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The Dresden Type Satyr-Hermaphrodite Group in Roman Theaters

ALEXANDRA RETZLEFF

Abstract

The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group is known through more than 30 Roman replicas in various media. The meaning of the group has traditionally been derived from its discovery in domestic contexts, but replicas from the theaters at Daphne and Side raise different questions regarding viewer reception. The horizontal composition and small scale of the groups suggest they may have decorated the *pulpitum* (stage) of those theaters. At the Daphne theater, where two replicas were found, the groups were likely displayed as pendants, offering complimentary views of the same sculptural composition. In terms of subject matter, the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group yields several nuanced interpretations associated with the theater, including connotations of *paideia* (Roman reverence for the Greek past), Dionysiac aspects, the reversal of norms, the objectification of the body, the sexual tryst, and the *agon*.*

The group depicts a satyr and a hermaphrodite engaged in a struggle. The satyr, seated on a rocky outcropping, envelops the hermaphrodite from behind, holding it between his legs and grasping its arm with both hands (figs. 1, 2). The hermaphrodite twists vigorously at the waist, pushing the satyr's head back with one hand and grasping his foot with the other. Although the hermaphrodite pushes the satyr away, its right foot locks the assailant's leg so that he cannot escape, implying that the hermaphrodite does not truly intend to break away from the satyr's advances. The intertwining limbs of the two figures are delicately balanced in a complex composition, with few points of contact with the base.¹

Although likely based on a Hellenistic model, the composition is known only through Roman replicas in various scales and materials.² Of the 30 sculptural

replicas, 28 are marble and two are bronze miniatures.³ Eight of the marbles are of unknown provenance.⁴ Twelve were found in Rome or its environs (although the precise findspots are not known),⁵ one is thought to have been found in Tunisia,⁶ and one may have been found in İzmir, Turkey.⁷ Another is less precisely associated with the Villa of Quintilius Varus at Tivoli.⁸ The best-known and most complete replica, located in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden, is a small-scale marble (ht. 91 cm, depth 61 cm). Only five of the replicas have secure archaeological contexts: two from the theater at Daphne, one from the theater at Side, one found in situ at the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis, and one (a miniature) from a Roman villa at Chiragan in Gaul.⁹ In addition to the sculptures, the composition is represented in wall paintings from Pompeii, mosaic pavements from Daphne, a terracotta seal from Cyrene, and on a gem in Munich.¹⁰ This study focuses on the sculptural replicas found in the theaters at Daphne outside Antioch and at Side in Pamphilia.

The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group is usually categorized with other sexually themed pairs as an "erotic group."¹¹ It is one of the groups that has been tentatively associated with the *symplegma* ("entanglement") described by Pliny as a creation of the Hellenistic sculptor Kephisodotos:¹²

Praxitelis filius Cephisodotus et artis heres fuit. cuius laudatum est Pergami symplegma nobile digitis corpori verius quam marmori impressis.

The son of Praxiteles, Cephisodotus, inherited also his skill. His "entanglement" at Pergamum is highly

*I wish to thank my colleagues at McMaster University and the anonymous reviewers of this article for their very useful comments and suggestions.

¹For a detailed treatment of the group, see Haüber 1999.

²I use the term "replica" rather than "copy" because these are examples of a much-replicated type, and no "original" can be identified. For a historiography of the Roman "copy" and bibliography, see Gazda 1995, 2002.

³Stähli 1999, 309–40. The bronzes (Stähli 1999, nos. 2, 13) are of unknown provenance.

⁴Stähli 1999, nos. 4 (Dresden), 7, 8, 10, 23, 28–30.

⁵Stähli 1999, nos. 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 15–19, 21, 22.

⁶Stähli 1999, no. 24.

⁷Stähli 1999, no. 9.

⁸Stähli 1999, no. 20.

⁹Stähli 1999, nos. 1, 14 (Daphne), 25 (Side), 26 (Oplontis), 27 (Gaul).

¹⁰See Ajootian 1990, 278, nos. 63, 63a–c.

¹¹E.g., Marconi 1923. For the erotic theme of this sculptural group in the context of Greek culture, see Stähli 1999.

¹²Plin. *HN*36.4.24 (Eichholz 1962). Overbeck (1857–1858, 2:114) first proposed the identification of the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group with the *symplegma* of Kephisodotos.



Fig. 1. Satyr-hermaphrodite group ("front view"), Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, inv. no. 155 (H.-P. Klut; © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden).



Fig. 2. Satyr-hermaphrodite group ("back view"), Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, inv. no. 155 (H.-P. Klut; © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden).

praised, being notable for the fingers, which seem to sink into living flesh rather than into dead marble.

Although Pliny does not specify the subject matter of Kephisodotos' statue, the use of the term *symplegma* is often taken to indicate sexual themes. A line from one of Martial's epigrams uses *symplegma* in a pornographic sense to denote a novel sexual position involving five people:¹³

*Sunt illic Veneris novae figurae,
quales perditus audeat fututor,
praestent et taceant quid exoleti,
quo symplegmate quinque copulentur,
qua plures teneantur a catena,
extinctam liceat quid ad lucernam.*

Therein are novel erotic postures such as only a desperate fornicator would venture, what male prostitutes provide and keep quiet about, in what combinations five persons are linked, by what chain are held more than five, what can go on when the lamp is put out.

These literary passages suggest that Kephisodotos' *symplegma* may have been a sculptural composition involving two or more people entangled in an erotic grouping. Inscribed statue bases from Ephesos, however, suggest that the term *symplegma* could also denote sculptural groups of a much different character. The Roman bilingual inscriptions describe subjects that are unlikely to have been sexual. One *symplegma* involves Athamas (the Boeotian foster parent of Dionysos) and another features Theseus.¹⁴ The connection between the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group and a Hellenistic sculpture by Kephisodotos is highly speculative, and the date of the original composition has been the subject of much discussion; proposals range from the early third century B.C.E. to after 100 B.C.E.¹⁵

This paper does not pursue problems of *Kopienkritik* but rather treats the sculptural group as a product of the society that commissioned it.¹⁶

Eight marble fragments belonging to Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite groups were discovered by the Princeton Archaeological Expedition in the theater at Daphne in April of 1935.¹⁷ The discovery of two satyr heads makes it clear that at least two replicas of the same group, both of very fine workmanship, were set up here.¹⁸ One of the heads, now in the Princeton University Art Museum and reassembled from six pieces, preserves the satyr's forehead, horns, nose, left eye, part of the nape of the neck, and parts of the hair and beard, as well as the base of the hand and two fingers belonging to the hermaphrodite (fig. 3).¹⁹ The dimensions of the head fragment (ht. 23.6 cm, wdth. 18.4 cm, depth 18.3 cm) show that the group was under-life-sized. The second satyr fragment (ht. 48 cm), now in the Hatay Archaeological Museum, was carved at the same scale.²⁰ His head and torso are preserved down to the waist, the arms are broken above the elbows, and the hand of the hermaphrodite is preserved to the wrist (fig. 4).²¹ It is clear from the position of the hermaphrodite's fingers on the satyr's face that the two replicas were sculpted in the same position, not as mirror-reversals. The fragments have been dated to the second century C.E. on the basis of carving style.²² The theater at Daphne was probably built shortly after 70 C.E., during the rule of Vespasian.²³ It was modified in the third century and extensively remodeled in the fourth century, following the earthquake of 363 C.E., before it went out of use in the sixth century.²⁴ The precise findspots of the sculptures from the theater at Daphne are not noted in the catalogue of finds published by the Princeton Expedition, making it difficult for us to posit their original placement within the building.

The fragment from the theater at Side was discovered by Turkish archaeologists in 1958 and is cur-

¹³ Mart. *Epigram* 12.43.5–10 (Bailey 1993).

¹⁴ Engelmann 1979–1980, nos. 857 (Athamas), 509 (Theseus), 858 (subject not specified).

¹⁵ Kell 1988, 21; Ridgway 2000, 287 n. 54; Verzár-Bass 2004, 911–12.

¹⁶ On recent reevaluations of *Kopienkritik*, see Perry 2005, 12–27.

¹⁷ Stillwell 1938, 173–74, nos. 161–68, pls. 13, 14, inv. nos. 4725-S234 (torso and head of satyr), 4721-S230 (hair fragment), 5269-S291 (head of satyr), 4723-S232 (foot), 4722-S231 (hand), 4724-S233 (hand), 4726-S235 (hand clutching arm), 4454-S215 (hand grasping foot).

¹⁸ In addition to these two groups, fragments belonging to a third group were found nearby in a surface survey but cannot be securely connected to the theater (see Stillwell 1938, 174, no. 161n, pl. 14).

¹⁹ Stillwell 1938, no. 163; Najbjerg 2001, 212, no. 68.

²⁰ Hatay Archaeological Museum, Antakya, inv. no. 1327.

²¹ Stillwell 1938, no. 161. A comparison of the length of the face in the scale photographs from the Princeton Expedition shows that the two satyrs were carved at the same scale (cf. Stillwell 1938, pl. 13, nos. 161, 163).

²² Najbjerg 2001, 212.

²³ This date is based on stratigraphic evidence, as well as on a passage in Malalas' *Chronographia* (10.45.261), which states that Vespasian built the theater at Daphne and had *Ex praeda Iudaea* ("from the spoils of Judaea") inscribed on it. Since Vespasian was no longer in the East when Jerusalem fell in 70 C.E., the theater was probably built by Titus during Vespasian's rule (see Müller 1889, 86 n. 7; Downey 1938, 12).

²⁴ Wilber (1938, 59) dates the earthquake to 341 C.E., but the earthquake of 363 C.E. is meant (see Russell 1985, 42).

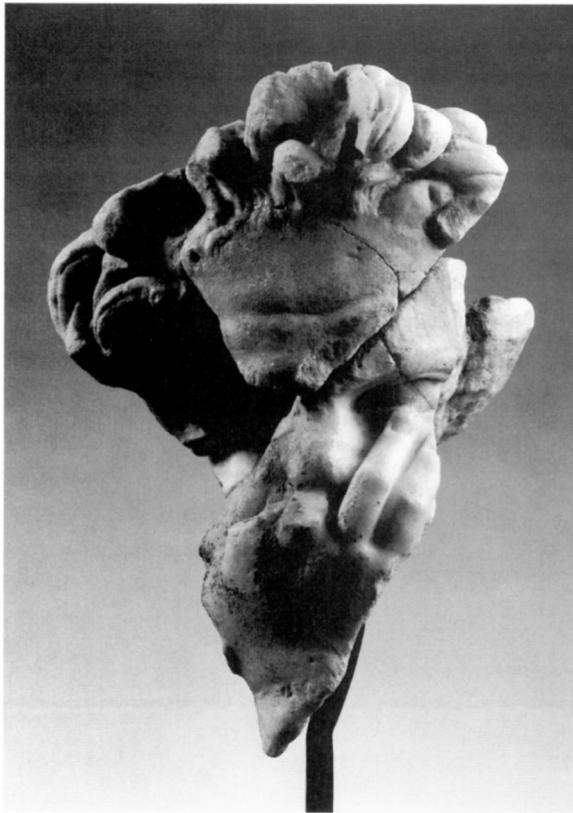


Fig. 3. Head of a satyr from Daphne theater, Princeton Art Museum, inv. no. 2000-49 (B. White; © Trustees of Princeton University).

rently housed in the Side Museum (fig. 5).²⁵ The torso of the hermaphrodite is preserved, as is the left arm as far as the elbow, the beginning of a leg, and a portion of the left thigh; the head and right arm are missing. A portion of the satyr's calf is attached to the hermaphrodite's abdomen. The replica from Side (ht. 40 cm, wdth. 18.4 cm, depth 17 cm) was less than half-life-sized, even smaller than those from Daphne. The theater at Side was most likely constructed in the last quarter of the second century C.E., with a period of remodeling in the Late Roman period.²⁶ The hermaphrodite fragment was found in front of Gate C of the scaena.

ARCHITECTURAL SETTINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The story of the hermaphrodite, as told by Ovid, begins when the nymph Salmakis falls in love with

Hermaphroditos, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite. Salmakis plunges into a spring where he is bathing and surrounds the boy with her embrace. As she prays that they may never be parted, their bodies are fused into one, thereby creating a sexual hybrid, the hermaphrodite.²⁷ In the Roman period, the myth was connected to the Carian city of Halikarnassos, although it is not clear how widely this story was known. A Roman bilingual inscription from Halikarnassos, found in situ on a promontory known as Salmakis, relates a version of the myth and claims it for the city, citing this as one of Halikarnassos' most noteworthy aspects.²⁸ Vitruvius calls the spring at Halikarnassos by the name Salmakis, and notes that it carried an undeserved reputation for infecting people with lewdness and making men effeminate and unchaste.²⁹ Although these attributes seem fitting for the hermaphrodite myth, Vitruvius claims that the superstition was connected to the pacification of barbarians in the early days of colonization.

In Greek and Roman art, the hermaphrodite is often portrayed alone and either nude, semidraped, or draped.³⁰ When paired with another figure, the companion is usually Dionysiac: a satyr, Pan, Silenus, or

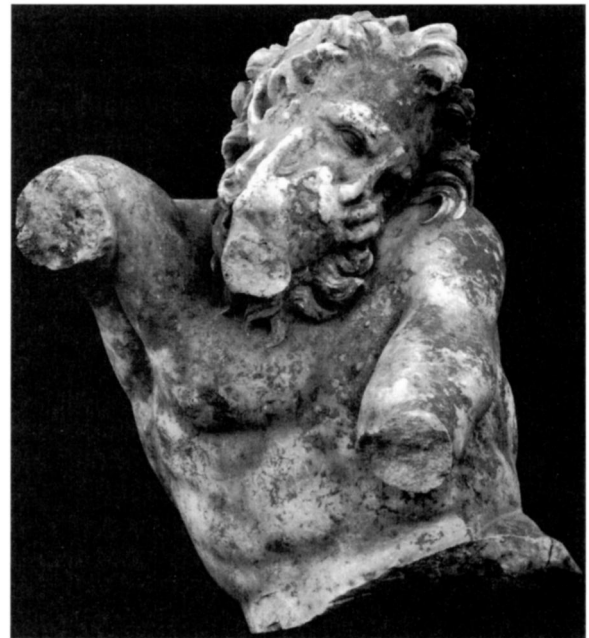


Fig. 4. Torso of a satyr from Daphne theater, Hatay Archaeological Museum, Antakya, inv. no. 1327 (© Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University).

²⁵ Side Museum, inv. no. 464; Inan 1975, 123–25, no. 56.

²⁶ Mansel 1963, 122–42; de Bernardi Ferrero 1970, 141–42.

²⁷ *Ov. Met.* 4.285–388. On Ovid's myth, see Oehmke 2004, 13–15.

²⁸ Isager 1998.

²⁹ *Vitr. De arch.* 2.12.

³⁰ Ajootian 1990, 271–77, nos. 5–59.

erotes.³¹ The interest of the Dresden type lies not only in the pairing of the hermaphrodite with a satyr but also in the complex interaction between the two figures. Previous scholarship has assigned various meanings to the group. Von Prittwitz und Gaffron has interpreted the group as a metaphor for love's simultaneous pleasure and anguish.³² Ridgway has suggested that the figures represent the contradictions in the forces of nature. In a garden setting, the group would emphasize the "correlation between the well-ordered planting and the inherent wild essence of vegetation."³³ Gercke has equated the two figures to wrestlers engaged in a struggle that is agonistic rather than erotic.³⁴ Ajootian has argued that all Hermaphroditos images, Greek and Roman, regardless of their setting, were perceived as guardians because of the function of the phallus as a weapon against the Evil Eye.³⁵ Such an apotropaic use represents a more serious, potentially dangerous struggle than the erotic or agonistic one suggested by other scholars. While each of these interpretations has its merits, it is my view that no single interpretation can be taken as the inherent meaning of the group. Rather, its meanings stem from the contexts of the statues' display and the impressions of the viewers within those settings.

Previous scholarship on the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group has focused on the domestic sphere. Ridgway views "erotic groups," including the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group, as most appropriate in the luxurious gardens of Roman villas.³⁶ Smith suggests that the group belongs best in an outdoor, scenic context. He cites an example found in situ in the garden at the villa at Oplontis and a Pompeian wall painting that depict it in an open landscape.³⁷ Indeed, the subject is well suited in many respects to the decoration of private gardens. The position of the group next to a tree-lined pool at Oplontis might even have been a deliberate reference to the Hermaphroditos myth, which takes place at a spring.³⁸ Most of the replicas of this group are, however, of unknown or insecure provenance, and the examples from Side and Daphne are from public buildings. In addition, fragments of related sculptural groups involving a satyr and a nymph were found at two other theaters in the Greek East: at Caesarea and Neapolis in Palestine.³⁹ The discovery of these groups



Fig. 5. Torso of a hermaphrodite, Side Museum, inv. no. 464 (M. Gilbert; courtesy the Side Museum).

in the public setting of the theater demands new considerations of their iconography and meanings. Much of what has been ascribed to the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group is not readily applicable to the context of Roman theater decoration, which raises the question of whether it is possible to attribute a single global meaning to a sculptural group that was displayed in antiquity in quite disparate settings.

³¹ Ajootian 1990, 277–82, nos. 60–77; Oehmke 2004, 34–41.

³² von Prittwitz und Gaffron 1999.

³³ Ridgway 2002, 91.

³⁴ Gercke 1988.

³⁵ Ajootian 1997, 228–29. Ajootian's argument is based on iconographic connections between various mosaics at the House of the Boat of Psyche at Daphne, dated to the third

century C.E. For the mosaics, see Stillwell 1938, 185, pl. 37; Kondoleon 2000, 71–4.

³⁶ Ridgway 2000, 288.

³⁷ Smith 1991, 131.

³⁸ *Ov. Met.* 4.285–388.

³⁹ For Caesarea, see Frova 1966, 203–5, no. 8. For Neapolis, see Magen 2005, 114, fig. 40. Both of these sculptural groups are small scale.

Both Cicero and Lucian reveal some of the intentions behind villa decoration.⁴⁰ In Cicero's letters, we find a request for statues that are *gymnasiode*, which would be suitable for his Academy. However, the provisions remain general and no particular statue type is stipulated. It seems that choices were made to complement the function of a space within the villa. In Lucian's description of the house of a wealthy man, the focus is on the fame of the masterpieces that were represented in the collection of replicas in the statue gallery. Within certain limits of aesthetic propriety, the selection of statuary in a private villa may therefore be interpreted as the personal choice of an individual and a reflection of that person's tastes and preferences.⁴¹

Vitruvius notes that the principle of propriety (*decorum*) applied to public spaces.⁴² He reports that, according to the mathematician Licymnius, the inhabitants of Alabanda were judged as unintelligent (*insipientes*) because of their inappropriateness (*indecentia*). They set up statues of men pleading cases in the gymnasium and statues of athletes in the forum. Vitruvius claims that the inappropriate disposition of the statues brought the state as a whole into disrepute. His implication is that the subject matter of statuary must be accordant with its environment, and that poor choices would reflect badly on the state as well as the benefactor.⁴³ The benefactor must then have been involved in decisions that led to the production and/or obtaining of the statues for a particular architectural setting.

These literary sources suggest that the principle of *decorum* provided guidelines for the types of art that should be displayed in various settings without prescriptions for any particular requisite works.⁴⁴ Statues helped to define the space in which they were situated and, in turn, were defined by the meanings ascribed to

them in that space, so that a range of associations with or aspects of a single piece of art could make the same composition appropriate in radically different settings.⁴⁵ The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group likely acquired different meanings, or at least different nuances, in the private and the public spheres. A focus on the context, including the architectural setting and the interests of the benefactors and viewers, urges us to treat statues as polysemic objects.

The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group was represented at Daphne not only in the statues from the theater but also in two mosaic panels from the third-century House of the Boat of Psyche, 200 m south of the theater.⁴⁶ The mosaics show the group from two opposing viewpoints: one shows the hermaphrodite from the front, the other shows it from the back (figs. 6, 7). Theater and performance themes composed a significant part of the decoration of elite houses at Antioch and Daphne,⁴⁷ but the occurrence at Daphne of satyr-hermaphrodite groups in two distinct architectural contexts and in different media is notable and raises the possibility that there was a connection between them.⁴⁸ The mosaics of the House of the Boat of Psyche included other theatrical imagery, notably masks.⁴⁹ The satyr-hermaphrodite group mosaics were located in the colonnaded portico (area 4), between a nymphaeum and a series of three large rooms.⁵⁰ The orientation of the panel mosaics in the portico suggests that they were meant to be seen by viewers facing west as they were walking from the large rooms toward the nymphaeum. While architectural elements such as colonnades and nymphaea in third-century houses at Daphne and Antioch seem to have been designed to evoke public spaces such as colonnaded streets and public fountains,⁵¹ it stands to reason that aspects of their decorative programs also referred to the public sphere. The mosaic quotations of public

⁴⁰ For a selection of Cicero's letters, see Marvin 1989, 41–3. On Lucian (*Philops.* 18), see Koortbojian 2002, 175–83.

⁴¹ See Neudecker 1988; Sterling 2005.

⁴² Vit. *De arch.* 7.5.5–7; see also Pollitt 1974, 341–47.

⁴³ On the association between *decorum* and *auctoritas* in Vitruvius, see Perry 2002, 156–57; 2005, 32–5.

⁴⁴ Perry (2005, 54–5) discusses this point in reference to Pliny the Elder's mention of "women's subjects" (*femineis argumentis*) in the Porticus Octaviae (*HN* 36.43) and Cicero's request for sculpture that is "appropriate to the gymnasium" (*gymnasiode*) (Cic. *Att.* 1.6.2).

⁴⁵ On the application of a viewer-oriented approach to Late Roman art, see Elsner 1995.

⁴⁶ In the same room (the portico), a mosaic depicting an ithyphallic dwarf accompanied by the inscription KAIZY ("And You") warns visitors that the sentiments they bring into the house, good or bad, will be returned to them. This apotro-

paic formula is also found at the entrance of the House of the Evil Eye at Antioch (see Kondoleon 2000, 77 n. 20).

⁴⁷ See Huskinson (2002–2003) for a detailed treatment of four mosaic pavements from houses in or around Antioch.

⁴⁸ Ajootian (1997, 229) suggests that there was a sanctuary to Hermaphroditos at Daphne to which the statues and the mosaics referred. Evidence for the cult of Hermaphroditos is limited, but a votive inscription attests that Hermaphroditos was worshiped in the Hellenistic period at Kos among other gods associated with healing, fertility, and children (Carratelli 1963). On religious aspects of the hermaphrodite, see also Oehmke 2004, 18–20.

⁴⁹ Stillwell 1938, 183–86 (Villa 23/24–M/N at Daphne-Harbie); Kondoleon 2000, fig. 5 (Rooms 3, 8).

⁵⁰ For a plan of the House of the Boat of Psyche showing the location of the mosaics, see Kondoleon 2000, 72, fig. 5.

⁵¹ Dobbins 2000, 60–1.

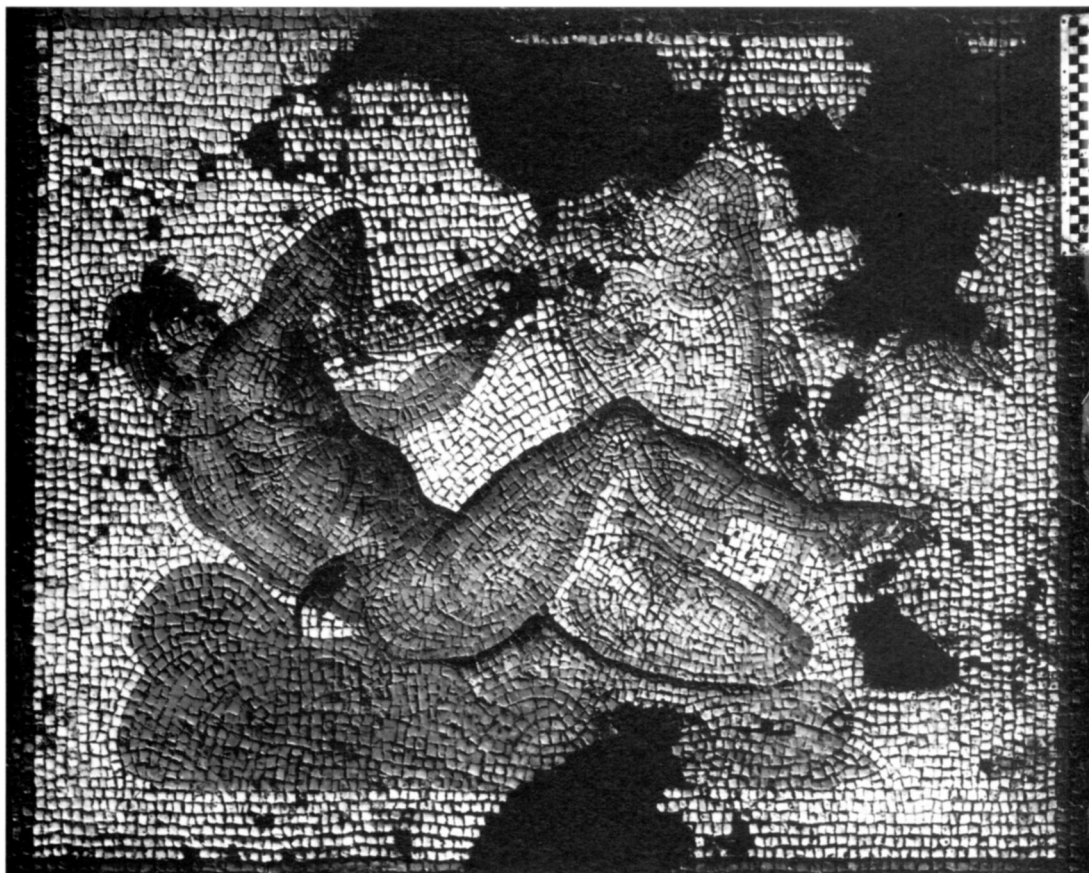


Fig. 6. Mosaic Panel A (Room 4), the House of the Boat of Psyche, Daphne (© Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University).

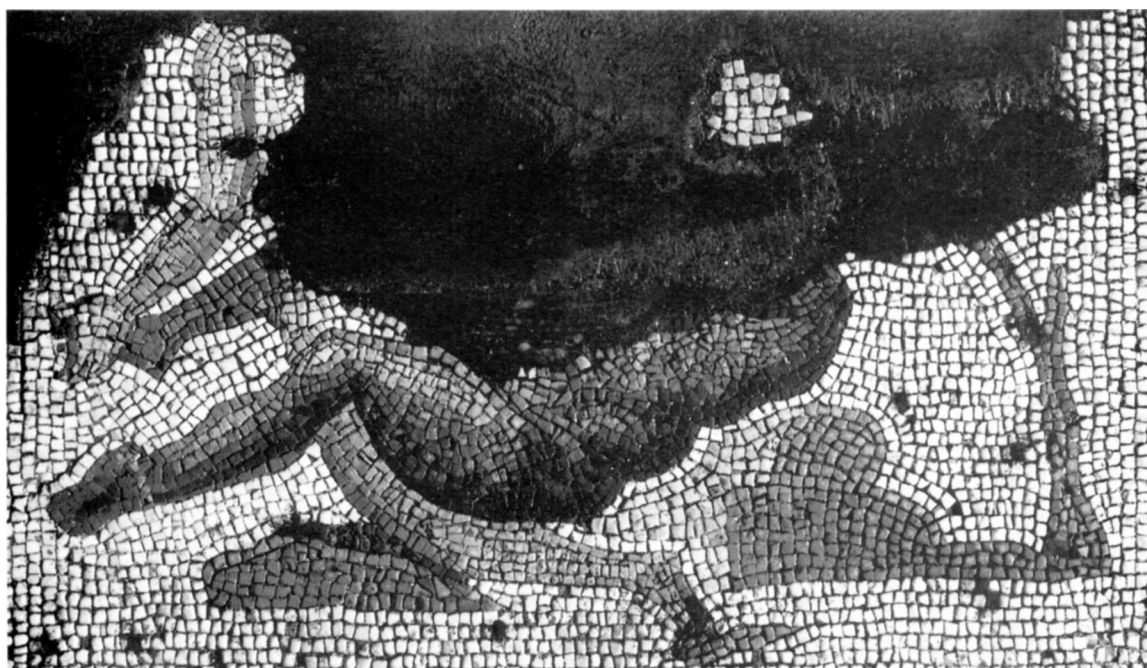


Fig. 7. Mosaic Panel C (Room 4), the House of the Boat of Psyche, Daphne (© Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University).

statuary may have signaled to visitors that they were entering a public area of the house, and the theatrical theme would reflect favorably on the social status of the homeowners by demonstrating their cultivated taste. The location of the house relative to the theater and the location of the mosaics within the house suggest that they are an artistic reference to the statues set up in the theater.⁵²

SCULPTURAL DISPLAY IN THEATERS

The ornamentation of the stage and the beauty of the interior space were important components of the experience of attending the theater. In a discussion of sense perception, Lucretius makes special note of the beautiful effect of the colored awnings stretched over the theater.⁵³ Later, he refers to a sort of sensory overload induced by attending the theater for days on end and alludes to the audience and the diverse theater decorations along with the entertainment itself:⁵⁴

*Et quicumque dies multos ex ordine ludis
adsiduas dederunt operas, plerumque videmus,
cum iam destiterunt ea sensibus usurpare,
relicuas tamen esse vias in mente patentis,
qua possint eadem rerum simulacra venire.
Per multos itaque illa dies eadem observantur
ante oculos, etiam vigilantes ut videantur
cernere saltantis et mollia membra moventis,
et citharae liquidum carmen chordasque loquentis
auribus accipere, et consessum cernere eundem
scenaique simul varios splendere decores.*

If anyone has given his whole attention constantly to the games for many days in succession, we generally see that, although he has stopped receiving these [images] through the senses, channels remain open in his mind by which these same images of things may come to him. So for many days the same images move before his eyes, so that even if he is awake he seems to see dancers stirring their supple limbs, to perceive in his ears the fluent song of the lyre and its speaking strings, to see the same audience and the different beauties of the stage shine brilliantly.

This passage emphasizes the repetitiveness of the surroundings, which is an important consideration with regard to the effect of statuary in a theater in

contrast to other architectural contexts. In a villa or bath building, for example, a visitor could move freely from one space into another, experiencing the statuary from different angles and in intentional sequences.⁵⁵ In a theater, however, the impact of the statuary was unchanging, delivered in a single tableau. Statues in theaters normally were concentrated in the stage area, displayed in the niches or the intercolumniations of the scaenae frons or on the *pulpitum*. Small statues, altars, fountains, and candelabra might also be set up in the niches across the front of the *pulpitum*.⁵⁶ Most of the time, the spectator occupied a fixed position in the cavea in relation to the statues, which served as constant points of reference. Some varying angles might be glimpsed as the spectator entered and exited the theater or milled about during the show, but there would remain a fundamental divide between the stage and cavea. The location of the seat occupied by the spectator thus would have affected the visibility of the sculpture. While some iconographic details might have been clear to those seated in the orchestra or the lowest tier, the *ima* cavea, their visibility must have diminished in the upper tiers of seats. With the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group, which relies on anatomical details such as the satyr's horns and the hermaphrodite's genitalia to complete its meaning, the precise subject would surely have been lost on much of the audience. It was toward the educated elite, who would have been seated in the orchestra and *ima* cavea, that the nuances of the statuary were aimed.⁵⁷

That two replicas of the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group were found in the theater at Daphne suggests they were set up as pendants. The intentional pairing of statues aimed at creating a special meaning through juxtaposition was not uncommon in the Roman sphere.⁵⁸ In some cases, the pendant pieces were virtually identical, as at the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, where two replicas of the Farnese Hercules appeared on either side of the entryway to the Great Hall.⁵⁹ A series of four replicas of a Pouring Satyr from the theater by the Domitianic villa at Castel Gandolfo may have been displayed in a deliberate repetitive composition.⁶⁰ Pendant statues could also be carved

⁵² The possibility that the mosaics were inspired by the theater sculpture was also raised by Verzár-Bass 2004, 915.

⁵³ Lucr. *De rerum natura* 4.74–89 (Godwin 1986).

⁵⁴ Lucr. *De rerum natura* 4.973–984 (Godwin 1986).

⁵⁵ Zanker 1994, 288.

⁵⁶ See Sturgeon (2004, pls. 3, 4) for reconstructions of the scaenae frons at the Corinth theater and the proposed locations of statues. For display in the *pulpitum* niches, see Fuchs 1987, 138–50.

⁵⁷ For a selection of ancient sources on theater seating, see Csapo and Slater 1994, 306–12. Most of the evidence for re-

served seating in the Greek East, however, pertains to civic tribes, trade guilds, and, in the late empire, private individuals (Roueché 1993).

⁵⁸ Bartman (1988, 221–22) discusses the use of pendants in villas, particularly the Via Cavour villa in Rome, and notes the apparently deliberate lack of stylistic and compositional parallelism in many examples.

⁵⁹ The statues were set up in rooms where visitors could linger and examine them at leisure (see Marvin 1983, 355–57).

⁶⁰ The statues were found in the cavea (see Neudecker 1988, 134–44; Koortbojian 2002, 195–200).

as mirror images to complement a particular architectural setting. In several Roman theaters in the western empire, for example, sculptures of sleeping Silenoi were set up in mirror-reversed pendant groups, presumably because it suited the symmetrical layout of the fountains they adorned.⁶¹

Pendant display would have been particularly effective for the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group because of the complexity of its composition. The group has figured prominently in discussions of sculptural planes in Hellenistic sculpture, and arguments have been made for one, two, or multiple intended views (*Einansichtigkeit*, *Zweiansichtigkeit*, *Vielansichtigkeit*).⁶² The various contexts in which the group has been found, however, suggest that Roman taste accepted its presentation with open and restricted views. In the garden at the villa at Oplontis, the viewer would be able to appreciate the element of surprise in the composition by walking around the statue and seeing it from various angles; the context there seems to invite contemplation from multiple views.⁶³ In a theater, however, the opportunity for interaction with the statues on the *pulpitum* and scaenae frons was more limited.

The two principal horizontal views of the composition are a "front view" presenting the hermaphrodite's back, and a "back view" presenting its chest.⁶⁴ While the hermaphrodite's genitalia are visible to some degree from both standpoints, they are only truly emphasized from an intermediary point, which Haüber has termed the "hermaphrodite view."⁶⁵ In the context of the theater, where the hermaphrodite view was unlikely, the element of surprise may nevertheless have been captured through the use of pendants representing the two horizontal views. These preserved the composition's inherent sense of reversal in a two-dimensional setting, with one view emphasizing the satyr's advances and the second showing the hermaphrodite in control.⁶⁶ It seems likely that the two statues from the theater at Daphne depicting the same configuration (not mirror reversals) were set up to show the front and back views, as in the mosaics from the House of

the Boat of Psyche. Although evidence for only one Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group was found at the theater at Side, the rough finish on the back of the torso suggests that it was carved to display the back view.⁶⁷ While there may originally have been a second replica presenting the front view set up in the Side theater, it is also possible that there was only one replica. The depiction of the satyr-hermaphrodite group on Roman gems and seals demonstrates that it could also be depicted singly in a two-dimensional format.⁶⁸

Although it is not certain where the groups were set up in the theaters at Daphne and Side, the findspot of the Side fragment in front of one of the scaenae doors suggests a location in the stage area. While the rough finish on the back of the hermaphrodite torso from Side implies its placement against a wall or in front of a niche, the two satyr fragments from Daphne are fully carved on all sides. The horizontal composition of the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group is not common in theater statuary, however, and does not lend itself readily to a location in the intercolumniations or the niches of the scaenae frons. The small scale of the groups also raises the problem of their visibility and their aesthetic compatibility with the larger, vertically oriented statues that dominated the decoration of Roman theaters. The statue type with a horizontal composition that is most common in Roman theaters is the reclining or sleeping Silenus, which was usually a fountain figure.⁶⁹ It is notable that the Silenoi were often displayed as pendants, and usually associated with the outer niches in the front of the *pulpitum*. On the basis of composition and scale, the *pulpitum* may be proposed as a possible location for the Dresden-type hermaphrodite groups from Side and Daphne.⁷⁰

CONTEXT AND MEANINGS

The possibility of pendants raises broader questions about how the meaning of the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group was informed by the subject matter of other statues in the same venue. In any context, a statue gains a shade of meaning through its relationship to other figures in its sculptural setting.⁷¹

⁶¹ Pendant groups of sleeping Silenoi are known at the theaters at Caere, Falerii, Olisipo (Portugal), Arelate, and Vienna (see Fuchs 1987, 142; Ajootian 1993, 252).

⁶² For a summary of scholarship on this point, see Verzár-Bass 2004.

⁶³ For the garden at Oplontis, see Jashemski 1987.

⁶⁴ Schmidt 1925, 100; Schober 1936, 91; Gercke 1988, 234; Kell 1988, 28.

⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion of the "front" and "back" views of the group, see Haüber 1999, 169–71. For the "Hermaphrodite" view, see Haüber 1999, pl. 46.2.

⁶⁶ Verzár-Bass 2004, 917.

⁶⁷ Inan (1975, 125) suggests that the Side torso provided important evidence for a second main view of the composition.

⁶⁸ Ajootian 1990, 278, nos. 63b, 63c.

⁶⁹ Fuchs 1987, 141–43.

⁷⁰ While niches across the front of the *pulpitum* are ubiquitous in Roman theaters, it should be noted that no evidence for them was preserved at Daphne (Wilber 1938, 76).

⁷¹ Roccas (2002, 292) illustrates this point through an examination of the Citharode Apollo in villas. Combinations with other statues (Diana, the Muses, Marsyas) emphasize different facets of Apollo's nature (festivity, creativity, judgment).

Zanker has suggested that the messages conveyed by individual statues in the scaenae frons were less important than those established through the viewing of the assemblage as a whole and the relationships between statues.⁷² We have seen that the impact of theater decoration lay in its capacity to be viewed all at once; some attempts at reconstructing specific and coherent “sculptural programs” in theaters have yielded convincing results.⁷³ However, most theater assemblages contain a number of eclectic elements that are difficult to reconcile as components of a single deliberate message.⁷⁴

The programmatic approach to interpreting statuary in its context presents two immediate challenges: the first relates to the archaeological record, the second relates to building chronology. First, it must be admitted that only a percentage, however large or small, of the total assemblage from the theater has been preserved and recovered through excavation, and in many cases, archaeological records are inexact about the findspots of individual statues. At Side, where the findspots in most cases are precisely recorded, only five other fragmentary statues were found in the theater excavations.⁷⁵ At Daphne, more statues were recovered from the theater, but the findspots are rarely specified.⁷⁶ Second, the long history of many Roman theaters argues against a unified reading of their sculptural assemblages. Stylistic criteria suggest a rather wide range of dates for the statuary recovered from many theaters, making it unlikely that they were all conceived as components of a single program. Rather, the sculptural assemblages in theaters are usually additive in nature, reflecting different phases of construction and centuries of accumulated benefactions. Although the aesthetic and conceptual interconnections between the statues displayed together on the *pulpitum* and scaenae frons, even if they were set up at different times, did become a decorative program, the messages of the individual statues could also be considered on their own terms.

One of the objectives in setting up a replica of the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group in a Roman theater may have been to refer to art of the Greek past, at least in a general way. The mythical subject matter and ideal form were fundamentally suitable for the theater, which itself was a cultural venue derived from the Greek past and functioned as a setting for some activities that were Greek in origin. Sculpture of this sort may have served as a form of diplomacy through which a city might create a visual encomium celebrating its membership in the culture of the wider Hellenic world of the Roman empire.⁷⁷ *Paideia* may be seen as an important driving force behind the mass production of replicas. In some cases, benefactors seem to have relied on clichés, deliberately choosing works that were familiar and immediately recognizable.⁷⁸ At the same time, it seems unlikely that the ancient viewer would be expected or able to identify the replicas of most individual statues in a given setting or that the identity of the original was a significant criterion in the selection of the statue type.⁷⁹ The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group must have functioned in the theater on the basis of specific, albeit nuanced, meanings that were particular to that context.

A Late Hellenistic marble relief depicting a hermaphrodite dancing with a mirror was found in the Theater of Dionysos in Athens, suggesting that already in the Hellenistic period, there was a point of connection between hermaphrodites and the theater.⁸⁰ Perhaps the hermaphrodite's sexually ambiguous nature was seen to reflect the blurred gender identities of the stage, where costume and role-playing allowed traditional boundaries to be crossed. On the Greek stage, male actors played all parts, including those of women. The Roman pantomime, too, was a male performer, often characterized by ancient sources as effeminate, who acted all the roles in the story, both male and female.⁸¹

The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group may have been specifically more appropriate for theater

⁷² Zanker 1994, 286.

⁷³ At the theater at Carthage, the statuary may have symbolized the principal components of the Pythian Games established by Septimius Severus (Ros 1996, 484–89). At the Theater of Aphrodisias, the sculptural assemblage may refer to Augustus' victory at Actium, in addition to cultural, civic, and athletic aspects (Erim and Smith 1991, 67–98).

⁷⁴ For theater assemblages from Italy and the West, see Fuchs 1987. Theaters in which relief sculpture has been preserved tend to offer more coherent readings, since the reliefs were carved all at once or in series (D'Andria and Ritti 1985; Sturgeon 2004).

⁷⁵ The other statues from the theater at Side include a Kassel Apollo, Tyche, Sphinx, the Three Graces, and an animal's leg (Inan 1975, nos. 5, 45, 63, 85, 436).

⁷⁶ The other statues from the theater at Daphne include

cuirassed portraits of imperial men, two Knidian Aphrodites, a Dresden Artemis, a female ideal head, a lion, five headless draped females, and a nude male torso (Stillwell 1938, nos. 143–53, 157–60, 169–73).

⁷⁷ On cultural production and local mythology in Roman Asia Minor, see Yıldırım 2004.

⁷⁸ Marvin 1989, 35–8. It is difficult to explain otherwise the appearance of the most common types (e.g., the Capitoline Venus) in all kinds of Roman contexts.

⁷⁹ Perry (2005, 57–65) aptly illustrates the problem of “the original” in a discussion of the Olympias-Aphrodite type.

⁸⁰ Acropolis Museum, Athens, inv. no. 3356; Oehmke 2004, 126, no. 102.

⁸¹ On effeminacy, see Csapo and Slater 1994, 383. On the pantomime playing all parts, see Lucian *Salt*. 67–8.

decoration because of the mythical identities of the participants—both are hybrid creatures. As companions of Dionysos, satyrs are intimately connected to the theater. Most frequently, they are portrayed in groups, often in scenes of excess or transgression, endlessly engaged in efforts to consummate their desires. Through their transformation of values, satyrs inversely represent a society's standards and morals.⁸² As such, they mirror the social inversions produced on the stage.⁸³ Tragedy and comedy offered opportunities to reflect on social norms and even inculcated a questioning of the very basis of those norms.⁸⁴ While there was a deliberate preservation of social stratification in the cavea of a Roman theater, the stage offered the exploration of reversal through fantasy.⁸⁵ Tensions within the culture could be explored on the stage while real social structure was safely maintained.

The pairing of the hermaphrodite with a satyr emphasizes the former's sexuality and resonates with the characterization of the theater as a place of sexual license. Roman mimes could be sexually explicit.⁸⁶ Valerius Maximus, for example, talks about women stripping on the stage as early as the Republican period.⁸⁷ Because Roman actors were *infamis*, they were legally vulnerable to all forms of abuse, and the theater became a place where the body was regularly objectified.⁸⁸ Cicero's defense of Gnaeus Plancius, with the notorious assertion that the alleged rape of a *mimula* (diminutive of female mime) should hardly be considered a crime, is a chilling reminder of the vulnerability and exploitation of those with *infamia* within the theatrical realm.⁸⁹ The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group may be construed as a visual metaphor for this form of social tension between Roman citizens and actors. The satyr, who is in the position of power, echoes the role of the male viewer. He controls the hermaphrodite, who struggles but ultimately submits to him, as an actress would be obliged to submit to a

Roman citizen. As a component of a theater's decorative scheme, the satyr-hermaphrodite group was a fitting backdrop to the relationship between those on the stage and those occupying the good seats in the lower portion of the cavea and the orchestra.

The sexual energy of the satyr-hermaphrodite group may also be read as a metaphor for social dynamics among the viewers in the cavea. The theater repeatedly figures in Latin love poetry as a place where men and women go to ogle and flirt. Propertius comments on his sexual attraction to women in the theater, apparently to those on the stage and those seated around him.⁹⁰ His lover, Cynthia, even establishes in the terms of their make-up that he should not crane his neck to the upper tiers of the theater where the women sit.⁹¹ Ovid freely admits to the same habit of spying on the upper tiers and shares advice on how to behave around women at the theater to woo them.⁹² He recommends, for example, applauding in particular any mimes playing the role of a lover.⁹³ Ovid encourages women to go the theater, which he considers a favorable place for showing oneself.⁹⁴ To men, he suggests that the theater is a good place to meet women and forge all types of relationships.⁹⁵ The theater, he proposes, is among the public places that pose a challenge to a woman's guardian.⁹⁶ It is a place dangerous to chastity, furnishing the seeds of wantonness by offering too much opportunity.⁹⁷ The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group would have been well suited to the decor of the theater as portrayed by poets as a locale for romantic trysts.

Another point of connection to the theater might be found in the group's agonistic theme. Both Daphne and Side were host to *agones*, one of the principal activities that took place in Roman theaters in the Greek East.⁹⁸ Daphne was one of the sites for the many festivals held by Antioch.⁹⁹ Epigraphic evidence attests to the presence of members of the Guild of the Artists of

⁸² On the representation of satyrs in classical Greek art, see Lisarrague 1990.

⁸³ See Turner 1995.

⁸⁴ This view is taken in reference to fifth-century Athens (Goldhill 1990, 127–29).

⁸⁵ On social hierarchy in theaters in the Greek East, see Small 1987; Roueché 1993, 119–28.

⁸⁶ Sexual themes in the theater are most vividly described by the Church Fathers who rallied hard against attendance at the theater by Christians, ostensibly because of immoral and sexually explicit content. On the early church's attitudes to theater and actresses, see Brown 1988, 314; Leyerle 2001, 13–41.

⁸⁷ Val. Max. 2.10.8, writing ca. 32 C.E., referring to the mid second century B.C.E.

⁸⁸ On the status of actors, see Csapo and Slater 1994, 276–79.

⁸⁹ Cic. *Planc.* 12.30.

⁹⁰ Prop. 2.22.4–12.

⁹¹ Prop. 4.8.77.

⁹² Ov. *Am.* 2.7.3.

⁹³ Ov. *Ars am.* 1.501–52.

⁹⁴ Ov. *Ars am.* 3.394. These would be the Theaters of Balbus, Marcellus, and Pompey in Rome.

⁹⁵ Ov. *Ars am.* 1.100.

⁹⁶ Ov. *Ars am.* 3.633.

⁹⁷ Ov. *Ars am.* 1.100; Ov. *Tr.* 2.279–80.

⁹⁸ Roman theaters served multiple functions and hosted a wide variety of events, both political and cultural (see Sturgeon 2004, 51–5). On festivals at Antioch and Daphne, see Downey 1961, 222–35. On festivals at Side, see Weiss 1981; Nollé 1993, 84–8.

⁹⁹ Strabo (16.2.7) notes that the Antiochenes and neighboring peoples held a festival in Daphne.

Dionysos (*technitai*) at Side, thereby confirming that actors gathered there and competed for prizes.¹⁰⁰ A sculptural group depicting the engagement of two figures in a struggle, particularly one in which there are surprises and reversals, might have been appropriate for the setting of theatrical *agones*. It may also have reflected some of the theatrical content. New compositions in comedy and tragedy as well as revivals of old plays were presented at festivals in the Greek East.¹⁰¹ The stories of the great Greek tragedies were also performed on Roman stages as pantomimes.¹⁰² The *agon* itself was a common formal motif in old comedy and Greek tragedy. Most plays of Euripides, in particular, have some kind of conflict as a central theme.¹⁰³ In its simplest form, the *agon* is made up of a pair of opposing speeches of approximately equal length. Some agonistic dialogues, however, are more complex, oscillating between several movements. The initial aggressor might find himself on the defensive when the adversary, overcoming his surprise, takes up the role as aggressor.¹⁰⁴ This type of dynamic tension is found between Eteocles and Polynices in Euripides' *Phoenissae* (2.594–624), between Admetus and Pheres in Euripides' *Alcestis* (2.708–29), between Teucer and Menelaus in Sophocles' *Ajax* (2.1120–141), and between Teiresias and Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* (2.1048–63). The tension between the roles of aggressor and prey makes the sculptural group an apt visual metaphor for the struggle presented in a tragic *agon*.

CONCLUSION

The Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group thus offers various nuanced meanings that may have made it a suitable choice for theater decoration: the connotations of *paideia*, the Dionysiac associations, the reversal of norms, the objectification of the body, the sexual tryst, and the agonistic motif. The danger in exploring these nuances, however, is that we may erroneously imbue the ancient viewer with the knowledge of all antiquity.¹⁰⁵ There is also a danger of generating a universal and generic viewpoint when, in fact, the "viewer" encompassed a broad range of identities.¹⁰⁶ The spectators in a Roman theater came from a variety of social classes and cultural backgrounds, and it is necessary to distinguish between the cultivated,

educated response and the popular, raw response, and recognize that there were many possible interpretations between these two extremes.¹⁰⁷ Many users of Roman public buildings were uneducated and not familiar with a broad range of art and thus incapable of or uninterested in making arcane associations.¹⁰⁸ To some of them, the Dresden type satyr-hermaphrodite group may simply have been a statue that helped create a certain ambience that had come to be expected in a theater. But to benefactors who were responsible for making "appropriate" choices for a decorative scheme, and to audience members from a higher stratum of society, these kinds of associations may have been important and exciting. Some of these nuances may have motivated the benefactor's artistic selection, while others may only have become apparent against the backdrop of theatrical activity and in juxtaposition with other visual elements. My intention has not been to suggest that any single viewer grasped all the meanings investigated here but rather to explore possible responses to the group within the aesthetic, social, and cultural setting of the Roman theater.

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¹⁰⁰ For Side, see Nollé 1993, 79, 299–300 (no. 31, Claudian period).

¹⁰¹ Mitchell 1990; Sturgeon 2004, 51–2.

¹⁰² See Csapo and Slater (1994, 382, no. 34) for an inscription from Tivoli listing the titles of pantomimes, almost all adaptations of tragedies by Euripides (*TGF* 1:344, 14a). On Roman pantomime, see Beacham 1992; Leppin 1992.

¹⁰³ Lloyd 1992.

¹⁰⁴ Duchemin 1945, 222–24.

¹⁰⁵ As noted by Zanker 1997, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Contrary to Stewart (2003, 15), who seeks to identify a general, nonspecific mass-response to an object among the inhabitants of Roman cities.

¹⁰⁷ On different types of responses to be reclaimed by the historian, see Freedberg 1989, xx–xxi.

¹⁰⁸ As noted by Marvin 1989, 34.

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