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Source: *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 110, No. 3 (Jul., 2006), pp. 365-388

Published by: Archaeological Institute of America

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40024548>

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The Tomb of the Diver

R. ROSS HOLLOWAY

Abstract

Dating from about 470 B.C., the frescoes of the Tomba del Tuffatore (Tomb of the Diver) at Paestum are the only example of Greek wall painting with figured scenes from the Orientalizing, Archaic, or Classical periods to survive in their entirety. Close examination of the paintings shows the working practices of the artists. Technically these are similar to those of the painters of Etruscan tombs of the period. There is a world of difference, however, between the purpose and conceptualization of Etruscan tomb painting and that revealed in the Tomb of the Diver. Furthermore, although interpretations claiming Orphic or Pythagorean significance have been advanced, reconsideration of the frescoes gives some reason to think that the program for the tomb's decoration may have been of the simplest nature and developed by the artists themselves from prototypes in Attic vase painting available to them in Italy. Thus, although the diver may make reference to the moment of death and the symposium may have been intended to create a welcoming scene to surround the dead man in the tomb, the creation of these frescoes may owe more to the initiative of the painters than to any complexities of philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

The Tomb of the Diver is the only example of Greek painting with figured scenes dating from the Orientalizing, Archaic, or Classical periods to survive in its entirety (fig. 1). Among the thousands of Greek tombs known from this time (roughly 700–400 B.C.), this is the only one to have been decorated with frescoes of human subjects. It was created about 470 B.C., in the Greek city of Poseidonia (in Roman times known as Paestum) on the Tyrrhenian coast of Italy just south of Salerno. Although little of the skeleton was preserved, it is widely assumed that the occupant was a young man. A plain black-glazed lekythos of about 480 accompanied him, as did the carapace of a tortoise, which almost surely had been the sounding box of a lyre, the wooden frame of which had completely disintegrated.¹ Four separate slabs formed

the walls of a tomb, which was no larger than a good-sized sarcophagus (see dimensions in fig. 2). A fifth slab formed the roof. The natural rock surface served as the floor. The paintings covering the walls of the tomb place the viewer in the center of a symposium: the evening gathering of citizens of Greek communities devoted to conversation, poetry, and politics, amid the added pleasures of wine and erotic adventure. Despite its unique status as a tomb painting, the symposium scene of the Tomb of the Diver is oddly familiar because the same scene, composed in similar fashion, is well known from the decoration of contemporary Attic painted pottery, red-figure cups and wine-mixing vessels intended for use at the symposium. This cannot be said for the painting found on the ceiling of the tomb. The image of a diver is almost unknown in Greek art, and this scene of a lonely figure plunging past a masonry tower into a stream is unique.

I had the good fortune to see the paintings of the tomb two days after their discovery, on 5 June 1968, some 1,500 m south of the city walls of Paestum. I was in the company of Prof. Mario Napoli, then Superintendent of Antiquities for the Provinces of Salerno, Benevento, and Avellino, and the discoverer of the tomb, and Prof. Venturino Panebianco, then Director of the Museums of the Province of Salerno.² We saw the paintings of the tomb in the darkened storage room of the museum at Paestum to which they had been taken. The conversation among us turned without delay to the salient problems presented by the appearance of this hitherto unsuspected discovery. Panebianco wanted us to remember that Paestum's location near the mouth of the Sele River, considered by the ancients to be the border between Greek and Italic-Etruscan Italy, meant that tomb painting at Paestum should be viewed in relation to influence from the Etruscans, whose archaic and classical tomb

*The author expresses his gratitude to Dr. Giuliana Tocco Sciarelli, Superintendent of Cultural Property for the Provinces of Salerno, Avellino and Benevento, and to Dr. Marina Cipriani, Director of the National Archaeological Museum of Paestum, for their many courtesies to him in connection with the study of these painting and the preparation of this article. An even greater debt is owed to the late Prof. Mario Napoli, dedicated archaeologist and generous friend. Thanks for important and

useful references are also due to Profs. Thomas H. Carpenter, Maurizio Gualtieri, and Silvio Panciera. I am further indebted to Alice Walsh for drawing fig. 1 and to Brooke Hammerle for copy photographs.

¹Two aryballos spouts were also present (Napoli 1970, 67–8).

²The color photographs of the tomb frescoes in this article were taken by the author on that occasion.

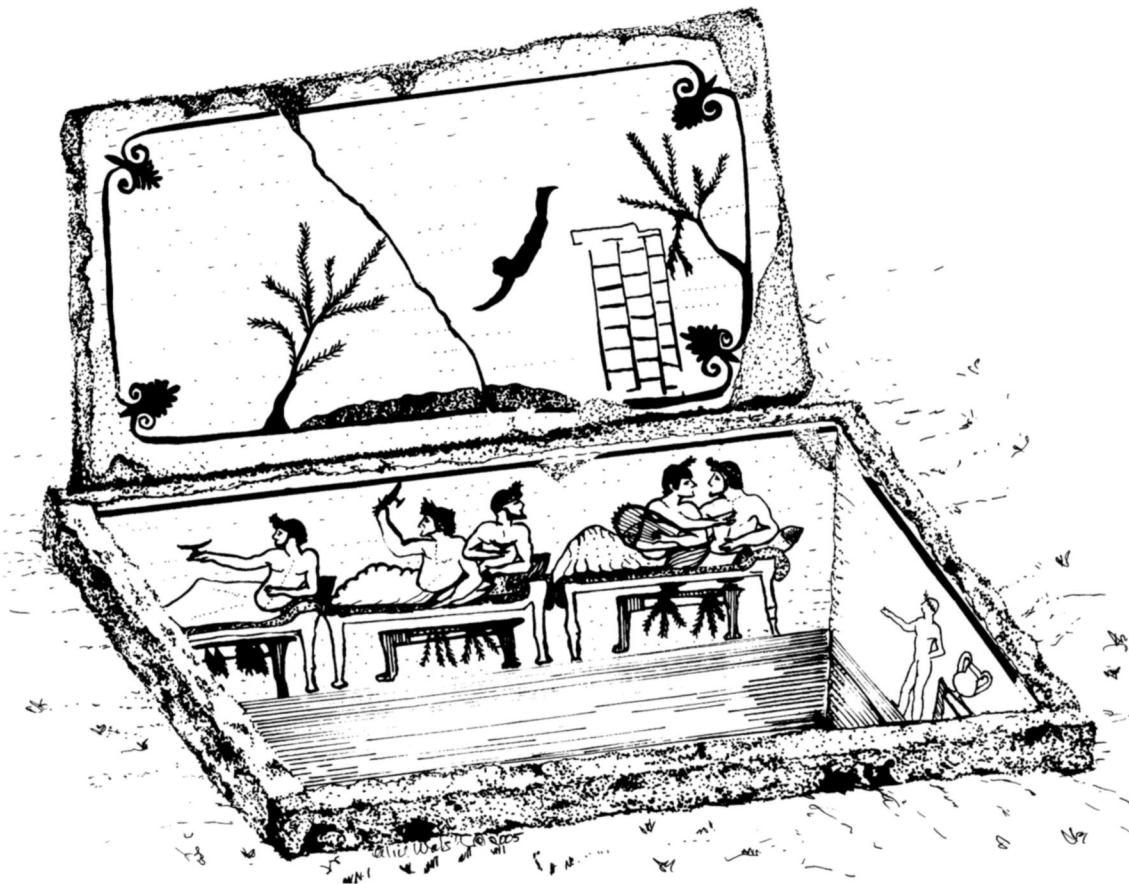


Fig. 1. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver (drawing by A. Walsh).

paintings are well known and are documented as far south as Capua in inland Campania. Napoli emphasized the Greekness of these paintings and the problem of the thematic, and no doubt symbolic, connection between the diver and the symposium scene. These two topics have dominated scholarship on the tomb for the last half century.

Publication of the tomb was rapid. An initial article in *Le Scienze* in 1969 was followed the next year by Napoli's book, *La Tomba del Tuffatore*.³ In both, the discoverer's observations on the technique and style of the paintings were laid out, together with a sober view of the interpretive problems raised by the decoration. The reception of these publications in the world of classical archaeology was curiously restrained. To the best of my knowledge, only two reviews of Napoli's book were published in scholarly journals, both in Italy.⁴ The sensation of the discovery was, of course, clear and led to widespread reproduction of

images from the tomb, but the discussion in the learned literature developed slowly. Such an unusual monument, furthermore, was not easy to accommodate in general evolutionary treatments of ancient art.

The purpose of the present article is, first of all, to provide a new documentation of the tomb, reviewing the observations made by Napoli on its technique and execution. It then takes up the problem of the message to be read in the decoration of this unique monument.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FRESCOES

The painting of a symposium occupies the four walls of the tomb (figs. 3–8). On each of the two long walls (north and south), three couches and their serving tables are positioned so as to appear to rest on the broad red dado below them.⁵ There are five occupants of the couches on each wall: a single symposiast on the left-hand couch and a couple on each of the

³ Napoli 1969, 1970.

⁴ Bianchi Bandinelli 1970; Arias 1972.

⁵ On the association of the color red and death, see Gernet 1957, 324.

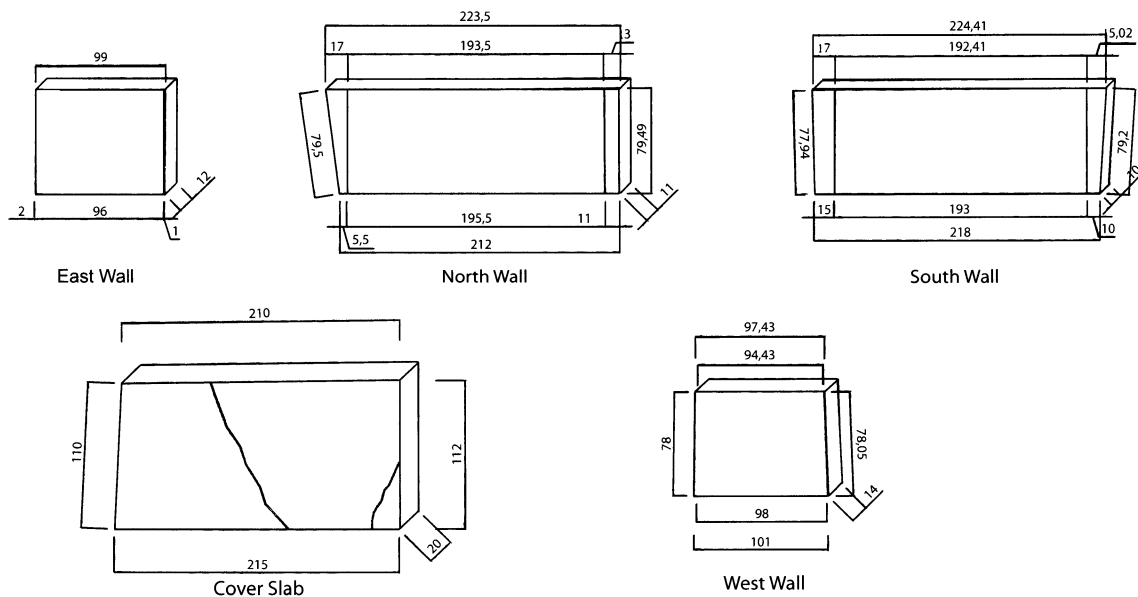


Fig. 2. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. Individual slabs with dimensions (drawing by M. Cipriani).

adjoining two couches. Each of the figures is covered below the waist by a coverlet. They are all crowned, and additional crowns are placed on the serving tables. The serving tables have three legs, and detailed reconstructions of them were made by Napoli.⁶ The klinai are painted in undercoat only.

On the north wall, the single symposiast prepares to try his luck at the *kottabos* game. He is sighting over his kylix, in which there are wine lees ready to be projected toward the target (not shown), as is being done by the nearer symposiast reclining on the central couch. The older man of the pair on the central couch turns his attention to the couple on the far-

ther kline. Here the youth grasps his lyre to his chest while discouraging the advances of the older man who caresses his head.⁷

On the south wall, the first couch (to the left) has a single symposiast holding his lyre balanced against his knee while looking back toward his companions. In the center, the two figures occupy the couch converse; at right, the younger man plays the double flute and his companion raises his voice in song.⁸

The west short wall of the tomb represents a symposiast, nude but with a stole over his arms, leaving the gathering (as indicated by his gesture of separation).⁹ He is preceded by a flute girl and followed

⁶Napoli 1970, 110.

⁷A single coverlet covers both, over the older man's body below the waist, then passing behind the striped pillow and reappearing over the lower body of the youth, where it is decorated with wavy lines in dilute black. The coverlet over the youth's legs has a slightly reddish cream color. It is not the same shade as the faded color of the klinai frames or of the costume of the flute girl on the west wall. The coverlet over the older man was not finished. His teeth are carefully rendered. The black outline on his neck does not follow the edge of the area covered by the skin coloring but is well inside it. Both the youth and the older man have red dots on their cheeks, which appear to be the result of careless application of deep red color on the figures. There are preparatory lines in light red at the youth's waist and along the edge of the coverlet, just above the blue line of the fabric covering the kline. The red line curling up from the coverlet over the frame of the youth's lyre is apparently a mistake. There is a dab of black paint below the kylix at the right of the serving table.

⁸In the central group, the flesh color dips below the black

line, indicating the edge of the coverlet across the youth's stomach. Since the coverlet was never given its final treatment, save for two disconnected lines descending below the youth's right hand and right elbow, the relation of flesh color and outline places us in a position to make some observations about the sequence of the work. The youth's body was given its flesh color first. Next, the upper edge of the coverlet was indicated by the black outline. Clearly, if he had finished the coverlet, the painter would have colored it up to the black line, thus covering the superfluous flesh tone outside it. Similarly, a runnel of red paint has invaded the area reserved for the pillow below the youth's left elbow, which would have been covered if the painting of the pillow had been finished. There is another smudge of red between the left leg of the serving table and the adjoining leg of the kline.

⁹This gesture is discussed in Boegehold (1999, ch. 2). In the figure, black outline was used sparingly; preliminary outline in red is visible, especially along the trailing edge of the figure's right leg.



Fig. 3. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. North wall.



Fig. 4. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. South wall.



Fig. 5. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. East wall.



Fig. 6. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. West wall.



Fig. 7. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. North wall, details.



Fig. 8. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. South wall, details.

by a man wearing a himation and using a walking stick.¹⁰ All of the figures are wreathed. The flute girl wears a cap with a knot or loop at its top, and a wreath.¹¹ She is not a child; she has fully developed breasts.¹² On the east short wall, a serving boy, nude but crowned, is seen beside a table on which there stands a crater, which is also wreathed. There are additional wreaths on the table.¹³

The painting of the ceiling gives its name to the tomb (fig. 9). Within a black frame marked at its corners by palmettes, a diver descends into a pool or stream of blue-green water.¹⁴ Below him is a tower rising from the water and behind it a tree growing out of the frame of the picture as if it were a sharply rising cliff face. A second tree marks the other boundary of the water. The diver's anatomy is detailed. His ribs are drawn in a complicated pattern. His legs and arms are clearly delineated. His genitals are carefully rendered, and a small growth of hair has been added to the chin in dilute paint. The figure is fully outlined in black.

The ends of the long walls are recessed to form a joint with the side walls. The cover slab rested on the walls thus bonded to sustain its weight. The cover slab, however, is cracked across its middle. A second crack, which led to the separation of a corner of the ceiling slab, is found to the right and below the tower, tree, and palmette at the right side of the painting. The slab had apparently already lost its corner when

the painting was carried out, thus causing the shifting of the black frame and the displacement of one of the palmettes upward and inward in the direction of the tower.¹⁵

The paintings of the Tomb of the Diver were executed in true fresco. The plaster was applied in a single layer,¹⁶ and two methods were employed in the design: it was first incised with a stylus (presumably made of wood) and then rendered with a thin red line.¹⁷ Napoli made a careful record of these preliminary sketches, which are invaluable evidence for how the paintings were created, especially for the changes from the original designs of the preliminary sketch of the pair of symposiasts sharing a single couch at the ends of both the north and south walls.¹⁸ On the north wall, the final version of the painting differs notably from the preliminary sketch. In the pair of symposiasts occupying the right-hand couch, the youth's head and upper body were repositioned, and his right arm, which had originally been extended over his leg, is turned in the gesture of refusal that we see in the final painting. A similar repositioning of the head is found in the young symposiast flute player on the south wall. The sketch for both of these elements of the symposium scene was carried out by incision.¹⁹

The colors employed are black, red in various concentrations (producing tones from bright red through red-brown to deep red), blue, green, and white. An

¹⁰The hanging folds of the himation of the older man were made by first tracing two vertical lines in black with a straight edge. The same practice was followed in the outer line of the trailing folds of the himation below the right arm.

¹¹For parallels, see Zancani Montuoro 1983. As noted by Otto (2003), the crown of the flute girl has triple projecting ends, while that of her youthful companion has two, and all other figures in the symposium scene have crowns with only one projecting end.

¹²Her lower left leg was made wider than that indicated by the preliminary sketch. Her right foot was moved slightly to the right. The original intention was possibly to show her with a somewhat shorter upper garment, as suggested by the original lines of her two legs, which extend upward above the hemline that was finally adopted. The chiton appears at her neck and emerges below the overgarment. The dark outline for the lower edge of the chiton between her ankles was never added. The pale tone of her clothing in its present condition may be an undercoat only, suggesting that the garments were never given their final coloring.

¹³The oinochoe in the boy's hand was left unfinished; it is shown only in preparatory outline. There is an odd hanging leaf at the base of the right handle of the krater. It appears to be a mistake. For the shape of the krater, a hybrid between Greek and Lucanian shapes, see Loliucchi (forthcoming).

¹⁴The water is given a swelling form used in Greek painting as early as the François Vase in the first half of the sixth century

(Arias and Hirmer 1960, fig. 42).

¹⁵The interpretation of the resulting aperture in the ceiling of the tomb as an intentional opening to the outside is discussed below.

¹⁶The discussion in Napoli (1970, 95–108) is fundamental. Cf., however, the remarks of Cipriani et al. (2002) and Melucco Vaccaro (1988), who note that the plastered surface is a single layer, not two as thought by Napoli. According to Melucco Vaccaro, a portion of the south wall (symposium scene) was retouched after the plaster had dried using a clay-based surfacing.

¹⁷The procedures employed can be paralleled in Etruscan tomb paintings (see Vlad Borrelli 1991). Napoli (1970, 167–71) refers to the execution of the preliminary sketch in red as a "sinopia," a term then criticized by Bianchi Bandinelli (1970) as inexact if it is to be understood in the same sense, which it has in discussion of Renaissance and Baroque painting where between the preliminary sketch and the fresco itself there is an additional layer of plaster.

¹⁸For the preliminary sketch lines identified by him, see Napoli 1970, figs. 79, 91–4.

¹⁹This is true also of the legs of the klinai on the north wall, which were adjusted significantly during the final execution of the paintings. Along the north wall, moving from right to left, the legs of the first klinai were moved to the left. The right leg of the middle klinai was shifted toward the right, while the legs of the klinai at the left end of the group were moved farther to the left than originally planned.



Fig. 9. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. Cover slab.

olive color is used for the wreaths worn by every figure in the symposium scene, the leaves of the trees in the diving scene, and, in the symposium scene, for the wreaths adorning the krater on the west wall and displayed on the serving tables beside the klinai. There is also evidence of a grayish undercoating, visible on the klinai and in the costume of the flute girl of the west wall. The coverlet of the symposiast on the far left of the north wall is in the same shade. The principal color is a red found in the flesh tones and the palmette petals, stems, and ends of the volutes in the diving scene; it is also used for the tree trunks, as well as for the high dado below the symposium scene. The application of the red color over large areas of the painting is somewhat uneven. This is especially visible on the dado. More than once, droplets of paint ran down onto the dado (e.g., immediately below the flute girl on the west wall). These runnels show that in the final coat the paint was applied in a dense state to produce the tone of the red of the serving tables; it is also found among the pillows on which the symposiasts recline and in other details such as the cap and double flutes of the flute girl. The exposed flesh of the reclining figures of the symposiasts and the male figures of the two end walls was also painted in two stages, first in a lighter shade and then in the denser final coat. This was applied unevenly, however, producing an interesting pattern of vertical, narrow brushstrokes on the nude youth of the west wall and

on the older symposiast of the pair on the right-hand couch of the north wall. The left arm of the latter rests on a pillow, a part of which is unfinished. It was evidently intended to be red, and the same red would have been carried up onto the arm of the symposiast. But this was not done, leaving a light area on the symposiast's arm exactly matching the unfinished area of the pillow. The procedure can also be seen clearly in the case of the trees of the ceiling painting. The undercoat is a red-pink. The upper coat, used only for the bark of the main trunk, is deep red.²⁰

Black outline is used extensively, both to silhouette figures and to render anatomical detail. It is important to note, however, that the figures were not painted by beginning with a black outline. Their internal anatomy and their outlining were added after the flesh tones had been painted on the plaster. In many parts of the paintings, there is no outline for the figures beyond that provided by the preliminary sketch. However, the figure of the flute girl on the west wall suggests the use of a pale undercoating to define the area of the figure before black outline was added. The same undercoat is visible on the long walls of the tomb, on the coverlet of the symposiast on the far left of the north wall, and on the frames of the klinai on both long walls. Rather than representing a faded condition of their final state, they seem to have been left unfinished. The serving table of the couple in the center of the north wall docu-

²⁰ The same technique was employed for the palmettes at the four corners of the cover slab.

ments painting in deep red over this undercoating, which is visible outside the finished area of both legs.²¹ Presumably the klinai frames would have been completed in the same deep red as the serving tables. The coverlets of the central group and of the single symposiast on the south wall also appear to be unfinished, left in white or reddish cream with no further decoration such as we find in dilute black on the coverlet of the couple occupying the far right couch on the north wall. The black lines of the chest and stomach musculature as represented on the north and west walls are a stereotype taken from contemporary Attic red-figure pottery, used without variation on the single symposiast at the left, the right-hand figure on each of the other two couches, and with some foreshortening, on the youth in the center of the scene with the flute girl on the west wall.

This detailing of internal anatomy, not found on the south wall, is one of the elements that suggested to Napoli that two master painters were involved in the creation of the tomb.²² The Maestro del Tuffatore executed the north wall and the scene of the diver on the ceiling. He may also be credited with the paintings of the two short walls. His are the remarkably varied and expressive heads of the symposiasts of the north wall, three bearded men and two youths, who, however, are not replicas of one another but each a distinctive individual; the more graceful is the youth on the right-hand kline, the more masculine, the kottabos player with his raised kylix on the central couch. This artist worked easily with overlapping planes, especially in the rendition of the couples of symposiasts on the north wall. He was at home with foreshortening, of which there is a remarkable example in the upraised right hand of the kottabos player of the central kline of the north wall. The treatment of the beards and hair is wonderfully detailed; each strand of the short curly beards is rendered with a separate line, a treatment that continues along the edge of the hair over the neck and forehead.²³ But the Maestro del Tuffatore shares this technique with a second painter, the Maestro della Lastra Sud, who was responsible for the south wall of the tomb.²⁴ And in the work of both painters there is an enlivened facial expression because the white of the eyeball is indeed white, a characteristic that is, of course, lost in red-figure pottery. Napoli characterized the Maestro del Tuffatore as "[a] free and more self-confident

draftsman." The Maestro della Lastra Sud was, in his words, "[l]ess expert and here and there displaying an uncertain and less incisive hand."²⁵ Certainly the Maestro della Lastra Sud avoided the complexities of overlapping found in his colleague's work and made no experiments with foreshortening.

However, the overall layout of the two long walls with the reclining symposiasts was clearly a single design, and it is possible that it was prepared by neither of the two masters but by the leader of their atelier. In executing the design, the Maestro del Tuffatore introduced significant variations from the original sketch in his best figures on the north wall of the tomb. The Maestro della Lastra Sud, on the other hand, was more faithful in following the preliminary sketch. Of course, even while recognizing that there were two main hands at work on the paintings for the tomb, one must still suppose a workshop with the usual complement of assistants. Certainly the completion of the couch covers on the north wall was entrusted to such an apprentice, who, in his haste, ran his blue line between the middle couch and the couch adjoining it to the left with no break between the two couches. And a similar moment unworthy of the main painters can be noted in the summary striping of the coverlet of the youth with a lyre on the far right-hand kline of the north wall. Black outline was used by the Maestro della Lastra Sud more sparingly than by the Maestro del Tuffatore. His work is notable for the simplicity of its anatomical markings.

The hand of the Maestro del Tuffatore emerges on the west wall in the head of the man wearing a himation, in the anatomy of the youth in the center of the scene, and in the figure of the flute girl in the overlapping planes of her two arms and of her hands on the double flute. The east wall also appears to be the work of the Maestro del Tuffatore. The leg of the serving boy has the same three lines marking the shin that are found on the leg of the youth of the west wall. A characteristic "hook" for the ankle bone is also found on the serving boy, the youth, and the man in the himation on the west wall.

RELATION TO ETRUSCAN TOMB PAINTING

As exceptional as it was in the Greek world, the Tomb of the Diver's painted interior was far from unique in contemporary Italy. Indeed, together with

²¹ The undercoat design of the left leg of this table extended upward to join the frame of the kline.

²² Napoli 1970, 185–89.

²³ On the Maestro del Tuffatore, see the excellent discussion of Rouveret 1989, 139–57.

²⁴ And, according to Napoli (1970), the two short walls of the tomb.

²⁵ "[U]n disegnatore più disinvolto e sicuro"; "un disegnatore meno esperto e dalla mano qua e là incerta e meno incisive" (Napoli 1970, 185).

the painted tomb of similar date at Capua, it represents a southern extension of the taste for painting in the interior of tombs that was particularly strong in southern Etruria but not unknown, though represented by tombs lacking figural decoration on their painted walls, in Messapia (Ugentum) and at Tarentum.²⁶

It is in Etruria, however, that tomb painting had developed into an important and frequently practiced art. Etruscan chamber tombs began to be decorated during the seventh century.²⁷ The line of waterfowl in the Tomba delle Anatre (Tomb of the Water Fowl) at Veii begins the series of figured scenes.²⁸ In the same group of early tombs, the Tomba dei Leoni Dipinti (Tomb of the Painted Lions) and the Tomba degli Animali Dipinti (Tomb of the Painted Animals) at Cerveteri introduced fierce and apotropaic animals with the obvious purpose of defeating those influences malevolent to the living or to the dead.²⁹ In the sixth century, Etruscan painters at Tarquinia made an isolated excursion into the representation of Greek mythology in the Tomba dei Tori (Tomb of the Bulls), in which the scene of the ambush of Troilos raises the question of the penetration of Etruria by Greek culture.³⁰ While some scholars have gone so far as to hold that Etruria was so influenced by Greek imagery, Greek religion, and the customs of Greek society (seen especially in the banquet) that it became no more than a provincial version of Greece and Magna Graecia, it is also possible, and in my opinion closer to reality, to recognize the independence in language, religion, and probably funeral beliefs among the Etruscans, despite the wholesale adoption of Greek visual imagery by the Etruscans, the presence of Greek merchants in the Etruria's harbor towns, and the arrival of Greek expatriates on Etruscan soil.³¹ So, in the case of the Tomb of the Bulls, I have argued that the ambush and sacrifice of Troilos was used for expiatory and apotropaic purposes in its Etruscan setting rather than as a gesture to any aspect of Hellenism.³²

After 540, and in the hands of the Ionian painters who arrived in Etruria in the wake of the Persian conquests in Asia Minor, a recurring convention dominated Etruscan painting at Tarquinia. A scene of the funeral celebration in and around the tent erected for the purpose was reproduced pictorially in the tomb to placate and honor the dead, although elements of the former preoccupation with apotropaic imagery were not lacking. This is evidenced by the fierce animals still found in the gable triangles of these tombs and touches such as the gesture of the woman dancer of the Tomba delle Leonesse (Tomb of the Lioness), her fingers forming the horn of protection against the Evil Eye.³³

At an early stage in the formation of the tent and funeral banquet convention at Tarquinia, a set of frescoes was executed that constitute an *unicum* in Etruscan tomb painting. These are the paintings of the Tomba della Caccia e della Pesca (Tomb of Hunting and Fishing).³⁴ The program of decoration of this tomb can be described as both conventional and uniquely adventurous. The outer chamber has clear ties with the past of tomb painting at Tarquinia. Around its four walls a scene of frenzied dancing takes place in a grove where various objects (wreaths, baskets, mirrors) hang from the trees. This is not the first appearance of trees in the Tarquinian painted tombs. There is a frieze of trees below the Troilos scene in the Tomb of the Bulls, and the significance of trees in defining place in these scenes has been pointed out.³⁵ Over the doorway leading to the inner chamber we find a return from the hunt (two servants carry the game suspended on a pole). There are two figures on horseback and a huntsman on foot with two dogs. Because this is a return from the hunt, it cannot be interpreted as the beginning of a journey to the underworld. But the lush vegetation in which the procession takes place, so familiar from the seventh-century Campana Tomb at Veii, may lead one to speculate that this image belongs to the same tradition and serves to snare the Evil Eye.³⁶

²⁶ Capua: Weege 1909, no. 15; Ugentum: Lo Porto 1970; Tarentum: Napoli 1970, 89, fig. 29; see also Tinè Bertocchi 1964, 113, no. 54; Dell'Aglio and Lippolis 2003, 133, no. 1.

²⁷ For painting in the Etruscan chamber tombs, see Steingraber (1986) and Naso (1996), the latter a work that has the virtue of collecting the many examples of the simple use of color to emphasize architectural details, as well as what one normally thinks of as "painted tombs." It is readily apparent from Naso's work how exceptional tombs with painted figural decoration were in early Etruria.

²⁸ Steingraber 1986, no. 175.

²⁹ Steingraber 1986, nos. 3, 6.

³⁰ Steingraber 1986, no. 120.

³¹ "L'Etruria è una delle province della cultura greca" (d'Agostino and Cerchiai 1999, xix). The classic expression of this train of thought is Hampe and Simon (1964), but for the Etruscan craftsman as the uncertain adapter of Greek originals, see Campana 1965, 1968, 1969; Gran-Aymerich 1999.

³² Holloway 1986.

³³ Steingraber 1986, no. 77. For the birth and development of the tent convention, see Holloway 1965. On the Evil Eye and charms against it, see Elworthy 1895; Levi 1951.

³⁴ Steingraber 1986, no. 50.

³⁵ Rouveret 1988a.

³⁶ For the Campana Tomb at Veii, see Steingraber 1986, no. 176.

That is certainly the purpose of the grove and dance on the main register of the walls. The trees delimit, but they are festooned with objects that can attract (and, in the case of the mirrors, dazzle) the malicious gaze. And the dancers with their vigorous gestures serve further to distract the same dangerous force.

The inner chamber of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing is renowned for the panorama of seashore, fowling, fishing, and swimming that surrounds its four walls. There is, however, a second scene occupying the gable at the far end of the chamber. A banqueting couple, surrounded by servants and entertained by a flautist, reclines in comfort. The man offers a wreath to his companion. Two girls at the feet of the woman weave more wreaths. At the other side, manservants are busy around the kraters and other vessels. All in all, this appears to be a scene of pleasant conviviality. Is it an excerpt from the kind of banqueting scenes that were beginning to appear at this time in Tarquinian tombs depicting the funeral feast? Or is it an image of the dead *patronus* and his spouse, familiar from the well-known Sarcophagus degli Sposi (Sarcophagus of the Married Couple) from Cerveteri?³⁷ The position of the painting, however, should make one hesitant to accept either of these alternatives outright. The gable is the place for apotropaic images, and, in fact, at the opposite end of the same chamber, over the doorway leading to the antechamber of the tomb, there are two apotropaic felines. Moreover, subtle details suggest that the dining couple has a similar function. The man is making overt advances to the woman. His leg is curling suggestively around her waist and his hand is resting on her shoulder. There is more than a faint hint of sex, and the Evil Eye, itself the enemy of potency, faces defeat by any show of sexual vigor. Thus any interpretation of this couple must recognize its apotropaic overtones.³⁸

And so we turn to the diver in that extraordinary scene of man and nature that fills the lower walls of the inner tomb chamber (fig. 10). Having protected the dead from malevolence that could disturb them, the painter of the tomb might well have turned to the themes of the funeral celebration for the decoration of the walls of the inner chamber of the tomb.



Fig. 10. Tarquinia, Tomb of Hunting and Fishing. Inner chamber, detail (courtesy Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale).

But instead he painted a vast panorama of sky, sea, and land. It has been observed that the style of the figures in this scene has much in common with that of Samian black-figure cups.³⁹ The scene that was created in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, however, has a scope that is otherwise unparalleled in the art of its day. One element, and one element only, of this scene is the diver plunging from a rocky headland into the sea. How different is this concept of decoration in the tomb from that of the Paestan image of the diver, caught alone in the moment of death but assuring the occupant of the tomb lying below that death is a brief passage to the further shore, as is argued below. It is difficult to imagine that the Etruscan diver could have been the bearer of any symbolic reference, especially symbolic reference to Greek legend or belief.⁴⁰ A similar image was thus employed, in one case in Tarquinia, in the other at Paestum, in different contexts and for very different purposes.

Thus Etruscan tomb painting was without question a factor in the creation of the Tomb of the Diver. But it was no more than a distant exemplar of what

³⁷ Pallottino 1980, figs. 170–73.

³⁸ Holloway (1965) proposes that the single couple stands for the group of banqueters. One may note further that the woman makes a gesture that we interpret, when found in the Tomb of the Diver, as a sign of hesitation or refusal, as I have argued in regard to the west wall of the tomb. But it is far from certain that the language of Greek gestures was the same as that of Etruria.

³⁹ Recently by Rouveret 1992. In a forthcoming study I examine the question of the visual panorama found in the Tomb of

Hunting and Fishing in relation to the artistic formation of Ionian artists before their migration to Etruria.

⁴⁰ It will be clear, therefore, that we do not concur with the theory of d'Agostino and Cerchiai (1999, 61–72) that a common theme of eroticism unites the programs of the two tombs, or with that of Massa-Pairault (1992, 86), who sees the outer chamber of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing as a grove of Turan-Aphrodite and the inner chamber as an exaltation of the sea as the fecund element of the same goddess.

could be done. On undertaking the commission to decorate the interior of the Tomb of the Diver, its painters had no doubt heard about these Etruscan practices and might have seen something of the sort at Capua. But in carrying out their specific assignment, they were very much on their own.

THE SYMPOSIUM SCENE

In interpreting the paintings at Paestum, the scene of the diver on the ceiling is more challenging than the symposium of the tomb's side walls. But it is necessary to understand the symposium scene on the walls of the tomb before confronting the problem of interpreting the diver.

The symposium painted on the walls of the tomb was not a magical formula assuring that the pleasures and honor of the funeral celebration continued for eternity. This was the Etruscan convention that developed at Tarquinia. It was not the episodic celebration of the dead man's life that we find in Asia Minor.⁴¹ There is little likelihood that it was meant to substitute for the display of grave goods that was a mark of the end of the Iron Age and orientalizing times in central Italy and which was alive as late as the end of the fifth century when a "princely" burial was made at Roscigno in the immediate hinterland of Paestum.⁴² In Greece, the symposium was not a funeral theme.⁴³ And this factor, too, adds difficulty to the reading of the paintings of the tomb.

Napoli based his interpretation of the symposium scene on the group of figures represented on the west wall: a man dressed in a himation and bearing a staff and who is preceded by a youth and a flute girl. He made it clear that the flute girl and her companions could be seen either as late comers to the party, like Alcibiades in the *Symposium* of Plato, or as a group departing from the same gathering, as happens in the same dialogue. In his opinion, it was the latter alternative that rang true.⁴⁴

The dress of the youth in the center of scene, who, in Napoli's interpretation, is identified as the dead man himself, calls for brief comment. Or rather, it is not so much the dress as the lack of it that deserves comment. Despite the common appearance of figures clothed only in a stole draped around their shoulders in scenes of the komos on Attic red-figure vases, no one can reasonably assume that normal Athenian gentlemen paraded through the streets of the city in such a state, even in the wee hours of the morning.

Such marginal nudity could also be formal undress. It appears as such in the Calf Bearer, one of the most well-known archaic sculptures from the Athenian acropolis, and, in western Greece, in the "draped kouros" in Syracuse.⁴⁵ Formal undress in sculpture is evidently a means of elevating the subject from the here and now to a higher state, moving toward the full state of nudity, which was reserved for divinities and the heroized dead, although divinities, notably Apollo, are also shown wearing only a stole around the shoulders. So how is it that komoi of men in this state of almost nudity appear so commonly on Attic red-figure vases of the time of the Tomb of the Diver? Frequently given to song, they also display signs of intoxication. They have been carried to a higher state of consciousness by the wine of Dionysos. One may not be far from wrong, therefore, to see their dress as a visual language showing their inspired state.

The eroticism, kottabos, and music and singing of the symposium scene are elements typically found in similar representations in Attic vase painting, which were early recognized as prototypes of the Paestan paintings.⁴⁶ However, since no attempt has been made to search out close prototypes for each symposiast, it may be useful to do so here.

North Wall

1. Single symposiast at left (cf. figs. 11a, 11b).⁴⁷
2. Middle group (cf. figs. 12a, fig. 12b).⁴⁸

⁴¹ Mellink et al. 1998.

⁴² Holloway and Nabers 1982; Greco 1996.

⁴³ Murray 1981, 1988.

⁴⁴ "Ed in questo *uscire* dopo il banchetto (la vita terrena?) dovrebbe trovare la sua spiegazione la lastra ovest ed il suo collegamento con le altre, poiché colui che esce, preceduto dal flautista, è proprio colui che va verso l'al di là" (Napoli 1970, 147). Opinion continues divided on this question. Roesler (1983) follows Napoli, but, e.g., Warland (1999) upholds the opposing view. Rouveret (1976) considers the possibility that the three figures are all entertainers. Cynthia Damon suggested to me, on the occasion of a lecture at Amherst College, 23 March 2005, the possibility that the youth and older man of the west wall could be intended as symposiasts coming to take two vacant places, one on the end couch of both the north and south walls,

thus giving each couch two occupants.

⁴⁵ For the Calf Bearer, see Hirmer and Lullies 1957, pls. 24, 25; for draped kouros, see Holloway 1975, figs. 182–84.

⁴⁶ Parisi Badoni (1968), seeing strong ties as well to Campanian black-figure pottery. But Ermini (1994) makes the point of direct dependence on models in Attic vase painting. Napoli (1970, 126 ff.) was also inclined to credit the Paestan painters with greater independence from their models than allowed them by Parisi Badoni.

⁴⁷ For the hand of the same figure type holding a kylix, see ARV², 455, no. 9; CVA Great Britain 17, pl. 13b. Among the new additions to the repertoire of Attic red-figure vases, see also the tondo of the kylix published by Tzachou-Alexandri 2002.

⁴⁸ See also ARV² (24, no. 9) for figures at center and left.



Fig. 11a. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. North wall, figure at left.



Fig. 12a. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. North wall, middle group.



Fig. 11b. Attic red-figure cup (Felbermeyer; © DAI Rome, neg. 34.2287).



Fig. 12b. Attic red-figure hydria signed by Phintias, detail, British Museum, London (CVA Great Britain 7, pl. 72:3).

3. Right-hand group (cf. figs. 13a, 13b).⁴⁹ In figure 13b the youthful member of the pair has the exact pose of his counterpart in the Tomb of the Diver, although he does not hold a lyre. For the pose with lyre (in the original composition of the figure of the tomb in preliminary sketch with left arm extended), see figure 13c.⁵⁰ The space between the youth and his companion in this figure is greater than that in the tomb. The older figure does not caress the head of the youth and holds a kylix in his right hand. Figure 13d shows the motive of caressing the head.⁵¹

South Wall

1. Single symposiast at left (cf. figs. 14a, 14b).⁵² For the lyre, see figure 14c.

2. Middle group (cf. figs. 15a, 15b).⁵³
3. Right-hand group (cf. figs. 16a, 16b).⁵⁴ Pindar alludes to the singer's head thrown back in song.⁵⁵ For the symposiast with the double flute, see figure 16c.

Pillows and Coverlets

1. Pillow with central seam and stripes to either side of it.⁵⁶
2. Coverlets with sinuous lines crossing it as north wall right-hand group.⁵⁷

The paintings of the tomb, however, cannot be thought of in the same way as the scenes painted on drinking cups and kraters. In the case of the tomb, although consigned to darkness, the scene of the symposium surrounded the dead man in a meaningful

⁴⁹ See also *ARV*², 1279, no. 51; *CVA USA* 18, pl. 30:1.

⁵⁰ See also *ARV*², 24, no. 9.

⁵¹ See *ARV*² (467, no. 118), signed by Hieron as potter, for an hetaira caressing the head of her companion on a kline; see also Kunisch 1997, no. 377.

⁵² See also *ARV*² (275, no. 64), holding egg but without lyre.

⁵³ See also *ARV*², 1279, no. 51.

⁵⁴ See also *ARV*², 437, no. 128; Buitron-Oliver 1995, no. 173.

⁵⁵ fr. D2.13 Snell and Maehler.

⁵⁶ cf. *ARV*², 88, no. 4; *CVA Germany* 21, Tav. 51:3, 56:1.

⁵⁷ cf. Richter and Hall 1936, pl. 49, no. 58.



Fig. 13a. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. North wall, group at right.



Fig. 13c. Detail of Attic red-figure hydria signed by Phintias, British Museum, London (CVA Great Britain 7, pl. 71:2).

way. Painted on a drinking cup, the symposium was an appropriate touch on a vessel made with the drinking party in mind but a touch of decoration that could either catch the eye or be ignored. The image was in no way linked to the fate of the individual who held the cup on which it was painted. But one cannot escape the fact that the tomb painting we are examining must have spoken to the dead or worked in some way to ease his lot after death.⁵⁸ The symposium scene thus moved from the painted vases that provided the elements of composition for these tomb paintings to the tomb itself, acquiring new significance in the process. As Rouveret has observed:

Whatever may have been the motive which led to the execution of these frescoes, it is interesting to observe that the Greek painter treated the scenes of the banquet according to the schema which described it in Greece . . . at the same time doubtlessly enfold- ing their anecdotal nature with an eschatological or funerary significance.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ A point made already by Cagiano de Azevedo 1972.

⁵⁹ "Quel que soit le motif qui ait conduit à l'exécution de ces fresques, il est intéressant de remarquer que le peintre grec a traité la scène du banquet selon les schémas qui la définissaient



Fig. 13b. Attic red-figure krater, Los Angeles County Museum no. 48.25 (© 2005 Museum Associates/LACMA).



Fig. 13d. Detail of Attic red-figure cup signed by Hieron (Richter and Hall 1936, pl. 54; courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

Three elements of the Paestan paintings can be interpreted as having symbolic associations: the egg held by the first symposiast of the south wall, the number of symposiasts, and their musical instruments.

The egg is unquestionably at home in a funeral setting.⁶⁰ But its appearance here, like its well-known appearance in the Tomb of the Lionesses at Tarquinia, where two of the banqueters on the side walls

en Grèce . . . tout en les détournant, sans doute, de leur valeur anecdotique pour leur donner un sens eschatologique ou funéraire" (Rouveret 1974, 21).

⁶⁰ Nilsson 1951. For the appearance of eggs on south Italian



Fig. 14a. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. South wall, figure at left.

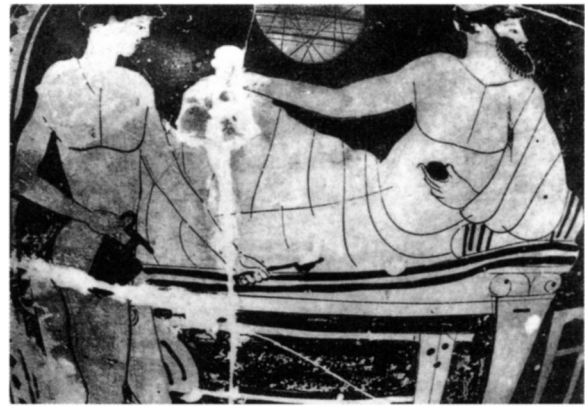


Fig. 14b. Detail of Attic red-figure amphora, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, Florence (CVA Italy 13, pl. 42:3).

hold eggs, is hardly emphasized and does not automatically signal a specific Orphic cult association.⁶¹ Just what Orphism meant at Paestum, or in any other location of Magna Graecia in the early fifth century, is difficult to say. The Orphic banquet of the dead is only known from the caricature of it made by Plato.⁶² The promise was of an eternal drinking bout (τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἤδη διάγειν μεθύοντας). It is clear, moreover, that there is no relation between the decoration of the tomb and the possibly Orphic formulas of the gold lamellae from Magna Graecia inscribed with directions for the dead to meet the challenges confronting them on their journey to the underworld.⁶³

A Pythagorean interpretation of the tomb paintings rests on the 10 reclining symposiasts. The number 10, of course, is the Pythagorean perfect number.⁶⁴ The number seven also recurs in various elements of the tomb's decoration, but this number has no special Pythagorean significance (every number had some connotation attached to it), and its various manifestations in the tomb show how deceptive numerology can be. Each of the trees flanking the diver in the painting of the ceiling has seven branches. Likewise, the tower of the diver painting is built with seven



Fig. 14c. Attic red-figure rhyton, Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome (Felbermeyer; © DAI Rome, neg. 59. 1679).

courses of masonry. There are 14 figures in the paintings of the symposium, and each of the lyres has seven strings. The real number intervals represented by the tuning of the lyre were, of course, a fundamental demonstration of Pythagorean number theory, but this does not mean that the number of strings on the in-

vases and their funeral connotations, see Lohman 1979, 88. Carter (1998, 196) also comments on representations on Attic white-ground lekythoi: "The white spheroid objects placed in great numbers as offerings on monuments, in baskets on a tomb base, or on a phiale, may also be eggs." There is also at Metapontum a tomb in which a marble egg was found containing an image of Aphrodite or Phanes, and which thus does correspond to Orphic cosmogony (see Guzzo 1991).

⁶¹ Napoli 1970, 141. Cf. the caution of Rouveret 1974, 20; for the Tomb of the Lionesses, see Steingraber 1986, no. 77.

⁶² Pl., *Republic* 2, 363c. Any search for echoes of Orphic partying in the comic poets depends on reference to this passage.

⁶³ Collected by Zuntz (1971, 277–393), who believes that they are Pythagorean, not Orphic, in origin. Orphic verses and Orphic superstition were also under general suspicion; as Zuntz (1975, 158) comments, Orphism was of "un livello basso e di bassa reputazione." Our view thus differs sharply from the decidedly Orphic centered interpretation of Otto 1990, 2003.

⁶⁴ See references in *Der Neue Pauly*, s.v. "Pythagorean numerology." Any Orphic reference is uncertain. A scholion on Virgil (*Aen.* 6.119 [Savage 1925]) states that Orpheus' lyre had seven strings. But for Pseudo-Eratosthenes (24), his was a nine-string lyre.



Fig. 15a. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. South wall, middle group.



Fig. 15b. Attic red-figure cup, Musée d'art et d'archéologie, Laon (CVA France 20, pl. 50:2)

strument was significant.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Iamblichus reports that the Pythagoreans could not abide the flute because they thought it was so violent, yet there are two flutes in the symposium scene of the Tomb of the Diver.⁶⁶

It is only too easy, however, to find deep philosophy behind one egg and 10 symposiasts. For example, Daisy Warland, the most recent commentator, has few doubts on the matter.⁶⁷ But, as Francoise-Hélène Massa-Pairault has pointed out, even if significant, the presence of 10 symposiasts in the tomb paintings may represent little more than an instance of numerology in popular culture.⁶⁸ Furthermore, any theory of Orphic or Pythagorean belief permeating the decoration of the tomb must include the image of the diver.⁶⁹

At the outset it should be made clear that the diver cannot be identified with any of the participants in the symposium. The slight growth of hair on his chin

occurs nowhere else among the figures in the paintings. Luca Cerchiali and Warland have suggested, however, that there is a special relationship between the diver and the kottabos player on the central couch of the north wall of the tomb because the trajectory of the diver's plunge touches the upraised hand and cup of this youth.⁷⁰ The wine projected from this cup finds its target in the cup held by the symposiast at the far left of the wall, in a curve similar to that suggested by the diver's fall. It is hurled into air, just as the diver hurls himself into his dive. This interpretation is valid, however, when the cover slab is raised up to a vertical position so that the diver would appear to be falling toward the central couch and its symposiasts.

Yet to be discussed is the erotic element of the decoration. The four couples sharing couches in the symposium scenes (there are only two solitary symposiasts) are in each case an older man and a youth.

⁶⁵The most that can be said for the Pythagorean significance of the number seven is that, as Aristotle commented (*Meta.* 1093a), the Pythagoreans held that things with the same number are related. Rouveret (1976, 119–21) discussed this subject, and far from finding hints of Pythagoreanism, she concluded: "Peut-être l'élément le plus important de ce symposium est-il l'évocation d'un compagnonnage masculine au-delà de la mort." This is not to deny that Pythagorean number theory influenced sacred architecture at Paestum (see, most recently, de Zwarte 2004).

⁶⁶*Vita Pythag.* 111. In general, we agree with Rouveret's (1976) rejection of the Pythagorean hypothesis. And here skepticism cautions us to remember that, as Virgil tells the story, Aeneas arrives on the shore of Libya with seven ships, and once ashore hunts seven stags to feed his crews (*Aen.* 1.170, 192). The presence of a lyre in the tomb, indicated by the fragments of a tortoise shell, may, however, have some significance in identifying the dead man as musician and thus well educated (see Pontradolfo 1995).

⁶⁷"En effet, les thèmes illustrés dans la sépulture s'inscrivent

dans une perspective eschatologique qu'il serait tentant d'associer à ces doctrines si répandues, non seulement en Grande Grèce, mais aussi en Etrurie. La sobriété des peintures et du mobilier funéraire irait dans le même sens. Le banquet collectif masculin était un rituel constitutif et de renforcement des liens d'une communauté. La représentation de l'au-delà comme une fête symposiaque éternelle est évoquée dans la littérature comme appartenant au domaine orphico-pythagoricien ("banquet des purs" dans les "îles des bienheureux" localisées dans le Soleil et la Lune)" (Warland 1999, 205).

⁶⁸Massa-Pairault 1993, 389–92.

⁶⁹Rouveret 1976, 125.

⁷⁰Cerchiali 1987; Warland 1996. D'Agostino and Cerchiali (1999, 65) advance the suggestion that the wine projected from the kylix in the *kottabos* game may be intended as a synonym for the act of diving. For additional comments on possible relationships between the symposiasts and the figures of the short ends of the tomb, cf. Otto 1990, 268.



Fig. 16a. Paestum, Tomb of the Diver. South wall, group at right.

Although none of the other couples approaches the overt erotic display of the pair at the far right of the north wall, whose older member cradles the youth's head with his hand while the youth modestly extends his arm, palm down, in a gesture indicating hesitation or refusal, there is a general atmosphere of erotic relationships.⁷¹

THE DIVER

Death and eroticism may also be intertwined in the image of the diver. Death and diving were associated in the Greek mind at an early date.⁷² *Katapontismos*, the leap from the cliff into the waves below, was of course a fate meted out to criminals and scapegoats. But it was also the act of lovers made mad by their passion.⁷³ Although we know it as a tale embroidered in later centuries, Sappho's leap from the Leucadian rock was the most famous of these exploits. The concept of love and the leap of desperation, however, were current in archaic and classical times, as expressed by Anacreon:

ἀρθείς δηῦτ' ἀπὸ Λευκάδος
πέτρης ἐς πολὺν κύμα κολυμβῶ μεθύων ἔρωτι.

Burning and drunk with love
I leap from the white rock into the grey wave.⁷⁴

Thus the question is whether the diver in the Paestan tomb is simply an image of dying or an im-



Fig. 16b. Attic red-figure cup, Museum Antiker Kleinkunst, Munich (Furtwängler and Reichold 1904–1932, pl. 105).



Fig. 16c. Fragment of Attic red-figure krater, Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri–Columbia no. 98.14a (© MAA, University of Missouri–Columbia).

age of dying in a state of ecstasy. Before weighing this question, we must consider other elements of the scene.

The diver has not made his leap from the tower that occupies the center of the scene with him. Rather, he is passing the tower in his descent. He has leapt from above, from the cliff clearly indicated by the tree at the right side of the scene.⁷⁵ The tree seems to be growing out of the frame of the scene, but the frame has become, at this side of the picture, the face of a vertically rising cliff. This is an olive tree.⁷⁶

Another olive tree, similar to the one at the right of the diving scene, is shown growing from a cliff face at the right-hand side of another diving scene found on the Attic black-figure amphora attributed to the Priam Painter from Monte Abetone and now in the

⁷¹ The same gesture, discussed by Boegehold (1999, ch. 2), is made by the youth on the west wall of the tomb as a gesture of separation. But here it is a simple "good-bye."

⁷² As we see from instances when the verb *δύο* takes on this meaning in Homer (*Il.* 11, 163; *Od.* 12, 383, etc.) (see Georgoudi 1988; Ampolo 1993). For the sinister aspects of the sea, see Lindenlauf 2003.

⁷³ For the notion that the leap from the rocks was an element of early Pythagorean speculation and belief, based largely on Carcopino's interpretation of stucco reliefs of the early Roman imperial period, see Carcopino 1926; Rouveret 1976, 124–27.

⁷⁴ fr. 21 Edmonds, *FAC* (fr. 376 Campbell).

⁷⁵ For cliff diving, see De Vries 1978.

⁷⁶ Chazalon 1995.

Villa Giulia Museum (figs. 17a, 17b).⁷⁷ Although women, particularly maenads, are found in other scenes where they are bathing in the open, this picture of girls diving and swimming in the seclusion of a grotto framed by sharply rising cliffs on both sides of the scene is unique in Greek vase painting.⁷⁸ And just as at Paestum, there is a tower in the center, from which one of the bathers is about to dive. Just as at Paestum, a second olive tree is found on the left of the picture. Just as at Paestum, the watery pool, inlet, or river is indicated in a painterly fashion, the water rising in the background to create, with the swimmer shown in it, an amazing effect of perspective.⁷⁹

What distinguishes the diving scene at Paestum from this vase painting of perhaps a half century before is its tone. The Priam Painter produced a genre picture of the young girls' outing and its pleasures. Their clothes have been carefully hung on the trees. Two lekythoi with perfumed oil hang ready for use. From the cliff at the left of the picture issues a spring of water, and one of the bathers is washing her hair below it. The divers (one ready for the plunge, the other looking on) have climbed the tower.

In the Tomb of the Diver there is none of this levity. The diver dives alone, isolated against the sky. There is present all the intensity of the moment of death.

One may thus entertain the idea that a prototype like the scene on the Monte Abetone amphora has been transformed into this painting of the diver's lonely adventure. Although a frame has been placed around the painting, which has eliminated the cliffs, they were certainly represented in the prototype and remain to give a foothold to the olive tree that clings to the cliff face in the amphora (see fig. 17b), now

the frame of the painting.⁸⁰ The diving platform remains.⁸¹ But the diver, descending from the cliff above, has no connection with it. Why, one may ask, was it kept when it could have been eliminated from the scene?

In his review of Napoli's work, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli opened a line of interpretation regarding the tower that has had a major influence in subsequent discussions. Bianchi Bandinelli identified the body of water into which the diver is plunging as the Stream of Ocean, emphasizing that in early Greek thought the ocean was imagined to be a great river. To the potential objection that the Pillars of Herakles were two and there is only one pillar in the scene of the diver at Paestum, he answered, repeating an observation of Giovanni Becatti, that the concept of twin Pillars of Herakles was created only after the opening of the Straits of Gibraltar became known. In earlier belief there was only the stream of ocean at the boundary of the world and no need to double the pillar.⁸²

This first suggestion of the "gate theory" is open to an important criticism. The early fifth century B.C. was hardly that distant past when the Greeks may have been unaware of the geographical boundaries of the western Mediterranean. They may even have been aware of them in Mycenaean times and were certainly aware of them by the time Colaeus made his voyages to Tartessos.⁸³

The gate theory, however, has continued to attract attention, notably in the work of Bruno d'Agostino, who bases his interpretation of the tower on the scene of Odysseus and the Sirens shown on a Corinthian aryballos now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (fig. 18).⁸⁴ Beyond the Sirens' rock there rises from

⁷⁷ *Paralipomena* 146, no. 8 Ter. On this scene, see Moon 1983; further bibliography in Scheibler 1987, 112–14; Hurwitt 1991.

⁷⁸ For other bathing scenes, particularly of maenads, see Frachia Miller 1979; Pfisterer-Haxes 2003, 36–40.

⁷⁹ As noted in Moon 1983.

⁸⁰ The covering slab of the tomb is damaged on its lower right side, just below this olive tree. It has been assumed that the curvature of the border of the diving scene was necessitated by the fracture of this corner of the cover, which left an open seam between it and the main part of the slab. This situation has engendered speculation that the corner was deliberately broken to provide an "entrance" and "exit" from the tomb (Napoli 1970, 150), evidence supporting this idea coming from the fact that the curvature of the painted frame remains inside the line of breakage. However, since the curve of the painted frame of the diving scene was drawn to mimic the cliff face of the original prototype, it is less certain that its form was determined by the fracture of the corner below it, intentional or not. The cover slab also cracked crossways in its center after it was put in place due to the weight of earth above it.

⁸¹ Napoli (1970, 152–55) gave four hypothetical ground plans of the tower, both as a solid and as an open structure. He be-

lieved that it was the platform from which the diver had dived. Slater (1976, 1977) suggested that the "tower" was in fact a temporary structure made out of ladders, an opinion countered by Holloway 1977.

⁸² "A questo punto un collega più erudito di me (G. Becatti) concordando con la mia supposizione, mi ha fatto notare che a un certo momento l'Oceano mitico fu razionalisticamente collocato al di là del Mediterraneo, al di là delle 'colonne d'Ercole' e che queste, che poi vennero dette 'colonne,' erano dette 'pylai,' porte o 'stelai,' pilastri (cf. Hdt. 4, 15, 2; Pl., *Criti.* 3). Aggiungo che queste 'colonne' si configurarono duplici perché si era conosciuta la realtà geografica delle terre a nord e a sud dello stretto di Gibilterra. Ma prima di questa realtà, il 'termine del mondo' non poteva possedere un segnacolo duplice; perciò non vale l'obiezione che le 'stelai' avrebbero dovuto essere due; non potevano essere due, perché nella credenza più antica, il fiume Oceano era alla fine del mondo e non vi poteva essere nella al di là" (Bianchi Bandinelli 1970, 142).

⁸³ Hdt. 1.127.

⁸⁴ d'Agostino 1982; see also d'Agostino and Cerchiai 1999, 81–90.

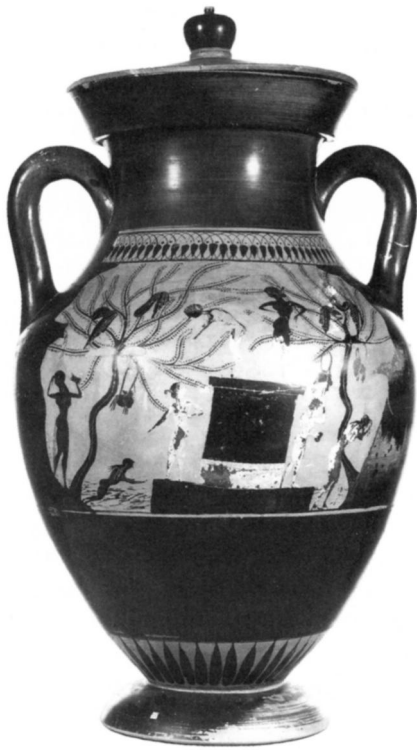


Fig. 17a. Attic black-figure amphora from Monte Abetone, Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome (courtesy Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell' Etruria Meridionale).

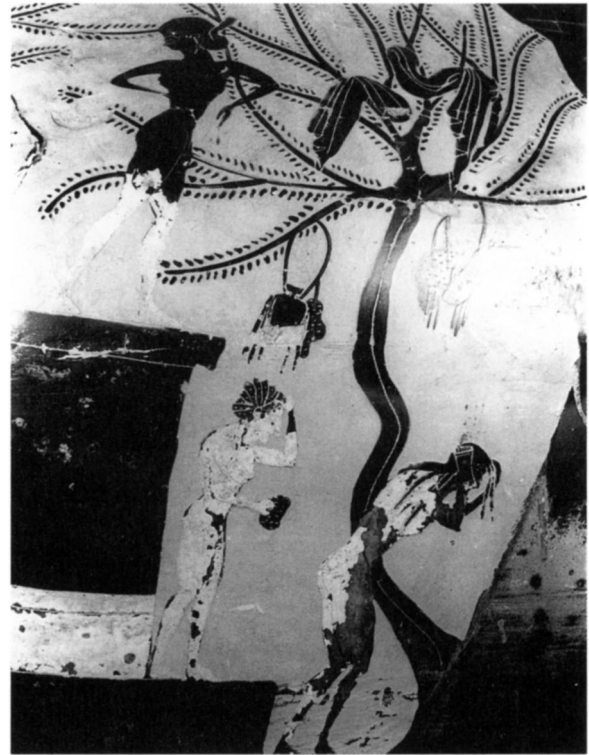


Fig. 17b. Detail of Attic black-figure amphora from Monte Abetone (courtesy Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell' Etruria Meridionale).

the sea a tower not unlike the tower of the Tomb of the Diver. D'Agostino suggests that this image represents the Gates of Hades, the sign of the fate that awaits the victims of the Sirens' song. So, too, the tower in the Paestan painting is meant to represent the Gates of Hades. This suggestive line of reasoning, however, is open to the same criticism that can be made of identifying the tower of the tomb painting with the Pillars of Herakles; it is a single tower, and in Greek painting when a gate is intended, it is shown in frontal view. Alessandro Ermini has made this point with thorough documentation that, in our opinion, settles the matter.⁸⁵

Let us return for a moment to the tower of the Boston aryballos, which d'Agostino is right in identifying as a close parallel and undoubtedly a parallel with similar significance. This tower is hardly an upright stone (στήλη), nor is it a way to represent a set of gates (πύλαι). What then is it? It is a tower (πύργος), and the tower has definite symbolic overtones in Greek thought. In the *Odyssey*, Ajax is called

a tower for the Achaeans (Ἀργεῖοι . . . πύργος [*Od.* 11.555–56]). Alcaeus compares the defenders of a city to a tower (ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλιος πύργος ἀρεῦτοι).⁸⁶ Sophocles' Oedipus is described as a tower for his country against death (θανάτων δ' ἐξ χώρας πύργος ἀνέστα [*OT* 1200–1]). And in Euripides we find the image twice, in the *Alcestis*, where it is evoked for a father's protection for his son (καὶ παῖς μὲν ἄρσεν πατέρ' ἔχει πύργον μέγαν [*Alc.* 311]) and in the *Medea* of her wish for a protector (ἦν μὲν τις ἡμῖν πύργος ἀσφαλῆς φανῇ, δόλω μέτειμι τόνδε καὶ συγῇ φόνον [*Med.* 390–91]).

So, in the Tomb of the Diver, the tower, far from being a diving platform like that of the Priam Painter's amphora and far from being intended to suggest the Pillars of Herakles or the Gates of Hades, may stand as an indication of hope and safety. This interpretation of the image at Paestum is also applicable to the Corinthian aryballos in Boston. There, Odysseus approaches the fatal danger of the Sirens' perch, but beyond it is a tower of safety, which gives a visual sig-

⁸⁵ Ermini 1994. There is no reason to see the swelling form of the water in the Paestan painting as an indication of an open stretch of ocean. This is a convention for representing water in

general found as early as the François Vase (Arias and Hirmer 1960, fig. 42).

⁸⁶ fr. 41 Edmonds, *FAC* (fr. 112 Campbell).



Fig. 18. Corinthian aryballos, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Helbig 1900, 31).

nal of the happy outcome of his dangerous passage.

In the Priam Painter's work, there are no such symbolic overtones. The olive trees of the scene are no more than trees by the side of the water where the girls hang their clothes. But, like the tower, the olive trees make symbolic reference to peace and security.⁸⁷ Thus the diver, for all the peril of his dive, is surrounded by signs of hope. His passage through the waters that await him will be brief because the tree to the left of the scene marks the safety and restfulness of the nearby shore.⁸⁸

The Etruscan diver of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing is an element in an illusionistic landscape. Another diver (with swimmers) is depicted in company with the sun god and his chariot on a red-figure krater in the British Museum (the "Blacas Vase").⁸⁹ The diver and swimmers are held to be stars descending into the sea at dawn. Massa-Pirault has argued that the Paestan diver is also a metaphorical star plunging into the spring of the ocean, which, she emphasizes, is a restricted body and so might be represented by the stream between the two trees of the Paestan tomb.⁹⁰ But what is lacking in the Tomb of the Diver

is the very cosmic setting that is emphasized on the London vase. If such an overtone was present in the mind of the artist, it was not emphasized.⁹¹

In summary then, the individual buried in the Tomb of the Diver was comforted by a vision of death as a rapid passage to safety. This vision was not derived from teachings of a Pythagorean or Orphic credo but was made by adapting two sets of images from genre art of the day. The prototypes were in all probability vase paintings of the symposium and of bathing and diving, the latter scene rare in painted pottery but documented by the amphora from Monte Abetone.⁹² The bathing scene was adapted so that it could be read with diving as death, the tower as protection, the olive trees as peace, and the shore beyond leading to the haven awaiting the diver when his passage through water is complete. The symposium scene surrounded the dead man with pleasure. The composition of the figure groups of the symposiasts was also borrowed from vase painting.

Is there a place for love and passion in this image? It has been argued that there was, and that this aspect of the painting served to link the scene of the

⁸⁷ See *RE*, s.v. "Ölbaum."

⁸⁸ The vision of death thus projected by the image of the diver has a deep resonance that transcends time and culture. Many in their last moments of life have seen a vision of the Elysian fields. "Those who are about to leave will often talk about seeing beautiful landscapes on the other side and then state this is where they will be after they pass. In most cases, once one has had such a vision, death is no longer something to fear" (Wills-Brandon 2000). This was certainly the vision before the eyes of Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, Lieutenant General, CSA, as he lay dying of his wounds following the Battle of Chancellorsville on 10 May 1863, and those gathered at his bedside heard him say his last words: "Let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees." The ancient notion of a passage to the

underworld across the river Styx is simply another manifestation of these deep-seated and recurrent human reactions to death.

⁸⁹ British Museum, cat. no. E 466; see also *LIMC* 2, s.v. "Astra no. 22"; *LIMC* 3, s.v. "Endymion no. 11"; Smith 1896, 284–85; Furtwängler and Reichhold 1904–1932, pl. 126.

⁹⁰ Massa-Pirault 1993, 389–92. Water, both spring water and the sea, is an agent of purification as well as a danger (Eur., *IT* 1191–94).

⁹¹ Napoli (1970, 161–65) introduces the London vase in his development of his Pythagorean interpretation of the paintings; see also Somville 1979.

⁹² For Attic vases at Paestum, see Rouillard and Verbanck-Piérard (2003) and the contributions of Cipriani Cabrera and

ceiling thematically with the clearly erotic content of the symposium scenes on the walls below it.⁹³ This may well be the case. However, the paintings of the ceiling and walls of the Tomb of the Diver may belong together not because they are part of a logical program of funeral symbolism but because of an independent relation of the two themes to the dead man of the tomb. While the image of death as a speedy passage through the waters was displayed above him, surrounding him was a symposium that would never end and in which he participated to the full, sounding his lyre in the company of his fellow musicians. And so the symposium fulfills the promise of the diver's quick passage to safety, for safety is what awaited him beyond the farther shore.⁹⁴

THE MOTIVATION FOR THE DECORATION OF THE TOMB

There remains unanswered the question of motivation: what led to the creation of this exceptional tomb in the Greek city at the mouth of the Sele River? For Mario Torelli, the Tomb of the Diver was painted for an Etruscan resident at Poseidonia.⁹⁵ The isolation of its small necropolis from the city and most of the cemeteries surrounding it suggested to him that this was the burial ground of a group of metics.⁹⁶ The program of the Tomb of the Diver and of Etruscan tombs, the Tomba delle Iscrizioni (Tomb of the Inscriptions) at Tarquinia in particular, is one and the same; on the ceiling, the diver is beginning his passage to the afterlife, below he is welcomed in the symposium of the afterlife. The Tomb of the Diver, in effect, represents Etruscan tomb painting at Paestum. In the same vein, Rouveret has pointed to the enduring attachment of the Italic world to the paraphernalia of the symposium in the tomb while their Greek neighbors dispensed with any such display.⁹⁷ It is important to note, however, that the Italic

and Etruscan tradition was one of both eating and drinking and so not precisely comparable with the institution of the Greek symposium. Viewed without reference to Etruscan tomb painting and Italic tomb furniture, the Tomb of the Diver is, first of all, a typical Greek cist tomb; second, a tomb decorated with imagery taken directly from contemporary Greek sources; and last, a tomb belonging to a Greek city, even if located some 1,500 m from its walls.

Nothing, however, in all that is known of Greek funeral customs, would have predicted the existence of this tomb. Ionian Greece had experimented with decorated terracotta sarcophagi in the sixth century.⁹⁸ It may be that several Attic terracotta pinakes of the late seventh and sixth centuries with *prothesis* and *threnos* scenes were used to decorate sarcophagi.⁹⁹ A Tarentine single grave of the end of the sixth century was painted with a decorative border at the top of its walls.¹⁰⁰ Finally, there are the terracotta sarcophagi from Sicily, notably from Gela, which were given molded architectural decoration on their interiors.¹⁰¹ These three categories of sarcophagi, or pinakes possibly made to decorate sarcophagi, mark three independent experiments with such decoration. The Tomb of the Diver is a fourth.¹⁰²

There were, however, two other partially decorated tombs at Paestum that can be compared with the Tomb of the Diver. In the same small necropolis where the Tomb of the Diver was found, the walls of a similar tomb had been plastered and a red dado painted on them. But no decoration was added.¹⁰³ And in 1999, in the Arcioni necropolis just north of the city, a tomb was excavated with a cover slab painted with a frame and corner palmettes similar to those of the Tomb of the Diver.¹⁰⁴

The fact that at Paestum other tombs with figured decoration may have been planned but left incomplete should increase one's reluctance to accept the

Rouillard therein. The parsimonious attitude of the Greeks generally toward grave goods means that the contents of tombs at Paestum are probably not an accurate guide to the repertoire of Attic vases imported into the city. The so-called Brygos Painter tomb from Etruscan Capua gives us a better idea of what was available in the area, on which see Williams 1992.

⁹³ Holloway 1977.

⁹⁴ I agree with Lamboley (1980), who emphasizes ancient beliefs in the life of the dead prolonged in the tomb, while at the same time we insist on the generalized symbolic overtones of the ceiling decoration. Cagianò de Azevedo (1972) and Rouveret (1976) believe that both the scene of diving and of the symposium were painted for the dead man as memories of times past.

⁹⁵ Torelli 1997, 138.

⁹⁶ As argued by Greco (1982), who holds that since this area (part of the limestone shelf on which the city itself was con-

structed) was not subdivided for agricultural purposes (thus not belonging to the citizenry) it was the property of metics. The argument was further developed by Massa-Pairault 1993. On the cemetery, see also Cipriani 1989; Pontrandolfo 1995.

⁹⁷ Rouveret 1988b, 279–82 (drawing in Pontrandolfo 1988).

⁹⁸ Cook 1981.

⁹⁹ Fairbanks 1924, pl. 66, no. 27.146 (Early Attic), see also no. 10.194 (black-figure of the mid sixth century); Mommsen 1977; Frel 1983.

¹⁰⁰ Tinè Bertocchi 1964, 113, no. 54; Napoli 1970, 89, fig. 29; Dell'Aglio and Lippolis 2003, 133, no. 1.

¹⁰¹ Bonanno 1998; for Gela, see Panvini and Giudice 2004, 149–50.

¹⁰² Napoli 1970, 65.

¹⁰³ Napoli 1970, 65.

¹⁰⁴ The discovery is mentioned in Cipriani et al. 2003, 142. Otherwise, it is unpublished.

theory that the Tomb of the Diver was an otherwise unparalleled creation made for a nostalgic Etruscan. Nevertheless, the Tomb of the Diver is exceptional in its Greek context, although the remark of Friis Johansen to the effect that in archaic and early classical Greece, remarkable tombs often were made for youths and maidens who died prematurely may hold the key to a better understanding of the tomb.¹⁰⁵ The fate of the young man who was buried in the Tomb of the Diver, if a youth he was, may well have evoked the desire on the part of his surviving family to give him an extraordinary tomb. What were their instructions to the painters? As I have emphasized, they did not dictate the precise imagery of an Orphic cult or Pythagorean brotherhood, except to the extent that the notions promoted by these groups had permeated the popular imagination of the day. Perhaps their instructions to the painters were no more than a generalized request for scenes of departure and cheer. The paintings of the Tomb of the Diver are testimony to how these artists, having to create imagery for the tomb, fulfilled their commission.

The painters of the tomb, as Napoli was at pains to stress, were hardly vase painters called upon to become mural artists.¹⁰⁶ Theirs was an active mural painters' workshop that showed its capabilities especially in the heads of the symposiasts of the north wall and in their reformulation of the diving scene from a genre motif into an arrestingly symbolic design. That they based their solutions for their unusual commission on vase paintings imported to southern Italy from Athens is hardly a mark against them. That the commission was executed with a certain haste only reflects the way in which much funeral art is created. One might wish that some sample of their work in the city were preserved. Were they, like Damophilus and Gorgasus, who frescoed the walls of the Temple of Ceres at Rome, coroplasts as well as painters?¹⁰⁷ Almost everything about them must remain speculation. But the Tomb of the Diver will remain unchallenged as one of those experiments, without clear precedent and without close successors in its own time, that sparkle so brightly in history of art.

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¹⁰⁵ Rouveret 1976, 128 (citing Friis Johansen 1951, 108–9).

¹⁰⁶ Napoli 1970, 187–89.

¹⁰⁷ Plin. *HN* 35.154.

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