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***La Civilisation urbaine
de l'Antiquité tardive
dans le Sud-Ouest de la Gaule***

Actes du III^e Colloque Aquitania
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Gods, heroes, and ancestors : sculptural decoration in late-antique Aquitania

Dieux, héros, et ancêtres : le décor sculpté des villas d'Aquitaine

Résumé

* Au cours des dernières années, la recherche a insisté sur l'importance de la décoration intérieure, la décoration statuaire y compris, comme cadre social interactif et lieu de l'exercice du pouvoir à l'intérieur du monde romain. L'exposition de sculptures était un moyen considérable par lequel le propriétaire d'une maison exprimait l'image qu'il avait de lui-même, ainsi que l'importance qu'il avait par rapport à ses subalternes, ses pairs, et ses supérieurs. À en juger par les découvertes archéologiques, les documents d'archives liés aux trouvailles archéologiques et les références anciennes à la décoration sculptée, les villas d'Aquitaine romaine étaient décorées de statues de genres mais aussi d'échelles, de matériaux, et d'époques très variés. Les efforts cumulés de

plusieurs générations de collectionneurs ont abouti à des collections très diverses englobant à la fois des objets de famille et des sculptures contemporaines. Cet article examinera certains des thèmes les plus communs quant aux contenus et à l'exposition des statues d'Aquitaine de la basse antiquité.

Le genre le plus répandu chez les collectionneurs d'Aquitaine était les statues de divinités, de héros et autres personnages mythologiques. Parmi les sculptures que l'on trouve sur les sites et que l'on préserve, on trouve presque à chaque fois des statues mythologiques. Bien que certaines de ces statues comme les personnages de *lararium* trouvés à Plassac ou le Jupiter de Mézin servissent à des fins religieuses, beaucoup parmi elles étaient originellement utilisées comme décoration, disposées dans des décors qui accentuaient les attributs mythologiques ou les domaines de pouvoir du dieu.

* Outre ce résumé en français, on trouvera un condensé plus bref, en anglais et en français à la fin du volume.

Une grande variété de messages pouvaient être envoyés à travers la sélection et le placement minutieux des statues mythologiques. Certaines étaient disposées dans des endroits qui se rapportaient à leurs attributs ou leurs domaines de pouvoir, Minerve dans une bibliothèque, Bacchus dans un jardin ou un *triclinium*. Vénus était une divinité particulièrement à la mode, cela était certainement dû à l'association qu'on en faisait à la beauté idéale, au mariage, ainsi qu'à la fécondité de façon plus générale. Les statues de héros ou de dieux puissants glorifiaient le propriétaire de la villa, invitant par là même à la comparaison de ses pouvoirs avec ceux du héros en question, ou indiquant une protection divine de ses activités aristocratiques. Une statuette de Vénus-Victoire à Montmaurin pourrait se rapporter indirectement au trophée de la cité voisine de Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, et d'autres statues font sans aucun doute référence à des monuments publics. L'interprétation des mythes a changé avec le temps, comme on le voit dans l'iconographie insolite de certaines statuettes assez récentes, telles Vénus et Adonis de Montmaurin. D'autre part, certaines sculptures ont pu être réinterprétées au cours de la basse Antiquité, comme je le suggère à propos de la statue de Jupiter à l'anguipède de Saint-Georges-de-Montagne.

Le portrait était un autre genre de sculpture largement répandu. Des portraits contemporains de famille ainsi que certains objets offraient la preuve tangible de la distinction de ses propres ancêtres. C'est un élément qui ressort clairement dans les vers d'Ausone accompagnant un portrait de son père. Dans la plupart des villas on retrouve des portraits particuliers, y compris aux villas de Castelculier,

Montmaurin, et Séviac. Mise à part l'exceptionnelle collection à Chiragan, le portrait impérial est rare dans les villas de la Gaule du Sud-Ouest. Quelques villas exposaient des bustes de philosophes et d'écrivains, mais ce genre n'était pas aussi répandu en Gaule qu'ailleurs dans l'Empire.

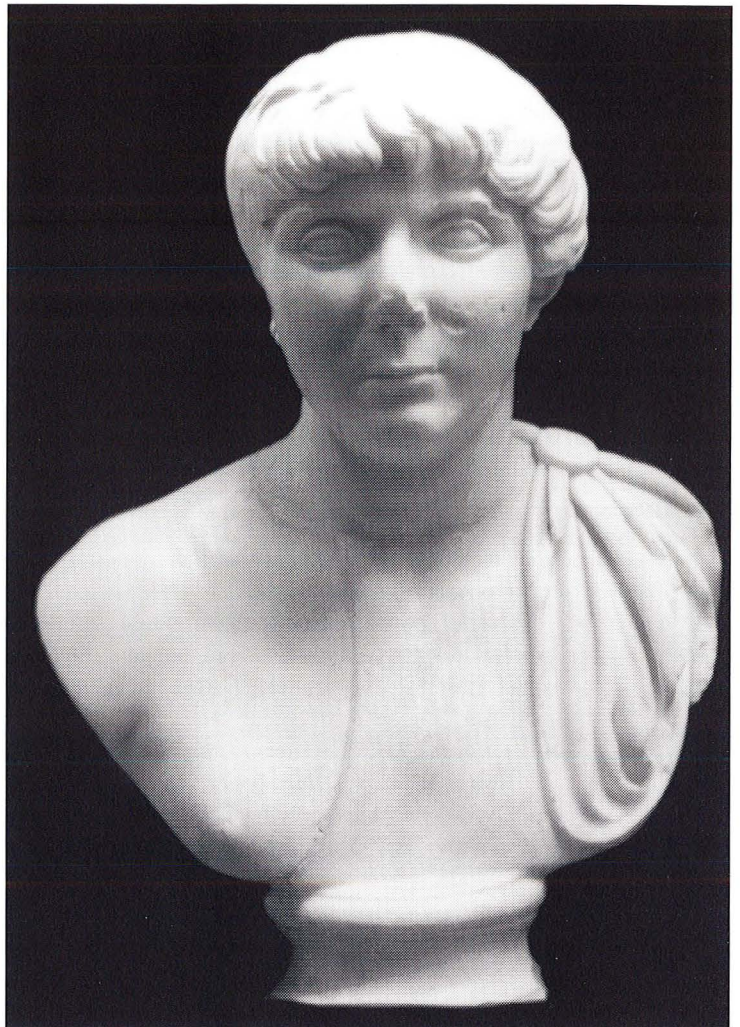
Les endroits où l'on a fait des découvertes, les emplacements ayant des décorations différentes telles que des mosaïques et des peintures murales, et des références littéraires permettent d'émettre quelques hypothèses à propos de l'exposition des statues dans les villas gauloises de la basse Antiquité. C'est assurément dans les bains, les nymphées, les halls d'entrée et les cours que l'on retrouve de la sculpture. La sculpture pourrait aussi faire partie de la somptueuse décoration des *triclinia* comme les sources anciennes l'ont démontré. Il apparaît donc que la sculpture était largement exposée au public ainsi que dans des endroits fréquentés de la maison et que, combinée avec la mosaïque, la peinture, et les murs recouverts de marbre, elle servait à étaler la richesse ainsi que l'influence du propriétaire. Etant une forme parmi les autres formes de la décoration figurative dans les villas d'Aquitaine, la sculpture en a été, sans nul doute, un aspect important. Les nombreux objets de famille composant les collections de la basse Antiquité à Montmaurin et ailleurs illustrent le fait que l'intérêt que les Gaulois portaient à la décoration statuaire irait croissant au cours du Haut et du Bas Empire. Pour les aristocrates gaulois de la basse Antiquité, une collection de sculptures, tout comme une éducation classique, était la preuve de la participation continue à la culture romaine traditionnelle.

¹A pair of statuettes of Diana and Venus found at Saint-Georges-de-Montagne in the middle of the last century are two of the best known examples of statuary decoration from the villas of Aquitaine (figs. 5, 6). Less known is the fact that approximately 25 other fragments of sculpture were found at the same time at this site, including a torso of Meleager, a small-scale torso of a horse, a limestone Minerva, an overlife-sized male torso (now lost), a limestone group of *Jupiter à l'anguipède*, and heads of Apollo, Mars, an unidentified female (possibly a maenad), and an Amor. The assemblage thus comprises pieces of widely varying style, size, date, material, and subject. As such, it is in fact characteristic of the sculptural decoration of many late-antique Gallic villas, with the most unusual feature being not so much the size of the collection as the absence of portraiture within it. ² Other sites such as Montmaurin, Chiragan, and Nérac all have well attested sculptural collections, and careful study of extant finds combined with data from antiquarian sources and brief site publications reveals that sculptural decoration was more common than would appear from a preliminary scan of material currently available in museums. ³

As seen at Saint-Georges-de-Montagne and other sites such as Séviac or Montmaurin, popular genres of statuary in domestic collections included portraits, mythological statuary, and some statuary which was religious or votive in origin. Size, material, and style could vary immensely, and it is evident from the wide variety of dates that the collection of statuary was a popular aristocratic pastime from the high empire through to the late empire. In the course of this paper, I will explore trends in the contents of Gallic collections, evaluate evidence for methods of display, and consider literary evidence for the appreciation of sculpture in a domestic setting.

Portraiture

Private portraits are almost universal among Aquitanian collections, as the assemblages from Montmaurin and Castelculier will illustrate. At the



■ Fig. 1

Bust of youth (Trajanic date) from Montmaurin. Montmaurin, Musée de Montmaurin. Photo author, by permission.

1. This article is based in large part on material discussed in my PhD. dissertation though I have revised and expanded the topic: Stirling, *Mythological statuary*.

2. On these sculptures, see Amtmann, 1904; Stirling, *Divinities and heroes*; Stirling, 1994.

3. For instance: Momméja, 1923, pp. 175-83 (various sites); Formigé, 1939, p. 192 (Moncaret); Redeuilh, 1959, p. 64 (Rions, Lestiac, Loupiac); *Gallia informations, préhistoire et histoire*, 1, 1987-88, p. 130 (Auria sur Dropt); Boube, 1955, p. 95. The pioneering work of F. Braemer on sculptural finds from Gaul is fundamental to any investigation: for instance, Braemer, 1966; *L'ornementation*.

villa of Montmaurin, a youthful head of Trajanic date is preserved (fig. 1), and three more busts (two male and one female) are reported by early researchers.⁴ In addition to a headless bust which was found on the surface at Castelculier in 1958, there are reports of sculptural finds from the same site in archival sources.⁵ The antiquarian Boudon de Saint-Amans reported three portraits from Castelculier: a very battered female head and two over life-sized heads, one of which he suggests could be a consul or a magistrate.⁶ He dates the latter head to the late first century A.D., and provides a sketch which very closely matches a male head now in the Musée Municipal d'Agen (figs. 2, 3).⁷ Both the Agen head and the sketch show a Julio-Claudian hairstyle with similarly configured locks over the forehead and ears and damage to the nose. It is particularly noticeable that there are two chips out of the right side of the neck on both statues.

Overall, portrait busts found in Gallic villas span the first to fifth centuries A.D. in date and illustrate a steady interest in portraiture. Republican and early imperial sources document how the display of *imagines* of a patron's ancestors in his atrium vividly illustrated his distinguished heritage and confirmed his high social status.⁸ In the Gallic villas, portraiture presumably served a comparable function adorning rooms and spaces where guests were received. To judge from findspots, the portraits at Montmaurin may have been displayed in the "atrium" or in an adjacent suite of reception rooms.⁹ At the villa of Séviac, fragments of at least three portraits were found in the peristyle court, where they would have been visible to all who gained access to the villa. Statuary in the intercolumniations of the peristyle would also have been visible to anyone in the luxurious rooms surrounding the court.

Ausonius, the fourth-century rhetor and writer

from Bordeaux, provides literary confirmation of an interest in private portraiture as a representation of ancestral dignity and accomplishment. The *Epicedion in patrem* is a verse inscription which he placed under an image (*imago*) of his father.¹⁰ It praises the father's moderate character and his worldly accomplishments, with frequent references to the successes of Ausonius himself. We learn from this poem not only that Ausonius did own a portrait of his father in an unspecified medium, but also that the portrait inspired *pietas* and admiration in Ausonius and presumably also in other viewers. The poem provides a template of the sorts of sentiments portraits were meant to inspire in their viewers. Portrait busts in other Gallic collections must have been understood and appreciated in a similar fashion. Another series of Ausonius' poems, the *Parentalia*, describe the accomplishments of many of his relatives over three generations. Again Ausonius shows a descriptive interest in achievement and the resultant increase in family status in what amounts to a verbal portrait gallery, a literary counterpart to the multi-generational collections of stone portraiture found in many villas.¹¹ That Gallic aristocrats continued to display portraiture into the fifth century A.D. is illustrated by a letter of Sidonius mentioning the "robed *imagines* of his ancestors" in a friend's house.¹²

A late-antique male portrait head found at Séviac raises some interesting questions about the treatment of portraiture.¹³ The head clearly owes its relatively good preservation to the fact that it was included in debris used to fill in a hypocaust covered over with a fruit tree mosaic dating sometime in the first half of the fifth century.¹⁴ As the portrait itself dates to the late fourth century or the first half of the fifth, it appears to have been on display for only a relatively short time before its burial. Why did the renovators of the villa throw away this sculpture but apparently retain the others? Possibly the villa changed hands in

4. Fouet, *Montmaurin*, p. 25, 186.

5. The bust dates to the third or fourth century. Agen, Musée Municipal (no inventory number given): *Gallia*, 22, 1963, pp. 528-9, fig. 40; *Rome et le Sud-Ouest de la Gaule*, p. 75, no. 90.

6. Female head: Boudon de Saint-Amans, 1859, p. 218; over life-sized head: p. 58; possible magistrate: p. 217 and IX notice, pl. 1, no. 3.

7. Agen, Musée Municipal, inv. 861.1: *Rome et le Sud-Ouest de la Gaule*, p. 29, no. 17. The author of the entry does not appear to know of the Boudon-de-Saint-Amans reference. I believe that Boudon-de-Saint-Amans' sketch and the catalogue photo show the same piece: they are as similar as a photo and a drawing can be.

8. Polybius *Hist.* 6.53; Pliny *HN* 35.6-7; Livy 8.40.4.

9. Fouet's room 38. Despite Fouet's use of the term "atrium," the layout of Montmaurin and other villas is considerably different from the Pompeian atrium house.

10. *Epicedion in patrem, praef: imagini ipsius hi versus subscripti sunt*. Note that *imago* does not reveal the medium of the portrait. The importance of this passage as evidence for the reception of art by the viewer has never been investigated.

11. Significantly, the model for these poems, Varro's *Imagines* or *Hebdomades* provided biographies and illustrations of famous men: Cameron, 1993, p. 91.

12. *Ep.* 1.6.2: *trabeatis proavorum imaginibus*.

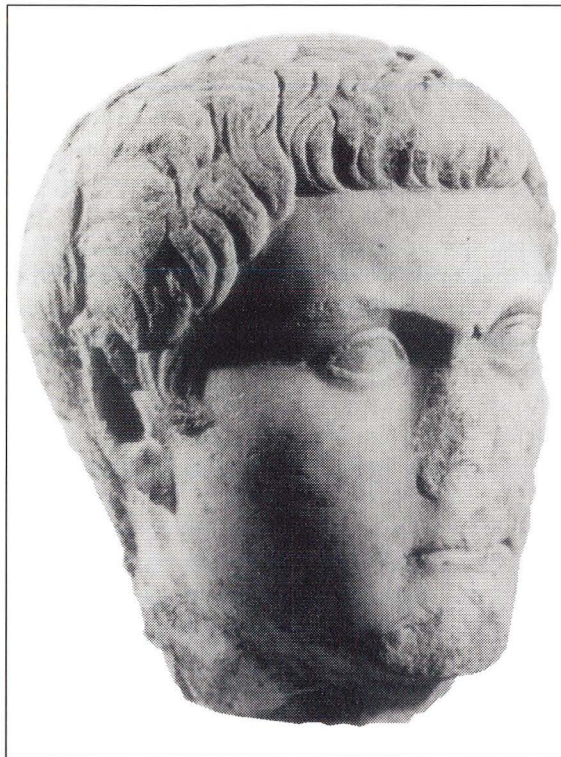
13. The date of this sculpture is debated. I prefer the fifth-century date proposed by J.-P. Balty, as cited in Balmelle, *Recueil*, pt. 2, p. 19, note. 42. Balty is currently preparing a publication on this piece. Braemer argues for a Constantinian date: *L'ornementation*, pp. 139-41, figs. 40-43.

14. Balmelle, *Recueil*, pt. 2, pp. 172-174, no. 293, pl. 116, 117.



■ Fig. 2

Sketch of male head found at Castelculier. From Boudon de Saint-Amans, 1859, IX notice, pl. 1, no. 3.



■ Fig. 3

Male portrait now in Musée d'Agen, probably found at Castelculier. Agen, Musée d'Agen, inv. 861.1. From Racines, p.176, by permission.

the turbulent years of the first quarter of the fifth century, and the new owners did not want a reminder of their predecessor. Or, perhaps the head was deemed irreparable and thrown away after being damaged in some accident.¹⁵ Other portraits in the villa evidently remained on view for longer; they were found in the (later) destruction levels covering the villa.

There are a few imperial portraits among the Gallic collections.¹⁶ The owner of the villa at Nérac had a single bust of Marcus Aurelius. An alabaster and marble statuette of an empress dressed as Venus was found at Tayrac.¹⁷ Imperial portraiture demonstrated

the high status of a family and may have referred to participation in the imperial cult. In later generations, emperors of the Golden Age may even have been viewed as heroes of sorts, complementing other heroic imagery.¹⁸ The Tayrac statuette may have graced a *lararium*.

At the villa of Chiragan, an extraordinary assemblage of some thirty imperial statues was discovered, but this collection is unusual in its sheer size.¹⁹ Within this collection, the existence of multiple portraits of certain emperors (Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, and Caracalla) is of interest. The busts of Marcus Aurelius differ from one another in style, date, and material; there is also divergence of style among the portraits of the other emperors.²⁰ Such variation among the busts of a

15. The head had been damaged prior to burial: the nose is missing, and the face and hair have suffered considerable damage. A piece of hair on the right temple was repaired at some point by piecing, as a smoothed surface and chiselled hatch marks at the right temple show.

16. Braemer, 1966, pp. 383-94.

17. Nérac: Braemer, *L'ornementation*, pp. 136-37, figs. 38, 39; Tayrac: Marcadé, 1961, pp. 489-91.

18. Hero: Ellis, 1991, p. 128.

19. In general, see Joulin, 1901, on this site and its excavation. Most of the sculptures are also included in *Regard de Rome*, 1995. See also Queyrel, 1992.

single emperor suggests that the villa's owners assembled the statuary from different sources.²¹ The duplicated busts may have been displayed in different rooms, or alternatively, perhaps the patrons wished to contemplate different renderings of the same subject in order to appreciate minute differences among them.²² The villa was occupied into the fourth century, and the living quarters of the fourth-century phase, though reduced in size, had luxurious decoration including gilded glass mosaics.²³ The assemblage at Chiragan, however, is problematic in that there is debate over whether the sculpture actually served as decoration for the villa, or was dumped there in late antiquity for as yet undetermined reasons. The extraordinary range and quantity of the sculpture along with the fact that it was found in two large pits cut *into* the ruins of the villa raise the real possibility that the sculpture did not originate there.²⁴

Gallic aristocrats do not seem to have been very interested in portraits of philosophers, although some examples are attested. There is a bronze statuette of a seated philosopher from Bordeaux.²⁵ One sculptural fragment found at Séviac appears to portray a philosopher or poet.²⁶ Preserved on the fragment is part of a creased forehead, over which thick, claw-shaped locks of hair fall. A thick round band encircles the head, and one lock of hair strays over it. The stringy hair and the fillet suggest an identification as a writer, perhaps a Homer or Sophocles.²⁷ A fine example of a portrait type which is variously identified as Hesiod, "Pseudo-Seneca," or the head of the Hellenistic genre type known as the "old fisherman" was found near Auch in 1860 and

presumably originated in a domestic collection (fig. 4).²⁸ Very carefully carved, this head is one of the best preserved and executed examples of its type and illustrates the expense to which Gallic collectors would go in order to decorate their homes. To peers of the patron, a bust of a philosopher or writer would have illustrated his educated taste and cultured pursuits, while his less educated clients would probably have interpreted the portrait as another ancestor bust, especially if different kinds of portraits were displayed together, as was evidently the case in



■ Fig. 4

Portrait of "Pseudo-Seneca" found near Auch. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. MA921. Photo C. Larrieu, by permission. Copyright R.M.N.

20. Braemer, 1952-53.

21. Neils Hannestad suggests that the statuary collection was assembled in the fourth century through buying up "used" sculptures from imperial temples which were no longer in use: Hannestad, 1994, p. 133 (and see generally pp. 127-143 on this group).

22. As E. Bartman has argued in her analysis of two differing replicas of Skopas' Pothos from a house of Hadrianic date in Rome: Bartman, 1988, pp. 211-25. Perhaps the owner(s) of the villa at Chiragan had a similar purpose.

23. Joulin, 1901, pp. 357-74. Note that there are coins from the later fourth century at the site: p. 374.

24. For the pits, see Joulin, 1901, pp. 232-33.

25. *Racines* p. 316.

26. Montréal-du-Gers, Dépôt des fouilles, inv. M48. Aragon-Launet, 1971, p. 236. This sculpture is published as no. 1 in my forthcoming report on the sculptural decoration from Séviac: Stirling, *Séviac*.

27. For a collection of philosopher and writer portraits, see Richter, 1965. For types with similar curled, flame-shaped locks under a rounded fillet, see the Homer "Apollonius of Tyana" type: vol. 1, pp. 48-54, especially figs. 48-50; or the Sophocles "Farnese" type: pp. 125-28, figs. 611-74. Smith argues that fillets are particularly associated with poets: Smith, 1995, p. 333.

28. Espérandieu, vol. 2 no. 1051. Richter, 1965, vol. 1, p. 61. Pseudo-Seneca=Hesiod no. 29, figs. 195-97. Note that an "old fisherman" type carved from black marble was found at Chiragan: Rey-Delque, 1975.

the peristyle at Séviac. Other examples of philosopher portraits from Gaul do exist, but in general, philosopher portraits do not seem to have been as popular in Gaul at any period as they were in Italy or the eastern Mediterranean.²⁹

Mythological sculpture

Equally as popular as portraiture in Aquitanian collections was statuary of divinities, heroes, and other mythological figures, as a glance at some of the better preserved assemblages will illustrate. As described above, the 25 sculptural fragments from Saint-Georges-de-Montagne belonged to mythological statuary of a variety of scales, genres, and dates. At the villa of La Garenne de Nérac, current museum holdings and archival sources combine to record the finding of a statuette of a draped woman (possibly a victory), a small-scale diademed female head which I interpret as a Venus or nymph, a second head from a statuette, an overlife-sized hand holding a cup, two overlife-sized heads, and a bronze statuette of Minerva, in addition to the portrait of Marcus Aurelius already mentioned.³⁰ Single examples of mythological statuary have also been found at many sites, as for instance the Venus found at Mas-d'Agenais or a Silenus also in the Musée d'Agen.³¹ Mythological statuary is found at nearly every site from which statuary is preserved. Overall, mythological statuary ranges in date from the first to fourth centuries A.D., and the scale, material, and probable function of the statuary varies considerably. By the fourth century A.D., statuary assemblages contained heirlooms of various ages as well as contemporary additions to the collection.

The Venus and Diana from Saint-Georges-de-Montagne are among the best-known examples of mythological sculpture from Aquitaine due to their



■ Fig. 5

Statuette of Venus and erotes from Saint-Georges-de-Montagne. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. MA3537. Photo M. Chuzeville, by permission. Copyright R.M.N.



■ Fig. 6

Statuette of Diana from Saint-Georges-de-Montagne. Bordeaux, Musée d'Aquitaine, inv. 71.16.1. Photo museum, by permission. All rights reserved.

29. Espérandieu's catalogue shows very few philosophers, among which a Plato or Sophocles from Viala (Hérault) (Espérandieu-Lantier, vol. 15, no. 8800), a philosopher or Asclepius from Nîmes (Espérandieu, vol. 15, no. 8785), a philosopher possibly from Aix-en-Provence (Espérandieu, vol. 2, no. 1692) and a Socrates of unknown provenance, now in Toulouse (Espérandieu, vol. 2, no. 1023). Braemer suggests that the owners of the Marcus Aurelius portrait found at Nérac revered the emperor also as a philosopher: Braemer, *L'ornementation*, p. 137. A Demosthenes found at Chiragan reflects interest in orators and the golden age of Athens: Joulin, 1901, no. 197E. For philosophers in sculptural collections outside of Gaul, see Neudecker, 1988, pp. 105-14, 147-57; Smith, 1990, pp. 127-55.

30. Only the female statuette and the head of Marcus Aurelius are still extant, both in the Musée de Nérac. See Braemer, *L'ornementation*, p. 135-7, figs. 36-39. For the non-extant pieces, see Samazeuilh, 1865, pp. 451-2; Dumège, *Nérac*, p. 226, 235.

31. Venus: Espérandieu no. 1259. The Silenus was found at Agen in 1966.

prominent display in large museums (figs. 5, 6). They belong to a widely distributed genre of statuettes which I date to the last decades of the fourth century or even early in the fifth based on their similarities to portraiture and relief sculpture of this period. It is worth reviewing the reasons for assigning this late date because some scholars would prefer a much earlier one.³² François Braemer has argued for a Constantinian date and Louis Valensi for a Severan date.³³ Braemer and Valensi base their interpretations on valid characteristics, such as the long-waisted proportions or the high polish, but do not appear to acknowledge the longevity of these characteristics in Roman art. Short proportions and abrupt transitions between body parts, for instance, are common to late-antique art in many media, and a high surface polish remained popular into the late fourth century.³⁴ Much more compelling as evidence of a specific period of manufacture than such long-lived characteristics are the aesthetic and facial similarities to fourth- and early fifth-century art. The smooth faces with drilled pupils and ridged, arched, brows are typical of the later fourth century, as seen on the faces on the Theodosian obelisk base or on the head of an angel also found in Constantinople, in the Sultanahmet district (fig. 8).³⁵ A group of Mithraic statuettes dated inscriptionally to A.D. 389 have similar facial features to the Venus and Diana.³⁶ The stylized drapery flourishes on the Diana match those on a Hekate statuette in the Mithraic group, and on an angel on a sarcophagus found at Sarigüzel near Constantinople.³⁷ A late fourth- or early fifth-century date for the statuettes thus seems reasonably secure.

Furthermore, it is possible to place the Diana and Venus within a genre of classicizing, mythological statuettes created during this period. These statuettes are characterized by complex compositions involving subsidiary figures and often landscape motifs, as for instance on a statuette of Ganymede found in Carthage, an Aphrodite from Sidi Bishr near

Alexandria, or a dancing satyr and maenad reportedly found at Aphrodisias (fig. 7).³⁸ All three have facial features very reminiscent of the Diana and Venus. All component parts are reinforced by tiny struts, and on most of these late-antique mythological statuettes, a thick, crudely carved strut supports the back of the neck. The sculptures are very flat when viewed from the side, and were evidently displayed in niches or against walls. The base moulding on the Venus and Diana of Saint-Georges-de-Montagne, a scotia flanked by pairs of fillets, is one which appears on many statuettes of this genre.

The marble of the Venus and Diana is agreed to be non-Gallic, though opinions vary as to its origin. Braemer identifies it as Carrara, while Gazda points out similarities to the fine-grained white marbles of Asia Minor. Gazda has proposed an eastern origin for the statuettes, based on their stylistic similarities to such monuments as the Theodosian obelisk base, portraits of magistrates from Ephesus, and others. The neck struts seen on the Diana and Venus and other sculptures of this genre are generally recognized to be characteristic of Asia Minor.³⁹ Recently, much attention has been focussed on the workshops of Aphrodisias, which were unquestionably producing mythological sculpture in the fourth century. Some sculptures produced by Aphrodisian sculptors were on display in Rome in the middle of the century, and it is possible that the Venus and Diana were manufactured in Rome by an Aphrodisian branch workshop, then shipped to Gaul.⁴⁰ While I do not observe strong similarities between the Venus and Diana of Saint-Georges-de-Montagne and published sculptures from Aphrodisias, the existence of workshops producing late-antique mythological sculpture at Aphrodisias raises the possibility of other Asian centres likewise producing such sculpture.⁴¹ Ephesus and Constantinople remain alternative locations.⁴²

Very similar in style and date to the Venus and Diana are a group of sculptural fragments found at the villa of Montmaurin. Fragments representing a Venus

32. The dating information here is drawn from Gazda, 1981 and my own further work on the group (forthcoming): Stirling, *Divinities and heroes*. See also Stirling, *Mythological statuary*. It nevertheless seems worth summarizing the dating evidence in the present context because it lays the groundwork for discussing several other late-antique mythological statuettes found in Aquitaine.

33. Braemer, *L'ornementation*, p. 124; Valensi, 1973.

34. Wrede, 1972, pp. 81-82.

35. Kiilerich, 1993, pp. 31-49 (Theodosian obelisk base), 129 (Sultanahmet angel).

36. Amiet, 1968, pp. 307-8, fig. 8; Jidejian, 1971, pp. 78, 88-93, figs. 214-16; Will, 1951.

37. Angel: Gazda, 1981, pp. 154-56, pls. 41, 42, 44. Hekate: Jidejian, 1971, fig. 216.

38. Ganymede found in Carthage: Gazda, 1981, *passim* and fig. 16; Aphrodite: Hannestad (1994), pp. 124-5; satyr and maenad: Comstock and Vermeule, 1976, pp. 128-9, no. 197; Vermeule, 1964.

39. Inan and Rosenbaum, 1966, p. 10.

40. For Aphrodisian sculptors in Rome in the second quarter of the fourth century, see Erism and Roueché, 1992.

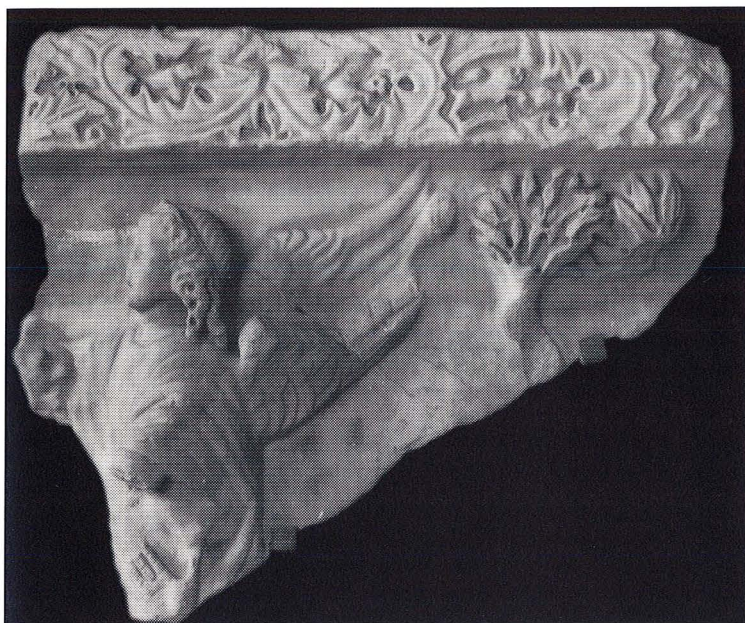
41. For instance, most of the late mythological statuettes have neck struts, whereas the statues on display in the Aphrodisias museum generally lack neck struts.

42. Kiilerich, 1992, pp. 201-4, 213-4.



■ Fig. 7

Statuette of dancing satyr and maenad. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 62.1. William Warden Francis Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



■ Fig. 8

Relief of an angel found in the Sultanahmet district of Istanbul. Istanbul, Istanbul Archaeological Museum, inv. 5122. Photo museum, by permission.



■ Fig. 9

Fragments of statuettes of Venus and Adonis found at Montmaurin. Montmaurin, Musée de Montmaurin. Photo author, by permission.

Anadyomene, a boar, a youth, and a tree-fork containing the feet of an infant were found in the nymphaeum and its garden (fig. 9). The tree trunk, with its flat, little-worked back and trapezoidal cross-section, resembles the tree which forms the lattice behind the Diana. On the arm of the Venus Anadyomene tiny struts extend between the goddess' fingers and hair. Though they are not strictly necessary from a structural point of view, they show off the virtuoso capabilities of the sculptor. Lacy microstruts are a distinctive feature of late mythological sculpture. The high polish on the pieces and the presence of subsidiary as well as a central figures accords with late fourth-century mythological sculpture, as do the drilled dots in the eyes of the boar.

The fragments found at Montmaurin have been plausibly interpreted as a scene of Venus at the birth and death of Adonis.⁴³ According to mythology, Adonis was born from a tree, became the lover of Venus, and was killed by a boar while still an adolescent. The late fourth-century scholar Servius recounts the myth thus:

On the island of Cyprus Cinyras ruled, and he had a daughter, by the name of Myrrha. Because of the anger of Sol, she fell in love with her father, with whom she even shared a bed, by the assistance of her nurse. For the nurse told Cinyras that a certain girl burned with love for him and hoped to lie with him at night, in the shadows on account of her virginal modesty. His desire aroused, Cinyras agreed. In the end, wanting to see the girl's face, he ordered a light to be brought. Seeing his daughter's face, he began to pursue her with a sword in order to kill her. Pregnant, she fled from her father into the forest and there was changed into the tree which bears her name. But she held onto the conceived infant inside the bark, and after it was cut by the tooth of a boar, she sent him out into the light. He was raised by nymphs and named Adonis. Because Venus had fallen in love with him [Adonis], Mars disguised himself as a boar and killed him. They say that because of the great mourning of Venus, he [Adonis] was changed into a rose. (*Comm. in Verg. Ecl. 10.18.*)⁴⁴

43. Georges Fouet has already proposed this identification, but his reconstruction of the fragments differs from mine: Fouet, *Montmaurin*, pp. 170-1.

44. He also recounts a second version less helpful for the Montmaurin figures.



■ Fig. 10

Female head found at Montmaurin, front. Montmaurin, Musée de Montmaurin. Photo author, by permission.



■ Fig. 11

Female head found at Montmaurin, back. Montmaurin, Musée de Montmaurin. Photo author, by permission.

In some versions, Adonis then alternated his time between the Underworld and the Overworld.⁴⁵ The Montmaurin finds (a Venus, boar, youth, infant, and a tree fork with tiny feet in it) can all be linked iconographically to this story of birth, death, and rebirth.

A recently discovered head from a statuette appears to belong to the same statuary group (figs. 10, 11).⁴⁶ The new head portrays a woman wearing a diadem. The lower face is very damaged, but the general oval shape and flat, unmoulded surfaces of the upper face are clear. Her chin appears to have a

sloping profile. Curved eyebrows frame her puffy-lidded eyes, in which small drill dots mark the pupils and tear ducts. Traces of a chisel line between the lips are visible. The woman's hair is parted at the centre and combed back into a loose knot which also acts as a neck-strut. A thick lock of hair emerges horizontally on either side of this knot. On the woman's right, bridged drill channels demarcate the waves in her hair. The left side of the head is less carefully worked, resulting in a facial asymmetry when the head is viewed from the front. A diadem which has broken off at the top arches over her hair. The back and top of the head are worked only roughly with a chisel.

The rough workmanship on the back of the head indicates that the back was not meant to be seen. The cursory carving of the left side and the asymmetry of

45. Apollodorus 3.14.4; [Dümmler] *RE*, vol. 1.1, cols. 390-3.

46. This head is unpublished, and I thank the late M. Georges Fouet for his kind permission to study and publish it. It is currently housed in the Musée de Montmaurin. Height: 9 cm; width: 8 cm; depth: 7.7 cm. The surface is abraded and yellowed.

the face imply that another object in the sculptural group (such as a tree or another figure) stood immediately to the left of the head, making it more difficult to work this side. The horizontal locks of hair emerging from the neck suggest that the head belongs to a Venus Anadyomene, an identification which is supported though not proven by the presence of the diadem. The configuration of the hair is similar to that on the Venus of Saint-Georges-de-Montagne.⁴⁷ The new head cannot belong to the Anadyomene torso mentioned above, however, since the torso is too big and does not have hair on the neck.

Despite the surface damage on the new head, several traits compatible with late-antique mythological statuettes can be observed, such as ridged, arched brows, puffy eyelids, drilling at the tearducts and nostrils, facial asymmetry, and the neck support. The face generally resembles that of an unfinished Europa dating probably to the mid fourth century found at Aphrodisias.⁴⁸ The Montmaurin head can be plausibly dated to the late fourth or early fifth century.

As described above, the new head cannot belong to the existing Anadyomene torso from Montmaurin. Moreover, there are difficulties in reconciling the extant right arm with the right shoulder of the Anadyomene torso, further evidence that the fragments come from more than one statuette. It would appear, then, that there were in fact a pair of multi-figure compositions.⁴⁹ Rather than reconstructing a single sculptural group telescoping the whole story of Venus and Adonis, I interpret the fragments as two separate statuary groups, one showing Venus at the birth of Adonis, the other showing Venus at the death of Adonis.⁵⁰

In one composition a Venus Anadyomene stood beside a spreading tree in whose fork was poised the baby Adonis (fig. 12). A lattice of branches spread out from the tree, supporting both the goddess and infant. The striding position of the baby contrasts with the seemingly still, frontal pose of the Venus, and implies that there is some action or event in the scene which

can no longer be reconstructed. In the other group, the Venus Anadyomene stood next to another tree at the base of which was a smaller scale figure of the youthful Adonis and a boar turning at bay (fig. 13). Such a combination of centrifugal motion with intersecting gazes would have given the scene dynamism. Aesthetically, these statuettes must have closely resembled the late fourth-century Diana from Saint-Georges-de-Montagne (figs. 5, 6) in their use of a lattice of supporting branches, subsidiary figures, and intricate strutwork. The proportions of the figures, insofar as they are preserved, also compare well to the Saint-Georges-de-Montagne figures and their late fourth-century date. Unfortunately, no trace of the bases remains.

The iconography of the statuettes is unusual. The birth of Adonis is a scene rarely shown in Greco-Roman art.⁵¹ In paintings from Pompeii and the baths of Titus, Aphrodite and a nymph receive the infant as he is born out of the midsection of a tree.⁵² These scenes do not resemble the Montmaurin statuette. A third example of the scene, found on coins of Valerian (253-68) minted at the city of Aphrodisias, has more potential similarities (fig. 14).⁵³ The coin shows a three-branched tree flanked on either side by a figure wearing a Phrygian cap. The figure on the left wields a double axe, while the right-hand figure falls to his knees and appears to hold a hand to his face. The right-hand figure appears to be male, since he wears a Phrygian cap and is not draped, but evidently these figures represent some part of Cinyras' pursuit of his daughter. The metamorphosis of Myrrha, presaging the birth of Adonis, appears on another coin from Asia Minor, from the city of Myra in Lycia.⁵⁴ On this coin, Myrrha emerges from the fork of a tree while two figures try to chop it down. It is possible that these coin images may have influenced later iconography of this scene. In particular, the running pose of one of the figures on the coin from Aphrodisias seems very similar to the configuration of the youthful Adonis. On the coin from Myra, Myrrha's statuesque detachment from the agitated figures below mirrors the poised disengagement of the Venus of Montmaurin. The coin images from

47. For a variety of other configurations of Venus Anadyomene, see *LIMC* 2, Aphrodite nos. 423-55.

48. Rockwell, 1991, p. 138, figs. 19-20. The damage on the Montmaurin piece and the unfinished carving of the Europa may contribute deceptively to the resemblance, however.

49. The nymphaeum area is rooms 112, 114, 115, 116.

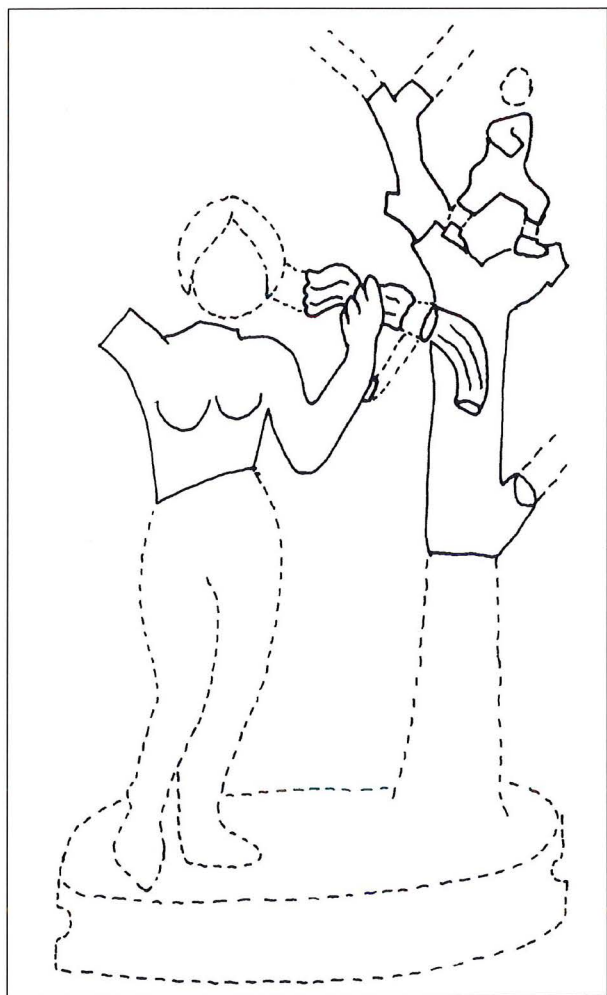
50. For Fouet's interpretation, see *Montmaurin*, pp. 170-171.

51. Michael Koortbojian confirms this observation: Koortbojian, 1995, p. 26. The *LIMC* records only three examples: *LIMC* 1 Adonis 2a-4.

52. *LIMC* 1, Adonis 3, 4.

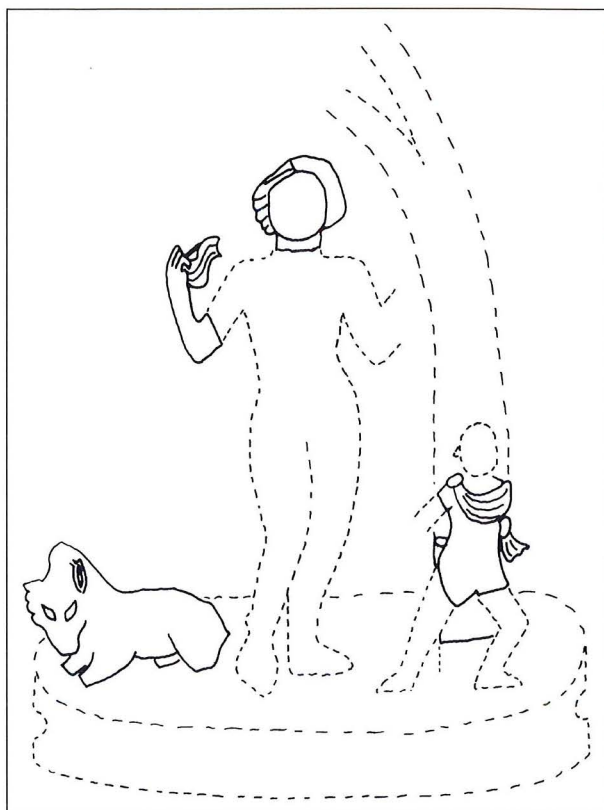
53. *LIMC* 1, Adonis 2a.

54. *LIMC* 6, Myrrha 3a = *LIMC* 2, Artemis Eleuthera 4.



■ Fig. 12

Author's reconstruction of statuette group of the birth of Adonis.



■ Fig. 13

Author's reconstitution of statuette group of the death of Adonis.



■ Fig. 14

Coin minted at Aphrodisias showing the birth of Adonis. London, British Museum, inv. 55-1885 6-6-200. Photo museum, by permission. Copyright British Museum.

Aphrodisias and Myra indicate an iconographic and religious interest in the birth of Adonis in Caria and Lycia. Aphrodisias, it should be remembered, was a great exporter of sculpture in late antiquity. Even if Aphrodisias may not have been the specific origin of the statuettes found at Montmaurin, the iconographic similarities between the coins and the statuettes point to origins in western Asia Minor. These similarities between the Montmaurin statuary and the coins are all the more striking when the statuary is compared instead to the painted representations of Adonis' birth.

The death of Adonis was a common subject for sarcophagi, but was usually configured differently from the Montmaurin group in that sarcophagi tend to show the boar charging the fallen hero.⁵⁵ Venus appears in scenes on sarcophagi either in a parting embrace with Adonis before his fatal hunting trip, or rushing distraught to the aid of the dying Adonis. Again, the configuration of the Montmaurin pendant of the death of Adonis differs and may have been influenced by the more heraldic configuration seen on coins from central Asia Minor.

Interest in the hero's infancy may have originated in a wider late-antique focus on the youthful deeds and education of certain heroes. Cycles of the youth of Achilles, for instance, appear on silverware, relief carving on tables, and ceramics.⁵⁶ The early fifth-century author Macrobius offers an allegorical interpretation of the scene of Adonis' death as he explains that Adonis represented the sun:

Nevertheless, they say that Adonis was killed by a boar, painting the image of winter in this animal, because the boar is shaggy and savage and rejoices in dank, muddy, frost-covered places and especially feeds off the acorn, a winter fruit. Therefore winter is like a wound to the sun, and diminishes its light and heat for us, which happens to every living creature at death. (*Saturnalia*, 1.21.4)⁵⁷

He then goes on to describe Venus's mourning which turns to joy at Adonis's return in spring. Venus's joy creates the flowering of spring, and thus it is appropriate that April is dedicated to her.⁵⁸ The

pendants from Montmaurin may well have been displayed in the garden of the bath wing, an appropriate setting for an allegorical narrative of regeneration. The story of Venus and Adonis had long been viewed as a symbol of seasonal death and rebirth, but perhaps it had extra poignancy in light of Christian emphasis on the same subject. The Anadyomene pose may have been selected for the Venus in the Montmaurin pendants because this pose alludes to Venus's own birth and thus could complement the birth of Adonis in the one statuette, while foreshadowing his rebirth in the other.⁵⁹ The unique iconography of these pendant sculptures illustrates the creativity of the patron or sculptor of this piece in choosing a new aspect of the myth on which to focus.

A headless statuette of Minerva found at the villa of Castelculier also belongs to the genre of late mythological statuettes (figs. 15, 16).⁶⁰ The statuette shows Minerva standing frontally, weight on her right leg, with her arms lowered towards her sides. The goddess' body is well masked by layers of drapery, though her square shoulders, one unemphasized breast, and a robust thigh can be made out underneath them. Minerva wears her aegis, recognizable by its frilly edges and some preserved snakes, rather like a cloak, fastened at her neck near her right shoulder, with a ribbon-like collar encircling her neck. The aegis falls slightly behind her right shoulder, but covers the left one. Under the aegis, she wears an unbelted chiton and a cloak which is pinned at her right shoulder. The back of the sculpture is less finished than the polished front, although the contours of the aegis are shown, along with rough vertical drapery folds below them. A protrusion of stone at the back of her neck presumably belonged to either the crest of a helmet or a neck support. The overall effect of the figure is fairly stiff and frontal.

Although the Castelculier statuette is headless, comparison of the drapery to other statuary allows the assignation of a late antique date to the piece. The squared profiles of the drapery folds and the undercut

55. See for instance sarcophagi: *LIMC* I Adonis 38a-b, 39a-g; Koortbojian, 1995, pp. 23-62.

56. Jungck, 1984, 308-15; Delvoye, 1984, p. 184-99.

57. Alan Cameron convincingly dates the composition of the *Saturnalia* to the 430s: Cameron, 1966.

58. *Saturnalia* 1.21.5-6.

59. Venus Anadyomene is paired with a statuesque Adonis dressed for hunting in other late-antique representations such as a silver plaque in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts or a silver patera from the Esquiline Treasure: Gonosová and Kondoleon, 1994, pp. 176-9, no. 57; Shelton, 1981, p. 78, no. 3, pl. 21.

60. Privately owned. Height: 48 cm; max. width: 28 cm; max. depth: 13 cm. Stéphanus, 1987-88, p. 139, fig. 58.



■ Fig. 15

Statuette of Minerva found at Castelculier, front. Privately owned. Photo author, by permission.



■ Fig. 16

Statuette of Minerva found at Castelculier, right side. Privately owned. Photo author, by permission.

omegas at the hems are reminiscent of folds in the skirt of the Diana of Saint-Georges-de-Montagne and on the lower portion of a dancing maenad in Arles (fig. 17), although the drapery on the Minerva falls in straighter lines.⁶¹ A stylized ridge along the slit of her sleeve is similar to those at the collars and shoulders of the Diana of Saint-Georges-de-Montagne and a draped woman found at the villa of Nérac. The vigorous undercutting and tiny struts supporting the snakes of the aegis also have good comparanda in the

lacy design of the late-antique statuettes. Finally, on the right side where the bottom of the sleeve falls almost to her knees, its folds become somewhat confused with those of the cloak and the overfall of the chiton. Confusion of garments and anatomy is not uncommon in late-antique renderings, as for instance on a reclining woman (Terra?) at the bottom register of the missorium of Theodosius.⁶²

It is possible to hypothesize about reconstruction

61. Maenad: Espérandieu, vol. 3, no. 2523.
62. Küllerich, 1993, pp. 68-70, fig. 1. A late-antique head of Athena found at Khirbat-al-Mafjar wears a "rather peculiar hybrid" of a Corinthian helmet: Merker, 1987, p. 15, pl. III.1-4.

61. Maenad: Espérandieu, vol. 3, no. 2523.

of the statuette. Minerva's right arm probably extended forward to hold an attribute in front of her body, since there is a large broken strut on her right thigh just below the break in her forearm. Her arm slopes down in an appropriate pose for holding a spear. Since the cloth of her cloak gathers at her left elbow, pulling against the fastening at her right shoulder, it seems that she held part of her cloak draped over her left arm. More complete statuary types of Athena offer possibilities for the reconstruction. An Athena from Crete wears the aegis spread over her left shoulder and holds in her left arm a *cista* from which emerges a snake.⁶³ A bronze statuette of Athena now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has a somewhat similar pose, and it is suggested that she held a *patera* in the right hand and a spear in the left.⁶⁴ The Castelculier Minerva wears a cloak under her aegis, a dress configuration which is not common, though it is shared by the Boston statuette.⁶⁵ Again, it is not unusual for later Roman mythological statuary to show some confusion regarding the configuration of costumes no longer in use.

A curious feature of the Castelculier Minerva is the absence of the customary gorgoneion from her aegis. It is rare, though not unheard-of, to find Athena/Minerva without the gorgoneion, normally one of the identifying traits of the goddess.⁶⁶ The absence of the gorgoneion shows that this is a young Minerva who has not yet acquired the Medusa head for her attire from the hero Perseus, whom she aided in killing the gorgon. It is possible that the Castelculier statuette originally belonged to a group showing Perseus and Minerva together, although the rather static pose of the Minerva would seem to argue against a reconstruction involving interaction with another figure.⁶⁷ Late-antique writers stressed the goddess's patronage of wisdom and philosophy, and other late antique Gallic collections possessed representations

of her.⁶⁸

Other Gallic finds which I consider to date to the late fourth century include a draped female from Nérac, a Venus-Victory from Montmaurin, a dancing maenad from Arles (fig. 17), female heads from Bordeaux, Chiragan, Arles, and Nérac, a running satyr from a villa near Trier, and a miniature deer's head now in the Musée d'Aquitaine in Bordeaux (fig. 18).⁶⁹ A sculptural fragment from Séviac showing a child seated in a tree may have belonged originally to one of these complex compositions, but the piece is too small to be dated accurately.⁷⁰

For the late-antique aristocrat, these contemporary statuettes were a natural addition to the collection of heirloom pieces already in his collection. Interest in mythological sculptures grew out of interest in classical literature and mythology, and a sense of the sculpture's appropriateness in a particular locale. Statuary of mythological figures, especially when enhanced by grandiose architecture such as an apsidal setting, magnified the aristocrat to a heroic, god-like stature.⁷¹ Over life-sized statuary such as the male torso at Saint-Georges-de-Montagne or a figure holding a cup found at Nérac (now lost) may have served such a role. Though miniature in scale, hunting figures such as the Diana (fig. 6) and a Meleager from Saint-Georges-de-Montagne specifically heroized the aristocratic pastime of hunting. Dionysiac imagery alluded both to the joys of conviviality in this world and to hopes for the next world. Decorative sculpture could also refer to public monuments. The choice of a Venus-Victory at Montmaurin may have been inspired in subject matter by the Augustan *tropaeum* in nearby Lugdunum Convenarum (Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges), even though the specific configuration of the Victory figure is different.⁷² The information from the Gallic sites is too fragmented for us to determine mythological programs at individual sites.

Some mythological statuary, such as the Jupiter de

63. *LIMC* 2, Athena 252; Charbonneau, 1963, p. 34.36.

64. *LIMC* 2, Athena/Minerva 188; Comstock and Vermeule, 1971, p. 93, no. 98.

65. In general, the *LIMC* does not provide close parallels for the pose and drapery of the Castelculier Minerva.

66. For instance, the Athena from the Athena and Marsyas group (*LIMC* 2, Athena 623a) and the "Mourning Athena" (*LIMC* 2, Athena 625). Sidonius describes the *gorgoneion* at length: *Carm.* 15.7-12. See also Fulgentius, *Mythologiae* 3.1: *Fulgentius*, pp. 82-83.

Athena does occasionally appear in Classical Athenian art without the *gorgoneion*, but I do not think that possible political motivations behind this representation would have been relevant in late antiquity. See Marx, 1993; Hartswick, 1993.

67. Certainly, elsewhere in late-antique art we see an interest in the youthful deeds of heroes, such as Achilles: Delvoye, 1984.

68. Symmachus, *Ep.* 3.47; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.17.70; Sidonius, *Carmen* 15.

69. Arles maenad: Espérandieu, vol. 3, no. 2523; Bordeaux head: Farine, 1887, p. 141, no. 2, pl. XXVIII, no. 2; Chiragan head: Espérandieu, vol. 2, no. 924; Arles head: Espérandieu-Lantier, vol. 12, no. 7937; Nérac head: Dumège, *Nérac*, pp. 266, 400, 405 (unlabelled sketch); satyr from Wellen (near Trier): Binsfeld, Goethert-Polaschek and Schwinden, 1988, pp. 149-50, no. 308, pl. 72; Bordeaux deer's head: Stirling, *Mythological statuary*, pp. 253-4, fig. 57 (Bordeaux, Musée d'Aquitaine, inv. 60.8.638).

70. Montréal du Gers, Dépôt des fouilles, inv. M39.

71. Ellis, 1991.

72. Picard, 1957, pp. 270-73, foldout between pp. 272 and 273, pls. 9, 10.



■ Fig. 17

Statuette of a dancing maenad found in Arles. Nîmes, Musée Archéologique, inv. 391.25.2. Photo museum, by permission.

Mézin, or a statuette of a *genius* from Plassac, clearly performed religious or votive functions.⁷³ A third-century statue of *Jupiter à l'anguipède* found at Saint-Georges-de-Montagne probably belonged to a Jupiter-Giant-Column.⁷⁴ The lower portion of the statue is now preserved in the Musée de Libourne and shows a snaky-legged person clinging to the left leg of a much larger-scale figure. The statue is broken off

at the knees of the larger figure. I would add to the composition a limestone head of an eagle, placing the eagle on Jupiter's right.⁷⁵ Compositionally, the group must have resembled Jupiter-Giant groups from Limoges or Guéret.⁷⁶ Théodore Amtmann, an early visitor to the site, reproduces sketches of two limestone blocks (now lost) showing four divinities under niches, one on each side.⁷⁷ Together, the blocks are 2 m tall. Piers with four gods on them were common in Gaul from the late first century B.C. to the mid third century A.D. I would associate the base and Jupiter statue as parts of a Jupiter-Giant-Column similar to monumental examples from Germany.⁷⁸ Though the iconography of Jupiter subduing a giant originated in Celtic mythology, it probably accumulated additional meanings over time and came to represent in addition the classical gigantomachy and the power of the emperor. With the advent of Christianity, it could even have provided a suitable image for the struggle between good and evil.⁷⁹

Evidence for display of sculpture in late-antique Gaul

It is possible to make speculative generalizations about the display of statuary in late-antique Gallic villas based on findspots, location of other decoration such as mosaics and wall-paintings, and evidence from literary sources.⁸⁰ Studies of domestic decoration in the late Republic and early empire concentrate on the atrium house and the increasing degree of intimacy implied as a guest or client entered the atrium, *tablinum*, peristyle and *triclinium* or *cubiculum*. Architectural forms had changed substantially by the fourth century A.D., and scholars are beginning to assess how vestibules, apsidal *triclinia*, peristyles, and private baths expressed a changing power structure in which the gap between rich and poor had widened appreciably, and aristocrats wielded increasingly autocratic power.⁸¹ Statuary acted as one element within multi-faceted programs of domestic decoration which acted as a

73. Mézin: Coupry, 1973; Plassac: *Racines*, p. 361.

74. A longer discussion of the reconstruction and interpretation of the statuary group is forthcoming: Stirling, *Divinities and heroes*. See also Stirling, *Mythological statuary*, pp. 46-50. For a partial reconstruction, see Sarrau, 1940.

75. Eagle head: Amtmann, 1904, p. 80, no. 23.

76. Espérandieu, vol. 2, no. 1581; Nerzie, 1989, p. 51.

77. Amtmann, 1904, p. 73, pl. 4, figs. 4, 5.

78. Bauchhens and Noelke, 1981.

79. Gigantomachy: De Sarrau, 1940, pp. 75-76; imperial power: Picard, 1977, pp. 21-26; Christian allegory: Bauschhens and Noelke, 1981, pp. 65-82; Stirling, *Divinities and heroes*.

80. Influential recent scholarship includes Wallace-Hadrill, 1994; Thébert, 1987.

81. Wallace-Hadrill, 1994; Ellis, 1991, with earlier references.



■ Fig. 18

Head of a deer. Bordeaux, Musée d'Aquitaine. No inventory number. Photo museum, by permission.

setting for social interactions and a regulator of relationships of power.

As the first room a guest or client would enter, the vestibule had to create an immediate, grand impression, an impression which statuary could enhance. The Gallic panegyricist Nazarius informs us that "for large homes, the vestibule itself reveals the decoration inside." Writing in the fifth century, Sidonius admiringly described the marble revetment, Biblical wall-paintings, and gilded ceiling of the vestibule of a friend's home.⁸² The portrait of Marcus Aurelius and an overlife sized head (now lost) found in a field near the luxuriously mosaicked "entrée monumentale" at Nérac probably adorned its niches or floors. A bronze statuette of Minerva was discovered within the vestibule.⁸³ At Montmaurin,

fragments of a Venus statuette made of calcite were strewn in a long trail starting in the court of honour and leading axially through the villa. This statuette may have adorned a curved niche in the vestibule of the villa.⁸⁴

Many of the Gallic villas were centred around a peristyle court. Again, as a domestic zone to which most guests had access, the peristyle courts must have been an important setting for sculptural decoration. Three portraits were found in the peristyle court at Séviac, and they may well have adorned the intercolumniations. A fourth, late-antique, portrait found in the fill under a late mosaic may have also originated in the peristyle.⁸⁵ At Montmaurin, the head of a youthful bust was found in the "court of honour," while its shoulders were discovered in the "atrium," which faces onto the larger interior court (fig. 1). The youth, along with portraits recorded in archival sources but now no longer conserved, may have been displayed in this interior court in a fashion similar to the Séviac pieces, or possibly in a smaller court which was flanked by two well-appointed *triclinia*.⁸⁶

Triclinia and ornate reception rooms were an important setting for patronal relationships, and grew ever more magnificent in tandem with the increasingly autocratic power of the aristocracy.⁸⁷ Apses and architectural forms which alluded to public buildings, as for instance the basilical halls at Nérac or Séviac, exalted the patron's status. Rooms facing directly onto the peristyle at Séviac presumably served as dining and reception room, and had mosaic floors and other decorative accentuation. One room, for instance, showed vine tendrils framed by Doric columns, perhaps reflecting in stone the colonnaded garden of the peristyle.⁸⁸ Fragments of coloured marble revetment and other architectural decoration came from many of the rooms. One had two low statue bases in it, and it may have been on these that a

82. Nazarius *Pan.Lat.* 4 (10).6.1; Sidonius *Carm.* 22.141-68.

83. For findspots at Nérac, see Dumège, *Nérac*, pp. 226, 235, 400; Samazeuilh, 1865, pp. 451-2.

84. Fouet, *Montmaurin*, p. 66 n. 9, pp. 92, 171.

85. Aragon-Launet, 1971, p. 236.

86. Fouet, *Montmaurin*, p. 92. The "atrium" is room 38. Intriguing though the information from Montmaurin is, however, it should be noted that the sculptural fragments overlay the final burning layer (p. 92). In general, the findspots confirm the theory that statuary would primarily have been displayed in the showplaces of the house. Also, the fact that fragments of statuary were found in late destruction layers at various villas suggests that they must have remained on view well into late antiquity.

87. Ellis, 1991.

88. Room 2.

statuette of Hygeia or other fragmentary statuettes from the site were displayed.⁸⁹ Visitors to these rooms would have been able to see statuary adorning the intercolumniations of the peristyle. It is possible that the riverside nymphaeum at Nérac displayed mythological statuettes, as the arm to a late-antique statuette of a draped female (possibly a maenad or victory) was found in the river Baïse near the nymphaeum. The arm (now lost) belonged to a statuette of a draped woman, and a figure with a diademed head may have originated here too. The walls of the nymphaeum have large niches which would have been suitable for displaying statuary. The nymphaeum may have acted as a summer dining room where diners could enjoy the fountains and statuary inside while appreciating the riverscape outside.⁹⁰ Lastly, villa owners could receive their peers in private libraries; a library would have been an appropriate setting for the Minerva of Castelculier (figs. 15, 16).⁹¹

Comparative evidence from elsewhere in the empire confirms the likelihood of sculptural decoration in reception rooms and *triclinia*. A Ganymede found in a cistern beside the House of the Greek Charioteers in Carthage, built in the early fifth century, may have stood on one of a pair of stone foundations in the *triclinium* of this house.⁹² At Piazza Armerina, niches and statue bases attest to statuary in the grand dining room.⁹³

Private baths were a key signal of affluence. A rescript of A.D. 382 notes that the most aristocratic houses can be distinguished from "moderate houses of lesser worth" because the former possess "more sumptuous baths."⁹⁴ The decoration of private baths was clearly important in establishing hierarchy among houses and their owners. Because they were an indicator of luxury, the private bath suites of Gaul were decorated with mosaics and paintings.⁹⁵

Sculpture would have been appropriate in this setting, as an allusion to the statuary decoration of public baths, and as another sign of wealth. An over life-sized cup-bearing figure appears to have decorated the baths at Nérac.⁹⁶ Possible identifications for this figure include Asclepius, Dionysos, or the Hercules Epitrapezios.

Gardens are another possible venue for statuary, as I and others have argued was the case at Montmaurin.⁹⁷ Most of the fragments of the pendants of Venus and Adonis discussed above (figs. 9-13) were found in the nymphaeum, a fitting locale for statuary celebrating a cycle of death and rebirth. A statuette of a Venus-Victory underlay a seventh-century grave in the inmost axial court, which is surrounded by luxuriously appointed rooms. Fouet reconstructs the figure in a central niche which faced straight down the villa's axis to the court of honour.⁹⁸ Such an outdoor location would have maximized the effects of light and shadow in her deep-cut drapery folds and would have disguised the unfinished back of the statuette. Again, evidence elsewhere in the empire confirms this possibility. The House of Fortuna Annonaria in Ostia had two garden sculptures still *in situ*, a late fourth-century Fortuna and a statuette of Hera or Demeter.⁹⁹

Other forms of decoration

A brief survey of other forms of decoration will assist in envisioning the environment in which late-antique sculptural collections were displayed. The mosaics of southwest Gaul were mostly geometric or vegetal, with a very few hunting, aquatic, or mythological scenes.¹⁰⁰ Painted decoration is preserved in reconstructable quantities only at Montmaurin, and there the painting has nonfigural patterns imitating marble surfaces or mouldings. This is common elsewhere at this period. There is some evidence for figural painting; at Loupiac there were ceiling paintings with a togate figure surrounded by

89. Room 2: Balmelle, *Recueil*, vol. 2, p. 178, no. 296: finds of marble: Aragon-Launet, 1962, pp. 327-8. For the possible Hygeia, see Stirling, *Mythological statuary*, p. 240; Stirling, *Séviac*. Other fragments of miniature sculpture include a composition involving a winged figure and one involving a seated eros.

90. An arm of a statuette was found in the river Baïse near the nymphaeum: Dumège, *Nérac*, p. 226.

91. Rossiter, 1991.

92. Gazda, 1981, 177. Alternatively, it may have decorated one of a pair of fountains in the peristyle.

93. Ellis, 1991, p. 127.

94. *CTh.* 15.2.3. This rescript is addressed to the city prefect of Constantinople. It distinguishes three grades of houses and specifies the measure of water from the public aqueduct to which each is entitled. The emperors express doubts that the moderate houses (the second grade) will have "baths of this type."

95. Mosaics are almost universal. The bath complex at Castelculier even had a mosaic ceiling: Stéphanus, 1987-88, p. 140. Paintings: Sidonius, *Ep.* 2.2.6. This letter describes Sidonius's own baths.

96. Samazeuilh, 1865, pp. 451-2.

97. Fouet, *Montmaurin*, p. 131; Pailler, 1987.

98. Fouet, *Montmaurin*, pp. 92, 171 (Venus and Adonis), pp. 94-95 (Venus-Victory statuette).

99. Becatti, 1948, pp. 122-24. Four mythological sculptures and two portrait busts were also found in the house, which dates to the mid fourth-century.

100. Balmelle, *Recueil*, vol. 2, 18 and *passim*.

patterns of octagons and crosses, and Sidonius mentions historical Biblical scenes at the villa of Pontius Leontius and suggestive paintings on bath walls.¹⁰¹ Architectural sculpture generally strives for contrasts of light and shadow or colouristic effects with different types of Pyrénéan marble. In such a decor, figural decoration such as sculpture would have stood out clearly against the architectural decoration of the walls and the carpet-like mosaics.

Textiles, possibly figural, would have added to the decor of these rooms.¹⁰² Rich hangings were important indicators of wealth and could help frame and exalt a seated patron. Sidonius describes an imported cloth showing hunting scenes as part of the furnishings of a dinner party.¹⁰³ An anecdote from the reign of Constantius II shows the extent to which textiles could carry meaning: a Bordelais aristocrat was accused of treachery because the purple borders of his furniture covers and tablecloths were suspiciously broad, as though he were hoarding cloth to make himself an imperial cloak.¹⁰⁴

Smaller objects such as silverware or ivory containers may have provided additional figural or mythological decoration. Several plates and cups showing scenes of the hunt, Dionysos, and Venus were buried at Thil (Haute-Garonne), probably in the second half of the third century.¹⁰⁵ Three plates from a villa near Béziers may date to the fourth century. They show Dionysiac scenes, pastoral and hunting scenes, and a seated goddess with a snake.¹⁰⁶ Ivory boxes or furniture decorations could be figural. Pieces of an ivory pyxis with scenes of an amazonomachy were found at Séviac, and a cache of ivory statuettes and plaques was excavated at a fourth-century villa at St.-Loup-de-Comminges.¹⁰⁷ A

shard of diatrete glass at Séviac had flowers on it and may have had further figural decoration.¹⁰⁸

Late-antique sculptural collection in Gaul : conclusions

The sculptural collections of late-antique Gaul match their counterparts elsewhere in the empire in combining statuary of differing genres, sizes, materials, styles, and dates. The only potential regional variation is a lesser interest in philosopher portraits. Statuary of a variety of genres coordinated with other forms of decoration (mosaic and marble revetment) in rooms used for receiving clients and peers in order to exalt the prestige of the villa's owner. Late-antique mythological statuettes continued a long tradition of collection, display, and appreciation of mythological sculpture.

Again, the writings of Ausonius provide insight into the society which collected and appreciated such diverse statuary. His poems describing mythological statuary, whether real or otherwise, express a keen interest in symbolism, subtle but meaningful details, and narrative scenes. In the *Epicedion* he tells us that he kept at least one portrait in his home, a portrait which represented the upstanding character and worldly achievements of its subject, his father. The traditional, classical education system created an intellectual background and set of values which made it natural to appreciate statuary decoration. A classical education also provided all the necessary tools for its students to understand and admire the style, iconography, and display of the eclectic elements of late-antique statuary collections. For the Gallic aristocrats of Late Antiquity, sculptural collections were an important representation of the traditional culture and education of Rome.

101. Loupiac: Clyti-Bayle, 1989, pp. 102-5; Sidonius *Carm.* 22.158-68, 200-203; *Ep.* 2.2.6.

102. Thébert, 1987, p. 389. He cites Augustine on the importance of hangings for displaying rank: *Sermon* 51.5 (*PL* 38 col. 336). On hangings and curtains, see also Maguire *et al.*, 1989, pp. 45-47.

103. *Ep.* 9.13, lines 20-27 of the second enclosed poem.

104. Ammianus Marcellinus 16.8.8. See also Reinhold, 1970, pp. 62-70.

105. Painter, 1989, pp. 240-48, nos. 197-203.

106. Colin *et al.*, 1986, pp. 26-34.

107. Séviac: *Rome et le sud-ouest de la Gaule*, p. 85, nos. 128-37. They are second to third century in date; St.-Loup-de-Comminges: Fouet and Labrousse, 1952, pp. 117-29. Among other things, the ivories show a boxer, a Jupiter-Serapis, a Phrygian-capped youth, and Dionysiac scenes.

108. Hochuli-Gysel, 1993, pp. 84-86, fig. 3, no. 8, fig. 4. The piece probably dates to the third century and is the only published example of diatrete glass in southwest Gaul.

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