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Mekayla May

April 6, 2020

The Grotto-Complex in Tiberius's Villa at Sperlonga: Experientiality, Immersion, and Owner-as-Spectacle

by

Mekayla May

Dr. Eric Varner
Adviser

Art History

Dr. Eric Varner
Adviser

Dr. Katrina Dickson
Committee Member

Dr. Bonna D. Wescoat
Committee Member

2020

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Mekayla May

Dr. Eric Varner

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Abstract

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The grotto-complex in Tiberius's villa at Sperlonga has features, however, that reveal a distinctive Roman execution intent on portraying the owner as occupying a liminal space between heaven and mortals. Attempting to recreate and enhance the natural theater, the owner strategically separates the grotto-complex from the familiar contexts of the villa, dining and symposium, and theater. He, instead, creates a new type of theater, in which both artifice and nature compete and complement as the owner attempts to occupy a divine-creator role of a landscape. Isolated from both the domestic villa and the public shore, the owner's manipulation of subverted expectations and grotto-as-spectacle seduce the visitor into the grotto where the owner puts his power, wealth, and intelligence on display.

Immersed in this grotto-landscape, the visitor occupies a space temporally suspended in which his own education and intelligence is tested against the owner's. Both an actor and spectator and judge of his fellow diners and judged by them, the visitor explores the grotto to encounter the grotto-landscape in physical and mental participation and active viewing. Within the space, he realizes his mortality and divine power through assumption of various roles, a lesson that, despite his power, the owner also learned. This paper recontextualizes the grotto-complex within its larger landscape of burgeoning prominence and significance of seaside residences, at the historic first half of the first century CE, and within the creation of spectacle for dining and symposium contexts. To challenge scholarship's limited focus on the four heroic groups, this paper introduces six additional sculptures as transitory objects encountered before immersing oneself in the alternative world of the grotto-landscape and upon exiting to return to the familiar. Consideration of the grotto-complex as a *space* reveals the owner, in his divine-creator yet mortal role, has strategically presented himself as the spectacle.

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Introduction

Since its discovery in 1957, academic scholarship on the grotto-triclinium at Tiberius's villa in Sperlonga has been almost exclusively focused on the four so-called heroic sculptural groups. Discourse is often centered around the pursuit of these sculptures' Hellenistic originals,¹ a Rhodian workshop,² and a single literary source.³ Scholars have decontextualized the space and sculptures. The grotto-triclinium and its decorative program, however, are works of art that are very influential to later imperial dining rooms' cave imitation/decoration and Odyssean themes.⁴ A deliberate and powerful spatiality curates the visitor's experience into a theatrical performance both by and for the owner, resulting in a conflicted narrative that echoes the changing times in the first centuries BCE and CE and portrays the owner as creator and controller of environments. This thesis is a study of the grotto-complex, defined in this paper as the lagoon, *nymphaeum* to the left (Figure 1, L, N) and the *piscina* in addition to the grotto-triclinium recognized in scholarship (Fig. 1, G, and Fig. 2). The grotto-complex will be studied as a Roman ensemble to challenge the prevailing understanding of the grotto as limited to the grotto-triclinium and as a space solely for viewing the four heroic groups, which have been identified as a height of Hellenistic sculpture and representative of the idea of Roman "copies."

¹ For Pergamene influences, Nancy T. de Grummond and Brunilde S. Ridgway, *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context*, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000). For considerations of Greek bronze originals versus derivation from minor arts: Nikolaus Himmelmann, *Sperlonga: Die homerischen Gruppen und ihre Bildquellen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995); Brunilde S. Ridgway, "The Sperlonga Sculptures: The Current State of Research," in *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context*, ed. Nancy T. de Grummond and Brunilde S. Ridgway (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 80-82. For overview of varying Hellenistic influences and originals with a study of dating: Bernard Andreae and Claudio Parisi Presicce, *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria* (Roma: Progetti Museali Editore, 1996).

² For Laokoon connections: Bernard Andreae, *Praetorium Speluncae Tiberius Und Ovid in Sperlonga* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1994); Himmelmann, *Sperlonga: Die homerischen Gruppen*; Volker Michael Strocka, "Zur Datierung der Sperlonga-Gruppen und des Laokoon," in *Gedenkschrift für Andreas Linfert: hellenistische Gruppen* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1999), 307-322; Christian Kunze, "Zur Datierung des Laokoon und der Skyllagruppe aus Sperlonga," *Jahrbuch Des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, Band III (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1996), 139-223. For an in depth consideration of a Rhodian workshop: J.J. Pollitt, "The Phantom of a Rhodian School of Sculpture," in *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context*, ed. Nancy T. de Grummond and Brunilde S. Ridgway (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 92-110.

³ The literary source discussion will be reviewed and summarized below. See notes

⁴ These influences and other imperial dining rooms will not be considered in this paper but are well considered elsewhere. Such places include Tiberius's Blue Grotto in Capri, Domitian's villa at Castelgandolfo, Claudius's villa at Baia, Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, and Nero's Domus Aurea. For an overview of influence: Fausto Zevi, "Claudio e Nerone: Ulisse a Baia e nella *Domus Aurea*," in *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria*, ed. Bernard Andreae and Claudio Parisi Presicce (Roma: Progetti Museali Editore, 1996), 316-321; Paolo Liverani, "L'antro del ciclope a Castel Gandolfo Ninfeo Bergantino," in *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria*, ed. Bernard Andreae and Claudio Parisi Presicce (Roma: Progetti Museali Editore, 1996), 332-341; Bernard Andreae, "I gruppi di Polifemo e di Scilla a Villa Adriana," in *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria*, ed. Bernard Andreae and Claudio Parisi Presicce (Roma: Progetti Museali Editore, 1996), 342-346.

The four heroic groups (the Rape of the Palladion, the Blinding of Polyphemus, the attack of Skylla, and the so-called Pasquino group) have received considerable publication; their published find-spots within the circular basin allows a relatively confident placement and reconstruction (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).⁵ Elsewhere, however, there is a succinct lack of publication of archaeological evidence and excavation reports, especially for architectural material.⁶ Recent scholarship has better addressed some of these issues, but there have been few attempts to rectify the dearth of architectural information about the space itself.⁷ The arguments proposed in this thesis require further study but are meant to recontextualize the grotto-complex in an attempt to rectify the lack of discussion of material lying outside the four groups.

To reconstruct the impact and reception of the overall space, I study the grotto-complex through a visitor's experience of the space. Its purpose as a dining room, a triclinium (Fig. 5),⁸ would have defined aspects of the experience: the expectations of the design and activities; procedure of dining and drinking activities preceding and proceeding dinner; interactions with the space, fellow diners, and the host; and interactions/observing with the setting, decoration, and performances. In the late Republic, early Empire periods, the concept of the dinner was its own spectacle, and lavish dining was not the norm.⁹ Plutarch called the Roman banquet a procession and show.¹⁰ The intimate nature of the "inward-looking" triclinia often only allowed for the display of the room's decoration, the dining utensils, and the food itself.¹¹ Extravagant entertainment, however, existed, ranging from dancing, music and singing, pantomime, and

⁵ Baldassare Conticello and Bernard Andreae, *Die Skulpturen von Sperlonga: I gruppi scultorei di soggetto mitologico a Sperlonga*, vol. XIV, *Anti Plastik* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1974).

⁶ For lack of records and studies of present records, Nicoletta Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio e il Museo archeologico nazionale, Sperlonga* (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e zecca dello stato, 2006; Marisa de' Spagnolis, *L'antologia omerica di Sperlonga: Storia di una grande scoperta archeologica* (Ali Ribelli Ediz4, Hioni, 2017).

⁷ Hans Riemann, "Sperlongaprobleme," *Forschungen und Funde: Festschrift Bernhard Neutsch* (1980), 371-380: in the beginning, he discusses architectural elements before returning to the four heroic groups and additional sculptures near the grotto-triclinium. de Grummond and Ridgway, *From Pergamon to Sperlonga*, and the essays presented all return to the four heroic groups; Kunze, "Zur Datierung des Laokoon," 150-223 in his architectural study for the purpose of dating the four heroic groups.

⁸ A triclinium is the arrangement of three couches in the shape of a Greek Pi, where three diners would recline on each couch, facing the middle where food and drink would be served. It is a debated term, as there is little evidence often to establish a room as a triclinium or dining room, but triclinium is used generally by scholars in designations of dining rooms.

⁹ Katherine M.D. Dunbabin, "Convivial spaces: dining and entertainment in the Roman villa," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9 (1996), 70.

¹⁰ John H. D'Arms, "Performing Culture: Roman Spectacle and the Banquets of the Powerful." *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, ed. Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1999), 301, 313.

¹¹ Dunbabin, "Convivial spaces," 70.

recitations of literature.¹² The shift to an “outward-looking” triclinium in the first century CE resulted in the triclinium opening up to look out to a larger space, often into a garden, courtyard, or water feature; the spectacle often became the nature itself.¹³ The grotto-triclinium at Sperlonga incorporates both the intimacy of “inward-looking” and nature-as-spectacle of “outward-looking” triclinia in a strategic shift to owner-as-spectacle.

In the Roman empire, the wealthy competed with the sophistication or extravagance of their domestic entertainments.¹⁴ The host in Roman dining context was a spectacle maker, and he needed to be able to provide visual language beyond his display of the dinner itself, especially in complement to his education.¹⁵ This display of wealth fit well in the dining context because of the god Dionysus, god of wine and theater. Wealthy Romans incorporated public spectacles in religious and communal festivals and theater into their private sphere. The grotto-complex as a dining room would have embodied the theatrical idea of spectacle and the symposium. It, in fact, became its own type of theater in the encouragement of circumambulation through mythological narratives in such a way that portrays the owner, possibly the emperor, as a sponsor and/or producer of spectacle and ultimately as a spectacle himself. Thus, the grotto-complex should be considered in this social context and experientiality.

Experientiality within this paper is the cognitive experience of the visitor demonstrated through a study of possible kinesthetic actions, visual encounters (or lack thereof in terms of lighting issues), temporality within the space, possible sensory elements, and interaction with fellow visitors, the host, and the decoration.¹⁶ These elements can be reconstructed through investigating the grotto’s architecture and decoration. In turn, experientiality can reveal what the visitor might have received from the space and the owner. Simultaneously, experientiality can inform and be informed by understanding the space as a

¹² Dunbabin, “Convivial spaces,” 67.

¹³ Dunbabin, “Convivial spaces,” 70.

¹⁴ Dunbabin, “Convivial spaces,” 79.

¹⁵ D’Arms, “Performing Culture,” 303, 310, 313-314.

¹⁶ Though not necessarily defined as such, recent scholars have taken up studying the visitor’s experience in the grotto-triclinium. Kuttner, “Delight and Danger,” 103-156; Stewart, “To Entertain an Emperor,” 76-90; Sorcha Corey, “A Tradition of Adventures in the Imperial Grotto.” *Greece & Rome* 49, no. 1 (2002): 44-61; Michael Squire, “Giant questions: Dining with Polyphemus at Sperlonga and Baiae,” *Apollo* 157, no. 497 (2003): 29-37.

triclinium with a goal within a societal context to display wealth, power, and intelligence.

I attempt to recontextualize the grotto-complex in three chapters. The first chapter is recontextualizing the grotto-triclinium in the larger villa landscape the viewer would have undoubtedly interacted with both before and after congregating at the dining space. The villa's connection will lead to a brief study of the grotto-complex architecturally to highlight issues of experientiality and interaction with decoration. This chapter will argue that the architecture at Tiberius's villa directed the visitor's movement to the grotto-complex through a series of introductions to the space which is isolated from the villa and separated temporally from either reality or fantasy. In this space, he is simultaneously an explorer of a new space and a witness to scenes of exploration. The viewer's liminal role results in the portrayal of the owner-as-spectacle as the owner between mortal and divine.

Liminality in this paper refers to the suspension between two identities without fully belonging to one or another. The grotto-complex creates liminalities which enhance the experience of mystery, discovery, and realization for the viewer. As the visitor moves and contemplates each sculptural group, the visitor is immersed in the experience of both watching and performing a play. The architecture and decoration force active participation of movement and interaction rather than stationary viewing and contemplation. Meanwhile, unconsciously, the visitor recognizes the owner who occupied his own liminal state of the creator of the new space and type of spectacle/experience, no longer just mortal, but still mortal in his being and dependent on the visitors recognizing him as the creator and their superior. Though the grotto-complex embodies and encourages the visitor and owner to assume liminal states, the space itself is an innovative new type of theatrical space that is removed from the familiarity of theaters and dining contexts as a different landscape. It becomes an alternative world, here termed grotto-landscape, in which liminality becomes personal, created by the overall space and its function socially, that leads to the realization of the power of the owner.

The second chapter is a brief re-examination of the four heroic groups in a proposal of a counterclockwise circumambulation beginning from the Palladion group on the right wing of the grotto (Fig. 4, D). Circumambulation is evoked, enhanced, and encouraged by the grotto's circular architecture.

Small footpaths close to the water created limited mobility, resulting in the necessity to immerse oneself in the water and Skylla's attack (Fig. 4, B) and prolonged time at the larger land spaces for contemplation in front of the groups. The new landscape (complete with the decoration of artificial recreations and imitations of nature) and theatrical elements seduce the viewer to journey along the path and contemplate the scenes to complete the scene. Completion of the violent scenes results in the realization of mortality, but the scenes also have hopeful undertones for a better future, which can be attributed to the owner who embodied the liminal space between mortal and divine.

The third chapter is an introduction of six additional sculptures found in or near the grotto-complex that continue and emphasize the theme of liminality, experientiality, and balance of the artificial and natural. The six I have selected to introduce offer additional insights into the notions of experientiality at the villa. Even as later additions, they seem to continue the themes of liminality between violence and peace and between artificial and natural that were introduced by the original sculptures. The six sculptures will be placed into three arbitrary groups, the "larger sculptural," the "smaller sculptural," and the "architectural" based on the interaction with the viewer to make them more accessible in an introductory study, especially within the context of the grotto-complex. The "larger sculptural" group consists of two figural sculptures around or more than life-sized. This includes a sculpture of the Rape of Ganymede by an eagle that crowned the mouth of the grotto (Fig. 4, E, and Fig. 6) and a sculpture of a draped woman seemingly bound who is identified as Andromeda or Hesione, daughter of King Laomedon (Fig. 7). The "smaller sculptural" group includes six sculptures approximately one meter or less in size. A sculpture of a draper woman in exaggerated contrapposto, identified almost unanimously as Circe accompanied by three deformed piglets (Fig. 8). There are three putti-like figures that seem to play in water (Fig. 9), an elaborate putto-figure pouring liquid out of a vessel (Fig. 10), and a putto-figure playing with a theatrical mask (Fig. 11). These putti-figures will be considered roughly together because of their similarities. The "architectural" additional sculptures are two unusual sculptures of the decorative program within the grotto-complex. Three theatrical masks are discussed as dramatic light sconces in scholarship (Fig. 12, Fig. 13, Fig. 14) that will be discussed together due to their similarities. On the left

wall inside the grotto near the wing, a relief of Venus Genetrix and Cupid was found (Fig. 15).

All of these additional sculptures will be studied based on brief stylistic studies and the viewer's experientiality within and approaching the grotto-complex. Another sculpture will be considered throughout the thesis, which is that of the carving of a ship's prow out of the mountain to the left of the grotto entrance, identified as the Argo now eroded (Fig. 16, and Fig. 2, G). The ship separates the rectangular pool from a *piscina*, a fishpond, and since not much of it remains, it will not be considered in the additional sculpture chapter separately but rather in direct connection with the architecture of the grotto-complex and the viewer, briefly touching on its connotations and impact on the viewer. The six additional sculptures introduced here will be studied alongside the heroic groups because this thesis aims to recontextualize the grotto-triclinium as a luxuriously decorated space with much more to offer than the four heroic groups through the viewer's experientiality.

The grotto-complex architecturally, decoratively, and narratively produces a different type of theater in which the visitor is seduced into journeying into a space isolated from the reality of a villa and its dining room and the fantasy invoked by a theater because of its immersive creation of experienced liminality of actor-spectator, judge-participant. Alongside the grotto-complex presenting the nature and art as spectacle in the space, its strategic creation of landscape reveals the owner-as-spectacle as he isolates the visitor and the space to present himself favorably as powerful, wealthy, and intelligent.

A Note on Previous Scholarship

It is predominantly due to a lack of publication of findings that the scholarship on Tiberius's villa is plentiful though incomplete. This thesis is an attempt to compile the studies completed: the numerous ones on the four heroic groups, the recent excavations to understand the villa itself,¹⁷ the investigation of the villa and grotto-triclinium construction,¹⁸ and the study on the decorative program, more focused on

¹⁷ Daniele Capuzzo, "Scavo con la Scuola: Sperlonga." *LANX* 17 (2014), 10-16; Fabrizio Slavazzi, Elena Belgiovine, and Daniele Capuzzo, "Sperlonga (LT): indagini nella "Villa della Grotta" Campagna di scavo 2014." *Journal of Fasti Online* (2014).

¹⁸ Kunze, "Zur Datierung des Laokoon," 139-223; Nicoletta Cassieri, "Il complesso archeologico della villa di Tiberio a Sperlonga," in *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria*, ed. Bernard Andreae and Claudio Parisi Presicce (Roma: Progetti Museali Editore, 1996), 270-279.

the minor arts.¹⁹ I aim to offer further avenues to explore the grotto-complex through this compilation despite the difficulty in accessing some of the details of the excavation records and findings, photographs, and lack of study-comparanda in the scholarship. Due to these issues, it must be acknowledged that the ideas here require further study and are not meant to solve the puzzle that is Sperlonga but rather to encourage study beyond that which has been done to understand the space and its later influences.

There are a few key notes to make about the missing scholarship that becomes crucial to the presentation of the grotto-complex in this thesis in each chapter. In Chapter 1, emphasis is placed on attempting a reconstruction of experientiality by relying directly on Jacopi's initial publication of the excavations. Though other scholars study the grotto's architectural features, Jacopi presents more evidence about structures and features that pose interesting complications to experientiality. His discussions and observations, however, are sometimes difficult to follow, or more detail is desired to understand his conclusions. I attempt to bring these elements back into the conversation while acknowledging the difficulty of retroactively understanding an excavation.

In Chapter 2, a note must be made on a predominant theme in Sperlonga and classical scholarship, which is that scholars often attempt to assert a single literary source as inspiration for the sculptural groups and to inform their meaning. Odysseus is relatively accepted to be identified in three of the four groups: that is the Rape of Palladion (Fig. 4, D, and Fig. 17), the Blinding of Polyphemus (Fig. 4, C, and Fig. 18), and the scene of Skylla attacking a ship (Fig. 4, B, and Fig. 19). Due to this, the sculptural program is considered an "*Odyssey* in marble." A tentative identification of Tiberius relating to Odysseus because of his wanderings and controversial personality has since been denied, but the proposals of a portrayal of Odysseus's character have persisted.²⁰ While generally no longer considered a positive rendition of Odysseus as was originally proposed,²¹ the idea of a negative portrayal of Odysseus

¹⁹ Henri Lavagne, *Operosa Antra: Recherches sur la grotte à Rome de Skylla à Hadrien* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1988).

²⁰ A. F. Stewart, "To Entertain an Emperor: Sperlonga, Laokoon and Tiberius at the Dinner-Table." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 67 (1977): 87-88.

²¹ Ann Kuttner, "Delight and Danger in the Roman Water Garden: Sperlonga and Tivoli," in *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2003), 131.

is considered against the Roman hero.²² Recently, the Odyssean focus has been complicated primarily by H. Anne Weis and Nancy T. de Grummond.²³

New theories are being offered, though the desire to attach a literary source remains. For a Roman audience, a connection to Vergil is made, especially by Weis and de Grummond: Vergil's description of Skylla is like the sculptural representation which differs significantly from a Homeric description;²⁴ the *Aeneid* as an influence on the program used by Tiberius (or Augustus) in favor of the position of emperor descended from the Julio-Claudian line and mythic heroes;²⁵ and the possible identification of Aeneas in two of the groups.²⁶ Vergil challenges Odysseus as a hero with the story of Aeneas as the founder of Rome, and scholars suggest that the negative portrayals of Odysseus (i.e., the Palladion group and his betrayal) are caused by this Vergilian inspiration of a Roman hero. Bernard Andreae, a prominent scholar on the grotto-triclinium, proposed an Ovidian influence.²⁷ Ovidian poetry's display of violence and nature is used as support for the sculptures' location within the cave and their connotations.²⁸ Ovidian inspiration is not generally accepted by most scholars.²⁹ All offer tempting and convincing connections and influences, and the arguments nor the literature will be ignored in this experiential study of the four groups. To understand the grotto-complex as a space beyond the sculptures, however, it is crucial to understand these sculptures as an example of the culmination of display of intelligence through multiple referential elements, including literature, localities and variations through Etruscan influence, and

²² Stewart, "To Entertain an Emperor," 78.

²³ H. Anne Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga: Hellenistic Hero or Roman Heroic Foil," in *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context*, Nancy T. de Grummond and Brunilde S. Ridgway (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 117-125; H. Anne Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group and Sperlonga: Menelaos and Patroklos or Aeneas and Lausus (*Aen.* 10.791-832)?" *Stephanos. Studies in Honor of Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway* (Philadelphia: 1998), 255-86.

Nancy T. de Grummond, "Gauls and Giants, Skylla and the Palladion: Some Responses," in *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context*, ed. Nancy T. de Grummond and Brunilde S. Ridgway (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 269-271.

²⁴ Virgil, *Aen.*, III.420-428; Homer, *Ody.*, XII.77-101. Homer describes her as a beast with three rows of black teeth, six necks, and twelve feet. Virgil describes her with a virgin torso and as a monster below her pelvis.

²⁵ Sauron, "Un conflit qui s'éternise," 289 for an overview of the argument.

²⁶ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 119-127 especially for Aeneas in *Pasquino*; de Grummond, "Gauls and Giants," 269-271 for Aeneas in the *Palladion* group.

²⁷ Andreae, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 25-28 (*Argo*), 36-37 (*Pasquino*), 42-43 (*Palladion*), 53-56 (*Polyphemus*), 83-84 (*Skylla*), and generally 105-112, 124-134.

²⁸ Stewart, "To Entertain an Emperor," 79-80.

²⁹ Ovid was exiled in 8 CE by Augustus, and it is unlikely that Tiberius would have wanted to promote an Ovidian program at the villa or even knew about the unfinished *Metamorphoses*. Himmelmann, *Sperlonga: Die homerischen Gruppen*, 15-16.

topographical knowledge.

In Chapter 3, the examination of the six additional sculptures attempts to compile the references to these sculptures within Sperlonga scholarship and expand them. While never the focus of a study, each additional sculpture has been mentioned in some capacity, and for some, often. Initial excavations revealed the sculptures of Ganymede, Circe, the putti-Figures, the theater masks, and the relief of Venus Genetrix. Again, I rely mostly on Jacopi and Nicoletta Cassieri's *La Grotte di Tiberio e il Museo archeologico nazionale* (often only slightly expanded on Jacopi's descriptions and with additions of later finds such as the sculpture of Andromeda/Hesione near the grotto briefly). Few find-spots are exactly provided, though their general area often is, but their derivation from the initial excavations and close thematic relation to the four heroic groups urge further consideration beyond theatrical elements.

Overall, previous scholarship has seemed to neglect other features outside the four heroic groups, but in fact, it is a general lack of publication of the material at Sperlonga that restricts studies. This thesis attempts to piece together what can be known about the other features and about the four heroic groups outside of what has been said and in what directions study can be taken. Thus, it is necessary to remark these arguments are sometimes speculative and always require further study. In the reconstruction of experientiality, it is revealed that the grotto-complex works deliberately together architecturally and decoratively to direct the viewer into a spectacle created by immersion into a new type of dining space meant to present the owner as awesome and powerful.

Chapter 1: Architecture

Introduction

Located between Rome and Naples on the Tyrrhenian coast at the base of and within Mont Ciannito, the villa was one of many seaside villas, *villae maritimae*, built and expanded during a boom of construction of "luxury villas" in the first century BCE.³⁰ Conquests in the second and first centuries BCE

³⁰ Cassieri, "Il complesso archeologico," 271-272; Mantha Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples: Villa and Landscapes (c. 100 BCE-79 CE)*, (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7-8.

created an influx of wealth, and *otium* (leisure) was becoming increasingly important to Romans as was the desire to boast.³¹ Despite wanting to escape *negotium*, the lack of leisure (i.e., work and politics), the villa became a staple of social gatherings where the owner put himself on display. The setting of the villa, its incorporation and design of landscape, architecture, and decoration were deliberate actors in the ongoing play of power, wealth, and intelligence. To remain a prominent part of society, villas were clustered in areas, especially along the coast. There is evidence of villas along the Bay of Naples and the Tyrrhenian coast starting from the early second century BCE, owned by a variety of wealthy Romans.³² Having a *villa maritima* meant the opportunity to display to guests on the property and those traveling on the water, which Cicero and Pliny remark as essential to display a sense of broader power.³³ Crucial to these villas was the manipulation of landscape, especially the sea, rivers, and artificial terracing.³⁴ As will be further discussed, Tiberius's villa is exemplary of these elements.

Tiberius's villa (Fig. 20) is generally considered to have been constructed in the first century BCE under the ownership of Livia's grandfather, M. Aufidius Lurco.³⁵ The area was thought to be where the Claudian family originated as descendants of Telegonus, the son of Circe and Odysseus, who later founded Tusculum.³⁶ The home of Circe, the promontory Monte Circeo, can be seen from the interior of the grotto (Fig. 21). Tiberius is thought to have inherited the villa from Livia in 4 CE when he returned from a voluntary exile onto Rhodes and he was adopted by Augustus as his legal son and heir. During his ownership, he is thought to have expanded the villa and the grotto, especially towards the sea, sometime between 4 and 26 CE. Suetonius and Tacitus tell a story of a rockfall that nearly killed Tiberius in 26 CE when Tiberius was dining at a villa called *speluncae*.³⁷ After this, and possibly because of the rockfall,

³¹ Cassieri, "Il complesso archeologico," 272.

³² Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury*, 25-26. Pliny the Younger talked of the spotted coast of villas as like the view of cities from afar: Pliny *Epistles*. II.17.27; Hannah Platts, "Art, Architecture and Landscape in 'Villa' Residences of Italy from c. 1st B.C. to c. 2nd A.D." (dissertation, University of Bristol, 2006), <https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/files/34501648/435861.pdf>, 177-178.

³³ Cicero, *Atticus* XII.XVIII; Plin. *Ep.* II.17.21; Platts, "Art, Architecture and Landscape," 177-178.

³⁴ Marzano, *Roman Villas in Central Italy*, 21.

³⁵ Andreae, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 139-144; Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, "Life of Caligula," XXIII.2.

³⁶ Andreae, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 141.

³⁷ Suet., *Tib.* 39; Tac., *Ann.* IV. 59. Suetonius offers little beyond the villa's name, but Tacitus said, "Vescenbantur in villa, cui vocabulum speluncae, mare Amumclanum inter et Fundanos montes, native in specu." Most scholars, though there is no

Tiberius retired to Villa Iovis on Capri.³⁸ The Sperlonga villa remained imperial property until the fourth century, as evidenced by portraiture in the Tetrarch style discovered at the site,³⁹ and later, the site was occupied by local inhabitants and Christians.⁴⁰ This thesis will work under the assumption of Tiberius's patronage. The continuous occupation, however, results in different additions and construction phases that make interpretation of the space difficult and should be considered consciously in any attempt to understand the villa and grotto-complex.

The Neighborhood

To recontextualize the villa in order to consider the visitor's expectations and interactions with the space as a luxury *villa maritima*, it is necessary to study where the villa was located and how one approached it. The presence of structures further north and upstream, along the shore, and on the other side of Mont Ciannito (Fig. 22, A, B, D) demonstrates that the villa was not isolated, and offers insight to how the visitor would have been introduced to the villa before visiting the grotto-complex.

The structure further north, here called "Structure A," might have been connected with Tiberius's villa as a water tank connected to a series of cisterns from further north to provide water to the villa, built alongside the first phase of construction in the villa.⁴¹ The gathering and transportation of water so far from the villa even though a river is present and the grotto-complex had mountain springs as a water source demonstrates both the wealth of the villa and a broader sense of architectural manipulation of the natural resources. With another source of water, suggested by Structure A, the water within the grotto-complex's lagoon, island-triclinium, and fountain feature are exemplary of wealth as it is used and

description of the grotto itself, believe the location to be fitting to Tiberius's villa. For an overview on the approval on the location's identification, Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 111.

³⁸ Ricotti offers that the grotto was built by one of the wealthy *piscinarii* that had a fondness for Sicily because of the presence of Skylla and Polyphemus, both geographic markers of the island and its sea; Tacitus and Suetonius do not mention Tiberius as owning the villa but rather dining there, but his experience might have influenced his creation of Villa Iovis: Eugenia Salza Prina Ricotti, "The Importance of Water in Roman Garden Triclinia," *Ancient Roman Villa Gardens*, ed. Elisabeth B. MacDougall and Wilhelmina Feemster Jashemski (Dumbarton Oaks: 1987), note 19.

³⁹ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 145-146; Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 75-76.

⁴⁰ Cassieri, "Il complesso archeologico," 272.

⁴¹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 26-28. There is evidence of three phases of construction: *opus incertum* with irregularly sized and placed blocks that is found on the inner grotto rock walls up to the seats; *quasi opus reticulatum*, the most extensive with roughly similar sized blocks and composes the rectangular pool and island-triclinium and dates with the sculptural groups; and *opus reticulatum*, strictly regular blocks. The date ranges from early first century CE-the second half of the first century CE: Kunze, "Zur Datierung des Laokoon," 169-184.

prioritized for luxury. The practicality of these bodies of water is also undermined by the lack of sustainable fish-breeding, which will be discussed later. Even if Structure A was not connected to the villa, it demonstrates the area was not isolated, and it raises the question of considering the views when approaching the villa (Fig. 23). The grotto-complex, then, becomes emblematic of luxury and aesthetic more so than demand for use, and a consideration of Structure A is meant to provoke further thought on the larger context of the grotto-complex and villa.

Structure D's connection might have been as a house for the emperor's routine.⁴² The natural boundaries that separate the two areas would have required some connection if they were to be accessed or communicative. There is evidence of structures to the right of the grotto along the natural curve of the mountain (Fig. 1, E). Perhaps this space facilitated access around the mountain. In its visual and physical connection with the sea, the grotto-complex is suspended between the two spaces, as a domestic setting of a dining room, and a public setting of travel conduit to-and-fro Tiberius's villa, the remains along the mountain, and the broader sea. Even if Structure D was not a part of Tiberius's villa, either as another villa entirely or another structure, it should still be considered as influencing the construction of (or its own construction influenced by) and interaction with Tiberius's villa.

More is known about the sea-side structure, though the water level has raised and submerged much of the remains.⁴³ Running 500 m, Structure B seems to begin after the wall extending beyond the *coenatio*, another term for dining room, that is across from the island-triclinium (Fig. 1, T).⁴⁴ Structure B stretches westward toward the city of Sperlonga, and close to the city are remains of a structure possibly used as a *balneum*, a bath-house, with rich decoration and thermal pipes for heating; a *balneum* so close to the sea was a common feature in *villae maritimae*.⁴⁵ The connection of Structure B to the villa's wall suggests a conscious connection with Tiberius's villa. It is also possible that Structure B was not

⁴² In early excavations, Structure D was considered Tiberius's villa: Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 21-22.

⁴³ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 26.

⁴⁴ The *coenatio* is often only mentioned in passing in the scholarly literature, but it has considerable architectural study in its relation to the three construction phases of the villa. It will not be discussed in this paper as I do not consider a part of the grotto-complex and its function is relatively unclear, so it is difficult to consider its relationship with the villa and/or the grotto-complex. For more information on the structure:

⁴⁵ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 27-28.

necessarily a part of Tiberius's villa, as it could have been a port or receiving area where travel could continue inland on the river. Fabrizio Slavazzi, director of the comprehensive villa study begun in 2013, suggests that the mountain remains (Fig. 1, E) might have been a receiving area as well.⁴⁶ It has also been suggested the *coenatio* was used as a receiving structure in whose luxuriously decorated rooms opened onto the horizon and an axially aligned view toward the grotto.⁴⁷ Even if the *coenatio* was another, more intimate dining room, the emphasis on dining and domesticity would have still been present as the visitor moved through Structure B to the villa. Either way, approaching Tiberius's villa along Structure B would have illustrated this prominence with a panoramic view of the coast, the mountains, and the grotto (Fig. 24).

The Villa

The 2013 study under Slavazzi has opened more avenues of discussion about the villa that help reconstruct experientiality as an affirmation of the owner's display of power, especially over nature. Above the structure of the villa defining an interior courtyard, there is an unclear triangular area the excavations call "Area V" (Fig. 1, V, and Fig. 25), possibly an area of kitchens.⁴⁸ Slavazzi argues the difficulty of access from the Via Flacca favors arrival by boat; it is possible, however, that its shape was meant to direct traffic down into the villa.⁴⁹ Its shape, defined by the natural landscape and at the highest altitude of the villa, directs and emphasizes a vertical directionality down to the grotto-complex. The entire villa embodies this directionality in the form of natural hills and artificial terracing of architecture on differing levels, a feature common in *villa maritima* (Fig. 20 and Fig. 26). Area V begins to offer questions and ideas about the initial interaction with the villa and directed movement.

The villa itself has many elements of reconstruction, evidenced by Hadrianic and Antonine brick stamps, so the interpretation of spaces and movements is difficult to decipher within the villa complex.⁵⁰ The villa's proximity, however, to the mountain is explicit; it emphasizes the importance of landscape in

⁴⁶ Fabrizio Slavazzi, "La villa imperial di Sperlonga e il mare." *Newsletter di Archeologia CISA* 6 (2015), 99.

⁴⁷ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 42.

⁴⁸ Slavazzi, Belgiovine, and Capuzzo, "Sperlonga (LT): indagini nella," 3-5.

⁴⁹ Capuzzo, "Sperlonga (LT)," 11.

⁵⁰ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 25.

its design, ultimately culminating in the innovative design emblematic of the intersection of artificial and natural in the grotto-complex. The panoramic view and directed movement seduce the visitor to travel the waters of the lagoon and rectangular pool to enter the new natural landscape created simultaneously by the owner and natural processes. Before he can reach the waters, however, the visitor must transverse “Area P” between the villa and the grotto-complex (Fig. 27), where he acknowledges the owner’s power and the grotto-of-spectacle.

Area P is a double-aisled portico proposed as a gymnasium.⁵¹ Derived from Hellenistic architecture, the inclusion of gymnasia in Roman villas was created by gardens, groves, and landscapes, often in colonnaded spaces.⁵² Area P’s liminality between the villa and the grotto-complex as not connected with either directly exists as it is not a continuation of the vertical directionality or the seemingly boundless area possibly marks this as a transitory space. The grotto-complex demands active contemplation and participation. The gymnasium offers this transition to active contemplation because of *paideia*’s (education and training) role in gymnasia;⁵³ ancient thought considered education, especially in classical texts, and excellence as related.⁵⁴ The grotto requires both physical and mental participation in classical literary references, localities and topographical variations of legends, and societal expectations. Area P could have acted as a transition from the known domestic space to the more demanding unfamiliar space of the grotto-complex; this could be supported in the abrupt change in directionality the gymnasium creates through the horizontality toward the mountainside. Disorienting the visitor, the space results in a side structure and a *nymphaeum* (Fig. 28), in which the *nymphaeum* introduced the power of creation and spectacle necessary to immerse himself into the discovery of the grotto-complex. As the gymnasium prepared the visitor for the contemplation, the *nymphaeum* prepared the visitor for the grotto.

⁵¹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 37-38; Alessandro Viscogliosi, “Antra cyclopolis: osservazioni su una tipologia di coenatio,” in *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria*, ed. Bernard Andreae and Claudio Parisi Presicce (Roma: Progetti Museali Editore, 1996), 255, remarks the similarity of this double-aisled portico with one in the Imperial palace on the Palatine Hill.

⁵² Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 37-38.

⁵³ Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis, “The Archaeology of Gardens in the Roman Villa,” in *Gardens of the Roman Empire*, ed. Wilhelmina F. Jashemski, Kathryn L. Gleason, Kim J. Hartswick, and Amina-Aicha Malek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017), 90.

⁵⁴ Edward J. Watts, “Academic Life in the Roman Empire: Libanius to Aristaenetos,” *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (2008), 6.

The *Nymphaeum*

A *nymphaeum* is a cave or shrine originally dedicated or in the context of association with nymphs. Later, however, it often became associated with other cults that arose in the Hellenistic period, such as Pan and Dionysus.⁵⁵ Even later, there was a subtle shift in grotto- (*nymphaeum*-)⁵⁶ connotations where Roman caves retained chthonic connotations (i.e., as of mouths to the Underworld)⁵⁷ but not necessarily as dangerous, and instead, as a general representation of the divine.⁵⁸ Often *nymphaea* were designed with artificial cave decoration created through plaster, mosaics, shells and stones. The *nymphaeum* between the villa and the grotto-complex is a constructed smooth barrel vault (Fig. 29) that was decorated with a white tessellated floor; remnants of colored tesserae on the ceiling attest to the ceiling being covered with polychrome mosaic with geometric and plant motifs.⁵⁹ The vault was framed with shells that were common in imitation cave decoration, *cardium edule* and *murex brandaris*.⁶⁰ Stucco with engaged pilasters that were framed by seashells decorated the door.⁶¹ The appearance of mosaics on walls and ceilings seems to be a Roman invention that might have been influenced by Ptolemaic decoration characterized by stone encrustation.⁶² In the first century CE, there was a visible change from Hellenistic polychromatic mosaic floors to mosaic wall and vault decorations, a demonstration of the Roman desire in constructing nature artificially.⁶³ The *nymphaeum* embodies the liminality of artificial nature that contrasts explicitly and complements implicitly with the larger grotto.

If the visitor approached the grotto-complex first from the villa and was compelled by the

⁵⁵ Michele George, "The Triclinium-Grotto of Julia Felix: The Grotto in Roman Domestic Architecture," (McMaster University, n.d.), <https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/11130/1/fulltext.pdf>, 7-9, 16-21. Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*.

⁵⁶ The term *nymphaeum* and grotto are used interchangeably in most modern scholarship and were difficult to define in ancient scholarship as well. For a more in depth conversation about the terms of grottoes, *nymphaea*, and other similar structures and decorations, Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*.

⁵⁷ George, "The Triclinium-Grotto of Julia Felix," 23; Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," 107, note 9; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 44; Gilles Sauron, "De Buthrote a Sperlonga: A propos d'une etude recente sur le theme de la grotte dans les decors Romains." *Revue Archéologique, Nouvelle Série, Fasc. 1* (1991), 3-42.

⁵⁸ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 184-190.

⁵⁹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 38; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 521-523.

⁶⁰ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 38; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 521-523; Katherine M.D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 236.

⁶¹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 38; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 521-523.

⁶² Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 236.

⁶³ Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 239.

horizontality of the gymnasium to visit the *nymphaeum*, it would have introduced him to these innovations not yet widespread in public fountains, *nymphaea*, or domestic spaces. This decoration, as will be discussed, dominates the grotto-complex and thus needs to be displayed and further studied to understand the kind of experientiality that would have prepared the visitor for the innovative grotto-complex. Examples of the ornate mosaic decoration can be seen in fragments found at Sperlonga. Floral motifs are illustrated both as explicit flowers (Fig. 30) and common scrollwork (Fig. 31). Stylized but fluid wave-like imagery (Fig. 32), also common in ancient art, might recall contemporary border imagery. Another fragment demonstrates the use of shells as borders and decoration (Fig. 33). For a more complete image of all of these decorations together, as they might have been in the *nymphaeum* and elsewhere across the grotto-complex, is a large rounded niche within the side structure on the left of the *nymphaeum* (Fig. 34 and Fig. 35). Though its context is perplexing behind the constructed wall and above an incredibly regular *opus reticulatum* constructed wall (Fig. 36), it can be used as a foil to understand experientiality. With these in perspective, as the visitor was compelled to visit the *nymphaeum* through Area P's horizontality before the visit to the grotto, the *nymphaeum* in its elaborate and complex decoration would represent an introduction to what to expect from the larger grotto that is complicated once one enters the space. This introduction is made explicit by a mosaic frieze decoration with a vegetal subject, very degraded but once decorated with polychrome glass, runs along the exterior of the niche toward the main grotto,⁶⁴ alongside a portico with half-columns flanking niches and at a higher level (elements in the side-structure and approach to the *nymphaeum*) from the right of the *nymphaeum* to the *piscina* (Fig. 37),⁶⁵ a feature common in *villae maritimae*.⁶⁶ The contrast of verticality (the portico) versus horizontality (into the *nymphaeum*) and artificial versus seemingly natural is crucial in understanding the state of mind before the approach.

⁶⁴ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 523.

⁶⁵ Viscogliosi, "Antra cyclopiis," 256-257. The portico might have also been elaborately decorated with bands of mosaics of blue, yellow, and green, stucco, pilasters and half-columns, and niches. Jacopi's remarks on it are not entirely clear on the evidence or description of decoration and orientation. Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 20.

⁶⁶ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 37-38; Bettina Bergmann, "Painted Perspectives of a Villa Visit: Landscape as Status and Metaphor," in *Roman Art in the Private Sphere: New Perspectives on the Architecture and Decor of the Domus, Villa, and Insula*, ed. Elaine K. Gazda (USA: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 56.

With the introduction to the smaller, perhaps more familiar type of *nymphaeum*, the viewer would begin to understand what to expect from the larger grotto since his expectation of it as a triclinium has already been challenged. Before Tiberius's time, the concept of island-triclinia (where the water becomes crucial to the dining experience either by invasion into the seating/serving or surrounding the space) was not incredibly popular. Thus, knowing his destination was the grotto-triclinium, his expectation of the dining space would be complicated. Once he began to explore the grotto, he would realize the space was disconnected from the time and space he knew in many ways, resulting in his immersion and recognition of the grotto-as-spectacle, which the owner created to present himself favorably strategically.

Exterior Grotto

Undoubtedly, the mouth of the grotto (Fig. 38) would have been lower in antiquity, especially if the story of the rockfall in 26 CE was true.⁶⁷ It has been suggested that the massive bulwarks went up the grotto's sides and possibly stretched over it.⁶⁸ Such a structure might be visible in remains on the right (Fig. 39). The terrace that might have been formed by such a structure has visible remains of a white mosaic floor bordered by a black band.⁶⁹ On the right also, Nicoletta Cassieri, a prominent scholar who focuses on archaeological and architectural elements of the dining-grotto and villa, suggests there was a short vaulted ambulatory that was plastered and frescoed with the top decorated with polychrome marble *crustae*.⁷⁰ On this side as well, there is evidence for a channel that collected water from a slightly high-magnesium spring, possibly used to supply a fountain or the pool.⁷¹ Jacopi suggests a fountain feature in an "artificial cavity to the right of the carved seats with a polygonal section" that might have to do with this spring.⁷² This area is most likely the cavity preserved outside the grotto entrance (Fig. 2, N, and Fig.

⁶⁷ Ricotti offers a possible projection of the grotto's mouth as reaching from the sculpture of the Argo to the remains of the rockfall represented on the right of the grotto's mouth by the white streaks in the rock. This, he claims, would explain the existence for the Argo figure and its "abrupt ending" in the jagged rocks. His projection reaches over the foot-bridge on the left of the entrance where servants would have been killed, as Tacitus and Suetonius report, and did not kill the emperor. It is an interesting projection, and if the mouth did reach in that direction, further study should be done to reconstruct how the sculpture of the Argo would have impacted/been impacted by such an image. Ricotti, "The Importance of Water," 138, 168, fig. 2.

⁶⁸ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 44.

⁶⁹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 44.

⁷⁰ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 44.

⁷¹ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 11; Riemann, "Sperlongaprobleme," 372-373.

⁷² Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 11.

40). For this fountain feature, he reconstructed a trabeated structure decorated with a similar grotto-decoration used elsewhere using a fragment of a plastered and mosaic-decorated balustrade (Fig. 41 and Fig. 42).⁷³ A trabeated niche at the artificial cavity outside the grotto mouth would have extended into the already small path, and it would have influenced how one left/entered the ambulatory space and the grotto. A fountain in this niche would have echoed the explicit emphasis on water, but it would have been the only fountain feature of the grotto-complex (at least that is known), and even more that does not interact with the main body of water. Interacting with a fountain at the mouth of the grotto might have evoked the intimate and more familiar nature of a small grotto-niche, just as the *nymphaeum* near the villa, and contrasted directly with the larger grotto's enormous size. Another smaller niche with similar decoration and a variation on the interaction with water integrated with the architectural structures at the grotto's mouth would again serve to represent the owner's power and wealth in the various ways he constructed an environment that seduced visitors in its unfamiliarity and theatricality.

Another possible approach to the grotto could have been along the portico attached to the *nymphaeum* to the *piscina* (Fig. 43). The view into the grotto would have been obstructed by the natural rock, into which, later, the prow of the Argo was carved (Fig. 44). The Figure of the Argo would introduce a complicated image, as a Figure of man-made creation formed out of an explicitly natural element, of which the grotto itself is naturally created; perhaps this complicated connotation would also recall the original Argo, emblematic of sacred wood.⁷⁴ Representing the contrast of artificial and natural in the use of the natural rock, the sculpture of the Argo also began the immersion into the natural and fantastical space. The front of the Argo cuts through the water, changing the shape and direction of the water and path, as though the ship was sailing. As the visitor walked around the ship (if it was possible), he would have been immersed into the journey from which the ship is sailing, especially as he rounded the Argo on the side of the rectangular pool where the decorative mosaic band bore the inscription,

⁷³ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 11-15.

⁷⁴ Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica*, I.519-525.

“NAVIS ARGO PH” (Fig. 45).⁷⁵ This directed movement along a small path would prepare the visitor for the journey into and through the basin, especially in its need to physically move around the sculpture to understand its contents and purpose within the larger decorative program.

The *piscina* itself prepared the visitor for the larger grotto. Within the mountain wall, a marble-covered plinth supported eight carved niches that might have had plastered floral motifs in bright colors, supposedly with decoration and architecture characteristic of jetties and piers; what is preserved today are the remnants of the niches (Fig. 46).⁷⁶ Similar decoration to the portico along the mountain and the *nymphaeum* would connect these spaces to the larger grotto. Indeed, the eight niches direct vision to the natural archway that holds an element of secrecy and revelation in its glimpse at the interior of the grotto. The *piscina* served as a fishpond meant for breeding fish in specific conditions for sustainable production, a common feature in villas. The conditions were controlled by a shutter between the *piscina* and the rectangular pool.⁷⁷ Movement of the fish and the water would interact with the decoration on the mountain wall, perhaps in an echo or pretense of the circular basin. Though separated from the domestic and dining space of the island-triclinium, the *piscina* serves food, a purpose that is lacking in the rectangular pool.

The rectangular pool (Fig. 47), instead, becomes the embodiment of the complication of the grotto-complex in its artificial geometric order that contains more exotic fish not necessarily meant to be breed or sustainably used.⁷⁸ Rather the fish in the rectangular pool were representative of nature that was controlled by the owner as instruments of entertainment and wealth. The complicated relationship between the lagoon and rectangular pool alongside this display and inclusion of fish representative of the sea (naturally allowed to roam through the rectangular basin and into the circular basin) suggest that the rectangular pool seems to be the point of separation from the known landscape of the villa and the new one of the grotto. The delineation of the spaces (Fig. 48) emphasizes the lagoon as indicative of the sea,

⁷⁵ This inscription is what Andreae uses in his argument about Ovidian inspiration and derivation because of the PH: Andreae, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 25-27.

⁷⁶ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 21.

⁷⁷ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 14, 23.

⁷⁸ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 24.

the more public and natural area, and the rectangular pool as the embodiment of an introduction into the domestic but unfamiliar space. The strict geometry contrasts the openness of the lagoon and the circular *piscina*, constricting movement and interaction, funneling the visitor toward the circular basin in a more horizontal orientation unlike the verticality created in the villa's landscape and in the purpose of the lagoon (for it serves as a transitory space primarily between the shore, or *coenatio*, to the villa). How one transferred from the lagoon to the rectangular pool (or if they did at all) is unknown. Without the presence of some sort of stable flooring, transferring from boat to boat between bodies of water would have been difficult. Access, then, to the island-triclinium from the lagoon through the rectangular pool was limited. Even within the rectangular pool was restricted to boating or swimming. There is evidence in the outer wall of the island-triclinium of a place for the boat to dock, and possibly for a footbridge near the *piscina* shutter, though this might have been primarily used by slaves.⁷⁹ Thus, it required active participation to enter the rectangular pool, which was representative of the dining room because of its primary function of holding the island-triclinium. This begins the transition from observation of the grotto and the other features such as the *nymphaeum* and trabeated structure into immersion and exploration of the space. The diners, however, would have stopped and stayed at the island-triclinium, from which they could glimpse the decoration of the interior.

Sperlonga's island-triclinium (Fig. 49) is constructed in two parts, where the more western half is split into four quadrants used as fishponds (Fig. 50). It is suggested that these fishponds would have temporary wooden boards to cover and provide further space, but the idea of watching the fish during the meal for entertainment and fishing one's own meal is often considered. The concept of watching fish for entertainment is present in Republic floor mosaics, and hunting is hinted by Varro in his own villa.⁸⁰ The ability to fish his own meal would have embodied the physical participation required in the grotto-landscape and might have invoked the connotations of power and rustic origins of Rome's ancestors. Watching the fish would provoke consideration of the natural confined by man, as formal Roman

⁷⁹ Ricotti, "The Importance of Water," 169.

⁸⁰ Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," 117, notes 50, 51, Varro, *De re rustica* 3.5.8.

approach was order imposed upon environments, as well as create further immersion into the grotto-landscape that the owner has created by this controlled nature that transfers over into the grotto structure and the fish in the rectangular pool.⁸¹ The construction of the island-triclinium, however, complicates this idea: the fishponds would be behind the diners who are intimately placed around a basin, possibly also full of water. To watch the fish or to hunt them, the diner would have to turn around, and perhaps this action is too complicated or awkward in such a small space, especially if, as the evidence of holes around the island-triclinium suggest, columns were present that provided shade. Having fishponds behind the diners, however, would heighten the island feeling, especially after travel through the other bodies of water. The surrounding water with fish might have enhanced the ambiguity of water as both nourishing and dangerous. The dangerous aspect would be embodied and visually represented once one looked into the mouth of the grotto. Revelation and suspense were crucial to the emperor as sponsor and producer of spectacle and immersion into this new landscape isolated from the rest of the villa.

Dining at the island-triclinium, then, would have been an immersive experience that would have been focused on the grotto-as-spectacle. The grotto mouth and intimacy of the island-triclinium directed viewing into the grotto, where, due to the time of dining from late afternoon into the evening, receding sunlight and artificial lighting would have created an intimate atmosphere that urged physical movement to appreciate the sights of the sculptures and space gained during dinner. Cicero described framed viewing as becoming “active” vision that enhanced theatrical perspectives.⁸² Not only did the diners experience active vision from the triclinium overlooking the landscape, but they became immersed into the landscape through the requirement and architecture’s encouragement of physical, active participation.

Interior Grotto

Two artificial wing-platforms separate the rectangular pool from the circular basin. The circular basin was decorated in *opus sectile* with polychrome marbles; its edge was covered with marble *crustae*

⁸¹ Macaulay-Lewis, “The Archaeology of Gardens in The Roman Villa,” 95.

⁸² Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 263.

topped by a narrow mosaic frieze.⁸³ Marble pavement might have decorated the bottom of the basin.⁸⁴ The water level would have been above the decoration and closer to the footpaths, invading the visitor's space. The water level would have also covered the amphora jugs on the wall of the island-triclinium (Fig. 51), immersing the viewer into a liminal space of land but also in the water. In addition to the water reflecting the marble decorative elements, it would also have reflected the decorations of the cavern common in the other features but perhaps more embellished: various shells as decorative frames and borders, walls and the ceiling decorated with colored pumice, polychrome glass in Egyptian blue, white and green, and artificial stalactites.⁸⁵ Pumice stalactites were a relatively new invention, a mark of the Roman imagination.⁸⁶ The decoration embodied the beauty and power of the natural. It would have provoked visitors to leave behind the world of artificiality from which they were accustomed but removed from in the liminal space of the lagoon and island-triclinium.

Near the entrance on both sides, seats were carved behind the wings, not exactly across from each other (Fig. 2, E2, F2, and Fig. 52). Their stilted position in the cavern walls would give different angles of the statues on the wings, as well as differing views of the horizon in a visual complement of landscape to the setting the owner has created. In the darkness, however, the visitor might have only seen the flickering lights of the villa, reminding them of their separation from the outside familiar domestic world. Small footpaths that led around the basin (Fig. 53 and Fig. 54) might prevent prolonged stay in the seats, especially as the footpath leads to open areas (Fig. 2, A, C). Deliberate movement throughout the basin was necessary in the dim lighting and as the sculptures are the main spectacle, once one enters the cavern.

A wider area, thought to be contemporaneous with the commission of the four heroic sculptural groups or even predating it, is in front of the Blinding of Polyphemus (Fig. 2, C3, and Fig. 55). This area, which today has a visible channel, would have been covered by white marble flooring. The channel directed mountain spring water from the area behind the Polyphemus group (Fig. 2, C1) and into the

⁸³ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 524.

⁸⁴ Viscogliosi, "Antra cyclopiis," 256.

⁸⁵ Riemann, "Sperlongaprobleme," 373-374; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 527-528; Viscogliosi, "Antra cyclopiis," 259.

⁸⁶ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 269-273.

circular basin. The left side of the artificial landscape-podium was a bench that was decorated similarly.⁸⁷ The staircase to the right is still preserved today (Fig. 56), and its construction is used to identify the cave's use from the first century BCE. What was behind the group is discussed as semi-circular niches that overlapped each other. Now lost due to the excavations, this area's decoration and possible interactions are difficult to assess.⁸⁸ Jacopi explains the area behind this structure (Fig. 2, C1) as the natural grotto, through which ran the mountain spring that originated from an artificial niche at the back wall, but it is uncertain whether the visitor was able to access this area.⁸⁹ He discusses the presence of a square manhole cover along the direction of the stream (odd because what would it have been used for if the channel was meant to be directed into the basin) and the artificial niche in the back reached by two stairs suggests that at least the architect had access.⁹⁰ Could the visitor have heard the streaming water as he stood near the top of the sculptural group, or did the possible niched-wall block the sound? Perhaps the large space behind enhanced the sound and heightened the drama as one stood observing the dangerous climax and reflecting upon Odysseus's expression and magnificent carving. Perhaps as he moved up and down the staircase, he would have felt the heightened tension and the need to be silent. The larger space and architectural elements invited physical and active movement and engagement with the scene.

The other waiting area is thought to be constructed later, either under Nero or Vespasian.⁹¹ It consists of an oval artificial area (Fig. 2, A, and Fig. 57) that was approached by two steps and flanked on the left by a semi-circular niche that perhaps housed another sculpture.⁹² Decorated with white marble slabs on the floor, the walls house a thin seating area decorated with red-colored pumice, as was the ceiling, and a baseboard of green glass tesserae.⁹³ The revetments of the rock contained artificial stalactites as well.⁹⁴ Here, Andreae claims to see footprints for another statue group.⁹⁵ As will be

⁸⁷ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 11.

⁸⁸ Kunze, "Zur Datierung des Laokoon," note 128.

⁸⁹ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 11.

⁹⁰ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 11.

⁹¹ Stewart, "To Entertain an Emperor," 77.

⁹² Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 50.

⁹³ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 527.

⁹⁴ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 14.

⁹⁵ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 51. For the denial: Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 528.

discussed in Chapter 2, another sculptural group in this area would disrupt the contemplation space provided and desired to continue the owner's performance of his education and role as public and private sponsor and producer of spectacle. It would also disrupt the intimate setting of the room of the line of sight to each wall and out to the cavern. Leading into the exedra behind the ellipsoidal room, the doorframe was decorated with flat pilasters decorated with Egyptian blue mosaics and outlined by the repeating presence of shells. It has been argued this space is a *musaeum*, a space defined by Pliny as a room usually as a natural cave or decorated as one.⁹⁶ Roman contexts developed the *musaeum* from Greek sites of culture into a site of philosophical conversations, music, and admiration of the recreation of natural objects in a familiar environment.⁹⁷ The emphasis on white mosaics in the *musaeum* would have reflected the artificial light better than the cavernous basin, serving well as an area of more prolonged contemplation, rest, and as an opportunity to admire the cavern and works of art.

The room behind the *musaeum* is often called a cubiculum (simply a room) or triclinium (Fig. 2, B). It was more artificially constructed with a flat ceiling decorated with stucco and fine white mosaic,⁹⁸ and a white tessellated floor with black framing (Fig. 58), which might support a late Republican dating.⁹⁹ The walls of this room, too, were covered in mosaic and shells.¹⁰⁰ Jacopi, in his documentation of the room, describes a “diaphragm, with partially artificial screen” that overlooked the *musaeum*.¹⁰¹ If a window was present, were the rooms meant to be slightly isolated from each other, especially as the cubiculum seems more connected with the natural cave in the presence of lateral doors? Perhaps the cubiculum was meant to be more intimate for the emperor and a few associates while the *musaeum* served more of his guests. The cubiculum, with its openings to the natural cave (was this area truly accessible or meant to provide more sensory theatricality?), might have acted as a point of contrast to the true natural cave and the sophisticated world the owner created using a similar material. Additionally, a window

⁹⁶ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 269-271.

⁹⁷ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 269-275.

⁹⁸ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 527-528.

⁹⁹ Riemann, “Sperlongaprobleme,” 373.

¹⁰⁰ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 14.

might act similarly to the arch under the Argo, where he is meant to have an element of surprise and revelation. It is clear that these spaces served, as will later be discussed, as interim spaces meant to invoke the comfort, stability, and privacy of domestic spaces while constantly (and startlingly if one exits the door into the natural cave of the cubiculum) reminding the visitor of the unfamiliarity of the natural and of the owner's power in control of it to produce the space. The constant subversion of expectations, such as understanding the nature of the cavern through his journey before coming upon the *musaeum* and the cubiculum for a time (as a different setting and construction than the island-triclinium) would illustrate the power of the owner over not only architectural and artistic creations but also of the ability to create such a sophisticated, albeit unconventional space. In this way, the visitors are not only appreciating the space but also the owner, who assumes a liminal role of divine yet mortal.

Conclusion

Overall, the architecture of both the villa and the grotto-complex influenced experientiality through introductions of expectations and subversions of those expectations. As creator, the owner has incorporated part of the sea in the presence of the lagoon in its basic purpose as a travel conduit, controlled natural forces in the *piscina* and island-triclinium fishponds for sustainable breeding, and displayed the dangerous unknown in the circular basin. As sponsor and producer of spectacle, the owner has visually and physically created a new landscape that culminates in a natural theater that presents the grotto-as-spectacle in its grandeur and innovation. The creation of spectacle is heightened through the element of mystery, surprise, revelation, and danger where the visitor must actively engage through “active” viewing, physical participation through various ways, mental participation in contemplation of artificially recreated nature and learning from features in a pseudo-exploration and discovery of the grotto-complex. Framed by a dining context, the owner utilized seduction strategies inherent in a theatrical space and the Roman thought of balance between artificial and natural, to present the grotto-complex as his created landscape in his role of sponsor and producer of spectacle. The owner became the spectacle, affirming a liminal position of divine-creator though simultaneously mortal in the limitations of artificial creation in which divinity has to be imbued, whereas it is inherent in the natural.

The theatrical setting and isolated space would have enhanced the personal liminalities the visitor is to experience in his exploration and discovery of the narrative in the sculptures since he was manipulated to be an actor within the owner's narrative of space-creation but also simultaneously acting as the owner's judge. The judgment would recall that of theatrical plays in festivals, where he would consider if the owner was a worthy sponsor and producer of spectacle. Both types of players and the space in which they perform recall Hellenistic and art cultural traditions and the burgeoning Roman art and cultural traditions that collapse into the fantastical space further created by the presence of the mythological sculptural groups.

Chapter 2: Four Heroic Groups

Introduction

Considered to have been created during Tiberius's occupation in the first century CE, the four heroic sculptural groups have been studied individually and together as a group. Research determined these groups are all made of Phrygian marble from the ancient quarry of Docimium, suggesting their contemporaneity with each other.¹⁰² In an effort not to repeat the plethora of scholarship on reconstruction,¹⁰³ stylistic features and influences,¹⁰⁴ and dating, the sculptures will be considered in terms of creation in the first century CE with the grotto as the reconstructions that are generally accepted.¹⁰⁵ The Tiberian dating is not accepted by every scholar: Octavian,¹⁰⁶ Augustan,¹⁰⁷ Domitian,¹⁰⁸ and Flavian late first-century dates are also offered.¹⁰⁹ The purpose of this thesis is not to propose new stylistic theories or to reassess any of the previous studies completed. Rather it is to inject into the conversation consideration of experientiality impacted by and impact the sculptures within the architectural context of the grotto.

¹⁰² Matthias Bruno, Donato Attanasio, and Walter Prochaska, "The Docimium Marble Sculptures of the Grotto of Tiberius at Sperlonga." *American Journal of Archaeology* 119, no. 3 (2015): 375-94.

¹⁰³ Conticello and Andreae, *Die Skulpturen von Sperlonga*; Conticello, "Il Gruppo di Scilla e della nave," 288-291.

¹⁰⁴ Andreae and Presicce, *Ulisse: Il Mito e la Memoria*.

¹⁰⁵ An overview of the dating debate: Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 137-142.

¹⁰⁶ Pollitt, "The Phantom of a Rhodian School of Sculpture," 100; Strocka, "Zur Datierung der Sperlonga-Gruppen," 313.

¹⁰⁷ Kunze, "Zur Datierung des Laokoon," no. 76.

¹⁰⁸ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*, 538-540; Sauron, "De Buthrote a Sperlonga," 38-40.

¹⁰⁹ Himmelfmann, *Sperlonga: Die homerischen Gruppen*, 42.

Occupying the left wing is the Pasquino group (Fig. 4, A), a depiction of a helmeted warrior carrying the corpse of a companion based on later Roman replicas (Fig. 59). This group is identified by the remains of a pair of lifeless legs on the ground, a weathered helmeted head, and an arm with a shield band. Various identifications are offered: Menelaus carrying the body of Patroklos,¹¹⁰ Odysseus carrying the body of Achilles,¹¹¹ or Ajax carrying the body of Achilles.¹¹² There has not necessarily been an agreement on the identification of either character, but the identification of the warrior as Odysseus and the corpse as Achilles has been suggested and perpetuated because of the perceived Odyssean theme. Weis has challenged these identifications: Odysseus is not known to carry Achilles's body, and perhaps the corpse is not even that of Achilles, but rather the group is Aeneas and Lausus.¹¹³

The Palladion group (Fig. 4, D) occupies the proper left wing. It depicts the night-time theft of the Palladion, the sacred *xoanon* of Athena, from her temple at Troy by Odysseus and Diomedes to guarantee the fall of Troy. This is supposedly the moment Odysseus is about to betray Diomedes to steal the Palladion and take credit for the act. De Grummond is one of the first to question the identification of Odysseus in the Palladion group because of the discrepancies of clothing, facial hair, and object in his hand; she suggests it is a scene of the Return of the Palladion with Aeneas as the character.¹¹⁴ From Sperlonga, a head dramatically turning, a hand grasping the Palladion, and an idealized man's nude body with a cloak thrown over his left shoulder grasping an item in his proper left hand are preserved. There are no Sperlonga- or scholar-created reconstructions beyond the 2D grotto reconstruction.¹¹⁵

Near the center of the circular basin, slightly to the left, is the episode of Skylla attacking a ship and its sailors (Fig. 4, B). Five companions are being attacked by five canine and feline beasts and two

¹¹⁰ Ridgway, "The Sperlonga Sculptures," 81-82; Himmelmann, *Sperlonga: Die homerischen Gruppen*, 20. Criticism: Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 117-118.

¹¹¹ Andrae, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 31-37 and 106-107. Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 112. Both use Ovid's story of Odysseus carrying Achilles's body not Ajax as support. Baldassare Conticello, "Il Gruppo di Scilla e della nave," in *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria* (Roma: Progetti Museali Editore, 1996), 288.

¹¹² Himmelmann, *Sperlonga: Die homerischen Gruppen*, 13-14. Overview and criticisms: Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 118-119.

¹¹³ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 117-125; Weis, "Pasquino and Sperlonga," 257-263.

¹¹⁴ de Grummond, "Gauls and Giants," 269-271.

¹¹⁵ Andrae and Presicce, *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria*, 352-354. The Catanian relief depicting the Theft of the Palladion is used in reconstructions of the two characters who have a relief-like composite pose and composition.

pisciform tails emerging from Skylla's lower half. A sixth beast reaches onto the ship where another companion, distinctly clothed, is clutching the stern as Skylla grabs his head. A Fig., possibly Odysseus, is proposed to stand on the back of the ship attempting to attack Skylla, though this is generally not accepted.¹¹⁶ Thousands of fragments make up approximately 90% of Skylla's lower half and the companions, the ship, the helmsman, and the crown of the helmsman's head grabbed by Skylla's hand.¹¹⁷

In the back of the grotto is an episode of the Blinding of Polyphemus (Fig. 4, C). A Figure thought to be Odysseus leads the charge of two companions with idealized nude bodies in directing a burning rod into the eye of Polyphemus. Another companion stands anxiously lower, holding the wineskin used to trick Polyphemus into a drunken stupor. Fragments from Sperlonga include a good amount of the companions, most of Polyphemus's legs, and in a well-preserved state, the head of Odysseus.

In a brief re-examination of the four heroic groups, I will discuss the composition of the Skylla episode, which evokes a circumambulation in a counterclockwise direction to view the sculptures. This circumambulation, which I argue begins on the right with the Palladion group, results in the visitor assuming a liminal state of actor-spectator as he is further immersed and isolated into the grotto-landscape where the mytho-history can conflate with the contemporary and future to provoke active contemplation per dining societal expectations, which along with his physical participation, culminates in recognizing the owner-as-spectacle.

Skylla¹¹⁸

The scene is made of two blocks of Phrygian marble: one is the bow of a ship, suggested to be Rhodian based on the group's close stylistic ties to Pergamon,¹¹⁹ and the helmsman, and the other is

¹¹⁶ Overview and criticism: Anne Weis, "Sperlonga and Hellenistic Sculpture." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 11 (1998): 417-419.

¹¹⁷ Conticello, "Il Gruppo di Scilla e della nave," 290.

¹¹⁸ Much of the scholarship surrounding Skylla revolves around the discovery of an inscription declaring the sculpture was made by Athandoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros, the same names of the creators of the Vatican Laocoon. The patrynomics of the inscription at Sperlonga are different, however, naming the artists as Athanadoros son of Hagesandros, Hagesandros son of Paionios, and Polydoros son of Polydoros. The similarity sparks much debate about the relationship and Rhodian influence and commission in the second and first centuries BCE. This inscription, as it is subject to much debate in scholarship and lends to a focus on dating rather than experiential studies, will not be considered here. For an overview: Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 124-126.

¹¹⁹ Waywell, "Scilla nell'arte antica," 115.

Skylla and the five companions.¹²⁰ The ship heads out of the grotto, toward the island-triclinium, reflecting the narrative of Odysseus facing Skylla after Polyphemus and reflecting the topographical references in such mythology: the strait between Charybdis, the whirlpool, and Skylla was said to be the Strait of Messina,¹²¹ while Polyphemus's island was Sicily.¹²² Located at the widest point of the basin complicates a topographical association, as traffic can occur on either side of her, deliberating refusing the idea of a strait and rather creating herself as an island, or perhaps as the creator of two straits. It has been suggested that the circular basin's architecture evokes the whirlpool Charybdis.¹²³ As the ship is pulled slightly to the right, with possible encouragement of traffic in the counterclockwise direction because of the composition, the visitor would be enacting the idea of a whirlpool himself. The basin's decoration might have reflected in the water with artificial light in such a way that it created an optical illusion of disturbance. Combined with the placement of Skylla's pisciform tails rising out of the back corners of the base, the architecture invokes the dangers of water, especially of the sea: the conflation of two different mythic monsters associated with dangerous storms is juxtaposed with the idea of water as nourishing and helpful for travel.

Topographical and mythological references can also be recalled in the depicted of the Argo. Jason and the Argo went through the same strait, but they were able to make it without being attacked because of divine aid. Perhaps Jason's success is inferred in overcoming the danger in its exterior position. Charybdis could also be represented by the *piscina*, its circular structure, also recalling a whirlpool. The grotto-complex would become more physically topographical as the Argo travels between the two monsters. Nevertheless, the moving ships as inhabiting the dangerous waters illustrates that this body of water is meant to be reminiscent of the natural sea; this would support that the fish present in the rectangular pool were meant to be seen as incorporation and ordering of the natural as a demonstration of power and landscape-creation. The visitor, when traveling by boat or by swimming, would become

¹²⁰ Bruno, Attanasio, Prochaska, *Docimum Marble Sculptures*, 377; Conticello, "Il Gruppo di Scilla e della nave," 116-117, 287; Waywell, "Scilla nell'arte antica," 115.

¹²¹ Waywell, "Scilla nell'arte antica," 110.

¹²² De Grummond, "Gauls, Giants, Skylla, and the Palladion," 265, 270-271.

¹²³ Macaulay-Lewis, "The Archaeology of Gardens in The Roman Villa," 103.

immediately immersed into the landscape as he sailed like the Argo and Odysseus. In the minor arts, such as “Rhodian” relief bowls and impressions on clay seals from Delos,¹²⁴ she is often depicted attacking ships on the left.¹²⁵ In Sperlonga, the ship is on her right. If on a boat, the visitors are in danger of being the next victims, or perhaps they are saved because she is preoccupied. Perhaps they are saved because the owner assumes the role of divine-creator, the sponsor and producer of spectacle. Her frontal position, as well as the direction the ship faces, might also suggest the visitor should go to the left and exit the way the ship would have, recalling a success over death even as, or perhaps because, he realizes his mortality. Her isolated nature requires the physical participation in the scene for a successful discovery, thus immersing the visitor into an explorer-like role (perhaps akin to Odysseus) of the entire landscape.

Skylla, in her frontal and central position, introduces the visitor to some of the themes present in the rest of the four heroic groups (though these themes have similarly been introduced by some of the additional sculptures outside the cavern). Her anthropomorphism represents humanness and empathy in all the sculptural groups that include the visitor as active participant, the image of past suspenseful violence with underlining hopeful future for the people collectively, and a realization of mortality. It has been proposed that Skylla does not want to inflict this violence, demonstrated by tear tracks on her face and her expression; however, she is directly engaged in violence with the highest of command (the helmsman) who represents a culmination of inevitable death, complicating this theory.¹²⁶ Her immoral act of tearing the desperate helmsman so that his head is pulled back at such a sharp angle is just as monstrous as her unnatural chthonic lower body. Perhaps it is the story behind Skylla told by Vergil (and Ovid) about her transformation and humanness that the visitors could contemplate in a display of excellence and education as created by their own learned morality and virtue alongside literary texts,

¹²⁴ De Grummond, “Gauls, Giants, Skylla, and the Palladion,” 265-267; Andraea, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 150-151; Waywell, “Scilla nell’arte antica,” 119.

¹²⁵ De Grummond, “Gauls, Giants, Skylla, and the Palladion,” 267-268.

¹²⁶ Conticello, “Il Gruppo di Scilla e della nave,” 293-294. Conticello, the scholar in charge of the initial reconstruction of Skylla, used a replica found in the Docimium quarry and the fragmented remains of Skylla’s arms, using the preserved torso of a similar composition from Hadrian’s Villa as support.

topographical references, and local illustrations.¹²⁷ In Italy with Etruscan precedents, the anthropomorphic, frontally facing Skylla attacking ships was a common motif, known from third-century BCE Etruria.¹²⁸ The visitor was not meant to be completely isolated from the real world, but rather he is meant to be immersed in this space suspended temporally of history, contemporary present, and future.

Since the scene is at peak climax, emphasized by visual chaos that is simultaneously perfectly balanced in composition, it might have been easier for the viewer to recognize this suspension the grotto-landscape embodies: the pairing of beasts and companions increase the helplessness in their unique position of varying dangers (the beast's bite, the beast's claws, the water from which Skylla was transformed possibly holding more monsters but desire as a savior from the current attack) as the viewer witnesses both the moment before death, the companions dying, and the implied result which is death. Such intense suspension, heightened as Skylla might have held an oar above her head and the viewer might have made eye contact upon approach due to her frontality possibly as her next victim, would heighten the immersion. The diners would recall the result of this and require the other mytho-historical Skylla encounter through the figure of the Argo, while possibly contemplating the wrath of the gods that compelled these events. The viewer would also make connections to local variations. Beyond the scene, however, he would recall the impact and origin of Odysseus, both which have a hopeful outcome for peoples and lands that were created, especially that of Rome. Thus, beyond simply contemplating the narrative displayed visually, the diners would be introduced to the multiplicities of narratives and references the grotto-landscape embodies in its suspended temporal and isolated state.

As the chaotically beautiful composition requires a closer look, the viewer would assume the role of companion in his own mortality and simultaneous witness to the narrative of death, especially in observing the facial expressions which have unique displays of panic, agony, helplessness, and loss. The counterbalancing of figures and fluid motions lends to a counterclockwise circumambulation. Both the

¹²⁷ Edward J. Watts, "Academic Life in the Roman Empire: Libanius to Aristaenetus," *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (2008), 6.

¹²⁸ Andreae and Presicce, *Ulisse: Il Mito e La Memoria*, cat. 271-274; De Grummond, "Gauls, Giants, Skylla, and the Palladion," 262-268; for a general overview: Waywell, "Scilla nell'arte antica," 108-118, comparanda, 119-157.

owner and his visitors begin their performance to each other as they are immersed in the composition and space of their knowledge.¹²⁹ Both players assume a liminal state of actor-audience and judge-judged. Throughout this, as the visitors discover the grotto-landscape as spectacle, the owner's liminal state becomes more pronounced. The Skylla episode, in these elements, her compositional requirement of physical circumambulation, and location within the basin and immediately separated from the land influences the other sculptures.

Palladion Group

The remains of a hand grasping a small *xoanon* of Athena bearing a spear and wearing her armor (Fig. 60) seems to identify the group as the Theft of the Palladion. The headless warrior with a cloak thrown over his left shoulder (Fig. 61) is identified as Odysseus who is in the process of pulling out his sword to betray Diomedes, whose head is preserved alongside his hand (Fig. 62), just as Diomedes turns around. As mentioned, de Grummond convincingly challenges this identification and suggests it as a scene of the Return of the Palladion to Aeneas who pulls his cloak over his arm in pious action.¹³⁰ To understand the experientiality, both of the identifications will be considered but only briefly.

Diomedes is reconstructed on the left near the edge of the wing based on the comparanda of the sarcophagus relief (Fig. 17). The right of Diomedes's head has more defined sideburns, reaching down to the cheek in its length compared to the left sideburn which is roughly delineated and leads unnaturally to curls more like vegetation (Fig. 63). Both the body's frontality and the lack of definition on the left side of his face suggest the viewer was not meant to interact with Diomedes much from behind or even from the side. Instead, the viewer is encouraged to move towards the direction Diomedes is looking to get a glimpse at what caused his fright.

The trabeated structure would have influenced the visitor's interaction with the sculpture. If the

¹²⁹ Conticello also recognizes the counterclockwise composition, through which he uses a numbered system that will be referred to in later discussions of key companions. For a more in-depth consideration of the actions of each companion-beast pair, he also provides excellent angles and key features in labeled diagrams and textual descriptions. Conticello, "Il Gruppo di Scilla e della nave," 295-314.

¹³⁰ De Grummond, "Gauls, Giants, Skylla, and the Palladion," 269-270.

niche was interacted with before entering the grotto (which is likely given its location), the visitor would approach the sculpture, becoming a participant in the scene: he becomes an accomplice to the theft, the interruption that causes the characters to turn, or a witness to Aeneas's piety. The niche, in its decoration and possible fountain feature, might have served as a reminder of the divine presence in nature and grotto-imitation, which would be emphasized by the visual of the Palladion as *xoanon*. Alternatively, perhaps the niche in its architecture represents its own interaction with the sculpture as the Palladion was stolen from and returned to a temple. Nevertheless, even without necessarily interacting with the niche, the visitor would become immersed into the scene as witness and as a possible participant.

In a suspension of action, the sculpture also introduces more empathetically the complicated nature of the grotto-landscape as temporally suspended. The mytho-history of the implication of the Trojan War and in either identification, the resulting events of the Fall of Troy would be conflated with the contemporary present. If it was indeed the Return, the viewer would be a witness to the pious hero actively returning a sacred object to Rome, where it was kept in the Temple of Vesta, known at least during Ovid's lifetime.¹³¹ Perhaps this scene would provoke considerations of Augustus's actions to revive the religious ceremonies and support. The concept of returning sacred objects to Rome can also be echoed in the statue of Andromeda/Hesione, which will be discussed later. If the sculptural group represented the Return of the Palladion, the visitor might refer to the actions the emperor, who might have been the owner, both in overcoming wars and representing the ideal pious man. It can also be connotated through the initiatives Augustus began once taking up the position of emperor as returning to religious ceremonies and the construction and reconstruction of temples around Rome. All the sculptural groups seem to have an element of suspenseful violence, so the Palladion group representing a more peaceful act might have impacted the initial close interaction with the rest of the sculptural groups. The more peaceful connotations, however, could also emphasize the hopeful elements of all the sculptures for peace or eventual good outcomes. Depending on what the scene was, the viewer's expectations would have been

¹³¹ Alastair McBeath and Andrei Dorian Gheorghe, "Meteor Beliefs Project: The Palladium in ancient and early Medieval sources." *WGN, Journal of the International Meteor Organization* 4, vol.32 (2004): 119-120.

created as he moves forth into the grotto to view the other sculptures in detail. Indeed, to escape the Theft or in appreciation of the Return, the visitor would be compelled to see what he had witnessed during dinner as either complements or contrasts with the theme of the sculpture.

As the viewer rounds the group, due to its relief-like composition, not much is to be considered from the back, possibly supporting that an approach beginning from the Pasquino group, or more generally from the left, would be not as effective as a frontal approach. Moving next to the sculpture, the visitor might have made eye contact with Diomedes to consolidate his participation further and appreciate the craftsmanship. As he continues beyond the sculpture, however, due to the small paths and proximity of the grotto wall, the visitor is limited to make eye-contact with the only beast frontally visible from the proper left of the Skylla group (Fig. 64). It is the size of the Polyphemus group and limited understanding from obscure angles that compels movement deeper into the grotto. Looking toward the Skylla group, the companions seem hopeless, but power is granted back as heroic Fig.s in the Blinding of Polyphemus group, which is removed again upon viewing the Pasquino group.

Blinding of Polyphemus

Upon approach to the Blinding group, glimpsed through dim lighting and perhaps highlighted by the setting sun during dinner, the visitor would instantly become a part of the scene. The companion holding the wineskin standing on the proper left of the composition would have implicated the viewer into the events of the scene through the instinctual movement of fear and preparing escape (Fig. 65). The wine-skin companion, even though Odysseus is the one who contrived the plan, is the one who becomes the culprit because of his fear and holding the wineskin that tricked and felled Polyphemus. Even more implication of both the companion and the visitor is through the rolling large wine cup resting beneath Polyphemus's hand (Fig. 66). This cup, though only decorated with floral motifs, might invoke connotations of the visitor's own drinking cup, which he might be carrying along the journey or will be presented to him in the next contemplation space. Scholars often mention this scene in dining contexts as

a warning to the diners of the dangers of excessive drinking or wrong eating, which is possible.¹³² The wine vessel so close to the visitor (perhaps even closer to the staircase) could also emphasize the ambiguous nature of drinking: too much and the visitor could fall into such a state, but not enough in the grotto would mean a lack of immersion and enjoyment beyond the reality of his mortality. Nevertheless, the viewer, upon approach to the wineskin companion, would not necessarily immediately become a heroic character because of the fear provoked by the companion's expression and the visible size of Polyphemus. He would, however, assume the liminal state of participant and viewer as he can move away from the action, unlike the wineskin companion who wishes he could.

When the visitor moves up the stairs, it could possibly evoke the stages at which the other companions who hold the pole and stand opposite, moving up the artificial landscape. The visitor does not become Odysseus when he reaches the top, as even Odysseus's heroism is challenged because of the fear in his expression (Fig. 67). The importance of Odysseus, however, cannot be missed as a character in the scene and as a participant in the visitor's journey of discovery and appreciation of spectacle. Odysseus's head has been tentatively suggested to belong to another sculptural group because of the discrepancies in the joining to the proposed body, a findspot that differs from the other companions, and because of the level and beauty of carving, leading scholars to believe that it must not have been well visible from below. While the head's carving is indeed different, perhaps it is due to the placement at the height of the cavern decoration. The Blinding group is given prominence over the other heroic sculptures because of its size and placement on a naturally and artificially established cave landscape as a crucial feature of the composition. In direct connection to the bodies of water so emphasized as an introduction to the grotto-landscape, the created podium of this sculptural group requires a different act of physical participation, subverting his expectation of the space and the sculptures. The group cannot be viewed only frontally because of the peak of the composition: Odysseus's head. Indeed, even the architecture interacts with the group, as in the niched wall behind was used for lighting the group (as proposed by most

¹³² Ridgway, "The Sperlonga Sculptures," 79-80.

scholars) and possibly inviting the viewer into the niches. Furthermore, the presence of a larger space in front of the group is seen nowhere else in the grotto-complex; indeed, the sculptural groups are placed in areas hard to access and remain. Beyond participating in the composition, the visitor is also expected to identify the elements of the artistic spectacle.

Based on comparanda in minor-arts like vase-paintings, Odysseus is aided by a third companion guiding the stick into Polyphemus's eye.¹³³ The wine-skin companion as well is not a usual player in the composition.¹³⁴ Perhaps the compositional difference in Sperlonga is corrected by the visitor as he approached the stairs and became the third companion. Since he does not heed the wineskin's warning, who Weis describes as a "visualized personality" of desperation and fear, the approach to Polyphemus for further contemplation, the visitor is explicitly an actor in the scene.¹³⁵ To appreciate the carving of Odysseus (the reward for their bravery?), a viewer would need to approach as close as possible, at which point, they may become the third companion aiding in the blinding, or as the one who completes it in his realization of the successful ending. The niches of the wall behind would flicker and emphasize or echo the burning end of the pole, engaging the viewer in an atmospheric immersion akin to the swimming or boating motion near Skylla. The architectural composition's dramatic tension forces the visitor to interact with the scene beyond merely contemplation and viewing. The suspense of the composition is the moment before action, representing an immediate hopeful success as Odysseus and his companions escape, but the visitor knows from his education the threats yet to come. The height of the podium realizes the visualized threats and mortality Odysseus and these mythological narratives recall. In this realization, the grotto is a temporally suspended space and alternative world that the owner has created artistically, architecturally, and philosophically in his balance of the artificial and natural.

As one returns down the staircase and continues forward, the almost identical positions of the two others offer little to contemplate, especially as they are simply guides to the peak of contemplation and

¹³³ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 112-113.

¹³⁴ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 112-113.

¹³⁵ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 113.

action. Continuing beyond the Polyphemus group, rather than being removed from a narrative, the viewer is thrust back into the Skylla story by viewing of the fourth and fifth companion at the back (Fig. 68). In the absence of another sculptural group ahead, the recent interaction with Polyphemus would enhance the interaction with the visual of the sea-serpents, almost fully obscuring the companions. The humanity of Skylla is not emphasized in the back of the composition, especially in dim lighting, because the display is meant to be on the mythical creatures that mostly obscure her human torso. Similarly, the two companions of the Polyphemus group are not meant to be the focus of the group, neither are the companions lost in the pisciform tails, especially as they are rather invisible from the frontal and initial view. The viewer, thus, after he has left the Polyphemus group and interacting with the Skylla group again, remains within the realm of mythic beasts, in which he is the mortal companion who faces death either after or during the scene but also escapes it as only a spectator, suspending him in reality and fantasy simultaneously as he enters the *musaeum* which provides an artificial and false safety.

The Interim

The *musaeum* could have offered the viewer the chance to contemplate the three sculptural groups he has seen and interacted with on differing levels. In the *musaeum*, fit with artificial stalactites, the landscape created by the groups is continued, especially if the visitor continues into the exedra where the natural cave is highlighted through two flanking doors. Once the diners could contemplate, the owner could present himself as the spectacle clearly through a display of his knowledge and encouragement of appreciation of his created landscape. In addition to the sculptures and their theatrical narrative, the owner became sponsor and producer of spectacle through the entertainment that might have occurred in the *musaeum*. Any entertainment that occurred in the space might have been accentuated by the presence of three marble masks found in three niches at the “beginning” of the *musaeum* that Jacopi suggests were light sconces.¹³⁶ With an inherent connection to symposia, dining, and theater contexts, the masks would have been emblematic of acting and fantasy to remind the viewer he remains in a present, familiar world.

¹³⁶ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio a Sperlonga*, 13-14.

His high-ranking domestic (as owner and host) and public (as sponsor and producer of spectacle) positions call for appreciation already, but in this space (a variation or perhaps contrast of an artificial recreation of the natural theater), he is allowed to perform according to more standard dining conventions of entertainment to complement his power, wealth, and intelligence.

After contemplation and most likely more drinking, perhaps lightening the mood, the viewer would continue. The small footpath would require him to interact with the possible sculpture in the niche to the left of the elliptical room before continuing toward the grotto's mouth. The viewer would also face the helmsman and his desperation, being helpless in aiding the man and facing the helmsman's inevitable gruesome death. The visitor would encounter his own mortality upon approach to the Pasquino group.

Pasquino Group¹³⁷

The Pasquino group, like the Palladion group, has a more frontal-based composition. The warrior, if the reconstruction is correct, looks up while he heaves the corpse, whose legs drag on the ground. It is unlikely that the visitor serves as the interruption, unlike the case in the Palladion group, but it is likely that the visitor would have understood why the warrior looks back into the grotto. After visiting the sculptures, with the image of inevitable death fresh in his mind from the helmsman, the viewer would understand the warrior looking back perhaps on his past struggles that might have caused the death of his companion and is forthcoming.

Upon approach behind the sculpture, the viewer is first struck by the dead weight of the companion. The companion's feet are awkwardly unproportionate and placed (Fig. 69), a fact well-considered in literature as an identifying factor of the companion as Achilles, due to a perceived focus on the heel; scholars suggest that even though there is no wound in the sculpture at the heel, it would have been painted.¹³⁸ While possible, other scholars suggest this discrepancy in creation as a mistake of

¹³⁷ Without much remaining, and even the fragments that remain lacking secure identifying features, it is difficult to discuss this group. The identification and literary references made in this sculpture are not going to be discussed in this paper, but rather, the interaction with the group as unidentified warrior and dead companion will be considered. For an in depth consideration and overview of the attempts to identify the characters: Peter Green, "Pergamon and Sperlonga: A Historian's Reaction," in *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context*, ed. Nancy T. de Grummond and Brunilde S. Ridgway (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 181-185.

¹³⁸ Andrae, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 32; Weis, "The Pasquino Group," 262.

copying from a Hellenistic original.¹³⁹ The viewer, however, would interact with the dead weight rather than the proportion, especially in low artificial lighting. After viewing the helmsman as the only companion in the moment right before death, as he is not yet attacked by his paired beast and still on the ship, and the other five companions in the process of dying, the viewer would be struck again with the mortal reality upon exiting the grotto-landscape and re-entering the world they knew.

Perhaps it was not crucial to know the exact identification when faced with the common trope of a warrior carrying his dead companion. In terms of the context of the decades of civil war, perhaps this group had a greater impact on the concept of brotherhood but also the end of a war that would result in peace or a great outcome, such as the Trojan War when Aeneas left burning Troy to found Rome. Weis argues the identification of Aeneas and Lausus is an illustration of the broader themes of the *Aeneid*: young lives (depicted in the youth of the dead companion) lost and parents forced to witness the death of their children because of the obligation generations owe to each other.¹⁴⁰ Aeneas and Lausus, Weis says, represent the ideal father and son who sacrifices for each other.¹⁴¹ She relies on the weathered helmeted head at Sperlonga (Fig. 70).¹⁴² The warrior's helmet and drape are Phrygian; Phrygian dress at Vergil's time was associated with the Parthians.¹⁴³ It is possible that the group recalled the deaths in the Parthian Wars, as well as the civil wars in Augustan times, both of which Augustus was well-associated and known for, suggesting a military competence despite losses and the unification under peace, especially as Augustus had the Roman standards returned from the Parthians. Tiberius also took much pride in his military accomplishments,¹⁴⁴ and he himself as Augustus's adopted son brought the two mythical branches of the destinies of Rome together.¹⁴⁵ Thus, there is an element in the group of a recognition of the struggle of war and inevitable mortality, which could be the purpose for the relief of Venus Genetrix behind both as the mother for Aeneas and invoking consideration of the newly divine Julius Caesar.

¹³⁹ Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group," 265.

¹⁴⁰ Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group," 262.

¹⁴¹ Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group," 262.

¹⁴² Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group," 258-261 (helmet), 269-271 (Vergilian source using the Faustinius Felix epigram).

¹⁴³ Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group," 261.

¹⁴⁴ Stewart, "To Entertain an Emperor," 87.

¹⁴⁵ Cassieri, "Il complesso archeologico," 272.

Viewing this scene of mortality after scenes of climactic action, either the moment before (the Palladion and Polyphemus groups) or the moment of (the Skylla group), would shock the viewer out of the fantastical time and space created in the grotto and their contemplative discussions. The deadweight of the companion's legs would have invaded the path at least visually, just as the motion of Odysseus/Aeneas does opposite. If the visitor looked back as did the warrior, the lack of interaction suggests an ended interaction and relating to the warrior who also realizes the impact and danger of mortality as he heaves his dead companion. Perhaps this suggests that the viewer was meant to return to reality having confronted the idea of death without time or place for contemplation of the fact. Mythic narratives, then, must be left behind, especially as the visitor most likely only saw the villa lights as a domestic, artificial space. Though seemingly ending on a negative note, the Pasquino group emphasizes the visitor's liminal state present in the grotto-landscape, so elaborately and strategically created by the owner: no longer can he play a part in the group as the scene has completed but he can assume the position as both warrior, especially if the owner had military associations or was the emperor and the companion whose fate has been fulfilled. Thus he lives as he realizes his mortality, and it is in this realization that he determines the grotto-as-spectacle in its decoration and the owner-as-spectacle in the innovative space temporally suspended and physically separated, an alternative world to either the domestic dining context or the public theater context. The owner, though he has similar mortality, within that space assumed a liminal state of divine-creator and displayed his power, wealth, and continued success of himself and the Roman empire as a result.

Conclusion

The four heroic groups, when considered experientially, reveal a counterclockwise circumambulation that required varying levels of physical and mental interaction in an overarching theme of asserting the liminality of the space as suspended temporally and as physically separated from the domestic villa, the normal dining context, and a purely theatrical or museum-like context. Such an innovative space influenced the visitors as they assumed their own liminal state within the grotto-landscape of actor-spectator and judge of the owner and his fellow diners-judged by the same people. The

four groups offered the opportunity for a demonstration of education, morality, and social prowess as each group invokes a different type of contemplation though elements of them are present in each: Skylla might invoke consideration of the wrath of the gods, Palladion could compel recollection of recent history and the origin of Rome, the Blinding of Polyphemus illustrating the craftsmanship of the sculptors and architects and owner as sponsor and producer of spectacle, and the Pasquino group perhaps contemplation of mortality and war.

Working in tandem, the four heroic groups also work separately as their own entities that the visitor must discover by exploration after initial sighting from the island-triclinium during dinner. Ultimately, the four sculptural groups result in a realization of mortality, as the visitors, perhaps subconsciously, assume the role of the companions, whom they would know in their education and in the visualization of the scenes would die. Though the owner himself was not exempt from mortality, in his creation of this innovative and separated space, he assumed a liminal state of divine and mortal, superior to nature in his control and manipulation of it but inferior to the natural in his fate and the limitations of artificial recreation to the grotto-complex. Experientially, the diners' societal context impacted their interaction with the sculptures and the sculptures' creations in a culmination of a display of power, wealth, and intelligence that influenced the impression of the owner.

Chapter 3: Additional Sculptures

The four heroic groups were not the only images that were meant to be interactable and indicative of this theatrical liminality celebrating the owner. Instead, it was the grotto-complex's entire sculptural program with which the visitor was meant to interact. It becomes clear that these sculptures were meant to be interacted with at different times throughout the visit to invoke contemplation of varying subjects just as important and connected as the four heroic groups. This chapter seeks to introduce the way these additional sculptures were experienced through a brief survey of the objects and their possible placements. Since these objects have not yet generated a great deal of study, the exploration of them here is meant to provoke further stylistic, art historical, and experiential studies. These objects should be

considered just as individually and holistically as the four heroic groups.

To understand why these objects require further study, I present the four sculptures which are figural but serve a purpose beyond being decorative, as which they might first appear and scholars only refer to them. These sculptures, I argue, are not meant to be separated from the theme of theatrical performance and invocation of liminality because they actively embody it. While the concept of Roman eclecticism is valid in Roman display of sculptures and art, it is not always the case. In the grotto-complex, the additional sculptures, especially as possible later additions, represent a deliberate desire in a continuation and exploration of the theme. Placed on the circular basin cavern's exterior and perhaps as some of the few first sculptures visitors are exposed to, these sculptures embody liminality as an introduction to the decorative program that will become revealed to the visitor through a journey, and in their placement in liminal spaces.

To understand why these objects require further study, I present four figural sculptures that serve a purpose beyond being decorative and two "architectural" sculptures that are crucial in the overall scheme of the grotto's architecture. These sculptures, I argue, are not meant to be separated from the theme of theatrical performance and invocation of liminality because they actively embody it. While the concept of Roman eclecticism is valid in Roman display of sculptures and art, it is not always the case. In the grotto-complex, the additional sculptures, especially as possible later additions, represent a deliberate desire in a continuation and exploration of the theme. Perhaps as some of the few first sculptures visitors are exposed to, these sculptures embody liminality as an introduction to the decorative program that will become revealed to the visitor through a journey. Inside the grotto, the sculptures are emblematic of the real, familiar world removed from him in the grotto-landscape to remind him of the reality of the space and experience.

"Large Sculptural" Additions

Ganymede

The sculpture's body depicts a man in Eastern dress striding forward and reaching up over his shoulder back at a large eagle in the process of lifting him up (Fig. 6) standing at 2.25 m tall. His white

marble head, attached separately, displays his expression of awe and fear in his parted lips and wide eyes (Fig. 71).¹⁴⁶ Both elements are Docimium marble, though the body is a pavonazzetto strain with purple veins, and the head is a similar white to the four heroic groups but from a different area.¹⁴⁷ Due to the interest in polychromatic marbles in the Flavian age, the sculpture was initially dated, and accepted, as Flavian.¹⁴⁸ Andreae, however, proposed an Augustan or early Tiberian date due to stylistic features and asserting it as contemporary to the four sculptural groups. Cassieri, interestingly, suggests the sculpture to be a commission for Augustus after his death by Agrippa, his son-in-law.¹⁴⁹

Early uses of pavonazzetto came from the House of Augustus on the Palatine Hill dating initially to 25-20 BCE and were used in depictions of Phrygian barbarians placed in the Basilica Aemilia, which was finished 22 CE in depictions of barbarians.¹⁵⁰ Dressed in Eastern dress and with a Phrygian cap, Ganymede is representative of the East and Asia Minor, which is enhanced by choosing pavonazzetto marble. The purple veining would have recalled the colorful Eastern dress, wealth, and status of Ganymede as Trojan prince. During the time of Augustus and Tiberius, the color purple embodied wealth and status so much it was confined to being used by specific people and for specific purposes.¹⁵¹ With other barbarians being represented with pavonazzetto and the emphasis on the Eastern aspect, the owner displays power by control of the mountain upon which he can build such a high and geographic reach.

Scholars are confident about its placement above the grotto because of the presence of a base of suitable dimensions with footprints that match the sculpture.¹⁵² Weis, however, proposes that the sculpture be placed in the niche on the right of the grotto's entrance (Fig. 2, N) due to its findspot being just in front of the cave entrance and its drapery's detailed carving that would have been lost if placed so

¹⁴⁶ Some scholars believe that the head is not associated with the body because of a discrepancy of joining, but the common motif of Ganymede looking up slightly at the eagle seems to refute this. Perhaps the discrepancy was another addition of optical correction. Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 146.

¹⁴⁷ Bruno, Attanasio, and Prochaska, "The Docimium Marble," 383-386.

¹⁴⁸ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 147.

¹⁴⁹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 145.

¹⁵⁰ Bruno, Attanasio, and Prochaska, "The Docimium Marble," 382-383; Katie Claire McCann, "Use and Symbolism of Polychrome Marble in Roman Sculpture," *Meaning and λόγος: Proceedings from the Early Professional Interdisciplinary Conference*, ed. Erica Hughes (Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 2015), 29-30.

¹⁵¹ McCann, "Use and Symbolism," 33-34.

¹⁵² Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 146; Andreae, *Praetorium Speluncae*, 116 for detailed measurements and placement.

high.¹⁵³ The orientation of the grotto, however, would have had a strong sunlight presence. The undercutting of the drapery would have created more shadows for easier viewing. The way the drapery at his waist flows as though in motion would be especially prominent with the chiaroscuro and would have enhanced the scene's drama and action. The span of Jupiter as the eagle hovering over and reaching out behind Ganymede's head would have served to capture more light. Cassieri also notes a seven degree inclination forward, suggesting an optical correction of the height disparity.¹⁵⁴

Weis also argues that the position above the grotto would have made the diners uncomfortable from craning their necks from the island-triclinium, but I argue that it was not necessary to see the sculpture during dinner, but rather it would have been seen on approach to the grotto and the island-triclinium.¹⁵⁵ A common facet of scholarship surrounding this sculpture is the concept of Ganymede contributing to the four heroic groups as the "beginning" of an Odyssean/Trojan narrative. The myth of Ganymede, a young Trojan prince, being snatched by Zeus in eagle form to join the god on Olympus as his cup-bearer is remarked in the proem of the *Aeneid* as being the beginning of Hera's wrath that led to the Trojan War.¹⁵⁶ Scholars go so far to suggest the backdrop of the mountain would have served as a representation of Mount Ida.¹⁵⁷ Serving as the "beginning," the viewer at the island-triclinium would then see the four heroic sculptures as the end of the Trojan War and Odysseus's wandering. Although the Trojan element is not meant to escape the viewer, the immediate connection of narrative might not have been as prominent as scholarship suggests. Indeed, the mouth of the grotto would have been lower in antiquity and other sculptures and structures would have drawn the attention of the viewer before considering Ganymede and perhaps long before he considered the figures within the grotto. Thus, the sculpture of Ganymede introduces the idea of liminality embodied by the grotto-complex to the visitor.

Crowning the grotto, the group is placed as both on land and moving into the air. The striding motion, coupled with the eagle's wings half-open, suggest the moment as the abduction occurring.

¹⁵³ Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group," 271, note 131; Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 132, note 130.

¹⁵⁴ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 146.

¹⁵⁵ Weis, "The *Pasquino* Group," note 131; Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," note 130.

¹⁵⁶ Vergil, *Aen.* I.25-29.

¹⁵⁷ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 146-147.

Sensuous drapery invokes strong winds with which Jupiter will ride to Olympus with Ganymede. In scholarship, this suspenseful moment is thought to allude to the apotheosis of Tiberius (or Augustus?) as an imperial descendant of the Trojan line, a predestined fate since the abduction of Ganymede and, illustrated in the four heroic groups, with Odysseus as an instrument of divine fate.¹⁵⁸ Background knowledge would inform the visitor of Ganymede's own liminal position as he became cup-bearer for Jupiter as mortal and divine, servant to Jupiter but controlling Jupiter through intense love. As the visitor moved through the lagoon and rectangular pool, he is in the opposite liminal space: between land and sea and performing a more chthonic journey as he enters the cave with visions of death. Viewing the Rape of Ganymede group before the visitor approached the island-triclinium might have created an atmosphere more like a symposium; Ganymede as cupbearer and as a beautiful young man, like those who might have been serving the diners, recalls the dining setting. The implications of Ganymede's story as being one of the only sculptures in the grotto-complex that represents the cause of a god's wrath rather than the result of it would have impacted the viewer only after he entered the circular basin and was no longer able to see the sculpture.¹⁵⁹ Upon this transition, the visitor, in the presence of the owner as creator aspiring to be divine, might have become the mortal in the presence of the divine snatched away similarly in fear and awe.

Though not necessarily provoking participation or interaction the same ways as the four heroic groups, the Rape of Ganymede introduces the concept of assuming a liminal state within the grotto-complex because of his placement above the grotto and the representation of Ganymede as mortal-divine. The grotto-complex's temporal suspension and physical separation are emphasized through the conflation of mythic and real history, contemporary present, and future (the acknowledgment of the origin of Rome, the Parthian and Eastern conquest, the present dinner, and possibly the apotheosis of emperors) and the reference to dining being outside the cavern and that the experience to be had inside the cavern is unlike that of a normal dinner/symposium. Visual participation is necessary upon approach through which

¹⁵⁸ Ridgway, "The Sperlonga Sculptures," 84.

¹⁵⁹ Ridgway, "The Sperlonga Sculptures," 82-83.

expectations of the sculptural program are subtly created and then subverted upon inspection of the four heroic groups.

Andromeda/Hesione¹⁶⁰

The statue of a bound, draped woman is well preserved and depicts a woman with heavy drapery falling at her bent elbows (Fig. 7). Her wrists are sharply held limply, but her fingers are suspended slightly curled into her fist. A sculpted band is on her wrists, a sign of her binding and most likely embellished with paint, or perhaps more likely, a bronze attachment. She looks down and slightly to the side with a serene smile and deep-set wide eyes (Fig. 72).

Her hair is elaborate and reveals much about how it is possible to reconstruct her placement and significance in the grotto-complex. In an *anadyomene* style, recalling an original Greek statue of Aphrodite thought to be influenced by Praxiteles's genius, Sperlonga's woman has thick, curvy rope-like strands of hair that are pulled into a defined bow above her forehead. The hairstyle is most well-known in the Capitoline Venus type (Fig. 73), though it does not remain confined to statues of Aphrodite. It can be seen in images of other young gods, often women, but perforating especially in images of Apollo and Diana. Through a brief investigation of LIMC objects to identify hairstyles like Sperlonga's women's uniquely drilled and placed style, I found few similar. They are usually placed further back on the head with an emphasis on centrally parted hair, from which the bow is made, separated from the bow usually with a band. The deep undercutting underneath the bow is also not exactly replicated, though other images do have deep cutting of strands and undercutting of the side hoops. This deep undercutting, suggest a higher elevated placement supported by other factors: her serene smile, seems like the Palladion's Archaistic smile, but serves better to enhance her features and beauty from a lower angle; her head is unproportionate to her body, most likely for a similar reason of optical correction as the Ganymede sculpture; and the emphasis on frontality is clear in her stance hairstyle.¹⁶¹ Evidence of drill

¹⁶⁰ The dimensions of this sculpture are not available, but based on photographs and proposed locations, especially of a higher elevation, it can be determined she must be somewhere near life-sized.

¹⁶¹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 147.

holes in the back attests to its placement against a wall, possibly so that she could overlook the sea.

Her archaeological record is a vague location of being found in the sea, having fallen from Mount Ciannito. Slavazzi suggests she would have decorated the structure along the mountain to the grotto's right.¹⁶² Indeed, this is tempting because of her "find-spot's" distance from the grotto-complex and of how she is bound, confirming the identification as either Andromeda, daughter of the Ethiopian king Cepheus and Cassiopeia, who is sacrificed to *ketos* to appease Poseidon, or as Hesione, daughter of Trojan king Laomedon who was sacrificed to appease Poseidon and Apollo. Both women were saved by the great heroes, Perseus and Herakles, respectively. Definitive identification is difficult without a male figure as the women are so similar and rarely depicted alone, but speculations can and will be made in this paper to understand the experientiality of approach to the grotto-complex.

Hesione seems to be the generally accepted identification among Sperlonga scholars because of her Trojan background as sister to Priam and that Herakles was aboard the Argo.¹⁶³ She would then have served as an exterior sculpture that connected both flanks of the grotto (as the right side of the grotto is sometimes considered representative of Asia Minor and the left side is Italy) harmoniously and an introduction to the four groups within the cavern.¹⁶⁴ Images of Hesione do seem to support this argument, as when she is represented, she is usually chained to a rocky setting. Usually accompanied by a rocky background with upraised arms, she seems to resemble the sculpture at Sperlonga. It does not appear, however, that Hesione appears without Herakles.¹⁶⁵ Understandably so, as the Herakles myth does not necessarily revolve around Hesione, but rather Herakles is more interested in the horses of Ganymede, which is explicitly one of his 12 labors and was handed over in some stories by King Laomedon after Herakles killed the *ketos*.¹⁶⁶ The composition of at least these two figures seems to remain mostly

¹⁶² Slavazzi, "La villa imperial," 100.

¹⁶³ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 133, note 132. Weis agrees with the identification and Hadrianic dating proposed by R. Neudecker, whose work was not available to me but appears to be one of the few scholars who studies this sculpture.

¹⁶⁴ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," note 132; de Grummond, "Gauls, Giants," 270-271.

¹⁶⁵ J.M.C Toynbee, "Greek Myth in Roman Stone," *Latomus* 36, no. 2 (1977), 381-384.

¹⁶⁶ Patrizia Birchler and Jacques Chamay, "Hésioné En Apulie: Un Chef-D' Œuvre De La Peinture Apulienne," *Antike Kunst* 38, no.1 (1995), 72.

constant in pose and dress, changing only in position and with additive elements.¹⁶⁷ The possible placement overlooking the sea on the structures to the right along the mountain complicates the possible placement of a male Figure that is crucial to identifying the Figure (though it is possible, especially if more structures have yet to be discovered).

Indeed, I argue that the sculpture represents Andromeda. While Hesione is a tempting identification because of her connections with the already established themes, Andromeda would be more significantly connected with the grotto-complex as a temporally suspended and physically separated created-landscape for the purpose of presenting owner-as-spectacle. This identification seems to be more accepted by scholars outside of Sperlonga,¹⁶⁸ though K.M. Phillips in his study of the iconography of Perseus and Andromeda remarks there is no extant vase that depicts Andromeda chained to a grotto while Perseus battles the sea monster.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps the sculpture at the grotto-complex reflects the suspended moment of Perseus approaching about to slay the *ketos*. This would relate to the rest of the sculptural program of climactic moments or creating tension. Indeed, Andromeda, from her position as perhaps one of the first sculptures a visitor would interact with by passing on the sea might have invoked the idea of the visitor replicating the way Perseus, or Herakles from the Argo on the grotto's left, might have seen her in danger. This similarity would introduce the concept of immersion and the visitor assuming a liminal state of spectator-actor in scenes with underlining violence. Viewing from below would emphasize the danger of the water through the implication of the *ketos*, which can only be considered so seriously if Andromeda was closer to the sea that could hold such a beast Pliny described as 12 meters long.¹⁷⁰ The vulnerability of Andromeda would also be enhanced through her higher elevation, creating helplessness in

¹⁶⁷ Toynbee, "Greek Myth in Roman Stone," 408-409.

¹⁶⁸ Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," note 84, suggests Andromeda because she was sacrificed as food for the *ketos*, thus being fit for a dining context, with an earlier date based on Republican and Augustan literature, specifically Aratus in the *Phainomena*. Konrad Schauenburg in his study of Perseus iconography identifies her as Andromeda with a second century CE date: Konrad Schauenburg, *Perseus in der des Altertums* (GR: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1990), 72.

¹⁶⁹ K.M. Phillips, "Perseus and Andromeda," *American Journal of Archaeology* 72, no. 1 (Archaeological Institute of America: Jan., 1968), 10-11. The earliest example of Andromeda bound to a grotto comes from the first century BCE: Phillips, "Perseus and Andromeda," 3, 8. The transition from her depiction as between two posts in an Athenian capital punishment way must have occurred earlier, Phillips says, sometime between the fifth and first century BCE based on ancient literature.

¹⁷⁰ Pliny, *HA* 9.11: "Marcus Scaurus as aedile exhibited, among other miraculous remains, the bones of the water beast to which Andromeda is said to have been exposed, shipped to Rome from the Judaeen town to Jaffa—40 feet long, higher than an Indian elephant, its backbone six spans thick."

the visitor that continues in the sculptural program of the basin and even present in Ganymede. Beyond this introduction of liminality, Andromeda would also introduce the temporal suspension and physical separation of the grotto-complex.

To acknowledge her Ethiopian origins, she is usually depicted wearing Eastern clothing, and that can be evoked in the use of the greyer marble, like the statue of Ganymede in its polychromatic marble.¹⁷¹ Also, like Ganymede, Andromeda embodies a conflation of contemporary present and mythic and historical past. As Andromeda was saved and married to Perseus, who in some Greek thought was considered the founder of Athens, she would then also invoke thoughts of the Roman conquest reaching across the Mediterranean that also expanded in the incorporation and development of Greek style, seen throughout the grotto-complex in Hellenistic influence that is developed into and with Roman thought. Her Ethiopian background and the tradition as early as fifth-century BCE that Perseus was the forefather of the Persians by his son, Perses, born from Andromeda, would have invoked Eastern conquests as well.¹⁷² The statue's polychromatic dress, just like Ganymede (though more subtly), would illustrate the conquest and unification of the East into the Roman empire.

Perhaps, most crucial is her connection with Jaffa, an ancient port city in modern-day Tel Aviv. Coins from the city dated to first century BCE or the first-century CE linked the cults of Andromeda and Tyche, perhaps as a renewal of the pagan religion after Marcus Scaurus, a governor of Syria after Pompey's conquest in 64 BCE, returning the locally sacred skeleton of the *ketos* from Jaffa to Rome.¹⁷³ It is possible that, with the wide distribution possibilities of coins, especially since Jaffa was a port, that this kind of contemporary relative past could be recalled, and the statue's role in Sperlonga would be a representative of the conquering of the East and development of the Roman empire. Like the Palladion (perhaps an introduction to it?), her connection to divinity both with Tyche and through Perseus, who is associated with Athena, would represent a theme of conquest itself. The exterior sculptural program, then, might

¹⁷¹ Andromeda's dress might be made of *bigio morato*, a dark grey-purplish veined marble that is often used in depictions of Isis, but without an in-person look at the marble's color clearly, this cannot be said definitively.

¹⁷² Simona Roda, "Jaffa," in *Maritime-Related Cults in the Coastal Cities of Philistia during the Roman Period: Legacy and Change* (Summertown, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2019), 22.

¹⁷³ Roda, "Jaffa," 16-17.

have had more hopeful images rather than the explicit mortality visualizations within the basin, perhaps to complement each other. The exterior sculptures in this hopefulness, especially as both figures of Andromeda and Ganymede are associated with conquest over death, might offer hope because of the mortality that the visitor will experience and witness within the cavern.

The sculpture of the bound woman first introduces the visitor to the liminality of a suspended moment between salvation and tragedy, mythic and contemporary past and future, and confused topographical references that physically separate the grotto-landscape from the reality of the villa. The emperor as sponsor and producer of spectacle is clear here, where he displays conquest and the threat of danger ever-present in the sea, ultimately contributing to a Roman ideal, space, and future.

“Small Sculptural” Additions

Circe

The figure of the draped woman in exaggerated contrapposto is only 1.1 meters tall (Fig. 8).¹⁷⁴ Indeed, she is emblematic of Hellenistic sculpture in the sensuous lines and curves, the detailed drapery, and her elaborate hairstyle. It differs from Andromeda’s slightly in the hair around the face being pulled back into a complex bow with holes drilled through the hoops. Interestingly, she lacks a fillet in her hair that separates her bow from her centrally parted hair. At the nape of her neck, her hair is curled in on itself and back into her scalp with open spaces between the strands of hair (Fig. 74), a style called a *krobylos*. At the back of her head is a large bun that is slightly separated from the head. In this way, too, she differs from the images I found in my brief investigation of LIMC objects, as the hair has three gatherings and are not in the same stylized wavy ropes of hair indicative of the *anadyomene* hairstyle. Waves are still detailed in the hair, but not nearly as deliberately as in the Andromeda hair.¹⁷⁵ Her facial features, however, are like Andromeda with the serene youthfulness and large almond-shaped eyes. Dating is not clear, though Jacopi offers a third or second century BCE date that is generally accepted.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 109.

¹⁷⁵ This elaborate and unique hairstyle might be indicative of portraiture influences.

¹⁷⁶ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 109-114; Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 69.

The three deformed piglets that are often associated with her were revealed in later excavations, but might be from the Tiberian age.¹⁷⁷ As there are no images or publications about the piglets and their findspots, they cannot be discussed here in detail.¹⁷⁸ It is her statuette nature that refutes the identification as Circe.

As a statuette, it is doubtful that she would represent Circe because of her importance in all the scenes within the cavern. The identification was proposed by Hans Lauter based on her gaze and gestures representing the moment after Odysseus's companions were transformed.¹⁷⁹ Refuting this theory are the vase paintings of the transformation of Odysseus's men, and other depictions of transformation into an animal like Actaeon, where the emphasis is on the liminal state of both man and animal and the horror that entails (Fig. 75). The deformity of the piglets could be representative of the transformation completed, but in the grotto-complex where the emphasis is at the climactic moment in the scenes (especially as the four heroic groups and Ganymede are in the process of acting out the key moment), it is unlikely that Circe would be represented accompanied by men already transformed by her hand. Also, in vase paintings of Circe, her gesture does not align with that of Sperlonga's sculpture, as she is usually depicted reaching out toward the companions rather than drawing in on herself. Thus, I argue that this cannot be Circe, but this does not detract the importance of this sculpture in the grotto-complex.

Without any attributes to confidently identify her, the statuette need not be considered as outside the sculptural program defined by the mythic sculptures. On the contrary, her *anadyomene* hairstyle would connect her with divine persons, and the *krobylos* hair might reference vase paintings of maenads, female worshippers of Dionysus.¹⁸⁰ Though this might be limiting the investigation of *krobylos* instances, a connection with a maenad would connect with the dining and pseudo-theatrical context of the grotto-

¹⁷⁷ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 69.

¹⁷⁸ In fact, the only images are the ones of them standing at the base of the Circe's sculpture and never within their own photo. Weis proposes that the piglets belong to an additional sculptural group of the Sow of Lavinium form *Aeneid* Book 3: Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 132. This seems unlikely because of the nature of the unusual sculpting of the pigs and the lack of an area to house such a sculptural group, as Weis would like to place it somewhere on the right side, and as has been discussed above, it seems unlikely another group would be placed to disrupt the *musaeum*, one of the large enough spaces for another group.

¹⁷⁹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 69. Unfortunately, I could not access Lauter's article.

¹⁸⁰ The Kleophrades painter uses the *krobylos* hairstyle in depicting maenads, though not nearly as elaborately or defined as the Sperlonga statuette.

complex. Regardless of this tempting connection, the presence of a sculpture without an explicit mythological subject represents the need to study beyond the mythic motif in the dining complex. The display of sculptures was common in dining areas. If this statuette was placed within the circular basin, it would be somewhere that allowed for viewing her in a three-quarter view with an emphasis on frontally. There might have been a moment of reprieve from the violent images to appreciate a Hellenistic sculpture. The contrast of the statuette's heavy and layered drapery and the heroic nudity of the heroic groups might draw attention to the craftsmanship and artistic eye of the owner who created the decorative program and/or the statuette.¹⁸¹ In her subdued movement, she becomes an intermediate between the Palladion's and Andromeda's static Archaistic stances and the Hellenistic-influenced Roman works of the four heroic groups. As access was difficult to some of the sculptures in the decorative program, perhaps this statuette offered an experience for the viewer to remove himself from the narrative and position of actor to demonstrate his own knowledge of art and culture in general. Whereas Andromeda's bow was placed immediately above her forehead with deep undercutting to emphasize it, the statuette has intricate curls and specific undercutting meant to emphasize the structure. In a display of craftsmanship, the viewer must have been able to observe the ensemble from different angles. Perhaps she was placed in one of the niches in the *piscina* where she was able to draw the viewer's gaze toward the natural arch and the fish in the water. Thus, though the statuette does not necessarily represent a mythic liminality that continues the motif of theatricality and narrative, she is her own liminality between the two types of sculptures and offers a chance for different engagement beyond looking and immersion.

Putti-Figures

Though only one putto-figure splashing in water is in scholarship (Fig. 9), three of them are considered during discussions; the one published is 0.44 m tall. Jacopi defines their (though only referring to one?) findspot as being just outside the circular basin in front of the cave.¹⁸² Its hairstyle is common

¹⁸¹ Her drapery with fringed ends is very interesting as well and might help in identification upon further study.

¹⁸² Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 138-139. Jacopi labels the one putto-figure as Hellenistic in his captions and Cassieri proposes a date of first quarter of the first century CE: Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 139, Fig. 134 and 135; Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 72.

among young children or Eros-personifications, where it gathers in a tuft at the crown of the head and ending in drilled curls at the nape of the neck.¹⁸³ Its ears are pointed, recalling a satyr. Kuttner suggests that the putti-figures might have been ordered from Asia or Athens as a common ornament around pools, ones that mimicked *deliciae*, toddlers kept around for banquets,¹⁸⁴ (confirmed by instances in Pompeii)¹⁸⁵ using a shipwreck near Tunisian Mahdia from 100 to 80 BCE as support, as identical figures have been discovered.¹⁸⁶ These putti-figures have been reconstructed as surrounding the basin of the island-triclinium on each edge (Fig. 76).¹⁸⁷ The banquet and its setting were thought to be a place of conviviality, cheer, and entertainment, and the putti would embody this for the diners in their playful splashing.¹⁸⁸ If the diners used the water in the basin, he would have mimicked their joy and youthfulness. Also, as the grotto-complex is a new type of theatrical space and spectacle, the contrast of the playful figures with that of the sculptural groups surrounding them and that they gaze upon during dinner might have disoriented the viewer. Repeating almost identical sculptures, coupled with their reflections in the water and the visitor mimicking them, would have confounded the viewer. When he approached the grotto interior, he would be separated further from the conventional dining and villa contexts into this liminal grotto-landscape. Furthermore, this disorientation would be well within the bounds of Dionysus's influence through the effects of drinking and theatrical acting, especially as Dionysus was known to inhabit his worshippers through *extasis* (standing outside one's self) and *enthusiasmos* (having the god inside).

¹⁸³ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 138.

¹⁸⁴ Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," 118.

¹⁸⁵ Platts, "Art, Architecture and Landscape," 190-196, 258-260.

¹⁸⁶ Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," 118.

¹⁸⁷ This reconstruction, though believable, most likely, and precedented, I think, would complicate further the smaller space of the triclinium area. Their findspot as just outside the circular basin places them a distance from the square basin of the island-triclinium, though it is possible they were moved and dumped as the other sculptures. Despite this, it also seems unlikely that the putti figures were placed on the artificial wings where the tense moments of death and impiety (or piety) were occurring. That would also create an asymmetrical order that would defy the order created and demanded within the geometric spaces. Cassieri suggests a placement around a fountain at the southern limit of the triclinium, but this would, I think, disrupt the action taking place and would not be conducive to creating a liminal space where the rectangular pool transitions into the circular basin: Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 72.

¹⁸⁸ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 135-138. John Donahue, "Party Hard: Violence in the Context of Roman Cenae," in *The Topography of Violence in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Riess Werner and Fagan Garrett G. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 382.

A connection with Dionysus with these satyr-putti figures is also evident in another putto figure that plays with a theater mask (Fig. 11) that is 0.98 m tall dated to the first century CE.¹⁸⁹ Due to the mask's baldness, open mouth, and age implied through the thick eyebrows and wrinkles, the mask is identified as a Socratic comedy mask by Jacopi,¹⁹⁰ and as Silenic by Cassieri.¹⁹¹ The most discussed putto-figure in scholarly literature because of the obvious connection to the theatrical quality of the grotto-complex (though never in detail), it has been linked to representing a satyr-play.¹⁹² Kuttner goes so far as to suggest that the combination of this sculpture, the theater masks in the grotto, and the scene of the Blinding of Polyphemus recalls the satyr-play *Cyclops* by Euripides.¹⁹³ While perhaps drawing the connection between that specific satyr-play and the grotto-complex might not be the most convincing, though the association of Euripides's *Andromeda* does strengthen it, the argument of a representation of a satyr-play is compelling. Recalling the tragic competition where playwrights would present three plays back-to-back and then ending with a satyr-play for a release of the tragic elements, this would support the presence of the three putti around the island-triclinium basin. On the other hand, though, the visitor would interact most likely first with the basin and then interact with the narratives. Perhaps this inversion of theater norms would help develop the grotto as a new theater, making the space more unfamiliar but grounded in traditional conventions. Possible, too, is that the presence of these putti might encourage the viewing of the sculptures that, despite the violence depicted, the stories have a good outcome, just as the festival competition would. The findspot of the sculpture is not known, however, so it is difficult to reconstruct the visitor's experience with the satyr-play connection.

Weis suggests that the theater-mask putto be placed within the grotto at the *musaeum* because of the lighting with theater masks as light sconces.¹⁹⁴ This placement is possible, perhaps even near the small niche to the left of the *musaeum*. According to Vitruvius, scenery for comic plays should be

¹⁸⁹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 72.

¹⁹⁰ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 132.

¹⁹¹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 71.

¹⁹² Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," 118.

¹⁹³ Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," 118.

¹⁹⁴ Weis, "Odysseus at Sperlonga," 133.

depicted more domestically. Satyr-plays were meant to be rustic. It is possible the presence of this putto figure might recall the theatrical aspect inherent or desired in plays, though juxtaposed directly with the same setting being a tragic stage.¹⁹⁵ Thus, the space and those in it would be a liminal theater, centered both in comedy and tragedy and reality and fantasy, as the putto with the mask would remind the viewer he was in a type of theater that though unfamiliar and hinting at his mortality was not a real world.

Lastly, another putto-figure discovered in the grotto-complex was one pouring from a jug (Fig. 10), measuring 0.87 m tall. This figure is thought to stand across from the triclinium on the basin, acting as a servant while his friends play in the water.¹⁹⁶ Created as a fountain feature, the presence of a dog near his feet is unusual, especially as the dog does not seem to interact with the figure. Cassieri suggests this is a result of the group being a prototype later turned into a fountain feature with the dog left as it was.¹⁹⁷ The craftsmanship of the drilled locks of hair both on top of the head and at the neck are impressive and would create a distinctive chiaroscuro effect (Fig. 77). Jacopi suggests that it has Alexandrian precedents and influences, drawing from representations of Horus as a child and Hellenistic styles of Eros.¹⁹⁸ It is possible the three satyr-like ones were representative, too, of Eros, who became less associated with love and more associated with playfulness and youth. This might indicate to the viewer that he was not meant to join the divine fun, but he had to stay grounded in the present dinner. Alternatively, he could have entered a new space where he could join the fun with such creatures in preparation for his interaction with the four heroic sculptures. If it indeed has Alexandrian influences, and they are as explicit as they are in the development of the hairstyle, the image of a Alexandrian-putto acting as a servant would invoke the conquest of the emperor over the East; if there are comparanda with the image of Horus as a child, it would also serve as a reminder of the conquest of Egypt, which would be crucial after the Battle of Actium as Augustus took up the role of emperor. Worth noting, as well, is the downward tilt of the head, presenting the curls to the diners and acting in submission. Nevertheless, the addition of putti-figures into

¹⁹⁵ Platts, "Art, Architecture and Landscape," 148.

¹⁹⁶ Kuttner, "Delight and Danger," 118.

¹⁹⁷ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 70-71.

¹⁹⁸ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 135-138.

the discussion about the sculptural program at the grotto-complex adds to the theatricality and preparation as he enters the grotto.

“Architectural” Additional

Venus Genetrix

A bas relief of Venus Genetrix and a little Cupid hanging on her shoulder was found in the excavations within the grotto on the left (Fig. 15). The angular definition of the woman's face, where her forehead continues into the line of her nose and her features so sharply defined, contrasts against the pudgy modeling of the Cupid figure hanging on her shoulder. Venus's three-quarters portrayal versus Cupid's frontality evokes considerations of the implications of relief sculpture. Prolific architectural relief and decoration (and in the Palladion group) support this argument. Cupid's realistic and detailed wing can be compared roughly with the angular lines of Venus's drapery. In all these juxtaposed styles, this piece, I argue, is an interaction of Cupid with a statue of Venus that is emblematic of the experience the viewers have completed upon approach. Scholarship already mentions Venus is not a figure here but an identifiable statuary type commissioned by Julius Caesar for his forum in Rome and on coinage as a sign of his divine lineage.¹⁹⁹ More so than its artistic connections, however, is the way Cupid's interaction with a sculpture-Venus in the relief reflects the visitor's overall experience with the sculptures in the grotto-complex.

Made of Carrara marble, this piece stands apart in both materiality from the bluish-white marble of the sculptures and in manufacture as a relief.²⁰⁰ Cupid's hairstyle of a central braid and the drilled curls reflect the putti-figures on the island-triclinium but is also datable to the second half of the first century BCE.²⁰¹ The use of Italian marble, when the rest of the sculptural program was imported marble, and the connection with Caesar and the city of Rome (explicitly the dedication of the image type for Venus Genetrix as the progenitor of the family line), was a deliberate connection to the present. To support the

¹⁹⁹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 65-66; Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 118-123.

²⁰⁰ Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 118.

²⁰¹ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 66.

argument of the grotto's left as a depiction of the foundation of Rome, scholars use this relief. Its possible placement behind the Pasquino group might confirm this, but the figure also represents forward-looking to peace because of the emperor. Similarly, it presents the space of the grotto as physically separated with the topographical references and the importation of Docimium marble and the use of Italian marble. As one of the last sculptures the visitor encounters, the patriotism, and loyalty of the owner (or simply the acknowledgment and reminder of the owner being the emperor) through one last temporal suspension that emphasizes the visitor's liminal state within the grotto-landscape that the owner has strategically developed and controls. The connection to Caesar and materiality support this, as does the interaction between Cupid and the statue-like figure of Venus Genetrix.

Cupid looks out toward the statue, with his lips parted in a smile as an expression of awe. Simultaneously, his frontality confronts the viewer, as none of the sculptures had been truly frontal in the sculptural groups beyond, to an extent, Diomedes in the Palladion group. The manufacture as a relief confronts and stops the viewer from ambulating to look at the object. Thus, before he leaves the grotto, or before he interacts with the Pasquino group, emphasis is placed on this object. Joyful Cupid, who looks in awe at Venus Genetrix, might have served as a relief after the tension of interacting with the horror of the helmsman. It might encourage continued worship of the gods and fates as mortals having witness signs of gods' wrath seen both inside and outside the grotto.

Cupid could have served as a representative of the visitor, in awe of the craftsmanship of the architect, sculptors, and the owner as creator. In this relief, the culmination of the owner-as-spectacle has been revealed. Cupid interacts with the image of Venus directly, as his hand goes behind her neck, just as the visitor has interacted physically through directed movement with the heroic groups. Cupid seems to move around to bring himself in front of the image, just as the visitor has circumambulated the circular basin. After the time spent in the *musaeum*, the visitor might have just left another drinking bout, at which point he might embody the playfulness of Cupid and interact in a similar type of awe with the last sculptural group. Venus herself becomes the embodiment of the narratives produced by the sculptural program. Since the owner assumed the liminal state of divine-creator and yet mortal (perhaps this is a

reminder to himself, if he was not the emperor, of his mortality), the visitor would recognize him as not just the sponsor and producer of the spectacle but also as the spectacle himself.

Though elements upon approach to the grotto-complex prepared the visitor for the experience, there are few to reintegrate the visitor back into the domestic realm. Perhaps this was the true impact of confronting the Pasquino group, but the relief serves as a small transitory piece. The viewer reflects on the spectacle of the grotto in its creation through architecture and decoration, sponsored and produced by the owner, so that he can remove himself from the immersion of the space back into the familiar world in which he is mortal. He is reminded of how to view the sculptures as art and representative of divinity while simultaneously remarking on the narrative of violence with good outcomes presented to him. Nevertheless, the image of the Venus Genetrix would also remind the viewer that the emperor was in the liminal space between mortal and divine that perhaps the owner (if not already the emperor) was trying to emulate in his creation of the grotto-complex.

Theater Masks

Jacopi recorded the theater masks as found in the niched area within the *musaeum*, but the third mask (Fig. 14) was found outside the circular pool field.²⁰² What exactly constitutes the "circular pool field" is unclear, but it is possible this mask was not associated with the other two. Indeed, its sculpting is more naturalistic with fluid sensuous lines compared to the rigidity of vertical curls and plastic facial expressions of the other two masks (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13). These two masks have clear flat bottoms, with the youthful mask (Fig. 12) rounded out to the flat bottom, and the older mask (Fig. 12) has a stylized beard that slants out from the face but forms a flat bottom (Fig. 78). The more youthful mask might be representative of a generic tragic character of a young man, identified through his cleanly shaven and pudgy face. The older mask, identified through the wrinkles, slightly sunken cheeks, and beard is representative of the tetral type of the "grizzled" character.²⁰³ Cassieri suggests that perhaps this third

²⁰² Jacopi, *L'antro di Tiberio*, 11, 147-150.

²⁰³ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 147-148, as defined by the rhetorician Pollux who wrote in the second century CE on scenic antiquities.

mask refers to a typologically more recent original theater character from the fourth century BCE.²⁰⁴

These identifications of representations of characters would be relevant in the *musaeum*, where it would be most likely that performances and discussions would take place, as discussed earlier.

Curious, though, is the possible use of these masks as light sconces, as I find this use unlikely due to the nature of the sculptures. In a space that might have been a reprieve from the consistent tension and ambiguity of nature as a nourishing but dangerous figure, the use of these figures as light sconces would have heightened the tension. In addition, I have not heard of the use of marble masks, which must be heavy and thus hard to access with the closed bottoms and proposal of hanging on the wall, as light sconces, though imagery of masks with mouths outlining the spouts are common in lamps. Theatrical masks are well attested to be used in architectural situations as gutter-spouts with mouths and wide-open eyes as the ones at Sperlonga. They are also depicted in wall-paintings in Pompeii as architectural elements, hanging on candelabra and walls or in window/niche areas in a structure.²⁰⁵ Rather than being used as light sconces, perhaps they were meant as identifiers of the oval room as a *musaeum*, or a pseudo-theater, where they could contemplate on the performances they witnessed in the sculptures. Also, the masks could accompany the owner's implicit performance of himself as host and the domestic sponsor and producer of spectacle.

Thus, the theater masks that are present in the grotto do not need be considered only as a dramatic light sconce but rather should be considered as emblematic of the drama already presented to and played out by the visitors. The *musaeum* (with at least two of the three masks) in its natural decoration so common throughout the grotto-complex (emblematic of the artificially created natural) might be lost within the grotto without these elements that were commonly used in wall-paintings in Pompeii as indicators of a theatrical stage structure. So that the visitor did not lose himself in the immersive atmosphere, the theater masks might have reminded the visitor that he was merely witnessing such a great

²⁰⁴ Cassieri, *La Grotte di Tiberio*, 148.

²⁰⁵ For more considerations of the use of theater masks in wall paintings, especially in domestic spaces: Platts, "Art, Architecture and Landscape," 135-138.

spectacle created by the owner as sponsor and producer of this new type of natural theater, whom he should be greatly impressed by and fearful of his power (perhaps indicated by the tragic expressions of the masks).

Conclusion

Thus, the six additional sculptures are crucial to further understanding how the visitor would have interacted with the grotto-complex outside of the four heroic groups in his moments of rest and transition. The sculptures, though smaller and perhaps less grand than the four heroic groups (and some even smaller still!), also contribute to the temporal suspension and physical separation of the grotto-landscape. The connotations of these sculptures allow the visitor to derive geographic locations, artistic styles and motifs, mythic narratives or the lack thereof, and conflated histories. While the sculptures range in date and might be additions to the overall sculpture, the decision to add them was a deliberate choice for a continuation of the grotto-complex as a new theatrical that presents the owner-as-spectacle in his display of wealth, power, and intelligence that culminates in his embodiment of the liminal state of divine-creator and mortal. These sculptures seem to remind the owner also of divine presence within the natural theater though the owner attempts to ascend to a divine identity in his creation. These elements aid in the immersion of the visitor into this new theater and type of spectacle, introducing the themes present within the grotto as he approaches the complex and easing him out of it.

Conclusion

In a study of the experientiality of the grotto-complex in Tiberius's villa at Sperlonga, it became clear that it is a genuinely innovative space, brilliant and deliberate Roman work of art indicative of the development of Roman ideals and artistic styles. While heavily influenced by Hellenistic traditions, the grotto-complex represents the transition to a Roman art style of imitating nature and immersive spaces populated with sculptures that require more than just physical ambulation but also active viewing, mental participation, performance acting, and exploration and discovery. The study of architecture revealed the environment's control over the approach, experience, and impression of space and owner. The four heroic groups immersed the visitor into the alternative world; during a counterclockwise circumambulation, he

embodied his liminal state of actor-spectator and judge-judged as he fulfilled the necessary societal expectations of a dining context. The discussion of six additional sculptures examined transitory influences within the less complex sculptures no less important than the primary spectacles.

The grotto-complex, rather than merely serving as a triclinium, served as a natural theater within a temporally suspended and physically separated alternative world. It is still in the dining and symposia contexts, however, that the diners were meant to conduct themselves, with societal expectations compelling their immersion into liminal states the architecture, decoration, and purpose warranted. Pushed into the role of both actor and spectator and judge of his fellow diners and judged in his education, he explored the new type of theatrical spectacle. Through this experience, the grandeur and complexities of the grotto seem to offer it as the spectacle. Still, upon exiting the grotto after a counterclockwise investigation of the four heroic sculptural groups and contemplating and refreshing in the *musaeum*, it became the owner who was the spectacle.

The owner as host was expected to create spectacles, but the extent to which he created a new type of spectacle removed from normal villa, dining, and theater contexts and a world of its own made him divine-creator. His mortality is never lost within his grotto-landscape, however, because he can only artificially recreate the natural theater on small scales (the *musaeum*) and the reminders of the presence of divinity inherent in the cave context and images he commissioned. Upon exiting, he realized his mortality, even as emperor, in the images of mortal heroes and the need to return to the domestic space of the villa. His legacy was not necessarily divine, but the images of conquest over death demonstrate his ability to live on beyond death, especially embodied by the visitor's lasting impression of him as the spectacle and creator of the grotto-landscape.



Figure 6. Ganymede. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Carole Raddato, distributed under CC BY-SA 2.0 license. From [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_\(15803551982\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_(15803551982).jpg)).



Figure 7. Andromeda/Hesione. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Andromeda, II-III secolo dc. Ca." distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Andromeda,_II-III_secolo_dc._ca.jpg&oldid=331257446).



Figure 8. Circe. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. (Photograph by Sailko, "Circe coi maiali, III-II secolo ac.," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Museo_archeologico_nazionale_di_Sperlonga#/media/File:Circe_coi_maiali,_III-II_secolo_ac.jpg).

Figure 10. Putto-figure pouring from vessel accompanied by a dog. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Statua di fanciullo di tipo ellenistico," distributed by CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statua_di_fanciullo_di_tipo_ellenistico.jpg).



Figure 9. Putto-figure splashing in water. There are two others nearly identical found at Sperlonga, Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Satirello seduto in marmo, dall'area antistante la grotta di tiberio, 1-25 dc ca.," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Satirello_seduto_in_marmo,_dall%27area_antistante_la_grotta_di_tiberio,_1-25_dc_ca.jpg).





Figure 11. Putto-figure playing with theater mask. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Putto che gioca con una Maschera teatrale, I secolo," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Putto_che_gioca_con_una_maschera_teatrale,_I_secolo.jpg).



Figure 12. Youthful marble theater mask. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Maschere teatrali in marmo, I secolo dc. 02," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maschere_teatrali_in_marmo,_I_secolo_dc._02.jpg#/media/File:Maschere_teatrali_in_marmo,_I_secolo_dc._02.jpg).



Figure 13. Elderly marble theater mask. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Maschere teatrali in marmo, I secolo dc. 01," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maschere_teatrali_in_marmo,_I_secolo_dc._01.jpg).



Figure 14. Naturalistic marble theater mask. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Maschere teatrali in marmo, I secolo dc. 03," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maschere_teatrali_in_marmo,_I_secolo_dc._03.jpg).



Figure 15. Venus Genetrix and Cupid Carrara marble bas relief. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga (Photograph by Sailko, "Rilievo di venere genitrice, I secolo ac., forse replica della statua di arcesilao per il foro di cesare," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rilievo_di_venere_genitrice,_I_secolo_ac.,_forse_replica_della_statua_di_arcesilao_per_il_foro_di_cesare.jpg).



Figure 18. The Blinding of Polyphemus reconstruction. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Saillko, "Athanodoros, agesandros e polydoros, gruppo del polifemo di sperlonga, ricostruzione 01," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Athanodoros,_agesandros_e_polydoros,_gruppo_del_polifemo_di_sperlonga,_ricostruzione_01.jpg).



Figure 20. Tiberius's villa looking toward the sea. (Photography by Carole Raddato, "Villa of Tiberius, Sperlonga," distributed under CC BY-SA 2.0 license. From <https://www.flickr.com/photos/carolemage/15157420502/in/album-72157646878259307/>).



Figure 21. Grotto perspective to Monte Circeo from the Blinding of Polyphemus podium. (Photograph by Alessio Innocenti, Itineraria Picta, <https://www.itinerariapicta.it/sperlonga-villa-tiberio/>).



Figure 26. Villa terracing as evidenced by the higher elevations of the villa closest to the road from the side of the villa closest to Area P. (Photography by Carole Raddato, "Villa of Tiberius, Sperlonga," distributed under CC BY-SA 2.0 license. From <https://www.flickr.com/photos/carolem/age/14971234578/in/album-72157646878259307/>).



Figure 28. Area P approaching the side structure and *nymphaeum* on the right. (Photography by Carole Raddato, “Villa of Tiberius, Sperlonga,” distributed under CC BY-SA 2.0 license. From <https://www.flickr.com/photos/carolemage/15157802925/in/album-72157646878259307/>).



Figure 29. The *nymphaeum* to the left of the grotto. (Photograph by Sailko, “Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, interno 22,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_interno_22.jpg).



Figure 30. Mosaic fragment of a flower. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Mosaici di paste vitree e incrostazioni di conchiglie dalla villa di tiberio e annessi, I secolo dc. 01," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaici_di_paste_vitree_e_incrostazioni_di_conchiglie_dalla_villa_di_tiberio_e_annessi,_I_secolo_dc._01.jpg).



Figure 31. Mosaic fragment with scrollwork. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Mosaici di paste vitree e incrostazioni di conchiglie dalla villa di tiberio e annessi, I secolo dc. 02," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaici_di_paste_vitree_e_incrostazioni_di_conchiglie_dalla_villa_di_tiberio_e_annessi,_I_secolo_dc._02.jpg).



Figure 33. Mosaic fragment with shell borders. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Mosaici di paste vitree e incrostazioni di conchiglie dalla villa di tiberio e annessi, I secolo dc. 04,," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaici di paste vitree e incrostazioni di conchiglie dalla villa di tiberio e annessi, I secolo dc. 04.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaici_di_paste_vitree_e_incrostazioni_di_conchiglie_dalla_villa_di_tiberio_e_annessi,_I_secolo_dc._04.jpg)).

Figure 32. Mosaic fragment with wave imagery. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Mosaici di paste vitree e incrostazioni di conchiglie dalla villa di tiberio e annessi, I secolo dc. 03,," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaici di paste vitree e incrostazioni di conchiglie dalla villa di tiberio e annessi, I secolo dc. 03.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaici_di_paste_vitree_e_incrostazioni_di_conchiglie_dalla_villa_di_tiberio_e_annessi,_I_secolo_dc._03.jpg)).





Figure 34. Rounded niche behind side-structure with shell borders and mosaic decoration. (Photograph by Sailko, “Sperlonga, resti della villa di tiberio, ambiente con affreschi e incrostazioni a mosaico 06,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga,_resti_della_villa_di_tiberio,_ambiente_con_affreschi_e_incrostazioni_a_mosaico_06.jpg).



Figure 35. Rounded niche behind side-structure with mosaic decoration. (Photograph by Sailko, “Sperlonga, resti della villa di tiberio, ambiente con affreschi e incrostazioni a mosaico 04,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga,_resti_della_villa_di_tiberio,_ambiente_con_affreschi_e_incrostazioni_a_mosaico_04.jpg).



Figure 36. Rounded niche's location within side-structure behind wall. (Photograph by Sailko, "Sperlonga, resti della villa di tiberio, ambiente con affreschi e incrostazioni a mosaico 03," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga,_resti_della_villa_di_tiberio,_ambiente_con_affreschi_e_incrostazioni_a_mosaico_03.jpg).



Figure 38. The grotto-triclinium from in the lagoon. (Photography by Carole Raddato, "Villa of Tiberius, Sperlonga," distributed under CC BY-SA 2.0 license. From <https://www.flickr.com/photos/carolemage/15134765456/in/album-72157646878259307/>).



Figure 39. Structure remains of the bulwark proposed to run up the mountain to the right of the grotto entrance. (Photography by steveilott, “Sperlonga ruins 19,” distributed under CC BY 2.0. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_ruins_19.jpg).



Figure 43. View from *piscina* to *nymphaeum*. (Photograph by Sailko, “Sperlonga, grotta di tiberi, 09 resti della peschiera,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta di tiberio_09_resti_della_peschiera_canalina.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_09_resti_della_peschiera_canalina.jpg)).



Figure 44. View at natural arch and eroded back of the Argo sculpture. (Photograph by Sailko, “Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, interno 21,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_interno_21.jpg).



Figure 47. Rectangular pool from right wing. (Photograph by Sailko, “Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, 08 resti della peschiera,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_08_resti_della_peschiera.jpg).



Figure 48. Delineation of lagoon and rectangular pool. (Photograph by Sailko, “Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, 07 resti della peschiera,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_07_resti_della_peschiera.jpg).



Figure 49. View looking from back end of island-triclinium into grotto. (Photography by steveilott, "Sperlonga ruins 17," distributed under CC BY 2.0. From [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Villa_of_Tiberius_\(Sperlonga\)#/media/File:Sperlonga_ruins_17.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Villa_of_Tiberius_(Sperlonga)#/media/File:Sperlonga_ruins_17.jpg)).



Figure 50. View of island-triclinium's fishponds. (Photography by steveilott, "Sperlonga ruins 30," distributed under CC BY 2.0. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_ruins_30.jpg).



Figure 53. View from right seats to the Polyphemus podium. (Photograph by Saikko, "Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, interno 02," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_interno_02.jpg).



Figure 54. View from near left seats to the *musaeum* and Polyphemus podium. (Photograph by Sailko, "Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, interno 18," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_interno_18.jpg).



Figure 57. Oval area to the left of the Polyphemus group, identified as a *musaeum*. (Photograph by Sailko, "Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, interno 11," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_interno_11.jpg).



Figure 58. View of right door and floor of exedra. (Photograph by Sailko, "Sperlonga, grotta di tiberio, interno 13," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_grotta_di_tiberio_interno_13.jpg).

Figure 59. Flavian era Roman copy of Pasquino group, commonly identified as Menelaus and Patroklos. Such replicas are used in the reconstruction of the Pasquino group. (Photograph by author. Flavian era Roman copy of Greek original from 240-230 BCE). Florence, Loggia dei Lanzi).





Figure 60. Remains of Palladion and the hand that grasps her. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, “Eta tiberiana, Gruppo del ratto del palladio, con testa di diomede e frammento della statua di atena, 03,,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Et%C3%A0_tiberiana,_gruppo_del_ratto_del_palladio,_con_testa_di_diomede_e_frammento_della_statua_di_atena,_03.jpg).

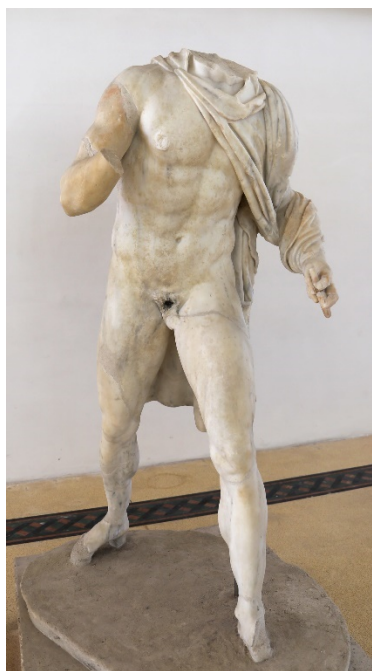


Figure 61. Body of Palladion group character commonly identified as Odysseus. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, “Eta tiberiana, Gruppo del ratto del palladio, con testa di diomede e frammento della statua di atena, 04 ulisse acefalo,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Et%C3%A0_tiberiana,_gruppo_del_ratto_del_palladio,_con_testa_di_diomede_e_frammento_della_statua_di_atena,_04_ulisse_acefalo.jpg).



Figure 62. Head of Diomedes associated with Palladion group. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, “Eta tiberiana, Gruppo del ratto del palladio, con testa di diomede e frammento della statua di atena, 02,,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Museo_archeologico_nazionale_di_Sperlonga#/media/File:Et%C3%A0_tiberiana,_gruppo_del_ratto_del_palladio,_con_testa_di_diomede_e_frammento_della_statua_di_atena,_02.jpg).



Figure 65. The wineskin companion. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Athandodoros, agesandros e polydoros, gruppo del polifemo di Sperlonga, eta tiberiana, compagno di ulisse con l'otre 01," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Athandodoros,_agesandros_e_polydoros,_gruppo_del_polifemo_di_sperlonga,_et%3%A0_tiberiana,_compagno_di_ulisse_con_l%27otre_01.jpg).



Figure 66. The cup associated with Blinding of Polyphemus, reconstructed. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Athandodoros, agesandros e polydoros, gruppo del polifemo di Sperlonga, eta tiberiana, tazza marmorea," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Athandodoros,_agesandros_e_polydoros,_gruppo_del_polifemo_di_sperlonga,_et%3%A0_tiberiana,_tazza_marmorea.jpg).

Figure 67. The head of Odysseus. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photograph by Sailko, "Athandodoros, agesandros e polydoros, gruppo del polifemo di Sperlonga, eta tiberiana, testa di ulisse 04," distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Athandodoros,_agesandros_e_polydoros,_gruppo_del_polifemo_di_sperlonga,_et%3%A0_tiberiana,_testa_di_ulisse_04.jpg).





Figure 70. Remains of the helmeted warrior of the Pasquino group. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Cropped from the photograph by Sailko, “Gruppo del pasquino (menalo e patroclo o ulisse e achille) I secolo dc. 01.,” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gruppo_del_pasquino_\(menalo_e_patroclo_o_ulisse_e_achille\)_I_secolo_dc._01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gruppo_del_pasquino_(menalo_e_patroclo_o_ulisse_e_achille)_I_secolo_dc._01.jpg)).



Figure 71. The head of Ganymede. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Photography by Carole Raddato, distributed under CC BY-SA 2.0 license. From [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_\(15182533613\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperlonga_(15182533613).jpg)).



Figure 72. Close-up of Andromeda's face. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Sperlonga. (Cropped from the photograph by Sailko, “Andromeda, II-III secolo dc. Ca.” distributed under CC BY 3.0 license. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Andromeda,_II-III_secolo_dc._ca.jpg&oldid=331257446).

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