

Grounded: History, Materiality and Myth at the Sacro Bosco of Bomarzo

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PhD Thesis

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I, Thalia Allington-Wood, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

VOLUME I

ABSTRACT:

This thesis considers the relationship between history, materiality and myth in the Sacro Bosco of Bomarzo (c.1550–1580), a site that encompasses roughly three hectares of woodland filled with carved peperino sculptures of monsters and marvels. Frequently framed as an outlier, Bomarzo’s position within studies of Italian Renaissance garden design has always been uncomfortable. This thesis provides a detailed consideration of the Sacro Bosco’s long history through the lens of art history and the site’s beholders, both within the sixteenth century and in key moments of its subsequent reception. In doing so this thesis opens up the study of Bomarzo to questions and concerns beyond that of attribution, iconography and patronage. Instead, interpretative frames grounded in the interests and concerns of the site’s intended visitors, from antiquarianism and popular forms of literature to natural history and geologic disasters, situate the Sacro Bosco in the complex social and cultural matrix from which it was produced and in which it was received. In particular, a case is made for the central role of the immediate physical surroundings—the area’s history, geology and topography—when seeking to understand the space. It is a site that should be seen as engaging with regional concerns. In focussing on the site’s afterlife, moreover, this thesis is interested in how canons have been formed within Garden and Landscape Studies and Renaissance Art History, and how the past is reinterpreted at different moments according to shifting political agendas, and social and cultural horizons.

IMPACT STATEMENT:

The last full length study of the Sacro Bosco was published in 2009, while the only published book dedicated to Bomarzo in English is an extended photo essay by Jessie Sheeler from 2007. This thesis thus contributes a much needed, detailed consideration of the site according to recent concerns within art historical scholarship, providing a critical assessment of the literature to date and new archival documents regarding its afterlife and reception.

Previously examined primarily in relation to its patron, Vicino Orsini, this present study shifts the focus to examine the Sacro Bosco through the lens of its beholders and the characteristics of the regional topography in which it sits. It will thus be of significance to those invested in the reception history of Renaissance artworks, and those participating in the material, sensory and ecological turn in the humanities.

In situating the Sacro Bosco in terms of the interests and concerns of its intended visitors, moreover, this thesis is fundamentally interdisciplinary. It relates Bomarzo to the Etruscan history of Alto Lazio, cinquecento *novelle* and game books, and theories of rock formation and geologic events, and will be of relevance to scholars of Etruria and its reception, Italian literature, and sixteenth-century natural history and disaster.

A significant part of the project involves the first detailed critical evaluation of the Sacro Bosco's afterlife. As part of this research, previously unknown drawings, photographs and understudied films of Bomarzo were unearthed that force a revision of the site's history as it has been understood to date, and which help us to situate and modify prevailing narratives about Renaissance sculptural and garden history more broadly. These new visual and textual materials will be vital to future studies of Bomarzo by students and academics, while also engaging the study of twentieth-century Italian photography, film, critical literature and media.

In considering the longer history of Bomarzo, a wider impact of this thesis is its capacity to show how shifting political, cultural and social horizons alter the physical and intellectual histories of objects and places. Its focus on the lasting effects in post-war Italy of the national Italian garden type created under fascism is a particularly unstudied, but crucial, subject for understanding the wider story of Italian Renaissance and garden scholarship. It is hoped that this study will be a starting point for future research that continues to fill this critical gap. My consideration of the twentieth-century restorations of the Sacro Bosco in relation to the concept of the *giardino all'italiana* should be significant methodologically for those working within, and on, historic gardens across Italy.

The publication of elements of this research in scholarly journals, including forthcoming articles in the peer-reviewed *Open Arts Journal*, *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, and an edited volume entitled *La Renaissance des origines*, provide evidence of the pathway to impact of this work on scholars across diverse disciplines, including art history, philosophy, architecture, literature and garden history, within the study of Italian culture and beyond.

The concerns of this thesis have also engendered a series of conference panels, including two on the reception and rediscovery of medieval and Renaissance art at the *Renaissance Society of America* (2017) and the *International Congress of Medieval Studies* (2018), for which an edited volume is planned. The environmental and material concerns of the fourth chapter, moreover, resulted in an panel entitled 'Elemental Force in Renaissance Visual and Material Culture' (2018), the second iteration of which is planned as a collaboration with Northwestern University and the Newberry Library in Chicago in 2020, thus providing opportunities for collaboration, conversation and knowledge sharing, internationally and across academic and public contexts.

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Elements of this thesis have been presented at multiple conferences, both in the UK and internationally. I would especially like to thank the members of the Association of Art Historians, Renaissance Society of America, Society of Architectural Historians, Panthéon-Sorbonne, and the Sixteenth Century Society for their encouragement and comments, which have been influential and have led to several forthcoming publications. My thanks to the London Arts and Humanities Partnership, the Society of Architectural Historians and the Sixteenth Century Society for awards that made participating in these events possible.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1620s, the Dutch painter Bartholomeus Breenbergh moved to Rome from Amsterdam and filled sketchbooks with views of the Lazio countryside. One drawing, rendered in pen and brown ink with brown and grey wash over black chalk, depicts the landscape of Bomarzo [Fig.1], an area of Alto Lazio that is found in the lower foothills of the Apennines, roughly fifty-eight miles north of Rome and two and a half miles southwest of the river Tiber and the Umbrian border. The land here is volcanic and archeologically rich. Lakes, such as Bolsena and Vico, fill extinct craters. The land undulates with rolling hills covered with woods of oak, beech and chestnut trees, which hide gigantic *tufò* boulders and Etruscan tombs beneath their canopy. The nearest metropolitan centre is Viterbo, about ten miles to the southwest. In Breenbergh's drawing, the Orsini castle of Bomarzo's medieval town is shown in the central distance, clinging to its stony summit and divided by a crease that runs down the centre of the page, marking where the paper was once folded. The view is orientated from the north looking south towards the town, and the facades of the buildings are cast in the light of the setting sun. The foreground positions the viewer as if atop a hill looking over this topography; rough earth, shrubs and low foliage indicated by loose pen strokes at the bottom of the page. To the left, a third of the drawing is dominated by immense boulders that reach to the top of the composition, their craggy and pockmarked surfaces dwarfing any other point of reference. Two figures crest the hill, next to a small gable-roofed structure, to the right of which is the foundational outline of a previous construction, hinting at the ancient ruins found throughout the region. Where stone dominates the left of the composition, on the right

the view gives way to vast open sky and forest-covered hills.¹ This lithic and archeological landscape as it existed both before and after Breenbergh's rendering forms the focus of this dissertation, which considers the relationship between topography, history, materiality and myth in early modern Italian outdoor sculpture.

The case study for this topic, the Sacro Bosco, is a sculptural site that was commissioned by Pier Francesco Orsini, also known as Vicino, between the early 1550s and 1580.² It resides in the valley between the medieval hilltop town, an Orsini residence since the fourteenth century, and Monte Casoli, a *tuffo* ridge about nine hundred meters northwest of the site and that runs parallel to the Vezza river, a tributary of the Tiber river [Fig.2]. If located in relation to Breenbergh's drawing, it would be found in the bottom right hand corner, hidden from view by the gable-roofed building and the loosely sketched tree tops covering the valley below. The site itself encompasses roughly three hectares of woodland, filled with large scale sculptures of monsters, marvels, and carved inscriptions that are arrayed over sloping ground and surrounded by further trees and foliage. The sculptures include fighting giants over seven meters tall [Plate 4], a dragon [Plate 20], a two-tailed siren [Plate 29], tombs [Plate 3 and 15], and a building that leans precariously to one side [Plate 13] [for a full list see Plates 1–35].

¹ On the verso of this drawing there is a further sketch of the Bomarzo landscape: on the bottom right corner of the page rolling hills covered in trees are rendered in graphite, now partially obscured by a large water stain. National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, object number: 1985.14.1.b.

² Principle scholarly texts dedicated to the Sacro Bosco are: Praz [1949] (1975); Davidson (1954); Rivosecchi (1955); Calvesi (1956), idem (1989) and idem (2000); the essays in the dedicated issue of the *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* (1955); Lang (1957); de Mandiargues (1957); Kretzulesco-Quaranta (1960); Bruschi (1955), idem (1963)a and idem (1963)b; Settis (1966); von Henneberg (1967) and idem (1972); Oleson (1975); Theurillat (1976); Quartermaine (1977); Dotson (1982); Bosch (1982); Bury (1982) and idem (1983); Darnall and Weil (1984); Bredekamp (1985) and the Italian translation, with added documents (1989); Berberi (1999); Guidoni (2006), Bélanger (2007); the edited volume by Frommel and Alessi (2009); Morgan (2015), idem (2016)a and idem (2016)b. The only book dedicated to the Sacro Bosco in English is Sheeler (2007), however this text is an extended photo essay.

Very little is known about the creation of the Sacro Bosco. Almost all historical documents pertaining to Bomarzo from the sixteenth century onwards have been lost or destroyed, meaning that its designers, the identities of each sculpture, and the precise original layout, remain unknown. Even the dates are approximate. The earliest concrete year, 1552, is gleaned from an inscription carved on one of two plinths that flank the semi circular Theatre [Plate 12], which states: ‘VICINO ORSINO NEL MDLII’.³ That work had finished by 1580 is evident from a letter Orsini wrote to his friend Giovanni Drouet, under-secretary to Cardinal Matthieu Cointerel, dated 15 January. ‘When I consider that from now on there is no more work to do in my *boschetto* than the contemplation of lesser and greater things’, Vicino wrote, ‘I do not picture anything else, with a mind abstracted, like a statue’.⁴

Surviving documentation regarding the Sacro Bosco is comprised almost exclusively of scant references in Orsini’s correspondence, some legal documents regarding the estate as a whole, and literary dedications by Orsini’s acquaintances.⁵ The only visual records that are slightly close in date are drawings thought to be made from memory by the Italian painter Giovanni Guerra c.1598 and others by Breenbergh from 1625 (a

³ A full list of the inscriptions in the Sacro Bosco is provided in the Appendix (see vol.II), along with details of how the surviving carved words have, at times, been altered or filled in by the current owners.

⁴ Horst Bredekamp transcribed the extant letters by Orsini and others relating to the Sacro Bosco in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 11–92, with some additional documents added to the later Italian translation (1989), 249–303. All forthcoming references shall provide details for Bredekamp and the relevant archive. For the letter cited here: Vicino Orsini to Giovanni Drouet [15/01/1580], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 54–55, 54 (Rome: Archivio di Stato. Deposito Santa Croce. Y 592. 75–75v, 82): ‘quando considero ch’ormai nel mio boschetto non ci ho da far altra operatione, che la contemplatione delle cose inferiori et superiori, non ne ritraggo altro, che, stando astratto con la mente, parer una statua’ [sic]. ‘Ritraggo’ means to picture or portray something, as in to paint or draw, but also to withdraw or retire, and as such works two-fold to convey the despondency Orsini describes.

⁵ The Orsini archive is split over two locations: UCLA’s Charles E. Young Research Library (CYRL) and the Archivio Storico Capitolino in Rome (ASC). There is also some relevant correspondence in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), the Archivio Segreto Vaticano (AV), the Rome Archivio di Stato (ASR), the Archivio di Stato of Parma (ASP) and the Archivio Di Stato of Viterbo (ASV).

cache of works to which the rendering that opened this Introduction belongs).⁶ The lack of a substantial archive poses an interesting problem for the art historian and is perhaps why Bomarzo, though often referenced in surveys of Italian Renaissance gardens, has not been studied in great depth in recent scholarship.⁷ The majority of its bibliography was written in the 1960s, 70s and 80s and, in line with the art historical trends of these decades, focus is primarily given to establishing plausible iconography, to attribution of the sculptures and to Orsini's biography.⁸

Most interpretations of the Sacro Bosco look to the patron as a source of meaning. An aristocrat belonging to a (relatively minor) branch of the powerful Orsini family, which had included Pope Celestine III (1191–1198) and Pope Nicholas III (1277–1280) among their ancestors, Vicino was born in 1523 and inherited Bomarzo and nearby Chia in 1542, after an inheritance dispute with his brother Maerbale that was

⁶ A cache of Giovanni Guerra's drawings of the Sacro Bosco are held in the Graphische Sammlung, Albertina, Vienna under 'Disegni – Pradolino drawings', c.1598. Bartholomeus Breenbergh's renderings are held over multiple collections, including the British Museum in London, the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, as detailed in the List of Figures in vol.II.

⁷ In the past decade studies of the Sacro Bosco comprise the edited volume by Frommel and Alessi (2009), which acts as a synthesis or compilation of previous interpretations; and the work of Morgan (2015), idem (2016)a and idem (2016)b, 135–164, in which Bomarzo largely forms part of a wider study into monstrosity and the grotesque in Italian Renaissance garden design.

⁸ Many early post-war articles and films state that it was Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola who was responsible for Bomarzo's design. Both a 1948 newsreel and the documentary by Michelangelo Antonioni discussed in Chapter Five 'Myth' assert that 'A Bomarzo, Viterbo, la fantasia del Vignola si è presa di queste licenze architettoniche e ha popolato il giardino di giganti e mostri di pietra': 'Nel mondo del surreale: Salvador Dalí nel "giardino dei mostri"' (10/11/1948), Archivio Storico Luce, Rome (I020903) [Henceforth 'Nel mondo' (1948)]. Mario Rivosecchi argued in 1955 that the site was Vignola's creation: (1955), 171–178. When Vignola is mentioned by Vicino in his correspondence, however, it is in relation to the Villa Farnese at Caprarola rather than in connection to his *boschetto*: e.g. Vicino Orsini to Alessandro Farnese [09/10/1565], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 18 (ASP. Carteggio Farnesiano. Esterno. Viterbo. 533). Sandro Benedetti argued for Giacomo del Duca, assistant to Michelangelo and responsible in part for the construction of the Villa Mattei on the Celio as designer of the Sacro Bosco; Jacqueline Theurillat asserted that it was Pirro Ligorio, architect of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli: Benedetti (1973); Theurillat (1973). In fact, the only sculptor named by Orsini is Simone Moschino in a letter to Ottavio Farnese dated 17 December 1578 stating that he is 'molto soddisfatta, et ben servita' by his work, though it is not known what Moschino was contracted to make: Bredekamp (1989), 274 (ASP. Epistolario scelto. Simone Moschini, 66).

overseen by Pope Paul III.⁹ Bomarzo was Orsini's main residence, though he was absent for periods between 1546 and 1559 when he was called away on military duty for the Pope.¹⁰ Letters indicate that the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco were carved throughout the decades between 1550 and 1580, and Orsini died some five years later on 28 January 1585.¹¹ There is only one confidently identified portrait of Orsini: a cast lead uni-face medal by Pastorino de' Pastorini, one of the most prolific Italian medalists of the sixteenth century.¹² Thirty-six millimetres in diameter the example in the British Museum shows Vicino in profile with short tight curled hair, a beard and a doublet [Fig.3].

Writing about the Sacro Bosco, scholars frequently cast Orsini as the sole figure responsible for its contents. Ezio Bacino, writing in 1953, imagined Vicino looking over the 'tumultuous erratic rocks' in the valley below his palazzo and being struck with an immediate vision of the site in its completed form: seeing 'suddenly, like today, a park full of chimeric creatures'.¹³ As recently as 1997, in a book on the Renaissance gardens of Latium, one Italian scholar described Orsini as the 'magus-demiurge' of the Sacro Bosco.¹⁴ It has been argued variously that the site was a form

⁹ 'Notizia sulla divisione dell'eredità tra Vicino e Maerbale le Orsini' (1542), in Bredekamp (1989), 287 (BAV. Vat. Lat. 7997 Part. I. 54): 'Assegna a Maerbale La Penna, e Chia, le metà de' castelli di Foglia Collestat e Torri e due porzioni di Ripa. Così che possa Vicino fra tre anni recuperare Chia assegnando a Maerbale altro castello di frustoso di 200 scudi d'oro arbitrio di Gio. Francesco conte di Pitigliano nominato da Maerbale, e di Ottavio Orsino nominato da Vicino. Assegna a Vicino il Castello di Bomarzo, e Chia quando si ricuperi'.

¹⁰ Biographical details and descriptions of Vicino Orsini's life are provided in Bruschi (1955), 3–18; Zander (1955), 19–31; von Henneberg (1972), 43–55; Quartermaine (1977); Bosch (1982); Bredekamp (1985), vol.I, 14–53; Sheeler (2007), 6–23; Koller (2009), 14–19.

¹¹ For example a letter from Orsini to Drouet [22/12/1573] mentions 'disegni nuovi al boschetto', another dated 08 September 1578 refers to 'Colossi dei Boschetto': Bredekamp (1989), 258 and 273 (ASR. Deposito Santa Croce. Y 592. 133–134 and 122).

¹² Pastorino de' Pastorini, based in Ferrara, Bologna and then Florence, created c.200 known medals of Italy's elite men and women over the course of the sixteenth century, including those of prominent members of the Medici, d'Este and Farnese family, artists such as Titian, the poet Ariosto, and Nicolosa, wife of Giorgio Vasari.

¹³ Bacino (1953), 97: 'tumultuosa di rocce erratiche [...] vi scorse all'improvviso, come oggi, un parco brado di creature chimeriche'.

¹⁴ Fagiolo (1997), 28.

of sculptural autobiography, an attempt to claim an ancient lineage, and intended as a funerary monument to Orsini's wife, Giulia Farnese, even though she died in 1560, a decade after the creation of the Sacro Bosco had commenced.¹⁵

Rather than taking its cue from the patron, this thesis is concerned with opening up new avenues of interpretation and turns to the important role played by the site's visitors in making meaning, and the significance of the location and topographical setting. Acknowledging archival gaps, this study focuses on the possible encounters implied by the irrefutable physical remains of the sculptures and their surroundings, and how the interests and concerns of historically specific beholders may have, in turn, affected their reception. It is the proposition of this thesis that the Sacro Bosco needs to be seen as a space that engages with the local. The immediate geography of Alto Lazio, the placement of the large, embedded statues within a wooded environment, and the sculpture's material form the lynchpins around which my arguments turn.

These elements, geographic and material, have been some of the least considered aspects of the Sacro Bosco, and have only just begun to be seriously investigated since research for this thesis began.¹⁶ Likewise, it is only in recent years that scholarship within garden studies has begun to focus on the importance of regional landscapes when considering villa gardens.¹⁷ As such, the following pages help build a new geological and material lens through which to view Bomarzo. Almost every sculpture is carved *per via di levare*, that is by carving away matter, from colossal boulders of 'living' peperino stone found where they naturally occurred embedded

¹⁵ For early essays that sought to decode the Sacro Bosco's iconography through the events of Vicino's life see von Henneberg (1972); Oleson (1975); Quartermaine (1977); Bosch (1982); Bury (1982) and idem (1983).

¹⁶ See Morgan (2015), idem (2016)a and idem (2016)b, 135–164. How this thesis differs to Morgan's arguments is discussed in detail in Chapter Two 'Histories' and Chapter Four 'Rock'.

¹⁷ See, for example, Fagiolo (2011), 81–115.

into the Alto Lazio earth. In other words, the fact that the sculptural material was never quarried, selected, cut into a block and transported to the Sacro Bosco, means that what was sculpted and where would have been dictated to a great extent by the pre-existing form and position of the boulders. Peperino, a rough and grey-brown volcanic rock of the *tuffo* variety, moreover, is an unusual substance for sixteenth-century Italian statuary, and one not associated with wealth or status.¹⁸ The decision to use this local, un-quarried, material would thus have made an immediate visual statement about the site's ties to its environs.

The same is true of the way in which the statues were hewn. The softness and open structure of peperino in comparison to stones such as marble, meant that fine detailing was impossible. While its composition of basalt, limestone, augite, mica, leicite, and scoriae, meant that its dappled, coarse texture would always be apparent. However, while the works have certainly experienced weathering in the centuries since their creation, it is also clear that they were intentionally left rough. The ridged surface created by the stone carvers' tooth chisels has often been left purposefully visible, and the surface never smoothed to a refined plane by flat chisels and rasps.¹⁹ In one sense, these tool marks attest to the labour of the now anonymous artists who shaped these boulders, the physical effort involved in such stone carving of a kind famously epitomised by a woodcut in Sigismondo Fanti's *Triumpho di fortuna* (1527) [Fig.4].²⁰ At the same time, these striations emphasise the fact that the sculptures were hewn in

¹⁸ Peperino and its various qualities and associations are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four 'Rock'.

¹⁹ For an overview of Renaissance sculptural techniques across materials see Helms (1993), 18–39.

²⁰ Fanti (1527), Carte.XXXVIII. Since the late nineteenth century, the print has been most widely known as an illustration depicting Michelangelo as an *all'antica* sculptor, in a loincloth and working on his *Dawn* statue for the Medici Chapel. See Chatto (1861), 316–317 and Fagan (1883), 185 for two of the earliest discussions. For the volume in relation to the creation of artistic canons, and a study that points out the important fact that the print appears eight times throughout the volume, accompanied by the name of a different sculptor in each instance, see Johnson (2001), 199–205. Fanti's publication as a fortune book plays a key role in Chapter Three 'Fiction'.

dialogue with a chunk of stone and its natural setting.²¹ The active role played by the embedded material is made even more evident in many of the sculptures, such as the Reclining Woman [Plate 25] and the Tree [Plate 8], where areas of the natural boulder have been left entirely un-carved. The very manner in which the design of the site and sculptures was approached thus suggests an intimate engagement with local geographical and geological concerns, and in this way the primary concerns of this thesis take their cues from the characteristics of the site itself.

Central to this study too is a reconsideration of the Sacro Bosco's afterlife, beginning with the property's sale in the mid-seventeenth century. The site was practically forgotten after 1600 until a sudden revival of interest starting in 1948. This aspect of Bomarzo's *fortuna critica* has been neglected in scholarship to date even though it raises important questions for art historical research and the site's historiography. What happened to the Sacro Bosco in the interim centuries? Why was it overlooked for so long, and why did it become prominent again in Italy post WWII? My research has uncovered new documents relating to this longer history that can help us to situate and modify prevailing narratives about the Sacro Bosco and about Renaissance sculptural and garden history more broadly. By taking seriously the photographs, films and popular texts that initiated the Sacro Bosco's 'rediscovery', this thesis sees such material as playing an influential and active role in how the site was subsequently perceived and interpreted. As such, it participates in a growing body of scholarship concerned with the complex ways in which sculpture, photography, the

²¹ In this way the sculptures could be said to play upon the well known trope within Renaissance sculpture that it was a sculptor's task to release the '*concetto*' contained in a block of stone, an idea popularised by a poem of Michelangelo's, published with a commentary by the Florentine poet and scholar Benedetto Varchi in 1549: Varchi (1549). See also Cole (2011), 35 and 99–107.

media and art history intersect.²² In doing so, this thesis is also about how the associations and meanings of sculptures can change according to the historical moment in which they are encountered, and the shifting political, cultural and social horizons of those doing the beholding.

Reflecting these concerns, this dissertation is divided into two areas of study. One considers the site after the 1600s, with an emphasis on the twentieth century, and forms the focus of Chapter One ‘Afterlives’ and Chapter Five ‘Myth’. These two chapters bookend the second focus: the site in its original late sixteenth-century context and the interests of its intended historical viewers, which are addressed in Chapter Two ‘Histories’, Chapter Three ‘Fiction’, and Chapter Four ‘Rock’. These two aspects, though separated by centuries, are seen as inseparably linked and mutually inflecting. One of the first arguments this thesis makes is that it is only after critically reevaluating the historiography of Bomarzo, particularly in relation to early twentieth-century politics, that we can begin to find new, historically sensitive, ways to consider the space in its own period.

Throughout, particular emphasis is placed on the possible responses that the encounter with the site in a given moment could have provoked in visitors. Seeking to approach an object via its audiences is a widely embedded concern in art history, but a reappraisal of the Sacro Bosco, and Italian garden culture more generally, in such experiential terms has barely begun, despite the fact that the site itself suggests an

²² See Bergstein (1992); the essays in Johnson (1998); Fawcett (1995); Batchen (2004); the volume edited by Marcoci (2010) and Hamill and Luke (2017). The extensive work of Geraldine A. Johnson on the relationship between photography and sculpture has been particularly informative, see: Johnson (1995), idem (1998)a and (1998)b, idem (2004), idem (2006), idem (2011), idem (2013), idem (2017)a and (2017)b, and idem (2018).

invitation to the beholder to actively examine the work.²³ On the rectangular stone base of one of two Sphinx sculptures that flank the modern entrance [Plate 1] are the words:

YOU WHO ENTER HERE PUT YOUR MIND TO IT
PART BY PART
AND TELL ME IF SO MANY
WONDERS
WERE MADE AS TRICKERY
OR AS ART²⁴

These words present the Sacro Bosco as an analytical challenge based on empirical evidence, and explicitly call upon the visitor (*'Tu'*) to think actively and critically about what they behold. The aim of this thesis is to take up the call of the inscription and consider the Sacro Bosco in terms of its visitors and their active role. In doing so my research also confronts and repositions the site according to the current sensory turn in art history which, in its emphasis on the embodied and experiential, forces a greater account of a work of art's materiality and effect on the body of the beholder.²⁵ The remainder of this introduction will set up this approach, as well as characterise the type of wooded and sculptural space that the Sacro Bosco, as implied by its name, would have offered a visitor in the sixteenth century.

²³ Since the early 1980s, scholars such as Hans Belting and Michael Fried have considered the reception of works (or 'reader-response criticism') in their art historical research: see Belting (1989) and Fried (1980). The perspective of the beholder, however, has been surprisingly neglected as a methodological approach in Bomarzo scholarship to date. Even the essays included in the forthcoming special issue of *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* (which includes an article drawn from Chapters One and Five of this thesis), primarily take Vicino Orsini as the lynch pin of their interpretations. For an approach to gardens from reception more generally see: Hunt (2004), the essays in the edited volume by Conan (2005) and Morgan (2016)b. Conan in his Introduction states that the volume is 'trying to negotiate a turning point in garden history' away from 'establishing the intentions of patrons and garden designers': 1. This thesis participates in this methodological shift.

²⁴ 'TU CH'ENTRI QVA PON MENTE / PARTE A PARTE / ET DIMMI POI SE TANTE / MARAVIGLIE / SIEN FATTE PER INGANNO / O PVR PER ARTE' (see the Appendix of this thesis (inscription B), in vol.II, where all the site's inscriptions are transcribed).

²⁵ The sensory turn has been growing since the 1980s. Anthropologist David Howes has traced this genealogy, see Howes (2003), idem (2006) and idem (2013). Also Jay (2011). For a critique of visual hegemony in art history and the need for a multi-sensory approach to an art object see Mitchell (2002), idem (2005), and Halsall (2004). For the senses in early modern art see Quiviger (2010); Sanger and Walker (2012); Hall and Cooper (2013).

APPROACH: RECEPTION / RESPONSE

Courtly villas, their gardens and *boschi* were spaces of leisure where people of both sexes gathered, walked in pairs or groups, ate together, sang and told stories, socialised with greater freedom than in the spheres of public action, and explored and ‘delighted in’ sculptures and natural surroundings.²⁶ The idea that the Sacro Bosco was designed to offer a space for such heterogenous interactions is suggested in a letter written by Vicino to Ottavio Farnese on 20 July 1567. ‘There has arrived no duke in my house’, Orsini writes, ‘unless it was a duke in title, but not in effect’; Ottavio should thus not come to visit ‘as Duke of Parma, but as Ottavio Farnese, whom I esteem more in swords and cloak, than if he saw it [Bomarzo] with the guise [*habito*] of a Duke’.²⁷ Orsini’s use of the word ‘*habito*’ suggests attire but also temperament and behaviour. Some seven years later Vicino would likewise send Giovanni Drouet a poem he had written called ‘*Capitolo del boschetto*’, in which the *bosco* is presented as a space in which usual behaviours and hierarchies are levelled or suspended:

Here nature has put every pleasure,
[...]
So that in the wooded grove everyone is friend or relative,
You live cheerfully, you live in common.²⁸

In the Sacro Bosco, moreover, a carved verse gracing the back of the large Covered Bench [Plate 17], implies adventurous and curious beholders:

YOU [VOI] WHO TRAVEL THE WORLD
TO SEE GREAT AND STUPENDOUS MARVELS
COME HERE WHERE THERE ARE HORRENDOUS FACES

²⁶ See Coffin (1991), ‘Chapter 13: Entertainment’, 227–243.

²⁷ Vicino Orsini to Ottavio Farnese [20/07/1567], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 20 (ASP. Carteggio Farnesiano. Estero. Viterbo. 534): ‘In casa mia non c’è arrivato nessun duca, se non è fosse qual che duca in titolo ma non in effetto’; ‘non dico come duca de Parma, ma come Ottavio Farnese, qual stimo più in spade e cappa, che se lo vedesse con l’habito dogale’.

²⁸ Vicino Orsini to Giovanni Drouet, ‘Capitolo del Boschetto’, 1574 (?), in Bredekamp (1989), 263–264, 264 (BAV. Ms. Chigiano. LIII. 61. cc. 144r–145v): ‘Qui messe la natura ogni piacere, [...] Che pel boschetto ogni amico è parente / Si vive allegro, si vive a comuno’.

Structures such as the various stone carved benches [Plates 17 and 26], the dining table and seating ledge in the Ogre [Plate 19], and the Theatre [Plate 12], all suggest group forms of spectatorship or participation, offering places to sit, converse, eat, perform and be entertained. A pen, ink and wash drawing by Giovanni Guerra from c. 1598, one of the only contemporary illustrations of the site to have survived, depicts two figures sitting inside the stone Ogre, one with a guitar or lute in his lap (evoking the resonant sounds of his instrument inside the echo chamber of the sculpture's lithic interior) [Fig.5]. Such social activity, which would also include women, is also implicitly attested to by at least one contemporary text. Describing the same sculpture in the late sixteenth century, Italian agronomist Giovanni Vittore Soderini writes of how when laid for dinner, with candles and plates set out on the table/tongue, the sculpture is lit up and appears 'a very scary mask' (describing too how the sculpture was activated by human presence).³⁰

Orsini's social network allows us to create a working sample of the Sacro Bosco's intended spectators and at the same time to remove the garden from an exclusively signorial and male gaze. David R. Coffin has written about the social openness of Lazio or 'Latium' gardens in the sixteenth century, where patrons followed the ancient Roman principle of *Lex Hortorum*, in which a garden was understood as open to friends and strangers alike, and often had both a private and a public entrance.³¹ When Cardinal Andrea della Valle commissioned Lorenzetto Lotti to design a sculpture garden for his villa in Rome (c.1520), one inscription placed along the surrounding

²⁹ 'VOI CHE PEL MONDO GITE ERRANDO VAGHI / DI VEDER MARAVIGLIE ALTE ET STVPENDE / VENITE QVA, DOVE SON FACCIE HORRENDE / ELEFANTI, LEONI, ORSI, ORCHI ET DRAGHI' (Appendix, O).

³⁰ Soderini [c.1580–1590] (1902), vol.I, 276: 'dentro la lingua serve per tavola et i denti per sedili, che quando vi si apparecchia da cena con i lumi, tra le vivande apparisce di lontano un paurosissimo mascherone'.

³¹ Coffin (1982), 201–232.

wall stated in Latin that it was designed ‘for the enjoyment of friends and for the delight of citizens and strangers’.³² Michel de Montaigne, describing his visits to Roman courtly gardens in the late cinquecento, spoke of how ‘all these beautiful spots are free and open to any one who may desire to enter therein’.³³ Nonetheless, Bomarzo’s rural position between Rome and Florence, ten miles from Viterbo and not on any major roads or route between these cities, means that the majority of its projected audience was probably comprised of people Orsini already knew, or that were associated with his acquaintances and invitees, rather than casual or chance visitors.

From Vicino’s surviving letters and the dedications he received in publications throughout the sixteenth century, it is clear that he and a good number of his social group were actively interested in ancient history, literature and natural science, and it is these intellectual contexts that further ground my consideration of the Sacro Bosco in the late 1500s. Orsini corresponded regularly with a host of noble and erudite interlocutors, including the prolific historian and translator Francesco Sansovino, Giovanni Drouet and Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, who held an estate at Soriano nel Cimino just over five miles away.³⁴ Indeed, Sansovino, when he dedicated an edition of Jacopo Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* to Orsini in 1570, explicitly referenced a visit to Bomarzo. ‘Reading the present volume’, Sansovino wrote, ‘I found within some descriptions of hills and valleys that represent to me the site of Bomarzo, and they

³² Inscription quoted and trans. in *ibid.*, 205. Original text: 229, note 11: ‘Ad amicorum iucunditatem civium advenarumque delectationem’.

³³ Montaigne (ed.1983), 96.

³⁴ For transcriptions of these letters see Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 11–65.

have given me great desire to return'.³⁵ It is a statement that provides vital evidence that the Sacro Bosco was visited and admired by humanist-educated members of society in the sixteenth century, while revealing an appreciation for the region's topography. Through his marriage to Giulia Farnese in January 1541, Vicino was also intimately tied to an even more powerful Roman family, communicating frequently with Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, Pope Paul III's grandson, a collector of antiquities and the commissioner of the nearby villa at Caprarola.³⁶ Giulia, her family and these high-ranking friends would almost certainly have been conceived as part of the Bosco's favoured and intended audience.

The humanist editor and poet Giuseppe Betussi, best known for his translations of Boccaccio's Latin works, moreover, dedicated multiple publications to Vicino, including his second dialogue *Il Raverta* (1544).³⁷ In this text, a character named after Ludovico Domenichi (who translated ancient works including Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*, and who published of a poem of Vicino's in 1545), refers to some of the close friends of '*l'illustrissimo S. Vicino*'.³⁸ He describes the '*dolcissima conversazione*' that Orsini has with '*molti virtuosi*', including Leone Orsini, Maerbale Orsini, Francesco Maria Molza (author of Boccaccian-styled *novelle* and the pastoral poem *La ninfa tiberina* (c.1537)), Bernardo Cappello (pupil of Pietro Bembo and author of a collection of sonnets and *canzoni*), Claudio Tolomei (founder of the

³⁵ Francesco Sansovino, 'All' Illustriss. Signor Vicino Orsini' [1570], in Sannazaro [c.1489] (1578), 2r–4r, 2v: 'quanto che leggendo il presente uolume, ui ho trovato per entro alcune descrittioni de colli e di ualli, che rappresentandomi il sito di Bomarzo, me ne hanno fatto venir grandissima voglia'. Vicino Orsini then wrote to Francesco Sansovino on 29 December 1570 thanking him for the dedication and expressing how upon receiving the book 'mi ha ripieno il piacere doppiamente. Prima per le molte lodi date al mio Boschetto, tanto altamente'. Letter reproduced in Sansovino (1584), Libro Sesto, 172v–173r.

³⁶ Giulia was the great granddaughter of Pope Paul III's brother, thus making Alessandro her second cousin once removed.

³⁷ Betussi [1544] (1555). For the dedication to 'All'illustriss Sig. Vicino Orsino' see 3–6.

³⁸ Ibid., 77. There is also a poem about Vicino, spoken or sung by Ludovico in the text: 'Canzone in lode del Signor Vicino Orsino', 35–38. For Domenichi's publication of Vicino's poetry see Domenichi (1545), 322–323. Nb: the poems in the collection have no titles but are published simply under their author's names.

Accademia della Virtù), and the scholar Annibale Caro (a member of Tolomei's Accademia and private secretary to Alessandro Farnese).³⁹

This roll call of elite and illustrious individuals actively participating in translation, the study of ancient texts, poetry, vernacular literature, natural history, architecture and art history, allows us to picture the social context out of which the Sacro Bosco grew and by which it was, at least in part, received. Sansovino's edition of Giovanni Nanni's Etruscan history (1583), Betussi's edition of Boccaccio (1569) and Domenichi's version of Pliny (1562), all feature in the following pages, belonging to the network of characters, texts and discourses that would have informed the way Bomarzo was experienced.⁴⁰ We might only have sparse documentation as to how individuals responded to their encounters with Bomarzo, but by paying attention to collective concerns and publications of its likely visitors and historicising their activities and attitudes, one gains new insights into how the Bosco could have been perceived. When analogies between Bomarzo and other discourses are drawn over the following pages, they are always based upon physical, cultural and social proximity to the sculptures and the historical beholder's probable realm of knowledge.

Michael Baxandall's concept of the 'period eye' is apposite here, as is Hans Robert Jauss' 'horizon of expectation', as both frameworks acknowledge that a beholder's encounter with an artwork is temporally and culturally specific and plays a role in constructing its meaning. Baxandall argued that spectatorship is formed by culturally relative pressures, inferences and expectations of representational conventions, and

³⁹ Betussi, *ibid.*, 78: 'E così potreste aver commodo ed agio di conversare a piacer vostro con molti virtuosi, ch'ivi sono; come sarebbe un pari del reverendissimo monsignor Leone Orsino, prelato dignissimo et signor senza difetto; il signor Maerbale Orsino, carissimo fratello del mio signor Vicino, veramente degno d'imperio. Potreste allora godere della dolcissima conversazione del divin Molza, del magnifico Capello, del dottissimo Claudio Tolomei e del mirabile Annibale Caro, e d'altri infiniti'. The Accademia della Virtù was a society established in Rome for the study of literature, poetry, art and architecture and it planned a multi-volume edition of Vitruvius.

⁴⁰ See Nanni (1583); Boccaccio (1569); Pliny (1562).

that in order to understand an historical work in respect to its time it is thus necessary to consider the practices and thoughts that informed those to whom it was originally addressed.⁴¹ His approach is somewhat limited in its focus on vision as opposed to a more embodied experience and encounter with a work however, and it should be added that it is a period body, as well as eye, that is considered over the following pages. Jauss' 'horizon of expectation' similarly refers to the time-bound cultural codes, knowledge and experience with which a viewer plausibly approaches a work of art.⁴² Where Jauss differs to Baxandall is in his interest in how the horizon changes over time, and how the meanings of an artwork shift accordingly. In other words, he is invested in a history of altering responses, and in this way his approach is particularly pertinent for Chapters One and Five.

In addition to the men listed above, it is clear and worth stating that the visitors to Bomarzo would also have included women. In relation to the Sacro Bosco, the woman primarily mentioned in the literature is Vicino's wife Giulia Farnese, but letters within Vicino's correspondence and others that speak of him include noble women such as Violante Farnese, wife of Torquato Conti.⁴³ Such women were active members of sixteenth-century society, participating in religious and civic events, many active in learned discourse, and visitors to famous monuments, villas and gardens.⁴⁴ The archives offer evidence of at least one female visitor to the Sacro Bosco: Isabella Moschino, who was a guest in 1579 when her son arranged for her

⁴¹ Baxandall [1972] (1988), particularly 29–45 and Langdale (1999), 479–497. On the politics, pressures and problems with 'normative' looking see Silverman (1996), particularly 9–36.

⁴² Jauss (1982).

⁴³ See Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 75.

⁴⁴ When Cosimo I de' Medici stayed at the Villa Giulia in Rome in 1560, for example, his wife Eleonora de Toledo was also in attendance, touring the city's private collections of antiquities and gardens, including Cardinal Ippolito d'Este's villa on the Quirinal. Likewise, in the same year, the daughter of the Duke of Urbino and wife of Federico Borromeo, Virginia delle Rovere, did the same. See Coffin (1979), 172–173. On the many viewers in sixteenth-century Roman gardens see also Bentz (2015) and Cohen (2008).

and her daughter's travel, sending them to Bomarzo instead of Rome.⁴⁵ That the Sacro Bosco received numerous guests, moreover, is suggested in a letter written by Vicino to Ottavio Farnese on 1 September 1555, in which he playfully refers to Bomarzo as '*L'osteria della Montagna*'.⁴⁶

In conjunction with a focus on the beholders of Bomarzo, this thesis insists on close physical study of the sculptures and on re-situating the site in its local and immediate context. Focusing on the sculptures and their setting can, as with the benches and theatre mentioned above, shed light on the type of encounter originally intended for, and experienced by, the historical beholder.⁴⁷ The sculptures of the Sacro Bosco are almost entirely situated in the round and carved on multiple sides, for example, suggesting a mobile, exploratory mode of viewing.⁴⁸ Frequently without plinths and emerging directly from the earth, the sculptures are encountered at ground level, occupying the same space as the visitor, suggesting a direct, potentially tactile, interaction often precluded by 'garden sculpture' presented on pedestals or as part of a fountain.⁴⁹ When sculptures merge representation and practical function, such as a bench which takes the form of a woman in whose lap you sit, it is clear that at least

⁴⁵ Isabella Moschino to Giovan Battista Pico [20/06/1579], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 90–91 (ASP. Epistolario scelto. Francesco Moschini. 86): '[...] con dirmi che mendevo menar in Roma assieme con mia figliola, et in loco di menarmi a Roma mi menò a Bomartio'. Sadly the rest of the letter continues with complaints about her son, rather than any description of her time at Bomarzo.

⁴⁶ Vicino Orsini to Ottavio Farnese [01/09/1555], in *ibid.*, vol.II, 14 (ASP. Carteggio Farnesiano. Estero. Viterbo. 531).

⁴⁷ The work of Christopher Tilley in relation to rock art has provided a useful theoretical grounding for this aspect of my thesis. Tilley uses what he calls a 'phenomenologically kinaesthetic approach', asking questions that focus on the effects the painted rock have on the moving body of a spectator, such as: 'What did I have to do to see the carvings? How do I have to move? [...] How might the location of the rock in the landscape affect my perception of it?': (2008), 15. For a critique of an iconographic approach in contrast to the kinaesthetic, see 17–21. See also Szafralska (2006).

⁴⁸ In Renaissance Italy looking at works of art was understood to require both close observation and the sensation of movement through space. See Gage (2008) and *idem* (2010).

⁴⁹ On touch in relation to sculpture in Renaissance and early modern Italy see Boyle (1998); Summers (1987); Johnson (2002), *idem* (2010), *idem* (2012) and *idem* (2016); Randolph (2014). More broadly on touch and art see Hall (1999) 80–103; Harvey (2003); Howes (2003); Classen (2005); Sanger and Kulbrandstad Walker (2012); Dent (2014). On this point note that this thesis uses the word 'beholder' ('hold'), rather than viewer.

some of the Sacro Bosco's artworks were designed to induce touch and embodied discernment [Plate 32]. Indeed many of the structures imply a performative exchange. The act of entering the Ogre [Plate 19], for example, animates the work and means that the beholder enacts being swallowed. Likewise, there is a stone orifice that opens in the ground before the Tortoise [Plate 5], which, should the visitor choose to enter, leads them through a small tunnel directly into the gaping jaw of the Sea Creature by the stream below [Fig.6] [Plate 6]. This active, intimate and investigative mode of beholding, implied by many of the sculptures, is largely no longer accessible to present day visitors; wooden fences and hedges have been installed around many of the works, effectively distancing them from the viewer.

Just as careful attention to the sculptures can provide evidence of the types of encounter offered to the intended visitor, the works suggest an engagement with certain intellectual fields. When it is argued that the Sacro Bosco could have been seen to play with issues of replication and Etruscan history (Chapter Two), to have affinities with certain genres of contemporary literature (Chapter Three), or to speak to theories of rock formation from contemporary natural history (Chapter Four), it is because the sculptures and topography of Bomarzo and Alto Lazio support such interpretations, acknowledging the power of representation to physically move and suggest certain meanings to a beholder.

To approach a work of art with a respect for its affective power is another means to be historically specific. Created between the early 1550s and 1580, the Sacro Bosco is at once a Tridentine and post-Tridentine artwork. Orsini was closely tied to the mechanisms and debates of the Council, not least through his friendship with Cardinal Madruzzo, Archbishop of Trent. Madruzzo is honoured with the sole personal dedication in the Sacro Bosco, inscribed on the Leaning House in Latin and which makes reference to Madruzzo's Tridentine role [Plate 13]:

CRIS MADRVTIO
PRINCIPI TRIDENTINO
DICATVM.⁵⁰

Writing on sacred images in 1563, the Council of Trent decreed that a religious artwork must always be understood to be a representation merely referring to a prototype, but also insisted that such images and statues were to be maintained so that worshippers ‘may be excited to adore and love God and to cultivate piety’.⁵¹ In other words, the Council re-asserted the power of image making and did so in terms of the responses it could elicit in a viewer. As Gabriele Paleotti, a Cardinal and Archbishop of Bologna, would write some three decades later:

When the saintly martyr practically materialises in front of your eyes in vivid colour [...] one would have to be made of wood or stone not to feel how much more it intensifies devotion and wrenches the gut.⁵²

The implication of the Council’s and Paleotti’s words was that representation held the power to move and alter a beholder profoundly. Though speaking specifically of religious subjects, the discussions convening in Tridentine Italy had implications for the larger realm of visual representation. All art was imbued with an ability to change those standing before it. As Paleotti continued: ‘we cannot believe that there is anyone so insensate and stupid that he does not know from his own sensory experience the great convenience and sympathy that human nature has with images’.⁵³ In modern theory, such representational power is understood as affect: the range of resonances and sensations felt by the spectator in response to an object or image.⁵⁴ The *Vocabolario degli accademici della crusca*, first published in Venice in 1612, describes the Italian equivalent, ‘*affetto*’, in similar terms: referring to the state of

⁵⁰ ‘Dedicated to / Cristoforo Madruzzo / Archbishop of Trent’ (Appendix, J).

⁵¹ ‘Decree of the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent’, transcribed and trans. in Hall (2011), ‘Appendix’, 271–272. On Trent and the reformations of the Catholic church see Hsia (2005); Bamji, Janssen and Laven (2013).

⁵² Paleotti [1582] (2012), 119 (Book I:25).

⁵³ Ibid., 120 (I:25).

⁵⁴ Or as Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg describe it, affect is ‘an entire, vital, and modulating field of myriad becomings’: (2010), 6.

having something impressed upon one and of being emotionally effected as a result, with a ‘passion of the mind or soul’.⁵⁵

Positioning the Sacro Bosco against the backdrop of this post-Tridentine context provides further historical grounding for considering the responses the site could have provoked in its visitors. Indeed, while the Sacro Bosco as an elite leisure space is a secular artwork, the dedication to Madruzzo, structures such as the *Tempietto* [Plate 34], and the fact that sculptures including the Ogre (also known as the Hell’s Mouth) [Plate 19] and the Cerberus [Plate 33] could be seen to allude to the underworld, means that it is likely that some visitors at least would have thought of contemporary religious debates.⁵⁶

The Sacro Bosco was a sculptural project taking place in a period in which the boundaries of representation were shifting and being redrawn. The Council’s decrees are often seen as limiting, but it is important to remember that they also left room for artistic experimentation, that was itself changed by the new, approved, understanding of the potentiality of images. This transformative capacity would ultimately lead to calls for greater decorum and control over representation in the early seventeenth century. Federico Borromeo, writing in *De pictura sacra* (1624), argued that it was precisely because ‘the pleasure created by these arts is essentially the same as the pleasure produced by living, natural things’ that ‘these inanimate colours and mute stones, far from being somehow independent of the laws of decorum, actually need them more’.⁵⁷ Such a strict sense of artistic decorum, however, was not yet in place

⁵⁵ *Vocabolario degli accademici della crusca* (Venice: 1612) [henceforth *Vocabolario*]: the definition of ‘affetto’ is ‘disposto, impressionato’ and ‘passion d’animo’.

⁵⁶ Christine Göttler has recently touched upon this Hellish aspect of Bomarzo in her book *Last Things*, seeing it as a space ‘that inverted and mocked the traditional images of the infernal worlds’; the Ogre/Hell’s Mouth, to Göttler, ‘mocking both the moralizing interpretations of Dante’s *Inferno* and Catholic imagery of Hell to offer visitors, who enter light-heartedly, a surprising treat’. Göttler’s concern with solely religious images in this publication frames this view of the Sacro Bosco and differs to mine in this thesis. Göttler (2010), 135–139.

⁵⁷ Borromeo [1624] (2010), 5. For the increased anxiety produced by representation in this later period see De Boer (2001). For a contrasting view see Jones (1993).

when the Bosco was constructed, and though its contents could have offended some sensibilities as a ‘garden’ or ‘wood’ the ‘decorum’ of the Sacro Bosco was inherently more liberal than that of the church or the court. The flexibility of decorum at this time is evidenced by Cardinal Madruzzo’s own commissioning of a fountain at his palazzo at Soriano nel Cimino in 1561, which combined religious imagery (Moses striking the rock) with pagan (a giant female satyr sucking human infants) in the same architectural feature [Fig.7].⁵⁸ The Sacro Bosco was thus created between what Alexander Nagel has termed the ‘period of controversy’ (the first half of the sixteenth century), in which art was continually in a state of contention, being rethought from within and from without as the Protestant Reformation took hold, and the later (early seventeenth century) period of anxiety and regulation.⁵⁹ Caught between these two moments, the Sacro Bosco’s fantastical, informal character can be seen as a product of this unstable creative climate.

SACRO | BOSCO: TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

The majority of extant scholarship refers to the Sacro Bosco as a garden [*giardino*]. As a place commissioned by an aristocratic figure and associated with a rural residency, the Sacro Bosco is undoubtedly part of a wider trend amongst noble members of Renaissance and early modern society to create designed outdoor spaces filled with fountains, sculptures and a variety of plants. There are a handful of surviving documents from the sixteenth and early seventeenth century too, that refer to Bomarzo as a garden. Alfonso Ceccarelli referred to the site as ‘*un nobilissimo Giardino*’ in 1579.⁶⁰ Giovanni Guerra entitled a drawing from c.1598 ‘*Parte nelli*

⁵⁸ Lazzaro briefly discusses this fountain in her book on Italian gardens, arguing that it most likely commemorates Madruzzo’s role in the diversion of the Papacqua spring to Soriano as a new source of drinking water: Lazzaro (1990), 158. Also Fagiolo (1997), 158.

⁵⁹ Nagel (2011), 2.

⁶⁰ Alfonso Ceccarelli, *Il Simulacro di Casa Orsina* [1579], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 91 (BAV. Barb. lat. 4809. 65v): ‘Il Signor Vicino di Bumarzo ha fatto un nobilissimo Giardino presso a Bumarzo’.

giardini di Bvon Martio' [Fig.8]. The image is difficult to situate as Guerra depicts various elements of the site that are in reality separate.⁶¹ Best understood as an impression of the space according to Guerra's memory and imagination, the figures that populate the drawing nonetheless suggest that the artist was not alone when he visited, while the tall leafy trees imply that the site was planted in a more informal, wooded manner than a garden in the formal sense.

Indeed, as will be discussed in detail in the first and last chapters, what remains of the Sacro Bosco suggests that it works against the longstanding trope of the formal 'Italian Renaissance garden'. The Italian art critic Mario Praz, when first writing about the site in 1949, could barely bring himself to call it a garden. Bomarzo was so different to the aesthetic he associated with such a space, he referred to it as a '*cosidetto giardino*'.⁶² Along similar lines Edmund Wilson, writing in 1972, described it in disdainful terms. The Sacro Bosco was, he said, a 'patch of ugliness and horror' that 'strikes a deliberately discordant note' in comparison to the expected order and harmony of Italian gardens.⁶³

Many texts and films from the early twentieth century didn't refer to the site as a garden at all, perhaps for this very reason, instead terming it a 'park' or '*parco*'. In *A Guide to Villas and Gardens in Italy* published by the American Academy in Rome in

⁶¹ Bomarzo had multiple spellings at this point in time, all often cited as deriving from 'Polimartium', a historic title associated with the immediate region. Its Latin roots meant 'City of Mars' and is believed to have morphed into the Italian 'Buon Martio' also spelt 'Buon Marzio' and then 'Bomarzo'. Orsini in his letters primarily uses this latter spelling, but he also refers to his home as 'Polimarzio', 'Buonmarzio', 'Buonmarzo', 'Buomarzo', 'Bummarzo', 'Bumarzo' and 'Bommarzo'. For discussions of the historic roots of the name Polimartium (attributed by different scholars to the region's Etruscan, Roman and early medieval inhabitants) see Dempster (1724), 110; Vittori [1846] (2010), 10; Dennis [1848] (1878), vol.I, 166. These scholars are archeologists and not writing about the Sacro Bosco. That the town and region has a name connected to the mythological figure of Mars, Roman god of War and guardian of agriculture, is significant in relation to the mythic and fantastic content of the Sacro Bosco discussed later in this thesis. Another name given to the region, primarily in relation to its Etruscan past, is Maeonia, a title that will appear in Chapter Two.

⁶² Praz [1949] (1975), 78.

⁶³ Wilson (1972), n.p.

1938, the Sacro Bosco was described as a ‘park with curious animals cut from native stone’, with the significant addition of the words ‘No garden’ to the entry.⁶⁴ A newsreel featuring Salvador Dalí at Bomarzo from 1948 likewise referred to the space in these terms, as did a documentary by Michelangelo Antonioni (both discussed in Chapter Five), the voiceover in the latter stating to the viewer: ‘it’s a nice day, we are going to get some air in the park’.⁶⁵ The term *parco* immediately positions the site as a more public and open outdoor space associated with lighthearted entertainment than a *giardino* or heritage site: an amusement park is a *parco divertimenti*, a zoo is a *parco zoologico*. Indeed, Ezio Bacino in 1953 described the Sacro Bosco as ‘a huge petrified zoo’.⁶⁶ In 1976, an article in the *Guardian* newspaper would call it ‘a stone safari park with everything out of proportion - crazy giants, crazy animals...’.⁶⁷

The name Sacro Bosco (Sacred Wood), which was popularised in the 1950s, comes from an inscription found within the site:

MEMPHIS AND EVERY OTHER MARVEL
 THAT THE WORLD HAS HELD IN PRAISE YIELD TO THE SACRED WOOD
 WHICH RESEMBLES ONLY ITSELF AND NOTHING ELSE.⁶⁸

Orsini refers to the space in these terms, primarily calling it his ‘*boschetto*’ or ‘little wood’. In a letter to Drouet dated 17 November 1579, for example, he writes that ‘if it were not for the *boschetto*, I would be dead to the world’.⁶⁹ Annibale Caro also referred to the Sacro Bosco in this way. When writing to Torquato Conti on 6 June 1563, to advise him on plans to renovate the Villa Catena at Poli, Caro stated: ‘What

⁶⁴ Aldrich and Walker (1938), 5.

⁶⁵ ‘Nel mondo’ (1948) and *La Villa dei Mostri* (1950): ‘è una bella giornata, andremo a prendere un pò d’aria nel parco’.

⁶⁶ Bacino (1953), 92: ‘un immenso giardino zoologico petrificato’.

⁶⁷ Brent (1976), 7.

⁶⁸ ‘CEDAN ET MEMPHI E OGNI ALTRA MARAVIGLIA / CH HEBBE GIA IL MONDO IN PREGIO AL SACRO BOSCO / CHE SOL SE STESSO E NVLL ALTRO SOMIGLIA’ (Appendix, P). It was only with the publication of a dedicated special issue of the *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura* in 1955 that the name ‘Sacro Bosco’ came into common use within Bomarzo scholarship.

⁶⁹ Vicino Orsini to Giovanni Drouet [17/11/1579], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 54 (ASt. Rom. Deposito Santa Croce. Y 592. 14): ‘se non fosse il boschetto, io sarria mortuus mundo’.

is needed are extravagant things [*stravaganze*], to rival even the *boschetto* of Signor Vicino'.⁷⁰

The terms Sacro Bosco and *boschetto* position the space as something other than a formal garden. As garden historians Claudia Lazzaro and Elizabeth Blair MacDougal among others have researched, a *bosco* was not in itself an anomaly in Italian Renaissance design.⁷¹ There were frequently areas attached to the formal *giardino* that were more natural in aesthetic, populated with occasional fountains or reservoirs, and used primarily as hunting parks (often termed a '*barco*' or '*bosco*').⁷² Such *boschi* were included at the Villa d'Este on the Quirinal (c.1550) [now the presidential palace], remarked upon by the French scholar Jean Jacques Boissard in 1597 as having trees more diverse and splendid in their cultivation than anywhere else in Rome, as well as the Villa Lante at Bagnaia (c.1566–1590), and the Villa Mattei in Rome (c.1580) [now the Villa Celimontana].⁷³ The Sacro Bosco as a designed woodland relates to these contemporaneous sites but remains distinct. The *boschi* named above, and that Lazzaro and MacDougal describe, were intended as enclosed areas that were part of a much larger formalised design. The Sacro Bosco, in contrast, is not. Instead, as the inscription makes clear, it is 'only itself' [*che sol se stesso*], a fact accentuated by its physical separation from the Orsini residence in the hilltop

⁷⁰ Annibale Caro to Torquato Conti [06/06/1563], reprinted in Caro (1581), 208–209, 209: 'Bisogna che ci siano stravaganze da dar la stretta al boschetto del signor Vicino'.

⁷¹ Claudia Lazzaro has authored one of the most comprehensive volumes surveying Italian Renaissance garden design: (1990), for *boschi* see 109–130 (for Bomarzo specifically, 121–130). Also MacDougal (1994), 89–111.

⁷² MacDougal, *ibid.*, 75.

⁷³ Boissard's description is found in his monumental *Romanae Urbis Topographia & Antiquitates*, a six volume publication that acted as a detailed itinerary through Rome, focusing upon its palaces and gardens and their collections of antiquities. Accompanied by engraved plates by Théodore de Bry, it was collected across Europe: (1597), vol.I, 94: 'quibus nulli Roma videntur arborum diversarum cultu splendiores, et aedificio mirabilis artificii, quod ex arboribus consertis simul el implicates Labyrinthum efficiunt'. Cited in *ibid.*, 94.

town of Bomarzo.⁷⁴ Reaching the Sacro Bosco involves leaving the Orsini palazzo, passing beyond the town's walls and descending into the outside world of the valley below.

As constructed and domesticated representations of wilderness, placed within a larger manicured space, *boschi* were, moreover, usually not even especially informal. In the *bosco* of Bernardo Vecchietti's estate to the southeast of Florence, known as Il Riposo (c.1550–1590), for example, the trees were planted in rows and within compartments.⁷⁵ Comparable information about the trees and planting at the Sacro Bosco has been lost, but two pen and ink drawings by Breenbergh from 1625 and probably rendered in situ, suggest a space that was either left or cultivated to be informal in appearance [Figs.9 and 10]. Depicting the Pegasus Fountain [Plate 7] and the Tortoise statue [Plate 5] respectively, thin trunks of various trees abound in both images, branches and leaves overlapping to provide a wall of foliage in the background, the ground is depicted as grass, shrub and dirt, and natural stones and boulders puncture the space. Following the visual evidence in these drawings, it would seem the Sacro Bosco was close in appearance to the woodland that still surrounds Bomarzo today, densely populated by trees and interspersed with colossal *tufi* rocks. These forests, which cover the Monte Casoli ridge and make up the Selva di Tacchiolo and Selva di Malano, along with the Etruscan remains they contain, will be addressed further in Chapter Two. The implications of this wooded setting in the Sacro Bosco for the visitor's encounter are investigated in Chapter Three.

⁷⁴ One other sculptural site that has this separation from the villa is another Orsini 'garden' found at Pitigliano and started around 1560, thus after the Sacro Bosco had already begun. The site occupies the Poggio Strozzi, a promontory opposite the town, and also uses living *tufi* for its sculptures, though sadly many are now in such bad state they are barely discernible. See Portoghesi (1955) and Lazzaro (1990), 118–121.

⁷⁵ Lazzaro, *ibid.*, 121.

The formal gardens and *boschi* of villa estates were also often built on land that had been purposefully cleared of all vegetation, stones and boulders before being landscaped and planted from scratch. At the Villa d'Este at Tivoli (1560–1573), the site was originally a steep and uneven incline, littered with large rocks and circumscribed by the edges of the town.⁷⁶ In preparation for the garden commissioned by Cardinal Ippolito d'Este this landscape was radically transformed. Ippolito purchased and demolished an entire quarter of the town to expand its size and the valley was made into a series of level terraces by laboriously breaking down the masses of stone, bringing in huge quantities of earth to fill and shape the ground, and by using the old town walls as buttresses.⁷⁷ At Bomarzo, in contrast, along with the fact that the boulders became the material for its statues and primarily in the locations in which they were found, the land appears to have been predominantly allowed to keep its natural form. The levels that do exist follow the slope of the valley and a natural stream runs through the site.

As well as its physical differences to other villa *boschi* and hunting grounds, the epithet 'sacred' suggests that the Sacro Bosco was intended to function on a more imaginative plane. The inscription that names the space as a 'sacred wood' directly links the site to '*meraviglia*', telling us that at least one of the intended responses to the sculptures was wonder.⁷⁸ The fact that the inscriptions frequently follow a rhyming verse structure signals that it is a space intentionally framed according to a

⁷⁶ The two most comprehensive studies of the Villa d'Este are Coffin (1960) and Lamb (1966). See also Lazzaro (1990), 215–242.

⁷⁷ Lazzaro, *ibid.*, 217. A description of the villa from 1578 expresses awe at how such a wild site with great cavernous ditches [*'rustico e selvaggio, di fossi sí fatti cavernosi grandissimi'*], was turned into a '*raro e gentil giardino*': Zappi [1576] (1920), 55.

⁷⁸ For the inscription see the Appendix, P. For wonder in early modern society and culture see Daston and Park (2001), as well as Le Goff (1988), particularly 27–44; Kenseth (1991); Platt (1999) and Kenny (2004). For 'wonder' rather than 'wonders' see Bynum (1997). For a recent study of wonder as an emotional experience see Vasalou (2015). For wonder within Western philosophy and twentieth-century theory see Rubenstein (2008).

poetic and imaginative register.⁷⁹ On the base of the second Sphinx [Plate 1], moreover, are words that signal the physiology of amazement:

WHOEVER VISITS THIS PLACE
WITHOUT RAISED EYEBROWS
AND PURSED LIPS
WILL FAIL TO ADMIRE THE FAMOUS SEVEN
WONDERS OF THE WORLD.⁸⁰

The physician and inventive genealogist Alfonso Ceccarelli, in a manuscript entitled *Il simulacro di Casa Orsina* (1579) and held in the Barberini papers of the Vatican, provides a rare contemporary response to the Sacro Bosco, and which is aligned with this emotion. At Bomarzo, he writes, ‘Signor Vicino [...] shows himself to be competing with nature, to make things to amaze you [*stupire*] wherever you look’.⁸¹ Ceccarelli’s use of the word *stupire* recalls the definition of *meraviglia* in the *Vocabolario* (1612): both signify to be amazed and bemused by something’s unexpected, novel or rare nature.⁸² The philosopher Francesco de’ Vieri, when discussing the gardens at Pratolino (1569–1581), similarly defined the marvellous as something that defied immediate comprehension. ‘[A]s long as we fail to find it [understanding]’, de’ Vieri wrote, ‘we raise our eyebrows and tighten our lips’ for ‘the arching of our eyebrows means that the cause is known to God, who is over the heavens above, and the tightening of our lips means that the cause is concealed there

⁷⁹ For a full list of the inscriptions see the Appendix in vol.II.

⁸⁰ ‘CHI CON CIGLIA INARCATO / ET LABRA STRETTE / NON VA PER QUESTO LOCO / MANCO AMMIRA / LE FAMOSE DEL MONDO / MOLI SETTE’ (Appendix, A). As the narrator in Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1516) states, when relating the story of Olympia and Bireno: ‘A tanta fede e a tanto amor crudele, / Io vi vo’ dire, e far di meraviglia / Stringer le labra ed inarcar le ciglia’: Ariosto [1532] (1913), 100 (Canto 10:4). On the physiology of wonder see also Onians (1994), 11–33.

⁸¹ See note 60 *supra*: ‘Il Signor Vicino [...] mostra di fare a gara con la natura, in far cose da far stupire chinunque le vede’.

⁸² *Vocabolario* (1612): ‘Commozion d’animo, che rende attonito, nascente da novità, o da cosa rara’.

and that we cannot explain it'.⁸³ Writing on the marvellous in 1597, the literary theorist and philosopher Francesco Patrizi asserted that for this reason, it was the poet's (and by extension the artist's) task 'to give to a thing a form and appearance different from that which it first had'.⁸⁴ The idea of wonder as intrinsically tied to the new is further argument for situating the Sacro Bosco specifically in its mid to late sixteenth-century context with regard to the attitudes of its beholders, who could be expected to take pleasure in novel inventions. The idea of the marvellous as being beyond explanation provides historical support for the argument underpinning this thesis: that the Sacro Bosco was never meant to have a singular programme or be iconographically and symbolically fixed.

When considering the name 'Sacro Bosco', one immediate association that comes to mind is the religious sites of ancient Greece and Rome (termed *alsos* and *lucus* respectively), that were dedicated to particular deities and often built near prominent natural features. Cinquecento humanists had access to knowledge about these ancient sacred woods from textual references. Pausanias' *Periegesis Hellados* or *Guide of Greece*, from the second century AD (printed in Greek in Venice in 1516, in Latin in Rome in 1547, and in Italian in 1597), provided descriptions of sacred groves found across the Grecian provinces, including the many cases where such sites included

⁸³ de' Vieri (1587), 57: 'per mentre non la troviamo, inalziamo le ciglia, et stingiamo le labra; Lo inarcare le ciglia si fa per dinotare, che la cagione è nota à Dio, che è spora il cielo su alto; et lo striugere le labra il facciamo per significare, che la ciò occulta, et non la possiamo ad altrui dare ad intendere'.

⁸⁴ Patrizi [1586] (1969–1971), vol.III, 19: '[...] dare ad una cosa forma diversa da quella che havea prima ed apparenza', trans. in Platt (1992), 390, note 19. Patrizi's theory of wonderment has been discussed in relation to the Sacro Bosco, along with its parallels with the *Hypnerotomachia poliphili* (1499), by Anne Bélanger, who sees both as the actualisation of many of Patrizi's principles (despite this requiring a reading of Patrizi backwards onto Vicino's wood and Colonna's text, and not accounting for the fact that Patrizi's section on wonder '*La deca ammirabile*' remained in manuscript form until it was discovered in Parma in 1949). Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto, responding to Bélanger, explains the links between the three as rather due to a shared rejection of the Aristotelian concept of mimesis. See Bélanger (2007) and Giannetto (2015).

temple structures and statuary.⁸⁵ Pierre Bonnechère describes these sacred groves as ‘the natural and divine manifestation of a median place between two worlds’, representing a transitional and inherently ambiguous space where mortal and divine came into contact.⁸⁶ Such sacred groves were places where nature was manifested in all its beauty, but that also marked passages to the underworld and possibly distressing revelations via oracles and sibyls.⁸⁷ The Sacro Bosco in many respects evokes these ancient Grecian and Roman groves, not least with its *Tempietto* [Plate 34] on the highest level of the site and gaping Ogre/Hell’s Mouth below.

For the sixteenth century, the best known ancient images of sacred groves, however, were provided by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the epics of Virgil and Homer. These texts described the landscapes of Arcadia and the Golden Age, where gods and nymphs roamed the earth.⁸⁸ Virgil located the sacred cave of the Sibyl, who would lead Aeneas through Hades, in Cumae, an ancient city located near Naples, and described the sacred grove that once covered the city of Rome as a site where local fauns and nymphs lived in harmony.⁸⁹ In *The Odyssey* (first printed in Latin in 1488 and translated into Italian by Lodovico Dolce in 1573), Homer described the sacred *bosco* of Calypso’s enchanted island as a place where ‘all in the woodland was ungodly sweet’.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ In his passage on the sacred grove of the Muses on Mount Helikon, for example, Pausanias tells of how it contains statues of all nine of the divine women, as well as those of other deities, poets and musicians: Pausanias [2nd century AD] (2004), vol.I, IX:29–30. For ancient descriptions of sacred groves, see Bowe (2009). For the afterlife of Pausanias, including in the Renaissance, see Georgopoulou and Guilmet (2007).

⁸⁶ Bonnechere (2007), 42.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 26 and 33.

⁸⁸ On concepts of Arcadia and particularly Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as an inspiration for the iconography and design of Italian Renaissance gardens (though not in relation to the Sacro Bosco) see Hunt (1996), particularly 42–58.

⁸⁹ Vicino’s friend Annibale Caro famously published a translation of the *Aeneid* in 1581: Virgil (1581). For these passages, see 217–265 (VI:1–55) and 311–351 (VIII:342–358). See also Wilson-Okamura (2010).

⁹⁰ Homer (ed.1573), Canto Sesto, 48: ‘Tutto il boschetto dolcemente empia’.

Such pastoral and mythical topographies also found their way to cinquecento Italian readers via Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (c.1480, first published in 1504), connected directly to Bomarzo via Sansovino's mid-century dedication of his edition to Orsini.⁹¹ Sannazaro's text contains multiple enchanted *boschi*; the shepherd Sincero, for example, finds a mysterious temple in a landscape of 'woods and hills, very beautiful and rich in leafy trees'.⁹² 'More often than not', the reader is told in the *proemio*, such landscapes of trees and mountains bring greater pleasure and esteem 'than the cultivated trees trimmed by learned hands in ornamental gardens'.⁹³ This idea of the pleasure to be found in untamed bucolic landscapes is evoked in some of the Sacro Bosco's inscriptions. One of the plinths that flank the Theatre [Plate 12] states:

ONLY TO
UNBURDEN
THE
HEART.⁹⁴

These words frame the site as a place of psychological transformation, offering 'to unburden' a heavy heart in line with an Arcadian ideal. At the same time, such words seem in tension with some of the monstrous and violent subjects of the statues: giants that tear each other apart [Plate 4], fighting dragons and lions [Plate 20].

Just as the sacred groves of ancient Greece stood between ontological states—between the mortal and the immortal—the Sacro Bosco alludes to darker literary landscapes as well as pleasurable ones.⁹⁵ It is widely agreed that the inscription on the lip of the Ogre [Plate 19], which now is marked only by 'OGNI PENSIERO VO',

⁹¹ See note 35 *supra*.

⁹² Sannazaro [c.1480, first published 1504], ed. by Sansovino (1578), 24v–25r: 'selve & colli bellissimi & copiosi d'alberi fronduti'.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 9r: 'Sogliono il piu delle volte gli alti & spatiosi alberi ne gli horridi monti dalla natura prodotti, piu che le coltivate piante, da dotte mani espurgate ne gli adorni Giardini, a' riguardanti aggradire'.

⁹⁴ 'SOL PER / SFOGAR / IL / CORE' (Appendix, F).

⁹⁵ Herve Brunon has argued that in the late sixteenth century, threatening landscapes became part of villa garden design, stating that they could include the *locus horridus* as well as *locus amoenus*. See Brunon (1998), 103–136.

were once the words ‘Abandon every thought you who enter here’ [*Lasciate ogni pensiero voi ch’entrate*], a rewording of the text found above the entrance to Hades in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (c.1308–1320, first published in 1472), and hence why this sculpture is also referred to in some literature as the Hell’s Mouth.⁹⁶ Hell in Dante is reached after the protagonist travels through a ‘wood, savage and harsh and dense, the thought of which renews my fear!’.⁹⁷ This forest is ultimately allegorical and metaphysical, symbolising being spiritually lost, but the Sacro Bosco, filled with carved monstrous beasts, can also be read as a subverting evocation of Dante’s underworld, with its ‘hellish blood stained infernal Furies’ and Cerberus guard dogs at its gate [Plate 33].⁹⁸

The Sacro Bosco recalls other dark and enchanted literary woods, such as those of Ludovico Ariosto’s chivalric epic *Orlando Furioso* (1532) or the fearful ‘sylvan darkness’ of Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), which itself recalls ‘the vast Hercynian Forest, where there was nothing but the lairs of dangerous beasts and caverns full of noxious creatures and fierce monsters’.⁹⁹ As in Dante, the deep woodland of the *Hypnerotomachia* also works on a metaphorical level,

⁹⁶ See Appendix, N. The words above the gates of Hell in Dante are ‘abandon every hope you who enter here’: Dante [c.1308–1320] (1971), vol.I, Inferno, 46–47 (Canto III:1–9): ‘Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che’entrate’. This wording for the inscription is based on a drawing by Guerra [see Fig.5]. This thesis primarily uses ‘Ogre’ over ‘Hell’s Mouth’ as it evokes the more fantastical aspect of the site (rather than religious), such as concerns this study. It is also a term used in one of the site’s inscriptions: ‘come here, where there are horrendous faces, elephants, lions, bears, ogres and dragons’ (see Appendix, O), on the visitor’s map and in earlier literature on the site. For example, Eugenio Battisti refers to this sculpture as ‘dalla cella monolitica dell’Orco’: (1962), 126.

⁹⁷ Dante, *ibid.*, 22–23 (Canto I:5–6): ‘selva selvaggia e aspra e forte / che nel pensier rinova la paura!’.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 122–123 (Canto IX:38): ‘furie infernal di sangue tinte’. Cerberus first appears in vol.I, 86–89 (Canto VI:13–33). See also note 56 *supra* for the Sacro Bosco and Hellish imagery.

⁹⁹ Ariosto [1532] (2008), e.g.: 5 (Canto I:33 and 35); Colonna [1499] (2005), 13–14. For an interpretation of the Sacro Bosco according to Ariosto see Darnall and Weil (1984), 6–72. For the Sacro Bosco and the *Hypnerotomachia* see Kretzulesco-Quaranta (1960); Calvesi (2000), 122–124; Godwin (2002), 172; Guidoni (2006), 69; Althoff (1999), 23–28, 30–32, and 44. John Dixon Hunt has also discussed the *Hypnerotomachia* as a model for the Renaissance reception of villa gardens, see Hunt (1998), an idea subsequently extended by Morgan (2016)b, 27–30.

symbolising the confused state of sleep in which Poliphilo loses his hold of reality. Mary Carruthers' work on memory has shown how the pathless '*silva*' [*selva*] frequently stood in for mnemonic confusion, disorder and forgetting.¹⁰⁰ Where the inscription over the Ogre/Hell's Mouth has predominantly been interpreted as an 'invitation to happy mindlessness', it could thus equally be seen to comment on the mental disorder evoked in such a landscape.¹⁰¹ The Sacro Bosco shows itself, in this as in so many respects, to be ambiguous and dichotomous.

These multiple connotations—mythic and literary, historical and fictional, pleasant and dark—all converge in the Sacro Bosco's status as a sacred grove. Rather than try to argue for the greater influence of one or another source or text on Bomarzo's content, however, what I am interested in is how the site, as a wood filled with stone-carved monsters and marvels, works on an imaginative and fictive plane as well as a physical one, providing a multilayered space where such references can be experienced by the visitor both bodily and mentally. In this way, this thesis sees Bomarzo as affirming Edward Soja's concept of spatiality. Soja takes the two normative approaches to space—space as concrete material and space as representation and mental construct—and argues that they are inherently intertwined, allowing locations to become simultaneously real and imagined.¹⁰²

STRUCTURE

Chapter One, 'Afterlives', begins with a consideration of the Sacro Bosco from c. 1600 to the early twentieth century and explores why the site was overlooked, neglected and forgotten over this period. In particular, the concept of the *giardino all'italiana* promoted under the fascist regime of the 1920s and 1930s is found to have

¹⁰⁰ Carruthers (1994), 204.

¹⁰¹ Quotation from Schama (1996), 535.

¹⁰² Soja (1996).

played a damaging role in the omission of the Sacro Bosco from academic consciousness, while new evidence uncovered here shows that the site was known to a far greater extent than has been acknowledged to date. Only once we have considered the effects of and motivations for this more recent fate, can we begin to consider the site in the sixteenth century with sensitivity. The final section of this chapter in particular works to establish the extent to which the site has been restored according to architectural and formal ideas of Italian Renaissance garden design. This fact, alongside the dearth of archival evidence, means that it is the site's visitors and the irrefutable physical elements of Bomarzo's landscape, the frequently immovable large sculptures and their material to which we need to give greater weight.

Chapter Two, 'Histories', begins this argument by exploring the Etruscan history deposited in the landscape surrounding the Sacro Bosco. While the site's ancient references have been noted since the mid-twentieth century, primarily focusing on the large 'Mock Tomb' [Plate 3], little attention has been paid to the wealth of real archeological remains found within Orsini's territory.¹⁰³ This chapter offers previously unexplored and sometimes unregistered artefacts to this area of Bomarzo scholarship. In drawing connections between more obscure local archeological sites and the Sacro Bosco, this chapter additionally challenges the standard notion that in referencing Etruria the Bosco was intended as a simple claim on Vicino Orsini's part to an ancient heritage, in which faux Etruscan monuments were intended as replicas or substitutes.¹⁰⁴ The engagement with history at Bomarzo, Chapter Two argues, is more

¹⁰³ For the large mock tomb see Oleson (1975), Manni (2009) and Morgan (2016)a. The immediate Etruscan history of the area is also mentioned in passing by Lazzaro (1990), 125. Katherine Coty has considered the immediate Etruscan context of Bomarzo in an MA thesis from 2013. I am grateful to discussions held with Coty during a graduate workshop at Dumbarton Oaks in 2016. Coty broadly follows the argument of Lazzaro that the site is a promotion of a symbolic Etruscan heritage for the Orsini, as discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two, alongside the ways in which my findings and arguments diverge.

¹⁰⁴ For the mock Etruscan sculptures as substitutes see Morgan (2016)a—discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

complex, and involves situating these mock objects in relation to shifting ideas concerning history writing, forgery, antiquarianism and authenticity in the latter half of sixteenth-century Italy. When these wider debates are considered, the ‘mock’ Etruscan monuments of the Sacro Bosco can be seen as supplements, self-reflexive objects that become a form of commentary on the creation of historical knowledge.

From the wider landscape of Bomarzo, Chapter Three, ‘Fiction’, moves inwards to consider the wooded terrain of the Sacro Bosco, the presence of the statues within the site, and the experience and movement of the visitor. When thinking of an elite outdoor sculptural space, the pervasive early twentieth-century concept of the ‘Italian Renaissance garden’ tells us to expect paths in straight lines, statues of identifiable subjects, clearly demarcated sections, terraces and geometric patterns. The model here is Etienne Duperac’s 1573 etching of the gardens at Villa d’Este at Tivoli [Fig.11], in which the space is presented from a semi bird’s eye view: a central pathway divides the image, leading the eye to the impressive villa in the background while emphasising the symmetry of the design.¹⁰⁵ One of the most startling things about the Sacro Bosco compared to this image is its relative informality. Paths lead the visitor through woodland to colossal monstrous sculptures that are iconographically ambiguous and unconnected to one another apart from their fantastical nature. To tease out these unusual structural, experiential and atmospheric qualities, this chapter turns to forms of Italian literature emerging in the mid-sixteenth century. As underlined by the current visitor’s map, in which red arrows point a specific route across the green terrain [Fig.12], previous studies have sought a linear structure to the space, and have also stayed within the confines of classical and courtly texts.¹⁰⁶ This

¹⁰⁵ For over eighty years following its initial publication, Duperac’s engraving was regularly reissued, becoming almost more influential than the garden itself. See Eustis (2003), 43.

¹⁰⁶ Key texts that consider the Sacro Bosco in the context of courtly literature and a linear narrative include: Zander (1955); Calvesi (1956) and idem (2000); Kretzulesco-Quaranta (1960); Darnall and Weil (1984), 11–72 and Guidoni (2006).

chapter argues instead for an episodic composition and experience of the site, which the visitor could have seen as sharing a literary imagination and mode with the more popular genre of mid-century *novelle* and game books, which were often themselves fictively situated in gardens and woods. Indeed the first reference under both *bosco* and *boschetto* in the *Vocabolario degli accademici della crusca* is Boccaccio's *Decamerone*.¹⁰⁷

Chapter Four, 'Rock', proceeds to draw the reader (and visitor) even closer to the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco to consider the specific material of unclad peperino of the statues. The physical make-up of the site is rarely discussed in detail in academic literature.¹⁰⁸ This chapter brings it into focus, considering its connection to the geologic reality of the region and natural history theories of rock formation. The violence depicted in the statues, when paired with their material and rooted nature, it is argued, would have invited an educated historical beholder to engage on both an imaginary and physical level with contemporary ideas of stony generation, natural disasters, and the region's volcanic and seismic geography.¹⁰⁹

The three central chapters thus work on two levels. On the one hand they are concerned with the immediate physical context of the site—rock, landscape and archeology. On the other hand, they argue that Bomarzo should be seen as fundamentally inter-medial and discursively flexible, broadening the study of the Sacro Bosco to include previously unexplored cultural and intellectual contexts that

¹⁰⁷ *Vocabolario* (1612): a 'bosco' is defined as a 'luogo pien di piante salvatiche, come di querce, cerri, castagni, e simili'. The first reference with respect to this terminology is Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (4:6): 'Con vostra licenzia io voglio andare al bosco'; under 'boschetto' (41:4): 'Entrò in un boschetto, il quale era in quella contrada bellissimo'.

¹⁰⁸ The only author to have engaged with the material directly is Morgan (2015).

¹⁰⁹ In doing so this chapter participates in, and contributes to, a small but growing body of scholarship concerned with historical perceptions, and artistic representations of, natural disasters and how they can help us begin to form an environmental history. For an example of an article that does this deftly, with a focus on floods (and the biblical Deluge) in Northern Europe in the eighteenth century see Kempe (2003), 151–171.

would have been of interest to its intended sixteenth-century beholders: local Etruscan history, replicas, contemporary literature, game books and theories of natural history and disaster. These discourses, texts and objects were actively discussed, published and experienced between 1550 and 1580 by members of Orsini's social circle and beyond, and provide an important contribution to any understanding of Bomarzo.

Focusing on the geology and topography of the Sacro Bosco in this central section, this thesis has also been shaped by the material turn in the humanities and new materialism.¹¹⁰ Chapter Four in particular takes its cue from theories of material agency, which Jane Bennett terms matter's 'vibrancy', seeing the peperino material of the sculptures and the landscape of which they are a part as agents in the making and meaning of the Sacro Bosco.¹¹¹ This is not, however, to forget that the environment, sculptures and space I am dealing with are crafted. Rather it is to see the human context from which they were created as only an enmeshed part of what offers their meaning. As Lorraine Daston writes, objects 'communicate by what they are as well as by how they mean', 'their utterances are never disembodied'.¹¹² At the same time, it is also not to overlook the fact that material meanings shift according to particular moments in time. Here, the rock of Bomarzo is considered according to the ideas and geological theories of the sixteenth century.

When considering the relationship between topography, matter and sculpture at Bomarzo, another key element to my research is the visitor's ability to interact

¹¹⁰ See Miller (2005), 6–15; Ingold (2007); Coole and Frost (2010); Bennett (2010); Bryant (2011). It is important to acknowledge the feminist roots of the material turn in critical theory and the humanities, see Ahmed (2008) and Alaimo (2010), 6–11. For an overview of the material turn in art history, with a specific focus on sculpture, see Cole (2010), 1–15. An important early work that focused on the material reality of sculpture (in relation to limewood) is Baxandall (1980).

¹¹¹ Bennett (2010), viii. In placing particular emphasis on matter and meaning in relation to Bomarzo's landscape I also participate in the ecotheory that has emerged from materialism. See Morton (2010); Alaimo (2010); Iovino (2012); Cohen (2013); Iovino and Oppermann (2014); Cohen and Duckert (2015); Emmett and Nye (2017).

¹¹² Daston (2007), 20.

physically and sensorially with these elements in three dimensions. The focus in Chapter Four, for example, is the material of the sculptures *and* its meeting with the embodied beholder: it is through the presence and encounter with those that are before it, that a work of art and its material qualities are understood to be activated and animated. The sculptures, moreover, are situated outside in woodland and to behold them includes the feeling of weather, of moving air upon the skin, shifts in temperature and light, the fragrance of plants, and the sounds of the stream and moving leaves. Equally, the properties and qualities of outdoor stone are never static, changing according to temperature, weather and time: in the rain, damp peperino deepens until almost black; in the summer heat, the stone is paler, dry and its lichen crisp.¹¹³ An awareness of the broad sensory spectrum involved in beholding outdoor works of art was commented upon in the sixteenth century. Claudio Tolomei, writing to Giambattista Grimaldi on 26 July 1543, described how fountains evoked not only seeing but ‘hearing, bathing and tasting’.¹¹⁴ It should be stated too that in adopting this broadly phenomenological approach, my own experience is foregrounded and not intended to cohabit seamlessly with interpretations that privilege historical beholders.

Also tying these three chapters together is the assertion that the Sacro Bosco is a space invested in process and instability as opposed to semantic and iconographic fixity. Elizabeth Blair MacDougall argued that sixteenth-century Italian garden sculpture relied on ‘the use of readily available statue types and conventional associations of meaning’.¹¹⁵ What is so interesting about the Sacro Bosco is that it has consistently worked to test this statement, remaining open to a range of interpretations and iconographic possibilities. This is, I argue, central to understanding the site and,

¹¹³ On the shifting qualities of materials versus materiality see Ingold (2007). On embodiment and garden experiences see Conan (2007), 3–18.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Tchikine (2010), 63. On the multiple senses evoked by garden spaces see the essays in the edited volume by Ruggles (2017).

¹¹⁵ MacDougall (1985), 129.

as such, the thesis is intended to expand and enrich our understanding of Bomarzo, but not to offer a comprehensive ‘key’ or monographic account of the space.

Finally, Chapter Five, ‘Myth’, closes this thesis by returning the reader to the twentieth century and the moment the Sacro Bosco was ‘rediscovered’. Starting with a newsreel featuring Salvador Dalí exploring the site in 1948, Bomarzo became of interest to Italian scholars, journalists and visitors in the post-war period. It is argued that the site’s refusal to fit the canonical image of the *giardino all’italiana*, along with the specific political and social concerns of Italy at this time, shaped this moment of remembering and led to re-presentations of Bomarzo that have at times cast long shadows over subsequent scholarship. It is a narrative that sheds light on the changing reception of Italian sixteenth-century sculpture, and on the significant, far-reaching role that political concerns, photography and film have had on the historiography of early modern art and art history.

This thesis then, is interested in how there have been multiple Bomarzos since its conception and how both art narratives and art objects are remade over time. On the current tourist map handed out to visitors, for example, thirty-five sculptural groups are listed; in another, from Horst Bredekamp’s 1985 study, forty-six are detailed [Fig. 13].¹¹⁶ In the large map provided in the central pull out of the 1955 issue of the *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura* dedicated to Bomarzo, no key for the sculptures is provided, though the diagram does present borders, walls and terraces

¹¹⁶ In his map, Bredekamp attempts to provide a possible ‘restoration’ of the site. For example, the two Sphinxes shift from their current location, known not to be their original location (see number 1 on the visitor’s map [Fig.12]), to be adjacent to the Leaning House, where, according to Bredekamp’s vision, the visitor would have begun their exploration (the current entrance being under an imagined body of water). At the same time, Bredekamp names certain structures ignored by the visitor’s map, such as number 46, a rock and masonry tower discussed in Chapter Two [Fig.2.2], and ungroups certain areas to make elements of them stand alone (e.g. number 9,10 and 11 are, in the visitor’s map, all covered by number 9). Both maps thus offer interpretations of the space that are inevitable distortions. The truth, known to sixteenth-century viewers and archival documents is now lost. This thesis is interested in how the art historian can acknowledge and navigate this gap, rather than offer another imagined solution.

where perhaps there were none originally [Fig. 14].¹¹⁷ Likewise, all the standardised names for individual sculptures are of modern invention (for clarity this thesis uses those printed on the current visitor's map, as indicated in the Plates section).¹¹⁸ An important part of the work that this thesis undertakes is to try to bring back to the study of Bomarzo an acknowledgement of how little we actually concretely know of this site, and how much it has been altered—literally and figuratively—from its original state. When books, articles, diagrams and maps present a coherent image of the Sacro Bosco, with titles for its statues and routes around the site, they are presenting, creating or repeating interpretations of recent invention that obscure how little can ultimately be reconstructed. The visitor's map, with small drawings of each of the sculptures overlaid on a painted dark green background, is in this way one of the more honest depictions of the site. Its lack of detailed information tacitly acknowledges how little we know about the space in its original form.

Together, the chapters of this thesis offer an answer to the questions: how have twentieth-century political and social concerns affected the history and understanding of the Sacro Bosco, and how can art history responsibly engage with a site with so little documentary evidence? A case is made for the central role of the Sacro Bosco's immediate surroundings—its history, geology and topography—when seeking to understand the space. Additionally, a case is made for the vital role of its visitors, both in the sixteenth century and in the twentieth century, in the making of meaning. To argue that both reception and non-human elements should be considered part of the

¹¹⁷ The post WWII alterations and 'restoration' of the Sacro Bosco according to architectural ideals, as presented in this map, is discussed in Chapter One.

¹¹⁸ Many of the names are straightforwardly descriptive (the 'Fighting Giants' or the 'Tortoise' for example), but others are more problematic in relying on mythic attributions. The bench in the form of a woman [Plate 32], for example, is referred to as 'Proserpine', daughter of the Goddess Ceres in Roman mythology, in the visitor's map and in several publications (probably due to its proximity to a three-headed Cerberus statue) [Plate 33]. But in others, this woman/bench is instead called 'Diana'. This alternative naming can be found, for example, in Guidoni (2006), 60. Guidoni provides brief iconographically led interpretations for each sculpture in turn in his 'Dizionario del Sacro Bosco', 59–72.

art historian's toolbox at Bomarzo is to immediately confront the idea that the written documents of an artist or patron (the traditional archive) should supersede other scholarly concerns and possibilities. By opening up the site to other types of discourse and knowledge being mobilised in the sixteenth century, Bomarzo is found to be in dialogue with the local, physical, and humanistic changes by which it was surrounded and from which its meanings were formed. It is a site that tells a story about the multidirectional forces that go into place making, and the active role of encounter and the interests and expectations of audiences when it comes to understanding works of art.

CHAPTER ONE: AFTERLIVES

This chapter addresses the uneven ground on which Bomarzo scholarship currently stands. The traditional narrative has been that the Sacro Bosco fell into disrepair and obscurity in the 1600s, consigned to oblivion within fifty years of completion until, to much fanfare, it was uncovered after World War Two. Yet the interim years between the seventeenth century and this moment have not, to date, been critically evaluated. This chapter fills this scholarly gap, offering a consideration of the site's timeline and historiography. To what extent was the Sacro Bosco really unknown prior to its 'rediscovery' and why was it previously absent from scholarly and popular comment? The answers are manifold. The site's shifting ownership after Orsini's death, combined with changing trends in garden styles and travel, led first to a casual neglect of the sculptures and their designed landscape. This period was then followed by active omission from the Renaissance garden canon produced by Italian intellectuals during the 1920s and 1930s, entangling the story of the Sacro Bosco with fascist political agendas of early twentieth-century Italy, and exposing the long shadow cast by the altering politics of garden studies. In addition, texts and previously unpublished, early photographs provide new material that helps piece together and pull apart the site's twentieth-century restorations and history. Counter to common thought, it is found that the Sacro Bosco was known and in use prior to the post-war period. Its afterlife, as such, needs to be retold.

SHIFTING OWNERSHIP

Vicino Orsini died in 1585, after which his descendants fell into financial difficulties so severe that they lost the Bomarzo estate entirely by the mid-seventeenth century. A notarial document in the Orsini Family Papers at UCLA, dated 19 September 1645, details the agreement to sell the Bomarzo and Chia estates for one hundred and

eighty-five scudi to Ippolito Lante Montefeltro della Rovere, ‘to pay off debts of D. Marzio Orsini [Vicino’s son] and in good memory of D. Orazio [Marzio’s son] and their makers and ancestors’.¹¹⁹ The attached document that records the ‘debts paid by selling Bomarzo’ is a long list over seven pages, on thick, yellowed paper.¹²⁰ With the new title of Duke of Bomarzo, one might assume that Ippolito, his family, and the social circles they moved in, would begin to make reference to the estate and the marvellous sculptures it contained. But after Ippolito gained possession of Bomarzo, any celebration of the Bosco seems to have faded. The only known mark on the sculptures made by the family is a coat of arms of unknown date, carved next to that of the Orsini on a stone bench [Plate 26].¹²¹

Ippolito’s initial intention to invest in Bomarzo is apparent from the building works he commissioned for the Orsini residency in the town in 1654. A contract with Bartolomeo Pozzi and Francesco Rusca, dated 27 January, stipulates that they are to complete ‘all the jobs that they will need in the Palace of said Excellency the Duke existing in Bomarzo’, including the completion of the northern wing of the palazzo and the hall of the piano nobile.¹²² Yet this work was never completed, and only one year later Ippolito rented the villa and gardens at nearby Bagnaia in perpetuity from Pope Alexander VII. This agreement signals a crucial shift in the family’s priorities when it came to property in the Alto Lazio region.

The Villa Lante at Bagnaia will crop up again in this thesis. First commissioned by Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara in 1566 and completed by his successor Cardinal

¹¹⁹ CYRL, Orsini Family Papers, c.1150–1950, Bomarzo 01, Box 29, Folder 2 (Vecchia Segnatura: I.A.XIV.12): ‘per pagare i debiti di D. Marzio Orsini e della buona memoria di D. Orazio e loro autori e antecessori’.

¹²⁰ Ibid.: ‘debiti pagati con la vendita di bomarzo’.

¹²¹ Henceforth the family shall be referred to as ‘the Lante’.

¹²² ASV, notarile di Bomarzo, no.86, ff.31v–34r: ‘tutti li lavori che faranno bisogno nel Palazzo di detto Eccellentissimo Signor Duca esistente in Bomarzo’.

Alessandro Peretti di Montalto, the design is attributed to Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola and it is one of the closest sixteenth-century gardens to the Sacro Bosco geographically, merely eight and a half miles away.¹²³ In contrast to the Sacro Bosco, however, it was both famous in its own time and lauded almost continuously throughout its history. It would, in addition, become a poster-child for the concept of the orderly Italian Renaissance garden instigated by Anglo-American scholars and then co-opted during Italy's fascist years, as discussed later in this chapter.

During the early seventeenth century, when Bomarzo had passed to Vicino's son, the debt-piling Marzio, the Villa Lante was reaching the height of its fame. When Pope Clement VIII visited in 1598, the site was described as 'famous throughout the world'.¹²⁴ Likewise, when Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini commissioned studies of contemporary gardens to aid the planning of his own *giardino* at Frascati in the early 1600s, his intention was explicitly to build a space that would 'overcome by far the place of Bagnaia that is so much celebrated'.¹²⁵ The antiquarian and publisher Pompilio Totti's guidebook to Rome from 1638 moreover, stated that it was a place 'made with incomparable art', for which 'the immensity of the expenditure happily corresponds with the immortality of its fame'.¹²⁶ The Villa Lante was thus a more famous and favoured site than Bomarzo when Ippolito gained it as a property. Bagnaia's proximity to Viterbo and therefore the direct road to Rome and Florence must surely have also played a part in this differing reception.

¹²³ On the villa and its gardens see Cantoni, Ariello et al. (1960); Coffin (1966); Lazzaro (1974) and (1977); Frommel (2005).

¹²⁴ 'Viaggio di Clemente VIII nel Viterbese' [1598], reprinted in Orbaan (1920), 455–486, 475: '[...] celebre a tutto 'l mondo'.

¹²⁵ 'Relatione sull'acqua della Molara, e della quantità modo e spesa per condurla a Belvedere' [1602], Archivio Aldobrandini, Acque, vol. II, fasc. 38, quoted in d'Onofrio (1963), 67: 'che saria per superare di gran lunga il luogo di Bagnaia, che viene tanto celebrato'.

¹²⁶ Totti (1638), 528–529: 'fatto fare con incomparabil'arte', 'all' immensità della spesa felicemente corrisponde l'immortalità della Fama'. On Totti see Rhodes (1969).

Accordingly, Ippolito's family resided, entertained, invested in and sought to associate themselves primarily with Bagnaia, a fact that is clear even from the villa's name.¹²⁷

The Lante archives record the severe damage and neglect the Orsini castle in the town of Bomarzo suffered during their ownership. In 1763, Ippolito's descendant Cardinal Federico Marcello Lante Montefeltro della Rovere requested a report of the structural interventions needed to secure the building at Bomarzo from further decay. It is an alarming read, recording how 'the wall of the façade of the palace' had been found 'overhanging its right perpendicular and notably detached from the three walls', while inside rooms are said to have broken vaults, door frames, and cracked arches.¹²⁸

Under the Lante's watch, it would seem Bomarzo was left unattended and allowed to fall into ruin. We can only assume that the peperino sculptures in the valley below, not mentioned in these documents, were left in a similar state.

The Sacro Bosco was owned for just under two hundred years by a family that established itself at a competing nearby villa. Indeed it is striking that the known references to the Sacro Bosco bookend the Lante's ownership almost exactly. The drawings by Breenbergh from 1625, some of the last seventeenth-century documents we have pertaining to the site, were made twenty years before the Lante family purchased Bomarzo. Likewise, it is only after Don Giulio Lante Montefeltro della Rovere sold the estate in 1836 to the Borghese family, that we find the next mention

¹²⁷ The Lante family remained at Bagnaia until 1933, when it was sold to the Marchesa Edith Dusmet. In 1953 Angelo Cantoni purchased it under the 'Società Villa Lante', carrying out extensive restorations, before selling the site to the Ministro dell' Pubblica Istruzione of the Italian government in 1973. The most significant alterations made to the garden during the Lante's ownership was the box hedge designs put in by Cardinal Federico in 1772, which created a far more geometrically formal space. For the post-war restoration, which kept the box-hedge, see Cantoni (1965).

¹²⁸ Cardinale Federico Lante to Filippo Prada, 'Perizia degli interventi Urgenti' [22/09/1763], ASR, fondo Lante della Rovere, carte relative alla tenuta di Bomarzo, Perizia, n.384 (e): 'Essendosi primieramente riconosciuto il muro della facciata del palazzo dalla parte della Ripa, si è trovato strapiombato fuori del suo giusto perpendicolo e distaccato notabilmente dalli tre muri, che formano le stanze, avendo crepato le volte di esse, rotti li architravi e soglie delle porte, e crepati gli archetti di esse in ambedue gli appartamenti'.

of it by Luigi Vittori in 1846.¹²⁹ This might be a coincidence but the chronology is highly suggestive.

In contrast to the dearth of material on Bomarzo during the one hundred and ninety one years of Lante ownership, Bagnaia continued to be mentioned in guidebooks throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In G.P. Rossini's *Il mercurio errante* (1693), it was described as 'a public delight, where everything is beautifully presented by the splendour of this generous Prince'.¹³⁰ In 1761, Pietro Chiari published a fourteen page poem dedicated to Cardinal Federico that described both the villa and its gardens, and his overwhelmed response, in which he 'saw things that made my chest soar'.¹³¹

The Villa Lante was also widely recognised abroad. Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine included it in their book of the 'most famous pleasure houses of Rome' in 1809.¹³² Despite acknowledging Bomarzo when detailing how the long lease of Bagnaia was sold to the 'Duke of Bommarzo [sic] of the Lanti family, which has never ceased to enjoy it until today', Percier and Fontaine make no reference to the Orsini castle or the Sacro Bosco.¹³³ Likewise, some sixty years later, Augustus J.C. Hare published *Days near Rome*. Discussing the region around Viterbo, Hare described how 'there is another even more interesting place in this neighbourhood, that of Duke Lante at Bagnaia [...] It is paradise'.¹³⁴ Bomarzo, on the other hand, is

¹²⁹ Vittori [1846] (2010), 112.

¹³⁰ Rossini [1693] (1771), 287: 'è pubblica delizia, ove il tutto vien ben'ornato dalla splendidezza di questo generoso Principe'. See also Cortonese (1766) and Natili (1864).

¹³¹ 'A Sua Emminenza il Sig. Cardinale Federico Marcello Lante. Descrizione della di lui deliziosa villa di Bagnaia', in Chiari (1761), vol.II, 33–47, 47: 'E veggio cose che nel petto ascondo'.

¹³² Percier and Fontaine [1809] (1824): 'plus célèbres maisons de plaisance de Rome' (part of the book's subtitle).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 55–56: 'Le pape Alexandre VII cède le tout à bail emphytéotique ac duc Bommarzo de la famille Lanti, l'aque lle n'a cessé d'en jouir jusqu'à ce jour'.

¹³⁴ Hare [1884] (1907), 215–216.

only mentioned in passing with regard to the area's Etruscan remains. 'Still further east', Hare writes, 'twelve miles from Viterbo, by the direct road, is Bomarzo'.¹³⁵ It is a sentence that suggests Hare never made this journey. If he had, as will become clear, it is unlikely that he would have totally overlooked the existence of the Sacro Bosco.

The discrepancy between such reports on Bagnaia and Bomarzo raise issues concerning patterns of travel and tourism. Hare writes from the context of the Grand Tour, which by the early 1800s had been established for over a century. Guidebooks and personal accounts, published in droves during this time, instituted primary routes that were predominantly, and often exclusively, based around urban centres. A homogeneity of itineraries developed in which visitors to Italy, as Rosemary Sweet describes, went to the same sites, 'the same excursions, read the same books and made the same observations'—helped along the way by limitations of infrastructure, such as good roads and inns, and a desire to conform and to consume pre-approved destinations.¹³⁶

One established route ran between Rome and Florence via the urban resting points of Viterbo and Siena. How little travellers, on the whole, were willing to stray from this itinerary, or prolong a journey between these two major cities, is evident in Richard Lassels' *The Voyage of Italy* from 1670. Describing his journey from Florence to Rome, almost exclusively from the seat of his moving carriage, Lassels tells of how he and his companions 'passed also that morning by the side of the Lake of Bolsena', journeying through 'a wood called anciently Lucus Volsinenium and now Bosco Helerno' before reaching Viterbo.¹³⁷ Here Lassels pauses to comment on the town's fountains and Cathedral, but does not stray further than two miles from the centre

¹³⁵ Ibid., 225.

¹³⁶ Sweet (2012), 3. See also Adler (1989) and MacCannell [1976] (2013) for a critical analysis on the act of travel, sightseeing and the consumption of place.

¹³⁷ Lassels (1670), 243.

when he goes on horseback to see what must be the Villa Lante: ‘a fine house, with a Garden of water-works and Fountains worth seeing’.¹³⁸ Without, as far as we are told, staying for even a night’s rest, Lassels then continues swiftly towards the ancient imperial capital, reaching it by nightfall. En route, even the grand Villa Farnese at Caprarola, which sits almost directly on the way to Rome, is described as ‘a little out of the Traveller’s rode’.¹³⁹ Such a strict itinerary and unwillingness to stray from the straight and well-trodden path, allows little room or opportunity for Bomarzo to be seen or prioritised. Roughly ten miles east of Viterbo, itself only seen as a brief stopping point between larger metropolitan centres, the Sacro Bosco would have consistently fallen short of the convenience required of the Grand Tour, even if it had been lauded and maintained by the Lante family during this period. Indeed, that the Lante were not in residence would surely have only detracted further from its appeal and accessibility.¹⁴⁰ The Sacro Bosco thus suffered neglect both internally (by its owners) and externally (by the tourists who passed it by).

One of the first detailed descriptions of the Sacro Bosco appears in 1846 in an Italian archeological text by Luigi Vittori concerned specifically with the Etruscan history of the Bomarzo area.¹⁴¹ The reader is told that just below the medieval town ‘you can admire a garden with many colossal sculptures’, where ‘dominating among these are a Hercules seated on a full armour, pulling apart a woman who he is holding by the extremities of her feet’, as well as ‘a fight of animals [the dragon group?], and an elephant with a tower on its back of gigantic proportions [...] and other mythological

¹³⁸ Ibid., 247.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Though the practice of keeping such spaces accessible to the public regardless as to whether a family was in residence was a long-standing tradition (based on the ancient concept of *Lex Hortorum*, see note 31 *supra*). So much so that when Edith Dusmet tried to close the nearby Villa Lante at Bagnaia for the first time in its history in the early twentieth century, the citizens of the town brought a successful lawsuit against her to regain access.

¹⁴¹ Vittori [1846] (2010).

representations, and innumerable vases and arabesques'.¹⁴² Vittori gets his historical information wrong, mentioning Vicino's father Giancorrado Orsini as creator of the site, but it is clear that he had visited the statues and gauged their colossal size and various subjects.¹⁴³ Renaissance culture, however, was not Vittori's primary interest, and the site exists merely as an interlude in his wider thesis on Etruscan history. Lost in pages dedicated to ancient civilisations, his remarks went largely unnoticed by scholars of Italian gardens and sculpture.¹⁴⁴

When the British archeologist George Dennis published *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* two years later, he too visited Bomarzo but made no reference to Vicino's *bosco*. Instead he saw fit to comment on the terrible facilities available to a traveller in 1848. 'Bomarzo is squalid in the extreme', he wrote,

as we rode down its main road, not a single house could we see whose exterior promised decent accommodation [...] should ladies desire to explore the antiquities of Bomarzo I can scarcely recommend them to make more than a flying visit'.¹⁴⁵

As well as highlighting the gendering of different forms of travel at this time, Dennis' comment provides another possible reason why Bomarzo didn't receive much attention from those on the Grand Tour: as well as being a detour from the main route, it didn't provide suitable infrastructure and hospitality. The archeological texts by Vittori and Dennis show the extent to which the area was absent from the usual tourist route, and was associated with its ancient, rather than sixteenth-century, splendours.

¹⁴² Ibid., 112: 'si ammira un giardino con molte colossali sculture. Primeggiano in queste un Ercole che assiso sull'intera armatura squarcia una donna che tiene afferrata per l'estremità dei piedi. Viene quindi una lotta di animali, ed un elefante con torre in sul dorso con gigantesche proporzioni [...] ed altri mitologiche rappresentanze, ed innumerevoli vasi e rabeschi'.

¹⁴³ Ibid.: 'ma non debbo preterire il vago tempietto porticato, innalzato dal duca Corrado Orsini per eternare la memoria di Giulia Farnese sua amantissima consorte'.

¹⁴⁴ Vittori's book is first mentioned in relation to the Sacro Bosco in a short bibliography provided by Zander (1955), 25.

¹⁴⁵ Dennis [1848] (1878), vol.I, 165 (for Bomarzo see Chapter XV, 164–173).

The question ‘to whom was the Sacro Bosco visible?’ is thus paramount. It is a startling fact that Vicino’s wood was not presented from an Italian art historical or historical perspective until the second half of the twentieth century. In Italy, it was geographers and archeologists of Etruria who were among the first to record their visits. After Vittori, Gustavo Strafforello noted the existence of a ‘garden with colossal statues and a beautiful little temple erected by the Duke Corrado Orsini to the memory of his wife Giulia Farnese’ (repeating Vittori’s error regarding the site’s patronage), in his monumental *La patria: geografia dell’Italia* (1894).¹⁴⁶ Rodolfo Lanciani then made a similarly fleeting reference to the ‘the eccentric country seat’ of Bomarzo and the ‘Boschetto of Messer Vicino’ in *Wanderings in the Roman Campagna* (1909), a text that reads as part travel narrative, part archeological history.¹⁴⁷ Giulio Silvestrelli, in *Città castelli e terre della regione romana* (1914), in between noting how the estate had changed hands over the centuries, described how near the villa there are ‘numerous gigantic statues of mythological deities, monsters and animals, carved in large erratic blocks scattered here and there in the ground’.¹⁴⁸ It would seem, therefore, that the Sacro Bosco was not unknown in this period, but rather that it was only briefly referenced in non-art historical contexts, offered as a tangent in texts that had other primary concerns.

To be considered in the context of other Italian villas and gardens, the Sacro Bosco had to wait for foreign, largely Anglophile, travellers in the early twentieth century. It was an American landscape architect, Rose Standish Nichols, who first repositioned

¹⁴⁶ Strafforello (1894), vol.III, ‘Italia centrale: Il Lazio’, 650: ‘giardino con statue colossali e bel tempietto eretto dal duca Corrado Orsini alla memoria della moglie Giulia Farnese’.

¹⁴⁷ Lanciani (1909), 212.

¹⁴⁸ Silvestrelli [1914] (1970), vol.II, ‘Bomarzo’, 678–680, 680: ‘conserva ancora numerose statue gigantesche di divinità mitologiche, mostri e animali, scolpite in grossi blocchi erratici sparsi qua e là nel terreno’. Silvestrelli also includes incorrect information, such as when Vicino married Giulia Farnese (dating the event 1570, when Giulia was already deceased), suggesting that the Bomarzo Orsini were relatively obscure historical figures at this point in time and had not been yet given serious archival attention.

Bomarzo in terms of garden history, affording two whole pages to the Sacro Bosco in *Italian Pleasure Gardens* in 1928. Here Nichols called it ‘a weird garden’ where ‘Pagan gods, exotic animals and figures illustrating old legends standing on crumbling terraces were carved from boulders that nature seems to have dropped there by accident’.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, it was Georges Loukomski, a Russian artist living in Paris and London, who provided the first known renderings since Bartholomeus Breenbergh’s drawings from c.1625.¹⁵⁰ In one, from the early 1920s, the Siren [Plate 29] is depicted in black pastel, the Monte Casoli ridge spread across the background, punctured by tall coniferous-looking trees [Fig. 1.1]. Drawn from memory perhaps, it presents an impossible view, bringing disparate elements of the garden together that could never fit in the same frame in reality.

Looking into early twentieth-century documents that pertain to the Sacro Bosco, a picture of an expatriate community that shared knowledge of and enjoyed Bomarzo swiftly develops. Into this group, along with Nichols and Loukomski, must be inserted Isabel Fanny Louise Porges (b.1879, London), wife of Marco Borghese (then the Duke of Bomarzo).¹⁵¹ Isabel’s youngest son Giovanni (1911–1983) described growing up at the estate for *Harper’s Magazine* in 1964 and credited his mother with bringing ‘attention to the gardens after so long a time’.¹⁵² ‘Especially interested in history and archeology’, he said, ‘she had them [the sculptures] cleared of moss and underbrush and the debris of centuries’.¹⁵³ Giovanni’s assertion that his family rediscovered the site, ‘claimed by earth and silence for hundreds of years’, is an

¹⁴⁹ Nichols (1928), 83–84.

¹⁵⁰ For the exhibition catalogue see Loukomski (1935)a.

¹⁵¹ The Borghese family owned the Sacro Bosco for just under one hundred years, selling the estate to the commune around 1940.

¹⁵² Borghese and Ambrosini (1964), 68.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

exaggeration (as the existence of Vittori's text from 1846 attests).¹⁵⁴ However it does seem a reasonable hypothesis that Porges' English roots would have played a role in the primarily Anglo-American visitorship that documented the site over the first half of the century.

Italian post-war art critics were quick to note the discrepancy between foreign and domestic knowledge of the Sacro Bosco. When Mario Praz described his first trip to Bomarzo in the Roman daily newspaper *Il Tempo* in 1949, he noted with surprise that when asking a local 'if there happened to be many visitors', 'we were answered: "American and Canadian everyday"'.¹⁵⁵ In comparison, Praz admits that 'the existence of Bomarzo I did not suspect any more than the vast majority of my countrymen until the day I spoke to a Russian painter in love with villas and Roman ruins'.¹⁵⁶ Guido Piovene, a journalist who had been involved in the anti-fascist movement in Italy, expressed a similar sentiment in the newspaper *La Stampa* in 1953. 'If one talks about Bomarzo today', he wrote, 'you often have this answer: I heard about it from an English lady who was enthusiastic', yet 'at home, as I have already said, it does not seem to have entered into our official values yet'.¹⁵⁷

Piovene's use of the term '*i valori ufficiali*' is significant and central to the argument of the next section of this chapter. The first half of the twentieth century saw the creation of an 'official value' for what constituted an Italian Renaissance garden. New evidence I will offer here shows that the Sacro Bosco was known and in use prior to

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹⁵⁵ Praz [1949] (1975), 77: 'Ma quando fummo in paese, e chiedemmo alla guida locale—sicuri di avere per tutta risposta uno sconcolato cenno del capo—se capitassero molti visitatori, ci rispose: "Americani e canadesi ogni giorno..."'.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.: 'che cell'esistenza di Bomarzo io non sospettavo più della stragrande maggioranza dei miei connazionali fino al giorno in cui me ne parlò un pittore russo innamorato di ville e di rovine romane'. This artist is later named as 'Andrea Beloborodoff' [sic] (more commonly known as Andrei Beloborodov).

¹⁵⁷ Piovene (1953), 3: 'Se si parla oggi di Bomarzo, spesso si ha questa risposta: ne ho sentito parlare, da una signora inglese, che ne è entusiasta', 'Da noi, come ho già detto, non sembra ancor entrato tra i valori ufficiali'.

its rediscovery to a far greater extent than has previously been acknowledged, and that as such a case can be made for what I am underscoring as the ‘active exclusion’ of Vicino’s wood from this politically motivated canon of garden history. Having explored the years of neglect experienced by the site between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, this chapter now turns to the fifty years before Bomarzo’s moment of re-emergence.

IL GIARDINO ALL’ITALIANA

The idea of a distinct Italian garden type first began at the end of the eighteenth century, decades before Italy’s unification in 1861. This early concept was conceived as an idea of shared habitat, botanical resources and weather conditions rather than stylistic unity. Marco Lastri, a Florentine agronomist, stated in 1797 that in contrast to an English garden, which included ‘very tall trees of rare types’ and ‘lush grass’, the Italian garden ‘derived its charm from fruit trees, citrus plants, [and] flowers’.¹⁵⁸ This primarily horticultural notion shifted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, to more aesthetic concerns when Anglo-Americans such as Vernon Lee (the pen-name of the British novelist Violet Page) and Edith Wharton arrived in Italy. These authors sought a counter to the ‘successive pictures of flower-loveliness’ fashionable in the ‘cottage-style’ gardens of America and Britain at the time, duly reducing what they found in Italy to the opposite: evergreen plants, stonework and water features.¹⁵⁹ Lee, whose essay ‘Old Italian Gardens’ from 1897 was one of the earliest of its type, described the Italian garden as a space that has ‘nothing to do with Nature, or not much’, where ‘trees and hedges are treated as brick and stone’, and where design is spurred by rules of ‘perspective, architecture, [and] decoration’.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Lastri [1797] (1831), Book I, vol.III, 107: ‘altissimi alberi di rarissime specie’, ‘erba freschissima’, ‘piante fruttifere, dagli agrumi, da’ fiori’.

¹⁵⁹ Wharton (1904), 6. For the promotion of the ‘cottage style’ garden, characterised by wild flowers, irregular planting and herbaceous borders, see Robinson (1870).

¹⁶⁰ Lee [1897] (1908), 110, 115 and 120.

Wharton, who dedicated *Italian Villas and their Gardens* to Lee seven years later, reasserted this orderly architectural paradigm. For Wharton, the design of an Italian garden was determined by permanence, in which plants, pebble paths and stone architecture held ‘a charm independent of the seasons’.¹⁶¹

Wharton and Lee were writing for an English-speaking audience, but when Benito Mussolini took control of Italy in 1922, their words and opinions were absorbed into the fascist ideology of Il Duce’s regime. Despite its nineteenth-century unification, when Mussolini came to power Italy was still largely divided by former political boundaries, traditions, histories and dialects. As such, a key agenda of the new fascist government was to create a unified Italian identity via a shared sense of cultural heritage. To do so, Italian history was edited along ideological lines, ironing out regional differences through a master narrative that emphasised a specific interpretation of the ancient Roman Empire and the Renaissance.¹⁶² Within this starkly political context of active historical rewriting, fascist leaning intellectuals highjacked Wharton’s and Lee’s version of the ideal Italian garden to fit an overtly nationalistic discourse.¹⁶³ Known as the *giardino all’italiana*, this now political construction of an ‘Italian garden’ type was a strictly architectural space, classically inspired and geometrically ordered, with little room for anything that diverged from these rules.

Two major proponents of this new garden narrative were the Italian scholars Luigi Damiani and Ugo Ojetto, both closely associated with fascist politics. Damiani published *Il giardino italiano* in 1924, the first major Italian book printed on the subject, in which

¹⁶¹ Wharton (1904), 8.

¹⁶² See D. Medina Lasansky’s *The Renaissance Perfected* for an in depth analysis of such historical editing and its motives: (2004).

¹⁶³ On the fascist construct of an ‘Italian Garden’ type see the following recent work on the subject, which has been influential for this section of my thesis: Dümpelmann (2005); Lazzaro (2005); Visone (2005); Giannetto (2011); Tchikine (2017)—I am indebted to Anatole Tchikine for having shared this article with me in advance of publication.

he argued that the Italian garden was epitomised by what he saw as the cinquecento style. ‘The word Italian in this book’, he stated, ‘is used as referring to a style and not a geographical space [...] those various forms which have taken definite shape in Florence and Rome, from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century’.¹⁶⁴ For Dami this style culminated in formal and symbolically stable gardens of control that were the ‘outcome of a keen mind and of a deliberate will’, where ‘everything is definite, divided, well balanced’, and in which nature is composed ‘of soulless things’.¹⁶⁵ In the Italian garden, Dami stressed, there was no room for romantic sentimentality, even ‘the sky is cut into zones’ by cultivated trees and architecture.¹⁶⁶

Closely following Dami’s line of thought, Ugo Ojetti was one of the signatories of the *Manifesto degli intellettuali fascisti* in 1925—a document created to formally define the cultural aspirations of Italian fascism. In 1931, Ojetti headed the exhibition committee responsible for the *Mostra del giardino italiano*, a colossal, widely publicised and regime funded exhibition held in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, which worked to define the national garden type for a broad and vast audience.¹⁶⁷ In the opening essay of the exhibition’s catalogue, Ojetti described the Italian garden as

¹⁶⁴ Dami (1924), 1: ‘La parola “italiano” ha in questo libro significato stilistico, non geografico. Si vuole infatti qui definire con qualche precisione, nelle loro varie apparizioni e casi varii, quelle forme che, determinatesi tra il quattro e il cinquecento’. For the translation I use the English version published a year later: Dami (1925), 7.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, (1924): 22: ‘una ragione perspicua e di una volontà decisa’, ‘Tutto è definito, sicuro, equilibrato’, ‘La Natura è invece composta di un certo numero di cose senz’anima’; (1925): 21–22.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, both 22–23: ‘Non c’è posto nel giardino italiano per sentimentalità romantiche’, ‘il pallore o il turchino del cielo, ritagliato a zone dalle sagome delle piante’.

¹⁶⁷ The *Mostra del Giardino Italiano* was one of many exhibitions organised and funded by the fascist regime to promote a specific narrative of Italian culture and history. For a discussion of other exhibitions see Lasansky (2004), 73–79 and Braun (2005). In addition to publications and exhibitions, the regime also promoted its concept of a national garden style by sponsoring gardening competitions, building new public parks and restoring Italian Renaissance gardens according to their aesthetic principles. The garden at the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, for instance, was restored in the early 1940s and the geometric box hedges established at this time are a result of fascist leaning ideals rather than historical accuracy. Between 1925 and 1938, the gardens at Villa Celimontana, Villa Aldobrandini, Villa Paganini, Villa Fiorelli and Villa Sciarra were all partly redesigned and reopened. See Dümpelmann (2005), 42–45, and Lazzaro (2005), 159.

strictly ‘symmetrical and architectonic [...] [displaying] the constant, orderly and visible dominion of man over nature’; a space notable for its ‘restrained beauty and regulated variety in nature made tame and obedient, and laid out in precise designs’.¹⁶⁸ The exhibition posters clearly expressed these aesthetic principles in visual form. With abstracted, simplified patterns and solid colours, the lithographed designs flattened and reduced the Italian garden to geometric form as much as possible [Figs.1.2 and 1.3].¹⁶⁹

The reach and influence of this garden aesthetic should not be underestimated. The *Mostra* contained almost four thousand objects displayed in fifty-three rooms—from paintings and tapestries to tools and wax flowers—all of which was framed to promote this particular idea of the Italian garden to the public.¹⁷⁰ To ensure that the exhibition was well attended, significantly reduced train fares were offered across Italy, and an impressive thirty thousand lithographic posters were printed [Fig.1.4]. The poster also offered a visual lesson in the *giardino all’italiana*. With linear one-point perspective, classical columns mounted by goats (an emblem of Cosimo I de’ Medici) and tall, neatly trimmed square hedges frame a central path that leads to a fountain approximating Giambologna’s *Ocean* and the *Isolotto* of the Boboli garden. In the background, the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore and the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio peek above a straight band of deep green foliage: the two structures of church and state in Florence symbolically framing, and thus supporting, the exhibition’s garden agenda.

¹⁶⁸ Ojetti (1931), 23: ‘simmetrico e architettonico [...] il continuo e ordinato e visibile dominio dell’uomo sulla natura’; 24: ‘d’ordinata bellezza e di regolata varietà dentro una natura fatta obbediente e domestica e allineata in disegni precisi’.

¹⁶⁹ Archival documents relating to the exhibition are held at the Archivio Storico Comunale di Firenze, ‘Mostra del giardino italiano, 1931’, bust. 5087–5093 and C.F.9260.

¹⁷⁰ Lazzaro (2005), 160.

Such promotional material and affordable, widespread access to regime-funded exhibitions was incredibly effective. While visitor figures for the garden display are not known, those for comparable government-led shows indicate just how far reaching these exhibitions could be. Almost four million people attended the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* for example, which opened in Rome on 23 September 1937; at that time four million people was almost ten percent of the Italian population.¹⁷¹ For those who couldn't or didn't travel to see the exhibition, regime-sponsored newspapers, journals, radio broadcasts and newsreels made sure the *giardino all'italiana* was disseminated as widely as possible. One extensive review, published in the Italian art journal *Emporium*, recalls Ojetti's and Dami's words in almost exact terms. The exhibit, the author writes, shows that the country's garden design is 'neat and symmetrical', 'all very precise, well defined, marked in its borders, clear and evident in all its reality with no place for the indefinite and the vague'.¹⁷² Describing 'the first signs of civilisation and well-being' as the need for 'a tamed and regulated nature', the article goes on to assert that the order of the Italian garden is proof of the nation's superiority.¹⁷³

In the archives of the Istituto L.U.C.E (L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa), Mussolini's national production agency, there is a silent black and white newsreel that focuses on the central exhibit.¹⁷⁴ The reel is part of an episode of *Giornale Luce*, a

¹⁷¹ Lasansky (2004), 9.

¹⁷² 'IX: 'La Mostra del Giardino Italiano a Firenze'' (1931), 262: 'tutto ordinati e simmetrici', 'tutto ben preciso, ben definito, segnato nei suoi confini, chiaro ed evidente in tutta la sua realta, che non ha posto per l'indefinito e il vago'.

¹⁷³ Ibid.: 'Coi primi segni della civiltà e del benessere questo bisogno di [...] una natura addomesticata e regolata'.

¹⁷⁴ 'A Firenze esposizione dei modelli di giardini italiani' (1931), Archivio Storico Luce, Rome (A080104). The archive of Istituto Luce is now the main source for Italian news programmes. As well as its own material, it houses the entire corpus of the INCOM archive, the Mondo Libero newsreels, those produced by Radar, by C.I.A.C (Compagnia Italiana Attualità Cinematografiche), as well as German newsreels dubbed in Italian. The majority of the films referenced in this thesis can be found in this archive, as recorded in the bibliography.

weekly news programme released by the regime and screened, according to law, before the start of every feature film.¹⁷⁵ At little under two minutes long, the film was broadcast in June 1931. Placing the viewer in the Salone dei Cinquecento of the Palazzo Vecchio, the camera slowly pans across a series of model gardens, sometimes offering close ups of particular details, at other moments staying static with a central viewpoint that emphasises the symmetry of each design [Fig.1.5]. At one point, the sequence of models is broken to show visitors milling around the space: men in suits, exhibition catalogues in hand, and a woman in an elegant dress, gather and pause over the small-scale representations. Watching the newsreel the viewer is aligned with these visitors and transported into the show's political interpretation of Italian garden history and culture.

The *giardino all'italiana* that came out of the 1920s and 1930s is important to understanding why the Sacro Bosco was overlooked in the early twentieth century. For decades Italians were fed a very specific and politically motivated idea of what an Italian garden consisted. This language became ubiquitous by the late 1940s. Distanced from its problematic political roots, it fossilised into academic tradition. In a 1960 study of the Villa d'Este, for example, Italian sixteenth-century gardens were described as 'simply to decorate architecture' and as spaces where 'all the elements of nature—water, stone, and verdure—were meant to reveal man's dominance'.¹⁷⁶ As late as 1999, one author wrote that 'by Italian gardens I thus mean "Italian Renaissance and Baroque gardens"'.¹⁷⁷ What is of note here is how the *giardino all'italiana* impacted the early twentieth-century history and historiography of

¹⁷⁵ For the Istituto Luce and its fascist history see Elwin (1934); Argentieri (1979); Ben-Ghiat (2004); Caprotti (2005).

¹⁷⁶ Coffin (1960), 38. For the gendering of nature in gardens and garden scholarship see Lazzaro (1998).

¹⁷⁷ Beneš (1999), 37. The trope was only seriously questioned within garden history in the twenty-first century with a host of articles published in 2005 (see note 163).

Bomarzo. With rough volcanic stone, Etruscan references and unusually monstrous subject matter, the Sacro Bosco does not fit this master garden narrative, which looks for ‘principles of balance, proportion, and compositional serenity’.¹⁷⁸ Rather than seeing the site as highlighting a need to reassess existing discourse, however, early scholars can be seen trying to work around its more non conforming elements, reasoning away its strangeness.

A LONG SHADOW CAST

The first significant move to place the Sacro Bosco within an Italian academic context was the dedicated edition of the *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura* published in 1955 by the University of Rome’s architecture department, which was inherently sympathetic to the architectonic emphasis of the *giardino all’italiana* even if it might have refuted its ideological origins. Arnaldo Bruschi’s essay, the first of five in the journal, sets out the history of the town and the architecture of the Orsini residence, the implicit assumption being that the two—*palazzo* and *bosco*—must be intimately connected despite their spatial separation.¹⁷⁹ Dami’s previous assertion that one of the main objects of a Renaissance villa was to create a ‘friendly understanding between the house and the garden’ having become accepted knowledge.¹⁸⁰ In order to make the Sacro Bosco fit this ideal, however, Bruschi made a striking claim: that there must have been a formal garden attached to the Bosco. Including this essentially imagined area in his first diagram, Bruschi conjured a rigid rectangular space orientated east to west and working out from the lower part of the town, divided into six compartments by a straight central promenade and rigid paths moving out at right angles like a ladder [Fig.1.6].

¹⁷⁸ Ojetti (1931), 23: ‘ripetendone l’equilibrio, la misura e la composta sirenità’.

¹⁷⁹ Bruschi (1955), 3–18.

¹⁸⁰ Dami (1924) and (1925), both 17: ‘un’intesa propizia tra una massa della casa e la massa della verdura’.

The evidence Bruschi offers for this space is flimsy, residing primarily in an aerial photograph of the town and valley [Fig.1.7].¹⁸¹ However, this document captures the landscape below Bomarzo in its post-war iteration, showing a stretch of bare ground marked with a faint rectangular grid. Bruschi argues that here there is evidence of a formal garden that has since been lost, but when examined with a more neutral eye, it is clear that these markings are made by contemporary agriculture. The ground has been divided into thin rectangular plots according to common practice in crop planting, as is even more evident in another aerial photograph taken at a lower angle and printed on the large foldout in the centre of the publication [Fig.1.8]. Where there is modern farming, Bruschi projects the ghostly remains of a *giardino all'italiana*, despite acknowledging that he cannot provide a specific date for such a complex, nor can he explain how the garden would have linked to the Bosco across the natural stream that intersects this geography.¹⁸²

The dominance of the 'Italian garden' promoted in the pre-war period is further evident in Bruschi's other argument for this supposed formal garden: simply that it was the norm. As Renaissance architecture always contains the principle of 'the dominion of order', Bruschi states, we should presume there was a formal *giardino*.¹⁸³ He thus tries to fit the Sacro Bosco into the existing model, in which the monstrous wood must be counter-balanced by a more ordered adjacent space. The prevalence of this understanding, shaped by the *giardino all'italiana*, would mean that as late as

¹⁸¹ Bruschi (1955), 13: 'La sua esistenza è provata (assai chiaramente nella fotografia aerea)'.

¹⁸² Ibid.: 'Non è provato, invece, che il tracciato, come lo vediamo oggi, sia orsiniano, potendo l'insieme dei viali—data l'insufficienza delle tracce esistenti, scarsamente leggibili—anche appartenere ad una eventuale sistemazione posteriore, del Lante o dei Borghese. Appare, in ogni modo, singolare che, attualmente non si possa leggere un collegamento diretto, attraverso il ruscello, tra giardino e bosco'.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 8: 'per la architettura il dominio dell'ordinel'.

1982 and 1989, authors were still asserting the existence of the formal garden proposed by Bruschi on little solid evidence.¹⁸⁴

The other articles in the 1955 *Quaderni* similarly work around the Sacro Bosco's more unique elements according to ideas that can be traced back to the underlying structure of the 'Italian garden' promoted in the 1920s and 30s. Giuseppe Zander's article compiles historic documents pertaining to Bomarzo known at the time and that relate consistently to Vicino Orsini (a focus visually reinforced by the journal's cover: a close up of an heraldic peperino Orsini bear).¹⁸⁵ Furio Fasolo then offers a stylistic analysis of each of the Sacro Bosco's features in turn, an approach which has been regular in studies of the site ever since, but that often means that a route or programme is implied and that the sculptures become decontextualised from their landscape, materiality and each other.¹⁸⁶ Fasolo's argument positions Orsini as iconographic master of a space that he sees as fundamentally architectural. Despite acknowledging that the overarching theme of the Sacro Bosco is a 'departure from the real (plastic) and architectural norms', the roots of its iconography, Fasolo insists, are in a classical vision of late Roman architecture and antiquities.¹⁸⁷ Leonardo Benevolo's article then takes up Fasolo's assertion 'that almost every single element belongs to the normal sixteenth-century figurative tradition', to position Bomarzo as a Mannerist space that is still bound, rather than opposed, to classicism (a concept that

¹⁸⁴ See Nyholm (1982), vol.II, 27–42 and Perucca (1989). Nyholm's argument that the central motif of the Sacro Bosco was a movement from nature to art relied entirely on the assumed existence of a formal garden between town and *bosco*.

¹⁸⁵ Zander (1955), 19–31.

¹⁸⁶ Fasolo (1955), 33–60. For comparable stylistic analysis, taking each of the sculptures in turn, see Berberi (1999) and Calvesi (2000).

¹⁸⁷ Fasolo, *ibid.*, 58: 'un discostarsi dal reale (plastica) e dalle norme architettoniche' (57–60 for full conclusion of this argument).

shifted in Italian scholarship of the late 1950s and early 1960s).¹⁸⁸ Bomarzo, Benevolo asserted, ‘reorganises and codifies the classical repertory’ and as such is ‘a companion to classicism’.¹⁸⁹

The emphasis on architectonic and classical ideals is particularly striking in relation to the images that accompany Fasolo’s text, which were meant to introduce readers to the space for the first time within a scholarly context. Small black and white photographic reproductions dot the margins of the page, consisting almost entirely of close ups and sculptural details, which are often taken from an angle, height or proximity that would be inaccessible to an in-situ beholder.¹⁹⁰ As a result, the photographs fragment and distort the viewer’s sense of the sculptures. When a work is photographed whole, the frame is closely cropped, cutting out much of its physical context and its spatial relationship to other statues.

Photographs, however, are in the minority. The majority of illustrations take the form of line drawings of individual structures, with occasional rough measurements given for their height and width. These punctuate the pages’ borders and are placed according to the journal’s layout rather than their actual scale in relation to one another [Fig.1.9]. The placement of the drawings on the page, moreover, does not correlate with the sculpture being discussed in the adjacent text, making a disconnect between word and image, and potentially meaning that the reader must place greater

¹⁸⁸ Benevolo (1955), 61–73, 65: ‘L’analisi di Furio Fasolo ha dimostrato che quasi ogni singolo elemento rientra nella normale tradizione figurativa cinquecentesca’. The shifting concept of ‘Mannerist art’ post WWII and the role Mannerism played in Bomarzo’s historiography will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 66 and 69: ‘riordina e codifica con cura il repertorio classico [...] accompagna il classicismo’.

¹⁹⁰ Geraldine Johnson has connected the belief in the supposed scientific accuracy of photography and the rise of the photographic close ups in representations of sculpture to the growing influence of connoisseurship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and vice versa. See Johnson (2013), 31–35.

trust in Fasolo's written argument, not easily being able to compare his interpretations with the visual one.

In addition, other sculptures are rendered in line drawings over six full-page spreads [e.g. Figs.1.10–1.13].¹⁹¹ The sparse contours of each sculpture in these renderings offer no shading or external shadows to suggest mass, weight or a spatial environment; instead, all sense of material, surface, texture and depth is excised.¹⁹² The representations divorce the sculptures even further from their context and location than the photographs so that the sculptures float against the white background of the page. Through this representational mode, moreover, the sculptures lose their 'rootedness', a key and unusual component of their composition, as discussed in detail in Chapter Four. In the illustrations the bottom of the sculptures is primarily rendered as a flat horizontal line, as if the work is on a plinth or carved from a block that is detached from the ground.

In the full-page spreads, as with the images in the essay's margins, the buildings and statues are shown in no particular order, some with measurements and some without, but with the addition of a silhouetted contrapposto figure inscribed within a square. This Vitruvian image (taken 'from the treatise of Francesco di Giorgio') is misleading for a number of reasons, not least the fact that the reference: Francesco di Giorgio Martini's *Trattato di architettura civile e militare* (c.1482) was completed almost a century before the Sacro Bosco was finished, and circulated in manuscript form until it was published in the nineteenth century.¹⁹³ When placed next to these minimal

¹⁹¹ Fasolo (1955), 50–55.

¹⁹² The use of line drawings positions the *Quaderni* within a tradition of art historical scholarship that had been in practice since the eighteenth century, initiated at a time when photographs were either unavailable or still costly to reproduce to a high standard. See Winckelmann's *Monumenti antichi inediti* (1767) or d'Agincourt's and Cicognara's surveys of Renaissance art for key examples. See Johnson (2013), 14–26.

¹⁹³ Fasolo (1955), 'Fig.1', 33: 'dal trattato di Francesco di Giorgio'. For the original drawing and treatise see Martini [c.1482] (1967), vol.I, f.21v, Tav.38.

diagrams, this schematised and boxed-in figure reads as an attempt not to give a sense of the colossal size of the sculptures against the human but to pin down the unconventional use of scale in the Sacro Bosco, where size does not always correlate to subject nor to that of other statues: the Tortoise, for example, is as large as the Elephant. Applied to a site where a sense of proportion and shared scale is disregarded, the Vitruvian figure works to steady Bomarzo, offering a ‘rational’ and ‘Renaissance’ canon of measure and reference against which to judge each sculptural element.

In this way, the illustrations work to reinforce visually the formalist approach and architectural leanings of Fasolo’s argument.¹⁹⁴ It is striking that structures and sculptures that are encountered far apart are brought into direct comparison. On page fifty, the Fighting Giants are shown next to a frontal view of the *Tempietto*, while the Elephant is positioned next to this same building’s rear aspect [Fig.1.11]. In another (page fifty-two), the floor plan of the *Tempietto* is shown above the Nymphaeum [Fig. 1.12], while on page fifty-four, the Dragon group and Tortoise are placed by external and internal side views of the Leaning House [Fig.1.13]. Thus, not only is heavy emphasis placed on the architectonic features, but the more unusual and monstrous statues are tempered by the site’s more traditional and classical architectural structures. As a result, these pages work to visually balance out the Sacro Bosco’s more unconventional aspects (some of the diagrams even correct the tilt of the Leaning House [see page fifty-five, Fig.1.10]).

Critically evaluating the *Quaderni*’s images in this way highlights how photographs and illustrations are implicated in methodological strategies and art historical arguments. Decontextualised, stripped of their tangible and physical qualities and the

¹⁹⁴ In a similar manner Suzanne Lang’s formal and iconographic study of the Sacro Bosco is accompanied by inverted reproductions of these drawings, the outlines in white against a black background. See Lang (1957).

peculiarities of their medium, the line drawings accompanying Fasolo's article create a particular vision of the Sacro Bosco that has almost nothing in common with the encounter experienced by a visitor. The subsequent three chapters of this thesis can thus be read as a redressing of the effect of these images: it is precisely the landscape, materiality and setting of Bomarzo, omitted from these diagrams, that are foundational for the approach taken over the following pages.

The compulsion at work in these illustrations, and in the wider project set out by the architecture faculty of the University of Rome in 1955, is to try and fit the Sacro Bosco into the existing canonical garden discourse. Indeed, as if in evidence of the contrary nature of this approach, one of the images found in the journal's preface shows a black and white photograph of a student taking measurements 'hoisted dangerously on the dome [of the *Tempietto*], for the sake of accuracy' [Fig. 1.14].¹⁹⁵ Photographed from below, the Temple's dome and pinnacled *cupola* fill the perfectly centred image, while a wooden ladder leans up against the structure in the middle of the frame. In contrast to this symmetrical composition, the sprawled legs and behind of a trouser-clad figure can be seen ungainly stretched out, limbs akimbo, as if about to fall from the top of the ladder: the site seeming to actively resist the students' attempt to place it within a regularising schematic.

EXCLUSION

The prevalence of the *giardino all'italiana* in academic thought affected how the Sacro Bosco was understood and framed in the twentieth century. It is a concept that is equally important in relation to the afterlife of Bomarzo because it has generally been assumed that the site was unknown to Italian scholars such as Dami and Ojetti prior to the mid-twentieth century, and that this is why it did not feature in their

¹⁹⁵ Luise et al. (1955), 1: '[...] issato pericolosamente anche sulla cupola, per amore di precisione'.

studies or projects. However, photographs and publications uncovered in the course of the present research prove that something far less coincidental was taking place: the Sacro Bosco was actively overlooked and omitted by the academics creating an Italian garden canon in the first half of the century. In his catalogue introduction for the exhibition of 1931, Ojetti spoke openly of how ‘the sheer quantity of documents, paintings, drawings, prints, views, plans and models meant that in the end we had to choose and abandon many’.¹⁹⁶ Ojetti is speaking of sites lost or modified here, and is using the act of exclusion as a means to assert the sheer weight of evidence supposedly behind the display. But it is also a sentence that hints at a wider practice of omission and selection that took place.

The central exhibit of the 1931 *Mostra* consisted of the ten three-dimensional models displayed in the Salone dei Cinquecento and filmed for the episode of *Giornale Luce* previously discussed [Fig. 1.5]. Made by Donatello Bianchini and Enrico Lusini, these models were presented in individual *teatrini* that were ten-foot deep, fabric-enclosed areas, rigged with individual lighting and framed by an arched viewing window that suggested a stone garden feature. Set against painted backdrops, the models contained to-scale buildings, sculptures, fountains, plants, figures in historic dress, even running water. These three-dimensional reproductions, the catalogue explained, were ‘intended to illustrate the most characteristic essentials of Italian gardens throughout the centuries’, offering consolidated, constructed spaces that entirely conceded to the ideals of order and classicism of the *giardino all’italiana*.¹⁹⁷ The model of the Renaissance Florentine garden, for example, is a study in geometry and

¹⁹⁶ Ojetti (1931), 24–25: ‘Abbiamo raccolto memoria anche dei Giardini e delle Ville scomparse o mutate; ma tanta è stata la folla dei documenti, quadri, disegni, stampe, vedute, piante, plastici, che abbiamo alla fine dovuto scegliere e abbandonarne parecchi’.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Salone dei Cinquecento’, in *Mostra del giardino italiano: catalogo* (1931), 28 [henceforth ‘*Mostra*’]: ‘vogliono dare al pubblico la rappresentazione essenziale dei tipi caratteristici, nelle varie epoche’.

monumentality [Fig.1.15]. Perfectly symmetrical, a central fountain is encased by a tall, almost funereal ring of cypresses, surrounded in turn by identical square enclosures edged by box hedge, around which is a further ring of geometrical beds.¹⁹⁸ Nature is suppressed to an abstract pattern, with foliage represented largely by flat blocks of colour on the model's base. The sixth *teatrino*, containing 'A Roman garden between 1500 and 1600' [Fig.1.16], worked to a similar logic. Taking its inspiration from the 'richness of architectonic motifs' found at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli and the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, the model displays a wide central parterre containing four courtly figures, a central water pool, tall box hedges, and grand tiered architectural terraces reaching theatrically into the background—spectacular, but contained and classicising.¹⁹⁹

In order to create these idealised, composite models, and to compile the research for the exhibition as a whole, regional committees were established to produce detailed inventories of Italian gardens in their locale. Instead of being representative however, archival papers make clear that these groups were instructed only to catalogue those sites that fitted the approved style, regardless of the implications this had for the wealth of other garden types represented in Italy. As Francesco Fichera, a disgruntled member of the Sicilian committee highlighted in March 1931, this meant that the eclecticism of Italian garden design was rejected and key sites ignored. 'How will Sicily participate in the garden exhibition', Fichera asked, 'where the norm will be architectonic Italian gardens? Architectonic gardens: were this not the definition,

¹⁹⁸ The Boboli gardens, designs by Bartolommeo Ammannati, Niccolò Tribolo's images for the Medici villa at Castello, along with Vasari's description and Giusto Utens's lunette of the same garden, are listed among the inspirations for this model. *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29–30: 'L'ordinata ricchezza dei motivi architettonici nei grandi giardini romani sorti fra il '500 e il '600 ebbe il suo primo e glorioso esempio nella Villa d'Este costruita a Tivoli da Pirro Ligorio, tra il 1550 e il 1569 [...] e la Villa Lante a Bagnaia presso Viterbo'.

three-quarters of Sicily could be represented’, as it was however, he concluded, ‘our contribution will be very modest’.²⁰⁰

Fichera’s statement makes it clear that Ojetti, the exhibition’s organisers and, though sometimes reluctantly, the regional committees, all purposefully passed over gardens that displayed stylistic approaches other than the one being actively promoted, gardens, one could suggest, like the Sacro Bosco. Ojetti claimed in the exhibition catalogue that the Salone models provided ‘the whole evolution of landscape architecture’.²⁰¹ Yet, as Fichera’s complaint and other surviving documents make evident, the opposite was the case. Discussing the models, a revealing text from the exhibition committee records states that the composite approach used, in which multiple gardens were merged into a type, was preferable because: ‘it will be easier to understand what a sixteenth-century Florentine garden [...] was like through an ideal model that does not represent *the numerous variations of specific gardens that exist or once existed*’.²⁰²

The Sacro Bosco must be added to this practice of omission. Lazio was one of the ten ‘*comitati regionali*’ established for the exhibition, with nine members including Roberto Longhi.²⁰³ The fact that Bomarzo is nowhere to be found in the *Mostra* has generally been assumed up until this point to be simply because the site was unknown, despite the fact that it seems unlikely that such a group would have overlooked established surveys of the area, such as those by Vittori, Strafforello and Lanciani, which mention the Sacro Bosco. Indeed, a thorough reading of Dami’s *Il*

²⁰⁰ Fichera (1931). Quoted and trans. in Giannetto (2011), 59.

²⁰¹ Ojetti (1931), 23: ‘tutta la evoluzione dell’architettura giardiniera’.

²⁰² ‘Mostra del Giardino Italiano, 1931’, Archivio Storico Comunale di Firenze: busta 5088. Quoted and trans. in Giannetto (2011), 59 [emphasis my own].

²⁰³ *Mostra* (1931), 7: ‘Urbano Barberini, Benedetto Bonacelli, Camillo De Gregorio di Sorrentino, Giovanni Incisa della Rocchetta, Enrico Josi, Roberto Longhi, Giuseppe Lugli, Roberto Papini’.

giardino italiano alone, will show this cannot be the case. The Sacro Bosco was, in fact, known to garden historians.

The majority of Dami's book consists of a large and densely-packed appendix of images and there, in black and white, is a photograph of the *Tempietto* [Fig.1.17]. Overlooked by Bomarzo scholars to date, it is an image that suggests we have to rethink the Sacro Bosco's historiography in relation to early twentieth-century politics. It proves that Dami knew of the Sacro Bosco, and so too, therefore, did Ojetti and the Lazio regional committee. Dami's publication was a key text for the *Mostra del giardino italiano*. A copy of his book was even available to visitors in room twenty-four of the exhibition, reserved for '*Libri sul giardino italiano*'.²⁰⁴

Built on the highest ground of the Sacro Bosco, the *Tempietto* [Plate 34] is notably the site's most classical structure: peripteral, with a tetra style portico with a vaulted ceiling, and a dome to the rear, it complies more than any other structure to the architectonic ideal of the *giardino all'italiana*. Such garden temples were also one of the only features Ojetti permitted in the 'Romantic' style garden (pitted as the antithesis of the 'Italian'). The reason, Ojetti explained, was because these 'little round or octagonal classic temples' expressed 'regret for the forgotten architecture' of the Italian *giardino*.²⁰⁵

The caption to the photograph reads: 'Figure CXXXIV: BOMARZO (Viterbo), the Orsini garden, Vignola (?), the small Temple', suggesting that Dami considered the famous architect as probably responsible for its design.²⁰⁶ Such an attribution may have been sufficient reason for Dami to include it in his publication. Even more

²⁰⁴ 'Sala 24: Libri sul giardino italiano', in *Mostra* (1931), 141–142, 142.

²⁰⁵ Ojetti (1931), 23: 'classici tempietti rotondi [...] un rimpianto per l'architettura perduta'.

²⁰⁶ Dami (1924) and (1925), 'Fig.CXXXIV', n.p.: 'BOMARZO (Viterbo): giardino Orsini, VIGNOLA (?), Tempietto'.

significant however, is the reference to the ‘*giardino Orsini*’, a phrase that admits knowledge of the wider complex of which the Temple is a part, and that then goes undocumented by the publication. Indeed, from the *Tempietto* (as will become clear) it would be very difficult not to also see, and become aware of, the other, more monstrous sculptures nearby.²⁰⁷ The truth of Bomarzo’s history is that it was known to Dami, and therefore almost certainly Ogetti, but purposefully overlooked. It would seem that supporters of the regime were not willing to promote Bomarzo, nor include its eccentric sculptures in their concept of Italian garden culture. It is an omission further evidenced by the fact that others visited and documented the site during these decades, more so than has thus far been acknowledged.

ACTIVE USE

Rose Standish Nichols published *Italian Pleasure Gardens* in 1928. Her text, therefore, was written four years after Dami’s *Il giardino italiano* and printed during the early years of Mussolini’s rule. Indeed, Nichols includes the 1925 English translation of Dami’s text in her bibliography, suggesting that it was even one way she could have heard about the ‘*giardino Orsini*’, to quote Dami’s image caption.²⁰⁸ In addition to her description of the site, there are two words Nichols uses in her ‘Garden Itinerary’ that further problematise the common view that Bomarzo was obscure during this period, namely that it was ‘always accessible’.²⁰⁹ It is a claim corroborated by other rare and previously unpublished photographs of the Sacro Bosco from as early as the 1920s that research for this thesis uncovered, along with publications not

²⁰⁷ As the students of the Institute of Architectural History in Rome stated when describing the visit that would result in the *Quaderni*: ‘In una valletta sottostante al paese scoprimmo il tempio da noi ricercato, sorgente su un pianoro, dal quale poi scorgemmo alcune statue gigantesche che ci spinsero a fare una rapida ricognizione nella zone. Tutto un complesso architettonico, semisommerso dagli arbusti, sorprese il nostro sguardo, ci sbalordì e ci fece dimenticare lo scopo del nostro viaggio’: Luise et al. (1955), 1.

²⁰⁸ Nichols (1928), 292.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 278.

noted in Bomarzo literature to date.²¹⁰ These images and texts present new evidence for the early twentieth-century afterlife of the Sacro Bosco, and show that—as Nichols describes—the site during this period was easily visible and in active use.

The photographs were taken by Americans, a Russian and a Britain living in Rome, emphasising once again an active expatriate community in Italy that shared knowledge of the Sacro Bosco, and which included Nichols, Loukomski, Isabel Borghese (née Porges), Beloborodov, Praz's 'American and Canadian tourists' and Piovene's English ladies.²¹¹ Two groups of some of the earliest photographs uncovered were taken by two Fellows of the American Academy in Rome: landscape architect Norman Thomas Newton, who was awarded the Rome Prize between 1923 and 1926, and Richard K. Webel, who trained at Harvard and visited Bomarzo in March 1927.

In amongst the ninety-three of Newton's photographs held by the Academy, all documenting Italian villas and their gardens, are three 12 x 8 cm black and white prints of the Sacro Bosco, each with a white border and a single hole punched through their longest edge as if once included in a ring binder.²¹² In addition to the *Tempietto* (taken in a view strikingly similar to that of Dami) [Fig. 1.18], Newton focused on the

²¹⁰ These images primarily reside in the archives of the American Academy in Rome, the British School at Rome, La Fondazione Primoli in Rome and the Archivi Alinari in Florence. Regarding the latter, it should be noted that the Archivi Alinari now contains multiple photographic collections in addition to that of the Alinari Brothers, who established what would become the primary commercial photography company in Italy in 1852. There are notably no images of Bomarzo belonging to that of the Alinari proper, despite the fact that they invested in producing vast photographic libraries, surveys and publications of Italian art, including sculpture and national heritage sites. In comparison, Alinari photographers captured the Villa Lante in Bagnaia from as early as 1890, and the nearby Papacqua Fountain in Soriano nel Cimino from as early as c.1900–1910 (Archivi Alinari, Florence: ACA-F-007099-0000 and FVQ-F-133190-0000). On the Alinari see Zevi (1978); Quintavalle and Maffioli (2003); and *Una storia della fotografia italiana nelle collezioni Alinari: 1841–1941* (2015).

²¹¹ See pages 59–61 and notes 149–157 *supra*.

²¹² Norman T. Newton, 'Villa Orsini (Bomarzo, Italy)', black and white photographic prints, 12 x 8 cm, c.1923–1926. American Academy in Rome Photography Archive (LA.Italy.Bomarzo.8, 9 and 10).

site's 'stranger' elements. In one photograph he captured the Ogre close up and from a low viewpoint, as if he had crouched on the ground with his camera. This angle accentuates the cavern of its open jaw, and means that its monstrous face, almost entirely free of overgrowth, dominates the composition [Fig.1.19]. Newton also captured the hulking mass of the Elephant, surrounded by low, dense foliage, with the Dragon and Ogre visible behind [Fig.1.20]. These personal images, taken as part of a research project and then kept at the Academy, went on to provide the basis of *A Guide to Villas and Gardens in Italy* published by the American Academy in 1938.²¹³ In this concise book 'Palazzo Orsini or Borghese' is featured, further positioning the site within garden history and providing another easy means for people to hear about its existence. Under the heading of Bomarzo are the words:

Park (see below) open to the public. Castle can be seen from the road. A castle of 1400, remade in 1525, finished by Vignola in 1565. No garden. About 15 minutes walk below the town is a park with curious animals cut from native stone, and a tempietto by Vignola.²¹⁴

When Richard K. Webel visited in 1927, who, like Newton, amassed a collection of photographs specifically of villas and gardens near Rome during his time at the Academy, he also photographed the *Tempietto* [Fig.1.21], the Elephant [1.22] and the Ogre [1.23].²¹⁵ In the last image the sculpture is almost entirely covered with vine that begins to reach into the right eye and flared nostrils. Either this growth marks the passage of time between Newton's visit and that of Webel, or shows the site in a different season. In addition, Webel chose to photograph the Fighting Giants [Fig. 1.24], the Dragon group [Fig.1.25], the sculpture commonly referred to as Ceres with the roof of the Leaning House behind [Fig.1.26], and a statue rarely photographed

²¹³ Aldrich and Walker (1938), 5: 'The following is an amplification of a Guide to the Villas of Italy made by R.K. Webel of the American Academy in Rome'.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 29.

²¹⁵ Richard K. Webel, 'Villa Orsini (Bomarzo, Italy)', black and white photographic prints, 12 x 8 cm, 1927. American Academy in Rome Photography Archive (LA.Italy.Bomarzo.1, 6 and 7).

even today: the female nude that resides in a large alcove by the Nymphaeum, referred to on the visitor's map as the 'Fountain with Nymph' [Fig.1.27] [Plate 11].²¹⁶ The multiple sculptures presented in these personal but research-based photographic collections, and which shift from wide-angle shots to close ups, evidence the ready accessibility of most, if not all, of the Sacro Bosco in the first half of the twentieth century. In one of Webel's prints, the space is even inhabited. In the photograph of the Dragon [Fig.1.25], two small boys can be seen perched on top of the statue. Wearing flat caps, fitted dark jackets and small leather boots, the children look directly at the camera.

Newton's and Webel's photographs from the 1920s, and the English language *Guide* of 1938, would primarily have been accessible to a non-Italian audience. However Loukomski, the artist who rendered the Sacro Bosco in pastel in the late 1920s [Fig. 1.1], went on to publish an article written in Italian and illustrated with photographs in 1935 entitled 'Ville meno conosciute del Vignola nei dintorni di Roma'.²¹⁷ In this text, Loukomski described '*l'antica residenza degli Orsini*' at Bomarzo, as well as that of the Villa Chigi at Albani and the Madruzzo estate at Soriano nel Cimino. After detailing the construction of the Orsini palazzo, he relates that there is '*uno strano giardino*' below the town, in which 'using the stone that was in place, Vignola erected a number of statues curiously carved in the form of elephants, frogs, nymphs and satyrs' and 'an exquisite little temple, one of the prettiest things owed to his great talent'.²¹⁸

Loukomski's article is particularly significant as it was published in the November issue of *Le vie d'Italia*, the monthly journal published by the Touring Club Italiano

²¹⁶ Ibid., (LA.Italy.Bomarzo.2, 3, 4, 5).

²¹⁷ Loukomski (1935)b, 837–842.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 840: 'Utilizzando la pietra che si trovava in luogo, il Vignola eresse una quantità di statue curiosamente scolpite in forma di elefanti, di rane, di ninfe e di satiri. Un tempietto squisito, una delle più graziose cose dovute al suo grande talento'.

(TCI), one of Italy's first major tourist companies that was geared towards an Italian audience. Founded in 1894 by a group of cyclists, the activities of the TCI represented an Italian appropriation and democratisation of the Grand Tour tradition for a domestic user, publishing affordable Italian guidebooks and maps to Italy for a large audience.²¹⁹ By the 1930s the Club had a membership of five hundred thousand people and the issue of *Le vie d'Italia* that Loukomski's article appeared in had a print run of one hundred and eighty thousand copies, making it one of the most widely distributed magazines in Italy at the time. That same year, moreover, the TCI published its first guide to Lazio (unillustrated bar topographical maps), in which the Sacro Bosco also briefly featured.²²⁰

The four photographs of the Sacro Bosco that illustrate Loukomski's text primarily focus on the more classical and architectural features of the location: the palazzo, the *Tempietto*, and the Monumental Vase [Fig. 1.28 and 1.29]. One image, however, is of the Elephant with the Ogre in the background [see Fig. 1.29]. This was reused (and cropped) to illustrate the site for the Club's large photographic book on Lazio, published eight years later in 1943 (the eleventh volume in the Touring Club Italiano series *Attraverso l'Italia: illustrazione delle regioni italiane*) [Fig. 1.30].²²¹ Indeed, these images, along with others of the site, can be found in the Touring Club Italiano's archive.²²² Consisting of black and white prints mounted on yellowy beige card, they have torn edges and are marked by multiple cropping lines in red pencil and black ink, along with the script of different hands, words crossed out and rewritten. As such,

²¹⁹ On the Touring Club Italiano see *90 anni di turismo in Italia, 1894–1984* (1984); Pivato (2006); Valtorta (2014), 52–55.

²²⁰ Bertarelli (1935), 160: 'Addossato alla collina, ha inoltre un parco con una quantità di statue rappresentanti animali, ninfe e sacri e un tempietto grazioso eretto alla memoria di Giulio Farnese, amico dell'Orsini, opera del Vignola'.

²²¹ *Lazio* (1943), 105.

²²² Now held in that of the Archivi Alinari in Florence: Unidentified photographer [Loukomski?], 'Orsini palace' and 'Gardens of Villa Orsini', Bomarzo, Viterbo, black and white photographic prints glued on card, c.1910–1935: Archivi Alinari, Florence (TCM-F-000408-0000; TCM-F-000409-0000; TCM-F-000411-0000 and TCM-F-000412-0000).

these photographs trace the decisions made by the Club's editors on which images to include for these various publications, while also reminding us of the very material (even sculptural) lives of photographs [Figs.1.31–1.33].²²³

In none of these publications by the TCI does the Sacro Bosco feature prominently—either visually or in the text. Indeed in the 1943 volume, the single photograph of the Elephant statue is placed next to those of the formal architectural features of the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, the Castello Ruspoli at Vignanello and the Palazzo Ducale at Gallese [Fig.1.30]. In one sense, this layout only accentuates Bomarzo's comparably fantastical character. In another, the surrounding photos work to balance and dilute the site in a manner similar to the *Quaderni* a decade later. Yet the discovery that the Sacro Bosco was documented for and included in the publications of the Touring Club Italiano during the 1930s and 1940s significantly shifts the current understanding of Bomarzo's afterlife. Knowledge of the site was, in fact, disseminated to a broad Italian public invested in exploring their country's natural and cultural treasures in the early twentieth century. The key here is the word public. The Touring Club Italiano was associated with a popular and potentially even amateur audience, rather than a scholarly or historically-minded one, perhaps explaining why the inclusion of Bomarzo in their documents has so far escaped notice.

All of these photographs play a crucial role in shifting our understanding of Bomarzo in this period in that, while the sculptures might be more or less overgrown, they are not in a *bosco*, a fact that remains evident in photographs of the site into the 1960s. In the photographs by Newton, Webel, and those belonging to the TCI, the ground around many of the stone artworks has been completely cleared. Rather than located in a wood, the statues are open to the elements and the vast Lazio sky. Without the cover of the region's oaks, beeches and chestnuts, the colossal carved stones would

²²³ On the material lives of photographs see Edwards and Hart (2004); Edwards (2012).

have been unavoidably visible from the town above, as well as from the roads that wind around its extremities. This is in fact clear from a later photograph taken in the early 1950s by John Bryan Ward-Perkins, Director of the British School at Rome from 1945 to 1974 [Fig.1.34].²²⁴ This black and white photograph is taken from the town of Bomarzo looking towards the Monte Casoli ridge, pockmarked by Etruscan caverns. Part of his ‘Southern Etruria survey’, the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco are clearly visible on the bare inclines of the valley, the open maw of the Ogre a black orifice in the landscape, the War Elephant in profile. It is an image that makes clear that it would have been difficult not to know Orsini’s sculptures existed, let alone photograph its *Tempietto* (as per Dami) and not see the other, more monstrous, statues nearby. By contrast, looking down from the Orsini castle today, where trees have been actively cultivated as it is believed they were in the sixteenth century, the Sacro Bosco is completely hidden from view [Fig.1.35].

Newton’s, Webel’s and the Touring Club Italiano’s photographs from the 1920s and 1930s were taken during the Borghese ownership of the Sacro Bosco and Mussolini’s primacy. Those of Ward-Perkins are from the post-war period when the site fell into the possession of the municipality (which then sold it to the Bettini family in 1954). Even granted that Ward-Perkins’ photographs were potentially taken in winter, when deciduous trees are bare, the stripping of the ground is clearly more substantial, as sculptures that can no longer be seen together due to more recent vegetation are seen within a single frame. In one, the Monumental Vase, Elephant, Dragon and the Hippodrome with Vases are all visible, while groups of visitors wander across the space between [Fig.1.36]; in another, people cluster by the steps of the *Tempietto* [Fig. 1.37], evidence again that the site was regularly used and visited.²²⁵

²²⁴ John Bryan Ward-Perkins, ‘Bomarzo’, black and white silver gelatin photographic print, glued on card, 11 x 15 cm, c.1950: British School at Rome Photography Archive (wpset-1871.29A).

²²⁵ Ibid., (wpset-1868.05, wpset-1868.03 and wpset-05794).

This new picture of Bomarzo, no longer abandoned or obscured by trees, but rather visible and visited, must also encompass the photographs of the American resident of Rome Milton Gendel. Part of his personal archive, these unpublished negatives record a trip Gendel took to the Sacro Bosco in 1950 with Margaret Koons (a Fulbright Fellow in Art History between 1950 and 1951) and her husband Howard Black.²²⁶ Half of the images centre on individual sculptures and show Koons and Black interacting with the statues as artistic objects and curiosities: Koons gazing up at the Fighting Giants with her back to the camera [Fig.1.38]; standing on the legs of the Ceres statue [Fig.1.39]; looking at the Dragon while flanked by the Elephant and a stone vase [Fig.1.40]; Howard Black by the Tortoise, his hand outstretched to rest on its open mouth [Fig.1.41]. The compositional choices made in these images, with close cropping around the statues, and with trees regularly included in the foreground—leaves overlaying the main subject and sky—make the site appear abandoned, wild and full of vegetation.

Other photographs taken by Gendel in the same series, however, present a very different idea of the site, whether intentionally or not. Comparing these images reveals the myth of photographic objectivity, as well as how photography can act to produce its subjects and objects. Depending on which images you look at, a very different sense and understanding of the Sacro Bosco is gained. Ignoring Koons and Black, in these photographs Gendel steps back to capture wider views in which the Sacro Bosco is shown to be in active agricultural use, with farmers tilling the soil around the statues. In one, a man in a white shirt, sleeves rolled up to the elbows, leans over and turns the earth with a hoe ready for seeding in front of the Fighting Giants [Fig.1.42]. In another, workers rake the soil into ridges, the Ogre behind them

²²⁶ Milton Gendel, 'Bomarzo', black and white negatives, 6 x 6 cm, c.1950. La Fondazione Primoli, Archivio Gendel, Rome (AA023 f104/01/A to f104/06/A and AA023 f105/01/A to f105/11/A).

[Fig.1.43]. In these photographs the Sacro Bosco appears, in contrast to those of Koons and Black, open, bare and inhabited in a manner totally different to their leisurely and culturally minded visit.

Gendel's images return us to the question as to whom the Sacro Bosco was visible and why, and raise important issues of class, ownership and the regional. The site, as the publications and photographs studied in this chapter show, was visited during the first half of the twentieth century to an extent that has not to date been properly acknowledged. It was also clearly and simultaneously part of the daily existence of local agricultural workers and purposefully overlooked by Italian scholars during the period, as Dami's choice to include only the *Tempietto* in 1924 makes clear. Perhaps, in addition to the site not conforming to the accepted ideals of the 'Italian Renaissance garden', the presence of these *contadini* meant that Bomarzo was considered inappropriate and undesirable for art historical consideration by the earlier intellectual elite. The farmers' presence and that of their crops could have made the site appear too rustic and too closely associated with and a part of the lives and work of the rural poor, particularly when seen in relation to other sixteenth-century villas and gardens that were already state owned heritage sites.²²⁷ Fascist propaganda certainly valorised the image of the Italian peasant, but the *giardino all'italiana* was by definition a courtly space of leisure that grew from the order and exclusivity of the aristocratic patron's villa of the Italian Renaissance as it was then conceived.

Indeed, another striking element of Gendel's photographs is the attitudes expressed towards the sculptures by Koons and Black, as representative of the leisured or tourist class, compared to the farmers. In none of the photographs, for example, do the local

²²⁷ The fascist party invested in the restoration and upkeep of garden sites they deemed reflective of their cultural, historical and aesthetic ideals. The Villa d'Este at Tivoli, for example, became the property of the Italian state and was restored and opened to the public in the 1920s; the Villa Farnese at Caprarola was likewise taken over in 1941.

inhabitants look at the statues they work next to. No attention or reverence is paid to the artworks as the Sacro Bosco provides the daily backdrop to their labours [Fig.1.44 and 1.45]. Koons and Black, though very much engaged with the works, also do not show an attitude that would usually be afforded a sixteenth-century sculpture in the mid-twentieth century. Instead, they touch and clamber up the colossal peperino forms. These informal ways of engaging with the site frame the Sacro Bosco just as much as do the photographs, and imply that the Bomarzo ‘park’ was seen as a place outside the traditional heritage site, the work of art or the ‘Italian Renaissance garden’.²²⁸

The agricultural afterlife captured by Gendel, moreover, fills in a missing part of the Sacro Bosco’s chronology. In two early post-war articles something of the site’s rural character is referenced. Piovene describes how ‘you have to walk down between hens and pigs, for a flower trail with wild roses and hawthorn’ to reach the site.²²⁹ Colin Davidson makes brief reference to the fact that ‘today the elephant rides in a field of Indian corn’.²³⁰ But it is the photographs from this period, more than these words, that force a confrontation with Bomarzo’s agrarian past, reminding us too of the workers continually removed from cultural and landscape histories. Mauro Ambrosoli addresses one aspect of this issue in an essay from 2011, in which he argues for designed landscapes to be examined in terms of the relationship between master and labourer, and the physical activities and tools which create them.²³¹ The co-existence of these twentieth-century farmers with Bomarzo’s statues, and their implications for the site’s interpretation, will be returned to in greater depth in Chapter Five’s

²²⁸ On the Sacro Bosco as a park see page 33 *supra*.

²²⁹ Piovene (1953), 3: ‘Bisogna discendervi a piedi tra galline e maiali, per un sentierino fiorito di rose selvatiche e di biancospino’.

²³⁰ Davidson (1954), 178.

²³¹ Ambrosoli (2011).

discussion of a film by Michelangelo Antonioni. Here, it is the ramifications of this farming activity for the site's physical remains that is directly relevant.

The workers, their hoes and spades, seeds and crops signal an erasure of original land formations, paths and plantings of the Sacro Bosco's history. Agriculture is particularly aggressive in its capacity to alter landscape: ground is flattened, soil upturned, natural species and habitats uprooted. The site we walk around today therefore is almost entirely made up of flora planted since the mid-1950s and, as such, these photographs by Gendel serve as reminders of how wary we need to be of interpreting the site according to the experience we have as twenty-first-century visitors. It is vital to acknowledge the extent to which such elements have been erased from both topographical as well as archival memory. Agriculture at one point completely altered the Sacro Bosco from that of a wooded environment to that of a field, changes that can be seen on a par with the intervention of restoration.

RESTORATIONS

In a photographic reproduction that accompanies Colin Davidson's 1954 article for the *Architectural Review*, the so called Mask of Madness [Plate 2] can be seen with almost half of its large head submerged by soil [Fig.1.46]. With similarly exaggerated features to the Ogre, it has wide staring eyes that appear to bulge out of expressive arched brows, its thick top lip rising from the earth to reveal square protruding teeth and a shallow cavern within. In the photograph, vines creep over the crevices of the face and eyes, while just the upper three teeth are visible above the ground. Its mouth/cave is almost completely inaccessible, in stark contrast to the statue now, where (were the sculpture not cordoned off) adults would be able to stand tall, seeking shelter from rain or sun, as is also depicted in a drawing by Guerra from c.1598: a figure standing, arms outstretched, within its gaping maw [Fig.1.47]. Pieyre de

Mandriarques' *Les Monstres de Bomarzo* from 1957 contains comparable photographs by Georges Glasberg [Fig.1.48], offering an example of how photographs and negatives from the early and mid-twentieth century can offer vital information about the site before restoration.²³² As with the stripping of woodland, these visual documents bear witness to the shifts in earth and topography over the interim centuries and the alterations made by the Bettini family once they came into possession of the Sacro Bosco in 1954.²³³ The photographs of the Mask of Madness, in particular, show the serious amount of excavation that must have taken place to get the statue to its current state.

There are no official records of how the Bettini family found the site when they bought the Sacro Bosco nor of their restorations made primarily in the 1960s and 1970s. Early twentieth-century photographs, however, suggest that their interventions have been extensive. Another photograph reproduced in de Mandriarques' book, for example, looks across at the Ceres figures from what is now the clearing lined with stone vases at regular intervals [Fig.1.49] [Plate 22]. In the photo, however, there is no vision of the current order and completeness. Instead, the ground is littered with broken fragments of plinths, the various components of the vases themselves—rectangular pedestals, fluted bases, rounded vase bodies, and tall column like necks—along with other architectural debris. The extent to which these parts are scattered across the grass, implies that the current plateau of vases has been almost entirely

²³² de Mandriarques (1957). The IMEC archives show that the text had already been composed by de Mandriarques as early as 1954: see Moscatelli (2017), 41.

²³³ Brief reference is made to the Bettini family restorations in a paper by Giada Carraro from 2012 discussing the architecture of fantasy and in which the standard account of the Sacro Bosco's creation is presented. In 2000 Giovanni Bettini's nephew related how 'l'incontro più fortunato per il Sacro Bosco avvenne nel 1954, quando Giovanni Bettini lo acquistò, per giunta a un prezzo molto basso [...] Tra privazioni e sacrifici enormi, dal momento che era un semplice impiegato, e senza chiedere alcun contributo allo Stato italiano, lo rimise a nuovo': Bettini (2000), n.p. and Carraro (2012), n.p. (25).

reassembled.²³⁴ This fact is corroborated by other images, such as a postcard from the first half of the twentieth century, which looks across from the opposite viewpoint, towards the Elephant and the River God, and shows the same broken remains strewn on the ground [Fig.1.50]. The same may be said of the plateaux lined with giant acorns and pinecones [Plate 31]. Plate 12 of *Les Monstres de Bomarzo* shows one of the large acorns lying discarded by the trunks of two young trees [Fig.1.51].

Another example can be found in a different image from de Mandriarques' book, which indicates the severely damaged state of the Pegasus Fountain [Fig.1.52]. Taken from the side, it shows that the stone animal had no front or rear legs, wings, ears or nose in the 1950s; all that remains is the equestrian body resting on a central lithic support. Compare this with the fountain we experience now, where its wings, face and legs have been restored [Plate 7], and it becomes clear that a significant proportion of this statue is in fact of modern making. Similarly, the Harpy sculpture is headless in photographs printed in both Davidson's article from 1954 and de Mandriarques' book from 1957 [Fig.1.53 and 1.54]. Now it has a head that has been roughly attached with messy concrete seams, its setting on the creature's torso somewhat awkward [Plate 27]. Comparing early photographs to the sculptures in their current state in this manner goes some way to indicate the degree to which some of the statues have been modified during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Equally significant as these individual examples of additions and amalgamations is the way the site as a whole has been made to appear clearly defined and architectural during the last sixty years. If we return to the image of scattered fragments [Fig.1.49], it is particularly notable that there is no evidence to suggest low masonry walls of the kind that currently demarcate and enclose the area [Plate 22]. The Ogre is a good case

²³⁴ This has implications for the inscriptions found on a couple of the vases and whether their location and relationship to each other can be trusted (see Appendix, K, L and M).

study to consider how significant such alterations can be to the spatial experience offered to the beholder. Approaching this statue currently, the visitor walks up a wide, flat gravelled area, towards stone steps that lead to the statue's open lips [Plate 19]. On either side of this stairway are rough concrete ramps, followed by low masonry walls which enclose the foliage and trees to either side of the sculpture, making it appear flanked by high plant beds. Behind, a tall masonry wall fans out on either side of the Ogre and shores up the higher level lined with stone pinecones and acorns. Looking at various photographs of the Ogre from the 1920s through to the 1950s however, none of these architectural details are present. The jaws of this creature do not open onto built steps and paved slopes, but rather onto soft uneven ground. Likewise there is no wall behind it, instead there seems to be a rough pathway leading up to the higher level [Fig.1.55]. It is clear that the Bettini began making their alterations to the Ogre as soon as they came into possession of the site. In a photograph that accompanies Marie Noble Kelly's article from 1958 the steps are already present [Fig.1.56].

My argument is that while these architectural elements *might* have existed, we simply do not have enough surviving evidence to know the form they took. The site experienced today is a physical interpretation according to mid-twentieth-century ideas and expectations. It is possible that there would have been some retaining walls, for example, as they would almost certainly have been a structural necessity if indeed the site was carved into different terraces as the current restoration assumes. The inclusion of the stairs in the Ogre, moreover, stems, in all probability, from a pen and ink drawing by Guerra from c.1598 [Fig.5]. In this image five stone steps lead up to the gaping face, diminishing in size as the flight ascends. Yet it has long been established that Guerra's drawings are imaginative reconstructions from memory and today, there are a total of nine steps to the Ogre—four more than in Guerra's

rendering. In addition, many of Guerra's depictions are out of proportion and devoid of vital contextual information—no walls, paths or botanical information is included around his drawing of the Ogre. So while to use Guerra's image as evidence for a restoration is problematic, the discrepancy between this drawing and the current staircase, along with the proliferation of built masonry surrounding the Ogre today, suggests that the alterations made to the Sacro Bosco since 1954 have been equally enacted without close reference to extant documents. Moreover, in the late 1950s these steps diminished in size as evident in Fig.1.56, and as they do today, but a photograph from 2002 shows that at one point these stairs were altered to evenly span the width of the monster's visage [Fig.1.57]: even since the post-war period the Sacro Bosco has been a site that is in flux, its 'restoration' a morphing beast.

A comparable situation pertains to the Fighting Giants [Plate 4]: today you walk down a row of neat stone steps from the Mock Tomb with a brick wall to your left that then continues, after a right angle, to stretch all the way along to the wrestling colossi. Two photographs from the late 1950s show, however, that this wall didn't exist at this time [Fig.1.58 and 1.59]. Instead, all that is present is the sheer peperino rock onto which an inscription is carved and that is one with the immense stone from which the two figures were hewn. Likewise, there is no low wall of the kind that currently fans out behind the giants, providing a broad hemmed pathway directly to the Pegasus Fountain. Rather, the statue appears in a more 'natural' setting, approached by dirt paths, as can also be seen in photographs taken by Georgina Masson between 1950 and 1960 and published in *Italian Gardens* in 1961 [Fig.1.60].²³⁵

As explored in the Introduction to this thesis, the name Sacro Bosco and Vicino's reference to the site as '*il mio boschetto*' suggests a space allowed to grow in a more untamed manner, and distinctly less architectural than a formal garden. The drawing

²³⁵ Masson (1961), 176–177.

of the Pegasus Fountain by Breenbergh from 1625, shows the planting in the early seventeenth century when it was still in Orsini possession [Fig.9]. Unpruned trees reach up into the sky, bushes and shrubs gathering at their roots, while large natural boulders cluster in the centre of the composition leading the eye to the fountain above. The same lack of architectural order can be found in Breenbergh's drawing of the Tortoise with Fame riding on its back [Fig.10]. Loose pen marks seem to indicate moss and grass spreading over earth pathways. In the background tall tree trunks and rough boulders fill the space, instead of anything suggesting brick walls, while in the foreground are three steps that look cut directly into rock rather than built with masonry, and thus aligned more with the local Etruscan carvings discussed in the next chapter than the architectonic space we experience today.

The alterations that have been made since the mid-twentieth century make the site fit better into the normative understanding of the Italian Renaissance *giardino* than was perhaps ever intended, affecting how the Sacro Bosco is now read and encountered by a visitor. The site has been cleared of debris, some of which might have belonged to sculptures no longer known or extant, and some of which have been reattached, somewhat dubiously, to various sculptures. Masonry walls, both low and tall, have been added, along with wide, gravelled plateaus and paths and other architectural features, which all work to alter the overall texture of the space into a more structured and directed site, with distinct levels and sections. The result is a place more in line with the ideas of the *giardino all'italiana* and the expectations of a heritage site, in which a visitor is guided along paths and separated from the artworks.²³⁶

In fact, the *Quaderni* from 1955 includes a troubling reproduction of a pen and ink drawing made by the University of Rome students responsible for conducting a survey of the site [Fig.1.61]. The illustration presents an attempted 'reconstruction of

²³⁶ An entrance fee was introduced soon after the Bettini purchased the site in 1954.

the sacred forest in its original appearance', providing a bird's-eye view over the Sacro Bosco, as if the viewer was situated to the north looking southwards.²³⁷ The drawing follows the style traditional to architectural garden books of the period, such as those found in John C. Shepherd and Geoffrey A. Jellicoe's *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance* (first printed in 1925), and which emphasise structural elements over any planting.²³⁸ In the *Quaderni* diagram, the Leaning House is the first structure that draws the eye, reached from a ramp running up from the valley while the space beyond forms the bottom of a series of architectural terraces, with large areas of flattened ground and high walls shoring up each tier. It is a scheme with some recognisable parallels to how the Sacro Bosco has been restored, namely in its introduction of areas with level ground and high walls [see also the maps in Figs.13 and 14]. Yet the accompanying text openly acknowledges the image's limitations. The two dimensional reconstruction, the *Quaderni* states, 'reflects an intermediate situation of our studies', rather than a complete survey.²³⁹ The authors admit that various assumptions made in the diagram later proved erroneous and that overall the resulting 'design was a little too strict. Subsequent surveys have served, rather, to question the initial schematic'.²⁴⁰ The text even goes on to explain that in giving the reconstruction 'a very neat appearance', the students have presented a space according to expected sixteenth-century design, and are unable to confidently say exactly how Bomarzo was intended to look.²⁴¹ It is made clear, in other words, that what the image

²³⁷ *Quaderni* (1955), 32: 'una ricostruzione del sacro bosco nel sue aspetto originale'.

²³⁸ See Shepherd and Jellicoe (1925).

²³⁹ *Quaderni* (1955), 32: 'riflette una situazione intermedia dei nostri studi'.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 'il disegno è risultato un po' troppo rigoroso. I successive rilevamenti hanno servito, piuttosto, a mettere in dubbio l'iniziale schematismo'.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 'Questa ricostruzione conferisce al sacro bosco un aspetto molto ordinato, e non molto lontano (a parte la folla dei mostri) dalle consuete architetture rustiche cinquecentesche'.

is presenting is a projection, heavily influenced by the existing canon of Italian Renaissance garden design.²⁴²

CONCLUSION

This chapter has offered the first sustained consideration of the Sacro Bosco in the period after the sixteenth century. It has explored the site's history, and the visual and textual documents pertaining to it, seeing these items as informative and as objects to be critically analysed in their own right. The afterlife that has been uncovered is a complicated *fortuna critica*, bound to the site's location, changing politics and persistent tastes, as well as problems arising from both neglect and active intervention by its owners. It is also a history that revises the site's afterlife as it has been understood to date, highlighting the fact that the Sacro Bosco was known in more contexts and to a far greater extent before its 'rediscovery' post WWII, but actively omitted from Italian art historical garden studies. The decades of the Sacro Bosco's existence within farm land, along with the subsequent post-war clearing of debris, moving of statues and architectonically focused restorations, moreover, exposes a desire to either side-line Bomarzo or to place it within already existing academic narratives. The result has been a distortion of the space and how it has been understood.

Interrogating the afterlife of Bomarzo in this way shows us that every era produces a contortion of its object of study—both physical and interpretive. Indeed, unavoidably, this study will also not be immune to its own time bound concerns. As such, it is imperative that we take into account this longer history of the Sacro Bosco and the extent to which what we experience and read today has been mediated by the

²⁴² Ibid.: 'bisogna però tener conto che questa veduta dall'alto non corrisponde ad alcuna immagine reale, perchè da nessun punto circostante è possibile abbracciare con l'occhio tutto l'organismo del bosco'.

centuries in between. In response, Chapters Two, Three and Four all take aspects of Bomarzo that focus on the physical remains we can be confident of: the ancient history contained within the surrounding landscape; the large, grounded sculptures in the site; their peperino material and the geologic composition of the region. These elements offer some of the most secure pieces of evidence we have about the Sacro Bosco. Because the majority of the sculptures were carved directly into colossal rocks embedded in the landscape, the works for the most part cannot be moved. So while it is hard to grasp the site as it would have been experienced originally, we can be confident that the largest sculptures are positioned as they always would have been, intimately and directly connected to their immediate geography. Likewise, the topographical make up of the region is largely the same as it would have been in the sixteenth century, with extinct volcanic craters, hot springs, and the marks of past earthquakes, as well as Etruscan remains within easy walking distance. It is with the ancient history contained in Bomarzo's nearby woods that we now begin the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORIES

In the garden of Villa d'Este at Tivoli there is a fountain sculpture representing ancient Rome in miniature, commissioned by Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este and built between 1567 and 1570 [Fig.2.1].²⁴³ Known as the *Rometta*, it shows the city's buildings clustered in tightly packed layers of deep architectural relief. An account from 1571 describes its replicas of aqueducts, the Metae Sudantes and the Naumachia of Nero that are no longer visible—the result of the collapse of a foundational wall in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴⁴ What remains is dilapidated: stucco façades have fallen away leaving exposed bricks to crumble in the heat, wind and rain. Originally, however, the fountain offered an idealised model of ancient Rome reconstructed across its seven hills.²⁴⁵ It was a city whose buildings had been subject to centuries of damage and purposeful demolition by the time the *Rometta* was built.²⁴⁶ The fountain sculpture, in other words, presented the un-ruined metropolis no longer visible.²⁴⁷

Through the *Rometta*, the Villa d'Este engaged with its regional ancient past. Tivoli is only twenty miles from Rome and is adjacent to the archeological site of the Emperor Hadrian's Villa which, at under three miles away, can be reached in an hour on foot. The present chapter is concerned with how the Sacro Bosco, in a very different way, engages with a local and more ancient past. More precisely, it investigates the site's

²⁴³ The *Rometta* was designed by Pirro Ligorio and executed by Curzio Maccarone. The key for Duperac's 1573 plan of the Villa d'Este discussed in the Introduction describes the *Rometta* as 'Fontana grande che rappresenta Roma con sette colli, acquedotti, templi, statue et altri ornamenti' (see Fig.11).

²⁴⁴ 'Descrittione di Tivoli, et del Giardino dell' Ill. Cardinal di Ferrara...' [1571], manuscript from the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, transcribed in Coffin (1960), 'Appendix A', 141–150, 148.

²⁴⁵ Luke Morgan is the most recent scholar to write about the *Rometta* as a reconstruction, presenting it as 'a kind of *capriccio*': (2016)a, 263–264.

²⁴⁶ See Lanciani (1901), 228–252 and Barkan (1999), 1–64.

²⁴⁷ It is notable on this point that a year later, in 1551, Pirro Ligorio, head designer of the Villa d'Este and excavator of Hadrian's Villa, produced an engraved map of ancient Rome in its imagined entirety. Coffin argues the fountain is a reconstruction of the ancient city according to this map and others Ligorio prepared in 1553 and 1561: Coffin (1960), 24–28.

relationship to Etruscan history.²⁴⁸ Building upon studies that have considered its iconographical links with famous archeological sites in Lazio and Tuscany, this chapter shifts the focus to the historical remains within Orsini's territory at and in the immediate vicinity of Bomarzo.²⁴⁹ Largely overlooked in scholarship on the Sacro Bosco to date, these artefacts contribute to a richer picture of the site's engagement with ancient Etruria.

Susan Stewart has written of how the miniature announces itself as artificial and thus creates an experience 'which is domesticated and protected from contamination'.²⁵⁰ To render something small, as the Villa d'Este *Rometta* offers ancient Rome in a diminutive scale, is to package it into something manageable. By contrast, I will argue, the Sacro Bosco tests its visitors with artificial Etruscan ruins and colossal representations that offer history in fictitious excess—a playful acknowledgement of the make-believe and mythology inherent in all history-making. The Etruscan-looking elements of the Sacro Bosco are considered in relation to the changing status of antiquarianism and the anxiety surrounding it as a scholarly practice in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The sculptures are understood to negotiate concerns about representation and authenticity in a manner that provides the visitor with an open and reflective space to consider how the past is known and constructed.

²⁴⁸ For scholars that briefly discuss the Sacro Bosco's Etruscan elements see: Bruschi (1955), 3–4 and idem (1963)a, 105; Zander (1955), 26, note 16; Fasolo (1955), 44; Battisti (1962), 126; Settis (1966), 17; Dotson (1982), 210–216; Bredekamp (1985), vol.I, 84–85; Fagiolo (1986), 70–71.

²⁴⁹ For example, Oleson, Bredekamp and Manni (who provide more sustained explorations of the Bosco in relation to Etruria), cite the archeological site of Sovana as a possible iconographic source for several sculptures: Oleson (1975), 413–415; Bredekamp (1985), vol.I, 151–153; Manni (2009), 166–172. While the famous monuments at Sovana would almost certainly have been known to Vicino (Sovana is only seven kilometres north of Pitigliano, home to another branch of the Orsini family), neither site provides particularly close iconographic resemblances and are geographically distant (about fifty miles) from the Sacro Bosco.

²⁵⁰ Stewart (2007), 69.

MOCK RUINS

The most widely discussed ‘Etruscan’ object in the Sacro Bosco is a large architectural ruin carved from a boulder of peperino and known as the Mausoleum, but here referred to as the Mock Tomb [Plate 3]. One of the first structures you encounter as a modern visitor coming from the present entrance, it measures roughly seven meters long, three meters wide, and two and a half meters high. One side of this sculpture, which has been considered its ‘front’, presents what reads as an architectural tomb façade, carved in relief, with two pilasters, a cornice, capitals with corner volutes, and half a triangular pediment, which looks as if it has broken away from a larger structure or necropolis. The pediment contains a central relief-carved fishtailed figure, possibly a Triton, with wings branching out from his back while his human torso turns into a thick, writhing fish tail, from which grows another humanoid body. Where the architectural elements cease, the rest of the stone is rough and irregular.

In comparison to the fantastical sculptures, it is not immediately clear if this is a real ancient relic or a Renaissance construction. As has been noted by various scholars, upon initial encounter, it looks like a fragment of a larger Etruscan tomb of the aedicular type frequently found in southern Etruria during the third and second centuries BC.²⁵¹ It is also one of many structures of Etruscan appearance found in the Bosco, though the others are less well recognised. The site’s unnamed tower (also left off the visitor’s map), for example, is a masonry structure that sits upon a large hunk of peperino carved with steps, below which is a man-made cave or tomb [Fig.2.2]. Next to this structure, two recesses have been cut into a large boulder with worn decorative motifs on either side to form a rough looking bench [Fig.2.3]. In front of the Tortoise [Plate 5] is an entrance carved into the ground with rock cut steps and a

²⁵¹ Oleson (1975), 413.

chiselled stone passageway that echoes Etruscan tombs and stone walkways, and playfully steers the *bosco*'s explorer into the open mouth of the colossal Sea Creature [Fig.6]. Behind the Tortoise, moreover, there is a short staircase cut directly into a boulder that leads to its carved form, recalling nearby Etruscan remains discussed below and clearly intended to provide the visitor with a means to traverse the sloping valley (it is now behind a wooden barrier) [Fig.2.4]. Finally, on the upper level, is a 'tomb' known as the *Tomba a Fossa* [Plate 15]: carved into rock that lies flush to the ground, it presents a rectangular hole edged with a carved linear moulding and looks, to all intents and purposes, like an Etruscan sepulchral pit.

Ancient references—Roman more than Etruscan—were relatively common in villa gardens of the period. Sculptures that emulated those of ancient art in complete and restored form, such as the *Rometta* or the stucco river god sculptures at the Villa Giulia in Rome (discussed in Chapter Four), were standard, as was the inclusion of genuine ancient sculpture collections in elite *giardini*.²⁵² The fact that the Sacro Bosco differs by offering new, purposely ruined, 'ancient' artefacts is striking, despite such fictions being standard within paintings, frescos and print.²⁵³ Whereas the latter three media offer quite clear imaginary representations, the three dimensional sculptures of the Bosco hold greater potential to blur boundaries between old and new, authentic and re-imagined. Indeed, I know of only two comparable examples to what is found at Bomarzo: the deliberately ruined appearance of the nymphaeum in the Parco Colinna in Genazzano, attributed to Donato Bramante around 1501, and the purposefully ruined building in the *barchetto* of the Villa Imperiale in Pesaro, commissioned by Francesco Maria della Rovere in 1530.²⁵⁴

²⁵² See Christian (2008), 116–137.

²⁵³ For ruins in early modern paintings and frescoes see Ribouillault (2011) and Gage (2008).

²⁵⁴ For Parco Colinna see Brunon (2009), 196. For the Villa Imperiale see Gothein (2014), 220. Giorgio Vasari described the latter: 'il duca fece restaurare la corte di Pesaro, ed il barchetto, facendovi dentro una casa, che, rappresentando una ruina, è cosa molto bella a vedere': (ed.1981), vol.VI, 319.

The primary interpretation of the Sacro Bosco's Etruscan structures—almost solely focusing on the Mock Tomb—is that they are unambiguous claims to an ancient lineage.²⁵⁵ Such a reading is certainly logical. To claim an illustrious regional heritage was popular amongst the nobility of Renaissance Italy, as the wealth of family genealogies attest. Etruscan history and culture was, moreover, increasingly celebrated in the sixteenth century.²⁵⁶ Ancient authors such as Livy, were found to have described the Etruscans as an 'opulent and powerful' people.²⁵⁷ Duke Cosimo I de' Medici chose the title 'Dux Magnus Etruscus', thus asserting an Etruscan ancestry, when the Pope recognised his position of Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1569.²⁵⁸ Likewise, when Francesco Sansovino published a history of the Orsini family, he argued that they were one of the oldest families of Etruria.²⁵⁹

When interpreting the Sacro Bosco's faux-historical sculptures as genealogical assertions, however, scholars describe them as 'accurate reproduction[s]', as forgeries and as replicas, implying that they are meant to deceive the visitor and be plausible as ancient works.²⁶⁰ In the most recent article on the subject from 2016, Luke Morgan takes a slightly different approach but with a similar conclusion, arguing that the Mock Tomb is substitutional.²⁶¹ To make this proposition, Morgan adopts Alexander

²⁵⁵ See Oleson (1975), 147; Lazzaro (1990), 126–130; Coty (2013), 70–96.

²⁵⁶ See Vickers (1985–1986); Bartolini and Pacini (2003); Schoonhoven (2010). For the Etruscan influences still evident in Italian culture today see De Grummond (1996). Overall, however, in comparison to Roman culture, the influence of the Etruscans on Renaissance art is still considered relatively low: Grafton, Most and Settis (2010), 338–341.

²⁵⁷ Livy (ed.1983), vol.I (I:2:3).

²⁵⁸ Haach (2014), 1137. Cosimo I was also a committed collector of Etruscan antiquities and motifs were regularly used by the Medici for ideological and political ends. See Minor and Mitchell (1968); Richelson (1978); Ricci (2001), 103–119; Eisenbichler (2001); Collins (2001), 116; Hillard (2009), 108–136 and 166–205; Gàldy (2009).

²⁵⁹ Sansovino (1565)b, Libro Primo, 2v.

²⁶⁰ Oleson (1975), 413.

²⁶¹ Morgan (2016)a, 264–267. Nagel and Wood's substitutional model and the idea of anachronism within Renaissance art has been taken up by art historical scholarship in recent years. In addition to Morgan's article, see also the earlier articles by Ribouillault (2008) and Hunt (2012) who consider substitution as a framework to explore works of art that are not the Sacro Bosco.

Nagel and Christopher Wood's theory of substitution, in which an object that represents, replicates or mimics another becomes invested with the meaning of an original through its referential reach.²⁶² In other words, despite their recent manufacture, Morgan argues that the faux Etruscan ruins were essentially genuine to the sixteenth-century beholder.

In conversation with these interpretations, this chapter considers an alternative possibility: that these objects were not deceptive for the educated visitor nor did they act as 'originals' would, but could rather be considered to acknowledge their fiction and be deeply dialogic and self-reflexive, offering the beholder a space to question history, its creation and material traces. For this reason I will avoid words such as 'fake', 'forgery' and 'replica' to describe them, instead using terms such as 'mock', 'faux' and 'fictional'. These latter adjectives are helpful because they acknowledge that the object being described is not necessarily intended or received as authentic; rather there is a playfulness to their register that articulates the pleasure in an imitation that does not fully wish to be believed. Christopher Wood gets to this mode in his book *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* when he describes fiction as a 'virtual reality for purposes of comparison, ludic argument, delight or utopian projection'; forgeries, on the other hand, while containing fictionality, point 'with all their might away from fiction and towards the real'.²⁶³

This chapter's alternative view of the mock Etruscan objects is apposite to the late sixteenth-century context within which Vicino commissioned Bomarzo and within which it was received. As both Nagel and Wood have asserted together and separately, the model of substitution is primarily a late medieval and fifteenth-century structure of thought, which underwent an epochal shift with the advent of printing and the

²⁶² For substitution see Nagel and Wood (2010), 29–34.

²⁶³ Wood (2008), 327–328.

theorisation of the autonomous artwork in the sixteenth century.²⁶⁴ Acknowledging this shifting, depreciating view of the copy and replica, and the disintegration of substitution, calls for a re-evaluation of the ‘Etruscan’ elements of the Sacro Bosco as points of critical encounter, particularly from the point of view of the historical beholder. Central to this possibility are the many genuine artefacts within walking distance of the Sacro Bosco, which undermine the likelihood that the faux structures were intended as ‘substitutes’.

DISCOVERING ANCIENT ARTEFACTS

Ancient Etruria was an Italic society that existed at its height between the eighth and late fourth century BC (though its culture continued until about 100 BC, when it was absorbed by the Roman Empire after a gradual decline). Its territory encompassed Tuscany, Western Umbria and Alto Lazio, with borders meeting the Tiber river in the south, the Apennines to the east and the Magra river to the north.²⁶⁵ Bomarzo thus sat in its heartland. In an engraved, hand coloured map from 1579, based on Girolamo Bellarmati’s 1536 map of Tuscany and part of Abraham Ortelius’s *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Bomarzo can be found just outside the yellow area denoting Tuscany; small buildings represent the town, while to the west is Lake Bolsena; between them are rows of tightly packed green trees and the words ‘Locus Etrurie’ [Fig.2.5].

Indeed, between Etruria and Rome in antiquity lay the unbroken Ciminian Forest—an extensive swathe of trees that for centuries kept the two civilisations physically and culturally separate.²⁶⁶ In Alto Lazio, it was thus mainly Etruscan culture that was

²⁶⁴ Succinctly summarised in *ibid.*, 12–13.

²⁶⁵ Wiman (2014), 11–28.

²⁶⁶ Until Etruria was later assimilated into the Roman Empire c.100–300 BC. The view of the Etruscans as a culture different and distinct from the Graeco-Roman was clearly emphasised in classical literature available to Renaissance humanists. See Grafton, Most and Settis (2010), 338.

found in the Renaissance.²⁶⁷ In fact, the manner in which dwellings and burial sites were frequently created in this region of ancient Etruria—carved into existing colossal boulders and cliff faces, already significantly above ground—meant that many Etruscan sites were known and repurposed throughout the centuries following their creation, instead of becoming buried and hidden beneath the earth. When you visit the region of Bomarzo, the faux-ancient ruins in the Sacro Bosco become remarkable, even perplexing, for this very reason. The intended visitorship, educated and historically minded, could not help but be struck by the wealth of Etruscan sites, roughly hewn mausoleums, tombs and crumbling edifices that fill the surrounding woods and cliff ridges. You do not even need to leave Orsini’s territory to find evidence of ancient Etruria.²⁶⁸ This immediate archaeological context has been noted in relation to the Sacro Bosco since its rediscovery, but not closely interrogated. As described in the previous chapter, it was archeologists who first wrote about the Bosco in Italy, Praz commenting briefly in 1949 that ‘Bomarzo is appointed in the guides for Etruscan remains’.²⁶⁹

A deed from 1502 dividing Orsini family holdings, along with annual census payments made to the Camera Apostolica throughout Vicino’s lifetime, tell us that the boundaries of Vicino’s estate encircled Bomarzo with land that covered a woodland

²⁶⁷ For a chronology of archeological finds in Italy see Lanciani (1902–1916). For cultural and artistic responses to the discovery of ancient sculpture see the studies by Weiss (1969); Haskell and Penny (1981); Bober and Rubinstein (2010).

²⁶⁸ The most relevant texts on Etruscan sites within walking distance of the Sacro Bosco are local archeological guidebooks, e.g. Felici (2004), especially 49–51; Menichino (2010); Steingräber and Prayon (2011).

²⁶⁹ Praz [1949] (1975), 78: ‘Bomarzo è nominato nelle guide per i suoi avanzi etruschi’. See also Bacino (1953), 95. As far as I am aware, Katherine Coty is the only art historian to have noted some of these more obscure and immediate archeological elements surrounding Bomarzo. I became aware of her MA thesis in 2016 after having completed the ground research for this chapter. Some of her findings overlap with my own however, as will be acknowledged, and while some of our primary objects are the same, the focus of our interpretations differ. Coty argues that the regional focus of the Bosco’s Etruscan character expresses Orsini’s desire to assert an ancient lineage, an argument first proposed by Oleson and then by Lazzaro (see note 255 *supra*). I am more interested in the destabilising potential of these objects in relation to forgery and history-making in post-Tridentine Italy.

areas of just under twelve square miles, now known as Monte Casoli, Selva di Malano and Tacchiolo, and that reached as far as Santarello in the south, Vitorchiano to the west, and Mugano and Chia to the east.²⁷⁰

The archeological richness of this relatively small area of land and the proximity of ancient monuments to the Sacro Bosco is palpable. Starting at either the Sacro Bosco or the Orsini palazzo at Bomarzo, it is possible to explore and seek out these local Etruscan artefacts on foot [Fig.2.6]. Some are noted in local archeological guidebooks, several are signposted, but many are not. Yet this is not to imply that these sites and Etruscan remains are obscure. They are all within three miles of the Sacro Bosco, and discovering them completely alters how the site's interaction with the past can be understood. These woodlands and their local monuments are an archive—if an 'in situ' rather than a gathered and textual one.

A brief excursion to some of the closest archeological sites will offer a sense of the physical history inhabiting the Bomarzo property. Some of the largest, most striking features are found southeast of Bomarzo in the Tacchiolo wood, under one and a half miles from the Orsini palazzo. Follow Via Cupa to its endpoint and the road transforms from tarmac to gravel to mud until a path leads into the trees and winds down the *tuffo* hillside into the valley below. After a few hundred meters, cut directly into the cliff face, is the first of many Etruscan dwellings or tombs. Known colloquially as the *Finestraccia* (though it is not known how far back this name reaches) [Fig.2.7], two vertical rectangular doorways or windows open directly on top of each other, with a stone-carved staircase leading to the upper portal. Inside, chisel incisions mark the rough interior walls and a bench is carved directly into the rock, in a way that recalls entering the Sacro Bosco's Ogre [Plate 19].

²⁷⁰ Vicino came into possession of the estate in 1542 and made payments in 1548, 1549, 1551 and 1567. Documents transcribed in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 69.

Continue down the path and soon another, even more impressive, structure appears, referred to as the *Piramide Etrusca* [Fig.2.8]. Formed from one giant boulder, the *Piramide* is a triangular mass roughly eight by twelve meters in plan. Starting at the bottom, the primary stairway, to the left hand side of the structure, extends a total of twenty-five steps up to a middle level, where three staircases flank large square recesses to reach the top of the monument: a levelled surface that provides a viewing platform over the treetops. Criss-crossing diagonally across the entire surface are drains to allow rivulets to run off. Despite being one of Bomarzo's most well known Etruscan monuments, scholars have so far not determined its specific function or date though, if nothing else, it provides a strategic vantage point.²⁷¹ Once again, there is something reminiscent of the Sacro Bosco in this ancient monument. Its multiple stairways find echoes, for example, in the steps carved into the peperino boulder of the unnamed tower and those on the fragment leading to the Tortoise [Figs.2.2 and 2.4].

At this point, the few tourists who make it off the beaten track to the *Piramide* return to the Via Cupa. But push forward through the trees, over the stream at the bottom of the valley, up and along the ridge on the other side, and there is a host of ancient peperino dwellings, boulders with cut out niches, carved basins and fragments of stairs [Fig.2.9]. One lithic circular recess, with a stump in the middle [Fig.2.10], resembles in a strange inversion, what has been called somewhat unsatisfactorily a 'disk' or 'broken column' by the Pegasus Fountain in the Sacro Bosco (omitted entirely from the modern visitor's map) [Fig.2.11].

These monuments mark the way to what is known as the *Necropoli di Santa Cecilia*, an early medieval graveyard (c.500–800 AD), under one kilometre from the *Piramide*

²⁷¹ Menichino proposes a date of circa 6–7 century BCE: (2010), 128; Luciano Proietti the slightly later Etruscan-Roman period: (2010), 37–38; Steingraber and Prayon think it is early Imperial: (2011), 109.

[Fig.2.12].²⁷² There, amongst the Christian tombs, are a proliferation of Etruscan structures, suggesting continued use and knowledge of this archeological location. Stone coffins cluster, overturned and opened next to earlier *tombe a fossa* carved directly into the rock, their water-filled orifices roughly shaped to contain a human form. Surrounding these are larger pyramidal structures, echoing the *Piramide*, as well as basins and chambers carved into the peperino boulders. If Vicino and sixteenth-century antiquarians knew the site of Santa Cecilia, it is possible that the medieval elements were thought to also be remains of Etruria. When antiquities were discovered in sixteenth-century Italy, they often ‘lacked historical context and, absent an inscription, any cultural signifiers’, such that their reception often involved the muddling of Etruscan, Roman, and medieval.²⁷³ This potential for the blurring of epochal boundaries is important for the Sacro Bosco’s engagement with the ancient past, as will become clear in the next section it enabled the mock sculptures to play with archeological and antiquarian confusion.

Walk west out of Bomarzo and continue past the Sacro Bosco and there are even more archeological monuments. The most visible is Monte Casoli, an Etruscan necropolis that is just under one mile from Vicino’s sculptures, marking the long hill of *tufo* facing the town with cavern-tombs and columbaria [Fig.2.13]. This necropolis is visible from the windows of Vicino’s palazzo (as well as from the Sacro Bosco), and likewise Bomarzo can be seen from its ancient hollows. Once these now empty and crumbling tombs would have contained, like all these local Etruscan sites, elaborately carved sarcophagi and other valuable belongings. In one of the earliest surviving descriptions of an Etruscan tomb, Antonio Ivano in Volterra writes to Nicodemo Trachedini in Florence (18 November 1466) and describes how ‘some tombs were discovered in a cave not far from the same hill. One of these was marble, with carved

²⁷² Feo (2006), 93–94; Menichino (2010), 114; Steingraber and Prayon (2011), 98.

²⁷³ Hillard (2009), 12. See also Bule (1996).

lids depicting various reclining figures and the ancient clothing of the bodies'.²⁷⁴ At a ruined site of Salingolpe near Siena, a tomb was opened in 1507 said to contain such treasures that it was like 'the adornments of a queen', with mirrors, gold and silver jewellery, female busts in alabaster, stone and marble cinerary urns, and 'a sculpture of a woman with a bowl in hand, and her name was there, in Etruscan characters'.²⁷⁵ The discovery was described in multiple publications over the following decades.²⁷⁶ A letter relaying the discovery dated 10 February 1507 and addressed to 'Cardinal Francesco Soderini', moreover, includes sketches of the tomb's plan, Etruscan inscriptions and two sarcophagi [Fig.2.14], evidencing direct knowledge of ancient Etruria in Renaissance Italy.²⁷⁷

The Selva di Malano that surrounds Monte Casoli and that stretches southeast to Vitorchiano hosts additional Etruscan, Roman and medieval ruins, that are unmarked on maps to the area [Fig.2.15]. On one architectural fragment I came across there were the distinct remains of a relief-carved Corinthian column [Fig.2.16]. It is an archeological object that thus holds affinities to the many elements of the Sacro Bosco that play with material ambiguity through forms of construction: the fine cut masonry on the external walls of the Leaning House, which are in fact the carved rock of a boulder that makes up its lower level [Plate 13], or the supposed chipped plaster walls in the Nymphaeum, which is similarly hewn peperino [Plate 9], and the relief-carved architectural features of the Mock Tomb. Nearby, along the broader ridge of Monte Casoli, moreover, there are towering boulders with central stairways that lead to levelled viewing platforms—miniature versions of the *Piramide* known locally as *sassi del predicatore* [Fig.2.17], and cubic forms that look like unfinished square

²⁷⁴ Quoted and trans. in Spencer (1966), 96.

²⁷⁵ Marmocchini (c.1541–1547), 13r–14r. Quoted and trans. in Hillard (2018), 932. For a partial transcription of Marmocchini's text, see Gáldy (2009), 203–207.

²⁷⁶ For example, see Giambullari (1546), 45.

²⁷⁷ See Hillard (2016), 934–938.

towers or columns but are, in fact, single boulders of *tuffa* that have been carved to look like masonry [Fig.2.18]. The latter in particular have similarities with the construction of the Leaning House and its relief-carved bricks.

One of the most striking architectural remains in the Selva di Malano is the ruined San Nicolao abbey [Fig.2.19], another medieval Christian site that shares ground with Etruscan remains. The abbey, once a simple masonry building, is constructed on a huge lithic mass, and at the bottom of this rock face are ancient hollowed tombs. The complex is now privately owned and is under extensive renovation—the abbey is roofed and encased with metal, the bottom entrance fitted with a handrail and ramp—but the tombs have so far been left comparatively untouched. Each are of a slightly different style but combine Etruscan and Roman features. The most visually arresting has a doorway surmounted by a carved pediment containing a floral motif within a circle. Flanking the stone entrance are low relief Doric columns, much like the carved architectural features and pediment of the Mock Tomb [Plate 3].²⁷⁸

There are correlations too between San Nicolao and the unnamed tower of the Sacro Bosco [Fig.2.2]: both are square masonry structures built upon peperino, at the foot of which are caves or tombs. It is a local connection that seems more plausible than the crumbling Roman brick tower found at the distant site of Norcia thus far proposed as a referent [Fig.2.20].²⁷⁹ Other features that suggest a local connection can be found in the form of the remains of a stone building of a later but unknown date at the base of the cliff of the abbey and near the Etruscan tombs, where large, foundational peperino blocks mark the outline of its external walls. Their configuration has similarities to the shape of a benched recess by the Nymphaeum of the Sacro Bosco, which looks reminiscent of the exterior wall of a building no longer standing [Plate 9]. In the

²⁷⁸ Menichino (2010), 75; Steingräber and Prayon (2011), 121–122.

²⁷⁹ Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, fig.92; Lazzaro (1990), 125–126.

immediate vicinity of San Nicolao, moreover, are *tombe a fossa* [Fig.2.21] that are strikingly similar to the one found in the Sacro Bosco [Plate 15].

Finally, slightly further afield and close to the town of Santareello, is another Etruscan necropolis, Corviano, carved directly into the edge of the cliff face. Reached by descending stone cut steps from ground level [Fig.2.22], are caves with multiple chambers and benches carved into their interior walls (recalling the *Finestraccia* and the Sacro Bosco's Ogre), their openings looking out over the valley and offering vertiginous drops. Follow the ridge of this network of hollowed out rooms and about two hundred meters away are the remains of another early medieval church, on a rectangular plan with a semi circular apse, marked by surviving foundational blocks. Around the remains of this building are more anthropomorphic tombs hewn into the rocks [Fig.2.23].

Considering their situation within his lands, their size, quantity and close proximity to Bomarzo and the Sacro Bosco, it is almost inconceivable that Orsini did not know of these ancient sites, show them to, or inform his visitors of them. Monte Casoli, as has been noted, is visible from the Orsini palazzo at Bomarzo, and all the archeological ruins discussed are within a three mile radius. If this were not enough, a few hundred meters from the site at Corviano, and still within Orsini territory, is the ruin of a small fortress, which Gaetano Moroni's 1851 ecclesiastical encyclopaedia records as being handed over to the Orsini in the fourteenth century, and so was surely known to Vicino [Fig.2.24].²⁸⁰ Likewise, the Monte Casoli necropolis and the various ruins of Selva di Malano are within about five hundred meters of Santa Maria di Monte Casoli, a single-chamber twelfth-century church that is said to have been renovated in

²⁸⁰ Moroni (1851), 35. The exact date of the construction and who originally commissioned the fortress are unknown, but the external walls, made of peperino masonry, are said to date from the late thirteenth century, and rest on much earlier Etruscan blocks that make up its foundation.

the sixteenth century during Vicino's residence at Bomarzo [Fig.2.25].²⁸¹ A letter in the Orsini archive by 'Prosperus Campanus', a church notary affiliated with this building and its surrounding land, concerning Vicino's death shows that this religious foundation was active at the time the Sacro Bosco was built.²⁸² As explored in the Introduction, moreover, Vicino's social group included antiquarians, such as Claudio Tolomei, founder of the Accademia Vitruviana, Cardinal Madruzzo at nearby Soriano nel Cimino, Fulvio Orsini—a close relation who acted as librarian and purchaser of antiquities for Vicino's friend Alessandro Farnese, and the prolific historian Francesco Sansovino.²⁸³ The 'period eye' and body of the Sacro Bosco's intended visitors, in other words, was one that was versed, and actively interested and participating in, the study of such artefacts and ancient history.

There were also major and much publicised discoveries of Etruscan sites and objects in the mid-sixteenth century, which provide reference points and a richer context for the Sacro Bosco. In 1553, for example, builders dug outside the gates of Arezzo and uncovered the bronze *Chimera*: a fire-breathing lion with a goat protruding from its back, a serpent for a tail, and letters inscribed on its front leg (and thus a composite monster like many of the Bosco's stone creatures) [Fig.2.26]. This arresting sculpture is both dynamic and violent; the creature's eyes are wide, its teeth bared, its legs drawn back, as it prepares to attack. Its flanks, with lean muscles and expanded ribs, have been pierced so that blood drips down from its wounds. Made in the fourth century BC, the *Chimera* became, in the words of Caroline Susan Hillard, 'one of the most recognised antiquities of the sixteenth century'.²⁸⁴ For Vasari it represented 'the

²⁸¹ Perucca (1989), 200; Donadono (2004), 12–13.

²⁸² Cited in Buchicchio and Zeni (2009), 34. The letter is dated 31 March 1586 and can be found in ASR, Collegio Notai Capitolini 464, Prosperus Campanus (1569–1596), 821r–v.

²⁸³ See pages 23–25 *supra*. On Fulvio Orsini's collecting see de Nolhac (1884), 153–172 and Cellini (2004), S.228–512.

²⁸⁴ Hillard (2009), 209. Also Pallottino (1977), 4–6; Haach (2014), 1137. The documents related to the discovery of the Chimera have been published by Cristofani (1979).

perfection of that art [sculpture] among the Etruscans in ancient times'.²⁸⁵ Cellini noted its discovery in his autobiography of 1562, describing how 'along with this Chimera was discovered a number of very small statues, also of bronze, covered in clay and rust'.²⁸⁶ Its fame spread by letters, copies and drawings. One of the earliest of these, by Baccio Bandinelli c.1553 and now held in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, shows the bronze work sketched in loose black ink strokes on the covering sheet of a letter he received from Lorenzo de' Medici.²⁸⁷ Another, a pen and ink drawing by Alfonso Chacón from 1582, shows the Etruscan lettering carved into the Lion's leg [Fig.2.27].

The *Chimera* might have been one of the most famous cinquecento discoveries from Etruria, but it was far from unique.²⁸⁸ Entering the collection of Cosimo I de' Medici upon its unearthing, the *Chimera* became one of many Etruscan antiquities held by the Duke.²⁸⁹ Leandro Alberti's *Descrittione di tutta l'Italia*, first published in 1550, included Etruscan sites across Italy. His 1553 edition described the site at Volterra and the 'large antiquities, statues and epitaphs of Etruscan letters, and sepulchres and

²⁸⁵ Vasari (ed.1966–1987), vol.II, 11: 'nella quale figurasi conosce la perfezzione di quell'arte essere stata anticamente appresso i Toscani'.

²⁸⁶ Cellini (2002), 343 (II:87).

²⁸⁷ See Waldman (2004), 545. It is not entirely clear which member of the Medici family this 'Lorenzo de' Medici' is, not belonging to the more prominent branches of the family such as the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. Waldman suggests that this might be the Lorenzo de' Medici who served as 'ambassador to the Imperial Court from 1558 to 1560'.

²⁸⁸ Existing reports of Etruscan tomb openings in the Renaissance, as Steven Bule and John R. Spencer have noted, are often written in a mundane manner suggesting they were so frequent as to be almost unremarkable: Bule (1996), 312; Spencer (1966), 96. The same is true of graffiti found in Etruscan tombs across Italy (particularly around Florence and Viterbo), that were thought to have been opened for the first time in the 1900s, yet provide evidence that many were in fact known as early as 1300. The Bartocini tomb at Tarquinia, for example, when opened in the 1960s, was found to bear inscriptions dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries: see Bartolini and Pacini (2003), 453. For the discovery of Etruscan tombs and antiquities in the Renaissance see also Chastel (1959); Cipriani (1980); Greenhalgh (1982), 1–30; Cristofani (1992); De Grummond (1986); Collins (2001), 113–115; Gáldy (2006); Hillard (2009), 138–140, idem (2013), idem (2016) and idem (2018). The work of these scholars has established that the work of ancient Etruria was clearly well known in Renaissance Italy, even if we do not know much about the specific artefacts that were rediscovered and held in individual collections.

²⁸⁹ See Gáldy's work on Cosimo's antiquarian collections: (2009).

other cut stones, [that] are constantly found here'.²⁹⁰ Pierfrancesco Giambullari described the 'many very ancient stones' of Etruria known from the regions of Gubbio, Volterra and Viterbo in 1546.²⁹¹ Indeed, such sites were so abundant that the same year Cardinal Alessandro Farnese collected six thousand pounds of metal comprising antique objects and fragments from the Etruscan necropolis of Tarquinia, near Viterbo, handing them over to Pope Paul III for the decoration of Rome's church of San Giovanni in Laterano, for which they were melted down to be recast.²⁹² Equally, visible Etruscan remains were apparently so common that Santi Marmocchini, in his *Dialogo* (c.1541–1547), described finding near Orvieto, chickens drinking out of a stone vase bearing an Etruscan inscription.²⁹³

In light of this context, in which the culture of ancient Etruria was being encountered, discussed and celebrated, the striking correlations between the ancient artefacts surrounding Bomarzo and the 'Etruscan' elements of the Sacro Bosco and their proximity to each other take on a greater significance. The mock-tombs and structures carved into the Bosco's boulders clearly find counterparts and close neighbours in the real ancient remains found in the local landscape. When placed within the archeological geography of Bomarzo then, it becomes clear that the Sacro Bosco is in purposeful conversation with the peculiarities of the local ancient topography. What does this mean for how the apparently 'archeological' artefacts *in* the Sacro Bosco would have been understood? I would argue that the existence of the real ancient artefacts undermines the assertion that they unproblematically project a specifically

²⁹⁰ Alberti (1553), 70v: 'Come etiandio per la grandi antichitati, statui, & epitafi di lettere Hetrusce, & con avelli, & altre pietre laureate, che di continuo quivi si ritrovano'.

²⁹¹ Giambullari (1546), 45. Quoted and trans. in Hillard (2018), 931.

²⁹² Pallottino (1937), 20–21 and Bule (1996), 312, note 17.

²⁹³ Marmocchini (c.1541–1547), 12v–13r. Cited in Hillard (2009), 143.

local lineage for the Orsini.²⁹⁴

A fake or a substitution fills in for an absence, a lost—or perhaps never extant—original. As such the ‘fake’ object is often more effective if there is no precise, genuine, referent.²⁹⁵ But at Bomarzo, surrounded by land teeming with ancient remains, there is no lack. When scholars argue that the mock artefacts make the Sacro Bosco appear built over a more ancient site, it would be more correct to say that it is built over, and is part of, a genuine Etruscan landscape. When Annibale Caro made brief reference to ‘*teatri e mausolei del suo Bomarzo*’, in a letter to Vicino dated 20 October 1564 regarding Orsini’s request for assistance with a fresco (discussed in Chapter Four), he could even have been referring to the ancient monuments in Orsini’s territory.²⁹⁶

Equally significant is the fact that the Etruscan nature of Vicino’s estate is visible even without seeking the archeological sites and fragments in his woods. In the improbable event that Vicino had no idea about sizeable sites such as the *Piramide* or *Corviano*, he and his visitors would undoubtedly still have been aware of the area’s Etruscan heritage. In addition to Monte Casoli, there are characteristic ancient hollows in the cliffs of the town of Bomarzo itself [Fig.2.28], as well as on the descent from the Orsini residence to the Sacro Bosco where the *tufi* hill is dotted with ancient caverns now used for storage [Fig.2.29]. Such close proximity to Etruscan tombs and the repurposing of ancient sites for contemporary use was rendered by Breenbergh in a drawing from 1625 labeled ‘Cliff near Bomarzo’ [Fig.2.30]. High up on the top of this rock face is the facade of an ancient tomb, while below masonry structures have been

²⁹⁴ As already established, projection of lineage is the argument of Oleson, Lazzaro and Coty, see note 255 *supra*. Coty writes that the site projects ‘an innately Etruscan Orsini identity [...] bolstering personal and familial connections to the surrounding land and its illustrious, enigmatic past’: (2013), 88–89.

²⁹⁵ Hiatt (2004), 1.

²⁹⁶ Annibale Caro to Vicino Orsini [20/10/1564], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 79.

added to caves presumably for local, agricultural use. There is even evidence of ancient Etruria inside Vicino's palazzo. Follow the stairs into the lower quarters of the building and there is what is thought to be an Etruscan cave reused as a cellar, its open portal leading into a pitch black space that descends into the mount's rocky core [Fig. 2.31].

It should also be remembered that the Bosco's precise boundaries remain a mystery. Andrea Alessi, for one, has recently argued for the extension of the Bosco's current borders, citing sculptural fragments beyond the northern borders of the current park.²⁹⁷ When exploring the perimeters of the space, research for this thesis found evidence of another fountain the current owners are 'reconstructing' near to the Leaning House [Fig.2.32]. Indeed, there is another drawing by Breenbergh labelled in his hand 'Nel giardino del castel Bomarzo' (1625), which shows a view void of sculptures [Fig.2.33]. Instead, two small figures are shown atop a tall boulder looking down at a waterfall below, where water pours between gigantic rocks into a pool in the central foreground, trees and wild plants crowding the sides of the page. The possibility can be entertained, therefore, that the site simply merged with the larger unenclosed woodland of which it was a part.

Even within the current borders, outlined by a walled perimeter of twentieth-century construction, there are previously un-noted and less immediately apparent, non-specific indentations and abstract fissures that are carved into occasional boulders [Fig.2.34 and 2.35]. These artefacts are worn down and weathered to a far greater extent than the Sacro Bosco's sixteenth-century forms, potentially meaning that these peripheral rocks in fact display genuine ancient carvings (compare with Fig.2.9 for example). If this was the case then it would truly mean that Orsini's mock-Etruscan artefacts lived directly among an ancient landscape, a fact that would only throw the

²⁹⁷ Alessi (2009), 214–221.

site's more recent creations into further stark relief.²⁹⁸ It would not be entirely out of character for a valley to have occasional water troughs carved into the rocks between larger Etruscan sites (there being no evidence of a wider settlement or necropolis at the Sacro Bosco).

All of this raises the question: if Vicino's territory—both immediate and further afield—contained large, impressive and genuine ancient monuments, why would it be necessary to produce additional, significantly sized sixteenth-century imitations to project an ancient lineage? With an immediate region so full of relics, the Sacro Bosco is not making up for archaeological evidence that does not exist, a fact which has, so far, been overlooked. Rather than substitutions, the mock-ruins are, I would contend, supplements, and are therefore doing a different type of cultural work.

EXPOSING FICTIONS

The experience of encountering the faux Etruscan monuments in the Sacro Bosco is closely akin to discovering the nearby genuine remains. Staged as archeological finds, upon initial contact, the mock artefacts are of plausible dimensions and, with no plinths or mode of clear presentation to suggest they are sculptures, they protrude out of the earth. The question might be raised for the visitor therefore as to whether almost the whole artefact is visible or merely the tip of a ruin of greater proportions.

Leonard Barkan argues that in the Italian Renaissance the antiquity of discovered objects was authenticated 'from the soil in which they are found'.²⁹⁹ Just as, for Barkan, the Roman earth validated classical antiquities, the Etruscan soil of Alto

²⁹⁸ If this is the case then the Sacro Bosco would have ties with the park of Ascanio Colonna, south east of Rome near Frascati, begun in 1590 by Girolamo Reinaldo, and which was built on the site of a preexisting ruined villa and kept its ancient structures as part of its design. See Lazzaro (1990), 120–121.

²⁹⁹ Barkan (1999), 17–20, 19. For this reason, Barkan argues, narratives around key discoveries always stress the accidental nature of their findings and the Renaissance 'did not give rise to the professional enterprise of archaeology such as waited another two centuries to be born': 18–19.

Lazio, along with the embedded nature of the mock-tombs, gives them the appearance of historical legitimacy. The sculptures, moreover, are formed *per via di levare*, carving rock away from the very same peperino material and in the very same manner as the genuine ancient monuments. The sculpted mock ruins, as such, materially confuse the distinction between authentic and fake ancient artefact.

In this way, there is none of the mastery gifted to the beholder of the *Rometta*, but rather the unstable experience of the antiquarian seeking, but not immediately knowing, what object is before them. The inscription on the base of one of the Sphinx sculptures is significant here. The words:

YOU WHO ENTER HERE PUT YOUR MIND TO IT
PART BY PART
AND TELL ME IF SO MANY
WONDERS
WERE MADE AS TRICKERY
OR AS ART

are often discussed in relation to the paragone of art versus nature, so common to Italian Renaissance gardens, and especially in twentieth-century scholarship on such spaces.³⁰⁰ Within this topos, the inscription is assumed to ask: is what you see a deceptive product of nature or made by man?³⁰¹ However, in the context of the Sacro Bosco's engagement with ancient history, the inscription has implications beyond this framing that seem more befitting to the site. The use of the word 'deception' [*inganno*] opens up questions of authenticity, specifically of a man-made deception rather than a natural one—a key uncertainty raised by the faux tombs and

³⁰⁰ 'TU CH'ENTRI QVA PON MENTE / PARTE A PARTE / ET DIMMI POI SE TANTE / MARAVIGLIE / SIEN FATTE PER INGANNO / O PVR PER ARTE' (Appendix, B). For a key study see Lazzaro's reading of the Villa Lante, in which she argues that the garden design takes the visitor from the realm of nature through steadily more formal areas until the visitor ends where art dominates: (1977).

³⁰¹ See Rinaldi (1979), 154–175 and Beck (2002) on the Renaissance concept of a 'third nature' and the nature versus art trope. Coffin is one scholar that expressly situates the Sacro Bosco according to this idea, discussing the site in a chapter entitled 'Art, Nature, Illusion': (1991), 103–119. Lazzaro likewise discusses Bomarzo in a similar section of her book called 'Ornaments of Art, Mostly about Nature': (1990), 138–144.

‘ruined’ fragments. The inscription makes representation within the site problematic, but does not provide a solution. The visitor is told that all may not be as it seems, but is then left to judge for themselves whether a deception is intended by human makers or if theirs is a display of artifice *all’antica*.

The inscription turns the Sacro Bosco into a connoisseurial, antiquarian space, encouraging a critical, inquisitive and questioning mode in the beholder reminiscent of that modelled in Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia* (1499).³⁰² In this text the protagonist Poliphilo encounters a landscape of ruins through which he ‘roamed like some animal always seeking better pasture [...] wishing to know their type’.³⁰³ His exploration of this antique topography is extensive, undertaken to distract him from his desire for his beloved Polia, who encourages him to ‘take your pleasure in looking at these [ruins], and examine the noble fragments that remain’.³⁰⁴ The attention Poliphilo pays to the ancient objects is detailed and particular. He describes their shapes, hieroglyphs, inscriptions and material, rummages through debris, clears away overgrowth, crawls through tunnels and takes measurements, providing a model for antiquarian study.³⁰⁵

With Poliphilo’s delighted, diligent approach in mind, and the Sphinx’s invocation to approach the Sacro Bosco as potentially deceptive (indeed, by provoking doubt, the Sphinx sculpture implies precisely that there *is* deception to be found), let us return to

³⁰² See note 99 *supra* for the *Hypnerotomachia* and the Sacro Bosco.

³⁰³ Colonna [1499] (2005), 260.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 242. For the full section of Colonna’s exploration of these ruins: 242–272. For the *Hypnerotomachia* and ancient architecture see Lefaivre (1997); Stewering (2000); Smick (2003). Responses to the aesthetics of ruins in the sixteenth-century ranged from considering them beautiful works of imperfection, as per the *Hypnerotomachia*, to defective, dismembered objects in need of completion. Vasari, when writing about Lorenzotto’s restorations of antiquities for Cardinal Andrea della Valle, for example, stated: ‘Hanno molto più grazia queste anticaglie in questa maniera restaurate, che non hanno que’ tronchi imperfetti, e la membra senza capo, o in altro modo diffetose e manche’: Vasari (ed.1981), 580. For different responses to ruins in the Renaissance and early modern period see Barkan (1999), 119–208 and 209–270; Fiorenza (2004); Dacos (2004), 23–30.

³⁰⁵ Colonna [1499] (2005), 247.

the Mock Tomb. If we reexamine this sculpture according to the potential for *inganno* and Poliphilo's example, as well as Vicino's wider estate of Etruscan artefacts, it becomes quickly apparent that, contrary to previous studies, the Mock Tomb reveals itself as deliberately inauthentic and inconsistent.

Almost always photographed and discussed according to what is considered its primary viewpoint [see the top photograph of Plate 3], when examined from all angles—as Poliphilo and any sixteenth-century antiquarian surely would have done—it becomes swiftly evident that, far from a successful forgery, the Mock Tomb is an impossible object. The 'front', with its relief of an architectural tomb façade, suggests that, were it a genuine relic, it would exist as a chunk of stone that had fallen from a larger architectural rock face. As discussed by Oleson, an example of such a tomb can still be seen at Sovana—site of the *Tomba della Sirena* [Fig.2.36] and the *Tomba del Demoni Alati* [Fig.2.37]—or the nearby archeological site of Castel d'Asso, to the west of Viterbo [Fig.2.38].³⁰⁶ A sketch of the latter by George Dennis, made into an engraving for *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* (1848), shows just such a façade fragment discarded on the ground [Fig.2.39], while behind a row of tomb edifices are carved into the rock face, showing from where the fragment has fallen.³⁰⁷ If the Sacro Bosco's Mock Tomb belonged to such a tomb complex, as its façade implies, where are the other architecturally decorated tombs it is supposed to have broken away from and where are its companions? Etruscan tombs primarily line cliffs rather than reside in valleys and are rarely found alone, as Dennis' illustration reinforces. The Monte Casoli tombs are too far for such a fragment to have plausibly travelled and have no such relief-carved edifices.

³⁰⁶ For Sovana see note 249 *supra*.

³⁰⁷ 'Castel d'Asso, from the Necropolis', engraving originally drawn by Dennis [1848] (1878), vol.I, 177.

More significantly, where the back of the Mock Tomb should be a rough surface, void of human marks to indicate where it has broken off from a rock face, instead it is carved on every side. There are the remnants of a stairway that allows you to climb and stand atop the Tomb—reminiscent of the steps of the *Piramide Etrusca* and the many ancient rock-cut stairs in the area [Compare Plate 3 with Fig.2.8, 2.9, 2.15 and 2.17 for example]. It also has carved niches that echo columbaria or indentations often found within, rather than on, local monuments, including those at Monte Casoli and Santa Cecilia [Compare with Fig.2.12 and 2.13]. The Mock Tomb thus comprises a montage of Etruscan elements. Carved on all sides, it simply, and rather obviously, cannot be a fragment of a tomb face: something that the erudite sixteenth-century visitor, with knowledge of antiquities, would surely have realised.

In a similar manner, elsewhere in the Sacro Bosco there are carved stairs and abstract fragments that are more obviously imitations of ancient architecture damaged by time than the basins found on the periphery of the current site and the local monuments discussed above [Fig.2.4 and Fig.2.40].³⁰⁸ On these artefacts, which have not yet been discussed in Bomarzo literature, the same tooth chisel marks that can be found on the sixteenth-century sculptures are clearly visible. A fact that would only have been more apparent in the cinquecento and that distinguishes them rather obviously from the carved stones of ancient Etruria, which have experienced centuries more weathering. In other words, there is a marked visual and tactile difference between these carved stones and the Etruscan ruins, which allows even the untrained visitor to intuit their more recent temporality. These structures are also more integral to the site. The boulder by the *Tempietto* seems to echo, in a more unfinished state, the seats found by the unnamed tower [compare Fig.2.40 with Fig.2.3 for example]. While the stair

³⁰⁸ Coty briefly notes the existence of the boulder near the *Tempietto* [Fig.2.40], but no other literature on Bomarzo that I have encountered discusses the other carved fragments discussed here: (2013), 72.

fragment [Fig.2.4] leads to the Tortoise sculpture, suggesting that it was purposefully created for visitors to use when exploring the Sacro Bosco, much like the small rock-carved passageway that leads to the Sea Creature [Fig.6]. Even the more abstract faux-artefacts are thus tellingly disingenuous.

Kathleen Wren Christian has explored how late fifteenth-century Renaissance collectors ‘consciously and willingly displayed *all’antica* works among their real antiquities’, opening up ‘the possibility for the deception of the viewer, who was called upon to distinguish ancient from modern’.³⁰⁹ She describes how the Porcari family exhibited Michelangelo’s first version of his *Risen Christ* among antique sculpture in their garden, and how the Galli similarly displayed Michelangelo’s *Bacchus*, with its purposefully broken off arm, in a garden littered with ancient fragments (as famously depicted by Maarten van Heemskerck in a drawing from between 1532 and 1536 [Fig.2.41]).³¹⁰ For Christian, these examples show ‘the collector’s intent to deceive the visitor’ and allowed the owners to evidence their superior antiquarian knowledge.³¹¹ There is something of this potentiality in the Sacro Bosco, as the Sphinx’s inscription indicates, but the purposeful implausibility of the Mock Tomb suggests a slightly different intention than outright deception. In testing the visitor’s archaeological knowledge, the Sacro Bosco’s faux tombs revel in and expose their own construction.

This more comprehensive analysis of the sculptural character and situation of the Mock Tomb undermines prior arguments that it is meant to be a plausible forgery or even a substitutional object. Instead, Vicino’s pretend Etruscan ruins work through a

³⁰⁹ Christian (2006), 252.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 254.

self-aware staging of the fact that they are representations.³¹² Indeed, Nagel and Wood are quick to note that not all referential or *all'antica* objects of the Renaissance should be understood according to a mode of substitution. On the one hand, substitution, they argue, required ‘a systematic self delusion’: knowing that something was fabricated was not enough to stop people believing in it.³¹³ Yet, at the same time, both authors argue that ‘this capacity to stand in for absent authority [...] comes to be doubted when too much is learned about how works are actually fabricated’.³¹⁴ Taking this latter statement into account means that the Sacro Bosco’s faux tombs cannot work to this theoretical model. The closer we look at the artefacts, the more it becomes apparent that they physically call attention to their fiction, just as the Sphinx’s inscription highlights that elements of the site are a re-staging—an *inganno*—of a ruined civilisation.

The ‘Etruscan’ objects in the Sacro Bosco confront their own fabrication of history and ontological status (rather than obscuring it), and so open up a space where the visitor is asked to question how they know and trust ancient artefacts. If the faux-ruins assert the Etruscan lineage of the Orsini, it is by providing comparanda that highlight just how genuine the nearby artefacts in Vicino’s territory are, rather than by acting as credible simulations. Simultaneously, however, by creating points of critical encounter and revealing their pretension, the mock-relics also challenge the reliability of ruins and objects as evidence of the past. They might confirm the authenticity of nearby archeological remains, but they also hold the potential to call them into

³¹² Michel Foucault discussed this idea of self-reflexivity, when he argued that the seventeenth century marked the beginning of a transition from image as resemblance (which he saw as characteristic of the Renaissance) to that of representation, in which the very idea of being a representation was inherent, in turn demanding a reflexive mode from the viewer: (2002), 19–85, (particularly 70–71). However, it should be noted that other scholars have argued for a reflexive structure or mode in earlier Italian artworks. See, for example, Klaus Krüger’s article on Andrea Mantegna and fifteenth-century religious paintings, which, he argues, purposefully ‘keep alive awareness of the fictitiousness of representation’: (2014), 230.

³¹³ Nagel and Wood (2010), 29.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11. See also Wood (2012).

question. To understand this more destabilising character it is necessary to put pressure on the historical context of the site in relation to the concept of *inganno* and the changing status of the antiquarian in post-Tridentine Italy. As Nagel and Wood admit, a new awareness of the definition of space and time seems to have appeared as the result of print, authorial models and the shifts engendered by the Counter Reformation, which diminished the value of the substitutional mode.³¹⁵ It was a change that had profound effects on ideas surrounding antiquarianism and forgery.

ANTIQUARIAN ANTICS

Inganno, which most simply translates as deception, was an increasingly loaded word in the latter half of the sixteenth century, shifting from a term of praise to one with potentially negative, anxious connotations in relation to art and antiquarianism.³¹⁶ Traditionally used to evoke the skill of a work of art or artist, when comparing 1550 and 1568 editions of Vasari's *Lives* one finds the term *inganno* used with increasing frequency, in each instance to express awe at the artistic skill put in place to make a work of art able to trick the viewer, either into thinking it is what it represents or into believing it is an antique original when it is not.³¹⁷

Just as people applauded art that succeeded in *inganno*, however, such deception also gave rise to confusion over authorship and an art market filled with replicas, which shifted social perceptions of successful artistic duplicity.³¹⁸ Over the 1500s antiquarian exchanges came increasingly in contact with forgeries, such as those that

³¹⁵ Ibid., 259. Wood (2008), 12–13. Katherine Hunt discusses how the birth of print affected and dampened the substitutional potential of objects in the sixteenth century, also noting that Nagel and Wood's examples end around 1510—significantly earlier than the *Sacro Bosco*: (2012), 840–842.

³¹⁶ For *inganno*, forgery and deception in the Renaissance see Barolsky (1994), 107–118; Grafton (1990)a and idem (1990)b; Rowland (2004); Wood (2008); Gregory and Hickson (2012).

³¹⁷ Gregory and Hickson (2012), 8.

³¹⁸ On sixteenth-century antiquarian collecting and forgeries see Fusco and Corti (1991) and idem (2006); Brown (1999); McCrory (2003); Christian (2010); Catterson (2012).

now fill a glass cabinet of the ancient art museum of the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome [Fig.2.42]. In this cultural landscape of replicas and counterfeits, the connoisseurial skill needed to distinguish ancient from modern *all'antica* was progressively demanding and highly valued, while artistic and antiquarian *inganno* became something that could be negative, even dangerous.³¹⁹ Indeed, by the early seventeenth century, the *Vocabolario degli accademici della crusca* refers to *inganno* in relation to forgery as ‘an insidious *malizia*’: a word that encompassed malice, cunning and craft under a negative, grievous banner.³²⁰

The shift in attitude towards *inganno* in relation to art and forgery was also inherently tied to the wider change that occurred in cinquecento Italy due to the rise of Protestantism and the subsequent Counter Reformation. The knowability and ontological security of objects and images were brought under intense scrutiny by thinkers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, the latter asking in his *Treatise of Relics* of 1543: ‘How do we know we are venerating the ring and comb of the Virgin Mary rather than the baubles of a harlot?’³²¹ While the Council of Trent eventually reasserted the role and benefits of religious art in 1563 (though such art was primarily of a different status to the relics Calvin discussed in the text above), their very acknowledgement of an image’s power to contain and evoke holy sentiment was by then inherently marked by the implicit and parallel admission that viewers were vulnerable to deception and objects that could elicit false veneration. ‘If any abuses shall have found their way into these holy and salutary observances’, the 1563 decree stated:

³¹⁹ On the antiquarian market and skill see Howarth (2006); Furlotti (2010); Hickson (2012)a.

³²⁰ *Vocabolario* (1612): ‘una insidiosa malizia’.

³²¹ Quoted and trans. in Nagel (2010), 211.

the holy council desires earnestly that they be completely removed, so that no representation of false doctrines and such as might be the occasion of grave error to the uneducated be exhibited.³²²

Against this religious debate that questioned the role and validity of the sacred image and object, the wider vulnerability of knowing in relation to all representations and artefacts became an important concern, filtering down into antiquarian culture and activities. The joyful pleasure of Poliphilo in the late fifteenth-century *Hypnerotomachia* was no longer so unburdened during the decades in which the Sacro Bosco was being built and encountered.

In 1562, the Gioliti press in Venice published a book entitled *L'inganno* by the Veronese humanist Giuseppe Orologi, a comprehensive discussion of deception in which the antiquarian was singled out for critique.³²³ Those ‘in Rome called antiquarians by everyone, who assume the task of recognising everything’, Orologi stated, ‘say the most lying and scurrilous things in the world’.³²⁴ ‘This type of man’, Orologi continued,

is accustomed to playing strange jokes on the moderns using the appearance of ancient figures, and they say things and then they restate them and say them again in a manner better suited to their purpose [...] I liken them to dreams that feature things both present and past, but never wholly as they are, or as they were.³²⁵

Here the antiquarian is inherently associated with deception and duplicity. Orologi’s description of their creations as both ‘present and past, but never wholly as they are, or as they were’ captures the slippery ineffability of the antiquarian forgery, a fluidity

³²² ‘Council of Trent Canons and Decrees: ‘Twenty-Fifth Session, December 3 and 4 1563... *On the invocation, veneration and relic of saints, and on sacred images*’, in Klein and Zerner (1989), 119–122, 121.

³²³ For a discussion of Orologi’s writings and activities see Hickson (2012)b and idem (2013).

³²⁴ Orologi (1562), 124: ‘Vi sono di quelli in Roma chiamati antiquari ogn’uno [sic]; che pigliano l’impresa di riconoscerli tutti & dicono le più ladre e manigolde cose del mondo’.

³²⁵ Ibid., 125: ‘Questa maniera d’huomini sogliono far il più delle volte di strani scherzo a i moderni con le apparenze delle figure antiche, e dicono, e ridicono come loro torna meglio; trovando le orecchie altrui ben disposte a dar credenza a tutto quel, che vien loro in animo di dire, & io li assomiglio a i sogni che rappresentano e le cose presenti & le passate; ma non mai del tutto come sono, ne come furono già’.

that was both pleasurable and deeply problematic. While the antiquarian might play with the instability inherent in representation, Christian discourse urgently desired to do away with this uncertainty, so that in the context of the Counter Reformation the morality of antiquarian activities was also at stake.³²⁶ There was a danger that such men and women would ‘love those mute [and] insensible things more than enough, with little respect for God’ becoming ‘mad and lost because of that artificial beauty’.³²⁷ Not just downright antiquarian trickery, but the pleasure of objects, of merging past and present, fact and fiction was loaded, even potentially morally suspect, by the latter half of the cinquecento. As Wood writes, in the sixteenth century, substitution ‘was criminalised as forgery. Anachronism became the attribute of bad scholarship’.³²⁸ A prime example of this shift in thought regarding the antiquarian can be seen in the reputation and reception of Annio of Viterbo.

ANNIO OF VITERBO

Annio of Viterbo, also known as Giovanni Nanni, was a Dominican Friar and antiquarian who wrote multiple texts in the late fifteenth century that cast the city of Viterbo, twelve and a half miles west of Bomarzo, as the ancient centre of Etruria.³²⁹ The most famous of his publications was the *Commentaria super Opera Diversorum Auctorum de Antiquitatibus Loquentium* (*Commentaries on the works of various authors discussing antiquities*) (1498), in which Annio combined Christian history

³²⁶ On the instability of antiquarian activity see Francis Haskell’s *History and Its Images*. Haskell explores the impact of images (including archeological finds) on historical imagination, and describes the sixteenth century as a period characterised by a sometimes reckless collaboration between the antiquarian, imagination and history. He also notes the growing skepticism regarding the reliability of sources after the Reformation: (ed.1995), 6–88, 86.

³²⁷ Orologi (1562), 126: ‘Et pur ci sono di quelli a tempi nostri che amano assai piu queste mutte, & insensibili; con poco rispetto al grande Iddio’, ‘impazziti, e perduti per quella artificiosa bellezza’.

³²⁸ Wood (2008), 13.

³²⁹ For literature on Annio of Viterbo (independent of the Sacro Bosco) see Weiss (1962)a and idem (1962)b; Baffioni (1981); Ligota (1987); Stephens (1989) and idem (2004); Jacks (1993), 162–172; Grafton (1990)a; De Caprio (1991)a and idem (1991)b; Collins (2000) and idem (2001).

and pagan mythology to argue that Etruscan Alto Lazio was the birthplace of mankind.³³⁰ Central to this assertion was Annio's claim that the ancient god Janus was the biblical Noah and had founded Viterbo as the capital of this ancient civilisation.³³¹ As previous scholars have briefly addressed, Vicino's knowledge of Annio's publications is almost certain.³³² Controversial as well as famous, the *Commentaria* was published in eighteen Latin editions across Europe between 1498 and 1612 (in Lyons, Paris, Antwerp, Basil and Wittenberg as well as Italy), and in three sixteenth-century Italian translations in 1543, 1550 and 1583.³³³ The last of these, published in Venice, was by Francesco Sansovino, who dedicated multiple publications to Vicino and wrote a history of the Orsini family.³³⁴ With regard to an ancient heritage, Annio's texts provide the genealogical narrative the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco could be said to manifest, and it is in this context that his work has previously been mentioned in relation to Bomarzo.³³⁵

To create his version of the past, Annio fabricated accounts by ancient authors and, more significantly for this discussion, created counterfeit artefacts. The *Commentaria* consisted of seventeen supposedly ancient texts, some that Annio claimed to have recently discovered but had, in fact, invented. The sections supposedly by Berosius the Chaldean, Myrsilus of Lesbos, Manetho the Egyptian and Metasthenes the Persian, for example, were entirely fictitious.³³⁶ In a similar fashion, Annio forged antiquities to bolster his version of a history of Alto Lazio, often burying them and staging 'discoveries'. He is said to have boldly enacted one such unearthing of an

³³⁰ Nanni (Rome: 1498).

³³¹ Collins (2000), 69–74; Stephens (1989), 104 and idem (2004), 208.

³³² Oleson (1975), 416; Lazzaro (1990), 126; Coty (2013), 28–52; Morgan (2016)a, 266–267.

³³³ Stephens (2004), 204.

³³⁴ Nanni, ed. by Francesco Sansovino (1583).

³³⁵ As in note 332.

³³⁶ For a full summary of Annio's fraudulent activities see Jacks (1993), 162–172.

Etruscan tomb outside Viterbo in 1493, which he had filled with fake antiquities in advance, in the presence of Pope Alexander VI.³³⁷

One of the most famous of Annio's forged antiquities survives in the Museo Civico of Viterbo: the *Tabula Maeonica Cybelica*, a large white disk of Alabaster tightly packed with dark lettering [Fig.2.43]. In a short tract entitled *De Marmoreis Volturrhenis Tabulis*, Annio announced finding this inscription in 1492.³³⁸ The *Tabula*, Annio stated, was one of a pair discovered in the Colle Cibellurio, an area between Tuscania and Viterbo, whose various names—the colloquial *Cipolluru* (onion-zone) and the Latin *Cibelurius*—he argued, were etymologically linked to the ancient goddess Cybele, proving the area's ancient roots.³³⁹ The tablet itself (supposedly made at the request of Pupinus and Marsias, later rulers of Etruria), he argued, was covered in ancient Greek lettering with Maeonic elements, and recorded the marriage of Cybele to the Etruscan leader Jasius, with Isis as witness to the celebration.³⁴⁰

Annio's forgeries can be seen as famous local precedents for the simulated Etruscan elements of the Sacro Bosco. Indeed, it is worth remembering that the name *Tabula Maeonica* refers to 'Maeonia', the designation given to the town of Bomarzo in Annio's forged translation of *Origines*: a conveniently 'found' lost history by Cato the

³³⁷ Cited in Collins (2001), 113–115 and De Grummond (1986), 28–29. Arnaldo Momigliano, Roberto Weiss and Francis Haskell have all written about how material evidence became increasingly important but also progressively fraught in history writing and study during this period: Momigliano (1950); Weiss (1962)a; Haskell (1995). Haskell gives a pertinent example in Fulvio Orsini's publication *Imagines et elogia* (1570), an antiquarian work which published engravings of portraits of historic figures across various media, including coins, busts and gems, in order to gain knowledge of an individual's true likeness. On the one hand, this book thus made an argument for the image and artefact as historical evidence. On the other hand, the variety of appearances found for one person through this comparative endeavour simultaneously called into question the very reliability of such objects: (1995), 40–41.

³³⁸ The tract is reprinted in Weiss, *ibid.* See also Stephens (1979), 157–174.

³³⁹ The other of these inscribed tables, Annio stated, referred to a much earlier one that recorded the foundation of Viterbo by Cameles and Janus in an ancient language that the inscription translated into Greek: Collins (2000), 62–63.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65

Elder.³⁴¹ The primary view repeated by Bomarzo scholars is that Annio's histories were intended to be, and were, widely believed, and that the Sacro Bosco works in the same fashion.³⁴² Such a view, however, denies the site its temporal specificity: to view the connection between Annio's *inganno* and the sculptures as straightforward is to situate the Sacro Bosco in Annio's earlier, late fifteenth-century context, rather than its actual post-Tridentine moment. By the mid-1500s Annio of Viterbo was an historical figure widely mocked for his version of antiquity, derided as a fraud and a cheat. This problematic reputation within sixteenth-century humanist circles has not been given appropriate critical attention in scholarship on the Sacro Bosco.

The extent to which Annio's historical claims, books and objects were discounted can be seen in the multiple texts published against him. Italian humanist Pietro Crinito (also known as Pietro Riccio) discredited Annio in *De Honesta Disciplina*, as did Raffaello Maffei in *Commentarium Urbanorum* and Antonio Agustin, Archbishop of Tarragona, in his *Dialogues*.³⁴³ Agustin, who regularly corresponded with Vicino's friend and relative Fulvio Orsini on antiquarian matters, stated with disdain in this publication that 'everything that he [Annio] had printed, I hold for certain, was his invention'.³⁴⁴ Such was also the opinion of Gaspar Barreiros, in his clearly titled text:

Censura in quendam auctorem qui sub falsi inscriptione Berosi Chaldaei

³⁴¹ For the names of Bomarzo see Dennis [1848] (1878), vol.I, 166; Bredekamp (1985), vol.I, 84–85 (and note 61 *supra*). On Annio's fictional works by Cato see Fumagalli (1984).

³⁴² Oleson writes that Annio's texts were a 'serious attempt to deceive' when connecting them to the Sacro Bosco. Coty takes the slightly different view that the 'issue of whether or not Annio's structures of reasoning and key arguments hold together under close inspection is effectively moot. His works were highly lauded, and reached a vast audience across Europe'. Morgan focuses on the fact that Annio's fake historical artefacts give a period voice to Nagel and Wood's theory of substitution: if Annio could find replica inscriptions as 'real' as originals then 'it is plausible that the 'Etruscan' artefacts of the Sacro Bosco were conceived in a similar spirit [...] the tombs were, to all intents and purposes, considered real by visitors'. Oleson (1975), 416; Coty (2013), 45; Morgan (2016)a, 266–268. See Nagel and Wood (2010), 241–250 for a discussion of Annio in relation to substitution.

³⁴³ Crinito [1504] (1955); Maffei [1506] (1559); Agustin [1587] (1736).

³⁴⁴ Agustin, *ibid.*, 290: 'Tutto quello, che egli fece stampare, io tengo per certo, che fosse sua invention'. On the twenty-year correspondence between Agustin and Fulvio Orsini see Haskell (1995), 21.

circumfertur—first published in 1561 in Portuguese and then in Latin in Rome four years later.³⁴⁵ In this publication, as Walter Stephens has shown, Barreiros systematically destroyed all credibility of Annio’s narrative.³⁴⁶ His focus was one of the ‘sources’ Annio claimed to have discovered, which he asserted belonged to Berossus, a Babylonian writer and astronomer active in the third century BC, whose writings had been lost to history but referenced by many prominent ancient authors.³⁴⁷ The language Barreiros used to describe Annio’s attempt to masquerade his own writings as that of Berossus is utterly dismissive. When writing of his motivation for his own exposé, Barreiros stated that he was ‘sorely grieved’ to find that such a historical figure should be ‘circulating under the putative, vain and unknown writer’ from Viterbo, who pretends to illuminate readers with ‘shaded/disguised interpretations’ and ‘fables’ [*fabulas*].³⁴⁸ He finds no pleasure in Annio’s fictions, instead the situation is an ‘indignity’ [*indignitate*] to history.³⁴⁹

Sixteenth-century marginalia found in copies of Annio’s *Antiquitates* held in the Biblioteca Hertziana in Rome, are equally explicit in their critique of Annio’s scholarship. One cinquecento reader thought that the text before them was so ludicrous, they wrote:

This man went insane twice and because of his insanity died in chains; rightly therefore, in his turn he teaches us the art of going insane [...] there is no lack of witnesses to his ignorance.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ Barreiros [1565] (1827), 21–98.

³⁴⁶ Stephens (2004), 210.

³⁴⁷ The history by Berossus was the longest of Annio’s creations and was also the focus of Sansovino’s edition of 1583. Annio’s five books by Berossus occupy fifty-three and a half folios (about a quarter) of the *Commentaria* and relate a version of human history from Adam through to and beyond the creation of Etruria by Noah.

³⁴⁸ Barreiros [1565] (1827), 28: ‘Sub cujusdam vani, et obscuri scriptoris titulo circumferri’. Quoted and trans. in Stephens (2004), 209–210.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ Quoted and trans. in Rowland (1998), 54: ‘Hic vir bis insanivit et propter insaniam mortuus est vincitus; recte igitur et suo vice artem docet insaniendi [...] se ut ignorantiae suae non desunt testes’.

In another section a direct address is scrawled to Annio: ‘O crazy delirious man—it’s no wonder you died in chains’.³⁵¹ These words reference the fact that Annio was known to have fallen ill with a brain abscess in the late 1480s and suggest that, as Ingrid D. Rowland discusses, people thought Annio’s historical claims so preposterous his brain might never have healed.³⁵² This is significant—regardless of whether Annio was actually *delirius*, late sixteenth-century readers clearly thought his histories were utter madness.³⁵³

Annio’s supposed discoveries and his fake artefacts were similarly discounted. Barreiros noted that the script of the *Tabula Maeonica Cybelica* looks nothing like the ancient Greek Annio claimed it was, but rather the writing used in early Christian Byzantine liturgical manuscripts—the very letters with which a Dominican friar such as Annio would have been familiar.³⁵⁴ Similarly, to uncover Annio’s forgeries, Agustin transcribed an account told to him by a native of Viterbo, which detailed the orchestrated ‘discoveries’. It is worth quoting the passage in full:

As Latino Latini from Viterbo, a learned man and very truthful, told me, Fra Giovanni Annio had certain characters carved in to a slab, that he then had buried in a vineyard, where in a short time there was to be an excavation at Viterbo, and when he learned that the excavators were already in the vineyard, he made them work where he had hidden the slab, saying that he had found from his books that in this part of the world was the oldest Temple in the World. So excavations being at once started at the other position, the first man who discovered the stone, ran to tell him, and he had it uncovered,

³⁵¹ Ibid.: ‘O hominem amentem delirium nimirum si mortuus es in vinculis’.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ The extent to which a negative view of Annio and his scholarship permeated educated circles can be seen in the attitude expressed in Giambullari’s *Il Gello* from 1546. Essentially a piece of mythic propaganda on the Etruscan origin’s of Florence for Cosimo I de’ Medici, the dialogue is heavily indebted to Annio’s histories, yet when Messer Curtio asks the character Gelli if Annio can be trusted, Gelli responds: ‘I do not wish to make a judgement on such an uncertain thing’, later stating of the history of Berosus: ‘we have agreed in our dialogue [it] is not trustworthy’: Giambullari (1546), 14 and 31. Quoted and trans. in Hillard (2016), 22.

³⁵⁴ Collins (2000), 62, note 19; Stephens (2004), 213.

little by little, and began to show great wonder about the stone and the characters alike.³⁵⁵

Accounts such as these suggest that Annio was widely disparaged by the mid-sixteenth century, his writings held to be fakes, his discoveries to be staged and his Etruscan artefacts to be forgeries. To quote Christopher Ligota, by 1550 Annio's reputation was 'pretty much in ruins'.³⁵⁶ It is a reception that shifts our understanding of, and complicates, the relationship between his activities and the Sacro Bosco. If a sixteenth-century visitor to Bomarzo responded to the Etruscan elements found in the Bosco in relation to knowledge of Annio of Viterbo and his history of the region, it could easily have been according to a figure who had organised theatrical performances of archaeological finds, and who had constructed a regional historical narrative that was considered deceptive, even ridiculous. Accordingly, converse to prior interpretation, the faux Etruscan ruins of the Sacro Bosco could be seen to make room for, even play with, this more ridiculing view of local antiquarianism. In their purposeful implausibility, the site's ancient-looking sculptures free themselves of similar criticisms. Perhaps they can even be seen as parodies of such antiquarian claims. This more critical view of Annio and of the potential for *inganno* in antiquarianism in the latter half of the sixteenth century is a vital, historically apposite, context for the Sacro Bosco. Indeed the view of antiquarianism and its *inganno* as unacceptable was taken to its most logical extreme in the fate of another antiquarian and forger, Alfonso Ceccarelli.

³⁵⁵ Agustin [1587] (1736), 290: 'Si come mi raccontava Latino Latini da Viterbo uomo dotto, e molto veridico, che Fra Giovanni Annio aveva fatto scalper certi carratteri in una lastra, e che le fece sotterrare in una vigna, ove tra poco tempo doveva cavarsi presso a Viterbo, e quando seppe che gia stavano i cavatori nella vigna, fece che venissero tirando l'opera fin là, dove stava occultata la altra, dicendo, che trovava ne' suoi libri, che in quella parte su un Tempio il piu antico del Mondo. Così cavandosi alla volta della l'altra, il primo che scoperse la pietra, corse as avvisarlo, el egli la fece scoprire a poco a poco, e comincio a mostrare gran meraviglia cose della pietra, come de' caratteri'.

³⁵⁶ Ligota (1987), 44.

ALFONSO CECCARELLI
(AND FRAUGHT ANTIQUARIAN INGANNO)

Ceccarelli (1532–1583) can be connected to Vicino Orsini through a manuscript from c.1579 written in his hand that refers to Orsini’s ‘noble garden near Bomarzo’ with ‘things to surprise you wherever you look’.³⁵⁷ Like Annio, Ceccarelli composed fictive historical documents but with the specific end of bolstering the ancient lineages of elite families across Italy, including in the Marche, Umbria, Rome, Florence and Bologna.³⁵⁸ Ceccarelli, however, lived in very different times to Annio and his activities resulted in the ultimate punishment—execution under the order of Pope Gregorius XIII in July 1583. His death sentence described him as a ‘*famoso impostore di Scritture antiche*’.³⁵⁹

Greek scholar, theologian, and keeper of the Vatican library, Leone Allacci, set down Ceccarelli’s crimes of falsification [‘*imposturae*’, ‘*falsidicationes*’, ‘*fraudes*’] in *Antiquitatum Etruscarum Fragmenta* (1642), in which he describes Ceccarelli’s actions in terms of various moral illnesses [‘*lues*’, ‘*pestis*’].³⁶⁰ If this text is reliable, Ceccarelli’s activities were extensive. Allacci includes three indices to his volume, which include more than one hundred and twenty authors supposedly quoted by Ceccarelli that either did not exist or to whom he fictitiously attributed texts.

According to these lists, moreover, Ceccarelli fabricated papal documents, privileges and family trees, as well as historical accounts.³⁶¹ Rather than accept the elevated

³⁵⁷ Alfonso Ceccarelli, *Il Simulacro di Casa Orsina* [1579], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 91 (BAV. Barb. lat. 4809. 65v): ‘Il Signor Vicino di Bumarzo ha fatto un nobilissimo Giardino presso a Bumarzo, dove mostra di fare a gara con la natura, in far cose da far stupire chiunque le vede’.

³⁵⁸ On Alfonso Ceccarelli (also sometimes known as Ciccarelli), see Fumi (1902); Pistarino (1958); Riegl (1894), 193–236; Kivistö (2015).

³⁵⁹ Ceccarelli’s judgement and death sentence: ‘Sentenza di morte contro di Alfonso Ceccarelli da Bevagna famoso impostore di Scritture antiche’ is reprinted in Fontanini (1711), 319–326.

³⁶⁰ Allacci (1642), 255–360. See also Kivistö (2015), 158–159.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

heritages Ceccarelli provided, however, against the unstable Tridentine backdrop, his clients asked questions, demanded to see the documents he claimed to own but could not produce for validation, cross-checked the towns he named and sought the manuscripts he asserted were in particular, obscure libraries but that turned out not to exist. Humiliated and out of pocket, these noble or illustrious figures, people such as the Prince of Massa Alberico Cibo-Malaspina (1534–1624), took Ceccarelli to court for his multiple deceptions.³⁶²

Before his execution Ceccarelli issued a public apology in which he situated, and tried to justify, his actions. Reprinted in Latin by Allacci but originally written in Italian, in this text Ceccarelli argued that he fabricated documents ‘for the truth’ [*pro veritate*] of a history that existed in incomplete form—just as the gospels were considered true, though none had Pontius Pilate’s condemnation of Christ verbatim.³⁶³ In this way, Ceccarelli argued, he used his writing to ‘stabilise the truth’ [*stabilire enim fulcireque veritatem*], and amplified [*amplificare*] and extended [*adaugere*] facts rather than making them anew.³⁶⁴ In making such justifications, Ceccarelli, it could be argued, was attempting to place himself in the earlier tradition and view of history of Anzio of Viterbo, which made room for inauthenticity.³⁶⁵ Ceccarelli’s gruesome fate, however, shows how the context had altered; such argument had no purchase.

Orologi’s 1562 book *L’inganno*, the publications and marginalia discrediting Anzio, and Ceccarelli’s execution, all expose a view of antiquarianism and its manipulation

³⁶² Ibid., 260–268; Kivistö (2015), 161–162. Ceccarelli’s was not the only court case surrounding forgery. The fraudulent activities of Roman antiquarians often resulted in legal challenges. Barbara Furlotti, for example, relates how the famous antiquarian brothers Vincenzo and Giovanni Antonio Stampa were charged with having purposefully deceived one Bernardino Acciari: (Archivio di Stato di Roma, Tribunale criminale del Governatore, Investigazioni, vol. 99, fols. 56v-57r), Furlotti (2010), 390, note 17.

³⁶³ Allacci (1642), 284, 279–280.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 283, 285 and 287.

³⁶⁵ For how this mode of thought originated in even earlier traditions of forgery see Grafton (1990)b and Trapp (1990). On imagination as part of Renaissance antiquarian scholarship see also Mitchell (1960). For willing credulity as a way of reading history more generally see Veyne (1988).

of history that offers a new framework and more nuanced perspective within which to consider the Sacro Bosco's engagement with its local past, and the possible receptions of its sculptures in the latter half of the sixteenth century. History writing in the late cinquecento was particularly unstable, subject to accusations of fiction—just as much an originator of insecurity or scandal as knowledge and pleasure. So too, antiquarian issues of history and authenticity were sources of anxiety; antiquarians could not be trusted and nor could their texts or artefacts. An humanist educated visitor, at the very least, would have been aware of this fraught and potentially deceptive side of antiquarian activity. Positioned in a landscape of genuine relics, the mock Etruscan tombs self-consciously expose their fabrication and, seen in the wider antiquarian context discussed, they thus become evidently discursive objects, playing on their own deceptiveness, and—crucially—offering critical sites where the knowledgeable visitor was provoked to consider the deceptive and creative nature of history.

By the point of their completion, the 'mock' sculptures in the Sacro Bosco, placed in their immediate archeological landscape, prompt thought about how the past is known when so much is unknown, damaged and incomplete. Discoveries of ancient artefacts in sixteenth-century Italy were often marked by a lack of solid contextual information, an historical instability that equally projects uncertainty about the future. If the objects of history come to us so fragmented and mysterious, how can one be confident of how one's own artefacts will be known and understood? The construction of monuments and outdoor sculpture was often seen, then as now, as a way to provide a permanent and curated memory and image beyond the grave. The ruin destabilises this concept. In *Orologi's* publication the character Ruscelli informs the reader of the deception of sculpture, represented by the false promise of its sculpted material. 'Deceiving the ambitious who seek to have themselves cast and sculpted in order to believe that they will thus live forever', *Orologi* writes, instead the:

ravenousness of time buries them to their neck, their arms, their nose or their legs so that they look unearthed like Maestro Pasquino, and at that moment they find themselves in such bad repair that no one knows them for anything but resurrected fragments.³⁶⁶

The ruin here is the loss of control over one's self and image, the fate of sculpture to become damaged marking the instability of one's own history and future.

When Ruscelli compares the broken statues of Rome's ambitious patrons to 'Maestro Pasquino' he refers to the ancient ruined body of a Hellenistic-style statue in Rome [Fig.2.44].³⁶⁷ Over the course of the sixteenth century, the tradition developed of dressing this battered sculpture in mythological dress and posting anonymous verses on its figure and the surrounding architecture, '*pasquinades*' that often sardonically mocked the city's governance and social order. This practice is, in many ways, the performative embodiment of Orologi's comment on the *inganno* of sculpture: the ruined *Pasquino* is no longer his original self but the mouthpiece of others.

In a print published in Rome in 1621 this relationship between the statue's destroyed body and powers of speech are explored. Part of Antonio Lafreri's *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, the print shows the stone body of Pasquino turned to face the viewer, his chipped visage looking out of the image (so damaged it is the epitome of lost identity) [Fig.2.45]. Around him torn bits of paper are tacked to the wall in both Latin and Italian, while on the base of his plinth is carved text through which Pasquino addresses the viewer:

I am not as I seem a worn-out baboon without feet and without hands
Nor am I the ape of Nicolò Zoppino with the other limbs deformed and
strange
But I am that most famous Pasquino and I make tremble the most powerful

³⁶⁶ Orologi (1562), 124: 'ingannando medesimamente gli ambizioso che si fanno coniare e scolpire dandose a credere di viverci perpetuamente', 'la ingordiggia del tempo i sotterra fiaccandogli [sic] il colo, le braccia, il naso, o le cambe che assomigliano poi dissotterate a maestro Pasquino & talhora si trovano cosi mal'acconci che non è alcuno che i conosca per altro che per fragmenti di figure de rileno [sic]'.
³⁶⁷ On *Pasquino* see Marucci (1988); Rendina (1991); Barkan (1999), 208–230; San Juan (2001), 1–8.

Lords
and astonish foreigners and peasants when I compose in vernacular or in
Latin
My persona was shaped thus by the blows that strike me from here and from
there
Because I speak their faults openly, but as long as I have my well-used tongue
in my mouth
What do I care, even if the rest of me perishes.³⁶⁸

As Rose Marie San Juan has noted, in this statement ‘Pasquino attributes the power of his voice to a diminished physical appearance that permits others to take on his persona but remain undetected’.³⁶⁹ As people adopt his voice, in other words, Pasquino loses control of his selfhood and by being so ruined he becomes a vessel for others’ words. This, in Orologi’s text, is what Ruscelli argues is the danger of all sculpture—it will become a ruin. Far from fixing the self in time, in sculpture the subject is set up to be rewritten. This is what the mock Etruscan ruins of the Sacro Bosco acknowledge, even pre-empt, by presenting themselves already partially ruined and fragmented—as if anticipating how scholars would come across their damaged forms centuries later, overgrown and undocumented.

SUPER SIZED

The inventive and self-reflexive mode of dealing with the past that I argue is evident in the Sacro Bosco becomes even more apparent when we place the mock Etruscan ruins in relation to the site’s other statues. Too frequently the faux-tombs are discussed in isolation, within the Sacro Bosco as well as within the surrounding Orsini territory. However the fantastical creatures represented, as will become apparent in the following chapters, relate to many different contexts: literary, mythical and scientific. They also occur within Etruscan culture.

³⁶⁸ Pasquino, quoted and trans. in San Juan (2001), 3: ‘Alexandri Magni miles, vulgo Pasquinus eum socium detinens. Ante aedes Sermonaetis Card[inalis] Romani’, c.1614. Engraving, 22 x 13 cm, part of *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* [1550] (Antonio Lafreri, 1621), engraving number 80.

³⁶⁹ San Juan, *ibid.*

Take the two Sphinx sculptures that now face each other and guard the modern entrance, and where we find the inscription concerning *inganno* [Plate 1], as an example. These creatures famously occur in ancient Egyptian and Greek art and these statues would almost certainly have reminded a Renaissance visitor of the famous hybrid that terrorised Thebes, but they are also commonly found on Etruscan sarcophagi.³⁷⁰ One example is that carved from volcanic *nefro* stone, dating between 325 and 250 BC, and now housed in the British Museum. Decorated with relief carvings of scrolls, snakes, female mask-like heads, floral and animal designs, the sarcophagus includes on each end of its lid two seated sphinxes, approximately twenty-five centimetres in length. Originally this object was found in a tomb known as the Grotta Dipinta, now destroyed, a few kilometres north of Bomarzo and Monte Casoli, and a site that was known already in the sixteenth century [Fig.2.46].³⁷¹ Looking at the Sacro Bosco's Sphinx sculptures in relation to this object, the plinths they sit on begin to resemble stone coffins. It is likely Orsini knew of other such objects. As Hillard expresses, there has been much scholarly work that proves that there was widespread and direct knowledge of Etruscan culture and its objects in sixteenth-century Italy, even if it is 'rarely possible to trace specific artefacts'.³⁷² We might not have direct evidence of the exact Etruscan objects Orsini encountered, but the prevalence of certain motifs in surviving sarcophagi from the region makes knowledge of particular mythic creatures and designs highly probable. There are multiple similar pairs of sphinxes adorning Etruscan sarcophagi in the many local Etruscan museums of Alto Lazio, such as one duo facing each other in carved relief at

³⁷⁰ For the familiarity of Egyptian myths and culture in Renaissance Italy see Curran (2007).

³⁷¹ de Grummond (1996), 171. Dennis described the tomb as 'a chamber whose walls, gaily painted, are alive with sea horses snorting and plunging—water snakes uprearing their crests and gliding along in slimy folds [...] and—can we believe our eyes?—grim and hideous caricatures of the human face divine': Dennis [1848] (1878), vol.I, 'Grotta Dipinta', 168–172, 168.

³⁷² Hillard (2016), 502. See note 288 *supra* for the widespread knowledge of Etruscan tombs and artefacts in the Renaissance.

the end of a peperino sarcophagus now housed in the Museo Nazionale Tarquiniense [Fig.2.47].

The Siren and Harpy sculptures of the Sacro Bosco also represent creatures prevalent in Etruscan culture. Facing each other at one end of the area lined with stone acorns and pine cones, the Siren sits upright and bare chested, her face staring ahead impassively [Plate 29], while opposite the Harpy digs her claws into the earth, her body turning into a singular scaly tail, while out of her back spread dragon-like wings [Plate 27]. Between these female monsters are two adult lions defending their cubs, their mouths open, large enough to engulf your hand [Plate 28]. Such hybrid and tailed female creatures reside in almost every Etruscan archeological museum and site in Alto Lazio. At the *Tomba dei Demoni Alati* (third century BC) at Sovana, a damaged figure can be seen with a long, scaled tail and fanned wing, akin to the sculpture at Bomarzo [Fig.2.37].³⁷³ Others that fill the entire front surface of sarcophagi at the Museo Nazionale at Tarquinia have the same covered groin, bare chest, and thick writhing tails [Fig.2.48 and 2.49]. Significantly enough, such a creature was also included above the title of Francesco Sansovino's dedication to Vicino in his 1578 edition of *Arcadia* [Fig.2.50].³⁷⁴

Of further significance here is how these sculptures of the Sacro Bosco relate to Etruscan objects in terms of their scale. The sculptures are of a size that far exceeds those found in genuine artefacts from this ancient civilisation. The torso of the Siren alone is almost three meters high—standing in front of her you must crane your neck to meet her eyes; were she capable of standing she would be nearly seven meters tall. What does it mean to recreate fantastical creatures from Etruscan artefacts in such

³⁷³ This is one of the tombs Oleson references in relation to the large Mock Tomb, though it makes for a much stronger visual comparison to the Siren sculpture. Sovana was likely known to Orsini due to its proximity to Pitigliano. See note 249 *supra*.

³⁷⁴ See note 35 *supra*.

extreme proportions and fully in the round, and what are the implications for the beholder? In one sense, it means to create ‘Etruscan’ sculpture that rivalled in size the giant objects of ancient Rome, surviving examples of which included fragments of a colossal statue of the Emperor Constantine from circa 312 to 315 AD [Fig.2.51].

Colossal statues were of course legendary beyond Rome too. The *Colossus of Rhodes*, a sculpture of the Greek sun god Helios erected in 280 BC and said to have stood thirty-three meters tall, celebrated Rhodes’ victory over Antigonos I Monophthalmus, ruler of Cyprus. Considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, Pliny the Elder wrote of how:

This statue fifty six years after it was erected, was thrown down by an earthquake; but even as it lies, it excites our wonder and admiration. Few people can make their arms meet around the thumb of the figure and the fingers are larger than most statues.³⁷⁵

In 1570, Maerten van Heemskerck reimagined this famed ancient statue in a pen and brown ink drawing, which was then copied as an engraving by Jan Philipp Galle in 1572 [Fig.2.52].³⁷⁶ In this image, the *Colossus of Rhodes* is shown pre- and post-earthquake. In the background it stands in the harbour, legs sturdily apart to create a gateway for sea vessels entering and leaving the city. In the foreground, however, its decapitated head is depicted upturned and broken on the ground—the face looking skyward as its chipped neck faces the viewer. Men, antiquarians perhaps, clamber over and examine the fragment. The *Colossus of Rhodes* is particularly relevant for the Sacro Bosco as it is directly referenced in an inscription found near to the Fighting Giants:

IF RHODES WAS ELEVATED BY ITS COLOSSUS
SO BY THIS ONE MY WOOD IS GLORIFIED

³⁷⁵ Pliny (ed.2012), vol.V: Books 33–37 (XXXIV:41).

³⁷⁶ The original drawing can be found in the collection of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London (D.1952.RW.648).

FOR I HAVE DONE NO MORE THAN I CAN DO.³⁷⁷

To make sculptures of such size was, the inscription implies, to emulate, grapple with, and match the ancients, a glorifying mission that places the Bosco in competition with sites of ancient wonder.³⁷⁸

What is equally notable, however, is how the site's play with scale creates a relationship between representation and beholder in which the distance between the two is greatly reduced. To carve creatures of such size, particularly given the qualities of sculpture as a medium, puts into place an imaginative, performative element to the visitor's encounter with ancient history and its mythic creatures. The giant three dimensionality of these sculptures occupies, and powerfully asserts their physical presence in the same space as that of the viewer. Importantly, the stone creatures of the Sacro Bosco are not technically colossal according to the sixteenth-century definition of the term. In 1504 Pomponio Gaurico defined a colossal sculpture as one that was three times life size, though sometimes the term was also applied to sculptures that were slightly smaller.³⁷⁹ Instead, the sculptures belong to their own fantastical scale, in which they are proportioned not just to the block or boulder from which they are carved, but also to the imaginary of the visitor. Consider an Etruscan alabaster cinerary urn found at Chiusi from between 200 and 100 BC and now in the British Museum, on which a two-tailed female monster attacks two men with a steering oar, while they fight back aggressively, swords raised [Fig.2.53]. The scale of the Sacro Bosco's Siren matches the scale of human to monster shown here in relief. The beholder in Bomarzo is thus compelled to take part in a physical as well as imaginative interaction, in which their body senses what it would be like to be

³⁷⁷ 'SE RODI ALTIER GIA FV DEL SVO COLOSSO / PVR DI QVEST IL MIO BOSCO ANCHO SI GLORIA / E PER PIV NON POTER FO QVANT IO POSSO' (Appendix, C).

³⁷⁸ The inscription may also comment upon the construction of the sculptures: 'I have done no more than I can do' highlighting that the sculptures are confined by the limits of their given material and boulder. The seven ancient wonders of the world are also directly referenced in the inscription on the left Sphinx (Appendix, A).

³⁷⁹ Gauricus [1504] (1969), 102; Bush (1976), xxvii.

overshadowed by a creature of such size. It is a dynamic, playful encounter with a mythic history, into which the mock-tombs by a different mechanism insert themselves.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to rethink the Sacro Bosco's engagement with Etruscan history. It has done so by bringing the immediate archeological landscape of Bomarzo to bear on the site's faux artefacts, along with close visual analysis of the sculptures, and an attentiveness to changing attitudes towards antiquarianism in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Doing so allows a reconsideration of how a historical visitor inclined to study ancient history might have received the Sacro Bosco's mock tombs in light of the genuine Etruscan remains nearby and locally known historic forgers such as Annio of Viterbo. When examined in relation to these archeological objects and intellectual contexts, the ancient references in the Sacro Bosco are more complex than a simple assertion of an Etruscan lineage for Vicino Orsini. Instead, the faux-ancient structures appear to respond, on the one hand, to the geography the sculptures share with a multitude of ancient sites. On the other hand, they seem to respond to the specific late sixteenth-century, post-Tridentine context in which the Bosco was built, in which representation and history was a source of pleasure initially, but also unstable and potentially problematic.

Scholarship to date has smoothed over the more playful and conflicting elements of the Sacro Bosco's relationship with ancient Etruria. To stop at the point where the faux-ancient sculptures argue for Orsini lineage denies the site its potential for self-reflexivity, and the ways in which it could have been seen to acknowledge its historic fictions. Afford the latter and the Sacro Bosco becomes a space that provides a performative, critical space, where its visitors enjoy but also encounter the construction of the past. As William Stenhouse has pointed out, antiquities in the

Renaissance were objects that sparked discussion, analysis, and often debate—the same is true, perhaps particularly, of imitations.³⁸⁰ Even if the patron did, in part, wish to project an Etruscan lineage, the sculptures of the Bosco call up more complex possibilities, which would not have been lost on a humanistically trained visitor. Indeed Agustin, when discussing the inventive texts of authors such as Annio of Viterbo, asserted that if we were to believe everything we find in history books we might as well believe overtly fantastical texts such as *Orlando Furioso*: ‘*Se tutto quello, che si truova stampato, si dovesse creder per vero, sarebbe ancor vero quello [...] Orlando, et tante altre fictioni de’nostri tempi*’.³⁸¹ Fiction and history rub up against each other in the Sacro Bosco. From playful historical fiction and a local Etruscan past in this chapter, the next moves to consider fictions of a different kind: those of the type Agustin references above, of fantasy and imagination. With Agustin’s alignment of fictional, fantastical literature and history then, the ground is prepared for Chapter Three.

³⁸⁰ Stenhouse (2005), 426.

³⁸¹ Agustín [1587] (1736), 291.

CHAPTER THREE: FICTION

In the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, the loggia of the Palazzina Gambara contains a fresco that displays a bird's eye view of the villa and its grounds represented within a unifying one-point perspective [Fig.3.1]. Painted around 1574 to 1578 and complete with a trompe-l'œil gold frame, it is based not on the site itself but on the original *disegno* or *bozzetto grafico* by Vignola. Recent scholarship has discussed the dangers of trusting such painted garden views, which are often idealised and inaccurate, as historical documents. As artworks in their own right, however, Denis Ribouillait has argued that they functioned to demarcate and provide readability for the locations they represented. By commissioning a garden view, patrons and garden designers actively attempted to confer 'particular visual knowledge', and place pressure on the way the visitor engaged with and moved around a site.³⁸² For the Sacro Bosco there is no such map or wall painting, and none from the sixteenth century is known to have existed. Instead, the wooded Sacro Bosco and the naturally-occurring placement of the large, grounded statues imply a design in which there is no clear authoritative route around the space and in which a more exploratory mode of beholding is encouraged. The aim of this chapter is to probe more closely the implications of this unusual layout for the experience of those visiting the Sacro Bosco in the late cinquecento. The previous chapter examined the Etruscan geography of the locale. This chapter returns from the hills and valleys surrounding the Bosco to concentrate on the immediate topography of the sculptural site itself in order to attempt to better understand the possibilities attending the visitor's movement through it.

³⁸² Ribouillait (2011), 213. See also Edward Casey, who argues that 'the representation of landscape affects us, the viewers—affects us not socially or politically as such but experientially': (2002), xvi. On the fresco at the Villa Lante see Lazzaro (1974), vol.I, 37–40; Coffin (1966), 569–575; Alessi (2002), 22–24.

To do so, I turn to forms of popular literature that were emerging in Italian culture around 1550, namely the fantastical stories that appeared in a fresh influx of mid-century *novelle* and the courtly game books that drew upon their content. These contemporary genres would have formed the ‘horizon of expectation’ and informed the ‘period eye’ and body of the intended, educated historical beholder.³⁸³ Indeed, Giuseppe Betussi lists authors and editors of *novelle*, such as Francesco Maria Molza and Francesco Sansovino, within Orsini’s illustrious social circle.³⁸⁴ The fact that we know that Orsini conversed with figures who were actively engaged with this literary genre adds weight to what I see as the evident structural and thematic correlations between these publications and the Sacro Bosco. This literature offers new insights into how the sensory and cognitive experiences laid out for a sixteenth-century visitor might have been received. On the one hand, the outdoor settings employed in these texts, the works’ composition, and the way readers were led to engage with them in social situations has implications for understanding what I shall characterise as the fragmented, episodic experience of moving through the Bosco. On the other hand, the two cultural forms share an imaginative register that would have been palpably invoked for the beholder, for whom the woodland environs and disparate sculptural scenes could have recalled the enchanted topographies of contemporary fantastical fiction.

In making such an argument, the following pages draw on the historical work of Niall Atkinson on the experience of space.³⁸⁵ Using various Renaissance poems and prose narratives, from Boccaccio to Petrarch, Atkinson considers how the urban disorientation articulated in these texts can help us capture the historical experience of being in fifteenth-century built environments. His central thesis is that fiction can

³⁸³ For these concepts see pages 25–26.

³⁸⁴ Betussi [1544] (1555), 78 (note 39 *supra*).

³⁸⁵ Atkinson (2016), 177–207.

offer critical insights into historical spaces and people's behaviour within them.³⁸⁶ This chapter will transpose Atkinson's method to the landscape setting of the Sacro Bosco. Likewise, my approach draws from scholars, such as Patricia Emison, who have explored how certain literary forms and experiences of reading must be seen 'as having psychological, physical, cultural and social aspects' and the potential to affect 'habits of perception'.³⁸⁷ Emison is particularly notable for her focus on Renaissance *novelle*. If an 'awareness of cultural "thickness" is our goal', as she puts it, 'it is irresponsible to ignore the *novelle*' when thinking about how Renaissance men and women perceived and inhabited the world around them.³⁸⁸ The same is true of the courtly game books also considered here.

The immensely popular genres of magical tales and game books provide a compelling and historically apposite frame with which to approach a site such as Bomarzo from the point of view of its sixteenth-century beholders and could have offered perceptible and forceful connections for the literate visitor. The Italian word *movimento*, from the Latin *motio*, helps frame this proposition, applicable as it is to both physical action and affects and sentiments. To borrow the definition of the *Vocabolario degli accademici della crusca*, *movimento* indicated both the motion 'of bodily things, as well as incorporeal'; in other words, it implied bodily travel, but also the emotions and feeling of being moved.³⁸⁹ This is the argument made here: that the Sacro Bosco would have been physically and emotionally encountered by a beholder in a manner that literally moved them around the site, but that would also have moved them to

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 206.

³⁸⁷ Emison (2016), 1 of 20. See also Petrucci (1979) and idem (1995). For a more general look at how stories and narrative forms act upon people, society, relations and experience see Frank (2010).

³⁸⁸ Emison, *ibid.*, 3 of 20.

³⁸⁹ *Vocabolario* (1612): 'Moto, e dicesi così delle cose corporee, come incorporee'.

comparisons and connections with, even an immersion within, the type of imaginative landscape associated with these fictional genres.

The positioning of the sculptures in Bomarzo, and the visitor's movement through the space, remain the site's most frequently mentioned but most problematic aspects, and these two literary genres have not previously been considered in relation to the Sacro Bosco. Scholarship on the site, and on the relationship between Italian Renaissance gardens and literature, tends to home in instead on explicitly classical and courtly publications, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Petrarch, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) or Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581).³⁹⁰ In comparison to such texts, *novelle* and game books belong to a relatively 'lowly' form of literature within early modern criticism. Perhaps inheriting this early critical view, the genre seems to have passed beneath the attention of academic literature on Vicino's site. In his influential *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (c.1360, first printed 1472), for example, Boccaccio described the *novella* as last in the hierarchy of fiction.³⁹¹ Following Boccaccio, Girolamo Bargagli asserted in 1572, that while a story of magic 'can't but delight on account of its un-conventionality', it

³⁹⁰ For the Sacro Bosco and the *Hypnerotomachia*, see note 99 *supra*. For *Orlando Furioso*, see Darnall and Weil (1984), 6–72. For Torquato Tasso see Zander (1955), 19–32. For Petrarch, see Morgan (2015), 16–21. Maurizio Calvesi was one of the earliest authors to consider literary references in relation to the Sacro Bosco. In 1956, he posited Bernardo Tasso's poem *Floridante* (published posthumously in 1587, but circulated in the poet's lifetime) as the source of the Sacro Bosco's iconography, and then later explored the site's allusions to *Orlando Furioso*, Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, Luigi Pulci's *Morgante* and Bernardo Tasso's *L'Amadigi*: Calvesi (1956), 369–402 and *idem* (1989), 142–147. Calvesi has also argued that Torquato Tasso's enchanted woodland in *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581) could have been based on a visit to the Sacro Bosco: (1956), 369–402. For texts on Renaissance gardens and literary 'sources' more generally, see Leslie (1992); Hunt (1996), 42–58; Tigner (2016). For an introduction to epics and romance texts of the Italian Renaissance see: Bruscaagli (1996), 888–907 and Ceserani and Pellini (2003), 1–19.

³⁹¹ Boccaccio (1585), 236v. Boccaccio's own critique lay in the fact that the genre did not conform to the verisimilitude required by Aristotle's *Poetics*. In response to this criticism, Florentine Francesco Bonciani published *Lezione sopra il comporre delle novelle* in 1574, one of the only extended attempts to theorize the *novella* in sixteenth-century Italy. Bonciani attempted to restore the literary standing of the *novella* by arguing that it did in fact have a didactic end and a semblance of verisimilitude by informing the reader how to avoid danger, horror or ridicule. See Bonciani [1574] (2002), 117–181.

was also ‘held to be less beautiful and less perfect’.³⁹² Over the following pages it will be established that despite their more modest literary status, *novelle* and courtly game books were embedded within the elite leisure practices of Orsini’s circles and were associated with rural residences and outdoor spaces, making them particularly apt genres to consider in respect to Bomarzo. Indeed, the Sacro Bosco—set apart from the Orsini palazzo in the town, with its sculptural use of local peperino stone, and its referencing of predominantly Etruscan rather than classical Roman motifs—could be said to speak inherently to vernacular, less prestigious cultural forms.

NOVELLE & FAVOLE

The word *novelle* refers to collections of short stories written in vernacular prose, primarily told within a frame tale (*la cornice*), in which a group of characters gather to entertain each other over multiple evenings.³⁹³ Taking various modes, including humorous, satirical, moral and fantastical, these stories primarily went by two names in cinquecento Italy: *novella* and *favola*.³⁹⁴ Today these terms often signal different types of text: a *novella* is deemed the more realistic in content (though it can still be imaginary), while a *favola* indicates a magical fable or fairytale.³⁹⁵ In sixteenth-century Italy, however, this distinction was less exact and the two terms were used

³⁹² Bargagli [1572, written 1563] (2012), 60: ‘Non può fare per la sua stravaganza di non delittare [...] avviene, che men belle, e meno perfette’.

³⁹³ For the *novella* genre in sixteenth-century Italy see Guglielminetti (1972); Salinari (1976); Clements and Gibaldi (1977); Pozzi (1981); Villani (1982), 67–73; Smarr (1983); Ciccuto, Marcello and Conrieri (1993); Norton and Cottino-Jones (1999), 322–338; Mancini (2003), 25–27.

³⁹⁴ In the seventeenth century the word *cunto/i* was also used, as with Giambattista Basile’s 1634 collection *Lo cunto de li cunti* (*The Tale of Tales*). In cinquecento Italy however, this word does not seem to have been in wide use and does not appear in the 1612 *Vocabolario degli accademici della crusca*.

³⁹⁵ *Grande Dizionario Italiano*: Aldo (2015): Favola: ‘Breve narrazione, in versi o in prosa, dove, facendo agire e parlare animali, piante e cose inanimate, si mettono in evidenza i difetti e i vizi umani, con l’intento di dare un insegnamento morale’ and ‘Racconto fantastico, spec. popolare, con protagonisti immaginari quali fate e streghe’; Novella: ‘Testo letterario in prosa, consistente nella narrazione, per lo più breve, di un fatto reale o immaginario’.

interchangeably and indiscriminately.³⁹⁶ The *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca* (1612), describes a *favola* as ‘[f]rom the Latin *fabula*, [a story] found not to be true but that sometimes gives the impression of verisimilitude’; while *novella* is categorised as ‘a fabulous narrative’, a ‘*favola*. Lat. *Fabula*’.³⁹⁷ In the Italian to English Dictionary *Queen Anna’s New World of Words* (1611), a *favola* is said to be ‘a fable, a tale, a leafing, a lie’, while *novella* denotes broader possibilities and can be ‘a novel, a new discourse, a tale, a fable, a parable. Also a tiding or news’.³⁹⁸

In Italy, the history of *novelle* begins with Boccaccio’s fourteenth-century *Decamerone*, a group of one hundred vernacular tales told over ten days by a host of fictional narrators who have fled the Black Death in Florence and have taken refuge in a Tuscan country villa. The *Decamerone* quickly became the primary literary model for prose fiction across Italy in the 1300s, followed by a general hiatus in output over the fifteenth century.³⁹⁹ The genre, however, then experienced an unprecedented rise in production, innovation and readership in the second half of the sixteenth century, at precisely the time when the Sacro Bosco was being built. Manuela Scarci has argued that Agnolo Firenzuola’s *I Ragionamenti* (1548), was the first publication to take up the vernacular *novella* format in earnest after the period of stagnation the previous century.⁴⁰⁰ Firenzuola’s collection was swiftly followed by similar publications, in which authors pushed the Boccaccian tradition further into the realm of magic and

³⁹⁶ See Calabrese (1983), 178 and Cottino-Jones (2000), 173–184.

³⁹⁷ *Vocabolario* (1612): *Fabula*: ‘Dal latino *fabula*, trovato non vero, ma talora verisimile’; *Novella*: ‘Narrazion favolosa, *favola*. Lat. *Fabula*’.

³⁹⁸ Florio (1611), n.p.

³⁹⁹ Examples of Italian tale collections that based their style and content on the *Decamerone* from the fourteenth century, include Giovanni Sercambi’s *Novelle* [1374] (1972); Giovanni Fiorentino’s *Pecorone* [1390] (1804); and Franco Sacchetti’s *Trecento Novelle* [c.1395] (2014).

⁴⁰⁰ Scarci (2003), 138.

fantasy than it had ever been previously.⁴⁰¹ This new wave of *novelle* became a fixture of courtly leisure time.⁴⁰² Immensely popular, they were widely published despite the fact that many were also placed on papal indices for forbidden books in the wake of the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent. Indeed, their censorship also speaks to their prevalence and widespread use.⁴⁰³

Le Piacevoli Notti by Giovan Francesco Straparola first published in 1551 and extended with a second volume in 1553, demonstrates the high demand for such stories. It is also a publication that plays an important role in this chapter as a text celebrated for containing some of the first published literary fairytales in western culture.⁴⁰⁴ Straparola's volumes were so popular that they were printed on twenty separate occasions in Italy in the first twenty-five years of its publishing history,

⁴⁰¹ Magnanini (2008), 3 and Bottighemer (2014), 149. *Novelle* by authors such as Anton Francesco Doni (who resided in Florence, Venice and Rome), Giovan Francesco Straparola (Venice), Lorenzo Selva (Marcellino, Tuscany), Anton Francesco Grazzini (Florence), Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio (Ferrara) and Matteo Bandello (Castelnuovo, Piedmont and Milan). For a survey of fairytale motifs in Italian Literature see Petrini (1983), 252–255.

⁴⁰² For the various contexts of storytelling see Richardson (1999); Burke (2009), 133–163; Salzberg (2011), 737–759; Salzberg and Rospocher (2012), 9–26.

⁴⁰³ Aretino's *Sette Selmi* was censored in 1551, Bandello's *Novelle* in 1554, the *Decamerone* in 1557, Firenzuola's *Novelle* in 1562, and Straparola's *Le Piacevoli Notti* in 1580: Bottigheimer (2002), 121–122. Restriction mostly arose as a result of content that was viewed as anticlerical—stories that involved lecherous priests and badly behaved nuns for example—but sometimes censorship stretched to fantastical content considered unable to contain allegorical Christian meaning or moral truth, a problem that led to the heavy editing and attempted religious interpretation of many re-editions of popular *novelle*, including Boccaccio: see Hathaway (1968), 127–139. For an example of an edited version of the *Decamerone* with allegorical interpretations by Giuseppe Betussi, see Boccaccio (1585).

⁴⁰⁴ Straparola's 'fairy tale' stories hold a contentious place within folk tale scholarship. Ruth B. Bottigheimer ((1994), (2002) and (2009)) argues that Straparola invented a new fairytale plot and genre that emerged from a mercantile, urban, Venetian context, in which an impoverished protagonist attains riches through the aid of magic (a 'rise' story). It is a position that has sparked intense debate, more traditional folklorists arguing that all printed tales find their origins in oral, sometimes untraceable, narratives, see the *Journal of American Folklore* (2010), which was dedicated to the issue and includes challenges by Francisco Vaz da Silva, Dan Ben-Amos and Jan Ziolkowski. Jack Zipes, though conforming to the view of fairytales as oral tradition, does place Straparola as the first European author to write and print such magical tales: (1997), 176–193, idem (2001) and idem (2011), 221–243. Rudolf Schenda proposes a more fluid interchange in which oral tales were written down, and where oral tales were learnt and listened to from the printed page: (2007), 127–140.

whereas the *Decamerone* took fifty years to reach sixteen editions.⁴⁰⁵ The publisher Daniele Zanetti printed versions in Venice in 1597, 1598 and 1601, as did Zanetto Zanetti in 1604 and 1608 despite a papal ban existing from 1580.⁴⁰⁶ To omit these new tales of monsters, magic and enchantment from the literary lexicon of the historical beholder is thus to overlook a widespread, rich, and potentially illuminating element of the cultural matrix in which the Sacro Bosco was received. With this fantastical literary context in mind, let us now first consider their shared imaginative register; in both, woodlands filled with mythical and marvellous creatures abound.

EVOCATIONS

The woods that surrounded the town of Bomarzo in the cinquecento, as they do now, consisted primarily of beechwoods, oaks and chestnuts. On the one hand, these woods would have been productive, providing the region with timber, firewood, herbs, land to graze animals and rich hunting grounds.⁴⁰⁷ On the other hand, such woodland also had deep and longstanding imaginative associations in which the *novelle* genre participated. The Introduction to this thesis explored the connotations of the Sacro Bosco as a ‘sacred grove’ and *boschetto*, which, along with the images by Bartholomaeus Breenbergh from 1625 [see Fig.9, 10 and 2.33], suggest that the site was intended to be experienced as a wooded environment. In this way the Sacro Bosco was more a part of and an extension of the surrounding landscape and *bosco* than of the Orsini residence, such as one would expect of a country villa estate.

⁴⁰⁵ Bottigheimer (2002), 120.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. It should be noted, however, that *Le piacevoli notti* was not immune to the effects of the Council of Trent and its various guidelines. Looking at the Italian editions chronologically, it is apparent that changes were made to certain tales and others replaced entirely to edit out potential offence to the church: Magnanini (2015), 30–32. Doris Senn, in addition, notes how during this period Christian-related words such as ‘glorioso’, ‘sacro’, ‘divino’ and ‘anima’ as well as pagan-tinged vocabulary such as ‘fortuno’ and ‘fato’ were removed from Straparola’s volumes: (1993), 53.

⁴⁰⁷ On the practical history of woodland in Italy and Europe see: Warde (2006), 28–57; Appulin (2009) and Squatriti (2013).

Indeed, the spatial separation of the Sacro Bosco from the Orsini palazzo meant that rather than move seamlessly from the courtly space of internal rooms out into the villa garden, Vicino's visitor would need to leave the palazzo grounds completely to reach the stone sculptures, transitioning from the safety and boundaries of the town to the more unfamiliar, external space of the wood.

The *bosco* beyond a town or place of inhabitation has a long history in European culture of being seen as a threshold, a place that connotes a shift from civilisation to wilderness, controlled to chaotic, known to unknown. Across literary and artistic manifestations it symbolises a transformative place and a portal into a world that abides by different laws, as characterised by Dante's *selva oscura* and Poliphilo in the *Hypnerotomachia*, the latter first travelling through a dense landscape of gnarled trees in order to enter his dreamscape. The 1499 woodcut that accompanies the description of this journey emphasises the all-encompassing experience of being within a wood. Poliphilo's body seems to merge with the upright pattern of repeated trunks, the folds of his attire mimicking that of the bark and the spaces between the trees [Fig.3.2]. Just as Poliphilo must lose himself in this *bosco* to pass into the world of his imagination, the viewer almost loses him within the image. Into this vocabulary of enchanted forests in Bomarzo scholarship, so far characterised by Dante, the *Hypnerotomachia* and *Arcadia*, the *novelle* of cinquecento Italy must be admitted.

The *zona boscosa* has held a place in the more mystical and mythic of *novelle* since Boccaccio. In the *Decamerone*, the story of Nastagio degli Onesti tells of a woman who is punished for refusing the love of her admirer by being chased and gruesomely killed each night in a pine forest near Ravenna, as represented over three panels by Botticelli in 1483 [Fig.3.3]. The *novelle* of the late sixteenth century further extended the connections between woodlands, enchantment and fantasy. On the third night of Straparola's *Le Piacevoli Notti*, the young and beautiful Alteria tells the fourth tale, in

which Fortunio wins the hand of a king's daughter with the help of three enchanted animals he meets in 'a dense and tangled woodland' [*'uno solto & invilupato bosco'*].⁴⁰⁸ In the sixth tale of Book Three of Selva's *Della Metamorfofi*, the story opens with two young men taking a rest from their journey in the shade of a wooded grove [*'all'ombra di multi alberi'*] that is inhabited by a fairy; these creatures, the reader is told, populate such topography and 'for the most part go about in the trees or rest among the flowers'.⁴⁰⁹ In fact, the correspondence between the genre and woodland settings became so established by the time Giambattista Basile's immensely popular *Lo cunto de li cunti* was published in 1634, that the author was able to turn his wry sardonic humour directly onto the trope. On the seventh tale of night two, for example, Prince Nardo goes hunting alone in a woodland where he meets a fairy. So captivated is he by her magical beauty, the young man exclaims out loud:

O woods and forests! Where not handles for brooms are made, nor cross pieces for gallows, not lids for chamber pots, but doors for the temple of beauty, beams for the houses of the graces, and shafts for the arrows of love!⁴¹⁰

This rhetorical transformation of the wood from base material for everyday objects to a place of mythic wonder, playfully reminds the reader that in reality such a landscape is filled with labour intensive productivity rather than magic and fantasy.

In the 1550s, however, when the Sacro Bosco was first being constructed, Basile's playful cynicism lay decades away, and the fantastical stories that graced the pages of newly published tale collections were unapologetically rife with the animals, mythical creatures and monsters of the kind that stand in Orsini's wood. Returning to the

⁴⁰⁸ Straparola (1556), 102v (III:4).

⁴⁰⁹ Selva (1582), Libro Terzo, 126: 'le quali per il più vanno per gli alberi, or si posano tra i fiori'. For a commentary and translation of three of Selva's 'fairytale', see Magnanini (2011), 331–369 (the translation here is taken from 338).

⁴¹⁰ Basile (1634), 376 (II:7): 'o buosche [sic], o serve, dove non se tagliano maza de scopa, travierze de force, né copierchie de cantaro, ma porte de lo tempio de la bellezza, trave de la casa de le Grazie ed aste da fare le frezze d'Ammore!'. For a discussion of fairytale landscapes within Basile see Canepa (1999), 207–216.

protagonist of Alteria's story on the 'third night' of Straparola's publication, for example, Fortunio becomes quickly bored of the matrimonial bliss he has won with the help of enchanted animals. Deciding to prove his valour by travelling the world completing heroic deeds, disaster strikes aboard his boat almost as soon as he has departed, when 'a Siren, the biggest that was ever seen' lulls him to sleep and swallows him whole.⁴¹¹ Fortunio is, predictably, saved from this mythical sea creature, but once Alteria finishes her tale, she provides a description of the monster in the form of a riddle. After the company of guests have all tried to guess the answer, she explains that it is:

The alluring siren, who dwells in the ocean waves, and is an animal very delightful to see, because it has the face, chest, body and arms of a pretty maiden and all the rest of her is like a scaly fish.⁴¹²

The Siren sculpture at Bomarzo fits this very description: of such proportions that it could certainly be described as 'the biggest that was ever seen' [Plate 29], defying the scale of those on the local Etruscan tombs discussed in Chapter One and the smaller relief carvings found in other cinquecento gardens, such as the Villa Lante, which are more closely aligned to grotesque decoration [Fig.3.4].

Giant enchanted fishes and sea creatures like the Siren of the Sacro Bosco also feature heavily in other sixteenth-century *novella*. In the second tale of the third night of Straparola's collection, a magical fish is saved by the protagonist Livoretto. In thanks,

⁴¹¹ Straparola (1556), 105r–106v (III:4): 'Navigando adunque Fortunio con prosperi, & favore voli venti, aggiunse nell'Atlantico mare, ne fu guardi piu di dieci miglia entrato nel detto mare, che una Sirena la maggiore, che mai veduta fusse, alla galea s'accostò & dolcemente cominciò à cantare. Fortunio, che in un lato della galea col capo sopra l'acqua per ascoltare dimorava, s'addormentò & così dormendo fu dalla Sirena diglutito, la quale attuffatasi nelle marine onde se ne fuggì'.

⁴¹² Ibid., 108v (III:4): 'Lusinghevole Sirena, la qual dimora nelle onde marine & è uno animale molto dilettevole à vedere, perciò che egli tiene il volto, il petto, il corpo & le braccia d'una vaga damigella & tutto il resto di squamoso pesce, & è molto crudele'. The riddle goes as follows: 'Molto lontan da queste nostre parti / alberga un animal crudo e gentile. / Naturalmente tiene in se due parti: / l'una inumana, l'altra femminile. / Vaga è molto al veder, mostra d'amarti / ma dispietata è, forte e inumile; / canta soave e nel cantar produce / oggetto di tal ch'a morte l'uomo conduce': 107r (III:4).

the fish helps him complete some of the impossible tasks he has been set to win the hand of the princess Bellisandra.⁴¹³ In the fourth tale of the eighth night, the sorcerer Maestro Lattanzio and his apprentice Dionigi rapidly change form as they fight one another. After exhausting a succession of land born creatures, they take their battle to water, turning into a shark and a tuna fish.⁴¹⁴ While on the first tale of the third night, Pietro, a deranged fisherman, spares a giant and similarly magical tuna, who then grants him wishes in thanks: making the king's daughter pregnant, curing Pietro of his madness, and building him a rich palace. The latter is described as having 'very beautiful loggias, halls and rooms' with a garden 'full of trees which produce gems & precious pearls: in the middle of this garden is a fountain of cold water, and a vault of precious vines'.⁴¹⁵ Were a historical beholder to have been familiar with such tales, it seems more than likely that the sculptures of giant fish that proliferate in the Sacro Bosco would have called them to mind. The open-mouthed creature by the stream [Plate 6], the water monster that rears its head by the colossal River God [Plate 24] and the so-called Mask of Madness found to the left of the modern entrance [Plate 2], could all be said to evoke the creatures of such fantastical stories. If the Mask of Madness was part of a large artificial pool or lake, as some have suggested, then it may even have appeared to be rising from liquid depths, breaching the surface of water.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Ibid., 83v–92v (III:2).

⁴¹⁴ Straparola (1570), *Libro Secondo*, 60r (VIII:5): 'Giunto il cavallo [Dionigi] al fiume, subito nell'acqua si lanciò, e trasformatosi nel pesce squallo s'attuffò nell'onde [...] Il padre [Maestro Lattanzio] inteso il sopradetto caso, senza indugio si spogliò le sue vestimenta, & andato alla riu del fiume, nell'acque si gettò, e trasmutatosi in un tonno, persequitò lo squallo ovunq nuotava per divorarlo'.

⁴¹⁵ Straparola (1556), 80r (III:1): 'un ricchissimo palazzo con logge, & con sale, & con camere bellissime', 'copioso de alberi, che producano gemme & preziose perle: in mezzo del quale sia una fontana di acqua freddissima, & una volta de preciosi vini'.

⁴¹⁶ See Coffin (1991), 111–112. Coffin makes the argument for a lake on the back of Bredekamp's proposition that a wall across the stream by the Fighting Giants would have acted as a dam and flooded the land to the south creating an artificial pool about one hundred meters long (see Bredekamp (1985), vol.I, 57–58).

Alongside the gargantuan presence of colossal peperino fish in the Sacro Bosco, other fantastical beasts that haunt the pages of cinquecento *novelle* are given tangible form in stone. The dragon is one monster that automatically evokes the adventures and mishaps of fairy tales. To borrow the words of Magnanani, ‘so prevalent is the dragon in European oral and literary traditions that twentieth-century folklorists identified the dragon-slayer tale as one of the fundamental tale types’.⁴¹⁷ In Vicino’s *bosco*, one such scaly, fire-breathing creature is carved in mid-attack: its mouth open in a roar, its body raised on hind legs in defence as it claws at a pair of lions that fight back viciously [Plate 20]. Dragons and lions appear together in the second story of the third night of Straparola’s volumes, when Livoretto wins the hand of Bellisandra by fetching the water of life, which is ‘guarded and carefully protected by two ferocious lions and as many dragons that constantly roar and cruelly devour everyone who approaches’.⁴¹⁸ On the tenth night, in the third tale, moreover, when Cesarino di Berni saves a king’s daughter from a ferocious dragon ‘whose breath infects and poisons everything’, he does so with the help of a lion, a bear, and a wolf that he has befriended in a cave in ‘a thick and very leafy wood’ and that fight the creature on his behalf.⁴¹⁹ The settings of this last story are particularly evocative of the topography of Bomarzo, with its woods filled with Etruscan caves, and the Sacro Bosco’s fighting dragon, with lions crouched in counter-attack at its feet. Other iconographical references can be found in the first tale of the fifth night of *Le Piacevoli Notte*: a story about a gigantic wild man who lives in the woods, ‘so tall and broad and so deformed

⁴¹⁷ Magnanini (2008), 117.

⁴¹⁸ Straparola (1556), 90v (III:2): ‘guardata & diligentemente custodita da duo fieri leoni & altrettanti dragoni, i quali di continuo ruggino & miseramente divorano tutti quelli, ch’apprenderne s’avicinano’.

⁴¹⁹ Straparola (1570), Libro Secondo, 97v (X:3): ‘un dracone, il cui anelito ammorba & avelena ogni cosa’; 96v (X:3): ‘un folto, e ben fronzuto bosco’; 98r (X:3): ‘Et cosi dicendo, ecco con gran empito uscir fuori l’insatiabil dracone, & con la bocca aperta cercava di lacerare, e divorare la vaga, e delicata giovane, la quale per paura tutta tremava. Allora Cesarino da pietà commosso s’animò, & spinse li tre animale contra l’affamata, & inforga belua, e tanto combatterone, che finalmente l’atterrarono, & uccusero’.

and ugly that everyone was in awe of him'.⁴²⁰ It is a description that could be used to describe the colossal forms of the Sacro Bosco's Fighting Giants, with wide shoulders, defined muscles and grimacing features [Plate 4].

In Book Three, tale six of Selva's *Delle Metamorfosi*, moreover, one of the protagonists, who has shown kindness to a snake-formed fairy, is welcomed by this creature into the enchanted interior of a large boulder that he has seen open before his eyes.⁴²¹ Once inside, this fortunate man is taken to a subterranean lithic palace in which there is a table 'laden with all of those foods that one could desire', and where the fairy 'orders him to eat what he wished to satisfy his hunger'.⁴²² This story of dining inside a magical rock offers a comparison with the Sacro Bosco's hollow Ogre [Plate 19]. The visitor, served a candlelit meal inside the stony interior of the carved boulder, could have imagined themselves to occupy the role of Selva's protagonist.⁴²³ We know that such meals took place from a late sixteenth-century account of this sculpture by Giovanni Vittore Soderini, in which he describes how 'the tongue serves for the table and the teeth for the seats, so that when it is set for dinner, the lights, among the food, make it appear in the distance a very scary mask' (describing too how the sculpture was activated by human presence).⁴²⁴

At a fundamental level, Bomarzo and these tale collections share mythical, magical beasts in an often enchanted, woodland setting. To turn the pages of *novelle* is to wander in a topography of mysterious forests populated by dragons, and to encounter

⁴²⁰ Straparola (1556), 150r (V:1): 'uno huomo saluatico assai grande & grosso, et si diforme & brutto, che à tutti grandissima ammiratione rendeva'.

⁴²¹ Selva (1582), 126–127. For the English translation see Magnanini (2011), 339.

⁴²² Ibid., 127: 'vivande, che desiderar si possono, lo fece sedere, imponendoli, che a suo modo mangiasse, togliendosi la fame'. Translation: *ibid.*, 338–339.

⁴²³ David Coffin has asserted that 'the essential aspect of entertainment in a Roman garden was always eating', a statement that is supported by sixteenth-century accounts: (1991), 230–238, 230.

⁴²⁴ Soderini [c.1580–1590] (1902), vol.I, 276: 'la lingua serve per tavola et i denti per sedili, che quando vi si apparecchia da cena con i lumi, tra le vivande apparisce di lontano un paurosissimo mascherone'.

bodies of water home to sirens and magical aquatic creatures, just as we find them in the Sacro Bosco. As the inscription, carved on to the tiles that line the back of the Covered Bench [Plate 17], tells the visitor:

YOU WHO TRAVEL THE WORLD
TO SEE GREAT AND STUPENDOUS MARVELS
COME HERE WHERE THERE ARE HORRENDOUS FACES
ELEPHANTS, LIONS, BEARS, OGRES AND DRAGONS.⁴²⁵

The correlations between the creatures in these texts of enchantment and in the Sacro Bosco are undeniable, but this is not to say that the tales were direct source material. Nor is it to renounce the value of the visual and iconographic sources to which the sculptures have already been subject. Such scholarship has, for example, linked the Dragon [Plate 20] to a lost drawing by Leonardo da Vinci and a subsequent engraving attributed to Lucantonio degli Uberti (c.1510).⁴²⁶ The Mask of Madness [Plate 2] has been connected to examples of Aztec art from the kingdom of Tenochtitlan that could be found in the collection of Cosimo I de' Medici in Florence.⁴²⁷ The making of Bomarzo and the *novelle* discussed are contemporaneous, so this is not a matter of direct lines of influence. Rather this chapter addresses how such literature could have informed the beholder's response to their encounter with the sculptures in the site's wooded environment. The visual and atmospheric correlations between fantastical *novelle* and the Sacro Bosco could have produced a sensation of 'fairy-tale' affect in the experience of beholding the stone monsters surrounded by trees.

Hervé Brunon offers a productive concept for understanding the openness and interactive nature of this encounter. Discussing the relationship between literature and

⁴²⁵ See the Appendix, O.

⁴²⁶ Lang (1957), 427–428. Also Berberi (1999), 216–221; Guidoni (2006), 60–61; Calvesi (2000), 247–255.

⁴²⁷ Bredekamp (1985), vol.I, 131. Bury is not convinced by this assertion of Bredekamp's. See Bury (1986), 679–680.

sixteenth-century garden sculpture, he describes the connections as that of ‘*déjà lu*’.⁴²⁸ Rather than an uncanny sense of having seen something before (*déjà vu*), the experience is that of a literary familiarity which cannot quite be placed. Along the same lines, the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco would have offered the literate beholder resonances and echoes with the *novelle* of cinquecento Italy. Moving around the space, the visitor would have been prompted not to ‘recognise’ intended characters (in fact the subjects of the sculptures could be said to be too generic to belong to one specific source or narrative), but rather to imaginatively participate in a topography evocative of, among other things perhaps, contemporary fantastical short stories. Indeed, whereas Aztec imagery was not widely known, *novelle* were frequently read across a broad spectrum of society, making them all the more potent to consider in relation to the visitor’s encounter with Bomarzo.

SETTING

The very outdoor environments of elite country residences, such as Bomarzo, were closely associated with the literary form of the *novelle* in cinquecento Italy. In his fourth book of letters, published in 1556, Andrea Calmo included a letter addressed to ‘Signora Frondosa’ soliciting her to join him for a few days at a rural estate. In this letter, Calmo describes the delights and entertainments that will await her each evening. After drinking wine and tasting a mouth-watering dessert of sweetly cooked pears and candied chestnuts, Calmo tells Frondosa how:

Everyone returns to his seat recounting the most stupendous, charming, and imaginative yarns in the whole world: of Godmother Goose, Fraibolan, the beautiful green bird, the wooden statue, the fairy’s alms-box, the little pigs, the ass who became a hermit, the mouse who went on a pilgrimage, the wolf

⁴²⁸ Brunon (2008), 25–27.

who became a doctor, and so many other nonsense tales that I shall not mention.⁴²⁹

Calmo evokes an evening of storytelling to tempt his beloved to a villa in the countryside, his list of tales including several that critics have identified as belonging specifically to *Le piacevoli notti*.⁴³⁰ It is a letter that provides evidence that these fantastical stories were widely known and shared by the social circles to which Orsini and his guests would have belonged, particularly considering the fact that Calmo does not deem it necessary to indicate the source of the stories he mentions. The letter also suggests that a visit to the Sacro Bosco as a rural residence and retreat for Orsini's guests, even without its marvellous sculptural content, could have been associated with, and involved, the social activity of listening to and recounting *novelle*.⁴³¹ Indeed, Boccaccio, in his 'Author's Conclusion' of the *Decamerone*, asserted the close relationship between such places and the stories themselves when he defended the content of his tales on the grounds of decorum:

One also should recognise that these things [*novelle*] are said not in church, where one must speak with virtuous soul and words [...] nor in the schools of the philosophers [...] instead, they are told in gardens, in a place of amusement.⁴³²

Historicising the leisurely practices associated with visiting rural residences in this way, as well as the settings deemed appropriate for storytelling as a social activity,

⁴²⁹ Andrea Calmo, 'Lettera a la signora frondosa' [1556], reprinted in Calmo (1888), vol.IV, 346–347 (letter 42): 'E torna tutti a sentar digando le pi stupende panzane stampie, e imaginative del mondo, de comare ocha, de Fraibolan, de osel bel verde, de statua de legno, del bossolo della fade, di porceletti, de l'aseno che andete remito, del sorzeche andete in pellegrinazo, del lovo che se fese miedego; e tante fanfalughe che no besogna dir'.

⁴³⁰ For the identification of Straparola's tales in Calmo's letter see Magnanini (2008), 41. Magnanini notes that it is probably significant that Straparola and Calmo shared the same printer, Comin da Trino: 41, note 81.

⁴³¹ For activities that took place in a villa garden, including and in addition to storytelling, see Coffin (1991), 227–243; Beck (1998); Nevile (1999), 805–836, who makes an interesting correlation between formal Renaissance garden design and the choreographic designs of Italian, English and French dancing masters; and Giannetto (2008).

⁴³² Boccaccio (1527), 282–283: 'Appresso assai ben si può cognoscere queste cose non nella chiesa, delle cui cose e con animi e con vocaboli onestissimi si convien dire [...] né ancora nelle scuole de' filosofanti [...] ma tra giardini, in luogo di sollazzo'.

provides a context in which *novelle* would have played a role in the perception and experience of the Sacro Bosco.

The established place of storytelling within the leisure activities of the elite in sixteenth-century Italy is confirmed by its inclusion in contemporary game books, publications that codified the pastimes and behaviour appropriate for courtly society in its various settings.⁴³³ One of the most successful of these volumes was Girolamo Bargagli's *Dialogo de' giuochi*, composed in the early 1560s and first published in Siena in 1572.⁴³⁴ From the very outset, storytelling and *novelle* are included as a game. The book opens with Marcantonio Piccolomini (referred to as Il Sodo) hosting a dinner in his garden, where his guests can 'delight in the sweetness of the evening air in the inclination of the Sun', and during which he describes the various games and etiquettes that he has come across while on his travels.⁴³⁵ Almost immediately, the character of Il Frastagliato interrupts Il Sodo to assert: 'I believe that every day of the *Decamerone* can be called a game'.⁴³⁶ To which Il Sodo replies in agreement:

I confess well then, to return to what you said of novelty, that narrating *novella* in a circle can be called a game, making itself, as in the *Decamerone*, centred variously around some theme to delight best.⁴³⁷

Storytelling, specifically of *novella* and *favola* ('the extravagance of which cannot help but delight'), then comes up in various sections of the publication.⁴³⁸ The one hundredth game, for example, listed as '*giuoco della novella*', describes the various ways a game of storytelling can be managed; game one hundred and thirty includes

⁴³³ See Burke (1996), 45–47.

⁴³⁴ Bargagli [1572] (1592).

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9: 'diletto della dolcezza dell'aria la sera nello inclinare del Sole'.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33: 'mi credo io, che ciascuna giornata del Decamerone si possa giuoco chiamare'.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34: 'Confesso ben poi, per ritornate a quel che voi diceste del novellare, che il narrarsi novelle variamente a cerchio, si potrebbe chiamar gioco, facendosi, come nel Decamerone, variamente intorno a qualche thema a fin di diletto'.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 265: 'non puo fare per la stravaganza di non dilettere'.

tips on how to best tell or perform these stories in public.⁴³⁹ In these sections, Bargagli presents an Italian courtly society in which being able to relate diverting short tales for entertainment was an expected skill, and a game readily called upon in leisurely social situations.

The association of telling tales within the setting of country villa grounds is obviously reinforced by the published *novelle*, which are almost always structured around a frame-tale that mirrors this social activity. Having retreated from some horror or having gathered after carnival, men and women come together over a series of evenings to pass the time pleasantly by telling stories, for the most part surrounded by the lush verdant surroundings of a rural garden. The frame tale therefore creates a verisimilar scenario that the aristocratic reader would have been familiar with in their own social experiences.⁴⁴⁰ In Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, ten narrators pass their time telling stories in the beautiful setting of a Tuscan villa.⁴⁴¹ Thus unsurprisingly, Firenzuola, in *I Ragionamenti*, also chose an outdoor setting for his frame tale: a villa set in a beautiful valley near the village of Pozzolatico, just outside of Florence. It is a rural space that Firenzuola closely associates with both Boccaccio and the act of storytelling when he has Gostanza, the appointed queen of his group of storytellers, state:

Now that I recall, most beautiful ladies, and you, graceful young men, what the reason was that prompted that fine group who, according to Boccaccio,

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 'Giuoci 100: della novella', 127; 'Giuoci 130', 261.

⁴⁴⁰ Sixteenth-century literary theory was heavily influenced by the discovery and translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which argued that literature required verisimilitude, favouring 'things probable though impossible' over 'possible but implausible'. Baxter Hathaway has argued that this became the central tension in Renaissance literary theory—how to include something marvellous that also had the necessary realism: (1968). The frame tale could be said to function in this way, providing a means to tell fantastical tales without their internal magic threatening the publication's wider claims to plausibility.

⁴⁴¹ For the garden in Boccaccio see Kern (1951), 505–523; Stillinger (1983), 301–321; Usher (1989), 274–285; Gittes (1999), 147–174; Raja (2003). Raja argues for the garden's significance within the text, both as a symbolic space but also as a model for the text itself as an object of variety and growth. For the garden in contrast to the outside world and the plague see Levenstein (1996), 313–335.

very happily passed the time away telling stories [...] these fountains, this grass, these flowers, all of this countryside seem to invite us to do the same.⁴⁴²

A countryside villa and a garden setting, Gostanza asserts, is conducive to and inherently associated with the telling of short fantastical tales. In Pietro Fortini's *Novelle* (c.1555), the men and women of the frame-tale likewise move around a luscious garden, changing locations over the course of the different evenings. On the fourth night they decide 'to sit in the bosom of a small area strewn with herbs', where under the shade of a pergola 'contorted with very green jasmine and lovers' roses [...] the sun could not offend them'.⁴⁴³

The countryside and rural villa setting established by Boccaccio, in other words, became typical in sixteenth-century *novelle*. These idyllic bucolic settings were also commonplace in pastoralism and certainly evoked, for some, the countryside of Bomarzo, as articulated by Francesco Sansovino's dedication of his edition of Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* to Vicino Orsini.⁴⁴⁴ Visiting the Sacro Bosco and wandering its paths, it seems likely that the Renaissance beholder would have imaginatively connected the rural Orsini residence, its wooded setting and fantastical sculptures with literary tropes, including *novelle*. The fact that storytelling was a popular social pastime that was itself associated with, and deemed appropriate for, time spent in rural villas and outdoor spaces only strengthens this probability. As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, at the Sacro Bosco there are multiple structures that suggest

⁴⁴² Firenzuola (1548), 14r–15v: 'Ora mi sovviene, bellissime donne, e voi leggiadri giovani, qual fusse la cagione che movesse quella bella compagnia che, secondo che pone il Boccaccio, assai lieta si passo novellando [...] queste fontane, questi fiori, tutto questo paese, par che ne invitino a fare il simigliante'.

⁴⁴³ Fortini [c.1555] (1888), 535–536: 'a sedere in seno di una minutissima erbicella'; 'contessuto di verdissimi gelsimini et amaschine rose [...] il sole offendare non li poteva'.

⁴⁴⁴ Francesco Sansovino, 'All' Illustriss. Signor Vicino Orsini' [1570], in Sannazaro [c.1489] (1578), 2r–4r, 2v: 'Quando mi uiene a mente uostro bellissimo loco di Bomarzo, non posso astenermi di non trar qualche sospiro [...] che leggendo il presente uolume, ui ho trovato per entro alcune descrittioni de colli e di ualli, che rappresentandomi il sito di Bomarzo, me ne hanno fatto venir grandissima voglia' [sic].

a site designed for social activity and entertainment, including the sharing or performance of stories. There is the open-air Theatre found on the lower level of the site [Plate 12], along with spaces for smaller or more intimate groups: the mouth of the Mask of Madness is large enough to shelter a gathering of about four or five adults [Plate 2]; the Ogre seats about eight [Plate 19]; while a large alcove or curved recess of benches sited opposite the Nymphaeum and relief carving of the Three Graces, offers a space in which a larger group could sit, rest and entertain each other [Plate 9]. In a letter to Drouet dated 15 January 1580, Orsini reminisces about how ‘*nel mio boschetto*’, ‘to have such sweet company of men as much as women, and to feast with them, and that together with conviviality there might be songs, music and similar things, I believe were to make the soul more joyful’.⁴⁴⁵ It is not hard to image men and women gathering to tell stories in Vicino’s *bosco*, or doing so one evening in the palazzo after having passed the afternoon amongst the sculpture of the valley below. The carved mythical creatures and its woodland setting make the Sacro Bosco the perfect accompaniment for tales of fantasy, horror and enchantment. The site seems particularly well adapted to invoke such responses and to engage fantastical narratives, perhaps even inspiring the content of the stories told, and offering three dimensional, tangible form to the creatures found within them.

GAMEPLAY

The fact that the telling of *novelle* was given such prominence within late sixteenth-century game books implies that the publications were seen not just as texts to read to oneself, but also that they were understood as sourcebooks and literary games in and of themselves. Guido Ruggiero goes so far as to state that ‘it might be suggested that

⁴⁴⁵ Orsini to Drouet [15/01/1580], in Bredekamp (1989), 277 (ASR. Deposito Santa Croce. Y 592.75r–75v, 82): ‘haverci compagnia dolce tanto d’homini come di donne, et con loro convivere, et che insieme col convivio fussero canti et suoni et similia, credo che l’animo s’allegraria più’.

virtually all Renaissance collections of *novelle* would qualify as *giochi* and were perhaps intended to be viewed in this light'.⁴⁴⁶ If storytelling is a form of gameplay for the leisure time of the elite and *novelle* were *giochi*, and if *novelle* and literary games were played socially in rural residencies and gardens, it is possible that the Sacro Bosco was seen according to a similar model, as a form of game. At the very least, the concept of playing literary games and telling fantastical stories could have offered a framework for the experience of the site encountered by its historical visitors.

Many of the literary games listed by authors such as Bargagli, including storytelling, involve either being able to guess the source of a story or quote, or an ability to change or adapt a well known literary text in some unexpected or humorous way. The most important quality to show when telling a *novella* or *favola* or playing a game, Bargagli repeatedly emphasises, is invention [*doverete sempre ingennarui*].⁴⁴⁷ Bomarzo is peppered with texts in the form of inscriptions that puncture the visitor's journey and the spaces in-between the sculptures.⁴⁴⁸ The number of these inscriptions and the way they are placed in relation to the various structures and statues is unusual, not found in comparable nearby gardens such as the Villa Lante at Bagnaia or the Villa Farnese at Caprarola. Ranging from four or five words to an entire sentence or statement in verse, the inscriptions divide the space, interrupt the visitor's movement from one carved group to another, and at times relate to specific sculptures, framing their content, and at other points make reference to the space as a whole. By the Fighting Giants, for example, is the following epigram in which the text and sculpture mutually inform one another:

⁴⁴⁶ Ruggiero (2007), 231, note 8. Ruggiero describes Renaissance Italy as a society that saw such storytelling as a 'game that turned on the demonstration of wit, wisdom, and verbal virtuosity', 231.

⁴⁴⁷ Bargagli [1572] (1592), 266.

⁴⁴⁸ For the inscriptions in the Sacro Bosco see the Appendix of this thesis in vol.II.

IF RHODES WAS ELEVATED BY ITS COLOSSUS
SO BY THIS ONE MY WOOD IS GLORIFIED
FOR I HAVE DONE NO MORE THAN I CAN DO.⁴⁴⁹

Other inscriptions reference and alter well known textual sources, as found in literary gameplay. The most obvious of these is the inscription over the Ogre/Hell's Mouth, which, it is believed, offered a gloss on Dante's *Divine Comedy*.⁴⁵⁰ The carved words change the famous inscription over the gates of Hell in the *Inferno*: 'Abandon every hope [*speranza*], you who enter here' to 'abandon every thought [*pensiero*] you who enter here' [Plate 19].⁴⁵¹ Another, on the Leaning House, states in Latin:

THE QUIET
MIND
THUS
BECOMES WISER.⁴⁵²

The words are thought to derive from a motto created by Annibale Caro and published by Vasari in his life of Taddeo Zuccaro.⁴⁵³ The task (and pleasure) offered to the visitor to Bomarzo is, in part, to recognise the literary source and how it has been altered, mirroring the activities of imaginative literary adaptation and guesswork codified in game books of the period. In a variation of this theme, other inscriptions in the Sacro Bosco appear unfinished. On the back of the wall of the Nymphaeum, for example, is the following fragmented statement over two lines:

THE CAVE, THE FOUNTAIN, THE [...]

⁴⁴⁹ 'SE RODI ALTIER GIA FU DEL SUO COLOSSO / PUR DI QUEST IL MIO BOSCO ANCHO SI GLORIA / E PER PIU NON POTER FO QUANT IO POSSO' (Appendix, C).

⁴⁵⁰ This is primarily due to the phrase Guerra writes over the Ogre/Hell's Mouth in his rendering from c.1598. See note 96 *supra*, Fig.5 and Appendix, N.

⁴⁵¹ Dante [c.1308–1320] (1971), vol.I, *Inferno*, 46–47 (III:1–9): 'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che'entrate'. Inscription: 'LASCIAATE OGNI PENSIERO VOI CH'ENTRATE' (Appendix, N).

⁴⁵² 'ANIMUS / QUIESCENDO / FIT PRUDENTIOR / ERGO' (Appendix, I).

⁴⁵³ See Coffin (1991), 108–109. The motto states: 'Anima fit sedendo et quiescendo prudentior': Vasari (ed.1881), vol.VII, 130. In addition, Guidoni links the inscription on a column by the Theatre: 'SOL PER / SFOGAR / IL / CORE' (Appendix, F) to a sonnet by Petrarch to Vittoria Colonna, particularly the lines: 'scrivo sol per sfogar l'interna doglia / di che si pasce il cor': (2006), 131.

OF EVERY DARK THOUGHT [...].⁴⁵⁴

The incised grooves of these words are clearly visible, whereas the rock after them is empty and comparatively smooth, suggesting the possibility that these lines would have been intentionally incomplete in the sixteenth century—left for the visitor to finish.

Traditionally, the inscriptions at Bomarzo have been seen to participate in the humanist revival of epigraphy, but the affinities with literary gameplay give us an equally, if not more, compelling context. Leonard Barkan has discussed the special elliptical quality that ancient inscribed remains held for Renaissance viewers.⁴⁵⁵ Mysterious and enigmatic, like the sculptural fragment, they invited completion and interpretive decoding and as such, one could argue, an act of epigraphic fulfilment that participates in the same mechanisms of imaginative play as literary games. The inscriptions of the Sacro Bosco can be understood to operate like guessing games that reference other famous literary artworks, participating in the culture of gameplay in which texts were playfully and deliberately mobilised and mutated. The pleasure for the reader/visitor lay in seeing ingenious textual alterations, or in inventing their own and filling in the gaps.

The sculptures are also part of this game of guessing and invention. The many iconographic sources that have been suggested for the sculptural content of Bomarzo indicates how the space is enigmatic and multiple in its references. Mario Praz, writing about the Sacro Bosco in 1949, asserted that it seemed influenced by a wide range of cultures and objects, including the:

elephants from the temple of Subrahmaniya or those elephants bearing obelisks from Catania, from the Hypnerotomachia of Polifilo [Fig.3.5], or by Bernini in Piazza della Minerva [Fig.3.6], and also that makes one think of

⁴⁵⁴ 'L'ANTRO LA FONTE IL [...] / D'OGNI OSCURO PENS[...]' (Appendix, E).

⁴⁵⁵ Barkan (1999), 26–28.

dragons and hippogriffs rampant in Madura [...] the Journey of the Spirits by Nank'ou, to the unicorns guarding the river Fen.⁴⁵⁶

Reading Praz's essay is itself disorientating in its evocation of the multivariant character of the site. In the above quote, Praz predominantly lists possible inspirations or sources for the site's Elephant [Plate 21], which has also been connected to Hannibal's famous war animals that crossed the Alps, as well as Pope Leo X's pet elephant that was kept at the Cortile del Belvedere in the early sixteenth century, as immortalised in popular woodcuts and a wall painting by Raphael of which only a preparatory drawing survives [Fig.3.7].⁴⁵⁷ In another quite different, biographically orientated, reading, Lynette M.F. Bosch sees Bomarzo's Elephant as a symbol of Vicino's military career and his imprisonment by Philibert of Savoy. Bosch's argument is based on the fact that Philibert's impresse in Girolamo Ruscelli's *Le impresse illustri* (1556), was an elephant [Fig.3.8].⁴⁵⁸ The majority of these suggestions are possible, with the exception of Bernini, which is anachronistic.

In this way, the diverse subjects of the Sacro Bosco, along with their lack of concrete iconographic and identifying markers, suggest that it was never intended as a programmatic space with a singular key. Instead the site, to an educated visitor, would have read like a literary and iconographic game involving the invention and ambiguity so highly prized in such activities, and which allows for the possibility of misguided interpretations or of multiple solutions. The site is even framed as a space invested in enigma through the inscription of the Sphinx:

YOU WHO ENTER HERE PUT YOUR MIND TO IT

⁴⁵⁶ Praz [1949] (1975), 76: 'elefanti del tempio di Subrahmaniya piuttosto che a quelli, portatori d'obelisco, di Catania, dell'*Hypnerotomachia* di Pilofilo, e del Bernini in piazza della Minerva, può far pensare ai draghi e agli ippogrifi rampanti di Madura [...] al Cammino degli Spiriti presso Nan-k'ou, agli unicorni a guardia del fiume Fen'.

⁴⁵⁷ Bury links the elephant to Hannibal, noting that Orsini's brother was called Marable, Hannibal's famous cavalry commander: (1985), 215. For more on Leo X's elephant see Bedini (2000).

⁴⁵⁸ Bosch (1982), 98–102. See Ruscelli (1556), 187.

PART BY PART
AND TELL ME IF SO MANY
WONDERS
WERE MADE AS TRICKERY
OR AS ART.⁴⁵⁹

These words turn the whole site into a riddle to be enjoyed, in which the notion of what *arte* consists of should be seen as an expanded field that includes literature—both popular and elite—as well as antiquities and sculpture. The visitor would have participated in a similar activity to the modern art historian or the sixteenth-century game player, guessing at the iconographic references and meanings of the sculptures, or making ones up for entertainment.

Indeed, the iconographic hybridity of the statues at Bomarzo is also akin to the compositional strategies of mid-sixteenth-century fantastical *novelle*. Not only are *novelle* multifarious in the types of tales they contain, they are also, like the Sacro Bosco, particularly striking for the huge variety of sources they draw upon. *Le piacevoli notti*, for one, contains tales based on the *Decamerone*, the *Panchatantra*, a collection of animal tales written in Sanskrit that had been translated into Italian in 1540, Girolamo Morlini's Latin *Novellae* from 1520, and Sacchetti's fourteenth-century *Novelle*.⁴⁶⁰ This practice of bringing together and rewriting known tales (*risrittura*) was widespread in the sixteenth century, particularly when it came to *novelle*—a form of literary bricolage that has parallels with the approach to mythic subjects in the Sacro Bosco (and the historical invention of Annio of Viterbo discussed in Chapter Two).

⁴⁵⁹ 'TU CH'ENTRI QVA PON MENTE / PARTE A PARTE / ET DIMMI POI SE TANTE / MARAVIGLIE / SIEN FATTE PER INGANNO / O PVR PER ARTE' (Appendix, B).

⁴⁶⁰ See Bonomo (1958), 365–369; Villani (1982), 67–73; Guglielminetti (1979), 69–81 and idem (1984); Pirovano (2000), vol.I, xxxvi–xliv. Jack Zipes has also identified stories in Straparola's volumes that can be traced to Indian, Arabic, North Africa and Hebrew oral traditions and tales: (2012), 16.

Sixteenth-century *novelle*, moreover, were frequently broken up by literary riddles and mottos that would come after each story and often reflected some aspect of its contents, such as Alteria's siren riddle on the third night of Straparola's collection.⁴⁶¹ Such enigmas were also a feature of courtly gameplay that might have taken place in a villa garden or *bosco* and as part of a storytelling activity.⁴⁶² Ascanio de' Mori, in *Giuoco piacevole* (1575), describes a group of men and women who are engaged in a competitive game of storytelling in which the players must create tales that are then accompanied by a riddle.⁴⁶³ Thinking of the Sacro Bosco in this way, it seems highly possible that a sixteenth-century beholder would have perceived a walk through its wooded environs as a walk through a variety of literary games of the kind codified in publications of the period, both in game books and the *novelle* themselves.

Having now considered the comparable creatures and settings of *novelle* and the Sacro Bosco and their similar compositional strategies, and having established the role of storytelling of *novella* and *favola* and of literary games within the elite activities that took place in rural residencies, the rest of this chapter turns to the visitor's movement through the site. It is argued that the structure of *novelle* and game books, and how they were read, can help us engage with the socio-spatial specificity of the Bosco and the visitor's encounter with its sculptures.

⁴⁶¹ For Alteria's riddle of the siren see note 412 *supra*. Straparola's riddles were immediately popular amongst sixteenth-century readers, and frequently reprinted in subsequent riddle collections: De Filippis (1947), 141–142. Examples of riddle collections that include those from *Le piacevoli notti* include Musici (1570) and Sylvano (1581). For more on Straparola's riddles see Rua (1888), vol. VII, 427–465; Calabrese (1984), 37–70.

⁴⁶² Riddles were included in a wide range of publications regarding elite social behaviour, pastimes and etiquette, for example, Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* [1528] (1531); Cinzio's *L'uomo di corte* [1569] (1989); and Guazzo's *Civil conversatione* (1574). For riddle culture in Renaissance Italy see Felippis (1948); Schiltz (2015), 31–40; McClure (2004), 27–69. For a history of riddles and enigmas in general see Cook (2006).

⁴⁶³ Cited in McClure (2013), 10.

ENCOUNTER

The act of walking along a path, through a landscape or around a garden, is often presented as akin to storytelling. As Rebecca Solnit describes, ‘roads, trails, and paths [...] unfold in time as one travels along them, just as a story does as one listens or reads’.⁴⁶⁴ Contemporary landscape architects similarly describe how a ‘path can become the thread of a plot, connecting moments and incidents into a narrative’.⁴⁶⁵

The desire to associate landscape, movement and narrative has often, however, resulted in scholars of Italian Renaissance gardens seeking and asserting the existence of linear and singular sequences or stories in these verdant, sculptural spaces. It is a conclusion that Michel Conan has called a ‘landscape metaphor’, in which the sculptures, route and design devices of a site are seen to act as signs that culminate in the visitor participating in an intended plot.⁴⁶⁶ In his study of the Villa d’Este, for example, David Coffin takes the reader through a reconstructed account of a visitor’s journey through the garden to argue that the directional choices proposed by the site’s design (for example a Y fork with a strong visual appeal, such as a fountain, in one direction) manipulates the beholder into participating in a specific route that relays the well known fable of Hercules through the garden’s artworks and fountains.⁴⁶⁷

One example of a Renaissance space that unambiguously asserts a singular narrative can be found in the *sacri monti* that were created in Italy from the late fifteenth century, and that were designed to offer spatial reconstructions of the pilgrimage sites at Jerusalem. The trend for *sacri monti* was established in Italy with the site at Varallo in Piedmont, first founded by Fra Bernardino Caimi, a Franciscan friar, in 1486, but primarily constructed from 1565 thanks to the patronage of the Milanese nobleman

⁴⁶⁴ Solnit (2001), 72.

⁴⁶⁵ Moore, Mitchell and Turnbull (1993), 35.

⁴⁶⁶ Conan (2003), 287–318.

⁴⁶⁷ Coffin (1960), 14–41.

Giacomo d'Adda.⁴⁶⁸ Conceived as a 'New Jerusalem', Varallo offered a reproduction of key Christian pilgrimage sites, sometimes made to their precise measurements and housed in individual chapels, in which visitors would find richly populated *mise en scène* of biblical episodes using trompe l'oeil painting and life size polychromatic sculptures [Fig.3.9]. Visitors would thus follow the narrative of the Passion of Christ in real time and space, treading the same imagined steps of Christ to each station of the cross.

The existence of *sacri monti* shows that sixteenth-century Italians were explicitly aware of the powerful psychological and transformative effects of physically inhabiting stories, and unfolding a narrative with feet and knees and hands, as well as eyes. In the words of Christine Göttler, the site at Varallo 'encouraged a bodily, sensual way of 'reading' and 'travelling through' the Passion events', with the expressed intent to increase religious devotion.⁴⁶⁹ In fact, when construction at Varallo was revived in 1565, the architect Galeazzo Alessi reworked the site to ensure that the visitor's movements followed the biblically 'scripted' order of events. Piazzas were created, in which the chapels were clearly ordered, a new central path was laid that asserted the site's itinerary, and viewing screens were installed to control movement and vision, where previously pilgrims were able to walk inside and interact with the sculptures.⁴⁷⁰ It is worth noting that Alessi's designs coincided with the post-

Tridentine assertion of orthodoxy and thus a moment when it would have been more

⁴⁶⁸ For a bibliography of Varallo see Longo and Zardin (2010). For recent studies see Göttler (2010) and idem (2013), 393–445; Gelfand (2011), 87–117 and idem (2012), 407–422; Lasansky (2010), 249–273 and Benzan (2014). Varallo was not the first *sacro monte* in Italy, but is considered the most influential of the early sites. Others in Italy include Crea (1589), Varese (1598), Orta (1590), and Valperga Canavese (1602).

⁴⁶⁹ Göttler (2010), 111.

⁴⁷⁰ The finished plans and drawings of Alessi's alterations were published as the *Libro dei Misteri: Alessi [1565–1569]* (1974). Alessi also designed villas and their gardens, including the Villa delle Peschiere and Villa Grimaldi-Sauli near Genoa, and worked with Vignola (designer of Villa Farnese and Villa Lante) on the the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi. For scholarship specifically on this post-Tridentine period at Varallo see Göttler (2010); Lazansky (2010) and Benzan (2014).

important than ever to abide by, and stay on, the correct spiritual path as laid out by doctrine.

The prescriptive mode of encounter and movement offered at Varallo is very different to the one found at Bomarzo, with its inscriptions in verse and that prompt the beholder to question the very nature of what they encounter. From the outset too, the diverse range of possible iconographic references that can be assigned to each sculpture, means that an intended singular and authoritative narrative seems highly unlikely. Indeed, where attempts to offer an itinerary for the Sacro Bosco have failed in the past is precisely in trying to mould the sculptures of Bomarzo into a consistent story. The desire to find a 'programme' for the Sacro Bosco with a clear beginning and end is always resisted by the site itself.⁴⁷¹

The huge variety of subjects within the sculptural groups is part of this resistance to linear and singular legibility. The sculptures bear no connection or immediate relation to each other bar their material and their fantastical nature. The Fighting Giants [Plate 4], for example, are very close to the Tortoise with Fame riding upon its back [Plate 5] yet the two have no direct thematic links. Likewise the Dragon [Plate 20] is found only a few metres from the Elephant with stocky straight legs, a castellated tower on its back and a dead soldier limp in its trunk [Plate 21]: two scenes that clearly present unconnected events. Such disjunction is emphasised further by the fact that the size of the sculptures correlates neither to what they depict, nor to each other; there is no mutual measurement, the tortoise by the stream being larger than the elephant. Acknowledging the disconnectedness between the sculptures at the Sacro Bosco allows us to rethink how the space might have been conceived: as a place composed of disconnected, individual scenes, joined only by the particular and variable

⁴⁷¹ Texts that assert a linear narrative for the Sacro Bosco include Darnall and Weil (1984); Althoff (1999); Berberi (1999).

sequence in which the visitor encountered them and their fantastical nature. In other words, the logic of the site could be termed episodic. Bolstering this proposal is the same inscription found on the base of the Sphinx sculpture already quoted in this thesis: when it says ‘you who enter here, put your mind to it *part by part*’, it is implied that the sculptures are to be viewed as individual moments rather than as a coherent whole.⁴⁷²

Such a concept has similarities to the format of *novelle*, which are compendia of fantastic, brief, unconnected short stories or episodes. They are not grouped by content or topic, just as in the Sacro Bosco at one moment you can face a dragon, the next the tranquil *Tempietto* or the screaming face of an upside-down giant. *Le piacevoli notti* consists of seventy-five stories over two volumes, told in various clusters over thirteen nights. On the third evening, we hear disparate tales including that of an enchanted tuna fish (3:1), the dismemberment and magical bodily reconstruction of a woman called Biancabella (3:3), and a story of the failed trickery of a woman called Isotta (3:5). Commenting on his *Novelle* printed in 1554 and 1573, Matteo Bandello described this central aspect to the genre when he talked of how his *novelle* are not governed by continuity of plot, but ‘a mixture of diverse occurrences, differently told, and in different places and times, that happen to different people, and [are] narrated without any order’.⁴⁷³

Indeed, it is when we start to conceive of the Sacro Bosco as a series of marvellous episodes in a manner similar to *novelle* that attempts to connect Bomarzo to romance epics become potentially more interesting. Darnall and Weil’s claim that *Orlando*

⁴⁷² ‘TU CH’ENTRATI QUA PON MENTE / PARTE A PARTE / ET DIMMI POI SE TANTE / MARAVIGLIE / SIEN FATTE PER INGANNO / O PUR PER ARTE’ [emphasis my own] (Appendix, B).

⁴⁷³ Bandello (ed.1972), vol.II, 247: ‘una mistura d’accidenti diversi, diversamente e in diverse luoghi e tempi a diverse persone avvenuti e senza ordine veruno recitati’. Quoted in Bragantini (1998), 169.

Furioso (1532) is ‘the itinerary of the Sacro Bosco’ is based upon iconographical links and seeing the sculptures according to the order of events in the book.⁴⁷⁴ Reading their essay one would be forgiven for thinking Ariosto’s publication is itself a clear linear narrative. But to read *Orlando Furioso* is instead to experience a text that flits from subject to subject, from one part of the globe to another, from one narrative thread to its opposite, in a whirlwind of events that is very much akin to a tale collection.⁴⁷⁵ In fact, literary historian Jon R. Snyder goes so far as to say that any study of *novelle* in the cinquecento would be ‘incomplete’ without *Orlando Furioso*.⁴⁷⁶ For Snyder, the many different episodes that can be found within the epic are themselves short stories, some of which are ‘virtually autonomous’.⁴⁷⁷ It is worth noting on this point that some episodes from *Orlando Furioso* even made their way into Straparola’s compendium as stand alone stories.⁴⁷⁸

In the sixteenth century, this very element of Ariosto’s publication, its controversial deviation from the epic form and the disorientating reading experience it offered, placed it at the centre of a heated literary debate. Daniel Javitch argues that ‘no vernacular work of poetry provoked as much discussion and commentary in the

⁴⁷⁴ Darnall and Weil (1984), ‘III: The Itinerary of the Sacro Bosco’, 11–72.

⁴⁷⁵ *Orlando Furioso* has three major plots: Orlando’s quest for Angelica, the parted lovers Ruggiero and Bradamante, and Charlemagne’s religious wars, which are spliced in ever smaller parts, told in a woven narrative and mixed in with other events.

⁴⁷⁶ Snyder (2014), 208.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ For example Straparola (2015), 283–288 (VII:1), a story which originates, it has been argued, in a historical witch case from the fourteenth century when a woman named Gabrina degli Abeti was branded with a red-hot iron and her tongue cut out in Reggio Emilia in 1375. Ludovico Ariosto then incorporated her, now folkloric, life story into *Orlando Furioso* as Gabrina Fureta, the name Straparola then adopted in *Le piacevoli notti*: Bottigheimer (2014), 157. For the tale itself in *Orlando Furioso*: Ariosto (ed.2008), 246–255 (Canto 21). For more on this particular historical instance of supposed witchcraft see Bonomo (1958), 367–369.

sixteenth century' as did *Orlando Furioso*.⁴⁷⁹ A letter from Giovan Battista Pigna to Giovambattista Giraldi Cinzio from 1548 neatly sums up the sentiment felt by many readers (though it should be noted that they are not the opinions of Pigna himself):

They also say that he [Ariosto] jumps from one thing to another throughout the work, tangling up the whole poem [...] what stirs them up above all is that, instead of having a single action, he chooses to have many.⁴⁸⁰

A similar opinion was expressed by Giuseppe Malatesta in *Della nuova poesia* (1589), in which he stated that *Orlando Furioso* could be found 'announcing subjects at untimely moments, and when the reader expects something quite other than to have what is in front of him taken away'.⁴⁸¹ This experience of surprise and change led Malatesta to describe reading Ariosto as like being in 'a little world [where] many diverse things do not conform' and that compete to produce pleasing things, echoing Bandello's description of his *novelle*.⁴⁸² Indeed, the narrator of *Orlando Furioso* highlights the non-linear and episodic nature of his text when he interjects to say that 'it will be madness [*pazzia*]' to promise to recount to you one by one Orlando's mad acts, which were so very many that I do not know when I should finish, so I shall merely go on choosing'.⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁹ The perceived problem was that with its multiple plots and weaving narratives, not to mention fantastical content, *Orlando Furioso* did not adhere to Aristotle's *Poetics*. For the debate see Javitch (1991) and idem (1999), 205–215. For sixteenth-century Aristotelian texts on literary epics (and the discrediting of *Orlando Furioso*) see Minturno (1563); Tasso [1562–1565] (1587); Pellegrino (1584).

⁴⁸⁰ Giovanni Battista Pigna to Giovambattista Giraldi Cinzio [1548], a letter that was first made public in a pamphlet published in 1554 and is reprinted in Cinzio (1973), 246–247: 'Dicono altresì che va per tutta l'opera saltando d'una cosa in un'altra intrucando tutto il poema [...] quello che molto più monta, vi aggiungono che si dee stare una sola azione, ma che egli molte ne piglia'.

⁴⁸¹ Malatesta (1589), 17: 'non d'una azione d'un solo, ma di molte di molti: il signer le materie, che narra intempestivamente, & quando il lettore aspetta ogn'altra cosa, che di vedersele togliere dinanti'.

⁴⁸² Malatesta (1596), 247: 'quasi in un piccolo mondo molte cose diverse non conforme tra loro concorrere à produrre un tutto cose bene disposto'. Quoted and trans. by Weinberg (1972), vol.II, 1062, note 144. For Bandello see note 473 *supra*.

⁴⁸³ Ariosto (1560), 329 (29:50): 'Pazzia sarà, se le pazzie d'Orlando / Prometto raccontarvi ad una ad una / Che tante e tante fur, ch'io non so quando / Finir; ma ve n'andrò scegliendo'.

This confusion of genre and the disorientation *Orlando Furioso*'s structure provokes in the reader is where the book becomes a compelling publication to consider in relation to the Sacro Bosco. Ariosto mixes the strict high and low hierarchy that defined literature of the period, presenting his 'epic' in a manner that more closely resembled *novelle*. This fact has not been noted in Bomarzo scholarship to date. But just as *Orlando Furioso* mixed tales and altered literary genres, jumping 'from one thing to another' much like the contents of *novelle*, the experience of the Sacro Bosco as a visitor is to happen upon diverse, unconnected and surprising sculptural scenes as a result of subjective choice.

The 'pazzia' of referents and the 'mixture of chance occurrences' that characterises *Orlando Furioso* and *novelle* was, importantly, a source of pleasure for sixteenth-century readers. A diversity of episodes was, for some, precisely where enjoyment lay. Cinzio, for example, writing in 1554, spoke of how 'variety [*varietà*] is the spice of delight and so allows a large field to the writer to make episodes, i.e. pleasing digressions [*digressioni grate*]'.⁴⁸⁴ This understanding of an episodic form as inherently pleasurable, precisely because of the *varietà* and *digressioni* that it offers, was perhaps what Vicino Orsini had in mind when he wrote to Drouet on 10 April 1575 and stated that he hoped people would 'enjoy the madness [*folia*] of my grove'.⁴⁸⁵

MOVEMENT

Two scholars have touched upon the fact that the Sacro Bosco is experienced as diverse 'scenes' in their separate suggestions that the site finds iconographic

⁴⁸⁴ Cinzio (1554), 25: 'Però che porta questa diversità delle attioni con esso lei la varietà, la quale è il condimento del diletto & si la largo campo allo Scrittore di fare Episodi, cio è digressioni grate'.

⁴⁸⁵ Vicino Orsini to Drouet [10/04/1575], in Bredekamp (1985), vol.II, 35–36, 35 (ASt. Roma. Deposito Santa Croce. Y 592. 49–49r–58): 'godere la follia del mio boschetto'.

precedents in festive processions. Josephine von Henneberg connects certain statues, for example, to the celebrations Cardinal Madruzzo organised in Trent in 1549 for Philip II, son of Charles V.⁴⁸⁶ Luisa Quartermaine makes a similar argument when she states that ‘the physical space between the sculptures replaces the temporal interludes of a performance’.⁴⁸⁷ Both arguments are compelling in as much as they see the Sacro Bosco as composed of a variety of independent sculptural moments. My argument differs in that it does not see the sculptures as encountered as part of a linear sequence as occurs in a procession or performance. Whereas a pageant generally passes by a viewing group and the latter do not have a choice over the order in which the floats appear, the Sacro Bosco by contrast requires movement, choice and discovery on the part of the beholder. The way in which *novelle* and certain game books were used in outdoor spaces within courtly society allows room for this kind of fluid, more spontaneous experience that the Sacro Bosco’s design and statues encourage.

Although it is not known whether there was a specific entrance to the site initially, the fact that the Sacro Bosco unfolds over the descending slope of the valley below the town of Bomarzo, means that it is clear that a visit would have involved moving up and/or down this hillscape across various levels. At moments there are currently areas in the design that suggest a break in the woodland: a xystus below the *Tempietto*, which stretches North–South and is ringed by peperino acorns and pinecones; another further below, lined with vases, that runs East–West; and the theatre and nymphaeum complex found one ‘level’ down [see Figs.12–14]. These features, however, should they have existed in this form in the sixteenth century, face in opposing directions and are clearly situated to accommodate to the contours, ridges and natural inclines of the landscape, rather than terraced with regularity (as at the Villa Lante). It is thus safe to

⁴⁸⁶ Von Henneberg (1967), 3–19, idem (1972), 43–55 and idem (1982).

⁴⁸⁷ Quartermaine (1977), 71.

say that movement up and down this geographical feature would likely have involved shifting directions of travel according to the lie of the land, and that it would have meant leaving one level behind to move on to another space from which the point of departure was no longer visible. Such a journey, with shifting directions and elevation, would have meant that the Sacro Bosco was not a space easy to read, or in which an itinerary, or lack of it, would be readily legible. In this regard, the fact that the site is thought to have been wooded is central. Sometimes a stone monster can be hidden by trees or glimpsed between branches and above the tree tops. Even today, with the site's current wide gravel paths and fences around the statues, the *bosco* environment works to obscure a comprehensive sense of space, and of the positions of and distance from and between the sculptures, increasing a sense of spatial disorientation and discovery experienced by a visitor.

Around the constructed 'levels', moreover, other statues seem to be dotted incongruously, facing (where there is a principle face to the sculptures) in different directions, according to where the large boulders were found naturally in the landscape. Responding to, and starting with, such raw material and its various placement, there could be no sense of a geometric, symmetrical or even systematic design (such as expected of the *giardino italiano*) underpinning how and where these works are situated. A fact that means that it would have been difficult to map an intended, authoritative and coherent narrative to the space. To try to create connections or paths between the sculptures in a manner that would provide a semblance of order or an axis (so common in sixteenth-century formal gardens) is impossible. The sculptures instead suggest a site where multiple paths must have curved, bent and split. As Maurizio Calvesi states: 'differing from what is usually found in Renaissance parks, the Sacro Bosco is not punctuated by prospective orthogonal and symmetrical avenues; but it appears as though an adventurous

sequence of appearances now fearful now pleasant'.⁴⁸⁸ Likewise, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, the fact that the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco are almost entirely carved in the round suggests a mobile, explorative mode of beholding, rather than one where a visitor would be physically manipulated to approach or view a sculpture from one particular aspect.

The placement of the large immovable statues in the landscape, the effect of the trees, levels and inclining landscape would suggest that a sixteenth-century beholder would have moved around this leafy space following paths without always knowing or being able to see what was coming next. They would have created their own itinerary in a rambling manner, potentially looping back on themselves and even missing certain statues altogether. Put another way, the position of the sculptures implies no sense of a primary intended route. Indeed, even following the modern paths that steer the visitor around the site today, the lack of spatio-temporal coherence in the Sacro Bosco is palpable.

The proposition of this chapter so far has been that the intended educated and literary visitor to the Sacro Bosco could easily have thought of and associated the contents and form of *novelle* and literary games with the sculptures and space they encountered, particularly considering that telling tales and playing literary games was a popular activity that was affiliated with, and took place in, such a setting. Of interest here are affinities between these literary forms and the somewhat spontaneous or at least changeable directions of travel through the site that could have been additionally felt by a literary minded, mobile beholder.

⁴⁸⁸ Calvesi (2000), 4: 'Diversamente infatti dal consueto ordinamento, dei parchi rinacimentali, il Sacro Bosco non è scandito da prospettive di viali ortogonali e simmetrici; ma si presenta come un'avventurosa sequenza di apparizioni ora spaventevoli ora amene'.

The fact that *novelle* and storytelling appeared in game books of the period has implications for how these publications were read and conceived. On the one hand, the frame tale of a *novelle* collection provides and instates a chronological narrative. When seen in light of gameplay, however, evidence suggests that as well as read from start to finish in accordance with the *cornice*, these volumes were also seen as storehouses of amusement, to be dipped into at random, and with stories chosen according to the desire of the reader. Renzo Bragantini has described such a shift in *novelle* usage in the latter half of sixteenth-century Italy as a move towards an ‘anthological use of the text’, in which the shift to reading ‘in scattered sequences’ worked to undermine any notion of the book’s unity.⁴⁸⁹ Indeed, Francesco Sansovino’s act of compiling and publishing a collection of *Cento novelle scelte da piu nobili scrittori della lingua volgare* in 1562, a book that went through three further editions within a decade, speaks to this new engagement with the genre. Sansovino pulled together stories from other contemporary *novelle* volumes, bringing them into new arrangements, orders and relationships.⁴⁹⁰

Pietro Fortini, in his collection *Le giornate delle novelle de’novizi*, composed around 1550, alluded to this new role of the *novelle* book when he claimed to have put together his collection out of the ‘compassion I have of certain poor ignorant youths’, who, when asked to participate in storytelling, ‘move away, dodge and tread their heels, or not knowing, remain there as statues, or images full of shame, showing their lack of ingenuity’.⁴⁹¹ With these words, Fortini suggests that he sees his book as an encyclopaedia for people to use when playing games in elite society, and thus to read or use in whatever order that most suits this purpose. In 1634, Basile would likewise

⁴⁸⁹ Bragantini (1989), 57–73, 70.

⁴⁹⁰ Sansovino [1562] (1563).

⁴⁹¹ Fortini [c.1550] (1888), vol.I, 9–10: ‘compassione che ho hauta di certi poveri giovani baccelloni’; ‘poi li circostanti, or di calcagna, or di non sapere rimanendo ivi come statue o magini pieni di vergogna, mostrando parimente lo ingegno’.

tell readers that he published his tale collection to provide entertainment during conversations.⁴⁹² It is this more improvised or impromptu and unruly form of engagement that has parallels with the autonomy given to the visitor at Bomarzo.

Comparisons between such literary genres and leisurely pursuits, and the visitor's moving encounter with the Sacro Bosco become even more fruitful if we turn to another form of game book popular in the sixteenth century: the fortune telling book. The trend for such publications began with Lorenzo Spirito's *Libro della ventura*, first published in 1482 but reprinted throughout the sixteenth century, and followed, with great success, by Sigismondo Fanti's *Triumpho di Fortuna* in 1527, and Francesco Marcolini da Forlì's *Le ingeniose sorti* in 1540.⁴⁹³ Such books belonged to the same imaginative lexicon as *novelle*, riddles and games, and they were also a popular feature in the same type of upper class social pastime. These publications, moreover, offer a literary genre in which the very layout of the book has an affinity with the space of the Sacro Bosco. Readers begin by selecting a question they wish to ask and are then taken, or travel, to different thematic 'stations' or 'places', where tables and charts lead the reader to another section within the volume in order to reach a 'fortune' at the end, which often takes the form of a short rhyming verse or motto. Key to these texts are the elements of chance that are inserted at each 'place' in order to determine where to go to next, be it through the throwing of dice (as found in Spirito), referring to the time of day the book was being consulted, or the handing out of fortune cards (as in Fanti and Marcolini [e.g. Fig.3.10]).

⁴⁹² Basile [1634] (1986), 'Il Raconteur Fianesco', 1057.

⁴⁹³ Spirito [1482] (1535); Fanti (1527) and Marcolini da Forlì (1540). The emphasis on 'play' in these texts, rather than any attempt seriously to tell the future or someone's fate, is clear from the outset in Spirito's *Libro*. In his short address to the readers/players Spirito states that the publication is intended to 'give fun to the mind' ['Per dar spasso'], and that the fortunes were made 'non perche la gente / Debba credere in tutto a lor parlare, / Pigliatene piacer quanto vi pare / Credendo solo in Dio onnipotente': (1535), title page, n.p.

When Fanti explains the game to the reader in the *proemio* of *Triumpho di Fortuna*, the language he uses aligns the game and publication with a spatial experience and journey. Upon reaching one of the ‘stations’, where the reader/player must visit one of multiple kings, the reader is told that ‘the name of the King tells you where you should go looking for more [*dove tu debbi andare cercare piu altra*]’; having found your sign, another roll of the dice ‘will send you to the sphere of the planets to find the present river [*trovare lo presente fiume*]’.⁴⁹⁴ Upon completion, the last location the reader reaches is a particular prophet and the number of their particular fortune ‘which [will] speak of the demanded matter that has been searched [*cercate*] for’.⁴⁹⁵ Movement through the book is orchestrated in a spatial manner that is episodic and continually shifting, open to ‘chance occurrences’, in which the reader travels to different ‘places’ both physically within the book and in their imagination. The movement through a fortune telling book thus operates in a similar way to how movement through the Sacro Bosco is suggested by the sculptures—the reader/player journeys to different ‘scenes’, in an exploration that is unpredictable and subject to change, in order to reach their unknown destination.

One of the ‘places’ where the reader can find themselves in Fanti’s publication is one of twelve ‘noble’ houses or families in Italy, including none other than the ‘Casa Ursina’ (Orsini) [Fig.3.11]. Other ‘stations’ the reader might arrive at in both Spirito’s and Fanti’s books belong to mythical creatures of the kind sculpted at Bomarzo. In Spirito’s *Libro della ventura*, the two-tailed ‘*Sirena*’ appears on the page opposite the ‘*Leone*’ [Fig.3.12]; just as in the Bosco, these two creatures are placed side by side, while a different role of dice could send the reader/player to the ‘*Dracone*’ [Fig.3.13]. Likewise, in Fanti’s publication, after visiting one of the twelve noble households, the

⁴⁹⁴ Fanti (1527), ‘Proemio’, n.p.: ‘Li t’isegna il nome del Re dove tu debbi andare cercare piu altra’; ‘mandara alla spera delli pianeti a trovare lo presente fiume’.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.: ‘Profetta & il numero delli soi versi, che parlano delle cercate over dimandate cause’.

player can find themselves directed to the fortune wheel of the elephant, whose woodcut image presents one of these creatures with a small castle on its back according to the same iconography as the Elephant in the Sacro Bosco [Fig.3.14]. As in Spirito's publication, there are also wheels belonging to a dragon, a siren, and a 'flying horse' such as graces the Pegasus Fountain [Figs.3.15–3.17].

To refer to the comparable creatures in these fortune books is not to make the case for any lines of direct influence in the creation of the Sacro Bosco. Rather it is to highlight the fantastical motifs and themes shared between these cultural forms that would not have been lost on the site's sixteenth-century visitors familiar with such publications. Andrea Calmo, the same author that spoke of entertaining evenings telling *novelle* and *favole* at a country villa, described the use of such publications in similar social scenarios in a letter written to 'Signora Fulgentia' in 1580. Gifting her a 'pleasant book of fortune', Calmo explains that it is a game to be played 'with the family or with a company of ladies and gentlemen' and in which, by throwing three dice, you learn 'the greatest of falsehoods in the world'.⁴⁹⁶ The frontispiece of an edition of Spirito's *Libro della ventura*, printed in Venice in 1557, represents this playing of the 'game' or book: a group of men and women are shown gathered around a table, one throws the three dice, while the group look at a copy of Spirito's book laid out in the centre and open at a page with a wheel of fortune and a table of dice configurations with corresponding fortunes [Fig.3.18]. The frontispiece to Marcolini da Forlì's *Le ingeniose sorti* from 1540 presents a similarly social but more complex scene [Fig.3.19]. In the foreground, men and women in classicising dress are seated on the ground within an idyllic rural setting. In the centre a woman opens the fortune book for the group, a pack of tarot cards stacked by its side ready for use. Behind, in

⁴⁹⁶ Andrea Calmo, 'Alla Signora Fulgentia', in Calmo (1580), 35v–36v, 36r: 'le terzo che ve mando è quel piacevole libro de la Ventura', 'compagnia de femene, e de homeni; tragando quei tre dai se intende [...] le pi gran busie [sic] del mondo'.

the shade of a classical structure, another group play at a table. Trees, foliage and a craggy underpass make up the natural surroundings. In the distance, the rooftops of an urban centre can be seen, once again associating such leisure activities with bucolic topography and retreat.

Considering the various contents and contexts of ‘books of fortune’, we can now imagine Orsini’s guests gathered in the cool shade of the Ogre, playing such a game upon its central table, laughing in the sloping interior of the Leaning House, or telling fantastical short stories. Indeed the Leaning House has even been iconographically linked to the ‘Fortuna’ card in a pack of Renaissance tarot, where Fortune was often represented as a tower leaning precariously, on fire or falling apart.⁴⁹⁷ The *Roman de la Rose*, a text that was immensely popular in Renaissance Italy, bolsters this connection between a tilting building and one’s fortune, describing how ‘always threatening ruin and ready to accept a fall, the house of Fortune stands aslant’.⁴⁹⁸ Such a connection would have made the tilting building an apt setting for such a leisurely pastime. Moving around the Sacro Bosco, a space that encouraged an exploratory, changeable mode of travel, the beholder could very easily have aligned his or her experience with that of the structures and ways of reading *novelle* and game books, particularly considering that such publications were themselves encountered socially and in such outdoor, leisurely settings.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the affinities between the Sacro Bosco and contemporary, popular forms of fantastical fiction and game books that would have been palpable to the educated visitor to Bomarzo, and that would thus have factored into their

⁴⁹⁷ Bosch ties this into a wider biographic study of the garden, stating that the Leaning House therefore alludes to Orsini’s wife ‘Giulia’s virtue [and] Vicino’s fortune’: (1982), 104.

⁴⁹⁸ de Lorris and de Meun [c.1230–1275] (1995), 121.

encounter with and reception of the space. My argument is based on three factors. First, that the Bosco and such literature share motifs and themes in their enchanted woodland settings and mythic creatures. Second, that the villa garden and rural residence were associated with the telling of such short stories in elite Italian society, both within the frame tale but also in the visitor's social reality. Country homes and designed outdoor spaces of the upper echelons were a social environment in which the telling of fantastical tales and the playing of literary games was an established, practiced and appropriate pastime. Third, that the geographic experience of the Sacro Bosco—its unconnected sculptures and episodic character, encountered by a visitor in a changeable, exploratory manner—can be anchored historically through comparison to the disjointed, heterochronic structure of Renaissance compendia of short stories and game books.

These materials—*novelle*, literary games and fortune books—have not to date been considered in relation to each other and the Sacro Bosco. Yet fantastical literature and game books were repeated, altered and shared by groups of elite men and women such as those Vicino held in his social circle. Orsini himself wrote of the pleasant times one could spend with men and women in his *boschetto* conversing, singing and the like, while his close friends included individuals that had edited collections of *novelle*.⁴⁹⁹ By paying attention to the sculptures' positions and subjects and how visitors were encouraged to move in relation to them, a new form of narrative experience comes to light that has implications for how the site might have been understood in relation to these genres. To imagine the social encounter of someone moving through the Sacro Bosco in the sixteenth century is to picture an educated, well-read visitor exploring, either alone or as part of a group, discovering sculptural scenes in different orders according to the various paths and directions they choose to

⁴⁹⁹ See notes 445 and 490 *supra*.

take, almost certainly stopping at various moments to converse, eat, rest, and entertain one another. In this way, the Sacro Bosco can be understood as episodic, characterised by *varietà*, *episodi*, and *digressioni grate*, of a kind that feature in *novelle*, literary play and a journey through a book of fortune. This is not to say that the Sacro Bosco was intended to be seen as a physical manifestation of such literary forms, the lack of an archive makes such a statement impossible. Rather it is to argue that the similarities between these texts and Bomarzo would have been evocative to the knowledgeable beholder who took part in the leisurely activities associated with them. Moving from the archeological surroundings in Chapter Two and the site's woodland setting here, the next chapter takes the visitor's encounter with the statues of Bomarzo even closer to consider the sculpture's 'living' peperino material.

CHAPTER FOUR: ROCK

On 12 December 1564 Annibale Caro wrote to Vicino concerning a fresco Orsini wished to commission for the loggia of his palazzo in the town of Bomarzo. The fresco, never completed or no longer extant, was to depict the battle between the giants and the gods, and Orsini had asked Caro for advice on its iconographic programme. ‘You want to paint the fable of the giants’, Caro responded, ‘I like [this decision], firstly because of the subject; I find it complies with the place, where there are so many fantastical and supernatural things’.⁵⁰⁰ As the letter continues a rich picture develops of the fresco as he imagines it: the giants will have long menacing serpent’s tails and be surrounded by ‘incubi, which are a type of demon, said to be the father of the Giants, which come in the form of fauns and wild men’.⁵⁰¹ It is unknown which came first, Caro’s description and Orsini’s plan for a fresco, or the Sacro Bosco’s sculptures of giants and hybrid animals with snaky tails [Plates 27 and 29], but the connections between the two are immediately evident. Of greater interest for this chapter is how Caro then goes on to align the imaginative content he describes with a specific geography: ‘a place [*luogo*] that would give occasion to the tale [*favola*] in which the giants are struck down’ and which ‘in some places exhales sulphurous fires and lets out waters that smoke’.⁵⁰² The ‘*fuochi sulfuri*’ and ‘*aque che*

⁵⁰⁰ Annibal Caro, ‘Al Signor Vicino Orsino: Di frascati, a li 12 di Dicembre M. D. LXIII’, in Caro (1597), Libro Secondo, 233–238, 233: ‘vuol far dipingere la favola de’ Giganti. Mi piace, la prima cosa, il soggetto; e mi pare conforme al luogo, dove sono tant’altre cose stravaganti e soprannaturali’. For Caro as an iconographer see Robertson (1982), 164–166.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 236–237: ‘Alcuni poeti descrivon i Giganti co’piè di serpenti’; ‘Incubi, che sono alcuni demoni, I quali di dicono esser padre de’ Giganti: la forma de’ quali è la dedesima che dei Fauni e de’ Silvano’. The description of giants as having serpent tails probably comes from, or at least correlates with, Vincenzo Cartari’s *Le imagini* in which he describes: ‘Era quell Gigante huomo dal mezzo in sù, e serpent nel resto’: Cartari [1556] (1581), 322.

⁵⁰² Ibid., Libro Secondo, 237: ‘un luogo tale ha dato occasione alla favola, che i Giganti vi fossero fulminate’, ‘in alcuni lochi vaporare fuochi sulfuri, ed uscirne aque che fumino’. The picture Caro creates in this letter is of a composition that goes beyond (in terms of diversity) the comparable, extant, fresco of the ‘Fall of the Giants’ at Palazzo del Te in Mantua by Giulio Romano (c.1526–1535). Speaking of this artwork in his letter, Caro describes it somewhat dismissively, see 236.

fumino' Caro describes are important because they are topographical features that characterise the region surrounding Bomarzo. This fact has not been considered in relation to the Sacro Bosco. Born from volcanic activity, the locale has a history of eruptions and earthquakes and, to this day, is known for sulphurous, bubbling hot springs and seismic activity. Caro thus places the giants and monstrous creatures of the fresco's subject in a landscape that correlates directly to the surrounding geography of Orsini's home and, in turn, makes Alto Lazio into a landscape of violent mythology, home to giants as well as volcanic events.

This chapter explores the connections suggested by Caro's letter to make a claim about how myth, geology, material and subject matter could have been seen to meet in the sculptures of Vicino's *bosco*. The last two chapters have argued for the importance of the topography of Bomarzo by considering the site's intended visitors. This chapter extends this overarching concern to consider the material of the statues up close, while also returning to the wider landscape of Alto Lazio and its geological features. We know these topics were of interest to Vicino's social circle. Just as he knew historians, collectors of antiquities and authors of fiction, Orsini's friends also included figures who studied and translated Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*, a thirty-seven-book encyclopaedia on natural science and one of the most important ancient texts in Renaissance thought.⁵⁰³

The Sacro Bosco would have concerned those interested in the workings of geologic forces, on both a material and mythic level. First, I shall consider the implications of the living peperino stone from which the sculptures are carved in the context of natural history, the local landscape and seismic activity. Second, I shall return to the

⁵⁰³ For example: Pliny, trans. by Ludovico Domenichi (1562)a. Scholars such as Paula Findlen and Sarah Black McHam have shown how the cinquecento was characterised by a desire to study the material world in a manner unprecedented since the classical period. See Findlen (1994) and McHam (2012). On the emergence of natural history as a distinct discipline in the sixteenth century see Ogilvie (2006).

giants and creatures of Caro's letter to rethink some of the sculptures and their subject matter from a mythic geological stance. Thus the two themes of the previous chapters—history and fiction—are also brought together in order to consider how a geologic past becomes entwined with the fictional; how various myths attend to specific landscapes; how material can convey meaning; how, to borrow the words of Lorraine Daston, things 'communicate by what they are as well as by how they mean'.⁵⁰⁴

To consider the Sacro Bosco from this material and ecological angle is to bring a new lens to the study of Bomarzo. Michael Cole stated that 'few topics in the history of sculpture have seen as much success in recent years as those relating to 'materials' and 'materiality'', yet the peperino substance of the sculptures is rarely discussed in any detail.⁵⁰⁵ Luke Morgan's work is a recent exception. Morgan considers the rock of the Sacro Bosco primarily in relation to Petrarch's poetic image of *pietra viva* and the grotesque elements of François Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (first printed in French in two instalments in 1532 and 1534).⁵⁰⁶ My research builds on that of Morgan in that, like him, I am concerned with the multiple ways these statues and their stone could and would have been received. Where our work differs is that I am concerned with the specific meanings of Bomarzo's peperino rather than living rock in general, and am here invested in local and geological concerns, rather than broad literary connections. In following this line of thought, my research draws upon art historical scholarship that considers the specific Renaissance meanings of particular rocky materials.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁴ Daston (2007), 20.

⁵⁰⁵ Cole (2010), 1.

⁵⁰⁶ Morgan (2015), 7–29. Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is central to much of Morgan's work on Italian Renaissance gardens, which is primarily concerned with monstrosity and the grotesque. See also Morgan (2016)b.

⁵⁰⁷ On porphyry, for example, see di Castro (1987); Mundy (1988) and Butters (1996). On different types of marbles see Strupp (1993) and Barry (2006).

GROUNDED

Dominated by just one type of stone, every sculpture in Vicino's *bosco* is made from peperino, a dark, volcanic *tuffo* that is mottled with flecks of basalt, limestone, augite, mica and black peppercorn-like scoriae that give it its name. Its texture is coarse and rough, its relatively loose or open composition of different minerals and rock making it hard to work to any fine detailing. Vasari described peperino as 'a blackish and spongy [*spugnosa*] stone', while Ferrante Imperato likewise called it 'spongy and tender, and close to the pumice's condition' in his natural history book of 1599.⁵⁰⁸ The statues of the Sacro Bosco were hewn *per via di levare* from large boulders of this matter, frequently carved where they were found in the landscape. What was sculpted and where would thus have been dictated to a great extent by the pre-existing form and position of the giant stones. This fact is visually evident as there are numerous places where parts of the boulders the sculptures are hewn from are both visible and left un-carved, and where the statues, without plinths, emerge directly from the ground.

One of the most obvious examples is the sculpture referred to as Proserpine [Plate 32]: a wide-armed female that is half human, half furniture.⁵⁰⁹ Where her torso meets what would become her stomach, the stone branches out to form a broad rock bench, which in turn is clearly shown to be formed from a boulder that rises from the earth (in a *non-finito* effect that could be compared to Michelangelo's *Slaves*, though purposefully so rather than left accidentally incomplete). The lowest part of her form remains intentionally un-carved, leaving the irregularity of the boulder visible. Where the natural rock becomes the seat, rather than smoothed, the rough initial marks of the

⁵⁰⁸ Vasari (1550), 33 (Book I: 'De la Architettura': cap.I): 'pietra nericcia e spugnosa'; Imperato (1599), 689 ('Libro vigesimoquinto': cap.VIII): 'spongiosa, e tenera, e vicina alla condizion delle pomici'.

⁵⁰⁹ Bettini (2012), 37; Berberi (1999), 270–280; Guidoni (2006), 60.

sculptor's point chisel have been left apparent, once more making the qualities of the rooted stone emphatically evident to a beholder.

A similar encounter is offered by the statue of the Reclining Woman [Plate 25]. Walk around this sculpture and it is clear where the boulder from which it is carved comes naturally out of the earth, where the sculpted body emerges from this hunk of matter and where the stone woman's right hand becomes the rock it grasps. Head thrown back, body writhing with knees bent, the figure appears to be in transformation, from body to stone, stone to body. At close proximity, the figure is so large it cannot be seen in its entirety; my hand can only grasp one cold, rough finger. Instead, what comes to the fore is the stone itself. Its grey-brown surface rough to the touch, earthy and mottled, marked by lichen and occasional soft patches of moss.

Scholars have shown in recent years that touch was a central means by which beholders encountered sculpture in early modern Italy.⁵¹⁰ In one of the first Italian treatises to consider sculpture theoretically from the mid-fifteenth century, the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti, describing his encounters with various life-sized statues, spoke of how tactile exploration was necessary in order to fully appreciate and understand sculpture from a connoisseurial point of view.⁵¹¹ The interaction prompted by the sculptures in the Sacro Bosco, the fact that some double up as places to sit and enter, and the fact that, without plinths and rising from the earth, the distance between sculpture and beholder is rarely controlled or separated by an unreachable distance, suggests that touch on the visitor's behalf would have been likely. At the very least, the texture of the stone, its dappled mineral appearance and the visible chisel grooves,

⁵¹⁰ See note 49 *supra*.

⁵¹¹ See Johnson (2002), 64–66 for a discussion of Ghiberti's writings on sculpture.

would have prompted an imaginative tactile engagement.⁵¹² Indeed, in the sculpture of the Reclining Woman, her right hand is shown clutching the stone fabric that begins to fall from her lower body, directly calling attention to touch and material.

Such places, in which the sculptures call attention to their matter, admit their rootedness and natural stone, and where representation tails off to become rock—or where rock begins to become representation—are numerous and makes an immediate visual statement about the sculptures' ties to the local environs. It is apparent in the rough surface of the boulder from which the Three Graces are carved in relief by the Nymphaeum [Plate 9]; in the Harpy, chiselled from a chunk of peperino to which her wing and tail remain visibly attached [Plate 27]; in the Ogre, hewn from a colossal boulder that you can enter, its internal walls showing repeated chisel grooves; in the carved stump of the Tree sculpture [Plate 8] by the Pegasus Fountain; and in the Sea Creature that seems to rise out of the ground, mouth agape, by the Tortoise and the stream [Plate 6]. Even the Boat Fountain, little discussed in Bomarzo literature, emphasises the unusual grounded nature of its material.⁵¹³ Found on the lower level of the site, this fountain is shaped as a shallow flat-bottomed boat with dolphin-like creatures at either end that would once have spewed water from their open mouths into the boat's hull [Plate 10]. Inspecting the bow and stern of this water-logged vessel it becomes clear that its sculpted form merges with the rough, moss-covered boulders from which it is carved. The handling of material in the Sacro Bosco means that the sculptures actively call attention to their formation from natural boulders and the rooted nature of their peperino stone. It is a presentation of rock that is exceptional

⁵¹² Geraldine Johnson has written about how context, decorum and the question of potentially illicit encounter (often inflected by gender and desire) could negatively impact on attitudes towards touch and sculpture in early modern Italy: (2016), 92–99. It is worth also noting that the particularly coarse properties of peperino, in the context of outdoor sculpture, means that any visible traces of historical visitors' touch would be improbable.

⁵¹³ Tchikine (2011), 318, briefly discusses the Boat Fountain.

in the context of sixteenth-century gardens and statuary, and would undoubtedly have been notable to a cinquecento visitor.

Artistic and architectural treatises from the period suggest that peperino was a stone primarily perceived as an unimpressive, functional material. In the introduction to *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (1550), Giorgio Vasari details peperino in his section on the materials used in architecture rather than in sculpture.

‘A stone named *piperno* or more commonly *peperigno*, a blackish and spongy stone, resembling travertine’, he writes, ‘is used for the posts of windows and doors in various places, notably at Naples and in Rome’.⁵¹⁴ The association of peperino with building as opposed to sculpture is further substantiated by Andrea Palladio’s influential *I quattro libri dell’architettura* (1570). In each instance that peperino is mentioned it is in relation to the external construction of an ancient Roman building.⁵¹⁵

The practice of covering peperino with a classicising layer of polished stucco was widespread in sixteenth-century Italy. Such is the case in the nymphaeum of the Villa Giulia in Rome, whose two muscular river gods, commissioned from Bartolomeo Ammannati between 1551 and 1553, recline in square niches and in front of large

⁵¹⁴ Vasari (1550), 33 (Book I: ‘De la Architettura’: cap.I): ‘Avviene questo medesimo della pietra detta piperno, da molti detta peperigno: pietra nericcia e spugnosa come il trevertino, la quale si cava per la campagna di Roma, e se ne fanno stipiti di finestre e porte in diversi luoghi, come a Napoli ed in Roma’. For a translated version see Vasari (1907), 55 (‘On Architecture’: 1:14).

⁵¹⁵ Including for the outside walls of the Temple of Mars, the courtyard of the Temple of Antonio and Faustina in Rome, and the Temple of Fortune Virile, ‘the whole structure [of which] is built out of peperino and covered with stucco’: Palladio (1570), ‘Di Tempio di Marte’: Quarto Capitolino XV, 53; ‘Tempio d’Antonino, e di Faustina’: Quarto Capitolino IX, 28; ‘Tempio della Fortuna Virile’: Libro Capitolino XI, 46: ‘tutto questo tempio è fatto di peperino & è coperto di stucco’. For a translated version see Palladio (1997).

rectangular troughs [Fig.4.1].⁵¹⁶ Both of these statues are carved from peperino that was then covered by a stucco skin.⁵¹⁷ Today, time has taken its toll and, examining the feet of the Roman river god on the right, one can see where the smooth pale outer layer has chipped and fallen away to reveal the dark rock interior. Peperino sculptures that were stuccoed were also found in the gardens of Ciriaco Mattei on the Celio in Rome, created between 1581 and 1586.⁵¹⁸ In an inventory of the villa made after Mattei died on 10 October 1614, the sculptures of his garden are listed in two parts: one names the marble sculptures (most of which are thought to be ancient originals); the other: ‘*Seguitano le statue, animali, vasi et altri ornamenti di peperino*’.⁵¹⁹ Close examination of an engraved bird’s eye view of the Villa Mattei by Giacomo Lauro from 1614 [Fig.4.2], reveals that these peperino sculptures were primarily of pastoral subjects: a shepherd with a mastiff, playing goats and a wild boar, to name but a few examples.⁵²⁰ By being stuccoed, efforts were made to hide the integral peperino aspect of their material composition.

⁵¹⁶ For the history and design of the Villa Giulia see Coolidge (1943), 177–225; MacDougal (1970), 40–49, Falk (1971), 101–178; Coffin (1979), 150–155 and 165–169. For the antique river gods topos and its use in the Renaissance see Bober, Rubinstein and Woodford (1986), 101–103. The ancient river god statues that could be found in Rome in the sixteenth century included the Marforio, Tigris, and Nile, along with the Louvre Tiber and the Vatican Nile.

⁵¹⁷ MacDougal (1994), 60, note 10.

⁵¹⁸ Ciriaco Mattei reviewed the history of the villa and his gardens in his Will, dated 26 July 1610. The Will is held in the Archivio di Stato, Rome and is reprinted in entirety in Lanciani (1907), 83–86. See also MacDougal (1983), 121–130. Sadly almost nothing now remains of the Mattei garden or its statues, the family having sold the property in the eighteenth century along with its art collection, which they broke up into individual sales. What you see today is a municipal park acquired in the 1920s. For the later history of the villa and gardens see Pasolini (1925), 173–176.

⁵¹⁹ Full inventory published in Lanciani, *ibid.*, 88–97. For the peperino sculptures noted in the inventory see also MacDougal (1994), 128–130.

⁵²⁰ Giacomo Lauro, *Giardino dell Ill Sig Ciriaco Mattei posto nel Monte Celio*, 1614, Italy, engraving from two plates, h: 653mm x w: 636mm, The British Museum. These sculptures are referred to in number 21 of the image key, which states: ‘Boschetto con molti Animali di pietra con un Pastore’. These peperino sculptures, it seems, were separated from the antique sculpture collection, which was displayed in the Loggia (number 34 on the key, which describes ‘statue antiche in diversi’ and ‘altri busti antichi’).

In light of this evidence, what was the Renaissance beholder to make of the use of this stone in the Sacro Bosco, in which the material's rough and earthy texture was allowed to surface? Did the sculptures present to the beholder as artworks which had lost their stucco layer? Would they have appeared primitive, unfinished or of less prestige than those in materials such as marble?⁵²¹ The natural historian Agostino del Riccio, for one, described peperino as an unremarkable rock in 1597, echoing Vasari in stating that it was primarily used for windows and other architectural features.⁵²² There are, first and foremost, regional concerns that need to be taken into account. Peperino, and *tuffo* in general, is intrinsic to the locality. Just as in Naples, where the buildings and urban artworks are primarily made from a pale yellow and sandy *tuffo* (omnipresent thanks to nearby Mount Vesuvius), so the architecture of Alto Lazio is almost entirely of its own dark grey version of this stone thanks to its abundance within the area.⁵²³ The stairways, doorways and structural details of Orsini's palazzo [Fig.4.3] and of the primary church of Bomarzo [Fig.4.4], where heraldic Orsini bears sit in the arched niches, are all made from peperino.⁵²⁴ The same is true of the region's urban capital, Viterbo, where this rock composes many of its historic walls and architectural details, in line with Vasari's description of peperino as used for '*finestre e porte*'. More unusually, raw peperino was also used for some of the sculptures of the

⁵²¹ For example Agostino Del Riccio, in the third volume of *Agricoltura teorica* [1595], stated that he considers macigno (a hard sandstone) an ordinary stone and thus unworthy of the garden of Cardinal Gambara: Del Riccio [1595] (1981), 59–123, 111.

⁵²² Del Riccio [1597] (1979), 'L. Della Pietra Peperina', 109 (22r): 'Intro le pietre si trovano appresso Roma, ci son le pietre che si cavano a Marino fuor della città, son pietre ordinarie, del color quasi del macigno, sono in opera per tutta Roma, ché d'esse si fanno usci e finestre ed altri lavori'.

⁵²³ For Naples and its volcanic stone see Iovino (2014), 98–100.

⁵²⁴ Palazzo Orsini was renovated in the sixteenth century, with work initiated by Giovanni Corrado Orsini and completed by Vicino. Baldassarre Peruzzi, Pietro Antonio di Andrea, Pier Domenico Ricciarelli, Bartolomeo di mastro Giovanni da Morco and Francesco Moschino have all been linked to the restoration project. The church, known as the Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta, Bomarzo, was built in the fifteenth century. In 1546 a well was dug under the loggia of the façade for the inhabitants of the town.

nearby Villa Lante at Bagnaia and those of the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, both attributed to Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola and begun after the Sacro Bosco [Figs.4.5 and 4.6].⁵²⁵

The ubiquitous use of peperino in Alto Lazio is due, therefore, to its convenience as a local stone. Moreover, using peperino, as Chapter Two detailed, had a historic precedent in the region's Etruscan past, and the dominance of this material in sixteenth-century structures and sculptures in the area was certainly, in part, motivated by an engagement with local ancient history. However, the historic Etruscan and widespread local use of peperino for architecture is far from the only possible context or connotation the material would have had for the sixteenth-century visitor. This is true particularly when the key difference between the use of peperino in the Sacro Bosco and the other examples in the nearby towns and gardens is reiterated and taken into account. In Viterbo, in the Villa Lante, and in the Villa Farnese, the peperino has been quarried, carved and relocated. Conversely at Bomarzo, the statues are literally physically attached to the landscape in which they reside.

In sixteenth-century Italy, a statue's material source could capture people's imagination, and many viewers were aware of and even fetishised a stone's origin. Families, including the Medici, owned quarries where sculptors would select marble for their commissions, lithic blocks that would then be transported, as Bartolomeo Ammanati described in 1582, with the investment of 'great effort, time and expense'.⁵²⁶ One such quarry at Seravezza in Versilia, opened by Cosimo I de' Medici in the 1560s, provided the marble for Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine* (c.1579–1583), which currently stands in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence [Fig.4.7]. When

⁵²⁵ The Villa Lante has been most extensively studied by Lazzaro (1974), idem (1977) and idem (1990), 243–269, and more recently Frommel (2005) and Benocci (2010). On the Villa Farnese at Caprarola see Coffin (1979), 302–310 and Lazzaro (1990), 99–108.

⁵²⁶ Bartolomeo Ammanati, 'Lettera agli Accademici del Disegno' [1582], reprinted in Barocchi (1960–1962), vol.III, 115–123, 118: 'con gran fatica, tempo e spesa'.

Cosimo Gaci eulogised over the creation of this sculpture, he felt compelled to construct a transportation myth for its marble block, in which Hercules used a magic rope to carry the precious stone from its quarry all the way to Florence.⁵²⁷ When visiting sculpture gardens in Italy, Agostino Del Riccio noted where different stones originated. At the Villa Medici at Pratolino just outside Florence (1569–1581) he described how in its various fountains one could see ‘spugne from the Radicofani region’; at the Boboli gardens (c.1550–1590), he described stalactites that had been collected from as far away as Hungary, evidencing the parallels between the natural historian’s connoisseurial skill and that of the antiquarian—both must seek the source of their object of study.⁵²⁸ In the grotto of Villa di Castello near Florence (c.1538–1590), moreover, carved animals made from a dazzling array of stones were installed, including a lion from ancient Sienese marble, a rhinoceros from grey granite, and a monkey from a veined marble only recently discovered [Fig.4.8]. Just as these exotic animals symbolically travelled from across the globe, their many different stones travelled from various quarries, displaying their patron’s wealth.⁵²⁹

These examples serve to illustrate how the origins of a material were an important aspect of a work of art. The groundedness of the sculptures in the Sacro Bosco and the rawness of their material, as such, would have been evident and notable to the site’s

⁵²⁷ Cosimo Gaci, ‘Del Reverendo Sig. Cosimo Gaci: Egloga: Mirenio et Brilio’, in Sermartelli (1583), 23–45. For example: ‘In questi ultimi giorni Hercole apparue al gran Francesco, e lo pregò, che quindi Col detto fune a Flora il conducesse, Il chef u fatto ageuolmente, e n braue: E posto in quella parte, ou’hor si vede, Fà spesso altrui con sua mirabilvista Restar di sensat’ huom stupido sasso’ [sic]: 40–41. On Giambologna’s *Sabine* see Cole (2008), 337–359 and idem (2011), 94–102; Wutrich (2004), 308–322.

⁵²⁸ Del Riccio, [1597], (1979), ‘CII.Dell Spugne’, 129–130 (40r–41r): ‘Le spugne, che si cavano apresso a Radicofani, nel fiorentissimo stato di Siena, sono alquanto rossette e si veggono in opera alle fonti di Pratolino’, ‘Una spugne, la più bella che io abbi visto, ma par quella che è alla grotta de’ Pitti, in testa all’ultimata grotta piccola, che dicono esser stata portata d’Ungheria al Gran Duca Francesco’. On Pratolino and its sculptures see Zangheri (1979); Butters (2001), 61–87; Brunon (2001). For a general bibliography see Valdré (2003).

⁵²⁹ See Lazzaro (1995), 197–228.

historical visitors.⁵³⁰ The fact that, in contrast to other local sites, there has been no quarrying, no divorcing of lithic matter from its source, no painstaking journey from ground to sculptor's yard to the patron's location of choice means that visitors stand on and walk around the very origin of the sculptures' stone: the ground beneath their feet. Indeed, one of the only surviving sixteenth-century texts to reference Vicino's *bosco* focuses on the unusual grounded nature of its statues and shows that this aspect of their creation was striking and worthy of comment. In an agricultural treatise from the final decades of the sixteenth century, Giovanni Vittore Soderini (whose description of the Ogge appeared in the previous chapter), writes:

Nor should one forget to mention that in some of these palaces of India, in the meadows which surround them, some lumps of natural boulders come out of the earth, in which they have carved their idols and some figures of statues of their very fantastic animals. So these rocks also exist in our parts, which we make into good sculptures of giants or other happy inventions, as at Bomarzo are seen those carved out of natural rocks of more than a huge pebble.⁵³¹

Soderini finds the statues of Bomarzo remarkable, even exotic, because they are carved from 'huge' [*grandissimo*] 'natural rocks' [*pietre naturali*] that 'come out of the earth' [*escono fuor della terra*], or that are, in other words, still connected to their source. Focusing upon this distinction is imperative to understanding one of the many ways Vicino's *bosco* would have been seen to engage with regional and topographical

⁵³⁰ I know of only one other sixteenth-century Italian site that carved directly into stone in this way, a garden at Pitigliano in Tuscany, belonging to a separate branch of the Orsini family and commissioned—it is thought—around 1565 by Niccolò IV, and thus after work on the Sacro Bosco had begun. This site takes the form of various architectural features and seats carved directly into the soft tuff of a small mountain plateau right by its steep precipice, offering views of the valley and hills beyond. The site is currently very dilapidated and traversing through the overgrowth is difficult. Most of the sculpted forms have been extremely weathered to the point of being barely discernible, though some of the architectural detailing still visible clearly resembles features of Etruscan tombs. On the Orsini garden at Pitigliano see Portoghesi (1955), 74–76 and Lazzaro (1990), 118–120.

⁵³¹ Soderini [c.1580–1590] (1902), vol.I, 276: 'Né è da lasciar di dire che in alcuno di questi palazzi delle India nei prati che vi sono d'attorno escono fuor della terra certi bernoccoli di massi naturali, nei quali hanno scolpiti i loro idoli e certe figure dell'effigie dei loro animali stravagantissimi. Così fossero dalle nostre parti cosiffatti sassi, che si portiamo ridurre a buone sculture di statue, di colossi o d'altra allegra invenzione; come a Buomarzo si veggono questi cavati di pietre naturali di più d'un grandissimo ciottolo'. This source has previously been noted in relation to Bomarzo, including in Coffin (1991), 114.

concerns. The handling of material in the Sacro Bosco could be said to call attention to nature's geologic power: generative, unpredictable and full of force. To get closer to this possibility, it is necessary to turn now to theories of rock formation, subterranean forces and seismic activity.

GROWTH

In the understanding of natural history, rock was alive until removed from its source. For centuries authors had argued for the reality of 'living stone'. In *De Mineralibus* (c.1280, printed in at least six Latin editions between 1476 and 1569), Albertus Magnus, a medieval author widely read in the Renaissance, wrote that 'the specific form of individual stones is mortal, just like humans; and if [stones] are kept for a long time away from the place where they are produced [*extra loca generationis*], they perish'.⁵³² Marsilio Ficino likewise wrote that while many animals 'remain alive even when they are not in contact with the earth', 'stones and plants (deriving life as they do from the soul of the earth, not from their own soul) do not'.⁵³³ In *De subtilitate* (1560), the Italian scientist and polymath Girolamo Cardano spoke of how all stones, when rooted to the ground, are 'in some sense alive, although the life of plants and animals are more manifest'.⁵³⁴ Within this framework, rock, once quarried,

⁵³² Magnus (1541), 92v (II:i.4): 'Et ad memoriam huius reuocandum quæ in n. meth. diximus, lapidum species ad individua quodammodo esse mortalia, sicut & homines & extra loca generationes suæ diu contenti corrumpuntur' [sic]. For an English translation see Magnus (1967), 66. On Alberti and stones see Riddle and Mulholland (1980), 203–234. On the concept of living stone since antiquity see Plumpe (1943).

⁵³³ Ficino [1482] (2001), 264–265 (IV:I:13): 'In terra multa sunt animalia quæ propriam habent animam a communi anima terræ distinctam, quia moventur loco, quod terra non facit; quia separate cum sint vivunt (quod lapides et plantæ non faciunt, quæ per animam vivunt terræ, non suam)' [sic]. Though Ficino was writing at the end of the fifteenth century, the sixteenth century in Italy saw the popularization of his Platonism beyond Florence, with multiple translations into vernacular Italian, such as editions by Hercole Barbarasa (Ficino (1544)a); F. Figliucci (Ficino (1544)b); and Alessandro Puccinelli (Ficino (1577)). On Ficino and his Platonism as a sixteenth-century 'courtly vogue' see Gilson (2006), 719–722, 721, and the essays in Allen, Rees and Davies (2002).

⁵³⁴ Cardano (1580), 248: 'Obscuriora hæc sunt Omnia in lapidibus quam in plantis, quanto etiam vita in his minus & vita opera sunt manifesta' / 'Dubitavit autem merito aliquis, cur lapidibus ipsis maiores vires esse videantur quam animalibus aut plantis, cum animalia & plantæ clariore vivant vita?'.

was dead, removed from its life source (though the visual effects of this death might not be immediately evident to the human eye).⁵³⁵ The rootedness of the Sacro Bosco's sculptures, on the other hand, meant its stones were—and are—'living', carved from '*pietra viva*' that would have been seen as taking part in an animate and physical transformation. This adds a vital dimension to the theme of metamorphosis in the Sacro Bosco. Metamorphosis applies not just to the changing seasons, or to the subjects that invoke Ovid's transformations as possible iconographical source, but to the lithic material itself.

In recent years there has been a growing interest within Renaissance garden scholarship in the intersection between scientific theories of natural history, different materials, and outdoor sculpture. To date, these discussions have primarily focused on the rock-filled grotto, found in almost every sixteenth-century Italian *giardino*, but not at Bomarzo. Inside, along with fountains and water displays, these structures were almost universally made to appear cave-like by covering the interior walls with *sponge* and pumice, a practice derived from ancient classical sources such as Ovid and Pliny.⁵³⁶ Examples of such cinquecento grottos include the Grotta Grande or Grotta di Buontalenti of the Medici Boboli gardens in Florence [Fig.4.9], and the Grotto of Cupid at the Villa Medici at Pratolino [Fig.4.10].⁵³⁷ In a drawing of the inside of the latter by Guerra, the same artist who sketched the Sacro Bosco around

⁵³⁵ As discussed later in this chapter see page 219 and note 592.

⁵³⁶ As Alberti explained in his *De Re Aedificatoria* (1485): 'Nelle grotte, & nelle spelonche usuano gli antichi di farui una corteccia di cose aspre, & ronchiose, comettendoui pezzuo li piccoli di pomice, o di spugne': (1565), 334. In Book II of the *Fasti*, for example, Ovid writes of such a space when Omphale and Hercules go to rest in 'a cave, its ceiling panelled with tufa and living pumice'. Pliny the Elder described pumice as 'the hollowed rocks in buildings called by the Greeks 'Homes of the Muses' [nymphaea], where such rocks hang from ceilings so as to create an artificial imitation of a cave'. See Ovid (ed.2011), 26 (II:315); Pliny (ed. 2012), vol.V, 195–196 (XXXVI:42).

⁵³⁷ The interior of the 'Grotta Grande' was constructed by Bernardo Buontalenti between 1583 and 1593 under Francesco I, while the architectural façade was designed by Vasari between 1556 and 1560. For interpretations of the grotto's iconography see Fagiolo (1979), 137–143; Medri (1999), 215–260, 226.

1598, the rough surface of such rocks found covering the walls can be made out from the jagged shapes drawn in loose quick pen strokes [Fig.4.11].

The stones that coated the interior of these grottos often originated from actual caves and were believed, within natural history theories circulating at the time, to be formed by the slow accumulation of congealing water drops. Scipione Capece, in *De principiis rerum* from 1546, for example, described how ‘when liquid pours drops in hollow caverns [...] the liquid distils to become hard stone’.⁵³⁸ Soderini, who in the same *trattato* wrote of Bomarzo’s sculptures, likewise argued for this theory of stony generation for *spugne*, noting in addition that ‘concretions engendered in this manner serve as fountain decorations in gardens and in villa courtyards’.⁵³⁹ It was a theory that fed into the reception of such grottos too. In a letter from 1543, Claudio Tolomei wrote that the spongy concretions present in the fountains at the Villa d’Este at Tivoli in ‘being formed by water, return to the service of water as if they were its own creation’.⁵⁴⁰ In this way, the *spugne*-filled grottos with their waterworks and fountains, could be seen, as Phillippe Morel and others have argued, as ‘a staging of mineral nature’s generation’, in which the grottos re-presented the calcareous watery birth of their material.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ Capece (1546), Libro I, 5v: ‘Sic etiam liquidas fundit cum concava guttas / [...] In lapides stillans humor concresecere duos’.

⁵³⁹ Soderini [c.1580–1590] (1902), vol.I, 193: ‘E massime veggendosi ancora del sugo atto fra la terra e di fuori a diventar pietra, o gocciando nelle spelonche delle sue commisure, fibre e vene, che caschin giù, s’indurino e faccin sasso [...] generati in questo modo, buoni a far fonti per i giardini e nei cortili dei palazzi villerecci’.

⁵⁴⁰ Claudio Tolomei to ‘G.M. Giovambattista Grimaldi’ [26/07/1543], in Tolomei (1554), Libro Secondo, 41v–43v, 42v: ‘le quali essendo formate da l’aque, ritornan come lor fatture al seruizio de l’acqe’. See also the description of the grotto in the west garden of the Villa Farnese at Caprarola by the papal secretary Fabio Ardito on the occasion of Pope Gregory XIII’s visit in 1578: ‘tutto fabricato di tartiri et pumice, che sembrano veramente quivi prodotti dalla natura et da l’acqua’: Ardito [1578] (1920), 386.

⁵⁴¹ Morel (1998), 26–36 and (2006), 127. Also Szafranska (1989), 76–85; Brunon (2001), 471–584 and Pietrogrande (2011), 197–203.

In a similar vein, but without any sustained analysis, scholars have noted that the statues in the Sacro Bosco appear to be emerging from rock, sometimes quoting Capece's text above.⁵⁴² However, there are some important differences that need to be distinguished. First, whereas these garden grottos invoke living rock, re-enacting a creation narrative, the Sacro Bosco's sculptures *are* living rock. Second, it must be remembered that there were different theories of rock formation for different types of stone. Capece refers specifically to *spugne*, not peperino. Thus, while this section builds upon the suggestions of previous scholars to argue that the Sacro Bosco engages with lithic generation, its claim fundamentally differs in exploring the Renaissance understanding of how peperino was created. Far from lithic genesis as the gentle drip of water becoming stone, peperino is subterranean in a different manner, its creation filled with vitality, force, even violence—befitting the geographical setting and sculptural content of the Sacro Bosco.

At the end of the fifteenth century Marsilio Ficino, in *Platonica theologia* (1482), spoke of how stones grow out of the ground like teeth [*'quasi dentes'*], having been formed within the maternal womb of the earth's interior.⁵⁴³ The image was more than a metaphor. Renaissance natural history understood certain stones to be created deep within the earth. Central to this idea of subterranean generation were the ancient writings of Aristotle, who in *Meteorologica* (printed in more than one hundred and twenty-five editions across Europe before 1601) argued that the earth produced metals and stones via underground 'exhalations'. The movement and changing characteristics of these produced such matter according to how vaporous and smokey the conditions

⁵⁴² Jeanneret (2001), 126. Morgan references Jeanneret: Morgan (2015), 12–13.

⁵⁴³ Ficino [1482] (2001), 248–249 (IV:1:2): 'Augere etiam lapides quasi dentes suos et herbas quasi pilos, quamdiu radicibus haerent, quae si evellantur et extirpentur e terra, non crescunt. Quis feminae huius ventrem vita carere dixerit, qui tam multos sponte sua parit foetus et alit, qui sustinet se ipsum' [sic]. On the links between earth and body in the Renaissance see Hallyn (1988), 43–54.

were underground; rocks were primarily formed from smoke, which explained why many of them could not be melted.⁵⁴⁴

Aristotle's theory was widely adopted in the sixteenth century.⁵⁴⁵ For example, one of the most influential cinquecento writers on geological theories, Gregorius Agricola, discussed and endorsed Aristotle's theories in *De ortu et causis subterraneorum* (1546), a text that was translated into Italian in 1550 by Michele Tramezzino, who had considered the anticipated income value worthy of gaining a ten year privilege.⁵⁴⁶ In *De ortu*, Agricola, following Aristotle, asserted that particular rocks were 'in a certain way made of a dry and smoky exhalation', generated from a mixture of earth and water, which was then cooled to solidity when the exhalations were cold, or dried into lithic matter by hot exhalations that were heated by subterranean fires. Rocks made through heat, Agricola asserted in agreement with Aristotle, were thus very difficult to melt.⁵⁴⁷ Soderini likewise stated that some 'stones are born to generate from smoky and terrestrial exhalations, which [when they] cannot come out of the earth, congeal and convert into hardened mud, and so then the inside, being cooked [by underground fire], becomes stone'.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁴ See Martin (2011), 3–6 and Eichholz (1949), 141–146.

⁵⁴⁵ Charles Schmitt has clearly demonstrated that despite numerous and often savage attacks Aristotle's authority remained practically inviolate throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: (1983). Also Mottana (2006), 1–22.

⁵⁴⁶ Agricola, trans. by Tramezzino (1550). For the practice of gaining privileges for texts and prints in sixteenth-century Italy see Pon (1998), 40–64.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., *Della Gener.* Libro III, 40v. 'un certo modo si fanno da una exhalatione secca e fumosa'. For Agricola's discussion of underground rock formation and subterranean fires see Libro II, 32v–34r, and Libro IV, 49r–66r.

⁵⁴⁸ Soderini [c.1580–1590] (1902), vol.I, 192. 'le pietre si verghino a generare da esclamazioni fumose e terrestri, le quali non potendo uscire fuori della terra, si congela e converte in loto, e così poi la dentro cocendosi diventi pietra'. For other Italian writers who adopted both Aristotle's and Agricola's assertions see Cardano [1550] (1560); Falloppio (1564); Imperato (1599); and Aldrovandi (1648). On Agricola's influence in Italy see Morello (2006), 27–30.

It is this notion of underground rock formation that would have been invoked materially for the historical beholder at the Sacro Bosco. In sixteenth-century printed texts, peperino appears as a subterranean, fire resistant rock. One of the most prominent publications in which peperino appears is in Pliny the Elder's monumental *Naturalis Historia*, one of the most widely read ancient texts in the sixteenth century: an impressive one hundred and twenty-eight editions had been printed by 1601, in both Latin and Italian.⁵⁴⁹ The most popular vernacular versions were by Alessandro Brucioli (1548) and Orsini's friend Lodovico Domenichi (1561), which, with simpler Italian and glosses, saw dozens of reprints.⁵⁵⁰ Under the heading of tuff (a broad category of stone that includes *tuffo* and peperino),⁵⁵¹ Domenichi translates that the stones 'in the neighbourhood of Statonia, are unharmed by fire, and made into funeral monuments, remain unconsumed by time'.⁵⁵² The rock of Bomarzo can be identified geographically in Pliny's account since the ancient city of Statonia was identified already in the sixteenth century as having been in the immediate vicinity of what is now Bomarzo and the Monte Casoli ridge.⁵⁵³ It is fitting that Pliny notes these rocks are perfect for the use of monuments, and significant in relation to the rock's formation that they are notable for being immune to fire. If we are to follow the

⁵⁴⁹ McHam (2012), 3 and 12.

⁵⁵⁰ Pliny, trans. by Brucioli (1548); idem, trans. by Domenichi (1562)a. By comparison the first translation into French, by Antoine du Pinet, was in 1562, and the first translation into English was by Philemon Holland in 1601: Pliny, trans. by Pinet (1562)b; idem, trans. by Holland (1601). For a discussion of sixteenth-century Italian translations of ancient texts, including Pliny and Ovid, see Merisale (2015), 55–77.

⁵⁵¹ The term peperino was not in use during Pliny's lifetime, the stone instead was referred to variously as lapis albanus, lapis gabinus, tufo, tufa, sometimes even tofu. Care particularly needs to be taken with regard to 'tufa', which is technically a very different type of stone to 'tufo': within modern geology tufo refers to a volcanic rock, while tufa is considered a calcareous form of limestone. In ancient and Renaissance texts the terms are used interchangeably.

⁵⁵² Pliny (1562)a, 1149 ('Libro Trenaseesimo':Cap.XXII): 'Sono anchora nel paese Stationiese, allequali il fuoco non nuoce: & facendosene sepulture, il tempo non le consuma'. In the Latin original, this passage is found in a different chapter: Pliny (ed.2012), vol.V, 200 (XXXVI:49).

⁵⁵³ For the connection between Statonia and Bomarzo see Stanco (1994), 247–258; Munzi (1995), 285–299 and idem (1998), 85–92; Landfester, Cancik and Schneider (2008), vol.III, 861.

geological theories of Aristotle and later sixteenth-century natural historians, such a characteristic would mean that peperino was understood to be heated within the bowels of the earth.

This interpretation is bolstered by a second source: Book VII of Vitruvius's *De architectura*. Daniele Barbaro's 1556 Italian translation and extended commentary, accompanied by illustrations by Andrea Palladio, became the most successful and authoritative edition of this publication.⁵⁵⁴ Discussing 'Stone for Concrete Masonry', Vitruvius describes the rock from workshops 'around Lacus Volsiniensis [an ancient name for Lake Bolsena] and the prefecture of Statonia. Now these have endless virtues. For neither freezing storms nor the touch of fire can hurt them, they are firm and last to a great old age', for the reason that 'they have in their mixture a little air and much fire, moderate moisture, and much earth'.⁵⁵⁵ The stone of the region of Bomarzo, these texts state, was used for monuments, resistant to fire, made more of earth than of water, and thus viewed as created by subterranean geological forces. Certainly Ferrante Imperato's entry for peperino, in his late sixteenth-century *Dell'Historia Naturale* (1599), followed such ancient authors when he described it as a rock used in construction and large ornaments but also a material that resists fire [*'è materia che resiste al fuoco'*].⁵⁵⁶

The fact that the peperino sculptures at Bomarzo protrude naturally out of the earth and are made of *pietra viva* takes on greater significance when the natural history theories of how such rock was generated underground is taken into account. Seeing where boulder meets ground in the Sacro Bosco, the visitor is invited to imagine how

⁵⁵⁴ Vitruvius [1556] (1999)—facsimile of 1567 edition printed in Venice.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 81–82 (II:VII): 'd'intorno il lago di Volscena, & nella prefettura Stratoniese si trovano, queste hanno virtù infinite, perché nè i grandi ghiacci, nè la forza del fuoco le nuoce, ma ferme sono, & per questo curabili alla vecchiezza. Percioche nella loro mistura hanno poco aere, & molto del fuoco, me di temperato humore, / & molto del terreno'.

⁵⁵⁶ Imperato (1599), 689 ('Libro vigesimoquinto':cap.VIII).

far each sculpted stone sinks and thus also to think of the forces at play beneath their feet that made the rock—the lithic generation deep underground, the mud and water, the fire and the smoke. Encountering the peperino sculptures of the Sacro Bosco with knowledge of these scientific theories, a sixteenth-century beholder would have been reminded of nature’s stony generation. This subterranean theory of rock formation only becomes more assertive when one considers the topography surrounding Bomarzo.

GEOLOGY | GEOGRAPHY

As the attention paid to the locations of specific rock by Pliny and Vitruvius highlights, the geography of a region was understood to relate to the characteristics of its geology. When Agricola compiled *De Natura Fossilium* in 1546, he noted the specific places and sources of various stones, and how their situation related to their physical qualities, including colour, temperature, dryness or humidity, and even taste (dispelling any idea that materials were not considered according to the full range of senses by Renaissance beholders and philosophers).⁵⁵⁷ Alix Cooper, moreover, has examined how a new sense and appreciation of the particularities of local environment emerged in Renaissance geology, as figures interested in natural history ‘began to pay attention to an “indigenous” located within Europe itself’.⁵⁵⁸ This is important because Bomarzo has a visibly active geological history that correlates directly to the theories of subterranean rock formation discussed above.

When sixteenth-century natural historians (and literate individuals versed in their writings) considered the colossal peperino boulders from which the Sacro Bosco is hewn, it would have been, at least in part, to the surrounding geographical features that they would have turned to understand their presence. Inspection of the

⁵⁵⁷ Agricola (1546).

⁵⁵⁸ Cooper (2010), 3.

neighbouring topography would have made it evident that the region had a turbulent geological past. The two nearest lakes to the Sacro Bosco, Bolsena to the northwest and Lago di Vico to the south, fill extinct volcanic craters, as was recognised in the sixteenth century from reading ancient texts including Pliny as well as from observing their physical appearance, while towns cling to the tops of rocky hills, often with steep cliff faces.⁵⁵⁹ Breenbergh sketched these features in the early seventeenth century in pen and ink wash [see Figs.1, 2.30 and 2.33], rendering the looming and jagged rocks that characterise the Bomarzo countryside. On the reverse of the drawing entitled ‘Nel giardino del castel Bomarzo’ [Fig.2.33], Breenbergh shows a minuscule figure holding a stick and waving a hat at the bottom of a cliff, giving proportion to the truly huge scale of the region’s lithic outcrops [Fig.4.12]. What is more, the ground across Alto Lazio spurts boiling water to the surface in a manner similar to Caro’s epistolary description at the beginning of this chapter.

Thermal springs such as those at Bullicame, Bagnaccio or Le Masse, where sulphurous steaming water gushes into large rocky pools, were extensively known and in use during Orsini’s lifetime and their popularity with people of all classes was widely noted.⁵⁶⁰ In Machiavelli’s satirical play *Mandragola* (composed between 1518 and 1524), the character Ligurio at one point knowingly states that ‘all kinds of people go to these baths you know’.⁵⁶¹ Michel de Montaigne was among them, visiting Italy’s natural baths during his travels across Italy in 1581, including those in Alto Lazio. Writing on 1 September from the baths of ‘Della Villa’ near Lucca, Montaigne expressed regretfully that he should have ‘gone as early as possible to find

⁵⁵⁹ Pliny (1548), 28 (II:53).

⁵⁶⁰ See Mack (1992), 45–63.

⁵⁶¹ Machiavelli (1556), n.p. (Act 1:scene III): ‘Ti sai che a questi bagni va d’ogni qualita gente’. Andrea Bacci, in his 1571 text *De thermis*, dealt exclusively with thermal springs and referred to disorderly crowds taking to the baths: ‘tumultuariam hominum frequentiam ad balnea’: (1571), 80. For the various social groups using thermal springs and baths see Mack (2000), 257–276.

an autumn cure at some other baths. Going to Rome I noticed, a short distance from the main road, the baths of Bagnacqua, of Siena, and of Viterbo'.⁵⁶² Speaking again of Viterbo's natural warm waters later on in his travels, Montaigne described how he walked about a quarter of a mile away from the city on foot to where '[t]here are three or four baths of different effects, and more places to shower. The waters make a white foam and are easily located'.⁵⁶³ In *Descrittione di tutta d'Italia*, moreover, Leandro Alberti mentioned that in 'Terra Falisci', another name given to Alto Lazio, there is 'no shortage of fountains nor bubbling springs of hot water'.⁵⁶⁴

These warm water outlets were the object of much scientific and medicinal discussion, epitomised by the publication in 1553 of the edited volume *De balneis omnia quae extant* by Tomaso Giunta, which offered an encyclopaedic compendium of texts written on the subject from Pliny and Galen to Renaissance physicians and ancient poets such as Lucretius and Ovid.⁵⁶⁵ In relation to the formation of peperino, these hot springs are important because they were seen to provide evidence of the subterranean fires and hot vapours that were believed to create stones beneath the ground.⁵⁶⁶ As Agricola succinctly stated, hot springs were caused because 'the fire is located under the ground, above which they run'.⁵⁶⁷ In other words, the topography surrounding the Sacro Bosco offered up geographical features that evidenced the hot

⁵⁶² Montaigne [1581] (1774), vol.III, 284 and 286: 'per andare piu presto fornir la cura d'autunno a qual si voglia altri bagni. Andando verso Roma mi venivano riscontrati poco discosto della maestra strada i bagni Bagno acqua, quelli di Siena, e di Viterbo'. This is one of the first published editions of Montaigne's travel diaries, which were intended as private documents. The manuscript was discovered in 1770.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., vol.III, 336: 'Ci sono tre o quattro bagni di diversi effetti: e di più, loco per le doccie. Fanno queste acque una schiuma bianchissima, la quale si sitta facilmente'.

⁵⁶⁴ Alberti (1553), 70r: 'Non vi mancano fontane & sorgive d'aque calde'.

⁵⁶⁵ Giunta (1553). On natural baths and thermal springs see also Bacci (1571). For an earlier Renaissance text on the subject see Savonarola (1493). For scientific and medicinal views of thermals baths in the Renaissance see Palmer (1990), 14–22 and Stefanizzi (2011).

⁵⁶⁶ See Vermij (1998), 323–347.

⁵⁶⁷ Agricola (1550), 'Della Gener.', Libro I, 12r: 'il fuoco si trova post sotto il terreno, sopra il quale esse corrono'.

exhalations and subterranean fires believed necessary for the generation of a rock like peperino.

Another key aspect to this relationship between rock and geography in the Sacro Bosco is the idea of their eruption to the surface. Once stones such as peperino had formed underground, natural historians posited that they often rose from the depths below as a result of a violent natural force, such as an eruption or an earthquake. Such events, in particular the latter, were said to occur when the same Aristotelean ‘exhalations’ that formed stones became trapped underground, the prison like conditions of which, to borrow the words of Agricola, ‘force them [the exhalations] to break what they are in [...] the wind goes and gets impetuous, and the earth shakes’.⁵⁶⁸ Giacomo Buoni likewise offered this explanation for the natural cause of earthquakes in his *Terremoto dialogo* of 1571, dedicated to Alfonso II d’Este after the devastating Ferrara earthquakes of the same year.⁵⁶⁹ On the second day of the dialogue, the character of the historian Alessandro Sardi relates a tale apparently included in the histories of the Byzantine author Agathias of Mirena.⁵⁷⁰ According to Agathias, Sardi proclaims, a man names Artemisius once scared his neighbour Zeno by placing a contraption made from sealed containers full of water under Zeno’s house. Heating these containers,

...the steam raised by the force of the fire could not escape and sought more room, & trying to get out [...] moved with so much violence, that all the

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 29v: ‘che il vento interiore è cagione del terremoto’; ‘Quando il calore ò il fuoco sotterraneo ha generate molta copia di vapori [...] e constringe insieme [...] forzano di rompere ciò che presso si trovano [...] e l’vento ne va e viene impetuo samente, si scuote la terra’.

⁵⁶⁹ Buoni (1571).

⁵⁷⁰ The actual Sardi later went on to write his own text on earthquakes in his *Discorsi*, dedicated to Buoni: (1587).

house of Zeno shook, so that he told in the court wonders of the earthquake believing that it was for the whole city.⁵⁷¹

Artemisius, in other words, made an artificially created, localised earthquake. It is a story told for its entertaining properties, but that also worked to underline a belief in Aristotelian causes for the ground's trembles and violent shifts.⁵⁷²

Describing the manifestations of these earthquakes, writers noted that when they struck, rocks and boulders created within the ground were violently forced to the surface (as well as swallowed up). In chapter eighty-two of Book Two of *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny described how earthquakes 'cause remarkable consequences, in some places overthrowing walls, in others drawing them down into a gaping cleft, in others thrusting up masses of rock'.⁵⁷³ Imperato in 1599 likewise spoke of how due to the sudden release of hot exhalations, earthquakes occur in which stones and ashes rise upwards, 'carried by the violence of the [underground] wind'.⁵⁷⁴

Visitors to the Sacro Bosco in the sixteenth century, moreover, would have been well aware of the implications, lithic and otherwise, of earthquakes and eruptions. The *Catalogo dei forti terremoti in Italia* lists no less than seventy-nine major seismic events between 1500 and 1600, a figure that does not include the many aftershocks or smaller tremors that took place.⁵⁷⁵ These actual events provide a vital and previously

⁵⁷¹ Buoni (1571), 31v: 'quella dunque mise molti vasi o pile piene di acqua in varie parti della stanza, poi cirondo ciascuna di quelle di cuoco tanto largo di sotto che abbracciasse tutta la bocca di esse [...] si che non potevano essalare, poi fece fuoco sotto le pile, il vapore elevato dalla forza del fuoco cercano maggior luogo, & tentando d'uscire [...] con tanta violenza si movea, che tutta la casa di Zenone di scosse, si che egli raccontava in corte maraviglie del terremoto credendosi che fosse stato per tutto la citta'.

⁵⁷² For other sixteenth-century Italian authors who took this view on the natural causes of earthquakes see Boccadiferri (1570); Maggio (1571); Galesi (1571). Galesi is particularly interesting: a professor of natural philosophy at Bologna, he rejected completely the idea of earthquakes as portents, contending that political revolutions and the deaths of princes after earthquakes were just coincidences (a view few were willing to solely support for fear of heresy).

⁵⁷³ Pliny (2012), vol.I, 120 (II:82).

⁵⁷⁴ Imperato (1599), 313 ('Terremoto', 'Libro Decimo':cap.VI-IX): 'da gli sbloccamenti del fuoco si levano in alto, e sassi, e cenere, portati dalla violenza del vento'.

⁵⁷⁵ See 'Tabella 2, 3 and 4' in Boschi, Ferrari, Gasperini et. al. (1997), 9-24.

unconsidered context for the reception of the Sacro Bosco and how its sculptures connect to geological concerns. Over the decades the Sacro Bosco was built there was a concentration of events. Between 10 February 1547, when a magnitude eight earthquake struck in Reggio Emilia, and September 1575, when an earthquake struck Ferrara, nineteen earthquakes occurred in Italy, and six were in the decade of 1560 alone.⁵⁷⁶ These seismic events provoked widespread turmoil within religious and political fractions as well as within the study of natural history, read by some as cosmic portents (a fact that made many ruling families only more invested in the publication of books claiming their natural origins). Tracts were published in large quantities disseminating news of the catastrophes far and wide and books on their causes appeared in droves.

One example that all visitors to the Sacro Bosco would almost certainly have been aware of is the frequent movement around Ferrara in the early 1570s. These were some of the most famous and destructive earthquakes of sixteenth-century Italy, levelling much of the city and described prolifically in letters and publications.⁵⁷⁷ Lucio Maggio, a nobleman from Bologna, was so overwhelmed when he saw the level of destruction, he described how he ‘truly could not contain my tears as turning each way I saw the damage of this beautiful city’.⁵⁷⁸ Violent earthquakes, their destructive forces, their alterations to topography and their thrusting up of rock, were thus witnessed and widely documented during, and within living memory of, the Sacro Bosco’s creation.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Guidoboni notes how the damage suffered to the buildings of Ferrara in these earthquakes is still visible today, particularly because the work of restoring the city was carried out very quickly for reasons of political prestige: (1987), 190. See also Martin (2011), 60–79; Guidoboni (1984), 107–135; Nardelli (1982), 261–294; Weinburg (1991), 69–81.

⁵⁷⁸ Maggio (1571), 1v: ‘Ne puoi veramente con tenere le lacrime mentre che in quallato mi volgea io vedeva il danno di quella bellissima Citta’.

One earlier event that was an extreme example of such geologic and topographic formation was the famous creation of the ‘Monte Nuovo’ in Naples in 1538. Between 29 September and 6 October, a new landmass was formed after a series of earthquakes engendered an eruption and severe alterations in land elevation. Over a matter of days the shifting ground and spurting lava completely altered the landscape, creating a mount said to be one hundred and thirty-three meters high and seven hundred meters across. Marcantonio Falconi recorded the event in *Dell’incendio di Pozzuolo* (1539): ‘The day before this fire appeared, between the night and the day, shifts were heard in the aforementioned places, with more than twenty large and small earthquakes taking place’, after which ‘this cumulus of land, opened like a mouth, trembled with great frustration, and vomited up great fires and pumice and stones’.⁵⁷⁹ The woodcut illustration that accompanies the book graphically depicts the extreme topographic alteration that took place [Fig.4.13]. The ‘Monte Nuovo’ is shown casting out smoke and flames and spewing chunks of rock that fall down from the sky, while a boat lies stranded upon the ground of the new cone, showing that what is now a lithic landmass was until recently water and ocean.

Considering the widespread experience of the earth’s seismic instability in relation to how the Bomarzo of the 1560s and 1570s would have been received, it is even more striking that the statues of the Sacro Bosco appear to grow and thrust out of the ground. The visitor’s attention, then as now, is drawn to the rooted nature of the sculpture’s material and thus prompted to ponder the way this stone was created and the natural event that at one point would have caused the rock to appear, pushed up through the surface of the earth. The handling of peperino in the Sacro Bosco’s

⁵⁷⁹ Falconi (1539), n.p.: ‘Et nel giorno innanzi che appare tal incendio tra la notte e’l giorno turno sentiti nella predetti luoghi tra grandi & piccolo piu de venti terremoti’; ‘questo cumulo di terra, aperta quasi una bocca, con gran fremito vomitò grandi fuochi e pomice e pietre’.

sculptures could, in this way, bring to mind a violent geological history evident in the region's geography.

Indeed, the repercussions of an earthquake are suggested, quite literally, in some of the Sacro Bosco's architectural structures. The Leaning House, most obviously, could easily be seen to represent the effect caused by sudden movement within the ground. Found on the lower level of the site, the two-story structure tilts, pulling away from the earth on one side, while seeming to sink into it on the other [Plate 13].⁵⁸⁰ It presents in the round what hand drawn and print images that accompany sixteenth-century descriptions of earthquakes visually describe. One ink and watercolour painting (c.1570) included in a report of the Ferrara earthquake by the Swiss secretary Hans Jacob Helden, for example, shows the city with huge black fissures breaking through the castle walls as buildings and towers lean and fall to the ground while people flee, arms in the air [Fig.4.14]. Above the cityscape, a dragon flies in a burst of orange light, smoke and fire emitting from its mouth to evoke the stormy, thunder and lightning filled sky described by witnesses. In another representation of the same event, a print from 1597, a similar image of off kilter buildings is presented but with the addition of a family fleeing as a cavernous hole opens in the ground beside them [Fig.4.15].⁵⁸¹

So evocative is the Leaning House of such an event that scholars have occasionally even tried to argue that its tilt was caused by a real life event in which the foundations

⁵⁸⁰ The primary interpretation to date has been biographical: that the building was intended as a memorial for Vicino's wife Giulia Farnese, despite the fact that Cardinal Madruzzo, not Giulia, is mentioned on the structure's inscription. Compared to two sixteenth-century imprese of towers, one leaning, one buffeted by waves, and which symbolise the stalwart wives of Carlo Ruino Antonii and Bertoldo Farnese, who cannot be toppled despite their husband's long absences; it has been proposed that the Leaning House asserts that the same is true of Giulia. See Quartermaine (1977), 75; Bosch (1982), 103–104; Bury (1985), 214; Sheeler (2007), 111–114.

⁵⁸¹ Boaistuau (1597), 289 ('Troisiesme Tome': 'Chapitre quartorziesme'). For a full discussion of earthquakes see 288–311.

of the building sank into the ground from the shaking of the earth.⁵⁸² Close observation however shows this cannot be the case. The lower part of the structure is formed from a large carved boulder (like almost all the sculptures of the site), while the upper section is made by added bricks masked by a layer of stucco. Where the building meets the ground, there is no separation between embedded natural rock and the lowest part of the building and on the lower corner there is no seam between the shield and the bricks it seemingly overlaps, exposing the fact that while these lower walls might look like constructed masonry, they are actually carved rock. The Leaning House was purposefully built to slant, providing the visitor with an opportunity to physically experience a building in a state of suspended collapse. Entered by a stone staircase, the beholder encounters simple bare rooms with tilted floors, sloping fireplaces and windows at odd angles. The experience of being inside this structure works to undo any sense of physical stability; the visitor is literally thrown off balance as if experiencing an earthquake or its aftermath.

Other places where such geologic upheaval is hinted at in the Sacro Bosco can be found in and beside the Pegasus Fountain [Plate 7], which is sited between the Fighting Giants and the Leaning House. The basin and arched base of this fountain seem to lean despite the fact that the support under the winged horse is perfectly level, suggesting that, like the Leaning House, it must purposefully have been built at an angle. In addition, a large carved disk and cylinder, found just to the north of the fountain, tilts in the opposite direction [Fig.2.11]. Both disk and Pegasus Fountain in turn contrast to the level platform of the giant Tortoise nearby. The three main sculptural components of this area of the Sacro Bosco are, as such, all misaligned in levels and angles [Fig.4.16].⁵⁸³

⁵⁸² Theurillat (1976), 45.

⁵⁸³ This fact was first noted by Furio Fasolo in 1955 and illustrated in an accompanying diagram: Fasolo (1955), Fig.51 and 47–48.

Esther Gordon Dotson has discussed this grouping of sculptural elements as a depiction of deconstruction or damage over long periods of time ‘in which nature overturns the work of human art’.⁵⁸⁴ Dotson’s interpretation situates the Bosco within the visual language of ancient ruins. But seen in relation to both ongoing geologic activity and contemporary events of natural disaster, these structures could remind the late sixteenth-century viewer of the uneven ground and results of an earthquake. The back wall of the Nymphaeum, for instance, on the same level, simulates damage: the smooth veneer of its faux ‘outer layer’ (which is in fact peperino rock) looks as if it has broken away forcefully in chunks to reveal rubble construction underneath [Plate 9]. The simulated clean jagged edge between ‘stucco’ and ‘wall’ suggesting not ‘deconstruction over time’ as much as sudden damage. The Nymphaeum presents a fissure like that seen in the drawing of the Ferrara earthquake by Hans Jacob Helden, and a sign perhaps of an unpredictable, volatile force of nature.

TIME

Just as Alto Lazio is still, to this day, a seismically active region, the visitor to the Sacro Bosco would have known that its past had been geologically violent. Not only is this tempestuous history written upon the landscape by the lakes that were known to have once been active volcanoes, but ancient texts characterised the Apennines, which connect to Bomarzo’s foothills, as dangerous in movement. Pliny spoke of how ‘the mountains still are not safe from this outrage. I know that the Alps and the Apennines have often trembled’.⁵⁸⁵

Standing as testament to the temporal distance between many of these geologic events and the sixteenth-century visitor, were the many Etruscan sites found in Orsini’s

⁵⁸⁴ Dotson (1982), 213 (building upon the observations of Fasolo in 1955).

⁵⁸⁵ Pliny, trans. by Domenichi (1580), 45 (II:cap.LXXX): ‘i montuosi ancora non son sicuri da tale oltraggio. Io so chiaro, che l’Alpi & l’Appennino spesso volte hanno tremato’.

territory (as discussed at length in Chapter Two). The rocks used by the Etruscans to carve their necropoli were also often ‘living’, connected to the ground and their source, and we know from the writings of Annio of Viterbo that, at an imaginative, mythic level, the Etruscans were associated with the origins of human history and a far away time that went back to Noah. If the Etruscans were bound to this deep past then so too, it follows, were the living rocks used to carve their dwellings and tombs. In this way, sixteenth-century beholders could grasp a notion of what we would think of as geological time, even if it was one far more circumscribed than that which we hold today.⁵⁸⁶

The intended historical visitor would not have had the scientific framework to comprehend time on a scale as we do now, but they understood the lithic to be capable of containing truly epic history. Thomas Aquinas stated that stones ‘have something in them of the nature of the stars’.⁵⁸⁷ Albertus Magnus looked into a sapphire and saw a story of the ‘sand banks in ancient India and mines in Provence’.⁵⁸⁸ Despite the fact that Christianity dictated that the world began with God’s creation, and many found shells discovered on mountains to evidence the biblical flood, this did not stop scientists and writers conceiving of a stony past that stretched across deep, almost unfathomable, history.⁵⁸⁹ In his *Meteorologia* (1542), Fausto da Longiano explained the origins of mountains (the very largest of rocks), describing how they were continually changing, growing, eroding and being re-formed by winds, earthquakes and water, sometimes suddenly, but also, over ‘so to speak, an almost infinite length of time’.⁵⁹⁰ Ferrante Imperato proclaimed that while ‘some lands have a manifest

⁵⁸⁶ Paleobiologist Jan Zalasiewicz shows the almost boundless past contained in rock, when he traces a history of 13.7 billion years in a small disk of grey slate collected on a beach in Wales: (2010).

⁵⁸⁷ Quoted in Murphy (2010), 67.

⁵⁸⁸ Cohen (2015), 15. For Albertus Magnus’s discussion on sapphires see Magnus [c.1250–1260] (1541), 111v–114r (Liber II:ii:17). For a translated version: Magnus (1967), 115–116.

⁵⁸⁹ See Connell (2011); Dal Prete (2014).

⁵⁹⁰ da Longiano (1542), 33r: ‘come sarebbe quasi a dire infinità di tempo’.

birth, some have their birth in the length of dark time [*lunghezza del tempo oscuro*].⁵⁹¹ Explaining that the mortality of stone was not always visible to the human eye, Albertus Magnus turned too to an idea of extended lithic temporality. ‘Minerals in their own way suffer death just as animals do’, he stated, but in stone the altered state of living to dead happened at a different temporal pace: only after ‘a long drawn out change’, he wrote, does a rock or mineral die, ‘[it] grows dull and begins to disintegrate’.⁵⁹²

The ancient Etruscan remains carved into rock and found in the woods of Bomarzo, as such, bore witness to how old the region’s living boulders were and are. That the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco were hewn out of the same lithic material meant that their substance was also temporally vast, the artists having carved into a living lithic history. This material duplication is poignant, creating a space where a sixteenth-century beholder physically interacted with a kind of temporal merging; where real Etruscan ruins and those of the sixteenth century shared physical matter and geographical context. It also meant that the Sacro Bosco was a site where the living material of its sculptures spoke to the geological shifts, growths, eruptions and earthquakes that had occurred in the distant past, and that had created the Alto Lazio landscape as experienced in the sixteenth century. Bringing the previously unconsidered context of geologic generation and seismic instability to bear on Orsini’s site in this way also takes us back to Caro’s letter, and allows a reconsideration of some of the sculptures and their subject matter. The Sacro Bosco could additionally be seen to partake in local, geological occurrences through the mythic creatures some of the sculptures represent.

⁵⁹¹ Imperato (1599), 150 (‘General consideration delle terre’:Libro Quinto:Cap.XXXIX).

⁵⁹² Albertus Magnus, *Meteorology* (IV:4:7), quoted in Magnus (1967), 66, note 7.

GEOLOGICAL MYTHOLOGY

As Caro's main theme is that of giants, let us first turn to the Fighting Giants sculpture [Plate 4]. Descending a staircase by the Mock Tomb today, visitors find two figures roughly seven meters tall and locked in mortal combat. A male with thick set muscles holds another (potentially female) colossus upside down, a leg in each hand, as he begins to pull his opponent's feet apart as if preparing to rip the body in two. The victor's head rises above the tree tops and stares out in grim determination. The victim's face, on the other hand, which hangs upside-down close to the ground, hair wild and eyes wide, with a mouth open as if screaming out in pain, immediately confronts the beholder at eye level. Often discussed in terms of epic literature, specifically Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Orsini's plan for a fresco depicting the Battle of the Giants, and Caro's letter in response, provide a cue for reconsidering, or supplementing, this iconographic connection.⁵⁹³ Such gigantic and aggressive characters were also tied to Orsini mythology and the local geological landscape.

In 1565, when Sansovino claimed that the Orsini were amongst the oldest families of Etruria, he described their ancestry as going back as far as 'before the Greeks, some said that the Orsini are of the paternal blood of King Lycaon of Arcadia'.⁵⁹⁴ This connection has never been highlighted in literature on Bomarzo, yet King Lycaon provides a striking fictive origin for the Orsini, altogether gruesome and savage, that is in turn concerned with giants and the earth. In the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lycaon is said to have lived in a land that contained 'satyrs, demi-

⁵⁹³ For scholarship that links the Sacro Bosco and the Fighting Giants to *Orlando Furioso* see, for example, Darnall and Weil (1984), 12–15.

⁵⁹⁴ Sansovino (1565)b, Libro Primo, 2v: 'Et prima quanto a Greci, alcuni dissero che gli Orsini son discesi per sangue paterno da Licaone Re di Arcadia'.

gods, fauns and wild men'.⁵⁹⁵ Visited one day by Zeus, Lycaon refused to believe his guest was a true deity and so tested him with a banquet of human flesh. His punishment was to be transformed: 'The human aspect soon dissolved [...] [and] from a man [he] became a wicked and devouring wolf'.⁵⁹⁶ Sansovino extended this metamorphic aspect of Ovid's myth in his history of the Orsini family to include Lycaon's children, which, he elaborated, mutated into bears, thus altering the beast in the myth, from wolf to bear, to fit the etymology of the Orsini name and heraldry.⁵⁹⁷ This fictive genealogy has further implications for the present discussion however in that King Lycaon belonged to and ruled over an early race of men that were gigantic in proportions, and who had been born from the spilt blood 'on the rotten ground' of the giants that had assaulted Olympus.⁵⁹⁸ If the Orsini descended from Lycaon and his offspring, then they also laid claim to a genealogy of gigantic ancestors. Annio of Viterbo's history of Alto Lazio also placed giants at the centre of the region's ancient origins, when he claimed that Viterbo was founded by a race of giants descended from Noah, who was himself of colossal proportions.⁵⁹⁹ As Sansovino tells the reader in the introduction to his 1583 edition of Annio's fictional histories: 'Noah was a giant, so that one should believe that even Adam, from whom he was born, and those sons

⁵⁹⁵ Ovid (ed.1584), Libro Primo, stanza 52, 6: 'Satiri, Semidei, Fauni, & Silvani'. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was incredibly popular in sixteenth-century Italy, translated into Italian on multiple occasions, including by Ludovico Dolce (1555) and Andrea dell'Anguillara (1584). Anguillara's version is favoured over others here due to the fact that he hailed from the town of Sutri in the commune of Viterbo and had Vicino Orsini's friend Cristoforo Madruzzo of Soriano nel Cimino as a patron in the 1560s and 1570s, meaning it is likely his publication came into Vicino's hands. Anguillara's version was also incredibly successful. His version of Ovid's 'Libro Primo' first appeared in 1553 and his complete translation in 1561, which saw twenty-five reprints in the latter half of the sixteenth century alone. Moreover the version cited here from 1584, includes annotation by Giuseppe Orologio, author of *L'Inganno* referenced in Chapter Two.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., Libro Primo, stanza 61–62, 7: 'L'humano aspetto tosto si disperse [...] Si fe d'un huomo un lupo empio, e rapace'.

⁵⁹⁷ Sansovino (1565)b, Libro Primo, 2v: 'figlivola di Licaone fose mutata in Orsa'.

⁵⁹⁸ Ovid (ed.1584), Libro Primo, stanza 45, 6: 'A germogliar di novo un'altra gente, / Del sangue loro in terra putrefatto'.

⁵⁹⁹ See Stephens (1989), 157.

descended from Noah, were giant'.⁶⁰⁰ Annio, Sansovino and Caro therefore all correlate the mythic origins of the Alto Lazio region and its noble families with a time when giants walked the earth.

These myths of giants local to Bomarzo are also tied to issues of geography. As scholars such as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Susan Stewart have explored, stories of giants are often connected to landscapes, the gigantic becoming, in the words of Stewart, 'an explanation for the environment, a figure on the interface between the natural and human'.⁶⁰¹ The story of Atlas, one of the Titans who had attacked the Olympian gods, provides one of the most well known ancient examples. In Ovid, Atlas is changed into a mountain after Perseus holds up the petrifying, decapitated head of Medusa:

Atlas turned to stone and became a rocky mountain
His beard and black hair became woods
And his tougher parts became harsh rocks.⁶⁰²

This scene is depicted in an engraving that accompanies Anguillara's edition of Ovid from 1584 [Fig.4.17].⁶⁰³ Atlas stands upright, the outline of his torso and face just distinguishable from the rough edges and craggy surface of the rock feature he is becoming. A similar figure is found near to Bomarzo in the Papacqua fountain of Soriano nel Cimino, commissioned by Orsini's close friend Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo in 1561 (to whom the Leaning House is dedicated) [Fig.4.18].⁶⁰⁴

Occupying a wall adjacent to the entrance to Madruzzo's palazzo, a female satyr suckling human infants reclines above a stone basin while various animals including a

⁶⁰⁰ Sansovino in Nanni (1583), 2: 'Noè fu gigante, si dee credere che anco Adamo, dal quale era nato, & disceso Noè co figliuoli fosse gigante'.

⁶⁰¹ Stewart (2007), 70–78, 71. Cohen (1999), particularly Chapter Two: 'Monstrous Origin: Body, Nation, Family'.

⁶⁰² Ovid (ed.1584), Libro Quarto, stanza 408, 142: 'Cresce Atlante di pietra, e un monte sassi / La barba, e i neri crin diventan boschi, / E le parti piu dure si fan sassi'.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., Libro Quarto, 100.

⁶⁰⁴ See note 58 *supra*.

tortoise and a snail surround her. Behind rises a shaft of rock into which various creatures have been carved in relief, including a giant bearded man to the left who seems to prop up the lithic outcrop.

Continuing the conflation of giant and mountain, the Apennines of Italy were personified in two well known garden features of the period. In the Villa Medici at Castello, Bartolomeo Ammannati presented one of Italy's most prominent geological ridges as a figure hunched in the cold waters of a fountain, clasping his sides to try and keep warm (1563–1565) [Fig.4.19]. At Pratolino, Giambologna took the same subject and scaled it up to colossal proportions for the *Appennino* fountain (1570–1580), in which a gigantic figure, bent on one knee, is encrusted with pieces of *spugne* that hang from his limbs and beard [Fig.4.20].⁶⁰⁵ Una Roman d'Elia has discussed this work as a presentation of the 'topos of the suffering landscape' and an evocation of the 'mournful myth of the ancient origins of the Tuscan landscape'.⁶⁰⁶ Perhaps, in light of this chapter, it is possible to see the Fighting Giants of the Sacro Bosco and its other sculptures as working in a similar capacity to invoke topographic origins: they are far from mournful, but, aggressive and disruptive (even noisy), they could have been seen to mythically evoke the specifically tempestuous geologic history of the region.

Lycaon and his people were, so the myth relates, born from the potent combination of the foul remains of the giants' corpses *and*, importantly, the mud with which this spilled blood was mixed. As Ovid describes, following their defeat:

⁶⁰⁵ For Giambologna's *Appennino* see the edited volume by Vezzosi (1990); Cole (2011), 110–113 and d'Elia (2011).

⁶⁰⁶ d'Elia (2011), 1. Relevant to d'Elia's argument is also Alessandro Vezzosi's interpretation of the Appennino's interior as being like the fabric of the human body: the iron skeleton the bones, the bricks the flesh, the plaster the skin: (1990)b, 9–10. For other gardens that address origin myths see David Marsh's article on Lorenzo de' Medici's poem 'Ambra', in which a nymph, pursued and caught, turns into a rock that forms the setting for his villa at Poggio a Caiano: (1992), 89–90.

The terrible bodies of the giants lay crushed beneath their own massive structures and the earth was drenched and soaked with torrents of blood from her sons. Then, they say, she [Earth] breathed life into this warm blood and, so that her offspring might not be completely forgotten, changed it into the shape of men.⁶⁰⁷

Myths such as these in which violence, blood and earth mingle, bound to narratives of Orsini bloodline and Bomarzo, bring a new frame with which to consider the violence of the Fighting Giants of the Sacro Bosco: colossal and ripping each other apart. If we return to Caro's letter, moreover, he aligns the story of the giants with geological features and events. Relating how the colossal bodies of the defeated fell back down to earth, Caro describes how their tremendous bodies were turned into, and were buried beneath, mountains. Rather than petrified and safely contained within stone (as with Atlas), however, these giants continued to show their violent nature and to wreak damaging consequences upon the land. Trapped within earth and rock, Caro writes of how when wishing to move, these ancient bodies shifted position and would as a result 'make an earthquake and overthrow some cities'.⁶⁰⁸ Perhaps then, the aggressive nature of the Fighting Giants, in comparison to the melancholic, sorrowful forms of Giambologna's *Appennino*, can be seen to conjure the specific tempestuous nature of the region's mythology and its historic geology, its ancient volcanoes, seismic activity and rocky mounts. When the Fighting Giant's are seen wrestling aggressively, the historic visitor could have seen them as speaking to an ancient mythic past that is in turn tied to the origins of Alto Lazio's geography and the tremors that shook its ground centuries before.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ Ovid (ed.1979), 33 (I:151–171).

⁶⁰⁸ Caro (1597), Libro Secondo, 238: 'volersi muovere, gli sconquassi tutti: faccia terremoto, e rovesci alcune citta'.

⁶⁰⁹ Myths and geology are often closely related, as scholarship within geography and ecocriticism are increasingly realising. See the essays in Piccardi and Masse (2007), particularly Vitaliano, 1–9. Vitaliano was an early pioneering scholar in the field of geom mythology, see her 'Early Legends of the Earth: their geologic origins' (1973).

It is also potentially significant in relation to the idea of lithic generation, that the next story in Ovid is that of Deucalion and Pyrrha, in which, after a flood has consumed the earth in further punishment for Lycaon's transgression, these two surviving individuals birth a new human race by throwing stones over their shoulders, rocks which then 'began to loose their hardness and rigidity, and after a little grew soft' in order to develop a human form.⁶¹⁰ It is a story that presents an encounter between landscape, myth, stone and figuration, and a direct link between rock and the human. It offers our history, to borrow the words of Leonard Barkan, as a metamorphic 'flow from God to giants to men to bones to stone'.⁶¹¹ In Ovid's narrative too, the transforming stones are described as half made sculptures: 'like marble images, begun but not yet properly chiselled out, or like unfinished statues'.⁶¹²

When detailing the various volcanic lakes of the region, ancient authors, including Pliny, describe other monsters to explain Italy's seismic and volcanic instability, which offer further grounding for the sculptural subjects of the Sacro Bosco. Pliny, for example, described a monster called Volta who lived in the volcano at Bolsena (before its current water logged iteration), causing its unpredictable volcanic acts of destruction when angry.⁶¹³ Pliny provides no description of Volta but one myth from the town of Latera on the north-western side of Bolsena, tells of how a giant serpent came out of the mountain during eruptions, ejecting fire and rocks from its mouth and eyes.⁶¹⁴ It is a story that evokes the many snake-like creatures sculpted from stone at Bomarzo, as well as the Ogre, which when lit with candles within would have looked like it had fire burning in its eyes and mouth.

⁶¹⁰ Ovid (ed.1979), 39 (I:403–405).

⁶¹¹ Barkan (1986), 31.

⁶¹² Ovid (ed.1979), 40 (I:406).

⁶¹³ Pliny (1548), 28 (II:53): 'in Toscana, hauerle impetrate la citta di Bolsena, essendo guasti i loro campi [...] uno monstro chiamorno Volta'.

⁶¹⁴ Vittori and Piccardi, with Esposito et al. (2004), 64.11.

In his *Inferno*, moreover, Dante famously recalled the region's hot spring in his description of the entranceway to Hell:

Without exchanging words we reached a place
where a narrow stream came rushing from the woods
its deep red colour still coursing fear through me;
like the one that issues from Bullicame.⁶¹⁵

The commentators to sixteenth-century editions of Dante's text, such as Ludovico Dolce in 1555, wrote that Dante referred here to the 'the brook at the start of Bullicame at Viterbo, where the stream is hot water'.⁶¹⁶ The dramatic force and historic unpredictability of the landscape around Bomarzo thus found expression in local mythology and famous literary texts, that in turn could be seen to be evoked by the sculptures of Vicino's *bosco*. We know that Orsini had Dante at least in mind when he commissioned Bomarzo from the inscription that supposedly marked the lips of the Ogre/Hell's Mouth.⁶¹⁷

Perhaps too, with these myths in mind, we can rethink the many open-mouthed creatures found in the Sacro Bosco. Paralleling the mythic monster of Lake Bolsena spewing rocks and fire, the language found in sixteenth-century texts describing earthquakes used terms that evoke open mouths which either throw up or ingest the lithic materials of the earth. Tramezzino's Italian translation of *De ortu* (1550), described how during *terremoti* the ground 'vomits out' [*vomita fuori*] stones, fire and hot air, or 'swallows' [*inghiotti*] that which is found on the surface.⁶¹⁸ Descriptions such as these bring to mind the various gaping mouths in the Sacro Bosco: the Ogre

⁶¹⁵ Dante [c.1308–1320] (1971), vol.I, *Inferno*, 184–185 (Canto XIV:76–79): 'Tecendo divenimmo, la 've spiccia / Fuor della selva un picciol fiumicello / Lo cui rossore ancor mi raccapriccia / Quale del Bulicame esce 'l ruscello'.

⁶¹⁶ Ludovico Dolce, in Dante (1752), 86, note 27: 'si parte dal bulicame di Viterbo un ruscello di aqua calda'. This publication is a reprint of Dolce's original version and commentary from 1555.

⁶¹⁷ See note 96 *supra* and Appendix, N.

⁶¹⁸ Agricola (1550), 30r and 152r.

[Plate 19]; the Mask of Madness [Plates 2]; the rearing, gaping creature that emerges from the ground by the stream, its jaggedly fanged mouth open, ready to swallow [Plate 6]; and the slightly smaller, open-mouthed head by the River God fountain [Plate 24].

Luke Morgan has discussed the open-mouthed creatures of the Sacro Bosco (primarily the Ogre [which he terms the Hell's Mouth] and the Mask of Madness) in relation to the motif of the grotesque head found in Renaissance Italian gardens, like those of the Alley of the Hundred Fountains at Tivoli's Villa d'Este [Fig.4.21].⁶¹⁹ For Morgan it is the 'range of bodily fluids, from vomit to sweat and tears' engaged by such representations that interests him, and the connections he finds between the motif of the gaping mouth and the imagery of Rabelais's sixteenth-century French novel *Pantagruel*, in which gluttony, drinking and eating become synonymous with the transgressive, grotesque body.⁶²⁰ It is certainly true that these open-mouthed heads in the Sacro Bosco encapsulate a theme of devouring, but I would add that when considered in relation to the physical landscape of Alto Lazio, its seismic past, regional mythology, and the earthquakes of sixteenth-century Italy, they could just as powerfully have offered or been perceived as manifestations of geological emission and consumption.

Morgan describes the Ogre as 'strictly speaking, *disembodied* or lacking a body'.⁶²¹ This is true only if you require the monster as sculpture to have a body of stone. It is equally possible to see the bodies of these monsters as residing within the landscape itself. The Mask of Madness blends into natural rock that in turn merges into the

⁶¹⁹ Morgan (2016)b, 56–62. Also Morel (2011), 195–198.

⁶²⁰ Morgan, *ibid.*, 59–62. In making this argument Morgan draws heavily on Bakhtin's theories, in which 'the most important of all human features for the grotesque head is the mouth': Bakhtin (1984), 325.

⁶²¹ Morgan, *ibid.*, 93. On the same page Morgan describes the sculpture as 'lacking a body altogether'.

landscape of which it is part, as if its body is in fact continuous with the hillside it emerges from. The same is true of the Ogre. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the entrance to this structure (like many elements of the site) has been made significantly more architectural and formal by twentieth-century restorations. Photographs from the 1950s, however, show that the current retaining wall did not exist when the site was rediscovered. This offers at the very least the possibility that, like the ‘Mask of Madness’, this gaping face emerged more obviously out of the hillside or earth. If this were the case, the gigantic mouths that litter the Sacro Bosco could be said to be, not so much detached from their architectural context as inherently tied to their natural one, invoking how the earth, when it shifts and moves, opens to either swallow up what it finds above or spew out new lithic matter and geological forms. Indeed, there is an example of a grotto in the shape of a monstrous face carved into a natural rocky hillside at the garden of Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati (1598–1603), that is thought to have been inspired by the sculptures of Bomarzo [Fig. 4.22].⁶²²

For a visitor entering the colossal orifices of the Sacro Bosco too, there is, on the one hand, the sensation of being devoured by a monster, and, on the other, the experience of entering an entirely lithic space. Walk inside the Ogre/Hell’s Mouth and you are entering the core of a giant rock. The walls are roughly carved—you can see its various minerals, place your hands along its coarse surface, smell the damp air, which remains cool however hot it is outside (a reverse Hell). Similarly, to reach the gaping mouth of the creature by the stream, the beholder must also descend into rock, through a rectangular orifice in front of the Tortoise [Fig.6]. A visitor to the Sacro Bosco, in other words, is consumed on various levels by stone and earth. The possibility that these engulfing and vomiting mouths of Vicino’s *bosco* could have

⁶²² On the Villa Aldobrandi, see d’Onofrio (1963).

been seen to figure nature's powerful generative and destructive forces is bolstered by the myths that surround the region's violent geology, which are, in turn, at stake in natural history theories regarding the creation of stone such as peperino.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored how, to the intended, educated beholder of the sixteenth century, the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco and their material could be perceived as tied, both mythically and within scientific theories, to the local landscape of Bomarzo, its geological makeup and history. Rebecca Solnit states that landscape is 'made out of memory and desire, rather than rock and stone'.⁶²³ This chapter has aimed to show that it can also be precisely in rock and stone that a landscape's, artwork's or site's many meanings can be found. First of all, the grounded nature of the sculptures at Bomarzo and the handling of peperino could have been seen as evocative of nature's generative force and the creation of such stone beneath the ground. This, in turn, connects the sculptures to the region's seismic and volcanic topography and history: the mountains that were once volcanoes, the lakes that fill craters, the hot, steaming, thermal waters that erupt from fissures in the ground, and the colossal rocks and lithic ridges that appear thrust up from beneath.

The Sacro Bosco, as such, could have appeared to be in material conversation with its surrounding topography and its geological forces, giving sculptural expression to a local nature that is, and was, visibly tumultuous and powerful, generative and destructive. By considering contemporary sixteenth-century earthquakes and geological theories, it becomes clear that these contexts are insightful for a reception history of these artworks, providing new, previously unconsidered associations for the historical beholder encountering the Sacro Bosco's peperino sculptures and their

⁶²³ Solnit (2006), 121.

groundedness. At the same time, the landscape in which the Sacro Bosco was situated was impregnated with myths and stories of giants and monsters that were connected to its volcanic topography and past, and which could have, in turn, been evoked in the subject matter of the sculptures. It is a narrative that I believe would not have been lost on the intended sixteenth-century visitor familiar with geological speculations, such as we know were Orsini's friends and acquaintances. The Sacro Bosco could have been understood as symbolically and materially concerned with geological forces, a site of geomorphology.

From myths of rock and mountain trapped giants, the next chapter shifts time period and focus to consider mythology of a different kind, unpacking the narratives wrapped around the site upon its 'rediscovery' post WWII. The last three chapters have explored how the historically distinct interests, attitudes and activities of the Sacro Bosco's intended sixteenth-century beholders could have affected its reception. Next, the way Bomarzo was responded to and presented in this much later moment of resurgence is investigated as similarly temporally specific, shaped by the period lens of those who visited in the mid-twentieth century.

CHAPTER FIVE: MYTH

On 10 November 1948 a short feature in an Italian newsreel showed Salvador Dalí in the Sacro Bosco.⁶²⁴ Part of a weekly Italian news programme called *La Settimana INCOM* and one minute and twenty-three seconds in length, this *cinogiornale* marks the beginning of the active promotion of the Sacro Bosco after the Second World War. Once the newsreel of Dalí had aired, a spate of academic articles, newspaper features, films and photographs appeared on Bomarzo, starting with a seminal essay by Mario Praz published in the conservative-leaning national newspaper *II Tempo* on 17 November 1949.⁶²⁵

Why did the Sacro Bosco become of note post-WWII and what conditions made the space newly visible? The chequered history mapped across Chapter One highlights that the site's post-war afterlife was not a 'discovery' per se, as it is usually described, but a transition into a more general visibility. As such, this chapter interrogates how the images, films and texts of the late 1940s and 1950s worked to re-contextualize and re-present the historic artefact that is the Sacro Bosco. Particular attention is paid to the photographs and films that pertained to the site, which are seen as critical objects of study in their own right, rather than mechanical documents of how the site appeared in this moment. These camera-made images, both moving and static, were interpretive acts, and played a role in how the Sacro Bosco was perceived, and the meanings that were attributed to its sculptures.

⁶²⁴ 'Nel mondo del surreale: Salvador Dalí nel "giardino dei mostri"' (10/11/1948), Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (I020903) [Henceforth 'Nel mondo']. This film is, to my knowledge, the first, or at least one of the first, known instances of the Sacro Bosco on moving film made for the general public, and one of the first pieces of Italian media to promote the site in post-war Italy. Despite this, there has been no scholarly examination of the film to date, neither within studies of the Sacro Bosco, Italian Renaissance garden history, nor post-war Italian media.

⁶²⁵ Praz [1949] (1975).

Beginning with the Dalí newsreel and ending with a documentary by Michelangelo Antonioni, this chapter first investigates how Bomarzo was positioned as irrational, modern and international, and then, conversely, repositioned with a focus on regionalism, locality and rural life. Central to these reconfigurations is the concept of the *giardino all'italiana* discussed in Chapter One. This idea of the 'Italian garden' had become ubiquitous by the late 1940s, distanced from its earlier political activation by figures such as Dami and Ojetti and fossilised into academic tradition. When Italian journalists, filmmakers and photographers visited Bomarzo after WWII they were faced with a site that did not align to the idea that they had inherited of what an Italian Renaissance garden should be. What is so fascinating about their responses is how, shocked by what they found, they attempt to find ways to describe and categorise the Sacro Bosco and its sculptures. Rather than re-write the parameters of the *giardino all'italiana*, they positioned Vicino's wood as an outlier. How an artwork first enters public consciousness and academic discourse can have a lasting impression on the understanding, reception and interpretation of that object or site. To begin, the newsreel of Dalí sets the trend for one of the most dominant ways to describe Bomarzo post-war: via the avant-garde art movement of Surrealism.

NEL MONDO DEL SURREALE

In the opening seconds, the title page of the newsreel announces its content: 'In the world of the surreal: Salvador Dalí in the "garden of monsters"' [*Nel mondo del surreale: Salvador Dalí nel "giardino dei mostri"*]. A suited figure is then shown walking out of the Leaning House, after which the frame switches to the colossal statue of Ceres, where the same smartly dressed man enters from the right and proceeds to climb up the monumental female sculpture. The camera pauses on the encounter, sustaining an image of their two profiles regarding one another, a composition that works to visually suggest an intimate connection between man and

site. ‘Who is climbing these Baroque monuments?’ the narrator asks, at which point the camera looks directly into an instantly recognisable face: ‘It’s Salvador Dalí, the Surrealist painter, whose appearance shows all the characteristics—from his eyes to his moustache—that we expect of a Surrealist’.⁶²⁶

This opening sequence [Fig.5.1] is immediately notable for two reasons. First, because the narrator refers to the sculptures as ‘Baroque’, despite the fact that the actual date of the site was known at the time.⁶²⁷ Baroque was a familiar period designation; Arthur McComb for example, writing in the 1930s, used the word to cover the long period from 1600 to 1790 in his publication on Italian painting, due to it ‘being less cumbersome and more evocative’ than “seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”.⁶²⁸ It was also, of course, a style label. To call Bomarzo ‘Baroque’ immediately highlights how the space did not sit comfortably in the traditional narrative of the Renaissance for post-war Italian directors and viewers. It was so unlike the accepted canonical idea of a sixteenth-century garden that people struggled to place the site in its actual historical moment. For this reason perhaps, the Sacro Bosco became pliable in these decades to a number of different loosely stylistic and period designations, including Mannerism as discussed further below. Interestingly, postcards from the same period and printed for the local municipality, and which might also have been expected to be familiar with the site’s sixteenth-century origin, jumped the other way by stating that the Sacro Bosco was created in the fifteenth century [Fig.5.2]. As a site, Bomarzo simply did not fit the understanding of its own cultural moment in history.

⁶²⁶ ‘Nel mondo’ (1948): ‘Chi sta scalando questi monumenti barocchi? È Salvador Dalí, il pittore surrealista fin nel viso, nei baffi, negli occhi fissi nell’insensato e dispotico accostarsi di immagini che è proprio del surrealismo’.

⁶²⁷ Nichols, writing in 1928, described Bomarzo as built in the cinquecento, and Praz, in his article in 1949, would cite letters written in 1564 in which Vicino Orsini mentions his *boschetto*. While the newsreel itself mentions Vicino’s wife Giulia Farnese, who was dead (along with Vicino) before 1600. See Nichols (1928), 84; Praz [1949] (1975), 78.

⁶²⁸ McComb, ‘Intro note’ (1934), n.p.

Second, from the outset of the newsreel the Sacro Bosco is framed through a twentieth-century figure and art movement: Dalí and Surrealism. From his encounter with the Ceres statue, the artist goes on to hold out what looks like a conductor's stick or magician's wand while standing on top of the giant stone Elephant, and to crouch by a candle in the gaping Ogre. At one point the narrator even states: 'when he arrives, on the edge between grace and delirium, everything [in Bomarzo] corresponds to the style of Dalí'.⁶²⁹

The result is that from the moment the title appears on the screen, declaring the space '*nel mondo del surreale*', the Sacro Bosco is positioned according to the principles of an art movement that are diametrically opposed to the aesthetics of control and equilibrium that define the *giardino all'italiana*. Surrealism was famously rooted in the exploration of the uncontrolled, extreme world of the unconscious, contrasting with Dami's promotion of the imposition of 'deliberate will'.⁶³⁰ Indeed art historian Herbert Read, as early as 1936, stated that the Surrealist movement was bent on 'liquidating classicism', which he understood to be characterised by order and balance.⁶³¹ Dalí, a year earlier, described his work as giving 'objective value on the plane of the real to the delirious unknown world of our irrational experiences'.⁶³² Winthrop Sargeant, writing in the American photographic news magazine *LIFE* in 1945, described the Surrealist movement, and particularly Dalí's work within it, as a

⁶²⁹ 'Nel mondo' (1948): 'quando lui appare al limite della grazie e del delirio, tutti gli aspetti prendono lo stile di Dalí'.

⁶³⁰ Dami (1924), 22: 'una ragione perspicua e di una volontà decisa'; (1925), 21–22.

⁶³¹ Read (1936), 22.

⁶³² Dalí (1935), 15.

‘methodologically lunatic world’.⁶³³ It is this sense of Dalí as rooted in the unstable and spontaneous that the newsreel takes as a lens through which to view Bomarzo.⁶³⁴

In line with the unstable landscape of the surreal and metaphysical, the way the *La Settimana* feature interacts with the Sacro Bosco creates a bewildering spatial impression. Directed by Sandro Pallavicini, the camera cuts in quick succession between the sculptures, often moving from one part of the site to another without any clear sense of space, distance, or of how the sculptures are positioned in relation to each other. The viewer is left with little sense of how they might enter, leave or move around the Sacro Bosco. The film and its cinematography, in other words, makes the Bosco into a space that lacks tangibility, and something of a Surrealist’s playground.

The closing scene is particularly striking in this respect [Fig.5.3]. Dalí approaches the *Tempietto*, walks up its central steps and bends down to pick up a white cat. Carrying it in his arms, he turns his back to the camera and walks in between the temple’s columns. As the camera follows the artist into the darkness, the narrator likens the experience to passing into the ‘shadows of the unconscious’, as the screen then fills with images of Dalí and his artworks.⁶³⁵ First, is the famous *Dalí Atomicus* portrait of 1948 by photographer Philippe Halsman, in which Dalí is caught leaping in the air with three cats, a chair and a bucket of water joining him mid-flight. Second, is a lithograph made for the ballet of Tristan Fou, for which Dalí designed the set, backdrops and costumes in New York in 1944, with the heads of three wild-eyed

⁶³³ Sargeant (1945), 63.

⁶³⁴ These qualities of Surrealism led to the movement coming under fire in fascist publications. Mario Puccini, in the journal *Critica fascista*, aligned the movement with ‘Satanism’, while Giorgio de Chirico’s work, which was fundamental to the formation of Surrealism, was similarly described in 1935 by Garibaldo Alessandrini as the ‘aberrations of a sick imagination’: Puccini [1926] (2000), 229; Alessandrini (1935), n.p. Despite this external dislike and vilification of Surrealism and other avant-garde movements, it is important to note that scholarship has shown that a broad and diverse range of artistic practice took place in Italy under fascism: Stone (1998), 43–54 and Cirillo (2006).

⁶³⁵ ‘Nel mondo’ (1948): ‘alle ombre dell’inconscio’.

horses emerging from the crumbling bricked terrace of a palatial cliff side. Last, is the oil painting *The Sublime Moment* from 1938, in which, against a desert landscape, a telephone balances precariously on a branch, overhanging a plate on which sit two sunny-side fried eggs. The *Tempietto* in 1948 is thus transformed: from an isolated building representing rationality and order in Dami's scholarship of 1924 (as discussed in Chapter One), it becomes a portal into the most unrestricted part of the human mind.

This is not to suggest that the newsreel's creators were consciously trying to challenge the existing idea of the 'Italian garden'. Rather, in their repositioning of the Sacro Bosco in relation to Surrealism, we can see writers and producers searching for a new language to describe what they find at Bomarzo. Dalí and Surrealism offered a convenient means for post-war Italy to see Bomarzo anew, and in a manner that was tied to the country's political and social situation.

By 1948 Surrealism was no longer at the avant-garde. That same year art historian Ronald Ossory Dunlop stated that the movement had 'more or less worked itself out into vacuity', and by 1950 Wallace Fowlie would proclaim that Surrealism 'already designates an historical period'.⁶³⁶ To align Bomarzo with Dalí, however, presented two opportunities in post-war Italy: one, to confer the Surrealist's global fame upon the site, and two, to connect the space to a movement that was seen as a distinctly 'international phenomenon'.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁶ Dunlop (1948), 40; Fowlie (1950), 11.

⁶³⁷ With regard to Dalí's international fame, one article, published in the American weekly news magazine *Time* in 1936, stated that 'Surrealism would never have attracted its present attention in the U.S. were it not for a handsome 32 year old Catalan with a soft voice and a clipped cinema actor's moustache, Salvador Dalí': 'Marvellous and Fantastic' (1936), 60. I take the term 'international phenomenon' from Herbert Read: '[f]rom the moment of its birth Surrealism was an international phenomenon—the spontaneous generation of an international and fraternal *organism*': (1936), 20.

At the time the *cinogiornale* was broadcast, Italy was actively invested in being seen as an outward-looking society and culture. Only three years had passed since the end of WWII and with it the death of Mussolini. Regina M. Longo writes of the high stakes that existed for the Italian people and government during this immediate post-war moment: it was, she writes, ‘an exceptional period during which filmmakers, industrialists, and politicians were continuously reinventing and reconstructing their personal, political and national identities’, in order to suppress and move away from the country’s fascist past and its defeat in the war.⁶³⁸ It is a sentiment concisely shown in a series of personal photographs taken by Milton Gendel, the same photographer who captured the agricultural workers in the Sacro Bosco discussed in Chapter One. Taken in a foundry near San Michele in Rome in 1950, workmen in dusty overalls take sledgehammers to metal sculptures of Mussolini’s officials [Fig.5.4].⁶³⁹ Gendel photographs the moment just before a young man strikes the upturned face of a bronze portrait bust with a hammer. In others, the sculptures are placed in great bonfires, melted into oblivion, their material now able to be used for new ends.

In order to reposition itself as politically distinct from its recent fascism, Italy realigned itself as a country with an international outlook and as an active participant in the global and European community. Culture played a major role in this new image, as a poster designed by Gian Rossetti for the 1948 Venice Biennale (the first since the war) made explicitly clear, with a white dove of peace wearing a ribbon of world flags around its neck [Fig.5.5].⁶⁴⁰ The Biennale’s director, Giovanni Ponti, emphasised the event as a marker of the country’s post-war artistic openness:

⁶³⁸ Longo (2012), 26.

⁶³⁹ Milton Gendel, ‘Rome, S. Michele Foundry, smashing fascist busts’, c.1950, black and white negatives, 6 x 6 cm, La Fondazione Primoli, Archivio Gendel, Rome (AA025 f/ac316, AA025 f/ac316 and AA025 f/ac316).

⁶⁴⁰ For the 1948 Biennale and its ties to European politics see Jachec (2005), 193–217 and idem (2007), 37–44; Calvesi (1995), 95–96; di Martino (2003), 118–133; Duran (2014), 75–98; Dossin (2016), 21–27.

Art invites all mankind beyond national frontiers [...] in this 1948 (the glorious, historical centenary of our political reawakening and civil revival) humanity, still dazed in anguish and suffered torments, receives an invitation from this convening of artists from every part of the world.⁶⁴¹

Art, Ponti implies, creates an international community, which Italy welcomes and which equally welcomes Italy.

The Biennale of 1948 was particularly striking for its emphasis on the European avant-garde of the early twentieth century. There was a Picasso retrospective, the first inclusion of Peggy Guggenheim's collection with its holdings of Cubist, Futurist and Surrealist works, and an exhibition entitled 'Three Italian Metaphysical Painters', which featured Carlo Carrà, Giorgio Morandi and Giorgio De Chirico. The central pavilion featured an exhibition on Paul Klee, while another contained the work of German artists that had been disowned by Nazism. Adrian R. Duran has shown that these exhibitions were, to many Italians, their first major introduction to previously avant-garde movements and that, while engendering debate, the exhibition expressly promoted Italy's new pan-Europeanism and global outlook.⁶⁴²

The reframing of Bomarzo as aligned to Surrealism is part—whether intentionally or unintentionally—of this post-war political and social context. The national *giardino all'italiana* had sought to close down global borders, Ojetti expressly stating in his 1931 catalogue entry:

...this exhibition is intended to restore to its place of honour an art not only *peculiarly ours*, but one, which after having conquered the world, seems overshadowed by other fashions or *hidden under foreign names*.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ Ponti (1948), x–xi: 'L'arte invita tutti gli uomini, oltre le frontiere nazionali [...] In questo 1948 (glorioso centenario storico del nostro risveglio politico e del nostro Risorgimento civile) l'umanità ancora stordita dalle angosce e dai tormenti patiti, accolga l'invito che le viene da questo convegno di artisti di ogni parte del mondo'.

⁶⁴² Duran (2014), 75–97.

⁶⁴³ Ojetti (1931), 23: 'questa Mostra intende rimettere in onore un'arte singolarmente nostra che dopo aver conquistato il mondo sembrò offuscata da altre mode o nascosta sotto nomi stranieri' [emphasis my own].

Dalí's interest in the Sacro Bosco, just like the Biennale, by contrast presented the country's Renaissance garden art as globally relevant and connected, while also suggesting Italy had been avant-garde all along.

THE UNITED STATES

The newsreel's very production was tied to the development of post-war geopolitical ties between Italy and other countries. The social and economic situation in Italy in 1948 was dire. Ten years before what became known as Italy's 'economic miracle', two-thirds of the country's industrial capacity and almost eighty per cent of its infrastructure were in need of replacement or repair.⁶⁴⁴ Buildings and transport systems had been severely bombed, electricity was in short supply and harsh winters had resulted in drastic food shortages. Italian poet and essayist Giacomo Noventa said despairingly of the country's situation in 1947: 'No one has seen the Rainbow appear [...] is the Flood really over?'.⁶⁴⁵ Tom Ford, an American officer sent to Sicily, was shocked by the conditions, describing Italy in a letter dated 16 October 1950 in three blunt words: 'Dirt, Dishonesty and Dysentery'.⁶⁴⁶ To recover, Italy was reliant upon the support of the United States and Europe, which meant that the agendas of these world powers shaped how Italy realigned itself as a newly international entity.

Alcide De Gasperi, leader of the political party *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC), was elected Prime Minister on the 18 April 1948, for example, with the aid of ten million dollars of covert US support—part of a multinational anti-Communist stratagem.⁶⁴⁷ In opposition, the *Fronte Democratico Popolare* (FDP) was formed by a coalition of the

⁶⁴⁴ Scrivano (2005), 317. For Italy's 'economic miracle' see also Ginsborg (1990), 210–253; Crainz (1996), 53–81; Carnevali (2000), 248–278.

⁶⁴⁵ Noventa (1947), 402: 'nessuno ha visto apparire l'Arcobaleno [...] È veramente finito il Diluvio?'.
⁶⁴⁶ Letter from Tom Ford to Frank Gervasi [16/10/1950], Marjory Collins Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliff Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 85-M 201, Carton 2, 21:6:6. Quoted in Scrivano (2005), 318, note 4.

⁶⁴⁷ See Miller (1983), 35–55; Harper (1986); Salvati (2003), 556–577; White (2005), 11–21.

Italian Communist and the Italian Socialist Party, whose popularity would soon lead to Italy becoming a key battleground in the Cold War. Indeed, the gulf between the DC and FDP was so huge that, according to some historians, the war-battered country was near civil war.⁶⁴⁸ With external support and funding, however, De Gasperi remained prime minister for the following eight years.

The newsreel of Dalí was tied to these same economic and political realities. Hoping to stem the rise of Communism and Soviet power, the US directly invested in Italy establishing a democratic, capitalist and global outlook by supporting the production of thousands of Italian films and news programs that promoted this agenda. The US did so through the European Recovery Program (ERP), a funding and commissioning body also commonly known as the Marshall Plan.⁶⁴⁹ As a documentary intended for an American audience from 1950 explained: because fascist propaganda campaigns had left Italians ‘sceptical of all information’, ‘an important aspect of the Italian Mission’s work is that it never appears itself as the issuing agency for any of its publicity. Consequently Italians get their information about what the ERP is doing in their country from Italian hands’.⁶⁵⁰

La Settimana INCOM, one of the most prolific news series in Italy, was one such programme that was supported and influenced by American backing.⁶⁵¹ Its production company, INCOM, was initially established by Sandro Pallavicini in 1938 as a competitor to the Istituto L.U.C.E, Mussolini’s national agency, and after WWII it

⁶⁴⁸ See the work of Ellwood (1992), idem (1993), 19–33, and idem (2001), 23–48.

⁶⁴⁹ Officially the ERP ran between 1948 and 1951, although American governmental agencies continued providing aid to Italy for media outputs until roughly 1955: Longo (2012), 14–15. See also Price (1955); Gimbel (1976); Esposito (1994); Ellwood (2001), 23–48; Scrivano (2005), 317–340; Tobia (2009). General Marshall, the Secretary of State who established the ERP, believed that film was the most powerful means ‘of teaching the salient lessons of history [...] an inherent necessity for a democracy’: (1945), 175–184.

⁶⁵⁰ *Talking to the Italians* (1950).

⁶⁵¹ 2,555 weekly programs of *La Settimana INCOM* were produced between 1946 and 1965: Sainati (2001), 85. Also Frabotta (1995), 361–365.

became distinctly pro-government, receiving the vast majority of its commissions from US funders and De Gasperi's administration.⁶⁵² The United States ambassador in Rome, in a letter to the State Department dated 27 April 1948, stressed Pallavicini's pro-American sentiments and recommended the production company receive more funding, while the company's president from 1946, Teresio Guglielmone, became a DC senator.⁶⁵³ This backing is demonstrated in much of INCOM's content. The first post-war edition of *La Settimana INCOM*, broadcast on 15 February 1946, was entitled *Italy takes its first steps toward democracy* and featured an interview with Admiral Ellery Stone of the Allied Command.⁶⁵⁴ In 1948, the year the Dalí feature was broadcast, a short series entitled *Thanks America* detailed the varied assistance given to Italy by the United States.⁶⁵⁵ Discussing the content of such *cinegiornali*, one Italian critic described them in 1953 as 'straightforward propaganda that the audience equates to commercials'.⁶⁵⁶

In light of this fact, it is significant that the newsreel stresses Dalí's connections to the United States. While the Surrealist stands waving his stick on the Elephant sculpture, the viewer is told that he left America as soon as he found out about the site.⁶⁵⁷ In fact, having lived in the US for eight years (to escape the war in Europe), Dalí had returned to his Spanish home in Port Lligat in July 1948, Spain remaining under Franco's

⁶⁵² Longo (2012), 19; Frabotta (2001), 50. The Istituto L.U.C.E produced the regime's weekly newsreel *La Giornale L.U.C.E.* on which *La Settimana* was modelled, and was responsible for the short film covering *Mostra del Giardino Italiano* in 1931 (Fig.1.5). For the correlations between Luce and INCOM see Baratieri (2010); Gargani and Pagliarulo (2011), 281–295. For more on how De Gasperi's government mobilised mass media for their post-war agenda see Marletti and Roncarolo (2000), 195–210; Forgacs and Gundle (2007).

⁶⁵³ Brunetta (1993), vol.III, 5.

⁶⁵⁴ 'L'Italia muove i primi passi sull, a strada per la democrazia' (15/02/1946), Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (I000102).

⁶⁵⁵ 'Thanks America: documentario Incom', seven episodes (9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28 and 30/01/1948), Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (I011103, I011203, I011303, I011405, I011505, I011601 and I011704).

⁶⁵⁶ Chiarini (1953), 178. Quoted and trans. in Bonifazio (2014), 18, note 59. The centrality and success of film in Italy in this period has been said to be, in part, due to Italy's high illiteracy rates, which Longo ((2012), 36), reports as fifteen percent.

⁶⁵⁷ 'Nel mondo' (1948): 'Dalí è partito dall'America appena ha saputo di questo parco'.

military dictatorship. The newsreel was broadcast in November, and Italian newspapers reported Dalí's presence in Italy that year in October, for the Biennale, and in November, for a production of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* for which Dalí had created the set design.⁶⁵⁸ In his poster for the show, two spindly, stilt-legged elephants with towers hovering above their backs face each other, recalling the Elephant statue at Bomarzo [Fig.5.6]. Given these dates, the emphasis on the artist's transatlantic crossing to Italy is pointed and unlikely. It works to remind the viewer of the artist's global fame, while also revealing the political axis between INCOM's content and the US. Indeed, a film called 'Salvador Dalí visits Italy!' was broadcast in America only fifteen days after the *La Settimana* feature.⁶⁵⁹ This US newsreel used the same footage as the Italian *cinegiornale* and described the Sacro Bosco as a 'typically surrealist setting' [Fig.5.7].

The last section of the newsreel that remains to be discussed also addresses the post-war Americanization of Italian (and more broadly European) culture. Between the sequence in which Dalí stands on the Elephant and his entering the *Tempietto*, the camera focuses on the Ogre, where Dalí sits on top of one of its protruding cube-like teeth, a lit candle upright on the tooth opposite [Fig.5.8]. The narrator tells the viewer that here Dalí has 'rediscovered one of the most magical scenes of our Pinocchio'.⁶⁶⁰

Pinocchio is an Italian children's story that is almost sacrosanct in Italy, written by Carlo Collodi and first published in 1883, just over a decade after Italy's unification in 1871.⁶⁶¹ The fact that Dalí sits in the mouth of the monster with a single candle suggests that the narrator finds a parallel with when the wooden puppet boy and his

⁶⁵⁸ For Dalí's presence at the Biennale see Carrieri (1948), 27. For his appearance at the opening of *As You Like It*, directed by Luchino Visconti and performed at Rome's Teatro Eliso, see Monelli (1948), 3, and the newsreel: 'Prima del teatro a Roma: "Rosalinda di Shakespeare"' (01/12/1948), Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (I021805).

⁶⁵⁹ 'Salvador Dalí visits Italy!' (25/11/1948), British Pathé Archive, London (2240.15).

⁶⁶⁰ 'Nel mondo' (1948): 'ritrovato una delle più magiche scene del nostro Pinocchio'.

⁶⁶¹ Collodi [1883] (1991).

father escape from the belly of a great shark by guiding their way to the creature's jaws with their last remaining taper.⁶⁶² However, the date of the newsreel and its emphasis on Dalí's American connections, also recalls the fact that Walt Disney adapted the story into a Technicolor animation in 1940, bringing the story to international fame.⁶⁶³ The Disney version was only released in Italy on 5 November 1947, due to previous prohibition by Mussolini's regime, and so would have been fresh in the consciousness of Italian viewers in 1948.⁶⁶⁴

From the moment of its release in the United States and then in Italy, the Italian press reviewed Disney's *Pinocchio* negatively, upset by how the features, actions and personalities of Collodi's characters had been altered into intrinsically American forms.⁶⁶⁵ One review, printed in *La Nuova Stampa* on 30 December 1947, stated that 'this Disney is a quiet drizzling rain', void of the truly mischievous characteristics of the Italian original.⁶⁶⁶ Collodi's version seems to be implied by the lone candle and the narrator's use of the phrase 'our [*nostro*] Pinocchio', and the original anti-authoritarian Pinocchio seems relevant for a post-fascist Italian society. Yet, at the same time, Dalí's presence (Dalí collaborated with Disney), and the American connections of the *La Settimana* feature, also raise associations with Disney's version

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, 432–433.

⁶⁶³ *Pinocchio* (1940). (Though *Pinocchio* was first translated into English by Mary Alice Murray in 1892).

⁶⁶⁴ Not all Disney films were censored by the regime. Walt Disney Company Italia S.r.l. was founded as Creazioni Walt Disney S.A.I in 1938 and in the same year *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was released in Italy. *Pinocchio*, however, was prohibited as it was considered an Anglo American import of an Italian cultural entity: Pizzi (2012), 147 and Bacchilega (2016), 95.

⁶⁶⁵ Italian journalist Emilio Ceretti, who translated and published English and American texts during the regime, but also founded a publishing house that printed post-war defences of Mussolini, criticised the 'excessive discretion' of Pinocchio's nose in a 1940 issue of the journal *Cinema*: 'instead of the nose a foot and a half long, he [Disney] has given him a sweet little turned up nose, which might belong to Dopey or even Myrna Loy': (1940), 50–52. On the differences between Collodi's and Disney's versions, and *Pinocchio*'s Americanization, see Street (1983), 47–57; Laura (1994), 11–17; Zipes (1996), 1–24; Allan (1999), 67–90; Wunderlich and Morrissey (2002); Verger (2007).

⁶⁶⁶ Gorno (1947), n.p.: 'Questo Disney è un acquerugiola cheta'.

and international films only now available due to Italy's new, democratic alignment in world politics. It is a reference by the narrator riddled with ambivalence. As such, it highlights how Bomarzo acted as a wonderfully polyvalent symbol that could adjust to the different (and often conflicting) political expectations and demands of the time.

The exact means by which Dalí came to be filmed in Bomarzo are unknown.

Giuseppe Zander related in 1955 that the artist heard of the site from the Swiss writer Maurice Yves Sandoz, then residing in Rome, and for whom Dalí illustrated multiple publications.⁶⁶⁷ Sandoz was, significantly, a friend of Andrei Beloborodov, the Russian painter credited with telling Praz of Bomarzo, as discussed in Chapter One. Both thus formed part of an expatriate community that were aware of Bomarzo, shared an interest in the surreal and metaphysical, and seem to have played a significant role in its re-emergence into the consciousness of the Italian public.⁶⁶⁸

Dalí was also a potentially problematic figure in and of himself at this time, having been accused of fascist sympathies in the late 1930s, though this seems not to have compromised his appearance in the newsreel.⁶⁶⁹ As Italy sought ways to repress its recent fascist past, it was, in many ways, primed to do the same of others.⁶⁷⁰ Indeed, a significant number of fascist public figures, structures and institutions remained in place after the war, though many promoted otherwise. Benedetto Croce, author of the *Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascista* of 1 May 1925 (a response to the fascist

⁶⁶⁷ Zander (1955), 27. For editions illustrated by Dalí see Sandoz (1944), idem (1945) and idem (1949).

⁶⁶⁸ Sandoz's literature explored the strangeness of dreams; Beloborodov painted ruined architecture in flooded landscapes that drew inspiration from the work of de Chirico who was also a friend. Furthermore, Beloborodov designed a villa for Sandoz on his estate 'La Vigna Pepoli'.

⁶⁶⁹ See André Breton's accusation in 'Des tendances les plus-récents de la peinture surréaliste', *Minotaure* (12 May 1939), reprinted in Breton (2002), 146–147.

⁶⁷⁰ Ruth Ben-Ghiat has argued that this was in part because the trauma and humiliation of WWII, and the urgency of national reconstruction, 'tempered impulses to carry out a collective recrimination' of Italians who had actively participated in fascism: (1999), 83–84. Of how the same was true of actors and directors in the film industry see Ambrosino (1989), 63.

manifesto signed by Ojetti), described the fascist era in 1944 as ‘a twenty-year parenthesis in our history’, thus attempting to diminish its significance (a widespread practice).⁶⁷¹ The intended message of the newsreel was thus almost certainly that of an internationally-acclaimed painter conferring significance upon an historic Italian site, rather than an artist associated with ideologies the country was trying to forget. But the murky nature of Dalí’s political opinions highlights the tension that existed in post-war Italy between the reality of continuity with the past, and the mythology inherent in the country’s post-war re-fashioning.

One thing, however, is definite: Dalí’s presence in the Sacro Bosco had lasting repercussions for the site’s increasing fame and how it was presented and understood. This is evidenced by the broadcasts, articles, films and photographs of Bomarzo that appeared at a steady and increasing rate after the newsreel was aired, and which often referenced Dalí. In 1948, it was obligatory for cinemas in Italy to show a news programme before the screening of every feature film and Italy had the highest number of cinemas in Europe: 11,641 compared to 5,806 in France and 6,885 in Germany, meaning that the film would certainly have been widely seen.⁶⁷² In addition, the image of Dalí sitting inside the Ogre was chosen as the front cover of the first issue of INCOM’s popular weekly magazine *La settimana INCOM*, published

⁶⁷¹ Croce [1944] (1963), 56–57: ‘è nella nostra storia una parentesi di venti anni’. See also Lichtner (2013) and La Rovere (2014), 23–44. Others, however, acknowledged the pretence behind such sentiments. Responding to Croce one year later, Eugenio Artom stated: ‘Il fascismo non è stato una semplice parentesi nella nostra storia che chiudendosi consenta la ripresa del ritmo di vita rotto violentemente venti anni or sono’: [1945] (2008), 247. In 1947, Giacomo Noventa was similarly adamant that ‘non si può dire dunque che il Diluvio sia finite. Il fascismo e il nazismo del primo e del secondo periodo sono entrambi presenti’: (1947), 404. Recent studies of Italian history have picked up on this line of thought, stressing the continuities, rather than the differences, between pre and post fascist/WWII Italy. See, for example, Forgacs (1996), 49–63; Torriglia (2002); Zunino (1991), 132–142; Pavone (1995); Focardi (2005); Scoppola (2007), 5–22.

⁶⁷² Gennari (2009), 7–9. Likewise, seventy-five per cent more cinema tickets were sold in Italy than ten years earlier (Brunetta (2009), 42), and by 1950 figures for cinema spectators were somewhere between 580 and 661 million. Giulia Evolvi states that there were ‘an estimated 579,500,000 [cinema] spectators per year’ in 1950, while Daniela Treveri Gennari puts the figure at 661 million: Evolvi (2016), 6 and Gennari (2009), ‘Film Spectators in Italy, 1950–60 Table 1.1’, 149.

that same month and promoted in a further newsreel dated 24 November 1948 [Fig. 5.9].⁶⁷³

Soon after, other artists with Surrealist inclinations visited the site. Brassai, a friend of Dalí, made a photo essay for *Harper's Bazaar* in 1953 in which he photographed the Ogge and played upon the Surrealist's well-known eccentricity to retell an almost folkloric story about Dalí's visit.⁶⁷⁴ The French author of fantastical literature, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, published a text in 1957 illustrated with photographs by Georges Glasberg, in which he described the Sacro Bosco as the physical manifestation of 'cruel eroticism' and its 'disturbance of the senses'.⁶⁷⁵ Moreover, the artist Niki de Saint Phalle's visit would ultimately feed into the creation of her *Tarot Garden* begun in 1979.⁶⁷⁶ Dalí, in the meantime, became synonymous with the Sacro Bosco's 'discovery' and the assertion of the site's Surrealist character became embedded within a new academic discourse.⁶⁷⁷

Indeed, early authors were quick to recognise the effect that the artist's presence had upon the site and how it was understood. Guido Piovene, writing in 1953 in *La*

⁶⁷³ 'Roma - la presentazione della rivista La settimana Incom' (24/11/1948), Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (I021508).

⁶⁷⁴ In particular, Brassai recounted what he called an 'apocryphal story' about how Dalí was determined to have a white cat in the film, but while 'the village of Bomarzo yielded black cats, grey cats, brown cats, ginger cats, but it took hours to find a white one': (1953), 71. In a later article, in *Harper's Magazine*, Giovanni Borghese similarly and gleefully related a piece of gossip about how Dalí supposedly 'infuriated the major of Bomarzo by asking to buy two of the statues': (1964), 66.

⁶⁷⁵ de Mandiargues (1957), 186 and 207: 'érotisme cruel', 'le trouble des sens'. De Mandiargues saw the site as expressive of the subliminal, primitive and violent forces central to his theory of sexuality as the destructor of psychic stability.

⁶⁷⁶ See the essays in Mazzanti (1998) and Johnston and Chia (2010).

⁶⁷⁷ Dalí's presence in the Sacro Bosco was referenced by Praz [1949] (1975), 77; Piovene (1953), 3; and Bacino (1953), 92. Even the architecture students who surveyed the Bosco for the *Quaderni* recalled being struck by 'una scena surreale': Luise et al. (1955), 1. Marie Noble Kelly described the space as 'a surrealist dream': (1958), 822. In 1977 Luisa Quartermaine wrote that 'the garden was first thoroughly studied in 1955 by the school of architecture of the University of Rome, after Salvador Dalí had rediscovered it': (1977), 68. As late as 2007, Jessie Sheeler asserted that 'in 1949 the influential critic and art collector Mario Praz and the Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí discovered it, abandoned and deformed by thickly growing shrub and grass': (2007), 33.

Stampa, for example, noted that in the film ‘Bomarzo serves mainly to define his [Dalí’s] person’, rather than being valorized in its own right.⁶⁷⁸ In the same year, Ezio Bacino described how ‘Salvador Dalí came to give with his presence a Freudian and psychoanalytic interpretation of the “monsters” of Bomarzo’.⁶⁷⁹ In their different ways, Piovene and Bacino thus shared an understanding of how Dalí’s intervention altered the perception of the Sacro Bosco, turning it into a Surrealist space of unconscious dreams and nightmares, regardless of the anachronism of this view. Their critical awareness, however, became lost in following years, as the seeming parallels between the site and this twentieth-century art movement became a standard means of framing the space. Even as late as 1997, a scholarly text described the Sacro Bosco as indicative of ‘a surrealist phase of expressive freedom, freed from constraints and checks’.⁶⁸⁰

ANTI-CLASSICAL REBELLION

The connection drawn between Bomarzo and Surrealism from 1948 has telling affinities with the post-war characterisation of a strain in later sixteenth-century Italian art, which was placed under the much-contested stylistic rubric of ‘Mannerism’. Upon the establishment of Mannerism as an academic category in the 1950s, the Sacro Bosco was frequently included within, and explained according to, this classification. At the same time, early theorising of Mannerism drew upon the language and characteristics of avant-garde art and Surrealism to define its stylistic features and existence in sixteenth-century culture. That these frameworks coincided—Bomarzo as surreal, Mannerism as surreal, and Bomarzo as Mannerist—exposes the historical specificity of this structure of thinking; one that was invested in

⁶⁷⁸ Piovene (1953), 3: ‘Bomarzo serve soprattutto di contorno alla sua persona’.

⁶⁷⁹ Bacino (1953), 92: ‘Salvador Dalí a dare con la sua presenza una interpretazione freudiana e psicanalitica ai “mostri” di Bomarzo’.

⁶⁸⁰ Zevi [1997] (2005), 424: ‘Siamo infatti in una fase surrealista di libertà espressiva sganciata da vincoli e controlli’.

forms that could be framed as ‘anti-classical’. It is a concept that seems to have bridged both popular and academic contexts, and to have played a role in the reception of cinquecento culture and the Sacro Bosco.

In the years following WWI, earlier re-evaluations of sixteenth-century art, such as Walter Friedlaender’s ‘The Anti-classical Style’ (1925), had begun to use Mannerism as a term to distinguish the period between the so-called High Renaissance and Baroque.⁶⁸¹ Between 1925 and the end of WWII, however, the distinction of this ‘style’ as ‘anti-classical’ gathered new political implications. A classical aesthetic of Roman art, associated with the *Rinascimento*, had been co-opted by, and was widely associated with, political tyranny (in Nazi Germany as well as in fascist Italy, as per the *giardino all’italiana*).⁶⁸² Already in 1936, the English art historian Herbert Read had firmly stated that classicism represented ‘the forces of oppression [...] Wherever the blood of martyrs stains the ground, there you will find a Doric column’.⁶⁸³ In the new social and political context of post WWII, therefore, the idea of Mannerism as an ‘anti-classical style’ begun in the interwar period, became an appealing alternative to versions of Renaissance culture celebrated by fascist ideals and championed by the likes of Damini and Ojetto.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸¹ Walter Friedlaender’s essay ‘Mannerism: the anti-classical style’ was first published in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* (vol. XLVII, 1925) and was reprinted in Friedlaender (1957), 3–43.

⁶⁸² On this phenomenon in fascist Italy see Lasansky (2004) and the essays in Lazzaro and Crum (2005).

⁶⁸³ Read (1936), 22–23.

⁶⁸⁴ Similar mechanisms can be found in another defining description of Mannerism in this period: that it was a European, international style. See, for example, Briganti [1961] (1962), 11 and Wuertenberger [1962] (1963). For Hocke, in particular, the connections he saw between Mannerism and twentieth-century avant-garde art was evidence of a collective unconscious in the European community that had existed across centuries—an interpretation that can be seen as part of the emphasis on European integration post WWII: (1957).

A key post-war writer to argue for Mannerism as representing a ‘*ribellione anticlassica*’ was Eugenio Battisti.⁶⁸⁵ For Battisti the rediscovery of Mannerist art was to be celebrated as having ‘freed us from the myth of the classical Renaissance’—his use of the word ‘*liberati*’ here would still have held strong connotations in the mid-1950s.⁶⁸⁶ Battisti’s views on Mannerism would ultimately culminate in the publication of *L’antirinascimento* in 1962. Though not directly about Mannerism, in this text Battisti took central characteristics that he had previously associated with the term: an anti-classical, iconoclastic air, the preference for ‘the tumultuous, the indefinite, the protean, the psychologically aggressive’, and argued that they were central to sixteenth-century Italian art. Rather than a ‘style’ or period, in his ‘anti-Renaissance’ Battisti argued for a freer mode of creativity, almost a force, running throughout Italian culture of the period, in which epochal barriers were blurred, the concept of ‘classical’ or ‘Renaissance’ was broken down all together, and the popular and folkloric, the mystical and alchemical were absorbed into the fine arts.⁶⁸⁷ Within this proposition, Bomarzo was described as appearing to be spontaneously created: ‘the forest, dense with shadows’, Battisti wrote, ‘with intricacies, with unconsciousness, seems to generate monstrous apparitions from within’.⁶⁸⁸ In describing the Sacro Bosco in such terms, Battisti essentially offered an image of a

⁶⁸⁵ Battisti (1960), 225. Such descriptions would continue throughout Mannerist scholarship. Linda Murray in 1967 would argue that Mannerism was characterised by ‘violations of the High Renaissance and classical forms and canons’: [1967] (2011), 126. Equally there were writers that argued against this definition, arguing instead that the Mannerist mode coincided, overlapped and at times engaged with the classical High Renaissance. See, for example, Briganti, *ibid.*, 9–11 and Wuertenberger, *ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁸⁶ Battisti (1956), 3: ‘hanno liberati dal mito del classicismo rinascimentale’. Lionello Venturi, Battisti’s teacher, moreover, was one of only twelve university professors in Italy to refuse to take an oath of loyalty to Mussolini’s fascist party and lost his job as a result.

⁶⁸⁷ Battisti (1962), 52. For an informative discussion of Battisti’s book see Cole and Wood (2013), 651–656.

⁶⁸⁸ Battisti (1962), 125: ‘il bosco, denso d’ombre, d’intrichi, di scrosci, sembra generare dal suo stesso grembo le apparizioni mostruose’. In line with Battisti’s view of Bomarzo, Hauser saw Surrealism’s practice of ‘giving reign to impulses’ as closely ‘related to the Mannerist attitude, the peculiarity of which was blind confidence in the autonomous activity of the means of expression, that is to say, of language, and in the autogenesis of images’: [1964] (1965), 381.

designed outdoor space that diametrically opposed the prior ideals of an ‘Italian Renaissance garden’ in which man was seen to dominate art and nature. In an author’s note included in the second edition of *L’antirinascimento* from 1989, Battisti reflected on his original aims when writing the publication and described his focus on the elements previously left out of the classical Renaissance (such as the Sacro Bosco), as ‘an act of social justice’ and as an effort to ‘sanctify the witches’.⁶⁸⁹ In other words, Battisti stated that his post-war scholarship on sixteenth-century art was socially and politically motivated in its attempt to reposition cinquecento culture away, in effect, from the ideals that had been co-opted by early twentieth-century fascist politics, and to remember those objects that had been suppressed.

As with the Dalí newsreel of Bomarzo, Battisti and other early post-war writers and art theorists found a natural sympathy between aspects of the art of their own time, particularly that of Surrealism, and that of what they termed ‘Mannerist art’. To borrow the words of Arnold Hauser, the Marxist scholar of crisis and art in 1964, the concept of Mannerism as a ‘revolution’ marked by ‘an intentional and ostentatious deviation’ from that which had come before, was what aligned it with the twentieth-century avant-garde.⁶⁹⁰ As early as 1956, Battisti wrote that ‘modern Surrealism, moved by a similar poetic, has met with Mannerism on its own game-like terrain’.⁶⁹¹ One year later, Gustav Rene Hocke (a writer whom Battisti would go on to quote as a major source of influence in his section on Mannerism in *Rinascimento e barocco* (1960)), stated that ‘certain paranoid giants by Dalí have their home in Bomarzo’, a

⁶⁸⁹ Battisti (1989), vol.II, 686.

⁶⁹⁰ Hauser [1964] (1965), 3 and 21. For contemporary Italian theories of what constituted avant-garde art see Poggioli [1962] (1968).

⁶⁹¹ Battisti (1956), 7: ‘il surrealismo moderno, mosso da una affine poetica, si è incontrato col manierismo proprio sul terreno del gioco’.

site which he described as also having parallels to ‘the visions of Max Ernst’.⁶⁹²

Visually, Hocke’s *Die Welt als Labyrinth* drew these connections through an illustration section laid out like an art history slide lecture [Fig.5.10]. On the left page is a reproduction of a black and white photograph of the Sacro Bosco from the 1950s. On the adjacent page, two reproductions of paintings by Dalí display gigantic twisting and disembodied limbs in barren landscapes, above a painting inspired by Bomarzo by Manfredo Manfredi in which the Ogre and the *Tempietto* reside in an abstract landscape of block colours.⁶⁹³ Just as Surrealism was about disorientation and ‘stupor’, Hocke argued, the Sacro Bosco aimed to ‘produce “perplexity”’.⁶⁹⁴ Even the Italian art historian Giuliano Briganti, who pushed against the idea that Mannerism was a break from classical ideals, found that the way ‘the forms of reality are changed’ in Mannerist art had ‘results recalling those of modern Surrealism’.⁶⁹⁵

Exploring early post-war writings on Mannerism it thus becomes apparent that there is an unexpected but significant relationship between popular articles and film-based cultural propaganda (such as the newsreel) and emerging academic discourses on late sixteenth-century art, including that on the Sacro Bosco. Both draw upon the avant-garde and Surrealism as an ‘anti-classical’ modernity in order to define and understand a strain of late sixteenth-century culture, and as a result create an elective affinity between the two, despite the significant temporal gap. Surrealism and Mannerism become somewhat mutually informing in these publications, in a manner similar to how Surrealism offered a means to define and frame Bomarzo. Put another

⁶⁹² Hocke (1957), 85–86: ‘an Visionen von Max Ernst’, ‘Gewisse paranoische Giganten DALIS [...] haben ihre Heimat in Bomarzo’. For his full discussion on the Sacro Bosco and the avant-garde see 85–92. One example where Battisti sites Hocke as important to his thoughts on Mannerism is in *Rinascimento e barocco*: (1960), 216, note 1.

⁶⁹³ Manfredo Manfredi appears in the 1955 issue of *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura*, and his drawings can be found throughout the journal.

⁶⁹⁴ Hocke (1957), 87–88: ‘der <Verblüffung> erzeugen will’, ‘<Stupeur> (Schock) ist die Wirkung, die alle Surrealisten vorzugsweise erreichen wollen’.

⁶⁹⁵ Briganti [1961] (1962), 15.

way, a particular post-war understanding of Surrealist art allowed people not only to see and appreciate the Sacro Bosco, but Mannerist art more broadly. Battisti acknowledged this when he stated that ‘only recently, thanks to a more in-depth knowledge of modern art, sympathy for Mannerists has turned into affection and understanding’.⁶⁹⁶ Likewise, Hauser argued that, without the avant-garde, the spirit of Mannerism ‘would have remained basically unintelligible’.⁶⁹⁷

The ‘Mannerism’ that would later dominant Anglo-American scholarship in the following decades, however, was of a very different kind: John Shearman published his influential volume *Mannerism* in the Penguin Style and Civilization series in 1967, the year he was appointed as Reader at the Courtauld Institute in London.⁶⁹⁸ Approaching the concept from a stylistic and iconographic angle, Shearman rejected the work of Battisti and any notion that Mannerism shared ‘virtues peculiar to our time’.⁶⁹⁹ Instead, he argued that Mannerism was a trend for representing ‘a silver-tongued language of articulate, if unnatural, beauty’ through highly artificial and extravagant forms, that were fundamentally continuous with the ideals of Raphael’s Roman workshop.⁷⁰⁰ Within this framework, the sculptures of Bomarzo were ‘products of artistic and literary escapism’: ‘only a freakish case of a general sixteenth-century tendency to focus the attention of the visitor to the garden upon the stunning set piece’.⁷⁰¹ This view may have affected the shift seen in the

⁶⁹⁶ Battisti (1956), 3: ‘E soltanto recentemente, per merito di una più approfondita conoscenza dell’arte moderna, la simpatia per i manieristi si è trasformata in affetto e comprensione’.

⁶⁹⁷ Hauser [1964] (1965), 355–357. For Hauser, writing from a Marxist perspective, the connection between modern art and Mannerism was due to their ‘similar historical constellations’: both, he argued, had arisen out of political and social periods marked by crisis and instability. For his discussion of Surrealism as ‘mannered’, see 371–382.

⁶⁹⁸ Shearman [1967] (1981). Despite now being a key Italian art history book, *L’antirinascimento* went almost un-noted upon its publication. It received no substantial review in English and by 1965, Battisti revealed later, it had sold only fifty-two copies: Cole and Wood (2013), 651.

⁶⁹⁹ Shearman, *ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 125 and 158.

historiography of the Sacro Bosco, in which the studies published throughout the 1970s and 1980s focused almost exclusively on close iconographic details and the site as an idiosyncratic creation of a particular patron. Within the 1950s, however, Mannerism was viewed by many as an international (primarily European) occurrence that expressed aesthetic structures of thought across borders rather than of a singular person, just as Surrealism was an ‘international phenomenon’.⁷⁰² In line with this idea of an outward looking and interconnected culture, so unlike the *giardino all’italiana*, writers continued in this decade to widen the Sacro Bosco’s possible associations beyond Surrealism and the confines connoted by the ‘Italian Renaissance garden’.

IMPRESSIONS SO ALIEN

Through proposed affinities with Surrealism, the frame of reference for Bomarzo was pushed beyond Italy to include an international, avant-garde art movement. Many post-war writings that followed did similar work but with their eyes turned towards the East, emphasising what they saw as the exotic, primarily Asian, elements of the sculptures. Praz, in particular, was struck by the many ‘impressions so alien to Italian art’ that he found when visiting the site in 1949.⁷⁰³ Praz wrote that the country’s landscape with its ‘unmistakably Italian face’, had not seemed to have any exceptions to him until he saw Bomarzo as:

[...] a place with a mass of bizarre and monstrous sculptures scattered among weeds and brambles, without apparent order, which would suggest certain religious and sinister corners from India and from China.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰² See note 637 *supra*.

⁷⁰³ Praz [1949] (1975), 81: ‘impressione così aliena all’arte italiana’.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 76: ‘un volto inequivocabilmente italiano. Questa regola mi pareva non patire eccezioni, fino al giorno in cui vidi un luogo, raggiungibile in meno di due ore d’automobile da Roma, e perciò quasi da annoverarsi tra le sorprese di Roma, un luogo che per la sua folla di bizzarre e mostruose sculture disseminate tra sterpi e rovi senza ordine apparente può far pensare a certi angoli religiosi e sinistri dell’India e della Cina’. Guido Piovene picked up on this interpretation by Praz in his 1953 article, stating: ‘Eppure anche per Praz, che ho accennato, Bomarzo è l’unico luogo d’Italia “che può far pensare a certi angoli religiosi e sinistri dell’India e della Cina”’: (1953), 3.

Praz is disconcerted by what he finds in Vicino's *bosco*; it is so counter to his understanding of an Italian garden that he feels the need to reframe and explain it as a space shaped by outside influences.

Looking at the Dragon group, Praz sees a 'distant cousin of those found on a famous roof of Hong Kong or of that gold bronze (of the T'ang dynasty) that it is possible to see today at the Fogg Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts', possibly referring to the only complete gilt bronze dragon held in the Harvard Art Collection: the 'Tang-style Striding Dragon' bequeathed by Grenville L. Winthrop in 1943 [Fig.5.11].⁷⁰⁵

When discussing Bomarzo's Elephant, Praz asserts, in a similar vein, that the statue 'claims influences from India and from China, such as elephants from the temple of Subrahmaniya', as well as other references already discussed in Chapter Three.⁷⁰⁶ In 1953, Ezio Bacino similarly framed the character of Bomarzo according to an exoticism of the ancient 'Orient', stating that the Sacro Bosco had the 'the arcane flavour of a Babylonian ruin, of a Buddhist sanctuary recaptured by the virgin forest'.⁷⁰⁷

That Praz and Bacino would choose such references and descriptors, rather than possible influences that exist closer to Italy, can be seen as symptomatic, in part, of a post-war fascination with Eastern cultures that was connected to emerging Cold War politics and Italy's reintegration into global networks. 1949, the year Praz published his article, was the year Italy participated in signing the North Atlantic Pact, which

⁷⁰⁵ Praz, *ibid.*, 80: 'quelli di un famoso tetto di Hing-kung o di quello di bronzo dorato (dinastia T'ang) che può vedersi oggi al Museo Fogg di Cambridge'. The gilt statue is, in fact, from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century (as discovered when tested by the Straus Centre for Conservation in 2003), but was thought to be of genuine Tang origin when accepted by the museum in 1943. Personal correspondence with Monique Goodin, Division of Asian and Mediterranean Art and Alison M. Cariens, Straus Centre for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard Art Museums, 2017. For the bronze dragon: Harvard Art Museum (1943.53.113).

⁷⁰⁶ Praz, *ibid.*, 76: 'dell'India e della Cina, agli elefanti del tempio di Subrahmaniya'.

⁷⁰⁷ Bacino (1953), 95: 'il sapore arcano di una ruina babilonica, di un santuario buddista riconquistato dalla foresta vergine'.

subsequently led to the establishment of NATO.⁷⁰⁸ In this moment Asia and the East came to be seen as vital non-communist allies against the Soviets.⁷⁰⁹ As a result of this political shift, a distinct cultural turn took place. There was an influx of representations of the East, including images, films and texts associated with what has been termed ‘the lure of the Orient’.⁷¹⁰ At the same time, Praz’s and Bacino’s analogies speak to how Bomarzo challenged the *giardino all’italiana*, understood as a distinctly national style and void of foreign references. In fact, Praz was understandably resistant to the idea that the Sacro Bosco was a garden at all, at one point referring to it as the ‘*cosidetto giardino*’.⁷¹¹

Indeed, the very titles given to many of the texts published on the Sacro Bosco in this period immediately present the space as other to an ‘Italian Renaissance garden’ with its connotations of classical serenity, focusing instead on the site’s monstrous content. Praz’s article was entitled ‘The monsters of Bomarzo’, as was de Mandriarques’ book (*Les Monstres de Bomarzo*). Bacino’s article, called ‘*La Valle dei Mostri*’, described how when asking a local inhabitant how to get to the site, a man pointed down a path and said ‘*Quello è il parco dei mostri*’ (the name given to the site today).⁷¹² As if taking these descriptors to their logical conclusion, in 1964 Bomarzo was used as the location for the Italian-French horror film *Il castello dei morti vivi*, directed by Warren Kiefer.⁷¹³ Set in early-nineteenth-century France, a group of entertainers end up at the stately home of a murderous Count with a penchant for human taxidermy.

⁷⁰⁸ As Mario del Pero has noted, the inclusion of Italy into this alliance made no sense geographically, nor was Italy a global power at the time. Rather, Italy became “Atlantic” precisely because it was neither of these things, ‘not a member of the United Nations, militarily weak, and punished, Italy was politically unstable’ and as such was included to avoid it turning to the Communists and the ever-expanding Soviet power: (2015), 685–686.

⁷⁰⁹ Klein (2003), 5.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷¹¹ Praz [1949] (1975), 78.

⁷¹² Bacino (1953), 91.

⁷¹³ *Il castello dei morti vivi* (1964).

The sculptures of the Sacro Bosco provide the backdrop for murder, secrecy and funerals as the actors clamber over their peperino forms [Fig.5.12].

ECCO BRAVO POLIMARTIUM

In the last part of this chapter I will turn from the outward staging of the Sacro Bosco in the terms discussed above, to a concurrent and contrasting, inward looking presentation. Rather than glorifying, nationalising and rendering uniform the Italian identity and garden as under fascism, however, this framework repositioned the Sacro Bosco in relation to the regional, idiosyncratic, humble and everyday. A good starting point from which to explore this alternative image of Bomarzo is a short documentary by the Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni called *La villa dei mostri*.⁷¹⁴

Antonioni's film, while part of the same mechanisms of post-war governmental propaganda as the INCOM newsreel, dramatically shifts how the Sacro Bosco was framed. Moving away from the internationalism epitomised by Dalí and the exoticism stressed in articles at this time, the documentary is concerned with the rural setting and its local inhabitants, and with reclaiming the site's sixteenth-century aesthetic as intrinsically Italian in a regional manner.

Very little is known about the creation of *La villa dei mostri*. When mentioned in relation to Antonioni's oeuvre, it is seen almost solely, as with his other early shorts (or *cortometraggi*), as a film that exists to inform our understanding of his later, acclaimed full-length features, such as *L'avventura* (1960), *Blowup* (1966) and *Zabriskie Point* (1970). Though a few articles have examined Antonioni's early short films in their own right, including *Gente del Po* (1947), *N.U.* (1948), and *L'amorosa*

⁷¹⁴ *La Villa dei Mostri* (1950).

menzogna (1949), the documentary on Bomarzo remains absent from these critical discussions.⁷¹⁵

With a lack of textual and archival documentation, what we do know must be deduced from the film itself. Directed by Antonioni, a film maker consistently aligned in opposition to fascist politics, and with production by FILMUS, *La villa dei mostri* has a post-synchronized Italian voiceover by Gerardo Guerrieri, a screenwriter who had worked on the seminal Italian neorealist film *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), and music by Italian composer Giovanni Fusco.⁷¹⁶ Most telling, however, is its length (nine minutes and thirty-nine seconds) and the French and German subtitles that run along the bottom of the frame. Together these two aspects suggest that the film was contracted by a government or international agency, or at least intended for an engaged audience beyond as well as within Italy. Such *cortometraggi* were commissioned in the thousands by De Gasperi's government and international agencies such as the ERP after WWII to be played at home before the start of a feature film, and abroad, in order to foster a sense of European community.⁷¹⁷ Antonioni also produced other

⁷¹⁵ See for example Quaresima (2011). These 'documentary' films, including *La Villa dei Mostri*, it is worth noting, do not fit the format of documentary we would recognise today, often featuring fictional stories and enacted sequences alongside 'real' footage. On the documentary format in post-war Italy see Bonifazio (2014), 4.

⁷¹⁶ It is noted, in certain sources, that Antonioni refused to make films for Mussolini's political party when asked, and was involved in the Anti-fascist Action Party's underground network. Antonioni's interest in engaging with Italy's fascist period in film also, at moments, put his career on shaky ground. His second feature film *I Vinti*, for example, had to be significantly rewritten after being initially vetoed by the Italian board of censorship due to one of its story lines following a young neo-fascist involved in planting bombs in Rome. When discussing the experience decades later, Antonioni explained the censorship succinctly: 'the Christian Democrats have always been easy on the fascists': (2007), 189. For the censorship of *I Vinti* see also Minghelli (2013), 154–155. For fascism represented (or not represented) in post-war Italian culture see Sorlin (1981), 225–245. Sorlin cites twenty-seven Italian feature films made between the Liberation and 1980 that dealt with the dark years of Mussolini ("Bentennio nero"); of these only two were produced between 1944 and 1960.

⁷¹⁷ Brunette (1998), 17. De Gasperi established the Documentation Centre (Centro di Documentazione) of the Italian government in 1951 (notably just after the ERP had ended) for this same purpose and it was prolific: between 1952 and 1962 over 4,000 copies of over 200 short documentaries (roughly 10–15 minutes long and often dubbed into English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) were exported to be shown in international commercial cinemas, at major events, on television and during Italian diplomatic missions.

‘made to order’ shorts in the late 1940s, including *Sette canne, un vestito* (1949), which looked at and was commissioned by the textile industry, and *Vertigine* (1950) about the funicular at Mount Faloria. As Italian film critic Luigi Chiarini stated in UNESCO’s monthly bulletin, the *Courier*, in the late 1940s and early 1950s the documentary was seen to be an ‘important medium for spreading knowledge abroad of our [Italy’s] traditions, our genius and our national characteristics – in a word, the soul of our country’.⁷¹⁸ That the Sacro Bosco was chosen for such a film suggests it was beginning to be seen as a valuable site worth promoting overseas as part of Italy’s marketable heritage. Indeed, by 1959 the Sacro Bosco had become so famous it was included in the itinerary for a state visit to Italy by Britain’s Queen Mother and Princess Margaret, as captured on film for a *Mondo Libero* newsreel.⁷¹⁹

Even when films were not directly commissioned, Italian shorts of the period should be seen as part of wider government propaganda mechanisms. A law passed in 1942 stipulated that a *cortometraggio*, as well as a newsreel, had to be played before the start of a feature film, while laws passed in 1947 and 1949 assigned three to five per cent of ‘tax on revenue’ to each documentary approved by a government commission.⁷²⁰

While the intention of these laws was to promote the Italian film industry, particularly in opposition to its Hollywood competitors, they inevitably and fundamentally shaped

⁷¹⁸ Chiarini (1951), 3. Ross McLean, head of UNESCO films and visual information division, wrote in the same issue: ‘The power of film to entertain, to distract, to move to action, to hatred and contempt, to passion and respect, is everywhere agreed’: (1951), 2. Luigi Chiarini was a film critic that cooperated with the fascist regime and co-founded the Centro Sperimentale, but then shifted allegiances after the war.

⁷¹⁹ ‘Ore romane delle ospiti inglesi’ (30/04/1959), Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (ML040301). *Mondo Libero* (1951–1959) was a weekly news programme produced by Astra Cinematografica and directed by Arnaldo Genoino.

⁷²⁰ The government decree passed on 31 January 1942 required the screening of a triad comprising a newsreel, a documentary and a feature film. Screenings took place in regular movie theatres, as well as in other venues, such as factories, recreational centres, classrooms, and public squares, where films were projected by mobile trucks provided by LUCE and underwritten by various sponsors: Argentieri (1998), 9 and Bonifazio (2014), 3–4 and 16.

the subjects and viewpoints chosen by post-war directors who wished to meet the commission's selection criteria.⁷²¹

What is immediately striking about *La villa dei mostri* is its focus upon the rural setting and inhabitants of Bomarzo. The film begins with a long distance shot of the countryside, the camera moving across the landscape before pausing on the medieval town. The film then leads the viewer through Bomarzo's narrow cobbled streets, with men in flat caps and donkeys for company as the narrator states 'here's good Polimartium' [*ecco bravo polimartium*']. With this phrase, the narrator immediately situates Bomarzo in terms of Italy's ancient and localised history.⁷²² At various points the screen fills with the luminous rectangle of a street sign, pinning the film to an exact and identifiable location, or the face of a large clock, fixing the viewer in time. Slow pans give a further, detailed sense of location that the narrator corroborates. When the camera pauses on the edge of the Orsini palazzo, for example, the viewer is told that from the balcony you can see the Tiber and Rome, positioning Bomarzo within Italy's more famous geography [Fig.5.13].⁷²³ In contrast to the surreal landscape of the imaginative unconscious in the 1948 newsreel, Antonioni engages directly with Bomarzo as a historic location and as a very real topographical entity positioned in a specific time and place.

Leaving the town, the camera then moves down the cliff side to the Sacro Bosco below, as the screen fills with the various layers of rock face, rough masonry and stuccoed buildings, which make up the town of Bomarzo and the lithic outcrop on which it resides. This montage of materials, textures and surfaces again emphasises

⁷²¹ Bonifazio, *ibid.*, 16–17. In 1950, director Roberto Guerrasio referenced the effect of these laws in a text entitled 'Lo scandalo dei documentari': '[D]a quattro anni il denaro dei premi dello Stato affluisce nelle tasche degli speculatori, mentre la migliore produzione soffoca e i documentaristi ne fanno le spese': (1950), 358.

⁷²² See note 61 *supra* on Bomarzo's names.

⁷²³ *La Villa dei Mostri* (1950): 'Dalla loggia si vede il Tevere. Roma è a quattro passi'.

the physical reality and geographical situation of the Sacro Bosco before the viewer is finally taken into the site itself, where the focus on place continues. Starting with the *Tempietto*, perhaps due to it being the more well-known structure, Antonioni takes his lens through the site at ground level. Beginning at the bottom of the building's overgrown stairs, the camera slowly moves up the temple step by step, over its columns and up finally to its pediment, creating the sensation for the viewer that they are directly before the architectural feature, slowly craning their neck to see it in its entirety. From here, the camera descends the crumbled, broken steps that lead to the stone monsters below, their fragmented slabs cutting the frame into horizontal lines [Fig.5.14].

Photographs illustrating articles on Bomarzo during this period can be found framing the statues in a similar manner: one of the Fighting Giants, reproduced in Bacino's text from 1953, captures the sculpture at an extreme angle looking skyward, the screaming head of the upside-down figure cut out of the frame [Fig.5.15]. The effect of this earthbound vision is striking.⁷²⁴ In contrast to the Dalí newsreel, in Antonioni's film and such images there is a real sense of the works as they would be encountered in situ, their scale, and of the space of the Sacro Bosco: of the distances between sculptures and how you would negotiate the site if actually present. The Sacro Bosco becomes a tangible, albeit complex, topography.

Moving through the Bosco in this manner, Antonioni's lens continues to pan slowly across and around each of the statues, scanning from top to bottom and shifting from close up to wide view, reproducing the paths of a visitor's gaze. In doing so, the film

⁷²⁴ The phrase 'earth bound' comes from Giuliana Minghelli, who, discussing some of Antonioni's other films, places stress on what she finds to be his 'alternative "earth bound" vision', in which the camera seems anchored at ground level: (2013), 13. For a contrasting view, see Steimatasky's reading of Antonioni's engagement of landscape as emphasising the aerial, and thereby the distant and ungraspable (a reading which I do not think applies to *La Villa dei Mostri*): (2008), 1–40.

also takes time to provide a sense of the size and materiality of each sculpture, and their rough and tactile surfaces, in a manner that would later be employed by Carlo Ragghianti in his art historical '*critofilms*'.⁷²⁵ When the film reaches the Elephant, for example, the sequence begins with the view of the castle on its back, then moves over the creature's stone body to look between its thick legs, before following the sculpture slowly at eye level all the way around its body to its face [Fig.5.16]. With the Dragon, the image first shows the mottled texture of the creature's legs in close up, abstract and entirely unfamiliar to the viewer, before the camera slowly moves to the left to reveal the animal's roaring mouth and claw raised in battle with a female lion [Fig. 5.17]. When approaching the Ceres statue, Antonioni's shot begins on the vase of plants atop her head, before moving down and around her body until coming to rest on her gigantic hand, which entirely fills the frame, the shadows between her fingers like dark cuts across the screen [Fig.5.18].

In these sequences, the camera plays with the viewer's vision, switching between abstract and legible, close and far, creating a textured and physical engagement with material and space, in many ways evoking the experience of being in front of the statues, moving closer, further away, and walking around them. The rock is emphasised, with its various mineral deposits and its rough chisel marks dominating certain close ups, as if in these moments the camera is enacting the viewer reaching out to feel the cold, hard stone. The cinematic choices, in other words, work to make the viewer feel as if they are present in the Sacro Bosco, moving around the site and beholding its sculptures.

⁷²⁵ In the 1950s art critic Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti began making a series of art documentaries, which he termed '*critofilms*', alluding to the way he saw cinematography as an interpretive tool for understanding and presenting works of art on film. See La Salvia, Faguna, Caleca and Cuccu (2006).

In focusing on space, movement and texture, in filming from ground level, as if filling the shoes of the visitor, Antonioni evokes a kind of *genius loci* of Bomarzo and the Sacro Bosco. In a similar manner, writers of the period also often lingered on the vegetation, light and rural setting of the site, and the smells and sounds that surrounded them as they approached Orsini's land. Praz described the town of Bomarzo as a 'towered acropolis', 'suffused by the golden dust of the October sky, standing out against the far away mantles that seem to be engraved with sweet sapphire'.⁷²⁶ Bacino too, felt the tug of the surrounding topography, which he described as an 'ancient landscape of stones and trees, gentle and strong, proud and gentle that is Alto Lazio and ancient Tuscia, with nested cities like the hawks in the summit of the tuffy bastions'.⁷²⁷ Even the architecture students of the Istituto, so wedded to the rational task of measuring the site for the *Quaderni*, could not completely avoid describing how when 'the shadows of the night took us to a whisper of trickling fountains [...] it seemed to us that this fantastic world of monsters, guarded by the divine (the temple) and the human (the castle), lived in a whirlwind of a life time'.⁷²⁸

Where these authors are poetic and evocative, however, seeking to make the Sacro Bosco 'other' and a place apart, in Antonioni's documentary, the regional landscape and *loci* is rooted in mundane reality. The conversational voice of the narrator, for example, is a post-synchronized addition by Gerardo Guerrieri that adds to a sense of presence and inclusion within Bomarzo, framing the viewer as a visitor making their

⁷²⁶ Praz [1949] (1975), 81: 'acropoli turrata [...] circondata dal pulviscolo d'oro del cielo d'ottobre, profilata contro i manti lontani che sembrano incisi in un dolce saffiro'.

⁷²⁷ Bacino (1953), 91–92: 'In quel paesaggio antico di pietre e d'alberi, gentile e forte, fiero e soave che è dell'Alto Lazio e dell'antica Tuscia e di tutte le città annidate come falchi in vetta ai bastioni fulvi di tufo'.

⁷²⁸ Luise et al. (1955), 1: 'le ombre delle notte ci portavano il lieve sussurro delle fontane zampillanti, il dolce mormorio del ruscello [...] E ci è sembrato che quel mondo fantastico di mostri, vigilato dal divino (il tempio) e dall'umano (il castello), vivesse la turbinosa vita di un tempo'.

way carefully through the site. When descending the steps by the *Tempietto*, Guerrieri's voice states: 'You go down these stairs. Okay, I know you don't really want to because they are in ruins, the plants have eaten everything'.⁷²⁹ Likewise, the script often undercuts poetic flights of imagination to which the viewer might be tempted. Guerrieri often speaks in an ironic tone, posing rhetorical questions, such as: 'Did the beautiful Giulia Farnese turn her men into fountains, into plants, sirens, one day that the jealous Vicino was surprising her? Maybe she is the famous enchantress Alcina eh?'.⁷³⁰ The *Sacro Bosco* meanwhile is filmed in bright sunshine and the background music is playful and lighthearted—instead of evocations of gemstones, a donkey is shown chewing the grass by the colossal Elephant. In this way the documentary undermines the poetic descriptions and scholarly interpretations, such as found in Praz's article, which work to frame the site as mysterious and disturbing. The film employs an anthropological and sociological gaze of the kind that is much better known from other films of the period, such as Antonioni's *Gente del Po* (1947), a languorous look at the communities that lived on the Po river and their daily activities [Fig.5.19].⁷³¹ In a photo essay on the film, published in the journal *Cinema* in 1939, Antonioni expressed a concern for, and belief in, the *genius loci* when he stated that 'the people of the valley 'feel' the Po. How this feeling comes to reification, we do not know. We only know that it is 'in the air''.⁷³² Place is understood as specific and local, autonomous while also being a sensation and atmosphere.⁷³³

⁷²⁹ *La Villa dei Mostri* (1950): 'Chissà, scendevano queste scale, non va più lo so, è una rovina, le erbacce coprono tutto'.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*: 'Che la bella Giulia Farnese non ha trasformati lei i suoi innamorati in fontane, nelle piante, sirene, un giorno che il geloso generale Vicino fu lì lì per sorprenderla? Sì è che non sia lei la famosa maga Alcina eh?'

⁷³¹ *Gente del Po* (1947).

⁷³² Michelangelo Antonioni, 'Per un film sul fiume Po', *Cinema*, no.68, April 1939, 254–257. Quoted and trans. in Quaresima (2011), 116.

⁷³³ Antonioni himself once said: 'The subject of my films is always born of a landscape, of a site, of a place I want to explore'. Quoted and trans. in Minghelli (2013), 134. For a discussion of space in Antonioni's films see Lefebvre (2006), 19–60.

As well as providing a comprehensive sense of the individual statues and the Bosco as a space, Antonioni's camera lingers over the broken monuments that litter the site. Scouring the earth, the film pauses on the broken head of a sculpted woman looking skyward, heavily weathered and without a nose, as the narrator states that this fragment 'has rolled on the ground for centuries'.⁷³⁴ Next the screen shows the toppled Orsini crest clutched by an overturned *tufu* bear that is almost imperceptible, its form distorted by the moving shadows of leaves and branches swaying above, followed by fragments of inscriptions discarded on the overgrown and grassy earth [Fig.5.20].⁷³⁵ Such details provide the historian with useful information regarding the site's subsequent restoration, but they also allow the viewer to take stock of the site's devastation as a symptom of deep time. There is, moreover, some poignancy in providing a space to contemplate the deterioration of historical sculpture and architecture in light of the wider physical devastation of Italy after WWII, in which bombed out buildings, rubble littered streets, churned up fields and waterways were commonplace reminders of a painful past, loss, and the long road to any recovery [Fig.5.21 and 5.22].⁷³⁶ The extensive damage by the allied bombs had made the ruinous landscape in all its forms, Noa Steimatsky asserts, 'an arena of confrontation', the country caught between the desperate need to reconstruct, and the inevitable sense

⁷³⁴ *La Villa dei Mostri* (1950): 'rotolata per terra da secoli'.

⁷³⁵ These fragments have been restored to the inscription now found lining the inside wall of the Covered Bench (see Appendix, O).

⁷³⁶ Other Italian documentaries and newsreels from the period primarily focused on promoting the country's huge rebuilding efforts, and visual evidence of the actual destruction left by the war or of historic sites in a bad state of disrepair were rare in films of this sort. In shorts such as *Italia d'Oggi* (1952) and *Italia allo specchio* (1953) (sponsored by the government's Centro di Documentazione), cameras capture the construction of new railroads and factories with gleaming metal surfaces and new products. In the latter, a bombed out building comes into view ever so briefly to be glossed over with images of new homes, bridges, ships, trains and canals, acting to confirm that Italy is moving away from 'the night of dismay that was the war' ['di là da quella notte di sgomento che fu la guerra']. *Italia d'Oggi* (1952), Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico, Rome; 'Italia allo Specchio' (10/04/1953), Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (I092901).

that a ruin is a monument, a piece of material evidence and a locus of memory and grief.⁷³⁷

In this way *La Villa dei Mostri* is aligned to the topographies of neorealist film, in which directors undercut the triumphalist new Italy promoted by American and government funded organisations to focus on ‘the everyday and its detritus, the marginal and forgotten’, emphasising on-location shooting and regions not yet reached by the reconstruction efforts.⁷³⁸ In Roberto Rossellini’s *Paisà* (1946), for example, extended travelling shots capture the war-torn and rubble-filled streets of Naples.⁷³⁹ Antonella Sisto describes this new filmic approach of neorealism in terms of opposition to ‘the propagandistic scopes of the [fascist] Regime’.⁷⁴⁰ This was very much how neorealism was identified in its own time, though more contemporary scholarship has highlighted the inevitable continuities between fascist film and neorealist practices.⁷⁴¹ In 1951, Chiarini spoke of neorealism as a movement responding to the need to ‘reassert, in art, those human values which had been trampled and crushed underfoot’.⁷⁴²

In line with the concerns of neorealist practice and in stark contrast to the newsreel with which this chapter started, the inhabitant of the Sacro Bosco in Antonioni’s film is a farmer who works the land around the statues. White shirt tucked into loose, dark trousers, this *contadino* journeys through the site, completely oblivious to the camera. By the Monumental Vase, the lens pans from left to right across a large field of tall swaying corn in which the man can be seen walking through the upright stalks; by the

⁷³⁷ Steimatsky (2008), 45–63.

⁷³⁸ Minghelli (2013), 148. Antonioni’s place within the neorealist movement has been the subject of wide debate, but speaking of his own practice in the 1940s, Antonioni stated that he would own the ‘presumption: of having entered the path of neorealism by myself’: Antonioni (2007), 65.

⁷³⁹ *Paisà* (1946).

⁷⁴⁰ Sisto (2014), 81–82.

⁷⁴¹ See for example Ben-Ghiat (2000), 20–36.

⁷⁴² Chiarini (1951), 3.

Fighting Giants he appears again, walking along the upper level by the head of the victorious stone figure. Later he walks in and out of the frame by the Leaning House carrying a long metal hoe [Fig.5.23]. Recalling the men seen working in Gendels' photographs discussed in Chapter One [Figs.1.42–1.45], the presence of this local inhabitant once again paints a very different portrait of Bomarzo to the Dalí newsreel and brings the site rather literally down to earth. Within the cinematic practice of neorealism, the inclusion of this farmer can be understood as a means to reclaim and acknowledge regional Italian identities in the new reality of post-war Italy.⁷⁴³ The focus on the *contadino*'s agricultural crops and tools, moreover, presents the Sacro Bosco as a productive and fertile space, home to local workers and, as such, could be read as a political reclamation of the landscape from the international celebrity of the likes of Dalí.

At one point the documentary even seems to respond directly to this aspect of the 1948 newsreel. The closing sixty seconds of Antonioni's film consists of a sequence that almost exactly, and playfully, replicates the scene in the INCOM feature in which the painter-provocateur sits in the Ogre with a lit candle [Fig.5.8]. When Antonioni turns his lens upon this sculpture, the camera slowly zooms in on the stone maw as the narrator explains that here Dalí 'came to sit in the mouth of the dragon'.⁷⁴⁴ Yet, at the very moment when the viewer is led to think that the famous artist might emerge, tendrils of smoke escaping from the dark cave, a figure appears from within and crouches by a small campfire [Fig.5.24]. Is this Dalí? 'Ah no', states the narrator, 'it's just a farmer, who burns his corn on the cob'.⁷⁴⁵ Antonioni flips the content of the

⁷⁴³ In this way *La Villa dei Mostri* can be seen alongside Antonioni's documentary of Rome's street cleaners: *N.U.* (1948). Antonioni's interest in the lives of those otherwise largely unnoticed in society is evident too from a list of documentary titles never realised, but noted down in a diary at beginning of the 1950s, and which includes 'everybody's woman, undertakers, waiters, show girls, models, convents, public safety, [and] railway cleaning service'. Quoted and trans. in di Carlo (1973), 15.

⁷⁴⁴ *La Villa dei Mostri* (1950): 'venne qui e si mise a sedere in bocca questo drago'.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 'no, è un contadino che brucia una pannocchia di granturco'.

Dali's newsreel, seeming to comment on its pretence and distance from reality (despite the inevitable constructed nature of his own film).⁷⁴⁶

Antonioni's documentary was not alone in placing emphasis on the people of Bomarzo. Local inhabitants and farmers play a prominent role within non-filmic representations of the Sacro Bosco too. Beyond the documentary, the image of Bomarzo's *contadino* emerging from the Ogre became a trope, co-opted in photographs by Brassai and in others by the German photographer Herbert List. In the former, a black and white photograph that accompanied Brassai's short article from 1953, shows two farmers sheltering in the gaping mouth, one dog at their side, another stalking towards them [Fig.5.25].⁷⁴⁷ In 1952, List had taken a similar shot that was to become one of the iconic images of the site from the 1950s: a black and white silver gelatin photograph in which a young local herdsman stands in the orifice of the Ogre with his flock of sheep gathering at the foot of the sculpture [Fig.5.26].⁷⁴⁸ The composition is centred, yet taken from a slight angle to the mouth, emphasising the deep relief of the monster's facial features. The young shepherd stands nonchalantly and looks off to the left, one hand in his pocket, the other holding a long staff that reaches to the ground outside the stony jaws.

Praz, for one, objected to post-war photographs such as these, which included local men, women and children, arguing that they demystified the site. Speaking of images that accompanied his own article, including one that showed three children

⁷⁴⁶ At the same time it must be noted that the post-synchronised script at times refers back the language of Surrealism and parallels with modern art, in direct contrast to the cinematography. Guerrieri describes the garden at one point as 'metafisico' and 'irreale', where 'Vedrà, qui tra un pò le cose più assurde le sembreranno le più naturali'. When the camera falls on the Three Graces [Plate 9] carved in relief, moreover, the narration describes them as 'come sono moderne in quel primitivismo un pò ironico'. Evidencing once again the long, sometimes overlapping, shadows cast by these early interpretations of the Sacro Bosco.

⁷⁴⁷ Brassai (1953), 70.

⁷⁴⁸ Herbert List, 'Latium. Bomarzo. Sacro Bosco, Italy', black and white silver gelatin photograph, c.1950–1952, Magnum Photos (NN11472025). The photograph was still being used to illustrate newspaper articles in 1983, see Forghieri (1983), III.

clambering over the Dragon [Fig.5.27] (in a manner similar to Webel's photograph from 1927 [Fig.1.25]), Praz complained:

I must also add that the photographs fail to give an adequate idea of Bomarzo [...] the photographer, as usual, gathers a group of country people to give a sense of proportion, and the magic of the usual loneliness encircling the place is destroyed.⁷⁴⁹

Praz's statement highlights how photographic images can work to support or undo the argument of a text. Moreover, a closer look at List's photographs suggests that such representations of the Sacro Bosco were not all as staged as Praz would like to have his readers believe.

When List took his photograph of the shepherd in the Ogre in 1950 he was using a Rolleiflex camera with a mechanical wind mechanism. This technology made film loading semi-automatic, allowing shots to be taken in fast succession. Unpublished photographs from the same trip to Bomarzo capture the moments either immediately before or after the image by List discussed above. In one, the sheep appear less unified and more spread out; in another, the frame zooms out to show two young men and a boy on top of the Ogre with a small white dog [Fig.5.28 and 5.29].⁷⁵⁰ Other photographs List took in the site similarly appear to have been taken spontaneously. In one shot from above, a man, a young boy and a dog herd sheep around the Elephant, the young shepherd's form blurred as he runs across the grass and frame [Fig.5.30].⁷⁵¹ The same impromptu quality can be found in photographs List took outside of the Sacro Bosco and on the same trip to Italy, which seem focused on capturing unplanned moments, rather than frames that are overtly staged (as he did in his day

⁷⁴⁹ Praz [1949] (1975), 78: 'Debbo anche aggiungere che le fotografie non riescono a dare un'adeguata idea di Bomarzo [...] il fotografo, come di solito, per dare il senso delle proporzioni, convoca intorno ai massi i ragazzi del paese, distrugge la magia di cui l'abituale solitudine circonfonde il luogo'. This photograph was also reprinted when the article was published again in 1953 in *Illustrazione Italiana*: Praz [1949] (1953).

⁷⁵⁰ List, 'Latium. Bomarzo. Sacro Bosco, Italy', black and white silver gelatin photograph, c. 1950–1952, Magnum Photos (PAR132775 and PAR302687).

⁷⁵¹ Ibid. (PAR184672).

job as a fashion photographer for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*). There is an image of women knitting complacently on the steps of their homes in Bomarzo and another of a woman caught crossing the street in Rome [Figs.5.31 and 5.32].⁷⁵² While acknowledging that a photograph is never objective and is always determined by the compositional choices of the photographer, these images suggest that List's photographs present, more or less, how he found the Sacro Bosco: in regular, everyday use, occupied frequently and casually by the local people who grazed their flocks there.

What Praz's statement seems to highlight then is the beginning of a tension between popular and academic framings of the Sacro Bosco. Praz wishes to emphasise the horror, mystery and eccentricity of the space, so different to what he has come to expect of gardens from the period, its desired '*solitudine*' also adding to the (false) idea that this is a site that has been abandoned for centuries and only recently discovered. The photographs and Antonioni's documentary, in contrast, present it as accessible, inhabited and inherently local. There is a mythologizing in both: a pastoralism in the images and films that emphasise rural aspects and an exoticism in the Surrealist re-framings of Bomarzo and Praz's poetic language.

CONCLUSION

When visiting the Sacro Bosco for the first time in 1949 Praz described his astonishment at finding a site 'without apparent order' with 'impressions so alien to Italian art'.⁷⁵³ Exploring the films, photographs and articles devoted to Bomarzo after its mid-twentieth-century 'rediscovery', this chapter has interrogated how the space was reframed and re-presented in this period in ways that positioned it, whether

⁷⁵² Ibid., (PAR184711 and PAR338423).

⁷⁵³ Praz [1949] (1975), 76: 'senza ordine apparente'; 81: 'impressione così aliena all'arte italiana'.

intentionally or not, as alternative to the ubiquitous *giardino all'italiana*. At the same time, the ways in which these images and texts worked to interpret and frame the Sacro Bosco have been understood as specific to the post-war historical moment they belong to, and its social and political concerns. In this way, these films, articles and images can be seen as active agents, in line with what Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson term as film's 'ability to transform unlikely spaces, convey ideas, convince individuals and produce subjects in the service of public and private aims'.⁷⁵⁴ Put another way, they recreated the Sacro Bosco anew. If the previous chapters have been engaged with the various historic, literary, scientific and material myths that envelope the sculptures and their Alto Lazio landscape, here the focus has been the myth-making that happened about the site in the mid-twentieth century.

Two primary strands have been identified. One, starting with the Dalí newsreel, framed Bomarzo as surreal, exotic and mysterious, a site that provided broader, international parameters for Italian Renaissance art at a time when Italy was seeking to distance itself from its recent nationalist politics. Lacking an academic language to describe what they found, and seeing other potentials, the Sacro Bosco was turned into a discursive space that could accommodate disorder even irrationality, wild imagination and parallels with international, modern art movements, characteristics that would soon find an art historical framing and rationale via Eugenio Battisti's *L'antirinascimento* and the emergence of Mannerism as an art historical discourse in the 1950s and 1960s. Concurrently, other writers, photographers and the film maker Michelangelo Antonioni, addressing a primarily popular audience, positioned the site from an inherently local stance, drawing upon neorealist impulses to document the everyday reality of Italian life and culture. It is this more local and material position,

⁷⁵⁴ Acland and Wasson (2011), 2. Such a stance invariably draws upon what Benedict Anderson termed 'Imagined Communities', as well as the writings of Roland Barthes and John Berger. See Anderson [1983] (2006); Barthes [1957] (1993); Berger [1972] (2008).

in some ways, that this thesis has also adopted in order to understand the space within its own period in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

Studying the images, films and articles that came out after 1948 reveals much about how Italy attempted to reframe its artistic culture in the post-war period, the difficulties this could involve, and how historical sites become enmeshed in politically-driven agendas. As we saw in the first chapter, during the fascist regime an idea of the Italian garden emerged as an ordered, rational, and inward-looking space with closed cultural borders, and in which eclecticism and pluralism was actively rejected. The Sacro Bosco clearly didn't fit this model. Sidelined by Dami and Ojetti, it was, it would seem, just the right type of site to remember in 1948. Bomarzo became, for a decade or so after WWII, a site representative of a new way of thinking about and celebrating Italian Renaissance culture and, as a result, a space enveloped by myths and narratives of a mid-twentieth-century making.

CONCLUSION

THE EXPANDED ARCHIVE OF THE SACRO BOSCO

It has been established by scholars that photography played a significant role in shaping the history of sculpture and the discipline of Art History, both in its inherent limitations to represent three dimensional forms and the visual conventions that swiftly developed for photographing sculptural objects from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.⁷⁵⁵ A supposedly neutral white or black background, which laid visual claim to an image's objectivity, was one such signifier that an object was sculptural and worthy of study (as seen in a photographic print of the 'main sculptures in the museums of Florence' from the late nineteenth century [Fig.6.1]).⁷⁵⁶ Another means to present the cultural value of a sculptural object (and the 'scientific' and 'pure' claims of the photograph), was to capture the work from a dominant viewpoint and without human presence, particularly if the work was in situ.⁷⁵⁷

The photographs that shape the Sacro Bosco's visual historiography in the early and mid-twentieth century are not traditional art historical documents nor do they work according to these visual conventions. The initial reception of Bomarzo in the

⁷⁵⁵ See Johnson (2017), 282 and idem (2013), 12–51, and the publications detailed in note 22 *supra*.

⁷⁵⁶ 'Main sculptures in the museums of Florence', black and white photographic print, c. 1870–1880, Alinari Archive, Florence (CDP-S-MAL516-00150). It was a convention that meant that, as Johnson argues, 'eventually any three-dimensional object [...] could begin to be read sculpturally', naming the 'Involuntary Sculptures' of Brassai (photographs of found objects that were published in *Minotaure* in 1933 with captions by Salvador Dalí), as a prime example: (2017), 282–283.

⁷⁵⁷ Three photographs of Benevenuto Cellini's bronze *Perseus* in the Loggia de Lanzi in Florence offer an example of these conventions. Photographed in c.1890, 1900–1910 and 1938, in these images the wider public setting of the sculpture is largely cropped out, and the parts of the loggia and piazza that are visible are void of human presence. See Archivi Alinari, Florence (ACA-F-002489-0000, CDP-S-MAL515-0232 and ACA-F-058420-0000). The actual crowded and day-to-day use of the space can be seen in personal photographic collections of the same period: Archivi Alinari, Florence (CDP-S-MAL514-0175 and CDP-S-MAL517-0001). When a late nineteenth-century photographic print of *Perseus* from the Alinari archive was used to illustrate André Malraux's *Musée Imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale* in 1952, moreover, the background setting of the Loggia was totally excised, as noted by Johnson (2012), 12–13.

twentieth century did not take place within an academic setting, instead, the photographs primarily reside in personal photographic collections or illustrate articles published in newspapers and magazines. The films are likewise geared for a general audience, taking the form of newsreels and short documentaries to be played in cinemas across Italy. Yet it is their ‘popular’ status and thus, at times, widespread distribution that makes them all the more important to consider in relation to how the Sacro Bosco has been perceived and maintained. It is to the images and films, as well as the texts of the twentieth century, that we can attribute, at least in part, the site’s later history, reception and presentation to the public, when, bought by the Bettini family in 1954, the Sacro Bosco was turned into the tourist destination visitable today.⁷⁵⁸

From Weibel’s photograph of the Dragon sculpture in 1927 [Fig.1.25], in which two young boys sit atop its carved form, the photographs of the Sacro Bosco this thesis has unearthed are characterised by the inclusion of human presence and a display of playful, rather irreverent, behaviour towards the sixteenth-century statues. In contrast to the attitude and interactions normally afforded a Renaissance work of art, which might be typified by distance and respect as well as curiosity and connoisseurship, in these images multi-generational visitors touch and climb upon the works. In Milton Gendel’s photographs from the 1950s of the art historian Margaret Koons and her husband Howard Black, hands reach out to rest upon the hewn sculptures [Fig.1.41]. The site’s colossal stone figures become something to stand upon in order to get up close [Fig.1.39], while also allowing the viewer of the photograph to measure up the sculpture’s scale against the human. The same is true of photographs belonging to the

⁷⁵⁸ For an article that argues for the significant influence of ‘popular’ photographs of sculpture in their reception (in relation to Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* (erected in New York in 1981) and Maya Ying Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC (1981)), see Johnson (1998)b, 213–233.

garden historian Georgina Masson from the same decade.⁷⁵⁹ In one, she can be seen standing upon one fishy tail of the Siren, their two profiles aligned and looking into the distance [Fig.6.2]. In another, Masson poses in the mouth of the Ogre, arms raised to grasp the two stone teeth above her head [Fig.6.3].

In the personal archive of Italian photographer and anthropologist Mariani Fosco, moreover, is a series from the 1950s clearly taken on a family day trip. In one, a woman, smiling broadly, stands upon the stomach of the Ceres statue and leans against the stone torso, one arm around each of the sculpture's peperino breasts [Fig. 6.4].⁷⁶⁰ In another, a group of adults and children gather to pose in (and on) the Ogre [Fig.6.5].⁷⁶¹ Taken from an angle, this particular photograph shows, once again, the extent to which the current architectural surroundings of this statue [see Plate 19], and the shored up levels of the site, are a product of the later 'restorations' of the 1960s. The sculpture stands alone, with no walls fanning out on either side. Instead, the sides of the boulder from which it is hewn can be seen reaching beyond the frame. In further evidence of photography's power to distort and define a sculpture, other examples in the series present the Ogre and other statues as if surrounded by vegetation, Fosco having placed his camera directly in front of low lying shrubs in the foreground [Figs.6.6 and 6.7].⁷⁶² To see only these latter photographs and to accept their presentation of Bomarzo would be to misconceive the site's setting at this moment in time.

⁷⁵⁹ 'Villa Orsini (Bomarzo, Italy), with Georgina Masson', black and white photographic negatives, 6 x 6 cm, c.1950–1960, part of the 'Masson collection of Italian villas and gardens', American Academy of Rome Photographic Archive (Masson.1901 and Masson.1913).

⁷⁶⁰ Mariani Fosco, 'Bomarzo, Park of the Monsters', black and white photographic negative, 6 x 6 cm, c.1950–1959, Alinari Archive, Florence (MFV-S-PAL118-0141).

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, (MFV-S-V00106-0012).

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*, (MFV-S-PAL118-0120 and-0139).

In other photographs by Fosco, young boys are seen scrambling over the sculptures: climbing up the body of the upside down giant [Fig.6.8], play-fighting on the Mask of Madness [Fig.6.9], sitting on the shell of the stone Tortoise [Fig.6.10], and posing on Ceres [Fig.6.11].⁷⁶³ The interactions with—and behaviour towards—the sculptures presented in these images work to frame the Sacro Bosco as a playfully interactive and tactile space, as also found in many of the published photographs and films of the site from this period. In the 1948 newsreel Dalí is shown waving a stick from the top of the Elephant [Fig.6.12], climbing on the Ceres figure and sitting within the Ogre [Figs.5.1 and 5.8]. Praz's article from 1949 included a tinted photograph of children playing on the Dragon sculpture [Figs.5.27]. Antonioni's film ended with a similar scene of youthful and carefree enjoyment, showing a young boy running through the Sacro Bosco to a tree heavy with ripe apples from which he steals [Fig.6.13]. Four years later, another newsreel broadcast in 1954 by *Mondo Libero* included a short feature on the Sacro Bosco in which a group of children are shown playing hide and seek, one boy counting with his eyes covered in the Ogre as the narrator proclaims: 'the huge mouth of the mask does not scare them' [Fig.6.14].⁷⁶⁴

As the Sacro Bosco entered mainstream consciousness, Bomarzo became almost a picture-perfect site of consumption in Italy: the location and back-drop for glossy fashion shoots. One example, a feature entitled 'Beauty and the Stone Beasts' published in a 1958 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, presented:

...Richard Avedon's photographs of the 400-year-old monsters that inhabit the ruined park of the Palazzo Orsini in Bomarzo. Like the intrepid Beauty of the fairy tale, our models (in shaggy, Brigitte Bardot wigs) have climbed into their very mouths to pose in this fall's newest fashion sweaters.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶³ Ibid., (MFV-S-V00106-0072; -0004; -0041 and MFV-S-PAL118-0140).

⁷⁶⁴ 'La villa dei mostri' (01/10/1954): 'l'enorme bocca della mascherone non fa loro paura': Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Rome (ML016402).

⁷⁶⁵ 'Beauty and the Stone Beasts' (1958), 71.

In one photograph, a young woman sits on the nose of the Mask of Madness, her feet bare on the rough peperino surface, calling attention to touch, texture and material [Fig.6.15]. In another, a model poses on the Dragon, her head framed by its open jaw, one foot on the nose of the attacking Lion [Fig.6.16].

These photographic representations of Bomarzo remake the Sacro Bosco according to their own interpretative gestures, and inevitably went some way to influence the expectations and behaviour of subsequent visitors, as well as, consciously or unconsciously, the way in which the site was perceived by artists, critics and academics. The attitudes and encounters represented are distinct from what one would expect when beholding an Italian Renaissance artwork and garden. Bomarzo is presented as an almost excessively interactive space, characterised by touch and exploration; as a site in which to experience and climb rather than to study, where you behave as if in a park or adventure playground rather than an outdoor museum.

In this way, the portrayal of the site in these photos and films can be seen as folded into the language used to describe the Sacro Bosco in contemporary twentieth-century texts, in which it was positioned as something other than, and ill-fitting, a Renaissance *giardino italiano*. In 1928, Nichols called Bomarzo a ‘weird garden’; in 1949 Praz described it as a ‘*cosidetto giardino*’.⁷⁶⁶ Piovene would likewise write in 1953, in an article entitled ‘*L’India nel Lazio*’, that the current interest in the ‘garden (if this is a suitable name for the piece of land that we want to describe) can serve as a test of the change occurred in our tastes’.⁷⁶⁷ It is the long visual and textual legacy of presenting the space in such terms that must also have led, in part, to the site’s current iteration as the *Parco dei mostri*. It is a phrase that, including the word ‘parco’, connotes an open

⁷⁶⁶ Nichols (1928), 83; Praz [1949] (1975), 78.

⁷⁶⁷ Piovene (1953), 3: ‘giardino (se questo è un nome adatto per il pezzo di terra che vogliamo descrivere) può servire di saggio del mutamento avvenuto nei nostri gusti’.

and more casual space of entertainment, and underscores the Bosco's somewhat awkward situation in scholarship on outdoor Renaissance sculpture.⁷⁶⁸

The current owners have done some work to remove the types of encounter presented in these images. Hedges have been planted and low, wooden fences have been installed to separate sculptures from beholders (additions that also artificially divide the space and deny the current visitor forms of access that would have been originally available). Yet at the same time, there are other elements of the current Bosco that firmly position it as closer to the *parco* of its popular name than a visit to a historical 'Italian Renaissance garden'. On arrival a flat, expanse of gravel comprises a car park, while a long temporary bungalow contains the ticket office, cafeteria and gift shop. After paying the ten-euro fee, you emerge from this building to an area of picnic tables and a children's playground.

Lastly, the photographs and films discussed are striking for the performative way the viewers often pose with the statues, activating the subject matter. In images of the Ogre, for example, it is the presence of a human figure standing within its gaping maw that makes the theme of devouring come to life [e.g. Fig.6.3]. In this way, these visual documents provide an understanding of how the site has continued to demand interaction and response from its beholders. It is such close proximity, and the tactile, explorative meeting between human subjects, topography and sculpture that the photographs present, that I have also sought to consider in relation to the site in the sixteenth century.

This thesis opened with a drawing of Bomarzo's landscape by the early seventeenth-century Dutch painter Bartholomeus Breenbergh [Fig.1]. It is a rendering that went on to form the basis of an oil painting the artist completed shortly after and which serves

⁷⁶⁸ For the Bosco as a 'park' see page 33 *supra*.

as an apt image with which to close [Fig.6.17]. Known simply as *Landscape with a view of Bomarzo*, the canvas takes much the same view as the pen and ink wash rendering: the colossal rock formation towers to the left; the Orsini castle is visible in the distance between the large stones and the small gabled building. The view to the right, however, has been extended to depict a greater expanse of rolling hills and a large tree stretches up the foreground. In contrast to the drawing, which is barely inhabited, in the painting a proliferation of people engage directly with the physical surroundings.

In the lower left of the painting, a herdsman wanders with his sheep, while in the centre women can be seen carrying large ceramic jugs across the fields, reminding us of the range of figures that inhabited the land around the Sacro Bosco from the moment of its creation to the farmers captured in the photographs by Milton Gendel in 1950. In the foreground, between these individuals, is a large boulder on which two courtly dressed men sit and stand, having clambered up the rock's coarse surface in order to study the landscape before them. The figure in a black hat, breeches and slashed doublet with sleeves sits facing away from the viewer, looking out over the valley in which the Sacro Bosco resides. He holds up a white sketchbook and appears to be drawing the scene before him, pencil in hand, various measuring instruments by his side. His companion, wearing similarly dark clothing, leans over his shoulder, watching him work, presenting Bomarzo's topography as worthy of erudite study. Behind them, a boy in red hose leans up against the rock and lets a steady stream of urine fall on the brown earth, showing the viewer that this is not a landscape that is simply looked at, but also encountered and experienced.

On the left, the monolithic outcrop of peperino that reaches to the sky is also no longer devoid of human presence, as in the drawing. Instead, a group of workmen take pick axes to the lithic matter. Wearing loose white shirts, one is poised with his

arms raised to break a large boulder with a sledge hammer. Another, bent down on one knee, can be seen shaping a colossal rock into a rectangular form with a chisel, showing the potential of the landscape's geology to become sculpture. Just as the boy relieving himself summons the many odors that would have filled the Alto Lazio landscape, the hard labour of these men evokes sweat and sound: the clang of metal hitting rock (mixed with the sheep bleating nearby, and the groups of people conversing). Finally, in the lower right foreground, an Arcadian figure, dressed in a white toga and carrying a staff, blows into a horn. This individual seems to belong to a different time and place to the rest of the picture. He is of an ancient and mythic pastoral past yet resides in the same landscape as those that work and study, audibly engaging with and interrupting it. Bomarzo is here conceived as an inhabited space of deep history, populated, and filled with changing sounds, smells and activities; its figures, actual and imagined across time, interact directly with the landscape's lithic materiality.

In this way, the painting serves to evoke the primary concerns of this thesis, in which the Sacro Bosco has been considered according to its different and multiple historical beholders or users, and situated in its immediate geographical and geological setting. A focus upon the sculptures themselves and their location, along with a sensitivity towards the interests and concerns of Orsini's social network, has taken precedence. The individuals Orsini corresponded with collected Etruscan artefacts, translated local histories, wrote and compiled *novelle*, and translated the words of Pliny the Elder. Lacking a large documentary base, it is this framework that has allowed the Sacro Bosco to be situated within the cultural fabric of an elite, late sixteenth-century beholder interested in antiquity, ancient and modern literature and natural history. Chapters Two 'Histories', Three 'Fiction' and Four 'Rock', advance the study of Bomarzo by taking as their interpretative frames these subjects as grounded in the

culture of the site's intended sixteenth-century beholders. New contexts and materials have been brought to bear on the Sacro Bosco with the aim of opening up examination of the site beyond (while not disregarding) the questions of attribution and patronage that have so far dominated academic discussions. The examples of the Etruscan tombs immediately within Orsini's territory and the shifting reputation of antiquarian authors such as Annio of Viterbo; the popular genres of *novelle* and game books and the historical leisure practices of noble society within rural villas that are associated with these genres; the theories of rock formation specific to peperino, the local geology and contemporary earthquakes—these are hitherto unrelated objects, texts and phenomena that, through the lens of its beholders, are brought into play in this thesis to enhance our understanding of Bomarzo.

To consider the various historicised and possible responses to the Sacro Bosco is also to insist on the plurality of beholders, and thus the work's potential meanings and interpretation. The sculptures, the many spaces provided to sit and eat, and the inscriptions, along with surviving letters by Orsini, provide indisputable evidence that Bomarzo was intended as a social space, to be encountered actively by men and women in groups as well as alone. If it is acknowledged that beholders contribute to and participate in the meanings of a work in the act of encounter, then artworks and sites cannot be explained in terms of a singular interpretation. Instead, a wide range of functions and meanings can co-exist within a historicised and grounded realm of probability. Indeed, it has been asserted over the previous pages that the Sacro Bosco, with its diverse sculptural subjects, episodic character, and exploratory mode, presents itself as a space without a single iconographic key, and which instead anticipates the criticality and inventiveness of its beholders. When the Sphinx's inscription calls upon the visitor to work out if what they encounter is 'made as trickery or as art', the site

visibly asserts the role of the beholder, and their imaginative and reflective engagement in making meaning.

Like the man seated on his boulder studying the landscape with its colossal peperino rocks in Breenbergh's painting, this thesis has outlined the Sacro Bosco's close relationship with its local geography: archeological, geologic and wooded. In doing so I have taken cue from a close consideration of the sculptures themselves, arguing that their features as carved, embedded rocks and their wider setting should be taken seriously. Carved *per via di levare* from boulders of 'living' peperino as occurring naturally in the Alto Lazio earth, the statues are in visible conversation with and, to a large extent, dictated by the topography in which they reside; this is a reason why focusing on a proposed singular designer or sculptor is to misrepresent, and under appreciate, how this site works. Bomarzo offers an opportunity to consider how specific topographies and materials can provide important sources for understanding site-specific works of art.

The second focus of this thesis has been an examination of the Sacro Bosco's afterlife from Vicino Orsini's death in 1585 to its post-war 'rediscovery'. This part of Bomarzo's story has not received any sustained critical attention, yet offers important insight into how the site has been reframed and reformulated, variously omitted and repurposed, according to the cultural, social and political horizons of those encountering the space at different historical moments. In this way, Chapters One and Five are a continuation of my concern with the beholders of Bomarzo in the central three chapters. In taking stock of what visitors made of the site across a range of periods, this thesis could be termed a history of response to the Sacro Bosco, in which reception is always recognised as temporally contingent. It considers how historical objects are rewritten according to changing tastes and shaped by their various

representations; it is concerned with questioning how dominant scholarly narratives are produced and transformed into assumed knowledge.

The unpublished photographs, articles, and unstudied films unearthed in the course of this study have, moreover, provided new knowledge, context and documents for scholarship on Bomarzo, and there is scope here particularly for a wider project on the role of film and moving images in the larger history of Italian Renaissance sculpture. Some of these texts, films and photographs have prompted a revision of the existing view of the Sacro Bosco's history, particularly during the early twentieth century. It has been evidenced, for example, that the Sacro Bosco was actively omitted from the Italian garden canon systematised by fascist leaning intellectuals. We learn as much from history's omissions as we do from its selections and there is more work to be done on the other sites and sculptures purposefully overlooked during this period. Furthermore, while much has been written about how the Italian Renaissance was co-opted and manipulated by Mussolini's regime, little work has been done on how this was responded to post WWII.

In the sixteenth century visitors to the Sacro Bosco would have encountered its colossal peperino sculptures of monsters and marvels within a wooded environment, sun filtering through the leaves in summer, illuminating the rough stone at certain moments, at others casting it in shadow. Exploring the site, they would have entered certain structures, rested upon others and touched carved rock. If in a group they would have conversed, dined together and passed the time playing games deemed appropriate for such a setting. Their interests, when meeting with the sculptures and the outdoor space of the Bosco, would have prompted particular discourses and affected how Bomarzo was perceived and understood. Here, the contexts that have been explored are antiquarian, literary and geological. There would have been others. Some four hundred years later, the new concerns of the site's later beholders re-

shaped the Sacro Bosco according to avant-garde art movements and neorealist practices, and the altered, damaged site they encountered. This thesis inevitably also re-situates Bomarzo according to its own temporal moment, though with an awareness of and attention to this interpretive act, and a sensitivity to the historically specific horizons through which the site has been beheld at different moments in time. The Sacro Bosco and its afterlife provides a means to draw attention to the mythology inherent in all history-making. To this day, the Sacro Bosco continues to be re-imagined and re-presented in relation to its surrounding topography, and a large collective viewership that places upon it new and shifting demands.