

## The Experience of Cursing and the Power of Things at the Fons Annae Perennae

In 1999, during the building of a parking lot in Rome, Italy, the remains of the fountain of Anna Perenna was unearthed by archaeologist Marina Piramonte. Among the discoveries within the fountain's basin were a plethora of magical artifacts, including a *caccabus*, 74 oil lamps, over 20 *defixiones*, and various lead containers holding figurines inscribed with magical symbols (Piranomonte 2015). While scholars have extensively examined the *defixiones* and their inscriptions, little attention has been paid to the collective power of this assemblage of magical objects and its potential impact on the practitioners who frequented the site to cast spells (Piranomonte 2015; 2010; Blänsdorf 2010). This paper seeks to explore the potency inherent in such a concentrated gathering of magical paraphernalia and the psychological, spiritual, and practical effects it may have had on those who utilized it for their rituals. By gaining a better understanding of how such a large magical assemblage could affect the practitioners who visited the site by using Bennett's theory of vibrant matter and "thing-power," we can gain a stronger understanding of the effect of large assemblages of magical objects in the study of ancient magic (Bennett 2010).

Objects themselves can have the power to affect people coming to a site by influencing their emotions or triggering certain memories through various sensorial affects (Hamilakis 2017; Rask 2020). I argue that the interactions between in the magical objects amassed in the fountain and the individuals who visited the site imbued the assemblage with a certain agency and ability to act upon the individuals who spent time worshiping or doing magic there, following Bennett's (2010) theory of "thing-power." In this same way, the ritual deposition of these objects within the fountain's basin likely imbued the site itself with a potent aura of magical power in the minds

of its visitors. As practitioners returned time and time again to cast spells or seek assistance from supernatural forces, the accumulated evidence of past rituals may have served as reminder of the potency of the site, creating an atmosphere conducive to magical practice and therefore, encouraging more practitioners to use the site.

The discovery of the *Fons Annae Perennae* and its associated magical artifacts provides an unique opportunity to explore the dynamic interplay between material culture, ritual practice, and the power of things at a magical site. By examining the collective power of this assemblage of magical objects and its impact on practitioners, we can gain valuable insights into the power of object assemblages in the study of ancient magic.

## Works Cited

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