

Christodorus of Coptus on the statues in the Baths of Zeuxippus at  
Constantinople: text and context

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A distinctive feature of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* is its emphasis on the gaze of the voyeur, whether an external onlooker like the Achaean seaman who is amazed at the bull Zeus carrying off Europa (1.92-126), or a character inside the narrative such as Actaeon viewing Artemis bathing naked (5.303-7).<sup>1</sup> The rhetorical technique of *ekphrasis* directs and informs the viewer's gaze, helping to make sense of potentially confusing or overwhelming material;<sup>2</sup> and Ruth Webb has convincingly argued that it is central to *ekphrasis* to persuade the audience of the correct interpretation of its subject.<sup>3</sup>

1. *The ekphrasis of Christodorus and the statues in the Zeuxippus baths*

Against this background of the gaze and its interpretation, this paper explores the *ekphrasis* preserved as the second book of the *Palatine Anthology*. In it Christodorus of Coptus, who flourished under the Emperor Anastasius (491-518), describes a collection of eighty statues in the Zeuxippus bath- and gymnasium complex,<sup>4</sup> located close to the imperial palace in the heart of Constantinople. The statues fall into three groups:<sup>5</sup> eleven represent classical gods and demi-gods, thirty-three historical literary and political figures,<sup>6</sup> and the remainder mythical characters, including twenty-five connected with the story of Troy.<sup>7</sup> Towards the end of the poem, in describing the statue of the

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<sup>1</sup> Actaeon is in turn spied by one of Artemis' nymphs whose shriek of horror alerts Artemis (5.307-11).

<sup>2</sup> See further below, sec. 3.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Webb 2009, 48-9.

<sup>4</sup> See further below, n. 23.

<sup>5</sup> See further below, sec. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Including five or six lyric poets (one statue depicts either the prophet Alcmaeon or the poet Alcman: see further below sec. 3), five early Greek philosophers, five epic, comic and tragic poets, as well as statesmen. There are four Romans: Julius Caesar and Pompey, Apuleius and Virgil.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix.

Roman general Pompey (lines 398-406), Christodorus links Pompey's family to that of Anastasius, who is complimented on his conquest of Isauria,<sup>8</sup> following on from his illustrious Roman predecessor. This suggests that Christodorus' poem was either a bid to gain imperial attention through flattering reference to the ancestry of an emperor of undistinguished background,<sup>9</sup> or that it was an imperial commission, perhaps in response to some refurbishment or rearrangement of the statue collection.<sup>10</sup>

The Zeuxippus baths, reputedly begun by Septimius Severus (emperor 193-211) and completed by Constantine who 'adorned it with columns and varied marbles and works of bronze',<sup>11</sup> were destroyed in the fire of the Nika Riot of 532.<sup>12</sup> Although refurbished by Justinian,<sup>13</sup> there is no further mention

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<sup>8</sup> This provides a *terminus post quem* of 497/8 for the date of the poem, see further below, n. 85. On the identification of Pompey, see Kaldellis (2007, 377-379), arguing against Bassett's suggestion (1996, 504; 2004, 55, 182) that he is Anastasius' nephew Pompey who was consul in 501.

<sup>9</sup> On Anastasius' background and possible links with Pompey, see Cameron 1978; Kaldellis 2007, 377-81; Croke 2008. For the poem as a bid to win favour, see Jeffreys 2006, 131, Bär 2012.

<sup>10</sup> See further below, sec. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Malalas p. 321 Bonn κοσμήσας κίοσι καὶ μαρμάροις ποικίλοις καὶ χαλκουργήμασιν, *Chron. Pasch. s.a.* 328 (p. 529 Bonn); Mango 1959, 37-42. Manderscheid (1981, 9) found the second century to be the period of great bath-building and statue decoration. But the Severan inauguration of the Zeuxippion may be a later fiction: Mango 2003, esp. 599-602 and 2004, 75. Bardill (2004, 67-9), who provides a concise and clear survey of the archaeological evidence with plans, doubts the Severan origin, see especially his n. 163.

<sup>12</sup> Proc. *Wars* 1.24.9. Cedrenus describes the statue collection in conjunction with the Nika fire (647.22-648.21), mentioning that it included 'bronze statues of all the lofty wise men, poets and orators and all those celebrated for their courage' (648.13-15 στῆλαι δε ἦσαν ἐκ χαλκοῦ πεποιημένοι τῶν σοφῶν ἀπάντων τῶν ὑψηλῶν καὶ ποιητῶν καὶ ῥητόρων, καὶ ὅσοι ἐπ' ἀνδρία διαβόητοι); he includes a long description of the representation of Homer, which is not obviously related to that of Christodorus, e.g. in Cedrenus Homer has his hands linked under his breast (648.6-7), whereas in Christodorus he has placed his hands one on top of the other and rests on a staff (343-4). Mango in Mango/Vickers/Francis 1992, 90-92, shows that Cedrenus preserves information about monuments of Constantinople, some of which derives from Constantine the Rhodian (mid-10<sup>th</sup> c.), who wrote a poem on the Seven Wonders of Constantinople. For more recent bibliography on this topic, see James 2012, 4-9, esp. 6 (by I. Vassis) and 136.

of the statue collection, so Christodorus' poem is our chief evidence for it. When the area was excavated in 1927 and 1928 by a British Academy team led by Stanley Casson and David Talbot Rice, three statue bases were found, a matching pair and a third of another design.<sup>14</sup> The unpaired base is inscribed with the name of Aeschines,<sup>15</sup> and one of the pair that of Hekabe – both figures in Christodorus' catalogue. The third base, however, carries no inscription,<sup>16</sup> a point to which Anthony Kaldellis draws attention in a recent study of the poem.<sup>17</sup> Kaldellis argues that Christodorus' poem cannot be taken as straightforward testimony to eighty identified statues arranged in a programmatic sequence, but rather the poet may be inventing some of the identifications, particularly those for the large group of Trojans: this sequence, he suggests, should be linked with Christodorus' own status as a poet in the Homeric tradition.<sup>18</sup>

Interpretations of this poem over the last thirty years have broadly fallen into two groups, those that see it as a guide to understanding a lost antique statue collection in the capital with a programmatic message,<sup>19</sup> and those like

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<sup>13</sup> Proc. *Aed.* 1.10.3.

<sup>14</sup> Casson and Talbot Rice 1929, esp. 5-17 on the excavations (which revealed two buildings – a circular, probably domed, chamber, and an apsed building looking out onto a marble court), and 18-21 on the statue bases. The matching pair of bases were not found *in situ* and had been reused. See also Mango 1959, 37-42, Bardill 2004, 67-9.

<sup>15</sup> Misspelled ΑΙΣΧΗΝΗΣ. Casson (1929, 18) described the lettering on the two bases as identical and suggested that the tenons on the top of the Aeschines base indicated a statue of bronze (19). He dated the bases on stylistic grounds to the period 400-500 (20).

<sup>16</sup> This base has instead a small inscribed vase-like design. The bases are conveniently shown together in Casson 1929, figs. 8-11; also Bassett 2004, pls. 8, 10, 17, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Kaldellis 2007, 372.

<sup>18</sup> The longest description is devoted to a representation of Homer who is described as 'my father' (311-50). Bär (2012, 456) draws attention to the parallel with Nonnus, *D.* 25.264-5 where the poet, in invoking the Muse, also refers to Homer as 'my father'.

<sup>19</sup> Stupperich 1982, Bassett 1996, 2004, 50-8, 160-85, Martins de Jesus 2014. Prose literary sources (Cedrenus and Zonaras) have persuasively been used as a basis for identifying a programmatic arrangement in the private collection of antique statues in the palace of Lausus, destroyed by a fire in 475: Mango/Vickers/Francis 1992; see also Bardill 1997; Guberti Bassett 2000. The

Kaldellis who have emphasized the literary background underlying the descriptions, casting doubt on the authenticity of Christodorus' identifications of the statues.<sup>20</sup> While agreeing that Christodorus' poem cannot be taken at face value as a straightforward factual account of the collection, I want to argue that there is value in relating it to an archaeological as well as to a literary context: late-antique iconography in bathhouses and elsewhere, on which there is much excellent recent work,<sup>21</sup> provides a useful independent control for Christodorus' account of the Zeuxippus collection. And study of the techniques and objectives of ekphrastic description, likewise illuminated by excellent recent studies, can assist understanding of the possible context for and analysis of the poem. For example, recent work on literary *ekphrasis*,<sup>22</sup> shows how it uses Homer to aid interpretation of an image: it is likely that Christodorus also deploys this technique, which flatters the audience by reference to a shared culture. I suggest that a fruitful approach to improved comprehension of Christodorus' poem is to strike a balance between analysis of the conventions of *ekphrasis* and comparison with other late-antique iconographic bathhouse programmes.

## 2. *Links with late-antique iconographic schemes*

The Zeuxippus baths, like many others in Asia Minor, combined a bathing establishment with a gymnasium.<sup>23</sup> This combination perhaps intensified the

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Lausus statues, however, unlike those described by Christodorus, are explicitly identified with famous ancient artworks: convenient account with illustrations, Bassett 2004, 98-120, 232-8.

<sup>20</sup> Tisconi 2000 (who, however, also includes valuable iconographic evidence); Kaldellis 2007; Bär 2012.

<sup>21</sup> I draw particularly on Manderscheid 1981 (survey of bathhouse statuary), Marvin 1983 (statuary of the baths of Caracalla), Yegül 1992, 2010 (archaeological studies of bathhouses), Bol 2011 (baths of Faustina at Miletus). Jacobs 2010 is a valuable survey: I thank Jonathan Bardill for drawing it to my attention.

<sup>22</sup> For example in Philostratus' *Imagines* and Lucian's *The Hall*: Elsner 1995, 21-38; Newby 2002, 2009; Webb 2006.

<sup>23</sup> The lemma in the *Palatine Anthology* refers to the Zeuxippus as a 'public gymnasium' (δημόσιον γυμνάσιον), but other sources speak of baths (e.g. Malalas, p. 321 Bonn τὸ λεγόμενον Ζεύξιππον δημόσιον λουτρόν, cf. *Chron.*

cultural and social associations of bathing. So, for example, the baths of Faustina at Miletus, which were also of this type, included a ‘Musensaal’ used for recitations, in which representations of the nine Muses and Apollo were found *in situ*.<sup>24</sup> Archaeological work on a number of imperial baths indicates that sculptural displays were concentrated in certain rooms, typically the central hall, the *frigidarium* and the *palaestra* colonnades, whereas sculpture is not found in the *caldarium*.<sup>25</sup> Statues displayed included both free-standing figures and groups on bases, but many were also set up in niches: so, for example, Marvin calculated that the baths of Caracalla had 108-112 niches for statues in the main building, of which most were concentrated around the two *palaestrae*.<sup>26</sup> Since the baths of Zeuxippus were constructed on a similarly massive scale, it is therefore possible that the eighty statues described by Christodorus could have been arranged in a single area, especially if some of the figures were displayed in niches.

As for the types of figures in Christodorus’ collection – mythological characters, historical figures and gods – all three are paralleled in the archaeological record, but the very striking omission is that of contemporary portraits: inscriptions and portrait heads in archaeological finds elsewhere indicate that patrons and donor figures featured prominently in bathhouse

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*Pasch. s.a.* 328, p. 529 Bonn); cf. Bassett 1996, 494; Yegül 2010, 184-6. On the bath-gymnasium complex, see Yegül 1992, 250-313, 2010, 154-80; for the baths of Faustina at Miletus: Bol 2011: 80f. The Zeuxippon occupied a very spacious site: Mango 1985, 26 suggests the complex was larger than is usually indicated on plans of the area; cf. id. 1959, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Bol 2011, 81-3. Yegül (1992, 416) identifies a similar feature in the East Baths of the Hellenistic gymnasium at Pergamum. Manderscheid (1981, 34) observed that this iconography is not common, citing only the example of Agnano in addition to Miletus. See further below, n. 72.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Marvin 1983, 350-3 (Caracalla), Bol 2011, 79-88 (baths of Faustina, Miletus). Bassett (1994, 500) postulates that Christodorus’ display was concentrated in the *frigidarium*. It has been suggested that the heat of the *caldarium* might soften the wax that was used in Roman paint: Marvin 1983, 352.

<sup>26</sup> Marvin 1983, 350-3; several surviving statues from the baths of Caracalla have dowel holes at the back to secure them to a niche, *ibid.* 358, 367, etc.

displays,<sup>27</sup> and indeed we know from the historical record that the baths of Zeuxippus included at least one honorific statue, that of Leo I's widely respected doctor Jacob the Cooler.<sup>28</sup> It is arguable that such figures were displayed in a different area of the baths from that described by Christodorus, but at the very least this omission indicates that Christodorus does not give a complete catalogue of the Zeuxippus statuary.

Taking each of Christodorus' three types in turn, there are further indicative features. Among mythological figures, a favourite representation in bathhouse schemes is that of Heracles: at the baths of Caracalla, for example, five different representations of Heracles are attested, including the famous Farnese Heracles in which the aged hero rests after completing his last labour of capturing the apples of the Hesperides.<sup>29</sup> Christodorus too describes a Heracles holding the golden apples (lines 136-8), but his Heracles is a young man, indicating a version that placed this labour early in Heracles' career; interestingly this type is paralleled in an extant bronze statue.<sup>30</sup> However Christodorus juxtaposes Heracles (138 ἐγγύθι δ' αὐτοῦ) with Auge, priestess of Athene, whom Heracles raped. Tisconi is surely right to argue that this is a combination inspired by Christodorus' literary imagination rather than a representation that combined these two separate incidents in Heracles' life.<sup>31</sup> As for Christodorus' Trojan sequence, there are parallels elsewhere for individual figures: so, for example, while accepting that identification is

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<sup>27</sup> Bassett 2004, 55, Jacobs 2010, 271. See, for example, Smith 2007 on the Hadrianic baths at Aphrodisias.

<sup>28</sup> Malalas 370.9-10 ἡ σύγκλητος εἰκόνα συνεστήσατο ἐν τῷ Ζευξίππῳ, cf. *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 467, p. 595 Bonn. Bassett (2004, 52) uses the latter passage, which has the plural εἰκόνας, as evidence for the dating of the collection described by Christodorus, in my view mistakenly.

<sup>29</sup> Marvin 1983, 355-8, 379 Heracles 'ubiquitous in bath culture'; DeLaine 1997, 266f.

<sup>30</sup> Louvre, Br 387 (MNB 1044) 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC, originating from Thrace: cited and discussed by Tisconi 2000, 148.

<sup>31</sup> Tisconi 2000, 147-8. Christodorus pairs a number of other mythological figures, including Poseidon and Amyone, Pyrrhus and Polyxena and many of the Trojan sequence, but these may well have been independent free-standing figures: certainly the bases discovered in the 1920s excavation are designed for individual statues. See further below, n. 59.

controversial, Miranda Marvin argues that the colossal male figure carrying a dead child over his back from the baths of Caracalla represents Achilles and Troilus, in a brutal depiction of an episode from the fall of Troy, which is also the theme of Christodorus' sequence.<sup>32</sup> But I have found no parallel for the scale of the Trojan sequence of twenty-five statues described by Christodorus; it may be significant, however, that Christodorus' Trojans include a number of heroic male nudes and draped female figures.<sup>33</sup>

A similar point can be made about the large group of intellectuals and historical figures in Christodorus' collection. Although isolated parallels can be found – a fine late third century philosopher from Sardis,<sup>34</sup> busts of Socrates and Menander from the baths of Scholastica at Ephesus<sup>35</sup> – Marvin comments on 'the relative scarcity among bath sculptures of literary figures'.<sup>36</sup> She notes that such figures are often honoured elsewhere: so, for example nine striking fifth-century tondo or shield portraits found at Aphrodisias were displayed, not in a bathhouse, but probably in a Neoplatonic philosophical school.<sup>37</sup> A stylistically uniform set represent Pindar, Alexander the Great, Alcibiades, Pythagoras, Apollonius of Tyana, and an unknown philosopher;<sup>38</sup> the other three are Socrates, Aristotle and a young pupil.<sup>39</sup> Of the uniform group, some of the representations have their names inscribed on the lower rim (Pindar, Pythagoras, Apollonius, Alcibiades), but Alexander does not, his appearance

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<sup>32</sup> Marvin 1983, 359-63. Smith 2007, 215-18 describes heroic groups from the Trojan story (Achilles and Penthesilea, Menelaus with the body of Patroclus or Ajax and Achilles, etc.) from the Hadrianic baths at Aphrodisias, suggesting that these high quality works from the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> centuries were famous local monuments relocated in the pool area of the bath.

<sup>33</sup> See further below, sec. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Yegül 1986, 146.

<sup>35</sup> *LSA* nos. 2107 Socrates (dated 370-450) and 680 Menander (mid/late 4<sup>th</sup> c.).

<sup>36</sup> Marvin 1983, 378. The discussion of Lenaghan (2016, 261-266) vindicates this conclusion.

<sup>37</sup> Discovered in the early 1980s and analysed by Smith 1990, 127-55. Smith identified the building on the basis of the tondo portraits.

<sup>38</sup> Probably a single commission. Smith *ibid.* suggests that the philosopher should be identified with the founder of the Aphrodisias school.

<sup>39</sup> Smith suggests that the last is probably another contemporary portrait, perhaps the son of the school's founder.

and attributes being sufficient to identify him.<sup>40</sup> This provides a parallel for the three bases recovered in the Zeuxippus excavations, of which two had names inscribed (Aeschines, Hekabe), but one did not.

Four of the Aphrodisias figures, Pindar, Alcibiades, Pythagoras and Aristotle, also feature in Christodorus' selection (though Socrates, perhaps surprisingly, is absent). Other late-antique representations of philosophers and intellectuals can also be related to Christodorus: for example a late-antique mosaic from Seleucia in Pamphylia depicts Homer (with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) surrounded by Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Pherecydes, Demosthenes, Heraclitus, Hesiod, Lycurgus, Solon, Thucydides, Herodotus and possibly Xenophon among others.<sup>41</sup> Of these, all but Anaxagoras, Lycurgus and Solon are among the figures described by Christodorus.<sup>42</sup> So his historical figures, even those less familiar like the cosmographer Pherecydes<sup>43</sup> or Pindar of whom very few representations are known,<sup>44</sup> cohere with the taste for classical *paideia* evident elsewhere in late-antique depictions.

If we turn to the gods in Christodorus' collection, the picture becomes more complex. Manderscheid, who catalogued sculptures in baths of the imperial period, found that 72% (from a total of 560) were gods.<sup>45</sup> The most frequent, starting with the most popular, were Bacchus/Dionysus (30%), Venus/Aphrodite (23%), Asclepius and Hygieia (18%), Apollo and the Muses (12%), Hercules (10%) and water divinities (7%). In Christodorus, gods form the smallest of the three statue-groups. He mentions no healing divinities, nor Bacchus/Dionysus, though he does have a Poseidon (whom he pairs with

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<sup>40</sup> Similarly Aristotle's name is inscribed, but that of the distinctively snub-nosed Socrates is not.

<sup>41</sup> Discussed by Smith 1990, 151, Lenaghan 2016, 264; cf. Cameron 1995, 275-6, Tisconi 2000, 226. The mosaic is now in the museum at Antalya. I am grateful to Katherine Dunbabin for discussion of this mosaic.

<sup>42</sup> Further examples of similar material in late-antique mosaics from East and West: Smith 1990, 151-3, Lenaghan 2016, 261-6.

<sup>43</sup> Tisconi 2000, 226-7.

<sup>44</sup> Smith 1990, 134, Tisconi 2000, 243.

<sup>45</sup> Manderscheid 1981, 28.

Amymone),<sup>46</sup> three statues each of Aphrodite and Apollo, and a Heracles (discussed above), along with a hermaphrodite,<sup>47</sup> Hermes, god of the *palaestra*, and Artemis. Christodorus' description of Hermes clearly identifies him with the late-classical 'Sandalbinder' type,<sup>48</sup> while a half-draped Aphrodite suggests the Aphrodite of Arles or Venus de Milo figure.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore the three images each of Apollo and Aphrodite would be consistent with an authentic collection.<sup>50</sup> Three different statues of Aphrodite have been found in different rooms of the baths of Faustina at Miletus: one interpretation is that she was represented in various stages of undress in parallel with the bathers' own *déshabillage*.<sup>51</sup>

Christodorus' account of Artemis (lines 306-10), however, deserves attention. She has her tunic hitched up to her knee, a pose that is iconographically recognizable,<sup>52</sup> though she is seldom found in bathhouses.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Tissoni 2000, 114-17, esp. 117 on the iconography of Poseidon holding a dolphin. Amymone is identified with Beroe in Nonnus, *D.* 42-3, where the story is treated at length.

<sup>47</sup> The hermaphrodite figure is found in other baths: see Tissoni 2000, 131 who notes an inscription attesting a statue of Hermaphroditus in the gymnasium at Athens in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC; Manderscheid (1981, 127, nos. 520, 521) catalogues two Hermaphroditos from the baths at Caesarea (late 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> c.); the identification of two possible hermaphrodite figures from the baths of Caracalla is now regarded as uncertain: Marvin 1983, 373 = Delaine 1997, 267 no. 36 and Delaine 1997, 267 no. 44 = Manderscheid 1981, 73, no. 47.

<sup>48</sup> *AP* 2. 297-302; Bassett 1996, 497; ead. 2004, 172f. A Hermes torso survives from the baths of Caracalla: Marvin 1983, 367; Delaine 1997, 266, no. 10; Manderscheid 1981 has examples from North Africa (nos. 314, 315, 362, 363, 393, 411, etc.).

<sup>49</sup> Aphrodite 1, lines 78-81: see Bassett 1996, 497, ead. 2004, 165.

<sup>50</sup> Compare the multiple representations of Heracles in the baths of Caracalla (n. 29 above), and for multiple images of divinities, Jacobs' inventory (2010, 293-4). Tissoni (2000, 198) suggests that Apollo 2 (lines 266-70) has characteristics of the famous Belvedere Apollo. For Apollo and the Muses in bathhouses, see above at n. 24, below n. 72. See also Bär (2012, 457) on the significance of Apollo as Homer's companion.

<sup>51</sup> Bol 2011, 79-88. The figures are contemporary with the construction of the baths in the Antonine period. Stages of undress: Ortwin Dally, lecture in Oxford, June 2013. Auinger – Rathmayr (2007, 246) note 'at least' three representations of Aphrodite from the baths of Vedius at Ephesus.

<sup>52</sup> Tissoni (2000, 212) compares the Diana of Versailles, a type known from the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC onwards.

But Francesco Tissoni noted that Christodorus' description is modelled on lines from Callimachus' *Hymn to Diana* (11-12), including the very rare word λεγνωτόν (at the same place in the line) to describe the decorated border of her garment.<sup>54</sup> Here, then, Christodorus is at least as strongly influenced by literary learning, as by iconographical features.

So what conclusions can be drawn from this tentative iconographic contextualization? Christodorus describes proportionately fewer gods than are usual in bathhouse schemes, and many of the standard deities are absent; yet the multiplication of figures like Apollo and Aphrodite is reflected in the archaeological material. Some representations match well-known iconographical types, but Artemis also reflects literary sources. As for the historical figures, the culture of *paideia* that they suggest is consonant with that in other late antique representations, with considerable overlap in the people depicted, but such a large collection of intellectuals is unusual in a bathhouse. And the Aphrodisias tondo portraits offer a precedent for a display with some figures identified by name and others not. Even if some of the identifications are merely postulated by Christodorus,<sup>55</sup> they cohere with contemporary taste as represented in surviving plastic arts.

### *3. Links with the late-antique ekphrastic tradition*

In describing Artemis, Christodorus comments on missing attributes of the goddess. She is called οὐρεσίφοιτος,<sup>56</sup> 'haunting the mountains' (306), but then we are told that she does not have the expected bow and quiver of the huntress goddess (307f.). In other cases too Christodorus focusses on missing attributes. So, Pyrrhus/Neoptolemus, who is represented twice (56-60, 192-4), is naked

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<sup>53</sup> Examples at Italica, Sufela, Cales and Cherchel (Caesarea): Manderscheid 1981, nos. 35, 114, 439, 535; Bassett 1996, 501.

<sup>54</sup> Tissoni 2000, 211-12, and 67 on Christodorus' extensive use of Callimachus; cf. esp. *AP* 2. 308-9 ἦν δ' ἐπὶ γούνων / παρθέنيον λεγνωτόν ἀναζωθεῖσα χιτῶνα, and *Call. Dian.* 11-12 ἐς γόνυ μέχρι χιτῶνα / ζώννυσθαι λεγνωτόν.

<sup>55</sup> See further below.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Nonn. D.* 48.310; the compound occurs 24 times in Nonnus, *D.*: Tissoni 2000, 211.

and devoid of the weapons.<sup>57</sup> The first statue gazes up, as if towards Ilium, while the second has a hand raised in victory and looks towards a vanquished Polyxena. No other statue of Pyrrhus is known,<sup>58</sup> but, interestingly, one of the exercises in *ekphrasis* of a statue attributed to Libanius describes a naked Pyrrhus, clad only in a helmet, slaughtering Polyxena.<sup>59</sup> Christodorus' Telamonian and Locrian Ajax are also naked, beardless and unarmed.<sup>60</sup> He here appears to be guiding his audience in the interpretation of a statue whose identity is far from obvious, using the familiar Trojan story. This view draws support from the inclusion in the Trojan sequence (lines 246-55) of four counsellors (Panthous, Thymoetes, Lampon and Clytius), otherwise known only from *Iliad* 3 (146-53), where they accompany Priam in the *teichoskopia* scene. Likewise two wrestlers (222-7), not out of place in a gymnasium, are identified as Dares and Entellus, otherwise known only from Book 5 of Virgil's

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<sup>57</sup> 57f. ὅσον ἤθελε χερσὶν ἐλίσσειν / τεύχεα χαλκήεντα, τὰ μὴ ὤπασε τέχνη, 'how he longed to wield in his hands the bronze weapons that art did not give him' (tr. Paton); cf. 192-4.

<sup>58</sup> In vase painting he is represented as a warrior: Tissoni 2000, 112; Bassett 2004, 183.

<sup>59</sup> Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 18 (Foerster 8.508-11). Christodorus, however, specifically mentions that his Pyrrhus has no helmet (192-3 οὐκ ἐπὶ χαίτης / ἱππόκομον τρυφάλειαν ἔχων). Libanius' previous description (17) of a Trojan woman has considerable overlap with the description of Polyxena. Lib. *Progymn.* 18 (511.3-5) clearly states that one base holds the statues of Neoptolemus and Polyxena, but figures described as interacting by Christodorus may well be free-standing statues rather than groups, the pairing being his own invention; cf. n. 31 above.

<sup>60</sup> Telamonian Ajax (271-6) is naked, beardless, has no helmet but wears his hair in a diadem, is without sword and sevenfold shield. Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 23 (524-7) describes a statue of a naked Ajax, but it is the mad Ajax of Sophocles' play. Christodorus' Oilean Ajax (209-14) is similarly naked and beardless. This Ajax is described as 'a huge bulwark (πελώριον ἔρκος) of the Locrian land' in a phrase applied by Homer to Telamonian Ajax (*Il.* 3.229). Tissoni (2000, 173, 200) suggests that Christodorus confuses the two Homeric Ajaces, but this seems hard to credit. Is there a more elaborate game here, perhaps to keep the audience on their toes? Tissoni analogously postulates a learned 'mistake' in Christodorus' allusion to Aglaos as father of Polyidus: Tissoni 2000, 196-7.

*Aeneid* (362-484), thus demonstrating Christodorus' familiarity with Virgil's Latin epic as well as Greek versions of the Trojan story.<sup>61</sup>

Sometimes Christodorus challenges the identity of a statue. The collection includes a number of laurel-crowned figures whom he systematically identifies as prophets.<sup>62</sup> But one is said rather to be Amphytrion, whose wreath is a sign of victory over the Taphians (367-71).<sup>63</sup> Conversely a figure named Alcmaeon (393 Ἀλκμάων κεκλημένος οὖνομα μάντις) is reidentified as the lyric poet Alcman because he does not wear the prophet's laurel wreath (394-7).<sup>64</sup> Similarly Christodorus claims to be unable to tell whether a statue of a wrestler (228-40) represented Philo, Philammon or Milo. Here the similarity of the names suggests that Christodorus is unable to make out the inscription; alternatively it may simply be a further elaborate show of erudition.<sup>65</sup>

What are we to make of all this? In her careful study of *ekphrasis*, Ruth Webb analyses the dynamics of the genre, beginning from the textbook definition that '*ekphrasis* is a descriptive speech, bringing the subject vividly before the eyes'.<sup>66</sup> This 'vividness' is achieved by drawing on a body of internal images (φαντάσματα) that is common to speaker and listener, so that the speaker evokes a picture in the mind's eye of his listener, who is expected to

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Tissoni 2000, 178f. Creusa (148-54), wife of Aeneas lost at Troy, is also best known from Virgil, *Aen.* 2. Virgil himself is the last statue described in the poem, suggesting Christodorus' allegiance, cf. n. 77 below.

<sup>62</sup> Palaiphatus (36-7), Polyidus (40-2), Amphiareus (259-62), Aglaus (263-5). The more famous Homeric prophets, Calchas (53-5) and Chryses (86-92) are not distinguished by laurel wreaths; Chryses wears a fillet. On this topic, cf. Kaldellis 2007, 373-5.

<sup>63</sup> Tissoni, however, observes (2000, 235-6) that the wreath as a symbol of victory in war is a Roman rather than a Greek habit, said by Pliny (*NH* 15.126.1) to date back to Crassus.

<sup>64</sup> Kaldellis (2007, 374) suggests that Christodorus' iconographical interpretations are a means of establishing his scholarly credentials before his audience.

<sup>65</sup> Tissoni (2000, 180-2) notes, however, that in fact Philo and Philammon were boxers rather than wrestlers.

<sup>66</sup> Webb 2009. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 36 ed. H. Rabe. ἔκφρασις ἐστὶ λόγος περιηγηματικὸς ὑπὲρ ὄψιν ἄγων ἐναργῶς τὸ δηλούμενον (Ruth Webb's translation, 2009, 201).

engage actively and respond emotionally to what he hears.<sup>67</sup> Studies of the third-century Philostratus' *Imagines* have shown how the speaker aims to educate the viewer – in this case the young son of his host – through an interpretation of the image viewed. So he reminds the lad that a depiction of Scamander is based on Homer, and then instructs the boy to turn away, so as to look only on the events on which it draws. The aim is to persuade the viewer that he can understand and interpret the object seen.<sup>68</sup>

This seems to me to provide a key to understanding Christodorus' techniques, especially with figures that do not possess the attributes that the audience might expect. Faced with a collection of statues that included a number of beardless naked youths,<sup>69</sup> figures wreathed in laurel,<sup>70</sup> and draped women,<sup>71</sup> Christodorus gives them life and meaning by relating them to the familiar material of myth, often the Trojan story, or to the shared Hellenic historical past. One might speculate that the figures identified by Christodorus as the female poets Sappho (69-71) and Erinna (108-10) were conceived originally as Muses who accompanied Apollo.<sup>72</sup> Hesitation in some identifications is part of the lively interaction between speaker and audience, where the speaker challenges his listener's powers of interpretation and knowledge and the viewer is invited to participate in the business of identification, and often, like the *voyeur* in Nonnus, to be amazed at what he sees.<sup>73</sup> Nonnus' Achaean seaman speculates on the identity of the bull he sees

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<sup>67</sup> Webb 2009, esp. chs. 4 and 5.

<sup>68</sup> Jaś Elsner comments: 'It does not much matter if the artist intended his picture to be of the Scamander or not'. Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.1, with Elsner 1995, 23-36, quoting p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Marvin 1983, 379 on the popularity of 'idealized young men' in the baths of Caracalla.

<sup>70</sup> Might these originally have been laurel-wreathed city officials?

<sup>71</sup> E.g. Hecuba (383-5), Polyxena (199-200). Cf. Yegül 1986, 146 on this type in the baths at Sardis. Casson (1929, 20) already suggested that the Hecuba statue may have been a Hellenistic funeral monument rechristened.

<sup>72</sup> Boll 2011, 81-3, cf. above n. 24: the Muses were depicted in a range of poses (ead. 88). For possible Christian reinterpretation of pagan statuary in the fourth century, see (e.g.) Bardill 2012, 268-9.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. 82, 117, 168, 209, 243, 288.

carrying a woman across the sea. But Christodorus provides a clear identification for representations that might puzzle or confuse the viewer.<sup>74</sup>

#### 4. *Conclusions and context*

What, then, can we conclude about the statue collection in the Zeuxippus baths and Christodorus' poem on it? The historical and archaeological evidence leaves no doubt that a statue collection existed there<sup>75</sup> and parallels can be drawn with other late-antique bathhouse schemes – more, certainly, than I have adumbrated.<sup>76</sup> It is likely that the Zeuxippon contained an identifiable core of images of gods and probably some portraits of figures representative of classical Greek culture, as well as mythological figures; but that many others had no specific identification beyond the one that Christodorus evoked. His choices reflect late-antique taste, in which reference to a common Greek – and Roman – cultural *paideia* constituted a flattering and unifying form of praise,<sup>77</sup> apposite for the emperor Anastasius, who is described by John Lydus as 'intelligent and educated' (συνετὸς καὶ πεπαιδευμένος).<sup>78</sup> Although there is evidence for statuary connected with Troy elsewhere in Constantinople, for example in the Forum of Constantine,<sup>79</sup> the preponderance of Trojan figures among Christodorus' statues may be related to the literary ethos of the era and more particularly of Anastasius' court, rather than being intrinsic to the collection.<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Jeffreys has pointed out that the *Rape of Helen* by Christodorus' contemporary

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<sup>74</sup> We may add that the correct identification of surviving statuary from baths remains today a matter of scholarly contention, as is clear from Marvin's 1983 discussion of the sculpture in the baths of Caracalla.

<sup>75</sup> Sec. 1 above.

<sup>76</sup> Sec. 2 above. Jacobs' useful inventory (2010, 293-294) catalogues sculpture from ten bathhouses in Asia Minor, including the Zeuxippon.

<sup>77</sup> See Bassett, 2004, 57-8 and more generally Borg 2004. Bär (2012, 457-8) has good remarks on the continuity of Greek *paideia* into Byzantium through Rome, as represented by the two final statues, Homer Byzantinus and Virgil, which follow that of Pompey; Kaldellis (2007, 381-2) similarly argues that this concluding group of statues indicates that the end of the poem is complete.

<sup>78</sup> *De mag.* 3.48. See Nicks 2000 on Anastasius' promotion of literary men in government and the general cultural freedom of the reign, where writing in both Greek and Latin flourished freely.

<sup>79</sup> Bassett 2004 68-71, 205-7.

<sup>80</sup> The latter was argued by Stupperich 1985 and Bassett 1996, 2004.

and fellow-Egyptian Colluthus belongs to exactly this period and context, and that the chronicle of John Malalas, which was also taking shape in the early years of the sixth century, devotes a disproportionate amount of space to the story of Troy.<sup>81</sup>

Colluthus' poem is of almost identical length to that of Christodorus – the former just under four hundred lines, the latter slightly over – and Jeffreys has also observed that, rather than presenting a straightforward narrative, Colluthus' poem uses the epyllion technique and offers 'a series of set-piece, highly visual scenes which fall short of a full narrative and demand the complicity of the audience to appreciate his purpose'.<sup>82</sup> This exactly matches my view of Christodorus' poem, which Silvio Bär has argued is itself an epyllion.<sup>83</sup> Both Christodorus and Colluthus hailed originally from Egypt and, although most of their works are lost, their respective notices in the tenth-century Suda lexicon indicate that they belonged to the group identified fifty years ago by Alan Cameron as 'wandering poets', well-educated itinerants who moved from one city to another composing occasional poetry to meet the demands of patrons and to earn a living.<sup>84</sup> Both Christodorus and Colluthus also wrote more overtly panegyric works, now lost – in Christodorus' case a five-book *Isaurica* on Anastasius' Isaurian campaigns (which ended in 497/8), while Colluthus composed a *Persica* (of unspecified length), usually associated with the Persian campaign that concluded in 506.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Jeffreys 2006, esp. 128-33. Jonathan Bardill reminds me that Malalas is the earliest source to mention that Constantine acquired the Palladium, originally from Troy, and buried it under his column at the foundation of Constantinople: Malalas 13.7; see further Bardill 2012, 252.

<sup>82</sup> Jeffreys 2006, 132.

<sup>83</sup> Bär 2012. A further epyllion from this time, but with no known connection to Anastasius or Constantinople, is Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* (343 lines): see, e.g., Hopkinson 1994, 136-40; Hollis 2006, 154f.

<sup>84</sup> Cameron 1965, revised 2016; Jeffreys 2006, 131.

<sup>85</sup> This might indicate that Colluthus succeeded Christodorus as court poet to Anastasius: Tissoni (2000, 22) argues that Christodorus' silence about Anastasius' Persian expedition of 503-6 suggests that he wrote before it happened. However, Tissoni goes on to argue (2000, 22-36) that Christodorus' career continued for another twenty years: he dates Christodorus' two epigrams on John of Epidamnus (*AP* 7. 697-8) after 517 and postulates his authorship of

The comparable and compact length of the two poems is compatible with the view that they were tailored for performance. We are well informed about other slightly later poems that were certainly performed: John of Gaza's *Description of the cosmic painting in the winter bath*, recently placed in the first quarter of the sixth century by Delphine Lauritzen,<sup>86</sup> is divided into two sections of 360 and 342 lines respectively, each preceded by an iambic prologue, the second of which makes clear that the speaker returns after an interlude. Paul the Silentiary's *Description of Hagia Sophia*, precisely dated to January 563, begins with two iambic prologues with a total length of 134 lines; there follow 275 hexameters, then a further six-line iambic passage marked a break in the performance before the final section of 612 hexameters.<sup>87</sup> George of Pisidia's *Persian Expedition*, entirely written in iambic trimeters to celebrate the 622 campaign of the Emperor Heraclius, is divided into three 'hearings' (ἄκροάσεις), respectively of 252, 375 and 460 lines.<sup>88</sup>

In the case of Colluthus and Christodorus, however, no iambic prologues survive, though they were certainly the norm for occasional poetry of

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AP 9.656, which he locates after 515, and of AP 1.10 on Anicia Juliana's church of St Polyeuktos. While agreeing that these works have linguistic affinities (Whitby 2003), I am not confident of the attribution of AP 1.10 to Christodorus (Whitby 2006). For further dating arguments for Christodorus, based on the relationship of his poem with the Porphyrius epigrams, see Cameron 1973, 151-4; on his relationship with the panegyrics of Procopius of Gaza and Priscian, see Tissoni 2000, 21-2.

<sup>86</sup> Lauritzen 2011, 64, citing her unpublished thesis (2009), 2015, XII-XVIII. Cameron 1993 argued that the poem referred to a winter bath in Antioch and must predate the 526 earthquake there, but Lauritzen (2015, XXII-XXIV) argues convincingly that the bath described by John was in Gaza. See also Renaut (= Lauritzen) 2005 for discussion of John's poem alongside *ekphrases* by his close contemporaries Procopius of Gaza and Choricus, stressing the reality of the performance and of the artworks and buildings described.

<sup>87</sup> See further Whitby 1985.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Cameron 2004, 346-7. The similar length of Christodorus' poem to sections of these works suggests that it is likely to be more or less complete. There are small variations between the Palatine and Planudean versions, but Bassett's hypothesis (1996, 495; 2004, 53, 55) that difficulties can be explained by positing lacunae is unconvincing. See n. 77 above for the view that the end of the poem is complete and below on the statue of Deiphobus as an appropriate opening for the *ekphrasis*.

this period.<sup>89</sup> Alan Cameron has proposed that poems which do not have the typical iambic prologue designed to put the audience in a favourable mood were ‘put into circulation without a public performance’.<sup>90</sup> This might substantiate the view expressed by some recent critics that Colluthus’ and Christodorus’ poems were what Jeffreys describes as ‘master pieces’, that is show pieces designed to demonstrate their composer’s skills.<sup>91</sup> However, as early as 1881 Baumgarten suggested that an iambic prologue might have been lost when Christodorus’ poem was incorporated in the *Greek Anthology*.<sup>92</sup> In my view, it remains an attractive hypothesis, whether or not it ever had an iambic prologue, that Christodorus’ poem, with its open panegyric of the emperor, prominently positioned towards the end of the poem (398-406), was performed, perhaps, as suggested above,<sup>93</sup> to mark a refurbishment of the Zeuxippus baths or rearrangement of the statue collection, typical of the period.<sup>94</sup> Statues tended to be concentrated in central parts of the baths, and in some cases were moved there from elsewhere in town: such relocation could include endowing statues with new meaning.<sup>95</sup> If Christodorus’ poem marked such an event, then a showy celebration might appropriately distract attention from possible difficult circumstances, such as down-sizing the Zeuxippus baths, much as Paul the Silentiary’s poem on Hagia Sophia was composed to celebrate Justinian’s rebuild after the dome of his first church collapsed following an earthquake. And Christodorus’ re-imagining of the identities of some of the statues would be an appropriate rejuvenation (using Jacobs’ term) at such a moment. Recitation was in late antiquity indubitably the major medium for literary dissemination of occasional works such as an *ekphrasis*, and

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<sup>89</sup> The seminal work is Viljamaa 1968; also Cameron 1970.

<sup>90</sup> Cameron 2004, 347.

<sup>91</sup> Jeffreys 2006, 131; cf. Bär 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Baumgarten 1881, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Sec. 1.

<sup>94</sup> There is considerable archaeological evidence for bath refurbishments elsewhere in the late antique period, e.g. Hadrianic baths at Ephesus (Smith 2007), baths of Scholastica at Ephesus (Yegül 1992, 291); baths of Faustina at Miletus (Bol 2011: 87); the statues at Aphrodisias were rearranged throughout the Byzantine period (Ortwin Dally, lecture in Oxford, June 2013).

<sup>95</sup> Marvin 1983, 377-8; Jacobs 2010, 271-274, citing her remark on p. 271.

Christodorus' lively interaction with his subjects is ideally suited to *viva voce* presentation.<sup>96</sup>

Where then might Christodorus have presented his poem? It is sometimes assumed that his audience was led in a kind of tour around the Zeuxippus collection, pausing before each statue.<sup>97</sup> Certainly the complex was large enough to accommodate a crowd, but the idea is surely impractical – groups are slow-moving and often fall behind their guide. Performance in a chamber or outdoor space of the capacious Zeuxippon – ideally that in which the statues were displayed – before a seated audience is a more practical and plausible scenario.<sup>98</sup> We know that Paul the Silentiary began reciting his poem on Hagia Sophia in the imperial palace, but that after the first iambic prologue the recitation moved to the patriarchal palace.<sup>99</sup> And indeed Ruth Webb makes the salutary observation that the notion of a tour was fundamental to the *progymnasmata* definitions of *ekphrasis* as a λόγος περιηγηματικός, literally 'a speech that leads around', though the expression is usually weakly translated as 'a descriptive speech'.<sup>100</sup> She further notes that this 'tour' often moved from outside to the inside of a building, an observation which is consonant with Christodorus describing first the statue of Deiphobus, who is said to be poised as he was when he met Menelaus rushing at him 'in front of his house which was being pillaged' (*AP* 2.3-4). This opening picture also signals the focus on

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. n. 86 on the Gaza *ekphrases*.

<sup>97</sup> As Philostratus in the *Imagines* leads his audience on a tour of his host's art gallery in Naples – but this scenario has often been thought fictional.

<sup>98</sup> So Kaldellis 2007, 369. Renaut 2005 argues that the Gaza *ekphrases* were performed *in situ*. If she is right, this would provide a parallel for the recitation of an *ekphrasis* in a bathhouse, since John of Gaza's poem describes a cosmic representation in the winter bath. We know of other crowd-pulling events staged in the Zeuxippon, the trial of Isocasius for paganism, *Chron. Pasch.* 595-6 Bonn (s.a. 467) and an unsuccessful attempt by the monothelite monk Polychronius to demonstrate to the fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council his ability to raise men from the dead (see Mango 1959, 39); cf. also the summons to the Zeuxippon of the patriarch Paul prior to the announcement of his deposition (*Socr. Eccl. Hist.* 2.16).

<sup>99</sup> Whitby 1985.

<sup>100</sup> Webb 2011, 27.

Trojan figures, many of them connected with the fall of Troy, who are chiefly clustered in the centre of the poem.<sup>101</sup>

Were the statues described by Christodorus identical with those installed in the baths by Constantine? We cannot know, although, as others have noted, Christodorus specifically alludes in some cases to the bronze of the statues, and elsewhere to their sparkle, suggesting that they were made of bronze, as recorded for the Constantinian collection, and as suggested to the 1920s excavators by the statue bases discovered.<sup>102</sup> But archaeological studies have shown that bathhouse statue programmes were constantly rearranged, and new pieces added:<sup>103</sup> Christodorus is interpreting for his audience what was visible to them in the early sixth century, by which time the identification of many pieces might well have been puzzling.

The literary background is crucial to this poem which, however, relates to an archaeologically attested provenance at a particular historical moment: all three elements need to be balanced in any attempt to interpret it. There are many uncertainties and doubtless irresolvable problems: what I have tried to do is to suggest a possible framework in which to explore it.

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<sup>101</sup> It is in my view unwise to attempt to reconstruct the precise arrangement of the statues from Christodorus' poem, as Stupperich 1982 attempted to do; Bär (2012, 453) suggests an arrangement in 'permeable clusters'.

<sup>102</sup> Bassett 1996, 100, n. 27; Kaldellis 2007, 362-4; Casson 1929, 19-20.

<sup>103</sup> Note 94 above.

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