The Dresden Type Satyr-Hermaphrodite Group in Roman Theaters

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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 twist, 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.†

Although likely based on a Hellenistic model, the composition is known only through Roman replicas in various scales and materials.‡ Of the 30 sculptural replicas, 28 are marble and two are bronze miniatures.§ Eight of the marbles are of unknown provenance.¶ Twelve were found in Rome or its environs (although the precise findspots are not known),‖ one is thought to have been found in Tunisia,⁄ one may have been found in Iznik, Turkey.∥ Another is less precisely associated with the Villa of Quintilius Varus at Tivoli.¶ The best-known and most complete replica, located in the Staatsliche 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 Poppara at Oplontis, and one (a miniature) from a Roman villa at Chiragan in Gaul.¶ 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.¶¶ 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."¶¶ 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 Kephisosotatos.¶¶

Praxiteles filius Cephasodotus et artis herm qui est, eius levdatum est Pergami symplegma nobile digitis corporis versus quam marmor impressi.

The son of Praxiteles, Cephasodotus, 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.

† For a detailed treatment of the group, see Hauber 1999.

‡I 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 2005, 2002.


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

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

¶¶American Journal of Archaeology 111 (2007) 459-72
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 nuncus figurae, quales perditis auscent futuror, prorsum et tacenti quid exaudiet, quo symplegne quinque copulentur, qua phares tenentur 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 Ephesus, 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-

13Mart. Epigram 12.43.5-10 (Bailey 1993).
15Kell 1988, 21; Ringway 2000, 287 n. 54; Verzínskas 2004, 911–12.
16On recent reconnaissances of Kopienkritik, see Perry 2005, 1–27.
18In 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).
19Stillwell 1938, no. 163; Najbjerg 2001, 212, no. 68.
20Hatay Archaeological Museum, Antakya, inv. no. 1327.
21Stillwell 1988, 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 1988, pl. 18, nos. 161, 163).
22Najbjerg 9001, 919.
23This 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 Ev prava Iudaeas ("from the spoils of Judea") 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, 86n. 7; Downey 1988, 121).
24Wilber (1938, 59) dates the earthquake to 341 C.E., but the earthquake of 363 C.E. is meant (see Russell 1985, 42).
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. 37 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. 26 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. 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 or as a hybrid, with either nude, semidraped, or draped. 30 When paired with another figure, the companion is usually Dionysiac: a satyr, Pan, Silenus, or Eros. In some cases, they are shown bathing together. 31

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

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

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25 Side Museum, inv. no. 464; Inan 1975, 123-25, no. 56.
29 Vit. De arch. 2.12.
30 Ajootian 1990, 271-77, nos. 5-59.
erotic.

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. 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.” Gercke has equated the two figures to wrestlers engaged in a struggle that is agonistic rather than erotic. Ajoonian has argued that all Hermaphroditus images, Greek and Roman, regardless of their setting, were perceived as guardians because of the function of the phallos as a weapon against the Evil Eye. 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. 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. 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 Hermaphroditus myth, which takes place at a spring. 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. The discovery of these groups 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.

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33 Ridgway 2002, 91.
35 Ajoonian 1997, 228–29. Ajoonian’s argument is based on iconographic connections between various mosaics at the House of the Boat of Psyches 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.
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. 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.

Vitruvius notes that the principle of propriety (*decorum*) applied to public spaces. He reports that, according to the mathematician Licynius, the inhabitants of Abalanda were judged as unintelligent (*insipientes*) because of their inappropriateness (*indecentia*). They set up statues of men pleading cases in the gymnasion 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. 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. 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. 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 Psyches, 280 m south of the theater. 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, 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. The mosaics of the House of the Boat of Psyches included other theatrical imagery, notably masks. The satyr-hermaphrodite group mosaics were located in the colonnaded portico (area 4), between a nymphaeum and a series of three large rooms. 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 nymphaeas in third-century houses at Daphne and Antioch seem to have been designed to evoke public spaces such as colonnaded streets and public fountains, it stands to reason that aspects of their decorative programs also referred to the public sphere. The mosaic quotations of public

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41 See Neudecker 1988; Sterling 2005.
42 Vitruvius *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” (*femenas ar gumenias*) in the *Poticus Octaviar (HN* 30.48) and Cicero’s request for sculpture that is “appropriate to the gymnasion” (*gymnasiode*) (*Cic. Att. 1.6.9.*).
45 On the application of a viewer-oriented approach to Late Roman art, see Ebner 1995.
46 In the same room (the portico), a mosaic depicting an ithyphallic dwarf accompanied by the inscription ΚΑΙΣΥ (*And You*) warns visitors that the sentiments they bring into the house, good or bad, will be returned to them. This apotropaic 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 J.B. Stillwell 1988, 188–90. (Villa 23/24 M/N at Daphne–Harby; Kondoleon 9000, fig. 5 (Rooms 3, 8).)
49 Stillwell 1988, 188–90. (Villa 23/24 M/N at Daphne–Harby; Kondoleon 9000, fig. 5 (Rooms 3, 8).)
50 For a plan of the House of the Boat of Psyches 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 Psyches, Daphne (© Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University).

Fig. 7. Mosaic Panel C (Room 4), the House of the Boat of Psyches, 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 enclave 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{54}

\begin{quote}
\textit{His quasnumque dies multos ex ordine ludit adsiduus dexterum operas, plenamque videmus, cum iam desistunt ex sensitibus userpare, reliquas tamen esse vias in mente palatentis, qua possint eadem rerum simulacra venire. Per multos itaque illa dies eadem observantur ante oculos, etiam vigilantibus ut videantur cernere saltantis et mollia membra noctentis, et cibarum liquidum carmen chordaque loquentis auresque incipere, et consensum cernere eundem scenisque simul variis splendere decore.}
\end{quote}

If anyone has given his whole time 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.\textsuperscript{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 scena front or on the pulpitum. Small statues, altars, fountains, and candelabra might also be set up in the niches across the front of the pulpitum.\textsuperscript{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-hermaphroditic group, which relies on anatomical details such as the satyr’s horns and the hermaphroditic 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.\textsuperscript{57}

That two replicas of the Dresden type satyr-hermaphroditic 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{60} Pendant statues could also be carved served seating in the Greek East, however, pertains to civic tribes, trade guilds, and, in the late empire, private individuals (Roueché 1993).

\textsuperscript{53}Lucret. De rerum natura 4.74-89 (Godwin 1986).

\textsuperscript{54}Lucret. De rerum natura 4.973-984 (Godwin 1986).

\textsuperscript{55}Zanker 1994, 288.

\textsuperscript{56}See Sturgis 2004, pls. 5, 4 for reconstructions of the scena front at the Corinth theater and the proposed locations of statues. For display in the pulpitum niche, see Fuchs 1987, 138-50.

\textsuperscript{57}For a selection of ancient sources on theater seating, see Caepo and Slater 1994, 306-12. Most of the evidence for
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.4

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, Zwiansichtigkeit, Vielansichtigkeit).55 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 Olontis, 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.6 In a theater, however, the opportunity for interaction with the statues on the pulpitum and scenae 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.6 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."66 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 scena 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 scena 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 slant of meaning through its relationship to other figures in its sculptural setting.71

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45. Pendant groups of sleeping Silenoi are known at the theaters at Caeret, Falerii, Olisipo (Portugal), Areleate, and Vienna (see Fuchs 1987, 142; Ajoonian 1993, 252).
46. For a summary of scholarship on this point, see Verzar-Bass 2004.
47. For the garden at Olontis, see Jaschinski 1987.
48. Schmidt 1925, 100; Schober 1986, 91; Cercke 1988, 234; Kell 1988, 98.
49. 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.
51. Inan (1975, 195) suggests that the Side torso provided important evidence for a second main view of the composition.
52. Ajoonian 1990, 278, nos. 63b, 63c.
53. Fuchs 1987, 141–43.
54. 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 1988, 76).
55. Roscher (909.909) illustrates this point through an examination of the Citharode Apollo in villas. Combinations with other statues (Diana, the Muse, Marsyas) emphasize different facets of Apollo’s nature (festivity, creativity, judgment).
Zanker has suggested that the messages conveyed by individual statues in the scena frons were less important than those established through the viewing of the assemblage as a whole and the relationships between statues.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{73} However, most theater assemblages contain a number of eclectic elements that are difficult to reconcile as components of a single deliberate message.\textsuperscript{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 find spots of individual statues. At Side, where the find spots in most cases are precisely recorded, only five other fragmentary statues were found in the theater excavations.\textsuperscript{75} At Daphne, more statues were recovered from the theater, but the find spots are rarely specified.\textsuperscript{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 scena 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.

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, 481–89). At the Theater of Aphrodias, the sculptural assemblage may refer to Augustus' victory at Actium, in addition to cultural, civic, and athletic aspects (Eizen and Smith 1991, 67–90).
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 Rinti 1985; Sturgeon 1990).
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, 68, 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. 145, 53, 157, 60, 169, 78).
77 On cultural production and local mythology in Roman Asia Minor, see Yıldırım 2004.
78 Marvin 1989, 35–50. 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 Petti (2005, 57–65) aptly illustrates the problem of "the original" in a discussion of the Olympia Aphrodite type.
80 Acropolis Museum, Athens, inv. no. 3356; Oehmke 2004, 126, no. 102.
81 On effeminacy, see Canpa 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.84 As such, they mirror the social inversions produced on the stage.85 Tragedy and comedy offered opportunities to reflect on social norms and even inculcated a questioning of the very basis of those norms.86 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.87 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.88 Valerius Maximus, for example, talks about women stripping on the stage as early as the Republican period.89 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.90 Carner’s defense of Gnaeus Plancus, 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.91 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.92 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.93 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.94 He recommends, for example, applauding in particular any mimes playing the role of a lover.95 Ovid encourages women to go the theater, which he considers a favorable place to show oneself.96 To men, he suggests that the theater is a good place to meet women and forge all types of relationships.97 The theater, he proposes, is among the public places that pose a challenge to a woman’s guardian.98 It is a place dangerous to chastity, furnishing the seeds of wantonness by offering too much opportunity.99 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 agonae, one of the principal activities that took place in Roman theaters in the Greek East.86 Daphne was one of the sites for the many festivals held by Antioch.87 Epigraphic evidence attests to the presence of members of the Guild of the Artists of

80 On the representation of satyrs in classical Greek art, see Lisarrague 1990.
82 This view is taken in reference to fifth-century Athens (Goldhill 1990, 127–29).
84 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 actress, see Brown 1988, 314; Leyerle 2001, 13–41.
85 Val. Max. 2.10.8, writing ca. 32 C.E., referring to the mid second century B.C.E.
86 On the status of actors, see Csapo and Slater 1994, 276–79.
88 Prop. 2.22–4–12.
89 Prop. 4.8.77.
90 Ov. Am. 2.7.3.
91 Ov. Ars am. 1.501–52.
92 Ov. Ars am. 3.304. These would be the Theatres of Balbus, Marcellus, and Pompey in Rome.
93 Ov. Ars am. 1.100.
94 Ov. Ars am. 3.633.
95 Ov. Ars am. 1.100; Ov. Tr. 9.970–80.
96 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 1981, 222–35. On festivals at Side, see Weiss 1981; Nollé 1993, 84–8.
97 Strabo (16.2.7) notes that the Antiochenes and neighboring peoples held a festival in Daphne.
Dionysus (technitai) at Side, thereby confirming that actors gathered there and competed for prizes. 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 agon. 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. The stories of the great Greek tragedies were also performed on Roman stages as pantomimes. 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. 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. 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 Telephus 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-hermaphroditic 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. There is also a danger of generating a universal and generic viewpoint when, in fact, the “viewer” encompassed a broad range of identities. The spectator 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. 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. To some of them, the Dresden type satyr-hermaphroditic 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.

Works Cited


106 For Side, see Nollé 1993, 79, 299–300 (no. 31, Claudian period).
108 See Csapo and Slater (1994, 382, no. 54) for an inscription from Tivoli listing the titles of pantomimes, almost all adaptations of tragedies by Euripides (TCF 1:344, 14a). On Roman pantomime, see Beacham 1992; I epin 1989.


A. Retzleff, "The Dresden Type Satyr-Hermaphrodite Group"

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