

# Between Street Vendors, Singing Slaves, and Envy

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*When the well-known “House of the Ephebe” was excavated in Pompeii, a statuary group composed of four bronze figurines was found. Those small statues are now known as “Placentarii”, namely “pastry cooks.” They were given this name because they were thought selling their products placed on a plate, shouting to attract the clients. This interpretation explains the particular hand gesture of those men, touching their throat. This theory seems very conceivable and is generally accepted by a large scientific majority. However, some iconographic elements don’t fit with this hypothesis. Indeed, how do we explain the nakedness of those four men, their thinness, their weird facial features and their disproportionate phalluses?*

*Other figurines – terracotta, bronzes, amulets, mosaics – depicted with the same specific features were found among the archaeological material from the Mediterranean basin. There is –nearly– no question that those objects are representations of the Envy personified, also known as Phthonos, or of an envious person (phthoneros). Would it be possible to see in those four bronzes not –only– pastry cooks, but an embodiment of Envy, filled with apotropaic value? A fresh perspective –literary and archaeological– will help and issue a clarification about this new theory.*



Figure 1: The four bronzes found in the house of the Ephebe, in Pompeii, known under the term “Placentarii” - (Maiuri 1925: 268, figure 1).

### Introduction

On 28 May 1925, the archaeologist Amadeo Maiuri found the site known today as the House of the Ephebe, or House of P. Cornelius Tages in Pompeii.<sup>1</sup> In the *tablinum*<sup>2</sup> of this house was found a statuary group, composed of four gilded bronzes, locked in what is thought to be a wooden chest.<sup>3</sup> The four statuettes (Fig. 1), dated from the Late Republican or the Early Imperial period, are now kept in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples.<sup>4</sup>

The four bronzes depict relatively old and naked men of twenty centimeters tall. They work in two mirrored pairs: two of them carry a silver rectangular tray in their right hands, the other two in the left ones. Each statuette stands on a rectangular base. Apart from some details, the four have similar grotesque physical characteristics: they are old, with emaciated, almost skeletal bodies. This thinness is stressed by the exaggeratedly visible backbone, by the rib cage and by their protruding shoulder blades. Their face also display grotesque features. In fact, their ears, their mouths, their noses, their eyes and eyebrows are all, to different degrees, modified from reality. Their heads, slightly lifted heavenwards, show bald skulls, pointed beards, and sunken cheeks. They seem to scream with

their mouths wide open. Their free hands are reaching for their throats, while the others carry the tray.<sup>5</sup> Maiuri described them as showing an “obscene nudity”, due to the way their oversized and flaccid phalluses hang down to their knees.<sup>6</sup>

The overall effect of the bronzes’ features is one of grotesqueness, owing to their thinness, wincing, and oversized phalluses. However, they present a certain verism, particularly because of the detailed shape of the muscles and some other physical features.<sup>7</sup>

The name under which these four bronzes are known, the *Placentarii*, is owed to Maiuri. The archeologist gave them this name because he saw this statuary group as four pastry vendors. In Latin, there is a kind of pastries called *placentae*, which were sold by *placentarii*.<sup>8</sup> This idea came to Maiuri from a personal experience in Naples where it was common to find street vendors carrying their trays and boasting the quality of their goods.<sup>9</sup>

### Function and meanings

As already mentioned, the four bronzes were found in a presumed wooden box in the office room (*tablinum*) of the house. Because of this effort of conservation and protection, added to the high quality of the representations, the material used

by the artist and the gilding, this statuary group was unquestionably of high-value. Their service posture and the presence of silver trays suggest that these bronzes are pieces of furniture, used during sumptuous banquets, gathering high-ranking people.<sup>10</sup> They are certainly sauceboat bearers or condiments and food carriers.<sup>11</sup>

The heart of the problem is not the function of the bronzes, but the meaning of their aspect. What did the artist want to represent? Is there any link between the function and the representation? Many scientists suggested identifications for these bronzes – which will be reviewed – but owing to different elements, a new hypothesis could be proposed.

In fact, the iconography of these four men has some commonalities with another iconography, that of the personified Envy – *Phthonos* in Greek or *Invidia* in Latin. This contention comes from observations made on the aesthetic features of the four men, compared to other ancient artistic production.

#### Particular features

Every element and aspect chosen by an artist has its own importance and reflects a conscious choice.<sup>12</sup> Following R.R.R. Smith: “Images were not reflectors, but like texts and speakers, active participants in public discourse.”<sup>13</sup> Exaggeration and stress of some features bring to light what was really important for the artist or the client,<sup>14</sup> or the aesthetic appeal of these figurines.<sup>15</sup>

Several ancient depictions depart from the aesthetic ideal widespread in the ancient world. But with the number of those representations, which oscillate between realism and the grotesque, people must have appreciated this kind of art.<sup>16</sup> There is evidence for this in a couple of literary examples:

When we see emaciated people we are distressed, but we took upon statues and paintings of them with pleasure because our minds are captivated by imitations which we find endearing.

--Plutarch, *Quaestiones Convivales* V 1.

Out of a legacy which I have come in for I have just bought a Corinthian bronze, small it is true, but a charming and sharply-cut piece of work [...]. For it is a nude, [...]. It represents an old man in a standing posture; the bones, muscles, nerves, veins, and even the wrinkles appear quite life-like; the hair is thin and scanty on the forehead; the brow is broad; the face wizened; the neck thin; the shoulders are bowed; the breast is flat, and the belly hollow. The back too gives the same impression of age, as far as a back view can. [...] In fact, in every respect it is a work calculated to catch the eye of a connoisseur and to delight the eye of an amateur, and this is what tempted me to purchase it, although I am the merest novice.

--Pliny, *Epistulae* III 6.

Plutarch and Pliny express clearly the idea of a “double view”: what is considered ugly in everyday life can become a source of admiration in the artistic field. In general, Greco-Roman art displays a standardized beauty resulting from an aesthetic fixed by Polyclitus.<sup>17</sup> Thus, thinness, obesity, old age, or illness were not major artistic themes.<sup>18</sup> Every deviation of every feature from the standard corresponds to an aspect of the character or behavior of the represented subjects. For this reason, it is important to study each grotesque feature

included in this statuary group. These particular features (thinness, grotesque facial characteristics, an oversized phallus, and the “hand to throat” gesture) and their understanding allow drawing parallels with other iconographies, such as the Envy’s one, as already mentioned.

### *Thinness*

The four men of the Pompeian statuary group are thin, in spite of some prominent muscles. This particularity brings them closer to a naturalist artistic vein. Ancient artists used extreme thinness and emaciation to express several things, in both literature and iconography. It is bound to poverty, to disease, to old age and to other “physiognomic” conceptions.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that ancient populations presented an obvious thinness, due to lack of food or supply problems. So, thinness was above all a social status indicator, explaining why this characteristic is very present in the naturalistic figures. However, people displaying an extreme thinness are moved to the edge of humanity, to a grinding poverty and to the margins of civilization.<sup>20</sup>

Diseases could also explain an emaciated body.<sup>21</sup> The ancient doctors considered the thinness as a possible symptom of the pulmonary tuberculosis, best known as consumption.<sup>22</sup> Old age may also play a role in thinness. The best way to illustrate this is the case of Geras, the personification of Old Age, who is depicted as a thin old man.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the thinness can symbolize moral characteristics such as a stoic abstinence; philosophers are generally depicted with thin, old-mannish features.<sup>24</sup>

Some authors who were engaged in physiognomy interpreted emaciation a bit differently.<sup>25</sup> A man with a thin body could be recognized as an envious person. This thought is found for the first time in Menander.<sup>26</sup> The same conception is found in Ovid, when the author describes

the personification of Envy (*Invidia*), and in Lucian, in the description of a painting where *Phthonos*, the Greek counterpart of *Invidia*, is depicted.<sup>27</sup>

### *Grotesque facial features*

As already mentioned, the four bronzes display facial features modified from the reality. Their ears, their mouths, their noses, their eyes and eyebrows don’t mirror a real physical state, hence the use of the term “grotesque” to describe this group.<sup>28</sup> They don’t show extreme iconographical exaggerations but many parallels can be drawn between them and other ancient production: the Pompeian bronzes have prominent noses, pronounced brow bones overhanging piercing eyes, big ears, and a half-bald heads as in the grotesque statues (Fig. 2). In addition, the “hand to throat” gesture provides the four bronzes a much more distinct facial expression. The personified Envy is generally depicted with such characteristics. *Phthonos* is suffering from the inside to the point of distorting his facial features (Fig. 3).

### *Oversized phallus*

The phallus in art is extensively documented through the whole Mediterranean basin and through the centuries.<sup>29</sup> Usually represented erected, the phallus is connected to the god Priapus. It is the symbol par excellence of virility and male fertility, or it assumes a strong apotropaic function against the Evil Eye.<sup>30</sup> However, the phalluses of these miniatures are flaccid, not erect. What do they symbolize then? The personifications of Envy have also such phalluses (see Fig. 3) and this particular feature is explained by the inherent apotropaic function of these objects. This characteristic for the Pompeian statuary group will be discussed in more detail later.

### *The “hand to throat” gesture*

The last point to be mentioned is probably



Figure 2: Detail of one “Placentarius” bronze - Photo by S. Vanesse.

the most meaningful. Each of the four men brings his free hand to his throat, as if preparing to touch or enclose it. The artist seems to have depicted a pending action. So, is this the indicator of a street vendor job, as Maiuri thought? Maybe this gesture is bound to another meaning: what if it was a sign of choking or the beginning of a self-strangulation?

The facial expression of the four men is clear: they are suffering. The choking would explain the position of their heads and why their mouths are wide open, with their tongue showing. The “complete hand to throat” gesture – namely the hand enclosing the throat – is seen in several ancient objects, such as terracotta figurines, bronze or gold amulets, and was interpreted from a medical perspective. The hand is placed where there is a pain. Some experts of ancient medicine defined such gestures as tuberculosis cases in which sufferers made them because of a bad cough.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 3: Bronze statuette, from Alexandria – 2nd c. B.C. – National Archaeological Museum of Athens (inv. 447).

Once again, a link with Envy’s iconography can be drawn. This “hand to throat” gesture is typical of *Phthonos/Invidia*. As a proof, Silius Italicus, a Roman poet, described Envy – under the name *Livor* – as a terrible resident of the Underworld, characterized by the self-strangulation gesture.<sup>32</sup>

### The personification of Envy

The distinctive features discussed previously are reflected in the iconography of Envy.<sup>33</sup> Many ancient writers have described this personification, as mentioned earlier. Among them, the Roman poet of the late 1st c. B.C., Ovid, who said in his *Metamorphoses* that this divinity was thin, pale, and terrible.<sup>34</sup> Silius Italicus talked especially about the self-strangulation gesture.<sup>35</sup> Lucian of Samosata, a Greek rhetorician of the 2nd c. A.D., described *Phthonos* as “a man with piercing eyes, but pale, deformed, and shrunken as from long illness.”<sup>36</sup> These literary examples show that Envy was seen as thin, pale and choking himself and have echoes in the figurative arts.

This iconography, mainly preserved on terracotta statuettes, bronze miniatures, gold amulets and mosaics, was first connected to pathological grotesques, before being identified as Envy. One example bridges the relationships between the literature and the iconography: a 3rd century A.D. mosaic from Cephalonia.<sup>37</sup> On this mosaic, a thin man is drawn choking himself, being attacked by four beasts. Under this image, an inscription explains the meaning of this entire mosaic panel. This is a representation of Envy, being attacked by animals. It is a representation with a clear apotropaic purpose: this image warned Envy of the fate that awaits him if he dared to come in the house. This purpose is inherent in all the other representations of Envy.<sup>38</sup> Another striking example of this particular iconography is a bronze statuette from Alexandria, kept in the National Archaeological Museum at Athens, already mentioned previously.<sup>39</sup> On this little Hellenistic bronze, one can see the same features. There are only two main differences between this Greek statue and the four Pompeian ones: the *Phthonos* from Athens stands with his two legs closed and chokes himself with both hands. Apart from that, a link between this statuette and the four bronzes seems possible.



Figure 4: So-called “Morio” terracotta vase, from Herculaneum – 1st c. A.D. – National Archeological Museum of Naples – Photo by S. Vanesse.

Another example deserves some additional words, mainly because it presents the same gesture as the four bronzes. This is a curious terracotta vessel of a dwarf, generally known as *Morio* and found in Herculaneum. He shows a terrible expression of pain through his exaggerated facial features (Fig. 4). As with the four Pompeian bronzes, he puts one hand to his throat, while he holds some *tabellae* (wax tablets) in the other. His flaccid phallus is used as a pouring spout. Here, the significant difference with the statuary group lies in the fatness of the dwarf. Can this jug be a representation of a grotesque *Phthonos* or is it only a simple grotesque representation?<sup>40</sup> There is no basis for definite conclusion, but an iconographic parallel can be made.

The objects whose “phthonian” identification is attested were used as talismans against Envy. This iconography had various protective components: oversized phallus, wincing, grotesquerie, etc. Every effort was made with these objects to ensure an effective protection. So, do the four bronzes pieces of furniture have some apotropaic purpose? Are they a warning for guests not to lapse into envious behaviors? This is a possibility, since the Romans loved such moral lessons.<sup>41</sup>

### Other hypotheses

This theory of a probable connection between Envy and the four Pompeian bronzes has never been mentioned up to now. The most widely known and accepted hypothesis in the scholarly community is that of Maiuri’s.<sup>42</sup> As a reminder, he saw this statuary group as four pastry vendors, giving them the name of *placentarii*.<sup>43</sup> The archaeologist explained their “hand to throat” gesture as the symbol of the vendors’ cry.<sup>44</sup> Maiuri added also that the four men must surely be Jewish or Asian, because of the habit of these people to occupy commercial business in ancient times. Of course, this idea, based on a fascist spirit commonly found at that time in Italy, has no scientific foundation.

Noel Lenski, Professor of Classics and History at Yale University, proposed another theory. According to him, instead of street vendors, they could be four servants.<sup>45</sup> He assumes that they could be African, possibly because of their oversized phalluses. He explains that the “hand to throat” gesture is not the symbol of a cry, but an indication that they are singing. To support his claim, he came up with two pieces of evidence. The first one, from the *Satyricon* of Petronius, a Roman writer of the 1st c. AD, involves a young male slave singing the songs written by his master, while at the same time distributing grape bunches to the guests.<sup>46</sup> As his second argument, Lenski also drew a parallel with

the colonial iconography in Europe and in America that was used to represent African slaves.<sup>47</sup>

In some ways, these theories provide an explanation of this particular iconography. However, several aspects were not taken into account. Let’s begin with Maiuri’s Jewish or Asian identification. This idea comes from a time marked by prejudices, and simple observation makes it obsolete; none of them are circumcised, ruling out the Jewish hypothesis, and neither is there any valuable reason to accept the Asian interpretation.<sup>48</sup> As regards to the *placentarii* theory, several elements cast doubt upon its validity. First of all, why would street vendors be naked, displaying such an ungainly and grotesque body? According to Lenski, it seems unthinkable to imagine naked street vendors in such a poor condition, even if in fact these bronzes show a real verism.<sup>49</sup> The nudity reminded the Romans of a wild, barbaric state; it was the sign of a social exclusion.<sup>50</sup> Slaves were sometimes characterized by nudity, but it was not their permanent state.<sup>51</sup>

The issue about nudity is related to the obscenity, mainly because of the question of the oversized phalluses. This feature usually belonged to Priapus, the god of obscenity.<sup>52</sup> In Rome, obscenity was dependent on the context,<sup>53</sup> but what about these four bronzes? If they are pieces of furniture used during banquets, we are, as Cordier said, in a space on the brink of the public, which does not have the same impunity as the private. There, you cannot do or show what you want as you want.<sup>54</sup> Thus, there have to be good reasons to explain their nudity and exaggerated phalluses if it is not because of the taste for the grotesque.<sup>55</sup>

Also concerning Maiuri’s identification, the term used by the archaeologist to name this statuary group – *placentarii* – brings some problems. This term is not classical; it is particularly found in Late Latin.<sup>56</sup> It

comes from the *placentae*, which are a kind of honey cake cooked for special occasions, as mentioned previously. It would have been more appropriate to give the bronzes a more classical name, since they date from the Late Republican or the Early Imperial period. Moreover, there is no literary testimony, nor any representation of such obscene pastry vendors. Maiuri's approach to this hypothesis may also be debatable, particularly in using modern parallels to explain an ancient phenomenon.<sup>57</sup> All these problems undermine Maiuri's interpretation.

Concerning George's theories about African singing slaves, there are additional reservations. An African origin is not really justified by real attributes.<sup>58</sup> The oversized phallus seems to be a more modern stereotype.<sup>59</sup> Is it possible that they are singing slaves? Slaves, as mentioned earlier, were not naked during service. They wore a specific tunic,<sup>60</sup> which differentiated them from other people. It is also seen in art, even if some slaves are depicted naked, which is not the standard. Moreover, the masters used to have beautiful and young slaves to show how wealthy they were. If these were realistic slave representations, then one would expect young and beautiful men and not old, emaciated, grotesque ones.

In short, whether they are slaves or street vendors, nudity, old age, obscenity and grotesquerie cannot be entirely explained. Additionally, it is perhaps too simplistic to say that such grotesque features are purely comedic and chosen by the artist for a humorous purpose. If so, the bronzes would have been more uncomplicated. There should be a moral meaning underneath these bronzes.

### Conclusion

Maiuri wrote in his paper that he did not see what else they could be if they weren't street vendors. I think I have made clear,

as did Lenski before me, that they can be many other things. This study, before proposing a particular iconographic parallel, reminds us that gestures and their meanings are cultural phenomena, first and foremost. Many things have changed since antiquity, making the convocation and the use of modern conceptions to explain ancient traditions very delicate.

As a reminder, the four Pompeian bronzes display common features with the particular iconography of personified Envy. Envy and the four bronzes have extreme thin bodies, grotesque facial features (as large mouth, big eyes, eyebrows and ears, bald heads, etc.), oversized phalluses and are nearly similar in the "hand to throat" gesture. The representations of Envy were used as apotropaic objects. If my assumption is true, it is thus not unthinkable that the four bronzes had a higher meaning than just a humorous function. Suggesting that the guests could see these bronzes as reminders of Envy's risk does not seem any more far-fetched than considering them as singers. This new theory gives them a new moral dimension prized by the Romans, which deserves further considerations.

Of course, I do not claim my theory solves everything. It does not provide a final answer to the question of the identity of this statuary group. However, these comparisons deserved to be highlighted.

## Endnotes:

- 1 Reference number: I, VII, 10–12. It is located along the Via dell'Abbondanza. Its name comes from the discovery of a torch carrier portrayed as a beautiful epebe, in the garden of the site.
- 2 In the Roman houses, the tablinum is a room generally situated on one side of the atrium and opposite to the entrance. It was the master's office.
- 3 Maiuri (1925: 268) interpreted the burnt remains surrounding these figurines as a wooden box.
- 4 Their inv. numbers are 143758–61. Needless to say they do not date later than 79 A.D.
- For a more detailed description, see Maiuri 5 1925: 268–70.
- 6 Maiuri 1925: 270.
- 7 Ballet and Jeammet 2011: 40.
- 8 Maiuri 1925: 272; Lenski 2013: 145–46. See also TLL, vol. X, Pars prior, Sectio II, col. 2289 s.v. *placuntarius*, which refers to Paulus, *Sententiae*.
- 9 Maiuri 1925: 272.
- 10 On account of the size of the house, the masters were obviously wealthy.
- 11 This kind of objects are not really common. However, a parallel can be made with another statuary group composed also of four bronzes. See Francken 2004.
- 12 Bradley 2011: 4.
- 13 Smith 1997: 194; Cordier (2005: 347) adds: “La statue prend sens pour qui maîtrise son langage; autrement, elle n’offre au regard qu’une feraïlle bonne pour la fonderie ou, au mieux, l’image pénible à voir d’un organisme décrépît”.
- 14 Bradley 2011: 4.
- 15 What was considered as terrible in the everyday life could be appreciated in art. Cordier (2005, 346) says also: “la pierre et la chair n’appellent pas le même type de regard”.
- 16 A simple search on internet under the terms “hellenistic grotesque terracotta” is sufficient to see striking examples.
- 17 Polyclitus wrote an artistic treatise – lost – in which he developed a new approach to sculpture. The perfection of a statue was based, following him, on mathematical proportions.
- 18 Bradley 2011: 34.
- 19 Physiognomy was an ancient thought that a person's character or personality was linked to his or her outer appearance.
- 20 Bradley 2011: 8.
- 21 Grmek and Gourevitch 1998: 145.
- 22 Mitchell 2013: 288. However, the Ancients considered a thin body to be better for health than a fleshy one.
- 23 Son of Nyx (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 225) or of Erebus (Hygin, *Fables*, preface) Geras is depicted with Heracles on various vases. E.g. a red figures Attic pelike dated from ca 500 - 450 BC, kept in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy (inv. 48238). See: <http://www.theoi.com/Gallery/>

- N18.1.html.
- 24 Bradley 2011: 20.
- 25 This method supplies an overview of somebody's character based on his physical appearance. This “art” had a great success during antiquity and was practiced by many ancient doctors, such as Hippocrates or Galen.
- 26 Dunbabin and Dickie (1983:15). Menander compares the effect of envy on the human spirit as the rust on the metal.
- 27 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II 775–80; Lucian, *De calumnia* 5.
- 28 Under this name, the scientists gather a series of works whose aims and outlines are unclear. See Stevenson 1975: partim; Hasselin Rous 2009: 170.
- 29 Johns 2000; Orrells 2005; Younger 2005, 94–95.
- 30 Dunbabin and Dickie 1983: 31; Slane and Dickie 1994: 487–88; Crocqueville 2009: 93; Dasen 2015: 185–89.
- 31 Grmek and Gourevitch 1998: 146.
- 32 Silius Italicus, *Punica* XIII 579–84.
- 33 This personification is known under various names in Greek and Latin: Phthonos or Baskaina in Greek, *Livor* or *Invidia* in Latin.
- 34 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II 775–80. In this text, Envy is a female divinity because her Latin name is *Invidia*.
- 35 Silius Italicus, *Punica* XIII 579–84.
- 36 Lucian, *De calumnia* 5.
- 37 Dunbabin and Dickie 1983. You can see a picture of this mosaic by searching “Phthonos Skala” on the Internet.
- 38 Dunbabin and Dickie 1983.
- 39 Museum number: inv. 447.
- 40 The dwarf, as the four bronzes, could touch his throat with only one hand because the other one is occupied with another task.
- 41 Some silver drinking cups, decorated with skeletons, were found in various excavations (e.g. at Boscoreale). This morbid decoration should be understood as a “*memento mori*”, reminding guests that they must enjoy life, because it is short. Our bronzes, if they possess something of the Envy, could be understood in a similar moral way. They have perhaps a link with the sumptuous domus where the guests gathered, the house owner playing with the guests emotions felt during the dinner. The meaning of such a group could have been: “be careful, envy and jealousy have a terrible influence on the spirit and can destroy a man.”
- 42 This identification is repeated in various modern works. See, e.g., Jashemski 1979: 146, fig. 149; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 1990: 282; De Caro 1994: 244.
- 43 Maiuri 1925: 272; Lenski 2013: 145–46. See also TLL, vol. X, Pars prior, Sectio II, col. 2289 s.v. *placuntarius*, which refers to Paulus, *Sententiae*.
- 44 Maiuri 1925: 272.
- 45 Lenski 2013: 145–46.
- 46 Petronius, *Satyricon* 41.
- 47 Lenski 2013: 146.

48 Lenski (2013: 145) also criticizes the Jewish identification.

49 Nudity was not a problem, but was restricted to defined contexts. Given the large amount of naked statues found throughout the excavations, it is generally thought that nudity was a normal thing for the Romans. It's not true, but all is a matter of context.

50 Cordier 2005: 76. He (2005, 148) adds that even the beggars at least wore rags. This fact shows that nudity was shameful.

51 Cordier (2005: 149, 152–53) says that to emphasize the social disruption, the slaves were stripped bare during their sales. In this way, they were not people anymore, only things. However, the master had to provide clothes to his slaves once the sales were made. See also Gardner and Wiedmann 2001; Dunbabin 2013: 100–101, fig. 52–53.

52 Cordier (2005: 262, 265–66) says it was not a violent, aggressive or insulting obscenity. What was indecent in a public context may not have this resonance in private.

53 Dupont and Éloi 2001: 153–55. The authors cite in particular Cicero, *De officiis* I 127.

54 Cordier 2005: 265.

55 Beginning in Hellenistic times, a particular taste for ugliness appears. The Romans also adhered to this taste. There are several reasons for this artistic vein: humor in the deformity, protection against the Evil Eye, etc.

56 Paulus, *Sententiae* III 6.72.

57 It is dangerous to project modern considerations on ancient cultures.

58 Bradley (2011: 18) says that “African [peoples] popular images in private collections in Hellenistic and Roman Italy, often exhibited protruding bellies as a symptom of their strange physiology.”

59 We have some representations of African people with oversized phalluses, but it doesn't seem to be the standard. See Snowden 1970 for pictural examples.

60 Dunbabin 2003: 446. Lenski pointed out that they couldn't be street vendors because of their nudity. We could say the same, *mutatis mutandis*, for his theory.

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