



September 2015

The Virago, Hermaphrodite, and Jan Gossaert: A Metamorphosis in Netherlandish Art

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Recommended Citation

Caudill, Heidi (2006) "The Virago, Hermaphrodite, and Jan Gossaert: A Metamorphosis in Netherlandish Art," *Kaleidoscope*: Vol. 5, Article 13.

Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kaleidoscope/vol5/iss1/13>

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I graduated from the University of Kentucky in December of 2005 with a BA in Art History. As a student there, I was on the Dean's List every semester except one from the fall semester of 2002 to fall, 2005. I am a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Phi Beta Kappa, and the Alpha Lambda Delta Academic Honor Society. In April, 2006, I received second place in the Humanities: Critical Research category of the Oswald Research and Creativity

Program for this paper, which was written while participating in a class on Renaissance Art. My professor and faculty mentor, Dr. Jane Peters, was very supportive during its development, encouraging me to think beyond what has been said about the subject of Jan Gossaert and his impact on sixteenth-century Netherlandish art. In the future, I hope to continue researching this individual and his development as an artist. I am currently in my first year of graduate school at the University of Louisville, where I am pursuing a master's degree in Critical and Curatorial Studies.

I want to thank Dr. Peters for her guidance and support during the research and writing of this paper.



Faculty Mentor:

Jane S. Peters, Ph.D.

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I am pleased to endorse Heidi Caudill's research paper, "The Virago, Hermaphrodite, and Jan Gossaert: A Metamorphosis in Netherlandish Art." for publication in *Kaleidoscope*. For her research project in A-H 334: Renaissance Art (Fall, 2005), Heidi selected a challenging image by Jan Gossaert, with an obscure mythological Ovidian subject: *The Metamorphosis of Hermaphroditus and the Nymph Salmacis* (1516). Her assigned task was to explore issues of women in the Renaissance using the evidence of art. Heidi went far beyond course requirements, however, by exploring the implicit messages and meanings in terms of societal gender construction (male and female) and by further proposing a patron and the reasons for the commission of such a unique work. It was without question the most original research and best written paper in the class, one that deserves to be published.

The Virago, Hermaphrodite, and Jan Gossaert: A Metamorphosis in Netherlandish Art

Abstract

In this paper, I examine the origins of the 1516 painting *The Metamorphosis of Hermaphroditus and the Nymph Salmacis* by the artist Jan Gossaert. Because there are no known representations of the myth in post-classical European art before Gossaert's version, the existence of the painting provokes questions about its patronage, background, and possible implications. Derived from the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the focus of the work is on the physical struggle between a male and female figure. The artist casts these individuals into the roles of victim and aggressor, with the female as the dominant character. This depiction reflects common attitudes at the time toward women and their scorned position in a male-dominated society. I suggest that the subject of Gossaert's painting is related to themes found in the popular art of Northern Europe, which focused on the reversal of traditional gender-roles and often acted as warnings to men about women with too much freedom and power. Proposing that *The Metamorphosis* could be viewed as a satirical representation of women having political power, I argue that there is more to the painting than what appears on the surface.

Introduction

The Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam has in its possession a remarkable painting titled *The Metamorphosis of Hermaphroditus and the Nymph Salmacis*, hereafter called *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis*. Produced in 1516 by the Netherlandish artist Jan Gossaert, the work stands as one of the earliest depictions in Northern Europe of a mythological scene. (Durante, 2004) Its subject



derives from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a Roman poem dating from 9 C.E. that was widely popular and widely distributed in the Renaissance. Visual representations of the *Metamorphoses* were common in Italy but not the Netherlands during the period when Gossaert made his painting. Yet, while certain stories in the poem were prevalent as subjects, some were almost never illustrated by artists. One case in point is the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. It is, consequently, significant that Gossaert, as a Netherlandish artist, created the first known rendering of the myth since the fall of the Roman Empire.

Some intriguing questions are raised simply by the fact of the existence of *Hermaphroditus* and *Salmacis* at this moment in history. There are no known representations of the myth in European art before Gossaert's version in 1516. Another representation did not appear until forty-seven years later, in 1563, as an illustration for a version of Ovid's book (Virgil Solis. *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* from the *Metamorphoses Ovidii*. Vienna: 1563). After that, the story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis started to appear in more and more works, its presence not abating until the nineteenth century.

Given the chronological isolation of Gossaert's painting, it is strange that this particular myth was chosen when representations of so many other stories from the *Metamorphoses* were available. This problem brings up the issues of patronage and originality in Renaissance art. It follows that the first question to ask is who made the decision to select a subject that would require the artist to invent virtually every detail of the composition without the benefit of existing precedents? Or were there precedents in other subjects and media? Furthermore, what connotations did the myth hold that would compel the patron to commission a painting of it? The answers to these questions reflect the position of Gossaert as an innovator who created a new hybrid art by fusing some of the themes and stylistic qualities of Northern and Italian Renaissance art.

The Myth

The myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis centers on the idea of aggression and pursuit as well as the reversal of gender roles. Hermaphroditus, a handsome and innocent youth, crosses paths with the nymph Salmacis. She immediately develops a passion for him but he resists her advances, telling her to leave him alone. Salmacis pretends to comply, but then secretly watches as he bathes in a pool of water. Overcome with lust at the sight of his naked body, she undresses and rushes into the pool after him. As they struggle in the water, Salmacis shouts to the gods to let them remain together forever. Granting

her request, the gods fuse their bodies together into a single form with both male and female features. Hermaphroditus in turn calls on the gods to curse the pool in which he was emasculated and to diminish the manhood of any male who might bathe in that pool thereafter.

The Portrayal

As one of the many artists during the Renaissance who made visual representations of the *Metamorphoses*, Gossaert proved his knowledge of and respect for the poem through the literalness of his depiction. Using contrasting forms and ideas, he imparts a strong sense of drama and dynamism to the viewer in his portrayal of the violent collision between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. These figures, shown as a nude male and female, wrestle with each other in the midst of an idyllic landscape set with rocks, a shallow pool of water, and green grass.

Ovid wrote that the pool in which Salmacis and Hermaphroditus fought was "perfectly clear right through to the bottom, entirely empty of marshy reeds, unfertile sedge-grass and spiky rushes; the crystalline water was lushly fringed by a circle of fresh and evergreen grass." (Ovid, 4.297-300) There are no reeds or rushes around the water's edge in Gossaert's painting; the only vegetation is grass of a deep, healthy green color as prescribed in the poem. The clearness of the water is evidenced by both the sight of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus' feet and the rocks that extend below the surface. The agitated movement of their struggle is meant to be viewed in contrast to the tranquility of the surrounding scene, further emphasizing the disturbance caused by the female attacking the male.

Gossaert uses the composition of the landscape to communicate the struggle for power between the two figures. He positions the rocks behind the woman to imitate the curve of her lower body and outstretched arms. The sloping earth behind the man echoes the defensive stance of his torso and legs, in which his weight is shifted to one side to support himself in the struggle. Just as the hill is inclined downward from left to right, so is the left side of his body higher than his right side. Indeed, even the height difference between the rocks and the ground reiterates the dynamic of power in the scene.

Conforming exactly to the description by Ovid of the intense confrontation between Hermaphroditus and his pursuer Salmacis, the artist follows the poet by showing the woman in the role of aggressor. Gossaert uses the contrast of the male's and female's physical expressions to distinguish the assailant and victim. The female is obviously the stronger, dominant presence because of her fierce look and the

strength of her posture. She pulls the struggling man toward her in a very realistic manner, twisting her waist and standing at a slight angle. Also Gossaert uses the curves and diagonals of her body to express a greater degree of movement and a more aggressive stance. The diagonals created by her arms and legs cut across the body of the male, surrounding and imprisoning him. In contrast to the woman, the man is represented as weak and powerless. He is attempting to escape the situation, as shown by the way his body leans away from contact with hers. It is clear though that he is overwhelmed by her force.

In his poem, Ovid describes Salmacis as shouting, "Victory! He's mine!" as she jumps into the water to embrace Hermaphroditus. (Ovid, 4.356) It is almost possible to imagine Gossaert's Salmacis uttering this phrase, given the fierce and triumphant expression on her face. Overwhelmed by her passion, she wrestles with Hermaphroditus in the hope of bending him to her will. According to Ovid, Salmacis "dived in after her quarry, grabbed hold of his limbs as he struggled against her, greedily kissing him, sliding her hands underneath him to fondle his unresponsive nipples and wrapping herself round each of his sides in turn." (Ovid, 4.357-360) Gossaert emphasizes the physical aggressiveness of Salmacis' character through his portrayal of the rigidity and strength of her body. Hermaphroditus by contrast appears weak because of the vulnerable stance of his body.

Gripping the male's left wrist in her right hand, the female uses the other hand to pull his head toward her. She draws his body to her with all of her strength, as Gossaert makes evident in the way that she leans to the side, pushing her heels into the ground. He braces himself by bending his knees and upper torso to the opposite side. His recognition of the futility of the struggle is marked by the panic and terror in his facial expression. Grasping the fingers that clutch him, the man desperately pulls at them while his other hand moves to break the rigidity of the arm that has given added support to the woman's hand at his neck. This action is swiftly blocked by the woman, who is shown grasping his raised hand in mid-air. The painting perfectly captures the emotional intensity of the moment. He stares up at their hands, stunned by her surprise movement. She gazes directly at him, the determination to completely overwhelm him clear in her expression. This is the moment when the male, helplessly or willingly, succumbs to the female's control.

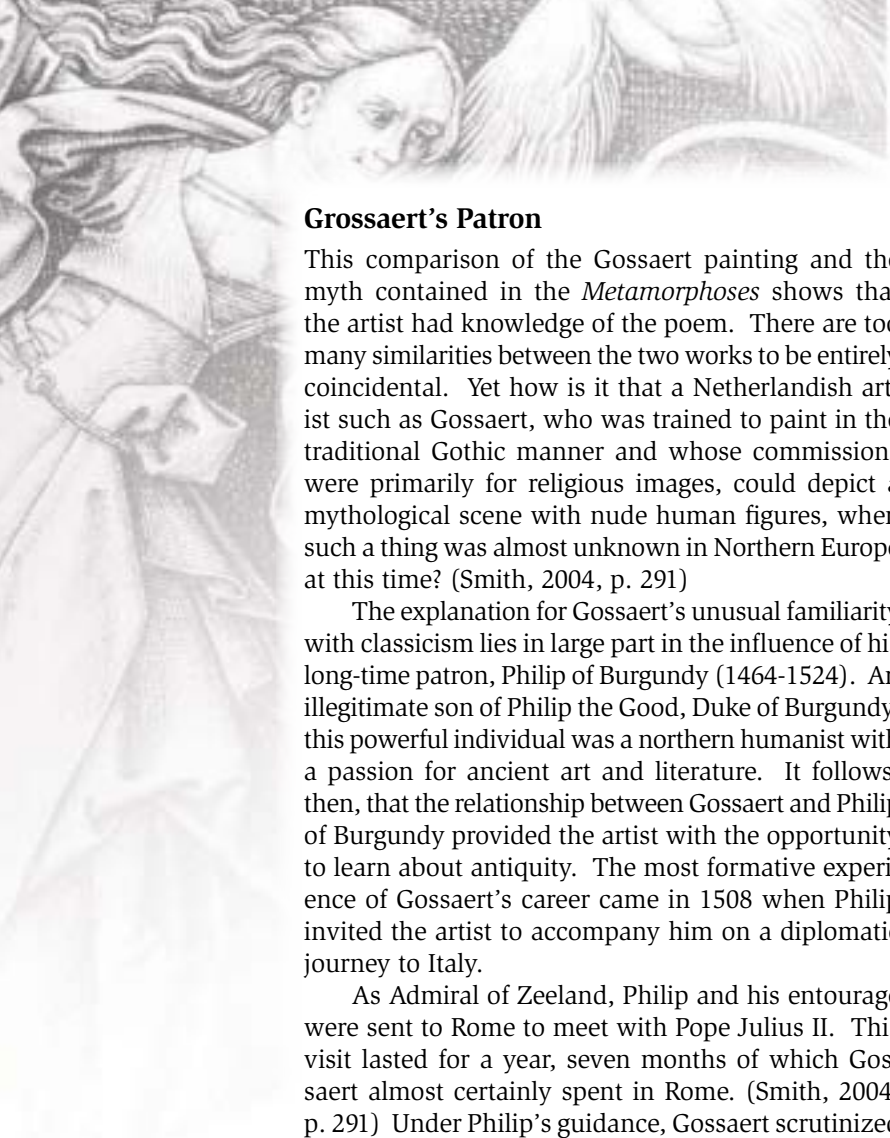
The consequence of Hermaphroditus' surrender is indicated by Gossaert through the ghostly apparition standing in the background. When examined closely this creature appears to be composed of the

conjoined bodies of the man and woman. Though it has one torso, two legs and two arms like a normal human, the creature possesses the two heads of the fighting male and female. The appearance of this creature is the most noticeable deviation from the poem that is visible in Gossaert's work.

Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* portrays the unusual being in this way: "the bodies of boy and girl were merged and melded in one. The two of them but a single face...they were two no more but of double aspect, which couldn't be fairly described as male or as female. They seemed to be neither and both." (Ovid, 4.375-383) Gossaert shows Hermaphroditus and Salmacis as being joined in one body, but two heads. The poem in contrast calls for a body with a single head. It would have been difficult for the artist to show the creature with only one head because of its position in the background behind the two main figures. Its facial and bodily features are unrecognizable except for the two heads, which are the only indication to the viewer of its abnormality.

All of the antagonism that is evident in the foreground couple is completely purged from the conjoined couple in the background. The heads of the man and woman, known from the poem to be Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, are drawn close together in an intimate conversation while below their hands are raised in the air and clasped together. In keeping with his use of contrast as a way to emphasize the disparity between a powerful, domineering woman and a weak, submissive man, Gossaert emphasizes the differences in the relationships between the two pairs of figures.

For example, the willing embrace seen in the background is the complete opposite of the forced embrace of the man and woman in the foreground. The heads on the creature gaze directly at one another and its hands are clasped together in a friendly manner. This denotes an equality of status and power that is missing in the association between the two figures in the foreground. There the male fixes his stare above the female's head, while she watches his face. There is no eye contact between them. Their bodies are intertwined as a result of the fight and the placement of their arms and hands reveal the tension of their situation. Also, the creature stands in a stationary pose on the solid earth while the separate man and woman thrash violently about in the shallow pool of water. Differences such as these serve to further emphasize the painting's central point, which is not only the struggle between a strong-willed female and her unfortunate male victim, but also the consequences of a man surrendering power to a woman.



Gossaert's Patron

This comparison of the Gossaert painting and the myth contained in the *Metamorphoses* shows that the artist had knowledge of the poem. There are too many similarities between the two works to be entirely coincidental. Yet how is it that a Netherlandish artist such as Gossaert, who was trained to paint in the traditional Gothic manner and whose commissions were primarily for religious images, could depict a mythological scene with nude human figures, when such a thing was almost unknown in Northern Europe at this time? (Smith, 2004, p. 291)

The explanation for Gossaert's unusual familiarity with classicism lies in large part in the influence of his long-time patron, Philip of Burgundy (1464-1524). An illegitimate son of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, this powerful individual was a northern humanist with a passion for ancient art and literature. It follows, then, that the relationship between Gossaert and Philip of Burgundy provided the artist with the opportunity to learn about antiquity. The most formative experience of Gossaert's career came in 1508 when Philip invited the artist to accompany him on a diplomatic journey to Italy.

As Admiral of Zeeland, Philip and his entourage were sent to Rome to meet with Pope Julius II. This visit lasted for a year, seven months of which Gossaert almost certainly spent in Rome. (Smith, 2004, p. 291) Under Philip's guidance, Gossaert scrutinized the architecture and art of ancient and contemporary Rome. He was supposed to make sketches of these works, which probably were to be used later in Philip's humanistic studies. (Hope and McGrath, 1996, p. 164) Five pen-and-ink drawings remain from this trip; one was a sketch of the Coliseum and four were depictions of classical sculpture. There must have been many more sketches made during Gossaert's time in Rome, but now only the surviving drawings and the transformation of his art attest to the deep impression left on him by his direct contact with Italian culture.

It is the general opinion of those who have researched Gossaert's life that the impact of his journey to Rome did not surface in his commissioned work until several years after he returned to the Netherlands. Durante (2004) has attributed this supposed delay to the "suddenness" of his discovery of ancient and Italian Renaissance art, and the continued demand in the North for pious subject-matter. Even though opportunities to depict nude human figures and mythological scenes were few and far between, it can be shown that Gossaert did have the ability to test his new-found ideas through his religious scenes.

Like his German contemporary Albrecht Dürer, Gossaert used the biblical story of Adam and Eve to

practice representing nudes in classical poses. There is a painting of Adam and Eve dated from 1509 and now in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, that clearly shows the influence of both his studies in Rome and the prints of Dürer. While the style of the picture remains in the traditional Northern manner with its great attention to detail, realism, subtle shadowing and use of light to create textural surface, the contrapposto poses of Adam and Eve along with the degree of anatomical accuracy shown in their bodies is reminiscent of Italian art.

These are characteristics also found in Dürer's popular 1504 print of Adam and Eve (now in the Graphic Collection of the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna), which was done ten years after his first journey to Italy. (Panofsky, 1955, p. 8) Dürer was another Northern artist who was trained in the Gothic aesthetic but discovered Renaissance humanism and classical themes after coming into direct contact with Italian culture. As with Gossaert, Dürer had to find opportunities to explore the idea of the nude figure in his art. He recognized that the nudity of Adam and Eve was acceptable to northern audiences because it had a purpose. Gossaert, who definitely knew of Dürer's print (Smith, 2004, p. 266), utilized this same tactic in his 1509 Adam and Eve and the others that came afterward. Perhaps he viewed Dürer as a model for how to incorporate classical motifs into conventional Northern subject-matter. In that case, it would not be coincidental that Gossaert's 1509 painting was one of the first instances in his career in which he attempted to synthesize the artistic traditions of the Netherlands and Italy. Gossaert presumably would have continued to further develop this idea through similar religious works until 1516, when he produced *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* for his old patron Philip of Burgundy.

There are several sound reasons to believe that *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* was commissioned by Philip of Burgundy. Mensger (2002, p. 114) states that the first known record of the painting's existence is contained in an inventory of Margaret of Austria's possessions dated 1524. There it is listed as a gift from the "Monsgr d'Utrecht." According to Lins (2003), Philip of Burgundy was appointed Bishop of Utrecht in 1518; because he held this post until his death in 1524, he is most likely the person mentioned in the record. In addition it is known that, in 1515, Philip of Burgundy commissioned Gossaert to decorate his palace near Middelberg with mythological scenes. (Durante, 2004) It is probable that *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* was made during this time. Though he often worked for other European royalty, Gossaert became Philip of Burgundy's court painter soon after

his appointment as Bishop of Utrecht, and he resided with the nobleman at his residence. (Durante, 2004) Therefore, given his extended patronage of Gossaert, his love of the ancient world, and the record mentioning him as the former owner, it is almost certain that Philip was the person who commissioned the painting.

The identification of Philip of Burgundy as the patron is critical to the question of why the myth of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* was chosen as a subject. Smith (2004, p. 278) asserts that “the mutually stimulating association between artists and humanists resulted in creative twists to familiar genres.” This was certainly the case in the creation of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis*. As the artist, Gossaert was forced to invent almost every detail of the painting’s composition without the benefit of existing precedents, because there are no known visual representations of the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in post-classical European art before Gossaert’s version in 1516; subsequent depictions would not be created for another fifty years. It seems strange that this particular myth was chosen when illustrations of other stories from the *Metamorphoses* were available and in common use. Yet it is important to remember that in situations involving patronage and commissions, the patron and not the artist usually chose the subject of the work.

Philip of Burgundy almost certainly was the person who chose the theme of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis*, both because of his position as patron and his knowledge of ancient works of literature such as the *Metamorphoses*. It would have been Gossaert’s role to find a way to translate the action of the literary text into a clear visual image. In order to do this, he would have had to employ both the poem and other models that were independent of the myth.

Weibermacht Scenarios

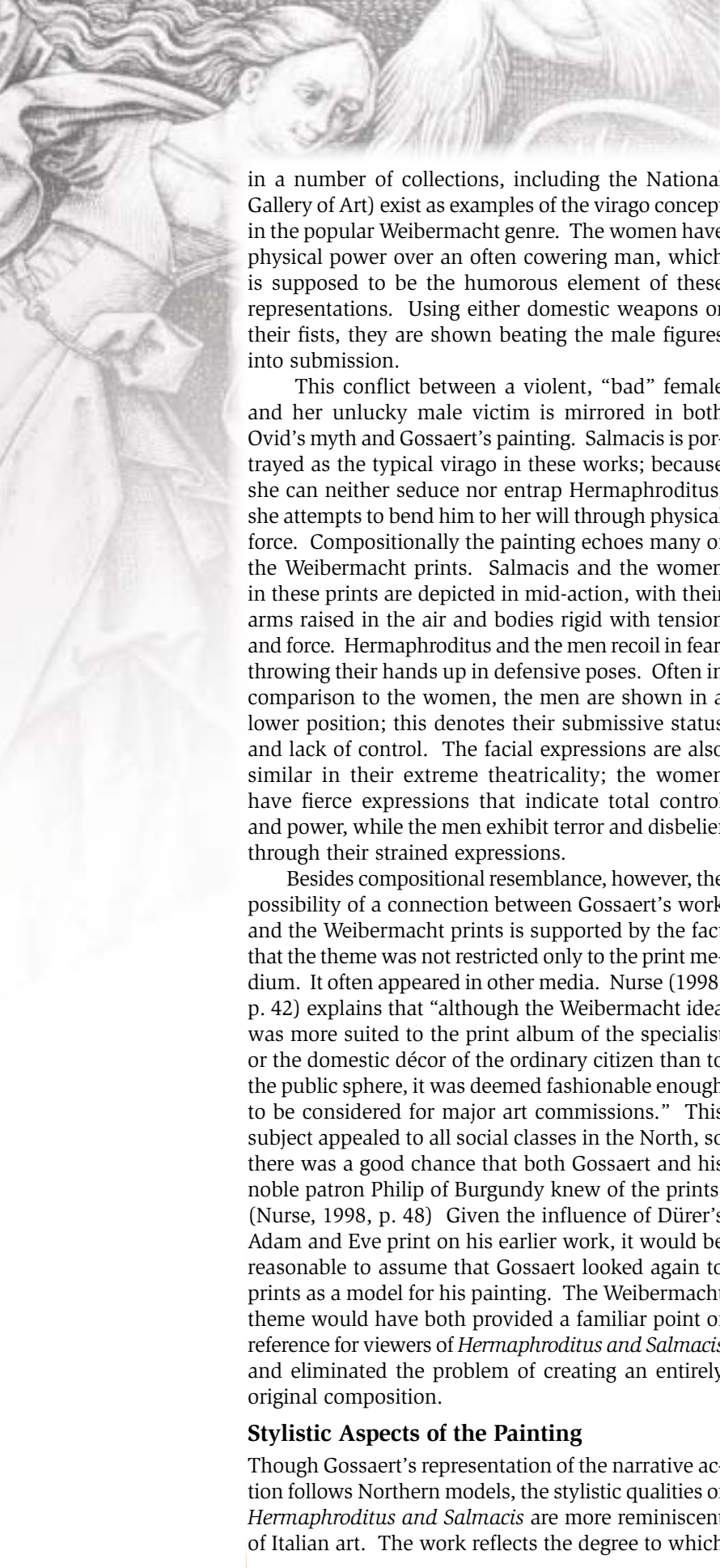
It has been shown that Gossaert closely followed the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus as told by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*. This text was the only source that he possessed for information about the characters and details of the landscape. However, even though the poem is particularly descriptive, it would have still been difficult for Gossaert to execute a representation effectively. He needed visual precedents resembling the central action of the myth, which is the struggle between Hermaphroditus and Salmacis. It follows that some of the most accessible models available to Gossaert at this time were the satirical portrayals in Northern prints of dominant women and submissive men, known collectively as ‘Power of Women’ or Weibermacht scenarios. (Nurse, 1998, p. 41)

As a Netherlandish man, Gossaert almost certainly would have known about these illustrations and the assumptions connected with their subject matter. The ‘Power of Women’ theme was very popular around the time that Gossaert was painting *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis*. (Nurse, 1998, p. 42) The theme centered on the reversal of traditional gender-roles and often acted as warnings to men about giving women too much freedom. Many concerns and fears during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were indeed focused on women, who often acted as scapegoats for natural disasters, economic troubles, war, and other misfortunes. The print medium allowed deep prejudices and misogynistic attitudes to be distributed to a wide audience; therefore the success of the Weibermacht prints indicates a general distrust of women in Northern society.

One of the most popular portrayals was that of the ‘virago’ or woman who would use physical force when she could not subdue men through sexual advances or entrapment. Prints such as *The Angry Wife* by Israhel van Meckenem (copies of which are held



The Angry Wife by Israhel van Meckenem 1495-1503
National Gallery of Art



in a number of collections, including the National Gallery of Art) exist as examples of the virago concept in the popular Weibermacht genre. The women have physical power over an often cowering man, which is supposed to be the humorous element of these representations. Using either domestic weapons or their fists, they are shown beating the male figures into submission.

This conflict between a violent, “bad” female and her unlucky male victim is mirrored in both Ovid’s myth and Gossaert’s painting. Salmacis is portrayed as the typical virago in these works; because she can neither seduce nor entrap Hermaphroditus, she attempts to bend him to her will through physical force. Compositionally the painting echoes many of the Weibermacht prints. Salmacis and the women in these prints are depicted in mid-action, with their arms raised in the air and bodies rigid with tension and force. Hermaphroditus and the men recoil in fear, throwing their hands up in defensive poses. Often in comparison to the women, the men are shown in a lower position; this denotes their submissive status and lack of control. The facial expressions are also similar in their extreme theatricality; the women have fierce expressions that indicate total control and power, while the men exhibit terror and disbelief through their strained expressions.

Besides compositional resemblance, however, the possibility of a connection between Gossaert’s work and the Weibermacht prints is supported by the fact that the theme was not restricted only to the print medium. It often appeared in other media. Nurse (1998, p. 42) explains that “although the Weibermacht idea was more suited to the print album of the specialist or the domestic décor of the ordinary citizen than to the public sphere, it was deemed fashionable enough to be considered for major art commissions.” This subject appealed to all social classes in the North, so there was a good chance that both Gossaert and his noble patron Philip of Burgundy knew of the prints. (Nurse, 1998, p. 48) Given the influence of Dürer’s Adam and Eve print on his earlier work, it would be reasonable to assume that Gossaert looked again to prints as a model for his painting. The Weibermacht theme would have both provided a familiar point of reference for viewers of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* and eliminated the problem of creating an entirely original composition.

Stylistic Aspects of the Painting

Though Gossaert’s representation of the narrative action follows Northern models, the stylistic qualities of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* are more reminiscent of Italian art. The work reflects the degree to which

his tendency and ability to fuse Netherlandish and Italian artistic traditions had increased since his 1509 *Adam and Eve*. As one of his first opportunities to depict a mythological scene containing nudes, *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* demonstrates Gossaert’s familiarity with the Italian style of painting. He understood that Italian art favored simple and idealized forms. Both Hermaphroditus and Salmacis are shown in the work as classical nudes with a sense of monumental three-dimensionality. They are perfectly beautiful figures without the realistic blemishes or defects that Northern artists typically would feel compelled to include.

The color tone of the entire painting is thin and cold like that of an Italian fresco; it does not have the rich vibrancy of most fifteenth and sixteenth century Netherlandish paintings. In addition, two events from different moments in time are presented in the same pictorial space. Gossaert shows the struggle between Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in the foreground and the later fusion of their bodies in the background. This convention was associated more with Italian than Netherlandish art.

All in all, the visual style of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* is closer to that of the Italians than Gossaert’s contemporaries in the Netherlands. This similarity can probably be attributed more to the demands of his humanistic patron, Philip of Burgundy, than to Gossaert himself. As Durante (2004) explains, Gossaert “became absolutely adept at switching back and forth between an ‘Italianate’ style, and a distinctly Netherlandish one. He could invoke either mode according to the particular impact he wished to create and became very skilled at manipulating and fusing elements from different sources within a single composition.” It is known that when Philip commissioned Gossaert to decorate his palace in 1515, the decorations were ordered to be Italian in style. (Durante, 2004) In view of the fact that *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* was produced around that same time, it is reasonable to assume that Philip dictated the style of this painting as well. He was the real force behind the appearance of the work; Gossaert simply attempted to fulfill his wishes.

Why Portray this Subject?

The collaboration between Gossaert and Philip consisted of the artist following the orders of the patron, who made the decisions about the content and style of the work. Yet the question remains unanswered as to why the myth of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* was chosen as a subject in the first place. What connotations could the myth hold that would compel Philip to commission a painting of it? A possible

answer can be found in the political situation of the Netherlands during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

In this period, two women, Mary of Burgundy and Margaret of Austria, were appointed to the position of regent of the Low Countries, which encompassed what is now present-day Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The first female regent, Mary of Burgundy, held power from 1477 to 1482. She did much to weaken Burgundian power and eventually brought about a decade of civil war and revolt. The second female regent, Margaret of Austria, was a far better leader. Reigning from 1507 to 1530 as a representative of King Charles I of Spain, she negotiated deals to improve the economy and protect the military interests of the Low Countries.

Philip of Burgundy lived through the governments of both women, experiencing both turmoil and prosperity under their respective reigns. *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* was completed during the rule of Margaret of Austria, who was responsible for sending Philip to Rome in 1508, and later appointing him Bishop of Utrecht. Though he owed much of his political success to this woman, could he have also harbored some apprehension about her ability to govern? This is a rather hypothetical idea but, given the fears in Netherlandish society about powerful women, it must have been difficult for Philip as a man to accept Margaret of Austria as a ruler.

Memories of the chaos and unrest during Mary of Burgundy's reign probably reinforced the cultural stereotypes perpetuated by the *Weibermacht* prints about women in positions of command. Men who yield to the authority of women are always shown in these illustrations as weak, vulnerable fools. Likewise, the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis revolves around this same idea of the inherent connection between female power and emasculation. Bearing in mind that Philip was serving under Margaret of Austria at the same time that he commissioned a representation of the myth, it seems plausible that *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* might be connected to his relationship with the female regent. Though the possibility of a correlation between the subject of the painting, cultural attitudes toward female authority, and Philip's personal biases seems strong, more research needs to be done in this area before definite conclusions about a possible deeper meaning can be made.

Conclusion

The 1516 painting *The Metamorphosis of Hermaphroditus and the Nymph Salmacis* by Jan Gossaert embodies his innovative fusion of some of the themes and stylistic qualities of sixteenth century Italian and Northern European art. He consciously made the connection between a popular subject in his own Netherlandish culture, that of the virago or violent woman, and the classical myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis. It was through his collaborative association with a humanist that Gossaert was able to completely synthesize the two different artistic cultures; this synthesis now sets him apart from his contemporaries and identifies him as one of the first artists during the Renaissance to attempt to bridge Northern and Italian art.

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