Survivals', a term given to cultural phenomena and behaviours that outlive the context in which they originally came about and can thus be observed in seemingly anachronistic or strange settings. The concept was first invoked by the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871). Tylor believed that 'irrational' customs and practices - such as superstitions - were remnants of earlier, rational behaviours, making a distinction between ongoing practices which had maintained their function and those which had lost their original meaning and were therefore at odds with surrounding culture.<sup>212</sup> The Scottish theorist John Fergusson McLennan employed the term to describe *symbolic* forms of earlier practices: for example, McLennan asserted that the simulation of battles in marriage customs was the survival of an earlier phase when

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<sup>208</sup> Frazer (1894) 7-29.

<sup>209</sup> Ackerman (2004).

<sup>210</sup> Ackerman (2004).

<sup>211</sup> Indeed, Knight swiftly attempted to destroy as many of copies of his *Discourse* as he could, following its ignominious reception.

<sup>212</sup> See Chapter III, 'Survival in Culture', Tylor (1920).

nuptial procedures entailed the actual kidnapping of women.<sup>213</sup> Knight's explanation of phallic imagery, and the case he made for its innocence, by conceiving of phallic art and artefacts as attempt-after-attempt by humanity to depict the "First Cause" visually and materially was, essentially, an exposition of the concept of survivals. In the beginning, Knight asserted that the image of the male genitals was depicted because, in trying "to express abstract ideas by objects of sight", early man "selected those objects whose characteristic properties seemed to have the greatest analogy with the Divine attributes which they wished to represent", thus conveying the earnestness and rationale behind the use of phallic images; however, over time, the purpose and meaning of these images became distorted as "avarice and superstition have continued these symbolical representations **for ages after their original meaning has been lost and forgotten**", thus giving rise to the disturbing discovery of phallic objects at Pompeii and Herculaneum. It was precisely the status of these artefacts as survivals – though the term had not yet been coined - and thus as corrupted, dislocated descendants of a primordial idea, which was central to Knight's exposition of their presence, ubiquity and solemnity.<sup>214</sup>

Another prominent anthropological theory of the nineteenth century was the concept of Sympathetic Magic. Sometimes termed 'Imitative Magic', it denoted a belief in magic that operated according to imitation or resemblance: for instance, various yellow plant substances might cure – or equally, induce – jaundice; similarly, voodoo dolls might have the capacity to affect a person through their being a proxy, often facilitated by biological material acquired from the target (such as a lock of hair). In a section in his *Primitive Culture* entitled "Magical Association of Ideas", Tylor writes:

*"He who has cut himself should rub the knife with fat, and as it dries, the wound will heal; this is lingering survival from days when recipes for sympathetic ointment were to be found in the Pharmacopoeia.*

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<sup>213</sup> McLennan, *Primitive Marriage: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies* (1865).

<sup>214</sup> The following chapter will examine further the notion of survivals and its particular pertinence to the conceptualisation of the apotropaic.

[Wuttke, p.165; Brand, vol.iii, p.305]<sup>215</sup> Fanciful as these notions are, it should be borne in mind that they do come fairly under definite **mental law**, depending as they do on a **principle of ideal association**, of which we can quite understand the mental action, though we deny its practical results.”<sup>216</sup>

In 1922, Frazer subsequently outlined the “Law of Similarity” and the “Law of Contact or Contagion”:

*“If we analyse the **principles of thought on which magic is based**, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first, that **like produces like**, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that **things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance** after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle may be called the **Law of Similarity**, the latter the **Law of Contact or Contagion**. From the first of these principles, namely the Law of Similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it: from the second he infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not. **Charms based on the Law of Similarity may be called Homoeopathic or Imitative Magic**. Charms based on the Law of Contact or Contagion may be called Contagious Magic.”<sup>217</sup>*

The notion of sympathetic magic was also elucidated in the work of German ethnographer Richard Andree, through his term “Sympathie-Zauber”, in his 1878 *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche*. Andree describes the “widely-held superstition in Germany that, if you have a piece of grass on which a man has trodden

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<sup>215</sup> *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart* (‘Present-Day German Folk-Superstition’) (1865) by Karl Friedrich Adolf Wuttke, most commonly known as Adolf Wuttke (1818-1870). A German protestant theologian and author of a treatise on Christian ethics (*Handbuch der christlichen Sittenlehre*, 1860-1863), works on heathen religion (*Die Geschichte des Heidentums*, 1851-1853) and superstition (*Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart*, 1865).

<sup>216</sup> Tylor (1920) 119.

<sup>217</sup> Frazer (1922) 11. In his discussion of an “esoteric doughtray scraper”, Barrick concludes that its “ithyphallic” shape probably makes it “a homeopathic charm appropriate for this moment [that is, the successful and customary baking of bread].” Barrick (1979) 217.

with his bare feet, and you allow that blade of grass to dry out in front of the stove, that man himself will also dry out and wither".<sup>218</sup> Andree compiles a number of examples of "Sympathie-Zauber" from an array of different cultures, including practices which sound remarkably like voodoo dolls:

*"Such a woman believes that she has been betrayed by her husband, so she gets up by night... dresses fantastically and attaches the image of the unfaithful man in the temple garden to a tree, where she pierces it with a nail. In the place where this has been struck, the unfaithful husband feels pain; or she makes a doll out of straw, which is to represent the relevant person, pierces it with nails and buries it in the place where her husband sleeps..."*<sup>219</sup>

The concept of sympathetic magic certainly appears to echo our notion of an apotropaic object, and indeed, we have already seen how scholars such as Johns conceive of the Campanian phallus' apotropaim as being derived from its evocation of fertility in a manner akin to Sympathetic functionality. How might the concept of Sympathetic Magic be an inheritance, or corruption, of the image-meaning relationship described by Knight, and how does this feed into our conceptualisation of phallic apotropaim as well as our perceived relationship to Payne Knight's theories? In the *Discourse*, Knight conceives of the use of phallic imagery as being the result of its analogousness to the miracle of life and reproduction:

*"As these symbols were intended to express abstract ideas by objects of sight, the contrivers of them naturally selected **those objects whose characteristic properties seemed to have the greatest analogy with the Divine attributes which they wished to represent.** [...] ...what more just and natural image could they find, by which to express their idea*

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<sup>218</sup> "Weit verbreitet durch Deutschland ist der Aberglauben, daß, wenn man ein Stück Rasen, auf welchem ein Mensch mit nackten Füßen gestanden, aussticht und hinter dem Herde oder Ofen vertrocknen läßt, auch der Mensch verdorrt und dahinsiecht." Andree (1889) 8.

<sup>219</sup> "Glaubt sich eine solche von ihrem Gatten hintergangen, so erhebt sie sich nachts... kleidet sich phantastisch an und heftet das Bild des Treulosen im Tempelgarten an einen Baum, wo sie es mit einem Nagel durchbohrt. An der Stelle, wo dieser eingeschlagen wird, empfindet der treulose Mann Schmerzen, Oder sie macht eine Puppe aus Stroh, die den Betreffenden vorstellen soll, durchbohrt sie mit Nägeln und vergräbt sie an dem Orte, wo der Mann schläft..." Andree (1889) 8-9.



*of the beneficent power of the great Creator, than that organ which endowed them with the power of procreation?"*<sup>220</sup>

Significantly, this mode of analogy according to which phallic images were thus used to represent divinity feels revived in Frazer's claim that certain magical beliefs assume "that *like produces like*, or that an effect resembles its cause", that "the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by *imitating it*".<sup>221</sup> Whilst Knight's *Discourse* includes minimal discussion of the propitiatory aspect of religion, we can thus see how current notions of fertility worship extrapolate his system of analogy in such a way that the depiction of the phallus not only represents divine generative agency, but *invokes* it too, thus extending the iconographic power of the phallic image into a Sympathetic one. The identification of such a connection between Knight's and Frazer's ideas in turn forces us to consider the extent to which our modern notions of the apotropaic phallus' functionality are based on Frazer's outdated model of magical power, and thus founded on problematic colonialist and Cartesian assumptions.

The parallel interest of the late nineteenth century in the role of ritual - being, as a central part of religious worship, propitiation - and similarly, votives - being objects which, through divine transaction, are able to bring about an effect - contributed to bringing the magic element of practices and images to the fore in the conception of ancient or 'exotic' belief, which thus saw the actuation of particular objects and images in a manner ideologically akin to apotropaism. Through ritual practice and its associated accoutrements, as well as votives as objects charged with achieving an outcome, intellectual engagement with worship gradated, via these forms of propitiation, from symbolic representation (as outlined by Knight and D'Hancarville<sup>222</sup>) into active beseeching which, significantly, had a lot in common conceptually with apotropaism. The role of the Cambridge Ritualists, as arguably the next in the ideological chain following Enlightenment comparative-religious

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<sup>220</sup> Knight (1865) 17.

<sup>221</sup> Frazer (1922) 11.

<sup>222</sup> Heringman has indeed shown how D'Hancarville's treatment of the mythological scenes on Hamilton's vases as documents of early forms and conventions of visual representation served to "relocate the origins of art and ritual close to the moment of human origins"; "Art is history for d'Hancarville, both because artefacts themselves encrypt the origin and progress of the arts and because they translate into intelligible myth the social and political events of a pre-literate past that are otherwise irretrievable." Heringman (2013) 183, 195.

thinkers, in effecting this shift goes some way to explain how, given the fundamental disjunction we have thus far identified between a purely denotative fertility symbol and an apotropaic agent, the latter conceptualisation of the Campanian phallus came about.<sup>223</sup> In her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, first published in 1903, Jane Ellen Harrison examined ancient Greek religious festivals with a view to ascertaining the primitive foundation for classical religious systems. Indeed, the first chapter of Harrison's book concerns 'Olympian and Chthonic Ritual', including "The distinction drawn by Isocrates and others between Olympian and apotropaic ritual" and "The contrast between 'Tendance' (θεραπεία) and 'Aversion' (ἀποτροπή)".<sup>224</sup> In thinking about religion's active, reciprocal or entreating components, apotropaic practice became of particular interest, it being the negative, aversive counterpart to positive practices of *therapeia*. Furthermore, the term *therapeia* also conveyed the nurturing of the sick or needy, its corresponding role in the ritual sphere accordingly denoting practices which entailed nurture or active attraction of positive outcomes (as opposed to the apotropaic deterrent of negative ones). The contemporary investigation of ancient religion thus went hand-in-hand with the continued ideological development of apotropaism, the latter being the mechanism by which ancient peoples were viewed to have ritually responded to the demonic causes of disease:<sup>225</sup> namely, this conceptualisation of ritual, religion *and* superstition as medicine saw apotropaic-type objects conceived of in active, effecting ways.<sup>226</sup> The agency of the apotropaic was thus born of an era which saw the intrinsic interconnection of investigation into folklorism and superstition, religious practice, and medical history, thus serving to invigorate Knight's conceptualisation of a phallic image.

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<sup>223</sup> Carabelli describes this as the "euphemistic transformation of the phallic cult into the cult of vegetation" but, as we have thus shown, this does not sufficiently capture the nature of the ideological development which took place between the works of Payne Knight and Frazer. Carabelli (1996) 99-100.

<sup>224</sup> Harrison (1908) 8-10.

<sup>225</sup> The influence of Cambridge Ritualists such as Harrison on the medico-historical sphere is evident in the work of Fielding Hudson Garrison MD, whose articulation of the dialect between the Olympian and Chthonic owes much to Harrison's *Prolegomena*. See Hudson Garrison (1919) 35-51.

<sup>226</sup> Indeed, as late as 1928 Sir Henry Wellcome drew links between traditional belief, religion and medical development of the kind which saw the concretisation of the apotropaic artefact as an agent of power and outward enchantment: "in all the ages the preservation of health and life has been uppermost in the minds of living beings, hence the omni-present medicine man and the religio-medico or priest-physician". Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome in 1928, cited in Turner (1980) 37-8.

## **The Nineteenth Century and the Phallus: Wider socio-cultural influence of the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus***

The *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* served to put a spotlight on phallic imagery, triggering a surge of interest in the topic along with the revival of Knight's work itself during the nineteenth century. In fact, phallic images, objects and symbols became popular aspects of several other areas of culture, such as art, medicine and religious sub-culture. This afterlife of Payne Knight's subject matter in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries goes some way to explain how we got from the concept of universal fertility worship through the symbolic depiction of the abstract generative principle as expounded by Knight, to our sense of a phallus being apotropaic: the phallic symbol characterised by Knight evolved for an even wider set of intellectual and esoteric applications during this period, which gave rise to its association with a number of other qualities and capabilities.

### **The Nineteenth-Century Phallicists**

The long legacy of the *Discourse*, which was to influence the interconnected fields of sexology, anthropology, archaeology, and folklore studies from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, is largely the result of the British revival of Knight's work which came about in the 1860s. In 1865, the Anthropological Society of London (ASL) republished the *Discourse* in a run of five hundred, adding their own illustrations to accompany a new essay appended to it entitled 'On the Worship of the Generative Powers during the Middle Ages of Western Europe' by Thomas Wright (1810-1877).<sup>227</sup> This reinvigoration of Knight's treatise was the work of ASL member, former medical doctor, banker and collector George Witt (1804-1869), and indeed many of the new illustrations featured material from Witt's own 'Collection Illustrative of Phallic Worship' (1866 catalogue).<sup>228</sup> Witt's collection comprised phallic objects of all eras and cultures, thus taking a Payne-Knightian approach to the

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<sup>227</sup> Carabelli (1996) 111–12.

<sup>228</sup> Langlands, Fisher, Funke & Grove (2017).

material by seeking to identify the phallic across all cultural contexts. Witt's collection also included some representations of female genitalia, in accordance with Payne Knight's assertion that the divine essence of the cosmos had a "double nature", "both active and passive, both male and female". Witt eventually donated his collection to the British Museum in 1865 and, due to the 1857 Obscene Publications Act, it led to the formal creation of the museum's *Secretum*.<sup>229</sup> Many others compiled collections of phallic objects following the composition of Knight's *Discourse*, including Goethe and, much later, Sigmund Freud.<sup>230</sup> The nineteenth century was therefore an era of phallic museology, which saw the phallus become a specimen and 'phallushood', as it were, a curatorial category.

A plethora of treatises on phallic art and related symbolism came about in the century following Knight. [Fig. 24] The ASL was also to publish many of these studies, all of which drew explicitly on Knight's original *Discourse* (this included, for example, the work of Hodder Michael Westropp, C. Staniland Wake, and Alexander Wilder, entitled *Ancient Symbol Worship: Influence of the Phallic Idea in the Religions of Antiquity* (1874)<sup>231</sup>). Many others, however, were anonymously and privately printed, such as: *Phallic Objects* (1889); *Phallism* (1889); *Nature Worship: An Account of Phallic Faiths and Practices Ancient and Modern* (1891); and *Phallic Miscellanies* (1891). Works in this image can be found as late as 1922 in the work of Otto Augustus Wall, in his disquisition *Sex and Sex Worship (phallic worship): a scientific treatise on sex, its nature and function, and its influence on art, science, architecture, and religion - with special reference to sex worship and symbolism*. A selection of other such authors includes: Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, Félix Lajard, Hargrave Jennings, Thomas Inman, Thomas Wright, Godfrey Higgins, Robert A. Campbell, General James Forlong, P. N. Rolle, Clifford Howard, Robert H. Fryar, Henry O'Brien, Sir William Jones, Roger Goodland, Edwin Sidney Hartland, Sir James Tennent, Raphael Blanchard, Gustav Joseph Witkowski, Sha Rocco, Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, G. W Foote, and Jean

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<sup>229</sup> Gaimster (2000). Janes (2008), 101–12, 106.

<sup>230</sup> Whilst they went unacknowledged in the 1989 publication *Sigmund Freud and Art: His Personal Collections of Antiquities*, Freud also enjoyed collecting phallic amulets made of bronze, ivory, and faience, likely acquired as early as 1902 during a trip to Pompeii. Gamwell & Wells (1989) and Davis (2010) 51. Davis (2001) 247–77.

<sup>231</sup> Wilder edited and re-released the 1892 edition of Knight's *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*.

Christian Boudin. Many of these figures concurrently published on topics such as 'Nature Worship', tree worship and Ophiolatry, the worship of snakes - topics which emerged from the primary fascination with the phallus. The rise of these secondary topics is interesting: such surveys were also conducted in a Payne-Knightian manner, conceived of as deep-seated human impulses and as being cross-culturally identifiable; furthermore, many of these themes were conceived of as manifestations of the phallic or the generative themselves - sometimes on account of their shape (trees and serpents supposedly being primordially identified with the phallus), other times as phallic alternatives, and thus another means of conveying the generative principle. Other such topics coming about in this period include "the masculine cross"; cults of "Venus"; "ancient sex worship"; and intersections with Indology and the mythology of ancient Egypt.<sup>232</sup> The reception of Knight's work at this moment was also influenced by contemporary colonialism: cultures that had featured briefly in the *Discourse*, such as India, were now treated in more detail, and others, such as the customs of Japan ("Japanese phallic temples") and various African societies, were now brought into the mix.<sup>233</sup>

Many of these works not only took their cues from the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, but even paraphrased entire sections of Payne Knight's original treatise. Many were written anonymously, using pseudonyms, or even purporting to be written by other well-known authors on the topic. Some, whilst professing to be different titles on the topic, actually quote verbatim the content of pre-existing works. The character of these treatises and their messy interrelation makes it difficult to quantify their importance in terms of anthropological and archaeological thought, as well as their public consumption.<sup>234</sup> However, whilst many of these disquisitions and

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<sup>232</sup> E.g., Sha Rocco (possibly a pseudonym for Hargrave Jennings), *The Masculine Cross and Ancient Sex Worship* 1874; reprinted in the 'Nature Worship and Mystical Series', 1890. See also other titles in the 'Nature Worship and Mystical Series'.

<sup>233</sup> On India, see Sellon (1865a) & (1865b). On Africa, see Burton (1865) 308–21. See also Jennings (1890).

<sup>234</sup> Frazer's thoughts on the study of "sex worship" and phallic symbolism in his *Golden Bough* possibly indicate the wider significance and impact of all these treatises: "The study of the various forms, some gross and palpable, some subtle and elusive, in which the sexual instinct has moulded the religious consciousness of our race, is one of the most interesting, as it is one of the most difficult and delicate tasks, which await the **future historian** of religion." Frazer seems to think that such topics were yet to be tackled effectively. Frazer (1912) Preface.

their authors can be considered obscure, this overall phenomenon of crypto-publishing itself is at the very least testament to the way in which Knight's ideas gained momentum over the course of the nineteenth century, as well as how they evolved and acquired additional significance. For the co-opting into the discourse of a great many other images and material remains – from trees and snakes to Irish monastic towers, stone circles and obelisks – saw a resonance and privilege accorded to a wider range of images and objects than ever before, and thus the creation of a distinct notion of 'phallushood'. In other words, the status of being phallic came about most patently in this era - predating Freud and his influential *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he claimed that "all elongated objects, such as sticks, tree-trunks and umbrellas (the opening of these last being comparable to an erection) may stand for the male organ - as well as all long, sharp weapons, such as knives, daggers and pikes."<sup>235</sup> This realisation of phallic status, phallic objecthood, and an outward phallic power was thus only to grow further in the cultural consciousness with the dawn of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Carabelli rightly points out that the lack of development in the theory put forward for interpreting ancient phallic material between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enables the side-by-side comparison of the works produced in the two periods. He accordingly observes that the writers of such discourse were no longer solely the rich dilettanti of the eighteenth-century, Hamiltonian era, but more often ordinary antiquarians, or "scribblers who alternated erudite compilation with mass-production of pornography".<sup>236</sup> Secondly, the tone of such discourse became more "assertive and simplistic": where Payne Knight discussed the "symbols of the

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<sup>235</sup> Freud's concept of the phallic symbol itself emerged from eighteenth-century discourses of antiquity and sexuality, which themselves orbited around the Campanian archaeological discoveries. Indeed, Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* "furnished Freud with an important model for explaining Leonardo's [Da Vinci] worship of his phallic mother", articulated in his *Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci (Leonardo da Vinci and A Memory of His Childhood)* (1910). Orrells (2013) 47.

For example, see *The Round Towers or The History of The Tuatha De Danaans* by Henry O'Brien (1808-1835), published in 1834. The book was controversial at the time because O'Brien claimed that the round towers which were a common feature of early Irish Christian monastic sites were in fact built by pre-Christian pagans. According to O'Brien, the towers were phallic symbols built by the Tuatha De Danaan as part of an ancient cult he linked with ancient Greece, Egypt, India and Buddhism. See also Jennings (1877); and the works attributed to 'Sha Rocco'.

<sup>236</sup> Carabelli (1996) 113.

generative powers”, these late nineteenth-century authors were concerned with “phallism” or “phallicism”. Carabelli also calls attention to the concept of universal phallic religion being linked ever more obdurately with the cults of the obelisk, pyramid, dolmen or serpent during this latter era of phallic historiography. However, what Carabelli fails to recognise is that the Victorian fixation with, and deployment of, “phallism” (or “phallicism”) also sees the wider eighteenth-century body of early anthropological and comparative-religious theory distilled into one, exemplary aspect. Namely, in the Victorian uptake of the topic, the phallus became ‘the symbol of symbols’; all other forms of generative symbolism were subsumed into this category, all of them considered *subsidiary to* the ultimate symbol, the phallus, and all of them thus considered simply *indicative of* the phallus. Therefore, the phallus was not a symbol of the generative powers, but generative imagery were *symbols of the phallus*. For example, Sha Rocco said of the cross of Christianity:

*“Thus we find the cross is the Ethiopic and ancient Hebrew "tau" †. The T is the triad, the triad is Asher, Ann, and Hea — the male genitals deified — the genitals are pudenda, pudenda means shame or immodest, and so we arrive at the unavoidable conclusion that the cross is of sexual origin and purely masculine. It is the sign of a man-God.”<sup>237</sup>*

Finally, the narrowing of focus which saw the increasingly obsessive drawing of parallels between obelisks, dolmen, and other supposedly ‘phallic’ structures illustrates what was going on this period perhaps most clearly of all: phallic-ness became a status, a value, and a category of objecthood; the phallus was something to be symbolic of, rather than symbolic of something else. During the nineteenth century, the broader body of Payne-Knightian theory was therefore sublimated and inspissated around the phallic principle. This amounted to more than just a stagnation of theory as termed by Carabelli, for it was actually a demonstration of the very processes of semiotic corruption Knight had himself hypothesised: where Payne Knight (and D’Hancarville) conceived of ancient material culture as a history of repeated attempts to make manifest the “First Cause”, many subsequent phallic

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<sup>237</sup> Sha Rocco (1904) 25. In 1941, George Ryley Scott also declared that “the study of phallicism is the study of religion”. Ryley Scott (1941) 1.

symbols should in turn be considered increasingly derivative attempts to recall the very image selected to represent what was an original, abstract idea.<sup>238</sup> Accordingly, nineteenth-century engagement with such theory saw the 'forgetting' of the phallus' aetiology as a cosmological signifier: that is, according to Knight, it was the *male genitalia* which were in fact deemed to have the "greatest analogy" with the generative nature of the cosmos, and thus the *phallus'* narratological emergence as a symbol ought to be considered a sublimation of the original thought-process by which the penis was selected as an appropriate signifier. In this way, the nineteenth-centuries search for phallic symbols was not truly a search for significations of the "First Cause", but for symbols of the *penis*.

A closer look at what the nineteenth century did with the phallus illustrates that our 'reception' of Knight's ideas on phallic imagery is in truth most often a reception of his nineteenth-century revival. Indeed, Knight's work should be seen as the first stages of a wider intellectual and cultural movement that was to see protracted and pronounced engagement with material and ideas encompassing the phallus as an image, an object, a symbol, and a religious implement. The nineteenth century can be characterised by a more bizarre, 'clumsier' version of Enlightenment thought, often driven by singular individuals and subversive or eccentric intellectual currents. The effect of this on our understanding of phallic artefacts, therefore, should not be overlooked.

## Conclusions

Richard Payne Knight stands at the head of a *longue durée* characterised by the repeated attempt to deal with the phallus as a symbol and an art object; to negotiate the problems and implications presented by phallic artefacts; and to articulate authoritatively the status and significance of the phallus in the contexts in which it was contemporaneously being discovered. These efforts can be identified in the wealth of discourse on phallic worship which was produced during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as in the associated ideas and socio-

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<sup>238</sup> Knight (1865) 28.



cultural phenomena which germinated around such discourse. In this chapter we have reassessed the ways in which Payne Knight's work relates to the crystallisation of the apotropaic as a mode of categorising phallic objects from Pompeii and Herculaneum. This chapter has taken the significant step of pointing out that Payne Knight did not in fact discuss the phallus as an apotropaion in his *Discourse*, despite the text being repeatedly and implicitly evoked in historiographical and ideological discussions of this material. In turn we have seen how, in the era following Knight, the phallus took on mystical and magical qualities, and went from being a stand-in for fertility and regeneration to actually possessing the very power of these things. Charting the history of our conceptualisation of this category of archaeological material, starting with the high-profile discovery of such artefacts and one of the earliest, most influential responses to them all the way through to our present understanding of these objects, the following chapters will shed light on how other aspects of discourse which developed over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries facilitated the Campanian phallus' transition from a symbol for an abstract concept to an activated apotropaion.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Ancient Locals, Local Ancients: A Folkloric Neapolitan Context for the Apotropaic Campanian Phallus

The previous chapter demonstrated that our modern sense of phallic apotropaism cannot be straightforwardly attributed to the Enlightenment antiquarian Richard Payne Knight, who, whilst being a foremost proponent of the idea that all world religions are descended from a primordial impetus to venerate the generative principle – resulting in the proliferation of phallic imagery throughout a multitude of belief systems, the image of male genitalia being deemed most effective for denoting this power – did **not** actually connect phallic symbolism with apotropaic function at any point in his 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*. Indeed, a close examination of the subsequent reception of Payne Knight's treatise by fields such as anthropology, and western esotericism sheds light on the ways in which the Enlightenment meaning and significance of the Campanian phallus was to be reconfigured during the socio-cultural climate of the nineteenth century and over the course of the Fin de Siècle. This reconfiguration saw the phallus take on active magical properties, its perceived origin as a fertility icon giving rise to fetishistic associations. The following chapter will continue to flesh out the ways in which the notion of the apotropaic phallus evolved over the course of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially concerning the assigning of amuletic qualities to it as part of contemporary fascination with primitivism, anthropological survivals, and folklore. In particular, this section will demonstrate that we should understand the attribution of apotropaism to Campanian phallic artefacts during this period as in part the result of a fascination with the culture and customs of the Kingdom of Naples, which manifested contemporaneously with the archaeological excavations.

Much has been done to illuminate the socio-historical context for the excavations provided by the Bourbon Kingdom and the various political and social events that took place alongside them, such as the knock-on effects felt in

archaeological activity and museum display as a result of Napoleonic rule (1799-1814), the re-integration of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1816, and the Expedition of the Thousand led by Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1860, as well as historical narratives of collection censorship and the institution of secret cabinets.<sup>239</sup> However, a connection is yet to be shown between the grand-touristic image of the Bay of Naples and its people in the European imagination, a significant body of concurrent discourse on southern Italian customs and lifeways which flowered during the nineteenth century, and the contemporary conceptualisation of different categories of artefacts emerging from the ancient sites. We will see that commentators frequently sought to respond to the archaeological finds by contextualising them within the living and breathing Neapolitan culture they saw around them, and that archaeological discourse on the Vesuvian sites inherently overlapped with a desire to unravel the 'folkloric' strata of modern, contemporary culture, consistent with wider trends in anthropological discourse of this period including the identification of 'survivals'. Accordingly, the illumination of this context provides further evidence of the ways in which the import and popularisation of the apotropaic Campanian phallus during this era corresponds to an intermeshing of nineteenth-century socio-cultural enquiries with this major moment - and accompanying sense of place - in the history of classical archaeology. However, the investigation of southern Italian customs in this period constituted more than simple comparative convenience of geographical proximity: whilst certainly fostered by the intellectual environment born of the excavations, along with the high number of people visiting the area as a result, the nineteenth century saw a distinct flourishing of work which sought to explore southern Italian culture independently of comparison with the neighbouring archaeological sites, spanning a wealth of topics including folk art and crafts, beliefs, linguistics, *tarantella* and traditional tales. Therefore, what elements of our conceptualisation of the 'apotropaic' as a category of artefacts, and the Campanian apotropaic phallus as we have come to imagine and recognise it, are grounded in a

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<sup>239</sup> De Francesco (2013). Marzano (2015). Imbruglia (2000). Beard (2012) 60-69, on the *Gabinetto Segreto*.

nineteenth-century interest in, and construction of, a contemporary Neapolitan cultural character?

## **Ancient and Modern Campania: A Continuum?**

The perceived validity of drawing links between ancient and modern Campanian culture is evident in several late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts of the archaeological sites and the objects being unearthed from them. In his *Italienische Reise*, published 1816-17 (based on the diaries of travels undertaken 1786-88), Goethe mused that “as we approached Naples, the little houses struck me as being **perfect copies of the houses in Pompeii**...Despite the lapse of so many centuries and such countless changes, **this region still imposes on its inhabitants the same habits, tastes, amusements and style of living.**”<sup>240</sup> Indeed, the letter written by Sir William Hamilton to Sir Joseph Banks in 1781 titled *On the Worship of Priapus in the Kingdom of Naples*, published as a preface to Payne Knight’s 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, served to frame Knight’s treatise as a direct response to the very “discovery that, in a Province of this Kingdom, and not fifty miles from its Capital, a sort of devotion is still paid to Priapus, the obscene Divinity of the Ancients (though under another denomination)”, thus setting the stage for Knight to elucidate the perceived “similitude of the Popish and Pagan Religion” [Fig. 19].<sup>241</sup> Elsewhere, in his *Letters on the Discoveries at Herculaneum* (published 1762), the famed art historian and connoisseur Johann Joachim Winckelmann stressed the Neapolitan character of a bronze figurine he saw in Portici museum [Fig. 25]. Winckelmann writes:

*“It makes a type of gesture that is very common among the Welsch but is entirely unknown to the Germans, so it is difficult for me either to explain the gesture or describe its meaning... with his left hand the figure makes what the Welsch call a fica. The word denotes the female sex and is illustrated by placing the thumb between the first and middle*

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<sup>240</sup> Goethe (1816-17); translation Auden & Mayer (1970) 199.

<sup>241</sup> The particular effects of *this* juxtaposition will be explored further in the following chapter.

*fingers... they also call this far castagne from the slit one cuts in the shell of chestnuts in order to cook them more quickly.*"<sup>242</sup>

The art historian describes the artefact using local, contemporary folklore and symbolism, deeming there to be a continuity of meaning between the society that inhabited Pompeii and Herculaneum and that which inhabited southern Italy during his visit. Throughout his letter, Winckelmann refers to the inhabitants of southern Italy as "*die Welschen*", a derogatory term explained by Mattusch as "people who speak gibberish".<sup>243</sup> Therefore, the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum are situated in primitivist discourse and associated with the lower classes, their being intrinsically Italian – "very common among the *Welsch* but is entirely unknown to the Germans, so it is difficult for me either to explain the gesture or describe its meaning" - also signifying their backwardness.

Therefore, the tendency to draw links between ancient and modern Campania, especially in the explanation of ancient artefacts as seen in Winckelmann's *Letters*, can be detected early on in intellectual and popular engagement with the sites. Over the course of the nineteenth century, this trend for comparison and co-contextualisation, as well as the interest in modern southern Italian culture itself, was to grow significantly as the Bay of Naples became a major stop on the grand tour trail. Intellectual engagement with the city and the production of contemporary Neapolitana saw Naples and the day-to-day lives of its people as distinctly characterised by the close proximity of the modern/folkloric and the archaeological.<sup>244</sup>

Art and tourist paraphernalia from the nineteenth-century Kingdom of Naples nurtured this sense of correspondence between ancient and modern Campania. Neapolitan porcelain and wood intarsia featured archaeological scenes inhabited by quaint figures in traditional Neapolitan dress [Fig. 26]. Souvenirs such as fans depicting archaeological sites alongside a panorama of Naples or Vesuvius

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<sup>242</sup> Translation Mattusch (2011) 95.

<sup>243</sup> Mattusch (2011) 148 note 117 & 143 note 6.

<sup>244</sup> The Naples Gallery at Compton Verney, Warwickshire contains many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scenes of Neapolitan peasant life, and the contemporaneous production of Capodimonte Porcelain also took such scenes as its inspiration. For more on the history and influences of Capodimonte Porcelain, especially pertaining to the Campanian archaeological discoveries, see Najbjerg (2007) 59-72.

could be purchased [Fig. 27].<sup>245</sup> Traditional Neapolitan *presepi*, nativity scenes, often incorporated archaeological elements.<sup>246</sup> The monumental *presepe* housed at the Monastery of Santa Chiara stages the scene of the nativity in the ruins of a Roman temple, and its figures were dressed in fabrics used to make real clothes at the time and even use maiolica dishware [Fig. 28].<sup>247</sup> The lithograph prints and picture books depicting Naples and its culture closely resembled those being produced to disseminate the archaeological findings and were frequently sold together.<sup>248</sup> All of this reinforced the distinctive segueing together of the ancient and modern to be experienced at Naples, with the modern city conveyed as an antechamber to the archaeological sites. Comparisons drawn by travellers between Naples and other parts of Italy visited on the Grand Tour argued for a difference in the very way the ancient past was encountered and experienced in this part of the country. George Stillman Hillard (1808-79), an American lawyer and author, writes in his account *Six Months in Italy* (1853):

*“Rome and Naples, though only about 130 miles apart, and inhabited by a population of the same faith, the same language, and of kindred blood, are singularly unlike [...] Rome is ...overshadowed by the solemn memories of a great past... [In Naples, by contrast] there is no ghost of departed power and glory to rise up and frown upon the giddy gaiety of a thoughtless race.”*<sup>249</sup>

Elsewhere:

*“In Naples, in this as in so many other respects unlike Rome, we do not need the help of time to grasp and hold the spirit of the place. The veil of time is not here to be uplifted slowly and with reverent hands. A single look from a favourable position puts the traveller in possession of what is most striking and characteristic. The entire outline is traced*

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<sup>245</sup> For example: Victoria & Albert Museum, Inv. T.88-1956.

<sup>246</sup> For more on the Neapolitan *presepi*, their history and their popularity today, see Hughes (2015) 284-308, & De Caro (2007).

<sup>247</sup> Discovered on a visit to Naples as part of the research undertaken for this thesis.

<sup>248</sup> For example, Achille Vianelli's *Scene Popolari di Napoli* (1831), C. Lindström's *Panorame delle scene popolari* (1832) and journals such as *Poliorama Pittoresco* and *L'Omnibus Pittoresco*. Kendon (2000) lxviii-lxx.

<sup>249</sup> Stillman Hillard (1853) Volume II: 140-1.

*ineffaceably, and afterwards nothing more is required than to cut  
the lines more deeply.*"<sup>250</sup>

In Naples, therefore, the ancient past remained visible, its nature uncomplex and still available to be witnessed in the quotidian, humble scenes that greeted the traveller to the modern city.

This sense of continuity is reflected in contemporary study and depiction of the geographical landscape, in which a sense of concord between archaeological remains and geological subjects saw ancient ruins portrayed like natural features of the scenery, and archaeological relics keeping company with geological specimens.<sup>251</sup> For example, Plate XLI in Hamilton's 1776 *Campi Phlegraei* - a work on the unique volcanic environment of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies - by the artist Pietro Fabris depicts the excavation of the Temple of Isis at Pompeii [Fig. 29].<sup>252</sup> In this image, the Roman ruins are portrayed as an extension of the stony landscape upon which they stand.<sup>253</sup> Elsewhere in the volume, a scene capturing the physical landscape of the bay at Pozzuoli recognisably depicts the ancient Macellum (mistakenly identified in the eighteenth century as a temple of Serapis) [Fig. 30].<sup>254</sup> Charles Lyell's 1830 *Principles of Geology* depicted the very same site as its frontispiece [Fig. 31]. Hamilton's work of volcanology also featured illustrations of Lake Avernus, the site of the cave providing entry to the underworld, and the Grotto at Posillipo, site of the so-called Tomb of Virgil, places in which antiquity was inextricably a part of the physical landscape.<sup>255</sup> Fabris' illustrations for Hamilton also regularly featured quaint, non-specific ruins - for example, Volume II Plate V - clearly part of the aesthetic in constructing this landscape of contemporary fascination, and regularly featured local folk - the same sort pictured excavating at Pompeii as inhabiting other scenes. In addition to the plates for Hamilton's work on the Phlegraean Fields landscape, Fabris painted many *bamboccianti* scenes of Neapolitan life, genre paintings depicting locals in native garb going about their day-to-day lives, such as

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<sup>250</sup> Stillman Hillard (1853) Volume II: 83.

<sup>251</sup> Heringman (2013) 77-122, 155-182.

<sup>252</sup> Hamilton (1776).

<sup>253</sup> Carabelli (1996) 45.

<sup>254</sup> Hamilton (1776).

<sup>255</sup> Hamilton (1776).

*View of Naples, Italy* (1770s), as well as scenes of the archaeological sites, including *The Temple of Hera at Paestum, Italy* (late 1770s) [Fig. 32].<sup>256</sup> Many of Fabris' scenes of Neapolitan folk life also take place in a geological setting or are framed by geological formations, such as *Naples from the West, with Peasants Gaming* (around 1760) [Fig. 33] and *A Scene of Popular Life with a Tarantella in a Grotto in Mergellina* (date unknown).

Carabelli thus correctly asserts that at this time "the landscape is seen as archaeological and having a corporeal physiognomy", a fluidity perceived between archaeological ruins, ancient landscape, and the type of culture it was deemed to produce.<sup>257</sup> This is testified more widely in how southern Italy was viewed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Visitors' accounts emphasise a connection between the customs and disposition of the people of the Bay of Naples and its geographical situation. George Stillman Hillard wrote of his arrival in the area that "the general aspect of the scene was glowing and impassioned; and differed from the scenery of more northern regions, as the **changeable features and fervid gesticulation of a Neapolitan differ from the grave and calm demeanour of an Englishman or German.**"<sup>258</sup> The demonstrative character of Neapolitans, as it was popularly described by such travellers, was often attributed to the warmer climate and the type of landscape on which the society was built. Stillman Hillard writes of leaving Rome for Naples that "The **face of nature** and the **face of man** differs from those which we have left behind...**all shew [sic.] that we are drawing nearer to the sun.**"<sup>259</sup> Italy more broadly was described by the novelist John Cleland as a "torrid zone", whose climate and geographical circumstances nurtured in its inhabitants a characteristically lax and sexually-deviant disposition, and Daniel Defoe wrote in

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<sup>256</sup> Several examples of Fabris' work can be seen in the Naples Gallery at Compton Verney, Warwickshire.

<sup>257</sup> Carabelli (1996) 120.

<sup>258</sup> Stillman Hillard (1853) Volume II: 81. Stillman Hillard mentions the "fervid gesticulation" of Neapolitans and comments elsewhere that "Everybody talks in a loud tone and enforces his words with the most animated gestures." Stillman Hillard (1853) Volume II: 141. As we will see, the gestures of Neapolitan people would become a focal point for their examination as an anthropological and folkloristic subject, a recurring trope in their depiction as a distinctive culture in the European imagination, and a foremost means of encountering, exploring and articulating apotropaic practice and belief as it was perceived to have been characteristic of this part of Europe.

<sup>259</sup> Stillman Hillard (1853) Volume II: 81.



1701 that “lust chose the torrid zone of Italy”.<sup>260</sup> Thus geography and cultural disposition went hand in hand in this era, further demonstrating the strength of perceived continuities between ancient and modern lifeways, and why ancient sites were so closely tied to the natural landscape.<sup>261</sup> In particular, the geography and climate of southern Italy were deemed to engender a distinctly sexual nature; this is significant given the relationship with sexual imagery, or the depiction or representation of sex – for example, through hand gestures, folk arts and ritual superstitions – that southern Italian culture was considered to have, as will be shown. Given this wider notion of geographical genealogy deemed to encompass and dictate the region’s archaeology, volcanic activity, and now social character, this is significant for the way in which this pertained to the contemporary framing of Campanian artefacts – especially those of an ostensibly sexual and demonstrative nature.<sup>262</sup>

The Neapolitan contextualisation of the natural landscape, its influence and its ties to certain socio-cultural characteristics also extended to coral and its use in material culture that was distinctly Neapolitan. Coral was similarly thought of as a Bay of Naples product, evocative of its distinctive landscape, and a popular grand-tourist souvenir in the form of jewellery and other items. Coral features prominently in the Naples Collection at Compton Verney – including a typical Neapolitan nativity scene styled around a fictitious Roman ruin [Fig. 34].<sup>263</sup> Significantly, however, both ancient *and* contemporary amulets were found made of coral - indeed, as Carabelli puts it, “coral was the material par excellence of amulets against the evil eye”- thus inviting clear comparisons and a prevailing sense of Neapolitan materiality, and materiality of *belief* at that, into which the exploration and wider articulation of the

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<sup>260</sup> See also the anonymous work *Satan’s Harvest Home* (1749) and Charles Churchill’s *The Times* (1764). See also Findlen, Wassyng Roworth & Sama (2009) and Babini, Beccalossi, & Riall (2015).

<sup>261</sup> Such ideas comprised the central premise of Montesquieu’s 1748 *De l’esprit des lois*. In Book Seventeen of the work, Montesquieu presented climate as the main factor underlying the strength of Europe and the corresponding weakness of Asia. Indeed, Italy had an ambiguous status in his text: it was part of Europe, but seemingly shared some characteristics with Asia: its uncertain status was reinforced by the example of the rule of Ottoman Turkey, which Montesquieu deemed emblematic of the inherent shortcomings of Italian republics (Book Eleven). Marzano (2015) 272. Moe (2006) 23–7. See also Pinna (1988) for an historical overview of the “climate explanation”. This concept can also be traced back to Vitruvius, who considered Italy’s geographical location and corresponding meteorological characteristics to be key to Rome’s success.

<sup>262</sup> For more on the intellectual role of Hamilton and Volcanology in this era, see Cocco (2007) 15-35.

<sup>263</sup> Compton Verney, Inv. CVCS:0342.S.

apotropaic will in turn be situated [Fig. 3].<sup>264</sup> This was not simply just the blurring of archaeology and geology but demonstrates that the attribution of meaning to relics and material was something heavily reliant upon a specific sense of place. Coral was collected by the Duchess of Portland, and a branch of coral emerging from the Portland Vase appears as the frontispiece of the catalogue to her collection, providing further evidence of the multiple ways in this era in which Neapolitan natural science and the antique were being purposefully brought together, but also of the way contemporary collectorship sought to reconstruct and possess a particular cultural flavour [Fig. 35].<sup>265</sup> The *Wunderkammer*-type lens for collecting and appreciating this material further enabled this broad sense of Neapolitan materiality - coral was at once a geological, naturalistic specimen, but also an artefact (being used for many ancient amulets<sup>266</sup>) and of archaeological value. Furthermore, the intellectual interests surrounding nineteenth-century Naples appear to have retained much of the '*objet trouvé*' nature of eighteenth-century materiality: Romantic-era plate books presented a wide variety of objects as ancient relics; the specimens of rock plates in Hamilton's *Campi Phlegrei* resemble the frontispiece of the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* [Fig. 15] - indeed, the phallic artefacts comprising the frontispiece of Payne Knight's *Discourse* were portrayed in the manner of a specimen of natural science [Figs. 36 & 44].<sup>267</sup>

## Nineteenth-Century Neapolitan Romantic Realism and the Study of Folklore

The way in which Neapolitan culture was being presented to the European audience during, for and via grand tourism – including the production of souvenirs, the description of Naples and its people in travellers' accounts, and the recurring comparisons being drawn between contemporary Neapolitans and the people

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<sup>264</sup> Carabelli (1996) 45.

<sup>265</sup> British Museum, Inv. D,3.351.

<sup>266</sup> For example, British Museum, Invs. WITT.343, WITT.342, WITT.345, 1824,0471.30, and 1814,0704.1175, as well as several examples of small coral phalluses in the *Gabinetto Segreto*. See also Cuming (1866).

<sup>267</sup> Baird & Ionescu (2014) 247-306. See also Heringman (2013).

envisaged as inhabiting the ancient Campanian towns – indicates how these ideas fed into archaeological discourse and the assessment of material emerging from the neighbouring excavations, as well as the (re)construction of the kind of society from which apotropaism, as will be shown, was believed to have been generated. The strength of specific interest in southern Italian - and particularly Neapolitan - culture at this time is testified by the body of writings prevailing from the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which sought to unravel its beliefs and customs. Winckelmann himself had made studies of Neapolitan slang, and the Anglican priest John James Blunt, whose writings predominantly concerned the early history of the Church, published *Vestiges of Ancient Manners and Customs Discoverable in Modern Italy and Sicily* (1823) following his travels around Italy and Sicily in 1818-19.<sup>268</sup> The nineteenth-century era of the Grand Tour manifested a particular enthrallment with the culture and people of Naples. The 1830s saw the beginning of what has been termed the flourishing of 'Neapolitan Romantic Realism', in which there was huge appetite for the folk life and folk lore of the city.<sup>269</sup> During this period, lithographs portraying scenes of 'ordinary' life were widely sold, and whole books of such scenes – such as Achille Vianelli's *Scene Popolari di Napoli* (1831) and C. Lindström's *Panorame delle scene popolari* (1832) - were highly popular. Journals such as *Poliorama Pittoresco* and *L'Omnibus Pittoresco* were also very successful. Works on customs and places, such as Emmanuele Bidera's *Passeggiata per Napoli e Contorni* (1844), *Napoli in Miniatura ovvero il popolo di Napoli ed i suoi costumi* edited by Mariano Lombardi (1847), and the collection of essays on Neapolitan lore and daily life entitled *Usi e costumi di Napoli e Contorni* edited by De Bourcard (1853-60) were lapped up by European intellectuals. The German archaeologist Karl August Boettinger compiled a treatise on the *mano in fica*, a distinctive hand gesture strongly identified with Neapolitan culture.<sup>270</sup> These works, produced primarily for wealthy Italians and grand tourists, responded to a fashionable interest in Neapolitan 'traditional' dance, hand gestures, costumes and behaviours.

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<sup>268</sup> Davis (2010) 77.

<sup>269</sup> Cione (1957).

<sup>270</sup> Also spelled Böttiger.

Much of the interest in Neapolitan culture from this era framed the native people as a specimen of study, appealing for the ways in which they supposedly represented a primitivism and a survival of their ancient forebears. Blunt's work is particularly emblematic of this, "holding intercourse with the living and inspecting the relics of generations past" in order to reveal the "the **vestiges of a classical age** which **still exist** in Italy and Sicily".<sup>271</sup> Taking after Knight and Hamilton, Blunt remarks that "it is impossible not to frequently refer to the rites and ceremonies of paganism, or to avoid remarking the close connexion which they often have with those at present in use" and indeed cites the rediscoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum as providing a windfall of further evidence of the very similitude between ancient pagan practices and modern Catholic ones.<sup>272</sup> The patent dynamic equilibrium between these two spheres of interest, that of southern Italian folklore and archaeology, is indicative of the intellectual atmosphere of this era which nurtured the consolidation of apotropaic artefacts and superstition in both the popular and scholarly imagination. Indeed, the articulation and impression of Campanian apotropaia can be traced in large part back to this fusion of Neapolitana and Campanian archaeology – to the *application* of Neapolitana, even, to Campanian archaeology.<sup>273</sup> This was of course enhanced by the nature of the Vesuvian sites and the sorts of engagement they invited: as Kendon says, "Pompeii and Herculaneum being left virtually intact had the important consequence of reinforcing the idea that the practices and customs of the ancient inhabitants of the area had been largely maintained by their modern descendants".<sup>274</sup> The close proximity of the excavations and Neapolitan lifeways of course invited comparisons for tourists and continuums for commentators; but in this era the strength of interest in Neapolitan culture in its own right provided a context for understanding, experiencing and perceiving the sites. Given this flourishing of Neapolitan Romantic Realism as well as the studies of southern Italian lifeways, it is clear that by the time of the mid-nineteenth century people as much came to this part of the world to observe contemporary culture as to

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<sup>271</sup> Blunt (1823) x-xi.

<sup>272</sup> Blunt (1823) xi.

<sup>273</sup> Supported by Carabelli (1996) 96, 101.

<sup>274</sup> Kendon (2000) xxxiii.

visit the excavations. We should not ignore, therefore, the contemporary strength of interest in Neapolitana and the effect this must have had on relevant archaeological and anthropological discourse, especially given long-established frameworks – themselves articulated in response to the Vesuvian excavations – which sought to flesh out a narrative of cultural evolution and continuity between ancient and modern counterparts.

This particular era of Campanian archaeological engagement thus saw not only the use of the present to illuminate the past, but the reverse of this equation, too. This approach is in keeping with wider trends in archaeology and anthropology of the period, which saw the creation of the Folklore Society in Britain, founded in London in 1878 to study the traditional vernacular culture of Europe and the British Isles, and institutions such as the Pitt Rivers Museum, founded in 1884 at the bequest of the extensive ethnological collection of British army officer, ethnologist and archaeologist Augustus Henry Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers (1827-1900).<sup>275</sup> Pitt Rivers himself conceived of archaeological enquiry as an extension or subset of anthropology and accordingly built up his collection with ‘matching’ archaeological and ethnographic objects so as to demonstrate his views on cultural evolution.<sup>276</sup> Prominent figures from the early decades of the Folklore Society were intimately involved with the subsequent history of the Pitt Rivers Museum, and were especially responsible for the acquisition and curation of its ‘English Collections’: there was much debate in this era as to what constituted ‘Englishness’ and how it could be identified (some folklorists of this period reckoned it to be derived from German culture – Teutomania – whilst others sought to find evidence of an entirely ‘indigenous’ English culture).<sup>277</sup> This socio-cultural introspection was ultimately fascinated with the ‘primitive at home’ – the superstitious, traditional, mystical and subcultural elements of contemporary society which could be observed alive and well alongside ‘rational’ knowledge - and was therefore highly indicative of wider fin-de-siècle cultural concerns.<sup>278</sup> (Recent study of this particular part of the Pitt Rivers collection came about through the ESRC-

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<sup>275</sup> Roud & Simpson (2003) ‘Folklore Society’.

<sup>276</sup> Bowden (1991) 65. See also Gosden (2007).

<sup>277</sup> See for example Wingfield (2009) 22-38, Petch (2010) 136-154, and Wingfield, Petch & Coote (2009) 3-8.

<sup>278</sup> Marshall (2007). See also Margree, Orrells & Vuohelainen (2018).

funded “Other Within” project at Oxford University, whose apt title neatly conveys the impetus behind much of folkloric enquiry during this period.<sup>279</sup>) The body of *Neapolitan* folklorism manifesting in this era might thus be considered very much in line with these wider intellectual trends, and indeed the ways in which apotropaic objects and beliefs were discussed in the light of Neapolitan discourse saw them framed not only as primitivisms and survivals, but as deep-seated, irrational and abstruse curiosities of an otherwise ‘non-primitive’ culture. Folklore studies were also the place where objecthood and materialism, which so fascinated contemporary thinkers, regularly took on broader significance and power.

### The Folkloric Character of Nineteenth-Century Naples

In particular, there are two notable characteristics that can be identified in the construction of a distinctly Neapolitan folkloric character that took place in this era: firstly, the recurring notion that southern Italy had an especially sexual disposition, and that many Neapolitan customs involved the representation or evocation of the sexual;<sup>280</sup> and secondly, that Naples’ folk life was especially characterised by superstitious behaviours and accoutrements. Both of these aspects fed notably into the contextualisation of phallic artefacts unearthed at the nearby archaeological sites, and such artefacts regularly featured on discourse expounding both the sexual and superstitious nature of the traditional Neapolitan culture that could be observed whilst on the Grand Tour. We have already seen Hamilton’s underscoring of the survival of a sexual rite in Isernia in which phallic votives are, significantly, seemingly dedicated by women in order to remedy or guard against infertility [Fig. 43]. Re-thinking the votive practice at Isernia to be more in line with that of anatomical votive

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<sup>279</sup> <http://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/index.html> Date Accessed: October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017.

<sup>280</sup> Indeed, these external attitudes to southern Europe, which see Italy typified as den of iniquity and perverted languor, correspond to the wider trope of the Mediterranean at large being painted as possessing of a “Don Juan”/“Don Giovanni” culture of sexual conquest. Indeed, the acute emphasis on the dichotomy of active and passive in ancient Roman culture can still be observed, according to Paul Veyne, “*comme plus d'une société méditerranéenne de nos jours encore*”, where “*être actif, c'est être un mâle, quel que soit le sexe du partenaire passif*” (Veyne (1978) 50). Veyne’s assertion of the bisexuality of ancient Rome (Veyne (1978) 39, 50-3) being extended to Italy and southern Europe reinforces our assessment of Naples’ repute in the era under investigation here: this part of the world had/has long been considered as exhibiting a peculiar manifestation of masculinity, debauched and disproportionately sexual on account of being simultaneously lustful/hyper-macho *and* effeminate.

practices (such as those at Etruscan Veii or Aesclepian sanctuaries), Davis points out Hamilton's "determination to construe an ordinary healing cult as a cult of priapic worship" which, he accordingly argues, has been repeated ever since.<sup>281</sup> (Carabelli, for example, asserts that "what people were looking for in Isernia was a remedy for sterility, which was why women were the leading figures in the festival."<sup>282</sup>) Davis thus argues that Hamilton's account suggests that the priests themselves provided the 'cure' for this sterility by having intercourse with the women at the festival. In highlighting how Hamilton's version of the practices at Isernia does not therefore fit the "usual, virtually universal, pattern of dedication" (which, Davis contests, would have seen the *men* of the town dedicate phalluses to propitiate or give thanks for fertility, and women to dedicate votive replicas of uteruses or vulvas, as widely testified at ancient sites such as Veii or Corinth), Davis draws attention to the antiquarian's underlying desire to frame the contemporary festival as being "perverted"; that is, an exemplar of Knight's concept of an ancient custom whose original function or significance has been forgotten by its modern practitioners.<sup>283</sup> This also served Hamilton's purpose of illustrating the "similitude of the Popish and Pagan religion" and in particular the "obscene" practices which the Church had apparently allowed to continue. In this way, the intrinsically sexual rites at Isernia were not just a survival decontextualized by their endurance into a modern era, but a warped corruption of an original belief.<sup>284</sup> The sexual thus takes on even more significance in this sense, being unnecessary, incorrect and gratuitous, and facilitating improper relations under the fraudulent aegis of the Catholic Church.

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<sup>281</sup> Davis (2008) 115.

<sup>282</sup> Carabelli (1996) 13.

<sup>283</sup> The extent to which the works of this era should be considered a reflection on Neapolitan culture is testified in a reaction to Payne Knight and Hamilton's collaboration by the commentator Michele Torcia. In his *Saggio itinerario nazionale pel paese de' Peligni* (1793), Torcia broadened even further the folkloric aspect of Payne Knight's studies by incorporating several other examples of pagan remains in the regions of Abruzzo and Puglia. However, he saw fit to defend the religious practice and character of the people of Abruzzo in the light of Hamilton and Knight's work. Torcia described them as a "hard-working, urbane human society, as isolated as that of Otaheite [Tahiti], discovered not many years ago in the bosom of the distant Ocean." Torcia asserted that "Religion forms the basis of the ancient tenor of their life; and its practice among them is not stained with the lurid colours of superstition or hypocrisy." Carabelli (1996) 73-5.

<sup>284</sup> Indeed, Knight centrally argued that the ancients had an innocent system of belief; it was the church who corrupted it, then moralised against it.

The other aspect to the folkloric characterisation of Naples in this era was that of its supposedly superstitious nature. Indeed, superstition was a particular interest in this period, thanks to the Folklore Society, the concept of 'survivals', and the status of material culture as evidence of cultural character and development: the concept of apotropaism saw the happy meeting of the interests of this era, encompassing the use and conceptualisation of material culture for superstitious purposes, often constituting a cultural survival, and embodying mid to late nineteenth-century concerns about the 'primitive at home' or the "Other Within" - the bestial and uncivilised that lurked beneath the veneer of rational, scientific, modern society. Several individuals in this era put together extensive collections of amulets and charms, such as Walter Leo Hildburgh, Edward Lovett, Lydia Einsler, Adrien de Mortillet, Ellen Ettlinger, George Reginald Carline, Frederick Thomas Elworthy and Barbara Freire-Marreco, and indeed many of these specialised in the collection of such objects from the British Isles or contemporary Europe specifically (Carline, Elworthy, Lovett, Ettlinger and Freire-Marreco were also high-profile members of the Folklore Society).<sup>285</sup> In addition, the Folklore Society regularly published on different forms of apotropaic practice. Therefore, we can see how anthropology, folklorism and their concepts – such as that of survivals and sympathetic magic – gave voice to contemporary fin-de-siècle preoccupations. In Naples specifically, the appetite for Romantic Realism along with scholarly works on the Kingdom and its people testify to Naples' distinctive and popular folkloric cachet in this era (clearly aided by it being a key Grand Tour stop), of which superstition indeed played a prominent part. Sir William Hamilton collected amulets, tokens and talismans used by both the rural peasants and by the city dwellers of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.<sup>286</sup> In Naples, Hamilton was fascinated with what he called the "modern amulet most in vogue" among local women, the so-called *mano in fica*. (Hamilton contended that this gesture had "a special connection to Priapus", despite its supposed representation of *female*

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<sup>285</sup> Freire-Marreco was in fact one of the first ever students studying for the recently established Diploma of Anthropology in the Pitt Rivers Museum (she gained the Diploma of Anthropology with Distinction in 1908) who, immediately after she completed her studies, continued to volunteer at the Pitt Rivers working specifically on the cataloguing of the amulet collections.  
<http://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Barbara-Freire-Marreco.html> Date Accessed: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

<sup>286</sup> Davis (2008) 121.



genitals, precisely because he had seen it on **ancient figurines of Priapus excavated from Herculaneum**;<sup>287</sup> indeed, as recently as 2008 the *mano in fica* was described as “a **phallic apotropaim** used by Neapolitan women” by Davis.<sup>288</sup>) In his 1781 letter preceding Payne Knight’s *Discourse* – entitled “On the Worship of Priapus in the **Kingdom of Naples**” - Hamilton describes how

*“...the women and children of the lower class, at Naples... frequently wore, as an ornament of dress, a sort of Amulet... exactly similar to those which were worn by the ancient inhabitants of this country for the very same purpose... Struck with this conformity in ancient and modern superstition, I made a collection of both the ancient and modern Amulets of this sort, and placed them together in the British Museum”*.<sup>289</sup>

Hamilton insists that the same hand gesture worn as an amulet by Neapolitan women can be seen being made by “a most elegant small idol of bronze [of Priapus], now in the Royal Museum of Portici, and which was found in the ruins of Herculaneum” and that it was therefore “an emblem of consummation: and as a further proof of it, the Amulet which occurs most frequently amongst those of the Ancients (next to that which represents the simple Priapus), is such a hand united with the Phallus; of which you may see several specimens in my collection in the British Museum.”<sup>290</sup> [Fig. 25]

Seeking to interpret the very same statue, Winckelmann writes:

*“A small bronze arm that is at the other end a Priapus makes the same gesture, and there are other arms like this one that are flattened. These were ancient amulets or pendants [Amuleta...Gehenke] ... This ridiculous [lächerliche] and shameful [schändliche] superstition survives even today among the common folk [noch itzo unter dem gemeinen Volke Neapelchen erhalten] in Naples. [Fig. 37] They let me see some examples of the Priapus that they wear around the wrist or around the neck. These were ancient amulets or pendants, which one wore against*

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<sup>287</sup> Davis (2008) 122.

<sup>288</sup> Davis (2008) 124.

<sup>289</sup> Hamilton (1781) in Payne Knight (1865) 3-4.

<sup>290</sup> Hamilton (1781) in Payne Knight (1865) 4.

*curses, against the evil eye, or against sorcery. In particular, there is a silver half-moon worn on the arm, which the commoners call luna pezzura, that is, the pointed moon, which is supposed to prevent epilepsy. It must be made from alms one has gathered oneself, and one takes it to the priest for a blessing, an abuse that is known about and tolerated. Perhaps the many silver half-moons in the museum [at Portici] served the same purpose..."*<sup>291</sup>

Similarly, Plate II from Payne Knight's *Discourse* displaying the "soter kosmou" figure of Priapus also featured a *mano in fica* pendant, described by the author as a "modern" amulet (the same object also appears in D'Hancarville 1785, Volume One, p183, note. 67) [Fig. 17]. In addition to arming anti-clerical dilettanti with evidence of the degradation of religion meted out by the Church, Naples thus also constituted a primitive, esoteric case study in its own right. Archaeology, folklorism, and ethnological study of contemporary cultures were all seen as belonging to the same disciplinary unit in this era, and as dealing with the **same** subject matter – just at different **locations** and different **points in time**.

Critically, however, southern Italy was also notably characterised as a seat of superstition *independently of* survival-type comparanda for the archaeological finds. Many undertook research during this era on apotropaic materiality, such as Giuseppe Bellucci's work on amulets - which he termed "fetishes" – which were jointly used by ancient Romans, Umbrian locals, and "savages" (by which he meant the peoples of Libya, which at this time had recently become an Italian colony).<sup>292</sup> Bellucci's collection is now held at the Palazzo Galenga in Perugia.<sup>293</sup> Hamilton asserts the inherently superstitious character of Naples when describing some bells which, having been in contact with the statue of the Madonna of Loreto, were used for the prevention of, and protection against, storms. He writes that the locals considered these bells to be more effective in this regard than "Franklin's Inventions" (by which we assume he refers to the lightning rod).<sup>294</sup> The deliberate juxtaposition of a scientific

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<sup>291</sup> Mattusch (2011) 95-7. For further discussion of this statuette, see Parslow (2013) 56-8. MANN Inv.27733.

<sup>292</sup> Carabelli (1996) 18.

<sup>293</sup> Carabelli (1996) 18.

<sup>294</sup> Carabelli (1996) 3.

and practical response with that of a superstitious belief served to reiterate the contemporary perception of southern Italian peoples in this era as being backward, rustic, and credulous. Indeed, the interest in southern Italian folk beliefs and behaviours might in part be attributed to derision: Stowe writes that the guidebooks of this era encouraged the tourist “to think of him- or herself as a deservedly masterful member of a deservedly dominant gender, class, and ethnic group...by referring explicitly and disdainfully to other groups”, and indeed, we can see from travellers’ accounts of this era that the society and customs of southern Italy were often met with disparagement, especially in contrast to other Italian destinations such as Florence, Venice or Rome.<sup>295</sup> Nonetheless, the wealth of evidence from the nineteenth century illustrates the extent to which superstition – and apotropaic-type objects and behaviours at that – emerged as distinctive of southern Italian culture and peoples.

### **The *Jettatura* and the Neapolitan Evil Eye**

A large proportion of the body of anthropological and folkloristic work on the people, lifestyle and customs of the Bay of Naples was concerned in particular with the Neapolitan notion of the evil eye, known as the *Jettatura*. Prominent examples of work on this topic include Nicola Valletta’s *Cicalata sul fascino detto volgarmente jettura* (Table-talk about enchantment, commonly called the ‘evil-eye’) (1787) and Marugi’s *Capricci sopra la jettatura* (Caprices on the evil-eye) (1788).<sup>296</sup> The nineteenth century saw several works of fiction which subsequently drew upon this concept. One of these, ‘*Jettatura*’ (published 1856 as ‘*Paul d’Aspremont*’; again in 1863 with the Italian term as title) told what would become a familiar tale of a foreign tourist to Naples falling in love with a Neapolitan woman, and subsequently being accused of being a *jettatore* (someone who, either knowingly or unknowingly, had the power of the evil eye).<sup>297</sup> The foreigner played a central role in this genre, being especially susceptible to – or prone to having – the evil eye, and seemingly possessing of a particular erotic potential. In *Paul d’Aspremont* as in other works of this genre, Pompeii in turn proves

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<sup>295</sup> Stowe (1994) 47.

<sup>296</sup> See Martino (1959) Chapter Six – a modern work on Valletta’s ideas re the *Jettatura*.

<sup>297</sup> Carabelli (1996) 109.

the setting *par excellence* for stories concerning both eroticism and supernatural mysticism. All together, this genre of fiction was characterised by a distinctly grand-tour setting in terms of protagonists, location and narrative context, and even featured archaeological fragments acting as erotic agents (for example, '*Arria Marcella, un souvenir de Pompeii*', 1852, by Theophile Gautier, is the story of a foreign tourist in Naples who falls in love with the cast of a woman's breast imprinted in the solidified lava of Pompeii, then, in a dream, with the body part's original owner).<sup>298</sup> In turn, these stories reflect the popularity of regional Neapolitana and their reach, and the strength of their association with experiencing the excavations. Evil eye belief was thus inherently wrapped up in confrontation of this culture with collectorship, grand tourism, and archaeology, as well as obscenity; therefore, whilst similar beliefs were identified and indeed can be observed elsewhere (e.g. as testified by a French evil eye amulet in the Wellcome Collection, dated 1850-1920<sup>299</sup> **[Fig. 38]**) – it was the south-Italian incarnation of evil eye belief which had the biggest role in shaping apotropaism before the contemporary European audience, and thus for the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology which converged so formatively in this setting and at this time.<sup>300</sup> Indeed, several accounts by travellers to Italy during the

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<sup>298</sup> For more on Gautier's *Arria Marcella* and the ways in which the story can be considered an analogue for the very story of Pompeii and its rediscovery, see Lively (2011).

<sup>299</sup> <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/eme3ysym> Date Accessed: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

<sup>300</sup> Carabelli has taken a detailed look at the Neapolitan authors of this era who described the *iettatura* and who often connected it with the Roman *fascinus* (see Valletta's *Cicalata sul fascino*). Carabelli (1996) 95-106. Carabelli asserts that, in the late eighteenth century, "when the phallic content of primitive religion was being made much of in London, a series of studies based on essentially similar material began in Naples. [...] The surprising fact is that the two currents, British and Neapolitan, seem to have been substantially independent" (Carabelli (1996) 11). Whilst a simple coincidence of publication dates could explain the lack of interaction between Hamilton and Knight's work and that of Valletta (1786 and 1787 respectively), for example, Carabelli does not sufficiently recognise the subsequent, wider snowballing of folkloric discourse on apotropaic practice more broadly which came to characterise the late nineteenth century and in which southern-Mediterranean belief in the evil eye indeed became a central topic of interest, being situated in a broader introspective investigation of European culture. It is true, however, that during this period Neapolitan practices were more often being discussed as a specimen of interest by *non*-Neapolitan authors, who cited writers such as Valletta and Marugi as evidence of such beliefs and practices rather than perhaps fully considering them detached, scholarly perspectives in their own right. Indeed, Carabelli stresses the self-conscious nature of the works created by the Neapolitans, who "were in a state of continuous oscillation between self-concealment and self-exhibition" (Carabelli (1996) 101-2). This thesis indeed takes the alternative perspective to Carabelli and focuses more on the way Naples was characterised in this period from an *external* viewpoint, primarily by and for the benefit of foreign observers, and in turn how this is connected to the way in which the Vesuvian sites and their phallic artefacts were in fact characterised for global touristic, rather than indigenous or domestic, purposes.

nineteenth century report, with evident fascination, the Italian belief in the *malocchio* or *jettatura*. The German author Fanny Lewald (1811-1889) wrote in her *Italienisches Bilderbuch* (1847), in a section entitled 'Gettatore' [sic.]:

*"Among the many objects which are continually offered for sale to strangers at Naples, the most remarkable, perhaps, are certain little coral hands and horns which are worn by everybody there. Gentlemen attach them to their watch-chains, ladies to their brooches, and the people wear them as earrings, or hanging on strings round their necks; for they all alike regard them as a means of protection against the 'evil eye'. A belief in the evil eye – il malocchio – is almost universal in the south of Italy, where it exists among the higher classes, although one may hear it occasionally derided by them..."*<sup>301</sup>

Similarly, in *A tour of inquiry through France and Italy, illustrating their present social, political, and religious condition* (1853), Edmund Spencer addresses in his tenth chapter "superstitious belief of the Neapolitans in the evil eye" amongst other "characteristics of Naples".<sup>302</sup> He recounts of his visit:

*"The epithet 'jettator', evil-eyed, bestowed by the preacher on our guide Tomasso, is one of the most degrading and opprobrious that can be applied by one Neapolitan to another. A superstitious belief in the agency of the evil eye is still entertained, as we learned from Tomasso, not only very generally by the ignorant, but by the higher classes of society, who, as a protection against its malign power, adorn their houses with gilded bulls' horns, to which we have before alluded; and when they leave home, carry with them a trinket in the form of a horn, intended as an antidote."*<sup>303</sup>

Similarly, nineteenth-century academic texts stress the distinctly superstitious character of southern Italy and Naples. Having spent time in Italy, the Scottish academic William Spalding (1809-1859) asserted in volume one of his *Italy and the Italian Islands: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* that "talismans, to protect the wearer from the evil eye and other perils, were in general use throughout the whole

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<sup>301</sup> Lewald (1847); translation (1852) 174.

<sup>302</sup> Spencer (1853) Volume I: xiii, 238.

<sup>303</sup> Spencer (1853) Volume I: 251.

ancient period of Italian history”.<sup>304</sup> The eminent French geographer Élisée Reclus (1830-1905) said of southern Italy and Naples in his nineteen-volume masterpiece, *La Nouvelle Géographie universelle, la terre et les hommes* (1875–1894).<sup>305</sup>

*“Old superstitions exist in full force, and the heathen hallucinations of Greeks and Iapygians still survive. [...] One of the great superstitions of the Neapolitans refers to the ‘evil eye’. The unfortunate being who happens to have a nose like a battle-axe and large round eyes is looked upon as jettatore and is avoided as a fatal being. If by any evil chance his glance happens to fall upon any unfortunate person, it is considered necessary to counteract it by the influence of an amulet resembling the fascinum of the ancients, or by some other means no less potent. Coral amulets are looked upon as most efficient, and many who pretend not to believe in their virtues are the first to make use of them.”*<sup>306</sup>

Reclus not only declares ancient superstitious practices to be very much alive in Naples but emphasises the extent to which south-Italian culture is still governed by its ancient ancestors. Indeed, an “amulet resembling the *fascinum* of the ancients”, no less, is the weapon of choice against the *jettatore*.

## **Andrea De Jorio’s work on Neapolitan Gesture and the Conceptualisation of Apotropaic Imagery**

The suggestion that Italy was a distinctly sexual place, characterised by the representation and simulation of the sexual, and the seemingly prominent place of superstition in its culture intertwined and came to a particular head during the nineteenth century.<sup>307</sup> One work of micro-ethnography that is particularly emblematic of this convergence, and which engages directly with apotropaic practice, linking it to the excavations, is Andrea De Jorio’s *La Mimica Degli Antichi Investigata Nel Gestire Napoletano* (*Gestural Expression of the Ancients in Light of Neapolitan*

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<sup>304</sup> Spalding (1841) Volume I: 329.

<sup>305</sup> Not to be confused with Élie Reclus (1827-1904).

<sup>306</sup> Reclus (1875–1894); translation Ravenstein (1883) Volume I: 297-8.

<sup>307</sup> For further illustration of the extent to which the phallic, sexual, folkloric and amuletic coalesced in terms of the perception of Naples and engagement with apotropaic material, see Lovett (1909), Hildburgh (1938), & Berry (1968).

*Gesturing*), published in 1832. As is typical of this era, De Jorio's subject matter was the Neapolitan lower classes of his contemporary time, and specifically their gestures - an aspect of Neapolitana that by this point was considered highly distinctive of Neapolitan people, as we have already seen (George Stillman Hillard and Goethe both describe the impassioned gestural communication that came to be thought of as highly characteristic of Neapolitans). That something which can be considered so fundamentally Neapolitan had such a bearing, as will be shown, on the conceptualisation of apotropaic artefacts from Pompeii and Herculaneum conveys the prominence of the role that Neapolitan culture and folklorism played in this period in shaping our interactions with, and understanding of, the Vesuvian sites and the material emerging from them. The self-described aim of *La Mimica* was to show how the expressive practices of antiquity had been preserved among the ordinary people of Naples, thus serving as a guide for interpreting the figural monuments of antiquity.<sup>308</sup> De Jorio insisted that the latter required a thorough knowledge of contemporary Neapolitan gestural expression (and his *La Mimica* was in fact the first treatise of its kind devoted to gestural expressions of a specific cultural group).<sup>309</sup>

De Jorio was an archaeologist, curator for a period at the Royal Museum in Naples, and intimately involved in all aspects of classical archaeology then developing in relation to the excavations at Herculaneum, Pompeii, Pozzuoli, Cumae and the other sites within the district.<sup>310</sup> He published fifteen archaeological books in total, as well as several maps and shorter articles, including guides to zones of archaeological importance and collections in the Royal Museum.<sup>311</sup> De Jorio was also a Fellow of the *Accademia Ercolanese*, the body of scholars appointed by the King to oversee the description and publication of the findings from Campania.<sup>312</sup> He devoted lots of time to explaining for the benefit of foreigners or tourists rather than 'specialists' and it is in relation to this that the writing of *La Mimica* must be

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<sup>308</sup> Kendon (2000) liii; De Jorio (1832) vii & xxiv.

<sup>309</sup> Kendon (2000) xi. In his *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* (1865), Tylor refers to De Jorio's work. In the chapters of the first volume of his *Völkerpsychologie* (first published 1900) where he discusses the nature and origin of language, Wundt cites examples from De Jorio. Kendon (2000) xxii.

<sup>310</sup> Marzano (2015) 267-9.

<sup>311</sup> Marzano (2015) 267-9.

<sup>312</sup> Kendon (2000) xx & xxii.

understood; for the fact that such writings were available to, even aimed at, grand tourists gives us a strong indication of how the notion of apotropaic material was being conveyed to the wider public, and the construction of its character in the popular imagination.<sup>313</sup> In 1807, two years before the point at which Kendon asserts that De Jorio became fully committed to archaeology (following his work *Gli Scheletri Cumani*<sup>314</sup>), the Napoleonic King of Naples Joseph Bonaparte had taken initiatives to revive archaeological investigation in the Kingdom, including appointing Michele Arditi as Director of the Royal Museum and as Superintendent of the Excavations.<sup>315</sup> Andrea De Jorio was therefore working and publishing in this period of revival and expansion, and alongside Arditi, another key figure in articulating an apotropaic function for phalluses of Pompeii and in the creation of what would become the *Gabinetto Segreto*.<sup>316</sup> The restoration of King Ferdinand to the throne in 1816 would result in the issuing of a decree establishing the *Real Museo Borbonico*, which would consolidate all the finds from Herculaneum, Pompeii, Cumae and elsewhere in a single location – the so-called *Palazzo degli Studii*, where they have remained ever since.<sup>317</sup> De Jorio's deconstruction of certain artefacts thus took place during a period of high archaeological activity and dissemination as well as of the creation of the *Gabinetto Segreto*, a time during which the meaning and status of the artefacts at the heart of this thesis was very much at the fore of contemporary engagement with the sites, and very much up for grabs.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Ceserani (2012) 147-53. Carabelli (1996), 102–6. Schnapp (2000) 164–6.

<sup>314</sup> In a tomb near the Lake of Licola near Cumae, De Jorio discovered three bas-reliefs depicting dancing or running skeletons. As a result of this discovery, in 1809 he wrote a letter reporting his archaeological observations to Michele Arditi, then director of the Royal Museum; in 1810, he published his first archaeological work based on this discovery, entitled *Gli Scheletri Cumani*.

<sup>315</sup> Beard (2012) 62-3.

<sup>316</sup> De Jorio therefore knew and was in contact with Arditi, and indeed mentions Arditi's work on the *fascinum* - the subject of a subsequent chapter of this thesis - in *La Mimica*. De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 148, note (c): "Anyone wishing to read many of the ancient authorities on this idea [evil eye belief] will find them in chapters 11 and 12 of Valetta [Valetta 1787] and even more in the work of Com.re Marchese Arditi. 'Il fascino e l'amuleto contro del fascino; Illustrazione di un antico basso-rilievo rinvenuto in un forno della città di Pompei' Napoli: dalla Stampieria Reale 1825."

<sup>317</sup> Beard (2012) 62-3.

<sup>318</sup> Kendon (2000) xxviii. See De Caro (1996) for a brief history of the museum. Milanese (1998) covers the period during the 'French decade' (1806-1815) when the Museum was established in its present building and which includes the first years of De Jorio's career. As to how plastic perceptions of archaeological phallic objects actually were in this period, we will find from Arditi that the growing consolidation of these objects' apotropaic function did not necessarily pose a challenge to the taxonomical perspectives which saw them fit to be placed in a secret room.



Protective, lucky, or superstitious gestures, particularly those aimed at combatting the evil eye or envy, feature prominently in De Jorio's *La Mimica*. Indeed, it is these gestures especially that De Jorio connects directly with ancient artefacts deemed apotropaic, and all of them in some way – both gesture and artefact – incorporate the phallus or differing degrees of phallic signification. For example, the aversive power of the so-called *mano in fica* is clear: “The commonest use of this gesture is as an amulet [*amuleto*]: and the Neapolitans, in performing it, may add the expression ‘*te faccio ‘na fica*’ (‘I make the fig for you’) as if they said to some friend: ‘so the evil eye will not bring you harm’.”<sup>319</sup> Several scholars, including Winckelmann, interpreted the *mano in fica* as denoting the female genitalia.<sup>320</sup> De Jorio appears to agree with this, asserting that: “Looking at it as an amulet, it is very well understood, since it **denotes both the prototype [*il prototipo*] of the amulet and something more;** and that explains clearly why **sometimes it is used as an insult**, at other times an invitation.”<sup>321</sup> In expounding the close relationship between insult and aversion embodied by this particular gesture, De Jorio highlights that the use of the imagery of obscenity is seemingly a frequent trait of apotropaism – both ancient and modern.<sup>322</sup> Furthermore, De Jorio gives a sense here of the differing and evolving degrees of meaning entailed in symbolism, whether that be for that of a gesture or an object: as an insult, the *mano in fica* directly simulates the female genitals; however, as an amulet it also means “something more”, intimating that this representation can in turn take on more meanings, the very *simulation of* the female genitalia possessing connotations which De Jorio considers to have an efficacy in their own right.

De Jorio's work thus explores the derivation of meaning, the layers and stages of which are often articulated according to how many steps removed they are from

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<sup>319</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 214.

<sup>320</sup> Winckelmann (1762); Davis (2008), (2010); Kendon (2000); and Parslow (2013) all discuss the interpretation of this gesture. Kendon writes: “According to ‘Il Nuovo Zingarelli’ (Dogliotti and Rosiello 1988) *fica* is a word of uncertain derivation which is defined as a vulgar term for ‘vulva’ and, by extension, a vulgar term for ‘woman’. The Italian word for fig (*ficus carica*) is *fico*, from the Latin *ficus*. The relationship between *fica* and *fico* is thus not clear. Referring in English to the gesture discussed here as ‘the fig’ (see, e.g., Morris et al 1979) may perhaps be a consequence of similarity in the form of the word rather than any relationship of meaning. In Italy today, the word *fica* is strongly tabooed.”. Kendon (2000) 214, note 186.

<sup>321</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 216.

<sup>322</sup> This is something also discussed by Millingen (1818) and Arditì (1825) and will be addressed in a subsequent chapter of this thesis.

the original thing being represented or symbolised, and his exposition of the different insinuations encompassed by a single gesture or object explores how this process of derivation adds to and alters the meaning and usage of an image. It is into this framework that much of our historical effort to articulate the apotropaim of the Campanian phallus can be situated: De Jorio's preoccupation with whether or not an artefact or gesture is intended to *directly represent* its prototype or, in being *symbolic/connotative* of its prototype, offer a *new* image altogether, and thus whether or not the gesture or object derives its power from *standing in for* its prototype, or whether the symbolism itself is intended to *denote an abstract meaning or value*, ultimately prefigures our fixation with whether a phallus is apotropaic because, for example, it evokes fertility, or because it is intended to stand in directly for the male genitals and threaten penetration. De Jorio's analyses are highly reminiscent of Payne Knight's account of the various stages of phallic symbolism, starting out with the direct representation of the male genitalia as the most fitting image for the generative nature of the cosmos, all the way down to the Christian cross - an image evocative of the *phallus*, the phallus in turn being evocative of the *male genitalia* - the cross thus numbering amongst the many "symbols of symbols" which proliferate amongst modern culture and which have apparently become several times removed from their original signification.<sup>323</sup> Further on, De Jorio says:

*"Among the three-dimensional representations of this gesture from antiquity, there are so many that have survived the catastrophes of the centuries that it is clear that the ancients made extensive use of them. The greatest number of those that have survived are made of bronze, mainly because this is a highly resistant metal. [Fig. 39] They do not differ much from modern ones (which are so much in use among us), except that they are never associated with the prototype of the amulet, notwithstanding the frequency with which one encounters the mano in fica among the ancients. But as we can see, for some of them they have clearly been used*

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<sup>323</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 28-9.

by the ancients in the same way as they are used among the Neapolitans..."<sup>324</sup>

De Jorio thus believes that this image was solely used for apotropaic purposes in ancient times, bronze amulets providing a permanent, portable version of a *mano in fica* gesture; the bronze amulet is apotropaic, therefore, because it itself simulates and stands in for the gesture.

The dynamics and processes of simulation, resemblance, symbolism and substitution, the similarities but also the distinctions between these modes of representation, and the role they appear to play in the construction of meaning in folkloric practice and material culture thus occupy a central place in De Jorio's text. The issues represented by these different manifestations of simulacra are key to our historical engagement with the Campanian phallus, in that they are emblematic of our wider struggle to know whether or not to read it literally or symbolically: if a phallus on the street in Pompeii is a fertility symbol, then it 'is' a penis only insofar as it evokes the penis so as to signify something else; if such phalluses are meant to be understood *as* penises, however, does this make them pornographic? On what mode of representation is their apotropaism derived? Is apotropaic 'power' grounded in fertility, or obscenity?<sup>325</sup> Similarly, the contemporary concept of the *jettatore* also encompasses simulation: a *jettatore* might be considered a simulacrum of a person, given their duplicitous status. "All those who believe in the power of the horn against sorcery whether **real** or **simulated** [*per similitudine*] (b) attribute it **not only to the natural horn**, but to the **artificial** [*all'artefatto*] **horn**, to **objects that resemble** [*al somigliante*] **it, even to the word corno**, and they extend it with the same belief to the *mano cornuta* as well."<sup>326</sup> What aspects of an image, symbol or idea carry meaning and have efficacy, and why? The distinction De Jorio draws between an "artificial horn" and "objects that resemble" horns strongly recalls wider nineteenth-century expansion of the search for phallic symbolism from the phallus itself to things

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<sup>324</sup> De Jorio (1832) 156-7; translation Kendon (2000) 216-7.

<sup>325</sup> The semiotic dimension to De Jorio's work means that scholars of folklore and especially semioticians have been the main force behind renewed interest in *La Mimica*; Kendon's 2000 translation (the first of the work into English) was fittingly published in the *Advances in Semiotics Series*.

<sup>326</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 146-7.

that resemble it and are therefore *phallic* - such as Irish monastic towers in the work of Henry O'Brien (*The Round Towers or The History Of The Tuatha De Danaans*, 1808-1835), or obelisks in the work of Hargrave Jennings (*The Obelisk: Notices of the Origin, Purpose and History of Obelisks*, 1877). At what point – if any - do prototype and representation diverge, and what does this mean when the prototype is obscene?

The relationship between image, “prototype”, and meaning is explored further in the case of the “*Corna, fare le Corna*” gesture:

*“The Neapolitans have only one gesture for portraying horns, but such is the quality and diversity of the meanings that they attach not only to this gesture, but also to real horns, to things that resemble horns, and even to the name itself, that, deservedly, students of our customs are very curious about it.”*<sup>327</sup>

Once again, several different degrees of representation are at play, with distinguishable meanings evoked by resembling the horn, standing in for it, or indeed by a horn itself. Simulating the horn, according to De Jorio, came about for two reasons: accessibility and portability, and thus the meaning of “artificial horns” closely aligns with those attached to the horn itself:

*“2.: Artificial Horns. In our country imitation horns are made not only for use when natural ones are lacking, but mainly for the convenience of being able to carry them around...One of these vendors has recently offered tiny mani cornute made of silver, gold, coral, etc....”*<sup>328</sup> [Fig. 40]

De Jorio writes of this local belief in the power of horns that “from the aforesaid one understands how the custom arose of suspending in the air natural horns, **or objects that resemble them.**”<sup>329</sup> His comment here on the evolution of folkloric practice, charting this against the usage of material culture to enact or convey meaning, once again recalls Payne Knight’s discussion of the gradual corruption of phallic symbolism and its significance: “it has often happened that avarice and superstition have continued these symbolical representations for ages after their original meaning

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<sup>327</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2011) 138.

<sup>328</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2011) 140.

<sup>329</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2011) 147.

has been lost and forgotten".<sup>330</sup> The notion of simulation thus comes about in this sense, too: as a misguided interpretation or ersatz form of an original. Later, Frazer's account of Sympathetic Magic would similarly testify to an underlying effort to articulate the power of simulation and resemblance: "like produces like, or an effect resembles its cause".<sup>331</sup> It is this semiotic enquiry, played out in the fields of folklorism, anthropology and archaeology, of which the engagement with and popularisation of the apotropaic phallus is emblematic. This interest in semiotics aligned well with concurrent trends in folklorism and anthropology in their desire to define knowledge and chart its development: the characteristically folkloric attachment of meaning to material culture provided an ideal vehicle for this investigation, with folklore-type practices being deemed symptomatic of 'ignorance' or backwardness and therefore fostering a distinct relationship with material objects. As we have seen elsewhere, such issues were of particular fascination in the self-proclaimed era of science and rationality, in which the uncovering of uncivilised or primitive practices provided cause for socio-cultural introspection and analysis.

De Jorio also analyses the presence of horn imagery and its various guises in antiquity:

*"Besides the five kinds of horns and their different uses just as described, some other kinds of horn are found in antiquity, **both in paintings and in three-dimensional form**, which not only do not have those external additions we have spoken of, but others that are different. What is more, when they are additions attached to the horn itself, these are different from those we have described. We propose that these kinds of horns may have had another meaning, in particular that of the amulet. Furthermore, in this they are the same as the horn amulets in use today. Let us turn to some examples which support this interpretation. These will include **some specimens kept in the R.M.B.** [Real Museo Borbonico] which we cite here as being more than sufficient to prove our position. [...] 17.: Horns in pictures, without additions and suspended in the air. We begin with some*

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<sup>330</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 14.

<sup>331</sup> Frazer (1922) 11.

ancient pictures and a fresco from Herculaneum. Consider the picture referred to as n.948 in our Galerie des Pein, etc. Here there is depicted a tholos... In the middle of one of the sides of the tholos one sees **suspended a simple horn** of the kind we described on p104, n.16. **Today, in the very same manner, though with less elegance, one meets with this same practice. In windows, terraces etc., one may see a horn suspended, serving as an amulet. It is surely one of the customs that we have inherited from our ancient ancestors.** Scholars have accumulated not a little erudition on this very painting, but because, in their discussions, they always start from the unproved idea that it was a Bacchic rhyton, they have not concerned themselves with anything else, nor have they paid attention to the difference of this horn from others... **Thus they could not, nor will they be able to, demolish the simple and natural idea that the ancients may have recognised in this emblem the supposed magic virtue of keeping away envious others from their own properties.** [...] The smallness of such rings [attached to the top of the horns] shows that they could not have been handles; and therefore they must be considered to have been specially designed for hanging the item up. **This is one of the qualities that seem inherent to the horn as an amulet...**<sup>332</sup>

Using an ancient depiction of a horn in use in antiquity and observing that it, too, features metal rings for suspension resembling those in surrounding Neapolitan culture, De Jorio refutes the popularly accepted interpretation of his contemporaries and instead puts forward apotropaism as the function of ancient horn-shaped decorations. Here contemporary folk practices are used to recontextualise images from the archaeological sites, which thinkers appear to have been keener to label with élite philhellenism on the part of the ancient inhabitants, *rhyta* being evocative of sympotic imagery. In asserting the “**simple and natural** idea [*la semplice e naturale idea*] that the ancients may have recognised in this emblem the supposed **magic virtue of keeping away envious others** [*di allontanare l'invidia altrui*] from their own

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<sup>332</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 155-8.

properties”, De Jorio hints at a reluctance amongst those who approached the topic before him to identify such a practice in antiquity. Alternatively, perhaps De Jorio is using this opportunity to set himself up as a scholar unafraid to engage with the folkloric element of antiquity, and the beliefs and material culture of ordinary, non-élite people. Equally, the overall aim of *La Mimica* is to “offer to the public an essay on the gestural expression of the Neapolitans and its connection with that of the ancients”, and in forging strong links between local behaviours and the findings of the excavations De Jorio may have sought to elevate the profile of his contemporary Naples – especially given the tourist readership for which he was writing.<sup>333</sup>

Indeed, De Jorio’s work shows a clear sense of investigative dynamic equilibrium between ancient and modern, for he often uses material from the sites to confirm or justify his analyses of contemporary practices. In fact, De Jorio says of his work from the outset that it aims to show the vibrancy of “natural philosophy, talent and spirit” of Neapolitan common folk, contrary to the prejudices of foreign visitors of which we have seen patent evidence of.<sup>334</sup> De Jorio openly considers the amulets and gestures used for apotropaic purposes in contemporary Neapolitan culture to be descended from ancient phallic amulets, describing the latter as “*amuleti principii*”

**[Fig. 41]:**

*“Some of the objects cited, to judge from their small size, were designed to be carried around on the person. The larger ones are shaped and arranged with their little rings to perform the same function of those other **original amulets** [amuleti principii], that are seen at the **end of the second volume of the Herculanean Bronzes**. One can also add to this the*

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<sup>333</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 6. Indeed, in his introduction, De Jorio firmly situates his treatise into the contemporary interest in Neapolitan culture, writing of his decision to put the work together that “modern taste, also, has had its part in our decision. It has made us unhappy to see so many of our fine artists devote themselves to the representation of local customs by composing pretty *Bambocciate*, just in order to satisfy the justifiable curiosity of foreigners...even though they may have referred to their compositions as *Bambocciate parlanti* [true-to-life *bambocciate*], their pictures rarely speak to us as if they were lifelike.” De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 5. De Jorio’s *La Mimica* directly participates in contemporary Neapolitan Romantic Realism whilst also seeking to improve it, promising the real, true-to-life version of Neapolitan culture.

<sup>334</sup> De Jorio (1832) vii, xiii.

*horned head of bronze destined to be suspended, which is grouped with three half-moons and two phalluses (Beger 1696-1701, Vol III p427)."*<sup>335</sup>

To some extent, De Jorio – as well as those Neapolitans working on the *jettatura* or other aspects of local culture – is perhaps representative of ‘natives’ trying to assert themselves as Neapolitan in the context of foreign rulers, whether that be French Napoleonic forces or Spanish Bourbons. By De Jorio’s time, the Kingdom of Naples (1713–1799) had undergone many iterations and rulerships: having been ruled by the Habsburgs and Bourbons, it enjoyed a short stint as the Parthenopean Republic (1799), to be reclaimed by the Bourbons and then subsequently ruled by the Houses Bonaparte and Murat before becoming Bourbon again, before the arduous process of Risorgimento began in 1815/16.<sup>336</sup> De Jorio certainly exhibits a desire to show his countrymen in a good light, aiming to illustrate through his work their “natural philosophy, talent and spirit”. Marzano frames De Jorio’s work as an effort to (re)brand Neapolitan identity positively in the “context of the debate over the North–South divide”, and indeed we have seen how this divide was constructed by contemporary intellectuals and travellers such as Goethe, who regularly derided the south of Italy in comparison to glorious Rome.<sup>337</sup> De Francesco has discussed in detail the ways in which, at the prospect of unification, the “problematic area of southern Italy seemed to obstruct, rather than smooth, the way towards a rapid process of stabilization for the newly unified state”, often clinging precisely to its ancient archaeological identity as a means of differentiating itself from the rest of *Italia*.<sup>338</sup> Ancient Roman civilisation became one of the central motifs invoked in the construction of an Italian national identity during the Risorgimento: political commentators and nationalistic poets such as Pascoli, Carducci and D’Annunzio often sought to evoke the glorious Roman past in an effort to set the scene for a second celebrated epoch of a united Italy.<sup>339</sup> In doing so, however, these figures decidedly did *not* refer to ancient Roman Campania: Pompeii and its surrounding region was a

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<sup>335</sup> According to Kendon, the “*amuleti principi*” are “winged phalluses, or objects shaped as two outstretched arms the end of one of which is a phallus, the other a hand that is making *la fica*, all of them designed to be suspended.” Kendon (2000) 141.

<sup>336</sup> For more on this history see Acton (2009).

<sup>337</sup> Marzano (2015) 267-283. See also Goethe (1970) 335–6.

<sup>338</sup> De Francesco (2013) 113-132; 130.

<sup>339</sup> Marzano (2015) 278-9.



symbol of the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, *not* of a unified Italy under the governance of Piedmont and the Sabaudian royal house.<sup>340</sup>

Overall, however, De Jorio's exposition of obscene gestures and the relation they have to their "prototype" constitutes the first real time that the use of the sexual in apotropaism was addressed, the close link between the obscene and the amuletic – often deriving from original use as insult - occupying a prominent place in *La Mimica*. In De Jorio's work, therefore, sexual simulation and the superstitious, particularly the apotropaic, meet patently for the first time, and are framed as distinctly Neapolitan, in a distinctly Neapolitan work. The discussions of both gestures and artefacts were conducted alongside plates depicting quaint gestural scenarios - the *bambocciate* of Gigante - and the ancient artefacts themselves, reinforcing the contextualisation of apotropaically-classified material within the milieu of Neapolitan folk-life. Apotropaic belief was thus expounded upon in idiosyncratic Neapolitan settings, and it was a distinctly Neapolitan ethnological context in which De Jorio's *La Mimica* situated corresponding Campanian artefacts.<sup>341</sup> De Jorio also makes sure to convey any details which reinforce the local heritage of such beliefs. For example, he writes that the *zucca*/gourd, with its long, curved horn shape and clear association with amuletic horns and usage in protecting households was "...a species that abounds in our region...It is known as *Cocozza Longa*." Similarly:

"[Meaning of] *Horn in the midst of fruit*. ... ***In the days leading up to Easter and Christmas our Neapolitan merchants display comestibles of every kind, masterfully arranged outside their shops; and in these displays a fine pair of horns is never lacking. They are placed there with the aim of keeping at bay anyone who is jealous, the evil eye, or bewitchments.***"<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Braccesi: "*La località di Pompei nel passato e presente...è troppo intimamente connessa alla storia politica e culturale di Napoli*". Braccesi (2008) 72. Marzano (2015) 279.

<sup>341</sup> For example, see his explanations of Plate VII, entitled *Il primo ingresso della sposa nella casa del marito*, 'The bride enters her husband's house for the first time', and his breakdown of the scenes unfolding in Plate IX, entitled '*Rissa Napoletana*', 'Neapolitan quarrel'. De Jorio (1832); Kendon (2000) 339 & 344.

<sup>342</sup> De Jorio (1832); translation Kendon (2000) 160.

Therefore, the artefacts at stake in this thesis were thought about and disseminated in terms we can consider highly Neapolitan; Campanian apotropaism as we have come to know it therefore has a recognisable Neapolitan flavour.

## Conclusions

In this way, the Kingdom and Bay of Naples not only provided a socio-political backdrop to the interpretation and dissemination of the archaeological excavations, but a cultural context and continuum. Indeed, the dissemination and popularisation of ancient Campania during the nineteenth century was very much situated in contemporary Neapolitana and the enthusiasm for Neapolitan Romantic Realism; this was the means by which Naples became a framework for the encounter with, reception and investigation of Pompeii and Herculaneum which was, in turn, indicative of wider anthropological policy (Reclus: "The only way to really understand what took place amongst the nations of antiquity is to know what is taking place amongst modern nations..."<sup>343</sup>). Accordingly, the characterisation of Neapolitans in a folkloristic manner contributed to the register through which the apotropaic artefact was conceptualised and the kind of culture it indicated - as something belonging to the realm of the lower classes or the backward, in contrast to the traditional ancient *objets d'art* typically coveted by collectors.

Even today, jewellery boutiques and souvenir shops in Naples sell *mano cornuta*, *corna*, *mano in fica* and phallic charms, including winged phalluses, perhaps cashing in on our enduring desire to witness the ancient alive and well in modern Naples [Fig. 42]: modern tourists visit Pompeii and perhaps hear a guide discussing the site's many street-phalluses, then visit Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli and see the plethora of phallic charms, *tintinnabula* and figurines in the *Gabinetto Segreto*, and then step out on to the streets of the modern metropolis and see phalluses by the score in windows of jewellery emporia, including many made of coral, or dangling unabashedly from tourist outlets alongside penis-shaped pasta and phallic vessels of limoncello. It would be worthwhile considering the extent to which this

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<sup>343</sup> Reclus (1885) ix.

was in action during the nineteenth century - a conspicuous performance, for the benefit of foreign visitors, of the folkloric legacy of the hallowed sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum – and the effect of this on the construction of accepted popular knowledge on the ancient past. Thus Naples and its character – either authentic or created – *continues* to frame the Vesuvian sites, despite the notion of folkloric continuums and primitivism being largely outdated ideas.<sup>344</sup> The influence of nineteenth-century Neapolitana in shaping our central disciplinary categories and concepts, one of which – the apotropaic - has become strongly associated with Pompeii and indeed continues to be a staple of the popular imagination and engagement with the site, should thus be firmly acknowledged. In particular, Andrea De Jorio's ethnological exposition of gesture should be considered a natural bedfellow to contemporary interest in archaeological objecthood, the shared fascination with semiotic capabilities symptomatic of the interests and questions of this era and its objective to decode the ancient, foreign and strange.

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<sup>344</sup> Indeed, recent media reporting the discovery of a hitherto unknown fresco depicting Priapus in a vestibule in Regio V of Pompeii continues to expound phallic imagery with folklorist lexis: "*Priapo, protagonista del Satyricon di Petronio, nel mondo latino è tra le figure **più suggestive e più vicine alla mentalità quotidiana del mondo romano**, capace di raggiungere anche **l'elemento folklorico**, data la funzione apotropaica avente la divinità greco-latina di allontanamento del **malocchio** e della sfortuna. Infatti, cimeli analoghi del dio Priapo, data la diffusione di questa figura nel mondo latino, sono disponibili da ammirare presso il MANN di Napoli, in cui la sezione dedicata al mondo romano, **raccoglie numerosi esemplari a testimoniare l'affetto e le credenze popolari in merito sono varie e molteplici.***"

<https://www.21secolo.news/pompei-rinvenuto-affresco-priapo/> Date Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Isernia Effect: Artefacts, Dismemberment & the Creation of Agent Objects

“The *Dilettanti* Society best know *what emblem*, modelled in wax, is laid upon their table at their *solemn* meetings.”<sup>345</sup>

Thomas Mathias (1794)

The historiography of phallic artefacts from the Campanian sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum begins simultaneously with historiography on the Catholic phallic votives from the town of Isernia in Abruzzo - where Sir William Hamilton unearthed evidence that “devotion is still paid to Priapus, the obscene Divinity of the Ancients” in a contemporary Catholic context - and the respective biographies of these two sets of objects have been inextricably intertwined ever since.<sup>346</sup> Whilst the Enlightenment-era, comparative-religious significance of the Isernian votives is well-attested in scholarship, further implications of the relationship nurtured by Hamilton between these objects and the nearby archaeological excavations are yet to be sufficiently unpacked and acknowledged.<sup>347</sup> Here we shall readdress the intellectual backdrop to Sir William Hamilton’s discovery and characterisation of the phallic votives in Isernia, and shed light on the ensuing discussion which developed in response regarding the role of such items in both ancient and modern belief, their power and significance. In highlighting what is the enduring legacy of the Isernian votives in framing and influencing the reception and interpretation of phallic artefacts from the nearby archaeological sites, we shall find that an intrinsic concern for semiotics – regarding the dynamics of simulation, substitution, imitation and symbolisation – was manifested in response to the phallic objects emerging from Campania at this time, which in turn had a notable role in the conceptualisation of their potential

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<sup>345</sup> Mathias (1798) 68, footnote †.

<sup>346</sup> Hamilton (1781) in Payne Knight (1865) 3.

<sup>347</sup> Davis (2010); Davis (2008) 51-82; Funnell (1982) 50-64; Orrells (2015) 66-79 and Carabelli (1996).

apotropaism, pornographic quality and fetishistic agency.<sup>348</sup> Building on this, this chapter will then look beyond Hamilton and Isernia – and indeed, beyond Campania – to shed light on a wider fascination for and desire to understand further cases of uncanny objecthood during the nineteenth century (particularly those which were also in some way considered archaeological or pseudo-biological, in the manner of the Isernian votives). Accordingly, an ‘Isernian-type approach’ to objecthood, representational states and magical materialism, which was central to constructing the idea of apotropaic objects during the nineteenth century, can be identified long after the Hamiltonian fixation with Priapus-worship demonstrated by Carabelli, and proves more broadly symptomatic of other aspects of the nineteenth-century cultural consciousness which developed in light of its intense archaeological and anthropological activity.<sup>349</sup> Accordingly, this chapter will map out a persistent concern for/fascination with, firstly, disembodiment and agency, secondly, simulation and agency, and thirdly the characterisation and typology of ‘agent’ objects parallel with changing socio-cultural and intellectual circumstances (including folklorism, medical historiography and mysticism), which began with the discoveries at Isernia and in fact culminated in a patent fascination for fetishes, amulets and totems by the time of the Fin de Siècle.

## Isernia and Disembodied Enlightenment Phalluses

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<sup>348</sup> We have already seen in the work of Andrea De Jorio that many of the options he put forward for ‘reading’ any given gesture were down to the dynamics of original vs simulation, and the differing degrees of allusion to an original, material object.

<sup>349</sup> Indeed, this chapter is hugely inspired by Carabelli, who looks at how the so-called ‘Great Toes’ of Isernia were dealt with in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the issues they raised for contemporary commentators, particularly concerning troubling states of objecthood and representation. Accordingly, this chapter will both draw upon and extend Carabelli’s contribution: by firstly mapping the ways in which the perception and interpretation of **Pompeian** phallic artefacts evolved onto the discursive legacy on (pseudo-)anatomical objects set in motion by the Isernian ‘discoveries’; and by then linking that discourse – which Carabelli reductively characterises as being primarily concerned with the “historical continuity of the ancient cult [of Priapus]” (Carabelli (1996) 101) – to the evolution of a later fascination with the **magical** manifestations of material objects and their epistemological ramifications, not restricted to phallushood or a theological interest in Priapic worship. As a result, this chapter will illuminate the semiotic and epistemological tension, overlooked and oversimplified by Carabelli and those inspired by him, between the delineation and identification of a fertility icon or votive-type object and that of an apotropaically-charged device.

Sir William Hamilton was interested by the wax phallic votives at Isernia because they were being used in a Catholic ritual context. [Fig. 43] Davis has critically pointed out the extent to which Hamilton characterised the votive rite observed at Isernia as a survival of phallic worship in which the phallic votives are dedicated by *women* in order to remedy or guard against *male* infertility: comparing the votive practice at Isernia with that of ancient anatomical votive practices, he points out that Hamilton's version of the practices does not fit the "usual, virtually universal, pattern of dedication" which, Davis contests, would have seen the *men* of the town dedicate phalluses to propitiate or give thanks for fertility, and women to dedicate votive replicas of uteruses or vulvas.<sup>350</sup> In turn, Davis asserts that Hamilton ultimately wishes to imply that the priests themselves provided the antidote for infertility by having intercourse with the women at the festival, serving to render the rite and its use of phallic imagery a distorted perpetuation of priapic worship under the guise of Christian sacrament. The phallus, in this context, thus represents the ritualised permissiveness of debauchery, the wax votives enabling the transaction of divine propitiation in exchange for the fleshly realisation of fertility.

Carabelli writes that "unlike D'Hancarville and Knight, Hamilton seemed to regard the worship of Priapus purely and simply as the **worship of the male member**";<sup>351</sup> however, the significance of such an assertion is not fully unpacked, for if phallic worship or phallic imagery was about the penis, then such images and objects were not symbolic at all, and such conviction would also conflict directly with Knight's central exposition of the role of phallic art in human belief.<sup>352</sup> In his letter to Sir Joseph Banks, Hamilton writes that those who were wanting treatment for a part of their body presented themselves at the main altar and "uncovered the members affected", "not even excepting that which is mostly represented by the *ex-voti*" – or, in the words of the Italian witness, "even the **original** of the wax copy" ("*anche l'originale della copia di cera*").<sup>353</sup> The Italian reporter's words convey a perplexing relationship between the actual body part and its ritual signifier, in that the infirm

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<sup>350</sup> Davis (2010) 114-117.

<sup>351</sup> Carabelli (1996) 54.

<sup>352</sup> "...the forms and ceremonials of a religion are not always to be understood in their direct and obvious sense." Payne Knight (1865) 14.

<sup>353</sup> Italian witness (unnamed) (1780) in Payne Knight (1865) 11.

body part itself is talked about *in terms of* its replica. Of course, this phrasing is partly also tongue-in-cheek or an attempt at modesty, the witness avoiding saying “penis” outright. However, this dynamic, in which an image or copy is dictated by its prototype, is reinforced elsewhere in the witness’ account, where they refer to the wax **votives** as “*membri rotti*” – broken, or detached **members**.<sup>354</sup> Here, the votives are thus described as if they are actual body parts, more akin to anatomical relics of the typical Christian tradition.<sup>355</sup> In this way, it is as if the simulacra themselves retained some sense of biological actuality, rather than being inert effigies for the purpose of rendition.

The problematic phallic nature of the wax votives as characterised by Hamilton and the distinctive folk-Christian tradition surrounding them thus combined to raise questions concerning representational status and simulation. What were the respective objecthoods of the phallus in popular medicine and belief, of phallic relics, and of phallic votives or simulacra, and how did they differ? What were the gradations of ‘originality’ between each and, as each took a step *away* from the original – namely, the penis - did each acquire more of its *own* intrinsic agency? If so, what was the nature of that agency? The different scenarios emerging in response to Hamilton’s account of Isernia saw the body as being composed of detachable parts and thus encouraged those same thinkers responding to the Campanian phallic

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<sup>354</sup> Italian witness (unnamed) (1780) in Payne Knight (1865) 10.

<sup>355</sup> See for example Nickell (2007) 13-25. This blurring of the distinction between relic and replica is detectable elsewhere in the tradition of Isernia. The festival involving the wax phallic votives took place, according to Hamilton, at a church dedicated to the twin saints St Cosmus and Damianus. These two figures were Arab physicians and thus considered saints of healing and the infirm. In the cult of St Cosmus and Damianus itself, the theme of the fragmented body is combined with that of the replica, manifesting a persistent toying with ideas concerning duplicity, replication and simulation, strongly linked with their being double figures as twin saints. For example, Jacobus de Voragine recounts in his *Golden Legend (or Lives of The Saints)* (first published 1275; first published in English by William Caxton, 1483) the miracle of the “Man with the Cankered Thigh”: “*Where shall we have flesh when we have cut away the rotten flesh to fill the void place? Then that other said to him: There is an Ethiopian that this day is buried in the churchyard of St Peter ad Vincula, which is yet fresh, let us bear this thither and take we out of that morian's flesh and fill this place withal. And so, they fetched the thigh of the sick man and so changed that one for that other. And when the sick man awoke and felt no pain, he put forth his hand and felt his leg without hurt, and then took a candle, and saw well that it was not his thigh, but that it was another. [...] And they sent hastily to the tomb of the dead man, and found the thigh of him cut off, and that other thigh in the tomb instead of his.*” Jacobus de Voragine (1275); translation Granger Ryan (1993) 198. In this tale, which is the original, and which is substitute? How does this change over the course of the story? Which of the two is, therefore, defunct, or inferior to the other?

discoveries to theorise on agency and meaning: namely, the notion of anatomy as dis severable, and thus of a single body part being symbolic of a whole, or of a dis severed body part possessing of its *own* agency, raised important questions concerning biological reality vs symbolic connotation. Accordingly, the ways in which commentators and audiences attempted to negotiate the relation between these two readings played an important role in formulating the perceived pornographic objecthood of phallic artefacts emerging from the Campanian archaeological sites, having long-term ramifications for dealing with the phalluses of Pompeii and Herculaneum which can still be felt today.

To begin with, the medium used for the frontispiece of Hamilton and Knight's *Discourse*, engraving, makes it essentially impossible to distinguish between the depiction of a real object and that of an artistic copy [Fig. 15]. The reproduction of the Isernian *ex votos* in the *Discourse* was intended as a document of real artefacts; however, their replication also constituted what Carabelli terms a "cultural provocation", for "whether these belonged to the great repertoires of classical culture (where such illustrations had a purely documentary purpose), or to the libertine and erotic tradition (where such illustrations had a purely provocative purpose)" was intrinsically uncertain in the reception of this influential treatise on the problem of the phallic image.<sup>356</sup> Elsewhere, Romantic-era plate books presented a wide variety of objects as ancient relics; the specimens of rock plates in Hamilton's *Campi Phlegraei* resemble the frontispiece of the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, and the phallic artefacts comprising the frontispiece of Payne Knight's *Discourse* were indeed portrayed in the manner of a specimen of natural science [Figs. 36 & 44].<sup>357</sup> This fluidity of typological status is in part reflective of the wider character of material culture and the encyclopaedic organisation of knowledge of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Carabelli argues that the Campanian phallus in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse can be thought of as an *objet trouvé*, an artefact seemingly indicative

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<sup>356</sup> Carabelli (1996) 128.

<sup>357</sup> Hamilton (1776).



of many material categories but belonging solely to none and, critically, thus possessing an intrinsically ambiguous and seemingly dialectical agency.<sup>358</sup>

Secondly, one of the case studies of ancient mythology most regularly discussed in relation to the Isernia simulacra, phallic artefacts from Pompeii and Herculaneum, and the various treatises of comparative religious discourse seeking to find a common phallic origin for modern world religions, was that of the story of Isis and Osiris. Both D'Hancarville and Payne Knight refer to the passage in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, which recounts Isis' search to find and reassemble Osiris' scattered body parts following her husband's death at the hands of Thyphon (or Set). In his *Recherches*, D'Hancarville writes: "Everyone knows that Isis...when she could not recover the one part missing from this figure, had a **model of it sculpted**, which she consecrated under the **name of Phallus**...":

*"Personne n'ignore qu'Isis, après avoir rassemblé les membres épars d'Osiris tué par Thiphon, ne pouvant recouvrer la seule partie qui manqué précisément à cette figure, en fit sculpter une, qu'elle consacra sous le nom de Phallus, dont elle institua les Fêtes."*<sup>359</sup>

Plutarch's account of this myth was used extensively in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works which discussed phalluses of world archaeology and folklore, and was used as evidence for several different, interconnecting ideas pertaining to their anthropological origins and universal function.<sup>360</sup> D'Hancarville's reference to the tale conveys the inherent cogitation on originals and simulacra, and the relationship between these two states, which preoccupied thinkers seeking to

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<sup>358</sup> Carabelli (1996) 41-52. Indeed, the *objet trouvé* – traditionally discussed in relation to Modernist cultural practices – proves a useful means of approaching eighteenth- and nineteenth-century material culture: used in the production of an array of cultural practices throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, transformed by aesthetic and material processes such as display, translation, and adaptation, both mundane and extraordinary found objects proliferate throughout collections, collages, still lives, manuscripts, and assemblages made throughout this period. Baird & Ionescu (2014).

<sup>359</sup> D'Hancarville (1788) Volume V: 105-6.

<sup>360</sup> For instance, several thinkers saw Osiris as an incarnation or Egyptian equivalent of Priapus; others saw the phallus replication story as being connected to the ancient Athenian *phallophoria*; some linked Osiris to Bacchus, whilst others have connected the tale to similarly disembodied Greek phalluses – including Herms – or to chthonic or rustic deities; others point out his role as a deity of [re]generation, and thus the loss and subsequent replication of his phallus as both emblematising and reinforcing his generative power, and therefore several consider Isis and Osiris as complementary male and female powers, designed to be evocative of the inherently opposing yet productive forces of nature.

make sense of phallic imagery following the rediscoveries of the Vesuvian cities along with Hamilton's spotlight on Isernia. The apparent centrality of the phallus to Osiris' being – in that he could not be fully resurrected until that part of his anatomy was no longer incomplete – coupled with the fact that it was an artificial phallus which was able to *effect* this completion, commanded considerable interest. Moreover, the synthetic simulacrum, made of gold in some versions of the myth, was not only able to stand-in sufficiently for the biological original, but *actually to assume its role*: most versions of the story even have it that Isis was able to impregnate herself by this replacement phallus.<sup>361</sup> These aspects of the story as described in the *Recherches* reflect the sense of tension and ambiguity between an artificial phallus and the original, and thus between biological reality and symbolic connotation, as it became a central topic of concern in the works of this era and onwards.

D'Hancarville describes the process of substitution – “*en fit sculpter une*” – in terms of tangible fabrication. This passage therefore resonates with the tension surrounding the Isernian simulacra and the corresponding relic-replica dialectic; in fact, Osiris' dismembered phallus becomes a kind of relic, and his newly made replacement a replica; yet the synthetic replica also acts like a relic in the very same way the Isernian votives did in the witness' accounts (“*membri rotti*”), as it serves to complete his anatomy, restore his vitality, and even impregnate his wife. In the case of both Isernia and Osiris, then, does the status of being a simulacrum make such an object a phallus, as opposed to a penis, and is a phallus a thing designed to emblematised or represent a penis? Yet can a phallus act both symbolically and literally, as in the above cases? The Isis and Osiris tale served to convey and reinforce the apparent totality of the phallic image, in that to *resemble* a phallus was to *be* a phallus; it seemed the sheer status of deputising and thus *being* a phallus was seemingly enough to *become* one, to activate its properties and power. Such indications raised questions of simulation and efficacy, certainly underscored by sexual undertones, the reconsideration of sexual and generative roles, and looming issues of emasculation.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Leading to the birth of the god Harpocrates (in some versions, Horus). Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride* 358e, 377b.

<sup>362</sup> Orrells (2013) 39-57. Orrells (2015) 65-88, 168-180.

Indeed, Plutarch's original text betrays many of the very same tensions and resonances observable in the eighteenth-century comparative-religious works:

*"Of the parts of Osiris's body the only one which Isis did not find was the male member [αἰδοῖον], for the reason that this had been at once tossed into the river, and the lepidotus, the sea-bream, and the pike had fed upon it; and it is from these very fishes the Egyptians are most scrupulous in abstaining. But Isis made a replica of the member [ἐκείνου μίμημα ποιησαμένην] to take its place, and consecrated the phallus [τὸν φαλλόν], in honour of which the Egyptians even at the present day celebrate a festival."*<sup>363</sup>

Osiris' original member, αἰδοῖον, becomes a φαλλόν after its synthetic substitution: the shameful and inherently biological, therefore, becomes a symbol and an effigy; the thing to be concealed becomes something to be looked upon and to be revered, an icon and a focal point. Plutarch also describes the replacement as a μίμημα– a counterfeit or copy.<sup>364</sup> Of course, there also exist the connotations of the very word φαλλός itself, in that to be a phallus was to be a copy or an emblem.<sup>365</sup> The central relationship between original male member and synthetic copy, as conveyed in Plutarch's text, was picked up on by the Hamiltonian commentators, and thus fed into their consideration of what it meant to imitate, represent, symbolise or stand-in for a penis. Its mythological status meant it was deemed an archetype for the phallus' role in human belief, thus providing a model for discussing such artefacts and examples of symbolism and the drawing of cross-cultural connections in order to explain them. That this crucial and familiar source enshrined at its very centre a seemingly vital and irreconcilable relationship between biological original and synthetic copy, then, indicates the extent to which this very dialectic underwrote the genre of discourse which sought to understand phallic artefacts, including those from Pompeii and Herculaneum.

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<sup>363</sup> Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride* 358b; translation Babbitt (1936).

<sup>364</sup> μίμημα: "anything imitated, counterfeit, copy". Liddell & Scott (1968) 1134.

<sup>365</sup> φαλλός: "*membrum virile*, phallus, **or a figure thereof**, borne in procession in the cult of Dionysus as an **emblem** of the generative power in nature." Liddell & Scott (1968) 1914.

This dialectic indeed persisted until the turn of the twentieth century at least: Carabelli points out that “The theme of dismemberment, along with those of castration and **the autonomy and divinity of the male genital apparatus**, is typical of the figures described in [Frazer’s] *Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the history of oriental religion* (1906). The myth of Osiris in particular is inherently associated with the idea of the fragment. In recent years the name ‘Osiris Complex’ has been used for psychic disorders characterised by multiple personalities.”<sup>366</sup> The apotropaic thus proves a distinctive case of “the autonomy and divinity of the male genital apparatus”, its role in not only emblematising but, by this time, embodying and outwardly projecting fertility: indeed, Frazer concludes that, based on the role of their dismembered and divine genitalia, these divinities were linked with the cult of vegetation. In turn, this embodiment of and capacity to bestow fertility was in turn inherently tied to an established sense of the apotropaic phallus’ autonomy in subsequent anthropological discourse.<sup>367</sup> The use of a simulacrum to biological effect was a perplexing component of Enlightenment-era discourse on phallic origins of belief and the omnipresence of fertility gods/goddesses in world religions: where Osiris’ phallus was meant to be Priapic, Bacchic, and *symbolic* of generative power, it also served a distinctly non-symbolic, and thus conflicting, role, which thus conflicted with the central conviction of Payne Knight’s *Discourse*.<sup>368</sup> Therefore, there was, in fact, an inherent, intrinsically irreconcilable tension embedded in responses to phallic images from the off, which was only to escalate over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Other nineteenth-century responses to both Greco-Roman and contemporary Catholic anatomical votive practice show, serving as comparanda for the reception and interpretation of this type of ‘imitative’, ‘sympathetic magic’-type material, that the Isernia case was ultimately unique in the contemporary imagination as far as the possible problematic agency of such objects. For example, almost half of the material unearthed during the 1885 excavations at Nemi conducted by Lord Savile (John Savile Lumley) were ex-votos linked with therapeutic rites.<sup>369</sup> Carabelli writes of the finds

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<sup>366</sup> Carabelli (1996) 122.

<sup>367</sup> Frazer (1907) 331-2.

<sup>368</sup> “...the forms and ceremonials of a religion are not always to be understood in their direct and obvious sense.” Payne Knight (1865) 14.

<sup>369</sup> Carabelli 118-9; see Carabelli (1996) 153 for excavation references.

that they “bring us back to a reality comparable to that of Isernia, [being] made of humble materials – dark red or brown terracotta, with two parts joined together like Easter eggs – and they lacked any artistic content.”<sup>370</sup> However, these items were of little interest to the archaeologists: “objects made on a mould, of no value whatever”;<sup>371</sup> “other objects which have been unearthed, votive terracottas...need not to be mentioned”.<sup>372</sup> [Fig. 45] Similarly, Samuel Highley wrote in 1857 for *The British and Foreign Medico-chirurgical Review*, that “those who have visited the parish churches in the different Roman-catholic countries of the Continent, and more specially Southern Italy, will call to remembrance the manner in which the walls and pillars are covered by the so-called votive offerings, and will at once recognise in the ancient practice of the Grecian temples the quarter from which the latter may reasonably be assumed to have sprung”, making a straightforward link between contemporary and ancient practice, the mode of devotional reciprocity at play thus configured as a straightforward transaction.<sup>373</sup> Was it the case that this disparity in reception of highly comparable artefacts was the result of the votive transaction being perceived as different at Isernia? Highley’s reference to the “manner in which the walls and pillars are covered by the so-called votive offerings” in the churches of southern Italy follows a discussion of Aesclepiian sanctuaries, on which he writes about “the nature of the remedies which had at the advice of the deity been employed”, and thus his conceptualisation of contemporary Italian practice is one which mirrors the Aesclepiian model of “consultation”, in which the votive object was thus intended to bring about a specific, concordant cure.<sup>374</sup> As Davis has rightly pointed out, neither the model of consultation nor that of reciprocal transaction is reflected in Hamilton’s account of the ritual at Isernia, in which the relationship between votive object and sought outcome appears to have been skewed. Therefore, the Isernia phalluses and other anatomical votive material were responded to in starkly different ways. Was this because other anatomical votives were more familiar, given their association with Asclepius, and were thus a prominent part of

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<sup>370</sup> Carabelli (1996) 118.

<sup>371</sup> Lanciani (1885) 477.

<sup>372</sup> *Notizie degli scavi* (1885) Volume I: 653.

<sup>373</sup> Highley (1857) 72.

<sup>374</sup> Highley (1857) 65-88.

medical history already, their function and ‘belief mechanics’ believed to be well understood?<sup>375</sup> Nonetheless, the Isernian votives, whilst they indeed could have been situated in this same ideological and historiographical scheme as other anatomical votives, critically *were not*; their being of interest to Hamilton and Knight meant that they were talked about in the context of a different intellectual scheme – that of universal phallic worship - thus complicating their votive status. Therefore, the way in which the narrative on Campanian phalluses was directed by Hamilton and Knight from its beginning led to a very different perception and conceptualisation of the Isernian votives’ agency, their ‘phallushood’ interpreted very differently from the anatomical phalluses of Nemi or Epidauros. In turn, the debt to the distinct significance constructed in this era for the “autonomy/divinity of male genital apparatus” and those deemed to take after it – including phallic art from Pompeii and Herculaneum - is clear.

Modern scholarship’s conflation, as has been demonstrated previously in this thesis, of Payne-Knightian ideas concerning universal phallic worship and religious symbolism with the notion of their supposedly apotropaic power serves to have masked a distinct ideological tension between the notions of universal phallic worship and the phallus as a pornographic emblem, which has thus not been fully revealed or evaluated. For it is in the perceived dynamics of semiotics in which this tension is played out: the difference between a fertility icon and an apotropaic image was (and indeed continues to be) an issue of representation, of literalism versus abstraction. In pointing out the fundamental disjunction between the phallus as a fertility symbol and as an apotropaic device, we can in turn identify how the later reception of Knight’s ideas and, as we have already touched on, his reinvention by certain spheres brought about a more overtly active, ‘enchanted’ configuration of the phallic symbol, possessed of an animacy able to effect external forces or events. This chapter thus sheds light on and will further explore another facet of this process, of the transition from the phallus’ conceptualisation as passive symbol denotative of

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<sup>375</sup> For example, see Rouse (1902).

generativity, having “the greatest analogy with the divine attributes”, to that of an active agent of fortune and aversion.<sup>376</sup>

## Archaeological Dismemberment: A Tradition of Archaeological ‘Body Parts’

There existed a conviction, then, in the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century responses to the phallic material of Campania that processes of dismemberment and simulation created agent objects. This ultimately led to the attribution of an inherent autonomy and divinity to the *image*, **not** the original, of male genitalia. A genre of erotic works of the nineteenth century drew explicitly upon the erotic potential of archaeology, unearthed material and the disquieting agency of the fragmented body as was seemingly witnessed in folkloric and ancient Campania by the Hamiltonian commentators. These works saw artefacts – and ones which **resemble** or **signify** body-parts, especially sexually-charged ones – as being indicative of ‘dormant’ erotic value, waiting to be (re)activated. ‘*Arria Marcella, un souvenir de Pompeii*’ (1852), by Theophile Gautier, was the story of a foreign tourist in Naples who falls in love with the cast of a woman’s breast imprinted in the solidified lava of Pompeii, then, in a dream, with the body part’s original owner [Fig. 46]. Gautier’s tale transforms archaeological fragmentation into a sexual motif, capitalising on the sense of emotional proximity and wonder evoked by archaeological encounters and the perspective of a foreign visitor to the sites and collections.<sup>377</sup> In Gautier’s erotica, the objects and sites thus serve as a means of accessing the living people of the past, the lava-cast breast acting as a vestige of the woman, as one might use a person’s belongings to communicate with a ghost. Even more interesting, however, is that it is not even an original object or anatomical relic which is used to invoke the connection and create the erotic charge; it is the **cast of an original** – itself a **fragment** – and an impression left in the lava which sets in motion the erotic relationship, and thus a kind of simulacrum once again acting with the

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<sup>376</sup> Payne Knight (1865) 17.

<sup>377</sup> Liveley (2011) 105-6.

authority of authentic anatomy, personhood and corporeality.<sup>378</sup> Gautier's *Le pied de la momie* (1840) similarly plays with the concept of archaeological fragments to erotic effect.<sup>379</sup> This time, a visitor to a Parisian antiques shop buys a mummified foot which supposedly belonged to the Egyptian princess Hermonthis.<sup>380</sup> The ancient relic soon establishes a connection between the man and the ancient woman, eventually transporting him to Egypt. Yet again, archaeological remains function to represent the whole, and sure enough the story sees the man requesting Hermonthis' hand in marriage.

In '*Arria Marcella*', Pompeii is used as the ultimate archaeological site for an erotic experience, the site seemingly imbued with erotogenic potential through its characteristic vestiges and artefacts, waiting to be discovered, a setting ripe for erotic fantasy and self-immersion.<sup>381</sup> The experience of visiting the sites and encountering the excavated material was also about yielding to the inherent power of the objects found there and their sensual capabilities, therefore.<sup>382</sup> Gautier's familiarity with the artefacts from Pompeii and his detailed description of the ancient city led to fans of his novel looking for Arria Marcella's impression, which Octavian [the protagonist] saw in the Naples Museum: even Amedeo Maiuri, superintendent of the excavations at Pompeii (1924-1961), an authority on the Vesuvian sites and their remains, recounts his "sad, fruitless search through the museum's storage rooms for the elusive Arria Marcella."<sup>383</sup> Gautier's erotica thus reinforces the irreconcilable status of Campanian

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<sup>378</sup> For a detailed discussion of Gautier's *Arria Marcella*, particularly its treatment of "'delusion and dream' in the context of Pompeii" as well as the ways in which the tale can be considered a metaphor for the story of Pompeii itself and its archaeological rediscovery, see Liveley (2011).

<sup>379</sup> This era was indeed characterised more widely by fiction-writing which utilised archaeological- and anthropological-type objects as demonic agents, such as the work of Richard Marsh (*The Beetle*, 1897; *The Goddess: A Demon*, 1900; and *The Joss: A Reversion*, 1901). For more on Marsh, see Margree, Orrells & Vuohelainen (2018) (particularly chapters seven, eight, nine and eleven).

<sup>380</sup> Carabelli (1996) 107-10.

<sup>381</sup> "The casts of women provoked sexual fantasies in various authors like Edward Bulwer Lytton and Théophile Gautier. In the run of time this sudden erotic effect made place for emotions of mourning and contemplation of death." Behlman (2007) 157-170.

<sup>382</sup> Gardner-Coates also points out the contemporary Christian subtext of archaeological erotics: "Arria Marcella is a Victorian antiheroine, lustful and pagan as she rejects her father's conversion to Christianity [as compared to Bulwer-Lytton's altruistic Nydia]." Gardner Coates (2012) 70.

<sup>383</sup> Gardner Coates (2012) 70-77. Maiuri (1998) 42.



archaeological items, being at once semblances and substitutes.<sup>384</sup> However it also illustrates that objects which were both 'archaeological' and 'biological' (these categories being characteristically loose) possessed of a particular agency inherently derived from these two qualities, with biological resemblance or imitation enabling proximity, and archaeological value enabling transport through time or immersion in a (temporally and geographically) far-off place. An artefact in this era could thus be characterised by magic and motility, and some form of resemblance – whether that be as a remnant, relic, imitation or imprint – particularly the personal or anatomical, functioned in the manner of the voodoo dolls or shamanistic implements being contemporaneously described by anthropologists.

Gautier's *Arria Marcella* heavily influenced Wilhelm Jensen's 1903 novella *Gradiva: A Pompeian Fancy*, in which a young German archaeologist, Norbert, becomes fixated with the plaster cast of an ancient relief depicting a walking woman, Gradiva [Fig. 47].<sup>385</sup> The title page of the novel's first edition bore an image of the plaster cast of 'Gradiva', which was in fact extracted from a relief portraying three figures in the Vatican Museums, proving another case, as will be shown, of an erotic archaeological 'fragment'. In a manner which also emulated the complicated relationship described by Hamilton between the Isernian wax phalluses and their votive outcome, Norbert does not derive his lust from the classical original of the relief, but his modern reproduction. Furthermore, Norbert conceives of Gradiva as inhabiting Pompeii rather than the chaotic, rowdy metropolis of Rome, and thus constructs his erotic fantasy of her there, once again conveying the particular archaeo-erotic cachet seemingly denoted by the Vesuvian cities. Gradiva eventually turns out to be Norbert's childhood sweetheart Zoë Bertgang, his deep-seated longing for her having been projected onto his construction of Gradiva. Indeed, the notion of erotic agency as something constructed and projected by the *beholder* of an object or image was precisely what posed a significant problem for engagement with the Isernian phalluses.

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<sup>384</sup> Of course, the association between the archaeologically buried and the sexually taboo are perhaps nowhere clearer than in the work of Freud, who saw archaeology as a metaphor and model for psychoanalysis. Orrells (2013) and (2015).

<sup>385</sup> Jensen (1903) *Gradiva: Ein pompejanisches Phantasiestück*. Liveley charts the relationship between Gautier's *Arria Marcella* and Jensen's *Gradiva*. Liveley (2011).

In turn, *Gradiva* underwent several twentieth-century reprisals in art and psychoanalysis, in the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) and Sigmund Freud's 1907 *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva* (*Der Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensens "Gradiva"*).<sup>386</sup> Gardner Coates says of Freud's discussion of *Gradiva* that it established "Pompeii's modern status as a place where not only could the past be accessed, but the self could be explored in Freudian terms."<sup>387</sup> She elaborates:

*"Gradiva must have seemed almost custom-made for Freud, and in a way it was. Jensen's novella emerged from the same antiquarian, Teutonic zeitgeist that produced Freud himself, and it incorporated some of Freud's favoured themes, such as the role of archaeology as an allegory for the exploration of the self. Even better, the story was set in Pompeii, and Freud considered Pompeii, with its history of violent burial and subsequent excavation, the quintessential example of this allegory."*<sup>388</sup>

For example, Freud wrote in *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*:

*"I then made some short observations upon the psychological differences between the conscious and the unconscious, and upon the fact that everything conscious was subject to a process of wearing away, while what was unconscious was relatively unchangeable; and I illustrated my remarks by pointing to the antiques standing about in my room. They were, in fact, I said, only objects found in a tomb, and their burial had been their preservation: the destruction of Pompeii was only beginning now that it had been dug up."*<sup>389</sup>

The long-term effect of Isernian agency is detectable, via *Gradiva*, in Freudian legacy, which has in turn shaped a large part of how the twentieth century conceived of its relationship to classical antiquity and material archaeological remains. Evaluating Norbert's choice to situate *Gradiva* in Pompeii, Freud wrote in *Delusions and Dreams*:

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<sup>386</sup> In 1931 Freud's essay was published in French, thus making it more widely accessible to the Surrealists.

<sup>387</sup> Gardner Coates (2012) 72.

<sup>388</sup> Gardner Coates (2012) 72.

<sup>389</sup> *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, in *Standard Edition* 10:176. See also Armstrong (2005) 194-7; and Orrells (2011a) 185-98. Gardner Coates (2012) 76-7, note no.7.

*“Finally, his fantasy transported her to Pompeii, not ‘because her quiet calm nature seemed to demand it’, but because no other or better analogy could be found in his science for his remarkable state, in which he became aware of his memories of his childhood friendship through obscure channels of information. Once he had made his own childhood coincide with the classical past (which it was so easy for him to do), there was a perfect similarity between the burial of Pompeii – the disappearance of the past combined with its preservation – and the repression, of what he possessed a knowledge through what might be described as ‘endopsychic’ perception.”*<sup>390</sup>

In Freud’s analysis of *Gradiva*, archaeological artefacts thus emerge as having the power to tell us something fundamental about ourselves; indeed, this notion was to become closely associated with Freud in the twentieth century.<sup>391</sup> Therefore, such objects retained a troubling, Isernian agency long after the nineteenth century, which was only further reinforced by Freud’s popularisation of the deep-seated, omnipresent phallic symbol, when he asserted in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* (first released 1899) that “all elongated objects, such as sticks, tree-trunks and umbrellas (the opening of these last being comparable to an erection) may stand for the male organ - as well as all long, sharp weapons, such as knives, daggers and pikes.”<sup>392</sup> Most importantly, however, both Jensen’s *Gradiva* and its discussion by Freud serve to credit resemblant, archaeological objects with an essential power to reveal hidden meaning and thus with an independent voice or to the ability to effect change. This quality obviously took on new significance in its role in Freudian psychology, but nonetheless comprises part of the process in which an ancient or simulative object came to be considered inherently magical over the course of the late nineteenth century.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Freud *Delusions and Dreams* in *Standard Edition* (note 6), 9:51.

<sup>391</sup> Armstrong, R. (2005); Orrells (2011a), (2013) & (2015).

<sup>392</sup> Freud (1913) 246.

<sup>393</sup> The 1931 translation of Freud’s work on *Gradiva* into French rendered it available to the Surrealists, in whose work we find further evidence of the long-term impact of Isernian representation. Duchamp is indeed considered an enthusiastic contributor to the twentieth-century reinvention of Pompeii; his interest in the site and the socio-cultural import of its artefacts heavily informed his approach to the image of a breast he crafted, which in turn inspired the cover of his *Surrealism en 1947* exhibition

## Curative Objects: The Unity of Primitive Medicine and Religion

The framework for thinking about the wax phallic votives at Isernia provided by their use in a supposed healing/fertility rite calls attention to the proximity of apotropaism to early conceptions of medicine and disease, especially in terms of its nineteenth-century conceptualisation. Indeed, the latter half of the nineteenth century was characterised by an anthropological interest in the history of medicine, including the fleshing-out of a linear narrative of increasing development through the acquisition of material evidence of different cultural and historical approaches to healing. For example, the extensive medical history collection of pharmaceutical magnate Sir Henry Wellcome, begun in earnest in 1895 at the death of his business partner Silas Burroughs, incorporated objects intended to illustrate “most branches of the healing art... from the early days of the world’s history to more recent times”.<sup>394</sup> [Fig. 48] This incorporated many Greco-Roman anatomical votives, as well as, significantly, thousands of charms and amulets from various different parts of the world.<sup>395</sup> In his *Magic in Modern London* (1925), the charm and amulet collector Edward Lovett discussed “Fossil Shark’s Teeth for Cramp”, “Mercury Charm for Rheumatism”, “Charms for Cutting Teeth”, “A Curious Cure for Whooping Cough”

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catalogue. His *Prière de Toucher* (1947) comprised a plaster-cast breast, highly reminiscent of Gautier’s *Arria Marcella*. Of *Prière de Toucher*, Gardner Coates declares: “*Duchamp’s sensitive, detailed and naturalistic technique belies his repeated renunciation of the manual production of art and suggests a complex relationship between the living breast of his beloved mistress, the vanished breasts of the beauties of Pompeii, and the famous impressions in ash that made them present in perpetuity.*” Gardner Coates (2012) 120-1. Once again, therefore, an intrinsically irreconcilable link between original, relic and simulacrum is set up in relation to the vestiges of Pompeii, serving to bestow the latter, the simulacrum, with an ambiguous and unsettling agency of the kind articulated in response to the phallic votives of Isernia and subsequently refracted multiple times through engagement with Osiris mythology, the analysis of post-ancient iconography, archaeo-erotic fiction and rise and popularisation of psychoanalysis.

<sup>394</sup> *Handbook to the Historical Medical Museum* (1913) Sir Henry Wellcome.

<sup>395</sup> A letter dated 8th August 1930 from Lydia Einsler, a scholar and archaeologist of Jewish and Biblical studies, to Peter Johnston-Saint, one of Wellcome’s foremost itinerant purchasing agents, describes the nature of Einsler’s collection which Wellcome was at this time interested in buying: in response to Johnstone-Saint’s enquiry as to a “collection of Palestinian herbs particularly relative to folk-lore”, Einsler writes that her collection is “composed principally of amulets and writings concerning the evil eye, the fear of demons, the prevention of disease and healing of illnesses, etc.”, conveying the extent to which apotropaic-type material and objects for healing were deemed to go hand-in-hand as late as the early twentieth century. Wellcome Collection: WA/HMM/CO/Chr/G.5. For more on Wellcome, see Turner (1980), Larson (2009), Olsen & Arnold (2003).

and “Blue Glass Beads for Bronchitis” [Fig. 49], illustrating the extent to which the application of ‘practical’ medicine was at the forefront of categorising and conceptualising abstruse or magical apotropaic-type items. The Pitt Rivers museum collection also contained several accoutrements of traditional medicine, and the Folklore Society regularly published on “folk medicine” and “plant lore”, including “Wart and Wen Cures”, “Folk-lore in Relation to Psychology and Education” and “Székely Folk-Medicine” as part of their wider investigation of superstition and folk belief.<sup>396</sup> In his *Golden Bough*, Sir James Frazer made use of the language of biomedicine to communicate and categorise his ideas, popularising the use of terminology such as “contagion” and “homoeopathic” in connection with this subject matter, as could subsequently be seen in the object labels at the Pitt Rivers Museum.<sup>397</sup>

This later characterisation of apotropaic objects as medicinal or as representing primordial or primitive medical solutions should be attributed to the parallel interest of scholars of religion in early medical thought – or at least, their characterisation of ancient religion as such. Much of Jane Harrison’s work was patently concerned with the supposedly biomedical dimension to Greek Religion. For example, in Chapter Five of her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (first published 1903), entitled ‘The demonology of Ghosts, Sprites and Bogeys’, Harrison describes the role of the κήρ, goddess/spirit of death, as a “bacillus”.<sup>398</sup> Commenting on the end of an Orphic Hymn to Herakles, she declares: “The primitive Greek leapt by his religious imagination to the forecast of the truth that it has taken science centuries to establish, i.e. the fact that disease is caused by little live things, germs – bacilli we call them, he used the word Keres.”<sup>399</sup> The subsequent investigation of ancient religion thus went hand-in-hand with the conceptualisation of apotropaim, the latter being the mechanism by which ancient peoples were viewed to have ritually

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<sup>396</sup> The latter article was based upon “F. Kozma’s Inaugural Address, given before the Hungarian Academy of Science (May 8, 1882), entitled, ‘Mythological Elements in Székely Folk-Lore and Folk-Life’” and such a scientific forum for this kind of investigation is testament to the ambiguous, quasi-medical intellectual space inhabited by such topics and the research conducted into them.

<sup>397</sup> Frazer (1922) 11.

<sup>398</sup> Harrison (1908) 167.

<sup>399</sup> Harrison (1908) 167. The influence of Cambridge Ritualists such as Harrison on the medico-historical sphere is evident in the work of Fielding Hudson Garrison MD, whose articulation of the dialectic between the Olympian and Chthonic owes much to Harrison’s *Prolegomena*. See Hudson Garrison (1919) 35-51.

responded to the demonic causes of disease. In 1919, the celebrated doctor and medical historian Fielding Hudson Garrison contributed an article entitled 'The Gods of the Underworld in Ancient Medicine' to Volume V of *The Proceedings of the Charaka Club*. Garrison writes:

*"At the back of the worship of the Olympian or celestial gods, the religion of duty or daily life, there existed a darker, obscurer cult, that of the so-called **Chthonian deities** of the earth and underworld, the religion of fear. These, like the celestial divinities, had **overlapping medical functions.**"*

Going on to talk about rites of expurgation and the notion of 'miasma' as a cause of disease in ancient thought, Garrison thus discusses ancient Greco-Roman apotropaism:

*"**Prophylactic medicine**, as adumbrated in the classical literature, was threefold: (1) **Apotropaic**, designed to avert disease by prayers and sacrifice; (2) **Hilastic**, designed to abort disease by rites of propitiation or atonement; (3) **Cathartic**, designed to rid the body of disease by individual rites of purification or lustration."*

The Charaka Club itself was formed in 1898 by a group of five doctors with the purpose of exploring the "literary, artistic and historical aspects of medicine" (indeed, the society was originally called the 'Medico-Historical Club'; in 1900, the name was changed to the Charaka Club after the legendary Indian physician who compiled a book of ancient medical texts). This group's interest in the apotropaic and their situation of it in early medical practice is emblematic of the extent to which, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the distinction between apotropaic practice and objects and those of traditional medicine or disease prevention was not finite.

When it came to recovering the function or power attributed to apotropaic objects by their ancient users/creators, a parallel interest in the development of medical knowledge thus encouraged nineteenth-century thinkers to think about such material – often termed "charms" or "amulets" - in prophylactic terms, figuring their agency to be grounded in aversion, pre-emption or remedy, their usage/application based in contact or imitation (in his investigation of "Blue Glass Beads for Bronchitis",

Lovett records that the amulets were “always worn beneath the neck or collar of the dress and therefore were not visible...” and that “they are put on the necks of very young children and never taken off, not even when the wearers are washed or bathed...”), and the significance of their material qualities – colour; resemblance to, or imitation of, another material; portability; and aesthetic qualities deemed counteractive of symptoms – thus concerned with being able to effect external forces. Accordingly, much of the discourse on, and collation of, apotropaic objects thought about in therapeutic terms during this period resembled the concepts which would be outlined by Sir James Frazer:

*“If we analyse the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. [...] Charms based on the Law of Similarity may be called Homoeopathic or Imitative Magic. Charms based on the Law of Contact or Contagion may be called Contagious Magic. To denote the first of these branches of magic the term Homoeopathic is perhaps preferable, for the alternative term Imitative or Mimetic suggests, if it does not imply, a conscious agent who imitates, thereby limiting the scope of magic too narrowly.”<sup>400</sup>*

Therefore, a parallel and intrinsically overlapping interest in the history of medicine, and thus the conceptualisation of apotropaic objects as healing objects, should be recognised for its role in enacting the ideological shift from the identification of the phallus as fertility icon to that of an apotropaic device. For this conceptualisation of ritual, religion *and* superstition as medicine critically saw apotropaic-type objects conceived of in active, effecting ways.<sup>401</sup> In conceiving of ancient religion as primitive

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<sup>400</sup> Frazer (1922) 11.

<sup>401</sup> Indeed, as late as 1928 Sir Henry Wellcome drew links between traditional belief, religion and medical development of the kind which saw the concretisation of the apotropaic artefact as an agent of power and outward enchantment: “in all the ages the preservation of health and life has been uppermost in the minds of living beings, hence the omni-present medicine man and the religio-medico or priest-physician”. Wellcome (1928); cited in Turner (1980) 37-8.

medical knowledge, the ritual objects and icons of religion were dually thought about in what was essentially apotropaic terms, in being worshipped or used in ritual they were also able to ward off, cancel out, or provide remedy. This framework for thinking about religion and its applications enabled the phallus to shift from religious icon to an apotropaic-type one, too. The agency of the apotropaic was thus born of an era which saw the growing interconnection of investigation into folklorism and superstition, religious practice, and medical history.<sup>402</sup> Therefore, a parallel and intrinsically overlapping interest in the history of medicine, and thus the conceptualisation of apotropaic objects as healing objects, should be recognised for its role in enacting the ideological shift from the identification of the phallus as fertility icon (as established by Knight) to that of an apotropaic device.

## **Bad Objects: Misbehaving Artefacts and Disquieting Tokens in the Fin de Siècle**

The nineteenth century was characterised more widely by the creation of, and interest in, uncanny and ‘animate’ objects. Indeed, much of the agency attributed to - and palpable contemporaneous anxiety surrounding - such objects can similarly be attributed to an Isernian sense of resemblance, substitution or archaism, which we can in turn identify as having much in common with a modern sense of apotropaism. The Baetyl was a term given to sacred stones that were believed to be imbued with life, of comparable interest to antiquarians and anthropologists as “**fetish objects of worship...meteoric stones, which were dedicated to the gods or **revered as symbols of the gods themselves****”.<sup>403</sup> *Le Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines de Daremberg et Saglio* says of baetylia:

*“Une des formes primitives des cultes idolâtriques a été la litholâtrie. On la retrouve dans l’état de barbarie chez presque toutes les races humaines, car avant la naissance des arts, dans le culte fétichiste des*

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<sup>402</sup> See also Rivers (1915).

<sup>403</sup> Chisholm for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1911) Volume 3: 191-2. See also Munter, *Über die vom Himmel gefallenen Steine* (1805); Bösigk *De Baetyliis* (1854); and the exhaustive article by F. Lenormant in Daremberg and Saglio's *Dictionary of Antiquities*.



*premiers âges, bae [sic.] une pierre informe dressée fut un des objets dont on se servit pour représenter la divinité et offrir un signe sensible aux adorations.”<sup>404</sup>*

Indeed, such objects were considered evidence of litholatry, which by definition entailed the perplexing bestowal of power and animacy on intrinsically inanimate material. They were similarly considered universal and primordial, their “fetishistic” character deemed to be “manifest” (“*sensible*”) to worshippers in an age of embryonic iconography. Thus a similarly ambiguous agency was identified in conjunction with other ancient religious material culture by nineteenth-century thinkers (indeed, “*la pierre conique*”, the conical incarnation of the baetyl, was considered to be intentionally evocative of the erect phallus itself - “*dont la forme imitait celle du phallus dressé*”).<sup>405</sup>

The way such archaeological and anthropological objects captured the popular imagination is once again testified in fiction-writing of this era. For example, Richard Marsh’s *The Goddess: A Demon* (1900) describes the events which taken place when an Indian sacrificial idol comes to life with intent to murder, and in *The Joss: A Reversion* (1901), an Englishman actually *transforms* himself into a frightening oriental idol. A central element of many of Marsh’s stories, then, involves the supernatural agency of distinctly archaeological or anthropological items, their coming to life constituting a key narrative plot device. The same can even be said of Marsh’s most famous work, *The Beetle* (1897), in which a shape-shifting ancient Egyptian spirit seeks to exact a grim fate on a member of British Parliament, given that the villain of the tale is clearly inspired by ancient Egyptian scarab objects and the cult of Isis. Indeed, Marsh’s antiquarian and ethnological character-objects were also frequently invested with contemporary esoteric or occult qualities, highlighting the characteristically fin-de-siècle context for this fascination with inorganic demonhood: *The Beetle* also involves an obscure Isis cult – a popular object of appropriation by nineteenth-century Western Esotericism - and the concept of transmigration, the latter being a preoccupation of contemporary Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, the same sorts of nineteenth-century pseudo-intellectual circles which

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<sup>404</sup> Lenormant (1873-1919) 642.

<sup>405</sup> See also Butcher (2003) 281-343.

also revived and took inspiration from Payne Knight's 1786 *Discourse*, and who subsequently characterised the phallic image in magical terms.

Contemporary to Gautier's works, fragmented biological material signalled a similarly perplexing socio-cultural agency in the form of the boom in European fashion for jewellery made from or incorporating human hair [Fig. 50].<sup>406</sup> This practice is most closely associated with mourning, the hair of the deceased loved one thus being transformed into a wearable, non-perishable keepsake. As opposed to most other biological matter, human hair does not decay, possessing of chemical qualities that enable it to last for hundreds of years – in this way, it thus had an intrinsically dialectical nature, being at once 'non-biological' in its permanence, whilst also serving as an eternalisation of the very transient, biological tenor of human existence. The popularity of such material in this era is therefore highly comparable to the responses to Campanian phallic artefacts, their fixity and objectification intrinsically at odds with the vulnerability and vitality they simultaneously conveyed, their perceived capacity to function as synecdoche akin to the use of hair as memento for a whole person. Indeed, Lutz writes: "Nineteenth-century Britain saw a resurgence in relic culture, which became, like other death rites, increasingly secular, personal, and private. The relic, most commonly jewellery set with human hair, became a popular plot device in the novel, but also, or perhaps because, it had its own narrative qualities."<sup>407</sup> Similarly: hairwork ornaments could clearly be considered relics, but might also be considered substitutes for a portrait of the sort one might wear in a locket, a simulacrum, and their being transformed into a piece of wearable jewellery perhaps in possessing of apotropaic-type significance for the wearer. Altogether, the long nineteenth century can be characterised by a wider fascination for, and desire to understand, the kind of uncanny, pseudo-biological objecthood as detected in the Isernian wax phalli.

The nineteenth-century acquisitions of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford are emblematic of this era's distinctive anthropological fascination for agent objects. The museum amassed a vast array of apotropaic-type material during this period,

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<sup>406</sup> Lutz (2011) 127-142.

<sup>407</sup> Lutz (2011) 128.

frequently catalogued as “amulets” or “charms”, this clearly being a notable preoccupation of anthropologists and folklorists of the era. A “lump of clay stuck with pins and glass, used in sympathetic magic” was collected and displayed by the museum in 1893 [Fig. 51]. This item was acquired from Norfolk, England, and was also classified as an “amulet” and “religious object”.<sup>408</sup> Other catalogued objects from this time period, including “Prince Ducoqui chief on the Gaboon river a bag of charms for safety on the water” (PRM 1884.56.49 .1-9) and “Band with large stone beads used as an amulet, Africa” (PRM 1884.140.257), convey the clear fascination with objects attributed with apotropaic-type power. This category was evidently a very fluid one, and objects characterised by analogous supernatural power which was similarly grounded in their material status or qualities also comprise a notable part of the collection. For example, “idols”, “crucifixes” and “votives” recur frequently throughout the museum’s records. A catalogue entry reading “fragments of tree with pieces of rag attached used as votive offerings (white quartz and small fragments of wood used as votive offerings at holy wells at the present time in Ireland for the cure of diseases)” (PRM 1884.140.332) refers to objects which appear to resemble apotropaia in their function, yet are described as “votives” and “votive offerings”, terms which patently connote religiosity and reciprocity and reiterate our convictions as to the role of the contemporary study of ancient and ‘primitive’ religion and its associated material culture in facilitating the gradual, quasi-religious articulation of material apotropaia. Similarly, a “Prayer Relic, belonged to the late Archbishop Amber Salama Abyssinia” (unknown inv. number) was no doubt of interest for the sanctity it embodied and with which its fabric might still resonate, having been touched by a holy person and used to commune with the divine.<sup>409</sup> These examples illustrate the slipperiness of the object categories and classifications which, for the nineteenth-century audience, demonstrated magical materialism encompassing apotropaism, sympathetic magic and uncanny representational states.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> PRM Inv. 1893.81.3.

<sup>409</sup> Listed as part of ‘Idols Series’ by the *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers: Analysing the Activities of a Nineteenth-Century Collector* project, Pitt Rivers Museum (Sept 2009 – August 2012). Date Accessed: February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>410</sup> For more on the history of the Pitt Rivers and its collection, see O’Hanlon (2014) and Gosden (2007). For on Victorian fetishism, see Melville Logan (2009).

## Conclusions

All together, the interpretative issues posed by the Isernian wax phallic votives, as well as the ways in which they were characterised in order to suit the socio-political and intellectual agenda of certain eighteenth-century thinkers, had long-term effects on the reception of material hailing from or creatively-situated in ancient Campania, as well as objects later deemed to be resemblant or 'archaeological' in nature. The Isernian phalluses raised questions as to the possible distinctions between representational states and the implications of these distinctions for reception and belief. The contemplation of semiotic status they triggered served to nurture the perceived ambiguity of phallic objects and their agency, which was increasingly resolved – in line with growing nineteenth-century fascination for *curiosa*, *arcana* and fetish-type objects - by attributing to them magical or totemic qualities. Indeed, later nineteenth-century culture more widely was distinctly characterised by intellectual and socio-cultural engagement with uncanny, deviant or magical objects, which was patently inspired by contemporaneous anthropological and archaeological activity, and of which an apotropaic object can be considered emblematic – both in its functional, supernatural characteristics, but also in its evocation of ancient or exotic 'otherness'.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Hic Habitat Felicitas: Michele Arditì on the Fascinum*

*“E ’l solo motivo di sottrarre da sì fatta idea turpe quegli Scavi Regali (i quali, nel tempo stesso che sottoposti sono alla mia Soprantendenza, formano l’ammirazione dell’ universo) ha potuto eccitar la mia penna a schiccherare rapidamente questa Memoria, qualunque sia.”<sup>411</sup>*

Michele Arditì (1825)

As the previous chapters have shown, modern scholarship on the history of interpreting Campanian phallic artefacts particularly emphasises the role of Richard Payne Knight and his theories on universal phallic worship, outlined by him in the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786). However, it is clear that there were in fact a number of ideas circulating during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seeking to make sense of these problematic objects, as well as bodies of discourse on other, interconnected themes – such as southern-Italian folk practices – which fed into the ways in which the apotropaic phallus was being conceived of and characterised. One such tract which comprehensively articulated phallic apotropaism, but which has been almost entirely overlooked in recent historiography on the concept, is Michele Arditì’s *Il fascino, e l’amuleto contro del fascino, presso gli antichi illustrazione di un antico basso-rilievo rinvenuto in un forno della città di Pompei* (1825). This short treatise ostensibly focused on one particular phallic artefact from Pompeii: a red stucco relief from a bakery showing an erect phallus, accompanied by the words ‘HIC HABITAT FELICITAS’ (MANN Inv. 27741, now held in the *Gabinetto Segreto*) [Figs. 52 & 54]. Arditì was the Supervisor of the Royal Fieldworks from 1807 until his death in 1838, and was therefore intimately connected with the process of excavating, cataloguing, curating and disseminating the Campanian finds, as well as with the contemporary socio-political backdrop of the excavations.<sup>412</sup> The self-declared objective of his

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<sup>411</sup> Arditì (1825) 45.

<sup>412</sup> [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/michele-arditi\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/michele-arditi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) Date Accessed: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018.

treatise was to “clear the name of the city of Pompeii...commonly considered a place of public dissoluteness.”<sup>413</sup> So, what did Arditì actually say about the purpose and meaning of Pompeian phallic imagery? Furthermore, how did Arditì’s ideas relate – or alternatively, *not* relate – to the apparently prevailing concept of universal phallic worship?

In his treatise, Arditì asserts that the Pompeian phallus was an apotropaic symbol set up against the evil eye, as opposed to an advertisement for the sale of sex, which he attests was commonly believed by foreign visitors and asserted by other scholars. Arditì’s position in the context of Campanian archaeology at this time makes his advocacy of this interpretation especially significant; he was, moreover, the first to discuss the apotropaic meaning of the phallus specifically in regard to its context and function in the social and urban fabric of Pompeii. His work is emblematic of the ways in which modernity has approached ancient phallic symbolism at Pompeii through the seemingly ‘opposing’ notions of obscenity and apotropaism. However, Arditì is noticeably underacknowledged in comparison with figures such as Payne Knight, meaning that many modern scholars of the Vesuvian cities do not realise the significance of *Il fascino*, having come across its ideas several times removed through the work of others. Several of the most prominent scholars to have worked on the topic of Pompeian archaeological taxonomies, the period of the Bourbon excavations or the history of the *Gabinetto Segreto* all exhibit a solely derivative awareness of Arditì’s treatise, which amounts only to repeated indirect citation of his work: for example De Caro and Gaimster both cite what was originally Arditì’s anecdote detailing that, in 1819, King Francis I<sup>st</sup> of the Two Sicilies (whilst he was still known as the Prince Regent and Duke of Calabria) was the one to suggest that a ‘secret cabinet’ be created for the obscene archaeological material, yet none of them - despite dealing directly with the taxonomy and interpretation of provocative artefacts - explore Arditì’s own take on these issues.<sup>414</sup> Arditì himself is, therefore,

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<sup>413</sup> Arditì (1825) iv.

<sup>414</sup> “In February 1819, the heir to the Neapolitan throne, the future Francesco I (1825-30), visited the museum, by then transferred to the *Palazzo degli Studi*, with his wife and daughter. He suggested that ‘it would be a good idea to withdraw all the obscene objects, of whatever material they may be made, to a private room.’” Gaimster (2000). Similarly, De Caro writes: “In 1819 the heir to the throne, who reigned as Francesco I from 1825-1830, visited the Museum with his wife Maria Isabella and daughter Luisa Carlotta, and averred that ‘it would be as well to confine all the obscene objects, of whatever

notably absent from historiographical scholarship on phallic artefacts and our development of the classification of apotropaism, our fixation with censorship once again overshadowing and reducing a broader and more textured history of ideas. Indeed, Arditì is entirely absent from Johns' 1982 *Sex or Symbol?*, which dwells almost exclusively on Payne Knight's *Discourse* which - as we have now seen - did **not actually state** that the phallus is apotropaic. Only Beard acknowledges that the story concerning King Francis I<sup>st</sup> can be traced back to a figure called Arditì:

"[the Secret Cabinet] was established in 1819 in the Museo Borbonico...behind the scheme was the museum director Michele Arditì – though a few years later (in the **final footnote of a little tract** in which he argued that the phallic symbolism of the ancient world was **not a sign of erotic excess, but a weapon against the evil eye**) he went out of his way to credit the future King Francis I<sup>st</sup> with the idea."<sup>415</sup>

The fact that this potentially incendiary assertion, which would have directly contradicted prevailing taxonomies of such material – both in the nineteenth century and today – is not unpacked further by Beard is emblematic of the insufficiencies of existing scholarship on this aspect of the history of classical archaeology.

## Absolving Pompeii: Motive and Method

Arditì states that his motivation for writing *Il Fascino* was to "**clear the name of the city of Pompeii**, where the Bas-relief has been found, which is **commonly considered** a place of **public dissoluteness** [literally: *scagionare* – "exonerate" - *dalli idea comune di pubblica dissolutezza*]."<sup>416</sup> Introducing the *HIC HABITAT FELICITAS* bas-relief which will comprise the central case study of his exposition, along with the apparently typical responses to it on the part of visitors the archaeological excavations, Arditì explains the problem at hand:

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*material, in one room, the only people allowed to visit this room being of mature age and proven morality*'. Thus the Royal Bourbon Museum officially instituted the 'Cabinet of Obscene Objects'..." De Caro (2013) 12.

<sup>415</sup> Beard (2012) 62.

<sup>416</sup> Arditì (1825) iv.

*“At the sight of the phallus and of the accompanying words, one would immediately think that this place was devoted to dissoluteness and sensual pleasures. This is the opinion of many erudite foreigners, who every day visit our Fieldworks. And they would be even more convinced if they had read what our Father Pietro d’Onofri, Priest of the Oratory, wrote. In his Elogium to the glorious memory of Charles III, talking about the excavations in Pompeii, he states that this excavation started in 1755 (which is untrue), and on the main city door, which was found at that time, a sculpted phallus was discovered and is still visible today (which is even more untrue): starting from these premises, he concludes that the whole city was devoted to the filthiest indecency [dedicata alla più sordida impudicizia], and for this reason it deserved, like Sodoma, God’s fire punishment.”<sup>417</sup>*

Later on in the tract, Arditì gives a more specific idea of what he means by the town being deemed “devoted to dissoluteness and sensual pleasures”:

*“...it is undoubted that the foreign scholars’ vile interpretation of that place [in which the HIC HABITAT FELICITAS plaque was found] as a public brothel is wrong. A brothel, they say? Recently another bakery has been discovered in Pompeii, and similarly there is a phallus on top of it. Was also this bakery, then, a brothel? And all the other bakeries that most likely will be discovered from now on, similarly having the image of a phallus engraved upon them, are these also to be interpreted as brothels? [...] the only reason why I have decided quickly to write this essay was to distance [sottrarre] these Royal Fieldworks (which under my Supervision inspire worldwide admiration [formano 1’ ammirazione dell’ universo]) from such an indecent interpretation [idea turpe].”<sup>418</sup>*

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<sup>417</sup> Arditì (1825) 1-2. Based on its sin, D’Onofri says that Pompeii thus deserved “like Sodoma, God’s fire punishment”, referring to the Judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah as told in *Genesis* 18–19. Indeed, at Pompeii IX.1.26, a graffito reading SODOM[A] GOMORA (*CIL* IV.4976), inscribed before the eruption by someone with knowledge of the Old Testament, was found. See Cooley & Cooley (2004) 109-10.

<sup>418</sup> Arditì (1825) 44-5.



Arditi thus frames his essay as a direct rebuttal to the idea that every building exhibiting a phallus in Pompeii must have been a brothel, an interpretation which he thus considers to be responsible for nurturing a myth of sybaritic levels of prostitution at the town.<sup>419</sup> Indeed, the interpretation of phallic images as brothel signs can be traced back to the early reports on the site: in 1771, the members of the *Reale Accademia Ercolanese di Archeologia*, the learned committee of Neapolitan scholars tasked with elucidating and publishing the principal finds from the royal excavations, interpreted a plaque sculpted with a phallus on the facade of a shop (VI.17.3-4) near the Herculaneum Gate in Pompeii as advertising a *cubiculum Venerium* [Fig. 53].<sup>420</sup> Similarly, tourist accounts of the site attest that some visitors did indeed interpret/were told to interpret the phalluses in this way: in the *Annual Register* of 1805, a visitor returned from Pompeii describes the phallus as “the indecent symbol of the brothel”;<sup>421</sup> in 1835, Joseph Forsyth lists a couple of options for its purpose - “some think it the sign of a brothel; others, of an amulet manufactory”;<sup>422</sup> and in the early twentieth century, Parke wrote that “the sign of the brothel was a clay phallus, baked or painted.”<sup>423</sup> Arditi’s primary argument is that of a case of mistaken identity, therefore; he seeks to redress the balance by shedding light on *another* function of phallic imagery, that of it being a device against the evil eye. His exposition of phallic apotropaism is therefore instrumental in his absolution of the site before the global public.

Equally, through the vehicle of Pompeii and its global profile, Arditi might also be indirectly addressing a wider issue with representation of *modern* Campania, which had become known as a locus of sorts for pleasure and immorality amongst grand tourists. Indeed, given also the patronage of his tract, how much did this “*idea comune*” Arditi was aiming to refute also apply to the Kingdom of Naples at this time? De Caro details how “the foreigners visiting Naples on the Grand Tour tended to indulge in ribaldry whenever the [erotic] collection was mentioned, and their

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<sup>419</sup> He does concede that there is indeed some evidence for prostitution. Arditi (1825) 2-3.

<sup>420</sup> Reale Accademia Ercolanese: *Le antichità di Ercolano esposte*, Volume VI, *De' bronzi di Ercolano e contorni incisi con qualche spiegazione* (Naples, 1771) 389-395, plate 96.

<sup>421</sup> Burke (1807).

<sup>422</sup> Forsyth (1835) 311.

<sup>423</sup> Parke (1906).

comments could be decidedly defamatory with respect to life and morals, both ancient and modern, in the Kingdom of Naples.”<sup>424</sup> Indeed, the Grand Tour was frequently connected in this period with the potential for sexual adventures, especially of a transgressive nature. Italy in particular was described the novelist John Cleland as a “torrid zone”, whose climate and geographical circumstances nurtured in its inhabitants a characteristically lax and sexually-deviant disposition; Daniel Defoe wrote in 1701 that “lust chose the torrid zone of Italy”; and the anonymous pamphlet *Satan’s Harvest Home* (1749) asserted that Roman Catholic Italy was the wellspring of all sexual debauchery.<sup>425</sup> Young men returning from travel abroad were often accused of having adopted foreign manners of exhibitionism and undue ostentation: such anxieties surrounding the effect of the Grand Tour can also be seen in satirist Charles Churchill’s *The Times* (1764). Immersing oneself in Campania past and present was widely connected with iniquity and aberrance, therefore, the socio-cultural import of the phallic discoveries thus extending beyond the archaeological excavations to be identified with a wider picture of cultural backwardness and ritual perversion.

## **Apotropaism as Absolution: Conflicting Ideas of Apotropaic Origins and Function**

In seeking to distance the bas-relief, and thus the site of Pompeii as a whole, from misguided accusations of prostitution, Arditi attempts to demonstrate the role of the phallus as an apotropaic device in ancient Campanian culture. He writes of the phallus that it was an amulet used to “neutralise” – “*da render vani*” – the harmful effects of fascination.<sup>426</sup> Critically, he attributes this capacity of the phallus to its humorousness. Suggesting that the apotropaic phallus likely started out as an “*oscena idea*” before eventually being considered “*buono a dileguare*”, capable of dispersing/extinguishing bad luck or ill will, Arditi explains:

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<sup>424</sup> De Caro (2013) 12.

<sup>425</sup> For more on this, see Findlen, Wassylng Roworth & Sama (2009); and Babini, Beccalossi & Riall (2015).

<sup>426</sup> Arditi (1825) 22.

*“...the ancients mainly used two types of amulets, which were completely different from each other. The first one consisted in bring **statuettes of Deities, Sovereigns, and other renowned Men...** used also a second type of amulet, which was **completely opposed to the first type** [totalment a quella prima contraria]: namely they used **hilarious and vile objects** [oggetti ridicoli e turpi], believing that, **since the sight of them generated much laughter** [la vista di quelli destando il riso], **this could drive away** [potessero allontanar] **the evil effects of enchantment.**”<sup>427</sup>*

Arditi thus appears to make a distinction between purely sexual imagery – i.e., that which pertains to the sale of sex (cf. his concession regarding evidence of prostitution) – and those images with a more abstract meaning. However, he also reckons obscenity to be the very source of this abstract power which differentiates certain uses of the phallus from those which he considers as having unfairly earned Pompeii a shameful reputation. Arditi’s absolution of Pompeii and his concern for its debauched disrepute does not comprise, therefore, simply distancing the site’s ubiquitous phalluses from obscenity, but rather putting that obscenity to different ends. Does apotropaism thus constitute a higher, excusable purpose, or is it the notion of unchecked prostitution which was the problem here? If the latter is indeed the case, we might consider once again whether this was because it was being tied to a more modern problem of perceived immorality and derision in the modern Neapolitan Kingdom itself.

Therefore, Arditi asserts that the humour and ridicule elicited by phallic imagery was the source of its apotropaic power, laughter and comicality being opposed to - and therefore able to avert or remove - the ill effects of fascination. Arditi’s tract claims to have drawn upon several particular sources for this idea: a closer look at the work of these other commentators, however, complicates Arditi’s case. The first of these is the work of Conyers Middleton (1683-1750), an English clergyman and alumnus of Trinity College, Cambridge, whose life was marked by regular controversies and disputes (including the acquisition of his title Doctor of

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<sup>427</sup> Arditi (1825) 12-15.

Divinity in 1717), who dabbled in classical scholarship in the later years of his life, including a work on the life of Cicero [Fig. 55].<sup>428</sup> Middleton spent much of the years 1724-5 in Rome, which provided the inspiration for his infamous 1729 *Letter from Rome, showing an Exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism*, in which he theorised on the pagan origins of Catholic religious practices - a work which was cited by Sir William Hamilton in his 1781 letter prefacing Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786).<sup>429</sup> Arditi writes: "About the last type of amulet, as Middleton says, *ex omni amuletorum classe nihil certe valentius habebatur, quam pudenda virilis effigies* [among all types of amulets, surely the **most powerful** was the **image of the male genitals**]."<sup>430</sup> This assertion is taken from Middleton's *Germana quaedam antiquitatis eruditae monumenta* (1745). In his footnotes, Arditi carefully cites Middleton's explanations for the efficacy of the phallus as an apotropaic device: "The author finds **[three] reasons** for which the ancients [*la credula antichità*] abandoned themselves [*siasi abbandonata*] to this stupid and filthy [*a questa idea quanto laida, altrettanto sciocca*] belief...".<sup>431</sup> Middleton writes:

*"Quippe figurae huius turpitudine repulsus, ut Plutarchus ait, 'malignorum intuitus, ab homine ipso avertatur' [Plutarch Quaestiones Conviviales V.7.3<sup>432</sup>]: sive, ut alii dicunt, Deus ipse Priapus tanquam fascinantium omnium, seu invidentium vindex, ultorque praesens, colebatur [Diodorus Siculus Bibliotheca IV.6.4.<sup>433</sup>]."*<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Dussinger (2004).

<sup>429</sup> Hamilton wrote of his discovery of the ritual involving wax phallic votives in Isernia that it "offers a fresh proof of the similitude of the Popish and Pagan Religion, so well observed by Dr Middleton, in his celebrated Letter from Rome." Hamilton (1781) in Payne Knight (1865) 3.

<sup>430</sup> Arditi (1825) 17.

<sup>431</sup> Arditi (1825) 17, note 1.

<sup>432</sup> "διὸ καὶ τὸ τῶν λεγομένων προβασκανίων γένος οἴονται πρὸς τὸν φθόνον ὠφελεῖν, ἐλκομένης διὰ τὴν ἀτοπίαν τῆς ὄψεως, ὥσθ' ἦπτον ἐπερείδειν τοῖς πάσχουσιν." ("And therefore, people imagine that those amulets that are preservative against witchcraft are likewise good and efficacious against envy; the sight by the strangeness of the spectacle being diverted, so that it cannot make so strong an impression upon the patient.") Translation Clement (1969).

<sup>433</sup> "This god is also called by some Ithyphallus, by others Tychon. Honours are accorded to him not only in the city, in the temples, but also throughout the countryside, where men set up his statue to watch over their vineyards and gardens and introduce him as one who punishes any who cast a spell over some fair thing which they possess. And in the sacred rites, not only of Dionysus but of practically all other gods as well, this god receives honour to some extent, being introduced in the sacrifices to the accompaniment of laughter and sport." Translation Oldfather (1935).

<sup>434</sup> Middleton (1745) 65.

Middleton first suggests that the phallus functions as an apotropaic device either due to its strangeness, which thus served to deflect fascination or envy from its intended target on account of being distracting. This seems to correspond with Arditì's own account. However, he then suggests that the phallus represents the god Priapus himself who, in embodying the very *essence* of fascination, deigns not to inflict his power on those who worship him suitably. According to this latter explanation, therefore, phallic artefacts are evidence of a kind of pre-emptive transactional worship of a cult to a phallic god with the power to bewitch, their apotropaic power thus grounded not in aversive obscenity, but in their status as votive icons set up in exchange for being spared from misfortune. In this option, it is Priapus who provides the negative threat towards which phallic apotropaism is directed, rather than a more abstract conceptualisation of the evil eye, envy or misfortune. Priapus' being phallic and, according to Middleton, thus being the embodiment of fascination – the very power of the phallic *fascinum* – is to some extent alluded to in more recent scholarship seeking to deconstruct the phallus' apotropaic power.<sup>435</sup> This ambiguous dynamic is reflected in Arditì's own title, *Il fascino, e l'amuleto contro del fascino*. Whilst being opposed to fascination (St Augustine: "the god Liber was to be propitiated, in order to secure the growth of seeds and to repel enchantment [*fascinatio*] from the fields", *De Civitate Dei* 7.21<sup>436</sup>), the phallus was also at times considered to be endowed with it (Middleton). What, therefore, was fascination? How did a phallus 'fascinate'? This conundrum is today most closely addressed by those scholars, such as Clarke, who consider the phallus' power to be grounded in its ability to incite laughter: indeed Clarke, one of the only scholars of Campanian phallic imagery to exhibit an awareness of Arditì's ideas on apotropaism, wrote in a footnote of his 2007 *Looking at Laughter* that he considers the latter's tract "still useful".<sup>437</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that our modern sense of the phallus' comicality and the apotropaic potential

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<sup>435</sup> See Warner Slane and Dickie (1993), Dunbabin & Dickie (1983). Katherine Dunbabin outlines the particular dangers of the baths: Dunbabin (1989) 6-46.

<sup>436</sup> Translation Dyson (2002).

<sup>437</sup> Clarke (2007) 255, note 23.

correspondingly attributed to this – Clarke’s “ritual laughter”<sup>438</sup> - can essentially be traced back to Arditì, given Clarke’s respective prominence on the topic.<sup>439</sup>

Middleton offers a third reason for the Roman choice of a phallus as an apotropaic emblem. He infers it from Herodotus, who writes “[In Aegypto] *in Bacchi sacris, mulieres statuas quasdam cubitales per pagos circumferebant, quas nervis seu fidiculis intus dispositis tractae, membra sua movere, spontaneo quasi motu, videbantur: Fascino praesertim, quod reliquam fere statuam magnitudine exaequabat, hinc inde nutante.*”<sup>440</sup> In Book Two of his *Histories*, Herodotus describes the supposed Egyptian forerunner of the Greek festival to Dionysus and, focusing on the Greek ‘interpretation’ of its phallic elements, declares that “These customs, then, and others besides...were taken by the Greeks from the Egyptians.” (“ταῦτα μὲν νῦν καὶ ἄλλα πρὸς τούτοισι, τὰ ἐγὼ φράσω, Ἕλληνες ἀπ’ Αἰγυπτίων νενομίκασι.”) Taking Herodotus’ deductions a step further, Middleton concludes that “*Hic idem Fascini cultus e Graecia deinde Romam transiit, ubi Phalli ingentis erectique species, e columna marmorea seu ligna exsculpta atque extans, qualis in sculpturis interdum antiquis cernitur, sub Priapi, Mutini, vel Fascini nomine, divinos plane honores obtinuit.*”<sup>441</sup> Egypt is thus conceived of as a well-spring for Greek and Roman mythology, religious practices and visual symbolism (in much the same way that the Isis and Osiris myth, reported by Plutarch, was considered archetypal of primordial beliefs by D’Hancarville and Knight). The phallus’ apotropaism was not grounded in its obscenity in this case, either, but was owed to its being an adaptation and a survival of a more ancient, mysterious practice, its meaning reconfigured by later cultures to the point that, eventually, the phallus itself had been transformed, erroneously, into an object of reverence, facilitated by the cult of exclusively phallic gods.

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<sup>438</sup> Clarke (2007) 19.

<sup>439</sup> Described by Fisher & Langlands as “the leading classical art historian in the field”, they cite his belief that phalluses were not signs to the brothel but “talismans to bring good luck to passersby”; Clarke & Larvey (2003) 98-9, cited in Fisher & Langlands (2009) 181-2, note 35. In 2007, Clarke elaborated on the phallus’ role as a “talisman”, deeming its power to be fundamentally grounded in “ritual laughter”. Clarke (2007) 14, and passim.

<sup>440</sup> Middleton (1745) 70. Middleton’s Latin paraphrasing of Herodotus’ original Greek; *Histories* Book II.48-51.

<sup>441</sup> Middleton (1745) 70.

In addition to Middleton, Arditì regularly cites the ideas of Paolo Alessandro Maffei in his exposition of phallic apotropaism. The text of Maffei's to which Arditì frequently refers is the *Gemme antiche figurate* (1707), published by Domenico de' Rossi. Maffei (1653 –1716), an antiquarian with a humanist education, is highly familiar to art historians for his collaborations with the entrepreneurial printer-publisher Domenico de' Rossi. De' Rossi published a collection of engravings of ancient and modern Roman sculpture, *Raccolta di statue antiche e moderne* (Rome, 1704), for which he turned to the well-known antiquarian Maffei for suitably learned descriptive text, for what was in effect the first eighteenth-century art book. The sumptuous folio volumes concentrated on the most well-known ancient sculptures together with a handful of modern ones found in prominent collections. A further volume concerned with engraved gems - a popular pursuit for aristocratic collectors (and one rife with excellent sixteenth- and seventeenth-century fakes) – was to follow, *Gemme antiche figurate date in luce da Domenico de' Rossi colle sposizioni di Paolo Alessandro Maffei* (1707). Arditì draws upon Maffei's discussion of one gem in particular, described by Maffei as illustrating a "*Sagrifizio Phallico*" (Plate XLI) [Fig. 56]. In his "*Osservazioni*" on the piece, Maffei likewise decrees that "...il culto di Priapo ebbe origine in Egitto, e che dall' Egitto passò in Grecia" ("...the cult of Priapus originated in Egypt, and that from Egypt it passed into Greece").<sup>442</sup> He too cites Herodotus for this genealogy – "...come appunto vien descritto da Erodoto..." – as well as Eusebius – "*Dionysi dies sexti (scrive Eusebio) et orgia cum honore huius membri fiebant, cuius simulacrum in mysteriis ferentes, phallum apellabant' ...*"<sup>443</sup> In turn, Maffei accordingly believes that "*Nell' Italia poi, dopo che vi fu trasportato, unì la pazza Idolatria il culto di lui con quello di Bacco seguendo l'esempio de' Greci*": that from Greece, phallic worship then took hold in Italy.<sup>444</sup>

Maffei subsequently conjectures, however, as to how what started out as a cult to the phallus became a superstitious mode of safeguarding one's wellbeing:

*"Convieni adunque da quanto s'è detto trarre argomento delle alte cagioni, ch' ebbero i Romani di bandire da Roma , e dall' Italia i Baccanali; il culto*

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<sup>442</sup> Maffei (1707) Volume III: 73-7.

<sup>443</sup> Maffei (1707) Volume III: 73-7.

<sup>444</sup> Maffei (1707) Volume III: 73-7.

*però di Priapo non solo vi rimase, ma egli stesso fu venerato, come custode degli orti , degli Imperadori , degli infanti , e de' trionfanti [...] Dunque una delle principali ragioni di venerar Priapo , come Dio , era quella di crederlo rimedio efficacissimo contro il fascino; onde a lui era confidata la custodia universale di quei , che venivano giudicati esser sottoposti a questo infortunio.”<sup>445</sup>*

Maffei believes that, when the Romans eventually “banished” bacchanalia from Italy, the “cult of Priapus” remained because “he himself was venerated, as guardian of the gardens, of the Emperors, of infants, and of the triumphant; [...] So one of the main reasons for revering Priapus, like God, was because he was believed a very effective remedy against fascination; on account of which he was entrusted with the universal protection of those who were judged to be susceptible to this form of injury...” Maffei therefore reckons that the apotropaism of the phallic image, born of Priapus’ particular cultic remit, actually served to establish his survival in Roman Italy. Indeed, Maffei conceives that “...perchè questo Dio fosse stimato presidente della generazione, donde anche era denominato Conservatore del mondo” (“...because this God was considered president of generation, he was also called Conservator of the world”), and thus that Priapus’ supervision of matters pertaining to the inception of life meant that he was configured as suitable for, or additionally capable of, safeguarding it.<sup>446</sup> This reasoning aligns more with later articulations of the phallus’ aetiology as fertility symbol, and is at odds with the significance Arditì attributes to its obscenity.

So far, therefore, Arditì’s use of both Middleton’s and Maffei’s ideas is not straightforward, the rationalisation provided by these sources not concretely aligning with his own exposition of the phallus’ apotropaism. In truth, Arditì’s account of the phallus’ apotropaic capability aligns more with the ideas later outlined by De Jorio in his discussion of the application of obscene hand gestures for protection in contemporary Neapolitan culture. Another figure seemingly central to informing Arditì’s defence of Pompeii and its artefacts was that of James Millingen (1774–1845),

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<sup>445</sup> Maffei (1707) Volume III: 73-7.

<sup>446</sup> Maffei (1707) Volume III: 73-7.



an archaeologist who, at a young age, was introduced to his passion for numismatics by Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode.<sup>447</sup> Millingen resided for much of his life in Italy, where he compiled valuable works on coins, medals, Etruscan vases, and kindred subjects.<sup>448</sup> He also supplied most of the great museums of Europe with their choicest specimens of ancient art, frequently offering his purchases to the trustees of the British Museum.<sup>449</sup> His extensive works include *Recueil de quelques Médailles Grecques inédites* (Rome, 1812); *Peintures antiques et inédites de Vases Grecs, avec des explications* (Rome, 1813); and *Ancient Coins of Greek Cities and Kings, from various collections . . . illustrated and explained* (London, 1831).<sup>450</sup> In 1818 he contributed a short article to *Archæologia*, the then-journal of the Society of Antiquaries, London, entitled, 'Some Observations on an Antique Bas-Relief, on which the Evil Eye, or *Fascinum*, is represented,' [Fig. 57] and it is to this work of Millingen's that Arditì regularly refers.<sup>451</sup> Millingen declares that "the charm most generally employed" against fascination was the phallus,

"...which on that account was placed on the doors of houses and gardens, on terminal figures, and was hung about the necks of women and children. In general, any obscene or ludicrous action or figures were thought efficacious... [...] It is sometimes remarkable by the action of putting out the tongue, any ridiculous or obscene action being considered...a preservative against fascination."<sup>452</sup>

Millingen suggests, therefore, that the key to the phallus' apotropaism was its comicality, it being symptomatic of wider cultural implementation of "ludicrous actions or figures" for amuletic purposes, just as Arditì himself asserts that it was able to "neutralise" fascination by "*destando il riso*". Millingen's observation that "a

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<sup>447</sup> Goodwin & Baigent (2004).

<sup>448</sup> Goodwin & Baigent (2004).

<sup>449</sup> Goodwin & Baigent (2004).

<sup>450</sup> Goodwin & Baigent (2004).

<sup>451</sup> *Archæologia* Volume XIX: 70-4; later reissued in a separate form in 1821/25. Interestingly, Millingen's brother John, a renowned physician who published on medical matters, also discusses the concept of the evil eye, in his *Curiosities of Medical Experience* (1839) (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), published by Richard Bentley. He discusses the evil eye on pages 29, 30, and 433, in the section on "Unlawful Cures" (19-31), and "Sympathies and Antipathies" (428-39) (this latter chapter being reminiscent of Harrison and the dialectic she sets up between *apotropaia* and *therapeia*).

<sup>452</sup> Millingen (1818) 72.

representation of the object **possessing the power of fascination** was also considered as a preservative or amulet" was likewise reflected in the title of Arditì's own tract on the subject.<sup>453</sup> Thus Millingen's work appears to have had the most in common with Arditì's own ideas, with the use of obscenity and grotesqueness not limited to the phallus and thus presented as a wider trait of ancient society. Millingen's take on the topic also aligns with that of De Jorio, who similarly pointed out the role of obscenity in contemporary Italian beliefs, which De Jorio considers ancient in origin. The concordance of these three thinkers on the topic of south-Italian folk beliefs and the way they represent a continuation from ancient Campanian culture is interesting. Firstly, Millingen's ideas clearly exhibit the influence of the body of predominantly Italian scholarship from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries on southern Italian culture and customs. Secondly, therefore, we must note that Arditì and De Jorio were speaking on this topic as Southern Italians: both Schnapp and Marzano have pointed out the effort, on De Jorio's part at least, to use discourse on such a topic to try and combat negative *foreign* impressions of the south of Italy.<sup>454</sup> Schnapp notes, for example, that whilst De Jorio was undoubtedly influenced by thinkers such as the Baron d'Hancarville, his approach to everyday life in Naples differed distinctly from that of French and English scholars, being "from the inside rather than with condescending detachment".<sup>455</sup> Millingen, as a British scholar, thus comprised one of the people who typically derided southern Italy; by contrast, however, he takes a very neutral approach to the belief, in fact commenting that "the same superstition prevails to the present day in several parts of the world, **even in the northern part of our Island**, and in Ireland".<sup>456</sup> Throughout his text, however, Arditì actually describes such beliefs as "*sciocca*"; though the extent to which he sincerely derided such practices is in fact somewhat ambiguous, and will be explored later on in this chapter.

Therefore, it is unclear the extent to which Arditì endorsed Middleton and Maffei's thoughts, drawn primarily from Herodotus and Eusebius, on the Bacchic-

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<sup>453</sup> Millingen (1818) 72.

<sup>454</sup> Marzano (2015); Schnapp (2000) 164; Schnapp (2013) 30-1.

<sup>455</sup> Schnapp (2000) 164.

<sup>456</sup> Millingen (1818) 71.

cult origins of the apotropaic phallus, as he does not directly incorporate this idea in his own text. Furthermore, it is perhaps unsurprising that, as Superintendent of the Royal Fieldworks, Arditì pointedly goes beyond established methods of literary-based conjecture to discuss the mechanics of phallic apotropaism in reference to material examples from the site of Pompeii itself. For example, he writes:

*“We should observe here two things: first, **that attached to the phallus usually there was an anulus superne annexus**, so that this could have been used as a pendant...Second, that according to the ancients, the boys were more vulnerable to the enchantment: this is said by Plutarch...Others used to **carry the phallus in a ring** [Arditi cites examples depicted by Winckelmann along with “*degli amuleti in generale*”]; Bartolino has provided us with a drawing of it [he cites an example on p398 of volume II of *De’ Bronzi* by the *Accademici Ercolanesi*]. Others, more triumphantly, carried the phallus hanging from the chariot [Arditi cites p392 of *De’ Bronzi*]. The peasants hung it up and carried it around in their fields [p72 of Volume IV by the *Accademici Ercolanesi*]. **Some others used the phallus to decorate their shops, and their doors** [p393 & 398 of *De’ Bronzi*].”<sup>457</sup>*

De Jorio also discussed the functional implications of real artefacts in his *La Mimica* – for example, he similarly highlighted the presence of rings for suspension, employing this very detail in his analysis of the use of horn imagery in contemporary Naples – and was also particularly engaged with the direct reading of actual material remains, making most of his deductions based on real examples from the sites.<sup>458</sup> He, too, was heavily involved with the excavations unfolding at the various sites across Campania, and indeed made his name in the archaeological sphere with a close reading of a figural bas-relief he discovered at Cumae; in fact, the work which ignited De Jorio’s career in archaeology, *Gli Scheletri Cumani* (1810), was heralded by a letter he wrote as a result of this discovery in 1809 to none other than Michele Arditì, Director of the

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<sup>457</sup> Arditì (1825) 18 note 5; 19-20.

<sup>458</sup> “The smallness of such rings [attached to the top of the horns] shows that they could not have been handles; and therefore, they must be considered to have been specially designed for hanging the item up. This is one of the qualities that seem inherent to the horn as an amulet...” De Jorio (1832) translation Kendon (2000) 158.

Royal Museum.<sup>459</sup> Indeed, Arditì and De Jorio moved in the same circle which oversaw the archaeological developments taking place in this era, and cited each other's work in their own.<sup>460</sup> In his tract, Arditì gives extensive detail on particular artefacts, demonstrating how his theories absolving Pompeii of its ill-deserved reputation for obscenity go hand-in-hand with familiar artefacts in well-known collections, illustrating how this symbolism played out not only functionally in the ancient social context but in tourist experience of the ancient sites and collections (for example, "I report here the **Borgian** Terracotta, representing a Gladiator with a phallus sculpted on the helmet..."<sup>461</sup>).

Indeed, many of the objects Arditì analyses reinforce the sense of a regularly recurring set of artefacts at the centre of the contemporary imagination of the site of Pompeii and its infamously ubiquitous phallus. These include "ancient bronze phalli", mentioned at the outset of Arditì's text [E.g., **Figs. 42 & 44**] ("As soon as His Imperial Royal Apostolic Majesty the Emperor of Austria set foot in our capital city, he visited the Royal Bourbonic Museum, which was under my Direction. At the time, that truly august Sovereign was observing with knowledgeable curiosity and intelligence the many and various Antiquities and Beaux-Arts within the above mentioned Museum, **and among them also some ancient bronze phalli...**") and notably also discussed by both Richard Payne Knight and Andrea De Jorio, as well as by Middleton and Niccola Valletta (author of *Cicalata sul Fascino*, first published 1777), according to Arditì (Arditì p21-2, note no.19).<sup>462</sup> Another example of an artefact which makes several appearances in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse on the Campanian phallus is the "statue of a Faun or drunken Satyr" [**Fig. 25**], discussed at length by both Winckelmann and De Jorio due to its ithyphallic state coupled with its perplexing hand gesture, which Arditì says "holds the fingers of his right hand as to *fare uno scoppio* ['finger snap']; while others believe that the gesture is to *far le fiche*; and thus the hand of the statue would also be ithyphallic. May everyone think in his

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<sup>459</sup> Kendon (2000) xxviii.

<sup>460</sup> Arditì (1825) 21 note 74, Arditì cites De Jorio's *Metodo per rinvenire e frugare i sepolcri degli antichi* (1824).

<sup>461</sup> Arditì (1825) 32-3, 39-40.

<sup>462</sup> Arditì (1825) iv.

own way".<sup>463</sup> Indeed, from Arditì we learn a little more about the Campanian phallus as contended concept in contemporary archaeological thought:

*"I have the Excercis Amuletis aeneis figuris illustrata by Giulio Reichelto, and also the peculiar book by Pietro Federigo Arpe de Prodigiosis naturae et artis Operibus talismanes et amuleta dictis; and I see with my great surprise that the first work does not speak about the phallus at all; and the second one talks about it in five or six lines. But we should not pay attention to the silence of these authors."*<sup>464</sup>

And elsewhere:

*"And I am sorry that I have to say that Knight Millin (dear colleague and friend of mine, and his loss has been very bitter to me) wrote in his Dictionary of the Beaux-Arts four different interpretations of the phallus carved on the Pompeian shop, without mentioning my own conjecture. [...] But I am also happy that the Academics of Herculaneum in the volumes of the Bronzes agree with my interpretation, including Mr Eduardo Dodwell [also cited by Millingen<sup>465</sup>], who is a colleague of mine in the Roman Academy of Archaeology, in his book printed in Rome in 1812 with the title Di alcuni Bassi-Rilievi della Grecia."*<sup>466</sup>

This picture of variation and debate described by Arditì accords with the conflicted picture of phallic apotropaism that comes across in his own tract through the collation of his sources and schools of thought. In turn, this serves to illustrate that the investigation of phallic imagery during this era cannot sufficiently be summed up as 'universal phallic worship' vs 'censorship', as has been conveyed in modern scholarship;<sup>467</sup> furthermore, as we have seen, many of the variations on phallic

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<sup>463</sup> Arditì (1825) 21-2, note 19. Arditì also says of this statuette that he positioned it "in the porch of the Bronze Statue section of the Royal Bourbonic Museum: not long ago I made this porch accessible to the curiosity and the admiration of the erudite men." It was clearly a popular object, witnessed by many visitors to the area. For further discussion of the statuette and its interpretations, see Parslow (2013) 56-8. MANN Inv. 27733.

<sup>464</sup> Arditì (1825) 18.

<sup>465</sup> Millingen (1818) 71, note *a*.

<sup>466</sup> Arditì (1825) 23.

<sup>467</sup> Johns (1999) 21-8.

apotropaism which can be isolated now can also be identified in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought on the issue.

## Characteristics of Arditì's Approach

### Religious Motivations?

We have already seen in this era that many Libertine antiquarian thinkers sought to demonstrate through phallic symbolism how certain aspects of Christianity had in fact been corrupted.<sup>468</sup> Conversely, in their discussion of phallic artefacts, the authors of *Le Antichità di Ercolano Esposte* gave several examples of esteemed, pious figures who had already discussed or collected such material. For example, a plate depicting a putto-like creature riding a winged phallus (presumably the remaining figural part of what was once a *tintinnabulum*) with a phallus of its own and phalluses for hind legs and feet, is footnoted with an extensive apology of sorts [Fig. 58]: the author protractedly explains that even some of the most pious figures have been connected with material of this kind – such as popes and clergymen including “*Sommo Pontifice Alessandro VII*” and “*Papa Clemente XI*” – and that openly publishing such things in fact diminishes their corruptive potential.<sup>469</sup> Arditì likewise conveys some religious motivations for his treatise, similarly prefacing it with a caveat as to the kind of content within that would be considered troubling to a Christian audience. He warns that “such a topic cannot be separated from a certain language, which is neither that of intrepid licence [*ardita licenza*] nor that of shy modesty [*timido pudore*].”<sup>470</sup> He explains:

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<sup>468</sup> Davis (2008) & (2010) on Hamilton's agenda; Payne Knight (1865); D'Hancarville (1785). In his *Letter from Rome*, Middleton's autobiographical, anecdotal style reinforces the sense of an English protestant bemused at an exotic spectacle: “the whole form and outward dress of their worship seemed so grossly idolatrous and extravagant, beyond what I had imagined, and made so strong an impression on me, that I could not help considering it with a particular regard”. Middleton (1729) 40. See also Dussinger (2004).

<sup>469</sup> (1771) Volume VI, 380-1, note 8 (referring to Plate XCIV). In 1771, an array of phallic figurines was published at the end of the sixth volume (pages 367 - 407).

<sup>470</sup> Arditì (1825) v.

*“...as soon as we write with modesty of words and feelings, how many difficulties do we have to face in presenting the madness [i deliri] of the pagan superstitions, so that we can abhor [per detestare] them? And how many in presenting the stupidity [le follie] of **those who are not provided with true religion [vera religione]**, so that we can mock them [per deriderle] and spurn them [per isfuggire]?”<sup>471</sup>*

His conceptualisation of his subject matter as indicative of “those who are without true religion” certainly recalls contemporary Christian commentators. He also cites the following passage from Middleton’s *Germana quaedam Antiquitatis eruditae Monumenta*:

*“De qua quidem re disputare, seu loqui omnino puderet, ni non eos modo omnes, qui antiquorum sibi ritus explicandos sumpsissent, sed et Sanctos etiam Ecclesiae primaevae Patres, **quo obscenam hanc gentilium superstitionem ludibrio darent, ac detestabilem redderent, de ea libere disseruisse vidissem.**”*

(“It would cause shame to discuss this, or to speak about it at all, had I not seen that not only all those who had taken on themselves the task of explaining the rites of the ancients, but also that the **Blessed Fathers of the early Church, in order to make a mockery of this obscene belief of the people, and to render it hateful**, have discussed these things freely.”)<sup>472</sup>

Middleton, like the compilers of *Le Antichità*, justifies his engagement with the topic on account of the indisputable reputation of those who had done so before him, as well as with the objective of “talking freely” about such a topic so as to discredit it (and thus doing, assumedly, an honourable Christian service). Furthermore, Middleton’s most famous work, his 1729 *Letter from Rome, showing an Exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism* intrinsically sought to show how “the religion of the present Romans was derived entirely from their heathen ancestors”, Middleton considering it his duty

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<sup>471</sup> Arditi (1825) v.

<sup>472</sup> Arditi (1825) v, note 1; Middleton (1745) 65.

“...to use the opportunity given me by providence towards detecting and exposing, as far as I was able, the true Spring and Source of those Impostures, which, under the Name of Religion, have been forged and contrived from Time to Time, for no other Purpose, than to oppress the Liberty, as well as engross the Property of Mankind”.<sup>473</sup>

Similarly, Maffei likewise invokes the precedents of St Augustine, Arnobius, and “altri Padri della Chiesa”, declaring that such a topic can in fact be approached without comprising the “honesty” of the reader, following the example of Theodosius who ordered “*esponessero al pubblico le piu sozze immagini, e statue degl’ Idoli, venerati dagli antichi per porle in orrore a popoli.*”<sup>474</sup>

Therefore, Arditì aligns his text with the idea that, in order to illustrate the misguided, impious nature of such beliefs, they must first be discussed openly. However, elsewhere in his *Il Fascino*, piety and deference actually appear less straightforward for Arditì, raising interesting questions as to his attitude towards, and treatment of, his subject matter. For instance, ambiguous notions of true morality also seem to play a part in both justifying and exonerating the topic at hand. The same quotation from Dante’s *Paradiso* is used at both the beginning and end of Arditì’s text:

“E veh! l’ambage, in che la gente folle  
Già s’invescava, pria che fosse anciso  
L’Agnel di Dio, che le peccata tolle.”

(“And see the **obscure language, which beguiled  
The credulous people, before the lamb of god,  
Which takes away our sins, was slain.**”)<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Middleton (1729) 5.

<sup>474</sup> Maffei (1707) 73-7. “*Crederei, che si potesse, dare qualche notizia di questo sacrificio senza pregiudicare punto all'onesta di chi legge, coll'esempio di S.Agostino, d'Arnobio, di Minuzio Felice, di Lattanzio, e d'altri Padri della Chiesa; perche quantunque non vaglia piu al presente la ragione di proporre al Cristianesimo le sozzure del Gentilismo per abborrirle, ne abbiasi in considerazione l'editto del gran Teodosio, col quale fu ordinato che si conservassero, e si esponessero al pubblico le piu sozze immagini, e statue degl' Idoli, venerati dagli antichi per porle in orrore a popoli...*” Maffei’s book was also dedicated to Pope Clement XI.

<sup>475</sup> I owe huge thanks to Federica Scicolone, doctoral candidate at King’s College, University of London, for providing me with a workable English translation of Arditì’s original Italian text. Her English translation of the work – which, until now, had not been translated into English before - is the one I have utilised throughout.



Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, Canto XVII.31-3.

A close look at the language exhibited in this extract of Dante's work proves highly suggestive as to Arditì's overall attitude and approach to his subject. The word "ambage", which Dante adopts from Latin (here translated as "obscure language") seems to speak of the morally confounding nature of pagan religion as it was viewed at this time. Indeed, scholars assert that Dante calls upon *ambage* here to allude to the "tortuous and deceptive darkness of pagan oracles".<sup>476</sup> In Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the word is used to convey a tortuous and winding path, such as that of the Minotaur's labyrinth: "*variarum ambage viarum*", *Metamorphoses* VIII.160-1; and "[Luna] *multiformi ambage torsit ingenia contemplantium*", *Aeneid* VI.29-30. It was also used to depict ambiguous or enigmatic language (so, of the Theban Sphinx "*immemor ambagum*", *Metamorphoses* VII.761; and the language of oracles or prophecies "*ambage nexa Arcana tegere*", *Fasti* IV.261). Therefore, Arditì's choice of proem seems to acknowledge the ways in which the phallic artefacts being unearthed in southern Italy were considered emblematic of the morally depraved state of ancient society prior to the advent of Christianity, in that they were disconcerting, corruptive and seductive. This line of the *Paradiso* is itself reminiscent of many parts of the Bible – for example, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (Book of John 1.29) – and its reference to Jesus as the lamb of God who removes sins ("*L'Agnel di Dio, che le peccata tolle*") seems to refer to and concur with the reaction of many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century respondents to the disquieting archaeological discoveries, who considered the Campanian phallus clear evidence of ancient vice - whether deemed apotropaic or otherwise - and the pagans as having thus been rescued by the advent of Christianity.

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It is worth noting that Arditì's transcription of Dante appears to contain two mistakes (pointed out in bold font below). His variations do not alter the meaning, and it is unclear whether they are errors or intentional alterations to the text. The quotation, taken from Durling's 2010 version of the text, and the most accepted version – should read as follows:

*"Né per ambage, in che la gente folle  
già s'**inviscava**, pria che fosse anciso  
l'Agnel di Dio, che le peccata tolle."*

<sup>476</sup> [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ambage\\_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ambage_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/) Date Accessed: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

However, Arditì's use of the quotation might equally be considered more subversive. Following the positioning of the *Paradiso* extract in his frontmatter, Arditì states that his objective in writing *Il fascino* was to "clear the name of the city of Pompeii... commonly considered a place of public dissoluteness."<sup>477</sup> The assumption going into the treatise is that the reader considers the Campanian phallus and its urban ubiquity to be an indication of ancient Pompeian depravity ("At the sight of the phallus ... one would immediately think that this place was devoted to dissoluteness and sensual pleasures. This is the opinion of many erudite foreigners, who every day visit our Fieldworks"<sup>478</sup>). By the end of the tract, Arditì plans to have changed the reader's opinion ("...the only reason why I have decided quickly to write this essay was to distance these Royal Fieldworks (which under my Supervision inspire worldwide admiration) from such an indecent interpretation"<sup>479</sup>). Therefore, could Arditì also be using the *Paradiso* quotation to comment on the fact that, thus far, contemporary society has wrongly interpreted such artefacts? Could the extract also serve duplicitously as a comment on the fact that, in condemning such objects, contemporary society could actually be found guilty of the very *peccata* – sin - for interpreting them as such? Or is it perhaps even a comment not only how the *fascino* was, according to Arditì, attributed with the power of both being bewitching but also serving to counteract bewitchment, and thus how, in being mesmerised by its apparently 'obscene' nature, contemporary society was in fact 'fascinated' or 'bewitched' by it and therefore unable to know its true nature, being "*gente folle*" taken in by its "*ambage*"? The reflexive nature of the verb used, "*Già s'invescava*", potentially adds weight to such an interpretation. In this way, therefore, who are the "gullible people" Arditì is actually thinking of? The pagans, seduced by their immoral practices and then subsequently 'saved' by Christianity, or Arditì's contemporaries, befuddled – *fascinated*, even - by the Campanian phallus? Similarly, in warning that "such a topic cannot be separated from a certain language, which is neither that of intrepid licence [*ardita licenza*] nor that of shy modesty [*timido pudore*]", does Arditì make a pun on none other than that of his own name – "**ardita** licenza" – humorously

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<sup>477</sup> Arditì (1825) iv.

<sup>478</sup> Arditì (1825) 1.

<sup>479</sup> Arditì (1825) 45.

announcing himself as the very person with sufficient audacity to approach such a topic, and the topic itself as something which contemporary thinkers have taken too seriously?<sup>480</sup>

Piety and interpretation are not straightforward in this text, therefore, and indeed we have seen that 'morality' and its relationship with interpretation and intellectual enquiry prove critical throughout Arditì's exposition and his defence of the artefact at hand.<sup>481</sup> Thus, the *Paradiso* extract proves programmatic for Arditì's overall discussion. In reaching the end of the essay and being enlightened by Arditì, a reader might in turn view the significance of the Dante quotation (which is indeed cited again at the tract's conclusion) differently: intellectual enlightenment and scholarly detachment are therefore rendered critical to this discussion, as they enable one to recognise the 'true' nature of Pompeian phallic artefacts. Where Arditì invokes the quotation again at the conclusion of his tract, it follows his declaration that "it is undoubted that the foreign scholars' vile interpretation of that place as a public brothel is wrong."<sup>482</sup> Are the foreign scholars the "*gente folle*" whom Arditì had in mind when writing his tract? Of course, such an interpretation seems complicated when one then considers that Arditì exaltingly attributed the creation of the secret cabinet – and therefore, the decisive censorship of such artefacts as those at stake in Arditì's treatise – to the King himself; furthermore, elsewhere in his text Arditì regularly describes the very belief in the evil eye and the harm it could cause as "*sciocca*" – foolish or stupid.<sup>483</sup> However, whilst the language of disgust is used throughout the tract to describe belief in the apotropaic value of the phallus, it is equally employed in relation to misconceptions of the site of Pompeii and Arditì's vehement refutation of its perceived widespread debauchery. Does Arditì feel similar issues to those elicited earlier by the Isernian simulacra, in that their 'perversion' was in fact in the eye of the beholder? Or is he even using his tract to make a subtle comment on the areas of Catholicism he perceives to have fallen foul of corruption,

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<sup>480</sup> Arditì (1825) v.

<sup>481</sup> "Arditì's flattery and hypocrisy are postures typical of the courtier." Carabelli (1996) 100.

<sup>482</sup> Arditì (1825) 45.

<sup>483</sup> "*Era opinione quanto invecchiata, altrettanto sciocca, che e le persone e gli animali e le cose potessero sentir grave danno, principalmente se guardate venivano da occhio invidioso e maligno*": Arditì (1825) 9.

just as Hamilton used the practices at Isernia to try to put a spotlight on the supposedly depraved goings-on permitted by the Church itself? De Jorio's aim to demonstrate the "natural philosophy, talent and spirit" of his fellow Neapolitans also of course entailed discussion of their curious beliefs and frequently bawdy customs;<sup>484</sup> given also that De Jorio cites and speaks highly of Arditì, how does Arditì's description of the very same beliefs as "*sciocca*" relate to De Jorio's perspective on the topic?

Arditì often uses a performance of deference and piety to protect himself, using the patronage of the King as well as ideas of holiness to guard against potential reproach, but also, as we have seen, to portray the subject matter itself as worthy of discussion. The text opens with a letter addressed to "Excellency", King Francis I<sup>st</sup> of the Two Sicilies. He refers to the King's "courteous manners" and describes him as being of "knowledgeable curiosity and intelligence."<sup>485</sup> Therefore the King himself, to whom the very work is dedicated, is portrayed as the sort of man who can appreciate the subject matter, recognise its value, and approach it with a detached, scholarly state of mind – as not belonging, therefore, to the "*gente folle*". Where we have seen Arditì toy with the twofold nature of "fascination" in his title and exposition of his topic, we indeed find that sight itself appears to play a recurring, self-conscious role in his text. This too takes place most notably in his '*recusatio*', the theme of sight, its power and the act of bestowing or commanding it thus also employed in an interesting interplay between ostensible piety and deference and the nature of the subject-matter at hand. In his opening letter addressed to King Francis I<sup>st</sup> Arditì incorporates a short extract from the proem of *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto (1532):

*"Quel che io vi debbo, posso di parole  
pagare in parte, e d' opera d' inchiostro.  
Nè, che poco io vi dia, da imputar sono;*

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<sup>484</sup> De Jorio (1832) vii & xiii. For a detailed discussion of De Jorio's socio-political agenda, see Marzano (2015) 267-283. Schnapp also asserts that, while de Jorio was of course influenced by figures such as D'Hancarville, his approach to Neapolitan culture differed distinctly from that of contemporaneous French and English scholars, being "from the inside rather than with condescending detachment". Schnapp (2000) 164.

<sup>485</sup> Arditì (1825) ii & iv.

*Che quanto io posso dar, tutto vi dono."*

("My pen and pages may pay the debt in part;

Then, with no jealous eye [*imputar sono*] my offering scan,

Nor scorn my gifts who give thee all I can.")<sup>486</sup>

Then, later on in his text, Arditì refers to the idea that fascination particularly affects those who boast or are more fortunate: "Symmachus...reports *Ne ullo fascino FELICITAS mordeatur* [Book I, *Epistle* 13]. Also, because the ancients believed that Envy, which inspired enchantment, **especially targeted happy people, who were arrogant and full of themselves...**"<sup>487</sup> Arditì thus plays with this very relationship between fortune, talent and the temptation of fate by citing a canonical instance of literary self-deprecation – Ariosto - at the outset of his *own* work, thus introducing his own text as a potential target for fascination. Arditì's quotation of *Orlando Furioso* thus serves as his own guard against misfortune - as well as a way of indirectly implying that his work is so good, that it should inspire jealousy in others! It also situates the topic, and his own contribution towards it, in a distinctly Italian folkloric tradition of belief in the evil eye. This part of the text thus provides further evidence of Arditì's mode of deference and patronage in framing his subject-matter, but also illustrates how he cleverly plays with the close relationship these have to the material at stake and his subtly mischievous handling of it. The theme of sight and its power occurs once again in Arditì's letter addressed to his readers (following the letter to his patron) where he recounts an original letter addressed to King Francis in which he is supposed to have said "Please, Your Imperial Royal Apostolic Majesty, do **not move away your glance at the sight of the topic** of my essay..." ("*Di grazia non torca Vostra Maestà Imperiale Regale Apostolica il suo volto altrove, in vista dell' argomento...*").<sup>488</sup> We have already seen how potentially witty Arditì is being with his topic and material in his use of Dante; here we see a suggestion that he toys further with the notion of the 'evil eye' itself, likely inspired by the local Neapolitan tradition of the *jettatura*. Is he perhaps even seeking to demonstrate that the very same mechanics which governed the belief in the ancient apotropaic phallus were just as much at play

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<sup>486</sup> Arditì (1825) ii. Translation Slavitt (2009).

<sup>487</sup> Arditì (1825) 28.

<sup>488</sup> Arditì (1825) v.

in contemporary intellectual culture? In doing so, does he slyly suggest that he is more sympathetic to such beliefs than he lets on?<sup>489</sup> Indeed, do such comments comprise a clever rebuttal to those visitors to southern Italy who considered its people chaotic and uncivilised?<sup>490</sup> Or is Arditì in fact artfully mocking this belief, thus nurturing a sense of distance between contemporary, ‘intellectual’, ‘high-cultural’ Naples and that of its ancient predecessors (and their modern analogues – the Neapolitan lower classes), by setting himself up as an enlightened scholar of an ancient, “stupid” people?

Arditi cements his justification for the work, as well as his performance of humility, by saying that “...the academics of Herculaneum, my **illustrious predecessors**, [*Le Antichità di Ercolano Esposte*, 1757-92, by the *Accademia Ercolanese*] **already discussed this topic more than once in their works**...dedicated to the memory of the most religious Monarch Charles III.”<sup>491</sup> He adds that “indeed Ennio Quirino Visconti [author of the seven volumes of the *Museo Pio-Clementino*, 1782-1807], most erudite colleague of mine, explored this topic in the volumes of the Pio Clementino Museum **that he dedicated to the visible Chief of the Catholic Church himself**. Also, the **Apologists of the Christian Religion, and especially the great Father St Augustine**, have explored this topic.”<sup>492</sup> Indeed, St Augustine wrote of the ancient belief in the *fascinum* that it was evidence of the dissolute and misguided morals of pre-Christian society:

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<sup>489</sup> Indeed, he says elsewhere: “The ancients devised many ways of protecting themselves from enchantment, or from evil eyes, **as we say nowadays**...” Arditì (1825) 11.

<sup>490</sup> Such discourse had begun around eighty years prior to the publication of Arditì’s text and indeed continued throughout the nineteenth century. Contemporary historians, poets, and philosophers considered northern countries to be civilised and hard-working; southerly countries, on account of their warm climate and picturesque landscape, were accordingly considered lazy, chaotic and brutish, being entirely concerned with the pleasures of the flesh. For more on this trope, see Marzano (2015), who cites, among others, the travel accounts of Anna Jameson (1826): “Let the modern Italians be what they may...a dirty, demoralized, degraded, unprincipled race, centuries behind our trice-blessed, prosperous, and comfort-loving nation in civilization and morals [...] I am not come to spy on the nakedness of the land, but implore from her healing airs and lucid skies the health and peace I have lost.”

<sup>491</sup> Arditì (1825) v. In 1755 Charles VII of Naples – who, after 1759, became known as Charles III of Spain - appointed fifteen savants to a newly formed *Accademia Ercolanese* to study the artefacts and publish the findings. The committee engaged twenty-five leading artists to prepare drawings and engravings on the finds, including Giovanni Elia Morghen, Carlo Nolli and Giovanni Battista Casanova. Risser & Saunders (2013) 36; Blix (2011) 12; Coates & Seydl (2007) 63.

<sup>492</sup> Arditì (1825) v.

*“Varro says that certain rites of Liber were celebrated in Italy which were of such unrestrained wickedness that the shameful parts of the male were worshipped at crossroads in his honour. ... For, during the days of the festival of Liber, this obscene member, placed on a little trolley, was first exhibited with great honour at the crossroads in the countryside, and then conveyed into the city itself ... In this way, it seems, the god Liber was to be propitiated, in order to secure the growth of seeds and to repel enchantment [fascinatio] from the fields.”<sup>493</sup>*

However, it was precisely the *Reale Accademia Ercolanese di Archeologia* who, in 1771, interpreted a plaque sculpted with a phallus on the façade of a shop (VI.17.3-4) near the Herculaneum Gate in Pompeii as advertising a *cubiculum Venerium* – i.e., a brothel, the very interpretation Arditì purports to be railing against.<sup>494</sup> What did Arditì mean, then, when he cited his “illustrious predecessors”, the *Accademia Ercolanese*, and the ways in which they had “already discussed this topic more than once in their works” which, presumably, Arditì categorically disagreed with? Therefore Piety, Credulity and Fascination itself have an interesting relationship in Arditì’s text, the potential interconnection between the very theme of the tract, *fascinatio*, and the recourse to moralising Christian condemnation of the site giving us cause to question how straightforwardly Arditì participated in the Christian tradition of deriding – and even censuring - the pagan past.<sup>495</sup>

### **The Legacy of Thought on the Evil Eye and Fascination**

Arditì’s *Il Fascino* provides a window onto a body of contemporaneous scholarship on the evil eye and related belief, and his engagement with this body of scholarship confirms the significance of what we have already seen in the chapter

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<sup>493</sup> St Augustine *De Civitate Dei* 7.21, translation Dyson (2002).

<sup>494</sup> Reale Accademia Ercolanese, *Le antichità di Ercolano esposte* Volume VI: *De’ bronzi di Ercolano e contorni incisi con qualche spiegazione* (Naples 1771) 389-395, Plate 96.

<sup>495</sup> It is true that the literary form of essays on the *iettatura* from this period – such as Valletta’s *Cicalata sul fascino* – was that of the ‘*cicalate*’, described by Carabelli as “mock-serious dissertations on light or trivial subjects which were in vogue in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian academies”, and we must therefore be mindful that it is this legacy in which Arditì’s *Il fascino* is likely to be situating itself. Carabelli (1996) 95.

concerning the Neapolitan folk-culture context for investigating ancient Campanian apotropaia. Where Arditì draws upon this scholarship to justify his position on Campanian phallic symbolism, however, it becomes clear that this legacy of evil eye scholarship is even older than we realise. Arditì invokes discourse which is, as we have already seen, concentrated in Italy (or being conducted by Italian scholars) and at Naples in particular, and which again sees the concretisation of the concept of 'fascination' alongside Italian, and most often Neapolitan, folk culture. Arditì cites Celio Rodigino's (pen-name of the Italian humanist Ludovico Ricchieri, 1469-1525) *Antiquae Lectiones* (sixteen books, 1516; posthumously published in twenty books in 1542) published by the illustrious Venetian publisher Aldo Manuzio; Giovanni Lorenzo Gutierrez's *Opuscolo de Fascino* ('Booklet on Enchantment') printed in 1653 in Lyon; Vincenzo Alvario's tract *Invidia et Fascino* ('Envy and Enchantment'), contained in Volume X of *Antichità Romane* by Grevio (who I believe is Johann Georg Graevius, 1632-1703, compiler of *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanarum*, 1689); Matthias Martini's entry 'fascino' in his *Lexicon Philologicum* (1623), (seemingly added to by Graevius in later editions); Francesco Mazzarella-Farao's, (Professor of Lettere e Antichità Greche at Naples) *Bellezzetudene de la Lengua Napoletana* ('Beauty of the Neapolitan language' - date uncertain; cited in another work on southern-Italian linguistics in 1789); *Cicalata sul Fascino* (1777) by Nicola Valletta; Giovanni Cristiano Frommann's *Tractatus de Fascinatione novus et singularis*, printed in 1675 in Nuremberg; "Carlo du Fresne [better known as Charles du Fresne, sieur du Cange] at the entry 'fascinare'" (presumed to be the 1678 work of the renowned philologist and historian, who specialised in the Middle Ages and Byzantium, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, published in Paris); and of course the work of James Millingen and Andrea de Jorio. Thanks to Arditì we are therefore privy to a long historical and philological tradition of the idea of the 'fascino'/fascinum, likely ideologically traceable back to a Renaissance idea of enchantment and fascination. In drawing upon this intellectual tradition of seeking to pin down the nature of enchantment and the instruments against it, Arditì situates his defence of Pompeii in the face of contemporary "foreign" accusations of debauchery into a long, notably Humanist heritage.



## Neapolitan Folk Culture: A Comparative Methodology

*“Ora gli antichi stessi più rimedj avevano escogitati per potersi difender  
dal fascino, ossia da’ mali occhi, come usiamo pur oggidì noi di  
parlare...”*

(“The ancients devised many ways of protecting themselves from  
enchantment, **or from evil eyes, as we say nowadays...**”)<sup>496</sup>

Those authorities on fascination cited by Arditì include Niccola Valletta and Andrea De Jorio, whose earlier work – highly esteemed by Arditì – also comprised some of the major contributions to discourse on, and popularisation of, Neapolitan folk-culture.<sup>497</sup> Indeed, Arditì himself regularly draws upon contemporary Neapolitan culture – and the parallel, intellectual trend for investigating it – to provide comparanda for his own assertions on Pompeian artefacts. Arditì writes: “In short, the ancients used the phallus against the enchantment, **similarly as our people commonly make use of the horn**; and sometimes they also shape the fingers to make the sign of the horns, whenever one sees a person suspected of *jettatura* coming closer.”<sup>498</sup> Indeed, the ubiquity of the horn in Neapolitan visual and material culture – as well as its analogic resemblance to that of the phallus - was a central aspect of De Jorio’s 1832 *La Mimica*.<sup>499</sup> Arditì also cites Valletta, who “at p.149 of his *Cicalata*, writes that a remedy against the enchantment was similarly considered shaping the hand to form the gesture used to *far le fiche* (‘fig sign’; ‘cunt gesture’): and this is also the opinion of the **learned friend of mine Mr Can. D. Andrea de Iorio** at p. 134 of his booklet *Metodo per rinvenire e frugare i Sepolcri degli antichi* (‘Method to find and search the tombs of the ancients’) [as well as, as we have ourselves seen, in his later *La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire napoletano, 1832*]” (it is at this point in his tract that

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<sup>496</sup> Arditì (1825) 11.

<sup>497</sup> De Jorio *Metodo per rinvenire e frugare i Sepolcri degli antichi* (1824). Arditì’s comment that “if someone was not equipped with the amulet of the phallus, and suspected that evil and bewitching eyes were already upon him, then he used to portray the phallus with his own hand: namely raising the middle finger, as to check whether the hen carries an egg in her womb” is highly reminiscent of Andrea De Jorio’s discussion of ancient and modern Campanian hand gestures in *La Mimica*. Arditì (1825) 19-20.

<sup>498</sup> Arditì (1825) 21-2.

<sup>499</sup> De Jorio (1832) 95, 108-9; translation Kendon (2000) 145, 160.

Arditi discusses the much-debated hand gesture of the drunken faun statuette, discussed by both Winckelmann and De Jorio – MANN Inv.27733).<sup>500</sup> In the manner of these Neapolitan contemporaries, Arditì seeks to illuminate the meaning of ancient symbolism by establishing connections between contemporary Campanian culture, pondering whether the ancients also made use of the horn as an amulet against enchantment:

*“Beside phallic glasses .... also horn glasses were much used, as shown by Carlo du Fresne ... and Millin ... by providing many Greek and Latin authors... And have not the Italians as well sometimes used the term ‘horn’ with the meaning of glass? **But at this stage someone would ask: could the resemblance** [l’analogia e la somiglianza] **between the phallus and the horn have persuaded also the foolish people of nowadays** [la sciocca plebe] **to consider the horn as an amulet against the enchantment?** In the same way as the ancients used the phallus as an amulet against the enchantment? This question could be answered by using the Novels of Giovanni Boccaccio, in which the horn and the phallus are called in the same way. Nevertheless, **I do not want to offend our people so much...**”<sup>501</sup>*

In his *La Mimica*, De Jorio similarly wonders whether the power attributed to the horn by contemporary people is derived from its resembling a phallus, the “prototype” of apotropaic amulets; Arditì’s use of the vocabulary of simulation and representation – “*l’analogia e la somiglianza*” – confirm our sense of a persistent, observable concern for the implications of meaning and agency thrown up by phallic apotropism during this era. Elsewhere, on the suggestion that ancient Pompeians also made phallus-shaped bread, Arditì writes that “we too have the habit not only of shaping the bread in such an obscene way, but also of giving it an indecent name which conforms to such shape.”<sup>502</sup> In conjecturing such links with his contemporary Naples, Arditì echoes the wider nineteenth-century trend for using semiotics and ‘traditional’

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<sup>500</sup> For discussion of the statuette and its various interpretations, see Parslow (2013) 56-8. MANN Inv.27733

<sup>501</sup> Arditì (1825) 42, note no.3.

<sup>502</sup> Arditì (1825) 43. Such a tradition sounds similar to the Neapolitan tradition for phallus-shaped food products (such as pasta and sweets) heavily driven by tourist demand today.

visual-material culture to illustrate folkloric genealogies. His comment that he does not want to “offend” his people also reinforces the proximity of the contemporary context perceived by Arditì in the ramifications of his work and the part it might play in the public profiling of modern Naples – but also further complicates the stance he takes elsewhere in his tract in seemingly seeking to deride and distance himself from folkloric-type behaviours, making the possibility of slyly-disguised sympathy with such beliefs (“please, Your Imperial Royal Apostolic Majesty, do **not move away your glance at the sight of the topic** of my essay...”) seem ever the more plausible.

### **The Role of Philology and Linguistics in Explaining the Apotropaic Phallus**

Throughout Arditì’s treatise, philological approaches and linguistic evidence play a central role in demonstrating the apotropaic significance of Pompeian phallic artefacts. Arditì cites several examples of ancient authors discussing the apotropaic significance of the *fascinum*, but also regularly invokes a linguistic argument in order to reinforce his archaeological exposition. Philologists and lexicographers thus comprise a central source of evidence for Arditì: he especially refers to the work of “Vossio”, Gerrit Janszoon Vos (often known by his Latin name Gerardus Vossius), a Dutch classical scholar and theologian, who compiled the *Etymologicum Linguae Latinae* (1662; new edition in two volumes 1762–63).<sup>503</sup> Indeed, Arditì patently considers it important to illustrate the etymologies of the vocabulary at stake:

*“The ancients devised many ways of protecting themselves from the enchantment, or from evil eyes, as we say nowadays; and Latin speakers called these remedies **praebia, or rather proëbia from the verb prohibeo; because they ‘mala prohibebant’**, as Festus said; and they were more commonly called amuleta, which Filosseno preferred to write*

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<sup>503</sup> Also, Matthias Martini’s *Lexicon Philologicum* (1623); Francesco Mazzarella-Farao’s *Bellezzetudene de la Lengua Napoletana*; Charles du Fresne *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis* (1678); Vossio’s (Gerrit Janszoon Vos; often known by his Latin name Gerardus Vossius, a Dutch classical scholar and theologian) *Etymologicum linguae Latinae* (1662; new edition in two volumes 1762–63); and Pastor Arcade Florenio Salaminio of Manduria’s *Capricci sulla letteratura*.

*in his 'Glosses' amoleta with the vowel 'o', as if they came from the verb amoliri ['to clear away'].*"<sup>504</sup>

Elsewhere, on the possibility of the horn as a phallic connotation, Arditì hypothesises:

*"I start by saying that the horn - as it clearly emerges from the oriental languages, and as it has been shown by the Compte of Caylus in Volume I, p. 18, Sigeberto Avercamps in op cit. pp. 13ff., and Millin at the entry Cornes - was "un symbole de la dignité et de puissance". For this reason, the gods Serapis, Isis, Amun, etc. adorned their own foreheads with horns..."*<sup>505</sup>

Arditi's desire to illuminate an etymological mirror image for the semiotic genealogy he pieces together in his text testifies to the comparative-religious inheritance identifiable in his work, in that the very network of belief and symbolism he fleshes out through semiotics can supposedly also be traced in the evolution of language. His methodology is indicative of an era in which the ways that the visual could reflect the linguistic or the textual as conveyors of meaning was regularly being explored, testified by the interest in simulacra and semiotics that we have witnessed elsewhere. In the very title of his tract, "*Il Fascino e l'amuleto contro del fascino presso gli antichi*", Arditì draws attention to the word for "enchantment", the thing which an apotropaic device was intended to guard against or counteract, also being used to denote the very apotropaic instrument against it - that of the phallus, specifically.<sup>506</sup> (The same dynamic is reflected in Latin, in that the phallus, known as the *fascinum* or *fascinus*, was conceived of as being opposed to *fascinatio*.) The philological and lexicographical evidence for this perplexing relationship between threat and deterrent underpins much of Arditì's tract.

## Conclusions

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<sup>504</sup> Arditì (1825) 11.

<sup>505</sup> Arditì (1825) 42, note 3.

<sup>506</sup> Similarly, the title of Millingen's tract: 'Some observations on an Antique Bas-relief, on which **the Evil-Eye, or Fascinum**, is represented' suggests that the *fascinum* **IS** the evil eye. Millingen (1818).

Despite their regular contradiction, the various ways in which the presence of phallic artefacts has historically been explained all comprise part of the wider issue of the place modernity has wanted sex to have in Pompeii, resulting in a constant toing and froing between the attribution of sex and 'loose morals', or the branding of such assumptions as an unfair misconception. Whether modernity attributes sex or disavows it, however, the issue is the same: sex is a central aspect of our engagement with, and configuration of, Pompeii, either ubiquitous and unabashed (rampant prostitution), or conspicuously mistaken (evil eye aversion). This dialectic is certainly prominent in Arditi's text, seemingly comprising the primary reason for his writing it. His absolution of the site is not straightforward, however, and we are left uncertain as to how much of his discussion is sardonic. His choice of case material, that of the *HIC HABITAT FELICITAS* plaque from the House of Pansa, can be considered one of the most well-known examples of the famous and hotly disputed Campanian phallus, its inscription serving to highlight many central questions as to the phallus' wider association with concepts of fertility, prosperity and luck. This example, along with several others, will be revisited in the following and final chapter of this thesis, in which the idea of an apotropaic Campanian phallus will be reassessed in the day-to-day, urban contexts of the Vesuvian sites themselves.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Revisiting the Apotropaic Phallus in the Ancient Campanian Urban Context

## Approaches to Understanding the Campanian Phallus in Recent Scholarship

### Boys will be Boys: Mary Beard

In proffering an explanation for the pervasiveness of phallic imagery at Pompeii, Beard has declared:

*“It was still a man’s world in sex as it was in politics. Power, status and good fortune were expressed in terms of the phallus. Hence the presence of phallic imagery in almost unimaginable varieties all round [sic.] the town.”*<sup>507</sup>

Indeed, Beard categorically denies that these images and objects had any indirect or mystical meaning, asserting that:

*“More recently the fashion has been to deflect attention from their sexuality by referring to them as ‘magical’, ‘apotropaic’ or ‘averters of the evil eye’. But sexual they cannot avoid being. [...] As in most aggressively phallic cultures, the power of the phallus goes hand-in-hand with anxieties – whether about the sexual fidelity of one’s wife (and so the paternity of one’s children) or about one’s own capacity to live up to the masculine ideal.”*<sup>508</sup>

For Beard, therefore, the notion of phallic apotropaism constitutes an attempt to rebrand or sterilise what is the straightforwardly sexual reality of Campanian phallic artefacts. Describing Pompeii as having an “aggressively phallic” culture, Beard recalls the earlier ideas of Eva Keuls on Classical Athens, famously outlined in her feminist work *The Reign of the Phallus* (first published 1985). According to Beard,

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<sup>507</sup> Beard (2008) 233.

<sup>508</sup> Beard (2008) 233-5.

Pompeian phalluses were outrightly about the act of sex and its ramifications for male superiority, through the performability of both generativity and paternity. The particular social importance of the sex act, therefore, was supposedly writ large wherever a Pompeian citizen went; in turn, this omnipresence of sex corresponded to a culture that was, according to Beard, intrinsically androcentric and homosocial.

Beard's conviction that the representation of the male genitalia at Pompeii was exactly that, and that it did not - contrary to recent "fashion" - in fact denote some primordial belief in the supernatural power of fertility, is intrinsically entangled with modernity's ongoing engagement with the site itself. Beard comments:

*"And the phalluses that appear on every street corner? "If you consult the guidebooks," she says, "they'll tell you the willies point to the nearest brothel. Or they'll go into lots of pseudo-anthropology about fertility of warding off the evil eye. I want to say, what you're seeing here is a society quite different from ours. In Roman culture, however much women might get on, power and masculinity are co-related. When you find a sculpture of a willy over a bread oven, it's not to dispel the evil eye, it's simply to say, 'Look, it's me, the male baker.' I think, at some level, that's the answer.""<sup>509</sup>*

Her use of the term "pseudo-anthropology" warns of false experts and the circulation of bogus theories, as well as an apparent reluctance to face up to a sexual reality. With this term Beard also appears to suggest a reliance on outdated, Enlightenment-era ideas: indeed, Enlightenment thinking on this material – namely, that of universal phallic worship – is itself seemingly branded by Beard as an attempt at desexualising the inescapably sexual. As we have witnessed in earlier chapters, this is not a fair assessment of these thinkers and their motivations: the very appeal of seemingly phallic religions for Libertine antiquarians was their apparent flouting of Catholic

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<sup>509</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/queen-of-the-underworld-mary-beard-is-bringing-the-ancient-city-of-pompeii-to-life-in-a-bbc-2154808.html>

John Walsh, Thursday 9th December 2010.

Similarly: "To her credit, Beard does not give a carbonised fig for such ideas, the bulk of which - like the notion that a phallus was a directional sign to a brothel - are "certainly wrong". "All kind of puzzles remain," she writes sensibly. "The truth is we can only guess." Date Accessed: July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

[https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non\\_fictionreviews/3560953/Review-Pompeii-by-Mary-Beard.html](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non_fictionreviews/3560953/Review-Pompeii-by-Mary-Beard.html) 20th Sep 2008 Nicholas Shakespeare. Date Accessed: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

modes of morality, their apparent celebration of sex as something miraculous and wholly natural deemed an entirely rational cause for veneration. Rather, eighteenth-century thinkers did not consider phallic symbolism un-sexual, but discriminated the sexual from the erotic or immoral, arguing against the idea that ancient phallic imagery was evidence of cultural depravity or perversion.<sup>510</sup>

With “if you consult the guidebooks...”, Beard highlights the multiple different authorities we have on Pompeii and the different registers of knowledge and engagement the site thus inhabits. Our construction of ‘accepted’ knowledge on this site and its significance intrinsically contends with the interaction of all these registers, and Beard’s allusion to the movement of “pseudo”-expertise conveys the popularity of Pompeii in the popular imagination, as a frontier for understanding and engaging with antiquity, and the corresponding desire to thus be an authority on it and to provide answers to some of its most popular mysteries. Beard’s comments also confirm our convictions regarding the conflation of certain ideas addressing the phallus at Pompeii: her “fertility of warding off the evil eye” mashes together two distinct interpretations, which we have indeed seen regularly elsewhere in modern scholarship attempting to account for the phallus’ apotropaim.<sup>511</sup> This is perhaps deliberate here on Beard’s part, making both these theories sound ambiguous and unsubstantiated, serving to mock these concepts and thus disregard them. Finally, Beard’s use of the word “willy” to render the topic familiar, light-hearted and more accessible to the non-expert also serves to reduce the images in question to nothing more than the male genitalia itself, in line with her own interpretation of their presence. In becoming a “willy”, however, the Campanian phallus is not even a penis, but something more silly, mundane, and unthreatening, in turn unworthy of abstract concepts and “pseudo-anthropological” theories as to its function. Indeed, Beard posits her explanation for the Campanian phallus as drawing our expectations more in line with the nature of Roman society and how it differs from ours; however, the very nature of phallus as an apotropaion is indicative of a society intrinsically

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<sup>510</sup> For example, Payne Knight (1865) 27-8 on phallic images “attached to bracelets, which the chaste and pious matrons of antiquity wore round their necks and arms”: “to show that the devout wearer devoted herself wholly and solely to procreation, the great end for which she was ordained.”

<sup>511</sup> For example, Henig (1984), Crummy (2010) and Parker (2015).



different from ours! Yet Beard appears to consider the concept of the apotropaic phallus the product of modernity's attempt to make ancient Roman society more comparable, and thus palatable, to our own: "More recently **the fashion** has been to **deflect attention from their sexuality** by referring to them as 'magical', 'apotropaic' or 'averters of the evil eye'". However, as we have seen, in the nineteenth century especially the conceptualisation of the apotropaic phallus was emblematic of contemporary anxieties concerning that which was deemed alien and uncultivated. Moreover, does phallic apotropaism necessarily entail the desexualisation of the phallus? Other scholars do not appear to think so (see below). The idea that Pompeian phalluses operated on a more symbolic level is thus dismissed by Beard. Her thinking on this topic is emblematic of the implications for this conundrum as it is presented to the wider public, and indeed its very status as an ongoing source of debate or mystery; of the significance of this very debate being constantly framed as a dichotomy of literal vs symbolic, of sexual vs apotropaic, and how this thus relates to modern issues of obscenity and interpretation; and of what, ultimately, the site of Pompeii means to us and, in turn, what the phalluses at Pompeii thus mean to us, occupying a place at the forefront of engagement with, and (re)imagination of, the site itself.

### **Humour, Grotesqueness and "Ritual Laughter"**

Another central school of thought seeking to explain the phallus at Pompeii attributes its function and importance to its supposed capacity to induce laughter. According to these scholars, the phallus is indeed apotropaic because it is humorous, thus serving in some way to counteract or ward off misfortune or demonic entities. The foremost proponent of this idea is John R. Clarke, whose analysis of phallic imagery in the Roman world revolves around the concept of "ritual laughter":

*"If the ritual joking of the triumph or the forced laughter of the Lupercalia seems strange to modern audiences, it is because we don't share with*

*ancient Romans the belief that laughter will propitiate gods or demons.”*<sup>512</sup>

Clarke’s primary study of Roman humour, *Looking at Laughter* (2007), was hugely influenced by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, and indeed the latter’s theories on the carnivalesque and bodily humour can be detected throughout Clarke’s text.<sup>513</sup> In particular, a large proportion of Clarke’s conclusions on the visual comedy of apotropaism centre on the bodily humour of the phallus when paired with pygmies, figures which Clarke considers funny “by virtue of both their non-normative bodily form and their wild sexual behaviour.”<sup>514</sup> In turn, Clarke deems these funny pygmies to have been apotropaic “because a Roman viewer saw such behaviour as outrageously transgressive”, and thus to laugh at them not only served to excise evil energies but also to perform one’s conformity with positive social expectations.<sup>515</sup>

*“By placing images of deformed creatures in dangerous spots, the Romans hoped to incite salubrious laughter that would ward off evil forces. Such so-called apotropaic images instruct us about the kinds of bodies and behaviours the Romans considered to be improper. They also reveal that, for Romans, it was perfectly fine – even salutary – to laugh at persons who were deformed or disabled. In visual representations, huge phalli – whether alone or attached to the comic body – reveal the belief in the power of the phallus as apotropaic.”*<sup>516</sup>

Whilst Clarke does assert that “the phallus alone, without its being attached to a misshapen human, was also a powerful apotropaion”, most of his discussion of its implementation as such takes place in conjunction with “the comic body”; the phallus is apotropaic because it could be funny, therefore - but what about when it was not attached to such a figure?<sup>517</sup>

Clarke does say of the many phalluses found in Pompeii that “what all of these *fascina* have in common is their emphasis on the phallus itself – **above and beyond**

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<sup>512</sup> Clarke (2007) 63.

<sup>513</sup> Bakhtin (1984).

<sup>514</sup> Clarke (2007) 163.

<sup>515</sup> Clarke (2007) 81.

<sup>516</sup> Clarke (2007) 14.

<sup>517</sup> Clarke (2007) 69.

any plausible connection to a human being”, perhaps indicating that he also considers unattached phalluses to have been intended to incite laughter on account of their farfetched and ridiculous appearance.<sup>518</sup> Indeed, his study accordingly makes a case for the ubiquity of apotropaic imagery in Roman culture, considering most humorous images to be apotropaic, and a wealth of images to be humorous. However, when attempting to identify the parody, caricature, visual puns or situational comedy involved in iconography, Clarke shows an oversimplified approach to the different registers of meaning occupied or denoted by the phallus in particular; as will be shown, not every phallus found at Pompeii can be considered to have been funny, nor was any phallus straightforwardly apotropaic. Furthermore, despite his emphasis on salubrious laughter, Clarke still invokes longstanding ideas of omnipotent, multipurpose and indiscriminate fertility symbolism to explain the role of phallic imagery in Roman society: “The fact that artists made both pygmy and aethiops phallic and hypersexual – and that they adorn a garden – gives them apotropaic powers as well.”<sup>519</sup>

Like Clarke, others have suggested that making light of a situation, mocking someone, or lowering the tone of a social rite or interaction warded off ill-will or bad luck by preventing anyone from getting beyond their station and thus attracting envy or wishful schadenfreude. Indeed, Arditì wrote in 1825 that “if they did not have [a phallic object] to hand, and therefore feared fascination, [the ancients] were not ashamed of adapting their own bodies to that obscene posture...”<sup>520</sup> He also notes: “After describing the filthy posture of a figure of Mithras portrayed on that bas-relief, [James Millingen] adds: ‘Still nowadays, when adverse wind is blowing, the Italian sailors think that they can contrast it by adopting the same posture towards the place from where the wind is blowing’.”<sup>521</sup> It is perhaps for such reasons that several scholars including Clarke, Trentin and Garland consider dwarfs and hunchbacks to have been apotropaic, being ‘unenviable’ figures: Garland has asserted that, for Romans, the sight alone of a deformed person was cause for laughter.<sup>522</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>518</sup> Clarke (2007) 73.

<sup>519</sup> Clarke (2007) 107.

<sup>520</sup> Arditì (1825) 16.

<sup>521</sup> Arditì (1825) 16.

<sup>522</sup> Garland (1995) 73-86. Trentin (2015) 51-72. Clarke (2006) 155-69.

Clarke subscribes to Levi's assertion that figures such as dwarfs or hunchbacks are laughable because they embodied ἀτοπία – "unbecomingness".<sup>523</sup> However, in reference to the famous Evil Eye mosaic at Antioch [Fig. 59], Levi also asserted that:

*"Beings with a funny appearance or in which some obscene details are accentuated are effective apotropaia, as well as normal beings represented in indecent attitudes, making vulgar gestures or noises...Laughter is the opposite pole of the anguish produced by the dark forces of evil; where there is laughter, it scatters the shades and the phantasms."*<sup>524</sup>

In this way, Levi considers the efficacy of such figures to be grounded more plainly in their comicality, the laughter they generate being intrinsically opposed to the misery of misfortune – in much the same way that Arditì considered laughter "*potessero allontanar*" the evil effects of enchantment.<sup>525</sup> Therefore, the dynamics of humour and functionality which have been attributed to the apotropaic phallus remain uncertain and inconsistent.

Elsewhere, Clarke exhibits a somewhat undiscerning reliance on what we can now identify to be characteristically nineteenth-century ideas on the nature of apotropaism and its socio-cultural significance. Specifically, he cites several sources either originating from the nineteenth century or which demonstrate a characteristic recourse to the structuralist anthropological thinking established in this era. These include: Alan Dundes *The Evil Eye: A Casebook* (1981); Frederick Thomas Elworthy *The Evil Eye: An Account of this Ancient and Widespread Superstition* (1895); Gravel, Pierre Bettez Gravel *The Malevolent Eye: An Essay on the Evil Eye, Fertility, and the Concept of Mana* (1995); Doro Levi *The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback* (1941); Clarence Maloney *The Evil Eye* (1976); Thomas Rakoczy *Boöser Blick, Macht des Auges und Neid der Götter: Eine Untersuchung zur Kraft des Blickes in der griechischen Literatur* (1996); Ernst Kris *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (1952); Dale B. Martin *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (2004); Marbury B. Ogle *House-Door in Religion and Folklore* (1911); E. Kuhnert, "Fascinum" (*Pauly-Wissowa*, Vol.6) (1909). Perhaps most evident

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<sup>523</sup> Levi (1941) 225. See also Clarke (1996) 184-198 and Kellum (1996) 174, both of whom demonstrate a central reliance on this idea of Levi's.

<sup>524</sup> Levi (1941) 225.

<sup>525</sup> Arditì (1825) 15.

of this ingrained mindset is the fact that Clarke, one of the only scholars of the apotropaic phallus to cite directly Michele Arditi, also asserts that he considers that scholar “still useful”.<sup>526</sup>

## Fertility Symbolism

As we have witnessed already, the Campanian phallus is also considered a fertility symbol, both as a means of explaining its apotropaic function but also as an alternative to it. Catherine Johns’ book *Sex or Symbol?* (first published 1982), which has become widely known as an authority on the spectrum of erotic imagery from Greece and Rome, subscribes to the fertility symbolism model as a means of demonstrating that not all sexual images were intended to be titillating, but “had a more peripherally religious meaning, as amulets to keep misfortune at bay.”<sup>527</sup> Indeed, Johns believes that “the importance of the image of the phallus, and some other sexual motifs, as apotropaic devices **probably stems originally from fertility cults.**”<sup>528</sup> Prior to Johns, Jean Marcade published *Roma Amor: Essays on Erotic Elements in Etruscan and Roman Art* (1965), in which he investigated the appearance of the phallic image and its apparent use as a superstitious charm, similarly tying it to the role of phallism he identified in early Italianate religious cults.<sup>529</sup> Others more explicitly blur apotropaic practice with fertility ritual itself: for instance, writing on Scene 6 on the East wall of the Villa dei Misteri - often referred to as the “Likon Scene” - Michael Jameson suggests that the kneeling female figure is about to unveil a phallus, thus leading him to read the commencing ritual as a “celebration of the life force, as a **charm for fertility.**”<sup>530</sup> Did protection from the ‘evil eye’ necessarily invoke fertility? Or do these overlaps simply amount to a deeply ensconced conflation of Enlightenment-articulated phallic worship with the later concretisation of a phallic apotropaion?

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<sup>526</sup> Clarke (2007) 255, no.23.

<sup>527</sup> Johns (1999) 143.

<sup>528</sup> Johns (1999) 143.

<sup>529</sup> Marcade (1965) 33-4.

<sup>530</sup> Jameson (1993) 44-64.

## A Threatening Weapon

Other ideas on the apotropaism of the phallus include its conception as a threat of penetration, its aversive capacity grounded more banally in its physical implications. For example, Warner Slane and Dickie have declared that “the erect phallus, with testicles as a symbol of virility, threatens the envious and those endowed with the Evil Eye with being bugged [...] The phallus thus makes an aggressive statement calculated to scare off those whose gaze might harm, and more generally, those whose intentions were malign”.<sup>531</sup> In conceiving of phallic apotropaism as a threat of physical assault, the target of that apotropaism is arguably conceived of in a more sublunary way, such a threat being less suitable for ‘demonic’ or mystical forces and more apt for a real, misdemeaning person, such as a thief or burglar. Warner Slane and Dickie draw their conclusions on phallic apotropaism primarily in light of Archaic and Classical Greek evidence; however, they do regularly cite familiar evidence from Pliny, Varro and St Augustine as well as images from Pompeii, England and Dalmatia, conveying the extent to which this topic is still treated in an inherently structuralist manner.<sup>532</sup> Yet they do assert that such evidence represents “a constellation of beliefs” and indeed they cite Herzfeld, who “has very properly insisted that the term “Evil Eye” should not be used in cross-cultural comparisons, on the ground that it lumps under one heading very different phenomena.”<sup>533</sup>

The concept of Fascination thus also plays an inconsistent role in the explication of the apotropaic phallus, as well as of its intended target. In his highly supernatural conceptualisation of the threat – “apotropaia, images and practices meant to fend off evil...remain inscrutable for most modern viewers because science has all but erased belief in the power of laughter to defeat demons” – Clarke contests that “ritual laughter” was intrinsically opposed to demonic forces.<sup>534</sup> Warner Slane, Dunbabin and Dickie consider the phallus to be aimed at inauspicious individuals

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<sup>531</sup> Warner Slane & Dickie (1993) 488.

<sup>532</sup> Warner Slane & Dickie (1993) 488-9.

<sup>533</sup> Warner Slane & Dickie (1993) 486.

<sup>534</sup> Clarke (2007) 19, 77. Similarly, he explains the presence of images he considers apotropaic in tombs as being down to the fact that they were not aimed at human viewers.

endowed with envy (Φθόρος/*invidia*) and/or the evil eye (Dunbabin characterises the bath house in particular as dangerous on account of envious individuals *as well as* the more supernatural threat of black magic and demonic forces); but there remains more general confusion amongst all of these as to whether fascination is the *threat* posed by Envy/the evil eye, or the *weapon* against it.<sup>535</sup> Were the negative effects of Envy that of fascination, or was the phallus considered effective at negating evil or envious eyes because *it* fascinated *them*? Wider questions thus remain, as we still cannot agree as to who or what the apotropaic phallus was ‘aimed’ at. Did it serve a supernatural or practical purpose? Or, were the supernatural forces it targeted – that of the evil eye, demons or Envy – conceived of as the *cause* of practical misfortune? How did these two spheres relate, and according to whom?<sup>536</sup> Ancient accounts of “*fascinatio*” do allude to a more supernatural force: for example, in St Augustine’s account of the rites of Liber in *De Civitate Dei* 7.21 (“the god Liber was to be propitiated, in order to secure the growth of seeds and to repel enchantment [*fascinatio*] from the fields”<sup>537</sup>); and similarly in the concerns of the characters in Virgil’s third *Eclogue* (“*Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos*”).<sup>538</sup> Elsewhere, however, its menace is grounded in human agents, as in Catullus *Carmen* VII: “*Quaeris, quot mihi basiationes tuae, Lesbia, sint satis superque [...] quae nec pernumerare curiosi possint nec mala fascinare lingua.*” However, how do *scholars* settling one way or the other potentially reflect (unconscious) alignment with different facets of the intellectual traditions originating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

Others take the physical threat potentially denoted by the phallus a step further. What Eva Keuls did for Classical Athens with *The Reign of the Phallus* (1993), Amy Richlin arguably did for Ancient Rome with *The Garden of Priapus* (1992): in this work, Richlin asserts that the intrinsic sexual aggressiveness she sees in phallic

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<sup>535</sup> See Warner Slane and Dickie (1993), Dunbabin & Dickie (1983). Katherine Dunbabin outlines the particular dangers of the baths: Dunbabin (1989) 6-46.

<sup>536</sup> It is from this family of words that we get the English ‘to fascinate’ and ‘fascination’: a now-obsolete meaning of the English ‘fascinate’ was “to affect by witchcraft or magic; to bewitch, enchant, lay under a spell.” (In 1621, Robert Burton asked in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* “Why doe [sic.] witches and old women fascinate and bewitch children?” *Oxford English Dictionary*: R. Burton *Anat. Melancholy* i. ii. iii. ii. 127. 1621.)

<sup>537</sup> Translation Dyson (2002).

<sup>538</sup> Virgil *Eclogue* 3.103.

apotropaism, both embodied and emblematised by the figure of Priapus, served as a model for Roman culture more widely. In particular, Richlin considers Roman satire and sexuality to be “interrelated discourses of aggression” and the “ithyphallic god Priapus, who threatens to rape thieves who enter his garden, as a synecdochic embodiment of the sexuality consciously constituted in these Roman texts: male, aggressive, and bent on controlling boundaries.”<sup>539</sup> The threat of penetration posed by the phallus is, as far as Richlin is concerned, central to both its protective function and its eminently cultural significance, being an emblem of Roman social structure and functionality. Richlin conducts a feminist survey of Roman culture - hinging on the idea that sexual behaviour can be considered a performance of cultural gender hierarchy - the feminist and anthropological methodology she employs central to her choice of Priapus and the concept of phallic apotropaism as jumping-off points for her exposition:

*“This Priapic figure is familiar, especially to those who read feminist theory, for it is a type that can be found in many other cultures. Feminists have described cultures under patriarchy— that is, most cultures— as dominated by institutions associated with precisely Priapus’ characteristics: male, aggressive, controlling boundaries. On the symbolic level, a talking phallus situated in the middle of a walled garden surely makes a good sign for phallogocentrism. In short, while Rome is definitively itself, with definable characteristics, the otherness of antiquity has been greatly overstated: Priapus is peculiarly Roman; Priapic attitudes are not.”*<sup>540</sup>

In this way, Roman phallic apotropaism is conscripted into a wider survey of patriarchal values and historicity – Richlin asserts that “forms of misogyny and phallic thinking characterised Roman culture in the same way as they have both earlier and later cultures [...] Greek and Roman societies...are neither outside of, nor

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<sup>539</sup> Richlin (1992) xiv-xvi.

<sup>540</sup> Richlin (1992) xvi-xvii. Her perspective hugely recalls Keuls’ famously provocative opening to *Reign of the Phallus*: “In the case of a society dominated by men who sequester their wives and daughters, denigrate the female role in reproduction, erect monuments to the male genitalia, have sex with the sons of their peers, sponsor public whorehouses, create a mythology of rape, and engage in rampant saber-rattling, it is not inappropriate to refer to a reign of the phallus”. Keuls (1993) 1.



do they predate, patriarchy"<sup>541</sup> - a trans-cultural mode we are by now highly familiar with, the phallus' biography as an apotropaion unerringly appealing to such narratives. (Indeed, Richlin's use of the phrase "Priapic attitudes" recalls the parlance of the eighteenth-century commentators who detected a universal "Priapic principle" in all world cultures.<sup>542</sup>) Beard's assertion in 2008 that "it was still a man's world in sex as it was in politics; power, status and good fortune were expressed in terms of the phallus" thus strongly echoes Richlin's ideas. As we have seen, Beard denies the apotropaism of the phallus, but *does* see the image as evidence of a phallocracy; by contrast, Richlin does not deny phallic apotropaism, and indeed considers it – both in its essential concern for "boundaries" and defence, as well as the high-profile role occupied by male genitalia – to be *intrinsically* phallocratic.

### **Apotropaism and 'Liminality'**

Scholars have regularly invoked certain mechanisms for making sense of apotropaic power and functionality. In particular, the concept of liminality – the quality of being in a transitional or indeterminate state between defined stages, often during a ritual or rite of passage or, more literally (as it is often applied in the context of Pompeian phalluses), during travel or the crossing of physical thresholds – is an attribution and idea which recurs frequently in the discussion of apotropaic artefacts and their function. It is a distinctly anthropological concept in its genesis and application, being closely associated with Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology (particularly thanks to the work of V. W. Turner).<sup>543</sup> Having been developed for the purposes of the Anthropology of Religion – the discussion of rituals, rites of passage and the delineation or signalling of culturally-defined stages of a person's life – it has passed into popular, trans-disciplinary usage, becoming more widely associated with

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<sup>541</sup> Richlin (1992) xvii.

<sup>542</sup> For example, Edward Moor was a Lieutenant for the East India Company and wrote a travel narrative and war correspondence piece describing his experiences fighting the armies of Tipu Sultan: in the 'Notes and Illustrations' section of his account, Moor conveys his observations on Hindu religion, particularly "the worship of Priapus, the Phallus and the Lingam" in India. Moor (1794) *A Narrative of the Operations of Captain Little's Detachment* 392-393.

<sup>543</sup> Turner (1964) 4; Turner (1969) 95. For more on Turner and his contribution to cultural anthropology, especially to Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology, see Fardon (2004).

physical circumstances or architectural settings.<sup>544</sup> This is the case especially in classical scholarship, where “liminality” more often than not denotes a spatial dimension or location, such as crossroads, doorways and vestibules, boundaries, frontiers, borders and even windows.<sup>545</sup> In turn, therefore, such places have equally become a part of the customary parlance entailed in discussing apotropaic objects, which are always apparently found ‘guarding boundaries’, ‘protecting crossroads’ and ‘defending entryways’. Classical Archaeology’s adoption of this term has thus seen the qualities of ambiguity, disorientation and malleability ethnologically associated with undergoing various culturally-determined rites of passage transposed upon non-specific physical locations. Accordingly, the inhabiting of such spaces in antiquity is associated with vulnerability or threat, and thus requiring apotropaic protection.<sup>546</sup> The effect of this, however, is that anything occupying a ‘liminal’ context is regularly and indiscriminately deemed apotropaic, and Campanian phalluses *not* found in such locations typically excluded from discussion.<sup>547</sup>

This habit can especially be seen in the work of Roger Ling who, in mapping the street plaques at Pompeii, commented that the phallic examples “have in common their similar dimensions and the fact that **virtually all of them are adjacent to entrances or to street-corners (or both)**”, thus emphasising the central place accorded to liminality from the outset of his study.<sup>548</sup> In the conclusion of his survey, he writes:

*“The phallic plaques, which constitute the largest group [of street plaques], must have performed their normal role as apotropaic symbols or ‘good-luck’ charms (Herter 1938, 17733-44). Their preponderance at entrances and street-corners is readily understood in view of the ancient fears and superstitions associated with doors and crossroads. When they are not near entrances or corners, they may be*

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<sup>544</sup> Thomassen (2009) 5–27.

<sup>545</sup> This provides further evidence of the way our historical approaches to the topic of phallic apotropaim presents a distinctive triangulation between anthropology, classics and popular notions.

<sup>546</sup> Dunbabin (1989) 6-46.

<sup>547</sup> Ling (1990); Clarke (2007), especially 182.

<sup>548</sup> Ling (1990) 51.

*conceived as protecting the whole property (A3) or joint properties*

(A2).”<sup>549</sup>

Ling’s approach to the phallic variant of the plaques in his survey is somewhat teleological, therefore. Indeed, when examples are found in locations which he does *not* consider liminal, Ling figures that “they may be conceived as protecting the whole property...or joint properties”: even when liminality is uncertain, the notion of boundaries is still invoked. Furthermore, we once again find ourselves asking: what are these “ancient fears” supposedly attached to liminal places?<sup>550</sup> These types of locations surely evoke *practical* dangers: that of theft, burglary, or break-ins, of danger entailed in crossing the road, or being attacked out of the protective sight of onlookers. Ling writes of phallic plaques that they were “not only displayed on busy streets but also deliberately set at a height where they would not be obscured by the heads of people on the sidewalks”, leading him to conclude that they were meant to be seen by passers-by and, one assumes, anyone who would consider acting on bad intentions.<sup>551</sup>

Yet Clarke, who argues that the intended viewers of these phalluses were “demons” and “malevolent spirits”, similarly scaffolds his discussion of phallic apotropaia on the concept of liminality, but with contrasting results. He writes:

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<sup>549</sup> Ling (1990) 62. Note here also Ling’s use of Herter’s ‘Phallos’ (1938).

<sup>550</sup> See also Clarke (2007) 70.

<sup>551</sup> Ling (1990) 61. With regard to *visibility*, Ling records that almost all of the phallic and figurative plaques are framed in some way: by strips of moulded terracotta or pieces of brick; a frame carved from Nocera tufa; or a raised border at the edge, and part of, the plaque itself. A plaque showing a phallus creature with two phalluses either side of it in the brickwork façade (Ling A7) has a frame of terracotta as well as raised margin inside the frame on the edge of the plaque itself; some of the frames are bevelled, some have “*ovolo* moulding”, and some a “fillet and a cymatium”. In addition to their frames, some of the phallic plaques also have pediments: most of these are fashioned separately with their own frames of brick or moulded terracotta, with some carved from same block of Nocera tufa as the actual relief itself. Ling believes that the background, the elements of the relief, and sometimes even the frames were almost invariably painted, with phallic plaques generally being red all over (one with a possible white background is, however, identified by Ling). Given that the phalluses installed in streets were often coloured red, then, how visible were they in actual fact? Did they stand out against the brickwork or external plastering? (The famous ‘Amphora-Bearers’ shop sign (VII.4.15), by comparison, was coloured white, red and yellow on a blue background, conveying the extent to which business or guild signage stood out so as to serve its purpose.) If their colouration served to make them more *discreet*, perhaps this tells us something as to how the intended audience of these plaques was actually conceived of or how they were deemed to provide ‘protection’: if overt visibility was not important, perhaps the evil forces to which they were aimed were indeed more abstract or supernatural in character. Ling (1990) 61.

*“Central to understanding how laughter might [be apotropaic] is the analysis of images in their original architectural settings. [...] Our first clue about their meaning lies in their spatial context: the fauces is a liminal, or boundary space that marks a person’s passage. Carlin Barton, citing ancient textual evidence, lists the places and points of passage where a person was especially vulnerable: ‘corners, bridges, baths, doorways.’”*<sup>552</sup>

Clarke signposts his own reliance on structuralist approaches to this concept, also citing the work of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner.<sup>553</sup> Indeed, he asserts that “the liminal state, derived from the Latin word *limen*, ‘boundary, threshold’, derives from the situation when a person ‘passes through a **cultural realm** that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state’.”<sup>554</sup> Clarke thus appears to conceive of liminality as a more ritualistic, eminently cultural state of being. What precisely was it, therefore, that was effectingly dangerous or vulnerable about it? In focusing on the comic paintings and mosaics found in houses, Clarke’s study seeks to demonstrate the potential for analysis elicited by close interrogation of viewing mechanisms, given that this particular material was either found *in situ* or its original setting more likely to be known. (Clarke considers images of Hermaphrodites to be apotropaic, because they too “single out important doorways” and are often given positions “at liminal passageways”;<sup>555</sup> other ascriptions of apotropaim based on liminal context include “the head of Oceanus”.<sup>556</sup>) Clarke’s privileging of liminality, like Ling’s, is central to his archaeological approach, therefore, yet his characterisation of viewership seems drastically different. His distinctive separation of superstition and practicality is confusing: surely the ancients would have been able simultaneously to conceive of both a proximal and distant cause for an event, and to

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<sup>552</sup> Clarke (2007) 63. Barton (1993) 168-72.

<sup>553</sup> Clarke (2007) 64.

<sup>554</sup> Clarke (2007) 64; citing Turner (1969) 94.

<sup>555</sup> Clarke (2007) 182. “Along with the obvious humour, we can understand how Hermaphroditus remained a disquieting god who had the power to protect the Roman viewer from unseen evil forces. A sign of the mysteries of sex and a reminder that things are not always what they seem, Hermaphroditus – like the hunchback and the pygmy – was a powerful good-luck charm.” 184.

<sup>556</sup> “Like the head of Oceanus or the phallus-fascinum, the pygmies were intrinsically apotropaic and worked to keep demons away.” Clarke (2007) 77.

have set up a mystical or abstract remedy for something they knew to be grounded in practical circumstances. Doors and windows might frequently have phalluses over or near them because that is where someone is statistically *likely* to break in, not because ancient people believed these places to be mysteriously invested with some unknowable negative potentiality. Similarly, crossroads would develop a reputation for needing apotropaic installations because, anecdotally, a larger proportion of accidents may happen there; the reason for this – that is, the increased likelihood of a collision taking place at that point on a roadway - is obvious; this would not preclude people, however, from taking more ‘irrational’ measures to try to prevent such things, especially as the associated bad events occurring at such a location would themselves perhaps invest it with increased inauspiciousness over time. By way of comparison, the more modern belief that walking under a ladder is unlucky probably originated in the fact that doing so simply caused lots of accidents, gradually leading to an especial connection of that act with misfortune and encouraging people to consider it a temptation of fate. Clarke ultimately asserts that “in the Roman city, one only had to look for images of the phallus to find where the danger was.”<sup>557</sup> But are phalluses at Pompeii even always found at or in liminal places? Rather than focusing too heavily on the archaeological context of single examples, we need to think instead about the broader visual picture created by the various phalluses of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and how that picture connected up and was compiled. In thinking about Campanian phalluses as belonging to a bigger and diverse visual landscape, we can get closer to understanding how they were seen and experienced on a daily basis by the ancient viewer and, in turn, how they could thus have been ‘read’.

Indeed, scholarship’s blinkered focus on liminality has overlooked the simple fact that many phalluses in ancient Campania were simply not installed in “liminal” settings. Similarly, (whilst the dichotomy inferred by the terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ are somewhat inadequate for describing Roman domestic space and its social function<sup>558</sup>), the wealth of phallic imagery found in private settings in Pompeii also refutes head on the ingrained assumption that these phalluses were always outside

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<sup>557</sup> Clarke (2007) 70.

<sup>558</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1988) 43-97. Grahame (1997) 137-64. Hales (2003).

brothels or wholly commercial venues that sold sex.<sup>559</sup> For example, two tufa phallic plaques, of the sort by now strongly associated with protection of property (particularly the commercial) in the streets of Pompeii (as made familiar by Ling's survey), and thus with the demarcation of external boundaries and entryways 'vulnerable to the public' were found in the House of N. Fufidius Successus (Pompeii V.2.g) (no longer extant). According to *Notizie degli Scavi*, leaning against the wall outside the doorway to room 'o' was a masonry seat; encased in the same west wall was a slab of tufa with a phallus in high relief, in the middle of a niche with a small pediment, painted in red and with a yellow cornice.<sup>560</sup> In addition, Boyce records a slab with a relief phallus high on the east garden wall, approximately 2.5 metres above the ground, surrounded by an aedicula façade and all painted in red.<sup>561</sup> The setting of these two phalluses – a 'private', domestic context - is particularly striking given their resemblance to the specimens discussed by Ling, his characterisation of which is so strongly grounded in their being indicative of the Campanian streetscape. Equally, their positioning does not suit that of a brothel sign, even if we consider that it was not impossible for a household to have conducted prostitution from within the home: are we supposed to convince ourselves that the *oeci* containing such images were waiting rooms for clients? Or, as McGinn would perhaps have it, that this dwelling also comprised its own private 'sex club'?<sup>562</sup> Such cases confound the frameworks on which we have become reliant when approaching phallic material from Pompeii and Herculaneum. The range of contexts, as well as forms or media, in which the Campanian phallus has been and can be found demands a more holistic approach and as a whole corpus, unfettered by unscrutinised notions such as liminality.

When we remove the habitual and unscrutinised crutches of analysis we are accustomed to using in conjunction with this material, what sort of questions are revealed? Roger Ling's 1990 appraisal of street plaques at Pompeii remains the only

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<sup>559</sup> Laurence (2010); McGinn (2002) & (2010); Wallace-Hadrill (1995).

<sup>560</sup> *Notizie degli Scavi* (1896) 421.

<sup>561</sup> Boyce (1937) 36, note 105.

<sup>562</sup> McGinn (2010) 134-166.

survey-type study of phallic images in the Campanian townscape.<sup>563</sup> As we have seen, Ling is heavily reliant on - and uncritical of - the notion of liminality when it comes to reconstructing the meaning of the phallic plaques in his study, and in this regard his discussion is somewhat reductive and teleological. Furthermore, Ling's survey does not consider the wider body of urban phallic street evidence, meaning that his conclusions are not reflective of all forms of phallic imagery one would encounter on the streets of Pompeii: namely, he does not incorporate the types of phalluses, *also* set up on the outsides of buildings, which jutted out perpendicularly from the façade [Fig. 60], or frescoes involving phallic imagery which were also set up on business frontages, such as the fresco of ithyphallic Mercury from the House of the Chaste Lovers IX.12.6 [Fig. 61].<sup>564</sup> What did it mean when one saw a phallus in the form of a plaque, then turned a corner and saw one sticking *out* from above a doorway? Did these different forms denote different things? How did they relate semantically? In fact, it remains for us to consider even more widely the broad range of material and imagery that could be found adorning the streets of Pompeii in general. What happens when we re-situate the Campanian phallus into the broader picture of urban visual and material culture as it would have been actually experienced on a day-to-day basis? This additional material for consideration thus includes those plaques or images presently identified as shop or business signage; street shrines; and terracotta or marble antefixes in the form of faces, both human and animal [Figs. 62 & 63].<sup>565</sup> Indeed, how was the phallus viewed by Pompeian

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<sup>563</sup> Ling maps the phallic plaques (along with the other two types) but not exhaustively or selectively; he appears to only be aware of three other phallic plaques in MANN *Gabinetto Segreto*, in addition to the twelve he lists here – we know there are far more. He does not consider the ones perpendicular to building facades or the ones which appear to have been set up more informally.

<sup>564</sup> See Distribution Map, Fig. 61. This more detailed information reflects on-site research undertaken for this thesis. On-site research for *this* thesis undertaken at Herculaneum also uncovered a probable case of a 'jut-out' phallus type, as it has been referred to throughout this chapter, of the sort also found in the streets at Pompeii (e.g., IX.5.13). This is at Casa del Telaio/House of the Loom, Herculaneum Ins. V.3-4, and has been partially removed, leaving only what appears to be a frame and the remains of the testicles and base of the phallus [Fig. 64]. The shape left on the wall strongly recalls the shape created by phalluses, now held in the *Gabinetto Segreto*, where they too attach to the wall (e.g. MANN Inv. s.n., [Fig. 65]). (Interestingly, the Pompeii example at IX.5.13 does not have testicles; however, the example from the House of the Centenary, now MANN Inv. 113415, does.)

<sup>565</sup> Ling organises his discussion around the fact that the plaques' content ostensibly "divides them into three distinct classes...the first two are in the form of reliefs, respectively phallic (A) and figurative (B); the third (C) consists of geometric patterns in a stone-cut technique." Ling (1990) 51.

inhabitants when considered as a part of this 'stuff in the streets'; how might it have been in dialogue with the other material it kept company with?

## The Phallic Topography of Campania

What *is* clear from the actual evidence at Pompeii and Herculaneum is that the phallus could be about *all* of the things with which we have variously connected it – sexuality, eroticism, fertility, good luck - at different times and in different contexts, as well as simultaneously. Indeed, several instances of phallic imagery which seem to be likely candidates for our conventional notions of apotropaism *also* incorporate scope for comedy, social satire or obscenity. We must approach the phalluses of Campania as a wider townscape and consider how the day-to-day visual experience - as an inhabitant encountered phallic imagery in different contexts and set up for different purposes - would have connected up. In doing so, we will find that the 'meaning' of the Campanian phallus was much more complex than we currently allow for: the ancient inhabitants of Campania were precisely aware of the different registers of meaning and the overlap – conflict, even - between what the phallus represented and could stand for. Indeed, they toyed with this very multivalence, even going so far as to play with the very scope for confusion, double-meaning, misunderstanding and double-take that came with the unavoidable corpus of phallic imagery they saw around them every day. In this way, the apotropaic phallus encompassed a variety of meanings which relied on familiarity, parody and visual cross-referencing; no given phallus was ever viewed in isolation, and viewers brought every other phallus they had seen with them when they looked at and 'read' any other.

Clarke writes of Roman apotropaia that "they remain inscrutable for most modern viewers because science has all but erased belief in the power of laughter to

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Ling considers that most of the other types of material set into Pompeian walls was frequently for "religious or purely decorative purposes; for example, a marble head of Dionysus in a niche in a shop-front...and several fragments of terracotta antefixes or water-spouts in house walls..." Ling (1990) 62. However, what if, in fixating on categories such as the phallic, we have actually overlooked a *wider range* of urban apotropaic installation - including, for instance, geometric compositions or faces set into façades? If Clarke, for example, considers the face of Oceanus to be apotropaic, could a face staring out from a wall or entranceway not also be? Clarke (2007) 77.



defeat demons.”<sup>566</sup> But are ancient images of the phallus really that inscrutable? In fact, we find evidence for the possibility that even the very belief in the supernatural capabilities of the phallic image was itself at times mocked – or at the very least toyed with - by the ancients themselves. In the following sections, we will see the phallus being used in the following ways in the Campanian townscape: as a comedic-making addition; as a device for the parody of other visual registers and socio-cultural spheres; as part of self-referential comedy involving the parody or subversion of the phallus itself as an apotropaic device; as a vehicle for exploring and bringing into relief various socio-cultural values and anxieties; for satirising and exploring constructions of sexuality and sexual mores; as well as potentially to play with and subvert long-held ideas or cultural hangovers concerning the propitiation of fortune or fertility. The examples discussed here demonstrate a clear awareness of the numerous phallic ‘registers’ available for reference, and accordingly we see this very capacity for multivalence capitalised upon for comic and satirical effect. In approaching the material in this way, we are better placed to newly identify several instances in which the phallus in ancient Campania may actually have meant more than one thing at once. Such an approach necessitates that we don’t take for granted any given phallic meaning based simply on unchallenged intellectual traditions or the modern standards derived from these: namely, the apotropaic phallus has most often been equated with fertility, but thus far no one has interrogated the semiotic mechanisms for how these two ideas might relate. Where the historiographical part of this thesis assessed the *ideological* relation of these two things, here we will accordingly re-evaluate their *visual* and *semiotic* relation as it actually played out at the sites themselves. In turn, the different strands and adaptations of potential meaning encompassed by material typically deemed apotropaic will be demonstrated: throughout this exposition, we shall thus see that the very practice of phallic apotropaism could be toyed with, satirised and subverted by its ancient installers, both for comic effect *as well as* for enhanced apotropaic potency.

### **‘Hyperphallism’ and the Maximisation of Luck and/or Fertility**

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<sup>566</sup> Clarke (2007) 19.

Several objects from both Pompeii and Herculaneum depict the phallus not only oversized, but literally taking over human bodies. These objects draw attention to ideas concerning fertility – or more prosaically, virility – and its maximisation through superstition and the setting up of visual imagery. For example, a number of *tintinnabula* show dwarfs – by comparison, at least - riding their own huge phalluses [Fig. 66]. A figure of a gladiator battles his own phallus as it turns on him and attacks [Fig. 67]. In this latter example, we are more than simply viewing a figurine, but are witnessing a narrative moment unfolding: a phallus growing, transforming and then becoming ungovernable. Elsewhere phalluses – both of bronze and in street plaques – sport their *own* phalluses [Figs. 68-71]. Some of these see tails, feet and limbs swapped for phalluses, so that the entire creature is composed of phallus. Such concoctions point to the perceived hybridity of the phallus as a visual device in this period: its ability to be extended, enlarged, added to things, multiplied and combined. They also divulge a distinct significance to being ‘phallic’, in that the phallus of Campania was often manifested as a transformation or bodily addition. The phallus was, therefore, a (transformative) state of being. In fact, the creation of the ‘ultra-phallic’ as seen in these images is itself reminiscent of the very concept of maximising fortune and installing apotropaic measures through use of phallic imagery, which sees phalluses of inordinate size or number set up seemingly to protect property or invite luck. Such phallic ‘creatures’ potentially constitute highly self-aware and self-reflective constructions, therefore, which appear – through their own brand of phallic apotropaism – to poke fun at the very practice of installing phallic imagery in order to achieve luck and protection. Where phallic *tintinnabula* double-up as lamps, the wick was usually placed in the tip of the phallus [Fig. 72] - for example, a bronze *tintinnabulum* from a building identified as a bar at Pompeii IX.11.2.<sup>567</sup> Such objects, along with terracotta versions, force comical interaction, in that one had to touch and fondle the penises in order to light them. The characters comprising the terracotta lamps resemble mime performers, adding to their manifest horror that, with the lamp lit, the end of their penis was on fire, their arms thus raised in shock and recoiling

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<sup>567</sup> Beard (2008) 227-8, and Fig.79. Descamps-Lequime (2013) 158, note 13.

from the flame [Fig. 73]. Furthermore, if flames convey desire, is this passion gone awry – phalluses so engorged and overcome with lust that they burst into flame? Alternatively, could these objects be a grotesque or comic parody of the role and sanctity of fire in ancient Roman religion?<sup>568</sup> Indeed, the phallus is especially connected with fire in the myth detailing the begetting of Servius Tullius, legendary sixth king of Rome: one version of the story, recounted by Plutarch in the *Fortuna Romanorum*, says that when Tullius' mother Ocrisia was dedicating offerings to the sacred fire tended by the Vestal Virgins,

*"...suddenly, as the flames died down, the member of a man rose up out of the hearth [αἰφνίδιον δὲ τῆς φλογὸς μαρνανθείσης μόριον ἀνδρὸς ἀνατεῖναι γόνιμον ἐκ τῆς ἐστίας]; and this the girl, greatly frightened, told to Tanaquil [her mistress] only. Now Tanaquil was an intelligent and understanding woman, and she decked the maiden in garments such as become a bride and shut her up in the room with the apparition, for she judged it to be of a divine nature. Some declare that this love was manifested by the Lar of the house, others that it was by Vulcan. At any rate, it resulted in the birth of Servius, and, while he was still a child, his head shone with a radiance very like the gleam of lightning."*<sup>569</sup>

Rykwert considers the phallus of this tale an embodiment of masculine generative power situated within the hearth.<sup>570</sup> Indeed, Plutarch uses the phrase "μόριον ἀνδρὸς...γόνιμον" to describe the phallic manifestation which emerged from the fire and inseminated Ocrisia - literally the "begetting part of a man" - thus depicting the apparition as a disembodied, unanimous manifestation of male reproductive capacity.

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<sup>568</sup> Indeed, fire was also potentially deemed to have an aversive capacity: Festus records that those attending a funeral had to be sprinkled with water and walk over fire in order to rid themselves of the contaminants of death. Festus L 3: "aqua et igni". Do these objects consciously unite the belief in the aversive powers of fire and the phallus respectively? For more instances of sacred and expurgatory rites involving fire, see also Ovid, *Fasti* 4.727, 781-782, 785, 805; Tibullus 2.5.81-4; and Tibullus 2.5.89-90. See also Burriss (1930), who, whilst his actual analyses are extremely outdated, extensively collated ancient literary sources pertaining to the use of fire in Roman religion, particularly in rites described (by ancient commentators) as having expurgatory or aversive purposes.

<sup>569</sup> Plutarch *Fortuna Romanorum* 10.323C. Translation Babbitt (1936).

<sup>570</sup> Rykwert (1988) 101, 159.

Phalluses with their own phalluses thus speak of not just fertility, but *hyperfertility*, and the luck fostered by hanging up a phallic windchime-cum-lamp in your bar was surely enhanced by regular tactile contact with the operative appendage. In this way, the phallic image served to wittily and apotropaically 'inseminate' all those who came into contact with it. In these cases, does the phallus thus operate through contagion, acting as a vehicle for disseminating the intrinsic fortune it potentially carried, and mirroring the inchoate notions of fertility from which its propitiousness was perhaps derived? When it comes to the examples in which phalluses have outgrown their bearers, we cannot actually be sure whether we are looking at a dwarf - that is, an *undersized* figure - or an *oversized* phallus: perhaps this is precisely the point, in that before we assume we are looking at a giant and therefore 'super virile' phallus, we need to consider whether or not it is in fact attached to a tiny man! What would this subsequently mean for the depiction of masculinity or virility it was supposed to offer if so? Indeed, if the size of a phallus conveys its virility and masculinity, what happens when this is messed with? Such imagery might thus be seen as providing evidence that the phallus *did* indeed denote fertility on some level, as we see fertility 'out of control' at Pompeii - in the *hyperfertility* conveyed by the phalluses with phalluses - as well as the 'efficacy' of a phallus' potency undermined by attaching it to an ambiguous figure, accordingly serving to undermine and mischievously mock the traditional bellicose, eminently cultural pride in the male member.<sup>571</sup>

### **Prosperity, Abundance and Eroticism**

The well-known *HIC HABITAT FELICITAS* ("Happiness/Prosperity Lives Here") plaque from the House of Pansa at Pompeii [Fig. 52] illuminates further the intrinsically ambiguous connection between the Campanian phallus and the potential representation of fertility. Clarke argues that in this instance, "the plaque's humour rests on a double meaning: happiness of sexual arousal and the good luck that phallic fertility and power will bring."<sup>572</sup> Similarly, Ranieri Panetta writes that the

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<sup>571</sup> As asserted by Richlin (1992).

<sup>572</sup> Clarke (2007) 72-3.

“triumphant male member seems to represent a successful trade, good products on sale (made from wheat, the epitome of fertile lands) and – why not? – the sexual prowess of the owner.”<sup>573</sup> The inscription teamed with this example of the Campanian phallus brings to the fore the multiplicity of meanings attributed to this image, and the ways in which their close proximity and slipperiness were consciously magnified or spotlighted for both witty *and* apotropaic effect. Namely, the language of the inscription draws attention to the moments in which the symbolism and representation of fertility veers into that of outright sex (something that eighteenth-century commentators, including Richard Payne-Knight, grappled with in their defence of phallic imagery). In the case of the Pansa plaque, there is indeed a multiplicity of ways in which this particular phallus, taken together with its text, can be read: as being concerned with the fertility of the land and the obvious causal relationship this would have with the commercial success of the bakery (with *Felicitas* thus reading as fecundity); or a more general sense of fertility (which, in being propitiated, one assumes would also have positive sexual or erotic benefits for the proprietor); or, more generally, the attraction of non-specific good luck so as to *achieve* commercial success, or the aversion of non-specific, general misfortune so as to *maintain* commercial success (with the inscription thus declaring that ‘*happiness/prosperity* dwells here’, rather than something more agricultural or generative, and the phallus accordingly being set up in order that the situation stays that way).

It is clear from this example alone that the aversive or propitiatory use of the phallus was often a conscious triangulation of several intrinsically connected associations. Cases such as this exhibit patent awareness of the slippage between these associations and the capacity for double-entendre when setting up phallic imagery for apotropaic purposes: here, the concept of *felicitas* is played upon due to the particular setting of this phallic installation, a bakery, so *felicitas* in this individual context is accordingly able to stand quadruply for: happiness; success in the commercial sense; fertility in the agricultural sense (as befitting a business directly reliant on agricultural yield); and finally wheat, pertaining directly to the products of

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<sup>573</sup> Ranieri Panetta (2004) 216.

the bakery and *felicitas*' particular iconographic association with wheat (highlighted by Arditì in 1825).<sup>574</sup> This example also highlights that phallic apotropaism was not a wholly solemn or desexualising affair, as Beard would have us believe.<sup>575</sup> These layers of meaning encompassed here by the word *Felicitas* – exhibited in a manner that was as much playful and reflexive as it was also a 'belts and braces' approach to apotropaism – are in turn reinforced and highlighted when combined with the image of the phallus. For just as *Felicitas* sought to encompass all the aspects to do with 'fertility' and '(commercial) prosperity', the phallus reinforced this multivalence, representing generativity pertaining to the fecundity of the land on which the business relied, *as well as* evoking sex and pleasure. There was one further possible pun in this visual set up, too: "happiness lives *here*, in the phallus" – and not only that, but right at the member's tip, directly below the words "HIC HABITAT", as if labelled by them. The scope for subversion and deliberate duality of meaning was thus as much a part of Campanian phallic imagery as any other of its characteristics.

### **The Realm of Priapus**

The figure of Priapus, images of which are found throughout both of the Vesuvian cities, provides further evidence as to how the relationship between apotropaic phallism and fertility worship or symbolism was conceived by the ancients. The deity, characterised by an oversized phallus, was traditionally associated with protecting gardens from thieves (as seen in the *Carmina Priapea*).<sup>576</sup> A genre of fresco painting outlined by Bettina Bergmann is characterised, however, by statues of Priapus in countryside shrines, with devotees of both sexes coming to pray to him, seemingly for fertility.<sup>577</sup> How do these sacral-idyllic scenes relate to Priapus' role as an agricultural guardian deity, and do they arguably present a 'corruption' of an earlier socio-religious remit? We see this possibility being played with at the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii. In the two-couch cubiculum (cubiculum 4, east wall of

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<sup>574</sup> Arditì (1825) 24-8, 42.

<sup>575</sup> Beard (2008) 233-5.

<sup>576</sup> Clarke (2007) 184.

<sup>577</sup> Bergmann (1986); cited in Clarke (2007) 184.

north alcove) there is a painting showing a man sacrificing to Priapus in the middle of the night. Clarke describes this fresco as “a humorous embroidery on the traditional images of worshipping Priapus in the sacral-idyllic landscapes...” in that “the males in the wall decoration of this cubiculum play the fools to the more solemn, female-dominated imagery of the Mysteries Room.”<sup>578</sup> Clarke argues, therefore, that the ‘rites’ observed by the men are a foolish, comical version of those ‘authentic’ ones conducted by the women. Are they comical because they are blatantly focused on the obtainment of sexual success, pointing to a misunderstanding of priapic imagery and its purpose? Or because they are a crude and asinine misinterpretation of the *actual* rites of fertility and propitiation? Of course, it could also be both: in this case, the former would also therefore mean the latter. Indeed, is this scene “humorous” because we are meant to infer that the man is not seeking Priapus’ help with agricultural fertility, or even with sexual fertility (fathering offspring), but with sexual *success* or *pleasure*? Is this fresco thus meant to be a visual joke on being unlucky in love, unsatisfactory in the bedroom, or even on impotency or other forms of erectile dysfunction? A ‘typical man’s’ interpretation of the purpose and benefits of propitiating fertility, where the women in the “solemn” fresco next door have the mature and correct idea? Does the dialogue between these two sets of frescoes, as suggested by Clarke, portray women as being concerned with maintaining agricultural fecundity as part their social remit (and more solemn religious or ritual duties), where men are depicted as obsessed with sex and ‘sowing their oats’? Does this fresco and its depiction in the Villa of the Mysteries provide evidence that ‘worshipping’ Priapus for fertility - or particularly sexual fertility or sexual success - is a corruption or misinterpreted survival of an original tradition to do with protecting and maintaining agriculture production? Such scope for ambiguity and parody is relevant to our discussion, because it provides further evidence of the different visual registers and webs of meaning which the Campanian phallus could thus inhabit. Indeed, there is a distinct sense that the phallus could be about both fertility and generativity as well as sex, as well as the very slippage *between* these things, *and* the way that this slippage could in turn be manipulated for comic effect.

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<sup>578</sup> Clarke (2007) 185-6.

In this way, if a phallus was apotropaic because it was about the propitiation of fertility and productivity, it could also be about sex, pleasure and sexual conquests in a manner that would have seemed more light-hearted and deliberately facetious to the Campanian viewer.

Indeed, Priapus' various associations certainly appear to have occupied a sliding scale, from denoting physical threat and guardianship to inviting more sacred forms of propitiation, with notions of sex and/or fertility playing varying roles in every case. We can find similar evidence of the comic-erotic material provided by priapic imagery in the character of Quartilla from Petronius' *Satyricon*, a devotee of a secret cult of Priapus (Chapters 16-18, 21-26): "*ne scilicet iuvenili impulsu licentia quod in sacello Priapi vidistis, vulgetis deorumque consilia proferatis in populum. Protendo igitur ad genua vestra supinas manus petoque et oro, ne nocturnas religiones iocum risumque faciatis, neve traducere velitis tot annorum secreta, quae vix mille homines noverunt*";<sup>579</sup> and "*Itane est?*" inquit Quartilla "*etiam dormire vobis in mente est, cum sciatis Priapi genio pervigilium deberi?*"<sup>580</sup> Quartilla's character satirises the 'underground' ritual membership and practice of Priapic worship and the obvious material it provides for sexual innuendo.<sup>581</sup> Once again, it is women who play a key role in these Priapic cult duties, even in a deeply satirical tableau, with the men in the episode 'kidnapped' and 'unwilling' participants in the – obviously sexual – cultic rites. Priapus and priapic worship appear to have been a source for satirisation and mockery even in Roman times, therefore. The very existence of the *Carmina Priapea* also demonstrates this: it is most widely held that the *Carmina* were the work of a group of poets who met at the house of Maecenas, amusing themselves by writing tongue-in-cheek tributes to the garden Priapus, who regularly indulges in violent sexual threats and crude innuendos (others, including Martial and Petronius, were thought to have added more verses in imitation of the originals).<sup>582</sup>

A complex and malleable visual tradition connected with Priapus and his role in Roman society is alluded to elsewhere in Pompeii, at the House of the Vettii. First,

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<sup>579</sup> Petronius *Satyricon* 17

<sup>580</sup> Petronius *Satyricon* 21.

<sup>581</sup> See Courtney (2001) 65-71, 152-7.

<sup>582</sup> See Holzberg (2005) for a reassessment of these poems and their authorship.



on entering the house, we are greeted with a large fresco showing Priapus in the property's vestibule [Fig 74]. Priapus as he is here is in his guardian role, at the entrance of the house, greeting you brazenly with his member; but this painting also toys with his acquired connections to prosperity – presumably through an evolution of his proximity to fertility and thus to agricultural and, in turn, commercial success - as he is shown weighing his phallus against a bag of money. Beard and Henderson have mused that “Romans might have enjoyed the verbal pun (on *penis* and *pendere*, ‘to weigh’) visualised in Priapus’ balancing act”.<sup>583</sup> The identification of a potential pun simultaneously provides further illustration of how widespread and typical double-meanings were in Roman culture, as well as the very performance of the multiple sides to any kind of symbolism being intrinsically a part of the construction and function of an image installed in the Roman house. Indeed, it is this visual world which the Campanian phallus inhabits, meaning that it inherently resists any straightforward kind of characterisation or classification as to its definitive ‘meaning’, which has so reductively and fruitlessly been attempted in the past. The depth of this particular image’s witticism and self-conscious usage of the phallic apotropaic tradition goes yet one step further, however: for Priapus is literally weighing his weighty weight against money to reflexively show his *own* success – achieved through his propitiatory and aversive phallus – at making *you*, the businessman and owner of the household, successful.

In August 2018 another fresco of Priapus was discovered [Fig. 75], depicting the deity in same format as he appears in the vestibule of the House of the Vettii.<sup>584</sup> The discovery has shown that the famous image of Priapus weighing his phallus is by no means unique to the Vettii property, and was potentially a standard or common trope of domestic phallic installation. This new Priapus fresco is also located at the entryway of the house it can be found in - a grand villa in Regio V, on the Via del Vesuvio, south-east of the *Castellum Aquae* and not far from the impressive House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto. These frescoes’ witty configuration of the phallus, with its

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<sup>583</sup> Beard & Henderson (2001) 35, caption to Fig.30.

<sup>584</sup><http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/art-culture/article/consolidation-work-pompeii-reveals-new-fresco-priapus> Date Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019.  
<http://www.arte.it/notizie/napoli/a-pompei-riemerge-un-affresco-di-priapo-14857>

symbolism of luck and prosperity, into the very vehicle or measurement of that prosperity, display an undeniable awareness of the erotic nature of using a phallus to invoke luck in one's livelihood and day-to-day living. The House of the Vettii is famous amongst scholars and tourists arguably precisely because of its Priapus fresco: indeed, interpretations of the dwelling and its inhabitants – including their aesthetic style and livelihood – have been hugely reliant on this image and the way it has been deemed programmatic of the property's overall decorative scheme. This has often been termed the 'Trimalchio Effect' or 'Trimalchio Vision' (named after the infamous dinner host of Petronius' *Satyricon*), in which the apparently patent depiction of riches accumulated through commerce - Priapus weighing his phallus, along with putti elsewhere in the house measuring and weighing things as if part of a manufacturing process – have been read as allusions to the owners' business, the supposedly nouveau-riche character of such décor leading many to conclude that the property's owners must surely have been freedmen (like Trimalchio).<sup>585</sup> The Priapus weighing tableau has long been interpreted as a take on phallic apotropaism or the propitiation of luck which was unique to this particular house, therefore. However, given not only its discovery elsewhere on the site but its capacity for witty commentary on the very practice and visual repertoire of phallic apotropaism itself, it perhaps should be taken as evidence of a wider visual dialogue which relied on viewers' regular exposure to such imagery throughout their locale.

Following the Priapus who accosts us in the vestibule, we next encounter the deity in statue-form, likely in the villa's garden (Clarke argues that it had been moved or was being restored at time of eruption), spouting water from his oversized member [Fig. 76].<sup>586</sup> Clarke hypothesises that a visual axis was created between these two incarnations of Priapus, in that they were set up to be in line with one another as one

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<sup>585</sup> Clarke has associated the Vettii's taste with that of Trimalchio's, seemingly prompting Leach to remind him that Trimalchio was a fictional "caricature". Ling (1991) 78; Clarke (1991) 233-5; Leach (2004) 309, note 117. Similarly: "In this era, the big house of the Vettii is famous for its painting of a **man**" - ? – "weighing an enormous penis on scales against coins: the Vettii were evidently freedmen. [...] The vulgarity of freedmen in the Naples area is immortalised in the most remarkable prose work of this era, the *Satyricon*, written by Nero's witty and elegant courtier, Petronius." Lane Fox (2005) 556-7; also, Severy-Hoven (2012) 547; and Wallace-Hadrill (1988) 43-97. See also Petersen (2006).

<sup>586</sup> Clarke (2007) 188-9.

viewed the house from its main entrance or through the open front door [Fig. 77].<sup>587</sup> The door to the property would likely have remained open throughout the day so that passers-by would see the image and be made to recognise the owners' wealth, thus making the setting up of any kind of line of sight – which would have accentuated the depth of the house and the extent of the opulence within – highly plausible.<sup>588</sup> That priapic imagery might have been used to create such an axis is significant, as it simultaneously acknowledges Priapus' role - as an inherently phallic character - as an entryway image (thus underlining his apotropaism), as well as his *other* capacity for connoting pleasure, excess and sensuality (of the kind of which would have been glimpsed through the open doorway of the house on display in the rooms beyond, and climactically emblematised by the fountain-Priapus both comically and erotically spouting water in the property's garden). Therefore, the visual axis architected by different guises of Priapus would have directed the viewer, gazing at the house through its open doorway, to start at the external, protective, threshold-delineating form of Priapus and visually progress to the bountiful, uninhibited and thus highly-sensual incarnation of the deity. An actual guest into the house would have undergone this transfiguration, symptomatic of the privilege that comes with being granted access into someone's property, even more acutely: for where others could only glimpse from the outside and never truly know what lies within, the guest or client granted access can enjoy that person's wealth.<sup>589</sup> The guest to the house thus runs the gamut of the incarnations and socio-cultural applications of Priapus, symbolically going from needing to be granted access (in order to overcome the threshold-defending apotropaism), to passing through into the inner sanctum of the household, where apotropaism and propitiation consciously morph into a more unrestrained celebration of wealth and pleasure. Therefore, the role of Priapus in entryway settings proves an elevated and self-aware take on phallic apotropaism, the latter having been reconfigured for the conspicuous consumption, self-elevation and power dynamics entailed in wealthy households.

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<sup>587</sup> Clarke (2007) 188-9, Fig.94.

<sup>588</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1988) 46.

<sup>589</sup> For example, see Gazda & Haeckl (1994) 25-48; as well as Brown on the "matrix of the authority of the father", Brown (1961) 14.

## Anatomy and Phallic Power

In 2015, an article in the journal *Urology* sparked titillation across the internet when it declared that the famous Priapus fresco from the entrance to the House of the Vettii in fact documented a medical condition. "The disproportionate virile member is distinctively characterized by a patent **phimosis**, more specifically a shut phimosis," Francesco Maria Galassi told *Discovery News*.<sup>590</sup> Phimosis is a condition where the foreskin is too tight to be pulled back over the head of the penis (glans), making erection not only uncomfortable but, in severe cases, impossible.<sup>591</sup> Such a desire to diagnose retrospectively, attempted on several aspects of antiquity, says more about contemporary society than it does about Roman art and symbolism.<sup>592</sup> Nonetheless, Hughes subsequently confirmed that "anatomical votive offerings made in Italy between the fourth to second centuries BC do often show the penis with the foreskin closed around the top, as in the later Priapus painting from Pompeii."<sup>593</sup> Galassi believes that "it is not unlikely the painter might have desired to report objective evidence of a high prevalence of that anatomic defect in Pompeii, at a time mixing it with fertility attributes traditionally ascribed to Priapus."<sup>594</sup> In Galassi's view, seemingly being widespread among the male population in Pompeii, phimosis might have been the very reason for the abundance in Pompeii of anatomical votive artefacts used in an attempt to dispel that anatomical and functional defect. However, Hughes rightly goes on to say that "it's more challenging for us to understand why

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<sup>590</sup><https://www.livescience.com/51206-penis-disorder-found-in-fertility-god-pompeii-portrait.html>  
Date Accessed: November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/did-greek-god-fertility-priapus-have-penis-disorder-known-phimosis-1529771>

<sup>591</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/phimosis/> Date Accessed: November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>592</sup> For example, Muramoto and Englert reckoned that the episodic voices which Socrates is said to have experienced point towards a "simple partial seizure of temporal lobe origin, possibly in the left lateral temporal lobe." Muramoto & Englert (2006) 652. Similarly, Mitchell diagnoses a terracotta figure as a "hunchback suffering from acromegaly." Mitchell (2017) 186. (Interestingly, Mitchell also thinks that the "most plausible explanation for many of these objects [that is, figurines of dwarfs and hunchbacks] remains an apotropaic one." 192.)

<sup>593</sup><https://www.livescience.com/51206-penis-disorder-found-in-fertility-god-pompeii-portrait.html>  
Date Accessed: November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>594</sup><https://www.livescience.com/51206-penis-disorder-found-in-fertility-god-pompeii-portrait.html>  
Date Accessed: November 12<sup>th</sup> 2018.

the artist [of the Priapus fresco] would have chosen to represent a biological condition that may have been seen to threaten fertility and health. Perhaps we need to see this painting as a comment on the power of the divine body, which didn't suffer from the same biological limitations as the mortal body."<sup>595</sup> It is also true that we should be careful as to how literally to read such an image: after all, Priapus is not known for anatomical accuracy (!).

However, patent artistic attention to the glans of the priapic or apotropaic phallus is seen elsewhere in the phallic corpus of Campania: several phallic plaques show particular attention to the glans of the phallus (*fritillus* plaque VI.14.28; bird creature plaque III.4.3) [Figs. 78 & 69]; a fresco of ithyphallic Mercury from outside a business at IX.12.6 displays a highly exaggerated glans [Fig. 91]; a mosaic showing an "aethiops" from the bath suite at the House of Menander makes a point of distinguishing the glans from the rest of the figure by using highly-contrasting tesserae [Fig. 79],<sup>596</sup> and a phallus in an otherwise entirely black and white mosaic scheme also exhibits a reddish-purple glans in the women's baths at Herculaneum [Fig. 80]. All these comprise instances in which the glans of the phallus appears to be being drawn attention to or is considered a critical transmitter of visual information. Ultimately, however, they also show that an exposed glans was used to signal an *erect* phallus, and that this distinction was thought about in at least some of the instances in which the phallus was being portrayed in Campania. Could the anatomical anomaly identified in the Priapus fresco at the Vetti property simply have been an oversight on the part of the artist? It is too early to tell confidently whether the glans is exposed or delineated on the new Priapus fresco from Regio V; whether the skin is drawn over it or not remains unclear at present. Is Hughes right, and is this about a divine body – Priapus being the ultimate hyperfertile, hypersexual body at that – defying the biological norms and restrictions suffered by mere mortals? Is this fresco and its "phimosis" actually about hyperfertility, then? Or, is this particular phallus *not* actually an *erect* one? Is a lack of an erection part of the fresco's joke, in that Priapus' lucky member was huge even when 'at rest'? There is a tradition in which

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<sup>595</sup> <https://www.livescience.com/51206-penis-disorder-found-in-fertility-god-pompeii-portrait.html>  
Date Accessed: November 12th, 2018.

<sup>596</sup> See Clarke (2007) 75.

Priapus is cursed by Hera to have a permanent erection, or alternatively to be permanently erect but then experience impotency when he actually desires to have intercourse; perhaps Campanian depictions of Priapus depict this myth, then, his confusing phallic state a reflection of his member's unreliability?<sup>597</sup> The same observation on the foreskin can potentially be made of the sculpture of Priapus from the Vettii villa's garden: given this visual consistence throughout the property, does the lack of foreskin retraction constitute a wider theme or artistic choice in the villa's decorative scheme and its employment of phallic imagery, or is it simply a coincidence that both Priapi appear to correspond in this way? Or are *both* of these phalluses from House of Vettii intended to *not* actually be erect ones? Why might this be the case in context of this particular property and its decorative scheme?

We might consider how these two phalluses are specifically being used. Whilst weighing, the phallus can't remain erect! (Indeed, Beard and Henderson say of the fresco's comical scene that "an erection would complicate any weighing operation".<sup>598</sup>) Also, in order to function as a fountain, a phallus can't be at a fully 'erect' angle. Therefore, we might conclude that these two phalluses are not even '*supposed*' to be erect. In the case of the fountain, we can perhaps go one step further: here, Priapus' phallus might well be dysfunctional in the medical or biological sense but functional as the fountain, and therefore incorporates an in-built joke inspired by the very practicalities of this particular depiction of the Priapus. Or, perhaps the fountain shows him at rest or post-coital, and is thus intended to provide another riff on the themes of fecundity and virility used in the house and elsewhere in the town. Moreover, in the same way that we have lots evidence for erect phalluses with clearly defined and exposed glans, we also have lots of evidence for phalluses that, whilst still *oversized* - this being the primary source of their humour and identifiable potency - are *not* erect: this includes the terracotta 'old man' figurines [Fig. 81] and the bronze 'dumb waiter' figurines [Fig. 82], now in the *Gabinetto Segreto*, which all have oversized penises hanging from below their clothing which exhibit a similar spout-like appearance, indicating the foreskin is not drawn back, and are indeed also not at

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<sup>597</sup> Story related in a scholium on Apollonius *Argonautica*; see Kerényi (1951) 176.

<sup>598</sup> Beard & Henderson (2001) 35, caption to Fig. 30.

the angle of erection. To demonstrate this further and even more concretely, there are several other examples where satire and stylisation – which confound the manifestation of the imagery in many of the cases mentioned thus far – are *not* at play: both the herm of Caecilius Iucundus – which features a non-erect penis with pubic hair and testicles portrayed in a more anatomically naturalistic manner [Fig. 83] - and a *tintinnabulum* in the *Gabinetto Segreto* [Fig. 84] - with pubic hair, testicles and a relaxed, proportionate penis – display the same spout shape and visual mode of indicating non-retracted foreskin. These latter two examples make it clear that the way to render a non-erect penis in ancient Campania looked very much like that which has been identified as phimosis in the Vettii Priapus fresco. So, do every single one of these examples have phimosis? Were all the anatomical votives referenced by Hughes dedicated by someone suffering from phimosis? Of course not. Rather, are we just simply looking at a conventional way of denoting a non-erect penis, which could still then be inflated or exaggerated for comic effect? This seems far more likely. In which case, to go back to the Priapi in the house of the Vettii: it seems that we are looking at two instances of Priapus *without* an erection, but still a characteristically oversized phallus (perhaps in line with his mythographical tradition): therefore, a phallus being oversized did not mean it had to be erect, and Priapus' phallus not being erect was not necessarily an indicator of something anomalous or symbolically distinctive, as we have now seen from the *Gabinetto Segreto* figurines. The Campanian Phallus could clearly be un-erect and still serve a symbolic purpose. Sometimes, it seems, people went out of their way to demonstrate that a phallus *was* indeed erect, perhaps to add an *extra* layer of meaning or to inject a boost of luckiness, as we will explore subsequently. Modernity's recent obsession with phimosis tells us one thing, however: we *expect* the Campanian phallus to be erect.<sup>599</sup>

## Phallic Puns

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<sup>599</sup> Davis has pointed out the uncertain 'erection status' of many of the Isernia wax *voti*, both in terms of the objects themselves as well as their reproduction in Knight's frontispiece to the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, and the corresponding effect of this on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century perception of their symbolic function in the Catholic ritual for which they were made. Davis (2008) 107-30; (2010) 62-4.

At the *Pistrinum* of Sextus Patulcius Felix at Herculaneum, two phalluses are shown side-by-side on the hood of the oven [Fig. 85]. One is bigger than the other, allowing the phallus depicted here in this context to take on the process of the bread rising successfully (with the smaller phallus denoting the bread dough, and the larger phallus the bread once baked). This particular use of phallic imagery is perhaps deliberately and playfully evocative of the *Priapus Siligineus*, referenced by Martial in *Epigram* 14.70, and also mentioned by Arditì in conjunction with the phallus plaque from above an oven in the House of Pansa at Pompeii. Arditì draws attention to the particular connection between the idea of *Felicitas* and wheat, and therefore the especial relevance of propitiating this, as a form of good fortune, in a bakery.<sup>600</sup> The House of Pansa plaque establishes a connection for us between *Felicitas* and the phallus: *Felicitas* being the kind of thing the phallus was designed to attract or maintain, and with its own layers and facets of meaning (including happiness, good fortune, fertility – through the connection with wheat and thus abundance – and sexual satisfaction). Here in the *Pistrinum* at Herculaneum, the phallus takes that connection one step further: the phallus becomes the literal embodiment of a successful wheat product, a phallus *made* of wheat - with a further layer of humour being that such products were in fact potentially available to buy and consume! Indeed, Martial's poem pushes further the humour available to the viewer on seeing these two phalluses: *Si vis esse satur, nostrum potes esse Priapum; // Ipsa licet rodas inguina, purus eris* ("If you wish to satiate your hunger, you may eat this Priapus of ours; even though you gnaw on the loins themselves, you will remain pure.")<sup>601</sup> This image also plays up a comical and double-purpose connection between the processes of transformation entailed in the rising of bread and getting an erection: as the dough/wheat phallus rises, it undergoes 'an erection', thus also serving to maximise the lucky implications of the imagery, in that a successful erection (a successful, functioning phallus) also means successfully risen bread. This use of imagery also mischievously toys with the masculine pride attached to performing successfully in

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<sup>600</sup> Indeed, other ovens, at Pompeii, have phallic imagery: phallus on brick tile of oven hood/arch, Pompeii IX.1.33/3; plaque from above oven hood from House of Pansa, Pompeii VI.6.1. The so-called Bakery of Modestus also has two phallic plaques on its external wall. Pompeii VII.1.36.

<sup>601</sup> Own translation.



the sexual sphere. The use of phallic imagery and its implications in this example from Herculaneum also shows up the ways in which the ancients knowingly played off the ambiguous connection between the proximal and distant meanings of the phallus: here, the phallus starts off as a symbol for fertility (played out here especially acutely, just like at the House of Pansa, through its connections to agricultural abundance), and is then deliberately construed for a more literal interpretation – with getting hard (and thus a straightforwardly sexual notion of success) being facetiously equated to the successful outcome of any given commercial or manufacturing process deemed to require a bit of good luck in order to turn out well. Accordingly, therefore, modern attempts to characterise either phallic apotropaism or fertility worship as solemn beliefs absent of any irony or innuendo simply do not stand up when we look at how this imagery was integrated into the day-to-day processes and activities of ancient Campanian life.

### **Competitive Phalli**

There are a number of other cases where the depiction of erection appears to play a key role in the employment of phallic imagery. A plaque featuring a yellow tufa phallus, high up on a wall, in a small frame [Fig. 86] mimics the more sculptural ‘jut out’ phallus type also seen on the streets of Pompeii [Fig. 60]. This phallus is a hybrid form of phallic installation halfway between plaque and sculptural protuberance, therefore; perhaps it is a plaque deliberately *referencing* the sculptural protuberance type? What would be the significance of this? Did these two types serve different purposes, the combination of which would have been conspicuous or amusing to the ancient viewer? The phallus of this example swells out of its frame, seemingly playing with the process of erection: a phallus so lucky – so *erect* – that its frame cannot actually contain it. We therefore also get a sense of humorously competitive display from these kinds of examples: ‘my phallus is bigger than yours, so I’ll be attracting more of the good fortune going around’; ‘my phallus is so virile – and therefore lucky – that it exceeds the very frame it was installed in’. A comical – and therefore extra lucky – excess of virility on display. A corresponding attention to anatomical scale, this time to a phallus’ testicles, can alternatively be seen in the case

of the huge red tufa phallus from the House of Centenary [Fig. 102].<sup>602</sup> These tiny testicles are comically out of proportion, as if to exacerbate just how huge and erect this specimen is – so much so it exceeds its own anatomical bounds. The self-reflexive comedy of this particular example is clear, whilst simultaneously still serving to put forward a prominent claim on phallic apotropaism: ‘ours may well be comical and ridiculous, but it’s *still* a big phallus – an unnaturally (supernaturally?) big one at that – thus conveying the extent to which *our* household is guaranteed luck and protection’. Yet this installation of phallic apotropaism – in a manner highly comparable to the *tintinnabula* depicting ambiguously proportioned men – also calls into question the relationship between the size of a phallus and its corresponding measure of virility, as well as, once again, the very link itself between a phallus and its prototype: did Romans measure masculinity by the phallus, or by the penis?

### Whose Phallus is This?

Elsewhere in Campania, we find another instance in which the depiction of erection appears to have been of notable concern in the installation of phallic imagery. In the women’s section of the central baths at Herculaneum, the mosaic on the floor of the tepidarium – a square geometric meander design inset with squares – features a selection of different motifs of different objects and images [Figs. 87 & 88]. One of these – along with two others (discussed later on) – is a phallus [Fig. 80]. The entire mosaic scheme is in black and white apart from the glans of this phallus, which uses reddish-purple tesserae. This is surely significant, given it constitutes the only usage of colour in the entire scheme. This mosaic bears a similar colouring and schematic feel to that of the ithyphallic aethiops in the House of the Menander at Pompeii [Fig. 79]. In this latter example, the whole scene is in black and white apart from the two *askoi* being carried by the aethiops figure, the *aryballos* on a cord below it, and the tip of his phallus, all of which are rendered in the same reddish-brown colour, serving to draw especial attention to the glans of the phallus itself. What is the significance of this anatomical detail and what role is anatomy playing in these two schemata? The

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<sup>602</sup> Ovid writes in the *Fasti* that “The hermae of Priapus in Italy, like those of other rustic divinities, were usually painted red, whence the god is called *ruber* or *rubicundus*.” Ovid *Fasti*.I.415, VI.319,333.

phallus in the Herculaneum arrangement is obviously highly simplified and stylised (and is part of a wider scheme of highly stylised objects and paraphernalia inserted into the design, which are rendered more like symbols or logos than naturalistic depictions); does the red glans continue this sense of caricature, adding an extra splash of detail peculiar to the way the phallus is familiarly depicted? Or is it simply there to ensure that this image is recognisable as a phallus (the design being all in black, the phallus' shape may have been mistaken for something else)? However, if this latter explanation was the case, why not render the glans in white, as other details have been alluded to elsewhere in the design? The significance of colour amidst a black and white scheme cannot be overlooked here; plus, as will be discussed, at least two other phalluses feature in this mosaic, and their details *have* indeed been outlined or delineated in white. As we have now seen, phalluses in Campania – even the exceptional in size or form – are *not* always erect. Is this careful allusion to glans about emphasising this phallus' state of erection, then? Or is it concerned with emphasising that this is a *penis*, even, rather than a *phallic object*: elsewhere in the mosaic, the other two phalluses which feature are, as will be shown, *tintinnabula* [Figs. 89 & 90]. Is this use of red tesserae about fleshliness, therefore? (Indeed, the sense of a phallus/penis depicted alongside *phallic objects* is definitely at stake in this scheme, as we will address further on.) Alternatively, if we consider this example in relation to the mosaic in the House of the Menander, it leads us to ask *whose* phallus this is in the baths at Herculaneum: does the purple glans make it a particular ethnicity amid what would just have been a black and white mosaic? Is this, therefore, a phallus belonging to an Aethiops? And why – was an Aethiops considered additionally lucky? Or is the Herculaneum mosaic consciously referencing and even playing with the fact that ithyphallism is often paired up and associated with certain morphologies, namely those of the aethiops or pygmy?<sup>603</sup> So, this phallus is perhaps supposed to denote an aethiops even when not actually attached to an aethiops?<sup>604</sup> Once again,

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<sup>603</sup> See Clarke (2007) 75. Also, Clarke (1996).

<sup>604</sup> Clarke deduced that an aethiops in a bathhouse could function apotropaically in two ways: one, by reminding the viewer to protect their body from the heat through its skin colour (the Greek word αἰθίοψ meaning “face burnt by the sun”) and evocation of a hot climate; secondly, by inciting ritual laughter on account of being an “unbecoming” body. An aethiops with a large phallus was therefore a combination of bathhouse heat danger with the danger of envy found at baths (including demons,

therefore, the employment of phallic imagery is conscripted into testing and satirising the very limitations and implications of the visual field and choice of media which it inhabits. Such cases convey an acute awareness of how medium, symbolism and the possibilities of meaning interact.

### **Penis: Phallus: Phallic Object**

The depiction of phallic *tintinnabula* in the mosaic at Herculaneum poses further questions as to the role of anatomy and the stylisation of anatomy entailed in the Campanian phallus. Three phalluses feature in the mosaic on the tepidarium floor of the women's baths. Two of the three are in fact phallic *tintinnabula*, and are thus not portrayals of a phallus, but of an *image* of a phallus/a phallic object - and an apotropaic device at that [Figs. 89 & 90]. Are the red tesserae in the glans of the phallus [Fig. 80] used in light of this, therefore: that is, to make distinctions between a phallus and a *phallic object*? This in itself is interesting, as it is as if the mosaic is trying to make a distinction between an 'actual' or 'original' phallus, and an object utilising the form or imagery of a phallus in order to harness luck or to function apotropaically; but of course, however, the phallus depicted in the mosaic is itself an *image* of a phallus, not an *actual* one. Does this mosaic thus present a witty play on the very practice of setting up phallic *images* in order to attract luck or avert evil? There *is* no 'original' or 'actual' phallus here: *all* are simulacra. In inserting *tintinnabula* into its design, this mosaic thus features the simulacrum of a simulacrum. It plays with the idea of symbolism and the derivation of meaning, and once again draws attention to the fact that a phallus in ancient Campanian culture symbolised something but was not meant to be a *literal* manifestation of it (which of course was the basis of Payne Knight's argument) – otherwise a penis itself would be lucky! As we have seen, however, frequently the symbolic and apotropaic phallus breaks down into an image that is downright sexual, and not symbolic in its communication whatsoever. Does the mosaic consciously reflect the instability of this imagery and its vacillating meanings in the Campanian townscape? The relationship between an

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envious persons, and those who worked black magic, as outlined by Dunbabin). Clarke (2007) 74-5. Dunbabin (1989) 6-46.

image and its 'original' – i.e., that of the one between the phallus and the male genitals – is something the ancients seem to have explored, the way this dynamic prevaricated the concrete reception of a given phallic image in different urban or domestic contexts - as well as the extent to which the Campanian phallus utterly transcended its prototype - proving to have provided material for artistic parody and reflexive allusion.

### Priapic Mercury

The stylisation of anatomy and erection is particularly evident in the Mercury fresco from outside the House (bakery) of the Chaste Lovers, Pompeii [Fig. 91]. The painting features a cartoonish erection, in which a huge phallus curves comically upwards, defying physical possibility and boasting a highly exaggerated anatomy. In particular, the glans of this phallus is painted so as to look bulbous and shiny. The author of the website *AD79: Destruction and Re-discovery* considers this fresco to be a depiction of Priapus, however, making off with the *attributes* of Mercury: “A shop sign on the right-hand side of the facade is a humorous portrayal of Priapus, a minor god of fertility and abundance, making off with the caduceus and winged sandals of Mercury, in essence thieving from the god of thieves”.<sup>605</sup> This would indeed be a neat bit of imagery to serve as a commercially-minded installation of apotropaim in this context, aimed at protecting the business from robbers. However, I would argue that this is in fact Mercury *in the guise of* Priapus or with a priapic attribute, represented as such so as to boost his particular commercial brand of luck-bringing potential. He **wears** the winged sandals and does not carry them, and is also holding a bag of money as Mercury often does.<sup>606</sup> We also have a number of bronze figurines of Mercury with numerous phalluses on his head, which can be seen in the *Gabinetto Segreto* [Fig. 92]: just because phalluses are present does not mean we are always

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<sup>605</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/ad79eruption/pompeii/regio-ix/reg-ix-ins-12/house-of-the-chaste-lovers> Date Accessed: October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>606</sup> See Mercury with money-bag and staff on a money-box from Italy, c. AD 200. “Out of a large range of subjects, the potter, who stamped his product on the back of the box, chose a topic to match the object’s function, Mercury being responsible **for luck and material welfare.**” Rüpke (2008) 227, Fig.14.4

dealing with Priapus. Rather, the phallus – and hyperphallism – is regularly used to *transform* a familiar image or to provide an apotropaic take on a particular theme. The depiction of a ‘priapic Mercury’ would deliberately play on this very trope of phallic transformation and the phallus’ patent connections to commerce.<sup>607</sup> Furthermore, this image portrays a comical blurring of the distinction between *Herm* statues and *Hermes* (Mercury) *himself*, perhaps in turn indicating where ‘serious’ herm statues (think Caecilius Iucundus [Fig. 83]), with their long history extending back to phallic crossroads statues in sixth-century Greece [Fig. 93], fitted into this overall picture of Campanian phallic apotropaism: can this fresco be considered a nod to the way in which Roman culture reinvented – even *corrupted* – an original Greek tradition of phallic apotropaism?<sup>608</sup>

### The Commercial Phallus

Scholars have thus far neglected the possibility for interaction between the phallic plaques and shop signs, which were seen alongside each other on a day-to-day basis and are highly similar in both form and context.<sup>609</sup> Several of the phallic plaques appear to parody more ‘serious’ shop signage, toying with an inherent

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<sup>607</sup> Many of the other phallic plaques appear to be associated with shop-type spaces. Are these plaques concerned with the ‘danger’ of such public spaces, as is often asserted (Clarke), or are they actually about commerce, its success, and proudly self-identifying as a businessman in the Campanian townscape? For example, other types of ‘propitiatory’ behaviour from the towns illustrate the evident importance of courting diverse forms of luck and benefit in commercial settings: a *caupona* at Pompeii (I.11.11) featured a big painted shrine visible to proprietors *and* patrons, serving as a collaborative engagement in appeasing ‘household’ gods whilst maintaining the financial success of all involved in the establishment. The so-called *Taberna* of Priapus at Herculaneum (IV.17) features a fresco of the deity behind the bar, close to where the patrons would have been working *and* clearly visible to customers. In Pompeii, a phallus is installed perpendicularly on the wall above a *cella meretricia* on the Vicolo del Lupanar, and to the left of the doorway under the phallus appears to be a large painted serpent on red ground, illustrating that different modes of propitiation and protection occurred in close proximity, even sharing the same space (VII.11.13).

<sup>608</sup> For an investigation into this very idea in Roman domestic decoration, see Rubio (2018) 313-324.

<sup>609</sup> Ling does concede that “occasionally it is conceivable that the functions of the plaques extended beyond the simply apotropaic”. In particular, a plaque “decorated with four phalli and a cantharus or dice-cup (A4), situated at the entrance of what may have been a gaming-house (Della Corte 1965, 90-5) could have served partly as a kind of ‘shop-sign’ advertising the various activities practised on the premises. Similarly, the winged or triple phallus of the Inn of Philippus, set between two further phalli carved in the brickwork, (A7), could have referred to the carnal pleasures available to customers.” He nonetheless concludes, however, that “even here the apotropaic function was probably predominant. The innkeeper and gaming-house proprietor offered protection to all who entered (as well, perhaps, as protecting their premises against the risks associated with their trade).” Ling (1990) 62.

association between the phallus and commerce.<sup>610</sup> A plaque showing a human figure with an oversized phallus and large, dangling testicles [Fig. 94] from outside the Bakery of Modestus, VII.1.36, is remarkably similar in both style and formulation to the ‘Amphora-Bearers’ at VII.4.15 [Fig. 95]: the execution of the figures and the flat cut of the relief perhaps indicate a similar workshop provenance or even an intentional parody of figural commercial signage. The ithyphallic figure at VII.1.36 holds an object in each of his hands. These look remarkably similar in shape to items identified by Ling as builder’s tools on plaques – also regularly incorporating phalluses – at IX.1.5 and VII.15 (Pompeii Antiquarium 2254) [Figs. 96 & 97].<sup>611</sup> Could the incorporation of trade tools in this plaque suggest that it is playfully mocking the ‘tradesman’ figures in other, non-phallic plaques, and is therefore a means of setting up apotropaic protection in a self-referential, tongue-in-cheek way; or do the tools mean this phallic plaque *is* primarily a sign for a business, thus rendering the phallism a means of either incorporating apotropaism into the signage or signposting one’s commercial identity in a playful, self-mocking manner? There is potential, therefore, that the phallic plaques sometimes billed themselves as dually comedic and apotropaic interpretations of more straightforward street signage.<sup>612</sup> But could the phallus *itself* also have denoted the commercial or the trades?<sup>613</sup> Is the phallus in the plaque from outside the workshop of L. Livius Firmus (Pompeii IX.1.5a) [Fig. 96] a trade tool intentionally designed to look like, and thus double-up as, a phallus? Was

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<sup>610</sup> Indeed, these similarities in form also beg the wider question as to who made these phallic plaques: the same people who made the shop signs? Builders or contractors? Pottery workshops? Was there in fact more than one type of place where you could get them?

<sup>611</sup> Ling (1990) 57 & 62. Given that this building has been identified as a bakery, this figure probably carries baking tools, such as an oven peel and hook or ash shovel.

<sup>612</sup> If we consider the possibility that a phallic sign did on occasion denote prostitution (for example, see McGinn (2010)), this relationship can perhaps be taken in another direction. For in this case, parody of form could also directly convey parody of meaning, in that ‘vices’ were the ‘produce’ for sale signalled by a phallus (where a sign depicting a goat (VII.5.4 [Fig. ]) signalled dairy, an amphora that of wine or olive oil, for example). Even in this instance, a phallus sign would still not have to denote a formal brothel: the building could be an inn famous for raunchy parties and loose morals, or a place where a liaison with a barmaid after you’ve had a few drinks was certainly not off the cards (even if the establishment did not consider itself a brothel, and the woman a prostitute).

<sup>613</sup> Ling says of the phallic plaques which appear to depict craft tools that these examples therefore “offered protection as well as labelling the premises.” Ling (1990) 62. Indeed, just as Ling believes that the plaque at building VI.14.28, identified by Della Corte as a gaming-house, served as a business label due to its representation of a cantharus or dice-cup, others (including Ling) have also observed a preponderance of phallic imagery – not restricted to plaques – at shops, *caupone* and bakeries. Beard (2008) 225-33. Ling (1990) 62.

this some sort of ‘made you look joke’? Or did the design serve to embed good luck into an assemblage of one’s tools, establishing the *fascinum* itself as a tool to the tradesman? Similarly, the plaque advertising work completed by builders or architects at Pompeii VII.15.1/2 (Pompeii Antiquarium 2254) [Fig. 97] depicts an array of tools, including a phallus in the assemblage. Is this intended to convey that the work was completed with skill, good equipment, *and* a little bit of luck? Does the sign not only serve as an advertisement for the workshop, but an acknowledgement – and a mode of thanks – to the more supernatural forces which maintain the business’ success? In the Campanian townscape, the apotropaic phallus was the concern – and the instrument – of the businessman, fundamentally emblematic of the risk and reward entailed in courting the whims of commerce.

### **Phallus Worship?**

The phallic plaques interact with other potentially comparable modes of propitiation through their apparent reference to shrines. Almost all of the phallic plaques have a pediment above them, making them look like miniature *lararia* [Figs. 53 & 93]. Does this indicate that these plaques were in fact considered votive, or was such simulation thought to boost their potential to bring about beneficence? Equally, does a more recognisably ‘religious’ mode of presenting phallic symbolism mean that these plaques were indeed the paraphernalia of fertility worship after all? In installing these plaques in the shape of *lararia*, how were house- and business-owners putting these plaques into dialogue with other types of shrines one would encounter on the street or in the home? There exists potential for self-parody once again, therefore. Or does the use of religious-type forms to display phallic imagery point to solemn belief in the phallic propitiation of fertility and fortune? Further contemplation of a ‘fertility worship’-type configuration for phallic apotropaism in Pompeii comes in the form of a stucco phallus design on the front of a furnace, from a workshop on the Via dell’Abbondanza. It shows a winged phallus in a temple, with phallus acroteria [Figs. 98 & 99]. The main phallus is rendered like a cult icon, and the whole design bears clear allusions to temple structure and architectural detailing which also wittily involves the phallus, creating the effect of a comic cult of



the phallus – a *hypercult*, where everything is ridiculously composed of phallus. Is such a design an allusion to a genuine practice of setting up phalluses for fertility, or a comedic reflection on the fact that the phalluses everywhere in the town indeed resemble that of a cult?<sup>614</sup> Similarly, a tufa ‘*tempietto*’ plaque from the *Gabinetto Segreto* shows a phallus stood in relief in the centre of another miniature temple as if it were a cult icon [Fig. 100]. Both examples patently display a sense of religious format or shrine imagery in their presentation of the phallus. Several other phallic installations indeed interact with shrine practice: most of the plaques from Pompeii utilise an ‘*aediculum*’ shape, with a pediment, as if alluding to the idea that the plaque and its image should be regarded as a form of street shrine.<sup>615</sup> Do these modes of framing and depicting the phallus reference ideas of, or seek to hark back to, the practice’s origins in fertility worship or the propitiation of Priapus as a fertility deity? Or do they simply utilise the shrine format and cultic imagery in order to maximise the potency of the image? There is, therefore, evident slippage between superstition and formal religion when assessing the phallic corpus of Campania: indeed, should the practice of phallic apotropaism even be conceived of as a kind of spontaneous folk religion? How was it perceived by its creators and users? What stratum of formalisation did it occupy?

Such issues of classification are further confounded by the existence of two tufa phallic plaques, now no longer extant, from the House of N. Fufidius Successus (Pompeii V.2.g). One slab was encased in the west wall, its phallus in high relief, in the middle of a niche with small pediment, all painted in red with a yellow cornice;<sup>616</sup> elsewhere in the property, another a slab with a phallus in relief was framed by an *aedicula* façade and all painted in red.<sup>617</sup> Should we think of these two examples as belonging to the category of household shrines? Or were these images installed to protect the house’s garden space? What was the nature of the ‘potency’ attributed to the phallic image by that of its users – sacred, divine, superstitious, mimetic, or indeed more akin to a supernatural scarecrow? We have already seen that street installations

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<sup>614</sup> Indeed, this hyperphallic, uber-cultic stucco design perhaps also parodies the *aedicula* shape common to the phallic plaques we have seen installed throughout Pompeii’s streets.

<sup>615</sup> Ling (1990) 61; see also, Boyce (1937).

<sup>616</sup> *Notizie degli Scavi* (1896) 421.

<sup>617</sup> Boyce (1937) 36, no.105.

of phallic imagery regularly kept company with other shrine-type imagery, especially in commercial settings. At IX.2.1, a tufa block in an arcade pillar of a street shrine to the *lares compitales* displays a phallus carved in relief on its surface [Fig. 101]. This case raises particular questions as to the status and function of phallic imagery in Campania. If this structure was a site, to none other than the deities of the crossroads or *vici*, did it not intrinsically possess some propitiatory or auspicious power? Why, then, was it necessary to install a phallus at this site? Did the phallus have some other purpose, perhaps pertaining to the actual maintenance of the structure itself? If we followed the examples of Clarke and Ling, we would probably conclude that this phallus was here on account of it being a crossroads (a site of apparent danger and vulnerability); but is this not what the shrine itself addresses? Is this a belts-and-braces response to the crossroads, then? The phallus added to make sure the shrine itself was doubly powerful? Or does this phallus constitute a lower-level contribution to the shrine, someone's own gesture of propitiating the *lares compitales*? Who would have been able to leave this form in the stone? Surely this is the mark of a builder – perhaps left following a repair to the structure or an incident of damage, or perhaps added to the shrine's fabric from the beginning as gesture of ensuring the building would be suitably auspicious for its purpose.<sup>618</sup> This instance of juxtaposition between a phallus and a formal street shrine forces us to engage with the different registers of practice and installation encompassed by these two forms – the ways in

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<sup>618</sup> Was this as part of a package offered to a landlord or business owner, or even to protect the fabric of the building as a 'product' created by the builder? Therefore, did contractors install them to try and ensure the survival of their handiwork? Alternatively, were phallic images installed following a building repair, maintenance or, or even in a response to structural damage incurred as a result of what were perceived as 'unlucky' events (earthquake damage, fire, accidents)? Certain other instances of street-phalluses – not plaque examples – at Pompeii seem surely to have been set up by builders. A phallus sculpted in prominent relief in tufa cornerstone, VII.13.14 (at the corner of Vicolo della Maschera and Vicolo degli Scheletri), has a jaunty angle suggestive of an informal, makeshift gesture to hedge one's bets and ensure that fortune is maximised, even without a formal plaque [Fig. 106]. The fact that these examples are carved directly into the tufa surely means they were done by a tradesman and installed at the time of construction or following a repair to the structure. Was this because an owner or tenant had asked them to do so? Or did the contractor deem it necessary of their own volition? The same issues could be raised in relation to the phallus carved in a paving stone on the Via dell'Abbondanza, outside VII.13.3 [Fig. 103]: could an occupant of a nearby building really have sat at the roadside long enough to carve this into the paving stone? Or, when a repair to the road needed doing, was it requested that the new slab put in place had a phallus on it? Was installing a phallus in this circumstance an attempt at ensuring a repair was not required again in the future? Or does this particular slab mark the site of some unfortunate event, serving to either prevent against future misfortune or avert the inauspiciousness now associated with the site?

which they might be in dialogue, interdependent, or concerned with wholly different ends.

### Conspicuously Repulsive

There are instances where a phallus in the Campanian townscape cannot sufficiently be explained if we are overly insistent on resisting the attribution of obscenity or sexuality, for fear of imposing modern social mores, to the extent that we deny obscenity or sexuality where it is patently present. One such case is that of a very large tufa phallus, painted red, which jutted out from an external wall of the House of the Centenary, IX.5.6 (also known as *Domus A Rustii Veri e Tiberius Claudii Veri*) (MANN Inv.113415) in the alleyway between neighbouring properties, fixed into the external side of the east wall of the house [Fig. 102].<sup>619</sup> This example is interesting for two reasons in particular: the character of the property on which it is set up, and the inscription which accompanies it. The House of the Centenary is among one of the largest in Pompeii, with its own private bath suite and bakery. The property's ownership is uncertain – but arguments have been made for either that of Aulus Rustius Verus or Tiberius Claudius Verus, both local politicians, conveying the extent of both the luxury of the property and its perceived profile within the town.<sup>620</sup> The setting-up and find context of apotropaic phalluses has thus far been connected most frequently by scholars with the lower classes or the more commercial classes – especially freedmen - and yet here we have an example of a high-class property with a very non-discreet phallus set up on an external wall, along with a very indecorous inscription.<sup>621</sup> Clearly these values were not mutually exclusive, and the implementation and connotations of phallic apotropaism not so easily categorised.

Under this phallus, a small marble plaque carried the inscription “*HANC EGO CACAVI*”. This inscription appears to undermine any potential superstitious or

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<sup>619</sup> *Bulletino dell'Instituto di corrispondenza archaeologica* (1882) 115.

<sup>620</sup> Mau argued for Claudius Verus, citing *CIL* IV.5229: Mau (1907) 559. Franklin prefers Rusticus Verus; Franklin (2001) 134.

<sup>621</sup> Although, elite wealth and “*sordida merces*” were definitely not wholly separate at Pompeii: e.g., as at the House of Aulus Umbricius Scaurus - also a very elaborate and expansive property - corner of *impluvium* in the *atrium* (Room 2), featuring fish sauce jars motif in mosaic design, as *garum* was the primary source of this householder's wealth. See Curtis (1984) 557-66.

symbolic value of the phallus sculpture, but rather takes the opportunity to make a crude joke about anal sex and the size of the phallus (which in this case was particularly excessive). Clarke believes that “someone – either the person who erected the phallus or a jokester who decided to embellish the image with a hilarious obscenity – placed a carved marble plaque beneath it with the inscription *HANC EGO CACAVI*.”<sup>622</sup> Would it really have been possible for a “jokester” to set up this inscription? We are not talking about a hastily-scrawled graffito here, but a marble plaque. In Housman’s 1931 article (written in Latin because of the obscenities it discusses), he explains that the inscription should be translated ‘I shat out this one [phallus/prick],’ referring to the phallus above the inscription.<sup>623</sup> This seems likely, with “*hanc*” needing to be read as “*hanc [mentulam]*” (*mentulam* being another word for the “*membrum virile*”, according to Lewis and Short, and which appears to have been more of a slang term for penis – akin to “cock” – rather than the more superstitious term “*fascinum*”; *mentulam* is used by Martial and Catullus, as well as in the *Carmina Priapea*).<sup>624</sup> However, Housman then goes on to attribute the inscription to a shameless homosexual who wished to boast about his abilities to take a huge phallus anally; I agree with Clarke that it seems more likely to be a joke *at the expense of* all men who openly admitted to liking anal penetration (*cinaedi*).<sup>625</sup> This interpretation is reinforced by Williams, who discusses the application of the language of defecation to the activity of the receptive partner in anal intercourse.<sup>626</sup> Williams also draws our attention to *CIL X.8145*: “*HANC EGO CACAVI*” which also occurs along with a graffito of a penis.<sup>627</sup> This marble inscription keeping company with the tufa phallus at Pompeii IX.8.6 forces us to reassess the many layers of meaning encompassed by phallic imagery in Campania: simply put, we now cannot deny that an ancient Pompeian would not have looked at this and thought only of

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<sup>622</sup> Clarke (2007) 70-1.

<sup>623</sup> Housman (1931) 404.

<sup>624</sup> Lewis & Short (2003) 1134.

<sup>625</sup> Housman (1931) 404: “*cacat, hoc est merdae modo emittit, mentulam cui eam finite opera extrahit pedicator; quae si iusto maior sit, cum dolore id fieri consentaneum est. Eodem modo explicanda sunt tria huius verbi exempla non rectius in thes. Ling. Lat. III p854-8 collocata CIL X 8145 ‘hanc (mentulam supra pictam) ego cacavi’ scripsit impudicus euruproktia sua gloriatus.*”

For more on Housman himself, see Graves (1979).

<sup>626</sup> Williams (1999) 15-61.

<sup>627</sup> Williams (1999) 345, note 208

superstition, the evil eye and/or fertility ritual, and not sex; nor would they have been unable to find such an image funny or crude. These aspects clearly coexisted, even with the same image or object, and seemingly did not negate the value or function of the other. The humour of the inscription is clearly grounded in the oversized and exaggerated nature of the phallus, testifying a clear awareness of the trope of 'hyperphallism' – whether through size, anatomical features, or colouration - to maximise the power of propitiating fertility or averting evil; the by-product of this custom being that such an installation simultaneously became increasingly sexual, *hypersexual* – and, as in this case, mockable. This phallus is so exaggerated, so *excessive*, that its sexuality actually breaks down, becoming a cause for ridicule. To what extent might we consider this evidence of a self-conscious and reflexive humour inspired by the very significance Roman society placed on the male member – namely, evidence of Roman society poking fun at its own phallicism, laughter at which in turn affirmed your social integrity?<sup>628</sup> This crudeness of humour seems to be at odds - to a modern viewer at least - with the kind of house on which it was set up. Should we simply infer from this case that there was still a concern for protecting boundaries even when one was wealthy? Or does this literal case of 'mine is bigger than yours' tell us something more about the practice: the bigger the phallus, the luckier the installer, but implicitly also the more successful: thus the phallus served as an indirect but conspicuous way of showing this (i.e., 'luck has really favoured us - and we want you to know it! - as you can see from the scale of *our fascinum*'). And therefore, was the purpose behind the marble inscription to subvert and therefore undermine this display of one-upmanship and self-elevation? Or was it set up by the same person who set up the phallus itself, thus showing us that humour was not excluded from a display of superstition or self-projection? In fact, two sculptural-protuberance type phalluses occur in close proximity in this area of Pompeii [Fig. 61]: this one at the House of the Centenary, IX.8.6; and in the street immediately east and parallel to it, at IX.5.13 [Fig. 60]. Was there indeed a competitive dialogue going on between these two installations? Did the marble inscription play any part in this potential rivalry?

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<sup>628</sup> As Richlin asserts. Richlin (1992).

Or, does the marble plaque simply reference the fact that, actually, this phallus looks rather a lot like a shit? Or is there something particularly uncanny in its sense of detachment, in turn providing material for the installer of the plaque to make a crude anal sex joke?<sup>629</sup> Indeed, the dialogue between this phallus and its accompanying inscription draws our attention to the way ancient Campanians lightheartedly explored the proximity of eroticism and disgust. Did phallic installations of this type – more sculptural affairs which stuck out from external walls of buildings – humorously imply a person *behind* the wall, to whom the member was attached? A larger-than-life, comically deific phallus, penetrating the very fabric of the Campanian streetscape, its erection bursting through wall, into the street, into public space, and up in your face. Many of these things – the disembodied phallus’ faeces-like quality; its disturbing status as both penetrative tool and subsumed object; the sense of severance it connotes; its ability to rupture boundaries; and to allude, by its very detachment, to an intrinsic *attachment* (a conspicuously absent body) – strongly recall Kristeva’s work on the Abject. Expounded in her work *Powers of Horror* (1982), the abject denotes the human reaction (horror; even vomit) to a threatened or impending breakdown in meaning or status triggered by the loss of distinction between subject and object, or self and other.<sup>630</sup> Archetypal examples of what could elicit such a reaction indeed include faeces, as well as the corpse or an open wound. The inscription accompanying the huge red phallus thus seems to verbalise such feelings or even eroticise them. This instance of the Campanian phallus seems to have been conspicuously excessive, its hyperbolic claim on virility or luck so extreme, in fact, that it becomes both a monstrosity and a cause for ridicule, its spectacle of power and bellicosity intrinsically unsustainable, its severed status - which in turn undermines its essential claim on eminently cultural gendered hierarchies of power -

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<sup>629</sup> Several scholars have debated how to interpret “*cacavi*” in this inscription and the ramifications of this and other similar inscriptions for understanding the experiences and perceptions of *cinaedi* in Roman culture. Housman argues: “*cacat, hoc est merdae modo emittit mentulam cui eam finito opere extrahit pedicator*”. Housman (1931) 404-5. Adams considers Housman’s assertions “far-fetched”, arguing instead that “*cacavi*” denotes the receptive partner not “shitting out” the penis, but “shitting on” it. Adams (1982) 171-2. Williams argues that Housman’s interpretation is in fact preferable on philological grounds, “*cacare*” usually meaning “to shit out” (that is, as excrement), and the compound verb “*concacare*” “shit on”. Williams (1999) 272, note 90.

<sup>630</sup> Kristeva (1980); translation Roudiez (1982).

more evident here than ever before. Accordingly, it testifies further humorous engagement with the irreconcilable and vacillating practice of asserting power and fortune through phallic symbolism: the bigger the disembodied phallus, the more its status as a power symbol can actually be undermined, or even backfires. Similarly, Carlin Barton considers the *tintinnabulum* depicting a gladiator fending off his own phallus to be the epitome of the Roman gladiator's "contradictory" masculinity: sexual desire *so* extreme, it turns upon desirer, manifesting a rage at one's own body. This object emblematises the synthesis of sexuality with violence, a distinct and central Roman sensibility.<sup>631</sup>

The House of the Centenary has in fact had attributed to it a private 'sex club', due to paintings of non-mythological, heterosexual intercourse (Room 43) within.<sup>632</sup> Indeed, McGinn finds the House of the Centenary along with the House of the Vettii to offer the best examples of potential 'sex-club facilities' in the town:<sup>633</sup> guests would have entered the smaller, more private *atrium*, then passed down a corridor and through a *triclinium* and antechamber to reach Room 43, in which the decorative theme would have supposedly 'set the mood' for parties of a licentious nature.<sup>634</sup> Some houses had suites that may have functioned as actual brothels; these, however, were more like the attached shops that might be leased out for business, as they lacked interior access to the house and had only an entrance to the street to admit paying clients. A few similar rooms in Pompeian houses arguably suggest that the intention was to create the ambience of a brothel in the home, for parties at which participants played the roles of prostitute or client, or for which actual prostitutes were hired to entertain guests. Other scholars categorise Room 43 in the House of the Centenary simply as a normal *cubiculum*, which often featured erotic imagery, and find it unnecessary to conclude that systematised sexual entertainment was offered to guests there.<sup>635</sup> So, was this a household with a more liberal attitude to sex and sexuality upon which this particularly striking phallus was set up, or was the

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<sup>631</sup> Barton (1993) 73.

<sup>632</sup> McGinn (2010) 164–165; discussion of his theory of "sex clubs" in general at Pompeii 157–166, including literary evidence.

<sup>633</sup> See also Clarke (1998) 161.

<sup>634</sup> McGinn (2010) 158–159.

<sup>635</sup> Clarke (1998) 169.

property no different from any other Pompeian household? Reading into such theories as that of the private 'sex-club' room potentially feeds into the very problem we are trying to combat: namely, that the presence of phallic or what we might consider erotic imagery in Pompeii does not necessarily denote the sale of sex or a particular focus on sex such as would characterise a 'private sex club'.<sup>636</sup> In addition, we must not be too hasty to connect Room 43 and its decorative scheme to the phallus and inscription on the external wall of this property. However, there is an interesting linguistic link between the remains of the household of this particular property and the phallus and inscription on its external wall. A graffito in the latrine uses the rare word *cacaturit*, "wants to shit" (*CIL* IV.5242) (found also once in the Epigrams of Martial - 11.77). We are not suggesting that the same person was responsible for both the graffito and inscription; but it *is* useful to illustrate the commonality of the language of defecation and the different visual and material registers in which it appears - at one moment a discreet (?) graffito in a latrine (where shitting was obviously an expected activity); at another on a marble plaque in the street, on the façade of an ostentatious property.

### Phallic Graffiti and 'Unofficial' Apotropaism

Indeed, how might phallic graffiti be in dialogue more generally with the apotropaic setting-up of phallic imagery? Can an apotropaic phallus be installed somewhere simply by graffitiing one? Warner Slane and Dickie have pointed out two examples of "apotropaic" phallus graffiti from Pompeii, supposedly "painted at strategic spots on walls".<sup>637</sup> But is a man with a giant, ejaculating phallus in the large theatre access corridor at Pompeii [Fig. 104] a graffito of Priapus, or just a comedy image of a man with a ridiculously large phallus?<sup>638</sup> The inhabitants of Campania would have been exposed to this as part of a wider visual experience: a phallus simply

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<sup>636</sup> McGinn, in his approach to, considers a street phallus to be evidence of a brothel. McGinn (2010) 202, see especially note 102. See also his Appendices to this volume. Similarly, Laurence conceives of the phalluses as leading customers to *cellae meretriciae*: Laurence (2010) 92.

<sup>637</sup> Warner Slane & Dickie (1993) 487. *Pitture e mosaici I*, 399, Plate 3; *Pitture e mosaici II*, 929, Plate 1, 931, Plate 4.

<sup>638</sup> Langner (2001) no. 1263.



being funny and obscene does not mean an excessively large phallus elsewhere could not be Priapic or apotropaic; similarly, as we have seen, an apotropaic phallus could also be undeniably comical or gross. These readings were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, a great many different types of ‘phallushood’ were juxtaposed throughout Campania: for example, the *tepidarium* mosaic in the women’s baths at Herculaneum alludes to different forms of ‘phallushood’ (with a fleshy-looking phallus immixed with *tintinnabula*-looking objects), and the infamous *lupanar* at Pompeii (VII.12.18-20) features a fresco of a double-phallus Priapus amid its gallery of erotic frescoes depicting an array of sexual acts [Fig. 105]. Also, there are several instances where graffiti occur *alongside* more formally-installed phalluses: how might this alter or interact with the meaning of the phallus itself? A phallus carved directly onto the tufa block at the corner of Vicolo della Maschera and Vicolo degli Scheletri, Pompeii VII.13.14 can be seen in close proximity to a graffito reading “LIBANIS FELAT A. II” - “Libanis sucks cock for two asses” (CIL IV.2028) [Fig. 106]. This graffito hijacks the logically apotropaic tufa phallus for its own lewd ‘advert’, seeking to make fun of someone (not necessarily advertising the price of real sexual services). This case demonstrates the clear and conscious juxtaposition and live repurposing of one form of phallic imagery into another. Elsewhere, a tufa plaque at Pompeii IX.1.13/14, opposite the Stabian Baths, kept company with an inscription – painted in red – on the tile beneath it, reading “UBI ME IVVAT ASIDO” (CIL IV 950) [Fig. 107]. According to Varone, this translates as “When it suits me, I sit on it” (*asido* is written instead of *assido*).<sup>639</sup> Is this yet another instance in which an ‘otherwise apotropaic’ phallus is used to make a joke about anal penetration? Should we consider this inscription to be more ‘official’ than a graffito, as it was painted? Electoral and gladiatorial notices were painted, and the remit of official sign writers.<sup>640</sup> This example thus poses similar questions to that of the marble plaque below the phallus on the House of the Centenary: who set it up? Was the owner of the phallus aware of the accompanying inscription? Did *they* in fact commission it? Did people install apotropaic imagery whilst also using the opportunity to make a joke at their own expense? Do any of

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<sup>639</sup> Varone (2002) 90.

<sup>640</sup> Milnor (2014) 45-96.

these examples amount to the tongue-in-cheek mockery of commonly-practised superstition? At Herculaneum (*taberna*, V.10), an incised graffito of a phallus is accompanied by the words “MA[N]SUETA TENE”, which can perhaps be translated as “handle with care” (*CIL* IV.10568).<sup>641</sup> Was this a cheeky erotic joke, perhaps aimed at one of the women who worked at the establishment and with whom the author hoped to have a sexual encounter, or is it an erotic take on an *apotropaic* joke – namely, a deliberately suggestive way of saying “treat us well/I hope nothing bad befalls us”, thus knowingly combining the comic and smutty urge to scrawl a phallus on a wall with a reference to the practice of ‘officially’ installing phallic imagery for the purposes of good fortune?

### Phallic Characters

A group of table settings from Pompeii - bronze figurines - now kept in the *Gabinetto Segreto* portray four elderly men, naked, with long dangling penises, each supporting a small tray for holding appetisers, titbits or dainty food [Fig. 82].<sup>642</sup> They may be set in the context of a free-standing bronze statue discovered in the House of Polybius, imitating the archaic style of Greek sculpture of the sixth century BC, holds its arms out, presumably to carry a tray; it was likely intended as a ‘dumb waiter’ for holding out food, or perhaps a lampstand (as seen in a wall-painting from House of the Triclinium).<sup>643</sup> The figurines, now in the *Gabinetto Segreto*, appear to parody objects such as this statue from the House of Polybius, through miniaturisation and the addition of a phallus. There definitely exists a wider relationship in the visual record of Campania between the processes of adding of a prominent phallus and that of miniaturisation – these are two visual transformations which frequently go hand-in-hand. However, this relationship was about more than just making something look small in comparison to a comically oversized phallus: images which have undergone these transformations often toy precisely with these visual effects and their implications for correctly ‘reading’ an image, as will be shown in regard to

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<sup>641</sup> Della Corte (1958) 293, no.725. Jocelyn (1980) 16. No longer extant.

<sup>642</sup> Beard (2008) 220.

<sup>643</sup> Beard (2008) 220.

pygmy imagery. Indeed, we need to see the apotropaic phallus as a part of these wider Campanian visual schema and tropes, which themselves regularly demonstrate and call attention to the overlap and interface between the different contexts and intended purposes of a phallus in the Campanian townscape: for example, the size and scale of a phallus could be manipulated for *apotropaic* effect, but size was simultaneously played with for comedic and obscene aesthetic effect, rendering size and caricature a point therefore at which these two different functions and incarnations of the Campanian phallus regularly met and overlapped in the ancient viewer's semantic experience. As we have already seen, apotropaic functionality regularly rubbed up against sexual implications, and therefore these two fields can never be truly disentangled. The little bronze figurines would have been funny precisely because a viewer would have recognised them as a miniature, ithyphallic version of the full-sized original form that was available elsewhere, illustrating further that we need to approach the phallus at Pompeii and Herculaneum as a visual townscape, and not in anachronistic isolation. Certainly, the very notion of parody – which is proving a central mode according to which the Campanian phallus functioned – relies precisely upon iconographic interrelation and the viewer's ability to cross-reference what they are seeing.

The phallus was often added to images to reinforce their comedic value or evoke a 'grotesque' aesthetic. Indeed, phallic comedy in Campania appears often to rely on (the manipulation of) two things: size, and otherness. The extent of this otherness is debatable: the word itself in scholarship is loaded with socio-political connotations, which Clarke indeed subscribes to in his assessment of different ithyphallic figures.<sup>644</sup> Before we can assess this, however, we must firstly point out the construction of comedic landscapes using the phallus and its many overlapping, interconnected connotations, which are constantly jostling and vying for central focus in the viewer's reception of an image. For example, pygmies often appear in tiny friezes at houses in Pompeii: there are many instances in these tableaux where strange sex acts are occurring, or the protagonists are ithyphallic, but it is obviously difficult to tell because of the small scale. Therefore, perhaps this is precisely the point of these

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<sup>644</sup> Clarke (2007).

inventions: they invite close scrutiny, encrypt secret jokes – which would otherwise be ‘pornographic’ if they were rendered full-size - and facilitate silly ‘spot the phallus’ scenarios. Such examples include friezes from the House of the Doctor at Pompeii, the House of the Bull, the House of the Sculptor, the House of the Menander, and the House of the Pygmies [Fig. 108]. Clarke argues that “to effectively merge the apotropaic, phallic *fascinum* with human bodies and personalities, Roman artists had to invent two new types: the Aethiops and the ‘pygmy’.”<sup>645</sup> Clarke seems to indicate, therefore, that pygmy-type figures were about accommodating oversizedness, and in turn that the size and scale – indeed, *oversizedness* – of a phallus was thus integral to its being apotropaic. As we have already observed, however, oversizedness was not just about eliciting (“ritual”) laughter, but often toyed with the conventions of meaning attributed to the phallus and showed up the double entendre it encoded. Humour was obviously a frequent and important vehicle for this playfulness, but Clarke’s monotone conception of “ritual laughter” alone is not sufficient for explaining the many interconnected nuances encoded in the apotropaic phallus and, accordingly, the ways in which it could be highly self-conscious and reflective upon the society that created it. The phallic and apotropaic humour he describes is often one-dimensional and superficial, and does not sufficiently capture the extent to which phallic installations in Campania regularly tested the limits of their very function and manifestation.

Veronique Dasen has outlined that the visual form which the Greeks called *pygmaios* combined ancient pseudoethnography with the pathology of dwarfism (large heads, short limbs and torso, protruding buttocks) to create a hybrid “Other”.<sup>646</sup> Clarke deduces that the combination of different physical morphologies in Roman culture with ithyphallism was about the annexation of Egypt, suggesting that “dwarfs and hunchbacks represent the Other, but not the colonial Other, since they do not belong to any specific place [ ...] But Romans connected both the Aethiops and the pygmy with Egypt and the Nile landscape in particular.”<sup>647</sup> Indeed, what role did the setting of these scenes play in the viewing and understanding of the phallus in

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<sup>645</sup> Clarke (2007) 73.

<sup>646</sup> Dasen (1993) 169-74.

<sup>647</sup> Clarke (2007) 88.

Campania?<sup>648</sup> Why do these certain settings, identified by Clarke, often involve sexual behaviour and defecation? And what do we make of such figures when they are in fact *not* misbehaving or frolicking through Nilotic space, but acting out parts played by ‘normal’ human beings in ‘normal’ or traditional settings (such as the pygmies acting out the Judgement of Solomon at the House of the Physician, Pompeii)?<sup>649</sup> Clarke suggests that these figures operate on three levels: to evoke the exotic fertility of the Roman province of Egypt; to ‘other’ the province and its inhabitants so as to empower the Roman viewer; and to function apotropaically.<sup>650</sup> Clarke attributes apotropaism to them largely because of the humorous transgression in which they often partake – conducive to the necessary “ritual laughter” to which he considers apotropaic power to be tethered – and the frequent use of oversized phalli: “If their wild dancing and outdoor lovemaking are apotropaic, it is because a Roman viewer saw such behaviour as outrageously transgressive.” Anthropological theories of evil eye aversion suggest that crude behaviour or putting one’s self in unbecoming situations averts the evil eye precisely because doing so makes oneself unenviable: is this the power of the transgression at work here?<sup>651</sup> Or is it not so, because the unbecoming object of the laughter is someone *else* (i.e., the pygmy or

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<sup>648</sup> Mitchell has said that Clarke goes too far in considering aethiops and pygmies to be depictions of the opposite to the dominant power in the colonial context (Clarke (2007) 89-107). Rather, he suggests that pygmies getting up to funny and sordid business in the “imagined and imaginary place” that was Roman Egypt may have been political mockery in fact aimed at Imperial rule, rather than, as Clarke states, at the colonised.

Mitchell (2008).

<sup>649</sup> Mitchell and Dunbabin have indeed questioned the extent to which this story would even been recognised by a Pompeian viewer as distinctly Jewish: “the story may have become by the first century part of wider group of stories, wise deeds of great monarchs, maybe originating in Alexandria where there was a large Jewish community. This [pygmy wall painting] would be a parody of one of these ‘good stories’. In this respect, a parody of an ‘exotic’ story would fit well with the other paintings in the house.” Mitchell (2008).

<sup>650</sup> Clarke (2006) 155-169.

<sup>651</sup> Gershman (2015) 119-44; Ardit (1825) 16; Millingen (1818) cited in Ardit (1825) 16, note 55. Similarly, Pliny recounts that an image of the god Fascinus was placed below the emperor’s carriage during a triumph: “*Quamquam religione cum tutatur et Fascinus, imperatorum quoque, non solum infantium, custos, qui deus inter sacra Romana a Vestalibus colitur, et currus triumphantium, sub his pendens, defendit medicus invidiae, iubetque eosdem respicere similis medicina linguae, ut sit exorata a tergo Fortuna gloriae carnifex.*” *Naturalis Historia*, XXVIII.7. Whilst Fascinus was clearly considered a guardian god of children as well as of the Roman city itself, his appearance in this triumphal context by Pliny indeed sounds like ritualised ‘embarrassment’, in order that the victorious emperor not get too ahead of himself and thus attract “*invidia*”. Similarly, the idea that a slave stood behind the emperor during the process in order to whisper into his ear: “Remember, you are a man”. For more on this, see Beard (2009) 82-5.

figurine)? Indeed, pygmies *do*: a) frequently bizarre and ‘socially-unacceptable’ things, most often sexual or crude, sometimes also involving bodily functions; b) most often inhabit exotic places, scenes most often identified as Nilotic. But what does it do for the phallus and its potential meanings to be situated amidst these two characteristics? “The fact that artists made both pygmy and aethiops phallic and hypersexual – and that they adorn a garden – gives them apotropaic powers as well.”<sup>652</sup> Clarke reverts to fertility ideas to explain their signification, but this is insufficient. How does phallic apotropaism fit in with the hypersexual and physically revolting mischief of pygmies? We should be asking: what do pygmies ‘do’ for the phallus when they are attached to it?

Meyboom and Versluys have observed, with regard to representing sex and exotica, that the rarer “reverse upright Venus” position used to portray women in wall-painted sexual encounters is more often found in scenes set in Nilotic Egypt, to them suggesting that certain behaviours - especially certain sexual or bodily ones - are indeed only able to occur in certain places.<sup>653</sup> The pygmies of Campania are often seen participating in sex, dancing and defecation; so are these scenes and their characters actually about bodily functions, and the exploration of what is and is not ‘acceptable’? Pygmies are in miniature, and yet their bodies are ‘larger than life’ on account of the exuberance of their bodily processes. The role of miniaturisation is therefore central to the meaning of these scenes and the role the phallus has within them. The visual presence of the phallus in Campania and the various different roles it takes accumulate with the result that the Campanian phallus and its deployment can be considered one extended rumination on the relationship between the visual and the derivation of meaning. For example, messing with size is a recurring trope of imagery involving the phallus: is a bigger phallus luckier or more fertile? The pygmy scenes take this trope to the extreme: the phalluses in these scenes *are* oversized – and often hugely so – but at the same time they are tiny, and often difficult to identify at all. So, what of their value or significance then? Pygmies also serve to create another visual register for parody, acting like a cartoon form. We infer this

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<sup>652</sup> Clarke (2007) 107.

<sup>653</sup> Meyboom & Versluys (2006) 188.

from pygmies acting out normal – often official or solemn – roles or famous scenes, such as the Judgement of Solomon painting from the House of the Physician (Pompeii VIII.5.24). These scenes are funny because they are diminutive or miniature – a microcosm of ‘real’ society – and because the players themselves are at odds with the roles they are inhabiting: they are small, deformed, grotesque, ugly, and they typically behave crudely and cannot control their bodies and bodily functions. Thus pygmies signal a ‘primitive’ or proto-human visual aesthetic. What does it mean when the phallus inhabits this visual field? Clarke considers that their behaviour, appearance and setting denote that the “pygmy and aethiops [...] were used to act out – and therefore defuse – a Roman viewer’s wild drives.”<sup>654</sup> Erotic or titillating imagery in Roman culture usually serves the opposite purpose – but does Clarke perhaps feel that this is not the case here precisely because of *who* is behaving erotically? When protagonists are replaced by caricatures or forms of ‘other’, do they serve to render what would otherwise be erotic grotesque and comical? Are pygmies and aethiops about eliciting reflexive laughter, therefore? Or do these comical protagonists in fact signal the removal of any inhibitions or concern for social acceptability, facilitating a glimpse into something wild, primitive and extreme, which would otherwise be highly ‘pornographic’ and socially disapproved of? In this sense then, the phallus’ participation in such a scene would render it a weapon or tool wholly unleashed, the literal embodiment of virility, fertility and sexuality given free reign. That is, the Campanian phallus – an already *hypersexual*, *hyperfertile* tool, as we have seen elsewhere in its urban corpus – is put in a hypersexual, hyperfertile setting, with hypersexual, hyperfertile protagonists, its potentiality thus fully realised but its setting and handlers serving to keep it contained.

Animal hybridity and bestiality also goes in tandem with ithyphallism, or the addition of a phallus to transform, adapt or add a particular meaning to an image. Certain animal hybrids and beasts occur most commonly, such as donkeys: a painted shrine in a house at VII.12.13 featured the image of a phallus and an ass side-by-side; and a fresco of Fortuna crowning a donkey who penetrates a lion can now be seen in the *Gabinetto Segreto* (MANN Inv.27683) [Fig. 109]. In this way, how might donkeys

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<sup>654</sup> Clarke (2007) 231.

be being used to direct the reading of a phallus?<sup>655</sup> Phallus birds are also numerous, on both plaques and as *tintinnabula*. Are 'human' figures – that is, pygmies and aethiops - also being hybridised with the phallus? Is hybridity the issue at stake here, not so much what the phallus is being hybridised *with*? Viewed in this light, the act of 'phallicising' something, or making something a carrier of a phallus, is another recognisable trope of ancient Campanian imagery. What does this mean for the humanoid figures used in conjunction with ithyphallism? How were they viewed – are they 'animals'? Similarly, does the wall plaque from Pompeii at III.4 [Fig. 69] show a double phallus creature, or a phallus bird, or a phallus with a tail - or is this ambiguity precisely the point, it being unclear where the phallus ends and the 'animal' begins? The potential agency of this creature is uncertain: is it an ithyphallic animal, or an animated phallus, and what effect might such a distinction have on this image's signification of virility? Which option is more disquieting? In which case would the phallus be deemed more 'out of control' – when being 'operated' by a wild animal, or when it is ungoverned altogether? (The glans of this example is more visible, perhaps in light of the animal caricature.) *Tintinnabula* comprising phalluses with wings must have looked, when suspended, like they were flying through the air [Fig. 110]. How does the portrayal of these hybrids, and particularly winged phalluses, in any way reflect a Roman inheritance of the Greek tradition of phallic creatures which can be seen in Athenian vase painting? It has long been argued that the zoomorphic conceptualisation of the phallus in Greek culture was intrinsically Dionysiac, the effigy carried in the Dionysian phallophoria having eyes (on the creature's 'head', the glans), sometimes as well as donkey-like ears, rendering them "independent living organisms".<sup>656</sup> Csapo asserted in 1997 that this characteristically Dionysian phallus had human and animal-like attributes because "though one can be possessed, by music through one's ears and possess others through theirs, it is by one's own eyes and phallus that one is both possessed and takes possession".<sup>657</sup> The

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<sup>655</sup> Donkeys are attested as being the proper sacrifice to Priapus, which finds its aetiology in the donkey which brayed loudly and woke the nymph Lotis (or, in some versions, the goddess Hestia) before Priapus had a chance to rape her. Ovid *Fasti* 1. 391. Ovid *Fasti* 6. 319. They were also supposed to be extremely libidinous: Juvenal 9.92; also, Winkler (1985) 174.

<sup>656</sup> Boardman (1992) 227-242; Csapo (1993) 1-28, 115-124; Kilmer (1993) 193-7; Csapo (1997) 260.

<sup>657</sup> Csapo (1997) 260.



phallus-bird is indicative, therefore, of the ritualised inversion of hierarchy and status long identified with Dionysiac religion, in which both male and female and active and passive sexuality – some of the most critical structuring distinctions in Athenian society – could be upended under the auspices of this cult's specific imagery and modes of participation. The phallus' zoomorphism allowed it at one moment to be supernatural and to seem divine, yet at another moment its bestiality rendered it susceptible and fatuous, and thus belonging to that of the human worshipper. Creating a phallic 'beast' invites taming it, yet in taming the phallus does one give up being the master? The distinction between 'rider' and 'ridden' is similarly blurred in the cases of *tintinnabula* in which phalluses are ridden by dwarves or human figures, who often reach forward to crown their steed [Fig. 66]. In these objects, who is taking who for a ride? Who is being *dominated*? In the fresco showing a donkey penetrating a lion, the donkey is crowned by Victory - the ridden becomes rider? In the Roman context, then, do these phallic "independent living organisms" serve simultaneously to enact and undermine the gendered hierarchy of power, a hierarchy which characterised a society that produced, as Richlin has stated, "a humour, and a sexual poetics, in which an ithyphallic male stood at the centre of a protected space and threatened all intruders with rape?"<sup>658</sup> What Richlin fails to acknowledge adequately, however, and what is evident in these zoomorphic cases as well as in many of the other instances of phallic symbolism we have encountered, is that the performance of this gendered power hierarchy was, at times, as much about sexual failure as it was the assertion of penetration.

## Conclusions

The depiction and semiotic profile of the phallus in the urban and domestic settings of Pompeii and Herculaneum was inherently guileful and self-referential. The different visual strategies typically employed in its set up – including the subversion or ambiguity of scale, anatomical caricature, and the inversion or insecurity of active and passive roles – often rendered its various possible meanings

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<sup>658</sup> Richlin (1992) xvii.

unstable and inextricable, its status as either a patriarchal or supernatural symbol regularly undermined. In assessing the way in which phallic apotropaism architects its relationship to the social structures and norms of its contemporary society, we have in turn found evidence for the satirising of the very practice and mechanisms of phallic apotropaism itself. Critically, this has been achieved through conceiving of the Campanian phallus as a topographical corpus of evidence, opening up possibilities for recognising visual cross-reference and semiotic interrelation.

## CONCLUSION

*“The term ‘fetishism’ almost has a life of its own. Instead of functioning as a metalanguage for the magical thinking of others, it turns against those who use it, and surreptitiously exposes their own magical thinking.”<sup>659</sup>*  
Jean Baudrillard (1972)

Whilst the *fascinum*'s aversive power is clearly testified in both literary and material ancient sources and is thus by no means a wholly modern, retroactive construct, it is evident that the concept of the Campanian apotropaic phallus and the issues it presented engendered disquieting, deconstructive reflection for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century society. As a concept, it can both be considered of particular interest to the cultural and intellectual enquiries of this era, as well as a partial product of them. It was regularly reinvented according to different socio-cultural preoccupations, its character as a practice and category of material in any given ideological context of this era extremely indicative of certain contemporary fascinations. These included superstition and apotropaic use of objects as symptomatic of the folkloric stratum of both past and contemporary society; symbolism and material culture as central vehicles in the evolution of religious ideas; material culture as evidence of a society's values; the 'exotic' as an analogue for the 'ancient', and vice versa; and the semiotic implications of different representational states and the issues of reception posed by simulation and mimesis. Accordingly, a socio-historical contextualisation of this concept and its ideological genealogy has shed light on the extent to which many of our present assumptions about the Campanian phallus, its nature, significance and function can be tied to certain stages in our discipline's history.

Historiographical or ideologically-introspective discussion of the phallic artefacts of the Vesuvian cities has traditionally comprised narratives of censorship, as well as the connection between this material and the modern conceptualisation of the pornographic. When it comes to phallic imagery more broadly, we tend to think

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<sup>659</sup> Baudrillard (1972) translation Levin (1981) 90. For more on fetishism theory see Apter (1991). See also Melville Logan (2009).

predominantly about the ideas of Freud and Foucault, about psychosexual theory, or phallic imagery as evidence of apparent dissimilarity in sexual mores between different, and thus diametrically opposed, cultures. By contrast, this thesis shows how the concept of the apotropaic phallus was also being conceived of in magical, amuletic terms, in light of comparatively underacknowledged discourse on folklore, superstition, mysticism and uncanny, disquieting objects. Indeed, this thesis has brought attention back to the *apotropaic* side of the apotropaic phallus, which has too long been uncritically assumed to be a by-product of modernity's repeated attempts to reconcile itself with the ubiquitously 'pornographic' nature of ancient Campanian art. This has of course entailed investigation of how the Campanian phallus' apotropaism has indeed *related to* its perceived pornographic and scandalous nature (which was also of concern in the period under investigation); however, exploration of this dimension to the concept's place in our historical engagement with the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum has revealed that there was far more to the articulation of the phallus' apotropaic status than simply an attempt to desexualise these artefacts and images.

The first chapter of this thesis examined the notion of universal phallic worship, a concept first aired during the Enlightenment – most notably by the British antiquarian and dilettante Richard Payne Knight – and long associated with the phallic symbols found at the Vesuvian cities, as well as with phallic art as a more global phenomenon. It demonstrated the prominent place accorded to Payne Knight's 1786 *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* in terms of understanding the history of engagement with these artefacts, and the extent to which we perceive his work as the beginning of modernity's more tolerant and refined approach to the ancient objects at the centre of this thesis. In turn, this thesis has pointed out the habitual conflation of phallus- or fertility-worship with phallic apotropaism, and the fact that both the ideological and historiographical relationship between these two approaches to Campanian phallic imagery demands interrogation. In undertaking this interrogation, this chapter highlighted a central and hitherto unacknowledged misconception which has been implicitly and continuously reinforced by the lack of critical interest in the conceptual genealogy of the apotropaic Campanian phallus:

namely, that Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse* never actually discussed the *fascinum*, nor did it attribute an apotropaic function to Campanian phallic artefacts.

In thinking about Payne Knight's treatise in terms of its Enlightenment-era context, this investigation assessed the extent to which the apotropaic phallus of Campania can be considered a product of Enlightenment thinking: over the course of this chapter, it became apparent that the notion of the phallus as an apotropaic symbol or object has more in common with the nineteenth-century revival and *reinvention* of Payne Knight's ideas, together with the ways in which the Enlightenment phallus was to coalesce with distinctly nineteenth-century socio-cultural preoccupations (such as folklorism, mysticism and uncanny states of objecthood). In turn, this chapter identified the socio-cultural and intellectual phenomena which adapted, elaborated or were inspired by Knight's original theories, and the corresponding extent to which these elaborations enacted the transcendence of universal phallic worship beyond its original Enlightenment conceptualisation into a trope of popular culture and subcultural engagement with antiquity, and into what at times feels almost like a caricature of anthropological discourse.

Subsequent chapters of this thesis have also revealed that later attempts by scholars to reference or position themselves in relation to Payne Knight's ideas rarely reflected accurately his convictions as to the purpose and nature of transhistorical, cross-cultural phallic symbolism: successive references to either Payne Knight's *Discourse* or the broader notion of phallic worship popularised by him consistently fail to recognise that he originally conceived of the phallus as a convenient and proximal means of denoting a wholly abstract concept, and thus that the phallus's conspicuous association with both eminently cultural and intellectual ideas of fertility might almost be considered happenstance. Therefore, what modernity understands even by universal phallic worship is heavily misconstrued. This only goes to reiterate the need to think of the apotropaic Campanian phallus, its perception and the issues it raises as an accumulation of different socio-cultural priorities, or as a concept which – whilst being principally grounded in ancient belief – evolved with the enquiries and anxieties of the times. Indeed, the concept of phallic worship, which modernity has so closely tied to the idea of the phallus as an aversive or lucky device, has itself been

rehashed through innumerable reprisals over the course of anthropological discourse.

Furthermore, in connecting the Campanian, Hamiltonian responses to the wider development of nineteenth-century anthropology, this thesis has illuminated a convincing genealogy for a concept, which, prior to this thesis, proved difficult to place. For the apotropaic phallus was strongly evocative of the Hamiltonian era, but not actually reflective of its articulation of priapic worship (indeed, it was this intellectual and socio-cultural context, along with that of Bourbon-initiated censorship, with which scholarship has most often aligned it); as a concept, however, apotropaism – especially in its broader application to other types of material, even still within classical archaeology – was more reflective of Frazerian sympathetic magic and associated terms, but yet it specifically was *not* directly discussed in the intellectual context which generated them. In fleshing-out the nineteenth-century biography of the notion of phallic worship, we thus highlighted how it had both changed by the time of the Cambridge Ritualists *and* was ideologically recontextualised by them, the altered parameters of Knight's original theory melding with subsequent ideas on fetishism, totemism and sympathetic magic.

Having reconfigured how we think about this prominent aspect of our historical and popular engagement with Campanian phallic imagery, the following three chapters shed light on the other, lesser-known aspects of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century responses to this material, its function and significance. The first of these was the role played by a contemporaneous interest in Neapolitan folk culture, as well as by folklorist inquiry more generally during this era. The effect of this interest was manifold: it both drew upon and reinforced the sense of geographical and cultural proximity perceived between modern Naples and the archaeological sites, framing modern locals – particularly the lower classes – as direct descendants or modern equivalents of the people imagined to have inhabited the ancient sites, and vice versa; it established the apotropaic – both as a ritualistic or superstitious practice and as a category of material culture – as something belonging to the folkloric stratum of contemporary society, and in turn of that folkloric stratum as having preserved many aspects of ancient culture; and it served to render apotropaic belief and

symbolism, and particularly belief in the evil eye, as something distinctive to southern Italy and the people it nurtured. Indeed, a palpable connection between the Grand Tour, archaeological discourse, and contemporary, local folkloric flavour is evident in the popularity of the Neapolitan *jettatura* in grand-tourist erotic fiction, which typically set its stories in the Campanian archaeological sites themselves. Both fictional and investigative writings on the Neapolitan *jettatura*, which sought to record and understand a native belief characteristically concerned with apotropaism, should be considered a missing link between Enlightenment ideas of phallic worship and the modern concept of the apotropaic phallus, providing a context for the work of nineteenth-century figures such as Michele Arditi and De Jorio to expound the superstitious, aversive nature of phallic images of the kind that could be seen in the *Raccolta Pornografica* at the Real Museo Borbonico. Naples - as tourist destination, intellectual hub, gateway to the archaeological sites and itself a subject of contemporary anthropological enquiry - thus played a key role in the modern consolidation of the Campanian apotropaic phallus, thanks to there being something intrinsically apotropaic in character and ideology at the heart of experiencing and studying at Naples in this era.

The third chapter of this thesis examined the effect of the archaeological phallic discoveries being closely associated by contemporary commentators with the Catholic wax phallic votives simultaneously uncovered in the nearby town of Isernia, Abruzzo, on the perception and conceptualisation of the role and significance of both these sets of phallic material. Accordingly, it was demonstrated that the links insinuated between these two cases of phallic 'replicas' established an enduring sense of a disembodied, unquantifiable and thus disquieting agency surrounding the Campanian phallus and its representational status, as well as its status as an archaeological remnant. In exploring the ways in which the Isernian votives may be considered to have framed the reception and interpretation of phallic artefacts from Pompeii and Herculaneum, this thesis also unlocked some of the ways in which the potential pornographic agency of the artefacts was conceived of during this era, and in turn assessed the relationship between this and the phallus' apotropaism. Indeed, an intrinsic concern for the semiotic status of these objects - that is, as to whether or

not they ought to be considered substitutions, imitations or symbols – both raised and was a product of questions as to their agency: biological, prosthetic, titillating, mimetic, replacement, synthetic, ersatz, fetishistic, magical, abject or totemic? This chapter then demonstrated a wider ‘Isernian eye’ for uncanny objecthood and magical materialism manifesting during the latter half of the nineteenth century and reflected in literature, jewellery, museum acquisition and anthropological enquiry. Indeed, this era as a whole was characterised by the identification of agency and the struggle to classify and articulate it - direct, or indirect; taboo, or naturalistic; pornographic, or symbolical and spiritual? This oscillation forged and cemented the perception of certain categories of artefact – including the phallic - as objects charged with meaning, import and agency, with the ability to represent, to be enacted, and to act. This perception was of course to be enhanced even further by subsequent Freudian incarnations of the phallus, which rendered it indicative of deep-seated, psychological truths, a ‘whistle-blower’ of sorts on human consciousness itself, and thus deviant, threatening, and universal to all mankind. It also challenged the ways in which scholarship and popular culture has conceived of interpretation of the Campanian phallus as occupying a dichotomy between the erotic and the magical: indeed, it has shown that the very ways in which such objects might not just be arousing but *actively* sexual raised the possibility of their amuletic capacity.

The final part of the historiographical portion of this thesis looked at a nineteenth-century treatise seeking to elucidate the phallus’ significance in ancient culture as an amulet against the Evil Eye: *Il fascino, e l’amuleto contro del fascino, presso gli antichi illustrazione di un antico basso-rilievo rinvenuto in un forno della città di Pompei* (1825), by Michele Arditi, Supervisor of the Royal Fieldworks (1807-1838). A central aim of this chapter was simply, first and foremost, to draw overdue attention to Arditi’s tract, which has long remained in the shadow of comparative scholarly fixation with the work of figures such as Payne Knight or with the historical creation of secret cabinets. Indeed, where Arditi’s tract is mentioned by modern scholars, his contribution to our understanding of this material is reduced to a dubious anecdote about the very creation of the *Raccolta Pornografica*, which he attributes to his patron, King Francis I of the Two Sicilies. Arditi’s *Il fascino*, however, challenged the very



parameters and modes of classification according to which the Secret Cabinet was established. Accordingly, therefore, this chapter also investigated his motivations for writing this treatise, which purportedly aimed at absolving Pompeii of a contemporary reputation for debauchery amongst foreign visitors to the site. In line with the period in which he was writing, Arditì's characterisation of the Campanian phallus' apotropaic value was heavily grounded in his knowledge of contemporary, south Italian folkloric belief. A closer look at his work also revealed, however, a wider legacy of philological and lexicographical inquiry into the superstitious significance of the phallus and its aetiology, as well into the Evil Eye and the dynamics of 'fascination'. Arditì's essay left us with a few questions as well: his use of Dante, as well as his choice of language at certain points in his own text, cast an ambiguous light over the intentions of his tract and his feelings towards contemporary thinking on phallic imagery and its relationship to the socio-cultural backdrop of the excavations as provided by the Kingdom of Naples.

All together, the historiographical arm of this thesis demonstrated that the *apotropaic* Campanian phallus should be conceived of as a semiotic conundrum. It was in the perception and exploration of the dynamics of semiotics in which certain tensions as to its classification were played out: for instance, the difference between a fertility icon and an apotropaic image was - and indeed continues to be - an issue of representation, and specifically of literalism versus abstraction. In addition, both the chapter on Neapolitan folklorism as well as the chapter concerning the effect of the Isernian discoveries testify to an ongoing effort to pin down the Campanian phallus' relationship to its 'prototype': many of the options Andrea de Jorio put forward for 'reading' any given gesture were down to the dynamics of original vs simulation, and the differing degrees of allusion to an original, material object; and the issues raised by the Isernian discourse were those of the possible distinctions, if any, between an imitation, a substitute, a simulation or an alternative, and the ramifications of these distinctions for the reception of such modes of representation. Furthermore, Payne Knight's central thesis is that the *male genitals*, not the phallus, proved to have the "greatest analogy" with the divine, abstract powers of nature that early man sought to represent, and that it is from the depiction of the penis to denote divinity and

generativity that *phallic* imagery developed. Finally, the wider European interest in folklore frequently exhibited an interest in the use of certain images and materials for sympathetic or substitutional purposes – including ‘traditional’ medicine and superstition - and fin-de-siècle culture regularly took inspiration from the demonic forces imagined to be facilitated by archaeological relics and mysterious fragments. Therefore, the mechanics of representation and the nature of objecthood were not only of central importance throughout the discourses of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but central to the conceptualisation and concretisation of the apotropaic as a category of archaeological material and an expression of belief.

Crucially, it was this ongoing struggle to pin down and articulate the mercurial and multifaceted agency of the ancient phallus which established it as an apotropaion in nineteenth-century thought. The very notion of an apotropaion proved emblematic of the deep-seated, uncivilised, bestial and primitive dimension to ‘advanced’, modern society. The apotropaic *phallus* specifically was seen as being intrinsically wired into those dimensions of faith, power, and superstition which, despite science and modernity, ‘modern’ culture was yet to understand. The apotropaic phallus was thus *representative* of the supernatural forces which inhabited deep-seated, cross-cultural human belief, but was simultaneously and perplexingly considered capable of averting them. Modern fears concerning sexuality and taboo behaviour – reinforced with the influence of Freud – mingled with the phallus’ ‘power’, and thus the phallus was gradually deemed apotropaic *also* because of its sexual and *psychosexual* nature. It became a visual and material manifestation of all that was characteristically fearful in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - supernatural and unlucky forces despite developments in modern medicine and science; sexual deviance and uncivilised behaviour; the endurance of superstition and faith in an era in which religion was increasingly coming into doubt – and thus the ultimate realisation of bad objecthood and material agency, of the intrinsically unknowable and mysterious.

The final chapter of this thesis advanced new ways of looking directly at the ancient material itself. Indeed, it found that the apotropaic phallus’ semiotic ambiguity and potential for challenging the very relationship between

representation, meaning and interpretation was of evident significance in the ancient world, too. In approaching the evidence from Pompeii and Herculaneum as a semiotic topography, the intrinsic multivalence of the phallus and its installation for apotropaic purposes becomes clear, as well as the extent to which this multivalence was knowingly capitalised upon by its ancient users. Several cases of phallic imagery convey the slippage between the denotation of fertility and the connotation of the sexual or erotic. Indeed, fertility, apotropaism, eroticism and even obscenity were not mutually exclusive 'readings', even within the same instance of phallic imagery. At times, we even get a sense that the very practice of setting up a phallus for apotropaic purposes is itself being gently mocked, its conventions consciously spotlighted and its efficacy comically undermined or rendered uncertain. In this way, the apotropaic Campanian phallus appears to resist many of the one-dimensional categories or unitary modes of functionality or communication according to which scholars have historically tried to explain it, ambiguity and reflexivity in fact being central to the ways in which it participated in the Campanian urban context.

The concept of the apotropaic Campanian phallus is a staple of global tourism and research in classical archaeology. Therefore, this thesis re-evaluates a highly familiar and desultorily implemented feature of our discipline's conceptual toolkit, as well as an enduringly conspicuous element of popular engagement with the ancient world. We have shed light on and unpacked some of the central processes by which the Campanian phallus became an object invested, by contemporary audiences, with agency and power during the late-eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This exploration of this long-neglected and misunderstood side to our historical engagement with Campanian phallic artefacts has also served to elucidate further the impact of certain disciplines and conceptual agendas on the development of classical archaeology in its nascent stages, such as that of comparative-religious discourse, anthropology, and folklorism. It has moved our ideological engagement with this material on from a reductive and erroneous focus on Richard Payne Knight and historical attempts at censorship, to recognise the ways in which this material has in fact encompassed the pornographic, the sexological, popular arcana, the comparative religious, the esoteric, the subcultural, collectorship,

the museological, the mystical and the semiotic. Indeed, this thesis has revealed that modernity's engagement with the Campanian phallus' apotropaism is by no means solely tied to its perceived obscenity: it has demonstrated the role of several parallel discourses dealing with apotropaic power and its corresponding significance for narratives of cultural development.

This investigation has highlighted the extent to which recent scholarship's repeated conflation of fertility worship with phallic apotropaism has resulted in our failing to recognise what was in fact a distinct set of ideological tensions during the era in which these artefacts were first being responded to. It has shown how certain ideas have both endured and evolved over a long period of time, beginning in the Enlightenment and continuing to be central to our conceptualisation of these objects even during the early twentieth century; indeed, certain ideas – especially that of 'fertility worship' – have remained highly similar since their inception, being invested with new contemporary cultural immediacy and only a slight shift in definition with every iteration of modernity's engagement with this material. Indeed, the Campanian phallus has proven to be at the forefront of much of even the most modern discourse seeking to make sense not just of the phallus, but of psychosexual truths, the symbolism and usage of genital imagery, the construct of gender and gender hierarchies, and the understanding of cultural similarities and differences, and our sense of both proximity and distance to the ancient past. The apotropaic phallus' changing characterisation is highly indicative of its place in the popular imagination, being of distinctive import at a particular moment of classical archaeology and continuing to occupy a prominent place in how modern audiences both conceive of and architect our relationship to the ancient world.

Further research in the vein of this thesis would benefit from exploring the broader innovation potential of disciplinary reflexivity via the history of ideas and popular perceptions, along with the mileage of such an approach for contributing to our discipline's longevity as well as its ability to respond to the challenges of modernity. For example, further investigation as to the effect of the interface between anthropology and classics during the nineteenth century on the terminology and theoretical frameworks used in regard to certain categories of materiality, particularly

pertaining to religion and superstition, would be extremely enlightening. There is definitely an even wider story to be told about the development of the apotropaic - exceeding the parameters of this thesis - and its characterisation as a concept and category of material during the nineteenth century. As it pertained to the Campanian phallus, this necessarily tangled with the historical development of priapic worship; however, this era was characterised by the intense collection, study and curation of an even broader chronological and geographical range of material categorised as amulets, charms, talismans, totems and fetishes, which itself merits recognition and further evaluation. Our use of vocabulary such as 'liminality' also demands interrogation, as well as the potential effect of the historical articulation of the fetish on engagement with ancient material culture and ritual practice. More recently, what has the influence of certain thinkers such as Gell and Gombrich been, with regard to their articulation of the agency of art and of apotropaic art in particular, on the direction of classical scholarship? This thesis has also highlighted the widespread popular ramifications of classical archaeology during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in particular the ways it was engaged with by intellectual subcultures of Western Esotericism, Occultism and Mysticism, as well as parallel trends in anthropology and comparative religion. Early indications from this study identify this as a fertile area for shedding light on our historical conceptualisation of the 'otherness' of antiquity and of certain categories of artefacts, including apotropaia, religious material and texts, as well as the historical role of popular perceptions of antiquity in the construction of 'accepted' knowledge about the ancient past and the role of such spheres in informing this.

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