

DOMESTIC STATUARY AT POMPEII: THE SCULPTURAL  
REPERTOIRES OF VENUS, HERCULES, AND DIONYSUS

DOMESTIC STATUARY AT POMPEII: THE SCULPTURAL  
REPERTOIRES OF VENUS, HERCULES, AND DIONYSUS

By

ALLISON R. KENNEDY, B.A. (Hons.)

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Author: Allison R. Kennedy, B.A. (Hons. Classical Archaeology, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2002)

Supervisor: Professor M. George

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## ABSTRACT

Although the study of public statuary has often overshadowed sculptural pieces discovered in the private context, an examination of domestic sculpture has much to contribute to our knowledge of Roman private life. This thesis examines the sculptural repertoires of Venus, Hercules, Dionysus and his *thiasos* in an effort to understand the nature of mythological figures in private collections of statuary. The artistic antecedents, sculptural types, placement and function are examined in Pompeii's private context, revealing some interesting commonalities. The religious function of statuary is also addressed, with emphasis on those examples associated with aediculae, niches, and altars.

Chapter 1 examines the goddess Venus' connection with the garden, focusing on sculptural representations of the deity in the gardens of Pompeii. Although the Italic goddess was associated with vegetation, it is the Greek form of the deity which appears in the context of the garden. Semi-draped versions of Venus at Pompeii often depict the goddess in connection with her bath. Several of the statuary types found in the gardens of Pompeii are adaptations of Hellenistic prototypes.

Chapter 2 briefly discusses the hero Hercules' Greek background and transition to Rome. Despite an extremely large artistic repertoire, it was the Hellenistic prototype created by Lysippos which Roman copyists adapted for display in the Roman garden. Among the statuettes of the hero discovered at Pompeii are examples which may have functioned as religious images.

Chapter 3 discusses representations of Dionysus and his *thiasos* in the gardens of Pompeii, outlining the god's Greek background and connection with the region. While only three representations of the deity have been discovered in the domestic context, there are numerous examples of his Hellenistic *thiasos*. The final chapter provides an analysis of all three sculptural repertoires, emphasizing the artistic trends, and placement as an indication of function.

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## INTRODUCTION

From the most opulent villa to the most humble dwelling, Romans cultivated private gardens and furnished them with decorative elements designed to appeal to people of varying economic means. Despite a limited budget, Pompeian patrons endeavored to create a luxurious setting in their private gardens that was reminiscent of Hellenistic royal courts. Living in an urban setting, owners took advantage of these small green spaces by filling them with lush vegetation, wall paintings, sculpture, fountains, and other architectural features. As a result, the private garden was among the most ornately decorated areas of the Pompeian house. Although statuary was placed in other parts of the Roman home, the peristyle was often at the center of a program of sculptural decoration, highlighting the most expensive pieces where they might be viewed from reception areas and adjacent dining rooms.

During the Late Republic private gardens were cultivated primarily for their vegetables, fruits, and medicinal plants.<sup>1</sup> Although the domestic gardens of the Imperial period continued to be planted with a variety of greenery, flowers, and vegetables, the function of the private garden changed. With the introduction of water fountains, the demand for sculpture, fountains, and other decorative features increased significantly. As a result, the domestic garden became a display space, intended to be looked at rather than actually used.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of literary references related to Roman gardens see P. Grimal *Les jardins romaines* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris 1969) 101-196.

<sup>2</sup> P. Zanker *Pompeii: Public and Private Life* (Cambridge 1998) 168.

The Romans, however, did utilize this space for dining on portable or permanent *triclinia*, which allowed them to indulge their love of *res rustica*, while enjoying the garden décor. The interior décor of the household was not only intended to impress private guests, but also those passers-by who could catch a glimpse of the interior through the front door.<sup>3</sup> This ostentatious display communicated to fellow Romans the owner's social status, culture, and wealth.

Although the aesthetic properties of a sculptural piece may have been a factor in its selection, it appears that a number of criteria determined a patron's choice, including religion. While religious piety is seldom identified by scholars as a criterion of choice, it may have influenced a patron's inclusion of certain figures in the domestic context. Agricultural divinities were among the most popular figures chosen for garden display, although they were not confined to the outdoor context. While such figures were naturally imbued with religious meaning, the religious function of these divine images is often ambiguous. However, there does appear to be evidence of religious worship in the garden context aside from the *lararium*, or household shrine.

Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus were among the agricultural divinities that appeared most often in sculptural form in the Pompeian household. Each of the deities was particularly well suited for display in the private garden. All three were intimately connected with agriculture and fertility, making them an ideal addition to any green space. However, the suitability of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus for the Pompeian domestic realm may also have been reinforced by their strong affiliation with the region

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<sup>3</sup> Zanker (1998) 10.

of Campania. The isolation and study of these particular deities provides an opportunity to examine the sculptural types selected by Roman patrons and artisans from each divinity's vast repertoire of sculptural examples. The nature of these mythological figures in the domestic sphere is the focus of this study, but it also includes a discussion of each divinity's political role in the official art of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, which provided an artistic and religious backdrop to their appearance in private art. The Pompeian repertoires of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus will be examined with respect to their artistic antecedents, sculptural types, placement and function in the domestic context.

The unique preservation of Pompeii and the surrounding region has proven to be of paramount importance in the examination of houses and their contents. The houses and gardens of Pompeii have been of particular interest to those archaeologists concerned with the domestic life of 'middle-class' Romans. The subject matter and fine execution of many wall-paintings and mosaics has made them the focus of several studies on art in the domestic context. Domestic sculpture, however, has generally received less attention. The statuary which has been examined in detail is often the large-scale, high quality sculpture discovered in villas rather than those examples typical of more modest dwellings. The private statuary at Pompeii was often of lower quality and reduced in scale to suit a more confined area.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the excellent preservation of the site, the reconstruction of the original context is often dubious, and at times impossible to ascertain. Many of the earliest

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<sup>4</sup> L. Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens* (Phoenix Mill 1998) xiii.

excavation reports omit information regarding context, a problem that is compounded by a tendency to discriminate between finer pieces and those deemed less important. Occasionally, the actions of Pompeian residents themselves make the analysis of original context difficult. There are several cases where it appears that Pompeian patrons removed sculptural pieces from their original position to a more secure area in an attempt to preserve them during the course of the eruption. As a result, conclusions based upon the placement of a piece should be made with a certain degree of caution.

There are a number of monographs devoted to the subject of Roman gardens and private art which have proven to be exceedingly useful in the examination of Pompeian statuary, its placement and function. In her book, *The Gardens of Pompeii, and Herculaneum and the Villas destroyed by Vesuvius*, Wilhelmina F. Jashemski discusses the nature and function of the private garden, highlighting the paintings, mosaics, and sculpture found within its confines. Of particular interest is Jashemski's brief discussion on religion in the garden. While Jashemski highlights artistic representations of the deities in the garden, she also illustrates their affiliation with agriculture and nature. Her second volume is an appendix for her first work and provides a catalogue of every private garden and its contents.<sup>5</sup> Although these two publications are extremely useful, Jashemski's study of garden statuary is far from exhaustive, as it is intended to serve as a survey of gardens with particular emphasis on her pioneering work in the reconstruction

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<sup>5</sup> W. Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius I* (New York 1979) 124. There are two volumes of this book, the second of which was published in 1993. From this point the volumes will be referred to as Jashemski I and Jashemski II.

of ancient vegetation. Since her work encompasses many aspects of the private garden, her analysis of statuary is often rudimentary.

Eugene Dwyer's work *Pompeian Domestic Sculpture: A Study of Five Pompeian Houses and their Contents* provides a catalogue of items found in the private context concentrating on an analysis of free standing sculpture.<sup>6</sup> Dwyer's holistic approach to domestic statuary is especially useful since sculptures are generally analyzed for their artistic characteristics without much concern for the context.

One of the most influential studies in the last 25 years on domestic life at Pompeii is Paul Zanker's work *Pompeii: Public and Private life*. In his analysis of the private sphere, Zanker argues that Pompeian patrons were motivated by a desire to emulate the grand decorative programs typical of villa gardens. While his suggestions are certainly compelling, they are of a more general nature, and are therefore not the main focus of this study.

In the first three chapters I examine the nature of Venus, Hercules and Dionysiac statuary in Pompeii's private context. In these chapters I address the artistic tradition of each deity with emphasis on those sculptural types adapted by Roman artisans for display in the domestic sphere. A brief examination of each divinity's role in the political milieu of the Hellenistic and Roman periods and their affiliation with the region of Campania rounds out a discussion of the Pompeian sculptural examples. The final chapter provides

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<sup>6</sup> E. Dwyer *Pompeian Domestic Sculpture: A Study of Five Pompeian Houses and their Contents* (Rome 1982).

an analysis of the three Pompeian repertoires focusing on the context and meaning of these mythological figures in the private realm.

## CHAPTER 1: VENUS AT POMPEII

As progenitor and patron, the goddess Venus played an important role in the political and religious life of the Roman people. The deity's popularity in official art seems to have carried over into the private sphere, where the goddess was frequently the subject of both wall-paintings and statuary. Although statuary was not displayed exclusively in the garden, the peristyle was often at the center of a decorative program. The goddess' inclusion in garden décor was particularly appropriated since Romans considered her a guardian of the private garden. Venus' role as a garden goddess was deeply embedded in her Italic identity which antedated assimilation with the Greek goddess Aphrodite. It is perhaps not surprising that Pompeians selected their patron deity Venus for her aesthetic form and natural affiliation with the garden. This study will examine the nature of the goddess Venus in the domestic context, highlighting her sculptural form, artistic antecedents, and her role as the protector of the Roman garden.

### 1.1 VENUS POMPEIANA: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As the goddess of love and beauty Venus figured prominently in Roman mythology, but it was her role as patron and progenitor that thrust the deity into the political milieu of the Late Republic. In the last half-century of the Republic three military dictators who ascribed their fortune and victory to Venus transformed the role of



the goddess, assigning the new epithets Felix, Genetrix, and Victrix. Sulla was the first to adopt Venus as his patron goddess and to credit his ability to conquer to her particular favour.<sup>1</sup> The dictator honoured Venus not as a goddess of love, but as a goddess of Fortune, assigning her the epithet Felix.<sup>2</sup> Sulla introduced this new cult of Venus Felix to Rome and set a precedent followed thereafter by Caesar and Pompey.

With Caesar's establishment of his own Venus cult, another dimension was added to the identity and role of the Roman goddess. Prior to Caesar's adoption of the cult the epithet "Genetrix" had already been associated with Venus for over a century as an acknowledgement of her role as progenitor of the Roman people. This new cult not only honoured Venus as an ancestor of the Romans in general, but as progenitor of Caesar's family the Iulii. Like Sulla, however, Caesar's devotion to the goddess was the result of victory in battle. Prior to the battle of Pharsalus Caesar invoked the goddess and vowed to erect a temple in her honour. It has been suggested that this warlike aspect of the goddess and her role as a guarantor of military success was a result of her eastern origins. Speidel suggests that despite the marked difference in their respective attributes Venus Victrix and Venus Genetrix were essentially the same goddess, and that Venus Victrix provided her own particular offspring with military victory.<sup>3</sup> With his dedication of a permanent temple-theatre in 55 B.C. Pompey also altered further the identity of the goddess uniting the cults of Venus Victrix and Felicitas in the same sanctuary.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Speidel "Venus Victrix: Roman and Oriental" *ANRW* II 17.4: 2225.

<sup>2</sup> J. Rives "Venus Genetrix Outside Rome: *Phoenix* (1994) 48 (4):297.

<sup>3</sup> Speidel 2226.

<sup>4</sup> Speidel 2226.

During the Empire this tradition of honouring the goddess continued with the establishment of a state cult. Although the cults of Venus Felix and Victrix were eventually superseded by the popularity of Caesar's cult, Venus Victrix continued to appear on imperial coinage until the time of Diocletian. Armed with shield, helmet, and spear, the goddess was often surrounded by various epithets, including Venus Victrix, Venus Augusta, Venus Genetrix, or Venus Felix.<sup>5</sup>

Founded in 80 B.C., the Roman colony at Pompeii was known as *Colonia Veneria Cornelia*.<sup>6</sup> It is the juxtaposition of Sulla's *nomen* "Cornelia" with "Veneria" that has led some scholars to conclude that the latter was included as a personal reference to the founder's devotion. This evidence is often coupled with an unusual iconographic type of Venus portrayed in several wall paintings at Pompeii. Venus Pompeiana is often depicted as a standing figure fully clad in a *pallium* and tunic; the crowned goddess displays an olive branch and a steering-oar, attributes normally associated with the goddesses Fortuna and Felicitas.<sup>7</sup> Since Sulla's Venus Felix, a goddess he associated with fortune, exhibited many of these same characteristics, Venus Pompeiana is considered a variant of this type. A derivative of Sulla's Venus Felix may have continued at Pompeii in the form of Venus Pompeiana.<sup>8</sup> While the establishment of the Venus cult at Pompeii has often been attributed to Sulla's fervent devotion to the goddess, the validity of this assumption has

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<sup>5</sup> Speidel 2226.

<sup>6</sup> R.M. Peterson *The Cults of Campania* (Rome 1919) 248.

<sup>7</sup> Peterson 248.

<sup>8</sup> M. Hamilton Swindler "Venus Pompeiana" *AJA* (1923) 302.

recently been called into question. Rives suggests that Sulla's cultivation of Venus at Pompeii is not as certain as some scholars have purported.<sup>9</sup>

These parallels between Venus Felix and Venus Pompeiana in conjunction with the epithet 'Veneria' have led some to attribute the institution of the Venus cult at Pompeii to Sulla. Rives argues that there is very little evidence to support the existence of the cult of Venus Felix. No ancient source comments on Sulla's establishment of her cult or a temple dedicated in her honour. Although Rives notes that Sulla himself adopted the *cognomen* Felix the evidence of Venus Felix even during the imperial period is restricted to her appearance on a medallion and a few inscriptions that suggest the existence of a shrine.<sup>10</sup>

Rives also questions the validity of attributing the colony's epithet 'Veneria' to Sulla's institution of the Venus cult. As an old Italic goddess, the cult of Venus had been long established in both southern Latium and Campania. Moreover, the epithet 'Fisica' associated with the goddess in several graffiti is believed to be of Oscan origin or perhaps a transliteration of the Greek word *physika*.<sup>11</sup> In other examples of graffiti, the goddess is given the name Pompeiana, an epithet which could be associated with the Sullan cult. However, in one particular graffito the goddess is referred to as Venus Fisica Pompeiana which suggests to Rives that the cult of the goddess was well-established in the region prior to Sulla's arrival. Rives proposes that the epithet 'Veneria' was not a reference to the cult associated with Sulla but the result of the ancient Italic cult.

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<sup>9</sup> Rives 298. Arguments for the Sullan cult have been made by G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Munich 1912) 291, and R. Schilling, *La Religion romaine de Venus depuis les origines jusque' au temps d'Auguste* (Paris 1954; reprinted 1982) 272-295.

<sup>10</sup> Rives 298.

Rives raises some important concerns about the validity of Sulla's introduction of the Venus cult at Pompeii, but does not provide an alternative explanation for Venus Pompeiana's Roman attributes. Those who support the association of Venus Pompeiana with Venus Felix do not deny the existence of an older cult in the region. During the pre-Roman period Venus' Oscan counterpart Herentas was one of the deities worshipped at Pompeii. An altar which stood in Apollo's temple provides the only evidence of a Venus cult at this time.<sup>12</sup> Peterson suggests that by the second century B.C. this old Italic goddess had already been influenced by the Sicilian goddess Venus of Eryx.<sup>13</sup> At both Pompeii and Herculaneum the Oscan goddess is mentioned in inscriptions with the epithet Erycina, an indication of this outside influence. While Sulla may not have been responsible for the introduction of the Venus to the region it is likely that he influenced the nature of the cult. Peterson postulates that the Roman colonists (encouraged by Sulla's promotion of the deity) joined the worship of the goddess already practiced at Pompeii.

The most compelling evidence of Sulla's influence is Venus Pompeiana's regal appearance. Rives downplays the importance of the iconographic connection between the Pompeian deity and the goddesses Fortuna and Felicitas. The striking similarities between Venus of Pompeii and Fortuna had long impeded the positive identification of Venus Pompeiana. The deity was only recognized as Venus when paintings were found which featured the goddess in the company of the other eleven Olympian gods.<sup>14</sup> Coins

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<sup>11</sup> Rives 299.

<sup>12</sup> Peterson 246.

<sup>13</sup> Peterson 236.

<sup>14</sup> Peterson 248.

issued by Sulla prior to the foundation of the Roman colony seem to confirm that Venus Pompeiana's appearance is consistent with representations of Venus Felix. While engaged in a campaign against Mithridates, Sulla struck *aurei* which featured the head of Venus, crowned by a diadem, accompanied by Cupid who stands before the goddess holding a palm branch in recognition of Sulla's victories in 85 B.C.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to this evidence are the remains of a temple which has been identified as that of Venus Pompeiana. While later construction phases have made the analysis of the earlier remains difficult, it appears that enough of the building remains to confirm that temple was erected during the first two decades of the colony's existence at Pompeii.<sup>16</sup> The identification of the temple is also based on the discovery of a statuette of Venus and a bronze rudder consistent with representations of the Venus Pompeiana in the wall-paintings at Pompeii. This, in conjunction with the numismatic and iconographic evidence, appears to confirm that the cult of Venus Pompeiana was heavily influenced by Sulla's cult of Venus Felix. Venus' role as the city's tutelary goddess and the evidence of cultic activity suggests that Pompeian residents favoured the Roman goddess.

## 1.2 SCULPTURE OF VENUS IN THE GARDENS OF POMPEII

With the establishment of the Venus cult at Pompeii and the adoption of the deity as patron goddess, it is not surprising that Venus frequently appears in the art of the private sphere. Although the goddess was not the most popular figure to appear in the garden, representations of Venus in the domestic context give some indication of the quality and

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<sup>15</sup> Hamilton Swindler (1923) 305.

types of statuary available to the private patron. The inclusion of Venus in the décor of the Pompeian garden not only reflects her aesthetic appeal, but her role as a guardian of nature and her important role in the domestic cult.

While aspects of the Pompeian cult of Venus are Sullan in nature the goddess appears to have retained some characteristics of her Italic heritage. Long before Venus had taken on the role of Fortuna or Aphrodite, the deity was associated with nature, and acted as a protector of the garden. Although this aspect of Venus was largely overshadowed by her acquisition of other attributes, both Varro and Pliny refer to her ancient role as a garden goddess. In his manual on agriculture, Varro acknowledged Venus as one of a number of deities considered a patron to those who cultivate the land.<sup>17</sup> Likewise Pliny, in his discussion of the garden, relates that Plautus considered the garden to be under the custodianship of Venus.<sup>18</sup> In addition to these literary references the strong correlation between the cults of Venus and Ceres at Pompeii may also be an indication of the goddess' association with nature. This role is further reinforced by the discovery of an inscription on a vase which names Venus as the guardian of the garden.<sup>19</sup>

As the tutelary goddess of Pompeii it is not surprising that representations of Venus have been found in both public and private contexts. Among the representations of Roman Venus, however, the patron goddess of Pompeii stands out as one of the most unusual. As an important civic deity, Venus was frequently depicted fully clothed in imperial and cult representations in the capital. More often, however, Venus is shown in

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<sup>16</sup> Rives 298.

<sup>17</sup> Varro *RR* 1.1.6.

<sup>18</sup> Pliny *HN* 19.50,

a state of undress or partial nudity. These nude and semi-draped renditions were modeled after Classical and Hellenistic depictions of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Although the goddess appears in both forms at Pompeii, it is the partially concealed version which appear most frequently in the domestic setting.

Modeled after the Greek Aphrodite, the semi-draped versions of Venus at Pompeii depict the goddess in connection with her bath.<sup>20</sup> These revealing renditions are a departure from the Venus Pompeiana's more formal attire, but demonstrate the effect of different iconographic influences on the identity of the Roman goddess. Two Roman adaptations of well-established Hellenistic prototypes are found among the repertory of Venus statuary at Pompeii: Venus 'Anadyomene' and Venus 'binding her sandal.'

Although the epithet 'Anadyomene' ('emerging from the sea') seems to be a reference to the goddess' birth, the three examples discovered at Pompeii show the goddess in the act of arranging her hair. One example of the 'Anadyomene' type was discovered in a small niche in the garden wall of the House of Camillus (VII.xii.23) (Fig.1).<sup>21</sup> This marble statuette of Venus, measuring 0.63 m in height, depicts the goddess splitting her hair into two, and gathering it up to the crown of her head in order to tie it into a knot. The goddess' drapery is firmly knotted at the hip, allowing her to arrange her hair using both hands.

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<sup>19</sup> Jashmeski I (1979) 124. The inscription written into the clay prior to the firing of the pot reads: *Presta mi sinceru(m): sic te amet qu(a)e custodit (h)ortu(m) Venus.*

<sup>20</sup> M. Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age* (London 1955) 143.

<sup>21</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 125.

Stylistically, the 'Anadyomene' type is often placed among the many derivatives of Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Cnidos (Fig.2).<sup>22</sup> Bieber has suggested that this statuary type was based on Apelles' famous painting of Aphrodite 'Anadyomene,' which depicted the goddess removing the sea foam from her hair.<sup>23</sup> While the Pompeian examples are semi-draped Bieber suggests that the nude versions of this type found elsewhere are likely older than these Roman adaptations. There are a number of cases where Roman copyists denuded the goddess, but often the Romans preferred a veiled body.<sup>24</sup> It is for this reason that the semi-draped versions from the Roman period exceed the number of nude examples.

Despite the fact that the 'Sandal Binding' Venus is among the most popular versions, only one example of this statuary type has been found at Pompeii and not in a garden, but in an atrium. An alabaster statuette of the goddess, measuring 0.62 m high, was discovered in the Casa della Venere in Bikini (I.ix.6) on a table in the atrium.<sup>25</sup> The goddess is shown leaning on a small statuette of Priapus for support while in the act of fastening her left sandal. A tiny Eros sitting before her raised left foot attempts to aid the goddess by supporting her foot with his outstretched arm (Fig.3). Unlike the examples of Venus 'Anadyomene,' Venus' body is not partially concealed beneath heavy drapery; instead, the goddess is clad in a gilded mesh 'bikini.' Other details on the statuette are also gilded, including the goddess' sandals, necklace, armlets, the chains around her midriff and her hair. The statuette of Priapus also features gilding on his head and genital

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<sup>22</sup> R.R.R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture* (London 1991) 81.

<sup>23</sup> M.Bieber, *Ancient Copies: Contributions to the History of Greek and Roman Art* (New York 1977) 64.

<sup>24</sup> Bieber (1977) 64.

<sup>25</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 125.



region. The fine quality of the carving and the attention to detail reflects the wealth of the patron and the workmanship available to him.

Although the 'Sandal Binder' cannot be traced to a major Greek work, its characteristics appear to be consistent with Hellenistic representations of the goddess. During the Hellenistic period, the goddess Aphrodite became a favourite subject of Greek sculptors. As a result, new prototypes were developed, many of which depict the goddess preparing for her bath. Stylistically, the pose of the 'Sandal binding' Venus is also typical of the Hellenistic period. The spiral movement created by the goddess' movement is consistent with poses developed during the period, in the style of the 'Crouching Aphrodite.' Although the 'Sandal Binder' appears to have been confined exclusively to smaller scaled statuettes,<sup>26</sup> more than 70 representations of this type are known: 39 in bronze, 17 in marble, 5 in terracotta and 10 on gems.<sup>27</sup> Among the representations there are numerous variations in the goddess' jewelry, hair, and accessories. While the Pompeian example depicts Venus leaning on a statuette of Priapus, other forms have the goddess resting her forearm on a dolphin, rock or vase. Despite these variations the goddess' proportions and pose are remarkably similar. This uniformity, in conjunction with the consistently small scale, suggests that the type may have developed as a popular offering.<sup>28</sup>

A similar statuette has in recent years been discovered among a large repertoire of statuary at the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis. Like Pompeii, Oplontis was buried by the

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<sup>26</sup> Smith 81.

<sup>27</sup> Bieber (1955) 144.

<sup>28</sup> Smith 81.

Like the 'Sandal binding' Venus, the goddess is represented resting her arm on a statuette for support. This unidentified figure, rendered in an archaizing style, is fully draped with her right hand at her chest and her left tugging at her drapery. The rocks upon which this small statuette stands seem to indicate an outdoor setting, an idea reinforced by the partially draped goddess. Although the statuette has not been positively identified, its association with Venus is not unprecedented. Higgins postulates that this statuary type originated in Western Asia Minor.<sup>32</sup> A signed terracotta statuette of Aphrodite resting her arm on a similar statuette from Sicily has been dated to 150 B.C.<sup>33</sup> He also suggests that the statuette may represent the goddess herself, as a priestess or votive offering.<sup>34</sup>

The Hellenistic antecedent has been traced to Western Asia Minor. Rather than supporting herself on the statuette, however, the earliest versions of this type depicted the goddess leaning on a pillar. A derivative of this type has been discovered in the garden of the House of Euxinus (I.xi.12) at Pompeii (Fig.6). The marble statuette, discovered in an aedicular shrine, measures 0.47 m in height and shares her pose with the statuette from House I.ii.17.<sup>35</sup> Resting her left foot at the base of the pillar, the goddess places her left arm on an unadorned pillar for support. Although the left hand is now missing, this Venus may have clutched an apple. During the Roman period, the statuary type appears to have evolved into the more elaborate version discovered at Pompeii.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> R.A. Higgins *Greek Terracottas* (London 1967) 115.

<sup>33</sup> Higgins 115.

<sup>34</sup> Higgins 115.

<sup>35</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 125.

<sup>36</sup> Higgins 115.

With few exceptions, the sculptures of Venus at Pompeii are said to have been created in a Praxitelean tradition.<sup>37</sup> This is not to imply that ‘point’ copies of Praxitelean works appeared in Pompeian gardens, but rather that many of the semi-draped versions of the goddess were loosely modeled after Praxitelean prototypes. Although the Aphrodite of Arles and Aphrodite at Capua are not works of the Greek sculptor they are considered to be in the same style.<sup>38</sup> One variation of the Arles type was discovered inside House II.iii.4 during a 1953 excavation.<sup>39</sup> The statuette measures 0.51 m high and retains a considerable amount of red paint on the drapery (Fig.7).<sup>40</sup> The goddess, like the Aphrodite of Arles, stands with her weight on her right leg and left leg slightly bent. The Pompeian variation depicts the goddess attempting to secure her drapery in a gesture of modesty. Although this modest gesture is absent from the Aphrodite of Arles, the motion is typical of other Roman representations of the goddess.

### 1.3 VENUS IN OTHER MEDIA

Venus’ presence in the garden was not confined to sculpture; two-dimensional renditions of the goddess appear in several paintings and mosaics within the Pompeian garden. Wall paintings in the context of the Pompeian garden allowed patrons to create the illusion of an ornate villa garden within their financial means. These two-dimensional vistas often included architectural elements such as pillars and fountains, lush vegetation and occasionally statuary. While the deterioration of many garden paintings has impeded

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<sup>37</sup> E. Dwyer (1988) “Decorum and the History of Style in Pompeian Sculpture,” *Studia Pompeiana and Classica in Honor of Wilhelmina F. Jashemski*. Ed. R. I. Curtis (New York) 108.

<sup>38</sup> Smith 81.

<sup>39</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 84.

the identification of some figures, two paintings of the goddess Venus have been identified with relative certainty.

On the west wall of House II.ix.6 a statuette of the goddess Venus was rendered in a garden painting and later partially concealed by the addition of a *lararium*. The statuette, which stands 0.87 m in height, appears to be a derivative of the Venus Genetrix.<sup>41</sup> In the garden painting the goddess stands in front of a painted lattice fence 0.68 m high through which flowers, leaves, and bushes can be seen. Despite the loss of the north side of the figure beneath a *lararium*, the goddess is shown tugging at her drapery over her right shoulder with a bent right arm. This motion is a characteristic feature of the Venus Genetrix or Fréjus type. The development of this type which was often used for the portraits of imperial ladies, has been attributed to the famous statue created at the beginning of the fifth century B.C.<sup>42</sup> The two main variations of the type, are essentially mirror reversals of one another. A statue of the Venus from the Villa Torloni-Albani at Rome is characteristic of the first group of copies, with the goddess raising her left arm behind her shoulder in order to tug at her drapery.<sup>43</sup> A statue of Venus from the baths at Argos is typical of the second version with the goddess raising her right arm in an identical motion.

While the goddess' pose is relatively uniform throughout the copies, changes in the drapery seem to reflect a desire for modesty.<sup>44</sup> The Roman goddess is frequently depicted divesting one breast; however, several adaptations of the prototype appear fully

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<sup>40</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 84.

<sup>41</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 332.

<sup>42</sup> Higgins 115.

<sup>43</sup> C.C. Vermeule, *Greek Sculpture and Roman Taste* (Ann Arbor 1977) 31.

draped. It is perhaps not surprising that many Roman matrons, who adapted this statuary type for their own portraits, selected a more modest version of the goddess.

The representation of a Venus statuette in the garden of House II.ix.6 appears to be consistent with the second group of the Genetrix type. Due to the poor preservation and partial obstruction, it is difficult to discern the style of the goddess' drapery. The shape of the goddess' leg, however, seems to be consistent with the transparent or 'wet' looking drapery often typical of the Venus Genetrix. Although this type does not appear among the statuary discovered at Pompeii, its inclusion in the context of the garden may indicate another statuary type available to the private Roman patron.

Another two-dimensional representation of Venus statuary was uncovered during the excavation of a *biclinium* in a small garden in Region I (I.xiii.16).<sup>45</sup> A statuette of Venus with billowing veil stands atop a pedestal. The nude goddess, her weight evenly distributed on each foot, holds a mirror in her left hand and with bent right arm touches her hand to her temple. A statuette of an ithyphallic Priapus stands on a tall pedestal to the left of the goddess, while a small peacock stands between the two deities. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these paintings is the depiction of the goddess rendered in the form of a statuette. While garden paintings were often mythological in content, two-dimensional representations of statuary seem to reinforce the use of the painting as an extension of garden. As with the previous example of Venus statuary, the painting from House I.xiii.16 may indicate another statuary type not represented in Pompeii's archaeological record.

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<sup>44</sup> Vermeule 31.

Among the mythological representations of the goddess in the garden is a large painting from the House of Venus Marina (II.iii.3).<sup>46</sup> The nude goddess, with billowing veil, is shown lying on a large shell. Venus is adorned with a necklace, bracelets, anklets and a diadem. The deity is accompanied by a small winged amorino peeking over the shell at her right and another riding a dolphin at her left. While the painting itself was not particularly well executed, its preservation indicates that this garden was re-decorated following the earthquake of A.D. 62.<sup>47</sup> While such a large representation of Venus does not necessarily signify the worship of the deity, her dominance in the garden décor seems to indicate the favour of the patron.

Similar depictions of the goddess were among the motifs included on two mosaic fountains at Pompeii. A mosaic fountain was discovered against the west wall of a small garden in the Hospitium of Fabius Memor and Fabius Celer (IX.vii.25).<sup>48</sup> The fountain is composed of a semi-circular niche, which is covered by a vault and flanked by two half-columns that support a pediment. In the left half of the pediment a group of objects which include a helmet, shield, and two spears are described as attributes of the god Mars. The objects, which appear on the right, include a dove, fan and chest, all attributes of the goddess Venus.<sup>49</sup>

The largest and most important scene appears in the vault of the niche. The scene depicts the birth of Venus. The nude deity, depicted wafting on a large shell from which she appears to have emerged, dominates the semi-circular vault. An old Triton looks on

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<sup>45</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 58.

<sup>46</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 126.

<sup>47</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 330.

<sup>48</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 242.

as Venus places her left hand on the head of a winged amorino for support. Other figures appear in the water around the shell, including another amorino holding a dolphin, a Nereid, and a dove perched upon a rock. While the Venus of Pompeii was not primarily known as marine deity,<sup>50</sup> other Venuses are associated with a marine *thiasos* which includes dolphins, fish, crustaceans, and Nereids among others.<sup>51</sup> As a theme for a fountain, the 'birth of Venus' was particularly appropriate and reflects another aspect of the goddess' identity which appears in the art of Pompeii.

#### 1.4 VENUS IN *LARARIA*

Although many representations of Venus appear to be more ornamental than religious in nature, the goddess was one of the divinities associated with domestic religion. While *lararia* or household shrines have been found in various parts of the Pompeian house, a number have been discovered in the context of the garden. The deities associated with the household shrine are commonly referred to as the *Lares* and *Penates*. The *Penates* were originally worshipped as the guardians of the family's storeroom (*penus*). The term, however, eventually referred to all the deities worshipped by the family.<sup>52</sup>

The Pompeian goddess was among the divinities venerated as the protector of the household. As a result, representations of Venus not only appear in *lararium* paintings but also among the content of the shrines. Venus Pompeiana appears in several of the

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<sup>49</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 242.

<sup>50</sup> Peterson 253.

<sup>51</sup> L. Farrar "Gardens of Italy and the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire: From the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.," *BAR International Series 650* (Oxford 1996) 33.

*lararia* paintings at Pompeii. Orr also notes her possible association with the fullers since her image appears in a *lararium* painting inside a *fullonica*.<sup>53</sup> The Roman deities depicted in *lararia* are often a reflection of the ‘religious make-up of the town.’<sup>54</sup> Venus’ status as patron deity made her inclusion in the *lararia* particularly appropriate, but deities, such as Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Minerva, Fortuna and Mercury also appeared.<sup>55</sup>

Although Venus Pompeiana appears among the repertoire of *lararia* paintings at Pompeii, within the contents of shrines the goddess was often less formally attired. Generally, the *Penates* worshipped in Pompeii were represented by small solid bronze statuettes, but this was not always the case. There seems to have been an overall lack of standardization among the contents of the household shrines, since each family worshipped its own particular deities. Thus, votive decorative figurines could be found side-by-side in a *lararium*. Although decorative figurines were not specifically designed for this use, they were employed in the event that a proper figurine could not be obtained. As a result, many of the *Penates* were of terracotta or in the case of Venus, of marble.<sup>56</sup> In addition to her semi-clad form, the images of the goddess found within the household shrines are often larger in scale than other statuettes. Again, Dwyer suggests that this is the result of decorative sculptures being consecrated as votive figures.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Jashemski I (1979) 118.

<sup>53</sup> D. Orr *Roman Domestic Religion: A Study of the Roman Household Deities and their Shrines at Pompeii and Herculaneum* Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972. 112.

<sup>54</sup> D. Orr “Roman Domestic Religion: The evidence of the Household Shrines,” *ANRW* (1978) 16.2:1580.

<sup>55</sup> E. Dwyer *Pompeian Domestic Sculpture: A Study of Five Pompeian Houses and their Contents* (Rome 1982) 121.

<sup>56</sup> Dwyer (1982) 121.

<sup>57</sup> Dwyer (1982) 124.



An example of this type of representation can be seen in a shrine discovered in the Casa di Epidio Rufo at Pompeii. The *lararium*, which was composed of wood coated with stucco, was accompanied by two large wooden cabinets which were placed against the north and south. The *lararium* itself appears to have been emptied before the eruption, but the north cabinet contained instruments of the domestic cult, including a bronze altar, a bronze *lar*, and a marble Venus.<sup>58</sup>

The pose and proportions of this statuette are reminiscent of the large representation of Venus found in the garden of House I.ii.17. Although there are slight differences between the two compositions it is clear that the two are derived from the same Hellenistic prototypes. While the garden statuette shows the goddess leaning on an archaic statue of a female, the statuette associated with the *lararium* depicts Venus resting her hand on an unidentified male figure. Another slight variation is in the placement of the goddess' right hand. In the garden example, the deity makes no attempt to secure her garment from slipping. In the smaller version, however, the goddess uses her right hand to secure her mantle. This gesture of modesty was also seen in the Venus statuette from House II.iii.4. The semi-draped form of the goddess indicates that the piece was likely a decorative statuette which was used by the patron as a votive figure.

The discovery of three statuettes of Venus in aedicular niches at Pompeii seems to indicate that some of the larger statuettes may have been venerated as religious objects and worshipped in the domestic cult. In the peristyle garden of House I.ii.17, the marble statuette of Venus leaning on a statuette was discovered in an aedicular niche, built

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<sup>58</sup> Dwyer (1982) 135.

against the east wall (Fig.8). Many aedicular facades were constructed of stucco, but this shrine-like structure was veneered with marble. This, in addition to the fine quality of the statuette, may suggest that the goddess was an object of worship in the garden. Unfortunately, the portable and perishable nature of altars often makes the identification of a statuette as religious image difficult.

A simplified version of this statuary type was also discovered in a shrine-like niche on the south garden wall of the House of Euxinus (I.xi.12). The aedicular shape of the niche suggests that it may have functioned as a *lararium*. This is reinforced by the appearance of a tiled floor, which Jashemski suggests may have originally extended out to accommodate a small altar.<sup>59</sup> Again, the absence of an altar makes tenuous the identification of this structure as a *lararium*. It is interesting to note, however, that the two examples of this statuary type at Pompeii were discovered in similar contexts. While the goddess is only partially draped, this representation of Venus is perhaps more formal in nature than the other depictions of the goddess. This pose appears to be more consistent with public representations of the goddess.

The third Venus statuette discovered in an aedicular niche is an example of Venus 'Anadyomene.' In the rear garden of House (VII.iii.6) a shrine-like structure was built into the rear wall. The niche, which was visible from the street, was decorated with stucco. Vertical recesses on either side of the niche may have held candelabra. This example of Venus 'Anadyomene' measuring 0.72 m high is an example of a poorer quality statue (Fig.9). While all three examples likely functioned as decorative pieces,

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<sup>59</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 124.

the placement of each statuette in fairly elaborate niches may indicate that they were considered religious images.

The most common form of niche found in the Pompeian garden consisted of a rectangular recess, usually coated in plaster.<sup>60</sup> Although examples of this type often functioned as *lararia*, they were also used for the display of sculpture. In the *viridarium* of the House of Camillus (VII.xii.23) four niches in the north wall held statuary. Two arched recesses flanked a central rectangular niche. The fourth arched recess was located high above the central niche. In the lower niche, beginning with the one on the left, was a statuette of Venus ‘Anadyomene.’ In the central niche a statuette of an unidentified male was found and in the east recess a statuette of a small child holding a hare.<sup>61</sup> While the statuette of Venus may have been considered a religious object, the inclusion of the child statuette seems to indicate that these figures were ornamental rather than religious. Niches should not be mistaken for *lararia*, however, some sort of religious piety may have been directed at the image of a deity placed within the architectural feature. Perhaps Venus’ appearance in several *lararia* at Pompeii indicates that these larger statuettes were also venerated as cult objects.

The nature of Venus and the frequency with which she appears in the private context are perhaps the result of the goddess’ aesthetic appeal. Roman collectors certainly appreciated statuettes for their aesthetic qualities.<sup>62</sup> Nude and partially draped renderings of Venus were certainly less formal than Classical depictions. However, to

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<sup>60</sup> Orr (1972) 88.

<sup>61</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 225.

<sup>62</sup> E. Bartman, “Sculptural Collecting and Display in the Private Realm,” in *Roman Art in the Private Sphere* Ed. E.K. Gazda (Ann Arbor 1991) 77.

view these sculptural examples as strictly ornamental is to trivialize Venus' importance as a religious figure. Romans considered Venus a divine mother, benefactor, goddess of love and protector of gardens. Surely Pompeian patrons who included the goddess in their domestic repertoire viewed her as an embodiment of all these elements. The placement of Venus statuary in niches and aediculae is perhaps an indication of her function within the Pompeian household as both ornamental and religious. Venus, however, does not appear to be distinct in this respect; other deities found in the domestic context seem to have functioned in a similar way, an aspect which will be examined further in the sculptural repertoires of Hercules, Dionysus and his retinue.

## CHAPTER 2: HERCULES IN THE GARDENS OF POMPEII

As Greece's foremost hero, Herakles inspired a rich artistic tradition which can be traced to the eighth century B.C. Although the mythological hero was praised for his strength and perseverance, his penchant for indulging in food and wine inspired Greek writers to exploit his human weakness in Greek comedy.<sup>1</sup> While Herakles' sculptural tradition followed him from Greece to Rome, these less desirable traits were left behind as the deity adopted an entirely new persona. No longer a comic character, Roman Hercules represented strength and perseverance, qualities that were particularly attractive to the ambitious generals of the Late Republic. Like Venus, Hercules became increasingly important as Sulla, Pompey, Crassus, and Mark Antony attempted to affiliate themselves with the deity. Despite this new role in Roman religion, in artistic representations the deity retained many of his Greek characteristics. The nature of Hercules' cult in addition to his natural association with the outdoors made the hero a particularly appropriate garden figure.

## 2.1 HERAKLES: GREEK HERO

Born of a mortal woman and Zeus, the mythological hero Herakles was a study in contrasts, with the strength of a god and all the failings of human nature. His legendary exploits inspired an artistic tradition that rivals that of any other deity. Although Herakles began as a Peloponnesian hero, the deity became increasingly Panhellenic as his popularity spread. Much of Herakles' mythology can be traced back to the Mycenaean period, when the semi-divine hero was the foremost hero of Tiryns, a vassal kingdom of Mycenae. It was as a young man that Herakles was sent to perform his twelve labours on the injunction of Eurystheus, the king of Mycenae.<sup>2</sup> While there are an overwhelming number of myths associated with the deity, his twelve labours appeared in art as early as the eighth century B.C.<sup>3</sup> The twelve labours, however, were only a small part of the hero's mythology. Herakles' myths were further sub-divided into those deeds which he performed during his labours, and other expeditions which he undertook at the head of an army or with a number of other heroes.<sup>4</sup> Since the deity had the ability to perform seemingly impossible tasks, he became an averter of evil and was worshipped as a helper in the completion of difficult tasks.<sup>5</sup> This mixture of superhuman strength and determination made propagating an association with the deity politically advantageous.

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<sup>1</sup> I have focused on this aspect of the Greek hero in order to contrast Herakles' Greek persona with his Roman identity. This comical portrayal of Herakles is only one aspect of the hero's identity, and not representative of the hero in Greek art and theatre.

<sup>2</sup> M.P. Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (London 1972) 195.

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Uhlenbrock, 'The Herakles Motif in Classical Art' Ed. J.P. Uhlenbrock. *Herakles: Passage of the Hero Through 1000 Years of Classical Art* (New York 1986) 7.

<sup>4</sup> Uhlenbrock 15.

<sup>5</sup> Nilsson (1972) 194.

Peisistratos, the tyrant in sixth century B.C. Athens, might have been the first to adopt the Herakles theme for the purposes of political propaganda. The tyrant, having failed at his first attempt at seizing power, reputedly plucked a beautiful girl named Phyē from the Athenian countryside, dressed her in armour, and instructed her to act like the goddess Athena, the patron deity of Athens. Peisistratos then stood beside her in a chariot and they drove together into the city. It was a well known myth that Herakles was a favourite of Athena and had been personally led by the goddess up to Mount Olympos. The tyrant appeared as a new Herakles being installed by the goddess on her own citadel.<sup>6</sup> Although Athena was a patron of other Greek heroes, her special affiliation with Herakles made him particularly attractive to the aspiring tyrant.<sup>7</sup> Boardman has convincingly argued that the frequency and consistency with which certain Heraklean scenes appeared on Athenian pottery reflect the tyrant's adoption of the hero. He suggests that these scenes seem to reflect a political rather than narrative interest in the mythological figure. Peisistratos' adoption of the hero as a divine protector set a precedent followed by politicians and prominent families in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The nature of the association, however, fundamentally changes, with some claiming the hero as an ancestor rather than a patron.

Peisistratos and his sons might have been among the first to ally themselves politically with Herakles, but it was Alexander the Great who thrust the hero into the political spotlight. Unlike the Peisistratids, Alexander and the Macedonian royal house considered Herakles, and therefore Zeus, the progenitor of their line. Both figures

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<sup>6</sup> J. M. Hurwit, *The Art and Culture of Early Greece 1100-480 B.C.* (Ithaca 1985) 235.

appeared regularly on the coins of earlier Macedonian rulers, a tradition which Alexander continued. A silver tetradrachm struck by the Amphipolis mint between 336 and 323 B.C. depicts the head of a young Herakles on its obverse.<sup>8</sup> The deity is depicted wearing his most recognizable attribute, the lion's scalp. During his conquest, Alexander also made a point of sacrificing to his ancestor. These associations with the divine figure likely fostered parallels between Herakles' triumphs and Alexander's own celebrated achievements.

It is unclear whether Alexander himself wore the lion's scalp in contemporary portraits. After his death, however, Hellenistic rulers often depicted Alexander in the guise of the hero on their own coinage. On coins minted by Ptolemy I in Alexandria, Alexander appears much like the earlier portraits of Herakles with one distinct difference: rather than a lion's skin on his head, Alexander's head is covered with the skin of an elephant, depicting the general as the conqueror of India.<sup>9</sup> Despite this change, the similarities between the two images possibly helped to solidify the identification of Alexander with Herakles. On his early coinage, Ptolemy I also gave ram's horns, the aegis, and Dionysos diadem to Alexander.

At the end of the Hellenistic period, Mithridates also embraced an association with Herakles and Alexander. Mithridates claimed descent from Cyrus and Darius on one side, and from Seleukos Nikator and Alexander on the other. Mithridates seems to have continued the theme of Herakles as the saviour of civilization on a sculptural tableau

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<sup>7</sup> J. Boardman, "Herakles, Peisistratos and Sons" *RA* (1972) 1: 59.

<sup>8</sup> G.K. Jenkins, *Ancient Greek Coins*, 2ed. (London 1990) 123.

<sup>9</sup> Jenkins 125.



from Pergamon. The scene depicts the young hero clad in a lion skin freeing Prometheus. Although the Herakles is not exactly a portrait of the ruler, as Smith notes, it seems to have 'Mithridatic' characteristics.<sup>10</sup> The effect of propagating such an association would not only draw comparisons with Herakles, but perhaps more importantly Alexander himself. This trend continued well into the Imperial period, with Roman generals and later emperors using Herakles in an attempt to appear as the new Alexander.

Over the centuries a number of artists contributed to the hero's iconographic tradition, including the sculptors Scopas and Praxiteles, and the painters Apelles and Zeuxis. Perhaps the single most influential contributor to the development of the Herakles motif was Lysippos of Sikyon, who worked in the last half of the fourth century B.C. Of fifteen hundred works ascribed to Lysippos,<sup>11</sup> the most innovative not only altered the god's physical appearance but perhaps more importantly the hero's persona.

The 'Weary Herakles' or 'Herakles Farnese' was one of Lysippos' most influential works. The 'Farnese' type takes its name from the family of the Farnese who had possession of a famous Roman copy which originally stood in the Baths of Caracalla (Fig.10).<sup>12</sup> It was this depiction of an aged Hercules with the muscular physique of a mature athlete that altered perceptions of the hero. Lysippos had not only chosen to depict the traditionally ageless hero as an older man, but this rendering conveyed vulnerability never before associated with the virile hero. The sculpture depicts the

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<sup>10</sup> Smith 123.

<sup>11</sup> Uhlenbrock 11.

<sup>12</sup> Bieber (1955) 37.

heavily muscled hero leaning on his club for support. Herakles stands with his left hand hung limply at his side and his right hand placed behind his back. It is only when the viewer walks around the sculpture that the Apples of the Hesperides, which the hero holds in his right hand, become apparent. It is this small detail that indicates to the viewer that Herakles has completed the last of his labours.<sup>13</sup> The sculpture is in some ways typical of Hellenistic sculpture, where the aim was to entice a viewer to walk around the piece. Hellenistic artists experimented with well-established artistic canons, altering them in unexpected ways. The appeal of the innovative representation was widespread, with copies and adaptations of the piece appearing in various media through the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

This new perspective on Herakles inspired other depictions, which played upon the idea of a physically strong hero with a tendency towards excesses. These adaptations often corresponded with his role in Greek Comedy, where the hero was frequently in a state of intoxication. Such depictions show the god unable to keep his balance or attempting to maintain sexual arousal. Another common statuary type depicts the deity urinating, a theme that made this representation a popular fountain figure in the private gardens of the early Imperial period.<sup>14</sup> Despite an extremely large artistic repertoire, it is the Hellenistic prototype created by Lysippos which Roman copyists often adapted for display in the Roman garden.

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<sup>13</sup> Uhlenbrock 11.

## 2.2 HERAKLES: FROM GREECE TO ROME

Although the cult of Herakles in Greece continued through the Hellenistic and Roman period, the hero's religious role fundamentally changed in his passing from Greece to Rome.<sup>15</sup> While the hero was praised for his success in completing his twelve labours and achieving immortality, the deity was often featured in Greek comedy in a state of inebriation, having overindulged in food, wine, and women. In these comedies, Greek playwrights exaggerated Herakles' mortal failings of pride, greed, anger, and lust. These less desirable characteristics, however, are noticeably absent in Roman theatre. Upon his incorporation into Roman religion, Herakles, or Hercules, his Roman name, was approached with a new seriousness. The hero's attainment of immortality through his own strength and *virtus* (the equivalent of Greek *arete*) appealed to the Romans' Stoic sensibilities.

It was an old Roman tradition among aristocratic families to trace one's family line to a Greek hero or god.<sup>16</sup> During the Republic, Roman generals continued the pattern by connecting themselves with Hercules, a figure celebrated for his triumph over adversaries.<sup>17</sup> At Rome, Hercules was worshiped as Hercules Invictus, the invincible. It was an old custom for triumphant generals to dedicate one-tenth of their spoils to the god as a thank-offering.<sup>18</sup> Large, ritual banquets had developed with the offering up of edible

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<sup>14</sup> Uhlenbrock 12.

<sup>15</sup> G. Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: the Adaptations of the Hero in literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (London 1972) 127.

<sup>16</sup> P. Zanker, *The Power Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor 1990) 44.

<sup>17</sup> Uhlenbrock 14.

<sup>18</sup> E.C. Evans, *The Cults of the Sabine Territory* (New York 1939) 75.

and, perhaps more importantly, promoted comparisons between himself and Alexander, an association which Pompey readily fostered. Like Sulla, Crassus chose to celebrate the festival of Hercules, thanking the deity for granting him victory over Spartacus and the slave rebellion the previous year, and dedicated one-tenth of his property, a tithe which would have provided enough funding for an elaborate celebration.<sup>22</sup> Pompey's effort to affiliate himself with this particular deity, however, was likely aimed at superseding Sulla rather than simply connecting themselves with the god or Alexander.

While both Pompey and Crassus claimed special favour with the deity, neither appears to have claimed descent from Hercules. Despite the fact that Mark Antony seems to have modeled himself after the god Dionysus, he claimed Hercules as an ancestor.<sup>23</sup> His family traced its origins back to one of Hercules' lesser-known sons, Anton. Antony issued coins which featured a portrait of himself on the obverse and his ancestor on its reverse.<sup>24</sup> According to Appian, Caesar's reluctance to adopt Mark Antony was due to Antony's refusal to accept Aeneas and thus Venus as an ancestor in exchange for Hercules.<sup>25</sup> Antony and his family not only claimed descent from the hero but Antony himself was thought to bear a semblance to the deity, a comparison which would have worked to his advantage: "The finely formed beard, broad brow, and aquiline nose lent him a powerful masculine look which reminded people of paintings and statues of Hercules whom he was thought to resemble." (Plutarch, *Antony* 4) An engraved stone ring discovered at Pompeii seems to confirm this general opinion. The ring, which was

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<sup>22</sup> Rawson 33.

<sup>23</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 4, 36, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Zanker (1990) 45.

<sup>25</sup> App. *BC* iii 16.

likely used as a seal by a political supporter, depicts a nude and muscle-bound Hercules with a club in his left hand. The face of the figure, however, bears a striking resemblance to Mark Antony. To Zanker, the engraving indicates that statues which depicted Antony in the guise of Hercules were likely in existence at this time.<sup>26</sup>

Although Augustus did not appear to show any special favour to the cult of Hercules in Rome, Augustan poets readily associated the emperor with the hero. This was accomplished in a number of ways, but perhaps most effectively through Virgil's *Aeneid*. From the beginning Virgil attempts to assimilate Aeneas to Hercules,<sup>27</sup> and in doing so endows Augustus' ancestor with the ability to accomplish Herculean feats. The *Aeneid* itself was in some ways an attempt to make a national hero of Aeneas, giving him the role that Herakles had in Greece.<sup>28</sup> The effort on the part of the Augustan poets to link Augustus to Herakles may also have been intended to offset the claims made by Pompey and Antony to become Herakles' successor on earth. Given Antony's claim to be a descendent of the hero, it is perhaps not surprising that Octavian scheduled his triple triumph in celebration of his victory over Antony and Cleopatra to coincide with the festival of Hercules at the Ara Maxima on August 13.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.3 HERCULES IN CAMPANIA

Hercules was a well-established figure at Rome, but was also honoured throughout Italy. As Dionysius, a contemporary of Virgil, notes:

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<sup>26</sup> Zanker (1990) 45.

<sup>27</sup> Galinsky 132.

<sup>28</sup> Galinsky 131.

<sup>29</sup> Galinsky 141. This date also marks the arrival of Aeneas at the site of Rome on that very occasion.

“In many other places in Italy precincts are dedicated to this god and altars erected to him, both in cities and along highways; and one could scarcely find a place in Italy in which the god is not honoured (Dionysius *Rom Antiq.* I.40.5).<sup>30</sup> The hero had a particularly strong connection with Campania and the Bay of Naples since the region provided the backdrop to several important mythological episodes involving the hero. It was in the Campi Phlegraei or ‘Flaming Fields’ that the epic battle between the gods and giants (the gigantomachy) was staged.<sup>31</sup> The Greek hero was instrumental in the triumph of the Olympian gods over the unruly giants. Herakles also performed one of his Twelve labours in the region. On one of his two trips to the Underworld, the hero brought back the cattle of a three-headed giant known as Geryon, a figure sometimes identified as a herdsman of the dead.<sup>32</sup> The area around Lake Avernus, once volcanic in nature, had often been associated with the Underworld, an idea reinforced by the presence of a cult to Persephone. Particular geographical characteristics of the region were sometimes attributed to the hero such as the causeway across the Lucrine bay. Lake Avernus, once opened to the sea, was reputedly blocked by Herakles, who constructed a road (the Via Herculanea) along its shore.<sup>33</sup>

Other indications of the hero’s activity in the area were retained in place-names. The ancient site of Bauli, modern-day Bacoli, derived its name from bo-aulia – ‘cattle stalls.’ It was at the site of the future settlement that Herakles had penned up Geryon’s

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<sup>30</sup> Galinsky 131-2

<sup>31</sup> The epic battle also known as the titanomachy in the Cumaean territory of Phlegra.

<sup>32</sup> S.L. Harris and G. Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* (London 1998) 242.

<sup>33</sup> A.G. McKay, *Ancient Campania: Cumae and the Phlegraeian Fields vol. 1* (Hamilton 1972) 8.

cattle for a time.<sup>34</sup> Pompeii may also owe its name to the hero and his activity in the area.<sup>35</sup> Not all of the deity's activities in the region, however, were in connection with the gigantomachy or his Twelve Labours. Although these are among the most popular mythological deeds associated with the Herakles, he was also involved in aiding kings, defending cities, and leading armies.<sup>36</sup> It was in this role as 'civic hero' that the deity founded a town he named Herakleion or Roman Herculaneum.<sup>37</sup> Diodorus, noting the mythical foundation of the city, says:

After Hercules had settled everything in Italy according to his desires and his naval force had arrived safely from Spain, he sacrificed tithes of his booty to the gods and built a small town named after himself in the place where his fleet lay at anchor; the site is now occupied by the Romans, and lying as it does between Naples and Pompeii, has a secure harbor facilities at all seasons (Diod. 1, 44).<sup>38</sup>

In a region with such strong mythological ties to the deity, it is not surprising that the hero's cult was particularly popular in the region.

#### 2.4 HERCULES IN THE GARDENS OF POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM

It is perhaps to be expected, therefore, that in Campania representations of the deity should appear in the Roman household. Although Hercules appears in a number of mythological wall-paintings within the house, the hero was particularly well-suited for the garden. Often the deities featured in garden décor had an association with

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<sup>34</sup> T.P. Wiseman, 'The Games of Hercules,' in *Religion in Archaic and Republican Rome and Italy: Evidence and Experience*. (Edinburgh 2000) 112.

<sup>35</sup> Servius, *ad Aen.* 7, 662. Hercules...in quadam Campaniae civitate pompam triumphis sui exhibuit: unde Pompei dicitur civitas.

<sup>36</sup> S.L. Harris and G. Platzner 237.

<sup>37</sup> Wiseman 111.

<sup>38</sup> McKay (1972) 173.

agricultural. This, however, was not a requisite; figures like Mercury, who has no known connection to the garden or agriculture, appeared in a number of private collections. Although Hercules was not considered one of the major agricultural deities he was still worshipped as a god of abundance and praised for his powers of fecundity.<sup>39</sup> On a tablet discovered in a grove at Agnone (sacred to the goddess Ceres), the hero's name appeared on a list of seventeen other deities associated with vegetation and agriculture. Hercules is listed with the *cognomen* Cereaelis, an adjective which was often used to denote the ability to nourish growing things.<sup>40</sup> The connection between Hercules was also apparently associated with the goddess Ceres at Rome, where the two shared a joint festival.<sup>41</sup>

While many of the deity's labours were performed in an outdoor setting, the hero's last labour places him in the Garden of the Hesperides. In his final labour Hercules must go to the sacred garden in order to steal the apples from the female guardians. Depictions of the god sitting in the idyllic garden can be traced back to the sixth century B.C. As a result, sculptural representations of the deity were particularly well-suited for display in the private garden. In the *hortus* such mythical settings could be recreated.<sup>42</sup> The suitability of the deity for garden display was also reinforced by depictions of the deity banqueting in an outdoor setting or in the company of Dionysus and his *thiasos*.

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<sup>39</sup> Jashesmki (1979) 122.

<sup>40</sup> E.T. Salmon, *Samnum and the Samnites* (Cambridge 1967) 160-162.

<sup>41</sup> Salmon, 160-162.

<sup>42</sup> Farrar (1996) 34.



The rustic nature of Hercules' appearance may also have inspired private patrons to include him in garden décor. The deity was often depicted nude, a characteristic typically applied to athletes and heroes. While the deity's physique was subject to change, the attributes associated with the hero remain fairly consistent. Although other elements were occasionally added to these compositions, Hercules' main attributes, the lion's skin and club, were standard in most representations of the hero. Figures like Priapus, Pan, and various members of Dionysus' entourage including satyrs and *silanoi* were considered figures more appropriate for display in an outdoor setting. Hercules' physical appearance and attributes conveyed a similar rusticity that appealed to Roman attempting to recreate a woodlands setting. With the introduction of Lysippos' 'Weary Herakles', the apples of the Hesperides became an important attribute signifying the completion of the hero's labours.

A statuette discovered in the garden of House II.viii.6, the 'Garden of Hercules', exhibits some Lysippan characteristics, yet the overall attitude of the statuette differs from the 'Farnese Herakles' sculptural type (Fig.11a, 11b).<sup>43</sup> The marble statuette, which measures 0.57 m high, was found in a large aedicular shrine built against the east wall of the garden.<sup>44</sup> Here, Hercules exhibits the heavy musculature of the 'Farnese' type without the characteristic weariness and vulnerability. Roman copyists were able to convey an entirely different mood simply with a tilt of the head in an upward direction

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<sup>43</sup> Dwyer (1988) 107.

<sup>44</sup> W.F. Jashemski, 'The Garden of Hercules at Pompeii' (II.vii.6): The discovery of a Commercial Flower Garden' *AJA* (1979) 83(3): 403.

and a slight alteration of the stance. Despite these small changes the overall style of the composition betrays its Lysippan roots.

Other small bronzes discovered at both Pompeii and Herculaneum exhibit characteristics that can be traced to the 'Farnese' prototype. A small bronze statuette (0.19 m high) discovered in a *lararium* in the garden of House I.viii.1 is also a Roman adaptation of the Hellenistic original.<sup>45</sup> Again, the figure possesses characteristics typical of the sculptural type, including a contrapposto stance and a heavily muscled physique. In this rendition the copyist also included typical attributes, such as Hercules' club, lion's skin and the Apples of the Hesperides. Although the sculptor has incorporated these same attributes, the manner in which they are displayed is entirely different. Instead of leaning on his club for support, the Pompeian figure simply holds the club down at his side. The Apples of the Hesperides are also displayed in different way, with Hercules holding them in plain view rather than tucked behind his back. As a result, the Pompeian statuette loses the three-dimensional quality of the original.

A group of bronze statuettes assembled by Dwyer from both Herculaneum and Pompeii not only illustrate the relative uniformity among the copies of a statuary type, but the characteristics these adaptations share with the original prototype.<sup>46</sup> Although the placement of the accessories differs from copy to copy, the same three attributes (club, lion's skin, and the apple) appear repeatedly. The pose, proportions, and musculature are

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<sup>45</sup> A. Coralini *Hercules Domesticus: Immagini di Ercole nelle case della regione vesuviana* (Naples 2001) 162.

<sup>46</sup> Dwyer (1988) 109.

remarkably consistent. Roman copyists often made small changes in an effort to provide the private patron with a little variety.

An example of Lysippos' small-scale work, the 'Herakles Epitrapezios', was discovered in the garden of a villa southwest of Pompeii. According to Statius,<sup>47</sup> the original silver table ornament was created by Lysippos for Alexander and had passed into the possession of other famous generals such as Hannibal and Sulla. Although this account was likely an attempt to enhance the prestige of the sculpture, the description appears to be accurate.<sup>48</sup> The Pompeian example was found at the north end of the large peristyle garden, in full view of the *triclinium* (Fig.12). The bronze statuette's carefully modeled physique is reminiscent of Lysippos' other creation, the 'Herakles Farnese'.<sup>49</sup> Here, the aged Hercules is depicted nude, bearded, and crowned with ivy. The deity sits on a section of Nocerian stone which has been left rough to represent rocky terrain.<sup>50</sup> The hero rests his left hand atop the knotty club and in his right hand of the deity once held a cup. In this garden, Hercules was associated with a Bacchic entourage. The rusticity of this piece was enhanced by the presence of satyrs and *Sileno*i. Although this piece is in some ways a continuation of the 'Herakles Farnese', it does not appear to have had the same widespread appeal of Lysippos' earlier work. It is likely that this piece, the only example of this sculptural type in the region, was specially commissioned by the villa's owner. It is also interesting to note that this piece was an enlargement of the original. The original sculpture was a size appropriate for a table, in contrast to the

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<sup>47</sup> Statius, *Silvae* iv.6

<sup>48</sup> Bieber 36.

<sup>49</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 292.

<sup>50</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 292.

copies of the 'Farnese Herakles,' which were often scaled down for display in the garden or *lararium*.

Lysippos' creation of a new type of Hercules inspired other artists to contrast the hero's superhuman strength with his human weakness. Although Hercules never appeared as a comic character in Roman theatre, the hero's Greek counterpart was often depicted in a state of inebriation. One of the finest examples of a Hercules *Mingens* or Drunken Hercules was discovered in the House of the Stags in Herculaneum (Fig.13). The marble statuette, measuring 0.50 m high, depicts the potbellied hero with his back arched, knees spread wide, and his club slung over his shoulder.<sup>51</sup> In this example the unstable deity grasps his penis and appears to stare at it. Traditionally, the hero has been interpreted as urinating, an act frequently associated with intoxication. Sutton suggests that composition reflects a specific episode from Euripides' satiric *Syleus*.<sup>52</sup> In one of the scenes, an inebriated Hercules implores his penis to stand erect so that he can rape Syleus' daughter.

Whether the hero is urinating or attempting to maintain sexual arousal, the overall mood of the composition is quite different from the statuary types inspired by the Lysippan prototype. Another scaled-down version of the 'Drunken Hercules' type was discovered in House I.xviii.3. The small bronze statuette (0.07 m high) depicts the god in an almost identical pose, grasping his penis with his right hand and holding a club in his left. While it is unclear if this small statuette was discovered in association with a

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<sup>51</sup> Coralini 236.

<sup>52</sup> D.F. Sutton, 'The Hercules Statue from the House of the Stags: Herculaneum,' *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (1984) 127(1): 96.

*lararium*, its size and type suggest that the figure belonged to a household shrine. It appears that votive figures might have been sold as decorative statuettes. An ambiguity between decorative statuettes and small religious figures can be seen among the Herculean *lararium* figures at Pompeii and Herculaneum. According to Dwyer, the deity is not represented in the usual Italic type, with extended bow and upraised arm.<sup>53</sup> Instead, the hero is depicted in the style of the ‘Herakles Farnese,’ in a state of intoxication or with the apples of the Hesperides. These types of Hercules are more typical of the decorative statuettes designed for display in the garden or palaestra.<sup>54</sup> Like Hercules, representations of Venus in *lararia* often appeared to be decorative statuettes that were converted to votive figures.

It is perhaps not surprising that there is a certain amount of ambiguity that surrounds the use of decorative and religious sculptures in the garden. The cult of Hercules was much more private than public in nature. Since the cult was privately observed, the people rather than the priests alone were able to partake in sacrificial banquets in honour of the god. Instead of a single state-supported sanctuary Hercules’ cult was often practiced in small temples and shrines, many of which had been erected by private patrons in thanksgiving.<sup>55</sup> The garden was ideal for the private worship of such a deity. The marble statuette from the garden of House II.viii.6 appears to have been venerated as an object of worship. The statuette, discovered near the *lararium*, had been badly damaged and repaired in antiquity, an indication of its important role in the

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<sup>53</sup> Dwyer (1982) 121.

<sup>54</sup> Dwyer (1982) 122.

<sup>55</sup> Galinsky 127.

domestic cult. The hole carved into the back of the statuette suggests that the figure was fastened to the *lararium*. Finally, a masonry altar was discovered in front of the niche in addition to a masonry *triclinium*.

Not all figures, however, were associated with *lararia* or altars, making the identification and interpretation of religious figures difficult. Two unusual statuettes discovered in the gardens of Pompeii do not follow the Lysippan artistic tradition. A statuette depicting an aged Hercules, wrapped from head to toe in a cloak and lion's skin, was discovered on the rear garden wall of House I.x.7 (Fig.14). This representation of the hero is clearly different from the other depictions of the deity, which can often be traced to Hellenistic prototypes. This statuette, known as Hercules *Ammantato*, or cloaked Hercules, was quite a departure from the nude, athletic renditions of the god. The piece exudes a solemnity which provides a sharp contrast to the representations of a 'Drunken Hercules.' While there appears to be no evidence to suggest that the figure was an object of worship, the owner's occupation as a merchant would make the worship of the Hercules in this context particularly appropriate. In Italy, Roman Hercules was recognized as the patron deity of merchants many of whom dedicated one-tenth of their profit to him.<sup>56</sup> Hercules was also considered a silent partner in many business deals. Given this context it seems possible that the figure had some sort of religious significance.

Another notable example of the *Ammantato* or cloaked type was discovered in the atrium of House I.ii.17. This larger marble statuette (0.70 m high) depicts the deity

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<sup>56</sup> Jashemski (1979) 122.

wrapped in a lion's skin with only his legs exposed. Although the hero is rendered as an older bearded male, the treatment of his face, hair, and beard is inconsistent with other representations of the god, as his hair and beard are rendered in a number of undefined globules. The face is almost a portrait, with small close-set eyes and a straight, square nose. Many of the statuettes in the Herculean repertoire are cast in bronze, a medium that allows a freedom of movement. Although this statuette illustrates many of the conventions used by Roman copyists working in marble, the treatment of the piece is unusual among the Pompeian sculptural repertoire. The statuette was created from two blocks of marble. The first block consisted of the legs and torso up to the height of chest, and the second block encompassed the shoulders and head of the figure. Another interesting aspect of the piece is its unfinished back. Occasionally, copyists would only carve the front of the figure and leave the back unfinished, giving the figure a two-dimensional quality. This severely limited the number of ways a piece could be displayed. In the case of this Hercules, the figure would have to be placed against a wall or in a niche. The last technique that was employed by the copyists was the thickening of the legs to provide the figure with adequate support. As a result the figure is left with legs that look squat and disproportionate with the rest of the body. Whether or not this statuette was considered a religious representation of Hercules, or more ornamental, the crudeness of the carving creates a certain rusticity which clearly appealed to Roman patrons.

In passing from Greece to Rome, Hercules achieved a new seriousness as a member of the Roman pantheon. However, in the art of the private sphere the hero

retained aspects of his Greco-Hellenistic persona. Although the vast majority of Pompeian examples are essentially adaptations of Lysippos' 'Weary Herakles', the representations of the hero in a state of inebriation seem to be a remnant of the deity's Greek identity. In Greek plays the brawny hero was often portrayed as a comical figure, indulging in exorbitant amounts of food, and wine. Despite this informal portrayal, worship of the deity is evident in the domestic context at Pompeii, with both small and larger-scale statuettes as objects of veneration. Like Venus, the casual nature of the depiction sometimes belies the religious function of an image. The worship of Hercules in the domestic context was particularly appropriate since the hero's cult was often privately observed. As a result, images of the deity found in the private context may have served as both decorative and religious. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the deity was his association with banqueting, a favourite pastime in the private garden. In this respect Hercules was connected with the *luxuria* often affiliated with the god Dionysus and his retinue.



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## CHAPTER 3: DIONYSUS AND *THIASOS*

To many Romans, the Dionysiac realm represented *luxuria*, wealth and abundance, a milieu many attempted to recreate in the context of their own gardens. Although the youthful god occasionally appeared in sculptural form, it was his *thiasos* that pervaded the private art of the Roman period. At Pompeii, Dionysus' band of revelers were among the most frequently depicted figures in the garden context. In addition to free-standing sculpture, the deity and his entourage appeared in other sculptural forms, such as herms, *oscilla*, masks and *pinakes*. In this respect the nature of the Dionysiac corpus differed significantly from the repertoires of Venus and Hercules. The versatility, and rustic nature of these woodland creatures made them particularly appropriate for the outdoor context.

### 3.1 GREEK BACKGROUND

In the Greek tradition, Dionysus, the god of wine and theatre, was an exotic deity imported from east. Despite his putative foreign origins, the appearance of his name in a Mycenaean inscription indicates that the cult of Dionysus was indigenous to Greece.<sup>1</sup> The god was undoubtedly the most complex member of the Greek pantheon, a

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<sup>1</sup> S.L. Harris and G. Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* (London 1998) 186.

multifaceted deity who was both the master of intoxication, madness, and patron of Athenian music and theatre.<sup>2</sup> In addition to his role as the god of wine and drama Dionysus was a fertility god whose fecundity was represented by an erect phallus. The phallus was central to the deity's cult, as a symbol of fertility, life, and death. During the 'country Dionysia', celebrated throughout Attica, representations of the phallus were carried in both private and public processions. For the 'city Dionysia,' Athenian colonies participating in the festival were expected to bring phalli and march in a procession in order to show them to Athenian citizens and to the statue of the deity in the theatre of Dionysus.<sup>3</sup> The *Anthesteria* or "Festival of Flowers" was another important Dionysiac festival celebrated at Athens and in other Ionian cities. The festival was a celebration of the new vintage and the annual marriage of the god and the *basilinna*, the wife of the archon known as the *basileus*.<sup>4</sup> The new vintage was celebrated over three days: *Pithoigia* ("Opening of the Wine Jars"), the *Choes* ("Feast of Cups"), and the *Chytroi* ("Feast of the Pots").<sup>5</sup> Although the deity played an important role in the civic life of the Greek *polis*, little is known about the nature of the god's mystery cult in the region during the Archaic and Classical periods.

Dionysus and his wild entourage of satyrs, maenads, and Silenoi inspired a rich artistic tradition during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Although the development of Dionysiac iconography can be observed in sculpture and on coins of the period, Attic pottery provides the clearest examples of Dionysiac imagery. In this early phase the

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<sup>2</sup> C.A. Faraone "Introduction" *Masks of Dionysus* Eds. T.H. Carpenter and C.A. Faraone (Ithaca 1993) 1.

<sup>3</sup> M. Jameson, "The Asexuality of Dionysus" *Masks of Dionysus* Eds. T.H. Carpenter and C.A. Faraone (Ithaca 1993) 54.

<sup>4</sup> Jameson 57.

Dionysos of Attic vases appears as a fully clothed, bearded adult. During the last quarter of the fifth century B.C., the deity underwent a fundamental change. Traditional representations of the god were replaced with a beardless youth, who was often depicted partially clad or naked. The change first appeared in the sculpture on the Parthenon, but was quickly adopted by Attic vase painters as the principal form of the deity. While older representations of the god rarely appear on vases after this period, the deity's two forms appear side-by-side in sculpture well into the Roman period.<sup>6</sup>

This sudden break with tradition may have been a reflection of theatrical imagery during this period. The production of a play or plays about Lycurgus might have inspired the iconographical change during the first half of the fifth century B.C. Carpenter suggests that the youthful appearance of the deity should be understood as a costume or disguise. In this, and later theatrical production, the deity laid aside his appearance as a god in order to appear as a mortal adolescent.<sup>7</sup> While the Athenians may have understood the deity's altered appearance as a disguise, the iconographical change from adult to Apolline youth took hold and became the deity's principal form during the Hellenistic period.<sup>8</sup>

The youthful deity, however, was somewhat overshadowed by the popularity of his mythological *thiasos*. The soft, effeminate god was the popular subject of mosaics and wall paintings, but did not enjoy the same success as his followers in sculptural form. When Dionysus was represented in sculptural form he was often depicted as a scantily

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<sup>5</sup> T.H. Carpenter and C.A. Faraone, *Masks of Dionysus* (Ithaca 1993) 297.

<sup>6</sup> T.H. Carpenter, "On the Beardless Dionysus" *Masks of Dionysus*, Eds. T.H.Carpenter and C.A. Faraone (Ithaca 1993) 185.

<sup>7</sup> Carpenter 205.

clad youth crowned with ivy. However, it was Dionysus' Hellenistic *thiasos* that received the most attention. Representations of the *thiasos* were among the most successful sculptural types of the period, and later a favourite among Roman patrons.<sup>9</sup> Centaurs, hermaphrodites, nymphs and Pan now joined the Dionysiac realm alongside maenads, satyrs, and Silenoi. These figures could now stand alone or in groups, unhampered by a narrative context.<sup>10</sup>

Praxiteles was among the first to create genre statues of satyrs during the last half of the fourth century B.C. The sculptor's 'Leaning Satyr,' known through more than fifty copies, appears as a soft and slender youth betraying only a few elements of his wild nature (Fig.15). Rather than depict the satyr as a beast-human hybrid, Praxiteles opted to downplay the pointed ears and snub face typical of earlier representations. This elegant rendering seems to reflect the effeminate nature of Dionysus himself in the art of the period. As a general trend satyrs acquired a more human-like form as time progressed. However, more traditional forms of the woodland creatures also existed alongside these Hellenistic counterparts.

During the Hellenistic period, new members were added to the deity's festive band. Centaurs, nymphs, hermaphrodites, and the gods Pan and Priapus joined the original *thiasos* of satyrs, Silenoi, and maenads. When these new mythical devotees became members of the entourage, they often left behind their own mythological tales. Satyrs, Silenoi, and maenads, the original member of the entourage, appeared in the

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<sup>8</sup> Smith 127.

<sup>9</sup> Smith 127.

<sup>10</sup> Smith 128.

deity's company as early as the sixth century B.C. Satyrs were woodland creatures with snub noses, pointed ears and goat-like tails. These revelers were portrayed as lustful beings whose relentless pursuit of maenads and nymphs often ended in disappointment.

In Greek mythology, Silenus was the foster father to the young deity. The satyr-like figure was often depicted as a balding old man with a round belly. Like other members of the god's entourage, Silenus was often shown in a state of inebriation. Both satyrs and Silenoi appear in sculptural form.<sup>11</sup> Maenads, however, were rarely depicted in statuary. More often, they appeared in vase paintings or in relief carvings. Maenads were often depicted with swirling drapery and wild hair. These ecstatic devotees were occasionally shown carrying parts of animals dismembered in mythic accounts of cultic ritual.

The god Pan was perhaps the group's most interesting addition. The rustic god, who originated in Arcadia, enjoyed an independent cult following in Macedonia during the Hellenistic period.<sup>12</sup> When the deity was absorbed by the *thiasos*, however, he seems to have lost some of his potency, becoming a stock character in Dionysus' retinue. It was likely Pan's association with fertility which first brought him into contact with the cult of Dionysus.<sup>13</sup> The god was usually depicted as a half-human and half-goat. The deity's upper body was human except for his wild hair, goatee beard, and horns. The god was depicted with hairy legs and cloven feet.<sup>14</sup> The pastoral god was occasionally represented by a *pedum*, the shepherd's staff or a set of pan-pipes.

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<sup>11</sup> Farrar (1998) 118.

<sup>12</sup> Smith 131.

<sup>13</sup> Farrar (1998) 120.

<sup>14</sup> Farrar (1998) 119.

Centaur, a human-horse hybrid, were relatively minor members of the *thiasos*. These wild beings were often featured in scenes of the Bacchic triumph. In representations of the procession, centaurs were often shown pulling the triumphant chariot. The god Priapus was a relative latecomer to the god's retinue. Like Pan, Priapus was rustic deity associated with fertility. The god's ithyphallic posture was believed to promote the fertility of the garden and avert the evil eye. In one hand Priapus often carried a pruning hook, a reference to his ability to increase the fertility of trees and vines.<sup>15</sup>

Representations of Dionysiac figures were not restricted to individual statues. Members of the *thiasos* were occasionally paired in order to create sculptural groups. Often satyrs were depicted as lustful creatures making unwelcome advances toward other members of Dionysus' retinue. Pairs of satyrs and nymphs or satyrs and hermaphrodites were intertwined in typical Hellenistic fashion. In mythology, satyrs vigorously pursued the objects of their affection, but seldom obtained their goal.<sup>16</sup> It was generally understood that the struggling nymph or hermaphrodite would escape, unscathed by the encounter. Not every Dionysiac pair, however, was depicted in the midst of a struggle. A popular composition featured the god Pan pulling a thorn from the foot of a satyr. The versatility of Dionysiac figures allowed sculptors to create a variety of combinations without altering the concept of the composition.

In the art of the Hellenistic and Roman periods the world of Dionysus conveyed *luxuria* and pleasure. To the ambitious rulers of the period, however, Dionysus had much

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<sup>15</sup> Farrar (1998) 110.

more to offer. The god of wine and abundance was also a successful conqueror of the east. It was this aspect of the deity which prompted Alexander and his successors to adopt Dionysiac imagery as part of their official iconography.

Although Alexander associated himself with a number of deities, the connection between the successful conqueror and the triumphant god was particularly fitting. The Macedonian royal house not only linked itself to the Greek hero Herakles, but also to Dionysus. According to Plutarch, Alexander's mother Olympias was involved with Orphic-Bacchic mysteries and was seen handling snakes and winnowing baskets, objects associated with the cult. Her participation in the cult gave rise to the tradition that she had been impregnated by the deity in the form of a snake and gave birth to Alexander the Great.<sup>17</sup> This association was further solidified by Alexander's discovery of Nysa in India, the legendary site of Dionysus' early childhood.

Hellenistic rulers consciously continued the tradition of affiliating themselves with Dionysus in an attempt to foster comparisons with Alexander the Great. The Ptolemies were particularly shrewd in their promotion of their ancestry. On the male side the Ptolemies claimed descent from Herakles and on the female side from Dionysus, the two deities most often associated with Alexander.<sup>18</sup> Ptolemy II Philadelphus was among the first of the diadochs to promote a connection with the deity in the form of a great Dionysiac procession in 280/275 B.C.<sup>19</sup> It appears that Ptolemy II himself appeared in the guise of the deity in official art; statuette depicts the ruler wearing an elephant scalp a

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<sup>16</sup> Smith 130.

<sup>17</sup> Plutarch *Alexander* 2-3; and W. Burkert, "Bacchic *Teletai* in the Hellenistic Age" *Masks of Dionysus* Eds. T.H. Carpenter and C.A. Faraone (Ithaca 1993) 261.

<sup>18</sup> Smith 44.



reference to both Dionysus' and Alexander's triumph over India and the tall laced boots, conventionally worn by Dionysus.<sup>20</sup> Ptolemy IV Philopater also continued the tradition by renaming the demes of Alexandria with Dionysiac names and had himself called the "New Dionysus."<sup>21</sup>

Mithridates promoted himself as the "New Alexander" and appeared in official art in the guise of both Herakles and Dionysos. In his portraits, the Hellenistic ruler appears as a young and sometimes effeminate Dionysus with the soft features and wild hair typical of the Hellenistic Dionysus.<sup>22</sup> The rulers of the Hellenistic period included Dionysus in the royal iconography because the association was beneficial. The Dionysiac realm not only represented the opulence and power that the rulers of the Hellenistic world wished to convey, but also connected them to Alexander the Great and his successful conquest of the east.

### 3.2 THE NATURE OF DIONYSUS' CULT IN ITALY

The Dionysiac religion was well-established in Greece by the time the deity was introduced into Rome in 496 B.C.<sup>23</sup> The cult, which had old roots in Magna Graecia, was slightly altered from its original form, with the Dionysiac cult being combined with the chthonic deities Demeter and Kore. It was as part of a new trinity that the god (renamed Liber) was inducted into the Roman pantheon. The deity, also known as Bacchus, was well-known to the Roman public by the second century B.C., when in 186 B.C. the senate

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<sup>19</sup> Burkert 262.

<sup>20</sup> Smith 44.

<sup>21</sup> Burkert 263.

<sup>22</sup> Smith 123.

banned the Bacchanalia, a festival celebrated by Bacchants (followers of Dionysus).<sup>24</sup> Livy provides a description of the infamous festival, but as Nilsson notes the historian's account seems to propagate many of the stereotypes associated with the Dionysiac religion. Livy identifies a Greek from Etruria as the individual responsible for the introduction of the scandalous festival, saying:

There were initiatory rites which at first were imparted to a few, then began to be generally known among men and women. To the religious element in them were added the delights of wine and feasts, that the minds of a larger number might be attracted. When wine had inflamed their minds, and night and mingling of males with females, youth with age, had destroyed every sentiment of modesty, all varieties of corruption began to be practiced, since each one had a hand at the pleasure answering to that which his nature was more inclined...the promiscuous matings of free men and women...likewise poisonings and murders of kindred...This violence was concealed because amid the howlings and the crash of drums and cymbals no cry of the sufferers could be heard as the debauchery and murders proceeded. (Livy xxxix 8)<sup>25</sup>

Although Livy's account is heavily influenced by the traditional view of Bacchic *orgia*, and cannot be entirely trusted, it is the only source that discusses the matter in any detail. The *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, also quoted by Livy, not only forbade the festival itself, but the performance of secret rituals in private or public places, or outside the city.<sup>26</sup> If, however, an individual insisted that it was necessary for them to celebrate the forbidden festival they had to appeal in Rome to the *praetor urbanus*, who in turn brought the matter before the senate. If permission was granted the restrictions were explicit, with the Bacchants forbidden to take oaths of allegiance or vows of fidelity to one another, or for more than three women and two men to perform rites, unless

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<sup>23</sup> M.P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age* (New York 1975) 12.

<sup>24</sup> Nilsson (1975) 14.

<sup>25</sup> Translation (adapted) by E.T. Sage in the Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>26</sup> Nilsson (1975) 18.

otherwise stated by the *praetor urbanus* or the senate. Religious scruples prevented the senate from repressing the Bacchanalia completely nor was it possible for them to ban the cult of Bacchus, since the deity was an official member of the Roman pantheon. Although the public cult was also placed under some restrictions, the god continued to be worshipped.<sup>27</sup>

In Southern Italy, where the old cult of Dionysus was particularly well established, faithful adherents continued to participate in Dionysiac rites. The senate was active in quelling the religious movement in places like Tarentum and Apulia years after the initial enforcement of the ban. Public observances of the cult continued throughout the period, albeit somewhat limited by the restrictions sanctioned by the senate. For a time, it appeared that interest in the private cult had diminished, until the re-emergence of the mystery cult in the Late Republic. These new Bacchic mysteries, however, differed significantly from the old traditional *orgia* associated with Bacchic ritual. Gone was the fanaticism that was considered typical of the old cult.<sup>28</sup> Another significant change was the class of participants. Nilsson suggests that those adherents who had participated into the cult prior to 186 B.C. were chiefly plebian members of the lower class. By the end of the Late Republic, however, the new mystery cult had become a favourite of the wealthy upper class.<sup>29</sup> Despite the cult's new popularity, the devotees were still subject to many of the stereotypes which plagued the old Bacchic cult. To the conservative Roman, the

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<sup>27</sup> Nilsson (1975) 19.

<sup>28</sup> Nilsson (1975) 20.

<sup>29</sup> Nilsson (1975) 21.

Bacchic mysteries represented *luxuria* and overindulgence, and were therefore subject to political attack.<sup>30</sup>

Although Hellenistic kings found the association with Dionysus advantageous, the fanaticism, *luxuria*, and overindulgence sometimes associated with the Bacchic cult tainted any association with the god during the Imperial period. During the Roman period many of the attributes and activities associated with Dionysus and his mystery cult were offensive to conservative Roman sensibilities. Marc Antony's attempt to identify himself with the deity ultimately backfired. Antony claimed descent from Hercules and had promoted this association with the hero. However, with the partition of the empire among the triumvirs in 42 B.C. Antony found Dionysus a much more attractive figure, especially in the East.<sup>31</sup> Plutarch describes the scene at Ephesus when a drunken Antony arrives with his followers dressed as members of his *thiasos*:

As Antony entered Ephesus, women garbed as maenads and men and youths as satyrs and Pans all sported before him. The city was filled with ivy and thyrsos, with music of the flute, syrinx, and lyre. All welcomed him as Dionysus bringer of joy, gentle and kind.

(Plutarch *Antony* 24)

When Antony entered places like Ephesus, Athens, or Alexandria as a *neos Dionysos*, it seemed appropriate that the successful politician and general followed in the footsteps of the Ptolemies and Diadochs.<sup>32</sup> Antony was not only taking political advantage of the popularity of the Dionysiac cult, but also the association with Alexander.<sup>33</sup> The general's

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<sup>30</sup> P. Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life* (London 1998) 18.

<sup>31</sup> Zanker (1990) 46.

<sup>32</sup> Zanker (1990) 47.

<sup>33</sup> K. Scott, "Octavian's Propaganda and Antony's *De Sua Ebrietate*," *Classical Philology* (1929) 24(2): 133.

adoption of the opulent lifestyle, however, did little to win him supporters at Rome. Despite his attempt to defend himself against charges of drunkenness, Antony was betrayed by his own image and as a result tainted any association with the god thereafter. While Antony was not the only Roman aristocrat to embrace Dionysiac religion, his attempt to identify himself with the deity was ultimately his downfall. Antony's assimilation with the god only provided partisans of Octavian with ammunition.

### 3.3 DIONYSUS IN POMPEII

In Campania, devotion to the Dionysiac religion was particularly strong. An inscription from Cumae forbidding the burial of persons not initiated into the Bacchic cult within a certain area not only illustrates the deity's connection with the underworld, but is a testament to the popularity of the cult in the region.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, devotees in the region were among the last to yield to senatorial legislation banning participation in the mysteries. A temple discovered on the hill of S. Abbondio near Pompeii dedicated to Bacchus and Ariadne, and roughly contemporaneous with these events, seems to reinforce the importance of the public aspect of the cult.<sup>35</sup> The temple, located 700 meters south of the amphitheatre, was discovered as a result of heavy bombing 1943 and was excavated between 1947 and 1948. Two large masonry *triclinia*, covered with red plaster, were found in front of the temple, each *triclinia* with a circular table. This outdoor dining area was likely the site of banquets for the devotees of the Dionysiac

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<sup>34</sup> Nilsson (1975) 12

<sup>35</sup> A. Bruhl, *Liber Pater: Origine et Expansion de Culte Dionysiaque a Rome et dans le Monde Romain* (Paris, 1953) 86.

cult.<sup>36</sup> As Zanker notes, it is interesting that during the second century B.C., at a time when no new temples appear to have been erected for a civil cult that this shrine to Dionysus was dedicated on the outskirts of the city. Zanker suggests that this timing was no coincidence and may reveal religious interests in the town.<sup>37</sup>

With so little known about the nature of the Dionysiac mystery cult, artistic representations of Dionysiac themes have become increasingly important for the study of the cult in the region. The most famous and controversial Dionysiac representation was discovered outside of Pompeii near the Porta Ercolanense.<sup>38</sup> The content of the Dionysiac fresco in the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii has generated numerous theories about the nature of initiation into the Bacchic cult. The great frieze, painted in the second style between 60 and 50 B.C., is among the most important examples of Bacchic imagery. The fresco graces the walls of the small *oecus* at the south-west corner of the villa.<sup>39</sup> Although the mixture of both the mythological and historical is often a feature of Roman composition, at the Villa of the Mysteries the combination of the two has made interpretation of characters and events difficult.

Occupying the focal point in the center of the east wall is a representation of Dionysus and a figure many have identified as Ariadne, although arguments have been made for both Semele and Aphrodite. Ariadne, however, appears to be the most common identification of this figure. Before the pair kneels a woman about to uncover or, as

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<sup>36</sup> Jashemski II (1993) 253.

<sup>37</sup> Zanker (1998) 52. The temple of the Apollo was reduced in size during the period.

<sup>38</sup> Nilsson (1975) 66.

<sup>39</sup> R. Ling, *Roman Painting* (Cambridge 1991) 101.

Zuntz has argued, conceal a *liknon*.<sup>40</sup> The *liknon* or winnowing basket was often featured in Dionysiac scenes, and in many cases contained a concealed phallus. Many believe that the revelation of this symbol of fertility and regeneration signified an important moment in the initiatory rites of the mystery religion.<sup>41</sup> Behind the kneeling woman stand two figures, one holding a plate carrying what Ling identifies as pine-twigs.

Ling connects these figures on the east wall of the *oecus* with adjacent figures on the north and south walls. One of the female figures on the north wall, rendered with billowing cloak behind her, appears to be startled or alarmed. According to Ling her gaze indicates that it is the activity of the Silenus and satyrs to the left of Dionysus and Ariadne which appear to be causing the distress. The alarmed woman, however, seems to be reacting to perhaps the most enigmatic figure in the frieze, the dark winged daemon.

The dark-winged female, clad only in a short belted *chiton* and high boots holds a long pointed stick in her right hand and seems to be preparing to deliver a blow.<sup>42</sup> This mysterious figure appears to be looking toward a young, semi-draped female (on the next wall) who kneels before another female figure concealing her head in her lap. The other scenes on the north and south walls depict a combination of mythical and human Bacchic devotees. Next to the female, waiting to receive the blows dealt by the winged figure, stands a dancing maenad clashing symbols above her head and another female in behind, who holds a *thyrsus*.<sup>43</sup> The frieze on the opposite wall depicts two young satyrs seated on a rock, a male figure playing the *syrinx*, and a female figure nursing a kid,

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<sup>40</sup> G. Zuntz "On the Dionysia Fresco in the Villa dei Misteri at Pompeii," *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1963) 44: 182.

<sup>41</sup> Ling 101.

<sup>42</sup> Zuntz (1963) 195.

while another female figure stands in the foreground. Next to this group stands a Silenus playing a lyre and leaning against a column.

Left of the Silenus stands a group of three females performing a ritual at a nearby table. A fourth figure approached the table from the left carrying a tray of cakes. A female figure stands beside a child who appears to be reading from a scroll. To the right just slightly behind the child sits a woman who rests her right hand on the child's shoulder. A heavily veiled woman watching the entire ritual completes the scene.<sup>44</sup>

The final scenes are situated between the window and doors of the small room. The first scene in the southwest corner depicts a seated female figure having her hair styled by a maid-servant. A Cupid to the left of the pair holds up a mirror, while another Cupid leans against a pillar. The final figure is a veiled woman holding her right hand against her cheek, who sits on the couch looking on.<sup>45</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that the remarkable preservation of the frieze in conjunction with the Dionysiac subject matter has generated much interest. Interpretations of the unique content abound and are too numerous to summarize in detail here. Several scholars have interpreted the frieze as a representation of the initiatory rites of the Bacchic mysteries, with some suggesting that the scenes represent the initiation of one and the same person.<sup>46</sup> However, the idea that the frieze reveals anything about the rites or mysteries at all has also been vehemently contested. Other scholars contend that the scene of the woman having her hair dressed by a maid warrants the identification of

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<sup>43</sup> Ling 101.

<sup>44</sup> Ling 102.

<sup>45</sup> Ling 102.

<sup>46</sup> Zuntz 179.



the figure as a bride.<sup>47</sup> This too has been contested. Although a consensus on the precise meaning of the frieze has not been reached, it does suggest that the patron was most likely an upper class devotee of the Dionysiac mysteries. The date of the work falls into the re-emergence of the Bacchic mysteries in the last years of the Republic when the cult seemed to draw devotees from the wealthy upper class. Although scholars have not reached a consensus on the meaning or motivation behind the wall-painting, the inclusion of cultic objects and unusual figures indicates that the overall composition was cultic rather than ornamental in nature.

#### 3.4 DIONYSIAC SCULPTURE AT POMPEII

It is perhaps not surprising that representations of Dionysus and his joyous entourage seem to have been the overwhelming favourite in the private gardens of Pompeii. Dionysiac imagery fulfilled a desire to create a sense of wealth and prosperity, and allowed Romans to indulge in their love of all things Greek. It is not difficult to understand the allure of Dionysiac themes. Not only were the members of Dionysus' *thiasos* rustic, and at home in the outdoor setting, but their association with banqueting was ideal for the garden, since outdoor dining was common. Dionysiac decoration made banqueters a part of the happy entourage.

The nature of Dionysus and his mythical devotees in the gardens of Pompeii are unlike the representations of any other major deity. First, unlike Venus or Hercules, Dionysus was often accompanied by members of his *thiasos*. While other deities appear

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<sup>47</sup> See J. M.C Toynbee "The Villa Iam and the bride's ordeal" *JRS* 19 (1929) 67-87.

in the garden in the form of freestanding statuary and in the occasional garden painting, Dionysiac figures appear in a wider variety of forms, including statuary, fountains, herms, masks, and *oscilla*. Unlike the other deities who appear in the domestic context of Pompeian house, Dionysus is conspicuously absent from *lararia*, although the deity, however, does appear in a number of paintings associated with *lararia*.

An example of the youthful god was discovered at Pompeii in House VII.xii.17 amid the remains of what Dwyer describes as a second-storey dining room.<sup>48</sup> The bronze statuette of Bacchus (0.63m high) is also depicted nude except for a goatskin the god wears over his left shoulder and sandals (Fig. 16). In the god's hair sit four small clusters of ivy berries.<sup>49</sup> The figure stands with his left leg forward and supports his weight on the right, his left shoulder slightly raised with the left hand resting on the hip. The figure's right elbow is bent and pressed against the right hip, and the right hand is closed except for the thumb and index finger. His head is down and turned slightly to the left.<sup>50</sup> There is a distinct S-curve in the torso coupled with the contrapposto stance. The piece exhibits Praxitelean, and even Lysippan elements. It is the way the figure leans which recalls Lysippus' famous rendition of Hercules, for this figure is certainly not as heavily muscled as the Lysippan hero.<sup>51</sup> Fiorelli first identified the figure as the mythical figure Narcissus. This identification, however, was countered by Brunn, who identified the figure as Dionysus based on the costume. Brunn, moreover, argued that the young

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<sup>48</sup> Dwyer (1988) 108.

<sup>49</sup> Dwyer (1982) 53.

<sup>50</sup> Dwyer (1982) 53-4.

<sup>51</sup> Dwyer (1982) 108.

Bacchus was pointing or gesturing to the panther that likely appeared on his left.<sup>52</sup> Dwyer reinforces Brunn's identification of the figure as Bacchus, citing the resemblance to Praxiteles' 'Leaning Satyr.'

Dionysiac statuary was often displayed in the garden, a natural setting for the woodland members of the god's *thiasos*. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the bronze Bacchus from House VII.xii.17 was the statuette's placement in a second-storey dining room. It appears that the well-built upper storey was constructed above a *fullonica*. A large number of fine bronze serving vessels were discovered in addition to the bronze statuette.

The high quality of the bronze and placement in the home suggests to Dwyer that this representation of Dionysus was a religious image. This is reinforced by the absence of the god's companions. Perhaps the banqueters considered themselves members of the god's missing *thiasos*.<sup>53</sup> A key difference between this statuette and similar bronzes found in a domestic context at Pompeii was the secluded nature of its placement. A visitor had to pass through the atrium, cross the garden, climb a flight of stairs and enter the second-storey room before being granted a glimpse of the deity. Bronze statuary, produced outside of Pompeii, was both desirable and expensive.<sup>54</sup> As a result, bronze pieces often received a place of honour in the Pompeian household. The placement of the statuette in dining room of House VII.xii.17 may indicate that the owner viewed the

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<sup>52</sup> Dwyer (1982) 54.

<sup>53</sup> Dwyer (1982) 123.

<sup>54</sup> Dwyer (1982) 135.

piece as a religious object. However, the placement of the piece may have had more to do with banqueting than religion.

Among the Dionysiac figures featured in the peristyle of the House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1) is a representation of young Bacchus (Fig.17). The marble statuette of the deity (0.60 m. high without base) was found on the south side of the sculpture-filled peristyle.<sup>55</sup> The ivy-crowned god is represented in typical Hellenistic fashion, with a slender, effeminate body. The lean, elegant limbs and relaxed contrapposto stance is rendered in the tradition of Praxiteles. The god of wine is depicted nude with only an animal skin over his shoulders. He holds a *kantharos* at his right side. The overall composition is strikingly similar to Praxiteles' 'Apollo *Sauroctonus*', for both compositions share a similar pose, and the same soft modeling of the musculature (Fig. 18).

Unlike the statuette of the deity from House VII.xii.17, this statuette was displayed in a large peristyle garden among a variety of figures. This peristyle is one of the most ostentatious private gardens in Pompeii. In this garden, the statuette of Dionysus was only one of many marble statuettes. Twelve fountain statuettes stood in between the columns of the portico, jetting water into eight marble basins. The statuette of Dionysus was displayed on the south side of the garden with a satyr, crowned with pine cones, carrying a syrinx in his left hand and a wineskin on his right shoulder (0.58 m high without base). In addition to the statuettes of traditional Bacchic revelers was a representation of the god Priapus (0.95 m high).<sup>56</sup> His rustic nature and fertility made him an appropriate Bacchic figure. Representations of the deity were often smaller in

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<sup>55</sup> Jashemski (1979) 154.

scale than other garden statuettes. The relatively large statuette of the fertile deity is unusual, but in keeping with the rustic nature of Dionysus and his followers.

While two examples of Bacchus are influenced by Praxitelean works, a third youthful depiction of the deity draws on another artistic tradition. A rather unusual bronze statuette of Bacchus accompanied by a satyr (0.83 m high) was discovered in a kettle in the portico of the House of Pansa VI.vi.1/12 (Fig.19). Jashemski suggests that the unusual find spot is a result of the owner attempting to protect it from the *lapilli* during the eruption of Vesuvius.<sup>57</sup> With the bronze statuette was another representation of Bacchus in the form of a bronze lampstand. The small statuette depicted a youthful Dionysus riding a panther, a common Dionysiac motif.<sup>58</sup> Although the smooth rendering of the musculature is reminiscent of a Praxitelean work, the proportion and overall attitude of the work seems to suggest that the artist looked to fifth-century models like Polykleitus' *Doryphorus* for inspiration. However, one aspect of the figure's head may draw on a Praxitelean work for inspiration, which Dwyer suggests recalls Praxiteles' *Venus of Cnidos*.<sup>59</sup> The quality of the bronzes, in addition to the owner's attempt to protect them from incurring damage during the eruption, may indicate that in this garden the representations were more than simply decorative.

In many Pompeian gardens, other members of the Bacchic *thiasos* were placed in aedicular niches and perhaps looked upon as cult images. Silenus, one of the most common figures found in the Pompeian garden, is depicted in statuary, *oscilla*, masks,

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<sup>56</sup> Jashemski (1979) 153.

<sup>57</sup> Jashemski (1979) 127.

<sup>58</sup> Dwyer (1982) 123.

<sup>59</sup> Dwyer (1988) 108.

and herms. Often the Bacchic figure presided over gardens as a fountain head of nymphaea. In the garden of House IX.vii.25, a small Silenus crowned with ivy seems to occupy a place of honour, sitting at the base of a mosaic aedicular fountain. The marble statuette (0.66 m high without base) depicts Silenus wearing a mantle which covers his legs but exposes his left shoulder and chest. The figure appears to clutch the drapery in his right hand in an attempt to keep it from slipping down. With his left hand he holds the edge of the mantle. This fold originally formed a small channel for water, which flowed from a pipe that had been inserted under his left hand.<sup>60</sup> Although satyrs and Silenoi are often seen in large numbers in and around the gardens of Pompeii, they cannot be dismissed as ornamental. As rustic figures, these characters represented the idea of deified nature which made them an appropriate addition to any garden.

The playful nature of these compositions, in addition to the variety of statuary types within the genre, made the Hellenistic *thiasos* among the most popular subjects of Roman art in the private sphere. Some Roman patrons could afford replicas or point copies of Hellenistic masterpieces for display in their villa gardens. More often, however, patrons opted for small-scale adaptations of Hellenistic prototypes. The figures were at home in the rustic setting of the garden and could be placed with any number of other figures.

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<sup>60</sup> Jashemski (1979) 242.

### 3.5 OTHER ORNAMENTAL FEATURES

In the gardens of Pompeii, Bacchic imagery was not restricted to statuary. On the contrary, the Dionysiac theme featured in many private gardens was often expressed in the form of two-dimensional *oscilla*. These small marble or terracotta plaques were often suspended in the intercolumniations of porticoes in Pompeian gardens.<sup>61</sup> While a variety of images and motifs appear on the relief-plaques the iconography is dominated by theatre masks and Dionysiac imagery, which vary in quality, and were carved onto both sides of the marble or terracotta disks. The plaques, discovered at Pompeii and elsewhere in the Roman world, were available in three forms: the round disk (*tondi*), the lunate shield (*peltae*) and in the form of a rectangular plaque known as *pinakes*.<sup>62</sup> Scholarship on the subject of *oscilla* has been limited to a few works. The origin, meaning, and even the use of the term *oscilla*, continue to be matters of contention. However, few would deny that the decorative objects came into vogue in the first century A.D. and declined in popularity by the mid-second century A.D.<sup>63</sup> The frequency with which they appear at Pompeii, therefore, is not surprising. At the time of the city's destruction in A.D. 79 the custom of including *oscilla* in garden decor was at its height.<sup>64</sup>

The tradition of suspending ornamental objects has been linked to the tradition of suspending images of Dionysus himself and other deities from trees and more generally to the classical tradition of suspending votive shields from the architraves of temples.<sup>65</sup> The nature of the disks are likewise a source of controversy. While some early scholars

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<sup>61</sup> R. Taylor, "Oscilla in Roman Gaul, and Some Thoughts on their Meaning," *JRA* (2003) 16: 596.

<sup>62</sup> Dwyer (1981) 249.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, 597.

<sup>64</sup> Dwyer (1982) 119.

viewed the plaques as religious objects, others argued that they were purely decorative. Paillet suggests that the plaques were invented to decorate the background of reliefs on both the Campana plaques and on Arretine ware, and at a later date were translated into three-dimensional plaques by Campanian carvers. While Taylor concedes to an “eclectic derivation of *oscilla*” he argues that the dominance of both Dionysiac and theatrical themes reveal that they were likely more than simply ornamental. Taylor cites the practice of using “satiric images” in gardens for their apotropaic properties.<sup>66</sup>

Dwyer suggests that the round disks or *tondi* found at Pompeii were intended to represent *tympana*, drums, or tambourines often carried by followers of Dionysus or Cybele. These *oscilla* employ a raised border around the circumference and are normally decorated with an individual figure. Maenads, fauns, and satyrs are often depicted in the act of performing sacrifices or dancing.<sup>67</sup> The subject matter and the shape of the *oscilla*, which bears a resemblance to a Bacchic accoutrement, implies that they had some sort of religious function. However, the ease with which *oscilla* could be produced suggests that they were a relatively inexpensive addition to garden décor. Like many other sculptural elements in the Pompeian garden it seems that *oscilla* may have been both decorative and religious in nature.

Within the Pompeian corpus of material, Dwyer includes dramatic masks which were also often suspended in porticoes. Masks of comedy, tragedy, and satiric drama were among the most common forms of decorative art in the Hellenistic and Roman

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<sup>65</sup> Taylor 597.

<sup>66</sup> Dwyer (1982) 251.



period.<sup>68</sup> Although marble masks are found among the sculptural décor at Pompeii, terracotta masks are far more common than their marble counterparts. Dwyer traces the origin of the terracotta examples to South Italian terracottas typical of the Hellenistic period. The marble masks, like most of the sculptural decoration at Pompeii, tend to be more classicizing. This contrasts sharply with the rather expressionistic terracotta examples from the same period. Although other mythical figures are featured on the relief-plaques at Pompeii, the great majority are Dionysiac in nature. As theatre accessories, masks fall under the domain of Dionysus as the god of theatre. Many of the masks also represent members of the god's retinue, including satyrs, Silenoi, and maenads. Like other "satyric images" masks also seem to possess an apotropaic quality.

Members of the Hellenistic *thiasos* pervade the art of the private sphere. Their figures were not only well represented in statuary, but in two-dimensional form. Like *oscilla*, *pinakes* were often carved with Dionysiac scenes. A *pinax* consisted of a rectangular plaque which was mounted on top of a marble post for display in the garden.<sup>69</sup> The reliefs commonly depict a series of several masks rendered in high relief, against a landscape with other Bacchic attributes. According to Dwyer, these types of reliefs were similar to votive shrines or tablets that were commonly erected in sacred precincts.<sup>70</sup> In the context of this garden, the *pinakes* appear to be decorative. However, it is important to note that even during the Roman period *pinakes* removed from Greece

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<sup>68</sup> Dwyer (1981) 250.

<sup>69</sup> Farrar (1998) 127.

<sup>70</sup> Dwyer (1981) 255.

were placed in sanctuaries. In the context of this garden it likely that the plaques were decorative. They cannot, however, be entirely divorced from their religious nature.<sup>71</sup>

Hermes were among the most important sculptural elements in the private Roman garden. In its original form the herm represented the Greek god Hermes. The bust of the god was placed atop a pillar-like shaft which stood upon a square base. Greek herms often featured a carving of the male organs on an otherwise plain pillar. In Roman examples, a cross beam was added at the shoulder in order to incorporate the drapery detail frequently included in portrait busts. Subjects ranged from deities to Greek philosophers, historians, Hellenistic rulers, and from Roman emperors to the portraits of Roman men and women.<sup>72</sup>

Dionysiac subjects were among the most popular mythological figures to appear in the form of a herm. Members of the Hellenistic *thiasos* were shown singly or paired in double, or janiform herms. These types of herms featured two busts facing outward from one shaft. In an example from the House of M. Lucretius, a double, janiform herm comprises a bust of a young, beardless Dionysus and an older, bearded rendering of the deity. The appearance of the god's two forms side-by-side in sculptural form was quite common during the Roman period. Other combinations of Bacchic herms depicted the god paired with his consort Ariadne, young satyrs paired with a Silenus, or maenads paired with satyrs.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Dwyer (1981) 256.

<sup>72</sup> Farrar (1998) 122.

<sup>73</sup> Farrar (1998) 123.

Many gardens featured works related to Dionysiac themes. Few, however, exhibited as unified a program of Dionysiac sculpture as the small garden in the House of M. Lucretius (IX.3.5) (Fig. 20). The elevated garden is located as the back of the house. As a result, the garden décor could be enjoyed from the main rooms of the house. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the house was that the garden itself was approximately one meter higher than the floor of the *tablinum*.<sup>74</sup> Since the garden was located behind the main room at a higher level than the street, visitors were afforded a magnificent view of the garden even before they entered the house.<sup>75</sup>

Occupying the center foreground is a sculptural group which was an adaptation of a Hellenistic prototype. The composition shows a satyr on the right extracting a thorn from Pan's left hoof (0.32 m high and 0.50 m in length).<sup>76</sup> The sculptural group discovered at Pompeii not only demonstrates the versatility of Roman copies but of Dionysiac figures. One of the original Hellenistic compositions depicted the god Pan removing a thorn from the foot of a satyr. While the overall composition is the same, Roman copyists could easily exchange such figures without altering the meaning. Since these figures were generally devoid of any narrative context, they were often interchangeable.<sup>77</sup> This scene was ideal for display of the garden, appealing to Roman love of rusticity and naturalism.

Another statuette from the garden also appears to have drawn on a well-known Hellenistic composition. The marble statuette of a satyr was displayed in the left middle

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<sup>74</sup> Dwyer (1982) 40.

<sup>75</sup> Zanker (1998) 174.

<sup>76</sup> Dwyer (1982) 44.

<sup>77</sup> Smith 127.

ground. The marble statuette (0.79 m high without base) is nude except for an animal skin which is draped over his left forearm (Fig.21). The figure appears to be more human than animal except for the addition of two small horns on his forehead. The figure strides forward, leading with his left leg. He raises his right hand in an attempt to shield his eyes from the sun, concentrating his attention on something above him. The figure stands on a base with a marble tree trunk at his back for support.<sup>78</sup> Although the satyr's pose is slightly altered the overall composition is reminiscent of Praxiteles' masterpiece the 'Apollo Lykeios.' Although the Hellenistic Apollo is not shown shielding his eyes from the sun, his right arm is raised up over his head in a similar gesture. The treatment of the musculature and face are also comparable, although the copy of the Praxitelean masterpiece is of considerably finer quality than the Pompeian statuette.

Other ornamental features included in the décor continue the Bacchic theme. Four janiform herms featured in the garden depict various combinations of Dionysiac figures.<sup>79</sup> These motifs were also echoed in the *oscilla* and *peltae* discovered in the courtyard. These ornaments, which depict fauns and silens performing sacrifices, are typical of the Pompeian repertoire. Statuettes of various animals were also included in the garden and although they are not normally considered Dionysiac they work well with the rustic nature of the Bacchic entourage. The combination of the two themes effectively unites the collection, creating an ideal setting for entertaining in the main rooms or within the garden itself.

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<sup>78</sup> Dwyer (1982) 42.

<sup>79</sup> Jashemski (1979) 232.

Although a number of decorative themes can be detected in the peristyle garden of the House of the Golden Cupids (VI 16. 7), Dionysiac imagery dominates the garden décor (Fig.22). This small but lavish garden employs Bacchic-themed statuary, *oscilla*, masks, and herms, creating an idyllic setting. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the garden is the theatrical setting created by the “Rhodian peristyle” (Fig.23). The peristyle could be reached from the raised portico on the western side by a staircase.<sup>80</sup> The grand façade, which provides an elaborate frame for the dining room behind, resembles a theatre façade. This theatrical theme is reinforced by the five masks and two *tondi* which were suspended between the columns on the western half of the peristyle.<sup>81</sup> Three of the five masks represent members of Dionysus’ *thiasos*. Perhaps the finest of the three masks depicts a maenad (0.27 m high) wearing a headband with ivy-leaves in her hair (Fig.24). Grape clusters hang down on either side framing her face. The maenad’s pupils are drilled and her large mouth is open in typical theatrical style. The iron ring used for suspending the mask is preserved along with traces of polychrome paint.<sup>82</sup> A maenad is also featured on one of the two *tondi* preserved in the garden. Side A features a nude youth with a shield and sword dancing. The dancing maenad featured on side B is depicted with a torch or sword in her left hand.<sup>83</sup> With her right hand the maenad raises her veil. The other two masks represent a young satyr and a Silenus. As a decorative piece, masks were perhaps more effective as *oscilla* than *tondi*. Since masks were carved in high relief they were visible from distance. *Tondi*, however, were often carved in low

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<sup>80</sup> Zanker (1998) 168.

<sup>81</sup> Dwyer (1981) 267. It cannot be determined whether there were *oscilla* suspended in the eastern half of the peristyle garden.

<sup>82</sup> Dwyer (1981) 267.

relief, which made their relief surface extremely difficult to while suspended in the colonnade.<sup>84</sup>

The corpus of Dionysiac material discovered in and around the gardens of Pompeii was not only larger than the repertoires of Venus and Hercules, but also fundamentally different. Although members of the Dionysiac realm were among the most frequently depicted figures in the private art of Pompeii, the god himself rarely appeared in sculptural form. Patrons often recreated the world of Dionysus with representations of the god's mythical *thiasos*. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the repertoire is the number of sculptural forms rendered in a Bacchic theme. Members of the Bacchic retinue appear in the form of garden sculpture, *oscilla*, masks, herms and *pinakes*. While Venus and Hercules occasionally appear in these alternative forms, the vast majority portrays Dionysiac figures, themes or accoutrements. Like Hercules, Dionysus was often associated with banqueting. When the god did appear in sculptural form at Pompeii it appears that he may have presided over banquets. While banqueting was often performed outside in the garden, the bronze statuette from House VII.xii.17 seems to have been placed in the indoor context of the dining room, where guests could enjoy the Bacchic milieu. Unlike Venus and Hercules there appears to be no conclusive evidence that freestanding representations of the deity or his revelers were worshipped in the domestic context. Representations of Dionysus often did not appear in the *lararium*.

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<sup>83</sup> Dwyer (1981) 268.

However, it is likely that Romans viewed the deity and his revelers as a combination of religious and ornamental, often conveying pleasure, luxury, and the spirit of nature.

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<sup>84</sup> Dwyer (1982) 130.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Thus far the repertoires of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus have been examined individually with emphasis on the artistic antecedents and sculptural types. The attention now shifts to an analysis of the commonalities within the Pompeian repertoires, and those aspects which set each one apart. Depictions of divinities in the private context were naturally instilled with a religious aura. However, there is ambiguity between sculptures which functioned as aesthetic pieces and those viewed as religious images. An examination of the location of statuary and the evidence of altars may be useful criteria in the identification of religious images.

### 4.1 GREEK ANTECEDENTS AND TYPES

This examination of the repertoire of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus within the context of the Pompeian household reveals that the sculptural types which developed during the Hellenistic period were preferred to all other renderings of the deities. In all three cases, the sculptures found in the domestic context were adaptations (rather than replicas) of well-known Hellenistic works. Within the Venus and Hercules repertoires, sculptural types provided a certain amount of variety, but the dominant influences can be attributed to the works of Praxiteles and Lysippos.



Praxiteles was among the first to depict the goddess Aphrodite nude rather than fully-draped in a traditional fashion. The Cnidian Aphrodite gave rise to numerous sculptural types all centered on the conceit of the goddess bathing in an outdoor setting (Fig.2). The 'Anadyomene' type, 'Sandal Binder,' and other versions of the semi-draped goddess reflect the Praxitelean Aphrodite in both subject and style. Differences in pose and accessories altered the compositions, but the style of the Pompeian pieces was undoubtedly Praxitelean. Like Venus, Hercules took several forms in the Pompeian repertoire, but his overall appearance can be attributed to Lysippos' Herakles Farnese (Fig.10). Roman copyists altered the hero's size, pose and attributes, while retaining his heavily muscled physique, which was a Lysippan innovation.

It is difficult to determine why these two statuary types were favoured over other depictions. Perhaps the thought of Venus preparing for her bath was deemed more appropriate for an outdoor setting and was therefore preferred for display in the private garden. Water was certainly a key feature in many gardens and the aesthetic quality of a bathing goddess may have influenced the prevalence of her Hellenistic form. As an agricultural deity, and protector of the garden, the goddess' nudity may have also been a reference to her fertility. The rustic style and subject matter of Lysippos' Hercules also worked well in the context of the garden. In the original work, and many of the adaptations, the weary hero was depicted holding the apples he had retrieved from the Garden of the Hesperides as part of his last labour. Perhaps patrons attempted to recreate the mythical setting by including the deity in their garden.<sup>1</sup> The element of rusticity in

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<sup>1</sup> Farrar (1998) 116.

these representations of Hercules made them particularly attractive to the Romans. The brawny hero appeared easily alongside such rustic creatures such as centaurs, satyrs, Silenoi, and the woodland gods Pan, Silvanus, and Priapus. The hero's fecundity may have made his appearance with these nature deities particularly fitting, given their own powers of fertility.

These factors may have contributed to the prevalence of these statuary types; however, it is likely that the popularity of a type essentially fed on itself.<sup>2</sup> Lysippos' interpretation of Hercules became such an integral part of the hero's identity that in his Lysippan form the deity was recognizable without attributes. Likewise, semi-draped renditions of Venus rarely included attributes since the goddess was the only female deity to be rendered in the nude. Scholars have commented on the homogeneity of Pompeian garden sculpture, noting that a piece's originality ranked rather low among the criteria utilized by patrons in the selection of statuary. The inclusion of a popular statuette in a private collection guaranteed a certain degree of social acceptance for its owner.<sup>3</sup>

Two representations of Venus and Hercules are examples of higher quality pieces within the Pompeian repertoire. Perhaps the finest representation of Venus at Pompeii is the alabaster statuette from the Casa della Venere Bikini (I.ix.6). The goddess, discovered on a table in the atrium, was depicted fastening her sandal while supporting herself on a statuette of Priapus (Fig.3). Evidence of polychrome paint has survived on several Venus statuettes, but the 'Venus in Bikini,' as the small statuette has become known, is the only example with evidence of gilding. Venus was outfitted with a gilded

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<sup>2</sup> Bartman 75

<sup>3</sup> Bartman 78.

mesh bikini, rather than traditional drapery which fell about the hips. Other accessories received the same decorative treatment, including her earrings, armlets, necklaces, sandals and hair. A similar example among the contents of the villa at Oplontis was painted with simple polychromy, rather than gilding.<sup>4</sup> One might not expect villa statuary to rival an example from a more modest dwelling; in this case, however, the statuette found in a Pompeian house appears to be the finer of the two examples. The attention to detail and general quality may suggest the piece was privately commissioned. Conversely, the statuette may simply be indicative of the range in quality available to patrons of various means. There are certainly pieces of varying quality within the Venus repertoire, with the statuette from House (VII.iii.6) as an example of a cruder rendering. As a finer statuette, it cannot be said that the Venus from the Casa della Venere Bikini was more important or held greater significance to an owner than statuettes of lower quality. The statuette's quality and medium was likely a reflection of taste and perhaps, more importantly, a patron's ability to pay.

Unlike other Venus statuary, the 'Sandal Binder' was not derived from a Praxitelean masterpiece. The sculptural type was among the most frequently copied within the Hellenistic repertoire, but appeared almost exclusively in the form of small-scale statuettes. This is contrary to most Pompeian depictions of the goddess that are rooted in major sculptural works like the Cnidian Aphrodite, Aphrodite of Arles, and Aphrodite Fréjus. Likewise, Hercules also appears in his Hellenistic form, adapted from Lysippos' over life-sized masterpiece the 'Weary Herakles.' However, one of the finest

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<sup>4</sup> De Caro 114.

examples of Hercules statuary was derived from another one of Lysippos' masterpieces, the 'Herakles Epitrapezios.'

In a villa near the Sarno, southwest of Pompeii, an adaptation of this famous Lysippan work presided over a large peristyle garden. The bronze piece depicts the hero sitting on a stone, left rough in order to convey a rocky terrain (Fig.12). The original masterpiece, created for Alexander the Great, was well-known in the ancient world and frequently copied. Yet, the 'Epitrapezios' type lacked the widespread appeal of Lysippos' famed 'Weary Hercules.' A number of 'Farnese' adaptations have been discovered in the domestic context, but the bronze 'Epitrapezios' is the only one of its kind at Pompeii. Its rarity in the repertoire may suggest that it was a specially commissioned piece, an idea perhaps reinforced by the statuette's fine quality and medium. Bronze was an expensive medium, and therefore received pride of place in the private collections. According to Dwyer, such bronze statuettes were not produced in the local industry, but were imported from elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, Dwyer never substantiates this claim, providing little indication of where a Pompeian patron would obtain such a piece. Without further investigation into the bronze industries of the region it is difficult to determine the rarity of the 'Epitrapezios' piece.

The Hercules 'Epitrapezios' has the distinction of being the only example of villa statuary in this study, and as an isolated example, it is therefore impossible to compare this statuette with those pieces found in smaller residences. In general, villa statuary tended to be larger and of higher quality than those examples found in more modest

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<sup>5</sup> Dwyer (1982) 135.

dwelling. While the statuette is the finest piece in the Hercules repertoire, the size and quality are comparable to the bronze renderings of Dionysus at Pompeii.

Despite the popularity of his *thiasos* in Hellenistic sculpture, Dionysus himself appeared rarely in sculptural form. A disproportionate number of Dionysus representations seem to be in keeping with artistic tradition. During the Hellenistic period representations of the Bacchic entourage overshadowed the number of sculptures devoted to the deity. This seems to be reflected at Pompeii where only three statuettes of the deity were discovered in the domestic context. Typically, the deity was represented as a nude, effeminate youth. Although the Pompeian examples are adaptations of Hellenistic works, they were often prototypes developed for other mythological figures. No single Hellenistic work or artist influenced the artistic canon of Dionysus to the degree that Praxiteles and Lysippos altered the representation of Venus and Hercules. As a result, identifiable attributes were often included in depictions of the deity in order to set him apart from other youths or deities, such as Mercury or Apollo. These Dionysiac accessories could include ivy wreaths, drinking cups, and various animal skins. These attributes were included in the compositions from House VII.xii.17, and the House of the Vettii. In the bronze example the deity is depicted with ivy berries in his hair and a goatskin over his shoulder. In the other example the god is shown wearing an ivy wreath, holding a drinking cup a particularly appropriate attribute for the god of wine.

However, the third Pompeian example was markedly different from the other representations of Dionysus in both style and composition. Except for his satyr companion, the bronze rendering from the House of Pansa is devoid of attributes.

Without a member of his *thiasos* or other identifiable characteristics, Dionysus was indiscernible from a depiction of a youth. In this case, the identification would have been further impeded by the treatment of the hair, which is more characteristic of Apollo's swept up hair than Dionysus' wild tresses (Fig.19). Dionysus, it appears, could not necessarily stand on his own without a Bacchic companion. Members of his *thiasos*, however, often appeared without the god in the garden or in other domestic contexts. With only three examples in the sculptural repertoire, it is clear that in many gardens and other domestic contexts Bacchic figures did appear on their own or in combination with other figures without the god.

This ambiguity is in sharp contrast to representations of Venus and Hercules. Although attributes were occasionally included in representations of both Venus and Hercules, they were often unnecessary. Both deities were easily recognized without the addition of other mythological figures or accessories. The innovative works of Praxiteles and Lysippos became an established part of Venus and Hercules' artistic canon. Representations of Venus were often variations on Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite, while Lysippos' Hercules was preferred to all other versions of the hero.<sup>6</sup> In Dionysus' case, no single Hellenistic masterpiece influenced the god's form. Although the representations of Dionysus at Pompeii share certain characteristics there is a lack of standardization typical of the Venus and Hercules repertoires. Dionysus was virtually unidentifiable without the benefit of his Bacchic accoutrements or members of his entourage.

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<sup>6</sup> Bartman 75.

## 4.2 FUNCTION AND MEANING

Several monographs cataloguing domestic sculpture have provided a great deal of valuable information on the range of statuary available to Roman patrons, and the frequency with which items occur.<sup>7</sup> The works of Jashemski and Dwyer have proven instrumental to the study of Pompeian statuary, the majority of which was displayed in the context of the garden. The function and religious nature of these divinities have been broached in each work, without a clear indication of the criteria used to categorize statues as either religious or ornamental. Jashemski views the sculpture found in and around the gardens as a combination of decorative and religious functions, postulating that Romans did not make a distinction between the two functions. In her examination of Pompeian gardens, Jashemski highlights agricultural divinities like Venus, Hercules, Bacchus, Apollo and Diana, noting their connections to the garden and the outdoor, and cites the presence of altars as evidence of worship within the confines of the garden. However, an altar does not appear to be a key criterion in her assessment of religious figures. An association with agriculture, gardens, or fertility, seems to be the primary reason for inclusion in this study.

While Jashemski views Pompeian sculpture as both ornamental and religious, Dwyer attempts to separate the two functions. Using size as his main criterion Dwyer separates the Pompeian repertoire into two categories: religious statuary and decorative pieces. Dwyer divides the free-standing sculpture into two classes—small, portable

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<sup>7</sup> Farrar (1998) 104.

figures, and larger-scale statuettes. According to Dwyer the first category of small-scale statuary was appropriate for the *lararium* or household shrine, while larger examples were displayed for decorative purposes.<sup>8</sup> However, within both size categories Dwyer determines the function of pieces as religious or ornamental, often with little or no explanation. Among the small-scale examples of Venus and Hercules, Dwyer notes that ‘decorative’ statuettes were frequently used as *lararia* figures. Here, the size is no longer the criterion, but the style and medium. While Dwyer mentions these differences in passing, he is rarely explicit.

Dwyer seems to reject his own criteria in his identification of a large-scale statuette as religious rather than decorative in function. In his brief analysis of the bronze Dionysus from House VII.xii.17, Dwyer suggests that the secluded location of the statuette and its high quality indicate that the piece was more than a “simple decorative object.”<sup>9</sup> The fine bronze statuette of the deity was discovered within an area identified as a *fullonica* (Fig.16). However, it appears that the piece and a number of bronze serving vessels belong to a dining room located a floor above the *fullonica*. Dwyer cites the statuette’s dining room context as an explanation for this identification, without elaborating on the religious nature of the piece. In his assessment of the piece, Dwyer changes his criterion from size to the quality, and introduces location as the determining factor in the statuette’s function within the household. Although religious piety may have motivated the owner to display the statuette in the dining room, it is likely that the piece was simply considered appropriate for such a setting. As for his characterization of the

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<sup>8</sup> Dwyer (1982) 121.

<sup>9</sup> Dwyer (1982) 123.



statuette, the dining room was one of the more 'public' rooms within the Pompeian household. Guests invited to dine with the owner would have had the opportunity to view and enjoy the rendering of Dionysus as he presided over the banquet. Perhaps Dwyer was thinking of the ostentatious and rather public display of statuary in the House of Marcus Lucretius when he noted the secluded nature of the piece.

The problem with Dwyer's classification of the statuette is the loss of the piece's original context. While the contents of the room appear to be consistent with a dining area, all other information pertaining to the statuette's placement and the room's general décor is unavailable. As the representation of a deity, the statuette was both religious and decorative. However, the decorative treatment of the room may have aided in the identification of the statuette's religious function.

Members of Dionysus' *thiasos* were among the large-scale statuettes highlighted in the domestic context. The outdoor setting provided an ideal setting for the woodland members of the retinue. Again, their size is generally consistent with the large-scale statuettes Dwyer categorizes as ornamental. While many renditions of satyrs, Silenoi, centaurs, and other members of the Bacchic entourage such as Pan and even Hercules were often depicted in comical situations, the informal nature of these representations often belie their religious importance. To the Romans, such figures represented the spirit of nature. Unlike Dionysus, these woodland figures could appear unaccompanied by the god himself within a garden context, and still be understood as Bacchic figures. Dwyer seems to contradict his own argument by suggesting that members of the *thiasos* were elevated to the position of a cult image when they were placed within an aedicula or

nymphaeum. Silenus was often highlighted in this way, most notably in the garden of the House of Marcus Lucretius, where he presided over the entire garden from a large aedicular fountain.<sup>10</sup> It is likely that Silenus and associated figures represented the Dionysiac realm in the absence of the deity.

Within the domestic context statuary served a multiplicity of functions, both ornamental and religious. Depictions of divinities like Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus, while selected in part for their aesthetic qualities, were nonetheless viewed as religious pieces. That is, images of divine figures, while functioning as ornamentation, could not be entirely divorced from their religious nature. However, there is evidence that some images were viewed as cultic images. Although Dwyer views larger-scale statuettes as decorative, there is evidence that these pieces were occasionally venerated as religious objects. The presence of an altar and a figure's location are perhaps the most useful criteria for determining the function of a statuette. The nature of each criterion is such that a certain amount of discretion must be used in the identification of any one figure as sacred. While masonry altars survive in the archaeological record, many altars were portable or constructed of perishable materials, making tenuous the classification of statuettes as religious objects.

The location of a statuette in the Pompeian household can provide an indication of its function within the domestic setting. In many of the early excavations, the location was not consistently recorded, resulting in the loss of provenance. The difficulty in reconstructing the original context is further compounded by the actions of Pompeian

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<sup>10</sup> Dwyer (1982) 124.

house-owners. Prior to the eruption, several patrons removed statuary from open areas in an apparent effort to protect them from ash and debris. For example, the owner of the bronze Dionysus and satyr composition from the House of Pansa set the piece inside a kettle which in turn was placed in the portico of the peristyle garden. The owner's attempt to prevent the statuette from incurring any damage is perhaps an indication of its importance in the sculptural collection. While this attachment to the piece may reflect the owner's religious piety, it seems that monetary considerations may have also played a role. In general, statuary was among the most expensive forms of decoration in the private context. Bronze pieces were particularly costly and were therefore prominently displayed in the Pompeian home where they might be most advantageously viewed. According to Dwyer, Pompeian bronzes were generally imported from elsewhere, increasing not only the expense of such items but also the pride of ownership. Devoid of its original context the religious function of the Bacchic statuette cannot be asserted. As a bronze piece, however, it is likely that it was a key feature of the peristyle garden.

Niches and aedicula were important architectural features used by patrons to give emphasis to certain sculptural pieces within their private collection. Although these features should not be mistaken for *lararia*, objects placed within a niche or aedicula may have been viewed by house occupants as religious items. The goddess Venus was highlighted in four separate Pompeian gardens occupying three aediculae and a niche. Although an altar was not discovered in association with the aedicula from House I.ii.17, its high quality and size may suggest that the goddess housed within was an object of religious worship (Fig.5). The large aediculum, which contained a particularly fine

rendition of the goddess, provided the focal point for the garden's east wall (Fig.8). While many aedicula were coated in plaster and then painted, the example from House I.ii.17 featured marble veneer. Other details seem to reinforce the importance of the architectural feature, including a fluted ceiling and painted decoration. It was not unusual for the ceiling of a niche or aedicula to resemble a shell. In this case, however, the shell was particularly appropriate because of its association with the goddess Venus. In addition to this detail, the interior of the aedicula seems to have been customized to enhance the appearance of the Venus statuette. The interior retains evidence of blue paint which was made to resemble the goddess' drapery. While the aedicula was an aesthetically pleasing feature in the garden which highlighted a fine marble rendition of the goddess, the size and overall quality suggests that the Venus may have played a role in the domestic cult.

However, caution must be used in assigning a religious function to large-scale statuettes based solely on their placement in a niche. Although the goddess Venus occupies one of four niches in garden of the House of Camillus (VII.xii.23), it seems unlikely that the goddess was worshipped in the confines of the garden (Fig.1). Three of the four niches in the north wall of the small *viridarium* contained seemingly unrelated statuettes. The easternmost of the three niches held a statuette of a child holding a hare, the central niche displayed a statuette of an unidentified male, while the westernmost niche held a statuette of Venus 'Anadyomene.'<sup>11</sup> The eclectic nature of this sculptural collection is in keeping with the combinations of statuary found in other domestic

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<sup>11</sup> Dwyer (1982) 61.

contexts. It is possible that the Venus statuette functioned as a religious image; however, the goddess' juxtaposition with the child seems to suggest that in this case the statuette was viewed as ornamental than religious. While the placement of a statuette in the Pompeian household may reveal aspects of its function and meaning, the absence of an altar makes tenuous the identification of a figure as a religious image.

Although the representations of deities in the private context were naturally imbued with a religious aura, they were not necessarily utilized as religious images. While the placement of a piece within the context of a niche or aedicula is suggestive of religious piety, only the presence of an altar provides tangible evidence of religious activity. A large masonry altar from in a garden of House II.viii.6 was found in association with a representation of Hercules. The permanent altar was positioned in front of a large aedicula which housed a statuette of the hero and two smaller figurines. The statuette, fitted with a hole in its back, was likely fastened to the aedicula. The hero's size and Lysippan form appears to coincide with Dwyer's idea of a more decorative piece. At 0.57 m in height, the marble rendering of Hercules was not overly large, but according to Dwyer too large to be considered a *lararium* figure.<sup>12</sup> However, the combination of the aedicula and altar suggests that the hero was a figure of worship within the confines of this garden. Interestingly, the statuette suffered considerable damage to its head, right arm and left foot, but was repaired in antiquity (Fig.11). This is perhaps another indication that this representation of the deity played a significant role in the domestic cult. Although marble renditions tended to be less expensive than their

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<sup>12</sup> Jashemski (1979) 94.

bronze counterparts, statuary was an expensive addition to any room or garden. While no other example of statuary examined in this study showed signs of repair, it was likely a common alternative to replacing the piece.

The prominence of Hercules in the 'Garden of Hercules' may address the commercial aspect of this garden. Jashemski identified the large area as a commercial flower garden attached to a modest dwelling. The worship of Hercules in this garden may have been particularly appropriate, since he was often recognized as the patron deity of merchants. According to Jashemski, merchants dedicated as much as one-tenth of their profit to the deity.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, Jashemski does not elaborate on this aspect of the deity. Perhaps the frequency with which the deity appears in both *lararia* and in the confines of the garden may be a reflection of the hero's role in the affairs of merchants.

As previously discussed, the items intended for display in the domestic context served a number of functions. While the statuette of Hercules from the garden of House II.viii.6 fulfilled a religious function, the importance of the piece as a decorative item should not be underestimated. The large aedicula, which held to the statuette of the hero, was a major architectural feature in the garden serving as a shrine, and as a focal point. In addition to the masonry altar, there was also a permanent *triclinium* located before the deity's image. Hercules, an occasional reveler in Dionysus' *thiasos*, was often associated with banqueting, a common activity in private gardens. In context of this garden, the deity appears to have presided over banquets held in the large garden.

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<sup>13</sup> Jashemski (1979) 122.

The hero seems to have fulfilled this role in several Pompeian gardens. Hercules, known for his excessive consumption of food and drink, was occasionally depicted suffering the consequences of his overindulgence. The statuette of Hercules discovered in the House of Stags at Herculaneum represents the hero inebriated following a night of banqueting. The drunken hero could be viewed from either the large *triclinium* north of the garden, or from the *oecus* to the south. While the rendition was certainly intended to be comical, the unsteady hero may have also served as a warning to banqueters to avoid excess.

Other examples of Hercules have also been associated with *triclinia*, including the fine adaptation of Lysippos' 'Hercules Epitrapezios' which was placed in full view of banqueters in the villa southwest of Pompeii, and the statuette from the 'Garden of Hercules.' Like Hercules, Dionysus as god of the vintage was also affiliated with banquets. Although the bronze statuette of Dionysus and his satyr companion were not discovered in their original context, Dwyer postulates that the pair was displayed where they might be most advantageously viewed by guests from their dining couches. The bronze rendering of Dionysus displayed in the dining room of House VII.xii.17 illustrates the deity's connection with banqueting, but this time within the confines of the house.

The standardization of sculpture in the Pompeian repertoire is often misleading. While pieces were selected in order emulate or surpass the statuary displayed in other Pompeian houses and villas, the inclusion of certain divinities may have been the result of a patron's partiality or the religious devotion. Although there are notable statuettes in each of the Pompeian repertoires, the rarity or high quality of a piece is not necessarily an

indication of a patron's piety. Variations in quality are likely the result of economic factors rather than religious significance. Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus each possessed qualities which made them ideal for display in a private context. The soft and elegant renderings of Venus and Dionysus fulfilled the aesthetic requirement while the rusticity of Hercules and the Bacchic *thiasos* appealed to the Roman love of naturalism. Each deity contributed to a certain milieu created by the patron. The association of Hercules, Dionysus and his *thiasos* with banqueting, a favourite pastime, created a feeling of *luxuria* and whimsy in the context of the garden. Although the religious role of Venus, Hercules and Dionysus statuary in the domestic context is uncertain, an examination of statuary placement and the presence of altars in the garden suggest that some larger-scaled statuettes served as both decorative and religious pieces.



## CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters I have examined the nature of the sculptural repertoires of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus in the private context of the Pompeian house. The examination of each mythological figure has included a discussion of the artistic antecedents, sculptural types, placement, and function. The commonalities shared by the three repertoires appear to be consistent at Pompeii. The free-standing sculpture discovered in the domestic sphere was generally scaled-down for the private urban garden. In addition to its smaller size, Pompeian garden sculpture appears to have varied significantly in quality, suggesting that artisans created statuary for patrons of varying status. These variations can be seen in each of the three repertoires examined in the scope of this work. Although the influence of the Archaic and Classical periods can be detected in other examples of Pompeian sculpture, the majority of private statuary is derived from late Hellenistic prototypes.

Several scholars have commented on the homogeneity of sculptural collections and display in the Roman household, a uniformity that is reflected in the three Pompeian repertoires. Despite the prevalence of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus and his retinue in private art, the selection of statuary available to the patron was rather limited. The quality of a piece set it apart from other examples, but the forms were often consistent, with the three deities confined to a small number of sculptural types. Further study of other mythological figures found in Pompeian households would perhaps reinforce these findings, but remains to be pursued elsewhere.

The narrow scope of this work makes it difficult to come to any profound conclusions regarding the repetitive nature of types within Pompeian sculptural collections. However, I have suggested that the Roman concept of *luxuria* and the desire to emulate other collections may have determined a patron's selection of statuary. Zanker postulates that the homogenous nature of private Pompeian collections is also the result of imitation. That is, patrons of limited financial means purchased and arranged sculpture in an attempt to capture the grandeur of villa gardens. Although Zanker's compelling argument was not fully addressed in this study, an examination of a larger number of sculptural collections would necessitate engagement with this and other arguments based on private collecting. While some conclusions can be drawn from the study of particular repertoires the limited corpus of material is not conducive to a generalized discussion of trends in Roman sculptural collecting.

The placement of statuary in the Pompeian household has been central to this examination of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysiac statuary. While statuary was not confined to the private garden, the space was often reserved for sculptural display. Statuary was placed in the garden in an effort to create an idyllic setting, which could be enjoyed from dining couches placed within the garden itself, or in adjacent rooms. Romans created a 'sacred grove' in these private spaces by including agricultural deities and other rustic figures suitable for the garden setting in their private collections. Venus, Hercules, and Dionysiac figures were particularly desirable because of their aesthetic quality, rusticity, and their strong affiliation with gardens and agriculture.

Although the placement of these figures varied from garden to garden, both Venus and Hercules were occasionally highlighted in niches or aediculae. This separation of a statuette from the other sculptural pieces implies that the figure was preferred in some way to other examples in the collection. While this favouritism may have been the result of an aesthetic preference, I suggest that the patron may have highlighted pieces of religious importance. There is little doubt that the Romans viewed divinities placed within the context of the household as inherently religious in nature. Although niches and aediculae should not be mistaken for *lararia*, the placement of figures in niches and the presence of altars are perhaps suggestive of religious activity. The display of a piece in the household may provide some indication of a statuette's religious function, but the absence of an altar or other specifically cultic feature makes the identification difficult.

The role of statuary has been examined in a number of works with emphasis on sculpture as ornamentation, an indicator of social status, or imitation of villa statuary. These are certainly important aspects of domestic sculpture at Pompeii; however, the religious nature of free-standing statuary is rarely addressed with any sort of clarity. This is in part due to the ambiguous nature of domestic religion itself and our general lack of knowledge on the subject. The problem is often compounded by the identification of certain statuettes as cult objects with little explanation. The criteria employed by scholars to determine the religious role of these pieces are often unclear. Jashemski's approach to divinities in the domestic context is perhaps the most reasonable, since she views sculptural representations as both ornamental and religious in nature.

Although the scope of this work is limited to the sculptural repertoires of three divinities, further study of the religious nature of mythological figures in private art is worth pursuing. In particular, an examination of Apollo, Artemis, and Isis would perhaps help elucidate the religious aspects of private statuary. While the religious nature of statuary is an important issue raised in this work, the nature of sculptural collection and display are of equal importance in advancing our understanding of domestic art. Mythological figures have been examined in wall-paintings, and in sculptural form. A comprehensive study, however, which would encompass both media in tandem is still needed.

My study is concerned with these three figures within a specific geographical location, i.e. Pompeii. Obviously, one of the ways to broaden the scope of this work would be to analyze other sculptural examples of Venus, Hercules, and Dionysus which are drawn from a wider geographical area. Such a study would be limited to a region in which the conditions are sufficiently favourable for preservation, in order to provide a corpus of material which is comparable to that at Pompeii. For example, certain regions of North Africa may present adequate evidence for comparison, and could reveal something of the regional, and cultural dimensions of domestic statuary.

Other avenues for further investigation include a study of the manner in which socio-economic factors are reflected in quality, size, media, function and sculptural type. Although villa statuary and more modest collections have each been examined individually, they are seldom incorporated into a single study. While discrepancies in terms of size and quality may reflect economic disparities, variations in the selection of

figures and sculptural types may expose social and cultural differences as well. Similarly, an investigation could explore the relationship between public and private depictions of Venus, Hercules and Dionysus in statuary. These and other studies focused on statuary in a domestic context could result in significant contributions to our understanding of Roman private life.

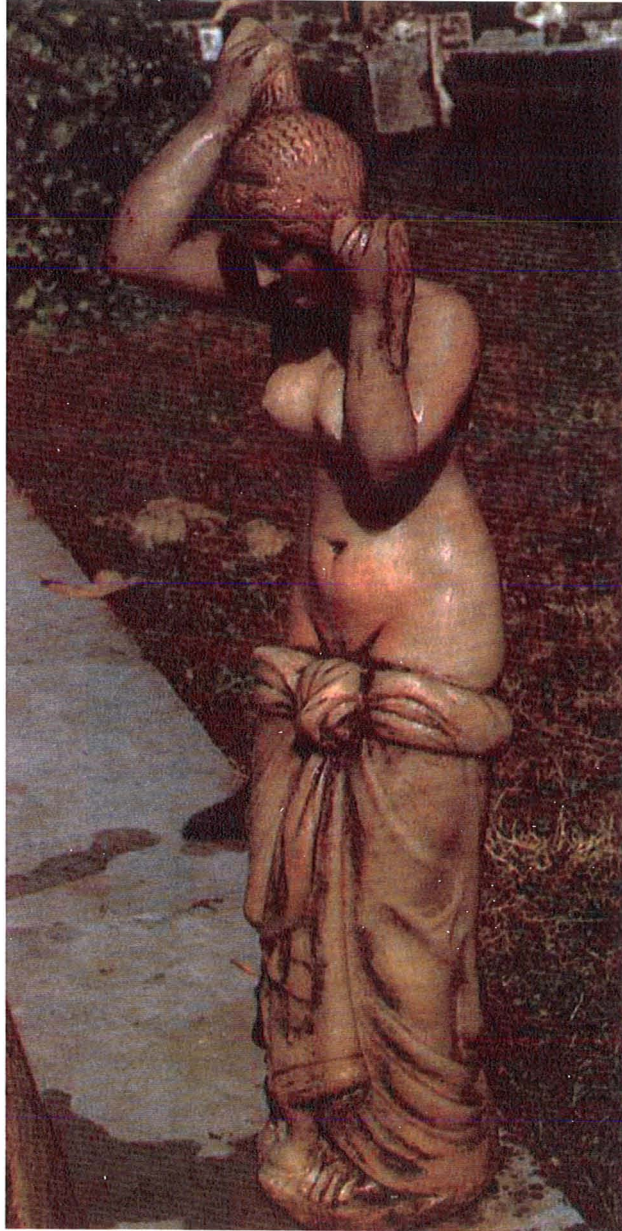


Fig. 1 Venus 'Anadyomene,' House of Camillus (VII.xii.23).

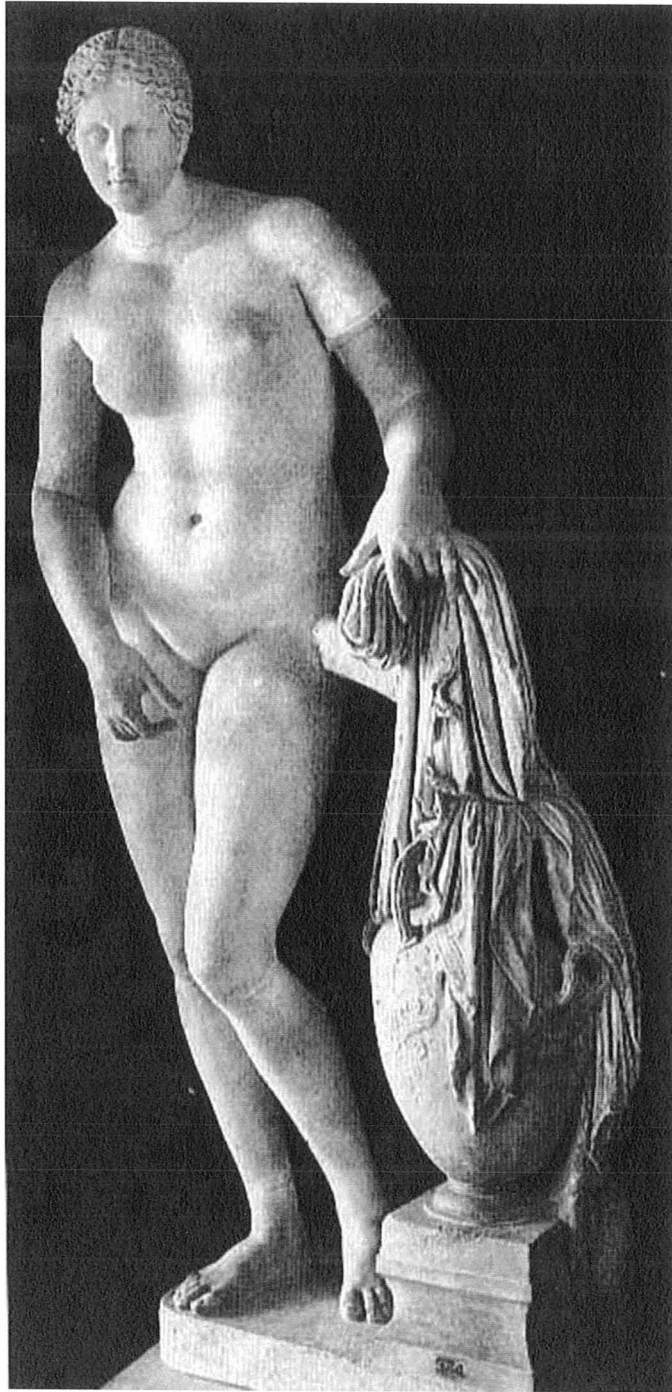


Fig. 2 Praxiteles' 'Aphrodite of Cnidos.' Vatican, Rome.

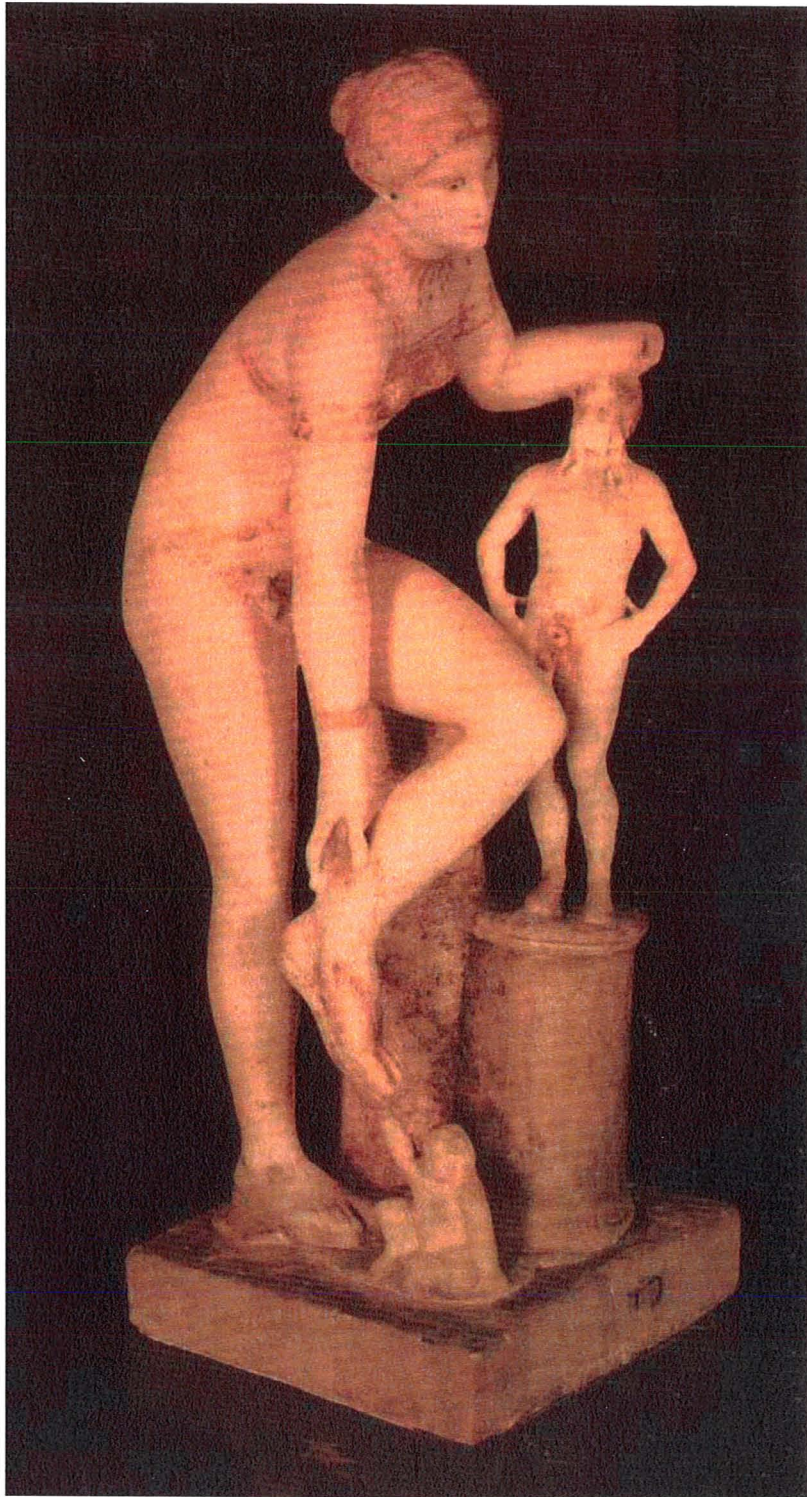


Fig. 3 'Sandal Binding' Venus from the Casa della Venere in Bikini (I.xi.6).





Fig. 4 'Sandal Binding' Venus from the Villa at Oplontis.

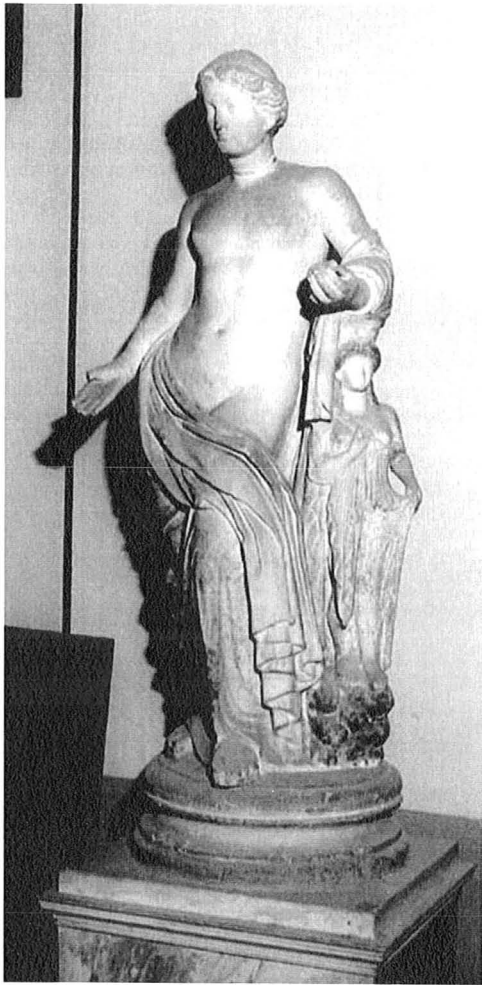


Fig. 5 Statuette of Venus, House Lii.17.



Fig. 6 Statuette of Venus, House of Euxinus (I.xi.12).



Fig. 7 Statuette of Venus, House II.iii.4.

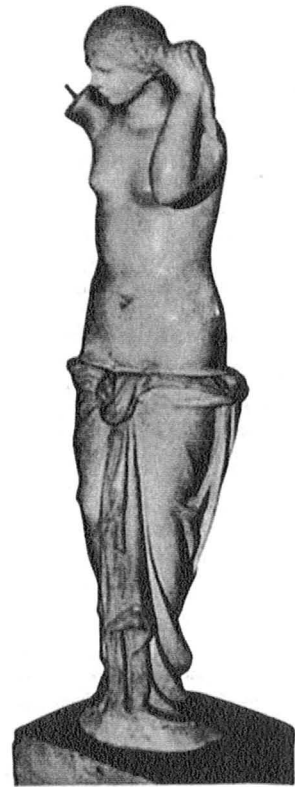


Fig. 9 Venus 'Anadyomene,' House VII.iii.6



Fig. 8 Aedicular niche, House I.ii.17.

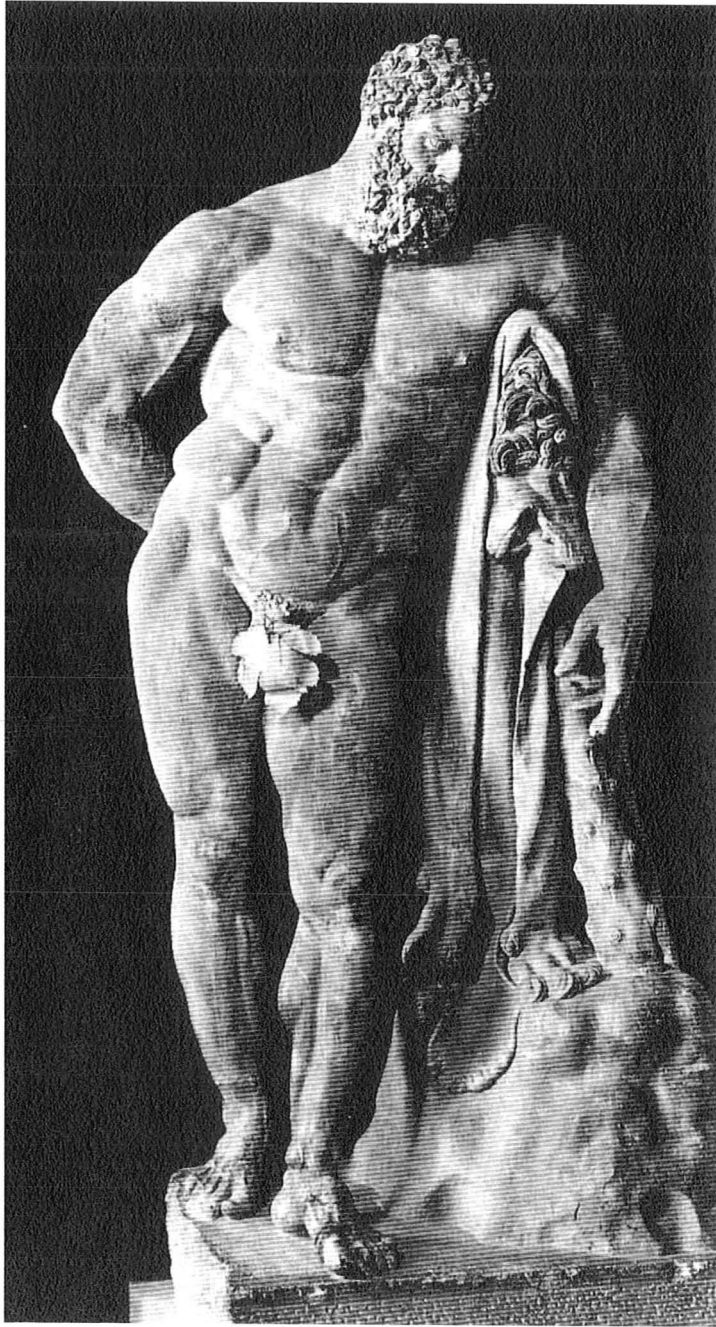


Fig. 10 'Farnese Hercules,' Baths of Caracalla.



Fig. 11a, 11b Statuette of Hercules, Garden of Hercules (II.viii.6).

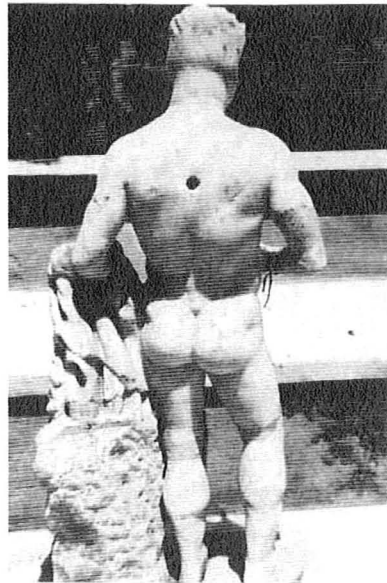




Fig. 12 Hercules 'Epitrapezios,' Villa near the Sarno, southwest of Pompeii.



Fig. 13 'Drunken' Hercules, House of the Stags (IV.21), Herculaneum.



Fig. 14 Hercules '*Ammantato*,' House Ix.7.

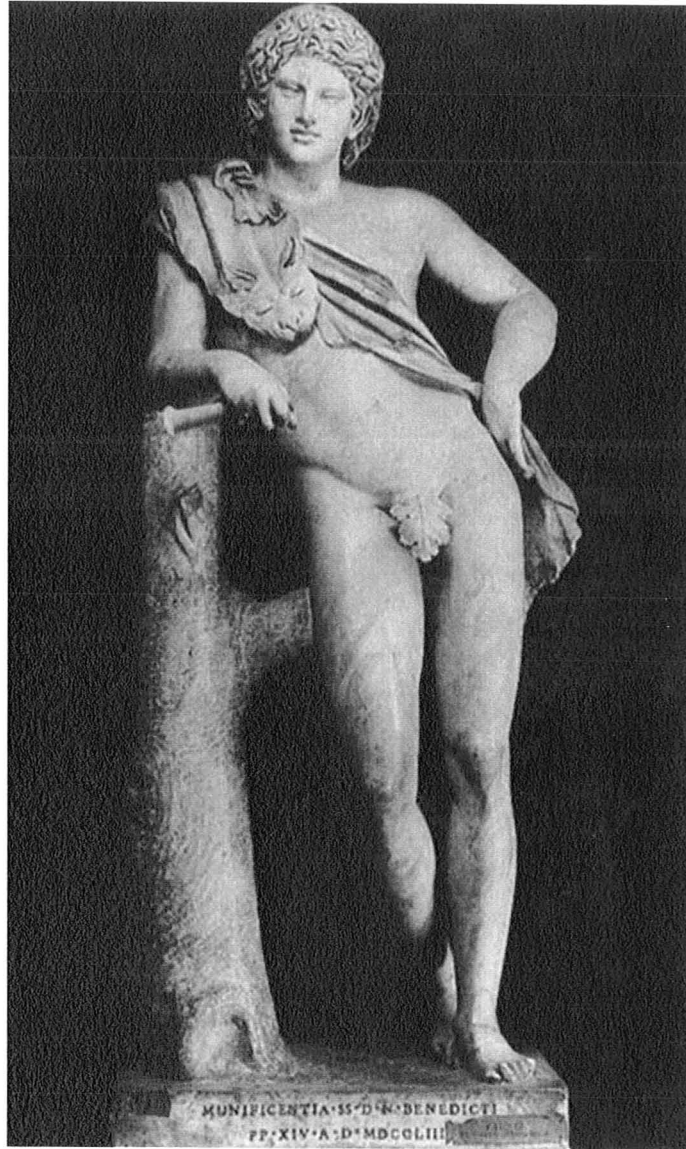


Fig. 15 Praxiteles' 'Leaning Satyr.'





Fig. 16 Bronze Statuette of Dionysus, House VII.xii.17.

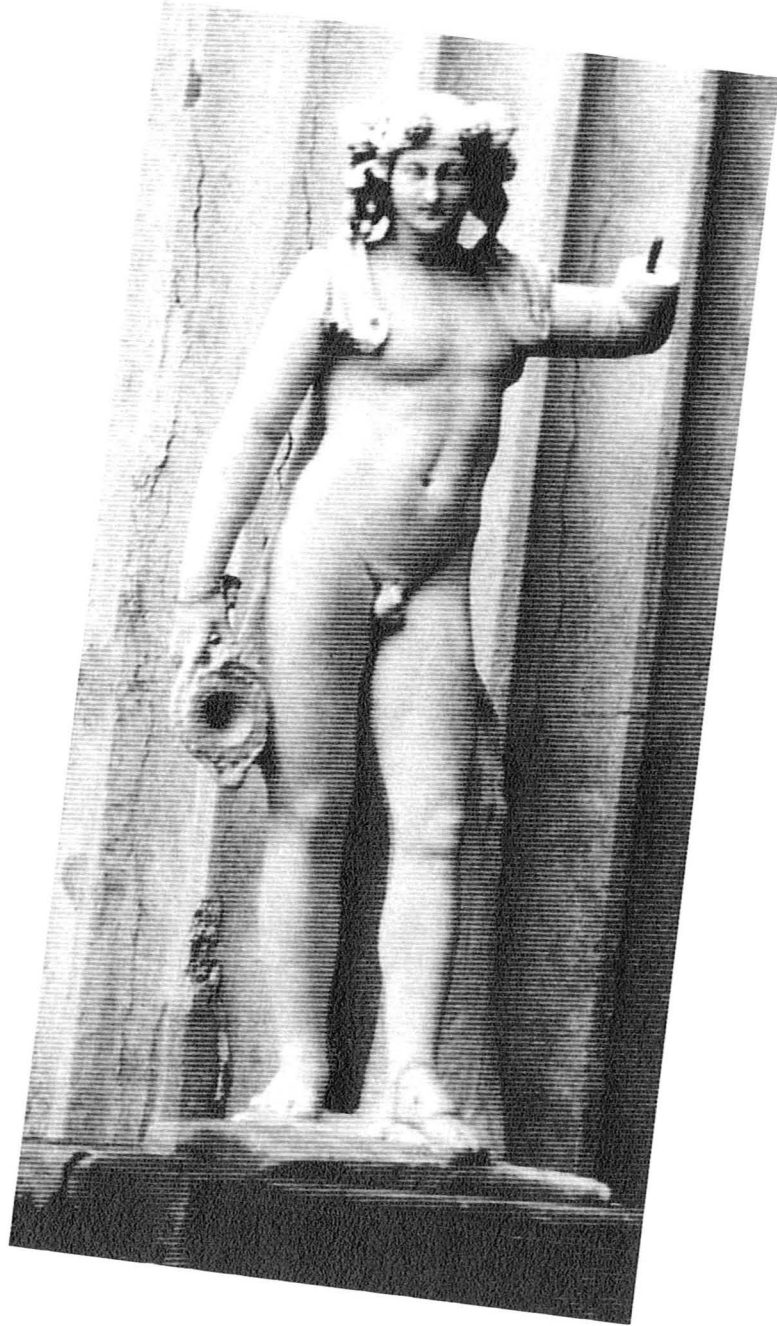


Fig. 17 Statuette of Dionysus, House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1).

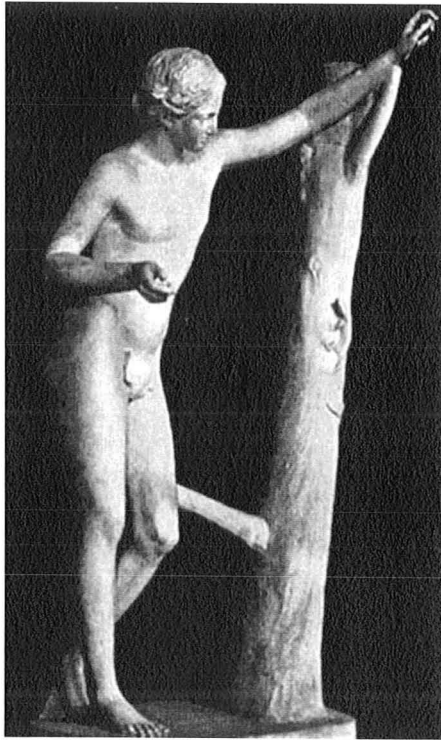


Fig. 18 Praxiteles' Apollo 'Sauroctonus.'

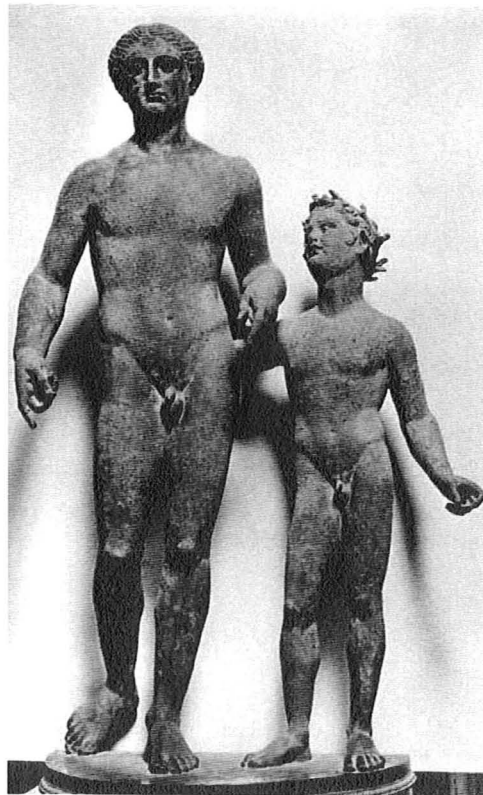


Fig. 19 Dionysus and satyr, House of Pansa (VI.vi.1/12).

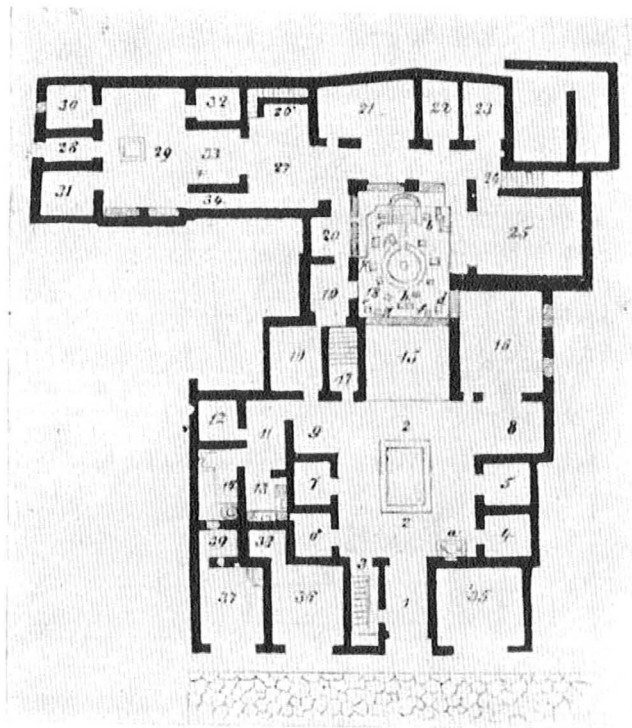


Fig.20 The House of M. Lucretius. Plan. (IX.iii.5/24).

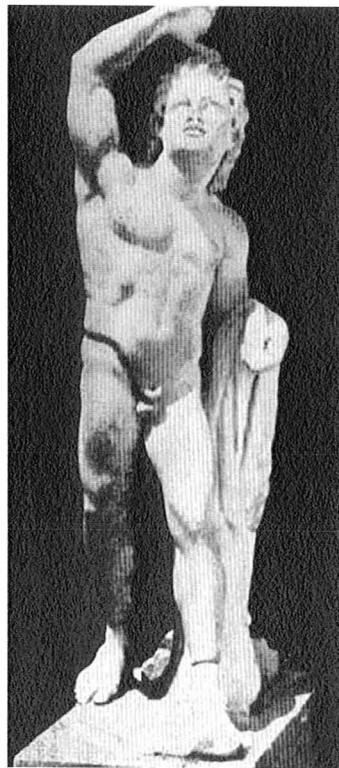


Fig. 21 Marble Statuette of a satyr, House of Marcus Lucretius (IX.iii.5/24).

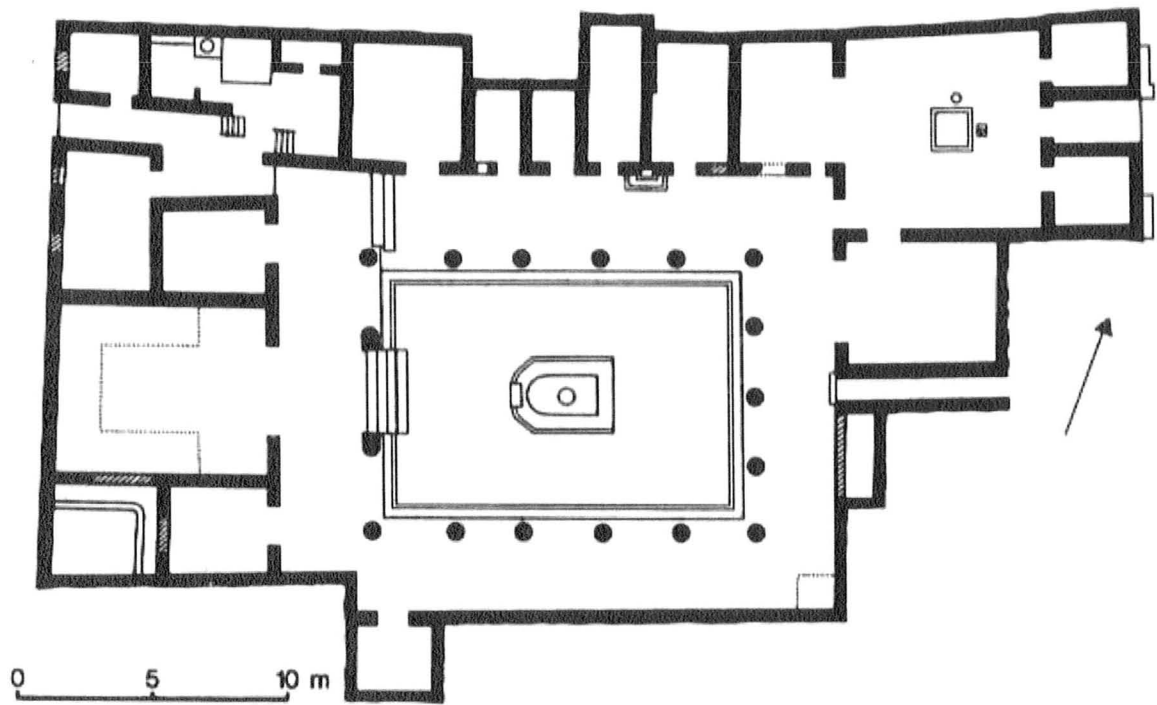


Fig.22 House of the Golden Cupids. Plan. (VI.xvi.7).



Fig. 21 A view of the peristyle garden, House of the Golden Cupids (VI.xvi.7).



Fig. 22 Mask of a Maenad, House of the Golden Cupids (VI.xvi.7).

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