



Antike Mythologie: Hermaphroditos

Die früheste schriftliche Überlieferung des Hermaphroditos-Mythos findet sich bei Diodor; Ovids Metamorphosen sind die einzige ausführliche Darstellung in Ovids Metamorphosen. Diese Fassung war (anders als Diodors Text) auch im Mittelalter bekannt. Es gab sehr gelehrte Auslegungen (z.B. durch die Mythographi Vaticani [11. Jh. (?)]) oder im sog. Ovidus moralizatus [14. Jh.,], aber Ovids Schriften waren auch Schullektüre und damit (relativ) weit bekannt.

Edition und Übersetzung: 1. Diodorus of Sicily in twelve volumes, vol. 2: Books II (cont.) - IV, 58, with an English translation by C.H. Oldfather (Loeb Classical Library 303), Cambridge, Mass. 1967, hier 360–361; 2. Ovid, Metamorphoses in two volumes, vol. 1. With an English translation by Frank Justus Miller (Loeb Classical Library 42), Cambridge, Mass. 1951, hier 198–205.

Digitalisate: 1. <https://archive.org/stream/diodorusofsicily02dioduoft#page/360/mode/2up>; 2. <http://archive.org/stream/metamorphoses01oviduoft#page/198/mode/2up>

Literatur: Michael Groneberg, *Mythen und Wissen zu Geschlecht und Intersexualität. Eine Analyse relevanter Begriffe, Vorstellungen und Diskurse*, in: «Intersex»: *Geschlechtsanpassung zum Wohl des Kindes? Erfahrungen und Analysen*, hg. von Michael Groneberg und Kathrin Zehnder, Fribourg 2008, 93–146.

1. Diodor, *Bibliothèque IV*, 6, 5-6

5 Παραπλησίως δὲ τῷ Πριάπῳ τινὲς μυθολογοῦσι γεγενῆσθαι τὸν ὀνομαζόμενον Ἑρμαφρόδιτον, ὃν ἐξ Ἑρμοῦ καὶ Ἀφροδίτης γεννηθέντα τυχεῖν τῆς ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων τῶν γονέων συνθεθείσης προσηγορίας. τοῦτον δ' οἱ μὲν φασιν εἶναι θεόν καὶ κατὰ τινὰς χρόνους φαίνεσθαι παρ' ἀνθρώποις, καὶ γεννᾶσθαι τὴν τοῦ σώματος φύσιν ἔχοντα μεμιγμένην ἐξ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός· καὶ τὴν μὲν εὐπρέπειαν καὶ μαλακότητα τοῦ σώματος ἔχειν γυναικί παρεμφερή, τὸ δ' ἀρρενωπὸν καὶ δραστικὸν ἀνδρὸς ἔχειν.¹ ἔνιοι δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα γένη ταῖς φύσεσιν ἀποφαίνονται τέρατα ὑπάρχειν, καὶ γεννώμενα σπανίως προσημαντικὰ γίνεσθαι ποτὲ μὲν κακῶν ποτὲ δ' ἀγαθῶν. καὶ περὶ μὲν τῶν τοιούτων ἄλις ἡμῖν ἐχέτω.

¹ τὰ δὲ φυσικὰ μόρια συγγενῆσθαι τούτῳ καὶ γυναικὸς καὶ ἀνδρὸς ("and he is born with the physical organs both of a woman and of a man") after ἐχειν BD.

A birth like that of Priapus is ascribed by some writers of myths to Hermaphroditus, as he has been called, who was born of Hermes and Aphrodite and received a name which is a combination of those of both his parents. Some say that this Hermaphroditus is a god and appears at certain times among men, and that he is born with a physical body which is a combination of that of a man and that of a woman, in that he has a body which is beautiful and delicate like that of a woman, but has the masculine quality and vigour of a man. But there are some who declare that such creatures of two sexes are monstrosities, and coming rarely into the world as they do they have the quality of presaging the future, sometimes for evil and sometimes for good.



2. Ovid, *Met. IV*, 274-388

„Unde sit infamis, quare male fortibus undis Salmacis enervet tactosque remollia artus, discite. Causa latet, vis est notissima fontis. Mercurio puerum diva Cythereide natum naides Idaeis enutrivere sub antris, cuius erat facies, in qua materque paterque cognosci possent; nomen quoque traxit ab illis. Is tria cum primum fecit quinquennia, montes deseruit patrios Idaque altrice relicta ignotis errare locis, ignota videre flumina gaudebat, studio minuente laborem. Ille etiam Lycias urbes Lyciaeque propinquos Caras adit: videt hic stagnum lucentis ad imum usque solum lymphae; non illic canna palustris nec steriles ulvae nec acuta cuspide iunci; perspicuus liquor est; stagni tamen ultima vivo caespite cinguntur semperque virentibus herbis. Nympha colit, sed nec venatibus apta nec arcus flectere quae soleat ne quae contendere cursu, solaque naiadum celeri non nota Dianae. Saepe suas illi fama est dixisse sorores ‚Salmaci, vel iaculum vel pictas sume pharetras et tua cum duris venatibus otia misce!‘ nec iaculum sumit nec pietas illa pharetras, nec sua cum duris venatibus otia miscet, sed modo fonte suo formosos perluit artus, saepe Cytoriaco deducit pectine crines et, quid se deceat, spectatas consulit undas; nunc perlucenti circumdata corpus amietu mollibus aut foliis aut mollibus incubat herbis, saepe legit flores. Et tum quoque forte legebat cum puerum vidit visumque optavit habere.

„How the fountain of Salmacis is of ill-repute, how it enervates with its enfeebling waters and renders soft and weak all men who bathe therein, you shall now hear. The cause is hidden; but the enfeebling power of the fountain is well known. A little son of Hermes and of the goddess of Cythera the naiads nursed within Ida’s caves. In his fair face mother and father could be clearly seen; his name also he took from them. When fifteen years had passed, he left his native mountains and abandoned his foster-mother, Ida, delighting to wander in unknown lands and to see strange rivers, his eagerness making light of toil. He came even to the Lycian cities and to the Carians, who dwell hard by the land of Lycia. Here he saw a pool of water crystal clear to the very bottom. No marshy reeds grew there, no unfruitful swamp-grass, nor spiky rushes; it is clear water. But the edges of the pool are bordered with fresh grass, and herbage ever green. A nymph dwells in only of the naiads follows not in swift Diana’s train. Often, ‘tis said, her sisters would chide her: ‘Salmacis, take now either hunting-spear or painted quiver, and vary your ease with the hardships of the hunt.’ But she takes no hunting-spear, no painted quiver, nor does she vary her ease with the hardships of the hunt; but at times she bathes her shapely limbs in her own pool; often combs her hair with a boxwood comb, often looks in the mirror-like waters to see what best becomes her. Now, wrapped in a transparent robe, she lies down to rest on the soft grass or the soft herbage. Often she gathers flowers; and on this occasion, too, she chanced to be gathering flowers when she saw the boy and longed to possess what she saw.



„Nec tamen ante adiit, etsi properabat
adire, quam se composuit, quam
circumspexit amictus et finxit vultum et
meruit formosa videri. Tunc sic orsa loqui:
45 ‚puer o dignissime credi esse deus, seu tu
deus es, potes esse Cupido, sive es
mortalis, qui te genuere, beati, et frater
felix, et fortunata profecto, si qua tibi soror
est, et quae dedit ubera nutrix; sed longe
50 conctis longaque beatior illa, si qua tibi
sponsa est, si quam dignabere taeda. Haec
tibi sive aliqua est, mea sit furtiva voluptas,
seu nulla est, ergo sim, thalamumque
ineamus eundem.‘ Nais ab his tacuit, pueri
55 rubor ora notavit; nescit enim, quid amor;
sed et erubuisse decebat: hic color aprica
pendentibus arbore pomis aut ebori tincto
est aut sub candore rubenti, cum frustra
resonant aera auxiliaria, lunae. Poscenti
60 nymphae sine fine sororia saltem oscula
iamque manus ad eburnea colla ferenti
‚desinis? Aut fugio tecumque‘ ait ‚ista
relinquo.‘ Salmacis extimuit ‚loca‘ que
‚haec tibi libera trado, hospes‘ ait
65 simulatque gardu discedere verso, tum
quoque respiciens, fruticumque recondita
silva delituit flexuque genu submisit; at
ille, scilicet ut vacuis et inobservatus in
herbis, huc it et hinc illuc et in
70 adludentibus undis summa pedum taloque
tenus vestigia tinguit; nec mora, temperie
blandarum captus aquarum mollia de
tenero velamina corpore ponit. Tum vero
stupuit nudaeque cupidine formae
75 Salmacis exarsit, flagrant quoque lumina
nymphae, non aliter quam cum puro
nitidissimus orbe opposita speculi referitur
imagine Phoebus; vixque moram patitur,
vix iam sua gaudia differt, iam cupit
80 amplecti, iam se male continet amens.

“Not yet, however, did she approach him,
though she was eager to do so, until she
had calmed herself, until she had arranged
her robes and composed her countenance,
45 and taken all pains to appear beautiful.
Then did she speak: ‘O youth, most worthy
to be believed a god, if thou art indeed a
god, thou must be Cupid; or if thou art
mortal, happy are they who gave thee birth,
50 blest is thy brother, fortunate indeed any
sister of thine and thy nurse who gave thee
suck. But far, oh, far happier than they all
is she, if any be thy promised bride, if thou
shalt deem any worthy to be thy wife. If
55 there be any such, let mine be stolen joy; if
not, may I be thine, thy bride, and may we
be joined in wedlock.’ The maiden said no
more. But the boy blushed rosy red; for he
knew not what love is. But still the blush
60 became him well. Such colour have apples
hanging in sunny orchards, or painted
ivory; such has the moon, eclipsed, red
under white, when brazen vessels clash
vainly for her relief. When the nymph
65 begged and prayed for at least a sister’s
kiss, and was in act to throw her arms
round his snowy neck, he cried: ‘Have
done, or I must flee and leave this spot –
and you.’ Salmacis trembled at this threat
70 and said: ‘I yield the place to you, fair
stranger’, and turning away, pretended to
depart. But even so she often looked back,
and deep in a neighbouring thicket she hid
herself, crouching on bended knees. But
75 the boy, freely as if unwatched and alone,
walks up and down on the grass, dips his
toes in the lapping waters, and his feet.
Then quickly, charmed with the coolness
of the soothing stream, he threw aside the
80 thin garments from his slender form. Then
was the nymph as one spellbound, and her
love kindled as she gazed at the naked
form. Her eyes shone bright as when the
sun’s dazzling face is reflected from the
surface of a glass held opposite his rays.
Scarce can she endure delay, scarce bear
her joy postponed, so eager to hold him in
her arms, so madly incontinent.



Ille cavis velox adplauso corpore palmis
desilit in latices alternaque brachia ducens
in liquidis translucet aquis, ut eburnea si
quis signa tegat claro vel candida lilia
vitro. ‚vieimus et meus est‘ exclamat nais,
et omni veste procul iacta mediis innittitur
undis, pugnanteque tenet, luctantiaque
oscula carpit, subiectatque manus,
invitaque pectora tangit, et nunc hac
iuveni, nunc circumfunditur illae; denique
nitentem contra elabique volentem implicat
ut serpens, quam regia sustinet ales
sublimemque rapit: pendens caput illa
pedesque adligat et cauda spatiantes
implicat alas; utve solent jederae longos
intexere truncos, utque sub aequoribus
deprensus polypus hostem continet ex
omni dimissis parte flagellis. Perstat
Atlantiades sperataque gaudia nymphae
denegat, illa premit commissaque corpore
toto sicut inhaerebat, ‚pugnes licet,
inprobe‘, dixit ‚non tamen effugies. Ita di
iubeatis, et istum nulla dies a me nec me
deducat ab isto.‘ Vota suos habuere deos;
nam mixta duorum corpora iunguntur,
faciesque inducitur illis una. Velut, si quis
conducat cortice ramos, crescendo iungi
pariterque adolescere cernit, sic ubi
complexu xoiertur membra tenaci, nec duo
sunt et forma duplex, nec femina dici nec
puer ut possit, neutrumque et utrumque
videntur.

„Ergo ubi se liquidas, quo vir descenderat,
undas semimarem fecisse videt mollitaque
in illis membra, manus tendens, sed iam
non voce virili Hermaphroditus ait: ‚nato
dato munera vestro, et pater et genetrix,
amborum nomen habenti: quisquis in hos
fontes vir venerit, exaunde semivir et
tactis subito mollescat in undis!‘

90 He, clapping his body with hollow palms,
dives into the pool, and swimming with
alternate strokes flashes with gleaming
body through the transparent flood, as if
one should encase ivory figures or white
95 lilies in translucent glass. ‘I win, and he is
mine!’ cries the naiad, and casting off all
her garments dives also into the waters: she
holds him fast though he strives against
her, steals reluctant kisses, fondles him,
100 touches his unwilling breast, clings to him
on this side and on that. At length, as he
tries his best to break away from her, she
wraps him round with her embrace, as a
serpent when he king of birds has caught
105 her and is bearing her on high: which,
hanging from his claws, wraps her folds
around his head and feet and entangles his
flapping wings with her tail: or as the ivy
oft-times embraces great trunks of trees, or
110 as the sea-polyp holds its enemy caught
beneath the sea, its tentacles embracing him
on every side. The son of Atlas resists as
best he may and denies he nymph the joy
she craves; but she holds on, and clings as
115 if grown fast to him. ‘Strive as you may,
wicked boy’, she cries, ‘still shall you not
escape me. Grant me this, ye gods, and
may no day ever come that shall separate
him from me or me from him.’ The gods
120 heard her prayer. For their two bodies,
joined together as they were, were merged
in one, with one face and form for both. As
when one grafts a twig on some tree, he
sees the branches grow one, and with
125 common life come to maturity, so were
these two bodies knit in close embrace:
they were no longer two, nor such as to be
called, one, woman, and one, man. They
seemed neither and yet both.

130 “When now he saw that the waters into
which he had plunged had made him but
half-man, and that his limbs had become
enfeebled there, stretching out his hands
and speaking, though not with manly
135 tones. Hermaphroditus cried: ‘Oh, grant
this boon, my father and my mother, to
your son who bears the names of both:
whoever comes into this pool as man may
he go forth half-man, and may he weaken
140 at touch of the water.’



Motus uterque parens nati rata verba
biformis fecit et incesto fontem
medicamine tinxit.“

Finis erat dictis, sed adhuc Minyeia proles
urguet opus spernitque deum festumque
profanat, tympana cum subito non
adparentia raucis obstrepere sonis, et
adunco tibia cornu tinnulaque aera sonant;
redolent murræque crocique, resque fide
maior, coepere virescere telae inque
hederae faciem pendens frondescere vestis;

His parents heard the prayer of their two-
formed son and charged the waters with
that uncanny power.

Alcithoe was done; but still did the
145 daughters of Minyas ply their tasks,
despising the god and profaning his holy
day: when suddenly unseen timbrels
sounded harshly in their ears, and flutes
with curving horns, and tinkling cymbals;
150 the air was full of the sweet scent of
saffron and of myrrh; and, past all belief,
their weft turned green, the hanging cloth
changed into vines of ivy;