

Unlocking the Museum Secretum

**Challenging the Stereotyped Narrative of the Sexual and Obscene
Object from Private Collector to Public Institution in the Digital Age
(1737-2021)**

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Abstract

In 1865 the British Museum established the Museum Secretum, described by scholars as a Victorian collection of sexual/obscene objects. These objects were acquired during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from donations/purchases of private collectors, including Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824), Charles Townley (1737-1805), and George Witt (1804-1869). Though now disbanded, the Museum Secretum still exists in textual accounts and as a digital archive. The Secretum has been described as a space of censorial restriction and for academic retrospection, imitative of previous theoretical studies of sexuality. This thesis combines art historical methods of object biography with innovative digital/mathematical methods to analyse the online archive of the Museum Secretum and ask the following questions: What do objects assigned to the Secretum reveal about the curation and purpose of this controversial collection? How can scholars engage with modern and complex source material in constructive, accurate, and precise ways that avoid making assumptions based on generalisations from the past regarding the collection, display, and reception of sexual objects?

This research analyses digital archives and virtual images to reveal new art historical perspectives using large datasets. Virtual objects prompt questions regarding visual accessibility and the role of curators in shaping perceptions of the Secretum. This thesis develops comparative analysis methods by merging traditional art historical approaches with techniques from STEM and social sciences. When applied to case studies, these new approaches reveal that collector biographies exerted significant influence on sexual object reception. Additionally, multiple factors beyond sexual subject matter influenced Museum Secretum assignment, including material construction and burgeoning medical and anthropological theories, illustrating that this nineteenth-century collection was not simply a censorial space or solely referencing eighteenth-century theory. These findings emphasise the problem of over-generalisation and stereotyping within humanities research and demonstrate the utility of combining traditional and digital techniques to the study of art history.

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I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

Secrets, Mysteries, and Sex in the British Museum

The concept of the Museum Secretum runs counter to [...] either a culturally based museum or an art-based one or, indeed, for almost any other kind one can imagine. [...] “Obscenity” is not a scholarly category, it is a moral one, and it is academically indefensible.

- Catherine Johns, *Sex or Symbol*¹

What does it mean for *something* to be secret? Is being secret by definition a moral judgement, a protection of others from the shame of that which should not be seen? Alternatively, does it denote a protection of that secret *thing* from the outside world? Are these secrets in fact titillating mysteries to be analysed and discovered? In 1865, the British Museum established the Museum Secretum, and in so doing created an epicentre of moral and museological debate that continues today. Described as a thematic collection of sexual objects by modern scholars and curators from the British Museum, its secretness, as implied by its title, has become synonymous with the perception of the late-nineteenth century as a moment in time defined by prudery and dogged censorship of sex and sexuality.² In recent years, the same Museum Secretum has been understood from the opposite perspective, a starting point for later blossoming studies in fields such as sexology and medical history.³ However, what has been largely overlooked in this process of categorisation and recategorisation of the Museum Secretum is the very thing that makes the Museum Secretum worth studying in the first place: the collected objects within it and the private collections that stand as foundations for its development. Does this space develop out of the models of eighteenth-century private collections? What, if anything, does the Museum Secretum illustrate about definitions, categorisations, and specific characteristics of sexual objects and their legacy in British Museum public display?

There is no direct evidence regarding how, when, or why the Museum Secretum was granted this controversial title. However, records from the ‘Museum Secretum Register’, discussed in great

¹ Catherine Johns, *Sex or Symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (London: The British Museum Press, 1982; London: British Museum Press, 1989), 30. Citations refer to 1989 edition.

² For examples see Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (London: University of California Press, 1987), 1-33.; Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 30.; David Gaimster, “Under Lock and Key,” in *Sex: The Erotic Review*, ed. S. Bayley (London: Cassell [in conjunction with the Erotic Print Society], 2001), 126-139.; Stuart Frost, “Secret Museums: Hidden Histories of Sex and Sexuality”, *Museums & Social Issues* 3, no. 1 (2008), 31.

³ Jennifer Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” (PhD Thesis: University of Exeter, 2013).

detail later in this chapter, suggest that the curator A. W. Franks was donating items to this titled version of the collection as early as 1869. Like any abstract concept in language, the noun “a secret”, verb “to secrete”, and adjective “secret” all have complex, convoluted, and historically dynamic interpretations of their meaning. Etymologically speaking, the root of the English word “secret” in all its variations, is rooted in the Latin verb *secerno* from *se-* to put aside, to disjoin + *cerno-* to see to discern. In more recent Latin dictionaries, the noun *secretum* is defined as retirement, solitude, a solitary place or a secret, mystery.⁴ However, the grammatical construction of the phrase is difficult to decipher, leading to several options in translation that have a significant influence on the potential reading of its function as a collection. The phrase can be translated as Secret Museum, i.e., describing the museum itself as secret. Alternatively, another valid translation would be as the Museum of Secrets (or secret *things*).⁵ In the first instance, the collection is absent from view, shielded from unwelcome eyes. In the second, the Museum houses items that are in and of themselves secret, offering a stimulating mystery for further exploration.

Due to lack of standardised dictionaries throughout the nineteenth century until the development of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the 1890s, determining a generally accepted definition of the term ‘secret’ is difficult within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contexts. However, an American source, Charlton T. Lewis’ *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* dated to 1895, thirty years after the founding of the Museum Secretum, defines *secretum* as “a hidden thing, mystery, secret” suggesting an understanding of the word arguably closer to the second interpretation than the first.⁶ The reception of the Museum Secretum has therefore been fundamentally based around the (mis)understanding of the words, text, and generalisations surrounding its establishment from its very inception. Additionally, its links to similar concepts, terminology, and curated spaces such as the phrase ‘private’ and therefore spaces such as the British Library’s Private Case, have created false comparisons based on these same assumptions of function.⁷ In either case, the pseudo-

⁴ Comes from *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary* ed. D. P Simpson (London: HMH Books, 1977), s.v. “secretum”.

⁵ It may also be a supine verb noun ‘to secrete’, though this would make less sense with the noun “Museum” portion of the phrase.

⁶ *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* ed. Charlton T. Lewis (New York, Cincinnati, Chicago: American Book Company, 1895), s.v. “secretum”.

⁷ Privacy is itself another complex concept. The Private Case, as shall be illustrated later in this chapter, had very limited and exclusive access despite its presence in a public collection of books and manuscripts. For clarity, in the context of this thesis, the commonly used phrases ‘private collection’ and/or ‘private collector’ are terms related to ownership of the objects within a collection, purchased by or gifted to an individual, in contrast to a ‘public

Latinisation of the phrase “Museum Secretum” suggests an active desire to associate this collection with the study of, specifically Roman, antiquity, and the famous Italian equivalent of the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, a comparison that is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Two. However, this is a competitive venture, a “museum” far outstripping in size and grandeur of a “cabinet,” suggesting a desire to not only emulate but expand the notoriety of the “secrets” held within the British Museum’s walls.

For many years the British Museum was the infamous home of the Museum Secretum, an “academically indefensible” collection of sexual objects.⁸ In this defamatory process, scholars have relied heavily on the biographies of private collectors of sexual objects, constructing a timeline of eighteenth-century enlightened scholarship transitioning into a reactionary and intellectually stagnant reception of these same objects in the nineteenth century with the Museum Secretum positioned at the epicentre. This narrative, however, is born out of subjective bias rather than evidence from the objects within these collections themselves and fails to address the deep complexity of how objects, private collectors, public institutions, and wider society interact. Understanding objects as actors in their own right that influence the various social networks interacting with/upon them underpins this thesis and builds upon the field of material semiotics and, more specifically, Actor-Network Theory – a theoretical approach discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

More recent challenges to traditional censorship myths have been posited but methods for exploring the vast networks of collected objects and the context of their collection have remained largely in the realms of conventional historiographic research, relying heavily on textual and traditional archival material. In the search to reexamine and reframe the perceived function and contents of the Museum Secretum, as well as the numerous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century private collections that compose it, moving away from an assumption of pure censorship, this thesis combines art historical methods of enquiry, such as close visual analysis and object biography, with innovative numerical and mathematic methods of data analysis using digital and

institution’ such as the British Museum which purchases items for its collection using public funding and receives/purchases items on behalf of the wider public.

⁸ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 30.

virtual material to address the following questions. First, what do the objects assigned to the Museum Secretum reveal about the curation and purpose of the collection, as well as the display and reception of sexual objects? Second, how can scholars engage with complex source material in constructive and accurate ways that avoid making (un)conscious assumptions based on biographical information and broad generalisations from the past regarding the collection, display, and reception of sexual objects?

To achieve credible, factually based direct comparison across multiple time periods, private collections, visual records, and archives, this thesis employs tools from the fields of numerical data analysis in combination with more traditional archival/visual analytical practice. In this way, trends, patterns, and larger conclusions can be drawn based on evidence from the collections and objects themselves rather than relying on over-generalisations based on cursory information and biographical readings. This method is time consuming and highly detail oriented, but it offers quantitative evidence to answer specific research questions about complex, large groups of art objects, networks, and collecting practices that qualitative approaches alone often fail to test robustly, and without relying on broad generalisations typical of more traditional approaches. These traditional approaches typically rely on single or a few case studies that are often selected without considering the wider context of the object, i.e. based on personal preference of the author, deliberate selection of an example that supports a hypothesis, the relative ease of research for a particular object due to a wealth of previous scholarship and available archival material, and/or due to the wider popularity of the object that promises more sustained interest in the research over time.

1. What is the Museum Secretum?

1.1 The Nineteenth-Century Collection

Many of the general histories of the British Museum fail to mention the development of the Museum Secretum both as a physical space and as a concept.⁹ Its creation story has for many years

⁹ Neither Wilson nor Caygill mention the space in either of their foundational texts on the subject; David M. Wilson, *The British Museum: A History* (London: The British Museum Press, 2002); Marjorie Caygill, *The Story of the British Museum*, 2nd ed, (London: British Museum Press, 1992).

been somewhat mythical, relatively unexplored, and largely taken at face value based on a single record. In November of 1865, a seriously ill and severely weakened Dr. George Witt, a wealthy medic-turned-mayor-turned-banker-turned-collector, sent a letter to Anthony Panizzi, the Principal Librarian of the British Museum from 1837-1866.¹⁰ In it he wrote:

Dear Sir,

During my late severe illness, it was a source of much regret to me that I had not made such a disposition of my Collection of ‘Symbols of the Early Worship of Mankind,’ as, combined with its due preservation, would have enabled me in some measure to have superintended its arrangement.

In accordance with this feeling I now propose to present my Collection to the British Museum with the hope that some small room may be appointed for its reception in which may also be deposited and arranged the important specimens, already in the vaults of the Museum – and elsewhere, which are illustrative of the same subject.¹¹

Panizzi’s response, though the original is now lost, must have been in the affirmative, as over the next few years the majority of Witt’s 434 objects from his personal collection were transferred to the British Museum. Additionally, the British Museum’s records indicate that a dedicated subcommittee accepted the offer on November 11th, 1865, and a room was requested by 1866 (Figure 1).¹² From this letter, it is clear that in his first approach Witt had no suggestion for the addition of the title ‘Museum Secretum’ to be attached to his collection.

It has often been easiest to assume that this was the first inkling towards segregating obscene materials from the main collections of the British Museum. The year 1865 sits comfortably within the mid-Victorian period, seemingly adding legitimacy to the idea that censorship and secrecy surrounding sexuality is attributable to the puritanical morality of the curators in this era. As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, legal policies governing sex, sexuality, sexual behaviour, as well as the production, display, and distribution of sexualised images were becoming

¹⁰ The title “Principal Librarian” was a position that presided over the entire running of the museum and library at this time and in this way the modern title of “Director” has a similar scope of prestige and responsibility; Very little is documented about Witt’s life and even less scholarly material produced; For general biography see David Gaimster, “Witt, George (1804–1869), Physician and Collector of Phallic Antiquities,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (23 Sep. 2004), accessed May 17, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/74100>.; Witt’s biographies will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

¹¹ George Witt, *Letter to Anthony Panizzi, 1865*, (letter), Vol 84, British Museum Archive Originals Papers.; Letter printed in full in Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28.

¹² This assumption comes from a twentieth-century note in the Museum Secretum Register.

common public concerns throughout the 1850s and 1860s. For example, the development of the Museum Secretum collection may seem a reactionary, exceptional event when scholars point to the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 as the root cause for its invention. However, the practice of grouping objects thematically, whether for the purpose of censorship or not, occurred consistently in the hundred years leading up to the official establishment of the Museum Secretum proper in the British Museum. By 1832, Stanislas Marie César Famin referenced similar sexual collections to the Naples Cabinet of Secrets when he states, “[the Cabinet of Secrets] is the richest of its kind though there still exist in Florence, Dresden, London, and Madrid private galleries of preserved obscene antiquities from Egypt, Greece, and Etruria.”¹³

Additionally, a separate space set aside for obscene books in the British Museum was already well established by the 1860s and was known as the Private Case. Keeper Henry Hervey Baber suggested that “young men” must first gain his permission to view this obscene collection of literature and prints in 1836, therefore predating the proposal for a Museum Secretum by thirty years.¹⁴ These texts were held in private, locked cases and folios held in the Departmental Keeper’s office of the now defunct Department of Printed Books. However, the official title and archival name of this collection was not settled upon until the 1850s. Though the exact date for when the books were all moved to the same case location is debated, it is clear that John Winter Jones began to press-mark ‘P.C.’ (Private Case) into the obscene books by 1856.¹⁵

A fundamental difference between the Private Case and the Museum Secretum is that the Museum Secretum housed *objets d’art*, archaeological artefacts, and other non-print objects from the British Museum’s collections. As a varied collection of large- and small-scale objects and artefacts in addition to books, folios, and pamphlets, the Museum Secretum posed a challenging prospect in terms of storage compared to the relatively standardised shelving for the books and prints of the

¹³ “Cette collection est la plus riche de ce genre; mais il existe encore à Florence, à Dresde, à Londres, à Madrid, des galeries particulières où se conservent des antiquités obscènes provenant de Égypte de la Grèce ou de rÉtrurie.” Translation by author; This reference comes from an 1836 reprint of an earlier 1832 work, Stanislas Marie César Famin, *Musée Royal de Naples: Peintures, Bronzes et Statues Érotiques du Cabinet Secret* [The Royal Museum of Naples: Erotic Pictures, Bronzes, and Statues of the Secret Cabinet] (Paris: Abel Ledoux, 1836), xxix.

¹⁴ P.R. Harris, *A History of the British Museum Library 1753-1973* (London: The British Library Board, 1998), 92.

¹⁵ Derek Jones, ed., *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2015), s.v. “Private Case: Collection of Forbidden Books, British Library (formerly at the British Museum Library)”; Patrick J. Kearney, *The Private Case: An Annotated Bibliography of the Private Case Erotica Collection in the British (Museum) Library* (London: J. Landesman, 1981).; Peter Fryer, *Private Case, Public Scandal* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966).

Private Case. Larger objects like Charles Townley's Satyr and Nymph group in marble and standing at 76.2cm in height were meant to be stored alongside items like the bronze phallic amulet bequeathed by Richard Payne Knight measuring just 6.5cm (Figure 2 and 3).

It is debatable as to whether a final, physical solution was ever achieved by the British Museum for how to house the Museum Secretum with respect to the wishes of Witt in 1865. What is known is that the Museum Secretum at some point existed as a room.¹⁶ However, it is difficult to determine the layout, functionality, and understand the general experience of the first Museum Secretum room for a nineteenth-century visitor as the Museum Secretum has been largely disbanded today and the objects redistributed. Therefore, contemporary descriptions by those who physically accessed the material within the Museum Secretum are the best available source of information. It is difficult to reconstruct and trace the full process undertaken to access the Museum Secretum by an interested nineteenth-century visitor. In many cases, the original documentation held at the British Museum requesting access to this collection offers no indication as to whether or not these applications were approved or denied.¹⁷ Additionally, very few sources survive describing the physical display and condition of the Museum Secretum meaning that we rely on particularly individualised, subjective, and therefore unverifiable accounts.

One of these descriptive references to the physical space occupied by the Museum Secretum collection is a footnote in the work of Henry Spencer Ashbee, the suspected author of the infamous memoir cataloging the prices of prostitutes, homosexual encounters, age of consent, et. al. in the

¹⁶ This assumption is based on a note left in the Museum Secretum Register in the 1930s (Figure 1) as well as an account from a contemporary patron who attended the Museum Secretum, Henry Spencer Ashbee; Henry Spencer Ashbee, *Bibliography of Forbidden Books*, vol. 1 (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 1877, reprint 2007), 8.

¹⁷ Additionally, an unfortunate misquotation of Gaimster's work on the Museum Secretum reprinted in numerous blogs and non-academic works online have led to the public misunderstanding of how access would have been granted. Gaimster describes access to the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples as "only those people of mature years and sound morals would be admitted," a phrase regularly misassigned to the terms access to the Museum Secretum. Original quote: David Gaimster "Sex & Sensibility at the British Museum," *History Today* 50, no.9. (Sep, 2000): 10-15. Examples of recent misattribution in popular writing: Harry Rosehill, "Ever Heard Of The British Museum's Long-Lost 'Porn Room'?", *The Londonist*, June 1, 2017, accessed Jan 16, 2019. <https://londonist.com/london/history/the-british-museum-s-secretum>; Caitlin McCurdy, "'For Gentlemen of Mature Years & Sound Morals': Bodhisattva Tara in the British Museum's Secret Room", *Musings: Master of Museum Studies Blog at the University of Toronto* (blog), July 13, 2020, accessed Dec 28, 2020. <http://musingsmmst.blogspot.com/2020/07/for-gentlemen-of-mature-years-sound.html>.

period around the 1890s titled *My Secret Life*.¹⁸ In his *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, or *Bibliography of Forbidden Books*, first published in 1877, Ashbee states:

The objects left to the nation by Knight, and Witt, now form one collection, which to the shame of the British Museum authorities, is consigned to a dark room in the basement, difficult of access, and where the interesting specimens it comprises can be inspected only under the greatest disadvantages.¹⁹

Clearly, Ashbee, a great collector of sexual prints himself, was underwhelmed by the display of the Museum Secretum objects. Probably the most problematic phrase from this passage is “difficult of access”, which could describe the lengths it might take to gain access due to the perceived obscenity of the objects within. However, this phrase may be taken quite differently if understood as a practical complaint rather than one bemoaning censorship of sexual objects. Firstly, the Museum Secretum is reasonably situated in the basements of the museum as the majority of collections have been and continue to be located to this day.²⁰ Despite the British Museum being one of the first institutions to use electric lighting for their displays by 1890, it is unlikely the basements were prioritised for this luxury, making both reading and visual studies of the objects difficult. In the context of the original footnote, it could just as convincingly be understood to mean that the space was difficult to *physically* access as it is in the basement in dim lighting with limited illumination from windows. Rather than a critique of the moral policing of the British Museum keepers, it could instead reasonably be a complaint against the poor lighting conditions.

As to the set up and display of the items within the cabinet storage and shelving composing the Museum Secretum, there remains no descriptive evidence in the primary sources. Additionally, while records including the observable stickers and labels applied to objects directly indicate that

¹⁸ This identification has in recent years been challenged considerably in scholarship. However, the point remains that his reputation as someone interested in information of a sexual nature during the period the Museum Secretum was in existence. For original text see copy in the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research Library, Bloomington, IN: “Walter”, *My Secret Life* (Amsterdam: Privately printed, n.d. c.1888–1894), accessed May 17, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/mysecretlifevolu30360gut.>; For debates see Vern L. Bullough, “Who Wrote My Secret Life? An Evaluation of Possibilities and a Tentative Suggestion.” *Sexuality and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2000): 37-60, accessed May 5, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-000-1011-y>.

¹⁹ Ashbee, *Bibliography of Forbidden Books*, 8.

²⁰ This is from the figure circulated by the British Museum that only 1% of their collection is on display to the public at any given time; from the Trustees of the British Museum, “British Museum Fact Sheet”, accessed Apr 5, 2021, https://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/fact_sheet_bm_collection.pdf.

these items were renumbered/relabelled using a Museum Secretum archival number, that is a number under which it was filed in the Museum Secretum Register with the prefix M.-, MS.-, W., or WITT.-, there is little documentation of the physical movement of these objects to designated locations upon their immediate reclassification to this collection.²¹ Catherine Johns suggests that objects already designated as ‘obscene’ before the donation of Witt’s collection remained in their location in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities in 1865 “for no particular reason that we can now detect except the historical one that they stayed where they were.”²² This theory implies that the content of the Museum Secretum was less accessible for practical reasons as much as censorial ones, though it should be noted that the complexity of the collection’s departmental location will be addressed later in Chapter Three. Unlike the Private Case, which was transferred as a whole collection to the British Library collections in 1973 and continues to remain in much the same grouping as it was in the late nineteenth century, the of Museum Secretum was gradually disbanded over many years starting in 1912, with the majority of the objects redistributed across the British Museum departments as evidenced from the notices provided in the Museum Secretum Register itself by 1939 (Figure 1). In this process, objects were reclassified and redistributed to geographically or materially relevant departments, meaning many of the objects donated from private collections were no longer kept together based on previous collector or theme but rather became subsumed into culturally/geographically or object typologically linked categories such as the Department of Greece and Rome, Department of Asia, and Department of Coins and Medals to name a few. Eventually the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities would change and restructure to form the Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory which now contains only 28.5% of Witt’s collection with the same classification numbers as the Museum Secretum.

This brief and undetailed summary of the Museum Secretum as a physical space might prompt questions about its suitability as a candidate for close study with a goal to explore wider ideas of sexuality and sexual objects in the nineteenth century. The Museum Secretum may seem like something of an anomaly in British collection histories as no other object based, ‘sexually’ themed

²¹ See right of centre on the reverse side of Figure 60a for example of a sticker (in this case orange in colour).

²² Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 30.; the idea that these sexual objects were isolated from the larger British Museum collections comes from a private correspondence between Donald Bailey to Bernard Cashman 11/07/1991, noted in Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century”, 54.

collections are widely known or discussed in modern scholarship. By selecting this single case study to research in this thesis, it could perhaps be argued that the Museum Secretum is representative only of a small and insignificant trend in London-based traditions of collection and display of sexual objects. However, I would counter this critique of the Museum Secretum as a valid case study with the assertion that the British Museum in the nineteenth century was, and continues to be today, not just a reflection of collections from a subset of London society, but also reflects the state of international collecting both in Britain and throughout the wider world. This perspective positions the British Museum at the forefront of deciding how to maximise accessibility of collections to scholars, while understanding that certain objects in collections may be perceived as affronts to morals and beliefs in the wider community, deciding how best to manage these competing needs and demands. As such, studying how the larger institution prioritised, categorised, and displayed their sexual antiquities informs wider concerns across time and space, in particular as many later museums based their sexual collections on the items held in the British Museum.²³ Therefore, due to the glaring absence of the Museum Secretum within the discipline of long-nineteenth studies, this thesis offers a bridge between the disciplines of Victorian studies, art history more generally, classics, museology, and digital humanities to name a few. There is certainly important research to be done on the holdings of sexual antiquities across Britain collected in the nineteenth century, and with the further use of this new comparative data methodology this may eventually produce fruitful results.

1.2 Searching for The Museum Secretum Today

Only Cupboard 54 and 55 remain as physical relics of the Museum Secretum and attempts have been made to reconstruct how they may have appeared to nineteenth-century visitors in recent years (Figure 4).²⁴ Studying the Museum Secretum as a researcher today poses some challenges after its official disbanding in the twentieth century. Descriptions from writers and journalists who have seen this material personally range from “almost bare,” “deflating,” and an “historian’s heaven.”²⁵ The first two sentiments most likely due to the very limited number of objects left

²³ I refer here to the Wellcome Collection and Fitzwilliam Museum.

²⁴ R.B Parkinson, *A Little Gay History* (London: British Museum Press, 2013), 86.

²⁵ Ben Macintyre, “Ann Summers goes to the British Museum: Mounting a Tantric Exhibition comes naturally to an institution with a vast, long-hidden story of sex objects,” editorial, *The Times*, January 24, 2020. Accessed Dec 28,

available to see in the remaining cupboards, the latter because what is available in Cupboard 55 is still arranged thematically and categorised by one modern viewer as “shameful contents.”²⁶ These storage units are located in the basement of the retitled Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, and the few objects that continue to be stored in the drawers of Cupboard 54 and 55 are generally small items including the well-known wax phalli donated by Sir William Hamilton and Witt (Figures 5 and 6). Larger items and many others were moved to departments reflective of their geographical and cultural original production. The choice of remaining objects is informative, in terms of the perceived purpose of the Museum Secretum, a thematic topic that is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

As previously stated, items within what remains of the physical Museum Secretum continue to be identifiable by their registration numbers with the prefix M-, MS-, W-, or WITT-. Accessing these items using these call signs is most readily done through the use of the digital archive/online collections. In Chapter One, I argue that these online collections are curated spaces in their own right. As such, I suggest that the Museum Secretum continues to exist for a modern audience on this platform, certainly in terms of textual reference and in many cases as a visual record.

One of the concerns of this thesis is how the Museum Secretum was originally envisioned in the nineteenth century, not simply as a space of display but as an ideal collection of objects. The Museum Secretum no longer exists as a physical room or a dedicated space as experienced by Ashbee in the nineteenth century. However, the carefully curated nineteenth-century archives and registration books documenting what objects were listed as being within the Museum Secretum remain accessible in the form of the Museum Secretum Register (MSR). Therefore, while the physical collection does not remain, the ideal Museum Secretum collection is accessible to today’s researcher in the form of the MSR. The Museum Secretum Register is composed of a single leatherbound volume, brown with gold lettering reading “MUSEUM SECRETUM; WITT COLLECTION CATALOGUE; DEPT. of B. & M. ANTIQUITIES” (Figure 7a-c). According to Figure 1, the outer binding was rebound in 1949, though there is no indication that the pages or

2020. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ann-summers-goes-to-the-british-museum-97pnlj08b.>; Tony Perrottet, *The Sinner’s Grand Tour* (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2011), 6-9.

²⁶ Perrottet, *The Sinner’s Grand Tour*, 1.

other elements of the manuscript were re-written or edited then or at any specific time prior, though this is clearly an evolving document for reasons stated later in this section. For this reason, this thesis shall assume that the inner pages and text is nineteenth century in origin, at least by design if not input. The pages are lined and have a common ledger design, with a small left-hand column reserved for the item's Museum Secretum number and details from the original acquisition such as previous departmental registration numbers. The second, much wider, column is the item description, with repeating information indicated with ditto marks throughout. In many cases, item descriptions are accompanied by a small sketch of the object in question giving visual detail difficult to describe with pure text. Occasionally, a third column appears and provides more information on an object much like the first column, including size, price at time of purchase, and previous identification numbers (Figure 8). The final column gives details of deaccession times and to which departments objects were moved. In addition to the written catalogue of the items themselves, loose paper de-accession logs and notices describe the relocations of items from the Museum Secretum across multiple departments (Figure 1).

Before going into the specifics of what was housed within this collection and its larger function within Victorian archival practices, it is important to deconstruct the Museum Secretum Register and the implications of its original construction and content as an archival record. After all, an archive “is a space where the curator thinks, works, and puts fragments together in order to create new narratives. (...) To be in this [archival material] is to think alongside the curator, through - and despite- his/her absence: in absentia.”²⁷ By using the Museum Secretum Register as a stand in for the Museum Secretum proper, it is possible to glean more substantial meanings and curatorial decisions about this collection even without the continued physical existence of the Museum Secretum.

From the records available, 1,152 items are listed in total as being in the Museum Secretum (Table 1).²⁸ However, it is difficult to know when these items were added to the collection as items entered and left the MSR from its establishment in 1865 all the way through to the 1950s. In addition, the

²⁷ Michela Alessandrini, “Introduction: The Curator in Absentia, or what curatorial archives reveal about curatorial practices,” in *Curatorial Archives in Curatorial Practices*, ed. Michela Alessandrini (Online: Salt, 2018), 6.

²⁸ This number is based on the collection numbers in the Museum Secretum Register and includes fractured objects or parts of objects as a whole item.

purchase of the Léon Morel collection and many other items are not given dates for inclusion at all. Therefore, it must be assumed that the Museum Secretum was a constantly changing collection throughout its existence, an assumption that has profound implications for the Museum Secretum as a functioning space and collection beyond a space of censorship. Firstly, the Museum Secretum register is divided into four main groups: the general collection (consisting of objects from items across the entirety of the British Museum's holdings), the Witt Collection of objects (from Witt's 1865 donation), Witt's donation of books (donated from 1864-1869), and the Léon Morel collection (donated in 1901 and indicated by an ML.- number).

What is immediately noticeable in the records is an attempt to categorise these items not by subject or theme such as phallic, depictions of sexual intercourse, or 'yonic' imagery (i.e. images of female genitalia - a term that will be discussed further in Chapter One), as may be expected in a collection concerned with extensive censorship of all sexually themed objects within its collection. Instead, in all sections of the MSR the items are divided along geographical/cultural lines. There are civilisations and continents not represented in these sections, most notably Australia, Oceania, and other Pacific Island cultures, which have no items represented within the collection. It could be argued that this is because no such items deemed sexual or censorable existed from these regions within this period of the British Museum collections. Against this, the fact that there is no section dedicated to future objects representing these regions implies that they were not anticipated as sources of object in this category. This point aside, it is clear that there is considerable similarity between the general Museum Secretum object's geographic/culturally based labelling (indicated with MS.- or M.- labels) and the categories into which Witt's donations were given as a whole in 1865 (indicated with W.- labels). These divisions are further paralleled in Witt's donated scrapbooks that illustrate his priorities in collecting and the larger theories surrounding the grouping of his particular object choice, making it clear that categories were based on the choices of Witt. Witt's scrapbooks, his concern with geographical/cultural divisions, and the broader implications of these items/ideas are dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Three.

A key feature of a censored collection is the idea that these items are somehow unwanted or undesirable by the keepers of the British Museum collections.²⁹ However, the MSR tells a very

²⁹ See for example Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28-30.

different story. Firstly, the MSR leaves numerous pages blank between cultural categories, or contains numbers lightly written in pencil with no item descriptions. These sections, particularly in the Greek category of the MSR, might indicate an attempt to begin re-cataloging these items by not just culture but also material, with sections in the Roman category having the additional subcategories of material types not present in other groups (i.e. objects M.339-402 are labelled under a BRONZE category while M.403-466 are TERRACOTTA) (Figure 9). Care is taken to categorise these objects further, presumably at some later date than their initial records were created. Additionally, the extensive empty pages suggest that more items were expected to enter the Museum Secretum as time went on (Figure 10). While it is certainly true that this could be an expectation of the occasional obscene, unwanted donated item from larger collections, notes in the final column of the general Museum Secretum section of the MSR indicate many items were specifically purchased by the British Museum keepers (Figure 11).

The purchase and donation by British Museum staff of these sexual objects has been discussed in great detail by Jennifer Grove.³⁰ To Grove, the actions of A. W. Franks, the keeper listed in the MSR as donating a large number of items over the course of the late-nineteenth century, “show a chief member of the British Museum’s staff, who was responsible for shaping the collections, not only collecting this material but enabling the museum to own it.”³¹ Franks shaped the collections of the British Museum in his work within the Department of Antiquities starting in 1851 and subsequently as the keeper of the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities, sometimes labelled Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography, newly formed in 1866.³² It was in this later capacity that the Museum Secretum came under his direct purview. His considerable personal wealth allowed him to make these purchases, perhaps at the behest of the

³⁰ Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century”, 58-62.

³¹ Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century”, 59.

³² For more on A.W. Franks see Margorie Caygill and John Cherry, ed., *A.W. Franks: Nineteenth Century Collecting and the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1997).; The addition of ‘ethnography’ to the department title is based on A.W. Franks’s own labeling of his department from R. L. Hobson and A.W. Franks, *Catalogue of the Collection of English Porcelain in the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities and Ethnography of the British Museum* (London: Printed by order of the Trustees of the British Museum, 1905).; the link between the departmental scope and the role of the Museum Secretum in the field of ethnography/anthropology is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Three of this thesis.

British Museum Trustees, though equally from his own personal interest.³³ In many ways this exchange was another example of how private collector's interests beyond the larger institutional demands developed these innovative nineteenth-century collections in the British Museum. However, it was not simply by personal donation from staff that the Museum Secretum acquired new objects. Indeed, the British Museum Trustees purchased numerous items and collections, in full knowledge of the sexual contents included using public money. Examples include the collection of Reverend Greville John Chester, which possessed numerous phallic objects and figures throughout the 1880s. The Museum Secretum in the nineteenth century was therefore not a stagnant collection of hidden, morally depraved items. Instead, this new sexually themed collection had a larger role and reflected different ideas than simple censorship, ideas that the remainder of this thesis will attempt to unpick using object-based research of private donated collections within the Museum Secretum.

2. Historical Contexts: Empire, Obscenity, Origins, and the British Museum

The wider contexts relevant to each finding and/or discussion researched throughout this thesis will be deconstructed and examined in the relevant chapters. This said, it is important to discuss the rapid changes to the British Museum in the 1850s and 1860s, as well as the key legislation most closely associated with the Museum Secretum by scholarship, namely the Obscene Publications Act of 1857. The goal is not to attempt an extensive historical positioning of the Museum Secretum, but to introduce two major changes across nineteenth-century London and England (the legal acts were not in effect across the British Isles) most helpful to understanding the Museum Secretum's traditional classification as a space of censorship.

The British Empire was still expanding in 1865. British colonisation and rule had expanded significantly in the period leading up to this year, for example the passing of the Government of India Act 1858 which transferred the ruling powers of India to the British Crown after the events of the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Arguably, however, the full extent of British rule was yet to come

³³ Robert G. W. Anderson, "British Museum, London: Institutionalizing Enlightenment," in *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of the Institution in 18th- and Early-19th-Century Europe*, ed. Carole Paul (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012), 65.

with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and the subsequent ability for Britain to annex control of the African continent and further solidify its holdings via the Indian Ocean in the 1870s and 1880s. The Museum Secretum was therefore established and developed during a period of growing British imperialism, primarily from the collection of a man who took full advantage of the opportunities that this form of colonialism afforded, i.e. Witt. Additionally, it is important to note that the Museum Secretum was in many ways established during a time of increasing tension between the ruled and the ruling classes, particularly those defined along the lines of race and cultural hierarchies. The previously mentioned Indian Rebellion of 1857, as well as the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica in October of 1865 illustrate these challenges to British, and primarily white, rule in the Global South, a point that has significant implications for the collection of objects by nineteenth-century collectors including Witt – a point further discussed in Chapter Three.

In many ways, the history of the British Museum and its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collections is the history of the private collector. From its establishment in 1753, the donations of private collectors, usually elite male dilettantes, determined the direction and narratives of the British Museum's collections and displays. In this historical context, the Museum Secretum sits at an interesting time of the national institution's development.³⁴ In terms of physical environment, the nineteenth century was a time of great change for the British Museum collections. The new neoclassical building designed by architect Robert Smirke was completed by 1857, and shortly after in 1863, British Museum Trustees commissioned what would become the Natural History Museum (completed in 1881), separating the zoological collections and specimens that were the original basis for the British Museum's founding in 1753 with the Hans Sloane collection.³⁵ The restructuring of the physical surroundings of the collections had significant influence on the conceptual organisation and meaning of the objects within the British Museum. In essence, the identity of the Bloomsbury British Museum morphed into a more specific category, that of a national library, a role consistent with the institution's eighteenth-century founding principles, and that of an historical/cultural museum. Therefore, accepting the Witt Collection, which would

³⁴ For general history of the British Museum see Anderson, "British Museum, London," 47-71.; Wilson, *The British Museum.*; Caygill, *The Story of the British Museum.*

³⁵ For more on the architectural developments of the British Museum see J. Mordaunt Crook, *The British Museum: A Case-Study in Architectural Politics* (Harmondsworth, Baltimore, Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1972).; For more on Hans Sloane and his biography see James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World: Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum* (Harvard University Press: 2019).

become the basis of the Museum Secretum in 1865, and placing its contents within the Bloomsbury British Museum's collection, rather than the new museum offshoots has implications for how the Museum Secretum's collections were perceived more broadly as a category of objects belonging to an historical/cultural collection of human artefacts. As I explore in Chapter Three, this categorisation has complex consequences for the initial identification and reception of sexual objects, as the fields of science, natural history, ethnography, anthropology, and even the origins of humanity, were being called into question after the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859.

Furthermore, to scholars of British sexual history, the year 1857 has profound significance beyond the date of completion of Smirke's British Museum building. That year, the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 was passed into public and enforceable law, tightening the nebulous rules set out in the Vagrancy Act of 1838. For the first time in British Law:

any Constable or Police Officer into such House, Shop, Room, or other Place, with such Assistance as may be necessary, [were authorised] to enter in the Daytime, and, if necessary, to use Force, by breaking open Doors or otherwise, and to search for and seize all such [Obscene] Books, Papers, Writings, Prints, Pictures, Drawings, or other Representations.³⁶

The broad and inclusive language of the 1857 Act is probably in response to the demands of the large political group known as the Society for the Suppression of Vice who in the 1840s and 50s were campaigning aggressively for harsher punishments against 'pornographers'.³⁷ As I shall explore further in Chapter Three, these ideas are inseparable from the terminology of medicine and practices of hygiene, particularly when put into the wider context of the legal acts about public sexual health with the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869.³⁸

³⁶ The Obscene Publications Act, 1857, 21 Vic. 1, c. 83.; for direct quote see George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, ed., *A Collection of the Public General Statutes, passed in the Twentieth and Twenty-first of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria*, (London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1857), 814.

³⁷ M.J.D. Roberts, "Making Victorian morals? The Society for the Suppression of Vice and its Critics, 1802–1886," *Historical Studies* 21, no. 83 (1984): 157-173, accessed April 26, 2021. DOI: 10.1080/10314618408595699.

³⁸ For more on the regulation of sex acts and sexuality through law and legal processes in the nineteenth century see Louise A. Jackson, "Sex, Religion, and the Law: The Regulation of Sexual Behaviors, 1820-1920," in *A Cultural History of Sexuality: In the Age of Empire*, ed. Chiara Beccalossi and Ivan Crozier (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2011), 5:83-100.

In his seminal work *The Secret Museum*, Walter Kendrick is the first to suggest that the invention of the concept of ‘pornography’ and ‘obscene’ materials in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries necessitated the invention of a censorial space to put these controversial and unwanted items.³⁹ Similarly, Johns bemoans this “academically indefensible” action.⁴⁰ David Gaimster calls for saving the Museum Secretum only because “[i]ts tensions and contradictions serve as a warning to future generations against imposing their own contemporary prejudices on the erotic culture of the past.”⁴¹ Gaimster in particular links the establishment of the Museum Secretum as a direct reaction to the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, and the new governmental regulations “to control the circulation of images or erotic objects among the more “vulnerable” sections of society.”⁴² I would argue that a period of approximately eight years between the passing of the 1857 act and the establishment of the Museum Secretum in 1865 does not imply a reactionary, panicked, or direct response on the part of the British Museum. It is certainly true that the British Museum had for many years been segregating sexual, mostly phallic, objects but as mentioned previously this was a long, drawn-out process from at least three decades prior.⁴³

Perhaps more importantly, a causal link for the establishment of the Museum Secretum to legislation regulating sexual behaviour and public display is only relevant if one assumes that these Museum Secretum objects were considered to be pornographic and, therefore, censorable by the nineteenth-century British Museum keepers. Such assumptions are undermined by available data and object-based research, which challenges the definition of sexual objects from Payne Knight’s, Townley’s, or Witt’s collections as falling under the remit of the Act of 1857. For example, objects moved into the Museum Secretum are not “Books, Papers, Writings, Prints, Pictures, Drawings, or other Representations” as outlined in the wording of the Obscene Publications Act.⁴⁴ Indeed, the title of the legislation itself suggests that this regulation was designed for primarily paper items rather than sexual antiquities, a theory supported by the creation of the British Museum’s Private

³⁹ Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, 1-33.

⁴⁰ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 30.

⁴¹ Gaimster, “Under Lock and Key,” 139.

⁴² *Ibid.* 136.

⁴³ Victoria Donnellan, “Ethics and Erotics: Receptions of an Ancient Statue of a Nymph and Satyr,” in *Sculpture, Sexuality and History*, ed. Jana Funke and Jen Grove (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 145-171.

⁴⁴ An itemisation of the complete collections is reported in Chapter Two and Chapter Three through data analysis.

Case in 1856, which is much earlier and may have been established in anticipation of the Obscene Publications Act of 1857.

Furthermore, the concept of a ‘secret’ collection or museum was not an invention of the British Museum, or in fact of nineteenth-century Britain at all. *Il Gabinetto Segreto* [The Cabinet of Secrets] in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples had been established before 1819.⁴⁵ As Fisher and Langlands point out, this process was not reactionary nor one stemming from “the horror, the trauma, the sense of betrayal” excavators are described as experiencing during the initial archaeological excavations.⁴⁶ Instead the development of the Cabinet of Secrets was slow, unmethodical, and lacked the model of sensationalist censorship that is so popular in recent scholarship.⁴⁷ Access to this material was, in many ways, made easier by objects of a sexual nature being housed together in a single location as a titled collection available for scholarly research, which was relatively well known in the ‘correct’ circles.⁴⁸ Similarly, collections of books in particular were being segregated on the basis of obscenity in much the same way the Private Case in the British Museum Library was in the 1850s across the world in this period, including the Enfer collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France established between 1836-1844. Additionally, legal acts and obscenity laws were commonplace outside of Britain throughout the 1860s and 1870s, particularly in the United States of America.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Stefano de Caro, “Up and Down, In and Out: the Story of the erotic collection,” *The Art Newspaper*, no.102, (2000): 44-45.

⁴⁶ Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands, “The Censorship Myth and the Secret Museum,” in *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from its Rediscovery to Today*, ed. Shelley Hales and Joanna Paul (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 301.

⁴⁷ For an account of eighteenth-century display and archival practice see Alison E. Cooley, *Pompeii* (London: Duckworth, 2003): 65-69.; A. R. Gordon, “Subverting the Secret of Herculaneum: Archaeological Espionage in the Kingdom of Naples” in *Antiquity Recovered: The Legacy of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, ed. V. Gardner Coates and Jon L. Seydl (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007): 37-58.

⁴⁸ For access to Priapic material by Winckelmann and for notes on the general layout of the Portici museum see Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Critical Account of the Situation and Destruction by the First Eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia; The late Discovery of their Remains; The Subterraneous Works carried on in them; and the Books, Domestick Utensils, and other remarkable Greek and Roman Antiquities thereby happily recovered; The Form and Connection of the Ancient Characters being faithfully preserved, In a Letter, (Originally in German), To Count Bruhl of Saxony from the Celebrated Abbe Winckelmann, Antiquarian to the Pope* (London; T. Carnan and F. Newbery, 1771), 49-51, 61-62, 117-122.

⁴⁹ See Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 125-188.; Jennifer Burns Bright and Ronon Crowley, “‘A Quantity of Offensive Matter’: Private Cases in Public Places,” in *Porn Archives*, ed. Tim Dean, Steven Ruszczycky, and David Squires (USA: Duke University Press, 2014), 103-126.; Amy Werbel, *Lust on Trial: Censorship and the Rise of American Obscenity in the Age of Anthony Comstock* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

3. Literature Review: Modern and Classical Receptions of Sex, Sexuality, Sexual Objects, and Sexual Collections

While the Museum Secretum remains relatively understudied as a collection of objects within modern scholarship, the study of both ancient and modern sexuality as well as research and theory surrounding the collection and display of classics/classical objects has a long-standing tradition of research, literature, and method.⁵⁰ As this thesis approaches the challenge of studying sexual history and the Museum Secretum using multiple fields of study and challenges the overreliance on biographical material with each collector case study, there will be a division of literature review across multiple chapters with constant reference to these materials throughout. Chapter One focusses on the previous scholarship that underpins the data analysis approach in humanities as well as the exploration of the use of digital source material within art historical practice to date, before outlining how I apply theory and terminology within this work. Chapters Two and Three examine the relevant primary sources and the reception of the biographical approaches to studying collection history.

Therefore, the remainder of this chapter focuses primarily on identifying and outlining the scholarly foundation and larger debates in the field of sexual history reflecting nineteenth-century collecting and reception. As stated earlier in this chapter, previous studies of nineteenth-century reception of sexual antiquities and their collection in museums has long followed a censorship narrative. This approach describes the Victorian collection as part of a reactionary society hell-bent on censoring salacious material from an innocent, uneducated, and potentially anarchic public – all while hypocritically allowing access to lusty ‘properly’ educated Victorian elite male eyes.⁵¹

As is clearly seen from the opening quotation of this thesis, within the field of museology, most specifically studies of the British Museum’s collections, work was already being done in the early 1980s to reposition sexually themed Greco-Roman objects. Johns, a curator at the British Museum

⁵⁰ Reception of sexual antiquities in scholarship in its broadest sense begins in the eighteenth century with the work including that of Payne Knight and his fellow dilettantes such as Townley, a fundamental reason for selecting their collections as case studies representative of the Museum Secretum. This earliest literature will therefore be presented and examined in greater detail in Chapter Two.

⁵¹ For a few examples see Giancarlo Carabelli, *In the Image of Priapus* (London: Duckworth, 1996), 10-11.; Andrew P. Lyons and Harriet D. Lyons, *Irregular Connections: A History of Anthropology and Sexuality* (United States of America: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 59-72.

until 2002, first published her work *Sex or Symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* in 1982, with subsequent republications, redefining the content of the British Museum's collections to a public audience and suggesting that the stifling of 'erotic' content was the result of Victorian prudery.⁵² Shortly afterwards, Kendrick suggests that the invention of the concept of 'pornography' and 'obscene' materials in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries necessitated the invention of a censorial space to put these unwanted items.⁵³ This assumption of a Christian morality continued with the work of Gaimster, a later colleague of Johns and a former curator of the British Museum's Department of Medieval and Modern Europe. Gaimster, whose work is addressed in greater detail in Chapter Three, categorises the Museum Secretum as a space of deep censorship, a reactionary curated space to a traumatised Victorian audience.⁵⁴ This categorisation is in keeping with the contemporaneous work of Stefano de Caro on the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, indicating a larger, international narrative of censorial museum space.⁵⁵ Stuart Frost laments that "[b]y segregating material either formally or informally nineteenth and [early] twentieth-century museums supported the notion that there was something wrong, unnatural or 'pornographic' about this material and stifled research."⁵⁶ Even more recently, Jennifer Tyburczy discusses how "[t]he now defunct Secretum at the British Museum is indicative of the ways in which museums, even sex museums, have on- or off-site storage for what they deem the obscene, the pornographic, and thus the undisplayable."⁵⁷ However, this museological reading of the Museum Secretum has been challenged from other disciplines using theoretical foundations starting from philosophical and classics driven perspectives.

Michel Foucault's seminal work *The History of Sexuality*, left unfinished upon his death in 1984, revolutionised the study of sexuality with Greco-Roman culture at the center of the second volume of this treatise titled in English *The Use of Pleasure*. Most commonly used in classical and

⁵² Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28.

⁵³ Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 1-33.

⁵⁴ Gaimster, "Sex & Sensibility at the British Museum," 10-15.; Gaimster, "Under Lock and Key: Censorship and the Secret Museum," 126-139.

⁵⁵ Stefano de Caro, *The Secret Cabinet in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples: Quick Guide.*, English Language Edition (Napoli: Soprintendenza Archeologica di Napoli e Caserta, 2000); de Caro, "Up and down, in and out", 44-45.

⁵⁶ Frost, "Secret Museums", 31.; For similar discussion by same author see Stuart Frost, "The Warren Cup: Highlighting Hidden Histories," *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 26, no. 1 (2007): 63-72.

⁵⁷ Jennifer Tyburczy, *Sex Museums: The Politics and Performance of Display* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 28-29.

museological works referencing Foucault is his exploration of the division of ancient and modern approaches to the study of sexuality by a Christian perspective on the Greek concept of *aphrodisia*, the works and acts of Aphrodite.⁵⁸ Foucault posits that ancient cultures had few regulations regarding the construction and performance of these intimate, often sexual relationships.⁵⁹ By contrast, post-Christian cultures construct notions of sexuality based around, “[a] general principle of moderation, a suspicion that sexual pleasure might be an evil, the schema of strict monogamous fidelity, [and] the ideal of an absolute chastity,” which leads to strict and prohibitive regulatory measures, tainting the modern understanding of the art and literature of antiquity with a Christian veil of morality.⁶⁰

However, in more recent scholarship of the last ten years, Foucault’s first volume from the same work, entitled *The Will to Knowledge* published in 1978, has received closer attention and has been used to reassess these materials again with Foucault’s repressive hypothesis underpinning their commentary. Foucault introduced the idea that the development of the legal and social commentaries encouraging the campaigns against obscenity and sexuality were, in reality, the result of an age where discourse about sex and sexuality was flourishing. His hypothesis was developed in response to the construction in contemporary scholarship of a small, anti-mainstream group of Victorians who engaged with sexual objects and literature in an enlightened, seemingly modern way. *The Other Victorians* published by Steven Marcus in 1966, which presented these people as outliers in a censorial society, directly referencing the author of the work *My Secret Life* in this censorial context, was challenged by Foucault’s own take on the work when he states that “[r]ather than seeing in this singular man a courageous fugitive from a ‘Victorianism’ that would have compelled him to silence, I am inclined to think that, in an epoch dominated by (highly prolix)

⁵⁸ For thorough discussion see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley, (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 2:38-52.

⁵⁹ It should be noted that this was generally related to Greek readings. In recent scholarship, sexual behaviour has been shown to be more regulated in Roman law having great significance for the reading of many of the objects from within the Museum Secretum collections; on Roman sexuality and regulatory practice see Rebecca Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Caroline Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁶⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 2:250.; For criticisms on his study of ancient sexuality see David H.J. Larmour, Paul Allen Miller, and Charles Platter, ed., *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).; James I. Porter, “Foucault’s Antiquity,” in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 168-179.

directives enjoining discretion and modesty, he was the most direct and in a way the most naïve representative of a perisecular injunction to talk about sex.”⁶¹ Therefore, the seeming Victorian obsession and need to regulate sexual or ‘obscene’ material came not from a lack of interest or understanding of the complexity of human sexuality, but rather a growing discourse on the subject. Reflecting on this perspective of Foucauldian theory, the work of the last decade with respect to the *Museum Secretum* has encouraged a consciousness of modern bias towards the Victorian age, in addition to awareness of historical distancing from the ancient past, challenging the predominant ‘censorship myth’.

Post-Foucault, scholarship on ancient art and sexual objects within the field of classics and classical studies largely attempts to divorce the ancient object from its nineteenth-century curation and afterlife as a scholar today “must learn how to bracket out [their] own attitudes toward such representations, since [their] ideas are the product of [their] own acculturation” in an attempt to address the difficulties suggested in *The Use of Pleasure*.⁶² By and large, this earlier method uses Pompeian examples as the primary geographic epicentre for research, discussing phallic worship as predominantly based in apotropaic laughter, a theory addressed later in Chapter Two of this thesis.⁶³ However, the work of Charles Martindale and the introduction of a Classical Reception Theory once again revolutionised the approach to the study of classical material, encouraging the reading of history as an exchange of influence, in its earliest sense as a need to acknowledge the role of Greece and Rome within the cultural development of modern Western culture.⁶⁴ Though a relatively new field, classical reception has been employed to also examine the role modernity and recent cultural histories have had on continued and sustained understanding of the classical world,

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 1:22.; Marcus, *The Other Victorians*.

⁶² John R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1998), 9.

⁶³ See John R. Clarke, *Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2007).; Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶⁴ Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).; Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas, ed., *Classics and the Uses of Reception*. (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).; Also see Lorna Hardwick, *Translating Words, Translating Cultures* (London: Duckworth 2000).; Lorna Hardwick, *Reception Studies* (Oxford and New York: Published for the Classical Association by Oxford University Press, 2003).; Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, ed., *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2011).

notably in the world of art history and sculpture studies within works such as those by Richard Brilliant, Elizabeth Prettejohn, and Michael Squire.⁶⁵

The combination of Foucauldian principles and new perspectives on the value of reexamining the complex exchange between modernity and the ancient have, in recent years, lead to a direct challenge to the ‘censorship myth’ of secret museums. Of particular note in this genre is the work of Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands who first coined the term ‘censorship myth’ and explored its cultural influence on the post-Victorian viewer and British society’s/scholarship’s continuing assertion that nineteenth-century sex museums existed as censorial spaces.⁶⁶ To Fisher and Langlands, who focus primarily on the scholarship surrounding the reception of the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, the power of the censorship myth is one that creates a “rich comparative context” of a narrative that “contains elements of fiction or selective use of the available evidence.”⁶⁷ Fisher and Langlands explore how archival evidence has created a false repressive narrative of the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples within English-speaking reception, challenging its presentation as a purely censorial space.

Continuing this challenge is Grove’s PhD thesis, *The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century* submitted in 2013, changing the narrative of collecting in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within a British context. Through fastidious archival research she explores the sustained scholarly approach to collecting, and the continued interest in museums across the latest decades of this period through the purchase and deliberate acquisition of sexual antiquities. She concludes: “[w]here there has previously been an assumption that reactionary responses to such material during this period stifled proper

⁶⁵ Richard Brilliant, *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).; Elizabeth Prettejohn, “Reception and Ancient Art: The Case of the Venus de Milo,” in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 227-249.; Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture: Greek Sculpture and Modern Art; from Winckelmann to Picasso* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2012).; Michael Squire, *The Art of the Body: Antiquity and its Legacy* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2011).; For a thorough history of classical reception studies in the field of art history see Michael Squire, “Theories of Reception: Past, Present and Future,” in *A Handbook of Greek and Roman Art and Architecture*, ed. C. Marconi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 637–71.

⁶⁶ Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands, “The Censorship Myth and the Secret Museum,” 301-315.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 315; Ibid. 303.

scholarly engagement, I have revealed a widespread conscious attempt to explore a range of possible interpretations of sexual imagery in its original contexts.”⁶⁸

Therefore, this thesis builds on the most recent research redefining the study of nineteenth-century British reception of sexual objects, though the approach here is methodologically greatly different with important consequences for the results. In previous studies, phrases including “around half of his collection was from antiquity” are commonplace and fall into the pattern of over-generalisation that has epitomised research on the *Museum Secretum* to date.⁶⁹ This oversight creates the potential for their conclusions to be challenged and disproved as they have no robust testing via quantitative or comparative analysis to support their results.

Grove’s approach is traditionally historiographic with minor art historical references, looking primarily at textual material with the objects as secondary support. Figures included are presented as evidence in their own right without visual deconstruction, detailed visual analysis, or comparative study. Unlike in Grove’s work, in this thesis the object is the central evidence, and the close reading of objects fundamentally shifts the priorities of research in the field of sexual antiquity reception away from a predominantly textual historiographical source base.⁷⁰ This method of comparative data analysis of collections requires categories from an eye practiced in visual analysis to make useful comparative statements and comparisons based on this kind of evidence.

4. Introducing New Methods

The ideas and challenges to the censorship theory orthodoxy from Fisher, Langlands, and Grove has been continued in recent years by scholars, attempting to make connections to the material itself. Of particular note is the later work of Fisher and Langlands on the Pan and Goat statue in Naples which employs a single case study to explore the development of the Cabinet of Secret in

⁶⁸ Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century”, 320.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁷⁰ It should be noted that this art historical data analysis method has larger consequences for art history and humanities fields more generally explored in Chapter One and the Conclusion Chapter.

Naples.⁷¹ More specifically to the British Museum context is the work of Victoria Donnellan who approaches the examination of “censorial” curatorial practice of the Nymph and Satyr sculpture collected by Townley (in this thesis titled the *Townley Symplegma*), bringing the object itself from the Museum Secretum as source material to the forefront of the debate.⁷² However, I would argue that, to date, there has not been enough attention paid to the broader context of these art objects as comparative visual material. To address this gap, I employ a technique which I describe as object biography. This method traces the ‘life’ of an object from production to its current existence as understood by modern scholarship, allowing for a close analysis of its influence on its various contexts throughout time and is closely based on the theoretical underpinnings of Actor Network Theory, an approach to material culture that embraces the object as an entity with social value, power, and influence.⁷³ Though these approaches were developed in the 1980s with the research of thinkers like Appadurai and Latour, the phrase ‘object biography’ has been adapted from the work of classicist Jessica Hughes.⁷⁴ While Fisher, Langlands, and Donnellan have begun to utilise similar approaches using single object case studies closely related to object biographies, and Caroline Vout has explored the ‘life’ of classical art in general through a British reception, these studies can, and should be, taken a step further into comparative object/collection biography.⁷⁵ This is particularly important in relation to collections such as the Museum Secretum, which was composed of smaller collections by measured and deliberate curation though no longer exists in a physical state. The case studies selected as representative of these various collections, the Pan and Goat in the case of Fisher and Langlands and the Satyr and Nymph for Donnellan are selected primarily due to the notoriety of the object itself, its traceability in text and literature. In this way, these case studies are not necessarily reflective of the make-up of the whole collection and the study of these items alone have the potential to support conclusions based on what may well be a singular and unusual example. For example, with her examination of the Satyr and Nymph statue from Townley’s collection, Donnellan offers little comparative examination of its relationship to other items from other collections that construct the Museum Secretum. By using the Townley

⁷¹ Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands, “Bestiality in the Bay of Naples,” in *Sex, Knowledge, and Receptions of the Past*, ed. Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86-110.

⁷² Donnellan, “Ethics and Erotics,” 145-171.

⁷³ This approach will be explored more in Chapter One.

⁷⁴ Jessica Hughes, “Fractured Narratives: Writing the Biography of a Votive Offering,” in *Ex Voto: Votive Giving Across Cultures*, ed. Ittai Weinryb (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2016), 23-48.

⁷⁵ Caroline Vout, *Classical Art: A Life History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Collection as the single representative source, which a vastly different collection than other case studies including Payne Knight's and Witt's collections as the data in this thesis proves, statements can be made about Townley's role in the Museum Secretum, which may not always be supported from data in other collections representing the Museum Secretum as a whole.

For this exploration, it is crucial to develop a rigorous and cogent methodology. To achieve credible, factually based direct comparison across multiple time periods, private collections, visual records and archives, this thesis employs tools from the fields of data/numerical analysis in combination with more traditional archival practice. In this way, trends, patterns, and larger conclusions can be drawn based on evidence from the collections and objects themselves rather than relying on over-generalisations based on cursory information and biographical readings. This method is time consuming and highly detail oriented but it offers quantitative evidence to answer specific research questions about complex, large groups of art objects, networks, and collecting practices that qualitative approaches alone often fail to test robustly, and without relying on broad generalisations typical of more traditional approaches. For example, previous museological, classics based, and historical research has often approached the question of the role of the Museum Secretum by a subjective, non-numerical assessment of the subject matter within its holdings, providing mixed results based on the pre-formulated hypothesis of the researcher.⁷⁶ Not only does analytic data disprove or support these various conclusions in response to this initial question, but deeper analysis of data has the potential to expose larger patterns in the collections not previously explored, and hence has wider implications than qualitative research alone could produce. In essence, data analysis gives the field of art history and museology mechanisms to test and (in)validate historic approaches to wider claims about the field, in this case, specifically examining sexual material in a restricted sample group, i.e. the Museum Secretum. This method allows for more rigorous and informative analysis than traditional humanities methods alone by providing fact-based, representative samples of the museum data, i.e. case studies.

⁷⁶ For examples see Johns, *Sex or Symbol*.; Gaimster, "Under Lock and Key".; Frost, "Secret Museums."; Grove, "The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century."; Donnellan, "Ethics and Erotics."

It is important to emphasise that collection and analysis of digital data on artefacts does not negate the benefits of traditional archival methods of gathering data. Rather, this approach offers a supplementary tool to identify patterns in this vast amount of material using well-established technology from the STEM and social sciences fields. As digital archives expand, this approach has significant and increasing potential to generate novel insights about collectors, their collections, and the motives of museum curators and trustees in making decisions about restricting access to specific objects. Thus, the field of digital humanities represents a different approach that complements traditional art historical methods, allowing triangulation that strengthens conclusions based on inherent concepts and assumptions in a single approach. Data analysis using numerical evidence and relevant software is not necessarily based in digital data, i.e. data relating to the use of computer technology. However, as a resource and archive in its own right, this online material is currently undervalued in scholarship and offers access to large scale information that makes comparative numerical analysis more fruitful. With the increased investment in online and digital archives by the British Museum, particularly after the physical inaccessibility of museums and archives in 2020/21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and enforced lockdowns, developing analytic methods to access and effectively utilise these technological tools has never been more vital to the continued practice of art history and to humanities more generally. Online collections also serve as a source to examine the priorities of curating of this sexual material today with a purely visual interface. This approach is defined more rigorously in Chapter One. The online collections from the British Museum websites represent the most accessible visual material within their collections and provide insight into how reception of the Museum Secretum objects and collectors continue today. Hence, it is timely to apply digital humanities methods to the world-leading British Museum digital archives, as many museums worldwide are in the process of developing comprehensive digital archives of their collections.

The Museum Secretum has been the focal point and representative example of British nineteenth-century censorship. Continued study of this collection must therefore offer new insight utilising innovative research methods and source material. From a practical perspective, the selection of the Museum Secretum to perform a close reading of the digital material as source material for comparative numerical analysis is due to the extensive and detailed publishing of the British Museum's online collections. Other museums, including the Ashmolean Museum, John Soanes

Museum, Yorkshire Museum Trust, and the Freud Museum London, for example, are creating, maintaining, and building online collections that would undoubtedly produce interesting results for scholarship utilising new techniques for accessing digital material. However, as a test case, this thesis makes use of the British Museum online collections, which have received extensive funding and relaunched as recently as 2020 with regular updates. The British Museum online collections offer a much larger sample of material beyond highlights from the collections and the ability to download results transferable to statistical/spreadsheet software.⁷⁷

In addition, I argue that in order to examine the construction of these combination collections, new material needs to be visually analysed including Witt's scrapbooks which continue to be generally overlooked today. Helen Wickstead's work, though groundbreaking as a new way to examine Witt's scrapbooks as an artefact and visual material, does not set about discussing how these explorations might influence the reception of his collected objects within the Museum Secretum.⁷⁸ Therefore, there needs to be more work done to incorporate larger source materials to allow for comparative, numerical study.

The method and use of wider source material in this case allows for taking previous conclusions by scholars a step further, more securely placing the Museum Secretum as a space of innovation from the outset of its establishment in 1865 rather than inspirational for later reception. This contrasts with the vision of it as a collection based solely on received 'Phallic Worship' ideas from the eighteenth century that would later inspire anthropological and medical connections in the 1880s and 1890s as suggested by Grove and Wickstead, based on a detailed and proportionally reflective sample for comparative study of the objects collected together.

Also, with the addition of using the digital online resources available to researchers, larger questions about public access to this visual material today can be explored, marrying the work of

⁷⁷ See Appendix-1.a, -1.b, and -1.c for raw datasets downloaded from the British Museum Online Collection.; these file downloads were accessed in June 2020 though the initial raw data which matches this download and constituted the basis of this project has been accumulated by me since 2017. Changes between both sets have been incorporated into the final results where possible and specific access dates given where appropriate.

⁷⁸ Helen Wickstead, "Sex in the Secret Museum: Photographs from the British Museum's Witt Scrapbooks," *Photography and Culture* 11, no. 3 (2018): 351-366, accessed May 17, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/17514517.2018.1545887.

these newer approaches to the study of the British Museum. Reception of sexual objects, and the influence of traditional methods of study, can be moved into our own time through visual presence of sexual objects from the Museum Secretum across multiple departments on the British Museum's Online Collections. In a sense, this redefines the Museum Secretum as a continuing and fully functioning collection through the digital archive.

5. Summaries and Structures

Readers of this thesis will note the technical and precise use of language and syntax throughout this work. While this may at times feel somewhat at odds with more 'sexy' material and content of the thesis, this is a deliberate choice and is designed to work in concert with the methodology that requires clear and precise language and terminology.⁷⁹ The intended readers of this work are highly interdisciplinary and may range from art historians, classicists, museologists, and those with more clearly STEM based backgrounds in fields such as digital humanities. For this reason, the text is meant to be less florid than other works from similar disciplines and areas of research primarily for the purpose of clarity. However, to counterbalance this potential 'dry' text, I have often included more playful, perhaps even 'sexier', chapter titles and subtitles to break up the flow of the work. This playfulness is also deliberate, making the technical sections more approachable but also are designed to reintroduce readers to the interconnectedness of humour and sexual histories/objects that have been historically present.⁸⁰

The overall structure of this thesis covers the following general topics. In Chapter One, I discuss in greater detail how this method is applied to the specific research questions within this thesis both in terms of the use of comparative numerical data analysis and the value and challenges of online archive material for the modern scholar. Additionally, Chapter One outlines the selections made regarding terminology and the theoretical foundations underpinning this work, both of which are fundamental to understanding the implications of more traditional art historical practice has on producing effectual data analysis.

⁷⁹ Terminology will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter One.

⁸⁰ This concept is built upon in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two explores the eighteenth-century case study of Payne Knight and redefines his collection as one interested in the material of objects, in particular metal, rather than heavily dictated by subject and theme, including fertility and Priapic worship, as previously suggested. A direct numerical comparison with the collection of his friend and colleague Townley highlights the relative obscurity that has surrounded Payne Knight's collection continuing into the twenty-first century and suggests that this is primarily caused by an over-reliance on Payne Knight's biographical and textual history rather than an assessment of the merits and importance of the objects collected. By selecting a case study representative of his collection for object biography, in this case the priapic *Payne Knight Term*, questions about the purpose of the Museum Secretum as a selectively curated space highlight the complexities of its function beyond the previously assumed space of censorship and as a collection of fertility/phallic worship objects alone. Instead, Chapter Two suggests a discerning Museum Secretum space that excludes sexual objects and related religious iconography such as specific deity imagery, perfect and idealised bodies, and images of rape/sexual assault that have been rationalised in classical myth. While the subject of these objects conforms to the content of the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples overall, the data analysis suggests a material difference that supports the conclusion that this collection is more representative of nineteenth-century collections based on materiality of the objects concerned than it is imitative of any of the eighteenth-century private or public collections of sexual objects that predate it.

Therefore, Chapter Three aims to explore the nineteenth-century foundation of the Museum Secretum in 1865 by analysing the collection of Witt. In this chapter, previous overreliance on collector biography is again a primary focus, instead reconstructing the narrative of Witt's collection away from his identification as a uniquely eccentric sexual object enthusiast to a principal voice in the continued study and collection of sexual objects in the mid-Victorian period. Analysis of his collection suggests a movement away from a focus of materiality from the earlier eighteenth-century collections to newer, subject/theme and cultural concerns in the nineteenth-century approach to the study of objects within the Museum Secretum. Object biography performed on W.104, a terracotta phallic votive, suggests medical history, hygiene, and anthropological ideas and concepts can and should be understood as fundamental to the Witt

collection, and subsequently the Museum Secretum from its initial inception rather than the result of its study in later decades.

Both the physical museum as well as the wider social and legal frameworks of this ‘Victorianism’ are amorphous and difficult to define during this period, particularly regarding the context of human sexuality.⁸¹ In this context, the Museum Secretum is equally difficult to define and is part of this fluctuating museological and historical landscape. Therefore, to research this type of varied collection, a methodology needs to be employed that can comparatively examine the diverse objects that it consists of effectively and proportionally/fairly represent the private collections that make up the larger whole collection using carefully selected terminology and source materials. It is vitally important in the next chapter to reframe the online archive as a source material and to acknowledge the challenges and benefits when using online collections within research, define the comparative numerical data analysis method used to explore this material, and define how terminology and theory is employed specifically throughout this work.

⁸¹ Lesley A. Hall, “The Victorians: Our Others, Our Selves?,” in *Sex, Knowledge and Receptions of the Past*, ed. Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 160-176.

Chapter One

Methodology and Terminology

The field of art history stands at a transformative moment. As visual culture becomes increasingly digitised, the material at the core of art historical practice has become more accessible to a wider cross section of people, though in formats less tangible than traditional methods of study in art history. Most academics access virtual collections to support their research at some point, with postgraduate students at the start of their careers as well as well-established career academics making the majority of enquiries to the British Museum online collections.⁸² Previous scholarship has highlighted the fact that the field of art history is relatively resistant to digital sources, though in the last year resistance to exploiting digital resources has weakened due to the global pandemic and inability to access the traditionally favoured ‘originals’.⁸³ In this new context for the continued practice of art history, a pressing new concern is how best to use digital resources for relevant and informative research. While art historians continue to debate the use of virtual representations of art and their legitimacy as material sources, there continues to be significant deficiencies in scholarship proposing practical methods for exploiting the wealth of digitised material available.

This thesis aims to contribute to the field of digital art history. This will be achieved by comparative mathematical analysis of digital resources to evaluate proportions (percentage) of defined object features from specific case studies relative to complete collections, or defined categories of objects within particular donations to British Museum collections. These methods, when combined with more traditional art historical approaches to object biography, highlight new patterns and identify clearer comparative networks surrounding the collection and display of sexual antiquities. In many ways, this approach carries on the tradition of object-based art history practice, though it utilises the broader scale of data offered by digital archives and the means of interpreting these data through traditional STEM and social science based statistical tools. As Lev Manovich concludes in his work on data science and digital art history:

⁸² Claire Ross, Melissa Terras, and Vera Motyckova, “Measuring Impact and Use: Scholarly Information-Seeking Behaviour,” *Evaluating and Measuring the Value, Use and Impact of Digital Collections*, ed. L. Hughes (Great Britain: Facet Publishing, 2012), 85-102.

⁸³ Johanna Drucker, "Is There a “Digital” Art History?“. *Visual Resources* 29, no. 1-2 (2013): 5-13, accessed Nov 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2013.761106>.

[C]omputer “vision” can be understood as extension of the most basic act (or method) of humanities – comparing cultural artifacts (or periods, authors, genres, movements, themes, techniques, topics, etc.) So while computer-enabled seeing enabled by data science may be radical in terms of its scale – how much you can see in one “glance,” so to speak – it continues the humanities’ traditional methodology.⁸⁴

At this point, there needs to be a distinction made between the phrases ‘digital material’ and the use of ‘(numerical) data analysis.’ Often in discussions of digital humanities, a vague catch all title, the two processes are falsely combined as necessarily mutually inclusive. Procedures for numerical data analysis are designed to reveal meaningful and informative patterns within sets of data and have a long history stemming from eighteenth-century study, well before the digital age as understood today.⁸⁵ STEM and social sciences fields have developed the means to simplify this process of data analysis. Today, art history is poised to adopt these tools.

To date, many ‘digital’ approaches to art history have fallen into two large groupings. First, 2-D and 3-D reconstruction of objects has been used for preservation, public engagement through virtual recreation, and mathematical research on the images. The second, uses largely text-based data to explore connections and larger networks over vast quantities of material. This thesis leans more towards the latter approach, though my goal is to explore beyond accumulation of data by developing simple and therefore accessible techniques to conduct comparative mathematical analysis of object categories between and within collections over time and space. The use of digital online archives as source material, and mathematical methods repurposed for art historical practice, is inherently innovative, though this approach prompts further research questions; how will this data be used within this thesis, and what can data analysis deliver in the form of original and insightful outcomes? To address these key questions, I shall use data to address the following art historical issues:

⁸⁴ Lev Manovich, “Data Science and Digital Art History,” *International Journal for Digital Art History*, no. 1 (June 2015): 14-35 (33), accessed January 15, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.11588/dah.2015.1.21631>.

⁸⁵ For further reading see Stephen M. Stigler, *Statistics on the Table: The History of Statistical Concepts and Methods* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

- 1) What is the proportional breakdown of private collections that make up the Museum Secretum in terms of object material, culture/place of production, and subject? Does this approach inform us independently about the collecting habits and priorities of the private collectors, without recourse to their biographies and consequent risk of potential bias?
- 2) Which specific object is most proportionally representative of the larger collection or a particular object category to best examine these private collections using visual analysis and object biography?
- 3) Do data from the objects within this collection alongside the object biographies provide new insights into the function of the Museum Secretum as a nineteenth-century space and is censorship a key factor prompting its establishment?
- 4) How are virtual objects curated for today's global audience and have robust criteria been developed to guide accurate and reliable digital curation? What role does the Museum Secretum's past reputation and collector biography have on the visual reception of these sexual objects to modern audiences?

As the work of digital art history is still in its infancy, it is important to discuss and define the materials and methods I will employ to the field at large and to the British Museum's digital data files.

First, I shall explore the general debates surrounding the use of digital records and virtual images in scholarly work, contextualising these concerns historically and exploring the benefits of their use with close case study research. I will then discuss the digital material presented from the British Museum's online collections and which specific materials are applied to explore the Museum Secretum collection. The second section will outline how this digital material will be analysed using comparative numerical data analysis methods. I will introduce software used to facilitate mathematical analysis of large datasets, in this case Microsoft Excel, as tools to process the data. Within this section, I will discuss and define terminologies used in this process, by (a) confronting the historical complexities of the language surrounding sexual objects more generally and (b) defining the terminology and issues raised for mathematical methods employed in this research.

1. Tapping the Newest Sources: The Digital and Virtual as Primary Source Materials

Of critical importance to the study of the Museum Secretum is the fact that it does not exist as a physical space today. With the exception of two cabinets in the Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, the Museum Secretum is a physical grouping of objects primarily in the past, making it difficult to study in comparison to living secret museums like the Italian equivalent in Naples. Many objects from the Secretum collection were relabelled and renumbered numerous times and redistributed to departments across the British Museum, creating long and complex information trails. To date, research has focused primarily on the Museum Secretum Register to reconstruct the original collection, a technique that has necessarily resulted in case studies centred around traditional textual evidence. However, this approach denies the object, or group of objects, as the central actor(s). Even when a selected object was placed at the centre of a study, there is no evidence that the selected item is representative of a larger trend within the broader collections. Therefore, to conduct larger scale comparative networking accurately and rigorously it is important for the researcher to use large data sets to identify patterns that differ for objects or object categories within a collection, or between distinct collections. The most easily accessible data and information of this kind are digital online collections where whole collections have been uploaded to them, and for the sake of visual studies, virtual online collections. The distinction between digital and virtual in terminology is significant here, and one that must be addressed not only for the purposes of this thesis, but also in the broader field commonly titled Digital Humanities, though I suggest this should be further categorised with ‘Virtual Humanities’ as a separate but related field.

In its simplest definition, digitising refers to any technology made processible using software that reads binary code. This may or may not include an accompanying image. Digital archives, therefore, are simply any information that have been digitised in this process, including numerical and textual data. Digitising an image requires samples of the original visual space, applying a fine grid and coding each colour/greyscale gradient within a readable binary code. To see this image as a continuous, non-visually disturbing image (e.g. without blockiness or insufficient contouring often described as pixelation), the gradation must be complex enough to create a complete, smooth

visual image.⁸⁶ This develops a *virtual* image through a computer, which effectively is any facsimile or simulation of something. For example, text in a Word document is a virtual representation of what would be produced on a paper page. Similarly, a picture uploaded of the Venus de Milo is a virtual image of the sculpture in a physical context, reproduced in a two-dimensional space. What this thesis deals with, therefore, is a mixture of digital textual records interspersed with virtual records for art/artefacts from within the British Museum, that can be viewed using computer software post-digitalisation. From these definitions, it is clear that accessibility is not immediately coupled with digital or virtual information. The act of digitising or virtualising a collection does not mean it is available beyond a private, ‘offline’ platform primarily for museum staff and the privileged few invited to explore these databases. Additionally, there are differing degrees of ‘public’ availability when considering access, for instance subscription or membership services making some information more available for a fee or based on professional standards. Therefore, to explore questions about continued accessibility of these sexual objects and the roles collector biographies have played in this process, it is vital to use publicly available digital and virtual archives, named here as ‘online’ archives that are not filtered to the non-paying public. In short, all online archives are digital but not all digital archives are online for the general public. As my research questions include the continued accessibility of sexual material to a general public, I will be using public online collections. With these definitions, I argue that (digital) online records are valuable textual and numerical source materials, and that virtual online records are visual curated displays that offer further insight into art historical questions.

From this brief introduction to the terminology and structure of digital collections, it is clear that for a field specialising in the visual interpretation of objects, physical experience of audience with art, and cultural context of image historically, the digital record and virtual object present unique and complex challenges to the practice of art history. Before I argue the case for including these new source materials in art historical research, it is necessary to acknowledge and address the problems surrounding the use of (a) online archives and (b) virtual records.

⁸⁶ For more on this process see Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 11-21.

1.1 Going Global: Digital Online Collections and Archives as Source Material

i. This Bytes!: Problems with Digital Archives and Collections

In many ways, online collections are undeniably problematic. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly from an academic perspective, digital records as text are not subjected to rigorous peer review. Many institutions, including the British Museum, hire specialists, highly qualified academics, and museum professionals to edit and maintain online databases, in some cases creating entire departments for this function. However, departments often rely on interns or volunteers to input data into the official digital records.⁸⁷ The immediacy of access means that substantive errors of fact are more prone to occur than in more rigorously edited textual material in the form of a published print catalogue for example. As in the case of the previously mentioned example of the Satyr and Nymph marble sculpture, in the Museum Secretum it is registered as MS 466 whereas in the item's online digital record it is listed as MS 666, a small but significant error when examining a collection. Additionally, the instantaneous nature of online collections allows uploading of new records with little previous editing, and allows further review and editing at any time, potentially making an online archive changeable from one search to the next. In addition, while the material is generally attributable to a larger institution or department, the individual, or individuals, responsible for uploading textual information are not always credited or known, meaning that their expertise or qualifications for providing the information on a given record cannot be immediately or completely ascertained. The vastness of the data means that not all objects are treated equally, with many examples having vague information with no image or useful detail provided. In contrast, some entries have overwhelming amounts of potentially under- or unedited information.

⁸⁷ For more on the statistics for volunteers in British museums, libraries and archives see Steven Hewlett, "Volunteering in Libraries, Museums and Archives," *Cultural Trends* 12, no. 46 (2002): 39-66, accessed April 26, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/09548960209390322.; Steven Howlett, Joanna Machin and Gertrud Malmersjo, *Volunteering in Museums, Libraries and Archives* (Great Britain: Institute for Volunteering Research, 2005).; For examples of the use of volunteers in a large digitisation project see G. Wayne Clough, *Best of Both Worlds: Museums Libraries, and Archives in a Digital Age* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2013), 112-136.; Nkholedzeni Sidney Netshakhuma, "Exploration Role of Volunteerism on the Digitisation Project: Case of the Office of the Premier in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa", *Collection and Curation* 40, no. 1 (2020): 15-23.

Perhaps the most significant factor to the success and comprehensiveness of an online archive is the financial investment behind it. The early process of setting up digital collections on the scale of a national institution is into the millions of pounds range. For example, the British Museum's online database, which was first made open-access to the public in October of 2007, continues to rely on grants of increasingly high value from multiple international donors, most recently, from The Andrew Mellon Foundation amounting to US\$1,700,000, and this only one of 31 listed donors/granting bodies.⁸⁸ Since the decommissioning of the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) in 2008, and final closure in 2017, the majority of funding for digitisation projects within the United Kingdom has come from domestic and international private foundations, donors, and granting bodies.⁸⁹ Much digitisation has been undertaken by for-profit companies such as Ancestry.com and equivalents. Due to restrictions on access driven by commercial need, these 'investments' risk making online archives less freely available to the public. Donor/funding body bias towards certain objects over others inevitably creeps into digital records, even at an institutional level. Also, issues with copyright make accessing images from digital records extremely problematic and expensive for academics wanting to publish on more popular, recently photographed items not in the public domain, potentially refocusing research on financial grounds. Additionally, the limited research available on the use of digital material by academics suggests that using such approaches may have negative consequences for career development as those who access the British Museum's online collections have been overwhelmingly pre-doctoral PhD students, and professors already secure in their positions.⁹⁰

Digitisation has often been lauded as the simplest and most secure method of preserving collections for the future. However, in the field of computer science, discussions on the longevity of digital preservation of materials have been debated for decades. In his seminal article "The Paradox of Digital Preservation," Su-Shing Chen highlighted the problem with the assumption that

⁸⁸ Information on the British Museum's funding comes from their own website and is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's grant database website; The Trustees of the British Museum, "Collection Online Guide", accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/collection-online/guide/>; The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, "Grants Database/British Museum: ResearchSpace", accessed April 26, 2021, <https://mellon.org/grants/grants-database/grants/british-museum/1708-04698/>.

⁸⁹ For web archive of the defunct AHDS website see Katrin Tiedau, "Enabling Digital Resources for the Arts and Humanities," Arts and Humanities Data Service, last modified March 28, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160906080138/http://www.ahds.ac.uk:80/>.

⁹⁰ See Joseph Raban, "Tenure, Promotion and Digital Publication," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2007); Ross, Terras, and Motyckova, "Measuring Impact and Use", 85-103.

digital archives are truly capable of lasting indefinitely, and therefore in terms of source material, digital collections are in danger of becoming technologically obsolete.⁹¹

Finally, online collections are not required to represent the entirety of an institution's holdings from the launching of their platform, though it should be noted that the eventual completion of the online record is the goal for the British Museum's online collection and many other institutions. In fact, due to the lengthy process of digitisation and information input, even the well-funded British Museum has only about half of its collections available online after forty years of digitisation.⁹² For researchers, this means that those interested in examining complete collections or object groupings may not be able to access all of the materials they are interested in, giving a skewed result if unaware of this absence of some materials. In the context of a museum, digital archives exist as both an internal platform, accessible only to staff and select academics and interested parties, and as an external platform designed to be accessed by the general 'interested' public. To be clear, this work will examine the digital collections available to the general public, rather than those available to staff and researchers with special access.

ii. Accessibility and the British Museum Online Collections: Reasons for Lifting the Stigma of Digital Online Collections in Humanities Research

With the arguments against the use of digital resources in humanities research laid bare, the next question relates to the potential benefits to using this material. Specifically, can academics approach such problematic sources in useful and meaningful ways to generate novel insights into objects and collections?

Firstly, it should be mentioned that most of the negative aspects of digital archives are consistent across most archival sources used in research, though far less recent criticism has been directed to older means of preservation and study. Multiple re-edited volumes of the same foundational publication are often produced, published works are often insufficiently credited, and archival

⁹¹ Su-Shing Chen, "The Paradox of Digital Preservation," *Computer* 34, no. 3 (March 2001): 24-28, accessed April 26, 2021, doi: 10.1109/2.910890.

⁹² The Trustees of the British Museum, "Collection Online Guide", accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/collection-online/guide>.

material has the potential to be in the hands of non-expert archivists in much the same way as digital records. Physical archives (i.e. nondigital/real world archives) are subject to human error in the form of mis-filings, loss of material, misidentifications, etc., which may negatively influence the outcomes of archival research. As with the online records, conscious and unconscious bias from curators, archivists, researchers, and/or the general public may create information imbalance within the physical archive, prioritising certain object's histories over others. Along these same lines, conservation practices and environmental requirements for preserving paper, cloth, manuscript, wood, precious metals, canvas, photography, and other materials kept in the physical collections at the British Museum constitute a substantial expense for museums and therefore require financial backing of private funding for their upkeep. Therefore, collections in the physical world are equally subject to their source of financing, which may influence an object's presence in the physical display, as well as the quality and quantity of supplemental information and material provided alongside the object. The public's access to these materials is also determined by how limited the space for display in the museum's galleries are as few apply for tours or viewings beyond the main floors. In this context, the curator's perspective is somewhat final offering only online access for the majority of the general public for items not on display in main galleries. Finally, many physical materials are also highly degradable and easily lost/destroyed over time, textual descriptions and/or virtual images therefore offer a snapshot of their existence that may be the only remaining source for their study.

As previously stated, the goal of this work is to examine the collection of supposed sexual/obscene objects from various donations within the British Museum, to examine how the Museum Secretum was intended to function within this institution, and the consequences of this archival categorisation on the reception of these objects. The British Museum has made a concerted effort to bring attention to their collections of sexual objects through numerous special exhibitions, many of which were at one time labelled with a Museum Secretum number, a point that was covered in more detail in the introductory chapter of this thesis. However, most of these objects remain largely out of physical display. It is in their digital records, therefore, that sexual/obscene material is most easily viewable and seeable, though as Chapters Two and Three discuss the degree of visual access is varied.

As Museum Secretum objects were redistributed across the British Museum's various departments over the last hundred years, these objects were subjected to multiple reclassifications and the idiosyncratic numbering systems of different departments. With this point in mind, the online digital collection, and its limitation by software requirements and need to use limited search terms and keywords, means that there is a relative standardisation of the records available to researchers, unlike paper archives. In practical terms, this means that information is more easily compared across multiple departments. With the addition of digital search engines, finding specific records, in this case Museum Secretum objects or parts of a collection from a single donor, is far easier than having to examine paper files or object labels manually. In addition, for practical reasons, it would be unrealistic to include all acquisition numbers, exhibition history, and potentially tangentially relevant curatorial notes on every museum label, particularly as visitors to museums view them in a matter of seconds, if at all.⁹³ However, all of this material can be seen alongside an image on a digital record if a viewer has the desire to access it – though the scope of the information necessarily provided to the public is not yet regulated and relies on the discretion of museum staff. In the case of the British Museum, the digitisation has been a generally inclusive act, though with some omissions and discrepancies that influence data results.

Also, it is indisputable that museum records are more easily accessible to anyone than ever before via digital collections, and national museums are at the forefront of this digital art revolution. On February 4th, 2019, the British Library announced their new project *Archives of Sexuality & Gender, Part III: Sex and Sexuality, Sixteenth to Twentieth Century*, in association with Gale Primary Sources, which would make their sexual collections from the 'Private Case' available on a digital platform.⁹⁴ The press response was quick and overwhelmingly positive, praising the new attitudes of the open access internet age where this material is "accessible at a click, not hidden in

⁹³ Paulette M. McManus, "Oh, Yes, They Do: How Museum Visitors Read Labels and Interact with Exhibit Texts," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 32, no. 3 (1989): 174–189.; for the subsequent re-evaluation and challenge of that material see John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience Revisited* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 116-118.

⁹⁴ Archives of Sexuality and Gender: Sex and Sexuality, Sixteenth to Twentieth Century, accessed May 17, 2021, <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender-lgbtq-part-iii.>; British Library, "Online resource unlocks restricted collections with Archives of Sexuality & Gender, Part III", accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.bl.uk/press-releases/2019/february/private-case-collection-launched>.

the slightest”.⁹⁵ The idea of public and private space has been blurred by the development of the internet and accessibility within our own homes. The internet, and use of digital social networks, creates perceived connectivity between people with whatever they are accessing, whether socially or, in the case of this work, direct links to a larger institution.⁹⁶ In the context of museological practice and engagement, digitisation has become the bedrock of perceived public access to collections. In reality, any member of the British public with a membership and a request to librarian or archivist for a specific text has been able to access the material in the British Library’s Private Case for the last decade. However, the perception of the internet as immediate and fundamentally open to the public has meant that it is not until the collection is digitised that the public feels included in the secret of the library’s inner sanctum.

The British Museum has been a pioneer in developing digital catalogues of their entire collection. In the UK, The British Museum Collection Online, V&A Search the Collections, and the National Gallery Search the Collection engines, to name just a few, have made 4,387,840 records accessible online to date, with 52% of these records accompanied by a digital image.⁹⁷ This has become a global phenomenon with museums in the United States of America, such as ‘The Met’ Collection and the Smithsonian Collections, as well as numerous other larger institutions around the world, including the Catalogo Musei Vaticani, Museums of India National Portal & Digital Repository, collection of the Moscow Kremlin Museums online, etc., making digital archives available to anyone with a laptop, internet access, and interest.⁹⁸ The British Museum online collection website

⁹⁵ Kate Williams, “Psst, Want to See Some Dirty Books? Try the British Library,” *The Guardian*, Feb 10, 2019, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/10/psst-want-to-see-some-dirty-books-try-the-british-library>.; Interestingly, the first two archives of this set consider sexuality from a much more queer approach to sexology and sexual archival material the first named Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture since 1940, Part I, accessed May 17, 2021, <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender-lgbtq>.; and the second follow up titled Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture since 1940, Part II, accessed May 17, 2021, <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender-lgbtq-part-ii>.

⁹⁶ Caroline Haythornthwaite, “Social Networks and Internet Connectivity Effects,” *Information, Communication & Society* 8, no. 2 (2005): 125-147, accessed April 26, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/13691180500146185

⁹⁷ The Trustees of the British Museum, “Explore the Collection”, accessed Dec 6, 2019, https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx.; Victoria and Albert Museum (London), “From the Collections”, accessed Dec 6, 2019, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk>.; The National Gallery, “Search the Collection,” accessed Dec 6, 2019, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/search-the-collection>.

⁹⁸The Metropolitan Museum of Art, “The Met Collection”, accessed Dec 6, 2019, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection>.; Smithsonian, “Collections”, accessed Dec 6, 2019, <https://www.si.edu/collections>.; Governatorato dello Stato della Città del Vaticano - Direzione dei Musei e dei Beni Culturali, “Musei Vaticani- Catalogo Online”, accessed Dec 6, 2019, <https://catalogo.museivaticani.va/>.; Ministry of Culture, Government of India, “Museums of India, National Portal & Digital Repository,”, accessed Dec 6, 2019,

received 168,093 hits compared to 101,783 in the same period for the V&A online collections, indicating that for a web-based resource it is competitive and used to an average/good degree compared to similar resources.⁹⁹ In short, this is a useful resource for academic study because it is widely accessed by the public and shows a representation of the collections beyond the walls of these larger institutions.

In the case of the British Museum online collections specifically, this continues with the remit and responsibility of the British Museum as chartered in the colloquially termed British Museum Act of 1753. This government act states that the “Museum or Collection may be preserved and maintained, not only for the Inspection and Entertainment of the Learned and the Curious, but for the General Use and Benefit of the Publick (sic).”¹⁰⁰ Neil MacGregor, a previous director of the British Museum, consciously referenced this wording and directive to maintain widespread access to their collections when he stated “[a]ll the language of the eighteenth century, about giving universal access to culture, clearly anticipates the arrival of the internet. We have to find a way of making our material usable and possessable by the world, and that’s exactly what the website can do.”¹⁰¹ This intent is echoed in the early launch of the new website mid-coronavirus pandemic in 2020, introducing new features and attempts at more intuitive search features.¹⁰² For the purposes of this thesis, the unusually open access available from the British Museum Online Collection allows for unprecedented exploration of the sexual material within their collections, both in its current virtual form as well as in its historically documented form. This makes the British Museum an excellent case study for this method of art historical digital humanities.

However, over half of the British Museum’s collection continues to be undocumented on the online platform, and hence inaccessible. This creates potential problems when selecting case studies to use in data analysis as accurate results require access to a complete data set. In the case of this thesis, I have therefore selected case studies from categorised datasets confirmed to be fully

http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/museum/nat_del.; Moscow Kremlin Museums, “Collection online”, accessed Dec 6, 2019, <https://collectiononline.kreml.ru/iss2?group-by=fund>.

⁹⁹ Data comes from SimilarWeb LTD, “Results”, accessed Dec 6, 2019, https://pro.similarweb.com_

¹⁰⁰ *The British Museum Act, 1753*, 26 Geo. 2, c22.

¹⁰¹ Neil MacGregor quoted in Rupert Smith, *The Museum: Behind the Scenes at the British Museum* (London: BBC Books, 2007), 171.

¹⁰² The Trustees of the British Museum, “We’re working on it...,” accessed Dec 30, 2020, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/collection-online/development>.

documented on the online archive. This is achieved through careful study of the original descriptions of the items gifted to the British Museum, using a mixture of primary source material such as newspaper articles, government purchase documents, museum registers including the MSR, and obituaries. In addition, where possible I have made comparisons to generalisations of the collection provided in secondary scholarship where necessary. For example, Witt's entire collection from 1865 is documented as part of the Museum Secretum register with close descriptions of the items included. Similarly Townley provided extensive notes on his collection that were donated to the British Museum that can be compared to the online archive.¹⁰³ Payne Knight's online collection also matches the accounts of its scale and contents as documented in Nicholas Penny's rough breakdown of Payne Knight's collection, indicating a thoroughness in the British Museum's uploading of material on his collections.¹⁰⁴ Due to the time that has elapsed between the admission of these items to the British Museum collections and the creation of a digital archive, it must be understood that some of the data will be lost or mis-labelled. However, the relative closeness to descriptions of these collections when donated means that any deviance is most likely small and is therefore unlikely to influence outcomes and interpretation to significant degree.

In summary, online archives offer researchers large sets of data visible to the general public. Often this information is not easily available even in a physical museum setting. The opportunities this type of source material offers are wide reaching and broad, though it requires specific research questions developed by specialists from humanities fields to make sense of the material available. Thus, online archives are an excellent source material, when combined with comparative mathematical analysis, to address the following key research questions:

- a) proportionality with the intention of selecting accurate case studies for object biography,
- b) comparative analysis of the composition of the collections when privately collected,

¹⁰³ Susan J. Hill, *Catalogue of the Townley Archive at the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2002).; for example of Townley entries in MSR see M.345 and M347 (Figure 9).

¹⁰⁴ Penny describes roughly 5,205 coins, 111 gems/cameos, and 800 bronze works from the collection, equaling 6116 objects. To date, the British Museum considers Payne-Knight's collection to equal 6,870 objects which are inclusive of these items and reflective of newer archival approaches to documentation; Nicholas Penny, "Collecting, Interpreting, and Imitating Ancient Art," in *The Arrogant Connoisseur: Richard Payne Knight 1751-1824*, ed. Michael Clarke and Nicholas Penny (Great Britain: Manchester University Press, 1982), 67-70.

- c) how private collections were restructured to form the Museum Secretum and,
- d) exploring the intended purpose of this infamous object grouping,

To address the question of how these objects are received today it is also necessary to examine how these objects are visually represented on the internet, the most publicly and globally accessible curated space. What are the problems with using virtual representations from digital archives? How can we approach the virtual object for fruitful art historical research?

1.2 The Virtual Reality: In Support of Using Virtual Images as Data and Source Material in Humanities Research

In essence, digital collections, records, and/or archives replicate particular features of ‘original’ objects. Taken at face value, these individual accounts exist as textual documentation of the object’s description, bibliography, location, associated persons, et. al. and/or as a virtual image, usually a digitised photograph or scan of a sketch or drawing. Inevitably, a ‘copy’, or in STEM terminology a ‘model’, no matter how close it is to ‘perfection’, never fully replicates an ‘original’. Though in both STEM and art history it is these imprecise models and copies that often have the most lasting and significant consequences. This paradigm stands at the crux of art historical concerns and resistance to using virtual records as source materials, prompting questions relating to authenticity and accuracy: is the digital reproduction an object, or at the very least, an accurate replacement for an object?

The debate and critical approach to the use of facsimiles as substitutes for research or educational display is not new. Walter Benjamin explored the nature of the reproduction of art through technology and concluded that “[i]t might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition”, suggesting that accuracy of new reproduction methods had the potential to devalue the experience of viewing and engaging with artworks in person.¹⁰⁵ Benjamin was concerned with the use of photography (as well as

¹⁰⁵ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version]," trans. Michael W. Jennings, in *Grey Room*, no. 39, "Walter Benjamin's Media Tactics: Optics, Perception, and the Work of Art", (The MIT Press: Spring 2010): 11-38, 14. This paraphrasing does not reflect the complexity of these arguments and direct transfer of the theories and approaches used to these examples should be applied to the study of virtual objects with discretion.

lithography to a smaller degree) denying the ability of technologically reproduced art to embody authenticity and ‘aura’. Beyond photography, this concern with the ‘copy’ in art historical investigations is reflected in the nineteenth-century discussions surrounding the use of plaster casts, and, to take this debate a step further, the continued discussions on the validity of using Roman copies of Greek ‘original’ statuary.¹⁰⁶ In these earlier fields of mainly classical subjects, copies have begun to be studied as objects with historical interest in their own right, highlighting the complexity of the copy as ‘art’ and object simultaneously independent and dependent of the original for their continued cultural narratives. Therefore, art history has a long past of grappling with reproductions, culminating in the current controversies surrounding the virtual image and archive record.

More recently, the question of the experience and understanding of what it means to interact with a virtual being, whether an object, person, or environment, has been given much closer study. In art history, the virtual object has become a subject for theoretical explorations of phenomenological and ontological concerns.¹⁰⁷ While these theoretical underpinnings are important for further studies of how a viewer may approach the virtual image and object, more research needs to be directed into how viewers engage with virtual art objects in this manner. These considerations prompt the question, how reliable are virtual objects as source material?

When a virtual object is used solely as a representation of a physical object, the virtual object is highly problematic.¹⁰⁸ From postcards, personal holiday photographs, to published images in

¹⁰⁶ For more on collection, preservation, and reception of plaster casts and copies of ancient sculpture in the nineteenth century see Kate Nichols, *Greece and Rome at the Crystal Palace: Classical Sculpture and Modern Britain, 1854-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87-123.; Emma Payne, “Casting a New Canon: Collecting and Treating Casts of Greek and Roman Sculpture, 1850-1939,” *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 65 (2019): 113-149, accessed Jan 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1750270519000034>.; Emma Payne, “The Conservation of Plaster Casts in the Nineteenth Century.” *Studies in Conservation* 65, no. 1 (2020): 37-58, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2019.1610845>.; For more on ancient copies see Brunilde S. Ridgway, *Roman Copies of Greek Sculpture: The Problem of the Originals* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1984).; Miranda Marvin, *The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue Between Roman and Greek Sculpture* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).; Vout, *Classical Art*, 187-219.

¹⁰⁷ For examples see Whitney Davis, *Visuality and Virtuality: Images of Pictures from Prehistory to Perspective*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017); Giuseppe Mantovani and Giuseppe Riva, “‘Real’ Presence: How Different Ontologies Generate Different Criteria for Presence, Telepresence, and Virtual Presence.” *Presence* 8, no. 5 (1999): 540-550, accessed April 26, 2021, doi: 10.1162/105474699566459.

¹⁰⁸ For recent scholarship on this material see Emma Stanford, “A Field Guide to Digital Surrogates: Evaluating and Contextualizing a Rapidly Changing Resource,” in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Humanities and Art History*, ed. Kathryn Brown (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 203-214.

books, reproductions come in extreme varieties of angle, magnification, image quality, and visual mediations (e.g. colour contrasting and sharpening of images with filters). Take for example the various photographic reproductions of the animal and gladiator tintinnabulum from the National Archaeological Museum in Naples (Figures 12a-d). Each represent the same three-dimensional object from the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. However, the result of the digitisation of the image illustrates extremely different priorities and ability to ‘accurately’ represent this bronze tintinnabulum. The first is a postcard sold in the gift shop circa 2018, the second comes from ARTstor, a dedicated website for academic access to virtual images, a figure from Johns’s British Museum Press publication *Sex or Symbol* from 1982 (reprinted in 1989), and the final image is a photograph I took myself on a research trip using a smartphone camera. The contrasts between these images are striking, and each image represents the limitations, abilities, bias, and interest of multiple aspects of each virtual image production process. Technical limitations in Figures 12b, 12c, and 12d mean some sections of the image are blurred (unfocused), making it difficult to discern what occurs in the figural representation. Physical and personal limitations are especially clear in Figure 12d, where height of the photographer, blocking of various angles by other museum patrons, the physical barrier of a display case, etc. played an important part in the production this virtual image. Viewer bias and intent are central to how an image is represented virtually. Figure 12a is intended to encourage the purchase of the image; to this end, a mostly centered, symmetrical image is prioritised in the composition. Also, a muted grey background is non-offensive to most buyers, creating an almost modern, clean image. In contrast, the ARTstor image, its vibrant red background with heavy shadows is intended to allow access to scholars as it is designed as a platform for access by researchers. This image is remarkably similar to Figure 12c from a publication, in composition, colour, as well as shadowing suggesting that they come from the same source image by Fabrizio Parisio. The academic image is therefore likely to be from a time before both Figures 12a and 12d before the advent of digital cameras. The purpose of these images is more difficult to ascertain, though they are surely intended to be viewed in the context of academic work, with dynamic poses perhaps implying the 3-D nature of the original object. Finally, my personal photo, Figure 12d, was taken for my own records, when examining the curatorial choices and layout of the Cabinet of Secrets. The awkward angles and lighting are not by design but, rather, the result of curatorial choice in the Naples museum. The angle in particular

reflects my height and inability to see the cabinet from a front position due to a large group of school students also present in the crowded room.

Inevitably, virtual images are heavily mediated. With the addition of filters and image modification software now available to anyone with a laptop or a smartphone, it has never been easier to manipulate images tailored to a particular audience. In this context, the museum online archive has considerable power and discretion to shape the visual narrative of its collections. These considerations suggest that virtual images are worthy of art historical and museological study in their own right, particularly when concerned with objects traditionally thought to be censored from the general public such as those consigned to the Museum Secretum collections.

For these reasons, my view is that virtual images do not fully replace the object they depict. Art historians utilising the virtual image as data must be careful to distinguish between the two object identities, and the varied contexts in which they are accessed. What must be emphasised and acknowledged is that the virtual image from the British Museum website is as heavily curated as the object(s) in the physical museum. The inclusion or exclusion of images of objects in a context catering to predominantly visual disciplines, including art history, archaeology, museology, etc., should be used to explore display in a digital context with the virtual object as a source material. In this thesis, I pose the question, how visually accessible are objects perceived as sexual or erotic in nature from Payne Knight's, Townley's, Witt's, and the composite Museum Secretum itself, for a general viewer in the twenty-first century? Using the virtual object as my source, I am able to compare these groups directly and compose my subsequent research question: why are some of these collectors/collections more accessible than others?

Method must accommodate art historical skill and practice, combining close visual reading online and in person. Making sense of the virtual image can only truly be done by an art historical eye, using triangulation of the long-held application of theory and visual analysis. Here, I perform this by selecting a case study and performing object biography, as well as rigorous scrutiny of the selected object using comparative mathematical analysis.

1.3 Sources and the Secretum: Source Materials as Presented in this Thesis

This thesis advocates the use of online archival material due to the global access, the depth of descriptive material available in a single record, the ability to easily compare items across entire collections, as well as the broad scope of the digital collection in terms of subject, time period, material, and production location. Additionally, specific to my key research question regarding the visibility of sexual objects to modern audiences, the availability (or unavailability) of virtual objects within online archives, and their overall quality, date of digitisation or depiction, offer unique and original insights into the curation of virtual representations as objects within their own right.

With this reframing of the online archive and virtual object, this thesis will utilise the material available from the British Museum's Online Collections and 'Explore the Collection' functions. There is no mandatory structure to digital collections and the manner in which information is presented to the global audience is determined by the institutions themselves. The British Museum's online collection provides a significant amount of detail relative to comparative institutions and, as of 2020, search results can be downloaded directly to a personal device as a chart/table.¹⁰⁹ It is important to note, however, that the information provided is varied based on what is available for documentation, the priorities of the individual curator or department uploading the data, and the type of object provided. As previously stated, this thesis will examine the collections of Payne Knight and Townley from the eighteenth century in Chapter Two, as well as Witt from the nineteenth century in Chapter Three, directly comparing their collections in terms of material, culture/place of location, subject/theme, and virtual imaging/display.

Therefore, data used in this thesis is accessed in multiple formats with varied amounts of textual supporting detail. What is generally included, and of particular importance to the aims of this thesis, however, is acquisition numbers, general item descriptions, material, location/place of production, general theme/subject, display history, and, in many cases, curator notes and additional IDs. Items still located in Cupboards 54 and 55 in the Department of Britain, Europe, and

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix-1.a, -1.b, and -1.c.

Prehistory are still labelled with their nineteenth-century Museum Secretum Register number and are easily identifiable from this list. However, redistributed objects sometimes retain their Museum Secretum numbers embedded in their descriptions, curator comments, or additional ID section, keeping the record of the Museum Secretum as a collection grouped in the data, though in some cases, close data mining is necessary to locate this information. Where these Museum Secretum labels are not included in any modern format, the descriptions of the Museum Secretum Register can be directly compared to the virtual image provided and/or the object description alongside that item.¹¹⁰

In addressing a secondary research question in this thesis (i.e. how are Museum Secretum objects curated for today's global audience?), it is important to describe how the virtual images analysed are presented. Digitised virtual records are compiled in numerous formats, often based on how recently they were requested for photography for use in publishing, display, or commercial use. Therefore, depending on the popularity of an object, there may be no image, a single angle image, or multiple versions, and angled images of an object. Beyond these differences, objects may be represented virtually by a direct scan of a document or 2-D image, a digitised sketch/painting of a 3-D object, a scan of a photograph from an analogue camera in either black and white or colour film, and/or a digital image from multiple resolutions. As Chapter Two explores, the inclusion of a virtual representation is the result of many factors and has important consequences to the study of private collectors.

1.4 Just for the Record: An Overview of the British Museum Online Collections Platform and Finding the Museum Secretum

Before exploring how to use the information from the British Museum online collections to produce useable data, it is first important to explore how this information is presented visually online visitors.¹¹¹ Each selected case study for this thesis has an overview and analysis of their respective online records in their object biography sections. Here, however, I will briefly introduce

¹¹⁰ To see the identified objects from the eighteenth-century private collections as a result of this cross referencing across the digital platform and Museum Secretum Register see Appendix-2.

¹¹¹ Note that this is based on the 2020 reboot of the online collections and was last accessed for the purposes of this research on October 7, 2021.

what the webpages, search functions, and records generally look like, and how the Museum Secretum specifically is findable in this virtual museum platform.

The British Museum online catalogue search page functions in a similar way to most search engines, allowing for a general search field plus the option to specify which field the visitor is looking for – including for related person/organisation, related place, object type, or museum number (Figure 13). It should be noted here, however, that by museum number this includes only the current catalogue entry number and not older numbers including Museum Secretum numbers. For the case studies in this thesis, I have opted to search based on the ‘related person/organisation’ field as the example for ‘Dr. George Witt’ illustrates (Figure 14).

It is on this result page that the complete number of relevant records is reported, in the case of the Witt collection 497 objects, and complexity of the filters and linked keywords becomes clearer and more specific (Figures 14 and 15). On the left-hand side of the screen, the filter options are presented as a column which allows for the selection of grid view, which offers images alongside text, or list view which is text only. Visitors have the option of sorting by their preferred field of interest. By default this is done by ‘Object Name’ which alphabetically lists the type of object. Next, can opt to filter out objects that do not contain images. This has the result of prioritising the imaged records over the records with no image provided. A more directed keyword search is also provided here, in which visitors are able to look through the results for items of interest through the results of their first search.

Following this search box are the specific filter links and drop-down menus to allow close searches of the results. These search filters offer interesting insight into the choices made by curators, catalogue managers, and website builders when engaging with complex terminology surrounding historical objects. This will be discussed later in this chapter and more specifically in the case studies analysed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, but for the sake of clarity the broad searchable terms include production date, person/organisation, object name, culture/period/dynasty, ethnic group, material, technique, ware, escapement, denomination, school/style, and subject. Each of these filter options also state how many of the result records are associated with each field. Finally, the bottom two buttons allow visitors to share their results and download a spreadsheet of the

results to their personal computer – originally in the format of a comma-separated values (CSV) file (Appendix 1.a-c).¹¹²

On the public facing online collections records there is no data provided stating what museum staff member is responsible for entering the information on the database. There is a separate section of the website, however, that provides peer-reviewed, clearly authored, and carefully researched object interpretation grouping objects by closer time period, artist, culture, subject, and material in some cases.¹¹³ Though very limited in their selection of objects and in the infancy of their development as many of these Online Research Collections were published in 2019, these illustrate a move to in depth study of online collections as research tools. However, neither the Museum Secretum nor sexual objects more generally have been studied in the context of this new platform and therefore researchers must still rely on the general online catalogue for this material.

Finding the Museum Secretum on the general online catalogue is further complicated as there is no option to filter based on specific collection groups, such as the Museum Secretum collection. While the objects that continue to have M.-, MS.-, W.-, or WITT.- numbers as their primary museum number are easily searchable – if the searcher knows this identification – there is no way to search the Miscellaneous or previous numbers associated with these objects. Therefore, any trace of the number is embedded in the unsearchable part of the record. However, in many cases, opening the online object record and looking in the ‘Additional IDs’ field toward the bottom of the textual record – on the left-hand side of the screen – will yield clear links to the object’s history as a Museum Secretum object (Figure 16a-b).

Despite this, there is no mandated standard for where, how, or whether or not to link the Museum Secretum object to the online record. For example, the *Townley Symplegma* has no mention of any additional identifying numbers despite the fact it is listed as M.466 in the MSR. However, it is provided with an exceptionally detailed object interpretation in the ‘Curator’s comments’ section and is described as being in the Museum Secretum Register though it is incorrectly identified as

¹¹² I have converted these files into Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets for my raw data file in the Appendix.

¹¹³ The Trustees of the British Museum, “Online Research Catalogues,” *The British Museum*, The Trustees of the British Museum, accessed Oct 12, 2021, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/online-research-catalogues>.

number 666 (Figure 17a-e). It is therefore the responsibility of the interested visitor/researcher to access the original MSR and compare records to reconcile the incorrect information, or in the case of the many objects with no online records to their MS numbers to compare the matching descriptions/small drawings to the catalogued objects.

The online platform informs research of Museum Secretum objects in multiple ways. Firstly it sets specific keywords and terminology that describes various aspects of the search results for analysis. Additionally, there is no specific information provided to those accessing the material from the general public to see who is responsible for the curatorial and archival information provided on the various records, nor when these records were last edited or updated. It also offers a tool to exclude objects with no images from search results at the click of a button, in some ways suggesting text-based results are more important/favourable to research. It also makes some elements of the object record more searchable than others, the effect of which in the case of Museum Secretum objects means that often their histories within these collections are difficult – and sometimes near impossible – to explore without sustained and knowledgeable examination of the online textual records in direct comparison to physical records held in the British Museum Library’s archives. The online records also offer massive amounts of specific and useable data that can be utilised to answer meaningful research questions – particularly with the addition of the ability to quickly download search data.

1.5 Method in the Math-ness: Comparative Mathematical Analysis, A Novel Tool to Support Art Historical Research

Within the humanities and related fields, there has been sustained resistance to use of mathematical approaches for data collection, particularly within the history of art. There are numerous reasons for this, many of which are subject specific and ideological, with a movement into numerical data perceived as being at odds with the subjective and unquantifiable experience of art engagement. In this narrative, the complexity of categorisation, definition, and theories of art and object are perceived as being slavishly tied to the restrictive mathematical requirements of tools developed predominantly in STEM fields, and “that subordinating art history (...) to computational analysis

(...) perpetuates uncritical assumptions about the intrinsic value of statistics.”¹¹⁴ I argue that art historical data analysis must be centred primarily around the art historical research questions, and tools using numeric analysis should be just that: tools to support, further explore, and validate the research questions. In short, method should always follow the needs of the art historical problem.

Additionally, reported cases of ‘mathematics anxiety,’ or the negative emotional sense of panicked helplessness when confronted with mathematical problems, are more prominent amongst humanities students, in particular students self-identifying as female, who make up 54% of undergraduate students in historical and philosophical subjects and 65.5% of students on creative arts and design courses in the UK.¹¹⁵ Such attitudes make the desire of these groups to use mathematical tools much less appealing. For similar reasons, resistance to the use of mathematical methods arises from perceptions that applying these tools is an arduous and time-consuming process in gathering and sorting data for the sake of generating empirical results that may be obtained more easily using traditional art historical methods. With practical considerations in mind, it is therefore important that any mathematical method should be clearly defined and easily understood. Simplicity does not equate to *unvaluable*, and to a field just beginning to access and use new tools and technologies simplicity is of practical value. Empirical research, if used in conjunction with traditional art historical method, offers robust data as support, and has potential to reveal gaps in knowledge or trends not visible through traditional art historical method.

While mathematical analysis in the context of the art historical discipline is still relatively in its infancy, this process has been employed in other humanities fields for many years and has yielded worthwhile results. Of particular note is work within economic history, which has for decades utilised data analysis software to explore larger themes in their work, previously too broad to

¹¹⁴ Claire Bishop, “Against Digital Art History,” *International Journal for Digital Art History*, no. 3 (2018), accessed Nov 28, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.11588/dah.2018.3.49915>.

¹¹⁵ These statistics come from Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited (HESA), *Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2016/2017*, (Cheltenham: HESA, 2018), accessed Feb 1, 2021, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/subjects>.; For studies on mathematics anxiety by subject and gender see Christopher M. Klinger, “On Mathematics Attitudes, Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Math-Anxiety in Commencing Undergraduate Students,” in *Proceedings of the 13th International Conference of Adult Learning Mathematics (ALM), Crossing Borders: Research, Reflection and Practice in Adults Learning Mathematics*, Queens University Belfast, Northern Ireland, July 16-20, 2006 (Great Britain: Adults Learning Mathematics (ALM) – A Research Forum, 2008), 88-98.; Hanna Ayalon, “Women and Men Go to University: Mathematical Background and Gender Differences in Choice of Field in Higher Education.” *Sex Roles* 48, (2003): 277–290.

test.¹¹⁶ Additionally, in the study of literature, the practice of distant reading – a phrase coined by Franco Moretti – aims to generate numerical evidence that allows for analysis of text at a large scale.¹¹⁷ Therefore the methodological work in this thesis sits within the broader scope of humanities and represents an attempt to combine traditional practice with digital techniques in an innovative format.

In short, the use of mathematical methods to analyse data in art historical contexts must be an organic process prompted by, and responsive to, the research questions posed. Art history must not be subject to the whims of technology, rather the opposite, art history should be bolstered, supported, reinforced, and further validated by digital and computational tools.

i. Beyond Compare: Comparative Data Analysis as Performed in this Thesis

I begin this section by restating my research questions and aims outlined in the introduction of this thesis, please note that these are separate from the questions presented at the opening of this chapter concerned with the usefulness of digital/virtual source material and mathematic data analysis:

1. What do the ‘sexual’ objects within the private collections that make up the Museum Secretum tell us about this space’s function, intent, and the categorisations of the objects within it?
2. How does collector biography relate to the reception of these private collections into the larger Museum Secretum categorisation?
3. How is the Museum Secretum curated visually to global visitors today?
4. Can data from online collections, combined with traditional art historical methods, help provide more insightful answers to the first two questions posed above?

The process of selecting datasets to address these research questions was as follows. Firstly, I identified *primary categories* for comparison of specific digital objects (i.e. material, culture, place of production, subject/theme etc.). Secondly, I placed data into spreadsheets (Microsoft Excel) and

¹¹⁶ Myron P. Gutmann, Emily Klancher Merchant, and Evan Roberts. “‘Big Data’ in Economic History.” *The Journal of Economic History* 78, no. 1 (2018): 268–99, accessed Nov 28, 2019, doi:10.1017/S0022050718000177.

¹¹⁷ Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (New York: Verso, 2013).

sorted data based on *secondary categories*. Finally, I used data analysis software (Microsoft Excel) to compare datasets and recorded outcomes in the form of charts and/or tables.

As stated by Drucker, “the crucial recognition that *digitization is not representation but interpretation* will serve as a critical springboard for insight,” and it is the responsibility of the mathematician art historian to explicitly lay out the basis of their interpretive methods.¹¹⁸ Here, the analysis of data is thought driven as opposed to algorithm driven, each individual item examined and interpreted by material, culture, and subject visually before being mathematically analysed and compared. As the procedure I use combines multiple disciplines, it is vital that key terms from the fields of digital data analysis are defined clearly before continuing.

Features and Categories: Objects have multiple features, which may be unique or shared with other objects. It follows that specific features, or defined sets of features, can be used to segregate objects into distinct categories.

Proportion, Normalisation and Percentage: In mathematical terms, *proportion* is the notion of a part (or fraction) of a whole and can be expressed in several ways. Thus, 10 and 5 are proportionally half ($\frac{1}{2}$) and quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) of 20, respectively. Proportions (or fractions) are commonly *normalised* to 100 to generate a *percentage*; normalisation means that an entire collection of objects is set at 100, irrespective of the actual number of objects in the collection. The proportion of objects that fall into a specific sub-category is then expressed as a fraction of 100 (i.e. 50% and 25% in the examples given above). Hence, in this thesis, I use ‘percentage’ to express ‘proportion’ of objects in a particular sub-category, relative to all objects in a collection. Using percentage allows for more specificity and facilitates comparisons across different collections when reporting findings. I round percentage points to one decimal point (i.e. 50.08% becomes 50.1%) to maintain ease of reading.

¹¹⁸ Drucker, “Is There a “Digital” Art History?,” 12.

Tables and Pie Charts: As this thesis is primarily concerned with proportions related to the whole, data is visually presented using a mixture of data tables and pie charts. Tables contain data describing and comparing sub-categories in a concise format. Pie charts generated from tabulated data are used to provide clear and easily understood illustrations of proportional breakdowns. The circumference of a pie chart represents the whole (100%), and segments drawn within the pie chart represent proportions of the whole.¹¹⁹

Scientific Method: This thesis uses an approach based on traditional scientific method. For this reason, data sections are divided in two main parts, first the ‘*Results*’ from an ‘experiment’, and second, the ‘*Interpretation*’ of the findings – placing the findings in a wider, comparative context – alongside the ‘*Conclusion(s)*’ of the findings – findings deduced from the ‘experiment.’ This structure is at odds to the usual narrative flow of humanities writing but allows for results to be clearly presented before they are subjected to in-depth interpretation. This process is intended to enhance clarity and provide easy reference sections for readers.

Comparative Mathematical Analysis: This thesis applies a practical approach to compare archival material, using data analysis software to determine and compare proportions (represented as percentages) of object features and categories by cross-referencing the following datasets; (a) the complete online collections held in the British Museum; (b) donations to the British Museum from three named private collectors and; (c) a separate digital archive compiled from the Museum Secretum Register (MSR).¹²⁰ The goal is to use comparative mathematical analysis to challenge prevailing paradigms in academic work relating to the collection and reception of objects depicting sexual and erotic themes from the British Museum collections, which may have led to classification as obscene. An important point relating to comparative analysis in archival research, is that data are not as representational as in social sciences or STEM fields. This point influences how terminology is used in relation to the mathematical concept of ‘statistical significance’, which is defined in terms of a ‘*p-value*’, which denotes the probability (likelihood) that experimental results support, or do not support, a hypothesis being tested. This thesis does not use this procedure

¹¹⁹ For the numeric data entered into every chart included in this thesis before the mathematical function is applied see Appendix-4.

¹²⁰ The software used is primarily Microsoft Excel.

to assess significance for two reasons: first, statistical tests to generate p-values assume that data is from a random sample representative of a trend within a larger population, an assumption that is not valid when comparing archival materials of complete, unchanging collections. Second, extensive recent scholarship in the mathematical and scientific communities has challenged how p-values are set to determine statistical significance.¹²¹

In the context of a digital archive, though subject to constant editing, the donations from Payne Knight, Townley, or Witt are fixed and unchanging. Their collections exist in a complete form in the British Museum. In archival scholarship it is generally accepted that relevant material will be overlooked and missed by researchers when working with substantial archives, and that breakthroughs are the result of “archival serendipity.”¹²² Archival research has always worked using samples accessed in that moment and academic work can only reflect what *is* and not what might be. In many ways, this theory complements the principles of statistical analysis, which require datasets to be selected using large definitions to include any relevant data that might otherwise be missed. That being said, while there may be some misattributions or loss of objects, the overall sample is the whole, rather than representative of a larger ‘population’ of the British Museum institutional collection. The data used in this thesis accounts for all of the objects in each of the private collector donations, rather than the use of a representative sample of a population and therefore it is more accurate to use the phrase comparative mathematical data analysis than to apply the phrase ‘statistical analysis’ which has specific implications for the type of method followed.

¹²¹ Evaluating probability, expressed as the p-value, is a common tool used in statistical hypothesis testing in the social sciences and STEM fields, The p-value is the probability that a particular experimental outcome (result) occurs if a hypothesis being tested is false (null hypothesis). If p-value is low (typically, $p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is unlikely and the experimental outcome has statistical significance as evidence supporting the hypothesis, while a higher p-value ($p > 0.05$) means that the null hypothesis is more likely. Put another way, a p-value of < 0.05 indicates strong evidence that the null hypothesis should be rejected, while a larger p-value of > 0.05 suggests weak evidence against the null hypothesis, and p-values of 0.041 and 0.049 in Recent Decades (but Negative Results Are Increasing Rapidly Too)." [In eng]. *PeerJ* 3 (2015): e733, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00031305.2019.1583913>.; Joost CF de Winter and Dimitra Dodou, "A Surge of P-Values between 0.041 and 0.049 in Recent Decades (but Negative Results Are Increasing Rapidly Too)." [In eng]. *PeerJ* 3 (2015): e733, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.733>.

¹²² For further reading see Lori Ostergaard, “Open to Possibilities: Seven Tales of Serendipity in the Archives,” in *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*, ed. A. E. Ramsey (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 40-42.; Lynée Lewis Gaillet. "(Per)Forming Archival Research Methodologies." *College Composition and Communication* 64, no. 1 (2012): 35-58, accessed February 18, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23264916>.

In summary, determining the proportions of objects with defined features (or object categories) within private collections, and comparing the results for different collections yields empirical data that is easy to report and permits further art historical interrogation and interpretation. However, it is a mistake to assume that comparative mathematical analysis is a more precise approach to data collection and interpretation. The mathematician must be transparent and skeptical about the procedures employed in their research to explore larger humanities questions, as this may influence the results of their examinations substantively.

ii. Materials, Cultures, and Themes: Criteria and Categories Used to Interrogate Online Collections

The criteria I used to select objects and object categories for digital analysis were based on: (a) the source data available from the British Museum Online Collection, (b) secondary source material documenting the contents of selected private collector case studies, and (c) personal direct observation of primary sources. First, I examined the visual representation of the objects on the online archive. Second, I evaluated the primary material composition of the objects collected. This category was particularly relevant to the discussions of the metal and marble objects in the eighteenth-century collections of Payne Knight and Townley, whose collections were referenced in large part based on this criteria across multiple secondary sources.¹²³ Third, I noted the location/place of production/culture; though more difficult to define, these criteria largely correspond to the department within the British Museum where each item is located, and the specific culture credited with its creation. These criteria are important as the Museum Secretum Register and Witt's Scrapbooks subdivide all objects in the Museum Secretum collection by these criteria. Finally, and perhaps most obvious when exploring a so-called thematic collection, the subject/theme of the object.

However, defining these categories creates more complexity. For example, how does one define the material of marble within the context of both broad and specific search terms? According to

¹²³ Penny, "Collecting, Interpreting and Imitating Ancient Art", 67-70.; Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

the British Museum online collection search an item is simultaneously inorganic, processed material, stone, marble, and may also be Pentelic, Parian, porphyry, etc. Within the broadest category are extensive qualities of material, each with their own cultural significance, monetary value, and other factors. Comparing all ‘stone’ objects within a collection would not necessarily distinguish the contents of one collection from another, producing inaccurate data. Additionally, the defining of cultures within this collection in terms of accurate and culturally sensitive terminology is problematic, and subjective due to the broad scope of each collection across multiple departments with differing specialisms. For example, while the labels ‘African periods and cultures’, ‘East Asian cultures, dynasties and periods’, as well as ‘American cultures and periods’ encompass all of the objects determined to be from those continents, the similarly titled ‘Historic European periods and cultures’ is underrepresented in favour of more specific terminology that differentiates the time periods and varied European cultures. Categorical descriptions are further complicated by the inclusion of a separate search section labelled ‘Ethnic group’ which overwhelmingly focusses on objects from African people and cultural identities. Religious versus geographic versus cultural identity versus imperial power are also problematic as objects labelled as ‘Roman’ in the digital archives may well come from a British, North African, or Mediterranean context, just as objects listed as Islamic are from locations in India, Afghanistan, etc. Within the context of the Museum Secretum, it is therefore perhaps most helpful to use nineteenth-century terminology, or as close as possible using modern search terms, to define the understood cultural breakdown of Witt’s Collection (Collection C). With this being the case, first I shall chart the labels specifically used in the still existing Museum Secretum Register and compare them to the similar terminology employed on the British Museum’s online database. However, this is not intended to deny the complex identities of the peoples within these larger groupings but rather to address the curatorial practices and data using the British Museum’s online systems and categories.¹²⁴

Similarly, determining a single subject is a challenge when considering a particular material. This process becomes especially difficult when trying to distinguish between subjective categories such as ‘erotic’ and ‘non-erotic’. The terminology employed by the Museum Secretum Register and

¹²⁴ For more on the spatial politics of museums and cultural terminologies see Viv Golding, *Learning at the Museum Frontiers: Identity, Race and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

search terms available on the British Museum Online Collections are useful here. Difficulties in categorisation highlight the curatorial choices made in both platforms, further shedding light on the role museological practice has on the reception of the Museum Secretum's collections over time. It should be emphasised that this thesis is less concerned with specifically casting my subjective interpretation of what is, and is not sexual or erotic, or how individuals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made such decisions. Instead, the selection of terminology within this thesis is in response to the terminology previously used in scholarship as well as the object descriptions available on public online platforms.

With these considerations in mind, it is important to define the classifications used within each category. This list is not exhaustive and merely illustrates the most commonly used terminology on the British Museum Online Collection search options and labels used within the Museum Secretum Register. The specific terms for each collection will be discussed in more detail in the case study chapters, Chapters Two and Three. This thesis addresses the categorisation of terms in the collection of datasets as outlined in Table 2.

1.6 ANT-iquarianism: Objects and Collections as Network Actors

I argue that in previous scholarship the primary means of studying, categorising, and displaying objects from the Museum Secretum has relied on the biographical and textual evidence surrounding the collector rather than a direct interrogation of the objects as source materials. While there have been attempts to use Museum Secretum objects to explore the Museum Secretum collections in the past, often objects have been studied based on their wide appeal and conformity to the assumed function of the Museum Secretum. As illustrated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, scholarship has prioritised objects that may *look* sexual or that are linked to superstars/singular points of research of the eighteenth or nineteenth century – including Payne Knight, Townley, and the Obscene Publications Act of 1857. These approaches have led to the MS objects being portrayed somewhat as victims of human society, hidden and unable to create meaning within society as actors themselves. In order to get to the crux of the function of the Museum Secretum, I argue that an object-based approach must utilise the object as a player, influencer, and historical figure throughout the longevity of its existence – allowing a clearer sense

of how objects have informed the collections and wider society that they are a part of – specifically the Museum Secretum, the British Museum, and wider perspectives of abstract fields of enquiry in Britain.

At the basis of any study surrounding the collection and reception of objects, it is critical to acknowledge the complexity of the concept and terminology of an *object* and how humanity relates to these various *things* within *collections*. Like much of the scholarship of collections and processes of collecting recent decades, the collected object and the collector of that object are intertwined, influencing and influenced by social practice. As Susan Pearce argues, “the accumulation of objects into groups that can usefully be called collections is one of our characteristic ways of organising the meaning which we call social practice.”¹²⁵ A collector selectively groups individual items to create a ‘rationalised’ *collection* of objects. Studying the Museum Secretum, however, adds another layer of complexity to this definition of a collection. In this situation, the private collection becomes part of the public collections of a national institution with objects distributed by the needs and desires of curators and archivists, often transforming the ‘rationalised’ collection from the initial donator’s purposes. In this sense, the object has become entwined in two separate narratives and networks of objects and human constructions of meaning. While the object remains the same, its reception transforms and the object projects new meaning to people interacting with it. The object becomes something that is *acted upon* (by private collector, public museum, original producer, purchaser, et al.) and simultaneously an *actor* in its own right, influencing social ties and constructions as an object itself. The object stands in for a moment in time of its creation but also continues to elicit social response. For example, Johann Joachim Winckelmann is moved by the Apollo Belvedere statue to write his personal narratives, the Belvedere Apollo, though not conscious, is influential as an item in and of itself to Winckelmann, and in many ways inspires cultural movement into the larger studies of Winckelmannian art historical process.¹²⁶ In this scenario, the vital, societal influencing moment is the exchange between the actor Winckelmann and the actor the Belvedere Apollo. This exchange produces a link in a larger network of actors: the exchange between the sculptor of the work, the exchange

¹²⁵ Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 39.

¹²⁶ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006).

between Winckelmann and his readers, and so on and so forth to produce the continuing influence of not only Winckelmann but the Belvedere Apollo itself in establishing larger networks of social practice. These networks include but are not limited to the disciplines of art history, classical reception, and other continuing areas of research.

Again, the fields of social sciences offer a theoretical framework for this type of relationship of object with agency influencing multiple networks, in this case, private collections, the public Museum Secretum, different people across time, as well as social contexts – namely the Actor-Network Theory or ANT. In ANT, the study of objects shifts away from the ‘products’ to the ‘processes’ through which these objects are influenced by and in turn exert influence upon society and social practice.¹²⁷ ANT is generally described as the brainchild of Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law in the 1980s.¹²⁸ In the field of anthropology, the work of Appadurai also fundamentally supports and subscribes to this same basic premise arguing that “commodities, like persons, have social lives” in which the value of things is based in the value of their point of exchange and network building.¹²⁹ The use of this theory, or more accurately guidance on the approach to studying the object throughout social history, has been primarily employed in computer sciences and the studies of ‘social networks’ in the digital world, though many of the same principles can be transferred to the tradition of art historical research already in practice. Perhaps the clearest history of art field specific attempt at a fruitful use of ANT is Michael Zell’s application to the use of paintings by Rembrandt as gifts and objects of exchange. As Zell argues, gift giving of art “epitomize[s] the short-lived assemblies between humans and objects that ANT considers the cornerstone of social activity, and focusing on them reveals the means by which certain personal ties between Rembrandt and members of his circle of admirers were created, sustained, and

¹²⁷Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1988).; for an example of how this approach has been taken in the museum sector and curatorial practice see Laurie Waller, “Curating Actor-Network Theory: Testing Object-Oriented Sociology in the Science Museum.” *Museum and Society* 14, (2017), accessed Oct 8, DOI: 202110.29311/mas.v14i1.634.

¹²⁸ See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).; Michel Callon, "Actor-network Theory—The Market Test." *The Sociological Review* 47, no. 1_suppl (1999): 181-195.; John Law, "Actor network theory and material semiotics," in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Chichester: Blackwell, 2009) 141-158.

¹²⁹ Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

extended.”¹³⁰ I argue that the process of donating objects from Payne Knight’s and Witt’s private collections, as well as the purchase of Townley collection, operate in a similar manner to this ‘gifting’ barter system, creating a wider network in which the Museum Secretum objects have their own historical agency.

Therefore, this thesis examines the object as an influencer of social practice and an active participant in the development of social networks across time and space. In this context, employing the practice of object biography – tracing the life of the object and its influence from production to continued storage/display – offers opportunities to explore sexual objects as actors in a wider social network. Additionally, the ANT approach further supports the examination the virtual image and the process of interaction and exchange between the sexual object, curator, and online visitor/viewer as a valuable social exchange. With the approach of how I *think* about the object within this thesis now explored, it is time to delve into the complexities of how I *discuss* the object within this thesis and how powerful and fundamental terminology and description are to the study of sexual objects.

2. Terminology: Getting Beyond “I Know it when I see it”

2.1 Let’s Talk about Sex: Erotic, Obscene, Pornographic, Sexual, or (?)

I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description [i.e. hard-core pornography], and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it (...)

- U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (No.11), June 22, 1964.

Challenging traditional categorisations by utilising new types of data and research tools is at the heart of this thesis. However, in this process it is also necessary to develop and categorise based on my own criteria in order to explore the collections at the centre of the debates surrounding the role of the Museum Secretum and the objects/collections within it throughout time and diverse social contexts.¹³¹ This does not, however, mean this type of work is self-defeating, rather it encourages and empowers humanities scholars to examine how terminology and over-generalisation continues to shape the fields in which scholars work. By being self-aware, skeptical,

¹³⁰ Michael Zell, "Rembrandt’s Gifts: A Case Study of Actor-Network-Theory," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 3, no.2 (2011), accessed April 26, 2021, DOI: 10.5092/jhna.2011.3.2.2.

¹³¹ For full list of objects and their categorisations under these subjects and themes see Appendix-3.

and careful with the terminology chosen, using numerical data and defining categories creates a level of specificity necessary to make robust claims about larger patterns and trends in history, specifically in this thesis, the private collections transferred into national collections and the Museum Secretum/online collections. As previous sections have indicated, this requires a breakdown of terminology based on levels of specificity of description, with interesting, and in some ways problematic, results for defining subject matter.

The struggle to define and label sexual material is not a new one. As Justice Potter Stewart illustrates in his (in)famous ruling, communicating the complexities surrounding the history and reception of objects that may have a sexual element to their visuality or function is difficult when using a single term. The subtlety of intent can be adjusted and misrepresented through the use of a close, but perhaps inaccurate synonym, sexualised images become pornographic become erotic become obscene, and so on and so forth *ad infinitum*.

It could be said that definitions are at the heart of reception studies, communicating to a modern audience the complexities of the lives of surviving materials from antiquity by way of a few millennia of varied social contexts using and examining the terms and language used to describe ideas, histories, and events. The assumption that a word's meaning has remained completely unaltered in its current definition from its historical usages is a well-known mistake to be avoided in academic practice, and yet, one could argue that it is nowhere more present than in the discussion of Victorian sexuality, sexual antiquities, and obscene objects, perhaps typified in the very public international outcry against academic misconceptions and misuse of Victorian terminology within Naomi Wolf's recent 2019 publication.¹³² Wolf's misuse and misunderstanding of the notation 'death recorded' in legal records related to sodomy cases, meant that she inaccurately posited that homosexuality was punishable by the death sentence in Victorian Britain. This mistake was very publicly corrected by host Matthew Sweet during her interview for BBC Radio.¹³³ Additionally, her miscategorisation of the term 'sodomy' was also an embarrassing and biased faux pas, illustrating an assumption that all acts of sodomy were describing adult homosexual intercourse in

¹³² Naomi Wolf, *Outrages: Sex, Censorship, and the Criminalisation of Love* (London: Virago Press, 2019).

¹³³ Parul Sehgal, "Naomi Wolf's Career of Blunders Continues in 'Outrages'," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2019, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/05/books/review-outrages-naomi-wolf.html>.

the nineteenth century, when in fact it is a phrase that was also used to describe many other types of sexual activity including anal and/or oral sex between a male and female as well as any acts of pedophilia.

In many ways, this thesis is fundamentally shaped by how terminology has been used, defined, understood, and adulterated in order to fulfill the narratives of censorial secret museums in the nineteenth century and how this can be challenged using new methodologies. This section, therefore, explores the background of the relevant terminology – in particular the terms pornography, erotic, and obscene as well as their variants – and aims to clarify why certain choices were made in the use of specific terms/phrases for the latter case studies.

In this thesis, I use the term ‘sexual objects’ to describe the collections and artefacts within the Museum Secretum (MS) collection. Before stating the purpose for this selection, it is worth exploring how terminology has been previously explored and utilised in the study of this field. Previous scholarship has approached the challenge of naming the collective group of potentially sexually themed objects in myriad ways.

As Justice Stewart’s own confident, perhaps arrogant, response makes clear, many people think sexually arousing images are easily identifiable, assuming a collective social definition of what is pornographic. Pornography as a term is known to be a relatively new addition to the English language. Despite its root in the ancient Greek word for prostitute/prostitution, it is not used to describe sexually stimulating visual material in ancient texts. It is not until the nineteenth century that it came into use in the English language.¹³⁴ One of the earliest examples of its use in relation to visual materials in an English text is from *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* edited by William Smith in 1842.¹³⁵ The term itself is not defined beyond the phrase ‘obscene painting’, but is used in the context of describing the ‘decline’ of Greek painting very much in line with the Winckelmannian tradition of art historical practice. It is clear that the term went through a series of shifts in meanings during the nineteenth century when one looks at its earliest definition in a

¹³⁴ See Lynn Hunt, “Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800,” in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 9-46.

¹³⁵ *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ed. William Smith (London: Walton and Maberly, 1842), 694.

dictionary of the time. By 1857 an American medical dictionary authored by an English born and trained physician, defined pornography as “a description of prostitutes or of prostitution, as a matter of public hygiene.”¹³⁶ This definition, written in time for the establishment of the Museum Secretum in 1865, shows the complexity of the term across cultures, as well as its changeability throughout time, highlighting the inadequacy of its use to define the objects covered in this thesis.

The terms ‘obscene’ or ‘censorable/censored’ would also fit into this category of descriptive definition. In many ways, this thesis addresses the nature of what it means for an object to be presumed ‘obscene’, and therefore not *seen* within the context of a single collection. This category is in flux constantly, and obscenity, literally repugnant and against moral principles, is again a subjective term. Obscenity, and its definition is particularly important when Museum Secretum objects are frequently linked to the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, discussed in the introductory chapter of this work. If, for the sake of argument, one thinks that the Museum Secretum is a collection of ‘obscene’ materials, even within the decade of the 1860s this definition is in rapid and continual flux, suggesting that obscenity as a concept is imprecise, ephemeral and ultimately immeasurable.¹³⁷

Similarly, ‘erotic’ or ‘erotica’ carries an implication of sexual desire, particularly of the body from its ancient origins.¹³⁸ Perhaps the most comprehensive breakdown of the problems with the use of the term ‘erotic’ or ‘erotica’ exists in the work of classicist academia with the debates surrounding the origins of the terms and the reapplication in modern contexts. In particular, John R. Clarke stresses the intrinsic understanding that an erotic object should arouse desire in a viewer and argues that in an academic context this is entirely an immeasurable response, assuming a personal knowledge of the subjective sexuality of all viewers.¹³⁹ To define a group of objects as ‘erotica’ or ‘erotic collections’ denies the diversity of these collections and the audience that views them. It

¹³⁶ *Medical Lexicon: A Dictionary of Medical Science*, ed. Robley Dunglison (Philadelphia, PA: Blanchard and Lea, 1857), s.v. “pornography”.

¹³⁷ This is based on the reclassification of item M.466 described in Donnellan, “Ethics and Erotics,” 145-171.

¹³⁸ N.B. with the arguable exception of Plato and his discussion of ‘δαίμων’ (daimon) or spiritual intermediary as a reflection of true Ἔρως (Love); Plato. *Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, *Loeb Classical Library* 166. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925).

¹³⁹ Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, 12-13.; John Clarke, “Erotica: Visual Representation of Greek and Roman Sexual Culture,” in *A Cultural History of Sexuality: In the Classical World*, ed. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2011), 1:169-170.

also makes the assumption of intent for the creation of these items, which can be hypothesised but is ultimately speculative, and out of time or context. In the same vein of reasoning, to label one object as ‘pornographic’, ‘erotic’, ‘obscene’, or ‘censorable’ over another simply because it was consigned to the Museum Secretum, negates the inherent eroticism of many other objects not assigned to the Museum Secretum. This is as damaging as inaccurately assuming an arousal response, denying subtle distinctions that are untraceable and often culturally determined.

In some instances, an individual description of each item could be employed to create specificity in their visual attributes. For example, in her seminal book *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, Marilyn B. Skinner in effect avoids discussing sexual art as a collective at all, instead using detailed descriptions of the art objects to reinforce her positions.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, scholars have discussed this type of art based on the classical mythology directly depicted within the scenes such as ‘Priapic’ and/or ‘Dionysiac’, a primary example being Johns’s *Sex or Symbol* text. However, this way of describing sexual objects subscribes to a singular function of these items, which even in classical antiquity is debatable, as this thesis examines in object biography sections of Chapters Two and Three.

Another approach is to utilise the terminology employed in the time period under consideration in reception studies in order to contextualise the author’s arguments. This option allows for a retelling of the reception of these artifacts without placing a moral judgement on the period that created the objects or the later society receiving them. For example, describing Witt’s collection as a collection of ‘Symbols of the Early Worship of Mankind’ or objects related to ‘the Worship of Priapus’ when discussing Payne Knight’s collections.¹⁴¹ However, while this is useful for exploring relevant terminology in the period of their collection and intent of the collectors, for the sake of practicality it does not necessarily work in the context of modern writing. Also, it runs the risk of excluding objects that are received differently after the collector’s death or donation to another institution and suggesting the only relevant perspective of that object and its collection is the collector’s intent and purpose for buying it. While this is certainly one aspect of the object’s biography that is

¹⁴⁰ See for example her description of the Red-figure krater by the Dinos Painter donated by Sir William Hamilton to the British Museum in Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 95-96.

¹⁴¹ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28-30.

relevant in exploring this collection, it denies the later receptions in the Museum Secretum Register and the online archives.

Of all the highly problematic terms that might describe the objects in the Museum Secretum collection, and the supposed broader category of objects examined in the field of sexual history and related studies, perhaps the most technical term to use might be ‘sexual antiquities’. As Grove points out, this term is one of the more nonjudgmental, inclusive ways of labeling “material made in ancient Greece, Rome, and sometimes Egypt which features imagery of sexual activity or of sexually related body parts. This can include representations of the non-erect penis and female genitalia, as in the anatomical models thought to be religious votives.”¹⁴² In the context of this thesis, ‘sexual’ is certainly a reasonable adjective in terms of the items Grove was specifically tracing to study the larger reception of similar material.

A problem with the term ‘sexual antiquities’ as related to this work, however, is the use of the term ‘antiquities’. The term antiquity is as problematic as the subjective ‘erotic.’ In the broadest and most literal reading of the term, it is simply ancient or very old. However, in the western tradition, that has come to signify predominantly Greco-Roman/Mediterranean cultures. This thesis specifically examines the wider scope of how an object may be received separately to the initial find point. As becomes clear in Chapter Three, the Museum Secretum, like the numerous private collections that contributed to it, is not exclusively an ‘antique’ collection. Additionally, antiquity is now understood to be distinct from the Medieval period via a poorly delineated period known as ‘Late-Antiquity.’ Definitions of this period are moveable and subjective, based on the research interests and goals of individuals using the term. Therefore, the phrase ‘antiquity’ does not accurately reflect the agency of these collected items as actors in continually changing networks and receptions. Instead, I suggest the term ‘sexual objects’ to reflect this group more effectively and less subjectively.

¹⁴² Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” 15.; Katherine Kittredge, *Lewd & Notorious: Female Transgression in the Eighteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 156.

Additionally, little work across scholarship has used terminology to distinguish between the large group of objects called ‘sexual objects’ in the field of sexual history and the smaller group of objects that comprise the Museum Secretum collection. Describing the Museum Secretum objects as a subset of the broader category of ‘sexual objects’ implies that all objects within the Museum Secretum collection must represent subjects of ‘sexual activity’ or ‘sexually related body parts’. As the data illustrates within this thesis, this categorisation is patently inaccurate and fetishises, in a sexual way, all of the objects within the collection. Even in scholarship that seeks to challenge this theory of the Museum Secretum as a censorial space, the over-generalisation of terms and lack of distinction between a ‘sexual object’ and a ‘Museum Secretum object’ undermines their arguments. For these reasons, I shall refer to the objects belonging to the general field of sexual (art) history as ‘sexual objects’ and the items within the Museum Secretum as ‘Museum Secretum (MS) objects’.

2.2 A Phallus by any Other Name: Sex and Sexuality Specific Terminology

Sexual objects and the content from the Museum Secretum collections, deserve closer reading by experts and theorists in the fields of queer, feminist, race, and related fields of enquiry. While there has certainly been some interest in this field, as will be discussed in Chapter Two with the current material examining Payne Knight in particular, a largely white-elite-heterosexual-male vision continues to be the dominant narrative of the contents of Museum Secretum, perhaps reflecting the socio-economic background and gender of the private collectors whose objects contributed to it. However, as before, this assumes constructs about sexuality and applies them to the past. While this thesis touches on these points, and suggests these perspectives are not only valid but vital to the continuation of studying the reception of these MS objects and sexual objects, I leave it to other academics to explore the complexities on these different theoretical approaches to the Museum Secretum. Instead, the focus of this thesis is the addition of digital source material and the numeric analysis tools for exploring these collections.

Additionally, the close subject descriptions between objects and the specific groupings of Level 3 terms needs further discussion. As can be seen from Table 2 and the accompanying Charts 1-12, I opted for detailed and highly descriptive terminology to title each grouping. Rather than using

phrases such as ‘homosexual sex’ or ‘heterosexual sex’, which are terms coined fairly recently to describe sexual orientation, I describe these figure groups as ‘Same Gender/Sex Sex/Intercourse Scenes Only’, ‘Mixed Gender/Sex Partners Sex/Intercourse Scenes’. Gender and sex are particularly fluid terms for defining individuals, not solely in the context of modern movements and culture, but also within the context of the cultures represented by these MS objects. Gender as a term has come to be defined by cultural performativity and construction since the work of Judith Butler in the 1980s.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, biological ‘sex’ consisting of either a male or female has been challenged by genetic studies and changes to the understanding of intersex individuals. Hermaphroditism, as previously termed, has been consistently understood and pictured throughout human history, one example being the famous Sleeping Hermaphrodite statue in the Uffizi gallery, though this is by no means an isolated case.

Traditionally in modern scholarship, the ancient world, particularly Greece and Rome, has been defined by strict binaries of male and female. However, more recent scholarship has started to challenge this larger notion of a strict moral binary, suggesting gender fluidity and/or a concept of what today would be described as transgenderism within the Greco-Roman ancient spheres was not simply reflective of the decadence of an (in)famous historical character such as the emperor Elagabalus but also played into heroic myth with major characters such as Achilles and complex ritual within Roman religion.¹⁴⁴ With all of this context, it would be easy to misgender, missexually orient, or mis-sex an MS object. My decision to describe objects as either ‘Same Sex’ or ‘Mixed Sex’ therefore is based purely on the representation of the genitals within the image and not based on assumptions of gender identity or ancient understanding of gender relationships. Additionally, defining what act constitutes sexual activity, is equally problematic. The grouping I have selected is ‘sex/intercourse scenes’ to be as inclusive as possible and represent penetrative intercourse alongside depictions of other actions like fellatio, cunnilingus, manual stimulation between partners, etc. This allows for a clearer picture of the large themes of coupled and group displays of sexuality allowing patterns to emerge from the dataset. However, where subjects are

¹⁴³ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-31. Accessed May 20, 2021. doi:10.2307/3207893.

¹⁴⁴ Domitilla Campanile, Filippo Carla-Uhink, and Margherita Facella, ed., *TransAntiquity: Cross-Dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the Ancient World* (New York: Routledge, 2017).; For a wider study see Brooke Holmes, *Gender: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

in the process of flirtation, courtship, or are simply depicted as individual nude or clothed figures, I have labelled these as separate from ‘sexual scenes’ and described them as ‘group scenes’.

The issue of sexuality in the art of the classical nude has been debated at length by scholarship, i.e. how sexual or asexual is the depiction of the nude? This debate was even present in the nineteenth century, as social concepts of the purity of the ancient nude, questions about the respectability of nude modelling, and public displays of contemporary depictions of nude bodies became subject to a public scandal in 1885 commonly titled the British Matron Scandal.¹⁴⁵ In *The Times* on May 25th 1885, the display of Edward Poynter’s *Diadumenè* became the focus of public debate, with one side describing this painting and similar images as “indecent pictures that disgrace our exhibitions.”¹⁴⁶ Equal numbers defended these works of art as aesthetic and educational tools. While these debates primarily related to the contemporary artistic depictions of the nude body, the classical nude was used in arguments on both sides as a perfect, aesthetic, non-sexual depiction. One commentator stated that in order for nudes to be truly good for public consumption they must achieve three main things: “(1) a manifest appeal to the love of beauty, and not to appetite; (2) an ideal presentation, and not a literal transcript of individual fact; a generalisation in the imagination, and not a photographic record of the particular; (3) the observance of certain special artistic conventions as old as Praxiteles.”¹⁴⁷ As far as categorising the nude as ‘sexual’, ‘erotic’, or even ‘obscene’ I suggest that to a nineteenth-century audience, this issue was a deep and complex social debate and is an ideal topic for closer reading using data analysis and object comparisons. Nude figures not in sexual groups, or with emphasis on genitals, can be *Museum Secretum* objects, though similar objects are excluded for reasons that are unclear. I will address this issue in more detail in Chapter Two but for the sake of clarifying terminology I will describe ‘nudes’ including male, female, and of ambiguous (or third) gender as separate from ‘sex/intercourse scenes’.

¹⁴⁵ For discussions on the nude in nineteenth-century art see Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956).; Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude* (New York: Routledge, 1992).; Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).; Alison Smith, “The ‘British Matron’ and the Body Beautiful: the Nude Debate of 1885,” in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 217-239.; Martin Myrone, “Prudery, Pornography and the Victorian Nude,” in *Exposed: The Victorian Nude*, ed. Alison Smith (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 23-35.; Michael Hatt, “Physical Culture: the Male Nude and Sculpture in Late Victorian Britain,” in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 240-256.

¹⁴⁶ A BRITISH MATRON., “A Woman’s Plea,” *The Times*, May 20, 1885, 10.

¹⁴⁷ H., “Nude Studies: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times*, May 25, 1885, 10.; all of the following lines from the article are from this reference.

Further complicating the description of these items is the means of describing the anatomical body parts and genitals. Here, I have selected the phrases ‘Primarily “phallic” objects’ and ‘Primarily ‘yonic’ objects’ to describe objects that most clearly show the male penis in either erect or flaccid states and female genitalia, respectively.¹⁴⁸ These are the traditional terms used when researching these objects from the primary sources such as Payne Knight, as well as modern scholarship. The complexity of these terms as potentially religious images and the discussion of the Museum Secretum as a ‘phallic’ collection is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two. Finding a female version that possesses the same level of spiritual and ritual connotation is somewhat challenging, as less secondary scholarship is focused on such material. Additionally, scientific terms such as ‘vulvic’, ‘vaginal’, or ‘uterine’ are too specific to a particular portion of the female anatomy, as many objects depict numerous sections of the reproductive organs, as understood by ancient anatomists. These descriptions also fail to express ‘generative’ and fertility-centred depictions of female genitals in the same way that ‘phallic’ is understood as a term. Therefore, I have selected to use the Sanskrit based term ‘yoni’ or ‘yonic’ as it possesses the religious significance in Hinduism that ‘phallus’ or ‘phallic’ possesses in the study of Greco-Roman images of male genitals.

Other groupings that need clarification are described by the terms ‘Surrogate Phallic Objects’ and ‘Surrogate Yonic Objects’. The Museum Secretum contains numerous objects that are not strictly anatomical. However, the theories of phallic and generative worship that form the basis for D’Hancarville’s work, Payne Knight’s *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, and Witt’s scrapbooks, include objects that are phallus-like, their hypothesis being that most, if not all, religious iconography emerged from worship of human fertility and generative organs.¹⁴⁹ I use the phrase ‘surrogate’, to emphasise that such objects are not direct representations of the human penis, testicles, breasts, or vulva/vagina/womb but, rather of objects that the private collectors, and possibly the original cultures of production, understood to be indirect representations. This includes coral ‘horns’, cowrie shells, etc. Distinguishing these objects from figurative

¹⁴⁸ “Primarily Phallic Objects” includes phallic votives, ithyphallic figures, zoomorphic phalli, non-penetrative female interaction with phallic objects.; “Primarily ‘yonic’ objects” includes vulvae votives, womb votives, Sheelana-gig objects, and other female figures with emphasised vulva.

¹⁴⁹ This will be covered in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three.

representations of the phallus or yoni is necessary to allow such objects to be observed without making assumptions about their production or reception, instead referencing the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century inclusion of such objects with other anatomical objects, without subscribing to a particular hypothesis before data analysis.

It is important to note that the descriptive terms selected as titles for categories, often extremely specific, have been chosen based on my personal visual analysis of the collected objects composing the Museum Secretum from the collections of Payne Knight, Townley, and Witt respectively. As this is a work of comparison among case studies, this definition of subject/theme is not exhaustive of all of the images and subjects within the entire Museum Secretum, but rather reflects how these specific private collections were composed, and are described within the Museum Secretum Register, and by archivists on the online collection platform.

3. Chapter One Conclusions and Summary

This thesis describes and applies new approaches to the study of the Museum Secretum collection and results are more broadly relevant to humanities research. A crucial point from this section is that the use of new technology in the form of source material (online collections and virtual objects) and analytic tools (comparative mathematical analysis), must be prompted by research questions, rather than seeking research questions that fit the latest technological breakthrough. In this case, the Museum Secretum, a single collection made of numerous intertwined privately collected objects, has been subjected to over-generalisation in terms of its initial purpose and continued function without careful academic analysis of the objects that compose it. Additionally, the British Museum has devoted significant time, effort and resources to create online and virtual collections, which represent a novel approach to curated public spaces for art display and global access. It is therefore important for art historians to apply new methods to utilise these collections, and to critique them.

Another key issue is to analyse online materials in innovative and informative ways, using simple and effective methods of comparison across time, space, and collectors. By compiling and comparing datasets using proportional studies across specific topics, larger themes emerge within

and between private and public collections. Interpretation of the data by a humanities specialist, in this case an art historian, using traditional methods, i.e. object biography, restructures narratives and debates about the Museum Secretum. This process exposes how almost exclusive use of private collector biography has led to misinformation about the content and purpose of this unusual collection, even in the digital collections, and offers robust analysis that does not rely on the popularity or textual material surrounding case studies, allowing for a more object-based, and hence less subjective, focus on collection studies. That is not to suggest that biographical and textual information should be entirely excluded from a thorough examination of the life of an object or collection. Instead, collector biography should be used as supporting evidence to the message that is portrayed by the object(s) within a collection rather than as the initial starting point of enquiry.

Finally, the complexity of terminology and the difficulty in categorisation over such long, fluctuating social structures and contexts is exposed by the process of data collection. This means that terminology must be carefully and rigorously employed to avoid inaccurate data analysis; this process of deconstruction should be applied more broadly in humanities research. Terminology selected should be based on the need to answer specific research questions. In this case, to deconstruct the difficulty in applying terms originating from the eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twenty-first-century descriptions of objects.

By employing this new source material and a comparative mathematical approach, the objects become agents and actors of historical change that can be measured and defined. Topics and trends within the Museum Secretum, such as the materiality and cultural representation, which have been neglected in favour of studying the presumed 'sexual' or 'erotic' subject matter, illustrate a complex web of priority and value placed on the private collections transformed into public collections. In the following chapters, I put this method into action, delivering results that expose the importance that neglected influences have had, and continue to have, on the collecting and curatorial practices that created the Museum Secretum.

Chapter Two

Seminal Collections: Richard Payne Knight, Charles Townley, and the Eighteenth Century

The Museum Secretum's founding date of 1865 suggests that the collection is a mid- to late-Victorian invention. If taken alone with no further chronological scope, the founding of the Museum Secretum on this date may support the idea that this was a collection built for the purpose of censorship of Witt's sexual objects in a purely Victorian context. However, the core of this collection is an amalgamation of smaller private collections donated or sold to the British Museum over the previous century from the institution's founding in 1753. Hence, to understand why the Museum Secretum was established it is necessary to examine the smaller, privately assembled collections from which it was constructed, and trace the deliberate inclusion or exclusion of objects within the Museum Secretum space and Museum Secretum Register. This research necessitates the application of two parallel processes. First, engaging with the objects assigned to the Museum Secretum to explore and expose their original purpose in the nineteenth century, and second, using comparative data analysis to reevaluate the intent and purpose of the eighteenth-century collectors who acquired the collections that contributed to the Museum Secretum. In short, to address questions about the reception of sexual and other Museum Secretum objects in the nineteenth century, it is essential to understand the legacy of the eighteenth-century collections and collectors that founded the sexual collections in the British Museum.

The eighteenth century marked a revolution in the practice of object collection and display in Britain and the rest of the world. Objects purchased, gifted to, and taken by British collectors in the eighteenth century become the original British Museum collections, and form the foundation for the continued acquisition, redistribution, and display of objects. This Enlightenment Era saw the birth of the modern day 'Museum' as a public institution as well as the private accumulation of material for personal appreciation and consumption.¹⁵⁰ In this context, all museums/archives/collections, including the Museum Secretum collection, are indebted to the

¹⁵⁰ While I am referring to larger, usually nationally funded public institutions, it is arguable that early, privately owned 'museums' existed much earlier. For more on these collections see Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, ed., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth- Century Europe* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2017).

eighteenth-century practice of object accumulation and display. Therefore, the selection of Payne Knight as the first case study in this thesis, with Townley as a contemporary “experimental control” collector/collection, is in part based on the importance of the eighteenth century within the realms of museums and collecting practice.¹⁵¹ Rather than start my enquiry with the Museum Secretum and the nineteenth-century collections, I explore the continuity of these objects through the various points of reception and collection from production to display across the last three centuries. Starting from the nineteenth-century collection would deny the influence of eighteenth-century collecting practice on the development of sexual collections, and museum display more generally. Therefore, the first section of this chapter will begin by introducing the general context of the discovery and reception of sexual objects in the eighteenth century, in particular Roman objects from Naples, before introducing the history of the Society of Dilettanti that unites the collectors chosen as case studies in this chapter.

At the centre of this thesis is the theory that collector biography and textual evidence has continued to influence the reception of collections and the objects that compose them, often with little concern for the data provided by a close analysis of the objects themselves.¹⁵² To expose the potential weaknesses of this process, as well as introduce alternative methods for approaching the Museum Secretum collection, it is important to first examine how Payne Knight’s and Townley’s biographies have been outlined previously in scholarship and what particular features of their backgrounds are most commonly referenced in relation to their collections.

The selection of Payne Knight as the primary case study in the context of the Museum Secretum is firstly due to the presence of numerous objects of his within the Museum Secretum Register labelled specifically as forming part of his 1824 donation. Secondly, virtually all scholarly discussions of the Museum Secretum, both of the traditional censorship model and the newer anthropological model of the Victorian reception of sexual objects, reference the work of Payne Knight and his colleagues from the Society of the Dilettanti.¹⁵³ His essay titled *A Discourse on the*

¹⁵¹ In shortening Richard Payne Knight’s name in this text I will use “Payne Knight”, though it should be noted that in some quotes or references from other secondary sources the shortening “Knight” may be used. Both refer to the same individual in this thesis.

¹⁵² I include literary contributions as part of the term ‘collector biography’.

¹⁵³ For examples see Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 22-28.; Gaimster, “Under Lock and Key”, 130-132.; Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” 50-57.

Worship of Priapus, privately published in 1786, has long been credited as the first work of its kind, using objects, symbols, and artistic representation as the primary source material for his explorations for this theological theory on the worship of fertility icons. This work will be presented in greater detail later in this chapter.

As is standard in quality mathematical and numerical analysis, having an experimental control with which to directly compare the results is necessary to produce usable and robust data. Therefore, it is necessary to select an appropriate collection that stands in contrast but is simultaneously comparable to Payne Knight's collection for direct comparative analysis. Payne Knight may be gaining traction in the scholarly community, particularly amongst sexologists, anthropologists, classicists, and classical receptionists, though his name recognition pales in comparison to that of his good friend and fellow Society of Dilettanti member Townley. The selection of Townley as a comparative case study for Payne Knight is based on several factors beyond their friendship and Dilettanti membership. Firstly, Townley's collection and specific objects within it are analysed, depicted, and referenced by Payne Knight within his *Discourse*, indicating that Townley's collection was central to the development of theories surrounding sexual objects during the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. Of key relevance to the comparative mathematical method I employ in this thesis is the fact that both collections are large, making them appropriate for comparison (Payne Knight's collection has 6,870 entries and Townley's collection has 8,452 entries on the British Museum online collection database). Both collections also have clear notations for the objects recorded into the Museum Secretum Register, making it possible to determine the proportions of their collections that contributed to the Museum Secretum collection starting in 1865.

A key aim of this thesis is to utilise undervalued and understudied source material in the research on sexual objects throughout recent history and therefore in the second section of this chapter, I introduce the comparative data report and analysis of the findings. I will outline both Collection A (Payne Knight's collection) and Collection B (Townley's collection) as a data report following the categories of material, culture/location, and finally subject of the objects within their collections and/or the Museum Secretum. A closer examination of these whole collections is particularly important with the collection of Payne Knight, which has had only one example of an overarching

attempt at categorisation by Penny and continues to be neglected in terms of detailed cataloging.¹⁵⁴ Instead, scholarship has made selective use of specific objects, most commonly objects depicting sexual themes, from the Payne Knight Collection to support research surrounding his *Discourse* and the legacy of his theories of sexual symbolism. This selective approach does not constitute a major transgression within the practice of art history or historical research *per se* but often supports an inaccurate and over-generalised picture of Payne Knight as a collector and antiquarian. As Vout states, “Richard Payne Knight seems less eccentric once we know that for every phallus he bequeathed to the British Museum, he gave tens of ancient coins.”¹⁵⁵ Therefore, this section offers new interpretations of Payne Knight’s collection by conducting quantitative and comparative research on contemporary private collectors including Townley’s well-known collection for contrast. Also problematic to the reception of Payne Knight’s collection is its strong and continued association with the Museum Secretum, which is described as a space of censorship. By repositioning the Museum Secretum as a scholarly collection into the nineteenth century, Payne Knight’s collection, as well as the other eighteenth-century collections that compose it, can be reexamined again not as victims of a prudish nineteenth century, but as private collections in their own right, contributing to larger questions and theories of sexuality and the role of sexual objects across time.

Finally, after determining an object representative of the sexual objects from the Payne Knight collection, in this case a miniature bronze figure here called the *Payne Knight Term*, I shall perform object biography tracing the life of a Priapic object that does not become part of the Museum Secretum. This third and final section will explore the theories surrounding the worship of Priapus and the (mis)identification of this figure in the nineteenth century as a Hercules statue within the nineteenth-century context. By tracing the objects such as the *Payne Knight Term*, as well as other sexual objects excluded from the Museum Secretum collection through curatorial selection, complex eighteenth- and nineteenth-century approaches to the function of sexual objects and construction of the body of the ‘other’ are explored.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Penny, “Collecting, Interpreting, and Imitating Ancient Art,” 65-82.

¹⁵⁵ Caroline Vout, *Sex on Show: Seeing the Erotic in Greece and Rome* (London: British Museum Press, 2013), 218.

¹⁵⁶ This basic structure of an introduction to biographical studies of the private collector, then data report and analysis, finally followed by a close object biography of a single object and its larger network directly parallels the structure of Chapter Three and the nineteenth-century case study of George Witt. This structure and method carried across both chapters encourages a further comparative process throughout this thesis and makes clear how this material has been

In this context, it is first necessary to contextualise the private collections, collecting practices, and the acquisitions of the objects that eventually compose the Museum Secretum Collections though have their origins more than one hundred years earlier in the eighteenth century.

1. Collector Biography

1.1 The Scholastic Amateur: Eighteenth-century Antiquarianism and the Society of Dilettanti

It is not possible within a thesis subchapter to do justice to the complexity and importance of the development and practices of eighteenth-century antiquarianism and classical reception. The details of the British aristocracy's Grand Tour tradition and the practices of collecting, displaying, and studying the materials of classical antiquity is at the crux of any discussion on British collecting in the eighteenth century and has been given much attention throughout the last few decades across multiple fields of research, particularly focused on the collection of larger sculptures and statuary.¹⁵⁷

What is most important to outline in this section is that Payne Knight, Townley, and their mutual friends collected during a period of rapid and sustained discovery and challenges to traditional constructions of classical society and how art/artefacts functioned within it. With the rediscovery and systematic excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum in 1738 under the direction of Karl Weber, never before seen art objects, interior design, physical remains, architectural, and archaeological material redefined the classical world.¹⁵⁸ Sexual objects were of particular interest

previously approached and how the new forms of approach conceived within this thesis can improve upon these traditional methods.

¹⁵⁷ For a few examples see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).; Jonathan Scott, *The Pleasures of Antiquity: British Collectors of Greece and Rome* (China: Yale University Press for Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2003).; Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of collecting in Britain since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ilaria Bignamini and Clare Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (New Haven and London: Yale University press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010).

¹⁵⁸ Christopher Charles Parslow, *Rediscovering Antiquity: Karl Weber and the Excavation of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae* (Italy: Cambridge University Press, 1998).; Pietro Giovanni Guzzo, Maria Rosaria Esposito, Nicoletta Ossanna Cavadini, ed., *Ercolano e Pompei: Visioni di una Scoperta* [Herculaneum and Pompeii: Visions of a Discovery] (Switzerland: Skira, 2018).

in this period and were something of a curiosity and/or surprise to eighteenth-century archaeologists. Whether understood as welcome or distastefully shocking, it is undeniable that these items presented a curious addition to the canon of Greco-Roman classical art for the eighteenth-century scholar. When it comes to the collection of sexual materials, in recent years Fisher and Langlands, de Caro, Vout, and Mary Beard have all explored the impetus of collecting in the eighteenth century, particularly in the Italian context.¹⁵⁹

The discovery of these new classical materials, sexual or otherwise, also coincided with important philosophical developments at the core of eighteenth-century ‘enlightenment’ research, namely that of Natural Philosophy. While there were numerous approaches to these enquiries, observable data from the natural world became the focus of scientific, and historical, research. This method of object focused empiricism translated into the world of art appreciation and research. Of particular importance during this period in the realms of art historical practice were the writings of Winckelmann. His work *A History of Ancient Art Among the Greeks* from 1763-1764 developed theories of classical art and the relationship of art to society based on close personal observations and reactions to visual material. Though it should be noted that Winckelmann had limited access to Greek originals and based his conclusions primarily on Italic copies. This categorisation of classical art, in which Winckelmann outlines a cyclical view of artistic merit with classical Greek characterised as the height of human attainment and culture, lay the groundwork for British art historical publications and works, of which, I would argue, Payne Knight’s writings sit at the very forefront. In this context of visibility and observable scientific enquiry, collections of artefacts, specimens, and art became part of the practice of intellectual exploration. British collectors soon dominated this world of competitive acquisitions of the newly unearthed, though admittedly not always the most canonically impressive, examples of Greco-Roman art.¹⁶⁰

British collecting of sexual objects, primarily Greco-Roman, emerges from the traditional practice of the Grand Tour and aristocratic explorations of the European continent. The Society of Dilettanti

¹⁵⁹ Fisher and Langlands, “The Censorship Myth and the Secret Museum,” 301-316.; de Caro, “Up and Down, In and Out,” 44-45.; Vout, *Sex on Show*, 204-237.; Mary Beard, “Dirty Little Secrets: Changing Displays of Pompeian ‘Erotica’”, in *The Last Days of Pompeii*, ed. Victoria C. Gardner Coates, Kenneth Lapatin, Jon L. Seydl (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2012), 60-70.

¹⁶⁰ Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 67-68.

sits within this tradition as membership of the society depended on physical journeys to the Italian peninsula from the group's inception, though the integrity of the supposed intellectual pursuits of the society in its early years is debatable. In the words of Horace Walpole in a letter from the 14th of April in 1743, the Society of Dilettanti was known as “a club, for which the nominal qualification is having been in Italy, and the real one, being drunk: the two chiefs are Lord Middlesex and Sir Francis Dashwood, who were seldom sober the whole time they were in Italy.”¹⁶¹ The group developed something of a libertine reputation in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, particularly with the scandals related to the antics of Francis Dashwood and the group's supposed links with the Hellfire Club. After the drunken evenings in taverns that escalated into political riots in both the 1730s and 1760s, members of The Society of Dilettanti began to make significant changes to their policies and practices in the hopes of creating a more respectable and scholastic reputation for the group – though arguably the thrills of drinking and sexualised adventure continued to be central to their meetings and general interests.¹⁶² By the 1760s and 70s the calibre of members had clearly changed. Gone were the scandalous libertines of the previous decades, at least in public reputation, replaced now with the most respectable minds of the enlightenment age including Sir Joseph Banks in 1764, Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1766, and Hamilton in 1777. The Society funded numerous publications in an attempt to earn credibility in the fields of science and art in the years leading up to the admittance of Payne Knight. For example, in 1763 they underwrote the first volume of *The Antiquities of Athens* and in 1769 the society funded the archaeological expedition that would result in the publication of *Ionian Antiquities*, two works that represent “the quintessential Enlightenment enterprise in the search for antiquity.”¹⁶³ Equally significant was the publication of catalogues outlining the private collections of the group's members. Particularly influential for Payne Knight's later work was the highly successful *Antiquites Etrusques, Greques et Romaines Tirées du Cabinet de M. Hamilton* in 1766 which detailed Hamilton's collection using the theories and writing of Pierre-Francois Hugues, otherwise

¹⁶¹ Horace Walpole, *Letter to Sir Horace Mann, Arlington Street, April 14, 1743*, (letter) in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir Horace Mann*, ed. W.S. Lewis, Warren Hunting Smith, George L. Lam (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), 18:211.

¹⁶² For more detailed discussion on the early scandals of the Society of Dilettanti see Jason M. Kelly, “Riots, Revelries, and Rumor: Libertinism and Masculine Association in Enlightenment London,” *Journal of British Studies* 45, no.4 (2006): 759–795.; For more on how art and collecting fed into the libertine interests of the group see Vout, *Classical Art*, 164-170.

¹⁶³ Ian Jenkins, “Ideas of Antiquity: Classical and Other Ancient Civilizations in the Age of Enlightenment,” in *Enlightenment. Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Kim Sloan and Andrew Burnett (London: British Museum Press, 2003), 168-177.

known as the Baron D'Hancarville, a flamboyant character, antiquarian, and mutual acquaintance of Townley.¹⁶⁴

As we shall see in the later section on Payne Knight's biography, even before his official membership in 1781, Payne Knight had a fruitful relationship with the Society of Dilettanti, their money funding his trips to Italy and the subsequent publishing of his travel books and illustrations. Eventually Payne Knight collaborated with his friend and, as of 1786, fellow member Townley to produce in 1809 the first volume of the *Specimens of Antient Sculpture: Aegyptian, Etruscan, Greek and Roman*, the first English language attempt at a significant work of art history practice, which developed from Winckelmann's conclusions and methods.

While Payne Knight and Townley both witnessed and bolstered the Society of Dilettanti to its intellectual height, the former was also present and complicit with its eventual fall from grace and the "displacement of the amateur."¹⁶⁵ By the early nineteenth century, after Payne Knight's embarrassment surrounding the Elgin Marble controversies (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter) the elite dilettante had been displaced "by a new kind of 'associational world,' in which 'associational' refers to professional organisations."¹⁶⁶ Though enthusiastic groups of amateurs continued to function, of particular relevance to this thesis the Anthropological Society of London (ASL) joined by Witt in the 1860s and supportive of the republishing of Payne Knight's *Discourse*, the dilettante was slowly replaced in authority by the professional academic and student of art and history by the end of the nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁴ For modern reprint see Pierre-Francois Hugues D'Hancarville, *The Complete Collection of Antiquities from the Cabinet of Sir William Hamilton*, ed. Sebastian Schütze and Madeleine Huweiler (Germany: Taschen, 2004).; For more detail about the original publication see Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 241-243.

¹⁶⁵ Bruce Redford, *Dilettanti: The Antic and Antique in Eighteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 181.

¹⁶⁶ Redford, *Dilettanti*, 181.; The term 'Elgin Marbles' is a controversial one and is used in this thesis instead of the commonly used 'Parthenon Marbles' to specifically indicate those marble items removed from the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens and transported to Great Britain from 1801-1812 by Lord Elgin. This is to mark them as distinct from the objects that remain in their original Greek location.; For scholarship from varied approaches to this idea of cultural ownership see Colin Renfrew, *Loot, Legitimacy and Ownership: The Ethical Crisis in Archaeology* (London: Duckworth, 2000).; James Cuno, *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over our Ancient Heritage* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

With this context laid out, it is now possible to describe in greater detail the contributions and biographical details of Payne Knight and Townley. Biography has been the primary approach to exploring their literary and cultural contributions. In the case of Payne Knight, I argue that biography has equally contributed to the erasure of his cultural influence and of the value placed on his collection. Payne Knight is written in modern scholarship as the amateur antiquarian who wrote a pamphlet on sexual antiquities and sexual objects, and his collection is used primarily to support discussions of this *Discourse* with little detailed analysis of the objects within. Consequently, the Museum Secretum's aim to contribute to and build upon Payne Knight's and Townley's scholarly tradition is easily overlooked, and this overreliance on biography as a source material has skewed the interpretation of his and the British Museum's collections.

1.2 Making a (S)expert: A Brief Biography of Richard Payne Knight

On the 23rd of April, 1824, Payne Knight died in his London home at Soho Square of what was described as “an apoplectic seizure.”¹⁶⁷ *The Times* printed in their 4th of May edition a relatively short notice regarding the politician and *arbiter elegantiarum* of London's high society.¹⁶⁸ The notice reads in full:

We understand Mr. Payne Knight has bequeathed his collection of medals, drawings, and bronzes, worth at least 30,000l., to the British Museum. They include a single volume of drawings by the inimitable Claude, which we recollect Mr. Knight purchased for 1,600l. from a private individual, who, a short time previously, had given 3l. for the same volume. Mr. Knight's general library is by no means particularly distinguished for either rare or splendid works.¹⁶⁹

This less than flattering description of Payne Knight's library and his apparent inability to properly value and source art within his collection is indicative of the diametrically opposed perspectives on the man, which continue to be debated in more recent scholarship.¹⁷⁰ Depending on the

¹⁶⁷ “On Wednesday last died Suddenly,” editorial, *Hereford Journal*, May 5, 1824, 3.

¹⁶⁸ This description comes from C. R. Dodwell, “Preface”, in *The Arrogant Connoisseur: Richard Payne Knight 1751-1824*, ed. Michael Clarke and Nicholas Penny (Great Britain: Manchester University Press, 1982), ix.

¹⁶⁹ “We understand Mr. Payne Knight has bequeathed,” editorial, *The Times*, May 4, 1824, 3.

¹⁷⁰ I refer here to the review by Alexander Potts of *The Arrogant Connoisseur* who described Payne Knight as “rather rigid and narrow” and the response by Nicholas Penny describing him as “a genuine scholar and an independent thinker.”; Alex Potts, “A Man of Taste's Picturesque,” review of *The Arrogant Connoisseur: Richard Payne Knight 1751-1824*, ed. Michael Clarke and Nicholas Penny, *Oxford Art Journal* 5.1 (1982), 70-76.

available newspaper, Payne Knight might become the champion of fine taste and scholarship or the arrogant buffoon who failed to see the merit of the Elgin Marbles in his address to the House of Common's Select Committee in 1816. It is in a similar notice of his death from the *Hereford Journal*, circulated in the county in which his estate of Downton Castle is located, that a possible insight into an initial cause for the controversy surrounding Payne Knight is exposed.

From his deep researches of Heathen Mythology, some persons who were not sufficiently learned to understand the nature, application, and objects of those researches have supposed that Mr. Knight's moral and religious principles were foeble [*sic*] and unfixed; but whoever has read the preface to his last production "the Romance of Alfred" must have discovered how very erroneous was that opinion.¹⁷¹

These "deep researches of Heathen Mythology" most likely refer to his work *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus and its Connection with the Mystic Theology of the Ancients*, a text produced relatively early in his writing career dated to 1786, though was ready for distribution to the Society of the Dilettanti in 1787.¹⁷² His collection has thus become entangled with his biography and bibliography, creating his reputation as an over ambitious amateur with a particular penchant for the sordid and profane.

i. Early Life

Payne Knight's childhood and adolescence have been dealt with in detail by other scholarly works, perhaps the most well-known being Penny's essay from the *Arrogant Connoisseur* catalogue.¹⁷³ However, in order to understand his later controversy, and how it came to influence the reception of his collection within and without the Museum Secretum's context, it is important to highlight the events and literature that created the later 'connoisseur' and 'dilettante.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ "On Wednesday last died Suddenly," 3.

¹⁷² The edition used here is the 1786/7 edition held in the Wellcome Library Collection. Richard Payne Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus and its Connection with the Mystic Theology of the Ancients*, in *An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus Lately Existing at Isernia, in the Kingdom of Naples: In Two Letters*, by William Hamilton and Richard Payne Knight (London: T. Spilsbury, *Snowbill*, 1786), 21-195, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/b28752156>; N.B. for the sake of clarity and concision, the text by Richard Payne Knight shall be referred to in a shorter form as *Discourse* and *Priapeia* interchangeably.

¹⁷³ Penny, "Richard Payne Knight: A Brief Life," 1-18.

¹⁷⁴ Please note that Payne Knight was very prolific and some of his writings including his *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*, *Inquiry into the Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*, much of his poetry, and

Payne Knight was born in 1751 to Thomas Knight, the second son of the successful and significantly wealthy ironmaster Richard Knight. His grandfather, whose entrepreneurial skill had increased the family's holdings to include over £45,000 worth of manor homes in the areas of Herefordshire and South Shropshire, elevated the family to the status of gentry, though admittedly very much located within in the *nouveau riche* segment of wealthy society.¹⁷⁵ Unlike his younger brother, Payne Knight was taught from home rather than attending a prestigious boarding school and was introduced to the study of ancient languages by his personal tutor.¹⁷⁶ Payne Knight never attended university and instead opted to travel on his own Grand Tour of Europe by traveling to France and Italy in 1772 and 1773. His 20s were marked by extensive travel, partly for practical reasons owing to the refurbishing of his new home at Downton, which was not complete until 1778, but also arguably because of his desire to establish himself amongst the foremost gentlemen-scholars of antiquities.

In April of 1777 at the age of 26, Knight embarked on the trip to Sicily that he hoped would eventually elevate him into the role of established classical enthusiast and dilettante in British high society. He and his travel companions, Jakob Philipp Hackert, Charles Gore and John Robert Cozens, together produced an illustrated diary guide of their travels through the exciting and, at that time, relatively unknown island of Sicily.¹⁷⁷ However, despite a long and detailed process of edits and working up of the material from the trip for publication in the following five years, the project remained unpublished until more than thirty years later when it was distributed publicly in a German translation by Goethe. The reason for this sudden abandonment of what seemed for so long to be a personally important project for the young Payne Knight has been explained in multiple ways.

other examples have been left out of this chapter. For a more thorough breakdown of his literary output see Penny, "Richard Payne Knight: A Brief Life," 1-18.

¹⁷⁵ Discussed in Charles J. Robinson, *A History of the Mansions and Manors of Herefordshire* (London: Longmans and Co. 1873; Hereford: James Hull, 1873), 57, 80, 105, 114, 172, 314.; Nicholas Penny also references a document in the Downton Castle Papers, T74-190 but the pandemic of 2020-2021 has made access to this material impossible at time of submission.; Penny, "Richard Payne Knight: A Brief Life," 110.

¹⁷⁶ Previous scholars have suggested this was due to ill health as a child. See Penny, "Richard Payne Knight: A Brief Life," 2.; Elisabeth Inglis-Jones, "The Knights of Downton Castle", *The National Library of Wales Journal* 15 (1968): 243.

¹⁷⁷ Richard Payne Knight, *Expedition into Sicily, 1777*, ed. Claudia Stumpf (London: British Museum Press, 1986).

Firstly, Stumpf states that “[t]he best explanation is perhaps the publication of rival accounts of Sicily; in particular, in 1781 (...) the Abbe de Saint-Non’s lavishly illustrated folios on southern Italy began to appear.”¹⁷⁸ She also suggests that it was a transition in the interest of Payne Knight in his scholarship, away from strictly archaeological concerns to a more sociological perspective on the study of ancient and modern societies.¹⁷⁹ However, if we place the work within the context of Payne Knight’s biography, and his taking up of collecting antiquities, it is easier to agree with the conclusions of Bruce Redford who explains that “the ‘turn’” had served its purpose when it was finally abandoned in 1782.¹⁸⁰ At this point, Payne Knight had already been admitted to the Society of Dilettanti a year previously and his main reason for publishing his guide no longer dictated his ability to socially/academically climb. Both Stumpf and Redford convincingly offer evidence of Knight’s imitative style of writing when compared to the work of other known members of the Society of Dilettanti. Redford goes so far as to suggest he fashioned himself as a “Hamiltonian Dilettante,” and managed to “emulate, and ultimately to rival, the career of Sir William Hamilton.”¹⁸¹

ii. Literary Output: A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus and Beyond

When Payne Knight, and at a later date Townley, joined the elite group of antiquarians, the Society of the Dilettanti had had something of a reputational makeover, transitioning from an image of raucous debauchery from the early eighteenth century into a respectable group of intellectuals by the 1770s. This shift is interesting in relation to the study of sexual objects as it influences the reception of Payne Knight’s (in)famous work, entitled *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus and its Connection with the Mystic Theology of the Ancients*. Known within the Society of Dilettanti as the *Priapeia*, the publication would link the work of Knight forever with Hamilton as the latter included his own letter that inspired the writing of the essay titled *An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus lately existing at Isernia in the Kingdom of Naples*.¹⁸² Payne Knight’s

¹⁷⁸ Claudia Stumpf, “Introduction,” in *Richard Payne Knight: Expedition into Sicily*, ed. Claudia Stumpf (London: British Museum Press, 1986), 15.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸⁰ Redford, *Dilettanti*, 83.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 83-85.; Stumpf, “Introduction,” 11-12.

¹⁸² William Hamilton, “A Letter from Sir William Hamilton & co.” in *An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus Lately Existing at Isernia, in the Kingdom of Naples: In Two Letters*, by William Hamilton and Richard

indebtedness to the work of Hamilton's close friend D'Hancarville is evident in the abstract theories apparent in both men's work and more directly as Payne Knight references the work of the eccentric French scholar by stating, "[t]hose who wish to know how generally the symbol, and the religion which is represented, once prevailed, will consult the great and elaborate work of Mr. D'Hancarville."¹⁸³ However, that is not to say that Knight's *Priapeia* is a mere copy of his friend's work, in particular his well circulated *Recherches sur L'Origine, L'Esprit et les Progrès des Arts de la Grèce* that highlighted the collection of Townley. Rather, Payne Knight took a much more concise and structured theological, sociological, and empirically scientific approach to the examination of 'generative' objects in early antiquity.¹⁸⁴ In fact, he feels it necessary to disclose that he "frequently find[s] it necessary to differ in opinion with the learned Author above mentioned, it will be always with the utmost deference and respect."¹⁸⁵

The basic premise of D'Hancarville's work that fascinated and inspired Payne Knight's *Discourse*, was the idea that all world religions, including pagan and monotheistic faiths, were fundamentally rooted in the human sexual and reproductive impulse; that representations of the phallus and the female equivalent such as the vulva or egg are visual representations of this common drive.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps the most obvious addition by Payne Knight to this theory is the pragmatic, clear, and erudite nature of the text he used to express his perspective. By using sexual objects from his own collection and those of his closest friends, Payne Knight used objects and empirical evidence to suggest that the visual symbols of religion are representative of the desire to worship the reproductive power of Nature in early civilisations. That, "[a]s these symbols were intended to

Payne Knight (London: T. Spilsbury, *Snowbill*, 1786), 3-19, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/b28752156>.

¹⁸³ Payne Knight, *Discourse*, 25.

¹⁸⁴ For an examination of the complexities and contribution of Payne knight to the study of sexuality in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century study of sexology see Jana Funke, Kate Fisher, Jen Grove, and Rebecca Langlands, "Illustrating Phallic Worship: Uses of Material Objects and the Production of Sexual Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Antiquarianism and Early Twentieth Century Sexual Science," *Work & Image* 33, no.3. (2017): 324-337.

¹⁸⁵ Payne Knight, *Discourse*, 25.

¹⁸⁶ Pierre François Hugues (Baron D'Hancarville), *Recherches sur L'Origine, L'Esprit et les Progrès des Arts de la Grèce* [Research on the Origin, Spirit, and Progress of the Arts of Greece] (London: B. Appleyard, 1785).; for recent scholarship on D'Hancarville, his works, and his relationship with the Society of Dilettanti circle see Francis Haskell, *Past and Present in Art and Taste: Selected Essays*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 30-45.; Daniel Orrells, *Sex: Antiquity and its Legacy*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 69-73.; Johnathan Scott, *Pleasures of Antiquity*, 172-193.; Redford, *Dilettanti*, 113-128.; Peter Funnell, "The Symbolical Language of Antiquity," in *The Arrogant Connoisseur: Richard Payne Knight 1751-1824*, ed. Michael Clarke and Nicholas Penny (Great Britain: Manchester University Press, 1982), 50-64.

express abstract ideas by objects of sight, the contrivers of them naturally selected those objects whose characteristic properties seemed to have the greatest analogy with the divine attributes which they wished to represent.”¹⁸⁷ For Knight, the use of sexual imagery, in particular phallic imagery, was in no way devious or perverse. He states that “[w]hatever the Greeks and Egyptians meant by the symbol in question, it was certainly nothing ludicrous or licentious” and for those who were still surprised by his perspective on these sexual objects, Payne Knight was happy to make them aware that they “have not been accustomed to divest their minds to the prejudices of education and fashion” and that they are constrained by the “artificial opinions and prejudices of any particular age or country.”¹⁸⁸

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to this work. In particular, its emphasis on phallic material has interested scholars working on the theories of Sigmund Freud and the development of sexology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁸⁹ Additionally, reframing this as an anti-Catholic, anti-Christian, and anti-clerical text has been an approach taken since G. S. Rousseau’s work on the *Discourse* in the 1980s.¹⁹⁰ However, these recent explorations have yet to fully engage with the specific objects that Payne Knight used to construct his theories. Jana Funke, Fisher, Grove, and Langlands have explored and filled part of the gap in this approach, for example by stressing the importance of studying the use of illustrations in Payne Knight’s first published version of his *Discourse*, and the subsequent sexological treatises inspired by it.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, how these images, and the actual/physical objects that they depict, fit within his larger practice of collecting, and how this informs the Museum Secretum and later collectors and curators of sexual materials, has not yet been addressed.

As Funke, et al. illustrate in their work, Payne Knight made extensive use of engravings in his *Discourse*. Such images were commonly used in antiquarian research during the period when the

¹⁸⁷ Payne Knight, *Discourse*, 28.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹⁸⁹ For examples see also Whitney Davis, “Wax Tokens of Libido: William Hamilton, Richard Payne Knight, and the Phalli of Isernia,” in *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*, ed. Roberta Panzanelli (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 107-129.; Whitney Davis, *Queer Beauty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 51-81.

¹⁹⁰ G. S. Rousseau, “The Sorrows of Priapus: Anticlericalism, Homosocial Desire, and Richard Payne Knight,” in *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, ed. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 101-153.

¹⁹¹ Funke et al, “Illustrating Phallic Worship.”

Discourse was published. Payne Knight and his colleagues saw these specific images as absolutely vital to place alongside the text as empirical evidence and source material.¹⁹² From the perspective of this thesis, what is also significant is the inclusion and attribution of these physical items to named private collections by way of reproduced images that are captioned and labelled. The engravings in Payne Knight's *Discourse* afforded the author greater exposure for his own, and his friend's including Townley's, growing collections amongst his peers. In the footnotes of his original text, Knight references figures from his own collection throughout the book, including a total of 25 individual objects listed as belonging to him (Figure 18a-b).¹⁹³ In order for these items to be included in his illustrations as engravings, rather than the easier and quicker method of producing an etching, Payne Knight and his colleagues had to collect the objects well in advance of printing the publication.¹⁹⁴ Hence, this approach testifies to the group's interest in sexual objects before it became the forefront of their intellectual research. However, it is important to note that using this single document as a representative case study for insight into the purpose of his collecting practices is problematic considering the small number of items it represented from his vast collection. 25 objects represent only a small fraction (<0.1%) of the 6,870 objects now considered to be donated at his death, though this number includes items collected in the 37 years of his life after his *Discourse* was published. However, considering Payne Knight had already been on his Grand Tour and had taken a second trip to Sicily by 1787, it is likely that his collection at this point would have contained far more than 25 objects even by this date. Clearly, these illustrated objects were selected out of his collection with great care to support his initial empirical enquiry on the notion of phallic worship.

As this thesis is concerned with the display and visual access to sexual material from private collections throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the question becomes, how visible was this text and the objects pictured within its pages during the eighteenth century? Scholars have generally operated under the assumption that the *Discourse* was actively suppressed by Payne Knight and distributed in a clandestine manner to only the closest members of the inner sanctum

¹⁹² Funke et al, "Illustrating Phallic Worship," 327.

¹⁹³ This is done by his notation 'belonging to me' from the original 1786/7 publication and occurs for 25 individual objects.

¹⁹⁴ James Raven, "The Book Trades," in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. Isavel Rivers (London: Continuum, 2003), 2:8-9.

of enthusiasts of the perverse, namely the Society of Dilettanti. While it is certainly true that the Society of Dilettanti decided to publish the work privately and in limited edition, Jason M. Kelly points out that the list of institutions receiving copies to add to their libraries and archives was extensive and included The British Museum, the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the Royal Society, the Royal Academy, the Royal Library of Copenhagen, and All Souls College, Oxford and the list of individuals with given their own copies included the Prince of Wales, John Wilkes, James Boswell, Edward Gibbon, Charles Burney, Jacob Bryant, the Marquis Piedemonte, and Giuseppe Mocenigo to name but a few.¹⁹⁵ If this list can be accused of anything, it is that the text was restricted to only a male, elite readership, which has important implications for modern reception but in the context of eighteenth-century enlightenment scholarship was not unique. There is scant evidence that Payne Knight actively sought to destroy or censor his text, even during and shortly after the scandals and criticisms surrounding his *Discourse*. Though, original copies have been increasingly difficult to acquire over the last two centuries and have now been largely replaced by the Victorian reprints, this does not constitute convincing evidence supporting the premise that Payne Knight, or the Society of Dilettanti, took action to suppress it, particularly when original printed copies were so few in number. Payne Knight's collection, like the collections of his very closest friends such as Townley, were therefore distributed to specific individuals and learned societies that the author most wanted to engage with in the scholarly world of the eighteenth century.

Payne Knight's and Townley's connections are not simply built on their shared interest in amassing impressive collections and their positions as Trustees of the British Museum where these collections would eventually be housed. While I outline Townley's biography later in this chapter, his role within the literary world of eighteenth-century empirical antiquarianism is intertwined with Payne Knight's writings and contributions. As previously seen, Townley's collection had a major influence on and place within Payne Knight's *Discourse*. Additionally, Townley was an antiquarian author and scholar in his own right, working on an ambitious project culminating in the publication of *Specimens of Antient Sculpture, Aegyptian, Etruscan, Greek, and Roman: Selected from Different Collections in Great Britain, by the Society of Dilettanti*. Townley's death

¹⁹⁵ Jason M. Kelley, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 224.

in 1805 precluded his sustained contribution to this work, leaving Payne Knight to write the majority of the introduction and main text that was finally published in 1809. However, it is generally acknowledged that both men led this project, with their own private collections creating the work's central focus.¹⁹⁶ *Specimens of Antient Sculpture* has to date certainly been under-studied when compared to other art historical treatises of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and even if compared to Payne Knight's other literary outputs.¹⁹⁷ For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to highlight the fact that both Payne Knight and Townley were actively conducting and engaging with overlapping research, including the study, collection, and, as discussed by Vicky Coltman and Colette Crossman, the pleasure of sexual material.¹⁹⁸ It should be noted at this juncture that to be aware of, and take pleasure in, the sexuality, sensuality, and eroticism of a piece of art, does not negate the intellectual respect and analytical skills of the same person. There should be no 'either/or' in reception of these collections. Payne Knight is not exclusively a collector of sexual antiquities because he wrote a pamphlet that pictured sexual objects any more than Townley's collection is non-sexual because he did not write such a treatise. Each had carefully collected objects placed within the Museum Secretum, though the evidence shows that this did not mean that their collections were censored, rather select objects were worth including using specific criteria.

Despite their broad overlapping fields of interest and, as described in the data section, a similar proportion of sexually themed objects within their collections, Payne Knight and his collection have been largely studied by sexual historians and classicists concerned with the reception of sexual objects, while Townley's marbles continue to be described by scholars as 'exceptional' in a general sense beyond the realm of erotica and sexuality.¹⁹⁹ I will explore the reasons for this in the data analysis section of this chapter but I next present the biographical events in the life of

¹⁹⁶ Redford, *Dilettanti*, 143-171.

¹⁹⁷ References include Andrew Ballantyne, "'Specimens of Antient Sculpture': Imperialism and the Decline of Art," *Art history* 25, no. 4 (2002): 550-565., Nicholas Penny, "Avatars of Antiquity," *The Burlington Magazine* 162, (2020): 964-965.

¹⁹⁸ Townley's sexual interest in his collecting of antiquities is discussed in Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collection in Britain Since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 159.; Colette Crossman, "Priapus in Park Street: Revealing Zoffany's Subtext in Charles Townley and Friends," *The British Art Journal* 6, no. 1 (2005): 71-80.

¹⁹⁹ Ellen Adams, "Defining and Displaying the Human Body: Collectors and Classics during the British Enlightenment." *Hermathena*, no. 187 (2009): 68.

Payne Knight that contributed to both his infamy and relative obscurity compared to his fellow enlightenment thinkers.

iii. “Jacobinically” Richard Payne Knight: Political and Public Life

Payne Knight’s reputation within the public arena was something of rollercoaster. *The Landscape*, a didactic poem attacking the landscaping style of ‘Capability’ Brown in favour of a rougher, more irregular form of garden, was perhaps surprisingly the work that made him notorious in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²⁰⁰ However, the politicisation of his work in this context hinted at his controversy as a thinker and as a politician. Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Orford and a noted Whig politician, writer, and antiquarian, described him as a man that “Jacobinacally [*sic*] would level the purity of gardens, would as malignantly as Tom Paine or Priestley guillotine Mr Brown.”²⁰¹ As a Whig politician representing Leominster and then Ludlow in the 1780s, Payne Knight’s literary works were rife for satire and attacks by his opponents both within and from outside his political party.²⁰² Payne Knight’s politics were closely linked to those of Charles James Fox, perhaps best known for supporting the French Revolution, as well as his long opposition to King George III. In this context, Payne Knight was a controversial political figure and, though not particularly outspoken on the debate floor, was nevertheless a political figure in the public eye.²⁰³ The satirical approaches to his literary outputs also extended to his collection. Payne Knight, in much the same manner as his friend and fellow dilettante Hamilton, was regularly depicted by caricaturists, such as James Gillray (1756-1815), as erotically and obsessively preoccupied with the sexual and priapic objects within his collection (Figures 19a-d).

With political rivalry and an unpopular reputation as a radical after the French Revolution and his dealings with Fox, the final death knell for Payne Knight’s public persona came in 1816. In the history of the British Museum, Payne Knight is best known for his inability to appreciate the value

²⁰⁰ Penny, “Richard Payne Knight: A Brief Life,” 10.

²⁰¹ Horace Walpole, *Letter to William Mason, March 22, 1796*, (letter), in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence, Horace Walpole’s Correspondence with William Mason II*, ed. W.S. Lewis, Grover Cronin, Jr., and Charles H. Bennett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 29:339.

²⁰² Penny, “Richard Payne Knight: A Brief Life,” 11.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

of the Elgin Marbles.²⁰⁴ In 1816, a committee of the members of the House of Commons convened to discuss the relative merits on the purchase of the Elgin Marbles using public funds. As an established member of the Society of Dilettanti, Payne Knight was called upon for his antiquarian assessment of their value as ancient artefacts and artworks to challenge the supportive positions of artists of the day, including Joseph Nollekens, John Flaxman, and Richard Westmacott to name a few.²⁰⁵ His inclusion in these debates clearly illustrated the high regard his opinion was kept in and the distinguished artistic and intellectual circle he was a leading member of. Based on the rationale outlined by Winckelmann, Payne Knight contended that the Elgin Marbles were not adequate examples of the work of Phidias and were the work of many hands in addition to being lesser architectural examples - the quality of which was diminished by the fact that they “were meant to be seen at the height of more than forty feet from the eye, [therefore] they can throw but little light upon the more important details of his art.”²⁰⁶ Though in many ways reasonable assertions, Payne Knight’s response, as well as the smug and patronising manner with which he presented it, consolidated his reputation as amateurish “in the newly pejorative sense.”²⁰⁷

1.3 Catholicism, Collecting, and Celebrity: A Brief Biography of Charles Townley

Though Townley in many ways is not the primary case study in this chapter, as the object biography section will examine an object from Payne Knight’s collection, a brief outline of his biography in relation to Payne Knight’s is necessary for comparative analysis.²⁰⁸ Born in 1737 in his family’s ancestral stately home Towneley Hall, Townley was born into the British aristocratic elite of the time.²⁰⁹ However, his family were devout Catholics, as documented in later Towneley Hall registers, and were not immune from scandal due to their long lineage dating back to the

²⁰⁴ For a full account of the proceedings see Redford, *Dilettanti*, 173-182.

²⁰⁵ For more on the debate see William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles: The Controversial History of the Parthenon Sculptures* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 162-179.

²⁰⁶ Richard Payne Knight for The Society of the Dilettanti, *Specimens of Antient Sculpture Ægyptian, Etruscan, Greek, and Roman* (London: T. Bensley, 1809), 1:xxxix.

²⁰⁷ Redford, *Dilettanti*, 173.

²⁰⁸ For further reading on Townley see Gerard Vaughan, “The Collecting of Classical Antiquities in England in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Charles Townley (1737-1805) and His Circle” (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1988); Brian F. Cook, *The Townley Marbles* (London: British Museum Press, 1985).

²⁰⁹ The variation in spelling is due to the general preference for the ‘Townley’ spelling by Charles Townley, which subsequently was abandoned by his successor and returned to the traditional ‘Towneley’ spelling after his death. They are, however, simply variations on the same family name.

fourteenth century.²¹⁰ The previous generations, before Charles inherited his family's estate, had been frequently embroiled in the Jacobite rebellions of the early eighteenth century, most notably his paternal grandfather Richard Towneley who was arrested and eventually acquitted on charges of treason after the Jacobite rebellion of 1715, and his great uncles, John and Francis Towneley, who both joined the French army before serving in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 ending in Francis' public execution in 1746.²¹¹

Townley's early childhood was therefore intertwined with the turmoil of his family's association with treason and their public punishment. It is perhaps no wonder then that Townley sought refuge in his multiple travels abroad starting with a trip to Italy in 1767 that prompted his life-long interest in the classical world and art objects. Unlike Payne Knight, however, Townley had the benefit of a quality education and access to prominent figures by virtue of his long-established name. His vast personal fortune afforded him the opportunity to amass an extensive collection that granted him something of a celebrity status amongst the dilettante community at the time. By the 1770s he was well acquainted with Hamilton and the Baron d'Hancarville, eventually being convinced by his new friend Payne Knight to join the Society of the Dilettanti in order to work on the first volume of *Specimens of Antient Sculpture* with his prolific friend. Townley never delivered the large amount of scholarship that Payne Knight produced, though his exceptionally detailed and extensive notes, receipts, catalogues, and correspondence pertaining to his collection are excellent and oft cited source materials for understanding the manner and method of eighteenth-century collecting.

On his death in 1805, Townley was celebrated by the public as a collector of antiquities and fine art. This stands in stark contrast to Payne Knight whose fall from grace tainted his scholarly reputation and, I would argue, his collections for later audiences, following the Elgin Marbles debacle. Townley, in part due to his inability to be a political public figure due to his catholic background and family associations, did not attract the same vitriolic political enemies that would

²¹⁰ Publications of the Catholic Record Society, *Miscellanea*, vol. 2 (London: The Arden Press, 1906), 306-307.

²¹¹ Towneley Hall Society, *Tracing the Towneleys 2004*. (Web: Towneley Hall Society, 2004), 13-14, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.towneleyhallsociety.co.uk/Towneley.pdf>.

face Payne Knight. Additionally, Townley never took part in the debates on the merits of the Elgin Marbles, solidifying his image as the ideal representative for the enlightenment collector.

Payne Knight's biography sets the stage for the reception of his collection, its underwhelming description already present in his obituary. Compared to Townley, whose public life did not attract the same level of scrutiny, despite his family's Jacobite associations, Payne Knight's legacy is one tainted by public humiliation. As we shall see in the next section, this has lasting results for his collection and the reception his collected objects both allocated to and excluded from the Museum Secretum established in 1865 by the British Museum. To expose, explain, and readdress this inherent and long entrenched bias it is therefore necessary to explore the actual contents of Payne Knight's collection within the British Museum's collections today, before exploring how the sexual objects assigned to the Museum Secretum from his collection are informed by their eighteenth-century private collecting context. This approach illuminates the underpinning reception of these eighteenth-century collector's items within a specialist nineteenth-century curated object grouping.

2. Data Report and Comparative Analysis

To understand how private collector biography influenced reception of the Museum Secretum, it is necessary to evaluate the contents of these collections thoroughly without recourse to potential biographical bias. This approach requires that the objects are used as primary sources in the comparative analyses, while biographical information is relegated to supporting roles. As discussed in the introduction and methodology chapters of this thesis, this process allows for a more rigorous approach to evaluate and understand the purpose of accumulating sexual objects in the larger private collections of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This approach also provides novel perspectives to examine and reevaluate how private collections influenced the intended purpose of the Museum Secretum by performing object biography rooted in traditional art historical practice.

Examining private collections in their original state at the time of their donations is necessary before conducting further research as it provides a firm basis for pursuing several avenues of

inquiry. Firstly, it allows for a clear understanding of the context of these sexual objects as collected items. That is, rather than suggesting using selective objects and/or images from the collection to support a biographical, literary/text based and potentially biased narrative, it is possible to create much broader and more precise perspectives describing where sexual objects fit into the wider collecting practices of the eighteenth-century case studies. Secondly, it is possible to examine the reception/accessibility of virtual objects to modern audiences, which can indicate how visually present these items continue to be on the online archives of the British Museum, as comparative studies reveal new insights into why certain curatorial choices were made in recent years. Finally, this approach permits more rigorous selection of objects that represent an entire collection, allowing more precision in closer study of the Museum Secretum by determining which objects are actively included or excluded during curation.

The reasons for selecting the categories of material composition, understood culture/place/location of production, and subject/theme of the object were discussed in greater detail in Chapter One of this thesis. Therefore, in this section I shall present and describe the numerical findings for each collection by each category before hypothesising potential reasons for these findings in the comparative numerical data analysis section. In order to further remove the collection from the biography of the collector for the report section, I will refer to Payne Knight's Collection as Collection A, Townley's collection as Collection B, and Witt's Collection as Collection C.

2.1 Material

i. Report

The results from the data analysis of Collection A illustrate that it is primarily composed of the Level 2 term material 'Metals' which make up 5488 objects, or 80% of the entire collection (Table 3 and Chart 1). This observation alone reveals a major predilection for collecting metal objects. Paper materials make up the next largest group with 11% of this collection. The Level 2 term 'Metal', does not, however, identify specific preferences within this material category, and it is important to next delve into the sub-categories within this broader category. Particular concerns are whether there is a preferences manifest for precious or common metals, composites, and/or how these materials are presented as object (i.e. whether they are coins, figures, jewelry, etc.).

Of the 5488 metal objects within Collection A, 2919 objects are silver (53%), 278 objects are gold (5%), and 745 objects are bronze (13.5%). In contrast, iron objects make up only .07% of all of the metal objects are present in collection A, while remaining objects in this category (~30%) are listed as metal composites, or no further details are available in the online catalogue (Table 4). From this observation alone, it would appear that the priority for collecting these items is in large part based on an interest in metal objects.

Deeper insights into collector preferences, with consequent reduced risk of being misled by reliance on limited data, can be generated by performing similar comparative analyses of the entire collection using other categorical descriptive terms, including quantity, time-period, and antique interest. For example, without additional comparisons it could be argued erroneously that metal collecting was a common theme in eighteenth-century antiquarianism.

To illustrate the power of this approach, Collection B provides a striking contrast to Collection A. A cursory analysis of collection B, reveals that objects are more evenly distributed amongst material categories than Collection A. Paper objects, including sketches, notes, watercolours, and prints, make up the majority of the 8,452 objects listed in the collection online at 37% of the entire collection. The next largest groups are metal objects consisting of 23% of the entire collection and stone objects representing 15% of Collection B (Table 3 and Chart 2).

While more metal than stone objects are included in Collection B, applying Level 3 terms reveals a more complex story through the numbers. Collection B metal sub-categories are composed of 4% iron, 70.5% bronze, 2% silver, and 10% gold, uncovering a priority for collecting bronze objects, a metal more commonly used for statuary and figurative representations, while silver, the major metal sub-category found in Collection A, is a precious metal commonly used to forge coins (Table 4).

Similarly, though there are fewer stone than metal items in Collection B, the rarity and relative value of the stone material compared to Collection A suggests that Collector B placed more substantial financial investments on collecting stone materials. Of particular note is the large

disparity between the marble objects present within Collection A (11 or 9% of the stone items collected) versus Collection B (308 or 23% of the stone items collected) (Table 5).

ii. Comparative Analysis

Traditionally speaking, Payne Knight's collection in the eighteenth century was described based on his collection of paintings and drawings by Claude, as confirmed by his death notice from *The Times*. From the data it is clear that this is a false representation of his collection as a whole, and his primary interest was in the collection of metal materials.

Within modern scholarship, the same collection has been described as primarily a bronze collection, a view that clearly conflicts with numerical analysis of objects collected, as bronze objects comprise only 13.5% of metal objects in the entire collection. In part, this inaccurate categorisation arises due to the type of objects formed of each material. The silver objects are mostly coins, while most bronze objects are figurative sculptural artifacts. Therefore, the description of Payne Knight's collection as primarily bronze emerges from specialised interests of art historians and classicists examining the collection, not from the reality of what is found within the entire collection.

If biographical information is brought into consideration, Townley's extreme wealth may be assumed to be the primary reason for his relative lack of interest in metal objects compared to stone. Following this premise, the metal objects within Townley's collection might be expected to be of more precious materials compared to Payne Knight's. However, numerical data analyses reveal something quite different driving collector preferences.

While this approach confirms the biographical reading of Townley as a collector with a primary interest in sculpture collection, such as the famous Townley Marbles, it challenges the prevailing view of Payne Knight as a collector interested primarily in acquiring bronze statuary. Analysing the material of the collection suggests that Payne Knight was far more interested in collecting coins and other miniature metal objects than statuary.

2.2 Culture, Location, Place of Production

i. Report

Determining the location of production of an object with precision is particularly difficult for items collected in the eighteenth century. Definitions of cultural, national, ethnic, racial, and regional identities have dramatically shifted over time and authenticating original findspots is often impossible due to loss of information over time, or never having it documented in the first place. In many cases, the British Museum's online database reflects this lack of precision by simply not including any official location information. However, from the information provided by applying Level 1 terms to the online database, it emerges that Collection A is ~57% European and ~20% Asian, most commonly South Asian, in origin (Chart 4). Similarly, 33% of objects found in Collection B are positively identifiable as European in origin, with only 1% Asian and 1% African (North African) in origin (Chart 5). However, continental definitions are not specific enough to give an accurate picture of the collections as whole entities.

Applying level 2 categorical terminology reveals deeper perspectives into collector priorities. For both collections, the top sub-category relating to location and place of production is 'Classical World', a term that generally describes Greco-Roman cultures and comprises the larger concept of 'antiquity.' 74% of Collection A and 50% of Collection B are categorised under this term, though these proportions include large donations of paper items produced during the eighteenth century. When paper items are excluded, proportions of antiquities are far greater with 90.5% of Collection A and 79% of Collection B originating from 'The Classical World.'

However, it is possible and important to go a step further within these cultural definitions, as this process elucidates the later priorities of the curators of the Museum Secretum. From the nineteenth-century context, MS objects from various private collections are sub-divided into groups that include Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Medieval, et. al. Later in this chapter I will introduce the breakdown of categories within the Museum Secretum collection based on object biography. However, in an attempt to minimise the influence of nineteenth-century terminology, cultural categories will be assigned by the labels given on the online database alone. As might be expected, the terms Greek and Roman are the most common cultural categories represented in both

collections at Level 3 terminology. Collection A has 4428 Greek objects (64.5% of the total collection and 78.5% non-paper objects) and 521 Roman objects (7.6% of the total collection and 9% non-paper objects). In comparison, Collection B has 503 Greek objects (6% of the total collection and 9% non-paper objects) and 3567 Roman objects (42% of the total collection and 67% non-paper objects).

ii. Comparative Analysis

Differences in cultural representation could be interpreted as evidence supporting the conclusion that Collector A was primarily interested in Greek items while Collector B prized Roman over Greek objects. However, when object biography and (art) historical expertise are also considered these interpretations are revealed to be incorrect. Firstly, from an object centered approach, the scale of the objects within each group is a key factor that must be considered when examining collector preferences. Collection A mostly consists of small-scale items, mainly coins, miniature statuary, etc., while Collection B contains objects with a much more diverse scale including life-sized and over-life-sized marble sculptures. In the context of eighteenth-century collecting, this suggests that object material and portability may dictate which regions are available for collector acquisitions, rather than collector preferences for specific regions. Due to the inaccessibility of Greece to British Grand Tourists in the eighteenth century in part the result of a lack of transport infrastructure in the region, most collection, categorisation, and theorising about Greek art and culture was mediated through Roman art. For example, marble copies of Greek statues produced by the Romans, such as those collected by Townley, were preserved on the much more frequently visited Italian peninsula. In this context, though Collection B is largely ‘Roman’ in production, it is likely that these items were collected due to their links to Greek antiquity. In contrast, the coins and small items present in Collection A have far more portability; in practical terms, this means that many of these objects were Greek originals, as coins in particular circulate amongst populations much more easily and rapidly than large scale statuary. Therefore, it is most accurate to describe both collections under the cultural identification of Greco-Roman in nature.

It is unfair to pass judgement on Collections A and B for lacking the extensive cultural diversity present in the nineteenth-century counterpart Collection C. Before the nineteenth century Britain

had not established an extensive colonial empire that made collecting across the globe possible for Witt. Additionally, transport in the form of shipping or tourism was not widely available in these regions in the eighteenth century. However, as we shall see in Chapter Three, the inclusion of more diverse cultures in the Museum Secretum implies sustained scholarship of sexual objects throughout the nineteenth century from the outset of the collection's founding in 1865, and a specifically anthropological approach independent and distinct from eighteenth-century antiquarian predecessors.

2.3 Subject/Theme

As discussed in the methodology section of this thesis, defining a 'subject' or 'theme' of a collected object is problematic due to reclassifications, new research, viewer bias, and a multitude of other complicated factors that may redefine the interpretation of an object or image. In particular, what constitutes a 'sexual' object is highly subjective and always requires a personal interpretation. What needs to be distinguished is the difference between a sexual object and an object included in the Museum Secretum collection and register. In terms of this thesis, and to test the prevailing hypothesis based on previous scholarship that the Museum Secretum is a censorial space, I include all Museum Secretum objects under the category of 'eroticism/sex' as suggested in previous work by Johns, Gaimster, and Frost.²¹² On a fundamental level, this thesis is concerned with the subject matter of specified collections at two levels. Firstly, as a whole collection donated to, or purchased by the British Museum upon the death of the private collector. Secondly, how these objects can be defined within the Museum Secretum and the specific images of a sexual nature within this context.

i. Whole collections

i.a) Report

Applying the general keyword search available on the British Museum online collections database reveals that most objects originating from eighteenth-century private collections are not classified under the heading 'eroticism/sex'. The top 5 categories for Collection A are religion/belief (1987

²¹² Johns, *Sex and Symbol*, 15-35; Gaimster, "Under Lock and Key," 132-139.; Frost, "Secret Museums," 30-31.

objects), myth/legend (1797 objects), classical mythology (1710 objects), deity (1682 objects), and classical deity (1588 objects). The top categories for Collection B are myth/legend (3383 objects), classical mythology (3266 objects), religion/belief (2992 objects), deity (2643 objects), and classical deity (643 objects). Under the search term ‘eroticism/sex’, only 4 items are listed from Collection A while 75 items are listed from Collection B.

i.b) Analysis

It is important to point out that multiple terms cited above are applied to the same object in many cases. This means that these terms do not represent the scope of the entire collections. However, compared to keywords commonly applied for the nineteenth-century collection of Witt, interesting distinctions emerge, as well as clear tendencies to specify the nature of an object’s perceived eroticism when applied to Witt’s collection, compared to objects originating from eighteenth-century collections. This point, and its implications are addressed in more depth in Chapter Three.

Importantly, it should not be concluded from this data analysis that lack of categorical labels denotes absence of objects that fall into a specific category. For instance, many objects from the nineteenth-century collection of Witt with similar physical forms, and therefore often similar subjects/themes, to examples from both Collection A and Collection B are labelled as part of the category ‘eroticism/sex’. However, analogous eighteenth-century counterparts are not given the same label (For example see Figures 20a-c).

Two conclusions might be made from these results. Firstly, that the primary concern of both Collection A and Collection B are based on representations of classical religion and mythology above and beyond the sexuality of the image. This reading of the subjects within their collections implies that the eroticism or sexuality of an image to an eighteenth-century dilettante was immediately placed into the narrative of D’Hancarville’s and Knight’s worship of phallic and fertility objects. Secondly, taking this a step further, it is simultaneously possible, if not probable, that there is a reluctance of curators who study classical Greek and Roman antiquities, and consequently the reception of the art in this period, to label these objects under the banner of eroticism/sex on a digital platform. Due to the lack of information provided to public audiences on

the collections online, identifying the dates that these curatorial decisions are made, the people responsible for applying these labels, and/or other relevant criteria for assessing the wider context for display on the online cataloging system is not immediately possible. However, the differing archival preferences across the varied departments within the British Museum support this second conclusion. In each eighteenth-century collection, the majority of the objects are paper items and as such were not included in the Museum Secretum Register despite their depiction of sexual objects included in the Museum Secretum collection, or their later definition as illustrative of eroticism/sex (Figures 21 and 22). The Department of Prints and Drawings is perhaps more inclusive and liberal with its use of the label 'eroticism/sex' compared to the Department of Greece and Rome.

By avoiding this label, curators are most likely attempting to position these objects within their original ancient contexts, reflecting the interpretation that in their classical environments these items would not have been viewed as 'sexual', 'erotic', or 'arousing'.²¹³ However, it is noticeable in the data that proportionally more of Witt's items are listed under this category of 'eroticism/sex' within the context of the Department of Greece and Rome, despite visual similarities to objects in Collections A and B that do not receive the same 'eroticism/sex' keyword association. This point suggests a different approach to the objects in the nineteenth-century collection compared to eighteenth-century counterparts.

As illustrated in the literature review at the start of this thesis, the majority of scholarship examining Payne Knight in particular has been performed by classicists and museum studies scholars who by the nature of their disciplines deal with the objects in partnership, though often subsidiary to, textual material. From this reception perspective in which the eighteenth century is in essence victim to the censorial practice of the nineteenth-century curation, with the Museum Secretum as its pinnacle, there is arguably a bias present in the labelling of an object's theme or subject in the online records today based on the understanding of it as having been collected by either a collector in the eighteenth or nineteenth century as illustrated by the selective use of keywords supported by the comparative data analysis.

²¹³ For examples see Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, 11-12.; Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 39-96.

ii. Museum Secretum/Sexual Objects

ii.a) Report

A primary goal of this thesis is to explore the role of the private collection and private collector's biography in the development of the Museum Secretum and its reception. Accordingly, this section will look at the Museum Secretum objects exclusively as a 'subject/theme' in their own right, reexamining the construction of this space as predominantly one of sexual objects and their censorship. Simultaneously, this analysis challenges the prevailing notion of Payne Knight's collection as a source of direct inspiration for the Museum Secretum collection. As the numerical data illustrates, defining all objects assigned to the Museum Secretum as sexual misrepresents both the nature of Payne Knight's collection and the Museum Secretum collection.

The number of Museum Secretum objects originating from Collection A is 55, representing around 0.8% of the total collection. Collection B is similarly represented with 107 objects, or 1.3% of the collection, listed in the MSR at some point. Applying Level 3 terms to this analysis allows for a closer reading of the subject matter present in the Museum Secretum and the private Collections A and B (Charts 10 and 11). A clear result of sexual subject preference is clear from the Collection A data with 98% falling under the category of 'Primarily Phallic Objects' while only one object, which also has a phallic element to its representation, falls under the 'Third Gender' category (i.e. it is a representation of a 'Hermaphrodite' with an erect phallus; Figure 23). Similarly, Collection B is mostly representative of phallic objects with 70% falling under this category. However, there is more interest by this collector, at least as represented in the Museum Secretum, in procuring other sexual representations as 14% of the objects are of 'Mixed Gender Partners Sex/Intercourse Scenes' and 5% 'Bestiality Sex/Intercourse scenes.'

ii.b) Analysis

The results of numerical data analysis prompt the question of why do differences in sexual subject interest emerge between collectors? Collector A appears to have little to no interest in coupled sexual acts while Collector B seems to have a penchant not only for generally 'heterosexual'- or mixed sex- couples and bestiality alongside phallic iconography. Questions about the collector's

sexuality may be the next logical step in the process of discussion, a process that has arguably led to an over intellectualisation, and asexualisation in some ways, of Collector A. In modern scholarship, Payne Knight's collections are rarely cast in light of his sexual inclinations unlike the nineteenth-century 'pornophiles' such as Witt, perhaps in part due to the lack of coupled intercourse depicted in his collected objects in addition to his intellectual outputs on the study of ancient sex and fertility cults. Payne Knight becomes the disinterested intellect rather than a sexual human being. However, there is evidence from correspondence of his contemporaries that Payne Knight was known to be something of a womaniser, with records of him having a mistress in 1794 and his reputation for 'philandering' in his relationships with women.²¹⁴ The rampant sexuality of Payne Knight in his lifetime has not served the censorship myth of the Museum Secretum as it is a characteristic that might challenge a non-sexual, cerebral-intellectualism narrative that supports the idea of a censorial nineteenth-century reception hell-bent on removing scholarly studies of sexual material.²¹⁵ The censorship myth of the Museum Secretum requires an unengaged, emotionally reactive, and unintelligent response to sexual objects in the nineteenth century in stark contrast to the researched and almost exclusively thoughtful approach to the same objects in the eighteenth century.

However, to imply that the eighteenth-century collector is entirely intellectual in his approach to sexuality denies the complex humanity of the collector. Additionally, for the censorship myth to be accurate all sexual objects acquired by a collector in their lifetime would have to be moved into the Museum Secretum, and therefore represent their singular approach to sexuality as a personal act or experience, is unhelpful and inaccurate.

²¹⁴ Uvedale Price, *Price to Beaumont, 28 Nov. 1794*, (letter), from The Morgan Library and Museum. *Coleorton Papers*, accessed Nov 28, 2019, <https://www.themorgan.org/literary-historical/413883>.; Uvedale Price, *Price to Beaumont 16 August 1801*, (letter), from The Morgan Library and Museum, *Coleorton Papers*, accessed Nov 28, 2019, <https://www.themorgan.org/literary-historical/127339>.

²¹⁵ It should be noted that I do not suggest Payne Knight was exclusively heterosexual under the modern definition of the term, nor do I suggest Payne Knight would have identified under the banner of any one modern categorisation of sexuality. The discussion of his 'heterosexual' sexual encounters come from the descriptions of his sexual activity by price Price that exclusively discuss Payne Knight's sexuality as regards his attraction to women. However, satirical figures such as Figure 14a may suggest his contemporaries also encouraged a reading of his sexuality as non-exclusively opposite gender attracted.

If one instead understands the Museum Secretum as a highly curated and selective space to facilitate scholarly access, rather than a space to hide secrets that potentially conflict with prevailing morality, it is important to define and discuss the criteria used to decide how to include as well as exclude objects from the Museum Secretum. For example, despite obvious priapic imagery, numerous objects were not assigned to the Museum Secretum collection including an intaglio finger-ring depicting a phallic beast, column, snake, bee, and snail in fine detail from Collection B (Figure 24). While this oversight of a sexual object might be the result of a practical mistake or failure to examine all of the objects available in the nineteenth century, considering the large numbers of these oversights and the similarity in material, scale, quality, and imagery of these excluded items it is equally, if not more, likely that these are deliberate curatorial choices. In this context, there is a methodical approach to exclusion and inclusion beyond sexual imagery and censorial intent. These questions will be dealt with in greater detail in this chapter's object biography section.

2.4 Data Report Conclusions

To select a case study from Collection A to continue a close reading in the object biography section, the next stage is to define what the parameters would be for the selection of an object representative of the categorical distinctions examined so far by the data analysis. In the most basic sense, it can be concluded that Collection A is overwhelmingly concerned with the collection of metal as a material, a conclusion in keeping with Payne Knight's family history as iron masters. Additionally, it is clear that the eighteenth-century collections A and B are primarily concerned with investing in specific materials and the 'classical world' i.e. Greco-Roman cultures and so the object of enquiry should be representative of these cultures, in particular the 'Roman' as defined in the Museum Secretum Register. Finally, in order to study the sexual objects within the Museum Secretum, a subcategory that should define the object of focus is 'Primarily Phallic', including amulets or priapic figures. With these criteria in mind, the object selected as our case study in the next section is 1824,0471.1, described as a bronze herm of Hercules.

2.5 Visual Presences Today: From Physical to Virtual Display

To examine the hypothesis that collector biography is the primary factor used to define items from private collections as sexual objects and consign them to the Museum Secretum, I turn now to the virtual images from the British Museum online database to evaluate if the objects from Collections A and B, with particular focus on Museum Secretum objects, are visible in open access.

Firstly, I address the physical presence of these objects in the British Museum, a more traditional way to examine public accessibility. The British Museum estimates that at any given time only 1% of their total collection is on display to the public at the Bloomsbury site. Collection A has 294 objects physically on display currently. These objects are primarily sculpture (93 objects), containers (63) and coins (60), though the objects on display beyond these terms are diverse and include jewelry, furniture, etc. Proportionally, 4% of objects from Collection A are currently on public display, a sizeable number relative to the overall proportion of the entire Museum holdings on display. In striking contrast, 18% of Collection B (1,563 objects) is currently on display, a staggeringly high proportion considering the limited space available. Like Collection A, the objects on display from Collection B are diverse in terms of subject and type, though the largest group by far are gems (1,219 objects), containers (118 objects), and sculpture (112 objects). Additionally, one object from Collection B is included as a ‘must see’ of the British Museum hour long tour, i.e. object that should be prioritised by visitors on a short visit due to its quality and/or historical/artistic significance, suggesting its continued relevance and value to the British Museum today.²¹⁶

Some Museum Secretum objects are included in public display today, though in a limited capacity after the redistribution of the majority of the collection in the early- to mid-twentieth century. From Collection A, only one Museum Secretum object makes it into the Greek and Roman Life gallery (Room 69) and is categorised under the theme “Roman Music” (Figure 25a). Collection B has four Museum Secretum objects on display, two objects also in Room 69, under “Medicine” and “Household Gods and Popular Religion” (Figure 25b-c). The other two in Gallery 1 (G1),

²¹⁶ Trustees of the British Museum, “One Hour at the Museum Trail,” accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/object-trails/one-hour-museum>.

otherwise titled the Enlightenment Gallery, in a case titled “Religion and Ritual”. In all of these contexts, the element of sexual imagery is downplayed, instead opting to display these objects in relation to their cultural and religious value, both in terms of their initial production in Room 69 and purpose of collection in the Enlightenment Gallery. This small selection might indicate a desire to remove sexual objects from public viewing if former Museum Secretum objects are considered to be indicative of all sexual objects collected in the British Museum prior to the 1860s. However, when looking at the wider objects on display there are numerous examples of sexual objects that are visually similar to items from the Museum Secretum that do not appear in the register. For example, from Collection B two lamps with images of Leda entwined with Zeus in the form of a swan are included in the Museum Secretum Register, M.417 and M.418 (Figures 26 and 27). While neither object is currently on display, a small glass intaglio representing an almost identical composition and figural representation is on display in the British Museum today though is not referenced at all in the Museum Secretum Register (Figure 28). The reasons for the exclusion of this image in the Museum Secretum collection, as well as similar omissions, will be explored in the object biography section. However, it is important to note for this examination of display that sexual objects from these collections are more abundant beyond those that carry MS numbers. Visually and thematically similar objects to the Museum Secretum collection, i.e. sexual objects, on physical display in the British Museum number six items from Collection A and twenty in total from Collection B.

In recent years, particularly following the celebrated purchase and permanent display of sexual objects such as *The Warren Cup*, which was the centre of the exhibition *The Warren Cup: Sex and Society in Ancient Greece and Rome* in 2006, sexual objects have indeed been celebrated very publicly as part of the British Museum’s collection.²¹⁷ The purchase of the Warren Cup by the British Museum in 1999 for £1.8 million was the topic of very public and heated discussion, in large part because of the explicitly homoerotic subject matter adorning the silver cup (Figure 29).²¹⁸ In his object in focus book on the Warren Cup and its display in the British Museum, Dyfri Williams describes the 1990s and early 2000s as a time when “society had perhaps reached a

²¹⁷ Maeve Kennedy, “British Museum Exhibition Reveals Saucy Side of the Ancient World,” *The Guardian*, May 12, 2006, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/may/12/arts.artsnews>.

²¹⁸ Dyfri Williams, *The Warren Cup* (London: The British Museum Press, 2006), 5.

greater understanding and tolerance of both ancient and modern sexuality, and the cup could be displayed as a central object in the Museum’s main Roman gallery” – a celebration of modern liberalism and intellectualism compared to the “disapproval” of the British societies that came before.²¹⁹ It should also be noted that each of these modern sources justifies the display of this item as much for the quality of the craftsmanship of the Warren Cup – described as a “singular masterpiece of Roman art” - as for the importance of the subject matter.²²⁰

The British Museum has also moved to celebrate the LGBTQI+ representations and readings of objects within their collection. Of particular note is the development of their Desire, Love, Identity: LGBTQ Histories Trails launched in 2019, which notably include the Discobolus from Townley’s collection and a black figure amphora depicting pederasty from Witt’s collection.²²¹ In terms of historical timelines for the display of sexual objects, the significance of the explosion in interest in feminist and queer studies after the push for queer visibility after the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s-1990s should not be underestimated in the development of these inclusive approaches to sexual art. In this context, defining a specific past approach (i.e. Victorian) that is a dark age of secret closets, cupboards, and cabinets is particularly helpful when illustrating the changing of display practice. The new, modern, and inclusive approach to sexuality by museums and heritage institutions post-HIV/AIDS crisis appears to stand in direct opposition to the ‘secret’ museums that came before.

While these new masterpieces of sexually themed ancient objects are celebrated for pulling the “mask off” the British Museum’s collections, the Museum Secretum objects that have been housed within their collections for over one hundred years continue to be kept in relative obscurity. Further to this point, what is notable in the context of this thesis is the disparity between the two collections’ visibility in the physical display of sexual objects in the British Museum, with Collection A being proportionally underrepresented compared to Collection B in general as well as in terms of sexual objects presented.²²²

²¹⁹ Williams, *The Warren Cup*, 60-61.

²²⁰ Williams, *The Warren Cup*, 62.

²²¹ The Trustees of the British Museum, “Desire, Love, Identity: LGBTQ Histories Trail”, accessed Oct 15, 2021, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/object-trails/desire-love-identity-lgbtq-histories>.

²²² All of these rooms and galleries are available to online viewers using their Google tour options.

This disparity is also reflected in the online collection, which as a non-physical space allows, at least in principle, for far less restricted and much more detailed and extensive object display, though as secondary virtual images once removed from primary objects. In this context, 64% of Collection A is provided with a virtual image (4,375 objects) compared to 83% (7,094 objects) of Collection B that have an image attached to their digital record. From a thematic approach this trend continues, as only 12 objects from the 55 former Museum Secretum objects attributed to Collection A have a virtual image. In contrast, Collection B's former Museum Secretum objects are overwhelmingly provided an image at 93%. Clearly, the British Museum is not censoring the sexuality of the images from Collection A but is instead favouring the objects in one collection as being more worthy of exhibition on the digital platform.

Multiple factors influence the ability of a museum to produce digital images online and it is important to understand what goes into the process of selecting items and why some are given more priority than others. Firstly, the medium of the objects themselves is vitally important to this process. For example, a paper object can be passed through a digital scanner to generate a front and back impression of the object in a single or double action. Compare this process to a three-dimensional object, such as a coin or sculpture, and the amount of time and labour required to produce quality images increases significantly, meaning that it would be reasonable to assume there would be a predominance of paper items. Numerical data analysis confirm that paper makes up a large proportion of visual items on the online collections 1,143 for Collection A and 3,039 Collection B; these figures represent nearly all paper objects associated with both collections. Collection A's largest group of non-paper items displayed, perhaps unsurprisingly as they make up the majority of the initial donation from 1824, are metal objects at 3,127 objects. This means that 98% of the items with an image come from these materials, also an accurate representation of the collection's general contents, especially considering 86% of these metal objects are coins. However, special care is taken to provide images for the three-dimensional sculptures present in Collection B, i.e. Townley's collection, most likely due to the historical value that was placed on his sculpture collection. This comes first from the perceived quality of the objects themselves. The scale and material construction of Townley's collection was well-known throughout his lifetime, though the purchase of his collection by act of British Parliament for the British Museum for

£20,000 in 1805 clarifies the perceived quality and importance of his collection by the nation generally. However, this is most likely a very small fraction of the original purchase price by Townley and was negotiated with Townley's descendants during their financial troubles, as mentioned in the act of parliament outlining its purchase using public funds.²²³ As stated previously, items from this collection continue to be advertised as prime attractions on the British Museum's website, perhaps supported by the fact that the materials he collected were overwhelmingly marble and therefore considered both expensive and valuable. Additionally, many of the pieces in Townley's collection were reconstructed to appear as 'complete' – the most infamous being Townley's *Discobolus*, whose head was incorrectly reattached in the opposite facing direction. This point was not lost on Payne Knight in 1809, though emphatically denied by the British Museum throughout the nineteenth century.²²⁴

Collection A, i.e. Payne Knight's collection, is clearly not considered to be of such high 'quality.' While in monetary terms Knight's collection was valued at a higher price compared to the amount spent on Townley's, £30,000 to be precise, the fact that it was donated at no cost to the British public, and that it was well known that Townley's collection was worth more than the final purchase price meant that the actual value of Knight's donation paled in comparison to the legacy of Townley's.²²⁵ Additionally, Payne Knight's discrediting as an art critic and the subsequent anecdotes about his spending more on items in his collection than they were worth circulated widely even after his death. Perhaps in part to avoid competition with his friends Townley, who collected primarily sculpture, and Hamilton, renowned for his vase collection, Payne Knight collected small metal objects, though it is important to add that his family background as iron masters may have exerted a major influence on his collecting practices.²²⁶ In terms of how this might impact his collection's visibility in a practical sense, it is sensible for a museum funded publicly based on visitor numbers to advertise and visualise the most 'impressive' items from its

²²³ An Act to Vest the Townleian Collection of Antient Sculpture in the Trustees of the British Museum for the Use of the Public, 1805, 45 Geo. III.; in *Acts and Votes of Parliament relating to the British Museum with the Statutes and Rules thereof, and the Succession of Trustees and Officers* (London: Printed by W. Bulmer and co., 1805), 76.

²²⁴ For more on the *Townley Discobolus* see Payne Knight, *Specimens of Antient Sculpture*, 1:plate XXIX.; Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 199-202.; Dyfri Williams, *Masterpieces of Classical Art* (London: British Museum Press, 2009), 315.; Ian Jenkins, *The Discobolus* (London: British Museum Press, 2012).

²²⁵ The British Museum Bill- Mr Payne Knight's Bequest, 1824, Geo. IV, 4.

²²⁶ Johnathan Scott, *Pleasures of Antiquity*, 188.

collection, namely the items that large numbers of people will want to see. Practical as this process is, it tends to bolster the importance of some collector's contributions over others.

This point notwithstanding, the relative neglect of Payne Knight's collection, and the sexual objects within it, cannot simply be explained in terms of object value and a hierarchy of object materials. After all, Payne Knight's collection has been described by modern scholars as one of "great beauty".²²⁷ I would argue that Payne Knight's obscurity compared to Townley's, and the results this has had on the reception of his collection, is in large part due to the biography of the man and his fall from intellectual grace. The key to continued display of an artwork or artefact is its perceived value to scholarship. After his catastrophic failure to perceive value in the Elgin Marbles, Payne Knight's relationship to the objects he studied and collected was forever tainted.

Does this also impact the reception of the *Museum Secretum*? In recent years, there has been an attempt to revitalise and salvage Payne Knight's reputation as a scholar of ancient art. Perhaps his biographical details and infamy in the art historical world of the nineteenth century have encouraged an exploration of a more refined and less 'loaded' approach to his intellect, i.e. his extensive writings and literature. While academic focus has been squarely set on his writings, his collection remains relatively underrepresented and, consequently, underappreciated. Within the context of the *Museum Secretum*, the inescapable affiliation with Payne Knight's *Discourse* and his private collection is ever present, creating a barrier to scholarly interest in the objects themselves until now.

This section has explored the narrative constructed by the objects themselves from their private collection in the eighteenth century. Collection A, i.e. Payne Knight's collection, was not one that was primarily sexually themed and overwhelmingly censored by the creation of the *Museum Secretum* in the 1860s. Instead, it becomes clear through numerical data analysis that Payne Knight was far more concerned with the material of his collected objects, their production in the Greco-Roman period, and themes of religion and worship. This reevaluation of his entire collection based on comparative data analysis of Townley's entire collection generates a more accurate, less distorted, and less generalised perspective of the acquisition preferences of these antiquarian

²²⁷ Penny, "Collecting, Interpreting and Imitating Ancient Art," 68.

collectors. Along these same lines, the comparative absence of some object categories from Collection A, in particular three-dimensional items, from the virtual collection also places Payne Knight, and therefore the objects curated within the Museum Secretum, in relative obscurity to modern visitors to the physical museum and the online catalogues. By removing this relative obscurity, this thesis reevaluates how Payne Knight's collecting practices influenced the development of the Museum Secretum. By examining the objects from his collection that were excluded from the Museum Secretum, and which are similar to objects included within the Museum Secretum Register based on visual analysis and close readings of the records, the selections and choices of nineteenth-century curators expose the complexity and nuances of this infamous space.

3. Object Biography: Hercules, the *Payne Knight Term*, and Phallus(ies) Galore

Object 1824,0471.1, here labelled as the *Payne Knight Term*, though it has no official title, entered into the British Museum along with the entirety of Payne Knight's collection donated in 1824 (Figure 30). Like many of his objects, this item is a small bronze statue or statuette and is now housed in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities. It is not currently on display and there is no indication in recent records that it has ever been publicly exhibited since its acquisition in the early nineteenth century. However, unlike similar examples, this visibly erect phallic sculpture does not make it into the Museum Secretum collection. The object itself has no MS number attached to it physically, there is no MS number recorded in the digital database, and the Museum Secretum Register has no description of an object taken from Payne Knight's collection that matches the distinct details of the figure.

The *Payne Knight Term* can be comfortably described as a miniature since it stands at approximately 7cm in height. The black plinth adds an additional 2.5cm to the object height as it stands today. This plinth is cubic and the front is labelled with gold block lettering. In the top left corner is a number '1318' and below this number in a central position the title 'TERM OF HERCULES ?'. The bronze of the ancient object is un-gilded and has a dark sheen in keeping with its bronze material. However, the surface of the figure is particularly worn and weathered from top to bottom and along all sides of the statuette.

In terms of iconography the roughness of the metal surface makes intricate detail difficult to discern. In a general sense there are two primary sections of the figure's body (1) the bottom half is a geometric object, a short, squat rectangular prism attached to a longer, vertical rectangular prism similar to an elongated statue plinth; (2) the top half, that tapers and blends into the bottom bronze plinth portion, is a figural representation of a man. This image is in the round, though the primary visible details are from a single, forward-facing direction.

The face of the man is downward tilting to the left from the viewer's perspective.²²⁸ His head, decorated with a head band or crown of some kind, is damaged though features of a stoic, bearded face with long hair can be made out. The detail of the beard is made with care and attention, the curls individuated and distinct. The arms of the figure are covered by a flowing tunic and held close to the body, the left arm is bent with a lump of a clenched hand under the tunic pressed against the figure's chest. The right arm, its clenched fist clearly exposed from under the tunic, is similarly crooked though the high level of detail on the drapery suggests this arm is performing the action of holding excess fabric. A line/indentation across the waist of the torso implies a belt or tie of some kind. At the center of this figure where the figural body blends into the bottom plinth is a clear, though highly worn, representation of an erect phallus exposed by the seeming deliberate gathering of the fabric. While erect, the penis is not oversized in comparison to other priapic images and could arguably be described as anatomically realistic/proportional for the size of the figure. However, the penis does not project from the body, instead being represented in an almost two-dimensional way. His two testicles and erect penis pressed flat against the body of the figure.

3.1 British Museum Collections Online Object Record: 1824,0471.1

While this bronze sculpture has not been on display to the general public in many years, if ever, it is provided as a virtual image on the British Museum online collection (Figure 31a-b). In this sense, it is visible to a modern-day audience, though the quality and viewability of the image are limited to say the least. It is unclear when, in what context, or by whom this new digital image was

²²⁸ All directional descriptions will be from the viewer's frontal perspective.

produced. It is produced in black and white, which might suggest limitations to the method of production for the photograph. Alternatively, the black and white photography could just as easily be a choice of the photographer due to the fact that the bronze, and therefore monochromatic, nature of the figure can be seen in higher contrast with stronger colours in a black and white image. The detail is exceptionally clear, suggesting either a high-quality film camera with the final image scanned using a high-quality scanner, or an image directly from a high-resolution digital camera. The central composition of the sculpture in the photograph, the clean background, and its similarity to other images within the collection of bronze miniatures suggests that this photograph is part of the vision of a single photographic shoot (for comparison see Figure 32a-b). The *Payne Knight Term* is clearly not haphazardly photographed with speed but is part of a planned programme of photography. Only a single image is offered from the frontal view of the bronze miniature. In this context the tangibility, portability, and physical experience of the bronze miniature can only be imagined from a frontal perspective, losing the physical interaction of the object with the viewer, particularly in ancient times.

The information provided alongside the image - located on the left side of the screen - is fairly limited. Basic information is provided and slightly expanded upon, offering broad terminology around materials, dimensions, location, subjects, responsible museum departments and relevant registration numbers, including acquisition information and the fact that it was donated by Payne Knight. Enhanced information provided includes a bibliographical reference and a description identifying the statue securely as Herakles, an attribution that I challenge later in this section. The choice of title, like many objects on the online collections, is generic and related to the broadest object type name available, in this case 'herm.'

The lack of interpretation provided in the form of curatorial notes on this online record suggests that there has likely been little research or sustained interest in this object. Additionally, the rushed description, lack of recent photography from multiple angles, and limited dimensions suggests that it was not an object prioritised for enhanced record entry and was instead quickly input into the cataloguing software/system. Finally, it is from this record that it is possible to conclude that the item most likely never entered the Museum Secretum as no additional M.- number is provided in

the appropriate field, nor is it traceable through the downloadable metadata nor the Museum Secretum Register (Appendix 1a).

To understand how this object reflects the purpose and use of the Museum Secretum by its exclusion from this later nineteenth-century collection, it is important to trace how its original production and purpose, as understood by today's scholarship, defines its later reception. First, how was it understood as an object in an ancient context? Second, how has it since been received in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? This object biography exposes the reasons for its exclusion, and of objects related to it from within Payne Knight's and even Townley's collections, giving a clearer image of the purpose of the Museum Secretum in the 1860s.

3.2 Mistaken Identities: The *Payne Knight Term* in its Ancient Context

With an object such as the *Payne Knight Term* with no information provided about its origin or findspot, understanding how this kind of object functioned in its original context is difficult, if not impossible, to say with any certainty. In addition, forgeries have been identified within Payne Knight's collection, including bronze items, further complicating the narrative of this item's biography. However, the forgeries from within Payne Knight's collection that have been identified by the British Museum replicated higher value objects such as the replica of the Louvre's Gaii head vase, gold coins, and valuable cameo gems (Figures 33a-c). Furthermore, the *Payne Knight Term* has been photographed and documented on multiple archives suggesting there is little evidence of forgery related to this object even with relatively recent handling and examination by the British Museum. Accordingly, I will continue under the assumption that this is a Greco-Roman original, though to classify its specific place of origin requires visual analysis and assessment, though this process is by no means an infallible system. The disparity between the Latinised 'Hercules' label of the cubic stand versus the Hellenised title of 'Heracles' assigned by both nineteenth-century sources, and the modern online description 'Herakles', attest to the continuing debate regarding the cultural origin of this miniature.²²⁹

²²⁹ For the sake of clarity, I will refer to this mythological character using the Latinised 'Hercules' version of the name throughout this chapter unless specifically referencing a Greek title or specific label.

Additionally, this lack of certainty extends to the identification of the figure as depicting the mythical demi-god Hercules. By comparison to early Greek and later Roman depictions of Hercules, this image would be an unorthodox one. While in keeping with the tradition of Hercules as being bearded, due to his Greek background, the sculpture bears neither obvious lion skin drapery nor a club most often depicted alongside Hercules (Figure 32a-b). Moreover, this figure depicts none of the mythology most commonly associated with Hercules, such as one of his twelve labours or his regular depiction in the action of urinating while heavily inebriated after a drinking contest with Dionysus (Figure 32b). Rather, from a visual comparison, I would argue that the clothing, pose, and facial details of the statue are more consistent with depictions of the minor god Priapus, particularly the Roman traditions of representing the god.

Perhaps the nineteenth-century reluctance to label this miniature bronze was in part due to its lack of typically Priapic accoutrements, such as a Phrygian cap (a conical head dress usually made from wool with the tip bent forward, commonly associated with Near Eastern and later Greek culture in the ancient world), fruit gathered in his tunic/drapery, or an extremely oversized penis/genital area. However, comparisons to other depictions of the gods solidify the identification of this bronze miniature as a depiction of Priapus, or a Priapic Hermes, rather than Hercules.

In the 1899 catalogue of bronzes in the British Museum, Henry Beauchamp Walters identifies the drapery on the *Knight's Term* as a himation, or a traditional Greek outfit tightly wrapped around the body. The position of the arms, particularly the one on the viewer's right, supports this assessment, as the exposed hand and bent elbow reflect multiple examples of classical Greek figures wearing this garment from the Elgin Marbles (Figure 34). This identification of a himation challenges the Hercules label even further as he was most commonly shown in classical heroic nudity or draped in a lion skin only. Rather, the implied presence of a belt and the deliberate exposure of an erect phallus closely mirrors the Roman image of Priapus from House of the Vettii and/or the Lupanar bi-phallic Priapus from the same town (Figures 35 and 36). While these painted representations are in a different medium to the statuette, the design template for the pose, clothing, the delicately depicted facial features with a serene expression, is strikingly similar to the bronze miniature from the British Museum. Additionally, the similar facial features and expression, extreme gathering of fabric, the general scale and material, as well as the emphasis on the penis

are all features that mirror other confirmed Priapus depictions from within Payne Knight's collection, most notably Figure 20b. By and large, modern scholarship has concluded that miniature statues, coins, friezes, gems, etc., were produced referencing the typology of larger statuary examples, in particular temple cult images.²³⁰ However, such objects rarely adhere perfectly to the details of their original models, instead favouring the identifying features and general schema of the desired represented object, though Peter Stewart suggests that this is an artistic choice, rather than a reflection of limited knowledge and/or skill of the artist, based in part on the limits and abilities of the various media used.²³¹

If not Priapus, sometimes Romanised as *Mutunus Tutunus*, then perhaps this statuette could be a phallic representation of Hermes, a god linked mythologically to the large membered phallic god Priapus. The feature on this miniature most supportive of this association with priapic Hermes is the tapered bottom plinth on the lower half of the figure. With this detail, the bronze miniature can confidently be classified as a *term*, often linked to the similar architectural phrase *herm* as it is labelled on the British Museum website. The history of this distinctly Greco-Roman form of semi-figural sculpture developed from the tradition of boundary markers, or *terminus* in the Latin, originating in ancient Athens.²³² The addition of human-like figural additions, most commonly a male head as a topper and male genitals on the front-center of the plinth developed over time as a means of protection for travelers. To explore this object's life in the ancient world, I will therefore operate with the understanding that rather than a depiction of Hercules the *Knight's Term* more likely depicted Priapus or a Priapic Hermes in an ancient context.

i. Creation and Production: Ancient Bronze Miniatures

In some ways, whether this object is Greek or Roman has little bearing on its process of production. Bronze casting from the classical Greek tradition of the lost wax method, both direct and indirect, continue throughout the Roman period, though these skills were lost by the Italian Renaissance in

²³⁰ Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 236.

²³¹ Ibid. 246-247. For examples of artistic changes across material see John Boardman, *The Diffusion of Classical Art in Antiquity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 7-8.

²³² H. A. Shapiro: *Art and Cult Under the Tyrants in Athens* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1989).

the fifteenth century only to be reinvented later in quite different forms and processes.²³³ The small size and solidity of this bronze statuette suggest that it is most likely that the direct bronze lost-wax method was used to produce it. Miniatures, which use less bronze and are not as heavy, expensive, or physically challenging to produce as life-size statues, could be produced using the direct bronze casting method. Additionally, unlike indirect methods, the statue is not hollow but solid, as is evident from the weight of the *Payne Knight Term* and the large hole in the head exposing solid bronze throughout. In this direct lost-wax method, which is the oldest and most widely used form of bronze sculpting and moulding in the ancient world, a sculptor produced an original sculpture out of a solid piece of wax. After covering the sculpted wax with clay, or another hardening material, the object was heated to melt the wax allowing molten bronze to be poured into the clay mould, which then solidified in the desired form. When the outer coating was removed, fine detail and finishing techniques were applied to the item. The rough finish of the *Payne Knight Term* is a possible product of an unfinished, or badly finished, final step in this process. In this direct lost-wax production method, the original sculpture is unfortunately lost forever, creating minor differences in every piece produced. As with most ancient art, it is not possible to attribute this object to a specific artist. It is likely that it was produced in a large workshop and alongside many other similar items due to the relative similarity to so many other examples of figures across the collections in today's museums. However, this is in and of itself an important point before exploring its function in an ancient context. While it is impossible to know the audience the *Payne Knight Term* was made for with certainty, it is likely that this was produced by a maker and intended for sale. The material choice also gives some context for its purchase as bronze as a material is an upgrade from the cheaper and more readily available terracotta figurines of similar imagery (Figure 37). Purchasing a metal item, even though bronze is an historically cheaper metal than silver and gold, offers a less fragile, slightly more expensive option than terracotta and ceramic counterparts.

²³³ Denys Haynes, *The Technique of Greek Bronze Statuary* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1992).

ii. A Private (?) Function

With this context, what was the ancient function and purpose of the *Payne Knight Term*? While my visual identification of the *Payne Knight Term* as a priapic god, based on its physical and costumed similarity to Roman precedents, might more securely place this item as a Roman production, this is by no means certain. It is impossible to know who initially purchased this phallic figure, and in what context this item was passed down in various iterations before finally being collected by Payne Knight in the eighteenth century. The complexities of any statue in the Greek or Roman traditions are too broad, varied, and debated to be covered thoroughly in a single subsection of a chapter in this thesis. The lack of a secure culture of origin, means that it is necessary to allow a degree of generalisation covering the Greek and Roman traditions of worship.

The small scale of this miniature item, and the worn nature of its surface, implies that this was an item that was held and touched regularly, possibly in acts of worship. If so, the religious purpose of this object most likely goes beyond a simple decorative representation of a god.

In this context, the statue takes on an identity as a central item of worship, though its size and ability to be readily produced *en masse* for sale suggests a level of intimacy and personal relationship to the statue by an individual, in contrast to larger temple cult statues such as the lost chryselephantine Phidian Zeus, originally in the temple of Zeus at Olympia, and the famed marble Praxitelean Aphrodite of Cnidos. However, that is not to say all cult statues were produced using only ‘high value’ materials. The cult statue of Athena in the Erechtheion is widely assumed to have been constructed of olivewood.²³⁴ However, a quote from Pausanias suggests a magical context to the mythical finding of this wood, adding additional significance to an otherwise common-place material.²³⁵ A mythical origin story stands in sharp contrast to derogatory attitudes directed at early wooden materials and a description of ‘bad’ or ‘coarse’ applied to wooden sculptures of Priapus.²³⁶

²³⁴ For more on the Erechtheion and Acropolis sculptures see John H. Kroll, "The Ancient Image of Athena Polias," *Hesperia Supplements* 20 (1982): 65-203.; Nigel Spivey, *Greek Sculpture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44-45. John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

²³⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece: Volume I, Attica, XXVI*, trans. W. H. S. Jones, *Loeb Classical Library* 93. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 1:136-137.

²³⁶ Peter Stewart, "Fine Art and Coarse Art: The Image of Roman Priapus," *Art History* 20, no. 4 (December 1997): 575-588.

Therefore, it is most likely that this miniature was not a cult statue that would have been worshipped by multiple members of wide society in open ritual. Perhaps the most comfortable term for a modern audience would be to describe this item as an object of ‘private’ religious worship. However, this concept is highly problematic in the case of Greco-Roman art, as the practice of religion in ancient Greek (here defined as the classical period 500-300 B.C.E.) through to the ancient Roman periods (late Republic and pre-Christian imperial 100 B.C.E.-306 C.E.), religion took forms of practice there were blurred between what a person living in a western culture today might understand as the private and public spheres. The relationship of private and public worship is not only opaque but arguably dualistic in nature, the private supporting the public and vice versa, to the point that it is debatable whether these terms can be applied at all in the study of ancient art.²³⁷ Modern concepts and terminology including private and public, family and community, lose the complexity of the ancient household in which families were composed of the direct blood relations in addition to the numerous other individuals belonging to the household including slaves and freedmen.²³⁸ The homestead was a space of business as well as intimate family interactions. While it was the responsibility of the primary male in the household, or *pater familias* in the Roman tradition, to be responsible for the spiritual health and practice of all of the members of his homestead, these practices of personal worship were transferred into the public sphere with icons taking centre stage in these familial rituals. The piety of the individuals as cult members transferred to the piety of the smaller households and then subsequently transferred to the piety of the wider community and respective city-states/empires. In this context a miniature object, whether owned by a master, slave, woman, man, or child, was directly involved in the practice of individual, domestic, and wider worship simultaneously in the practice of ancient ritual. Perhaps it is therefore most appropriate to discuss this item less as a source of private worship but rather more as a personal religious object.

²³⁷ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 17-23.; Elaine K. Gazda, “Introduction,” in *Roman Art in the Private Sphere: New Perspectives on the Architecture and Décor of the Domus, Villa, and Insula*, ed. Elaine K. Gazda (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 4-6.; Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, 259-260.

²³⁸ Christopher A. Faraone, “Household Religion in Ancient Greece,” in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 210-228.; John Bodel, “Cicero’s Minerva, Penates, and the Mother of the Lares: An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion”, in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 248-275. For more on the complexity of ancient slavery and the Roman household see Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Ritual and worship were performed with a cult statue or icon as both intermediary and embodiment of the god themselves.²³⁹ As Verity Platt states in her discussions on the goddess of Aphrodite from Philostratus, the “text and image can generate a ‘real’ experience of the divine” through the careful “co-ordinations of wisdom and skill” of human makers.²⁴⁰ While this ecstatic epiphany is largely described through the experience of generally larger, location specific cult/temple statuary, the miniature statuette is also included in the ancient artistic sources as a means of communication and direct interaction with the represented gods. Platt makes this connection with the Greek fifth-century representations of the Trojan Palladion.²⁴¹ In the *Iliad* text this object is referred to as Athena herself, though in vase representations Athena becomes embodied directly within an object which is either being stolen by the Greek Diomedes or being prayed and/or begged to by Cassandra who immediately after was raped by Ajax in the story (Figures 38a-b). Of relevance to the discussion of the *Payne Knight Term* in this context is the idea that portability was a major impetus for picturing the same mythical cult statue either as a full-/half- life sized image, or as a much smaller miniature of the goddess Athena. In both contexts the same power of epiphany and embodiment is endowed in the statue, despite the difference in scale.

iii. “Thief, I’ll Bugger you the First Time”: Greco-Roman Protector Gods and Aggressive Male Sexuality

As previously discussed, the identification of this object as a miniature *herm* or *term* has important implications for understanding its ancient function and purpose. Hermes’ role as the protector of travelers is a logical inclusion on a boundary marker as many vulnerable passers-by could seek protection from this source. The inclusion of a phallus, often erect, that further links this apotropaic nature of protective ritual statuary to the god Priapus, frequently described as either the son or father of Hermes in mythology. Most commonly in modern day scholarship, the phallus has been understood as a source of protection from the evil eye in its depiction of aggressive masculinity.²⁴²

²³⁹ Michael Squire, *The Art of the Body: Antiquity and its Legacy*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2011), 160-162.

²⁴⁰ Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 94-96.

²⁴² See for example Michael Grant, *Eros in Pompeii: The Secret Rooms of the National Museum of Naples* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1975), 66.

For example, Priapus' phallus is used as a weapon against thieves in the *Priapeia*, a collection of Latin poetry dedicated to and from the God:

Thief, I'll bugger you the first time.
 Try again, and you'll find it in your mouth.
 And if you come back a third time
 I'll try both penalties together
 You'll find it up your arse and down your throat.²⁴³

Priapus expresses the element of penetrative aggression that defined specifically Roman masculinity. In the Roman period, even the disembodied penis reminiscent of Priapus' phallus was particularly ithyphallic and apotropaic. Gods like Priapus and Hermes with enlarged penises exemplified their power expressed through penetrative aggression.²⁴⁴ Therefore, these types of images were placed in areas considered most dangerous in terms of accident, disease, or violence, such as brothels, bathhouses, and places of travel. Though it should also be noted that Hercules also appears on boundary terms/herms of this kind (Figure 39). However, Hercules is usually identifiable by a clear visual symbol of the lion skin in these instances. Additionally, the male genitals carved onto the corresponding base appear flaccid with the foreskin fully extended rather than the fully erect depiction in similar Hermes and Priapus herms and the *Payne Knight Term*.

In keeping with the theories presented by Payne Knight, it should be mentioned that images of Priapus were often found at entrances and barriers of the home and garden, adding domestic settings for the worship of Priapus as a symbol of fertility in addition to his role as a protector of thresholds. Recent scholarship from John Clarke and Amy Richlin points out the humour in the image of an oversized phallic deity, particularly as much mythology contends that Priapus was effectively impotent and sexually ineffective, an ironic twist familiar to ancient viewers that helped promote the apotropaic release of laughter when confronting an audience.²⁴⁵ As a humorous representation of masculinity, the effeminacy of the god is incongruous to his role as a protector

²⁴³ "Carmen 35." *Carmina Priapeia*, in Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, trans. Cormac Ó Cuilleánáin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 146.

²⁴⁴ For full discussion on Priapus' depiction as sexual aggressor see Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus*.

²⁴⁵ Clarke, *Looking at Laughter*, 165-191.; Richlin, *In the Garden of Priapus*, 57-80.; see also, Thomas D. Frazel, "Priapus's Two Rapes in Ovid's *Fasti*," *Arethusa* 36, no. 1 (2003): 61-97.; For an example of ancient Priapus mythology in which his sexual advances are 'humourously' thwarted see Ovid, *Fasti* 1.411-441. and Ovid, *Fasti* 6.319-348. in Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. James G. Frazer, revised by G. P. Goold. *Loeb Classical Library* 253. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.)

in the virility of the Roman tradition of masculinity, in effect, associating him with the ‘effeminacy’ of the Greeks and eastern gods.

However, it is important to stress that this characterisation of the phallic *Payne Knight Term* presupposes that the object is Roman. In a Greek tradition, masculinity as defined by penetrative act becomes somewhat more complicated when faced with traditions of pederasty in which an older male citizen would take a younger male lover.²⁴⁶ In this context, penetrative relationships and their identifications in art by oversized phallic art might be best examined through ideas of the idealised penis in artistic representations. In classical Greek examples, desirability is depicted through the trope of a flaccid, small penis as representing the adolescent athletic body.²⁴⁷ An erect penis of a bearded man, in a Greek tradition, would therefore be representative of an older, non-ideal standard of beauty. In fact, this depiction of the ‘coarseness’ of a larger penis is often visible in depictions of slaves in the act of hard labour, further removing this type of physical body from the ideal of the male form in the Greek context (Figure 40). In this context, *Payne Knight Term*’s representation of this body type supports the idea that this image as a protector god for boundaries and homesteads and mature brute physicality even in a Greek tradition.

In either narrative of origin, the *Payne Knight Term* is a figure allowing direct communication with the god it represents. Its portability suggests that it was designed to be easily moved, either by an individual or amongst a household group. As a priapic figure, its function would have been complex and multifaceted, though most recent understanding on the worship of Priapus and phallic Hermes figures suggests a link to protection of the individual and to property through the non-adolescent virility of the erect penis. In a Roman context, the supposed ‘otherness’ of the eastern Greek deity and need to redefine it as an effeminate male compared to the hypermasculinity of the virile Roman male prototype adds the potential of a humorous interpretation of this image. However, with little context to determine its true origin the *Payne Knight Term*’s production and early biography must primarily focus on its potential as an object of worship.

²⁴⁶ For more see Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 112-147.; Clarke, “Erotica”, 172-181.

²⁴⁷ H. A. Shapiro, “Eros in Love: Pederasty and Pornography in Greece”, in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. Amy Richlin (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 53-72.; Andrew Lear, “Ideals/Idealization”, in *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty: Boys were their Gods*, ed. Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 63-106.

3.3 Modern Contexts: From Eighteenth-Century Collection to Nineteenth-Century Curation

i. Purchase and Display in a British New World

Like his good friend Townley, Payne Knight went to great lengths to document the purchase, gifting, and various other means of collection at his disposal for his significant collection. Though it is possible that the *Payne Knight Term* was similarly documented in the catalogue of the British Museum, this information is not readily available without access to their non-loanable collection.²⁴⁸ What is known is that Payne Knight's general collection records, though extensive, were not always detailed or helpful in tracing the history of an individual object.²⁴⁹ His collection was acquired through dealers working out of Italy, in particular based in Naples, but like many collectors of antiquities in the time, much of his collection was purchased, traded, and gifted by brokers, acquaintances, and friends within London and Britain more widely.²⁵⁰ While it is not currently possible to pinpoint how, when, and in what circumstances the *Payne Knight Term* was acquired, it would have been within the context of this lively and competitive network of classical collecting in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The collections of Payne Knight and Townley were also subject to similar methods of display by their owners. Unlike the attention paid to Townley's housing of his sculptural collection, both in terms of textual descriptions as well as visual depictions by artists such as William Chambers and Johan Zoffany, Payne Knight's personal display of his collection is something of a mystery today (Figures 41 and 42).²⁵¹ However, it is clear from his personal correspondence that by 1809 Knight had created a purpose-built space within his London residence in Soho Square when, in a letter to Samuel Parr, Payne Knight states, “[a]ll my *supellex critica* [critical furniture] is now transferred

²⁴⁸ Plans had been made to access this material in 2020 though due to the global pandemic this material has thus been inaccessible.

²⁴⁹ Penny, “Collecting, Interpreting and Imitating Ancient Art”, 68-69.

²⁵⁰ References to Knight MS (Bronzes), a manuscript located in the rare books collection in the British Museum Archive, are taken from Penny, “Collecting, Interpreting and Imitating Ancient Art”, 65-81.

²⁵¹ For examples and discussions see Max Bryant, *The Museum by the Park: 14 Queen Anne's Gate from Charles Townley to Axel Johnson* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2017).; Vicky Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique: Neoclassicism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).; Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760*.

hither, and joined to my collection of antiquities, in a spacious library and museum that I have built secure from fire for that purpose".²⁵² It is likely that at some point the *Payne Knight Term* would have been displayed within this space, though in what specific context or arrangement remains unclear. It is equally possible that the identification of the *Payne Knight Term* as the hero Hercules comes from the collector himself, particularly as its identification continues throughout the object's lifetime in the British Museum including in the 1899 catalogue by H. B. Walters, a curator at the British Museum from 1890 and eventual Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities from 1925 until 1932, which makes reference to the object's place in Payne Knight's donation as RPK.xlvi.14.²⁵³ While clearly a phallic object, as the figure's erect phallus can be determined as central to the object's front side, this object is not illustrated within Payne Knight's *Discourse*, perhaps suggesting he did not have it in his collection by 1786 or that the item was not considered worth the effort and resources necessary to add it to the plates, perhaps for lack of quality compared to other examples or due to subject matter. That is not to say that other, visually similar objects in both scale and construction are excluded. Plate V figures 1 and 2 offer examples of bronze miniatures of priapic subjects in the original publication of Payne Knight's *Discourse* (Figure 43).

In any case, upon his death Payne Knight donated this item to the British Museum, primarily because he desired that his collection be housed in the same location as Townley's collection.²⁵⁴ From this point forward, there is little evidence of this object's life within the British Museum. No item described in the Museum Secretum Register directly matches the *Payne Knight Term*. Additionally, the 1899 identification number of 1318 alongside its identification as RPK.xlvi.14 confirms that while this miniature was recorded in the general British Museum bronze collection, it never makes it into the thematic display and collection of the Museum Secretum. However, this number provides insight into how this item was identified early in its rediscovery and/or life in the British Museum. The Roman numeral 'xlvi', translatable to Arabic numerals as '46', corresponds to the other Heracles bronze figurines from Payne Knight's collection, identifiable with the prefix 1824,0446.- in today's numbering system. According to the online system, 1824,0446.14, and

²⁵² Richard Payne Knight, *Letter to Samuel Parr, Soho-square, June 19, 1809*, (letter) in John Johnstone, ed., *The Works of Samuel Parr* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1828), 8:313-314.

²⁵³ Henry Beauchamp Walters, *Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1899), 221.

²⁵⁴ Richard Payne Knight, will dated 30 June, 1814, proved 18 June, 1824, PROB 11/1687/236, Leintwardine, Herefordshire.

therefore RPK.xlvi.14, does not exist in the British Museum collection. However, 1824,0446.13 and 1824,0446.15, both images of Hercules, are recorded in the online database with images provided.

What does it mean for the *Payne Knight Term* to be numerically redefined using the prefix 1824,0471.- in today's database? Compared to other items with the same group number label, for example 1824,0471.2 (M363) and 1824,0471.3 (M370), it is clear that the *Payne Knight Term* has become directly juxtaposed with priapic and ithyphallic bronze figurines in the modern archives. In this process, the British Museum curators have numerically identified this item as a sexual object, even specifically a Museum Secretum object, with no evidence to support this identification from the nineteenth-century primary sources. The sexualisation of this object is therefore performed by a curator much later than the censorship account of the Museum Secretum would suggest.

ii. Hero Worship and the 'Other' as Optimal in the Museum Secretum

From nineteenth-century sources, it is therefore reasonable to assume that the *Payne Knight Term* was identified throughout this period as a Hercules figure – an identification that may offer insight as to why it was ultimately excluded from the Museum Secretum collection. Hercules as a character makes only one appearance in the MSR on a vase within the Witt collection (Figure 44). This Greek black figure vase represents the hero with his traditional accoutrements of the lion skin and club over his shoulder, flanked on either side by Hermes and Athena in the moment of his apotheosis. Even in this Museum Secretum context, Hercules is not represented as a particularly well-endowed, phallic protector god. Instead, as shall be discussed in Chapter Three, it is more likely that this item came into the Museum Secretum not as a selected piece to represent the larger purpose of the thematic collection but rather because it was expedient to include all of Witt's 1865 donation in a single space keeping the collection together as per Witt's wishes. As we have seen, this practice was not extended to Payne Knight's or Townley's collections, and the objects were selected carefully from their larger groupings. Therefore, it would appear that the exclusion of a Hercules figure is deliberate, though it begs the question if the decision would have been different if the figure was identified as priapic.

Understanding this curatorial choice may also be addressed by exploring Payne Knight's own discussion of Hercules in the context of phallic worship. The character of Hercules appears within Payne Knight's *Discourse* and his interpretation of the demi-god offers insight into the potential reasons for not including Herculean imagery with the sexual object collection of the Museum Secretum. Payne Knight himself admits "[o]f all the personages of the ancient mythology, Hercules is perhaps the most difficult to explain".²⁵⁵ To Payne Knight, who references Varro and Homer's accounts of the god as evidence, Hercules' similarity in worship and ritual to the god Mars meant "[he] was the Destroying Attribute represented in a human form" and possessed "the Destroying Power of the diurnal Sun".²⁵⁶ To Payne Knight, his characterisation of Hercules places him at an almost opposite religious icon compared to the generative, fertility cult associated with the phallus and Priapic imagery. Hercules is understood as a destroyer rather than creator, an important notion when considering its exclusion from the Museum Secretum decades later. Perhaps to its private owner, Payne Knight, the *Payne Knight Term*, identified as Hercules for reasons unknown, is an anomaly and rarity in depictions of Hercules and therefore an interesting addition to his collection. Even if the label of Hercules is applied during the transition into the British Museum, and therefore was not the result of Payne Knight's own understanding of the function of the *Payne Knight Term*, the results of the change in identity are profound, particularly when considering no Herculean objects are recorded in the Museum Secretum.

That is not to suggest that the mere identification of a non-priapic mythological figure by name meant exclusion from the Museum Secretum, though it is certainly true that Museum Secretum objects are overwhelmingly anonymous figures like satyrs, nymphs, as well as disembodied genitals and body parts. Despite this, there are numerous examples from the collection representing other sexually charged stories from mythology. For example, M.417 and M.418 from Townley's collection both represent depictions of Leda entwined with Zeus as a swan, a story alternatively titled the Rape of Leda (Figure 26 and 27).²⁵⁷ The selection of some mythological figures and

²⁵⁵ Knight, *Discourse*, 159.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. 159-161. Minor edits to the original text have been made for the sake of clarity.

²⁵⁷ The complexity of the terminology surrounding rape and abduction is a contentious one in the field of classical art history. For more see Susan Deacy and Karen F. Pierce, eds., *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (London: Classical Press of Wales, 2002); Vout, *Sex on Show*, 170-181.

stories and the exclusion of similar items may at first appear as curatorial oversights until the objects in question are compared with the larger network of sexual objects collected and curated throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The most famous collection of sexual objects, the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, has been described convincingly by Grove as the impetus for developing an equivalent version in the British Museum based on continued purchases of sexual antiquities throughout the late nineteenth century.²⁵⁸ This theory can be further supported by a visual analysis of the objects within the collections that were already present in the Museum Secretum. Continuing with the example of Leda and the Swan, the Cabinet of Secrets contains a fresco depicting the two mythical figures, while Hercules continues to be conspicuously absent from the notorious collection of sexual antiquities in Naples (Figure 45). To anyone performing a cursory comparative assessment of the Townley and Witt lamps and the Cabinet of Secrets Leda and Swan fresco, an obvious difference emerges. Materially speaking these objects are extremely dissimilar. The wall fresco, cut and removed in a square section from a home in Herculaneum, is not only heavy and difficult to move, but moving it risks significant damage to the delicate paint work. In comparison, the smaller terracotta lamps are certainly more portable and easier to protect in transit. Therefore, the material difference between the objects in Naples and in Britain are in part a practical result of the distance and needs of portability for a British collector. However, when we consider that many portable objects depicting the Leda and Swan figures, phallic figures, etc., are also excluded from the Museum Secretum despite being already present in the British Museum's archives since the eighteenth century, a more intellectually constructed reason for this alteration from the Neapolitan forerunner should be explored.

There is something particular to Hercules as a character that excludes his image from the larger function of the Naples Cabinet of Secrets and consequently the Museum Secretum. As previously stated, perhaps it is Hercules's role as a destroyer in Payne Knight's theory rather than of the fertile, generative male body represented by a priapic or ithyphallic object that is an important element for the *Payne Knight Term's* omission. However, the inclusion of comparative small figurines that do not illustrate the traditional concepts of health and male virility might also offer

²⁵⁸ Grove, "The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," 57-68.

an additional reason for the demi-god's exclusion. While idealised images of the male body, with Hercules traditionally the pinnacle of this physical achievement in the Roman tradition, are largely absent from the Museum Secretum, all images of ithyphallic dwarves collected by Payne Knight are included in the Museum Secretum (For examples see Figures 46a-b). Depictions of dwarves, pygmies, disembodied male genitals, and pseudo-humans (such as goat-like satyrs) make up the majority of the Knight, Townley, and Witt sexual objects within the Museum Secretum (Charts 10, 11, and 12). This implies that there was a keen interest in what Lisa Trentin describes as "bodies of difference" and the body of "Others", not only in the context of Roman art which she discusses, but also in the continued collection and display of Roman sexual objects in the nineteenth century.²⁵⁹ As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, the medical implications of this choice is significant within the context of a physician's collection that forms the basis of the larger thematic collection. The Roman context for the juxtaposition of two extremes, i.e. the Herculean ideal and the 'inferior' and potentially apotropaically comic ithyphallic dwarf, can be seen in the square mosaics from the 'House of the Evil Eye' in Jekmejh near Antioch (Figure 47a-b). As Trentin observes, the textual reference in Greek 'καὶ ἐσύ' [and you], encourages a self-reflective experience for a viewer in which one engages with the "sliding scale" of physicality between the extreme abnormality of the ithyphallic dwarf and the equally extreme perfection of the baby Hercules.²⁶⁰

This tradition of physical idealism continues into the nineteenth century, particularly in the later decades, perhaps reaching its visual pinnacle in the representations of Eugen Sandow as "the perfect European Man", a statue commissioned by the British Museum's affiliated Natural History Museum in 1901 (Figure 48).²⁶¹ Sandow was not only embraced as the image of masculine perfection in terms of strength in his own right but used the imagery of Hercules to further cement his reputation, replicating the poses most associated with the Lysippan style *Farnese Hercules* also located in Naples (Figure 49). In this context, the 'othered' body becomes part of the increasing

²⁵⁹ Lisa Trentin, "The 'Other' Romans: Deformed Bodies in the Visual Arts of Rome", in *Disability in Antiquity*, ed. Christian Laes (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2017), 234.

²⁶⁰ Trentin, "The 'Other' Romans," 237-239.

²⁶¹ For more on Eugen Sandow and his links to classical art see Michael Hatt, "Physical Culture: The Male Nude and Sculpture in Late Victorian Britain," in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 244-248; Sebastian Conrad, "Globalizing the Beautiful Body: Eugen Sandow, Bodybuilding, and the Ideal of Muscular Manliness at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of World History* 32, no. 1 (2021): 95-125, accessed April 26, 2021, doi:10.1353/jwh.2021.0005.

interest in the development of medical definitions of normality, a key link to medicine further explored in Chapter Three.

As a priapic collection imitative of both the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, which also includes numerous examples of these ‘othered’ bodies, it is clear that the Museum Secretum’s exclusion of Hercules from the Museum Secretum is not the result of oversight or a desire to contain only sexually themed objects, but rather a conscious effort to imitate collections based on eighteenth-century examples as well as the more complex ideas of abnormality and cultural conceptions of ideal and abnormal developing in the later nineteenth century.²⁶²

iii. Intertwining or Invading: Coins and the Symplegma Group Image

Though it is clear that the nineteenth-century collection is in some ways imitative of the Cabinet of Secret in Naples, the disparate incorporation of objects by material and subjects compared to the Italian examples suggests an alternative model imitated by the selected objects within the Museum Secretum. This is where it is tempting to suggest that the most famous collector of sexual objects within the study of sexual history and object collection, i.e. Payne Knight and his collection, is the model and inspiration for the gathering of objects to represent sexuality in the Museum Secretum in 1865 forwards. However, close examination of the numerical data suggests this in an inaccurate conclusion. Instead, as the data reveal in Chapter Three, the selection of objects, particularly by material, as exemplified by the Leda and Swan objects, reflect the collection of Witt donated in 1865.

In many ways, this is a chicken and egg question prompted by the temporal order in which each collection was acquired, something of an ongoing debate in the case of sexual object collections. Townley’s Leda and the Swan terracotta lamps predate the collection of Witt’s examples by

²⁶²For a general history of the developments in medical history around the time of the founding of the Museum Secretum see Anne Hardy, *Health and Medicine in Britain since 1860* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.); for more on the structures of power surrounding the ‘othered’ body see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1979), 184-194.; For more on the use of classics as sexual social discipline and sexuality depicted through a classical lens see Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 4-5, 65-83.

decades, and it is clear from Witt's scrapbooks that he had access to the British Museum's collections for some time, suggesting Witt may have seen the Townley lamps and sought out his own copies and versions. However, even if Witt imitated the collection of these lamps he did not collect the gems and intaglios representative of the same subject present in Townley's collection. That is not to say that no intaglios are included in the Museum Secretum Register or Witt's collection. In fact, nine are documented as coming from an anonymous donation in 1867, including M.597 depicting Leda and the Swan, though all of these are itemised under the 'Medieval, Modern, etc.' subheading of the main MSR collection. Witt has four intaglios within his collection two of which are labelled as Roman and the other two are under the 'Medieval, Cinquecento, and Modern' category, though none depict Leda and the Swan. As Townley's intaglios represent primarily ancient cultures as understood by the nineteenth-century curators, the omission of all of his intaglios from the Museum Secretum suggests that there is a deliberate exclusion of these ancient items despite the inclusion of similar imagery. Rather than a collection of eighteenth-century iconography referencing the Naples Cabinet of Secrets, perhaps this exclusion instead illustrates a deeper concern for imitation of the collection of a nineteenth-century British collector, namely Witt.

To further explore this point, I now circle back to collection of Payne Knight, the donator of the *Payne Knight Term*. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis and opening of this chapter, Payne Knight's *Discourse* and other literary work, and consequently his collection, have been touted as direct prototypes for the Museum Secretum functioning as a center of intellectual study. However, as the data reported in the previous section suggests, for this to be the case, Payne Knight's primary concern as a collector was overwhelmingly the collection of Greco-Roman coins, an object type that is conspicuously absent from the MSR. This absence is even more profound when considering the fact that many of these numismatic objects within Payne Knight's collection are arguably sexual objects and at the very least objects representative of Priapic worship.

All sexually themed coins in Knight's collection are silver, consistent with collector's preference for this material. The visually similar subjects of the coins to the *Payne Knight Term* are described as having representations of ithyphallic herms alongside other figures.²⁶³ However, the more

²⁶³ RPK, Gre.33 and RPK,p293M.52.Tar; no images are available for these items

commonly depicted characters within the collection represent the forms of a nymph and satyr entwined.²⁶⁴ Two categories of these objects can be defined. First, Type A objects depict two standing figures, an extremely muscular bearded male (presumably a satyr) on the left, his left hand lifting the chin of a second figure looking towards him, and his right arm reaching out towards the second figure's waist. The second figure, unbearded and wearing a long garment, perhaps a chiton, is most likely meant to be female, their body twisted to the right with their upraised arm suggesting a forward motion away from the male figure (Figure 50a). Type B objects, though possessing the same archaic Greek smile on the faces of both figures, are more dynamic and violent, representing a similar composition to Type A though in mid-action (Figure 50b).²⁶⁵ In this image, the similarly muscular male figure is represented as ithyphallic. His legs are bent in the action of running, his left arms wrapped all the way around the waist of the female figure, his left arm tucked under her knees. The female figure is spread horizontally across the face of the coin. Her arms in opposite directions, fingers spread out as her feet dangle. This image expresses a sense of panic and abduction, suggesting moments before a sexual encounter, the aggression of the satyr implying a non-consensual sexual interaction or rape.

This entwined sexually charged image, regularly referred to in classical art history as a symplegma image, appears repeatedly in both Payne Knight's and Townley's collections. The symplegma image was well-known to collectors in the eighteenth century as a sexual representation. One of these coins from Payne Knight is even included in his *Discourse* from the 1786 version, suggesting that Payne Knight himself understood this to be a sexual object (Figure 18a-b). Had the Museum Secretum been designed as imitative of Payne Knight's collection or even referential to the plates in his literary work, presumably one example of this type of coin would be included in the MSR. Perhaps curatorial staff simply had not been able to locate or redistribute the item to the Museum Secretum, though their treatment of other examples of symplegma objects offers an alternative narrative.

²⁶⁴ There are nine examples of this image on Greek silver coins in Richard Payne Knight's collection: Type A: RPK,p94A.5.Arg, No: RPK,p94A.1.Arg, No: RPK,p94A.1.Arg; Type B: No: RPK,p95A.6.Arg, No: RPK,p95B.2.Arg No: RPK,p95A.8.Arg No: RPK,p95A.7.Arg No: RPK,p95B.1.Arg No: RPK,p95A.9.Arg

²⁶⁵ For more on the Greek 'archaic smile' and its relationship to Egyptian sculpture see Francis Henry Taylor, "The Archaic Smile: The Relation of Art and the Dignity of Man," *Daedalus* 86, no. 4 (1957): 285-322.; Whitney Davis, "Egypt, Samos, and the Archaic Style in Greek Sculpture," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 67, no. 1 (1981): 61-81.

In her work on the Townley Nymph and Satyr statue, in this chapter titled the *Townley Symplegma*, Donnellan charts the life of this object addressing the complexity of this form of implied sexual violence within the early nineteenth-century context (Figure 2).²⁶⁶ This statue had a dynamic and changeable existence within the British Museum's contexts of display long before the invention of the Museum Secretum, to which this object would eventually become part, as M466. Like the *Payne Knight Term*, which was included in official British Museum bronze catalogues as previously mentioned, the *Townley Symplegma* was in a state of flux but had been removed from public display by 1817.²⁶⁷ Today, this symplegma image is described by the curators of the British Museum as "Attempted Rape", a movement away from previous descriptions of similar images in which the action is described as an abduction.²⁶⁸ To date, there has been an increasing amount of work dedicated to examining and challenging these long held approaches to discussing rape and sexual assault in classical myth and society from both sides of the argument.²⁶⁹

It should be noted here that while the cases presented so far are of mixed gender sexual interactions, i.e. the nymph and satyr symplegma type and the Leda and Swan, this categorisation extends to male as well as female victims of sexual violence, a point which is also important in discussing the make-up of the Museum Secretum's collection. Despite the similarity between Leda and the Swan and the figural representation of Ganymede and the Eagle, also regularly referred to as an abduction scene, there are no images of Ganymede represented in the Museum Secretum. Depictions of Ganymede appear in both Payne Knight's Collection (1824,0405.10-no image available) and in Townley's collection, one example a lamp similar to M417 (Compare Figure 26 and 27 to Figure 51). It could be argued that this is due to the collection's emphasis on Payne Knight's theories of sexuality as a worship of fertility since Leda gives birth later in the myth. However the description and inclusion of depictions of male-male intercourse on other objects

²⁶⁶ Donnellan, "Ethics and Erotics", 145-167.

²⁶⁷ Brian F. Cook, *Documenting the Townley Marbles* (London: British Museum Press, 2013), 57.

²⁶⁸ Label from Ian Jenkins and Victoria Turner, *The Ancient Olympic Games: An Exhibition from the British Museum* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Heritage Museum (Bilingual edition), 2008), 138.

²⁶⁹ For an example encouraging the use of 'abduction' and 'seduction' in deity related sexual assault see Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Seduction and Rape in Greek Myth," in *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies* ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993), 17-38.; for those advocating for a redefinition of these actions as 'rape' or sexual assault see Susan Deacy and Karen F. Pierce (eds.), *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, (Wales: Duckworth, 2002).

within the Museum Secretum challenges this interpretation (Figure 52). As argued previously, it is more likely that the exclusion of this image reflects the absence of similar objects in both the Naples Cabinet of Secrets and in Witt's collection, which differs in significant material, cultural, and subject based ways.

Donnellan concludes that this regular movement in and out of view for the *Townley Symplegma* was due to continuous redefinitions of obscenity in this form of sexual interaction during this period, and that "the museum had begun removing objects with sexual subjects from [public] display as far back as 1810-1812, further weakening this connection with the [Obscene Publications Act of 1857], and predating even the creation of the Naples Cabinet of Secrets".²⁷⁰ This conclusion has significant implications for the Museum Secretum and its purpose.

If one accepts this theory of segregating obscene material from public display, it is the earlier actions by the British Museum, not the 1865 redistribution, that must be considered a reactionary curatorial response to sexual objects. In this reading, the Museum Secretum facilitated access to previously inaccessible objects, which are not even referenced in the official British Museum catalogues, and made it easier to view these objects than during Payne Knight's lifetime. Additionally, the great care that is taken to document these items, including drawings alongside descriptions in the MSR in some cases, imply that the Museum Secretum was designed to be a safe archival space for these objects rather than the obscurity of the general vaults, a point that is supported by Witt's scrapbooks discussed in Chapter Three.

As a final point, The *Payne Knight Term* is not the only phallic object from Payne Knight's collection that is conspicuously absent from the Museum Secretum or the Museum Secretum Register. The exclusion of several significant ancient cultures, even from European contexts, is notable to any scholar of classical history. The cultural titles attached to each section jump from 'Assyrian' and 'Egyptian', to a small 'Greek' section, immediately into a majority 'Roman' group. Objects such as the erect phallic depiction of pan or a faun, 1824,0466.3, or the Type A symplegma figurine 1824,0453.11, in which the male figure places his hand on the female figure's breast, are not only absent from the MSR but there is no section in which they could be placed as both are

²⁷⁰ Donnellan, "Ethics and Erotics", 163.

identified as Etruscan objects (Figure 53a-b). The online collection confidently identifies 70 objects as having Etruscan origins, though none of them appear in the Museum Secretum. If imitative of the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, this absence would remain logical as all of the items within that collection come from the Roman finds at Pompeii and Herculaneum. However, if this is a collection of objects meant to imitate the study of the sexual and phallic imagery collected and discussed by Payne Knight, their absence is a particularly glaring oversight. The gesture of the symplegma figure imitates very closely the gestures of a fresco included in the Cabinet of Secrets collection (Figure 54). To not include this object in the Museum Secretum therefore suggests it is not the theme or imagery of the Cabinet of Secrets that they wish to emulate, nor is it the eighteenth-century collected objects already contained in the British Museum archives. In reality, the exclusion of all Etruscan objects comparatively corresponds to the collection of Witt who has no objects with this cultural label within his collection.

4. Chapter Two Conclusions

Knight's scholarship, collection, and his relationship to the reception of sexual objects have to date been over-generalised and understudied. To understand how the transition of private collections into larger public institutional schema of the display of sexual objects occurred, it is essential that research start with the object, in its multiple iterations as the primary source. Nevertheless, due to an overreliance on biographical material, including Payne Knight's reputation destroying conduct at the parliamentary enquiry into the purchase of the Elgin Marbles, Payne Knight's collection became relatively obscure from the nineteenth century forwards, particularly when considering his visual presence on the public platform of today.

Additionally, his authorship of the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* was pivotal in associating a small fraction of his collection with the Museum Secretum, creating a biased narrative of censorship of his sexual collection due to a late Victorian obsession with the suppression of vice. By performing data analysis using the new method outlined in this thesis, Payne Knight's collection is redefined as one that is equally concerned with material over subject that offers wide scope of intellectual pursuit beyond his associations with sexual object collecting. In this analysis, not only has the private collection be reframed but the Museum Secretum as a nineteenth-century

space for the reception of sexual antiquities can be redefined and its objects more widely categorised.

By analysing the data comparatively and examining the life of the *Payne Knight Term* as an accurate representative case study of Knight's entire collection, it can be concluded with some confidence that the Museum Secretum was not imitative of Payne Knight's collection directly, nor other eighteenth-century antiquarian collections donated to the British Museum. This is particularly evident when considering the exclusion of coins that compose the majority of Payne Knight's private collection and gems/intaglios from Townley's collection. Many sexual objects, in this case an ithyphallic herm, were not selected for display in this group of objects posing questions about the curatorial criteria used to decide whether an object was worthy of inclusion.

From the topics highlighted in this chapter, the Museum Secretum's exclusion of Herculean iconography offers a deeper understanding of how the concepts of fertility and 'generative worship' in the context of Greco-Roman religion were understood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with a clear distinction between destruction and generation. The perceived perfection of the Herculean body reflects a preoccupation with imperfect bodies in the Museum Secretum collection, defining the priapic object, despite its direct embodiment of a god from its ancient context, in terms of the grotesque and the perceived 'disabled' body. Widening the network of excluded objects with the *Payne Knight Term* as the starting point, the omission of coins, despite their sexual imagery (in particular symplegma scenes), raises larger questions about the definitions of sexual violence and depictions of this kind of action in classical art. These complexities illustrate intellectual intent in the Museum Secretum beyond simply a collection of either obscene or representations of phallic/fertility worship, and suggestive of wider scholarly interest in understanding the purpose and function of sexual imagery in ancient cultures.

Additionally, from this evidence it is clear that emulating the Cabinet of Secrets from Naples was a major factor that prompted the British Museum to develop the Museum Secretum. However, the categorisation of objects as Museum Secretum objects suggests that there is a clear goal to surpass this Italian collection based on the scholarship of British thinkers and collectors in the nineteenth century. It has been widely acknowledged in modern scholarship that the Cabinet of Secrets in

Naples has been, and will most likely continue to be, a lucrative collection for the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.²⁷¹ Considering this factor, what is selected for the Museum Secretum was not simply created to protect vulnerable viewers, to protect and offer access to interested scholars, or even purely to present a specific ideological message with the group of objects it places within the same context. Rather, it should be understood as a space of potential income and/or prestige for the British Museum, a goal that the inclusion of Payne Knight's coins, the *Payne Knight Term*, and other omitted objects were not deemed able to fulfill. Therefore, to continue exploring the reception of the Museum Secretum, as well as the private collections that compose it, it is necessary to analyse the private collection that stands as its model and foundation.

²⁷¹ Alastair J. L. Blanshard, *Sex: Vice and Love from Antiquity to Modernity* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 32.; Beard, "Dirty Little Secrets."

Chapter Three

(Witt)icisms: George Witt, the Nineteenth Century, and the Establishment of the Museum Secretum

A challenge facing any student of the nineteenth century, museum collections, reception of classical material, and, as in this thesis, sexual material, is the lack of available research on the Museum Secretum and the consequent over reliance on collector biography in the work that does exist. The limited modern scholarship of phallic worship and the reception of obscene and sexual collections in the late nineteenth century generates the overriding impression that the age of intellectualism within the field of sexuality and the erotic entered a dark age in the nineteenth century.²⁷² Within this narrative, the Museum Secretum is a censorial closet of shameful objects, in both figurative and literal senses. However, the objects themselves, and their histories of collection and display, tell a very different story of acquisition and representation and only recently has scholarship attempted to readdress the censorship narrative. In the exploration of these objects and materials, it is tempting to use private collector biographies and their perceived motives to determine their intentions and purpose of collecting. In isolation, this approach colours the reception and display of the collected objects through a single lens of potentially biased and uniformed biographical reading. In effect, this approach denies the life of the objects as independent items throughout time and fails to engage with the larger narratives and contexts these collected items exhibit and preserve. Here I apply data analysis of digital archives to investigate Witt's collections within the Museum Secretum and British Museum before exploring the case study W.104 through object biography from Witt's donated collection in an attempt to decipher larger thematic nineteenth-century contexts for collecting sexual objects.

Arguably, Witt is the most challenging collector to fit into the alleged censorship function of the Museum Secretum and the notion of a scholarly sexual dark age of the late nineteenth century. Witt continued collecting sexual objects until his death in 1869 and perpetuated the literary traditions of Payne Knight and the Society of the Dilettanti by contributing enthusiastically to republishing the *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* in 1865. He also compiled extensive

²⁷² Catherine Johns, *Sex or Symbol*; Gaimster, "Under Lock and Key."

research notes and treatises in his own private notebooks or ‘scrapbooks’ held in the British Museum.²⁷³ However, Witt’s reputation has been far from that of the highly praised intellectual rigour of the gentleman scholar afforded to his eighteenth-century predecessors. As Grove argues, Witt’s contribution to academic study of sexual objects and of anthropological, archaeological, and classical study more generally has been marginalised in modern scholarship as the evidence and body of work he produced failed to fit into the strict definition of an alleged censorial nineteenth-century attitude to sex.²⁷⁴ I argue approaching the reception and history of sexual object in the nineteenth century from purely textual scholarship and evidence – i.e. letters, treatises, essays, and other forms of written analysis - relies too heavily on biographical material that is often used to confirm previously formed hypotheses, such as the censorship myth of sexual objects. Instead, by starting with the object as the primary source material, the context for the collection and curation of the physical object opens new avenues of exploring continuous intellectual engagement with sexual material in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Paralleling the structure of Chapter Two, section one describes the traditional methods of studying Witt’s collection and the *Museum Secretum* by introducing Witt as an historical character, reconstructing his biography from various secondary sources that have used his collection in the past as support for the idea that his collections were censored in the *Museum Secretum*. This section will illustrate how biography has oversimplified his relationship to the objects he collected as well as expose the gaps in this form of historical practice.

Section two explores the Witt Collection within the larger context of the *Museum Secretum*, British Museum digital collections, and in relation to the collections of Payne Knight and Townley. I will apply comparative data analysis to examine the reception of Witt’s collection in the years since his donation in relation to previous eighteenth-century case studies and then explore how Witt’s collection continues to be seen in both physical and digital contexts.

²⁷³ Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” 21.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

Finally, in section three I will examine Witt's collection from a new perspective by using a single object case study selected from within his collection as well as from the online catalogue to explore the continuous intellectual engagement with these objects throughout the nineteenth century. Using a visual analysis of object W.104 as a starting point, I explore a single thematic case study, discussing how Witt's collections stood as the basis for the reassignment of objects across the British Museum. In this context, the direct study of Witt's private collection illuminates the function and purpose from the Museum Secretum's initial establishment is far more complex than simply a collection imitative of the eighteenth-century theories of phallic and priapic religion. Instead, using Witt's scrapbooks as an object for study alongside the juxtaposed collected objects within his 1865 and 1868 donations, this chapter illustrates how sexual collections were already engaging with radical studies of cultural/anthropological theory, medical history, hygiene, and sexology in decades much earlier than the previously accepted turning point in these fields by later collectors, such as Henry Wellcome at the turn of the twentieth century.

1. Collector Biography

1.1 The Strange Case of Dr Witt and Mr 'Hide': The Biography and Class-ification of George Witt

Like the previous case studies from Chapter Two, Witt's biography has been the central source for studying his collecting practices and the state of academic research on sexual objects in the Museum Secretum. While the experiences of his education and lifetime are undoubtedly important to the study of his collection, this overwhelming interest in his biography with little detailed examination of the objects within his collection often misses the complexities visual and comparative analysis can offer. Unlike Payne Knight and Townley, Witt's biography has not received much sustained research since his death beyond snippets in works on sexual objects and/or the Museum Secretum specifically, amateur local historical works, and general encyclopedic entries.²⁷⁵ Additionally, unlike his Enlightenment predecessors, Witt remains a "positively elusive character" and the primary sources available on his life and experiences are

²⁷⁵ Catherine Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28-30.; Gaimster, "Under Lock and Key," 132-134.; Grove, "The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," 21.; Richard Morgan, "New Light on George Witt Part 1," *Bedfordshire Local History Association: History in Bedfordshire* 7, no 9 (2016-2017): 7-19.; Richard Morgan, "New Light on George Witt Part 2," *Bedfordshire Local History Association: History in Bedfordshire* 7, no. 10 (2017): 6-16.

relatively scarce.²⁷⁶ Most primary sources are restricted to the limited number of reports and articles from Australian newspapers, obituaries, and death notices from his longtime home of Bedford, records of his education and professional licenses, as well as the scant letters contained within his donations to the British Museum.²⁷⁷ In the scholarly works written around his biography, these primary sources are largely omitted with the exception of the letter he included on his sickbed requesting that the British Museum acquire his collection in 1865.²⁷⁸ In this section, I reconstruct his biography going beyond this one event and utilise the primary sources and secondary sources beyond those almost exclusively used previously. This process of reconstruction counteracts the tendentious previous narrative that Witt was a compulsive collector of sexual objects for the sake of personal sexual gratification alone and positions his collection within a larger nineteenth-century community of medical, professional, and anthropological scholars.

During his lifetime, Witt had a continuous impulse to collect. It is difficult and, in many ways, inaccurate to discuss his ‘collection’ as a single entity as the groups of objects he owned evolved with his changes in circumstance, both economically and socially, as well as out of practical necessity. Witt was born in the first decade of the nineteenth century, circa 1803-1804 according to Johns’s estimate. His place of birth varies in the sources, though most generally accepted is that he was born in either Norfolk or Cambridgeshire, the son of a yeoman farmer.²⁷⁹ Witt’s family became successful enough to pay for their son’s education, and he entered the medical profession. Like Knight before him, Witt was not a man born into the social elite of his time. His fortune was almost entirely amassed during his own lifetime through professional endeavors in fields that were decidedly ‘middle class’.²⁸⁰ With this in mind, Witt cannot be described as a gentleman scholar on par with Payne Knight or Townley before him. His professional commitments meant that he became strictly a hobbyist, his life work being dedicated to medicine, politics, and banking.

²⁷⁶ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 28. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Witt, George (1804–1869).”; Morgan, “New Light on George Witt Part 2,” 5–14.; N. B. amateur scholarship and local historians offer the most comprehensive documentation of his life, in particular Richard Morgan’s work.

²⁷⁸ George Witt, *Letter to Anthony Panizzi, 1865*, (letter), British Museum Archive Originals Papers, 84.

²⁷⁹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Witt, George (1804–1869).”

²⁸⁰ For more on the role of doctors and surgeons in the nineteenth century see Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 250-272.

He was first trained as a medical doctor in Northampton, then on to St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, followed by a stint in the East India Company in India before being elected as house surgeon at the General Infirmary, Bedford in 1828.²⁸¹ In 1830, he was granted his MD from Leiden University in the Netherlands with his thesis on cholera epidemics funded by his home institution.

His tenure as a doctor in the Bedford General Infirmary was evidently a successful one, as his various publications earned him a senior medical post in 1832 and he was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1834. The first direct reference in the record to his collection comes during his first few years at the Bedfordshire hospital, when Witt attempted to set up a museum along with his colleague Dr. Joseph Thackeray who writes about the venture:

In submitting to you a statement professedly touching on every point of interest connected with the Institution, I should be culpable in omitting all mention of the Museum. This collection, exhibiting proofs of the great talent, seal and industry of our valuable House-Surgeon, Dr. Witt, attracts many visitors to the House and engages in consequence new and active friends in the service of the Charity.²⁸²

In 1834 he was elected as Mayor of Bedford as the Tory candidate, though his run for election as alderman in 1843 and the subsequent criticism of his time in office suggests his political aspirations were short lived and not entirely successful.²⁸³

The available records show that in 1849, Witt stepped down from his position in the hospital and moved his family to Sydney, Australia, as evidenced through his personal letters and letter of resignation possibly due to concern for his own and/or his family's health.²⁸⁴ It was in Australia that Witt amassed his fortune that would allow him to explore his research interest and purchase the sizable collection that would become the foundation of the British Museum's Museum Secretum. Witt was as much a museum builder as he was a collector of objects. After departing

²⁸¹ Attempts have been made to track down more information and evidence for his time in the East India Company but as of the final submission date no further documentation has been located.

²⁸² Bedford Infirmary, *27th Annual Report of the Bedford Infirmary, 24 June 1829–24*, (Bedford: Local Squabbles 1830), 8.

²⁸³ "Special Meeting of the Town Council," editorial, *Bedfordshire Mercury*, Feb 25, 1843, 1.

²⁸⁴ *Bedford Times*, Sat, Jan 6, 1849, in *Local Squabbles*, 177, quoted from Richard Morgan, "New Light on George Witt Part 2," 6.; *Local Squabbles* is a collection of press clippings in the form of a scrapbook now in the British Library collected by George Witt. I was unable to photograph or further reference this item due to Covid-19 restrictions; for more on this volume see Morgan, "New Light on George Witt Part 1," 7-8.

England for his ventures in Australia, Witt was appointed as a member of the Committee of Superintendence of the Sydney Museum in 1852.²⁸⁵ It was during his tenure as the Honorary Secretary to the Trustees of the Museum that the museum was officially incorporated and renamed the Australian Museum in 1853.²⁸⁶ Additionally, newspaper evidence suggests that Witt continued collecting during this period as in April of 1854 he donates “[four] specimens of fossil wood, from Wollongong” though, as shall be discussed later in this chapter, by 1865 no items of Australian origin remain in his collection to be donated to the British Museum.²⁸⁷ In any case, his wealth from a change of career to banking and personal investments in the mining industry would allow the purchase of a home in Hyde Park upon his return to England in 1854 where he was known to “hold Sunday morning lectures (...) on his collection of phallic antiquities.”²⁸⁸

A sudden illness drove Witt to approach the British Museum with his extensive collection in 1865 and over the next four years until his death in 1869 the bulk of his collection was handed over to the curators at the British Museum and the newly established Museum Secretum, often casually titled the Witt Collection. In 1866, the newspapers announce his donation to the British Museum, though it is notable that the notice fails to mention his collection of objects, instead only commenting on the manuscripts and books:

Mr. George Witt has presented his valuable collec[tion] of manuscripts and books illustrative of Priapus Worship to the British Museum, on condition that a separate room be set apart for them, open to students under certain conditions.²⁸⁹

While the passage makes reference to conditions for viewing, these are not stipulated. It is unclear from direct comparison to Witt’s own letter of approach to the British Museum if this limitation was in reality intended by either Witt or the British Museum, a point further examined in the introduction of this thesis.

²⁸⁵ “Australian Museum,” editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sep 8, 1852, 3.

²⁸⁶ “Domestic Intelligence,” editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Jul 11, 1853, 2.

²⁸⁷ “Donations to the Australian Museum, During April, 1854” editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 9, 1854, 5.

²⁸⁸ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28.; Wickstead, “Sex in the Secret Museum,” 353.

²⁸⁹ “Obituaries,” editorial, *Congleton & Macclesfield Mercury*, Jan 20, 1866.; “Obituaries,” editorial, *Cheshire General Advertiser*, Jan 20, 1866.

Witt eventually died from his long illness on the 20th of February in 1869 at his home at 22 Prince's Terrace, Hyde Park in London. While both the collectors Knight and Townley were granted obituaries and death notices that make specific reference to their considerable donations and/or relationship to the British Museum, Witt's death notices and obituaries make no such mention of any of his associations beyond his title of Esquire.²⁹⁰ By this time his collection had almost entirely been handed over to the British Museum and its curators.

1.2 "Obsessed", "Indulgent", "Pornophile": George Witt in Modern Scholarship

Today, it is the research and work of Gaimster, a former curator of the British Museum's Department of Medieval and Modern Europe, that is most easily accessible to those interested in the life of Witt and it is his interpretation of Witt's collection and collecting habits that has often defined the role of the sexual object in the Museum Secretum.²⁹¹ Historically, Gaimster was interviewed about the Museum Secretum for newspaper and journal articles meant for general public consumption, making his perspective dominant.²⁹² As described in the introduction of this work, recent reception by British Museum curators, in particular Johns and Gaimster, have presented the Museum Secretum and nineteenth-century collection and treatment of sexual objects as "regrettable and unscholarly hypocrisy" and "reveal[ing] the degree of trauma experienced by the Victorians."²⁹³

The traditional biographical approaches to Witt's collection and collecting practices often focus on his career and social position to undermine his scholarly interest in sexual collecting. Firstly, Witt is regularly described using phrases and language implying someone who is concerned first and foremost with his own sexual gratification. There is a suggestion by Johns that eighteenth-century disinterestedness in sexual material makes their motivations more academic in nature than Witt's, stating that "Payne Knight and his contemporaries did not collect only phallic objects or those with some sexual connotation: it was simply that they did not avoid them" whereas "Witt

²⁹⁰ "Obituaries," editorial, *York Herald*, Jan 12, 1805; "Obituaries," editorial, *The Times*, May 4, 1824, 3.; "Obituaries," editorial, *Bedfordshire Times*, Feb 23, 1869.

²⁹¹ Gaimster, "Sex & Sensibility at the British Museum," 10-15.; Gaimster, "Under Lock and Key," 126-139.

²⁹² Laura Thomas, "Eye of the Beholder." *Index on Censorship* 29, no. 3 (2000): 161-65, accessed May 17, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03064220008536740>.

²⁹³ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 15; Gaimster, "Sex and Sensibility at the British Museum."

specialised far more.”²⁹⁴ While Payne Knight is described by Johns as “a man of real distinction” with an “outstanding collection,” Witt receives no such praise or suggestion of scholarly value, instead receiving a cursory biographical outline and a swift movement on to the life of his collection in the British Museum.²⁹⁵

To Gaimster, Witt appears to be simultaneously a pornophile and a social climber rather than a serious scholar. On the first count, Witt’s collection of cartoons including the ‘Car of Venus’ and ‘Ages of Man’ are described as “truly paedophile in character” with Gaimster overtly stating that “[t]hese explicit images go far beyond an interest in early fertility cults and call into question the professed rigour of Witt’s scholarship and his motivation for collecting” (Figure 55 and 56).²⁹⁶ Witt becomes a member of the “pornophile” club of the late nineteenth century, situating him comfortably within the realms of the censorship myth.²⁹⁷ While it is all but impossible to definitively know the extent to which Witt’s personal sexual proclivities and interests lead to his interest in the erotic, to dismiss his collecting as merely the fulfillment of lust ignores the man’s attempts at scholarly engagement with his own collection. Within this narrative, Witt’s meetings, talks, and presentations of his collections at his home in London with fellow collectors, acknowledged and described by both Johns and Gaimster, are akin to debauched gatherings such as the Hellfire Club instead of the supposed tempered scholarly meetings of the Society of Dilettanti. Against this perspective, the objects themselves tell a rather different story, namely Witt’s collection of heavily curated scrapbooks, illustrating the collector’s larger network of scholarly work, which will be examined in further detail later in this chapter.²⁹⁸

That is not to deny the closed, invite-only nature of gatherings at Witt’s home, however, to claim that this was due to the sexual subject matter of his collections and his own lusty desire to collect them without genuine scholarly interest is to deny the nature of private collections all over the country. To this day, access to art and materials in private collections is regularly by appointment

²⁹⁴ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28.

²⁹⁵ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 28-29.

²⁹⁶ Gaimster, “Under lock and Key,” 134.

²⁹⁷ Fisher and Langlands, “The Censorship Myth and the Secret Museum,” 310.

²⁹⁸ Wickstead, “Sex in the Secret Museum”, 351-366.

or personal invitation only, often regardless of the subject matter of the items in question but rather due to the practicalities of owning art privately.

The second characterisation of Witt is significant in the study of Victorian culture more generally.²⁹⁹ Classist bias likely comes to play in the study of collectors and with the dynamic changes and start of the stricter classifications of the middle class in the nineteenth century, Witt's biography as a middle-class professional is a singular point of reference for understanding his collection and motivations. As Gaimster concludes:

Entwined with Witt's obsession was a desire for scholarly recognition for his area of research. To mark the acceptance of his collection Witt presented to the Museum a pamphlet, published by himself, entitled *Catalogue of a Collection Illustrative of Phallic Worship* in 1866. What could be more respectable than official acceptance by the British Museum?³⁰⁰

The tone of Gaimster's characterisation of Witt's donation to the British Museum hints at his desire for legitimacy and to be a part of the upper echelons of scholarly society and for his collection to be seen as 'respectable' within this social context. This characterisation is problematic as a starting point for research on Witt's Collections in the British Museum. That is not to say that legitimacy was not important to Witt, as is likely the case with many collectors donating to established institutions, but the subject matter of his collections and the biographical emphasis on his nouveau rich background and profession taints his donation with a whiff of desperation not associated with the great Enlightenment collectors of the previous century. Indeed, the language utilised in these biographical approaches to Witt characterise him as someone unable to collect in a scholarly way because of his own "pornophile" interests, "obsessions," and "indulgent" motives.³⁰¹ These characterisations of his motives and mental state cannot be absolutely confirmed nor denied and so are based on bias and subjective reasoning, failing to acknowledge any intellectual curiosity in Witt for collecting sexual objects.

²⁹⁹ Discussions of the complexity of the 'middle class' in modern scholarship has been long studied from different perspectives for further reading see Lauren M. E. Goodlad, "'A Middle Class Cut into Two': Historiography and Victorian National Character." *ELH* 67, no. 1 (2000): 143-178.; Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

³⁰⁰ Gaimster, "Sex and Sensibility."

³⁰¹ Johns, *Sex on Show*, 28-29.; Gaimster, "Sex and Sensibility."

While collector biography is often relevant to understanding how a collection is transmitted through history for our studies, the biases and personal nature of this approach to historical research has in many ways tainted the reception and perception of the Museum Secretum in recent scholarship. Dr. Witt's profession, nouveau rich lifestyle that funded his collecting, and an assumption of prudery in the values of the middle class he is assumed to inhabit denies the broader scholarly network surrounding Witt and his collected sexual objects. If one is looking for a pornophile, it is easy to find this as a motivation, even though objective justification for this view is not in evidence.

2. Data Report and Comparative Analysis

As with Payne Knight's (Collection A) and Townley's (Collection B) respective collections, understanding the representation of the Museum Secretum and larger Witt collection must begin in the realms of digital archives and digital humanities. This section will examine the macro-scale biography of the Witt collection, referred for the remainder of this section as Collection C, by performing a breakdown of the objects donated in the 1860s and examining the continued representation of these objects online. As Collection C makes up 38% of all of the objects within the Museum Secretum, and 49% of his donated books are included, understanding what priorities lead to its creation and collection is necessary to understand the fundamental purpose of the Museum Secretum. Therefore, I will examine the contents and data of the entire Collection C by first reporting the materials, cultures represented, and the subject matter/thematic content of the items collected. To place the objects of Collection C into a broader context it is necessary to compare them to other collections represented within the Museum Secretum and conduct a numerical and proportional comparison. Detailed discussion and analyses of the Payne Knight and Townley collections, Collections A and B respectively, were reported in section two of Chapter Two. In each category of inquiry, I compare the nineteenth-century collection represented in the Museum Secretum in terms of material, culture, and subject relative to the entire collection and items specifically in the Museum Secretum register. It is important to keep in mind that the size of each collection differs substantially, with 6,870 digital object entries in Collection A, 8,452 in Collection B, and 497 in Collection C. The size of the collection is important to note, as the entire

size of Collection C is comparable to 6.7% of Collection A and 5% of Collection B. Therefore, to make larger claims about the comparative contents of each collection, I assessed the proportion (percentage) of the whole using like search terms.

As recorded in the Museum Secretum Register, the majority of Collection C comprises 434 objects accepted in 1865. It is important to note that Witt's collection was donated in three sections, the first of which occurred in 1865 with the vast majority of his holdings going immediately into the Museum Secretum. The second donation occurred in 1868 a year before his death and the acquisition notes from the British Museum's online collection indicates that 74 objects were taken in at this time, though none appear in the Museum Secretum Register. Additionally, other items donated afterwards, such as posthumously in 1880, have been redistributed and undergone over one hundred years of reorganisation, loss, damage, and mislabeling since they were accepted into the British Museum. As a result, under the search term/filter 'Donated by Dr. George Witt' now 497 results are found.³⁰² Many of these items include the broken parts of single objects as individual entries and therefore in my examination of Collection C I will be using the expanded numbers to be as inclusive as possible and representative of the online collection's data.

Sidelining Witt's biography in favour of starting with the objects within his collection as a whole makes it clear that the purpose, function, and reception of the Museum Secretum becomes arguably less censorial. The Museum Secretum was established to house Witt's collection and, if we are to accept the premise that the British Museum respected Witt's request to include a space for the study of objects 'illustrative of the same subject', his collection in many ways is the backbone and template for the extended contents of the Museum Secretum. While this phrase simplistically may refer to 'sexual' objects, in terms of curating and practice, identifying the materials, represented cultures, and other themes of his collection is crucial to defining what objects are similar enough to be included in this space. Therefore, the data and breakdown of Collection C beyond sexual antiquities, a subjective category, is vital to understanding the sustained study of sexual objects in the Museum Secretum, the British Museum, and the Victorian period more broadly. From examining the state of the collection from a data driven perspective, it is possible to select a single

³⁰² This number is accurate as of May 2021.

object to represent the collection in order to perform object biography to better understand the role of the Museum Secretum and sexual antiquities in section three.

Finally, this section will explore how Witt's collection is displayed in both the physical British Museum galleries and on the British Museum's online collections platform. Comparing these results to the previous private collections from the eighteenth century, it becomes clear that the representation of Witt's collection as primarily sexual, and the continued biographical approach to his 'pornophile' character, is supported by the virtual records largely due to the practicalities of avoiding repeating images of similar object types.

2.1 Materials

i. Report

The impact of materiality and the material construction of objects is a large field of interest in the study of art history in recent years. The hierarchy of materials, in terms of monetary value, rarity, popularity amongst various class structures and cultural hierarchies has immense influence over the reception of an object and its longevity its cultural capital and the extent to which it is displayed, researched, and made otherwise accessible for a wide audience.³⁰³ What materials a person chooses to collect, and to what purpose, is driven by numerous factors including personal aesthetic preference, personal knowledge/history, availability on the open market, personal wealth, ability to store and/or display that material and objects made from it. In terms of materiality and the theory of materials in the development of artistic objects and anthropology, the donation and curation of Collection C within a national museum sits within the centre of debates surrounding the taxonomy of material in the mid- to late- nineteenth century.³⁰⁴ Therefore, understanding how

³⁰³ For example, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).; Ann-Sophie Lehmann, and Judith Spijksma, "Flattening Hierarchies of Display: The Liberating and Leveling Powers of Objects and Materials," *Stedelijk Studies* 5, no. 7 (2017): 1-18.

³⁰⁴ I reference here the work of Gottfried Semper who developed the idea that the growth and development of art, decoration, and architecture is materially driven from the four elements of architecture. For a nineteenth century challenge to his theory see also Alois Riegl whose *Kunstwollen* which suggests it is the artistic will of man that initiates artistic innovation. See Gottfried Semper, *Die Vier Elemente der Baukunst* [The Four Elements of Architecture], (Brunswick: F. Vieweg, 1851).; Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zueiner Geschichte der Ornamentik* [Questions of Style: Foundations of a History of Ornamentation] (Berlin: Verlag Georg Siemens, 1893), VII-VIII.

this and other collections within the Museum Secretum group are understood materially and the bias of hierarchy of material that may be imposed on them is crucial to conducting object biography and understanding the collections as a whole.

Within his collection, items of metal, equaling 176 objects, and ceramics, equaling 180, are closely proportional while there is only one paper object, a category which primarily includes loose prints, sketches, or drawings. Beyond the broad Level 2 terms, it becomes clear that Collection C has a relatively high diversity in material from observation of the more specific Level 3 terms (Table 3 and Chart 3).³⁰⁵ For example, the metal collections can be subdivided into 37 Level 3 terms, ceramics into 14, stone into 42, and paper into 3. This is in part due to the mixed media of many of the items collected, such as the paper object WITT.315 consisting of both paper and a wax seal.

Additionally, Level 2 terms do not always illustrate the quality, rarity, or monetary value of the objects within them. Objects made partially or entirely of lower valued metals are common within Collection C, with copper alloys present in 78% of the metal objects, while gold makes up 10% and silver 2%. Similarly, within the stone object group lower value materials like coral make up a larger percentage of the collection, specifically 28%, and volcanic stone/lava make up 10% while traditionally more highly prized stone types are almost completely absent with only object WITT.252 (1865,1118.252) made of marble.

ii. Comparative Analysis

Materially speaking all three collections show very distinct priorities in collecting practices (Charts 1, 2, and 3). In a general sense, material patterns are evident within each collection. From these initial breakdowns, Collection A highly favours metal objects, Collection B contains a high proportion of paper items with fairly even distribution between the other categories, and Collection C has an even split of ceramic and metal objects. The seeming anomaly in Collection C of a lack of paper items is attributable to the collection of scrapbooks donated alongside the collection which are now held in the Anthropology Library at the British Museum and therefore are not counted as

³⁰⁵ These term categories, or ‘Levels’, are outlined in Chapter One.

individual objects. These will be reexamined in the object biography section of this chapter as objects of interest.

As previously stated, however, these Level 2 terms do not always manage to illustrate the supposed value of the differing types of material within each subgroup. For example, while Collections B and C have similar proportions of stone items, closer examination reveals that stone objects within Collection B have greater material value compared to stone objects within Collection C. From the search terms employed in the British Museum online collections, Collection A and B's stone collections consist primarily of higher value gemstones, while the most common Level 3 term for Collection C's stone group is coral followed by volcanic rock (Table 5). In the case of the metal objects, Collection A boasts the highest proportion of 'high value' metal objects, namely silver and gold, though interestingly Collection C has the highest proportion though not quantity, of gold items (Table 4). Reasons for this could be that the collector prioritised quality over quantity in metal collection, or simply did not have the means to collect larger value metal items compared to Collector A or B.

The data suggests that it would be fair to classify Collection A (Payne Knight's collection) as a predominantly metal based collection from the material items collected. Collection B and C, however, are more diverse materially. When it comes to Level 3 terms specificity, however, it becomes clear that the collector of Collection B (Townley), put their resources into higher value stone and metal items, particularly marble near life-size statuary, results that are supported by the introduction of biographical detail about the collectors to understand the possible reasons for these priorities.³⁰⁶ Finally, the materiality of Collection C is diverse and relatively inexpensive compared to the other two collections. While this may be due to the inability of the collector to buy higher value objects, it is equally possible that this collector also had different collecting priorities contributing to the material composition, perhaps in the realms of culture and/or subject matter of the objects collected.

³⁰⁶ As supported by the notes of sale from Townley's papers; Hill, *Catalogue of the Townley Archive at The British Museum*, 34-42.

2.2 Culture, Location, Place of Production

i. Report

When looking at the data available, it becomes clear that the digital collection illustrates the lack of certifiable information on the original contexts of production for many of these objects, leading to a difficulty in categorising these objects accurately by place or culture (Chart 6). From the Level 1 terminology applied to the digital records alone, objects from the Asian continent account for 19% of Collection C and 16% of the objects come from Europe. However, the absence of a definitive continent for location of production does not imply a traditionally ‘European’ context for creation. For example, the Roman Empire at its height spanned three continents and objects were produced across all of this vast geographical expanse. However, for an object to be classified in the archive as ‘Roman’ it must conform to the general artistic schema of traditionally Italic cultural representations.

Hence, it may be more fruitful in this case to examine how the nineteenth-century Museum Secretum Register assesses the intended cultural references of objects within the collection when it came into the possession of the British Museum. This analysis reveals that Collection C is understood to be composed mostly of Roman objects (43%), Greek being the second largest individual civilisation represented (15%), though with the combined Medieval, Cinquecento, Modern objects (all from European contexts) the next largest using nineteenth-century language (17%) (Chart 9). The idea that this collection favours Roman and Greek objects over others continues onto the online database labels in which 130 objects are listed as Roman, around 26% of the entire collection, and 50 objects, or 10%, are Greek. Considering the fact that 294 objects in the collection are not identified by culture, location, or time period in any way that means that 89% of the confidently identified objects within this collection are from a Greek or Roman context and that Collection C represents a predominantly Western-European selection of objects.

ii. Comparative Analysis

As the previous chapter highlights, both Collections A and B are made primarily of Roman and Greek sourced objects, the majority of which come from a European place of production (Charts

4, 5, and 6). Superficially, objects from Collection C originate almost equally from Asia or Europe, though the origin of many objects is unattributed. To further explore how these collections operated in the Museum Secretum, I assessed how objects placed into the Secretum from the collections were categorised using terminology from the nineteenth century. This analysis suggests that in the eye of the nineteenth-century curators, operating from the collection catalogues provided from Witt when his collections were handed over, Collection C, like Collections A and B, had a strongly Euro-centric vision favouring classical civilisations (Charts 7, 8, and 9).

However, unlike objects selected later from Collections A and B for display in the Museum Secretum, Collection C included several items from non-European cultures and empires. When compared to the entirety of Collections A and B, this data holds significance as Collection A has no items recorded from anywhere outside of Europe or Asia and the few items from Collection B that are listed as being from Africa are based on classical/antique societies (e.g. Roman Egypt). Collection B, however, does have a few examples of objects from southern Asia, for example linga and temple sculpture depicting acrobatic oral and manual sex (Figures 57 and 58). These are rare examples and Collection C is operating geographically very differently to the previous two by including civilisations outside of the classical world, possibly adding their own examples in order to bolster a different or expanded contextual hypothesis within their private collection.

With these results, there is a clear differentiation between the objects that were collected in the eighteenth century (Collection A and B) and in the nineteenth century (Collection C). This could be in part due to collector preference, Collection A does not have any Asiatic objects for example while Collection B does, though it is more likely that there are practical reasons for this change. The addition of historical context and biography to this object-based collection data illustrates the access afforded to Witt is likely the primary reason for this shift in collection data and not a disinterestedness of eighteenth-century collectors. Indeed, there is ample evidence that Payne Knight in particular was keenly interested in studying material from the Indian subcontinent despite there being few objects from his collection produced in this region.³⁰⁷ Witt was a confident and regular traveler in the context of an expanding British Empire with technology that had rapidly

³⁰⁷ Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 84-85.

progressed since the lifetimes of both Townley and Payne Knight. These changes allowed for an expanded world view of collecting and sexual art study, encouraging thematic collecting. This global perspective was in its infancy in the eighteenth century but by Witt's lifetime meant that his response, reception, and interest in sexual objects could be explored on a global scale as evidenced by this comparative data analysis.

2.3 Subject/Theme

i. Report

Determining a definitive subject/theme for objects within Collection C may, on the face of it, seem like a relatively easy task as every object donated in 1865 by Witt was included in Museum Secretum Register and the corresponding collection. Defining eroticism/sex based on a censorial notion of the Museum Secretum would *de facto* mean that all of Collection C from 1865 was collected to a thematic purpose, depicting the subject of sex and items somehow related to human sexuality through function or decoration. However, many of the objects from Witt's collection donated at this time may not be overtly sexual objects in theme. For example, objects WITT.146, a representation of a cockerel, or WITT.337, a figure of a hand with a pointed finger, are both recorded, and also provided with a sketch, in the Museum Secretum register (Figure 59a-b and Figure 60a-b). There are numerous reasons for the inclusion of these objects, including for ritual and apotropaic functions that will be explored later in this chapter in relation to anatomical votives and medical/hygiene history. As discussed in the methodology chapter of this thesis, eroticism, sexuality, and intimacy are entirely subjective terms and experiences, from an individual perspective but also cultural perspective, as recent debates on female public toplessness confirm.³⁰⁸ Therefore, using problematic broad terms like 'sexual', 'erotic', 'non-sexual', 'non-erotic', etc. does not give a clear picture of the subjects and themes most collected or represented within Collection C. Additionally, the fact that Witt's collection was donated primarily in two parts before 1865 and then in the year 1868 means that there are essentially multiple phases and groupings of his collection. While there is no information about whether Witt or the British Museum trustees

³⁰⁸ Jemimah Steinfeld, "Uncovering the Nipple Cover-up: The Battle to Give the Female Nipple Equal Rights as One Woman Heads to the Supreme Court. Plus, a Cut-out-and-Keep Male Nipple for Social Media Use," *Index on Censorship* 46, no. 3 (September 2017): 114–116.

and/or curators initiated gifting the collection in this way, it can be assumed that as the second collection was not immediately placed in the Museum Secretum, it was understood to have separate significance to the British Museum, or that the policies of redistribution from private collectors had changed in some way during this period, changing how one might understand the thematic reading of Collection C.

Therefore, to decipher the thematic contents of Collection C, it is necessary to breakdown the collection by when it was donated but also using the more specific, Level 3 terminology to examine the details of the subjects as outlined in Table 2. Using this method, it becomes clear that the 1868 donation was much smaller and generally consisted of non-figurative objects, in particular bathing and bathhouse related items including strigils, unguent pots, and hypocaust tiles (Figures 61a-b). To call this second collection non-sexual would deny two important things. First, there is an example of ‘copulative’ art on object 1868,0105.27 that might classify it as sexually themed (Figure 62). Second, there is little evidence that Witt himself kept these bathing items, no doubt related to the ‘Eastern or Turkish Baths’ well documented within his home, separate from his objects that would eventually go into the Museum Secretum, a point that will be further addressed in the object biography section of this chapter. Therefore, it is most useful to examine all of the objects donated over the space of both years as a single collection to understand better the collector’s goals.

As the data clearly shows, Collection C contains a majority of items that are of a phallic subject matter at 36% of the entire collection (Chart 12).³⁰⁹ This is followed closely by non-figurative objects at 21%. In terms of figurative subject matter, the next most collected is ‘Mixed Gender Partners in Sex/Intercourse scenes’ (i.e. predominantly arguably heterosexual sex scenes) at 7% and non-copulating animals at 6%. Statistically, it is therefore fair to state that based on the available data, this is a collection interested in artistic depictions of male reproductive organs.

³⁰⁹ See Appendix-3 for full data.

ii. Comparative Analysis

Perhaps most crucially for the reexamination of the Museum Secretum as a place of censorship, are the subjects and themes represented within the collections. The Museum Secretum is largely considered a collection of “artefacts of an erotic nature.”³¹⁰ However, as explored in Chapter Two, large numbers of sexual objects were excluded from the Museum Secretum from both the Payne Knight Collection (Collection A) and Townley Collection (Collection B), suggesting a ‘pick-and-choose’ approach to objects deemed worthy of display in the Museum Secretum from these collections. In contrast, Witt’s entire donation of 1865 enters the Museum Secretum, while later donations are excluded. When it comes to the contents of the Museum Secretum and the intended purpose of Witt’s collection before and after it enters the British Museum, detailed examinations of subject are vital.

As discussed earlier in Chapter One, Collection C represents a radical shift in subject terminology relative to Collections A and B based on the broadest subject terminology from the online collection search terms. Collection A’s top five descriptions of subject are religion/belief (1987 objects), myth/legend (1797 objects), classical mythology (1710 objects), deity (1682 objects), and classical deity (1588 objects). Collection B’s top terms are myth/legend (3383 objects), classical mythology (3266 objects), religion/belief (2992 objects), deity (2643 objects), and classical deity (643 objects). Finally, Collection C’s are religion/belief (78 objects), nature (61 objects), animal (55 objects), society/human life (42 objects), and eroticism/sex (27 objects).³¹¹ Though these terms are closely related, and often create cross-over in results, the terminology used to describe the subjects of Collection C rank relatively low in both Collection A and B, in particular eroticism/sex which make up .05% and .8% of their subjects respectively. This suggests a priority in Collection C geared towards subjects of a sexual or erotic nature separate from the study of classical antiquity and religion *per se*.

From the Museum Secretum Register, only 55 objects from Collection A (0.8% of the collection) and 107 from Collection B (1.3% of the collection) were relocated into the Museum Secretum,

³¹⁰ Gaimster, “Under Lock and Key,” 132.

³¹¹ These descriptive terms come directly from the British Museum online collections search terms and categories.

substantially lower proportions than the proportion of Collection C housed in the Museum Secretum (87.5%). This prompts the question, what made these latter objects so relevant to the Museum Secretum's overall collection? To address this question, I next conducted digital analyses of objects in the Museum Secretum register using 'Subject' as the search term.

From these digital analyses, it is clear that 'Primarily Phallic objects' are the main priority for curators of the Museum Secretum (Chart 10, 11, and 12). 98% of Collection A Museum Secretum objects are phallic, and a 'Third Gender' item also shows a hermaphroditic figure exposing their penis and testicles (Figure 23). Collection B's Museum Secretum objects show more diversity but objects with male genitals still make up 71% of the objects, and group/coupled sex is always represented as mixed sex/gender largely definable as heterosexual. Even in the case of bestiality scenes, the subject is always one receptive 'female' body to a penetrating 'male' body (Figure 63 and 64).³¹² This creates a largely gendered space, centered around a, probably, heterosexual male perspective of sex and fertility objects.

In comparison, Collection C's subject matter is much more diverse, though objects from Collections A and B generally conform with the overall priorities within Collection C, as they prioritise male genitalia and heterosexual coupling scenes. Additionally, most 'outlier' objects within Collection B, match a comparative item from Collection C in terms of subject. For example, the 'Primarily "yonic" objects' consist of votive wombs also present in Collection C.³¹³

An additional factor is that many objects are listed under multiple categories, particularly the theme of 'religion/belief.' This terminology is clearly defined in the modern digital archives and reflects current understanding of underlying theological functions of sexual subject matter. The terminology recorded in the Museum Secretum register also confirms that in the nineteenth century many objects were understood to fit into these two cross-over subject categories. I discuss the complexity of terminology used in more detail in Chapter One, as well as the following object biography section of this chapter. In short, objects from all three collections are registered with

³¹² i.e. A male swan, one of the few bird species possessing a penis, penetrating a female human Leda and a bull penetrating a female human, a predominantly human featured satyr penetrating a female goat.

³¹³ This will be addressed in more detail in the object biography section.

terms including ‘votive’ and direct references to classical gods, ‘Jupiter and Leda’, as well as ‘Oriental’ deities, ‘Lingam, Nandi, Ganesha,’ illustrating that curators, and likely the nineteenth-century collectors as well, understood these objects as having both religious and sexual connotations (Figures 65a-b).

While commonly stated that the Museum Secretum is a closet of purely sexual subjects, and therefore a response to regulations of censoring obscenity, the data reveal larger themes were applied to determine entry into the exclusive collection, particularly the overlapping themes of religion, sexuality, and as argued in the later sections of this chapter, perhaps medicine and hygiene. Ultimately, a major function of the Museum Secretum is as a space of comparative subjects/themes that are most reflective of Witt’s original collection, namely depictions of phallic figures and heterosexual intercourse as relate to religious practice that go beyond either Payne Knight’s or Townley’s collected objects.

2.4 Data Report Conclusions

Collection C stands in sharp contrast to Collection A and Collection B from the numerical data analysis. Materially, this is a particularly diverse collection, suggesting that material was not of primary interest to the private collector. Compared to the eighteenth-century examples, this marks a profound shift in priorities, with Collection A clearly a collection concerned with amassing metal objects and Collection B investing in higher quality stone objects.

Instead, the nineteenth-century collection marks a shift towards diversity in material though the relatively smaller scale of the items collected compared to Collection B in particular might suggest that portability is a priority for Collector C. When this is taken into consideration alongside the increasing cultural and geographic diversity of Collection C’s objects, it appears that travel and the advancements of the nineteenth century and expansion of the British Empire leading up to the donation of Collection C in 1865 play a significant role in the acquisition and composition of the objects in the private nineteenth-century collection compared to the eighteenth-century private collections. The private collection is therefore primarily concerned with the thematic representations of the objects collected and favours broader scope in the first two categories. As

the numerical breakdown of the subjects and themes in this section suggests, the label of ‘eroticism/sex’ or to assume that all these objects were related to human sexuality would be to oversimplify the results. Rather, there appears to be a complex network of theme and subject within Collection C that is the result of the continued and evolving approaches to sexual objects since the development of the Priapic Worship theory by Payne Knight almost a century prior. To explore these wider themes, it is next necessary to perform traditional art historical object analysis.

An object selected to examine the role of the Museum Secretum, and to explore the grouping of objects from Witt’s Collection, must be both accessible and representative given the data available online. In short, objects selected for deeper study must aid in the exploration of the more complex nature of the Museum Secretum by being visually available via online photography, traceable to the Museum Secretum Register, made of the predominant material collected within the group (i.e. metal or ceramic), come from either the Greek or Roman culture, and reflect thematic preferences within the collection, namely by relating to sex and, as Witt himself described, representing ‘Symbols of the Early Worship of Mankind.’ Therefore, the object selected for object biography which represents all of these features is the terracotta votive of male genitalia W.104. However, before embarking on this close biographical reading of the case study object, it is important to explore how Witt’s collection continues to be presented and/or underrepresented to audiences and visitors today in physical and digital contexts.

2.5 Visual Presences Today: From Physical to Virtual Display

Of primary concern in this thesis is the question of the longer reception and accessibility of sexual objects, Museum Secretum objects, and the objects from individual private collections to a modern audience. As discussed previously in Chapter Two, the disparity of images online between the collections of Payne Knight and Townley suggested the continued importance of collector biography, as well as the continued influence of hierarchy of materials, on visual accessibility on public databases today.

Firstly, it is important to note that much of Witt’s collection today is located in Cupboards 54 and 55 in Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, the only remaining remnants of the Museum

Secretum's physical collection. Though these are not on public display in the main galleries, their grouping together makes it easier to see them as a whole collection as it is possible for anyone to apply to the Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory for access.

Only one object from Payne Knight's collection and five from Townley's collection remain in the cupboards, compared to 123 from Witt's 1865 donation. Exploring what remains in this collection has significance for understanding how the British Museum has reconstructed the function of the objects within the Museum Secretum over time. Using our three primary categories of inquest, materially speaking the Museum Secretum collection remains relatively reflective of Witt's initial donation with 44 metal objects and 38 ceramic objects remaining. However, larger objects, such as the *Townley Symplegma*, are no longer included in the Museum Secretum cupboards and the largest item from Witt's collection, an Irish "Sheela-na-gig" stone figure, is measured at 47cm in height. This is a logical size restriction for any storage location titled and described as a cupboard.

Culturally speaking, however, this current physical collection lacks the diversity of Witt's initial donation, a point which has significant ramifications for the function/message to today's viewers on the purpose of the original Museum Secretum collection. Only one object from Witt's collection, WITT.367 made in Mexico, comes from a non-European find location and/or cultural affiliation. Though today's collection remains chronologically diverse, with a mixture of objects spanning from ancient Egypt through to the nineteenth century, the exclusion of broader cultural backgrounds for the objects within the collection has the potential to misrepresent the diversity of the original donation and curated collection. In the cupboards containing Museum Secretum objects remaining today, there is little indication that there was a global anthropological element to nineteenth-century collecting of sexual and related objects. Though in many ways this is a curatorial improvement, particularly considering the fetishisation of the 'othered' body in the context of the 'foreign' as well as issues surrounding the importance of attempting to decolonialise museum collections, this has the result of simultaneously misrepresenting the function of the space the British Museum continues to preserve, feeding into a false myth of Victorian collecting practices.

Additionally, the subjects/themes of the remaining objects are almost exclusively based on religious iconography and the worship of yonic and phallic amulets. The deliberately imperfect representations of human anatomy, including the votive objects discussed in the following object biography section, have been redistributed to other, more geographically/culturally representative departments. As will be discussed later in the object biography section, the redistributions of specific votive objects eliminate reference to the medical functions of these items in the Museum Secretum collection.

In terms of public access in the display of the physical twenty-first-century British Museum, Townley's collection has a relatively large proportion of objects currently on display with 18% of his collection, compared to only 4% of both Payne Knight's and Witt's collections. Witt has considerably less visual impact, though still an impressive number of physically displayed images for a relatively small collection. Witt has a total of 22 objects on display of varied materials, including ceramic, metal, and glass. Cultures represented among these items are predominantly Roman but are also Ptolemaic Egyptian, Greek, Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese. Objects currently on display range in subject, though themes are mostly sexual, religious, and/or related to hygiene/medicine, or are non-figurative. In general, these items are separated and placed in rooms based on close cultural associations, such as Room 69 titled "Greek and Roman Life", in a cabinet labelled "Medicine," disassociating them from the context of the Museum Secretum and/or their original collector (Figures 25b and 66). There is a notable deficit of phallic only images when compared to the entirety of Witt's collection as only 51% of the items on display represent phallic images, yonic images, heterosexual intercourse, or bestiality of any kind. However, this proportion changes with the online catalogue images.

From the online collections, of the 497 items listed as belonging to Witt's collection, virtual images are provided for 260 objects (52%). 238 are Museum Secretum objects as the remaining 22 are listed as part of the 1868 donation. Primarily Phallic Objects are represented by 98 images, 'Primarily yonic' objects have 16 images, and sex/intercourse, including bestiality, heterosexual, and homosexual, is illustrated by 31 images. Objects without images include horse-trappings, which are generally bronze phallic miniatures, fragmentary items, and terracotta figures. However, it should be noted that metal and ceramic objects (85 and 80, respectively) are the most common

materials accompanied by images; these proportions match the materiality of Witt's entire collection. When looking at these groups, several practical reasons for this emerge. Firstly, from the textual descriptions of the objects recorded without accompanying images, many of these examples are similar in design, theme, materials or general construction to items that already have photos or drawings provided. As with the Payne Knight collection, this suggests that objects selected for imaging are representative of several others; this point is particularly evident in the case of non-genital or sex organ anatomical votives.³¹⁴ Presumably, items with images are deemed to be superior or more representative than others in the same category. Secondly, many of the items with images, particularly those with coloured, high-definition photography, are also listed as being on display in the physical galleries of the British Museum, meaning they go through the hands of curators more frequently. This point also applies to many items that were redistributed to other departments within the British Museum. There is also an apparent priority to photograph figurative objects, as non-figurative objects are largely overlooked. This process misrepresents Witt's collection online as almost exclusively sexually and anatomically themed, while sexual antiquities from Payne Knight's collection are largely absent from the online collections. However, most of the dominant search terms among the imaged objects from Witt's collection are proportional to those in the entire collection, namely religion/belief, nature, society/human life, animal, and eroticism/sex.

In short, the online collection largely represents Witt's actual collection based on the available data. However, the exclusion of a large portion of the non-figurative items and 'repeats' of non-genital or sex organs amongst his collection of votives generates the false impression that Witt's collection is almost entirely sexual when in reality 21% of his collection is not even figurative, and images not related traditionally to human sexuality or reproduction, for example ears, eyes, and non-mating animals, et al., make up another 27% of Witt's collection. As stated before, numerous practical reasons may produce biased representations but common perceptions that Witt was a 'pornophile' and collector of sexual oddities, is another factor that may promote biased approaches to his collection and when photographing or displaying objects from his collection.

³¹⁴ For example, only 1 out of 4 ears and 4 of 9 eyes have accompanying pictures, while all 4 womb votives, 11 of 12 male genital votives, and 2 out of 2 breast votives are pictured online.

3. Object Biography: Case Study W.104 and Motives for Votives

Along with the majority of Witt's collection, object 1865,1118.104 entered the British Museum, and therefore the Museum Secretum, in 1865 (Figure 67a). For clarity, as the aim of this thesis is to explore the use of objects from the Museum Secretum in addressing assumptions about nineteenth-century responses to sexual objects, this object will be labelled using its Museum Secretum number of W.104 throughout this section.

Made out of terracotta, this object is described as a "Terracotta anatomical votive; male genitals" on the British Museum online collection entry and as a "Terracotta votive phallus wrinkled" in the original nineteenth-century Secretum Register (Figure 67b). W.104 is 12.95cm in length and approximately 11cm in width at its widest point. Starting from the front perspective, the votive represents genitals in vibrant orange terracotta. The phallus, scrotum, and lower part of the mons pubis are disembodied from a larger body and are sculpted and/or molded in the round. All sections of the terracotta are connected and part of a single whole item.

The phallus is shown in an unaroused state, an assessment supported by the shorter length and the curvature of the flaccid penis as well as the detail of the foreskin covering the glans completely. This flaccidity is particularly observable from both the left and right side angles. Great care has been taken by the craftsman/artist to maintain anatomically correct details that in some ways individualise the subject in specific ways, including wrinkles in the scrotum, around the base of the penis, and at the tapered point of the foreskin. While anatomically correct, the outer border has a clear inscribed line, either as a form of decoration or from the production process and the use of a mould.

From the back angle, it is clear that the object is a hollow terracotta sculpture, with the hollowed cavity extending to the penis to aid in the firing process in a kiln. The back is highly textured, scratched, and lacking the smooth careful finish of the front side.

Several museum numbers are included on this portion of the item, presumably due to assumption by curators that this side of the sculpture was not intended to be seen or displayed with any

prominence when it was originally created. In large black ink, the original MS number is handwritten as W.104. Above that in a finer pointed ink is the number associated with it today (top: 1865, below: 4-18). The final label is on the top back border and is a yellow sticker label with the numeral '2' centered.

As a singular object, the materiality, subject, and style of W.104 begins to open up suggestions of its function and place within its ancient context. The clear distinction between a viewable front and side portion and a less observable back section indicates intended display when it was created. Additionally, the material of terracotta was readily available across much of Italy and the Roman empire and was relatively cheap to purchase, easy to mould for large scale production, and light as a ceramic/sculptural material making it highly transportable.³¹⁵ In short, W.104 is an object that is portable, relatively cheap, and probably produced with a mixture of moulding, tool incision, and hand crafting.

This item is visually similar to a large number of other items in this group from Witt's collection in terms of size, material, production technique, as well as in subject matter. If limited to objects within the same subject category, namely the phallus, scrotum, pubic mound, and foreskin, and labelled with the same functional description, as a 'votive', there are 30 such objects within the collection. 13 of these examples are also made of terracotta and, though in varying states of completion and fragmentation, all of these 13 appear to be of similar dimensions and design.

Branching out further within Witt's collection, though staying within the confines of the labels 'terracotta' and 'votive', W.104 functions within a much broader group of anatomical figurines. The subjects of these images are diverse within the collection and include full body figures, hands/arms, feet/legs, heads, eyes, ears, breasts, gendered genitalia and sex organs.

³¹⁵ For more on terracotta in Ancient Rome see Donald Bailey, "Terracotta Revetments, Figurines and Lamps," in *A Handbook of Roman Art*, ed. Martin Henig (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1983), 191-204.

3.1 British Museum Collections Online Object Record: 1865,1118.104 or W.104

The online record for W.104 offers basic information for researchers and interested searchers on the British Museum online collection (Figure 68a-b). Like the *Payne Knight Term* from Chapter Two, the record for this object is fairly limited and provides online visitors broad information and guesses as to the original purpose or later reception of this object. Material, basic measurements (only length), broad production dates, and possible associated periods/cultures are included on the record. Online visitors can see the museum and registration numbers, however, what is noticeably absent from this record is any reference to this object's past as a Museum Secretum object. No miscellaneous numbers are visible in the context of this online record despite the fact that the new museum number – 1865,1118.104 – references the object's original Witt number in the Museum Secretum.

It should be noted, however, that the photography for this object is exceptionally clear and stylish. The high resolution and coloured images are set against a bright white background with well-placed lighting, accentuating the details of W.104 in the virtual image. Additionally, there are four angles of photography offered to viewers, clearly showing the three-dimensional nature of the object in a way that the single image from the online record of the *Payne Knight Term* is unable to evoke. In comparison to the photography of other objects in Witt's online collection search, it appears that this object was selected for special treatment in a more recent photographic project along with a few other items from Witt's collection such as 1865,1118.106, 1865,1118.118, and 1865,1118.125. These selections do not seem to be based on the museum numbers of these objects as 1865,1118.105 and other examples are not photographed in this style. Instead these objects are provided with a single, black and white photograph suggesting that despite being numerically next in the order of objects in the catalogue, they did not qualify for a new and improved set of photographs – presumably based on their lower quality or subject matter.

While W.104 is special in terms of virtual/photographic display on the online collection, the textual records provided are scarce, perhaps because it is not on display and had no record of ever being displayed. The description is generic and fairly limited, offering no details that might identify this item in comparison to other, similar objects. There is little interpretation offered within the record

and no further reading suggested or linked despite reference to this object in British Museum Press publications.³¹⁶ What online visitors learn is that it is representative of male genitals and it is generally considered to be a ‘votive’, more specifically an ‘anatomical votive.’ The inclusion of the descriptive term ‘votive’ in relation to these visually distinct objects is not an insignificant one and needs more exploration as a typology. Using the very broadest definition, a votive can be any object dedicated or gifted to a deity or religious spirit as thanks, or in exchange for a blessing. Within this definition there is complexity and flexibility from image to image, and each object may function differently, as these are personal items of exchange between a religious entity and a worshipper.

The study of Greco-Roman votive dedications has a long tradition and in recent years has become a topic of awakened interest. Primarily focused on the lives of these objects in their original ancient contexts, new research has reexamined the history of religious worship through object biography. However, this process has significant implications for reception studies and as Jessica Hughes points out “[t]he biographical approach also encourages us to shift our attention away from the moment of ritual dedication (...) and onto later, equally interesting stages of the offering’s history.”³¹⁷ This section uses object biography to explore the approach of Witt and the Museum Secretum curators to what is understood as sexual material, exploring how object biography can offer new insight into broader questions of sexological studies throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

3.2 Ancient Roman Context: A Phimosis Diagnosis

As with many of the votive objects now in museum collections, W.104 unfortunately has no find spot or specific context of its rediscovery. In her chapter on fertility and religion of Greco-Roman sexual objects, Johns compares this phallic object to others found at Ponte di Nona discussed by T. W. Potter and C. Wells in their 1985 work on this specific healing shrine dating this object to

³¹⁶ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 58-59.

³¹⁷ Jessica Hughes, “Fractured Narratives,” 24.

the late Roman Republic between 3rd century BCE – 1st century BCE.³¹⁸ If we accept this assessment, this object served a very specific function in the religious and daily ritual of its original owner.

The visual clues offered by the object itself indicate that W.104 was produced using a common type of mould and the similarities between this object and several others in Witt's collection suggest an element of mass production of this votive type (Figure 69 and 70). Two possibilities of production location and methods are most plausible for this kind of votive object. Firstly, that these come from a single or several centralised workshops, being shipped around the world to various healing shrines. Secondly, that itinerant craftsmen travelled with the moulds in tow, producing the votive objects of multiple varieties as and when needed.³¹⁹

The function of this votive in its Roman context is in some ways is difficult to define. In general, votives were usually offered as a form of thanks for past gifts from a deity or alternatively as an object of exchange for hoped for future blessings. The complexity of the argument within the ancient contexts has long been debated in modern scholarship. In many ways, these objects focus the attention on the fragmented nature of the body in illness. Many approaches to the anatomical votive suggest a distance from the votive object *per se*. For example, Pazzini and Rynearson suggest that the dedicant's physical healthy body is now separate from the faulty anatomical part represented due to the dedication.³²⁰ Jessica Hughes argues that these may be read equally as representative physical removal of these unhealthy body parts "facilitating the reconstruction of a healthy, individual whole," a theory in line with the holistic approach to medicine practiced in the secular world of Hippocratic medicine.³²¹ Alternatively, these objects can be seen as a fusion of image and prototype described by David Freedberg; or they can be seen as substituting the image

³¹⁸ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 57-58.; T. W. Potter and Calvin Wells, "A Republican Healing-Sanctuary at Ponte Di Nona near Rome and The Classical Tradition of Votive Medicine," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 138, no.1 (1985): 23-47.

³¹⁹ Hughes, "Fractured Narratives," 28.

³²⁰ Adalberto Pazzini, *La Medicina Primitiva* [Primitive Medicine] (Milan: Editoriale Arte e Storia, 1941), 105-131.; Nicholas Rynearson, "Constructing and Deconstructing the Body in the Cult of Asklepios," *Stanford Journal of Archaeology* 2 (2003): 9-10.

³²¹ Jessica Hughes, "Fragmentation as Metaphor in the Classical Healing Sanctuary," *Social History of Medicine* 21, no.2 (2008): 217-236, 233.; see also Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, "Between the Body and the Divine: Healing Votives from Classical and Hellenistic Greece," in *Ex Voto: Votive Giving Across Cultures*, ed. I. Weinryb (New York: Bard Graduate Centre, 2016), 49-75.

for the prototype.³²² Even in the ancient world, these objects can straddle the gap between the religious and secular approaches to medicine.

Visual clues provided by W.104 itself may help discern the original function of this particular votive. Like many objects in the Museum Secretum archives, and the collections of Witt, Payne Knight, and Townley, W.104 is representative of genitalia traditionally associated with the male sex. However, compared to examples from Payne Knight's collection which are usually representative of erect, sexually aroused disembodied phalli, W.104's flaccid phallus is visually strikingly different (Figures 71, 72, and 73). Additionally, the foreskin of this example completely covers the glans and tapers to a very narrow and wrinkled point, a stylistic choice that is widely accepted to be representative of a medical condition known as phimosis.³²³ Phimosis was, and continues to be, a particularly painful condition that often has a significant impact on a sufferer's fertility. Additionally, phimosis could be a symptom of a venereal disease and might also be associated with long lasting problems with the bladder and internal organs. Finding objects such as this at a healing shrine would therefore not be unexpected if we understand their function to be representative of a condition for the intervention of a healing god.

Whether the desired healing occurs before or after the dedication of this votive, in the case of these objects, a very specific need is being addressed by the object represented. This stands in sharp contrast with other anatomical votives generally, though also more directly those in Witt's own collection. For example, WITT.138 represents a complete left leg and W.129 a complete right eye (Figure 74 and 75). There is no obvious attempt to illustrate disease, illness, or damage that might explain the original purpose for dedication for either of these objects. Even when only using votives of other sex organs, the specificity of disease is less pronounced than in the case of W.104 and similar genitalia. Breasts are also treated with seemingly idealistic portrayal as with W.125 (Figure 76). This breast is perfectly round with an erect nipple, no lumps, bumps, or representations of illness, neither are there any indications of difficulties in breastfeeding. Depictions of the vulva are somewhat rarer in the category of anatomical votive and the three examples from the Witt

³²² David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

³²³ Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 59; Grove, "The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," 209.

collection more accurately describe the subjects as ‘pudendum’ following the textual lead of Witt himself in his Manuscript Catalogue.³²⁴ Once again, the vulvas depicted in WITT.121, WITT.122, and WITT.123, which are all casts of originals in French museums, are complete and not obviously afflicted representations of their subject, though certainly highly stylised and less veristically detailed than their phallic counterparts (Figure 77, 78, and 79).

Internal sexual organs, in particular the womb, would have been particularly difficult to represent for a Roman votive craftsperson as in 150 B.C.E. human dissections and autopsies were banned. Images of internal organs were largely from examinations of people with horrific open wounds in the case of gladiators or soldiers for example. By and large, female sexual organs were unlikely to be easily viewed even in this context due to their general exemption from the military and the location of wounds being considerably further up on the torso for an impactful blow in the arena. While there is evidence of the Caesarean Section being used in the Roman period, as the name itself mythically implies, after the *Lex Regia* of Numa Pompilius in (716-673 B.C.E.), by law the cutting of a baby from a mother’s womb was permitted only if she were already dead or had been pregnant for such a long time that she would not survive natural birth.³²⁵ In short, a healthy, non-pregnant uterus would not have been readily available to see even in this circumstance. This lack of access may account for the unusual shape and texture of the womb votives, such as WITT.119 in the British Museum’s collections, rather than a deliberate representational misshaping as the only examples legally seeable to people without any medical training would have been that of animals or from a prolapse (Figure 80). Alternatively, as Helen King suggests it is entirely possible that these items are not representative of wombs at all. Instead, King hypothesises that these are in

³²⁴ Described as “Votive female figure, exhibiting the breasts, the body and the pudendum only, cast from the original in stone in the Museum at Dijon” in *Witt Manuscript Catalogue*, 'Roman', no.21, date unknown.; For an account of this specimen and the bronze votive Witt 122 see Henri Baudot, *Rapport sur les Decouvertes Archeologiques Faites aux sources de la Seine par M. Henri Baudot*, [Report on the Archaeological Discoveries made at the Sources of the Seine by Mr. Henri Baudot] (Dijon: Lamarche, 1845; Paris: J. Techener and J. -B. Dumoulin, 1845), s.v. 39.

³²⁵ Samuel Lurie and Marek Glezerman, “The History of Cesarean Technique,” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 189, no. 6 (December 2003): 1803-1806.; for more on the role of the womb and sex in ancient medicine see Helen King, “Sex, Medicine, and Disease,” in *A Cultural History of Sexuality: In the Classical World*, ed. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2011), 107-119.

fact simply “generic ‘container’ organs,” completely removing the individualised representation of female anatomy from the equation.³²⁶

The single example in Witt’s collection that might arguably have a deformity or some kind of unusual growth is W.120 (Figure 81). Along one of the sides, to the right of the ‘cervix’, an oblong bulbous lump spreads across half the length of the womb. This lump might be identified as any number of other internal organs including the bladder, ovaries, or even a placenta.³²⁷ Unlike the phimosis of the penis, it would be much more difficult to visually represent a specific malady as a healthy human uterus was almost impossible to see for the medical professionals, let alone for the average non-medically trained craftsman. Therefore, it is more likely that these uteri are simply represented differently based on the mold accessible and the whims of the craftsman in much the same way the majority of the anatomical votives in Witt’s collection seem to be designed.

A potential counterpoint to the argument that terracotta anatomical votives did not represent illness, while their phallic counterparts did, could be that, like much sculpture in the ancient world they may have been painted to illustrate details of disease or sickness. The British Museum has a long and very public tradition of rigorous and often insensitive and destructive cleaning of classical objects within their collections. The cleaning of the Elgin Marbles in the 1930s being the most infamous example of this tradition.³²⁸ Though little evidence of paint survives on the anatomical votives in the Witt collection, other examples from the British Museum, including a Roman womb votive from Townley’s collection with ‘Red paint overall’, do show distinct paint patterns and residue.³²⁹ However, in these examples, paint appears to be a decorative device to enhance visual impact rather than specifically identifying a malady (Figure 82).³³⁰ Additionally, the representation of phimosis of the foreskin requires intentional sculptural work by the craftsman and, unlike other anatomical subjects, must have the depiction of the affliction etched in to the terracotta.

³²⁶ Helen King, “When is a Womb not a Womb?” *The Votives Project* (blog), Feb 17, 2017, accessed Dec 28, 2020, <https://thevotivesproject.org/2017/02/17/when-is-a-womb-not-a-womb/>.

³²⁷ This is potentially supported by the lumps and shape of a pig’s uterus which would have been more observable to non-medics.

³²⁸ On cleaning and scandals in the British Museum collections see Ian Jenkins, *Cleaning and Controversy: The Cleaning of the Parthenon Sculptures, 1811-1939* (London: British Museum, 2001).

³²⁹ The images available for this item online are entirely in black and white; e.g. 1814,0704.882.

³³⁰ See online description of 1814,0704.882 and image of H919.; also described in Hughes, “Fractured Narratives,” 30.

Why does it matter that some anatomical votives are idealistic, while others represent illness? As discussed before, studies on the theories, philosophies, and experience of corporeality in the ancient world may employ votives as evidence of research material. With such objects form follows function, and the process of ritual worship is entwined closely with physical representation of ritual use of the object. Thus, phimosis stricken phallic terracottas reflect a society aware of specific medical conditions and that these objects are veristic and were not intended to represent the idealised healthy body often associated with classicism. In the long history of medicine, and the later reception of these representations of sex or ‘generative’ organs, these objects are examples of arguably ‘non-erotic’ phallic objects, worshipping gods as healers not the virility of their idealised reproductive organs. This distinction and functional awareness are clearly present in their initial production, sale, and ritual use to their ancient consumers and dedicants.

Like many objects in Witt’s collection, W.104, lacks a reliable and attributable find spot. This has implications not only for its later reception, but also for the delivery and understanding of the meaning in the action of giving within the context of the ritual. From the researched and recorded records of healing shrines and the role of votives within them, the most likely source of such an object is an abandoned workshop, a place of sale, along a pilgrimage route, or a healing temple. In the first three likely find spots, the function of W.104 would not have been fulfilled. In final location, would strongly support the notion that W.104 is an item of a god’s property. Healing rituals would have been as varied as the objects dedicated, and most dedicated items would have been left in the temple sanctuary, as was the case in the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi south east of Rome.³³¹ From Latin dedications here it is clear that anatomical votives shared complex modes of exchange between thanks and request even in the Roman context, as described in the common phrases and inscriptions *do ut des* [I give so that you may give] and *votum solvit libens merito* [the vow fulfilled, I pay my debt freely].³³² Only confirmation of the find spot would allow firm conclusions to be drawn about the specific cultural function of W.104. However, it is reasonable to conclude that this object was produced with the intention of becoming part of a sanctuary/temple context.

³³¹ Hughes, “Fractured Narratives,” 33.

³³² *Ibid.*

3.3 A New Nineteenth-Century Context: A Physician's Phallus

The ancient context for W.104 tells of its first life as an item bridging the divide between secular and religious medicine. The question now must be: how was the later life of this anatomical votive moulded by the man that owned it and the society that now contextualised it in the nineteenth century? What does this reception reveal about the Museum Secretum as a curated space?

In her discussion of Sir Henry Wellcome's active and deliberate collecting of sexual antiquities at the turn of the twentieth century, more specifically anatomical votives from Oppenheimer's impressive collection, Grove states that "[t]he 'Phallic Worship' tradition have often associated these objects with the ancient worship of generative powers" and that "Wellcome instead treated them as a means of communicating with the gods of medicine as part of an ancient healing cult."³³³ This, she suggests, marks a turning point in the display and understanding of anatomical votives, impacting scholarship on these artefacts even today. While this may be true in terms of public display, I would argue that Witt's collection suggests that ideas of medicine and hygiene related to the function of these objects can be positioned much earlier in the British Museum's Museum Secretum through the comparative context of Witt's phimosis phallic votives.

Statistically speaking, Witt's collection shows that he overwhelmingly tended to collect phallic 'votives' over those of other anatomical structures. As previously stated, Witt's collection had 30 phallic votives out of 81 total entries listed as 'votives'. This is roughly 37% of this group. Interestingly, 15 of these 30 have clear representations of phimosis included suggesting Witt had an interest in collecting objects representing illness. Witt's biography and his long tenure as a successful doctor is most commonly referenced at this point in modern scholarship, suggesting that Witt is something of an anomaly due to his personal interest in the field of medicine. To leave it at this point, however, denies the complexity of Witt's and the Museum Secretum's role in the development of sexology and studies of human sexuality.

³³³ Grove, "The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," 157.

The lack of a reliable find spot of excavation makes the beginning of W.104's biography in the more modern age less clear. Witt does not offer any indication of how the phallic anatomical votive came into his possession, nor does he offer any information on the context of its rediscovery to make any hypothesis viable. We must therefore rely on the written and curatorial evidence of its existence in the British Museum and the more general context of the studies of anatomical votives in the long nineteenth century.

In a general context, the terms 'votive' and the more Christianised 'ex-voto' were used in relation to these anatomical objects from their very rediscovery in the eighteenth century. Hamilton's forwarding letter to Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, makes extensive reference to the continued use of phallic wax anatomical votives in the Isernian Catholic tradition.³³⁴ Interestingly, Witt collected wax phallus votives made from the same mould as the votives that make up the frontispiece of the 1786 version of Payne Knight's *Discourse* and exist alongside the originals donated by Hamilton to the British Museum in 1785 (Figures 5, 6, and 83).

This theological approach to sexual antiquities championed in the eighteenth century and traced through to the Museum Secretum collection has been largely discussed in the Payne Knight section of this work in Chapter Two. It is through this material, and the objects collected by Witt in the nineteenth century, however, that it becomes apparent that there is a sustained interest and academic tradition throughout the nineteenth century. Witt was aware of this previous reception and research into anatomical votives from antiquity and was actively engaging with its material intellectually and inquisitively.

i. Unscrapping Scrapbooks: Uncovering Witt's Visual Thesis

To understand Witt's and his circle's approach to the Witt collection, today's researcher must rely heavily on the scrapbooks he produced to understand how his objects fit into the larger theories and hypotheses developed in them. Witt, like Payne Knight and Townley before him, also donated

³³⁴ William Hamilton, "A Letter From William Hamilton, Naples, Dec. 30 1781," in *An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus Lately Existing at Isernia, in the Kingdom of Naples: In Two Letters*, by William Hamilton and Richard Payne Knight (London: T. Spilsbury, *Snowbill*, 1786), 3-19, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/b28752156>.

numerous texts and research projects alongside the objects in his collection. He provided a thorough catalogue of his own collection as well as an extensive library now at the British Library which included personally monogrammed editions of *Des Divinités Génératrices ou du Culte du Phallus* [Generative Divinities or the Cult of the Phallus], from 1805 and the republished edition of Payne Knight's *Discourse* from 1865. Along with these texts, he donated items that have been more difficult to categorise for museum curators and researchers, namely Witt's 'Scrapbooks' (Figure 84). These consist of nine leatherbound volumes existing in the Anthropology Library in the British Museum, as well as a possible tenth volume recently attributed to the collection that is held in the Private Case of the British Library.³³⁵ These volumes are some of the best surviving examples of visual material and resources for researchers interested in the development of sexual archaeology and history reception available. Comprised of Witt's and his colleagues' research texts, drawings, photographs, maps, etc. that are juxtaposed thematically, chronologically, and geographically, these books are a snapshot of intellectual interest and theorising of sexual material in the nineteenth century. In order, the scrapbooks are titled "Japanese Prints" [WITT 114], "Indian, Thibetan, Chinese, Japanese" [WITT 115], "Japanese Prints" [WITT 116], "Indian Drawings" [WITT 117], "Description de troise peintures inedites de vases grecs du musee de Portici" [WITT 118], "Grecian, Etruscan, Roman" [WITT 119], "Persian and Egyptian" [WITT 120], "Aboriginal American" [WITT 121], "Modern" [WITT 122], and "Erotica" [WITT 123]. The titles are engraved on the bound copies along with the stylised initials "G.W.", suggesting that these titles were original to Witt's classifications and not the result of later curatorial interventions. However, there is a somewhat haphazard approach to the layout of these scrapbooks with no strict table of contents or structured sections for each type of document held within. Pages are regularly thrown in loosely and seem to be attached as and when the maker was able to procure or produce the images and written content (Figure 85). Authorship of these books is difficult to define as there are numerous additions to the volumes after Witt's death, implying that these should be understood as a collaborative project amongst Witt's wider networks of friends, collectors, explorers, and colleagues.³³⁶ Scholarly work to date looking at the Witt Scrapbooks has been not only rare, but largely absent, with only cursory generalisations about their contents and structure. However, before delving into the particulars of Witt's Scrapbook collection, it is important to understand the

³³⁵ Wickstead, "Sex in the Secret Museum," 352.

³³⁶ See for example additions in the Witt Scrapbook texts from 1899 by William Simpson, Witt's long-time friend.

role that these items played in the nineteenth century compared to now and how they have managed to become undervalued as resources.

The definition of a ‘scrapbook’ is in itself highly problematic and subjective though generally it is a collection of mixed media items, most commonly paper and flattenable items (e.g. flowers, textiles, etc.), compiled with a thematic, chronological, or other purpose in mind. In this way scrapbooks “function as an intriguing combination of diary, photograph album, and ephemera” operating as “autobiographical statement(s) located where text and artifact meet (...) symboliz[ing] both personal and cultural identity.”³³⁷ Historically speaking, the scrapbook develops from the academic practices of the commonplace book popular throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which students of Latin would write down favourite passages in order to reflect upon them, combined and juxtaposed with other sections and/or visual material.³³⁸ The addition of image, newspaper cuttings, and other, more personal items, developed the scrapbook, though in many situations the line between journal, notebook, field book, sketch book, and others is blurred. This terminology has wider implications for the reception of these items today, particularly as there are gendered stereotypes of the scrapbook.³³⁹ From this, the loaded language of scrapbooking is discussed and the finer points of ‘hunting’ for items in male attempts versus the ‘gathering’ of material in the female.³⁴⁰

Witt’s scrapbooks therefore sit in this gender biased narrative of ‘scrapbooking’ and an almost passive reception of object, item, text, and image. By labelling his scrapbooks as such, they have been unfortunately overlooked as items of archival or research value. One notable exception to this unfortunate oversight is Wickstead’s 2018 work on Witt’s scrapbooks, chronicling Witt’s use of the medium of photography. In the article she explores the interchangeable nature of drawing and photography in the scrapbooks, the attempts at scientific empirical research, an expansion of

³³⁷ Juliana M. Kuipers, “Scrapbooks: Intrinsic Value and Material Culture,” *Journal of Archival Organization* 2, no.3 (2004): 84.; Patricia P. Buckler and C. Kay Leeper, “An Antebellum Woman’s Scrapbook as Autobiographical Composition,” *Journal of American Culture* 14, no. 1 (1991): 1-8.

³³⁸ For more on Commonplace Books in this period see David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (New York and Cambridge.: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³³⁹ For examples see Ellen Gruber Garvey, “Scissorizing and Scrapbooks: Nineteenth Century Reading, Remaking and Recirculating,” in *New Media, 1740-1915*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 207-227.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.

globalised cultural studies, and describes how “Witt promoted a homosocial code of collaborative authoring in the scrapbooks.”³⁴¹ She also posits that the treatment of these scrapbooks and inclusion of photographic images has encouraged the reading of Witt’s books as pornographic collections with no scholarly merit, as photography began to be the dominant media used in pornography starting in the late nineteenth century.³⁴² This reading of Witt’s scrapbooks easily conforms to the ‘pornophile’ reading of Witt’s biography as well, contributing to the reading of his collection and the establishment of the Museum Secretum as one based solely on pornography, fetishism and the laws/acts surrounding censorship.

Though not in a form familiar today such as a textual thesis like that of Payne Knight’s *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, Witt’s scrapbooks should be acknowledged as examples of scholarly research constructed with a theme and/or hypothesis directing the carefully curated selection of objects depicted, described, and reported within them. In the case of Witt’s scrapbooks, the familiar theme of fertility, genital, and the theory of generative worship from the eighteenth-century tradition appears to still be very much alive in the scholarship of sexual antiquities in the nineteenth century. Witt, however, has expanded his studies and networks beyond the realms of the primarily Greek, Roman, and larger Judeo-Christian interests of Payne Knight, documenting comparable traditions in more detail from the wider global community, a point that will be given more attention in the later section of this object biography.

From an archival perspective, it is therefore a mistake to think of these scrapbooks as merely documentary catalogues of the contents of Witt’s collection and in the case of W.104, this lack of cataloging has interesting implications for the Witt collection beyond his interest in the religious nature of these objects. In the Witt 119 volume of his scrapbooks, also labelled ‘Grecian, Etruscan, Roman’, there is no image directly of any of the Roman terracotta phallic votives. W.104 is never explicitly referenced in text, sketched, or photographed meaning it is not part of the carefully curated scrapbook. Instead, the closest image to the flaccid penis with attached, wrinkled scrotum

³⁴¹ Wickstead, “Sex in the Secret Museum,” 357.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 351.; For more on pornographic and/or sexualised photography in the late nineteenth century see Tomasz Ferenc, “Nudity, Sexuality, Photography: Visual Redefinition of the Body,” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 14, no. 2 (2018): 96-114.; Lisa S. Sigel, *Governing Pleasures: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815–1914* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

comes from Table V, image 5, and is drawn and painted in watercolour (Figure 86e). The shape of object V.5 already rules it out as a depiction of the terracotta phallus by the inclusion of a ring at its top, presumably for hanging like a charm/amulet, as well as the inclusion of deliberately sculpted tufts of pubic hair. Additionally, it is painted using a cool, green-blue deep pigmented watercolour which suggests the original object would have been made from a different material (most likely a deep coloured metal such as aged bronze or other copper alloy) to terracotta which is represented by a warm, orange/yellow colour (See Figure 86c for comparison).³⁴³ Finally, it is extremely unlikely that this item, if painted to ratio or scale, is big enough to equal the 12.95cm length of W.104 and its fellow healing shrine votives, as on the page it runs at around 2.5cm, making it smaller than the phallic metal amulets depicted alongside it which are usually under 6cm in length.³⁴⁴

The absence of W.104 or any of the other 12 terracotta phallic healing votives, as well as any of Witt's terracotta 'womb' votives, would be an unusual oversight considering the level of visual detail objects are given within Witt's scrapbooks. Might there be another reason for their exclusion? Perhaps a practical one, that these items were not of high enough quality in terms of material, original production quality, or state of disrepair. However, this theory can be dismissed as the objects from accompanying tables are depicted as fractured and/or made out of terracotta or other fired clay types regularly (Figures 86a-e).³⁴⁵ Additionally, the image Table III.1 also indicates that Witt did not only include metal phallic objects, though here the phallus is undeniably erect with the foreskin fully retracted, if present at all, the almost perfectly spherical testicles separated unnaturally far apart (Figure 86c). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the deliberate exclusion of W.104 must be based on the idea it does not conform to the vision or contribute to the overall thematic hypothesis for the scrapbooks in the opinion of the scrapbook curators, namely Witt and friends. From this, the "organ of generation erect, to show [a] generative and prolific power" described in Payne Knight's work and further championed in Witt's continued study of 'Symbols of the Early Worship of Mankind' in his scrapbooks is noticeably absent from Witt's treatment of the flaccid, afflicted phallus of a terracotta medical votive, marking a change

³⁴³ This is based on the identification of Tab III.6 as 1814,0704.37 from the Townley collection made of terracotta.

³⁴⁴ This is based on the largest recorded metal phallic amulet in Witt's collection WITT.286.

³⁴⁵ See central vase Table V, Table I, Table II, Table III, Table IV, et al.

in reception of these items as apotropaic alone.³⁴⁶ The exclusion of almost all flaccid phallic objects from the “Greek, Etruscan, Roman” scrapbooks therefore illustrates a dual purpose for Witt’s collection in his own pictorial thesis. The scrapbook conforms to Payne Knight’s concern with phallic worship as fertility symbol and the objects from his collection within confirm religious power of the virile erect penis in their anthropological approach to sexual art. This stands in stark contrast to the flaccid W.104 and the large group of similar objects excluded from this group, which though excluded from the scrapbook must play a larger, equally valid role in Witt’s approach to collecting and reception of these objects. All of Witt’s collection, whether part of the scrapbooks or not, are eventually deposited in the Museum Secretum, suggesting that the collection itself has a complex approach to these objects as well, not simply based on Payne Knight’s virile fertility cult hypothesis. Instead, the bodies of the ‘other’ and visibly less ‘normalised’ images of genitals might suggest a more Victorian and innovative approach to sexuality and the study of sexual objects - namely the study of anatomy and medicine.

ii. Witt’s Bathhouse: Sex, Medicine, and Hygiene

With Witt’s medical background, his own knowledge about anatomy would have likely been sufficient to identify phimosis visually or at the very least recognise that this item did not represent a typically healthy anatomical example.³⁴⁷ W.104’s exclusion, along with the missing 12 phallic terracotta healing objects and 4 womb votives from his collection, might suggest that this medical reading was occurring during the years Witt collected his objects and while his scrapbooks were being assembled. Witt himself engages with the variation between religious worship of the virile phallus and the existence of sexual disease directly in 1864 when he states that he “could not perceive much connection between phallic worship and syphilis”, in this context suggesting that

³⁴⁶ Payne Knight, *Discourse*, 13.; Witt, *Letter to Anthony Panizzi*, 1865.

³⁴⁷ A detailed description of the penis, testicles, and foreskin can be found in Gray’s *Anatomy* from 1858, indicating that enough was known during this period for Witt to have a medical understanding of W.104; Henry Gray, *Anatomy: Descriptive and Surgical* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1858), 671-681.; For more on the general history of medicine in the nineteenth century see Chiara Beccalossi, “Sex, Medicine and Disease: From Reproduction to Sexuality,” in *A Cultural History of Sexuality: In the Age of Empire*, ed. Chiara Beccalossi and Ivan Crozier (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2011), 5:101-121.

depictions of healthy phallic objects had little to do with disease, perhaps another reason for excluding the phallic votive terracottas from his visual thesis, i.e. scrapbooks.³⁴⁸

In the context of nineteenth-century developments in medicine, the exploration of the anatomy through visual observation and the diagnosis of disease, both physical and mental, was in common practice in France by the 1860s and spread to Britain throughout the next decades. Forensic doctors, including William Acton (1813-1875) and Auguste Ambroise Tardieu (1818-1879), argued that pure visual observation of the genitals and anal regions by specialist doctors could determine sexual behaviour, inclinations, and ultimately aid in the solving of what were then considered sexual crimes.³⁴⁹ Witt's collection of 'floating' anatomical votives therefore fit into the contemporary ideas surrounding the physiological 'reading' of genitals and human anatomy that were rapidly spreading across European legal systems.

Taken in conjunction with the careful selection of 'Othered' bodies from the collections of Payne Knight and Townley, if this is the case, the Museum Secretum's holdings in the nineteenth century are reflective not of material that needing censoring, nor of objects reflecting the themes of religion, belief, and phallic worship alone, but are simultaneously reflective of the new study of these objects as medical/healing items and newly forming classifications of imperfect human bodies, distinct from the eighteenth-century scholarship and predating the later developments in the Wellcome Collection that made the marriage between sexual antiquities and medical histories more commonly understood.

If asserting that W.104 and its omission from the Witt Scrapbook suggests the collector's identifying of this object as medical, and by association Museum Secretum's thematic remit as it bases its collections around the original Witt donation, it is also important to examine how this

³⁴⁸ The Anthropological Society of London, *The Anthropological Review*, vol. 2 (London: Trübner & Co., 1864), cclxix.

³⁴⁹ William Acton, *A Complete Practical Treatise on Venereal Diseases and their Immediate and Remote Consequences. Including Observations on Certain Affections of the Uterus, Attended with Discharges*, 2nd ed. (London: Henry Renshaw, 1851), originally published in 1841.; Auguste Ambroise Tardieu, *Étude Médico-Légale sur les Attentats aux Moeurs* [Medical/Legal study on Offenses Against Morals] 7th ed. (Paris: J B Bailliere et fils, 1878), originally published in 1857; For more on anatomy based forensic medicine in the nineteenth century see Ivan Crozier, " 'All the Appearances Were Perfectly Natural': The Anus of the Sodomite in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse," in *Body Parts: Critical Explorations in Corporeality*, ed. Christopher E. Forth and Ivan Crozier (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 65-80.

theme might be reflected across other objects in Witt's collection. This can be achieved by following the trail to another large theme in Witt's collection, and life more generally, that of the art of hygiene, bathing, the baths, and bathhouses.

The relationship between health, hygiene, bathing, and sex is one that has been long established in scholarship and wider debates in culture. From antiquity, images of Venus bathing were the standard female nude after Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite (Figure 87). In Roman bathhouses themselves, phallic icons and well-endowed bath attendants were common, particularly those depicting black African attendants creating a racial 'other' with phallic talismans as discussed by both Clarke and Katherine Dunbabin.³⁵⁰ Sexual objects were therefore clearly present alongside hygiene, luck, and health in their ancient contexts, it simply remains to determine whether these links between bathing, medicine, and sex continued into the nineteenth century.

During the eighteenth century, the discovery of microbes and other microscopic organisms lead to the concept of health beyond what is seeable, and cleanliness beyond the cursory removal of visible dirt, though it was still unclear how specific venereal diseases were spread even by the 1890s when primary blame was placed on the female body.³⁵¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, bathing had become a public health concern, with legislation such as the Baths and Washhouses Act of 1846 encouraging space be available for clothes and body washing after a series of deadly cholera outbreaks. Twenty years later, it was under the guise of these public health concerns that the lives and work of sex workers began to be regulated using the aggressive policies of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869. Under these acts, prostitutes and vulnerable women were discriminated against, abducted from the streets, and forced to undergo medical treatment and quarantine as the common understanding was that venereal disease was transmitted by specifically promiscuous sexual activity.³⁵² These medically sanctioned interventions into the legal rights of people stand in line with the need for docility of the body and invention of the deviant

³⁵⁰ See Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, 120-136.; Katherine Dunbabin, "Baiaurum Grata Voluptas: Pleasures and Dangers of the Baths." *Papers of the British School in Rome* 57, (1989): 6-49.

³⁵¹ F. Buret, *Syphilis in the Middle Ages and in Modern Times*, trans. A. H. Ohmann-Dumesnil (Philadelphia: The F. A. Davis Company, 1895), 265-289.; Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 17-34.; Deborah Lupton, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body* (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 82.

³⁵² Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, 35-60.

subject/patient outlined by Foucault.³⁵³ In short, bathing and public health were very much in the public eye in the time leading up to the Museum Secretum's establishment, along with hygiene/health's links to regulated sexuality - more often racialised and gendered sexuality - deployed as a means of control, concepts and associations that were probably not unnoticed by a cholera and infectious disease specialist like Witt.³⁵⁴

Images connecting bathing scenes to the worship of sexual objects were present, though cursory, in Witt's scrapbooks, linking this larger theme with the work of D'Hancarville (Figure 88). Though for Witt, the art of bathing was a much more personal interest beyond cursory readings, as his home at Prince's Terrace attests. In his book, *The Eastern, or Turkish Bath* published in 1861, Dr. Erasmus Wilson describes his personal experience of Witt's private bathhouse and "[t]he Bath that cleanses the inward as well as the outward man".³⁵⁵ Later in his work, Wilson explores the role of the religious rites of the baths and their direct link to Hygeia, goddess of health and Aesclepius the god of medicine, gods associated with the findspots of the terracotta votives like W.104.³⁵⁶ Witt's wider collection, which included 27 strigils, 1 artistic depiction of a bather with a strigil, and 21 hypocaust tiles donated in 1868, represented a larger theme of health and hygiene along the research interests of the collector. Therefore, while the Museum Secretum may not have had these items in its register for direct comparison, these items, phallic or otherwise, were linked within the Witt collection as a whole. The healing power of bathing, and the link to the objects within Witt's collection, likely was not simply rediscovered at the turn of the twentieth century. In this world constructed by Witt's interest in bathing, the worship of Hygeia and Aesclepius, and the visual differences between his various sexual artefacts, it is certainly arguable that W.104 becomes a ritual object of healing within the nineteenth-century mind, not simply one of generative phallic worship.

³⁵³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House Inc., 1975).

³⁵⁴ Phillip Howell, "Prostitution and Racialised Sexuality: The Regulation of Prostitution in Britain and the British Empire before the Contagious Diseases Acts," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (2000): 321-339.

³⁵⁵ Erasmus Wilson, *The Eastern, or Turkish Bath: Its History, Revival in Britain, and Application to the Purposes of Health*, (London: John Churchill, New Burlington Street, 1861), ix.

³⁵⁶ Wilson, *The Eastern, or Turkish Bath*, 20.

iii. Racial and Gendered Hierarchies of Collecting: Witt's Sexual Objects and the Birth of Anthropology

A primary criterion for selecting W.104 for object biography in this section was due to its identification as a Roman object in the current online collections as well as in the original Museum Secretum Register, making it representative of the culture most represented in the collection. However, as the data proves, Witt's collection compared to the eighteenth-century examples displayed increasing geographic and cultural diversity of production location (Charts 4-9). W.104, therefore, sits in juxtaposition with much wider contexts and meanings, charting a movement away from the typical Euro-centric, Greco-Roman perspective of phallic worship and sex cults from the eighteenth-century theories of Payne Knight. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the Museum Secretum Register reflects this diversity by titling sections based on geography/culture rather than by material, chronology of accession, or even by subject, directly mimicking the labels present in Witt's scrapbooks. Anthropological studies are of primary importance to Witt in this case and are also fundamental to understanding the role of the Museum Secretum and the reception of sexual antiquities in the mid-nineteenth century.

Broadly speaking, anthropology and ethnography were blossoming fields in the mid-late-nineteenth century. As is often reiterated in modern discourse on the history and development of these fields of study, colonialism and anthropology go hand in hand as "European merchants, soldiers, missionaries, settlers, and administrators – together with men of power who stayed at home (...) helped transform their non-European subjects. (...) [A] story of change without historical precedent in its speed, global scope, and pervasiveness" which facilitated the development of an academic discipline concerned with making sense of these rapid changes and human discoveries.³⁵⁷

This anthropological network was close to home as well as further afield for Witt as he was a member of the Anthropological Society of London (ASL) founded in 1863 by Richard Burton (1821-1890) and Dr. James Hunt (1833-1869). This group, generally categorised in modern

³⁵⁷ Talal Asad, "Afterward: From the History of Colonial Anthropology to the Anthropology of Western Hegemony," in *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, ed. George W. Stocking (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 314.

scholarship as an extremist group with sexist and racist positions on the application of anthropology, in particular supporters of polygenism, the idea that the individual races evolved from multiple and separate origin species.³⁵⁸ Developed in reaction to the perceived over reliance on religion and religious histories in the studies and works of the similarly titled Ethnological Society of London, the ASL had a distinct approach to the study of race, gender, and cultural development that emphasised logic and rational (pseudo)scientific observation of peoples and objects to focus its enquiries.³⁵⁹ Therefore, one of the group's primary concerns was based in the comparative study of typological ethnography and anthropology in the form of a legitimate and "worthy" museum, a goal that enticed some of the most well-known museum builders of the day including A. H. L. F. Pitt Rivers, who was active in the group's leadership for some time.³⁶⁰ Similarly, Witt was a committed and active member, going so far as to stand in as chair of proceedings for Hunt at meetings.³⁶¹ As Efram Sera-Shriar states, "[i]t is difficult to cultivate an intellectual sympathy for a figure such as Hunt because of his extreme views," and the same is certainly true of Witt who actively supported a movement that encouraged chauvinist views and causes against other races and genders based on pseudo-scientific anthropological principles.³⁶² That being said, what the movement lacked in morality and social conscience, it delivered in a methodological approach to anthropology that continued to be practiced well into the twentieth century and is reflected in the Museum Secretum's collections. The practice of physical anthropology and comparative anatomy became the forerunning principles that would spearhead their scientific purposes, a reaction by Hunt to what he perceived as an over-reliance on biblical examples for the origin of humanity.³⁶³ Witt, a physician like James Hunt, and his collection of anatomical votives would have been welcome in this group of men who envisioned themselves as science-minded scholars.

³⁵⁸ Efram Sera-Shriar, *The Making of British Anthropology, 1813–1871* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2013).; For more on these debates and how various nineteenth-century anthropological and ethnographical societies influenced the development of museums and curation see William Ryan Chapman, "Arranging Ethnology: A. H. L. F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition," in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George W. Stockling (Madison, WI: 1985), 15-48.

³⁵⁹ For a full history of the development of anthropological and ethnographical societies in the nineteenth century see George W. Stockling Jr., "What's in a Name? The Origins of the Anthropological Institute (1837-71)," *Man* 6, no. 3 (1971): 369-390.

³⁶⁰ Chapman, "Arranging Ethnology," 30.

³⁶¹ This comes from mentions of his name in from May 31, 1864, etc. in *The Anthropological Society of London, The Anthropological Review*, 2:clxx.

³⁶² Sera-Shriar, *The Making of British Anthropology*, 110.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

While effort has been put into tracing the ASL's publications of priapic worship texts, including Payne Knight's *Discourse*, here I will examine the objects present in Witt's collections to explore how this anthropological interest would shape the Museum Secretum collection.³⁶⁴ Starting from the objects themselves, there is a clear preference for art/objects from certain religions, peoples, and regions above others. For example, in the Museum Secretum Register, the nineteenth-century curators list 14 objects as Japanese, 5 Chinese, 43 Asiatic Indian, 4 American, and 2 African. There are, of course, numerous practical reasons for this absence of some cultures over others, including cost to transport and the availability on the open market for Witt, his dealers, and friends. However, the absence of certain cultures, namely aboriginal Australians, should offer some pause for thought considering Witt's personal connection to the continent after having lived there for five years. The exclusion of aboriginal Australian art from his study of phallic or fertility symbols must have been by personal preference, particularly when the visual similarities and common symbols across his own collection are present in items contemporary to his stay in Australia (for comparison see Figures 89a-b).³⁶⁵ This absence would therefore imply a personal choice on the part of Witt in excluding aboriginal Australian culture from his collected objects.

Witt's scrapbooks reflect a similar preference for Eurasian cultures, a point which may reflect some of the larger concerns of Witt's collected objects. There is a notable absence of most cultures present in what is commonly described as the Global South, and the inclusion of scrapbooks exploring India, China, Tibet, and cultures described as "Aboriginal American" is always in direct comparison to recognisably Western, often Greco-Roman cultural traditions.³⁶⁶ Wickstead concludes that this is an aesthetic choice, and one that "reflect[s] a racist model of beauty that extended to India, Asia, and America, but stopped at sub-Saharan Africa and Australia."³⁶⁷ Lending credence to this reading is the inclusion of classicised images originally painted by Jean Frederic de Waldeck in the "Aboriginal American" scrapbook, emphasising the beauty in identifiably white-European features on native bodies, their posing as recognisably sculptural in

³⁶⁴ Grove, "The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," 197-205.

³⁶⁵ See for example the Oc.6923 in the British Museum Collection decorated with cowrie shells, a material present in 10 objects from the Witt Collection in the Museum Secretum Register.

³⁶⁶ WITT 115, WITT 117, WITT 121.

³⁶⁷ Wickstead, "Sex in the Secret Museum," 354.

the classical Greco-Roman tradition or as ideal bodies in the modern European artistic tradition, as well as the preference for neo-classical objects in the ‘Modern’ scrapbooks more generally (Figures 90a-c).³⁶⁸ Witt’s scrapbooks are engaging with a recognisably historical/anthropological tradition for a western audience, the racial ‘others’ Witt is engaging with through the studies of their sexual objects are arguably classified as more ‘civilised’ than other counterparts.

Would adding sexualised images produced in these specific cultures to the Museum Secretum suggest these versions of sexuality need to be concealed? In a broader sense, the history of racial politics within the nineteenth century indicates that the sexualisation of body of the ‘other’, did not demand public censorship, even for those races considered ‘primitive’ and evolutionarily behind more ‘advanced’, civilisations by western standards. For example, Sarah Baartman was exhibited across Europe and in Britain by 1810 as a medical spectacle, her highly sexualised body used for the categorisation and classification of sexuality based on race long into the twentieth century.³⁶⁹ While this example was half a century before the Museum Secretum was established, this form of sexualised exhibition of ‘othered’ bodies continued throughout and beyond the lifetime of Witt and the passing of the Obscene Publications Act of 1857. However, in this later context an element of ‘science’ and pseudo-Darwinism was alluded to in order to encourage the connection between public education in addition to overt sexual fascination - for example, “Krao, the Missing Link” who was exhibited in 1883 and Joseph Merrick’s 1884 exhibition to the Pathological Society and subsequent photographic ‘souvenirs.’³⁷⁰ In this context, sexualised bodies of the ‘other’ are public spectacle as means of medical and cultural education. A museum

³⁶⁸ Figure 81a’s body is reminiscent of the Laocoön Sculpture group and the head and hand gestures of the Apollo Belvedere from the Vatican Museums, Vatican City, Figure 81b’s body type and painted environment are reminiscent of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’ *La Source* oil on canvas painted in 1859 now in the Musée d’Orsay, Paris, and Figure 81c similar to the pose and symbols present in the Apollo Sauroktonos in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

³⁶⁹ For scholarship on Sarah Baartman, her legacy, and the sexualisation of her body see, Natasha Gordon-Chipembere, ed., *Representation and Black Womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.); T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualised Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French* (USA: Duke University Press, 1999).; Janell Hobson, “The ‘Batty’ Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body,” *Hypatia* 18, no. 4 (2003): 87–105, accessed May 17, 2021, doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2003.tb01414.x.

³⁷⁰ Nadja Durbach, “Monstrosity, Masculinity and Medicine: Re-Examining ‘the Elephant Man’,” *Cultural and Social History: The Journal of the Social History Society* 4, no. 2 (2007): 197-198.; Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2010), 89-114.

collection purportedly designed around the private collection of a doctor would elevate this form of display and spectacle adding respectability to the study of these ‘abnormal’ bodies.

Museums in the nineteenth century supported this form of hierarchical categorisation of race and culture, perhaps one of the clearest examples being the Courts of Natural History at Sydenham Palace opened in 1854. In her book *Peoples on Parade*, Sadiya Qureshi describes these courts as platforms legitimising the comparative study of racial ‘types’, promoting the idea of “the linear progression from monsters to Victorians.”³⁷¹ These human displays were cast as educational tools and “were particularly important for those interested in ethnology and who craved formal instruction beyond that provided by showmen.”³⁷² Casts of human bodies were displayed alongside animal figures, inviting comparison along evolutionary lines and contributing to ideas of ‘social’ evolution in the same way.³⁷³ The importance of these courts and other forms of ‘human displays’ on the formalised study of ethnology and anthropology should not be underestimated. The desire to study race from an intellectual and ‘scientific’ approach promoted by the display of these kind of ‘natural history’ objects was foundational to the development of groups like Hunt’s – and Witt’s – ASL.³⁷⁴

As previously noted, Witt avoids collecting objects from Africa, Australia, and wider Polynesian Islands, favouring very specific cultures to source his collection from. What can Witt’s objects illustrate about the anthropological nature of his sexual collecting practices? Witt’s collected objects support the reading of the Museum Secretum as an anthropological space interested primarily in recognisably classical European traditions and the widening concepts of aesthetic beauty and pseudo-evolutionary ethnology in the mid-nineteenth century. This approach to collecting can be traced by examining objects from his collection from multiple cultures and places of production across the world – in particular the Indian subcontinent – however, here I explore his selection of Japanese items within his collection.³⁷⁵ Viewing the Museum Secretum from this

³⁷¹ Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2011), 203.

³⁷² Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, 193 and 206.

³⁷³ Robert Gordon Latham and Edward Forbes, *A Handbook to the Courts of Natural History Described* (London: John Murray, 1849).

³⁷⁴ Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, 208-221.

³⁷⁵ Many of these items do not have Museum Secretum numbers as the Asian material was moved to different departments across the British Museum very frequently meaning some information has been lost and many

lens exposes a mode of thought in which Japan is a highly ‘civilised’ culture closely comparable to Greco-Roman traditions and therefore worthy of anthropological and ethnographic study whereas Aboriginal Australian culture is not.

For context, Japonisme had taken British art and décor world by storm in this period, popularising Japanese culture within a British context after the opening of Japan’s borders in 1853.³⁷⁶ As Grace Lavery states, Japan becomes the ‘Other Empire’ within the British psyche, a representative of ‘modernity’ built in mythological Orientalist distanced viewing.³⁷⁷ Lavery further explores the idea of the *exquisite* in the reception of Japanese culture in Victorian Britain, stating that it is “*extremely* beautiful; it is also *weirdly* incomplete” though while it is exquisite, Japanese (visual) culture is simultaneously ‘quaint’ where quaintness is “a low-intensity aesthetic fondness, enabled and finally marred by its reassuring historical irrelevance.”³⁷⁸ Japan and its art/literature is therefore a symbol of the Eastern empire in popular British culture – almost modern but steeped in ornamental quaintness.

Much like the rediscovery of Pompeii in 1748 and the unearthing of sexual antiquities, art coming from Japan to the west in this period included images broadly labelled as *shunga* [spring pictures], a term which refers to a Japanese genre of erotic imagery characterised by its fine details and graphic depictions of highly emphasised genitals.³⁷⁹ Almost immediately comparisons were

departments do not add Museum Secretum numbers as standard on their online records. Therefore, I shall be using the online collection most often and cross referencing to the Museum Secretum Register when possible; for more on the reception of Indian art/artefacts in Victorian Britain see Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 221-287.

³⁷⁶ For more on Japonisme as a movement in art and design in the nineteenth century see Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and Nineteenth-Century Japan* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).; Yoko Chiba, “Japonisme: East-West Renaissance in the Late 19th Century,” *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 31, no. 2 (1998), 1-20.; For a specific exploration on Japonisme’s influence on western art see Ricard Bru, *Erotic Japonisme: The Influence of Japanese Sexual Imagery on Western Art* (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2014).

³⁷⁷ Grace E. Lavery, *Quaint, Exquisite: Victorian Aesthetics and the Idea of Japan* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 14.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 3.; *Ibid.* 23.

³⁷⁹ For more on *shunga* see Rosina Buckland, *Shunga: Erotic Art in Japan* (London: British Museum Press, 2010).; Tom Evans and Mary Anne Evans, *Shunga: The Art of Love in Japan* (New York: Paddington Press, 1975).; For more on the political, social, and economic changes contributing the popularity and development of “Orientalism” see Joanna de Groot, “‘Sex’ and ‘Race’: The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Cultures of Empire: A Reader: Colonisers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 46-50.

between Japanese and western art/visual traditions. For example, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt stated in 1863:

The other day I bought albums of Japanese obscenities. They delight me, amuse me, and charm my eyes (...) The violence of the lines, the unexpectedness of the conjunctions, the arrangement of the accessories, the caprice in the poses and the objects, the genitalia. Looking at them, I think of Greek Art, boredom in perfection, an art that will never free itself from the curse of being academic!³⁸⁰

The ‘imperfectness’ of these sex objects and illustrations to a western viewer equally extended to the subject matter and content of the images depicted. Unlike western pornographic photography and images, shunga regularly included same gendered sexual acts as well as larger group scenes.³⁸¹ Fantasy was fundamental and crucial to these depictions, but also highlighted the reciprocity and intertwined relationships in Japanese culture of husband, wife, prostitute, and the young man, concepts challenging to the traditional western narratives and constructions of marriage.³⁸² By the 1870s, the popularity of this type of visual material led to an increase in dealers all over the world, including the Europe based dealers Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906) and Sigfried Bing (1838-1905), specialising in ‘oriental’ art, which often included erotic and sexual objects and images. These items included traditional painted and wood block printed paper ‘art’ objects and also included photographic daguerreotypes for the wealthiest customers. The invention of the Kodak camera in 1888 finally allowed the spread of readily available and affordable photography. These cheaper photographs depicted ‘real’ pornographic images of ‘othered’ female bodies (usually prostitutes, same sex attracted women, or women of colour) and were now available to middle- and lower-income western consumers.³⁸³ Exoticism and fetishism increased as “imperialism provided new arenas for pornographic exploitation and as the world became a backdrop for sexual adventure.”³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal*, October 8, 1863.; quoted in Bru, *Erotic Japonisme*, 36.

³⁸¹ For discussion of the overwhelming presence of heterosexual material in British collections see Patrick J. Kearney, *A History of Erotic Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 112.

³⁸² Joshua Mostow, “The Gender of Wakashu and the Grammar of Desire,” in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, ed. Joshua Mostow, Normal Bryson, and Maribeth Graybill (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 49-70.; Julie Nelson Davis, *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty*, 2nd edition (Honolulu: Reaktion Books and the University of Hawaii Press, 2021).

³⁸³ Ruth Ford, “Erotica: Sexual Imagery, Empires, and Colonies,” in *A Cultural History of Sexuality: In the Age of Empire*, ed. Chiara Beccalossi and Ivan Crozier (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2011), 5:174-185.

³⁸⁴ Sigel, *Governing Pleasures*, 60.

These imported images, both photographic and otherwise, were often described using terminology such as “racial types”, “specimens”, or “tribes”, thus conforming to the purported scientific study of the ‘other’ sexual body as a higher intellectual anthropological source of interest.³⁸⁵ Discussions on the birth of anthropological studies of sexual objects and ‘pornography’ in the nineteenth century often define the origins of these discipline in the 1870s onwards, perhaps in part due to the extensive textual publications that are produced in this period as well as the role of photography in the development of a recognisably modern ‘pornography’ possessing an identifiable image of a living person. The potential of earlier collectors to explore anthropological, medical, and sexological theories through scientific/empirical methods is acknowledged in modern scholarship. However, this potential is described as never being fully reached by the nineteenth-century collectors as they supposedly favour traditional Payne Knightian Priapic Worship models to understand and construct their collections.³⁸⁶ However, when the objects in Witt’s collection from the 1860s are explored in more depth, there is a complexity of thought present that supports the assertion that the development of anthropological/medical methods for engaging with these sexual objects occurred much earlier than the texts developed in the 1870s. Indeed, with the addition of new material - such as Witt’s scrapbooks as a visual thesis and the comparative analysis of the objects within the collection - it is clear that these approaches were already occurring by the 1860s if not in the periods earlier when Witt was at the height of his collecting in the 1850s.

The timeline of globalised trade and exchange of ‘exotic’ erotic material further illustrates the originality and innovative nature of Witt’s collection considering the fact he was collecting these paper objects in the decade before the boom of importation of eastern ‘pornographic’ images to Europe. Though, again, Witt’s lack of interest in aboriginal bodies suggests his anthropological interest and the wider goals/themes of his collection were not located for him within studies of what he perceived as ‘primitive’ cultures – i.e. those of the Global South. Instead, Witt’s collection reflects his interest in sexual material from the new, popularised, and ‘civilised’ culture of Japanese tea and bathhouses, collecting at least 19 objects originating from the Japanese islands.³⁸⁷ Among

³⁸⁵ Ford, “Erotica,” 177.

³⁸⁶ See for example, Ford, “Erotica,” 5:171-198.; Grove, “The Collection and Reception of Sexual Antiquities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” 57-68.

³⁸⁷ The five objects listed in the Museum Secretum as ‘Chinese’ have been reassessed as Japanese in origin in recent years.

these, phallic anatomical votives, mirroring the tradition of W.104, are most commonly documented within the online collection with 6 fitting this description. Images of bathing, a common tradition in Japanese culture and often reflected in their art, are also common in Witt's collection, in particular the "wood carving, naked woman in tub, ithyphallic monster by her side with fingers in his mouth" listed in the Museum Secretum Register (W.419) and OA+.7134, a porcelain sake cup from the Edo period titled *Yu-agari no yuki no hada* [Snowy Skin after a Hot Bath] (Figure 91a-b and 92). The global reach of Witt's networks can be most keenly seen in this section of his scrapbooks. Witt could either not afford, did not keep, or did not choose to purchase photographic erotica, instead opting for more traditional printed drawings and paintings. However, Witt has hundreds of these printed *shunga* images with an additional volume dedicated only to these graphic images. Often, the themes and images were directly repeated with multiple copies of the same image, many of which continue with the theme of bathing (Figure 93a-c). Additionally, personal eye-witness accounts are included and preface his collection of shunga prints in his extensive 'Japanese Prints.' scrapbook clearly illustrating his extensive network of friends, colleagues, and fellow phallic worship/anthropological enthusiasts.³⁸⁸

The Japanese culture of bathing, as well as their prolific production of phallic and eroticised art, are in many ways comparable to the Roman objects within Witt's collection. For a man concerned with comparative anthropology, it is unlikely that this point would have gone unnoticed, and the objects and images Witt collects confirm this connection. While the collected objects from Japan are limited to 19, Witt's seemingly endless desire for Japanese shunga and related images, objects much easier to collect as an outsider to the only recently accessible Japanese islands, illustrate his deep interest in the new cultural parallels his sexual objects can draw across cultures. As discussed in relation to images of figures with physical abnormalities, this 'other' body, in this case of a physically different Japanese person compared to the imagined white-European Roman, is culturally similar, feeding into the narrative of an interconnectedness of religion and culture, a connection that is similarly echoed in the varied, high quality figural, non-figural, and symbolic sexual objects from India and Southeast Asia in Witt's collection.

³⁸⁸ Detailed in Wickstead, "Sex in the Secret Museum," 354-355.

The Museum Secretum, as it is so closely based on the archival techniques of Witt's scrapbooks and collection, therefore reflects the value now placed on phallic worship and the study of sexual objects as a mass global tradition, pulling new evidence for visual analysis. The visual approach to the study of sexual objects mirrored the detailed comparative anatomy preached by members of the ASL who developed their problematic racial discourse through the lens of a medical and, ultimately deeply flawed, pseudo-scientific method. This anthropological approach builds upon the archaeological and visual analytic methods conducted by Payne Knight, adding to them the nineteenth-century concepts of environmental influence on society, culture, and peoples from new Darwinian perspectives of the human origin. The Museum Secretum stands in a long tradition in Britain of scientific spectacle, with sexualised 'othered' bodies at the centre of enquiry.

To Witt, W.104 most comfortably reflects phallic worship as a white, European contribution to a global trend in early religion. While Payne Knight made a connection to Japan and the Indian subcontinent, primarily through the use of Townley's collected objects, he was unable to extend the study of the greater movement of his 'Worship of Priapus' theory due in large part to the practicalities involved in accessing this material as evidence and his focused final study of Christian tradition. Witt's approach to his own collection, as well as to his scrapbooks, revolutionised this global theory, the result of which was a new form of study of sexual antiquities, namely anthropological. The sexual object became a connecting icon across cultures, placing the sexual object, and the Museum Secretum, at the centre of this discussion during a new age of nineteenth-century scholarship.³⁸⁹

4. Chapter Three Conclusions

As this chapter illustrates, Witt's contribution to the study of sexual antiquities has been clouded by flawed historical practice by beginning with collector biography and using his objects only to support presupposed notions of his place in Victorian society and as a man collecting obscene material. From this perspective, the importance of the Museum Secretum and the objects within it are lost, covered in a veil of presumed pornographic content and an intention to conceal anything

³⁸⁹ For more on the concept of primitivism see Lyons and Lyons, *Irregular Connections*, 20-50.

and everything. However, by approaching this material from the objects collected first, the Museum Secretum becomes a dynamic and complex collection from the outset in 1865, building upon, and in some ways changing, the study of sexual objects from the eighteenth-century precedents.

Data analysis sits at the center of this argument, exploring the reality of the objects collected as a whole in order to make better, more informed conclusions about the content within the Museum Secretum and the collections that compose it. Without the prejudice of biography and what we think we know about the collectors, the numbers indicate confirmable preferences and biases of the collectors across multiple topics of interest. In this study I have examined the primary material, culture/geographical region of production, and the themes/subjects of the collections used as case studies. These three elements expose the subtle and conspicuous differences between the three primary collections for the purpose of exploring their presence in the Museum Secretum collection, though are by no means the only fields of enquiry this method can examine. In order to select an object representative of Witt's collection most accurately, and therefore explore the complexities of his and the Museum Secretum's wider importance in the nineteenth century, the data exposes the trends of his collection that he preferred objects of lower value metal or ceramics like terracotta, from a Roman context, and depicting a phallic or ithyphallic subject.

Object biography allows the close reading of the history of W.104 both before and after its reception in the nineteenth-century context, placing it in its original Roman origins and tracing how this transformed within Witt's possession and how this influenced the Museum Secretum collections. Here its role as a healing object, and therefore part of medical history, was discussed as well as how its production in ancient Rome made it a mass-produced item in wide demand as an object. From this examination, the role of W.104 within Witt's collection took on a new perspective – particularly alongside comparative explorations of the other objects of Witt's collection. Additionally, by approaching Witt's scrapbooks as a visual scholarly thesis and finally using supporting information from Witt's biography, it is possible to suggest that W.104 was understood intellectually, if not directly stated, as a votive separate from objects of phallic worship marked by virility and fertility. With the comparison of bathing objects and discussions of Witt's

interests beyond phallic worship, the object can be placed back into the discussion of medical history as early as the 1850s and 60s when it was most likely collected by the physician Witt.

The absence of comparative objects/scrapbook entries from various, mainly sub-Saharan African and Australian, contexts lead to a second role for the Museum Secretum through the study of W.104, the anthropological approach to the study of sexual objects. Witt's personal, and deeply problematic, perspectives on race expose the role of the ASL in his collecting habits as his collecting priorities favoured the examination of perceived 'higher' cultures – such as Japanese society – in direct comparison to Greco-Roman and other historically European traditions. The Museum Secretum collections therefore mirror his division across cultural lines, gathering material from other, mainly Euro-centric Greco-Roman collections, over equally relevant materials from cultures lower down in the perceived hierarchy. However, Witt's collection still reflects a diversity of collected objects that was simply not achievable by eighteenth-century collectors. Witt's Collection, and therefore the Museum Secretum, offers material from across vast networks of enthusiasts and scholars, encouraging close visual readings of these comparative thematic studies, in particular Asian cultures from the Indian subcontinent and Japan, constructing concepts of 'higher' culture as well as developing a pseudo-scientific construction of the 'primitive'.

In a basic sense, Witt's Collection and scrapbooks, as well as the Museum Secretum that eventually is built upon the back of that collection, is a space of preservation. To the Victorian Witt, the previous century was destructive and unappreciative of these important objects. In his scrapbook titled "Modern" his preface to the "Les Dessesins de Jules le Romain" images, a set of renaissance depictions of lovemaking, Witt writes "[t]he originals of these celebrated works of art by Julio Romano were preserved in the British Museum and are said to have been destroyed by order of the Trustees of that Institution about the year 1780" (Figure 94a-b). Perhaps, then, our twentieth and twenty-first-century idea of a censorial nineteenth-century cabinet follows a long line of generations, much in line with the Foucauldian repressive hypothesis, in which the Victorian collectors imagine themselves the saviours of this material from a brutal eighteenth-century cull. By giving the objects within Witt's collection agency in the form of data analysis and then object biography, collector biography becomes supportive information that encourages the researcher to avoid completely dismissing his intellectual contributions. The Museum Secretum is a thematic

collection, though it is not a purely censored collection. Instead, the Museum Secretum is a space of preservation, the birth of sexology in Britain, development of medical history, and a reflection of the complexities surrounding anthropology, ethnography, and the value of visual analysis for scholarship substantiated by the oft-overlooked evidence explored in this chapter.

Conclusion

The Secreted Secretum

Notions of secrets and secrecy create complex webs and networks of actors, both in terms of the action and the things acted upon. In this context, a museum collection described with reference to this concept is, by its very nature, a collection steeped in controversy and can be approached from numerous avenues of interrogation.

The aim of this thesis is to define the original function of the Museum Secretum using objects as primary source material and to address how the reputation, biography, and recent scholarship of private collections and collectors have contributed to the reception of this collection of supposedly sexual objects. Simply stated, I have found that the private collection and collector as well as the public collection and curator are constantly in exchange and that from its earliest conception the Museum Secretum was more than a museum of sexual objects and/or antiquities. Also, from its outset, this collection was a representation of the rapidly developing and shifting concepts of sexual art in the context of religious, medical, and anthropological thinking, with very specific requirements for inclusion beyond theme/subject of an object.

The British Museum's Museum Secretum, whether a collection 'to be kept secret', a collection of 'secret, mysterious things', or 'a space where selected objects can be secreted away from general display', cannot simply be described as possessing a single function for all contributors and audiences concerned. Rather, this space emerged from a conglomeration of several histories, from ancient production, private collection over the 'long' nineteenth century, and curation in the mid-nineteenth-century context. It is also the story of the reception of ancient objects by private collectors intertwined with the interpretations of scholars in their research who have continued to reevaluate, reimagine, and redisplay these individual, though highly networked, objects and public reception of the same objects. According to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "ordinary things become special when placed in museum settings" and, "the museum experience itself becomes a

model for experiencing life outside its walls”.³⁹⁰ Therefore, museum collections and curated display have the potential to create and solidify hierarchies of material, cultures, subjects, and individuals. As this thesis has demonstrated, the Museum Secretum is not a space of pure censorship from the delicate eyes of the general public, as traditional approaches to the study of the Museum Secretum have suggested. Nor is it a space designed from the outset to be directly responsive to eighteenth-century theories of phallic worship and priapic ritual, merely facilitating later intellectual intervention and interrogation. Rather, the Museum Secretum was already engaging with complex and innovative approaches to sexual material – such as anthropological and medical – far earlier than the widely accepted 1870s attribution of these fields of study. Hence, it may be more helpful to understand the Museum Secretum from the point of reference of the biological/medical meaning of the term *secretion*. Rather than *secret*-ed away to be hidden, these items are instead *secrete*-d selectively through their inclusion in this collection, and thereby slowly released to researchers and members of the public with specific interest in this material. From this perspective, the Museum Secretum becomes a generative space for intellectual enquiry, not one merely of censorship or reflections on the work of the past.

1. The Material Point

In addition to robust confirmation of this construction of a non-censorial space, this thesis has offered alternative and specific requirements for admission of an object into the Museum Secretum and the intellectual and cultural significance these selections have on the wider function of this collection. Where previous research on the Museum Secretum’s collections has focused solely on the sexual objects and themes within the register, this thesis suggests that the materiality and material construction of these objects was of primary importance to an object’s inclusion in this collection. The importance of materiality argued within this thesis, and how this material is developed into an object *type* (i.e. coin, figure, lamp, etc.), within the context of the Museum Secretum, or sex museums more generally, is a significant addition to the study of the reception of sexual art, as it challenges the dominant narrative of thematic curation within the nineteenth-century context. In this way, the Museum Secretum becomes a collection partly imitative of the

³⁹⁰ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 54.

Naples Cabinet of Secrets but is simultaneously a uniquely British perspective on this seminal Italian collection of sexual art and the implications for understanding the purpose and function of such art in ancient cultures. The material of an object is essential to its life as a Museum Secretum object, as in practical terms the portability of an item is fundamental to its ability to be collected and transported from its place of origin to British contexts. However, portable objects were not always reassigned into the Museum Secretum, despite their relative material value and sexual subject matter, including coins, intaglio, cameo work, and gems from Payne Knight's and Townley's collections especially those of excluded cultural backgrounds such as Etruscan. These observations undermine the concept that undesirable repetition of an object type in better condition was the primary purpose for the excluding similar materials and object types. This thesis instead suggests that the Museum Secretum is a collection across multiple materials creating a space of display for three-dimensional, or in the case of high relief sculpture, two-and-a-half dimensional objects rather than merely a collection of antiquities unified by possession of a sexual theme.

As the contents of the Museum Secretum is not proportional in terms of materiality to either the Naples Cabinet of Secrets, nor to the British eighteenth-century examples of Payne Knight or Townley, it becomes a collection of uniquely 'Wittian', and therefore nineteenth-century British, approaches to the materiality of related objects. This has significant new implications for the subject specific understanding of the objects collected with the Museum Secretum beyond censorable, obscene, or only phallic ritual objects. The cultural importance of *othered* sexual encounters, as well as the body of the 'Other', provides a guiding narrative within the context of the Museum Secretum that can only be thoroughly explored with the close object reading used in this thesis. Images of sexual encounters are largely excluded and highly selected. In this thesis, I have primarily explored how some visions of sexual encounters, particularly classical 'rape' and 'abduction' through the depiction of symplegma imagery were represented in, or excluded from, the Museum Secretum. The symplegma image, often a depiction of the moments just before sexual violence, is at times included and at other times excluded from the Museum Secretum collection. While images between a female victim of Zeus as a bird are included, equally well-known male victims portrayed in similar iconography remain excluded. This supports the theory that the subjects within the Museum Secretum are in part imitative of the preceding collection in Naples. However, by exploring the wider networks of these images, in particular in relation to the broader

private collections that compose the Museum Secretum, it becomes clear that gender dynamics and the representation of the female, male, and other gendered bodies are fundamental to the inclusion of an object to this collection but equally reliant on the *type* of object that this image appears on. For example, while a symplegma silver coin is excluded from the Museum Secretum, despite its appearance in Payne Knight's studies on phallic worship, a symplegma quarter lifesize marble sculpture is included, at least for a period of time.

Similarly, the exclusion of classically 'perfect' Herculean bodies from the Museum Secretum, even when visually similar to 'imperfect' priapic bodies, suggests that in terms of subject matter, the Museum Secretum is concerned with very specific depictions of humanity and the human body. The reasons for this are extensive, feeding into the cultural concerns of the era regarding cultural explorations for the worship of sex and fertility in terms of potential 'primitivism' in keeping with Witt's anthropological interests with the ASL. Also, this exclusion suggests a preference for including the 'disabled' body, a concept that feeds into the theory posited in this thesis that Witt's collection was a medical one from its earliest acquisition, as illustrated by his collection of votives in conjunction to items related to hygiene. The body of the 'other', whether racial or disabled, is therefore highly sexualised within this context. With these factors in mind, the visible sexuality of the image is secondary to the wider cultural implications of a titled, perfect mythological character and the (ab)normal representation of human-like bodies.

With the addition of cultural evidence from the private collection case studies, the Museum Secretum is a space of relatively homogenous vision for cultural objects with Greco-Roman classicism at the heart of its collection. Therefore, it is understandable that classicists and specialists in ancient material culture have primarily gravitated towards close study of the Museum Secretum's holdings. This thesis has deliberately focused on the Greco-Roman examples from these collections as they represent the numerical majority cultures as collected in the Museum Secretum Register and Collections. However, as this thesis has explored in greater detail in Chapter Three, this collection illustrates complex notions of cross-cultural anthropological approaches to art and is ripe for further research along this line of enquiry. More can, and should, be done with further research to examine the reception of objects from other, non-European

contexts within this collection, particularly in response to colonial constructions of the sexualised ‘Other’ body.

2. Private Parts of a Public Whole: Visualising Private Collections Physically and Virtually in the Public Museum

In its attempt to uncover the previously overlooked functions of the collected objects within the Museum Secretum, this thesis reinvigorates the study of private collections as key to the reception and lifecycle of objects within public museums. A preoccupation with textual sources, both in terms of literature produced and literature pertaining to historical individuals, has created false narratives surrounding the display and curation of sexual objects, as well as the preferences of collectors who acquired and owned them privately before donating or selling them for public exhibition and preservation. Biased and selective readings of textual sources led to the Museum Secretum becoming known primarily as a space of censorship with a singularly narrow vision that stifled the intellectual interests of individuals such as Payne Knight, even when faced with clear evidence that the exclusion of objects from Payne Knight’s collection from display in the British Museum extended far beyond the relatively few sexual objects in his collection. His consequent obscurity is undeniably linked to his political background and the failings of his artistic criticisms in his own lifetime rather than a structured attempt to cover up his sexual collection by Victorian prudes forty years after his death. Payne Knight’s private collection is to this day still mischaracterised as generally sexual, even though it is clear that his primary interests arose from his appreciation of metal and material construction if the objects within his collections are approached as source material in their own right. Similarly, the importance of Townley’s collection of sexual objects, such as the *Townley Symplegma Sculpture*, and their influence on the overall function of the Museum Secretum become secondary to having been hidden from view or operating as instruments of representing phallic worship.

Witt’s reputation is also tarred with the same biased brush, labelled as a ‘pornophile’ by Gaimster due to his interest in collecting sexual antiquities, and judged as being unable to appreciate the objects he collects with any intellectual rigour. In this sense, if today’s scholars, as well as curators, art critics, politicians, polemicists, and other public commentators, reduce the understanding of the

display of sexual art within the nineteenth century to purely censorship of the obscene or even as a 'sexually themed collection', these more complex, non-censorship-based narratives are potentially lost and their continuation in our own curation of these images easily overlooked. By starting with the objects as a collection, without recourse to biographical information that potentially clouds interpretation, Witt's collection is revealed as having purpose, thought, and being the result of careful acquisition in material, cultural, and thematic terms. By the identifying of these purposes and factors, the collection illustrates a continued interest in, and radical revision of, the original theories of phallic worship initiated by Payne Knight and his eighteenth-century antiquarian colleagues. That is not to say that his theories, which are undeniably problematic in terms of race and gender, should be reinvigorated. Rather, that denying their role in the development of his collection, and subsequently the British Museum's collection of sexual objects, also denies the complexities of the intellectual networks surrounding their initial collection and continuing reception.

Biographic information is not solely based in the personal experience of collectors, but also includes assumptions made about the periods in which collectors were active. Significantly, then, the outcomes from this thesis encourage a rethinking of academic terminology and descriptive language relating to objects, as well as the wider categories of periodisation and prevailing divergent notions of where the private ends and the public starts. Blind and superficial labeling of images, objects, and art as erotic, sexual, pornographic, obscene, and/or censorable encourages unhelpful and anachronistic ideas of viewer engagement. The notion of distinct public and private collected spaces in which the life of an object is cleanly separable from previous iterations is challenged as an insufficiently nuanced or flexible method for understanding collected and displayed objects. In its place, close readings of case studies using object biography is recommended to marry multiple receptions of an object throughout time and space. Such questions in relation to constructions of sexuality and censorship are particularly relevant in the digital age where our own identities, sexual included, are often publicly curated visually from 'private' origins.

3. Method Acting: Objects as Actors in Comparative Data Analysis

To tackle the aims and objectives of this thesis, the methodology employed necessarily encompasses broad evidence offered by the collected objects themselves *en masse* in the form of comparative numerical data analysis of online British Museum catalogues. This is not to say that this thesis develops a catalogue of the Museum Secretum collection, nor of the case studies of private collections that were the source of many objects assigned to it, though a catalogue would be a welcome addition in the research fields of sex museums and nineteenth-century curatorial practice. Nor do I advocate the removal of traditional archival research methods from art historical methods. Instead, this thesis addresses the question of how to approach and collate the plethora of information now available in the digital age in meaningful ways that triangulate multiple sources of information to generate more reliable insights addressing larger art historical concerns.

As described in Chapter One, the introduction of new technology to the study of art history has been anticipated for many years, though with few attempts to provide practical solutions to achieving these goals. Therefore, the methods employed in this thesis are not only original and contribute to the practice of the research of sexual collections, but also offer easily accessible means of combining the study of numerical data with the specialisms of humanities disciplines in the wider art historical and humanities research community.

The introduction of new source material, including the scrapbooks of Witt and virtual objects, allows for deeper exploration into the nature of display and reception of objects in twentieth/twenty-first-century contexts of display. In the case of the Museum Secretum, the exploration focus is on sexual, and privately collected objects, though the approach employed is flexible and may be applied more generally to many areas of art historical study. The scholarly use of the modern digital copies, in a similar vein to the plaster casts or photographs of the nineteenth century, is currently controversial.³⁹¹ However, careful visual analysis supported by further historical research generates useful and insightful results from these resources. In this case, virtual objects on the British Museum online database reveal that, even today, not all objects, collections,

³⁹¹ Bishop, "Against Digital Art History."

or collectors are equally represented to the public, with Payne Knight's collection in particular continuing to be relatively obscure. However, legitimate concerns with the use of digitised copies are justified, particularly as methods of digital production and curation of digital materials remains largely unregulated and unchecked for factual accuracy or consistency. In addition, the potential for manipulating digital materials for fraudulent or artistic purposes is equally problematic. These points notwithstanding, even in their current form, and as the extensive British Museum online collections exemplifies, digital archives and virtual images offer major new perspectives into the curatorial practices of institutions displaying art and are likely to increase in significance over time. Digital archives and virtual objects are already the most visible parts of any museum collection to many members of the public, and therefore demand and deserve the same attention and analysis as traditional physical displays. While in this thesis they have primarily been used as data sets rather than cases for close curatorial critique, future research should expand into this field.³⁹² Indeed, the continued growth and use of digital archives and virtual objects is undeniable, inevitable, and irreversible. Further research should spur action to create useful and appropriately regulated techniques to capture, archive, and display virtual objects, rather than excluding physical objects from art historical research and public exhibition due to the constraint of limited display space.

Comparing objects across collections has been a major component of art historical practice since its very inception in the eighteenth-century with Winckelmann, and in a British context, Payne Knight and Townley. While textual evidence and biography continues to be important in making sense of personal relationships to collected objects and their wider networks, it should not be considered the sole or primary source for accessing material objects. By initiating research on the object as the primary actor in the narrative of a collection, particularly by utilising new digital technologies in this process, new insights into purpose, functions, intentions, and interpretations fundamental to museological and art historical enquiry can be uncovered, which may be overlooked by traditional methods of scholarly enquiry. The concept of a continuing network is key in this understanding of the *Museum Secretum* and, in fact, any curated collection of objects

³⁹² While the early drafts of this thesis included a section visually critiquing and examining the British Museum's Online Collections, this was removed by the date of submission due to a full relaunch of the online collections platform in 2020.

from multiple sources. Numeric comparisons allow for greater clarity when using large data sets and offer robust results that test specific hypotheses, rather than building on general assumptions.

4. Further Limitations within this Thesis and Suggestions for Future Research

As with any work of this kind, there are limitations to the research presented in this thesis and many have already been acknowledged throughout this chapter. However, it is important to examine how some of these limitations were mitigated, as well as offering potential points of enquiry for further studies of the material and/or method covered in this thesis. Firstly, defining the scope of this work from the birth of Townley until the present day is deliberately broad when considering only a few case studies and objects of enquiry within this scale of time and culture. The selection of this time-period, however, allows for the mass data gathering required to address the period specific assumptions and generalisations encompassed in previous research in the general field. Therefore, this thesis challenges the construction of periods within the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in particular the idea of an Enlightenment age superseded abruptly by the moralistic and sexually prudish Victorian age. Instead, I advocate for the reexamination and analysis of art and objects through continuous life/biographical readings of visual material culture, a point that supports the wide range of dates encompassed in the title.³⁹³ The *Museum Secretum* is a case study that is culturally narrow and representative of only the British Museum's perspective on the objects collected. As such, it is a limited sample and further research utilising these research questions and methodology should be applied within other British institutions as well as comparable collections internationally. Equally fruitful would be the exploration of other collectors whose private collections were recorded as part of the *Museum Secretum*, including but not limited to, William Bragge, Hamilton, Sloane, and William Temple. Additionally, object biographies might be performed based on other items that either conform to the parameters set out by the analysed data, or deliberately stand out as unique from it, exploring the further relationship of these objects to one another with a clear context of the collection. In this process, further object focused explorations of other cultures, races, genders, and sexualities could

³⁹³ This perspective towards time has been used in art historical research more widely in recent years with the introduction of works such as Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, ed., *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010.)

contribute to a further understanding of the intricacies within this unusual collection and others like it.

Due to the goals of this work, the categories selected to perform numerical data analysis were only three of many possible points of approach for exploring the complexity of private collections. While I have attempted to broadly examine the material, culture/place of production, and subject/theme of the objects examined, these topics may usefully be broken down even further for other areas or research. Other topics that might also be comparatively analysed include scale/size, school/style, production technique, etc. While I have touched on these topics in object biography sections, more detailed examinations are likely to produce interesting results and new insights in the study of the Museum Secretum collection.

5. Final Thoughts: Unlocking the Future of Art Historical Research

The foundation of this thesis is challenging the common practice of over-generalisation in the selection of case studies for close analysis, as well as in descriptions of intent/purpose based upon biased interpretations of historical periods or figures. Specific to the field of sexual history in the nineteenth century, the 2019 public outcry prompted by the book *Outrages* by Wolf highlights the importance of detail orientated research with a view to the complexities surrounding terminology and time-specific assumptions regarding sexuality.³⁹⁴ In this context, a methodology offering a close reading of object as source material is a timely intervention in the disciplines of humanities research and one that can be adapted and applied across multiple fields of enquiry. In a world where access is simultaneously guaranteed and easily rescinded, as the recent pandemic and consequent closing of all public spaces has illustrated, digital archives and virtual objects cannot be ignored and must be explored, developed, and utilised as tools in the practice of object-based art history.

The results also have significant implications for the study of the Museum Secretum and private collections/collectors that contributed to it. Rather than a thematic collection concerned

³⁹⁴ Wolf, *Outrages*.

exclusively with the housing and seclusion of obscene objects away from general public display, and/or a collection primarily concerned with theories of phallic worship, this space is revealed to be a complex collection of multi-dimensional objects. These objects reflect deeper interests in materiality, the performance of sexual encounters and defining these interactions as sex, the building of cultural identities through comparative study, the relationship between the healthy body, medicine, and hygiene, and how British collections influence the continuation of these enquiries. Reception of objects is a continual and evolving process, and data curated digitally today offers new insight into older receptions from previous centuries. By using object biographies and wider comparative studies, a narrative of continued thought and interest is established throughout the broad chronology of the collection of antiquities and sexual objects.

As Tyburczy states eloquently, “all museums are sex museums”, in effect, with potential to normalise and abnormalise the reception of the objects within them in terms of sexual behaviour.³⁹⁵ To describe the Museum Secretum as merely censorial, imitative, or inspirational for later interventions denies the narrative that the objects themselves portray. Therefore, receptions of the Museum Secretum and over-generalisation of its function and contents not only influence historical discourse surrounding sex, art, objects, and collectors from the past, but keep secret the mysteries of our own receptions and continuing displays of sex and sexuality and nineteenth-century display more generally. The difficulty of how to display sexual objects to a public audience did not simply die with the Victorians. Even in the most recent explorations of ancient life, such as the *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum* exhibition at the British Museum in 2013, sexual objects carry warning signs for visitors and, in many cases, are placed in physically sidelined rooms so that a deliberate detour has to be made to engage with this type of imagery.³⁹⁶ Clearly, sex and sexuality continue to be delicate topics in a museum context.

The methods and approaches to controversial collections created, developed, and employed in this thesis offer practical and novel approaches to the challenges now faced by art historians in the twenty-first century. In a world moving towards increasingly virtual and digital representations,

³⁹⁵ Tyburczy, *Sex Museums*, 1.

³⁹⁶ For catalogue of this exhibition see Paul Roberts, *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (London: British Museum Press, 2013.)

embracing these tools and new source materials, if handled with care and awareness of their limitations, offers an exploration of patterns and wider networks previously unavailable to scholars. The history of art as a discipline has always allowed for simultaneous understanding and exploration of both *change* and *continuity* across time, and this thesis stands at the forefront of bridging the gaps between the ancient, modern, contemporary, and future of art historical practice, in much the same way the Museum Secretum functioned for the reception of sexual objects in its own time. With these tools in hand, art historians and humanities scholars are a step closer to unlocking these museological secrets.

Appendix

For access to complete Appendix see accompanying file: **Mellor_202038539_Appendix.xlsx**

This file is a single Excel Workbook composed of 6 spreadsheets as follows:

1a. RPKnight- RawData

Raw data file downloaded from the British Museum online collections in summer 2020 under database search for “Richard Payne Knight.” Only general formatting and titling have been edited by the author for clarity.

1b. CTownley- RawData

Raw data file downloaded from the British Museum online collections in summer 2020 under database search for “Richard Payne Knight.” Only general formatting and titling have been edited by the author for clarity.

1c. GWitt- RawData

Raw data file downloaded from the British Museum online collections in summer 2020 under database search for “Richard Payne Knight.” Only general formatting and titling have been edited by the author for clarity.

2. Identified MS Objects

List of objects from the eighteenth-century case studies of Richard Payne Knight’s collection and Charles Townley’s collection. These objects have been identified by cross referencing the textual evidence from Museum Secretum Register with the text and visual resources from the British Museum online database. This spreadsheet includes each object’s Museum Secretum number, today’s British Museum identification number, and details of the status of the object’s British Museum online database record regarding the presence or absence of an accompanying virtual image.

3. MS Objects by Subject+Theme

A full account of how each object identified as a Museum Secretum Object from the collections of Richard Payne Knight and Charles Townley, as well as the full collection of George Witt, were classified by the author in terms of specific subject/theme. For more details on the complexity and decisions of the author regarding terminology see section two of Chapter One.

4. Numerical Chart Data

Numerical data input to create the accompanying pie charts. Includes Chart Data by Material, Chart Data by Place: Using Online Database Search Terms, Chart Data by Culture/Period/Dynasty: Nineteenth-Century Terminology from the Museum Secretum Register, and Chart Data by Subject/Theme: Using Descriptive Level 3 Terminology.

Abbreviations

BM	The British Museum
MS	Museum Secretum
MSR	Museum Secretum Register
<i>Discourse</i>	<i>A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus</i> (London: T. Spilsbury, <i>Snowbill</i> , 1786)
<i>Priapeia</i>	Title given by the Society of the Dilettanti for <i>A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus</i>
ASL	Anthropological Society of London
Collection A	Richard Payne Knight's Collection in the British Museum
Collector A	Richard Payne Knight
Collection B	Charles Townley's Collection in the British Museum
Collector B	Charles Townley
Collection C	George Witt's Collection in the British Museum
Collector C	George Witt
G1	Gallery 1 (or Enlightenment Gallery) in the British Museum
ANT	Actor Network Theory
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
2-D	Two-Dimensional
3-D	Three-Dimensional

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Tables

Table 1. Breakdown of Items within the Museum Secretum based on Museum Secretum Register Classifications.

Object Grouping	Cultural division (as divided in MSR)	Number of Objects
General Collection		
	Assyrian	8
	Egyptian	73
	Greek	11
	Roman	386
	Medieval	44
	Oriental	18
	American	8
	Collection Total	548
Witt Collection		
	Egyptian	37
	Greek	65
	Roman	185
	Medieval, Cinquecento, Modern	74
	African	2
	American	4
	Asiatic Indian	44
	Chinese	5
	Japanese	15
	Misc.	3
	Collection Total	434
Witt Book Donation		
	Collection Total	130
Morel Collection		
	Collection Total	40
	Museum Secretum Grand Total	1152

Table 2. Terminology Classifications by Levels.

	Material	Culture/Location	Subject/Theme
Level 1 Terms <i>Most general</i>	Organic Inorganic Processed Material Unprocessed Material	East Asian cultures, dynasties, periods American cultures and periods African periods and cultures European	Figurative Non-Figurative
Level 2 Terms <i>Broad, though more specific than level 1</i>	Stone Metal Paper Ceramic Animal	Roman Greek Egyptian North American South American Sub-Saharan African North African Middle East South Asian Chinese	Eroticism/Sex Religion/Belief Society/Human Life Animal Military/Naval Science/Technology
Level 3 Terms <i>Specific Detail</i>	Gold Silver Copper Alloy Lava Terracotta Marble Porcelain Coral Bone Ivory Glass <i>et cetera</i>	Romano British Romano Egyptian Romano Italic Attic Corinthian Chinese Japanese Indian subcontinent <i>et cetera</i>	-Primarily phallic objects -Primarily yonic objects -Same Gender Sex/Intercourse Scenes -Mixed Gender Partners Sex/Intercourse Scenes -Bestiality Sex/Intercourse Scenes -Hand/Arm -Ear -Heart -Breast -Animals, non-copulating -Animals Copulating <i>et cetera</i>

Table 3. Number of objects in each collection by primary material composition.

Primary Materials	Richard Payne Knight Collection (A)	Charles Townley Collection (B)	George Witt Collection (C)
Ceramics	53	858	176
Metal	5488	1939	180
Stone	124	1312	61
Paper	1232	3112	1
Misc. (including glass, ivory, et al.)	0	1233	79

Table 4. Breakdown of Metal Varieties by top four common search terms.

Primary Materials	Collection A 5488 metal items	Collection B 1939 metal items	Collection C 180 metal items
Iron	4 (.07%)	5 (.25%)	8 (4%)
Bronze	745 (13.5%)	549 (28%)	127 (70.5%)
Silver	2919 (53%)	102 (5%)	4 (2%)
Gold	278 (5%)	96 (5%)	18 (10%)

Table 5. Breakdown of Stone Varieties by top four common search terms.

Primary Materials	Collection A 124 stone items	Collection B 1312 stone items	Collection C 61 stone items
Coral	1 (1.6%)	3 (.2%)	17 (46%)
Volcanic Rock/Lava	1 (1.6%)	11 (.8%)	12 (20%)
Gemstones	103 (83%)	949 (72%)	4 (6.5%)
Marble	11 (9%)	308 (23%)	1 (1.6%)

Charts

Chart 1. Collection A by Material (Level 2).

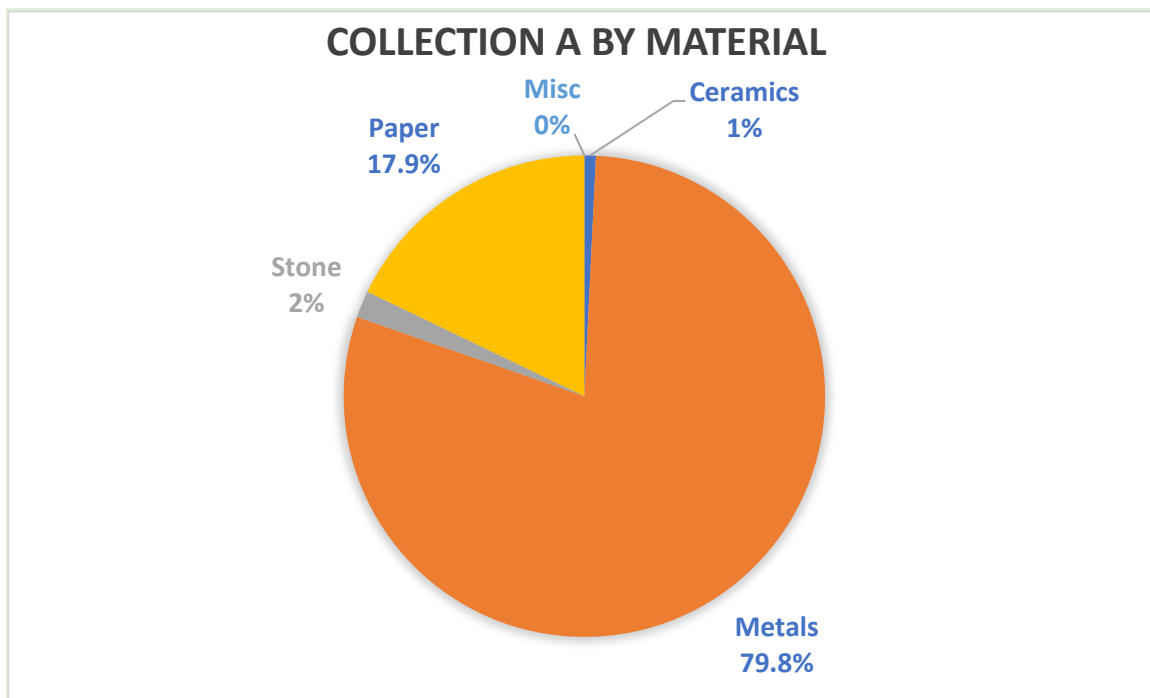


Chart 2. Collection B by Material (Level 2).

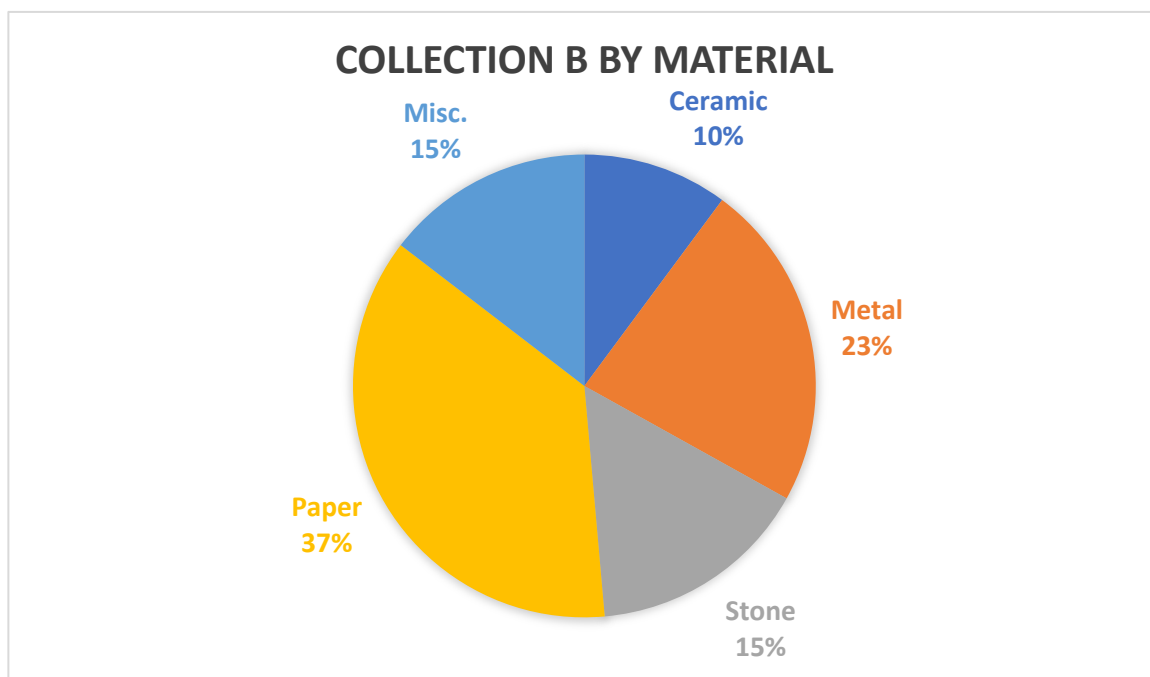


Chart 3. Collection C by Material (Level 2).

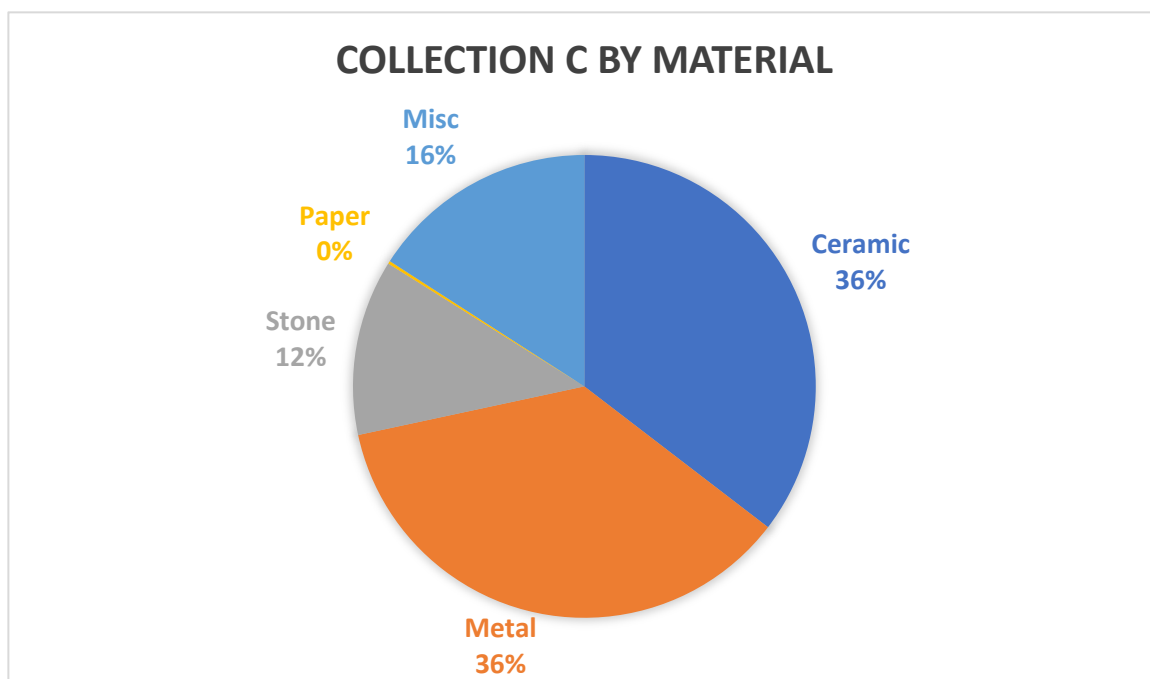


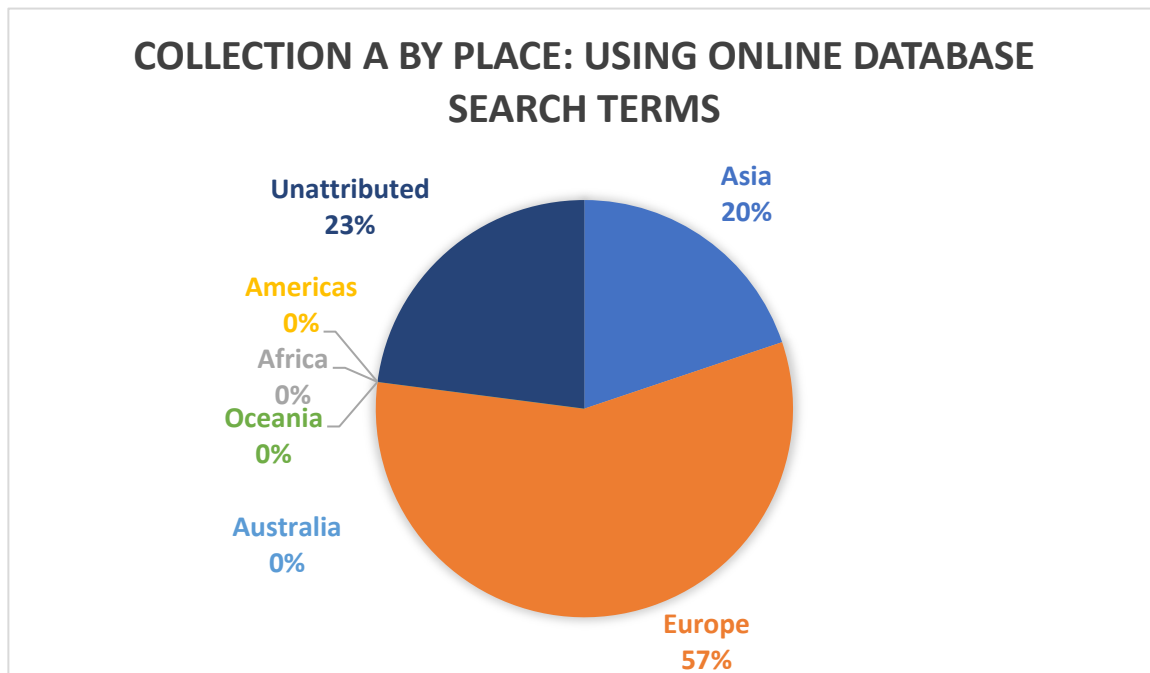
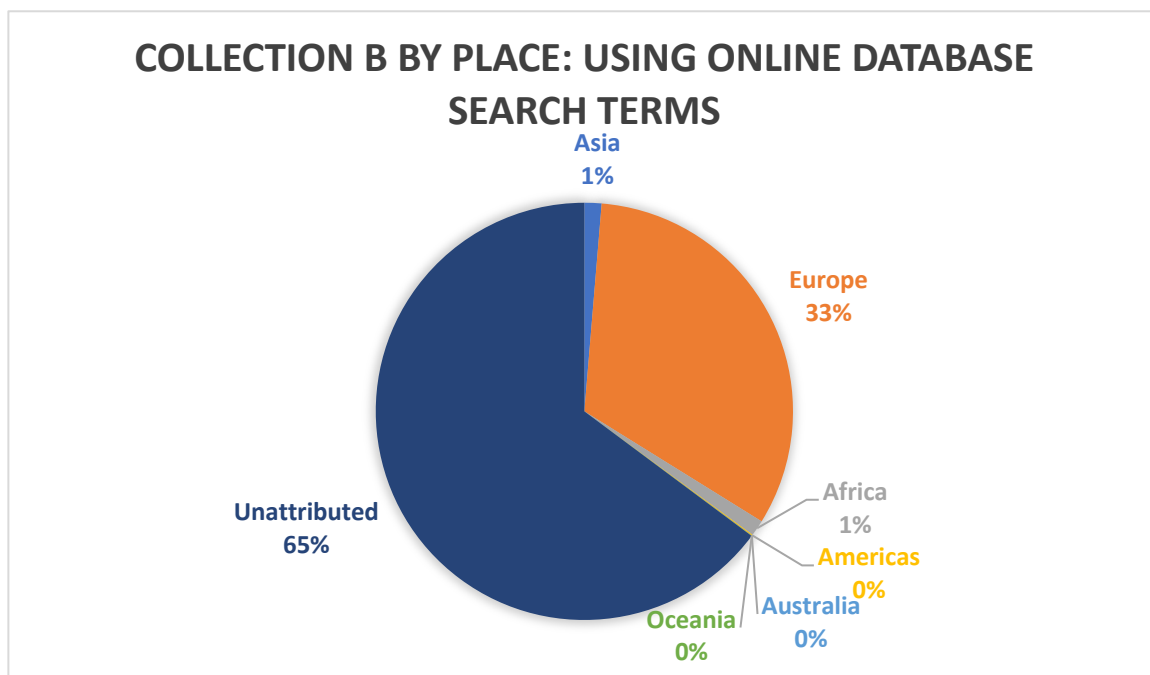
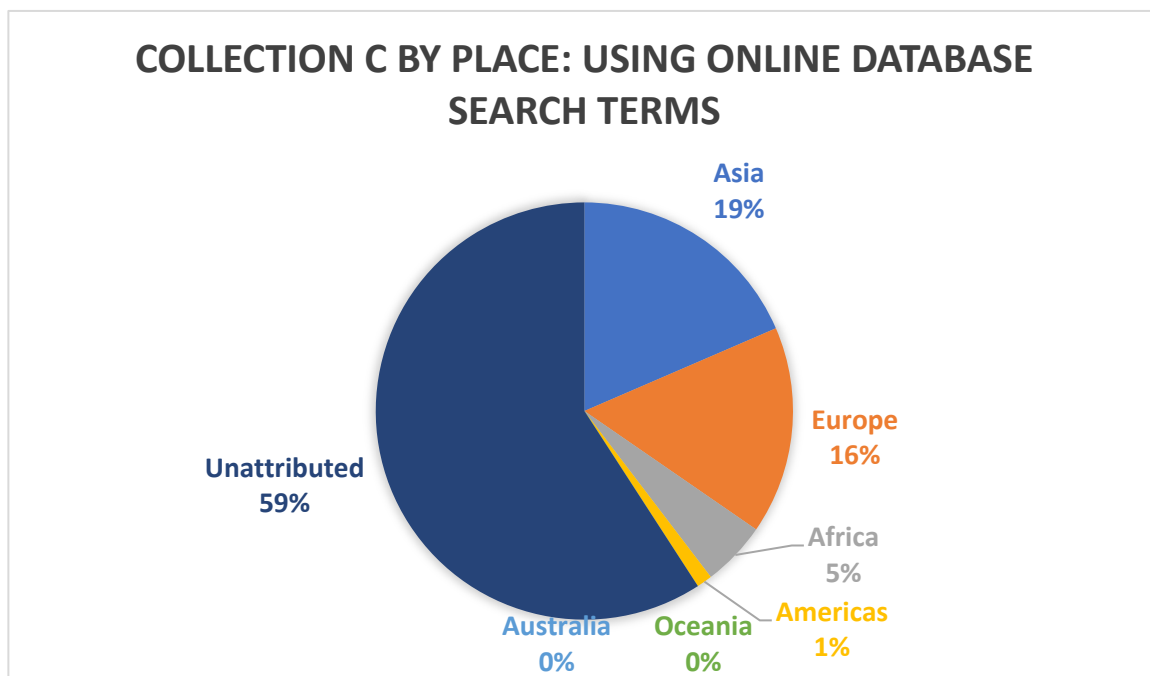
Chart 4. Collection A by Place: Using Online Database Search Terms.**Chart 5.** Collection B by Place: Using Online Database Search Terms.

Chart 6. Collection C by Place: Using Online Database Search Terms.



Legend for Charts 7-9- Culture/Geographic Location of Production:



Chart 7. Collection A in Museum Secretum by Culture/Period/Dynasty: Nineteenth-Century Terminology from Museum Secretum Register.

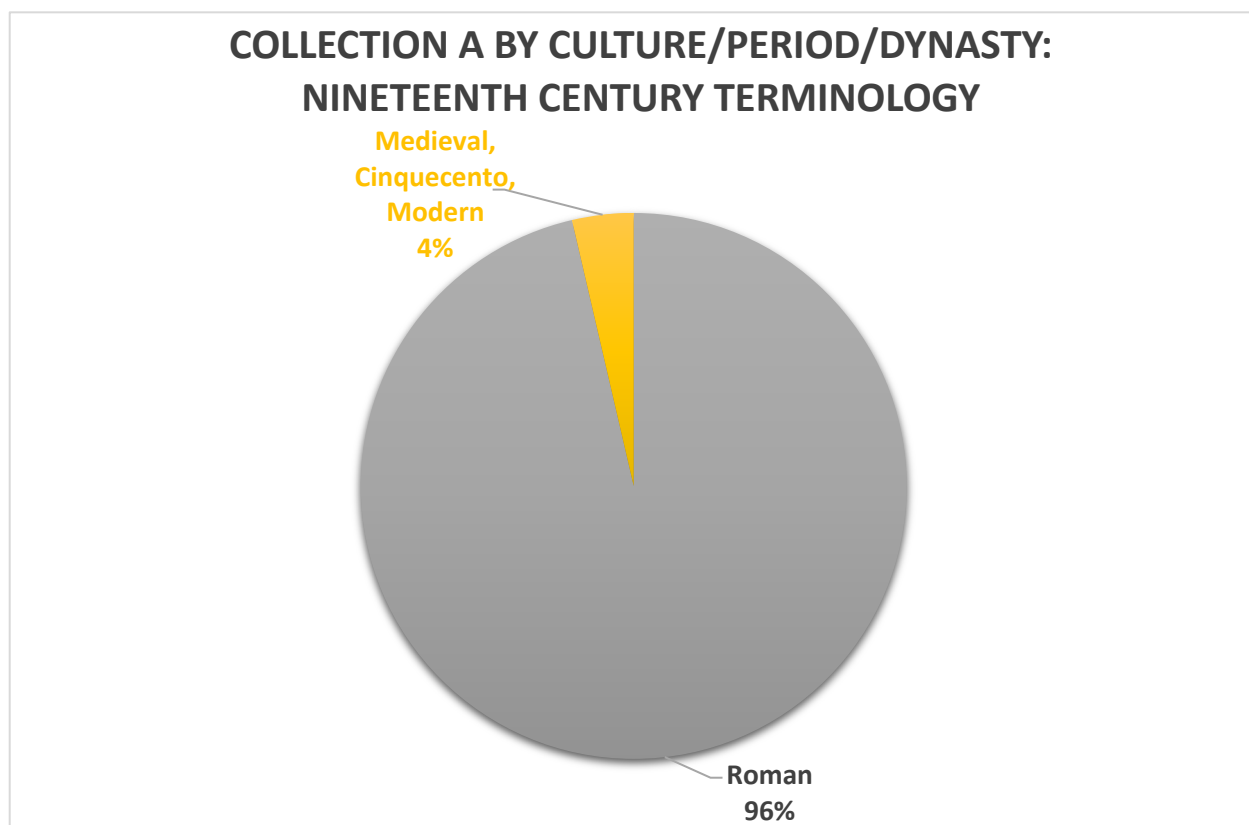


Chart 8. Collection B in Museum Secretum by Culture/Period/Dynasty: Nineteenth-Century Terminology from Museum Secretum Register.

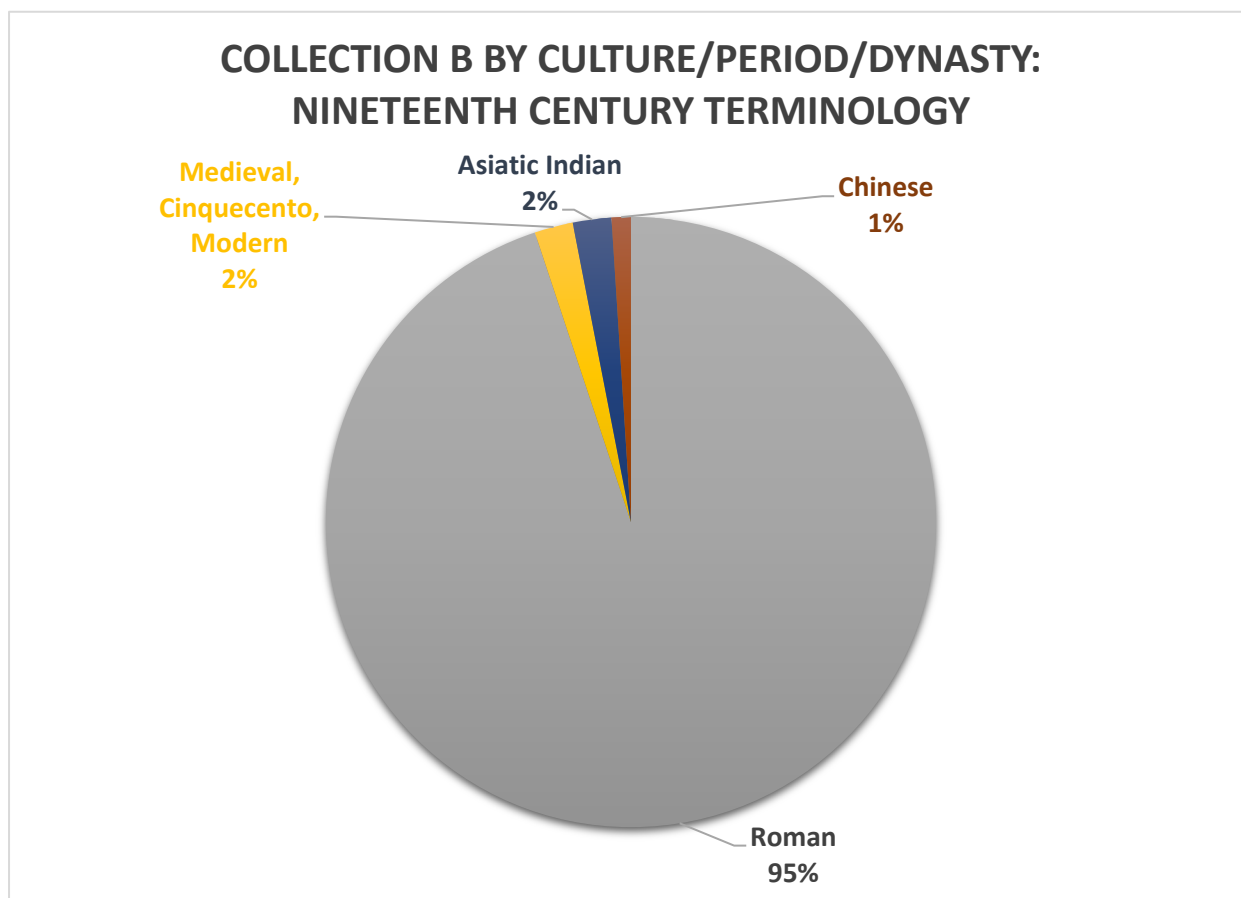
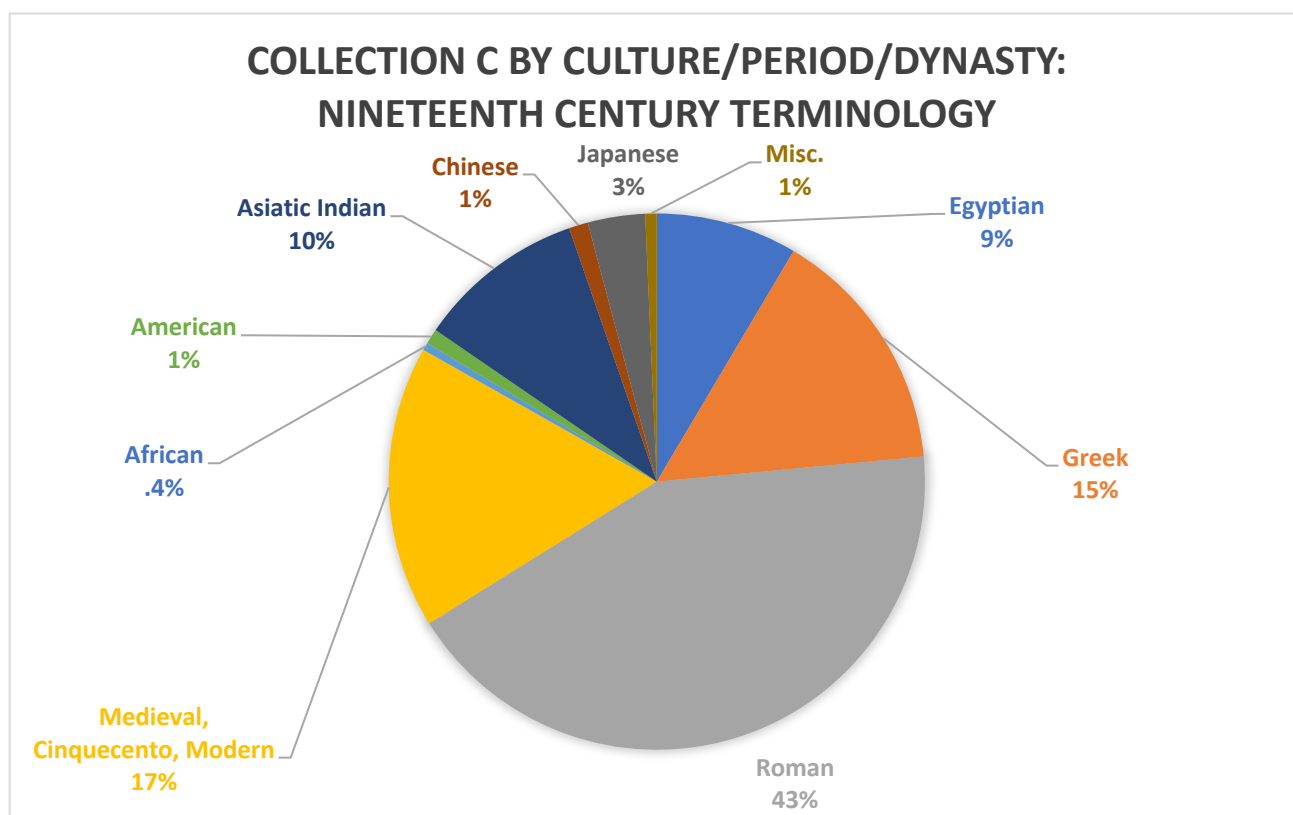


Chart 9. Collection C in Museum Secretum by Culture/Period/Dynasty: Nineteenth-Century Terminology from Museum Secretum Register.



Legend for Charts 10-12- Subject/Theme:

- Primarily Phallic Objects
- Male and Female Genitals Together
- Surrogate Yonic Objects
- Mixed Gender/Sex Partners Sex/Intercourse Scenes
- Sexual Aid
- Ear
- Breast
- Foot/Leg
- Food/Food basket
- Other Votive
- Male Figure-emphasised anus
- Third Gender
- Non-copulating Group Scene
- Animals Copulating
- Stupa
- Primarily 'yonic' objects
- Surrogate Phallic Objects
- Same Gender/Sex Partners Sex/Intercourse Scenes Only
- Bestiality Sex/Intercourse Scenes
- Hand/Arm
- Heart
- Eye
- Tongue
- Crescent Moon/Stars
- Male Figure Only
- Female Figure Only
- Medical Proceedure Scene-genitals exposed
- Animals, non-copulating
- Floral
- Non-Figurative

Chart 10. Collection A by Subject/Theme (using descriptive Level 3 terminology).

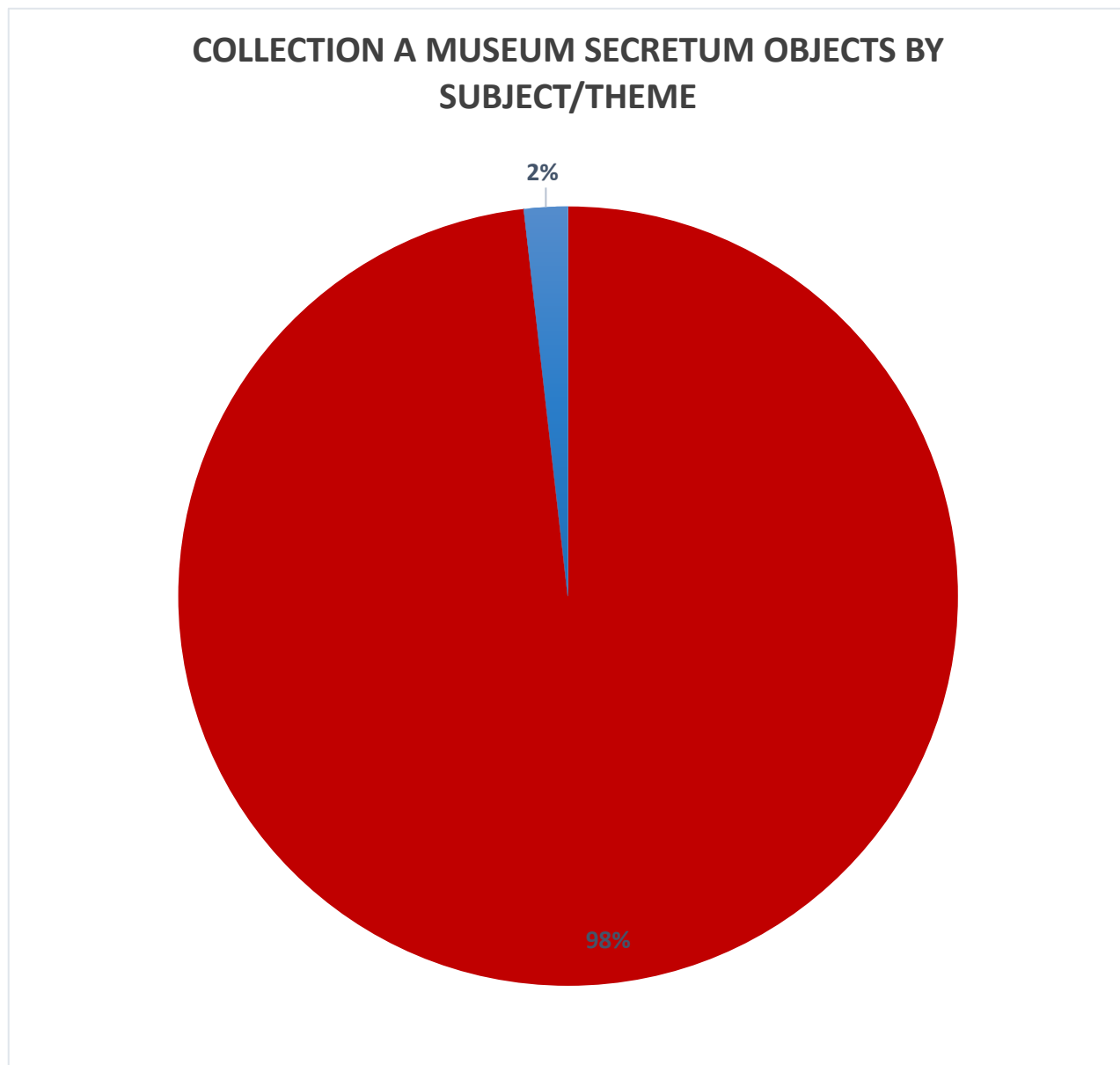
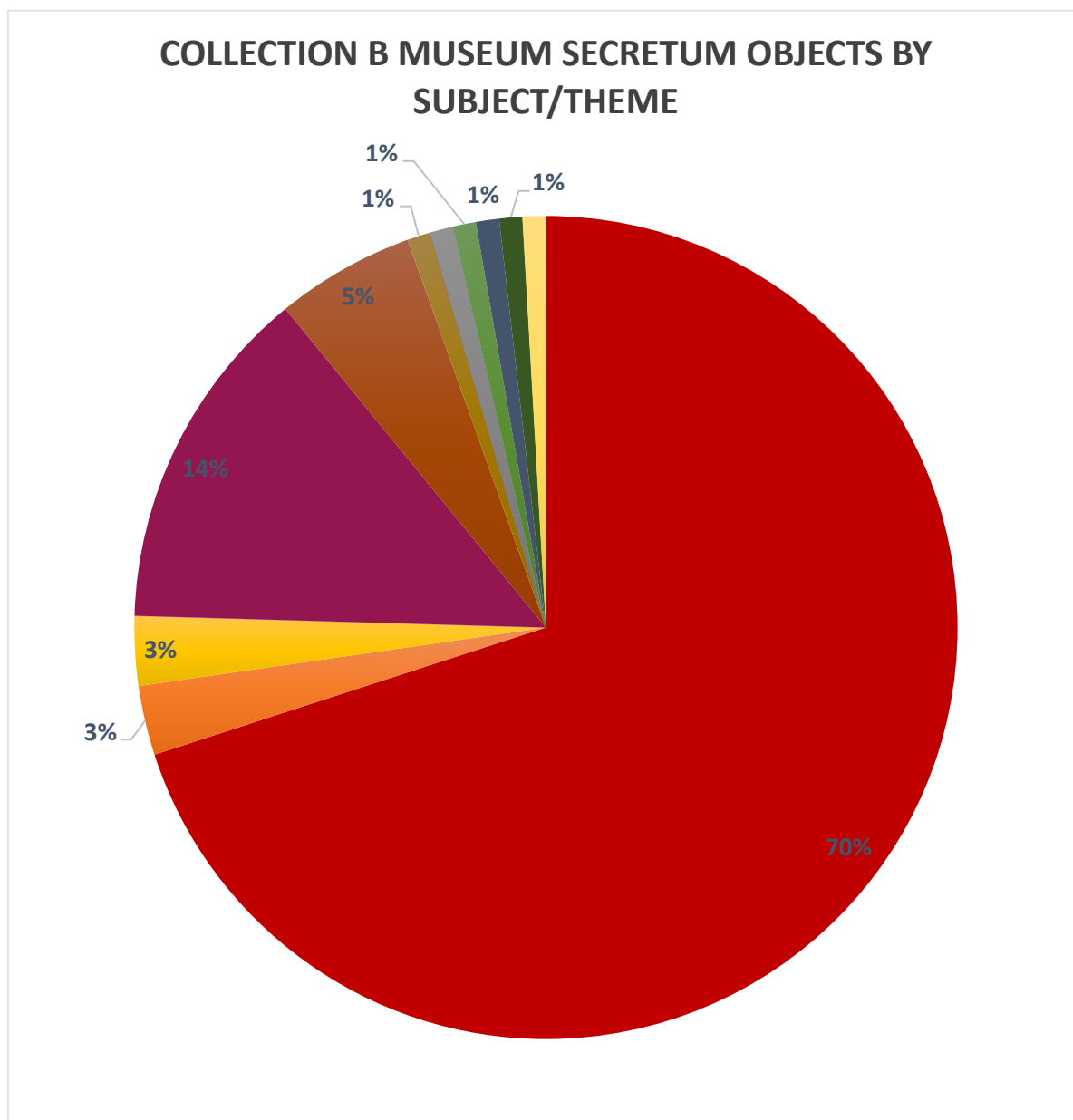


Chart 11. Collection B by Subject/Theme (using descriptive Level 3 terminology).



Illustrations

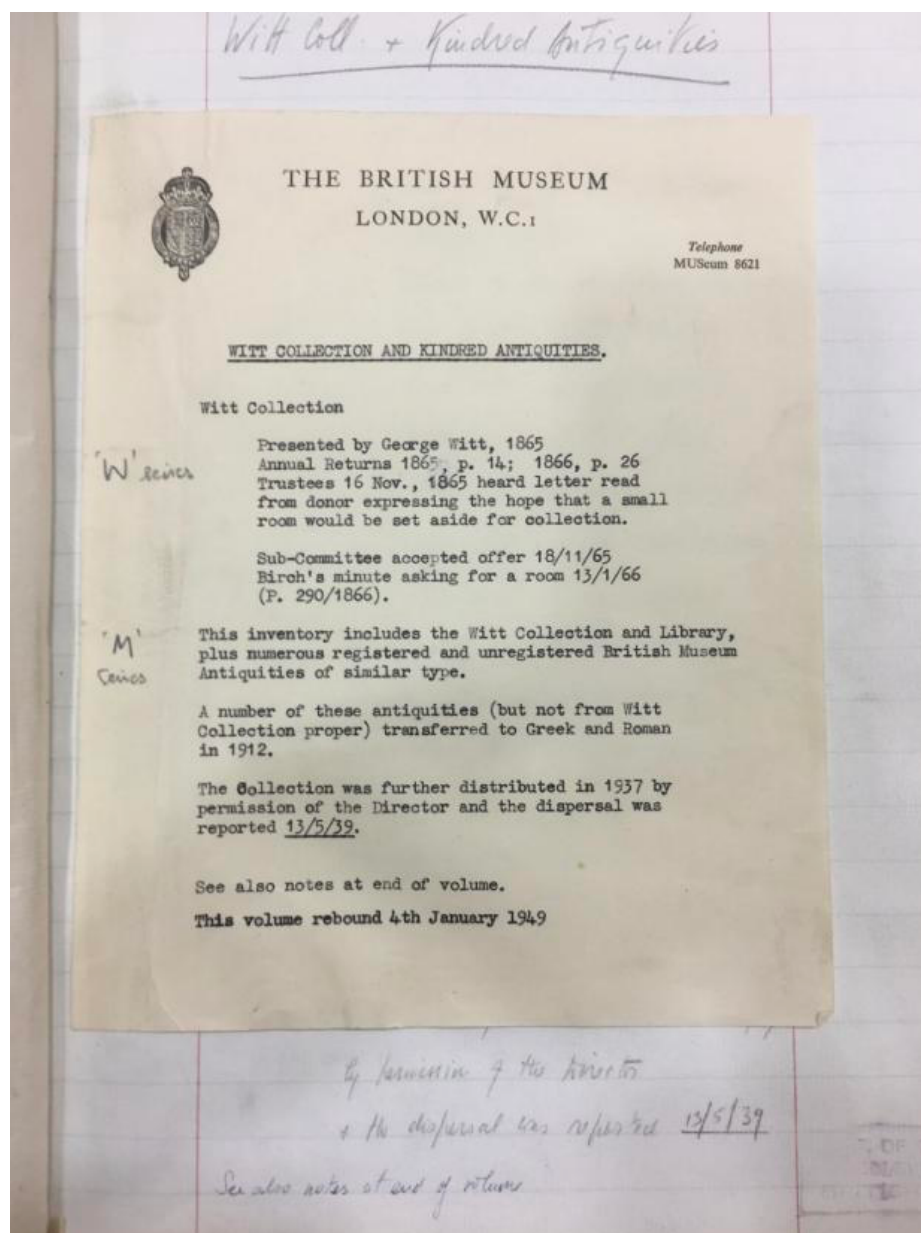


Figure 1. Museum Secretum Register note of disbanding, c. 1949. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 2. Unknown Artist, *Townley Symplegma*, 100-200 CE, found Tivoli, Italy. Marble, 76.20 cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1805-0703-2. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 3. Unknown Artist, 1824,0471.33, Bronze tintinnabulum; previously recorded as M305, unknown production location or date, probably Roman. Bronze figure, 6.5cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-33. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 4. Reconstruction of the Museum Secretum. Photograph in print. The British Museum. c.2013. From: R. B. Parkinson, *A Little Gay History*, 86.



Figure 5. Unknown Artist, M.560, Original Isernian wax votives collected by William Hamilton in 1780 and donated to the British Museum in 1785, c.1700-1780 CE, Italy. Wax, 2.4cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_M-560. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 6. Unknown Artist, WITT.319 and WITT.320 respectively, George Witt's replicas of wax phallic votives from same mold as M.560, c.1700-1860 CE, Naples, Italy. Wax, 6.5cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-320. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 7a. Museum Secretum Register binding, front cover, c.1949 (inner text starting c.1865).
Leather bound book with gold lettering, interior ink and graphite on paper pages, Quarto size book. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

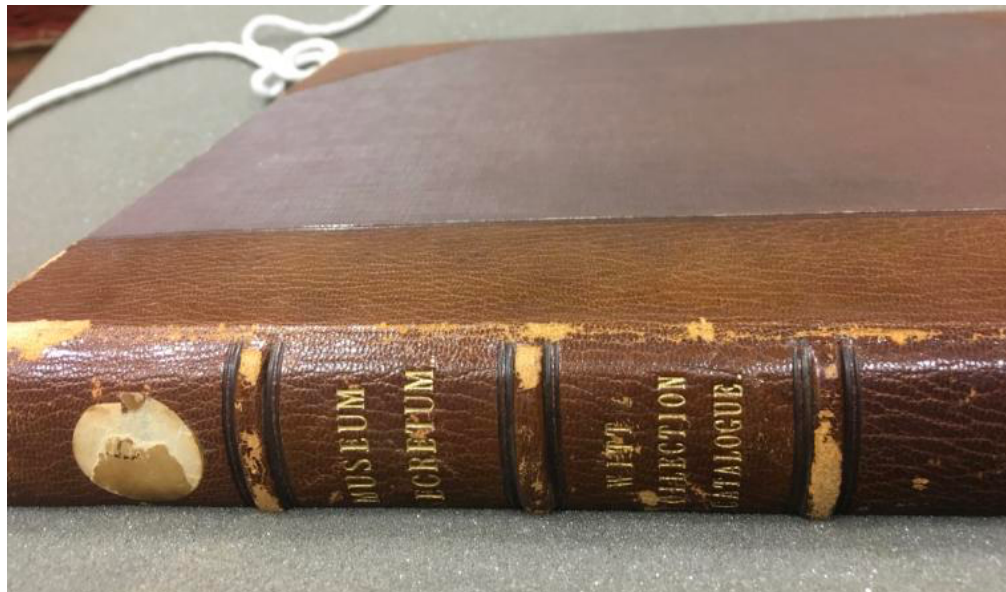


Figure 7b. Museum Secretum Register binding, upper spine, c.1949 (inner text starting c.1865). Leather bound book with gold lettering, interior ink and graphite on paper pages, Quarto size book. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

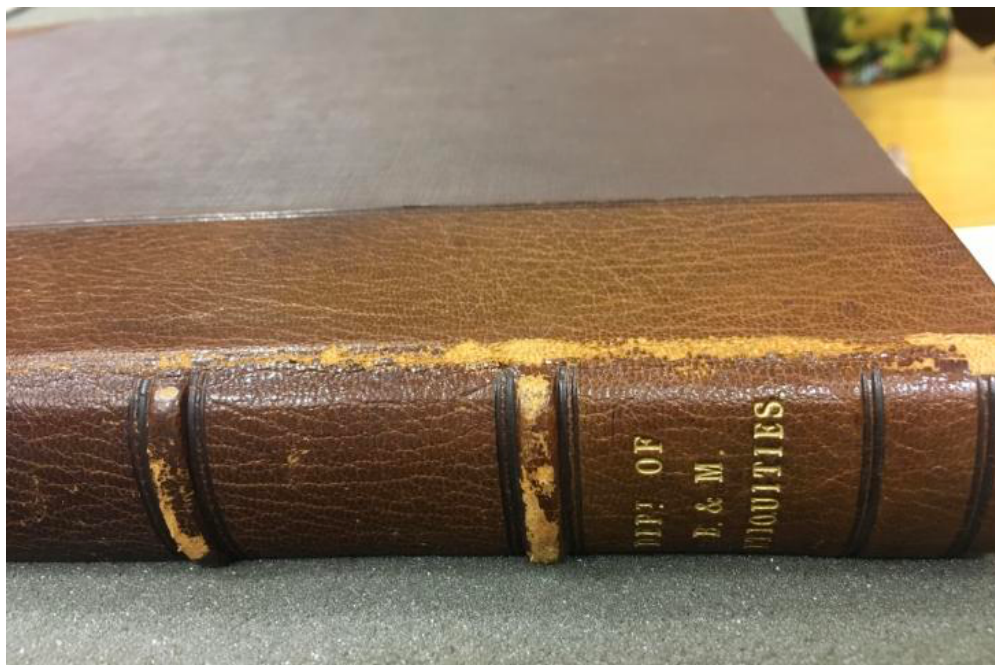


Figure 7c. Museum Secretum Register binding, lower spine, c.1949 (inner text starting c.1865). Leather bound book with gold lettering, interior ink and graphite on paper pages, Quarto size book. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

		M.	Greek I	
1373		120	Black ware, shallow bowl, on bottom relief <i>Castor</i> sun-bathing woman kneeling with head down. H. 2 1/2. 6 3/4.	908. 25. 11-12
1374		121	Terracotta vase in form of a female phallus, mouth above a thin hole for suspension. H. 3 3/4	908. 25. 11-12 From Cosmopolis Rhodes
W.T. 220		122	Painted vase, amphora, black figures, young man pouring libations in altar before <i>Attyphalloi</i> tomb. H. 11.	908. 25. 11-12 From the Temple Collection.
n° 021		123	" <i>Tazza</i> , red figures, seated man on cushions, <i>Attyphalloi</i> , young woman? resting her hands on her breast & her feet on his knees, beneath 1. Two unpaired figures resting on staff 2. man & boy wrestling. Paint still looking on. H. 2 1/2. 2. 9.	908. 25. 11-12
n° 497 n° 39		124	" <i>amphora</i> , black figures, panel in front with 2 figures, reclining behind chair & dog in background. H. 2 1/2.	908. 25. 11-12
		125	" <i>lower part of Attyphalloi</i> red figures, <i>Menon</i> <i>Attyphalloi</i> , <i>Castor</i> on side, altar in front. H. 3.	Hamilton Coll. 908. 25. 11-12
67.2.1044		126	<i>Tazza</i> , red figures, seated, <i>Castor</i> woman with two phal- lus, one side <i>Attyphalloi</i> & her under the other to mouth. <i>Castor</i>	Palace Coll. 908. 25. 11-12
		127	1. <i>Castor</i> (2 <i>Attyphalloi</i>) & 2 <i>Castor</i> . 2. <i>Castor</i> figure with two & four <i>Attyphalloi</i> <i>Castor</i> H. 2 3/4. 2. 11 1/2	908. 25. 11-12 Presented by W. Talbot
		128	Terracotta, figure, naked man with large phallus, head broken off & mended. H. 5.	Ready. Nov. 22. 1889
		129	" <i>Castor</i> <i>Castor</i> H. 3 1/2. Both from Antleron, Boeotia.	Ready. Nov. 22. 1889
		130	Stone <i>Castor</i> figure with <i>Castor</i> stem mended	Ready. Nov. 22. 1889
		131		
		132		
		133		
		134		
		135		
		136		
		137		
		138		
		139		
		140		
		141		

Figure 10. Example of MSR page including lines left blank for future additions to this section. Museum Secretum Register. "Greek" Section M.120-141. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

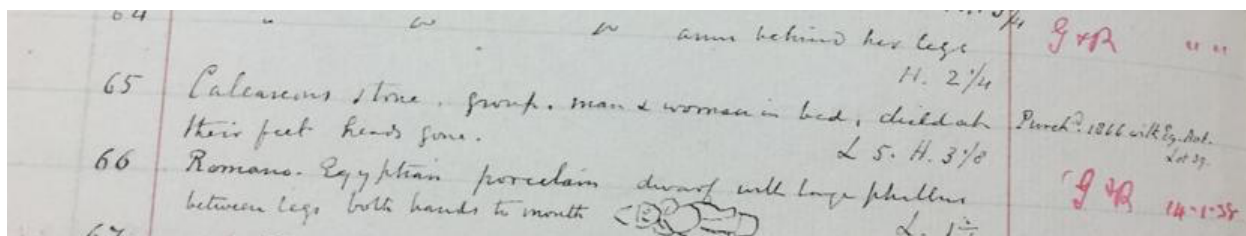


Figure 11. Detail from MSR “Egyptian” Section M.53-74 illustrating the notes of purchase of item M.65 in 1866 in far-right hand of image. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 12a. Postcard photograph of “*Sonaglio con gladiator che combatte con il suo fallo trasformato in pantera*” [Chimes with gladiator fighting with his phallus transforms into a panther] from the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, c. 2018. Photograph on postcard. ©Soprintendenza Archeologica di Napoli e Caserta.



Figure 12b. Photo by Fabrizio Parisio, ARTstor image of animal/gladiator tintinnabulum from the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, c.1982. Digital Photograph. Accessed: May 7, 2021. https://libraryartstor.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000158608.

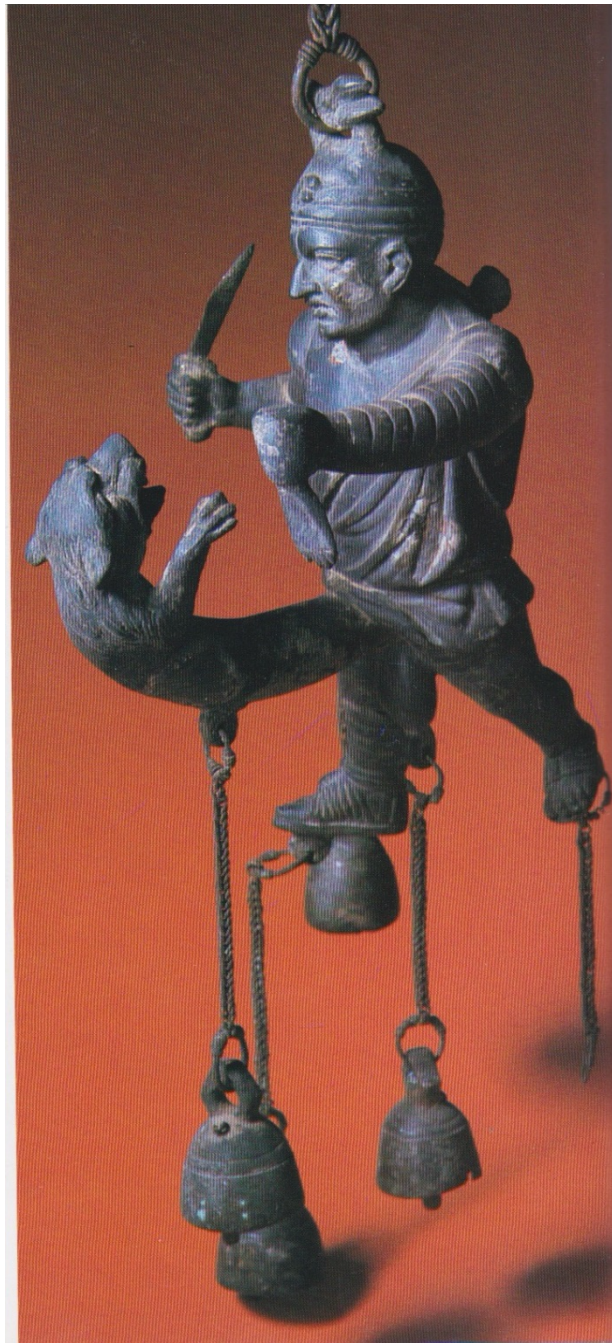


Figure 12c. Photograph of Bronze Animal/Gladiator Tintinnabulum in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. Photograph from publication. From: Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 64.



Figure 12d. Photo by author. Digital photograph of the Animal/Gladiator Tintinnabulum in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples taken on an iPhone 6s. July 2, 2018.

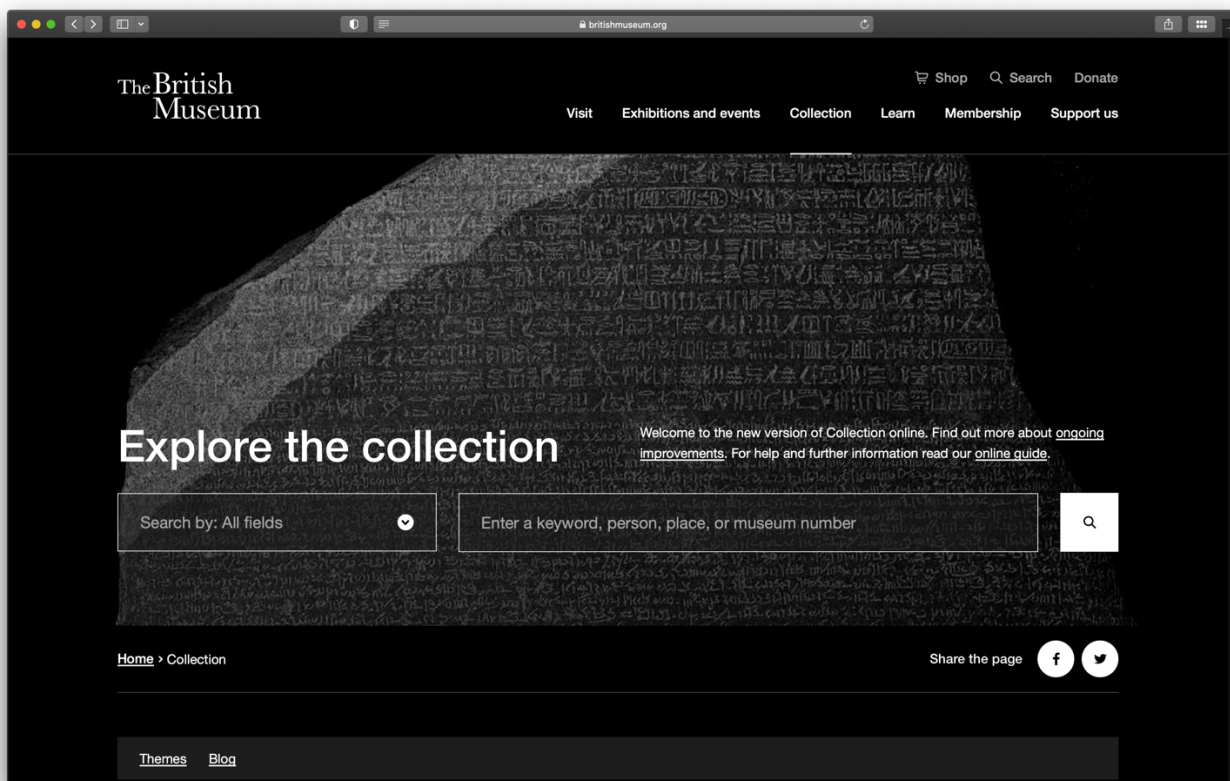


Figure 13. “Explore the Collection” webpage, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection>. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

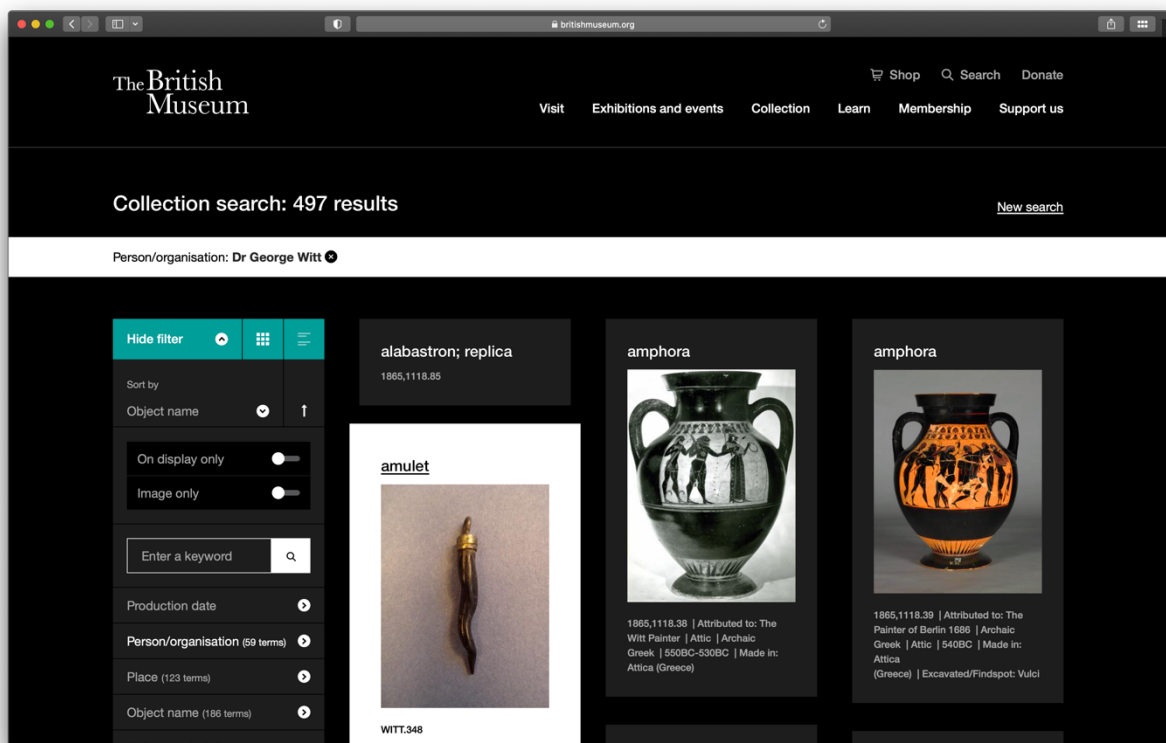


Figure 14. “Dr George Witt” keyword search results webpage, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?agent=Dr%20George%20Witt>. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

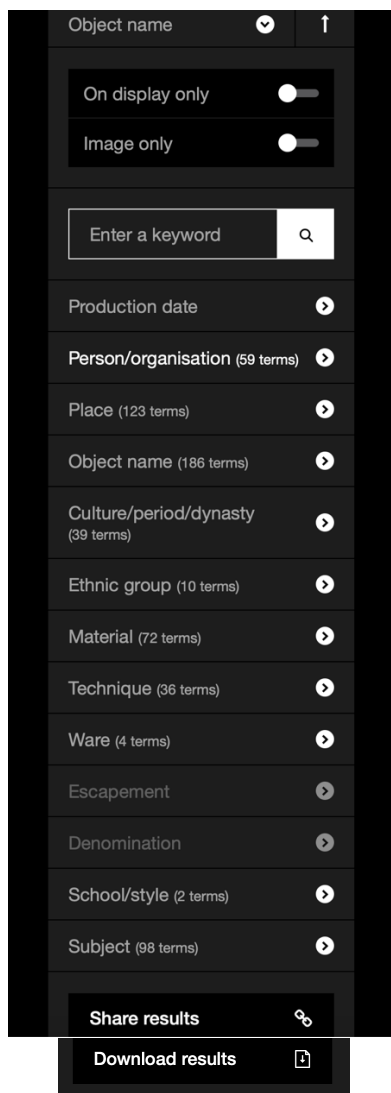


Figure 15. Detail of Filter column on “Dr George Witt” keyword search results webpage, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed. October 11, 2021: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?agent=Dr%20George%20Witt>. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

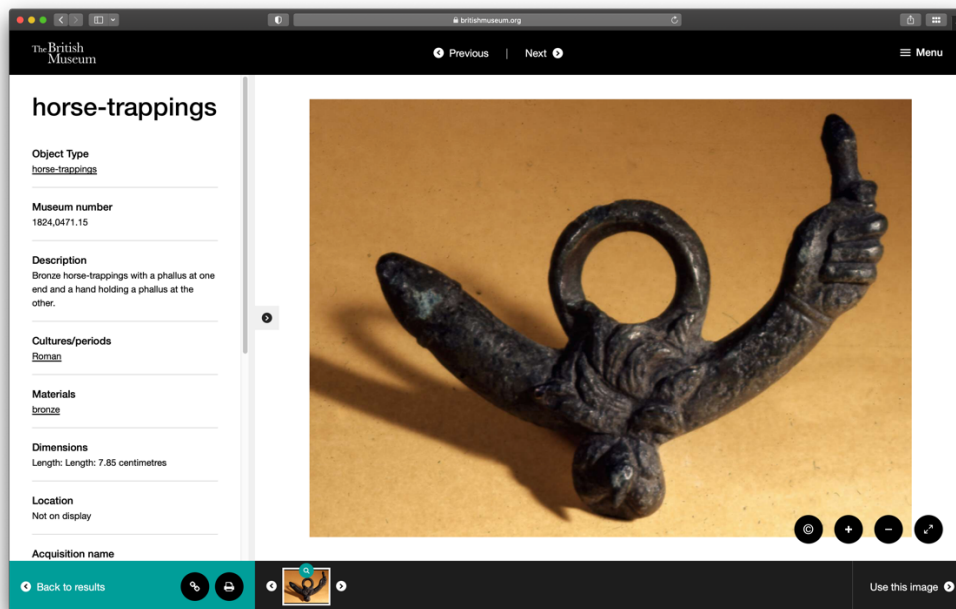


Figure 16a. Online record for 1824,0471.15, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-15. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

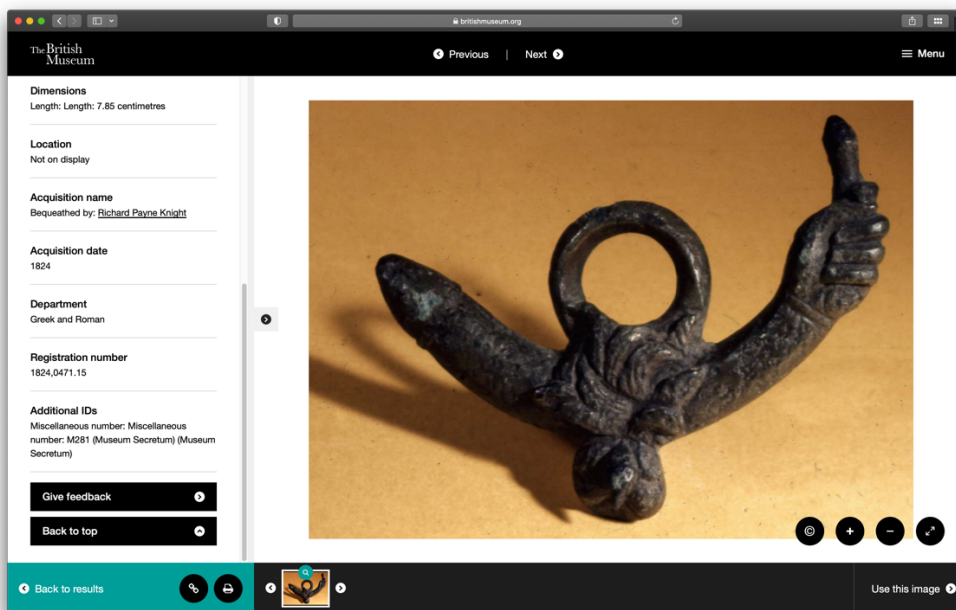


Figure 16b. Online record for 1824,0471.15, includes Museum Secretum number in 'Additional IDs' field, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-15. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

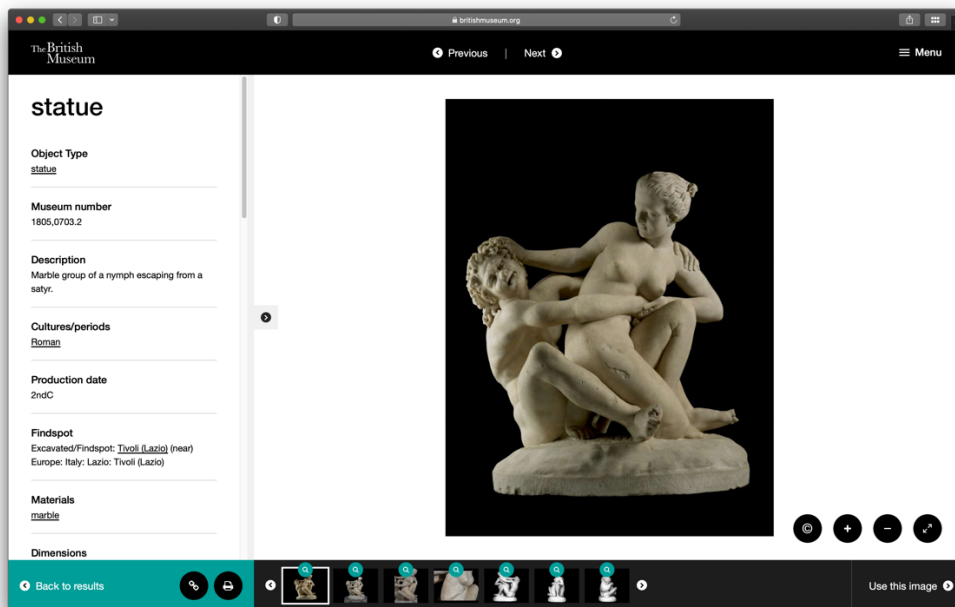


Figure 17a. Online record for *Townley Symplegma* statue, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1805-0703-2. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

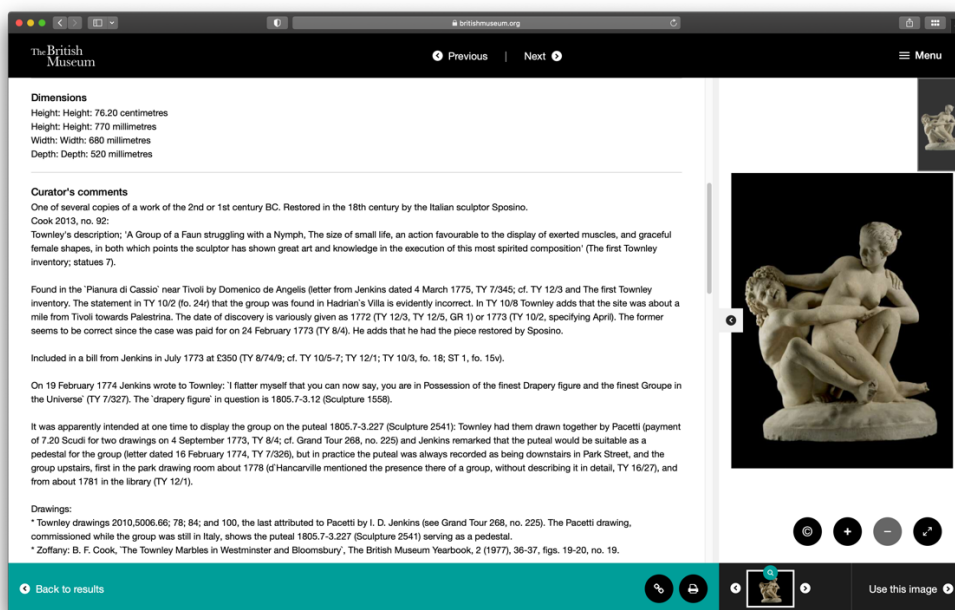


Figure 17b. Online record for *Townley Symplegma* statue, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1805-0703-2. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

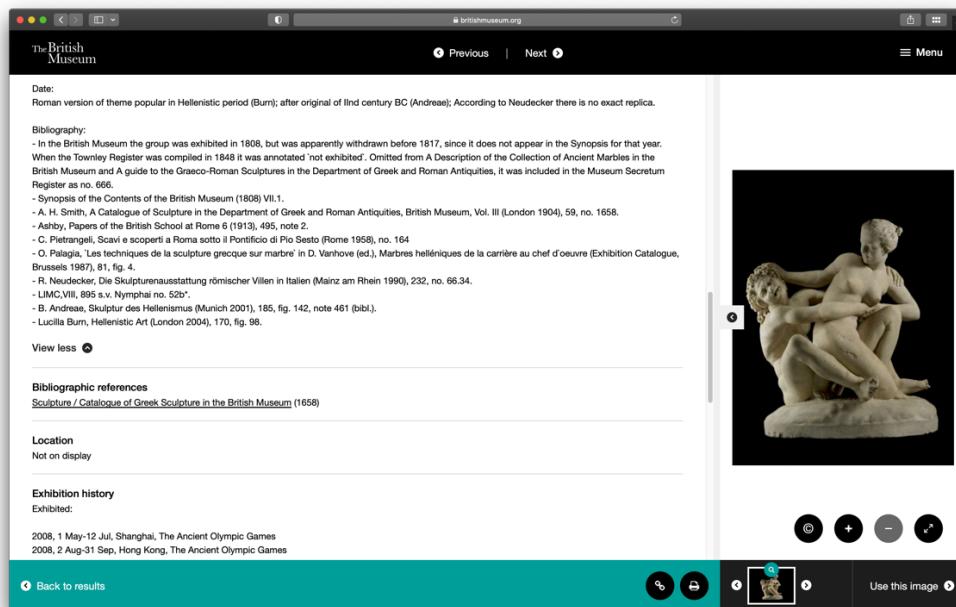


Figure 17c. Online record for *Townley Symplegma* statue, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1805-0703-2. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

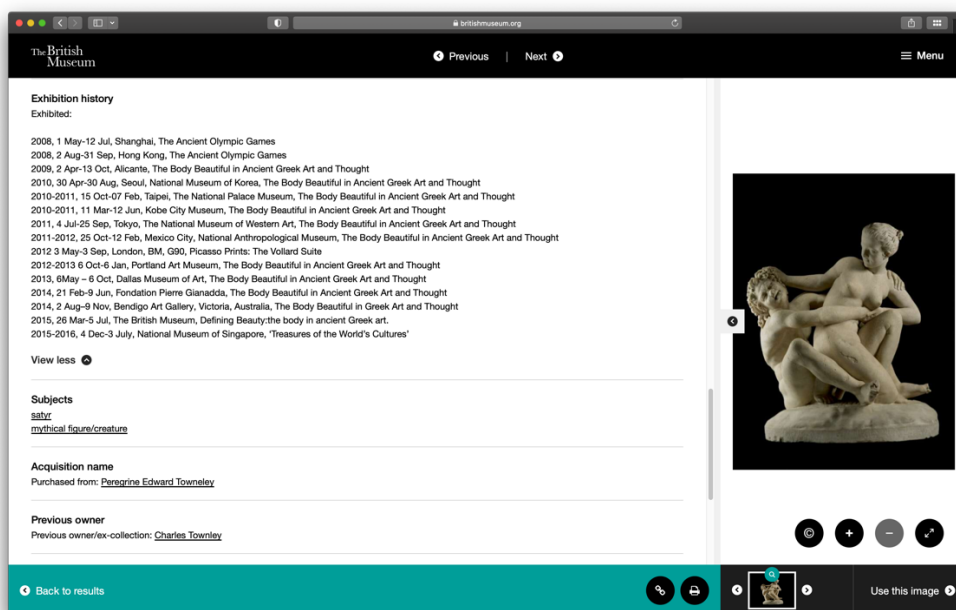


Figure 17d. Online record for *Townley Symplegma* statue, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1805-0703-2. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

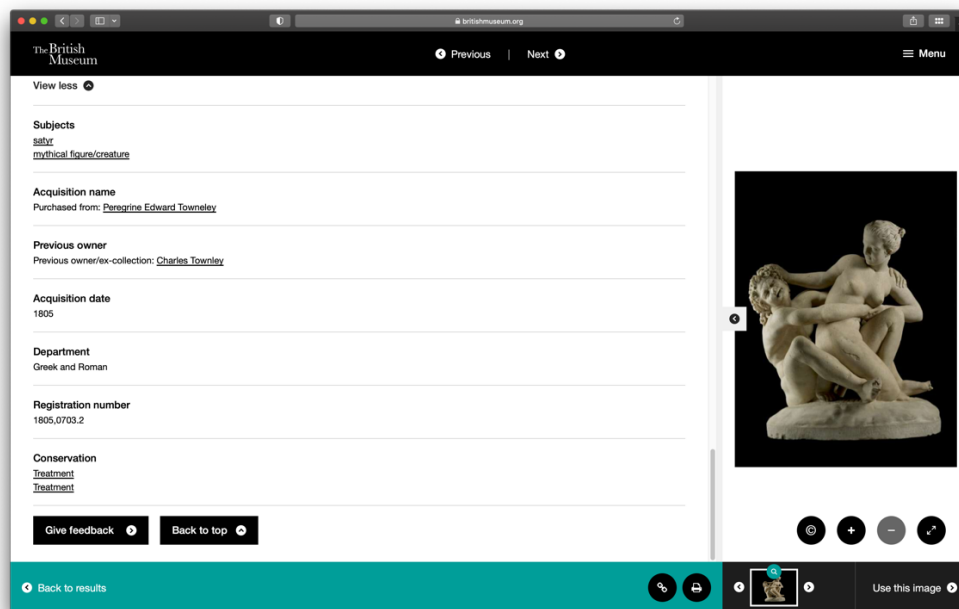


Figure 17e. Online record for *Townley Symplegma* statue, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1805-0703-2. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

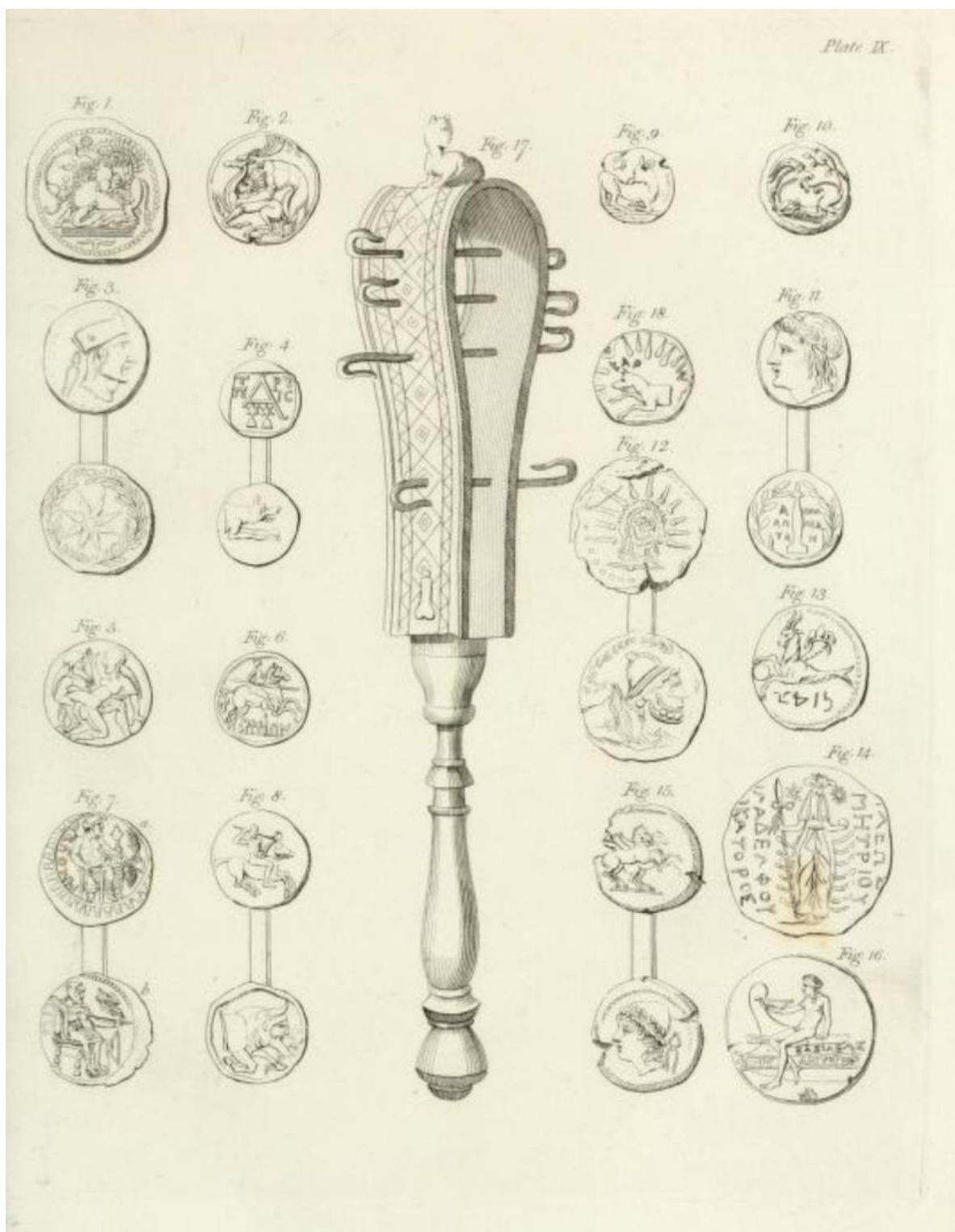


Figure 18a. Plate IX. Engraving. From: Richard Payne Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, 206, c.1786. Wellcome Collection. Accessed: May 7, 2021. <https://archive.org/details/b28752156/page/n205/mode/2up>.

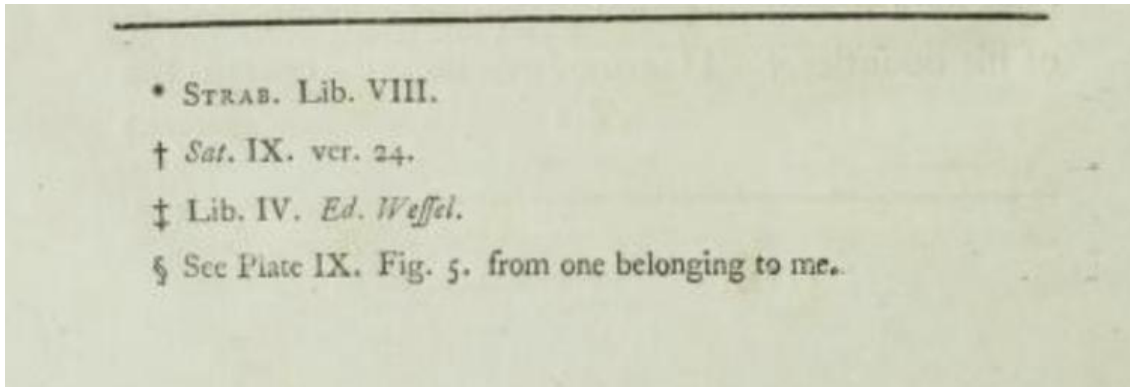


Figure 18b. Detail referencing *Plate IX*, Figure 5 as a *symplegma* coin belonging to Richard Payne Knight. From: Richard Payne Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, 180, c.1786. Wellcome Collection. Accessed: May 7, 2021. <https://archive.org/details/b28752156/page/180/mode/2up>.



Figure 19a. James Gillray, *The Charm of Virtú*, c.1794. Etching and engraving with roulette, hand coloured. Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library. From: Redford, *Dilettanti*, 129.



Figure 19b. James Gillray, Front: *Richard Payne Knight as Priapus*, c.1794. Graphite on Paper, 36cm x 29.7cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2001-0728-58. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 19c. James Gillray, Reverse of 14b: *Richard Payne Knight as a Satyr preparing an offering at an altar*. c.1794. 36cm x 29.7cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2001-0728-58. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 19d. James Gillray, *A Cognocenti contemplating ye Beauties of ye Antique*, Cartoon of William Hamilton, 1801. Hand-coloured etching. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. From: Redford, *Dilettanti*, 132.

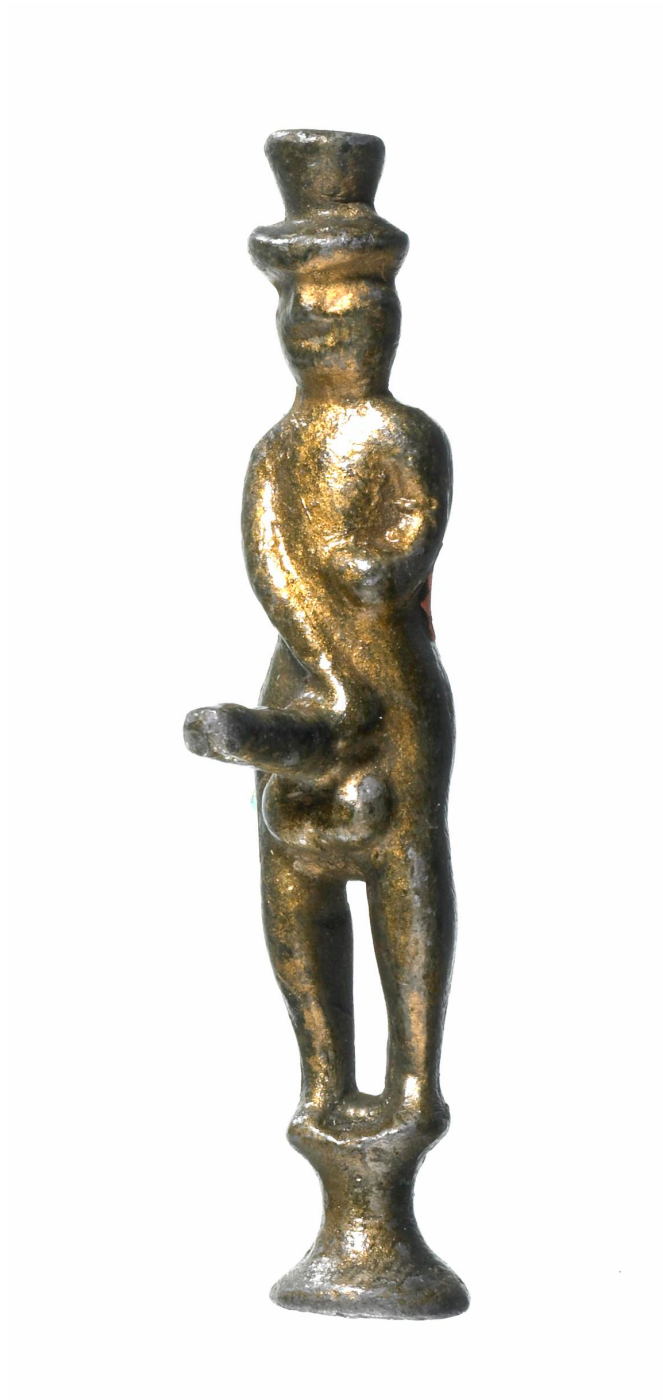


Figure 20a. Unknown Artist, WITT.308, Ithyphallic figure of a man wearing only a top-hat; Example from Witt's collection labelled under 'eroticism/sex' search term, c.1700-1865 CE. Lead cast of tobacco-pipe-stopper, 7.1cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-308. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 20b. Unknown Artist, 1824,0471.4, Bronze ithyphallic figure carrying fruit; phallic bronze object from Richard Payne Knight's collection without 'eroticism/sex' search term, Unknown production location or date, probably Roman. Bronze figure. 7cm without plinth. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-4. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

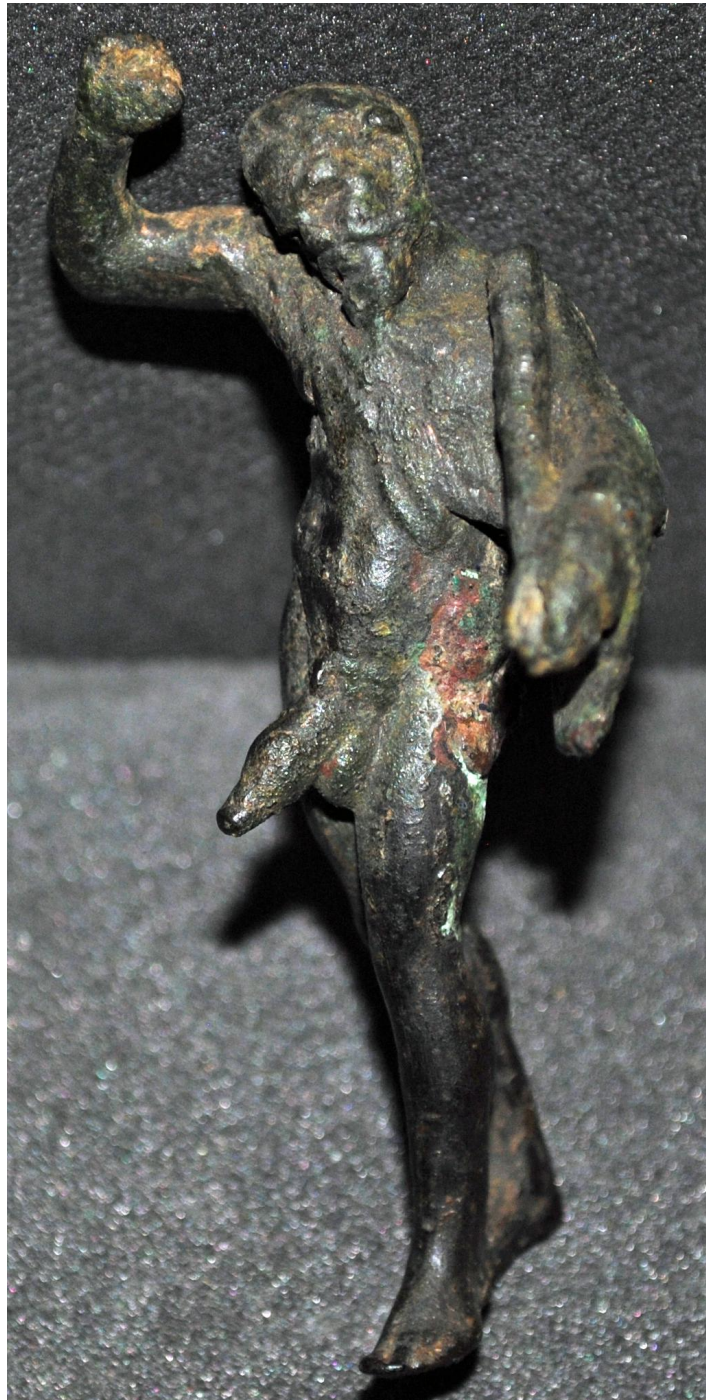


Figure 20c. Unknown Artist, 1814,0704.413, Described in MSR as “Bronze Figure, male, standing upright” and in later years identified as Hercules with a club; object from the collection of Charles Townley without ‘eroticism/sex’ search term. Bronze figure, 7.2cm. Unknown production location or date, probably Roman. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-413. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 21. Unknown Artist, 2010,5006.549, Drawing of item 1814,0704.34 from Charles Townley's collection; lamp depicted is included in the Museum Secretum as M.420, c.1768-1805 CE. Pen and ink, graphite and water on paper, 17.6cm x 16.6 cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_2010-5006-549. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 22. Frans van Mieris I, *The Courtesan*, from Richard Payne Knight's collection labelled under the search term 'eroticism/sex' in the British Museum online collection, c.1650-1681 CE. Black chalk on vellum, 19.5cm x 15cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_Oo-10-227. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 23. Unknown Artist, 1824,0447.1, Hermaphroditic Figure lifting tunic to reveal phallus, c.1-300 C.E., Roman Imperial. Bronze, 9.5cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 2, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0447-1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 24. Unknown Artist, 1814,0704.2872, oval cornelian intaglio depicting a phallic beast, column, snake, bee, and snail; set in eighteenth-century gold finger-ring, c.1-300 CE. Carved cornelian set in gold, 1.3cm x .9cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-2872. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 25a. Cabinet 23, “Roman Music,” Room 69, The British Museum. Still image from *Google Arts & Culture*. Accessed: January 26, 2021. <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-british-museum>.



Figure 25b. Cabinet 3, “Medicine,” Room 69, The British Museum. Still image from *Google Arts & Culture*. Accessed: January 26, 2021. <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-british-museum>.



Figure 25c. Cabinet 12, “Household Gods and Popular Religion,” Room 69, The British Museum. Still image from *Google Arts & Culture*. Accessed: January 26, 2021. <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-british-museum>.



Figure 26. Heraclides, 1814,0704.51, Mould-made pottery lamp depicting Leda and the Swan, previously recorded as M417, c.175-225 CE, Italian. Pottery with orange slip, 10.9cm x 7.7 cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-51. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 27. Stactenis, 1814,0704.47, Mould-made pottery lamp depicting Leda and the Swan, previously recorded as M418, c.101-150 CE, Italian. Pottery with orange slip, 11.1cm x 8cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-47. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 28. Unknown Artist, 1814,0704.2764, black intaglio depicting Leda and the Swan, c.100 BCE – 100 CE. Black glass paste intaglio, 1.85cm x1.15cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-2764. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 29. Unknown Artist, *The Warren Cup*, 15 B.C.E – 15 C.E., found near Jerusalem. 11 cm x 8.4 cm. The British Museum. Accessed Oct 11, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1999-0426-1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 30. Unknown Artist, *Payne Knight Term*, 1824,0471.1, Unknown production location or date, probably Greco-Roman. Bronze, 7cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

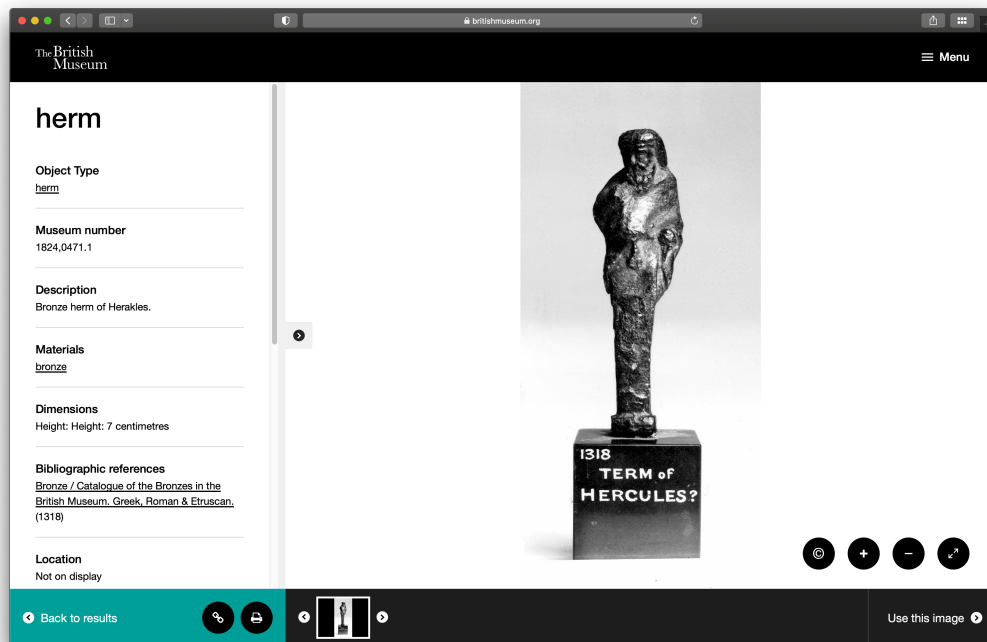


Figure 31a. Online record for *Payne Knight Term*, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

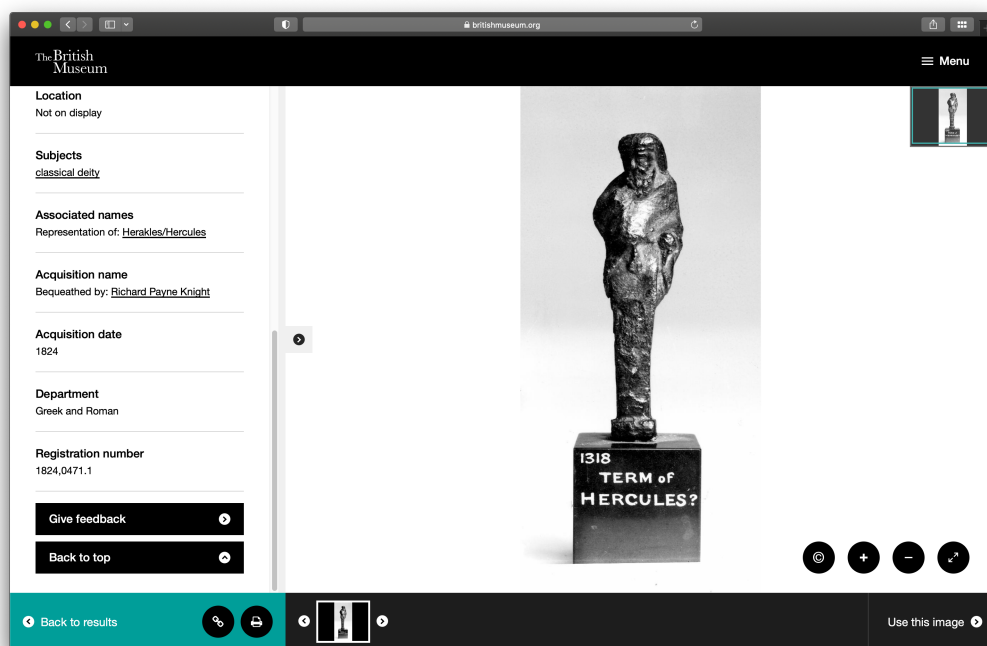


Figure 31b. Online record for *Payne Knight Term*, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 32a. Unknown Artist, 1824,0446.7, Herakles wearing a fillet; lion-skin over right arm, Unknown production location or date, probably Greco-Roman. Bronze, 5.5cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0446-7. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 32b. Unknown Artist, 1824,0446.9, Figure of Herakles holding club in left hand and holding genitals in right, Unknown production location or date, probably Greco-Roman. Bronze, 5.5cm. The British Museum. British Museum Collections. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0446-9. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

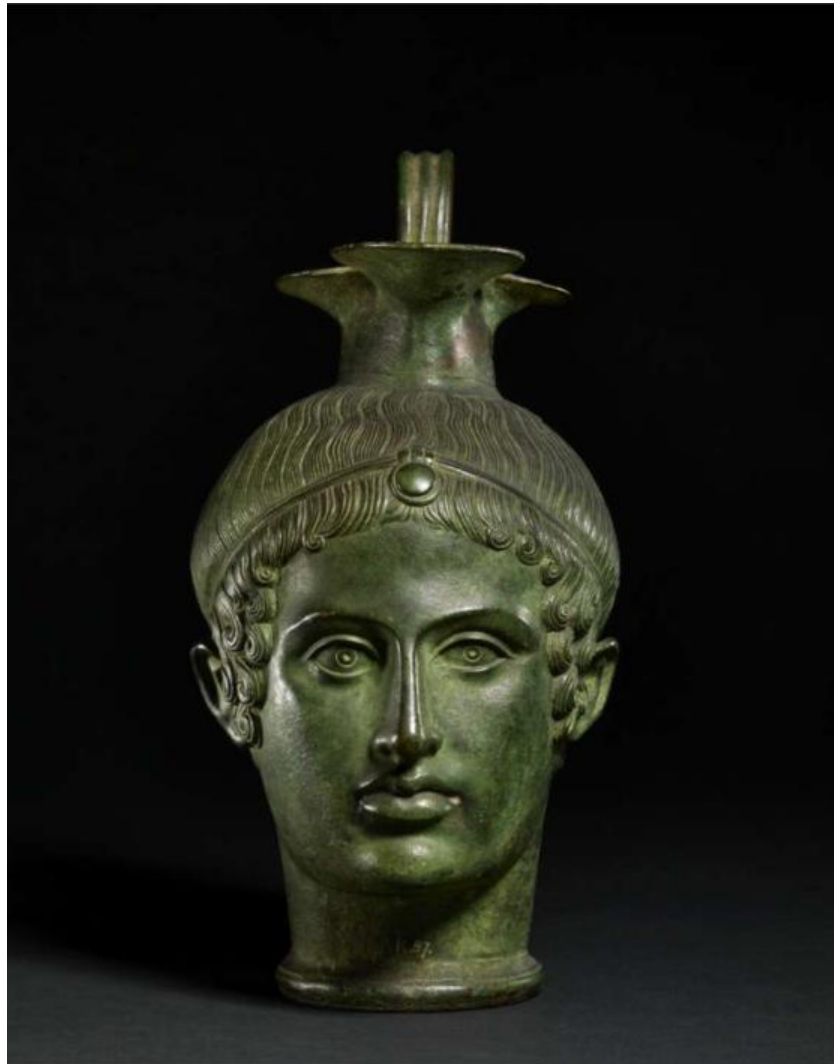


Figure 33a. Unknown Artist, 1824,0489.87 Reproduction of the Etruscan head-vase from Gabii in the Louvre (Louvre Br 2955), c.1700-1800 CE. Bronze, 25.4cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0489-87. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 33b. Unknown Artist, RPK,p86A.14.Lys, Forgery of a Thracian gold coin, unknown production location or date, before 1824. Gold, 8.301g. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_RPK-p86A-14-Lys. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 33c. Benedetto Pistrucci, *Flora of Pistrucci*, c.1800-1824 CE, Italy. Cornelian cameo, 2.3cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1824-0301-86. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 34. Designed by Phidias, Parthenon South Frieze, Block XLI, 438-432 BCE, Athens, Greece. Marble frieze, height 1m. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1816-0610-87. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 35. Unknown Artist, Priapus weighing his Phallus, Pompeii, House of the Vettii, VI.15.1, *fauces b*, c.62-79 CE. Fresco. From: Alfredo and Pio Foglia, Naples, from Ernesto De Carolis *Gods and Heroes in Pompeii*, 43.



Figure 36. Unknown Artist, *Lupanar Priapus*, double phallic Priapus, upper frieze in the north wall of the brothel, Pompeii, Naples, VII.12.18., c. 1-79 CE. Fresco. From: Photograph by Antonia Mulas in Michael Grant and, *Eros in Pompeii*, 33.



Figure 37. Unknown Artist, 1814,0704.820, Terracotta figure of Priapus; phallus now lost, 100-300 CE, Terracotta, 19.5cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-820. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 38a. Tyszkiewics Painter, Detail of the Palladion represented as a miniature statue while being stolen by Diomedes, c.500-450 BCE, Attic red-figure vase. From: Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 94.



Figure 38b. Altamura Painter, Detail of Cassandra begging at the knees of an Athena cult statue, here represented as full life-size, c.465 BCE, Attic red-figure calyx krater. From: Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 95.



Figure 39. Unknown Artist, Herm of Hercules with Lionskin, Date Unknown, Italy. Marble. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. Accessed: May 15, 2021, University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, <https://digital.library.unt.edu>.



Figure 40. Unknown Artist, Corinthian votive tablet depicting slaves in silver mine, 800-801 BCE, Black figure pottery. Altes Museum, Berlin. Photo: *Google Arts & Culture*, accessed May 7th, 2021. <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/corinthian-votive-tablets-pinax/tAF7puf0A-jZWQ>. © Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz / Johannes Laurentius.



Figure 41. William Chambers, *Sculpture collection of Charles Townley*, 1794. Pen, grey ink, and watercolour on paper, 39cm x 54cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1995-0506-8. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 42. Johann Zoffany, *Charles Towneley in his Sculpture Gallery*, 1782. Oil on canvas, 127cm x 102 cm. Art Gallery and Museum, Burnley.

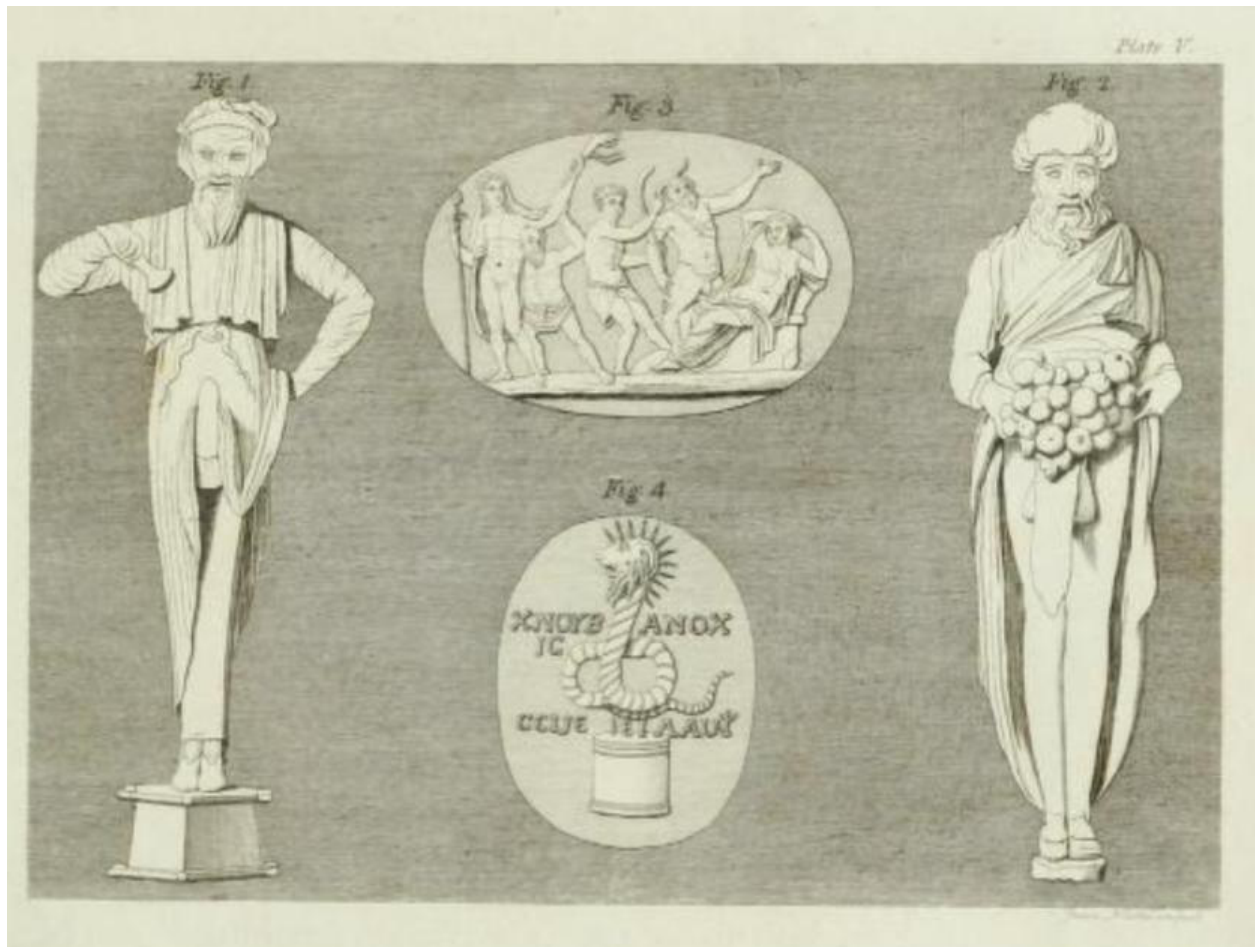


Figure 43. *Plate V.* Engraving. From: Richard Payne Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, 19, c.1786. Wellcome Collection. Accessed: May 7, 2021. <https://archive.org/details/b28752156/page/18/mode/2up>.



Figure 44. The Witt Painter, The Apotheosis of Herakles, c.550-530 BCE, Attica, Greece. Black figure vase. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-38. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 45. Unknown Artist, Leda and the Swan fresco in the Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, c.50-79 CE, Italy. Fresco. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. From: Michael Grant and Antonia Mulas, *Eros in Pompeii*, 146.



Figure 46a. Unknown Artist, 1824,0431.3, figure of a dwarf entertainer dancing and playing castanets, Unknown production location or date, probably Greco-Roman. Bronze, 7.62cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0431-3. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 46b. Unknown Artist, 1824,0431.2, figure of a dwarf wearing a conical hat, c.100-1 BCE, 6.35cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0431-2. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 47a. Mosaic Pavement of baby Hercules fighting snakes, c.100-200 CE, from 'House of the Evil Eye' in Jekmejehe near Antioch, now Hatay Archaeology Museum, Antakya. Photo: Christian Laes, *Disability in Antiquity*, 237.



Figure 47b. Mosaic Pavement depicting ithyphallic dwarf and the evil eye, c.100-200 CE., from 'House of the Evil Eye' in Jekmejeh near Antioch, now Hatay Archaeology Museum, Antakya. Photo: Christian Laes, *Disability in Antiquity*, 236.

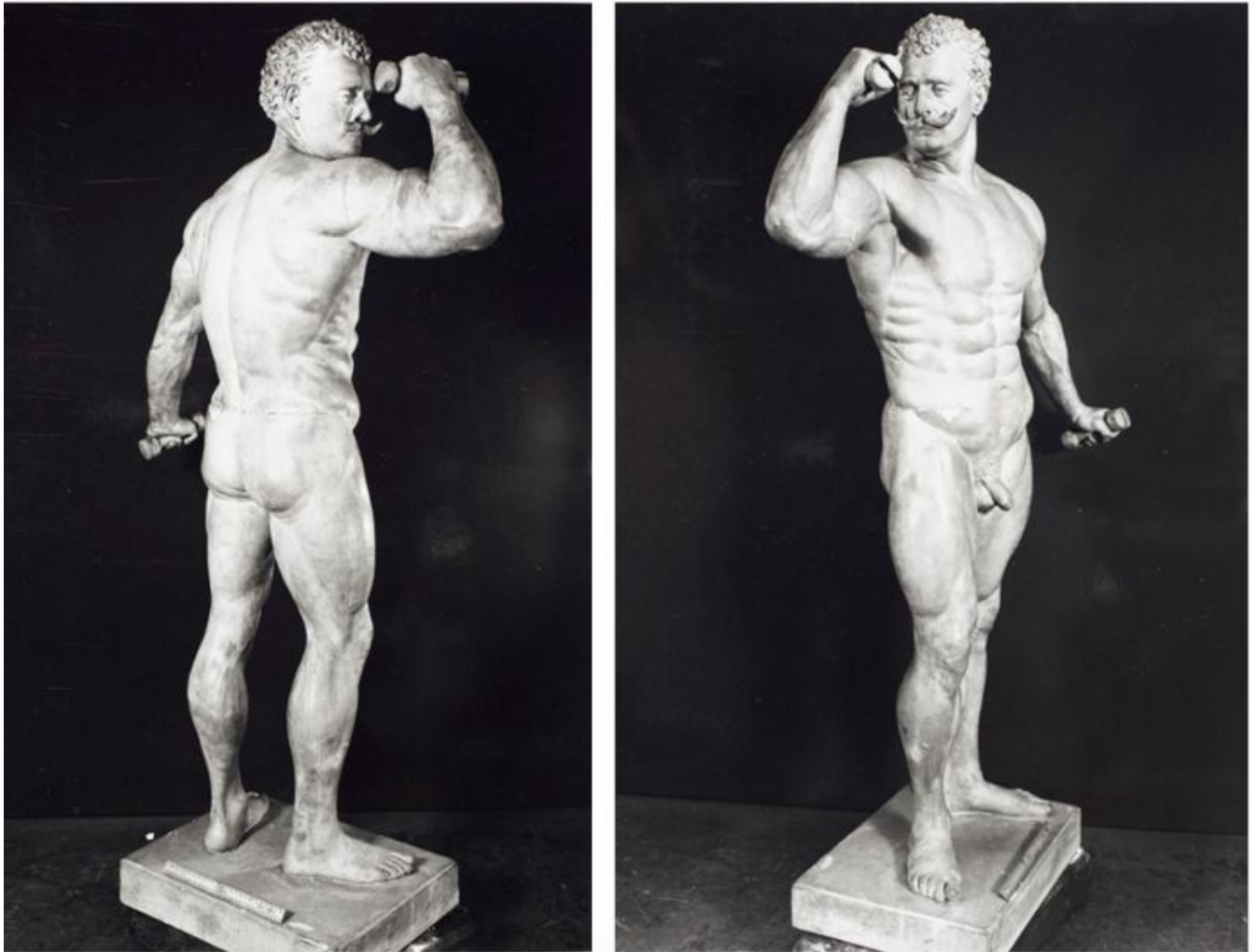


Figure 48. Messrs Brucciani & Co, *Perfect Type of European Man*, 1901. Plaster casts from the body of Eugen Sandow. The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London.



Figure 49. Napoleon Sarony, *Eugene Sandow with Leopard Skin (posing as Farnese Hercules)*, 1893. Albumen print. Accessed May 15, 2021. <https://jstor.org/stable/10.2307/community.13755478>.



Figure 50a. Unknown Artist, RPK,p94A.5.Arg, didrachm, “Type A” symplegma image, c.500-480 BCE, Lete (archaic), Greek. Silver coin, 9.59g. The British Museum Collections. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_RPK-p94A-5-Arg. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 50b. Unknown Artist, RPK,p95A.6.Arg, tetradrachm, “Type B” symplegma image, c.500-480 BCE, Thasos, Greece. Silver coin, 8.9g. The British Museum Collections. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_RPK-p95A-6-Arg. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 51. Abaskantos, Terracotta lamp depicting Ganymede and Jupiter as an Eagle, c.151-250 CE, Roman. Mould-made pottery, 10.7cm x 8.5 cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-139. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 52. Unknown Artist, 1814,0704.1019, though now described as a bronze knife handle depicting two wrestlers, in the Museum Secretum Register this item is in the context of male-male intercourse; previously recorded as M379, c.1-300 CE, Roman. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-1019. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 53a. Unknown Artist, 1824,0466.3, bronze relief of Pan playing Pan-pipes, c.450-400 BCE, Etruscan. Bronze relief, 8.89cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0466-3. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 53b. Unknown Artist, 1824,0453.11, depiction of an Etruscan couple performing a gesture of marriage and/or lovemaking; perhaps Tinia (Zeus) and Uni (Hera), c.500-475 BCE, Etruscan. Bronze, 11.1cm x 6.5cm x 4.5cm. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0453-11 ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 54. Unknown Artist, Satyr and maenad embracing from Cabinet of Secrets in Naples, c.50-79 CE, Italy. Fresco. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. Photo: Accessed: May 15th, 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Satiro_che_abbraccia_una_menade,_da_pompei,c_asa_di_l._cecilio_giocondo,_1-50_dc_ca,_110590.JPG.



Figure 55. Detail of “Car of Venus” from Witt Scrapbook ‘Modern.’, Before 1866. Pencil drawing on paper. The British Museum. From: Bayley, *Sex*, 127.



Figure 56. Cartoon depicting “Ages of Man” from Witt Scrapbook ‘Modern.’, Before 1866. Pencil drawing on paper. The British Museum. From: Bayley, *Sex*, 136.



Figure 57. Unknown Artist, 1805,0703.481, Linga on a spouted plinth, 1700-1800 CE, Karnataka, India. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1805-0703-481. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 58. Unknown Artist, 1805,0703.264, Architectural Fragment from part of a temple frieze depicting sexual scenes, c.1000-1100 CE, India. The British Museum. Accessed May 7, 2021: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1805-0703-264. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

Witt Collection - Medieval, Cinquecento, & modern.




W.	Number	Description	Measurements	Notes
	316	Sealing wax, modern impression of seal of Gregory Benoni		
	317	" "		
	318	" "		
	319	wax, other phallic	same wax L. 500 L. 2 3/4	From Benoni
	320	" "	stippled on L. 500 L. 2 3/4	"
	321	" "	hand with  L. 4 1/4	
	322	" "	"  L. 5	
	323	" "	hand of female with long hair L. 5 1/2	
	324	" "	child female a seated L. 3 1/2	
	325	" "	figure of man in blouse holding cross in his hand feet visible L. 6	
	326	" "	man in dense hair in fingers or hand visible L. 5 1/2	
	327	" "	man, right and thumb L. 6 1/4	
	328	" "	" " hand more open L. 5 3/8	
	329	" "	" " similar L. 5	
	330	" "	" " brown, hand opened left L. 1 1/2	
	331	" "	" " " " " " L. 1 3/4	
	332	" "	" " " " " " L. 1 1/4	
	333	" "	" " " " " " L. 3 1/4	
	334	" "	leg left L. 6 3/8	
	335	" "	" " " " " " L. 5 1/4	
	336	" "	" " " " " " L. 5 1/4	
	337	Lava stone, amulet, right hand first finger extended  L. 1 1/2.		

Figure 60a. Museum Secretum Register, Witt Collection “Medieval, Cinquecento, & modern.” section 316-337. The British Museum. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

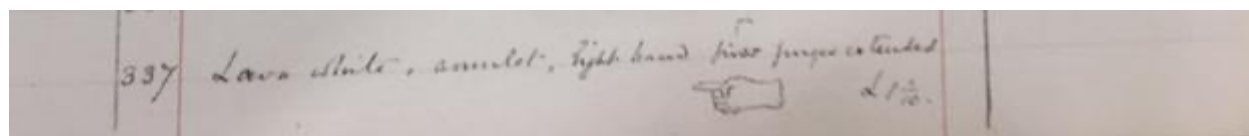


Figure 60b. Detail of W.337 with “hand” sketch.



Figure 61a. 1868,0105.76, Hypocaust-tile, c.1-500 CE, Romano-British. Fired clay, 24cm x 24.5cm x 4.1 cm. The British Museum. Accessed: Jan 20, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1868-0105-76 ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 61b. 1868,0105.46, Bronze athlete's toilet set, c.1-300 CE, Roman. Bronze. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 20, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1868-0105-46. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 62. 1868,0105.27, Strigil depicting ‘animals copulating’, Unknown production location or date, probably Roman. Bronze, 26cm long. The British Museum. Accessed: Jan 20, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1868-0105-27. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 63. Unknown Artist, W.402, Boundary-stone with a carved relief of a woman in sexual union with an ass/bull; at the top, the sun and moon, 1299-1300 CE, Salsette Island. Sandstone, 151 cm x 45 cm. The British Museum. Accessed: Jan 20, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_W-402. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 64. The Group of Vatican G57, 1865,1118.43, Black-figured kyathos depicting satyr assaulting/copulating with a fawn, c.500 BCE, Attic, Greek. Pottery, 15.24cm x 11.43 cm. The British Museum. Accessed: Jan 20, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-43. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

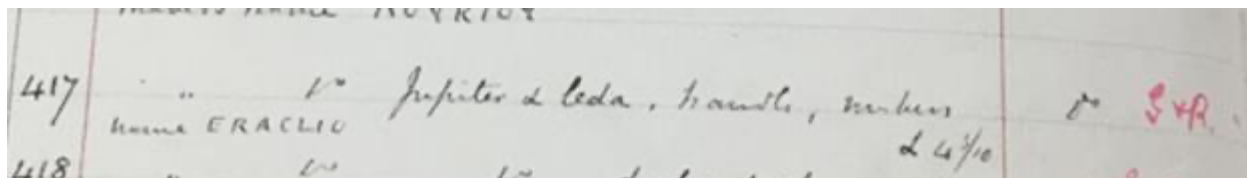


Figure 65a. Detail from Museum Secretum Register Describing M.417, “[Terracotta Lamp,] Jupiter & Leda (...)” Museum Secretum Register, “Roman continued” section, “Terracotta” subsection, 403-423. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

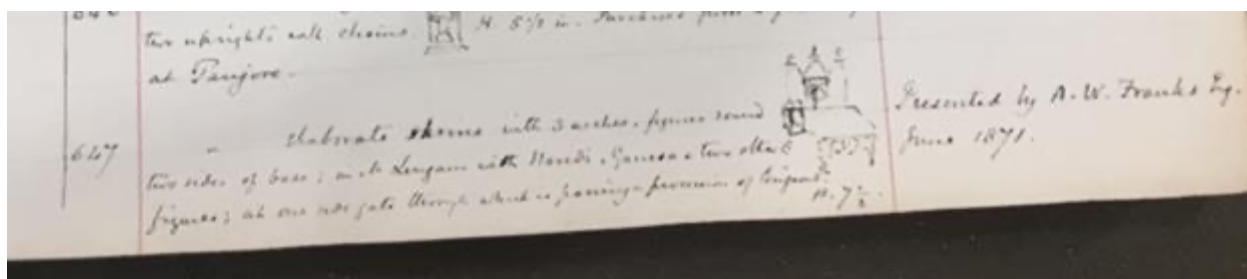


Figure 65b: Detail from Museum Secretum Register Describing M.647, “[Brass] elaborate shrine (...) with Lingam with Nandi, Ganesh & two other figures” Museum Secretum Register, “Oriental” section, 630-647. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 66. Close up of Witt objects in Cabinet 3, “Medicine,” Room 69, The British Museum. See Figure 20b for whole cabinet. Image by author. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 67a. Unknown Artist, 1865,1118.104, anatomical votive, male genitals; previously recorded as W.104. c.400 BCE- 200 CE, Roman/Hellenistic. Terracotta, 12.95 cm. The British Museum. Accessed: Jan 20, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-104. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



102	"	votive head ...	£ 5 ¼		
	Print				
		<u>Roman</u>			
103	Terracotta votive phallus		£ 5 ½	1	G+R
104	"	wrinkled	£ 5 10	2	G+R
105	"	"	£ 5 ½	3	G+R

Figure 67b. Detail from Museum Secretum Register Describing W.104, “Terracotta votive phallus wrinkled” Museum Secretum Register, Witt Collection “Greek and Roman” section, 101-121. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

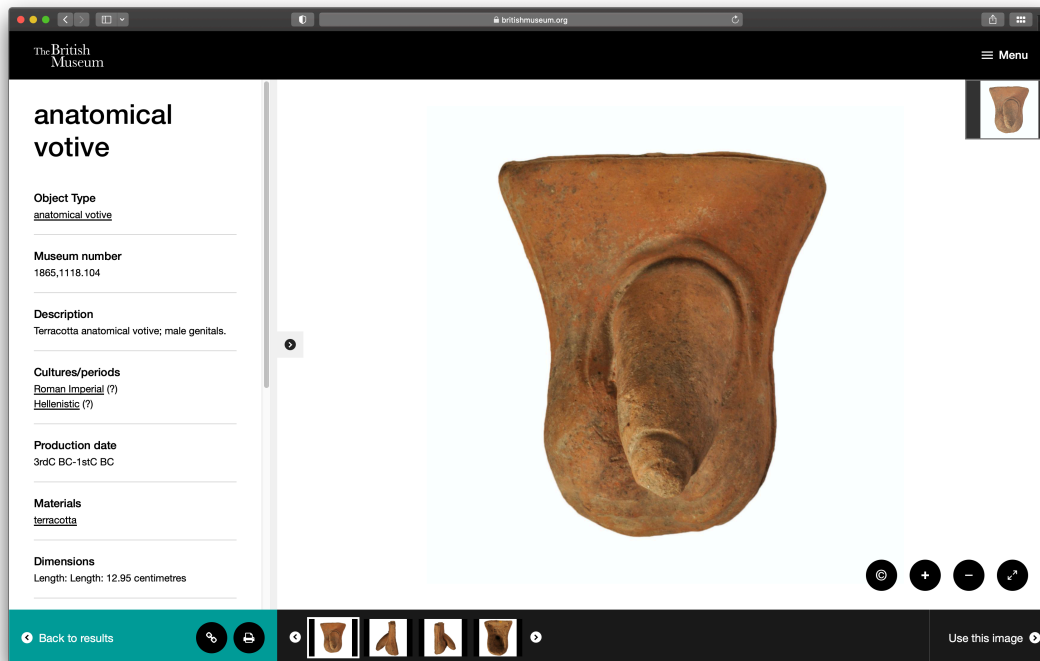


Figure 68a. Online record for W.104, or 1865,1118.104, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-104. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

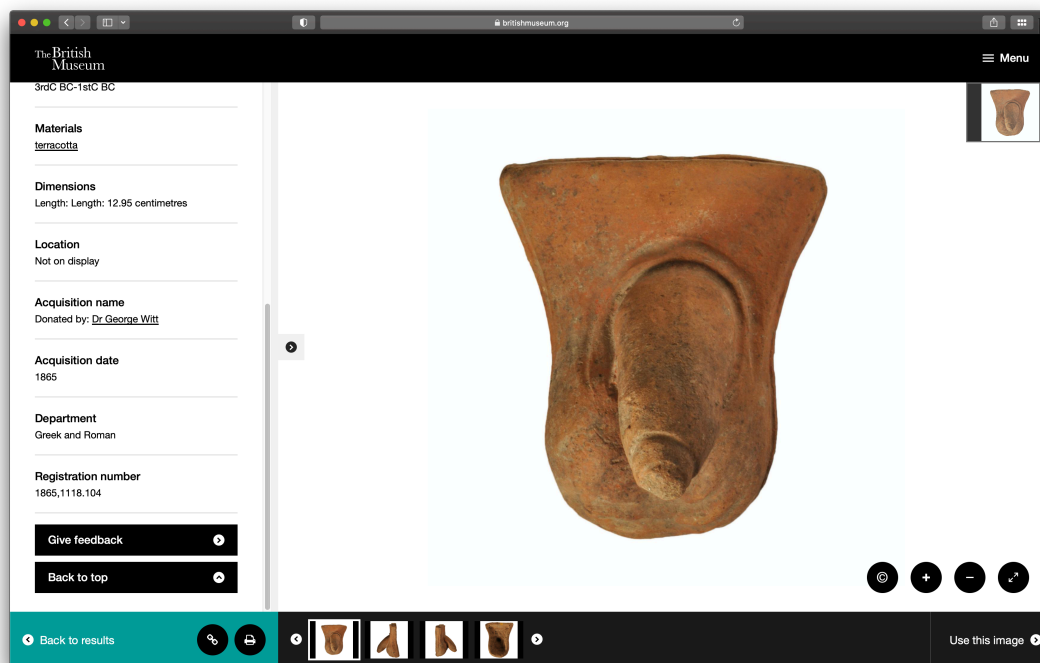


Figure 68b. Online record for W.104, or 1865,1118.104, The British Museum Collection online search. Digital Screenshot. Accessed: October 11, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-104. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 69. Unknown Artist, 1865,1118.103, anatomical votive; male genitals; portraying phimosis. Previously recorded as W.103, c.400 BCE- 200 CE, Roman/Hellenistic. Terracotta, 12.95 cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-103. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 70. Unknown Artist, 1865,1118.106, anatomical votive, male genitalia, solid; previously recorded as W.106, c.400 BCE- 200 CE, Roman/Hellenistic. Terracotta, 13.30 cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-106. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 71. Unknown Artist, WITT.287, amulet, in a shape of phallus with prominent vein, made of bronze, Unknown production location or date, probably Roman. Bronze, 8.3cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-287. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 72. Unknown Artist, 1824,0471.13, amulet in form of human arm, terminating at one end in phallus; previously recorded as M253, Unknown production location or date, probably Roman. Bronze. British Museum Collections. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1824-0471-13. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 73. Unknown Artist, 1814,0704.1233, horse-trappings in the form of a double-ended phallus; previously recorded as M241, Unknown production location or date, probably Roman. Bronze, 3.50 cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1814-0704-1233. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 74. Unknown Artist, WITT.138, votive left leg, Unknown production location or date, probably Greco-Roman. Bronze, 7cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-138. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 75. Unknown Artist, 1865,1118.129, anatomical votive of an eye, dedicated at the shrine of a healing god; previously recorded as W.129. c.400-1 BCE, Roman. Terracotta, 3.50 cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-129. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 76. Unknown Artist, 1865,1118.125, anatomical votive of a breast; previously recorded as W.125. c.400-1 BCE, Roman. Terracotta, 7.1 x 6.35 cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-125. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 77. Unknown Artist, WITT.121, Plaster cast of original terracotta votive Female ‘pudendum muliebre’, Unknown original production date, cast before 1864, original probably Roman, cast Paris, France. Plaster, 6.4cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-121. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 78. Unknown Artist, WITT.122, Plaster cast of bronze votive tablet with ‘pudendum muliebre’, Unknown original production date, cast before 1864., original probably Roman, cast Dijon, France. Plaster, 5.8cm x 5cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-122. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 79. Unknown Artist, WITT.123, Plaster cast of original stone votive Female Torso, Unknown original production date, cast before 1864, original probably Roman, cast Dijon, France. Plaster, 14.2cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-123 ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 80. Unknown Artist, 1865,1118.119, anatomical votive of a womb (?); previously recorded as W.119, c.400-200 BCE, Roman. Terracotta, 17.78cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-123 ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 81. Unknown Artist, 1865,1118.120, anatomical votive cast of a womb (?); previously recorded as W.120, cast before 1864, original: c.400-1 BCE, Roman or Hellenistic. Plaster, 13.97cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1118-120. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 82. Unknown Artist, H919, Bas relief or votive tablet relief fragment of a male figure with traces of white and red paint, c.400-1 BCE, Egypt, Roman. Marble with paint, 23.5cm x 8.5cm x 11cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/X_1540. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

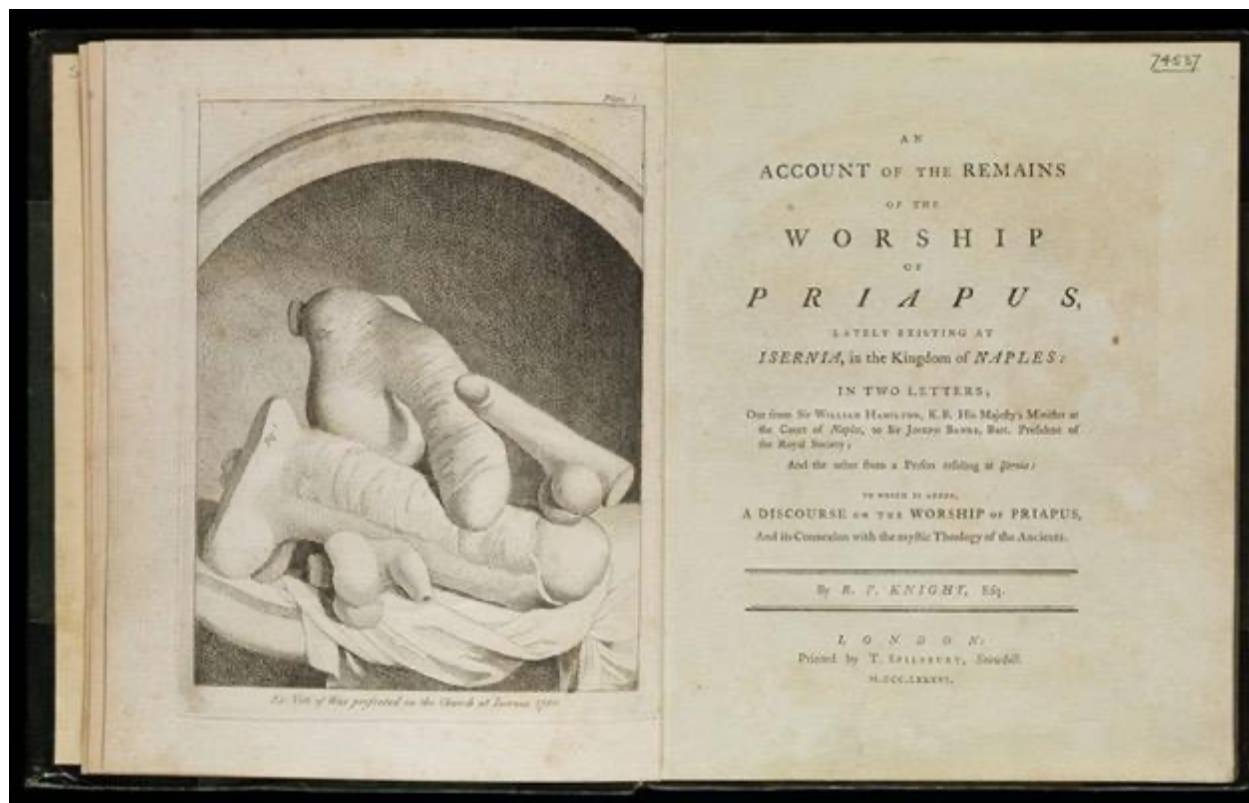


Figure 83. Frontispiece and Title Page. From: Richard Payne Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, c.1786. Wellcome Collection. Accessed: May 7, 2021. <https://archive.org/details/b28752156/page/n205/mode/2up>.



Figure 84. Current condition of the Witt Scrapbooks. Leather bound books and mixed media, multiple sizes. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

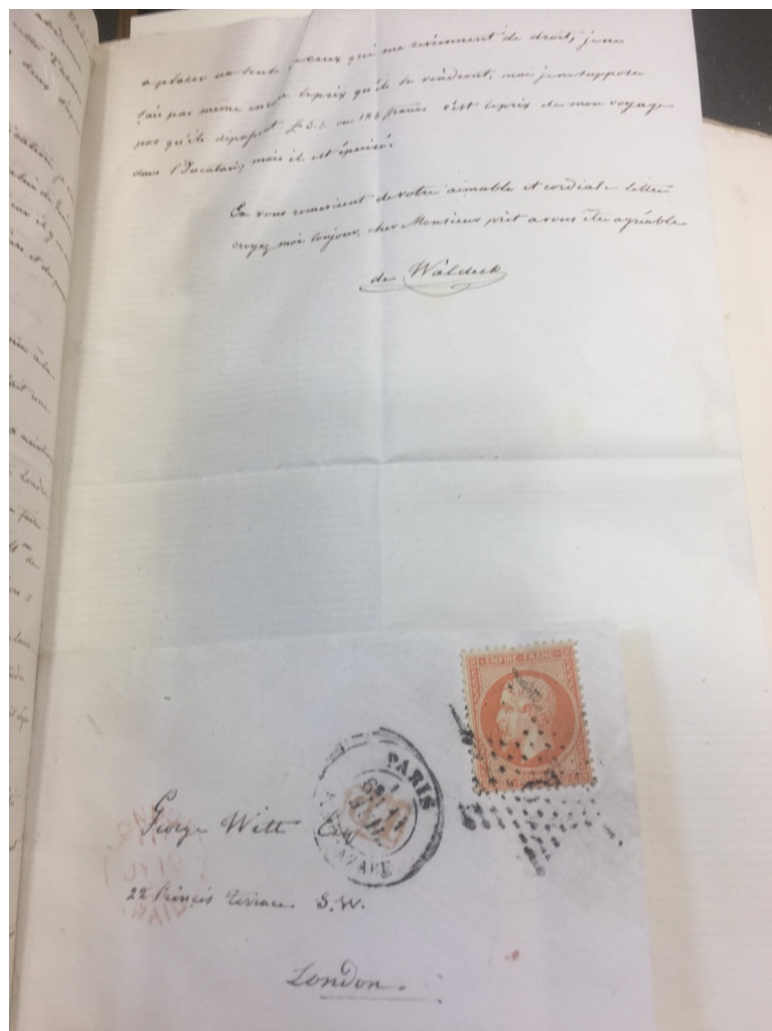


Figure 85. Example of letter loosely inserted into WITT 121 scrapbook. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 86a. Table I, 'Grecian, Etruscan, Roman' Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Pencil, ink, chalk, and watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 86b. Table II, 'Grecian, Etruscan, Roman' Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Pencil, ink, chalk, and watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

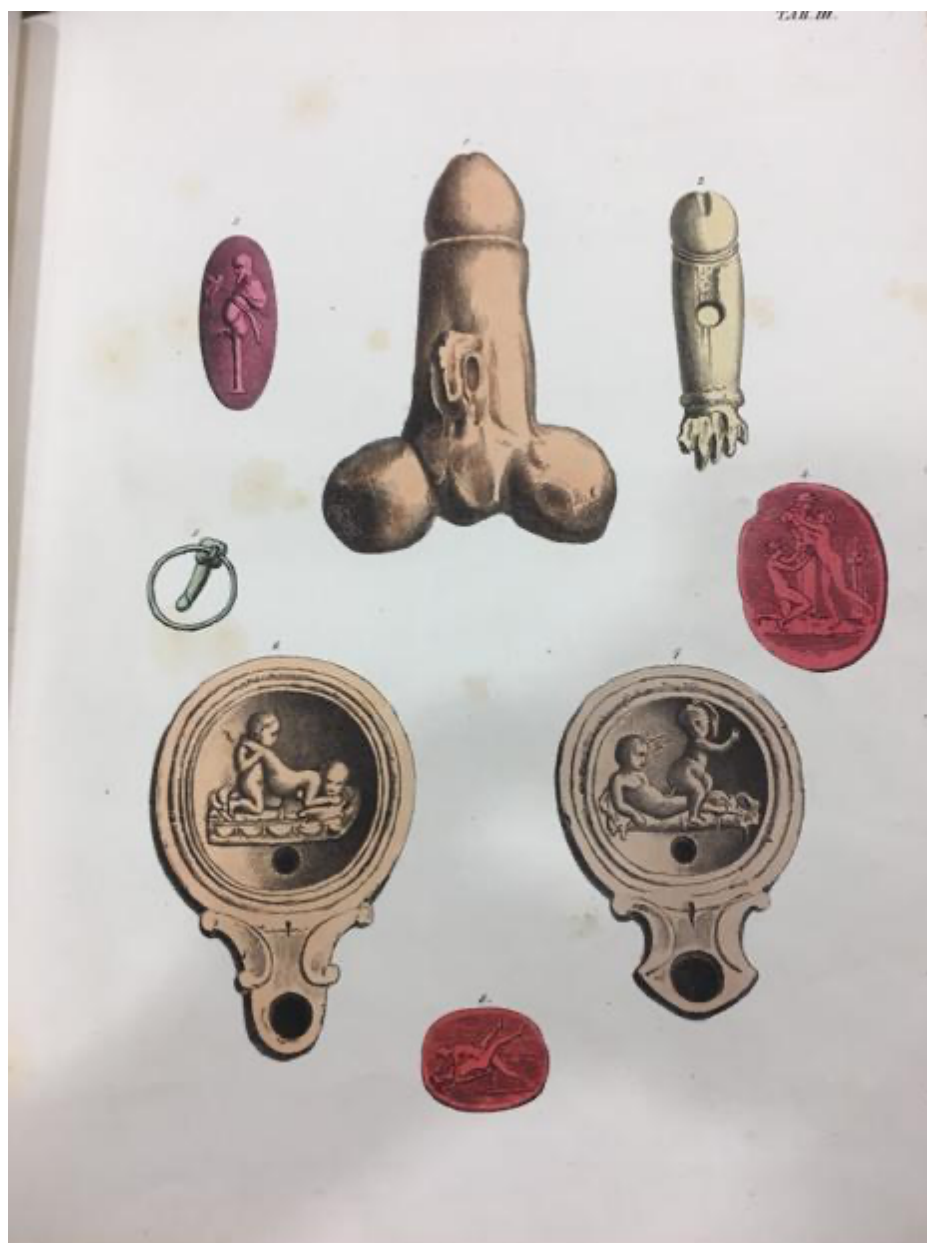


Figure 86c. Table III. 'Grecian, Etruscan, Roman' Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Pencil, ink, chalk, and watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 86d. Table IV, 'Grecian, Etruscan, Roman' Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Pencil, ink, chalk, and watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 86e. Table V, 'Grecian, Etruscan, Roman' Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Pencil, ink, chalk, and watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

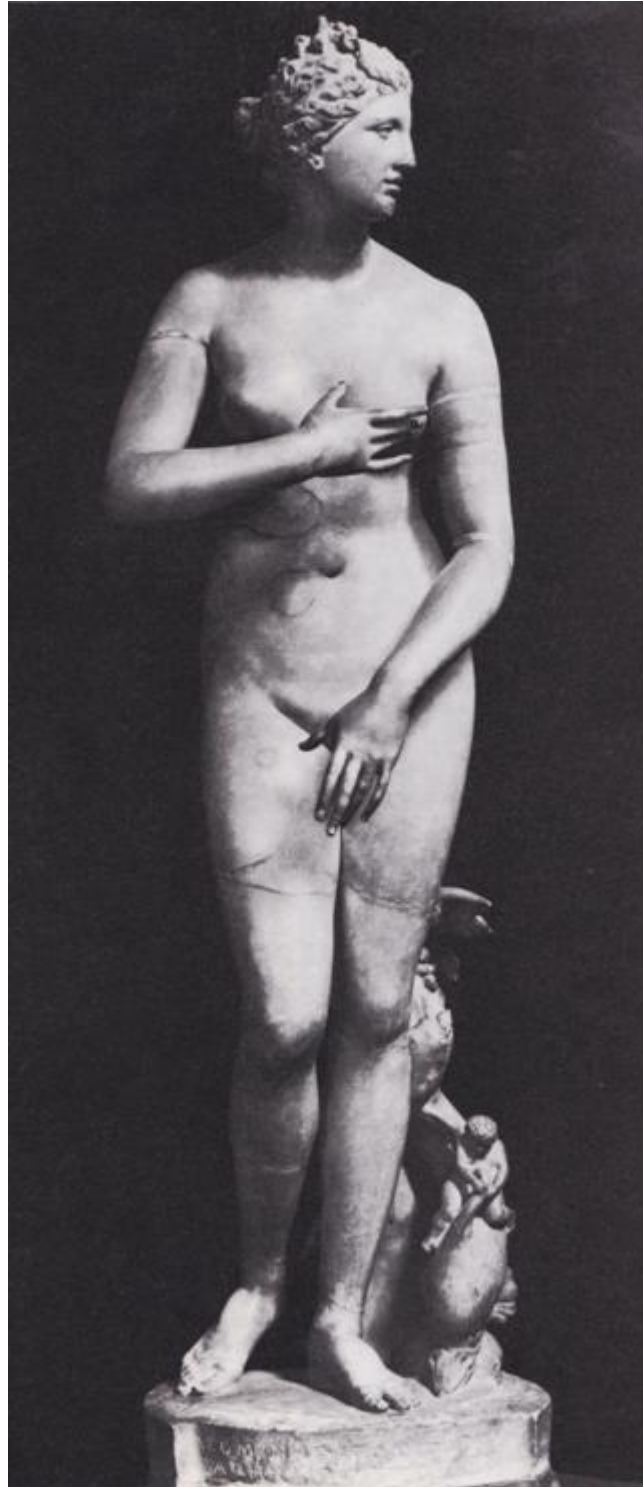


Figure 87. *Venus de' Medici*, traditionally considered a copy after the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles (mid-fourth century BC), c.100-1 BCE, Roman. Marble, 1.53 m. Uffizi Gallery, Florence. From: Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 327.



Figure 88. 'Grecian, Etruscan, Roman' Witt Scrapbook page 137, before 1866. Ink on card and paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 89a. Unknown Artist, WITT.155, Amulet; cowrie shell pendant; hole at one end. Unknown production date or location. Bronze, 3.6cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_WITT-155. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 89b. Unknown Artist, Oc.6923, Broad armband of interwoven narrow strips of brown leaf fibre, ornamented with a double row of small cowrie shells, before 1870, Mount Ernest Island, Queensland. Fibre, coix seed, shell, and wool, 2.5cm x 31cm x 15cm. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Oc-6923_1. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

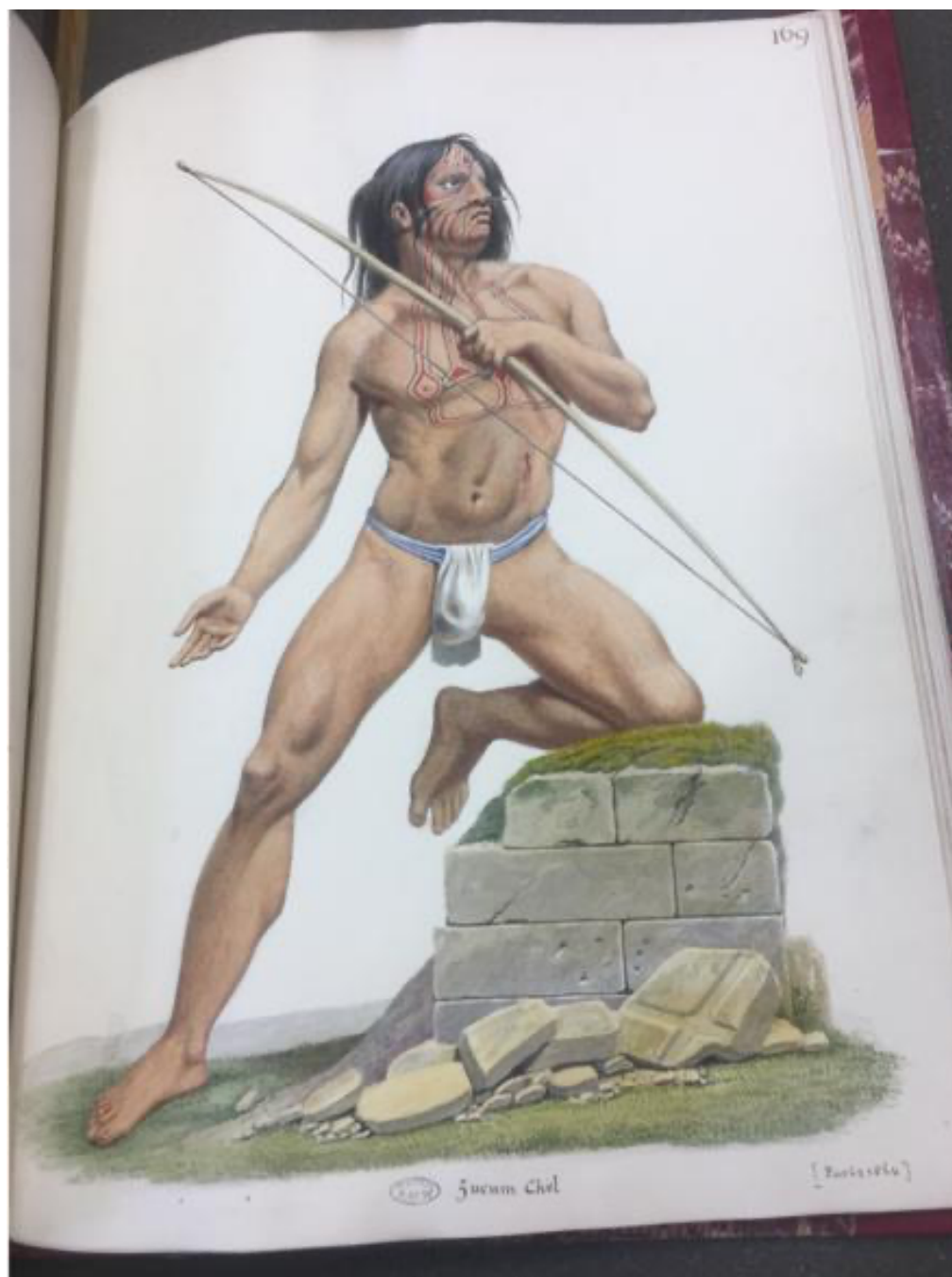


Figure 90a. 'Zueum Chel' Watercolour after Jean Frederic de Waldeck. 'Aboriginal American' Witt Scrapbook page 169, before 1866. Watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

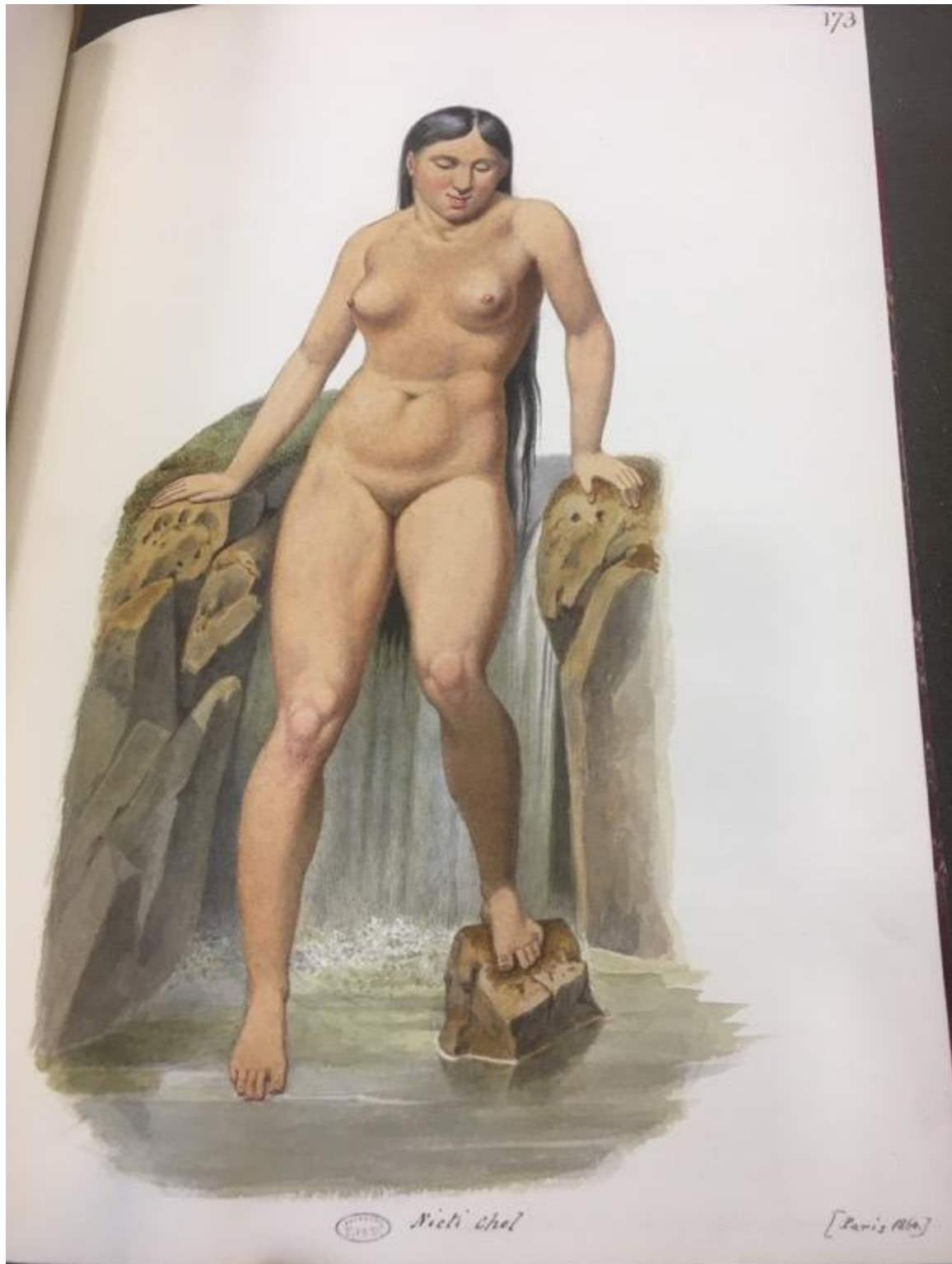


Figure 90b. 'Neiti Chel' Watercolour after Jean Frederic de Waldeck. 'Aboriginal American' Witt Scrapbook page 173, before 1866. Watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 90c. 'A Mexican Albino.' Watercolour after Jean Frederic de Waldeck. 'Aboriginal American' Witt Scrapbook page 177, before 1866. Watercolour on paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 91a. Iizuka Toyo 飯塚桃葉, W.419, Netsuke (miniature sculpture); Raiden descending on woman in bath, before 1865, Unknown production date or location, probably Japanese. Wood. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 26, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_W-419 ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

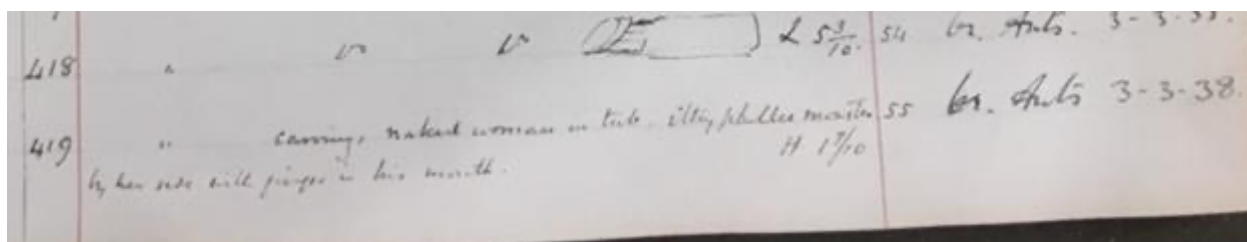


Figure 91b. Detail from MSR: 'wood carving, naked woman in tub, ithyphallic monster by her side with fingers in his mouth', Museum Secretum Register, Witt Collection Roman section 401-419, post 1865. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 92. Unknown Artist, *Yu-agari no yuki no hada* [Snowy Skin after a Hot Bath], sake-cup, 1800-1850, Japan. Porcelain, 10cm diameter. The British Museum. Accessed Jan 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_OA-7134. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

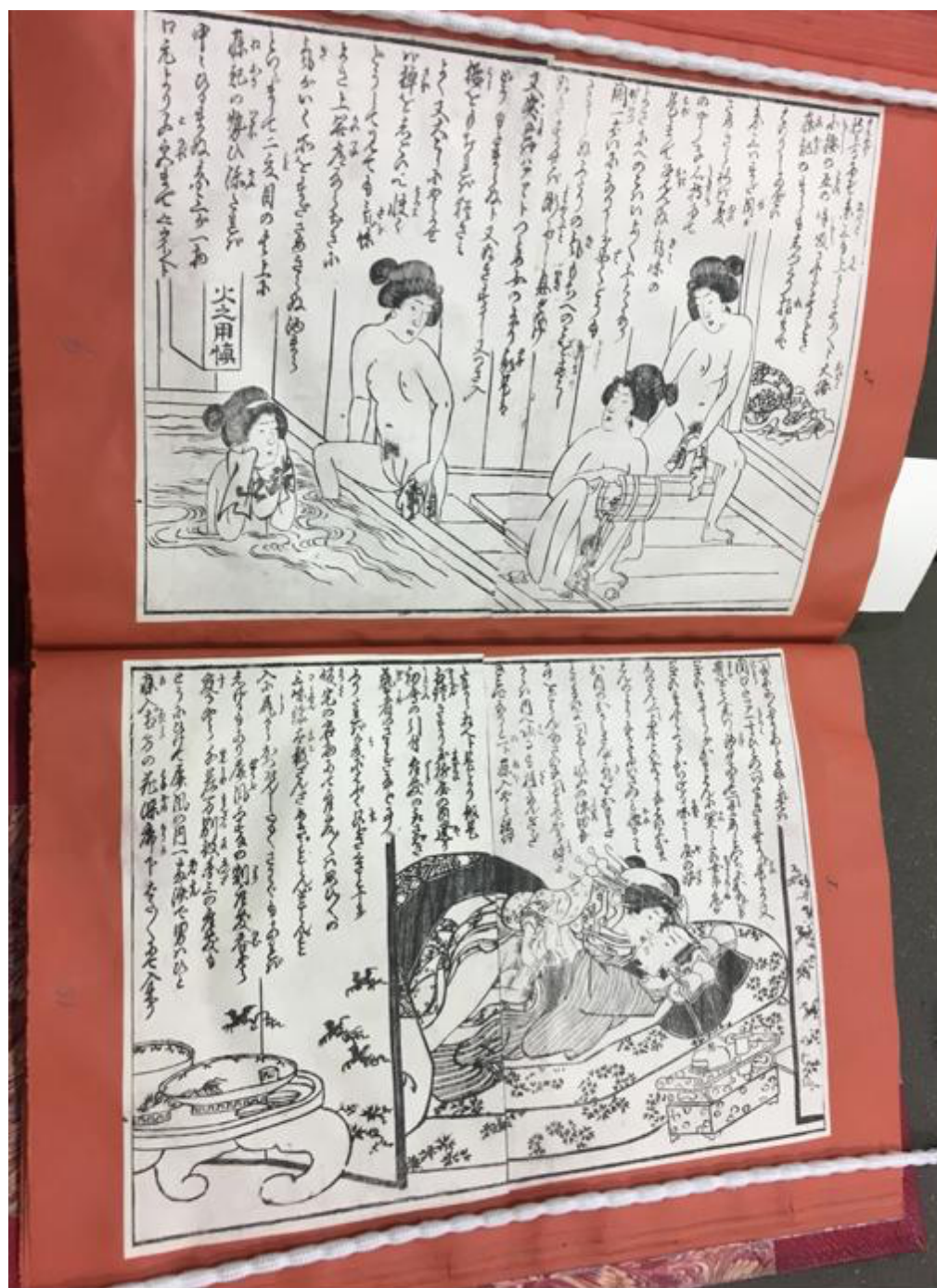


Figure 93a. Unknown Artist, Top: Image of Women bathing as a group. Below: Male/Female couple making love. 'Japanese Prints.' Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Black and White Prints. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 93b. Group of Women after bathing., panels fold to reveal male voyeur. 'Japanese Prints.' Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Colour Prints. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 93c. Detail of Illustration 84b with folded sections opened to reveal male voyeur in right hand corner and additional nude women after bathing. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

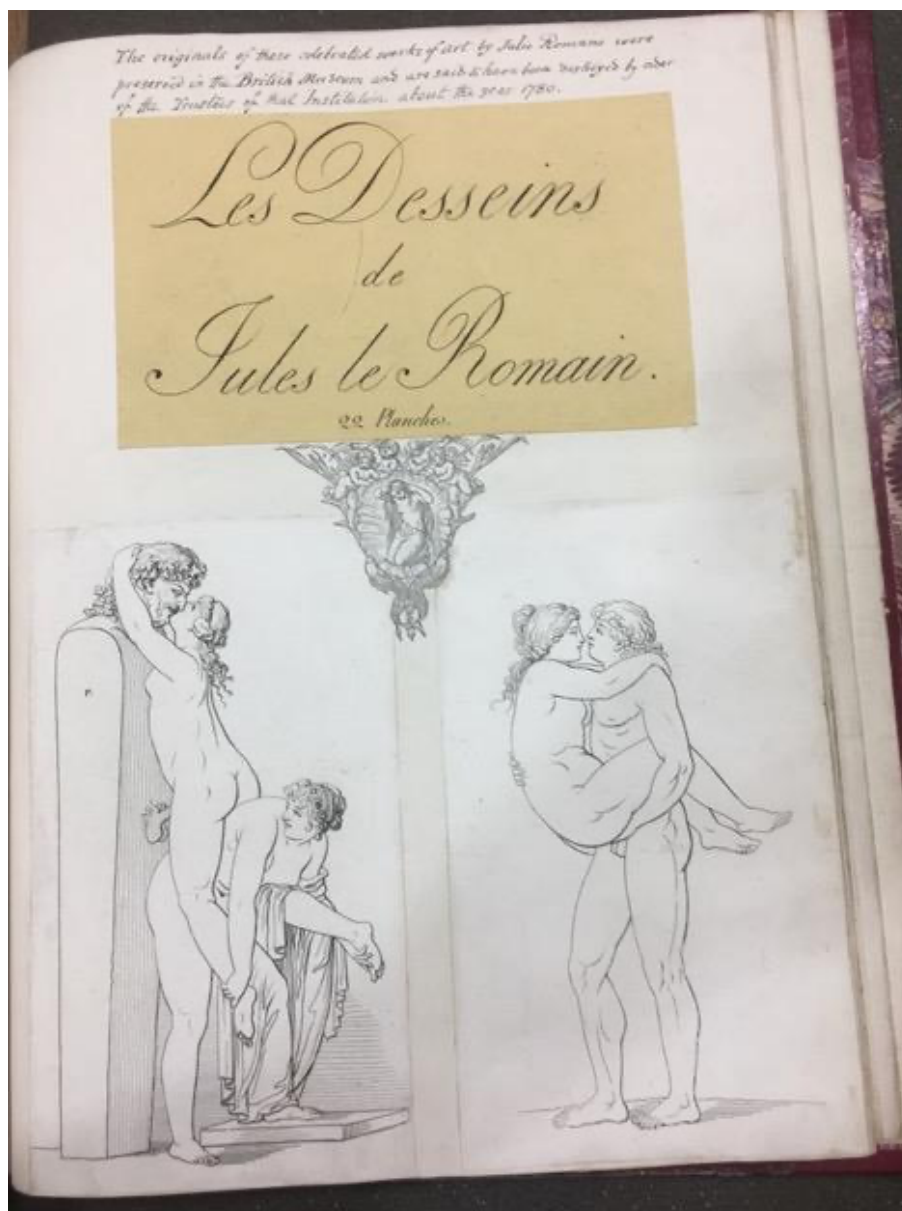


Figure 94a. “Les Dessains de Jules le Romain.” Clippings of prints after the originals by Julio Romano with text by Dr. George Witt. ‘Modern.’ Witt Scrapbook, before 1866. Mixed media, prints, black and white ink on card and paper. Image by author with permission from British Museum Archives. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

The originals of these celebrated works of art by Julio Romano were preserved in the British Museum and are said to have been destroyed by order of the Trustees of that Institution about the year 1780.

Figure 94b. Detail of text written by George Witt. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.