

## Votive Body Parts in Greek and Roman Religion

This book examines a type of object that was widespread and very popular in classical antiquity – votive offerings in the shape of parts of the human body. It collects examples from four principal areas and time periods: Classical Greece, pre-Roman Italy, Roman Gaul and Roman Asia Minor. It uses a compare-and-contrast methodology to highlight differences between these sets of votives, exploring the implications for our understandings of how beliefs about the body changed across classical antiquity. The book also looks at how far these ancient beliefs overlap with, or differ from, modern ideas about the body and its physical and conceptual boundaries. Central themes of the book include illness and healing, bodily fragmentation, human-animal hybridity, transmission and reception of traditions, and the mechanics of personal transformation in religious rituals.

JESSICA HUGHES is a Lecturer in Classical Studies at the Open University. She has an MA and PhD in Art History and her research focuses on topics in material religion, classical reception and the cultural history of Campania.

Cambridge Classical Studies

*General editors*

R. G. OSBORNE, W. M. BEARD, G. BETEGH,  
J. P. T. CLACKSON, R. L. HUNTER, M. J. MILLETT,  
S. P. OAKLEY, T. J. G. WHITMARSH

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-316-61042-8 — Votive Body Parts in Greek and Roman Religion  
Jessica Hughes  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

# Votive Body Parts in Greek and Roman Religion

---

JESSICA HUGHES  
The Open University



Cambridge University Press  
978-1-316-61042-8 — Votive Body Parts in Greek and Roman Religion  
Jessica Hughes  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781316610428](http://www.cambridge.org/9781316610428)

10.1017/9781316662403

© Jessica Hughes 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

First paperback edition 2021

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

Names: Hughes, Jessica, author.

Title: Votive body parts in Greek and Roman religion / Jessica Hughes.

Description: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2017. | Series: Cambridge classical studies | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016050607 | ISBN 9781107157835 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Votive offerings – Greece. | Votive offerings – Rome. |

Greece – Religion. | Rome – Religion. | Human body– Social aspects. |

Human body – Symbolic aspects. | BISAC: HISTORY / Ancient / General.

Classification: LCC BL795.V6 H84 2017 | DDC 203/.7– dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016050607>

ISBN 978-1-107-15783-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-316-61042-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

*List of Illustrations* [page vi]

*Acknowledgements* [xiii]

- 1 Introduction: Fragments of History [1]
  - 2 Fragmentation as Metaphor: Anatomical Votives in Classical Greece, Fifth–Fourth Centuries BC [25]
  - 3 Under the Skin: Anatomical Votives in Republican Italy, Fourth–First Centuries BC [62]
  - 4 The Anxiety of Influence: Anatomical Votives in Roman Gaul, First Century BC–First Century AD [106]
  - 5 Punishing Bodies: The Lydian and Phrygian ‘Propitiatory’ Stelai, Second–Third Centuries AD [151]
- Afterword: Revisiting Fragmentation [187]

*Bibliography* [192]

*Index* [218]

## Illustrations

### Figures

- 1.1 Ex-voto body parts on display in 2011 in the sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Arco, S. Anastasia, near Naples. Photo: Lucio Lazarese. [page 2]
- 1.2 Plate from Tomasini *De donariis ac tabellis votivis liber singularis* (1639). Image: Wellcome Library. [5]
- 1.3 Two 'diagnostic' images of votives, from the 1895 edition of the *British Medical Journal* (Sambon 1895). Left: 'elbow with psoriasis'; right: 'uterus septus'. [8]
- 1.4 Grave stele of Aristomache, c.330–320 BC. 127 × 52 cm. Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 66.971; SEG 28.278. [12]
- 1.5 Marble portrait head of Pompey, c.70–62 BC, Venice Archaeological Museum. Photo: DAI 68.5026. [15]
- 1.6 Terracotta figurines from Neapolis, Sardinia, fourth century BC, Archaeological Museum of Cagliari. Used with the kind permission of the Italian Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Soperintenza Archeologia della Sardegna e Polo Museale della Sardegna). Photo: C. Buffa. [16 and 17]
- 1.7 Marble votive relief from the sanctuary of the hero-physician Amynos at Athens, dedicated by Lysimachides. End of the fourth century BC. 70 × 40 cm. Athens, National Museum, 3526. Image used courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens and the photographer Irini Miari. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund. [19]
- 2.1 Map of Greece showing main sites discussed in the text. [27]
- 2.2 Miniature (7–9 cm) terracotta votive limbs from Petsofa, Crete. Minoan, around 2000–1700 BC. British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum. [28]
- 2.3 Marble votive eyes, once part of a limestone pillar in the sanctuary of Asklepios at Athens, second half of the fourth century BC; National Museum of Athens 15244. Image used courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, and the photographer

- Demetrios Gialouris. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/  
 Archaeological Receipts Fund. [29]
- 2.4 Marble relief showing a pair of breasts, dedicated by Phile to  
 Asklepios, from the sanctuary of Asklepios at Athens, fourth  
 century BC. 13 × 18 cm. Athens Epigraphic Museum 8761. Photo:  
 V. Stamatopoulos. [30]
- 2.5 Terracotta votive legs from the Asklepieion at Corinth, late fifth–  
 fourth centuries BC. Left: height 76.5 cm (V216). Right: height  
 96.5 cm (V110). Photo: ASCSA. [35]
- 2.6 Terracotta votive hands from the Asklepieion at Corinth, late  
 fifth–fourth centuries BC. Left: 21.7 cm (VT171). Centre: 17.7 cm  
 (VT172). Right: 22.3 cm (VT164). Photo: ASCSA. [37]
- 2.7 Terracotta votive breasts from the Asklepieion at Corinth,  
 late fifth–fourth centuries BC. Height 12.1 cm (V128). Photo:  
 ASCSA. [38]
- 2.8 Boeotian red-figure vase showing Asklepios and Hygeia, c.400 BC.  
 Height 23 cm. Athens, National Archaeological Museum n. 1393.  
 Image used courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum,  
 Athens and the photographer Irini Miari. © Hellenic Ministry of  
 Culture and Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund. [39 and 40]
- 2.9 Roman marble copy of Polykleitos' Doryphoros (original c.440  
 BC). Height 2.12 m. Naples, National Archaeological Museum.  
 Photo: DAI ROM 1966: 1831. [45]
- 2.10 Detail of the Foundry Vase, c.480 BC. From Vulci. Berlin State  
 Museums F 2294. [46]
- 2.11 Marble votive relief from the Asklepieion at Athens showing a  
 woman kneeling in front of a cult statue with votive body parts  
 suspended behind her, fourth century BC. Athens, Acropolis  
 Museum 7232. Height 16 cm. Photo: © Acropolis Museum,  
 photo: Department of Conservation. [47]
- 2.12 Attic red-figure vase showing the dismemberment of Pentheus,  
 c.500 BC. Berlin State Museum 1966.18. Photo: Johannes  
 Laurentius, used courtesy of bpk/Antikensammlung, Staatliche  
 Museen zu Berlin. [52]
- 2.13 Red-figure cup showing the death of Pentheus, by the painter  
 Douris, c.480 BC. Height 12.7 cm; diameter 29.2 cm. Kimbell Art  
 Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. [53]
- 3.1 Map of Italy showing main sites discussed in the text. [63]
- 3.2a–d Examples of (unprovenanced) Etrusco-Italic votives from the  
 collections of Henry Wellcome. Anti-clockwise from top

- left: uterus, bladder (?), teeth, portion of a face. All images used courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London. [64 and 65]
- 3.3 Display of votives from the sanctuary of Nemi, including a hand, foot, two uteri, a bust, three heads, a portion of a face and a 'dissected' figurine. Image courtesy of Nottingham Art Galleries. [66]
- 3.4 Model of a swaddled baby from an unidentified Etrusco-Italic deposit, Wellcome Museum, London, inv. no. A636023. Photo: Science Museum, London/Wellcome Images. [69]
- 3.5 Plan of the sanctuary at Gravisca, after Comella (1978), plate 1. [71]
- 3.6 Drawings of some votive uteri from Gravisca, showing Comella's main types of (from left to right) 'furrowed' (*scanalature*), 'almond shaped' (*a mandorla*), 'egg-shaped' (*ovoide*) and 'pear-shaped' (*a pera*). After Comella (1978). [73]
- 3.7 Terracotta lower half-body from Tessennano, Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm, inv. MM 1958: 135. Height 37 cm. Photo: Ove Kaneberg, used courtesy of the Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm. [75]
- 3.8 Terracotta polyvisceral model from Tessennano, now in the Villa Giulia. Length 29.5 cm. Photo: Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Soprintendenza Archeologia del Lazio e dell'Etruria Meridionale. [76]
- 3.9 Bovine hoof from Pisaurum (Pesaro). Photo: Museo Archeologico Oliveriani. [78]
- 3.10 Miniature metal votive plaques from the sanctuary of Reitia, Este, c.700–400 BC. Photo: Bridgeman Archives. [79]
- 3.11 Polyvisceral relief from central Italy, Wellcome Museum, London, inv. no. A636802. Photo: Wellcome Library, London. [83]
- 3.12 Polyvisceral model from Tessennano. Villa Giulia, Rome, inv. no. 8446. Height 25 cm. Photo: Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Soprintendenza Archeologia del Lazio e dell'Etruria Meridionale. [84]
- 3.13 Terracotta figurine depicting a 'dissected' male torso, reputedly from the Isola Farnese, Rome. Wellcome Museum, London, inv. no. 10284964. Height 70 cm. Photo: Science Museum, London/Wellcome Images. [85]
- 3.14 Votive torso with internal organs. Rome, Terme Museum, inv. no. 14608. Height 42 cm. Photo: DAI ROM, negative number 54.105. [86]
- 3.15 Terracotta liver from Falerii Veteres, c.300 BC. Villa Giulia, Rome. Photo: Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del



- turismo – Soprintendenza Archeologia del Lazio e dell'Etruria Meridionale. [88]
- 3.16 Etruscan cast bronze mirror depicting Calchas examining a liver. From Vulci, c.400 BC. Diameter 14.8 cm. Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco 12240. Line drawing from *Etruskische Spiegel*, vol. 2 (1845), pl. 223. [89]
- 3.17 Male votive torso in clay, unidentified provenance in Italy. Height 66.4 cm, BM 1834,1011.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum. [91]
- 3.18 Schematic representation of the cortical homunculus, after Penfield and Rasmussen (1950). After Schott (1993), 2. Image: Macmillan Publishing Company. [98]
- 3.19 Attic red-figure krater showing the death of Actaeon. Attributed to the Lykaon Painter, c.440 BC. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 00.346. [101]
- 3.20 *Origin*, Daniel Lee (1999). Wellcome Collection. Image: Daniel Lee 2003/Wellcome Images. [102]
- 4.1 Map of Gaul, marked with locations of the Dea Sequana sanctuary at the source of the Seine and the sanctuary of Chamalières. [107]
- 4.2 Plan of the Seine Sanctuary, after Deyts (1994), 7. [109]
- 4.3 Stone 'pilgrim' statue from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 60 cm. Dijon Archaeological Museum. [112]
- 4.4 Limestone statuette depicting a swaddled baby, from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 30 cm. Dijon Archaeological Museum. [113]
- 4.5 Wooden sculpture of female figure, from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 1.49 m. Dijon Archaeological Museum. Photo: Michel-George Bernard. [114]
- 4.6 Stacked wooden heads from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 72 cm. Dijon Archaeological Museum. [115]
- 4.7 Limestone torso sculpture from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 49 cm. Dijon Archaeological Museum. [116]
- 4.8 Bronze plaque showing female trunk, from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Dijon Archaeological Museum. [117]
- 4.9 Limestone relief with three breasts from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 12.5 cm. Dijon Archaeological Museum. [118]

- 4.10 Internal organ model from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 40 cm. Dijon Archaeological Museum, inv. 75.2.30. [119]
- 4.11 Limestone model of joined hands holding an offering, from the sanctuary of Dea Sequana at the source of the Seine. Height 18.5 cm. Dijon Archaeological Museum. [120]
- 4.12 Wooden model of female 'pilgrim' holding offering, from Chamalières. Oak, height 69 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand B3/32. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [124]
- 4.13 Wooden head model from Chamalières. Oak, height 24 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand P5/18. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [125]
- 4.14 Wooden 'stacked heads' from Chamalières. Beech, height 42 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand N4/116. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [126]
- 4.15 Lower half of female body from Chamalières (front and back views). Beech, height 90 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand C3/32. Photograph: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [127 and 128]
- 4.16 Leg model from Chamalières. Beech, height 62 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand B1/197. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [129]
- 4.17 Fragment of left arm holding round offering from Chamalières. Beech, length 41 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand B1/581. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [130]
- 4.18 Polyvisceral representation from Chamalières. Wood (beech or oak), height 27 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand N2/197. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [131]
- 4.19 Animal hoof from Chamalières. Beech, height 17 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand 1591. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [132]
- 4.20 Inscribed lead tablet from Chamalières. Length 7.1 cm. Bargoin Museum, Clermont-Ferrand. Photo: M. Levasseur and P. duBois (univ. Lettres, Clt-Fd), Coll. MCC (DRAC Auvergne). [133]

- 4.21 Drawing showing decorated side of stone head pillar from Entremont. Height 25.8 cm. Drawing by Libby Mulqueeny. Image courtesy of Ian Armit. [138]
- 4.22 Drawing of silver coin showing an Aeduan warrior (probably Dubnoreix) carrying a boar-headed carnyx and a severed head, AD 50s. Drawing by Rachel Kershaw. Image courtesy of Ian Armit. [148]
- 5.1 Map of Asia Minor marked with sites mentioned in the text. [153]
- 5.2 Marble stele of Stratoneikos, from Saittai, AD 194–5. Pergamon Archaeological Museum, Inv. 4207. Height 82 cm. *SEG* 28.914. Photo: Georg Petzl. [155]
- 5.3 Marble stele of Antonia, depicting Apollo Bozenos, from Kula. Berlin Antikensammlung, Sk 680, Sk 680. Height 71 cm. *TAM* V.1.238. Photo: Georg Petzl and bpk images. [161]
- 5.4 Marble stele of Severus from north-eastern Lydia, AD 200/201. Height 83 cm. Now in a private collection. *SEG* 38.1229. Photo: Georg Petzl. [162]
- 5.5 Marble stele of Ammias and Dionysias, third century AD. Provenance unknown. Uşak Archaeological Museum, inv. 1-3-74. Height 85 cm. *SEG* 41.1039. Photo: Georg Petzl. [163]
- 5.6 Bronze body parts from the sanctuary of Artemis at Ephesos, c.700 BC. British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum. [165]
- 5.7 Marble stele showing a leg and buttock, dedicated by Glykia, daughter of Agrios. Height 40 cm. Allegedly from near Kula. *SEG* 29.1174. Photo: Georg Petzl. [168]
- 5.8 Fragmentary white marble stele showing an arm, from Sandal (Maeonia), set up by Metrodoros, AD 118–19. Height 35 cm. *TAM* V.1.596. Photo: Georg Petzl. [171]
- 5.9 Marble stele with eyes and crescent from the territory of Silandos dedicated by Theodoros, AD 235/6. Height 84 cm. *SEG* 38.1237. Photo: Georg Petzl. [172]
- 5.10 White marble stele of Apollonios, from the Middle Hermos Valley. Height 1.09 m. Izmir Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 1973-1-1. *SEG* 35.1158. Photo: Georg Petzl. [176]
- 5.11 White marble stele with eyes, breasts and leg from the sanctuary of Anaïtis and Men Tiamou near Kula, AD 236/7. Height 99 cm. Leiden Rijksmuseum inv. no. 309. *TAM* V.1.322. Photo: Leiden Rijksmuseum. [177]

- 5.12 White marble pedimental stele dedicated by Pollion, AD 238/ 239.  
Height 84 cm. Uşak Archaeological Museum inv. 2-1-74. *SEG*  
39.1279. Photo: Georg Petzl. [179]
- 6.1 Plaster cast of the Venus de Milo. Photo: Roy Hessing. [189]
- 6.2 Feet of Aurelia del Prete on display in the Madonna dell'Arco  
sanctuary at S. Anastasia near Naples. Photo: Yvonne De  
Rosa. [190]

## Tables

- 2.1 Body parts from the Athenian Inventories (after van Straten  
(1981), 109) [33]
- 2.2 Body parts from the Asklepieion at Corinth (after Roebuck (1951),  
119–128) [37]
- 4.1 Materials and types of votive found at the Seine sanctuary (after  
Deyts (1994), 15) [110]
- 4.2 Votive material from Chamalières (after Romeuf and Dumontet  
(2000), 91, table 1) [123]

## Acknowledgements

This book had its genesis in a Leverhulme-funded project titled *Changing Beliefs of the Human Body*, which was based at the University of Cambridge between 2005 and 2009. This was a collaborative, multi-disciplinary project aimed at tracking how beliefs about the human body changed over time and space between the Neolithic and the present day. I joined the team as a postdoctoral student in late 2005, immediately after completing my PhD in Roman Art at the Courtauld Institute. I owe a great deal to all my colleagues on the Leverhulme project, and especially John Robb, Oliver Harris, Katharina Rebay-Salisbury and Simon Stoddart. Most of all, I owe an enormous debt of thanks to Robin Osborne, who read and commented on every chapter of the book, and who was the most inspiring and generous postdoctoral mentor I could have hoped for.

Whilst writing up my research project I have benefited from being part of a vibrant Department of Classical Studies at the Open University, and I thank all my colleagues there for providing such a supportive and fun environment to work in. I am particularly grateful to Emma-Jayne Graham, Helen King, Janet Huskinson and Phil Perkins, who have each commented on versions of these chapters and enthusiastically shared their knowledge about ancient bodies and archaeology. Beyond the OU, I have also benefited from presenting material at different seminars and conferences. Special mention must go to the participants in the seminar on *Ex-Voto: Votives across Cultures* organised by Ittai Weinryb at the Bard Graduate Center in New York in 2010, and the *Bodies of Evidence* conference organised by Emma-Jayne Graham and Jane Draycott at the British School in Rome in 2012. Further formative encounters happened in the context of the *Memoria Romana* project directed by Karl Galinsky. Although my work on that project addressed a different topic (Roman *spolia*), the time that I spent delving into the literature on Memory Studies shaped much of my subsequent thinking about votives, and the many ways in which these objects intersect with cultural and autobiographical memory.

Many other people have helped me bring this book into being. Three of my past teachers need special thanks: John Murrell at the John Henry Newman School in Stevenage, Mary Beard at Newnham College in Cambridge and

Peter Stewart, who was my PhD supervisor at the Courtauld Institute in London. I am grateful to all those colleagues who have contributed to *The Votives Project* website that Emma-Jayne and I set up in 2014, and especially to Jean Turfa and Urmila Mohan, who have answered many of my questions about votives and material religion. I am indebted to Michael Sharp at CUP for his patience and encouragement, to the anonymous CUP reviewers for their thoughtful critiques of the first version of my manuscript, and to Jane Robson and Clare Owen for invaluable help with copyediting and production. I also received help with photographs from Ian Armit, Michelle Berger, Julie Charmoillaux, Benedetto De Martino, Nancy De Grummond, Yvonne De Rosa, Dan Diffendale, Myriam Fèvre, Crestina Forcina, Anna Laine, Daria Lanzuolo, Lucio Lazarese and Georg Petzl.

Votive offerings are profoundly rewarding objects to work with, partly on account of the sense of intimacy that they bring to the study of history and the way in which they make us reflect on the practical, personal and emotional challenges faced by individuals in the past. During the last few years these objects have given me daily reminders about the transience and frailty of human existence, but also about the strength and tenacity of family bonds and friendships. In addition to those already mentioned, I am ever thankful for the presence in my life of Linda, Jon and Nick Hughes, Susan Zacharias, Alida Ferrara, Bruno and Ambra De Martino, and of course my husband Benedetto and our daughters Alice and Micòl. Finally, I would like to record my respectful gratitude to the men and women who first dedicated these votives to their gods, and who have unknowingly given me a precious glimpse of their world, and of other worlds beyond that one.