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Source: *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes*, Vol. 1, The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity (2002), pp. 249-271

Published by: [University of Michigan Press](http://www.press.umich.edu) for the [American Academy in Rome](http://www.aarome.org)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4238454>

Accessed: 29/07/2013 18:14

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EROS'S FLAME: IMAGES OF SEXY BOYS IN ROMAN IDEAL SCULPTURE

Elizabeth Bartman

Images of youthful males characterized by a soft, just-pubescent physique and a relaxed, *soignée* pose constitute a distinctive sculptural genre popular during Roman times. For reasons that will become obvious in the course of the article, this group of statues may be called “sexy boys.” Mythic in subject and ideal in form, the figures recall Greek statues from the classical past. In their Roman context, however, they possessed meanings that were not only aesthetic or historical but also social and sexual. Charged erotically but at odds with traditional ideals of Roman masculinity, these statues challenge the virile ideal that has long dominated our conceptions of male sexual identity and behavior in the Roman world.

To the extent that these statues have been discussed in modern times, they have been seen as Roman copies of now-lost Greek originals dating to the fourth century B.C.¹ On the basis of their poses and figural types, they have traditionally been attributed to Praxiteles, a Greek sculptor of the mid-fourth century, suggesting a kind of “praxitelean afterlife.” Although “praxitelean” is a convenient descriptive label, its implications require that the term be used with caution. For one thing, sculptors other than Praxiteles clearly also had a major influence upon the forms; among the artists known by name, for example, Skopas, Praxiteles’ contemporary in the fourth century, and Lysippos, a slightly later master, are believed to have popularized some of the poses and figural types that we will see are fundamental to the definition of our corpus.² In addition, works of the fifth-century master Polykleitos, usually seen as the stylistic antipode of Praxiteles, apparently presaged certain “praxitelean” motifs: his workshop’s “Westmacott Ephebe” and Narcissus pioneered the downward-looking male

I am grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for funding my participation in the seminar that gave rise to this essay and to the American Academy in Rome for its hospitality and support. Thanks are due to Bettina Bergmann, Richard Brilliant, Elaine Gazda, Anne Haeckl, Michael Koortbojian, and Miranda Marvin for their instructive comments and to Marina Lella for her assistance.

¹ This attitude is especially prevalent when more than one version of a statue type survives. One such example: a figure of Paris best known from versions now in the collections of Kassel, the Vatican, and recently sold from Marbury Hall (Kassel: M. Bieber, *Die antiken Skulpturen und Bronzen der königlichen Museum fridericianum in*

Cassel [Marburg 1915] 22, no. 26, pls. 24–25. Vatican: Musei Vaticani, Galleria dei Candelabri 2807; W. Amelung and G. Lippold, eds., *Die Skulpturen des Vaticanischen Museums*, 3 vols. (Berlin 1903–56) 3.2:425–26, no. 20, pl. 179 [called Ganymede]. Marbury Hall: present whereabouts unknown; *Classical Sculpture Formerly from Marbury Hall, Cheshire* [sale catalogue, Christie’s London, 10 July 1987] 36–37, no. 13).

² Skopas’s Pothos adopted a cross-legged stance that became synonymous with rest (A. Stewart, *Skopas of Paros* [Park Ridge, N.J. 1977] 107–10, pl. 45a). Lysippos is said to have devised the slender body proportions that predominate in our corpus (Pliny HN 34.65).

suspended in a state of self-imposed reverie.³ Even those figural motifs that we today regard as quintessentially “praxitelean”—the leaning pose of such works as the Apollo Sauroctonos or the upraised arm resting atop the head of the Apollo Lykeios—may have come to be known by Roman sculptors not so much through detailed sculptural copies of Praxitelean originals as through the many Hellenistic adaptations that these popular works engendered.⁴

Given this mix of precedents, it is doubtful that the Roman viewer equated what he saw in our corpus with Praxiteles or any other long-dead Greek sculptor. While recognizing the distinctive stylistic character of what he was looking at—a distinctiveness occasionally highlighted by juxtaposing the figure with another of different conception⁵—the viewer would not necessarily have identified it as “praxitelean” in opposition, say, to “polykleitan.” To many viewers, the statues may have represented simply two strains of the same classical Greek ethos that propelled Roman ideal sculpture. In this paper, then, my aims are not to establish ties to any particular master but to investigate the meanings of the statues’ figural language in the Roman context.

The statues that constitute our group register their difference from the heroic male ideal dominant in Rome in their treatment of three elements: pose, body type, and head type. Not every individual statue belonging to the corpus demonstrates the typology effectively, for many examples survive as fragments or restorations that distort their original appearance. Yet our problem is not only the familiar one of an antique work whose original appearance has been irrevocably altered. In addition, the taste among eighteenth-century literati for slim and soignée male figures⁶ makes it difficult to discern how much of the corpus is authentically antique and how much a product of eighteenth-century or earlier restoration.⁷ It is not clear that

³ Westmacott Ephebe: P. Zanker, *Klassizistische Statuen. Studien zur Veränderung des Kunstgeschmacks in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz am Rhein 1974) 19–21, pls. 21–23; H. Beck, P. Bol, and M. Bückling, eds., *Polyklet. Der Bildhauer der griechischen Klassik* (Mainz am Rhein 1990) 245–46, 585–94, nos. 103–16, pl. 6; Narcissus: Zanker, 26; Beck, Bol, and Bückling, 599–601, nos. 123–25.

⁴ E.g. the Cyrene and Tralles Apollos (R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture* [London 1991] figs. 75 and 76). Smith (p. 65) credits the Hellenistic age for introducing a more effeminate and eroticized dimension to images of Apollo and Dionysos, but at least one of the examples he uses for his argument, fig. 77, may be Roman rather than Greek. M. Fullerton, “Imitation and Intertextuality in Roman Art,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 10 (1997) 427–40, discusses the issue of sculptural precedent.

⁵ As in the San Ildefonso group in Madrid (Museo del Prado 67; Zanker [as n. 3] 28–30, no. 26, with earlier bibliography) or on a Tiberian coin showing two statues, different in their pose and formal articulation, flanking the door of the Aedes Concordiae in Rome (H. Mattingly, *British Museum: Coins of the Roman Empire* [London 1923] 1:137, no. 116, pl. 24; E. Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome* [London 1961] 1:294, fig. 347).

⁶ Young men in “praxitelean” poses in Ingres’s *Achilles*

Receiving the Ambassadors of Agamemnon (1801) and David’s *Paris and Helen* (1789) have been argued by C. Ockman to express homosexual feelings (“Profiling Homoeroticism: Ingres’ *Achilles Receiving the Ambassadors of Agamemnon*,” *Art Bulletin* 75 [1993] 259–74). For another use of the same classical imagery see A. Meyer, “Re-dressing Classical Statuary: The Eighteenth-Century ‘Hand-in-Waistcoat’ Portrait,” *Art Bulletin* 77 (1995) 47, figs. 3 and 4.

⁷ For examples of eighteenth-century work see Bartolomeo Cavaceppi’s restoration of the Newby Hall Eros (B. Cavaceppi, *Raccolta d’antiche statue, busti, bassorilievi ed altre sculture restaurate da Bartolomeo Cavaceppi* [Rome 1768] 1:pl. 40; S. Howard, *Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, Eighteenth Century Restorer* [New York and London 1982; Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago 1958] 65) and Carlo Albacini’s Eros Farnese and Ganymede (Naples, Museo Nazionale 6353 and 6351; E. Pozzi, ed., *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli* 1.2: *La scultura greco-romana* [Rome 1989] 174–75, nos. 143 and 142). See also J. Podany, “The Conservation of Two Marble Sculptures from the J. Paul Getty Museum,” *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 9 (1981) 103–7. On restoration see M. Cagiano de Azevedo, *Il gusto di restauro* (Rome 1948); U. Müller-Kaspar, “Das sogenannte Falschen am Echten. Antikenergänzungen im späteren 18. Jahrhundert in Rom” (Ph.D. diss., Bonn 1988) and the discussion by N. Ramage in this volume.

statues such as the Apollo Belvedere or the Belvedere Antinous represent “unsullied” examples of Roman ideal sculpture.⁸ In a very real sense, their reputation has followed that of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, their most eloquent fan.⁹ For the approximate century-long period beginning in 1764 when Winckelmann’s writings formed educated opinion in the West, the ancient statues he esteemed were likewise valued; when his influence waned, naturally his favorite statues also lagged in appreciation. Today we attribute some of Winckelmann’s enthusiasm for statues of beautiful nude young men to his own homosexuality;¹⁰ seeing these statues—and similarly conceived contemporary works—against the backdrop of the eighteenth century helps to acknowledge both their eroticism and their role as expressions of ancient anxieties about gender roles and sexual identity.

Gesture and the Masculine Other

Almost all the “sexy boys” adopt a leaning pose.¹¹ (Even those statues whose upper torsos do not truly lean—that is, keep the chest erect and the shoulders aligned horizontally—often evoke a leaning pose by resting one arm on a support.)¹² Propped by a vertical support at the side, the figure composes itself in an often complex configuration of contrary axes and overlapping planes. In a typical example, a youth who probably represents Paris (fig. 11.1)¹³ rests his left arm on his shepherd’s crook while adopting a leaning pose that forces his right hip out into space and creates a sinuous contour on the right side of the body. Bolstered by the staff, he stabilizes himself on one leg while drawing the other “resting” leg across in front. (Unlike the balance of the classical contrapposto scheme, the stance of the Conservatori Paris requires an artificial support to prevent the figure’s tipping over.) The resulting diagonal downward from right to left counters the strong compositional movement toward the opposite direction that is generated by the inclination of the head, left arm, and drapery.

Although a carved plinth marks out the statue’s frontal axis, Paris’s upper body twists at

⁸ Apollo: F. Haskell and N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique. The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900* (New Haven and London 1981) 148–51, no. 8; Antinous: Haskell and Penny, 141–43, no. 4.

⁹ Apollo: *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Vienna 1764) 392; Belvedere Antinous: *Geschichte*, 402.

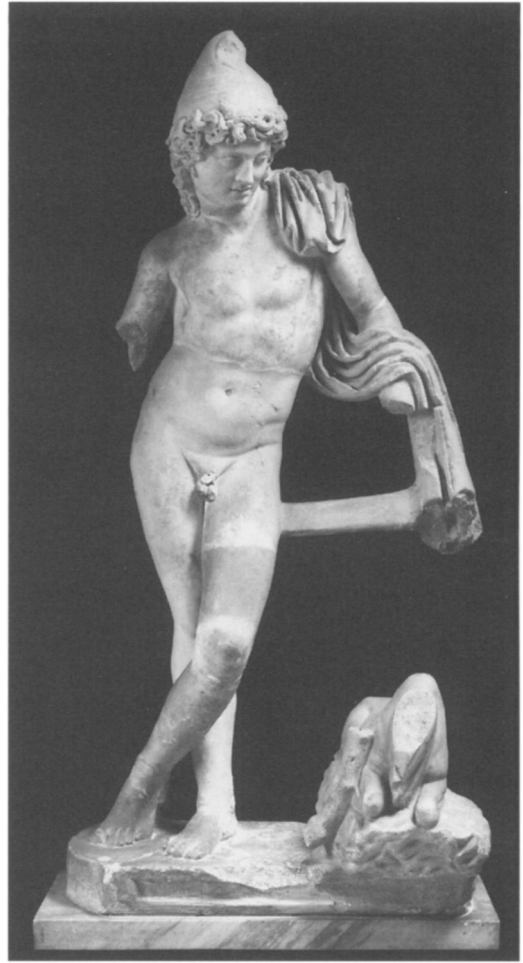
¹⁰ A. Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven and London 1994); D. Sweet, “The Personal, the Political, and the Aesthetic: Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s German Enlightenment Life,” in *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*, ed. K. Gerard and G. Hekma, *Journal of Homosexuality* 16 (1989) 147–62.

¹¹ The pose was made famous by Praxiteles. Well-known examples of Praxitelean figures who lean include the Aphrodite of Knidos, the Apollo Sauroctonos, and the Resting Satyr. See A. Stewart, *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration* (New Haven and London 1990) 176–79, 277–81, figs. 503–5, 509–10.

¹² For example, the statues of Paris in Kassel and one in Marbury Hall (both above, n. 1) or a headless Dionysos in Tarragona (Museo Arqueológico 372; A. García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas de España y Portugal* [Madrid 1949] 95–96, no. 81, pl. 70). The latter places his weight on his standing left leg while resting lightly on the ball of the right foot. The outward extension of the right leg, as well as the frontward placement of the foot, gives the figure an instability that distinguishes it from more balanced classical poses such as that of the Choiseul-Gouffier Apollo (Stewart [as n. 11] fig. 285). For other examples of this transient pose see the Princeton Bacchus (fig. 11.4 and discussion below) and a statuette of Eros in Copenhagen (Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek; *Billedtavler til Kataloget over Antike Kunstværker* [Copenhagen 1907] no. 179, pl. 14).

¹³ Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori 1080; Stuart Jones, *Cons.* 163–64, no. 15, pl. 56. Although broken and poorly finished, the statue is nearly entirely preserved and therefore an exemplary work for our study. The Phrygian cap, the curved staff, and a tiny bull that helps to support the figure suggest identification as Paris. Found at the Villa Casali on the Celian in Rome in 1885.

Fig. 11.1. Paris. Rome,
Musei Capitolini 1080
(photo Archivio Fotografico dei
Musei Capitolini).



the hips, and his torso bends and shifts to avoid direct alignment with the frontal plane. In addition, the sculptor aims to create multiple spatial planes within the figure's narrow confines. While the crossed left leg and the drapery slung over the left arm define the space in front of the torso, the pose of the right arm, once bent to rest on the right hip, emphasizes the space behind. The composition's denial of the priority of the frontal view is further underscored as Paris tilts his head down and turns his face away to avert his gaze from the spectator.

In its down-turned head, crossed legs, withdrawn arm, hip-shot pose, and leaning stance, the Conservatori Paris exhibits many of the compositional features that characterize the distinctive genre of Roman sexy boy statues. In most examples, the weight-bearing leg is the only vertical element of the figure; elsewhere angles and curves create a dynamic composition that animates the statue. Typically the hips and shoulders function as the pivots for the figure's alignment; in such works as the Borghese Eros in Paris and a nude young man in Boston¹⁴

¹⁴ Borghese Eros: Paris, Musée Nationale du Louvre Ma 545; Musée National du Louvre. *Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines. Catalogue sommaire des marbres antiques* (Paris 1922) 32; and C. Picard, *Manuel d'Archéologie grecque: La sculpture* (Paris 1948) 3:627, fig. 272; Youth:

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 1974.125 (M. Comstock and C. Vermeule, *Sculpture in Stone: The Greek, Roman and Etruscan Collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston 1976) 105, no. 161. Unlike such works as the Apollo Sauroctonos, the left arm is clearly not raised.

as well as the Conservatori Paris discussed above, the subjects lift their left shoulder while dropping the left hip at the same time. Although not impossible to sustain in real life, the pose requires considerable concentration (not to mention flexibility!). In its mannerism it is akin to the exaggerated movements of fashion models today; like them it is “real” but hardly natural. Sometimes the visual effect is disjunctive: certain variations of the Apollo Citharoedus type depict the god posed in an uncertain limbo between standing and sitting.¹⁵ With his vertical posture, he stands, but with his lower torso proffered to the viewer via his tilted pelvis and angled hips, he sinks back in a sitting pose. Such contradictory movements inevitably place the figure in a state of contrived languor: the calm repose implied by his leaning stance and crossed legs is undercut by aspects of the stance that imply restlessness.

Even today the pose and attitude of these statues suggest latent eroticism. To ancient viewers, the message was redoubled because of the cultural associations of specific aspects of their pose. Literature contemporary with the statuary provides insight into the gestural nuances of the images. According to several ancient writers, an inclined head signified passive homosexuality and androgyny.¹⁶ Lowered eyes set within the inclined head were a further sign of submission. Latin prescriptions for the orator provide additional insight into the body language conveyed by the statues. Because rhetoric and sculpture, similar in their urban and intellectual character, were both public forms of display, it is not inappropriate to apply strictures for one medium to the other. In the view of Quintilian, the effective orator kept his hands at a height no higher than the eyes and no lower than the waist¹⁷—gestures such as that of the Sauroktonos, with one arm raised above the head, or countless Lykeios variations in which one hand rested atop the head,¹⁸ were of course taboo for the decorum-conscious gentleman. Dropping the head to the side was also not recommended: “To incline the head to one side . . . expresses languor,”¹⁹ a quality suggestive of effeminacy. For Cicero softness and languor were equated with bodily desire and grief.²⁰

As Maud Gleason has demonstrated, deportment was crucial to establishing the correct masculine image for a Roman citizen who aspired to public life.²¹ Voice and grooming were also part of his masculine image-making; while our statues remain mute, their appearance exemplifies virtually all the aspects of grooming that the rhetors specifically caution against because of their “feminine” connotations. Among the oft-repeated prohibitions: hair that was

¹⁵ A particularly egregious example is to be found in the Apollo who accompanied the Muses in a multifigural group from the Baths of Faustina at Miletus (Istanbul, Arkeoloji Müzeleri 2000; H. Manderscheid, *Die Skulpturenausstattung der kaiserzeitlichen Termenanlagen, Monumenta Artis Romanae* 15 [Berlin 1981] 94, no. 214, pl. 31). Clearly these figures are meant to be viewed from the front rather than the unflattering right oblique. On the standard typology, see *LIMC* 2:208–13, nos. 190–238. This type of Apollo Citharoedos differs from that discussed by L. Roccas in this volume.

¹⁶ Dio Chrys. 4.109–12; Pseudo-Aristotle (*Phys.* 808a), Polemon and Adamantius, cited by J. Bremmer, “Walking, Standing, and Sitting in Ancient Greek Culture,” in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. J. Bremmer and H.

Roodenburg (Ithaca 1991) 23.

¹⁷ Quint. *Inst.* 11.112.

¹⁸ On a whole series of statues of Bacchus that adopt the Lykeios motif see S. Schröder, *Römische Bacchusbilder in der Tradition des Apollo Lykeios. Studien zur Bildformulierung und Bildbedeutung in späthellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (Rome 1989).

¹⁹ Quint. *Inst.* 11.3. 69: “in latus inclinatio languor.”

²⁰ Cic. *De Or.* 1.2.

²¹ M. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton 1995) *passim*.

Fig. 11.2. *Bacchus*. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano 113203 (photo Singer, DAIR, inst. neg. 73.804)



curled, annointed, or otherwise overly coiffed;²² bodies made soft and limp either through lack of physical exertion or depilation;²³ eyes that stared or glanced in a provocative way.²⁴

Just as many “sexy boy” statues pose in a manner that Romans would have considered distinctly unmanly, so too do their body types suggest effeminacy. “Ephebic” in character, they are slim and soft in the torso, elongated and narrow in the legs.²⁵ Their character is typified by a well-preserved statue of Bacchus in the Museo Nazionale Romano (fig. 11.2);²⁶ derived from the

²² Seneca the Elder railed against men who, among their other vices, curled their hair (*Contr.* 2 preface 2 and Gleason [as n. 21] 109). The hermaphrodite rhetor Favorinus annointed his tresses (Gleason, 129).

²³ On depilation see Gleason (as n. 21) 109, 113. Bodies such as those of adolescents that were moist rather than dry were equated with the female realm (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.28).

²⁴ Polemon *Phys.* 61.1.276F and *Anon. Lat.* 98.2.123–24F, joined by Gleason (as n. 21) 63. The Aphrodite of Knidos, an epitome of the feminine, was described as

having “melting eyes” (Lucian *Images* 6).

²⁵ Actual measurements corroborate the visual effect of the statues. If one compares the proportional scheme of the Doryphoros to that of the Apollo Sauroktonos, for example, one finds a trend toward reducing the torso’s volume, enlarging the head, and slimming the legs (E. Berger et al., *Der Entwurf des Künstlers. Bildhauerkanon in der Antike und Neuzeit*, exhib. cat. [Basel 1992] 328 and 332). I thank Bettina Bergmann for this reference.

²⁶ Museo Nazionale Romano 113203; A. Giuliano, ed., *Museo Nazionale Romano. Le sculture* (Rome 1979–)



Fig. 11.3b. Bacchus from nymphaeum at Punta Epitaffio, detail of head. Baiae, Castello di Baia (photo Foto Marburg).

Fig. 11.3a. Bacchus from nymphaeum at Punta Epitaffio, front. Baiae, Castello di Baia (photo Foto Marburg).

Westmacott Ephebe, a popular classical statuary type, the Terme statue has legs that are lengthened in respect to the torso above and a far more juvenile conception of its muscular underpinnings.²⁷ Yet although smooth and undeveloped in relation to many classical or Hellenistic bodies, the torso of the typical “sexy boy” does not completely lack muscular definition. Usually a slight depression running vertically down the middle of the chest and an impression of firmness beneath the flesh surface hint at imminent maturity (figs. 11.3a and 11.4).²⁸ For now the groin is defined as a high-rising line barely protruding beyond the surface (fig. 11.5);²⁹ when the boy matures, it will take on a more emphatic projection and sharp directional shift, forming the near right angle the muscle

1.12.2:127–30, no. 9; Zanker (as n. 3) 24, no. 21, pl. 23, 4; and C. Maderna-Lauter in Beck, Bol, and Bückling (as n. 3) 635–36, no. 165.

²⁷ In a work such as the Terme Ganymede, a short torso sits on legs so long as to appear stalklike (Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano 79811; Giuliano [as n. 26] 1.2:305–6, no. 21).

²⁸ Statue of Bacchus from Baiae, Museum (F. Zevi et

al., *Baia. Il ninfeo imperiale sommerso di Punta Epitaffio* [Naples 1983] 60–64, no. 10, figs. 141–45); torso of Bacchus wearing a panther skin, Princeton, The Art Museum, Princeton University y1989-24; *Record of The Art Museum, Princeton University* 49.1 (1990) 50, fig. p. 51.

²⁹ Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori 897; Stuart Jones, *Cons.* 133 no. 65, pl. 37; Zanker (as n. 3) 99, pl. 75, 1–3 (with the portrait features of Antinous). In a male torso



Fig. 11.4. *Bacchus or Satyr*. Princeton, The Art Museum, Princeton University 1989-24 (photo Museum).

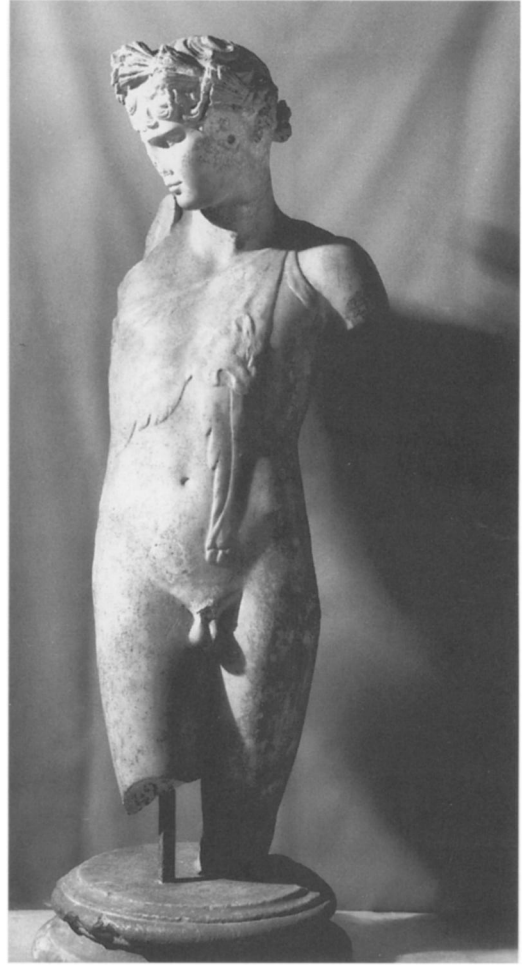


Fig. 11.5. *Antinous as Bacchus*. Rome, Musei Capitolini 897 (photo Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Capitolini).

assumes in the classical athletic physique of such works as the *Doryphoros*. In our statues, the rising diagonal of the groin produces a visual effect of slender elongation in the figure. Lacking strong lateral emphasis in the shoulders or hips, the figure can be read as a sinuous contour.

The position of the head, often tilted downward and its glance averted, furthers an impression of fluid curves in the composition. Its face is distinctive; constructed as an inverted triangle, it typically has narrow eyes, a small mouth with lips slightly open, and a flat forehead that joins the nose in a profile so vertical as to appear artificial (fig. 11.3b). The eyes are narrow and set under heavy lids; the oblique view presented by the averted face may cast them in shadow, enhancing their distance and endowing them with sentiments that have been variously described as dreamy, aloof, or melancholic.³⁰ Whatever their

in Rome (Musei Vaticani, Galleria dei Candelabra 2376; Amelung and Lippold [as n. 1] 3.2:148, no. 64, pl. 70) the groin line is so faint as to be nearly invisible. Instead the muscle articulation is concentrated in the diaphragm region.

³⁰ So E. Angelicoussis describes a head of Paris in Woburn Abbey (*The Woburn Abbey Collection of Classical Antiquities* [Mainz am Rhein 1992] 71–72, no. 55, figs. 257–60 or Stuart Jones, *Cons.* 133 on the Antinous/Bacchus in the Conservatori (fig. 11.5 and discussion below).

particular emotions, they project a sense of self-absorption, an otherworldliness that suggests that they are but reluctant participants in our world.³¹ Their distinctive character becomes clear when we compare a reposing figure of certain fourth-century Greek origin such as the young man depicted on a grave relief from Ilissos. Although crossing his legs and leaning against a support, the youth looks with an even gaze directly at the viewer.³² That relatively few female figures—only the so-called Psyche from Capua comes to mind³³—cast their gaze downward in the sexy boy mode is another indication of the contained application of the motif to this male group.

Framing the delicate face is a mound of hair with luxuriant, seemingly disarranged curls, which, at least in the best quality works, appear to melt into the neck and shoulders. Typically the hair is piled high on the crown in a bouffant style, which thins out dramatically below the ears as it tapers into long strands on the neck. (In a statue of Bacchus in Istanbul [fig. 11.6] an already generous pouf of hair has its volume so enhanced by an ivy wreath of oversized leaves that the god's face recedes into shadow.)³⁴ With their shoulder locks and the sometimes fussy arrangements into which hair atop the head is knotted, these coiffures evoke feminine styles (for example, in the Eros of Centocelle, fig. 11.7, or a head of Bacchus in London).³⁵ In some statues, the subject's transgressive character is playfully acknowledged: viewers of the stunning Bacchus from Hadrian's Villa (figs. 11.8a–b),³⁶ for example, would see nothing amiss in the god's simple, center-parted coiffure, vaguely reminiscent of early classical styles. Upon examining the back, however, they would discover a cascade of hair braided into a ponytail of decidedly female form.³⁷ Long locks hanging onto the back in contrast to a modest coiffure on the front surprise the viewer of a statue now in the Vatican (fig. 11.9)³⁸ and at the same time provide clear evidence of the importance of the back view in these statues.³⁹

³¹ In literature, the gesture may connote pathos, grief, or coquetry; on the latter, see Theoc. *Id.* 2.112 and *Anth. Pal.* 5.252 (F. Muecke, "Turning Away and Looking Down: Some Gestures in the Aeneid," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London* 31 [1984] 105–12). For a similar effect in eighteenth-century French painting see M. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago and London 1980) chap. 1.

³² Athens, National Museum 869; Stewart (as n. 11) fig. 517. See also Stewart's (as n. 2) characterization of Skopas's Pothos: "its whole *raison d'être* is to concentrate the spectator's attention elsewhere" (p. 109 and his reconstruction of it as part of a multifigural group [fig. 7]).

³³ Naples, Museo Nazionale 6290; Pozzi (as n. 7) 96, no. 10.

³⁴ Arkeoloji Müzeleri 1236 T; G. Mendel, *Musées Impériaux Ottomans. Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines*, vol. 2 (Constantinople 1912) 326, no. 592. The statue remains unfinished, but the basic outlines of the hair are established. Compare the "Dionysos Bevilacqua" in the Munich Glyptothek (Gl 231; M. Fuchs, *Glyptothek München. Katalog der Skulpturen*, 6: *Römische Idealplastik* [Munich 1992] 86–94, no. 13).

³⁵ Eros: Musei Vaticani 769; Zanker (as n. 3) 108–9. Bacchus: London, The British Museum 1627; Zanker, 114–15, no. 17, pl. 84. The Apollo Belvedere also wears a female hairstyle (see H. Kenner, *Der Apoll vom Belvedere. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse* 279.3 [Vienna 1972] 6–14). See Mattusch, fig. 5.1, in this volume.

³⁶ Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano 622; Giuliano (as n. 26) 1.1:70–72, no. 58, and Zanker (as n. 3) 103, no. 5, pl. 77, 2.

³⁷ Its design is remarkably close to the ponytail worn by Sabina, Hadrian's wife, in a bust in the Conservatori (848; K. Fittschen and P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom* 3 [Mainz am Rhein 1983] 12–13, no. 1, 2 pls. 14–15; drawing in A. Carandini, *Vibia Sabina* [Florence 1969] pl. 13, no. xlvii). The Erechtheion caryatids also provide a typological parallel (E. Schmidt, *Die Kopien der Erechtheionkoren. Antike Plastik* 13 [1973] pl. 16b).

³⁸ Musei Vaticani, Galleria dei Candelabri 2759 (formerly Braccio Nuovo); Amelung and Lippold (as n. 1) 1:56–58, pl. 5; signed "Phaidimos."

³⁹ On the issue of the back see below.

Fig. 11.6.
Bacchus.
Istanbul,
Arkeoloji
Müzeleri
1236 T
(photo
Museum).

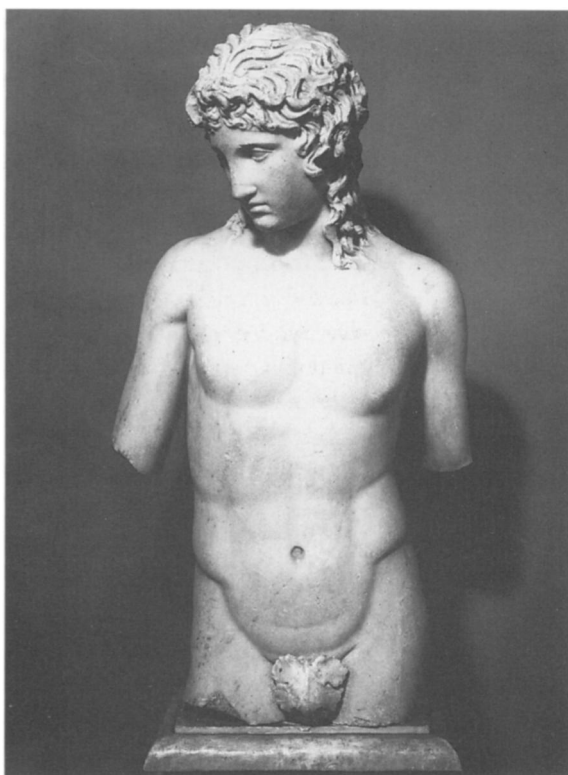


Fig. 11.7. Eros of Centocelle. Vatican Museums 769
(photo Museum).

Some of the hair arrangements found on other sexy boy statues, however, bear little relation to traditional styles worn by either men or women. The thick corkscrew curls ringing the faces of many representations of Paris (fig. 11.10),⁴⁰ for example, seem an artist's invention, deliberately concocted to convey the foreign character of its subject.⁴¹ If waves and long locks produced sexually transgressive Hellenistic statues of Apollo and Bacchus, the artificial conceits appearing in these Roman images evoked exoticism and otherworldliness.

In combination with delicate youthful bodies, the gestures and physical attributes I have enumerated above projected an effeminacy at odds with traditional Roman notions of masculine virility and respectability. Given its unconventionality, who was depicted in this mode? Although many of the surviving examples lack heads or attributes, those figures that can be identified indicate a restricted circle of subjects. Among the gods were Bacchus, Harpocrates, and occasionally Apollo, as well as Eros. From the mythological realm, Paris, Ganymede,

⁴⁰ Munich, Glyptothek Gl 263; B. Vorneisel-Schlörb, *Glyptothek München. Katalog der Skulpturen 2: Klassische Skulpturen des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Munich 1979) 241–47, no. 23. Unbroken heads on the Vatican and Marbury Hall versions of the Paris statue discussed above establish this head type as belonging to the popular body. Related but reproducing a different type (it is reversed) is a head in Paris (Musée Nationale du Louvre Ma 535; *Musée National du Louvre* [as n. 14] 32); deeply

undercut in the manner of the “beehive” hairstyles worn by some Flavian women, it may have been substantially recut in modern times.

⁴¹ Compare the frizzed “dreadlocks” depicted in a bronze head from the Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum (Naples, Museo Nazionale 5598; Pozzi (as n. 7) 136, no. 201. Possibly the Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra: R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* [Oxford 1988] 160, no. 24).

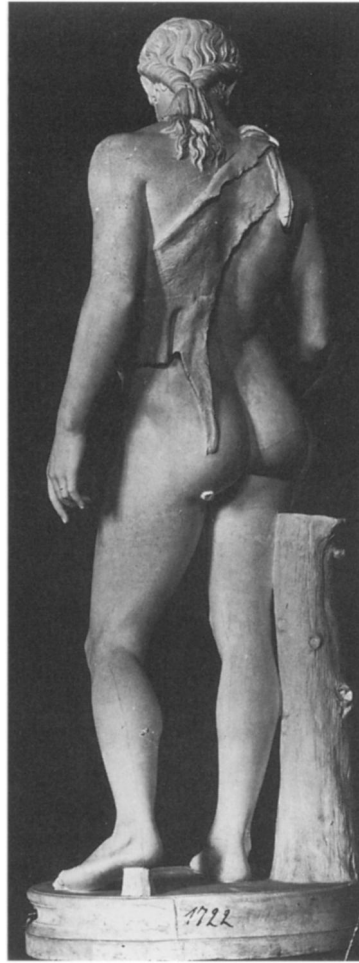
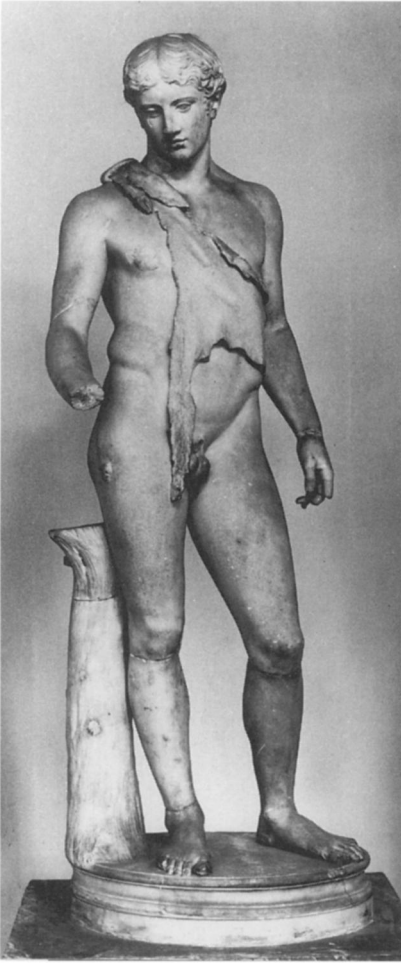


Fig. 11.8a (far left). Bacchus, front view. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano 622 (photo Rossa, DAIR, inst. neg. 76.2000).

Fig. 11.8b (near left). Bacchus, back view. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano 622 (photo DAIR, inst. neg. 595).

and Adonis frequently had this appearance,⁴² while personifications such as Hypnos or Thanatos could also adopt the look. With the exception of the personifications, what these subjects share is their status as exotic foreigners. Liminal figures in Graeco-Roman culture, they could be endowed with transgressive imagery because their foreignness exempted them from conformity to prevailing norms of male representation. Although Adonis and Paris were both mythic exempla of the male heterosexual lover, their passionate attachments reduced them to a state of physical torpor like that of a woman—hence their soft, feminine physiques.⁴³ In the same manner, Bacchus had a built-in iconographic rationale for his representation in this mode; because of his connections with wine and the theater, the lack of self-control implied by the relaxed, leaning poses and body types he adopted was by no means problematic. Finally, certain subjects such as Eros or Ganymede could be argued to merit puerile bodies

⁴² These subjects are often indistinguishable iconographically because their primary attribute is the Phrygian cap, called “the universal attribute of the youthful beloved of the gods” (R. Neudecker in *Forschungen zur Villa Albani. Katalog der antiken Bildwerke 2: Bildwerke in den Portiken, dem Vestibül und der Kapelle des Casino*, ed. P. Bol [Berlin 1990] 70–71, no. 170). To complicate matters further, the

Phrygian cap was also worn by Attis, Mithras, and Orpheus.

⁴³ Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* richly documents the feelings of female lovers; see, among others, the stories of Thisbe (with Pyramis, book 4), Medea (with Jason, book 7), Byblis (with Caunus, book 9), and Circe (with Picus, book 14). I thank Paul Iverson for raising this point.



Fig. 11.10. Head of Paris. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München Gl 263 (photo Koppermann, Museum).

Fig. 11.9. Leaning youth. Vatican Museums, Galleria dei Candelabri 2759 (photo Museum).

because of their youthful age.⁴⁴ In fact, the extreme youth of the sitter may have been the rationale for the combination of a portrait with a “praxitelean” body in the few instances in which a Roman chose so anti-heroic a mode of commemoration.⁴⁵

Indeed there are several cases in which the sculptor appears to have “bulked up” an ephebic-type model in order to produce a more conventional and socially acceptable male image. The leaning youth of the San Ildefonso group, as Zanker has noted, alters the body type of its model the Apollo Sauroctonos by broadening the torso’s dimensions and endowing it with more developed musculature; in other words, the sculptor “polykleitanizes” a soft,

⁴⁴ It is interesting, however, that Pliny calls the strongly muscled Doryphoros of Polykleitos a *puer*, technically a boy under the age of seventeen (Pliny HN 34.55) but qualifies the description with the adjective *viriliter* (“manly-looking”).

⁴⁵ Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori; C. Vermeule and M. Comstock, *Sculpture in Stone and Bronze in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Additions to the Collections of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Art 1971–1988* (Boston 1988) 55–56, no. 47. Compare also several portraits of young boys

whose ivy crowns and nebrises recall Dionysos (bust of a boy in Florence, Uffizi 1914, n. 260; G. Mansuelli, *Galleria degli Uffizi. Le sculture*, vol. 2 [Rome 1961] 95, no. 108, and a head in New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 14.105.1; G. Richter, *Catalogue of Greek Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* [Cambridge, Mass. 1954] 93, no. 176, pl. 123a–c). The absence of “praxitelean” bodies in the corpus collected by H. Wrede, *Consecratio in forma deorum. Vergöttlichte Privatpersonen in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz am Rhein 1981), confirms my argument.

pubescent form. This practice appears to have been fairly commonplace among the Romans, as a number of ideal statues whose poses derive from Praxitelean models are claimed by Zanker as examples of classicizing imagery influenced by the fifth-century master Polykleitos. Such works as the Dionysos Jacobsen, Vatican Thanatos, Bacchus from Hadrian's Villa, Conservatori Antinous (fig. 11.5), and Eros of Centocelle (fig. 11.7) fit into this category.⁴⁶ One might mention as well an extensive series of juvenile flute-playing satyrs whose leaning, cross-legged pose evokes Praxiteles' Resting Satyr but whose lower torsos show emergent musculature beneath their baby fat.⁴⁷ Whether fourth-century Greek types selected for copying or eclectic works newly fashioned for Roman settings, these muscled versions underscore the strength of the prevailing male corporal ideal and the perhaps limited applicability of the softer, more ephebic body type.

Sculptural Erotics and the Roman Sexual Climate

While their identity provided the excuse for the youthful, soignée depiction of the sexy boy statues, it does not explain entirely the typically sensual, erotically charged nature of the image. Of course few mythic figures were imagined in a single, monolithic mode; along with the mainstream view there were countermyths and variants. According to some traditions, for example, Ganymede was not a pubescent stripling but a more worldly youth of seventeen,⁴⁸ and Paris was depicted fully dressed rather than nude.⁴⁹ Yet in the freestanding statues that form our corpus Ganymede is invariably young and Paris nude. Why sculptors and patrons preferred this highly sensual male imagery forms the subject of the remainder of this chapter. First I will discuss the formal means by which the image was eroticized and then examine the context and meanings of its sexual messages. As we saw in the discussion of body types and poses above, individual statues may not possess all of the formal devices that eroticize the young man, but their different features produce the visual effects that characterize the genre.

The treatment of naked flesh plays a powerful role in the statue's visual impact. We have already seen how a sinuous pose and lack of muscular articulation create the sensation of soft, fluid body forms. In many images, drapery or another material is employed as a counterpoint

⁴⁶ All illustrated in Zanker (as n. 3): the Dionysos Jacobsen (pl. 83, 1); Vatican Thanatos (pl. 83, 4); Bacchus from Hadrian's Villa (pl. 77, 2); Conservatori Antinous (pl. 75, 1–3); and Eros of Centocelle (pl. 81, 1–3). The distinction may pose further difficulties if one accepts the view of Andreas Linfert that early works of Praxiteles such as the Sauroctonos and Pouring Satyr show strong Polykleitan influence (A. Linfert, "Die Schule des Polyklet," in Beck, Bol, and Bückling [as n. 3] 285).

⁴⁷ Typical examples include two statues from the Borghese Collection and now in Paris (Musée Nationale du Louvre Ma 594 and 595; *Musée National du Louvre* [as n. 14] 36) or the figure restored holding a cup in the Villa Albani (P. Bol, ed., *Forschungen zur Villa Albani. Katalog der antiken Bildwerke 3: Bildwerke in der Galleria della Leda, im ehemaligen Tempel der ephesischen Artemis und im Bigliardo* [Berlin 1992] 363–66, no. 382, pls. 236–43). A newly discovered headless statue from

Aizanoi reproduces the same type (*Antike Welt* 25.4 [1994] 379, fig. 23). The soft youth of these examples should be contrasted against the hard wiriness of Hellenistic interpretations of the image such as a statue in the Vatican (Galleria dei Candelabri 2760; Amelung and Lippold [as n. 1] 3.2:390, no. 25). On the differences see Smith (as n. 4) 129.

⁴⁸ In the pederastic poem of Straton discussed below, there is an allusion to Ganymede as seventeen.

⁴⁹ Paris is fully dressed and portrayed as a young adult on an early second-century A.D. sarcophagus in Rome (Museo Nazionale Romano 8563; Giuliano (as n. 26) 1.5:152–56, no. 6; H. Sichtermann and G. Koch, *Griechisches Mythen auf römischen Sarkophagen* [Tübingen 1975] 54–55, no. 56, pls. 141, 2 and 142–43) and in a seated statue in the Vatican (Musei Vaticani, Galleria delle Statue 762; Amelung and Lippold [as n. 1] 3:422, no. 255, pl. 47; Helbig⁴, 120).

to the flesh surface. Of course the interaction of drapery and flesh had long intrigued ancient sculptors, but in our corpus the classical function of drapery as a modeling device for the (usually female) body is replaced by a more purely optical goal: to heighten the tactile sensations of the carved marble.⁵⁰ Fur and feathers provided the preferred textural contrast; enlivened with linear but soft details, they underscored the morbidity of the flesh rather than contradicted it. In the Eros of Centocelle type (fig. 11.7), the oversize wings form a backdrop for the figure, their vertical accent contrasting with the more curvacious profile of the body. In other works the play of textures is even more subtle; the nebris worn by Bacchus in a statue from Argos,⁵¹ for example, clings so tightly that it functions as a second skin. It reiterates rather than contradicts the body forms, just as it does in the Antinous/Bacchus statue in the Palazzo dei Conservatori (fig. 11.5).

That Antinous's nebris had a visual and iconographic rather than sartorial function is suggested by the amount of flesh it leaves uncovered. In contrast to earlier works such as Praxiteles' Resting Satyr, his garment is decidedly skimpy; it covers neither the genitals nor the buttocks and exposes the shoulders and one breast. The nebris worn by the above-mentioned Bacchus from Hadrian's Villa (fig. 11.8) is tinier, displaying essentially both breasts and the entire back. Other intended "coverings" conceal even less flesh: the nebris worn by one of the statues of Bacchus from the Julio-Claudian nymphaeum at Baiae (fig. 11.11)⁵² is simply an iconographic accent for the upper torso; in a youthful male torso in Chicago the drapery swathes only the back of the lower legs, while the front and buttocks are completely revealed;⁵³ in several of the Paris and Ganymede statues the drapery makes but a thin choker around the neck.⁵⁴

Neither nudity nor the use of drapery as a foil for skin was a new conceit in ancient sculpture. Since the earliest archaic experiments, the male sexual organs had been openly displayed. In these Roman sexy boy images, however, the conjunction of drapery and pose seems intended to reveal and titillate. In the Conservatori Antinous a long leg and hoof descend the entire length of the torso to stop directly above the pubic area, whereas in the Museo Nazionale Bacchus the nebris leg, now partially broken, can be restored as just grazing the right side of the genitals. Reiterating the vertical line of the weight-bearing leg and the rightward emphasis developed by the god's gaze, the position of the garment can hardly have gone unnoticed by the viewer.

The viewer's gaze was directed toward the statue's genitalia in other ways as well. Drapery slipping below the hips focused the viewer's attention on male genitalia in the Dionysos Jacobsen and the Apollo Citharoedos just as it had so daringly in female statues such as the

⁵⁰ Marble was the preferred material for these statues, probably because of its opacity and natural coloration (especially when coated with tinted wax).

⁵¹ Archaeological Museum 11; J. Marcadé and F. Raftopoulou, "Sculptures argiennes," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 81 (1957) 438–39, no. 11, figs. 19–20 and Manderscheid (as n. 15) 84, no. 137, pl. 24.

⁵² Baia, Museum; Zevi et al. (as n. 28) 61–62, no. 11, figs. 175–78.

⁵³ The Art Institute 1926.441; *Ancient Art at the Art Institute of Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 20.1 (1994) 51, 53. Traces of drapery under the left

arm suggest that its ends once looped over the arms. For a comparable Ganymede in painting see a South Italian vase of ca. 340 B.C. in Tampa (Museum of Art 86.106; A. Trendall and A. Cambitoglou, *The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia* [Oxford 1978] 1:405–6 no. 15/51, pl. 143, 4–6). In sculpture compare a male torso in New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art 13.229.2; Richter [as n. 45] 37, no. 52, pl. 45) whose drapery (clasped in the left hand) must have swung out beyond the figure but was anchored with dowels behind the knees (there are two cuttings visible).

⁵⁴ See the statues mentioned above, n. 1, and a fragmentary statue of a youth wearing a Phrygian cap in Granada (Museo Arqueológico 843; García y Bellido [as n. 12] 127–28, no. 130, pl. 100).



Fig. 11.11. *Bacchus, Baiae, Castello di Baia*
(photo Foto Marburg).

Aphrodite of Melos.⁵⁵ Thighs pressed tightly together as they cross have a similar effect on the viewer, as does the popular hip-shot pose. Despite the inward-turning effect of the down-cast head, these stances are self-conscious poses of sexual display. Indeed the head too played a role in the statue's eroticization; its dense mass of hair, brushing the face and neck, often enhanced the body's tactile effects (figs. 11.7 and 11.10). The very profusion of hair on the head would have drawn attention to its absence in the pubic region; as a mark of the figure's youth—and also in contrast to the manly athletes and heroes of classical Greece—none of the sexy boys has carved pubic hair. With their open genital display yet averted glance, these statues are clearly intended as objects for visual delectation.

Notwithstanding the traditional emphasis for both sculptor and viewer on the front of a freestanding statue, the back of many sexy boy images received considerable attention. In some statues (figs. 11.8b and 11.9) the coiffure is most fully elaborated at the back; in others the figure's contorted pose (fig. 11.5) finds resolution only at the back. Using compositional devices that may have been originally devised for Aphrodite,⁵⁶ these sculptures pull the viewer

⁵⁵ "Venus de Milo," Musée Nationale du Louvre Ma 399; Stewart (as n. 2) fig. 806. Compare also the dramatic revelatory effect of drapery in the Venus Anadyomene in

Syracuse (Museo Nazionale; LIMC 2:83, no. 743, pl. 73).

⁵⁶ Especially such images as the Venus Kallipygos in

Fig. 11.12. *Jupiter and Ganymede*, detail of a strigillated sarcophagus. Vatican Museums, Cortile Ottagono (photo Singer, DAIR, inst. neg. 72.584).



around the statue so that the back—and features such as the well-shaped buttocks—can be appreciated.

As embodiments of youth and beauty, young men such as Ganymede and Adonis had a natural appeal in the funerary realm. Helmut Sichtermann has collected sixteen examples of Roman sarcophagi decorated with the boy Ganymede and Jupiter disguised as an eagle;⁵⁷ some of them are posed virtually identically to surviving freestanding sculptural groups, with Ganymede leaning toward the smaller eagle, hip thrust into space and one leg crossing in front of the other (fig. 11.12).⁵⁸ On the basis of this comparison it has been suggested that the related freestanding statues were also funerary; several other statues whose specific iconography seems to support an eschatological meaning, notably the San Ildefonso group, with its altar and down-turned torch, and the personification of Thanatos,⁵⁹ with its closed eyes, have been similarly identified. Without known findspots for these statues, however, their funerary association remains speculative. Indeed, when the provenance of statues from the sexy boy corpus is known, it seems to have been either the villa or the baths.⁶⁰ Of the statues

Naples (Museo Nazionale 6020; Pozzi [as n. 7] 156, no. 18) or Sleeping Hermaphrodite (Stewart [as n. 2] figs. 819–20). As in certain “sexy boys,” the drapery contrasts with the smooth flesh.

⁵⁷ H. Sichtermann, *Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs* 12.2: *Die mythologischen Sarkophage. Apollon bis Grazien* (Berlin 1992) 164–67, nos. 138–45.

⁵⁸ Musei Vaticani, Cortile del Belvedere; Sichtermann and

Koch (as n. 49) 30, cat. 20. Whether this similarity reflects the fame of the statue or the role of the pose as an identifying attribute of Ganymede is unclear.

⁵⁹ Musei Vaticani, Galleria dei Candelabri 2557; Amelung and Lippold (as n. 1) 3.2:256–57, no. 33, pls. 117–18.

⁶⁰ Perhaps the paucity of villas excavated in Asia Minor explains the relative dearth of “praxitelean” statues

already discussed, many have a known villa provenance. In addition to the two Bacchuses from a villa at Baiae (figs. 11.3 and 11.11), the Vatican Thanatos comes from the Villa of Cassio in Tivoli and an Adonis and Eros from Centocelle.⁶¹ In addition, the Museo Nazionale Bacchus (fig. 11.8), Newby Hall Eros, Hermitage Eros Centocelle type,⁶² and possibly the Capitoline Antinous (Hermes) came from Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli.⁶³ From bathing establishments, the numbers are smaller but still more than from any other context: the Bacchus and a fragmentary Ganymede from Argos,⁶⁴ the long-haired Vatican youth,⁶⁵ another Bacchus statue in Rome,⁶⁶ and a Ganymede group found in Agnano.⁶⁷

It is, I think, hardly accidental that statues of beautiful young men once decorated the interiors of Roman villas and baths. Although by the (largely) second-century date of our statues the villa and the baths had become integral elements of Roman life (in the case of the villa, of specifically upper-class Roman life), nonetheless both were the setting for *otium* (leisure), whose various facets, whether exercising, reading poetry, listening to music, contemplating art, or discussing philosophy, were Greek in origin and remained profoundly Greek in character. With their mythic subjects, nudity, and particular formal or iconographic details, sexy boy statues looked Greek—indeed so Greek that today they are frequently mistaken for copies of Greek originals. The perfect sculptural decorations for a Greek-derived cultural milieu, they interpreted their nonheroic subjects in an unceremonious postclassical style. Thus they corroborate Tonio Hölscher's view of Roman sculpture as governed by a system of visual semantics in which meaning was linked with formal style.⁶⁸ According to his thesis, gods and heroes, as befit their gravity and moral virtue, were represented in Greek-derived styles from the late archaic or classical periods, while epiphanous gods such as Apollo, Bacchus, and Venus were rendered in the more dynamic imagery of the postclassical age. Although perhaps more restrained in their movement than the latter deities, our sexy boy statues draw upon the same postclassical visual language.

Emulative of Greek statuary in their form, theme, and setting, these works in their youthful eroticism recall aspects of a specifically Greek homosexual culture.⁶⁹ Within the Greek elite

among the rich sculptural discoveries of such cities as Aphrodisias, Ephesus, Perge, and Side.

⁶¹ Bacchuses: Zevi et al. (as n. 28) 60–62, nos. 10 and 11; Vatican Thanatos: R. Neudecker, *Die Skulpturenausstattung römischer Villen in Italien* (Mainz am Rhein 1988) 230, no. 66.10; Adonis and Eros: Neudecker, 205, nos. 47.1 and 47.5. Surveying the twenty-three known copies of the Centocelle Eros, Olga Palagia notes that a number have a villa provenance (O. Palagia, *Ancient Greek Art from the Collection of Stavros S. Niarchos* [Athens 1995] 182).

⁶² St. Petersburg, Hermitage A 855; O. Waldhauer, *Die antiken Skulpturen der Ermitage 3.2* (Berlin and Leipzig 1931) 24–24, no. 123, pls. 25, 26.

⁶³ J. Raeder, *Die statuarische Ausstattung der Villa Hadriana bei Tivoli* (Frankfurt 1983) 68–69, no. 1:51 (Dionysos); 57–58, no. 1:39 (Newby Hall Eros); 133–34, no. 2:15 (Hermitage Eros); 157, no. 3:41 (Hermes).

⁶⁴ Bacchus: Marcadé and Raftopoulou (as n. 51); Ganymede: Marcadé and Raftopoulou, 445–48, no. 15, figs. 25–26.

⁶⁵ See n. 38. Amelung and Lippold (as n. 1) 1:58 record its findspot by R. Fagen in 1800 in the niche of a caldarium at Ostia. It is uncertain which of the approximately twenty-five baths housed the statue.

⁶⁶ Museo Nazionale Romano 361942; found in 1962 in the Piazza della Esedra in Rome above the site of the Baths of Diocletian.

⁶⁷ Manderscheid (as n. 15) 81, no. 119, pl. 22.

⁶⁸ Tonio Hölscher, *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System. Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, 1987. 2 (Heidelberg 1987) 42. E. Dwyer, "Decorum and the History of Style in Pompeian Sculpture," in *Studia Pompeiana and Classica in honor of Wilhelmina F. Jashemski*, vol. 1, ed. R. Curtis (New Rochelle, N.Y. 1988) 105–26, and J. Raeder (as n. 63) 239 make the same point.

⁶⁹ I use the term *homosexual* with the awareness that it is an anachronism when applied to ancient Greece. See D. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other*

from the classical period on, sexual relationships between men were tolerated, if not entirely sanctioned, as long as they conformed to an approved pattern: a young boy (known by the term *eromenos*) could receive the amorous attentions of an older male lover (known as the *erastes*).⁷⁰ While homosexuality in Rome had neither the public profile nor the quasi-institutionalized status that it had had in classical Greece, nonetheless it was clearly practiced, and even socially accepted under certain conditions.⁷¹ Most of our literary evidence comes from the educated upper class.⁷²

Martial frequently describes the erotic attractions of boys. Epigram 4.42 sums up his fantasy of the ideal partner:

If I could choose one boy, in any style
 From any country—this would be my choice:
 Firstly, he'd be Egyptian from the Nile
 For there they breed lascivious, languorous boys.
 I'd have him blond, and fairer than the snow
 For lads of that complexion there are rare.
 Let him have soft long tresses hanging low
 And starry eyes. (I don't like braided hair.)
 He should be low-browed, with nose aquiline,
 With lips more crimson than a Paestan rose,
 Let him force me to love when I decline,
 And spurn me when I'm eager—and spurn those
 Seductive boys or girls. Let him be *mine*.
 To me alone give all that passion knows.
 "Your words are clean, although their meaning daunt:
 It's my boy, Amazonicus, you want."⁷³

Among the literature surviving from the Greek East, Hyginus's *Fabularium Liber* of the second century catalogues beautiful boys, and an entire book of the *Greek Anthology* collects pederastic love poems from the Roman imperial age.⁷⁴

A well-known epigram of Straton preserved in the *Anthology* sets forth the chronological

Essays on Greek Love (New York and London 1990), using the model of M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality 1: The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (New York 1978) 43. On homosexuality as a typically Greek phenomenon see Cic. *Tusc.* 4.70 and 5.58 (*more Graeciae*); much of the vocabulary of homosexuality was Greek (R. MacMullen, "Roman Attitudes to Greek Love," *Historia* 31 [1982] 484–502, esp. 486). C. Williams, "Greek Love at Rome," *Classical Quarterly* 45 (1995) 517–39 and his broader *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford 1999) 63–67, argue that pederasty, not homosexuality in general, was regarded as Greek by the Romans.

⁷⁰ J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London 1990) 11; K. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London 1978).

⁷¹ Only the active role was acceptable for a male lover. Disapprobation of homosexuality varied, depending

upon the age and social class of the passive partner: boy slaves were condoned, whereas sex with free-born boys, adult slaves, and adult men of free-born status (in that order) evoked ever increasing disapproval. (MacMullen [as n. 69] 491; Williams 1999 [as n. 69] 18, 30).

⁷² MacMullen (as n. 69) 498, who also cites Dover (as n. 70) 148 as a precedent. (Of course it is this class that is most likely to have left whatever literary or artistic testimonia we have.) For evidence of the low, rustic taste for young boys during the Hellenistic period see Longus *Daphne and Chloe* 4.11–12 and 4.38.

⁷³ Trans. A. Reid. On Martial's paeans to boys see J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York 1991) 207–9. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press. I thank Anne Haeckl for drawing my attention to this poetry.

⁷⁴ Hyg. *Fab.* 27; *Greek Anthol.* 12 (trans. W. Paton [rev. 1979, rpt. Cambridge, Mass. and London 1991]).

parameters of the love object as between twelve and sixteen.⁷⁵ Other poems in the book enumerate the physical virtues for which such a boy was prized: long, curly hair; skin whose softness is as yet unroughened by stubble; "honeyed" lips; limpid eyes.⁷⁶ In some instances the boys' soft skin is equated with the smooth marble of a statue,⁷⁷ a reversal of the standard literary conceit in which sculptures were endowed with the actuality of flesh; Pliny tells of a man who attempted sex with a nude statue of Eros by Praxiteles.⁷⁸ The statue's attribution to Praxiteles may simply be a coincidence—more than one sculptor had the name, and there is evidence for its use as a synonym for sculptor⁷⁹—but nonetheless the episode is easily understood in the context of the eroticized imagery of our Praxiteles-influenced corpus. With their emollient surfaces, delicate faces, and less-than-lifesize scale, our statuary youths evoke the beautiful male love objects that set Roman hearts aflutter in the Imperial age.

The most acceptable male partner for the active male lover was a young slave.⁸⁰ Although the criteria applied in the selection of such slaves were undoubtedly highly personal, surviving descriptions of male household slaves present a consistent and suggestive profile: they are young, good-looking, and foreign. Slaves matching this description frequently worked in the dining room, where as servers of food and wine they could be admired by the dinner guests;⁸¹ a third-century Tunisian mosaic showing wine servers confirms the literary account.⁸² Catullus mentions litter-bearers (*ad lecticam homines*) from Bithynia,⁸³ clearly alluding to their role as status-enhancers.

The desire to manifest this form of status extended to the highest levels of Roman society. The emperor Augustus surrounded himself with "little boys" (*pueris minutis*), preferably Syrians or Moors, who amused him with their pretty faces and chatter (*facie et garrulitate amabilis*).⁸⁴ The wealthy Herodes and Favorinus kept an Indian child and Trimalchio, young

⁷⁵ *Greek Anthol.* (as n. 74) 12.4. For a recent commentary on the poem, see N. Hopkinson, *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period: An Anthology* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York 1994) 92–93. Typically a boy would become an *eromenos* at puberty, outgrowing the role when he had grown body hair and acquired other secondary sex characteristics, at about eighteen to twenty years of age (A. Rousselle, "Personal Status and Sexual Practice in the Roman Empire," *Zone* 5 [1989] 314). Sometimes masters castrated their slaves to prevent the onset of puberty (Rousselle, 313).

⁷⁶ Hair: 12.192 (see also Petron. *Sat.* 97.2, describing Giton's hair as *crispus* and other references noted by A. Richlin, "Not before Homosexuality: The Materiality of the *Cinaedus* and the Roman Law against Love between Men," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3 [1993] 523–73); unbearded face: 12.12, 12.27; skin: 12.30, 12.36; 12.191; lips: 12.22; eyes: 12.7.

⁷⁷ *Greek Anthol.* 12.40. Epigrams 12.56 and 57 play on the notion of art as a rival to nature in terms of male beauty. Coincidentally, in both epigrams Praxiteles serves as the exemplar of the sculptor. Ov. *Met.* 3.419 describes Narcissus in these terms.

⁷⁸ Pliny *HN* 36.22. For other examples of explicit "Pygmalionism," all involving men with female statues,

see H. Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*, trans. J. Freese, ed. L. Dawson (1931, rpt. London 1994) 502–3. The story of Tiberius's keeping a statue of the Apoxyomenos in his bedroom hints at sexual deviancy (Pliny *HN* 34.62).

⁷⁹ Philostr. *VA* 6.19.8 and the epigrams cited in n. 77.

⁸⁰ Williams 1999 (as n. 69) 30–38; Richlin (as n. 76) 535–37; C. Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York 1993) 188. See also n. 71 above.

⁸¹ John D'Arms, "Slaves at Roman Convivia," in *Dining in a Classical Context*, ed. W. Slater (Ann Arbor 1991) 173; J. Pollini, "The Warren Cup: Homoerotic Love and Symposial Rhetoric in Silver," *Art Bulletin* 81 (1999) 35–36.

⁸² From Dougga, the mosaic is now in Tunis (Musée du Bardo A 382; K. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa* [Oxford 1978] 257, pl. 45). Compare the appearance of the slave bearing gifts for victorious gladiators in the mosaic of Magerius from Smirat (Dunbabin, 67–69, pls. 52–53).

⁸³ Catull. 10.16. The demands of their job no doubt required more robust slaves than the typical sexy boy.

⁸⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 83.

Alexandrians in quantity.⁸⁵ Hadrian too succumbed to the attractions of a foreign-born youth from Bithynia, Antinous.⁸⁶ Although the youngest of these slaves do not appear to have serviced their masters sexually,⁸⁷ there is strong innuendo about their just-adolescent colleagues. In Catullus's poem, for example, the word *cinaediorum* appears shortly after mention of the litter-bearers. While the word describes a woman who wants to borrow the slaves and not the Bithynians themselves and has the relatively innocuous meaning of "shameless hussy," the etymological origin of the term hints at the slaves' erotic attractions.⁸⁸ As Slater has noted, slave names such as Aphrodisius, Veneria, and Erotion imply their possessors' sexual roles in the household.⁸⁹

Young, beautiful, and foreign: the literary image of certain household slaves parallels the visual image presented by the sexy boy statues. Thus our statues may suggest the good-looking slaves used by wealthy Romans in intimate domestic contexts. Conceptually they relate closely to the decorative lamp-holders (*lampadarii*) that depict the young slaves who staffed the dining room, although the *triclinium* pieces tend to be bronze and much smaller than the statues that constitute our corpus.⁹⁰ Unlike the lamp-holders, "sexy boy" statues are not meant to be understood literally as slaves—such a meaning obviously cannot be sustained for the statues of divinities and mythic figures. But we should not rule out the similar resonances of meaning that were attached to these statues; after all, both slaves and statues have essentially the same status as possessions of a rich owner. Ganymede as an artistic subject embodies this concept succinctly; in his mythic configuration, he is the cup-bearer of Jupiter and thus the epitome of a servant; as a statuary image of a cup-bearer in the villa of a rich man, he is in a sense also his master's servant, a figure whose age, beauty, and exotic background provided a mythic paradigm for the mortal servants who waited on their master (who, consequently, may have fancied himself as a Jupiter-like power).⁹¹ With their diverse foreign backgrounds, these exotic slaves—and the statues that evoke them—personify the Empire domesticated: small in size, physically nonthreatening, they are the cousins of the crouching barbarians carved in colored marbles⁹² and the distant relatives of the *ethne* displayed on major imperial reliefs.⁹³

⁸⁵ For Herodes and Favorinus, Philostr. *VS* 23; for Trimalchio, Petron. *Sat.* 31. Egyptian *deliciae* are mentioned by Statius (*Silvae* 5.5.66 and 2.1.72).

⁸⁶ S.H.A. *Hadr.* 14.5 f., Dio 69.11. On his depiction see below. Bithynia is also mentioned as the locus of a passive sexual act that Julius Caesar was alleged to have performed (Suet. *Iul.* 2).

⁸⁷ Called *delicium* or *delicatus*, these slaves could be male or female and were typically less than ten years old. Their owners could be male or female. That their tombstones frequently attest to their roles suggests that their behavior was not considered shameful. See W. Slater, "Pueri, Turba Minuta," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London* 21 (1974) 133–40 and H. Nielsen, "Delicia in Roman Literature and in the Urban Inscriptions," *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 19 (1990) 79–88.

⁸⁸ J. Adams, *Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London 1982) 132.

⁸⁹ Slater (as n. 87) 137. Commodus had a *delicium* called Philocommodus, who shared his bed (Herodian 1,17).

⁹⁰ P. Zanker, "Zur Funktion und Bedeutung griechischer Skulptur in der Römerzeit," in *Le classicisme à Rome aux Ier siècles avant et après J.-C., Entretiens Hardt* 25 (Geneva 1979) 289; C. Hallett, "Classical Statues as Roman Household Decoration: Pseudo-Classical Lamp-Holders," *American Journal of Archaeology* 93 (1989) 276.

⁹¹ There were many divine parallels for the lovers of boys: Apollo (with Hyacinthos), Poseidon (with Pelops), Hermes (with Cadmus).

⁹² R. Schneider, *Bunte Barbaren. Orientalenstatuen aus farbigen Marmor in der römischen Repräsentationskunst* (Worms 1986).

⁹³ For the earlier history of the pictorial tradition, see R. Smith, "Simulacra Gentium: The Ethne from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988) 50–77 and A. Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus: The Case of the Boscoreale Cups* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1995) 69–93.

While to interpret the “sexy boy” images as evidence of trickle-down imperialism may exaggerate the notion, at the very least the statues underscored the worldly internationalism of elite Roman society in the imperial age.

In the context of the baths, statues of sexy young boys perhaps conjured up a different, less polyvalent set of images. Notwithstanding their distinctly Roman architecture and technology, baths evoked the Greek world by virtue of the cultural activities that took place there: from exercise to education to simply relaxing, most of what Romans did in the baths had Greek origins. As Fikret Yegül has noted, the gymnastic culture practiced in Asia Minor during the Imperial age was institutionally similar to that of prior centuries.⁹⁴ In a thermal setting where Greek cultural values dominated, sculptural images that bespoke Greekness were a natural component of the decorative scheme.⁹⁵ Whether a “sexy boy” statue had any qualifications for a bath setting beyond its essentially Greek style is ambiguous. Was sexual activity between men, like athletic contests and ephebic lists, one further aspect of the continuity of Greek gymnasium culture?⁹⁶ While accusations of sexual license in the baths are deeply suspicious when part of Christian polemic,⁹⁷ earlier literature, where the recommendation of the gymnasium as a pick-up place for young men is a standard *topos*, is more credible.⁹⁸

As one of the primary loci (or at least stimuli) for homoerotic courtship, the gymnasium gave a public face to what today we would consider private activities. In the same way, the pederastic poetry of Martial and other Imperial age writers advertised private attitudes to a public audience. “Sexy boy” statues also brought eroticism into the public realm; notwithstanding their frequent conception as a mythical “other,” their sheer numbers indicate their appeal for a wide, albeit elite, audience. Yet the treatment of Antinous indicates that there were some constraints. Few of his images combine a portrait with an overtly “praxitelean” body type but instead borrow fifth-century corporal types.⁹⁹ And his coiffure, although characterized by long curls, nonetheless conforms to prevailing norms by having a uniform length.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, his head looks down and away from the

⁹⁴ F. Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass. and New York 1992) 309–10. Similarly, education and literature (in the formal sense) show little change from earlier practice (Hopkinson [as n. 75] 3).

⁹⁵ Indeed such quintessentially Roman statues as portraits or historicizing reliefs are extremely rare. See Manderschied (as n. 15). Several statues of young boys carrying athletic weights offer a pertinent comparison with our corpus. Standing less than a meter in height and typically coiffed with a long tress left uncut at the back of the head, these statues may well represent the boyish slaves who carried their masters’ exercise equipment to the gymnasium. Although as yet none has a known provenance, a bath location is likely. See A. Herrmann, “The Boy with the Jumping Weights,” *The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art* 80 (1993) 298–323, who argues for their function as funerary images, despite the lack of particularized portraits.

⁹⁶ Williams 1995 (as n. 69) 524 and 1999 (as n. 69) 63–64.

⁹⁷ For the Church’s view that baths incited men to lust see the response to Barsanuphius, cited by Yegül (as n.

94) 217. For a general attitude against bathing in public or private, see the discussion of Sylvania by E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Womersley (London 1995) 2:111 n., citing *Vitae Patrum* p. 779.977.

⁹⁸ Cic. *Tusc.* 4.70, on male/male love: “mihi quidem haec in Graecorum gymnasiis nata consuetudo videtur”; Tac. *Ann.* 14.20: “gymnasia et otia et turpes amores.” The palestra is singled out in Achilles Tatius’s *Clitophon and Leucippe* (2.38.4) as a place to meet boys.

⁹⁹ On the use of Severe Style statue types as statue props for Antinous’s portrait head, see Zanker (as n. 3) 97. In addition to the Antinous/Bacchus mentioned above, several portraits from Greece do render Antinous with an ephebic body (H. Meyer, *Antinoos* [Munich 1991] 103–4 and 105–6).

¹⁰⁰ Only in a rare image (as the statue of Antinous as Bacchus in the Vatican; Sala Rotunda 256; Helbig⁴, 34; Meyer [as n. 99] 88–90, no. 1:67, pls. 77–79) does Antinous adopt a divine hairstyle such as that routinely worn by our statuary youths.

viewer in virtually all surviving portraits. Thus he becomes for the viewer the passive object he was for the emperor.

Despite their effeminacy and clearly erotic intent—they might aptly be characterized as “cinaedic”¹⁰¹—it would be mistaken to assume that only pederasts or homosexuals (by contemporary definitions) commissioned and looked at these images of sexy boys. As scholars such as John Winkler and David Halperin have argued,¹⁰² ancient sexuality was not categorized as heterosexual or homosexual, two mutually exclusive behaviors; many men enjoyed sexual pleasure not only with women but also with boys.¹⁰³ As a poet in the *Greek Anthology* (5.65) pronounces:

Αἰετὸς ὁ Ζεὺς ἦλθεν ἐπ’ ἀντίθεον Γανυμήδην,
κύκνος ἐπὶ ξανθὴν μητέρα τὴν Ἑλένης.
οὕτως ἀμφότερ’ ἐστὶν ἀσύγκριτα· τῶν δύο δ’ αὐτῶν
ἄλλοις ἄλλο δοκεῖ κρεῖσσον, ἐμοὶ τὰ δύο.

Zeus came as an eagle to god-like Ganymede,
as a swan came he to the fair-haired mother
of Helen. So there is no comparison between
the two things; one person likes one, another
the other; I like both.¹⁰⁴

In the ancient view, Ganymede and the eagle functioned as a true pendant to Leda and the swan¹⁰⁵—the two myths represent different forms of love that were enjoyed equally and that, subject to certain constraints, engendered equal degrees of moral approbation.¹⁰⁶

Nor must we imagine that “sexy boy” statues had an exclusively male audience. At their wedding feast, Augustus and Livia were entertained by nude young boys (ψῖθυροι) whom Dio tells us were especially enjoyed by women.¹⁰⁷ Just as they enjoyed the physical presence of attractive nude boys, so women must have enjoyed looking at their statues. Thus the “female” gaze must not be excluded. Clearly one did not have to be a pederast in order to appreciate statues suggestive of the pederast’s love object.

Manipulating a complex system of messages that encoded gender in antiquity, “sexy boy” statues blended masculine and feminine signs. Although masculine in their genitalia, the statues

¹⁰¹ The term *cinaedus* applied to men who were penetrated by other men (Winkler [as n. 70] 45–54; Richlin [as n. 76] 526–31). See also Williams 1999 (as n. 69) 172 f.

¹⁰² Winkler (as n. 70) and Halperin (as n. 69) 17 f.

¹⁰³ To reiterate what has already been stated, what mattered was not the sex of the love object but the dynamics of power with that lover: a “real” man always played the active role in penetrating his partner.

¹⁰⁴ Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Loeb Classical Library from *Greek Anthology: Volume I*, pp. 160–61. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 067, translated by W. R. Paton, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1916.

¹⁰⁵ On the visual pairing of the two myths see J. Clarke, “The Décor of the House of Jupiter and Ganymede at

Ostia Antica: Private Residence Turned Gay Hotel?” in *Roman Art in the Private Sphere*, ed. E. Gazda (Ann Arbor 1991) 93. Contrast the moralizing view of Sichtermann, who interprets the Ganymede with the eagle as symbolic of pederasty, one of three “abnormal” forms of love depicted on a Roman sarcophagus at San Sebastiano, the others being narcissism (exemplified by Narcissus) and sadism (exemplified by Cupid and Psyche) (Sichtermann [as n. 57] 166–67, no. 144, pls. 115, 2 and 116).

¹⁰⁶ On forms of male-male love-making that earned wide social disapproval see Richlin (as n. 76) 526–30; MacMullen (as n. 69).

¹⁰⁷ Dio 48.44.3. On sexual relations between women and *cinaedi* see Richlin (as n. 76) 532–33 and *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New Haven 1983; rev. ed. New York and Oxford 1992) 139 (citing a woman mentioned in Mart. 7.58).

expressed femininity in their body types, coiffures, and poses—they represent, in marble or bronze, those *androgynoi* whom Suetonius describes as having “something of the shape of a man but are feminine in all other respects.”¹⁰⁸ To their largely second-century Roman audience, they conveyed unmistakably homoerotic sentiments. Yet it is worth remembering that at other periods in antiquity the same message of sexuality was conveyed by an entirely different set of visual images. In the context of sixth-century B.C. hoplite warfare, for example, a well-muscled torso conventionally known as the *cuirasse esthétique* could have an erotic value.¹⁰⁹ By the Imperial date of our images, however, the cuirass aesthetic epitomized the virile male. In the same way, ideals of beauty were not defined in monolithic terms: although youth is usually cited as a requisite of beauty, in fact beauty competitions for older men are attested in classical Greece.¹¹⁰ Even within the realm of corporal appearance, beauty had many components; classical *euexia* contests evaluated a host of characteristics: symmetry, definition, tone, bearing, fit or healthy appearance.¹¹¹ As these shifting values indicate, eros’s flame, although universal in its power, took many forms for those it touched.

¹⁰⁸ Suet. *On Insults* 61.

¹⁰⁹ S. Flory, “Dressed to Kill: The Aesthetics of Archaic and Classical Greek Hoplite Warfare,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 98 (1994) 333. See also L. Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London and New York 1992) 17, citing K. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*

2: *Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the Male Terror*, trans. C. Turner, E. Carter, and S. Conway (Oxford 1989).

¹¹⁰ N. Crowther, “Male ‘Beauty’ Contests in Greece: The *Euandria* and *Euexia*,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 54 (1985) 285.

¹¹¹ Lucian *Anach.* 25.