

# Sophisticating a Cyclops: Polyphemus and Galatea in Roman Wall-Painting

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B.A., Cornell University 2014

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Classics  
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of the Arts.

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Date Defended: May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017

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Date Approved: May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Thesis Abstract:

This thesis thoroughly examines Roman wall-paintings involving Polyphemus and Galatea. The goal of this thesis is to consider what ideas these paintings can offer concerning Roman values and aspirations. The different depictions of Polyphemus and Galatea at Pompeii are affected by Roman ideas on cultural reception, the power of education, and engagement with myth and fantasy. Their relationship takes on new forms not present in the literary tradition as a result of this Roman influence. Polyphemus becomes a vessel for interplay between literary and visual portrayals, self-representation, and fantasy. The paintings in this thesis are divided into three categories: Gaze wall-paintings, Cupid wall-paintings, and Erotic wall-paintings. Each illustrate ways the Romans interacted with the myth and created new variations, sometimes leaving the interpretation to the viewer.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and Literary Precedents

### I. Introduction

Scholars have seldom examined depictions of Polyphemus and Galatea, despite the continuous interest in Roman wall-painting at Pompeii. The only studies wholly devoted to paintings involving the Cyclops and nymph are dissertations, an older one by Richard Holland and a more extensive survey completed by Ruth Thomas.<sup>1</sup> Vasiliki Kostopoulou more recently addressed the pair, but focuses on their appearance in literature.<sup>2</sup> Michael Squire focuses on wall-paintings of Polyphemus and Galatea as a means of illustrating iconotexts, images that invoke literary sources and vice versa.<sup>3</sup> The act of viewing such paintings was informed by a literary tradition which in turn was shaped by viewers' perceptions of visual images of the pair. As a case study, Squire examines the Philostratus' *Imagines*, which describes a painting of the pair and draws upon several visual tropes typically seen in their depictions.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis approaches depictions of Polyphemus and Galatea in a different way. It narrows its focus both in scale and medium by examining wall-paintings from Pompeii and Herculaneum. The interplay between visual representations and literature is addressed, but the main arguments are concerned with the iconography of the paintings and the context of their locations.

The images of Polyphemus in wall-painting at Pompeii hardly depict the man-eating

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Holland, "De Polyphemo et Galatea," PhD diss., Leipzig University, 1884.[space]Ruth Thomas, "Polyphemus in Art and Literature," PhD diss., Tufts University, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Vasiliki Kostopoulou, "Polyphemus and Galatea: Variations on a Theme," PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Squire, "Cyclopien Iconotexts: The Adventures of Polyphemus in Image and Text," in *Image and Text in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 300-356.

<sup>4</sup> Squire, "Cyclopien Iconotexts," 300-356.

Cyclops from Homer's *Odyssey*. While he does keep some remnants of his monstrous appearance, most commonly shown by a third eye on his forehead, he more closely resembles a shepherd in accordance with his depictions in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Theocritus' *Idylls*. Likewise, he often appears with another key figure from these literary works, Galatea. Both Theocritus and Ovid describe his failed advances towards the sea nymph, but imply that his courting softened his violent demeanor. This literary tradition is best represented by the famous painting from the villa at Boscotrecase, where Odysseus' ships in the background allude to the futility of Polyphemus' infatuation.<sup>5</sup> According to Blanckenhagen, the ships foreshadow his blinding and subsequent rage against Odysseus. This ominous reminder of Polyphemus' future misery suggests a similar fate for his courtship of Galatea.

However, some wall-paintings in Roman houses show Polyphemus as successful in his wooing of Galatea. Eleanor Winsor Leach argues that the different responses of Galatea seen in paintings can be attributed to the Roman understanding of art's power to bring about change.<sup>6</sup> This thesis proposes a different societal focus, arguing that it is not Polyphemus' song that changes Galatea's mind, but rather his new-found cultivation in the context of Roman domestic space that enables his success. This unusual successful wooing of Galatea is just one of the variations of this story seen in Roman wall-painting. The goal of this thesis is to examine what ideas paintings can offer concerning Roman values and aspirations. The different depictions of Polyphemus and Galatea at Pompeii are affected by Roman ideas on cultural reception, the power of education, and engagement with myth and fantasy. Their relationship takes on new forms not present in the literary tradition as a result of this Roman influence.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter von Blanckenhagen II and Christine Alexander, *The Augustan Villa at Boscotrecase* (Mainz am Rhein: Philip von Zabern, 1990), 28-33.

<sup>6</sup> Eleanor W. Leach, "Polyphemus in a Landscape: Traditions of Pastoral Courtship," *Studies in the History of Art* 36 (1992): 74.

Polyphemus becomes a vessel for interplay between literary and visual portrayals, self-representation, and fantasy. The paintings in this thesis are divided into three categories: Gaze wall-paintings, Cupid wall-paintings, and Erotic wall-paintings. Each illustrate ways the Romans interacted with the myth and created new variations, sometimes leaving the interpretation to the viewer.

## II. Study of Roman Wall-Painting

Before turning to the literary evidence, it is necessary to review previous work on this pair, relevant scholarship, and the methodology of this thesis. This section will first address the work of Thomas and Kostopoulou. Then, it will outline the trends and various approaches within the study of Roman wall-painting. Finally, it will illustrate how this scholarship affected the thesis and outline methodology used.

### A. Dissertations by Ruth Thomas and Vasiliki Kostopoulou

Thomas' dissertation surveys Polyphemus in both literature and art, with a focus on the development of the Cyclops from epic monster to love-sick shepherd.<sup>7</sup> She notes the agency of Magna Graeca in this shift, as much of the literary and artistic precedents come from Sicily and Southern Italy. Thomas asserts that artists relied on literature for the basis of their work, but were sometimes free with their interpretation of the literary works. They also drew from other sources as well, such as the marble mask relief from Nemi which suggests theatrical influence. This relief depicts a mask of Polyphemus' face, which Thompson argues was based on one used in a

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth Thomas, "Polyphemus in Art and Literature," PhD diss. (Tufts University, 1970).

theatrical production of Polyphemos' wooing of Galatea. In her conclusion, she discusses how Roman art reflects both types of Polyphemos, but the Theocritean model appears later and is contemporary with landscape reliefs, which later influenced wall-painting.<sup>8</sup>

Kostopoulou's work analyzes the changing story of Polyphemos and Galatea.<sup>9</sup> Focusing on literary evidence, she traces the various versions of the Polyphemos and Galatea story presented by Greek authors. Her main conclusion is that, despite the different personas, Galatea never reciprocates Polyphemos' feelings. Even in *Idyll* 6, where Daphnis describes Galatea as the pursuer and Polyphemos seems disinterested, Galatea is not courting him out of love. Kostopoulou examines Daphnis' words for allusions to Galatea's motivations, which remain unclear. However, the expression *τὸν ἀπὸ γραμμῶς κινεῖ λίθον* (*Idyll* 6.18) refers to a board game and alludes to an erotic game she is playing that does not suggest any real love. Kostopoulou concludes that it is detrimental to consider a single story of Polyphemos and Galatea, on account of the adaptability of the characters, but she asserts Galatea's consistency as an unobtainable love interest.<sup>10</sup> Both of these dissertations, while focusing on the same pair, have different goals in mind. Thomas' broader survey is interested in the origins of Polyphemos, while Kostopoulou exclusively examines the literature. The stance taken by Kostopoulou on Galatea as forever inaccessible to Polyphemos is contradictory to the paintings discussed here. However, this contradiction between the literary tradition and artistic representations yields fascinating insights the causes of the story's transformation in Roman domestic contexts.

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas, "Polyphemos in Art and Literature."

<sup>9</sup> Vasiliki Kostopoulou, "Polyphemos and Galatea: Variations on a Theme," PhD diss. (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Kostopoulou, "Polyphemos and Galatea."



## B. Previous Scholarship on Different Methodology

Historically, scholars have examined Roman wall-painting utilizing three distinct approaches.<sup>11</sup> The first focuses on Roman wall-painting as a means for reconstructing original Greek paintings, which some scholars argue functioned as inspiration. The second concentrates on wall-painting as a genre of art, with the goal of tracing formal and stylistic developments. The third engages with the viewer and the architectural context of wall-paintings under the scope of social and cultural history.<sup>12</sup> In 2001, a series of articles in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* debated the pros and cons of these approaches. Rolf Tybout expressed frustration with the growing trend of studying wall-painting for social historical aim instead of those based in art history and style.<sup>13</sup> In defense of Mau and Beyen, whom Tybout argues were increasingly rejected as ineffectual in the study, he advocates the limited use of wall-painting in the study of Roman social history. Tybout asserts that there is no relation between motifs and room function, hence attempting to use wall-painting to understand the owner's status, occupation, or the structure of the paintings in his home is too ambitious.<sup>14</sup> In the same issue, Bettina Bergmann responds to Tybout's concerns, suggesting alternatives for why scholars such as herself are moving away from the work of Mau and Beyen. Bergmann argues that Roman houses are complex, and therefore demand approaches that surpass the exclusivity of scholarly fields, as "there is room in the Roman house for multiple approaches."<sup>15</sup> This thesis, likewise, recognizes the importance of both the style and cultural context of wall-painting.

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<sup>11</sup> Katharina Lorenz, "Wall Painting," in *A Companion to Roman Art*, ed. Barbara Borg (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 253.

<sup>12</sup> Lorenz, "Wall Painting," 253.

<sup>13</sup> Rolf A. Tybout, "Roman Wall-Painting and Social Significance," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 14 (2001): 33-56.

<sup>14</sup> Tybout, "Roman Wall-Painting and Social Significance," 33-56.

<sup>15</sup> Bettina Bergmann, "House of Cards: A Response to R.A. Tybout," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 14 (2001): 56-57.

The Roman architect Vitruvius, one of the few ancient sources on the technicalities of wall-painting, discusses wall decorations in the context of designing Roman houses.<sup>16</sup> In his discourse on present tastes in painting, he reviews the old methods of matching certain images with different types of rooms. For example, spacious rooms such as *exedrae* were decorated with large tragic, comic, or satyric scenes. Modern scholars influenced by Vitruvius have attempted to further clarify the relation between the paintings and the function of the room. This method is seen in Roger Ling's work, who discusses how paintings must be considered with respect to their architectural setting and other interior decoration.<sup>17</sup> Paintings, while decorative, also reflect the function of the room, as shown by the prevalence of Venus and Cupid in bedrooms. Moreover, Ling argues against the idea of consistent programmatic themes within individual houses, and rather emphasizes painting as a reflection of taste and the aspirations of the members of the household.<sup>18</sup> This thesis will further extend this idea. Instead of connecting paintings to the aspirations of just individual households, it will consider how they reflect the ambitions of Roman society as a whole. However, the connection between room's functions and the paintings residing within is considered problematic by some scholars today.

Another approach to the connection between the function of rooms and their artwork is found in Leach's work.<sup>19</sup> She focuses instead on the general type of room and its possible relation to the paintings in it, challenging the previous conception that the paintings must relate to the function of the room. She divides the areas of the home into more public rooms, like the atrium, and those that required an invitation to enter, such as the *cubiculum*. The *tablinum* was

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<sup>16</sup> Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 210-213.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Ling, *Roman Painting*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Ling, *Roman Painting*, 1-2, 135-138.

<sup>19</sup> Eleanor Leach, *The Social Life of Painting in Ancient Rome and on the Bay of Naples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

used both as an archive and a smaller reception place for clients, and often had paintings that were more complex than those in the atrium. Exedrae similarly contained paintings that could be used for memory exercises. Cubicula were rooms used for sleeping and other various activities, and could even be utilized as consultation rooms. Triclinia were meant for a range of social interactions from intimate gatherings with friends to meetings with superiors or clients. However, Leach argues that many of these rooms, like the cubiculum and triclinium, were not fixed locations. Advantageous places in the home were often intended for different uses and could vary depending on the seasons or the owner's needs. Therefore, when it comes to paintings, it is difficult to try and assess correlations between the depictions and the function of the room. Instead, Leach suggests that it is more useful to consider paintings intended for stationary versus transitory viewing. On account of the difficulty of ascertaining what exact function a room served, this more flexible method separates paintings into more useful categories: those that were meant for prolonged viewing and contemplation versus ones that were intended to leave quick and poignant impressions. Paintings in the atrium were usually paratactic and lacked designs on the surroundings walls, as they were intended to leave a quick impression. Paintings in rooms where one could linger on the other hand were more symmetrical and had thematic interest.<sup>20</sup> Leach's approach, which distinguishes between stationary versus transitory viewing, is better suited for this thesis. The focus on context within this thesis is not on determining rooms or their functions, but simply how the paintings were viewed in the past.

Clarke offers an approach surrounding the Roman house as a whole and looks at several aspects of domestic context.<sup>21</sup> Clarke argues that domestic space was focused around

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<sup>20</sup> Leach, *The Social Life of Painting*, 25-54.

<sup>21</sup> John Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy 100 BC-AD 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

ritual, by which he means formal and religious activities in addition to daily actions such as meeting with clients. As for paintings in particular, he discusses how they were used for education and entertainment. Paintings displayed in the fauces, atrium, and tablinum were meant for the passing spectator, while those in the triclinium, oecus, and exedra were intended for longer seated contemplation.<sup>22</sup> This method, similar to Leach's, encompasses the various uses of the domestic space by inhabitants and visitors rather than limiting interpretations to each room's specific function.

The work of Wallace-Hadrill has also been influential on scholarship considering the social significance of wall-painting.<sup>23</sup> He links domestic decoration with social standing, and shows how a so-called private home was a place used to present the best public image of one's self. Wallace-Hadrill also supports the division of rooms by private, invitation-only rooms as opposed to more public areas where business was conducted. He argues that wall-painting and other décor helped construct the owner's social identity, especially for those advancing in social rank. Competition was not just among elite Romans at this time, as lower classes would often emulate the grandeur of higher classes in furnishing.<sup>24</sup> The concept of emulation and the development of social identity through painting is critical to this thesis, as the desire to show cultural and social sophistication is a key factor behind the deviation from literary precedent in the Polyphemus and Galatea paintings.

Bettina Bergmann also provides a good example of scholarship that uses wall-paintings to look at social and cultural history in her article on the House of the Tragic Poet.<sup>25</sup> Her article

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<sup>22</sup> Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy*, 154-165.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 6-14, 183-184.

<sup>25</sup> Bettina Bergmann, "The Roman House as Memory Theater: The House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii," *The Art Bulletin* 76 (1994): 225-256.

engages with how space and motion within the house interacted with Roman memory and mnemonic devices, and offers a recreation of what a viewer would experience in the atrium of this house. At first glance the pictures in the atrium—Hera and Zeus, Briseis and Achilles, Helen and Paris, Amphitrite and Poseidon, Aphrodite, and Achilles and Agammenon—seem like they do not have much in common. However, they were in fact a mix of parallel and opposites, both in form and theme, meant to engage the viewer. One theme, for example, is women in transition who are joining or leaving the men depicted with them. At the same time, there is a sharp contrast between some of the women: Hera the goddess and model wife, Briseis the war prize, and Helen the adulterous queen. Bergmann argues that the similarities and differences stimulate the viewer to make connections. She also points out that it is a bit of an anomaly to have so many mythic paintings in the atrium, and suggests that the sheer number was meant to enhance the grandeur in the public atrium for visiting business client, and thus the owner's status.<sup>26</sup>

### C. Methodology

This thesis, in terms of methodology, is most closely aligned with Wallace-Hadrill and Bergmann. First, the project focuses on the iconography of Polyphemus in the paintings from Pompeii to determine how many paintings featured the cyclops. Then, it considers Polyphemus and Galatea according to similar themes within the depictions, organizing them as follows: Gaze, Cupid, and Erotic. The Gaze paintings show Polyphemus and Galatea looking at each other, usually separated by the boundaries of land and seas. The Cupid paintings depict Polyphemus receiving a letter from a Cupid. Galatea is not present in these paintings, but her love letter is. The Erotic paintings show Polyphemus and Galatea being physically intimate with one another.

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<sup>26</sup> Bergmann, "The Roman House as Memory Theater," 225-256.

Next, the room types are established, focusing not on the specific type of room, but whether or not it was a room meant for stationary or transitory viewing. The thesis then extends its focus to other paintings in the same room, to see if there were any thematic connections between them. In most cases there are connections, but several rooms do not establish a clear theme. This also includes a survey of what styles were present in each house, depending on how well preserved the house was. Then, the thesis analyzes the societal factors motivating the representations of Polyphemus and Galatea. As a whole, there is a softening of the monster during the late republic and early empire that correlates with the display context in the Roman home. Each set of paintings, however, represent various Roman influences on Polyphemus' myth. The Erotic wall-paintings interact with the literary tradition. This interaction displays a Roman appreciation of Greek culture, as well as the desire to leave their own impact on the tradition. The Cupid wall-paintings show an increased belief in how success could be achieved through education. Lastly, the Erotic wall-paintings further support the known trend of making epic figures more erotic as a way of engaging with sexual fantasy and escapism.

### III. Polyphemus and Galatea in Literature

#### A. Polyphemus

The Cyclops appears in a number of ancient literary works, though he is not always portrayed in the same way. The earliest depiction is from Homer's *Odyssey*, which depicts him as a legitimate monster, inhumane in both appearance and disposition.<sup>27</sup> He is shown with an affection for his sheep, but this does little to soften his cruel nature as it is outweighed by the vulgarity of consuming Odysseus' crewmates. Despite his strength, Polyphemus is easily

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<sup>27</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, 9.170-550.

overcome by Odysseus through trickery and loses his eye as a result. The Polyphemus of the *Odyssey* is a cruel monster, comic in his stupidity but not pitiable. This scene is also depicted in the satyr play *Cyclops* by Euripides.<sup>28</sup> Although the titular cyclops is not named, it is clearly an alternative version of the Homeric story, adapted to involve satyrs and philosophical debates. Despite being more articulate, Polyphemus meets the same fate by falling for the same trick from the epic.

A different take on Polyphemus is found in the bucolic poetry of Theocritus. *Idyll* 11 presents a love-sick Polyphemus singing a song for Galatea.<sup>29</sup> The introduction and conclusion make it clear that his love is unrequited, and the song helps tame his futile passion. This myth illustrates a different Polyphemus, one who is more human and relatable in his actions. The only monstrous thing about him is his appearance, otherwise he is no different from the other shepherds seen in the *Idylls*. Ovid combines these two depictions in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>30</sup> A displeased Galatea describes Polyphemus' advances towards her. While his love for the nymph has tempered his rage, it is quick to rise again when he catches her with Acis. He resorts to his old ways of solving problems—throwing boulders. Despite having some of the Theocritus' Polyphemus in him, he is still very much the Homeric monster.

#### B. Galatea

Galatea appears in a variety of literary roles, but her distaste for Polyphemus is consistent. She has no speaking line in *Idylls 11*, but the poem's context as a remedy for love makes it clear that she does not have any romantic inclinations towards Polyphemus. Galatea is

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<sup>28</sup> Euripides, *Cyclops: Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Robert Ussher (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo & Bizzari: 1978).

<sup>29</sup> Theocritus, *Theocritus, Moschus, Bion*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 166-175.

<sup>30</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13.738-897.

explicit with her disgust in the *Metamorphoses* and even describes her preferred lover Acis, who is killed in a jealous rage by Polyphemus.

Two outlier works are *Idyll 6* and Lucian's *Dialogi Marini*. *Idyll 6* is a singing competition between Daphnis and Damoetas. Daphnis sings of Polyphemus' ignorance of Galatea's flirtation, while Damoetas replies that this was a ploy by Polyphemus to make Galatea consider him more seriously.<sup>31</sup> As Kostopoulou argues, this apparent change of heart should not be taken seriously.<sup>32</sup> Galatea's character remains ambiguous and her actions allude to a variety of characters, including the Polyphemus of *Idyll 11*. Also, her flirtatious antics, such as apple throwing, are not directly aimed at Polyphemus, but rather his sheep and dog. Several words also play with the concept of not seeing, a nod to Polyphemus' future blindness and overall failure. Furthermore, when Daphnis ends his description of Galatea's actions, he alludes to a board game. This highlights the insincerity of Galatea's advances, which are nothing more than a game to her.<sup>33</sup> In *Dialogi Marini 1*, Galatea discusses Polyphemus' affections for her with Doris.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to previous literature, Galatea defends Polyphemus and even disregards his monstrous appearance, following the sophist's method of making the weaker argument stronger.<sup>35</sup> This work is also exceptional like the *Metamorphoses*, since we directly learn of Galatea's thoughts from the nymph herself, instead of through the eyes of Polyphemus or Daphnis. However, this disparate behavior on Galatea's part does not amount to reciprocal feelings. As noted by Kostopoulou, Galatea states that Polyphemus is not her lover and suggests that she is merely interested in being pursued by a suitor.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Theocritus, *Theocritus, Moschus, Bion*, 104-111.

<sup>32</sup> Kostopoulou, "Polyphemus and Galatea," 103-108.

<sup>33</sup> Kostopoulou, "Polyphemus and Galatea," 104-106.

<sup>34</sup> Adam Bartley, *Lucian's Dialogi Marini* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Kostopoulou, "Polyphemus and Galatea," 223.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 227.



This is a brief overview on the relationship of Polyphemus and Galatea in literature. There are many interesting facets and factors at play in these literary works, but this thesis cannot review all of these in detail. The single common factor throughout literary treatments is Galatea's refusal of Polyphemus' advances. The paintings from Pompeii shows us additional versions of the Polyphemus and Galatea myth still, one where she desires Polyphemus sexually and another where she reciprocates his interest in a less physical manner.

#### IV. Wall-Paintings Considered in this Study (See Tables 1-3)

Before moving into the main body of this work, a brief overview of the wall-paintings and their locations will be provided. This thesis examines fifteen paintings which show the story of Polyphemus and Galatea.<sup>37</sup> There are four more paintings that show this myth, but there is no evidence for what they looked like except for written records.<sup>38</sup> As such, they will be excluded from this study which relies on visual representations, both extant and reconstructed. Of the fifteen paintings in this study, nine remain in situ at Pompeii.<sup>39</sup> Seven of these are faded or damaged, but are documented in reconstructed drawings and paintings. Four paintings are only available as drawings or reconstructions, as either the decoration or entire building no longer

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<sup>37</sup> See the table on page x for a concise list of the paintings covered here.

<sup>38</sup>Houses: I.2.3, V.1.18, VI.16.32, IX.2.18

<sup>39</sup> Triclinium b of I.7.7 from Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, *Pompei: pitture e mosaici v. 1* (Roma: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1990-2003), 599.

Triclinium 12 of VI.10.1; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 4*, 1027.

Garden 13 of VII.4.48; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 7*, 35.

Exedra z of VII.15.2; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 7*, 759.

Oecus b of VIII.5.37; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 8*, 633.

Cubiculum g of IX.2.10; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 8*, 1101-2.

Cubiculum 5 and 7 of IX.3.5; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 9*, 172-3 and 216-217.

Atrium c of IX.6.d; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 9*, 752.

remain.<sup>40</sup> The last two paintings are preserved in the Naples National Archaeological Museum.<sup>41</sup>

The Gaze paintings were originally found in the following buildings. The House of the Priest Amandus is located in region I.7.7, with its main entrance off the Via dell' Abbondanza. It is a sizable complex with several rooms and a peristyle off to the sides of the atrium. Most of the remaining decorations appear to be done in the Third Style. The House of Glass Vases is found in region VI.5.5, and has painting from the First through Third Styles. The House of Colored Capitals is in region VII.4.51. It is a large complex with two peristyles. The House of the Ancient Hunt, which has an erotic painting as well, is in region VII.4.48 off the Via della Fortuna. This is the one of the largest of the buildings in this study, which preserves several examples of Fourth Style decoration. The House of the Sailor, also known as the House of Niobe, lies in region VII.15.2. This building is much larger and has a private bathing complex inside. It is better-known for a large painting depicting the slaughter of the Niobids. An unnamed house from region IX.6.d also has one of the gaze paintings. The building is very small and is not well documented. The final house with a gaze painting is next to House of the Eagle in region IX.7.12. This complex was only partially excavated, with the only significant finds being the painting of Polyphemus and Galatea, and one of Actaeon and Diana.

The Cupid paintings are found in four buildings at Pompeii. One is from the House of Marcus Lucretius is located in region IX.3.5. This house has two atriums, one of which is off of the Via Stabiana. A caupona on the Via di Mercurio in region VI.10.1 has another Cupid painting. This is a very compact building with only four rooms. The third example was found in

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<sup>40</sup> Triclinium m of V.2.d; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 3*, 628.

Triclinium 12 of VI.5.5; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 4*, 331.

Room c of VI.14.28-33; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 5*, 347.

Triclinium 5 of IX.7.12; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 9*, 780.

<sup>41</sup> MANN 8886, originally from cubiculum 26 of VII.4.31-51; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 6*, 1061.

MANN 27687, originally from oecus 15 of VII.4.48; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 7*, 39.

a building referred to as a gambling den in some sources. Located in region VI.14.28, this building is thought to be an annex of the House of Laocoon, but its purpose is still debatable. The final building in this chapter is an unnamed house in region V.2.d. The evidence for this painting comes from a reconstruction, since the most of decoration in this small complex is lost.

The Erotic paintings originated from the following locations. The House of the Ancient Hunt, mentioned earlier, also had one Erotic painting which is now in the Naples National Archaeological Museum. The House of Red Walls located in region VIII.5.37 was a large house that possibly belonged to the Fabia family. It had several rooms on both sides of the atrium, and a sizable garden in the back. The House of Chlorus and Caprasia in region IX.2.10 originally possessed several Fourth Style paintings, but few remain today. The painting of Polyphemus and Galatea from this house is known through a reconstruction.

This thesis thoroughly examines wall-paintings involving Polyphemus and Galatea, and compares them by type. Chapter 2 will focus on the Gaze paintings, which illustrate a continued appreciation for Greek culture alongside development of unique Roman aspects. Chapter 3 will examine the Cupid paintings, which demonstrate Polyphemus' success in wooing Galatea. This different version of the myth alludes to Roman views on the competence provided by education and literacy. Chapter 4 will look at the Erotic paintings, which illustrate another Polyphemus success story, but in a more carnal fashion. This further emphasizes the trend of eroticizing epic figures within the home and utilizing fantasy for viewing pleasure.

## Chapter 2: Gaze Paintings – Interplay between Literature and Art

This chapter analyzes the Gaze wall-paintings which show Polyphemus gazing at Galatea from the shore. These paintings evoke the works of Theocritus and Ovid concerning the Cyclops and emphasize his bucolic nature and a softening of his monstrous behavior. The basic composition of Polyphemus looking at Galatea unifies these paintings, but there are several differences among them. In addition, there are interesting comparisons and contrasts between the obtainable and the unobtainable suggested by the Gaze paintings and the surrounding images. In the Gaze paintings, Galatea's feelings are unclear, though their affinity with the stories from literary sources would suggest she remains unreciprocating as usual. One painting, however, hints at mutual attraction. The interaction between literary accounts and visual representations in these paintings demonstrates a continued appreciation for Greek culture, but also introduces the possibility of new interpretations prompted by Roman cultural considerations.

### I. Descriptions of Gaze Paintings in Context

*House of the Priest Amandus (P. 1)* The House of the Priest Amandus preserves one painting showing Polyphemus and Galatea (Pl. 1.1) The painting is located on the south wall of a triclinium next to the atrium. Polyphemus is seated on a rocky island, holding pipes and a shepherd's staff. There is a flock of sheep and a statuette of Priapus near him. Galatea is on the left, riding a dolphin and looking at Polyphemus from the sea. Galatea's back faces the viewer, and the side view of her face is lost. In the background of the painting, a trireme sails past. This painting shares similar features with the better-known painting from the Villa at Boscotrecase (Pl. 12.1). Notable differences from that well-known painting include the lack of the rock-throwing Polyphemus in the background, the presence of a Priapus statue, and Galatea's rear

view portrayal instead of frontal. On the north wall, Hercules and the Hesperides are depicted, standing before their tree.<sup>42</sup> The fall of Icarus is seen on the east wall of the room.<sup>43</sup> Helios and his chariot stand in for the sun, as Icarus falls before several onlookers, including a pair of women and men in boats. The west wall of the room has a painting of Perseus saving Andromeda, who is chained to a cliff and about to be attacked by the sea-monster in the bottom left corner.<sup>44</sup> The collection of paintings in this room do not share a single thematic program, but established foils between the paintings. Hercules and Perseus are successful in their depicted endeavors, while Icarus fails because he exceeded his capability. Polyphemus is usually a failure like Icarus. The relationship between this Gaze painting and the one from Boscotrecase, however, may suggest that his goal is obtainable as discussed later.

*House of Glass Vases (Pl. 2)* There is one painting of Polyphemus and Galatea in the House of the Glass Vases. Originally located on the north wall of room 12, a triclinium, it now survives only as a drawing (Pl. 2.1). Unlike the other paintings in this study, this painting was a tondo instead of the typical panel painting. Polyphemus is seated and holding a lyre. Galatea seems to be looking in a different direction, with her back facing the viewer. On the south wall, there was a tondo of Oedipus.<sup>45</sup> There was also a tondo of Leda and the swan in this triclinium as well, but its original location is unknown.<sup>46</sup> The central panel on the east wall of this room featured sacrificial items, including incense and a bull's head.<sup>47</sup> Since these paintings no longer remain, it is hard to establish a thematic program in the room. One interesting inclusion is that of

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<sup>42</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 1*, 592.

<sup>43</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 1*, 594.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 602.

<sup>45</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 4*, 333.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 335.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 332.

the Oedipus painting, as it shows another mythological character famous for his impending blindness.

*The House of the Colored Capitals (Pl.3)* This house originally included one painting of Polyphemus and Galatea on the east wall of room 22, which is situated between the two peristyles (3.1) The painting is currently located in the Naples National Archaeological Museum.<sup>48</sup> Polyphemus stands on the shore and looks out towards the sea. There, Galatea is depicted on a dolphin, along with other figures in the water. The west wall showed Hercules rescuing Prometheus.<sup>49</sup> The north and south walls are poorly preserved, with slight traces of Fourth Style decoration. A parallel to consider between these two paintings is a desire to cross boundaries. Prometheus and Polyphemus are both bound and desire to move from their location. The former seeks to flee the torture of the Underworld while the latter wants to leave the land in pursuit of his aquatic lover.

*The House of the Ancient Hunt (Pl. 4)* Here there are two paintings of Polyphemus and Galatea, one of which belongs to this theme. The Gaze painting is found on the south wall of the garden complex. The foreground has Galatea sitting in the sea, while the background has a landscape with buildings. A drawing of the painting suggests that Polyphemus was seated on the shore on the left side (Pl. 4.2). There is another poorly preserved landscape in the garden, with a tree and a statue of Apollo.<sup>50</sup>

*The House of the Sailor (Pl. 5)* This house, sometimes referred to as the House of Niobe, has a single painting of Polyphemus and Galatea. All paintings within this room are currently in situ, which has led to poor preservation. The Gaze painting is found on the east wall

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<sup>48</sup> MANN 8886.

<sup>49</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 6*, 1063.

<sup>50</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 7*, 31-2.

of the apodyterium in the house's bath.<sup>51</sup> The actual painting is very damaged, and is best comprehended through a reconstruction (Pl. 5.1). Galatea is shown sitting on a dolphin in the sea. She is looking towards an outcrop of rocks, on which goats are wandering. The right side of the painting is lost, but Polyphemus was most likely depicted there amongst the goats. A painting on the south wall depicts Perseus saving Andromeda, but is poorly preserved except for the legs of Perseus and the sea-monster.<sup>52</sup> Dirce being dragged by the bull is seen on the north wall, with goats in the foreground.<sup>53</sup> On the west wall, there is a painting showing the slaughter of the Niobids.<sup>54</sup> The prosperous Perseus is once again featured with the Cyclops and the nymph, in addition to two depictions of ill-fated characters.

*Unnamed House IX.6.d (Pl. 6)* A small house with a shop attached has one painting of Polyphemus and Galatea, located on the south wall of the atrium. The actual painting no longer remains, but a reproduction shows Polyphemus seated on a rocky island, looking out towards the sea (Pl. 6.1). He has one hand on top of panpipes and sheep flocked around him. Further back, there is an unclear figure moving away from him. The bottom left corner of the painting was lost when the reconstruction was made, but Galatea was most likely depicted there considering the similarities to the other Gaze paintings. The west wall depicts Theseus abandoning Ariadne, as Athena overlooks the event on a cliff.<sup>55</sup> The fall of Icarus is seen on the walkway from the atrium to a back room.<sup>56</sup> Unlike the similar painting mentioned in the House of Amandus, Icarus has completed his fall and lies on the ground next to a pair of women. Judging the paintings by

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<sup>51</sup> The function of this room is debated, as noted by Franklin, who suggests that it was a type of lounge area (to avoid problems with terminology), see James Franklin, *Pompeii: The 'Casa del Marinaio' and its History* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1990), 29.

<sup>52</sup> Carratelli, *Pompeii* v. 7, 762-3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 752-4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 749.

<sup>55</sup> Carratelli, *Pompeii* v. 9, 727.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 728.

both their literary precedence and the particular moments depicted, this room is filled with a theme of doom. Ariadne and Polyphemus do not obtain their lovers, both separated by the boundaries of the sea. Icarus similarly fails by trying to fly too high, only to plummet to his death. In an interesting twist, his completed fall to the ground is shown. The written version of the myth has the sea claim his body, which again keeps Daedalus away from his son just like it keeps Ariadne and Polyphemus from their loved ones.

*Partially Excavated House IX.7.12 (Pl.7)* Two paintings were found in this partially excavated building, one of which shows Polyphemus and Galatea. Both paintings are preserved today as only drawings (Pl. 7.1). The painting of Polyphemus was located on the north wall of a room labelled as a triclinium. Polyphemus appears on a rocky shore, holding his staff and seated near his sheep. Galatea is nearby, seated on a hippocampus in the sea. She seems to be looking directly at Polyphemus. On the south wall, Actaeon is seen on a rocky cliff, catching a glimpse of the naked Artemis near a stream below.<sup>57</sup>

Overall, there is a lot of variety in this group of paintings from seven contexts. They are located in different room types geared towards stationary and momentary viewing, but tend to be in the more public rooms of the house. The accompanying paintings depict various mythological scenes. Two are paired with Perseus and Andromeda, a similarity shared with the paintings at Boscotrecase. The main trends in the gaze paintings are classification as Third Style paintings, the emphasis on Polyphemus as a shepherd, and the act of gazing

## II. Discussion: Literary Continuity and Challenges

The Gaze paintings interact the most with the literary tradition of Polyphemus and

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<sup>57</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 9*, 781.



Galatea. Despite this apparent adherence to poems of Theocritus and Ovid, the rooms that hold all of these paintings play with contrasting ideas of obtainable and unobtainable goals in their choice of depicted myths. This arrangement forces the viewer to ask whether Polyphemus's of Galatea is achievable or not. In one particular case, there are even clearer signs that Polyphemus may yet win Galatea's affections.

Of all the Polyphemus and Galatea paintings at Pompeii, the ones in this group best depict the Polyphemus and Galatea story described in literary works. Most paintings of Polyphemus make reference to his role as a shepherd, but these show him in the act itself. Albeit distracted by the sight of Galatea, Polyphemus is seen watching over his flock. He is often seen holding his staff or panpipes, as if interrupted in mid-song. The painting from the unnamed house goes even further and shows a figure running behind Polyphemus, whom the cyclops is completely unaware of. Similar to the Polyphemus described in Idyll 11 and the *Metamorphoses*, the paintings show a former hard-working shepherd who has become preoccupied with his pining. The ship seen in the painting at the House of the Priest Amandus is the most direct reference to Theocritus and Ovid. Both authors mention how Polyphemus has mellowed on account of his love, caring for little else and even letting ships pass safely.<sup>58</sup>

These paintings are closely aligned with the non-epic descriptions of Polyphemus. As such, can we assume that Galatea remains faithful to the literary tradition as well? None of the paintings make Galatea's feelings clear, and often the viewer cannot see her face at all. In four of the Gaze paintings her back is turned, suggesting that her focus is in on Polyphemus. Whether or not this focus on the Cyclops indicates interest is unclear. Since of the paintings survive as

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<sup>58</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 14.765-769.  
Theocritus, *Idylls*, 11.7-16.

drawings, it is hard to make any definitive conclusions about the implications of Galatea's posture. The surrounding paintings do not make the implications clear, unlike the presence of Venus and Cupids in the other sets of paintings. At best they are ambiguous, and at worse conflicting. However, they do offer an interesting interaction between complementary and contrasting themes.

At first glance, the other paintings near Polyphemus and Galatea appear to be completely unrelated. However, in terms of more general themes, there are contrasts and comparisons being made to the story of the unsuccessful lover Polyphemus. First, there is the theme of the ill-fated, such as Icarus, the Niobids, and Dirce, who are all fated to die. Ariadne also qualifies since she must face the same rejection as Polyphemus, before being taken by Bacchus. Oedipus is an especially poignant sign of Polyphemus' predestined failure. While he does not die, Oedipus experiences the same loss of vision that Polyphemus suffers at the hands of Odysseus. Second, there is the idea of failure caused by over-reaching your bounds. This includes Icarus, who tried to fly too close to the sun, and the Niobids, who were punished for their mother's boasting. Third, several paintings call attention to events happening on the shore near the sea, such as Icarus, Ariadne, and Perseus. In doing so, they foreshadow Polyphemus' imminent failure to win Galatea's heart. Two explicitly suggest failure and one illustrates the divide between land and sea, which are condemned to remain separate.

The story of Perseus differs from these themes, as the story has a happy ending. One way to consider this outlier is as a contrast. This may be related to the Polyphemus of Idyll 11. While he does not get the girl, the ending is far from tragic as he cures himself with music. However, there is a way to have this painting fit the theme of failure. Despite being the main character of this tale, Perseus is typically drawn as a smaller figure. Arguably the more eye-catching figures

are Andromeda and the large sea-monster. This story is commonly thought of in terms of Perseus' successful rescue, but it can also be thought of as a failed attack by the sea-monster. It is a minor character to be sure, but it is equally as doomed as Icarus to die at the end of the story. Bergmann also offers interesting parallels between the Perseus-Andromeda and Polyphemus-Galatea pairs.<sup>59</sup> She likens Andromeda to Polyphemus, as they are both bound to the shore and unable to move to the object of their desire. Galatea is located in the same position as the sea-monster, alluding to the monster in her painting. Both paintings illustrate a moment of tension, with the future uncertain for Polyphemus and Galatea. Bergmann suggests that Perseus' presence is about to break the tension in his painting, by thwarting the sea-monster, and perhaps stands in for the song of Polyphemus.<sup>60</sup> Of course, whether the song will lead to success or failure is still unclear.

In general, these paintings involve themes of attempting to reach unreachable goals and pre-determined failures. Some, like Perseus paintings, show contrasting cases of successful endeavors. This suggests that these paintings all show a Galatea who most likely remains unmoved by Polyphemus' affections. The one possible exception to this is the painting from the House of the Priest Amandus.

As mentioned earlier, the painting from the House of the Priest Amandus (Pl. 1.1) resembles the painting of Polyphemus and Galatea at the Villa at Boscotrecase (Pl. 12.1). While there are only two main differences, they can completely change the implications of the painting. As discussed by von Blanckenhagen, the painting at Boscotrecase shows the narrative of

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<sup>59</sup> Bettina Bergmann, "Rhythms of Recognition: Mythological Encounters in Roman Landscape Painting" in *Im Spiegel des Mythos: Bilderwelt und Lebenswelt*, ed. Francesco De Angelis et al. (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1999), 92-93.

<sup>60</sup> Bergmann, "Rhythms of Recognition," 92.

Polyphemus seen in both Ovid and Homer.<sup>61</sup> Galatea shows no interest in the Cyclops, and instead faces the audience. The smaller Polyphemus in the background reinforces how his story will end—in failure. Not only will Galatea not love him, he will lose his eye to Odysseus and throw rocks at the departing ships in vain. The painting evokes the simpleton chasing after a beautiful woman. They are different in every way, including the environments they belong in, as land and seas further separate them. However, the painting was meant to affect the viewer in a positive way. Just like Idyll 11, despite the inherent failure in the story, the work itself shows the power of art to console.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast, the painting from the House of the Priest Amandus (Pl 1.1) removes the negative foreshadowing and perhaps indicates a Galatea who is interested in Polyphemus. One of the main differences is that the smaller Polyphemus is not depicted. Instead of alluding to the episode in the *Odyssey*, the ships refer to the *Metamorphoses*, in which ships pass safely and avoid Polyphemus' wrath. The depiction of Galatea also differs, as Pl. 1.1 has her facing Polyphemus instead of the viewer. This shift in her focus indicates, at least, some mild interest in Polyphemus. Finally, the presence of the Priapus statue may indicate a fortuitous endeavor. It is unclear what deity is shown in the painted statue at Boscotrecase, but the one at Pompeii has Priapus' unmistakable phallus. As such, it is clearly a sign of eroticism, but it is unclear who this eroticism is being attributed to. There is a possibility for sexual relations between the two, if not love. However, Priapus is often used for good luck as well, perhaps indicating that Polyphemus' pursuit of Galatea is more favorable here.

### III. Chapter Conclusion

The Gaze paintings represent an adherence to the literary tradition, with one possible

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<sup>61</sup> von Blanckenhagen II, *The Augustan Villa at Boscotrecase*, 28-33.

<sup>62</sup> von Blanckenhagen II, *The Augustan Villa at Boscotrecase*, 28-33.

exception. The accompanying paintings establish themes of failure, foretelling the rejection Polyphemus will face in his infatuation. The influence of the poems by Theocritus and Ovid on the paintings is clear. However, this does not mean that the narrative in the painting must follow the traditional story, as seen in Plate 1.1.

Regardless of their particular interpretation, all the paintings clearly interact with the literary tradition. Michael Squire discusses this phenomenon in great detail, using this pair as an example of iconotexts.<sup>63</sup> He illustrates the various exchanges between literature and art, arguing that they both have influence on one another and act as intertexts with varying sources. For example, depictions and literary works on Polyphemus usually associate his failed wooing with his blinding at the hands of Odysseus<sup>64</sup>. This interplay demonstrates a persistent interest in Greek art and culture. However, some also have potential to illustrate new Roman interpretations. The choice to depict a moment of tension, where Galatea's feelings are unclear, allow the viewer to construe the painting as they will. In contrast to earlier depictions of Odysseus about to stab out Polyphemus' eye, which leave little room for doubt about what will happen, the story of Polyphemus and Galatea is more flexible. Depictions of the pair are enhanced by literary precedent, but they need not be bound to it. The preference for this scene in Roman wall-painting indicates an inclination towards varying mythological traditions concerning Polyphemus. They would appeal to varying audiences who could either interpret the work in the context of literary tradition or appreciate the nuances of the painting, which contains hints of a successful relationship. By playing with this literary tradition, Roman taste in Greek culture remained, but it also shows a predisposition for flexible interpretation. This variety of interpretation is further developed in the next chapter, where we do see a Galatea who reciprocates Polyphemus' love.

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<sup>63</sup> Squire, "Cyclopien Iconotexts," 300-356.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 322.

### Chapter 3: Cupid Paintings – A Literate Cyclops

This chapter considers wall-paintings depicting Polyphemus with a Cupid. In these three paintings, the Cyclops receives a letter. The similarities among the paintings and the context of their rooms illustrate Polyphemus in a successful relationship with Galatea. This is a deviation from the literary tradition which can be traced to the written letter he receives. Letter writing can allude to both love affairs, as seen in the *Ars Amatoria*, and scholarly leisure, such as Pliny the Younger's published letters. In its most basic essence, though, letter writing indicates literacy. The Cupid paintings portray a literate Polyphemus influenced by the Roman belief that achievement is made possible through cultural progress.

#### I. Descriptions of Cupid Paintings in Context

*House of Marcus Lucretius (Pl. 8)* The House of Marcus Lucretius has two paintings featuring Polyphemus. The first is located in a room off the west side of the primary atrium, which is usually called a cubiculum.<sup>65</sup> A painting of Polyphemus receiving a letter from Cupid is located on the north wall of this room (Pl. 8.2). Polyphemus is seated, with his left hand in his lap and his right extending out to the Cupid. The Cupid is riding a dolphin and is handing a letter to Polyphemus. The west wall is decorated with illusionary architectural designs, and a Fourth Style panel showing Venus fishing with Cupids (Pl. 8.1). Venus is seen seated with a winged figure to the left of her head, probably Cupid. The south wall has a painting of Phrixus and Helle in the center, depicting the moment Helle falls from the back of the ram.<sup>66</sup> The second Polyphemus painting is found in a room off the east side of the primary atrium, and is also

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<sup>65</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 9*, 216.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 222.

thought to be a cubiculum (Pl. 8.4). A poorly preserved depiction of Polyphemus and Galatea appears on the center of the north wall. The figure of Polyphemus is seated with his staff and looking at a figure standing before him, most likely Galatea. This identification is supported by the presence of Galatea's leaf in the drawing, which also appears later in an Erotic painting (Pl. 4.1). Two panels with Cupids are on each side of the work.<sup>67</sup> The one on the left has a Cupid pulling a large feline away from the central painting, while the one on the right has a Cupid leading a goat towards the center. The east wall holds a picture of Cyparissus, seated next to his deer.<sup>68</sup> The south wall has a Nereid on a dolphin, who is most likely representing Galatea (Pl. 8.3).

This first Cupid painting has similarities with those that will follow. First, Polyphemus is always seated and extending his right hand. While it is difficult to make out on the painting, an early reconstruction indicates that he is holding a staff, which fits into his general iconography in domestic settings. Second, there is a painting of Venus fishing with Cupid in the same room. The significance of Venus and Cupids in characterizing these paintings will be discussed later in this chapter. This painting differs from the others as it is located near two paintings exhibiting Galatea. Although located in a different room across the atrium, the lone Nereid from the other cubiculum represents Galatea, and recalls the Cupid paintings on the other side of the atrium. The painting is strategically placed on the south wall, with her gaze directed across the atrium to the cubiculum where Polyphemus is, perhaps showing that she awaits confirmation of her letter's delivery. This set of paintings creates an interesting visual dynamic that may have prompted viewers to imagine a narrative. Polyphemus receives a letter from the messenger Cupid in one room. Across the atrium, Galatea awaits a reply to her letter, gazing out

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 170-171

<sup>68</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 9*, 167.

towards Polyphemus. On the opposite wall in this room, the two are finally shown with each other, brought together by the exchange. The painting of Polyphemus and Galatea is also on the south wall of the room, just like the Cupid painting, which draws further attention to them as set.

The second painting showing Polyphemus and Galatea in cubiculum 5 may indicate a successful love. The presence of the Cupid panels lends to this interpretation, as one is leading a goat, perhaps symbolic of Polyphemus. Cyparissus further indicates the theme of love and eroticism in this room as one of Apollo's lovers.

*Caupona in Regio VI (Pl. 9)* A painting of Polyphemus receiving his love letter appears on the east wall of a rear room in the north-east corner of this caupona (Pl. 9.1). The west wall features a fishing Venus, with another hunt scene underneath (Pl. 9.2). This painting is better preserved than the one in the House of Marcus Lucretius and depicts Venus accompanied by four Cupids. On the east wall, Polyphemus is well preserved, seated with his right hand reaching for something, most likely a letter. His left hand is further out to his side and appears to be holding a staff. The Cupid is not as well preserved and the area where the letter should be is completely lost. The similarities, however, make it clear that this is the same type of Cupid painting. There are two Cupids on each side of this painting, and a scene of a Cupid hunting underneath. In previous scholarship, this painting has been identified as one of Polyphemus and Galatea.<sup>69</sup> The figure on the left is heavily damaged, adding to the uncertainty of this figure. However, the size of the figure's head, its position before the outstretched hand of Polyphemus, and the accompanying image of fishing Venus on the opposite wall all indicate that the figure is more likely to be a Cupid than Galatea. This painting again matches the trend of this group, as the fishing Venus appears alongside Polyphemus accepting a love letter. The scene of Cupids

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<sup>69</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 9*, 1027.



hunting underneath both paintings connotes the success of Polyphemus' relationship, on account of their erotic associations. The function of this room is unclear, but its placement in the back of the building, as well as its single entrance, suggest that it was a room intended for stationary viewing.

*House of Laocoon Annex (Pl. 10)* The function of this building is unclear. Previously it was thought to be a shop attached to the House of Laocoon, but Laurentino Garcia y Garcia argues for its use as a gambling den, an interpretation supported by the relief of a fritillus between phalli.<sup>70</sup> A painting of Polyphemus obtaining a letter was located on the east wall of the main room, but it was destroyed by the 1943 Allied Forces bombing of Pompeii. A drawing of the painting indicates that it was nearly identical to the Cupid painting from the House of Marcus Lucretius (Pl. 10.1). Polyphemus is again seated with his right hand out and left hand in his lap, possibly holding a staff. The Cupid sits on a dolphin and hands a tabula to him. The west wall featured a painting of Venus fishing along with a small Cupid in front of her and the larger Cupid near her head (Pl.10.2). There was an image of two Cupids playing with grapes and a small dog on the south wall.<sup>71</sup>

This Cupid painting has the same similar themes as the previous ones. One difference is the presence of a wreath on Polyphemus' head. While this is not seen in the previous group of paintings, there is another depiction of Polyphemus with a wreath in a later group. The correlation between Polyphemus and the fishing Venus continues here, as well as the presence of Cupids to solidify the achievement of Polyphemus' love.

*Unnamed House V.2.d (Pl. 11)* This house is in poor condition today, with no visible

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<sup>70</sup> Laurentino García y García, *Danni di guerra a Pompei: una dolorosa vicenda quasi dimenticata con numerose notizie sul Museo pompeiano distrutto nel 1943* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2006), 90-91.

<sup>71</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei* v. 9, 349.

remains of the painted decoration in any of the rooms. All evidence of the paintings that were there originally come from drawings. The Cupid painting was on the north wall of a triclinium.<sup>72</sup> De Simone's drawing suggests that it matches the other Cupid paintings, with a seated Polyphemus reaching out to a Cupid on a dolphin (Pl. 11.1). The east wall held a painting of Venus next to a statue of Priapus.<sup>73</sup> The south wall featured a seated figure with boots, thought to be Narcissus.<sup>74</sup> This room is similar to the others in that it pairs the Cupid painting with one of Venus, but it switches from the common fishing Venus to another type. The so-called Narcissus painting was damaged at the time the drawing was made, so no connections can be drawn from this unidentifiable painting.

## II. Successful Love – A Possible Painting Group

The Cupid paintings depict Polyphemus in a successful courtship, if not an advanced relationship. Despite the small corpus, all paintings are found in similar thematic and contextual environments. Cupids in many different forms appear near all the paintings, which suggests the flourishing of a love affair. Moreover, the consistent display context alongside Venus furthers the theme of love in each room. The paintings in the House of Marcus Lucretius show a successful relationship in an intriguing way by playing with the themes of the Gaze paintings. In the previous chapter, this thesis explored paintings that show Polyphemus and Galatea gazing at each other. Despite being in the frame of the same painting, the two figures are separated and follow the literary tradition of Polyphemus' failed wooing. Here, Galatea is now gazing at Polyphemus. Unlike Polyphemus in the Gaze paintings, Galatea is separated not by the boundary

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<sup>72</sup> V.2.d; Carratelli, *Pompei v. 3*, 628.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 635.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*.

of land and sea within the painting, but by physical space of the house. Polyphemus, however, is focused on the Cupid and his delivery. The positioning of this painting further supports that it is indeed a love letter from Galatea, and not someone else. Finally, the Cupid paintings are all located in rooms meant for stationary viewing. As these images deviate from the known literary tradition, such works would give a viewer pause and thus were not ideal for a passing glance. Prolonged viewing encouraged one to think about what has made the unsuccessful Cyclops desirable enough to be the object of affection, as opposed to a doomed suitor.

Unlike the other sets of wall-paintings in this thesis, the Polyphemus and Cupid class appears to be a painting group that previously existed in antiquity, all based on the same pattern book. All the paintings are similar in composition, with only slight variations to Polyphemus' arm placement and iconography. Despite the small corpus, all paintings are located in rooms meant for sedentary viewing. Additionally, they all are near a painting of Venus in the same room. Another painting of this type is also found at Herculaneum (Pl. 12.2), but since it has been removed from its original context, it is impossible to determine if it met these criteria.

### III. Sophisticating a Cyclops

Returning to the question that would give a viewer of these paintings pause: what turned the hapless Polyphemus into a lover? The answer lies with the Cupid's delivery, the *tabula*. The suggested exchange of love letters between Polyphemus and Galatea indicate two things. The first is that she is reciprocating his feelings in some way, either through mutual courtship or a full-fledged relationship. The gestures from Polyphemus and the Cupid show that he is receiving the letter, not sending one. As such, Galatea is actively participating in a relationship that is not purely physical. The second is that Polyphemus is now literate. An exchange of love letters

implies that Polyphemus is capable of reading and writing, further educated than the singing Polyphemus of Theocritus.

Letter writing in Rome had two connotations. First, it implies courting and love affairs, which often developed through letter exchanges. Ovid discusses this in the *Ars Amatoria*, giving advice to both men and women on how to write the most effective letters.<sup>75</sup> The other implication is that of scholarly pursuits. Famous and learned letter writers included Cicero and Pliny the Younger, who lived closer to the time of these paintings. Both wrote letters with the intent of publishing them, an activity that represented the leisure and sophistication of elite society. While the tabula of Polyphemus most likely has words of love instead of thoughts on current events and advice, they still express a level of refinement.

This concept of a sophisticated Polyphemus is a manifestation of the increased cultural movement at Rome during the time of these paintings.<sup>76</sup> Starting in the early 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE, the Roman empire saw an influx of wealth among non-elites. Contemporaneously, there was increased interest in creating Roman cultural works on par with the those of the Greeks. At the local level, the new Polyphemus represents the benefits that individuals could reap when they pursued literature and the arts. Literacy can cultivate and even permit a hideous and unwanted Cyclops to achieve his goals. On a broader level, Polyphemus for the more cultured Rome in the time of the emperors. Wallace-Hadrill observes that Romans could admit that they used to be uncivilized. However, through superior behavior derived from reliance on laws and knowledge of classical literature, they distanced themselves from savagery.<sup>77</sup> This kind of transformation is

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<sup>75</sup> Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, I.436-486, III.467-498.

<sup>76</sup> Ian DuQuesnay, "From Polyphemus to Corydon: Virgil, Eclogue 2 and the Idylls of Theocritus," in *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, ed. David West and Anthony Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 35-37.

<sup>77</sup> Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 32-35.

analogous to that of Polyphemus, as the cannibalistic Cyclops becomes tempered when he learns how to write letters to his lady love. Instead of haplessly pursuing Galatea, Polyphemus first strives for education to ensure success in his former goal. Perhaps this letter exchange was a requirement proposed by Galatea, in order to assess Polyphemus' worthiness as a lover. Either way, Polyphemus is now participating in more sophisticated affairs, instead of throwing rocks and being tricked by Odysseus' word play. This trend seen in Polyphemus paintings also reflects the domestication that occurred with other mythological beings at Pompeii. A good example of this is the fishing Venus. The powerful and dangerous goddess of love is shown in a relaxing and calm activity, which ordinary people could easily take part in themselves. Likewise, the war-like Achilles is hardly seen fighting and becomes harmonious with the peaceful nature of the home.

Of course, it is difficult to tell from these paintings how educated the owner of the house was. Zahra Newby discusses how paintings represented values shared by elites and non-elites alike, but also served as a way to stage one's identity or personal ambitions.<sup>78</sup> Whatever the actuality of the owner's education may be, the Cupid and Polyphemus paintings still represent a belief in the power of education and the arts. Like many myths, the story of Polyphemus lends itself to interpretation by a variety of viewers. A general knowledge about the myth of the violent cyclops and futile lover of a sea nymph still allows the viewer to appreciate his acculturation and enjoyment of a fruitful relationship. For more educated viewers, with a good knowledge of Theocritus, the painting could be an invitation for discussion or poetry recital.<sup>79</sup> Elites with a particular taste in Greek culture and knowledge of the stories of Polyphemus, perhaps the type of audience found at Herculaneum, would have even more to discuss about the variances of

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<sup>78</sup> Zahra Newby, *Greek Myth in Roman Art and Culture: Imagery, Values, and Identity in Italy, 50 BC-AD 250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 23, 143-4.

<sup>79</sup> Squire, "Cyclopien Iconotexts," 310.

Polyphemus and Galatea in literature and art.

#### IV. Chapter Conclusion

Regardless of the viewer or house owner's actual ability to read, the power of literacy is clearly seen in these paintings. Moreover, these images display an interesting dynamic on account of Polyphemus' existence as a monster. Other houses at Pompeii, like the House of Julia Felix, contain paintings that advertise the learnedness of individuals, most likely the owners of the property (Pl. 12.3 and Pl. 12.4). Polyphemus is a more extreme example of this, since he is a monster who has learned how to read. This serves as a more compelling symbol of the capacity of education to elevate a person's status. Music and pining softened Polyphemus for a while, but literacy has enabled him to achieve prosperity and happiness. In the next chapter, we will look at a more physical manifestation of Polyphemus' successful relationship with Galatea.

## Chapter 4: Erotic Paintings – Eroticized Epic and Fantasy

This chapter analyzes wall-paintings that show Polyphemus engaging in erotic acts with Galatea. These paintings further illustrate the trend of eroticizing epic figures within the home. Unlike imperial contexts which focus on the monstrous Cyclops from the *Odyssey*, such as the sculpture group from Sperlonga, an eroticized Polyphemus is more suitable for domestic contexts. Eroticized epic figures also align with the fantasizing of paintings, which allowed the viewers to immerse themselves temporarily in imaginary scenes.

### I. Descriptions of Erotic Paintings and Contexts

*House of the Ancient Hunt, VII.4.48 (Pl. 4)* The erotic painting from the House of the Ancient Hunt was found on the south wall of an exedra (Pl. 4.1). This room is east of the peristyle, where a Gaze painting of Galatea and Polyphemus was found (Pl. 4.2). Polyphemus and Galatea are in a lovers' embrace, with the cyclops leaning back on a rock and grabbing her hips. Galatea, with her buttocks facing the viewer, appears similar to Venus Callipyge. Next to them are his staff, pan pipes, and a ram, all markers of his role as a shepherd. Galatea has a large, fan-like leaf, seen in other paintings, which helps solidify her identification. The north wall of this room has a partially preserved painting showing Diana bathing near a dog, most likely depicting the myth of Diana and Acteon.<sup>80</sup> The east wall has a painting of Apollo.<sup>81</sup> He is next to a cow and another young man, possibly a lover.

This painting of Polyphemus and Galatea shares thematic similarities with the other Erotic paintings. The first is erotic behavior. The preservation quality of the paintings makes it

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<sup>80</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 7*, 41.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 36-37.

difficult to determine exactly what they are doing, but Polyphemus and Galatea are at least embracing in these wall-paintings. Polyphemus' extend left leg could suggest that they are having intercourse. The form of this lovers' embrace varies from a seated position to a more upright position, as seen here. In this particular example, the pair is at least kissing and perhaps more. The second similarity is the presence of other erotic paintings in their proximity. While not all the nearby paintings are erotic, there is at least one in each room which helps establish the actuality of this love affair between Polyphemus and Galatea. The third similarity is that the painting was found in a room meant for stationary viewing. Two of the Erotic paintings, including this one, were found in cubicula, while the third was found in an oecus. A final similarity is the rustic and natural setting. Here, Polyphemus reclines against a rock; there is even a sheep present as a witness to the pair. Despite being a more domesticated cyclops, Polyphemus retains aspects of his wild and monstrous nature. Unlike a human couple, no bed is required.

*House of Red Walls, VIII.5.37 (Pl.13)* The House of Red Walls has a single painting of Polyphemus and Galatea. It is found on the south wall of an oecus, which is off the east side of the atrium (Pl. 13.1). Polyphemus is lying back against a rock, while Galatea climbs on top of him. His staff lies off to the left side and his pan pipes to the right, both forgotten for the moment. Like the Cupid painting from VI.14.28 (Pl. 10.2), Polyphemus is seen wearing a wreath on his head. There is an animal pelt underneath Polyphemus, which resembles the one he wears in the painting from Herculaneum (Pl. 12.2) and the suggested spotted cloth in the reconstruction drawing of VI.14.28. In addition, the wall background is decorated with Fourth Style architectural designs and small Cupids. To the left of the painting, there are two flying figures, perhaps Cupid and Psyche. As the modern name of the house suggests, the background of the



wall-painting is red. The central painting on the west wall shows Phrixus and the ram.<sup>82</sup> This painting is flanked by two pairs of poorly preserved floating figures, perhaps again Cupid and Psyche.<sup>83</sup> The north wall has a painting of Mars and Venus, seated next to each other and accompanied by a Cupid.<sup>84</sup>

This painting changes the erotic position of Polyphemus and Galatea, but once again features them as lovers on a rock. The wreath he wears may suggest that this is a painting of Silenus and a nymph, but the staff and pan pipes advocate for Polyphemus' presence. The assimilation of one attribute of the satyr Silenus may serve to highlight the erotic tone of the painting. The adjacent painting of Phrixus and the ram, while not erotic, also helps identify these figures as Polyphemus and Galatea. A Phrixus painting also appeared with Cupid painting from the House of Marcus Lucretius (Pl. 8.1). The pairing of this paintings works on account of their location near the sea, and the continued shepherd references through the ram. The painting of Mars and Venus, situated on the opposite wall from this erotic painting is complementary and accentuates the eroticism. As seen in the Cupid paintings from Chapter Three, Venus is a common feature alongside paintings of Polyphemus and Galatea, but in this case it is Venus and her lover Mars that accompany the pair. The presence of godly lovers reinforces the notion of a physical relationship between Polyphemus and Galatea.

*House of Chlorus and Caprasia, IX.2.10 (Plate 14)* The cubiculum in the House of Chlorus and Caprasia once held a painting of Polyphemus and Galatea, but no longer has any visible decoration. Both a watercolor and a drawing of this painting show Polyphemus and Galatea standing in an embrace (Pls. 14.1 and 14.2). Judging by the position of Polyphemus' left

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<sup>82</sup> Carratelli, *Pompei v. 8*, 636.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 636.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 626-627.

leg, he is most likely leaning against a rock as he does in the House of the Ancient Hunt (Pl. 4.1). The drawing suggests that Galatea is holding her fan-like leaf, another similarity to VII.4.48. The room today is poorly preserved, but Sogliano makes a note of the paintings that were previously found there.<sup>85</sup> In addition to Polyphemus and Galatea, there were pairs of Cupids and Psyches, as well as a painting of Galatea by herself. The precise original locations of these paintings within the room is unknown today.

The condition of the room makes it difficult to form firm conclusions. The drawing however suggests several similarities with the painting from the House of the Ancient Hunt, but other major aspects, such as Polyphemus' staff and pan pipes, are absent from both the reconstruction and the drawing. The presence of Cupid and Psyche helps further match this destroyed wall-painting with the other erotic paintings.

These three Fourth Style paintings are few in number, but show another interpretation of the Polyphemus and Galatea myth outside the literary record. Comparable to the Cupid paintings, the Erotic paintings reflect a social trend of sexualizing epic figures within Roman domestic space and playing with fantasies.

*Imperial Contexts* Outside the context of the Roman home, Homer's epic monster Polyphemus was still present in art sponsored by Roman emperors. The two famous examples are a ceiling mosaic from Nero's Domus Aurea and the monumental sculpture group from Sperlonga. The mosaic from the Domus Aurea is fragmentary, but the figures of Polyphemus and Odysseus are visible.<sup>86</sup> Polyphemus is reaching out towards Odysseus, who is offering the cyclops wine. In contrast to the wall-paintings from Pompeii, Polyphemus' monstrosity is

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<sup>85</sup> Antonio Sogliano, *Le pitture murali campane scoperte negli anni 1867-79* (Napoli: Giannini, 1879), 68, 79.

<sup>86</sup> Henri Lavange, "Le nymphee au Polypheme de la Domus Aurea," *Melanges d'archeologie et d'histoire* 82 (1970): 673-721, Figs. A-F.

emphasized by his size, as he is much larger than Odysseus. The sculpture at Sperlonga also highlights his status as a monster. Polyphemus' gigantic body lies stretched out on a rock in a drunk stupor, as Odysseus and his men prepare to gouge out his eye. His enormity is accentuated further by Odysseus's small men, three of whom are needed to hold the spear to stab out the cyclops' eye.<sup>87</sup> Both of these imperial properties focus on Polyphemus exclusively in his epic context, as a monster defeated by Odysseus. This is a different Polyphemus than seen at Pompeii, who is more of a shepherd and lover. Once again, let us examine what has caused this shift in focus on the cyclops' experiences.

## II. Erotic Objectification

The characters of Homer are not absent from the houses of Pompeii, rather it was epic episodes such as the blinding of Polyphemus that were lacking. Scenes of the Trojan War were present, but focus on instances surrounding the fighting instead of actual battles themselves. Fredrick discusses how wall-paintings of gods and heroes tend to depict them in erotic scenes instead of heroic exploits.<sup>88</sup> This preference does not preclude violence, as rape was common in Roman myths. Fredrick examines how erotic paintings used gender to represent power dynamics, which evoked pleasure and confronted issues of instability within the realm of home life and politics. One figure Fredrick discusses at length is Ariadne. The role of the gaze is crucial, both that of the painted subject and the viewer. The viewer looks at Ariadne, who serves as a sight that induces pleasure and pain. Internally, Ariadne's gaze towards Theseus underscores her inability to reach him. The arrival of Bacchus in some of the paintings further highlights her

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<sup>87</sup> For more discussion on this sculpture group, see Nancy de Grummond and Brunilde Ridgway, *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>88</sup> David Fredrick, "Beyond the Atrium to Ariadne: Erotic Painting and Visual Pleasure in the Roman House," *Classical Antiquity* 14 (1995): 266-288.

impotence as a stationary figure, a woman who can only look and be looked at. Of course, Fredrick does not neglect the numerous male victims of sexual violence such as Actaeon and Hylas. Unlike the assertion of male dominance in the Ariadne paintings, figures like Actaeon and Selene depict inversions of gender norms. This is not reserved for mythological figures, as several mortal women are seen in active sexual roles. He concludes with a discussion on how wall-paintings from Pompeii show a fascination with both unstable gender boundaries and violent reassertion of these boundaries.<sup>89</sup>

Polyphemus is not the only Homeric character to become eroticized. Achilles, one of Homer's most masculine characters, is often dressed up as a woman in wall-paintings at Pompeii.<sup>90</sup> Several paintings depict Odysseus' discovery of Achilles at Skyros. While this captures the moment prior to the reclaiming of his masculinity, the choice of this episode shows an inclination towards the erotic and sexual. Achilles is rarely shown in battle within the domestic space. Instead, he is on Skyros with girls or relaxing with Briseis and Patroclus.

Caroline Vout, who looks broadly at depictions of sex in ancient Greece and Rome, addresses the more explicit sex scenes in Roman wall-painting.<sup>91</sup> She also points out an eroticized hero, Hercules. In the House of the Centenary, the demigod is shown completely naked with Cupids. He is resting under a tree, his trademark club laying at his feet. Vout suggests that both explicit and erotic scenes were invitations to think about desire. Such paintings offered a venue to either relax or escape from the realities of life.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Fredrick, "Beyond the Atrium to Ariadne," 266-288.

<sup>90</sup> IX.5.2 room 20, VIII.4.4. room 10, VI.7.23 room p.

<sup>91</sup> Caroline Vout, *Sex on Show: Seeing the Erotic in Greece and Rome* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), 109-126.

<sup>92</sup> Vout, *Sex on Show*, 109-126.

### III. Chapter Conclusion

How then do we understand the relationship shown between Polyphemus and Galatea in the Erotic paintings? This group of paintings certainly follow the trend of eroticizing epic characters. Odysseus and Polyphemus are not seen together in any paintings from the corpus at Pompeii and Herculaneum, Instead, he is almost always with Galatea. The Erotic paintings also deviate from the literary tradition by showing the pair engaging in intimacy. The Galatea from literature shuns Polyphemus, while the Galatea from the Erotic paintings desires him sexually. This deviation tempts the viewer to think about what comes next, as seen before in the Gaze paintings. Both sets of paintings revolve around a moment of tension. In the Gaze paintings, the viewer is left wondering what awaits Polyphemus. Will Galatea reject him as she usually does, or will he finally succeed in winning her affections? In the Erotic paintings, they are engaging in erotic behavior and diverting from the literary tradition. Yet a viewer may wonder, is this sex or is this love? As seen in the course of many myths, intercourse does not amount to a relationship.

The paintings presented here offer two probable options for interpretation. The first is that these erotic scenes are fantasies, conjured up by Polyphemus or the viewer. The association of general erotic paintings with imagination and escapism may further suggest this. The scene here is a dream as opposed to reality, meant to let the viewer and Polyphemus indulge in their fantasies. Signs of Polyphemus' work as a shepherd are cast to the side but are still present in these paintings, similar to the repose of other shepherds in bucolic poetry. The viewer is encouraged to forget about work for a little while, but to not let the dream block out its existence. A second option is that this is a one-time fling, initiated by Galatea. One interesting aspect of the Erotic paintings is that the one in the House of Red Walls, which is the most explicit of the paintings, shows Galatea in the active position (Pl. 13.1). She, like the viewer, has succumbed to

the pleasure of the gaze and transgressed the usual boundaries to pursue indulgence. This dynamic also establishes a playful opposition to the usual Gaze paintings, especially one paired with the abandonment of Ariadne in IX.6.d (Pl. 6.1). Polyphemus, who takes on the role of the static Ariadne, is greeted by an unexpected Galatea (sea-bound Theseus) who has surpassed the dividing boundary of land and sea to unite.

Overall, the Erotic paintings titillate the imagination. As with the previous paintings, they invite the viewer to think beyond the literary tradition. The erotic paintings compel the viewer to contemplate the significance of Galatea's carnal reciprocation of Polyphemus' affections. There is no evidence beyond the act, which is hollow at best in myth, that would suggest a lasting relationship. The viewer must decide whether this is a dream of the cyclops or a momentary escape enjoyed by the nymph.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

This thesis provides an overview of the appearance of Polyphemus and Galatea in wall-paintings at Pompeii. The Gaze paintings interact with the literary tradition, using other paintings in the room as foils and comparisons. Most suggest an impending failure, but there is still some hope for Polyphemus in this moment of suspense. The Cupid paintings emphasize the power of education. Whether or not the owner was literate or desired literacy, its potency is clear. Ironically, the gesturing Cupid who delivers the letter resembles previous works of Odysseus handing the cyclops wine. Perhaps this is a double message to encourage viewers to read more and drink only in moderation. The erotic paintings play with fantasy and pleasure. Unlike the Cupid paintings which illustrate a hope, the erotic paintings delve into the realm of unobtainable dreams. Making love with Galatea is either a dream or a momentary fling, destined to end as quickly as it began.

The Gaze, Cupid, and Erotic paintings reflect various versions of the Polyphemus and Galatea myth. Each is affected by a different cultural influence, but they all have something in common. Whether the love has potential, is achieved, or is fleeting, each painting compels the viewer to contemplate Polyphemus' relation to Galatea. While all mythological paintings tend to encourage more than one interpretation, Polyphemus is unique in one aspect: he is a monster. This level of identification with a monster is uncommon. Other monsters, such as centaurs, are humanized in literature and later art. One good example of this is the battle between the Lapiths and centaurs in the *Metamorphoses*. While some are violent and rowdy in this episode, others are shown as lovers with great care for their partners. Chiron, as the instructor of Achilles, also

shows a level of education. At Pompeii, though, Polyphemus remains the most humanized monster. The wall-paintings go beyond the softening of his violent demeanor in the literature, since he gains the ability to read and write, acting as a representation of Rome's aspirations for pursuing higher culture and sophistication. He is even eroticized and serves as a vessel for Roman sexual fantasies and visual pleasure.

There are a few things that could motivate this Roman attachment to Polyphemus. The first is a desire to exert control over the wild and violent as a means of illustrating strength. When Polyphemus is incorporated into the Roman house, he is tamed by their customs and practices. The monstrous Polyphemus of Homer has its place in imperial contexts, perhaps due to the emperor's greater ability to command obedience and suppress violence. Another possible interpretation is a mixed sense of appreciation and competition towards the Greeks. The inclusion of Polyphemus reflects a fondness for Greek culture. Yet by adapting Polyphemus, and avoiding the Odysseus episode, they allow the cyclops to overcome the restrictions set on him by Greek literature. Somewhat analogous to the case of Aeneas, a character from Greek literature is given a fuller re-telling and is acculturated into Roman society. Finally, Polyphemus could epitomize the fantasy and escapism present in Roman wall-painting in general. While it is not depicted, Polyphemus' blinding by Odysseus awaits him in the future. Whether he succeeds in his love, or is simply dreaming, pain will occur after his pleasure. But for the moment, at least Galatea is finally within in his reach.



Table 1. Gaze Paintings

Building Name	Region Number	Room Number	State
House of the Priest Amandus	I.7.7	B	In situ
House of the Glass Vases	VI.5.5	12	Lost
House of the Colored Capitals	VII.4.31-51	26	Naples Museum
House of the Ancient Hunt	VII.4.48	13	In situ - damaged
House of the Sailor	VII.15.2	Z	In situ - damaged
Unnamed House	IX.6.d	C	In situ - damaged
Partially Excavated House	IX.7.12	5	Lost

Table 2. Cupid Paintings

Building Name	Region Number	Room Number	State
Marcus Lucretius	IX.3.5	7	In situ
Caupona	VI.10.1	D	In situ
House of Laocoon Annex	VI.14.28	C	Lost
Unnamed House	V.2.d	M	Lost

Table 3. Erotic Paintings

Building Name	Region Number	Room Number	State
House of the Ancient Hunt	VII.4.48	15	Naples Museum
House of Red Walls	VIII.5.37	B	In situ
House of Chlorus and Caprasia	IX.2.10	G	In situ - damaged

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