



SENSING HERMAPHRODITUS IN THE DIONYSIAN THEATRE GARDEN

Brittany DeMone and Lisa A. Hughes

Abstract

*This essay highlights new perspectives on the deity Hermaphroditus' role in select Pompeian garden settings. In particular, it suggests that Hermaphroditus needs to be seen as a convivial participant in Dionysian ritualistic and theatrical performances. Situating the deity in Dionysus' cultic retinue (e.g. alongside maenads, satyrs/pan, and Silenus) opens the way for a multivalent, lived, sensory approach to these intersexed representations. Hermaphroditus' role as a convivial participant is especially evident within the contexts of Pompeian dining and the theatrical performances (pantomime) that took place in or near garden settings known as the 'Dionysian Theatre Garden'. These theatre gardens contained architectural features, visual imagery, and botanical remains that were well-suited to the Dionysian style performances which often featured as part of the Roman dining experience. Ovid's narrative of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in *Metamorphoses* (4.274–388), possibly staged for theatrical performances in these houses, provides a useful case study to demonstrate a performative fusion of role-playing and theatrical narratives, which relied heavily upon visual, aural, and olfactory responses.*

Keywords: Pompeii, Dionysus, Hermaphroditus, garden, pantomime, theatre

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Banner image: Detail from a garden painting, from the House of the Golden Bracelet, Pompeii (VI.17.42), collection of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. (Photo: Fine Art Images/Heritage Images via Getty Images)

SENSING HERMAPHRODITUS IN THE DIONYSIAN THEATRE GARDEN¹

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This essay explores select visual representations of the deity Hermaphroditus that may have served as theatrical props in Pompeian domestic garden settings. It demonstrates the benefits of a more multivalent, lived, sensory approach to these representations, especially when they are set in or near the 'Dionysian Theatre Garden'. Here, ritually themed theatrical performances included Hermaphroditus, Dionysus, and Dionysus' cultic retinue (e.g. maenads, satyrs/Pan, and Silenus). Within the 'Dionysian Theatre Garden', Hermaphroditus' intersexed characteristics were fused with sensorial Dionysian attributes such as the *tympanum*, *kithara*, and saffron robe. Alongside the material evidence from Pompeian houses, the essay draws on Ovid's story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in *Metamorphoses* (4.274–388), teasing out both a ritualistic explanation and a performative fusion of role-playing and theatrical narratives (e.g. pantomime) that rely heavily upon the senses.

To better ground Hermaphroditus' sensorial relationship with Dionysus, it is necessary to identify Dionysus' cultic presence in Pompeii. In general, Dionysus' ancient Mediterranean presence had a connection with fertility festivals and mystery rites, which in its early stages included men, women, and children, who engaged in rites under the influence of wine and dance (Konstantinou, 2018, pp. 120–1; Nilsson, 1953, p. 179; Dodds, 1951, p. 76). These rites likely came to southern Italy during the fourth century BCE (Burkert, 1987, p. 22; Nilsson, 1953, p. 193). In contrast to the cult's large-scale appeal in the Hellenistic period, during the Roman empire worship seems to have changed to appeal to smaller groups (Gordon, 2017, pp. 281–2; Jaccottet, 2003, pp. 123–46).

Evidence for smaller-scale Dionysian worship at Pompeii is found in a sanctuary setting outside the southern wall. The sanctuary includes a Doric-style temple with dining areas and garden plantings

in honour of deities related to Dionysus' local manifestations, Liber and Libera (Bielfeldt, 2007, pp. 323–9). Initially excavated in 1947–48, near the chapel of Sant'Abbondio, the sanctuary seems to have flourished from the third century BCE until the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE (Van Andringa, 2013, p. 1). Wilhelmina Jashemski's findings revealed masonry benches and vine plantings at the forefront of the temple, which had been used for dining purposes (1979, pp. 157–8, fig. 244, Carroll, 2003, p. 70). In 2008, further archaeobotanical analyses exposed plantings associated with Dionysus. These plantings included vines, pomegranates, and figs near the masonry benches at the forefront of the temple and the *schola* (horseshoe-shaped bench) on the temple's southern end (Zech-Matterne & Oueslati, 2013, p. 1). Visual representations strongly suggest that the temple was dedicated to Dionysus and Venus/Ariadne/Libera (the city's patron deity). For example, the pediment of the temple bears a relief sculpture depicting the convivial reclining figures of the deities (Bielfeldt, 2007, pp. 322–8). In this polychromatic relief (Fig. 4.1), Dionysus/Liber holds the *kantharos* in his right hand and a bunch of grapes in his left hand. To his right (the viewer's left), there appear a *thyrsus* and tambourine which allude to the ritualistic dances associated with Bacchic rites. Moving further to the viewer's right, Venus/Libera appears, with her (now-damaged) head veiled. This convivial scene may represent the marriage of the two deities (Swetnam-Burland, 2000, p. 61, fig. 7.3). Through a comparison of other marriage scenes between Dionysus and Venus in Etruscan and Greek worlds, Stéphanie Wyler (2013) dates the relief to between the fourth and third centuries BCE. Eros/Priapus (on the viewer's bottom right) and Silenus and a panther (on the viewer's bottom left) also figure in the scene. In this instance, cultic practice in the form of ritual dining went hand in hand with a sacred landscape in a rural setting. The placement of a Dionysian sanctuary within a rural context, also fitted well with the region's primary agricultural product: the grape. In turn, this product was a staple in convivial settings (Swetnam-Burland, 2000, p. 65).

Although no sanctuary of Dionysus has yet been found within the city walls, it is safe to say that conviviality, wine, and Dionysian imagery set the stage for the deity's presence within Pompeii's residential settings. The standard reference for residential representations of Pompeian Bacchic rites and performances is the mid-first century BCE fresco cycle in Room 5 of the suburban Villa of the Mysteries (see Jones' essay in this issue). On the room's eastern central panel appears a damaged fresco representation

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Figure 4.1: Dionysus and Venus/Ariadne, Tuff, third century BCE, S. Abbondio. (Author's photo, with permission of the Ministero Cultura – Parco Archeologico di Pompei)

of seated male and female figures, who have been attributed to Dionysus and Ariadne. Staged on a low platform, mythological figures of Dionysus' retinue (Silenus, satyrs) also find themselves amongst a Roman bride and her entourage. Scholars have traditionally maintained that this scene marked the performance of a Bacchic rite (e.g. Gazda, 2000, pp.1–4), although this interpretation is not without its problems. No artefacts found *in situ* suggest that rites in honour of Dionysus took place in this area (Swetnam-Burland, 2000, pp.68–9). A more recent identification sees the room as an *oecus* or *triclinium*, reserved for guests to view theatrical performances (Longfellow, 2000, p.33). Additionally, Molly Swetnam-Burland (2000, p.69) argues that the cycle evoked 'reflection and contemplation of the nature of the god, his retinue, and local religious practices associated with the worship of the deity'. Such a setting could have appealed to a small group which may have practiced Dionysian rituals, enjoyed the

theatrical performance, or engaged in a combination of the two practices.

These themes of reflection and contemplation serve as useful points of departure for considering how sensory perception plays out in cultic, convivial, and theatrical contexts. Central to this is a recognition that the body as a whole, not just the brain, is integral to reflection and contemplation (Day, 2013, p.6). Moreover, multisensory approaches acknowledge that not only the body, but also 'animals, objects, architectures, spaces, and landscapes' play formidable collective roles in understanding the ancient world (Betts, 2017, p.2).

To tease out the possible sounds, smells, tastes, and sights audience and ritual participants may have experienced as part of the convivial experience, it is important to have some understanding of both the 'Dionysian Theatre Garden' and Hermaphroditus' role within it. The term 'Dionysian Theatre Garden' does not figure in the ancient literary sources, but is a term



(Ed. Alinari) N.° 11994. POMPEI – Casa detta degli Amorini d'Oro.

Figure 4.2: Archival Photo, House of the Golden Cupids (VI.16.7,38), first century CE Pompeii. (Photo: Alinari Archives/Art Resource, NY (ART39880))

constructed out of convenience to demonstrate the following six features in select Pompeian homes.²

The first feature is a garden peristyle; the second, dining areas³ located in or near the garden; the third, a stage/raised platform (temporary or permanent) which could have hosted theatrical performances; the fourth, sculpture (relief, in the round), frescoes, mosaics, and other artefacts related to the Dionysian mythic cycle in or near the garden; the fifth, fragrant and visually pleasing plantings (Draycott, 2019) or representations of plantings symbolically associated with Dionysus, and finally water features. Twenty-two of the twenty-four residences analysed for this study exhibit at least any three of the six features (most commonly the peristyle garden, Dionysian decoration, and water features) of the Dionysian Theatre Garden.⁴ Secondary scholarship has tended to opt for single rather than multivalent functions of space in these garden areas. For example, Katharine T. von Stackelberg (2009b, p.88) has noted that the inclusion of Dionysian imagery is not indicative of cult practice per se; rather, she sees it as having a more practical, convivial function that ties into activities within the home. Alternatively, scholars have pointed to the suggestive theatrical nature of Dionysian visual representations that are primarily cultic (Tronchin,

2012, p.269). It is safe to argue that one function does not surpass the other: instead, because of the nature of ancient theatre, cultic and theatrical performances go hand in hand.

The visual representation of Dionysus and his retinue in or near Pompeian dining areas could also do more than act as a subtle reference to the theatre. This Dionysian cultic and theatrical relationship also invokes a highly sensorial performance that enabled pantomime performers to take on the roles of deities who spoke and sang (Lada-Richards, 2013, pp.111–13). The audiences of these performances would likely understand traditional Dionysian doctrine and enjoy theatrical production, primarily through the lens of *mimesis* (Fernández, 2013, p.194–7; Huskinson, 2008, pp.91–2). *Mimesis* in theatrical contexts involves the projection of oneself into an adopted persona through imitation in a type of performance (acting, dancing) (Mueller, 2016; Lawler, 1927, pp.74–5). For example, dancing figures engaging in a dramatic performance of Dionysian ritual appear on Etruscan *cistae* as female performers (*mimae*), who imitate the roles of Dionysus' *thiasy* (satyrs, nymphs) (Wiseman, 2000, pp.283–6). Similar representations of ritualistic dramatic performances that connect multivalently to Dionysus' *thiasus* appear in other areas of Italy and in Greece (Håkansson 2010, pp.132, 134–5). Through the performers' vivid gestures and postures, these mimetic dances can contribute to a sensorial understanding of select Pompeian homes' interior landscapes. It could be argued that the Dionysian representations serve as props in the garden backdrop for actual cultic and theatrical performances. A multivalent approach, like that adopted by Albert Henrichs (2013, p.57), identifies 'the various provinces of Dionysus – the wine, ritual madness, the theatre, and afterlife'; taking account of the god's role in each of the areas 'is not only the safest course of action but arguably also the most productive.' Dionysus, therefore, takes on both cultic and theatrical personae. This multifaceted reading has a vital impact on other mythological figures, in this case, Hermaphroditus, who figure into the Dionysian narrative and pantomime performances.

Dionysus and Hermaphroditus

While other scholars have superficially commented on Hermaphroditus' correlation with Dionysus and his entourage in the material record, they often fail to pursue how this relationship is interpreted (von Stackelberg, 2014; pp.408–9; Oehmke, 2004, pp.19–20; Delcourt, 1961, pp.57–8; Kieseritzky, 1882, pp.266–71). Visual depictions of Hermaphroditus date from as early as the fourth century BCE (Ajootian, 1997, p.221;

2 These six features derive from the following houses: II.2.2 House of Octavio Quartio/Loreius Tibertinus; III.4.b; House of Iphigenia/Pinarius Cerialis; V.1.26 House of L. Caecilius Iucundus; VI.9.6,7, House of the Dioscuri; VI.7.18 House of Adonis; VI.9.2, 13 House of Meleager; VI.15.1 House of the Vettii (x2); VIII.4.4 House of Holconius Rufus; IX.1.22, 29 House of M. Epidius Sabinus, IX.8.6 House of the Centenary.

3 For example, these include rooms such as *triclinia*, *oeci*, *cenationes*, *cenacula*. We acknowledge the problematic nature of these terms concerning function and space; see Leach (2004) and Allison (1993).

4 It is vital to acknowledge that based on the lack of documented or preserved remains, examples such as the House of Euxinus (I.11.12) and the House of Diadumenus (VI.12.26) are included in the analysis. The following residences feature Hermaphroditus in the Dionysian Theatre Garden: House of Apollo Citharist (I.4.5), House of the Fruit (I.9.5), House of Menander (I.10.4), House of Octavio Quartio/Loreius Tiburtinus (II.2.2), House of Pinarius Cerialis/Iphigenia (III.4.b), House of the Epigrams (V.1.18), House of Caecilius Iucundus (V.1.26), House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V.4.a), House of the Vestals (VI.1.7), House of the Wounded Adonis (VI.7.18), House of Meleager (VI.9.2), House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6), House of the Vettii (VI.15.1), House of Tryptolemus (VII.7.5), House of Holconius Rufus (VIII.4.4), House of M. Epidius Rufus (IX.1.20), House of M. Epidius Sabinus (IX.1.22), House of M. Lucretius/Suonatrici (IX.3.5), House of Poppaeus Primus (IX.5.11, 13), House of the Centenary (IX.8.3), Villa Matrone/Villa Contraro Bottaro, Villa of Diomedes (HG24).

Oehmke, 2004, p.15). This date also coincides with the emergence of both the display of the female nude body (i.e. Praxiteles' Aphrodite Knidos) and the iconographic transformation of the effeminate beardless Dionysus (Berg, 2007 pp.67–8). Notably, the intersexed god Hermaphroditus is not introduced into Dionysus' entourage until the second century BCE (Oehmke, 2004, pp.19–20). It is during this later period that we begin to see marble and terracotta figurines of the dancing Hermaphroditus (Oehmke, 2004, cats.104–7, 109–13, 117, 119), as well as marble relief sculptures and marble kraters that depict Hermaphroditus dancing among Dionysus' *thiasus* (Oehmke, 2004, cats.102, 103, 114–16, 118). In first-century BCE Pompeian wall paintings we see a continuation of the display of Dionysian iconographic features. The wall paintings of Hermaphroditus preserve these juxtapositions that would have likely been visible in sculptural groups, before the sculptures were separated and decontextualised. In the frescoes, Hermaphroditus shares many Dionysian traits – namely the *thiasus*, attire and attributes – which reminded the viewer of the intersexed deity's link to Dionysus and Dionysian space.

Members of Dionysus' entourage who frequently accompany Hermaphroditus include satyrs/Pan, Silenus, and maenads. In two very similar wall paintings found in *triclinia* from the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1) and the House of Epidius Sabinus (IX.1.22) (Fig. 4.3) Silenus appears in the company of Hermaphroditus. In both scenes, Hermaphroditus is seated with Silenus positioned directly behind him. Hermaphroditus lifts up his⁵ yellow chiton to expose an erect phallus. Silenus, wearing vibrant red and a wreathed crown grasps Hermaphroditus' left wrist and extends his own right arm with an open palm. In both scenes, the inclusion in the scene of foliage and a background architectural feature indicates a sacro-idyllic Dionysian landscape. Foliage and sacro-idyllic architecture also appear in a fresco from the House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6) (Fig. 4.4). In the fresco from the House of Epidius Sabinus, we see the addition of a maenad identified by her *nebris* (animal skin) draped around her torso and ivy crown. She stands slightly off to the side of Hermaphroditus and Silenus, observing their interaction. Her Dionysian association is reinforced by the *kantharos* cup which she holds in her right hand, as well as by the *thyrsus* and

tympanum in her left. Another *thyrsus* appears atop of the architectural feature in the background. The *thyrsus* is a clear Dionysian symbol, which makes Dionysus present in the scene, even though the god's body itself is not represented. The *kantharos*, distinguished by its high handles extending above the lip of the vessel, was a type of drinking cup commonly used to hold wine for drinking and rituals. The *kantharos* could also symbolise banqueting and is often held by Dionysus or his representatives. Moreover, these cups frequently bore Dionysian themes.

Returning to the fresco from the House of Epidius Sabinus, Helbig (1868, nr.1371) suggests the *kantharos* contained *satyrion* (an aphrodisiac drink), which was to be used as a sexual stimulant by either Hermaphroditus or Silenus. Given the Dionysian nature of the scene, however, the cup might also have been understood to contain wine and to indicate either ritual or banqueting. The maenad, as an observing participant holding Dionysian implements, is also found in wall paintings from the House of Holconius Rufus (VIII.4.4), where she holds a *thyrsus* and *tympanum*, and from the House of the Centenary (IX.8.6) where the maenad is again seen in the background holding a *tympanum* standing next to an ithyphallic herm.

The *tympanum* leads us back to the theme of aural sensory perceptions, discussed in this journal issue by Kamila Wyslucha and Mirco Mungari. The image of the *tympanum* evokes the drumming that took place during Dionysian ritual dances (e.g. Euripides *Bacchae* 120–34). Ovid emphasises the noise of the *tympanum* in two passages in Book Four of the *Metamorphoses*. At the beginning of Book Four (*Met.* 4.28–30), Ovid highlights the noise of the festivities: '...glad shouts of youths and cries of women echo round, with drum of tambourine (*tympanum*), the cymbals' clash, and the shrill piping of the flute'.⁶ Then, when Alcithoë finishes her story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, we again see the emergence of Bacchic clamour, which signals the arrival of Dionysus: 'Alcithoë, was done...when suddenly unseen timbrels (*tympana*) sounded harshly in their ears, and flutes, with curving horns, and tinkling cymbals...' (*Met.* 4.388–92). Intriguingly, in artworks depicting Hermaphroditus, the *tympanum* is never played by Hermaphroditus. Rather, it is either displayed on the ground as if Hermaphroditus has just concluded a ritual activity and has placed the instrument down as he rests. The fresco from the Ixion room of the House of the Vettii, for example, presents Hermaphroditus reclining and leaning on a rectangular architectural

5 Following von Stackelberg (2014) and Åshede (2020), gender-neutral pronouns (ze/hir) refers to Hermaphroditus, except for when discussing the god's pre-transformation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. For a discussion on using gender-neutral pronouns for Hermaphroditus, see Surtees & Dyer (2020, pp.19–20).

6 All translations are from Miller (1977).



Figure 4.3: Hermaphroditus, Silenus and Maenad, c.50–79 CE, fresco, 50 × 50cm. House of Epidius Sabinus (IX.1.22,29), Pompeii. Now MANN 27874. (Photo:Vanni Archive/ ArtResource, NY (ART383521))



Figure 4.4: Hermaphroditus and Satyr/Pan, c.62–70 CE, fresco, 91 × 143cm. House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6), Pompeii. Now MANN 27700. (Photo:Vanni Archive/Art Resource, NY (ART383521))



Figure 4.5: Fresco depicting Hermaphroditus and Silenus, mid-late first century CE, 44 × 38cm. House of Caecilius Iucundus (V.I.26), Pompeii. Now MANN 111213. (Photo: Giorgio Albano, with permission of the Ministero Cultura – Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli)

feature (Oehmke, 2004, cat.162). A *tympanum* is placed at the end below Hermaphroditus' elbow, where water vessels commonly appear on reclining nymph motifs. Alternatively, if the *tympanum* is being played, it is held by Silenus. This is demonstrated in the fresco from the House of Caecilius Iucundus (Fig. 4.5).

A second instrument that features prominently in the wall paintings of Hermaphroditus in Pompeii is the *kithara* (lyre). Three wall paintings from the House of the Centenary (IX.8.6) (Oehmke, 2004, cat.187), the House of Holconius Rufus (VIII.4.4), and the House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V.4.a) (PPM III, fig.110.) display similar scenes where Silenus, recognisable by his potbelly, bald head, beard, and the red drapery (cf. BM inv. 1899,0215.1, discussed below) wrapped around his waist, actively strums the instrument as he accompanies Hermaphroditus.

These scenes are reminiscent of the Dionysian frieze from the Villa of Mysteries where Silenus also plays the

lyre (Ling, 1991, pl.IXB) and a fresco from Boscoreale now housed in the British Museum (inv.1899,0215.1) that shows Dionysus/Bacchus pouring wine for a panther at his feet and leaning on Silenus, who plays a *kithara*. The fresco from the House of Holconius Rufus includes a small Eros playing the *aulos* (double flute). Athenaeus (*Deip.* 14.618) quoting Ephippus (*Merchandise* fr. 7) comments on the pairing of the lyre and flute: 'For the music produced on the pipes and the lyre, by boy, is an integral part of the entertainment we provide...'. The *kithara* adds an aural element to the fresco scenes. Music was an essential part of festivals, rituals, and religious ceremonies as well as theatre and banqueting. The multiple scenes of cupids and psyches at an outdoor garden banquet from the triclinium of the House of M. Lucretius (IX.3.5 – a house filled with Dionysian and theatrical themes) include a series of performative scenes where a psyche is playing the *kithara* (MANN inv.9206), two scenes that feature

dancing cupids and psyches (MANN inv.9207, 9208), and another scene of Cupid playing the *aulos* (MANN inv.9191).

One type of performance singled out by Lucian was pantomime dance (*De Salt.* 26, 63, 68, 72, 83) because it featured the *kithara* for musical accompaniment. Karl Toepfer (2019, p.133), in his examination of the lyre, describes the instrument as ‘feminine’, as it was primarily studied by Roman women and was a favoured instrument of Greek *hetaerae*. Referring to Sallust’s first-century BCE criticism of Sempronia for her skills in dancing and playing the lyre (*Cat.* 25.2), Toepfer notes that the lyre was an appropriate instrument for pantomime because of its ‘implied “feminization”’ (2019, p.133). An ivory plaque (c. fifth-sixth century CE) found in Trier (now in Berlin SMB inv.2497) portrays a female performer identified as a pantomime dancer who wears a belted chiton, and holds a lyre in the left hand, and three masks in the right.

The inclusion in Pompeian frescoes of Silenus playing an instrument, whether the *kithara* or *tympanum*, indicates that these scenes relate to both an auditory imagination and lived space where the instruments were performed. The frescoes from the House of the Centenary, Holconius Rufus, M. Lucretius Fronto, and House of Caecilius Iucundus were all found in identifiable dining spaces, the last three of which were all situated directly off a peristyle garden. Although Hermaphroditus is not traditionally considered a member of Dionysus’ *thiasus*, these images indicate that Hermaphroditus was a participant. Furthermore, Hermaphroditus occupies the central space of the scene, indicating his importance and authority in these performative settings.

One attribute that has yet to be linked to Hermaphroditus, and which has ties to Dionysus, is the saffron (*crocus/krokotos*) robe. This object has strong sensorial allusions of sight and smell. Saffron yellow was perceived as a feminine colour in antiquity, in part because of its associations with young unmarried women, seduction, female ritual, and, by extension, a change of identity (Juv., *Oxford Fragment* 21–25, 271; Medda, 2017, p.139, n.8; Benda-Weber, 2014, pp.132–33; Goff, 2004, pp.110–11, 113; Perusino, 2000, pp.521–6). Meanwhile, when worn by men, the colour often signalled effeminacy (Ar. *Thesm.* 138. 940–45; Olson, 2014, p.198, n.115; Olson, 2008, pp.12–13). Dionysus was often associated with both the sights and scents of saffron (Ov. *Met.* 4.393) and wore a saffron-coloured robe (Ar. *Ranae*, 42–56; Sen. *Oed.* 421; Nonnus, *Dion.* 14.159–60; Cole, 2007, p.328). Theatres and performers also utilised saffron. For example, the spice was sprinkled in the Greek theatre (Prop. 4.1.6; Mart.

5.25.7–8; Jones, 1991, p.186, n.2), and Apuleius (*Apol.* 13.5) associates the saffron robe with pantomime. Erika Simon (1961, pp.111–72) links saffron-coloured robes with a blue/purple hem worn by several female figures and the Dionysian mysteries in her examination of the Dionysiac frieze from the Villa of Mysteries. A fresco from the Farnesina Villa now in the Museo Nazionale Romano depicts similar clothing on Leucothea, the nymph who breastfed the infant Dionysus (National Museum of the Terme inv.1118). Saffron, therefore, had semantic ties to both the theatre, cult of Dionysus, and effeminacy.

While it has often been noted that Dionysus and his followers wear a saffron robe, this has not been the case with Hermaphroditus. The most striking juxtaposition of this display appears in the House of the Vettii. One of the fresco panels in the Ixion Room depicts Ariadne’s discovery by Dionysus and his *thiasus* (Fredrick, 1995, fig.4). Here, Ariadne wears a saffron yellow garment with a blue hem. In turn, a second panel from along the same wall above a doorway shows the reclining Hermaphroditus in a similar yellow garment with a blue trim that frames his upper exposed torso and legs (Oehmke, 2004, cat.162). Hermaphroditus also wears a saffron yellow garment in several other Pompeian wall paintings. The semantic meanings of saffron yellow discussed above indicate why this might be an appropriate colour for Hermaphroditus, both because of his links to Dionysus, and the androgynous gender-blurring traits which connect him to both women and men.

One further link between Hermaphroditus and Dionysus is found in the most frequently portrayed *thiasus* member – the satyr/Pan (hybrid goat-man). Three Campanian black-glazed terracotta Caledonian *phialai* (bowls for pouring liquid offering) from the third century BCE provide evidence that Hermaphroditus struggling with a satyr or youthlike figure was already adopted in the local Italic tradition. This appearance, moreover, coincides with the period of adoption of Hermaphroditus into the Dionysian sphere. The *phialai* (British Museum inv.1873.0820.431; MFA 2000.843; Dresden SKD inv. Dr.496) portray reliefs of Hermaphroditus kneeling on a cushioned rocky plinth and pulling a muscular figure, often interpreted as a satyr, towards him. The raised right arm behind the muscular figure’s head and the left knee already raised on the bed is synonymous with the depictions of the later sculptural Berlin-Torlonia motif types (LIMC nos. 64c-j; Museo Torlonia inv.151) of Hermaphroditus and a satyr. In the background of these *phialai* cups (viewer’s left) appears a small statuette of Dionysus standing on a pedestal holding a *kantharos* in the right

hand, a *thyrsus* in the left and a wreathed crown. No sculptural group of Hermaphroditus with a satyr has been found in Pompeii. However, a marble statue of Hermaphroditus reclining on his back does appear in the garden of the House of Octavius Quartio/Loreius Tiburtinus (II.2.2). The lifted robe pulled away above Hermaphroditus's phallus, suggests that the viewer replaces the role of the satyr. This piece is an example of where performers could easily adapt sculpture within their theatrical narrative and use the artwork as a prop. In the larger corpus of Hermaphroditus sculptural groups, Hermaphroditus can play either the role of the 'victim' or 'sexual aggressor'. In the wall paintings from Pompeii, however, this is not always crystal clear. Pompeian wall-paintings reveal two categories of Hermaphroditus imagery, which we might refer to as concealed or revealed. For example, frontally depicted representations of Hermaphroditus are easily identifiable because of the exposure of female breasts and male phallus. Scenes such as the one found in the Ixion Room of the House of the Vettii (Oehmke, 2004, cat. 162) clearly outline Hermaphroditus in the role of the sleeping figure being revealed by a satyr/pan figure who raises his arm in the gesture of discovery. This image is even more striking when contrasted with the scene of the discovery of Ariadne (Fredrick, 1995, fig.4) to the left of the image of Hermaphroditus. As noted earlier, there is a sartorial similarity between the yellow and blue-trimmed dresses that both figures wear. Further comparisons and contrasts can be made: for instance, the fact that both figures are reclining (the distinction being Hermaphroditus is portrayed frontally and Ariadne from behind); a satyr lifts up its robes and raises its arm; and, finally, the addition of the *tympanum* located in both of the scenes.

Von Stackelberg (2014, p.405) categorises scenes of the satyr/pan figure either approaching a sleeping Hermaphroditus or wrestling with him as 'discovery/awakening' scenes. She focuses on five of these discovery scenes which all portray Hermaphroditus frontally. The expansion of this corpus includes depictions where Hermaphroditus' identity is also concealed. These discovery scenes portray a satyr either approaching a sleeping 'female' figure or wrestling with a 'female' figure whose frontal torso and pubic region are hidden. Instead, the buttocks or backside of the figure are revealed to the viewer. In sculpture such as the Dresden motif type, particularly the Villa of Oplontis example (Fig. 4.6), the viewer visually and physically interacts with the piece by circumambulating the artwork. However, this is not feasible with a wall painting. A fresco from an unknown location in Pompeii (MANN I 10878) (Clarke, 1998,

p.52, fig. 13) is a pictorial representation of the sculptural Dresden motif. Hermaphroditus wrestles with a satyr but the scene emphasises the backside of Hermaphroditus rather than the front. In this example, because there is a sculptural tradition that coincides with the fresco, we can be confident that the figure represents Hermaphroditus. However, in not all cases is there such clarity. Other artworks that conceal the sleeping 'female' identity ask the viewer to question and imagine the identity of the 'female' as Hermaphroditus or a maenad. The ambiguity of the scenes implies that this is the very point of the representation. The emphasis is not on the ithyphallic nature of Hermaphroditus' identity. Rather, the allure for both satyrs and the imagined Roman viewer is the 'shapely bottom', which the sculptural depictions of the Sleeping Hermaphrodite emphatically demonstrate (Oehmke 2004, p.55; Groves 2016, p.339–40; Åshede, 2020, p.90). The concealing of the reclining 'female's' identity is present in eleven images⁷, while seventeen artworks reveal Hermaphroditus' identity.⁸ The ambiguously concealed displays of these sleeping 'women' discovered by a satyr are performative in the same sense that theatrical presentations rely on concealing the performer's identity.

7 House of Apollo Citharist (I.4.5) (destroyed), House of the Fruit Orchard (I.9.5) (in-situ), House of the Greek Epigrams (V.1.18) (MANN 27705), House of the Vestals (VI.1.7) (destroyed), House of Diadumenus (VII.12.16) (destroyed), House of Lucretius/Soutrixes (IX.3.5) (in-situ), House of Poppaeus Primus (IX.5.11) (destroyed), Villa of Diomedes (HG24) (MANN 27703), Pompeii-Unknown (MANN I 10878), Pompeii-Unknown (MANN 27693), Pompeii-Unknown (MANN 27685).

8 House of Euxinus (I.11.12) (in-situ), House of Pinarius Cerialis/Iphigenia (III.4.b) (in-situ), House of Caecilius Iucundus (V.1.26) (MANN I 11213), House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V.4.a) (in-situ), House of the Wounded Adonis (VI.7.18) (in-situ), House of Meleager (VI.9.2) (MANN 9264), House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6) (MANN 27700), House of the Vettii (VI.15.1) – two frescoes (both in-situ), House of Siricus, (VII.1.25) (destroyed), House of Tryptolemus (VII.7.5) (destroyed), House of M. Epidius Rufus (IX.1.20) (MANN 109620), House of M. Epidius Sabinus (IX.1.22) (MANN 27875), House of the Centenary (IX.8.6) (in-situ), House of Holconius Rufus (VIII.4.4) (destroyed), House of Octavius Quartio/Loreius Tiburtinus (II.2.2) (Pompeii Antiquarium inv.3021), Villa Contrada Corrado/Villa Matrone (MFA 1981.754).



Figure 4.6: Hermaphroditus and Satyr, mid-late first century CE, marble, height 1 m, plinth 91 × 58 cm. From the Villa of Poppaea, Oplontis. Now in the MANN OP 2800. (Author's photo, with permission of the Ministero Cultura – Parco Archeologico di Pompei)

Hermaphroditus and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (4.285–388)

The theatrical disguise and voyeuristic nature of Hermaphroditus in Pompeian art is evident in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Hermaphroditus, in broader mythological contexts, maintains connections with Dionysus' cultic and theatrical personae. These connections are particularly apparent in Ovid's tale of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis (*Met.* 4.285–388), which itself has a distinctive Dionysian framework. Alison Keith's 2010 article on Dionysian themes in Book Four of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* highlights the fact that Minyas' daughters' stories are part of the larger Theban cycle of myths that spans *Metamorphoses* (3.1–4.603). Hermaphroditus and Salmacis is the last tale that the impious Minyads narrates. The daughters intentionally reject and avoid Bacchic celebrations, which results in the epiphany of Dionysus in four ways: firstly, through the sounds of instruments (*tympanum*, *aulos*, cymbals); secondly, through the smell of saffron and myrrh; thirdly, by the sight of the growing vines of ivy; and lastly, the shaking of the earth and howling of beasts (*Met.* 390–404; Keith 2010, p. 198). Ovid also employs several

literary conventions to play on Dionysus' relationship with Hermaphroditus. For instance, Robert Groves (2016, pp. 343–54) has suggested that Ovid presents a riddle for his readers by disguising Hermaphroditus' name until line 383, after his transformation. Keith (2010, p. 207, n. 66) also notes Ovid's use of name play. According to a second century BCE inscription found at the Spring of Salmacis in Halicarnassus, known as the *Salmakis Inscription*, Salmacis was not always the sexual assailant that Ovid makes her out to be, but, rather, was the nurse of Hermaphroditus celebrated in Halicarnassus for her role as *kourotrophos* (Sourvinou-Inwood, 2004, pp. 64–6). Ovid instead has the naiads of Mount Ida raise the deity (*Met.* 4.289). At this point, Roman readers may well have recalled the story of Dionysus, who was also raised by nymphs in Asia Minor, specifically the naiads of Mount Nysa (*Met.* 3.314). Ovid also describes Hermaphroditus as a *puer* (4.288, 4.329, 4.360), and then as an *iuuenus* (4.360) of the age of fifteen (4.292), a description (*puerem iuuenes*) used to refer to Dionysus himself, firstly in book 3.655 in the episode with the Lydian sailors, and again in 4.17–20 where he is not only praised for his eternal boyhood

(*puer aeternus*), but also for his feminine face (*virgineum caput*). The ambiguous identity of Hermaphroditus is further reported when Salmacis mistakes the youth for Cupid (4.320–21). Keith also observes that Ovid makes use of Dionysian sensorial elements through allusion in the following passage:

But the boy blushed rosy red: for he knew not what love is. But still the blush became him well. Such color have apples hanging in the sunny orchards, or painted ivory; such as the mood, eclipsed, red under white, when brazen vessels clash vainly for her relief.

(Met.4.329–333)

She suggests that the clashing of the brazen vessels was a further allusion to the cymbals familiar in Bacchic rituals and cited in Ovid's 'Thebaid' (3.532–3, 4.30, 4.393) (Keith, 2010, p.213). Ovid's simile likening Hermaphroditus' blushing red cheeks to apples in an orchard has been linked to Sappho's fragment 105a (Krier, 1988). Apples were used as gifts for marriage and as aphrodisiac symbols to elicit sexual desire (Longus *Daphnis and Chloe* 3.33–34; Verg. *Ecl.* 8; *Greek Anthology* 5.79; Faraone, 1990; Littlewood, 1968). The apple, furthermore, is linked to Aphrodite, the mother of Hermaphroditus. Here, there is a role reversal as Hermaphroditus plays the blushing maiden (compare Diana blushing when spied by Acteon: *Met.* 3.181–5). The use of the simile of apples also links Hermaphroditus to Dionysus. Dionysus himself was not just the god of wine but his patronage extended to various fruits, gardens, and orchards. For example, Theocritus references 'the apples of Dionysus' in his *Idylls* (2.120) and later writers claim that apples were discovered by Dionysus (*Ath. Deip.* 3.82d; Nonnus *Dion.* 42.307). Furthermore, apples were a reference for female breasts in Greek and Roman literature (Theoc. *Id.* 27.50; see Littlewood, 1968, p.157). Breasts will eventually distinguish the body of Hermaphroditus, alongside the male phallus, as Ovid reminds the viewer when Salmacis' physical touch draws attention to these areas through her physical assault when she 'fondles him [from below] and touches his unwilling breast' (*Met.* 4.359).

Further Dionysiac imagery appears in similes when Salmacis succumbs to her desire and sexually assaults Hermaphroditus after entering the pool (Keith, 2010, pp.213–14). Ovid writes:

...she wraps him round with her embrace, as a serpent, when the king of birds has caught her and is bearing her on high: which, hanging from his claws, wraps her folds around his head and

feet and entangles his flapping wings with her tail; or as the ivy oft-times embraces great trunks of trees, or as the sea-polyp holds its enemy caught beneath the sea, its tentacles embracing him on every side.

(Met. 4.361–7)

Snakes and ivy were both associated with the cult of Dionysus. For example, Greek vase paintings show examples of maenads holding snakes. Furthermore, Euripides' *Bacchae* (101–2) has Dionysus crowned with snakes. Dionysus as the god of wine and the grapevine by extension is associated with ivy. Ovid uses ivy to signal the god's epiphany during his encounter with the Lydian sailors (*Met.* 3.663–7) and in his punishment of the daughters of Minyas (4.395).

Viewing Ovid's Hermaphroditus as a pantomime

Pantomime performers were highly celebrated by the masses, aristocrats, and emperors alike (Lada-Richards, 2003, p.25). This has important implications at Pompeii, which had two large stone theatres that attracted famous pantomime dancers like Pylades and Paris (Lada-Richards 2016, pp.136–7). Additionally, many scholars have linked examples of Pompeian wall paintings to pantomime performance (Hall, 2008, p.12–13; Dunbabin, 2004; Clarke, 2003, p.139–41; Elia, 1965; Kondoleon, 1994; Morrman, 1983; Bieber, 1961; for additional links to pantomime and domestic art in Antioch, see Huskinson, 2003).

Mythological paintings, mosaics, and sculpture that decorated homes included themes that echo popular pantomime performances (Lada-Richards, 2016, p.137; Bieber, 1961, pp.231–3) that itinerant troupes could have performed (Hughes, 2014, p.231; Sick, 1999). Theatrical overtones in domestic spaces appear in both sculptural collections and, in particular, in the fourth-style wall paintings around the late first century CE. The emperor Nero may have influenced the taste for theatrical performances in domestic settings (Hughes, 2014, pp.229–32). His performances on the public stage were also recited in the home or gardens (*Tac. Ann.* 15.33). Smaller-scale performances of theatrical productions such as pantomimes were well-suited for homes and gardens (Hughes, 2014, p.231; Jones, 1991; *Plin. Ep.* 7.24).

Pantomimes were often a solo dancer of either male or female sex, enacting multiple roles in succession. Lucian describes a single dancer embodying multiple characters, first as Athamas in a frenzy, then Ino in terror, then Atreus, Thyestes, Aegisthus, and finally Aerope (*De Salt.* 67). The roles of Hermaphroditus

and Salmacis are well-suited for the polymorphism of a single pantomime dancer. Additionally, nudity did not pose a problem for the pantomime genre and was likely central to it (Fountoulakis, 2000, pp. 144–5). In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (10.31), a female dancer impersonating Venus during a performance of the Judgement of Paris appeared naked with a sheer silk tunic (*palla*), while Marc Antony played the role of the Nereid Glaucus at a banquet while performing in the nude with blue body paint (Vell. Pat. *Hist. Rom.* 2.83). Nudity may have posed an interesting challenge for the performer of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, however, through the aids of gesture and masks this could have assisted in differentiating the transitions between the characters being danced.

Pantomime was befitting for dining since it corresponded with the overall nature of the event's emphasis on leisure and pleasure. Entertainment was a major component of the banquet ritual itself (on the spectacle of the Roman banquet see D'Arms, 1999; Jones, 1991, pp. 185–98). Frederick Naerebout (2015, p. 107) reminds us that the act of dance itself a ritualized behavior where, 'they *do* ritual through their bodies.' Furthermore, Dionysus himself was interwoven figuratively through the entertainment, act of drinking and dining, as well as through the iconography that decorated the walls, floors, as well as eating apparatuses and drinking vessels that reminded the banqueter of the ritual connection (Dunbabin, 2003, p. 8).

While no ancient literary evidence states that the story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis was adapted and performed as pantomime, there does appear to be a broad connection between the *Metamorphoses* and imperial pantomime (see Ov. *Tr.* 2.519; 5.7.25; Lada-Richards, 2013; Ingleheart, 2008). Several scholars have observed a link between Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and pantomime performance (Galinsky, 1975, p. 68; Ingleheart, 2008, pp. 199–217). Ovid's use of similes in his characterisation of Hermaphroditus not only provides allusions to Dionysian elements but also serves as an added benefit for performers. As Marie Louise von Glinski states: 'Such similes alert the reader to the "staged" quality of the text, but not only in pointing to the provenance of Ovid's material from tragedy, but also in foregrounding the transition of representation into reality' (2012, p. 144). Ovid's 'simile chains' slow down his text, indicating the complexity of 'major moments of transition, entrances, and metamorphoses' (von Glinski 2012, p. 155), as well as creating specific descriptors for body language making it suitable for the adaptation of pantomime. Lucian's *De Saltatione* (19) describes the first mimetic dancer

in myth, Proteus, who, as Helen Slaney observes (2017, p. 169), blended both inanimate elements and animals into the dancer's repertoire. Ovid's similes of entangled serpents, ivy, and tentacles follow this visual pattern, which a dancer would be able to kinaesthetically adapt (Slaney 2017, pp. 159–63).

The sensorial and corporeal descriptions found in the tale of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis could easily have been tailored to pantomime. Slaney (2017) provides a useful framework for thinking about pantomime and multisensory modes of engagement, outlining three key characteristics which make texts highly suitable for the adaptation of pantomime. These three key characteristics include emphasis on metamorphosis, erotic or sexualised topics, and bodily movements and emotions. Ovid's myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis embodies all three of these features and would thus have been suitable as a story adapted for the use of pantomime performance.

The first case for the link between Ovid's story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis and known pantomime myths is the subject matter. Popular themes involved the loves of the gods and mythic metamorphoses (Lucian *De Salt.* 57, 59; for a full list of pantomime libretti see Hunt, 2008; Molloy, 1996). One such popular form of transformation, which Lucian (*De Salt.* 57) highlights, included the transition from one gender to another, such as the stories of Tiresias (Ov. *Met.* 3.314–36) and Caeneus (Ov. *Met.* 12.171–209). The metamorphic plotline of Hermaphroditus' transformation into an inter-sexed being follows this trend.

Another characteristic of Ovid's myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis that makes it well-suited for pantomime is its emphasis on sensorial bodily movement and discourse (Lada-Richards 2013, p. 114). In Ovid's description of the Spring of Salmacis, he describes the nymph bathing her finely formed (*formosus*) body in the pool while gazing into the mirror-like waters, combing her hair (*Met.* 4.310–12). The imagery sparks images of Aphrodite or a bride at her toilette, and even recalls the frescoes of the depictions of Hermaphroditus seated at his toilette (Figs. 4.7–4.8). After bathing, Salmacis then puts on a transparent robe (*perluceol/perlucenti*) (*Met.* 4.313), similar to a costume that pantomime dancers may have worn (Jory, 1991, p. 19; 2004, p. 149).

Various tactile references are emphasised, such as when Salmacis lies in the soft grass to pick flowers (4.314–5). Ovid also describes the sensory details of Hermaphroditus' delight at the spring. Hermaphroditus walks through the grass along the spring and then tests the waters with his feet. After noting the alluring

(*blandus*) temperature of the water with his toes, he throws aside his garments and dives into the pool, swimming with alternating strokes (*Met.* 4.340-55). Water features such as *nymphaea*, small scale fountains and large pools found in peristyle gardens of Pompeian houses, such as those found in the House of Meleager and the House of Octavius Quartio, could have served as added props for performances such as these. Using evidence from Antioch, Janet Huskinson (2003, p.153) envisages these types of performances as 'aquatic pantomime'.

Further tactile and bodily descriptors by Ovid describe Hermaphroditus' body as soft (*mollis*) and delicate (*tenero*) (*Met.* 4.345), even before his transformation. When Hermaphroditus swims in Salmacis' spring, his body is described as 'glittering' (*candido*) (*Met.* 4.355); thus, he begins to assume similar descriptors of Ovid's visualisation of the spring itself as *stagnum lucentis* (juxtaposing the adjectives *clear* and *shiny* pool of water) (*Met.* 4.297). Ovid presents Salmacis' desire for Hermaphroditus as the archetype of female desiring of the effeminate male. It is interesting to note that in Lucian's *Dialogue of the Gods* 6, Zeus and Eros discuss how Dionysus' effeminate body attracts women (Konstan, 2002, pp.345-8). When Salmacis' desire becomes irrepressible she is described as casting off her garments and diving into the waters to begin her sexual assault by stealing kisses and fondling the god. After Salmacis prays to never be separated from Hermaphroditus, Ovid uses another simile to describe the joining of their bodies,

For their two bodies, joined together as they were, were merged in one, with one face and form for both. As when one grafts a twig on some tree, he sees the branches grow one, and with the common life come to maturity, so were these two bodies knit in close embrace: they were no longer two, nor such as to be called, one, woman, and one, man. They seemed neither, and, yet, both.

(*Met.* 4.373-79)

After this metamorphosis, Hermaphroditus is no longer a *puer*, nor a female (*femina*); rather, he has a double form (*forma duplex, biformis*) (4.378, 387) that is neither and yet both (*neutrumque et utrumque*). Further descriptions include terms associated with effeminacy (*semimas, mollis*), and as possessing a 'non-manly voice' (*non voce virili*).

The androgynous and effeminate characteristics of both Hermaphroditus and Dionysus (Surtees, 2014, pp.281-94; Bremmer, 1999; Csapo, 1997) carry over into the representations of theatrical

performers. Hermaphroditus is the visual embodiment of androgyny displaying both female physiognomy (female breasts) and masculine sexual characteristics (male genitalia). This parallels the pantomime dancer's body that transforms into characters of varying sexes. Furthermore, the garden space in which Hermaphroditus' transformation takes place is considered a transgressive space, where von Stackelberg observes is a common place where gender norms are broken down (2009a; 2009b pp.96-100).

Hermaphroditus' performative roles in Pompeii's Dionysian Theatre Gardens

Hermaphroditus is neither a stranger to the theatre, nor to dance. A third century BCE comedy by Poseidippus (of which only a fragmentary sentence survives) was entitled *Hermaphroditos* (Ἑρμαφρόδιτος) (PCG (VII fr. 12; Groves, 2016, p.323; Robinson, 1999, p.214, n.17; Romano, 2009, p.553, n.36; Edmonds, 1957, p.233). Pliny (*HN* 7.34) suggests that Hermaphroditus' images were considered appropriate marvels for Pompey the Great's theatre in Rome. Fragmentary remains of Hermaphroditus/satyr groups have also been found in Hellenistic/Roman theatres at Daphne (Stillwell, 1938, pp.173-4, nos.161-8, pls.13, 14; Retzleff, 2007) and Side (Inan, 1975, pp.123-25, no.56; Retzleff, 2007). A fragmentary relief which depicts Hermaphroditus dancing while holding a *thyrsus* staff was displayed at the Theatre of Dionysus on the Athenian Acropolis (Acropolis Museum, Athens inv.3356; Kieseritzky, 1882, p.267; Oehmke, 2004, p.126, cat.102; Retzleff, 2007, p.468). Fragmentary reliefs and kraters that date between the first century BCE and early first century CE also depict Hermaphroditus dancing among Dionysus' *thiasus* (Oehmke, 2004, cats.114-15, 118; Grassinger, 1991, cats.26, 30, 55).

As discussed above, Hermaphroditus undoubtedly had some connection to Dionysus, and was at times incorporated into his *thiasus* and performative sphere. Hermaphroditus' associations with Dionysus, theatre, and performance – particularly dance – were adopted and integrated into Pompeian imagery of the dual-sexed god; this, together with this mythical figure's similarities with the often-androgynous characteristics of performers, actors, and pantomime dancers, makes it plausible that Hermaphroditus could have been used as a visual signpost for performative space in the Roman *domus* of Pompeii, linking dining and garden spaces. In what follows, we explore how Hermaphroditus' cultic and theatrical connections with Dionysus play out sensorially within Pompeii's Dionysian Theatre Gardens.

The House of Pinarius Cerialis/House of Iphigenia (III.4.b) is of interest for its representation of Euripides'



Figure 4.7: Detail of a fresco showing Hermaphroditus, from the House of Pinarius Cerialis/Ifigenia (III.4.4), Pompeii, mid-late first century CE, unknown dimensions. In-situ. (Catalogo generale dei Beni Culturali, I500569759, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Iphigenia in Tauris and its link with Hermaphroditus. A frieze that runs the space of an entire room, which is located across the colonnaded garden, depicts an elaborate *scaenae frons* with Iphigenia flanked by two attendants, appearing in a central aedicula on the north wall (Fig. 4.7). On the stage platform below, the Taurian king Thaos and a guard appear to the viewer's left, while Pylades and Orestes stand on the right. Lucian (*De Salt.* 43) includes the stories of the descendants of Pelops (Iphigenia's great-grandfather) amongst his list of pantomime libretti (Hall, 2013, p. 117). John Clarke (2003, p. 141) observes the omission of masks and the nudity of Pylades and Orestes as potential indications of a pantomime performance, rather than a tragic play. However, discussions of this room do not mention a figure depicted on the south wall of the room between the doorway leading to the garden and a window opening onto the garden space. The figure stands in a three-quarter profile with the left leg raised upon a small rectangular pedestal or stone. A light blue/green and purple-trimmed cloth is draped over the raised left thigh. The figure holds a round hand-held mirror in the left hand, while the right arm is raised at the shoulder so that they may play with their hair. The figure wears earrings and sandals, and aside from

the draped cloth is otherwise naked. The figure could easily be mistaken for Aphrodite *Anadyomene* but is, in fact, Hermaphroditus (Oehmke, 2004, cat. 38). The portrayal of Hermaphroditus in this particular wall painting blurs multiple masculine and feminine characteristics. The raised arm playing with the hair, the jewellery and the mirror are all feminine attributes, while the physique and posture are aligned with more masculine traits (e.g. the 'subdued' breasts and the more defined musculature around the abdomen). Galen describes the ideal dancers' body types as 'graceful and muscular and sturdy and compact and toned' (*Hygiene* 2.11), while Lucian compares dancers' bodies to Polykleitan sculpture (*De Salt.* 75). Lada-Richards (2008, pp. 289–91) provides a list of bodily descriptors relating to the dancer's bodies which include terms such as 'metamorphic', 'soft', 'fluid-like water', and 'luxuriously adorned'.

Pompeii has the highest concentration of preserved depictions of Hermaphroditus, totalling thirty-three artworks, with approximately twenty-four depictions of the deity situated in Dionysian Theatre Gardens. Representations of Hermaphroditus are often situated in or near dining spaces situated adjacent to a garden. Von Stackelberg (2014) identifies nine artworks from Pompeii and contextualises them either within the garden itself or in high-status rooms (*tablina*, *triclinia*), which have either direct physical or visual access to garden space. She argues that the Roman garden was regarded as 'hermaphroditized space', used by both men and women, and where both sexes were easily susceptible to crossing gender-boundaries (2014, p. 398). Von Stackelberg's premise for the semantic interrelationship between Roman gardens and the depictions of Hermaphroditus links the artworks found within these domestic contexts to Augustus' vegetative symbolism, which was tied to his propagation of domestic harmony (2014, pp. 418–22). This, in turn, was based on assigned male-female gender roles linking Hermaphroditus to fertility and matrimony (Von Stackelberg, 2014, p. 422). Part of the general assumption around Hermaphroditus being a patron of marriage and fertility is connected to the *Salmakis Inscription* mentioned above (see Sourvinou-Inwood, 2004). Yet the picture is more complicated. As already noted, Hermaphroditus was included in the Dionysian sphere by the second century BCE. Furthermore, the notion that Hermaphroditus symbolises fertility and matrimony is problematic, since it assumes that Hermaphroditus is a symbol of heteronormative relationships, even though he did not give birth to any children, and also rejected Salmakis' marriage proposal (*Met.* 4.327). It has been argued that Hermaphroditus,

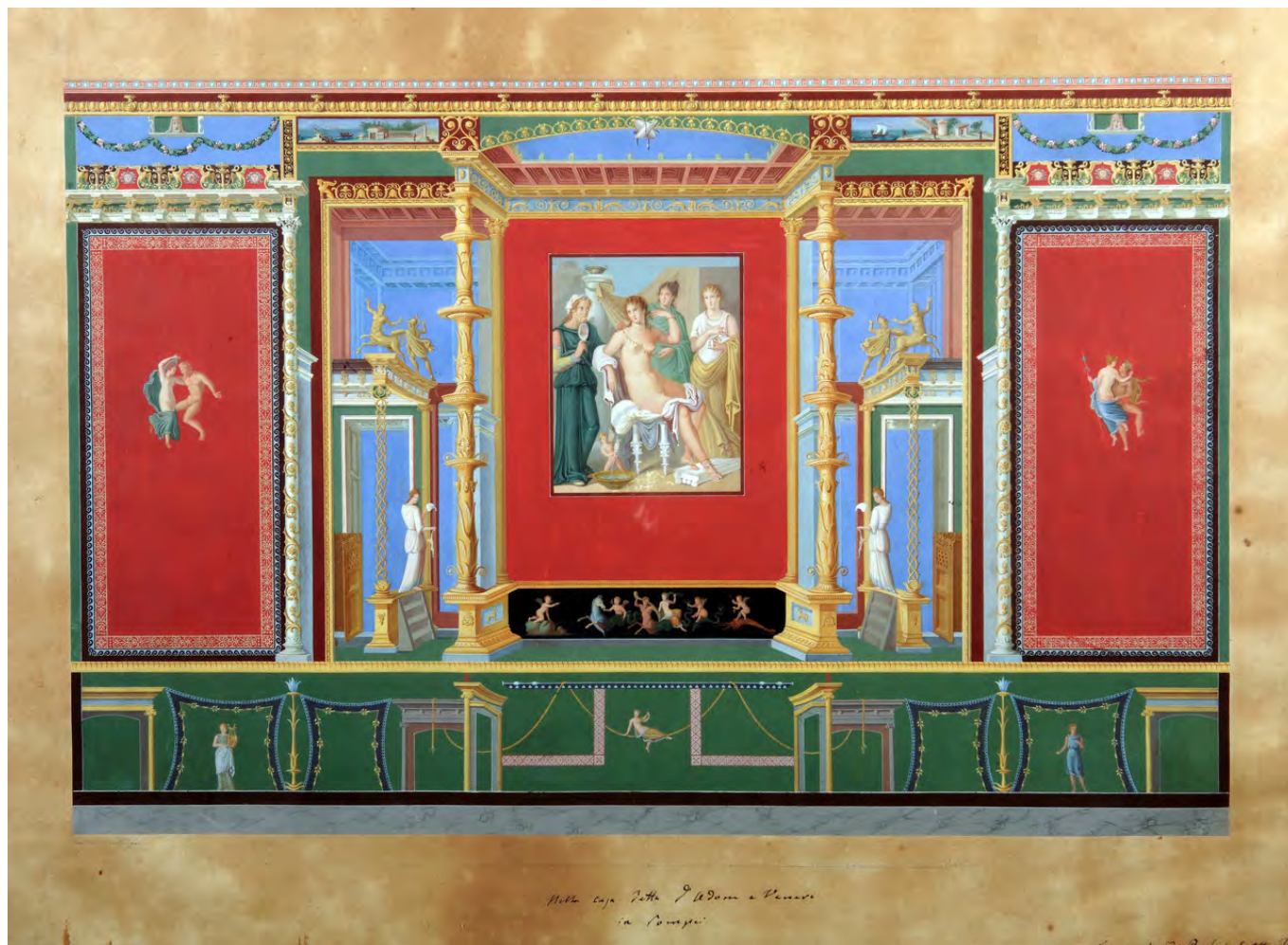


Figure 4.8: Fresco depicting the *Toilette of Hermaphroditus*, from the House of the Wounded Adonis (VI.7.18), Pompeii. mid-late first century CE 79 × 60cm. In-situ. (Catalogo generale dei Beni Culturali, I500569754, CC BY-SA 4.0)

as neither man nor woman, is ‘not considered a functional erotic partner for anyone, and [that] any erotic encounter thus must end in mutual frustration’ (Åshede, 2020, p.82; see also Oehmke, 2004, pp.35–7, 69–70; Cadario, 2012, pp.237, 293). Only by situating Hermaphroditus back into a Dionysian sphere, can the deity be understood within his Pompeian socio-cultural settings in the late Julio-Claudian period.

The majority of Pompeian frescoes depicting Hermaphroditus belong to the fourth Pompeian style of the mid-late first century CE. One such fourth-style fresco from the House of the Wounded Adonis (VI.7.18), painted in an *oecus* (11) situated directly across a colonnaded *viridarium* (14), depicts Hermaphroditus seated among three attendants – two female and one bearded male in female dress (4.7–4.8). Hermaphroditus’ head turns to his left, seemingly to look at his reflection in a mirror held by the bearded male attendant in female attire. However, when we look more closely, we see that the hand-held mirror is below the line of his gaze, which actually points out of the picture towards a ‘real’ open-air colonnade in

the garden of the house, in which a large wall-painting depicts Venus with Adonis. Venus was a patron of gardens in Campania (Jashemski, 1979, p.93, l:125–31; von Stackelberg, 2014, p.408; von Stackelberg, 2009b, p.27, n.39; see also Varro *Rust.* 1.1.6; *Ling.* 6.20; Plin. *HN* 19.19.50; 36.4.16). One inscription from Pompeii bears the petition: ‘...may Venus, who guards the garden love you.’ (*CIL* 4.2776; trans. Petersen, 2012, p.330). Two large-scale paintings of Venus are situated in Pompeian peristyle gardens. The first is found in the House of Venus in the Shell (II.3.3), which has a large wall-painting of Venus reclining in a shell on the south wall of the peristyle; the second is from the House of the Wounded Adonis. Venus’ relation to the Roman garden is linked to the perception of the garden space as a *locus amoenus*, as well as a space devoted to fertility, leisure (*otium*), and eroticism (von Stackelberg, 2014, p.408–9, 2009b, pp.27, 97–8). Von Stackelberg notes that ‘the sexual experience of the Roman garden was also referenced by the predominance of nude or partially nude images of Venus within it’ (2009b, pp.97–8). These would include the popular motifs of Venus *Callipyge* and

Venus *Anadyomene* that appeared in or around garden spaces and water features in Pompeii. By extension, it is no surprise that we see the attempted sexual encounters between Hermaphroditus and a satyr/Pan, either visually or physically aligned with the peristyle gardens of Pompeii.

Venus was not alone in her gardens. Dionysus and members of his Bacchic entourage were also popular motifs of decoration for these spaces. Both Dionysus and Venus had sacred groves associated with their sanctuaries in Pompeii (for the sanctuary of Venus, see Carroll, 2010, p.63). The House of the Prince of Naples (VI.15.8) has paintings of both Venus and Dionysus. In a summer *triclinium/lexedra* located in the garden's portico, there is a fourth-style wall painting with large framed central panels depicting a nude ephebic Dionysus holding a *thyrsus* staff and a nude Venus *Anadyomene* wearing jewellery and parting strands of her hair. Like Venus, Dionysus also had strong associations with Roman gardens (Neudecker, 1988, pp.47–51). Returning to the fresco of Hermaphroditus from the House of the Wounded Adonis, it is essential to note that the fourth-style wall painting of Hermaphroditus is set within a scenographic architecture, framed by floating maenads, dancing satyrs, garlands, and theatrical masks decorating the upper frieze (Fig. 4.8). The theatrical nature of the surrounding decoration of the central scene of Hermaphroditus reminds the viewer of both Hermaphroditus' association with Dionysus as well as spatially evoking Dionysus' association with dining and garden spaces.

The predominance of androgynous and gender-ambiguous imagery in Roman gardens suggests that garden space blurred the distinction between masculine and feminine just as it blurred the distinction between the categories of interior and exterior, and between public and private. This dichotomy is visually displayed by the dual-sexed nature of Hermaphroditus' body. The effeminising power of the spring of Salmacis is similar to the effeminising power of garden spaces. The visual display of Hermaphroditus in association with garden spaces that included water features (e.g. pools, fountains, nymphaeum, etc.) could bring to mind the mythical pool of Ovid's narrative. Furthermore, Ovid's description of the spring of Salmacis is no ordinary wild landscape with 'marshy reeds', 'swamp-grass', or 'spikey rushes' (*Met.* 4.298–9). Rather, it is a cultivated *locus amoenus* with crystal clear water, fresh soft grass, and green herbage which borders the spring and place where Salmacis can pick flowers (*Met.* 4.297–301, 314–15). Frescoes depicting Hermaphroditus from Pompeii, such as the example from the House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6.7; Fig. 4.4), nearly always portray the

god in a similar sacro-idyllic landscape with pruned foliage, architectural features, and the occasional herm.

Conclusion

Recontextualising images of Hermaphroditus in Pompeian domestic spaces reveals a strong sensorial association with Dionysus and by extension with the 'Dionysian Theatre Garden'. This contextualisation has important implications in terms of how the two figures have traditionally been viewed. Dionysus and Hermaphroditus are intrinsically linked to each other as ritual and theatrical performers within or near garden settings. In this essay, we have argued that the two figures' visual representations are dependent upon one another to serve as theatrical props for diners who either practiced Dionysian rituals or would have enjoyed viewing small-scale ritual centric performances offered by pantomime performers. Actors and audience alike, moreover, would have drawn on the visual, olfactory, and audial clues provided by the role-playing Hermaphroditus within garden settings to bring the performances to life.

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