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Research Perspectives in Greek Coroplastic Studies: The Demeter Paradigm and the Goddess Bias¹

Jaimee P. Uhlenbrock

- 1 The iconographic interpretation of Greek figurative terracottas from sacred and secular contexts increasingly has occupied the attention of researchers, often to the exclusion of any other avenues of inquiry. While it is true that terracottas could have much to offer for an understanding of religious practices, one also should recognize their usefulness for exploring other aspects of life in the ancient world, such as the identification of cultural exchange, political dependencies, possible social and economic changes, changing religious attitudes, as well as shifting social patterns and artistic influences. It is important to note that most often it is these explorations rather than those purely iconographic in nature that may reveal with greater clarity the motives hidden behind the presence of certain types of figurines found in specific Greek contexts. For this reason the researcher must be aware not only of the idiosyncratic nature of terracotta production, but also the mechanisms and impulses behind market demand, before attributing to a given figurine a historical or religious significance. It has become obvious that a significant revision in attitudes and approaches to the study of mass-produced terracottas is needed so that the researcher does not concentrate unduly on isolated figurines or figurine attributes without having a good understanding of all the determining factors behind the production of these figurines.
- 2 This lack of understanding historically has resulted in the development of certain research perspectives and biases carried over from the early 19th century that still persist in certain quarters to this day. This is nowhere more evident than in the archaeological literature that has focused on the terracottas of Sicily, particularly for the Archaic period, where terracotta figurines have been used as the primary vehicle for identification of cult. And given the persistence of these 19th century attitudes, the archaic cult places have almost exclusively been assigned to Demeter, or to aspects of the chthonic goddesses Demeter and Persephone.²

- 3 The modern researcher familiar with votive deposits containing terracottas at archaic sanctuaries elsewhere around the Greek world, such as on the Greek mainland, or in the Greek East, would not be surprised to find many similarities between the votive practices of a mainland or East Greek worshipper, who chose to dedicate at a sanctuary a terracotta figurine, a protome, or a plastic vase perhaps filled with perfumed oil, and those worshippers at the sanctuaries of Sicily. This researcher would also discover how the artisans at the Sicilian centers borrowed or reinterpreted motifs furnished by figurative terracottas that came from the Greek East, which also provided important evidence for the nature of international trade in the Archaic period.
- 4 However, the researcher of terracotta figurines coming from fieldwork on the Greek mainland or at East Greek sites to conduct fieldwork in Sicily would be perplexed by the repeated references to sanctuaries of Demeter and/or Persephone in Sicilian archaeological literature of the 20th and early 21st centuries, given the similarities in votive goods that characterized both the archaic Sicilian and the mainland/East Greek sanctuaries. This surely was not the case for archaic terracottas from mainland or East Greek sites, where sanctuaries were identified epigraphically as places sacred to Athena, Aphrodite, Artemis, Apollo, Zeus, or the Nymphs were worshipped,³ not to mention the terracotta protome from Delos inscribed with a dedication to Hera.⁴ So deeply ingrained in the archaeological literature on archaic Sicily was this bias that almost all archaic sanctuaries belonged to some chthonic aspect of Demeter and/or Persephone that it was impossible to see any other aspect of Greek religion in practice. From a certain perspective this is understandable since this chthonic interpretation was based on a statement of Cicero, for example, for which all Sicily belonged to Persephone.⁵ But that notwithstanding, until very recently the notion has persisted that no other divinity but Demeter or Persephone could be the object of an act of veneration in the Archaic period in Sicily that involved a figurative terracotta.⁶

D'Hancarville and the culture of romanticism.

- 5 This notion was born in the early 19th century out of a philological approach to the interpretation of Greek monuments, again an understandable attitude since the first archaeologists were philologists by training.⁷ Among the most influential in this regard were Eduard Gerhard and Theodor Panofka, both co-founders of the Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica in Rome.⁸ They saw in almost all the material they studied a very close association with the procreative forces of life and the mystery religions associated with death and the underworld. This point of view was itself a product of the culture of romanticism that had taken hold in northern Europe in the later 18th century and that matured in the early 19th century. Within this context there were two factors that contributed to what ultimately emerged as the Demeter paradigm. The first was a fixation on death and a morbid fascination with underworld spirits, ruins, caves, and tombs, all represented within gloomy environments and with an apprehensive foreboding.⁹ The second was an obsession with erotic subject matter that had taken hold in Europe with the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum in the middle decades of the 18th century of explicitly sexual representations.¹⁰ Together these provided fertile ground for the evolution of the so-called symbolic school of iconographic study that had been fuelled by the late-18th century publications of Pierre-François Hugues, otherwise known as the Baron d'Hancarville. His *Recherche sur l'origine, l'esprit et les progrès des arts de la Grèce*

, published in London in 1785, had a profound effect on the interpretation of Greek art for several generations. Of singular importance was his predictable hypothesis that Greek religion was intensely erotic in origin and had rituals associated with it that were conducted under the veil of secrecy at night.¹¹ His emphasis on procreative forces and their symbolism even lead him to see in the rather innocent ovoid forms of Greek vases a reflection of the original egg of creation.

- 6 D'Hancarville's insistence on the sexual basis of Greek religion was conflated with the fixation on death and decay to become a critical bias in scholarship that was absorbed into the works of classical scholars of the early 19th century. As has been noted, this re-emerged as an exaggerated emphasis on fertility and underworld cults, and especially on the secretive rites associated with them. The more inexplicable an artefact, the greater was the tendency to assign it to some aspect of a mystery cult, or at the very least an underworld or earth goddess, if not a death goddess.¹² The idea that these figurines could have been adaptable, generic images simply was not compatible with the philological approach of the early 19th century that demanded that all monuments be explained in strict relation to the ancient sources, either Greek or Latin. It also is not unexpected that all texts that were consulted favoured associations with the underworld and cults of fertility, for which Dionysos, Demeter, and, a little less, Persephone were the most important divinities. In the early 19th century there was a compelling drive to find the one key that could open the door to the mystical secrets of ancient religions, the key that above all Friedrich Creuzer sought in his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker besonders der Griechen*, originally published in Leipzig in 1810. This inclination, practically a prejudice, coloured all archaeological work and scholarly attempts at the interpretation of Greek art in the 19th century. Nor was this bias limited to the scholarly world. The tourist's guide for the archaeological material housed in the then Royal Museum of Naples, published in French in 1844, was entitled *Le Mystagogue*.

Paolo Orsi and the Demeter Paradeigm.

- 7 Into this intellectual climate entered Paolo Orsi, a highly regarded archaeologist of the late 19th and early 20th century, in particular for Sicily and south Italy. Although he was one of the first truly scientific archaeologists for Sicily, his archaeological research also was carried out from a philologist's perspective, having studied at the Historisches-Epigraphisches Seminar in Vienna with Otto Benndorf and Eugen Bormann, himself a student of Gerhard. Orsi's meticulous archaeological fieldwork and rapid publication paved the way for all subsequent studies on Greek, Roman, and Byzantine culture in Sicily and south Italy. But his philological approach to an interpretation of finds resulted in an excessive iconographic importance for certain archaic coroplastic types that gave birth to the Demeter paradigm in Sicily. For example, when Orsi discussed archaic protomai from a votive deposit at Megara Hyblaia, he repeated an idea that had been implanted in the archaeological consciousness by Gerhard several decades earlier, whereby the motif of the isolated head could refer to Demeter Kidaria. As soon as this idea appeared in print, it became embedded in the archaeological literature for Sicily, with references to Demeter Kidaria and her cult growing more and more absurd with every successive publication.
- 8 What Gerhard proposed was that the terracotta protome and the bust, as well as the isolated head on painted vases, could be embodiments of the *anodos* of Demeter, or Persephone, since they appeared to be emerging from the earth.¹³ But the protome, in

particular, with its mask-like form, also recalled to him a passage in Pausanias¹⁴ that refers to the celebration of the Greater Mysteries at Pheneus in Arcadia when a priest wearing a mask of Demeter Kidaria smites the underground spirits with rods. This idea gained considerable traction by the later 19th century when Léon Heuzey incorporated it into a discussion of protomai from Rhodes for the Louvre catalogue of ancient terracottas in 1882.¹⁵

- 9 Ten years later Orsi reiterated this notion, stating that the presence of protomai in graves at Megara Hyblaia was incontrovertible proof that also in Sicily there was a cult of Demeter Kidaria.¹⁶ That these protomai were not masks in the proper sense, being much smaller than life size and lacking eye holes, was not problematic for Orsi, who viewed their funerary context as *a priori* proof of their association with Demeter or Persephone. He maintained the same position for types of figured alabastra representing a standing female holding a dove that occasionally were found alongside protomai in both graves and votive deposits. The presence of the dove, for Orsi a symbol of Aphrodite, in the hand of this standing female type accompanying images of Demeter Kidaria initially was problematic. But Orsi's solution was to see in both types a representation of a Persephone-Aphrodite. Utilizing the same logic, Orsi held that discovery of protomai in a votive deposit at Megara Hyblaia could only indicate a cult of Demeter Kidaria. In the description of these protomai, Orsi attributed that which seemed to be closed eyes to "la fredda solennità della morte,"¹⁷ or the cold solemnity of death. Orsi could never have imagined that what appeared to him as closed eyes was nothing more than a lack of detail that commonly is associated with a long serial production, or that perhaps the painted details that often were applied to terracottas simply did not survive.
- 10 Given that Orsi's excavations at Megara Hyblaia were among the first to be considered truly modern and systematic for Sicily, the finds from Megara Hyblaia, indissolubly linked to the interpretations of Orsi, became the *contesto operativo* through which all other coroplastic finds were interpreted. In this way, the notion that the protome represented Demeter Kidaria was embedded in the archaeological literature concerning Sicily, a notion that has persisted throughout the better part of the 20th century. Forty years after Orsi's discussion of the protomai from Megara Hyblaia, Pirro Marconi, among other scholars, continued to reinforce the idea that all protomai from Sicily represented Demeter Kidaria.¹⁸ But Marconi advanced this notion a step further by implying the presence of a hypothetical sanctuary of Demeter Kidaria on Rhodes because he believed that the protome as a type was invented there.¹⁹ In 1982 Tamburello pushed this idea to an absurd extreme when she referred to an Archaic figurine from Palermo representing a seated female as Demeter Kidaria, since this type often was found alongside protomai. She further postulated that this was proof that Demeter Kidaria was worshipped in Punic Palermo in the same form in which she was worshipped in the Greek colonies in Sicily.²⁰
- 11 Following the discoveries and publications of Orsi, more than 30 archaic sanctuary sites in Sicily have been identified by archaeologists over the course of the 20th century as chthonic, sacred to Demeter, or to Demeter and Persephone, most on the basis of the coroplastic repertoire alone.²¹ The reasoning behind this represents a classic example of a circular fallacy, whereby the goal of the argument is to prove a premise that is already known and accepted at the beginning of the argumentation. Thus, the argument that figurines from a given sanctuary represent Demeter and that therefore the sanctuary must be chthonic rests on the premise that chthonic sanctuaries have figurines that represent Demeter. Of course, the evidence used to identify these figurines in the first

place is the fact that they are found in chthonic sanctuaries. Without questioning this mode of reasoning, Valentina Hinz listed all the Sicilian sanctuaries said to be chthonic in her 1998 study of the cult of Demeter and Kore in Sicily and Magna Graecia,²² and this study has become embedded in the archaeological literature for cult identification in Sicily, thus unwittingly furthering a research bias that rests on very tenuous foundations.

Léon Heuzey and the Demeter Paradeigm

- 12 By the late 19th century Léon Heuzey had become a particularly influential voice regarding the Demeter paradigm with his 1873 to 1874 publications “Recherches sur les figures de femmes voilées dans l’art grec,” I and II,²³ and his “Recherches sur le type de la Déméter voilée dans l’art grec.”²⁴ His initial intention in these discussions was to prove that terracotta figurines, particularly those of the Tanagra style, could be vehicles for an understanding of a veiled female head from a monumental sculpture that he discovered in Epirote Apollonia in 1863²⁵ that he believed represented Demeter because of its veil and its expression of a divine sadness. For Heuzey, the veil was a “veritable vestment of suffering and the sign of the somber sadness that the goddess wished to display to mortals.”²⁶ But the bulk of his discourses centered around his thesis that all female figurines could represent some aspect of Demeter, including Demeter Kourotraphos, the Earth Nourisher; or Demeter Europé, the nurse of Trophonios; the sorrowful goddesses Demeter Achaëa, recognized by the perceived melancholy expression of some Hellenistic figurines; Demeter Thesmophoros, worshiped in the temple of Cadmus in Thebes in the form of a half figure, according to Pausanias;²⁷ or the old nursemaid type, in which he recognized an image of Demeter Graia.²⁸ Protomai, which he called busts, he believed were specifically funerary in intent since their suspension holes indicated that they were intended to be hung on the walls of tombs, while their truncated form made them appear to be emerging from the earth.²⁹ They could only be images of Demeter, as was proven without question by their funerary context.
- 13 This thesis was strengthened in his 1882 publication of the *Catalogue des figurines antiques de terre cuite du musée du Louvre*, which became the most authoritative source for an understanding of ancient terracottas toward the end of the 19th century. Heuzey promoted an idea that had already been suggested by de Witte, that the tall, cylindrical head of some of the Louvre’s newly-acquired, archaic figurines from Rhodes was a *kidaris*. This, combined with Gerhard’s misguided suggestion that archaic protomai depicted Demeter Kidaria, led Heuzey to conclude that all archaic figurines represented this goddess.³⁰ In any case, as in his contemporary discourses on the iconography of the veiled woman, he again relied heavily on the funerary context of most of the figurines and related terracottas that had been acquired by the Louvre by the later 19th century, believing that this context, and the abbreviated form of the protome and bust suggestive of the *anodos*, were sufficient proof that the underworld goddess Demeter was the subject of what he called funerary idols.
- 14 What Orsi and Heuzey failed to recognize is that these archaic types, believed to have been created exclusively for veneration of the goddess Demeter, probably arrived in Sicily for more banal reasons. The archaic types noted above all belong to the so-called Aphrodite Group of Reynold Higgins.³¹ These types, mostly plastic vases, were introduced in Sicily in the second quarter of the 6th century from East Greece and in large measure were commercial products originally created as containers for scented oil. The protomai,

produced in the same East Greek workshops, appear to have been nothing more than abbreviated versions of the female alabastra, whose face was shared by some of the oldest of the protomai. Consequently, because the East Greek artisan could not know of the final deposition of the products, by necessity these had to have been created as generic images. Perhaps for reasons of prestige, these East Greek perfume vases and figurines, including protomai, were then extensively copied at local workshops throughout the Greek world.

- 15 Nonetheless, the notion of funerary exclusivity for certain terracotta types persisted well into the 20th century, regardless of the fact that, until the Hellenistic period, figurative terracottas in graves were the exception rather than the rule, and the protome, regardless of date, was a rare occurrence in tombs at best.³² The protome, in particular, was viewed by a number of scholars as having been made exclusively for the grave and therefore was exclusively chthonic in nature,³³ while they overlooked the hundreds of examples known from votive deposits throughout the Greek world that are epigraphically confirmed as belonging to every major Olympian goddess, as well as the nymphs.³⁴ Even though Heuzey appears to have been the first to stress the funerary context of protomai over the sanctuary context,³⁵ it was Orsi who pushed this idea forward when he spoke of numerous protomai, found by the hundreds in all the necropoleis from the 6th to the 3rd centuries.³⁶ This mistaken notion was then reiterated by Langlotz,³⁷ followed by Verhoogen,³⁸ who completely disregarded the evidence of protomai in sanctuaries, and focused exclusively on their funerary context, and finally by Barra Bagnasco,³⁹ who commented on the “discovery of many protomai in tombs, especially in Greece.”

The Goddess Bias

- 16 Closely related to the Demeter paradigm, and one that is also deeply rooted in the archaeological literature for Greek terracottas, as well as for all forms of Greek art, is the goddess bias, which is based on the unquestioned notion that all figurative terracottas representing females must have been images of goddesses,⁴⁰ or, at the very least, non-mortal beings, such as nymphs or muses. By association, male representations, much less frequent within Greek coroplastic corpora, have to be gods. As a notion this too came into prominence with the erudite writing of the 17th century by learned amateurs who sought to demonstrate their knowledge of ancient texts by applying them to ancient monuments. Even though figurative terracottas were hardly mentioned in these early discourses, when they were noted the reliance on ancient texts compelled the authors to see only representations of divinity,⁴¹ since the ancient authors did not write about mortals. For discussions of small-scale sculpture of the Archaic or early Classical periods, such as terracotta or bronze figurines, the terms “seated goddess,” or “standing goddess” were used indiscriminately to refer to any female image, and this habit distinguished coroplastic research throughout the 19th, the 20th, and into the 21st centuries.
- 17 Frequently, it was the presence of a polos, often referred to as a modius, that was of singular importance in the interpretation of which divinity was represented. Demeter was the most obvious choice because of the superficial resemblance of the polos to the Roman grain measure, the modius, even though the so-called Demeter images were all Greek. In early scholarship, the polos was also referred to as a kalathos, the cylindrical basket that was used by the ancient Greeks for a variety of purposes, but significantly for collection of the harvest. This reference was based on a mistaken interpretation of the polos, with its cylindrical form, but one that became firmly embedded in the

archaeological literature of the 19th century. Iconographic references to the kalathos were so frequent in early studies of Greek art that the word kalathos was used randomly and interchangeably for the word polos.⁴² In the archaeological literature that deals with Black Sea sites, for example, the word kalathos was, and still is, habitually used to refer to the cylindrical, or slightly flaring, headdresses of all female images believed to be divinities to the exclusion of the word polos, a fact that continues to bias all attempts at iconographic interpretation.⁴³

- 18 The notion that all female images represented goddesses because of the presence of a specific headdress was argued by Gerhard as early as 1828,⁴⁴ who, for example, perceived in a series of late archaic terracotta figurines from the Athenian Acropolis compelling symbols of a linguistic interrelationship between the words “polos,” “polis” and “polias.” This led him to conclude that Athena Polias was both a sky goddess and a mother goddess, in addition to being a state, as well as a mystery, goddess. This was based on the iconography of these figurines that presented a seated female wearing a high stephane, a headdress that was interpreted by Gerhard to be polos, notwithstanding the lack of a cylindrical form. He saw in the rounded contour of the stephane a symbol of the vault of the heavens, a feature that indicated the celestial realm of Athena Polias.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the seated posture of these figurines was indicative of Athena’s role as a mother goddess.
- 19 In 1842 Panofka published the terracotta figurines in the then Royal Museum of Berlin,⁴⁶ and assigned to each one a specific divine personification, although discussions of the significance of a polos, modius, or kalathos were less important than exploring other iconographic symbols. While Panofka interpreted a type of archaic Attic figurine of a seated female as Gaea Olympia, he further proposed that this figurine type represented the ethereal and life-giving principal of the collective creation of the universe, simultaneously evident in the moon and the earth.⁴⁷ But his originality is even more evident in his investigations of seemingly-unrelated iconographic details that then were explained by references to passages in Pausanias, Hesychius, or Herodotus, among other sources. In this way, a Hellenistic figurine of a Nike crowned with an ivy wreath and holding a phiale and oinochoe was identified as Hebe, or Ganymeda, the cupbearer wife of Dionysos Hebon. This was based on a statement of Pausanias, who noted that Hebe was worshipped at Phlius during an ivy festival, the *kissotomoi*,⁴⁸ while the presence of the oinochoe in the hand of the Nike confirmed the identification of Hebe/Ganymeda, since she alone was the cupbearer.
- 20 While Gerhard and Panofka, among others, sought answers in the writings of ancient authors in support of a divine identification for most figurative terracottas, other scholars appeared to attribute terracotta figurines to certain divinities in a manner that appears today to be arbitrary or fanciful. This seems to have been the approach of Jean de Witte when in 1866 he was discussing archaic figurines from Thebes in the collection of François Lenormant. He wrote, “If it is a question of giving a name to these goddesses, one can think of *Harmonia*, the heroic form of Astarte, rather than of Venus.”⁴⁹ Earlier, in 1840, he identified all the terracotta figurines of seated females in the sale catalogue of the Beugnot collection as Ceres, for no apparent reason,⁵⁰ and in the sale catalogue for the de Janzé collection he preferred to see Artemis Paidotrophos in a figurine of a woman holding an infant,⁵¹ rather than Venus, as he noted that Panofka had advocated for similar figurines.⁵² A typically fanciful interpretation of de Witte’s concerns a figurine of a knucklebone player in the de Bourville collection who appeared to him to be crouching to

collect flowers. “One can think,” he mused, “that this is Proserpine in the fields of Enna, who turns her head waiting to see Pluto.”⁵³

- 21 Even though the academic approach of Gerhard and Panofka that was rooted in the theory of a universal symbolism was the norm in the first half of the 19th century, there also were critics. One of these was Ernest Vinet, who in an 1845 review of Panofka’s Berlin terracotta catalogue, accused Panofka of resorting to any convenient iconographic element in a work of art to strengthen his symbolic interpretation, if supporting passages from ancient texts could not be found.⁵⁴ He then asked:
- 22 Can sound judgment elevate a mythological problem about a hairstyle or a gesture? Do we assume further that the painters of vases, engravers of gems, or sculptors working, in most cases, for trade and for luxury, will be mired in the depths of a mythical cosmic or Orphic mythology? Is this idea not a little more German than Greek?”⁵⁵
- 23 Vinet’s criticism of the symbolic school of interpretation notwithstanding, this belief in a universal symbolism left an indelible imprint on all subsequent scholarly investigations of Greek art. And as figurative terracottas increased in importance in private and museum collections over the course of the second half of the 19th century, so these too became subject to the same rules of scholarly discourse that continued to see divinity in every human image.
- 24 However, with the discoveries of high-quality, Hellenistic figurines at Tanagra in Boeotia and at Myrina in Asia Minor in the 1870s and 1880s that appealed to a bourgeois sentiment, the suggestion began to take root that some figurative terracottas, at least, could be genre representations of mortals. Wilhelm Froehner, among others, referred to such figurines as *jeune fille*, *fillette*, or *jeune femme* in the 1883 sale catalogue of the Leycuyer collection,⁵⁶ using these generic terms as a means of minimizing the religious associations that were once so tenacious an aspect of scholarly investigation. A review of the debate between the *symbolistes* and the *réalistes* was made by Ernst Babelon in 1890,⁵⁷ who supported an earlier thesis of Edmond Pottier that figurines in general, at the moment of creation, were designed to be generic images that could be used for a variety of purposes.⁵⁸ But this argument too was overwhelmed by the monolithic body of scholarship that was based, in one way or another, on the ancient sources. In fact, so entrenched was this goddess bias that scholars completely ignored early suggestions that certain figurines could represent mortals,⁵⁹ a suggestion that had been ridiculed by Heuzey,⁶⁰ or even that there could be representations of mortals in the guise of the heroized dead.⁶¹
- 25 Additional emphasis was given to the goddess bias by Valentin Müller in 1915. He made an exhaustive survey of representations of the polos on every conceivable type of monument, from gems, coins, and figurines, to vase painting, monumental sculpture, and reliefs for his PhD thesis entitled *Der Polos: die Griechische Götterkrone*.⁶² While he recognized that the identity of the goddess, or heroine, represented by these monuments was not easy due to the lack of attributes in many cases, he also believed that all female imagery involving the polos reflected the universal concept of Mother Earth.⁶³ While Müller’s study of the iconography of the polos is indeed useful as a compendium of all the available polos imagery at that time, his argument is weakened considerably by his basic assumption at the outset that the very presence of the polos indicates a divinity, as is demonstrated by the title of his study, and also by his blind acceptance of the interpretations of other scholars regarding the identity of the females wearing the polos in these representations. This lack of a critical approach to the evidence has resulted in

another meaningless circular argument, whereby the polos represents a given goddess because it is found on representations of that goddess.

- 26 The idea that terracotta figurines were not necessarily intended to represent goddesses at all, but rather could be mortals, was argued at length by Dragendorf in his 1903 analysis of the terracottas from the “massenfund” of the Sellada necropolis on Thera.⁶⁴ He believed that in many cases the terracottas served as companions for the dead and consequently embodied mortal representation, not divine. A different argument in favour of human representation was offered by Blinkenberg in his discussion of the archaic figurines and plastic vases from the acropolis of Lindos.⁶⁵ In his view the lack of attributes in these figurines suggested that they were mortals and that they were intended to perpetuate the presence of the adorants before the divinity, where they would be “exposées à la force divine.”⁶⁶ But, at the same time, Blinkenberg also pointed out the danger in making sweeping generalizations regarding the significance of terracotta figurines, since he recognized that they did not always have a clear and precise meaning.
- 27 Throughout the course of the 20th and into the 21st century the debate over divine versus mortal for interpretations of figurative terracottas continued. While those following the goddess interpretation were still in the majority, occasionally there were others who wished to see representations of mortals, at least in some types. Among those scholars was Zuntz, who, in his 1971 study of Persephone, preferred to see mortals in all figurines of standing females from south Italy and Sicily, but those represented seated had to be goddesses, since he believed the seated posture to be one of authority.⁶⁷ This dual interpretation was also articulated by Sguaitamatti in 1984 in his discussion of figurines of piglet carriers from Gela.⁶⁸ When Merker published the classical and Hellenistic terracottas from the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth in 2000, she underscored the difficulty in figurine identification, cautioning that an attribute may be either a symbol of a divinity, and therefore representative of that divinity, or merely a gift carried by a votary that would not necessarily have the same resonance. While she recognized that among the figurines there was a “blurring of identity between deity and worshipper,” she believed that all figurines of seated females wearing a polos must be goddesses, even though the type was generic.⁶⁹
- 28 A recent article by Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi and Arthur Muller on the later history and present state of the divine/mortal debate⁷⁰ has made a singular contribution to the broadening of our perspective on the meaning of figurative terracottas. The monolithic structure of the goddess bias has begun to crack and shift, in part as a result of the recent work of Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller,⁷¹ but also in part because of a more modern, anthropological and sociological approach to artifactual analysis in classical archaeology that has begun to color the archaeological literature of the early 21st century⁷². While philological attitudes may still prevail in some studies, the recent suggestions that the visual language of figurative terracottas could have had a broader, and more polyvalent, significance that could also include references to mortals, or to mortals assuming the natures previously exclusively attributed to divinities, has widened the door considerably to our understanding of the religious and social backgrounds of coroplastic production.

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NOTES

1. This is an extract from the *Handbook for Coroplastic Research*, in preparation by a team from the Association for Coroplastic Studies. See *Les Carnets de l'ACoSt* 11, 2014 and 13, 2015.
2. For a review of this argument see Uhlenbrock 1988, 139–142.
3. See Uhlenbrock 1988, 141–142.
4. Laumonier 1956, 74:109.
5. In *Verrem* II, iv, 48, 106, "Insulam Siciliam totam esse Cereri et Liberae consecratam"; Diodorus, XVI.66; Plutarch, *Timol.* 8; Pindar, *Nem.* 1, 13.
6. In Uhlenbrock 1988, 146–156, I argued that the presence of protomai in votive contexts was due less to cultic demands than to trading networks.
7. For 18th-century attitudes see Uhlenbrock 1993, 7–9.
8. The Instituto was formed along with Otto Magnus von Stackelberg and August Kestner. See Kurt Bittel et al. 1979. *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 1929 bis 1979*, 1. Mainz: von Zabern.
9. Late 18th- and early 19th-century literature was rife with themes centered around the supernatural, death, and aspects of the underworld, as can be seen in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and the works of Edgar Allen Poe (1839–1845). The landscapes of the early 19th-century painter Caspar David Friedrich perhaps best express this obsessive and morbid sentiment in the visual arts with subject matter such as caves, cemeteries, and crumbling ruins. See J. Grave, *Caspar David Friedrich* 2012. New York: Prestel.

10. Orrells 2015, 69–72.
11. See Haskell 1987, 43. See also Orrells 2013, 199–201.
12. For example, see Panofka 1834, 80, when discussing an archaic bronze applique of a Nike: “C’est pourquoi on trouve cette pose à la fois chez des êtres mâles et chez des êtres femelles dont le costume du reste est assez analogue, et dont les rapports avec l’enfer ne sont guère contestables. Nous voyons donc ici un de ces génies infernaux pour lesquels le nom de *Ker* [goddess of death] est le plus convenable, et qui s’élance à la poursuite d’un criminel.” Heuzey 1883, iii, “Les partisans de cette solution ont cherché naturellement à me pousser vers l’extrémité contraire à me faire prendre pour un adepte de l’ancienne école symbolique, qui ne voyait partout, dans les mêmes images, que des divinités, portant les emblèmes d’un dogme profond et mystérieux.”
13. Gerhard 1857, 212, n. 5
14. Paus. 8.15.1–4: “The people of Pheneus have also a sanctuary of Demeter surnamed Eleusinian... Beside the sanctuary of the Eleusinian goddess is what is called the Petroma, two great stones fitted to each other... There is a round top on it which contains a mask of Demeter Kidaria. This mask the priest puts on his face at the Greater Mysteries and smites the Underground Folk with rods.”
15. Heuzey 1882, 233–234.
16. Orsi 1891, col. 936.
17. Orsi 1891, col. 935.
18. Marconi 1929, 174, 178.
19. Marconi 1933, 56, 103.
20. Tamburello, *Sicilia Archeologica* 1981, 38, fig., 5; *Sicilia Archeologica* 1982, 49–50, 51.
21. Uhlenbrock 1988, 151
22. Hinz 1998.
23. Heuzey 1873 and Heuzey 1874.
24. Heuzey 1874 (2).
25. Louvre Museum, N° usuel Ma 828.
26. Heuzey 1874, 7, “véritable vêtement de douleur et le signe de la sombre tristesse que la déesse cherchait à dérober aux regards des mortels.”
27. Paus., IX, 16, 5.
28. Heuzey 1874 (2), 25–26.
29. Heuzey 1874 (2), 22.
30. Heuzey 1891, 227–228; the earlier mention of the *kidaris*, or *cidaris*, was made by de Witte 1866, 111. For a detailed discussion of the *kidaris* and its possible significance see Miller 1991, 58–71.
31. Higgins 1967, 32.
32. See Uhlenbrock 1988, 142; Huysecom-Haxhi 2008, 57.
33. Prime among these was Smith 1949, 359.
34. Uhlenbrock 1988, 141–142.
35. Heuzey 1883, 233.
36. Orsi 1891, col. 778.
37. Langlotz 1965, 262, no. 35, “...large numbers found in Ionian, Boeotian, and Sicilian graves.”
38. Verhoogen 1956, 22.
39. Barra Bagnasco 1986, 40.
40. For example, see Ammerman 2002, *passim*, who uses the term “goddess” or “enthroned goddess” to indicate the female figurines from the Sanctuary of Santa Venera at Paestum.
41. Tomasini 1639, 112–116; Gaetano 1767.
42. See Heuzey 1874, 12.
43. I am grateful to Tetania Shevchenko for enlightening me about this issue.

44. Gerhard 1828, 389; see also Gerhard 1866–1868, 134.
45. Gerhard 1866–1868, pl. XII:4–6.
46. Panofka 1842.
47. Panofka 1842, 13.
48. Panofka 1842, 32. See also Panofka 1837, 155–156.
49. de Witte 1866, 108, “Maintenant, s’il s’agit de donner un nom à ces déesses, on peut penser à *Harmonie*, forme héroïque d’Astarté, plutôt qu’à *Vénus*.”
50. de Witte 1840, nos. 186–192.
51. de Witte 1850, ftn. 2 to Pl. II in the text.
52. Panofka 1842, pls. XXI, XXII.
53. de Witte 1850, 5, Pl. XII:2, “On peut penser que c’est Proserpine, dans les champs d’Enna, qui détourne la tête entendant venir Pluton.”
54. Vinet 1845, 700–701, “M. Panofka ne perd pas courage lorsque le passage classique qui lui est nécessaire ne se trouve pas sous sa main, ou qui pis est n’existe point. Il ne s’en tient pas simplement à la comparaison des monuments avec les textes ; les mille détails d’une œuvre d’art lui servent à rechercher ce qu’elle signifie...”
55. Vinet 1845, 701, “Supposer en outre, que des peintres de vases, que des graveurs sur pierre, que des sculpteurs travaillant, le plus souvent, pour le commerce et pour le luxe, se soient enfoncés dans les profondeurs de la mythologie mythique, cosmique ou orphique, n’est-ce pas là une idée un peu plus allemande que grecque?”
56. Froehner 1883, passim.
57. Babelon 1884, 325–331.
58. Pottier 1890, 278–279.
59. Gerhard 1837, 134, believed that a seated female type of the later 5th century B.C.E. found on the Acropolis of Athens represented a deceased devotee of Aphrodite, although he used the Latin term *Venus*, because of the type of clothing depicted; de Witte 1866, 110, in a discussion of Lenormant’s terracottas from Tegea, refers to them as the many figurines of the initiates of the mysteries of Ceres; Martha 1880, iv, makes reference to the “nouvelle école n’y cherche que des sujets de genre.”
60. Heuzey, 1883, p. iii.
61. Duemmler 1883, 194–200.
62. Müller 1915.
63. Müller 1915, 68.
64. Dragendorff 1903, 122–124.
65. Blinkenberg 1931, cols. 28–29.
66. Blinkenberg 1931, col 29.
67. Zuntz 1971, 95.
68. Sguaitamatti 1984, 53.
69. Merker 2000, 327–328.
70. Huysecom-Haxhi, Muller 2007; Huysecom-Haxhi 2008, 63–70.
71. Muller 1996, 468–481; Huysecom-Haxhi 2008; Huysecom-Haxhi, Papaikonomou, Papadopoulos 2012; Muller 2009.
72. Huysecom-Haxhi, Muller 2015.

ABSTRACTS

The ubiquitous presence of masses of figurative terracottas in Greek sanctuaries of the Archaic and Classical periods has given rise to their almost universal use as iconographic tools for the identification of cult. A practice that has its roots in the archaeological literature of the late 18th and early 19th century, it has engendered certain research biases that have been difficult to overcome. A review of these biases and their origins could be useful in reorienting the researcher of coroplastic topics away from dangerous preconceptions.

INDEX

Keywords: Baron d'Hancarville, Eduard Gerhard, Theodor Panofka, Paolo Orsi, Demeter, goddess interpretation

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