Suggested project  
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Resonating bodies: Anatomical votives and incubation rituals in the Asclepieion of Pergamum

Made from terracotta, stone, metal and wood, arms, legs, eyes, fingers, hands, feet, uteri, genitals, internal organs and other recognisable parts of the body have been found at some of the most well-known healing sanctuaries of the Graeco-Roman world, such as Epidaurus, Pergamum, Corinth, Athens, etc. Bodily fragments offered to the gods at sanctuaries, temples, shrines and other sacred sites across the ancient Mediterranean have been studied independently in a number of contexts: ancient medicine, health and healing cults (de Cazanove 2006); body theory (Girardon 1993); early modern collecting and art; gender (Bonfante 1986 and 1997); ‘Romanisation’ and cultural interaction (Glinister 2006; de Cazanove 2000); as well as more restricted surveys of individual sites and geographical regions or official site publications concerned with typological and technological developments (e.g. Fenelli 1975 and others). However, despite widespread academic and popular interest in this material, the category of ‘anatomical votive’ remains distinctly under-examined. For a typology of self—world relationship this material offers the rare possibility to historically study material forms of self-reflective practices that are established in a nexus of object and transcendental relationships.

This PhD project is centred on definitional and interpretative issues related to anatomical votives from the temple complex of Asclepius in Pergamum. The project focusses on the second century AD, but comparanda of earlier or later date are welcome. Although the Pergamene Asclepieion and its incubation rituals, especially as seen through the synchronic testimony of a theoros (pilgrim) named Publius Aelius Aristides Theodoros, has received some scholarly attention in the last few years (Petsalis-Diomidis 2010), there is still quite a lot of work to be done on the topic.

Two forthcoming publications (a monograph by Hughes and the upcoming edited volume of Draycott and Graham) will be utilised as the starting point for initial discussions with the student. By drawing on the concept of synchronic and diachronic resonance (Rosa 2012, 2014, 2016, 2016a) as the prevalent conceptual (or theoretical) framework,
the PhD candidate will endeavour to rediscover and re-examine definitional and interpretative issues related to votives shaped like anatomical members from the temple complex of Asclepius in Pergamum. The next step is to take into account the rich corpus of dedicatory inscriptions found at the Asclepieion (Habicht 1969, Altertümer von Pergamon VIII 3). These inscriptions speak volumes of the incubation rituals which took place in the temple and the relationships of these objects with their dedicants. The PhD candidate will benefit hugely from autopsy of the material form of these texts enabled by a visit to the modern city of Bergama and its Archaeological Museum.

The PhD student working on this project would be prompted to address first more general issues, like the issue of the centrality of the anatomical votives in ancient healing and dedicatory rituals (diagonal resonance). Then, the question of what these objects can really tell us about their original dedicants and their relationships with the respective healing deity (transcendental relations) as well as about their relationships with the other theoroi (ancient pilgrims) who frequented the sanctuary (intersubjective relations). Moreover, this project encourages the PhD candidate to consider questions regarding the mimetic or symbolic representation of healthy or diseased body-parts. Comparative approaches with other famous depositories of dedicatory body parts like the Asclepieia of Athens (Aleshire 1989 and 1991; Melfi 2007) and Corinth (Roebuck 1951) will be strongly encouraged. Extra emphasis should be given to the visual dynamic of these objects and the ways they enhanced and blended into the natural and the man-made topography of the sanctuary in which they were exhibited. Whereas for the former cooperation with projects on pilgrimage (e.g. Hartmut Rosa, Kai Brodersen) is important, projects focusing on sanctuaries will be helpful for the latter (Eveline Krummen, Peter Scherrer). Questions of intentionality will also be raised within the same methodological framework: were these anatomical votives meant for the eyes of the divine healers or were they meant to attract the interest of fellow pilgrims? More significantly, this project intends to engage in discussions of the diachronic and synchronic resonance of these objects. Given their pervasive presence in early modern museum collections (diachronic resonance) what can we, as modern viewers, conclude from these objects about ancient (synchronic resonance) constructions of body imagery and anatomical knowledge?

Collaborations: Apart from the cooperations already pointed out, this project will benefit from collaborations with other Ph.D. projects centred on conceptions of health and
bodily identity, in particular the one led by Jürgen Martschukat, as well as the research projects on sanctuaries and initiation rituals in the second century AD like the ones headed by Wolfgang Spickermann and Katharina Waldner.

**Literature**


