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‘Touching the Gods: physical interaction with cult statues in the Roman world’ explores different forms of physical interaction with cult statues in the many cults and beliefs evident across the Roman world, and proposes wide-ranging implications of this for the understanding of Roman religions and Roman art. Despite the theoretical detachment of the cult statue in the Roman world, an ideological language of close physical interaction was developed, which manifested itself through both ‘regular’ (for example, ritual decoration and washing) and ‘irregular’ (such as sexual and violent) contact. Although modern scholarship accepts that cult statues formed part of religious worship within which physical interaction took place, they are generally treated as passive objects. This research addresses the implications of physical interaction for the active role of the statue within Roman societies, through the assessment of the anthropological, social and psychological functions the statue could embody. It establishes a socio-cultural definition of the cult statue in the Roman world, supported by an assessment of Greek and Latin vocabulary for statuary and an assessment of the physical evidence for cult images. The thesis separately considers the different types of interaction, including washing and clothing, verbal communication, transportation, embrace, violence and feeding. The conclusions drawn from these separate types are based partly on a broad study of the full range of interactions, with an additional focus on the points in the ancient dialogue at which their limitations are placed. The cumulative effect of the evidence, across the whole empire and across all interactions possible, illuminates the vast complexity and vast potential of images of the gods in forming, informing and being influenced by human relationships with the divine.

Touching the Gods: physical interaction with cult statues in the Roman world

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That the cult statue as a category existed in the Roman world is rarely questioned, although its problematic nature is quite clear; the cult statue's position in forming and informing human-divine interactions through its physical existence is also often partially acknowledged, but not frequently considered in-depth. Despite the theoretical detachment of the cult statue in the Roman world, an ideological language of close physical interaction was developed, which manifested itself through both 'regular' (for example, ritual decoration and washing) and 'irregular' (such as sexual and violent) contact. Although modern scholarship accepts that cult statues formed part of religious worship within which physical interaction took place, they are generally treated as *passive* objects. This research addresses the implications of this interaction for the *active* role of the statue within Roman societies, through the assessment of the anthropological, social and psychological functions the statue could embody.

i) **Matters of definition:**

a. **The cult statue**

Like so many other religious artefacts, terms, or practices, the cult statue to some extent defies definition; that is part of its beauty, and, indeed, one of the fundamental underlying principles of this thesis. Current scholarship on the arts and religions of the ancient world constantly refers to cult images in a rather general fashion, devoid of any serious attempt to define them. Previous scholars who have focussed upon the cult image as a specific and separate category have made clear the limits of their own working definition, and have not produced any real assessment of what a cult statue really *was*.¹ It is easy to refer to the error of categorising images too generally without ever really explaining what a precise taxonomy of images might involve. Although there is some acknowledgement that our current understanding of cult images is unsatisfactory, there remains no major work on their role within the religions and societies of the Roman world that encompasses everything a cult statue could be.² Clearly it is not enough to simply translate ancient terms for images, for a cult image is much more than just a word: a cult image takes an active role in the social and religious nexus within which those who define it live, and like any other active member of

¹ E.g. they have limited the media through which they assess the cult image, such as coinage or literary sources, or restrict their definition to those that can be seen to have received worship within a temple. Cf. Vermeule (1987), Clerc (1915) and Martin (1975) respectively. See below p9f.

² For example, Stewart (2003), 264.

that nexus, it cannot be pinned down with a word.³ Throughout this introduction, and indeed the argument that follows, the cult image, broadly speaking, is as the cult image does and as it is perceived by others to be.

The cult image of the Roman world was a fluid, intangible, and delineated concept, at the same time as being a solid, tactile, and visible object. It did, importantly, exist as a concept and there was an idea of the ‘cult statue’, distinct from the plethora of other image types that could be found in all corners of the Roman world: the cult statue had a place in the consciousness and practices of the participants in all sorts of state and private religions, and this place and these practices were not only important, but also challenged and discussed throughout the Roman period. It will be apparent from my own attempts to define a cult image, that there can never be any one sure way for us of ascertaining what was (and what was not) clearly a cult statue. However, through the careful analysis of the ways in which images were treated and interacted with, a clear category of ‘cult image’ can be established, albeit a category whose boundaries might be crossed (in either direction) by numerous images at some time or another.

Those of us who attempt to define the cult image of antiquity are not alone in the problems that we face, for it is one that we find apparent even in the ancient sources. An illustrative quote from Dio Chrysostom’s *Oration* to the inhabitants of Rhodes makes clear that even in the first century of our era, knowing what an image was, or what it had been in the past, could be a challenge:⁴

“...or else because the persons honoured, being the sons of certain demi-gods or even of gods, had later through lapse of time been forgotten. For it is not the custom to put inscriptions on the statues of the gods, ... In Thebes, for example, a certain Alcaeus has a statue which they say is a Hercules and was formerly so called; and among the Athenians there is an image of a boy who was an initiate in the mysteries at Eleusis

³ For the obvious errors of doing this see below, p11ff for the discussion of the language used to describe cult statues.

⁴ For the suggested date of the *Oration*, see the introduction to the translation of Cohoon (1940) 4, with bibliography. It is in any case certainly from the second half of the first century CE.

and it bears no inscription; he, too, they say, is a Hercules.” ... “and in Egypt they say there is a colossal statue of Memnon similarly uninscribed.”⁵

Here Dio is admonishing the Rhodians for replacing inscriptions on old images when statues had been voted as honours to prominent men, and in particular admonishes the idea that it is acceptable to inscribe statues with no name engraved upon them beforehand. One of his concerns is that not only would this mean removing honours given to their mortal predecessors, but that they may also unwittingly be erasing the identity of an image of a divinity. The problem is clear: one cannot always tell what an image of a god (be it a ‘cult statue’ or otherwise) *looks* like.

This is, of course, a problem familiar to modern scholars attempting to identify those images that have come down to us; a most famous example is that of the identification of the Artemision bronze, whose categorisation as a god certainly seems likely, but whose attributes (presumed to be either a lightning bolt or a trident) are now missing, an absence that prevents us from certainly naming the image either a Zeus or a Poseidon (fig. Intr.1).⁶ This difficulty is exacerbated by the lack of any labelling or inscription to identify the image, a problem which we again share with Dio Chrysostom, for not all images were inscribed, and one might expect this particularly of cult statues, whose identity would probably have been assumed through the fame alluded to in the passage.⁷ Hence we need not place too much blame on the fragmentary nature of the evidence alone, for although the fact that we often find images without their pedestals and away from the place of their erection problematises our classification, we may not necessarily have been helped in our task of definition had that not been the case.

⁵ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.91-2: “καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πᾶς εἶναι τοιούτους, ἐν γοῦν Θήβαις Ἀλκαῖος ἀνάκειται τις, ὃν Ἡρακλέα φασὶν εἶναι, πρότερον οὕτω καλούμενον· καὶ παρ’ Ἀθηναίοις Ἐλευσινίου μύστου παιδὸς εἰκὼν οὐκ ἔχουσα ἐπιγραφὴν· κάκεινον εἶναι λέγουσιν Ἡρακλέα.” ... “καὶ Μέμνωνος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ κολοσσὸν εἶναι λέγουσιν” Tr. Cohoon (1940). For the statue of Memnon (which was in actual fact so heavily inscribed that any attempt to find a naming inscription would be futile), see Ch. 4.3. Note that the image is now known not to be of Memnon, proving Dio’s point somewhat, cf. Bowersock (1984) 21f.

⁶ For a survey of early attempts to identify the statue see: Mylonas (1944) 143-60; Mattusch (1988) 150-3. An attempt to secure the identification as that of an athlete: Jüthner (1937) 136-48. Robinson (1945) 121-7, attempts to make a positive identification of the statue as specifically the Zeus Ithomatas mentioned at Paus. 4.33.2, although I find his arguments somewhat circular and spurious.

⁷ Dio tells the Rhodians that the images may have been identifiable once without their inscription. Of course there might be factors additional to the renown of a particular image that might have ensured its correct identification, such as its location. See below, this section, p9f and Ch. 2.5.



Fig. Intr.1: The Artemision Bronze, Zeus or Poseidon (?),
bronze, ca. 460 BCE.⁸

Clearly, the remains of images that we have cannot normally be allocated the title of cult statue through their appearance alone, for as the *Oration* makes clear, one cannot tell simply by looking. This is a problem further enhanced by the multiple modes in which a god might be represented in its cult image: gods not only had multiple forms and appearances (sometimes suggesting a particular cultic aspect, sometimes not), but they could also be wrought in a variety of styles. These styles do not necessarily indicate anything of the importance of the image or the god: the chryselephantine Zeus at Olympia (fig. Intr.2), for example, certainly could be categorised as a cult statue, but so could, in fact, some trees!⁹ We know that many of the most ancient and sacred cult images were not entirely (or necessarily at all) anthropomorphic.¹⁰ The worship of an aniconic representation of a divinity does not

⁸ <http://www.uwm.edu/Course/mythology/0300/613.jpg>, [Accessed 09-08-08].

⁹ On these problems of representation see Stewart (2003) 35-41. For examples of worship offered to trees, including dedications and offerings, see e.g. Paus.12.1.2; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.33; Silius Ital. 6.691; Ov., *Met.* 8.755; Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 5.16-17.

¹⁰ For example, Philostratus's list (*Vit. Apoll.* 3.14, ca. 217-38 CE) of the most sacred and ancient images of the gods includes the Athena Polias of Athens, Delian Apollo, Dionysus in the Marshes, Apollo of Amyclae, and Hera of Samos. We know from numismatic and literary evidence that a number of these statues were largely aniconic, often consisting primarily of an unshaped body, perhaps with the suggestion of a head and/or hands and feet. Cf. Clem. *Protr.* 4.46.3; Callim. quoted by Plut. *Them.* 10; Apul. *Flor.* 11; Arn. *Adv. Nat.* 1.39. Hera at Samos an 'unwrought *sanis*': Plut. *Mor.* Frg.158; Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 3.8. Athena Polias and Ceres at Pharia: Tert. *Apol.* 16.3.8; Tert. *Ad. Nat.* 1.12.3; Paus. 1.26.6. Apollo of Amyclae: Paus. 3.9.2f; Lacroix (1949) 54-8, pl. 1: 15, 6; Casson (1933) 56-7. For additional aniconic representations see: the *manalis lapis*: Festus 115, 128; Serv. On *Aen.* 3.175. Jupiter Elicius: Livy 1.20.7; *RE* 10.1128. Worship of unworked stones representing gods: Paus. 9.27.1, 38.1; 1.44.2; 2.9.6; 8.48.6; Servius, *ad. Verg. Aen.* 1.720; Tac. *Hist.* 2.3. Unhewn log of Artemis at

prevent it from being a cult statue, for many such images were the recipients of cult at the highest and most public levels (see figs. Intr.3-4).¹¹ A great deal of scholarly time, particularly within the disciplines of Art History and Anthropology, has been devoted to demonstrating that images that are aniconic can still *represent* a god, primarily through the human association of that artefact (stone/plank of wood/tree, and so on) with that deity. The unwrought stone, for example, looks as much like a divinity as an anthropomorphic representation does, for it is what that god looks like to that devotee at that time.¹²



Fig. Intr.2 Engraved ring stone depicting the chryselephantine Zeus at Olympia.

The size of the statue is indicated by the manner in which the
god fills the temple.¹³

This variety of representational forms was again observed as being potentially problematic in antiquity; we can see an example of this in the playful *Zeus: The Tragic Actor* of Lucian.¹⁴ In

Ikaria: Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 6.11; Clem. *Protr.* 4.41. Kroll (1982) 65-76. See also *OCD* sv “statues, cult of”, with bibliography.

¹¹ See above, n.9. The image of Athena Polias, for example, received what is probably one of the most famous cults of antiquity, see Ch. 2.2. For the coexistence of aniconic and iconic cults see Gaifman (2008).

¹² For a fuller explanation and analysis of this concept a vast bibliography is available, and the following is not comprehensive, but provides a good survey: Boyer (1996) 83-92; Belting (1994); Blaikie (1914) 131-3; Donohue (1988); Gell (1998) 97-99; Gaifman (2008); Guthrie (1993). See also below, Introduction.ii, for an explanation of how these images could be treated as representing the divine.

¹³ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, No. 1421a. Roman, date unknown. For discussion of the ring and the appearance of the Pheidias Zeus at Olympia, see Richter (1966) 166-70, with pl. 53-5.

this work a blustering and Homeric Zeus calls the gods to assembly, and when they attend in the form of their images he outlines the seating plan:

“seat each of them according to his material and workmanship, those of gold in the front row, then next to them those of silver, then all those of ivory, then those of bronze or stone, and among the latter let the gods made by Pheidias or Alcamenes or Myron or Euphranor or such artists have precedence and let these vulgar, inartistic fellows huddle together.”¹⁵

A certain amount of chaos follows for, as the character of Hermes points out, they are being ordered according to wealth, rather than merit.¹⁶ The larger and more valuable statues include the ‘foreign’ Egyptian divinities who are primarily cast in gold, meaning that ancient deities central to public cult, such as Aphrodite, Apollo and Poseidon are instructed to sit at the back, and of course nobody knows where to seat the Colossus of Rhodes.¹⁷ Lucian here indicates several points of interest to us: firstly, the variety of types of image that is possible is abundantly clear from Zeus’s list; second, that there was a great variety not only of material, but also of artistic value within the spectrum of cult images; and third, that placing any qualitative ordering system is ridiculous. The farcical nature of the piece actually helps us to understand some of the problems one might have in attempting to define or categorise cult images: if they cannot be categorised by virtue, wealth, artistic merit, or otherwise, then how ought it be done? Lucian’s purpose is quite probably to construct a critique of men more

¹⁴ For the tone of the piece see Bompaigne (1958); Bracht Branham (1989) 167-75; Jones (1986) 40. Although it certainly satirises the Olympians, it is through the technique of applying to them human laws of society (e.g. wealth, birthright, and so on), and as such the clearest criticism is likely to have been of events in Greece at the time, perhaps specifically the re-ordering of Athenian society in the second century CE. Cf. Bracht Branham (1989) 169-74.

¹⁵ Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 7: Εὐ γε, ὦ Ἑρμῆ, ἄριστα κεκήρυκται σοι, καὶ συνίασι γὰρ ἤδη ὥστε παραλαμβάνων κάθιζε αὐτοὺς κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἕκαστον, ὥς ἂν ὕλης ἢ τέχνης ἔχῃ, ἐν προεδρίᾳ μὲν τοὺς χρυσοῦς, εἶτα ἐπὶ τούτοις τοὺς ἀργυροῦς, εἶτα ἐξῆς ὅποσοι ἐλεφάντινοι, εἶτα τοὺς χαλκοῦς ἢ λιθίνους, καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς τούτοις οἱ Φειδίου μὲν ἢ Ἀλκαμένους ἢ Μύρωνος ἢ Εὐφράντορος ἢ τῶν ὁμοίων τεχνιῶν προτετιμῆσθων, οἱ συρφετώδεις δὲ οὗτοι καὶ ἀτεχνοὶ πόρρω που συνωσθέντες σιωπῇ ἀναπληροῦντων μόνον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. Tr. Fowler (1905).

¹⁶ Ibid. 7-8.

¹⁷ Ibid. For my use of terms such as ‘foreign’ and ‘public’ cult, see below, Introduction.i.c and iii. Here Lucian refers particularly to Bendis, Anubis, Attis and Mithras. The subject of nationalities as an ordering principle is one of the subjects of ridicule in this work, and so the division between foreign and native gods gains further complexities here. See above, n.14.

than gods at this point, but the general impression that such taxonomy is impractical, if not impossible, is neatly conveyed.¹⁸



Fig. Intr.3: Spartan Tetradrachm of 227-222 BCE, reverse depicting the semi-iconic Apollo at Amyclae.¹⁹

The image was formed of a bronze pillar, attached to which were hands, feet, and a head.²⁰



Fig. Intr.4: Thracian coin of 53-62 CE, reverse depicting the semi-iconic image of Hera at Samos.

The image appears as a column, perhaps with the suggestion of human features.²¹

There are relatively clear reasons as to why it might be difficult to categorise images in such a fashion: some of the earliest Greek thinkers noted the problems associated with attempting to depict the gods at all, particularly with reference to forcing the gods into human shape through their representations,²² and later authors of the Roman world expounded upon and developed these opinions. At times this was formulated as a criticism of religious practices, but it was also expressed in attempts to reconcile such representations with a much broader concept of the divine which could not be pinned down by (but could be suggested through)

¹⁸ See above, n.14 and 17.

¹⁹ <http://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?LotID=14758&AucID=13&Lot=167> [accessed 08-08-09]. See above, n.10 for references to the image in ancient literature and additional numismatic evidence.

²⁰ Grunauer, *Lakedaimonier* III. Gruppe 1. Series Nr.3. =

<http://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?LotID=14758&AucID=13&Lot=167> [accessed: 08-08-08].

For further coins depicting this archaic image, see above n.10

²¹ *RPC* 1755 = <http://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?LotID=185850&AucID=242&Lot=398> Accessed: 09-08-08. See also above, n.10.

²² E.g. Heraclitus, *KRS* Fr. 244; Plato, *Laws* 931a.

anthropomorphic statuary.²³ One particularly well articulated discussion of this problem can be found in the works of the Emperor Julian, who explains in his discussion of the role of cult images in the proper worship of the gods that:

“For our fathers established images and altars, and the maintenance of undying fire, and, generally speaking everything of the sort, as symbols of the presence of the gods, not that we may regard such things as gods, but that we may worship the gods through them. For since being in the body it was in bodily wise that we must needs perform our service to the gods also, though they are themselves without bodies; they therefore revealed to us in the earliest images the class of gods next in rank to the first, even those that revolve in a circle about the whole heavens. But since not even to these can due worship be offered in bodily wise – for they are by nature not in need of anything – another class of images was invented on earth, and by performing our worship to them we shall make the gods propitious to ourselves.”²⁴

Clearly this passage provides a wealth of material for our study of the cult images of the Roman world in general, and it is one to which this thesis will return for several purposes.²⁵ At this point it serves to illustrate the existence of an area of ancient thought that understood the difficulties inherent in representing gods at all, whether they be in human form or not. Julian here attempts to explain how beings whose mystery and invisibility form an integral part of their power can be represented by human methods and in human form. For him, the gods do not ‘look like’ their images, but for all practical and devotional purposes, their images do look like them.

²³ E.g. Cic. *Rep.* 3.13-15; Chrysippus, *SVF* 2.1076; Clem. *Stromata* 5.109.2, 7.22.1; Plut. *Numa* 7.7-8; Min. Fel., *Octav.* 23, cf. 27.

²⁴ Julian, *Epist.* 89b 293B-C: “Ἀγάλματα γὰρ καὶ βωμοὺς καὶ πυρὸς ἀσβέστου φυλακὴν καὶ πάντα ἀπλῶς τὰ τοιαῦτα σύμβολα οἱ πατέρες ἔθεντο τῆς παρουσίας τῶν θεῶν, οὐχ ἵνα ἐκεῖνα θεοὺς νομίσωμεν, ἀλλ’ ἵνα δι’ αὐτῶν τοὺς θεοὺς θεραπεύσωμεν. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἡμᾶς, ὄντας ἐν σώματι, σωματικὰς ἔδει ποιεῖσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ τὰς λατρείας, ἀσώματοι δὲ εἰσιν αὐτοί, πρῶτα μὲν ἔδειξαν ἡμῖν ἀγάλματα τὸ δεύτερον ἀπὸ τοῦ πρῶτου τῶν θεῶν γένος περὶ πάντα τὸν οὐρανὸν κύκλῳ περιφερόμενον. Δυναμένης δὲ οὐδὲ τούτοις ἀποδίδοσθαι τῆς θεραπείας σωματικῶς (ἀππροσδεῖ γὰρ ἐστὶ φύσει), τρίτον ἐπὶ γῆς ἐξευρέθη γένος ἀγαλμάτων, εἰς ὃ τὰς θεραπείας ἐκτελοῦντες, ἑαυτοῖς εὐμενεῖς τοὺς θεοὺς καταστήσομεν.” Tr. Wright (1913).

²⁵ For the use of Julian generally, and for bibliography on his use for the study of religions of the Roman world, see below, Introduction.iv.

Suffice it to say that the cult images of the Roman world certainly defy categorisation through means of their form. However, alternative visual methods remain open so that the term ‘cult image’ need not encompass all images that might or might not have looked like a divinity. The location of an image, *where* it was seen, could be a significant clue as to its status and purpose. One major caveat to this is that some images were never (or hardly ever) seen at all, with regulations allowing only the priest access to it, with restrictions forbidding the days it was visible, or on the classes, genders, even the eating habits of those who wished to view the image.²⁶ Yet it is clear from the evidence that a significant proportion of cult images were visible, or partially visible, to devotees for much of the time.²⁷ In any case, many of those statues that were hidden from view could also be identified through their location, which was normally within the separated *cella* of a temple: just because they were not seen there did not mean that one could not *know* they were there or indeed what they looked like.²⁸

This location, in the *cella* of a temple, is naturally what we would consider to be the habitual resting place of the cult image, and indeed this is often the case. If a statue is described or depicted within this location, one might quite easily assume it to be the particular cult image. Indeed, this is such a useful tool that some scholars use it as the safest classification method available and base works on cult statues upon it.²⁹ There remain problems, however: firstly,

²⁶ E.g. Images only visible on certain days: Paus. 2.4.7, 3.14.4, 2.35.11, 7.23.9, 9.39.8, 2.11.7 (Demeter and Kore); Herod. 3.37; Strabo, 10.473; Serv. *Aen.* 3.12; Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 24; Paus. 9.25.9 (the Cabiri); Paus. 6.25.2 (Hades); Paus. 7.27.3, 10.35.7 (Artemis); Paus. 8.38.6; Plut. *Mor.* 330A-B; Hygin. *Astr.* 11, 4; Eratosth. *Cat.* 1 (Zeus); Paus. 8.41.4-6 (Eurynome); Paus. 9.12.3 (Semele); Paus. 9.25.3 (Didymenean Mother); Paus. 10. 32.5 (Hermes); Paus. 10.33.1; Caes. *B.C.* 3.105; Dio, 11.1, 61; Paus. 3.20.3; Livy, 39.13.8; *Leges Sacrae* II.310 no. 121 (Dionysus); Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 24; Paus. 8.5.5, 10.2-3; *Ditt. Syll.*² 615, 9 (Poseidon).

Images kept concealed except from priests: Paus. 2.13.7; 10.32.3-9 (Isis); Paus. 2.35.1, 35.11 (Elithyia); Paus. 2.10.1 (Apollo); Paus. 2.10.4; Strabo. 14.682 (Aphrodite); Paus. 3.14.4 (Thetis); Paus. 6.20.3 (Sosipolis); Paus. 6.25.2 (Hades); Paus. 8.30.2, 38.6 (Zeus); Paus. 8.47.5 (Athena); Plut. *Mor.* 292F; 385C; Paus. 2.10.2, 10.32.5; Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 24 (Apollo); Plut., *vit. Arat.* 32 (Artemis).

Images that could be seen by some gender/class/other group only: Athen. 10.422D; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.99; Dittenberger, *Sylloge*², 560; Paus. 3.20.3, 3.22.7, 3.36.6, 7.23.9, 8.31.8, 9.39.8; Plut. *Mor.* 266E. Cf. Hewitt (1909) 18-42; Corbett (1970) 149-58.

Lucian, *DDS* 31 indicates the common practice in the Near East of bringing images out of their temples in order that they can be seen, cf. Themistius, *Orat.* 20.235; Diod. Sic., 17.50.6; Paus. 2.13.7; 10.32.3-9. Cf. Lightfoot (2003); Trell (1964) 241-6; Dick (ed.) (1999) *passim*. See Ch. 3.2.

²⁷ ‘Partial visibility’: some images are known to have been so covered with dedications of flowers, clothes, ribbons, and so on, that they were not apparently completely seen (Ch. 1.2). In addition, some temples may have had some form of barrier between its main area and its image, which could prevent those visiting from viewing part, or all, of it see Ch. 6.3.

²⁸ As would obviously be the case if images were visible only occasionally, but also, for example, through their representations in visual forms such as coins, cf. Trell (1964) 241-6; Stewart (2003) 208f; Vermeule (1987).

²⁹ Martin (1992) is an obvious case, his title making his focus on *Römische Tempelkultbilder* perfectly clear. Martin does accept the restrictions of the method as well as making it clear that he sees it as the most useful way of defining the category. For further discussion see Ch. 3.1.

as noted above, an image that is recovered in the modern period may well not be in its original (or even its secondary or tertiary) location;³⁰ secondly, many temples were occupied by more than one image, and there is no set number for how many of them were or were not offered cult;³¹ thirdly, some temples are known to have not contained images at all;³² fourthly, some images that we know to have received cult stood elsewhere, whether it be within a sanctuary, in a civic space, by a road, or anywhere else for that matter;³³ and finally, that even if an image was located normally within a temple, this may not be context in which a modern viewer perceives it, as a result of the nature of its descriptions or depictions.³⁴

These problems do not make the location of images redundant for our recognition of them, but they do mean that the method is more useful for some types of evidence than others. The temple-type coin found throughout the Roman world often includes an intercolumnar cult image, precisely because the combination of temple and statue are mutually beneficial to one another's recognition.³⁵ Indeed, it seems that those images that were the most immediately

³⁰ Many cult statues are known to have been moved within the Roman period, and may or may not have received cult in their new locations. See Ch. 3.3.

³¹ An obvious example is when images of the emperor were placed inside temples; it is not always known whether these images received cult or not. E.g. Dio, 43.14.6; 21.2, describing the image of Julius Caesar on the Capitol, with its inscription describing him as 'hemitheos'; Paus. 1.24.7, which explains that the image of the Emperor Hadrian was the only one inside the *cella* apart from the Parthenos herself; Paus. 5.12.6 (statues of Hadrian and Trajan in the temple of Olympian Zeus). Cf. MacCormack (1981) 97; Weinstock (1971) 40, 53; Fishwick (1975) 624-8; Nock (1930) 1-62; Athenaeus 12.536a; l'Orange (1947); Gradel (2002).

Additional examples include three images of Eros at Thespieae in Boeotia, only the central one of which was actually worshipped as such (Paus. 3.22.1, 7.22.4, 9.27.1); The Erechthion certainly contained altars to more than one god (at least Poseidon, Boutes, and Hephaistos) and it is not clear whether all of these were represented in the temple (Paus. 1.26.5), cf. Corbett (1970) 150. Aelius Aristides (25.5) gives a very clear impression of how full a temple could be with sculptures by comparing one at Rhodes to a sculpture museum; cf. Strabo, 14 for a similar description of the Heraion at Samos.

³² Although this may have been unusual, as it is something that Pausanias often particularly comments upon, e.g. Paus. 2.12.2, 2.35.1, 5.5.6-7, 9.19.1, 9.25.4, 9.33.6 (these do not include those that have no image because of destruction, which he does also mention: e.g. Paus. 2.7.6, 6.25.1, cf. Ch. 5.3). See also: Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, 4.31; Plut. *Numa*, 8.7-8. Temples without images in antiquity could indeed be famous at least partially for that reason, and it is often an observation made of the Temple at Jerusalem. See Ch. 3.1.

³³ Examples of these are numerous, and many will be referred to elsewhere throughout the thesis, but see particularly Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2 l. 49-53: "sed facias, divum Sator, ut Romana per aevum / transeat ante meos turba togata pedes. / haec me turba iuvat, nec templo laetor eburno: / Romanum satis est posse videre Forum," which makes a lack of temple quite clear. This image of Vertumnus (which narrates the poem) is clearly the recipient of cult, as seen at l. 17 and 45-6. See also: Paus. 4.32.1-2 (images of Hermes, Herakles, and Theseus in a gymnasium, where they are honoured according to universal practices); Paus. 4.33.1-2 (The statue of Zeus Ithome in Messenia is kept by the annually chosen priest in his house, cf. 7.24.4. Cf. Cook, (1965) 890-1, n.6; Robinson (1945) 121-7; *LIMC* VIII.1, p324, no. 63); Luc. *Alex.* 30 (roadside images); *CIG* no. 173; Tert. *Apol.* 46; cf. Maximus of Tyre 8.1 (dedications of offerings to trees).

³⁴ See Ch. 3.1; 3.2.

³⁵ See particularly Vermeule (1987), and now Stewart (2003) 208-15. Trell (1964) 241-6 argues that such depictions are in fact references to image revelation rituals, in which the image is brought out of the temple to meet its devotees, but the universal application of such a concept seems unlikely, see Ch. 3.2.

recognisable were the most popular for this type of representation.³⁶ The physical location of an image is also often helpful in ascertaining the subject of epigraphic references to statues, in which a dedication, consecration, or repair of a temple, altar and image together would most obviously indicate that it is the cult image of that temple being referred to.³⁷

It is most useful to view the location of an image as only one of the identifying features that can guide any decision as to whether it can be categorised as a cult statue. Alone it may certainly be indicative of the statue's role, but further identifying marks are needed for a classification to be secure. As far as the literary evidence goes, we may look beyond the appearance and location of the image to the language that is used to describe them in order to develop further techniques for establishing the category of a cult image. The linguistic evidence is particularly informative in helping to ascertain that the category of 'cult image' is not a totally anachronistic concept, and that it occupied a specific position in the Roman world of images.

This evidence is complex, however, and is regularly misused. A number of scholars have, with varying motivations, attempted to explain the ancient language for statuary.³⁸ Whilst there exist terms that suggest broad general categories, no word is used to apply to one type of image alone, no matter what philologists, epigraphists, and others would have us believe. One epigraphic study claims that:

“*to agalma*”: sometimes carelessly taken to mean a statue in general, has the precise meaning of a cult-statue, as distinct from an honorific statue.”³⁹

This is as patently and demonstrably incorrect as the suggestion by a different author that the term *xoanon* at some point became synonymous with both *agalma* and *eikon*.⁴⁰ At the same time, however, it is not altogether accurate to suggest that there was no real linguistic

³⁶ For example, the eminently recognisable Ephesian Artemis appears on Roman coinage in the form of her statue with an unusual frequency: *BMC* 191; *RIC* I 118; *RPC* I 2222; *RSC* 30; *RIC* I 119; *RPC* I 2224; *RSC* 1; *RIC* II 474; *RIC* II 475b; *RIC* 474; *RSC* 535; *RIC* II 527; *RIC* II 489, etc. Of course, our ability to identify the unusual image may influence the proportion. For the replication of this image see generally Biguzzi (1998) 277.

³⁷ See the discussion of terminology for images on inscriptions below, p14f.

³⁸ Principally: Bennet (1917) 8-21; Bettinetti (2001); 25-63; Donohue (1988); Martin (1992); Romano (1998) surprisingly does not include any extensive definition, but provides some further bibliography for Greek cult images; Russell (1973) 320-2; Scheer (2000) 8-34; Stewart (2003) 191-206; Vermeule (1987); Daut (1975).

³⁹ Russell (1973) 321.

⁴⁰ Bennet (1917) 17. Pritchett (1998) 205-13 provides a good survey of the use of the word *xoanon* in Pausanias and other Greek writers of the Roman world.

provision for cult statues at all.⁴¹ Any definition through linguistic terms is plagued by a number of serious problems, not least the tendency in antiquity to refer to a cult statue as the deity, rather than with any specific term for an image.⁴² We may add to this: the fact that statuary vocabulary is employed differently by different authors; the possibility that the Latin and Greek terms do not necessarily directly translate one another; the need in literary sources for linguistic variation; and what at times appears to be a purposeful gloss on the type of image being referred to.

Both Latin and Greek provide a number of words that may be used to describe a statue: *simulacrum*, *signum*, *statua*, *effigies*, *idolum*, and *imago* in Latin, and *eikon*, *andrias*, *agalma*, *xoanon*, and *eidolon* in Greek can all refer to sculpture in the round, that is, free standing statuary.⁴³ There are some broad and basic assessments that can be made about the use of these words in general, especially in the distinction between images of men and images of gods. *Simulacrum* and *signum* are primarily used to denote images of gods, whilst *statua* and *imago* are used of human representations. A similar divide can be found in the Greek, with *agalma* and *xoanon* referring to divine representations, and *andrias* and *eikon* to human.⁴⁴ A separate note is needed for *eidolon* and *idolum*, neither of which is found in a great deal of early literature to refer to statues as such. *Eidolon* appears to have been used in Greek during the Roman period to describe cult statues, and *idolum* appears to be a Latin calque of the word in later authors with an equally specific designation.⁴⁵ These distinctions are very rarely transgressed in the ancient literature, and yet any more finely tuned differentiation between the words is problematic, but perhaps not impossible.⁴⁶ The point here is not that terms for

⁴¹ Cf. de Bellefonds in *ThesCRA* sv 'Rites et activités relatifs aux images de culte', 418: 'Il n'existe, ni en grec ni en latin, de terme précis désignant explicitement une statue de culte...ne permettent pas de distinguer entre la fonction votive et la fonction cultuelle.'

⁴² Which might indeed tell us a great deal about the way that cult statues were perceived. See below p15f.

⁴³ On the distinction between linguistic terms for statue and for other types of images (painting, relief sculpture, etc.), see Daut (1975); Stewart (2003) 19-45; Oliver (1988) 144-5; Clerc (1915) 4; 11. That some of these words have additional meanings outside of freestanding sculpture is not assessed here, although for ancients of the more philosophical persuasion this may have been interesting, cf. Dodds (1966) 118ff for a discussion of *eidolon* as an aspect that emanates from people in Democritus and Ch. 2.5 for some similarity in terms for dream images to cult statues.

⁴⁴ These initial notes agree broadly with Stewart (2003) 19-45 in his assessment of words for statuary. Cf. *ThesCRA*, op. cit. n.41.

⁴⁵ In addition, both words are much more common in Late Antiquity and in Christian authors than they are elsewhere. *Idolum* might have been introduced by Tertullian (*Adv. Prax.* 3.1; 4; 18) who uses it to mean everything that functions as an intermediary entity between humans and *daimones*, cf. Stroumsa (1999) 104.

⁴⁶ Stewart (2003) 31f also states this differentiation, and emphasises the problems of breaking the distinctions down rather more heavily than I do here. He is, however, concerned to demonstrate statuary as a homogenous group within Roman society (a thesis that I do not dispute) rather than to emphasise the potential differences between types of statues.

statues of the gods could not be interchangeable, but that a linguistic category for cult statues specifically did exist, just as much as a social or cultural one.

Both languages provide two distinct terms for images of the gods (*agalma/xoanon* and *simulacrum/signum*), and it is fair to say that *simulacra* and *xoana* normally applied to cult statues specifically. Some scholars have attempted to draw a clear distinction between terms used for images of the gods that receive cult, and for images that existed as dedications or ‘mere’ representations.⁴⁷ However, *signum* and *agalma* could also be used to denote a cult image, with varying frequency depending upon the author.⁴⁸ For example, Cassius Dio almost always uses the term *agalma* to describe an image of the gods, often when they were clearly the object of cult, as does the Emperor Julian.⁴⁹ Even Pausanias, who is generally fastidious in his application of *xoanon* and *agalma*, can refer to the same image as both at different times.⁵⁰ In Latin the distinction appears to be more rigid, even in authors such as Cicero, who might prefer to vary their terminology for the rhetorical purposes of *variatio*.⁵¹

This greater rigidity is also reflected in the epigraphic language of statuary, in which *simulacrum* is not used to refer to an image that cannot, from its context, be a cult image.⁵² In contrast, the Greek inscriptions suggest a far more interchangeable use of *xoanon* and *agalma*, with no observable pattern to their use.⁵³ The suggestion in the written language is that there *were* categories of images, but that the terms are to some extent fluid. This is hardly

⁴⁷ See above, n.38.

⁴⁸ For the use of the Latin terms by a number of authors see Daut (1975), which provides a good survey, and some particularly specific material for the language of Cicero, see below, n.51. Pritchett (1998) 205-13 provides some good comparative material to Pausanias’s fairly rigid use.

⁴⁹ The most obvious examples being Dio 59.28.3, in which the Olympian Zeus is referred to as ‘*agalma*’, Dio 59.28.5, the images of Castor and Pollux in the temple in the Roman Forum as *agalmata*, see also Dio, 41.61.4; 37.9.1-2; 39.15; 45.17.3; 47.40.4. For Julian see above, p8-9 with n.24, 25. See also *Or.* 159C, in which he describes the aniconic image of the Mother of the Gods as *agalma*.

⁵⁰ Paus. 1.29.2 (outside the city is a small temple to which the Athenians bring the *agalma* of Eleutherian Dionysus every year. This was the old *xoanon* which had been transferred from Eleutherai, cf. 1.38.8, 1.20.3). Paus. 3.16.10-11 (the image of Artemis Orthia as both *xoanon* and *agalma*. Cf. Donohue (1988) for discussion of Pausanias’s use of the word *xoana*, with Pritchett (1998) 204-213.

⁵¹ On Cicero’s use of *simulacrum* and *signum*, see Daut (1975) 32-7.

⁵² For example: *CIL* VIII 08309 (from Cuicul) notes the dedication of a temple and an acrolithic *simulacrum*. The dedication at the same time as a temple (combined perhaps with its acrolithic nature) suggests its cultic role. *CIL* XIII 03653 (from Augusta Treverorum) simply states the restoration of a shrine and a *simulacrum*. Again, the combination of the two terms and the exclusion of any other objects make it likely that this is a cult statue. *AE* 1949, 0054 (from Bou Khchim) in which a *simulacrum* and temple are made at the same time. *ILAlg* 2, 2000 records the dedication of a temple and a *simulacrum*. In contrast, *signum* appears infrequently, although see *CIL* XIII 06488, which is from Obrigheim, and was the base of a statue that formed part of the furnishings of a temple dedicated to the household gods, built and consecrated by the land owner.

⁵³ The epigraphic evidence is collected and discussed thoroughly in Donohue (1988) *passim* and Bennett (1917) 8-21.

surprising given the nature of the cult statue in the Roman world, especially given that within this world that which is a cult statue today may not be one tomorrow.⁵⁴

Two further problems attach themselves to our understanding of the language for cult statues in the Roman world. The first is associated with the comment above, that an image's status could change dramatically and rapidly, and nowhere is that clearer than in the case of the Imperial cult. Alongside the arrival of new cults or cult images, and the decline or destruction of old ones, the devotee of the Roman world had the changing nature of the worship of the emperor, and of course his image, to contend with when translating statues into words.⁵⁵ This confusion is found quite frequently in the epigraphic evidence, in which the otherwise unused formulation '*statua sacra*' is used to describe images of the emperors.⁵⁶ Literary accounts seem rather more reluctant to refer to imperial statues with the titles of *signum*, *simulacrum*, *xoanon* or *agalma*.⁵⁷

The second problem is that of the tendency to not use any word at all for a cult statue. Plutarch once complained that:

“there are some among the Greeks who have not learned nor habituated themselves to speak of the bronze, the painted and the stone effigies as statues of the gods and dedications in their honour, but call them gods.”⁵⁸

Indeed, this is a tendency found with great frequency in almost all ancient authors, regardless of their overall religious temperament.⁵⁹ A number of Latin poets played specifically with

⁵⁴ For example as a consequence of the theft or looting of an image, amongst other reasons. See Ch. 3.3. See the comments on Dio Chrysostom's *Or.* 31 above.

⁵⁵ For discussion of my inclusion of the Imperial cult, see below, Introduction.iv.

⁵⁶ E.g. *CIL* II 01643, '*statuae sacrae*' of several Antonine emperors.

⁵⁷ Dio only refers to imperial images as *eikones*: 41.61.3-4; 44.18.2; 60.4.5. Also Diod. Sic. 17.17.6; Julian, *Epist.* 89b.293-296B.

⁵⁸ Plut. *Mor.* 379C-D: “ὥσπερ Ἑλλήνων οἱ τὰ χαλκᾶ καὶ τὰ γραπτὰ καὶ λίθινα μὴ μαθόντες μὴδ' ἐθισθέντες ἀγάλματα καὶ τιμὰς θεῶν ἀλλὰ θεοὺς καλεῖν, εἶτα τολμώντες λέγειν.” Tr. Babbitt (1927).

⁵⁹ Cicero, who was quite clearly aware that there could be a theoretical or actual difference between the cult image and its referent does this repeatedly, cf. Daut (1975) 32 indicates this conundrum by prefixing his introduction to Cicero's language for divine images thus: 'Das Götterbild wird von Cicero – wenn nicht mit dem Eigennamen...' This is particularly common in the *Verrine Orations*, e.g. 2.5.72f, cf. Daut (1975) 15, 23, 39, 65f. Diodorus provides a neat example at 17.46.6: he describes the treatment of an image of Apollo at Tyre, which was renamed after the city's successful siege by Alexander, and only ever refers to it as 'the god' (*ton theon*). Cf. also de Bellefonds in *ThesCRA*, sv 'Rites et activités relatifs aux images de culte', 418: 'nos principales sources littéraires...se contentent très souvent de designer les statues par le seul nom de la divinités qu'elles représentent.'

this idea in their works, allowing the narrator of a poem to be a god and/or statue, blurring the lines of differentiation purposefully for comic or dramatic effect.⁶⁰ In fact, this practice is so common amongst Greek and Latin authors that it would be fair to say that the majority of instances in which a cult statue is referred to, no term is used at all. Theoretically, this is a crucial point: in many instances of us *reading* statue, the word is simply not there.⁶¹

However, to suggest that the ancient languages did not provide terminology for cult statues remains inaccurate. The words *simulacrum* and *xoanon*, for example, are not normally used for images that are *not* cult statues, or for images that did not have the potential to be such, although other words could *also* describe these images. It is also simplistic to suggest that because a number of words could be used for a particular type of image, it did not exist as a category: the cult image was not a simple or rigid category, and it could not be described with simple or rigid terminology. Scholars attempting to distinguish, for example, between votive offerings of sculpture in the round and ‘cult statues’ are flawed from the outset: it is eminently obvious from the ancient sources that votive offerings could become cult statues, and vice versa, just as much as it is obvious that simply because an image is not described with a term, but with a deity’s name, the possibility of providing a term for it is not precluded.⁶²

How, then, are we to know that our sources are referring to cult statues? The answer is in many respects a simple one, but to pin it down into a definition is a rather more complicated matter: a cult statue was that which was treated like a cult statue, that which one *knew* was a cult statue, simply because it was. The identification might not always be absolutely certain, but most of the time the social and cultural context of the image was what formed its definition. In essence, the cult statue was the statue that was the object of cult. The form that this ‘cult’ might take varied tremendously, so much so that it would be impossible to outline any one interaction, or even any set of combined interactions that could form a concrete and universal definition. Not all cult images were sacrificed to, for example, prayed to or even gazed upon; not all cult statues stood in a temple, or even in a sanctuary; not all cult statues were ever written about in clear linguistic terms that defined them as such. However, there

⁶⁰ E.g. Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.1; *CP* 50, 26, 43. For the effects of this technique and its literary antecedents see Pillinger (1969) 171-9. Cf. Ch. 2.5.

⁶¹ Cf. Gordon (1979) 7-8: the definite article is often absent as well, suggesting that in at least some authors there is no concern over a semantic difficulty in calling a statue a god.

⁶² For the inherent problems of translation and applying our own language to other religions see Spiro (1966) 87-96.

were always ways that cult statues were treated that other images should not be, and it was *this* that defined them as a specific group in the Roman world. This is altogether apparent from those occasions when images that were explicitly not cult images were treated like them: Dido's cultivation of her image of Sychaeus goes beyond the realm of the proper treatment of images of the dead and borders on lunacy;⁶³ the crowning of Caesar's image in the forum with garlands spelled disaster;⁶⁴ images, such as that of Theagenes or Alexander's Glaucon, which demonstrated powers beyond their expectations were consequently awarded these cultic treatments, and so on.⁶⁵

In explaining this concept, which is certainly not without its problems for the modern scholar of cult images, it may be useful to draw upon a modern parallel.⁶⁶ If one were to behold a representation of the Virgin Mary, one might call it an 'icon', a 'statuette', even a 'souvenir', depending on its location, appearance, and treatment. Its location may not be decisive, for an image of the Virgin Mary in a family home might be the focus of prayer as much as one in a church. Equally, its appearance might not be decisive, for it could be displayed for its aesthetic or its religious value, or of course both. Finally, however, the way in which it was treated would provide the modern observer (presuming this observer is reasonably familiar with a Christian environment) with enough clues as to what term ought to be applied to it, or, if a specific term is missing, how it is to be understood.⁶⁷ Similarly, the same image might be treated quite differently by any number of observers, depending on their own understanding of it and religious perspective. Of course, our modern statuette of the Virgin Mary is not a cult statue of the Roman world, but this explanation serves to illustrate what kind of definition we are dealing with.

⁶³ Ov. *Heroid.* 7.100f: Dido has dedicated wreaths and numerous other offerings to her image of Sychaeus, and begins to hear his voice emanate from the image. For further comparison to this with cult worship see Ch. 4.4 and Reeson (2001).

⁶⁴ Dio 44.6.3.

⁶⁵ Theagenes: Dio Chrys. 31.95-7; Paus. 6.11.6-9; Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9 citing Oenomaus; Luc. *Conc. Deor.* 12. Alexander: Luc. *Alex.* 26, cf. Caster (1938); Bracht Branham (1989) Weinreich (1921) 129-51.

⁶⁶ I do not, of course, suggest that the parallel is complete, although it does have ancient counterparts, see below, n.67.

⁶⁷ The letter of an ancient Coptic Preacher indicates that there was some continuity in the cultural language of interactions with powerful images: his instructions regarding the proper way to adore the images of the Virgin Mary compare them to adored images of the emperor: "If the image of the emperor of this world when painted is set up in the midst of the market-place, becoming a protection to the city, and if violence is committed against anyone, and he goes and takes hold of the image of the emperor, then no man will be able to oppose him, even though the emperor is naught but a mortal man; and he is taken to a court of law." In Worrell (1923) 375. Cf. MacCormack (1981) 67-8.

This definition, which relies upon understanding the role of the image within the socio-cultural nexus of the Roman world and of Roman religions, both facilitates this thesis and necessitates it: the definition must remain incomplete until its conclusion. If the interactions with a cult image are what gave it that crucial status, then it is vital for our understanding of them that those interactions are fully assessed: it was through a cultural language that images were primarily understood, rather than through a verbal one. Since this has not been done previously, and since it is at least as important to assess the full scope of possible interactions with a cult image as to comprehensively elucidate the treatment of any one cult image, this thesis aims to achieve the former. It is inclusive in its concept of what a cult image *is*, for it is really only through being so that we can find out what being a cult image *meant*.

b. The Roman world

This inclusivity is extended into the geographical and temporal scope of the work. Whilst the arguments are limited to the ‘Roman world’, this naturally includes the potential for the study of around six million square kilometres of territory, and an impossibly large number of deities and cults during perhaps six or seven centuries. The inclusion of such a wide spectrum of cults, locations, and historical periods is not meant to imply any direct continuity or change in attitudes towards and interactions with cult statues, but it does perhaps demonstrate an unwillingness to suggest that any continuity or change might ever be clearly delineated for the topic.⁶⁸ There are a number of specific reasons for allowing the range of this thesis to be so broad and inclusive, beyond that motivated by the matters of definition noted above.

Firstly, the vastness of scope in terms of ancient (individual and collective) understandings of cult images, and the intention to demonstrate this variety and potential above all else provides further motivation for the geographical and temporal reach of this thesis to remain broad. Possible attitudes towards, and interactions with, images are almost unlimited for *any* time, cult, or place, and we will never know how every devotee (or even every critic or apathetic observer) felt about every image, even if we limit ourselves to the detailed study of one author, or of one cult at one time. As an illustrative example it is worth recalling a comment upon the religious and cultural context within which one might place the works of Lucian, a second-century CE author to whom this thesis will return regularly. In combating the

⁶⁸ Cf. Liebeschuetz (1973).

assumption made by Macleod in his introduction to the Loeb translation of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Gods*,⁶⁹ Bracht Branham firmly asserts that:

“it simply is not possible to isolate a norm in second-century religious beliefs, even among educated Greeks; the evidence is too complex, contradictory, and incomplete.”⁷⁰

What is particularly striking about this is that, in fact, the second-century CE is probably one of the most fertile plains for evidence about religious attitudes in general, and indeed the cult of images in particular. Many of the most explicit and clear authors on the religious ideas and problems behind the use of cult statues wrote during this period,⁷¹ and works focussed upon the role of cult images in *any* period often draw heavily upon them.⁷² That one cannot locate a norm for *this* period rather strongly argues against the possibility of finding a norm for *any* period, and indeed, even if the evidence were more complete it is unlikely that one would be found, for this is simply not how Roman religious systems worked.⁷³

Whilst it is not possible to pin down interactions with cult images (or any religious attitude) for any period of time, it may certainly be possible to illuminate the perspectives of individual authors. The scholarly background to this thesis is formed largely of works attempting to do just that, and although few works regarding the cult image in a specific author exist, modern approaches to their religious or art-historical attitudes in general make that type of individual work less urgent than a broader overview.

Recent and insightful assessments, such as Davies's approach to religion in the historians of Rome, have provided solid bases from which to build a study of attitudes towards a more

⁶⁹ Macleod (1961) 239: ‘scarcely any educated or intelligent men of Lucian’s day could still believe in these traditional myths’. For similar assumptions with regards to Lucian’s cultural milieu see also Highet (1962) 42-3; Hall (1981) 198.

⁷⁰ Bracht Branham (1989) 155.

⁷¹ Pliny, Plutarch, and Lucian are the most obvious, alongside second-century apologists. Clerc (1915) collects most of the second-century literary evidence.

⁷² E.g. Romano (1988) 127-34 relies hugely upon Pausanias’s descriptions of Greek cults for her discussion of *early* Greek cult images. The methodological problem here goes without saying, and is one of the pitfalls that I hope to avoid through the inclusivity of this work. For the prominence of second-century evidence see below, Introduction.iv.

⁷³ See King (2003) and below, Introduction.ii.

specific aspect of religious life in the Roman world.⁷⁴ Additional specific studies of religion and/or of images within specific authors help to build upon more general works,⁷⁵ such as the (still incredibly useful and important) study by Charly Clerc of the cult of images in the authors of the second-century CE.⁷⁶ In addition, the role of the image in general and in Roman religions in particular has been the subject of a vast array of new approaches, including the study of their socio-cultural setting that is so important to this thesis.⁷⁷ However, cult images as a defined category have not been addressed in this context, being the subject primarily of studies of form and representation,⁷⁸ or forming part of studies of individual cults or images.⁷⁹ These works on the narrower perspectives of authors and time periods make a study such as this, which assesses the role of cult images in the Roman world generally, both possible and necessary.

This is not to deny that attitudes towards, and interactions with cult images do not vary from author to author, or that there is no change in these attitudes over time. However, given the multifarious nature of the cult image at any given time, even within any given author, this variation does not so much pose a problem for the scope of the thesis as provide an additional reason for it. Attempting to demonstrate any sort of homogeneity, continuity, or secure developmental path within the religious systems of the Roman world is an all but impossible task, and it is only by accepting their diversity and variations that any real understanding can be achieved. This is a factor that is commonly accepted by a number of modern scholars, who

⁷⁴ Davies (2004) does not focus on cult images particularly, but his methods and arguments remain important for the study of religious practices generally, see especially his discussion of omens and portents, many of which include cult statues in some way or another: 71-84. See Ch. 3.5; 5.4.

⁷⁵ The following is not comprehensive (in particular it does not touch upon the vast literature for religious attitudes in the Christian apologists), but suggests the scope of material available on the religious and/or artistic perspectives of individual authors: Plutarch: Mossman (1991); Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus: Davies (2004); Livy: Levene (1993); Ammianus: Blockley (1987); Drijvers & Hunt (1999); Lucian: Anderson (1996); Bompaire (1958); Bracht Branham (1989) esp. 125-78; Hall (1981); Jones (1986); Lightfoot (2003); Oliver (1980); Pausanias: Arafat (1996); Knoepfler & Piérart (eds.) (2001); Pirenne-Delforge (2001), (2004); Pritchett (1998); Heer (1979); Elsner (1995) 144-50; Julian: Athanassiadi (1992); Bowder (1978) *passim*; Bowersock (1978); Foussard (1978); Smith (1995); Iamblichus: Clarke (2001); Porphyry: Toulouse (2005); Philostratus: Jones (2001); Ovid: Fantham (1998); Herbert-Brown (1994); Reeson (2001) *passim*; Sphalinger (1996); Pliny: Isager (1991); Cicero: Beard (1996); Daut (1975); Frazel (2005); Horace: Hardie (1993); Rudd (1993); Latin literature generally: Feeney (1998); Daut (1975); Greek literature: Clerc (1915); Hägg, Marinastos, & Nordquist (eds.) (1988); Stuart Jones (1966); Swain (1996).

⁷⁶ Clerc (1915) assesses a number of particular authors, as well as the combined impression that they convey, but is entirely restricted to the Second Sophistic and to relatively high-level literary evidence.

⁷⁷ Esp.: Stewart (2003) is the most important study of the social role of statuary, although it does not focus in particular upon the cult image. Elsner's work (1995), (1998) has been crucial for the study of ancient images and religion, but again takes a broader focus than the cult statue.

⁷⁸ Which of course are incredibly important: the representation of an image is after all a rather significant interaction with it. Cf. Vermeule (1987); Martin (1992).

⁷⁹ The studies of individual cult images are numerous, and will be referenced as and when they are used within this thesis.

often nevertheless attempt to find some unity and continuity in the religions of given periods and areas.⁸⁰

That said, it shall be seen that a number of forms of interaction commonly occur throughout the empire (in time and space), and that interactions with images formed a sort of ‘cultural language’ that could be understood across many barriers, both physical and temporal. I borrow the use of ‘cultural language’ as a term for describing interaction with images from Peter Stewart, who has used it with reference to both secular and religious iconoclasm in late antiquity.⁸¹ The term can easily be applied to the cross-cultural understanding of the ways that images were treated within the Roman world in general. Indeed, it might be said that certain interactions with images remain part of such a cultural language that can be transferred across numerous societies and cultures.⁸² Individuals understood the ways that they and others interacted with their images on a hazy, yet fundamental, level; rituals and interactions could be transferred from cult to cult, location to location, and through time with relative ease. Certainly, changes in the religious, intellectual and social climate, the politics of the empire, and so on, had an impact upon religious practices, including interactions with cult images, but the nature and structure of this change is not my focus. The point for this thesis is that whilst the cult image could be everything to everyone, pretty much all of the time, it simultaneously existed as such within certain (very vague, often blurred, and certainly crossed) boundaries.

Much of this study relies upon the ancient discussions of these boundaries, for it is often those whose attitudes towards images are the closest to the ‘edge’ or are perhaps the least conventional, whose voices are most clearly heard; it is those who interact with images outside of the commonly understood boundaries whose stories are most told; and it is when the proper interactions are criticised or do not take place that their functions are most clearly

⁸⁰ Cf. Woolf (1997) 75-6 on the heuristic approaches that have been developed largely in order to find some order and continuity. See also King (2003) 275-312 on the multiplicity of beliefs within the Roman religious systems.

⁸¹ Stewart (1999) 160. The idea behind the term is also evidenced in Whitley (2001) 52-3, although the discussion is based on Greek images.

⁸² In particular, early Christianity employed many similar interactive techniques with their religious images: cf. Kitzinger (1954); Elsner (1995). For the same appropriation across secular and religious iconoclasms see Stewart (1999).

explained.⁸³ In contrast, of course, there are the other, more casual, explanations of the roles and interactions of cult images, such as the passing mention of the consecration of a statue, or the inclusion of its clothes in a temple inventory, that tell us so little alone, but which combine to build a picture of frequent, careful interactions that formed part of a statue's place in the religions of the Roman world.

c. Interactions

This variety in interactions, from the mundane and the daily to the extreme and unusual deserves a brief note of clarification. I have not restricted the forms of interaction with cult images that are to be assessed here in any way other than that they must be physical.⁸⁴ mentions in the ancient sources of offerings to images, the touching of images and rituals involving images have been included. However, the necessity for a comprehensible structure and cohesive approach has meant that certain interactions receive more attention than others. In some respects this is rightly so, for some more often formed part of the cultural language of interaction with images, whilst others can be used to develop a greater understanding of the role of cult images and their boundaries. At the same time, types of interaction that receive relatively little attention are certainly not to be considered unimportant: many of them combined to make this cultural language possible in the first place. Where it is not possible to fully analyse specific types within the space of this work, I have provided notes on the evidence and bibliography for them when they are mentioned.⁸⁵

Two principle areas of interactions with images have been largely omitted from this work: consecration/construction, and the viewing of cult images. There are definite reasons for this, in that they are not, strictly speaking, physical interactions with cult images. Construction and consecration both take place *before* an image *is* a cult image, and therefore have a place in a different type of assessment of different aspects of religious practices.⁸⁶ That said, I have

⁸³ I use the term conventional, of course, to denote a very wide range of interactions. The boundary issues are dealt with in particular in Ch. 5 and 6, but also, for example, extreme or unusual cases of animation, vociferousness, etc.

⁸⁴ That is, I have not comprehensively included all written *thoughts* about cult images for example, or the nature of visual representations of them *per se*.

⁸⁵ For example, images that were said to have healing qualities are dealt with at various points throughout this thesis, but they do not receive as full an attention as they might, because their assessment could only be complete through the simultaneous study of healing gods and sanctuaries, which are not strictly image-interactions. See Ch. 3.5.

⁸⁶ The evidence for consecration is collected and discussed in Pekáry (1985) 107f.

included some discussion of the provenance and craftsmanship of cult images where it informs (or is informed by) the types of physical interactions that they participated in.⁸⁷ Similarly, the viewing of cult images has a different set of theoretical implications, methodological approaches, and theological issues attached to it, and whilst some of these do overlap, the viewing of a cult image simply lacks the decisive and conscious physicality of interaction that is the subject here.⁸⁸ In addition, viewings of cult images, and in particular questions of epiphany, have received recent and thorough treatment.⁸⁹

ii) **Everything to everyone? General attitudes (ancient and modern) towards cult images**

Having established that there existed a linguistic and social provision in the Roman world for what we might define as a cult statue, it may be useful to demonstrate some of the ways in which these images could be thought of. This is, of course, one of the principle aims of the thesis, and some preliminary notes should help to establish some of the problems and arguments that will be apparent throughout.

There remain a significant number of scholars who comment upon cult statues with little consideration as to the complexities inherent within them, and the images are treated, more often than not, as useful tools with which to demonstrate a wider argument, rather than as subjects for consideration on their own. Whilst some scholars all but ignore the significance of cult statues as a group, regarding images in the ancient world as art-objects or political tools,⁹⁰ others acknowledge their importance, yet make broad claims about them with little clear evidence provided in the text to substantiate them. For example, Elsner has commented that:

⁸⁷ For example the importance of provenance narratives for some cult images and the questions over the human creation of divine representations are dealt with to some extent in the Introduction.ii; Ch. 3.3.

⁸⁸ For some images physical interaction had an impact on their visibility and appearance, such as those blackened by anointing with oils (Ch. 1.1) or worn from touch (Ch. 4. 2).

⁸⁹ Platt (forthcoming).

⁹⁰ For example, Pollitt (1966) xii, claimed that ‘statues and paintings, in any case, were luxuries, not essentials, of life’ and that art in the Roman world was primarily commemorative. Much work on ancient religion reveals a similar attitude, for example, Beard, North and Price (eds.) (1998) is amongst many general works on Roman religion which devote very little space to cult images, and the term (or anything similar) does not appear in the index. Rives (2007) does acknowledge the importance of the image, although it is treated as and when relevant to the broader discussion, rather than as an individual subject.

“Images were at the centre of traditional religion in the Greco-Roman world’ ... ‘in a profound sense they shared an identity with the god in whose image they stood.”⁹¹

Despite this, he devotes only a few pages to the subject, and gives neither an explanation of what a cult statue was, nor any demonstration of the multitude of ways in which they could be perceived. In contrast, Stewart accepts that:

“The character and function of cult images in ancient Rome could be presented in a variety of ways’ ... ‘what we would call the cult image was only ever partially defined.”⁹²

Whilst neither of these sentiments is wrong, their comments are examples of a tendency to make assumptions about the cult image that are supported by only a limited consideration of the available evidence. Given their central and complicated role, attitudes towards these images require a more detailed and considered assessment.

Stewart’s arguments are drawn partially from Donohue’s work on Greek images of the gods, which suggests that the distinct category of cult statue is largely artificial and influenced by later Christian authors.⁹³ Indeed, the only work dedicated to what ancient authors had to say about cult statues in the Roman world structures its discussion primarily around Christian critics and pagan justifications.⁹⁴ However, there existed a long tradition of questioning and discussing the role of cult statues, and the fact that there was no single concrete understanding of the cult statue does not, in the context of Roman religions, mean that it was not defined. The nature of the evidence for religious practices of the Roman world means that it is hardly surprising that we have no explicit definition of what a cult statue was. Certainly, there is more explicit evidence from the period in which Christian authors began to condemn the worship of images, yet it is not always possible to demonstrate that an author is actively

⁹¹ Elsner (1998) 203. Cf. Elsner (1995) 93: the cult statue was ‘in Greek religious custom synonymous with the god himself’.

⁹² Stewart (2003) 186.

⁹³ Stewart cites Donohue (1997), especially her arguments regarding the artificiality of the distinction of the cult image as that which was the object of worship (specifically in the Greek world), and that this came about as a consequence of Christian arguments against them. See also Donohue (1988).

⁹⁴ Clerc (1915). The book is split into three parts: 1. ‘Les images sacrées au IIe Siècle d’après les auteurs de l’époque’; 2. ‘Les adversaires de l’idoatrie’; 2. ‘Les défenseurs des images’. There are other dedicated discussions of cult images in the Roman world, but they primarily address form over function, e.g. Vermeule (1987); Martin (1992).

engaging in a debate against such critics.⁹⁵ In addition, one need not necessarily rely on such explicit discussions of the role of cult images to conceive of them as a category about which certain views were held.

We have evidence for a discourse about the role and complications of the cult image amongst some of the earliest literary evidence of antiquity. A comment attributed to Heraclitus states that the habit of the Greeks of talking to images is misguided, and indeed equivalent to speaking to a house instead of its owner.⁹⁶ This is generally taken to refer to prayers and requests addressed towards images, and demonstrates an uncertainty and discourse on the role of cult statues in traditional religion from at least the fifth-century BCE. This is not the place to address the whole history of the discourse surrounding the role of images in cult, and indeed aspects of this task have been undertaken with regards to the Greek world.⁹⁷ Yet it is of note that numerous pre-Roman authors of the Greek world had comments to make about those objects that we might term cult statues.

For the Roman period, there is admittedly little explicit discussion of the role of images in worship from the Republican era, although that which we have points to a continuing discourse in which no single attitude is accepted or rejected. Cicero devotes several passages of his *De Natura Deorum* to the form and function of the images of the gods. He notes their form as almost invariably human, and comments upon the possible objection that this is an unrealistic envisaging of the divine.⁹⁸ He explains that whilst this may be the case, it is only to be expected because of the nature of humankind, especially considering the literary and figurative artists who represent the divine:

“However, by the same route, these [ideas] have been encouraged by poets, painters, and artificers; it was indeed not easy to build an active thing, a living god, in another way than a form imitating its servants. Perhaps also it is the strength of man’s belief

⁹⁵ For example, Pausanias, one of the major sources for the topic, demonstrates little or no awareness of Christian attitudes. Cf. Pritchett (1998) 328.

⁹⁶ See above, n.22 and Ch. 2.2. See also Steiner (2001) 79.

⁹⁷ For example Donohue (1988); Romano (1988); Steiner (2001). But see my comments above, n.72, on the methodological problems.

⁹⁸ See above, Introduction.i.a, for a discussion of matters of form as relevant to definitions of cult images.

in nothing but his own beauty.”... “Do you think there is any beast of the earth or sea which does not most delight in its own kind?”⁹⁹

He suggests at this point that the images were created for men to worship in the belief that in doing so they would have access to a divine presence:

“When they give cult statues for worship, so they believe that they can access the gods themselves.”¹⁰⁰

Whilst his stance might be read as one of acceptance that the attendance of divine images was propitious, yet stressing the need to exercise caution in how literally the image is to be associated with the actual divinity, Cicero clearly implies that his is not the only possible understanding, and he does not make any specific judgement as to the validity of the ways in which others might view the same images.¹⁰¹ Indeed, a little later he comments that simply because some temples have been robbed, and some images stolen, this does not mean the images are not worthy of worship, rather that it is simply one, local, aspect of the deity that has been damaged.¹⁰² In a different work, Cicero demonstrates how un-barbarian the Romans are by describing their religious practices: the Persians sacrifice humans, and also think that worshipping the gods in human form is a wicked practice.¹⁰³ He makes further references to image-cult throughout the *De Natura Deorum*, all of which suggest a variety of available judgements upon cult images, not all of which he necessarily agrees or disagrees with.¹⁰⁴

A similar ambivalence can be found in authors throughout the Roman world, regardless of the era to which they belonged. Indeed, the ambiguity becomes more pronounced the more evidence that we have. Whilst numerous authors mention cult images and behaviour towards

⁹⁹ Cic. *De nat. deor.*, 1.77: ‘Auxerunt autem haec eadem poetae, pictures, opifices; erat enim non facile agentis aliquid et molientis deos in alarium formarum imitatione servare. Accessit etiam ista opinio fortasse quod homini homine pulchrius nihil videbatur.’... ‘An putas ullam esse terra marique beluam quae non sui generis belua maxime delctur?’

¹⁰⁰ Cic. *De nat. deor.* 1.77: ‘ut essent simulacra quae venerantes deos ipsos se adire crederent’.

¹⁰¹ Compare Cic. *De Div.* 2.50ff, discussed in Ch. 3.5, where there is a much harsher judgement on believers in miracle statues.

¹⁰² Cic. *De nat. deor.* 1.82. The very long passage also includes numerous digressions into Egyptian religion and animal worship. He follows the comments with 1.83, which lists the various appearances of the gods at different localities, as well as the many names by which they might be known. Cf. Julian, *Epist.* 295 on those who damage cult images inevitably being punished.

¹⁰³ Cic. *Rep.* 3.13-15. Compare Cic. *De Div.* 2.58, see above, n.101 and Ch.3.5.

¹⁰⁴ For example Cic. *De nat. deor.* 2.79, with regards to the ancient personified deities of Mind, Faith, Virtue and Concord: ‘quae qui convenit penes deos esse negare cum earum augusta et sancta simulacra veneremur?’

them, there remain only a few who deal with the problems of categorising and understanding them explicitly.¹⁰⁵ Pliny, apparently an agnostic, rejects anthropomorphic representation, just as he rejects many other aspects of traditional Roman religion, and by disregarding the religious aspects of the images that he describes in books 34-6 began the process of allowing later historians of the art of ancient Rome to do the same.¹⁰⁶ By contrast Plutarch, whose primary concern is not art-objects, but religious and moral matters, often comments extensively on the perceived religious qualities of images. He consistently demonstrates a number of possible perspectives on cult images, especially when he notes their miraculous behaviour and omens provided by them.¹⁰⁷ In one of the more extensive passages he outlines the possible reasons that statues might be perceived to speak, including scientific explanations, dream-like illusions, and genuine acts of god.¹⁰⁸ His purposeful ambivalence is notable, for whilst he clearly establishes his own perspective as moderately cynical towards the miraculous abilities of divine images, he is reluctant to deny them altogether.

One of Plutarch's bluntest criticisms of general attitudes towards divine images is his judgement of the language with which they are commonly described, conflating the deity with the image in linguistic terms.¹⁰⁹ His near contemporary, Pausanias, is repeatedly guilty of such an offence, intermingling his precise terminology for cult images with references to statues simply by the name of the divinity represented.¹¹⁰ His *Periegetes* is rarely concerned with the aesthetic qualities of those images that he describes (apart from the occasional recommendation that a particularly impressive sculpture or building is 'worth seeing') and is generally focussed upon the religious role of the object. Despite the apparent acceptance that Pausanias demonstrates for the divinity of the images that he describes, he presents us with additional variants to consider. In his numerous descriptions, which may include the provenance, age, and location of the divinity, as well as its role in rituals, he rarely relates one interpretation or story. Many images appear to have had numerous narratives attached to them over extensive periods of time, and it is only occasionally that Pausanias passes

¹⁰⁵ In the sense that these authors deal with the more abstract qualities of cult images. There is much more evidence for, say, specific images in certain cults, or for the role of images in local rituals.

¹⁰⁶ See esp. Pliny *NH* 2.14-17. For discussion of Pliny's attitude to ancient art, his apparent agnosticism and his effect on modern scholarship see Stewart (2003) 184ff; Isager (1991); Elsner (1995).

¹⁰⁷ For example Plut. *Caes.* 69; *Cam.* 2.3-4; *Cor.* 37f; *Ant.* 60.2-3; *Mor.* 397E-F; *Lys.* 443A etc. Cf. Clerc (1915) 178-87. See Ch. 3.5.

¹⁰⁸ Plut. *Cor.* 37f. For full discussion and text see Ch. 2.3; 2.4.

¹⁰⁹ Plut. *Mor.* 379C-D p88-9, Ch.2.3 for text. For an example of this being played upon by an ancient author see Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.1 (an image of Priapus, purposefully blurred with the god himself).

¹¹⁰ See above, Introduction.i.a, p11-15. Cf. Pritchett (1998) 198 n.91; Furtwängler (1893) 720-3.

judgement on which of these is the most plausible, indeed he often claims that he prefers not to evaluate such matters.¹¹¹

In some respects, one might suggest that the prevalence of such stories would point to the importance of the image within local societies. At the same time, however, it is clear that there was no clear and consistent method of regulation either for which images could be revered, or in what way this should be carried out. As noted above, this is something heavily played upon by Lucian in humorously irreverent tales such as *Zeus: the Tragic Actor*, in which the gods attend a meeting on Olympus, all in the forms of their statues.¹¹² Similar criticisms of aspects of the worship of statues are found throughout the Lucianic corpus, and all serve to demonstrate both the author's amusement at the beliefs held by others, and also, of course, the beliefs potentially held by others. In his *Alexander, or the False Prophet* numerous individuals are fooled by the prophetic snake-image, Glycon, including the Governor (explicitly) and the Emperor and his court (implicitly),¹¹³ whilst in other parts of the world fools believe that an image of the athlete Theagenes can heal the sick, and worship it as a god because of this.¹¹⁴

Once the Christian literature and the responses to it are taken into consideration, the discourse surrounding the role of the cult statue certainly becomes more explicit and colourful. The critical comments have much to add to our conception of how the cult image was viewed, although they must be considered very carefully, given their obvious agenda. Arnobius, who criticises traditional Roman religion from the perspective of one who was once involved in it, comments that he previously worshipped stones as if there were some inherent virtue in them:

“If ever I caught sight of a stone anointed and dressed with olive oil, I worshipped it just as if some virtue/power/meaning resided in it.”¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ See also Ch. 3.3 for discussion of Pausanias's treatment of provenance narratives.

¹¹² Lucian, *Zeus Trag.*, throughout, but especially 7f. See above Introduction.i.a, with n.14.

¹¹³ Lucian, *Alex.* esp. 26f. See Ch. 2.4 for discussion of, and bibliography for, the Lucianic tale and its historical context.

¹¹⁴ Lucian, *Deor. Conc.*, 12. For other attestations of the image of Theagenes see Paus. 6.11.6-9; Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9, citing Oenomaus; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.95-97.

¹¹⁵ Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.* 1.39: ‘si quando conspexeram lubricatum lapidem et ex olivi unguine sordidatum, tamquam inesset vis praesens, adulabar’. Cf. Paus. 9.38.5.

Augustine quoted earlier Roman authors in order to demonstrate that men worshipped images in order to feel a greater proximity to god,¹¹⁶ but added his own concerns that the divine was something that could not be represented by humankind; the viewing of divine images was “a seeing that affords no sight of what really exists.”¹¹⁷ Others rejected the evidence provided by pagan responses for the divine power of images by claiming that if indeed they did have powers, it was the work of demons, not gods, as seen in the following comments of Tatian:

“And yet the things just referred to are the trickeries of frenzied demons, while the doctrines we inculcate are far beyond the apprehension of the world.”¹¹⁸

The discourse continued with the attacks of Christian authors, and defences by those who sought to justify image worship.¹¹⁹

Even after significant quantities of Christian literature had challenged the ideas behind the worship of images, variant perspectives can be found even within individual authors; there is not necessarily one defining idea of the cult statue despite the increased evidence of discourse surrounding them. The emperor Julian, with all of his concerns for addressing Christian perspectives, demonstrates this quite neatly. In his *Letter to a Priest*, he addresses the matter of image-worship, claiming that the fathers of Rome set up the images and altars of the gods, not so that they could be regarded as gods, but so that the gods could be worshipped through them,¹²⁰ and concludes his discussion with the suggestion that:

¹¹⁶ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 6.10, quoting Seneca (cf. *Civ. Dei* 4.31): “Since indeed on the cult statues he [Seneca] puts forth: ‘The sacred,’ he says, ‘the immortal and inviolable, they dedicate in worthless and immobile materials’” (“Cum enim de simulacris ageret: ‘Sacros’ inquit, ‘immortales, inviolabiles in materia vilissima atque immobili dedicant”).

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 10.9-11: “in qua non ea videntur quae vere sunt”. For a discussion of this passage with regards to the modes of viewing religious iconography see Elsner (1995) 88ff.

¹¹⁸ Tatian, *Orat.* 12: “καὶ τὰ μὲν προειρημένα παραφύρων δαιμόνων ἐστὶν ἀντισοφιστεύματα, τὰ δὲ τῆς ἡμετέρας παιδείας ἐστὶν ἀνωτέρω τῆς κοσμικῆς καταλήψεως.” Tr. Ryland (1995), cf. *Or.* 13-15; Cf. Athenagoras, *Leg.* 15-17 and *Leg.* 23-7, which form incredibly close parallels. For the interpretation of pagan gods as demons more generally in the early Christian literature (and some of the pagans of the Second Sophistic) see Rives (1995) 80-81.

¹¹⁹ Additional criticisms by Christian authors: for example, Ambrose, *Expos. Psalm.* 118.10.25; Basil, *De Spir. Sanct.* 18 (45); Origen, *C. Cels.* 7.62, *Comm. In Joh.* 6.5.30. For defenders of images, see, for example: Porphyry, *de abst.* 2.18; Maximus of Tyre, *Oration* 2.3; John Damascene, *Orations in defence of images* 2.60, 2.66, 3.114; Iamblichus, in Photis, *Bibl.* 215.

¹²⁰ See above, Introduction.i. a, with n.24.

“Therefore, when we look at images of the gods let us not indeed think they are stones or wood, but neither let us think they are the gods themselves”¹²¹

However, when he describes the arrival of the Mother of the Gods into Rome, a story well attested by other sources, he demonstrates quite a different perspective.¹²² The image is brought from Pergamum to Rome, and on arrival stays the boat, only moving when begged to by Claudia, the woman who had been allocated to receive the goddess. The woman had been accused of impurity by those who had gathered to receive the image, who blamed her for the image’s apparent refusal to land, ‘for by this time the thing seemed to all to be supernatural’.¹²³ In her response of allowing the ship to be moved, the goddess/statue had demonstrated that she ‘was no work of men’s hands but truly divine, not lifeless clay but a thing possessed of life and divine powers’.¹²⁴ These are sentiments that would be difficult to attribute to Julian, given the previous passage, and yet he concludes with remarks implying that he may be partly convinced by the story. He claims that he is aware of how incredible the whole event sounds, but suggests that those who dismiss such tales completely are ignoring the amount of attestations to them, in history and in art, and are too clever to be able to see what is right before their eyes.¹²⁵ It seems that for Julian, some cult images were more divine than others.

This is but a cursory assessment of the ancient sources that address the matter of attitudes towards cult images in the Roman world, and yet they clearly demonstrate a continuous and lively discourse. There are varied opinions between sources, within sources, and over periods of time, and none of this can be attributed to any particular event or group. They also demonstrate that the cult statue was something that was thought about and considered, and not necessarily taken for granted. There were uncertainties about form and function, and yet none of our evidence suggests that any agreement was reached. It shall be argued below that

¹²¹ Julian, *Epist.* 293D-294C. “Ἀφορώντες οὖν εἰς τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἀγάλματα μὴ τοι νομίζωμεν αὐτὰ λίθους εἶναι μηδὲ ξύλα, μηδὲ μέντοι τοὺς θεοὺς αὐτοὺς εἶναι ταῦτα.” Tr. Wright (1913).

¹²² Julian, *Or.* 159C-161B. For the earlier attestations of the tale see: Livy, 2.10f; Silius Italicus 17.1f; Ovid, *Fasti* 4.255f. See Ch. 3.3.

¹²³ Julian, *Or.* 160C. “ἔδόκει γὰρ ἤδη τοῖς πᾶσιν εἶναι τὸ χρῆμα δαιμονιώτερον.”

¹²⁴ Julian, *Or.* 161A. “Ἴνον τοῦτον, ἀλλὰ ὄντως θεῖον, οὔτε ἄψυχον γῆν, ἀλλὰ ἐμπνουν τι χρῆμα καὶ δαιμόνιον.”

¹²⁵ Julian, *Or.* 161A-B. “ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ ταῖς πόλεσι πιστεύειν μάλλον τὰ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιοιοὶ τοῖς κομποῖς, ὧν τὸ ψυχάριον δριμύ μὲν, ὑγιὲς δὲ οὐδὲ ἐβλέπει.”

there was no need for one within the Roman religious systems, but suffice it to say for the moment that, in general, our sources do not claim to have the last word on the matter; they are open to the ideas of others, and reluctant to invalidate any particular religious perspectives with regards to images.¹²⁶

It is of course important to acknowledge that authors held varying views and that none of them necessarily considered themselves to be dogmatically correct. Yet it may still be useful to elucidate what we can from these explicit commentaries upon the role of images, in order to demonstrate some form of context within and around which the study of interactions might be placed.

To some extent, the evidence supports the comments made by some of the scholars noted above. For example, Elsner's comment that 'in a profound sense they [the cult images] shared an identity with the god in whose image they stood'¹²⁷ is presumably based upon the allusions made by authors such as Plutarch to this as a relatively common standpoint.¹²⁸ It is a concept found throughout the ancient literature, although it is rarely wholeheartedly accepted by the authors we have available to us. Significant exceptions include the speculations of Julian as to the nature of the statue of the Mother of the Gods, and several comments made by Pausanias, which suggest that he does not doubt the divinity of many cult statues.¹²⁹ One thinks also of those who justified the worship of images in response to Christian criticism, which often entailed defending their inherent divinity.¹³⁰

Perhaps one of the key indicators for the extent to which the image and the deity may be conceptually elided is the purposeful confusion of the two in linguistic terms. Plutarch's complaints against the habit of the Greeks to do this have been noted above,¹³¹ as has Pausanias' tendency to refer to the image of a god with that deity's name or epithet, rather

¹²⁶ Of course, the situation is different in the case of the Christian authors, who do claim to have the correct understanding of the images, although see above, n.118 on images being influenced by demons, which was not necessarily a unanimously held opinion.

¹²⁷ Elsner (1998) 203.

¹²⁸ On a selection of the comments of Plutarch see above, Introduction.i.a, with n.58; i.b, with n.75 for a bibliography of works on Plutarch and art/religion.

¹²⁹ Julian, *Or.* 159C-161B, discussed above. For Pausanias, see, for example, those occasions on which images are believed to have fallen from heaven (Paus. 1.26.6) or which have a particular emotional impact on him, or others, because of their apparent divinity (e.g. Paus. 5.9.9; 9.38.5; 10.19.2; 5.17.1-2).

¹³⁰ For example, Porphyry, *de abst.* 2.18; Julian, *Epist.* 293-5 (discussed in section i.a); See also the late *Corp. Herm. Asclepius* 36-9.

¹³¹ Plut. *Mor.* 379C-D, see Introduction.i.a.

than as an image as such.¹³² Evidently Latin authors had the same tendencies: an example from the *Satires* of Horace,¹³³ consciously combining the image of Priapus and the deity himself, is paralleled in numerous extant poems about and/or narrated by that same god.¹³⁴ Other poets often refer to the image of a deity as the deity itself, such as Ovid's description of the arrival of the Mother of the Gods and the annual rituals that involved carrying her image through the city.¹³⁵ Even historians not generally considered to be particularly concerned with religious definitions or philosophy can be seen to do the same, including Livy.¹³⁶ Whilst in some respects the technique may be seen as a literary device, there is a tangible premise behind it; readers are expected to understand that the god being referred to is equated with the image being referred to, and if only the one is mentioned the reader must at times assume the other. That the amalgamation of image and deity can be found not only in poetry, but also in historical, descriptive, and philosophical works suggests that it may be more than literary contrivance.

In addition, one must consider the Christian evidence. Whilst this has to be treated carefully with regards to the agendas of the Christian authors, there are some interesting implications to be drawn from the literature. Their criticisms are levelled against varying aspects of image-worship, including the tendency to represent gods in human shape, which is childish, and speculation on the irrationality of believing there to be some inherent virtue in stones.¹³⁷ Other Christian authors demonstrate a more sympathetic approach, contemplating the desire to feel a proximity to the god which may be suggested to an individual by the presence of that god's image.¹³⁸ This sort of attempt to understand the pagan viewpoint, sometimes with reference to earlier sources, may be qualified by the ultimate assumption that the devotee is incorrect in a fundamental way, but perhaps provides some insight into another potential level of relationship with an image.¹³⁹ Indeed, it is one that is fairly securely attested. Additional inferences may be drawn from more detailed criticisms that relate specifically to the

¹³² See above, n.49.

¹³³ Hor. *Sat.* 1.18.1, see Introduction.i.a.

¹³⁴ Cf. Parker (1988) 10ff for the style of the anonymous *Carmina Priapea*. Examples of poems within the collection that are narrated by the god/image include *CP* 26; 43. *CP* 50 is a poem in which the distinctions between god and statue are blurred by a worshipper. These are also discussed in Ch. 4.3; 4.4; 2.5.

¹³⁵ Ovid, *Fasti* 4.255f. The technique is employed several times in the *Fasti*, e.g. 6.569ff. See Ch. 3.3. Another Greek work in which it is often difficult to ascertain whether the narrator is referring to god or statue is Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12, dedicated to the Pheidian Zeus at Olympia.

¹³⁶ For example, Livy, 45.23.18; 5.97; 26.37. For the religious perspectives that can be seen in Livy, see Davies (2004) *op. cit.*

¹³⁷ See Chrysippus, *SVF* 2.1076; Arnob., *Adv. Nat.* 1.39.

¹³⁸ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 6.10.

¹³⁹ See above, n.115-117.

perceived divine qualities and abilities of images. There are comments in both Athenagoras and Tatian, discounting the evidence of ‘miraculous’ statues (for example, those that can heal, or give omens or oracles) for the argued divine power of the images on the basis that it is in fact demons that exert power over the inanimate material, not the traditional gods.¹⁴⁰ These statements reveal an unwillingness to reject entirely the supernatural qualities of important images; perhaps it would be altogether too mighty a task to deny that the images had power at all?

There are several further comments, especially from later antiquity, that attend to this issue of whence divine images might obtain their power. Interestingly, in this debate, the question of whether they have any power in the first place is not addressed. In a poem addressed to Aesclepius, Callistratus waxes lyrical on the power of the god that is to be found within the image, explaining that after art has portrayed a god, the image passes over to the power of the divinity. He claims:

“To me, at any rate, the object before our eyes seems to be, not an image, but a modelled presentiment of truth; for see how art not only is not without power to delineate character, but, after having portrayed the god in an image, it even passes over into the god himself. Matter though it is, it gives forth divine intelligence, and though it is the work of human hands, it succeeds in doing what handicrafts cannot accomplish, in that it begets in a marvellous way tokens of a soul.”¹⁴¹

Further, it seems that the power was placed within the image either through magical means, or by the will of the god. He later adds the interesting note that this is not as inappropriate as one might think, for statues, like the gods, cannot die.¹⁴² In addition, several passages of the *Corpus Hermeticus* deal with images of the gods, one of which claims that both angels and demons were placed inside the images of the gods in equal measure.¹⁴³ It appears that even if

¹⁴⁰ Tatian, *Or.* 15 (Cf. *Or.* 12); Athenagoras, *Leg.* 15-17 and *Leg.* 23-7, see above, n.118.

¹⁴¹ Callistratus, *Ekphr.* 10: “ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν οὐ τύπος εἶναι δοκεῖ τὸ ὁρώμενον, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀληθείας πλάσμα. ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὥς οὐκ ἀνηθοποίητος ἡ τέχνη, ἀλλ’ ἐνεικονισαμένη τὸν θεὸν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐξίσταται. ὕλη μὲν οὖσα θεοειδὲς ἀναπέμπει νόημα, δημιουργημάτων δὲ χειρὸς τυγχάνουσα ἃ μὴ δημιουργίαις ἔξεστι πράττει τεκμήρια ψυχῆς ἀρρήτως ἀποτίκτουσα.” Tr. Fairbank (1931).

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ *Corp. Herm. Asclepius* 36-9.

one were critical of the divine image, any censure must be levelled on the basis that at least some images did have some power in order to be taken seriously at all.

However, it cannot be ignored that there were those who objected to such a fundamental association of deity with image, and that this conception of the divine image was not the only one. The spectrum ranges from a vague understanding of the image as neither stones or wood, nor the gods themselves,¹⁴⁴ to the downright ridicule of form, function, and beliefs found in Lucian.¹⁴⁵ Several authors seem to err on the side of visible divine power within cult statues being improbable, but not impossible. Plutarch, for instance, implies this when discussing the speaking image of Fortuna at Rome, commenting that when such an event is so well attested, it might indeed give great support to those who believed there to be power imparted by the divine into images, although he does not hold that this is generally the case.¹⁴⁶

Some of the sources that are perhaps the most revealing for what we might call the middle of this vast range of feelings for cult images are those in which the narrator of a text describes his feelings upon encountering an image. Perhaps these are also the ones to which the modern reader might most easily relate: the immediate impact of some of the famed cult statues of antiquity must have been significant. Pausanias' description of the Olympian Zeus, for example, entices a more emphatic response than one normally receives from the author of the *Periegetes*.¹⁴⁷ This chryselephantine statue must indeed have been one of the most impressive cult images of antiquity, and it was the subject of a lengthy oration by Dio Chrysostom.¹⁴⁸ This 'hymn' also emphasises the dramatic impact of the image upon the devotee, as well as the matter of the inspiration for the image.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, it is this image that Strabo describes as being so large that if it were to stand up (Zeus was depicted seated on a throne), it would push the temple roof off, implying perhaps that its viewers were able to envisage such an event.¹⁵⁰ These descriptions do not necessarily proclaim any inherent divine power within the image, but do suggest an association of proximity to the image with proximity to the god. We have

¹⁴⁴ E.g. Julian, *Epist.* 294C, discussed above in this section.

¹⁴⁵ Although Lucian's work might be read more as mockery than direct criticism, see above, i.a. and e.g. Bracht Branham (1989) 165 ff.

¹⁴⁶ Plut., *Cor.* 37f. For discussion and full text see Ch. 2.2; 2.3. Cf. Cic. *De Div.* 2.58.

¹⁴⁷ Paus. 5.11.9.

¹⁴⁸ Dio, *Or.* 12.

¹⁴⁹ Dio (*Or.* 12.25, 44-6) tells us that Pheidias was inspired by the Zeus of Homer, and Pausanias (see above, n.147) claims that Zeus himself bore witness to the making of the statue.

¹⁵⁰ Strabo 8.3.30, cf. Gordon (1979) 14.

seen this idea mentioned in Augustine and Seneca, and it is explicitly attested elsewhere.¹⁵¹ Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* famously devotes a significant section of the final book to the initiatory rites of the Isis cult, and frequently mentions her image.¹⁵² Here he regularly refers to the comfort that the image brings him, the pleasure he takes from being in the presence of the image, and the sadness that he feels when he has to leave it.¹⁵³ Several other sources mention in passing that one might seek proximity to a god through its image.¹⁵⁴

Several authors to whom we might attribute a more literal approach to the cult image appear to engage with the possibility of other perspectives, just as the critics of images did. They had, for example, counter-arguments to the complaints against attempts to represent the gods with human hands or in human form. Some sources suggest that the sculptor was inspired by a dream, which naturally would have been sent by a god. We have already seen that Dio was aware of the concern over inspiration for Phidias' Zeus, and indeed additional sources explained this same image as having been inspired by dreams, poetry or the god himself.¹⁵⁵ Other images had complex myths surrounding their creation, which may, for example, have related that they fell from the heavens, or were made on divine orders.¹⁵⁶

These types of narrative could not convince everyone, however, and satirists such as Lucian found great fodder in what they essentially considered to be superstitious foolishness. Lucian suggests that any image could develop a myth-history in order to explain its supernatural powers in the discussion of the image of Theagenes and other non-divine miraculous images in *The Parliament of the Gods*.¹⁵⁷ This work satirises many aspects of Roman religion, not just cult images, especially oracles and healing cults.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, the work discussed above,

¹⁵¹ See above, p29f and n.116.

¹⁵² Essentially the whole of the first half of Book 11.

¹⁵³ Apul., *Met.* 11.19.1ff; 11.24.5f. Admittedly the Isis cult may be a special case, included amongst those cults with rituals in which the revelation of the image played an important part. However, there were enough cults in the Roman world that involved this type of rite for the image to not need to be considered as particularly unique. Cf. Paus. 1.37.4; 1.38.7; 2.30.4; 10.32.18; Lucian, *DDS* 31; Philostr., *Vita Apoll.* 4.40; cf. Ch. 6.3. The revealing of images may also have formed part of the Imperial cult: see L.R. *BCH* 101 (1977) and Vermeule (1968) frontispiece and xviii.

¹⁵⁴ For example, Tac. *Hist.* 4.82.1. Cf. Versnel (1981) 58ff.

¹⁵⁵ See above n. 147. Cf. Dio, 12.25; Plut., *Aemil. Paull.* 28.2; Strabo, 8.354C; Dio, 12.44-6.

¹⁵⁶ Images that fell from heaven: e.g. Paus. 1.26.6, cf. Athenag., *Legat.* 17; Pliny, *NH* 36.11; Paus. 10.24.6. Images that were ordered by the gods: e.g. Pliny, 36.9-11, Paus. 10.19.2f. Another popular provenance narrative was that the image was made by Daedalus, who achieved such a mighty mythological reputation as artist/magician that his works could hardly be considered those of human hands, see Ch. 3.2-3. Cf. Morris (1992) esp. 217-25; 241-2, and Frontisi-Ducroux (1975).

¹⁵⁷ Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 12.

¹⁵⁸ Luc. *Deor. Conc.*, *passim*. See Bracht Branham (1989) 125-78 for Lucian's approach to the gods in this and other works.

Zeus: the Tragic Actor, ridicules the form of cult images, and the inconsistencies apparent in representations of the divine.¹⁵⁹ He is particularly critical of what might be called fraudulent trickery on the part of religious officials, to whom he would attribute the mechanics behind any perceived divinity within an image.¹⁶⁰ Here he has more in common with the Christian critics than with the majority of pagan authors, who rarely accuse members of the priesthood of deceiving the worshipping public.

Despite the evident diversity of interpretations of cult images, it does appear that there is a form of spectrum along which one might place any given individual with relation to any given image. Some may have considered there to be a form of divine presence in a literal and significant way in one image, but not in others. Some may have felt that the image was a symbolic tool with which to increase one's feeling of proximity to the deity. In any case, most of the authors engage with the potential for an image to be inherently divine or inanimate matter. The spectrum was acknowledged, and it does not seem that there was necessarily a correct way to view the cult image, but the existence of a mode of thinking that allowed the image to take various roles for various people was almost unanimously accepted.

There are a number of ways to interpret the fact that multiple ideas about cult images coexisted. It is possible to suggest, as Donohue does, that there was no concept of 'cult image' as we would define it, thus explaining the lack of unanimity in perceptions of them.¹⁶¹ However, Donohue's study is of Greek divine images, and we have seen that even the language surrounding images provides less space for the cult image, as a specific category, in Greek (until the Imperial period) than it does in Latin.¹⁶² One could also emphasise the symbolic nature of the images, and argue that symbolism allows a greater diversity of interpretation than a literal understanding of them would.¹⁶³ This would sacrifice a large amount of the literature, however, for many of the authors either accept, or acknowledge the potential for, literal viewings.

A preferable option is to place these images within the context of the religions of the Roman world, in which no homogeneity of opinion was essential. King has recently argued for a re-

¹⁵⁹ See above, Introduction.i.a, p6ff with notes, also this section, p28-30.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Luc. *Alex.* 26; *Philops.* 13-20, 26. Cf. Ch. 2.4.

¹⁶¹ See above, this section, p24.

¹⁶² See Introduction.i.a.

¹⁶³ For symbolism as opposed to literalism in Roman religion see Price (1984) 7ff; 29f and Beard, North and Price (Eds.) (1998) 49f. Cf. King (2003) 279f.

evaluation of the ways in which ‘belief’, as regards Roman religion, is considered, and many of his comments are applicable here. He argues that the Romans lacked the concept of membership and emphasis on the need for participants to share a particular set of beliefs that is found in religions such as Christianity, which require certain premises to be held for membership, and concurrent rejection of beliefs that are not held by that group.¹⁶⁴ In explaining the impact of this upon the variety of beliefs in the Roman world, he states:

“The Roman Pagans did not merely lack the Christian focus on orthodox sets of beliefs, but possessed specific alternative mechanisms for the organization of beliefs that allowed clusters of variant beliefs to exist within Roman society without conflict.”¹⁶⁵

He also argues that this does not preclude any acceptance of the concept of belief, or of literal meanings, in the Roman religious systems.¹⁶⁶ This does not, of course, rule out the symbolic potential of any aspect of Roman religion, and certainly not in the case of cult images. However, it does allow us to consider the potential of the cult image beyond the purely symbolic.

If we accept this model of organisation for the religions of the Roman world, then the variety of opinions expressed about cult images is to be expected, rather than problematic. It simply demonstrates that views about cult images were consistent with the organisation of Roman religious beliefs. The concern about how cult images ought to be viewed is a logical characteristic of a set of religious beliefs in which behaving appropriately with regard to expressing one’s devotion was perceived to have a very real impact upon one’s day to day life. Most importantly, this means that it is not impossible to ascertain how cult images were treated and understood in the Roman world. It is not necessarily easy to do so, and any assessment will clearly have to take into consideration the almost infinite variations that may be encountered, but it is certainly viable to demonstrate a set of potential views, of which any given Roman may hold one, some, all, or none.

¹⁶⁴ King (2003) 282-92.

¹⁶⁵ King (2003) 277; cf. Balagadghara (1994) 34-6.

¹⁶⁶ King (2003) 278-80. Cf. Rives (2000) 257-8 on the lack of an articulated system that combines belief and ritual.

Significantly, cult images *were* discussed, with some energy and consistency. The sheer volume of evidence that we have for their roles implies that not only were they a regular feature of religious life, but also had a position that needed careful consideration and negotiation. The idea that some devotees could linguistically categorise the image as equal to the deity, whilst others could not believe that the images even came close to representing the divine, is entirely appropriate to the multitude of religious options open to the citizens of the Roman world. However, those sources that explicitly discuss the potential conceptions of cult images are not enough to establish the variations available, or represent a wide enough range of the population. In order to gain a broader, and more complete, picture, it is necessary to explore beyond the explicit, and address those other references to cult images that do not necessarily explain how they were thought about but how they *behaved* within Roman societies. What cult statues did, and what was done to them, may help to illuminate further aspects of their complicated position in the Roman world.

iii) **Modern boundaries? 'state-cult', 'private cult' and the emperors**

Cult statues could be found in every type of religious system within the Roman world, from individual, private or domestic cult to the most important of public cult practices; from the worship of the oldest Olympian and Roman gods, to the foreign and the imperial cults. The inclusive approach of this thesis demands that all of these facets of the religions of the Roman world be taken into consideration, as it is only by doing so that the cultural language of interactions with images can begin to be understood.

There are further methodological reasons for taking this approach, with regard to all of the various aspects of Roman religions that have been included. The differentiation and divide between state- and private-cult can be seen to be blurry at best, and the evidence does not always allow us to determine how we might categorise certain religious practices at all. It is not clear how much impact state organised religion had on the religious practices of individuals at Rome itself, let alone in the rest of the empire. Furthermore, although there may have been particular activities that were more common to certain types of cult, it is often the case that image-interactions took on a very similar appearance across different types of

worship.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, it has long been argued that ‘magic’ as a category separate from religion is problematic, and so ought to be included in a study such as this.¹⁶⁸ In the particular study of interactions with images, the need to differentiate between types of cult is in fact far less, for the form of these interactions closely parallel one another across the board: a private cult image might differ in dimensions and monetary value from a publicly dedicated image within a temple, but the manner in which it was treated is often directly comparable.

This type of comparison also applies to the worship of imperial images, and it has been shown quite conclusively that emperor worship in the Roman world tended to model itself closely on the worship of the ‘old’ or traditional gods.¹⁶⁹ Regardless of the theoretical implications for the worship of the emperor and its role within traditional Roman religious systems, it is apparent that images of emperors were offered cult according to the widely understood cultural language of interactions with religious images generally, which is hardly surprising: whether one wanted to worship an emperor as a god, or to demonstrate a willingness to do so, or to worship an emperor as a mortal individual with apparently omniscient power, it was through existing modes of interaction that this would most likely take place.¹⁷⁰ This thesis does not intend to contribute to the already crowded domain of the theoretical problems of the imperial cult, but it does take imperial images into consideration, for there can be no doubt at all that they were worshipped and cultivated, and, as is the case for other cult images, that the motives and proper manner in which to do so were a subject of discussion in the Roman period.

iv) **Speaking of statues: the evidence**

¹⁶⁷ There is a vast scholarship on state- and private-cults, their differences and their relative importance in the Roman world, including: Woolf (1997) which provides a good survey of varying approaches to the study of state-religion; King (2003) presents an excellent discussion of the possible variety and overlap of both state and private religious belief systems; Bakker (1994) deals with some of the methodological problems in determining whether archaeological evidence points to state or private worship; Gradel (2002) 199ff points to similar problems with reference to the Imperial cult.

¹⁶⁸ Again, the bibliography on this debate is significant. Arguments for considering the two together are by now persuasive and in relative agreement, so I do not devote space to recounting them in full. On magic and religion generally see: Faraone & Obbink (1991) (eds.); Ogden (2002). For the evidence for the practices and beliefs commonly termed magic see Betz (1986) xlii-xlvi.

¹⁶⁹ Price (1984); Gradel (2002). That this applied to earlier ruler cults see Tanner (2000) 41.

¹⁷⁰ For the adoption of traditional image ritual in the imperial cult see Elsner (1998) 199-203.

Since the purpose of this research is to provide a full demonstration of the multifarious nature of the cult image, it makes sense to provide as much material from as many parts of the empire as possible. All types of evidence are considered, be they pictorial, literary, epigraphic or archaeological. Of course, all types of evidence also have their problems for the study of cult images, as does the nature of ancient evidence in general. A few of the more general problems are addressed by this introductory note, although their more precise aspects will be assessed as particular sources arise throughout the thesis.

The primary problem for understanding the role of cult images within ancient religions is, unsurprisingly, that the religious systems of the Roman world did not require any dogmatic explanation of how images were supposed to be perceived, or to work, or to be defined. Instead, it is necessary to build a picture from many smaller references to individual instances of interaction, some in a certain amount of detail, but many almost mentions in passing. It is, furthermore, particularly rare that a number of different sources, or different types of sources, can illuminate very much about any one image or any one type of interaction. There are relatively frequent scholarly attempts to identify surviving images with surviving literary references and so on, but that manner of conjecture is not of use here. This work does not attempt to pin down those sources that are flaky, but to add them to the heap of evidence for the abundance of images and image-interactions within the religious systems of the Roman world.¹⁷¹

One further problem is, of course, the fragmentary nature of the evidence, whether it be literary, archaeological or epigraphic. Some of the problems associated with archaeological evidence have been noted above, in particular with regards to the identification of surviving images with cult statues.¹⁷² In fact, statues themselves will rarely be used as evidence within this work, for very few of them can tell us a great deal about their social function, rather than their aesthetic appearance. There are some important exceptions, naturally, such as those images that suggest evidence for the manipulation of mortal hands that might allow them to move or to speak.¹⁷³ Depictions of statues, however, do have an important role, and these also have their problems in the assessment of the role of the cult image. The primary problem is that of identification of a pictorial representation (on coinage, wall painting, and so on) as a

¹⁷¹ Attempts to identify images mentioned in our literature are mentioned variously throughout, see e.g. the Zeus Ithomatas discussed at Robinson (1945) and above, section i; Hercules discussed at Palagia (2000) and in Ch. 5.

¹⁷² Introduction: i.a, esp. p2-3.

¹⁷³ See Ch. 2; 3.

statue in the first instance, and a cult statue in the second. Images often took the form of anthropomorphic representations of deities, and in certain media it is very difficult to tell whether such a representation is intended to be of the deity or the statue. Naturally, there may be many instances in which this precise uncertainty is intended or important: differentiating between a deity and its image was no simple matter, even when faced with the statue itself.

However, there must be some criteria for the interpretation of an image as depicting a cult statue. As far as representations of statues are concerned, the visual clues of pedestals, statuesque poses, attributes of a known image, and so on, are often used as key identifiers, and they are useful to apply, although by no means foolproof.¹⁷⁴ These matters have been discussed in terms of the definition of cult images, and need to be borne in mind in consideration of the evidence. Where visual representations are used and their identification as a cult statue is not certain, it will be duly noted, but it should also be observed that these issues of identification might have existed in antiquity to at least some extent.¹⁷⁵

One of the major challenges of producing such an inclusive assessment is in the range of evidence types, and in particular the range of authors, that will have to be considered. Some of the issues raised by this have been discussed above, and it has been noted that some authors have already been the subject of dedicated works on their treatment of images or religion. Where it is possible, I have incorporated these assessments into an understanding of why interactions might be thought of in a certain way by a certain author.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, where studies exist of particular epigraphic mentions of cult statues they have been informative and acknowledged.

Unfortunately, however, a full assessment of each author's motivations and broader perspectives cannot be included within the scope of this thesis. Some of the evidence has been paid very little scholarly attention at all, and it is not always possible to know the ideological context of any given reference to cult statues. These limitations must be acknowledged in terms of the precise attribution of perspectives towards cult statues to any one individual. In terms of the broader purposes of this thesis, however, these obstacles are not insurmountable. Whilst the study of what individual authors felt and believed about cult

¹⁷⁴ As noted by Stewart (2003) 36; Alroth (1992) 10.

¹⁷⁵ See the above notes on Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31. p2-3.

¹⁷⁶ For illustrative bibliography of these works see above, n.75.

statues in the Roman world certainly holds its own fascinations, the aim of developing an understanding of the full range of perspectives, interactions and their implications means that it is not necessary within the scope of this work.

v) **A note on the structure and content of the thesis**

Interactions with images did not form one (or even several) cohesive group (or groups), and not all types of interaction can be applied to all images. At the same time, very few images appear to have partaken in only one form, and it is likely that most statues were part of a variety of interactions at once or at different times. This is important to bear in mind despite the structure of this thesis, which separates them primarily for theoretical reasons. The nature of the evidence means that much of our knowledge about treatments of specific images is fragmentary but, in general, it should be assumed that cult statues were part of a complex array of physical interactions that formed a major part of the cultural language with which they were understood.

It would be impossible to address the full variety of types of interaction with all images across the Roman world without enforcing some kind of structure, even if it must, to some extent, be slightly arbitrary. The division of assessments into types of interaction is important for their theoretical treatment, for various modes imply various understandings, and through this division it is possible to gauge most fully the entire spectrum. It is also important in terms of understanding where the boundaries of image interactions were placed, for each type of interaction can generally be seen to exist both within and outside of the limitations of accepted religious practices, and how these limitations were discussed is crucial to our understanding of these images.

Broadly speaking, the most common types of interaction are treated first, although it has been noted that for each type of interaction there existed extremes and/or the transgression of boundaries. The first chapter addresses the anointing and decorating of images, probably the interaction most commonly attested in our sources. The discussion of verbal interaction with images includes the similarly common interaction of directing prayer to a cult image, although also includes extreme forms of image manipulation and 'oracle fraud'. The movement of cult statues in processions was again relatively frequent, and is covered in the

third chapter alongside aspects of more problematic movement such as theft. Although it is possible that kissing and touching cult statues happened as a casual gesture relatively often, the most extensive evidence we have for the touching of statues for the sake of touch, as discussed in chapter four, is embrace under much more extreme circumstances. The possibility for images to be harmed in ritual is mentioned in chapter five, although it is very scarcely attested and this is much more a treatment of transgressive behaviour towards images. Finally, although sacrifice is probably the most commonly known ritual of antiquity, the involvement of the image in this practice is different from many of its other activities, and its discussion is reserved for the final chapter.

This brief outline should help to illustrate the range of interactions that will be covered and indicate some of the ways in which they are treated. Explorations of the theoretical approaches mentioned briefly above will be applied to each type of interaction in its own context, before drawing them together in an attempt to understand the whole. Interactions with images certainly did not happen in isolation, either from the wider religious context or from other types of interaction, and it is an understanding of their relationships to one another that will be most important for our understanding of the cult statues of the Roman world.

Chapter One: Adornment and Ablution

1.1 The context of bathing and decorating cult images

In many respects, the ancient practices of adorning and washing cult statues are amongst the least problematic and the most commonly found in our literature. Our sources for such interactions range from lengthy explanations of specific festivals devoted to the dedication of clothes,¹⁷⁷ to the many casual mentions of dressing with flowers, ribbons or other small gifts left on or near cult statuary.¹⁷⁸ These interactions are so well attested, and they seem so simple, that whilst they have formed aspects of several surveys on the treatment of images and/or religious practices in the Roman world, they have rarely been given a full theoretical consideration.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, the very fact of the volume of references to this type of interaction alongside the absence of any real explanation for it in the sources themselves has led some to suggest that little can be gained from an assessment of them.¹⁸⁰

This is a valid point, for it is not immediately obvious how or why one ought to explain the devoting of decorative gifts to, and ritual bathing of, images. These practices seem close to those familiar to us in the modern world, where religious images are still clothed and offered decorations.¹⁸¹ They are practices that can certainly be very simply understood as symbolic; the symbolic giving of gifts to the divine through their representations can be seen as a demonstration of devotion that is very visible and logical. At the same time, a more literal interpretation of these interactions is possible, in the sense that the images, and in turn the deities they represent (and/or are elided with), could genuinely benefit from this type of treatment.

¹⁷⁷ The most famous ancient example is the Panathenaia: Paus. 1.26.6; Athenag. *Legat.* 17; cf. Herrington (1955) 17, 32-3. See also Paus. 3.16.2, 19.2 (Apollo); Paus. 5.16.1-2 (Hera); Plut. *Alc.* 4.87 (Athena); Livy 10.23.3 (Pudicitia? Cf. 442-3 with n.3 of Foster's translation).

¹⁷⁸ E.g. Flowers: Calder-Cormack 514, 516; Cic. *Epist.* 2.85; *Verr.* 2.4.77; Ov. *Her.* 7.100f; Luc. *Alex.* 30; Paus. 3.26.1-2; *CP* 50; Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2, 17; SHA *Caracalla* 5.7; Gold, metal and coins: *CIG* 173, cf. Tert. *Apol.* 46; Reinach (1906) 12, 19/20, 52, 86, 157, 169; Adornments generally: *LSJ*⁸ 1517, cf. *SEG* 28.866; Paus. 2.2.6, 10.24.6; Plut. *Dion. Hal.* 8.56, *vit. Cor.* 37; Paintings or inscriptions: Paus. 5.16.3; Ribbons: Paus. 8.31.8; 10.35.10

¹⁷⁹ The most significant recent survey is *ThesCRA* 5.I-II sv 'Nettoyage et entretien, bain, aspersion, onction and Vêtements, parures'. Romano (1988) provides a survey of material relevant to Greek cults, but the evidence is predominantly Roman in date; Clerc (1915) covers the evidence of the second century CE.

¹⁸⁰ Stewart (2003) 264: 'we need not expect to learn much about routine contact with statues, any more than we can study the attitudes of the 'man in the street' in any detail.'

¹⁸¹ Freedberg (1989) 28ff gives numerous examples, especially in the modern Mediterranean.

There are three main reasons that such interactions deserve further attention: firstly, because they are so common and diverse they form the cultural setting in which any number of the more complex and challenging interactions took place, and must be understood as part of the same cultural language developed around human relationships with divine images. This includes many features common to other types of interaction, such as the existence of officials to oversee them and the need for religious knowledge for their correct implementation. Secondly, if adornment and ablutions are symbolic, it is not automatically clear what they are meant to symbolise or symbolically achieve. Thirdly, there are possible literal implications of these interactions that ought to be assessed. Overall, the questions that can be asked and the picture that the sources paint is one that forms the broad backdrop for a whole world of possible interactions.

In terms of the overall study of physical interactions with cult statues in the Roman world, the assessment of these relatively routine moments of tactility is particularly useful. Whilst it may not be possible to understand the average attitude towards these interactions, or even to argue that there *was* an average and accepted attitude, such regular contact with cult images allows for a consideration of what theoretical models might be beneficial in understanding how they formed and informed relationships between man, god and statue. This type of contact paints the backdrop in the picture of a world in which images were very directly interacted with, on perhaps a daily basis; what happens when this touching took place with such frequency is important to address.

1.2 The daily routine

The range of physical interaction that can be included under the umbrella of adornment and ablutions is vast, and the sources are scattered across literary, visual and epigraphic evidence and the full temporal and geographical breadth of the Roman world. Whilst it is certainly my intention to demonstrate this range, there is not the space here to fully analyse each interaction or form of interaction, and there are other works that provide assessments of individual cults and statues, as well as surveys of the evidence.¹⁸² I hope to illustrate both the

¹⁸² See above, n.179 for general surveys. Assessments of individual or a selection of cults that include some element of assessment of gifts offered include: Brody (2001); Biguzzi (1998); Boardman (1954); Corbett (1970).

variety and the volume of such interactions, before a fuller theoretical assessment, whilst naturally not considering this to be comprehensive collection of all ancient references to them.

A favourite technique of scholars hoping to illustrate the extent of offerings placed on images is to point to Pausanias's references to statues in temples that he cannot see because they are so covered, whether it be with ribbons, locks of hair or clothing. So at Titane:

“There is a similar image of Health; this, too, one cannot see easily because it is so surrounded with the locks of women, who cut them off and offer them to the goddess, and with strips of Babylonian raiment.”¹⁸³

And in the sanctuary of Ino near Thalamae:

“It was not possible to see the one [i.e. the statue] within the temple clearly, owing to the garlands, but they say this too is of bronze.”¹⁸⁴

Pausanias also mentions images whose visibility is hindered due to a covering of ribbons,¹⁸⁵ and we get the impression in other ancient sources that some of the statues of Rome might also be all but concealed by the gifts of devotees.¹⁸⁶ Although in reality Pausanias mentions this invisibility just a couple of times in his travels, it does not seem unreasonable to suspect that many images may have been partially covered in dedications at least some of the time. Importantly, though, these dedications do not seem random; a statue of a god does not arbitrarily get piled high with cloth or ribbon, but is covered repeatedly with a specific type of gift. Some images are covered in garlands of flowers, others in locks of hair or ribbons,

¹⁸³ Paus. 2.11.6: “καὶ Ὑγείας δ’ ἔστι κατὰ ταῦτόν ἄγαλμα· οὐκ ἂν οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἴδοις ῥαδίως, οὕτω περιέχουσιν αὐτὸ κόμαι τε γυναικῶν αἱ κείρονται τῇ θεῷ καὶ ἐσθῆτος Βαβυλωνίας τελαμώνες.” Tr. Jones (1918).

¹⁸⁴ Paus. 3.26.1-2: “αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ ἐν τῷ ναῷ σαφῶς μὲν οὐκ ἦν ἰδεῖν ὑπὸ στεφανωμάτων, χαλκοῦν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο εἶναι λέγουσι.” Tr. Jones et al (1918).

¹⁸⁵ Paus. 8.31.8 (Images of Demeter and Kore); 10.35.10 (Demeter, it is not clear from the text whether this should be read as bound or decorated with the ribbons).

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 6.569ff on the identity of an image in the temple of Fortuna, which is unknown as a consequence of it being covered in robes; Dion. Hal. 4.40.7 and Pliny *NH* 8.194, 197 disagree with Ovid's guess that it represents King Tullius, and call it Fortuna herself. Cf. Livy 10.23.3.

and there seems to have been a relatively clear understanding of what offering was appropriate to which god.¹⁸⁷

The impression conveyed by this sort of dedication is one of individuals regularly bringing their own offering and placing it on or near the statue, normally within an expected understanding of what these images ought to receive. In this respect the offerings are similar to others in the form of votive inscriptions, images, food, incense and so on. There were expectations about how the images ought to receive such offerings, such as being accompanied by a prayer, but we do not have evidence for what these expectations might have been in all cases.¹⁸⁸ The relative simplicity of such dedications should not be taken to belittle their importance: a reference to punishment of those who have removed garlands from sacred images as being on a par with those who urinated on them suggests the dedication of flowers was indeed a serious business.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, some images did not only receive flowers from individual devotees, but their cults employed special officials to care for and carry them, sometimes known as *anthephoroi*.¹⁹⁰

These decorative dedications are often closely compared to examples of clothing sacred images, such as the dedication of specific items of dress, either on a one-off or a regular basis. Again, those responsible for the interactions appear to have been officially categorised through the religious terminology, in some sanctuaries being termed *kosmophoroi*.¹⁹¹ Some images are associated with annual clothing rituals, in which a specially constructed garment was presented to the image of the deity, and worn by it for a certain period of time.¹⁹² Usually

¹⁸⁷ See above, n.178. The terms *proskosmeo* and *proskosmema* can, especially in inscriptions, specifically apply to the adornment of cult images (e.g. *SEG* 28.866), but the term is broader, and can mean adorning monuments and building as well, cf. Pritchett (1998) 231.

¹⁸⁸ For prayer accompanying other image interactions see Ch. 2.2.

¹⁸⁹ *SHA Caracalla* 5.7. The reliability of whether any individuals were ever executed for either urinating on or removing gifts from statues is seriously in doubt, given the probable motives of the author, but the comparison of the two acts suggests something clearly deplorable in the removal of garlands. See Ch. 5.5 for further discussion of this passage.

¹⁹⁰ *MAMA* 514, 516 mention these officials in the cult of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias. Cf. *SEG* 40.926; *CIG* 2782, 2778, 2821-1; Reinach (1906) 29, 37, 54, 69, 71, 80, 88, statue base *inv.* 84-058; *IG* XII, 8, 526, cf. 609 (*anthephoroi* in the cult of Demeter and Kore at Thasis). Cf. Brody (2001) 103; *I Ephesos* Ia no. 27; 14.23; 3.792, 892, 980, 983-4, 989, 993-4; 5. 1655, 1872; 6.2083, 2902; 7.1.3072, for the possible similarity of these roles to those of the *kosmophoroi* at Ephesos, *kleidophoroi* at Lagina and Claros, who care for other accoutrements of the images. Cf. *SIG*³ 422.10 in which honours are awarded to those who watch over the clothes of a statue. Officials in the cults of the Capitoline triad: Feeney (1998) 95-6.

¹⁹¹ See above, n.190 with Fleischer (1978-80) 63-66. The term is particularly well attested at Ephesos.

¹⁹² Paus. 5.16.2: Other examples of this type of regular clothing ritual include: Paus. 3.16.2, 19.2 (Apollo); Paus. 5.16.1-2 (Hera); Plut. *Alc.* 4.87 (Athena); Livy 10.23.3 (Pudicitia or a Roman King?).

the construction of the garment was placed in the hands of specially selected individuals, who would then take part in a larger ceremony of dedication. This is the case, for example, of the image of Hera at Elis, for whom a *peplos* was woven by sixteen specific women, who then led in the celebration of the city's games in honour of the goddess:

“Every fourth year there is woven for Hera a robe by the sixteen women, and the same also hold games called Heraea.”¹⁹³

Other statues seem to have had something approaching a full wardrobe, with apparel that could be changed as appropriate to the occasion, possibly attested to by what archaeologists have identified as clothes racks inside temples.¹⁹⁴ A famous example is the statue of Hercules in the Forum Boarium at Rome, who was clothed in full triumphal garb at times of relevant processions, as described by Pliny:

“The statue in the Cattle Market is said to have been consecrated to Hercules by Evander; it is called the triumphal Hercules, and, on the occasion of triumphal processions, is arrayed in triumphal vestments.”¹⁹⁵

Numerous female deities had not only the wardrobe, but also the official wardrobe mistresses, who changed the clothes of images when necessary and fitting.¹⁹⁶ Certainly several statues seem to have had clothes that did not always cover them, but which were kept for specific occasions.¹⁹⁷ They could also be temporarily or permanently adorned with jewellery, crowns and other fine decoration, not just woven clothing, giving the impression of a complete outfit.¹⁹⁸ This type of dressing and adornment again seems surrounded by the roles of officials and regulations in order to ensure that it is correctly carried out, and combined give the impression of images in need of regular attention.

¹⁹³ Paus. 5.16.2 “οὐ μνημονεύουσι. διὰ πέμπτου δὲ ὑφαίνουσιν ἔτους τῇ Ἡρᾷ πέπλον αἱ ἑξ καὶ δέκα γυναῖκες· αἱ δὲ αὐταὶ τιθέασιν καὶ ἀγῶνα Ἡραῖα”. Tr. Jones et al (1918).

¹⁹⁴ For example in the Temple of Artemis at Brauron, probably dating to the early first-century CE: Dillon (2002) 21-2. For this wardrobe, often termed *kosmos*, see Fleischer (1978-80) 63-66, fig. 1; Plut. *Or.* 852b; Aelian 9.39; Zosimus, 5.41.6.

¹⁹⁵ Pliny *NH* 34.33: “Fuisse autem statuariam artem familiarem Italiae quoque et vetustam, indicant Hercules ab Euandro sacratus, ut produnt, in foro boario, qui triumphalis vocatur atque per triumphos vestitur habitu triumphali” Tr. Rackham (1938). Cf. Serv. *Ad Aen.* 3.407, 8.288; and possibly Macr. 3.6.17. For discussion of the image and the cult of Hercules in Rome see Palagia (2007) 53-5.

¹⁹⁶ See Romano (1988) with *IG V* 2, 265; *IschrCos* ED 32 l. 15; *SIG*³ 422.10; *IGRom* IV 145.

¹⁹⁷ See above, this is also suggested, for example, at Paus. 7.25.9 for an image of Demeter at Bura.

¹⁹⁸ Günther (1988) 215-37; *SIRIS* 510; Ov. *Fast.* 4.133-7.

There are significant variations within this range of clothing interactions, some of which seem to have been a major focus for large-scale rituals. These would certainly have been governed by a set of understood regulations surrounding how the image ought to be clothed and by whom. The latter point was considered to be particularly important, because those who clothed the statue clearly had to remove its previous garment, and essentially see the image ‘naked’.¹⁹⁹ Other clothing rites seem to have been based on the external influences of broader public and civic life, such as events the statues might be expected to attend, and it is known from inscriptions that statues could, for example, be dressed quite extravagantly for specific processions.²⁰⁰ In general, however, they seem to have fallen within an understood category of interactions, and within processes that were widely known, if not very clearly articulated.

A similar variety can be found in the ways in which an image might be washed, bathed or otherwise tended. We know, for example, of some images that were regularly anointed with oil or water, which may have arisen out of necessity as much as ritual.²⁰¹ Plutarch makes this necessity clear in his description of the polishing of the statue of Jupiter on the Capitol:

“But the polishing of the statue is absolutely necessary; for the red pigment, with which they used to tint ancient statues, rapidly loses its freshness.”²⁰²

The notable antiquity of the image is probably significant in its need for care, and given the supposed age of many cult images it seems likely that others were treated with oils for preservation. In many cases we do not know the precise motivation for anointing with oils or

¹⁹⁹ These problems are alluded to at Plut. *Vit. Alc.* 34.1-2: “The Praxiergidae celebrate these rites on the twenty-fifth day of Thargelion in strict secrecy, removing the robes of the goddess and covering up her image.” (δρῶσι δὲ τὰ ὄργια Πραξιεργίδαι Θαργηλιῶνος ἔκτη φθινοτος ἀπόρρητα, τὸν τε κόσμον ἀφελόντες καὶ τὸ ἔδος κατακαλύψαντες.) He refers here to the Plynteria festival at Athens, during which the garments of Athena were removed and ritually cleaned. Access to both temple and goddess were heavily restricted at this time. Cf. Töpffer (1889) 133-6 with Simon (1983) 48-9.

²⁰⁰ *SIG*³ 589.40 (*xoana* of 12 gods adorned in beautiful garments for a procession).

²⁰¹ Luc. *Alex.* 30; Paus. 5.11.9-10, 14.5, 10.24.6. Paus. 9.41.7 suggests that oils are used to prevent the rotting of wood, for this in the creation of images in Greece cf. Petrovic & Petrovic (2003) 183.

²⁰² Plut. *Mor.* 287d: “ῥαθυμεῖν τῶν ἱερῶν; ἡ δὲ γάνωσις τοῦ ἀγάλματος ἀναγκαία· ταχὺ γὰρ ἐξανθεῖ τὸ μίλπινον, ᾧ τὰ παλαιὰ τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἐχρῶζον” Tr. Babbitt (1936).

perfumes, but it is clear the practice was a much-repeated one. That this could change the appearance of statues, as in the case of the Artemis at Ephesus who was blackened from regular anointing, means that these images themselves visually displayed the effects of physical contact over time.²⁰³

Again, there is evidence for the titles of officials who seem to be associated with this particular kind of tending to an image, although it is difficult to tell what precise activities they were associated with. Pausanias, for example, mentions a virgin called a *loutrophon* who is appointed to tend the image of Aphrodite at Sicyon and is one of only two people who may enter her temple.²⁰⁴ These officials are attested in the epigraphic evidence, as are signs that financial dedications could be specifically made to contribute towards the cost of anointing oils, confirming that their function in the tending of images was well known.²⁰⁵ There are myriad examples of tending to images that fall along a broad spectrum, including the mimed combing of hair and the regular painting of images.²⁰⁶ The same treatment appears to have been applied in domestic cult, with these images being anointed by oils and garlanded.²⁰⁷

The bathing of statues was also the focal point of large-scale public rituals for certain cults, complete with regulations for where and when the bathing took place, who was to carry and touch the image and any accompanying rituals, such as sacrificial offerings.²⁰⁸ We do not know a great deal about how bathing or washing a statue might have worked in general, although we have detail for a few specific cases, for some of the most famous rites of antiquity involved this process. The Plynteria and Aphrodisia festival at Athens (typically for that city both well attested in epigraphic evidence) appear to have been governed by detailed regulations, highlighting some of the tensions surrounding the involvement of an image in

²⁰³ Ephesian Artemis blackened from constant anointing with oil: Paus. 4.31.8; Pliny *NH* 16.213-4; cf. Elsner (1998) 204; and the anointing described at Philostr. *Her.* 9.6 has corroded the image, cf. Jones (2001) 144-5.

²⁰⁴ Paus. 2.10.4. The exact meaning of the term is uncertain, and has often been taken to be associated with bathing, although this is not the only possible interpretation. Cf. *LSJ* sv. λουτροφόρος.

²⁰⁵ Officials: *IG* IV 840; *IG* II/III² 1828, 27-30; 5064B; 5072; 4075; *IG* P 6 C 48; *CIL* VIII 620 (= 11796); *ILS* 4908; Lapatin 153, 153; Cf. Pirenne-Delforge (1994); Kahil (1994). Oils: *BGU* 362, 6-8; *Select Papyri* II (1963) 526-31 no. 404.

²⁰⁶ Painting of images: Pliny *NH* 33.111-2 tells us that Jupiter Capitolinus's face was painted red on holidays, cf. Pliny *NH* 35.157. Images at Corinth also apparently had painted red faces: Paus. 2.2.6. Further tending to images: Paus. 2.10.4 (Athena at Sicyon); *IG* V 2, 265 (Kore at Mantinea); *InscrCos* ED 32 L.15 (statues in Kos); see above for officials devoted to tending to images with Reinach (1906) 12, 19/20, 52, 86, 157, 169; *SEG* XVIII 81 and *I. Ephesos* Ia 27, l. 279-84, 540-4 (tending of statues in Ephesus); Julian, *Epist.* 89b.293f. For combing of Juno see Feeney (1998) 95.

²⁰⁷ Tib. 1.7.49-52.

²⁰⁸ E.g. Athenaeus 84C; Strabo 14; Ov. *Met.* 10.270, *Fasti* 4.133 (Aphrodite at Paphos); Athenaeus *Deipn.* 15.672 (Hera at Samos); Paus. 4.33.1-2 (Zeus Ithome); Tac. *Germ.* 40 (Earth).

such close physical contact with its devotees.²⁰⁹ This is possibly in contrast to what may have been more regular washing and cleaning that perhaps rose out of necessity and for which we have far less detailed evidence, but which may have been recognisable to many as a common requirement of cult statues (see fig. 1.1).²¹⁰



Fig. 1.1 Terra cotta relief showing a man bathing a herm.²¹¹

The tensions surrounding large-scale bathing rituals might be indicated in the reach of many of the surrounding regulations. Often images had to be bathed in specific parts of certain waters, such as an image of Aphrodite in the sea at Paphos and images of Earth amongst the tribes of Germania.²¹² This latter ritual had requirements for only one priest to enter the sanctuary and for a procession, after which Earth's clothing and chariot, and perhaps the

²⁰⁹ Plynteria: Töpffer (1889) 133-6 with Simon (1983) 48-9, see above, n.199 for Plut. *Vit. Alc.* 34.1-2. Aphrodisia: Deubner 215-6; Bömer sv. 'Pompa' (1914); *IG* 659; Sokolowski *LS*no.39; Paus. 1.22.3.

²¹⁰ Compare Reinach *RepRel* II 438 no. 3. Villa Borghese VIII and XXXVI both depict satyrs and maenads washing images. This is not obviously a mythical scene, although the attributes of the man might be said to resemble satyrs.

²¹¹ 'Plaque Campana', Paris, Louvre, Cp 4038, first-century CE. The image represents a herm with a male and female devotee (the male could perhaps be a satyr) perhaps adorning, making a non-blood comestible offering or bathing the image, but it is not clear enough to discern precisely. Cf. Von Rohden and Winnefeld (1911) pl. CXXXIX.1.

²¹² Aphrodite at Paphos: Strabo, 14; Ovid, *Met.* 10.270, *Fasti* 4.133; Athenaeus, 84C; Earth: Tac. *Germ.* 40, cf. Nilsson (1906) 48, 255-6. Kahil (1994) suggests that parts of the sea, in particular, might have been chosen because it was more powerful in terms of cleaning/purifying the image. The archaeological evidence at Paestum suggests there might have been a specially constructed area for bathing the image of Venus there, cf. Greco & Theodorescu (1987) 41-62, fig. 71; Pedley (1990) 121-3.

goddess herself, are bathed in a secret lake by slaves who immediately drown.²¹³ Pausanias describes another image, that of Zeus Ithome, which rather than requiring bathing in a certain location, demands that water be brought from a specific spring to clean it.²¹⁴ Images also seem to need to be bathed by specially qualified individuals, a consequence of the need for the statue to be unadorned and touched for the washing to be carried out.²¹⁵ For example, Ovid's description of the bathing of Venus at Rome suggests that only brides and mothers could perform the rites:

“Perform the rites of the goddess, Roman brides and mothers,
And you who must not wear the headbands and long robes.
Remove the golden necklaces from her marble neck,
Remove her riches: the goddess must be cleansed, complete.”²¹⁶

When bathing formed a highlight of the festive calendar for a particular cult, it might also be surrounded with additional rites and dramatisation, including the calling out of the image from its temple and sacrificial offerings.²¹⁷ The rites of the Aphrodisia included the processing of images in addition to their washing and adornment.²¹⁸ These individual instances suggest that this type of interaction was governed by understood rules surrounding how they should take place across a number of cults.²¹⁹ Even anointing that appears to be carried out by the general devotee (rather than a religious official) may have had some restrictions: only women and young girls were permitted to anoint the Segestan Diana with perfumes.²²⁰

²¹³ Tac. *Germ.* 40. The deity's local name was Nertham, but is termed Mother Earth by Tacitus. It is hard to tell in this passage if there is a full anthropomorphic representation or if the chariot and clothing combine as aniconic symbols of the deity. The drowning of those who wash her is unusual, dramatic, and mysterious, appearing to occur at the deity's instigation rather than by human hand. This perhaps indicates again the tensions over seeing a 'naked' image.

²¹⁴ Paus. 4.33.1-2.

²¹⁵ See above for the Plynteria and Aphrodisia at Athens. The image of Zeus at Olympia was tended to only by specially selected men, Paus. 5.14.5. One such *phaidrunten* is attested in a second-century CE inscription from a statue base at Olympia: *Olympia* V 466; Lapatin 153.

²¹⁶ Ov. *Fasti* 4.133: “Rite deam colitis, Latiae matresque nurusque / et vos, quis vittae longaue vestis abest. / aurea marmoreo redimicula demite collo, / demite divitias: tota lavanda dea est.” Tr. Kline (2004).

²¹⁷ This is certainly known for early Greek practices (Callim. *Hymn* 5.33, 53, 100-1, 136-41), and is possible for later ones (e.g. Töpffer, (1889) 133-6; Sokolowski, *LS* no.15).

²¹⁸ Deubner 215-6; Bömer *RE* 21 sv *Pompa* (1952); Paus. 1.22.3; *IG*² 659; Sokolowski *LS* no. 39.

²¹⁹ For bathing rituals in the ancient world generally, although more focused on Greece, see Pirenne-Delforge (1994); Kahil (1994).

²²⁰ Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.77.

Even instances of anointing of images that are mentioned in our sources for being unusual seem to remain ruled by an understanding of how they ought to take place. Initiates of the mysteries of Kronos may have sprinkled his statue with the blood of the sacrificial victim in a complicated ritual setting that would have required clear understanding of the necessary actions.²²¹ This type of anointing sounds unusual, although might have been a practice found in the worship of other gods. Jupiter Latis at Rome was said to have received similar worship, although the evidence is problematic and comes largely from later Christian authors who may have been more focused on hinting at barbarism than aiming for authenticity.²²² In magical practices the image could also be bathed and anointed in various ways in order to imbue it with divine powers and specific skills, but again these processes are less clear.²²³

Whilst this is clearly a fairly general survey of the types of interaction possible, it should demonstrate variety, not only in what was dedicated or done to the image, but also in how this was done and on what scale. The adornment of images could be very personal, as is surely indicated by the individual offerings of locks of hair on the statue in Aesclepius's sanctuary at Titane, and by the affordable simplicity of the garlands covering Ino.²²⁴ Moments of adornment could also be very private for both mortal and image, as it was often only performed by certain individuals and not in the presence of devotees in general.²²⁵ Conversely bathing or adornment could be the most famous rite associated with a particular statue, performed at certain times of year as part of a much larger religious festival.²²⁶

Awareness of these interactions is fairly widespread in modern scholarship, and in general their frequency allows them to form a backdrop to the more enigmatic and dramatic aspects such as sacrifice and processions in modern studies. Certainly the appearance and bathing of a usually concealed deity might be dramatic also, but the combined frequency of the interactions is itself important. It has been noted that the nature of the evidence makes it

²²¹ Justin, *Apol.* 2.12.5. Cf. Grant (1981) 169-70; Versnel (1993) 211-6.

²²² For discussion see Versnel (1993) 211-6 and Rose (1927) 273-9. The ancient evidence is complex and almost certainly corrupt, but see: Just. *Apol.* 2.12.5; Theoph. *Ad Aut.* 3.8; Tat. *Or.* 29.1; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.21.3; Athan. *Gent.* 25; Porph. *Abst.* 2.56.9; Eus. *Laud. Const.* 13.8; Firm. Mat. *Err. Prof. Rel.* 26.2; Prud. *Symm.* I.396; Tert. *Apol.* 9.5.

²²³ E.g. *PGM* VII.878.

²²⁴ Paus. 2.2.6; Paus. 3.26.1-2; cf. the very personal offering of garlands implied at *CP* 50. Hair being left as an offering is implied for the temple at Hierapolis in Lucian's account (*DDS* 60); at Troezen the offering of hair mentioned by Pausanias may or may not be directly to an image (Paus. 2.32.1) and the same is true of Berenice's offering at Catullus, *Odes* 66.

²²⁵ As indicated by the existence of officials to maintain the images' upkeep.

²²⁶ This appears much more common in the Greek speaking parts of the Empire, see above, p53 with notes.

difficult to draw conclusions about the meanings or details of each individual interaction, but their routine nature and constant presence remains more than a backdrop. This type of interaction demonstrates that there was nothing unusual in getting close to these images, touching some of them and watching others be touched. This regular, seemingly mundane, interaction is a fundamental aspect of a world in which devotees and gods/their images had a frequently tactile relationship.

The decorating, clothing, anointing and bathing of images also pose some of the questions at the heart of this thesis, which can be reduced, very simply, to: what was it all for? Given that statuary is made of inanimate matter, which has neither temperature nor dress sense, what purpose does clothing serve? We are told more than once by ancient sources that cult statues do not need to be highly decorative or ornate, so there is no obvious point in adornment from an aesthetic perspective.²²⁷ It is not that there must be a hidden meaning in these interactions, but we should be wary of assuming that there is no meaning at all and that this is simply ‘empty ritual’. There is no logical explanation for why cult statues, or indeed the gods themselves, would need ribbons, locks of hair, elaborate wardrobes, garlands of flowers or bathing in the sea, and so some questions must at least be asked as to why this happened so often.

1.3 Dress codes: the symbolism of decoration and bathing

The potential for symbolism in these interactions is abundantly clear, particularly in those examples that form part of large-scale public ritual. The cult image as focal point in processions and bathing rites can easily be seen as symbolic of the divine, a visual signifier of the recipient of devotion and all its related activities. How this symbolism might work in a precise sense is a rather more complicated matter, and a number of scholars of ancient ritual in general have posited their own suggestions.²²⁸

The concept of the image as the focal point of cult, an ‘earthly manifestation’ of the deities themselves, allows for heavy symbolic investment in the image through the caring activities

²²⁷ There are many passing indications of this in the ancient sources, e.g. Pliny 34.16; 35.45, explaining that simple images of clay or wood are equally as important as grander statues in religious terms; Similar sentiments are expressed at Ov. *Fast.* 1.201-2; Paus. 5.17.1-2; Prop. *Eleg.* 4.1A, 5-8.

²²⁸ Cf. Shorter (1996) on the symbolism inherent in all ritual; Bourque (2000); Burkert (1983); Durand (1989).

of clothing, washing, anointing and so on.²²⁹ The very practical aspects of Roman religious systems demanded that the worshipper be visible for their devotion, and this clear demonstration of cultivation of the image can be seen as a visual display of cultivation of the deity by proxy.²³⁰ This does not allow for the image to be elided with the deity as such, but lets the image represent the deity in more associative terms; it acknowledges the absence of divinity in the image through its earthly representation, and the whole process is symbolic of a much larger and more complex relationship between men and the gods.

Along these lines we find suggestions that the image is involved in these clothing and bathing rituals as part of its being tied into the process of urban life.²³¹ That the image joins the populace in dressing for the occasion, that it forms a spectacle in its revelation from a temple and procession to a bathing place, or that it visibly receives the gifts of garments bestowed upon it, suggests its activity in civic life, and this in turn suggests the activity, or at the very least the concerned interest, of the god.

There are further semiotic interpretations of these types of interactions, in particular those that are associated with a specific type of behaviour.²³² Hence many scholars have found an element of purification in rituals of bathing and washing, a concept that is neither improbable nor provable.²³³ There is a natural mental association between washing and purifying, but it is only rarely attested in sources of the Roman period as a clear reason for bathing an image.²³⁴ Some images required washing should they be subject to transgressive interactions, and it seems that this in particular did have a purificatory motive.²³⁵ Others have posited a

²²⁹ 'Earthly manifestation': Romano (1988) 127. An interesting contrast is in many Near Eastern temples where reliefs, rather than free-standing sculpture, were the object of devotion, clearly making such attentions impossible, cf. Drijvers (1990) 73.

²³⁰ Romano (1988); cf. Julian, *Epist.* 89b.293f. For the performative or practical aspects of the religions of the Roman world generally, see Scullard (1981); Versnel (1993); North (1992).

²³¹ Elsner (1998) 205; Feeney (1998). For more detailed notes on the associations of myths with image rituals see Ch. 3.2; 3.3 with bibliography.

²³² Cf. Peirce (1931) 274-80.

²³³ Bathing and washing of images as purification: Simon (1983); Romano (1988); Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 15.672 does seem to suggest a purificatory motive, although it is not easy to tell if only one part of this tripartite ritual (washing, feeding and binding) serves this purpose. The evidence collected at Linant de Bellefonds *ThesCRA* sv 'Nettoyage et entretiens, bain, aspersion, onction' suggests that this might have more founding in the Greek evidence than in that of the Roman world. Compare the ancient Babylonian evidence for washing rituals as animating divine images: Dick (1999).

²³⁴ For example, Plut. *Mor.* 279A implies purification by association, but does not expand. See Ch. 3.2 for the full text. See also above, n.202; n.233.

²³⁵ Dio 48.43.4-5 says this is the case to purify an image after a poor omen; Tac. *Ann.* 15.44 tells us that the statue of Juno on the Capitol was bathed along with other expiatory rituals after the fire at Rome under Nero; it is not clear that there is an automatic link between expiatory and purificatory here. Other examples of this again

reinvigoration associated with these rituals, whereby the washing restores the image and renews its power.²³⁶ There is scant evidence to suggest that there was any one specific ‘meaning’ behind any one washing or bathing rite, let alone a homogenous understanding of *all* such rites. This is not, of course, to suggest that the interpretations of purification or renewal were not possible, but it is difficult to argue convincingly that either of these was generally the primary motivation.

A similar problem is encountered in the assumption that the image of Hercules in the Forum Boarium puts on triumphal regalia for the processions of victorious generals to show the support of the god for the victory.²³⁷ There is a very natural logic to this interpretation, and again there is no real need to suggest it is wrong as such, yet there is very little real evidence to support it. Other images were paraded in triumphal celebrations themselves, which is presumably a rather more active demonstration of support.²³⁸ Like all gods, Hercules was a complex character in mythical tradition, and if assumption for motives is to be made, a wish to challenge a general or simply join the party might be equally valid.²³⁹ This is not meant to be overly flippant, but to demonstrate the point that if we are to assume symbolism in these activities, we automatically assume something towards which the signs point or symbols represent. This is a process that must be treated with great caution, for there is no certainty that our assumptions about the most logical interpretation equate to those of the devotees of the Roman world. In the absence of much clear evidence for what this was intended to be, the modern scholar perhaps assumes too much in attempting to discern what is symbolised with any certainty.

Indeed, the vast range of interactions means that at least some will defy symbolic assessment in any meaningful way. Why do some images prefer locks of hair to ribbons? Why does Jupiter on the Capitol have his face painted red?²⁴⁰ The list would evidently go on. It is entirely possible, indeed fairly probable, that many individuals associated a number of layers

come from the earlier Greek world, e.g. Eur. *Iph. T.* 1039-1045. Cf. Dio 60.13.1-3 in which Augustus’s image is moved so that it cannot see the bloodshed of Claudius’s executions.

²³⁶ Linant de Bellefonds *ThesCRA* sv ‘Nettoyage et entretiens, bain, aspersion, onction’ 421.

²³⁷ Cf. Palagia (2007).

²³⁸ See Ch. 3.2.

²³⁹ For the mythical and literary traditions of Hercules see Galinsky (1972); Bayet (1926). Triumphs are also presented in literature as a celebration of the gods’ support in wars, so the presence of their images might also represent this overtly religious aspect of the celebration, cf. Livy 38.48.14-15; 45.39.13 with Davies (2004) 136f; Versnel (1987); Philips (1974).

²⁴⁰ See above, n.202.

of meaning with the clothing and bathing of images of the gods, and we are never likely to have access to that information. The sources are, as ever in understanding religious motivations, relatively mute on this point.

It is difficult to argue strongly for any one metaphorical understanding of any given ritual, although perhaps those associated with well-known myths might be easier to interpret in this light.²⁴¹ Some interactions of dressing and washing are suggested by modern and ancient authors to have some association with myths attached to a specific cult.²⁴² Efforts to firmly elide myth and ritual practice are notoriously rife with difficulties, not least because it is generally impossible (and not necessarily helpful) to know whether myth precedes ritual or vice versa.²⁴³ There is also a tendency amongst some writers to conflate versions of myths, or to attribute meaning from myth where this is not necessarily the case. The image of the Mother of the Gods, for example, was annually washed in the Almo, near Rome, and *might* be associated with such a ritual because of the tale of her arrival into the city by river.²⁴⁴ The association is not automatic, however, for there is no mention of washing it on arrival in any of the extant versions of the tale.²⁴⁵

There is a practical difference between large-scale public rituals and individual dedications in terms of understanding what was meant by the decorating and washing of images. Those instances of washing that took place behind closed doors, at the hands of a religious official, can again be seen to broadly symbolise the cultivation of the deity on behalf of its devotees, but any more detailed assessment of its meaning would be problematic, given the restrictions of the evidence. The gifts of garlands, crowns, coins, ribbons and hair from the general devotee can also serve this broad purpose, demonstrating devotion and bringing the deity into the material world through the image. With these instances in particular, however, a symbolic reading does not seem quite enough. There is no explanation of why an image should receive this dedication rather than that, or, importantly, what the image has to do with it at all. Many

²⁴¹ This is quite common for images that have a provenance myth attached to them, for these see Ch. 3.3 p136f.

²⁴² The anointing of Kronos with blood, for example, has been suggested as associated with the myth of him eating his children, see above, n.221 and n.222; the rituals surrounding Samian Hera probably included bathing, and this was connected to a myth of her image being stolen by pirates, see Ch. 3.3 for full discussion of this, with Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 15.672.

²⁴³ See above, n.239.

²⁴⁴ For the ancient sources for, and modern discussion of, this myth and the rituals of this image, see Introduction.ii; Ch. 3.3.

²⁴⁵ Full discussion is in Ch. 3.3, but see, for example, Ov. *Fast.* 4.255f.

other votives never touched the image, and their proper place was in the sanctuary or temple of the god, so why should clothes and adornments be any different?

The interactions must also be placed within the context of the overall relationship between devotees and gods, and indeed between gods, devotees and statues. The need for these practices to take place within certain parameters strengthens a suggestion that correctly performing them is meant to serve a purpose. The genuine need for these interactions to form part of relationships with the gods must place them in a more or less literal light at some times.

1.4 Dressing to impress? The literal potential of adornments and ablutions

Whilst the possible symbolic meanings of interactions in which images were adorned and bathed are both multiple and important, there are undeniable problems with leaving the explanations for such behaviour at that. Firstly, there are demonstrable practical reasons for at least some of these interactions; images did, after all, need to be looked after in a very real sense. Secondly, it is still not really clear from such interpretations what the interactions were supposed to achieve, symbolically or not.²⁴⁶ That is, an understanding of what effect the visually signified support of Hercules might have on a triumphal general (or indeed on Hercules), or why a god might in some way be impressed by such treatments of its representation. Finally, and crucially for the understanding of the role of the image in religions of the Roman world, these interpretations allow for a very narrow interpretation of the perception of the cult image. There may well have been devotees to whom the image was a focal point and a symbol of the absent deity, but as we have seen from the earlier assessment of the possible understandings of what a cult image was, this evidently cannot be the case for everyone.²⁴⁷ It is equally valid, therefore, to consider what these interactions might mean if the image is accepted to have the potential to be more than an image.

The practicalities of maintaining cult statues for worship are of note at this point because, unlike many other aspects of physical interactions with images, there are secular and practical reasons for at least cleaning, and possibly clothing, them. The antiquity of many cult images

²⁴⁶ For the assumption that ritual interactions are motivated by the desire to achieve something, see Spiro (1966) 106-7.

²⁴⁷ See Introduction.ii esp. p37.

was a matter of pride amongst those who worshipped them, and during the Roman period some images were believed to be so old they had been made by Daedalus or sent by the gods themselves.²⁴⁸ In a very literal sense, then, images had to be very carefully tended, primarily in terms of being cleaned and kept safe.²⁴⁹ It is unlikely that such important maintenance would be left to casual or occasional cleaning, and we are told specifically that some images physically benefited from human treatment. Pausanias refers to the oil kept in the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, the water sprinkled on the Parthenos on the Acropolis at Athens and the water cistern under the image of Aesclepius at Epidaurus as serving preservation purposes.²⁵⁰ Given the existence of religious officials whose titles appear to relate them to the tending of the image, attested in literary and epigraphic evidence, it seems likely that the practical maintenance of the image was the responsibility of specific individuals with specialist religious knowledge.²⁵¹ Whether these were the same activities as those of publicly performed ritual is not clear, but care for the image outside of the ritual setting would still be regulated and carefully carried out; the image remained a cult image, and had to be treated in the appropriate manner.²⁵²

The clothing of images is perhaps a different matter, for images do not need clothes in the same way that they might need to be cleaned or oiled. However, if they were to be clothed, the garments would certainly need replacing, and again this could surely not be left to luck and chance. The ritualised creation and dedication of garments may have had broader, more complex associated meanings, but it surely also served the practical purpose of replacing an old item.²⁵³ Given the specific requirements for the carrying out of most dedications, including knowledge of the correct prayers and sacrifices, it would presumably be safest to

²⁴⁸ For the importance of provenance narratives and their relation to cult images see Ch. 3.3. For the sentiment that antiquity of images was more important than their aesthetic or material value, see Pliny *NH* 34.34; 35.157-9; Prop. *Eleg.* 4.1A, l. 5-8.

²⁴⁹ For concerns over the safety of images see Ch 3.4; 5.3; 5.5.

²⁵⁰ Paus. 10.24.6; 5.11.10-11. Cf. 5.14.5 on the officials who clean the Olympian Zeus, said to be the descendants of Pheidias. For the specific treatment required by chryselephantine statues see Lintant de Bellefonds, *ThesCRA* sv 'Nettoyage et entretien, bain, aspersion, onction' 420. Pliny, *NH* 15.32 suggests an image of Saturn at Rome has the same treatment to preserve the ivory.

²⁵¹ See above, n.190 and n.191.

²⁵² For regulations on the maintenance of cult images see: Chaniotis (1997) 261 no. 21; *SEG* 42.1833. In the Imperial cult, see Price (1984) 188ff.

²⁵³ Romano (1988) suggests that the clothing did, at its early stages, serve the practical purpose of hiding old and poor quality craftsmanship, cf. Kauffmann-Samaras & Szabados, *ThesCRA* sv 'Vêtements, parures' 428.

also associate the giving of clothing to an image with the activities of qualified religious officials.²⁵⁴

Aside from the practical need for images to be cultivated for survival, these images also had a literal role in human relationships with the divine. Whether the rituals of interaction were symbolic or not, the religions and gods were certainly not, and these attempts to adorn and bathe images needed to form some function within those religions.²⁵⁵ There does not need to be one clear understanding of the meaning of a ritual for this to be the case. The purpose can be as broad as to impress the divine, or to contribute to what has been called the transactional aspect of Roman religious systems, by providing offerings in return for answered prayers.²⁵⁶ That is to say, whether or not the image itself is symbolic, relationships between mortal and divine need to be maintained.

If this is so, there is a clear implication that the gods have invested enough interest in their cult images to be affected by what is done to them. This need be in no more of a literal sense than that they are pleased when their images are treated well, and angered when they are not.²⁵⁷ Unless we are to posit that this complex of dedications of all kinds, clothing, washing, anointing and painting is all for the benefit of mortals, there must be some implication in these activities that the gods care about what happens to their cult statues. Like many aspects of Roman religions, the explanations are not laid out clearly for us in the ancient evidence, but the hints are certainly there. There are boundaries to how gifts ought to be made to images, and indeed to who ought to touch them at all, and some types of gift are properly kept at a distance from the cult statue, remaining near or in the temple.²⁵⁸ These are not arbitrary rules, for the evidence also makes it clear that when the proper interaction does not happen, or the improper interaction does, relationships with the divine are negatively affected.²⁵⁹ What remains is the question of how these interactions ought to be understood if indeed the image was at times completely elided with the deity by any given devotee.

²⁵⁴ For the regulations surrounding religious rituals in general, and the dangers of getting them wrong, see Ch. 5.5.

²⁵⁵ This is not to dispute that some may have seen these events as purely symbolic, but to argue that where belief existed, so too did thought about what interactions with images meant. For this see Introduction.ii. For this in relation to Greek sculpture see Donohue (1988) 60f.

²⁵⁶ For the transactional nature of Roman religions, and the request formulation of most prayers, see Ch. 2.2.

²⁵⁷ For divine reactions to the mistreatment of images see Ch. 4.4; 5.5.

²⁵⁸ See Ch. 6.3.

²⁵⁹ See above, n.252. Also Ch. 5.5.

These dedications and interactions can only serve any purpose in relationships with the divine if the gods have a vested interest in the way their images are treated and the way the images behave. This could be explained as simply an impression that the way man treats the images of his gods is indicative of the way he regards the gods. In this respect, the interaction is a kind of indirect communication. The devotee does not communicate through the image to the god, but displays his devotion through treatment of the image, which is as much a focal point in these rituals for the divine as it is for the mortal. The passage of Julian discussed previously, with regards to matters of definition, articulates the sentiment well, explaining the need for men to have material representations of the divine and to worship them in order to ensure good relationships with the gods.²⁶⁰ He follows those thoughts with the following statement:

“For just as those who make offerings to the statues of the emperors, who are in need of nothing, nevertheless induce goodwill towards themselves thereby, so too those who make offerings to the images of the gods, though the gods need nothing, do nevertheless persuade them to help and to care for them.”²⁶¹

The deity therefore appreciates the devotion, and the relationship continues on a stable path. It will be clear from later discussion of other interactions, such as prayer, that some treatments of cult statues suggest that the gods ought to be paying attention to the image or to those in its vicinity.²⁶² If the statue is a focal point for the deity (or a vessel for it), it is possible that the purpose in the mortal attentions towards it is to demonstrate due care on the part of the devotee and to ensure the same from the gods.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Julian, *Epist.* 89b.293A. See Introduction.i.a for the full text and further discussion.

²⁶¹ Julian, *Epist.* 89b 293C: “Ὡςπερ γὰρ οἱ τῶν βασιλέων θεραπεύοντες εἰκόνας, οὐθὲν δεομένων, ὅμως ἐφέλκονται τὴν εὐνοίαν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς, οὕτως καὶ οἱ θεῶν θεραπεύοντες τὰ ἀγάλματα, δεομένων οὐθὲν τῶν θεῶν, ὅμως πείθουσιν αὐτοὺς ἐπαμύναι σφίσι καὶ κήδεσθαι.” Tr. Wright (1913) Cf. *Epist.* 296B-C on the need to cultivate images of the gods for relationships with the divine.

²⁶² See Ch. 2.2.

²⁶³ The reciprocity is directly suggested in Luc. *Philops.* 18ff, in which an image is repaid for its healing of devotees with coins fastened to its thighs. Cf. Boardman (1954) 183-201.

The symbolic and the broadly communicative interpretations of these interactions are not complete answers.²⁶⁴ The public rituals and the cultic settings work too hard to evoke the presence of the deity to prevent us taking the literal interpretation further. Literal assessments of interactions with cult statues can be difficult ground, for they require a greater cognitive leap than that suggested so far; attempting to understand if there is a more practical meaning behind the clothing and bathing of images might be challenging, but is certainly worthwhile in an effort to clarify the full scope of possible perceptions that such interactions imply.

It has already been explained that, at least for some, the cult image of the god was on some level elided with that which it represented. One of the only apparently theoretical explanations for the type of interactions discussed here is the comment of Arnobius cited in the Introduction, who worshipped stones with oil because of the power that he believed to reside in them.²⁶⁵ Devotion is shown to the stone because of this power, and in the same way this motivation for worshipping images is criticised in Christian authors of similar date.²⁶⁶

The possibility for the elision of cult image with god has led some to compare the clothing and washing of these statues with the treatment of dolls, and to criticise the child-like (or primitive) tendency to imbue representations of gods with divine qualities.²⁶⁷ On the one hand, the comparison seems a fairly natural one: the ‘dressing up’ of inanimate objects does, as an act alone, imply that the person doing so has attributed animate qualities to it, and the example of children and dolls is one with which most are intimately familiar. Indeed, so too were the inhabitants of the Roman world and the ancient critics of this treatment of cult statues.²⁶⁸ In terms of its application to religious systems and the images within them, however, the notion of childishness or primitivism is unworkable, and if the images were indeed treated as being able to directly benefit from clothing and washing, and if they were to some extent equated with the god, another explanation for why this was so must be sought.

²⁶⁴ For the risks of explaining ritual as communication, see Bourque (2000) 21-4.

²⁶⁵ Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.* 1.39. See Introduction I.ii, p29. Cf. Luc. *Alex.* 30.

²⁶⁶ See Introduction p29-30.

²⁶⁷ Clerc (1915) 16: ‘Ils ont plus d’analogie avec des poupées que des enfants soignent et habillent’. For primitivism and the belief in animate qualities in anthropomorphic images, see Boyer (1996) 87-9.

²⁶⁸ E.g. Lucilius, fr. 484-9 (Marx) (=Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.22.13) with Feeney (1996) 93; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 2.4.12. For dolls in antiquity see de Solla Price (1964). For the use of dolls in ritual see McElderkin (1930) 455-6; 475: that they may have been dedicated to images of household gods perhaps strengthens the suggestion that they were ideologically very different artefacts. Dolls have the obvious difference of not representing a referent, perhaps acting more as a mirror for those who play with them, cf. Bettini (1999) 219.

Anthropologists of religions in general, and of religious images in particular, have long grappled with issues of anthropomorphic representation and the treatment of images as though they are themselves divine or in some way alive.²⁶⁹ In essence, the treatment of statues as though they have the needs of living things, indeed the needs of intelligent living things that will benefit more from this dress than another, say, demands a certain amount of explanation. Although the evidence for the motivations behind washing and clothing rituals in the Roman world is scant, the actions themselves suggest that this behaviour fits within a broader tendency to imbue the image with animate qualities through the fact of the actions themselves.²⁷⁰ There is no consensus as to why or how this perception of cult statues happens, but it is clear from the study of cultures of any time and place, that it does happen, whether in a religious setting or not.

Early arguments suggested that the basis for this was indeed childish, or based on a primitive and unsophisticated understanding of the world. The general premise of this argument follows the line that infants believe their dolls to be alive, in the same way that some cultures believe their representations of the divine to be alive.²⁷¹ This argument has become more sophisticated over time, and Guthrie has laid out a complex explanation of levels of understanding that allow for projections of inferences onto representations of the divine that enforce interpretations of what is perceived in that image. The inferences are important because, as Guthrie suggests, some features of that which is alive cannot easily be expressed in physical terms, but require an additional level of conceptual structure.²⁷² Essentially, it is hard to articulate what it is that makes something alive, for many things can move, speak, and look like living things, but do not have some intangible but innate quality of life. According to this argument, if an image looks and behaves like something alive, it can be 'mistaken' to be so.

In contrast, Boyer suggests that this cannot be supported from a psychological perspective. Much of the earlier theorising around a primitive 'misunderstanding' of the nature of images is based on comparison with children, and there is little evidence to suggest that children

²⁶⁹ E.g. Guthrie (1993); Gell (1998); Boyer (1996) see further below.

²⁷⁰ For the scholarly history of this see, for example, Gell (1998); Guthrie (1993); Boyer (1996).

²⁷¹ See Clerc (1915) above n.267.

²⁷² Guthrie (1993)

make this ‘mistake’ at all.²⁷³ Boyer argues that such a theory is complicated by linguistic barriers: a young child may very well know the difference between that which is alive and that which is not, but will lack the language to explain this for quite some time.²⁷⁴ Developmental psychology, then, contributes the possibility that there is not necessarily a ‘misunderstanding’ taking place when an individual attributes life to a cult image, or indeed to other inanimate thing.²⁷⁵ Instead, that which is ontologically counter-intuitive can very much be believed in the context of religious systems, without it being a fundamental category mistake about the way that the world works; it is possible to believe that a statue will benefit in some way from clothing at the same time as knowing that statues in general cannot.²⁷⁶

For the historian of the religions of the Roman world, this makes a lot of sense. Suggestions (now treated for the most part as severely out of date) that these devotees fundamentally mistook the images for the gods have never sat comfortably with our understanding of the rest of the Roman world.²⁷⁷ This has in turn led to a discomfort with the notion of these interactions having any possible literal interpretation. Although it is clear that many now see that the potential existed for the image to be believed to be deeply powerful and divine, it is how this was played out, and how it fits into the relationships formed with cult images that is of interest here.

Although it does not mean that all those who washed and clothed images literally took them to be alive, it does create a space for those who did. It also allows for the seemingly unnecessary aspects of this type of action in literal terms, the dressing up of wood and stone and the garlanding of inanimate heads. The physicality of these interactions undeniably pull something of the image into the living world, and allow the god to be part of a real and tangible relationship as well as part of the broader, perhaps more complex, one. Treating images as though they have animate needs implies heavily that they do, and that they therefore have some element of animism, and this type of interaction falls clearly within this category.²⁷⁸

²⁷³ This is quite apart from the obvious problems with comparing children of the modern era to adults of the past.

²⁷⁴ Boyer (1996) 87. Cf. Bullock (1985).

²⁷⁵ Common comparisons include, for example, the tendency to attribute sentiment to machinery or technology.

²⁷⁶ For the potential for a multiplicity of beliefs held simultaneously in the religions of the Roman world, and the ways in which this understanding directly impacts upon our understanding of image interactions, see discussion of King (2003) at Introduction.ii p37-9.

²⁷⁷ See, for example, Poulsen (1945) discussed more fully in Ch. 2.3, 2.4.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Stewart (2005) 261f; Gross (1992).

These potential interpretations of why images were clothed and bathed must remain broad and tentative at present, because the evidence simply is not there to argue that a belief that either the image was divine, these interactions were symbolic or that they improved human-divine relationships, motivated such treatment. However, washing and adorning form part of a much larger, and much more complex language of interactions, many of which do point towards this literal elision (partial or complete).²⁷⁹ In addition, it is precisely this sort of interaction that made such elision possible: an image that is so revered as to have women spend an entire year weaving its clothes, or is so valuable as to have only the children of Pheidias permitted to clean it, is one that is placed in a cultural position that allows it to be equated with a god.²⁸⁰

It is worth noting the cumulative effect of the different types of interactions in terms of their literal interpretation. It can be difficult to empathise with a devotee who believes an image to be a god, simply because he is placing ribbons or oil on it, or presenting it with clothes. Several of the large-scale public rituals would have been quite literally ‘performed’, and we know of at least some instances in the Greek-speaking parts of the Empire when the statue was called for to come out of its *cella* for bathing, and of huge processions carrying a garment to an image.²⁸¹ Similarly, an image within its temple or sanctuary setting was surrounded with accoutrements and an atmosphere that was designed to evoke the divine.²⁸² These settings both contributed to, and were impacted by, decorations and rituals of clothing or bathing, and it is valuable to remember that outside of the pages of those inclined to write about them, the interactions of washing and adorning may have felt rather more tangibly alive.

1.5 Conclusions on the adornment and ablution of cult statues

²⁷⁹ The same context exists whether the image is seen as temporarily elided with the deity or as a direct channel of communication with it.

²⁸⁰ See above for the references to these particular treatments. I am not, of course, convinced by Pausanias’s genealogy of the cleaners of the Olympian Zeus, but with so many of these images it is the story told that counts, rather than the ‘truth’ behind it.

²⁸¹ Cf. Pedrizet (1906) 226; also above, section 2 of this chapter.

²⁸² This is a vague concept, because it is difficult to recreate, but there can be no doubt that those who believed in the gods felt some sense of divine awe when in their temple homes.

There can be no concrete explanation for why cult statues were tended with such a variety of clothing, adornments and bathing. It is certainly possible to hypothesise a number of reasons, and we can provide small samples of evidence for each one, but there is simply no sole answer. This is not entirely an obstacle to understanding them, because the conclusions rely precisely on this variety of explanations, and the possibility that all of them could be equally valid at any one time.²⁸³

That this context of variety is central to an understanding of the religions of the Roman world has been argued with relation to beliefs in these religious systems more generally, and it certainly seems that attempting to stake a claim to *the* interpretation, even a very vague one, would be fundamentally flawed.²⁸⁴ For the adornment and bathing of images this is particularly the case, for it is one of the types of interaction that is so common as to go almost unquestioned in the ancient evidence. It is, however, probably one of the types of interaction with which we are most familiar in the modern West, and indeed even within religions based on dogma and orthodoxy there is not much consensus on the issue. Christian images can be seen adorned with flowers and clothes across much of Europe, incense is offered to images in some churches, and of course many are familiar with the offerings of flowers at graves.²⁸⁵ It is unlikely that if you were to ask any group of our contemporaries why this was done there would be anything approaching a consensus.²⁸⁶

The probability is that many do not theorise about the details or the practicalities very much. In some respects, the technology behind the efficacy of interactions of bathing and adornment of images, and the motivations for these actions, are irrelevant to their taking place. It is clear, however, that there are times at which these aspects of image interactions are discussed and assessed, in antiquity as now. More importantly, they are part of a much bigger picture; not knowing why you treat an image in a particular way does not mean that you do not know what you think about that image. If relationships with cult statues are built out of many sets of physical interactions, some as inexplicable and innocuous as garlanding with flowers,

²⁸³ See King (2003) and Introduction.ii p37-9 on the coexistence of belief sets.

²⁸⁴ King (2003)

²⁸⁵ Not a strictly religious practice, certainly, but the treatment of the dead and of the divine are close in many cultures, particularly where images are concerned, and in the ancient world as well, see, e.g. Bettini (1999) and Vernant (1983). This is not intended to be a direct comparison with the interactions discussed, but in terms of collective understandings should help to illustrate a point.

²⁸⁶ That many were uncertain about there being any reason for adorning images is made clear by Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2 1.59-64 on Vertumnus's image.

others as practical as preserving their materials with oils, then one type of interaction cannot be assessed alone. The treatment of cult images as though they in some way needed decoration and bathing, for whatever reason, meant that to all intents and purposes they *did* need them.

It is perhaps interesting to note the converse of this blurry image; that is, what happens when men dress as gods, or as statues of them.²⁸⁷ Clothing in the Roman world often had an element of symbolism attached to it, which is natural in a society where it could indicate much about your status and personal wealth.²⁸⁸ When men presented themselves as gods (or their images), it was usually unwise, as is indicated by the condemnatory tone used to describe Commodus's appearance as Capitoline Jupiter.²⁸⁹ The Emperor's clothing is perceived as arrogant in the extreme, and by dressing as the god he explicitly attempts to elide himself with it. It does not take much mythological or symbolic analysis to understand his message here, and it is all the more problematic for that. Creating a deeply symbolic spectacle that leaves little room for interpretation does not really have a place in the religions of the Roman world.

²⁸⁷ That costumes relate to statues is clear both from the sources and from the fact that statues were associated with specific dress, whereas gods in general had a rather more varied wardrobe.

²⁸⁸ This is naturally another reason to suspect the clothing of images had symbolic meaning, although it does not help to clarify what that might be. For clothing in ancient Rome generally see Vout (1996) with bibliography.

²⁸⁹ On Commodus's appearance as a god see e.g. Dio 73.1; Herodian, 1.14.8; Fishwick (1987-91) 555; Elsner (1998) 202-3, cf. Price (1984); Gregory (1994) 84-5. Cf. Amm. Marc. 16.10.8-10 on Constantius's statue-like appearance. Of course triumphators could appear in similar guise to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, but in a specific ritualised setting, rather than in general. Cf. Francis (1991) 577; 593; Hekster (2002).

Chapter Two: Talking Heads

2.1 A stony silence? An introduction to speaking with statues

Aside from dedications and maintenance, verbal communications with cult images appear as some of the most common types of interaction in the ancient evidence. This communication could take many forms, from the spoken prayer directed to an image to the hearing of the words of images themselves. In their capacity as listeners or speakers, cult statues take on a very clearly active role, participating in both large-scale public ritual and private worship in a complex and crucial way. These images clearly serve as more than a focal point for devotion or symbolic indicator of the divine in the material world, for their explicit activity means that they must either be elided with (or somehow contain) the gods or be communicated with by them.

The spoken word is not the only context in which images were involved in verbal communication, and they could be written to or on as well as taking a written voice as narrators of poems or through the first person inscriptions on their bases. These written words expand the picture of the cult image as active in verbal interaction through their purposeful elision of deity and image at the same time as casting into the foreground the differences between the two. Poems are, at times, clearly narrated by statues of gods, as distinct from gods themselves, suggesting simultaneously that the image has divine power and that it is not quite the same as its referent. Statues took on another communicative role when they were written upon, not only being the recipient of verbal communication but also being its communicator, presenting visible words to the images' viewers.

These types of interactions also begin to shed light upon the desires and fears of those who worshipped cult statues in the Roman world. The ability of images to speak, for example, was a subject that was to some extent discussed with regards to its plausibility and the religious technology behind it. The consultation of oracular images, the dedication of written votives and the direction of prayers to statues all indicate a desire amongst devotees to hear and be heard, and for the statues to have an active role in their relationship with the divine. Some tried to manipulate images in order to make them speak or otherwise respond to verbal

communication, which reveals a tension surrounding the control of images and their power that is found in other types of interaction.

This variety once more places the cult statue of the Roman world in a context of relatively frequent interactions in which it took a more or less active role. These images were fundamental to human relationships with the divine, and indeed provided one of the principal channels of communication between men and gods. Naturally, some of these interactions do not always involve clear physical contact, but the physical acts of speaking, listening, reading and writing (on the part of the image/god/devotee) remain important. The desires and fears of devotees surrounding the correct modes of interaction with statues show that this is not always ritualised and repetitive action, but a very real aspect of the correct treatment of the gods.

2.2 The listening image

When a devotee, or any mortal, adopted the active role in the relationship of verbal communication with cult images, it could take a number of different forms. The most obvious instance is probably prayer, which did not necessarily require the presence of an image, but which could be performed specifically towards an image of the deity being addressed. A slightly more complex aspect of this is oracular questioning in which an image took on a more clearly active role, whereby the questions to which an oracular response was desired were addressed to the statue, which in turn could respond in various different manners. Oracular questions and prayers did not necessarily have to be spoken aloud to a statue, but could also be written down and delivered to the image, either by placing it nearby, or attaching the material on which supplications were written to the body of the image itself. In addition to these relatively reciprocal processes, written and spoken words could be used to have a direct effect on an image, as in instances whereby magical words could enliven an image. These various forms, whilst often differing in intent and result, have similar implications for the understanding of the interactions that were conceived of as possible, as well as for the expected role that the image itself could play in these interactions. In this section I intend to outline the ways in which human participants could actively communicate with cult images, and to consider some of the ways in which this can be analysed.

Many prayers of the Roman world are known to have been spoken aloud, often in ritual settings, although this was not necessarily the only model for the practice of prayer, and in itself need not imply that an image was present at the prayer. Prayer, as a general concept, has been discussed at some length by modern scholars, and this discussion is limited to instances of spoken prayer that were directly addressed towards an image, and to an understanding of this practice on its own.²⁹⁰ Even within this precise area there are variations: a prayer may be performed aloud in the direction of a deity's image, may be spoken at the same time as performing an offering to an image, and may even be whispered into the statue's ear.²⁹¹ The reasons for the association between an image of a deity and the addressing of prayers may be fairly obvious in some respects, but it also forms the basis for additional types of verbal interaction with images, and so requires some initial attention.

On the simplest level, a devotee might address the image directly whilst performing prayer, either by simply directing his gaze at the image, or by making some formal gesture towards it. A clear example of this can be seen in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, which is not, of course, meant to be factual in its depiction, but which can be read as a reflection of popular religious practices of the time.²⁹² It must also be noted that the novel is consciously not depicting 'Roman' practices as such, but sets itself very clearly in the Greek world. This is not to say, however, that Rome is not 'present in its absence' within the novel, and one might suggest that the act of prayer would be easily recognisable both within and outside of the Greek speaking Eastern provinces.²⁹³ The reason that I have drawn attention to this text is because, of the twelve prayers narrated within the novel, ten are performed in the conspicuous presence of, and in supplication to, the image of the deity being addressed.²⁹⁴ One instance in particular describes the distraught Callirhoe praying to an image of Aphrodite whilst holding up her newborn child to the statue.²⁹⁵ The scene is immediately preceded by group devotional activity in celebration of the child's birth, which was also performed in the presence of the image, and Callirhoe's prayer is intended to be an emphatically personal and desperate gesture, which she performs in the absence of the men who had led the previous

²⁹⁰ For written prayers to images see below, p84-7. For prayer in the ancient world in general see Versnel (1981); Alderink & Martin (1997); Graf (1991).

²⁹¹ Clerc (1915) 11 sees the most common type as individuals prostrating themselves before an image.

²⁹² For Chariton's reflection of popular religion see Delbridge (1997) 171f. The time of writing remains a subject of much debate, and could be anywhere between 50 BCE and 200 CE, cf. Cueva (2000).

²⁹³ Schwartz (2003) 375f.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Delbridge (1997) 172-3.

²⁹⁵ Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 3.8.7.2.

ritual. The prayer is therefore understandably dramatic in gesture and in tone, and the raising up of the infant towards the statue indicates the urgency of the prayer, demanding that her words receive specific attention through this striking act. Although in some respects the desperation of the scene likens it more closely to those instances in which images were sought as places of sanctuary than general depictions of prayer, it is an indicator of how important the presence of the image could be in the psychological processes surrounding prayer and speaking to the gods.²⁹⁶

These basic processes are not difficult to understand on a semiotic level, for it is much the same as that which occurs, for example, when one speaks to a grave stone or an image of an absent friend: the presence of the image acknowledges the actual absence in material terms of the signified, but the signifier (the image, gravestone or similar) allows for an emotional release of tension.²⁹⁷ The application of this idea can certainly be found to have ancient models, especially with regards to images of the deceased, to which Seneca refers when he explains that images are often used as consolation for loss, but are in fact an empty solace, reminding one of absence.²⁹⁸ The significance must be greater, however, when one considers the results that might be expected from prayer as a type of communication. Whilst a definable result is not necessarily implied through the actions of speaking to representations of dead or absent friends, a prayer is part of a process of reciprocity in the Roman world. The standard prayer formulation of antiquity always involves a request, whether it is for a definite action (for example, a request for a successful business transaction), a general positive impact on one's life (success and wealth in business generally), or detrimental effects upon one's enemies (that your neighbour be unsuccessful in his business).²⁹⁹ The request, and with it the implication of perceived actual effects of a prayer, suggest that the perception of the image as a symbolic focal point cannot wholly explain the direction of prayer to a cult statue. Although it could be argued that the significance of the image itself is primarily of importance in this symbolic sense, and that the deity would be expected to 'hear' the prayer regardless of the

²⁹⁶ On embracing, or desiring the presence of, statues for sanctuary see Ch. 4.3. For example: Philostr. *Vit. Apol.* 1.15; Tac. *Ann.* 3.63; Plautus, *Rudens* 2.7.1; within this text: Chariton, 1.7; 2.2.7.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Bettini (1999) 23ff; Corbett (1970) 151. See Vernant (1983) for a discussion of the category of images of the dead in antiquity, especially Greece.

²⁹⁸ Seneca, *Epist.* 40.1. There are several examples of cult-like activities being associated with images of the dead as some sort of consolation for loss, for examples of which see esp. Bettini (1999) 25-38 and Ch. 4.4.

²⁹⁹ On the formulation of ancient prayer, see Versnel (1981) 5f; Alderink & Martin (1997) 123ff; Graf (1991) 188-9. The standard structure is tripartite, with sections addressing the deity, argument and request, and extreme deviations from this basic pattern are rare. The formula normally refers only to the deity, not to the image as a separate entity, cf. Delbridge (1997) 174; van Straten (1974), although more oratory prayers might also praise the image in some way, cf. Krentz (1997) 186.

location of its utterance, this could only stand for some instances of prayer directed towards images, certainly not all of them.³⁰⁰

Lane Fox and Versnel have noted this desire for proximity to a god being reflected in a desire for proximity to a god's image, specifically in relation to prayer in the Roman world, although it is not always clear whether this proximity is to be understood as symbolic rather than actual.³⁰¹ Versnel has also discussed the concept of the ability of the gods to 'hear' prayers that were directed towards them, and notes that some gods were perceived of as more likely to hear prayers uttered in the absence of images or alternative ritual facilitators (such as sacrifice or altars) than others.³⁰² He suggests that the presence of the image is one of the ways in which a devotee might capture a god's attention in order that the prayer will be listened to, serving in some ways a similar function to the multiple name variants often used at the beginning of a prayer, to enhance the probability of the god at least being aware that they are being spoken to.³⁰³ The existence of the epithet *Epekoos*, associated with specific cults, and perhaps with specific images, certainly supports the argument, with active listening being implied in the very name of the image/god.³⁰⁴

It is possible that in the prayers of large-scale public ritual, the direction of prayer towards image was a visible tool with which to communicate across the group of devotees. This is most heavily implied in evidence for the worship of imperial images, which by the fourth century CE had entire complex processes for the manner in which they were welcomed into cities, including the delivery of panegyric by prefects.³⁰⁵ In the broader context of the cult images of the Roman world, it is possible that prayer to an image was a joint process of communication by devotees, as implied by the suggestion in Pausanias that all those praying to the image of Aphrodite at Sikyon (other than two religious officials) did so from outside of her temple.³⁰⁶ Different images could clearly be prayed to, and generally spoken to, in different ways according to the regulations of their cult. It is likely that this applied to

³⁰⁰ For discussions over whether the gods could hear prayers uttered anywhere or whether they had to be in a temple, sanctuary or near an image see Versnel (1983) 28.

³⁰¹ Lane Fox (1986) 130ff, esp. 133; Versnel (1981) esp. 30. For Greece see Burkert (1985) 91-2.

³⁰² Versnel (1981) 28-30.

³⁰³ Cf. Graf (1991) 188f.

³⁰⁴ See below, p80 with n.310 for the evidence for the epithet.

³⁰⁵ E.g. *De Cer.* 1.87; 393, l. 10; 394, l. 7; 395, l. 7. Cf. MacCormack (1981) 68; Bruun (1976) 121-31; Procopius, *Pan.* 1, 29-30; Mammertinus, *Pan. Lat.* 3.11.4.

³⁰⁶ Paus. 2.10.4: "All others are wont to behold the goddess from the entrance, and to pray from that place" (τοῖς δὲ ἄλλοις κατὰ ταῦτα καὶ ὁρᾶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐσόδου τὴν θεὸν καὶ αὐτόθεν προσεὔχεσθαι). Tr. Jones et al (1918).

individual prayers directed to images as to large-scale public ritual, although it is natural that the former may have seemed to be a more direct and personal communication.

These possible perceptions play a significant part in the conceptualisation of the role of the cult statue within prayer processes, but they cannot be the entire explanation, even in the case of straightforward conversation with images that does not require any immediate response. Clearly there was a practical effect intended in some instances of speaking to images, and whether it is an activity visible in the image or not, it is intended to produce real results in the material world.

Whilst the idea of a desire for *proximity* is apparent in some ancient sources regarding prayer to cult statues,³⁰⁷ this is not the whole explanation, for we also encounter the explicit desire to be *heard*. Seneca attributed the practice of whispering prayers into the ear of a god to the hope that it would enable the god to hear the suppliant all the better, explaining that:

“We do not need to uplift our hands towards heaven, or to beg the keeper of a temple to let us approach the idol’s ear, as if in this way our prayers were more likely to be heard”³⁰⁸

Although his description is in the negative, it implies that this is a generally practised idea, and it is one that has its basis in a specific type of prayer attested in other sources. Whispering into the ears of images is known for a number of statues of deities, and whilst the best known is an image of Hermes that is asked oracular questions in this manner, this is not the only type of image to receive prayer delivered in such a format.³⁰⁹ An Aphrodite *Psithuros* (‘The Whisperer’) was apparently so named because it, too, heard prayers when they were whispered into its ear, and the same may be true of a Heros *Psithuros* and a

³⁰⁷ On proximity to the god through prayer to its image see, for example, Augustine, *Civ. Dei*. 6.10, cf. Apul., *Met.* 11.19.1, 24.5, and the desire implied at Tac. *Hist.* 4.82.1.

³⁰⁸ Seneca, *Epist.* 41.1: “non sunt ad caelum elevandae manus nec exorandus aedituus, ut nos ad aurem simulacra, quasi magis exaudiri possimus, admittat”. Hands lifted towards an image are a relatively frequent iconographic tool to denote prayer: Rome, Mus. Naz. Rom. 1037 (idyllic scene at a herm); Corning, Mus. Of Glass 52.1.93 (a herm of Silenus); Arezzo, Mus. Arch. 112 (Venus); Paris, Louvre MA 3444 (MND) 1956 (Diana); Tunis, Bardo A 171 (Diana and Apollo) for bibliography for these images see *ThesCRA* sv. ‘Vénération, prière’ 459-61.

³⁰⁹ Paus. 7.22.2-3. The god responds to the oracular questions through the unusual, and indirect, method of being the first words the suppliant hears after asking their question, having covered their ears until they are some distance away from the image.

Hermes *Psithuros*.³¹⁰ Another relatively common epithet in Greek is *Epekoos* ('The Listener') attested for numerous gods across the Empire, and applied to the late Imperial cult.³¹¹ There is a contrast in the use of these epithets, the former of which (presumably) applies to the action of the devotee and the latter applying to the god. These are not necessarily images that are expected to immediately and physically respond to the prayers, and the action of speech aimed directly into their ears is clearly an essential aspect of their conceptualisation and social function.

The desire to be heard, implicit in all actions of prayer, is explicitly associated with the image in instances that direct the devotee specifically towards the ears: this is not a case of simply being *near* an image, but of speaking directly to it and expecting it to hear and listen.³¹² The image, then, becomes a (or the) vital facilitator in the speaking/being heard process. In a more implicit sense, there are indications made throughout the ancient evidence that unmistakably attribute to images the ability to hear the words that were spoken to them, even when the action of prayer itself might be ambiguous: so Livy is able to relate a moment when Titus Manlius turns to an image of Jupiter, and addresses it with the phrase: 'Hear, O Jupiter, these wicked words!'³¹³ Although it is rare to find any clear statement to the effect that images could hear prayers, the cumulative effect of the evidence is that this was a relatively common perception: images can be described as having heard vows (making them more potent), to demand prayers for divination, and even to benefit from choral entertainment.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ Eustathius, in *Od.* 20.8 for images with the epithet '*Psithuros*'. For these see also Versnel (1981) esp. 27, who also argues that votive ears in sanctuaries may imply praying into an isolated 'ear', intended to be those of the gods. Cf. Sudhaus (1906); Weinreich (1912) 57. Other images into whose ears prayers were spoken include Seneca, *Epist.* 41.1; Paus. 7.22.2-3;; *Oxy. Pap.* 885.22 (3rd Century CE). There may be a comparison here with the epithet '*Kledonios*' (the epithet of the Hermes who answers through the random voices of others notes above), which refers to the form of response of the image, rather than the form of questioning, and is attested for images of Zeus and Herms: see Adler (1921) 584-5.

³¹¹ Epigraphic mentions of the epithet do not always associate it clearly with an image, and might be dedications in thanks for a god having listened to a prayer. Inscriptions: Hoover (2000) 109-10 (Aphrodite *Epekoos*, probably from Syria); Nock (1957) 115; Gordon et al (1997) 239; Fishwick (2002) 130 refers to the epithet possibly used for *Elegabalus*; Nock (1957) 121 suggests this is the only occurrence of this epithet for an emperor, cf. Price (1984) 92. For the comparable use of answering in epithets in the Near East, and the possibility that this was reflected in images with emphasised ears, see Kaizer (2004) 178-9.

³¹² The desire is to some extent implicit in both spoken and silent prayer, the latter of which is not discussed here as it is not related to interactions with cult images. In the ancient world silent prayer is often associated with malice and secretive worship, e.g. Martial, 1.39.5f; Hor. *Epist.* 1.16.59; Seneca *Epist.* 10.5. Cf. Alderink & Martin (1997) 125.

³¹³ Livy, 8.5.7: "Et conversus ad simulacrum Iovis, "Audi, Iuppiter, haec scelera" inquit."

³¹⁴ Hearing and approving vows: Ovid, *Epist.* 20.19-20: "She was present, and overheard your vow; and was seen to give a nod of approbation" (Adfuit et, praesens ut erat, tua verba notavit/ Et visa est mota dicta tulisse coma); Prayers needed to use an image for divination: Paus. 7.25.10 (an image of Herakles at Boura in Achaia, to which prayers are offered prior to divination with dice); Choral displays before images: Plut. *Mor.* 397C and Laumonier (1934) 85 with L.R. *Et. Anat.* (1937) 516 (inscriptions attesting the images at Stratonicea who

Prayer being associated directly with an image does not automatically imply that the image is seen to be playing an active role in the relationship, rather than (merely) serving a psychological and semiotic function. The range of interactions discussed here, however, indicate that the image could potentially be expected to take some active role in the hearing of prayer.³¹⁵ This is particularly clear on occasions when the focus is upon speaking directly into the ears: those parts of the statue that would, if it were not made of inanimate matter, be expected to perform the hearing function.

The importance of the statues' potential ability to hear is highlighted on occasions when images are expected to respond to the words they have listened to, as is apparent for certain oracular images. Whilst the form that the responses of images could take is not uniform, there were several cult statues that were expected not only to hear the questions, but also to listen and essentially reply to them. There are wide-ranging implications to be considered with these images, for often the image was seen to physically respond through movement or sound, making it clear that these statues were at times believed to contain divine life. Initially, however, it is important to consider how the fact of response to the spoken word impacts on our understanding of devotees speaking to images more generally. The responsive image has heard, listened and processed what it has been told prior to making any response, or it has provided some form of conduit through which a god may do so, and this in itself needs some consideration.³¹⁶

One of the best known oracular images of antiquity was that of Zeus Ammon at Siwah, although none of our sources are entirely unambiguous in their description of the form that the image's responses took.³¹⁷ Diodorus tells us that:

“The image of the god is encrusted with emeralds and other precious stones, and answers those who consult the oracle in a quite peculiar fashion. It is carried

receive daily choral hymns in thanks for their miraculous qualities). Further implications that images could hear include Paus. 5.24.9-10, 10.19.3; Tac. *Ann.* 12.22.

³¹⁵ On the varied rituals associated with the act of prayer see Schowalter (1997) 160-1.

³¹⁶ For discussion of statues that speak in response, see below, section 3 of this chapter, and for moving oracular images see Ch.3.5.

³¹⁷ Descriptions of the image: Quint. Curt. 4.7.21-4; Arrian, 3.4.2.

about upon a golden boat by eighty priests, and these, with the god on their shoulders, go without their own volition wherever the god directs their path.”³¹⁸

The image was asked questions on specific occasions and gave answers, although it is not clear whether the answers were given in spoken form, or if the image was believed to move in specifically understood ways to indicate certain types of response, as per the account of Diodorus.³¹⁹ Additional references to the image and its ability to answer oracular questions do not necessarily clarify the form that the responses took, but do seem to agree that it responded, having been directly questioned.³²⁰ The possibility of an image moving in response to questioning is attested elsewhere, for example for a representation of the ‘Hieropolitan God’ (probably Jupiter), a statue that moves of its own accord in indication that it is in a prophetic mode, as well as in answer to direct questioning.³²¹ The behaviour of this particular image is likened to the images of the Fortunaes in Antium, which also move when giving oracular responses.³²²

An incredibly detailed and problematic description of a statue indicating the answer to questions through movement is given in the *De Dea Syria*, attributed to Lucian.³²³ This statue moves in an agitated manner to alert the priests to the fact that it is prepared to deliver oracles, and it may even sweat if it does not receive immediate attention. The ‘Apollo’ is then lifted and questioned by specially qualified priests, and the directions that it guides them in are understood to be a sort of visually encoded answer. Occasionally, if the image were feeling particularly enigmatic, the statue was reported to have been able to levitate and direct itself unaided by the priests. This text is a notoriously complex one, even to the extent that both the author and the god involved have been the subject of considerable academic debate, and it would be unsafe to argue that this described the real practices of a particular cult.³²⁴

³¹⁸ Diod. Sic. 17.50.6: ἦν δὲ καὶ Σόλων πατὴρὸς μὲν Ἐξηκεστίδου, τὸ γένος ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος τῆς Ἀττικῆς, σοφία δὲ καὶ παιδεία πάντας τοὺς καθ’ ἑαυτὸν ὑπερβεβληκῶς. φύσει δὲ πρὸς ἀρετὴν τῶν ἄλλων πολὺ διαφέρων ἐζήλωσεν ἀρετὴν ἐπαινουμένην: πᾶσι γὰρ τοῖς μαθήμασι πολὺν χρόνον ἐνδιατρίψας ἀθλητῆς ἐγένετο πάσης ἀρετῆς. Tr. Oldfather (1989). Elsewhere Diodorus uses the specific term *automatus* for the spontaneous delivery of oracles, cf. Lightfoot (2003) 468.

³¹⁹ For variations on this description of the image, see: Quint. Curt. 4.7.23-4; Callisth. *FGrH* 124 F14; Strab. 17.143; *FGrH* 688 FI (14) (3).

³²⁰ *Ibid.* See also Paus. 9.16.1; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.23; Tac. *Ann.* 3.7.1.

³²¹ Macrobius, *Saturn.* 1.23.13. Cf. Lightfoot (2001) 335ff.

³²² *Ibid.* Cf. Hor. *Odes* 1.35; *RE* vii (1912) sv Fortuna, 22-3.

³²³ Luc. *DDS* 35-7; 10; for the problems of the text generally, see the introduction to Lightfoot (2003).

³²⁴ For discussion of all of these aspects of the *De Dea Syria* see Lightfoot (2003) generally, and on the cult of ‘Apollo’, esp. 332-466, on comparable practices elsewhere see 465.

Nevertheless, the events narrated in this passage bear striking similarities to various other attestations of oracular images and must be seen as at least plausible within this context. Amongst the most notable features of the passage are the attestation that the image initiates the interaction itself, as well as the prescribed processes for questioning the image and understanding its answers. As in the cases of Zeus Ammon and the Hieropolitan God, the process of questioning and response relies on regulated activities, including the role of individuals specially qualified for the purpose, and of specific knowledge required in order that the answers could be understood. It is clear that asking an image to respond to questions was not a straightforward affair, and certainly could not be taken for granted: there were procedures to follow, and the god/image itself decided if and when it was ready and willing to reply.

Despite the complexities apparent in the sources with regards to the form this particular type of interaction took, the clear implication is that the image could not only hear the suppliant, but also possessed enough cognitive capacity to reply. The same can be said of those images that gave answers in the form of spoken sentences, and also of the Hermes that responded to whispered questions through the next voice that the suppliant heard after speaking to the image.³²⁵ The most noteworthy ambiguity lies in whether the image itself is the one ‘hearing’ the words spoken to it, or if it acts as a sort of conductor for the attentions of the god, who listens to the words spoken to the image and consequently activates it in response. In a theoretical sense, however, the matter is fairly insignificant, for the supposition that the image is taking an active role with regards to both devotee and deity remains. If the image itself speaks or moves, it must do so with the voice or agency of the god, and it does so at the express request of man (whether this be immediate interrogation or a general expectation), who will be the recipient of its reply.

This picture of the image as actively engaged in the verbal communication between mortal and divine is further complicated when one addresses the issue of written communication, which may be seen to have been performed with similar motivation, but which alludes to further capacities on the part of the images. There is much evidence for the placing of written prayers or requests on or near cult statues, and some of the same questions are certainly

³²⁵ See above, p80 and Ch. 2.3.

relevant: it is not always obvious, for example, whether the image itself is supposed to understand the supplications, or if it is a symbolic point of contact with a deity. The indications with this type of verbal interaction, however, remain those of a reciprocal relationship, in which the image plays a more or less active part in a very real and important communicative process.³²⁶

One example of written communication with images is contained within Apuleius' *Apology*, in which he is protesting a charge of practising magic. As part of his refutation of the charges, Apuleius discusses his oracular Hermes doll, a sort of portable cult statue for his own purposes, the type of which is attested elsewhere.³²⁷ Here he claims that in contrast to his written communications with the image that he keeps (which has been used against him as evidence by his prosecutors), if he were instead to place petitions on or near the public statues of the gods it would be considered perfectly normal and safe.³²⁸ This reference conveys the impression that the process of petitioning the gods in writing was a standard practice, and one that should not be seen as performed in error. Indeed, we gain this impression from elsewhere in our sources; Apuleius appears to be referring to the general method, and not to a specific cult action, and the inference of attaching tablets to the statue itself can be seen here and elsewhere.³²⁹ Similarly, there are attestations to the placing of similar petitions near the statue, often at its feet.³³⁰

There are several variations on this mode of communication, such as the possibility of writing upon the image itself with similar intention.³³¹ Other images may have been perceived as able to respond in writing: a passage in the *Philopseudes* describes sacred images that can be consulted on a sealed papyrus and states that the response will be written on the same papyrus without the seal having been broken.³³² This particular example, coming as it does from the 'Lover of Lies', cannot necessarily be taken to be a factual depiction of the practices of any

³²⁶ Cf. below Ch. 2.5.

³²⁷ Apul. *Apol.* 54. These kinds of image are discussed below, p12f. and will be assessed further in Ch. 3.2; 3.3. See, for example: *PGM* V.370-446.

³²⁸ Ibid. For discussion see Blumenthal (1913) 335-6; Kunderewicz (1961) 127-8. Versnel (1981) 36 n. 144 provides evidence for this practice in Roman Egypt.

³²⁹ For example: Juv. 10.56; Philostr. *Her.* 3.2. For attaching similar supplications to aniconic subjects of worship, including trees, see Philostr. *Imagines*, 2.33; Silius Ital. 6.691; Ovid, *Met.* 8.755; Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.* 5.16-17. See below, Ch. 2.5.

³³⁰ For example: *P. Oxy.* XVII.2130, l. 17ff; *PGM* V.370-446; *Corp. Pap.* Raineri I. No XX (imperial images). Cf. Strabo 8.374 for words painted on votive plaques that may have been hung onto cult images, discussed further for the Greek world by Boardman (1954) 188. See also *IG* IV² 121.24.

³³¹ Juv. 10.56. Cf. Versnel (1981) 32-3.

³³² Luc. *Philops.* 19. Cf. Versnel (1981) 32f.

specific cult, although the concept of addressing the gods through words that cannot actually be seen is attested elsewhere.³³³ In addition, the images of the imperial cult are known to have had petitions placed at their feet, either by individuals or by groups of suppliants.³³⁴

There is no suggestion in the sources that the statues were expected to *read* these supplications, and neither is there an indication as to whether the gods themselves were expected to read them. Clearly, there must have been desire for the divine to understand the contents in some way and to react accordingly, but the technical *process* of reading cannot automatically be assumed. We know that some prayers were spoken aloud and subsequently written as a sort of permanent record, but this does not necessarily seem to be the case in all of these instances.³³⁵ The idea that the gods would have access to these prayers because of their proximity to the statue seems reasonable enough in essence, but there is no indication of how this was perceived to be the case. However, these add to the variety of verbal communication that is instigated by the devotee but assumes the active involvement of the image.

There is, however, a certain amount of evidence for the ability of written and spoken words to have a direct impact on an image in a different sense. The evidence that we have for magic, theurgy, and other practices that involved the manipulation of cult images often involves the spoken or written word as a key ingredient. Whilst these examples do not necessarily imply that the image could understand the written or spoken words, they explicitly involve a process whereby the verbal activities of the devotee have a clear impact upon the behaviour of the image. These instances are interesting because they are often combined with forms of interaction outlined elsewhere in this chapter; the images can have prayers laid at their feet, and at the same time be potentially manipulated through written spells inserted into their interior, for example.³³⁶ These words may, in turn, animate the image or endow it with the ability to deliver oracles, whether directly or indirectly. These instances make it necessary to conceive of the image as able to be affected by words in enormously significant ways, and

³³³ For example, when *defixiones* were often both folded and buried, but were clearly expected to be understood by some divine power or another. Cf. Versnel (1981) 33f; Graf (1991); Dodds (1966) 194; 204-5.

³³⁴ For example: *Corp. Pap.* Raineri I. No XX; *P. Oxy.* XVII.2130, line 17ff. Cf. Price (1984) 192ff.

³³⁵ For prayers spoken aloud or in silence, see Graf (1991) 188; Versnel (1981) 25f; and for the writing down of prayers that were initially spoken, see Schowalter (1997) and Versnel (1981) 32. Some prayers might have been written down first and then spoken, cf. McCartney (1948) 184; Sudhaus (1906).

³³⁶ For example: *PGM I. Pap.* V.370-446; *PGM I. Pap.* III.296; *PGM IV.*1841ff, 2360; Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.123.11.

leave no room for a perception of speaking or writing to images as an empty or symbolic gesture.³³⁷

The evidence for the ability of words to have a profound effect upon images comes primarily from the Greek magical papyri of various dates and from the theurgic texts of the second and third centuries CE. Other sources attest to very similar practices, but the magical handbooks and theurgic instructions comprise the most detailed and comprehensible examples.³³⁸ Images in these contexts could be manipulated for a number of reasons, including animation, the ability to give oracles, and for erotic purposes. Many of the images were homemade, and their creation involved the use of specific materials and processes to ensure their efficacy, often including written or spoken prayers, instructions, or spells. Several examples describe images that were to be constructed with a hollow interior in order that spells or *sumbola* could be inserted within them.³³⁹

A particularly detailed example, which is intended to enliven an image of Hermes and enable it to deliver oracles, involves the hollowing out of the image and the insertion of a spell written on papyrus or a bird's windpipe.³⁴⁰ It is clear in this instance that it is specifically the written words within the image that are able to bring it to life, although the image also receives offerings of incense as well as spoken prayer (much like the statues of public cult). The image responds to written or spoken requests by sending oracular dreams, and the person responsible has to sleep with the miniature shrine encasing the image close to his head. The importance of the writing inside the image, which allows (literally 'inspires') it to fulfil the function that it has been made for, is made evident in many of the examples of hollowed out statues, although it is not the only use of verbal communication in interacting with this type of image. Additional image-manipulations involve spoken prayer, and the depositing of requests at the feet of the specially created image, without a spell being inserted within the

³³⁷ For images magically induced to speak and walk, see below, section 3 of this chapter and Ch. 3.5.

³³⁸ For example, Luc. *Menipp.* 9 *fin.* describes methods of animating images that follow similar procedures to theurgy and magic, from a slightly more sceptical perspective. A certain amount of comparison between these rituals and reanimation necromancy can be drawn, cf. Apul.*Met.* 2.21-30; Heliod. 6.12-5; Cic. *In Vat.* 14; *Tusc.* 1.37; *De Div.* 1.132; Lucan *Phars.* 6.588-830.

³³⁹ For example: *PGM* I. *Pap.* III.296; *PGM* IV.1841ff; *PGM* IV.2360; *PGM* V.370-446.

³⁴⁰ *PGM* V.370-446. After describing the materials that should be used to make the statue, and the times at which this should be done: 'Let Hermes be holding a herald's staff. And write the spell on hieratic papyrus or on a goose's windpipe'... 'and insert it into the figure for the purpose of / inspiration; and when you want to use it, take some papyrus and write the spell and the matter'... 'and / place it at the feet of the Hermes (but others say: place it upon him).' (l.380-95, Tr. Betz (1986) 107-9 see this also for text and textual problems). Cf. Haluszka (2008) with Peirce (1931) esp. 274ff.

statue itself, as is the case for an image of the Egyptian Lady Selene which goes through these processes in order that she may send oracular dreams and/or a lover.³⁴¹ The importance of words remains apparent, and they are seen to have a vital impact upon the state and functionality of the image.

The similarities between these types of treatments of images, and those used within theurgy, are striking, although the manipulation of images within theurgy appears to be exclusively for the purpose of obtaining oracles from them (often termed *telestike*).³⁴² These statues could be produced in similarly diverse ways to those of the magical papyri, and the methods often include the insertion of written instructions or *sumbola* within the image, either as written formula on papyrus, or on engraved gems.³⁴³ In a similar way to magic, then, the images of theurgy can be manipulated through the use of the written word, and could often speak as a consequence. The words may be specific magical names, for example, that were able to capture the attention and harness the power of the deity, or they could be fuller written instructions closely paralleling those in the papyri.³⁴⁴ They are similar in other respects, importantly including the combination of the written instruction element with other typical treatments of cult statues, such as spoken prayer, offerings, and dedication within a shrine.³⁴⁵

In the case of theurgic *sumbola* and magical names, the implication is clearly that gods will be influenced by the specific words involved, and the image is somehow crucial in the communication of these words to the gods. How this was conceived of as working is not entirely clear, although given that the image is often expected to communicate the words of the gods back to the person who has made it, it seems as though the figure may hold some kind of mediatory function, whereby human and god can essentially speak through the same mouthpiece to one another. Whether the image must possess divine power in order to do this is a tricky issue, for these rituals of image manipulation stand apart from those instances in which images are manipulated at the hands of the divine.³⁴⁶ It is clear, however, that they

³⁴¹ *PGM* VII.878.

³⁴² For the similarities between theurgy and the practices described in the *PGM* see Dodds (1966) 283-311; Graf (1991); for a recent discussion of theurgy and rituals associated with the animation of images, see Johnston (2008) and Ch. 3.5.

³⁴³ Proclus, in *Tim.* 1.273.11; cf. in *Tim.* 3.6.13.

³⁴⁴ For the magical names and their ability to control the gods, see Eitrem (1991) 177f; Dodds (1966) 292f.

³⁴⁵ See, for examples of the possible combinations of these processes: Proclus, in *Tim.* 3.6.13; 3.155.18; 1.51.25; 3.6.12ff; *Theol. Plat.* 1.28; in *Crat.* 19.12; and Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 7 (citing Porphyry).

³⁴⁶ For the specifics of animation rituals see Johnston (2008).

have in common the ability to be oracular, and it is the image that facilitates the oracle. The only real way this can be understood is if the image has some particular power of its own.

These instances of the use of words to obtain power over images highlight some significant aspects of communication with them, demonstrating that it is not by any means a one- or even two-way interaction. The image appears to take on attributes of both mortal and divine, in order to facilitate successful communication, and may be manipulated by a number of parties, once the words have enlivened it in the first instance. The establishment of a conceptual framework within which the written or spoken word has a demonstrable effect upon an image allows us to view the instances of spoken and written supplication in a more reciprocal and interdependent light. The problems of defining *how* a word can be understood by an image are at least partially negated when it becomes apparent that in certain processes the boundary between image, word, speaker, hearer, and deity are consciously and irretrievably blurred. Some of these issues will arise again in other sections of this chapter, and they will be important for an overall understanding of the relationships between verbal communication and cult images. It should already be manifest that whilst parts of this chapter differentiate aspects of communication by who it is that instigated the interaction, the lines between the categories of speaker, image, and spoken to are extremely fine and in many respects quite artificial.

2.3 Speaking statues: voices of gods

In the second century CE, Plutarch wrote:

“The senate commended their public spirit, and erected the temple and its image at the public charge, but they none the less contributed money themselves and set up a second image of the goddess, and this, the Romans say, as it was placed in the temple, uttered some such words as these: “Dear to the gods, O women, is your pious gift of me.”

These words were actually uttered twice, as the story runs, which would have us believe what is difficult of belief and probably never happened. For that statues have appeared to sweat, and shed tears, and exude something like drops of blood,

is not impossible; since wood and stone often contract a mould which is productive of moisture, and cover themselves with many colours, and receive tints from the atmosphere; and there is nothing in the way of believing that the Deity uses these phenomena sometimes as signs and portents. It is possible also that statues may emit a noise like a moan or a groan, by reason of a fracture or a rupture, which is more violent if it takes place in the interior. But that articulate speech, and language so clear and abundant and precise, should proceed from a lifeless thing, is altogether impossible; since not even the soul of man, or the Deity, without a body duly organized and fitted with vocal parts, has ever spoken and conversed. But where history forces our assent with numerous and credible witnesses, we must conclude that an experience different from that of sensation arises in the imaginative part of the soul, and persuades men to think it sensation; as, for instance, in sleep, when we think we see and hear, although we neither see nor hear. However, those who cherish strong feelings of good-will and affection for the Deity, and are therefore unable to reject or deny anything of this kind, have a strong argument for their faith in the wonderful and transcendent character of the divine power. For the Deity has no resemblance whatever to man, either in nature, activity, skill, or strength; nor, if He does something that we cannot do, or contrives something that we cannot contrive, is this contrary to reason; but rather, since He differs from us in all points, in His works most of all is He unlike us and far removed from us. But most of the Deity's powers, as Heracleitus says, "escape our knowledge through incredulity."³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Plut. *Cor.* 37-8: μάλιστα δὲ τῇ περὶ τὰς γυναῖκας ἀγαπήσει καὶ τιμῇ τῆς τε βουλῆς τοῦ τε πλήθους ἅπαντος ἔνδελος ἦν ἡ χαρὰ τῆς πόλεως, καὶ λεγόντων καὶ νομιζόντων αἰτίας γεγονέναι τῆς σωτηρίας περιφανῶς ἐκείνας. ψηφισαμένης δὲ τῆς βουλῆς, ὃ τι ἂν αὐταῖς ἀξιόσωσι γενέσθαι πρὸς δόξαν ἢ χάριν, τοῦτο ποιῆσαι καὶ παρασχεῖν τοὺς ἄρχοντας, οὐδὲν ἡξίωσαν ἄλλο ἢ Τύχης γυναικείας ἱερὸν ἰδρύσασθαι, τὸ μὲν ἀνάλωμα συμβαλόμεναι παρ' αὐτῶν, ἱερουργίας δὲ καὶ τιμὰς ὅσαι θεοῖς πρέπουσι δημοσίᾳ τῆς πόλεως ἀναλαβούσης. ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ βουλή τὴν μὲν φιλοτιμίαν ἐπήνεσε, δημοσίαις δὲ δαπάναις ἐποίησατο τὸν νεῶν καὶ τὸ ἔδος, οὐδὲν ἦπτον αὐταῖ χρήματα συνεισενεγκοῦσαι δεῦτερον ἄγαλμα κατεσκεύασαν, ὃ δὴ καὶ φασὶ Ῥωμαῖοι καθιστάμενον ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ φθέγγεσθαι τι τοιοῦτο· „θεοφιλεῖ με θεσμῷ γυναῖκες δεδῶκατε.“

Ταύτην καὶ δις γενέσθαι τὴν φωνὴν μυθολογοῦσιν, ἀγενήτοις ὅμοια καὶ χαλεπὰ πεισθῆναι πείθοντες ἡμᾶς. ἰδιόντα μὲν γὰρ ἀγάλματα φανῆναι καὶ δακρυρροοῦντα καὶ τινὰς μεθίντα νοτίδας αἱματώδεις οὐκ ἀδύνατόν ἐστι· καὶ γὰρ ξύλα καὶ λίθοι πολλάκις μὲν εὐρύωτα συνάγουσι γόνιμον ὑγρότητος, πολλὰς δὲ καὶ χροὰς ἀνιάσιν ἐξ αὐτῶν, καὶ δέχονται βαφὰς ἐκ τοῦ περιέχοντος, οἷς ἔνια σημαίνειν τὸ δαιμόνιον οὐδὲν ἂν δόξειε κωλύειν. δυνατόν δὲ καὶ μυγμῷ καὶ στεναγμῷ φόφον ὅμοιον ἐκβαλεῖν ἄγαλμα κατὰ ῥῆξιν ἢ διάστασιν μορίων βιαιοτέραν ἐν βάθει γενομένην. ἔναρθρον δὲ φωνὴν καὶ διάλεκτον οὕτω σαφῇ καὶ περιπτῇ καὶ ἀρτίστομον ἐν ἀψύχῳ γενέσθαι

This is clearly an incredibly important passage for the consideration of images that could speak in the Roman world and provides an unusual insight into discussions of what has been referred to previously as the ‘religious technology’ of image interactions.³⁴⁸ I have quoted this passage in full because it raises some significant questions regarding verbal communication with images in the Roman world: What are we to make of this? Did the statue speak or not? Is it actually impossible that the statue did so, or is it feasible that the deity acted through the image in giving it voice? Is it some form of group hallucination that occurs, when several reliable witnesses report the story?

Plutarch seems to be leaving his options open somewhat on this matter, for it cannot have been an easy issue to decide.³⁴⁹ Part of the difficulty must have indeed been the significant number of attestations of speaking images in the ancient world, particularly in religious contexts, which Plutarch alludes to. The implication is that some had a very genuine belief in the ability of images to contain or channel enough power to enable this. One of the explanations that is strikingly absent from this passage is that of human manipulation or deception: there is no hint that anyone could either have tampered with, or enchanted, the image in order to give it the appearance of a voice, or that in cases where an image is reported to have spoken it could be a fabrication. This is in emphatic contrast to other sources from around the same time, such as Lucian, who described the fraudulent activities of false

παντάπασιν ἀμήχανον, εἰ μηδὲ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἄνευ σώματος ὀργανικοῦ καὶ διηρμοσμένου μέρεσι λογικοῖς γέγονεν ἡχεῖν καὶ διαλέγεσθαι. ὅπου δ' ἡμᾶς ἡ ἱστορία πολλοῖς ἀποβιάζεται καὶ πιθανοῖς μάρτυσιν, ἀνόμοιον αἰσθήσει πάθος ἐγγινόμενον τῷ φανταστικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς συναναπείθει τὸ δόξαν, ὥσπερ ἐν ὕπνοις ἀκούειν οὐκ ἀκούοντες καὶ βλέπειν οὐ βλέποντες δοκοῦμεν. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τοῖς ὑπ' εὐνοίας καὶ φιλίας πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἄγαν ἐμπαθῶς ἔχουσι καὶ μηδὲν ἀθετεῖν μηδ' ἀναίνεσθαι τῶν τοιούτων δυναμένοις μέγα πρὸς πίστιν ἐστὶ τὸ θαυμάσιον καὶ μὴ καθ' ἡμᾶς τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως. οὐδενὶ γὰρ οὐδαμῶς ἀνθρωπίνῳ προσέοικεν οὔτε φύσιν οὔτε κίνησιν οὔτε τέχνην οὔτ' ἰσχύν, οὐδ' εἴ τι ποιεῖ τῶν κίνησιν οὔτε τέχνην οὔτ' ἰσχύν, οὐδ' εἴ τι ποιεῖ τῶν ἡμῖν ἀποιήτων καὶ μηχανᾶται τῶν ἀμηχάνων, παράλογόν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐν πᾶσι διαφέρων πολὺ, μάλιστα τοῖς ἔργοις ἀνόμοιός ἐστι καὶ παρηλλαγμένος. ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν θείων τὰ πολλὰ, καθ' Ἡράκλειτον ἀπιστίῃ διαφυγγάνει μὴ γινώσκεισθαι. Tr. Perrin (1916). Cf. Dionysius, 8.56; Val. Max. 1.8.4. The comment of Heraclitus = Fr. 116 Bywater (1889). These thoughts are roughly echoed (primarily in relation to moving and sweating statues) in Plut. *Cam.* 6.

³⁴⁸ See especially Introduction.ii.

³⁴⁹ Plutarch had an interest in many religious phenomena, and having applied himself to consideration of Delphi, where he was a priest, it is no surprise to find him treading an equally cautious line here. See Hale et al (2003) 73; Parke (1967) 134-6.

prophets and others who attempted to fool the public with speaking statuary.³⁵⁰ It draws attention to a crucial area for the study of speaking images in antiquity; that is, those images that apparently spoke of their own volition. Whilst Plutarch does insert his own scepticism that statues could actually construct sentences and speak comprehensibly, he makes it clear that his is not the only perspective on the matter.

There appears to be an initial contrast drawn by Plutarch between those images that made *noises* (according to him because of ruptures in the material) and those that were said to have actually *spoken* (a rather more inexplicable facet of their nature).³⁵¹ A similar contrast between indistinguishable noises and spoken words is implied in the *Philopseudes* attributed to Lucian, in which the liar claims that not only did the famous ‘Memnon’ statue make noises when he visited it, but that the head of the statue opened its mouth and delivered several lines of verse.³⁵² The Memnon statue is an example for which we have an unusually large amount of evidence, including, as is so rarely the case, the statue itself.

This colossal statue near Thebes in Egypt made an eerie noise at dawn, which was likened by its hearers to the sound of Apollo’s lyre being struck. It was a famous tourist attraction, visited by such illustrious individuals as Germanicus, Hadrian and possibly Septimius Severus.³⁵³ Ancient sources claimed the statue to be of Memnon, and that the noises began

³⁵⁰ The most famous false prophet in Lucian is Alexander, whose adjustments to his prophetic snake, Glycon, are described at Luc. *Alex.* 26. He mentions additional images with similar scepticism elsewhere, for example Luc. *Philops.* 33.8. See below Ch. 2.3; 2.4.

³⁵¹ Images that were said to have made noise included those of the *De Dea Syria* (Luc. *DDS* 10), the Olympian Zeus which laughed loud enough to make the earth shake when Caligula tried to move it (Dio 59.28.4), a bellowing Jupiter on the Tarpeian Rock (Prop. *Eleg.* 4.1A, 5-8) and Apollo playing his Lyre (Libanius 60.11 with Philostorg. *HE.* 7.8). See also Livy 5.15.1; 5.32.7; 5.51.7; 1.31.

³⁵² Luc. *Philops.* 33.5-34.1: “When I was a young man, I passed some time in Egypt, my father having sent me to that country for my education. I took it into my head to sail up the Nile to Coptus, and thence pay a visit to the statue of Memnon, and hear the curious sound that proceeds from it at sunrise. In this respect, I was more fortunate than most people, who hear nothing but an indistinct voice: Memnon actually opened his lips, and delivered me an oracle in seven hexameters; it is foreign to my present purpose, or I would quote you the very lines.” (“Ὅποτε γὰρ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ διήγον ἔτι νέος ὢν, ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπὶ παιδείας προφάσει ἀποσταλείς, ἐπεθύμησα εἰς Κοπτὸν ἀναπλεύσας ἐκεῖθεν ἐπὶ τὸν Μέμνονα ἐλθὼν ἀκοῦσαι τὸ θαυμαστὸν ἐκεῖνο ἡχοῦντα πρὸς ἀνίσχοντα τὸν ἥλιον. ἐκείνου μὲν οὖν ἤκουσα οὐ κατὰ τὸ κοινὸν τοῖς πολλοῖς ᾄσημόν τινα φωνήν, ἀλλὰ μοι καὶ ἔχρησεν ὁ Μέμνων αὐτὸς ἀνοίξας γε τὸ στόμα ἐν ἔπεσιν ἑπτὰ, καὶ εἴ γε μὴ περιπτόν ἦν, αὐτὰ ἂν ὑμῖν εἶπον τὰ ἔπη.) Tr. Fowler (1905). The liar is evidently aware that the image normally only emits a strange noise, but is incorrect in his description of the voice coming from the mouth of the image.

³⁵³ Inscriptions on the statue attest to Hadrian’s presence in 130 CE, collected in Bernand & Bernand (eds.) (1960) esp. no’s 28-31. Germanicus’s visit in 19 CE is attested at Tac. *Ann.* 2.61. Severus’s visit is suggested by *SHA, Sept. Sev.* 17.4. Cf. discussion of Bowersock (1984) 21-32.

when it was damaged by Cambyses.³⁵⁴ The first known attestation of the ‘voice’ of the statue is in Strabo in 24 BCE,³⁵⁵ and he attributes the destruction to an undated earthquake. This image has received considerable attention by academics, largely because it still speaks to us through the hundreds of inscriptions covering the lower half of the (now restored) image.³⁵⁶ Visitors to the statue were so moved by the noise it made that they recorded their experience on the image itself, and whilst we now have sound scientific reasons for the noises produced, to which I shall return, it is not difficult to imagine the sensation of the miraculous evoked by the vision of the rising sun illuminating the huge image, accompanied by the mystical noise that came from it.

The Memnon statue did not actually speak, but its noises were nevertheless a miraculous experience for those who heard it. Other statues did speak: as well as the case of Fortuna mentioned in Plutarch, there are several references, often made in passing, to statues making brief comments on one off occasions, or of statues that could deliver spoken oracles, and therefore spoke with some frequency.³⁵⁷ They are not all recounted in entirely convinced terms by the author, but the point remains for all of them that they were believed to have spoken by someone, often by several people. Examples include Suetonius’s description of an image in the possession of Nero that warned him of conspiracies; mentions in Pausanias that tend to combine and compare image omens and healing powers; an oracle Agrippina was accused of receiving from the image of Clarios Apollo in Rome, reported by Tacitus; an image of Autolycus at Sinope; and the oracular images of Lucian’s *De Dea Syria*.³⁵⁸ Similarly, when authors recount examples of ‘fraudulent’ images that speak only because of human manipulation, it is clear that there are many individuals who willingly accept the statue as speaking.

³⁵⁴ The suggestion that Cambyses damaged the image is found at Paus. 1.42.3.

³⁵⁵ Strabo, 17.1.46, the story about the role of Cambyses appears to have been generated later in other authors. Later, more or less accurate, attestations of the noises of the Memnon statue include: Juv. *Sat.* 15.5; Philostr. *Vit. Apol.* 6.4; Luc. *Tox.* 27.12; Paus. 1.42.3; Pliny, *NH* 36.58; and the inscriptions on the image, collected in Bernand & Bernand (eds.) (1960).

³⁵⁶ For discussion of which see Platt (2003) 9-14, pointing out that these images give voice to those who view them, as well as animating the image itself. See also section 4 of this chapter.

³⁵⁷ See above, section 2 of this chapter.

³⁵⁸ Nero: Suet., *Nero* 56, the emperor worshipped this as a cult statue and offered it several sacrifices a day. In Pausanias, for example: 7.22.2-4, 25.20, 27.1; 9.19.5; Agrippina and Clarios Apollo: Tac. *Ann.* 12.22; Autolycus: App. *Mith.* 12; The Syrian statues: Lucian, *DDS* 10; 35-7.

The most famous example of the latter is probably Alexander of Abonoteichus as described by Lucian, who tells us that the false prophet manipulated the snake-image of Glycon, to pronounce oracles, through the insertion of a crane's windpipe.³⁵⁹ This image was reasonably well known by the time Lucian wrote his attack of the false prophet, and depictions and mentions of Glycon can be found across the Empire until at least 170 CE.³⁶⁰



Fig. 2.1 Late second-century statue of Glycon.³⁶¹

There are several similar examples, in which individual writers demonstrate the ways that manipulations by others fooled the public.³⁶² These are not literary fantasies, for we have archaeological evidence that points to the very real existence of such manipulation of images in an attempt to make them appear to speak. One of the most interesting is a head that seems to depict Epicurus,³⁶³ now in the Carlsberg Glyptotek museum, which has a channel hollowed

³⁵⁹ Lucian, *Alex.* 26: "But as he wished to astonish the crowd still more, he promised to produce the god talking - delivering oracles in person without a prophet. It was no difficult matter for him to fasten cranes' windpipes together and pass them through the head, which he had so fashioned as to be lifelike. Then he answered the questions through someone else, who spoke into the tube from the outside, so that the voice issued from his canvas Asclepius." (ἐθελήσας δὲ καὶ μειζόνως ἐκπλήξαι τὸ πλῆθος, ὑπέσχετο καὶ λαλοῦντα παρέξειν τὸν θεόν, αὐτὸν ἄνευ ὑποφύτου χρησιμωδοῦντα. εἶτα οὐ χαλεπῶς γεράνων ἀρτηρίας συνάψας καὶ διὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐκείνης τῆς μεμηχανημένης πρὸς ὁμοιότητα διείρας, ἄλλου πινὸς ἔξωθεν ἐμβοῶντος, ἀπεκρίνετο πρὸς τὰς ἐρωτήσεις, τῆς φωνῆς διὰ τοῦ ὀθονίου ἐκείνου Ἀσκληπιοῦ προπιπτούσης.) Tr. Harmon (1913).

³⁶⁰ For a survey of the vast range of evidence, covering coins, sculpture and epigraphy, see Jones (1986) 44ff; 138; Ogden (2002) 69; Lane Fox (1986) 136-40; Parke (1967) 142-3; Swain (1996) 324-6; Bracht Branham (1989) 186-7 with 265 n.16. For the numismatic evidence see, e.g. *Hist. Numm.* 432; Cumont (1887) 42; L.R. *IAMM.* 395, 400-402.

³⁶¹ National History and Archeology Museum, Constanța

³⁶² E.g. Eus. *Hist. Eccles.* 9.2-3 (an oracular Zeus that gave answers favourable to the official who set it up); Lucian, *Pseud.* 38 (a list of superstitions, including oracular images); Rufinus *Hist. Eccles.* 2.26 (priests giving announcements through statue of god in temple, and abused this to appear as god to young women); Theodoret, *Hist. Eccles.* 5.23 (Theophilus of Alexandria exposed). See below for further discussion of how these narratives describe the human manipulation of images.

³⁶³ For the use of images of Epicurus in worship see Pliny *NH* 35.5; Smith (2000); Glad (1995) 176; Piettre (1999).

out within it from the base of the neck through to the mouth. On discovering this, those enlisted to restore the image experimented with pipes connected to the channel, and it apparently produces clear and rather mystical sounding words if they are spoken into the pipe from a distance.³⁶⁴ It seems that two Roman temples in Karamis (Fayum, Egypt) had images placed against hollowed out sections of the walls, and a similar temple in Corinth were designed for essentially the same purpose of having a human delivering oracles through them.³⁶⁵ These fit well with the late accounts of Theodoret, Kyrillos and Rufinus on the hollowing out of walls and the existence of special chambers behind them through which priests could make the image appear to speak.³⁶⁶

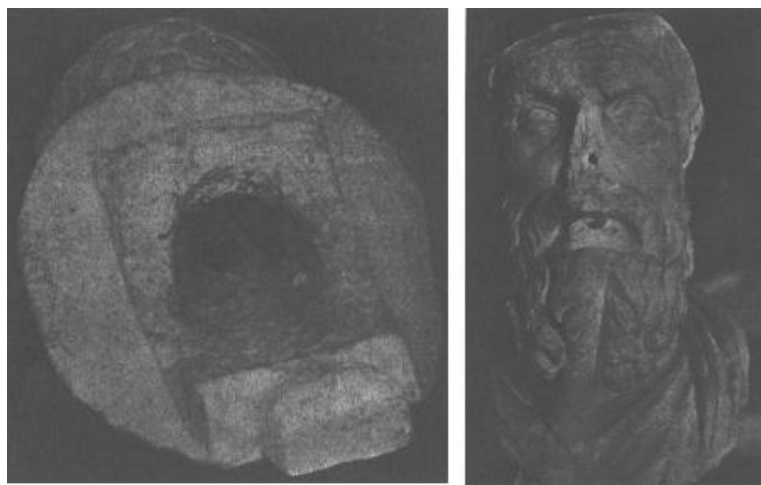


Fig. 2.2a : The base of the Epicurus head, showing the chiselled out hollow;

Fig. 2.2b: The front of the Epicurus head.³⁶⁷

The evidence clearly implies that images could be believed to speak of their own accord in antiquity. Whilst some references discuss the fraudulent nature of the images, and the human intervention behind them, there would clearly be little purpose in such manipulation unless they were to be accepted as real by someone. Indeed, Lucian tells us that Alexander grew very wealthy from his activities as a consequence of people's willingness to believe in his

³⁶⁴ No. 416 in Carlsberg Glyptotek. See the images (Figs. 2.2a and 2.2b) of the head from the front and from beneath and discussion in Poulsen (1945) 178-95, esp 178-81. Cf. Lucian's description of how Alexander made his snake appear to speak and Hippolytus, *Refut. Omm. Haeres.* 4.41. Inspection of the channel by the restoration team suggested that it was never used for piping water or any other substance through, which might have been another possible interpretation of the alterations, see Poulsen (1945) 182.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Poulsen *op cit*, and Grenfell et al (1900) 30; Eitrem (1931) 765.

³⁶⁶ See above, n.362 and Kyrillos, *Contra Julianum* 7. These exposures of 'oracle fraud' are found in the early Christian authors, who have their own purposes for demonstrating human involvement. On images that were considered fraudulent in the Near East see Polanski (1998) 90-1.

³⁶⁷ Carlsberg Glyptotek No. 416; Poulsen (1945) 181 fig. 5 and 182 fig. 6.

snake-image, and the same is implied in other references.³⁶⁸ In addition, there are those descriptions of statues speaking that offer no ‘human manipulation’ explanation, perhaps implying that one is not needed because the images did in fact speak on their own. Moreover this belief is certainly not restricted to the foolish *plebs*, and it does not seem that there were necessarily levels of religious knowledge or education that enabled the exposure of such oracular images as fraudulent. Lucian explicitly tells us that Alexander’s prophecies only directly came from the snake to those that could afford to pay for it, and that the false prophet had particular influence with the governor of the province.³⁶⁹ Similarly, the image described in Rufinus and Kyrillos was said to have pronounced oracles in front of the emperor.³⁷⁰ None of the sources seem to support the idea that it was primarily the uneducated masses that were fooled by such manipulations. It appears to have been completely possible for the educated and wealthy to incorporate speaking statues into their personal beliefs; not everyone agreed with Plutarch.

Most modern scholarship, however, does take this sceptical line, if sometimes by implication rather than specific dedicated argument. There are two main strands of scholarship on speaking statues in antiquity: one essentially ignores the existence of those images that spoke of their own volition as perhaps of no particular interest, and the other notes these references, but does not go beyond the observation that human manipulation must have been present somewhere, to consider what the implications of the statue speaking in the first place could be, regardless of who actually engineered it.

A good example of the first is Bowersock in his article on the Memnon statue, in which he comments that the visitors did not seem to be concerned by the fact that the image was in a semi-destroyed state, and hence spoke only from the waist down.³⁷¹ Does this mean that if it had a head it would be entirely reasonable for the statue to speak? The issue is not addressed, although it seems to me that this hurdle ought to be overcome before one can consider the impact of a statue that not only had no vocal cords because it was made of stone, but also had no head, and that nevertheless ‘spoke’ to its visitors on a regular basis.

³⁶⁸ Lucian, *Alex. passim*. but esp. 23, where he describes the price for a basic oracle as a drachma and two obols. See, for example, the implication of belief in Eus. *Hist. Eccles.* 9.2-3.

³⁶⁹ Lucian, *Alex.* 48f.

³⁷⁰ See above, n. 362 and 366.

³⁷¹ Bowersock (1984) 23.

The best example of the second is the only dedicated treatment of ancient speaking statues: a 1945 article by Poulsen, tellingly subtitled ‘A chapter in the history of religious fraud’.³⁷² The author provides an extensive collection of examples of images that were manipulated to speak or perform other miracles, but draws no real conclusion about what this might imply for ancient religious beliefs and practices, apart from the fact that we should not ‘look down upon our simple minded forefathers’ because there are comparable fraudulent images in the modern period.³⁷³

These treatments are not entirely representative, and there are some slightly more sympathetic and considered assessments of the phenomenon of speaking statues in the ancient world. Lane Fox, for example, suggests that because people expected their gods to be present and manifest, especially through their images, the priests cannot really be blamed for attempting to help the gods to live up to their expectations.³⁷⁴ He also notes that the conviction in a god’s ability to speak through images, or to move them in response to questioning, was so deeply held that the Christian critics of these statues did not actually reject their miraculous abilities altogether, but instead attributed the actions of images to a different source, primarily demons.³⁷⁵ We clearly cannot accept that the reason all cult statues of the Roman world spoke was because they were manipulated to do so, and that some people were convinced whilst others were not.³⁷⁶ Neither is it acceptable to rely merely on the desire to be close to the gods through their image (and therefore to have an expectation of power in the image) as being enough to induce that image to go to the extreme of speaking. An image did not have to form words to be perceived as miraculous, as we have seen in the case of Memnon, and as is clear from numerous examples of images that could sweat or move of their own accord, or that possessed healing qualities.³⁷⁷

³⁷² Poulsen (1945).

³⁷³ *Ibid.* 195.

³⁷⁴ Lane Fox (1986) 136.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 137 for discussion, and e.g. Tatian, *Or.* 12 (text at Introduction.ii). Cf. Tat. *Or.* 15-18.

³⁷⁶ Not all cases of manipulation necessarily implied fraud, for there were circumstances in which images could be enchanted in order that they could be made to speak, especially in theurgical divination and in magic/private religion. See below, section 4 of this chapter.

³⁷⁷ Not that these matters are unrelated, but they *are* different. On miraculous images see, for example, Clerc (1915) Ch. 3 and 4; Freedberg (1989) esp. 34-7; 312f; Lane Fox (1986) 135f; Spivey (1995) *Passim* and esp. 452-3. Examples of sweating statues: Plut. *Alex.* 14.5; Plut. *Ant.* 60; Suet. *Vesp.* 5.6; Lucian, *DDS* 10. Examples of moving statues: Athenagoras, *Leg.* 15-17, 23-7; Caes., *Bell. Civ.* 33.78; Dio, 41.61.4; Plut., *Caes.* 47; Paus. 3.16.10-11. Examples of healing statues: Apul., *Met.* 11.19, 24, 29; Lucian, *Conc. Deor.* 12; Paus. 6.11.6-9; Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9. Some of these are discussed further in Ch. 3.5.

In common with the movement of some images that indicated an omen, the voices of images do not always draw very much comment from ancient authors; it seems likely that the general perception was one in which divine images at least had the potential to speak. If we focus on speaking, not as a fraudulent creation but as an accepted ability of certain images, there are explanations that need to be sought: How did the images speak? What purpose did their speaking serve, and what can it tell us about the role of images in the religions of the Roman world?

Individuals displaying less scepticism than the Christian critics tend to comment on the ability of the image to speak, without passing particular judgement on how or why it did so. This is presumably one reason for the attention devoted by modern scholars to the issue of fraud. Perhaps more fundamentally there is the problem that statues cannot speak, and everyone knows this. The ancient Romans were no different in this respect, and we cannot join Poulsen in attributing the belief in speaking statues to their ‘simpleminded’ nature.³⁷⁸

The manner in which religious phenomena need not be ontologically intuitive to be perceived as true has previously been briefly touched upon, and can be of further use in our understanding of how images could genuinely be believed to speak in the Roman world.³⁷⁹ Essentially, the hypotheses of anthropologists that it is not necessary to postulate a primitivist theory to explain anthropomorphic or animist religions, because ontologically counter-intuitive principles can easily function within religious systems, can be applied to the idea that the images spoke, especially if they can be understood within the context of ancient religions.³⁸⁰ This means that nobody in the Roman world had to be ‘simpleminded’ enough to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of wood, stone or metal images as being able to speak in order to believe that occasionally they did precisely that.³⁸¹

Furthermore, it is possible for people to be completely convinced, in biological and psychological terms, that sound is emanating from that which it is not *actually* emanating. This is because if visual localization is good, it can dominate and capture sound, resulting in

³⁷⁸ Op. cit. n.373.

³⁷⁹ See Ch. 1.3.

³⁸⁰ As discussed in Ch.1, these theories (and some of their anthropological influences) are fully outlined in Gell (1998) and Boyer (1996). See also Banton (1966) and for comparison to beliefs in ancient Mesopotamia see Walker & Dick (1999).

³⁸¹ See Gell (1998) 121: animism is inherent in attributing to an image the ability to hear, but does not necessarily imply a belief that the image is alive in a *biological* sense.

the perception that sound appears to emanate from that which one sees, not necessarily from the exact location of the sound. The human mind is perfectly capable of making the statue appear to talk without any complicated technical manipulation.³⁸² If, however, there *is* a voice coming from an image, the combined senses (known as bimodal integration) locate the sound and the image, and causes us to consequently decide where the sound is coming from, in a process that naturally occurs *prior* to any consideration of *how* the noise can come from the image.³⁸³ Not only is it possible for a counter-intuitive phenomenon like a speaking statue to be perceived as true, but it is also a necessarily secondary step for it to be understood as potentially untrue. Essentially, the matter of how the statue is speaking need only be considered if the question is asked.

This secondary step will at times occur, however, and so it is necessary to examine how the images could remain vocal given the clear knowledge that statues cannot speak.³⁸⁴ The reasons for doing this are sound: it is clear that human intervention was not always supposed to be the facilitating factor in making images speak, and indeed was probably not the normative model for explanation. One particular, and rather late, source is emphatic about this: in an attempt to demonstrate that images of the gods can be divine (that is, they have divine presence), Iamblichus cites their ability to speak.³⁸⁵ Many of our discussions of speaking images are relatively late in date, which again is probably associated with the desire to uncover fraud in this form of worship. It is clear that there were earlier examples, although they do not tend to be particularly extensive in description or in theory.³⁸⁶ Examples of speaking statues are also known from Greece, the Near East and especially Egypt before the Roman period, and it is fair to say that the concept of speaking statues must have been well known by many in the Roman world, whether through practice, literature or reputation.³⁸⁷ This is also clear from the sources, especially in the works of authors such as Pausanias, and

³⁸² For the biology behind this see Alais & Burr (2004) and for the psychology and cultural location of this effect, essentially that of ventriloquism, see Connor (2000).

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ How often this question was asked in the Roman world is impossible to know.

³⁸⁵ Iamblichus, in Photis, *Bibl.* 215 (172b) amongst other attributes of divine images. A similar sentiment is expressed in Julian, *Epist.* 89b. See also above, n.375 (with Introduction.ii) on Christian accusations that demons create the power of the images.

³⁸⁶ A relatively early Roman example may be the reference in Tacitus to Agrippina's oracle, received by the image of Clarios Apollo in Rome, see above, n.358 For the impact of date on the treatment of interactions with images generally see Introduction.i., and for the importance of the Clarian oracle during the Roman period see Parke (1967) 140.

³⁸⁷ See, for example, Romano (1988) for Greek examples with mentions of comparable practices in the Near East (although many of her sources are Roman) and Jones (ed.) (2005) sv 'Idolatry' for examples from Egyptian and other Near Eastern cultures. See also the temples at Karamis, and the Corinthian temple, which was in use at least by the fifth century BCE, all mentioned above p95 and n.365-6.

even Lucian who, despite his clearly scathing tone in most of his references to speaking images, certainly conveys an impression that they were relatively widespread.³⁸⁸

In any case, the comment made by Iamblichus seems to suggest an association between the divinity of an image and its ability to speak. This seems to me to be perfectly logical: most of the references to speaking statues clearly relate to divine images, and images that were not necessarily designed for explicitly devotional activity in the first place appear to be connected to the divine once they are known to speak. Statues such as the Memnon in Thebes became sites of something equating to pilgrimage, where people sometimes waited for days to hear the image's voice.³⁸⁹ Many of the examples of speaking images are those of oracular images, although this was just one way in which they communicated their answers; oracles that came from images could be in the form of movement in response to questioning, or through dreams.³⁹⁰ Speaking images are invariably associated with the divine in a significant way, whether before or after the fact; in those instances where magic and/or theurgy animate an image and make it able to speak, they do so for the purposes of receiving an oracle from it.³⁹¹

The potential divinity of the image is also the most obvious explanation within the context of the Roman world, because there could not easily be any other explanation. As Davies has recently pointed out, the rejection of religion would be almost unfeasibly difficult to accomplish psychologically in a world without science (as we know it), and this applies similarly to perceived religious phenomena involving cult statues.³⁹² Of course, the science clearly existed in the ancient world to manipulate images so that they appeared to speak, and although we have no way of knowing how widespread the understanding of these techniques was, it would be valid to argue that devotees did have recourse to these explanations for

³⁸⁸ He makes mention of them in several works, each more or less mocking, but almost always suggesting that people accepted them. See, for example, *Luc. Tox.* 27.12; *Philops.* 13-20, 33.8, 42, 47; *Alex.* 26 and *passim*; *DDS* 10, 35-7; *Deor. Conc.* 12; *Zeus Trag.* 7ff.

³⁸⁹ For the concept of pilgrimage as applied to ancient religions see Coleman & Elsner (1995).

³⁹⁰ See above, esp. p89f, for oracular speaking images. Other oracular responses are sometimes those of sweating and moving noted at n.377, amongst others.

³⁹¹ Human intervention is a fundamental factor in these instances, and many of the following are discussed more fully below: Theurgical methods of animating images in order to obtain oracles from them: Proclus, *in Tim.*, 3.6.13, 155.18, 6.12ff; 1.51.25; *Theol. Plat.* 1.28; *in Crat.* 19.12; *Corp. Herm. Asclepius* 3.24a, 37a-38a; *Aug. Civ. Dei* 10.11. Magical methods of obtaining oracles from images: *PGM* IV.296ff, 1840ff; *PGM* XII.12. Images can be animated for other purposes, but they do not generally need a voice, for example in erotic magic and binding spells.

³⁹² Davies (2004) esp. 6.

speaking images much of the time.³⁹³ Certainly, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, Plutarch seems to refer to his own knowledge of the environmental influences upon images that could give them the appearance of certain lifelike traits. However, it is clear that not everyone did turn to this knowledge for an explanation, whether they were able to or not. The first assumption appears to be one of divine involvement in the vocal communication of images, over and above any desire to raise the kinds of huge questions implied in accusations of religious fraud.

A partial explanation may be found in the psychoanalytical and anthropological terms previously discussed, although it can be summarised in an oversimplified manner with the phrase ‘people will see what they want to see’. Even Poulsen is willing to acknowledge that the devotees of a number of faiths in the modern world accept behaviour in images as divinely inspired, regardless of what they may or may not know about the technological possibilities for achieving the same effects.³⁹⁴ The reason for this acceptance is not hard to generally comprehend, but it is more difficult to pinpoint and explain. In a (Jungian) psychoanalytic assessment of ritual, Shorter explains many ritual practices as arising from a need for communication with the divine, and describes ritual as a (necessary) process that ‘opens a window’ onto that other realm.³⁹⁵ Of course, speaking images need not be part of ritual at all, and especially so if they speak occasionally of their own volition, without human intervention or encouragement, but there is often a broader ritual context in which these interactions should be placed, in terms of how mortal relationships with these images were formed in the first place. If psychoanalysis provides a way of understanding a very common and very real need to communicate with the divine, this may be a partial explanation for a willingness to accept processes that make this communication more feasible and satisfying. Anthropology also allows for ontologically counter-intuitive phenomena to be perceived as true, regardless of other rationales that might be applied.³⁹⁶ In these terms, and especially in the context of these particular images, divine agency is absolutely the most reasonable explanation for the voices of images.

³⁹³ On the science and technology of making images appear to speak, see also, for example, Heron, *Aut.* 1.7, 4.4, 9.5, 17.1, 20ff, 30.6, 1.405ff; *Pnem.* 152; 1.38; *Vitr. De Arch.* 9.8.5. See further Ch. 3.5.

³⁹⁴ Poulsen (1945) 192ff. See also the considerable treatment of such matters from a broad range of historical periods and cultures, including modern examples, in Freedberg (1989) throughout, but especially Ch. 1.

³⁹⁵ Shorter (1996) 20-36 and 121.

³⁹⁶ See above, p99.

The context is a crucial factor here, and I have alluded to it, in the sense that all of these speaking images are somehow ‘divine’. We do not know the exact locations or contexts of all of the images to which the ability to speak is attributed, but those for which we do have information, or for which we can reasonably posit a likely location, are set in religious contexts. Some of them are explicitly labelled as oracles, others do not speak often enough to fit within the category of regularly consulted oracles of the likes of the Apollo of the *De Dea Syria* or Zeus Ammon, but belong in temples, or have other attributes of cult statues.³⁹⁷ I could perhaps here return to Lane Fox’s statement that priests manipulated images because people expected to encounter god in them.³⁹⁸ The motivation of such religious officials will be discussed further below, but the expectation of devotees is important here: if one visits an oracular image with the expectation that it will speak, and if it then does so, why would any explanation be sought other than divine agency? The Christian critics of the images did not try to reject some form of non-human agency altogether, but instead suggested the influence of demons.³⁹⁹ A similar suggestion is found in the *Corpus Hermeticus*, where images are said to speak oracles because they are possessed by angels and/or demons.⁴⁰⁰ These explanations are a far cry from those found in Lucian’s description of Alexander, or of scholars such as Poulsen, and they make sense of the images within their contexts.

Perhaps the explanations of divine influence in making these images speak were enhanced by those images for which no alternative explanation could easily be sought. Here I return to the statue of Memnon, which made those sunrise noises that sounded so surreal. The explanations for the statue’s voice vary in the ancient sources, and although the attribution of its qualities as somehow divine is common, this has been less commented upon by modern scholars than the reasons that we now know to have been behind the noises that it made. It seems that the destruction of the image in an earthquake created deep cracks in the statue, which were filled with air that did not heat up as quickly as the outside of the statue when the sun rose with its extreme heat in the morning. The expansions and contractions of the stone, caused by the differences in heat, were what caused these noises to be made, and this is why

³⁹⁷ For example, the speaking statue of Fortuna does not appear to have had particular oracular rites associated with it in the same way that, say, the image of Zeus Ammon or those of the *DDS* appear to. See above, p82-3.

³⁹⁸ See above, p97.

³⁹⁹ See above, n.375.

⁴⁰⁰ E.g. *Corp. Herm.*, *Asclepius* 3.24a, 37a-38a (animated statues which foretell the future and cause and cure disease because angels or demons have been implanted in them). It is not clear whether this implanting was at divine or mortal instigation, or how this was achieved exactly. Cf. Ebeling (2005).

the image ceased making noise when it was restored.⁴⁰¹ Whilst the passage of Plutarch implies that the concept of ruptures in images might be understood in terms of affecting their ability to make noise, he does not specifically mention the Memnon statue in this context, and there is no comparable explanation in antiquity.

That amongst the population of the Roman world were those able to accept divine voices coming from inanimate matter may seem difficult to understand, and the trickery of priests and those looking for an easy living might be very good explanations for how the images did *actually* speak, and for how some perceived the phenomenon.⁴⁰² The point remains, however, that the general explanation for the ability of images to speak in the Roman world was found in the ability of the divine to speak through them. This point is also alluded to in Plutarch, although he clearly does not claim it to be his own personal opinion on the matter. He does indicate, however, that devotion could allow one to accept that an image was speaking when one knew that it could not.

Having established that images could be seen to speak at divine instigation, a whole range of new questions arises about why this was the case, and what the possible implications could be. It cannot be a straightforward consequence of a desire to attain proximity to a god through his image, for this could be done in any number of ways, and did not require such miracles as spoken words emanating from solid stone or bronze. The implication in attributing to statues the ability to speak is that they have something to say. Not only could they make undistinguishable noises, as did the Memnon figure, but they also constructed sentences, which demands a skill greater than voice: it requires some form of cognitive capacity. Furthermore, people *listened* to what they had to say, as many of them were believed to be oracular and had some significant information to share. This is a special kind of proximity, one that facilitates direct communication with the gods. It is also something more than the ‘window’ onto the divine suggested by Shorter, for it signifies an evidently two-way

⁴⁰¹ The exact story behind the statue must remain speculation, although we know it to have been active in making noises until at least 205 CE, which is the date of the latest dateable inscription on the statue’s lower half: Bernard & Bernard (eds.) (1960) no. 60. There is an additional inscription written over this one (no. 62), suggesting that it continued speaking after this date. The restoration was probably Severan in date, although this is not certain (cf. Bowersock (1984) 23-4). For a discussion of the statue, the geological explanations for its noises, and its history, see Bowersock (1984) and Platt (2003) 12f. For the significance of the written word on cult images see below, section 4 of this chapter.

⁴⁰² See the discussion of Luc. *Alex.* above, p94 and below, p108f for the potential for financial gain from the manipulation of images.

process.⁴⁰³ In actuality, of course, the process is much more than two way, because many people, and often more than one god, are necessary for the communication to be achieved.⁴⁰⁴ In these instances the image remains particularly active in the interaction in which it is seen, to all intents and purposes, as a specific individual agent or entity.

The explanation for speaking statues must be sought within the wider context of communication with divine images. Statues that spoke of their own accord have a very special and important role in the conceptualisation of this communication through their apparent animism. The image that speaks is not a passive recipient of devotional activity, as might be argued for instances of, say, praying to a divinity's image.⁴⁰⁵ These types of image, rather, are able to instigate communication, clearly implying some form of direct contact with a god, and it is presumably this that makes them such dangerous matters to discuss, not only for modern scholars, but also for those writing in antiquity. We can see both support and disagreement in antiquity for the statements made by Plutarch in terms of his scepticism and of his acknowledgement that his view was not the only possible option. It is clear also why his statements read as somewhat ambiguous, for it might be rather too dangerous to reject the possibility of speaking images altogether if at least some of his contemporaries had an emotional investment in this precise activity of cult statues.

Several approaches make it possible for us to accept that images could be believed to have had these qualities within antiquity, and within the context of ancient ritual it is clearly possible to place them within a wider language of communication with the divine in which images played a significant role. The full implications of this are difficult to comprehend with reference to speaking statues alone, but it should be apparent that images that were able to speak of their own accord are indicative of a process of communication (even conversation?) that must be seen to extend beyond the merely symbolic or ritually necessitated.⁴⁰⁶ They were active agents in a social process as much as priests, devotees and false prophets, and open up

⁴⁰³ See above, p102 and n.395. Shorter's 'window' appears to be very much one-way, that is, it gives devotees the perception of having a window onto the divine world, rather than the potential for the same scenario to exist the other way around. This may be a consequence of her heavy focus on modern Christian ritual, with some very limited comparative material.

⁴⁰⁴ See below, section 5 of this chapter. There are, for example, the special processes that an image might need to go through before it can be considered divine at all, which often involve several human players, as well as the priestly role in obtaining oracles from an image.

⁴⁰⁵ The listening implied in some instances of prayer show that the image is not always passive at all, see above, section 2 of this chapter.

⁴⁰⁶ For this communicative/conversational element in the Greek world, see Petrović & Petrović (2006).

the possibility of a much broader, and more complex, concept of the divine image of the Roman world.

2.4 Speaking statues: voices of men

It is difficult in many ways to differentiate between instances in which images were manipulated by the gods to speak, and those in which they were manipulated by mortals. The possibility of perceiving any given speaking statue from both positions is clear, and any separation of the two must, to some extent, be artificial. However, the ways in which men could give their own voice to cult statues is an important interaction on its own, and provides yet another perspective on relationships with them in the Roman world.

The manipulation of images in order that they may appear able to partake in verbal communication has received some modern scholarly attention.⁴⁰⁷ There are a number of reasons for this, including the fact that it is a matter given considerable attention in several of the ancient sources that go into the most detail regarding speaking statues. Whilst I have argued that the normative form of spoken communication with images was based upon the premise that the images expressed voice without the intervention of human hands, the possibility for human manipulation remains an area of interest. As well as the manipulation itself being a form of interaction, the evidence for it might help to construct an understanding of the form and sensory experience of speaking images. There are also types of manipulation that do not negate the possibility of divine involvement, whereby the image is manipulated in order that it be more productively involved in the actual (rather than fabricated) communication.

Human efforts to make images speak (or appear to speak) were undertaken for a variety of purposes, all of which have been discussed above to some extent. Any categorization is subjective, and many of the examples considered could easily fall into two or more. The general heading of 'oracle fraud' includes instances whereby an image is adapted in order that it might deliver oracles to any number of individuals. The category of 'magical' images, which could be manipulated, enchanted, and/or divinely inspired in order to deliver pronouncements, often of an oracular nature, forms a slightly separate group. A more specific

⁴⁰⁷ See above, p86-9, 94-7.

distinction can often be made for images that formed a significant branch of theurgic divination, which allowed a suitably qualified individual to endow an image with similar powers to those attributed elsewhere to a human medium, with the image becoming (temporarily?) capable of speaking with the voice of something or someone outside of the mortal realm. The similarities between the categories are fairly obvious, especially with regards to the basic motivating factors behind the manipulation (that is, a desire that images should produce oracles) although they are rarely considered as a group in modern scholarship. The reasons for this are both their obvious differences, especially in method and in the number of people expected to benefit (or be duped by) the images in question, and the additional disciplinary reason that treatments of religion, magic, and theurgy in modern works are usually separate.

Although the motivations behind the manipulation of images were notably similar, the processes involved varied considerably. Many of the forms that they were said to have taken have been noted above and some further expansion on this is relevant here.⁴⁰⁸ In some respects we know the least about the form of what might be categorised as ‘oracle fraud’. Unlike magic and theurgy, it had no regulations or requirements in place to ensure its efficacy, and so every case may have been incredibly different from others, making any generalisation inadvisable.⁴⁰⁹ We do also have some very detailed explanations of how specific instances of oracle fraud were engineered, and these may tentatively suggest a few of the options for the ancient potential fraudster.

Lucian’s well-known narrative explaining the life of Alexander of Abonoteichus includes an explanation of how the image of the snake god, Glycon, was made to appear to deliver oracles itself, and the relevant passage is quoted above.⁴¹⁰ The technique of inserting the windpipe of a bird into an already made image is not widely attested elsewhere, although it is not entirely unknown.⁴¹¹ The basic principle, however, of engineering an image so that an unseen individual could speak ‘through’ it somehow, is seen in varying forms in other

⁴⁰⁸ See above, p86-9, 94-7.

⁴⁰⁹ Both magic and theurgy appear to have followed written instructions to an extent not common in other aspects of the religious life of the Roman world. See Clarke (2001) 58f on Iamblichus’s comparison between theurgic oracles and those of public Greek ritual; Faraone & Obbink (eds) (1991); Betz (1986).

⁴¹⁰ See above, p94, n. 359.

⁴¹¹ Hippolytus, *Ref. Omn. Haer.* 4.41, refers to this technique as being behind an instance of trick skull necromancy, in which a head was made of gypsum with an inserted windpipe, although there is no reason that Hippolytus’s account could not have been influenced by that of Lucian, see Harmon (1913) n.24 to his translation.

examples. The Epicurus head discussed previously appears to have been designed for some sort of tubing to be inserted into the opening of the channel so that someone could speak into it, with the voice effectively coming out of the mouth of the bust.⁴¹²

Archaeological evidence points to walls with cavities that seem to have been made within them in order that an image could be placed on one side and a temple official on the other, so that the image could appear to speak, without the owner of the voice being visible.⁴¹³ These instances bear striking similarity to the Christian critics who appear to follow a relatively recognisable motif of exposing the fraudulent nature of a pagan oracle-giving image. The intention is generally to demonstrate the dangerous nature of pagan worship, and the motivations, rather than the technical processes, are normally the focus.⁴¹⁴ One particularly obvious instance of this is found in Rufinus's *Church History*, in which the priests of a pagan temple not only deceive their worshippers by speaking unseen through a statue placed against a concealed wall cavity, but also use the sensation aroused by this trickery to appear as the god to those receiving the oracles. Apparently they did so specifically to young women, and did so in order to elicit a sexual response.⁴¹⁵

We have no certain evidence to confirm this specific instance, and the fact that similar stories occur in other Christian sources could equally be used to strengthen either the suggestion that this is merely a literary method of denigrating paganism, or the interpretation that these events were relatively common.⁴¹⁶ One of the most famous Church histories of the late antique period contains another tale of the fraudulent image-oracle as serving the purpose of the priests of the temple, although in a slightly less lecherous manner. Eusebius describes an official at Antioch who set up an oracular Zeus with the purpose of creating pronouncements favourable to himself in front of powerful devotees, including the Emperor, and for ejecting the Christians from the town.⁴¹⁷ He vehemently couches this type of manipulation in the terms of religious war:

⁴¹² See above, p94-5.

⁴¹³ See above, p94-6.

⁴¹⁴ For the uses, techniques and problems of early Christian writers see the Introduction.iv.

⁴¹⁵ Rufinus, *Hist. Eccles.* 2.26. The same story is told at Kyrillos, *Contra Jul.* 7.

⁴¹⁶ For example, Theodoret, *Hist. Eccles.* 5.23 describes how Theophilus of Alexandria exposed the fraud of images that were placed against a hollow wall for priests to make announcements. This could be taken as a literary trope, useful in decrying the pagan worship of images, or as an indication of the frequency with which this might have happened.

⁴¹⁷ For the difficulties of separating the narratives of Rufinus and Eusebius see Amidon (1997) xii-xiii.

“After this man had carried on all kinds of war against us and had caused our people to be diligently hunted up in their retreats, as if they were unholy thieves, and had devised every sort of slander and accusation against us, and become the cause of death to vast numbers, he finally erected a statue of Jupiter Philius with certain juggleries and magic rites. And after inventing unholy forms of initiation and ill-omened mysteries in connection with it, and abominable means of purification, he exhibited his jugglery, by oracles which he pretended to utter, even to the emperor; and through a flattery which was pleasing to the ruler he aroused the demon against the Christians and said that the god had given command to expel the Christians as his enemies beyond the confines of the city and the neighbouring districts.”⁴¹⁸

The narrative of the manipulated oracle serves a specific purpose within Christian histories, and should not necessarily be taken alone to provide evidence that such frauds actually occurred. However, the methodology applied by the priests of some of these tales (that is, the hollow wall illusion) does appear to be attested by archaeology, and seems the most practical technique for anyone wanting to have an image pronounce false oracles. Other Christian authors maintained the accusations of manipulation, but explained the mystical effects of oracles as a combination of sorcery and demons.⁴¹⁹

There were certainly other methods available, such as the windpipe insertion attested by Lucian and Hippolytus, although in many instances this might have meant mutilating an expensive image at great risk, and would have been especially complicated with full body statues (rather than heads) and with anything in a fragile, antique material.⁴²⁰ Perhaps even the most unethical of priests might have balked at the idea of vandalising a cult statue. Some

⁴¹⁸ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 9.3: “Πλείστα δ’ οὖν οὗτος καθ’ ἡμῶν στρατευσάμενος καὶ πάντα τρόπον τοὺς ἡμετέρους ὥσπερ πινὰς φώρας ἀνοσίους ἐκ μυχῶν θηρεῦσαι διὰ σπουδῆς πεπτοημένος πάντα τε ἐπὶ διαβολῇ καὶ κατηγορίᾳ τῇ καθ’ ἡμῶν μεμηχανημένος, καὶ θανάτου δὲ αἵπιος μυρίοις ὅσοις γεγονώς, τελευτῶν εἰδωλὸν τι Διὸς Φιλίου μαγγανείαις πισὴν καὶ γοητείαις ἰδρύεται, τελετάς τε ἀνάγκους αὐτῷ καὶ μυήσεις ἀκαλλιερήτους ἐξαγίστους τε καθαρμοὺς ἐπινοήσας, μέχρι καὶ βασιλέως τὴν τερατείαν δι’ ὧν ἐδόκει χρησμῶν ἐπεδείκνυτο. καὶ δὴ καὶ οὗτος κολακείᾳ τῇ καθ’ ἡδονὴν τοῦ κρατούντος ἐπεγείρει κατὰ Χριστιανῶν τὸν δαίμονα καὶ τὸν θεὸν δὴ κελεύσαι φησιν ὑπερορίου τῆς πόλεως καὶ τῶν ἀμφὶ τὴν πόλιν ἀγρῶν ὡς ἂν ἐχθροὺς αὐτῷ Χριστιανούς ἀπελάσαι.” Tr. McGiffert (1890)

⁴¹⁹ As at Hippolytus *Ref. Haer.* 4.28. See above, p97-8 and Introduction.ii for the attribution of demonic powers to images by Christians.

⁴²⁰ For the age of cult statues see Ch. 3.3.

temples and images might have been furnished with the technology to produce an ancient version of special effects, such as doors that automatically flew open, and fires that lit themselves.⁴²¹ Whether this would have been extended to speaking images is unknown, although there existed, at least in theory, complicated technologies for producing the effect.⁴²² This sort of manipulation must remain hypothetical, however, and we must assume that if and when it did occur, it followed the attested methods described above.

In simple technological terms then, the hollow wall technique was doubtless the easiest and most effective way of making an image appear to speak to devotees. The effect may have varied, although Poulsen recounts the eerie nature of the voice that emanated from his Epicurus head when his colleague experimented with its vocal potential.⁴²³ Certainly a dramatic and overwhelming effect must be imagined for Rufinus's story, to allow for the whole set up of the epiphanic appearance of the god/priest and the subsequent manipulation of female devotees. Alexander's snake-image was also clearly intended 'to astonish the crowd',⁴²⁴ and this particular method of oracle giving was only employed by the false prophet on occasions that demanded the client be particularly impressed, or when they had paid a large amount specifically for this form of the oracle.⁴²⁵ In any case, there must have been something convincing about these frauds, because they had to be exposed: the trickery was not common knowledge.

In other types of manipulation, the human intervention between god and image was certainly known, although this did not necessarily imply that the words of the image were any less important or divinely inspired. Within the spheres of magic and theurgy an image could be manipulated through enchantments, rituals, and in the production of the image, to essentially make it more receptive to the voice or presence of a god. Whilst modern scholars traditionally

⁴²¹ For the technology to create flames see: Eunap. 475 with Cumont (1903) 66; Lewy (1978) 247-8 and Mastrocinque (2002) 180.

⁴²² See Her. *De Aut.* 1.405ff; Vitruv. *De Arch.* 9.8.5.

⁴²³ See above, p95.

⁴²⁴ Luc. *Alex.* 26.

⁴²⁵ Luc. *Alex.* 26: "These oracles were called autophones and were not given to everybody promiscuously, but only to those who were noble, rich, and free-handed." (Εκαλοῦντο δὲ οἱ χρησμοὶ οὗτοι αὐτόφωνοι, καὶ οὐ πᾶσιν ἐδίδοντο οὐδὲ ἀνέδην, ἀλλὰ τοῖς εὐπαράφοις καὶ πλουσίοις καὶ μεγαλοδύροις) Tr. Harmon (1913). This makes it clear that the fees for the speaking image were over and above those of more basic oracles. Recipients of this special delivery included Severianus in regard to the invasion of Armenia (Luc. *Alex.* 27), and presumably the governor.

treat magic and theurgy as separate phenomena, with regards to image manipulation their forms are so similar that I will take them together at this point.⁴²⁶

Both the magical papyri and the treatises upon theurgy describe in considerable detail the various methods that could be used to create an image that spoke. In the magical papyri these are scattered amongst enchantments for various purposes, although the techniques display more similarities and variations upon a theme than distinctive differences. Often the giving of voice to an image is bound up with its animation, and at times it is difficult to tell exactly how the voice of the image will be received (that is, whether it will be heard out loud or delivered by other means, such as dreams). Several spells are intended to animate an image, thus making it oracular, and the processes involved are often quite lengthy and complex.⁴²⁷ One, often repeated, method, involves the use of a specially made hollow image, within which a spell or secret word can be inserted (written either on papyrus or on other material such as a bird's windpipe) as part of the animation process.⁴²⁸ The placing of words within the image appears to have importance for enlivening especially, and there is a very complex system of correct names and terminology that have to be followed. The enchantment of the images required much more extensive ritual than the spell placed within them, however, and these are just some of the rituals that can quite clearly justify the inclusion of magical images within the category of 'cult statues'.

PGM V.370-446, for example, is a detailed and developed spell for procuring oracular dreams with an image of Hermes.⁴²⁹ Here the image itself does not speak out loud, but facilitates the speaking through a dream, and as such remains the central point of the communication.⁴³⁰ Throughout the spell the image is referred to as the god, in much the same

⁴²⁶ Theurgy as a whole is a phenomenon found in later antiquity, reportedly founded by Julianus during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. See Dodds (1966) 285ff for the traditional history of theurgy and Johnston (2008) for rituals of animation in theurgy, whereas the use of images for magic can be found throughout the Greek and Roman periods. On the similarities between theurgy and Greco-Egyptian magic as found in the magical papyri, see Dodds (1966) 283f, although see now Haluszka (2008), who argues for a lack of significant evidence for clear animation ritual in the magical papyri.

⁴²⁷ See above, section 2 of this chapter.

⁴²⁸ For example: *PGM* IV.1841ff (a hollow statue in which to place magic scroll for animation); *PGM* IV.2360 (a hollow Hermes enclosing a written magic formula); *PGMV*.370-446 (an oracular Hermes with an inserted spell); *PGMI. Pap.* III.296 (hollowed out doll for putting papyrus inside). The same technique was used for animation rituals in necromancy: Eitrem (1991) 177-8 collects some of the evidence.

⁴²⁹ The text is discussed in detail at Eitrem (1991) 178-9.

⁴³⁰ It hardly needs noting that dream images of gods were known to regularly appear in the form of their image, as found in the well-known comments of Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.5; 2.33, 35, 39. See also Cic. *De nat. deor.*, 1.82;

way as temple images are referenced by authors such as Pausanias, and the prayer and question to which the oracular answer is required must be placed at the feet of the image. In addition, the image does not stand alone, but must be placed within a shrine and have its position consecrated with prayers and offerings of incense. Once all of this is done, and the prayers and questions are completed, the questioner must sleep with the shrine beside his head, and will then receive oracular dreams from the image/god. This ties the image to the dream, and hence the oracle, in a much closer way than reports of other dream oracles appear to.⁴³¹ Whilst there are a number of sanctuaries that were said to induce oracular dreams in those who slept at them, there is little to connect the image to the oracle, rather than the particularly holy nature of the immediate environment.⁴³² It might be that the image must be especially powerful because it is not within a larger consecrated ground, or it may be that we have here the specifics of a system of obtaining dream oracles that are not generally given for the larger sanctuaries.

In any case, there is no doubt in this instance, as in others, that it is the image that facilitates the communication between god and devotee, and that the image is intimately bound up with the identity of the deity. Similar descriptions are found in other spells involving the use of powerful images that can send dreams and perform other tasks.⁴³³ The manipulation here takes on a very different form, largely because of the way that the image is perceived: it is designed to be manipulated, and it is therefore not necessarily perverse and selfish, but is in fact the point in the image existing at all.

The case is similar in references to magic outside of the papyri, as well as in what is generally categorised as theurgy.⁴³⁴ Although there are, of course, ancient treatments of this sort of manipulation that are either openly sceptical or critical in tone, the methods that they attest to

Aelius Aristides, 2.32-4; 1.7; 4.50. See, for example, Elsner (2008) 205-6; Price (1990) 379. In literary terms, living mortals are one category that do not generally appear in dreams, cf. Reeson (2001) 5 with Ov. *Her.* 13.105-8.

⁴³¹ Although see above, n.430. For dreams in literature and epigraphy see Dodds (1966) 107-8; Eitrem (1991). The linguistic point that *eidolon*, *simulacrum*, and *imago* can all mean visions in dreams may help to elide dream images with sculptural images in conceptual terms. Cf. Bettini (1999) 14.

⁴³² For the powers associated with sleeping near an image see Ch. 3.5.

⁴³³ For example, *PGM* VII.878, in which an image of the 'Egyptian Lady Selene' has a complicated consecration and production procedure, receives offerings and prayers, and may be used to send dreams or attract a lover.

⁴³⁴ In many of the later references it is not really possible to tell whether theurgy proper or magic as a broader and more vague category is being referred to.

for enabling the images to speak tally with those in the more positive sources.⁴³⁵ Amongst these are some very detailed explanations of the procedures required, especially Book Three of Proclus's *De Mysteriis*, which is devoted entirely to the divination techniques employed within theurgic systems. The two principal forms were those relying on the use of *sumbola*, and those that involved the employment of an entranced medium. The former is of principal interest here, although in many practical and theoretical terms the two are not necessarily all that different. The *sumbola* divination appears to have been concerned mainly with the consecrating and animating of magical statues in order to obtain oracles from them, and was known as *telestike*.⁴³⁶ It is possible that many of the images that were so animated had temporary, rather than permanent powers, but it is not generally known what happens to an image beyond its animation and oracle delivery.

There is not scope in this thesis to recount all of the ancient arguments for and against theurgic divination, or all of the ways in which those who wrote about it (who are relatively prolific) believed it to work. The complex theological arguments require consideration within a complex literary and historical context that cannot be given justice in the space available.⁴³⁷ One of the main methods of Theurgic divination imbues the image with the potential to provide a mediatory role between men and gods, or to be possessed of divine power.⁴³⁸ The theoretical implications are closest to those of the magical rituals in which images are questioned and either animated or empowered to deliver responses.⁴³⁹

These rituals of animation appear to have occurred on a relatively small scale, but they are significant in suggesting the concerns surrounding the control of divine images and their potential power.⁴⁴⁰ Although other rituals surrounding speaking and/or oracular images in the

⁴³⁵ For the positive and negative accounts of theurgy see Clarke et al (2003) and Halliday (1913) 222 with e.g. Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 7; Proclus, in *Crat.* 36.20ff; in *Tim.* 3.6.13, 155.18, 1.51.25; Aug. *Civ. Dei* 10.11.

⁴³⁶ Dodds (1966) 292ff; cf. Procl., in *Tim.* 3.6.13.

⁴³⁷ They have been given excellent treatment elsewhere: Clarke (2001) 58ff and the Introduction and notes to Clarke et al (2003) cover much of the most important material; Johnston (2008) provides a good recent contextualisation for animation rituals in Theurgy specifically. Dodds (1966) is still useful as a general overview.

⁴³⁸ For the other forms of divination, especially the use of an entranced medium, see Dodds (1966) 292f; Proclus, *De Myst.* 3.

⁴³⁹ The distinction made by Haluszka (2008) between oracular images that spoke and those that delivered messages through dreams and other means is only relevant in terms of the form the animation takes: an image that is able to send dreams to a devotee clearly has as much power as one that can speak. For the role of magical ritual in theurgy, and for some of the interesting physical evidence, see Matrocinque (2002) esp. 173-5.

⁴⁴⁰ For the scale of theurgy at various times see Dodds (1966) 288. There is not necessarily a conflict between magical attempts to control and religious tendency to submission in relation to the gods in the Roman world, cf. Graf (1991) 188.

Roman world required specialist religious knowledge, this was normally related to the interpretation of their responses, rather than to the empowering of the image; the latter remains securely in the domain of the gods themselves. Critics of theurgy certainly felt that attempts to control divine power in this manner was inappropriate, and there is some literary evidence for tensions surrounding the magical control of images.⁴⁴¹ These manipulations also convey the desire that existed for images to speak and listen, and to take on that active role in human-divine relationships.

Within the context of more common verbal interactions with images, such as prayer and oracular consultation, evidence for human manipulation of cult statues comes as no great surprise. Whether those manipulated statues did so out of a desire to control them or to make money from them, they were responding to the need for images to take part in verbal communications with devotees in general, in the context of religious life of the Roman world. Although these images are initially the passive recipient of manipulations, they take on a sort of independent power through their magical enhancements or their contribution to the popularity of a cult.

2.5 A note on the written voices of images

Cult statues could also take on a communicative role through the written word, as has been noted with regards to the dedication of written prayers or votives and the use of magical scripts.⁴⁴² Images could also be written on directly or could speak through the first person inscriptions on their bases, demonstrating their potential as a communication channel between mortals, rather than solely between man and god. In addition, a number of poems narrated by cult statues contribute to the conception of the image as having voice as well as illuminating the manner in which cult statues were more generally perceived. These instances are not attested for very many cult images of the Roman world, and they do not automatically

⁴⁴¹ Iamb. *De Myst.* is largely a refutation of such criticisms, see e.g. *De Myst.* 5.1 with Clarke (2001) 39 and *De Myst.* 3.1 with Clarke (2001) 58; 65 n. 3.

⁴⁴² See above, section 2 of this chapter. We do have an indication of what some of these magical scripts might have looked like, both from the papyri and from physical finds, such as the Pergamene divinatory kit, cf. Mastrocinque (2002) 175-6, fig. 3. For debates on the purpose of the kit see this with Gordon (2002) 189.

form a cohesive group, but they are worthy of note for their demonstration of an additional facet of the cult image and its place in religions of the Roman world.

The Memnon statue at Thebes has been noted above for its audible nature, and it is one of the most communicative surviving statues of the Roman world. It remains covered in inscriptions to this day, some of which are addressed to the gods and others that record the presence of an individual devotee at the image.⁴⁴³ This is a method of communication not unknown in the modern world, and some images appear to attract more attention from those who would write on them than others.⁴⁴⁴ The practice does not seem to have been a particularly common one; although it is implied as well-known in some sources it is not generally discussed as a common aspect of worship.⁴⁴⁵ It may be that this form of writing onto images more commonly formed a votive expression or prayer, in a similar way to the written dedications placed on or near cult images for the attention of the deity.⁴⁴⁶ These written votives may also have been visible to others who viewed the image, to an extent publicising the act of interaction and extending the communication to other devotees. It is again unclear as to precisely how these words were meant to reach the divine, if at all, although the statue as central to communication is evidently an important concept.

Another form of visible writing was the inscription on the base of a cult statue. It is difficult to assess how many such bases we have in our corpus of evidence, for in general the base and statue were separated long ago, and it is not easy to tell whether those we have ever supported cult images. It has been suggested that cult statues were likely to be the least in need of an inscription, as the identity of the referent should have been fairly obvious, and the problem of uninscribed bases in general has been addressed previously.⁴⁴⁷ Some statue bases at least seem more likely to be associated with cult statues than others, and those that are inscribed in the first person and apparently indicate the presence of the deity or their response to a prayer

⁴⁴³ Collected in Bernand & Bernand (Eds) (1960). Some inscriptions refer to the image as a god, others as hero, oracle, etc.

⁴⁴⁴ See Platt (2003) for an interesting discussion of modern writing on ancient images.

⁴⁴⁵ E.g. Apul. *Apol.* 54.7: "Have you written a petition on the thigh of some statue" (Votum in alicuius statuae femore signasti). The suggestion is that this could be interpreted as either sorcery or standard ritual practice. Cf Philostr. *Her.* 3.2; Juv. 10.56.

⁴⁴⁶ E.g. Strabo, 8.374; *IG* IV² 121.24; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.33; Silius Ital. 6.691; Ov. *Met.* 8.755; Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.* 5.16-17. In the Imperial cult: *Corp. Pap.* RaineriI no. XX; *P. Oxy.* XVII.2130, l. 17ff; Bulnethal (1913) 335-6; Kunderewicz (1961) 127-8. For the dedication of written votives on or near images generally see also Versnel (1981) 36 n.144; Boardman (1954) 188.

⁴⁴⁷ See Introduction.i.a. That cult statues are unlikely to need inscriptions at all: Stewart (2003) 187.

might fall into this category.⁴⁴⁸ So the formulation ‘I am come’ both gives the image a voice and associates it with the presence of the divinity, certainly alluding to the presence of the god in or near the image.⁴⁴⁹ The evidence is too uncertain for a clear argument to be drawn from it, but there is certainly the possibility that images could be given a written voice through words that seem to have come from them being inscribed on their bases is relevant here.⁴⁵⁰

The ability of the written word to give voice to an image was a concept played with by the authors, particularly poets, of the Roman world.⁴⁵¹ Instances of statues speaking or narrating in ancient literature have been noted previously, and authors of the Roman world had particular interest in narrating poems through the voice of images of Priapus.⁴⁵² As well as several of the *Carmina Priapea*, the works of well-known poets included playful use of this statue-as-narrator technique.⁴⁵³ Horace’s *Satires* include a poem narrated by a Priapus image that opens with some clear comments about his material status:

“Once I was a trunk of wild fig-tree, an useless log:
when the artificer, uncertain whether he should make a stool or a Priapus of
me,
determined I should be a god. Since then I am a god”⁴⁵⁴

The status of the image as a material object is highlighted here, at the same time as making it clear that this image is possessed of life: this statue goes on to narrate what Priapus the statue (rather than Priapus the god) has seen and experienced.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁴⁸ For a selection of such bases see: Weinreich (1915) 38-45; *MAMA* VIII.446; L. R. *Hellenica* 13 (1965) 129-31. This formulation is in contrast to inscriptions that record votive offerings, for example, which is far more common, or the occasional reference to the sculptor, suggested at Paus. 5.10.2-3 of Pheidias’s Olympian Zeus.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Weinreich *Op. cit.*; Lane Fox (1986) 134. For the formula of a god being included as a dedicant on inscriptions relating to statues in Palmyra and the Near East, see Kaizer (2004) 172-5, some of these could imply the direct involvement of the god in his own worship, e.g. *CIL* XII 1277 found in France and from an emigrated Syrian.

⁴⁵⁰ For further material from the Greek world, see Gross (1992) 139-44.

⁴⁵¹ For the following techniques in the Greek world see Steiner (1993).

⁴⁵² See the introduction of Parker (1988) for a discussion of the literary type and known examples. Cf. Introduction.ii.

⁴⁵³ E.g. *CP* 26, 43, 50.

⁴⁵⁴ Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.1-3: “Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum, / cum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum, / maluit esse Deum. Deus inde ego”.

⁴⁵⁵ Hor. *Sat.* 1.8. See Hardie (1993) for Horace’s literary techniques employing the visual arts. Cf. Ov. *Fast.* 9.395-416; Nagle (1995) 15-16.

Conversely, Propertius's poem narrated by the god and statue of Vertumnus in Rome's Etruscan quarter purposefully elides the god and the image completely. The narrator is very explicitly the statue and describes its physical appearances as such along with what it sees from its permanent location, at the same time, the narrator is very explicitly the god himself.⁴⁵⁶

“Do you who marvel that my body has so many shapes
learn from the lips of the god the signs of Vertumnus”⁴⁵⁷

In this poem the statue describes and explains itself to an imaginary passer-by as though with the voice of the deity, and it imagines what questions the viewer would have about its appearance and worship. The poem gives the image voice at the same time as highlighting the ways in which the image speaks without one, through its decoration, appearance, gifts it receives and general treatment.⁴⁵⁸

The text of *Zeus the Tragic Actor* has been mentioned, and the characters of this tale are all statues of the gods, having been called to assembly by Zeus.⁴⁵⁹ It is here inferred that every god who speaks is an image, although in the instances of some it is clearer than others: the Colossos of Rhodes contributes to the argument, and the image of Hermes Agoraios comes specifically from the Athenians as a messenger.⁴⁶⁰ Lucian is trying to contribute to the humour of the piece through this presentation, taking literally the elision of image and deity and applying it to the divine world as well as the mortal one.⁴⁶¹ The depiction of statues of the gods walking and talking on Olympus adds to the ridiculousness of the debate, and creates room for some social commentary at the same time.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁶ Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2 e.g. l. 49-55 which describe the location of the image and what it sees.

⁴⁵⁷ Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2.1-2: “Qui mirare meas tot in uno corpore formas, / accipe Vertumni signa fatente deo.”

⁴⁵⁸ Vertumnus actually also describes the inscription on his base: Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2 l. 59-64: “Stipes acernus eram, properanti falce dolatus, / ante numam grata pauper in urbe dues. / at tibi, mamurri, formae caelator aenae, tellus artificis ne terat osca manus, / qui me tot docilem potuisti fundere in usus. / unum opus est. operi non datur unus honos.” For Propertius's use of statuary generally see Pillinger (1969). The narration also encourages the reader to envisage the image, to look on it although it is not visible, cf. Fowler (1991) 28-9 for this as an effect of all ekphrasis.

⁴⁵⁹ See Introduction.i.a, p6 with n.15 for the text.

⁴⁶⁰ Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 11; 33f.

⁴⁶¹ For aspects of this ridicule see Ch. 5.3.

⁴⁶² For the social commentary of the piece see Bracht Branham (1989) 167-75 with discussion in Introduction.ii.

Statues that speak through epigraphy and literature do so in a variety of ways, and do not form a complete picture of verbal interactions with cult images. To some extent their use as literary narrators or characters may be dependent on the literary devices employed, and as such can only partially indicate what the perceptions of these images were. Statues that were written on had a voice in a different way, allowing written words to be associated with the voice of the image or of those who viewed and worshipped it. All of these instances do, however, expand the concept of the cult statue as a communicator rather than an artefact.

2.6 Conclusions on verbal interactions with cult images

As is the case for many interactions with cult statues in the Roman world, verbal interactions form a vast spectrum of exchanges and communications that informed and maintained human relationships with the divine. They demonstrate a number of possible conceptions of cult images as well as some of the boundaries within which image interactions took place.

One of the most significant consequences of assessing the whole range of verbal interactions with cult statues is relatively straightforward, for it is the existence of so many references to so many types of interactions that allows us to begin to understand the prominence of the image as a communicator in ancient thought.⁴⁶³ The channels of communication might be from mortal to deity, statue or other mortal, as much as they might be from deity to statue or mortal, and the processes that allowed this to happen remain complex, varied and purposefully blurred.

Importantly, the evidence suggests that this was one of the qualities of cult statues that was thought about in the Roman world. There is no assumption of a correct understanding of the ways that images should speak and be spoken to, and there is no suggestion that there ought to be one. The passage of Plutarch makes it clear that speaking statues can be understood in a variety of ways, and the indications in many other sources support this.⁴⁶⁴ Similarly the direction of prayers and requests to images could be approached with the clear implication that the image itself could hear, or with the general idea that the words addressed to the image would somehow reach the deity.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ For the cult image as a method of communication generally see Mylonopoulos (forthcoming).

⁴⁶⁴ See above, section 3 of this chapter.

⁴⁶⁵ See above, section 2 of this chapter.

The literary techniques discussed above help to illustrate the tensions in these coexisting perceptions of cult images, for the narrative voice of the divine statue often serves to suggest animism in the image at the same time as highlighting its difference from the god itself. In many respects it seems that this is part of the context in which all verbal interactions with images could be understood, for the statues are generally viewed as having some quality that statues do not generally have, be it the ability to speak, hear or foretell the future. These images could be understood as the same as the god, as a focal point for man and god in their communications, as a channel through which the god could hear or speak and even as tool with which to manipulate others' perceptions of the god.

The expectation and desire for images to take an active part in these interactions is highlighted by the attempts at human manipulation of images in order to enable them to do so. These manipulations also illustrate the tensions over the control of the gods and their representations, at the same time as illustrating that, in general, human manipulation was not believed to be behind those statues that had apparently miraculous abilities of communication.

Cult statues had and heard many voices, and they existed in a context in which this was both expected and revered. The use of images to verbally communicate with the divine placed them in a crucial position for the security of mortal-divine relationships on individual and public levels. The absence and presence of the deity in the image and in the communication was a source of desire and tension, and heavily influenced the way in which cult statues were treated and understood.

Chapter Three: Walking the Earth

5.1 Static or mobile? An introduction to the movements of cult images.

It will already be apparent that the role of cult images was not theoretically or ideologically static; that in conceptual terms the cult statue was an artefact and symbol of great fluidity and movement. However, in *practical* terms, these images are often perceived as inherently static items, defined by their geographical locations in sanctuaries and temples. This is obvious from the very titles of scholarly works that discuss cult statues, such as Martin's *Römische Tempelkultbilder: eine archäologische Untersuchung zur späten Republik*, in which he recognises that his definition is restrictive, but nevertheless relies explicitly upon the temple setting for the allocation of the prefix 'cult' to an image.⁴⁶⁶ In addition, certain types of evidence rely rather heavily upon the geographical location of cult images for their identification, particularly coinage and other visual representations: the intercolumnar statue is generally taken to represent a cult image and is so used for identifying purposes.⁴⁶⁷ However, even this depiction of a cult image's location as within a temple is perhaps misleading: images on coins do not normally show the statue in that part of the temple in which it would stand, but brought forward so as to fit within the media in which it is produced (see fig. 3.1).⁴⁶⁸



Fig. 3.1: Thracian coin of Gordian, 238-244 CE, depicting a

⁴⁶⁶ Martin (1992). Esp. 7-9, at which he makes it clear that he is in fact using the definition in order to clearly limit the images under discussion. Cf. Stewart (2003), 213-4: "Cult statues are depicted as cult statues are, in their correct location." Cf. Introduction p9-11.

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Vermeule (1987) whose material is primarily numismatic and who deals with these issues of identification. Not all agree that the representation is straightforwardly a cult statue within a temple, as it would normally be located at the very back of the cella, rather than between the columns, leading some to suggest that the coin images allude to epiphanic encounters or processions of the image, e.g. Trell (1964) 241ff. See Stewart (2003) 208f and Introduction.i.a p9-11.

⁴⁶⁸ Although there are some instances in which an attempt at scale, and a suggestion of distance from temple doors to statue can be found. For discussion of these see again Stewart (2003) 209 and Introduction.i.a.

cult statue of Aphrodite between columns within a tetrastyle temple.⁴⁶⁹

The problem for modern scholars is a relatively obvious one, and one which has been touched upon in other sections of this thesis: matters of definition for us may be rather different from matters of definition for those who interacted with these images within the religions of the Roman world. When considering the ancient evidence it is not always possible to use linguistic tools to ascertain whether any given image is specifically a recipient of cult, just as the social function of a described or actual image is not always known or given enough detail for us to establish its role within ancient religions.⁴⁷⁰ Geographical location, therefore, is a common tool by which many scholars draw the boundaries of what is, and what is not, a cult image. The method is fairly sound, in the sense that these physical boundaries often do demarcate a cult image: most cult statues were housed in temples most of the time. However, the cult image did not *need* to be in this physical location in order to maintain its function, and although a geographical definition is useful at times, it contributes greatly to the predominant concept in modern scholarship of the cult image as a static, if not immovable, object.

In contrast, evidence for the mobility of cult statues suggests that the location of an image within a temple or sanctuary was not always necessary for the identification of its status. The cult images of the Roman world could move in a variety of ways at a range of different times, and these movements formed an important part of the interactions with devotees that they experienced. Not all forms of movement required that the image leave a temple, but all challenge the notion of the static cult statue. In addition to furthering our understanding of the ways in which cult images could be defined and interacted with, the role of moving images within the religions of the Roman world also provides further evidence for the almost unlimited potential of cult images: animation is often considered to be an unmistakable sign of life, and as such the attribution of this quality to objects made of essentially inanimate materials demonstrates yet again how complex and how vital cult images could be.

The setting is, naturally, of some importance to the relationship; there is a certain truth in Elsner's assertion that the viewing of a cult image in the ritual context of the sanctuary was

⁴⁶⁹ Jurukov, *Deultum*, 344; Draganov 1383-8 (O108/R617) = *SNG Bobokov* 1383-8.

⁴⁷⁰ For a fuller discussion of the issue of location in matters of definition, see Introduction.i.a. p9-11.

importantly associated with man's relationship with the divine.⁴⁷¹ There is no doubt that the clarity of this relationship must have been relatively secure within the temple/sanctuary setting, but this is not the only possible viewing in which an image can certainly be a cult statue, especially given the obvious ritual context of the various processions and excursions upon which an image could embark. Cult images did not need to travel only for the purposes of standard ritual practice; on occasion it might be necessary for a cult image to temporarily travel abroad, to accompany an embassy or a general for example. That such images continued to be worshipped despite being removed from their normal location is evidenced by tales such as that of ambassadors taking an especially venerated image of Apollo from Miletus on an embassy to the emperor in 217/8 CE.⁴⁷² The instance is not isolated, and the practice is attested in both literary and epigraphic evidence from various times and locations throughout the Roman world.⁴⁷³

The modes of movement employed by cult images range from the very common to the very bizarre: they could be carried in processions or otherwise moved as part of standard ritual; they could be transported to other cult locations, through theft, at divine instigation, or during wars; and they could be animated (by gods or mortals) in order to move of their own accord.⁴⁷⁴ In addition, images could be emphatically *prevented* from movement, through the clipping of wings or the positioning of fetters. This chapter will deal with each of these types of movement, assessing their implications for the interactions possible with cult statues, as well as for the role of these images within the religious systems of the Roman world. The evidence for these activities is considerable, although it varies tremendously in quality and in detail. For many of these types of movement I shall consider a few of the most detailed and illustrative examples, rather than attempting to catalogue every recorded instance of movement, for it is through these instances that we can begin to assess the implications for the role of images most fully.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ Elsner (1995) 93.

⁴⁷² *Pan. Lat.* 8.8.4. Cf. *Acta Alex.* 8.44-8 (Musrillo); L. R. CRAI (1981) 530ff; Mollet, 1.7 (1924) no. 274.

⁴⁷³ See above, and also Knoepfler (1997) 17-39 on the evidence (mainly epigraphic) for the movement of a sacred image of Eros from Thespieae to Athens and back, with further examples.

⁴⁷⁴ Images are also described as having moved of their own accord, although this is theoretically equated with divine instigation. See below, this chapter section 5.

⁴⁷⁵ Although I intend to include as much of the evidence as possible, it is not a productive use of the space of this thesis to, for example, list *every* instance of an image being perceived to have moved as a bad omen; the frequency of these instances is more important than their specific content. A fairly exhaustive list of these activities can be found at *ThesCRA* 5.VII-IX.

It is difficult to overemphasise how often cult images might be seen outside of their temple context; although any given image might only venture from its *cella* once or twice a year, in larger cities this might mean that some image or another was visible outside of the sanctuary on a very frequent basis. Furthermore, not all images were *ever* visible within their temples except to certain priests of the cult, and if they were encountered by laypeople at all it would have been on just such days of ritual procession.⁴⁷⁶

Despite these occasions on which an image might (albeit temporarily) leave its temple, and the uncertainty of the temple context as being the norm for all those encountering cult images, it remains unwise and unnecessary to reject the idea of the cult image as primarily static altogether. Whilst the cult statue was probably more mobile than we might assume in *practical* terms, *ideologically* there is a certain amount of evidence for its permanent location within the boundaries of a temple as being significant for its status as a cult image.

Those who place great emphasis on the physical location of an image for its definition draw largely on arguments based upon the placing of images within temples in literary and visual depictions. Certainly, we frequently encounter the description of an image alongside its temple in the literature, but this is very much dependent upon the intentions of the author, and numerous descriptions of images locate them within processions, or describe them for aesthetic value and therefore do not discuss the temple setting.⁴⁷⁷ As for the visual representations upon which so many discussions of cult images are based, the problem here is fairly obvious. If, for example, we find that the majority of depictions of cult images on coins represent the statue as within a temple, this may be because we rely on these iconographic clues in order to identify them as cult statues. It is obvious that our need for visual clues that would enable us to identify a statue represented as a cult image heavily influences the way in

⁴⁷⁶ Pausanias frequently notes his inability to see the cult image itself, and has to rely on descriptions of sanctuary guides. He also comments occasionally on his luck at having encountered specific images, because of arriving at the sanctuary on the correct day for such a viewing. Images that are visible only on certain occasions: Paus. 3.20.3-4; 2.4.7; 3.14.4; 2.35.11; 7.23.9; 9.39.8; 2.11.7; 2.13.7; 10.32.9; cf. 4.32.1-2 in which the image of Zeus Ithome at Messenia stays in the priest's house for a year; Plut. *Vit. Arat.* 32; Lucian, *DDS* 31; Themistius, *Or.* 20.235. Cf. Elsner (1995) 88f, and Hewitt (1909) 83-92 (which focuses upon Greek temples, but includes the Roman period). Other images were only allowed to be seen by certain groups of people, often regulated by gender (e.g. Paus. 3.22.7; 8.48.4). Cf. Corbett (1970) 151f with 156 n. 11. See Introduction.i.a. n.26.

⁴⁷⁷ For example, compare Pausanias, whose structure and intent often dictate that the image be described as within a temple, to Pliny, whose *Natural History* only very rarely notes any sacred setting for an image. On Pausanias, see Pritchett (1998) 168; Elsner (1995) 125-55; Coleman & Elsner (1995); for Pliny, see Stewart (2005) 185f; Isager (1991) 54f. See also below. Locating an image within a temple also naturally excludes the cult statues of domestic and rural cult.

which we describe representations of statues in the visual arts.⁴⁷⁸ It is interesting to note, for example, that the image of Ephesian Artemis can often be identified without its temple because its form is so specific and so well known in comparison to those of others.⁴⁷⁹

Epigraphic evidence does also often tie the image to the temple, and again this is partially because of the nature of the inscriptions: often those instances in which cult statues are referred to are at times when a temple, image and altar are being dedicated or repaired together. Whilst the three aspects of worship are clearly intimately linked, this does not automatically mean that they must always function together at the same time.⁴⁸⁰ Cult statues in isolation do not feature prominently in the epigraphic evidence generally, primarily because of the type of occasion at which an inscription might be set up, most commonly in cases of dedications and consecrations.⁴⁸¹

That visual and literary representations of cult images generally place them within the context of a temple is perhaps not surprising, although this does not detract from the importance of such representation for our understanding of the mobility of the cult image. It is generally fairly obvious why cult images are given a certain context within the literary evidence: Pausanias, for example, almost invariably describes the cult image within its sanctuary context, as much because this is fundamental to the structure of his work as because this is where he found the images.⁴⁸² One might compare Pliny, whose *Natural History* describes many images that might be classified as objects of cult, but because of his secular focus only

⁴⁷⁸ The literature on cult statues as coin types is extensive, and there is certainly no room to cover all of the issues here. See, for example: Stewart (2005) esp. 207ff; Martin (1992) *passim*, but esp. 8-10; and especially the thorough study of Vermeule (1987). For typologies and identification, see also Price (1984) and Trell (1977) 1957; Hill (1989); Zanker (1997).

⁴⁷⁹ The same is of course true of other famous and peculiar images, although they often remain the subject of debate. See Introduction.i.a, with figs Intr.1-2

⁴⁸⁰ For the tie between the altar and image specifically, see Vit. 4.5.1; 4.9. Cf. Stambaugh in *ANRW* 2.16.1, 554-608, esp. 571-2 and Elsner (1995) 357 n.10. For the epigraphic evidence: *CIL* VIII 08309 (from Cuicul), dedication of a temple and an acrolithic *simulacrum*, along with an official to care for the image; *AE* 1896, 0100 = *CIL* XIII 03653 (from Augusta Treverorum), the restoration of a shrine and *simulacrum*; *AE* 1905, 0108 = *ILAlg* 2, 2000, the dedication of a temple and cult statue; *AE* 1949, 0054 (from Bou Khchim), a temple and a *simulacrum* dedicated together, and so on; For example, Charneux (1992) 335-43 (an inscription from Argos, 1st C. C. E. in which a foreigner offers to refund a cult statue of Hephaistos stolen from the temple). Note, however, that the proper location of the image as within the temple is important here. Another inscription, *SIG*³ 695 (= Sokolowski *LSAM* no. 33 = *SEG* 28.1606 = *SEG* 40.1016) refers to the building of a new temple, to which the old (apparently now homeless) image is to be moved. Cf. Paus. 3.22.6-7 in which the temple of Apollo in Geronthrae was destroyed by fire, as was much of the cult image. A new temple was built, and the remains (the ivory head) of the statue were moved to the new temple.

⁴⁸¹ Some inscriptions do refer to images within processions or to the permanent movement of images. These instances are discussed individually below. Epigraphic evidence and cult images generally are discussed in the Introduction.i.a p13f.

⁴⁸² Cf. Pritchett (1998) 168; and Hutton (2008).

rarely acknowledges their religious function and/or setting.⁴⁸³ It is not necessary to explain the motives of each ancient author who chose to describe cult images; rather, it is important to acknowledge that the focus of the source very much influences the context in which an image is described. In general, if it is the religious function of an image that is of primary importance, we are also likely to be given the religious context of the image in geographical and physical terms. What is of greater significance for our understanding of the typical locating of the cult statue within the confines of a temple is the relative uniformity of pictorial representations of cult statues, as argued by scholars such as Stewart and Martin.⁴⁸⁴

I have pointed to a number of significant implications of the use of coin types and representations to define and categorise cult images, and a further note is indeed necessary on the apparent uniformity of these depictions. The subject of coin types that represent cult images has been thoroughly covered by others, and for that reason I do not wish to address arguments over their reliability as representations or how literally one might take them as evidence for the actual positioning or appearance of cult images. Vermeule's study of cult images is essentially an assessment of the numismatic evidence, and he covers these arguments quite thoroughly.⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, Trell, Hill and Zanker cover the typologies and the arguments surrounding numismatic representations of cult statues and monuments more generally.⁴⁸⁶ What I wish to point out about this evidence is that a significant majority of numismatic representations of cult statues locate them clearly within a temple, and that in itself requires little debate. Obviously there *are* other types, although their identification with cult images may often be less secure as a consequence of their absence from such an explanatory location. This is indicative of one of the major problems for us in ascertaining how important the placement of a cult statue within its temple was for its recognition: just because *we* need to see the context in order to know that the image is one of cult does not mean that the coins' contemporaries did.

⁴⁸³ Pliny generally makes exceptions when there is a significant anecdote to be associated with the image that relies upon its religious context, as is the case at for his description of the knight who fell in love with Aphrodite at Knidos, *NH* 36.4.21 (discussed more fully in Ch. 5.4). See above, n.477.

⁴⁸⁴ Stewart (2003) esp. 207ff; Martin (1992) *passim*, but esp. 8-10. The most thorough study of cult images through numismatic evidence is Vermeule (1987). See also above.

⁴⁸⁵ Vermeule (1987), although it is not really his intention to place the images on the coins within an external context.

⁴⁸⁶ Trell (1964); Hill (1989); Zanker (1997).

Additional visual representations of cult statues do not necessarily shed a great deal of light on the issue. At times, a temple location might serve to indicate a specific cult image, as can be seen in an engraved gem depicting the Pheidian Zeus at Olympia, whose enormous form completely fills the temple space that is used to frame him (fig. Intr.2). Roman wall paintings that depict cult images might do so through the representation of a temple or sanctuary surroundings, but the iconographic tools available to wall painters were rather greater than for the makers of coin dies. Alternative clues can be provided by ritual accoutrements, depictions of sacrificial remains, the presence of worshippers, and so on.⁴⁸⁷ Essentially, the problem remains that throughout literary and visual representations of cult images we are reliant upon the clues provided by context in order to understand that the image is the subject of some devotion. That it was common practice to locate the cult image within a temple and/or sanctuary certainly supports the idea that this was primarily where it belonged, but a conception of the cult image as primarily fixed within these boundaries cannot be based on this evidence alone.

3.2 Images in transit: temporary transport during festivals, processions and embassies

The movement of cult images in processions and festivals is widely known, and these types of temporary movement present the least challenge to the concept of the image as immovably located within its temple: the cult statue on procession or embassy is expected to return to the temple, to its home. Those who interacted with the images during festivals or other temporary excursions could be expected to retain the association of image with temple, for it was its very removal from the temple that made such an encounter a notable religious event. However, the frequency with which this occurred can hardly be over emphasised, and it is important to note just how often cult images might be seen separately from their sanctuary and temple setting. In cities, statues were carried into the theatre or circus in order to witness the performances there, and they accompanied victorious generals in their triumphs.⁴⁸⁸ All around the Roman world statues were carried out of their temples in order for specific rituals to be carried out, such as purification and bathing, and at times the procession of the image

⁴⁸⁷ For the depiction of cult statues in the various phases of Roman wall painting, see Stewart (2003) 215-20.

⁴⁸⁸ Images carried to the theatre: Dio 44.6.3; Paus. 1.29.2 (cf. *IG*² 1006, 12; 1008, 14; 1001, 11f; 1011), to the circus: Dio 47.40.4; 73.17.4; Suet. *Claud.* 11.2-3, in triumphs: Suet. *Aug.* 16.

seems to have been the aim in itself.⁴⁸⁹ In addition, the epigraphic evidence points to a variety of officials whose primary responsibility was to transport, carry, or attend to images during excursions from the temple.⁴⁹⁰ Cult statues could also be transported in order to take part in the festivals of other gods, to provide support in war, or to accompany an embassy;⁴⁹¹ essentially, they could, and did, leave home when they needed to.

What is apparent from the examples, however, is that whilst interaction with images outside of the temple was perhaps frequent, it could also be problematic. This might have been particularly the case for those images that were not normally visible to the average worshipper, being locked in an inaccessible *cella* and tended to only by religious officials. These images, only encountered in the circumstances of movement outside of the temple, were often treated with some caution when they were revealed. This can be seen in an example cited by Pausanias as occurring at Sicyon, where certain secret cult images were transferred to the sanctuary of Dionysus for one night of the year under the cover of night. The festival included the carrying of torches and hymns, and the nocturnal setting certainly adds to the general secrecy and solemnity that surrounds the subject of their movement.⁴⁹² The implication is that transport of an image outside of its temple had to be in some way regulated, as is certainly also suggested by the presence of officials responsible for transport in the epigraphic evidence: it could not be just anybody who moved the image, for it was a task that came with religious responsibility.⁴⁹³

Further instances of transportation and processions can be said to have involved some sort of narrative element, perhaps a ritual re-enactment of the initial arrival of the image, or the use

⁴⁸⁹ For purification and bathing, see Ch. 1.. Processions in which the visibility of the image seems to have been the goal of the festival: Diod. Sic. 17.50-1; Strabo, 17.1.43; Paus. 9.16.1; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.23; Tac. *Ann.* 3.7.1; Paus. 9.19.3 (cf. *IG* XII 2, 503 and 527 = XII. *Supp.* P33); Livy, 27.37; Ovid, *Fasti* 1.179-90; Paus. 1.29.2; 2.7.5-6; 2.7.8; 2.17.4; *SIG*³ 589.40.

⁴⁹⁰ The *sebastophoroi* of the imperial cult seem to have had responsibility for the carrying of images: L.R. *Rev. Phil.* (1939) 122-8 = *Op. Min. Sel.* II.1275-81; L.R. (1960) 323 = *Op. Min. Sel.* II. 839; *BCH* 24 (1900) 338-41. In the festival of Oenoanda at least, the *sebastophoroi* were also responsible for carrying the main cult image of Apollo, along with those of the imperial cult: Wörrle (1988) 227ff with Mitchell (1990). Other officials may have been those associated with specific ritual processions or movement, whose duties imply the carrying of the statue: L.R. *RHR* 98 (1928) 57 = *Op. Min. Sel.* II.1009; *BE* (1950) 134 p171; *BE* (1954) 52; (1958) 274, 277, 413 p303; *Anat. Stud.* 2 (1952) 129 no.2. See also Ch.1.2 esp. p49-50 for additional officials with similar responsibilities.

⁴⁹¹ Paus. 1. 20.3; 3.20.4-7; 7.20.1; Suet., *Aug.*, 16 (cf. Versnel (1981) 38-42); *I. Ephesos* 2026 = *SEG* XXXI 955; *Aug. Civ. Dei.* 5.26; *Pan. Lat.* 8.8.4; *Acta Alex.* 8.44-8; L. R., *C.R.A.I.* (1981) 530ff; Mollet 1.7 (1924) no. 274.

⁴⁹² Paus. 2.7.5-6. The images are so secret that Pausanias can provide little information about them, although he tells us that the first is called Baccheus and the second Lysius (The Deliverer). For a similar nocturnal procession, see Paus. 7.19.6-10.

⁴⁹³ See above, n.490. Cf. Price (1984) 188-9.

of an image to tell a tale about a god. The aniconic image of Cybele, for example, was transported through the city of Rome to the spot on the river at which it had arrived, in a conscious allusion to that famous event.⁴⁹⁴ Similar allusions to the history of cult statues can be seen in the processions of the image of Hera at Samos and the images described by Lucian in his *De Dea Syria*, amongst others.⁴⁹⁵ A more complicated instance, the famous Daidala festival, involved the carrying of several cult images that were then destroyed.⁴⁹⁶ The entire ritual has been the subject of much debate, and explanations have been sought in mythological re-enactments, hierogamy, and ritual purification.⁴⁹⁷ These examples do not necessarily differ in purpose from simpler processions, for they are also intended to make the image visible and form part of its worship, but they add to this aspect one in which the image can be seen as a sort of character within a narrative, an active participant in the telling of its own history.

Essentially, these instances of transportation were ritual events, regulated in the same manner as any other formal image interaction, and for this reason their theoretical implications are quite different from those of the more irregular or unusual circumstances of movement. When a statue is brought out of a temple by a religious official it remains associated with its temple context, and it functions within undefined but understood parameters. It might be that the image is only seen on these occasions, in which case the procession forms an important part of the devotee's relationship with the image and the god; it would be fair to suggest that an element of epiphanic encounter was involved when an image, normally secret and concealed, was revealed in order for the devotee to complete its worship of the deity represented.⁴⁹⁸

That this could be the case is most clearly seen in the temples of Egypt and the Near East, where statues of the gods were brought out with an explicitly revelatory or epiphanic motive.⁴⁹⁹ Many scholars draw a distinct line between these 'Oriental' practices and those of the Roman world, for they were part of a religious environment in which no images could be seen outside of this context, in which a priest occasionally and temporarily removed the

⁴⁹⁴ Ovid, *Fasti* 4.179-90. The narrative and further sources for it are discussed below in this chapter, section 3.

⁴⁹⁵ Athenaeus 15.672ff; Lucian, *DDS* 47 (cf. Lightfoot (2003) 269-71). Cf. The transportation of Eleutherian Dionysus at Athens (Paus. 1.29.2) and the image of Artemis Limnatis at Patrae (Paus. 7.20.8).

⁴⁹⁶ Recounted at Paus. 9.2.7-3.8; Plut. *Chair.* 388.

⁴⁹⁷ See Schachter (1981) 245-50; Prandi (1983) 82-94. The festival is discussed more fully in Ch. 5.2.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. Apuleius's comments regarding the image of Isis, which articulates this feeling quite clearly, although is of course specific to this cult: Apul. *Met.* 11.19.1; 24.5. See also Platt (2002) and (forthcoming).

⁴⁹⁹ See Ch. 2.3.

image from the temple where it was normally concealed from the public eye. This is taken as directly opposing relationships with the cult images of the traditional Roman religions, many of which could be accessed far more frequently.⁵⁰⁰ However, for those images that *were* normally hidden from view, temporary visibility must have taken on significant meaning, and indeed could be seen to allow a specific type of acquaintance and interaction with the god that was not normally possible.⁵⁰¹

When an image left its temple as part of regular ritual activity, whether it was normally visible to worshippers or not, it also took on a very active role in its own worship. Cult images that were transported to the theatre went to watch the performances; statues that took part in triumphal processions might have demonstrated the involvement of the god in that military cause and with the individuals involved; images that recreated their own provenance narratives in ritual processions were telling their own story; and images that were transported for a further purpose such as bathing took part in intimate interactions with mortals outside of the temple domain. The importance of this active role points to the centrality of the image in terms of human relationships formed with the divine. A neat example can be found in an anecdote about Augustus, who was said to have banned the image of Poseidon from a procession in order to communicate his anger at the god.⁵⁰² Suetonius may not be our most reliable source, especially when it comes to outlining Augustus's motives, but the story suggests a manner of acting upon the god through the image that must nevertheless have been understood. If the image is not present, then the god is not present either, and is excluded from involvement in the ritual.⁵⁰³

This consequence has the reverse implication of taking images of gods on embassies or to war, which we hear of in both the literary and the epigraphic evidence. These instances often involve the transportation of particularly ancient and venerated images, such as the Ephesian Artemis and an Apollo from Miletus, both of which visited emperors of Rome alongside ambassadors.⁵⁰⁴ It is common in these instances to find that the images continue to be venerated outside of the temple setting, and indeed this was vital to the success of the excursion: the images were clearly not being transported in order to impress the emperor with

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ On the visibility of cult images generally, see Introduction.i.a; Ch. 1.1; 1.3; 6.3.

⁵⁰² Suet. *Aug.* 16.

⁵⁰³ Or the god is at least conscious of, and in some way effected by, its image's absence.

⁵⁰⁴ *Acta Alex.* 8.44-8; L. R., *CRAI* (1981) 530ff; Mollet, 1.7 (1924) no. 274; *Pan. Lat.* 8.8.4; *I. Ephesos* 2026 = *SEG* XXXI 955.

their aesthetic charm, but were intended to facilitate and/or demonstrate the presence of the deity represented. The practicalities of this are unsurprisingly not explained to us in our sources, and we cannot say whether the image was intended to attract the focus of the deity, to be a vessel for it or to be elided with it completely. As is often the case for the religions of the Roman world, it is probable that the matter depended very much upon the individual and the image, and that there was no one way of perceiving these ambassadorial images. What is clear, however, is that this is not mere symbolism, for cult images could not be transported without accepting the religious implications, as is clear from the duties of individuals devoted to their care and movement. These images were intended to carry the power of the deity with them, to make the embassies that they accompanied a success, and so these too required the active involvement of the image and of the divine.⁵⁰⁵

The temporary transport of cult images, whether as part of a regular ritual procession or as a special excursion to benefit its devotees, was something that allowed the image to interact with its worshippers in a different manner than that prescribed by its usual temple setting. It was not without its risks and dangers, and could not be undertaken lightly, just as all interactions with cult images came with some level of responsibility. In leaving its temple the image could become actively involved in the religious life surrounding it, and was not a mere recipient of gifts or witness of prayers. The procession of an image to be active in events that did not take place in its temple, such as the spectacles of the circus or the political encounters of embassies, suggests that whilst the temple was normally its home, its power could, and often needed to, extend beyond that.

3.3 Statues in transition: the theft, transport and migration of cult images

The general perception that the cult image was essentially static is particularly challenged by narratives of permanent movement, demonstrating most clearly that whilst cult statues were often found within the boundaries of a temple and sanctuary, this was not necessary for the identification of their status. There was more than one way in which such a migration narrative could be told: within the context of a provenance myth; at the apparent instigation of the represented divinity itself; as part of the spoils of war; and as a consequence of theft by

⁵⁰⁵ An additional question is also raised as to the absence of the image from its temple and/or sanctuary, and whether this means that the god is also absent. The issues are directly related, and conclusions for the image's destination must also hold for its departure point.

individuals. Although there are many casual references to the transportation and movement of cult images, I wish here to focus upon a few particularly detailed and illustrative examples for these different types of transition.⁵⁰⁶ It is also necessary to comment on some unusual instances of transport that impact directly on the conceptualisation of the cult statue, before tying together these various motivations in an assessment of what the implications are for the boundaries that held a cult image in place.

Although the permanent transport of cult images was by no means unheard of within Roman religions, it was a deeply problematic event, and it is necessary to address the reasons for this in order to understand the implications of any specific instances of movement. The principal problem in moving a cult image was that it was an artefact that was often conceptually static in nature. Certainly, cult images could be removed from temples for any number of legitimate reasons, and yet these instances invariably result in its return to its proper place within the boundaries of the temple and sanctuary. Indeed, Plutarch informs us that at times sureties were occasionally demanded before an image was sent for bathing or ritual purification:

“Accordingly, as the Tyrians are said to have put chains upon their images, and certain other peoples are said to demand sureties when they send forth their images for bathing or for some other rite of purification.”⁵⁰⁷

That he likens this practice to the chaining of cult images to their pedestals is also significant, for it implies that the sureties (which presumably were temporary?) had something in common with the rather more visible and emphatic binding of an image to ensure it remained in its proper location.⁵⁰⁸

It is of interest to note that while the static nature of the cult image is an understandable assumption, it was clearly not always the case; if the images required chains and sureties, then there was not automatically some quality that bound them to their pedestal or *cella*. This again challenges those who seek to define the cult image through its location, suggesting that the image would retain its significance away from the temple, being defined primarily by the

⁵⁰⁶ I do not intend to *exclude* these other references to transition and movement, but will refer to them in significantly less detail than these fuller discussions.

⁵⁰⁷ Plut. *Mor.* 279A: “ὥσπερ οὖν Τύριοι δεσμούς ἀγάλμασι λέγονται περιβαλεῖν, ἕτεροι δ’ αἰτεῖν ἐγγυητὰς ἐπὶ λουτρὸν ἢ καθαρμὸν τινα προπέμποντες.” Tr. Babbitt (1936).

⁵⁰⁸ For such fettering of cult images see below, section 4.

human and divine relationships held with the image, rather than upon its precise geographical setting.⁵⁰⁹

These temporary departures from the temple, however, have in common the return, or at least the expected return, of the image to its usual home within the temple *cella*. The circumstances in which an image might be transferred could vary, and the boundaries between theft, legitimate removal, and transfer instigated by the gods were blurred to say the least. A few of the more extended examples will serve to illustrate just how difficult the distinction could be, as well as to highlight some of the most important consequences of these narratives for the understanding of the role of the cult image.

Like many cult images, the sacred (aniconic) representation of the Mother of the Gods at Rome had a developed origin myth that involved the permanent transfer of a particularly sacred image to a new home. The arrival of the image is described by Julian, Livy, Silius Italicus, and Ovid,⁵¹⁰ all of whom vary slightly in the details that they include, but who agree on these basic events:

Rome sent an embassy to Pergamon, in 204 BCE, to ask for their most holy statue on the advice of the Sybil (who was in turn translated through the instructions of the Pythian oracle) who told them that they should bring the goddess to Rome, in order that she might help them in the war against Carthage (in 218-201 BCE). They were initially refused by Attalus, until the ground shook and the goddess declared from her sanctuary that she wished to be moved. When the Romans received the goddess/image they brought her back by boat. Many people of the city went to greet this ship when it arrived, ‘but the goddess, as though she desired to show the Roman people that they were not bringing a lifeless image from Phrygia, but that what they had received from the Phrygians and were now bringing home possessed greater and more divine powers than an image, stayed the ship’⁵¹¹ and it appeared rooted in midstream. The crew tried everything but could not make her move. At this point, people began to accuse the priestess designated to receive the image of being impure, and for therefore angering the goddess, ‘for by this time the thing seemed to all to be supernatural’. The priestess then used an *infula* (sacred band) tied to the ship’s *rostrum*, and safely pulled it

⁵⁰⁹ See Introduction.i.a.

⁵¹⁰ Julian, *Or.* 159C-161D; Livy 2.10f; Silius Italicus 17.1f; Ov. *Fast.* 4.255f.

⁵¹¹ Julian. *Or.* 160A. See n. 512 for text of the passages quoted.

to shore. Through this delay, the goddess apparently demonstrated to the Romans that this ‘was no work of men’s hands but truly divine, not lifeless clay but a thing possessed of life and divine stone’. According to Julian, the tale must be related, despite its implausibility because it is recorded in all the histories, and is preserved in images (see fig. 5.3). Some did not believe the story at all, but Julian would rather trust the traditions of cities than people who question these things simply for the sake of it.⁵¹²



Fig. 3.3: Grave relief of Claudia Syntyche, a priestess of Cybele, depicting the arrival of the Mother of the Gods by boat at Rome. The image here is figurative, rather than the aniconic stone described in the literary sources.⁵¹³

The narrative is rife with significant detail for the study of attitudes towards cult images, many of which need to be considered carefully within the context of the principal authors’ broader works.⁵¹⁴ Julian, for example, is far more concerned with the theological implications of the tale than his predecessors, which is typical of his own personal interests. Ovid, in

⁵¹² From Julian, *Or.* 160A-161D: “Ἡ δὲ ὥσπερ ἐνδείξασθαι τῷ Ῥωμαίων ἐθέλουσα δῆμῳ ὅτι μὴ ξόανον ἄγουσιν ἀπὸ τῆς Φρυγίας ἄψυχον, ἔχει δὲ ἄρα δύναμιν τινα μείζω καὶ θειοτέραν ὃ δὴ παρὰ τῶν Φρυγῶν λαβόντες ἔφερον, ἐπειδὴ τοῦ Τύβριδος ἦψατο, τὴν ναῦν ἵστησιν ὥσπερ ῥιζωθεῖσαν ἐξαίφνης, κατὰ τοῦ Τύβριδος.”... “ἔδόκει γὰρ ἡδὴ τοῖς πᾶσιν εἶναι τὸ χρῆμα δαιμονιώτερον.”... “οὐδὲ ὡς ἀνθρώπινον τοῦτον, ἀλλὰ ὄντως θεῖον, οὐδὲ ἄψυχον γῆν, ἀλλὰ ἐμπνουν τι χρῆμα καὶ δαιμόνιον.”... “ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ ταῖς πόλεσι πιστεῦναι μᾶλλον τὰ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιτοῖσι τοῖς κομποῖς, ὧν τὸ ψυχάριον ὀριμὸν μὲν ὑγιὲς δὲ οὐδὲ ἐν βλέπει” Tr. Wright (1913).

⁵¹³ Rome, Museo Montemartini (Capitoline Museums), first century CE.. The implications of the mode of depiction are unclear, and it may be that the image is here anthropomorphic to further elide the image and its referent in visual terms.

⁵¹⁴ See generally, e.g. Feeney (1998). For Julian: Bowersock (1978); Athanassiadi (1992); Smith (1995). Ovid: Herbert-Brown (1994); Fantham (1998). Livy: Davies (2004) 21-64; Levene (1993). I know of no treatment of Silius Italicus’s attitudes towards religion.

contrast, relates the tale as an explanation of the rituals celebrated on behalf of the goddess at Rome, and is full of festive spirit and mythological allusions.⁵¹⁵

It is crucial to note that even in the explanation of one provenance narrative, no two sources clearly agree on the role or nature of the image, illustrating the diversity of understanding of religious images and their functions. However, the aspects common to all of the versions also speak volumes: the image itself gives several indications of its approval for the transfer to take place; the movement of the image is absolutely vital in the successful movement of the cult; the transfer of the image from Pergamon to Rome serves an immediate purpose, and yet it also develops into regularly observed cult. By far the most important element in discerning the dangers of transporting statues is the issue of consent: the divinity (which is conceptually elided with the image in a clear and explicit manner)⁵¹⁶ gives her approval for the transition, and in fact encourages it. The cult, the goddess, and her image are all very obviously transported in unison, and all of this is only made possible with the approval of the divine. It is made incredibly obvious that if the goddess did not wish for her image to be transported to Rome, it would not have happened.

This is not the only narrative of transition in which the represented deity is actively involved in the transport of their statue: the image of Juno that stood on the Capitol was said to have nodded assent to her movement into that temple; the Palladium of Troy was famously transported on the command of the gods; Ptolemy Soter apparently moved a colossal image of Serapis into Alexandria as directed in a (divinely sent) dream; the founder of Patrai also stole a cult image of Artemis Limnatis on the instructions of a dream, and so on.⁵¹⁷ Often these events took place long before the author is writing, and regularly form part of the corpus of provenance myths surrounding important cult images. A cursory study of Pausanias demonstrates how great the concern was to know where one's local cult image came from, whether it be the work of a great sculptor such as Daedalus, the work of the gods, a gift from

⁵¹⁵ The need to assess each author's intentions is one we might posit for all references to image interactions in antiquity, and there is unfortunately not the space to do so satisfactorily here. See Introduction.iv. For the historical context of the transportation and the literary descriptions, see Gruen (1990) 5-33.

⁵¹⁶ Ovid, for example, does not actually mention that there *is* an image, he refers only to the goddess herself being transported, whereas Julian makes a point of comparing the 'lifeless clay' that the image might look like to the 'life and divine stone' it obviously was (*Or.* 161A).

⁵¹⁷ Juno: Livy 5.22. Trojan Palladium: Strabo, 5.23.9, 6.1.4; Paus. 1.33.1; Appian, 3.88; Serapis: Plut., *Mor.* 361F-362B, cf. Tac. *Hist.* 4.83-4; Artemis Limnatis: Paus. 7.20.8. Cf. the refusal of Terminus to move from the Capitoline: Ov. *Fast.* 1.55, cf. 2.641; 6.395-416 with Nagle (1995) 16.

heaven, or an import from elsewhere.⁵¹⁸ All of these types of provenance narrative help to justify the importance attached to the image: of course an image will be powerful if it was crafted by Hephaistos, or if it fell from heaven. If images were transported as part of these narratives it was either because the image explicitly wished to be moved, or it was moved by a famous hero and played some role in saving his or her life (as in the case of Orestes and Iphigeneia's transport of the image of Artemis from Tauris).⁵¹⁹

Tales of permanent transport, then, commonly fit within the broader genre of myths attached to the origins of important cult images. Myths surrounding the transfer of a cult almost always involved the transfer of the cult image, and these tales follow the line that the image approved of its own movement.⁵²⁰ There is perfectly sound reasoning for this, in that it would be unwise to anger the gods by transporting their images without approval. There is also, however, the strong implication that one is also transferring the focus of the god, even an aspect of the god itself, if one transports the image. Rather than being a question of approval, it is perhaps a matter of possibility: a god cannot be moved by mortal hands if it does not want to be. There is an unusual extension of this within the ancient narratives of images transgressing the boundaries of their sanctuaries, with some tales recording moments when an image apparently departed (or wished to depart) of its own accord, without any human intervention.

An interesting counterpart to the tale of the transport of the Magna Mater to Rome is Athenaeus's explanation for the appearance of the image of Hera at Samos. Tradition held that the image had once been stolen by pirates, but that they had been unable to carry the image away in their ship, for whilst it was on board, the boat would not move. As a consequence they abandoned the Hera and she was later found by her devotees. Not being party to all the facts, they believed the image to have taken off of its own accord, and thenceforth the statue was bound to its pedestal.⁵²¹ Whether or not this was another aniconic image is uncertain, although a passage of Eusebius suggests that it may have been.⁵²² Its

⁵¹⁸ E.g. Cult images made by Daedalus: Paus. 9.39.8, 10.40.3-4, 3.18.5-6, 7.4.4 cf. Callistr. *Ekphr.* 8; Diod. 4.76.1-6; Luc. *Philops.* 19; as well as numerous fragments and scholia. Fallen from heaven: for example, the Palladium: Appian, 3.88; the Athena on the acropolis at Athens: Paus. 1.26.6; worship of stones fallen from heaven: Paus. 9.38.1; statues made by Hephaistos: Paus. 7.19.6.

⁵¹⁹ See Paus. 3.16.7, cf. 3.19.7-8 in which an Ares is said to have been brought from Colchis by the Dioscuri.

⁵²⁰ Cf. Pritchett (1998) 173.

⁵²¹ Athenaeus 15.672C who cites his authority here as the Samian historian Menodotus.

⁵²² Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 3.8. Cf. Paus. 7.4.4; Plut. *Mor.* Fr.158. See Introduction, fig. Intr.4 for a numismatic representation of the image.

attempts to stop the boat's movement were successful, and resulted in the safeguarding of the image in its proper home, at least theoretically. Tying a statue down did not, by all accounts, automatically prevent it from leaving or being taken. There are several examples of attempts to control images and gods with these methods (discussed later in this chapter); but if provenance narratives tell us anything, it is that cult images had some level of independence in securing their location, and that moving them (or preventing them from being moved) against their will was unsafe and close to impossible.

There were certain times at which the risk involved in moving a cult image seemed less significant than the gains to be made if it were achieved, as well as times when cult images were perhaps deemed to be more vulnerable. Probably the most common reason for the transport of cult statues was as loot in the process of war, and alongside the concept of *evocatio* this type of transport has a complex array of perspectives attached to it.⁵²³

In a catalogue of images taken as spoils by Augustus and dedicated elsewhere, Pausanias asserts that this was nothing new, and that the *Princeps* was, in fact, following time-honoured tradition in doing so. He goes on to list the whereabouts of various images taken from Troy by the victorious Greeks, the spoils taken by the Persians from numerous cities, and those taken after battle by the people of Cyzicus:

“The ancient image of Athena Alea, and with it the tusks of the Calydonian boar, were carried away by the Roman emperor Augustus after his defeat of Antonius and his allies, among whom were all the Arcadians except the Mantineans. It is clear that Augustus was not the first to carry away from the vanquished votive offerings and images of gods, but was only following an old precedent. For when Troy was taken and the Greeks were dividing up the spoils, Sthenelus the son of Capaneus was given the wooden image of Zeus Herceius (‘of the Courtyard’); and many years later, when Dorians were migrating to Sicily, Antiphemus the founder of Gela, after the sack of Omphace, a town of the Sicanians, removed to Gela an image made by Daedalus. Xerxes, too, the son of Dareius, the king of Persia, apart from the spoil he carried away from the city of Athens, took besides, as we know, from Brauron the image of

⁵²³ *Evocatio* and the removal of images are not the same, and do not necessarily have the same implications, but both take place in the context of war and relate to the treatment of defeated cities by the gods. Cf. Glinister (2000) 62f; Gustafsson (2000).

Brauronian Artemis, and furthermore, accusing the Milesians of cowardice in a naval engagement against the Athenians in Greek waters, carried away from them the bronze Apollo at Branchidae. This it was to be the lot of Seleucus afterwards to restore to the Milesians, but the Argives down to the present still retain the images they took from Tiryns; one, a wooden image, is by the Hera, the other is kept in the sanctuary of Lycian Apollo. Again, the people of Cyzicus, compelling the people of Proconnesus by war to live at Cyzicus, took away from Proconnesus an image of Mother Dindymene. The image is of gold, and its face is made of hippopotamus teeth instead of ivory. So the emperor Augustus only followed a custom in vogue among the Greeks and barbarians from of old. The image of Athena Alea at Rome is as you enter the Forum made by Augustus.”⁵²⁴

This is probably no exaggeration; the looting of important images was certainly commonplace.⁵²⁵ The issue is once again complex, and aspects of it have been discussed at length by scholars elsewhere: Scheer considers a number of the problems of the looting of Eastern cult-objects as art-works within the context of ‘cultural war’;⁵²⁶ Elsner’s *Art and the*

⁵²⁴ Paus. 8.46.1: “τῆς δὲ Ἀθηνᾶς τὸ ἄγαλμα τῆς Ἀλέας τὸ ἀρχαῖον, σὺν δὲ αὐτῇ καὶ υἱὸς τοῦ Καλυδωνίου τοὺς ὀδόντας ἔλαβεν ὁ Ῥωμαίων βασιλεὺς Αὐγουστος, Ἀντωνίων πολέμῳ καὶ τὸ Ἀντωνίου νικήσας συμμαχικόν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ οἱ Ἀρκάδες πλὴν Μαντινέων ἦσαν οἱ ἄλλοι. Φαίνεται δὲ οὐκ ἄρξας ὁ Αὐγουστος ἀναθήματα καὶ ἔδη θεῶν ἀπάγεσθαι παρὰ τῶν κρατηθέντων, καθεστηκότι δὲ ἐκ παλαιοῦ χρησάμενος. Ἰλίου τε γὰρ ἀλούσης καὶ νεμομένων τὰ λάφυρα Ἑλλήνων, Σθενέλω τῷ Καπτανέως τὸ ξόανον τοῦ Διὸς ἐδόθη τοῦ Ἐρκείου· καὶ ἔτεσιν ὕστερον πολλοῖς Δωριέων ἐς Σικελίαν ἐσοικιζομένων, Ἀντίφημος ὁ Γέλας οἰκιστὴς πόλιν Σικανῶν Ὀμφάκην πορθήσας μετεκόμισεν ἐς Γέλαν ἄγαλμα ὑπὸ Δ α ι ᾠ ᾠ α λ ο υ πεποιημένον. βασιλέα τε τῶν Περσῶν Ξέρξην τὸν Δαρείου, χωρὶς ἧ ὅσα ἐξεκόμισε τοῦ Ἀθηναίων ἄστεως, τοῦτο μὲν ἐκ Βραυρωνός καὶ ἄγαλμα ἴσμεν τῆς Βραυρωνίας λαβόντα Ἀρτεμίδος, τοῦτο δὲ αἰτίαν ἐπενεγκὼν Μιλησίοις, ἐθελοκακῆσαι σφᾶς ἐναντία Ἀθηναίων ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι ναυμαχήσαντας, τὸν χαλκοῦν ἔλαβεν Ἀπόλλωνα τὸν ἐν Βραγχίδαϊς· καὶ τὸν μὲν ὕστερον ἔμελλε χρόνῳ Σέλευκος καταπέμψειν Μιλησίοις, Ἀργείοις δὲ τὰ ἐκ Τίρυνθος ἔτι καὶ ἐμὲ τὸ μὲν παρὰ τῇ Ἥρᾳ ξόανον, τὸ δὲ ἐν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνός ἐστιν ἀνακείμενον τοῦ Λυκίου· Κυζικηνοὶ τε, ἀναγκάσαντες πολέμῳ Προκοννησίους γενέσθαι σφίσι συνοίκους, Μητρὸς Δινδυμήνης ἄγαλμα ἔλαβον ἐκ Προκοννήσου· τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμά ἐστι χρυσοῦ, καὶ αὐτοῦ τὸ πρόσωπον ἀντὶ ἐλέφαντος ἵππων τῶν ποταμίων ὀδόντες εἰσὶν εἰργασμένοι. βασιλεὺς μὲν δὴ Αὐγουστος καθεστηκότα ἐκ παλαιοῦ καὶ ὑπὸ τε Ἑλλήνων νομιζόμενα καὶ βαρβάρων εἰργάσατο· Ῥωμαίοις δὲ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τὸ ἄγαλμα τῆς Ἀλέας ἐς τὴν ἀγορὰν τὴν ὑπὸ Αὐγούστου ποιηθεῖσαν, ἐς ταύτην ἐστὶν ἰόντι.” Tr. Jones et al (1918).

⁵²⁵ Additional examples include: Livy 26.34.12 (Images and statues given to a college of priests after the siege of Capua to decide which were sacred and which profane); Polybius, 21.30.9 (M. Fulvius Nobilior, having taken Ambracia released the Aetolians under their rule and carried off their cult images, statues, and paintings. Cf. Livy 34.5.13-16 for quantities).

⁵²⁶ Scheer (1995).

Roman Viewer addresses the importance of the looting of images in terms of a community's self-definition;⁵²⁷ Davies has considered the implications of the importation of foreign gods into the city of Rome;⁵²⁸ and Gustafsson has very thoroughly covered the sources for, and recent scholarship on, *evocatio*.⁵²⁹ My focus here is neither the desire for the allegiance of foreign gods, nor the transformation of a cult image into an art object, but rather the explicit movement of a cult image as a cult image from one location to another.⁵³⁰

There are only infrequent explicit references to this type of transition, although it does occur: Pausanias described the transfer of the image of Athena Alea at Tegea to Rome; the image of Artemis Laphria, which was taken by Augustus as part of the spoils from Aetolia and later dedicated at Patrai; the statue of Apollo at Boeae that had been lost from Delos during the sack of the city; and so on and so forth.⁵³¹ The principal problem for us in assessing this type of transport is that it is often impossible to determine whether an image that received cult in one location did so in another, and if so whether the transfer was literal and precise. A case in point is the Artemis Laphria, whose rituals at Patrai are relatively well documented, and yet also deeply problematic.⁵³² A number of scholars have attempted to ascertain whether the descriptions of the rituals associated with the image and its cult were transported along with the statue, or whether they were essentially invented in the new Roman colony at Patrai; there is, as yet, no consensus.⁵³³ It seems to have been important to the city receiving images that their correct status post-movement was ascertained, as suggested by the handing over of looted statues to the priests at Rome after the siege of Capua, in order that they might decide which were sacred and which profane.⁵³⁴

It is only possible to sketch out a few of the theoretical implications of the practice of transporting cult statues during times of war without dedicating an entire study to that subject alone, yet we may draw enough conclusions to further understand interactions with cult

⁵²⁷ Elsner (1995) 127-55. Cf. Polybius, 9.10.7-10; Cic. *Verr.* 21.59; Paus. *passim*.

⁵²⁸ Davies (2004) esp. 85; 177f; 246.

⁵²⁹ Gustafsson (2000); cf. Glinister (2000) 62-4. For Christian criticisms of the looting of cult images and consequent worship of them at Rome, see Fowden (1993) 45-50.

⁵³⁰ Cf. the discussion of transferring 'foreign' rites with 'foreign' cults (not necessarily involving the image) in Scheid (1994). It is for this reason also that I do not cover *evocatio* in great depth, as there is little to suggest it was clearly associated with the removal of images, although for the destruction of images as a threat to divine power, see Ch.5.3; 5.5.

⁵³¹ Paus. 8.46.2, 8.18.8-10, 3.23.2-3. Cf. Norman (1986) 425-6.

⁵³² Descriptions of the rituals at Paus. 7.18.8-10, the full range of evidence is discussed by Pirenne-Delforge (2001) and (2004) 12ff.

⁵³³ For the range of arguments see Pirenne-Delforge (2001).

⁵³⁴ Livy 26.34.12.

images and their broader consequences. Firstly, although transfer myths seem to require that the image be moved in order that the god and cult may do the same, when the motivation is altered this need not work in the reverse: moving a statue does not automatically mean moving the cult. There are a number of possible reasons for this, including the possibility that the gods of a defeated city, once defeated, were not of any particular use once the war was over. It has also been suggested that the Romans were not as eager to capture the most venerated images, for they were often old, wooden, and aniconic, and therefore would have had little impact in the triumphal processions in which looted artworks were normally displayed.⁵³⁵ Furthermore, Roman authors often show a reticence to receive foreign gods, and these may not have been unusual sentiments.⁵³⁶ It has also been suggested that the Romans (especially in the earlier stages of the empire) would have preferred, generally, to proceed with their tried-and-tested cult images, than to attempt to introduce new cults (and their images) on a regular basis.⁵³⁷

However, the departure of images from their temples was a matter for concern whatever the circumstances, and it would not be unreasonable to presume that the circumstances of war might make the loss more disconcerting. Venerated images were intimately bound up with war as a process in many ways: they might give signs and omens, or be a place of sanctuary, and a focus for victory prayers and offerings.⁵³⁸ One might suggest that, if the belief in the abandonment of defeated cities by the gods was a commonly held one, this would have been reinforced by the loss of images, but that the loss of images was not necessary for it.⁵³⁹ It is worth noting a brief point of comparison to the secular world here, where the removal of images can only take place if those who care for them cannot defend them.⁵⁴⁰

Images taken in war account for a large amount of the evidence for the (im)mobility of cult statues in the Roman world, although how far they are separated from other instances of theft

⁵³⁵ Pritchett (1998) 189f, pointing out that most of the bronze images encountered by Pausanias date to the period after 44 BCE, during which the Greeks were able to restore some of their temples and sanctuaries. For the potential sacrilege involved in despoiling temples during war or otherwise, see Glinister (2000) 62-4.

⁵³⁶ Although foreign cults certainly were adopted, it is only in the most unusual of cases that the original cult image was also transported. Rather, it is likely that copies or other images were used, much as occurred in a variety of widely practiced cults see below, n.556.

⁵³⁷ Davies (2004) 85; 177 discusses concerns over the potential powers of foreign gods and the dialogue on how they ought to be treated.

⁵³⁸ Signs and omens: section 5; images as a place of sanctuary: Ch. 4.3; as a focus of prayers and offerings: Ch. 1.2; 2.2.

⁵³⁹ See Pritchett (1998) 335-9 with notes.

⁵⁴⁰ See Ch. 5.5.

is probably a matter of perspective, rather than definition. The unwarranted theft of cult images is remarkably well documented, especially considering the apparent challenges of it as a crime. Inscriptions record the replacing of stolen images, and a number of sources indicate that some form of punishment followed the theft of sacred images.⁵⁴¹ Cicero makes his perspective on the matter clear in his description of the removal of the sacred image of Diana from Segesta, which was ordered by Verres but which all refused to have a hand in for fear of divine retribution.⁵⁴² It might be supposed that actually stealing an entire cult image was a difficult thing to do, both because of the practicalities and also because of the taboo surrounding it. Some sources highlight the fact that theft posed questions about the divinity of an image, either in ridicule or defense.

The appropriation of an image by an individual (rather than a state or an army), appears occasionally in the provenance myths and the myth-histories associated with images. I have already referred to the image of Artemis Limnatis taken from Sparta; we are told that the motivation for this particular theft was a dream sent to Preuges, the founder of Patrae.⁵⁴³ Not all image-thieves were so lucky: Sulla was said to have suffered a horrible disease, sent by the gods, as punishment for his theft of an image of Athena at Alalcomenae.⁵⁴⁴ Roman emperors were not immune to reprimand from the gods either: Caligula had ordered that the image of Jupiter at Olympia be dismantled and transported to Rome, but the image disagreed, emitting a laugh so loud that it shook the scaffolding holding the workmen, who then fled the site.⁵⁴⁵

That the gods could send some form of punishment to those who stole cult images (or indeed made them suffer any similar indignity) was a view expressed by a number of ancient authors. Julian defended the challenge to the divinity of cult images that they could be harmed by mortal hands with a claim that despite it being possible to inflict harm upon an image, those who did so were always punished by the gods eventually:

⁵⁴¹ For example, Charneux (1992) 335-43 (Argos, 1st Century CE, in which a foreigner offers to refund a cult statue of Hephaestus stolen from the temple); *CIG* 2229 (the theft of an entire image of Hermes at Chios); Cic. *Verr.* 2.34, 2.23, 5.72 and *passim* (numerous occasions of thefts by Verres, see further below); Livy 6. 29.8-9 (Titus Quinctus carried off statue of Jupiter Imperator from Praeneste); *I. Laodikeia* 72 (replacement of a stolen Eros). See Ch. 5.5.

⁵⁴² Cic. *Verr.* 2.34-6, esp. 2.35 at which it is explained that some Lydians with no knowledge of the statue's nature had to be paid to remove it.

⁵⁴³ Paus. 7.20.8. There are also those images said to have been stolen by mythic individuals, such as Orestes and Iphigeneia, and the Dioscuri. See above.

⁵⁴⁴ Paus. 9.33.6.

⁵⁴⁵ Suet. *Galba*, 57.

“Therefore let no man disbelieve in gods because he sees and hears that certain persons have profaned their images and temples. Have they not put good men to death like Socrates and Dio and the great Empedotimus? And yet I am very sure that the gods cared more for these men than for the temples. But observe that since they knew that the bodies even of these men were destructible, they allowed them to yield to nature and submit, but later on they exacted punishment from their slayers; and this has happened in the sight of all, in our own day also, in the case of all who have profaned the temples.”⁵⁴⁶

Sulla is one such example, perhaps a sort of *exemplum* to those who wished harm upon cult images. This harm may not always take the form of theft, but there were several narratives related to, for example, the destruction of cult images, or the abuse of them, which demonstrate the general idea that the gods would take revenge on those who damaged their images. Pliny records that simply for not *completing* the images of the gods at Delphi the town suffered a plague,⁵⁴⁷ and an anonymous author tells us that a Greek tyrant was struck by lightning for the destruction of images.⁵⁴⁸

There were, of course, those who argued that as the images could be harmed at all, their divine nature must be in doubt. Typically, Lucian provides us with some acerbic ridicule of the matter. In a text known as *Zeus: the Tragic Actor*, in which the gods (in the form of their statues) attend a council on Olympia, some of the statues/gods complain about the mistreatment of their images, and here it is to demonstrate their incompetence. Hermes’ image ridicules that of Apollo, because he was defenseless against the theft of his crown and some of the pegs of his lyre:

⁵⁴⁶ Julian, *Epist.* 295: “Μηδεὶς οὖν ἀπιστεῖτω θεοῖς, ὁρῶν καὶ ἀκούων ὡς ἐνύβρισάν τινες εἰς τὰ ἀγάλματα καὶ τοὺς ναοὺς. Ἄρ’ οὐκ ἀνθρώπους χρηστοὺς ἀπέκτειναν πολλοί, καθάπερ Σωκράτη καὶ Δίωνα καὶ τὸν μέγαν Ἐμπεδοκίμον; Ὡν εὖ οἶδ’ ὅτι μᾶλλον ἐμέλησε τοῖς θεοῖς. Ἄλλ’ ὁρᾷτε ὅτι καὶ τούτων φθαρτὸν εἰδότες τὸ σῶμα συνεχώρησαν εἶξαι τῇ φύσει καὶ ὑποχωρῆσαι, δίκην δὲ ἀπήτησαν ὕστερον παρὰ τῶν κτεινάντων· ὃ δὴ συνέβη φανερώς ἐφ’ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ἱεροσύλων.” Tr. Wright (1913).

⁵⁴⁷ Pliny, *NH* 36.9-11. A similar tale is related for the lack of replacement of a destroyed image of Demeter Melaina near Phigaleia; Paus. 8.42 records the punishment, and the oracle addressing the matter can be found at Fontenrose (1978) no. Q182, cf. Parke-Wormell (1956) 1 323-4 and no 493. See Ch. 5.5.

⁵⁴⁸ Anon. in Westerman, *Paradox Gr.* 22. See further Ch. 5.

“Yes, and the same man said that Apollo was rich in gold and wealthy, but now you’ll see that he too is sitting somewhere among the middle class, uncrowned by the pirates and robbed of the pegs of his lyre.”⁵⁴⁹

Even Zeus feels powerless to punish the temple robbers who stole two of his golden curls, complaining that he has been unable to punish those who took attributes made of precious metals from his statue at Olympia;⁵⁵⁰ similar complaints are lodged by Poseidon and Hercules.⁵⁵¹ There appear to have been some mortal regulations in place to punish the thieves as well, perhaps as a safeguard or to demonstrate how seriously the devotees of an image had taken the matter. One inscription records the fact, but not the nature, of punishment for the removal of divine images, and the crime also appears to have come under the general domain of sacrilege within Roman law.⁵⁵² In addition, the words of Cicero in his *Verrine Orations* make it clear that the theft of images belonging to the public is a crime, and that the removal of images that have been dedicated is impiety.⁵⁵³

Of course, the best thing mortals could do to rectify the possible anger caused by the theft of a cult image was to replace it, and we have several inscriptions recording just such an act. Sometimes the inscription honours the individual who funded the restoration, as in the case of a cult statue of Hephaestus stolen from a temple at Chios,⁵⁵⁴ sometimes it simply records the fact of theft and restoration.⁵⁵⁵ The problem posed here is that if a cult image can simply be replaced, what does that mean for the nature of the image and the divinity attached to it? Is it assumed that the divinity is attached to the location and not the image, and therefore that the new statue will be just as efficacious? Or is it accepted that, if an ancient and important statue is lost, a new one may not be able to replace it conceptually as well as physically? We simply do not know, because there are no in-depth ancient discussions of the matter and the examples that we do have come from so many different images. Bearing in mind the wide

⁵⁴⁹ Lucian, *Zeus Trag.*, 10: “Καὶ γὰρ τὸν Ἀπόλλω ὁ αὐτὸς πολὺχρυσον εἶναι ἔφη καὶ πλούσιον· ἀλλὰ νῦν ὄψει κάκεῖνον ἐν τοῖς ζευγίταις που καθήμενον, ἀπεστεφανωμένον τοῖς ζευγίταις που καθήμενον, ἀπεστεφανωμένον τε ὑπὸ τῶν ληστῶν καὶ τοὺς κόλλοπας τῆς κιθάρας περισεσλημμένον.” Tr. Harmon (1915).

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid. 25. see Ch. 5.5 for further text.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² *SEG* IX 8 ii = *FIRA* I² 68 ii; Paulus, *On Public Prosecutions*, 1; Tit. 13;

⁵⁵³ Cic. *Verr.* 2.34, 2.23, 5.72 and *passim*. Cf. Daut (1975). Unsurprisingly, the greatest evidence for punishment of the crime is found within the realm of the imperial cult, for example (specifically regarding images that have been consecrated): from the *Digest* of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*: Tit. 4; Marcianus 5; Scaevola 4; Modestinus 12. See Ch. 5.3; 5.5.

⁵⁵⁴ Charneux (1992) 335-43, 1st C. CE.

⁵⁵⁵ *CIG* 2229; *Kernos* 10 (1997) 261 no. 21; *SEG* 42.1833.

regional and temporal variations in the evidence, this inconsistency goes further to demonstrate the complexity of the role of the image within Roman religions.

In terms of the movement of cult images by men, two final points must be made, although they do not necessarily refer solely to the permanent transport of cult statues. There is no doubt that some cult images were intended to be portable; often, but not always, because they were focal points of private cult and therefore potentially needed to go where their devotees went in order to maintain their status as cult images at all. I have already noted that the images of public cult could travel with embassies, and some were also known to have traveled in order to support the armies in times of war. It has been suggested that these may have been replicas, much as local temples may have housed imitations of a central cult statue.⁵⁵⁶ There are several references to individuals who carried small statuettes to which they attached divine power, and sometimes also made offerings of incense and prayer.⁵⁵⁷ Some of these were particularly potent and, despite being in the possession of one individual, could be thought to benefit many, as appears to be so in the case of an individual who carried a nine inch statuette of Aphrodite on a voyage, which is then credited with rescuing the entire boat from terrible storms and seasickness.⁵⁵⁸ There is also some evidence for the manufacture and trade of these images.⁵⁵⁹

Connected to this point is the general fluidity of the notion of the cult image. It is not always possible to tell what could be considered a cult image and what could not, although it appears to have been very much in the eye of the beholder as to how they categorized it. Sometimes the theft, removal, or destruction of an image that resulted in an apparent divine punishment could lead to its restoration or replacement, and subsequent institution of it as an object of cult. This is seen in the well-documented case of the image of Theagenes, which was thrown

⁵⁵⁶ Aug. *Civ. Dei.* 5.26 (soldiers placing images of Zeus with thunderbolts on surrounding hilltops before battle, they lost and their Christian enemies made jokes about the thunderbolts, cf. Theod. *H.E.* 5.24); the Clarian Apollo at Rome, mentioned at Tac. *Ann.* 12.22, may be assumed to be a replica since the original was not lost; Paus. 4.31.8 suggests a replica of the Artemis of Delos and a replica is implied at Strabo 6.2 in the temple of Venus Erycina at Rome. The desire of people to have their own personal replicas is also seen at Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 33, claiming that the image of Hermes Agorios has casts taken of it daily.

⁵⁵⁷ E.g. Amm. Marc. 22.13.3 (the philosopher Asclepiades carried a portable image of Dea Caelestis); Suet. *Nero* 56 (the Emperor sacrifices to, and receives oracles from, a small image that he carries around with him); Apul., *Met.* 11.19, 11.24, 29; L. R., *CRAI* (1982) 517-35. There are also numerous references in the magical papyri, see Ch.2.2; 2.4.

⁵⁵⁸ Athenaios, 15.676 (preserving a fragment of Polycharmos of Naukratis).

⁵⁵⁹ E.g. Philostratus, *VA* 5.20, cf. Bakker (1994) for the physical evidence from Ostia.

into the sea after it fell and killed a man, and was recovered and treated as a cult statue after a punitive plague damaged the city's harvests.⁵⁶⁰

These types of images might fall outside of narrower definitions of cult statues, and yet they must be considered simultaneously with instances of movement. Whilst images in the public temples are the ones most easily understood as cult statues, any study that defines the image by the way in which it is treated must conclude that these are precisely the sorts of image that defy a static classification. In the daily life of individuals in the Roman world, cult images need not be in a temple at all, and if they were there at times, they need not remain so.

3.4 A note on fettered images and clipped wings

The possibility for cult statues to be mobile, and the problems associated with this, are made apparent by those images described as having been in some way bound or chained to prevent their movement. I have referred already to this concept, and it is a feature of Roman religions that has been discussed by scholars elsewhere.⁵⁶¹ These images are generally agreed to have been fettered in some way or another in order to secure the deity, rather than the image. That this should be the case is clear from the fact that many fetters must be symbolic rather than functional: a Demeter bound with ribbons, for example, is unlikely to prevent human theft.⁵⁶² Similarly, some such images have the binding implements incorporated into their depiction, rather than as separate entities, which particularly seems to be the case for various goddesses represented with garments binding their arms to their bodies. Artemis Kindyas from Caria is a case in point (fig. 3.3), and it can be seen in the numismatic representations of several other deities.⁵⁶³ Indeed, ancient sources do not offer the practical protection of the image from mortals as an explanation for these bindings.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁰ Paus. 6.11.6-9; Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9, citing Oenomaus; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.95-97; Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 12. The image is discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

⁵⁶¹ E.g. Merkelbach (1978); Lane Fox (133-4); Faraone (1989) and (1992) 81-96; Versnel (1988); Sokolowski (1968); (Graf 1992); Johnston (2008); Delcourt (1982) 65-109.

⁵⁶² Paus. 10.35.10, cf. *LIMC* IV.1.849 no. 12. See Ch.1 p46f.

⁵⁶³ Many are collected in Merkelbach (1978) Pl. II-IV. See e.g. *Brit. Mus. Cat.* 'Ionia' 37.5 (Hera of Samos); Franke 484, 506, 508 (Ephesian Artemis); Franke 99 (Aphrodite from Aphrodisias).

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Spivey (1995) 442-3. The alternative explanation, that the bindings might be purificatory, is found only once, in Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 15.672.



Fig. 3.3: Artemis Kindyas from Bargylia in Caria, which like many other representations of the image suggests that the fetters were incorporated into the sculpture, rather than imposed upon it.⁵⁶⁵

Examples from the Roman world attest to the clipping of wings, restraint with chains, or binding of some kind on a large variety of different images: it is not a practice associated with one particular god or cult. Some also have a particular narrative of movement attached to them, which directly involve interaction between mortals and the divine. Plutarch relates one well known example, in his *Life of Alexander*, that whilst the Macedonians besieged their city in 322/1 BCE, the Tyrians bound the statue of Apollo in the ancient temple of Heracles/Malqart in order to prevent it from going over to the enemy. After his victory, Alexander removed the chains from the image, and renamed it Apollo Philalexandros.⁵⁶⁶ This is a fascinating example: the chains on the image clearly did not work in having an impact upon the deity, but the image is thanked for the deity's apparent actions.⁵⁶⁷ Evidently, one

⁵⁶⁵ Now in the National Museum at Athens. From Merkelbach (1978) Pl. 1.

⁵⁶⁶ Plut. *Alex.* 24.7; cf. Diod. 17.41.8, 17.46.6; Curtius 3.2.22.

⁵⁶⁷ The motive for binding is agreed on by all of the sources that report the event (see above, n.566).

cannot move the cult image if the god disapproves, and one also may not restrain the god attached to it if it wishes to depart.

Pausanias passes an unusually opinionated comment to this effect with reference to a cult image of Aphrodite, which is depicted with fetters upon its feet; he considers it unlikely that such punishment inflicted upon a statue would have any real impact upon the god:

“The other account, that Tyndareus punished the goddess with fetters because he thought that from Aphrodite had come the shame of his daughters, I will not admit for a moment. For it were surely altogether silly to expect to punish the goddess by making a cedar figure and naming it Aphrodite.”⁵⁶⁸

The refutation of the possibility also attests to the motivation, and it seems that the belief (or perhaps hope) that some influence over the deity might be inflicted existed alongside the certainty that this sort of behaviour could not harm the gods. Plutarch’s comments on the similarity between the chaining of images and the demands for sureties when they were temporarily transported have already been noted.⁵⁶⁹ Pausanias tells us elsewhere, with reference to an image of Enyalios at Sparta, that the clipping of wings of images and the binding of them are intended to achieve the same ends, that is, to prevent the departure of that god from the city.⁵⁷⁰ A similar motivation is suggested in the well known narrative explaining the appearance of Samian Hera, who was bound because the Samians believed the image had attempted to run away, rather than to prevent theft.⁵⁷¹ Clearly these images are not being protected from mortal enemies, nor are they being guarded for their material value, they are being symbolically bound for the very real purpose of exercising some control over the deity.

There are problems created by this assumed attitude towards the divine: how can the apparent power of the gods be compatible with this sort of treatment of their images? Given the nature of human relationships with the gods, surely this type of activity would anger, rather than control them? If this were the case, it could be suggested that these depictions were wholly

⁵⁶⁸ Paus. 3.15.22: (τὸν γὰρ δὴ ἕτερον λόγον, ὡς τὴν θεὸν πέδαις ἐπιμωρεῖτο ὁ Τυνδάρεως, γενέσθαι ταῖς θυγατράσιν ἐξ Ἀφροδίτης ἡγούμενος τὰ ὀνειδή, τοῦτον οὐδὲ ἀρχὴν προσίεμαι.) Tr. Jones (1926).

⁵⁶⁹ See above p133, with n.507.

⁵⁷⁰ Paus. 3.15.6-7, he also refers here to the Wingless Victory of the Athenians as being so represented with the same purposes (cf. 3.3.36-7 with Mark et al (1993) 93-4). See also the image of Eurynome at Phigaleia, which is bound with gold chains, at Paus. 8.41.6. Cf. Clerc (1915) 29 on concerns over gods abandoning their cities.

⁵⁷¹ See above, section 3; Athenaeus, 15.672C.

symbolic, and that no power or divinity was associated with these images in practical terms. However, this in itself is problematic in the extreme: if the images are purely symbolic, then there is really no gain to be made in tying them down. It is worth noting that, in general, attempts to coerce the gods through any means are normally found in extreme times of need, a 'last resort', as a consequence of the dangers associated with this.⁵⁷²

Many references to images that are chained or bound are not accompanied by extended explanations, and we do not know enough about them all to apply inferences drawn elsewhere across the board. However, the most fully explained examples, of Hera, Hercules/Malgart and the chained Aphrodite, are associated with mistakes made by the humans involved. The image of Hera did not want to move in the first place, and prevented her theft from being successful; the binding was, therefore, pointless. In the instance of Alexander's siege of Tyre, the god obviously did not respond well to being bound, and was ultimately not controlled through this method. The image of Aphrodite is also associated with local myths of Tyndareus, and Pausanias himself suggests the mistake here.⁵⁷³ An interesting contrast can be drawn with the images of Ares at Syedra and Iconium, which were bound, but also flanked by two gods, Justice and Hermes;⁵⁷⁴ the chains here are not enough to hold such a powerful god under control, and must be supported by further divinity.

Once again, the question of practicality is raised with regards to interactions with images of the divine. Although the instances referred to above demonstrate that the gods emphatically *cannot* be controlled by such efforts, the desire to chain and bind images must have remained strong, simply on the basis of the volume of references to this practice. In particular, a variety of images of Eros can be found that portray the god chained to a tree or a column, and one such image of Artemis is also known.⁵⁷⁵ Other depictions of Dionysus, Artemis, Hera, and Persephone are well catalogued, especially in the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire.⁵⁷⁶ Because most of the evidence for such images consists of visual representations of bound

⁵⁷² Graf (1991) 194.

⁵⁷³ See above, p149.

⁵⁷⁴ Lane Fox (1986) 133. See L.R. *IAMM* (1966) 91-100; Sokolowski (1968) 519-22 for the epigraphic evidence. The image of Actaeon at Orchomenus was bound to a rock and worshipped as a hero at the order of the Delphic oracle, again suggesting divine support: Paus. 9.38.5

⁵⁷⁵ Furtwängler, *Ant. Gemm.* 18.40; 29.24; 27.4f; 30.32 (gems depicting Eros bound to a column, cf. Loeb *AP* vol. 5, 274-5; *LIMC* III.2 683 sv. Eros/Amour, Cupido); *LIMC* II.2 573, no. 4 (a chained Artemis). The Eros images might more commonly have an allegorical meaning, fitting within commentaries on the power of 'Eros bound'. On violence in depictions of Eros generally see Bartscherer (2005) 5.

⁵⁷⁶ For a catalogue of this evidence and discussion see Merkelbach (1975) 1043-81.

statues, it is difficult to assess the motivation behind the practice, and even more so for us to ascertain how this type of binding might have *worked*.⁵⁷⁷ Modern scholarship has paid some attention to the matter, but does not help to provide solid answers. The general assumption is that the chains are intended to force the god to stay within the city, although this is sometimes supplemented with a suggestion that the more sophisticated worshipper did not actually believe this to be possible.⁵⁷⁸ Once again, we find a discomfort in modern treatments of cult images with the religious technology associated with the practices.

Binding images was not generally a ritual as such, for it was not repeated or performed on prescribed occasions; it was an action normally performed only once, and as far as we can tell this was at a time when circumstances seemed to require it.⁵⁷⁹ It may be that rational arguments or explanations cannot be used to fully explain the appearance of some images as bound, just as rational arguments are often not productive in the understanding of religions.⁵⁸⁰ However, insofar as we can attempt to understand this type of treatment of images, we must note that a straightforward explanation that the chains would bind the god to the city is clearly not enough, and obviously does not work when the ancient sources are considered. To the extent that the sources allow us, this form of interaction seems to be reactionary; a response to circumstance that falls outside of the boundaries of normal interactions.

3.5 Statues in transgression: animated images, magic, miracles, and movement

Up to this point we have covered instances of movement that might challenge the notion of the image as purely static, but which do not automatically contradict the common perception of cult images as inanimate symbols. Yet there are significant quantities of evidence that do precisely this, describing the ways in which images could move and display signs of life in a dialogue far more problematic to the modern mind than the transport of statues in processions and permanent relocation. Some statues moved of their own accord, could be manipulated to move by magic, or gave some sign of independent movement in the form of providing portents and omens. I have already touched upon a number of these images and their theoretical implications in the earlier discussion of speaking statuary, but the evidence is far

⁵⁷⁷ Many literary sources are no more explanatory, noting the particular appearance, rather than the motivation.

⁵⁷⁸ E.g. Biguzzi (1998) 29, cf. Spivey (1995) 442f. For the use of cult images to bind the deity to civic life generally see Feeney (1998) 94f.

⁵⁷⁹ It might have been part of myth re-enactment in Hera's worship, cf. Athenaeus *Deipn.* 15.672

⁵⁸⁰ Feeney (1998) 3-6; Stewart (2003) 185.

more abundant than this alone suggests.⁵⁸¹ In fact, the animation of cult images is one of the most significant indicators of the extent to which their divinity could reach and the limitations placed on interactions with them. It therefore adds a great deal to our understanding of the huge variety of manners in which cult images could be understood.

Although a number of works have addressed the matter of moving images in antiquity, and occasionally their implications for ancient religions, these studies are often hindered by the modern conception of art, mechanics and religious propriety.⁵⁸² The problem is one that we have encountered before: statues cannot move. For this reason, the temptation to attribute instances of images moving to mythical fancy or deliberate fraud is too great for scholars to avoid. The matter is to some extent beside the point: devotees in the Roman world were perfectly aware of the qualities of wood and stone, and they knew as well as we do that statues alone are incapable of movement. It is naïve to attribute a belief in the animate abilities of cult statuary to category mistakes or the ‘simpleminded’ nature of popular belief.⁵⁸³ Whilst the technical ability to manipulate images in order that they might appear to move independently is certainly both fascinating and relevant to the study of interactions with cult images, it should not preclude an acceptance of the perception of cult images, by the educated and the uneducated alike, as possessing life in some form or another.

Many of the theoretical implications of treating statues as though they share qualities, needs and desires with living things have been mentioned with relation to the dressing and adorning of images as well as their apparent ability to listen and speak. Movement is one of the fundamental signs of life, particularly where statues are concerned, and along with speaking statues is one of the indicators that these images were conceived of active and powerful. Like statues that spoke, instances of movement fall along a wide range of possible actions, from the infrequent and unusual to the regular and expected, and of course there were those that were enchanted or otherwise manipulated. Some images could also impact physically on the devotee without moving themselves (for example through healing), and as these have similarities in theoretical terms, some of those instances are covered at this point.

⁵⁸¹ See Chapter 2.3-4.

⁵⁸² E.g. Spivey (1995); Poulsen (1945); Berryman (2003); Biguzzi (1998) 21-9; Dodds (1966) 283-95; Francis (2003); Freedberg (1985) 223-98; Gordon (1979) etc.

⁵⁸³ See Ch. 2.2.

It is most common to find moving statues being referred to as unusual and one-off events, whereby the movement of an image is understood to be a sign and communication from the gods.⁵⁸⁴ Often these images were interpreted as being related to war, either positively, as when images of Victory turned to face the statue of Caesar after success in battle, or negatively, such as the statue of Juno at Sybaris that turned on her pedestal as a portent of divine disapproval for the slaughter of war.⁵⁸⁵ Alternatively, the movement of images could be interpreted as a consequence of the need for an entire city to correct its wrongs.⁵⁸⁶ At times the image appears to be casting judgement upon a specific event, such as when the images of Vesta at Rome and Athena at Troy closed their eyes in disapproval, the first at one of Vesta's priestesses giving birth, and the second at the Ionian seizure of Troy.⁵⁸⁷

Statues need not necessarily move in demonstrating signs of life and/or power, particularly in portents of the future. The passage of Plutarch discussed in the previous chapter mentions the possibility for images to appear to sweat, cry or bleed, and instances of this are indeed seen elsewhere.⁵⁸⁸ Again, these might be associated with war, and Appian relates instances in which sweat or blood emanated from images during the civil wars.⁵⁸⁹ Other references relate to the distant past of the authors, as in Livy's account of the bleeding statues of the Sabines and Augustine's report of the weeping statue of Apollo at Cumae in 129 BCE.⁵⁹⁰ In his discussion of these matters, Cicero suggests that such omens are more believable at times of war because of the atmosphere of fear:

⁵⁸⁴ For the destruction of images by the gods in this context see Ch. 5.4.

⁵⁸⁵ Caesar and Victory: Dio, 41.61.4: "in Tralles a palm tree grew up in the temple of Victory and the goddess herself turned about toward an image of Caesar that stood beside her" (καὶ ἐν Τράλλεσι φοινικά τε ἐν τῷ τῆς Νίκης ναῶ ἀναφῦναι καὶ τὴν θεὸν αὐτὴν πρὸς εἰκόνα τοῦ Καίσαρος ἐν πλαγίῳ που κειμένην μεταστραφῆναι). Tr. Cary (1927). The same instance is recorded at Caes. *BC* 3.86; Plut. *Caes.* 47. Juno: Athenaeus *Deipn.* 12.21: "And at the sight of this slaughter the statue of Juno turned itself away" (καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς φόνοις τούτοις ἀπεστράφη μὲν τὸ τῆς Ἥρας ἄγαλμα, τὸ δὲ ἔδαφος ἀνῆκε πηγὴν αἵματος). Tr. Yonge (1854). Additional omens of war when images move include: Dio, 54.7.3; 17.7.6; Plut. *Ant.* 60.2-3; *Mor.* 397E-F.

⁵⁸⁶ E.g. Dio 39.1-2, discussed further in Ch. 5.5.

⁵⁸⁷ Vesta: Ov. *Fast.* 3.45-6: "Silvia became a mother. The images of Vesta are said to have covered their eyes with their virgin hands" (Silvia fit mater; Vestae simulacra feruntur / virgineas oculis opposuisse manus.) Tr. Frazer (1931). Athena: Strabo 6.1.14: "the image that closed its eyes, the fable goes, when the suppliants were dragged away by the Ionians who captured the city" (τὸ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς Ἰλιάδος ξόανον ἰδρυμένον αὐτόθι). Tr. Hamilton & Falconer (1903).

⁵⁸⁸ Plut. *Cor.* 37. See Ch. 2.2 for the full text.

⁵⁸⁹ App. *Bell. Civ.* 2.5.36: (ξόανα ἰδρῶσαι) and 4.10.

⁵⁹⁰ Livy 22.36.7; Aug. *Civ. Dei.* 3.11.

“Sweat and blood you may be sure do not come except from animate bodies. An effect strikingly like blood is produced by the admixture of water with certain kinds of soil; and the moisture which forms on the outside of objects, as we see it on our plastered walls when the south wind blows, seems to resemble sweat. Such occurrences, which in time of war appear to the timid to be most frequent and most real, are scarcely noticed in times of peace.”⁵⁹¹

He also suggests applying natural philosophy to these omens, and argues that they do not come from the gods at all.⁵⁹² Clearly omens were not taken seriously by all, but the implication in the first half of Cicero’s work *On Divination* is that instances of statues bleeding and sweating were widely known and believed.⁵⁹³ Indeed, the sheer volume of references to this type of omen indicates that this was the case.⁵⁹⁴

In general these movements and signs of life required religious knowledge and the correct response and interpretation, as indicated by the assumption that they move with relation to a particular war or incident.⁵⁹⁵ This is in contrast to the potential understanding that movement, sweating and bleeding could have natural causes, as suggested by Cicero and Plutarch.⁵⁹⁶ These incidents caused religious action to be taken, and as such again provide a way in which the gods might be able to communicate with devotees through their image, directly acting on, or from, their representations in the material world.⁵⁹⁷

Within the broader context of images moving, however, these omens and portents are not just indications that the gods can act through their images, but are also signifiers of the potential for the statues themselves to have animate qualities and divine power. Certain images were

⁵⁹¹ Cic. *De Div.* 2.58: “nec enim sanguis nec sudor nisi e corpore. sed et decoloratio quaedam ex aliqua contagione terrena maxime potest sanguini similis esse, et umor adlapsus extrinsecus, ut in tectoriis videmus austro, sudorem videtur imitari. atque haec in bello plura et maiora videntur timentibus, eadem non tam animadvertuntur in pace;” Tr. Falconer (1923). Cf. Pease (1963). For the ambiguity of Cicero’s statements on these aspects of religion, see Balagagadhara (1994) 40ff.

⁵⁹² Cic. *De Div.* 2.60.

⁵⁹³ E.g. Cic. *De Div.* 1.23; 34; 43; 44.

⁵⁹⁴ E.g. Dio, 57.47.3, 46.33.3; Lucan, *Phars.* 4.22; Plut. *Alex.* 3.74; *Otho* 4; Suet. *Vesp.* 5.6; Theophr. *Hist. Plant.* 5.9.8; Luc. *DDS* 10; Paus. 4.13.1 with the references above. Early Christian concern miraculous images also suggests widespread belief in them, cf. Scherrer (1984) 600-4.

⁵⁹⁵ For this religious knowledge in Livy cf. Davies (2004) 43f; 64-7; 77-9 (on the implication that the Senate had an understood criteria for assessing what was (or was not) an omen. Cf. the decisions on whether statues were sacred or profane at Livy, 26.34.12, see above, n.525 and n.534).

⁵⁹⁶ For Plutarch see Ch. 2.2.

⁵⁹⁷ For the specific implications of this when omens included damaged images see Ch. 5.4.

more closely associated with this sort of power than others, in particular oracular images that moved in response to questioning.⁵⁹⁸ The images of Zeus Ammon and the 'Apollo' in Syria have been discussed previously, and their movement in response to questions has essentially the same implications for the role of the image, in that it plays an active role and appears to have qualities of life.⁵⁹⁹ The oracle of Zeus Ammon is said to respond with nods and signs, and the 'Apollo' even levitated.⁶⁰⁰ These statues seem to have indicated where they wished to move as they were being carried by religious officials, a method not dissimilar to that of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, which was said to have grown heavy in the priestesses hands if her rituals were not being performed with enough zeal.⁶⁰¹ Importantly, it is this ability of the image at Sparta that leads Pausanias to argue that this must be original Artemis Orthia, as taken by Orestes and Iphigeneia from Tauris.⁶⁰² The assumption here that cult statues are supposed to have power of some kind is very clear, and is one way of telling them apart from other representations of the gods.

Although the animation of images within rituals appears to be restricted to specific oracular instances, the assumption of their ability to have a direct impact on the physical world is clear in other effects they may have. Statues with the power to heal and otherwise affect those in their presence may not be moving statues as such, but these abilities naturally contribute to the understanding of what type of life and power these images were thought to have. Healing images are amongst the best known and most prolific of this type, and amongst these statues of Asclepius are probably the most famed. It is not always clear from the sources whether it is the sanctuary or the image that provides the cures, but the image is heavily implied in some cases, such as in the placing of a couch next to the statue for those seeking its help to sleep on.⁶⁰³ Images representing gods other than Asclepius could also be associated with healing powers, such as that of Hercules at Hyettos.⁶⁰⁴

⁵⁹⁸ For other oracular images see Ch. 2.2; 2.3.

⁵⁹⁹ See above, with Diod. Sic. 17.50-1; Strabo 17.1.43; Paus. 16.1; Macr. *Sat.* 1.23.13; Tac. *Ann.* 7.1; Luc. *DDS* 10, 36-7.

⁶⁰⁰ Zeus Ammon: Strabo 17.1.43. Apollo: *DDS* 36-7.

⁶⁰¹ For the movements of Zeus Ammon and the images of the *DDS* see Lightfoot (2003) 464f. Artemis Orthia is described at Paus. 3.16.10-11. Cf. Dawkins (1906/7) 104ff, figs. 31-3. For the possibility that this could also be used as a means of divination see Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 13.12.

⁶⁰² Paus. 3.16.7-11. Cf. Elsner (1996) 524; Heer (1979) 228-9.

⁶⁰³ Paus. 10.32.12. There is a lacuna in the text, but this is the most probable interpretation, see Pritchett (1998) 357. Other references to images of Asclepius and their powers include Callistr. 10; Apul. *Met.* 11.19, 24, 29; L. R. *CRAI* (1982) 517-35.

⁶⁰⁴ Paus. 9.24.3. Cf. Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 12; *Alex.* 30; Paus. 3.22.1, 7.19.6.

Statues that might not otherwise have received cult could also be treated as cult statues if they were found to have miraculous or healing qualities. The reinstated image of Theagenes at Thasos was said to have had healing powers and was worshipped as a consequence.⁶⁰⁵ The same appears to have been true of images of certain athletes and heroes, including Polydamas at Olympia and the Locrian Euthylocos.⁶⁰⁶ These images do not represent gods, but are treated as cult statues because the apparent power inherent in them demands it.

Physical impact associated with an image was not restricted to healing, and a range of qualities is found in the ancient evidence, both literary and epigraphic. Often this is related to a positive effect, as is the case for an image of Apollo at Magnesia that was supposed to impart great strength upon its devotees and an image of Aphrodite that apparently saved a boat from seasickness and a storm.⁶⁰⁷ Other statues could have a negative physical effect on those who touched them, often out of self-preservation, which was said of the sacred image of Artemis Orthia who drove those who touched it insane.⁶⁰⁸

These instances indicate that some images were very much conceived of as possessing animate qualities or divine powers. The variety of these powers and the range of locations in which these images are found suggest that this was quite a common conception, as bemoaned by those who criticised a belief in them. Cicero's comments to the effect that a belief in sweating and moving statues is foolish have been noted above, and are echoed in other authors of the Roman world.⁶⁰⁹ Others took the widespread nature of these beliefs as a cue to be more balanced on the matter, and Plutarch's remarks on speaking statues relate also to belief in other miraculous qualities of images.⁶¹⁰ In general, concern over such images is

⁶⁰⁵ Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 12; Paus. 6.11.6-9; Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.95-7.

⁶⁰⁶ Polydamas: Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31.97; *I Oropos* 380 (Paus. 6.5.1 mentions the statue but not its healing powers). Euthylocos: Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.10-11 citing Oenomaus. Cf. Luc. *Philops.* 13-20, describing an image of the Corinthian general Pelliclus.

⁶⁰⁷ Apollo: Paus. 10.32.6; Burchner *RE sv*, Hyla 1 (1914) 106-7; L.R. (1977) 77-8 with the second-century CE numismatic depictions. Clerc (1915) 24 posits ritual physical contact as the means for receiving this strength. Aphrodite: Athen. *Deipn.* 15.676. See also the unknown miracles attributed to images of Zeus and Hecate recorded in epigraphic evidence: Laumonier (1934) 85 with L.R. *Et. Anat.* (1937) 516.

⁶⁰⁸ Paus. 3.16.9. A similar effect is described of the images in the sanctuary of Eumenides at Ceryneia. Cf. Plut. *Vit. Arat.* 32 explaining that an image of Artemis in Pellene is kept covered up because its eyes are petrifying. For statues with general powers in antiquity see Faraone (1992), cf. Clerc (1915) 63ff; Elsner (1996) 525-6.

⁶⁰⁹ E.g. Polybius, 6.12.6-10 relates a belief in the powers of images to avoid rain and snow as childish and for simpletons.

⁶¹⁰ Plut. *Cor.* 37-8 (See Ch. 2.3) echoed at *Cam.* 6.3.

expressed within the context of religious propriety, aiming to ensure that cult statues are treated as they ought to be.⁶¹¹

As with instances of speaking statues, religious propriety did not normally extend to the manipulation of images in order that they appeared to move. Accusations of religious fraud have been mentioned in the previous chapter with relation to oracles, and for the most part they are restricted to those images. There are some suggestions that the concepts of light and fire were toyed with in temples, and an image of Hecate was said to radiate light whilst a statue found in a Mithraeum appears to have been designed to emit fire.⁶¹² There are again some suggestions in the magical papyri that statues could be enlivened through spells and rituals, often to produce oracles, but occasionally to act as messengers and attract lovers.⁶¹³ This type of practice is also mentioned rarely in the literary evidence, often as either an attack or defence of the use of magical images.⁶¹⁴

Interestingly, although moving statues formed part of myths about ancient images, and despite the fact that the technology certainly existed to create the impression of movement, there does not seem to have been any great attempt to do so for the images of cult. Daedalus was supposed to have been able to make images that moved of their own accord, and although many statues of the Roman world were attributed to the mythical sculptor, none seem to have had this quality.⁶¹⁵ A possible exception mentioned in Pausanias is damaged by the time that he sees it.⁶¹⁶ The technical ability to make sculpture seem to move of its own accord is indicated by the well-attested stag held by the statue of Apollo at Didyma.⁶¹⁷ The specific device is not known, but visual representations and mentions in the literature make it clear that it was both impressive and known to be the artifice of man.⁶¹⁸ We know from other

⁶¹¹ Esp. Plut. *Cor.* 6.3.

⁶¹² Hecate: Pliny *NH* 36.32; cf. 36.95-7 with Isager (1991) 157. The archaeological remains of the image from the Mithraeum are discussed in Cumont (1903) 66, it is a partial relief from the Near East. Comparable use of flames, perhaps emitting from torches or images have been posited along Hadrian's wall, cf. Cumont (1903) 110 fig.23 for a possible example at Ostia. Eunap. 475 also describes an image of Hecate that could smile, laugh and make flames, cf. Lewy (1978) 247-8; Mastrocinque (2002) 180; *PGM* IV 2708-84, 2785-90; 3125-71.

⁶¹³ *PGM* IV.184ff; IV.2360.

⁶¹⁴ Aug. *Civ. Dei.* 10.11; Apul. *Apol.* 61, 63-4. Theurgic images are only animated for the purposes of divination, and are covered in Ch. 2.4.

⁶¹⁵ For Daedalus's moving images see: Callistr. *Ekphr.* 8; Diod. Sic. 4.76.1-6; Luc. *Philops.* 19; Ov. *Ars* 1.289-326. The artist's abilities were known to produce rather unhappy endings, however, cf. Putnam (1987) 176-8.

⁶¹⁶ Paus. 9.40.3. Cf. Ar. *De Anima* 1.3.406B. Pausanias suggests other images he sees may have been made by Daedalus, but does not say they have any particular powers, e.g. Paus. 3.18.5-6.

⁶¹⁷ Pliny *NH* 34.19.75 describes the stag in some detail, but the exact meaning is unclear; the image is also mentioned at Paus. 2.10.5, 8.46.3, 9.10.2.

⁶¹⁸ Visual representations are collected at Lacroix (1949) 221-6.

references to what appeared to be moving people or animals that there were methods that could be applied to make statues move.⁶¹⁹ That these could inspire significant emotional responses is apparent from the famous moving model of Caesar that helped to inspire rioting after his death.⁶²⁰ The existence of technologies to manipulate images is not motivation in itself where cult statues are concerned: a mechanically moving image could quite easily have less of the divine associated with it than an unhewn *sanis* believed to have originated in the heavens.⁶²¹

The independent movement of images seems to occur on the periphery of human interactions with cult statues. The most commonly attested types of movement, those of irregular portents, are also criticised in some ancient writers, although it should be noted that these are small voices in a far wider impression of acceptance. Statues that moved any more than this were few and far between, and there does not seem to have been any real inclination to encourage images to move. When they did, it was a powerful event to those who believed it, suggesting direct communication from the divine through their representations. Other qualities of life and power attributed to statues were similarly important, requiring and encouraging proper religious knowledge and understanding. Whilst there appears to be great variety in the form these interactions took, in general they are responded to quite similarly: oracles are consulted and religious officials employed to deal with them.

The impression generated by the combined evidence for the animation of images is that cult statues *could* move at times, but in general were not supposed to. Concerns often arose when they did, and it was not a matter to be handled lightly or by amateurs. In addition, although the literary imagination certainly provided for statuary that did so, these images do not generally appear to be animated in anything approaching a 'realistic' anthropomorphic manner.⁶²² It is perhaps not surprising that these images did not move independently a great deal, given the tensions that evidently surrounded the correct location of cult images.

3.6 Conclusions on movement and cult statues

⁶¹⁹ E.g. a flying dove attested at Aulus Gellius *Noct. Att.* 10.12.8-10; an artificial snail at Polyb. 12.13.9. The technology is suggested at Vitruvius *De Arch.* 9.8.5; Seneca *Epist.* 88.22; Hero *Aut.* 1.7, 4.4, 9.5, 17.1, 20ff, 30.6. See Berryman (2003).

⁶²⁰ Appian *Bell. Civ.* 5.62. Cf. the description of the monstrous image of Nabis's wife at Polyb. 13.7.10.

⁶²¹ For the rejection of mechanical images in religions see Freedberg (1989) 235.

⁶²² For the literature of moving images see Frontisi-Ducroux (1975); Gordon (1979) 8-10; Gross (1992); Spivey (1995); Bruce (1913); Francis (2003).

The movement of images played a significant part in their conception, whether it be through a concern over the knowledge of their origin, a desire to restrain or to process them or their occasional ability to move spontaneously. The limits of interactions with cult statues are again experimented with in this manner, for there appear to be lines that they do not normally cross and restrictions on what their movement might be. We also find other instances of tension surrounding the control of cult images and, by inference, the gods: men tried to ensure that their statues would stay in the proper location and at the same time not to manipulate them beyond what was perceived as acceptable to the divine.

Although many images were static for much of the time, it is clear that they also had the potential to move and be moved, suggesting that they were not always or entirely static in their conceptualisation. Moving images in many ways cross the boundary into the mortal and material world, perhaps simultaneously allowing the devotee to feel as though they are moving closer towards the divine. There is always a need to ensure that this was done with due care for religious propriety because the moving of images could be a deeply significant moment, whether as a consequence of that being the only time the statue was visually encountered by its devotees or because it was when it moved of its own accord that oracles were delivered.

In some respects, superhuman qualities are attributed to cult images more often than human ones.⁶²³ Statues do not often walk around, but they are relatively frequently found to cause miracles, impart strength, madness or health, and tell the future. Statues that weep, sweat or bleed are always conveying a message from the divine that is not already known by humans: a warning for the future or the need to expiate the gods. Oracular images that move in response to questioning do so with a power that is clearly beyond that of man. These are perhaps more correctly termed signs of the divine than signs of life, for they very clearly place these images in a realm beyond that of the solely material or representational, demonstrated by the worship and cult offered to those images that have special abilities but do not depict deities.

⁶²³ Spivery (1995) refers to Greek statues as ‘bionic’ rather than ‘lifelike’ for precisely this reason. Images that actually *were* alive are notably not so because of any human qualities: Paus. 5.13.7-8 refers to an image made from a living tree, and trees were worshipped in the same way as images elsewhere, e.g. *CIG* no. 173; Tert. *Apol.* 46; Maximus of Tyre 8.1; Paus.12.1.2; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.33; Silius Ital. 6.691; Ov., *Met.* 8.755; Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 5.16-17. See Introduction.i.a.

Interestingly, one of the clearest indicators that images were not wholly static in their conceptualisation in the Roman world is the existence of anxiety over keeping them still. Cult statues could be fettered or bound by mortals, at least sometimes to keep them in place, and fears over their temporary transportation might have been eased with sureties and the proper rituals. Equally, these images could prevent their own movement, inflicting harm on those who tried to transport them or simply becoming immovable by human hands. Both devotees and the gods, it seems, wanted these images to be static, or at least correctly located, for much of the time.

Once again, perceptions of cult statues are both illuminated and complicated by this set of interactions. They were neither wholly static nor particularly mobile, and they were usually interacted with according to some vague and changeable parameters. The movement of images could be a powerful argument for the divinity inherent within them, as Julian found when describing the arrival of the Mother of the Gods into Rome. At the same time, the ability to steal and transport images was occasionally seen as an indication that they in fact lacked divine qualities, and that they perhaps were not even very much cared about by the gods. Statues that moved independently might have done so as a method of communication from the god, creating a physical impact on the physical world but not necessarily being elided with the statue at that time, or it could be a sign that the images themselves had the power to foretell the future. A vast spectrum of possible conceptions of how cult statues related to the divine and to the relationships between men and gods can hence be found in an assessment of the moving of images.

Chapter Four: Holding On

4.1 The boundaries of physical interaction

The inherent tactility of the cult image should by now be apparent, through the numerous forms of physical interaction that took place within Roman religious practice. This existence of constant physical interaction created a religious environment in which a devotee could, and often did, form a relationship with an image as though it, in and of itself, had some sort of power and independent life. Given this context, it is unsurprising that worshippers at times took this interaction quite literally into their own hands; not all interaction was based within ritual or upon tradition, and it appears that some individuals could form such a significant personal relationship with a cult image that they could expect it to respond to that most human of gestures, the embrace.

There are two principal circumstances under which one might embrace an image, and the circumstance dictates the form that the embrace might take, but both types occur principally as extreme responses. A cult image could be embraced for sanctuary, or for love. The extremity associated with desiring an image to provide sanctuary is clear from the sources, in which those individuals expecting protection from the statue are always in the most severe of situations. Embracing an image out of some kind of sexual or romantic feeling is extreme because of the limits to which it takes interactions: attempting to have sexual intercourse with a statue or a god lies well beyond the boundaries of 'normal' religious practice, even by the varied and fluid standards of Roman religious systems. These instances, therefore, provide us with a useful limit at which we might place our understanding of cult statues in the Roman world, for any discussion by the ancient authors of the extremes of this kind of behaviour is useful in assessing the full spectrum of potential relationships, as well as what happened as a result of the transgression of unspoken but accepted regulations.

Initially, however, it is necessary to take a brief look at forms of interaction that demonstrate touch for its own sake as existing and accepted within traditional practice, for it is partially the existence of such physical communication and its permissibility that created a cultural nexus in which narratives about such extreme behaviour could be told, and in which suppliants might expect to be protected by those images that they embraced. Certain aspects

of worship could involve the touching or kissing of images for no defined purpose, although some of the theoretical models discussed within the thesis provide indications as to why this form of behaviour might occur.

4.2 Kissing and touching

There are few sources that explicitly address this type of interaction, although this is not surprising, for it appears to have been performed as a personal gesture more commonly than as a part of public ritual. This is indicated by the contexts in which we hear of touching as worship, such as roadside images that have been worn by the hands of pious travellers.⁶²⁴ The kissing of images is mentioned in a similar context, and the wearing down of a statue's surface as a consequence of kissing is used by Cicero as an indication of how deeply loved a particular cult image of Hercules was.⁶²⁵ It is also important, of course, that not all cult images would be available to be touched by the general public, and some had specific regulations attached to who might be allowed to come into any physical contact with the statue at all.⁶²⁶ Nevertheless, the cult images of Rome *were* touched, apparently for the sake of this physical contact alone, and once again it is necessary to address what reasons there might be for this, and what purpose it might serve within religious practice in general, as well as within the relationship between devotee, image, and god specifically.

It has already been suggested that a religious context in which a cult image was an inherently tactile artefact might influence the necessity or desire for a worshipper to touch it. In addition, the argument that there exists a desire to touch all three-dimensional sculpture must be taken into account. A psychological experiment into the tactility of sculpture found that

⁶²⁴ Lucr. *Rer. Nat.*, 1.316-8: "tum portas propter aena signa manus dextras ostendunt adtenuari saepe salutantum tactu praeterque meantum."

⁶²⁵ Kissing roadside images: Lucr. *Rer. Nat.*, 1.316-8. Cicero on the image of Hercules: Cic., *Verr.* 2.4.94. Lucr., *Rer. Nat.*, 1.316. See also, for example, Heliod., *Aeth.*, 7.8.7; Chariton, 1.7; 2.2.7. Kissing as a sign of devotion by the Emperor Macrinus: *I. Milet.* 274. The passage of Cicero is intended to vilify Verres for having removed the image, and so may be exaggerated. The point, however, is that this form of interaction is not itself of note and is expected to be understood by his audience. Cf. Frazel (2005) for Cicero's use of the description of images within his rhetorical purpose.

⁶²⁶ For example, Livy, 5.22.4: 'The deportation of Queen Juno to Rome was entrusted to a body of men selected from the whole army, who after performing their ablutions and arraying themselves in white vestments, reverently entered the temple and in a spirit of holy dread placed their hands on the statue, for it was as a rule only the priest of one particular house who, by Etruscan usage, touched it.' (namque delecti ex omni exercitu iuvenes pure lautis corporibus, candida veste, quibus deportanda Romam regina Iuno adsignata erat, venerabundi templum iniere primo religiose admoventes manus, quod id signum more Etrusco nisi certae gentis sacerdos adtrectare non esset solitus.) Tr. Foster (1924). On the regulations of the priesthood permitted to touch the image see Plut. *Cam.* 6.1; Scheid (1995) 22.

84% of the participants observed amongst a collection of sculptures touched them, and that there was no differentiation between the images by what was represented and the amount of times they were touched.⁶²⁷ Interestingly, Kreitler and Kreitler suggested that one reason for this behaviour might be summarised in the statement that: 'Vision affords acquaintance without complete encounter, while tactility provides for an encounter without complete acquaintance.'⁶²⁸ That is, the reciprocity of touching and being touched that one might feel in actively seeking this type of interaction with an image is a significantly different experience than one might achieve by viewing alone.⁶²⁹

Within the context of the religions of the Roman world, in which a mortal's relationship with an image was influenced through a multitude of forms of both touch and viewing, it is no surprise that this simple act might be practiced as a personal acknowledgement of this relationship. The sensory perception involved in forming a full acquaintance with the statue's surface, the physical realisation of the space that the statue took up, and the impression upon the senses that the devotee was being touched in return must have combined to develop a powerful urge to touch religious images in particular. However, the physical space occupied by the cult image was only part of its role, and it must be acknowledged that, if a devotee touched an image that at so many other times was treated as though it were the deity, he might also be attempting to form a full encounter with that aspect of it.

There is no direct evidence to explain why individuals kissed or touched images in this manner, except to say that it falls within generally 'pious' behaviour.⁶³⁰ Although the desire to touch sculpture may have strong psychological force behind it independent of what the image represents, certain images will always be the subject of rather more physical contact than others. The descriptions of visible wear associated with those instances of touch that are mentioned in the ancient evidence certainly suggest that this might be the case. For the sake of comparison, one might think of images such as that of St Peter at his Basilica in Vatican City, or the statue of Victor Noir in Paris, which have been touched so frequently that parts of

⁶²⁷ Kreitler & Kreitler (1972) 206f.

⁶²⁸ Ibid. 208.

⁶²⁹ Cf. Gross (1992) 59ff for a discussion of the desire to touch statuary generally, and its presence as a literary motif throughout Western literary history. Scholars on the subject of the tactility of images often cite the necessity for 'Do Not Touch' signs commonly found alongside statuary in museums and galleries. A partially comparable urge in the sense of full encounter with religious images might be seen in the kissing of icons in Orthodox churches in Eastern Europe, some examples of which are mentioned in Freedberg (1989) 320f.

⁶³⁰ See above, n.624.

the material are visibly worn away (fig. 4.1).⁶³¹ Indeed, human contact has had so much physical impact upon these images that the touching of them is now either regulated or forbidden altogether.⁶³²



Fig. 4.1 The effigy of Victor Noir in Paris, which is now guarded by railings and a sign reading "Any damage caused by graffiti or indecent rubbing will be prosecuted." The effect of rubbing on the image is clearly visible.⁶³³

Clearly some images are more tactile than others, although the reasons for this remain obscure. Even those modern examples cited lack a real explanation for what is to be achieved through this contact, and there is even less indication for the antique ones.⁶³⁴ We simply have vague suggestions that the act is performed out of reverence or by pious individuals, and so must assume that it has some role in the relationship between the mortal and the deity, albeit an unclear one.

4.3 Sanctuary's embrace

When the form of interaction becomes more extreme and complex there are indications as to what the reasons behind them may be. In the case of embracing an image for sanctuary, the

⁶³¹ For the frequency of human contact necessary for this kind of wearing to take place, see Oda et al (2004), with specific reference to the statue of St Peter, as well as the Buddhist image of Pindola Bharadvaja and others.

⁶³² The statue in St Peter's Basilica has to be accessed via a regulated queue, and the 19th-century statue of Victor Noir is now protected by railings and a sign that reads: 'Any damage caused by graffiti or indecent rubbing will be prosecuted.' (See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3975607.stm>).

⁶³³ From: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3975607.stm> [accessed 12-12-09].

⁶³⁴ Some modern image-touching practices have certainly had explanations attributed to them: Victor Noir is supposed to be able to transfer virility (see above, n.632), for example, and the tradition of kissing the Blarney Stone in County Cork, Ireland, is meant to result in to imbuing the kisser with the gift of Irish charm (see Woodward (1962) 308). However, we have no similar suggestions for ancient cult statues at all, and therefore the question of how virility or charm is expected to be transferred from image to human is, whilst interesting, not a fruitful one for the purposes of this thesis. Clerc (1915) 24 suggests that the Magnesian Apollo of Paus. 10.32.6 gave strength to those who touched it, although the act is not mentioned in any of our sources.

suppliant is clearly expecting the image or god to have some active response to the act of touch, even if it is simply to impress enough piety upon the assailant that the suppliant will be safe. This practice of turning to statues as sanctuary is most commonly found either as a last resort or as the specific domain of slaves (who realistically had few other lines of defence). It is also a very ancient practice, and is attested throughout antiquity, from Classical Greece to the Late Empire (see fig. 4.2).⁶³⁵ Apparently the protective power of cult images was significant, and yet it was not to be called on for just any occasion; most instances relate to life-threatening attacks. The implications for our understanding of the role held by images have already been mentioned, and include the importance of assessing extreme forms of interaction, as well as adding a new dimension to our knowledge of the range of powers and properties that a divine image might be perceived to have had.



Fig. 4.2: Pompeiian wall painting depicting the dragging of Cassandra from the statue of Athena at Troy, probably the most famous instance of embracing a statue for sanctuary in the ancient world.⁶³⁶

⁶³⁵ Although I will not be discussing the earlier examples here, the most famous include that found in Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes* (esp. 174; 245-87), in which the women of the city beg several cult statues for safety, and of course the numerous depictions of the rape of Cassandra, in which she commonly clings to an image in desperation (for example: Tondo of a cup by the Condros Painter, c. 440-30 BCE, Louvre G458; Hydria by the Kleophrades Painter, c.480-75 BCE, Naples 2422 etc.). The motif in Greek art is discussed by Cohen (1997) 80f; Spivey (1995) 449-51; Dillon (2002) 260. See fig. 4.2.

⁶³⁶ Pompeii I 10.4 (4), House of Menander, *in situ*.

In both literary and visual representations of embracing an image for sanctuary it is in fact this act itself that often indicates the desperation of the individuals involved. It is a technique used in repetition by Appian, for example, to demonstrate both the absolute fear of those who are about to die, and also the barbarity of those who slaughter them:⁶³⁷

“The Ephesians tore fugitives, who had taken refuge in the temple of Artemis, from the very images of the goddess and slew them. The Pergameans shot with arrows those who had fled to the temple of Aesculapius, while they were still clinging to his statues.”... “The Caunii, who had been made subject to Rhodes after the war against Antiochus and had been lately liberated by the Romans, pursued the Italians who had taken refuge about the Vesta statue of the senate-house, tore them from the shrine, killed children before their mothers' eyes, and then killed the mothers themselves and their husbands after them.”... “He conducted the victims to the temple of Concord, and there murdered them, chopping off the hands of some who were embracing the sacred images.”⁶³⁸

These descriptions are not simply melodrama, however, for it is clear that this particular practice takes place as a last resort.⁶³⁹ The motivation is the combined force of desperation, and the sacrilege required on the part of the attacker in killing in a sacred space. In fact, in the majority of cases cited the suppliant is unsuccessful and dies despite their efforts, although this does not seem to have prevented the practice. Officials of the Roman world seem to have been less tolerant of the practice than the Greeks, in particular when it came to slaves seeking sanctuary, and concern was publicly voiced.⁶⁴⁰ It is difficult to know what this means for

⁶³⁷ Cf. App. *Pun.* 19.130 (Roman deserters taking shelter at the shrine of Aesclepius are killed). Cf. Delbridge (1997) 173 for the literary motif of grasping or kissing images to heighten the intensity of prayer scenes. See also van Straten (1974).

⁶³⁸ Appian, *Mith.* 4.23: Ἐφέσιοι τοὺς ἐς τὸ Ἀρτεμίσιον καταφυγόντας, συμπλεκομένους τοῖς ἀγάλμασιν, ἐξέλκοντες ἔκτεινον. Περγαμηνοὶ τοὺς ἐς τὸ Ἀσκληπιεῖον συμφυγόντας, οὐκ ἀφισταμένους, ἐτόξευον τοῖς ξοάνοις συμπλεκομένους.”... “Καύνιοι Ῥοδίοις ὑποτελεῖς ἐπὶ τῷ Ἀντιόχου πολέμῳ γενόμενοι, καὶ ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἀφεθέντες οὐ πρὸ πολλοῦ, τοὺς Ἰταλοὺς ἐς τὴν βουλαίαν Ἑστίαν καταφυγόντας ἔλκοντες ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑστίας, τὰ βρέφη σφῶν πρῶτα ἔκτεινον ἐν ὧσιν τῶν μητέρων, αὐτὰς δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐπ’ ἐκείνοις.”... “καὶ ὁ Θεόφιλος αὐτοὺς συναγαγὼν ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς ὁμονομίας νεῶν ἤππετο τοῦ φόνου, καὶ πινῶν τοῖς ἀγάλμασι συμπλεκομένων τὰς χεῖρας ἀπέκοπεν.” Tr. White (1899).

⁶³⁹ See also, for example, Philostr. *Vit. Apol.* 1.15; Tac. *Ann.* 3.63; 4.67.4; Plaut. *Rud.* 5.25; Plut. *Sol.* 12.1; Suet. *Aug.* 17; Paus. 7.21.2.

⁶⁴⁰ E.g. Ulpian, *Digest*, 21.1.19; Tac. *Ann.* 3.60-3. Cf. Rigsby (1996) 578f. *Cod. Theod.* 9.44.1 from 386 CE confirmed the right of sanctuary at statues, demonstrated the longevity of the practice, cf. Browning (1952) 20.

perceptions of the divine image itself, although we have seen that the gods do not generally respond well to coercion through their image.⁶⁴¹

Whilst the reasons for taking refuge in a sacred space and for seeking comfort in the physical presence of divine representation are relatively obvious, the step from taking refuge in a temple or in the image's presence to embracing the image is not an automatic one.⁶⁴² A devotee might just as much expect some protection from being within a temple, in the presence of the deity's image, or might hope to make one final attempt at prayer or sacrifice in order to communicate with a (hopefully protective) god. The desire to touch the image as an extension of this may be logical under the tense circumstances.

There are enough instances in which the physical contact of clinging or embracing is explicit for us to assume that this was a significant part of the process, although the reasons for it are not at all obvious. Certainly, there might be a psychological aspect at play here: the devotee might simply *feel* more protected through the very act of feeling. This in itself suggests a certain power on the part of the statue, however, for the same devotee must also know that in practical terms the average statue does not leap to the aid of living men or women, regardless of what it represents.

Being as it is an extreme act, placed on the limits of physical interactions by virtue of the fact that it only takes place at times of absolute desperation, this might be seen as (and sometimes literally was) the ultimate interaction. If a cult image could receive so much attention from mortals, and if their interactions and attention presume that some sort of reciprocal attention emanates from the image and/or the deity, this is precisely the type of act that might be hoped to immediately attract that desired attention. If a deity can be communicated with by virtue of speaking to an image, for example, might it not also respond physically to physical contact? This is not to say that this hypothetical devotee expected the image to move from its pedestal and protect him itself, but that the protection was conceived of as taking place in the physical world.

⁶⁴¹ See, e.g. Ch. 3.4.

⁶⁴² There certainly does not seem to have been provision in Roman law for sacred space to protect individuals by virtue of its sanctity alone. Cf. Rigsby (1996) 574ff, although some temples in the Greek speaking areas may have been treated this way, e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 3.60-3.

The tradition of images being able to provide asylum to those in desperation extended to slaves, especially in the Greek cities, and this was a practice that the Roman rulers attempted to effect some control over. As is to be expected, the sanctuary provided by a cult statue was not clearly regulated, and the circumstances under which it was acceptable were primarily governed by tradition. However, with the introduction of new cults during the Roman period, especially the Imperial cult, opportunities for regulation that was not based on tradition arose. Imperial cult images, commonly treated in precisely the same manner as images of other cults, unsurprisingly held protective powers, as references to slaves taking refuge from their masters at them make clear.⁶⁴³ Legal sources suggest that the practice was so popular as to be a matter for some concern, although they do not propose any secure method of controlling it.⁶⁴⁴ These concerns make clear the association between the image, its actions and its referent that is implied in all instances of direct physical contact with cult statues, for the image here takes an active role, and this in turn suggests that the represented deity is also active.

It was not only slaves who used the Imperial cult images as a place of refuge: a governor of Aspendus in Pamphylia fled to these statues in the hope of finding safety from a mob during a corn shortage.⁶⁴⁵ In his description of this scene Philostratus in fact directly compares the power of imperial images to those of the gods, saying that these statues depicting Tiberius were more feared than that of Olympian Zeus.⁶⁴⁶ In addition, as was the case for statues of the traditional gods, refuge could be sought *en masse*, as appears to have been the case when Cretans sought Augustus's image for sanctuary.⁶⁴⁷ That the treatment of cult images of traditional gods and cult images of emperors was the same with regards to those seeking sanctuary is made clear by sources stating that slaves might take refuge at temples of the gods and statues of the emperor.⁶⁴⁸ The association of image with referent plays precisely the same role for images of the emperor as for images of the god: extreme danger required extreme measures, and if there was only one opportunity to seek refuge, then it ought to be sought from the very top. Although in general it was a devotee's responsibility to ensure his own safety, Emperors and gods had the same power to protect individuals, and their attention

⁶⁴³ For example: Pliny *Epist.* 10.74; Gaius, *Institutes*, 1.53.

⁶⁴⁴ Ulpian, *Digest*, 21.1.19.1.

⁶⁴⁵ Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* 1.15.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 3.63.

⁶⁴⁸ Gaius, *Institutes*, 1.53: "with reference to the slaves, who flee for refuge to the temples of the Gods or the statues of the Emperor". (de his servis, qui ad fana deorum vel ad statuas principum confugiunt). Tr. Scott (2001). It is not clear whether the difference between images and buildings or sacred space is purposeful here.

might be best gained through this act of obvious desperation.⁶⁴⁹ That the Roman rulers attempted to regulate the practice but had no real ability to do so demonstrates both the popularity and a belief in the potential success of the practice, for it was common enough to attract the attentions of lawmakers, but was too old and respected to be altered.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁹ For the emperor as comparable to the gods in terms of levels of power, see Gradel (2002).

⁶⁵⁰ For discussion of the seeking of sanctuary at emperors' cult images generally, see: Price (1984) 192-3.

4.4 For the love of gods

At another extreme lies a different form of embrace altogether, one that is motivated by sexual feelings towards an image, rather than desperation for its protection. Agalmatophilia narratives, tales in which an individual falls in love and/or attempts to have sexual intercourse with an image, can be found throughout antiquity, indeed they can be found throughout literary history.⁶⁵¹ The idea of a living human expressing romantic feelings towards an image is relatively commonplace in ancient literature, and again it need not be a cult image to which such activity is directed.⁶⁵² In literary fantasy, agalmatophilia narratives toy with ideas of animate statues, desire, possession, mimesis and creation, and that must be an important aspect of the tales that narrate sexual attentions paid towards cult images.⁶⁵³ However, cult images stood within their own context of interactions and, in particular, a physical language which allowed them to be understood and to play a part in the active relationship between men and the divine.⁶⁵⁴ This cultic context probably informs many such narratives: lovers of statues often treat them as though they are alive/objects of worship/divine, by bringing them gifts, clothing them and so on, and these tales blur the boundaries on purpose.⁶⁵⁵

Several significant examples of agalmatophilia do specifically involve cult statues, and they have implications for what the boundaries of physical interactions with images could be thought to be, as well as for the role that the image itself occupied within the socio-cultural nexus.⁶⁵⁶ Importantly, the relationship that is formed throughout these narratives, in which an image becomes the object of adoration in ways quite different from those traditionally associated with cult statues, also challenges any definition of what a cult statue in the Roman world was through the overt conflation of spiritual and sexual love and worship that the stories describe.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵¹ For a vast array of which see Bettini (1999) *passim*; Gross (1992) esp. 54ff.

⁶⁵² The most famous example from antiquity is probably Ovid's version of the Pygmalion story (Ov., *Met.* 10.242-93), and this is not explicitly a divine image, although see discussion below with Elsner (1991) and Sharrock (1991b) for the suggestions within the narrative that the statue represents Aphrodite. For the general popularity of the motif in ancient literature and art see Bettini (1999).

⁶⁵³ See Elsner (1991) and Sharrock (1991a) and (1991b) for much discussion of these themes.

⁶⁵⁴ The concept of the image as a signifier of absence both relates and separates tales of agalmatophilia with images of gods to those of mortals: that represented by a cult statue does not necessarily have to be absent in the image's existence, but it is clearly not identical to the deity either.

⁶⁵⁵ See below, p173f.

⁶⁵⁶ The subject of agalmatophilia is normally considered by modern scholars as part of a discourse on art and desire, rather than art and religion. See, for example: Steiner (2001) 185, 249-50; Warner (1985) 219ff.

⁶⁵⁷ For the complexities of differentiating spiritual and sexual love see, for example, Freedberg (1989) 320-6, esp. 322-3 with fig. 151 (a discussion of Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa*). The discussion focuses upon the

Extended experimentation with this issue can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (10.242-93), which narrates the tale of Pygmalion, a sculptor who rejected women and made an ideal woman of his own from ivory. The protagonist expresses his adoration of the statue in a variety of ways, including bringing it/her gifts, clothing and undressing it, whispering to it, touching it, and so on, the combination of which has led some scholars to note the similarity between this behaviour and that associated with the worship of images in public cult.⁶⁵⁸ In addition, the goddess Venus is woven intricately into the narrative (eventually bringing the statue to life as a bride for Pygmalion), and the reader is encouraged to draw the already obvious association between this goddess and the nude female form that Pygmalion has sculpted. In addition to the fact that all surviving large-scale nude female free-standing sculpture representing the female form from antiquity represents this goddess (see Fig. 4.3), and that Pygmalion's ivory maiden is easily associated with the goddess by the reader, the suggestion is already made in an ancient source:

“The pyre represents Heracles, and if one sees a woman represented naked, he understands it to be “golden” Aphrodite, So the well-known Pygmalion of Cyprus fell in love with an ivory statue, it was of Aphrodite and it was naked.”⁶⁵⁹

concentrated gaze and attention associated with the ritual viewing of images, which is also significant for images within Roman religions. However, the focus of this discussion is rather the role that the context of constant physical interaction had in informing narratives of such extreme responses.

⁶⁵⁸ For example Sharrock (1991b); Elsner (1991); Sphalinger (1996) 53. The story is well known, and so I do not quote it in full here, but note esp. *Met.* 10.259-69: “He brings / to her such presents as are surely prized / by sweet girls; such as smooth round pebbles, shells, / and birds, and fragrant flowers of thousand tints, / lilies, and painted balls, and amber tears / of Heliads, which distill from far off trees.-- / he drapes her in rich clothing and in gems: / rings on her fingers, a rich necklace round / her neck, pearl pendants on her graceful ears; / and golden ornaments adorn her breast. / All these are beautiful -- and she appears / most lovable, if carefully attired,-- / or perfect as a statue, unadorned. / He lays her on a bed luxurious, spread / with coverlets of Tyrian purple dye, / and naming her the consort of his couch, / lays her reclining head on the most soft / and downy pillows, trusting she could feel” (Et modo blanditas adhibet, modo grata puellis/ munera fert illi conchas teretesque lapillos/ et parvas volucres et flores mille colorum/ liliaque pictasque pilas et ab arbore lapsas/ Heliadum lacrimas; ornat quoque vestibis artus,/ dat digitis gemmas, dat longa monilia collo:/ aure leves bacae, redimicula pectore pendent./ Cuncta decent: nec nuda minus formosa videtur./ Conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis/ appellatque tori sociam, acclinatque colla/ mollibus in plumis, tamquam sensura, reponit.) Tr. Moore (1922). For discussion of the many limits blurred throughout the tale, including that between artist and artwork and goddess and image, as well as the morality behind Ovid's version of the story, see: Sphalinger (1996) 50-61.

⁶⁵⁹ Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 50-51P: “τὸν δὲ Ἡρακλέα δείκνυσιν ἡ πυρά, κἄν θυμὴν ἴδῃ τις ἀνάγραπτον γυναῖκα, τὴν ἡρώδην Ἀφροδίτην νοεῖ. Οὕτως ὁ Κύπριος ὁ Πυγμαλίων ἐκείως ἐλεθαινίνου ἡράσθη ἀγάλατος. Τὸ ἀγαλμα Ἀφροδίτης ἦν καὶ γυμνὴ ἦν.” Tr. Butterworth (1919). In fact, Clement goes on to attribute this tale to Philostephanus, a much earlier Greek historian of Cyprus (*Protr.* 51P); he apparently claimed that Pygmalion

The boundary between object of religious worship and object of sexual adoration is purposefully blurred by Ovid, and the fact that this should be possible is to be expected within the context of the vague definitions of sacred and profane that Roman religious systems allowed for with regards to images.⁶⁶⁰ This seems especially to be the case with regards to images of Venus/Aphrodite, which often had sexual connotations as a consequence of both the deity represented and the form that they might take. The famous nude image of Aphrodite at Knidos was supposedly subject to similar attentions, as is attested by a number of sources.⁶⁶¹ In this tale a young Roman knight was so enamoured of the statue that he locked himself up in the sanctuary with it in order to satisfy his sexual desire. In the more detailed accounts the differentiation between lust and ritual is once again indistinct: the knight employs divination techniques such as the rolling of dice, which might be found in ritual, and is assumed by the caretakers of the sanctuary to be a particularly dedicated devotee because of his activities.⁶⁶²

was King of Cyprus, and that the image he fell in love with was an Aphrodite. For discussion of the full passage, see Elsner (1991) 154-6.

⁶⁶⁰ See Introduction.ii.

⁶⁶¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 50-51P; Luc., *Essays on Portraiture*, 4; Ps.-Luc. *Am.* 13-17; Pliny, *NH*, 36.4.21; Val. Max., 8.11.4, are all versions of the same story, but vary in length and detail.

⁶⁶² See Ps.-Lucian, *Am.* 15-16: "For she said that a young man of not undistinguished family – though his deed had caused him to be left nameless – who often visited the precinct, was so ill-starred as to fall in love with the goddess. He would spend all day in the temple and at first gave the impression of pious awe. For in the morning he would leave his bed long before dawn to go to the temple and only return home reluctantly after sunset. All day long he would sit facing the goddess with his eyes fixed uninterruptedly upon her, whispering indistinctly and carrying on a lover's complaints in secret conversation." ("ἔφη γὰρ οὐκ ἀσῆμου γένους νεανίαν -ἢ δὲ πρῶξις ἀνώνυμον αὐτὸν ἐσίγησεν -πολλάκις ἐπφοιτῶντα τῷ τεμένει σὺν δειλαίῳ δαίμονι ἐρασθῆναι τῆς θεοῦ καὶ πανήμερον ἐν τῷ ναῷ διατρίβοντα κατ' ἀρχὰς ἔχειν δεισιδαίμονος ἀγιστεῖς δόκησιν. ἔκ τε γὰρ τῆς ἐωθινήσ κοίτης πολὺ προλαμβάνων τὸν ὄπθρον ἐπεφοῖτα καὶ μετὰ δύσιν ἄκων ἐβαδίζεν οἴκαδε τήν θ' ὅλην ἡμέραν ἀπαντικρὺ τῆς θεοῦ καθεζόμενος ὁράσ ἐπ' αὐτὴν διηγεκῶς τὰς τῶν ὀμμάτων βολὰς ἀπήρειδεν. ἄσημοι δ' αὐτῷ ψιθυρισμοὶ καὶ κλεπτομένης λαλιᾶς ἐρωτικαὶ διεπεραίνοντο μέμψεις.") Tr. Harmon (1921). The use of divination techniques also links him to officials with specialist religious knowledge, rather than a more general devotee, cf. Bettini (1999) 61.

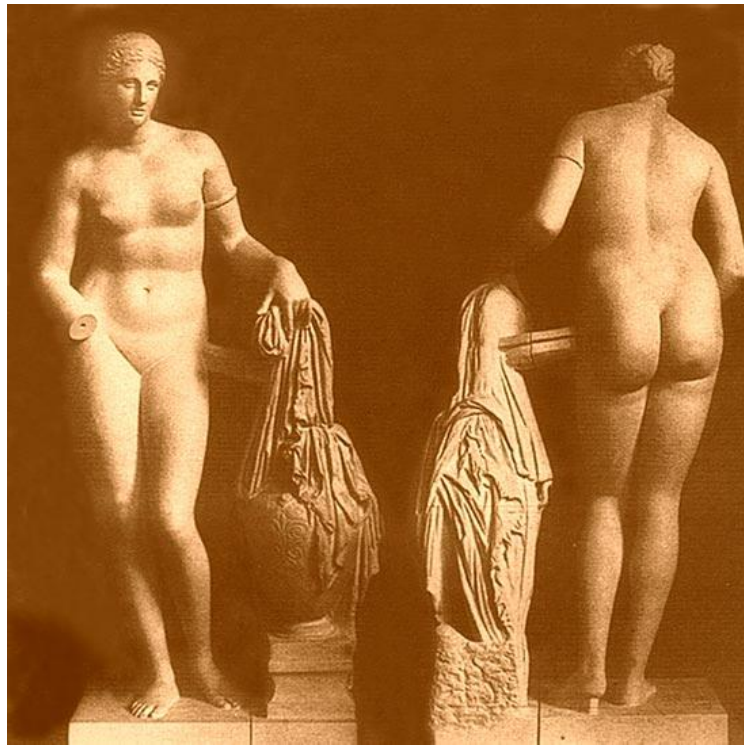


Fig. 4.3: Roman copy of the Aphrodite of Knidos, which was famously visible from all angles, adding to her apparent sexual appeal.

The tales of Pygmalion and the Roman knight complement each other: one describes a lover who treats his ivory maiden much as one might treat a cult statue or living woman, the other describes a lover who treats a cult statue as one might treat a cult statue or living woman. Both authors manipulate the possible interactions that an individual could have with a living individual, divinity or inanimate statue to ensure that the image occupies an impossible and indefinite position.⁶⁶³ Although the device here is a literary technique, it is also quite telling about the range of interactions and attitudes that were possible with regards to cult images.⁶⁶⁴ A further factor that the tales have in common is that the conclusion is as extreme as the intentions towards the image: Pygmalion's ivory maiden comes to life at the bidding of Venus and is married to him; the Roman knight succeeds in obtaining the image of Aphrodite for one night, but a permanent stain of his crime is left on the image and he commits suicide.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶³ This is common across many tales of agalmatophilia, which are generally preceded by intense devotion and/or fetishisation, see Freedberg (1985) 320ff for examples outside of the Roman world.

⁶⁶⁴ Examples of the conflation of image and deity as a literary technique with regards to Venus: Hor. *Odes* 4.1.9-20; 21-2; 22-8. Cf. Feeney (1998) 100-1.

⁶⁶⁵ Pygmalion's image comes to life at *Met.* 10.280ff; The knight's suicide is alluded to in Arnobius and Clement, but only explicitly described in Ps.-Luc. *Am.* 17. The young Athenian that fell in love with Fortune also killed himself, Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 9.39, see below.

Venus is not the only deity with whose image such confusion between sex and ritual is associated. Another popular target for such narratives is the god Priapus, whose image is the subject of numerous poems of varied authorship, but which is most extensively covered within the anonymous collection of *Carmina Priapea*.⁶⁶⁶ Like many Priapic verses, several of the poems within the collection purposefully elide the god and the image, often being narrated by the deity from the perspective of the statue. The example from Horace's *Satires* (discussed previously with regards to statues narrating poems) gives the statue voice, as well as contributing a little to the debate on man's ability to represent the divine.⁶⁶⁷

Some refer to offerings that the image might receive, or to the role of the image as a guardian of land, and almost all make reference to the statue's defining characteristic of a large phallus. The form of the statue, much like those of the nude forms of Venus, perhaps lends itself to tales of sexual attentions more readily than others, and several of the comic poems relate the activities that men and women engage in with the image.⁶⁶⁸ A particularly explicit example (*CP* 26) reads as follows:

‘O citizens, Romans, I pray you please,
There must be a limit – I’m brought to my knees;
For passionate women from hereabout
Importune me nightly and tire me out;
And always they’re lustful as sparrows in spring.
So either you’ll have to cut off my thing,
Or Priapus’ life will soon ebb away.
See how with fucking I’m pallid and grey!
I used to be hale and lusty and strong,
And able to deal with the thieves that did wrong;
But now I am in a most dangerous state,
And shudder and cough and expectorate.’⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁶ Authors of Priapic verse included Horace and Vergil, and poems of this type date from as early as the third century BCE. Cf. Parker (1988), who includes a table of all known Priapic verses in his introduction.

⁶⁶⁷ Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.1-4. See Ch. 2.5, p117, n.454 for text.

⁶⁶⁸ For the association with the form of the Aphrodite of Knidos in particular, and nude female images in general, with sexual viewings of them, see, for example Osborne (1994) 82-5; Blundell (1995) 193-5; Solomon (1997) 208ff. See also fig. 6.1, which shows both front and back views of the image, as described in Ps.-Lucian.

⁶⁶⁹ *CP* 26: “Porro – nam quis erit modus? – Quirites, / Aut praecidite seminale membrum, / Quod totis mihi noctibus fatigant / Vicinae sine fine prurientes / Vernis passeribus salaciores, / Aut rumpar nec habebitis Priapum. / Ipsi cernitis, exfututus ut

This poem is not the only one in the collection that refers explicitly to individuals attempting sexual intercourse with statue/god; indeed the trope appears to have been relatively common.⁶⁷⁰ The only visual representation in antiquity of sexual intercourse occurring between a statue and a living being is found on a sarcophagus, which depicts a Priapus-style ithyphallic image, although the perpetrator is a mythical figure: a Pan (with apparently female attributes?), which lowers itself onto the phallus backwards (see fig. 4.4).



Fig. 4.4: Sarcophagus, now in the National Museum at Naples.⁶⁷¹

The poems are obviously humorous in intent, as are some of the accounts of the Roman's love for the Aphrodite of Knidos, and are certainly not suggesting that such practice was normal or even ever occurred. They remain illustrative, however, of the ways in which human interactions with divine images could be manipulated and the extremes to which they might potentially go. Indeed, this is expressed as one of the concerns of the early Christian authors and other critics of idolatry, who cited such tales as examples of the full extent of the depravity that image worship might cause.⁶⁷²

sim / Confectusque macerque pallidusque, / Qui quondam ruber et valens solebam / Fures caedere quamlibet valentes. / Defecit latus et periculosam / Cum tussi miser expuo salivam." Tr. Parker (1988).

⁶⁷⁰ For discussion of this within the *CP* and elsewhere see Parker (1988) 110; 134.

⁶⁷¹ From: <http://www.aztriad.com/bacclleft.jpg>. Accessed 10/08/07. The statue's ithyphallic nature and rustic style suggest it could be Priapus, although the female (?) Pan appears to be holding onto horns protruding from the images' head, suggesting this could be a Pan statue.

⁶⁷² The stories of Pygmalion and the Roman knight are used in Clement of Alexandria to this effect, for his conclusion to these tales is: "Such strength had art to beguile that it became for amorous men a guide to the pit of destruction" ("Τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσεν ἀπατῆσαι τέχνη προαγωγὸς ἀωθώποισι ἐρωτικοῖς εἰς βάραθρον θενομένη.") Tr. Butterworth (1919). Arnobius expresses similar concern (*Adv. Nat.* 6.22): "To ask, again, in like manner: If the powers of the gods above lurk in copper and the other substances of which images have been formed, where in the world was the one Venus and the other to drive far away from them the lewd wantonness of the youths, and punish their impious touch with terrible suffering?" ("Ut similiter rursum interrogem: "Si in aere atque in

Lactantius even goes so far as to claim that Roman religious practices allowed for sexual intercourse with certain images:

“And Tutinus (is worshipped) in whose shameless embrace brides seat themselves so that the god seems to have first taste of their modesty.”⁶⁷³

This is the only extant reference to such a practice, and since the god is commonly associated with Priapus (having the same physical attributes) it would not be too great a stretch to imagine that the accusation is based upon literary and visual representations of that god, rather than on the reality of traditional religious interactions.⁶⁷⁴ It was clearly imaginable to the mind of the critic that a Roman devotee might engage in such an extreme form of contact with an image, and this must be largely because of the precedent set by ancient tales and the discourse surrounding appropriate relationships with cult images generally.

All tales of sexual interaction with images assume a certain cognitive leap on the part of the perpetrator, in the sense that they are described as performing an act normally confined to the realm of the living and not the inanimate. To attempt sexual intercourse with a statue is to bring it firmly into the realm of the living and the mortal, and this has dual implications for cult images, which neither represent mortals, nor have life. However, the accepted interactions with cult images, which also often imbued the image with animate abilities, created an environment in which this cognitive leap was easier than with other images.⁶⁷⁵

An example in Aelian's *Varia Historia* relates the love of a young Athenian for an image of Fortune, which he was unable to purchase despite petitioning the Council. The young man

materiis ceteris quibus signa formata sunt superiorum potentiae delitiscunt: ubinam gentium fuerant una atque altera Veneres, ut inpudicam patulantem iuvenum propulsarent ab se longe et contactus impios cruciabili coercitione punirent?”) Tr. McCracken (1938). It was not only Christian authors that used agalmatophilia as a warning against the dangers of image worship; Lucian also relates the tale of the Roman knight critically (see above n.661), cf. Anderson (1976) 22-31; Jones (1986) 22, 33f.

⁶⁷³ Lact. *De div.*, 1.20.36: “et Tutinus in cuius sinu pudendo nubentes praesident ut illarum pudicitia prior deus delibasse videatur.”

⁶⁷⁴ For the actual practices associated with the cult of Priapus, which did often focus upon the phallus, see Diod. 4.6.4; Paus., 9.31.2; Petron., 1.37; *CIL* III.1139; *CIL* XIV.3565 and Stewart (1997). See Grant (1981) for the use of (probably fictitious) immoral acts in pagan and Christian criticisms of one another.

⁶⁷⁵ This might be hinted at in the language for embracing statues in sanctuary, often *amplexus* in Latin, which is at least used in Ovid's description of Laodamia and Protesilaos at *Ov. Her.* 13.153: “amplexus accipit illa meos” (see further below, n.677). The application of the word is not consistently applied to statuary or to supplication, however, so the connection may be tenuous, see discussion in *ThesCRA* sv ‘Refuge, supplication’.

demonstrates his love with sacrifice, garlanding, dedication of ribbons and presentation of a gown.⁶⁷⁶ Indeed, tales of agalmatophilia that relate to broadly secular images often include cult-style activities within the narrative.⁶⁷⁷ It is indicative of the complex position that the cult image occupied that behaviours associated with ritual were also associated with this extreme form of interaction.⁶⁷⁸

Importantly, however, these types of interaction were marked out as inappropriate in the sources, and demonstrate the boundaries that image interactions should not cross. In general, perpetrators of agalmatophilia do not live happy lives, and it is possible to see the suicides of the knight in love with Aphrodite and the Athenian in love with Fortune as punishments for their behaviour.⁶⁷⁹ Again, concerns over the correct treatment of divine images extend to the manners in which they can be harmed; their vulnerability as images in human care is compensated for by the manner in which deities defend their own representations.⁶⁸⁰ It is only in literary fantasy that this type of transgression can conclude successfully, and in tales such as that of Pygmalion there is explicit divine consent involved.⁶⁸¹ Whilst this type of

⁶⁷⁶ Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 9.39.

⁶⁷⁷ For example the tale of Laodamia and Protesilaos, in which Laodamia had an image of her deceased husband that in some versions she had intimate relations with. Descriptions of her interactions with the image have strong cultic overtones, including garlanding and offerings of incense: cf. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 104; Apollodorus, *Epitoma Vaticana* 3.30; Ovid, *Heroides* 13; and the lost *Protesilaos* of Euripides (fr. 655 in Nauck). Visual representations often include cultic accoutrements associated with the image, such as a sarcophagus now in the Vatican (*LIMC* sv Protesilaos 26), illustrated and discussed in Bettini (1999) 25ff, as are various aspects of the Laodamia and Protesilaos story. See also Reeson (2001) 114-8 for a discussion of the various traditions (in which the image is always vital) of this story and its sources, and 175f; 179f on her cultic and sexual behaviour towards the image. Images of the dead are often targets of agalmatophilic behaviour in ancient narrative, and representations of deceased loved ones appear to have been the focus of some cultic behaviour, as attested in the epigraphic record, for example a funerary inscription for Allius's image of his dead wife: *CIL* VI.3795: "Instead of you, I hold an image, my consolation, which I venerate devotedly, and which I crown with many garlands" ("Effigiem pro te teneo solacia nostri / quam colimus sancte sartaque multa datur/ cumque ad te veniam mecum comitata sequetur") Tr. Bettini (1999) 26 with commentary of Horsfall (1985). Other examples of cultic behaviour associated with images of dead lovers can be found at: Statius, *Silvae*, 2.7.129 (Polla and her image of her deceased husband); Ovid, *Heroides* 7.99ff (Dido's image of Sychaeus); Pliny *NH* 35.43.151 and Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 17.2 (Butades's daughter and an image of a departed, but not dead, lover).

⁶⁷⁸ Other cult images that received sexual attentions include: Cupid (Pliny, *NH*, 36.4.21); Thespiads (Varro, *DLL*, 7.20; Pliny, *NH*, 36.4.39); Athena (Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 54); Fortuna (Aelian *Varia Historia* 9.39). Sexual behaviour could be accepted as part of ritual more generally, as suggested by the existence of sacred prostitutes in some cults of Aphrodite, attested for the Roman period in Strabo 8.6.20; 12.3.36; 11.14.16. Cf. Athen. 573c; Diod. Sic. 4.83.6. For sacred prostitution see e.g. Dillon (2002) 199-202; Cantarella (1987) 50f; MacLachlan (1992) 154-7.. For the condemnation of what was also perceived as religious immorality, see Grant (1981) 161.

⁶⁷⁹ See above n.675. Cf. Steiner (2001) 192-4 for the suffering of those who fell in love with images in Greek literature.

⁶⁸⁰ That it might be this aspect of apparent vulnerability that contributes to making the image attractive in the first place is discussed in Bettini (1999) 72; for the importance of punishment for the perception of the image as divine, see also Solomon (1997) 204-8; Boymel-Kampen (1997) 269-71.

⁶⁸¹ And perhaps in dreams: Artemidorus, who famously explains the general appearance of gods in dreams as their statues (3.13; 4.1; see also Ch. 2.4), also refers to dreams of having sex with gods (1.80; 5.87).

interaction with images can be understood as part of a larger set of cultural interactions, it must also be seen as one of the methods of defining the limits of how cult statues ought to be treated.

4.5 Conclusions on the tactility of cult images

Aside from the association of image with sensory and animate abilities that is indicated through ritual interactions generally, there are specific aspects of the treatment of cult images that allowed for them to be perceived as being capable of forming part of a romantic relationship. The embracing of images in desperation for sanctuary, and the touching and kissing of images by devotees, provided a context within which the image formed an active part of a tactile relationship, in which the tactility served an emotional, practical or spiritual purpose. In addition, cult statues could be specifically treated as though they were capable of forming romantic or sexual relationships, without being the targets of agalmatophilia. Instances of statues appearing to marry each other imply just such capabilities, such as a celebration of the marriage of the Sun and Moon attested by Herodian, which appears to have involved the ritual marrying of the deities' images.⁶⁸² In one intriguing instance Emperor Elagabalus reportedly dragged countless images of different goddesses to Rome in order to be vetted for marriage with an image of his favoured sun god.⁶⁸³ That an image might need to be married at all is curious enough, although within the context of the rituals of the Roman world it is not entirely bizarre, but that the union was so important as to require the complex procedure of transporting images and assessing their suitability is an altogether different matter. Unfortunately we have no evidence as to the criteria by which these goddesses were judged, or what purpose the marriage itself served, although it is clear that the propriety of the matter was a significant concern for the Emperor. Other, often quite complex, rituals appear to have involved the union of two images, sometimes as a form of myth re-enactment.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸² Herodian, 5.6.3-5.

⁶⁸³ Sources mentioning Elagabalus are generally highly critical of this unusual Emperor; indeed, this could certainly be taken to be more informative about 'common Roman fantasies of transgressive behaviour than for any accurate information they may offer about Elagabalus's reign' (Beard, North & Price (1998) 255). Tyrants and unpopular leaders often provide useful protagonists for tales of severely transgressive interactions with images, cf. Bettini (1999) 69-70. See Lane Fox (1986) 135 for discussion of the sources and the suggestion that this marriage was then celebrated in private cult throughout the Empire. Tales of Mark Antony's excesses included a possible *hieros gamos* to Athena, promised to him by the Greeks (Sen. *Suas.* 1.6), cf. Nock (1930) 4.

⁶⁸⁴ For example the infamously complex Daidala festival may have involved a ritual marriage between images. See: Paus. 9.2.7-3.8; Plut. *Chair.* 388; Kirsten, *RE* s.v. Plataiai (1950) 2319-25; Schachter, *Cult of Boiotia 1*,

Cult statues, therefore, could be touched as part of standard worship, they could be embraced for sanctuary, and they could be married to one another. Given the vast possibilities that an image already had through tactile interactions that served other purposes, as well as the position they occupied within a relationship in which tactility could in and of itself be both means and end to successful realisation of part of that relationship, it is no surprise that narratives regarding the extreme limits of this behaviour arose. Perpetrators of agalmatophilia might be punished in these narratives, but they might also dream for the success of Pygmalion. The role of physical interactions in relationships between man and cult image must have formed a significant part of the cultural impetus for such tales to be told, especially when they are related as an attempt to warn against the dangers of loving images at all through the consequences of loving them too much.

Overall, the opportunity to form a tactile acquaintance with a cult statue can be seen to have existed as part of traditional practice within the religions of the Roman world, but this opportunity also presented dangers and problems as to where the boundaries of interactions lay. That an image might, legally and emotionally, provide sanctuary to an individual is indicative of the vast power they might be thought to wield, as well as the direct impact upon a worshipper's reality that cult statues could have. Accounts of direct physical contact with images range from those which were so accepted that they are all but invisible in the ancient sources for their banality to the authors (touching and kissing), to the extreme limits to which interactions should not extend (agalmatophilia). All these interactions form part of the same complex relationship that a devotee had with cult images, however, for they contribute to the same discourse regarding how one ought to treat one's gods and their images. Once again, there are no explicit rules, and once again this is why there is such variety in the sources: with no doctrinal regulations as to how images ought to be treated, their limits could only be explored in literary fantasy and debate. Cult statues were difficult creatures to define and interact with, and yet successful relationships with them were vital within religions of the Roman world. Typically, the relationship between god, image, and devotee remains imprecise in these forms of interaction, and they demonstrate once again the range of potential roles that a cult image had within the religions of the Roman world.

BICS Suppl. 38.1 (1981) 245-50; Prandi (1983) 82-94; *LIMC* IV.1 (1988) 666; Plut. *Mor.* Fr.158 (= Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 3.1ff). The Daidala festival is discussed more fully in Ch. 5.2.

Chapter Five: The Violent Worshipper and Violent Gods

5.1 Violence and transgression

It should be clear from the previous discussion that there were some limits placed on the proper form that interactions with cult images should take. The pushing of these boundaries can be found in almost all types of interaction, whether it be the manipulation of images in order to make them speak, the theft of statues from their cultic home or sexual advances towards representations of the divine. Many of these acts can, and should, also fall under the category of violence towards images, and many of these instances will be recalled here;⁶⁸⁵ it is no surprise that these limits were pushed to extremes in violent physical interactions with cult statues.

That mortals could harm the images of the gods was a grave cause of concern in the Roman world, and retribution for these acts was generally assumed to be forthcoming.⁶⁸⁶ It is also possible, however, that some acts of apparent violence were in fact sanctioned by the gods, and formed part of accepted ritual practices. These rituals are incredibly difficult to interpret, and form a noteworthy minority amongst the vast array of ritual acts encountered in the Roman world. The establishment of accepted violence and destruction towards cult images needs some attention in terms of the type of cultural language that it employs, in particular in comparison with other public practices and with other unacceptable violent acts.

Images could, of course, be affected violently without any mortal motivation behind it. Accidental damage must have been a genuine concern for those responsible for the care of images, particularly given the age and tactility of many of them.⁶⁸⁷ Human hands could presumably harm images accidentally, and so could nature and the gods (insofar as the two are easily separately defined in this context). The apparent reluctance in the sources to attribute harm caused to images to accident also suggests that interactions with images, and their behaviour in general, are clearly seen as meaningful. Cult statues harmed through

⁶⁸⁵ See especially Ch. 3.3; 3.4; 4.4.

⁶⁸⁶ See below, section 5.

⁶⁸⁷ See below, section 4 of this chapter for the possibility that accidental damage could be attributed to the gods in the form of omens.

natural causes need to be understood, as responses to them allow us further insight into the relationships between devotees, gods and their statues.

It is necessary to note the scope of this particular study of violence and destruction, for two related phenomena that have been the subject of much scholarly discussion will not receive a great deal of attention here. The destruction of images of rulers and prominent individuals of the Roman world, often termed *damnatio memoriae*, has been the subject of study for some time, and whilst these works are certainly useful for placing the destruction of divine images in a broader social context, they do not properly fall within the category of interactions with cult statues.⁶⁸⁸ Although images specifically associated with the Imperial cult were no doubt included in this destruction, *damnatio* is very much a human political subject and, more importantly, its actions afford no notable comparison with any other violence against cult images by non-Christians.⁶⁸⁹

Essentially, instances of what scholars term *damnatio memoriae* tend to follow a recognisable and repeated process, and one which is very similar to the treatment of the human body of the individual represented. In addition, these acts are committed by large groups and with public sanction, and none of these qualities can be found in the destruction of cult images.⁶⁹⁰ It may be worth noting that, in the case of the *damnatio* of imperial figures, this would have been accompanied by a removal of their divine status, which makes it clear that none of their images could any longer be held to be cult statues as such.⁶⁹¹

Similarly, Christian iconoclasm will receive little discussion here, except where it clearly contributes to an understanding of how cult images were treated and perceived by those who worshipped them. This form of violence is also separate from dialogues on the role of cult

⁶⁸⁸ For *damnatio memoriae* generally, see e.g. Stewart (1999) and (2005); Gregory (1994); Varner (2004).

⁶⁸⁹ Although a strict division between the political and the religious is difficult in the Roman world, the context of *damnatio memoriae* is both precise and very much related to humans, not gods. Indeed, for emperors at least, deification is the direct opposite of and alternative to *damnatio*.

⁶⁹⁰ For the processes and practices of political iconoclasm, see Stewart (1999) with bibliography. Examples of the treatment as comparable to that of the human body include lynching, mockery, mutilation and dissection, e.g. Plut. *Pomp.* 1.2; Suet. *Vitell.* 17; Josephus, *AJ* 19.357; Dio 74.2.1; Herod. 1.13.6.

⁶⁹¹ E.g. Dio 60.4.5, 58.11.5, 63.25.1f, 80.20.2, 79.19.2; Suet. *Claudius* 11, *Vitell.* 17; Tac. *Hist.* 3.74, 3.84; SHA *Commodus*, 6.2, 18.3. For discussion of the removal of divinity and of images see Price (1984) 193-5. In addition, we really have no way of telling which of the destroyed imperial images were offered cult and which were not (Cf. Gradel (2002) 93 for this difficulty). Some instances of inappropriate destruction of the images of emperors who were not the subject of *damnatio* does seem to have occurred, indicated by the replacement of damaged images of Galba at Tac. *Hist.* 3.7.1 and the punishment of the man who took a coin with an image of the emperor into a brothel, reported at Dio 7.8.16.

statues within the religions of the Roman world, and it sits entirely outside of the understood cultural language between representations of the gods and those who worshipped them. It seems very likely that there was an element of continuity between the form and nature of the destructions of *damnatio* and those of Christian iconoclasm, in terms of the public and group nature of the destructions and in the repetitive, formulaic processes involved.⁶⁹² Again, this form is not comparable to the way cult images were treated outside of this setting.

In contrast, destruction and violence against cult images that cannot be considered part of the Christian iconoclasms have received hardly any prior scholarly attention.⁶⁹³ Those interactions that will be considered here are those that formed part of the way the people of the Roman world understood their cult images and their relationships with the divine. These interactions, as with all those previously discussed, both informed and challenged these understandings and relationships in important ways.

5.2 Sanctioned violence

Ritual practice in which images were harmed or destroyed is attested in only a very few ancient sources. Hints of violence might perhaps be seen in the binding and chaining of images, an act that clearly attempts to exert external force on an image, bending it to the will of the devotee, rather than that of the god.⁶⁹⁴ Some literary evidence describes the action involved in rites that harm images, and unsurprisingly does not provide any real explanation for what purpose the destruction might serve. Archaeological evidence around the Empire suggests that the harming of images in ritual *might* have appeared in variant local forms in different parts of the Empire, but there are obvious problems associated with assuming ritual to be behind finds of damaged images. Although some 'structured' deposits appear to include whole or partial statues, it is beyond the evidence to suggest a certain ritual context.⁶⁹⁵ Our picture is, therefore, a vague one, but it is worth highlighting the interactions that we do have some evidence for.

⁶⁹² For this argument of continuity see Stewart (1999) esp. 159ff and Stewart (2003) 290ff. For continuity of the cultural language of image interactions more generally, see Elsner (1995), (1996) 530-1, (1998). Literary descriptions of this include: Eus. *Hist. Eccles.* 9.11.2; Dio Chrysostom, *De Statuis*; Lib. *Or.* 19-23.

⁶⁹³ Versnel (1981b) 38-40 makes brief mention of it.

⁶⁹⁴ See Ch. 3.4.

⁶⁹⁵ This has been suggested by Croxford (2003) but the argument lacks detail and much positive evidence.

Probably the most famous, and certainly the most complicated, reference to the destruction of cult images in ritual is that of the Daidala. There are two extant detailed descriptions of this unusual festival, which are almost certainly incorrect in at least some of their analysis.⁶⁹⁶ The festival is described as involving the creation of a specific wooden image, a *daidala*, by the Plataeans every six years. These images are then gathered together every 59 years, when the Plataeans are joined by the rest of the Boeotians for the Great Daidala. Lots are cast for which of the Boeotian cities will present an image, and for the order they will be placed in during the procession from Asopus to the summit of Cithaeron. Once there:

“The cities with their magistrates sacrifice severally a cow to Hera and a bull to Zeus, burning on the altar the victims, full of wine and incense, along with the daidala.”⁶⁹⁷

This unusual festival has attracted the attention of a number of scholars, and is rife with difficulty for interpretation. It is possible that a *hieros gamos* is implied, on the basis of the myth of a reunion between Hera and Zeus that Pausanias claims to be associated with the ritual practices, although *how* this is enacted is very unclear.⁶⁹⁸ It is also difficult to know how much this can be categorised as interaction with cult statues as such, for each of the images is made specifically to be destroyed at a 59 year interval when the Great Daidala is celebrated. The oldest image at least will have been in the temple for the last 59 years, and will have been tended to and cared for in the meantime, along with the new additions every six years, perhaps indicating a level of worship for these statues, but this must remain speculation. Some have argued that this is a particularly old and Eastern-influenced ritual, although the inhabitants of the area at the time of Pausanias were almost certainly resettled there during the Roman period.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁶ The whole ritual is related at: Paus. 9.2.7-3.8; Plut. Fr. 157 (=Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 3.1.6). Particular problems in the accounts concern the origins of the festival. The ancient writers suggest that the festival is Classical or Hellenistic in origin, although the evidence suggests it is likely to be no later than the first century CE, cf. Schachter (1981) 248-9. There are also difficulties posed by the manuscripts and possible interpretations, cf. Dillon (1993) 327f; Pritchett (1998) 199.

⁶⁹⁷ Paus. 9.3.8: “ραντες δὲ ἐς ὕψος φρύγανα ἐπιφέρουσιν. αἱ μὲν δὴ πόλεις καὶ τὰ τέλη θήλειαν θύσαντες τῇ Ἥρᾳ βοῦν ἕκαστοι καὶ ταῦρον τῷ Διὶ τὰ ἱερεῖα οἴνου καὶ θυμιαμάτων πλήρη καὶ τὰ δαίδαλα ὁμοῦ καθαγίζουσιν ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ” Tr. Jones et al (1918).

⁶⁹⁸ See e.g. Schachter (1981) 245f.

⁶⁹⁹ For fuller discussion of the Daidala festival and its origins see: Kirsten (1950) *RE* sv. Plataiai 2319-25; Schachter (1981) 245-50 discusses many of the textual problems in Plutarch and Pausanias’s accounts; Prandi

Although it is unusual, we do have suggestions of evidence for other rituals that involved burning, as seems to be the case in a first- or second- century CE inscription from Hyampolis.⁷⁰⁰ We do not, however, find any attempt at explanation. It is just possible that festivals of this kind were not so uncommon as to require explanation, but there is not much evidence to suggest that this type of rite occurred in any great volume.⁷⁰¹ It is more likely that the nature of evidence about religions in the Roman world explains the lack of further detail, and it is typical that we find no real theorising about the purpose or motivations of the ritual in descriptions of it.

Another type of ritual behaviour that equates closely to destroying images is that of their burial.⁷⁰² Plutarch informs us of more than one festival in which individual images are buried as part of the celebrations, but again it is difficult to see whether these were cult statues as such, and if not, how they were associated with them.⁷⁰³ These images seem to represent gods, but Plutarch compares the rites and the burial to those typical of funerals through the accompaniment of the wailing of women and the singing of dirges.⁷⁰⁴

There may be some archaeological evidence for ritual burial of images, or parts of them. Images found at the Walbrook Mithraeum may have been buried for safekeeping or for ritual purposes, a matter the archaeological evidence alone cannot decide.⁷⁰⁵ Other images might have been buried for their own protection, in particular at times of war, and it seems likely that this would have been undertaken in a ritual setting; the burial of cult images would not have been a decision to take lightly.⁷⁰⁶

(1983) 82-94; Chaniotis (2002) 23-48. For the probable appearance of the *daidala* themselves, see *LIMC* VI.1 666.

⁷⁰⁰ *IG* 9.1.90, cf. Nilsson (1906) 154-5, 218-25.

⁷⁰¹ Pausanias does not make any special note on whether the *Daidala* was unusual or not.

⁷⁰² For burial as destruction see Livy 4.98 where it is a substitute for execution if the convicted individual cannot be found. Cf. Faraone (1991) for the use of burying images in spells to lay ghosts; Versnel (1981) 40.

⁷⁰³ Plut. *Vit. Alc.* 3.89; *Vit. Nic.* 3.42. Cf. Vernant (1983) for the use of statuary in Greek rites for the dead.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. Gellus 2.10.3.

⁷⁰⁵ For the find, which may have been in a 'structured deposit' and therefore indicate a ritualised burial, see Merrifield (1977) 376-9, pl.17. Discussion of the motives for burying the images at Croxford (1994); Henig (1984) 90.

⁷⁰⁶ See Merrifield (1977) for this explanation of the burial of the images at the Walbrook Mithraeum. There are many remains of images buried in parts of the Roman Empire that cannot easily be identified as ritually buried or otherwise. Cf. Palagia (2007) and discussion of Vatican 252; Fuchs no.38; Andreas Fulvius *op. Lyngby* (1954) 157 no.8; *Anth. Pal.* 9.805. Cf. Lane Fox (1986) 134 for pagan burial of images to protect them from Christian iconoclasm.

The scarcity of evidence for the ritual destruction of cult images is not particularly surprising. The broader network of interactions with divine images that has been illustrated thus far does not leave a great deal of room for destruction of them in a ritual setting. Indeed, simple practical issues surrounding the age and value of cult statues add to the probability that images were made to be maintained, rather than destroyed.⁷⁰⁷ It is possible that there were more ritualised destructions of images within the religions of the Roman world than we have evidence for, perhaps in particular localities of the Empire, but this would be a dangerous assumption to make in the absence of solid evidence.⁷⁰⁸ For the most part, then, the devotee of the Roman world would not be familiar with the concept of inflicting purposeful, if sanctioned, harm upon cult images. In these circumstances the instances when this occurred maliciously must have seemed all the more transgressive.

5.3 The hands of men

Of all interactions possible with cult statues of the Roman world, physical violence was probably the most dangerous. Acts of violence are always condemned when they are reported, and generally punished, by either god or man. This is unsurprising, given the obvious demonstration of disrespect for cults and gods inherent in such actions, at the same time as being behaviour that rudely pulls the image out of any carefully negotiated location in the cultural nexus, and into the physical space of the mortal devotee. In some respects the acts are not themselves surprising, either; if one wished to harm a god, there are not a lot of options open in terms of methods for doing so, and this type of violence is in many ways the most logical approach, especially given the role of interacting with images in the communicative systems between men and the divine.⁷⁰⁹

Cult images could be attacked in a number of ways, and for a variety of reasons. Statues could be smashed to pieces, because the god they represent does not appear to be answering prayers, as in the case of an image of Hermes according to a fable of Babrius.⁷¹⁰ They can be

⁷⁰⁷ For the importance of maintaining relationships with the most ancient images, even if a newer and more valuable statue was available, see e.g. Paus.1.27.1; 2.11.8; Plut. *De musica* 14; Pliny *NH* 36.11.

⁷⁰⁸ See e.g. Henig (1984) 89ff for the practices possibly common in Roman Britain of burying, or casting into rivers, of images that were not to be worshipped but still held some power. Within the context of the treatment of images elsewhere in the Roman Empire, however, this does not need to be anything to do with religious rituals. Cf. Stewart (1999) for the practices of throwing parts of images into rivers or wells as a common feature of *damnatio memoriae*.

⁷⁰⁹ For the motives behind harming images in general, see Freedberg (1985) 247-50; 253ff.

⁷¹⁰ Babrius 119. Cf. Artemidorus, 2.33, 4.78 referring to images being damaged as punishment for the referent.

destroyed or pulled down because the gods they represent are no longer accepted to be gods, or perhaps are deemed to be unfriendly gods, which seems to have happened to some Egyptian deities at Rome, and is argued as a solution for the visible presence of too many gods in Lucian's satirical *Parliament of the Gods*.⁷¹¹

“and if a temple and sacrificial honours have already been accorded to any disqualified person his statue shall be thrown down and that of Zeus or Hera or Athene or other God substituted in its place”⁷¹²

Individuals are said to have taken it upon themselves to attempt to punish statues, by whipping, flogging and flaying,⁷¹³ and this is probably similar in intent and impact to instances of stoning statues.⁷¹⁴ The motif of flaying or stoning statues in antiquity is usually associated with anger aimed at the referent, and one might expect the same to be true of images of the gods.⁷¹⁵

Suetonius's description of the public sadness at the death of Germanicus seems to imply that the Romans took out their anger on the gods in a very physical way, although may have harmed their domestic images of the gods, rather than reaching those in the temples:

⁷¹¹ Dio 42.26.2 tells us the Egyptian precincts and images were harmed in 48 BCE. These types of destruction probably form the closest parallels for the early Christian iconoclasms in terms of motive: cf. Eus. *Vit. Const.* 2.45, 4.23, 4.25, which deny divinity in images and focus on attempts to prevent people worshipping them, rather than their destruction. Cf. Stewart (1999) 179 and Bowder (1978) 80 for other possible motives.

⁷¹² Luc. *Parliament of the Gods*, 17-18: “ὧν οὐκ ἴσασι. ὅποσοι δὲ ἤδη ναῶν ἢ θυσιαῶν ἡξιώθησαν, ἐκείνων μὲν καθαιρεθῆναι τὰ ἀγάλματα, ἐντεθῆναι δὲ ἢ Διὸς ἢ Ἡρας ἢ Ἀπόλλωνος ἢ τῶν ἄλλων τινός.” Tr. Fowler & Fowler (1905). Note that the throwing down of the statue is highlighted, rather than the destruction of the temple or the cessation of rituals.

⁷¹³ An obvious example being the image of Theagenes that was whipped and tried for murder, before being reinstated and worshipped (Paus. 6.11.6-9; Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9, citing Oenomaus; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.95-7). There is a theoretical problem here as to whether the image was a cult statue *before* it was whipped, or only after it was reinstated. See discussion of this image in Ch. 3. There are other instances of whipping and flogging: Plautus, *Captivi*, 7.08, *Pseud.* 7.63, cf. Theocr. 7.106ff (with Schol. Theocr. 7.108f and Bremmer (1983) 309) which could have been a ritualised flogging of an image of Pan.

⁷¹⁴ *Dig.* 47.10.27 (cf. Nippel (1995) 43); Dio, 78.12.6 (it is not clear whether these images were secular or religious); John Chrysostom, *De Statuis*, 21.11; Tac. *Hist.* 3.7.1.

⁷¹⁵ See discussion of the image of Theagenes in Ch. 3.

“On the day he died stones were thrown at the temples, altars of the gods were demolished, the Lares and household gods, in some cases, were thrown out into the streets, and newborns exposed.”⁷¹⁶

Other destructive acts are mentioned without much explanation of motivation or process:⁷¹⁷ these did not have to destroy the statue as such, but could represent such harm, as in the case of children who created a mock hanging of the image of Artemis at Condylea or those who urinated on statues in Rome.⁷¹⁸ That not actually harming an image but appearing to could also be condemned is important, possibly implying that it is in reality the referent of the image that is the subject of the harm, and suggests an acknowledgement of the impact the treatment of the statue will have on them.

These instances have in common some impression of the antagonist being influenced by the religious nature of the images, whether their actions are intended to be demonstrative or to have a practical effect on the referent. Other violence towards images apparently had the more secular motive of greed, as seen on occasions when they or their adornments were stolen. Several occasions of the theft of images have already been discussed, as has the theoretical problem of defining theft as opposed to transportation.⁷¹⁹ It is not always possible to determine what the greed might be aimed towards, and that which is coveted could as easily be the image's power as its material or aesthetic worth. This is interestingly demonstrated by the theft of old garlands that adorned cult statues, which we are told were taken for their magical properties when used in powerful potions.⁷²⁰

Greed for materials is certainly suggested when cult statues are vandalised through theft of decorative elements, as may have been the case when hair or crowns represented in gold were removed.⁷²¹ Pausanias also notes occasions on which he encounters an image that had been

⁷¹⁶ Suet. *Cal.* 5: “quo defunctus est die, lapidata sunt templa, subuersae deum arae, Lares a quibusdam familiares in publicum abiecti, partus coniugum expositi.” It seems likely that the throwing of household gods into the streets indicates their images.

⁷¹⁷ E.g. Artemidorus 2.33; Aelian, *Fr.* 36; Cic. *Cat.* 3.19;

⁷¹⁸ The hanging of the Artemis: Paus. 8.23.6; urinating on statues: SHA *Caracalla*, 5.7; Suet. *Nero* 56. See below for further discussion.

⁷¹⁹ Ch. 3.3.

⁷²⁰ SHA *Caracalla*, 5.7. See Ch. 1.2.

⁷²¹ Plut. *Mor.* 379C-D suggests Apollo's golden hair was stolen, and Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 10 says the same of his crown, there is a list of other thefts in the same work, including the pegs of Apollo's lyre, curls of Zeus's hair and Poseidon's trident, these are discussed below, section 5 of this chapter. See Introduction p6 and Ch.3 p144-5 for text.

decorated with precious materials that have since been stolen.⁷²² Piracy seems to have had a part to play in some thefts, which might sometimes indicate a lack of knowledge or awareness of the cult status of some images and primarily a desire for material gain, although it is blamed for the attempted theft of the image of Hera of Samos, which was not necessarily artistically impressive or materially valuable.⁷²³ Verres certainly appears to have been motivated by material greed, according to the lengthy attack on him at the hands of Cicero, highlighting the danger that cult images could be in if they were perceived as art objects, rather than cult objects.⁷²⁴ It is entirely possible that between conquering generals and raiding pirates, such violent destruction and removal was relatively common. There were certainly many images missing from their pedestals by the time Pausanias undertook his travels, and whether these were stolen or destroyed, and why, is not known.⁷²⁵

The impression generated by these types of interaction is that whilst causing harm to images was not normally acceptable, it did occasionally happen. It clearly lies outside of the realms of proper behaviour, as is made clear by the low motivations of the individuals involved, and the punishments inflicted on those who were caught.⁷²⁶ Where the motivation of the attack stems from a religious perspective, for example if the god has caused dissatisfaction or resentment, the action is generally a solitary one, strengthening the impression that it falls outside of the realm of culturally acceptable behaviour. Religiously motivated attacks performed by a group seem to take place only when the gods portrayed are not thought to be gods at all, or are gods with whom relationships have already been severed.⁷²⁷ Material motivation could clearly be individual too, and in any case the theft of images appears usually to be clandestine, as it is not only beyond the boundaries of proper cult interactions, but also beyond the boundaries of the law.⁷²⁸

⁷²² Paus. 10.15.5 is a gilded image at Delphi, and although Pausanias believes the gold to have been taken by thieves, he cites another tradition that it was stolen by a huge flock of crows! 1.25.7 relates the theft of the gold from images on the Athenian acropolis by Lachares, who is hence described as impious.

⁷²³ See above, Ch. 3.3; 3.4 for the story of Hera's theft, but see also below, section 6 of this chapter. Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 24 blames pirates for damage in the sanctuaries of Claros, Didyma, and Samothrace; the temple of Chthonian Earth at Hermione; Asclepius in Epidaurus; Poseidon at the Isthmus, Taenarum and Calauria; Apollo at Actium and Leucas; Hera at Samos, Argos, and Lacinium; Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 10 blames pirates for some of the damage. For the idea that such damage encouraged cults to restrict access to their images see Hewitt (1909) 89.

⁷²⁴ There are numerous references in the *Verrine Orations*, but see in particular Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.95, when Verres does a poor job of pulling down a revered statue of Hercules. Cf. Frazel (2005).

⁷²⁵ E.g. Paus. 2.24.3; 8.30.5; 8.38.5; 8.49.1. For the desire of Roman generals to obtain or damage cult statues specifically see Gordon (1979) 11 with n. 26.

⁷²⁶ See below, section 5 of this chapter.

⁷²⁷ See above, section 1, for the attacks on Egyptian deities at Rome.

⁷²⁸ Thefts by force could be more public (as in the case of Verres), and in war those who might uphold the law in these instances do not have the power to do so at the time.

Of interest in positioning these interactions within their broader tactile context is the apparently emotional nature of some attacks, and the perception that they might have some impact on the god as well as the image. The man who destroys the image of Hermes because his prayers have been unanswered is a case in point: is he smashing the statue because *it* should have answered his prayers, or because the god who should have done so will be harmed as a consequence? That this method of demonstrating anger at the gods is intended to directly harm them is surely apparent in these personal attacks. Even in instances of theft, the thieves might covet the divine power of an image as much as the material of it or its value as an artwork. This is certainly implied in the theft of the Samian Hera, which was neither materially valuable nor pretty.⁷²⁹

Greed for the power of images might also be seen to motivate another category of harm, that of mutilation and re-imaging. A famous example is that of Caligula's desire to have the Olympian Zeus remodelled in his own likeness and transferred to Rome.⁷³⁰ Although the replacement of heads of old statues of emperors with new ones may have been relatively common, this approach to images of the gods is generally seen as too audacious to suggest. Even the Colossus at Rome, whose head seems to have been particularly popular to transpose, is only generally associated in our sources with emperors that tradition condemns.⁷³¹

Violence towards images can be seen to fit within the cultural language of interactions with images primarily through its opposition to the norm.⁷³² In assuming that the images can be harmed, the not-so-devoted devotee either assumes the god can be harmed through that image, or that the image can be dislocated from the god and taken out of its usual cultural position. That this must be done is clear from how separated these acts are from accepted interactions and behaviours. Again, there is no clear indication as to whether harm is intended to be caused through the deity being offended by the image's treatment, or through a closer

⁷²⁹ For the probable appearance Hera at Samos see Burkert (1985) 131 and O'Brien (1993) 9ff with Ch. 3.3.

⁷³⁰ Dio 59.28.3-5, cf. Suet. *Gaius* 22.57; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.1. The image itself prevents the alterations, see below, section 5 of this chapter.

⁷³¹ E.g. SHA *Commod.* 17.5, see Stewart (1999) 169. For the physical evidence of transposing the heads of imperial images see Varner (2000).

⁷³² That is, the very vague norm that can be considered within the limits of appropriate interactions with cult images.

association of physical impact on image with physical impact on god.⁷³³ The suggestion that gods can be directly harmed through the treatment of their image is certainly found elsewhere, in tales of agalmatophilia for example, or when Augustus excluded an image of Poseidon from his processions.⁷³⁴ Those who steal or remove cult images to some extent destroy them because of these associations: the image taken out of its cultic home may not really be a cult image any more, and if it is, it might not benefit those who have previously tended it for so long: the relationship between man, image and god is clearly damaged.⁷³⁵

The departure or harming of cult images was always troubling, partly because of the attitudes it indicated in the attackers, but also because of what it might say about the image and the god. On occasion, gods were assumed to have caused damage to cult images themselves, and the treatment of these instances confirms the fears that surrounded the harming of images.

5.4 Acts of gods

When there was no known mortal involved in the damage of images, the gods themselves were usually blamed. This in itself is fairly telling, for although the division of nature and deity is a difficult concept to apply to the Roman world, damage to cult statues is generally seen as significant enough to have specific divine motivation associated with it.⁷³⁶ Damaged images are, essentially, a bad sign.

Omens involving statues are relatively common in those authors who choose to mention them, and instances of images being damaged, and consequently interpreted as portentous, occur more than once in the works of Roman historians.⁷³⁷ Statues can topple over, be damaged by storms or lightning and consumed by fire, and as a rule appropriate response must be made. Failure to replace an image could cause famine, as occurred when the Phigalians neglected to replace the burned statue of Demeter Melaina, but replacing an

⁷³³ For this concept generally see Gell (1998) 61-2, 67f. The ability for statues of the gods to protect themselves in some way is suggested by those statues that are never rained or snowed on, or similar, e.g. Paus. 3.26.3 describes statues of the Dioskouroi that the sea should touch but never does, and Cic. *De Div.* 58 has a great deal to say on this matter with several examples of what people foolishly believe.

⁷³⁴ See Ch. 4.4; 3.2 respectively.

⁷³⁵ It is not always clear what happens to cult images after they have been removed, although it was certainly possible for them to be set up to receive cult elsewhere. See Ch. 3.3.

⁷³⁶ I.e. it is not 'accidental'.

⁷³⁷ E.g. Livy 40.21-3. Dio, 37.9.1-2, 19.2, 39.15, 44.18.2, 45.17.3, 47.40.4. For the actions of statues as omens more generally see Ch. 3.5.

image unduly, particularly if recognisable aspects of the image remained, was not always advisable either.⁷³⁸

The correct approach to solving instances of divine damage to images usually lay in consulting oracles. Religious officials might study these omens and prescribe specific actions accordingly, such as the expiatory sacrifices and dedication of a larger cult statue proposed by the soothsayers after lightning melted images on the Capitol.⁷³⁹ The consultation of the divine for information on how to treat the images again suggests their direct involvement in the life of their representations, and these are often considered alongside other unfavourable portents as indicating a need to correct religious or political wrongs.⁷⁴⁰

The interesting remains of a bronze Hercules, found in a pit in the sanctuary of Venus Victrix at Rome, shows that the image had been struck by lightning. The pit burial suggests ritual protection, rather than an attempt at destruction, and it is possible that the image was buried because of the damage. Whether this was, as has been argued, a cult image of Hercules is unknown, although its appearance and the precious materials it is made of certainly do not preclude it from being one of the images of Hercules that was actively worshipped at Rome.⁷⁴¹ This would certainly be an interesting treatment of an image destroyed apparently by acts of god, although it is not securely attested in any literary source.

In opposition to instigating their destruction as a message, gods could also prevent the harming of images, whether they were divine or not. A bronze ox in Olympia was not removed, despite having caused the accidental death of a child, because the Delphic oracle forbade it, instead prescribing a purificatory ritual.⁷⁴² Adherence to the instructions of the oracle make it clear that even images that were gifts to the gods should not be moved or harmed without their consent, so we should assume that oracles, divine instruction and specialist religious knowledge were involved when such removal was actually carried out by

⁷³⁸ Demeter Melaina: Paus. 8.42, cf. Parke-Wormell, 1 p323-4, no.493; Fontenrose no. Q182 for the associated oracle. The head of the image of Apollo at Geronthrai was worshipped in a new temple after the old one and the statue's body were destroyed: Paus. 3.22.6-7.

⁷³⁹ Dio, 37.9.1-2. Cf. Livy 27.37.7 in which an image of Juno on the Aventine is struck by lightning in 207 BCE, requiring that she receive gifts of gold and further sacrifices.

⁷⁴⁰ Indicated, for example, by Dio, 39.15 in description of lightning striking of the image of Jupiter on the Alban Mount (cf. 47.40 for the same image spouting blood), an event which encourages significant expiation by the citizens of the city.

⁷⁴¹ For full discussion of the find and its comparison to known cult images at Rome (it could be argued to have some similarities to the literary descriptions of certain cult statues), see Palagia (2007).

⁷⁴² Paus. 5.27.9.

pious individuals, in particular when cult statues were involved. We might here be reminded of the image of Theagenes, whose complicated history involved the punishing of the image for falling on and killing a man who whipped it, before its reinstatement at the command of the gods as a healing statue and recipient of cult.⁷⁴³

It also seems possible that what might be considered accidental damage was usually instead associated with omens and signs from the gods; there is no clear evidence for cult images being harmed by mistake. This is an interesting point in itself, for it suggests the difficulty of removing intentionality from image interactions.⁷⁴⁴ Images blown over by wind could, for example, be considered as much an accident as the consequence of divine will, but we do not see evidence for the former in our sources, as one instance of a wind-toppled statue of Minerva at Rome makes clear through its interpretation as an omen.⁷⁴⁵ An interesting reference to the smashing of the chariot of Minerva, which occurred as the image was being returned to the temple from the races, could surely have been human error, a realistic occupational hazard for images that made so many excursions.⁷⁴⁶ This is not how the event was understood, however, and it is described alongside bleeding statues and the birth of ten-handed babies as part of a series of diabolical omens for the city.⁷⁴⁷

The gods' ability to damage their own images as an omen is completely compatible with the language of signs and portents associated with cult statues and Roman religions generally. That they actively wished to do so is particularly worthy of note, because it implies a certain separation of image from deity: clearly the gods are not actually harming themselves in the statues' destruction. That omens include images of Jupiter being struck by lightning is particularly interesting; the association of Jupiter with both lightning and his image suggesting, perhaps, the strength of the message.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴³ See Ch. 3.5; 5.1.

⁷⁴⁴ Instances in which images are burned sometimes do not have a clear indication of divine motivation, e.g. Pult. *Mor.* 379D; Paus. 3.22.6-7; Paus. 8.42, although they are not blamed on accidents or men either.

⁷⁴⁵ E.g. Dio 45.17.3 in which a windstorm overturns an image of Minerva and is taken to portend death for the exiled Cicero. Cf. SHA, *Sev.* 22.3 for images of Victory that were blown over in the Circus and taken to be portents of the individuals who had dedicated them. Cf. Gregory (1994) 88.

⁷⁴⁶ Dio 47.40.4 places this alongside numerous omens, including the bleeding of Jupiter on the Alban mount, comets and a mule giving birth to a prodigy of two species.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ E.g. Dio 37.9.1-2, 39.15. The ship that was to be used to transport Olympian Zeus to Rome by Caligula was also destroyed by thunderbolts, cf. Dio, 59.28.3-5, Suet. *Gai.* 22.57, Josephus, *Ant.* 19.1. For the importance attached to places Jupiter had struck with lightning more generally see Paus. 5.14.10; Hewitt (1909) 86.

Along with other signs that could be sent from the gods via their images, destruction is a physical act that happens to an image without the involvement of mortals. In this sense the image is displaying signs of life and demonstrating its power even as it causes itself harm. In the broader context of interactions with other images in the Roman world, it is clear that the destruction of an image could be every bit as powerful as the creation of one.⁷⁴⁹ Actions of the gods upon their own images also helps to establish the order of the relationships implied by image interactions; for all that a devotee might tend to an image in any number of ways, they do not have ultimate control over it. Some images were thought to have been sent by the gods, and others could clearly be taken away by them.⁷⁵⁰

5.5 Reparation and retribution

In general, physical acts of violence and destruction, whether at human or divine instigation, were not the end point of these interactions. It has already been noted that when the gods destroyed images it was usually necessary to consult the oracles or religious officials to determine the best course of action. The consequences of this type of interaction, particularly as one that is beyond the boundaries of the acceptable, are equally as important as the interactions themselves.

The general concept of punishment for harming divine statues was an important one, and is an area of concern voiced in our sources. Julian makes it clear that, to his mind, harming and destroying temples and images does not mean that the gods do not exist, partially because the culprits are always punished.⁷⁵¹ The refutation is interesting for its suggestion that such violence had been taken by others to indicate a lack of power on the part of the divine. This may be partly to do with Julian's date of writing, for we have clear attestations that Christian destruction of images could be motivated by the desire to prove that the pagan gods were merely wood and stone.⁷⁵² The lack of divine power implied in the fact that cult statues could be harmed at all is also a subject made light of by Lucian, in whose *Zeus, the Tragic Actor* the images of Hermes, Apollo, Zeus, Poseidon and Hercules all bemoan the vandalism of

⁷⁴⁹ See Gregory (1994); Stewart (1999) and (2003) 267ff.

⁷⁵⁰ For provenance myths and cult statues having come from heaven and/or having been built by the gods, see Ch. 3.3.

⁷⁵¹ Julian, *Epist.* 295, see Introduction p26 with n.102 for further discussion.

⁷⁵² E.g. Eus. *Vit. Const.* 2.45, 4.23, 4.25; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 8.41. That their motivations were probably much more complex than that is not in dispute here, but for the political and doctrinal concerns of Christian iconoclasts see Browing (1952); MacCormack (1981). Cf. Stewart (1999) 179; Bowder (1978) 80.

their images, and their inability to punish the culprits.⁷⁵³ Zeus bemoans the situation in response to Poseidon:

“If it lay in my power, do you suppose I would have let the temple-robbers get away from Olympia unscathed by my thunderbolt, when they had shorn off two of my curls weighing six pounds apiece? Or would you yourself at Geraestus have allowed the fisherman from Oreus to filch your trident?”⁷⁵⁴

Elsewhere indications that destruction of images was understood to damage the concept of the divine overall are less apparent, but we do find that it is threatening enough to demand severe punishment and to require specific responses.⁷⁵⁵ Pliny describes an occasion on which Augustus ate from a plate made from the gold of a melted down image of Anaitis, captured by Antony during the Parthian wars. Rumour had it that the person who first harmed this image was struck with blindness, paralysis and death. Augustus’s sacrilege by association is not too disquieting, though, for the man who has served him on these plates claims that he himself destroyed the image and no suffering befell him.⁷⁵⁶ The fear and tradition recall the horrible disease suffered by Sulla as a consequence of his inappropriate theft of the image of Athena at Alalcomenae, although the actuality of punishment is in Pliny’s account suggested to be very different.⁷⁵⁷

In very general terms, a destroyed cult image would normally at least need to be replaced. We have seen that this could be influenced by divine instruction, as in the replacement of the Capitoline Jupiter in 64 BCE.⁷⁵⁸ Epigraphic evidence for the restoration and replacement of

⁷⁵³ Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 10 (Hermes says that pirates have stolen Apollo’s crown and that the pegs of his lyre have been robbed), 25 (Zeus complains that he cannot punish the temple robbers took two of his curls, and that a fisherman at Geraestus stole Poseidon’s trident), 32 (Hercules says he would like to punish those who rob from his temple by killing them). For additional text from this work and discussion see Introduction and Ch. 3.

⁷⁵⁴ Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 25: “ἐπεὶ εἴ γέ μοι ἐπ’ ἐξουσίας τὸ πρᾶγμα ἦν, εἶασα ἄν, οἶε, τοὺς ἱεροσύλους πρῶτην ἀπελθεῖν ἀκεραυνώτους ἐκ Πίσσης δύο μου τῶν πλοκάμων ἀποκείραντας ἐξ μνᾶς ἐκάτερον ἔλκοντας; ἢ σὺ αὐτὸς περιεῖδες ἂν ἐν Γεραισιῶ τὸν ἀλιέα τὸν ἐξ Ὠρεοῦ ὑφαιρούμενόν σου τήν τριάναν;” Tr. Harmn (1915).

⁷⁵⁵ On the concept of divine punishment generally, cf. Tiberius’s statement of “deorum iniurias dis curae.” At Tac. *Ann.* 1.73. Cf. Balagadhara (1994); Gradel (2002) 110; Parker (2004) on sacrilege in the Vestal cult and Rome’s religious systems generally.

⁷⁵⁶ Pliny *NH* 33.83. Isager (1991) 66 discusses the irony in this passage. A more typically Augustan story is of the melting down of images that had been set up to honour him, and reusing the metal as votives for Apollo (*RG* 24; Dio 53.27.3).

⁷⁵⁷ Paus. 9.33.6. See Ch. 3.3 for other examples of theft and punishment.

⁷⁵⁸ Dio, 37.9.1-2, for description of the image see Ov. *Fast.* 1.201-2, see above p197.

damaged cult statues does not normally provide further detail on how the damage was caused, although one inscription of unknown date from Roman Britain clearly blames ‘insolent hands’ for the need to repair a cult statue.⁷⁵⁹ In general, however, inscriptions tell us simply that images *were* replaced, clearly implying their removal or damage, but not providing us with any knowledge of motive or culprit.⁷⁶⁰

The literary evidence articulates some concern over the replacement of images, and much like those harmed by the gods, images harmed by human hands often consequently require special treatment informed by religious knowledge. When images were damaged at Rome during the Gallic sack of 290 BCE, widespread purifications had to be carried out, and elsewhere a priestess repairing the faces of the daughters of Apollo was instructed on the appropriate style by a divinely sent dream.⁷⁶¹ The image could itself act back, as is suggested by those statues that fell on and killed those who attacked them or that inflicted punishment in other ways.⁷⁶² The gods could also intervene before their images were harmed, as Zeus did to prevent the theft of his chryselephantine statue at Olympia, shattering the ships that were to transport it with thunderbolts and emitting noises from the image to terrify those who approached it.⁷⁶³

Failure to respond to damage appropriately also caused problems, and even when images were replaced or punishments enacted, they had to take the correct form. When the image of Demeter Melaina was burned and the Phigalians failed to replace it, a dearth on the land was revealed by the Pythia to have been caused by this inaction, and a replacement was made.⁷⁶⁴ Similarly, after the Caphyans discovered the crimes of the children who had mimed the strangling of Artemis at Condylea:

“The Caphyans, detecting what the children had done, stoned them to death. When they had done this, a malady befell their women, whose babies were stillborn, until the Pythian priestess bade them bury the children, and sacrifice to

⁷⁵⁹ Henig (1984) 218 *RIB* 152. For further discussion of this inscription and the condition of the text, see Croxford (2003) 82.

⁷⁶⁰ E.g. *BCH* 116 (1992) 335-43; *CIG* 2229; Henig (1984) *RIB* 103; *Kernos* 10 (1997) 261 no. 21; *SEG* 42.1833; *CIL* VI 102. *CIL* VI 526 seems to suggest repair of an image after a fire. Sometimes there is an indication that it has been removed by theft or destruction, but the inscriptions go no further than that.

⁷⁶¹ Gallic sack: Livy, 5.40.1-2; Dream inspiration: Paus. 3.16.1. Cf. Glinister (2000) 63-4.

⁷⁶² E.g. Suet. *Cal.* 5; Paus. 6.11.6-9; Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.95-7. See Ch. 3.5 for images that could drive those who would steal them insane.

⁷⁶³ Dio, 59.28.4. See above, n.730.

⁷⁶⁴ Paus. 8.42.7.

them every year as sacrifice is made to heroes, because they had been wrongly put to death. The Caphyans still obey this oracle, and call the goddess at Condylea, as they say the oracle also bade them, the Strangled Lady from that day to this.”⁷⁶⁵

Such instances also indicate that the punishment of those who harmed images was not always left to the gods alone. We have suggestions elsewhere that the damaging or mistreatment of images could be punished by the laws of men, particularly in the lengthy exhortations of Cicero against Verres for his destruction of statues and other artwork.⁷⁶⁶ Those who urinated on or near the cult statue of the emperor could be executed for their crime, a severe punishment that could have been exaggerated by the author of the *Historia Augusta* who related it, but which indicates a system in which this kind of treatment was clearly condemned and scope was made within mortal law for dealing with it.⁷⁶⁷

Although the picture formed by the evidence is incomplete, there is a general impression that the damaging of images is a situation that must be rectified, and not merely for aesthetic or practical purposes. The place of the image in man’s relationships with the divine is harmed when the image is, and it is as much this relationship that needs to be tended to as the statue. In some ways these interactions are similar to the extremes encountered in other forms of interaction, such as the agalmatophilia narratives that punish those who transgress the boundaries of acceptable tactility in severe ways.⁷⁶⁸ These narratives have in common a contribution to the awareness of the dangers associated with images, and contribute to the broader dialogue surrounding the tensions surrounding the control of representations of the gods.

⁷⁶⁵ Paus. 8.23.6: ἡ Ἄρτεμις. φωράσαντες δὲ οἱ Καφυεῖς τὰ ποιηθέντα ὑπὸ τῶν παιδίων καταλεύουσιν αὐτά· καὶ σφισι ταῦτα ἐργασαμένοις ἐσέπεσεν ἐς τὰς γυναῖκας νόσος, τὰ ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ πρὸ τοκετοῦ τεθνεῶτα ἐκβάλλεσθαι, ἐς ὃ ἡ Πυθία θάψαι τε τὰ παιδία ἀνείπε καὶ ἐναγίζειν αὐτοῖς κατὰ ἔτος· ἀποθανεῖν γὰρ αὐτὰ οὐ σὺν δίκῃ. Καφυεῖς δὲ ποιοῦσι τὰ τε ἄλλα ἔτι καὶ νῦν κατ’ ἐκεῖνο τὸ μάντευμα καὶ τὴν ἐν ταῖς Κονδυλέαις θεὸν—προσεῖναι γὰρ καὶ τότε ἔτι τῷ χρησμῷ φασι—καλοῦσιν Ἀπαγχομένην ἐξ ἐκείνου.” Tr. Jones et al (1918). Clem. Alex., *Protr.* P33 seems to suggest that the hanging was part of an annual ritual, although this is not at all clear. For the theme of social punishment in this ritual see King (1983), for its place in understanding religious propriety see Pirenne-Delforge (2001) 124.

⁷⁶⁶ Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.95, 5.72.184, and throughout the *Verrine Orations*. Not all of the images were sacred, but where they were special efforts to mention this are made.

⁷⁶⁷ SHA *Caracalla*, 5.7, see above n.718 and Ch. 1, p49 and n.189. Juv. *Sat.* 6.340 also uses the example of urinating on a statue (of Pudicita in the Forum Boarium at Rome) as an extreme behaviour associated with immoral women.

⁷⁶⁸ See Ch.4.4.

5.6 Conclusions on the harming of cult statues

The majority of instances of harm caused to cult images lie well outside of the realms of the appropriate and sanctioned. Although there appear to have been some rituals that involved the burying or burning of images, these are extremely limited in number and the extent to which these images were cult statues as such is unclear. It is possible that some in the Roman world were familiar with the concept of apparently violent acts towards statues within a ritualised or normalised setting, but for the most part it seems that statue harming was a problematic event.

The theoretical implications for the role of the cult image in violent interactions impact upon our understanding of attitudes towards divine and mortal relationships generally, as well as on perceptions of the innate qualities of a cult image. To some extent, attempts to harm an image as a way of communicating anger with the gods is a logical one, but the exact implications of this are not clear. It is possible that the image, acting as a focal point for man's conception of the deity, served as a symbol, and that anger directed at it was primarily a demonstration, presumably visible to the gods but not necessarily detrimental to them directly. Given the possibility for elision of image with god, however, the harm could also be seen to be intended to directly damage the deity as well.⁷⁶⁹

In fact, damaging a cult statue *does* literally damage a god. In one sense, the destruction of an image could be taken to suggest a lack of power in the divine, or a lack of interest on the part of gods in how their images were treated.⁷⁷⁰ This very literally impacts upon the god in a reputational sense, and how gods are perceived is fundamental to their worship.⁷⁷¹ Furthermore, the destruction of images literally damages the practices of cult, for it removes a very visible and physical part of many interactions, and places a block in the communication processes that devotees have otherwise been accustomed to.⁷⁷² In this way it also harms man's relationships with the divine, and this seems to have been the aspect that caused the greatest concern in antiquity. The need to punish and rectify instances of damage and destruction clearly demonstrates the seriousness with which it was taken, and the

⁷⁶⁹ See Gell (1998) 62.

⁷⁷⁰ For this as a problem in antiquity see Julian, *Epist.* 295; Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 10, 25, 32; Eus. *Vit. Const.* 2.45, 4.23, 4.25 and above, section 5 of this chapter.

⁷⁷¹ This literal effect can of course depend on the symbolic associations of the image. Cf. Freedberg (1989) 272ff.

⁷⁷² See Gell (1998) 102f.

involvement of the gods in this process (through the consultation of oracles and so on) allows for the repair of a damaged relationship to begin.

Conversely, in some circumstances the destruction of images is a demonstration of the power of the gods, for their demolition at divine hands is proof of their interaction with their images at a very physical level. These instances pose some problems for our understanding of the image, particularly the precise relationship between god and statue, which is surely harmed when the image is. The solution to understanding this may again lie in comprehending the genuine concern over the need to maintain the relationships between gods and men: a god only harms an image as a bad sign, an indication that they are unhappy with the relationship as it stands. Destroying the image that helps to facilitate this relationship is a deeply emphatic way of communicating this dissatisfaction, and the consequences, of devotees consulting oracles and religious officials and acting to repair the relationship, suggest again that the divine can very directly, and very physically, cause their images to significantly influence this relationship.⁷⁷³

It is worth noting that instances of images being harmed by mortals are relatively rare, and are generally condemned as aberrations by the sources. Whilst some clearly felt the need to understand how it was that images with so much potential power could be harmed, it is probable that many never asked this question. The normal set of circumstances was that images were not harmed but adored, and it is likely that the idea of attempting to damage them was preposterous to most people. It is only the most audacious and irreverent who hurt images, and this is probably not only because it would be counterproductive to do so in terms of mortal/divine relationships, but also because of the likely punishment associated with it and the perceived actual power of the image.

The interaction of destruction places us at the most extreme end of physical interactions with cult images, and it consequently occurs in extreme circumstances. This is useful in understanding the larger cultural language of cult statues, demonstrating another boundary for their proper place in relationships between gods and men. These interactions show quite clearly that there were ways of treating images correctly and ways of breaking the rules; these

⁷⁷³ For the gods acting physically through their images in other interactions see, in particular, Ch. 2.3; 3.5.

rules did not need to be written down or spoken aloud, but an assumed understanding that images are to be touched but not harmed is constantly implicit.

Chapter Six: Hungry Gods?

6.1 Sacrifice as interaction

Sacrifice, it is often explained, was the pivotal rite of Roman religions. As a ritual that was repeated on a vast range of occasions, with various motivations and in a multitude of manners, the act of sacrifice was indeed one with which any given devotee in the Roman world would be intimately familiar.⁷⁷⁴ At the same time, it is one of the most complex forms of ritual that we have evidence for, both in terms of its practice (the form that sacrificial ritual might take) and in terms of its theory (what was meant by the entire ritual). Because of its centrality and complexity, any study of Roman religious systems, especially their physical aspects, must incorporate a study of sacrifice, and yet for the study of physical interaction with cult statues of the Roman world, sacrifice actually remains something of a borderline issue in many respects. Sacrifice need not, and often did not, involve any direct physical contact with the cult image in the same way that, say, processions or clothing did. However, whilst the absence of abundant evidence for sacrifice as a physical interaction with cult statues makes its inclusion within this thesis problematic, it is also this absence, this lack of physical interaction, which makes the understanding of the role of the image within sacrifice important. Why, if a cult image took on a very physical role in many aspects of relationships between the mortal and the divine, might it not do so in the central act of the religious systems within which it functioned?

This chapter will, primarily, consider the presence and absence of physical interactions with cult images as part of sacrificial ritual, yet there are a number of additional matters that must be addressed. Firstly, there is the quagmire of scholarship on sacrifice and theory of sacrifice to be waded through, for although in many respects the theories put forward in these works are not directly relevant to the issue of the role of the cult image, it will become apparent that certain assumptions (or decisions) about sacrifice have to be made in order to study any one feature of its practice. The first section of this chapter will, therefore, briefly explain current

⁷⁷⁴ For sacrifice as the central/most common rite in Graeco-Roman religions, see, e.g. Scullard (1981) 23; Yerkes (1953) 1-7; Elsner (1991) 50: 'it is hard to overestimate the significance of sacrifice in Roman culture as a whole'; Pirenne-Delforge (2001) 132: 'Le sacrifice est, avec le nom du dieu, constitutif de chaque culte'; Petropoulou (2008) is useful for the interactions between different cultures of the Roman world on the issue of sacrifice. For the possible motivations for sacrifice see below, section 2 and van Straten (1981) 66ff. For the occasions on which sacrifice could be performed (in the Greek world primarily, but the demonstrated variety of occasions remains relevant for the Roman world) van Straten (1981) 88-102.

scholarship on ancient sacrifice, and outline some of the ways in which this scholarship impacts upon the role of the cult image. This will serve as a precursor to the principle focus of the chapter, the presence of cult images at sacrificial rituals, and the question of whether any physical interaction with the cult image took place as part of them. In addition, some specific statuary and specific sacrifices need to be addressed, and instances in which statues have a particularly close relationship to sacrifice will also be considered.

6.2 Theories of sacrifice

There are almost as many theories of sacrifice to be found amongst modern works on ancient religions as there are scholars who author them, and for this reason it is neither possible nor beneficial to discuss them all within the scope of this thesis. Attempting to place these individual theories within schools of thought or along a temporal line of development cannot do justice to the complexities and nuances of the various arguments. Other works provide varying accounts of these schools and developments in a much more sophisticated and complete manner than I do here, where I shall only briefly explain the major points, and expand upon them as and when they are of direct relevance to the role of the image.⁷⁷⁵ Of more importance than the solutions that are posed by these works are the questions that are asked: it will become apparent that the set of questions necessary for elucidating the role of the image in sacrifice are very different from, and yet affected by, the questions that normally form the basis of studies of ancient sacrifice more generally.

It is also important to note that, in general, large-scale studies of sacrifice within ancient Mediterranean religions lean heavily towards Classical Greece for both evidence and focus (albeit often including any number of Greek authors from the Roman period). Occasionally the Greek and Roman systems are taken together for theoretical purposes, but the most extensive works are explicit in their Greek focus.⁷⁷⁶ Although there are certain practical

⁷⁷⁵ Surveys of this scholarship depend, obviously, upon when they were written, although many of the early ones remain useful: Burkert (1983) xix ff, with his preface to the latest edition; Jay (1992) 128-49 provides what I consider to be the clearest and most thorough recent analysis, although her feminist focus heavily influences both the areas that she includes and also her criticisms and representation.

⁷⁷⁶ Girard (1977) makes little differentiation between the Greek and Roman periods (or places), but this is not tremendously surprising given that the theory proposed is ostensibly a 'universal' theory of sacrifice (much comparative anthropological material from Africa and the Americas is also considered). Burkert (1983) and Detienne & Vernant (1989) are (arguably) the two most important works on ancient sacrifice, and they make a Greek focus clear from their titles. Even Yerkes (1953), which is in any case seriously out of date, devotes far

similarities between Greek and Roman sacrificial rituals, it would be careless to assume that they served the same function, or that they incorporated the image in the same way.⁷⁷⁷ Even the Greek speaking areas of the Roman world will have been impacted by the Roman influence in their sacrifices, not least by the importance of the image, and of sacrificing to it, in the imperial cult.⁷⁷⁸

One of the most important problems with the current emphasis upon Greek sacrifice is highlighted by the continuous debate over the interactions of myth and ritual, a matter that has been a focal point for thinkers as disparate as Frazer, Durkheim, Freud, Girard, Meuli, Lévi-Strauss, Burkert, Jay, Detienne and Vernant. Although the tension between myth and ritual, the role of one within the other, and the impact of one upon the other, take on varying levels of importance for these individuals, the issues raised by ancient myths, especially Greek myths, remain a constant worry. The problem is obvious: one can only push the connection between Greek and Roman myths and rituals so far, and it is insurmountably problematic to begin to understand Roman attitudes towards sacrifice through Hesiod's account of the Prometheus myth, for example.⁷⁷⁹ Fortunately, most of the questions that are approached through studies of sacrifice and its relationship with myth bear scant relevance to the question of the role of the image. Those issues that *are* of direct relevance are often the subjects of the least focus, for example the practicality behind the type of sacrifice described by Hesiod; the literal explanation for how the meat (whether the disguise of the bones had been successful or not) was supposed to have nourished the gods is in any case barely touched upon.⁷⁸⁰

Although the relationship between myth and ritual is a common focus for many studies of sacrifice, conclusions upon it (and indeed its importance) are far from agreed. One of its early assessments was that myth provided a later explanation for antecedent rites.⁷⁸¹ Although the assumptions upon which this argument was based were flawed in many respects, it allowed

more attention to the Greek material than the Roman, and has also to make space for early Jewish sacrificial rituals. For interaction between different religions and cultures in terms of sacrifice see Petropoulou (2008).

⁷⁷⁷ There will of course have been variations across the Empire as well, an interesting case is that of Bel in the Near East (and the tale of Bel and the Dragon), who was apparently left with food to enjoy in seclusion, in a practice that may have been exploited by priests, cf. Kaizer (2002b) 5-6.

⁷⁷⁸ For the particular importance of sacrificing to the image in the imperial cult see Price (1980) esp. 28, 31, 40. See also below, section 7.

⁷⁷⁹ For this myth and Greek sacrifice see especially Vernant (1989); Girard (1977) 8f; Jay (1992) 22ff. The tale is at Hes. *Theog.* 540ff.

⁷⁸⁰ Not that it remains unasked; see Gill (1974) 130, although his focus is not upon the myths at all.

⁷⁸¹ Yerkes (1953) 24.

for an understanding of ritual and myth as two, potentially separate, systems of knowledge.⁷⁸² In stark contrast Detienne, Vernant, and other French Structuralist approaches insist upon a thorough understanding of myth for an understanding of sacrifice, and much of their work centres upon in-depth analysis of literary versions of the myths most relevant to sacrifice.⁷⁸³ Further schools of thought allow for the importance of the interaction between myth and ritual, but take a more strictly anthropological approach to the study of sacrifice. Girard, for example, employs many anthropological methodologies in order to arrive at a relatively anthropological conclusion. His argument is, essentially, that sacrifice is, as a civilised outlet for the inherent violence of humanity, the origin of all culture and society.⁷⁸⁴ This is an argument with which Burkert finds fault through its neglect of eating and consumption (which he considers crucial for the understanding of sacrifice as contributing to culture and civilisation generally), an important feature of Greek sacrifices, although he allows for a significant role for violence within his, more biological or genetic, explanations of sacrifice.⁷⁸⁵ In addition, Burkert makes sure to emphasise that the relationship between myth and ritual is not at all absolute, and that the two can clearly exist independently of one another.⁷⁸⁶

Whilst incredibly important for our understanding of sacrifice, especially any attempt to discern its origins and meanings, these studies generally neglect the area of sacrificial ritual that is of most importance for this study: that is, how it was supposed to work as a practical process. Interest in this aspect of ritual generally has begun to be re-awakened, but it remains of less importance to those who can be considered scholars of sacrificial ritual specifically.⁷⁸⁷ In many respects, the most useful aspects of these studies for this research are the warnings that they contain, for example:

⁷⁸² Flawed assumptions: for example that sacrifice could not have been intended to ‘feed the gods’ because it was offered to aniconic images (Yerkes (1953) 23), and it has clearly been demonstrated by numerous scholars that aniconic images can equally as clearly represent the gods as those in anthropomorphic form, cf. Introduction.i.a with notes.

⁷⁸³ See Detienne (1989) on the myth of the infant Dionysus being consumed by the Titans, except for his heart; Durand (1989b); cf. Jay (1992) 141f.

⁷⁸⁴ Girard (1977) esp. 4-6, 258-60. For a criticism of this, especially its focus upon masculine society, see Jay (1992) 131.

⁷⁸⁵ Burkert (1983) 12-29.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid. 30-35.

⁷⁸⁷ Cf. Davies (2004) 7-10, 96f on the ‘glaring omission’ that is the study of the ‘technology’ of Roman religions in practice.

‘Once one has made up one’s mind that sacrifice is an institution essentially if not entirely symbolic, one can say anything whatsoever about it. It is a subject that lends itself to insubstantial theorising.’⁷⁸⁸

And:

‘A philologist who starts from ancient Greek texts and attempts to find biological, psychological, and sociological explanations for religious phenomena naturally runs the risk of juggling too many balls at once and dropping them all.’⁷⁸⁹

Sacrifice attracts so much scholarly attention largely because it is so incomprehensible. Because of the religious systems and practices to which those in the West in the twentieth century are most accustomed, the concept of sacrifice, its ‘meanings’, ‘origins’ and its societal functions continue to be elusive. These concepts must be approached with more or less an extent of imagination, and this in itself poses a tremendous analytical problem. It is for this reason, among others, that these theories of sacrifice bear surprisingly little influence upon the study of the role of images within them. Instead, I return to the idea of the practical aspects of Roman religions. By these practical aspects I mean not only the practicality implied in physical interaction in any case, but also that which Davies refers to as the ‘technology’ of these religions.⁷⁹⁰ That is, the means by which religious rituals were conceived to have actually *worked*. Although scholars of sacrifice generally neglect and/or reject this aspect of religious practice, it is an area that in many respects receives more attention in the sources that mention sacrifice, especially of the Roman world.⁷⁹¹

Whilst analysis of passages of Hesiod, for example, may highlight highbrow concerns over the practice of sacrifice, it does not provide any explicit discussion of the theories behind sacrifice that existed in the ancient world. In many respects these are not easy to come across

⁷⁸⁸ Girard (1977) 1.

⁷⁸⁹ Burkert (1983) xix.

⁷⁹⁰ See above, n.787 and Introduction.ii.

⁷⁹¹ Elements of this discussion can be found in earlier Greek evidence, and where it is useful will be referenced throughout this chapter. For the explicit rejection of the ‘practicality’ of sacrifice, see, for example Yerkes (1953) 23: ‘a commonly accepted explanation of the origin of sacrifice is that it was first a method of feeding the gods’, which is wrong because, according to Yerkes, it suggests creed before cult, and because of the incompatibility of this theory with aniconic worship.

until quite late in the Roman period, and the reasons for the late date of the most extensive discussions are quite obvious: criticism (especially Christian criticism) of sacrifice required, or at least encouraged, its justification. This is not to say that there is no pre-Christian criticism as such, for it does exist in the gentle mockery of Attic comedy, and amongst the concerns of the Classical philosophers.⁷⁹² The clues that we have for early Roman theories of sacrifice are often more nuanced, and can be found as quiet asides in authors who are not concerned to devote significant attention to the subject or the theory.⁷⁹³ Problematically, much of what we do have as evidence for this debate comes as citations within Christian authors, who we may assume have taken the quotes out of context to at least some degree.⁷⁹⁴ Unsurprisingly the potential of the subject does not escape Lucian, who ridicules the notion that vapours could nourish the gods more than once.⁷⁹⁵ Although he writes after Christian thinkers and their criticisms had impacted upon religious thought in the Roman world, his work is nevertheless of an altogether different kind than, say, Julian's, and his satirising parallels that of Aristophanes centuries previously so neatly that it is easier to see it as fitting within that genre than that of serious attacks upon the process.⁷⁹⁶

The main authors who devote significant attention to the theory of sacrifice in the later period are Julian, Theophrastus, Iamblichus, and scattered apologists. All of these authors individually have their problems and complexities, especially when it comes to their interpretation of ancient religion. Although I cannot unravel these complexities in full here, I do not wish to draw too much from their conclusions either, but simply to draw attention to those aspects of sacrifice that were considered to be the principle matters for discussion.⁷⁹⁷ Primary among these appears to be the concept of nourishment that was so easily ridiculed by earlier authors, although the inconsistencies even within one author are clearly obvious. Julian, for example, seems to claim in one work that the gods are nourished by the fumes of sacrifice directly, and in another that sacrifice rather induces the goodwill of the gods,

⁷⁹² For example: Ar. *Pax* 1954 w. Schol.; Men., *Dysc.* 451-2 and fr. 264 all of which mock the idea of nourishing vapours to some extent; Pl. *Euth.* 14e; *Leg.* 716e-717a.

⁷⁹³ For example, Hor. *Sat.* 2.6.60-71 depicts sacrifice as a meal shared with the gods.

⁷⁹⁴ For example Seneca fr. 123 (= Lact., *Div. inst.* 6.25.3) ('deum...non immolationibus nec sanguine multo colendum'. Cf. Demonax, in Luk. *Dem.* 11; Clem., *Protr.* 4.62; 9; Just. *Coh. Ad Gr.* 16) and Varro, in Arnob. 7.1 ('dii veri neque desiderant ea neque deposcunt').

⁷⁹⁵ Luc. *Zeus Trag.* 6-7; *de Sacr.* generally, but esp. 9 in which he ridicules the image of greedy gods with open mouths drooling over blood-soaked altars.

⁷⁹⁶ See above, n.795.

⁷⁹⁷ For Julian and sacrifice: Belayche (2002); Bradbury (1995). Iamblichus: Belayche (2005); Clarke (2001) 39-51; Toulouse (2005). Theophrastus: van Straten (2005); Toulouse (2005) *passim*, Belayche (2005).

although they do not *need* the contents of it.⁷⁹⁸ A similar focus is found in those attacking the practicality of sacrifice, who could question just how and why the gods were supposed to be nourished through fumes at all.⁷⁹⁹ Iamblichus's arguments for sacrifice in its variant forms were both highly unique and highly dependent upon a complex interpretation of Neoplatonist thought that for reasons of time and space is not possible to explain here, although they did allow for the gods to, in some way or another, benefit directly from material sacrifice.⁸⁰⁰ In addition, a certain amount of non-literary evidence points towards a theory of sacrifice in which the gods were the practical recipients of what was offered. For example, names for portions of meat that were intended specifically for the gods can be found on many types of inscriptions, whether they be votive or prescriptive.⁸⁰¹

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to produce a positive argument for the practicality and 'technology' of sacrifice, it is relevant to note the above evidence in its relation to that which follows. It is highly unlikely that there was any uniform accepted theory of sacrifice in the Roman world, indeed there may have been very few articulated theories for the majority of the period, and yet at all periods there is some small voice that reminds us that the efficacy of sacrifice depended upon it having some sort of practical function *vis a vis* the relationships of mortals with the gods, as well as those within the mortal societies that worshipped them.⁸⁰² This is of importance for the study of physical interactions with cult images, because the level of involvement of the deity in sacrifice obviously has a direct impact upon the role of representations of that deity, and vice versa. Put in the simplest possible terms, sacrifice was supposed to *work*: it was meant to achieve something, be it communication or a more complex exchange of favours and/or honours.⁸⁰³ I shall go into more detail on this matter in the discussion of the 'destinations' of sacrificial offerings, but for now it is enough to demonstrate that the practicality of sacrifice is, and was, an important

⁷⁹⁸ Jul. *Caes.* 333d and *Ep.* 293C-D respectively.

⁷⁹⁹ Justin Martyr, *Apol.* 1.10.1 and Porphyry, *de Abst.*, 2.42.3 (citing *Il.* 9.500) are the most explicit on this matter.

⁸⁰⁰ Iamb. *De Myst.* 5.1. For a much more detailed analysis of Iamblichus's definitions of, theories of, and attitudes towards sacrifice, see Clarke (2001) 39-57.

⁸⁰¹ See below, p222f, and Gill (1974) esp. 124-31.

⁸⁰² The role of sacrifice as a means of communication and organization within societies is essentially where the arguments of origin and meaning in most modern scholarship lead, cf. Burkert (1983) 29-37; Detienne (1989); Girard (1977) 6; and Jay (1992) 24; 128f. For this in relation to ritual more generally see e.g. Rappaport (1999) 50-55; Bourque (2000).

⁸⁰³ The question of what happened when sacrifice did *not* work is very rarely asked by modern scholars, although see Davies (2004) *passim* for the treatment of Livy especially, who tends to blame negative outcomes on sacrifices that were already known to have failed through, for example, incompleteness of the full ritual.

issue, and one that stands slightly apart from those areas upon which most scholars place the greatest focus.

6.3 Visibility and invisibility

It has already been observed that the role of the deity within a sacrificial ritual will have a direct bearing upon the role of that deity's representation, and that the reverse is also true. Because the image itself (insofar as it can be distinguished from the deity) is my focus, I begin by assessing its physical role within sacrifice, and will return to the involvement of the deity presently. It will be of some use to first outline the basic actions that formed the most common sacrificial rituals, in order to place the image within an understood context.

This task is rather more problematic than it at first sounds. Although there are an almost infinite number of references to sacrifice in literary, epigraphic and visual evidence from the Roman world, there are very few clear *descriptions* of sacrifice, and only one antique source describes the ritual in full!⁸⁰⁴ There were, in addition, multiple variants on sacrifice, in terms of the offerings made and the procedures involved. The present description, then, must be taken as a broad and vague account of many separate and specific rituals, for the purposes of general demonstration, rather than an accurate account of any given sacrifice. Many scholars find justification in limiting their studies of sacrifice to comestible offerings to the gods, which is indeed what I intend to do here; other offerings, such as clothing and inscriptions, have been previously discussed.⁸⁰⁵ In addition, many scholars make a division between blood sacrifice, offerings of other types of food (such as cakes) and liquid offerings, or libations.⁸⁰⁶ There are some differences between the manners in which these products were presented to the divine, and so there are different implications for the role of the image, yet in many theoretical senses (and in many practical senses) the offerings are similar, and so all types will be discussed here.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who provides the only full ethnographic description of a sacrifice from antiquity, explains the ritual as follows:

⁸⁰⁴ Dion. Hal. 7.72, esp. 15-18. Others give more vague (and far less ethnographic) accounts, e.g. Luc. *De Sacr.* 12-13.

⁸⁰⁵ Especially in Ch. 1. For the justification of sacrifice as referring specifically to comestible offerings see especially van Straten (2005) 16f.

⁸⁰⁶ van Straten (2005) 17f.

“After the procession was ended the consuls and the priests whose function it was presently sacrificed the oxen; and the manner of performing the sacrifices was the same as with us. For after washing their hands they purified the victims with clear water and sprinkled corn on their heads, after which they prayed and then gave orders to their assistants to sacrifice them. Some of these assistants, while the victim was still standing, struck it on the temple with a club, and others received it upon the sacrificial knives as it fell. After this they flayed it and cut it up, taking off a piece from each of the inwards and also from every limb as a first-offering, which they sprinkled with grits of spelt and carried in baskets to the officiating priests. These placed them on the altars, and making a fire under them, poured wine over them while they were burning. It is easy to see from Homer’s poems that every one of these ceremonies was performed according to the customs established by the Greeks with reference to sacrifices... And also cutting off the hair from the head of the victim and placing it on the fire, writing thus:

“And he, the rite beginning, cast some hairs,
Plucked from the victim’s head, upon the fire.”

...These rites I am acquainted with from having seen the Romans perform them at their sacrifices even in my time.”⁸⁰⁷

Although it is the only description of its kind, it is broadly reflected in other descriptions and depictions of aspects of sacrifice that we have from all over the Empire and from all time periods. The focus is heavily upon the altar, where the sacrificial offerings are to be burnt, and on the build up to the sacrifice. Although Dionysius describes the many images of the

⁸⁰⁷ Dion. Hal. 7.72.15-17: “συντελεσθείσης δὲ τῆς πομπῆς ἐβουθύτουν εὐθὺς οἱ θ’ ὑπατοὶ καὶ τῶν ἱερέων οἷς ὅσιον, καὶ ὁ τῶν θυηπολιῶν τρόπος ὁ αὐτὸς ἦν τῷ παρ’ ἡμῖν. χερνισιόμενοι τε γὰρ αὐτοὶ καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ καθαρῶ περιαγνίσαντες ὕδατι καὶ Δημητρίους καρπούς ἐπιρράναντες αὐτῶν ταῖς κεφαλαῖς, ἔπειτα κατευξάμενοι, θύειν τότε τοῖς ὑπηρέταις αὐτὰ ἐκέλευον. τῶν δ’ οἱ μὲν ἐστῶτος ἐπὶ τοῦ θύματος σκυτάλη τοὺς κροτάφους ἔπαιον, οἱ δὲ πίπτοντος ὑπετίθεσαν τὰς σφαγίδας, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο δειραντὲς τε καὶ μελίσαντες ἀπαρχὰς ἐλάμβανον ἐξ ἐκάστου σπλάγχχνου καὶ παντὸς ἄλλου μέλους, ἃς ἀλφίποις ζέας ἀναδεύσαντες προσέφερον τοῖς θύουσιν ἐπὶ κανῶν· οἱ δ’ ἐπὶ τοὺς βωμοὺς ἐπιθέντες ὑφῆππον καὶ προσέσπενδον οἶνον κατὰ τῶν ἀγνιζομένων. ἕκαστον δ’ ὅτι κατὰ νόμους ἐγένετο τοὺς ἀμφὶ θυσίαν ὑφ’ Ἑλλήνων κατασταθέντας, ἐκ τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως γινῶναι ῥάδιον...τριχοτομοῦντάς τ’ ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὰς τρίχας καὶ τιθέντας ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ ὧδε γράφων· Ἄλλ’ ὃ γ’ ἀπαρχόμενος κεφαλῆς τρίχας ἐν πυρὶ βάλλε...Ταῦτα δὲ Ῥωμαῖους ἐπὶ καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ πράπτοντας ἐπὶ ταῖς θυσίαις ἰδὼν ἐπίσταμαι.” Tr. Cary (1937). Cf. Luc. *De Sacr.* 12-13 for a graphic but less complete description of the practicalities of sacrifice.

gods that are carried in the procession that precedes this sacrifice, he does not mention them with regards to the actual sacrifice itself.⁸⁰⁸ Large public sacrifices of this kind normally took place outside of the temple, the altar being close to the base of the steps leading into the temple itself.⁸⁰⁹ Although there are variants upon this form of sacrifice, as it is the most commonly described (and studied) general method, I intend to take this as a starting point for considering the role of images within sacrifice generally, before assessing some more specific instances.

In this description it is difficult to see how the image is being physically interacted with at all, and this is not merely because of Dionysius's omissions. Most visual depictions of sacrificial scenes do not involve the image, but focus either upon the approach of the animal to the altar or the procession preceding it.⁸¹⁰ There may be numerous reasons for this, such as the role of eurytism in sacrifice, and therefore the desire to focus upon the individual performing the sacrifice.⁸¹¹ Similarly, votive and commemorative sculptures naturally aim to place emphasis upon the offering itself.⁸¹² It may also be that other foci were better suited to the mediums through which most sacrificial scenes are depicted, especially relief sculptures on altars themselves, and on coins. Sacrificial scenes involving the image and/or deity do exist, but they generally fall within a different type of depiction, which also includes the temple.⁸¹³

The image within the temple might or might not have been visible during sacrificial ritual, a matter that probably depended upon the ritual, the specific cult, and the occasion. Many

⁸⁰⁸ He refers to these images as *eikones* in the description of the procession immediately preceding that of the sacrifice (7.72.12-15) and it is not clear that they are necessarily the cult statues.

⁸⁰⁹ Although not always, a sacrifice could be performed at an altar without a temple proper (as, for example, in the case of the Ara Pacis, See Elsner (1991) 54; for an image of Zeus Polieus that receives sacrifice outside the Parthenon, Paus. 1.24.4-5, cf. Elsner (1996) 520f; or within a temple (Paus. 5.14.4 claims this to be the case at the Temple of Zeus at Olympia and 2.31.2 within a temple of Artemis Soteira, although the sacrifice here is not to that deity and there may be no images involved) see Corbett (1970) 150. Some temples in the Near East had regular sacrifices inside of the temple (cf. Kaizer (2002b) 4) although the nature of the images in many of these temples is unclear (see Drijvers (1990) 73 with Ch.1.3).

⁸¹⁰ For types of depiction of sacrifice in Roman relief sculptures (often on the altars themselves) and some discussion of coinage, see Elsner (1991) esp. 54. See also Gordon (1990) 204ff for the emphasis upon the sacrificer in the Imperial period. A very few visual depictions do include the image in sacrifice, such as the fresco of the sacrifice by the tribune Iulius Terentius from Dura Europos, in which either deities or emperors are clearly statues (as they are on very obvious pedestals) and overlook the sacrificial scene. For recent discussion and bibliography on the fresco see Kaizer (2006).

⁸¹¹ Gordon (1990) 199ff.

⁸¹² For examples see van Straten (2005), whose evidence comes primarily from Greek sanctuaries, although some of it belongs to the Roman period.

⁸¹³ I am not aware of any depictions of sacrifice that depict both the deity and the cult image in the Roman period, for this type of depiction Classical Greece, see Spivey (1995).

scholars presume the visibility of the cult image within its *cella* during these rites, for example:

‘The sacrifice itself was normally performed at an altar in front of the temple, not in the main building itself, though the doors would be left open to give a view of the statue in his central chamber.’⁸¹⁴

The assumption is unsurprising for a number of reasons. Firstly, those images of sacrifice involving an image that we do have tend to depict the ritual being performed in front of the temple, through the doors of which the statue is visible.⁸¹⁵ Secondly, Vitruvius’s instructions for the proper building of temples and altars include the direction to:

‘enable those who approach the altar with offerings or sacrifices to face the direction of the sunrise in facing the statue in the temple...and likewise the statues themselves appear to be coming forth out of the east to look upon them as they pray and sacrifice.’⁸¹⁶

This is followed by instructions to place the altars at a lower level than the statues, so that those sacrificing can look up to the divinity.⁸¹⁷ Finally, there is the commonly held, but perhaps less commonly articulated, supposition with regards to the relationship between the altar and the image, that it was ‘the altar which made active cultivation of the image possible’.⁸¹⁸

These basic pieces of evidence do suggest that the image could be conceived of as importantly involved in the sacrifice, and the idea that an offering was directed towards the image need not be wrong as such. However, there are important caveats to the idea that

⁸¹⁴ Scullard (1981) 24.

⁸¹⁵ See Stewart (2003) 209 and Kleiner (1992) 141-5.

⁸¹⁶ Vitr., *de Arch.* 4.5.1: “qui adierint ad aram immolantes aut sacrificia facientes, spectent ad partem caeli orientis et simulacrum, quod erit in aede, et ita vota suscipientes contueantur aedem et orientem caelum ipsaque simulacra videantur exaudientia contueri supplicantes et sacrificantes.” Tr. Milford (1914).

⁸¹⁷ Vitr., *de Arch.* 4.9. The height of the altar should also be adjusted for the ‘height’ of the god, so for example Jupiter’s altar should be raised as high as possible.

⁸¹⁸ Stewart (2003) 191. It is possible that in sanctuaries of the Roman Near East altar and image were the same thing: cf. Gaifman (2008). See also figs. Intr.3-5 and discussion in the Introduction.i.a with fig. 3.1 and discussion in Ch. 3.2.

reciprocal gaze between image and devotee, and some significant visual interaction, meant that the image was actively involved in the sacrificial rites in this respect.

If we consider the images of sacrifice before a temple, for example, there are immediate problems with regards to the visibility of the image. Coins, which employ fairly standard methods for depicting images within their temples, demonstrate some of these quite clearly (see figs. II.3-5 and 3.1). In his discussion of the representations of cult images in coin types, Stewart notes the ‘distortion of reality’ and ‘obvious artifice’ in making the image visible through the unrealistically widened gap between the columns at the front of the temple.⁸¹⁹ The reasons for this are partly schematic, in that the size and field of a coin requires some artistic license in order to depict both temple and also image. The motivations for the commission of such coinage may also be important here, as coins that depict the cult image within the temple in any detail are usually commemorative of either a restoration or an erection of a temple, its altar, and its image.⁸²⁰ A further problem with using coins as evidence for the visibility of the image is that at least some are known to be inaccurate: some coins depict a statue of Vesta in her round shrine in the Forum Romanum, although it is quite probable that this temple contained no image at all.⁸²¹

It has been noted that relief sculptures tend to avoid the inclusion of a representation of the cult image, and where they do include it, the same typology can be observed, in which the image is located within the temple, is unrealistically visible, and is also normally at some distance from the sacrifice itself (see fig. 6.1).⁸²²

⁸¹⁹ Stewart (2003) 208-9, and Fig. 37, 209, the reverse of an aureus with an image of the Temple of Divus Iulius, c. 35 BC, on which the columns are excessively widened to present the image within the temple. Also, to a lesser extent, the sestertius of Tiberius depicting the Temple of Concord on its reverse, 209.

⁸²⁰ Stewart (2003) 211. See Introduction, fig. Intr.5.

⁸²¹ Ov. *Fast.* 6.295. Cf. Denarii of Q. Cassius, 55 BC, appearing to display the absence of an image, with Stewart (2003) 212.

⁸²² See above, p214.



Fig. 6.1: relief of Aeneas sacrificing to the Penates on the Ara Pacis, the temple in the distance in the top left appears to include representations of the gods.⁸²³

This distance can also be seen on the most realistic coin types depicting an image within a temple (whether it is a sacrificial scene or not). These coins attempt to create the illusion of perspective, sometimes including a line at which the statue's base meets the ground, and in such instances the image is almost invisibly small, due to its proper location at the back of the *cella*.⁸²⁴ These representations demonstrate a significant part of the problem in assuming the visibility of the cult image during sacrificial rituals, in that the image would often be at quite some distance from the sacrifice, masked by columns, and at the very back of a crowded, and possibly poorly lit, room; all this behind the people, animals, and smoke associated with public sacrificial rites.

These factors also have a significant impact upon our understanding of Vitruvius's instructions for the building of temples and the locations of their altars. It is clear from archaeological records that many temples and altars did conform to Vitruvius's plan, although it is not true for all temple layouts.⁸²⁵ However, whether an image would necessarily

⁸²³ Sanctuary wall of the Ara Pacis on the Campus Martius, depicting the sacrifice made by Aeneas to the Penates, for discussion of which see Elsner (1991) 54-5, 53. Cf. Virg. *Aen.* 3.389ff, 8.81f.

⁸²⁴ For example, a sestertius of Trajan, c. 105/6 AD, depicting (perhaps) the Temple of Jupiter Ultor, fig. 40 in Stewart (2003) 213.

⁸²⁵ Some basic plans showing this standard layout can be found in Ward-Perkins & Claridge (1976) 58-61, including the Temple of Dionysus at S. Abbondio, near Pompeii, and the Temples of Fortuna Augusta and Vespasian at Pompeii. There may be special circumstances for the Imperial Cult however, which are discussed below, section 7. See also the diagram of the Temple of Liber Pater at Pompeii in Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2005) 271, and discussion at 254f.

be visible from an altar because of this design is highly questionable given the points noted above. In addition, some temple images were barely visible in any case; Pausanias mentions more than one image that cannot be seen because it is either too heavily decorated with offerings, or because the temple itself is too full.⁸²⁶ One further factor to bear in mind lies within the words of Vitruvius, who envisages a worshipper seeing the statue coming out of the east, out of the sun. The practical possibility of actually *seeing* very much of a cult statue that is far within a dark temple, which itself is backlit by the sun, crowded with offerings, blocked by columns, and on the other side of priests, sacrificial assistants, animals, and the fumes of the altar fires seems limited to say the least.⁸²⁷ This is not to say that a viewing of the cult image during sacrifice would be impossible, but it might have very often been incredibly difficult.

The possible invisibility of the image is important, in the sense that it alters our perspective of how a cult statue might be involved in sacrificial ritual, but it certainly does not remove the image from the equation altogether, far from it. It will be clear from the previous discussions that images could be physically interacted with in a vast variety of ways despite all of these obstacles at times of large-scale public ritual, and it is the timing of these barriers that is important. On other occasions a devotee might be able to approach an image directly, to enter the temple, the area might be less crowded, he might touch the image, and so on.⁸²⁸ The invisibility then, rather than detracting from the importance of the image might also serve to have heightened it. Access to images was not an arbitrary matter, indeed significant bodies of evidence suggest that attempts to control access to all sorts of cult images were made throughout the Empire.⁸²⁹ Why, then, would the principal act of cult, the one that could be taken to facilitate the cultivation of the cult image, take place at such a distance from it? Why would it take place in circumstances under which it was so difficult to glimpse that image?

It would be obtuse to suggest that this was merely a matter of practicality, even in those early days of the ritual for which scholars are constantly searching. Cult images were often portable, making far longer excursions than that required for sacrifice for the purpose of other

⁸²⁶ See Ch. 1.

⁸²⁷ Some cult statues might also have had physical boundaries that at least partially blocked them from view, as evidenced through both archaeology and literature Cf. Corbett (1960) and Mylonopoulos (2010). See Ch. 3.

⁸²⁸ There are certain parts of sacrificial ritual that involve some individuals approaching the image, and these are addressed below, section 4.

⁸²⁹ See above, n.824 with Romano (1988); Hewitt (1909); Corbett (1970). Although the topic under discussion in these two works is Greek temple access, an astonishing amount of the evidence is Roman in date. Cf. Ch. 3.

public rituals.⁸³⁰ The invisibility of the image points to a different form of interaction altogether, one that is predicated upon this distance, this absence. At this point, I wish to return briefly to those theories of sacrifice that had to be initially put aside, for one particular argument finds resonance in the absence of the image, with regards to the relationships between mortals and immortals that are implied through the sacrificial rites.

Aside from the theories of violence and mythology that overwhelm much modern theorising over sacrifice, aspects of the implications for the social context of sacrifice can be of use in understanding the practical purposes of the ritual within the religious systems of the Roman world. Detienne and Vernant's school of thought also places a certain emphasis on the manner in which sacrifice, through the common animal victim, both unites and separates men and gods.⁸³¹ That separation ought to be a part of man's communications with the divine is unsurprising, for it is only through the emphasis of the differences between them that the gods can perform any of their necessary functions within the practical relationships that existed within these systems. Sacrifice, as an act that had the potential to highlight this distance, through the division of portions, the uncertainty over the 'technology' behind it, and through its centrality within ritual practices in general, is also a ritual in which the image is distanced from the devotee. This distancing is not absolute, and we shall see that certain individuals at certain times specifically brought the cult image into the physical processes of the sacrifice, but for most of the devotees present at a large-scale public sacrifice, the image, and the god, remained at a conscious and vital distance.

6.4 Priests and permissions: public cult

How great the distance was between image and devotee during any standard sacrifice would naturally vary greatly: priests would have had a different experience from the general public, for example. That this difference was one felt by Roman worshippers is suggested by Julian's behaviour in reinstating large-scale public sacrifices within the Empire. In his priestly roles Julian wandered from the old Roman traditions, and preferred to perform the sacrifices

⁸³⁰ See Ch. 3.2.

⁸³¹ Detienne (1989) 1-20; Vernant (1989) 21-86. See also Jay (1992) 140ff; van Straten (2005) and (1981). Cf. Davies (2004) 96: the distinction between men and gods was represented both textually and ritually.

himself in order to prevent there being any mediator between himself and the deities.⁸³² There is no doubt that Julian felt particularly strongly about sacrifice generally, and believed it was central to the restoration of public cult that he felt the Empire to be in need of.⁸³³ Although his attitude may not be typical, there is a certain logic to the feeling that those who were the most physically involved with the ritual act were also those communicating most intimately with the deity. In general, there were strict rules for priests who conducted public sacrifices: the correct performance was vital for every detail.⁸³⁴

On those occasions when an image was directly approached and explicitly interacted with during the offering of a sacrifice, two principle methods were employed: either placing the offering in the hands or laps of the gods, or leaving them on a sacrificial table that would normally be positioned close to the cult statue. Neither of these aspects of sacrificial ritual is particularly thoroughly discussed in our literary sources, although archaeological and epigraphic evidence suggests that at least the latter was relatively commonplace. These types of interaction could form a part of large scale public ritual, or they could take place as part of an individual devotee's involvement in public cult. In the first instance, it would normally be a priest officiating at the ceremony who approached the image and dedicated the part of the animal specifically intended for this purpose; in the second, an individual might make a comestible (although probably not blood) sacrifice by leaving it either on the table or the image itself. These circumstances, then, suggest that whilst the image may of necessity have remained at a distance from the principal aspects of the sacrificial ritual (the slaughter, inspection of entrails and so on) it could become more explicitly involved in the offering at a different stage. This aspect of sacrificial ritual has not received a tremendous amount of scholarly attention, although the works that do discuss it point out one obvious question: why should there be two ways of offering to the gods, burning and depositing?⁸³⁵

There are further implications of this question with regard to the direct involvement of the image. Why should some offerings be placed on the knees or in the hands of cult images?

⁸³² Belayche (2002) 110-15. Belayche also points out the similarities between Julian's behaviour with regards to sacrifice, and *Elegabalus's* attitudes as a priest-king. Although earlier emperors are depicted sacrificing, this may be more of an artistic device influenced by *eurgetism*, rather than a literal depiction, cf. Gordon (1990b).

⁸³³ Belayche (2002) 103-6. He is famously criticised by *Ammianus Marcellinus* (22.12.6; 22.14.4.), otherwise generally positive in his accounts of Julian's reign, for providing soldiers with too many feasts as a consequence of the extent of the sacrifices performed by the legions.

⁸³⁴ For the consequences of poorly performed sacrifices, see Davies (2004) 9-10.

⁸³⁵ Esp. Gill (1974) 133.

How important is the proximity of the sacrificial table to the cult image? Does this practice indicate a desire to directly involve the image in sacrificial ritual, given its distance from the larger part of the ceremony? And, given Julian's feelings about direct involvement with the act of sacrifice, might there also be a feeling that one ought to involve the image in order to also involve the gods more directly in the ritual through a similar logic? In addition, there are those sacrifices which our sources explicitly depict as being performed to images, which again might suggest the need to involve the statue in some way.

In some respects, the desire to involve the cult image in sacrificial ritual might seem to be a fairly obvious one. It is presumably the assumption that this ought to be the case that has led so many scholars to assume their visibility during the large scale rituals performed at the altars in front of temples.⁸³⁶ The simple act of viewing a cult image might be a religious experience, and to visually engage with it during sacrifice seems a reasonable desire.⁸³⁷ In focussing upon the image of a deity it is easier for the devotee to associate their actions with the effect on the deity that they are intended to have.⁸³⁸ However, in the case of sacrifice, there are important problems with this association, many of which will be discussed more fully in following sections of this chapter, but which are based around the cognitive leap required to involve the statue itself with the (already problematic) concept of the way in which the god practically benefits from sacrifice: the issue of consumption. I suggest that this issue might contribute to the answers to some of the questions posed above. That is, that the different types of offering, the ways in which the image was actively engaged or not engaged in the sacrificial process, partially helps to deal with the whole problematic notion of the practicality of sacrifice.

For now, however, it is necessary to return to the evidence in order to explain the ways in which sacrificial tables and images were employed within the sacrificial rituals of the religious systems of the Roman world. The evidence for the offerings made on sacrificial tables (*trapezomata*) or that were placed on the images does not allow us to clearly understand *why* they were used, but they do to some extent explain *how* they were employed. Essentially, *trapezomata* appear to have been portions of an offering that were dedicated

⁸³⁶ See above, p214.

⁸³⁷ On viewing cult images as a religious experience, and on the important of the reciprocal gaze between image and devotee see the Introduction. See also Platt (forthcoming), Elsner (2008).

⁸³⁸ This is discussed further in Ch. 2.2.

specifically to the gods (as well as those that were burnt and dedicated to the gods).⁸³⁹ In the complex system that divided animal offerings amongst priests, devotees, and immortals, it was necessary for rules to govern which parts of the animal went to whom in any given sacrifice. We hear of the distinctions from Julian, who differentiates between types of *trapezomata*, some of which are dedicated to the priests, and some of which are dedicated to the gods.⁸⁴⁰ That there is a differentiation between the two types of offering is important: in practical terms, the priest would probably consume both ‘his’ and ‘the god’s’ portion, but there remained a technical distinction.⁸⁴¹ Gill argues that this distinction is meaningless unless ‘the portions were originally intended for the god in some real sense’,⁸⁴² which again begs the question of practicality and consumption. This applies equally to those offerings made privately on the *trapeza* of deities, which could be left by individuals visiting a temple, rather than by a priest as part of large-scale ritual.⁸⁴³

Although evidence for the uses of sacrificial tables is relatively limited, one common feature of any description of their function is the cult image.⁸⁴⁴ Where archaeological evidence for the tables exists, they are always found directly in front of the cult image, and where their location is mentioned in the sources, this proximity is also vital.⁸⁴⁵ Visual representations also suggest this proximity, although the usual caveats regarding depictions of cult statues and their locations also apply in these instances.⁸⁴⁶ An exception may be a sarcophagus of Hadrianic date, now in Rome, depicting a statue of Dionysus with a table in front of it that is covered in offerings, which is quite distinct from another relief on the same sarcophagus

⁸³⁹ For a full discussion of this, and indeed for much of the evidence on *trapezomata* that follows, see Gill (1974).

⁸⁴⁰ Jul. *Or.* 5.176d. Sacred laws and inscriptions make it clear that these were a common feature of animal sacrifice, cf. Gill (1974) 125ff.

⁸⁴¹ Cf. Gill (1974) 127ff. Epigraphic evidence can sometimes be explicit in describing who actually received the portion dedicated to gods on the *trapeza*. The offerings did not always need to be consumed at all: see discussion of Paus. 9.19.5 below, n.845.

⁸⁴² Ibid. 130.

⁸⁴³ Ibid. 119 and Serv. on *Aen.* 8.279 for private libations on these tables.

⁸⁴⁴ There are inscriptions referring to the construction and dedication of sacrificial tables that do not explicitly mention the image, but this is unsurprising given the nature of the evidence, and many such inscriptions *do* refer to the cult image’s proximity. Cf. Gill (1974) 119.

⁸⁴⁵ Although *trapeza* could also be in this position of proximity at the same time as being separated from the image by the barriers that existed in some temples, as is the case in a number of Greek temples. This issue is discussed further below in this section. Literary references to *trapeza* in front of images: Paus. 9.40.11-12 (Boeotia); Schol. Luc. *Dial. Meretr.* 7.4 (Haloa at Athens); Paus. 9.19.5 (Demeter at Mykallesos). *SEG*³ 996 describes an elaborate table before the statue of Helios Apollo Cissaloddonos, Smyrna, 1st C CE. *IG*, II² 1935 refers to tables, and also possibly couches, for Plouton at the Eleusinion in Athens, 1st C CE. For less detailed references see also Dion. Hal. 2.23.5; Ov. *Fast.* 4.367-72; Varro, *Ant.* 101 (15).

⁸⁴⁶ See Introduction.i.a and section 2 of this chapter.

depicting the young Dionysus (not the statue of him) with a table laden with fruits.⁸⁴⁷ Although this, as a sarcophagus, is unlikely to refer to any specific cult act, it assumes a familiarity with the presence of image and cult table that can be expected from other archaeological and literary sources.

It is this proximity of table and image that associates the offerings placed upon them with those that are described as being placed in the hands or laps of the gods. In terms of public cult, references to this type of offering are even more infrequent, and where they do exist are sometimes ambiguous.⁸⁴⁸ The most obvious references occur in the Greek world, although one marble relief from the end of the first century CE, found in Sorrento, appears to depict offerings in the hands and at the feet of a statue of Diana.⁸⁴⁹ The most common occurrences of this type of offering are in rural and domestic cult, discussed more fully below.⁸⁵⁰ However, its frequency in this type of cult has implications for our understanding of the role of *trapezomata* and offerings placed directly onto the images in public cult, for they again imply the increased involvement of the individual, and perhaps a more direct correlation between the interactions of devotee and image and those of devotee and deity.

There are other scattered references to sacrificial rituals that closely involve the cult image, but they do not fall easily into the categories of rural or domestic cult. Amongst these are mystery religions, which placed a specific emphasis upon the revelation of the image.⁸⁵¹ Pausanias refers to several instances of images being sacrificed to as part of mystery religions, as well as one instance in which only certain female worshippers perform secret sacrificial rites in front of an image of Dionysus, whilst there is another image of the god that devotees in general are permitted to view.⁸⁵² Further examples are found with reference to images that were worshipped, but stood outside of temples, such as that of Hercules at

⁸⁴⁷ Sarcophagus, Rome, Mus.Naz.Rom. 106429. Cf. *ThesCRA* no. 269. See also *LIMC* VII, Salus no. 65.

⁸⁴⁸ As in the case of inscriptions from Chios of varying date, which *may* refer to meat placed in the hands of the images: *LSS* 129, 4-6; 77, 6-7. Cf. *LSS* 76, 4; 78, 6; *LS* 119, 4; 120, 2; *LSCG* no. 120, 1-3. *Ov. Fast.* 4.367-72 describes offerings of herbs onto a table, but does not say where the image is in relation to it.

⁸⁴⁹ Marble relief, Piano di Sorrento, Mus.Arch.Territoriale della Penisola Sorrentina, end of first century CE = *LIMC* III Artemis/Diana no. 277. Greece: Ar., *Eccles.* 778-83 refers to meat left in the hands of the gods, and a vase painting (*LIMC* II Aphrodite no. 44) depicts meat placed in a phiale in the hands of an image of Aphrodite.

⁸⁵⁰ Section 4. See also Gill (1974) 118, referring to an old tradition of placing food offerings on Hermai stones 'where the gods were meant to reside'.

⁸⁵¹ For the role of the image within mystery religions see e.g. Platt (2002).

⁸⁵² For the temple of Dionysus with two images: Paus.3.20.3-4. Other mysteries with image rites: Paus. 1.37.4; 1.38.7; 2.30.4; 10.32.18.

Carthage and a statue in the agora at Megalopolis.⁸⁵³ Such individual references do not form a very complete picture of the way in which sacrifices could be performed explicitly to an image, aside from making it clear that the image *could* be the principal focus of the ritual. In addition, images that were the *object* of cult (such as miraculous images) and images within the Imperial cult are referred to as explicitly receiving sacrifice, although these types of image require slightly separate analysis to images of public cult.⁸⁵⁴

It should be apparent that even for those aspects of involving the image in sacrifice for which we do have some evidence, such as the use of *trapezomata*, the manner in which they were used is not at all obvious. It is clear that they could form a part of large-scale public sacrifice, as distinct from the parts of the offerings that were burnt upon the altar, and also that they could receive the offerings of individuals at times other than during public ritual. It is difficult to say how widespread even the use of sacrificial tables as part of public ritual was, as although their presence in temples appears to be common the precise uses of them in each cult are not known. Even more problematic are the questions posed previously, regarding the involvement of the image in sacrifice in general, and whether these different types of offering indicate a different role for the image.⁸⁵⁵

However, it seems clear that interaction with an image could form a specific part of both large scale public ritual and individual involvement in public cult. The location of cult tables in front of cult statues, and the possibility of sacrificing directly to an image, even placing offerings upon the image itself, suggest that the image is not an accidental part of these interactions. This is further inferred from the contrast to the obvious invisibility of the image in other aspects of the sacrificial ritual.⁸⁵⁶ One of the most important aspects of the majority of these types of offerings is that they are either performed by specially qualified individuals or they are somehow completed in the absence of the devotee. That is to say, offerings placed

⁸⁵³ Hercules at Carthage: Pliny, *NH* 36.39, who explains that the statue now stands in a portico in Rome. The reference is dubious in the sense that it suggests the Carthaginians performed human sacrifice as part of its worship, although its implication that images themselves were sacrificed to is supported elsewhere. An image of Hercules that is sacrificed to by the *Sphaereis* (those who are passing from youth to manhood): Paus. 3.14.6. The statue in the agora at Megalopolis: Paus. 8.30.3-4; 8.41.7, for coins of the Roman period see Imhoof-Bloomer & Gardner (1964) 104-5. Statues with altars were offered sacrifice in the theatres of Rome and the provinces: Suet. *Claud.* 21.2, cf. Pollini (1996) esp. 172.

⁸⁵⁴ Below, section 7.

⁸⁵⁵ See above, section 1.

⁸⁵⁶ See above, section two of this chapter.

on *trapeza* or an images were not consumed in front of a devotee, but left within the temple just as many other, non-comestible offerings would have been.

This is particularly important for the consideration of the technology of sacrifice: as well as the theoretical and theological reasons that might be hypothesised as explaining the absence of direct interaction with an image in sacrificial rituals, there might be a rather simple cognitive one. As with many of the interactions that took place between image, god and devotee within the religions of the Roman world, the involvement of an image in sacrifice is ontologically counter-intuitive: statues cannot eat, they clearly cannot logically benefit from the food that is given to them.⁸⁵⁷ Although many religious phenomena are counter-intuitive in this sense, and although many such phenomena are all the more important for this quality, I would suggest that this is an area of ancient worship that challenged logic and knowledge too much, perhaps in the same way that it was rare to use human technologies to make images appear to move of their own accord.⁸⁵⁸ Offerings may have been left in front of an image to avoid the need to ask or answer the question of how it might benefit. It might equally be to ensure that the sacrifice (or evidence of the sacrifice) was positioned in such a way as to draw the attention of the deity, by locating it near an image where the god itself might occasionally reside. Additional evidence for the way in which cult statues were interacted with during sacrifice strongly suggest an experience that carefully negotiated the role of the image, requiring at times its absence and at times its presence, and that the combination of these practices allowed for an involvement of the cult statue that simply did not beg too many questions.

⁸⁵⁷ For the ontologically counter-intuitive nature of interactions with cult images generally see the Introduction and Ch. 1.4, especially the discussion of Boyer (1996).

⁸⁵⁸ For discussion see Ch. 3.5.

6.5 Home and country: domestic and rural cult

Within private, domestic and rural cults, the image of the deity often appears to play a more direct role than in the large-scale public sacrifices discussed above. In many respects aspects of large-scale ritual are mirrored, for example in the use of sacrificial tables, but this tends to occur in the absence of the accompanying blood sacrifice at a separate altar. There are practical reasons for this, of course; domestic residence had less physical space available to devote to religious activities, and yet the presence of the images is not an arbitrary one. Domestic shrines need not automatically provide space for an image, and yet they often are described as so doing, and the cultivation of that image is an important part of private cults in the Roman world. In the same way, rural cults, whether they centred around iconic or aniconic cult images, appear to have involved sacrifice that was directly aimed at the image, and through which direct interaction took place.

The nature of these offerings often appears to be different than those of large scale public cult, and there are several reasons for this. Firstly, they are not necessarily performed by a qualified individual or priest; secondly, they rarely centre upon blood sacrifice, instead comprising mainly fruits, vegetables, grain, cakes, and liquid offerings;⁸⁵⁹ thirdly, there are fewer complexities surrounding them (such as the precise division of sections of each offering between devotees and deities).⁸⁶⁰ The implications of these differences for the role of the image are in some respects fairly simple: it is easy to imagine that the experience of individual dedications to a household god might be a more personal and direct experience than during a public ritual, and consequently the interaction with the image is likely to have been more focussed and more individualised. Importantly, the aspects of public ritual that are most closely mirrored in domestic cult are those that involve direct interaction with an image, and those of rural cult appear to be similar.⁸⁶¹ Again, the evidence is fairly limited, especially as far as literary sources are concerned, and it refers to a very restricted range of cults, principally those of the Lares and Priapus. For this reason I do not wish to dwell for long upon these instances, save to demonstrate the ways in which direct interaction could take

⁸⁵⁹ For the types of offerings made to household gods see Calp. *Ecl.* 2.65, which specifies that *primitias* are offered to the Lares, and that cakes are given to Priapus. Incense and cakes are also known to be offered to the Lares, cf. Pliny, *NH* 12.83; 18.84.

⁸⁶⁰ This is not to say that there were no regulations for them; any sacrifice had to be performed absolutely correctly to be effective.

⁸⁶¹ This is also generally the case for images in the magical papyri, which are prayed to with an accompanying (normally non-blood) sacrifice. Cf. Graf (1991) 191-5. See Ch. 2; 3.

place in personal sacrifices, and the technique of apparently leaving offerings with an image, rather than consuming alongside them, which more closely resembles processes for leaving non-comestible offerings.

In the case of the Lares and other domestic cults, we have few explanations of the form sacrifice might take, although those indications that we do have suggest a similarity with the use of *trapeza* in temples and the offerings left upon them. Again, proximity of image to sacrificial offering appears to be important, as is the case for private cults of the Dioskouroi, whose images had a table set before them with a variety of types of offering, and sometimes even a full meal.⁸⁶²

Of the literary references to the manner in which offerings were made to the Lares, two explicitly mention that they are made to their images, whilst another is ambiguous and refers to an incense offering, rather than food.⁸⁶³ A visual representation of these offerings also has them before the images, in a Pompeiian wall painting of the first century CE (fig. 6.2). That the Lares are commonly represented with bowls also seems to suggest offerings being made to them, and it is possible that the small portable images worshipped by some were offered private sacrifices in a similar manner.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶² Paus. 8.31.3-4; Athenaeus, 4.137e. The Dioskouroi were common recipients of *theoxenia*, as discussed below in section five of this chapter, hence the suggestion that they might receive whole meals.

⁸⁶³ Pliny, *NH* 18.84 (cakes placed at the base of the Lares' images); Tib. 1.10.21-4 (offerings made to images of the Lares); Pliny, *NH* 12.83 (incense offered to the Lares). Cf. Clarke (1993) 7-10; Plaut. *Aul.* 385-6; Cato *Agr.* 83; 134.

⁸⁶⁴ E.g. Suet. *Nero* 56. For these types of image see Ch. 3.3.

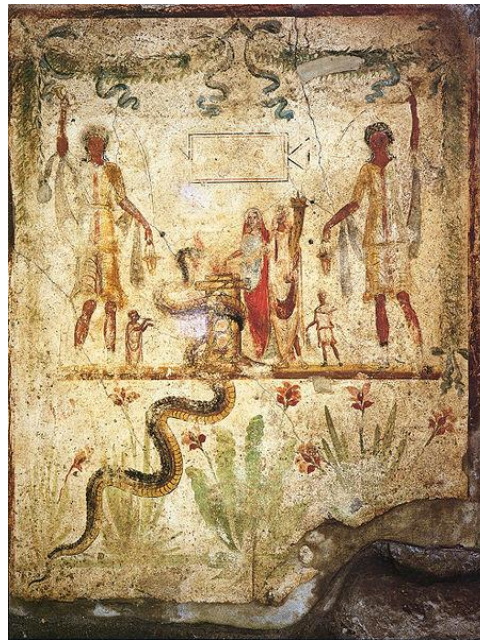


Fig. 6.2: Wall painting from the House of Iulius Polybius at Pompeii, depicting the worship of the Lares, possibly as images.⁸⁶⁵

For the rural cult of Priapus the evidence is slightly more widespread, although literary references are largely confined to the *Carmina Priapea* and other poems of the same genre.⁸⁶⁶ In general these, and the evidence of a variety of forms of visual material, form an unusually homogenous picture: comestible (but not blood) offerings are made by being brought to an image of Priapus and placed at its feet.⁸⁶⁷ Some of the depictions clearly represent mythical scenes, involving a Silenus or Maenad, whilst others appear to portray regular scenes of rural worship, yet there appears to be no difference between the two in terms of the form that the worship might take.⁸⁶⁸ The worship of images of Priapus has been subject to a limited amount of scholarly interest, and there are distinct problems with the fact that the poetic descriptions are clearly fictional, and that images of its practice are sometimes given a mythological

⁸⁶⁵ Pompeii I 13, 2 [17] = *LIMC* VIII Suppl. Genius, no. 5. For the context of the painting see Luongo et al (2003).

⁸⁶⁶ E.g. Hor. *Sat.* 1.8. A comparison might be drawn with Prop. *Eleg.* 4.2.41f: “hortorum in minibus dona probate meis”, cf. l. 17, 43-5 of the same poem.

⁸⁶⁷ Interestingly, the picture is not really complicated by broadening parameters of time or place: the earlier Greek evidence seems to be incredibly similar. Visual representations from the Roman period include: *LIMC* VIII Suppl. Priapos, no. 44 (Hadrianic sarcophagus, Naples, Mus.Naz. 27710. A woman bringing non-blood offerings to an image of Priapos); no. 89 (Marble relief from Aquileia, end of the first/beginning of the second century CE, depicting offerings at the feet of an image of Priapos); no. 124 (Marble relief from Tarquinia, Mus.Naz., early empire, showing fruits in front of a statue of Priapus, as well as a Silenus approaching the image with a plate of offerings); *ThesCRA* no. 263 (Votive relief, Rome, Mus.Naz.Rom. 1037, depicting a woman approaching a garlanded herm with a plate of offerings, including a cake in the form of a phallus); no. 268 (Wall painting, Pompei i VII 4, 63, tablinium, 54-79 CE, depicting a maenad bringing a plate to a herm of Priapos). Cf. Tib. 1.1.13-14; Calp. *Ecl.* 2.65.

⁸⁶⁸ See above, n.860 and n.864 for details.

setting.⁸⁶⁹ However, from what we know of rural cult, and the way in which even aniconic stones outside of towns and cities could receive offerings of varying kinds, these food offerings placed in close proximity to an image may be considered reasonably realistic.⁸⁷⁰

Again, the worship of Priapic images finds parallels in public cult, especially those dedicated to images that were not located within a temple:⁸⁷¹ the sacrifices are made in the open, and left in the presence of the cult statue. Once again, the practical purpose of these offerings is ambiguous at best, and it is no more possible to explain the manner in which the offerings were intended to benefit the deity or the image than in any of the instances previously discussed. What is clear, however, is that the image is an important focus for sacrificial activities that were undertaken on a more individual level, whether they be as part of domestic or of rural cults. Again, the offerings are left alone with the image, and the question of consumption and technology need not be asked. The image serves as a focal point for the devotee and for the deity, and its presence is required for the communication implicit in sacrificial ritual to take place, but its specific function remains unclear.

6.5 Eating out: theoxenia, lectisternia and sellisternia

In both domestic and public cult sacrifice could be performed in an additional manner that was more complex in practice and in theory: theoxenia, lectisternia and sellisternia were all forms of ‘inviting the gods’ to dine alongside mortal devotees, by reserving them a place at the table where the sacrificial meat was consumed.⁸⁷² In some respects this was similar to the use of *trapeza* in temples, for the gods and each worshipper received allocated portions of a meal that was partially offered to the gods and partially consumed as part of a large ritual gathering. The principle difference is of course that in these cases the table itself was shared between the mortals and the divine. A certain amount of scholarship has been dedicated to the study of these forms of sacrifice, although its scope is very limited, and it is often based upon an importantly flawed set of suppositions.

⁸⁶⁹ For discussion of this problem, see Stewart (1997)

⁸⁷⁰ See above, section three of this chapter, and the Introduction.i.a.

⁸⁷¹ See above, section three of this chapter, with reference to, for example, *LIMC* III Artemis/Diana no. 277 and also Dion. Hal. 2.23.5, describing the carrying of offerings on plates to cult images.

⁸⁷² For a good discussion of the concept of inviting the gods see Veyne (2000).

Most modern descriptions of this form of ritual explain that as part of the sacrificial banquets, couches or chairs were prepared for the gods, and that images or symbols of the gods would occupy these during the feast.⁸⁷³ However, there is no explicit evidence for actual images (let alone anything that could clearly be identified as a cult statue) ever being placed on these couches, and this poses a huge theoretical problem for the purposes of this study. Whilst there are clear references to couches and chairs being adorned with symbols of the gods, or being left empty or *possibly* being occupied by busts of deities, there is really nothing to suggest that cult images ever took on this role.⁸⁷⁴ Naturally, whether or not the images were present has a very important effect upon the ideas of absence and presence, and visibility and invisibility that are central to this discussion. Evidence for this type of sacrificial ritual is unusually frequent in literary sources, as well as occurring in a few visual representations.⁸⁷⁵ There were different types of theoxenia, lectisternia and sellisternia, and although they have received attention elsewhere, no study focuses upon the role of the image in these rituals, and all have therefore omitted to fully discuss what appears initially to be their most striking feature.

In addition it must be noted that lectisternia and theoxenia are not technically direct translations, although they can be used in this manner by some of the ancient sources.⁸⁷⁶ Whilst theoxenia could describe a number of different large scale rituals in the Greek world, Roman lectisternia were mainly a specific city-wide celebration, dedicated to a collection of Olympian deities, that took place in individual homes as well as part of a large-scale public ritual.⁸⁷⁷ They were not frequent or regular, but were executed either in response to particular civic need or according the instructions of the Sybilline oracle.⁸⁷⁸ Although this type of

⁸⁷³ Cf. Jacobson (2001) 100: 'at a ceremonial meal the celebrants dined with statues or appropriate symbols...These represented the participation of the deities.'; Taylor (1935) 123-5: images or emblems of the gods; Leigh (2002) 626: 'couches are spread and their statues are set up in such a way as to seem to participate in the festivities.'

⁸⁷⁴ See above, n.870. As is assumed in general works on Roman religions. Only Veyne (2000) and Blanc in *ThesCRA* sv 'Lectisternes et banquets' appear to acknowledge that the couches were empty, and the former notes the importance of the absence of visible presence.

⁸⁷⁵ Although there remain important gaps in the evidence, and we lack any full description of the processes of lectisternia or theoxenia.

⁸⁷⁶ Cf. Kearns (1996) in *OCD* 1506-07 sv 'Theoxenia'. For the possible 'origins' of lectisternia, see Scheid (1995).

⁸⁷⁷ The deities were initially Apollo, Latona, Hercules, Mercury, and Neptune according to Livy, 5.13.5-7. Later lectisternia may have included a greater range of Italian gods, such as that of 217 BCE which included couches for Jupiter, Juno, Neptune, Minerva, Mars, Venus, Apollo, Diana, Vulcan, Vesta, Mercury and Ceres, according to Livy, 22.10.9 (cf. Boyce (1938) 180).

⁸⁷⁸ The first lectisternium in Rome is said to have formed part of expiatory rituals performed after the Gallic invasion, cf. Livy 5.13.5-7; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 12.9. Later performances of the ritual were motivated by a consultation of the Sybil in times of great need: Livy, 7.2 (364 BCE: performed to appease the anger of the

practice may have been Greek-influenced, it was also an ancient one, the first recorded instance being celebrated in 399 BCE.⁸⁷⁹ Other celebrations are occasionally referred to as lectisternia in our sources, but in general these are problematic for one reason or another.⁸⁸⁰ It is possible that some temples held their own versions of lectisternia, in the sense of inviting the gods to join the table, but it is important to be aware of the differentiation between these and the principal lectisternia referred to in the sources.⁸⁸¹

These particular lectisternia are primarily related to us by Livy, who is far more concerned with the reasons for performing the rites than explaining the manner in which they were carried out.⁸⁸² He does, however, relate a few of the details, which include the elaborate adornment of the couches and the general splendour of the feasting, which is a feature of other descriptions of the ceremony.⁸⁸³ It is in Livy that we find the one and only reference that even begins to indicate the actual presence of the gods' images upon these couches, when he explains that, during a time of incredibly bad portents for Rome, the ground shook during the lectisternium, causing a plate to fall to the ground, and the gods on the couches turned their heads away.⁸⁸⁴ Here 'capita' is ambiguous, and it is certainly not clear that the heads belong to images, rather than to the gods themselves, or even being heads alone (that is, busts). Other than this, there is no reference to the images of the gods with regards to this specific type of lectisternia festival. However, we do have some material from comparable celebrations that more clearly indicate how these couches and chairs might have been adorned.

The literary sources for these festivals are not ethnographic, and therefore do not explain all of the different features in as much detail as we might like. The most significant clues are evident from visual representations, in which chairs or couches are combined with a

gods); 7.27.1 (347/6 BCE: to end a plague); 21.62 (218 BCE: performed at Caere because of bad portents); 22.1 (217 BCE: expiation for bad portents, cf. 22.9.10) etc.

⁸⁷⁹ Livy, 5.13.5-7. A Greek influence is argued by Boyce (1938) 174f; 180; and Jacobson (2001) 100. Blanc (2004) in *ThesCRA* sv 'Lectisternes et banquetes' 448-50 argues that Greek influence is not necessary, cf. *Ov. Met.* 10.431-3, which relates to a lectisternium for Ceres.

⁸⁸⁰ E.g. *Macr. Sat.* 1.16.4, which does not really differentiate between lectisternia and standard sacrificial banquets.

⁸⁸¹ For the concept of 'inuitare deum' see Veyne (2000).

⁸⁸² For Livy's interest in expiatory rites and the manner in which bad portents were dealt with at Rome, see Davies (2004) 23; 27f, cf. 9-11.

⁸⁸³ Livy 5.13.6: "spreading couches for them with all the splendour then available" ("quam amplissume tum apparari poterant, stratis lectis placavere"). Tr. Cary (1936). Cf. *Dion. Hal., Ant. Rom.* 12.9.

⁸⁸⁴ Livy 40.59.7-8: 'terra movit; in fanis publicis, ubi lectisternium erat, deorum capita quae in lectis errant averterunt se, lanxque cum integumentis quae Iovi apposite fuit, decidit de mensa.'

suggestion of the presence of the divine and are accompanied by a meal or offerings. One example is a frieze from an early Imperial building at Ravenna, which depicts what should properly be referred to as a sellisternium (as it depicts chairs rather than couches). The frieze shows several chairs, flanked by cupids, holding emblems of various gods, a scheme of representation that can be found in other sculptural decorations.⁸⁸⁵ Similar constructions, of a chair supporting a symbol of the divine can also be found in numismatic evidence, particularly in two series of coins issued by Titus and Domitian which depict chairs holding symbols and portable emblems of deities.⁸⁸⁶ Emblems might, for example, include a thunderbolt for Jupiter, a helmet for Minerva, or the (probably deliberately) ambiguous wreath of Jupiter or the emperors.⁸⁸⁷

The only clear discussion of the positioning of symbols upon chairs during sacrifice is in reference to the Imperial cult, or in less explicitly cultic honours offered to the emperors.⁸⁸⁸ These instances do not always refer to sacrificial banquets, but can also represent the processions of chairs holding symbols into the theatre, which are directly compared to the chairs of the gods.⁸⁸⁹ It is difficult to ascertain, therefore, precisely what the depictions of chairs and couches holding symbols indicate at all times, although they are commonly held to signify sellisternia or lectisternia. If this is the case, as it certainly is for the sculptural decorations noted above, it seems much more likely that the couches and chairs were devoid of any statuary, but rather held symbols of the gods' presence, if they held anything at all.

Other visual representations, which generally refer to the theoxenia of the Dioskouroi, generally show vacant couches, possibly being approached by the gods themselves, but never

⁸⁸⁵ Marble frieze from an unknown monument, Paris, Louvre MA1662 (= *LIMC* III Eros, Amor/Cupido no. 686c = *ThesCRA* no. 291). Similar representations of chairs with symbols or attributes of the gods, flanked by cupids can be found at *LIMC* III Eros, Amor/Cupido no.'s 686a-b, d-h and 683-5.

⁸⁸⁶ For example, an aureus of Titus, 79 CE, *BMC Emp* II 233 no. 64, pl. 45, 16, depicting a curule chair and the pulvinar of Mars and Venus. Also *BMC Emp*. II pl. 46, 59. Cf. *BNP RR* 100-101, fig. 2.5, 51 BCE; *LIMC* III 1, Dioskouroi no. 119, a coin of the 3rd century CE; and a coin of Herod c. 37 BCE discussed in Jacobson (2001). For further discussion of numismatic evidence and its depiction of the sellisternia and lectisternia see Taylor (1935).

⁸⁸⁷ For these and the series of Titus and Domitian see discussion in Taylor (1935). These coins are commonly seen to have been produced in commemoration of a sellisternium or lectisternium. For the ambiguity of chairs and imperial symbols, see Weinstock (1957).

⁸⁸⁸ And at times their families.

⁸⁸⁹ E.g. Dio 44.6.3: Caesar is voted a chair with a crown on it to be carried in the procession to the theatre, like those of the gods (for the processions see Tert. *De Spect.* 10); 58.4.4: gilded chairs of Sejanus and Tiberius; 73.17.4: Commodus receives a chair with a lionskin and a club on it to be placed in the arena, like those of the gods. Similar honours may have been given posthumously to Germanicus: Tac. *Ann.* 2.83; *CIL* VI 31199, fr. C; *CIL* VI 31200. For further discussion of the role of images in sacrifice in the Imperial cult see below, section six of this chapter.

supporting cult images.⁸⁹⁰ Some images from the Greek East appear to depict gods seated at couches during festivals, but there is nothing to indicate that these are cult images, rather than the divinities themselves.⁸⁹¹ All of the remaining literary and epigraphic evidence is similarly ambiguous, informing us that the gods are somehow present at the sacred meal, but not mentioning the role of the images.⁸⁹²

Given the evidence, the assumption of scholars that cult images (or indeed any anthropomorphic images at all) could be placed upon the couches during this type of festival seems to me to be wholly unfounded. Although there may have been physical indications of a divine presence, through symbols, emblems, or perhaps busts, there does not seem to be any evidence for the type of interaction with cult images that would be implied were the statues themselves present at the festivals.⁸⁹³ This might seem surprising, given the ease with which many modern works assume the role of images as part of the practice, yet the role of images in sacrificial rituals in general might seem surprising. In practical terms their absence seems far more common in large-scale public ritual than does their presence, and we should not expect lectisternia to be any different. As I have suggested, the cognitive leap required to involve statuary in any real consumption of sacrificial offerings is quite a dramatic one. More importantly, it is so dramatic as to pose a very real challenge to some of the conceptions of the cult image apparent through other ritual activities, which closely elide deity and statue.

I would argue, therefore, that lectisternia were specifically performed without the cult images, just as large-scale public sacrifices were. Their absence was of vital importance in the conception of the ritual, for the actual presence of the gods was to be felt under these circumstances, rather than seen. This is certainly supported by the fact that both theoxenia

⁸⁹⁰ E.g. *LIMC* III 1 Dioskouroi, no.'s 110-19; particularly clear is no. 118, a marble votive relief from the first century BCE in which the Dioskouroi approach a laden table on horseback.

⁸⁹¹ E.g. *LIMC* III 1 Dioskouroi, no. 119, see n.883 above.

⁸⁹² Arnob. 7.32 (the presence of gods at the lectisternia); Diod. 8.32 (Lokrians spread couches for Castor and Pollux in their vessel to sail from Sparta to Sicily); Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.70-1 (a banquet/lectisternia for Jupiter, cf. Cic. *Leg.* 3.7); Fest. 473, 4L (attributes or wreaths at feasts); *ILS* II.1.5050 (= *CIL* VI 4/2, 32323, 1.90-168. Sellisternia of Juno and Diana, with couches outside of the temple); Livy 7.2; 7.27.1; 8.25.1; 21.62; 22.1; 29.14-15; 42.30.8 (various Roman lectisternia, without mention of images); Macr. *Sat.* 1.16.4; 3.11.6 (lectisternia held in the pulvinar); Ov. *Met.* 10.431-3 (lectisternia for Ceres); Serv. *Aen.* 8.176 (lectisternia in the temple for rites of Ara Massima); Tac. *Ann.* 15.44.2 (sellisternia); Val. Max. 2.1.2 (banquet for Jupiter and Minerva). Cf. Reinach (1906) 138-41 in which there appear to be ritual banqueting areas and perhaps a special image (*aphidryma*) in the hall, but not the cult statue and it does not join them at the table. See also L.R. (1954) 232-4, no.148; *Prelim. Rep.* V (1934) 112; *I. Magnesia* 215, l. 5-7.

⁸⁹³ I am unconvinced that even busts were present. One coin (*BNP RR* 100-101, fig. 2.5) might suggest a bust placed upon a chair, but this stands alone and might quite easily be a reference to the cult of the dead, in which this might have been practiced. Cf. *ThesCRA* sv 'Lectisternes' no. 290 with discussion.

and lectisternia, when performed at city-wide celebrations, were also carried out in domestic situations; individuals held their own domestic meal, and invited the gods to their particular table.⁸⁹⁴ It is implausible to posit circumstances under which every household could provide images of these gods for the celebrations. The absence of the images allowed for the perception of the unseen involvement of the divine, just as the distance of the image from the ritual permitted this in other sacrificial rites, and the depositing of comestible offerings to be left with an image once the devotee had departed. Sacrifice in general appears to have been a ritual in which the image was not interacted with in anywhere near as close a manner as other rituals within the religions of the Roman world.

6.7 Blurred images: imperial cult, miracle statues and consecration

There are, however, certain forms of ancient sacrifice that were more closely related to the image, and generally demanded its conscious presence. These rituals fall outside of the classifications of standard (public or private) cult noted above; although they do take on many similar aspects in practical terms their differences are of fundamental importance. Imperial cult, in which sacrificial ritual highlights the difference between the worshipped and the worshipper as much as in the worship of other deities, was more than usually reliant upon cult images for these rituals. Other cults relied upon an intimate connection between the image and the sacrifice because of their nature, because they were set up as devotion to a statue specifically, for example when it was known to perform miracles such as healing. And, finally, in one important set of circumstances, all images were linked crucially to the sacrificial act, owing to the fact that they were almost always consecrated and established alongside a sacrificial offering, and were often set up over a specifically created sacrificial pit.

Although in general the rituals of Imperial cult appear to reflect cult practices in any given area of the empire, sacrifice does appear to be a slightly different matter as far as the role of images is concerned. In his discussion of sacrificial rituals in the Imperial cult, Price demonstrates that much of the vocabulary surrounding it is particularly vague, but often indicates that sacrifices are performed on behalf of the emperor, rather than to him.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹⁴ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 12.9; Livy, 5.13.5-7 make this city-wide involvement clear, and the theoxenia of the Dioskouroi were also known to have involved this element, cf. Veyne (2000).

⁸⁹⁵ Price (1980) 31-3, although there are some references to direct sacrifice to emperors discussed at 34f.

However, we do find instances of sacrifices being made explicitly to Imperial images in the visual, epigraphic, and literary evidence.⁸⁹⁶ Again, the evidence is very restricted, and does not often describe the processes of the sacrifice, or the role of the images of the emperor within the ritual. It is possible that, as Price argues, the Imperial image takes on some importance independent of the emperor himself within his cult.⁸⁹⁷ Other features of sacrifice within the Imperial cult are also different, especially the type of image used, for both paintings and busts appear to have received sacrifices, as well as full scale statuary, which is not commonly found in other cults.⁸⁹⁸ In addition, the offerings made to Imperial images appear to have often been of wine or incense, rather than food, and blood offerings are particularly rare.⁸⁹⁹

Given the scarcity of the evidence for direct sacrifice to emperors in any case, it is unsurprising that we find very little discussion of the role of the image in these rituals. However, Pliny's famous letter to Trajan expresses this form of sacrifice (of incense in this instance) as an act or demonstration of loyalty, and this may also be the case for the frequent sacrifices made to Imperial images amongst the legions.⁹⁰⁰ That the types of images, as well as the types of offerings, were often different from those used in other public sacrificial rituals also suggests that interactions with the Imperial image in sacrifices were different from those of standard cults. What exactly this interaction was remains unclear: there is simply not enough evidence to assess it in any detail.

Just as different from the more usual sacrificial rituals are the very few examples associated with miraculous images. Only two detailed examples are known, both from Imperial Greece. The first, and most famous, is the worship of the image of Theagenes, which was said to have had healing powers and to have survived an attempt to destroy it.⁹⁰¹ The image received

⁸⁹⁶ For example, Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.5-6: sacrifices offered to the images of the emperors; *SEG* XI 923 (sacrifice of wine and incense at painted images of Augustus, Livia, and Tiberius, cf. Price (1980) 30); a number of coins depicting sacrifice performed in front of Imperial images are discussed in Price (1984) 188f. Sacrifice to imperial images might have been particularly common in the army, cf. Herz (2002) for the specific importance of the Imperial cult and loyalty in the legions.

⁸⁹⁷ Price (1980) 37.

⁸⁹⁸ Cf. MacCormack (1981) 67; Kitzinger (1954) 83-149; Kruse (1934) 12-18; Browning (1952) 13-20.

⁸⁹⁹ Examples of blood offerings appear to be restricted to representations on Pergamene coins (cf. Price (1984) 188f with pl. 3a, which hardly give us enough information to form any sort of real understanding.

⁹⁰⁰ Pliny *Epist.* 10. It is also, of course, possibly a statement about the divinity of the emperor. See Introduction.iii and above, section 1, for the legions.

⁹⁰¹ The image of Theagenes was whipped by an unnamed individual, and it fell upon the man, killing him. As a consequence the statue was tried for murder and thrown into the sea as a punishment. After this, harvests failed and other bad portents were experienced, until the statue was miraculously recovered by fishermen and the

sacrifices as to a god, although obviously it was the image itself that held the powers, and so it was the image that was worshipped directly, rather than as a representation of a deity or any of the possible variations of that perception. The second example is of two statues in the council chamber at Stratonicea, representing Zeus and Hecate, both of which performed miracles, and were consequently worshipped with sacrifices, prayer, and thanks.⁹⁰² In both examples it is the special powers of the images in question that are being worshipped, and the sacrifices do not necessarily follow the standard procedure of being at a distance from a cult statue within a temple. These circumstances can be compared more readily to those other images that were said to take part in particularly unusual activities such as speaking or moving, and the image is itself the proof of the divine. Consequently, the theoretical implications of these interactions bear much more resemblance to cases of miraculous statues than sacrifice and statues. In addition, we are told nothing of the form the sacrifice takes, what is offered, where it takes place, and so on. The images of Thaegenes, Zeus and Hecate, therefore, go further towards our understanding of the potential that images had for taking on unusual roles and powers, but do not particularly benefit our understanding of the role of images within sacrificial rituals.

One final type of relationship between sacrifice and statue must be acknowledged before conclusions on images and sacrifice can be reached: the role of sacrifice in the erection of cult statues. Although we have hardly any evidence at all for the consecration of cult images in any precise sense, it seems likely that the images, like temples and altars, were set up in a ritual that involved sacrifice. Temples (and indeed many other buildings) are known to have been set up with sacrificial pits in their very foundations, as part of rituals enacted to ensure the successful construction and establishment of the building and its cult. It is possible that cult images received the same treatment, and there is some evidence that this was the case for at least a few images.⁹⁰³ However, again, the evidence is scarce, and we can draw no solid conclusions regarding the consecration of images and sacrifices. It is of course important that statues were so closely associated with sacrifice from the moment of their erection, but for many images this will have been the last instance of such proximity to the act of sacrifice itself.

harvests were restored. The image was replaced in its previous position, and sacrifices were offered to it. Other images of Theagenes were later erected, and the images were said to have healing powers. Cf. Paus. 6.11.6-9; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.95-7; Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 5.34.6-9; Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 12. See Ch. 3.5.

⁹⁰² Plut. *Camill.* 6-7; *Coriol.* 38; *Mor.* 397C; Laumonier (1934) 85 with L.R. *Et. Anat.* (1937) 516.

⁹⁰³ Rykwert (1988) 121-7; 169 argues that this might be possible from dispersed evidence, but there is not enough explicit evidence to make this a certainty.

6.8 Conclusions on sacrifice and cult statues

Sacrifice was probably the most common, and even central, act of worship within the religious systems of the Roman world, and as cult images were also so central to those religions, one might expect the relationship between image and sacrifice to be more explicit and direct. Indeed, numerous scholars of both ancient religious systems and ancient images have assumed this to be the case. Whilst these assumptions are understandable, they are not demonstrably linked to the little precise evidence we have that can be used to assess the role of the image within sacrificial ritual, or, therefore, the relationship and interaction between image and devotee or image and god, that can be illuminated through these rituals. On the contrary, the image appears to have been largely invisible during large-scale public sacrifices, and to have been present only under certain circumstances. The invisibility or distance of the cult image does not, of course, equate to its absence, and the fact of its distancing may itself point to the role that the statue had during these rituals and private acts.

It seems that the interaction a devotee might have with a cult image during sacrifice was what might be more accurately referred to as an anti-interaction. Sacrificial ritual relied, at least in part, on the manner in which it differentiated and separated gods from mortals, and one of the means through which this was achieved was through the separation of the worshipper from the image that was so often the focal point of his or her religious activities. Of course, sacrifice might also be said to be as much for the purposes of communication as for social ordering, and aspects of the ritual allowed the image to be involved in this communication, albeit in a carefully controlled manner. The donation of parts of the sacrificial victim onto tables close to the image allowed for the communicative triad that was formed by the image, devotee and god to remain functional, whilst the offerings that were burnt on the altar outside of the temple formed a barrier between the devotee and image that helped to highlight the distance between the two. Under certain circumstances an image might come into closer contact with sacrifice, but this was not the norm for public ritual, rather it had a place in personal and private devotion, through which the devotee could be certain of the attention of the god upon the offerings through their proximity to its cult representation.

The interactions possible with cult statues as a consequence of sacrifice were possibly limited by concerns over the ‘technology’ of sacrifice itself. Although this has not been a common focus for modern scholars, it is a concern expressed through the ancient literature, which at times conveys confusion and criticism regarding the manner in which sacrifices, especially blood sacrifices, were intended to benefit the gods, or even to benefit communication with them. The absence of the image at festivals such as the lectisternia and theoxenia prevented the issue from being complicated even further by the tendency within religions of the Roman world to elide the image and the divinity to some extent. It is probable that the elision of image and god was conceptually at its most complete at times of particularly important festivals, and yet the physical interactions that would have been necessary for the images to have partaken in such rituals would have pushed the intuitive ability to construct this elision (consciously or otherwise) to, if not beyond, its limits. Sacrifice in particular was an aspect of ancient religions that defied explanation, and as such very few explanations were ever demanded or offered outside of the realms of philosophy and myth. As with many ritual acts, sacrifice as experienced by the majority of devotees was vital and unexplained, and it is unlikely that many ever questioned the part that the image had to play in its efficacy. The image was present, through its location in the temple outside which the sacrificial altar stood, and was therefore kept in mind, but not in sight. In the Roman world cult statues were capable of achieving many marvellous things; they could walk, talk, heal and protect. It seems, however, that they were never expected to eat.

Conclusions

It is a genuine challenge to attempt to conjure a picture of all these thousands of statues, innumerable deities, millions of devotees and all of the possible interactions that could link them, but is a challenge worth attempting. Cult statues were indeed everything to everyone, from a listening ear to an inanimate lover, a voice that tells the future to an artefact in need of maintenance, an object of devotion to the subject of violent assault; the list is as long as all the interactions imaginable. From the daily attentions of those who adorned images or touched them in greeting to the extreme interactions that accompanied, or resulted in, death, the cult statue was an ever-present feature of the religions and life of the Roman world.

This variety in types of interaction is aptly mirrored in the diversity of possible beliefs about, and understandings of, cult statues. There are times at which it seems that the statue must be completely elided with the deity, such as when it has the power to speak, prevent its own theft or tell its own story. Other interactions imply restrictions placed upon this elision, as when images fail to defend themselves or are demonstrated to have been manipulated by fraudulent religious officials. Any given devotee could clearly hold beliefs across a whole spectrum of possibilities, and these could vary between any number of images.

Crucially, these images and the interactions that they took part in were considered deeply important in the Roman world. At times their apparently miraculous abilities were discussed with either balance or passionate conviction, at others consultation of oracles was required in order to know precisely what ought to be done with them. The existence of a wide range of officials who had responsibility for tending to, speaking to, adorning, carrying, protecting and understanding cult statues attests to their importance in the religious systems and communications that they both functioned within and facilitated. Man's complex relationship with the divine was negotiated and articulated through their relationships with the gods' representations, and it is no wonder that so many tensions and desires arose around them.

These tensions and desires are evident from the dialogue surrounding such interactions. Cult statues had a position in the socio-cultural nexus of the Roman world, but it remained a deeply unstable one, even to the extent that there can never have been any one explanation of what a statue *was*, let alone what it was *for*. Despite this, it is obvious that these images were

very much desired, even needed, by devotees of the Roman world. Efforts to control them were understandable but deeply dangerous, made clear through tales of those who tried to tie them down or carry them off; there is an impression in the narratives of manipulation and control that whilst man might be able to attempt to influence or coerce the gods through their representations, this was only successful if the gods permitted it.

Ancient discussion of the limits to which interactions with cult statues could reach make these tensions very clear: the most audible voices from antiquity are those that highlight concerns over the limits of cult statues, whether these are of what they ought to look like, how they could behave, where they should be or how they must be treated. These boundaries might have been blurred at best, especially when an image could become (or cease being) a cult statue essentially overnight, but the evidence for attempts to understand them suggests that the role of these images was thought about with considered attention and a concern for the maintenance of successful relationships between men and their gods. Transgressing these boundaries might be considered easy, given that it was never particularly clear where exactly they were, but it was also dangerous, normally resulting in punishment and damage to those relationships.

Cult statues also played their part in discussions of the technology behind religious practices, providing evidence for suggestions that the gods were supposed to listen to prayers, watch processions and communicate with mortals at times of need through the messages their representations could convey. They do not necessarily provide certain answers for how such practices were meant to work, and at times they seem to actively avoid involvement in the debate, keeping a distance from sacrifices and staying still for much of the time.

Theoretical approaches from a number of disciplines can certainly help us to understand these statues and the interactions they were involved in. It is important to know, for example, that we are not dealing with devotees ignorant enough to mistake a statue for a god, but that they can simultaneously believe it to be both a statue *and* a god. Indeed, the assessment of the different types of interactions and the discussions of them in the ancient world make it clear that this is exactly the way in which they functioned. In addition, the obvious tactility of three-dimensional sculpture plays a crucial part, encouraging people to touch the statues and interact with them in a way peculiar to this form of representation.

The cumulative effect, then, of the types of interactions discussed above is to generate a perception of the cult statue as both alive and not, in need of human attention at the same time as separated from the mortal world. Above all, the cult statue of the Roman world was unstable. It was a constantly shifting concept, now taking an active role in where its cult location should be, then becoming an artwork on display in the porticoes of Rome. It could be seen as a god, or as utterly separate from them, and it mattered.

Perhaps the most stable feature of cult statues is what they were not. They were very rarely 'mere' representations, for they attracted far too much attention and required too much constant interaction for that to have been the case for much of the time. They were also never human, for even when they displayed signs of life this was usually through superhuman powers, such as levitation or knowing the future. There was no prescribed way for a cult statue to behave, but perhaps that is because it did not normally behave quite like anything: somewhere between man, god and statue the cult images of the Roman world established their own positions, positions that they probably did not stay in for very long.

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AA	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
ABSA	<i>The Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
AE	<i>Archaiologike Ephemeris</i>
AJA	<i>The American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>Annales (HSS)</i>	<i>Annales: histoire, sciences sociales</i>
Arctos	<i>Arctos. Acta philologica fennica</i>
BASP	<i>Bulletin of the Society of American Papyrologists</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
BE	<i>Bulletin Epigraphique</i>
BGU	<i>Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Museen zu Berlin: Griechische Urkunden</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London</i>
BMC	<i>Coins in the British Museum Catalogue</i>
C&M	<i>Classica et mediaevalia: revue danoise d'histoire et de philologie publiée par la Société danoise pour les études anciennes et médiévales</i>
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
ClAnt	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>
Deubner	Deubner, L. <i>Attische Fest</i> , H. Keller: Berlin (1932)
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
Franke	Franke, P. R. 'Zur Münzprägung von Methymna' in Buchholz, H. G. <i>Methymna: archäologische Beiträge zur Topographie und Geschichte von Nordlesbos</i> , P. Von Zabern: Mainz (1975) 163-76
Franke, Tios	Franke, P. R. 'Zur Chronologie der 'autonomen' Münzen des bithynischen Tios', AA (1966) 58-67
Franke/Nollé	Franke, P. R. & Nollé, M. K. <i>Die Homonoia-Münzen Kleinasiens und der thrakischen Randgebiete I</i> , Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag: Saarbrücken (1997)
Furtwängler, Ant. Gemm.	Furtwängler, A. <i>Die antiken Gemmen: Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum</i> , 3 rd edn., Hakkert: Amsterdam (1965)
HSPh	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philosophy</i>
I Ephesos	<i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
ILAlg	<i>Inscriptions Latines de l'Algérie</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
IscrCos	<i>Iscrizioni di Cos</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JOAI	<i>Jahrshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
KRS	Kirk, G., Raven, J. & Schofield, M., <i>The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts</i> , Cambridge University Press: Cambridge (1983)
LIMC	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i>

<i>L.R. Et. Anat.</i>	Robert, L. <i>Études Anatoliennes, Sur des inscriptions de l'Asie Mineure</i> , Boccard: Paris (1937)
<i>L.R. Hellenica</i>	Robert, L. <i>Hellenica : recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques</i> , 13 vols., Adrien-Maisonneuve: Paris (1940-65)
<i>L.R. IAMM</i>	Robert, L., <i>Documents de l'Asie Mineure Méridionale. Inscriptions, Monnaies et Géographie</i> , Droz: Geneva (1966)
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9 th edn. (2007) [accessed via perseus.tufts.edu]
<i>MAMA</i>	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</i>
<i>MDAI(A)</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (Athen. Abt.)</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
<i>NJbb</i>	<i>Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Litteratur und für Pädagogik</i>
<i>OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i>
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>PCPhS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
<i>PGM</i>	Preisendanz, K. <i>Papyri graecae magicae</i> , 2 vols., 2nd Edn., Saur: Munich (2001)
<i>Phoenix</i>	<i>Phoenix: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada</i>
<i>RE</i>	Pauly, A. F., Kroll, W., Witte, K. & Wissowa, G. <i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: Neue Bearbeitung</i> , Reihe I: 47 vols. in 48. Reihe II: 19 vols., J. B. Metzler: Stuttgart (1894-1972)
<i>RE Suppl.</i>	Pauly, A. F., Kroll, W., Witte, K. & Wissowa, G. <i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft. Supplement</i> . J. B. Metzler: Stuttgart (1903-1978)
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
<i>RIC</i>	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i>
<i>RPC</i>	<i>Roman Provincial Coinage (online)</i>
<i>RSC</i>	<i>Roman Silver Coins</i>
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
<i>Select Papyri</i>	Hunt, A. S. & Edgar, C. C. <i>Select Papyri</i> , 3 vols., (Loeb Classical Library) Heinemann: London (1932-)
<i>SIG</i>	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i>
<i>SIRIS</i>	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae</i>
<i>SNG</i>	<i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The Collection of the American Numismatic Society</i>
<i>Sokolowski LS</i>	Sokolowski, F. <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques, École française d'Athènes, Travaux et memoires</i> , 18, E. de Boccard: Paris (1969)
<i>Sokolowski LSAM</i>	Sokolowski, F. <i>Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure, École française d'Athènes. Travaux et mémoires</i> , 9, E. De Boccard: Paris (1955)
<i>TAPhA</i>	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>ThesCra</i>	<i>Thesaurus cultum et rituum antiquorum</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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