The Lived Experience of Short-Statured People in the Early Roman Empire

Diana Molkova

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2023

Reading committee:

Sarah Levin-Richardson, Chair

Stephen E. Hinds

Kathryn Topper

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Classics

© Copyright 2023

Diana Molkova

University of Washington

Abstract

The Lived Experience of Short-Statured People in the Early Roman Empire

Diana Molkova

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Sarah Levin-Richardson

Classics

In the Roman Empire, what constituted a non-normative body, as well as the symbolic values ascribed to it, was not fixed or "natural," but was instead negotiated as a part of a complex social identity. While research on bodily difference and disability in ancient Rome has focused, perhaps excessively, on "'monstrous' or extremely deformed bodies" (Graham 2013, 250), how individuals inhabited and participated in creating their identity as non-normatively bodied has rarely been considered. The aim of this dissertation is to explore what can be learned about the lived experience of non-normatively bodied and specifically short-statured individuals from art, literature, and funerary inscriptions.

I begin in chapter 1 by interrogating the premises central to previous scholarship on lives and representations of short-statured individuals: that they were always seen as the apotropaic, humorous "Others" (Barton 1993; Garland 1995; Clarke 1998, 2001, 2005, 2007; Trentin 2022). I examine terracotta lamps portraying sex scenes to show that while the bodies of short-statured

individuals were sometimes "Othered" by Romans to amuse and avert the evil eye, a wider range of responses—including normalizing and integrating ones—can be conceptualized when we do not apply these interpretations uncritically. Using one such lamp found in an Aquileian burial as a case study, I suggest that it was chosen for its association with leisure and entertainment and was likely chosen by the tomb owners to reflect and enhance their social status.

I then use two historical figures as my case studies in chapter 2 and 3 to show that in imperial Rome enslaved and freed short-statured people were similarly ascribed socially enhancing and entertainment value and attempt to envision how they could have navigated this expectation. I also propose that these functions were imposed on enslaved and freed short-statured people specifically, while freeborn people had the resources and opportunity to engage with their bodily non-normativity differently. In chapter 2 I consider how the identities of *deliciae*, "pet child," and short-statured person overlapped for Conops, an enslaved person of Julia the Younger (Plin. *HN* 7.75). By bringing out the parallels between the skills ascribed to *deliciae* and non-normatively bodied performers, I explicate the labor that likely went into maintaining these personas. I then argue that this labor and the benefits it brought was seen as an opportunity for positive identification in the community of enslaved people and freedpeople by analyzing Conops' epitaph (*CIL* 6.7613) alongside others found in the Iunii Silani columbarium. In chapter 3 I turn to the gravestone of Myropnous the aulos player (*IG* 14.1865 = *IGUR* 2.798); I propose that life accounts of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century freak show performers provide useful comparative evidence for envisioning the agency of Roman enslaved and freed short-statured performers. I interpret Myropnous' commemoration as showing his identities as short-statured performer and musician as inextricably linked, and as reflecting the pride he and his community had in both facets of his life.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1. BEYOND APOTROPAISM, HUMOR, AND "OTHERING": SEXUAL SCENES ON TERRACOTTA LAMPS 23

CHAPTER 2. "PERFORMING ONESELF": CONOPS, *DELICIAE* OF JULIA TURNED *PALAESTRITA* 62

CHAPTER 3. STATUS, STATURE, AND AGENCY: MYROPNOUS THE AULOS PLAYER 82

CONCLUSIONS 100

REFERENCE LIST 101

APPENDIX 108

Introduction

Short-statured people, such as people with dwarfism, constitute a considerable part of our evidence of non-normatively bodied people in ancient Rome. A recent monograph goes as far as to claim "they hogged the glory" among Romans (Meintani 2022, 70). Although there has been great interest in examining artistic representations of short-statured figures and their possible functions, Robert Garland's *The Eye of the Beholder* (1995) remains the most extensive treatment of the "social and economic conditions" (xii) governing the lives of historical short-statured people living in ancient Rome. This indicates a gap in research, since Garland's monograph covers *all* "physical disorders" mentioned in *both* ancient Greek and Roman sources; thus each individual type of bodily non-normativity, understandably, can only receive superficial treatment. While Garland is thorough in collecting all literary mentions of historically attested short-statured people, the narrative he offers for short-statured people's possible experience in Roman society requires nuancing. Thus he suggests that the "usefulness" of a non-normatively bodied slave lay in their submission to "humiliation with at least the appearance of good grace" (48), which presents non-normatively bodied people as passive objects of their social superiors' exploitation, devoid of subjectivity or agency except for submitting to or rebelling against their treatment. It is envisioning the subjectivity and agency with which short-statured people navigated their life circumstances—what I refer to as "lived experience"—that is the aim of this dissertation. This line of questioning is complicated by the fact that ancient sources predominantly represent the perspective of normatively bodied people. Yet, as Ellen Adams—a Classicist who engages closely with Disability Studies—points out, this limitation is not new to social historians, and there is a rigorous tradition of approaches intended to offset the biases of our sources as best as we can (2021, 7). Adams is referring here specifically to the practices developed by feminist studies; I add that my own work

is indebted to the rich body of work addressing the lived experience of enslaved people, as exemplified by chapter 2. In this dissertation, apart from suggesting new approaches to the scant corpus of literary depictions, I present two additional pieces of ancient evidence that bring us closer to the perspective of short-statured individuals: the epitaphs of Conops (*CIL* 6.7613, discussed in chapter 2) and Myropnous (*IG* 14.1865 = *IGUR* 2.798, discussed in chapter 3), short-statured men who lived in the early Roman empire.

At the core of this dissertation is an idea formulated by Disability Studies: that bodily "norm" is not natural but socially constructed, and that it is not only historically and culturally specific but also can fluctuate within each specific society. Thus in ancient Rome, whether one's body was seen as "normal" depended on such factors as the individual's gender, age, and social status (Husquin 2020, 32). To foreground this understanding of bodily "norm" as not a descriptive reflection of biological difference, but rather a prescriptive tool of social hierarchy, throughout this dissertation I use the word "non-normative"—as opposed to "abnormal" or "atypical"—to refer to bodies that were singled out and marginalized by ancient Romans. I use the term "short-statured" to encompass all individuals who were singled out for their height in visual and literary depictions. I choose not to use the term "dwarf" because it is laden with cultural meanings irrelevant to ancient Roman material, and similarly do not use the term "person with dwarfism" because I believe it evokes a specific medical standard that I do not wish to apply to the individuals I discuss. The term "short-statured," then, is intentionally broad—I choose to forego attempting to identify whether a specific person had achondroplasia (the most common cause of dwarfism) or a different medical condition, or would not be considered to have dwarfism under the current medical system at all; the partial nature of extant resources makes this line of questioning futile. Moreover, focusing on retrospective diagnoses, as I will argue further below, introduces distinctions to the material that

Romans might have not recognized or found relevant and therefore can unnecessarily limit possible readings.

Having addressed the underpinnings of my dissertation, I now turn to the four topics that have shaped the Classical scholarship on the lives and representations of short-statured people—retrospective diagnosis, *pygmaei*, apotropaism, and humor—discussing as well how they influenced my own approach.

Retrospective diagnosis

Within Classics scholarship on people with non-normative bodies, and short-statured people specifically, one of the first approaches to develop was retrospective diagnosis—attempting to identify representations of real medical conditions. The interest in the subject arose at the end of 19th century, as evidenced by J.M. Charcot and Paul Richer's *Les difformes et les malades dans l'art,* which traces representation of medical conditions from ancient times to the late Italian Baroque (1889). In 1975, as a part of his dissertation William Stevenson created a catalogue of Hellenistic terracotta, bronze, and ivory statuettes that depict identifiable medical conditions. In 1998, physician and historian of medicine Mirko Grmek worked with Classicist Danielle Gourevich to perform "iconodiagnosis" on figures in ancient art in *Les maladies dans l'art antique.* All three studies consider dwarfism to be among the conditions that were in ancient times recognized and depicted in art.

The broader implications of this approach can be observed in Dasen's seminal monograph *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece* (1993). Dasen opens the book with an overview of modern medical findings on growth disorders, as well as of paleopathological evidence (8-21). When it comes to Greek iconography, she believes that a detailed enough rendering of anatomy is achieved in red-figure vase painting for us to attempt diagnosis (171). Dasen also takes the logical leap from

assuming that ancient art depicts a specific medical condition to suggesting that it portrays specific people. For example, she suggests that the similarities in depictions of "dwarfs" and "pygmies" in items from the same workshop could be explained by the artists drawing inspiration from a short-statured person living in the potters' area (220). The ultimate expression of this approach is to interpret these "authentic representations" as reflections of lived experience. Thus, Dasen asserts that "dwarfs" were allowed to exercise in the *palaestra* based on a pelike portraying one "dwarf" kicking a punchbag and another holding an unclear oblong object[1] (233). Admittedly, this conclusion is surprising, since a mere ten pages prior Dasen discusses the same pelike at length as an example of using "dwarf" figures to "represent standard stock figures in a ludicrous way" (222), that is, to create a parody. The question "Is what was depicted in art real or was at least construed as real by the ancient viewer?" haunts many a social historian.[2] As Gloria Ferrari persuasively argues, we should not assume that we "directly confront Athenian daily life" even in depictions of such "ordinary and trivial" activities as women visiting the fountain house (2003, 44); I suggest even more caution is needed with representations of non-normative bodies.

Another issue this approach forces is drawing the line between "authentic representations" and caricatures. For example, Dasen excludes from her corpus depictions of features that would have been fatal, or "an impossible combination of physical deformities" (169). Stevenson similarly limits his catalogue to "figurines intended as actual or factual depictions of reality" (1975, 28). He later formulates how he understands the difference between a caricature and what he calls a "pathological grotesque:" "[the difference] is one between two antipodal artistic intents; the one

[1] Attic Red Figure Pelike by Washing Painter, now in St Petersburg, Hermitage, inv. b 1621; BAPD 215021; *ARV*[2] 1134.11; *Beazley Addenda*[2] 333.

[2] Revisiting the material 30 years later, Dasen admits that "iconography does not provide concrete answers about the life of short-statured persons in ancient Athens," (2015, 42) although she continues to take some images at face value, such as those portraying Dionysian scenes.

for intentional aggregation to produce a comic effect, the other, intentional realism toward the actual representation of a phenomenon" (32). While a corpus of "authentic" representations might help establish which medical conditions were recognized in antiquity, this distinction does not take us much further. If we are to examine the actual lived experiences of people with these conditions, we must ask how they were perceived by society, and caricatures and parodies are as indispensable in reconstructing perceptions as the elusive "authentic" portrayals.

Pygmaei

We cannot discuss the perception of short-statured people without addressing the iconography of *Pygmaei.*[3] They are first described in the *Iliad* as people that lived near the streams of Ocean and were locked in perpetual strife with cranes (3.2-6); their short stature is implied in the name given to them by Greeks, derived from πυγμή, "a cubit." The consequent geographical and historical tradition also attests to short-statured people living in Africa, either along the shore of the Ocean or at the sources of the Nile (Hes. M-W fr. 150.17-18; Hecat. *FGrH* 1, F328a-b; Arist. *Hist. An.* 8.12.596b; Strab. 1.2.28). It is entirely possible that these descriptions stem from contact with Central African foragers, since they indeed likely once lived in the swamps of the White Nile (Cavalli-Sforza 1986, 364). However, as Molly Swetnam-Burland eloquently puts it, "Roman beliefs in and about pygmies were as much broadly held ideas about the unknown as they were ideas about actual people who lived along the banks of the Nile" (2015, 163). Thus Pliny, for example, relates accounts of *Pygmaei* living in Caria (*HN* 5.109), Thrace (4.44), India (6.70), and Ethiopia (6.188). Strabo goes as far to state that people "ὑπενόησαν καὶ ἀνέπλασαν" (surmised and made up[4]) the existence of *Pygmaei* based on their observation of smaller than normal (due to

[3] I will use this term—adapted into Latin from Greek *πυγμαῖοι*—for the people depicted in ancient sources, to distinguish these figures from historical Central African foragers.
[4] All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

harsh conditions) domestic animals that lived on the edges of the world. In Greek and Roman art, the introduction of non-normative physical features resembling those of disproportionate[5] dwarfism into the iconography of *Pygmaei* was gradual. In archaic vase painting, *Pygmaei* are often no different from figures of other ethnicities, and identification can only be made because they are battling cranes. But in red-figure vases, *Pygmaei* acquire non-normative physical features; in Dasen's words, they are portrayed as "short-limbed dwarfs, with the typical 'negroid' features of achondroplasia (snub nose and thick lips)" (185). By the time of the Roman Empire, M.J. Versluys notes that in Nilotic scenes *Pygmaei* are interchangeably depicted as proportionate and disproportionate short-statured people (2002, 276). Some see this as a consequence of culture contact between Rome and Egypt; thus Versluys and Paul Meyboom state that disproportionate short-statured people became a "symbol of fertility and *truphe*[6]" through their association with the gods Bes—whose form combines "dwarfish" and animalistic features—and Osiris[7] and were placed in Nilotic scenes mainly to emphasize the aura of fertility, revival, and abundance of the Nile (Meyboom and Versluys 2005, 205). In addition to these cultural associations, Versluys also suggests that the depiction of Egyptians as "merry-making dwarves and pygmies" primarily functioned as retroactive legitimization of Roman colonization of Egypt (2002, 437). This theory has not gone uncontested; Rolf Tybout argues that the appearance of non-normative bodies in Nilotic scenes is easily explained by concurrent developments of wall painting. Namely, popularity shifted from pure landscapes to scenes representing human activities; this new genre's core features were its charm and light-heartedness. In Tybout's view, it was in line with this pursuit of

[5] Dwarfism is broadly categorized into two types based on whether the proportion of the individual's limbs to torso resembles that of a normatively bodied person (proportionate dwarfism) or does not (disproportionate dwarfism).
[6] From ancient Greek, *τρυφή* means "luxuriousness, softness" (LSJ).
[7] The argument that short-statured people were involved in the worship of Osiris is the crux of their article, and I discuss it at length in chapter 1.

a humorous quality that Nilotic scenes started replacing normative bodies with "a more facetious species" (2003, 512-513).

As a social historian, I am most interested in how (or if at all) the perception of *Pygmaei* was connected with the perception of historical short-statured people living in communities that consumed Nilotic imagery. Many scholars do not comment on this matter at all, which is an answer in and of itself. Of scholars that do express an opinion, Dasen occupies one extreme, suggesting that stories about *Pygmaei* functioned as a reaction to the presence of "pathologically short people in Greek cities." She believes that putting "abnormal people" at the end of the known world and attributing otherworldly habits to them served as an expression of rejection (1993, 178). Thus for her the connection between *Pygmaei* and historical short-statured people *is* the reason for the ubiquity of their representations. Anastasia Meintani is driven to the other extreme by the fact that *Pygmaei* were not a historical people: "once again the notion that the impetus for the production of these artifacts was the sadistic attitude of artists toward the deformed collapses, since they were *imaginary* creatures" (2022, 171, my emphasis). While Stevenson's focus is on distinguishing "factual" pathological grotesques from caricatures, he sees *Pygmaei* as ultimately rooted in reality; he describes them as "artistic inventions … which distort the reality to which they allude, yet at the same time *are wholly dependent on it*" (1975, 27, my emphasis). Bert Gevaert and Christian Laes rhetorically ask: "Might the learned observations of geographers and natural scientists about monstrous races have been responsible for the fact that at least some people in ancient society regarded dwarfs, albinos, hermaphrodites, the hereditary deaf, blind, or one-eyed, as separate species of humankind?" (226), which brings us full circle. Namely, if Dasen argues that the way people felt about non-normatively bodied people in their communities impacted how they depicted foreigners, Gevaert and Laes imply that how people imagined foreigners might have impacted how

they saw their non-normatively bodied peers. For the purposes of envisioning lived experiences of historical short-statured people, I suggest that instead of trying to solve this "chicken (or Nile crocodile) and egg" problem, it is more productive to examine what meanings were attached to the non-normative bodies of *Pygmaei*, as well as what functions images of these non-normative bodies performed in ancient Roman spaces. The possible range of these meanings and functions is the subject of chapter 1.

Apotropeia

One of the functions that has long been ascribed to short-statured figures in Mediterranean art—including in Nilotic scenes—is averting the evil eye. In Stevenson's formulation, short-statured people, along with "other pathologically deformed creatures," acquired apotropaic connotations due to the "shocking disproportions of their bodies" (1975, 45). This idea is traceable back to Otto Jahn's 1855 essay on the evil eye in antiquity. Jahn begins his argument with Plutarch's remark that the logic of amulets lies in distracting the evil eye from their wearer through their ατοπία (literally "out-of-placeness") (Plut. *Quest. conv.* 681F). Jahn suggests that while items like the Gorgoneion possess ατοπία because they invoke fear, the concept more often applies to things that encourage laughter. This suggestion is built on a scholium on a passage of Aristophanes, in which Pollux (2nd century CE) records that metal workers hung up "γελοῖα βασκάνια" (humorous amulets) in their workshops to avert "φθόνος" (malice) (7.198). Phrynichus, a grammarian from the same time, provides further detail, describing amulets hung up in workshops as "ἀνθρωποειδές κατασκεύασμα, βραχὺ παρηλλαγμένον τὴν ἀνθροπείαν φύσιν" (Borries 1911, 53; human-like manufactured things, slightly different from human nature). Before moving on to documenting the apotropaic uses of phalluses, Jahn passingly wonders if the popularity of "pygmies" and "other deformed dwarfs" in Pompeian art can be explained by their amulet-like functioning (1855, 67).

The notion of non-normative bodies possessing apotropaic powers is picked up by Alan Wace in 1903 as he compiles a little catalogue of grotesque bronze figurines representing "Hunchbacks," "Dwarves," and "Negroes." Wace is convinced that the items in his catalogue functioned similarly to the amulets in the passages brought up by Jahn because almost all figurines were equipped with an exaggerated phallus, which is "a most potent charm against the evil eye."[8] Furthermore, one of the hunchbacks in his sample, in addition to possessing an overlarge phallus, makes a fig sign[9] (a closed fist with the thumb stuck between the index and middle finger), which is still considered an evil-averting gesture in Italy (110).

If Jahn and Wace were among the first scholars to make the connection, Doro Levi's commentary on a famous floor mosaic from Antioch[10] cemented the association between short-statured people, laughter, and apotropaism (1941). The mosaic features a short-statured person with kyphosis turning his back to an image of the evil eye, while his erect penis points back at it; the evil eye is also attacked by various tools and animals. Aside from being able to distract the evil eye by their ατοπία, Levi explains, "beings with a funny appearance"—and short-statured people belong to this group due to "certain shocking proportions of their bodies"—were apotropaic also because "laughter is the opposite pole of the anguish produced by the dark forces of evil." He suggests little evidence for this other than the aforementioned Pollux passage and an episode from a magic papyrus, in which "when the Creator laughs for the first time, light was created" (1941, 225). It should be noted that the actual formulation in the magic papyrus is "ἐκαρποφόρησεν τὰ φυτὰ σοῦ γελάσαντος," (*PGM* IV.1615, Preisendanz 1928, 124; with you laughing, nature bore

[8] Interestingly, Wace disregards Jahn's suggestion that short-statured figures in Nilotic scenes are charms against the evil eye, because they are probably derived from Alexandrian art. Presumably Wace believes that in Egypt short-statured people were not believed to have apotropaic powers. Cf. Dasen 1993.
[9] Bronze statuette, now in Weimar, Kunstsammlungen des Goethehauses, Inv. GPL/01294. Meintani points out that this specific statue has since been revealed to be modern (2022, 29).
[10] Mosaic from The House of the Evil Eye in Antioch, second century CE. Now in Antakya, Hatay Museum, inv. 1024.

fruit), which further undermines Levi's explanation, since it has little to do with the evil eye. Although Levi's argument is hardly air-tight, it has become the foundation of many interpretations of scenes with short-statured people. John Clarke is perhaps the most ardent proponent of the non-normative body=laughter=apotropaism theory; as he formulates in a chapter titled "Apotropaic Laughter": "Laughter at the unbecoming human seems to have been the essential weapon against the Evil eye" (2007, 66). How this generalization may lead to reductionist readings can be observed, for example, in his passing treatment of a wall painting with *Pygmaei* partaking in outdoor festivities in House of the Doctor in Pompeii: "The scene may also be apotropaic because it is both funny and phallic"[11] (2005, 163).

I also find unconvincing Clarke's suggestion that *Pygmaei* scenes specifically were aimed at a demonic audience (2007, 67). Clarke was inspired by the work of Ruth Mellinkoff, who suggests that grotesque medieval images "were chiefly intended for an audience of demons," whom "*in those times* virtually everyone believed to lurk everywhere" (2004, 42, my emphasis). On the very next page, Mellinkoff shows how the appearance of the ever-present demon figure in Western European thinking is connected to the rise of Christianity. Following Henry Maguire, she brings to our attention that pre-Christian belief in the evil eye, now pronounced a "superstitious relic of paganism," was harnessed by Christianity in its creation of the malevolent demonic forces against which only the church could provide protection (43). This doctrine finds reflection in a fourth-century CE homily by Saint Basil:

> ἐκεῖνο δέ φημι, ὅτι οἱ μισόκαλοι δαίμονες, ἐπειδὰν οἰκείας ἑαυτοῖς εὕρωσι προαιρέσεις, παντοίως αὐταῖς πρὸς τὸ ἴδιον ἀποκέχρηνται βούλημα· ὥστε καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τῶν βασκάνων εἰς ὑπηρεσίαν χρῆσθαι τοῦ ἰδίου θελήματος.
>
> I, on the other hand, say that demons who hate the good, whenever they find disposition similar to their own, use these people in all ways for their own purposes; so that they use also the eyes of enviers in service of their own will.

[11] On representations of penises or sex which might not be inherently apotropaic either, see below.

(*De inv.* 3)

On the pagan side of things, the Roman emperor Julian, also in the fourth century CE, provides the following unflattering description of Christians: "ἡ γὰρ ἄκρα θεολογία παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς ἐστι δύο ταῦτα, συρίττειν τε πρὸς τοὺς δαίμονας καὶ σκιαγραφεῖν ἐπὶ τοῦ μετώπου τὸν σταυρόν" (*Ep.* 19; for among them the main invocations of god are the following two: to hiss/whistle against demons and making the sign of the cross on the forehead). As with any personal opinion, we should be cautious about generalizing this sentiment as belonging to all Romans; but perhaps we can use it as an illustration of which elements of Christianity felt most culturally distinct to Romans. And yet, Clarke insists that ancient Romans also believed that they were surrounded by demons, citing the entirety of Katherine Dunbabin and Matthew Dickie's essay "*Invidia Rumpantur Pectora*: The Iconography of *Phthonos/Invidia* in Graeco-Roman Art" (1983). As one might glean from the title, Dunbabin and Dickie discuss depictions of personified envy;[12] specifically they argue that figures clutching at their throats, as if choking themselves, should be read as such personifications (19). To lay the groundwork for this identification, they provide an overview of the extant mentions of *phthonos/invidia* in written sources (10-19), which has been useful to subsequent scholars of apotropaism. All of the enviers discussed in these sources, however, are human, so it remains unclear how this essay supports Clarke's claim. The following chapters of this dissertation, therefore, do not share the assumption that Romans were always on guard against demons. One caveat to this is that extant evidence does confirm that Romans believed in spirits of the dead, and that they could be malicious (Hope 2009, 99 and 116-119). Whether these beliefs could have led to the use of non-normative bodies as *apotropeia* in funerary sites will be considered in my analysis of the Aquileia lamp in chapter 1.

[12] All but one were found in the Eastern half of the Mediterranean, in locations such as Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, Cyprus, and Egypt (27).

Carlin A. Barton goes so far as to suggest that historical people with non-normative bodies (as opposed to artistic representations) were considered apotropaic as well, which explains why Roman emperors and nobles "surrounded themselves with grotesques, fools, and clowns" (1993, 168). The main written source that led scholars to this conclusion comes from the *Vita Aesopi*. In this text, when some enslaved people wonder why their enslaver would purchase such a wretched creature as Aesop, one of them replies: "ἵνα αὐτον προσβάσκανον τοῦ σωματεμπορίου ποιήσῃ" (*Vita Aesopi G* 16; Perry 1952, 40; to make him an amulet for the slave-shop). While this passage is undeniable evidence that the presence of a non-normative body was perceived as protective, I believe the context should make us cautious about generalizing this notion. Here I find helpful Stevenson's theory about the apotropaic potential of non-normative bodies: the evil eye would accept them as *fait accompli* (1975, 49); that is, they communicate "the worst thing that could have happened (i.e. a non-normative body) has already happened here; you are powerless to do any more evil." The foundation of the slave-trader's financial prosperity is the physical ability and health (associated with normative bodies) of enslaved people; in line with Stevenson's reasoning I suggest that intentionally adding a non-normative body to his "stock" was intended to signal to the evil eye that the slave-trader was not too lucky: see, a non-normative—and therefore a non-productive—body is already present, there is no reason to create more by making other enslaved people injured or sick. I also wonder if a similar logic lies behind the amulet use in workshops, as attested by Pollux and Phrynichus. A craftsman's business relies on their ability to produce items that are perceived as "high quality" by their clients, and to do so consistently. Perhaps an amulet depicting a creature "slightly different from nature" was meant a stand-in for a sub-par artisan product, signaling to the evil eye that this shop has not been *too* lucky, and therefore preventing troubles with actual orders. If this is indeed what made non-normative bodies effective as

apotropaic objects in the context of a workshop or a slave-shop, other representations can scarcely be considered apotropaic by analogy. For example, many Nilotic scenes in Roman domestic context portray *Pygmaei* as being *too* lucky in life, if anything—enjoying sensual pleasures without a care in the world; such imagery clearly was not meant to communicate that bad luck had already played its role.

Another example Barton gives of "the extraordinary, the deformed, [and] the monstrous" (170) having apotropaic functions is Ascyltos (the friend and rival of the protagonist Encolpius in *Satyricon*), who is described as "lacinia fascine" on account of the size of his genitals (Petron. *Sat*. 92). Barton, in line with her argument, translates this expression as "the extrusion of a phallic amulet" (171). While we know of a Roman god by the name Fascinus (Plin. *HN* 28.35) and he has been connected to phallic amulets (Whitmore 2017, 49), I would like to push back against Barton's conclusion that Petronius is framing Ascyltos as an *apotropeion*. J.N. Adams directs our attention to a Priapic verse in which a man with a "laesus penis" (injured penis) asks Priapus: "fer opem, Priape, parti, cuius tu, pater, ipse pars videris" (*Priap*. 37.8; help, Priapus, the part of which you, father, yourself seem to be a part). Since the phrasing is so similar to that of Petronius—both Ascyltos and Priapus are described as "attached" to their phalluses rather than vice versa—Adams suggests that Petronius meant to compare Ascyltos to an ithyphallic statue (Adams 1982, 64); thus the point was to exaggerate and even mock Ascyltos' penis, rather than imply that penises attached to humans and/or whole human bodies could ward off the evil eye akin to amulets. I believe that the context of Ascyltos' (un)favorable description supports this interpretation. It is part of a rant by Eumolpus: same as Ascyltos, he was naked at the baths, but he was ridiculed, while the youth was looked at with admiration and applauded.[13] I believe that Eumolpus uses the word *fascinum*

[13] According to Barton, applause is apotropaic as well, protecting both the audience and the performer (1993, 171 n123).

to emphasize the unnaturalness of Ascyltos' genitalia to preclude questioning of his own sexual prowess. Eumolpus also bitterly adds that Ascyltos was picked up by a Roman knight of ill repute, who took the well-endowed youth home "ut tam magna fortuna solus uteretur" (to make use of such great fortune alone); it goes without saying that averting the evil eye is not what the infamous Roman knight had in mind. This further demotes Ascyltos to a sex object, a boy toy. That *fascinum* could be associated, at least mockingly, with actual sexual activities is attested in *Satyricon* itself: in order to cure Encolpius' impotence, a priestess of Priapus inserts a *fascinum* covered with oil, ground pepper, and nettles (ouch) into his anus (138).

As might be deduced from this scholarship review, I find it counter-productive to automatically assign apotropaic function to all non-normative bodies and their representations. Doubtlessly, the supposed apotropaic abilities of short-statured people are centered in some representations. If we return to the mosaic examined by Levi, we find a literal evil eye and a short-statured man among the entities "tasked" with attacking it. Another entity represented in this mosaic is a bird, yet we easily conceptualize that birds take on other, separate roles in the Roman imaginary, from "naturalistic animals among the realistic vistas of architectural ornamentation" in second-style Roman wall-painting (Harden 2014) to a heatedly debated stand-in for Catullus' penis in his poems.[14] Just as we recognize that a bird can signify various things based on context, the patron's and artist's intention, and the viewer's perspective, we should refrain from assuming that all depictions of short-statured people were intended to be apotropaic. Similarly, I believe we foreclose possible readings if we assume that all apotropaic representations of non-normative bodies are intended to be funny and conversely, that all humorous depictions of non-normative bodies were expected to have apotropaic qualities.

[14] For an exhaustive exploration of this discussion, see Gaisser 2007, 305-340.

Humor

This assumption is especially fraught because humor is historically and culturally specific. Herodotus illustrates that this was understood in ancient times as well. One of the transgressions Herodotus ascribes to Cambyses is sacrilege; he narrates that while in Memphis, Cambyses went into a temple of Hephaestus and "πολλὰ τῷ ἀγάλματι κατεγέλασε" (made much mockery of the image of the god). For those who are not familiar with the image, Herodotus explains that it "πυγμαίου ἀνδρὸς μίμησις ἐστί" (is a likeness of a pygmy man) (3.37). Herodotus seems to acknowledge that finding such an image amusing is not unreasonable; however, Cambyses' disregard of the *context* in which the image was presented is a sign of madness. Thus, identifying whether an image was considered funny by an ancient society proves to be a challenging task; a predicament that can be summarized by the sentiment "anyone who claims to understand how, when, or why laughter erupted in any past society is always over-simplifying and over-confident" (Beard 2012, 581). Thus, as an antidote for oversimplification and overconfidence, I turn to ancient evidence and modern scholarship that I believe provide useful context for judging the humorous(less)ness of short-statured people and their representations in imperial Rome.

In his treatise on best practices for orators, Cicero provides observations on the use of humor in speeches. He notes that "deformitas et corporis vitii" (ugliness and bodily imperfections), make for good joke matter, since they belong to the list of topics "neque odio magno, neque misericordia maxima digna" (*De Or.* 2.238-239; worthy neither of great aversion nor the deepest sympathy). But jokes about appearance, Cicero warns, are not always appropriate, a fact that he illustrates by the following story:

> Pusillus testis processit. 'Licet,' inquit, 'rogare?' Philippus. Tum quaesitor properans: 'Modo breviter.' Hic ille: 'Non accusabis; perpusillum rogabo.' Ridicule. Sed sedebat iudex L. Aurifex, brevior ipse, quam testis etiam: omnis est risus in iudicem conversus: visum est totum scurrile ridiculum.

> A short witness came forward. "May I question him?" asked Philip. The prosecutor, who was in a hurry, replied "Only if you are brief." To which Philip: "You won't complain; I will ask very little."[15] Hilarious. But among the jurors was L. Aurifex, who was even shorter than the witness, and so the laughter turned on him instead. The joke seemed totally buffoonish. (245)

According to Cicero, what went wrong with the joke is that it was not specific enough and implicated someone the speaker did not intend to (245; in quos nolis). One does not want to ridicule the person on whom the outcome of your case depends. In chapter 3, I will further explore how one's social status impacted the treatment of their non-normative body, namely how some freeborn citizens were able to pursue lives not defined by their bodily non-normativity.

Since Cicero is writing about public speaking, his observations are limited to humor at the expense of real people, members of one's audience; but what of generalized depictions of non-normative bodies? One type of evidence available to us is satyrical epigram, a genre meant to provoke amusement by clever use of punchlines. The Greek Anthology preserves the following three epigrams by Lucillius:[16]

> Τὴν μικρὴν παίζουσαν Ἐρώτιον ἥρπασε κώνωψ·
> ἡ δέ· "Τί," φησί, "δρῶ; Ζεῦ πάτερ, εἴ μ᾽ ἐθέλεις";[17]
>
> A mosquito carried off little Erotion while she was playing;
> "What am I to do," she said, "Father Zeus, if you want me?" (*AP* 11.88)
>
> Τὸν μικρὸν Μάκρωνα θέρους κοιμώμενον εὑρὼν
> εἰς τρώγλην μικροῦ τοῦ ποδὸς εἵλκυσε μῦς.
> ὃς δ᾽ ἐν τῇ τρώγλῃ ψιλὸς τὸν μῦν ἀποπνίξας,
> "Ζεῦ πάτερ," εἶπεν, "ἔχεις δεύτερον Ἡρακλέα."
>
> One summer, finding little Macron asleep,
> A mouse dragged him into its hole by his little foot.
> But in the hole he, unarmed, strangled the mouse.
> "Father Zeus," he said, "You have a second Herakles" (*AP* 11.95)

[15] The pun is that *perpusillum* could refer either to the number of questions Phillip will ask or to the short stature of his witness.
[16] The only definitive fact of Lucillius' biography is that he lived under Nero (*AP* 9.572).
[17] The texts are provided in accordance with Floridi 2014.

Ἱππεύων μύρμηκι Μενέστρατος, ὡς ἐλέφαντι,
δύσμορος ἐξαπίνης ὕπτιος ἐξετάθη,
λακτισθεὶς δ᾽ ὡς εἶχε τὸ καίριον, "Ὦ φθόνε," φησίν,
"οὕτως ἱππεύων ὤλετο καὶ Φαέθων."

Minestratos, riding an ant like an elephant,
Poor guy, was suddenly stretched out on his back,
Being trampled and meeting his final moment, "O envy,"
He said, "thus Phaethon also perished while riding." (*AP* 11.104)

These ridiculous situations—being carried off by a mosquito, riding an ant as an elephant, fighting a mouse to the death—already have an absurdist appeal; but it is drawing parallels with well-known myths that carries the jokes. Thus all three epigrams engage in parody: they take stories of Ganymede and Zeus, Heracles' labors, and Phaethon and Helios' chariot and replace the protagonists with fantastically tiny people. But the ultimate punchline relies, as Lucia Floridi puts it, on "il contrasto tra la piccolezza del personaggio e la grandezza del suo ego" (2014, 205; the contrast between the smallness of the character and the greatness of his ego). By putting these self-aggrandizing statements into the mouths of his protagonists, Lucillius adds another level of comedy. At the risk of overanalyzing a joke, I would like to suggest a couple of deeper readings of these epigrams. Perhaps Lucillius is mocking boastful people by literally putting them on a different scale of existence; or perhaps he is implying that all insignificant people treat their actions as worthy of eternalizing. In both of these readings short-statured people are used as a metaphor. It is equally possible that Lucillius *is* just ridiculing short-statured people. Then again, there could be no deeper meaning at all, and Lucillius just picked figures that seemed least heroic; that in and of itself would be telling, namely that short-statured people are seen as the opposite of competent and courageous. Since Lucillius, working in the written medium, gets to direct our attention to the essential elements of the joke, these epigrams are helpful for formulating what exactly about short-statured people was seen as humorous. The drawback is that we know little about Erotion, Macron,

and Minestratos' bodily non-normativity apart from their smallness. In fact, even the adjective *μικρός* that describes Erotion and Macron is ambiguous, as it could refer both to their age or their size. While I cannot rule out that characters described as such in Lucilius' epigrams are young, it is the physical smallness that the context emphasizes through the figures of a mosquito and a mouse, as well as the name Μάκρων (literally "Big Guy"). I would also argue that Erotion's assumption that she attracted the attention of Zeus would not be as humorous if she was simply young, and not small in a non-normatively bodily way.

So-called *phlyax* scenes on South Italian and Sicilian vases (5th-4th centuries BCE) form a bridge between literary and visual parodies, since they are believed to depict comic performances (Trendall 1967, 9). Although many of them portray scenes from everyday life, others are clearly intended to mock well-known figures and stories. For example, on a fragment from Taranto,[18] Zeus, endowed with a comically large nose, sits on the throne; he has his feet up, and it's clear that if he lets them down, he would not be able to reach the floor. In front of Zeus we see squatting Dionysus, his clothing hitched-up to expose his phallus. Interestingly, the short length of Dionysus' thyrsus, in addition to the shape created by his legs spreading his robing, creates an impression that he is also represented by a short-statured figure; this effect is emphasized by the fact that he is tilting his head back to look up at the third figure, of whom only the lower half is preserved by the fragment.

In other types of depictions, we also find many examples of replacing idealized bodies with non-normative ones. For example, the first century BCE frieze from House of the Menander in Pompeii (I.10.4, room 46) features Theseus with the Minotaur, alongside other divine and human characters of myth, all portrayed in a caricature style that recalls the physical features of

[18] Apulian bell-krater fragment, first quarter of the fourth century BCE. Now in Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 121613. *Phlyax Vases*^{2} 61.

disproportionate short-statured people: their heads are larger, and their limbs are shorter vis-a-vis their torsos in comparison to normatively bodied people. Clarke suggests that these scenes were expected to appeal to those "literate, skilled in ekphrasis, and willing (perhaps eager) to see the gods and heroes lampooned" (2007, 144). I would add that more generally, the humor of the frieze comes from its contrast with the Roman custom of adorning house walls with idealized bodies (which can be seen in other rooms of this lavish house); no knowledge of mythology is required to appreciate this aspect of the parody. Similarly, Michael Garmaise considers statuettes of short-statured people outfitted with military regalia to be parodic;[19] they were intended to subvert the expectation that a soldier "will be physically healthy and attractively proportioned" (1996, 146). In his examination of Greek vase-painting, Alexandre Mitchell identifies surprise as the core comic mechanism: Greek vases repeatedly portray the same subjects in the same manner, and a painter can catch their viewer off-guard and possibly make them laugh by changing some of the expected elements (2009, 29); here again a common "bait-and-switch" motif replaces gods and idealized citizen bodies with satyrs and "dwarfs". He brings up the aforementioned boxing pelike as exploiting "the burlesque possibilities offered by the unusual anatomy of dwarfs" (241); in another example[20] a satyr puts on armor with the help of a maenad, in a parody of epic scenes of heroes arming themselves for battle (174).

Thus there is convincing literary and visual evidence that figures of short-statured people could be used for comedic purposes, and especially in parodies. The question left to address is how this evidence adds to our knowledge of the lived experience of historical short-statured people. Multiple scholars are determined to not interpret comic representations as evidence of negative

[19] "[s]ince living dwarfs would have been useless in a conventional army," he explains.
[20] Attic red-figrue pelike, Deepdene painter, 460-450 BCE. Now in London, British museum, inv. 1865,0103.16; BAPD 205622; *ARV*[2] 501.35; *Paralipomena* 381.

societal attitudes. Thus Clarke, despite describing sexual scenes of *Pygmaei* as a "comic foil" to "elegant couples" (1998, 43), declares that Hellenistic and Roman viewers were naively curious about such representations of the "Other", "but did not debase, enslave, or otherwise show ill will toward them because of their difference" in real life (46). Similarly Dasen observes that people with dwarfism in Greek vase painting were seen as "like satyrs … experimenting with the limits of human nature, and reflecting in a burlesque way the norms of the *polis*," but in the same paragraph assures us that within the Greek *polis*, "they do not seem to have an undignified role" (2015, 42). Meintani, imagining how Hellenistic grotesque figurines were viewed, argues that their audience "laughed not *at* them (and their living counterparts), as has invariably been championed, but vicariously *with* them" (2022, 387, author's emphasis). In terms of parodic (or "carnivalesque", as she calls them, after Mikhail Bakhtin's theory) representations specifically, she insists that "the butt of the joke is not the cripple and the deformed," but the person being parodied, such as "the Roman magistrate, the rhetor, the athlete, and so on" (386). I believe that this and similar interpretations completely misconstrue the foundational logic of parody: putting a particular type of a person in a situation is only funny if they are seen as intrinsically not belonging in that situation. If these figurines are funny, they are funny precisely because "the cripple and the deformed" cannot be magistrates or athletes; therefore I absolutely consider the joke to be made at their expense. At the same time, as Cicero's anecdote from the beginning of this section shows, a non-normatively bodied person could occupy a position of power, and making *them* the butt of a joke was frowned upon. Thus as with apotropaism, we should refrain from assuming that Romans viewed short-statured people and their representations as inherently funny.

Chapter outlines

When we do not uncritically ascribe apotropaism, humor, or "Otherness" to representations

of short-statured people, a wider range of interpretations becomes available. This wider range of readings, I believe, in turn opens our minds to more possibilities for what the lived experience of historical short-statured people was like. If, on the other hand, we accepted apotropaism, humor, and "Otherness" as the only possible meanings ascribed to short-statured bodies in art, it would be unsurprising that their historical counterparts could only be imagined as objects of "degrading and painful humiliation" for the entertainment of social elites (Garland 1995, 46).

Therefore, before I address the lived experience of short-statured people in ancient Rome directly, in chapter 1 I suggest a more nuanced approach to a particular set of depictions of short-statured figures, namely their appearance in sexual scenes on terracotta lamps. The purpose of this chapter is to further disabuse us from the reductionist paradigms that have shaped how we view historical short-statured people. The lamps that serve as my case study existed at the intersection of Roman perceptions of short-statured people, *Pygmaei*, and sex. While the decorations on these lamps doubtlessly belong to the same tradition as Nilotic paintings, the lack of Nile-specific features and the normativity of the sexual acts portrayed blurs the line between *Pygmaei* and historical short-statured people. I argue that although these lamps circulated alongside lamps portraying normatively bodied couples and were likely intended to be (unfavorably) contrasted with them, these images were also open to normalizing, integrating interpretations. I finally consider what functions one such lamp performed in an Aquileian burial; I suggest that it was chosen for its association with leisure and entertainment, and was likely chosen by the tomb owners to reflect and enhance their social status.

In chapters 2 and 3, I show that in imperial Rome enslaved and freed short-statured people were similarly ascribed entertainment and socially enhancing value, and attempt to envision how they could have navigated this expectation. In chapter 2 I consider how the identities of *deliciae*,

"pet child," and short-statured person overlapped for Conops, an enslaved person of Julia the Younger. I bring out the parallels between the skills ascribed to *deliciae* and non-normatively bodied performers, explicating the labor that likely went into maintaining these personas. By analyzing Conops' epitaph alongside others found in the Iunii Silani columbarium, I then argue that this labor and the benefits it brought was seen as an opportunity for positive identification in his community of enslaved people and freedpeople.

I begin chapter 3 by examining accounts of freeborn short-statured people to further emphasize that meanings ascribed to non-normative bodies in ancient Rome are not "inherent" or "natural," since given resources and opportunity, short-statured people could, in fact, embody the values of Roman social elite. I then turn to the gravestone of Myropnous, the (likely enslaved) aulos player; I propose that life accounts of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century freak show performers provide useful comparative evidence for envisioning the agency of Roman enslaved and freed short-statured performers. I interpret Myropnous' commemoration as showing his identities as short-statured performer and musician as inextricably linked, and as reflecting the pride he and his community had in both facets of his life.

Chapter 1. Beyond Apotropaism, Humor, and "Othering": Sexual scenes on terracotta lamps

Since the primary goal of this dissertation is to add to our knowledge of Roman short-statured people's lived experience, it may be counter-intuitive that short-statured figures in artistic representations are the focus of this first chapter. Yet I strongly believe that we cannot approach our evidence for historical short-statured people in a nuanced way while we are still operating under the assumptions involved in the apotropaic/humorous/"Othering" framework of interpretation. In the Introduction, I examined the ancient sources and modern scholarship that form the foundation of this framework; in this chapter I continue to do so and use sexual scenes—that is, images that portray penetrative or oral sexual acts—on terracotta lamps (most popular in first and second centuries CE[21]) as my case study to offer alternative readings. To this end, I will first discuss the distinctive features of mold-made terracotta lamps as a medium; second, I will survey ancient representations of short-statured people involved in sexual scenes; third, I will consider sex scenes with short-statured people that are found specifically on lamps; finally, I will examine a particular lamp with such an image found in a burial site at Aquileia. I chose this specific lamp to test my general observations for three reasons: 1) it has a documented archeological context; 2) it is part of the most extensive and well-catalogued lamp collection in Italy; 3) it was found in a Roman military, diplomatic, and trade outpost.

Lamps as physical objects

In Italy, independent lamp-production (as opposed to the production of lamps by Greek craftsmen in Magna Graecia[22]) can be traced to the second half of second century BCE (Pavolini

[21] Because the proportions of the volutes framing the nozzle and how they are attached to the body of the lamp indicate a specific point in the development of the form, it is thankfully possible to date these lamps independently of the archeological context.

[22] In Greece itself and its colonies lamp-making takes up in the seventh century BCE, inspired by contact with

1987, 139). This innovation is led by Romans, and eventually is taken up by Etruscans as well; previously, both cultures preferred the use of torches and *candelabra* (stands for candles) for illumination purposes (Ambrosini 2013, 6). In the beginning of the second century BCE, wheel-making of lamps in Greece is replaced by mold-making, a trend that is picked up by Romans in the second half of that century (Pavolini 1987, 142). This allowed for new shapes, mass production, and decorative designs; before, in Donald M. Bailey's words, lamps were "strictly utilitarian objects, with nothing frivolous about them" (1963, 18). Wide mold-made lamps with voluted nozzles, as the ones examined in this chapter, were developed by the middle of the first century BCE in Italy (Bailey 1997, 164). The bowls of these lamps are covered by disci, which became a popular object of ornamentation with Romans. These lamps were widely exported until the beginning of second century CE (Bailey 1963, 19). In the second half of first century CE so called "factory lamps" were developed in Northern Italy; they are without decoration, have a sunk center around which there is a raised rim, and a shallow groove running through the body to the nozzle (Robins 1939, 57). On the markets of the north-west provinces, these "factory lamps" replaced the voluted lamps made in central and southern Italy (Bailey 1963, 20). After the third century CE lamp production practically ceases in the north-west provinces, but continues in Greece, Asia Minor, the Levant, and North Africa (Bailey 1963, 20).

Lamps produce light about as bright as that of a candle but require less attention (the wick does not have to be snuffed, but gradually burns away as it is occasionally pulled forward with tweezers or a needle). Brighter light was achieved by increasing the number of nozzles and on a lamp and therefore wicks, which also increased the amount of oil consumed. Wicks were made of various fibrous materials, such as linen, papyrus, mullein, oakum, and fibers of the castor plant

Egypt, Cyprus, and Eastern Mediterranean cultures (Ambrosini 2013, 4).

among other materials. Similarly various are oils that were used in lamps; based on availability it could be olive oil, sesame oil, nut oil, fish oil, castor oil and other plant oils. Since all of these substances are also used in cooking, only societies that had a food surplus could afford to use lamps extensively (Bailey 1963, 10). Lamps in ancient Greece and Rome were usually made of clay or bronze, the former being more common, the latter considered to be of superior quality and value (Hug 1927, 1569).

Lamps had uses in the religious context as lighting in temples and votives to gods (Hug 1927, 1585). Thus, for example, a storage room in the Pompeian Temple of Isis contained 57 lamps (Hoffmann 1991, 94), the sheer quantity indicating that they had significance beyond providing the modest lighting customary in domestic contexts (see below). 70 unused oil lamps dated to the first half of the fourth century were found at the cult site of Anna Perenna in Rome, which suggests that lamps were used as votives in religious contexts (Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2007, 240). Epigraphic evidence documents that lamps had a role to play in burial rituals as well. For example, a third century will from Rome, among other rites to be performed regularly, requests "lucerna lucens sibi ponatur" (*CIL* 6.10248; let a shining lamp be placed for me[23]). In a second century epitaph from Salerno we see a more general invocation of the grave/lamp association: "Have Septima: sit tibi terra levis! Quisquis huic tumulo posuit ardentem lucernam, illius cineres aurea terra tegat" (*CIL* 10.633; Farewell, Spetima, let the earth be light for you. Whoever places a lit lamp on this tomb, let golden earth cover their ashes).

Much can be learned about the domestic use of lamps from Penelope Allison's study of artifacts from the Insula del Menandro in Pompeii, which focuses on the contextual information for the finds. Allison notes that although lamps, particularly clay lamps, is one of the most prolific

[23] All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

find classes in Pompeii, the lamps in her sample barely allow for a lamp per each room. This can partially be explained by non-recording of broken lamps, abandonment of houses prior to the eruption of Vesuvius, and people taking lamps with them as they fled the eruption. Even with these factors taken into account, it is likely that lamps were only used in certain areas of the house as needed. At least a third of the lamps recorded in the Insula of the Menander were found in storage; this hints that lamps were not usually left lying around between uses. Lamps could be bought in bulk based on design preference, as ascertained from the fact that numerous lamps with the same motif were found in the same house (2006, 391-2).

While it is likely that all members of the household handled individual lamps at one point or another, these interactions were particularly charged for enslaved people. Sonia Sabnis explores oil lamps in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* as symbols of different aspects of enslavement (2012). She outlines how in the novel enslaved people are often invisible as human beings and are instead assimilated to the instruments they carry or are perceived as instruments themselves (85-6). In the famous episode of Cupid and Psyche, we also see the conflation of lamp and enslaved person as witness. The lamp Psyche uses to unveil Cupid's identity is the "concrete representation" of invisible and intangible servants of the house (99); it is reminiscent of epigrams that substitute an enslaved person present at the enslavers' moment of intimacy for a lamp (cf. *Mart.* 14.39). When a drop of oil falls on Cupid and wakes him, the narrative portrays this not as an accident, but a conscious action on the part of the lamp, "sive perfidia pessima sive invidia noxia sive quod tale corpus contingere et quasi basiare et ipsa gestiebat" (Apul. *Met.* 5.23; either by the worst treachery or noxious envy or because she herself desired to touch and in a way kiss such a body). Thus even a metaphorical enslaved person in the form of a lamp has potential to become uncontrollable and

expose her enslaver or go against the enslaver's interests[24] (102). Similarly Noel Lenski shows the entanglement of enslaved people and lamps by looking at anthropomorphic objects (2018). We see in the lanterns shaped as lantern bearers[25] and bronze lamp holders[26] shaped like young men the embodiment of Roman logic: "[j]ust as slaves are tools, tools could be made to look like slaves." (147)

In terms of lamp decoration, according to Bailey, sex scenes are among the most popular type of decoration on lamps in the British museum along with myth and legend, animals, and entertainment (such as gladiators or theater). Thus of the 692 lamps listed in the "Roman lamps made in Italy" volume of *The Catalogue of Lamps in The British Museum*, 36 of have sexual scenes, and 13 have sexual imagery involving short-statured people specifically. Although Bailey assures us that this likely reflects the actual proportions of production in antiquity—even citing the devout Catholicism of Charles Townley, from whom many lamps were acquired (1980, 64)—I have looked through the records of over four thousand terracotta lamps in the collections of Italian museums and was only able to find 35 lamps with sexual imagery, 6 of them depicting short-statured figures (my findings are summarized in table 1). Perhaps the origin of the lamps in the British Museum can resolve this paradox. Only one of the 13 lamps with short-statured figures engaged in sex has a semblance of provenience: based on a paper label attached, it is "said to be" from Petrie's excavations at Coptos[27] (Bailey 1980, 175; Q 924; inv. 1971-4-26.10). Therefore it is not inconceivable that more lamps with sexual scenes would be in Italian museums today if not

[24] Although here the lamp can be read as showing loyalty to her "true" enslaver, Cupid.
[25] See, for example, a terracotta lamp from the second to first century BCE, now in London, the British Museum, inv. EA 37561. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA37561
[26] See, for example, a bronze candelabrum from Casa dell'Ephebo (I.7.10-12) at Pompeii. Now in Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 143753.
[27] Presumably Bailey includes this item in the corpus of lamps made in Italy because he believed it was imported into Egypt from Italy. See a summary of the scholarly debate on the export of lamps from Italy into provinces below.

for private collectors like Townley, who gathered a couple hundred terracotta lamps in Italy, which were later sold to the British Museum by his cousin (including one lamp that features short-statured people engaged in sex[28]). In this way, it seems that lamps share the fate of many other small ancient items with figurative (and especially "racy") decoration, namely that they were sought-after purchases and so ended up decontextualized and in museums far from their origins.

Another possibility is that Bailey allowed for the inclusion of lamps made in Italy for export into the provinces when compiling the catalogue of "Roman lamps made in Italy". As mentioned above, the only lamp with sexual imagery involving short-statured people that has at least a semblance of provenience is "said to be" from excavations at Coptos (1980, 175; Q 924; inv. 1971-4-26.10). Sanja Vucetic, analyzing lamp collections from Ampurias (Spain), Carthage (Tunisia), Salamis (Cyprus), and Vindonissa (Switzerland), finds a quantity of lamps depicting sexual activity roughly comparable to the British Museum collection (5.2%): 2.13%, 4.74%, 6.10%, and 4.14% of all found lamps respectively (2013, 143).[29] Within these groups of lamps with sexual imagery, a substantial proportion depicts individuals she labels "dwarfs:" in her updated study with an increased data sample, Vucetic finds that short-statured figures comprise 44.2% of sexual scenes in Gaul/Germania, 30.4% in North Africa, 22.2% in Cyprus, 6.3% in Roman Asia, and 0% in Achaia (2022, appendix, table 1). It is worth noting that my case-study lamp at the end of this chapter comes from a region of Roman Italy adjacent to Gaul, and I discuss the particular relevance the imagery of non-normative bodies might have carried there.

[28] Terracotta lamp from circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1814,0704.38. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-38

[29] While Vucetic's 2022 article on this class of lamps contains data from twice as many catalogues, most of them lack information on the total number of lamps found at the site, so I chose to reproduce her previous (2013) findings here.

Museum and catalogue	Total lamps	Sexual scenes total	Sexual scenes with short-statured people
Museo di Aquileia (Balestrazzi 1988)	1206	13	6
Museo archeologico di Verona (Larese and Sgreva 1997)	687	3	0
Antiquarium Comunale, Rome (Mercando 1962)	411	0	0
Museo civico archeologico di Bologna (Genito 1980)	263	9	0
Trento (Genito 1986)	262	3*	?
Tortona (Gallina 1985)	259	1	0
Museo civico di Treviso (Zaccaria Ruggiu 1980)	245	0	0
Museo Campano (Patroni 1898)	229	0	0
Museo concordiese di Portogruaro (Larese 1983)	198	0	0
Museo di Cremona (Pontiroli 1980)	136	1*	?
Collezione archeologica del Palazzo Ducale di Mantova (Ferraresi 2000)	70	0	0
Museo di Rimini (Giovagnetti 1984)	61	0	0

Table 1. Distribution of lamps with sexual imagery in select Italian museums.
*only in fragments, impossible to determine whether average-sized or short-statured

Whether lamps in the provinces were usually produced locally or made in Italy for export has been a subject of scholarly discussion. One model, based on the corpus of signed terracotta lamps, suggests that lamps found in vastly different locations but carrying the same name were made locally but at interconnected branch workshops (Harris 1980). Of the roughly 1700 Latin lamp makers' names on lamps, only 20-25% had significant circulation outside of their presumed area of manufacture; they form the corpus on which this model is based. This corpus falls roughly into two groups. To the first group belong lamps believed to be made in Northern Italy and generally found in the Gallic and German provinces, the upper Danube provinces, and Dalmatia; the most common makers' names in this group are also found in central Italy, Spain, Dacia, and Moesia. The lamps in the second group were likely to have been made in North African workshops and can be found in southern Italy, as well as the Spanish provinces, southern France, Sardinia, and the German provinces (129-132). The model assumes that simple terracotta lamps were usually made near the places they were sold, since transporting such cheap and easy to produce items would not be profitable (134). Another argument in favor of local production is provided by many surviving molds that bear signatures (135). Signatures that are misspelled or written in different ligatures were clearly added manually (as opposed to being features of unauthorized secondary molds); they were therefore placed there intentionally, supposedly to show belonging to a certain brand. Furthermore, lamps made from secondary molds ought to be smaller than the originals,[30] which does not hold true for the corpus we have (139). In Roman law, we find the framework for branch workshops in the figure of an *institor*, someone appointed to a place "ad emendum

[30] An unauthorized mold would be made by applying clay to an existing lamp; such a mold would shrink when fired, and therefore lamps produced with it would be smaller than the original.

vendendumve" (*Dig.* 14.3.18; for the purposes of buying or selling); that a chapter of the *Digest* was dedicated to the regulation of the practice shows that it was widespread (141).

The model outlined above was criticized by Bailey. He disputes the very foundation of the interconnected workshops model: that clay lamps were too cheap for profit to be made by their transportation. First, it is impossible to establish how cheap clay lamps were, except maybe for the beginning of fourth century CE, as documented by Diocletian's Maximum Price Edict (Erim and Reynolds 1973, 103 and 108). Bailey believes that the low price found in the edict reflects the "exceptionally" poor quality of lamps throughout the Empire at the time; he suggests that lamps of poor quality not appealing to buyers elsewhere is as plausible a reason for not exporting them as not being able to make a profit because of transportation costs. Even if we accept early imperial references to lamps priced at one *as* such as *CIL* IV.5380,[31] the variety of size, shape, quality, and decoration should discourage us from generalizing that price to all clay lamps (Bailey 1987, 60). Similar limitations of extant evidence of transportation costs makes determining the profitability of the lamp trade impossible. Bailey even undertook a practical experiment to show how even the hypothetical scenario of lamp transportation offered by the branch workshop model was flawed: by packing a box one cubic foot in size with lamps and estimating how many could be carried in a cart, he arrives at a number eleven times greater than the branch workshop study posits (61). While provincial workshops doubtlessly existed, Bailey denies they replaced lamps imported from Italy (63). Richard Duncan-Jones also raises concerns about local workshops being solely responsible for lamp diffusion across the Mediterranean. He points out that ships that carried foodstuffs and luxuries in one direction needed goods for the return voyage, and the compactness and wide use of lamps make them suitable for that purpose (1990, 52), which goes against the

[31] This graffito from Pompeii is a ledger of a kind that documents goods sold to people on particular dates and their prices. Harris suggests that *inltynium* (sic) means a lamp but does not offer evidence to support this (1980, 126n60).

argument that lamps were too cheap to export. Using the same sample of "factory lamps" as the local workshop study to analyze the cohesion of Mediterranean trade, Duncan-Jones notes that signatures seem to be restricted to either northern Italy and northern provinces or southern Italy and Africa, with little to no overlap between these areas (58).

Having considered the implications of mold-made terracotta lamps as a medium, in the next section I turn to Roman written and visual portrayals of short-statured people's sexuality.

Non-normative bodies and sexuality

Extant written sources from Rome have little to say about the sexuality of short-statured people.[32] Of the historical figures known to us, none are described as engaged in intimate relationships, married, or having children.[33] What we do have is a poem by Martial, in which he makes fun of a husband for not recognizing that his wife has taken a "parvus morio"[34] (tiny fool) as her lover (12.93). In the poem, Labulla gets to kiss her presumably enslaved lover publicly by putting a twist on a cup-kissing party game. In the classic version, a couple could "exchange" kisses by taking turns kissing the same cup and passing it to the other;[35] Labulla cleverly gets the kisses she actually desires by substituting her *morio* for the cup. That Labulla's unnamed lover can be used interchangeably with an inanimate item further emphasizes that he is merely a sexual object; within the poem he is also a narrative tool for Martial to express Labulla's sexual deviance rather than an independent agent. If we accept, following Garmaise, that the *morio* is intellectually impaired, it

[32] Representations of sexual activity are also conspicuously missing from the Greek written sources examined by Dasen, as well as from the corpus of Greek "dwarfs" images assembled by her (1999, 174).
[33] Pliny speaks of a short-statured person Conopas who was in *deliciis* of Julia, granddaughter of Augustus (HN 7.75). I discuss what that could have meant in the next chapter.
[34] Based on a review of extant Latin texts, Garmaise concludes that "low intelligence" was central to the meaning of the word *morio* (2002, 56). At the same time, Goodey and Rose warn us against assuming an intellectual disability—"the very conceptual existence of which is modern"—in all passages that contain this word (2013, 31).
[35] Ovid gives instructions in *Ars Amatoria*: *fac primus rapias illius tacta labellis / pocula, quaque bibet parte puella, bibas*, "see first that you seize the cup touched by her lips, and, from the part the girl drinks, you drink" 1.575-576).

is even possible that he is "oblivious to what is going on" (2002, 62). If the stupidity of the husband is the punchline of Martial's joke, what exactly is he oblivious to? Is it only his wife's cruel and public mocking of him as a cuckold, or is it also the sexual abilities of short-statured men (as well as men with intellectual impairments)? A satyrical epigram adds interesting context to this notion:

> Κόνων δίπηχυς, ἡ γυνὴ δὲ τεσσάρων·
> ἐν τῇ κλίνῃ δὲ τῶν ποδῶν ἰσουμένων,
> σκόπει Κόνωνος ποῦ τὸ χεῖλος ἔρχεται.
>
> Conon is two cubits[36] tall, and his wife—four;
> in the bed, with their feet on the same level,
> consider where Conon's lip goes (*AP* 11.108)[37]

Before we even get to what they get up to in bed, Conon and his unnamed γυνή (wife) offer tantalizing possibilities not found in any other extant sources. Is this epigram evidence that it was conceivable for people with pathological dwarfism to marry average-sized people, or is this a premise created solely to make the difference in heights a punch line? And what a punch line it is: due to his height, cunnilingus is the only sexual act Conon can engage in. In the realm of satirical epigram, to accuse a man of performing cunnilingus is to suggest the most extreme form of effeminacy. Thus Martial on two separate occasions assures his addressees that he does not consider them *cinaedi*—men who enjoyed being penetrated—only to turn around and charge them with performing oral sex on women, implying that the latter is even more degrading (Mart. 2.28 and 4.43). In another of Martial's epigrams, even "obscena Leda" (obscene Leda)—that is, a prostitute —refuses to kiss her client on the mouth after he goes down on her (11.61). For the protagonist of the poem Conon, bodily difference and perverse sexuality are linked: his short

[36] The ancient cubit is typically 44 centimeters long, making Conon 88 cm tall, and his wife—176 cm.
[37] In terms of dating this epigram, we only have the terminus post quem: the satiric epigram is a development of late first century CE. One of the extant Greek Anthology manuscripts (Sylloge Euphemiana) gives the heading of this epigram as *τοῦ σατὰν Ἰουλιανοῦ τοῦ παραβάτου*, thus attributing the poem to "Satan Julian the transgressor," Julian being the fourth century CE Roman emperor. As amusing as that would be, this attribution is currently considered to be spurious (Page 1981, 573).

stature limits what sexual acts are available to him, making him not masculine enough both in appearance and sexual behavior. There is, however, another possible layer of meaning: since sexual activity in a bed does not necessitate the couple's feet to be on the same level, are we to understand that Conon *chooses* to perform oral sex? Then again, it is possible that the notion of differently statured people engaging in sex seemed ludicrous to the author, and he only focused on the translation of vertical difference into a horizontal one, without giving thought to other sexual positions available to couples of mixed statures. The irony is that to get the joke—to figure out where *does* Conon's lip go—the reader of this epigram is forced to imagine (however fleetingly) a short-statured man in bed with his wife. The perspective of the wife in this epigram is also a curious one: are we to infer that while she has to accept her husband's unmanliness, she is handsomely compensated by cunnilingus? Notably, there are no extant visual depictions of such mixed-stature couples engaged in sex, oral or otherwise; this might be evidence that outside of schematic joke set up, it was too unnerving of an image for the properly manly Roman man to enjoy. Similarly, in her dissertation of modern depictions of men with dwarfism in film, Claudia Cataldo suggests that the ability of men with dwarfism to operate sexually, in spite of not having normative bodies, threatens "the male normate's supposed superiority" (2009, 14).

As to visual representations of two or more short-stature people engaged in sex, they are most commonly found in Nilotic wall paintings; extant depictions predominantly belong to the first and second centuries CE (Meyboom and Versluys 2007, 183). Sexual Nilotic scenes are valuable to my project not only because they provide a substantial corpus of comparanda, but also because they likely belong to the same iconographic tradition as the lamp imagery. That lamps in this chapter could have existed at the intersection of Roman perceptions of the Nile, short-statured people, and sex is evidenced by multiple strains of lamp decoration. Figures that Bailey calls

"grotesque stave dancers" (1975, 60) are close equivalents of *Pygmaei* wielding crossed sticks in Nilotic scenes. For example, a late second-to early third CE lamp now in the British Museum (Bailey 1980, Q 1363)[38] portrays a non-normatively proportioned, macrophallic figure on a boat with hips thrust backward and holding crossed sticks in both hands (*Figure* 1);[39] the similarity to, say, the boat-riding and stick-handling *Pygmaeus* in a second century Roman mosaic (*Figure* 2) is uncanny.[40] Although the image on the lamp is quite worn out, the hat that the figure wears seems to be akin to inverted lotus flowers that *Pygmaei* wear in Nilotic scenes.[41] Music instruments (if that is indeed what the crossed sticks are) are also sometimes featured in lamp sex scenes of short-statured people; thus in a mid-first century lamp also at the British Museum (Q 924),[42] the woman lowers herself on her companion's penis while holding her hands high, seemingly playing castanets (*Figure* 3). Perhaps the most striking piece of comparanda is a lamp at the British Museum which portrays an ambiguously proportioned palm branch-holding woman squatting over genitalia inexplicably located on the back of a crocodile (*Figure* 4), an animal that personified the Nile for Romans (Versluys 2002, 265).[43] She is portrayed in three-quarters profile, but her knees are close together, which is also characteristic of lamps that show short-statured women lowering themselves onto reclining short-statured men, as in the just mentioned Q 924 (*Figure* 3). This is

[38] I intentionally chose to use lamps in its collection as illustrations in this chapter for two reasons: first, of all collections known to me, the British Museum provided me with images of the best quality; second, inventory records for all the British Museum lamps are available online for my readers' inspection. I will be using Bailey's catalogue numbers throughout as the primary reference system for the lamps in the British Museum.
[39] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 175-225 CE, said to be found in Oxford, the UK. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1963,0715.26. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1963-0715-26.
[40] Mosaic, circa 100-150 CE, found in Rome on the bank of Tiber, between the Villa della Farnesina and the Ponte Sisto. Now in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. 125535. https://www.alamy.com/nilotic-mosaic-pygmies-rome-2nd-century-artist-unknown-image186098551.html For more examples of crossed sticks in Nilotic scenes, see Versluys 2002, 282.
[41] One example is the mosaic found in Villa di Bar Buc Ammera in Zliten, circa 100-300 CE, which can still be found in Tripoli in situ.
[42] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1971,0426.10. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1971-0426-10.
[43] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1865,1118.249. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-249. For in depth discussion, see Etienne 2003.

markedly different from how average-sized women are depicted on top, whether they are facing towards (such as Q 934[44], *Figure* 5) or away (Q 1401[45], *Figure* 6) from their partners: their knees are always wide open, displaying them to the viewer. Thus based on iconography, it seems that short-statured people on lamps and in Nilotic paintings are portrayed according to the same set of conventions.

Perhaps the most intriguing of these conventions, is that sexual Nilotic paintings and sexual scenes of short-statured people on lamps use an identical limited repertoire of sexual positions compared to depictions of average-sized couples in the same media. Paul Meyboom and Miguel Versluys note that only two sexual positions occur in extant Nilotic paintings, both for average- and short-statured people:[46] from behind and reverse woman on top (2007, 184). Admittedly, they are working with a limited sample of 15 Nilotic scenes, 6 of which are only known from vague descriptions that do not specify sexual position. However, these same two positions are, with two exceptions,[47] the only ones represented in Vucetic's corpus of 71 provincial lamps depicting sex between short-statured people (2022, appendix, table 10). These two positions are also reflected, with one exception of woman on top, in the 13 sexual lamps with short-statured people at the British Museum.

As of the time of writing, Meyboom and Versluys are the only scholars to have attempted to account for the significance of the reverse woman on top position, therefore it is important to consider their argument in detail although they focus on Nilotic wall paintings and not lamps. Meyboom and Versluys suggest that the origin of this position in Nilotic wall paintings lies in the

[44] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1971,0426.9. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1971-0426-9.
[45] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 175-225 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1971,0426.36. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1971-0426-36.
[46] Or, as Versluys and Meyboom formulate it in their table, for "dwarfs" and "people" (2007, 183).
[47] One of woman on top and one uncertain.

myth of Isis and Osiris. Osiris was killed and dismembered by his envious brother Seth; his wife Isis looks for his body and finds his erect penis floating in the Nile; remaining in the shape of the falcon she took on to search for her husband, she gets on top of the penis and conceives the falcon-god Horus.[48] Already in ancient times this myth was seen as an etiology of the yearly Nile inundation: thus Plutarch relates that Egyptians see the Nile as the "ἀπορροή" (effluence) of Osiris, and the earth that it mixes with and fertilizes as the "σῶμα" (body) of Isis (Plut. *Mor. De Is. et Os.* 366A). The reverse position of the woman on top, according to Meyboom and Versluys, reflects the utmost passivity of Osiris in the sexual act[49] (189). Even if this interpretation is incorrect, they reassure us, since (Roman) artists apparently associated this position with the Nile flood, "and so probably did the Egyptian population". From here Meyboom and Versluys take an ever more baffling logical jump to claiming that during the inundation period this myth was imitated "by professional dancers if not by the Egyptian populace in general" (191). To corroborate the participation of "the common people," they offer the parallel of corn mummies, religious artifacts that are believed to have been made during a festival honoring the resurrection of Osiris (Raven 1982, 31); however to me the production of symbolic material objects seems hardly an assured pipeline to ritualistic public sex acts. As for the "professional dancers" imitating Isis and Osiris, a handful of depictions of "orgiastic dancing" of "a dark man … with a dressed woman" are cited, with the explanation that "there seems to be little doubt" that in all these cases dancing ended with sex (192-197).

However, Richard Jasnow and Mark Smith show that doubting this assumption would not

[48] For an image of falcon-Isis hovering over reclining and ithyphallic Osiris inside the lid of the coffin of Nakht-Khonsou-irou (Third Intermediate Period, i.e. c. 1070-664 BCE), see Etienne 2003, pl. 3. For a late Ptolemaic relief on the same subject from the temple of Hathor at Denderah, see Meyboom and Versluys 2007, 190, fig. 5. Notably, while in both scenes Isis is "on top" of Osiris, her position is not reverse.

[49] The other sexual pose—from behind—is explained as a representation of the alternate version of the Isis/Osiris myth, in which Isis became Egypt and Osiris the fertilizing Nile; thus the man regains his active status and the woman becomes passive (201).

be inappropriate. In their commentary to the first or second century CE demotic text that explicitly mentions sexual activity as part of worship of goddess Mut[50] they point out that there is "surprisingly little unequivocal Egyptian evidence" that such ritual practices took place (2010-2011, 47). While I do not have the expertise to comment on most of the evidence they contest, an unfaithful translation (that I have yet to identify) of Herodotus' description of a festival in the town of Bubastis seems to have been foundational to much scholarship in favor of widespread ritualistic sexual activity. In the passage in question, Herodotus writes that women and men together travel to Bubastis on boats, playing musical instruments, singing, and clapping hands. Whenever they pass a town, they near the bank; then some women continue making music, while others berate the women of the town, or dance, or—and here is the crucial part—"ἀνασύρονται ἀνιστάμεναι" (Hdt. 2.60; pull up their clothes/expose themselves while standing up). Versluys himself in an earlier publication reproduces the misleading notion that according to Herodotus, Egyptians "engaged sometimes in boats on the river, sometimes on the riverbank, in sexual acts" (2003, 282). By the time "The Meaning of Dwarfs" was published in 2005, the inaccuracy of the translation must have been pointed out to him, since the description is summarized as "the women uncover their bodies and make obscene gestures." However Meyboom and Versluys still see this passage as evidence that "lovemaking scenes in the boats" in Nilotic paintings should be connected with the festival at Bubastis (184). Jasnow and Smith argue that within ritual, exposing oneself while mocking someone would have carried meaning different from other sexual activities like intercourse (2010-2011, 48). In fact, Herodotus himself in a later passage describes Egyptians as the first to make it sacrilegious to have intercourse in a temple, or to enter a temple after intercourse without washing

[50] Betsy M. Bryan also suggests some evidence—such as tomb scenes and songs—that sexual behavior might have been part of the drunken festivals at the temple of goddess Mut at South Karnak as early as in the Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1550-1292 BCE (Bryan 2014, 118-119).

(2.63). To sum up, Meyboom and Versluys believe sexual scenes in Nilotic paintings to be "genuine imitations" of Egyptian ritual (2005, 198); while their theory would provide a tidy explanation for the particularity of sexual positions on the Roman lamps under consideration in this chapter, in my opinion there is not enough evidence to support it.

Let us turn to how Meyboom and Versluys account for the non-normative bodies that are often portrayed in sexual Nilotic scenes. While they refer to the well-established connections between "dwarfs" and Egyptian gods Bes and Ptah (204-205), who themselves are portrayed with features recalling disproportionate dwarfism,[51] their major argument is that "dwarfs … were the traditional servants of Osiris" (203). This argument hinges on connecting Alexandrian tesserae depicting an ithyphallic "dwarf" and inscribed "Pamo(u)les"[52] to an episode from Plutarch. The inscription, their argument goes, refers to the Alexandrian quarter Pamyles; Pamyles is connected to the feast of Pamylia; Pamylia is, according to Plutarch, a celebration in honor of Pamyles, the first person[53] to know of Osiris' rebirth. This celebration was, according to Plutarch, a "φαλληφόρια" (Plut. *Mor. De Is. et Os.* 355E; phallos carrying/procession). Which, according to Meyboom and Versluys, means that the ithyphallic "dwarf" on the Alexandrian tessera *is* Pamyles, a servant of Osiris; and thus "dwarfs", through association with Osiris, were appropriate figures to depict as imitating "the creative act" of Isis and Osiris (205). This explanation requires some leaps of faith, and also relies on the assumption that sexual Nilotic scenes are connected to Osiris, which I, as shown above, do not find entirely convincing either.

That being said, there is undeniable extant evidence that short-statured people had a role in

[51] For an in-depth consideration see Dasen 1993, chapters 6 and 7.
[52] See Alfoldi-Rosenbaum 1976, pl. 26, nos. 64-69.
[53] An intriguing nuance to this discussion is that Pamyles' gender is uncertain: the passage contains a feminine participle and then a masculine pronoun some lines later. Meyboom and Versluys refer to Pamyle as "she," which remarkably does not prevent them from using this episode to explain an ithyphallic figure (203).

Egyptian religion. For instance, images of Ptah that bear features of pathological dwarfism were used as protective amulets (Dasen 1993, 85-87). Another example is a mid-fourth century BCE sarcophagus[54] that commemorates Djeho, a short-statured man who danced for the burials of the Apis and Mnevis bulls. In the Roman context as well, Caitlín Barrett warns us against interpreting all Nilotic scenes as "caricatural Roman inventions" (2017, 312), since scenes with *Pygmaei* are occasionally found on sites where they must have still carried genuine religious meaning, such as in the portico of temple of Isis in Pompeii (VIII.7.28). However, to my knowledge, in none of these genuinely religious contexts are people with dwarfism or *Pygmaei* portrayed having sex. An explanation for the frequency of sexual Nilotic scenes might be found instead in how Greek and Roman authors besides Plutarch have focused on religious festivals to hypersexualize Egyptians;[55] which, as Dominic Montserrat remarks, is a common imperialist strategy for sublimating "fears about controlling subjugated cultures" (1996, 164). Montserrat points out that two features seem to characterize Egyptian religious events in the Greco-Roman imaginary: first, the general atmosphere of excess and lack of restraint; second, the equal participation of men and women (165). Thus Strabo describes the celebration of Sarapis in Canobus (Canopus) as πληθύει τῶν μὲν ἐν τοῖς πλοιαρίοις καταυλουμένων καὶ κατορχουμένων ἀνέδην μετὰ τῆς ἐσχάτης ἀκολασίας, καὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν, (Str. 17.1.17; full of both men and women on boats, flute playing and dancing loosely and with utmost licentiousness). Perhaps wall painters took the proverbial ball and ran with it, exaggerating the elements of Egyptian sensual, if not sexual, conduct that went against Roman sensibilities and combining it with non-normative bodies and symbols of Egyptian religion to enhance the "exotic" appeal of Egyptian landscapes. As Barrett and Nikola Bellucci punnily put

[54] A granite sarcophagus, mid fourth century BCE. Now in Cairo Museum, inv. CG 29307.
[55] It should be noted that I am yet to encounter a passage in Greek or Roman literature that explicitly describes intercourse as part of ritual in Egypt.

it, Nilotic scenes are "neither wholly *ex nihilo* or *ex Nilo*," but rework authentic Egyptian motives "according to Roman assumptions, stereotypes, and desires" (2022, 91).

Regardless of what the inspiration for sexual Nilotic scenes was, what function did they perform in the Roman context?[56] For Meyboom and Versluys, their main function was to enhance the Nile's aura of "fertility and *truphe*[57]" (2005, 205); they also propose that unseemly sexual activities were part of constructing "the colonial Other" (208). Lisa Trentin suggests that *Pygmaei* sexual transgressions were a commentary on or perhaps even a warning about "in/appropriate sexual conduct," aimed to affirm the "normality" of the viewer (2017, 242). Similarly, in her discussion of a convivial Nilotic scene in the garden of the Casa dell'Efebo in Pompeii (I.7.10-12), Barrett points out that the wall painting "sets up a structural parallel" between the "carousing" "pygmy" banqueters and their banqueting Roman audience. The fresco, Barrett suggests, "playfully challenge[s]" the viewers to reflect on their own "social performance" as banqueters: is it possible that they or their companions will end up engaging in indecorous behaviors, such as public sex, same as "the denizens of an imagined Nile"? And if so, what reaction would that prompt (2017, 322)? John Clarke believes that while Roman viewers were expected to identify with the "refined" representations of sex (that is, involving average-sized people), "pygmy" sexuality by contrast was supposed to provoke laughter (1998, 43). In the funerary context, Clarke also suggests that such laughter performed an apotropaic function, protecting tomb visitors from the Evil eye and demons (2001, 89).[58] He also points out that in the case of a freedperson's tomb, Nilotic scenes could have signaled their acculturation: in combination with other imagery common in garden

[56] Here I focus specifically on sexual *Pygmaei* scenes; for a general overview of *Pygmaei* functions, see introduction.
[57] From ancient Greek, τρυφή means "luxuriousness, softness" (LSJ).
[58] I have provided a detailed commentary on the non-normative body=laughter=apotropeia equation in the introduction, and I return to the question of non-normative sexuality in funerary context in my analysis of the Aquileia lamp in the last section of this chapter.

decoration for the elites, *Pygmaei* "served to promote the deceased's newly acquired status and *romanitas*" (90). I discuss whether these functions could be ascribed to sexual depictions on lamps in the next section.

Sexual scenes with short-statured figures on lamps

Despite sharing many similarities, images of sex between short-statured people on lamps are different from Nilotic scenes in multiple key ways. First, there is no element that unambiguously places lamp figures in the Nilotic context, or any specific context, for that matter. Apart from an occasional musical instrument (like the castanets in Q 924, *Figure* 3), which are themselves far from a definitive identifier, there is no accessory or element of flora, fauna, or architecture that situates the short-statured lovers as belonging to a specific culture. While it is possible that the mere presence of short-statured figures was enough to invoke the figure of the "hyper-sexual pygmy-clown" (Clarke 2014, 533) in the mind of the viewer, I believe the generality of these images created space for a wider variety of audience responses. The second way in which lamp sexual portrayals are different from their Nilotic painting counterparts is that they do not portray short-statured people as sexually deviant. In Nilotic paintings, *Pygmaei* are shown having sex outdoors, which attests their lack of modesty and decorum; on lamps, short-statured couples have sex on beds, same as their average-sized equivalents. For that matter, sex acts in Nilotic paintings are also rarely limited to a couple, with either bystanders watching and cheering on the couple, like in garden of the Casa dell'Efebo in Pompeii (I.7.10-12), or with multiple people joining in. Envisioning how a Roman viewer could have reacted to such a painting of group sex,[59] Trentin suggests that these paintings allowed their audience to stay "at a safe distance" from sexual

[59] Trentin refers specially to a wall painting, first century CE from Pompeii, now lost, although in this particular case Pygmaei are in position but not yet actively having sex. For drawing see Trentin 2022, fig. 17.1.

deviance and to assert the difference between the viewer and the Other, "in body and action" (2022, 416). While the bodies portrayed on lamps are non-normative in their size and proportions, the "actions" they are engaged in cannot be easily contrasted with those of normative couples. In fact, most of the sex acts ascribed to short-statured figures are mirrored in lamps with average-sized couples. This holds true even for variations of the same sexual position: for kneeling man penetrating woman from behind, we have short- and average-sized examples of woman on all fours (for example, Q 888,[60] *Figure* 7, and Q 935,[61] *Figure* 8) and of man lifting one of the woman's legs (for example, Q 887,[62] *Figure* 9, and Q 828,[63] *Figure* 10). Similarly to the absence of "exoticizing" elements, I suggest that the absence of aberrant sexual behavior offers the viewer a more earnest possibility to interrogate their (mis)alignment with non-normative bodies. The third core difference between sexual Nilotic wall paintings and lamps with sexual imagery is context. Wall paintings are intended to decorate a specific space; for example, as mentioned above, Barrett suggests that the Nilotic convivial scene in the garden of the Casa dell'Efebo was placed there to invite self-reflection on the part of banqueters (2017, 322). Lamps, on the other hand, are transportable objects, so their consumers had more agency in determining appropriate use contexts, therefore ascribing different meanings to the sexual scenes portrayed: one can use a specific lamp to light the bedroom if they feel like it would enhance "the mood", or one could remove it if they find it funny rather than sensual. This flexibility of context also adds to the variety of possible audience reactions. Finally, cultural practices around lamps must have impacted how their

[60] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1865,1118.242. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-242.
[61] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, 1814,0704.36. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-36.
[62] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1971,0426.13. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1971-0426-13.
[63] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 30-70 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1814,0704.35. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-35.

decoration was perceived. Allison's findings show that lamps were likely carried from room to room as needed, rather than kept in a particular spot (2006, 391), which means that they were frequently touched. Lamps are also framed as "witnesses" to lovemaking by multiple literary sources. For example, Martial mentions a lamp filled with perfume (the aroma of which would have added to the sensuality) as a companion to "felix lectulus," (10.38; a happy bed). The flickering light must have created an impression that the handler of a lamp was "witnessing"[64] the sexual scene decorating the lamp. The tactile and visual experience, paired with the possible sensual connotations of lamps, could have encouraged a reflection on one's sexuality in a way that a Nilotic wall painting could not.

When I say that only "most" sexual positions of short-statured people are also found in sex scenes of average-sized people, I mean, of course, the mysterious reverse woman on top discussed in the previous section. Here I first want to add nuance to the classifications suggested by Meyboom and Versluys (2007) and Vucetic (2022): their categories "*Venus pendula aversa"* and "woman riding reverse" seem to encompass two distinct sexual positions. In Meyboom and Versluys' sample, these two positions can be seen in the famous Nilotic wall paintings from the peristylium of Casa del Medico (VIII.5.24) and the aforementioned garden of Casa dell'Efebo (I.7.10-12), both in Pompeii and dated to first century CE. In the former, a short-statured man lies on his back and a short-statured woman woman, facing away from him, lowers herself onto his penis; in the latter, the man, in this case seemingly average-sized, is also reclined and the woman, average-sized as well, is still on top and faces away from him, but she is now on all fours. The reason why I find it helpful to differentiate these positions is because the "basic" reverse woman on top position is attested in non-Nilotic wall paintings; for example, a first century CE wall

[64] Funnily enough, in Ukrainian an idiom for witnessing something, especially something as private as sex, is "to hold the candle."

painting from a cubiculum in Casa del Centenario (IX.8.6) portrays an average-sized woman, adorned by a necklace and arm bands, on top of a man while facing away from him. On the other hand, to my knowledge there are no extant non-Nilotic wall paintings of the "on all fours" version of reverse woman on top. In the same way, Vucetic's "woman riding reverse" encompasses two types of scenes with short-statured people on lamps: woman lowering herself onto the man's penis while facing away from him (such as the castanet lamp Q 924, *Figure* 3), and examples of woman on all fours on top of the man, facing away from him (such as Q 804,[65] *Figure* 11). Similarly to wall paintings, lamp representations of "basic" reverse woman on top (such as Q 1401, *Figure* 6) are common for average-sized couples, however, there are no equivalents to the all fours version. The closest parallel we have for average-sized couples is the position portrayed on Q 835, where a man sits back on his heels, and the woman on all fours moves back onto him.[66] The most striking element of scenes with this position is that the woman is shown reaching her hand back between her legs,[67] supposedly to add to her own or her partner's sexual pleasure. As usual with ancient evidence, this pattern could be the result of chance of preservation; still, it is difficult to ignore that both in wall painting and on terracotta lamps, the all fours version of reverse woman on top appears exclusively in images of the Nile and/or non-normative bodies.

Based on how critical I was of Meyboom and Versluys' Isis/Osiris explanation for this sexual position idiosyncrasy, my reader might expect me to offer an interpretation I find more reasonable, especially because the Aquileia lamp at the end of this chapter depicts exactly this sexual position. Unfortunately, this is not a mystery I can solve in this dissertation; there are no

[65] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 40-80 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1814,0704.38. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-38.
[66] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 30-60 CE. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1971,0426.4. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1971-0426-4.
[67] The lamp in the British Museum is, unfortunately, too worn out to see this detail, but it is clear in two separate versions of this lamp decoration in Loeschke's catalogue (1919, Plate VIII: 90-94).

ancient sources known to me that would explain why this specific variation of reverse woman on top was considered appropriate for denizens of the Nile or people with non-normative bodies in general. To my knowledge, the only reference in Latin sources to any version of the reverse woman on top position is Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 3.787; he recommends that women who have stretch marks on their stomachs from pregnancy to "ut celer aversis utere Parthus equis" (use a reverse horse, like a swift Parthian). Since this line refers to Parthians' tactic of turning back on horseback to shoot arrows (Gibson 2003, 395), it seems that Ovid is imagining the woman upright rather than on all fours. Nevertheless, Ovid's framing suggests an approach fruitful for comparing visual depictions of sexual positions: that is, considering what each participant is allowed to see within the scene, and even more importantly, what is offered to the gaze of the viewer.

Clarke applies this approach to the "classical" variety of woman on top, identifying this pose as "above all … a way of showing the act of penetration—and the woman's beautiful face, breasts, torso, and legs—to best advantage" from the perspective of the male partner. Zooming in on the famous depiction of this sexual position from the Suburban Baths of Pompeii,[68] he suggests that the painting would have pleased Roman men who "enjoyed sex with women" and Roman women, since it showcases the beauty of the woman's body at the expense of her partner, privileging her as "aesthetic object" (1998, 218). As *Ars Amatoria* shows, it is indeed likely that both Roman women and artists were preoccupied with "optics" of sexual activities. We have seen that Ovid recommends that a woman reverses her position on top if her body does not live up to the youthful standard of beauty (3.787); presumably this advice also worked well for a woman "quis sua terga placent" (3.774; who is pleased by her back). What if a woman then bent over, getting on all fours? Her lover would then be able to see her vagina being penetrated *and* her

[68] Scene I in apodyterium 7, 62-70 CE.

buttocks/anus, which could have offered the combined arousing potential of both orifices.[69] The woman's own perspective is an interesting one, for if she indeed faced away, she would only be able to see her partner's ankles and feet. A second-third century CE terracotta medallion from Rhone Valley provides a humorous comparandum:[70] it portrays a woman dismounting a reclined man while holding a mirror; she is facing away from him, while he proclaims "tu sola nica" (you are the only victress) (*Figure* 12). Clarke adds that in a different version of the same scene, the man attempts to entice the woman by saying "futuo bene volvi me" (I fuck well, turn to me). It seems that for the woman in the medallion, her inability to see her partner—and her ability to admire herself in the mirror—while being penetrated by him is a sought-after perk, not a disadvantage of the sex position. That being said, in every lamp that portrays this position, the woman turns her head to look back at her partner (it is ambiguous whether he is meeting her gaze or focusing on her buttocks instead). Perhaps here a slightly different reading of the Rhone medallion by Antonio Varone could be more useful; he suggests that the woman's use of the mirror is part of her maintaining total control over the man: she can "spy on him," study his body and facial expressions in the reflection during sex, while denying him the same opportunity (Varone 2001, 87). In line with this, perhaps our lamp scenes were supposed to represent a position in which the woman held all of the cards: by being on top, she could determine the pace to enhance her and/or her partner's pleasure; by facing away, she was in charge of how much her partner could (not) see. Then again, a case could be made that this position privileged the man's point of view: the woman is deprived of the intimacy of face-to-face sex for the man to enjoy seeing her

[69] Martial memorably describes anal sex with women as less satisfying than anal sex with men by saying that for all intents and purposes, a woman has *cunnos duos*, "two cunts" (11.43.12). In another epigram, he similarly advises a woman to know her limitations, because her anus could never compare to that of a young man (12.96). Martial's witticisms aside, there is compelling evidence that many Romans thought of preference as concerning certain activities rather than their partner's gender (Williams 1999, 168-169).

[70] Terracotta medalion from Rhone Valley, second-early third centuries CE; for a drawing see Clarke 1998, fig. 101.

"choicest" parts. Another possibility is that for the artist(s) behind these depictions, this position did not have a real-life referent at all: perhaps for the sake of humor or othering they rotated figures until they arrived at a still anatomically possible but seemingly uncomfortable and visually peculiar configuration.

But where does this leave us as the outside viewers? In the Casa dell'Efebo example, because the couple is slightly angled away from us, we take on the perspective of the man. Following his sight line, we get to see both of the woman's buttocks; because of the couple's angle, we also get to see what the man cannot, namely the woman's breasts peeking out from under her arm. The act of penetration is hidden from us, as is most of the man's body. On lamps, couples are shown in profile; although these scenes portray sexual activity, the way the bodies are positioned deny the viewer even the glimpses of buttock or breast that the artist of the Casa dell'Efebo painting found a way to incorporate. Thus this scene does not showcase either the woman's or the man's body; in fact, the figures in these scenes come off as genderless, the only visible differences between their bodies being their hair and an occasional breast band worn by the woman, such as Q 924 (*Figure* 3) and possibly Q 804 (*Figure* 11; due to the woman's body position it is ambiguous whether we are looking at a breast band or simply a skin fold).

That the bodies of short-statured people are being obscured in sexual lamp scenes is all the more clear when we look at them alongside lamps depicting average-sized people in the same sexual positions; since both types of lamps circulated at the same time, it is likely they were intended to invite such comparison. I have already mentioned that both types of couples are shown with women lowering themselves onto their partners, facing away from them (Q 924, Figure 3, and Q 1401, Figure 6). The way short-statured figures are positioned shares many features with the woman on all fours version: in all examples the woman looks back at her partner (interestingly,

the way his head is angled might suggest that he is not meeting her gaze but is looking at her buttocks instead); her arms obscure her breasts, her thigh hides the act of penetration. We do get a partial view of the man's penis, which makes this scene more overtly sexual; however, both figures are closed off from the viewer. This becomes all the more clear in comparison to average-sized couples portrayed in the same position: while we see similarly little of the man, the woman is angled toward the viewer with her knees opened wide; she is meant to be the "star" of this show, drawing the viewer's gaze and directing it to the center of the image, the act of penetration. Few lamps survive with short statured women on top and facing their partners, one such example is a first-century CE lamp in the British Museum (Q 981,[71] *Figure* 13). Notably, in this configuration the short-statured woman spreads her legs widely just as her average-sized counterpart does (Q 934, *Figure* 5); both offer themselves to their partners and the viewer. What sets short- apart from average-sized couples is the lack of eye-contact: short-statured women are portrayed with their faces turned upward. Moving on to the rear entry lamps, average- and short-statured men are portrayed identically, down to the hand resting on the hip; however, there are a few slight differences in the depiction of the women, which add up to an uncomplimentary treatment of the short-statured figures. The images of the average-sized women emphasize their long limbs and the curve of their backs, where their partners sometimes rest their hands; their whole bodies are stretched out as they prop themselves on their hands. The short-statured women, on the other hand, are shown with their limbs bunched up under their torsos, their bodies hunched over. They seem neckless compared to their average-sized counterparts, and—most strikingly—they direct their gaze out of the scene, directly at the viewer. For the same position, we only have examples of average-sized couple either both looking ahead (Q 935, *Figure* 8) or the woman looking back at

[71] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 76-110. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1814,0704.40. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-40.

the man, eerily turning her head 180 degrees (Q 1371,[72] *Figure* 14); Vucetic found that in other sexual positions as well short-statured women are more likely to face the viewer and direct their gaze at them. She suggests that the outward facing gaze implicates the viewer in voyeurism and "corresponds with and confronts" the viewer's individual desire (2013, 150).

In the final set of comparisons between short- and average-stature couples on lamps, body proportions impact how the couple experiences the sexual position. In scenes with average-sized couples, the woman's leg is lifted high above the man's head (Figure 10). While it requires considerable flexibility on the part of the woman, this position allows the artist to check all of the erotic boxes: the act of penetration is visible; the woman's breasts, stomach, and thighs are shown off; as the man lifts his arm, his torso is also available for admiration; finally, despite still technically being a rear entry position, this configuration allows the lovers to meet each other's gaze without necessitating the woman to perform an *Exorcist*-level head turn (like in Q 1371, *Figure* 14). The short-statured couple does not get as flattering a portrayal: the woman's leg is shown to reach only as far as to rest on the man's shoulder, which emphasizes the shortness of her limbs; moreover, the woman's head rests on the pillow, as if the angle of her hips forced her down and prevented her from maintaining eye contact with her partner; instead, she half-turns her face towards the viewer, without looking at them head-on (*Figure* 9).

Thus images of short-statured couples do little to harness the allure of the male or female body; on the contrary, in the majority of scenes the most overtly sexual body parts (buttocks, genitalia, breasts) are hidden by the figures' positioning. At the same time, the fact that short-statured women tend to face the viewer—and average-sized women don't—conveys an understanding of short-statured people's sexuality as a spectacle to be consumed. While the sexual

[72] Mold-made terracotta lamp, circa 175-225. Now in London, the British Museum, inv. 1971,0426.32. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1971-0426-32

scenes with average couples create a private and intimate atmosphere, short-statured couples break this illusion by addressing the viewer through gaze. In fact, it has been suggested that the images on lamps are representations of entertainers, performing the sex-act on stage (Bailey 1975, 67). Catherine Johns lends support to this idea; she points out that many Roman lamps depict other forms of public entertainment, especially gladiatorial contests (1982, 118). Of figures in Attic vase painting resembling people with pathological dwarfism, Dasen writes: "Not only their physical anomaly was not concealed, but they were usually depicted naked, which implies that dwarfs were a pleasant sight and sought out for their rarity" (2015, 35). Dasen sees the mere existence of "dwarf" depictions as a positive sign that they were not "outcasts and stigmatized," but were instead "appreciated because of their physical appearance" (42). But "appreciation" is not always affirming, especially in ancient Rome: Catherine Edwards points out that gladiators, actors, and prostitutes had limited civil rights because they forfeited their dignity by selling their body for the pleasures of others (1998, 76), that is, by inviting a certain kind of appreciation. On lamps, the outward gaze of short-statured figures creates the impression that they know they are being watched.

If the beauty of human bodies and lovemaking is not centered in these lamp decorations, what is? Since they portray heterosexual couples in a nondescript environment, many functions ascribed to Nilotic sexual scenes discussed at the end of the previous section do not apply here: these images only tangentially reference the Nile and its fecundity and they scarcely can serve as a warning about uncouth sexual activities. What remains—especially since we have the same positions performed by short- and average-sized couples—is Clarke's "comical foil" interpretation (1998, 43). I see a close parallel to the lamp images in the wall painting from the House of the Bull in Pompeii (V.1.7), since it also portrays short-statured people performing everyday activities

(*Figure* 15). Clarke identifies this painting as a caricature: its humorous tone relies solely on "defamiliariz[ing] the familiar" by using "pygmies" as "stand-ins for people with normative body types" (2007, 96-97).[73] But if we look at the image a little longer, we will notice that since it lacks "othering" features such as crocodiles and orgies and introduces mundane elements, we end up with… what daily life of historical short-statured people in ancient Rome must have looked like. If the viewer of this wall painting has ever encountered a short-statured person they might have seen such a person in exactly the scenarios depicted in the painting: walking while chatting, buying food, or having dinner. At the very least, the viewer could have been encouraged to consider that "real-life" short-statured people engage in all of these activities as part of their lives, something that might not have occurred to a normatively-bodied person otherwise. As usual with optimistic readings, we must proceed with caution; there are elements in the framework of the wall painting that would have to be overcome by the viewer to reach such a socially progressive and integrative interpretation. Since these vignettes were likely read against other Nilotic scenes, the figures in them were set up to be read as the "imaginary" *Pygmaei*; while historical short-statured people clearly inspired the physical features portrayed, it is not a faithful portrayal; and, most alienating of all, the short-statured people in this wall painting are shown existing in a world of their own, with no people of different statures and proportions present. Yet the potential is there, and it is even stronger in sexual imagery on lamps, due to its lack of specificity: on the surface level, the only thing it is visually connected to is the tradition of portraying lovemaking on lamps. Vucetic claims that sexual scenes with short-statured figures are "a deliberate statement about socially acceptable sexual behaviors" that encouraged the viewer to reflect on sexual ideology. Her reading is based on the assumption that the mere presence of short-statured people—"the antithesis of the

[73] Clarke (uncharacteristically) rejects the possibility that it was apotropaic, since there are "no outsized phalli or tragic-comic crocodile hunts here" (2007, 98).

beholders' privileged status, health, and wealth," in her words—made these sexual acts "transgressive" (2022, 288). Although I in this section have also focused on how sexual depictions of short- and average-sized people on lamps are different, I would like to posit that the audience was just as likely to reflect on the *similarities* these images shared. Thus, even if what was on the artist's mind was "You know what's a funny thought? Imagine if short-statured people had sex, just like us!"—a demeaning and dehumanizing joke—the "just like us!" reverberates in the image, opening it to alternative, normalizing readings. However, it is also worth emphasizing that these short-statured figures are locked in a "parallel dimension" (similarly to the figures in the House of the Bull)—one where they are able to have sex, yes, but only with each other. As I mention in connection to two-cubit Conon and his four-cubit wife (*AP* 11.108), the idea of short-statured people, especially men, as able to participate in sex on par with or simply *with* normatively bodied people could have been deeply troubling. Cataldo describes the figure of the male dwarf in German films as a "site of sexuality in crisis": a sexually capable man with dwarfism disrupts hegemonic masculinity because he "embodies a form of male sexuality that is no way dependent upon a classical male body" (2009, 13-14). That short-statured people only have sex with each other in visual depictions protects the Roman viewer from facing this issue head-on, while leaving space for self-reflection.

In the next section, I consider a lamp portraying sex between short-statured people (specifically, the reverse woman on top on all fours act) found in an Aquileian grave, and its functions specific to the funerary and provincial context.

A lamp from Aquileian burial

Romans founded Aquileia as a colony under Latin law[74] in the then scarcely populated Lower

[74] As opposed to a Roman colony. The difference is that founders and inhabitants of colonies under Latin law

Friuli in 181 BCE. They did so for two main reasons: first, to secure northeastern Italian territories and to have a base for further expansion; and second, to tap into the trade routes of Cisalpine Gaul and Istria (Barca 2022, xvi). The original population consisted of Roman war veterans (Liv. 40.34) and Veneti, local people with strong trade interests in the region, who had always been friendly to Romans (Barca 2022, 1). After almost a hundred years of serving as a launch pad for military operations, in 90 BCE Aquileia obtained the status of a *municipium* (*CIL* 5.968), which means that its inhabitants received *civitas*—full Roman citizenship—which added *ius suffragii* (the right to elect officials) and *ius honorum* (the right to be elected to office) to the *ius conubium* (the right to marry Roman citizens) and *ius commercium* (the right to participate in trade) that they already had. In 58-56 BCE, Julius Caesar used Aquileia as one of his headquarters for dealing with Gallic and Illyrian affairs (Caes. *BGall*. 1.10). Octavian also spent considerable time in this town, especially during and after his campaign against Pannonia and Dalmatia (*Suet. Aug*. 20). Suetonius also names Aquileia as the birthplace of Tiberius' child by Julia (*Tib*. 7; the child sadly died). All of which is to say, Aquileia seems to have lived up to its military and political potential.

Aquileia, as already mentioned, was strategically located on the intersection of multiple trade routes (Hdn. 8.2.3). For example, Strabo records that Aquileia was a major center of slave trade: enslaved people from upper Danube were brought to Aquileia over the Alps, and were exchanged for sea products, wine, and olive oil (5.1.8) Being a trade hub meant that Aquileia's community was diverse. Calderini compiled a list of all Aquileian epitaphs that mention a place of origin other than Aquileia (there are over 200); the list documents the presence of people from all regions of Italy, as well as from various corners of the Mediterranean Basin, such as Hispania, Gaul, Thrace, Syria, Egypt, and Northern Africa (1930, 343-355).

acquired *latinitas*, partial citizenship, while Roman colonies provided *civitas*, full Roman citizenship (Barca 2022, 222).

The National Archeological Museum of Aquileia has an extensive collection of terracotta lamps; the first catalogue was compiled by Buchi in 1975, and an updated catalogue prepared by Balestrazzi in 1988. Apart from being perhaps the largest lamp collection in modern Italy, it also suits my project by having multiple lamps with sexual scenes[75] without being too far removed from Roman Italy; indeed, as mentioned above, although Aquileia invited many cultural influences as a trading hub, it was originally founded as a way to extend *romanitas* into the northeastern reaches of the Republic. There is a handful of lamps portraying average-sized couples in the collection, mostly showing sexual positions already discussed, such as from behind or woman on top. As to images of sex between short-statured people, in addition to the lamp I will be discussing below (*Figure* 16)—number 551 in the 1988 catalogue—there are four more examples: the first (552) is of the same motif as 551, although seemingly from a different mold; the second (628) is a fragment of a basic from behind position; the third (730) is also a fragment of a from behind position, but only the woman's part of the image remains; and two more (612, 613) portray reverse woman on top. The interest in non-normative bodies as decoration is also evidenced by seven lamps that portray short-statured figures dancing with sticks in their hands. Five of these seem to come from the same workshop—they have two dots stamped on the bottom half; that they were found together likely means that they were either produced locally or imported to Aquileia for further distribution. Balestrazzi notes that lamps with the two-dot stamp are also common in the innermost Po valley and Pannonia (1988, II.2: 200), which lie on Aquileian trade routes.

Our lamp was likely made in the second half of first century CE (Balestrazzi 1988, II.1: 229) and belongs to Loeschke type I C, which Siegfried Loeschke believed to have developed in northern Roman Italy in the last third of first century CE and to have spread to the neighboring

[75] In fact, their quantity is comparable to the British Museum holdings.

provinces (1919, 215). The Aquileian lamp collection contains only nine lamps of this type, however Balestrazzi does not rule out local production, since type I C seems an almost incidental variation of I B[76] (1988 II.1: 228), and the latter is common enough in Aquileia to assume local production (155). At the same time, she notes that the bodies of our lamp 551 and its companion 552 differ from the I B type lamps (228), which points to it being imported after all. Ultimately, there is not enough evidence to pinpoint the production site, but it is extremely likely that it was made in northern Italy.

It was found in a series of tombs along Via Annia, excavated by Giovanni Brusin in 1939-1940. The group consists of 5 separate enclosures that are built along a continuous wall, and therefore share a wall at their rear. Jocelyn Toynbee suggests that the wall was built to mark out the sepulchral area between it and the road,[77] and plots then sold to customers who built side walls and facades according to their tastes and means (1996, 80). The plot (in Brusin's numeration it is tomb II), from which our lamp came is unfortunately the only anonymous of five—there was once an altar within it that might have borne an identifying inscription, but Brusin found only its base. It is the smallest[78] and most modest plot of the group; in fact, it seems to use a space that was not meant for burial at all. Instead, it seems to occupy the space left between the plots of Statii and Julii (tombs I and III in Brusin's numeration respectively); the side walls of these plots, in addition to the continuous wall in the back, meant that one only had to put up a facade to have an enclosed tomb. The facade, Brusin notes, is of quite poor quality compared to those of neighboring plots (1941, 34), which reinforces the impression that this spot was chosen for its cost efficiency. It is also the most densely "populated" plot; over 20 burials were found in this four by nine meter space,

[76] The difference between types B and C lies in the comparison of widths of the top of the lamp's nozzle and the base of its nozzle: in B, the tip is narrower; in C—wider.
[77] No traces of this road now exist.
[78] All plots have the same depth but varying widths; this tomb is half as narrow as the next smallest tomb.

all but one were cremation burials. Most vessels with ashes also had objects in them, such as rings with gems or gem imitations, various amber items,[79] and mirrors; outside of specific burials Brusin records fragments of imitation *terra sigillata* (glossy red pottery), a fragment of a cup with a Greek warrior decoration, and a necklace made of Egyptian faience (1941, 35). All this suggests that items to be deposited in this burial plot were chosen intentionally for their sentimental and/or cultural value; it is therefore likely that lamps were chosen with just as much care.

Each tomb in the complex contained multiple lamps. The overwhelming majority of figurative lamps (eight) from this site were found in tomb I; a wide range of decorations is represented—motifs range from a dog to a plow between torches to a gladiator. Most excitingly for my project, one of the short-statured stick dancer lamps was found here, providing further proof that non-normative bodies were seen as appropriate for the funerary context in Aquileia. Our own lamp from tomb II was found alongside two other figurative lamps: the first portrays three masks—two of women and one of a bearded and horned male—and the second lamp is decorated with grapevines; I will return to the possible connections between these lamps below. Tomb III had no figurative lamps, tomb IV had one with Jupiter Ammon, and tomb V had a fragment of a dolphin lamp. Each tomb had multiple "factory lamps", most of which carry workshop stamps.[80] Most of the stamps are represented by lamps in at least two of the tombs: *Cresces* and *Vibiani* items were found in Tombs I, III, and V, *Q. G(...) C(...)* in Tombs I and II and so on. Some of the stamped names have been connected to known workshops, mostly in northern Italy: thus *Fortis*, found on lamps in Tombs I and II, is firmly connected to Modena based on kilns and molds bearing this

[79] Amber imported from the Baltic was worked in Aquileia and then imported to Italy and the rest of the Mediterranean (Roncaglia 2018, 106).

[80] That all lamps from this complex but two fragments found later by Bertacchi (1997) were signed seems not to have been unusual in Aquileia, where only 10% of "factory lamps" in the Museum collection are unsigned (Buchi 1975, table 5.1); of course it must be acknowledged that signed lamps are more likely to be preserved than anonymous ones.

name. However, Gerwulf Schneider and Malgorzata Daszkiewicz found through chemical analysis that while many Aquileian lamps with this stamp indeed came from Modena, they were also sometimes made locally; it is unclear whether such production was sanctioned or not (2011, 277).

As I turn to the meanings of imagery of short-statured people having sex could have in a funerary provincial context, I have to once again avert the evil eye. In the introduction, I posited that all depictions of non-normative bodies should not be *assumed* to have apotropaic qualities; instead, iconographic and contextual evidence needs to be provided for such a reading. Clarke sees tombs as a location where "ever-superstitious Romans" must have used images of "freaks" (his word) engaging in unbecoming behavior to provoke laughter and to counteract evil spirits and the evil eye (2001, 88). I have previously provided a critique of Clarke's apotropaic laughter theory and expressed my doubts of the applicability of warding off demons to pre-Christian Rome (see introduction); I have similar doubts concerning using non-normative bodies to ward off the spirits of the dead. Ovid does describe a ritual to be performed during *Lemuria* to discourage ghosts from wandering around one's house (*Fast.* 5.429-444), but the instructions he records are quite specific and provide no parallel to the use of, say, Nilotic paintings in a tomb. Ovid also helpfully records that Romans believed that ancestral spirits could become vengeful if they did not receive proper votives, such as flowers, food, and wine (*Fast. 2*.547-556). *Paternalia*, the festival during which such offerings were expected to be made, was also the time when the living dined at the tomb to commemorate the dead. Food was shared at the tomb on other occasions as well: *silicernium* names a meal eaten there on the day of the burial and *cena novendialis*—a meal that happened on the ninth day after the burial. Graham notes that some tombs in Pompeii, Ostia, and Isola Sacra include actual dining facilities, such as *triclinia* (2005, 59), which shows the importance of ceremonial meals. In one epitaph, the commemorated are imagined as joining the banquet, sharing in their

children's and friends' good cheer (*CIL* 6.26554). I believe it is in this light that we should see the Nilotic wall paintings in tombs discussed by Clarke: they were sites to commemorate death but also to enjoy life,[81] so motifs that adorned gardens and *triclinia* of Pompeii are more than fitting here. Returning to the Aquileia tomb, no permanent fixtures for dining were found; as Graham points out, this does not necessarily mean that banquets did not take place, since movable furniture could be used and reclining on the ground was also an option (2005, 60). It is then not surprising that the common thread for lamp scenes in Tomb II—namely lovemaking, Greek theater, and grapevines—is leisure. These lamps were seen or perhaps even used during public commemoration and celebration, so decorations featuring the themes of wine, performance, humor, and pleasure were possibly chosen to suit this context.

I finally would like to turn to Graham's argument that as an "active element" in community life, tombs were sites of communicating identity, akin to the indoor *triclinium* of a domestic house (2005, 60). Clarke provides similar reasoning for Roman freedpeople choosing Nilotic imagery for their tombs: namely, he suggests they opted for motifs favored by the elites to emphasize their "newly acquired status and *romanitas*" (2001, 90). As already mentioned, compared to wall paintings, interpreting contextual meaning and significance of such transportable domestic objects as terracotta oil lamps is more challenging. While a figurative lamp could have been included in a burial because its decoration seemed particularly fitting for a funeral context, as I suggest above, it could also have simply been an item especially liked by the deceased or the dedicator, or the most valuable (or perhaps even the least valuable!) item the grieving friends and relatives could contribute to the tomb. The wide range of imagery presented by lamps in the Via Annia complex suggests that even if the lamps were purchased specifically to be placed there—as opposed to items

[81] Sometimes a little too much, as evidenced by Trimalchio's dinner guest who came straight from a funeral, drunk (Petron. Satyr. 66).

that were used domestically previously and repurposed for the funeral context—no particular decoration motifs were sought out. If the presence of our lamp with a sexual scene between short-statured people cannot be explained by a more general pattern of Roman funerary practice in Aquileia, it remains to consider if the other items found in Tomb II can illuminate its proprietors' motivations for including it. Despite being the most modest in terms of size and architectural features, compared to other enclosures in the complex Tomb II contained—both inside urns with ashes and outside of them—a richer assortment of objects associated with particular locales, such as the aforementioned Egyptian faience necklace, the imitation *terra sigillata* (a pottery style liked with Arretium and Gaul), the lamp portraying Greek theater masks, and the lamp decorated by grapevines, which bears a Φωσφόρου stamp. While the proprietors of Tomb II seemingly lacked funds for a lavish facade or large monuments for their plot, the inclusion of artifacts with an aura of foreignness allowed them to display their cultural capital. Could our lamp be part of this program? In the context of Pompeii, Barrett suggests that part of the appeal of Nilotic wall paintings was that they created an opportunity for the viewer to display erudition and cultural cosmopolitanism by being able to interpret their iconography and/or relate such iconography to Egyptian customs (2017, 322). The scene on our lamp, of course, does not explicitly refer to Egypt, and the presence of non-normative bodies in a common genre scene offers a variety of surface readings, as outlined in the previous section. However, the link between short-statured figures and the Nile was present in the minds of at least some Aquileians, as evidenced by "stick dancer" lamps, one of which was found in Tomb I. Thus the range of the lamp's meaning depended on the "worldliness" of the viewer, which makes this object suitable for demonstrating the cultural competence of the tomb's proprietors (and testing that of the tomb's visitors!).

Conclusions

In this chapter I put forward that although terracotta lamps portraying sex between short-statured figures undoubtedly belong to the same tradition as Nilotic wall paintings, the lack of "exoticizing" features and the conventionality of the sexual acts depicted create an opportunity for the viewer to reflect on the sexuality of non-normatively bodied people. While previous scholarship had focused on how short-statured figures in art are "Othered" for the sake of humor, averting the evil eye, or reassuring the viewer of their "normalcy," I argued that the scenes on the terracotta lamps blur the line between the sexualities of average-sized and short-statured people, which creates space for integrating, normalizing readings. By examining one such lamp from a burial site in Aquileia, I suggested that the Nilotic associations, as well as the general association of short-statured people with entertainment, provided the proprietors of the tomb with an opportunity to enhance their social status in the eyes of visitors.

Chapter 2. "Performing Oneself": Conops, *deliciae* of Julia turned *palaestrita*

When enumerating extraordinarily tall and short people known to him, Pliny the Elder records that in Augustus' time, minimus homo duos pedes et palmum Conopas nomine in deliciis Iuliae neptis eius fuit, (Plin. *HN* 7.75; the smallest man by the name of Conopas of two feet and a span in height was *in deliciis* of Julia, his granddaughter[82]). Although Pliny's description only mentions their names, their relationship, and Conopas' height, in this chapter I will use the figure of Conopas to explore the functions historical short-statured people were expected to perform in imperial Rome, especially in the environment of the social elite. I believe that the unique intersection of Conopas' identities—he is a short-statured male *deliciae* of a female member of the imperial family—can provide insights for multiple ongoing scholarly discussions. I start by considering the range of lived experiences the term *deliciae*—best translated as "darlings" or "pet children"—encompassed. Second, since the kind of entertainment Romans found in some *deliciae* echoes the kind they found in people with non-normative bodies (Laes 2003, 302), I consider whether our evidence for the lived experience of these two groups of people can be mutually illuminating and how these two identities might have overlapped for Conopas. Third, I examine the significance of *deliciae* and people with non-normative bodies in the imperial context specifically: are we expected to read into the connection between Conopas and Julia the Younger because of the latter's reputation? Finally, I bring in an epitaph of Conops, a *palaestrita* (I will discuss the potential meanings of this word in that section) buried in the columbarium of Iunii Silani (*CIL* 6.7613). I suggest that this Conops might be one and the same as the Conopas Pliny mentions; I then consider whether the other epitaphs in the columbarium (there were 43 total) can shed light on how a person

[82] All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

with a non-normative body functioned within an elite Roman household.

Conopas the short-statured *deliciae*

As Richlin puts it, "ambiguous evidence" has led to "conflicting answers" about the lived experience of *deliciae* in ancient Rome (2018, 359). Richlin refers to scholars trying to locate, in Rawson's words, "the line between indulgent affection and sexual exploitation" (2003, 261)—or whether this line existed at all. We find the most extensive literary treatment of the subject in *Silvae* 2.1, in which Statius consoles his patron, Atedius Melior, after the premature death of Glaucias (he died at the age of twelve), who is described, among other things, as Melior's *deliciae* (71). Statius' poem, despite its length and detail, is "ambiguous evidence" *par excellence*. On the one hand, Statius presents Melior's grief through the "fostering frame" (Asso 2010, 667): Glaucias is called Melior's "alumnus" (foster son) in the very first line of the poem, and Melior is referred to as the boy's "pater ipse" (119; father himself). On the other hand, Paolo Asso shows that many elements of Statius' poem hint at an erotic subtext (2010, 669). Thus Statius' laudatory depiction of the boy's appearance (2.1.41-51) borrows many a trope from amatory poetry; some habits ascribed to the boy, such as stealing food and drink from Melior's mouth (60-61), recall stereotypical behaviors of lovers;[83] and homoerotic couples (Hercules and Hylas, Apollo and Hyacinth) are evoked as mythological *exempla* (113-114). Asso suggests that Statius was navigating "the tension between socially appropriate and personally intense feelings" in approaching Melior and Glaucias' relationship (2010, 692); Statius alludes to the "very special bond," in Asso's words, shared by the man and the boy while focusing on parental/filial affection to give legitimacy to Melior's grief (694).

[83] Laes perceptively notes that in all instances named Glaucias is invariably the one to initiate gestures of affection (2011, 226).

Unlike Atedius Melior, Julia the Younger was married and had children, not to mention that Conopas—as a person with a non-normative body—was an unlikely candidate to become a legitimate foster-child or heir in Rome. Thus what Statius shares about Glaucias and Melior's relationship within the "fostering frame" of *Silvae* 2.1 was unlikely to apply to Julia the Younger's treatment of Conopas; however, some context might be gleaned from Statius' description of what Glaucias was decidedly *not*. Statius emphasizes that Glaucias was a *verna*—a person born into enslavement in the enslaver's household; thus he is set apart by the poem from the other, "bad" kind of "pet children":

> non te barbaricae versabat turbo catastae,
> nec mixtus Phariis venalis mercibus infans
> compositosque sales meditataque verba locutus
> quaesisti lascivus erum tardeque parasti
>
> you were not turned by the rotation of the barbarian stage,
> nor were you an infant for sale among Pharian merchandise,
> telling prepared tricks and practiced words,
> lascivious in searching and slow in obtaining a master (2.1.72-75)

Asso suggests that this juxtaposition is once again intended to justify Melior's grief, since mourning intensely for an enslaved person purchased for entertainment "was 'not done'," but mourning for a *verna* was acceptable (2010, 679). Statius relies on the same juxtaposition to give legitimacy to his own deceased enslaved boy, who seems to have been raised "as if he were the master's own child," same as Glaucias (Laes 2011, 224):

> non ego mercatus Pharia de puppe loquaces
> delicias doctumque sui convicia Nili
> infantem lingua nimium salibusque protervum
> dilexi: meus ille, meus…
>
> not a talkative, bought from a Pharian ship,
> *deliciae*, taught insults of their native Nile
> as an infant, too forward in tongue and sarcasm
> did I love: he was mine, mine… (*Silv*. 5.5.66-69)

Although in both instances Statius connects the purchasing of *deliciae* to Alexandria, it is likely that such activities took part in other parts of the Empire as well. Thus Varro recommends Capua as a place to "pueros minutos videre" (in Nonius Marcellus, *De compendiosa doctrina* 141.18; to see small boys), which Laes interprets as evidence for a specialized slave market (2003, 304). Unlike Statius' and Melior's charges, raised in the household from birth to embody modesty, decency, and probity (*Silv*. 2.1.39-40), the children brought up to be sold as *deliciae* are trained to seem as entertaining as possible to customers. Such *deliciae* in training were instructed how to behave in outrageous ways: as seen above, according to Statius they were taught "convicia" (insults, abuse) Quintilian remarks that they talk "licentius" (*Inst.* 1.2.7; rather without restraint), and Seneca describes them as "probra effundant" (*Constant*. 11.3; spewing out abuse). Cassius Dio provides an example of such radical honesty in an episode which conveniently also evidences that women also sought out the extravaganza of having *deliciae* around.[84] He relates that at a party, one of τῶν ψιθύρων, οἷα αἱ γυναῖκες γυμνὰ ὡς πλήθει ἀθύρουσαι τρέφουσιν (chirping/whispering children[85] that women rear/keep as a game/sport, usually naked) put Livia and Augustus, her new husband, in an awkward situation. The child came up to them and, pointing out Livia's former husband Nero, who was also present at the party, asked why Livia was reclining with someone other than him (48.44.3). This remark seems to be in line with behavior expected of *deliciae*: the

[84] Another such episode can be found in Propertius 2.29a, where the poet imagines being accosted by "nudi pueri minuti" (little naked boys) who lead him to Cynthia, chastising him for making his lover lose sleep. In this elegy, however, the little naked boys might stand too close to the figure of Cupid (that *deliciae* were intermeshed with Cupid in Roman literature and visual art was convincingly shown by George 2013) to provide us with concrete historical evidence. In the epigraphic evidence from across the empire summarized by Laes, there is not a noticeable difference in gender distribution of *deliciae* of female and male patrons—that is, both Roman women and men are associated with female and male *deliciae* at comparable rates (2003, 308).

[85]. Translations (such as the Cary and Foster 1917 Loeb edition) and scholarship (for example, Laes 2003, 301; Laes 2011, 235; Beckmann 2023, 73) tend to identify this character as a boy. However, all gendered words in this sentence agree with παῖς, which is neuter and could refer either to a male or female child (LSJ). Perhaps maleness was assumed because anonymous *deliciae* in literary texts are commonly male, even though, as Hanne Nielsen points out, in personal literary descriptions and in epigraphical evidence *deliciae* are just as likely—if not slight more likely—to be female (1990, 83; for more information on epigraphic evidence see Laes 2003). In my translation, I preserve the ambiguous gender of the *deliciae*.

shock value of a child unrestrained by social norms was harnessed for entertainment.

The fondness for these unchildlike children appears to be a facet of what Garland calls the "perverse and seemingly inexhaustible appetite for the exotic and bizarre" (1995, 45), which also drove Romans to add enslaved people with non-normative bodies to their households. Plutarch remarks with distaste how such Romans forego enjoying arts or beautiful youths and women, instead frequenting τὴν τῶν τεράτων ἀγορὰν (the market of monstrosities) to look at people with no calves, or short arms, or three eyes, or ostrich heads (*Mor*. 520c). Literary sources preserve the ways in which the Roman elite exploited people with non-normative bodies for their own amusement. For example, in an episode recorded in Pliny, when a woman named Gegania was shopping for a famous Corinthian chandelier, the auctioneer "threw in" Clessipus, an enslaved person with kyphosis. When Gegania threw a party to show off her purchase, she made Clessipus parade around naked for the guests to mock (, *HN* 34.12; "ludibrii causa"). Similarly to *deliciae*, people with non-normative bodies are often portrayed as publicly acting outside social norms. For instance, when Suetonius records the numerous high treason cases persecuted under Tiberius, he mentions that Tiberius was called out for his cruelty at a party by "nano astante inter copreas" (a person with dwarfism standing among the shit-talkers). This unnamed person with dwarfism asked Tiberius why a certain person accused of high treason was allowed to live for so long. While Tiberius is said to have "obiurgasse quidem petulantiam linguae" (scolded him for impudence of the tongue) this situation is portrayed by Suetonius as far from unusual (*Tib*. 61).

In what still remains a foundational work on disability in antiquity, Garland also uses this episode from Suetonius to illustrate that people with non-normative bodies were allowed "licensed foolery;" however, his conclusion is "[w]ho but a genuine idiot would have the gall to admonish the emperor" (1995, 49). In other words, people with non-normative bodies only said controversial

things and were only forgiven for saying such things because they were "genuine idiots"—that is, had intellectual impairments. I would like to suggest that here it is beneficial to see (at least some) *deliciae* and people with non-normative bodies as belonging to the same class of party curiosities for the Roman elites. If it was rewarding to train *deliciae* to insult patrons—and literary evidence suggests it was, as discussed above—it is likely that people with non-normative bodies were expected to pull from the same bag of tricks as a part of their performance. As the pet-children's act was fueled by the dissonance of a child's innocent appearance and the obscenities they uttered, so I believe the incongruity of a person with a non-normative body insulting someone of a much higher social status could be harnessed for entertainment as well. It is not a coincidence that Tiberius' critic stood with *copreae*, who were possibly so named for their obscene speech (*LSJ*). An episode in Lucian (mid 2nd century CE) further evidences that such bridging of our knowledge about *deliciae* and often enslaved entertainers with non-normative bodies is not amiss: during a lull in the fictional symposium, an ἀνθρωπίσκος (little man) Satyrion was invited to entertain the guests:

> καὶ παρῆλθεν ἄμορφός τις ἐξυρημένος τὴν κεφαλήν, ὀλίγας ἐπὶ τῇ κορυφῇ τρίχας ὀρθὰς ἔχων· οὗτος ὠρχήσατό τε κατακλῶν ἑαυτὸν καὶ διαστρέφων, ὡς γελοιότερος φανείη, καὶ ἀνάπαιστα συγκροτῶν διεξῆλθεν αἰγυπτιάζων τῇ φωνῇ, καὶ τέλος ἐπέσκωπτεν ἐς τοὺς παρόντας.
>
> and in came a misshapen guy with a shaved head except for having a few hairs (standing up) straight on the top of his head. and he danced, bending and distorting himself to seem more laughable, and composing, anapests went on and on in Egyptian tongue, and finally made fun of the people present (Luc. *Symp*. 18).

Satyrion's performance relies on three elements: the non-normativity of his body, his fluency in Egyptian, and his transgression of social hierarchy in insulting his patrons. These skills recall the prepared tricks and practiced insults "of their native Nile" Statius ascribes to *deliciae*, and Satyrion's non-normative body enhances the effect: when one of the philosophers present takes offense at Satyrion's jokes and they get into a physical altercation, the narrator reflects that it was

especially enjoyable to watch a philosopher be beat up by a "well-trained little guy" (19). The parallel with *deliciae* is especially strong for short-statured entertainers, since their bodies were often viewed as "stuck" in childhood; Martial describes one *pumilius* (man with dwarfism) as having the head of Hector but the body of Astyanax (4.212).

Francesca Mencacci formulates why scurrilous humor came to be associated in ancient Rome with *deliciae* (2010), and I suggest that her argument encompasses enslaved people with non-normative bodies as well. Members of the social elite perceived such humor as *illiberalis* (literally "unfit for a free person")—for a freeborn person to speak of unseemly topics or to use obscene language was to compromise his "probum ingenium" (Cic. *Off*. 1.103-104; virtuous nature). Additionally, what would be considered an insult when spoken by a peer is seen as simply a harmless joke in the mouth of an enslaved person due to their powerlessness (Sen. *Constant*. 11.3). Thus vesting enslaved performers with abusive license allowed Roman citizens to enjoy offensive humor without risking their integrity, either by uttering an indecent joke or by being the object of an insult that had an actual bite because it is coming from a peer. Mencacci points out that this license in turn became "a sort of stigma, a label" to reinforce social division; since linguistic unrestraint was supposed to represent the lack of *mores*, to encourage such behavior in *deliciae* is "to present [them] to everyone as ready and willing to be approached" (241), opening their bodies to being exploited for entertainment. To accept that Mencacci's observations apply to enslaved people with non-normative bodies is to recognize that the way people with non-normative bodies behaved likely had to do with social expectations at least as much as with "genuine idiocy," if not more.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of seeing social transgressions by people with non-normative bodies in entertainment contexts as expected and intentional—as opposed to blunders of "genuine

idiots"—is that it allows us to recognize their agency on both individual and societal levels. Serving as entertainment at parties was one of few extremely limited avenues of life available to enslaved people with non-normative bodies in the Roman empire; to excel in this role required, as shown above, successfully taking on a specific persona. Burkhard Fehr observes that the ἄκλητος— the "uninvited" guest at ancient Greek *symposia* of the Archaic age—had to "perform himself," namely display his physical and moral inferiority, to confirm the guests' image of him and thus to gain a material benefit (1990, 186). While insulting guests was not part of the ἄκλητοι repertoire, the "social self-portrait" they presented focused on their lack of bodily and moral restraint (191), same as the entertainers discussed in this chapter. For *deliciae* and enslaved people with non-normative bodies, apart from such particular skills as fluency in Egyptian and a rich vocabulary of insults, "performing themselves" well in their lack of moderation necessitated an impeccable ability to "read the room," that is, to determine exactly how much social transgression is permissible and desirable at any given moment. Thus a challenge unique to such performers is that a particularly penetrating insult could earn them immortalization in Roman historiography, but it could just as easily result in severe punishment, depending on the enslavers' state of mind; navigating this challenge required awareness and skill. I will return to the complex issue of seeing non-normatively bodied people's agency in fulfilling social expectations as a way to ensure their livelihoods in the next chapter; at this point I would like to briefly return to Gegania and Clessipus (Plin. *HN* 34.12). Ironically, the humiliation of being paraded naked for the amusement of dinner guests is what gives Clessipus a chance at a self-governed life: Gegania falls in love with him and takes him as a lover, and shortly after makes him her heir. While Pliny puts Gegania's lack of restraint at the center of this episode, Clessipus demonstrates that one's non-normative body could become a tool in earning a privileged position in one's household.

The linguistically and societally unrestrained personae that *deliciae* and people with non-normative bodies took on also had significance in the broader context of society, as contextual socially transgressive humor can paradoxically be seen as a reflection of social cohesion. Kathleen McCarthy's work on the simultaneously subversive and authority reifying nature of Plautine comedy provides helpful background (2000). McCarthy observes that ancient Roman society was ordered by a "complex" and "dynamic" pattern of hierarchy: every person existed at an intersection of numerous identities, some fixed, like gender and place of birth, and others mutable, like enslavement status or personal wealth. This creates a system in which almost no one is "permanently and universally" dominant or subordinate. Thus in interrogating what desires comedy satisfied—especially for the social elite part of the audience, for ultimately they were the primary force shaping their content through public funding and influence—McCarthy encourages us to account for the viewers' "fears and vulnerabilities as much as … their powers and self-confidence" (22). McCarthy argues that because every audience member was a part of an intricate hierarchy, a social inferior in one relationship and a social superior in another—with a narrow range of behavior approved for each scenario—the audience was unified rather than divided by the subversive character of the comedy. This mechanism is perhaps easiest to see in the figure of "the clever slave," whose "doubleness" allows the viewer to identify paradoxically both as different from and same as him: his low social status and "infantile trickster" nature provided an opportunity to confirm one's superiority, while his ability to see through and manipulate his superiors invoked feelings of solidarity. For the free members of the audience specifically, the objectified—as in literally perceived as a human instrument—enslaved person on the stage is the perfect "screen onto which fantasies are projected," and a way to enjoy "the liberatory release" of witnessing a social reversal without having to admit it is something they desired in the first place

(23). McCarthy's framework provides an explanation for the increased popularity of loose-tongued *deliciae* and enslaved non-normatively bodied entertainers in the early empire: as the social and political hierarchy became progressively more complicated—especially with the introduction of such a "universally dominant" figure as the emperor—the social elites embraced additional opportunities for socially subversive identification. It is satisfying and even affirming to see one's social superior affronted, and the fact that the enslaved performers' marginalized social status took the "bite" out of their jibes made the pleasure gained from the performance seem innocuous. Returning to the agency of *deliciae* and enslaved people with non-normative bodies, this broader social context means that to be a successful performer one had to accurately assess and live up to the expectations, desires, and limits of not only one's enslaver and/or object of quips, but also the audience at large.

The last puzzle piece left to address is the identity of Conopas' mistress, Julia the Younger. Extant sources often place *deliciae* and people with non-normative bodies in the households of emperors specifically, likely to communicate their "immoral or at least luxurious way of life" (Laes 2003, 302). The *infamia* (disgrace) ascribed to some emperors, by the admission of Suetonius himself, vix ut referri audirive, nedum credi fas sit (Suet. *Tib*. 44; is barely fit to be told or heard, let along believed); is it possible that Julia the Younger's relationship to Conopas was mentioned or even fabricated to discredit her? After all, Julia the Younger, the daughter of Julia the Elder and Agrippa, was famously exiled by Augustus (although perhaps not as famously as her mother). Suetonius records multiple occasions on which Augustus expressed his less than warm feelings about his granddaughter: he forbade the child born to her in exile to be recognized or reared (*Aug.* 65.4); he razed a residence built by her out of distaste for its lavishness (72.3); and he forbade Julia the Younger, along with her mother, to be buried in his mausoleum (101.4). According to

Suetonius, Augustus was likely to have disapproved of Conopas' presence in his granddaughters entourage, since he "pumilos atque distortos et omnis generis eiusdem ut ludibria naturae malique ominis abhorrebat" (abhorred people with dwarfism, deformed people, and all of this sort, as laughing-stocks of nature and bad omens). However, Augustus himself was not beyond finding pleasure in surrounding himself with a particular type of people: in the same passage he is said to have sought out the company of young boys "facie et garrulitate amabiles" (*Aug*. 83; lovely in face and chattering). Moreover, Livia, the "worthy" third wife of Augustus (Cass. Dio 58.2.5)—and the very same woman that was said to patronize *deliciae*, as mentioned above—is stated to have had a short-statured freedwoman named Andromeda in the very same sentence that mentions Conopas and Julia the Younger (Plin. *HN* 7.75). In this passage, Pliny does not provide moral evaluation of Julia the Younger's nor Livia's choice of company, which is perhaps unsurprising, since his goal is to provide a catalogue of people with non-normative bodies, and not to characterize the imperial family. Elsewhere, however, Pliny does not shy away from straying from the topic on hand to record an inappropriate relationship between a non-normatively bodied entertainer and their patron: as mentioned above, the Corinthian chandelier story concludes with Gegania taken over by "inpudentia libidinis" (shamelessness of desire) upon seeing Clessipus naked, accepting him into her bed, shortly after including him in her will. Pliny does not mince his words: he describes the tombstone that Clessipus dedicates to Gegania after her death as perpetuating "Geganiae dedecoris memoria" (*HN* 34.12; the memory of Gegania's dishonor). It is impossible to know if Pliny did not elaborate on Julia the Younger and Conopas' relationship because his sources had not preserved details (after all, he started working on *Naturalis Historia* some 40 years after Julia the Younger's death); or because their relationship seemed appropriate for an enslaver and their party entertainment and therefore was not worthy of mentioning; or

simply because Pliny decided it was not appropriate material for this section. These ever-multiplying possibilities are, unfortunately, the constant companion of a social historian. However, I hope to have showed that Conopas' identities as *deliciae* and a person with a non-normative body were likely more interconnected than previously considered. Although history preserved only a glimpse of his life, I hope Conopas will continue to inspire scholars to consider lived experiences of Roman *deliciae* and people with non-normative bodies alongside each other.

The epitaph of Conops the *palaestrita*

I now turn to Conops, a *palaestrita* commemorated in the now destroyed columbarium of the Iunii Silani. His epitaph reads: "Conops palaestrit(a) Appi Silani" (*CIL* 6.7613; Conops, the *palaestrita* of Appius Silanus). His name comes from the ancient Greek word κώνωψ (gnat) or "mosquito." It is the name of a servant in *Leucippe and Clitophon* and is also attested as a cognomen of two Roman citizens (*CIL* 4.3905 and *CIL* 6.15056). It is likely that this was the name of Julia the Younger's *deliciae* as well—a "fitting" name for his short stature—and was later misspelled as Conopas by Pliny or his sources, since the name of that spelling is not attested anywhere else. The Iunii Silani columbarium was located on Via Appia in Rome, was likely used under Claudius and Nero, and contained 37 epitaphs on marble tablets (*CIL* 6.7600-7637).

Most tantalizingly, the Iunii Silani of this columbarium bear connections to Julia the Younger. One connection is that Aemilia Lepida, Julia the Younger's daughter, was the patron of Callityche, one of the freedwomen commemorated in the columbarium (*CIL* 6.7617). Aemilia Lepida was married to M. Iunius Silanus (*cos*. 19 CE), and two of their sons are mentioned in the epitaphs: D. Iunius Silanus Torquatus (*cos*. 53) was seemingly the patron of D. Iunius Philippus (*CIL* 6. 7629) and M. Iunius Silanus (*cos*. 46) is referenced in connection with Eros (*CIL* 6.7604), Dryans (*CIL* 6.7608), and Celtus (*CIL* 6.7612). Conops, however, comes from the other branch of

Iunii Silani represented at the columbarium—his epitaph links him to an Appius Silanus, who is also mentioned in a handful of other inscriptions in this location. There is a well-documented C. Appius Iunius Silanus (*cos*. 28); an epitaph to his freedman Seno evidences that Gaius and Appius functioned as a double praenomen for him,[86] and there are instances where he is called Appius Iunius Solanus (for example, *CIL* 10.1196) or even as just Appius Solanus (for example, Tac. *Ann*. 6.9 and Suet. *Claud*. 29 and 37). However, based on an epitaph in the Iunii Silani columbarium for M. Iunius Syntrophus, freedman of Appius, Theodor Mommsen proposes that all instances of Appius Silanus refer to the same person M. Appius Iunius Silanus who was possibly the son of C. Appius Iunius Silanus (*cos*. 28 CE). However, such an M. Appius Silanus is otherwise unattested and his prominent father's name only appears in one other burial (*CIL* 6.27454); I would therefore suggest that inscriptions without a praenomen in the Iunii Silani columbarium could just as likely be referring to Gaius the father as to "Marcus" the son, especially because epigraphic and literary evidence confirms that the father sometimes went by just Appius. There is difficulty in establishing how these Gaius and Marcus are related to other Iunii Silani. Robert Syme offers a genealogical tree in which our C. Appius Silanus (*cos*. 28) is the son of C. Silanus (*cos*. 10 CE), who is in turn the brother of M. Silanus (*cos.* 15) and D. Silanus, to whose significance in the context of my chapter I will return shortly. The contributors to *PIR*^{2}, however, express their doubts (I 541): they question whether a son could become a consul mere 18 years after his father's consulship, as well as whether C. Appius Silanus would have been able to become consul in 28 CE at all if his father was the C. Silanus that was indicted in 22 CE after his proconsulate of Asia (Tac. *Ann*. 3.66-69). They also suggest a connection between our C. Appius Silanus and M. Silanus (*cos*. 15), since the former's second praenomen (Appius) and the name of the latter's daughter (Claudia, as recorded

[86] Seno's full name is given as "C(aius) Iunius Ap(pi) C(ai) libertus Seno" (CIL 6. 27454; Gaius Iunius Seno, freedman of Gaius Appius).

in Tac. *Ann.* 6.20) link them to *gens* Claudii; *PIR*² suggests that they are, perhaps, brothers (I 541).[87] While the precise familial relation between C. Appius Silanus and M. Silanus (*cos.* 15) is unclear, we have definitive evidence that the latter is, as alluded to above, the brother of D. Silanus, whose affair with Julia the Younger possibly earned the latter exile (Tac. *Ann*. 3.24). Both lines of Iunii Silani represented at the columbarium in question, then, seem to have ties to Julia the Younger—one through her daughter's marriage, and another through her extramarital relationship. Unfortunately, extant sources do not preserve how these two lines connect to each other, but it can hardly be a coincidence that over 50 enslaved and freed people from these households were commemorated in the same location. These family ties—as well as the rarity of the name Conops and the connotations of the *palaestrita* position to which I will turn presently—lead me to suggest that Conops of *CIL* 6.7614 might be Julia's *deliciae* as recorded by Pliny.

The term *palaestrita* names someone connected to a *palaestra*, a site modeled on the Greek παλαίστρα that Romans used for athletics, especially in the context of public baths (Newby 2005, 4). Some uses of *palaestrita* clearly indicate that the people who used such an establishment are meant, and more specifically people that wrestled; thus Sidonius mentions "lubrici tortuosique pugilatu et nexibus palaestritae" (*Epist.* 2.6.6; slippery *palaestritae* entangled in boxing and clasping). When *palaestrita* does not refer to an actual athlete, its meaning has been more difficult to pinpoint. For example, Lewis and Short suggests that *palaestrita* means "the director of a wrestling school" based on the way this word is used in Cicero's *In Verrem*, while *TLL* admits that it is difficult to distinguish whether *palaestritae* are closer to *magistri* (instructors) or *ministri*, (attendants/administrators). Multiple sources portray *palaestritae* as tending the bodies of athletes or casual *palaestra* visitors. Thus in a satire by Persius someone has such thick hair on their crotch

[87] They do not deny Syme's claim that C. Silanus (cos. 10) could have been M. Silanus' brother (I 551), just that this C. Silanus was the father of our C. Appius Silanus.

and buttocks that even five *palaestritae* could not help with manscaping (4.39-40). In Petronius' *Satyricon* the protagonists, having been ambushed by Quartilla and her lascivious attendants (a *cinaedus* among them, who "extortis clunibus cecidit" (spreading their buttocks, beat) our protagonists), are oiled up by *palaestritae*—and are "refreshed" (reficeri) in the process, whatever that might mean (21.4). When enumerating the luxuries of a certain household, Martial also invokes the image of a *palaestrita* slippery with oil (3.58.25). In another epigram, when mocking the gaudy luxury of the dinner parties hosted by a certain Zolius—so gaudy that he has a eunuch assist him with relieving himself (3.82.15-17)—Martial describes with distaste that at his host's feet, awaiting a handout, are not only his lapdogs, but also *palaestritae* along with a "concubinus" (3.82.20-21; male bed-sharer). Loeb editions of Persius, Petronius, and Martial translate these instances of *palaestrita* as "wrestling coach," even though it is difficult to imagine how the activities described are related to instruction in sports. What does unite these passages is the air of extravagance and debauchery; *palaestrita*e are portrayed as standing outside social norms because/so that they can engage with their patrons' bodies in such subservient ways as oiling them up or plucking their pubic hair. Perhaps the figure of an indecent *palaestrita* is a reverberation of Romans' reservations about Greek-style athletics, namely, in Zahra Newby's words, that "it encourages degeneracy and pederasty" (2005, 43). At Zolius' dinner party, *palaestritae* are behaving as parts of his posse, his entourage, which recalls the social position of *deliciae* and enslaved people with non-normative bodies previously discussed in this chapter. Their purpose is to bolster their enslaver's social standing by having no other job than to provide entertainment by behaviors unfit for a Roman citizen, be it parading around naked, hurling insults at their social superiors, or being hand-fed like a pet. Such amusements ensure one's party would be the talk of the town—after all, Martial's main complaint is not that Zolius enjoys luxuries, but that he does

not share them with his guests (3.58.22-28); they also demonstrate that the host can afford to keep on an enslaved person whose function is far from essential in a household.

Where in the (known-to-us) spectrum of *palaestritae* experiences does Conops fit? There is no precedent for this word to describe enslaved people using the *palaestra* "on behalf" of their enslavers, say, taking part in wrestling competitions or maintaining one's physical form for some other purpose, so it seems unlikely that Conops was identified as a *palaestrita* on account of being a "gym rat." If we add to this the fact that Conops probably had a non-normative body—either because he is the short-statured young man Pliny describes or because of the heavy implication of his name alone—a more plausible explanation is that Conops was Appius Silanus' personal attendant at the *palaestra*. That it seemed fitting for Romans to include a person with a non-normative body in a space dedicated to bodily aesthetics is demonstrated by artistic conventions. For example, Lisa Trentin points out that the sculptural program of the Baths of Caracalla—which includes a well-known Sleeping Hermaphroditus[88] and the Farnese Hercules[89]—"lays an emphasis on bodily extremes" to shock and surprise the viewer and prompt them to "re-assess and re-think their own somatic normality" (2009, 150-151). Sleeping Hermaphroditus offers an explorative journey through the multiplicities a human body can hold; the viewer may be titillated by the view from the back, and if they choose to become an active voyeur and walk around the sculpture for further aesthetic and possibly sensual enjoyment, the combination of female and male characteristics forces them to re-examine their expectations and assumptions—a body so "unproblematically" beautiful from a particular perspective on further inspection refuses to fit such a seemingly clear-cut category of human existence like gender (147). Meanwhile, the Farnese

[88]. Marble sculpture from second century BCE. Now in Paris, the Louvre, inv. MA 231.
[89]. A second century CE marble cast of the fourth century BCE original is now in Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 6001.

Hercules is an "inflated, over-the-top image of masculinity," and the weariness with which he leans on his club invites the viewer to reflect on "the dangers of excessive bathing and gymnastics" (150). The way these sculptures encourage the viewer to study them from all sides—in case of the Farnese Hercules only from behind can we see that he is holding the Apples of Hesperides, a reference to one of his labors—reflects curiosity about bodies that was inappropriate for Roman citizens to direct at each other in public baths, but was instead satisfied by putting the bodies of enslaved people on display. For a non-normatively bodied servant to attend to an athlete's or a casual exerciser's body—especially in such intimate ways as spreading oil over their skin—thus achieved at least two goals: to enhance the luxurious dimension of athletics and to promote reflection, whether humorous or not, on body idealism. It is not a coincidence that in the *Satyricon* our first encounter of Trimalchio and the "lautitia" (splendor, magnificence) of his lifestyle is of him playing a ball game with "long-haired boys" with two "spadones" (eunuchs, mutilated men) and therefore non-normatively bodied men—waiting on him. Reminiscent of Zolius' dinner party, the task of one eunuch is to hold a chamber pot—made of silver!—and when beckoned to hold it in a way that would allow Trimalchio to urinate without pausing the game (Petron. *Satyr*. 27). That Zolius and Trimalchio rely on their enslaved people for assistance with bodily functions is portrayed as an extreme expression of extravagance and provides a scathing commentary on the *mores* of the Romans. Conops being Appius Silanus' glorified gym attendant likely falls in this category of lavishness, although perhaps was seen as less reprehensible—how is one supposed to put oil on that hard-to-reach spot on one's back without assistance, after all?

As luck would have it, the inscriptions in the Iunii Silani columbarium happen to record occupations of servants at an unusually high rate (Hasegawa 2005, 31), and the job titles mentioned provide support for seeing Conops' role in the household through the framework of Roman

nobility's personal luxuries. Four people are designated *cubicularii* (bedchamber servants) and two of them—Charopinus (*CIL* 6.7603) and Logus (*CIL* 6.7606)—were in the service of Appius Silanus specifically. In Sandra Joshel's astute formulation, enslaved servants "produced for their masters a life commensurate with their social standing" (1992, 158). She is referring here to how the labor of maintenance, such as fluffing pillows—or maintaining one's pubic hair—was displaced onto enslaved people as incongruous with the nature of a truly cultured person; and she is also referring to enslaved people "as a constituent of wealth" (74)—exactly how many routine tasks one could put on one's servants was a way to communicate social status (we are reminded once again of Zolius and Trimalchio's bathroom habits). By assisting Appius Silanus at the *palaestra,* whatever that looked like, Conops fulfilled both of these functions: by tending to his enslaver's body in a place dedicated to the maintenance of physical health and hygiene he allowed Appius Silanus to publicly demonstrate exactly how much wealth and social standing he had.

However, it is impossible to displace one's own basic life functions on another person without giving up independence. Joshel observes that some epitaphs of domestic servants emphasize "the person served," instead of, say, one's legal status (155). At first glance this can be surprising, as such epitaphs are most commonly dedicated by fellow enslaved people or freedpeople (184, Table A.1): why define the deceased through their subjugation? Joshel offers an alternative way to approach these epitaphs: she suggests that by omitting status indicators and naming the person attended, "domestic servants document their maintenance of the master" (158). By identifying their labor and who benefited from it, personal attendants get to take credit for creating "a life commensurate with their social standing" for their socially superior charges.

In the Iunii Silani columbarium, two inscriptions explicitly show that from the perspective of enslaved people and freedpeople, a job that put one in a close relationship to one's enslaver

could be an opportunity for a positive and affirming identification. In *CIL* 6.7605, Chrysis commemorates Iugurtha; she identifies herself as a freedwoman of Appius and chooses to give the following details about Iugurtha: he was a *cubicularius* of Lucius Silanus and lived 27 years. As a bedchamber servant, Iugurtha would have been privy to the most intimate parts of Lucius' life; to earn and maintain such a job required Iugurtha to be attentive to Lucius' every move without being an overbearing presence—a difficult balancing act. Performing this role competently likely put Iugurtha in a privileged position within the household—either through explicit preferential treatment from Lucius or simply by the virtue of having a front-row seat to Lucius' routines, moods, and maybe even secrets. For Chrysis to identify Iugurtha by his connection to his enslaver provided an opportunity to reflect his labor and the advantages that it brought. *CIL* 6.7618 demonstrates this point even more vividly, for it contains self-identification. This epitaph is dedicated by Apollonia, who identifies herself as a "nutrix Luci Silani Marci filii" (the wet-nurse of Lucius Silanus, son of Marcus). For Apollonia the freeborn status of her charge is important enough to overtly state; by doing so she "documents" that a Roman citizen depended on her not just for establishing his superior social status, but for literal biological survival. Even more than bedchamber servants, wet-nurses developed close relationships with their charges, and for Apollonia the mention of Lucius Silanus might have served as a shorthand for the benefits she enjoyed.

Conops' epitaph does not specify the dedicator; there is always a possibility that it was set up not by a peer, but by his enslavers, for whom Conops' only relevance was the duties he performed at the *palaestra*. Even if that is true, however, the larger culture of commemoration within the communities of enslaved people and freedpeople—and they were the primary users of the Iunii Silani columbarium—shows that being identified by the services one performed and for

whom allowed for a range of readings, including positive and affirming ones. When we approach Conops' epitaph from this perspective, we can envision how it reflects his agency: while his non-normative body made him a particularly fitting candidate to accompany Appius Silanus to the *palaestra*, he would have had to navigate expectations and be useful and entertaining enough in order to keep this post; a task all the more complex because the *palaestra* is a public space with its own particular code of conduct. Conops also had access to spaces out of bounds for Appius Silanus' other domestic servants, and got to witness the particular side of Appius Silanus and his social circle that came out at the public baths; for him to be identified as a *palaestrita* in his epitaph was to commemorate this unique position.

Conclusions

In this chapter I used the story of Conopas/Conops, *deliciae* turned *palaestrita*, to consider how non-normatively bodied enslaved people were expected to "perform themselves" in the world of Roman social elite. By bringing out the parallels between the skills ascribed to *deliciae* and non-normatively bodied performers I hoped to show that their "entertainment value" relied on carefully crafted personas rather than their intrinsic nature. Then, by examining Conops' epitaph in the Iunii Silani columbarium within the broader culture of commemorating enslaved and freed personal attendants, I further considered the labor that likely went into maintaining these personas, and how this labor and the benefits it brought was seen as an opportunity for positive identification in the community of enslaved people and freedpeople.

Chapter 3. Status, Stature, and Agency: Myropnous the aulos player

In the previous chapter I considered how enslavement status and bodily non-normativity intersected for Conops, *deliciae* of Julia the Younger and *palaestrita* of Appius Silanus. In this chapter I will continue exploring how one's social status impacted the way one's non-normative body was viewed, and how one could use one's non-normative body to negotiate for social privileges. I begin by considering extant accounts of freeborn short-statured people to further elucidate that meanings ascribed to non-normative bodies in ancient Rome are not "inherent" or "natural," and are instead part of the complex constellation that Roman social identity was. I then introduce the comparative evidence of non-normatively bodied performers in nineteenth- and twentieth-century freak shows to further explore the agency of ancient Roman people of low social status who harnessed their non-normative bodies for entertainment. I finally turn to the epitaph of Myropnous the aulos player from the Via Appia in Rome (fig. 13, *IG* 14.1865 = *IGUR* 2.798). Myropnous' epitaph features the word νάνος (person with dwarfism), as well as his full-length portrait, which makes it one of the fullest representations of a historical short-statured person. I consider what this epitaph can tell us about Myropnous' relationship to his social status, short stature, and profession, and how those facets of his life were interconnected.

Freeborn short-statured people

Of freeborn short-statured people, the life of Gaius Licinius Calvus is best preserved in extant sources. We know that he lived in the first half of first century BCE and was a close friend of Catullus and his equal in poetry. He did not seek political office but was a well-respected orator, and he died in his twenties. The most unambiguous evidence of Calvus' short stature comes from Seneca the Elder: "erat enim parvolus statura, propter quod etiam Catullus in hendecasyllabis vocat illum 'salaputium disertum'" (*Controv.* 7.4.7; for he was little in stature, on account of which even

Catullus calls him in a hendecasyllabic poem a "well-spoken *salaputium*"[90]). The way Seneca quotes Catullus 53.5 suggests that *salaputium* is a reference to Calvus' height, however the word is otherwise unknown and its etymology is unclear. One prominent theory connects *salaputium* to the words *pusio* and *pusus*, which mean "a little boy" (Knobloch 1969, 26; Fordyce 1961, 225). The other theory, originated by Ernst Bickel, interprets *-put-* as "phallus" based on a better understood Latin word *praeputium* (foreskin or literally "that in front of the phallus") with *sala-* possibly coming from *salax* (salacious) (1953, 94). Bickel suggests that this etymology is not at odds with how Seneca uses the word (95), for Suetonius provides us with the precedent of Horace being jokingly called *penis* (penis, phallus) on account of his shortness by Augustus (Suet. *Vita Hor.*).

Both of these theories are thoroughly disproven by Michael Weiss on linguistic grounds (1996, 354-356). Weiss also proposes that we do away with Seneca's understanding of the word completely, for its real, "slangy" meaning was likely "lost to Seneca, born as he was in Corduba thirty years after Catullus"[91] (354). Having thus rejected Seneca's testimony, Weiss puts forward that *salaputium* in Catullus 53.5 refers not to Calvus himself but to his speech, and comes from the Oscan word **salaputim* (salt purification) (357-358). In Latin, salt is often a stand-in for refinement, and Catullus uses the word *insulsus* (unsalted) on multiple occasions to express his distaste for someone's lack of class (37.6; 10.33) and in fact at one point describes Calvus as "salsus" (14.16; salty, witty). To call Calvus' oratory "learned salt purification," then, is to compliment his wit and sophistication.

However, this praise is uttered in Catullus' poem by a spectator at court, and Catullus

[90] All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.
[91] An interesting judgement for an American scholar writing in English in the 1990s to pass on Seneca, I have to admit.

reports that it made him laugh (53.1)—what exactly was funny? Weiss suggests that the joke "turns on the conflict between substandard pronunciation of a (probably) rustic word and the fine literary appreciation shown" (358). Shane Hawkins argues that Weiss' proposed translation of *salaputium* and the way Seneca uses this word are not mutually exclusive. Hawkins draws our attention to a passage in which Lucretius describes how men are incapable of seeing the flaws in their lovers; to a man in love, Lucretius tells us, "parvula pumilio, 'chariton mia,' 'tota merum sal'" (4.1162; a tiny girl with dwarfism is "my Grace," "nothing but pure salt"). Compare to how Catullus disparages a woman in one of his poems: "nulla in tam magnost corpore mica salis" (86.4; not a grain of salt in that giant body). Hawkins suggests Seneca recognized this motif in the word *salaputium*, and therefore joined it with the reference to Calvus' short stature: "Calvus may have been short, but he was pure salt/wit" (337).

I see no reason to dismiss Seneca's interpretation of Catullus' words, and although we might never know exactly what *salaputium* means, it still remains to be considered whether Catullus 53 can tell us anything about Roman short-statured people. Helpfully, D. F. S. Thomson points out that syntax can help us decide exactly how (un)flattering the bystander's remark was intended to be. The adjective "disertum" (well-spoken) should be taken as a predicate rather than just an attribute of "salaputium," which gives the phrase "an effect of climax and surprise" (1961, 333)—it should be understood not just as "a well-spoken *salaputium*," but "wow, this *salaputium* is actually well-spoken." Moreover, Hawkins persuasively interprets this poem as "programmatic statement" (2012, 347), in which Calvus is "the living embodiment of the neoteric preference for small poems" (348). Similarly, Jennifer Ingleheart reads Ovid's description of Calvus as "exiguus" (*Tr.* 2.431; little), as "referring to Calvus' diminutive stature, … but surely also with poetic, Callimachean point" (2010, 335). Thus Calvus' short stature is able to stand in for something

desired—namely the elegance of short-form poetry. This stands in sharp contrast to the meanings associated with short-statured figures in Roman art, as discussed in chapter 1, and ascribed to short-statured enslaved people, as shown in chapter 2.

Let us return to the episode that prompts Seneca to tell his reader about Calvus' short stature. In the forum, the clients of Cato, the man Calvus was defending, were assaulting Asinius Pollio, the man who was bringing the charge against Cato. Calvus threatened that if Asinius Pollio came to harm from Cato or his supporters, he (Calvus) would bring a charge against Cato himself; to be heard over the commotion when delivering this threat, Calvus "inponi se supra cippum iussit"[92] (ordered for himself to be put on a pillar). Asinius Pollio, Seneca informs us, was never bothered by Cato again (*Controv.* 7.4.7). This episode and others accompanying it are clearly intended to show that Calvus is an *exemplum* to be emulated by students of oratory in his adaptability (7.4.6). Seneca describes Calvus as often "violentus et concitatus" (violent and excited) in his oratory (7.4.6): he could get so overtaken by passion, reports Seneca, that he would leave his place in court and "inpetu latus usque in adversariorum partem transcurrere" (carried by impulse run over all the way to the corner of his adversaries). So forceful could Calvus be that one defendant proclaimed "rogo vos, iudices: num, si iste disertus est, ideo me damnari oportet" (7.4.7; I ask you, judges: if that guy over there is eloquent, surely I should not be condemned just for that reason?). Calvus' poetry, Seneca adds, despite being "iocosa" (joking) is also "plena ingentis animi" (7.4.7; full of great spirit). And yet, although Calvus' style was generally "omnia excitata et fluctuantia" (everything excited and swelling), he could also deliver speeches "non tantum emollitae conpositionis sunt sed infractae" (not just softened in composition, but subdued) when

[92] Although the image of people lifting a grown man onto a pillar could have easily lent itself to humor, Seneca's phrasing gives Calvus all of the agency: Calvus gives the order and he himself is the subject of the subordinate clause; being assisted does not take away from his control over the situation.

it was needed (7.4.8). Calvus' bodily difference is a minor detail of his background against which his skill and character are showcased; his short stature is brought up to emphasize that he is *such* a capable and determined orator that his physical "flaw" cannot hold him back.

For Catullus and Seneca, Calvus' non-normative body was not his most prominent feature, defining the course of his life and what he had to offer. These passages show that it was conceivable for a person with a non-normative body to be integrated into—and indeed to thrive in—Roman society. Thus Calvus was able to represent clients in court and serve as an *exemplum* to other orators—as well as write love poems about his numerous affairs (Ov. *Tr*. 2.431), be a patron to clients (Catull. 14.6), get into trouble with Julius Caesar and reconcile with him (Suet. *Iul.* 73) and own the house in which Augustus lived (Suet. *Aug*. 72). All of which could only be possible if his community invested resources—such as education, wealth, and social connections—into making him a full-fledged representative of elite Roman masculinity; and Calvus only had access to these resources, of course, by the virtue of being born into a respectable *gens*.

If Calvus existed at the intersection of having a non-normative body and being properly masculine, Juvenal describes how a woman—albeit fictional—could try to reconcile her non-normative body with the standards of elite Roman femininity. In his sixth satire, he takes 700 lines to find fault with what seems to be every type of woman to exist; and of interest to us is the following part of his rant about the vanity of Roman women:

> tot premit ordinibus, tot adhuc conpagibus altum
> aedificat caput: Andromachen a fronte videbis,
> post minor est, credas aliam. cedo si male parvi
> sortita est lateris spatium breviorque videtur
> virgine Pygmaea nullis adiuta coturnis
> et levis erecta consurgit ad oscula planta.
> nulla viri cura interea nec mentio fiet
> damnorum. …

> with so many tiers she burdens her head, with so many fixings
> she builds up her head high: from the front you will see an Andromache,
> from behind she is smaller; you would believe her someone else. say, if she has been poorly
> allotted length of a short flank, and seems shorter
> than a *Pygmaea* girl without being helped by platformed shoes,
> and lightly on tiptoes rises towards planted kisses.
> No care for her husband will there be in the meanwhile, nor mention
> of the losses. … (Juv. 6.502-509).

Since Juvenal's goal is to vilify women, not to provide a faithful portrayal, his "shorter than a *Pygmaea* girl" character is almost certainly an exaggeration and can hardly be seen as evidence that, say, a woman with dwarfism could become a Roman *matrona*. However, even the broad strokes of Juvenal's criticism of a hypothetical woman of high social status with a non-normative body provides an interesting glimpse into her life and how she was perceived by people around her. For even if she does not have dwarfism, she is short enough for it to warrant comment—and for her to feel self-conscious about it. If enslaved people with non-normative bodies were encouraged to emphasize their bodily difference to "perform themselves well," as I discussed in the previous chapter, Juvenal's pseudo-Andromache takes the opposite approach—she utilizes her wealth to conceal her "shortcomings" as well as she can. And while Juvenal mocks her for deluding herself, ultimately his portrayal is ironically affirming and integrative—a woman with a non-normative body can, as Juvenal elaborates elsewhere in the poem, terrorize her servants, mistreat her husband, and squander his money just as well as her normatively-bodied counterparts can.

Although the figures discussed above show that higher social status could afford integration into society for people with non-normative bodies, extant sources also show the limits of such integration. Namely, even freeborn people could be treated as spectacles by fellow Romans on account of their body difference. This is a common theme for the two final references to historical freeborn short-statured people, to which I now turn. Suetonius records that Augustus

"adulescentulum Lycium honeste natum exhibuit" (exhibited Lycius, an adolescent of respectable birth) because he was less than two feet tall, weighed less than 17 pounds, but had an immense voice (Suet. *Aug.* 43.3). Suetonius gives this detail after stating that Augustus had to stop putting "nobilissima iuventus" (the most noble youth) on display after a certain senate decree. Until then, Suetonius reports, Augustus had them race chariots, run, and slay animals in the Circus; and he was particularly fond of putting on the game of Troy,[93] "prisci decorique moris existimans clarae stirpis indolem sic notescere" (43.2; esteeming noble offspring's talent becoming known in such way to be an ancient and decorous custom). Suetonius intimates that frequent injuries were a major reason for barring freeborn young men from engaging in such performances (43.2); however, the stigma of attracting the "wrong" kind of public attention—to which I will return shortly—must have played a role here too. The first recorded instance of someone being prohibited from competing in the arena based on social status comes from 46 BCE, when Julius Caesar barred a senator from contending (Cass. Dio 43.23.5). It was followed by numerous *ad hoc* prohibitions, as well as senate decrees like the one from 19 CE, which dealt with people appearing on stage or in the games "contra dignitatem ordinis sui" (*AE* 1978, 145; contrary to the dignity of their rank).[94] It was after one such senate decree that Augustus acquiesced not to "exhibit" youths of respectable birth "praeterquam" (except for) Lycius (Suet. *Aug.* 43.3). As his peers were discouraged from entertaining a crowd with their bodies, Lycius' non-normative body was not granted the same care and protection, and he was still treated on par with the other "invisitatum dignumque cognitu" (visually unprecedented and worthy of knowing) phenomena—like a rhinoceros, tiger, or giant snake—Augustus was so enthusiastic about showing off (43.4).

[93] Lusus Troiae involved elaborate drills on horseback by multiple troops of youths, and is described in most detail by Virgil in *Aen.* 5.545-603.

[94] For the text and commentary on this senate decree, as well as a summary of restrictions of public performances by members of upper classes, as well as their violations, see Levick 1983.

Our final reference to freeborn short-statured people comes from Pliny the Elder. He includes the following in his catalogue of people with non-normative bodies: "Manium Maximum et M. Tullium equites Romanos binum cubitorum fuisse auctor est M. Varro, et ipsi vidimus in loculis adservatos" (*NH* 7.75; M. Varro relates that Manius Maximus and M. Tullius, Roman knights, were three feet tall; and I myself saw them preserved in a coffin). While the historical record unfortunately preserves nothing else about Manius and Marcus, even Pliny's barebones record provides some fascinating details of what was possible for people with non-normative bodies in life—and death. We once again have evidence that short-statured people could be integrated into Roman society. Manius and Marcus at the very least possessed substantial wealth, for at the end of republic and the beginning of empire a minimum of 400,000 sesterces was required to qualify for membership in the order. One wonders if they pursued—and were allowed to pursue—the military and civilian offices reserved for Roman knights, but that is a question our sources are unlikely to ever answer. The most striking feature of Pliny's story, however, is that the bodies of Manius and Marcus seem to have been available for viewing after their death. Since Varro died in 27 BCE and Pliny the Elder was born in 23 CE, if we are to believe Pliny's testimony as an eye-witness, the bodies of these Roman knights remained on display for quite some time. And even if Pliny's statement is simply an embellishment, the very fact that it felt *conceivable* to him that freeborn, wealthy, and influential Roman citizens could be exhibited for decades after their death on account of their non-normative bodies encourages further investigation into how bodily normativity impacted the tension between (self-) display and high social status.

Let us begin by elucidating this tension: in Shadi Bartsch's astute formulation, "there was no position more ideologically fraught, more riven with contradiction, more constitutive *and* destructive of male civic identity" than to be at the center of attention (2006, 115, original

emphasis). The highest honor a Roman military man could receive was to be on public display during triumph; the ability to speak convincingly in front of an audience was what made or broke an orator or a politician. Yet if someone had their virility celebrated as a gladiator in the arena or performed on the stage, they were *infamis* (infamous, disreputable) and had to give up what civil rights they might have had, on par with dishonorably discharged soldiers or convicted criminals (*Dig*. 3.2). That the difference lies in these activities themselves rather than in the protection offered by social status to the person on display—for gladiators and actors were often enslaved people or freedpeople—is demonstrated by the aforementioned prohibitions against people of high social status appearing on the stage and in the arena, as well as the assimilation of freeborn people choosing to incur *infamia* to enslaved people through legal restrictions. That is to say, acting and fighting in the arena were not seen as distasteful occupations due to the predominant involvement of people of lower social status; rather, they were morally reprehensible enough as to render anyone choosing to participate in them, even freeborn citizens, socially inferior. That freeborn public performers were liable to corporal punishment (mentions of this policy can be found in Suet. *Aug*. 45; Paulus *Sent*. 5.26; *Dig.* 48.5.25pr; *Dig.* 48.19.28.16) is the most extreme expression of this denigration, for protection from physical abuse "was one of the hallmarks of Roman citizenship" and personal freedom (Edwards 1993, 73). They were also, among other things, barred from participating in local government (*CIL* 1.593), bringing criminal accusations (*Dig.* 48.2.4), and participating in state functions (Tert. *De Spect.* 22). If the stakes were so high for only attracting the "right" kind of attention, how did Romans conceptualize the distinction between orator and actor, soldier and gladiator? In Roman ideology, as Bartsch points out, the *purpose* of self-display had a defining role in whether it could be virtuous and therefore appropriate for someone of high social status: was it to educate and inspire, or to entertain and titillate (158)? Thus

one's social status was lowered by any use of their body by others for pleasure (Edwards 1993, 85; Walters 1998, 364). Early Christian author Tertullian in his treatise on public spectacles observed that Romans "ex eadem arte, qua magnifaciunt, deponunt et deminuunt" (*De Spect.* 22; on account of the same skill, exult and put down and diminish them [charioteers, players, athletes, gladiators]). For Tertullian, this is just more evidence of the religious immorality of such spectacles—if even the society itself despises performers, how much more must these performers be hateful to divine justice (23)! His formulation, however, perfectly captures Roman paradoxical attitude towards entertainment; grand-scale events were an integral part of Roman cultural life—it is not a coincidence that the expression "bread and circuses" was coined by Juvenal (10.81)—and yet the people involved in their production were treated on par with the most marginalized and legally vulnerable Romans.

Bartsch suggests that it was the elite Roman's ability to maintain "control over the nature and meaning of self-representation" that allowed him not to be exploited in being seen (2006, 159), and I find this a useful standard to apply to the lives of freeborn people with non-normative bodies already discussed in this chapter. Calvus, perhaps by virtue of his life being best preserved by extant sources, provides a model of "morally good" self-display. He effectively commands the attention of his peers both in the court and in other spheres of public life, and for this he is commended as an *exemplum* of a persuasive orator; his short stature is incidental to his publicity. In the cases of Lycius, Manius, and Marcus, however, it seems that it is their non-normative bodies that make them worth seeing. Satisfying one's curiosity about non-normative bodies by scrutinizing them is akin to the *voluptas*—sensual and otherwise "low" pleasure—that actors and gladiators were tasked with providing (Edwards 1993, 83). It is thus not coincidental that for Suetonius the public display of Lycius forms a narrative bridge between the prohibition of noble

youths fighting in the arena and the exhibition of exotic animals; despite his respectable birth, Lycius' non-normative body opened him up to the "ravenous gaze" reserved for spectacles (Bartsch 2006, 156). That Manius and Marcus were supposedly displayed after their death makes it even more clear that one's non-normative body could turn one into a spectacle regardless of one's social status. Romans had the practice of creating and displaying *imagines*—wax death masks—of ancestors whose *exemplum* they wished to keep alive in their memories; this is distinctly not the kind of treatment Manius and Marcus received. Instead, the non-normativity of their bodies was offered up for examination.

Comparative evidence of freak shows

If high social status did not always protect freeborn short-statured people from becoming objects of dehumanizing attention, enslaved non-normatively bodied performers had even less control over their self-representation. However, I would like to consider their lived experience through the lens offered by the disability activist and scholar Eli Clare in his deeply personal essay "Freaks and Queers," first published in 1999. Namely, I would like to explore enslaved non-normatively bodied performers grasping "an exploitative situation in an exploitative world" and turning it to their benefit (2015, 94) without reducing their lives to "a pure story of resistance and subversion" (112). To do so, I now turn to the comparative evidence of people performing in nineteenth- and twentieth-century freak shows.

For Clare, envisioning the agency of freak show performers is impossible without acknowledging that "freak of nature" is in fact *not* a natural category. Mere biological fact of bodily difference is not enough to produce a "freak"; instead, they were created by the freak show through "an elaborate and calculated social construction that utilized performance and fabrication as well as deeply held cultural beliefs" (2015, 86). At this point I hope to have provided sufficient

evidence that the social identities of people with non-normative bodies in ancient Rome were similarly products of conscious crafting and not "natural" expressions of physical variation. In the previous chapter, I showed how enslaved people with non-normative bodies in ancient Rome were expected to carefully craft their personas in order to "perform themselves" to the satisfaction of their enslavers and audiences at large, be it by emphasizing their bodily difference, playing into the stereotype of moral unrestraint, or learning a foreign language to enhance their "exotic" appeal. The stories that opened this chapter illustrate that given resources and opportunity, short-statured people could also opt to *de*emphasize their bodily non-normativity, like Juvenal's anonymous *matrona,* or focus on qualities and skills separate from their bodily difference, like the orator and poet Calvus. While a person of short stature seemingly was always conspicuous in ancient Rome, whether one's life revolved around one's bodily non-normativity depended on what other avenues of participating in society were available.

The "freak" act, then, exists at the intersection of the performers' willingness to embody meanings ascribed to non-normative bodies and the audience's willingness to see them as nothing but extensions of their bodily difference; if "rubes"[95] were not eager to make disabled people and people of color into "Others" against whom they could gauge their "normality," the project of the freak show could not have succeeded (Clare 2015, 89). The nature of this self-fashioning—as well as the oppressive and discriminatory logic which lies at its foundation—has led to scholarly debate over the "moral problem" of the freak show. This debate is perhaps best represented by Robert Bogdan's monograph *Freak Show* and David A. Gerber's consequent critique of it.[96] Similarly to Clare, Bogdan focuses on the social construction of the "freak" (1988, 3) and observes that most performers were seen—and saw themselves—as "showmen" participating in the entertainment

[95] In the context of the freak show a rube is the gullible paying customer.
[96] For a detailed record of this discourse, see Chemers 2008, 104-118.

industry (267-268). He suggests that the freak show offered to some disabled people an opportunity to use their bodily difference—which "in another context, might have been a burden" (268)—to be "independent and proud" (281). Gerber, on the other hand, is unequivocal in his condemnation of scholarship that attempts to valorize disabled people's involvement in freak shows: "Beyond the question 'Is this choice voluntary?' or the surmise 'This choice is so bad, it could not be voluntary,' another point asserts itself just as insistently in my mind: 'This choice is so bad, I don't care if it's voluntary'" (1996, 40). Thus for Gerber the issue with projects like Bogdan's is twofold: first, it is dubious whether we can see freak show performers as willing, consenting participants when their ability to obtain mainstream employment was sharply limited and their non-normative bodies always already subjected them to the oppression of unwanted attention (48-49); second, it is difficult to valorize the figure of the "freak" when its popularity was rooted in the "contempt, mockery, or hunger for bizarre spectacle" of its audience (46). Bogdan's and Gerber's perspectives capture the "complicated collective history of exploitation and subversion at the freak show" that Clare is grappling with in his essay (2015, 111). Clare encourages us not to forget the parts of the freak show that do not easily lend to celebration, and must instead be honored and mourned (2015, 112). Daisy and Violet Hilton, conjoined twins who managed their own act coexisted with the two Congolese men and thirteen Congolese women who were enslaved in Africa and exhibited in the US as "Ubagi savages," their real names, origins, and life stories forever lost. It is tempting to see these figures as constituting the opposite ends of the agency/exploitation spectrum; in reality, this spectrum was the push and pull that defined the lived experience of every "freak." As Michael M. Chemers points out, when we *solely* focus on the exploitative nature of the freak show "in the most laudable of ethical motives," we erase the "complex discursive negotiations and strategies" undertaken by non-normatively bodied performers (2008, 112); that is to say, even if "freaks"

cannot be said to have *chosen* their life paths freely, the *agency* with which they navigated this role can still be examined. Embracing this nuance is all the more important when considering ancient Roman material, since non-normatively bodied performers were most often enslaved people or freedpeople, and therefore likely had neither resources nor opportunity to choose a different occupation.

Chemers deftly uses performance studies and Erving Goffman's concept of stigma framework—a negative departure from societal expectations that makes a "tainted, discounted" person out of a "whole and usual" one (Goffman 1986, 3)—to capture the tension that freak show performers faced. On the one hand, to become "freaks," performers must "cater to" and even "exacerbate" the dominant image of themselves as stigmatized, which only reinforces systems of discrimination. On the other, the medium of performance allowed "freaks" to renegotiate how they interacted with society (2008, 17), to "gain control of the process of stigmatization" (19). "Freaks" got to flaunt what they were told made them undesirable and to profit from it; their status as performers, despite putting them at the center of attention, gave them the authority to protect themselves from the "unwelcome, inappropriate, and invasive liberties" that normatively bodied people feel entitled to in casual day-to-day interactions (17). Anna Kerchy shows that the "fantasification of the self" integral to the creation of a "freak" could function as nothing less than a "technique of survival," a "means to protect one's life, sanity, and humane [sic] dignity" (2012, 218). Kerchy's archive is the life-writings of Hungarian short-statured entertainment artists Zoli Hirsch and the Ovitz family against the backdrop of World War II; their ability to flaunt physical difference in order to "attract and manipulate the attention of the normativizing gaze"—a strategy Kerchy calls "counter-spectacularity" (213)—quite literally was the matter of life and death. For instance, when the Ovitz family arrived at the concentration camp, they leaned into the strategies

that "could make them appear as stars instead of victims": they behaved like they would on tour, handing out autograph cards and cajoling the Nazi officers. Ultimately, it was this feat that set them aside and brought them to the attention of Mengele, whose involvement helped them survive the concentration camp, although of course not unscarred (225). Surviving World War II by capturing and maintaining the attention of a fetishizing eugenicist is doubtless an extreme example, but an example of exercising agency in a seemingly impossible situation nonetheless.

The epitaph of Myropnous the aulos player

In the previous chapter I used the epitaph of Conops the *palaestrita* to consider how non-normatively bodied enslaved people and their peers might have viewed their "performance" of bodily difference and the benefits this performance afforded them. I will now return to this line of inquiry by examining the epitaph of Myropnous the aulos player. His marble gravestone (Figure 17), found on the Via Appia in Rome[97] and dated to the second century CE, is decorated by engravings of a wreath, a pitcher, and a libation bowl; it bears the portrait of Myropnous playing the aulos, accompanied by the following inscription: Θ(εοῖς) Κ(αταχθονίοις). Μυροπνόυι νάνῳ χοραύλῃ (*IG* 14.1865 = *IGUR* 2.798; To the gods below. To Myropnous, dwarf aulos player). The epitaph is written in Greek language and in Greek script, yet the invocation of the gods below is a distinctly Roman commemorative convention (Kajanto 1963, 9); this combination of elements suggests that Myropnous had to balance his identities as both foreigner and Roman. That only a single name is given for Myropnous is not as reliable of a status indicator as it would be in a Latin epitaph, for most Greek epitaphs found in Rome contain only one name (Kajanto 1963, 3). In Myropnous' case, however, his profession as an entertainer—which, as discussed above,

[97] It is reported to have been excavated in the sixteenth century and was then displayed by the Pope in Villa Giulia before coming to the Uffizi Gallery in 1783. Unfortunately, no archeological context was preserved for it.

"upstanding members" of Roman society were discouraged from pursuing—as well as the connection of his name to his vocation (it literally translates to "sweetly blowing"), suggest that Myropnous was likely enslaved at some point in his life.

That Myropnous' occupation is named and that he is portrayed playing the aulos reflects the pride he and his community had in his career. We are left to wonder how (or if!) this career was impacted by his bodily non-normativity. Was he put in front of the audience on account of his short stature and was taught/learned how to play the aulos to enhance his act? Or did he become an aulos player simply because he had such natural talents as charisma and a good ear for music? Since Myropnous' name refers to his skill with the aulos, it seems that he received this name as an adult. The name therefore was likely given to him by his enslaver; should we infer from the fact that Myropnous came to be identified by his musical ability and not his non-normative body (like Conops in the previous chapter) that the former and not the latter was at the center or his performance? This dichotomy finds parallel in the two types of individual representations at the freak show as defined by Gerber: a "performance," that is, an act that can be appreciated "for its skill, discipline, and difficulty as well as its aesthetic value," versus "display," that is, an exhibition "in which talent, when it existed at all, was beside the point" (1996, 46). In Gerber's framework, Myropnous was seen—and could see himself—as *either* a musician, valued for his talent, *or* a non-normatively bodied performer, simply displaying himself to satisfy the audience's basest desires. Yet the first-person accounts of "freaks" themselves show that this dichotomy is often a false one. Zoli Hirsch, the Hungarian short-statured actor, records in his memoir that when asked if he would drink a magic potion that would make him grow, he replied: "It is out of the question. What would I do for a living then? I have been acting for twenty years now. People know me all over the world" (quoted in Kerchy 2012, 214). For Hirsch, his non-normative body was an integral

part of his career, not an obstacle to be overcome on his way to success; his identities as an actor and as a short-statured person were inextricably linked. We can interrogate, following Gerber, if Hirsch was able to freely choose what he became famous for, since he was likely only allowed to pursue roles that foregrounded his non-normative body. However the pride that Hirsch expresses in his work—*and* his non-normative body that formed the foundation of his act—is undeniable. Similarly, alongside commemorating Myropnous' musical talent, his gravestone makes no attempt to conceal or deemphasize the non-normativity of his body; on the contrary, his bodily difference is immortalized both in word (νάνος) and image (full-length portrait). When a person or their community commissions an epitaph, they engage in the process of (self-)fashioning; they have to be selective in choosing which aspects of one's life and identity will be showcased. Myropnous is defined through his career as a performer rather than through, say, his age, legal status, household, family, all of which are common elements to be included in commemorations. Within that identity of a performer, his skill with the aulos and his non-normative body seem to be inseparably entwined; it was a conscious choice to give the same level of prominence to both of these features. Both are presented as sources of pride and positive identification.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I considered how short-statured Roman people of different social statuses navigated their bodily non-normativity. By first examining records of freeborn citizens, I showed that given resources and opportunity, short-statured people could embody the values of Roman social elite, with the caveat that they could not always escape sensationalizing public attention. I then used the epitaph of Myropnous the aulos player to envision the agency of non-normatively bodied enslaved and freed performers; I argued that the exploitation/agency tension explored within "freak" studies serves as useful comparative evidence. Was Myropnous' non-normative

body the reason why someone invested in his musical education? If he was not able to master playing the aulos, what other avenues of extracting value would his enslaver have pursued? During his musical performances, was Myropnous also expected to "perform himself" as a non-normatively bodied person to cater to his audience's perception of him? We have to ask these questions lest we focus on Myropnous' agency and pride at the cost of acknowledging that the situation he was in was exploitative. That being said, it behooves us to recognize and respect the possibility that Myropnous found purpose and fulfillment in his occupation, for that is how he and his community chose for him to be remembered.

Conclusions

This dissertation has sought to nuance our understanding of short-statured people's place in ancient Roman society. Having thoroughly re-examined foundational scholarship, I hope to have shown that apotropaic, humorous, and "Othering" meanings should not be ascribed to short-statured people or to their representations without justification, nor should we treat these interpretations as exhaustive. Using sexual scenes on terracotta lamps as my case study in Chapter 1, I suggested a range of readings that includes some normalizing, integrating possibilities.

Ancient sources support such a range of readings, since the perception of a short-statured individual seems to have strongly depended on their social status. As I argue in Chapter 3, for example, it is likely that the Roman poet and orator Licinius Calvus was short-statured, yet extant sources do not present his bodily non-normativity as his defining feature, determining the course of his life. Moreover, his short stature is used by both Catullus and Ovid as a metaphor for elegance of short-form poetry—that is, something positive and desired—in sharp contrast to the associations Romans ascribed to non-normative bodies of enslaved people.

Finally, while previous scholarship on short-statured people in ancient Rome predominantly focuses on the display of enslaved and freed short-statured people for entertainment, I explore their potential agency and lived experiences. I elucidate the labor that short-statured people put into "performing themselves" for the benefit of their audience by using comparative evidence of *deliciae* in ancient Rome (Chapter 2) and nineteenth- and twentieth-century freak show performers (Chapter 3). I also argue that the funeral commemorations of Conops (*CIL* 6.7613; Chapter 2) and Myropnous (*IG* 14.1865 = *IGUR* 2.798; Chapter 3) reflect pride in this labor, as well as the benefits it brought.

Reference list

Adams, Ellen. 2021. “Introduction.” In *Disability Studies and the Classical Body: The Forgotten Other*, edited by Ellen Adams, 1-36. London: Routledge.

Adams, J. N. 1982. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. London: Duckworth.

Alfoldi-Rosenbaum, Elisabeth. 1976. “Alexandriaca. Studies on Roman Game Counters III.” *Chiron* 6: 205-240.

Allison, Penelope. 2006. *The Insula of the Menander at Pompeii.* Vol. 3: *The Finds, a Contextual Study.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ambrosini, Laura. 2013. “Candelabra, Thymiateria and Kottaboi at Banquets: Greece and Etruria in Comparison.” *Etruscan Studies* 16 (1): 1–38.

Asso, Paolo. 2010. “Queer Consolation: Melior’s Dead Boy in Staius’ ‘Silvae’ 2.1.” *American Journal of Philology* 131 (4): 663–97.

Bailey, D. M. 1963. *Greek and Roman Pottery Lamps.* London: The Trustees of the British Museum.

——. 1980. *A Catalogue of the Lamps in the British Museum.* Vol. 2: *Roman Lamps Made in Italy*. London: British Museum Publications.

——. 1987. “The Roman Terracotta Lamp Industry. Another view about exports.” In *Les Lampes de terre cuite en Méditerranée. Des origines à Justinien. Table ronde du CNRS, tenue à Lyon du 7 au 11 décembre 1981*, 59-63. Lyon: Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux.

——. 1997. “Roman Pottery Lamps.” In *Pottery in the Making*, edited by Ian Freestone and David Gaimster, 164-170. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Balestrazzi, Elena di Filippo. 1988. *Lucerne del Museo di Aquileia. Vol. II, 1: Lucerne romane di età repubblicana ed imperiale.* Aquileia: Associazione nazionale per Aquileia.

——. 1988. *Lucerne del Museo di Aquileia. Vol. II, 2: Lucerne romane di età repubblicana ed imperiale.* Aquileia: Associazione nazionale per Aquileia.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1968. *Rabelais and His World.* Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.

Barca, Natale. 2022. *Roman Aquileia: The Impenetrable City-Fortress, a Sentry of the Alps.* Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books.

Barrett, Caitlin E. 2017. “Recontextualizing Nilotic Scenes: Interactive Landscapes in the Garden of the Casa dell’Efebo, Pompeii.” *American Journal of Archeology* 121 (2): 293-332.

Barrett, Caitlin E. and Nikola D. Bellucci. 2022. “A ‘New’ (Rediscovered) Nilotic Scene from the Casa del Gemmario: Context, Iconography and Sub-elite Viewership.” *Rivista di Studi Pompeiani* 33: 89–109.

Barton, Carlin A. 1993. *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bartsch, Shadi. 2006. *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Beard, Mary. 2012. “Did the Romans Laugh?” *Annales (English Ed.)* 67 (4): 581–96.

Beckmann, Sarah E. 2023. “The Naked Reader: Child Enslavement in the Villa of the Mysteries Fresco.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 127 (1): 55–83.

Bergmann, Bettina. 1999. “Introduction: The Art of Ancient Spectacle.” In *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, edited by Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon, 9-37. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art.

Bertacchi, L. 1997. “I monumenti sepolcrali lungo le strade di Aquileia.” In *Monumenti sepolcrali*

romani in Aquileia e nella Cisalpina, edited by M. Mirabella Roberti, 149-167. Editreg: Centro di antichità altoadriatiche.
Bickel, Ernst. 1953. "Salaputium: Mentula Salax." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 96 (1): 94–95.
Bogdan, Robert. 1988. *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Borries, Johann von. 1911. *Phrynici sophistae Praeparatio sophistica.* Leipzig: Verlag B. G. Teubner.
Brusin, Giovanni. 1941. *Nuovi Monumenti Sepolcrali di Aquileia*. Venice: Le Tre Venezie.
Bryan, Betsy M. "Hatshepsut and Cultic Revelries in the New Kingdom." In *Creativity and Innovation in the Reign of Hatshepsut*, edited by Jose M. Galan, Betsy M. Bryan, and Peter F. Dorman, 93-125. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
Buchi, Ezio. 1975. *Lucerne Romane Con Marchio Di Fabbrica.* Aquileia: Associazione nazionale per Aquileia.
Cachia, Amanda. 2015. "Composing Dwarfism: Reframing Short Stature in Contemporary Photography." *Review of Disability Studies* 10 (3&4):
Calderini, Aristide. 1930. *Aquileia Romana: Ricerce di storia e di epigraphia*. Milan: Societa Editrice "Vite e pensiero".
Cataldo, Claudia Kingston. 2009. "Beyond Cute and Evil: How Dwarfs Reconfigure Boundaries of Sexuality, Identity, and Ability in Germanic Literature and Film." PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles.
Cavalli-Sforza, Luigi Luca. 1986. "African Pygmies: An Evaluation of the State of Research." In *African Pigmies*, edited by Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza, 361-427. Orlando: Academic press.
Charcot J. M and Paul Richer. 1889. *Les Difformes Et Les Malades Dans L'art.* Paris: Lecrosnier et Babé Libraires-Éditeurs.
Chemers, Michael M. 2008. *Staging Stigma: A Critical Examination of the American Freak Show.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Clare, Eli. 2015. *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation.* Durham: Duke University Press.
Clarke, John R. 1998. *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
——. 2001. "Sex, Death, and Status: Nilotic Tomb Imagery, Apotropaic Magic, and Freedman Acculturation." In *La Peinture Funeraire Antique: IVe siecle av. J-C.-IV siecle ap. J.-C.: Actes du VIIe Colloque del'Association internationale pour la peinture*, edited by Alix Barbet, 85-91. Paris: Editions Errance.
——. 2005. "Three Uses of the Pygmy and the Aethiops at Pompeii: Decorating, 'Othering,' and Warding off Demons." In *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*, edited by Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G.P. Meyboom, 155-170. Leiden: Brill.
——. 2007. *Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
——. 2014. "Sexuality and Visual Representation." In *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities,* edited by Thomas K. Hubbard, 516-540. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
Dasen, Véronique. 1993. *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
Dasen, Véronique. 2015. "*Infirmitas* or Not? Short-statured Persons in Ancient Greece." In *Infirmity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, edited by Christian Krotzl, 29-51. Farnham: Ashgate.

Dunbabin, Katherine M. C, and M. W. Dickie. 1983. "*Invida rumpantur pectora*. The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art." *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 26, 7-37.

Duncan-Jones, Richard. 1990. *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, Catharine. 1993. *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——. 1998. "Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome." In *Roman Sexualities*, edited by Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner, 66-99. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Egelhaaf-Gaiser, Ulrike. 2007. "Roman Cult Sites: A Pragmatic Approach." In *A Companion to Roman Religion*, edited by Jörg Rüpke, 205–21. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Erim, K. T., and Joyce Reynolds. 1973. "The Aphrodisias Copy of Diocletian's Edict on Maximum Prices." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 63: 99–110.

Etienne, Marc. 2003. "Queen, Harlot, or Lecherous Goddess? An Egyptological Approach to a Roman Image of Propaganda." In *Cleopatra Reassessed*, edited by Susan Walker and Sally-Ann Ashton, 95-100. London: The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fehr, Burkhard. 1990. "Entertainers at the *Symposion*: The *Akletoi* in the Archaic Period." In *Sympotica: A Symposium on the* Symposion, edited by Oswyn Murray, 185-196. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.

Ferraresi, Antonietta. 2000. *Le lucerne fittili delle collezioni archeologiche del Palazzo Ducale di Mantova.* Firenze: Olschki.

Ferrari, Gloria. 2003. "Myth and Genre on Athenian Vases." *Classical Antiquity* 22 (1). Berkeley: University of California Press: 37–54.

Floridi, Lucia. 2014. *Lucillio, Epigrammi: Introduzione, Testo Critico, Traduzione e Commento.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Forbes, R. J. 1958. *Studies in Ancient Technology*. Vol. 6. Leiden: Brill.

Fordyce, C. J. 1961. *Catullus.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gaisser, Julia Haig. 2007. *Catullus*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Gallina, Maria Vittoria Antico. 1985. *Le lucerne fittili di Dertona*. Tortona: Biblioteca civica di Tortona.

Garland, Robert. 1995. *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Garmaise, Michael. 1996. "Studies in the Representation of Dwarfs in Hellenistic and Roman Art." PhD thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton.

——. 2002. "The 'Morio' in Martial's Epigrams, with Emphasis on 12.93." *Scholia: Natal Studies in Classical Antiquity* 11 (1): 55–64.

Genito, Maria Cristina Gualandi. 1980. *Lucerne fittili delle collezioni del Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna.* Bologna: Istituto per la Storia di Bologna.

——. 1986. *Le Lucerne Antiche del Trentino.* Trento: *S*ervizio beni culturali Provincia Autonoma Trento.

George, Michele. 2013. "Cupid Punished: Reflections on a Roman Genre Scene." In *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture*, 52:158–179. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Gerbert, David A. 1996. "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization." In *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, edited by Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 38-55. New York: New York University Press.

Gevaert, Bert and Christian Laes. 2017. “What’s in a Monster? Pliny the Elder, Teratology and Body Disability.” In *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity: Disparate Bodies a Capite Ad Calcem*, edited by Christian Laes. Leiden: Brill.

Gibson, Roy K. 2003. *Ovid: Ars Amatoria. Book 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giovagnetti, Cristina. 1984. *Lucerne romane nel Museo di Rimini*. Roma: Paleani.

Goffman, Erving. 1986. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Goodey, C.F. and M. Lynn Rose. 2013. “Mental States, Bodily Dispositions, and Table Manners: A Guide to Reading ‘Intellectual’ Disability from Homer to Late Antiquity.” In *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity: Disparate Bodies a Capite ad Calcem*, edited by Christian Laes, Chris Goodey, and M. Lynn Rose, 17-45. Leiden: Brill.

Graham, E.-J. 2005. “Dining al Fresco with the Living and the Dead in Roman Italy.” In *Consuming Passions: Dining from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, edited by M. Carroll, D. Hadley and H. Willmott, 49-65. Stroud: Tempus.

Grmek, Mirko Drazen and Danielle Gourevitch. 1998. *Les Maladies Dans L'art Antique.* Paris: Fayard.

Harden, Alastair. 2014. “Animals in Classical Art.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*, edited by Gordon Lindsay Campbell. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Harris, W. V. 1980. “Roman Terracotta Lamps: The Organization of an Industry.” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 70: 126–45.

Hasegawa, Kinuko. 2005. *The Familia Urbana During the Early Empire: A Study of Columbaria Inscriptions.* Oxford, UK: Archaeopress.

Hawkins, Shane. 2012. “On the Oscanism Salaputium in Catullus 53.” *TAPA (Society for Classical Studies)* 142 (2): 329–53.

Hoffmann, Peter. 1991. *Der Isis-Tempel in Pompeji*. Münster: Lit.

Hug, A. 1927. “Lucerna.” In *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, edited by A.F. von Pauly and G. Wissowa, 1566-1614. Vol. 13.2. Stuttgart: A. Druckenmüller Verlag.

Husquin, Caroline. 2020. “Atypical Bodies: Extraordinary Body Treatment and Consideration.” In *A Cultural History of Disability in Antiquity*, edited by Christian Laes, 30-45. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Ingleheart, Jennifer. 2010. *A Commentary on Ovid, Tristia, Book 2.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Jahn, Otto. 1855. “Über den Abenglauben des bösen Blicks bei den Alten.” In *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologisch-Historische Classe*, 28-111. Leipzig: Weidmann.

Jasnow, Richard and Mark Smith. 2010-2011. “‘As for Those Who have Called me Evil, Mut will Call them Evil’: Orgiastic Cultic Behavior and its Critics in Ancient Egypt.” *Enchoria* 32: 9-54.

Johns, Catherine. 1982. *Sex or Symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome.* London: British Museum.

Joshel, Sandra R. 1992. *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: a Study of the Occupational Inscriptions*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Kajanto, Iiro. 1963. *A study of the Greek epitaphs of Rome*. Helsinki: Helsingfors.

Kerchy, Anna. 2012. “From Showbiz to the Concentration Camp: The Fabulous, Freakish Life of

Hungarian Jewish "Dwarf" Performers, Zoli Hirsch and the Ovitz Family." In *Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Shows and "Enfreakment"*, edited by Anna Kerchy and Andrea Zittlau, 211-232. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Knobloch, Johann. 1969. "Catull. 53.5 und Cicero." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 112 (1): 23–29.

Laes, Christian. 2003. "Desperately Different? *Delicia* Children in the Roman Household." In *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, edited by David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, 298-327. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

——. 2011. *Children in the Roman Empire : Outsiders Within*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——. 2017. "Introduction. Disabilities in the ancient world—past, present and future." In *Disability in Antiquity*, edited by Christian Laes, 1-22. London: Routledge.

Larese, Annamaria. 1983. *Le lucerne fittili e bronzee del Museo concordiese di Portogruaro.* Roma: G. Bretschneider.

Larese, Annamaria and Daniele Sgreva. 1997. *Le Lucerne Fittili Del Museo Archeologico Di Verona*. Roma: G. Bretschneider.

Lenski, Noel. 2018. "Working Models: Functional Art and Roman Conceptions of Slavery." In *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture*, edited by Michele George: 129–57. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Levi, Doro. 1941. "The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback." In *Antioch On-The-Orontes III: The Excavations 1937-1939*, edited by Richard Stillwell, 220-232. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Levick, Barbara. 1983. "The Senatus Consultum from Larinum." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 73: 97–115.

Loeschke S. 1919. *Lampen Aus Vidonissa: Ein Beitrag Zur Gescichte Von Vindonissa Und Des Antiken Beleuchtungswesens.* Zurich: Im Kommission bei Beer & Cie.

McCarthy, Kathleen. 2000. *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Meintani, Anastasia. 2022. *The Grotesque Body in Graeco-Roman Antiquity.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Mellinkoff, Ruth. 2004. *Averting Demons: The Protective Power of Medieval Visual Motifs and Themes.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.

Mencacci, Francesca. 2010. "*Modestia* vs *licensia.* Seneca on Childhood and Status in the Roman Family." In *Children, memory, and family identity in Roman culture*, edited by Veronique Dasen and Thomas Spath, 223-244. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Mercando, Liliana. 1962. *Lucerne greche e romane dell'Antiquarium Comunale*. Roma: De Luca.

Meyboom, Paul G.P and Miguel John Versluys. 2005. "The Meaning of Dwarfs in Nilotic Scenes." In *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*, edited by Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G.P. Meyboom, 170-209. Leiden: Brill.

Mitchell, Alexandre G. 2009. *Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humor*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Montserrat, Dominic. 1996. *Sex and Society in Graeco-Roman Egypt.* Florence: Taylor & Francis Group.

Newby, Zahra. 2005. *Greek Athletics in the Roman World: Victory and Virtue.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Nielsen, Hanne Sigismund. 1990. "'Delicia' in Roman Literature and in the Urban Inscriptions." *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 19: 79-88.
Page, Denys Lionel. 1981. *Further Greek Epigrams: Epigrams before A.D. 50 from the Greek Anthology and Other Sources, Not Included in Hellenistic Epigrams or the Garland of Philip.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Patroni, Giovanni. 1898. *Catalogo dei vasi e delle terrecotte del Museo Campano.* Capua: Il Museo.
Pavolini, Carlo. 1977. "Le lucerne fittili romane del Museo Nazionale di Napoli." In *L'Instrumentum domesticum di Ercolano e Pompei nella prima età imperiale*, 33–51. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
——. 1987. "Le Lucerne Romane fra il III sec. A.C. e il III sec. D.C." In *Céramiques hellénistiques et romaines*, Vol. 2, edited by Pierre Lévêque and Jean-Paul Morel, 139-166. Paris: Belles Lettres.
Perry, B. E. 1952. *Aesopica.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Pontiroli, Giuseppe. 1980. *Lucerne Antiche dei Musei di Cremona*. Milan: Cisalpino Goliardica.
Preisendanz, Karl. 1928. *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. Vol. 1. Stuttgart: Verlag B. G. Teubner.
Pugliese Carratelli, Giovanni and Ida Baldassarre. 1990. *Pompei: Pitture E Mosaici*. Vol. 1, *Regiones II, III, V*. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana.
Rawson, Beryl. 2003. *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Raven, Maarten J. 1982. "Corn-Mummies." *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen* 63, 7-39.
Richlin, Amy. 1992. *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Richlin, Amy. 2018. "Reading Boy-Love and Child-Love in the Greco-Roman World." In *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*, edited by Mark Masterson, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, and James Robson, 352-374. London: Routledge.
Robins, F. W. 1939. *The Story of the Lamp (and the Candle)*. London: Oxford University Press.
Roncaglia Carolynn E. 2018. *Northern Italy in the Roman World: From the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Ruggiu, Anna Paola Zaccaria. 1980. *Le lucerne fittili del Museo civico di Treviso.* Roma: G. Bretschneider.
Sabnis, Sonia. 2012. "Invisible Slaves, Visible Lamps: A Metaphor in Apuleius." *Arethusa* 45: 79-108.
Schneider, Gerwulf and Malgorzata Daszkiewicz. 2011. "Imported and Local Firmalampen in Aquileia: Chemical Analyses by WD-XRF." *Aquileia Nostra* 82: 262-282.
Stevenson, William Edward, III. 1975. *The Pathological Grotesque Representation in Greek and Roman Art.* PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
Swetnam-Burland, Molly. 2015. *Egypt in Italy: Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Syme, Ronald. 1986. *The Augustan Aristocracy*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
Thompson, Rosemarie Garland. 1996. "Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity." In *Freakery: Cultural Spectacle of the Extraordinary Body*, edited by Rosemarie Garland Thompson, 1-23. New York: New York University Press.
Thomson, D. F. S. 1997. *Catullus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Toynbee, J. M. C. 1996. *Death and Burial in the Roman World.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

University Press.
Trendall, Arthur Dale. 1967. *Phlyax Vases*. London: University Institute of Classical Studies.
Trentin, Lisa. 2009. “What’s in a Hump? Re-Examining the Hunchback in the Villa-Albani-Torlonia.” *The Cambridge Classical Journal 55* (55): 130–56.
——. 2015. *The Hunchback in Hellenistic and Roman Art.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
——. 2022. “Images and Interpretation of “the Other” in Roman Social Practice.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Imagery and Iconography*, edited by Lea K. Cline and Nathan T. Etkins, 406-425. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Tybout, Rolf. 2003. “Dwarfs in Discourse: The Functions of Nilotic Scenes and Other Roman Aegyptiaca.” Review of *Aegyptiaca Romana: Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt*, by M. J. Versluys. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16: 505–15.
Varone, Antonio. 2001. *Eroticism in Pompeii.* Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum.
Versluys, M. J. 2002. *Aegyptiaca Romana: Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt.* Leiden: Brill.
Vucetic, Sanja. 2022. “Roman Provincial Sexualities: Constructing the Body, Sexuality, and Gender through Erotic Lamp Art.” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 22 (3): 277–95.
Vucetic, Sanja. 2014. “Roman Sexuality or Roman Sexualities? Looking at Sexual Imagery on Roman Terracotta Mould-Made Lamps.” *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, no. 2013: 140-58.
Wace, Alan J. B. 1903. “Grotesques and the Evil Eye.” *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 10: 103-114.
Walters, Jonathan. 1998. “Making a Spectacle: Deviant Men, Invective, and Pleasure.” *Arethusa* 31 (3): 355–67.
Weiss, Michael. 1996. “An Oscanism in Catullus 53.” *Classical Philology* 91 (4): 353–59.
Whitmore, Alissa M. 2017. “Fascinating *Fascina*: Apotropaic Magic and How to Wear a Penis.” In *What Shall I Say of Clothes?: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Dress in Antiquity,* edited by Megan Cifarelli and Laura Gawlinski, 47-65. Boston: Archeological Institute of America.
Williams, Craig A. 1999. *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Zaccaria Ruggiu, Annapaola. 1980. *Le lucerne fittili del Museo civico di Treviso.* Roma: G. Bretschneider.

Appendix

Figure 1. Mold-made terracotta lamp with a non-normatively proportioned, macrophallic figure on a boat with hips thrust backward and holding crossed sticks in both hands. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 1363.

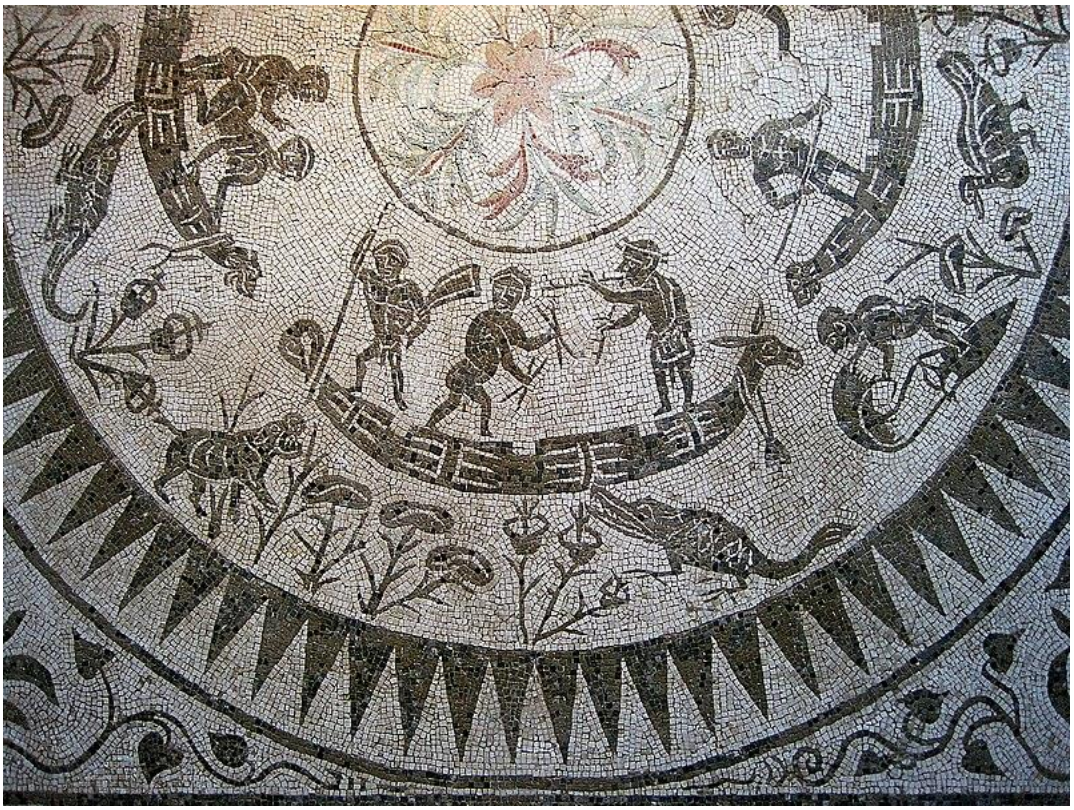

Figure 2. Mosaic from Rome depicting a *Pygmaeus* holding crossed sticks on a boat. © Jean-Pol Grandmont.

Figure 3. Mold-made terracotta lamp with a short-statured woman lowering herself onto a reclining short-statured man, facing away from him. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Bailey 1980: Q 924.

Figure 4. Mold-made terracotta lamp squatting over genitalia positioned on a crocodile's back. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 900.

Figure 5. Mold-made terracotta lamp with an average-sized woman on top of a reclining average-sized man, facing him. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 934.

Figure 6. Mold-made terracotta lamp with an average-sized woman on top of a sitting-up average-sized man, facing away from him. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Bailey 1980: Q 1401.

Figure 7. Mold-made terracotta lamp with a short-statured man penetrating a short-statured woman from behind. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 888.

Figure 8. Mold-made terracotta lamp with an average-sized man penetrating an average-sized woman from behind. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 935.

Figure 9. Mold-made terracotta lamp with a short-statured man penetrating a short-statured woman from behind while lifting her leg onto his shoulder. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 887.

Figure 10. Mold-made terracotta lamp with an average-sized man penetrating an average-sized woman from behind while lifting her leg over his head. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Bailey 1980: Q 828.

Figure 11. Fragment of mold-made terracotta lamp with a short-statured woman on all fours over a reclining short-statured man, facing away from him. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Bailey 1980: Q 804.

Figure 12. Terracotta medallion portraying a woman dismounting a reclined man while facing away from him and holding a mirror; inscription says *tu sola nica*, "you are the only victress." Clarke 1999, fig. 101.

Figure 13. Mold-made terracotta lamp with a short-statured woman on top of a reclining short-statured man, facing him. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 981.

Figure 14. Mold-made terracotta lamp with an average-sized man penetrating an average-sized woman from behind. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
Bailey 1980: Q 1371.

Figure 15. Short-statured people strolling and shopping in the wall painting at the House of the Bull in Pompeii. Pugliese Carratelli and Baldassare 1990, 487.

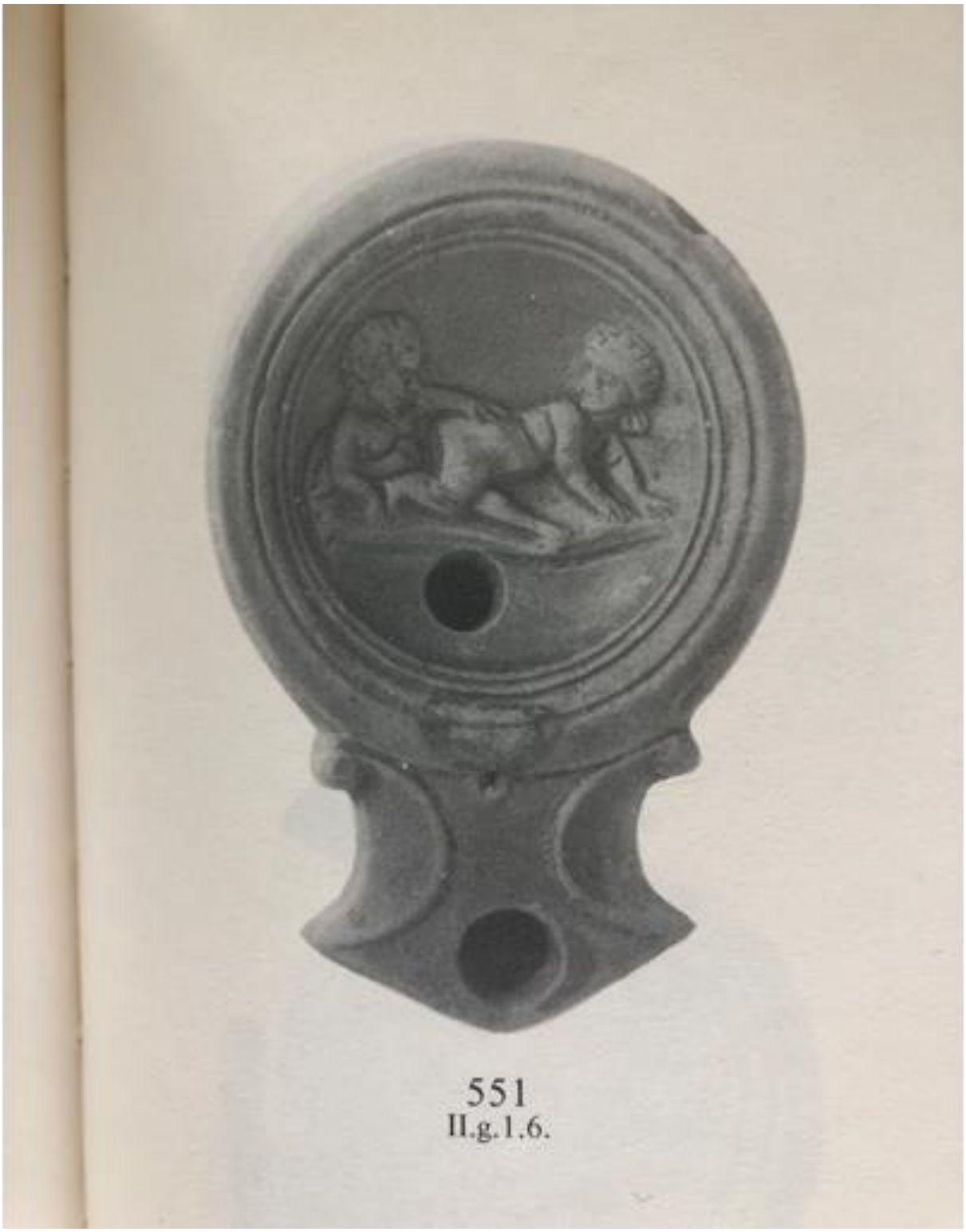

Figure 16. Mold-made terracotta lamp with a short-statured woman on all fours over a reclining short-statured man, facing away from him. Balestrazzi 1988, plate 99.

Figure 17. Marble tombstone of Myropnous the aulos player. © Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico, Artistico ed Etnoantropologico e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze.