

**GARDEN PAINTINGS OF POMPEII:  
CONTEXT AND MEANING**

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By  
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Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (1998)  
(Classical Studies)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Garden Paintings of Pompeii: Context and Meaning.

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NUMBER OF PAGES: ix, 101

## ABSTRACT

Garden paintings are ubiquitous in Campanian wall painting. This thesis examines the garden compositions of Pompeii. Despite the large number of well-preserved garden frescoes, these scenes have received relatively little attention from modern scholars. Yet following the earthquake of 62 A.D. they were among the first elements to be repaired by the inhabitants of Pompeii. Furthermore, due to the ephemeral nature of real gardens, garden paintings provide valuable information about the typical plantings, landscaping, decoration, and furnishings found in ancient *viridaria*.

Chapter 1 surveys the gardens and depictions of gardens found in the vicinity of Rome, including funerary gardens, market gardens, private imperial gardens, and public *horti*. Garden paintings from Livia's Villa at Prima Porta, the Auditorium of Maecenas, the *Domus Publica*, the Farnesina House, and the Tomb of Patro are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 gives a detailed description of the types of features and decorations found in the real gardens of Pompeii. Important background information regarding the source of inspiration of garden paintings is conveyed by outlining the characteristic elements of private gardens.

Chapter 3 enumerates and discusses the basic elements found in garden compositions. The elements are divided into three separate and distinct categories, namely architectural elements, decorative elements, and flora and fauna.

The composition of garden paintings is examined in Chapter 4. The arrangement of the constituent elements, such as lines, colours, and shapes comprises the main focus of this analysis.

Chapter 5 deals with the placement of garden paintings within domestic settings. Trends, such as the tendency to place verdant scenes in certain types of rooms and in conjunction with specific thematic programs, are identified in this chapter.

The discussion of the final chapter revolves around the possible functions of garden paintings. Specific roles were assigned to garden paintings in indoor and outdoor contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity first to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. M. George for her patience, sound advice, and encouragement which she provided as I toiled through this degree. My debt to her is enormous. Second, I would like to thank the other members of my supervisory committee, Dr. G. Umholtz and Dr. C. Eilers for their invaluable comments and technical support. I am also grateful to my peers and the faculty of the Department of Classics at McMaster University who were also incredibly helpful and supportive. Last, but certainly not least, I am compelled to offer a heartfelt thank-you to my family and friends, without whose love and moral support this thesis would never have been completed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Gardens themselves are intimately linked to many facets of Roman life, including public and private architecture, food production, recreation, and art. The presence of gardens attests to the Roman love of nature and reflects their desire to import some of the wholesomeness of *res rustica* into their urban settings. A survey of the gardens and depictions of gardens found in Rome will provide important information regarding the historical and cultural background of Roman gardens, which certainly influenced those found in Pompeii. However, the gardens of Pompeii represent the only extant examples of domestic *viridaria* and the architectural and decorative elements will therefore be closely examined to determine the general character of these private settings.

Pliny attributes the fashion of painting verdant scenes to the Roman Spurius Studius, yet very few examples of garden frescoes have survived in Rome itself.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, garden paintings are ubiquitous in the corpus of Pompeian wall paintings. Due to their state of preservation and high quality workmanship, the garden paintings from the House of the Fruit Orchard, the House of the Wedding of Alexander, and the House of Venus Marina represent the primary examples of garden paintings from the site.

Garden paintings are characterized by their depiction of elements derived from both fantasy and reality. These elements can be divided into three separate and distinct categories, namely architectural elements, decorative elements, and flora and fauna. Garden paintings are loosely based on Pompeian gardens and therefore have parallels in reality. The placement of these elements within the composition and the combinations

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<sup>1</sup> Pliny *NH*. IX.35.117. The reading of Studius is uncertain, it may be Tadius or Ludius.

which occur are particularly informative, as discrepancies between real gardens and painted versions indicate different functions and also convey different effects.

The composition of garden paintings, that is, the arrangement of the elements within the picture panel, is closely connected to the use of colour, light, and perspective. An analysis of how these combinations create the illusion of depth, function as framing devices and unifying elements is revealing. Both large field type paintings and smaller, syncopated versions will be discussed.

In order to understand how the scenes were affected by the light, shapes, sizes, and functions of the rooms, the paintings must also be considered in relation to their architectural settings. Garden scenes are painted in both indoor and outdoor contexts, each of which convey very distinct impressions to the viewer. Typical placement of garden paintings and the use of thematic programs will form the main focus of the discussion of content. Having thoroughly examined the garden paintings in terms of their constituent elements, compositional trends, and placement within domestic settings, certain functions become apparent. The possible role of villa imitation and attempts to increase the illusion of space will be considered.

## CHAPTER 1: ROMAN GARDENS AND GARDEN PAINTINGS

### ROMAN GARDENS

Although much can be discerned about the character of gardens based on architectural and decorative remains such as fountains, sculpture, and furniture, it was the plantings themselves which enlivened the garden. Unfortunately, due to the ephemeral nature of these organic elements, little tangible evidence for their nature and location has survived. Furthermore, until recently archaeologists were solely concerned with the plunder of statuary from these areas, so that they completely ignored all other aspects of the gardens, and thus failed to recover or document accurately pertinent information. The scant and poor preservation of gardens in the vicinity of Rome have compelled scholars to rely heavily on ancient texts which attest to the Roman penchant for gardens and substantiate the fact that *horti* played an integral part in Roman life both in urban and rural contexts throughout the history of the Roman state.<sup>2</sup>

That gardens played a useful and important role is demonstrated by the fact that they were regularly incorporated into both public and private architecture to serve the needs of their proprietors and the people who frequented these establishments. As is still the case today, much of Mediterranean life was spent outdoors and within that context gardens played a significant role in Roman society. However, it was not until the Imperial period that large, formally landscaped, public gardens came into vogue.

Prior to the first century B.C. small vegetable gardens in domestic settings were the norm. These cultivated spaces provided households with medicinal plants and were an important source of food, thus enabling the owner to be self-sufficient and to supplement

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<sup>2</sup> For a full discussion of literary references to Roman gardens see P. Grimal, *Les jardins romaines* 2nd ed. (Paris 1969) 101-196.

his income by selling any surplus at the local market. The Roman diet consisted largely of salads, containing fresh vegetables such as cabbages, cauliflower, sprouts, onions, leeks, peas, lentils, carrots, chives, cucumbers, and turnips. The fact that these foods were served cold was probably related to the limited supply of wood for fuel. Small scale produce gardens were typically surrounded by fences and divided up into plots. Pliny advises that these plots should have curved and raised edges, and be equipped with a water channel for irrigation and paths upon which the gardener could walk. Columella suggests that the width of the plots should be such that the gardener could comfortably reach half-way across to weed and not be forced to step on any of the plants.<sup>3</sup> During this period, flowers were only highly esteemed if they were cut, at which point they took on religious connotations and were therefore incorporated into wreaths and garlands to decorate the *Lares* on days of festivity such as the Kalends, Nones, and Ides. Eventually garlands and wreaths lost some of their religious significance, but were retained for decorative purposes.<sup>4</sup>

People who lacked gardens were forced to rely on food grown by others. Cicero and Varro state that market gardens known as *hortuli* were located around the periphery of the city.<sup>5</sup> Such proximity to the urban center ensured a reliable market, cheap transportation costs, and the freshest produce which obtained the highest prices. A range of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and herbs were grown in these gardens in order to meet the needs of the increasing urban population. Although gardens for food production remained important throughout the history of Rome, the pragmatic and utilitarian approach to gardens which characterized the Republican period was eventually superseded by a new garden aesthetic which eventually came to dominate Roman taste.

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<sup>3</sup> J. Lawson, "The Roman Garden," *Greece and Rome* 19 (1950) 99.

<sup>4</sup> Lawson (1950) 97-98.

<sup>5</sup> Cited by Grimal (1969) 109. Varro *RR*. I.16.3.

Gardens were also closely associated with the Roman concept of an afterlife. Funerary gardens were situated outside the city limits of Rome. Cicero records his efforts to find a suitably stationed and affordable funerary garden in which to erect a monument for his beloved Tullia.<sup>6</sup> The most developed form of funerary monuments known as *cepotaphia* were planted in order to provide the deceased with ample subsistence. Some of these monuments included fittings for the banquets which were held to commemorate the dead. Inscriptions state that wine for libations was often obtained from the vineyards which were associated with these monuments, and that money earned through the sale of products procured from these plots was to be used according to specific instructions.<sup>7</sup> Petronius provides further insight into these gardens through Trimalchio's description of his ideal funerary garden, which was to extend one hundred feet facing the road and was to be located back in a field a distance of two hundred feet and would contain vines and fruit trees.<sup>8</sup> The plan engraved on marble of a funerary garden found at the necropolis on the Via Labicana outside Rome shows the placement of a funerary monument accompanied by rows of trees or vines and planting beds.<sup>9</sup> The mausoleum of Augustus situated in the Campus Martius represents the most illustrious funerary garden found in the city of Rome. Ancient texts mention that *ambulationes* and *silvae* were found in conjunction with this edifice and describe how the summit of the mound was planted with a grove of evergreens.

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<sup>6</sup> Cicero *Ad Att.* XII.23 and *Ad Att.* XIII.33a.

<sup>7</sup> *CIL.* XII.1657 and *CIL.* V.7454. The latter reads "from whose yield my survivors may offer roses to me on my birthday forever."

<sup>8</sup> Petronius *Sat.* XV.71.

<sup>9</sup> L. Farrar, "Gardens of Italy and the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire: From the 4th century BC to the 4th century AD," *BAR International Series* 650 (Oxford 1996) 10.

Suetonius states that the area surrounding this monumental tomb was given over to the public.<sup>10</sup>

Gardens were usually named after their proprietor, so that when ownership changed, so did the name. This practice leads to much uncertainty in the study of gardens, since the transfer of property was not always well documented, and a garden with several successive names is often treated in literature as several different entities. Many of the private parks which are familiar from ancient texts were annexed and integrated into the imperial parks of emperors. Augustus, who particularly disdained private luxury villas, was known to have destroyed several palatial estates and erected public buildings and gardens in their place.<sup>11</sup>

During the Republican period private pleasure gardens were predominant. Replete with flowers, plants, trees, fountains, and sculpture, these villa gardens located on private family estates were greatly influenced by Greek models. The Romans readily adopted Greek prototypes such as herms, muses and members of the Dionysiac entourage, as well as embellishments traditionally associated with Greek sanctuaries, gymnasias, public squares, and Attic schools of philosophy.<sup>12</sup> These gardens represent areas where influential people received their guests and engaged in conversations and academic debates. Ancient scholars mention a plethora of private gardens of the imperial period, including many located on the right bank of the Tiber, such as the *Horti Drusi*, *Lamiani*, *Cassiani*, *Siliani*, the *Horti Damasippi*, *Scapulani*, *Cusinii* and *Trebonii*, the *Horti Clodiae*, *Caesaris*,

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<sup>10</sup> Suetonius *Vita Aug.* 100.

<sup>11</sup> M.L. Gothein, *A History of Garden Art* 1, trans. L. Archer-Hind (New York 1966) 90. Augustus destroyed his grand-daughter Julia's lavish villa, and razed the property that Vedius Pollio bequeathed to him and in its place constructed the Portico of Livia.

<sup>12</sup> M. Carroll-Spillecke, "The Gardens of Greece from Homeric to Roman Times," *Journal of Garden History* XII.2. (1992) 95. Gothein (1966) 86 states that Hellenistic philosophers were the first to convert Greek palaestras or park gymnasiums into private gardens. It was based on this precedent that Roman philosophers constructed their philosopher gardens.

*Antonii*, the *Horti Volcaci Tulli*, the Field of Mars and Pincio. Also referred to are the *Horti Scipionis*, *Pompeiani*, *Lucullani*, *Messalae Corvini*, and *Sallustiani*. Due to the fact that many other regions of the city were densely inhabited, later gardens were established in the areas of Trastevere and the Pincio, both of which were located on the outskirts of town, but close enough that they were frequented on a regular basis.<sup>13</sup>

The Roman love of the chase is manifested in the construction of immense game parks which were based largely on Hellenistic models. The younger Scipio was particularly enthralled with such theme parks. Varro mentions that Quintus Hortensius possessed a park extending over an area of fifty yokes, complete with a shooting-box, slaves disguised as Orpheus, and with stags, boars, and other wild animals contained within a wall.<sup>14</sup> Even later, the megalomaniac Nero had an elaborate complex devoted to the hunt built right in the heart of Rome, which included landscaped gardens, groves, and pastures enlivened with wild animals. Large estates equipped in this manner were quite popular throughout Italy and appear to have been first introduced to the Romans by the Greek writer Xenophon, who described the lavish parks that belonged to Persian kings.<sup>15</sup> The hunting ground was an integral component of these large estates and the taste for oriental *paradeisoi* acquired during the Roman conquest of the Hellenistic world, subsequently became a fashionable model which they sought to emulate on their own soil.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Grimal (1969) 133.

<sup>14</sup> Gothein (1966) 89.

<sup>15</sup> Xenophon *Anabasis*. 1.2.7; *Cyropaedia*. 1.3.14; *Hellenica*. 4.1.15.

<sup>16</sup> W. Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius I* (New York 1979) 72. There are two volumes of this book, the second of which includes appendices, with a corpus of garden paintings which published in 1993. From this point on the two volumes will be distinguished as Jashemski I and Jashemski II.

Since the foundation of Rome, people attached a great deal of importance to sacred groves. This reverence stemmed largely from their association with fertile deities such as Diana, Priapus, and Venus, and also from the fact that as farmers many of them were closely in tune with nature. However, as the population increased, the need for space to house the inhabitants of Rome meant that sacred groves were constantly under the threat of encroaching buildings. Inevitably, these woodlands, once irrevocably connected to early religious practices, gradually succumbed to the increasing pressures of urbanization.<sup>17</sup> Individual trees, however, did manage to retain a certain degree of sacrosanctity, recalling their former religious significance.

With the influx of more people to the city, more and more of the available space in the urban core was allocated to housing, so that the suburbs of Rome gradually expanded into the countryside, and as a result increased the amount of available space for large public gardens around the periphery of the city. The inhabitants of the overpopulated urban center placed a premium on verdant areas which were available for public use. Having secured peace and stability, the early emperors were able to devote serious time and energy to aesthetic matters such as beautification projects which had as a fringe benefit personal aggrandizement. Thus, at the beginning of the empire, Rome was characterized by luxurious gardens which abounded in both its urban center and periphery. It was also at this time that politicians bestowed several public parks upon the populace of Rome. Vitruvius himself notes that it was for the benefit of public health that public gardens were planted in conjunction with theaters and other large venues. Such donations also functioned as important vehicles for propaganda. Following the precedent set by Pompey, Augustus bequeathed the *ambulationes* and *silvae* attached to his monumental mausoleum and his private gardens at Trastevere to the city. It was also under his orders that the

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<sup>17</sup> Grimal (1969) 165-166.

*Nemus Caesarum* was planted near the *Naumachia*.<sup>18</sup> Agrippa, in the same competitive and generous spirit, also bequeathed his lavishly landscaped baths to the public. Ancient authors record that multitudes of people sojourned in the splendour of these public areas. The large plane trees which grew within these gardens no doubt served as a shady refuge from the scorching midday heat. Furthermore, the existence of public parks enabled Romans, particularly those confined to crowded *insulae*, to sustain some semblance of contact with nature despite rapid urban development. In addition to the obvious role that gardens played in the beautification of the city, public access to *horti* provided enjoyable areas for rendezvous and places where people could engage in varying forms of outdoor recreation.

Promenades, which may have found their inspiration in Greek or Hellenistic models, were situated throughout the city.<sup>19</sup> These covered walkways played an important role in the daily life of Romans, for they not only protected people from the sun but also sheltered them from the rain. The *Porticus Pompeiana* erected in 55 B.C. represents the first public park in the city of Rome.<sup>20</sup> Vitruvius records that this portico was constructed so as to provide the audience from the theater with a place to assemble during intermissions.<sup>21</sup> From Propertius it is learned that this portico contained rows of columns and plane trees, furnished with fountains and sculptures.<sup>22</sup> Though inconclusive, archaeological evidence has revealed four centrally aligned rows of square cavities, and

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<sup>18</sup> Farrar (1996) 11.

<sup>19</sup> Vitruvius' detailed description of a Greek peristyle in *De Arch.* V.11f. shares many parallels with the *Porticus Pompeiana*.

<sup>20</sup> K.L. Gleason, "Porticus Pompeiana: a new perspective on the first public park of Ancient Rome," *Journal of Garden History* 14 (1994) 26 n.3. Plutarch, in *Pompey* XLII.4, states that this portico was modelled after the theater complex found at Mytilene.

<sup>21</sup> Vitruvius *De Arch.* V.9.1.

<sup>22</sup> Propertius II.32.11f.

rectangular and semicircular *exedrae* along the perimeter of the garden which may have been equipped with seating.<sup>23</sup> The construction of gardens enclosed by peristyles completely isolated from adjacent edifices and streets was probably influenced by the porticoes of the Hellenistic period.

Based on the similarities that exist between the *Porticus Pompeii* and later examples, it appears that the former provided the inspiration for succeeding promenades such as the *Porticus Vipsania*, the *Porticus Livia*, and the one found in the *Forum Pacis*.<sup>24</sup> An ancient map also indicates that there was a temple portico dedicated to the *Divus Claudius*. As is evident from the nomenclature, these porticoes were often named in honour of the person who donated them. Portico gardens were also closely connected with public buildings such as temples, libraries, theaters, and baths.<sup>25</sup>

Generally assumed to be situated on the Palatine, the *Adonaea* was a much frequented portico garden. A well preserved marble map provides important information regarding the layout of such gardens. The *Adonea* possessed a wide colonnaded entrance followed by what appear to be porticoes and arbours heavy with grapes. A long rectangular feature located in the center of the garden is identified as an *euripus* encircled by planting beds.<sup>26</sup> Philostratus' description illuminates the archaeological remains, which mentions baskets of bright flowers commemorating Adonis.<sup>27</sup>

Although there is little evidence regarding the plantings of ancient Roman gardens, certain general conclusions regarding their appearance and cultural importance can be made.

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<sup>23</sup> Farrar (1996) 10.

<sup>24</sup> Pliny *NH*. XXXIV.19.84 mentions that works of art from the Domus Aurea were displayed in areas such as these.

<sup>25</sup> Farrar (1996) 10.

<sup>26</sup> Farrar (1996) 11.

<sup>27</sup> Philostratus *Vita Apoll. Tyana*. VII.32.

First, it appears that they often consisted of a network of footpaths, benches, various works of art, flower beds, bushes, and grassy areas.<sup>28</sup> Though more monumental in scale, the conversion of large private holdings into public gardens ensured that they shared similar characteristics. Furthermore, the fact that the Romans had functioning aqueducts at their disposal enabled them to landscape formally their gardens with water features such as pools and fountains.<sup>29</sup> Though influenced by earlier examples, these aquatic innovations helped to transform their gardens into something uniquely Roman.

Public *horti* provided people of all strata of society with unlimited access to cool and shady refuges in which to escape the heat of the sun. Covered walkways also protected pedestrians from inclement weather, and when placed near theaters, they functioned as convenient places to which the audience could retire during intermissions. But perhaps most importantly, the inclusion of gardens within the urban landscape was a means of affirming their connection to their beloved land, an attitude which was reiterated on the wall paintings which adorned both private dwellings and public buildings.

#### GARDEN PAINTINGS FROM ROME

The Garden Room in the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta (fig. 1) represents one of only five extant garden paintings which have been found in the vicinity of Rome. The continuous garden painting which once covered the walls of this underground room measures 5.9 m in width and 11.7 m in length, and extends to a height of 3 m from the base of the wall to the barrel vault.<sup>30</sup> A door located along one of the long walls represents

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<sup>28</sup> Farrar (1996) 11.

<sup>29</sup> The House of the Centenary (IX.viii.6.) and the House of the Coloured Capitals (VII.iv.31/51.) are just two examples of houses which were equipped with pools, around which gardens were planted.

<sup>30</sup> M. Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta* (New York 1955) 3. The garden paintings have since been removed and are now housed in the National Museum in Rome.

the only interruption in the composition. Unfortunately, the date of these paintings is unknown; however, illusionistic and continuous scenes are characteristic of second style Pompeian painting.<sup>31</sup> The function of this room has been the subject of debate among scholars, some of whom suggest that it is simply a cool underground refuge from the sun where one could escape from the heat, yet still revel in the presence of a garden.<sup>32</sup> Lugli suggests that the adjoining room functioned as a bath, and that the painted room was a reception area, designed to convey the illusion of a garden.<sup>33</sup> However, there was no evidence of water pipes to indicate the existence of any bathing facility.<sup>34</sup> Sulze uncovered a water channel inside an exterior wall and suggested that there may have been a water feature located in the center of the painted room, enabling it to function as a *nymphaeum*.<sup>35</sup> In his description of his Tuscan villa, Pliny the Younger mentions a room that was adorned with a fresco containing birds and foliage, and an underground room which remained chilled in the summer months.<sup>36</sup> The parallels between Pliny's descriptions and the garden room at Prima Porta suggest that the latter may also have been used as a room for entertainment.<sup>37</sup> Suetonius mentions that Augustus was afraid of thunderstorms and that during storms he hid in an underground vaulted room. Pliny also states that lightning

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<sup>31</sup> Gabriel (1955) 6. A detailed discussion of the Pompeian styles of wall painting can be found at the beginning of Chapter 4: The Composition of Garden Paintings.

<sup>32</sup> H. Brunn, "Scavi di Prima Porta," *Bullettino dell' Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (Rome 1863) 83.

<sup>33</sup> G. Lugli, "La Villa of Livia," *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* LI (Rome 1923) 31.

<sup>34</sup> Gabriel (1955) 15.

<sup>35</sup> H. Sulze, "Die unterirdischen Räume der Villa der Livia in Prima Porta," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung* XLVII (1932) 191.

<sup>36</sup> Pliny *Ep.* V.6.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel (1955) 15.

never strikes laurel bushes and never strikes more than five feet below the ground.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note that both the structure and the decoration of the subterranean room at Prima Porta conform to these descriptions.

The scene depicts a wild and unmanicured open garden which, with the exception of a masonry balustrade, is completely devoid of architectural supports.<sup>39</sup> The frescoes are painted to convey the impression that they are being viewed from beneath an outdoor garden enclosure such as a pergola, from which a fringe of tendrils along the top of the painting would have appeared to be hanging. Thus, the viewer appeared to be standing in an outdoor setting with an unobscured view of the garden.

The low wall that encloses the garden scene is recessed at equal intervals with a total of six niches, two on each of the long panels and one on each short panel. Contained within each niche is a tree: spruce trees on the long walls, a pine on the north wall, and a deciduous broadleafed species on the southern one. Rising up behind the enclosure is a mass of laurels, oleanders, pomegranates, strawberry trees, viburnum, box, and myrtle. The lower section of the panels are occupied by flowers. Located in front of the wall and behind a lattice fence is a grass path. The garden scene is enlivened with a profusion of birds, one of which is shown contained within a cage.<sup>40</sup> Realism is attained through the use of carefully placed highlights and shadows, indicating the presence of the sun.<sup>41</sup>

The detailed elements illustrated in these frescoes are both accurately and realistically rendered. The flora and fauna are consistent with those found in the region

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<sup>38</sup> Pliny *N.H.*. II.56.146.

<sup>39</sup> This contrasts with many of the garden paintings from Pompeii, which often include depictions of architectural elements such as columns and pillars which serve to divide the compositions into tripartite divisions. Architectural supports such as these give the viewer the impression of looking at the garden through a series of openings in the wall, rather than conveying the sense of an unobstructed outdoor view.

<sup>40</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 381. For an in-depth discussion of the composition and importance of these garden scenes see Gabriel (1955) 1-53.

<sup>41</sup> Gabriel (1955) 21.

surrounding Rome; however, the artist ignored the seasonal element as he incorporated plants and flowers which naturally bloom in different seasons into one composition.<sup>42</sup> According to Gabriel, the blue background is not indicative of an actual sky, for it lacks a softening horizon line, and therefore is more of a symbolic representation. In the absence of architectural and decorative elements such as columns, fountains, and *oscilla*, the recessed niches of the masonry wall provide the only linear perspective. Recession is conveyed through the use of converging lines, and thus the most advantageous viewpoint of each panel appears to be immediately in front of each niche. The illusion of depth is also achieved by rendering the trees in the background as smaller, with less detail, muted colours, and blurred edges, whereas those in the foreground are larger, have sharp outlines, and are vibrant in colour.<sup>43</sup> Although many garden paintings exhibit a similar use of colour and employ the same methods to portray perspective, the continuous and open garden scene illustrated on the painted panels from Livia's Garden Room is unique in its composition. Contrary to the majority of the paintings from Rome and Pompeii, those at Prima Porta do not conform to the typical stylized vistas, viewed through rows of columns, with symmetrical plantings flanking fountains and decorative elements.

The so-called Auditorium of Maecenas was actually a *nymphaeum* located in the Gardens of Maecenas. Until recently, this sunken rectangular building with a niched apse containing stairs had at different times been interpreted as a music hall, a conservatory, or a *nymphaeum*.<sup>44</sup> The niches within the apse were all adorned with representations of gardens (fig. 18), as were larger ones found on the side walls. These paintings represent

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<sup>42</sup> Gabriel (1955) 11. Upon close examination of the frescoes, differences in technique are readily apparent, indicating that they were not the work of a single artist. However, it is likely that the composition as a whole was conceived and planned by one individual. For a full discussion of the artists, see Gabriel (1955) 24-28.

<sup>43</sup> Gabriel (1955) 19.

<sup>44</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 383. The discovery of several blocked-off water channels on the uppermost stair conclusively indicated that this structure was in fact a *nymphaeum*.

the oldest illustrations of gardens found in Rome, but little remains of the paintings today. The fragments which have survived are characterized by the presence of a crater-shaped basin contained within a curved apse formed by a low painted fence, or a rectilinear niche complete with a basin-shaped fountain. Garlands are found along the base of the fence. The scenes also contain depictions of trees and flowers and appear to be vistas viewed through some form of garden structure. Black friezes located beneath the niches are adorned with garden representations with alternating genre scenes, including those of hunts, the Bacchic entourage, mythology, and comedy. The larger scenes found along the side wall each include a large tree rising behind a lattice fence.<sup>45</sup>

Fragments of garden scenes were also discovered in Room L of the Farnesina House. Both of these fragments contain only hints of foliage and include depictions of jetting, crater-shaped fountains placed in niches formed by low lattice fences. A garden painting also once adorned the Tomb of Patro, which was situated along the Via Latina; however, only fragments of the frescoes have survived. The upper register of the painting contains a funeral procession beneath which a garden scene was found. The garden fresco was simply composed of a row of five stylized trees amid which were three birds.<sup>46</sup>

The fact that several paintings depicting garden scenes have been found in Rome is significant as it indicates that this subject matter was not only just a regional trend confined to Campania. However, due to the limited number of examples and relatively poor state of preservation of the paintings from Rome, it is necessary to rely on the more extensive collection of garden frescoes from Pompeii in order to gain a fuller understanding of this subject matter in the medium of painting.

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<sup>45</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 384.

<sup>46</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 390. The iconography of garden scenes in funerary contexts is beyond the scope of this paper.

## CHAPTER 2: ELEMENTS OF REAL GARDENS

### ACTIVITIES IN THE GARDEN

Prior to an examination of the elements found in *viridaria*, it is necessary to discuss the activities that occurred within the garden in order to understand the role that it played in the Pompeian house. For those fortunate enough to possess one, the light and air of the garden rendered it an important venue for many facets of Pompeian life including: dining, entertaining, work, food production, and religion.<sup>47</sup> The diversity of activities combined with the multiple functions served by the garden indicate that it was an integral component of the urban *domus*.

The vast number of *triclinia* and *biclinia* found in Pompeian gardens attest to the prevalence of outdoor dining.<sup>48</sup> Varro himself mentions that *al fresco* dining was practiced by the ancients, stating that "people used to eat in winter by the hearth, in summer out-of-doors."<sup>49</sup> Pergolas, erected above *triclinia* were used to shade diners from the sun, and supplied a cool and refreshing environment in which to eat. Remains of food were found in a modest garden located in House I.xiv.2.<sup>50</sup> Several tripods which held braziers have been found in gardens, indicating that some food was actually cooked in the garden as well. Furthermore, as much of the food and water for cooking was collected from the garden, it is plausible that the preparation of food also took place in this area. Entertainment, such as music recitals and theatrical performances known to be closely linked to dining, also took place in the garden.

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<sup>47</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 89.

<sup>48</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 346 n. 1, records the total number of outdoor *triclinia* found in Pompeii at fifty-six.

<sup>49</sup> Varro *ap. Nonius*, ed. G. Olms, (Hildesheim 1964) 117.

<sup>50</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 89.

The garden also functioned as a workplace. Pliny himself states that much of his writing was conducted in the garden.<sup>51</sup> There is also considerable evidence attesting to the practice of spinning and weaving within the garden context. Jashemski mentions that loom weights have been found in every garden that she has excavated.<sup>52</sup> From graffiti, it is learned that two Pompeian peristyle gardens contained large-scale facilities for spinning and weaving.<sup>53</sup>

There is also substantial evidence for the practice of religion in the garden. According to Jashemski, of the five hundred and five *lararia* she examined in Pompeii, fifty were located in *viridaria* and another fifty-nine were found in peristyles.<sup>54</sup> Private worship of the *Lares* and *Penates* was closely associated with the garden context, and the inclusion of such structures formed a regular component of landscaped gardens. It is interesting to note that Euxinus encouraged out-of-town guests to worship in the garden of his *caupona*.<sup>55</sup> *Lararia* took the form of simple niches, aedicular *lararia* which looked like diminutive temples, or wall paintings.

The inclusion of statues of divinities, or associated attributes found in conjunction with incense burners or altars is indicative of worship in the garden. Deities associated with nature and fertility, including Venus, Diana, Mars, Priapus, and Hercules, have been found in Pompeian gardens.<sup>56</sup> Sacred trees were also important religious objects which had a long tradition in Roman religion.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Pliny *Ep.* 9.36.

<sup>52</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 102.

<sup>53</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 102 and 197.

<sup>54</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 115.

<sup>55</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 139.

<sup>56</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 139.

<sup>57</sup> For a full discussion of sacred trees, see Grimal (1969) 165-168.

Worship also took place in public gardens throughout the site of Pompeii. Set in a sacred grove, the altars erected in front of the Doric temple were used for ritual sacrifices. The temple of Dionysus, built in a vineyard, was the setting for banquets and sacrifices. The Temple of Isis surrounded by a garden was also an important location for religious rituals.<sup>58</sup>

#### ELEMENTS OF REAL GARDENS

The garden was central to the Pompeian house, for it provided both light and air to the surrounding rooms. To date, over 450 gardens of varying size and character have been unearthed at Pompeii.<sup>59</sup> Although the size, function, layout, landscaping, sculptures and furnishing differ from one garden to the next, certain commonalities are apparent. Above all, the existence of gardens in both large and small domestic contexts attest to the Pompeian penchant for incorporating features of the countryside into their living quarters.<sup>60</sup>

The site of Pompeii provides the best extant examples of residential gardens. The typical domestic garden is a conglomeration of architectural, decorative and organic elements (fig. 2). Although Roman gardens included numerous elements within an organized landscape, due to the ephemeral nature of many of these objects, archaeologists derive much of their information from literary references and artistic renditions of these features.

Gardens are often located at the rear of the house along the main axis of the dwelling, a placement which ensures that visitors to the house had an unrestricted vista

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<sup>58</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 140.

<sup>59</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 25.

<sup>60</sup> Farrar (1996) 55 suggests that the inhabitants of small dwellings which lacked *viridaria* relied on planted window boxes or potted plants to create the illusion of a small garden. See also Lawson (1950) 101.

through to the garden (fig. 26). Houses that were irregular in plan, with off-centered doorways, rooms, and hallways, usually had windows installed in order to facilitate a view of the garden and to illuminate and ventilate these particular rooms.

## ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Large gardens are normally divided from the rest of the house by a portico, although the number of porticoes was largely determined by the amount of available space. The fluted columns of the portico are usually constructed with marble, stone or brick-face covered with stucco (fig. 2). The lower third of the shaft of many of these columns was not fluted, but rather was covered with a surface which was smoothed and painted red. The garden walls between these intercolumnations are occasionally decorated with frescoes depicting garden scenes. In some cases, where restricted space or strained finances did not allow for real porticoes, columns were simply painted on the garden wall so as to create the illusion of a peristyle. Slots, visible on the sides of real columns, were for the insertion of fences connecting the vertical uprights.<sup>61</sup> A *pluteus* or low masonry wall was an alternative form of border found in Pompeian gardens. These walls are generally 40-50 cms in height and may have also functioned as a type of bench.<sup>62</sup> Though masonry walls would probably be much stronger, both fences and low stone walls would have functioned as barriers which would limit access to the garden and thus prevent people from trampling the plants of the garden, disturbing sculptures, or falling into shallow pools of water. In some gardens, curtains suspended from a pole between columns were put up to provide shade or to prevent drafts.<sup>63</sup> The entrance to the garden was usually located directly

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<sup>61</sup> e.g. at the House of the Centenary (IX.viii.6.) in Jashemski I (1979) 50.

<sup>62</sup> Farrar (1996) 12.

<sup>63</sup> Pliny *NH.* XIX.6.24, writes of a red curtain that was used to protect moss in a peristyle.

opposite that of a main dining room, and the space between the two columns which flanked this portal was often substantially larger than the space between the others. Decorative lattice and wooden fencing was also used to enclose planting beds; however, due to the ephemeral nature of these features, much of the evidence is derived from garden frescoes depicting these features and will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

Post holes found in close proximity to cavities formed by vine roots are proof of pergolas or arbours within the garden. Many Pompeian gardens had these structures as they functioned not only to support vines or ivy, but also represent an important source of shade. Evidence of the actual superstructure of these features is derived largely from garden paintings which show light frameworks of lattice or wood. Rows of post holes and cavities of vine roots were found at the House of Loreius Tiburtinus (II.ii.2; fig. 4, fig 5) indicating the presence of a pergola.

Often found in conjunction with pergolas were outdoor masonry *biclinia* or *triclinia* which utilized the shade that the canopy of vines produced. The *triclinium* was named after the three rectangular couches which were placed in a U-shaped formation around a low circular or rectangular table which was within reach of all of the diners. The couches are inclined with the tallest side positioned toward the center, and pillows were used to prop up the diners and to make them more comfortable. Several couches had a narrow shelf where drinking vessels could be conveniently placed. A *biclinium* refers to the layout whereby two dining couches are placed opposite each other. A well-preserved Pompeian example is found at the House of Loreius Tiburtinus (II.ii.2.), which was equipped with a water table, which was a pool of water set in between the diners upon which food could be floated and kept cool.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Farrar (1996) 15.

Many garden walls were decorated with colourful paintings (fig. 8), decorative brickwork, or with *nymphaea* or *aediculae*. The walls that enclosed the garden which backed onto a street are characterized by the addition of broken amphorae sherds along the upper edge to discourage thieves from jumping over the walls.

Features that were implemented for the conservation of water were regular components of gardens at Pompeii. For instance, gutters of stone or brick were used to collect run-off water from the roofs of the portico and to redirect the flow into cisterns.<sup>65</sup> The draw shafts of cisterns tend to be located along the periphery of the garden or inside the peristyle, and are usually covered with a plain or decorated disc. The construction of the aqueduct during the reign of Augustus revolutionized the art of gardening, for it meant that private households could now be supplied with water and that water features within the garden became a viable option. Water features such as water basins, fish ponds, *nymphaea*, and fountains were important symbols of wealth and were therefore regularly incorporated into gardens and lightwells in Pompeian dwellings. The presence of water within the garden context served as a constant reminder of the owner's wealth, for it showed that he could afford to maintain these central features by supplying them with a continuous flow of water.

Shallow water basins constructed of concrete were often covered with a waterproof painted plaster (fig 2). There are several basins in Pompeii that had their interiors painted with blue, and more elaborate ones which were adorned with marine scenes against a blue background. Once filled with water, these paintings would give the animated illusion of clear water and swimming fish. Some of the basins possessed breeding holes for fish along the sides of the basin, such as the one found at the House of Julia Felix (II.iv.7). Simple circles, squares or rectangles represent the most common shapes of basins. An elongated rectangular basin is often referred to as a *euripus* (fig. 4, fig. 5), a term taken

<sup>65</sup> Such a system is evident in the House of the Meleager (VI.ix.2).

from a narrow tidal channel in Greece. These water features were probably meant to evoke famous waterways such as the Nile, the Canopus or the Euripus.<sup>66</sup> Seneca suggests that some owners had holding tanks of water which, when released, were intended to simulate a tidal wave rushing up the estuary.<sup>67</sup> Rectangular basins with an appended semi-circular niche are also common in Pompeii. However, a small number of rectangular basins with interior walls shaped with apses or rectilinear niches or both, such as that found at the House of Meleager have also been discovered. The basins functioned as a main focal point of the garden, a source for water collection, and added moisture to the air. These basins may represent a development of the *impluvia* normally found in *atria*.<sup>68</sup>

In gardens where there was only limited space, it was necessary to incorporate scaled-down versions of water features. Aedicular *nymphaea* are usually centrally placed along the garden wall and tend to be located in gardens which lack a complete peristyle. They project from the wall and are characterized by their sloped roofs, pediments, and columnar facades. The arched entrance may correspond to a cave opening and allude to the sacred spring within. It is not unusual to find these *nymphaea* decorated with vibrant mosaics and shells, such as that found at the House of the Little Fountain (VI.viii.23). The water was pumped through a mask or simple fountain statue and subsequently poured over a flight of miniature steps, or fell directly into a collection basin. Though rare, facade *nymphaea* are also found in some Pompeian gardens. In many ways they resemble the aedicular *nymphaea*, but the facade is larger and is duplicated three times. The water spilling from the three niches is collected in a communal pool.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Cicero *De Legibus*. II.1.2. The House of Loreius Tiburtinus (II.ii.2.) and the House of Julia Felix (II.iv.7.) both have long canals, the latter of which is also traversed with bridges.

<sup>67</sup> Seneca *Ep.* XC.15.

<sup>68</sup> Farrar (1996) 21-22.

<sup>69</sup> An example of a facade *nymphaeum* is found at the House of the Little Bull (V.i.77).

Both circular (fig. 2) and straight pathways were important features of gardens. These narrow paths were usually delineated with hard packed earth, others were constructed of stones, pottery sherds, gravel and sand.<sup>70</sup> Many paths are circulatory or straight in nature, whereas others follow the contours of planting beds or lead the pedestrian to important features found within the garden.

Sunken gardens represent another form of landscaping found at Pompeii, such as that in the House of Anchor (VI.x.7; fig. 25). Due to the fact that this garden was one storey below ground level, one could only access it by climbing down a series of nine steps.<sup>71</sup> A cryptoporticus enclosed the garden on all four sides, above which was a colonnade which probably had a low wall. Together, the height of these features would not only have conveyed an impression of a two-storey house, but also would have kept the garden area damp and cool. Though quite rare, the sunken gardens at Pompeii perhaps foreshadow the imperial ones of the so-called 'Stadium' of the Domus Augustana in Rome, or of the 'stadium' of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli.<sup>72</sup>

In order to build on level ground, terraces and cryptoportici were often constructed to create a flat surface (fig. 24). Gardens were also planted on terraces, and in some cases tiered terraces were used to create sufficient water pressure to supply water features located on lower platforms. The gardens found at the Villa of the Mysteries near Pompeii and the House of the Stags at Herculaneum represent the only terraced examples found in this vicinity.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Farrar (1996) 14.

<sup>71</sup> Farrar (1996) 16.

<sup>72</sup> The garden at Hadrian's Villa was planted on an irregular terrain that was at a naturally lower altitude.

<sup>73</sup> Farrar (1996) 16.

Several ancient authors mention the presence of portable furniture such as tables and chairs in the garden and a few mosaics provide visual evidence.<sup>74</sup> However, it is only more permanent fixtures constructed of stone and marble that tend to have survived. At Pompeii, though several table bases have been preserved, the table tops, once constructed of wood, have not. Of the bases that do remain, some were of the monopodium variety, characterized by a single carved marble leg, or of a bipedal type which usually has two wide supporting decorative legs. Others have three slender carved legs which may be reminiscent of bronze or wooden tripods.<sup>75</sup>

#### Fountains

Fountains were a prominent feature in Roman gardens and were usually placed so that they were visible upon entering the *fauces* of the *domus*. They were constructed of stone or marble and vary tremendously in terms of shape and ornamentation. The most common type of fountain found in Pompeian gardens is the *labrum* type which is characterized by its simple rectangular basin surrounded by a lip. Crater-shaped fountains, which are both plain and elaborate, adorned with two handles and mounted on pedestals, are also quite common. Some of the bowl-shaped fountains have shallow basins, others are quite deep; many are fluted while others are not. Both round and rectangular basins are common. Similar to table bases, many fountains were supported by centrally placed monopodial bases, others were upheld by two solid widely-spaced bases, and still others were borne by three slender legs, reminiscent of tripods. Fountain statues from which

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<sup>74</sup> Statius, *Silvae*, III.86-8, mentions the presence of couches in the garden and the measures taken to preserve these pieces of furniture in the event of rain. The mosaic of Lord Julius from Carthage, now in the Bardo Museum in Tunis, has an illustration of a high backed wicker seat and a couch both set in an outdoor context.

<sup>75</sup> Farrar (1996) 15. A table with *trapezophori*, two wide supporting bases, was found beside the draw shaft of the cistern in the garden at the House of the Dioscuri (VI.ix.6). An example of the three legged type has been found at the House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1).

water poured were also important features of the garden. These took a variety of shapes and forms, such as the frog fountain at the Naples Museum.<sup>76</sup>

## DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

A wide range of ornamentation was an important feature of Pompeian gardens (fig. 2). These elements tend to consolidate the architectural and organic features of the garden. Though many decorations have been found *in situ* in gardens, their placement in this context has not always been well documented, and so literary sources and garden frescoes have often been consulted to determine their placement.

A sunny garden was an ideal location for the placement of sundials and to date approximately thirty have been revealed through excavations at Pompeii.<sup>77</sup> A basic sundial composed simply of an etched dial at the base of a column has been found in House VII.iv.57. More elaborate free-standing versions are usually constructed of stone or stucco-covered tufa and have a metal gnomon and dial scratched into the concave semicircular surface.<sup>78</sup> There are four basic types: spherical, conical, and planar (vertical and horizontal).<sup>79</sup>

There is also evidence that garden lights may have been permanent fixtures in some gardens, the inclusion of which would render the area functional even after sundown. A bronze statue of an ephebe from the House of the Ephebe (I.vii.10-12/19) had been modified into a *lynchnophoros* by placing *candelabra* in the palms of the figure. Brackets for garden lights had been installed on the animal painting at the House of Ceius Secundus

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<sup>76</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 105 fig. 167.

<sup>77</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 112.

<sup>78</sup> Farrar (1996) 36.

<sup>79</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 112.

(I.v.15) and masks with drilled eyes and open mouths which adorned the aedícula of the House of the Great Fountain (VI.viii.22) were also used to illuminate the garden. Most gardens, however, probably relied on small portable oil lamps for light.<sup>80</sup>

*Pinakes*, two-sided low relief marbles, are a popular form of garden ornament which are usually supported by marble posts adorned with foliage (fig. 23). They are geometric in form - rectangular, square or circular - and are framed with thick raised borders.<sup>81</sup> Traces of colour indicate that it was not uncommon for these objects to be painted with bold primary colours. A range of subject matter was illustrated on these reliefs, but Dionysiac themes are especially prevalent.<sup>82</sup>

Marble *oscilla* were hung from the center of the architrave between the intercolumnations of the peristyle in Roman gardens, often in conjunction with swags of garlands such as the House of the Golden Cupids (VI.xvi.7; fig. 2). They were suspended individually on a string or wire so that they could oscillate in the breeze, a practice that may have originated from the Greek tradition of displaying trophies on trees or in stoas.<sup>83</sup> Four types of *oscilla* have been found in Pompeian gardens including: masks, *peltae* (crescent shaped shields; fig. 20), *pinakes* (hanging rectangular reliefs), and *tondi* (circular shields; fig. 22). Excluding masks, *oscilla* usually have a narrow frame around their edges, and are sculpted in low relief on both surfaces. The diminutive shields often adorned with volutes or palmette designs are probably an imitation of shields which are commonly associated with Amazons in art.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 113.

<sup>81</sup> The Greek word for a wooden board is *pinax*. The thick band of marble framing the edges of this ornament may be an imitation of wooden originals.

<sup>82</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 124.

<sup>83</sup> Farrar (1996) 36.

<sup>84</sup> Farrar (1996) 36. See Jashemski II (1993) 351 fig. 413 for a detail of an *oscillum* of the *pelta* variety.

The masks are of both the comic and tragic variety and in the majority of cases are portrayed in a frontal manner and are constructed of marble (fig. 21). Masks of males and females have been found, both of which are characterized by their wide open mouths and large expressive eyes. Drilled holes are often used to delineate eyes and also indicate where jewelry would have been attached. Due to their association with the theater, masks tend to be associated with the Bacchic tradition.

### Statuary

Pompeians enlivened their gardens by placing a wide variety of garden sculptures around their properties. Typical Roman garden statuary included animals, genre figures, deities, theater subjects, characters associated with the entourage of Bacchus, and amorini.<sup>85</sup> Many of these sculptures are Hellenistic copies of Archaic and Classical originals. The majority of these statues were sculpted from white marble; however, several bronze, terracotta, alabaster, and coloured marble examples have also survived. The variety of materials available, and the mediocre quality of many of these statues, suggests that they were mass produced and thus were affordable to people of different incomes. An elaborate sculptural program juxtaposing an eclectic group of figures ranging from deities to small animals and children is visible at the House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1).

Sculptures depicting a wide array of both domesticated and wild animals, and statuettes of small plump children often shown holding animals and birds, were very popular in the *viridaria* of Pompeii. Amorini or small cupids also enliven these outdoor settings. The latter are quite similar to the statues of children except that they have wings and are usually adorned with bows and arrows. Fountain sculptures of the amorino-dolphin type and amorini shown with animals are also popular in this context.

Representations of ephebes, wrestlers, pharaohs, sphinxes, nymphs and river gods are

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<sup>85</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 7-8.

rare, but do occur within the garden context. Muses, Pan, hermaphrodites, Isis, Mercury, Omphale, Paris, and Pomona are examples of less frequently found statue types found at Pompeii.

Herms are another form of sculpture which were found in gardens (fig. 2, fig. 19). Herms are derived from the Greek statue type consisting of a bust, a shaft often adorned with male genitalia, and feet carved at the base. The shaft may or may not include a cross beam at the shoulder upon which cloaks were hung; however, Roman herms were occasionally sculpted with drapery. Eminent individuals were portrayed, including philosophers, heroes, historians, Hellenistic rulers, emperors, numerous deities, and idealized portraits of men, women, and children. Of the deities represented, those belonging to the *thiasos* were the most prevalent. It is not uncommon to find double or janiform herms, in which two busts facing opposite directions are placed on one shaft. Young individuals are often juxtaposed with old, satyrs with Maenads, males with females.<sup>86</sup>

Garlands were also a standard form of garden decoration largely due to the ready supply of materials such ivy, myrtle and grape leaves. Garlands were suspended in swags between the capitals of peristyle columns (fig. 2). Decorations such as *oscilla* were also hung from the centers of these garlands. Cato attests to the fact that garlands were regularly strewn across garden features such as shrines and sculptures during festive occasions such as the Kalends, Nones, and Ides.<sup>87</sup>

### Deities

The topic of religion in the garden has occupied scholars over the past few decades and thus the presence of sculptured deities within the context of the *hortus* has been closely

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<sup>86</sup> Farrar (1996) 35.

<sup>87</sup> Cato *De re rustica*. 143.2.

examined.<sup>88</sup> The repertory of garden art includes figures who are associated with particular garden deities, as well as some of their distinguishing attributes. The placement of these figures and respective attributes within the garden setting were meant to represent the presence of the god.

The Romans regarded Venus as the guardian of the *hortus* and it is highly plausible that a local cult devoted to the worship of Venus existed in Pompeii.<sup>89</sup> The sculptures of this deity render her in a classic standing pose and semi-nude. Statues of Venus Anadyomene binding up her hair, Venus emerging from a bath, and the hieratic Venus Pompeiana which is closely associated with religion have also been found in garden settings.<sup>90</sup> The House of the Ephebe (I.vii.10-12/19) has a statuette of Venus displayed on a circular base, and a light well located in the same house is decorated with a painting of Venus on a marble base. A nude Venus was also painted on the center panel of the rear garden wall directly in line with an alabaster statue of the same deity in the atrium of the *lupanar*.<sup>91</sup>

Both the Samnites and Romans recognized Mars as a god of war and agriculture and as the consort of Venus. His combined association with Venus and plant growth thus render him a suitable garden deity. He is easily recognized by his attributes: the shield, spear, and helmet, and at least two sculptures of him have been found in Pompeian

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<sup>88</sup> For a full discussion of the role of religion in the *hortus*, see Jashemski I (1979) 115-140 and Grimal (1969) 41-55.

<sup>89</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 124 fig. 195 is a photograph of an inscription etched into the shoulder of a vase found at Pompeii which attests to her role as protectress of gardens. The inscription reads: "*Presta mi sinceru(m): sic te amet qu(a)e custodit (h)ortu(m) Venus.*" Varro *RR.* I.6 and Pliny *NH.* IXX.50 state that Venus' domain is the garden. Jashemski I (1979) 124-125 cites various statuettes of Venus which could conceivably have functioned as cult objects.

<sup>90</sup> See Jashemski I (1979) 62 fig. 100, 125 fig. 197, and 127 fig. 200 for respective photographs.

<sup>91</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 125 figs. 200 and 201.

gardens, one of which was the marble statuette stationed in the mosaic aedicula at the House of the Scientist (VI.xiv.43).<sup>92</sup>

Several statues of Hercules have been found in both commercial and private Pompeian gardens. Adopted from the Greeks, Hercules was transformed into a Roman god, complete with Italic traits. One of his epithets was Hercules Cerealis, referring to his fertility and association with Ceres at Rome.<sup>93</sup> Statues of this deity include a seated bronze statuette, and several nude marble statuettes accompanied by his associated attributes: the club, lion skin, and the apples of the Hesperides.

Diana, the goddess of the hunt was an appropriate deity to be placed in the garden. According to Grimal, Roman gardens can be regarded as small scale imitations of her sacred rural groves, where the plants and trees correspond to the forest.<sup>94</sup> If such was the case, animal sculptures around the garden would represent the wild animals found in wooded landscapes. Several sculptures of this deity have been found in Pompeian domestic gardens. A marble statue, with an incense burner placed directly in front of it, has been discovered in the House of Queen Carolina (VIII.iii.14).<sup>95</sup> An archaic statue of Diana, found in conjunction with a shrine and altar, was also found in the peristyle of House VII.vi.3. Statues of this deity found at Pompeii usually illustrate her in full length drapery, sandals, and a crown, or in a short tunic.<sup>96</sup> Diana's brother Helios-Apollo has also been found in gardens. Characters involved in the myths that surround Apollo also appear in this context.

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<sup>92</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 128.

<sup>93</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 122. He is labelled as this on a tablet that was found in a sacred grove to Ceres at Agnone.

<sup>94</sup> Grimal (1969) 55.

<sup>95</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 131.

<sup>96</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 132 fig. 210.

Priapus, the son of Aphrodite and Dionysus, is the Greek god of fertility and the guardian deity of gardens, vineyards and herds. He is also the personification of male fertility. Statues of Priapus were usually constructed out of wood and therefore few have been preserved. These simplistic wooden statues often rendered his torso with a herm-like shaft and appear to have been the source of much ridicule by ancient sources.<sup>97</sup> From the Inn of the Gladiators (I.xx.1) a statue of a gladiator and Priapus have been recovered in which Priapus lifts up his garment to hold the produce derived from the garden while simultaneously exposing his ithyphallic penis.<sup>98</sup> A Priapic fountain statuette was also found at the House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1).<sup>99</sup> Both pieces are easily identified by the Phrygian caps adorning their heads and their oversized genitalia.

Although only a few statues of Dionysus in the round have been recovered from Pompeii, sculptures of members of the Bacchic entourage such as satyrs, Sileni and fauns are much more common. Satyrs, a class of woodland deities given to Bacchic revelry and lechery, are characterized as men with the horns, legs, sharply pointed ears, and tails of goats. Sileni are usually portrayed as old bearded satyrs who are illustrated in various stages of inebriation, often shown reclining, dancing, or sleeping. Attributes of Dionysus such as wineskins, drinking vessels, and musical instruments usually accompany these figures. The garden was regarded as an area conducive to recreation and relaxation, a setting in which Dionysiac imagery was considered particularly appropriate.

There is considerable evidence attesting to the worship of Sabazius in a large garden located at II.i.12. This garden contains an altar, a *sacellum*, graffiti, and various cult objects including statuettes, lamps, and two bronze mantic hands suggest that some form of worship occurred here. The hands were closely associated with the vegetation deity

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<sup>97</sup> Martial *Ep.* VI.73.

<sup>98</sup> Farrar (1996) 33.

<sup>99</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 156 fig. 177.

Sabazius, a Thracian-Phrygian god whose mystery cult gained popularity in the western world. Isis was another Eastern deity who was worshipped at Pompeii. Her temple, erected within a garden setting, combined with several paintings and a number of small lamps provide evidence of her mystery cult.<sup>100</sup>

## ORGANIC ELEMENTS

Although architectural and decorative elements were important features in the garden, it is the flowers, plants and trees that colour and enliven this outdoor space (fig. 2). Careful excavations of Pompeian *viridaria* reveal that they were inundated with a wide variety of flowers, plants and trees. Unfortunately, earlier excavators simply discarded soil samples containing important traces of pollen and spores, and did not carefully examine the earth for cavities left by small roots such as those left by vines. Pragmatic issues such as economics and food production for both sale and home consumption are factors that influenced the range of plants and trees found within the garden. The practical side of gardens is immediately apparent when one considers the great number of vegetable plots, vineyards and orchards that are incorporated into these contexts.

Perhaps early Roman gardens were solely concerned with the production of produce such as vegetables and spices which were used for both culinary and medicinal purposes, for, with the exception of poppies, few flowers are mentioned in ancient sources.<sup>101</sup> Yet, scented flowers eventually came to be highly regarded not only as a form of air freshener, but also in the lucrative production of oils and perfumes. Furthermore, many plants appear to have been grown in the garden for the sole purpose of producing decorative wreaths and garlands, which often incorporated seasonal fruits and flowers.

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<sup>100</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 135-137.

<sup>101</sup> Farrar (1996) 41.

Although actual remains are rare, ancient sources indicate that ivy, clipped box, acanthus, rosemary, myrtle, and laurel are frequently found in gardens.<sup>102</sup>

Spores and pollen confirming the presence of fruit trees have only been found for strawberries, chestnuts, olives, and grapes. However, painted versions and literary references to gardens attest to a much wider range of fruit trees, including lemon, pomegranate, plum, pear, almond, and cherry. A premium was also placed on trees that produced shade in Roman gardens, and for this reason, large plane trees were particularly esteemed by the ancient authors. Large plane trees were an indispensable component of the early Pompeian *hortus* as they rendered the garden a cool and comfortable area even during the peak temperatures of the day. However, when low, formal plantings became fashionable, curtains were substituted for shade trees.<sup>103</sup>

All of the evidence indicates that the plants grown in Pompeian gardens were indigenous to the Campanian region. Ancient authors mention mounds of plants and trees used solely for decorative purposes known as *opus topiarum*. These references are not inconsistent with many Pompeian gardens, such as those found at the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42) and the House of the Centenary (IX.viii.6) which have very formal plantings and are largely characterized by their architectural features and manicured planting beds edged with box, and bordered paths. This organized landscape is very minimalist and simplified in nature, and greatly contrasts the wild and overgrown gardens illustrated in the painted versions, to which we now turn.

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<sup>102</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 53.

<sup>103</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 53.

## CHAPTER 3: ELEMENTS OF GARDEN PAINTINGS

Garden paintings are characterized by their depiction of elements derived from both fantasy and reality. Fountains, trees, birds and flowers are ubiquitous and are found in even the most rudimentary examples. This chapter will enumerate and discuss the basic elements depicted in garden paintings and their derivation. The elements will be divided into three separate and distinct categories, namely architectural elements, decorative elements, and flora and fauna.

### ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Due to their strong horizontal and vertical lines, architectural features such as fences, masonry walls, and columns tend to function as the main defining elements of the garden paintings and are often employed to divide and frame the compositions. These structures provide visual cues, helping to direct the viewer's eyes to important features found within the painting. Architectural features used in conjunction with decorative and organic elements help to create a unified and realistic looking composition.

#### Fences and Masonry Walls

Fences are the most commonly depicted structures found in garden paintings. They function primarily as dividers between the real garden and the illusionary one painted in the background, separating fantasy from reality by functioning as a distinct line between the two. Fences are generally placed in the foreground and at the base of garden walls, and are often depicted with birds perched on them and with vegetation rising in the background (fig. 9, fig. 11).

There are several different types of fences illustrated in the paintings, ranging from reed structures to low masonry walls (fig. 27). The most prevalent fences are of the lattice type, which are usually painted in yellow on a black background; however, varying shades of red, yellow-orange, gold and brown are also used. These are probably meant to imitate the low woven trellis fences that were often employed by Pompeians to enclose their garden beds.<sup>104</sup> The construction of these fences varies in complexity. The majority are composed of simple cross-hatched patterns, such as that found in II.ix.6.,<sup>105</sup> while others, such as the one found in House of the Wedding of Alexander, are much more elaborate, exhibiting diamond, rectangular and pentagonal apertures through which foliage growing behind is immediately visible (fig. 6).<sup>106</sup> Lattice fences appear to have functioned primarily as a form of decoration and as garden dividers as opposed to sturdy barriers.<sup>107</sup>

Though less common, low masonry walls are also depicted in garden frescoes. These structures are much more substantial than the aforementioned ones. They appear to have formed solid boundaries, and were perhaps imitating the real ones constructed of limestone or marble which were used to prevent people from entering planting beds, or from falling into pools of water. The decoration found on the painted walls varies from simple solid low walls to ornately decorated ones, such as the low masonry wall of the House of the Arches (I.xvii.4), which has alternating intervals adorned with curvilinear and rectilinear patterns.<sup>108</sup> Some masonry walls are decorated with rectilinear apertures

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104 A. M. Ciarallo, "The Gardens of Pompeii," lecture notes issued during the Discovering Pompeii Exhibition in London (May 1992) 112.

105 Jashemski I (1979) 33.

106 Jashemski II (1979) 348 fig. 406.

107 Farrar (1996) 14.

108 Jashemski I (1979) 59 fig. 95.

through which greenery is seen.<sup>109</sup> In aesthetic terms, elaborately decorated stone walls are advantageous, as they tend not to obscure as much foliage as the plain solid walls. Nor is it unusual to have a garden painting adorned with both lattice fences and masonry walls. Both lattice fences and masonry walls are depicted in the garden paintings of the House of L. Caecilius Jucundus (V.i.26) and at Livia's Villa at Prima Porta near Rome (fig. 1). A garden painting in the Naples Museum (inv. no. 9705) represents the only garden painting from this area which exhibits a wooden fence, which forms a niche around a fountain and is decorated with triangular apertures quite similar to the ones found in VII.i.8.

Incorporated niches of a rectangular or semicircular variety are also visible in garden paintings. A single niche is usually centrally placed in the fence, while series of two or three niches also occur and are commonly placed symmetrically along the wall. Fountains, sculptures, and trees are occasionally placed in front of the fences in these niches (fig. 12, fig. 13). By placing a feature within a niche, the artist simultaneously framed it and drew attention to it by its prominent position within the composition. In addition to their function as frames, the angular and curvilinear niches provide an aesthetically pleasing alternative to the rigid straight lines often used to delineate fences and are also good for the suggestion of depth.

### Fountains

Fountains are the most common garden ornamentation depicted in Roman garden paintings and were an important feature since they were regarded as a symbol of wealth, a constant reminder that the proprietor could afford private access to a continuous flow of water. The presence of fountains provided members of the household with a ready supply of water instead of having to rely on water retrieval from public fountains. Furthermore,

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<sup>109</sup> Examples of rectangular apertures can be seen in the garden painting that decorates the *frigidarium* of the Stabian baths in Jashemski II (1993) 358 and fig. 6.

all evidence from Pompeii illustrates that fountains were carefully placed in the garden so that they were visible from important dining and reception rooms.<sup>110</sup>

Like real fountains, the painted fountains occupied a prominent focal point in the composition, affording them full visibility from principal rooms opening onto the garden (fig. 3). In this way, the painted fountains are visually reflective of those found in reality. For the most part, painted fountains are placed in front of the receding niches of the garden fences, so that the fountains appear to be in the foreground with the fence and the garden rising beyond. A single fountain tends to be located in the center of the composition, corresponding to a centrally placed niche (fig. 15). When there are several fountains depicted, they are placed symmetrically in niches along the garden wall. However, there are some examples of fountains that are depicted behind the fence as well (fig. 6). To achieve this effect, the fountains are painted directly above the painted fence and give the impression that they are actually located in the garden. By painting approximately two-thirds of the basin's interior, the artist not only achieves a three-dimensional effect, but also conveys the impression that the fountains are being viewed from a standing position.

It is certain that the fountains depicted in the paintings are derived from actual fountains found in Roman gardens. Not only do they correspond to real fountains in terms of placement, but they also imitate the colour, shapes, and jetting water typical of real *labra*. The painted white fountains imitate the marble used in the construction of real fountains, the majority of which have blue jets of water spilling out into the basins. Simulated reality was achieved in the case of the House of the Fountain of Love (IX.ii.7) where there was a crater-shaped fountain from which painted water flowed; an actual jet of water supplied through an open crevice and fell into a pool located in front of it.<sup>111</sup> Fountains are usually adorned with one or two preening birds perched on the rim.

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<sup>110</sup> Farrar (1996) 23.

<sup>111</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 365.

There are several different types of fountains illustrated in the frescoes; however, they vary tremendously in terms of shape and ornamentation, and tend not to be quite as elaborate as the ones found in reality. Due to the wide variety of combinations of basin types and bases, it is useful to discuss each component separately. The most prevalent fountain depicted is the basic *labrum* type, which is characterized by a flat rim surrounding the basin. Crater-shaped fountains adorned with two handles are also particularly common. Some of the bowl-shaped fountains have shallow basins, others are quite deep; many are fluted while others are not. The majority of fountains have round basins, but rectangular ones are occasionally illustrated. Most are footed and are frequently placed on slender pedestals, foliated bases (fig. 9), a tripod consisting of elegant legs, or are upheld by some sort of figural base.<sup>112</sup> Most fountains found in garden paintings were of the monopodial variety, supported by a single centrally placed base as opposed to the fountains supported on legs.

Winged sphinxes and water nymphs are the most common statue bases, followed by centaurs. The sphinxes and centaurs are usually portrayed in a crouched position and have their wings either extended or retracted into the body. Sphinxes also tend to be either tall and slender or short and squat. When two fountains are supported by sphinxes or centaurs, they are either placed back to back and with their heads and torsos turned to face the garden or are placed at each side of the composition facing one another.<sup>113</sup> Nymphs are generally standing; however, a garden fresco from VII.i.8 depicts a reclining one. Square rimmed fountains are closely associated with figural bases such as centaurs and sphinxes, whereas round basins are more frequently supported by water nymphs. There is

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<sup>112</sup> A good example of a foliated base is depicted in the garden painting of the House of the Epigrams (V.i.18).

<sup>113</sup> This back-to-back pose is illustrated in the House of the Arches (I.xvii.4) and can be seen in Jashemski I (1979) 59 fig. 95.

a painting of a nude male statue carrying a club who is leaning on some sort of object from which flows a stream of water flows in IX.ii.7. This represents the only form of fountain-statue illustrated in the garden paintings of Pompeii.

### Garden Structures

There are relatively few garden structures illustrated in the paintings. However, it appears that the Romans also used latticework to construct arbours, arches, trellises, pergulae and pavilions.<sup>114</sup> These structures are paralleled in some of the paintings.<sup>115</sup> Clinging ivy and vines are entwined around these delicate structures forming shady areas within the garden. Archaeological evidence such as cavities from wooden posts support the existence of such structures in garden contexts. The garden paintings which adorn the House of M. Vesonius Primus (VI.xiv.20) have two curious tholos-shaped rooms constructed of latticework painted in the foreground.<sup>116</sup> Wooden pavilions are reported to have been depicted in the frescoes of the House of the Laocoon (VI.xiv.30) and the House of Appuleia and Narcissus (VI.xv.2). Archaeological reports mention that a tripod encircled by columns was once visible in a garden painting located in the House of the Hunt (VII.iv.48).<sup>117</sup>

### Columns

Columns are found in several of the garden paintings at Pompeii; however, it is often difficult to discern what type of column is depicted because the capitals have not been

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<sup>114</sup> Farrar (1996) 14.

<sup>115</sup> Arches and lattice trellises are shown in the garden frescoes of the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42) in Jashemski II (1993) 352 and 357. A *pergula* is depicted in the House of the Centenary (IX.viii.6) in Jashemski I (1979) 32. Arches are shown in the House of the Arches (I.xvii.4) in Jashemski I (1979) 31.

<sup>116</sup> This house is also referred to as the House of Orpheus.

<sup>117</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 80.

preserved. Ionic columns are clearly visible in the fresco from the House of the Ephebe (I.vii.10-12/19). The painted columns of the House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5; fig. 11) have a decorative band at the top of the column shaft, directly beneath a nondescript capital.

Columns generally take the form of long, slender uprights, commencing at the base of the painting and concluding with a capital at the top of the composition. According to excavation reports, engaged pilasters were also depicted in the House of L. Caecilius Jucundus and the House of the Little Fountain (VI.viii.23).<sup>118</sup> Painted columns are located at evenly spaced intervals throughout the painting, commencing at the edges. This placement enables the columns to function as frames and to divide the composition into panels, an arrangement which is evident on the north and south walls of the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42).<sup>119</sup> The columns are used by artists to create effectively a *trompe-l'oeil* effect. Painted columns correspond to the real columns which constitute the portico of the peristyle gardens and are meant to appear as a continuation of the peristyle.<sup>120</sup> In some compositions, painted pilasters and columns are joined to low masonry walls or lattice fences. The slender posts on the east wall of the painting found in the House of the Wedding of Alexander are joined together with a fence.<sup>121</sup> Painted columns are commonly seen in conjunction with hanging garlands amid which *oscilla* are occasionally suspended. Garlands strewn from the column capitals are clearly seen in the garden painting of the House of the Ephebe (I.vii.10-12/19).<sup>122</sup> This juxtaposition of

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<sup>118</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 343-344.

<sup>119</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 357 fig. 418.

<sup>120</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 316 refers to painted columns in the House of the Ephebe and in the House of Sallust (VI.ii.3-5).

<sup>121</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 352 fig. 415.

<sup>122</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 58 fig. 93.

elements appears to form an effective decorative border at the top of the painted panel (fig. 11).

The illusionary columns are usually painted white, imitating the marble construction of real columns; however, there are a few examples of red and yellow columns.<sup>123</sup> Real columns are occasionally found painted as if to incorporate them into the scene; for instance, the engaged columns from the House of the Epigrams (V.i.18.) were painted with a red dado decorated with small flowers and plants, the upper half of which were enlivened with birds and climbing ivy. Another example was seen in the House of the Pygmies (IX.v.9.) in which the real columns were furnished with birds, garlands and branches covered with leaves.<sup>124</sup>

The two garden paintings that accompany the *paradeisos* scene from the House of the Hunt (VII.iv.48) each have a tripod encircled by a row of columns (fig. 14). There are three Ionic columns supporting an elaborate roof which forms a small garden structure. To date, no structural parallels have been found in reality. Perhaps it represents a small garden shrine typically found in garden settings.

## DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

### *Pinakes*

Painted *pinakes*, imitations of the two-sided low relief marbles that adorned real gardens, are a popular form of ornamentation found in the garden paintings of Pompeii. The painted imitations often have a white background which resembles marble; however, red backgrounds are common as well. They are usually rectangular in shape, but

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<sup>123</sup> Red columns are evident in the garden painting decorating the House of Adonis (VI.vii.18). Yellow columns are visible on the garden fresco from the House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1).

<sup>124</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 366.

occasionally circular or square ones are depicted.<sup>125</sup> Illustrated with thick borders framing the edges of the diminutive compositions, none of the *pinakes* are the same. Three of them have semi-nude reclining women, one of whom is shown with a tambourine. Egyptian motifs, masks, and animals such as bulls and lions are also pictured on *pinakes*. In the majority of illustrations the *pinakes* are supported by marble bases in the form of posts, columns or herms. Several of the *pinakes* painted in the House of the Wedding of Alexander are mounted on herms of female youths or male fauns (fig. 6).<sup>126</sup> The bottom of these bases appear to be staked into the ground and are covered with low lying foliage.

In other cases, the *pinakes* are depicted in the upper zones of the wall painting, positioned amid trellis-like structures or on top of walls (fig. 11).<sup>127</sup> Regardless of the horizontal positioning of *pinakes*, they tend to occupy a central position in the picture panel, surrounded by wildlife or flanked by ornaments such as amphorae. When more than one is illustrated in a painting, they are placed symmetrically in the composition and are often used to flank objects such as fountains. A painting from the Naples Museum (inv. no. 9760) depicts a rectangular relief decorated with a mask framed by a receding apse of a lattice fence.<sup>128</sup>

### *Oscilla*

*Oscilla* are among the most prolific kinds of garden ornamentation found in frescoes. Like real marble *oscilla*, painted ones are shown hanging from the architrave

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<sup>125</sup> Round *pinakes* are illustrated on the south wall of the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42) and can be seen in Jashemski II (1993) 354 fig. 418. Square shaped *pinakes* are found on the painting adorning the same house on the west wall of the garden.

<sup>126</sup> Jashemski believes that the *pinakes* in this painting stand behind each herm. See Jashemski II (1993) 348 fig. 406 and 349 fig. 407.

<sup>127</sup> Farrar (1996) 36. This composition is also visible in the upper fragments of the painting on the east garden wall of the House of the Wedding of Alexander. See Jashemski II (1993) 352 fig. 414.

<sup>128</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 381.

between the painted columns, oscillating in the breeze.<sup>129</sup> The four varieties of *oscilla* which occur in reality are also rendered in Pompeian garden paintings. The most common are masks, *peltae* (crescent shaped shields), *pinakes* (hanging rectangular reliefs), and *tondi* (circular shields; fig. 7).<sup>130</sup>

The masks illustrated are of both the comic and tragic variety and in the majority of cases are portrayed in a frontal manner. The faces of the masks are white, with large open mouths, expressive eyes, and long locks of straight or curly dark hair (fig. 9). Like the real marble masks, the pupils of the eyes in the theater mask from VI. Insula Occid. 42 appear to have been drilled out (fig. 6).<sup>131</sup> Both males and females are depicted, the latter slightly more often, and are sometimes adorned with earrings and cloth bands in their hair.<sup>132</sup> Several masks have wreaths of vine leaves, in the Bacchic tradition, and a mask of Dionysus is represented in a fresco which decorates one of the garden walls of the House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5).

*Pinakes* which are categorized as *oscilla* are essentially the same as the *pinakes* described above except that they are shown suspended, not mounted on a support. They also appear to be somewhat smaller and lighter, which would have made them more suitable for hanging. Suspended *pinakes* were visible in a garden painting in the House of L. Caccilius Jucundus (V.i.26) prior to its destruction.<sup>133</sup> Circular-shaped *oscilla* known as *tondi* are the most common form of *oscilla* preserved in the garden frescoes. These

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<sup>129</sup> Painted *oscilla* suspended from an architrave can be seen in the garden paintings from the House of Orpheus (VI.xiv.20).

<sup>130</sup> A *tympanum* hangs from the top center of a painting in the House of the Skeleton (III.3) in Herculaneum. This represents the only example of a *tympanum* in the garden paintings.

<sup>131</sup> See Jashemski I (1979) 82 fig. 132.

<sup>132</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 82 fig. 132.

<sup>133</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 334.

disks are decorated with an array of motifs including masks and dancing satyrs, and one has a representation of the head of Medusa.

Painted *oscilla* are located near the top of the composition, corresponding to their placement in reality, hanging between the columns of the portico. They are suspended from a rope or a wire, originating from the central apex of the *oscillum* and rising above it where it disappears in a hanging garland or behind an architrave.<sup>134</sup> They tend to be hung individually at equally spaced intervals along the intercolumnation, and in this way provide visual cues which help to delineate panel divisions.

### Statues

Reflecting reality, Pompeians enlivened their garden paintings by illustrating a wide variety of garden sculptures in their compositions. The majority of these statuettes are painted white, imitating the marble used in real ones; however, several painted versions imitating bronze, terracotta, and coloured marble are also found. In addition to the statuary found in real gardens such as animals, genre figures, deities, theater subjects, characters associated with the entourage of Bacchus, and amorini, garden paintings also included deities of the Roman pantheon, draped figures, Egyptian deities (fig. 11), characters from Roman mythology, woodland spirits, Nereids, Tritons, amorini, hunters, fishermen, a boy with a lance, and pygmies.<sup>135</sup> However, the range of sculpture depicted in Pompeian garden frescoes is much narrower than that found in reality. For instance, small statuettes of boys with ducks and animal sculptures have been found in many of the actual gardens; none, however, are visible in the garden paintings. This may simply be an accident of preservation, or it may reflect a certain hierarchy of forms, meaning that when artists had a

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<sup>134</sup> Farrar (1996) 36.

<sup>135</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 7-8.

limited amount of space in which to illustrate an image, they were forced to be selective and only included statues that were regarded as the most important. When the painted sculptures are meant to imitate reality, they are displayed on circular or quadrangular statue bases, like statues found in the garden. However, in mythological scenes, the deities depicted are not meant to represent a form of garden ornamentation and are therefore not shown with bases.

### Deities

Venus is the most commonly pictured deity in the garden paintings at Pompeii. A nude Venus was painted on the center panel of the rear garden wall directly in line with an alabaster statue of the same deity in the atrium of the *lupanar* (I.xi.6).<sup>136</sup> A statuette of Venus of the Fréjus type is painted standing in front of a fence on the west garden wall of II.ix.6.<sup>137</sup> A semi-nude statuette of a female figure similar in appearance to Venus is shown on a rectangular base in a garden painting which adorns VII.ii.14.<sup>138</sup> The House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3; fig. 8) derives its name from a magnificent painting which decorates the rear wall of the garden and is one of the most renowned garden paintings unearthed at Pompeii thus far. A reclining Venus is illustrated here, conveyed on a seashell with a veil billowing behind her and with two amorini in attendance. Aside from earrings, a gold coloured necklace, a bracelet and anklets, she is completely nude. This scene recalls her birth myth in which she rises from the foam of the sea. With the exception of the latter painting, the actual sculptures of Venus and the painted versions of this deity are similar in that they both depict her in a classic standing pose and semi-nude. There are no painted

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<sup>136</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 125 figs. 200 and 201.

<sup>137</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 332-333 fig. 385.

<sup>138</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 62 fig. 100.

parallels for the statuettes of Venus Anadyomene binding up her hair, Venus emerging from a bath, or the hieratic Venus Pompeiana associated with religion.<sup>139</sup> The myrtle tree is one of her attributes and is often illustrated in the garden settings where painted statuettes of her are located.

A statue of Mars is preserved in only one garden painting at Pompeii, painted on the East panel of the back garden wall at the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3; fig. 10). The statue is shown standing on an elevated rectangular column base, with drapery tossed around his neck, leaving the rest of his naked body exposed. He is also adorned with his attributes: a spear, shield, and helmet.<sup>140</sup>

Diana, the goddess of the hunt is often found in conjunction with scenes illustrating rural life. Unlike the small sculptures of animals that accompany statues of Diana in reality, aside from birds, wild animals are not present in compositions containing this figure. A painting that once decorated the south garden wall of the House of Apollo (VI.vii.23) had a statue of Diana with a quiver in her right hand and a bow in her left, standing in the middle of a pool, surrounded by a wide variety of birds and waterfowl.<sup>141</sup> Unfortunately, the excavation reports do not specify what type of clothing she was dressed in.

Unlike sculptures, no Priapic paintings have been found in gardens of a purely domestic nature. A large garden located in the House of the Birii (II.i.12) in which the worship of the Thracian-Phrygian god Sabazius took place, had a cursory painting of Priapus situated just to the side of the entrance. The west garden wall of the *caupona* of Euxinus (I.xi.10-11) also has an ithyphallic Priapus painted on it. According to

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<sup>139</sup> For a photograph of Venus Anadyomene see Jashemski I (1979) 125 fig. 197 and 198; for Venus emerging from a bath see Jashemski I (1979) 127 fig. 200. Jashemski I (1979) 126 fig. 196 shows a fresco from a shop sign of the felter Vercundus on the Via dell' Abbondanza (IX.vii.5-7) which illustrates a robed Venus with a crown on her head.

<sup>140</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 128.

<sup>141</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 341-342.

Jashemski, the ithyphallic Priapus was often included in paintings of gardens because of his dual function as a garden custodian and as a scarecrow.<sup>142</sup> Virgil attests to Priapus' role in gardens, portraying him as a guardian equipped with a willow pruning hook, warding off birds and common thieves.<sup>143</sup> Panel four of the fresco decorating the west wall of the Gladiatorial Barracks (V.v.3) also has a painting of a statuette of Priapus shown near an altar.

There are several deities worshipped in Pompeian gardens which are not reflected in the garden compositions. For instance, contrary to the large number of statues of Hercules found in real *viridaria*, only two garden paintings have depictions of this god, both of which are found in *lararia* and show Hercules with pigs.<sup>144</sup> There are no painted parallels for the mantic hands associated with the mystery cult of Sabazius. Similarly, no allusions to the worship of Isis are found in the garden paintings from Pompeii.

### Woodland Spirits

Although ancient sources attest to the popularity of the worship of Dionysus, and themes and imagery traditionally associated with him are found in art, to date no sculptures and only one painting of the god himself have been discovered at Pompeii.<sup>145</sup> One must be cautious not to be over zealous in an interpretation of the scant material evidence. Despite the fact that there are no painted representations of Dionysus, figures associated with his myths are commonly depicted in garden frescoes, including satyrs, Sileni, fauns, and members of the Bacchic entourage (fig. 15). These painted figures reflect the range of

<sup>142</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 175.

<sup>143</sup> Virgil *Georgics*. 4.111. Jashemski I (1979) 175.

<sup>144</sup> One of these paintings is found in the *lararium* of a small aedicula in the house to the west of the House of the Silver Wedding, and the other is found in the kitchen *lararium* of House VII.iv.26.

<sup>145</sup> A *lararium* from the House of the Centenary (IX.viii.6) has a painting of Dionysus crowned with vine leaves.

sculpture found in Pompeian gardens, and are illustrated in various stages of inebriation, or shown reclining, dancing, or sleeping and are accompanied by attributes of Dionysus.<sup>146</sup> A syrinx and a tambourine represent the only examples of musical instruments found in garden paintings, both of which are found in conjunction with the figures mentioned above.<sup>147</sup>

### Genre figures

Although the Campanians loved to adorn their gardens with statuettes of children holding animals and birds, these genre figures are not depicted in Pompeian garden frescoes. A youth holding a lance is preserved in the garden painting at the House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V.iv.a/11) and represents the only human found in garden scenes. However, amorini or small cupids are commonly found in these paintings. Like the real sculptures, these children of Venus are usually equipped with bows and arrows.<sup>148</sup> Though popular in reality, fountain sculptures of the amorino-dolphin variety and amorini with animals are not depicted in garden frescoes, but a flying amorino is found on the east wall of I.ix.5. It seems that it would be much easier to convey the impression of flight in a painting than with a three-dimensional sculpture, and this perhaps explains why such action is not portrayed in the real statuettes.

Exotic foreign figures, particularly Egyptian-like statues are also included in the repertory of garden paintings. For instance, a seated pharaoh is visible in the garden fresco that decorates the House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5; fig. 11) and a poorly preserved

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<sup>146</sup> A reclining Silenus with a wine skin is painted on the west garden wall of House VII.vii.10/13.

<sup>147</sup> A tambourine and Silenus are visible in a garden painting from the House of the Epigrams (V.i.18). The ceiling of the House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5) contained representations of musical instruments amidst Dionysiac symbols.

<sup>148</sup> A garden painting from the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3; fig. 8) is adorned with two amorini, one of which is shown riding a dolphin.

Egyptian figure has also been identified in a composition that adorns one of the walls in the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42). The now destroyed garden painting from the House of the Amazons (VI.ii.14) had representations of the well known Egyptian deities including Isis, Osiris, and Harpocrates.<sup>149</sup>

Technically, pygmies are a mythical race of dwarfs described by ancient authors as inhabiting Ethiopia or India. The north garden wall of VII. Insula Occid.16-19 had a pygmy painting, as did the House of the Chariot (VII.ii.25). A Nilotic scene, complete with a pygmy holding a lance and shield chasing a crocodile, and a female pygmy holding a basket in close proximity to a hippopotamus, decorated the east wall of the portico of VIII.ii.34.<sup>150</sup> A marble statuette of a standing pygmy leaning against the trunk of a tree was found at the House of Oppius (Gratus) (IX.vi.5-7) and represents the only real sculpture depicting this subject matter.<sup>151</sup> Perhaps Pompeian artists felt that a painting was a better medium for portraying a nilotic scene as opposed to a small garden lacking sufficient room for an *euripus*.<sup>152</sup>

## Garlands

Painted garlands are depicted in well over twenty percent of the Pompeian garden paintings. Excellent examples of painted garlands are visible in the compositions from the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42; fig. 7). Aside from hooks located along the architrave of peristyles, no material evidence of real garlands have survived; thus, garden paintings provide insight regarding the nature of these decorative features. Garlands, shown most often suspended in swags between the capitals of the

<sup>149</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 340.

<sup>150</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 209.

<sup>151</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 238.

<sup>152</sup> A real *euripus* has been unearthed in the garden of the House of Loreius Tiburtinus (II.ii.2).

painted columns, functioned as framing devices along the tops and sides of the painted panels. The myrtle garland outlining the base of a garden wall in a painting from the House of Romulus and Remus (VII.vii.10/13; fig. 15) serves to articulate this architectural feature. Decorative elements such as *oscilla* are shown in conjunction with garlands, either hanging from, above, below, or in between the painted swags. Garlands are also shown adorning the delicate necks of female herms in the garden paintings from the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42; fig 6), reminiscent of a common practice on festive occasions.

### Herms

Herms represent another form of sculpture illustrated in garden scenes. The three best preserved herms are depicted in the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42; fig. 6), which show two female busts and one male faun, all composed of round-faced busts supported by long rectangular posts with small cross beam extending slightly from the shoulders. The girls have long brown hair and garlands around their necks, while the red-haired faun has a long curly mustache and beard. Due to the fact that they were illustrated in two dimensions, unlike sculpture in the round, the viewer would not have an opportunity to walk around the herms. This explains why the popular janiform herms of real gardens are not depicted in garden paintings and is the reason that they are shown in frontal view only.

### Miscellaneous motives

*Candelabra*, a form of decorative, attenuated columns, have only been reported in the garden frescoes which adorned House I.ii.17, where each of the narrow panels that framed the garden paintings were decorated with a slender *candelabrum*. These features are

used strictly as ornamentation in wall paintings and have no parallels in real Pompeian gardens.

Vitruvius first used the word *xenia*, meaning "guest gifts" to describe a type of small still-life paintings depicting the food that a Greek host would provide guests on festive occasions.<sup>153</sup> Representations of *xenia* were incorporated into the garden painting that decorated the *viridarium* of House V.iv.1.<sup>154</sup> To date, these are the only examples of *xenia* recorded. Unfortunately, however, the excavation reports provide no details regarding what images were painted in them. *Xenia* have been found in several mosaics which decorate *triclinia* floors; however, none have been found in a garden setting.

Ornamental vessels are seen in several garden frescoes, where they often occupy a central focal point in a symmetrical composition. The urns and amphorae illustrated range from tall, narrow bottle-shaped containers to wide rimmed goblet-shaped vessels and are shown standing on fences, pedestals, or trellis-like supports (fig. 7).<sup>155</sup> The variety of shapes and sizes found in the paintings reflect many of those found in actual gardens.<sup>156</sup> In reality, terra cotta planting pots are typically found in garden excavations; however, the pragmatic nature of these vessels does not appear to have been a desirable component of garden paintings as no parallels exist in the compositions. Rather, most of the painted objects are silver or gold in colour, imitating metallic vessels and are occasionally found encrusted with jewels. Jewel-encrusted *urcei* are closely associated with the worship of Isis.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ling (1991) 154.

<sup>154</sup> A. Sogliano, *NSc* (1901) 256.

<sup>155</sup> A garden painting from House I.ii.17 has an illustration of an amphora, and the garden scene from the House of the Fruit Orchard includes a picture of an urn.

<sup>156</sup> A jewel encrusted *urceus* is illustrated in House I.ix.5. The shop-house garden located at I.xx.5 contained several vessels including an amphora and a terra cotta *urceus*.

<sup>157</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 320.

## FLORA

The flora depicted in the Pompeian garden paintings are indigenous to Campania, and some of the more skillfully executed paintings exhibit detailed renditions of the plants, which enable botanists and scholars to accurately identify them.

### Flowers

Flowers generally occupy a lower frontal position in the garden paintings. This position ensures that they are not obscured by the taller bushes and trees which rise behind them (fig. 6). The hierarchical positioning helps to reveal the colour and detail of the smaller and more delicate features of the garden. The vibrant tones of the flowers, including red, yellow, pink, white, blue, orange, and violet stand out against the green foliage and contribute colour to the composition. Clumps of flowers are usually arranged along the base of the composition or above the painted fences, as if they are growing in the enclosed garden bed. If flowers are shown in front of the fence, they are strategically placed around the bases of fountains, statues and herms so as to draw the attention of the viewer to the colour and in doing so highlight the importance of these decorative features.

Flowers are generally depicted in one of two stages, in full blossom or, less commonly, in bud, both of which are shown in profile or open faced. It is rare to find a closed flower. Perhaps the artists were only interested in depicting idealized gardens in their full glory or in illustrating an imaginary garden during daylight hours. The garden frescoes that decorate the House of the Wedding of Alexander display the broadest variety of flowers, including chamomiles, Madonna lilies, corn poppies, and morning glories.

### Shrubs

Bushes and shrubs are found in profusion, located above the flowers and beneath the trees. They tend to flesh out the composition by acting as an intermediary between the tall trees and the low lying flowers (fig. 6). Both flowering and non-flowering varieties are depicted. The shrubbery contributes many shades of green to the paintings; however, the bright colours of bushes in bloom prevent this verdant background from becoming too monotonous. Oleanders represent the most prolific type of bush depicted in Pompeian garden frescoes and are visible in a approximately one quarter of them. The myrtle is also quite prevalent in these scenes, occurring in more than ten percent of the illustrations. Their frequency in garden frescoes reflect their wide cultivation in the region of Pompeii. Also included in the paintings are viburnums, hart's tongue fern, rose bushes, acacia, and ivy. Topiary mounds of ivy are often shown flanking a fountain or framing an architectural feature, as in the garden painting from the House of Romulus and Remus (VII.vii.10/13; fig. 15). As in reality, arbours laden with climbing vines are also found in garden frescoes.<sup>158</sup>

### Trees

There are more types of trees found in garden frescoes than there are flowers or shrubs. For the most part, they are located in the background and appear to be growing behind the garden enclosures. The foliage of tall trees serves to fill in the composition on the top half of the painted panels. The House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5; fig. 11) preserves the widest variety of tree *genera*.

Although lemon trees, fig trees, plum trees and pear trees are widely cultivated in Campania, they appear only once in the Pompeian paintings.<sup>159</sup> Other fruit-bearing trees

<sup>158</sup> The House of Castor and Pollux (VI.ix.6-7) and the House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5) have traces of arbours.

<sup>159</sup> These trees are only depicted in the garden paintings which adorn the House of the Fruit Orchard (fig. 11).

found in garden paintings include cherry trees, strawberry trees, pomegranate, and apple trees. Fruit trees, an important source of food, were often grown in large orchards in Pompeii.<sup>160</sup> However, like vineyards, neither type of commercial garden is depicted in the garden frescoes.<sup>161</sup> Flowering species of trees, such as the Grecian laurel, whose blossoms and green foliage was used to make garlands, are found in many scenes, reflecting their widespread use in Pompeii. Date palms are the most frequently occurring trees, found in approximately ten percent of the garden frescoes. They tend to be shown with the lower branches removed from their thick fibrous trunks, with only the new growth left at the top, reflecting contemporary maintenance of these trees. Umbrella pines, cypress trees, and plane trees which were particularly prevalent in real gardens are found in only a few compositions. Plane trees, esteemed because of their ability to produce shade, were an integral part of Pompeian gardens. However, the pragmatic nature of such a tree had no place in decorative garden paintings.

## FAUNA

### Birds

Birds are seen in profusion in Pompeian garden frescoes (fig. 6). They are not confined to one area of the painted panels, but rather are found throughout the compositions, often filling in empty spaces in the pictures. They are commonly shown flying through the air, preening themselves on fountain rims, walking along the ground, eating, and perched on trees, bushes, fences and walls.<sup>162</sup> Both large and small birds are depicted; however, the former are generally confined to the lower sections of the scenes.

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<sup>160</sup> Evidence of a large orchard has been found in I.xxii. For a detailed description of this orchard see Jashemski II (1993) 73.

<sup>161</sup> The significance of these exclusions will be addressed in Chapter 6.

<sup>162</sup> A similar motif depicting birds perched on a fountain rim, preening themselves or drinking water may be derived from a Hellenistic model, a mosaic by Sosus of Pergamon.

Their wide variety of size, shapes, colours, and poses serve to enliven the garden scenes and in doing so add a sense of movement and realism to the paintings. The birds that are preserved in the garden frescoes reflect the types of birds that would have been present in the countryside of Campania.<sup>163</sup>

Among the larger birds, peacocks and egrets are the most commonly portrayed, appearing in at least ten percent of the garden scenes. Other large birds preserved in the paintings include flamingos, cattle egrets, black terns, and gallinaceous birds such as storks, herons, and ibises. Large birds tend to occupy the lower parts of the composition and function as a visual cue, directing the viewer's eyes to important features of the garden. Thus, the heron facing a fountain basin in the garden painting from the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3; fig. 9) is intended to draw the viewer's attention to the water feature.

Smaller birds are even more ubiquitous than the larger ones. The domesticated pigeon and the golden oriole are equally common, appearing in nine of the frescoes.<sup>164</sup> Other birds depicted in the garden scenes are: a mynah, songbirds, partridges, rock partridges, ducks, eagles, little owls, hooded crows, and quails. Also included are chickens, jays, swallows, shrikes, nightingales, black-eared wheatears, bustards, house sparrows, magpies, doves, turtledoves, tawny owls, blackbirds, and song thrushes.

### Humans and Animals

Unlike many of the gardens upon which the scenes are based, the absence of humans is characteristic of garden paintings. The same is true of animals, which are kept to a minimum. Household pets which probably inhabited real gardens are not incorporated into the compositions. While many wild animals occur in hunt scenes and *paradeisoi* (fig. 14), with the exception of snakes, few are found in frescoes depicting garden scenes.

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<sup>163</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 8.

Snakes are usually shown teasing birds, coiling around tree trunks, and slithering across the ground.<sup>165</sup>

Although these individual elements are rendered in a realistic and easily recognizable form, their existence is in no way an accurate reflection of what one would find in real Pompeian gardens. To be sure, the range of elements illustrated in the compositions is much narrower than that which occurs in reality (i.e. no vegetable gardens are depicted in the paintings, but these were often planted in gardens). The elements that are included in the paintings are painted versions of real features found in the garden and must attest to their prevalence if not their perceived importance. Perhaps some of the features commonly found in gardens that do not occur in the frescoes were regarded as too intricate, mundane, or difficult to convey in a two dimensional painting. Regardless, it appears that the artists sought only to paint idealized gardens and therefore ignored the more realistic and utilitarian aspects of Pompeian gardens.

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<sup>165</sup> An egret teasing a snake is visible in the garden painting from the House of Adonis (VI.vii.18).

## CHAPTER 4: COMPOSITION OF GARDEN PAINTINGS

To analyze the composition of any painting it is necessary to examine its constituent elements, such as the arrangement of shapes, colours, and lines. The individual elements discussed in the previous chapter do not work in isolation of one another, but rather are selected and carefully arranged within the painted panel to produce a symbiotic composition. The actual composition of the garden paintings will form the primary focus of this chapter and both large field type paintings and smaller syncopated versions will be discussed. I shall also consider the use of perspective, light, and colour within the frescoes.

### Garden Paintings and the Four Styles of Pompeian Painting

The composition of garden paintings was constantly changing, undergoing a wide series of developments that probably reflect the changes occurring in the transition from Third to Fourth style wall paintings. It is necessary to examine the garden frescoes within the larger framework of the four styles of Pompeian wall painting.<sup>166</sup> The Second style of Pompeian painting is characterized chiefly by its imitation of architectural forms and the illusion of three-dimensional surfaces.<sup>167</sup> The impression conveyed by paintings of the

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<sup>166</sup> A. Mau suggested that all Pompeian wall paintings could be categorized into one of four chronological styles based on the combinations of patterns, colours, and motifs which occur in the compositions. While the validity of Mau's theory has been challenged, most scholars agree that there is sufficient evidence to support the four styles of painting; however, the chronological divisions are no longer viewed as rigid, but rather are regarded as more fluid in nature. K. Scheffold, *Vergessenes Pompeji: unveröffentlichte Bilder römischer Wanddekoration in geschichtliche Folge herausgegeben* (Bern 1962) 140ff.; A. Laidlaw, *The First Style in Pompeii: Painting and Architecture* (Rome 1985) 42-46; and W. Ehrhardt, *Stilgeschichtliche Untersuchungen an römischen Wandmalereien von der späten Republik bis zur Zeit Neros* (Mainz 1987) 133ff have proven that earlier styles of decoration were imitated, modified, or refurbished during later periods. The First style of Pompeian wall paintings is characterized by its use of stucco and its imitation of masonry blocks and is therefore not relevant to garden paintings.

<sup>167</sup> For a full discussion of the phases that occur in the Second style see Ling (1991) 23-51.

Second style is one of looking beyond the wall through an architectural vista. The Third style, on the other hand, lacks perspective and is easily identified by its use of ornamentation.<sup>168</sup> Architectural features are reduced to attenuated and elongated forms placed on large colour-fields, the center of which is occupied by a small vignette, or *emblema*. The Fourth style is a combination of the illusion of the open wall from the Second style and ornamentation of the Third.<sup>169</sup>

The prevalence of garden frescoes in the corpus of Pompeian paintings attests to the adaptability of the garden motif. Both the vibrant colours of garden scenes and the fact that they could easily be expanded or contracted in size made them flexible motifs, well suited to the transitional phases of the Second, Third, and Fourth painting styles. The verism of garden scenes and their use of architectural illusionism were widely exploited in the large panel paintings of the Second style.<sup>170</sup> However, garden motifs by nature were easily reduced and were particularly conducive to ornamentation; thus diminutive garden representations were often included in Third style compositions.<sup>171</sup> The adjustable nature of garden scenes meant that they were more applicable to the three painting styles, more so than motifs derived from mythology, history, or architecture.

Due to the fact that garden scenes are incorporated into Second, Third, and Fourth style wall paintings, no single compositional trend emerges. Although they relied on a similar repertoire of architectural, decorative and organic elements, the innovative and

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<sup>168</sup> For a full examination of the Third style see Ling (1991) 52-70.

<sup>169</sup> See Ling (1991) 71-100 for a detailed discussion of the development of the Fourth style. Ling cites the garden paintings that adorn the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3), the House of Orpheus (VI.xiv.20; fig. 14), and the House of the Amazons (VI.ii.14) as examples of Fourth style wall painting.

<sup>170</sup> The garden fresco which adorns the *exedra* in the House of the Menander (I.x.4/14-17) depicts trees viewed through arches and a false colonnade and is a good example of the garden motif employed in Second style wall painting.

<sup>171</sup> Two fine examples of garden scenes used in a Third style framework adorn the walls of *cubicula* in the House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5; fig. 12).

creative nature of Pompeian artists resulted in a heterogeneous mixture of compositions. However, some trends are apparent in the placement and juxtaposition of elements within the picture panels. The range of approaches in composition achieve very specific and distinctive effects which may be indicative of a multiplicity of functions.

## PANEL COMPOSITION

Large field type paintings and smaller syncopated versions are the two main types of compositions used in garden paintings. The former generally occupies the whole wall, extending from the floor to the ceiling and from one side of the wall to the other. These all-over subject-paintings usually cover one or more contiguous walls and are used to create garden-like surroundings and occasionally to function as a backdrop to mythological scenes. Continuous garden paintings such as the one found in Livia's garden room from Prima Porta (fig. 1), in which the scene is uninterrupted from one wall to the next, are uncommon in Pompeii. Though several walls in one area may indeed be decorated with similar subject matter, the paintings do not constitute one continuous scene. The rare T-shaped compositions which incorporate mythological scenes in the upper and central zones of the painting and relegate garden paintings to the bottom lower corners of the painted panel also fall into this category (fig. 14). Due to the popularity of the large field type layout, it is useful to focus on a few of the best examples. The garden paintings which adorn the House of the Fruit Orchard (fig. 11), the House of the Wedding of Alexander (fig. 6, fig. 7), and the House of the Epigrams represent the most comprehensive and best preserved examples of whole wall decoration and will be the main focus of the discussion.

The syncopated paintings range in size from about ten to fifteen centimeters and represent schematic sketches of gardens (fig. 16, fig. 17). This type of composition is less common than the large field compositions and accounts for only approximately one third of the garden paintings that have been uncovered at Pompeii. It is for this reason that an

examination of this type of composition will constitute only a small part of the discussion. Their infrequency compared to that of the large scale panels could simply be an accident of preservation, or might indicate that lavish garden paintings were the preferred choice of composition within rich households. They are often diminutive versions of the larger garden scenes which cover whole walls; however, due to their small size, they are usually confined to a predella or the dado. Their reduced size limits the amount of available space and thus forces the artist to choose carefully which elements are depicted in the composition. In this way, the syncopated versions may be indicative of what basic elements Pompeians expected to find in a painting representing a garden scene. Based on the very distinct nature of the two types of compositions, each warrants independent analysis. Though no single compositional trend emerges, by examining the arrangement of architectural, decorative, and organic elements, the commonalties become apparent and the differences pronounced.

## LARGE SCALE GARDEN PAINTINGS

### Panel Divisions

Solid vertical and horizontal lines are characteristic of most of the architectural elements found in garden frescoes and it is for this reason that they function as the main defining elements within the compositions. Architectural features such as fences, masonry walls, and columns are used primarily as dividers and frames within the panel. The picture panel is usually divided horizontally into several zones, as seen in the excellent example of the east wall the room which opens off of the atrium in the House of the Fruit Orchard (fig. 11). The lower zone is usually occupied by a black or red dado located at the base of the wall on top of which is placed a lattice fence or low masonry wall. In the absence of a dado, a popular alternative was to place either of the latter two features directly at the bottom of the composition. The horizontal panel in the middle of garden paintings is

primarily reserved for organic elements. However, it is also in this region that features such as fountains and garden structures are found. The symmetrical placement of these architectural features flanking predominant figures or trees helps to balance the composition. The upper zone which corresponds to the ceiling, is generally occupied by either an architrave above which are garlands suspended in swags across the length of the painting or simply by a garland. The garland effectively demarcates the upper border of the composition panel. These divisions are not always strictly adhered to but rather vary from one composition to the next. For instance, the garden painting found on the north wall of the sitting room at the House of the Wedding of Alexander does not have a distinct upper zone, but rather the foliage of the garden converges with a blue backdrop which appears to be the sky, for it extends to the top of the painted panel (fig. 6).

#### Vertical divisions

The painted panels are also divided vertically into narrow zones. The usual tripartite panel divisions are constructed through the use of columns or pilasters, slender *candelabra*, or solid bands of colour. In essence, these uprights serve to demarcate the vertical perimeters of the painting. In most instances, the vertical dividers extend upwards from the dado or fence and either terminate at the architrave (if one is depicted) or at the top of the painted field.<sup>172</sup> The spacing of the columns is usually such that the wide central panel is flanked by two narrow subordinate panels. The central panel thus dominates the composition and is the preferred location for important figures and or distinguished elements. In some compositions, mythological scenes, hunt scenes and sacro-idyllic

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<sup>172</sup> Columns terminating in an architrave are seen on the east wall and on the south wall in the room off the atrium in the House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5; fig. 11). Columns terminating at the top of the painted panel are visible in the garden painting on the east wall in the room off of the peristyle in the same house.

landscapes occupy this central panel, flanked by simple garden paintings which are largely devoid of any decorative elements.

The garden painting on the north wall of the sitting room from the House of the Wedding of Alexander represents a continuous painting covering the extent of the middle horizontal panel, completely devoid of any architectural dividers (fig. 6). However, despite the fact that it does not employ columns as dividers, the two herms flanking a central fountain do however serve to break up the composition at evenly spaced intervals.

These panel divisions are not strictly employed, for some compositions incorporate continuous painted panels in the middle zone and use a tripartite division in the upper zone. The amalgamation of different layouts produces a wide variety of compositions and attests to the innovation and creativity of the artists working at Pompeii.

#### Lower horizontal zone

Dados, low masonry walls, and lattice fences are the principal architectural features found in the lower panels of garden paintings (fig. 11). With the exception of the odd plant, tree or exotic bird, fountains are the only garden feature that occur regularly in both the lower and central zones of the picture panel. When one or more of these features are found in the lower panel of the painting, they are placed at equally spaced intervals within recessed niches in a fence. This placement in front of the fence not only imitates the position of fountains in reality, but also helps to convey effectively a sense of depth within the painting. This three-dimensional effect is not achieved however when the fountain basins are found in the central horizontal zone of the painting.

#### Middle horizontal zone

In this area, the fountains are painted directly above the fence or low masonry wall, which renders it difficult to discern whether the basins are meant to be standing behind the

garden border or placed on top of it. Based on the supposition that the painted gardens do in fact simulate real ones, it would appear that they are meant to be seen behind the fence.

The vast majority of elements found in garden paintings are contained within the middle horizontal zone, for it is here that almost all of the statues, herms, painted *pinakes*, flora and fauna are illustrated (fig. 7, fig. 11). Symmetry of composition is achieved through the deliberate placement of the decorative elements at evenly spaced intervals; for instance, sets of decorative elements, plants and bushes are often used to flank dominant statues, fountains, and trees. In compositions lacking architectural dividers decorative elements are either painted as if to define the limits of the wall painting, or to divide it into panels.<sup>173</sup> However, the subtle effect of decorative dividers is not quite as pronounced as the bold demarcation achieved through the use of architectural borders such as columns and pilasters.

Birds, flowers, plants and trees are found in profusion in the middle zone. The plants are arranged hierarchically by size and are painted directly above the fence, indicating that they are rising behind the architectural structure. The flora occupying the foreground are usually executed with much attention to detail, whereas the shrubbery in the background tends to be depicted less accurately and is simply rendered by a green haze. Thus the green foliage of the bushes and trees provide an important backdrop against which the colour of the flowers and decorative features are seen. The diagonal lines of the branches and vegetal tendrils tend to break up the monotony of the solid vertical and horizontal lines that are characteristic of the other painted zones.<sup>174</sup> This green background accounts for about two-thirds of the background colour commencing at the base of the

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<sup>173</sup> The painted herms and *pinakes* visible on the garden painting on the north wall of a room in the House of the Wedding of Alexander appear to divide the composition into three separate zones (fig. 6). A similar division is evident in the garden fresco in the *frigidarium* of the Stabian Baths.

<sup>174</sup> Ling (1991) 58.

middle panel and extending upwards. Above the foliage to the top of the central zone is a light blue background representing the sky.<sup>175</sup>

Birds and the occasional animal serve not only to enliven the garden scene but also help to integrate all of the elements found within the composition. Birds in particular unite the composition through a series of animated poses in which they are shown flying through the air, perched on rims of basins, fences, walls and architraves, hanging from branches partaking of fruit, and walking along the ground. Birds are the common element that link the different elements together as they are the only organism that can be found in all of the painted zones. This is due largely to the fact that they are not confined to any particular location nor are they intimately linked with any particular element. They are a valuable filling motif often depicted in otherwise empty spaces within the composition.

#### Upper horizontal zone

The horizontal beams of the architraves which are occasionally depicted in the upper panels of the garden paintings support a wide range of elements, including vessels, *pinakes*, and birds (fig. 7, fig. 11). Masks are also shown suspended from these structures. Some of the architraves have vertical beams that function much like columns, demarcating the upper panel into three separate panels which are usually painted with a dark background colour. In addition, swags of garlands complete with suspended *oscilla* are also found suspended between the slender uprights. In cases where there are no vertical uprights extending from the architrave from which to hang garlands, they are either painted straight along the length of the exterior edge of the painting or are shown hanging from the upper corners of the wall and attached at the centre of the panel with an *oscillum*. The light

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<sup>175</sup> Ling (1991) 58 questions whether the paintings are meant to represent pictures as seen through windows or pictures attached to a blue background.

blue colour of the contiguous panel is extended above the horizontal beam of these less elaborate architraves (fig. 11).

## SYNCOPATED GARDEN PAINTINGS

Diminutive garden renditions appear to have been a very popular motif in paintings of the Third and Fourth style (fig. 16). To date, over fifty schematic sketches have been uncovered in Pompeii. Due to their small size, the layout of syncopated garden paintings lack any sort of panel dividers and the reduced amount of available space in these compositions calls for a pared down version of the large scale paintings. The main feature of these simplified compositions is a single rectangular garden enclosed by a yellow lattice fence (fig. 17).<sup>176</sup> The fences vary from one illustration to the next and are interrupted by any combination of curvilinear and rectilinear niches, pergolas, long arbours, entrances and exedrae.<sup>177</sup> Several of the garden structures incorporated into the enclosure support vessels and birds or have *oscilla* suspended from their beams. In addition, some of the paintings contain representations of fountains, yet these represent the only elements that are found in both large and small compositions. Contrary to the large garden compositions, there is very little suggestion of vegetation found within the syncopated versions. As in the large field type compositions, symmetry appears to have been an important aesthetic goal, for the left side of the panel usually reflects that of the right. The syncopated versions not only show gardens in a completely different perspective, but also refrain from drawing on the broad repertory of architectural, decorative and organic elements that characterize the large field type paintings. It is evident that these small sketches of gardens are meant to fulfill a function very separate and distinct from those of their larger counterparts.

<sup>176</sup> Two schematic paintings from House VII.iii.29 have several contiguous gardens depicted in the same composition.

<sup>177</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 79.

## PERSPECTIVE

Both large scale garden paintings and syncopated versions tend to be viewed from a single central perspective. The fundamental difference, however, is the origin of the point of view. In the small schematic sketches, the view is taken from above, thus permitting the viewer to see the garden in its entirety. The three-dimensional view is effectively achieved through a foreshortening of the garden enclosure, which is shown wider in the foreground and narrower along the back.

The large scale paintings are more complex, as they combine several vistas of depth and some employ multiple horizontal perspectives.<sup>178</sup> The full wall compositions treat the garden as a whole and appear to be viewed in perspective at a distance.<sup>179</sup> The middle and upper horizontal panels are both painted from a head-on perspective and are characterized by their failure to convey any sense of depth due to the fact that all the elements are two-dimensional and appear to be placed above or below one another rather than behind. If these panels are meant to portray a far-off scene, this flatness is in keeping with reality. The lower zones are a notable exception, for they are viewed from a standing position of close proximity to the features illustrated in the panels. Therefore, the fountains and recessed niches of the fences are not only rendered in three dimensions, but also successfully give the impression of depth because the former feature overlaps the latter. The absence of any cast shadows indicates that all of the garden paintings are painted with a single light source coming from behind the viewer regardless of his/her position.

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<sup>178</sup> E.g. the upper horizontal panel on the east wall of the garden in the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. *Insula Occid.* 42; fig. 7) is not painted as if it is viewed from below, but rather, is painted as if the viewer is looking at it straight on. This perspective is also referred to as a "bird's eye view."

<sup>179</sup> Ling (1991) 152.

## COLOUR

Background colour is restricted primarily to black, light blue, red and yellow. All of the dados are painted either black or red, with the occasional green plant growing against them. The lower zones are usually painted with a black background upon which the yellow lattice fence is superimposed. The use of black and other dark colours in the background is effective because the architectural, decorative and organic elements stand out in negative against these backdrops, whereby each feature is viewed as an entity unto itself (fig. 12).<sup>180</sup>

The central zone of the large scale paintings is largely characterized though its use of several shades of green meant to convey the lush foliage of the garden, and a narrow band of light blue along the top of this panel, suggesting the open sky as seen through the branches of the plants and trees (fig. 6). Also visible in the foreground of this section are a plethora of colours, including red, pink, yellow, blue, violet and white, all of which are used to illustrate the diverse species of vibrant flowers indigenous to the region. The colours are evenly dispersed throughout the central panel thus helping to maintain the symmetry of the composition.

Although red occasionally functions as a background colour for dados, it becomes increasingly common to employ it for painted borders (fig. 8). Yellow-orange is also used in a similar capacity.<sup>181</sup> Vertical borders are either broad or narrow panels of colour that extend from the top of the dado to the upper edge of the composition and are only found in the large field type paintings.

The colour schemes employed in the syncopated garden paintings however are more or less bichromatic. Although a light colour such as yellow or white for the

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<sup>180</sup> Ling (1991) 152.

<sup>181</sup> The use of a gold background is visible in the House of the Epigrams (V.i.18).

architectural features against a dark solid background of red-brown or black appears to have been the preferred colour combination (fig. 17), other background colours such as blue-green are also used to a limited extent.<sup>182</sup>

### Genre Scenes

Garden compositions are occasionally juxtaposed with other genres such as hunt scenes, *paradeisoi*, marine scenes, villa scenes, and mythological vignettes. These genre scenes are not categorized as garden paintings because they are inspired by different sources, they are largely devoid of vegetation, and they incorporate foreign elements and figures not normally found in garden compositions. Genre scenes generally occupy the center panel of the rear garden wall and are usually flanked with diminutive garden paintings.

Animal paintings represent the most popular type of genre scene and can be divided into two distinct categories, namely hunt scenes and *paradeisoi*. The former are far more popular and are readily identified as such by the action and movement conveyed through the depiction of a chase or the tearing of flesh. The chase usually takes the form of a wild animal pursuing or attacking its prey, but fleeing animals sought by hunters are also illustrated. Animals found in these paintings include lions, deer, leopards, boars, bulls, wolves, rams, gazelles, rabbits, elephants, and lambs.<sup>183</sup> Compared to hunt scenes, static *paradeisoi* scenes depicting a wide variety of exotic animals living peacefully in one harmonious environment seem very tranquil (fig. 14). Animal paintings are characterized by their sparsely vegetated, rocky landscapes and their muted, earthy colour palettes.

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<sup>182</sup> This colour scheme is visible in the syncopated garden painting found at the House of Successus (I.ix.3).

<sup>183</sup> The best preserved hunt scene is found in the House of the Hunt (VII.iv.48).

These scenes may be reminiscent of the large game parks that Persian kings and Hellenistic rulers incorporated into their large estates.

Several compositions incorporate aquatic elements such as marine life, boats, fishermen, Nereids, and Tritons on turquoise backdrops suggesting water. Nereids and Tritons enliven the scenes and are often shown engaged in activities such as shooting arrows at sea monsters and riding dolphins or seahorses.<sup>184</sup> Some garden walls are illustrated with mythological protagonists engaged in scenes derived from mythology. To date, Venus rising from the sea (fig. 8), the Fall of Icarus, Europa on a white bull, the Wounded Adonis, and Chiron teaching Achilles to play the lyre represent the only mythological scenes that have been found in conjunction with garden scenes at Pompeii. Both the use of mythological genre scenes and garden scenes with statues of mythological figures attest to the Pompeian preference for such a theme in garden settings. Perhaps the inclusion of these paintings was meant to allude to the owner's familiarity with Greek and Roman literature.

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<sup>184</sup> The best preserved and most dramatic marine scenes are found in the Gladiatorial Barracks (V.v.3) and the House of the Centenary (IX.viii.3/6).

## CHAPTER 5: CONTEXT OF GARDEN PAINTINGS

Garden paintings are inextricably connected to the architectural settings which they adorned, and therefore cannot be fully studied in isolation of their indoor and outdoor domestic contexts. Rather, their relationship to the size, shape, function, and availability of light in the room are all factors which must be considered. The quality of painting in terms of complexity and richness in colour varied from one room to the next, and the finest of them were usually found in important reception areas of the *domus* such as the *atrium*, *tablinum*, *triclinia*, *cubicula*, and peristyle garden.<sup>185</sup> The typical placement of garden paintings and thematic programs employed in specific settings will form the main focus of this chapter.

### PAINTINGS IN AN OUTDOOR CONTEXT

In contrast to syncopated garden representations, large scale garden paintings adorn both indoor and outdoor contexts. However, the majority of these large field type frescoes are found in an outdoor garden setting, many of which are located towards the rear of the house.<sup>186</sup> Unroofed areas such as lightwells and courtyards are also adorned with garden compositions, which tend to be placed in the rear section of the houses.

The vast majority of garden paintings found in an outdoor context are found on the rear wall of the garden (fig. 8). This is the case in both elaborate peristyle gardens and in smaller *viridaria* which lack peristyles. The fresco is usually visible through the atrium and the window of the *tablinum*. The axial placement of the garden at the rear of the house ensures that the garden painting is immediately visible upon entering the house or to people

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<sup>185</sup> Ling (1991) 2.

<sup>186</sup> Approximately seventy-five percent of the large scale garden paintings are found in an outdoor context.

passing the open doors of the *domus*.<sup>187</sup> This placement suggests that the proprietor intended to convey the impression that there was a flourishing garden at the back of his residence to people in the public sphere, beyond the confines of the house. The private domain was therefore used as a tool by the owner to convey an impression of wealth and grandeur to the people beyond the walls of his abode.<sup>188</sup> Second style wall paintings were well suited to outdoor contexts such as peristyle gardens, in which painted columns were visually reflective of the real ones, thus creating the impression that the portico continued behind the garden scene.<sup>189</sup>

It is interesting to note that many houses which are landscaped with formal plantings are decorated with large scale paintings of wild, unmanicured gardens. The House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42; fig. 6) for example, has a small formal garden adorned with frescoes representing scenes of a wild and overgrown garden. The contrast between the formal plantings and the unmanicured painted versions is striking, the latter were obviously intended to evoke a more rustic ambiance.

Garden compositions which are juxtaposed with other genre scenes are found predominantly in large *domus* and are painted exclusively in outdoor contexts. These too often accompany very formal plantings.<sup>190</sup> The outdoor spaces of modest sized houses tend to be decorated solely with garden frescoes; however, there are a few exceptions such as the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3; fig. 8). Animal hunts are depicted most frequently and account for about half of all genre scenes found in conjunction with garden frescoes.

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<sup>187</sup> House VII.ii.14 is set up in this manner. Genre paintings, discussed in the previous chapter, are commonly found on the rear wall of the garden, thus ensuring visibility.

<sup>188</sup> For a full discussion of the social implications of the decoration of Pompeian houses and the interconnection of public and private spheres, see A. Wallace-Hadrill *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton 1994).

<sup>189</sup> Ling (1991) 50.

<sup>190</sup> The House of M. Loreius Tiburtinus (II.ii.2), also referred to as the House of D. Octavius Quartio, has an elaborately landscaped garden which was adorned with animal paintings.

Though quite rare, some gardens simultaneously incorporate animal paintings and mythological scenes with garden representations. Genre scenes are generally found on the rear garden walls and are usually confined to the center panel of the wall, in the area which corresponds to the middle and upper horizontal zones.<sup>191</sup> These scenes often lack the usual tripartite horizontal divisions which characterize garden paintings. Although they are usually placed directly above the garden paintings, T-shaped compositions have also been employed when mythological scenes are incorporated with garden representations.<sup>192</sup> The T-shaped layout tends to subordinate the garden scenes by confining them to the lower corners of the wall. When juxtaposed with genre scenes, garden paintings are marginalized due to their diminished size and placement in the peripheral zones of the composition.

Garden paintings are not always confined to the rear wall but are often found on one or several other garden walls. Houses lacking axial alignment often have their gardens located at the side of the house. Regardless of where the garden paintings are placed within these settings, the compositions are not visible from the entrances and therefore are not intended to convey the immediate impression that the paintings discussed above do. The location of the garden may be a direct result of the available space, appropriation of contiguous properties, or may imply that the owner was not as concerned with the impression that he made on passers-by. The garden frescoes were visible only within certain areas of the residence, most notably at the entrance to the garden. The House of the Ephebe (I.vii.10-12/19) is not axially aligned and has a small peristyle garden painted with

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<sup>191</sup> A notable exception to this rear wall placement is the raised parapet in the garden of the House of the Centenary (IX.viii.3/6), which was painted to create the illusion of a body of water enlivened with aquatic animals.

<sup>192</sup> The genre scenes found in the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3) and the House of the Hunt (VII.iv.48) are placed directly above the garden compositions. The most notable example of the T-shaped composition is found in the House of Orpheus (VI.xiv.20; fig. 14).

fine garden paintings situated at the rear of the house which was not visible from the entrance.<sup>193</sup>

Lightwells and small courtyards are incorporated into the layout of Roman houses to ensure that there is adequate lighting. It is often difficult to determine whether an area functions as a lightwell or a courtyard due to its small size, exposure to the elements, and the absence of any characteristic furnishings. Like the gardens discussed above, lightwells and courtyards are painted with garden scenes and are found in both axial and non-axial plans. However, these rooms account for less than one percent of all the walls which are decorated with garden compositions. House I.vii.10-12/19 has a small courtyard or lightwell located behind the *tablinum*. The rear wall of this room is painted with a garden fresco which is visible from the front of the residence through the window at the back of the *tablinum*. Though one or more walls may be painted, the rear wall of these lightwells and courtyards is always painted in this manner. Lightwells decorated with garden compositions may have acted as substitutes for gardens in small houses which had insufficient space. This is supported by the fact that garden paintings were used exclusively in these small areas, for to date no traces of animal paintings or mythological scenes have been uncovered in lightwells or courtyards in Pompeii. Compared to the elaborate garden paintings found in highly frequented reception areas of the house, the quality of decoration in confined service areas such as light wells and courtyards tends to be much simpler and less lavish.<sup>194</sup> Both pragmatic function and lack of resources account for the low quality garden paintings which are generally found in these outdoor contexts.

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<sup>193</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 57.

<sup>194</sup> Compare the richness of colouring and the complexity of composition evident in the House of the Wedding of Alexander (fig. 6) with that of the rudimentary garden painting found in I.xvi.3 or I.xii.16 (fig. 3).

Yet, it is interesting to note that the inhabitants did not consider decoration in courtyards or light wells as either altogether inappropriate or superfluous.

*Lararia* and fountains are also found in conjunction with garden scenes, which are either painted on the adjacent walls or directly on the sides of these architectural features. The walls of an outdoor *triclinium* situated in the so-called *hospitum* located at I.xi.16, and a wall above an *impluvium* in V.i.28 have also been found with garden paintings intact. A raised parapet painted with an aquatic scene has also been found in the small garden of the so-called School of Potius (IX.viii.2). Similarly, the walls surrounding an open air pool at the Stabian Baths (VII.i.8) and the west wall at the rear of the pool in IX.i.22/29 were decorated with garden paintings.

## **PAINTINGS IN AN INDOOR CONTEXT**

The popularity of garden motifs was such that they were even extended to indoor settings. Both large scale garden paintings and syncopated representations of gardens are found in indoor contexts. However, the differences in the size of these two types of compositions results in different trends in the placement of these paintings and thus they warrant separate discussions.

Large field type garden paintings are typically found in the *cubicula*, *triclinia*, and sitting rooms of Pompeian houses. The majority of *triclinia* that are decorated with garden scenes are accompanied by animal paintings and are usually found in the larger houses. To date, only three *cubicula* containing garden compositions have been discovered, all of which are located in modestly sized houses (fig. 12). There are no commonalities in terms of placement within these quarters; however, there was a narrow panel with a garden painting at each end of the bed in the *cubiculum* of IX.xiii.1-3.

The House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3) and the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42; fig. 6) are the only two residences in Pompeii in which entire rooms

are painted with fine garden compositions.<sup>195</sup> Both of these rooms are located just off of actual gardens, at the rear of the *domus*, and convey the impression of sitting amidst real gardens. The walls of the *frigidarium* and *caldarium* of the private bath complex located within the House of the Labyrinth (VI.xi.9-10) and the *frigidarium* of the House of Fabius Rufus (VII.Insula. Occid.16-19) were also decorated with scenes of gardens.

Almost all of the syncopated garden representations are confined to the predella under the main panel of Third and Fourth style wall paintings (fig. 16).<sup>196</sup> No trends emerge in terms of the subject matter of the principal paintings which they frame, for they vary greatly from one composition to the next. An alternative layout which employs diminutive garden scenes in the center zone of the main painted panels instead of typical large scale scenes is also evident. Though uncommon, there are examples of dados and low garden walls which are also adorned with these miniature garden scenes. The use of syncopated garden paintings does not appear to have been restricted to any particular type of room within the *domus*. They do, however, occur most frequently in *cubicula* and *triclinia*, but are also found in *tablina*, *alae*, *exedrae*, atria and corridors. Small garden representations are more prevalent in large residences than they are in more modest dwellings.<sup>197</sup> Perhaps the greater detail and elaborate ornamentation characterized in Third style wall paintings was more expensive to produce, so that only people with sufficient wealth could afford this type of interior decoration. The fact that extensive gardens accompanied large houses meant that the proprietors alluded to gardens in interior decoration through the use of syncopated garden scenes, whereas small houses which often

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<sup>195</sup> A similar garden room has been found in Livia's villa at Prima Porta (fig. 1). The fact that entire rooms were devoted to creating a garden-like setting is revealing and will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>196</sup> There are only a few examples of syncopated garden paintings located in the predella above the chief painting.

<sup>197</sup> Approximately sixty percent of the houses in which syncopated garden paintings are found can be described as large homes.

lacked gardens altogether incorporated fictive gardens as substitutes for real ones.

Furthermore, the grand scale of these houses imparts a sense of lightness and openness without relying on large-scale garden frescoes which modest dwellings display in order to achieve similar effects.

Garden paintings are also employed extensively in both the interior and exterior decoration of a variety of public buildings, including *cauponae*, *scholae*, *tabernae*, gladiatorial barracks, and public baths.<sup>198</sup> Like private residences, peristyle gardens and small open spaces within public buildings are also adorned with large scale garden frescoes. The men's *frigidaria* at both the Stabian and Forum Baths were painted with scenes depicting gardens. By incorporating garden scenes into the decor of these public buildings, proprietors ensured that their business environments would be surrounded by bright and pleasant settings regardless of the time of day, the daily weather, or the time of year. Surely an aesthetically pleasing environment would also have been of benefit to the patrons of many of these establishments.

The employment of syncopated garden paintings in public buildings occurs less frequently than their larger counterparts. To date, the only surviving examples of public buildings which use this type of composition are in a small shop (I.vii.18) and a *caupona* (I.xii.5). Perhaps the expanses of available space on the long walls characteristic of public buildings were more conducive to large scale compositions, whereas small representations would have been lost on such large panels.

Similarities in composition and trends in the placement of garden paintings within the domestic context provide important clues as to the function of these compositions. Upon analysis of such trends, it becomes readily apparent that garden paintings were

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<sup>198</sup> The so-called School of Potius (IX.viii.2) is decorated with a garden painting, as are the *cauponae* located at I.xi.10-11, I.xii.3, and VIII.vii.1. The *hospitii* at I.xi.16 and IX.vii.25, the Gladiatorial barracks (V.v.3), a shop-house (VII.ix.27/40-41) and the garum shop (I.xii.8) are also decorated in a similar manner.

implemented in different areas of private and public buildings in order to achieve a variety of effects and thus fulfill several specific functions.

## CONCLUSION: THE FUNCTION OF GARDEN PAINTINGS IN POMPEIAN HOUSES

Having examined the elements, composition, and location of garden paintings within the domestic context, their function now becomes the focus of the discussion. The wide variety of garden compositions are indicative of a multiplicity of functions, dictated largely by their location and the desired effect. Garden paintings are regularly employed to evoke fanciful verdant scenes, to convey illusions of space and grandeur, and to recall elaborate villas. However, the complex nature of these paintings combined with scant remains often render it difficult to discern whether Pompeians intended garden scenes to function in these roles simultaneously or in isolation of one another.

Country life and all its rustic connotations were an integral part of the Roman character. The notion of *res rustica*, one of belonging to, or having a connection to nature and the countryside, was closely associated with villa life and was evocative of a life of luxury. Whether manicured or natural, gardens were an important expression of the Roman love of horticulture and their connection to the land toiled by their ancestors.<sup>199</sup> Their appreciation of the beauty of gardens was manifested in their use of the garden motifs in the decoration of their homes. The existence of gardens within their urban dwellings is a manifestation of the Roman desire to bring the countryside into their homes, effectively creating a *rus in urbe*.<sup>200</sup> Given this, garden paintings may have functioned as an evocation of country life and the possession of a garden, be it real or artificial, would provide some relief from the pressures associated with an urban existence.<sup>201</sup> Thus,

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<sup>199</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 87.

<sup>200</sup> A. Boëthius, *The Golden House of Nero* (Ann Arbor 1960) 105. For a discussion of *rus in urbe* see Martial 12.57.21.

<sup>201</sup> Farrar (1996) 55.

garden scenes were regularly employed by artists who fashioned the motifs to satisfy contemporary trends in Roman aesthetics. The adaptable nature of garden representations was conducive to change, and so led to their use throughout the course of development of domestic decoration.

The four styles of Pompeian wall painting first proposed by Mau provide a foundation upon which to discuss the character and function of garden paintings. Although many garden paintings transcend the stylistic divisions, the Second, Third, and Fourth painting styles supply a convenient framework for comparison. The hallmark of Second Pompeian wall painting is its use of architectural illusionism. The three-dimensional portrayal of features such as columns and pillars suggests that one is looking through an opening in a window unto a verdant landscape located beyond the building. By conveying the impression of looking beyond the garden wall, the artist alleviated the impression of a confined space.<sup>202</sup>

According to most scholars, the primary function of garden paintings was to create the illusion of space. Pompeian houses are characterized by their inward orientation and their small high windows which helped to ensure both privacy and security.<sup>203</sup> Thus, the enclosed nature of the house was opened up through the use of garden paintings which gave the impression of extending into the countryside, beyond the containing walls. The abbreviated space of urban gardens placed a premium on verdant scenes which relieved the impression of a closed space. This illusion was very popular, as it was common practice to adorn one or several walls of gardens and light wells with garden frescoes. In fact, courtyards and light wells devoid of actual gardens were usually painted so as to give the appearance of a garden. Evidence shows that in many houses the painted gardens could be

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<sup>202</sup> A. Ramage and N.H. Ramage, *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine* (Englewood Cliffs 1991) 65.

<sup>203</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 55.

seen rising beyond the actual plantings of the peristyle garden, so that the real garden appeared to be more lush and extensive. The low wall enclosing the peristyle garden in the House of Menander (I.x.4/14-17.) was painted with plants, birds and animals, as if to suggest a continuation of the real plantings.<sup>204</sup> Paintings with a mass of dense foliage also help draw the viewer's eyes into the distance, thus creating a sense of depth and space. The fact that the vast majority of garden paintings have been found on the rear walls of gardens located along the main axis of the house indicates that visibility from the entrance was deemed important, for this placement would ensure that the scene would be in full view of passers-by and visitors to the house. Seen from a distance, the painted garden would create a false reality so that it would appear larger and give the impression of containing a profusion of plants, trees, birds and animals. The composition and placement of the garden frescoes in the House of the Wedding of Alexander are similar to those just described, such that an effective *trompe l'oeil* is created.

Garden paintings depict features derived from both formally landscaped gardens, such as fences, fountains, and sculpture, as well as elements characteristic of wild country gardens, like blooming plants and flying birds. The overall impression, however, is one of a wild, naturally occurring garden. It is interesting to note that painted gardens are generally found in conjunction with very formal plantings. The overgrown and unmanicured garden depicted in the House of the Wedding of Alexander, for instance, contrasts greatly with the spartan nature of the formal planting beds of the garden. It appears that the painted version is based on an imaginary garden rather than a direct extension of the real plantings. Although the precisely rendered elements contained within

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<sup>204</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 323. This house is also referred to as the House of Q. Poppaeus Sabinus. The garden walls of the House of Adonis (VI.vii.18) and the House of Romulus and Remus (VI.vii.10/13) were painted as if to continue the actual garden. M. Della Corte, "La Scuole di Epicuro in alcune pitture pompeiane," *Studi Romani* 7 (1959) 133, suggests that potted plants were placed directly in front of the painted ones to convey an illusion of a small garden.

the composition are clearly modeled on flora and fauna indigenous to the Campanian region, painted gardens are only partially based in reality. The juxtaposition of a wide variety of flowers and fruits without regard to seasonal factors tend to represent more of a fantasy garden. The artist was primarily concerned with presenting the plant species in their most characteristic forms, with the result that he blatantly disregarded the laws of nature.<sup>205</sup>

Unlike fanciful painted versions, real gardens had specific issues to address and different roles to play. Real gardens performed practical functions within the house such as the production of food for sale and home consumption, and the provision of shade. The pragmatic nature of Pompeian gardens was largely characterized by the presence of vegetable plots, vineyards, fruit orchards, and plane trees for shade whereas the painted versions tend to have a narrower range of elements than what occur in reality. Perhaps the emphasis placed on colour and the more interesting visual elements found in garden frescoes were meant to compensate for the pragmatic nature of the real gardens which they decorated. Furthermore, relatively few large houses with elaborate gardens have garden paintings. This may simply be an accident of preservation, but it more likely suggests that garden paintings were viewed as an appropriate substitute for large gardens.

One of the fundamental differences between garden scenes in an interior and exterior context is that the former are not intended to embellish the appearance of actual gardens. However, many large-scale indoor garden paintings are similar in composition to those found outdoors, and illusionism is also used to create a sense of openness within these rooms.<sup>206</sup> Large-scale compositions are found in the *cubicula*, *triclinia*, and sitting

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<sup>205</sup> Ling (1991) 150.

<sup>206</sup> The south wall in a room identified as a *cubiculum* located off of the atrium in the House of the Fruit Orchard is an example of a large-scale garden painting found in an interior setting (fig. 12). The usual tripartite columnar divisions, the blue backdrop suggesting sky, and the profusion of plants, trees, and birds convey a sense of openness.

rooms of Pompeian houses. The degree of access to these areas of the *domus* appears to have been restricted to the reception of intimate friends. The traditional reception function of public and private gardens had as its decorative corollary in garden paintings which adorned reception rooms in the Pompeian house. Several rooms have been discovered, decorated exclusively with large-scale garden compositions. These rooms were devoted entirely to the creation of a garden-like setting within the interior of the house, the best example of which is found in the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula Occid. 42; fig. 6). This high vaulted room with a marble floor was decorated with fine garden frescoes.<sup>207</sup> These rooms were probably used as a cool refuge from the sun and as an area for dining during the summer months, and were picturesquely enlarged by idealized verdant backdrops, which created a *trompe l'oeil* effect and the illusion of being surrounded by a garden.

The illusionary function is eclipsed only by the decorative role that some of the interior garden paintings exhibit. Third style wall paintings are characterized by their use of ornamentation, and the architectural elements of Second style paintings are reduced to mere borders and framing devices for large colour fields in the Third style. The effect is very flat compared to Second style paintings, for there are no receding planes. Solid panels of colour are alternated with large panel paintings of mythological scenes or landscapes. The stylized representations of trees and vegetation framed with the tripartite division of attenuated columns typical of the Third style in the large scale garden frescoes in the House of the Fruit Orchard are not illusionistic (fig. 12). The dark background used in these compositions tend to render the schematic features in silhouette so that they appear flat and

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<sup>207</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 166. Other rooms decorated entirely with garden scenes have been identified in the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3) and in Livia's Villa at Prima Porta (fig. 1).

unrealistic.<sup>208</sup> Thus, the paintings which adorn the *cubicula* of the House of the Fruit Orchard have lost their illusionism and have assumed a primarily ornamental function.

This decorative role is also prevalent in the syncopated garden representations. Diminutive garden paintings, usually confined to the predella under the main panel of Third and Fourth style wall paintings, are found almost exclusively in an indoor context. These highly detailed miniature garden scenes are purely decorative in function, reduced to ornamental syncopated gardenscapes which are subordinated to large colour fields and an imposing architectural framework (fig. 16, fig. 17).<sup>209</sup> These garden scenes show the entire garden in perspective and from a considerable distance. These too tend to be displayed on a dark backdrop, which renders them without any sense of depth. Two dimensional diminutive garden representations are well suited to the Third style of Pompeian wall painting.

Paul Zanker has postulated that the decoration of even modest Pompeian houses was a product of conscious villa imitation. This influential thesis holds that the variety of architectural and decorative features which are incorporated into Pompeian houses, such as *euripi*, columns, *nymphaea*, fountains, and statuary, are diminutive versions of those traditionally found in aristocratic villas.<sup>210</sup> Modest homes furnished with scaled-down imitations of luxury items represent lower class aspirations to create the impression of wealth (fig. 3). Zanker's theory is particularly relevant to the study of gardens as it can be applied to garden paintings. The inclusion of disproportionately grand garden paintings

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<sup>208</sup> Ling (1991) 151.

<sup>209</sup> W.J.T. Peters, "*Van Prima Porta naar Pompeii*," (Nijmegen 1971) 6, hypothesizes that syncopated garden representations may represent architects' plans or sketches of newly landscaped gardens.

<sup>210</sup> For a full discussion of villa imitation see P. Zanker, "Die Villa als Vorbild des späten pompejanischen Wohngeschmacks," *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts* 94 (1979) 460-523.

within small domestic contexts reflects the level of resources and the social aspirations of the household.<sup>211</sup>

Although few Campanian villas have been fully excavated, there is an abundance of ancient literature which provides valuable insight into the layout and the design of these residences. That private gardens eventually came to be an important status symbol is immediately apparent from these accounts. Cicero's Tusculan villa was outfitted with the an Academy, a Lyceum, a palaestra, and a gymnasium. Cicero's on-going correspondence with Atticus regarding the statuary he requires for his garden is particularly informative, for he requests objects from Greek gymnasia, including herms and statues.<sup>212</sup> Thus, it is evident that many villas were inspired by Greek architecture and Hellenistic models, and that many villa owners sought to decorate their estates in the manner of gymnasia, stoas, porticoes, and theaters. The trend of recreating public spaces in private contexts made it fashionable to furnish large gardens with structures and sculpture based on Greek prototypes. Conspicuous consumption was also exhibited through the extravagant use of water. Due to the fact that fountains require a constant supply of water which was subject to taxation, these features were very expensive to maintain. The presence of fountains and water features displayed the unlimited wealth at the proprietor's disposal.

Large-scale garden paintings regularly contained depictions of luxurious objects and structures such as statues, herms, fountains, columns, garden structures, *pinakes* and *oscilla*, all of which are reminiscent of lavish villa gardens. For people of limited means, purchasing these garden elements was too expensive and required too much space in their small *viridaria*. However, viewed from a distance, painted illustrations of ostentatious features such as fountains and marble sculptures would create the impression that they did in reality belong to their garden. Therefore, even individuals who did not have ample space

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<sup>211</sup> A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (1994) 169.

<sup>212</sup> Gothein (1966) 86.

within their gardens or were unable to afford such luxuries could have them painted on the wall, thus providing them with viable and economical substitutes. In essence, garden paintings represent the lower classes' humble equivalent of the *paradeisoi* that wealthy citizens enjoyed in the countryside. Yet both successfully create the desired ambience of nature within the domestic context.

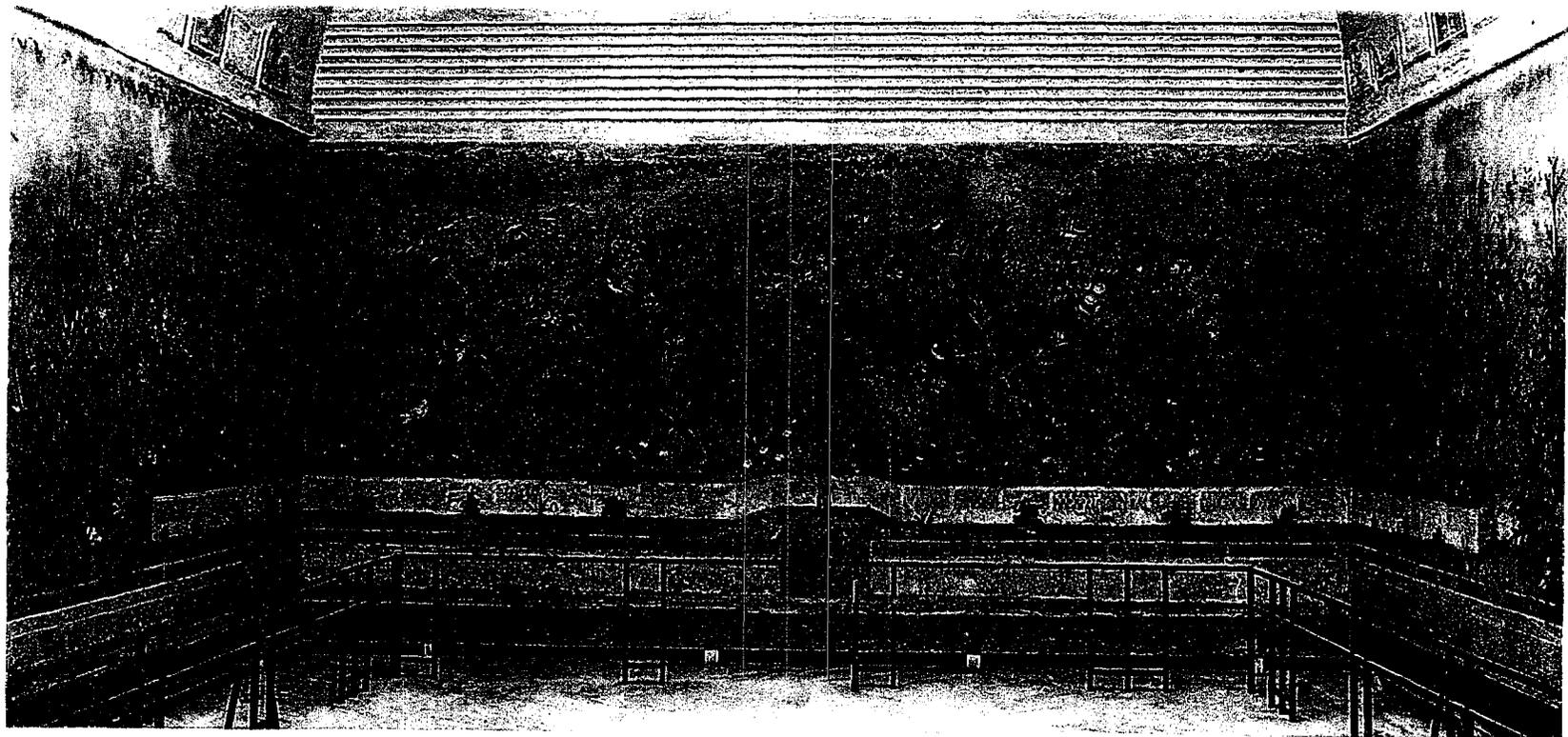


Fig. 1 Livia's garden room from Prima Porta. South wall and part of adjacent east (left) and west (right) walls.



Fig. 2 (above) House of  
the Golden Cupids  
(VI.xvi.7).



Fig. 3 (below) Painted  
*labrum* from garden  
painting in small garden  
located at I.xii.16.

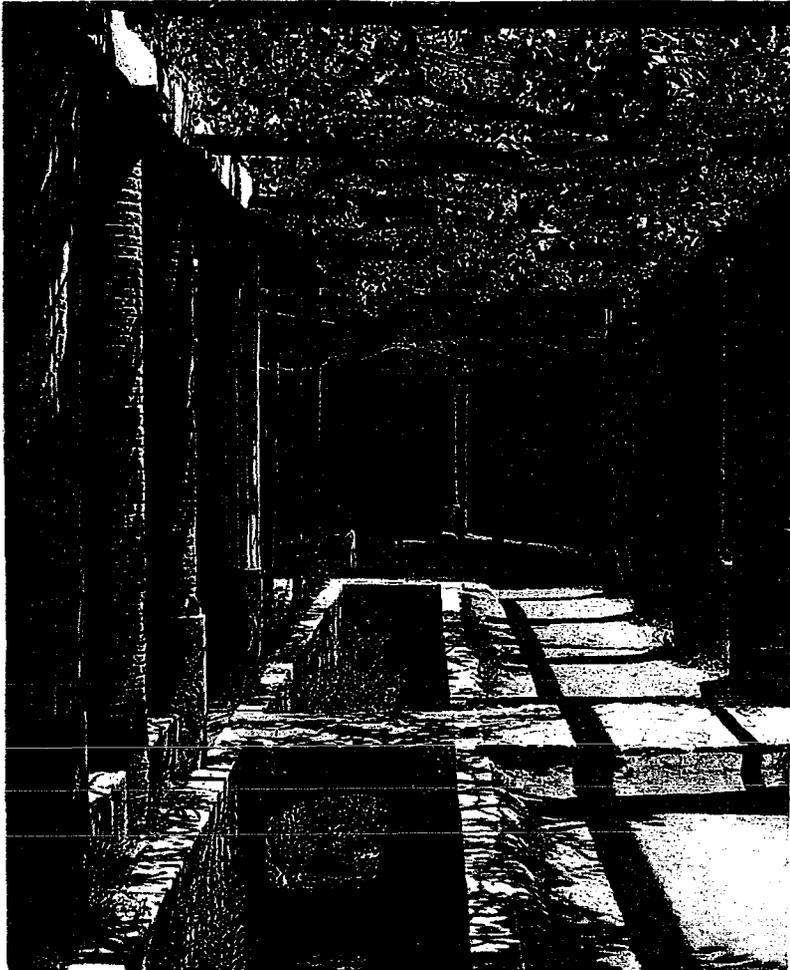


Fig. 4 (above) Fig. 5  
(below) *Euripus* in the  
porticoed garden terrace  
of the House of Loreius  
Tiburtinus located at  
II.ii.2.

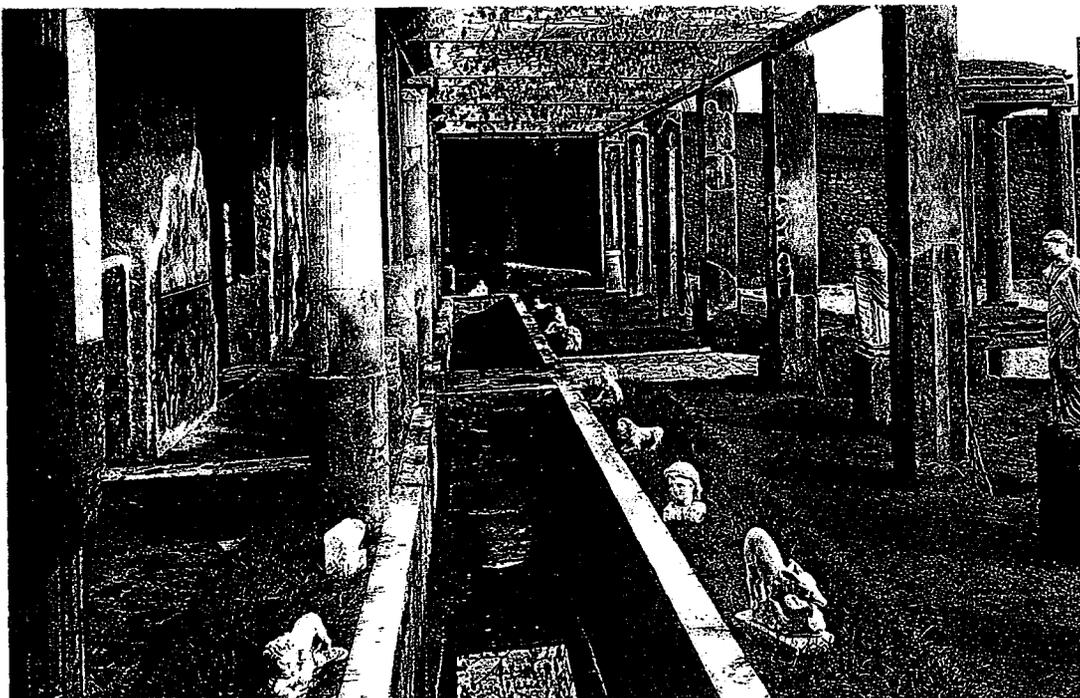
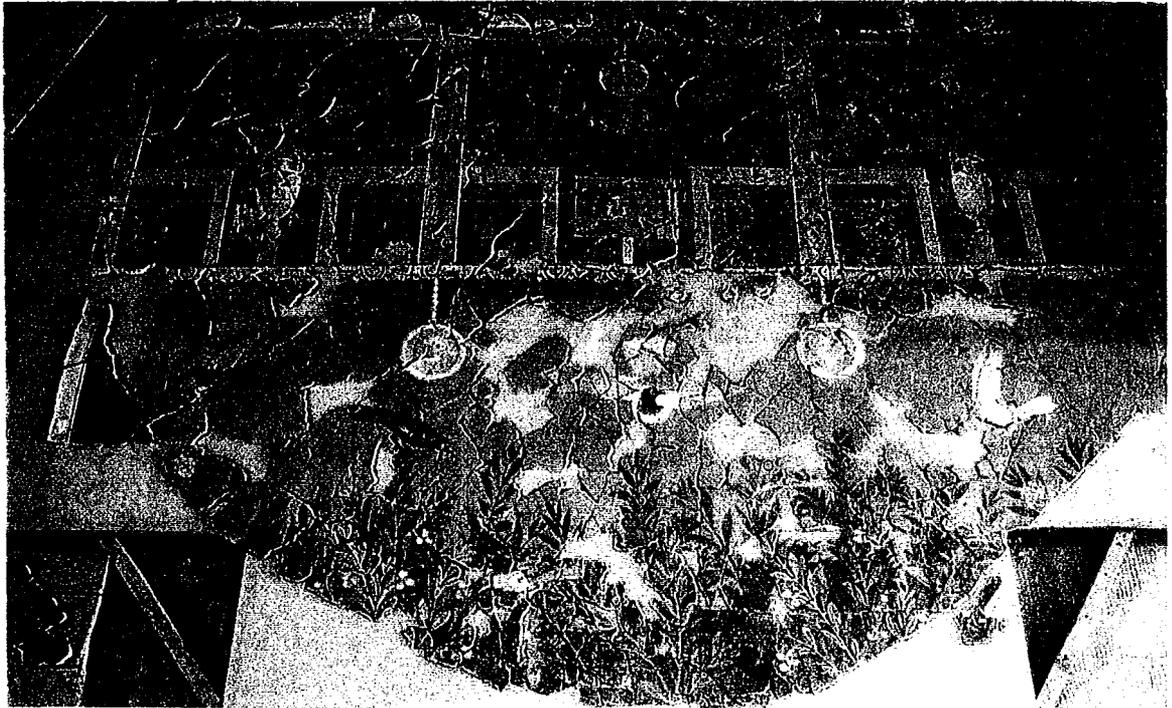




Fig. 6 Garden painting on north wall of a sitting room in the House of the Wedding of Alexander (VI. Insula occid. 42).

Fig. 7 Garden painting on east wall, upper part, fragments from the House of the Wedding of Alexander.



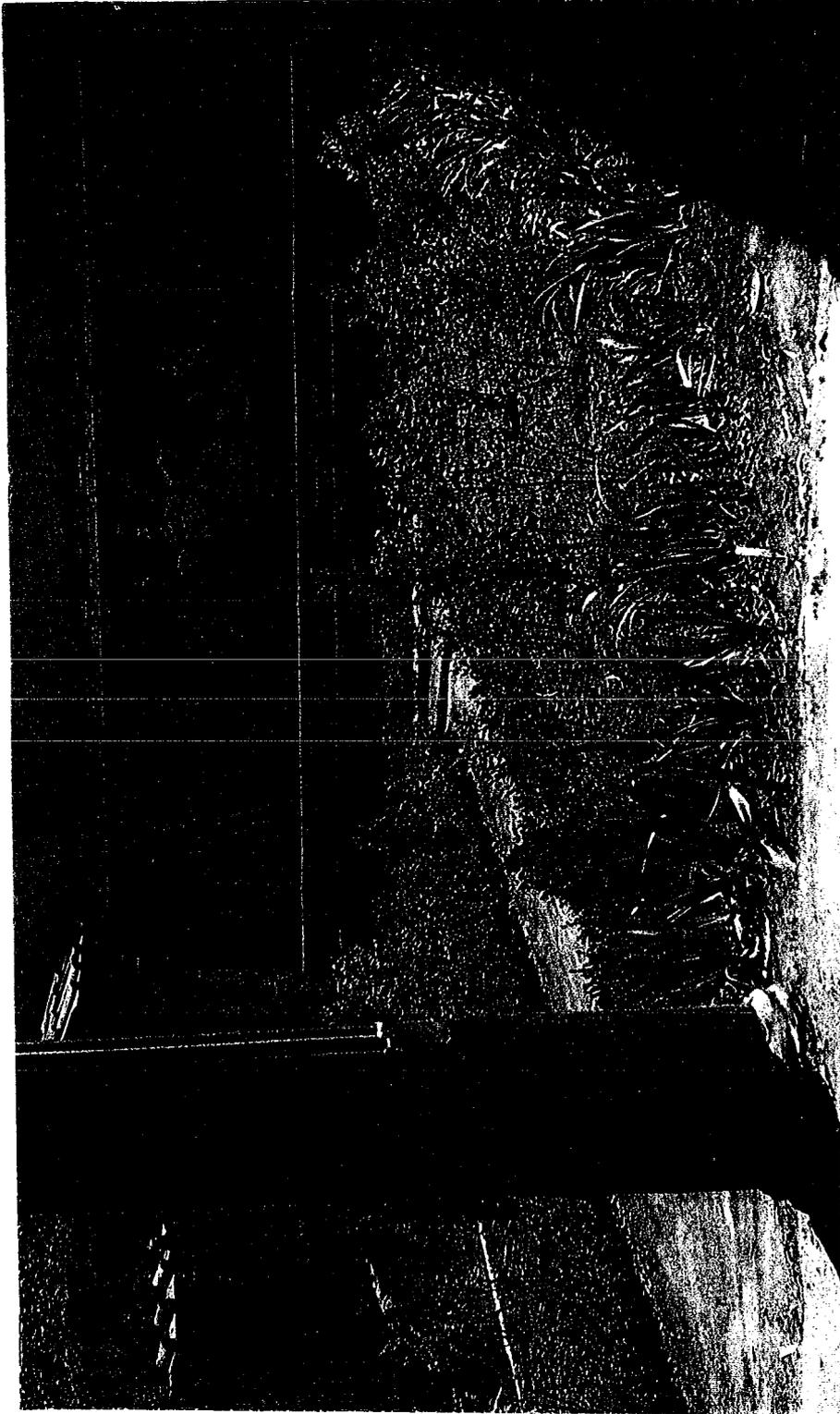


Fig. 8 Peristyle garden. House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3).



Fig. 9 Garden painting from west panel of south wall. House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3).



Fig. 10 (above)  
Mars. East panel  
on rear garden wall.  
House of Venus  
Marina (II.iii.3).

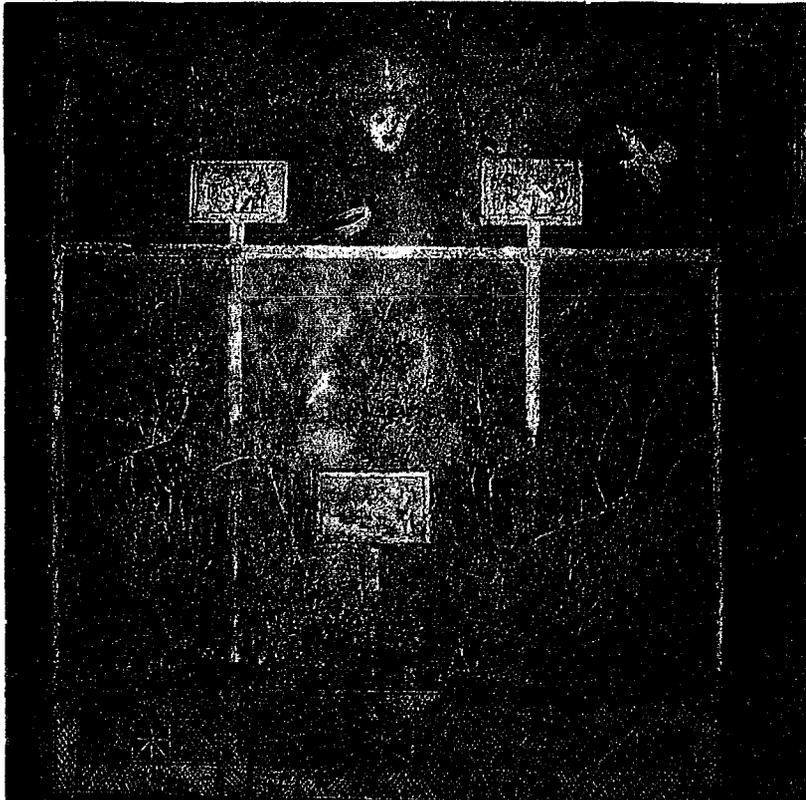


Fig. 11 (below)  
East wall of  
*cubiculum*. House  
of the Fruit Orchard  
(I.ix.5).

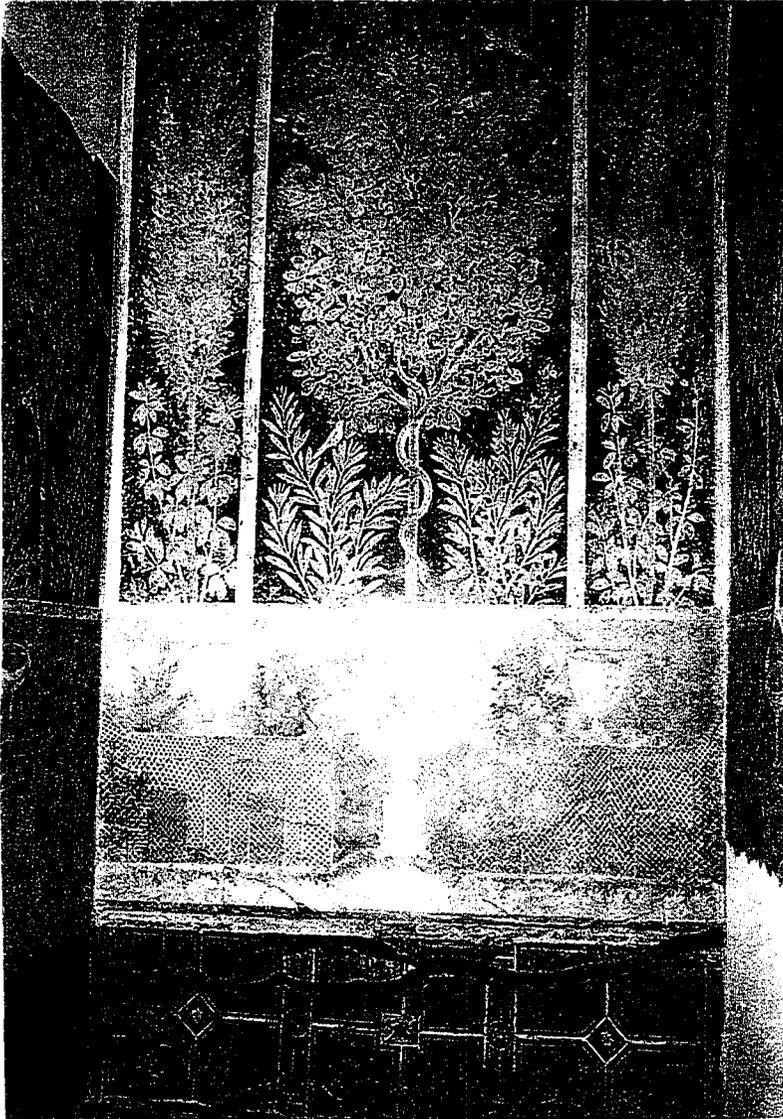


Fig. 12 (left) Garden painting on east wall in room off the peristyle.  
House of the Fruit Orchard (I.ix.5).



Fig. 13 (right) Detail of lattice fence and fountain from fig. 12.

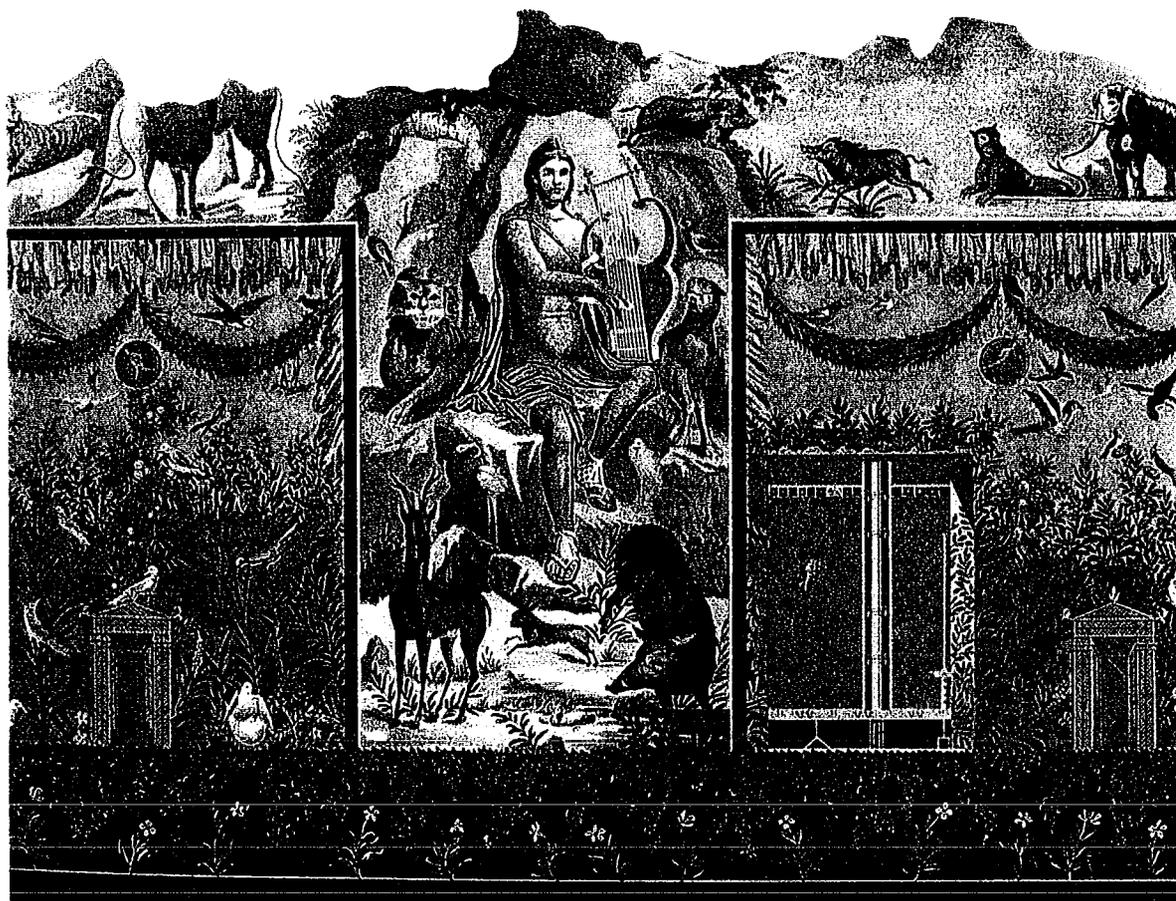


Fig. 14 (above)  
Watercolour painting of  
paradeisos and garden  
paintings from the  
House of Orpheus  
(VI.xiv.20).

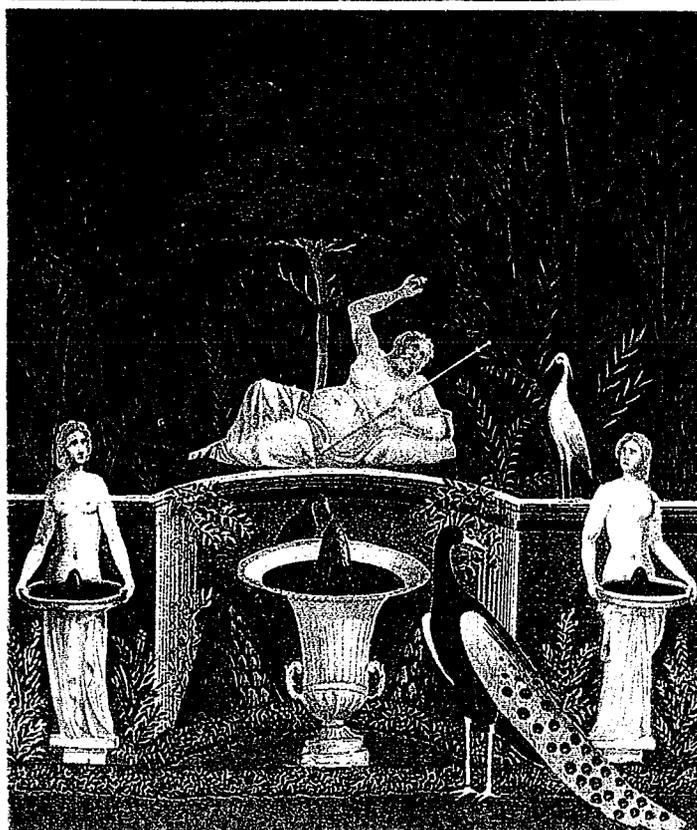


Fig. 15 (below)  
Watercolour painting of  
garden painting with  
fountains and Silenus  
statue. House of  
Romulus and Remus  
(VII.vii.10/13).

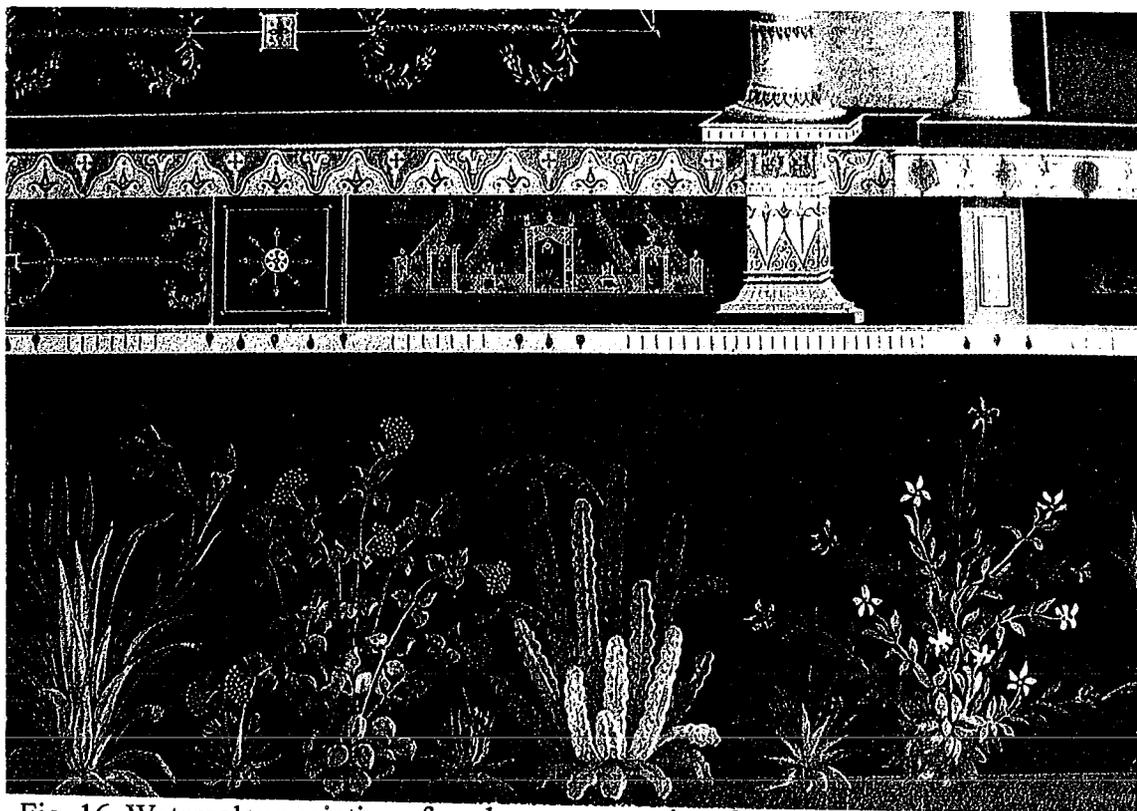


Fig. 16 Watercolour painting of garden representation. North wall of room d from the House of Epidius Sabinus (IX.i.22/29).

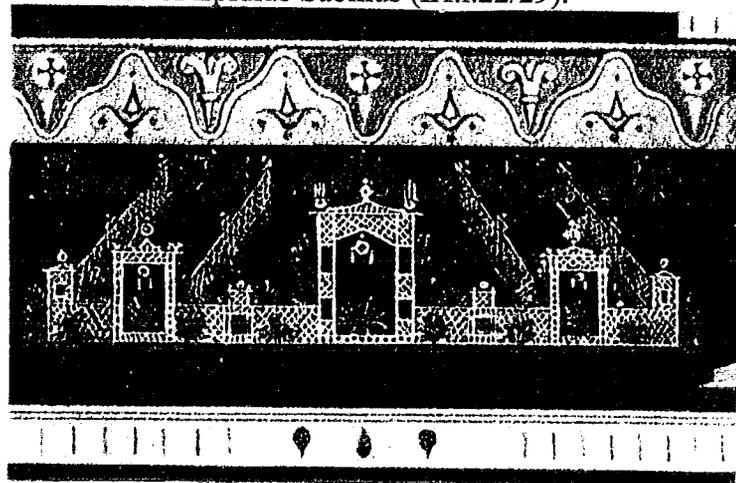
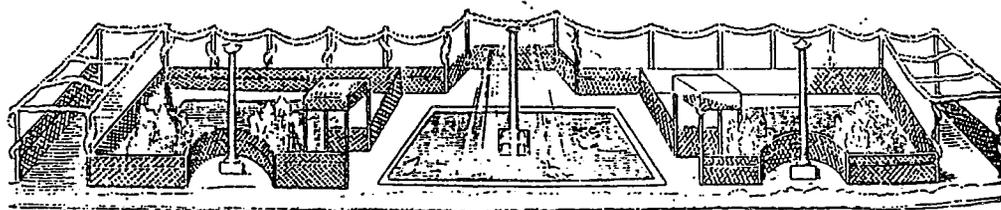
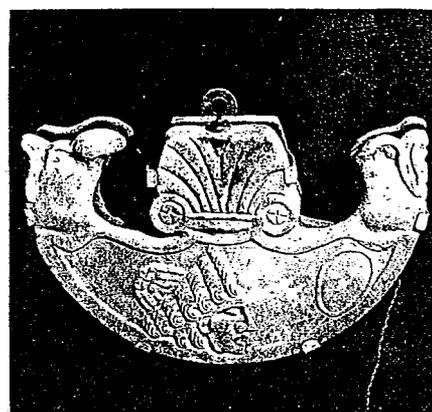
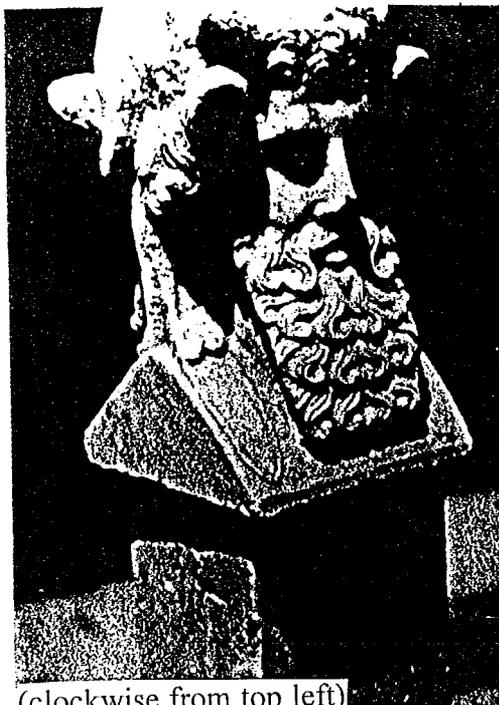


Fig. 17 Detail of watercolour painting of garden representation from fig 16.

Fig. 18 Garden representation. Auditorium of Maecenas, Rome.





(clockwise from top left)

Fig. 19 Herm from the peristyle garden. House of the Golden Cupids (VI.xvi.7). Fig. 20 Marble *pelta*. House of the Citharist (I.iv.5/25). Fig. 21 Marble theater mask hung between the peristyle columns. House of the Golden Cupids. Fig. 22 Marble *tondo*. House of the Citharist. Fig. 23 *Pinax* from peristyle garden. House of the Golden Cupids.



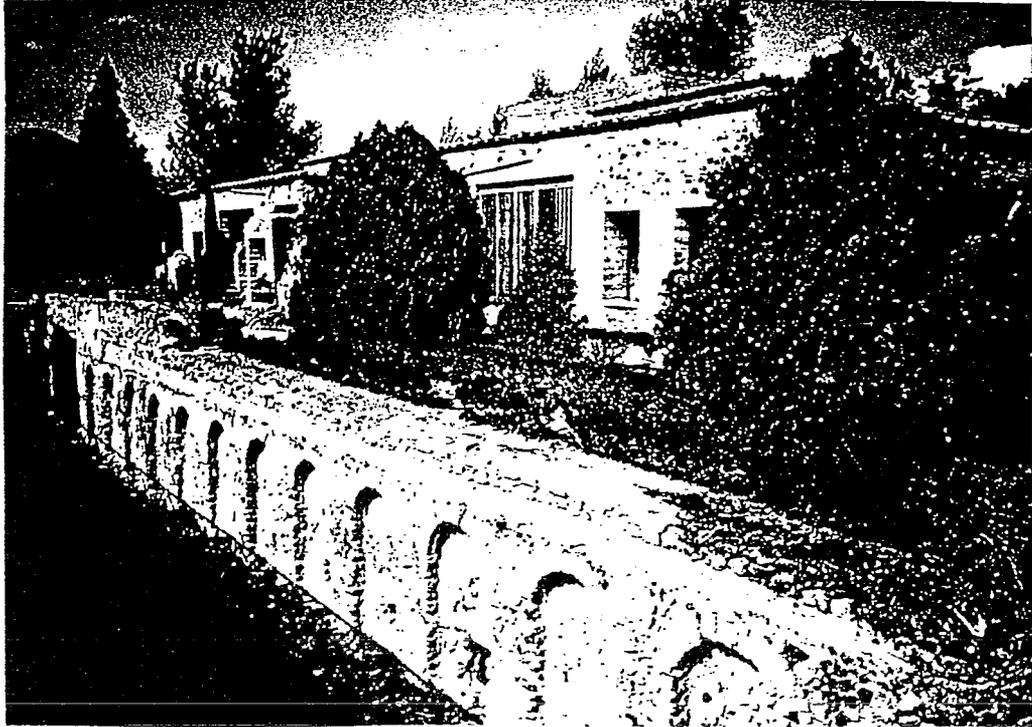


Fig. 24 Terraced garden with cryptoporticus. Villa of the Mysteries.

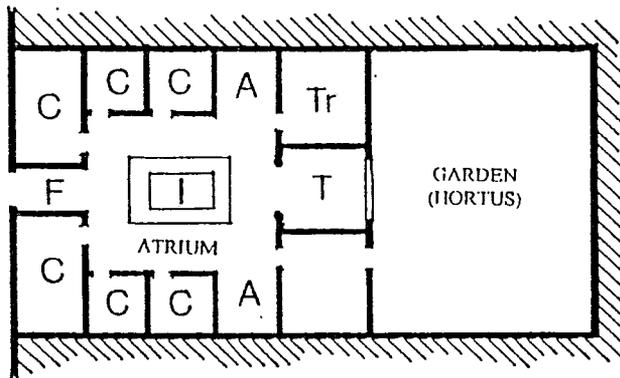
Fig. 25 Sunken garden. House of the Anchor (VI.x.7).



Fig. 26 Schematic plans indicating the development of town house and garden during the Roman period.

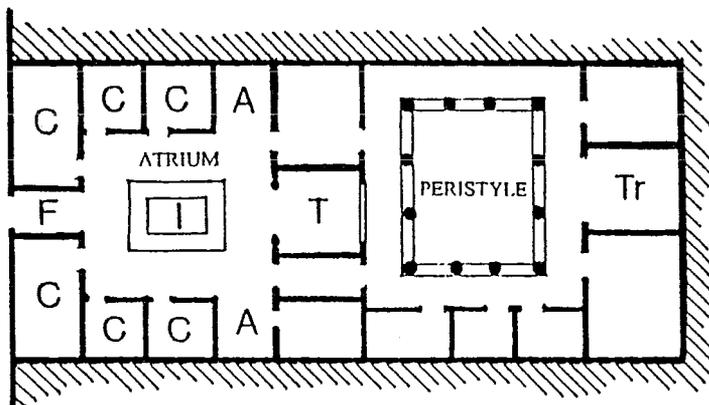
*Typical only; not to scale*

A. Basic Town House with Atrium Tuscanicum



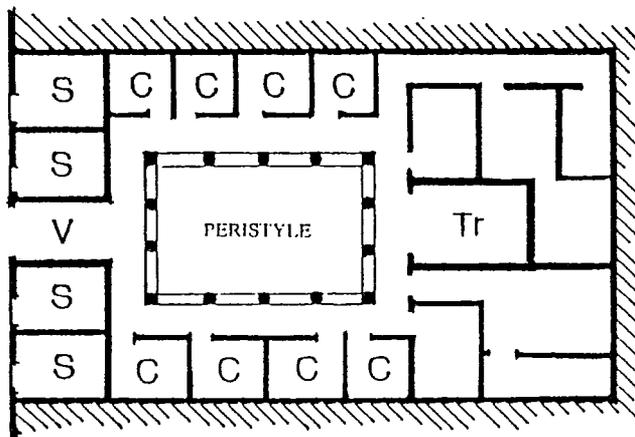
A: Ala C: Cubiculum F: Fauces I: Impluvium  
T: Tablinum Tr: Triclinium

B. A Peristyle House



A: Ala C: Cubiculum F: Fauces I: Impluvium  
T: Tablinum Tr: Triclinium

C. Later Form of Peristyle House



C: Cubiculum S: Shop Tr: Triclinium V: Vestibulum

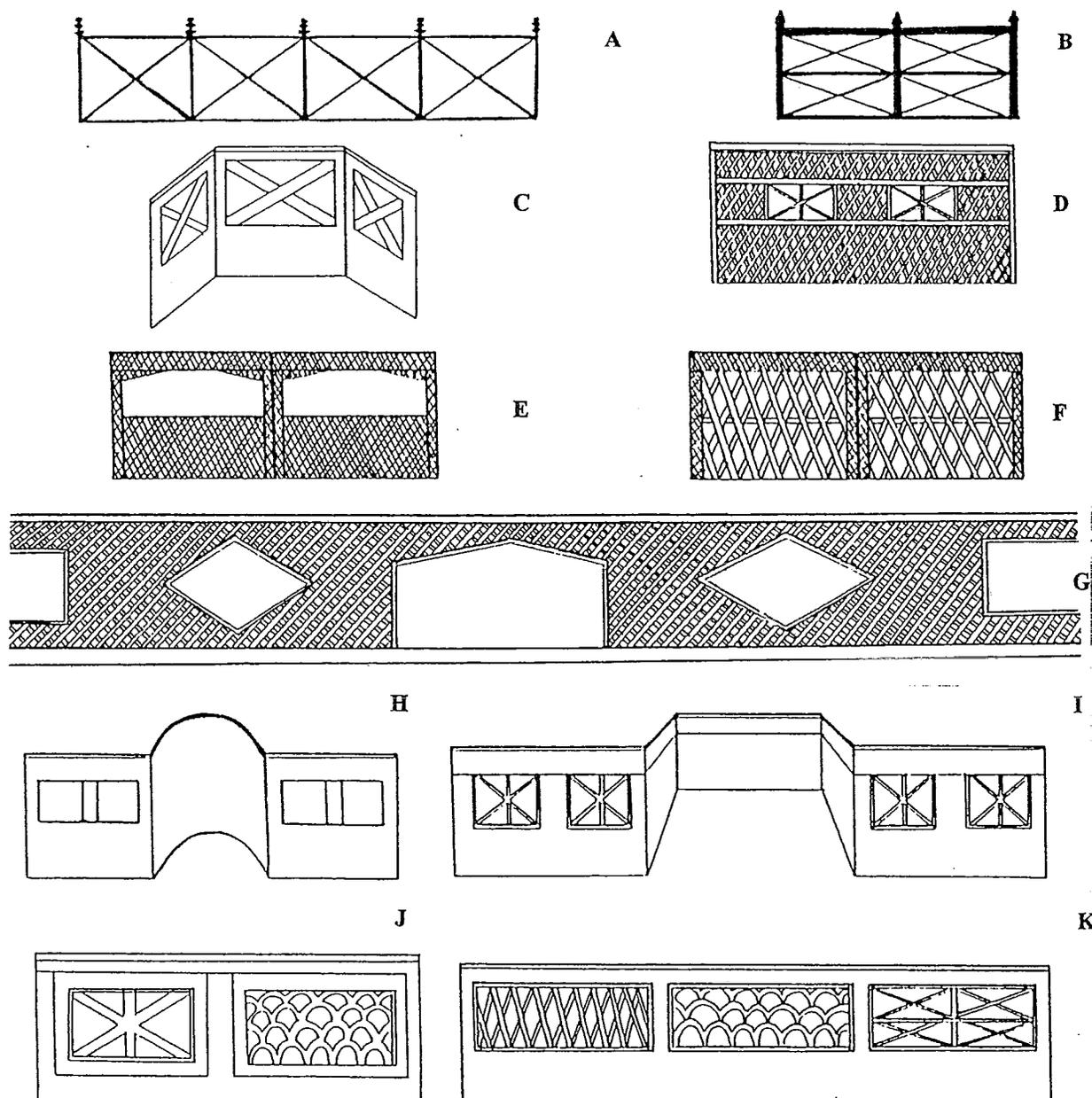


Fig. 27 Decorative fencing as illustrated in garden paintings

KEY TO PROVENANCE

A: Rudston Villa, Britain.

B: Wortley Villa, Britain.

C: National Museum Naples Inv.no.9705.

D & G: House of the Wedding of Alexander  
(Pompeii, Ins.Occid.42).

E & F: Auditorium of Maecenas, Rome.

H & I: Auditorium of Maecenas, Rome.

J: House of M.L.Fronto, Pompeii.

K: Livia's Garden Room, Primaporta, Rome.

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