The Myth of Marsyas: Pieces of a Sculptural Jigsaw

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A welcome addition to the literature on sarcophagi is Anna Marguerite McCann’s catalogue Roman Sarcophagi in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, published in 1978. This catalogue brought to my attention a fragment which was previously unknown to me, the right corner of a lenos sarcophagus with the punishment of Marsyas (Figures 1, 2).¹

The irregularly shaped fragment comprises the sarcophagus corner from the upper edge almost down to the bottom. Only the upper part of the satyr Marsyas, hanging from a pine tree, is preserved. The rest of his body is broken off at the diaphragm, since the figure was so deeply undercut that no part except the tail touched the background. Only the feet of the satyr were anchored to a surface—to the top of the rock on which the knife-grinder is sharpening his blade. The trunk of the pine is worked in very low relief behind Marsyas all the way down the sarcophagus trough to the lower break.

On the right of the fragment, a slave is tying Marsyas to the pine tree with a rope (Figure 2). He is wearing a long-sleeved tunic, trousers, and a Phrygian cap—a costume which in Greek and Roman art characterizes the Oriental, that is, a man from the Near East. In this case he is presumably a Scythian; Scythian slaves were employed by the Athenian police force in classical times. Because of their association with the police, they were sometimes included by artists in execution scenes, even mythological ones such as the punishment of Marsyas. The Oriental with the rope was carved in lower relief than Marsyas, but his right hand and his right leg from the knee down were undercut so they did not touch the background. As with Marsyas, the sarcophagus trough is completely smooth where it continues behind the missing limbs. The slave is looking upward to see whether the rope is secured. To emphasize the direction of his glance, drill holes just below his upper lids render the pupils of his eyes. The eyes of Marsyas do not look upward, and his irises are only faintly incised.

To Marsyas’s right, his goatskin appears near the bottom of the fragment. It was evidently supported on a branch or a rock, its folds nearly touching the trunk of the pine on the right, and on the left almost merging with the folds of another goatskin, this one slung across the knife-grinder’s back and continuing downward, partly covering his left arm. The knife-grinder, who is otherwise nude, crouches, turning toward Marsyas and looking up at him. As with the slave with the rope, drill holes render the pupils of the knife-grinder’s eyes to indicate his upward glance. In preparation for the flaying of Marsyas, the knife-grinder is sharpening his knife on the top of the rock which Marsyas’s toes touch. (The rest of this rock

A list of frequently cited sources is given at the end of this article.

1. McCann, no. 13, pp. 79ff., figs. 87–89. Properly speaking, the fragment consists of eleven joining fragments constituting two groups which were bought in 1915 and 1927, respectively, and which in 1930 were found to join. The marble, translucent with gray veining and large crystals, is considered by McCann to be Greek. The measurements are as follows (according to McCann): max. H. 2 ft (0.61 m.); max. W. 1 ft 9 in. (0.53 m.); max. D. 1 ft 3 in. (0.38 m.); max. D. of relief at top 5 in. (0.13 m.); max. D. at bottom 3¾ in. (0.10 m.).

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1, 2. Fragment of a Marsyas sarcophagus (fragment A): Marsyas, knife-grinder, slave with rope. Marble, max. H. 0.61 m. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 15.170; Fletcher Fund 27.122.19a,b

seems to have been deliberately cut or sawn off from its context.

The knife-grinder is the best preserved of the figures on the fragment. Most of his right arm is missing, not surprising since it was carved in the round, as was the lower part of his right leg; this, however, lacks only the foot, which must have been anchored to the missing bottom part of the sarcophagus. The knee and part of the thigh of his left leg are broken off, together with the adjacent part of the sarcophagus trough. Above the head of the knife-grinder, to the right of Marsyas's chest, a break indicates that an object or background figure was once present.

Behind the knife-grinder there is a right arm, bent at the elbow. Like several of the limbs of the figures on this fragment, most of it is carved in the round, with only the hand touching the background. According to McCann this hand is grasping a naked knee. Even though so little of the arm is preserved one may infer from the long, narrow sleeve that it belonged to an Oriental, and that this person was shown from the back seated on the ground.

Just such a figure, lacking his right arm, is preserved on the right of a very fragmentary Marsyas sarcophagus in the cloister of the Museo Nazionale delle Terme in Rome (Figures 3, 4). Close examination reveals that immediately to the right of this seated figure and partly covering his leg are preserved the right foot and the bent left knee of a kneeling figure (Figure 4). Since these are the missing parts of the knife-grinder on the Metropolitan Museum fragment, the question arises whether this fragment and the mutilated sarcophagus may belong together. To test the assumption, I took some measurements on the Terme Museum sarcophagus and asked the Greek and Roman Department of the Metropolitan Mu-

2. McCann, p. 79.
seum for corresponding measurements of its fragment. Department Chairman Dietrich von Bothmer very kindly complied, and the result is given in the following table. Fragment A is the fragment in the Metropolitan Museum, and fragment B the Terme Museum sarcophagus. The width was measured as close to the breaks as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Fragment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A cm.</td>
<td>B cm.</td>
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Thickness of the sarcophagus (the slab itself without relief figures) near the broken ankle of the knife-grinder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thickness of the sarcophagus immediately to the left of the trunk of the tree on which Marsyas is hanging</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
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Thickness of the sarcophagus immediately to the right of the trunk of the tree on which Marsyas is hanging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thickness of the sarcophagus including the tree trunk</th>
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<td>9.5</td>
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Thickness of the sarcophagus immediately behind the right knee of the slave with the rope

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Width of the right ankle of the knife-grinder, measured at the break</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
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Width of the tree trunk, measured at the break

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Width of the tree trunk, measured at the break</th>
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<td>4.5</td>
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The measurements clearly correspond, and according to the photographs the broken surfaces would seem to fit, especially in the area between the knife-grinder’s left arm and the left knee of the slave with the rope. The area around the knife-grinder is more difficult to assess, since fairly large pieces seem to be missing here. In addition to the correspondence between the breaks and the measurements, one should note that the type of marble is the same in both fragments A and B: coarse-grained and white with gray veining.

Assuming that fragments A and B belong together (see Figure 12), one may reconstruct the scene of Marsyas’s punishment in the following manner: as on fragment A, the tree trunk on fragment B is worked in low relief behind Marsyas. At the foot of the pine and continuing in the direction of the knife-grinder lies a flat stone or rock (see Figure 5). The upper part of it, which is now missing, must be that part of fragment A where Marsyas’s toes and the knife-grinder’s hands rest. Above the rock the folds of Marsyas’s goatskin continue from fragment A to fragment B.

To the right of the rock on fragment B there is a very fragmentary panpipe, a syrinx (see Figure 5). Its missing parts have left no traces on the surface and must therefore have been undercut. This is also true of a shepherd’s staff, a pedum, beside the syrinx. Only its curved end is preserved in relief, the rest of it was worked in the round. The trace of a puntello higher up provides evidence that the pedum was originally slightly tilted, so that it would seem to have been leaning against the pine trunk approximately at the height of the upper break on fragment B.

The left leg of the slave with the rope is fairly well preserved on fragment B (Figure 6). One sees that the slave was wearing trousers. His knee was slightly bent, as is also suggested by the outline of the same leg on fragment A. Perhaps fragment A should have been mounted so that it tilted slightly more in the direction of the sarcophagus front, as the slave with the rope seems to lean back a little. However, this impression may be due to the photographs.

Fragment B has no continuation from fragment A of the right leg of the slave with the rope. Fragment A shows that this leg was raised and that it was undercut from the knee downward, but one would not expect the foot to be left dangling. The position of the slave on fragment A suggests that he was bracing himself with his right foot on some object, probably the pedum, itself leaning against the pine trunk. The leg and the pedum must then have been worked in one piece in the round, anchored to the background only at top and bottom. This technique is demonstrated also in Marsyas’s body as well as in more examples discussed below.

On fragment B the left leg of the slave with the rope crosses the leg of another person who faces in the opposite direction (Figure 6). A trace of him may
3. Fragmentary sarcophagus illustrating the myth of Marsyas (fragment B). Marble, L. 2.10 m. Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme (photo: Siri Sande)

4. Detail of fragment B (Figure 3) showing the feet of the goddess Leto, the seated Oriental, and the right foot of the knife-grinder. The seated Oriental's missing right arm and most of the knife-grinder are preserved on fragment A (Figures 1 and 2) (photo: Espen B. Andersson)
be preserved on the extreme right of fragment A, where there remains a fold of drapery that does not appear to belong to the dress of the slave with the rope. This additional person, who is more summarily rendered than the others and shown in lower relief, was evidently an Oriental. He is wearing trousers, as is shown by his other leg—the left one, judging from the muscles. The distance between the two legs of this man suggests that he was represented walking. He was leaving the scene of Marsyas’s punishment, and ends the decoration of the sarcophagus on its right side. Immediately beyond his left foot the unadorned back of the sarcophagus begins (Figure 6). As he is turning his back to Marsyas’s executioners, this Oriental may have been depicted in a dejected or sorrowful attitude, and there is evidence of such grieving Orientals on Marsyas sarcophagi.4

The knife-grinder on fragment A recalls knife-grinders on other Marsyas sarcophagi (see Figure 7).5 As mentioned earlier, this figure offers one of the strongest arguments in favor of a connection between fragments A and B, since precisely the parts that he lacks (right foot and left knee) are found on fragment B, where the rest of the figure is missing. Fragment B thus contributes very little to the reconstruction of the knife-grinder, since he is preserved almost in his entirety on fragment A.

The opposite is the case with the figure whose right arm alone is preserved on fragment A (Figure 1, left). If this arm belongs to the corresponding figure on fragment B (Figure 4, left), he can be almost completely reconstructed; only his head is missing. He finds his closest parallel on a fragmentary sarcophagus in the Palazzo Mattei in Rome (see Figure 8, front row, third figure from right).6 This person’s head appears to be preserved, and it is turned toward Apollo at the center of the sarcophagus front.7 C. Robert

4. See, for instance, the Marsyas sarcophagus from Sidon in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, illustrated in Figure 7: F. Poulsen, Catalogue of Ancient Sculptures in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Copenhagen, 1951) no. 782, pp. 552ff.; Robert, no. 208, pp. 260ff.; Turcan, pp. 107ff., 204, 215–217. The grieving Oriental next to Marsyas on this sarcophagus is generally supposed to be his friend Olympus.

5. See also Robert, nos. 198 and 211, pls. LXIV and LXIX, which both show nude knife-grinders. Particularly close to the knife-grinder on the Metropolitan Museum fragment is the corresponding figure on Robert, no. 198, a sarcophagus in the Louvre. In both the “barbarian” character of the knife-grinder is suggested by his physiognomy (the inspiration doubtless came from the knife-grinder of the famous Pergamene group, known from a copy in the Uffizi in Florence) and not by a mere addition of attributes, as is the case with the knife-grinder on the Marsyas sarcophagus in Copenhagen (see Figure 7, right), who wears a Phrygian cap but is otherwise rendered as a handsome, nude youth in the classical tradition.


7. The Palazzo Mattei sarcophagus is heavily restored, and it may be that the head is misunderstood. However, its direction seems to be correct, to judge from the general position of the figure. For the state of preservation of the sarcophagus see Robert, pp. 255ff.

5. Detail of fragment B (Figure 3), right side, showing *pedum* and syrinx belonging to Marsyas (photo: Siri Sande)

6. Detail of fragment B (Figure 3), right side, showing left leg of the slave with the rope and the legs of an Oriental leaving the scene of Marsyas’s punishment (photo: Espen B. Andersson)
considered this seated Oriental to be one of the Scythian slaves awaiting the execution order, and L. Berczelly followed Robert's suggestion in his interpretation of the seated Oriental on fragment B in the Terme Museum. The gesture of the Oriental's left hand may indicate that he is shown talking, in which case he may be thought of as transmitting the execution order to the slaves further right who are actually carrying it out.

From the Oriental's preserved right arm on fragment A, which seems to be grasping a naked knee, McCann infers that the figure represents Marsyas's pupil Olympus, "weeping or imploring Apollo to spare his friend." She compares him to a seminude seated figure shown in a very similar position on a Marsyas sarcophagus in the Galleria Doria in Rome (Figure 9, right) whom she also believes to be Olympus. Robert, however, in discussing the same figure on the Galleria Doria sarcophagus, considered an identification with Olympus unlikely and suggested that the figure represents a local Phrygian god or personification.

The position of the seated Oriental on fragment B (Figure 4) is midway between that of the corresponding figures on the sarcophagi in the Galleria Doria and the Palazzo Mattei (Figures 8 and 9). On the latter he is placed immediately to the left of a seated woman, while his right arm partly covers her body. There is no room for another seated person whose knee the Oriental may have clapsed. On fragment B the seated Oriental is placed to the right of a seated woman, in a position recalling that of the Oriental on the Galleria Doria sarcophagus. The latter's right hand does clasp a knee, that of Marsyas, who is next to him. On fragment B, however, the knife-grinder is between the seated Oriental and Marsyas. The knee that the Oriental grasps must therefore belong to another figure. This was probably not Apollo, as suggested by McCann, since the preserved Marsyas sarcophagi of the type we are dealing with do not show him in the scene of Marsyas's punishment. A person whose knee might have been grasped is Hermes, who in the role of Psychopompos appears near the execution scene

8. Robert, p. 254; Berczelly, p. 38. Berczelly does not quote Robert on the Palazzo Mattei sarcophagus, however, but on a Marsyas sarcophagus in the Louvre, which shows a slightly different seated Oriental turned toward Apollo (Robert, no. 203, pp. 255ff., pl. lxvi).

9. McCann, p. 79.

10. McCann, p. 83. For the Galleria Doria sarcophagus see Robert, no. 207, pp. 259ff., pl. lxvii; Turcan, pp. 71, 220ff., 276ff.; H. Sichtermann and G. Koch, Griechische Mythen auf römischen Sarkophagen (Tübingen, 1975) no. 36, pp. 40f., pls. 82:2, 86–89, with further bibliography. The latter also suggest that the seated Oriental on the sarcophagus may be Olympus.


12. Compare Robert, p. 254. The restorer of the sarcophagus has carved the upper body of a man in this area, but Robert's reconstruction of it as the lower body of Leto must be right.
on several sarcophagi. A less likely candidate is Artemis, who, at least on one sarcophagus, is seen close to the scene of execution.

Too little of the object behind the Oriental's right arm is preserved to identify it. If it is a knee, the Oriental may not necessarily have been grasping it. If his head were preserved, his action might be more comprehensible. If he really is imploring somebody on his right, he may be assumed to be turning his head in that direction. From his general position, however, he

13. See Figure 9, right, and Figure 8, upper right; see further Robert, nos. 203, 205, 212, pls. LXVI, LXVII, LXIX.
14. See Robert, no. 201, pl. LXV.
seems more likely to have turned his head toward his left, and this would correspond to the direction of the head of the seated Oriental on the Palazzo Mattei sarcophagus, his closest parallel. Though the ambiguous position of the seated Oriental on fragment B makes his interpretation difficult, it seems probable to me that he is one of the Scythians connected with the execution of Marsyas, and not his pupil Olympus. If Olympus were represented at all on the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus, I would suggest that he is the person leaving the scene of Marsyas's punishment on the extreme right of the monument.

The enthroned figure whose left foot is almost touched by the left hand of the seated Oriental is Leto, Apollo's mother. Though little of her remains, her identity may be established by comparison to the figures of Leto on better-preserved Marsyas sarcophagi, such as the ones illustrated in Figures 7 and 9. In the compositional scheme, Leto frames on the right the main scene on the sarcophagus front, the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas. Fragment B shows only the lower part of the legs of the protagonists (Figure 10), but there exists another fragment which completes it so that this important portion of the sarcophagus may be securely reconstructed.

The fragment in question is in the National Gallery of Oslo (Figure 11). It was purchased in 1936 on the Roman art market. The discovery of its connection with the Terme sarcophagus is not mine but that of H. P. L'Orange, who made it public in his presentation of the fragment in the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten in 1937. A fuller account of the fragment did not appear until 1973, in an article by L. Berczelly. Since it is in Norwegian this article has

10. Detail of fragment B (Figure 3) showing the middle of the sarcophagus front which presented the contest between Apollo and Marsyas. From left to right: right leg of seated Cybele, left foot of Athena, Marsyas's right leg, Marsyas's pedum and paws of his panther skin, Marsyas's left foot, right forepaw of Apollo's griffin, dress of the muse Urania, Apollo's right foot, lower part of Apollo's griffin, part of Apollo's cloak, Apollo's raven with an olive branch in its claws, left foot of the goddess Leto, and left hand of seated Oriental (photo: Espen B. Anderson)

15. Compare also Robert, no. 203, pl. lxvi, and no. 205, pl. lxvii.

16. H. P. L'Orange, in Aftenposten, Mar. 1, 1937, evening edition, p. 3; Nasjonalgalleriet, Katalog over skulptur (Oslo, 1952) no. 114, p. 46, inv. no. 1243. White marble with gray veining and large crystals. Broken diagonally into two pieces, which have been rejoined. All the figures shown on the fragment lack part of their bodies from the knees down. Missing: from Thalia, all except left hand and part of chest; from Athena, right arm from above the elbow, left arm from below the elbow, tip of nose, parts of drapery; from the muse between Athena and Marsyas, tip of nose; from Marsyas, right arm between shoulder and wrist, left hand, tip of nose, parts of genitals and left thigh, double flute; from the muse behind Marsyas's left shoulder, tip of nose; from the muse behind Apollo's right arm, both hands with attributes, tip of nose; from Apollo's griffin, head; from Apollo, right arm, left thumb, tip of nose, upper part of plectrum. H. 0.532 m., L. 0.855 m., thickness of sarcophagus trough without reliefs 0.041 m. The thickness including reliefs varies from 0.041 m. (Thalia's body, which is incised into the background) to 0.115 m. (Athena's head, Apollo's thigh).

17. See note 8 above and list of frequently cited sources.
not aroused the interest it merits. I shall therefore recapitulate some of Berczelly's more important conclusions.18

It is easy to see that the fragment in Norway, here referred to as fragment C, corresponds to the center portion of fragment B, the mutilated sarcophagus in the Terme Museum (see Figure 12). The profile of the breaks is more regular than is the case with fragment A. L'Orange's theory could easily be proved with

18. I have in the following omitted Berczelly's name in connection with the more obvious identifications such as Thalia, and only referred to it in connection with figures whose identity might be subject to discussion.

11. Fragment of a Marsyas sarcophagus showing the contest between Apollo and Marsyas (fragment C): from left to right: part of the muse Thalia, Athena, the muse Euterpe, Marsyas, nameless muse, the muse Urania, Apollo with griffin. Marble, H. 0.532 m. Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet, inv. no. 1243 (photo: O. Væring)

12. Reconstruction drawing of the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus (fragment B, Figure 3), incorporating at right fragment A (Figure 1) and at center fragment C (Figure 11) (drawing: Siri Sande)
a piece of cardboard cut so that its lower contour corresponded to that of fragment C. The break of fragment C corresponded perfectly with that of fragment B, apart from a few areas where chips were missing.19

Marsyas stands straddle-legged in the middle of fragment C. Though his arms are missing, his inflated cheeks make his action perfectly clear. A bit of the mouthpiece of the double flute is seen between his lips. Traces of a puntello which supported the instrument are found just to the right of his genitals. Between Marsyas's legs the head of a panther skin may be glimpsed. It was supported on a pedum which is still preserved on fragment B, together with the paws of the panther skin (compare Figures 10, middle, and 11, middle).

The other protagonist, Apollo, is seen seated on his cloak on the right of fragment C, in a pose which recurs on several Marsyas sarcophagi.20 The god's left arm is broken off, and with it the cithara which was placed at his left side. By contrast the leaf-shaped plectrum in his right hand is perfectly preserved apart from its upper end. It is raised as though Apollo has just lifted it from the strings, his laurel-crowned head turned expectantly toward his challenger. Apollo's right foot rested on the ground and is still preserved on fragment B (see Figure 10, in front of the seated animal), while his left leg, which was raised, is broken off at the knee. It must have rested on some object, but both the support and the missing part of the leg have disappeared without leaving any visible break on fragments B and C. Undercutting must have been as prominent a feature on this portion of the sarcophagus as it was further to the right: one may recall the slave with the rope, the lower part of whose right leg with its support has similarly disappeared. Apollo's and Marsyas's preserved legs also show this undercutting. They are worked in the round from the middle of the thighs down to the lower edge of the sarcophagus, where the feet rest.

Between Apollo and Marsyas a griffin is seated. Fragment C shows the upper part of its body, fragment B the lower (see Figures 10 and 11). It is fairly well preserved, but lacks its head.21 The rear end of the griffin, on fragment B, is hidden by the folds of Apollo's cloak which continue in uninterrupted lines from fragment C (compare Figures 10 and 11). Further right on fragment B one sees the remains of Apollo's raven (see Figure 10, bottom right). Only its tail feathers, its right claw, and the olive branch it holds in its claws are preserved.

Apart from Apollo and Marsyas, Athena and four muses are seen on fragment C. Of the fourth muse, Thalia, a very small portion is preserved on the extreme left, near Athena's right shoulder (see Figure 13, left). Thanks to her characteristic garment, rendered by a multitude of small drill holes, and to a partially preserved pedum which she holds in her left hand, this muse is easily identifiable despite her fragmentary state.

The other three muses are better preserved. They wear diadems instead of the usual feathers.22 Between Athena and Marsyas there is a muse who holds a long stafflike object in her left hand. This may be interpreted as an extremely long flute, an aulos, and L'Orange and Berczelly have consequently identified this muse with Euterpe.23 The muse whose head emerges behind Marsyas's left shoulder lacks attributes. She appears to be a mere space-filler, and no more is seen of her further down, either on fragment C or on B.

The fourth muse, who is more carefully executed than the others, wears a high-girt dress with a triangular girdle-front. Her missing attributes have been identified by Berczelly as a globe which she held in her raised left hand close to her cheek, and a staff held in her lowered right hand.24 She is the muse Urania. On fragment C she alone is looking upward, and to emphasize this her pupils are plastically rendered

19. I would like to thank my colleague in Rome Rasmus Brandt for making this test for me and for checking the measurements.
20. Compare Figures 7 and 8; further Robert, nos. 203 and 204, pl. lxvi, no. 209, pl. lxviii.
21. Bartoli, p. 2, quoting E. Paribeni, maintains that Artemis with a deer was shown on the mutilated sarcophagus front in the Terme Museum. I have found no positive trace of either of them, on either this or the other fragments. Could Paribeni have mistaken the lower part of the griffin's body for that of a deer?
22. Berczelly, p. 36, has suggested that the diadems may indicate that the muses have been assimilated to the parcae. M. Wegner, Die Musensarkophage (Berlin, 1966), pp. 116f., gives other instances of an assimilation between muses and parcae. Generally the parcae take over the feathers of the muses, not the other way around, as in the case of fragment C. For another example of muses wearing diadems see Wegner, Die Musensarkophage, no. 165, pp. 64f., pl. 54b.
23. L'Orange, in Aftenposten; Berczelly, p. 36.
24. Berczelly, pp. 35f.
in contrast to those of the other persons, whose eyes are blank. On fragment B the folds of Urania's dress fill the space between the legs of Apollo and Marsyas (see Figure 10, middle).

Athena, who is seen on the left of fragment C, is of a type met with on other Marsyas sarcophagi (compare Figures 7 and 8). Both her lower arms were raised. She wears a Corinthian helmet decorated with rams' heads in relief (Figures 11 and 19), peplos and himation, and an aegis with a tiny mask of Medusa in the middle. Her left foot was raised and placed on a rock or a ledge, visible on fragment B (see Figure 10, left, immediately to the left of Marsyas's right leg). The folds of Athena's dress almost merge with the draperies of an enthroned woman, Cybele, who partly covers her (Figure 10, left). Seeing fragment B alone, one might at first assume that the raised left foot belongs to Cybele. However, her left foot is drawn back behind her right foot and is therefore not visible. On other Marsyas sarcophagi, where the same models were used for Athena and for Cybele, the two are more clearly separated from each other (compare Figures 7 and 8). This merging of draperies on fragment B recalls an area on fragment A, where the goatskins of Marsyas and the knife-grinder appear to continue into one another (see Figure 1, middle). On the lower ledge of the sarcophagus, between the feet of Marsyas and Cybele, there is a small circular break (see Figure 10, left). This doubtless indicates that a lance was originally held in Athena's raised hands.

Nothing of the enthroned Cybele, a pendant to Leto, is preserved on fragment C, whose lower break is determined by the profile of her left thigh on fragment B (compare Figures 10 and 11). Like Athena, Cybele derives from a popular model which was used by the sculptors of several Marsys sarcophagi (see Figures 7–9). She is easily identifiable in fragment B by the small lion accompanying her, and by a kettledrum, a tympanon, held in her hand. Attis, who was included in some cases (compare Figure 9), is not present. Apart from minor differences in the position of her arms, Cybele varies little from one Marsyas sarcophagus to another, so the missing upper part of her body on the Terme sarcophagus may be reconstructed in accordance with the better-preserved versions on other sarcophagi.

Comparison of fragments A and C makes it apparent that they share certain stylistic and technical features which support the assumption that they belong to the same sarcophagus. The two versions of Marsyas in particular lend themselves to comparison (Figures 14 and 15). The treatment of the face and hair is very similar in both, as are the high, chinalike polish of the surface of the bodies, the rendering of the muscles, and a detail such as the nipples (which seem to imitate bronze models). The face of Urania on fragment C may be compared to that of the slave with the rope on fragment A (Figures 2 and 21). Their features are rendered in the same manner, and both show a peculiarity of this sarcophagus: only the eyes of upward-looking persons have plastically indicated pupils.

Another characteristic of the sarcophagus is the

25. See Robert, no. 203, pl. lxvi.
26. See also Robert, no. 203, pl. lxvi.
27. Robert, nos. 202, 203, and 208 also show traces of a lance held by Athena (see Robert, pp. 254, 256, 262).
28. See Robert, no. 201, pl. lxv, no. 205, pl. lxvii.
29. The Galleria Doria sarcophagus as well as another in the Palazzo Torlonia (Robert, no. 205, pl. lxvii), which are very close to the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus with regard to composition, both show Attis by the side of Cybele.
14. Head of Marsyas from the contest with Apollo, detail of fragment C (Figure 11) (photo: Tore Holter)

Deep undercutting of the limbs, especially the lower ones, which is seen on both fragments A and C. This gives some of the figures an undulating shape, especially manifest in Marsyas's body on fragment C. His thighs, which are partly carved in the round, appear to burst forth from his rather flat abdomen.

To return to the fragmentary sarcophagus in the

16. Detail of fragment B (Figure 3) showing the seated Cybele with lion and to the left of her the muse Polhymnia from the waist down (photo: Siri Sande)

15. Head of Marsyas in punishment, detail of fragment A (Figure 1)

17. Detail of fragment B (Figure 3) showing Dionysus supported by a satyr (photo: Espen B. Andersson)
Terme Museum, its left part from Cybele onward is so well preserved that its composition may easily be reconstructed. Behind Cybele, and supporting herself on the back of her throne, stands a figure familiar from muse sarcophagi, Polhymnia (Figure 16). Her legs are crossed and she holds a scroll in her lowered left hand.

The left corner of the sarcophagus is occupied by two male figures, the larger one partly draped and the smaller one nude. The latter's left foot is raised and placed on a ledge, and in his lowered right hand he holds a syrinx (Figure 17). Mancini and Bartoli both believed the person with the syrinx to be Marsyas flying from Athena after having picked up the double flute, but Berczelly has correctly identified him as part of a group showing Dionysus supported by a satyr.30

On the left side of the sarcophagus in the Terme Museum is Athena, holding the double flute (Figure 18). She is very similar in type to the corresponding Athena on the Galleria Doria sarcophagus (Figure 19). Her head was turned in the same direction, as may be inferred from the preserved lower end of the crest of her helmet. On other Marsyas sarcophagi, the scene with Athena and the double flute is more elaborate, including a river god and sometimes also other landscape personifications,31 whereas the external elements are, on the Terme sarcophagus, reduced to a tree and Athena's owl. A similar tree is found on the Galleria Doria sarcophagus, whereas the owl recurs on a sarcophagus in the Palazzo Torlonia.32 Both these works correspond to the Terme sarcophagus in other compositional details.

The Marsyas sarcophagus here reconstructed follows the general compositional pattern for sarcophagi featuring the musical contest between Apollo

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18. Detail of fragment B (Figure 3), left side, showing Athena with the double flute (photo: Espen B. Andersson)

19. Detail of sarcophagus in the Galleria Doria, Rome (Figure 9), left side, showing Athena with the double flute (photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome)
and Marsyas at the center of the front. The closest parallels are the lenos sarcophagi in the Palazzo Torlonia and the Galleria Doria. From fragment A alone McCann was able to reconstruct the main composition of the sarcophagus on the basis of the Galleria Doria monument (Figure 9). Berczelly also used that sarcophagus for comparison with fragment C. On all three sarcophagi the same figures recur in the area between Cybele and Leto with one important exception: on the Terme sarcophagus, Artemis apparently did not appear between Leto and Apollo. She may have been placed a little further to the right, so that the lower part of her body was hidden behind that of her mother and consequently has no parts visible on fragment B. It seems more likely that the Terme sarcophagus followed the composition of the Marsyas sarcophagus in Copenhagen (Figure 7), in which only Athena, Marsyas, and Apollo, alternating with muses, occupy the area between Leto and Cybele.

The Terme sarcophagus has suffered especially in the area around and behind Leto. The space between her and the hanging Marsyas is unusually wide, and there is room for several figures above the seated Oriental and the knife-grinder. If McCann is correct in interpreting the object behind the seated Oriental's right hand as a naked knee, it would seem that here one has the remains of a person who was shown in profile and turned toward the center of the sarcophagus front. A horizontal break above the knee may be interpreted as the hem of a short tunic. Could the knee belong to Artemis, who is generally represented wearing a short tunic, and who may have been transferred to the right side of the sarcophagus front since there does not seem to have been room for her in the center of it? As already suggested, Hermes may also have been represented, and one might also expect one or two muses to have filled the area between Leto and the hanging Marsyas.

Such speculations can only be proved or disproved if the missing parts of the sarcophagus should turn up, which is not impossible. The circumstances surrounding the discovery of the Terme sarcophagus are such that they suggest the existence of more fragments than the two hitherto located.

Fragment B (the mutilated sarcophagus in the Terme Museum) was found in its present state in 1912, on an ancient burial site near the Viale del Re in Trastevere.33 Another fragmentary sarcophagus and one whole and one fragmentary sarcophagus lid were also found, in addition to “many marble fragments belonging to sarcophagi.”34 None of these “many fragments” seems to have been attributable to the Marsyas sarcophagus. Its missing fragments were probably removed before the archaeological authorities were notified of the discovery. That the burial site prior to its official discovery had been robbed of salable fragments is also suggested by the complete sarcophagus lid referred to by Mancini.35 This was of the kline type with two reclining figures, but their heads had been struck off and were missing.

When this took place, we can only guess: “The state of preservation of fragment A indicates that the Marsyas sarcophagus was damaged a long time ago.”36 On fragment C the lower break is encrusted, showing that the damage here must have been inflicted long ago, while the breaks at left and right look fairly fresh. Probably the Marsyas sarcophagus was found in a partially damaged state, but with the fragments remaining in situ. The person or persons who discovered it then broke up the rest of the sarcophagus and made off with the salable fragments. A terminus ante quem is given by the year 1912. The fragments may have been removed much earlier, but their appearance on the art market suggests that the vendors were aware of their connection with the mutilated sarcophagus in the Terme Museum and did not want to draw attention to it. A certain pattern is suggested by the fact that the two main parts of fragment A and the whole of fragment C were sold at intervals of about ten years, beginning with the most inconspicuous figure, the knife-grinder, and ending with the most revealing piece, fragment C, which appeared more than twenty years after Mancini’s publication of the finds from the Viale del Re.37

Since two large portions of the Marsyas sarcophagus, fragments A and C, exist in a good state of preservation, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the missing portion between them may have been found and removed at the same time. This fragment, with the enthroned Leto as its main figure, would make a pleasing composition in itself and fetch a good price.

33. See Mancini, pp. 117ff.
34. Mancini, p. 119.
35. Mancini, p. 118, no. 3.
36. See McCann, p. 79.
37. The fragments were sold in 1915, 1927, and 1936 respectively. More than one art dealer was involved in the transactions.
20. The Badminton sarcophagus, showing the triumph of Dionysus and the Seasons. Marble, max. L. 2.16 m. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Pulitzer Fund, 55.11.5

21. Urania, detail of fragment C (Figure 11) (photo: Tore Holter)

The same is true of the corresponding portion on the left side of the sarcophagus front, showing Cybele. If the missing portions of the Termé Marsyas sarcophagus do exist, the most easily recognizable figures will be Leto and Cybele. Since the preserved sarcophagi show a preference for the same models for these goddesses, with few variations, it should not be too difficult to attribute fragments showing them to a Marsyas sarcophagus. A more precise attribution to the sarcophagus discussed here may be facilitated by certain iconographical features such as the unusual diadems worn by the muses, but the style must of course be the determining factor.

In this connection it is interesting to note that both McCann and Berczelly, independently of each other, have compared different fragments of the Termé Marsyas sarcophagus to the famous Badminton sarcophagus with Dionysus and the Seasons in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 20). Berczelly has pointed out that the faces of both the Badminton sarcophagus and fragment C are constructed around eight drill holes at the inner corners of the eyes, the outer corners of the mouth, the nostrils, and a depression above and below the mouth (the face of Urania on fragment C constitutes an exception, as both the inner and outer corners of her eyes are emphasized by drill holes; see Figure 21). McCann has drawn attention to

38. Matz, Meisterwerk; Turcan, pp. 50, 208, 221, 278–280, 298ff., 304, 556, 558, 604, 609ff., 613, 616, 618; McCann, no. 17, pp. 94ff. with further bibliography.
the similarity between the head of Marsyas on fragment A and that of Ocean on the Badminton sarcophagus. There are, in fact, several other points of similarity between the Badminton and the Terme Marsyas sarcophagi. Both are characterized by extensive undercutting where the detached parts support each other, a technique described by Matz as "eine Menge wohlberechneter gegenseitiger Verbindungen der freien und unterschnittenen Teile." The chinalike polish of parts of the surface and the treatment of the hair and beards of the figures may also be compared. Apollo's body on fragment C is similar.

39. Berczelly, p. 40; McCann, p. 84, fig. 88, p. 80, fig. 120, p. 100.

22. Apollo, detail of fragment C (Figure 11) (photo: Tore Holter)

23. Dionysus, detail of the Badminton sarcophagus (Figure 20)
to the bodies of the Seasons on the Badminton sarcophagus, as is the drapery of his and their cloaks (compare Figures 22 and 20). Navels and pubic hair are rendered in the same manner on the two sarcophagi,\(^{41}\) and the wings of Apollo's griffin show the same type of incisions as the wings of the Badminton Seasons (Figure 23). Apart from being constructed around eight drill holes, the faces on the sarcophagi show other points of similarity, such as the slightly pouting mouths and the heavy, waxy eyelids (compare the faces of Apollo and Dionysus, Figures 22 and 23, and those of the muse Euterpe and Winter, Figures 24 and 25). In connection with the eyes, the distinction between eyeballs which are blank or show a faintly incised iris, and eyes with pupils indicated by drill holes seems to have served different purposes on the two sarcophagi: on the Badminton sarcophagus the pupils with drill holes are intended to convey a note of the wild and primitive,\(^{42}\) whereas those on the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus seem merely to indicate an upward glance. Another comparable feature is the rendering of the hands, where small drill holes separate the fingers at their base. Particularly characteristic are the fingers themselves. In their shape they recall fingers in works by Parmigianino and other Mannerist painters; long and supple (the fingers of Marsyas on fragment A, for instance, seem to comprise one joint more than they should), they taper down to a long, narrow tip with a correspondingly long nail. One may compare the left hands of Gaia on the Badminton sarcophagus and Euterpe on fragment C (Figures 26 and 11): the index finger is thrust out like a tentacle, its tip anchored to a drapery fold.

The many similarities between the Badminton and the Terme Marsyas sarcophagi make it likely that they come from the same workshop, to which F. Matz has attributed a number of other works.\(^ {43}\) Of these, the most convincing parallel seems to me to be a strigil sarcophagus in the Vatican grottoes.\(^ {44}\) The figure of Dionysus in the middle resembles that of Dionysus on

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\(^{41}\) The description of these details given by Matz, *Meisterwerk*, p. 12, also applies to the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus.


the Badminton sarcophagus and Apollo on the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus. The draperies of the flute-blowing maenad on the left of the strigil sarcophagus, with their "organ-pipe folds" bending at the bottom, find a counterpart in the cloak folds of the seated Oriental on the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus. Also the draperies of Cybele and Polhymnia on the same monument show similarities to those of the flute-blowing maenad. The latter's puffed-up face is rendered in a manner very similar to that of the contesting Marsyas on fragment C, while her "Mannerist" hands holding the flute recall the left hand of the muse Euterpe holding her aulos.

Of the other works in Matz's group, a sarcophagus in the Palazzo Borghese, Rome, and a fragmentary lesos sarcophagus in the storerooms of the Vatican Museums show certain similarities to the Terme-Badminton group, but I am not sure that these are close enough to allow for an attribution to the same workshop.45

With regard to the rest of Matz's group, a fragment of a lesos sarcophagus and a well-preserved pair of sarcophagi from Bordeaux, all in the Louvre, I find Matz's arguments even less convincing.46 Though the head of a centaur on the Ariadne sarcophagus from Bordeaux does show a certain resemblance to Ocean on the Badminton sarcophagus,47 the other faces on the Ariadne sarcophagus are rendered in a different manner.48 The drapery folds are sharper and more brittle on the Bordeaux sarcophagi, giving a shimmering effect when the monuments are seen from a distance, and the proportions of their figures differ from those of the Terme-Badminton group, as may be seen by juxtaposing figures shown in the same position. It seems difficult to believe that one workshop should have produced both the slim, long-legged Polhymnia on the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus and the squat woman who stands in a similar cross-legged pose near the right corner of the Endymion sarcophagus from Bordeaux.49

The attribution to different workshops is a controversial matter, and studies in this field have been complicated further by the fact that scholars often do not agree on the dates of Roman sarcophagi. A monument such as the Badminton sarcophagus has been dated from A.D. 220 to 280.50 Generally it is believed to be either a late Severan or a late Gallienic work. This vacillation between the Severan and Gallienic periods is also found in studies on third-century por-

traiture,51 indicating that our general knowledge of these periods is as yet incomplete. Discussions on the subject are apt to manifest themselves merely as exchanges of personal impressions. If I may add mine, I should like to remark that those in favor of a late Severan date for the Badminton sarcophagus seem to me to have the more convincing arguments.52 Therefore I agree with McCann in dating the Terme Marsyas and the Badminton sarcophagi to the late Severan period, with the former as the slightly earlier of the two. I must refrain from a fuller discussion of the date of the Badminton sarcophagus and others resembling it in style. To sort out the thorny problems involved would exceed the scope of this article. My chief aim has been to present the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus as it may be reconstructed from the existing fragments; and by drawing attention to these, I hope that other fragments will be found. Even in its present incomplete state, however, the Terme Marsyas sarcophagus is an interesting monument which can take a place among the high-quality sepulchral monuments of the third century A.D.


46. Matz, Die dionysischen Sarkophage I, no. 42, p. 145, pl. 43; III, no. 223, pp. 394ff., pls. 234, 238, 245; Matz, Meisterwerk, pp. 143ff., pls. 17, 23; Turcan, pp. 266, 272, pl. 38a (fragment in the Louvre); Turcan, pp. 50, 91, 101, 105, 220, 279f., 283f., 296, 297, 301, 314 (Endymion sarcophagus); pp. 90, 101, 105f., 220, 272f., 279f., 283f., 293, 296, 297, 301, 303, 309f., 314, 316, 318, 530 (Ariadne sarcophagus). Turcan does not believe that these two sarcophagi and the Badminton sarcophagus come from the same workshop, whereas McCann (p. 103) appears to find a close relationship between them.

47. Compare Matz, Meisterwerk, pl. 11 to pl. 24a; or Matz, Die dionysischen Sarkophage III, pl. 243:1 to IV, pl. 273:1.


49. Compare Figure 16 to Matz, Meisterwerk, pl. 23.

50. See McCann, pp. 105ff.


52. McCann, pp. 103ff., quotes others of the same opinion. See also Turcan, pp. 278f.
26. Detail of the Badminton sarcophagus (Figure 20), left side, showing the seated figure of Gaia

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