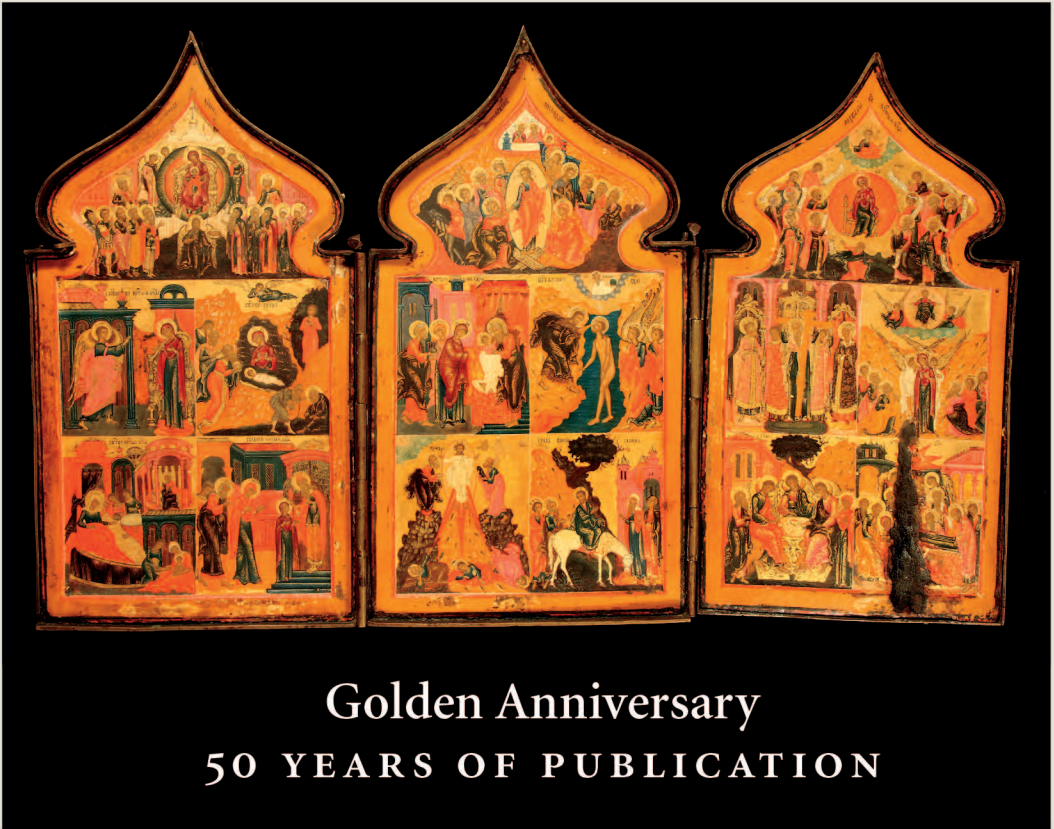


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# An Old Nurse from Egypt\*



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Hellenistic and Roman terracotta figurines from Egypt depicted a variety of gods, mortals, and animals.<sup>1</sup> Among these are representations of old women holding a child. A figurine in the Museum of Art and Archaeology, probably from Egypt, is an unusual version of the subject (Figs. 1, 2). The Missouri terracotta holds a child close to her chest, like other nurse figurines, but she displays a wide grin and an exposed breast, an attribute of *young* caregivers (*kourotrophoi*) and nursing women. Although the figurine's



**Fig. 1.** Figurine of old nurse and child (front view). Graeco-Egyptian, third to first century B.C.E., terracotta. Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri (66.352). Photo: Jeffrey Wilcox.



**Fig. 2.** Figurine of old nurse and child (back view). Graeco-Egyptian, third to first century B.C.E., terracotta. Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri (66.352). Photo: Jeffrey Wilcox.

provenience is uncertain, it bears resemblances to Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Ptolemaic Egypt, which is why the museum dates the figurine from the third to the first century B.C.E.<sup>2</sup> When placed in this geographic and chronological context, the Missouri nurse's grotesque face, aged appearance, and exposed breast, as well as the obvious emotional attachment she shares with her charge, all suggest that she functioned as a protective, or apotropaic, emblem that once shielded its owner from harm.

The Missouri nurse is a mold-made, reddish-brown, hollow figurine with extensive remains of a greyish-white plasterlike coating, which was used by most makers of terracotta figurines, or coroplasts, as a base for paint.<sup>3</sup> Measuring 13.8 cm high and 6.4 cm at the widest point, the terracotta consists of two separately molded pieces: a three-dimensional front, which extends to the edges of the woman's sides, and a flat but uneven back. The woman's feet (except for the toes of her left one), the base she once stood on, and a firing vent are all missing.<sup>4</sup> In the modern era, sometime before the museum's acquisition of the figurine, the interior was filled with plaster in order to strengthen the joins of the numerous breaks on both back and front. The woman wears a himation wrapped around a chiton, which slips off her left shoulder, exposing her breast. Her hair is thick and straight, and may be pulled back and covered by a cap, or cut short.<sup>5</sup> Her face, featuring a broad, flat nose, furrowed brow, large eyes, and an expressive open mouth, contrasts sharply with her realistic body. She holds a child wrapped in a blanket or cloth from the waist down. The child rests its head on the nurse's right shoulder and places a hand on her right breast. A ring of curls encircles its face, which is smooth and idealized, while its body is elongated, resembling a small human rather than a plump child.<sup>6</sup> The woman's gentle manner, her jovial, albeit grotesque expression, and their loving embrace suggest the child is her charge.

Although the Missouri nurse is incomplete, a Greco-Egyptian terracotta, sold by Christie's London branch in 2001, supplies the missing details: nearly identical in appearance and size to the Missouri terracotta, the Christie's nurse stands on a high pedestal, with two tiny feet emerging from beneath her chiton.<sup>7</sup> A long swatch of fabric hangs below the child seated on her right arm. This detail is not present on the Missouri terracotta, but a broken edge below the Missouri nurse's child suggests that it once was. The Christie's nurse, although similar to the Missouri terracotta, is not an exact parallel: the Christie's figurine features a visible cap with a ring of straight locks of hair emerging beneath. Moreover, the drapery is doughier and the nurse's neck is thinner. Terracotta molds were often reused, sometimes for as much as 100 years after their original manufacture.<sup>8</sup> Since the Missouri and Christie's terracottas are the same size, it is possible that these two figurines came from the same mold.

Nurses in the ancient Mediterranean world were tasked with feeding (or nursing), fostering, and serving the children of wealthy families.<sup>9</sup> In Athens, for example, nurses were usually young slave girls, acquired after giving birth, while a small percentage were salaried free women attempting to supplement their husbands' incomes.<sup>10</sup> The child would remain in the nurse's care until he or she was between the ages of three and six, yet the nurse could be retained within the household as a maid or caretaker or both,

after her original task was completed.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes, when her charge married, the nurse would follow him or her to a new home, later caring for subsequent children.<sup>12</sup> In Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, the evidence suggests that there were two types of wet-nurses: freed women who were paid for their services and slaves owned by wealthy families. Approximately forty nursing contracts survive, mostly from Alexandria:<sup>13</sup> a majority reveal that freed women were hired to care for the offspring of a slave or a child rescued from abandonment.<sup>14</sup> The implication is that once their services were no longer needed, wet-nurses would leave their charges.<sup>15</sup> Paying a wet-nurse for a child was less expensive than buying a slave. It is likely, however, in keeping with the Greek tradition, that wealthy Egyptian families used their own slaves as wet-nurses and caretakers.<sup>16</sup>

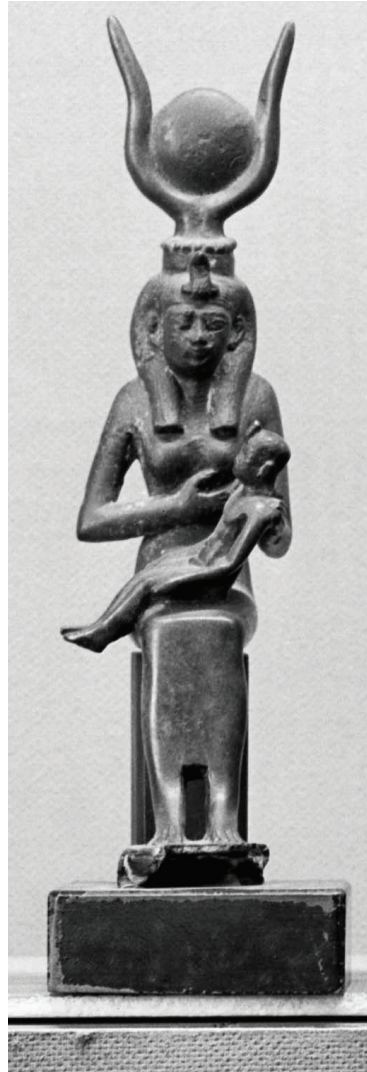
The Missouri figurine belongs to a group of terracottas called Tanagras after the Boeotian city where many were discovered. The concept, however, began in Athens, where manufacture began ca. 400 B.C.E.<sup>17</sup> Tanagra nurse-type figurines were first studied in the mid-twentieth century by Dorothy Burr Thompson. She divided the old nurse and infant group into two categories, seated and standing, and proposed a date range of 375–300 B.C.E.<sup>18</sup> More recently, Mary Louise Hart has dated a group of comedic Tanagra statuettes found in an Athenian grave; among them is an old crone, who could represent a procuress or elderly wife.<sup>19</sup> Hart dates the grave group to between 400 and 348 B.C.E., which means manufacture of Tanagra figurines began earlier than Thompson proposed and also overlaps with the end of Old Comedy and the beginning of New.<sup>20</sup> Although the Missouri nurse slightly resembles terracotta figurines representing old women from Comedy, especially in the appearance of her “mask-like” face, comedic figurines of old women generally feature padded bellies and flat breasts covered by fabric; their chests are never visible.<sup>21</sup> The Missouri nurse features iconographic elements that are both Greek and Egyptian, which indicates that she likely belongs to the complex, multicultural context of Ptolemaic Egypt, where examples of the nurse figurine type are numerous and appear in a variety of contexts; several feature women guiding, carrying, and cradling infants and small children, sometimes while they nurse them.<sup>22</sup>

There are three types of Ptolemaic nurse figurines: standing old women, seated old women, and age-ambiguous women, all holding children or nursing them. Standing old women usually feature naturalistic, aged faces; hunched shoulders; and a thick chiton and himation.<sup>23</sup> Seated women are similar to the standing type: they are wholly covered in clothing and feature wrinkled faces; some wear shawls and sit on birthing stools.<sup>24</sup> Nursing women are usually younger: in most examples, they cradle the child as it suckles, sometimes holding their breast in place for easier access.<sup>25</sup> Though the nursing women featured in Ptolemaic terracottas are not elderly, they do appear to be middle-aged. Sarah Pomeroy, therefore, wonders whether female caretakers are younger than they seem, or if their aged appearance is symptomatic of a hard life.<sup>26</sup> Alternatively, there may be a religious explanation: according to Caitlin Barrett, “many Egyptian terracottas combine several gods’ attributes in one image to make a theological statement about the nature of divinity.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, it is possible that the Missouri terracotta references not only mortal nurses but also divine caretakers, particularly the motherly Isis and apotropaic Bes.

Divine caretakers, like Isis and Bes, were represented far more frequently in terracotta and other media than mortal caretakers. In Egyptian mythology, Isis was the sister-wife of the death-god Osiris and mother of the sky-god Horus; the pharaoh was frequently identified with both, with Horus during his lifetime, with Osiris after his death. Isis was the goddess of many things—healing, magic, life, death, and rebirth. In Ptolemaic Egypt, she retained some of her original functions, such as that of mother and sorceress, but she also obtained new associations with fertility (e.g., with fruit, corn, and grain) and wealth.<sup>28</sup> She and her son Harpocrates (the Greek name for Hor-pa-khered, or “Horus the Child”) became two of the most popular figures represented in terracotta in Ptolemaic Egypt and Greco-Roman centers elsewhere in the Mediterranean.<sup>29</sup>

When Isis is depicted with Harpocrates, she sits with the child on her lap or stands with the child on her left arm (Fig. 3); her left breast is often exposed, while Harpocrates grasps or nurses from it.<sup>30</sup> Unless Harpocrates is nursing, both mother and son stare out at the viewer in an apotropaic manner.<sup>31</sup> She is mostly portrayed as an ideal young woman wearing a shawl and/or crown, a chiton, and a peplos.<sup>32</sup> Her exposed breast is an obvious sign of her fertility and her role as divine mother and kourotrophos. The Missouri nurse’s breast is exposed, but because of her age, she cannot be considered a wet-nurse. It, therefore, seems likely that she was based on similar Isis-Harpocrates figurines, rather than on Greek nurses, for despite her grotesque appearance and grimacing smile, like Isis, her exposed breast connotes fertility.

The Egyptian demon-god Bes features thick lips, an open mouth, sharp teeth, and a comically exposed tongue (Fig. 4). Like Isis, he is a kourotrophic divinity, but he is also apotropaic. He is often depicted with a short, stocky body; with a plumed headdress set atop a flat abacus (Fig. 5); with a lion skin over his shoulders; and wearing a loincloth and/or a wig. He often has large, sagging breasts. He is frequently accompanied by other figures, all of whom emphasize his kourotrophic nature:<sup>33</sup> his



**Fig. 3.** Isis and Harpocrates. Egyptian, 760–150 B.C.E., bronze, H. 23.7 cm. Photo © 2017 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of Arthur H. Phillips.



**Fig. 4.** Figurine of the Egyptian dwarf demon Bes. Greco-Egyptian, Ptolemaic, third to first century B.C.E., terracotta, H. without base 10.3 cm. Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri (65.31), gift of Martin J. Gerson.



**Fig. 5.** Standard with Bes. Egyptian, Late Period, 664–332 B.C.E., bronze, H. 21.9 cm. Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri (66.295), gift of Mr. J. Lionberger Davis. Photo: Erin Pruhs.

female counterpart Beset, who either stands beside him, holds him, or breastfeeds a child-like version of him; Taweret, an Egyptian hippopotamus demon with pendulous breasts; pregnant females or human children; and Horus as both an adult and child.

In Egypt, Bes first appears in the Middle Kingdom period (ca. 2055–1650 B.C.E.) as a slender, leonine man.<sup>34</sup> His portly build does not manifest itself until the New Kingdom

period (ca. 1550–1069 B.C.E.), when he is depicted alongside women and children. His grinning face first develops in the Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 B.C.E.).<sup>35</sup> Beginning in the eighth century B.C.E., the cult of Bes was imported into Greece, and in the second half of the sixth century B.C.E. locally inspired representations began to be made there.<sup>36</sup> In the Roman period, he was depicted as an armed general and was worshiped as an oracular and fertility divinity.<sup>37</sup> He was closely associated with the goddess Hathor, appearing in so-called *mammisis*, or birth-houses, attached to her temples.<sup>38</sup> His primary function, in both Egypt and Greece, was as an apotropaic mascot of women and children.<sup>39</sup> Egypt's extensive corpus of apotropaic fertility demons was used to mollify people's fears of unforeseen supernatural forces, such as death and deformity, as manifested in infants and children.<sup>40</sup> Based on her own grimacing features, it is possible that the Missouri nurse served a similar apotropaic function;<sup>41</sup> her pendulous breast may even be a reference to the dwarf god himself, allowing her to function, as Bes sometimes does, as a pantheistic image with multiple powers and connotations.<sup>42</sup>

We can trace the influence of different cultures, religions, and artistic styles in the Missouri nurse. It, therefore, seems likely that she embodies an amalgam of iconographic types, specifically, Isis as mother, the old caretaker, fertility demons, and grotesques. A number of iconographic aspects suggests this, the first being the nurse's stance and state of "undress." She stands facing forward, her left breast exposed, and she holds a child on her right arm, using her left hand to secure it in place (Fig. 1). This is very similar to the Ptolemaic Isis-Harpocrates figurines, with some differences. Although the Missouri nurse's left breast is exposed, she carries her charge on the opposite arm, not allowing the child to drink. Unlike Isis, she is old, and she holds the child with two hands, rather than one, perhaps emphasizing her old age by suggesting a lack of strength. Her age implies that she is no longer capable of nursing. Her exposed breast may, therefore, not refer to her function as a nurse.

The child featured in the Missouri terracotta is also different from typical Isis-Harpocrates pairings: while Harpocrates usually faces outward in an apotropaic manner, the Missouri child rests its head on his nurse's shoulder and places its hand on her right breast. As if reacting to this gesture, the nurse lovingly leans her head toward the child's. This level of emotional attachment is not evident in Isis-Harpocrates figurines, and while both Egyptian and Greek terracottas feature children touching their nurse's breast as they drink,<sup>43</sup> they do not display the same intense bond featured between the Missouri nurse and her charge. The closest parallel is a series of Greek nurses that affectionately kiss or look down upon their charges, but this tradition is restricted to mainland Greece.<sup>44</sup> Masegaglia notes that the varying "degrees of attentiveness" conveyed by nurses is based on the preferences of coroplasts and consumers, "some favouring images of the *function* of a nurse, others favouring images of the sentimental *relationship* between nurse and child."<sup>45</sup> In either case, she argues that nurse terracottas were popular for their protective implications, which suited them for burial contexts.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the strong connection between the Missouri nurse and child may imply that the figurine is apotropaic: the child is taking refuge in the nurse's arms, as if seeking comfort, support, and protection from harm.

The Missouri nurse's face, both grotesque and lifelike, is another apotropaic aspect with several possible explanations. Terracotta figurines of the Hellenistic period are diverse, some featuring ideal beauty, others believable naturalism, and still others grotesquerie. Naturalism and the grotesque intersect with comedy, specifically Middle and New Comedy. One explanation could, therefore, be that the nurse represents a comic figure, since terracottas of actors in the guise of old women are known. As caricatures, they feature non-ideal attributes, some of which carry over into the Tanagra tradition: swollen bellies, unbalanced proportions, bulging eyes, flat or protruding noses, large ears, warts, wrinkles, and gaping mouths. The infants they carry resemble inanimate objects with log-shaped bodies wrapped tightly and usually wholly swaddled.<sup>47</sup> The Missouri nurse does not, however, feature any comedic attributes, with the exception of exaggerated facial features. Rather than being a reference to comedy, a second possible explanation for the nurse's overstated features is that she is Nubian, a collective term that describes the African peoples living south of Egypt, an area which in the Ptolemaic period was under the control of the Meroitic kings. Their trade with the Hellenistic pharaohs often included exotic goods, such as wild animals and ivory, and also young boys.<sup>48</sup> Coroplasts living in Egypt represented their neighbors with heavy brow lines, wrinkled foreheads, and broad, flat noses.<sup>49</sup> One particular example, now in the collections of Tübingen University's Hohentübingen Castle, features the head of a young boy with a grinning countenance and wrinkled brow that strongly resembles the Missouri nurse's visage (Fig. 6).<sup>50</sup> It is,



**Fig. 6.** Head of a young Nubian boy. Graeco-Egyptian, ca. late third–early second century B.C.E., terracotta, H. 5.7 cm, W. 4.1 cm. Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Institut für Klassische Archäologie, inv. no. 2847. Photo: Thomas Zachmann.



therefore, possible that her exaggerated features indicate that she is a black woman from the Meroitic kingdom. An alternative origin includes Cyrenaica, a neighboring North African region from which Egypt regularly received an influx of immigrants.<sup>51</sup>

A third explanation for the nurse's exaggerated facial features could be that they derive from the "grotesque" tradition. In conjunction with the rising interest in realistic subject matters, like extreme age and youth, Hellenistic sculptors were fascinated by abnormal medical conditions and less than ideal physiques. Popular subjects included dwarfs and figures with severe physical deformities.<sup>52</sup> Dwarfs, like the god Bes, are often short, stocky, and bow-legged, though their faces may look more human than their grimacing counterpart.<sup>53</sup> Figures with physical deformities, on the other hand, appear humpbacked (*hybos*), maimed (*empēros*), crooked (*kullos*), or disabled (*pēros*), and their faces are equally distorted.<sup>54</sup> The most logical purpose of such figurines was not as objects of medical study but, rather, as apotropaic and comedic emblems.<sup>55</sup> While the Missouri nurse's body is perfectly proportioned, if a bit short, her face is distorted, featuring a grimacing smile like Bes. Thus, it seems likely that with her exaggerated features and careful embrace of her charge, she functioned as a protective device against infant mortality or any of the supernatural evils that plagued Ptolemaic Egypt.

In conclusion, while it is difficult to discern the true meaning and purpose of the Missouri nurse, there are several inferences one can make based on subject and iconography. Kourotropic imagery was more popular in ancient Egypt and the Near East than in Greece, occurring there in the Bronze Age but earlier in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>56</sup> In later times, it was often—though not always—used to parody elderly caregivers in Middle and New Comedy. In Egypt, it acquired apotropaic connotations. Nurses as protectors, nourishers, and caretakers, like Bes and Isis, made believable apotropaic emblems for children, both in domestic settings and in tombs. Ancient Egypt, from the Pre-Dynastic era through to the Roman period, suffered from high infant mortality, the result of poor diet, unsanitary conditions, and waterborne and infectious diseases like hepatitis, dysentery, and tapeworms.<sup>57</sup> Poisonous snakes and insects, such as scorpions, were also a dangerous reality.<sup>58</sup> The first ten days of a child's life were considered to be tenuous,<sup>59</sup> which is why apotropaic images of fertility gods and demons often adorned objects used by both pregnant women and young children.<sup>60</sup> Nurse figurines may have been an added line of defense against the evils of the world. The Missouri terracotta in particular, with her grimacing face, may have been part of a tradition that took the divine concepts of Bes and Isis and also adopted some of the physical characteristics of these divinities, specifically Bes' grimacing face and pendulous breasts and Isis' motherly embrace. Perhaps infused with the iconographies of kourotropic divinities, the Missouri nurse may have functioned as an apotropaic object for her owner. Only in Ptolemaic Egypt—a diverse locale of differing artistic, cultural, social, and religious traditions that both clashed and came together—could this figurine have emerged.

## NOTES

- \* I would like to thank Caitlin Barrett, Jane Biers, Susan Langdon, Francesca Hickin, Kathleen Slane, and my supportive reviewers for their helpful comments during the researching and writing of this article. I would also like to thank Jeffrey Wilcox for providing high quality images of the terracotta in question, and Benton Kidd for giving me access to the Museum of Art and Archaeology's storage and photos. Finally, I would like to thank Tübingen University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for allowing me to illustrate their images.
1. As affordable objects used by both elite and non-elite consumers, Greco-Egyptian terracottas were placed in tombs, domestic shrines, and sanctuaries as votive offerings, embodiments of the divine, and substitutes for worshipers or deceased persons. For a list of locations in Egypt where Greco-Egyptian terracottas have been found, see Sandra Sandri, "Terracottas," in C. Riggs, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2012) pp. 631–632. For household ritual, see Caitlin Barrett, "Terracotta Figurines and the Archaeology of Ritual: Domestic Cult in Greco-Roman Egypt," in S. Huyssecom-Haxhi and A. Muller, eds., *Figurines grecques en contexte: Présence muette dans le sanctuaire, la tombe, et la maison* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2015) pp. 402 and 406. Terracotta finds from sanctuaries are less plentiful than those found in domestic settings, but numerous votive deposits found at Canopus, Magdola, Memphis, Mendes, and Karanis show that *ex-votos* were dedicated at temples in Greco-Roman Egypt. See Céline Boutantin, *Terres cuites et culte domestique: Bestiaire de l'Égypte gréco-romain* (Leiden, 2014) pp. 125–128.
  2. This date is accepted in this article. Since most Greco-Egyptian terracottas were not excavated properly or legally, many are difficult to date (Boutantin, *Terres cuites*, p. 125; and Sandri, "Terracottas," p. 631). Even those that originate from legitimate sites are not always properly documented. For example, the excavation records for the temple of Heron at Magdola do not specify whether the terracottas found there are *ex-votos* from the temple or finds from homes that occupied the site after the temple was abandoned. See Boutantin, *Terres cuites*, p. 124. There are some exceptions to this rule. Frank Rumscheid has documented Hellenistic and Roman terracottas excavated from houses, sanctuaries, and graves throughout the Mediterranean world (*Die figürlichen Terrakotten von Priene* [Wiesbaden, 2006] chap. 3). Additionally, and more pertinent to this discussion, Hanna Szymańska has published a series of terracotta figurines that were discovered at Athribis in Lower Egypt (*Terres cuites d'Athribis* [Turnhout, 2005]). She dates the group to three periods: late fourth century B.C.E. (reign of Ptolemy V), second half of the second century B.C.E. (reign of Ptolemy VI), and the first century B.C.E./C.E. See also the British Museum's recent publication of the Naukratis figurines [https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online\\_research\\_catalogues/ng/naukratis\\_greeks\\_in\\_egypt.aspx](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_research_catalogues/ng/naukratis_greeks_in_egypt.aspx) (accessed September 29, 2017). For a more complete bibliography on figurines from known contexts, see Barrett, "Terracotta Figurines," p. 405, n. 34; and Boutantin, *Terres cuites*, p. 125.
  3. Without performing a chemical analysis, it is difficult to tell whether the coating is made of lime or gypsum. See Caitlin Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines from Delos: A Study in Hellenistic Religion* (Leiden, 2011) p. 102, n. 322. The fabric falls between 5YR 5/4 (reddish brown) and 6/4 (light reddish brown) on the Munsell scale, with no visible inclusions. The coating resembles 10 YR or 5YR 8/1 (white) on the same scale, with no visible traces of paint except for a faded light-brown color on the nurse's neck, the child's stomach, the base of the nurse's chiton, and the nurse's back.

- Many terracottas from Egypt were kept in damp, crowded domestic areas, which were not conducive to paint preservation; conversely, ones found in sanctuaries, located in the dry desert, are better preserved. The same is true for terracottas found in graves, which were sealed many feet beneath the ground and sometimes contained within coffins for added protection against dampness. While most Greco-Egyptian terracotta figurines feature remnants of coating, the amount preserved on the Missouri terracotta implies that she came from a tomb. For more information on plaster coating, see Donald M. Bailey, *Catalogue of the Terracottas in the British Museum*, vol. 4, *Ptolemaic and Roman Terracottas from Egypt*, British Museum (London, 2008) p. 6; and Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, pp. 102–103. For examples of nurse figurines found in grave contexts, see Harold Schultze, *Ammen und Pädagogen: Sklavinnen und Sklaven als Erzieher in der antiken Kunst und Gesellschaft* (Mainz am Rhein, 1998) pp. 54 and 125, no. A T81; Daniel Graepler, *Tonfiguren im Grab: Fundkontexte Hellenistischer Terrakotten aus der Nekropole von Tarent* (Munich, 1997) grave 64; and Stephanie A. Hagan, “Nysiac Devotions: Women-and-Child Figurines from Byzantine Burials at Beth Shean,” in Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller, eds., *Figurines grecques en contexte*, pp. 305–315, especially p. 312.
4. While Greek coroplasts regularly cut oval or rectangular vents into the backs of their figures, the Egyptians did this less frequently. Rather, open bases likely functioned as vents, although in rare circumstances, small holes appear in the center of some figurines’ backs. See Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, p. 100.
  5. Antipater of Sidon, in an epigram describing the image of an old woman named Bittis (*Greek Anthology* 7.423.2–4), argues that grey hair was considered unattractive in the Greek world because old women often covered theirs with scarves and caps. For the full quotation, see Jane Massegli, *Body Language in Hellenistic Art and Society* (Oxford, 2015) p. 243, n. 263. In Greek art, slaves are often depicted with short hair that encircles their forehead like a cap. For an example, see Warren D. Anderson, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, 1994) pl. 6, which features a small crouching slave seated beside his or her master in a school setting.
  6. Classical babies are often oddly proportioned, with small heads and elongated limbs, like adults; later representations of infants, from the Hellenistic and Roman eras, tend to be more naturalistic, with small plump bodies and large heads. For examples, see Jenifer Neils and John H. Oakley, eds., *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past* (London, 2003) pp. 226–227, figs. 24 and 25.
  7. According to the Christie’s auction catalog, the figurine measures 15.9 cm high; this makes it two centimeters taller than the Missouri nurse, which is missing its base. See Christie’s, *Antiquities*, Auction Catalog 9244 (South Kensington, 7 November 2001) lot no. 345. Unpublished. The figurine was sold as part of the Max Willborg collection. Christie’s dates the figurine between the second century B.C.E. and second century C.E.
  8. Jaimee P. Uhlenbrock, “The Hellenistic Terracottas of Athens and the Tanagra Style,” in J. P. Uhlenbrock, ed., *The Coroplast’s Art: Greek Terracottas of the Hellenistic World* (New York, 1990) p. 50; and Sandri, “Terracottas,” p. 632.
  9. See Victor Robinson, “Nurse of Greece,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 6 (1938) pp. 1002–1007.
  10. Sister Mary Rosaria Gorman, “The Nurse in Greek Life,” Ph.D. diss., College of the Catholic University of America, 1917, pp. 10–14; Valerie Fildes, *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to Present* (Oxford, 1988) p. 5; Schultze, *Ammen*, pp. 13–19; Susanne Pfisterer-Haas, *Darstellungen alter Frauen in der griechischen Kunst* (Frankfurt, 1989) p. 45; Olympia Bobou, *Children in the Hellenistic World: Statues and Representations* (Oxford, 2015) p. 26, n. 80; and Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age*, pp. 227–229. For a Greco-Egyptian example of a woman

who nursed for pay, see Jane Rowlandson, ed., *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge, 1998) p. 117, no. 91.

11. Gorman, *Nurse*, p. 17.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 28. A great poetic example is Odysseus's wise nurse, Eurycleia, who nursed the king, accompanied him to his Ithacan palace, and later cared for his young son, Telemachos. In Homer's *Odyssey* 1.429–434, it is revealed that Eurycleia is Telemachos' nurse, for "No servant loved Telemachos as she did, she who had nursed him in his infancy" (Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald [New York, 1998]). Later, in Book 19, Homer reveals that Odysseus was her original charge, for she recognizes him, even in his disguised form, when she catches sight of a familiar scar on his leg. This causes Odysseus to exclaim: "Will you destroy me, nurse, who gave me milk at your own breast?" (Homer, *Od.*, 19.388–498). If some nurses were kept by their charges forever, it is possible that representations of old nurses embody women like the ever-loyal Eurycleia—retired wet-nurses who are nurses for the children of their original charges. In the case of the Missouri figurine, the woman's bare breast could signify the wet nursing role she once held in her youth. The fact that her charge touches her opposite breast is also symbolic of this, for it occurs in representations of nursing infants: the child drinks from the left breast while simultaneously clutching the right. Neils wonders if this commonality implies that the child is in danger or represents a specific figure, like Demeter who transformed herself into the nurse Doso as she searched for her daughter Persephone who had been kidnapped by Hades (*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*). See Neils and Oakley, "Coming of Age," pp. 226–227, fig. 24.
13. Rowlandson, *Women and Society*, p. 275.
14. Unlike the Greeks, Egyptians did not abandon unwanted children; the practice was brought to Egypt with the influx of Greek peoples in the Hellenistic period. For an example, *ibid.*, p. 117, n. 91. Sarah Pomeroy notes that there was a strong correlation between slavery and exposure: in areas where there were fewer slaves, exposure was minimal (*Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra* [New York, 1984] p. 128). For more on child populations in Egypt, see Bobou, *Children*, pp. 28, 31, and 37; and Willy Clarysse and Dorothy J. Thompson, *Counting People in Hellenistic Egypt*, vol. 2, *Historical Studies* (Cambridge, 2006) pp. 12 and 346.
15. Pomeroy (*Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, p. 162) notes that the normal duration of a wet nursing contract was two years.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
17. Violaine Jeammet, "The Origin and Diffusion of the Tanagra Figurines" in V. Jeammet, ed., *Tanagras. Figurines for Life and Eternity: The Musée du Louvre's Collection of Greek Figurines*, Musée du Louvre (Valencia, 2010) pp. 62–69. After Macedonia defeated Greece in 338 B.C.E., manufacture of Tanagra figurines was spread across the Mediterranean. For additional information on Tanagras, see Uhlenbrock, "Hellenistic Terracottas"; and John M. Fossey, "Tanagra during the Hellenistic and Roman Period: An International Artistic Center?" in V. Jeammet, ed., *Tanagras for Life*, pp. 28–29.

While the old nurse type was first manufactured in Greece in Attica, other Greek locales have yielded nurse and child figurines as well. For example, in Cyprus, representations of standing women holding children were popular, though they are rarely depicted in the act of nursing. See, for example, Lucile Burn and Reynold A. Higgins, *Catalogue of Greek Terracottas in the British Museum*, vol. 3, British Museum (London, 2001) nos. 2888–2889. As in Egypt, however, divine kouroutrophi were more frequently represented than mortal nurses. See Burn and Higgins, *Greek Terracottas*, p. 266. Additionally, South Italy has yielded numerous figurines of portly old women with two charges: a baby, whom they hold, and a toddler, whom

- they lead by the hand. For examples, see Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age*, pl. 28; Raimund Wünsche, ed., *Stärke Frauen: Staatliche Antikensammlungen München*, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek (Munich, 2008) fig. 2.10; and Graepler, *Tonfiguren im Grab*, pp. 229–230. A similar figurine (ca. 180–176 B.C.E.), which features a young woman with two children, was discovered in Athribis; she is thought to represent Cleopatra I in the guise of Isis. See Szymańska, *Terres cuites d'Athribis*, p. 178, no. 51.
18. Dorothy Burr Thompson, “The Origin of Tanagras,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 70.1 (1966) pp. 51–63. She dated the first generation to 375–350 B.C.E. This generation features caricatures of old nurses with swollen bellies, a wide stance, rounded backs, heavy drapery, and masked faces. The infants they care for resemble inanimate objects, with log-shaped bodies wrapped tightly in swaddling bands; the perverseness of their features could indicate that they are not real but, rather, props used to authenticate a role. The second stage, which Thompson dated from 325–300 B.C.E., features naturalistic nurses with sunken shoulders, curved backs, a broad wrinkled nose and/or chin, and active babies. For standing examples, see Simone Mollard-Besques, *Catalogue raisonné des figurines et reliefs en terre-cuite grecs, étrusques et romains*, vol. 3, *Époques hellénistique et romaine, Grèce et Asie Mineure*, Musée du Louvre (Paris, 1971) pl. 1, no. g D5. For seated examples, see Juliette Becq, “New Themes, Theater Figurines,” in Jeammet, *Tanagras for Life*, p. 75, no. 38; Burn and Higgins, *Greek Terracottas*, no. 2113; and Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age*, p. 228, fig. 27.
  19. Mary Louise Hart, *The Art of Ancient Greek Theater* (Los Angeles, 2010) p. 125, no. 63. For a similar example of a comedic crone, see Alan Hughes, *Performing Greek Comedy* (Cambridge, 2012) pp. 134 and 160–161.
  20. Hart, *Ancient Greek Theater*, p. 122. Thompson (“Origin,” p. 57) relates comedic nurses to New Comedy plays, like Menander’s *Samia*, which involved characters associated with everyday life: fed-up housewives, lustful husbands, and aggressive old women. For a textual example, see Menander, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*, vol. 3, trans. John M. Edmonds (Leiden, 1961) no. 436 A.
  21. For an example, see Hart, *Ancient Greek Theater*, p. 125, fig. 63. Additionally, comedic babies are usually wholly swaddled. See Margaret Bieber, *The History of Greek and Roman Theater* (Princeton, 1961) no. 185, which comes from the same grave group.
  22. For a discussion on nurse body language, see Masseglia, *Body Language*, pp. 256–261.
  23. See Bailey, *Ptolemaic and Roman*, no. 3519.
  24. *Ibid.*, no. 3529.
  25. *Ibid.*, no. 3518; and Carl M. Kaufmann, *Graeco-Ägyptische Koroplastik: Terrakotten der griechisch-römischen und koptischen Epoche aus der Faijûm-Oase und andren Fundstätten* (Leipzig, 1915) pl. 48, no. 424.
  26. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, p. 161. In a similar vein, Kelly Wrenhaven notes that beauty was not a requirement of domestic nurses. In fact, the less attractive she was, the more focused she would be on her duties. See *Reconstructing the Slave: The Image of the Slave in Ancient Greece* (London, 2013) p. 124.
  27. The depiction of elderly figures in youthful roles may be religiously significant. In an article discussing an aged representation of Harpocrates, Barrett notes that the child may be imitating the sun god Amun, whose solar journey through the underworld aged his body. The story, featured in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, claims that, at the end of this journey, the god meets with his corpse, fuses with it, and is reborn again as a child. See “Harpocrates on Rheneia: Two Egyptian Figurines from the Necropolis of Delos,” in A. Muller et al., eds., *Figurines de terre cuite en Méditerranée grecque et romaine*, vol. 2, *Iconographie et contextes* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq, 2015) pp. 195–208.

28. Birgitte Bøgh, "The Graeco-Roman Cult of Isis," in L. B. Christenson, O. Hammer, and D. A. Warburton, eds., *Handbook of Religions in Ancient Europe* (Durham, 2013) p. 229.
29. It is important to note that although Harpocrates was a popular subject in terracotta, he was not the only child-god represented: Somtus-pa-khered ("Somtus the Child"), Harsomtut-pa-khered ("Harsomtut the Child"), and Khonsu-pa-khered ("Khonsu the child") are among several other child gods represented during the Greco-Roman period in Egypt. Many feature similar iconographies, such as a "Horus Lock" (sidelock of hair); attributes, such as a round food pot; and gestures, like finger sucking. For more on child gods, see Sandri, "Terracottas," pp. 634–635; and Barrett, "Harpocrates on Rheneia," pp. 197–198.
30. See Daniel M. Perdrizet, *Les terres cuites grecques d'Égypte de la collection Fouquet*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1921) pl. XVII; Paul Graindor, *Terres cuites de l'Égypte gréco-romaine* (Antwerp, 1939) pl. X, no. 27; and Bailey, *Ptolemaic and Roman*, no. 3013.
31. In Classical and Hellenistic Greek art, the frontal face in mortal figures was used to convey "psychological intensity," like inebriation and death (see Hart, *Ancient Greek Theater*, p. 58). Frontal-facing deities, monsters, and animals, however, often had apotropaic connotations from the Archaic period onward. According to Bonna Wescoat, writing on Greek architectural sculpture, "The front face breaks the spatial boundary of the narrative plane to engage the viewer directly. Creatures such as the gorgon have frontal faces that shock and quite literally petrify the viewer; the visceral confrontation of monster and viewer completes the image and gives it power" (*The Temple of Athena at Assos* [Oxford, 2012] pp. 175–176). In Egyptian relief art, most mortal and divine figures were depicted in profile, with the exception of Bes and Hathor (often in cow form); frontality was reserved for the chthonic monsters of the underworld. According to Véronique Dasen, the "monstrous appearance" of these creatures "was often meant to be frightening; some demons have names referring to their fearful faces, such as 'combative of face', 'savage one of face', and 'black of face'" (*Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece* [Oxford, 1993] p. 63). For an example of a grotesque Harpocrates, see Barrett, "Harpocrates on Rheneia," pp. 195–208.
32. A terracotta female figure from Egypt, Cairo Museum acc. no. 26894, may be an unusual example of Isis (François Dunand, *Religion populaire en Égypte romaine: Les terres cuites isiaques du Musée du Caire*, Cairo Museum [Leiden, 1979] pl. XI, no. 16; and Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, fig. C31). She is depicted with flattened, grotesque face and corkscrew curls and carries a grotesque figure of Harpocrates on her left arm. Since the figure does not wear the usual Isis crown, it may, however, equally well be a representation of one of Isis's human priestesses who are typically also shown with curls, or perhaps Beset, a companion of Bes, carrying baby Bes.
33. For Egyptian examples of Bes as a nurturing figure of humans and animals, see Jeanne Bulté, *Talismans égyptiens d'heureuse maternité* (Paris, 1991) pls. 1–15.
34. Bes appears with lion's mane, rounded ears, and tail. Unlike other Egyptian divinities, which are featured in profile in relief, Bes always faces outward. Moreover, in this early period, he is usually featured on "magic wands" or "amulets," stands upright, and holds snakes. For an example, see Dasen, *Dwarfs*, pl. 3.3.
- The ancient Egyptian chronology used here follows the *Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2004).
35. Dasen, *Dwarfs*, p. 59; and James F. Romano, "The Bes-Image in Pharaonic Egypt," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1989, p. 141. For examples, see Brooklyn 37.544E and 37.921E.
36. Veronica Wilson ("The Iconography of Bes with Particular Reference to Cypriot Evidence," *Levant* 7.1 [1975] p. 85) argues that Bes was likely transmitted to Cyprus from Phoenicia (i.e., from Syria and the Levant), where the god appears on scarabs, cylinder seals, and faience

- amulets between the sixteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C.E. For Greek examples, see Dasen, *Dwarfs*, pls. 78–80.
37. Dasen, *Dwarfs*, p. 81; and Tran Tam Tinh, “Bes,” in H. C. Ackermann and J. R. Gisler, eds., *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*: 3.1, *Atherion-Eros* (Zürich-Munich, 1986) p. 107. For Roman examples, see Bailey, *Ptolemaic and Roman*, pls. 16–18.
  38. For examples, see Dasen, *Dwarfs*, figs. 6.3 and 6.4. On birth-houses, see F. Dumas, *Les mam-misis des temples égyptiens* (Paris, 1958); and Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York, 1999) pp. 285–288.
  39. In addition to Bes, female fertility demons were also used as apotropaic emblems in contexts related to women and children. They are often nude with voluptuous figures, large breasts, and elaborate headdresses. They stand or crouch and sometimes point to their genitalia or hold their large stomachs. For examples, see Bailey, *Ptolemaic and Roman*, nos. 3130–3143. For a reconsideration of these figurines, see Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, section 4.3.3.
  40. Dasen, *Dwarfs*, p. 68. For a discussion of child graves and necropoli from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, see François Dunand, “Les enfants et la mort en Égypte,” in V. Dasen, ed., *Naissance et petite enfance dans l’antiquité: Actes du colloque de Fribourg, 28 novembre–1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2001* (Fribourg, 2004) pp. 21–30. See also n. 46 below.
  41. Old age and ugliness were familiar images of terror, but they were closely related to laughter and obscenity, which frightened off unwanted demons, for, as Aristotle states, “laughter is a part of ugly” (*Poetics* 5.1449a). For a larger discussion of grotesque figurines, see Maurice Olender, “Aspects of Baubo: Ancient Texts and Contexts,” in D. M. Halperin et al., eds., *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton, 1990) p. 102.
  42. Bes often features a combination of attributes that belong to other gods, including extra wings, limbs, and cult items; when in this altered form, he is called Bes Pantheos, an ancient solar god from which all other gods originate. See Barrett, “Harpocrates on Rheneia,” p. 200.
  43. For examples, see Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age*, pp. 26–27, figs. 24 and 25.
  44. For a nurse kissing her charge, see Masegla, *Body Language*, fig. 4.54. For a nurse smiling down upon her charge, see Burn and Higgins, *Catalogue of Greek Terracottas*, no. 2113.
  45. Masegla, *Body Language*, p. 260.
  46. For toddler and infant burials that contained nurse figurines, see Graepler, *Tonfiguren im Grab*, grave 64; and Hagan, “Nysiac Devotions,” pp. 305–315, especially p. 312.
  47. See Mollard-Besques, *Catalogue raisonné*, pl. 1, no. g D5; Becq, “New Themes, Theater Figurines,” p. 75, no. 38; Burn and Higgins, *Greek Terracottas*, no. 2113; Hart, *Ancient Greek Theatre*, p. 125, fig. 63; Hughes, *Performing Greek Comedy*, pp. 134 and 160–161; and Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age*, p. 228, fig. 27. For a wholly swaddled baby, see Bieber, *History*, p. 125, fig. 63.
  48. László Török, *Hellenizing Art in Ancient Nubia, 300 BC–AD 250* (Boston, 2011) pp. 3–4, 99–100.
  49. For a full discussion of Hellenistic representations of Africans, see Masegla, *Body Language*, pp. 159–184.
  50. Acc. no. S/12 2847. Published: Jutta Fischer, *Griechische-römische Terrakotten aus Ägypten* (*Tübingen Studien zur Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 14, 1994) no. 428.
  51. According to Csaba La’da, Cyrenaica’s close proximity to Egypt is likely what makes it the largest origin of female immigrants with ethnic titles. See “Immigrant Women in Hellenistic Egypt: The Evidence of Ethnic Designations,” in H. Melaerts and L. Mooren, eds., *Le rôle et le statut de la femme en Égypte hellénistique, romaine, et byzantine: Actes du colloque international Bruxelles—Leuven 27–29 novembre 1997* (Leuven, 2002) p. 173.

52. Masegla, *Body Language*, p. 279.
53. For examples, and a complete discussion of human dwarfs in Egypt, Greece, and its colonies, see *ibid.*, pp. 150–164 and 267–279; and Dasen, *Dwarfs*, pp. 214–242, pls. 41–55.
54. Masegla, *Body Language*, p. 280. These words describe “cripples” in ancient Greek. For examples, see Masegla, *Body Language*, pp. 279–294.
55. See Lisa Trentin, *The Hunchback in Hellenistic and Roman Art* (London, 2015) pp. 29, 295–296; James Elliot, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, vol. 2, *Greece and Rome* (Eugene, Oregon, 2016) pp. 35, 43, 52, 163, and 249; D. Levi, “The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback,” in R. Stillwell, ed., *Antioch on the Orontes*, vol. 3, *The Excavations 1937–1939* (Princeton, 1941) pp. 220–232; Kathleen M. D. Dunbabin and Matthew W. Dickie, “Invidia rumpantur pectora: The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband* 18 (1991) pp. 26–35; and John Clarke, “Three Uses of the Pygmy and the Aethiops at Pompeii: Decorating, ‘Othering,’ and Warding Off Demons,” in L. Bricault, M. J. Versluys, and P. G. P. Meyboom, eds., *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World* (Leiden, 2007) pp. 153–169.
- While many scholars are quick to dismiss grotesques as “low” or “inferior” art, many of these objects feature high technical and decorative quality.
56. Stephanie L. Budin, *Images of Women and Child from the Bronze Age* (Cambridge, 2011) p. 35.
57. Walter Scheidel, *Death on the Nile: Disease and the Demography of Roman Egypt* (Leiden, 2001) especially chap. 2, pp. 51–104.
58. This is why Bes and his more human counterpart, Ptah-Pataikos, are often featured wrestling snakes. See Henry Fischer, “The Ancient Egyptian Attitude towards Monsters,” in A. E. Farkas, P. O. Harper, and E. B. Harrison, eds., *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Mainz am Rhein, 1987) p. 18. For an example, see Dasen, *Dwarfs*, pl. 12, no. 2.
59. In ancient Greece, if a child survived the first five days after birth, it was accepted into the family and city through a series of rituals, such as the *Amphidromia* (“running around”) ceremony. In this ceremony, the newborn was carried around the home’s hearth at a run, and on the tenth day (*dekate*), the child was named. See Bobou, *Children*, pp. 31–32; and Neils and Oakley, *Coming of Age*, p. 144. In Ptolemaic Egypt, parents waited longer to ensure the health of their newborn: according to the third century C.E. Roman grammarian Censorinus (*De die natalie* 11.7) “the babies, particularly fragile through those days, do not smile and are not free from danger. This is the reason why, past that day, the custom is to hold a feast day, which occasion is called ‘the fortieth day.’ Now, before that day the new mother does not enter a shrine.” For the full quotation, see Maryline Parca, “Children in Ptolemaic Egypt: What the Papyri Say,” in J. E. Grubbs, T. Parkin, and R. Bell, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World* (Oxford, 2013) p. 473. According to Parca, the fortieth day may have marked a child’s social birth, since, before that moment, the parents could not be certain it would survive.
60. For examples, see Fischer, “Ancient Egyptian Attitude,” pl. III, no. 11; and Dasen, *Dwarfs*, p. 69, fig. 6.1.



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