

is inextricably connected with sense of position.<sup>35</sup> The reason why Oedipus paid such particular attention to the drunkard's slur was that it put both aspects of his identity in question.

This essay has attempted to draw out the connecting threads of Oedipus' rhesis. It is, I have argued, a legitimate inference from the text that Oedipus never forgot the original question which drove him to Delphi; that it was not heedlessness, but the assumption that all danger was limited to Corinth that led him unwittingly to fulfil the Delphic prophecy; that he read the confrontation at the crossroads as a challenge to his social identity; and that he killed Laius because the old man treated him like a slave. To conclude that Oedipus' anxiety is social rather than existential does not, in my view, diminish the play's significance or lessen its irony, for Oedipus' discovery of his rank takes its place among the many reversals that shape the action.<sup>36</sup> Oedipus had feared that he was the offspring of slaves, only to discover a truth far more terrible—that he sprang from generations of kings.

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<sup>35</sup> For a lucid discussion of this connection see S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton 1987) 5-II.

<sup>36</sup> For the motif of reversal see J.-F. Vernant in *Tragedy and myth in ancient Greece* (Brighton 1981) 87-119.

### The Portland vase: a reply

In *JGS* xxxii (1990), a volume devoted to the Portland vase, the sections on the discovery of the vase (85-102) and on the interpretation of its frieze (130-6) are jointly contributed by Kenneth Painter and David Whitehouse (hereafter P. and W.), who refer at some length to my own published views on these problems,<sup>1</sup> but only to dismiss them as untenable. The purpose of this note is to show why they have not persuaded me to change my mind on either.

#### THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FRIEZE (FIG. 1)

In their interpretation of Side 1 P. and W. follow Erika Simon<sup>2</sup> in supposing it to refer to the begetting of Octavian. The woman sitting on the ground in the centre of this side (C) is Octavian's mother, Atia, with the snake (*draco*) in whose shape, according to Asclepiades of Mende, Apollo visited her in order to father the future emperor.<sup>3</sup> The young man who approaches her from the left (A) is Octavian himself and the bearded onlooker on the right (D) Neptune. But P. and W. differ

<sup>1</sup> Haynes, *The Portland vase* (London 1964, revised ed. 1975); *Gnomon* xxxviii (1966) 730 ff. (review of H. Möbius, 'Die Reliefs der Portlandvase und das antike Dreifigurbild', *ABAW* lxi [1965] 6-31); 'The Portland vase again', *JHS* lxxxviii (1968) 58-72.

<sup>2</sup> E. Simon, *Die Portlandvase* (Mainz 1957) 8-29.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Aug.* xciv 4; Dio Cass. xlv 1, 2 f.

from Simon in their interpretation of Side 2. Where she again recognizes Atia with Apollo, they see a symbolic reference to the fall of Troy. The reclining woman in the centre (F) is Hecuba with the torch of which she is said to have dreamt before the birth of Paris.<sup>4</sup> To the left of her sits Paris himself (E) represented as a grown man, to the right Venus (G).

A crucial problem for any interpretation of the frieze is the nature of the sinuous creature beside C. In common with most interpreters, I believe this to be a sea-monster of the type conventionally called *ketos*;<sup>5</sup> and on the basis of this identification I have argued that the frieze as a whole represents Peleus on his way to woo Thetis. But to this line of argument, P. and W. claim, 'there are three possible replies: (1) that the creature on the vase is equally acceptable as a *draco*; (2) that a *ketos* can fit the Apolline theory just as well as the theory of Peleus and Thetis, and (3) that the Romans did not draw fine distinctions between snakes and snakelike creatures.'

To take (1) and (3) together: it is, of course, true, as that Roman writers use the words *anguis*, *serpens* and *draco* interchangeably as generic terms for snake, but it does not follow from this, as they imply, that Roman artists made no distinction between snakes and *kete*, a conclusion clearly refuted by the archaeological evidence. The snake is treated with considerable variety in Roman art, but a stereotype broadly based on nature can nevertheless be recognized (FIG. 2 a-c). In profile the head tends to be oval, its top running back in a continuous curve from the rounded nose to the neck. The eye is situated well forward, approximately above the middle of the jaw, and, being set in the side of the head, usually unforeshortened and circular. Male snakes often have crests and beards, female snakes sometimes small crests.

For the *ketos*, too, Roman art has a stereotype (FIG. 3), and one differing quite unmistakably from that of the snake. The *ketos* has a canine head with a raking, pointed nose, a long, flat, puckered muzzle and an abrupt, often beetling brow, above which the large ears point forward. Under the brow, and so above the inner angle of the jaw, the frontally-set eyes appear as triangular slits in the profile view. On many *kete* a slightly flaring gill-fin with a cusped end trails from the back of

<sup>4</sup> On Hecuba's dream see *RE* xviii,4 (1949) s.v. 'Paris' 1489-92 (E. Wüst).

<sup>5</sup> Apart from P. and W., the only scholars still sharing Simon's opinion that the creature is a snake, seem to be L. Polacco ('Il vaso Portland, venti anni dopo', *Alessandria e il mondo ellenistico-romano. Studi in onore di Achille Adriani* iii [Rome 1984] 734 ff.) and W. Schindler (*Mythos und Wirklichkeit in der Antike* [Berlin 1988] 202). Simon complains (*LIMC* ii [1984] s.v. 'Apollon/Apollo no.499') that I and others have paid too little attention to 'die mit der Frau auf der Hauptseite verbundene Schlange ... sie ist, wie Bastet (Nederlands Kunst-historisch Jaarboek xvii [1967] 1-29) in seiner Untersuchung zu Recht feststellt, kein Ketos.' Bastet did, it is true, at one time identify the creature as a snake, implausibly comparing it with the painted snakes of Roman *lararia* (*BABesch* xii [1966] 148-50, review of Möbius [n. 1]); but in the more considered *Jaarboek* article cited by Simon he accepts that it must be a *ketos* (cf. Haynes 1968 [n. 1] 72). Whether my own discussion of the problem (*ibid.* 61f) was inadequate, others must judge; but the reader will, I hope, forgive me for repeating here things I have said before. It is sometimes hard to persuade prejudiced eyes to recognize the self-evident.

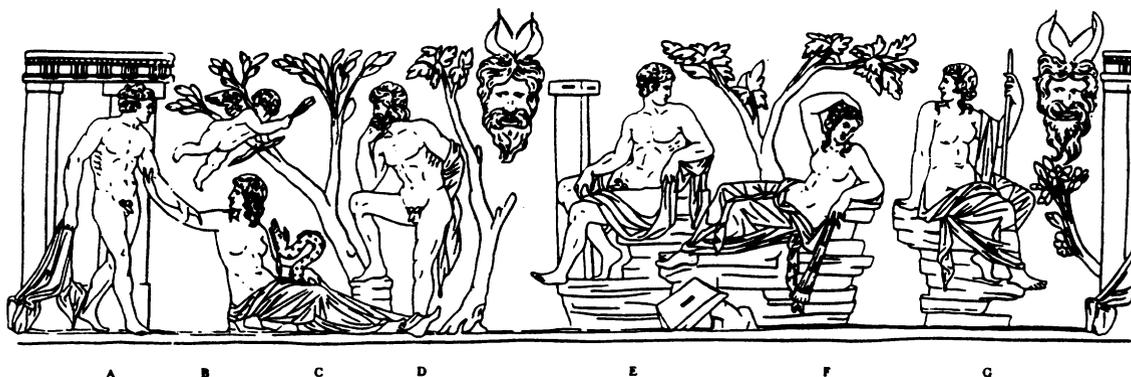


Fig. 1

each cheek, a sure indication of their marine status. A slender, swan-like neck joins the head to the chest which is usually, but not always, furnished with flippers or forelegs, while the rest of the body is convoluted like a snake's, but thicker and tapering to a fish's tail.<sup>6</sup> A row of small fins or spines often runs down the back of the neck and body.

Of these two stereotypes the creature on the vase, so far as it is visible, self-evidently conforms to that of the *ketos*, so it is not surprising that P. and W. have not been able to come upon anything like it in the repertory of Roman snakes.<sup>7</sup> They note noncommittally that it has been compared by Simon with the snake on a glass cameo in Cologne (FIG. 2 d), and point out that the latter's ears are not 'distinct and pressed forward', as are those of the former.<sup>8</sup> Of the still more significant fact that the Cologne snake lacks the gill-fins of the creature on the vase, they say nothing; but, passing on from

<sup>6</sup> Simon (1984 n. 5) maintains that a *ketos* can only be identified as such if it can be seen to have a Triton's body and forelegs, or (Augustus. *Kunst und Leben in Rom um die Zeitenwende* [Munich 1986] 164) a fish's tail. But it is not difficult to find *kete* of which only the head and neck are visible: e.g., A. Rumpf, *Die Meereswesen auf den antiken Sarkophagereliefs* (Berlin 1939) pl. 19 no. 76, pl. 29 no. 70, pl. 37 no. 93. A series of decorative marble panels now in the Capitoline Museum and probably from the Porticus Octaviae is carved in relief with symbolic objects, including ship's prows emblazoned with *ketos*-heads (FIG. 3 a; P. Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* [Munich 1987] fig. 102 b). Despite the lack of a corroborative Triton's body and forelegs or fish's tail, Simon does not hesitate to describe the heads as those of *kete* (Helbig *Führer*<sup>4</sup> ii [Tübingen 1966] 189 no. 1382 e, f).

<sup>7</sup> Of the assorted snakes and snake-like creatures reproduced by Polacco (n. 5, fig. 2) from Daremberg and Saglio, only two are Roman, and none bears the smallest resemblance to the creature on the vase.

<sup>8</sup> Römisch-Germanisches Museum inv. no. 72, 153; P. La Baume, *Glas der antiken Welt* (Mainz 1974) K 3, pl. 47, 3; E. Zwierlein-Diehl, 'Simpvium Numae', *Taenia. Festschrift für Roland Hampe* (Mainz 1980) 409, pl. 76 3, 4; Simon 1986 (n. 6) fig. 214. The snake's head, the modelling of which is very indistinct, is seen from above. Apart from the sharply-pointed nose, the only discernible features are two parallel excrescences on top of the head which have been taken to be ears, but might perhaps be a divided crest. No beard is visible.

*draco* = snake to *draco* = fabulous monster, they draw attention to three examples of what they describe as '*dracones* ... in non-maritime contexts of which Haynes's argument takes no account.'

Of these two bear little or no resemblance to the creature on the vase. Though they too are canine, the heads of the Dacian *draco*-standards represented on Trajan's column are of an entirely different type, having short, round-nosed muzzles, protruding eyes, upright ears, gaping, circular jaws and no gill-fins.<sup>9</sup> Even more dissimilar are the acroteria of the central aediculae of the 'Sala delle Maschere' in the House of Augustus on the Palatine, these being winged griffins with vegetable curlicues for hindlegs, a common decorative motif of Roman architectural wallpainting.<sup>10</sup> For their third example of land-based *dracones* P. and W. point to the creatures which appear in intertwined pairs beneath the columns of the painted architecture of the 'Sala del Monocromo' in the House of Livia.<sup>11</sup> That these bear a close resemblance to the creature on the vase, is undeniable, for with their long canine snouts, forward-pointing ears and gill-fins, they too are text-book *kete*. P. and

<sup>9</sup> On *draco* standards see now J. Coulston, 'The "draco" standard', *JRMES* ii (1991) 101-14. Though P. and W. do not mention them, there are Roman representations of Dacian *draco*-standards which do in fact closely resemble the creature on the vase: those on the Domitianic(?) trophy-pilasters in Florence (J. Crous, 'Florentiner Waffenpfeiler und Armilustrum', *RM* xlvi [1933] 1-119; G. Mansuelli, *Galleria degli Uffizi. Le sculture* i [Rome 1958] 25 f., nos. 2, 3). But here, as Coulston (*op. cit.* 111 n. 16) points out, the sculptor evidently had little first-hand knowledge of the originals and so had recourse to the *ketos*-stereotype to represent them. It was only when Dacian spoils began to reach Rome in quantity as a result of Trajan's campaigns, that Roman sculptors came to know what Dacian *draco*-standards really looked like.

<sup>10</sup> G. Carettoni, *Das Haus des Augustus auf dem Palatin* (Mainz 1983) 27, pls. 6, 7, 8, D, G. Cf. H. Beyen, *Die Pompeianische Wanddekoration* Tafelband i (The Hague 1938) 54 no. 210 (Casa dei Grifi); Tafelband ii (The Hague 1960) 32 (no. 86a Casa dei Epigrammi); I. Brigantini and M. de Vos, *Le decorazioni della villa romana della Farnesina* (Rome 1982) pls. 5, 139, 154, 157, 160.

<sup>11</sup> G. Rizzo, *Le pitture della 'Casa di Livia' Palatina* (Rome 1936) 41, fig. 30, pls. B, IV; Beyen 1960 (n. 10) fig. 232; Simon 1986 (n. 6) fig. 248.

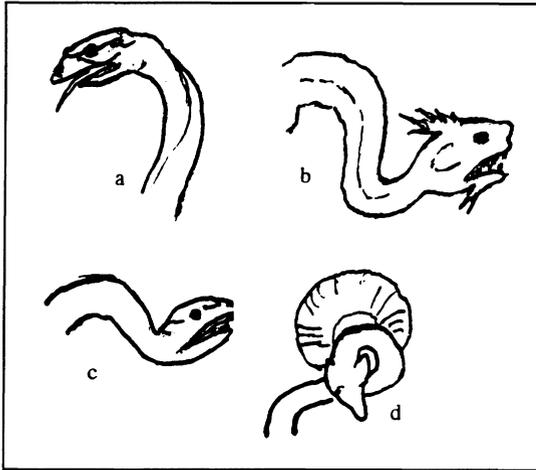


Fig. 2 Heads of snakes: (a) from a Mithraic relief in the Vatican (after A. Schütze, *Mithras* [Stuttgart 1972] 42). (b) from the lararium of the House of the Vettii, Pompei (after P. Herrmann, *Denkmäler der Malerei des Altertums* [Munich 1904-] pl.48). (c) from a relief of Demeter and Triptolemos (after Mansuelli [n.9] no. 168). (d) from cameo-glass plaque in the Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne (after Zwierlein-Diehl [n.8] pl.76 3,4). (Drawings by Sybille Haynes)

W.'s belief that they are terrestrial creatures appears to be based on the fact that they are incorporated in an architectural scheme, but this is clearly an untenable argument. Roman architectural ornament also includes intertwined pairs of dolphins,<sup>12</sup> but no-one, surely, would doubt for a moment that these are marine creatures.

Reply (2) looks like an attempt by P. and W. to leave themselves a loophole. Should the creature associated with C turn out to be a *ketos* after all, it would still be possible, they maintain, to save their interpretation of the scene by explaining it as a symbolic allusion to Apollo's role in the sea-victory of Actium. But this is to eat your cake and keep it. If the creature is a *ketos*, it cannot be a snake; and if it is not a snake, then the scene contains nothing whatever to justify connecting it with the union of Apollo and Atia.

The only concrete evidence P. and W. advance for their identification of A as Octavian is a resemblance they detect between its 'baroque' hair-style and that of a colossal marble head in the Cortile della Pigna of the Vatican, perhaps a portrait of the young Augustus.<sup>13</sup> Since, however, the whole of the crown and back of this piece, including the ears, is a seventeenth-century restoration, any similarity between the treatment of its hair and that of A can only be fortuitous. So far as A's face is concerned, P. and W. remark only that it is 'like Octavian', without specifying a comparable portrait, or suggesting in what the likeness consists. As Zanker has

<sup>12</sup> e.g., on the frieze of an annexe of the Baths of Agrippa (G. Lugli, *I monumenti antichi di Roma e suburbio* iii [Rome 1938] fig. 26) and on the cornice of the Temple of Venus Genetrix (J. Ward-Perkins, *Roman imperial architecture* [Harmondsworth 1981] fig. 34).

<sup>13</sup> W. Amelung, *Die Skulpturen des Vatikanischen Museums* (Berlin 1903) 834 f., pl. 94; Helbig *Führer*<sup>1</sup> i (Tübingen 1963) 380 f. no. 481 (H. von Heintze); Zanker (n. 6) 82, fig. 60.

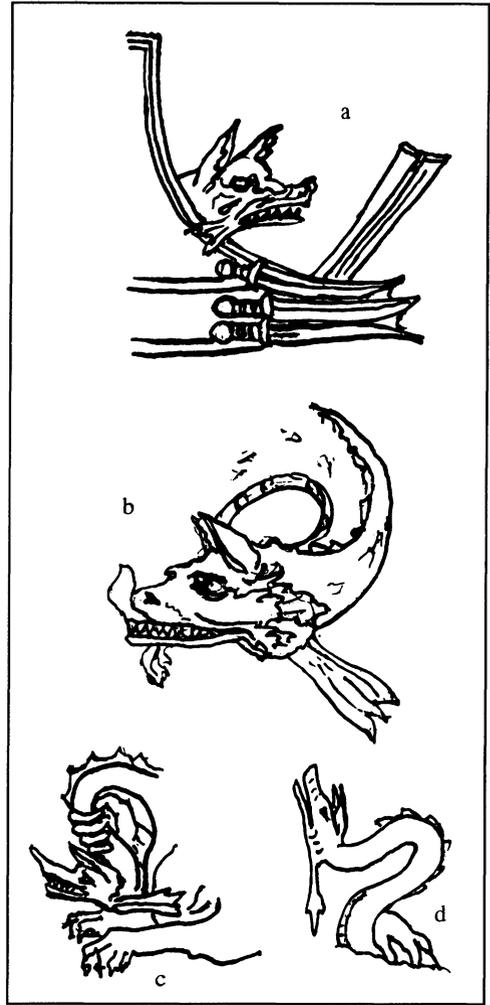


Fig. 3 Heads of *kete*: (a) from a marble relief in the Capitoline Museum, Rome (after Zanker [n.6] fig. 102b). (b) from the Tellus relief of the Ara Pacis, Rome (after Simon 1986 [n.6] pl. 39). Snout, front of lower jaw with beard, and left ear restored. (c) from a sarcophagus in the Museo Nazionale, Rome (after Haynes 1968 [n.1] fig.6 c). (d) from the Portland Vase. (Drawings by Sybille Haynes)

observed,<sup>14</sup> 'to see portrait features in ideal faces is a temptation to which many interpreters [of Augustan art] have succumbed, misled by the classicizing style of the official portraiture of the period.'

Further, if we identify A as Octavian advancing to meet his parents, what part in the scene can we possibly assign to the Eros (B)—hardly a symbol of family values? P. and W. claim that, being situated over C and

<sup>14</sup> Zanker (n. 6) 351: 'Der Versuchung, in den idealen Gesichtern der Figuren Bildniszüge zu sehen, sind schon viele Interpreten erlegen. Das Phänomen ergibt sich aus der klassischen Stilisierung der offiziellen Porträts.' Cf G. Becatti, *Arch. Class.* xix (1967) 211. Of the figures on the Portland vase Bernard Ashmole roundly declares: 'For my own part, I cannot see the faintest resemblance in any of [them] to any Roman historical personage' ('A new interpretation of the Portland vase', *JHS* lxxvii [1967] 3).

her 'snake', he makes explicit Atia's affection for her divine consort, and further, that he emphasizes their relationship more strongly still by the rearward glance he bestows on 'the product of the union.' But this interpretation of the scene fails to explain why A's eyes are fixed on the Eros. A dutiful son, who has approached his mother closely enough for her to support his arm with hers, would surely be looking at her. As most interpreters have seen, the familiar symbolism of the conducting Eros unambiguously tells us that A is a lover on his way to meet his love,<sup>15</sup> though it is not, as some have supposed,<sup>16</sup> to C that he is being guided. Not only does he not return her gaze, but the Eros is already passing over her and points beyond her with his outstretched torch, leaving her face in darkness.<sup>17</sup> The lover's goal still lies ahead of him and out of sight.

In their interpretation of Side 2 P. and W. identify E as Paris on the evidence of two arc-shaped fractures in the glass, one running from C to E in the lower part of the body and the other behind the Paris on the cameo-glass disc fitted beneath the vase after the loss of its original base, a repair which they believe to be ancient.<sup>18</sup> Since the fractures, measured across their chords, are

<sup>15</sup> The unmistakable characterization of A as a lover rules out his identification as Theseus visiting Amphitrite (Möbius [n. 1], followed by Becatti [n. 14] and E. Harrison, 'The Portland vase: thinking it over', *In memoriam Otto J. Brendel. Essays in archaeology and the humanities* [Mainz 1976] 131-42) or Achilles visiting Thetis (E. Brown, 'The Portland vase', *AJA* lxxiv [1970] 189; G. Schwarz, 'Achill und Polyxena in der römischen Kaiserzeit', *RM* xcix [1992] 287). Becatti's contention that the Eros 'battistrada' symbolizes Theseus's amorous nature in general, not his particular motivation in the present scene, is unconvincing.

<sup>16</sup> That the object of A's advance cannot by any stretch of the imagination be C, was pointed out by Polacco long ago ('Osservazioni intorno al vaso Portland', *Athenaeum* [pavia] xxxvi [1958] 132; cf. Haynes 1968 [n. 1] 59 f.). Hence these figures cannot be identified as Peleus and Thetis (Ashmole [n. 14] 5-7; C. Clairmont, 'A note on the Portland vase', *AJA* lxxii [1968] 280 f.; J. Hind, 'Greek and Roman epic scenes on the Portland vase', *JHS* xcix (1979) 20-25; J. Smart, 'The Portland vase again', *JHS* civ [1984] 186; H. Meyer, 'Griechische Mythen in römischen Kontexten: die Ara Telesina und die Portlandvase', *Boreas* xii [1989] 123-34; S.J. Harrison, 'The Portland vase revisited', *JHS* cxii [1992] 150), or as Perseus and Andromeda (F. Felten, 'Neuerlich zur Portlandvase', *RM* xciv [1987] 205-22; K-H. Hunger, *Das Geheimnis der Portlandvase* [Munich 1988]), or as Apollo and Atia (Simon 1957 [n. 2], 1984 [n. 5] 1986 [n. 6]; Schindler [n. 5]).

<sup>17</sup> Felten (n. 16 208) asks: 'hätte tatsächlich ein Verschieben der Figur [of Eros] um einen Zentimeter nach links die Interpretation verändern können?' The answer is no. But to bring the Eros into a position between A and C, as his interpretation of the scene demands, the god would have to be shifted more than two centimetres to the left, which would effectively destroy the composition.

<sup>18</sup> Harden, *JGS* xxv (1983) 45, 47, believes that the disc was fitted to the vase in antiquity because a 'limy weathering' which occurs on the grooved bottom edge of the body is also found on the upper surface of the disc, even, to some extent, in the circular groove cut in it to receive the body. But might not this 'limy weathering' be the remains of a cement used to join the disc to the vase and no older perhaps than a few hundred years? To me at least, the repair looks too botched to be ancient, more like a crude attempt by its sixteenth-century finders to make the vase more marketable.

roughly equal in length,<sup>19</sup> they must, they argue, have been caused by one and the same blow, so that by making them coincide we can tell how the disc was originally orientated in relation to the vase; and since the orientation thus established aligns the Paris on the disc with E, they conclude that the repairer must have been aware that the latter figure, too, represented the Trojan prince. But what are the chances, one wonders, of a fracture extending in one continuous line across two separate pieces of glass, each with its own internal stress-pattern and one abutting on the other perpendicularly? It seems much more likely that, as Harden concluded,<sup>20</sup> the two fractures occurred independently of each other.

The only evidence P. and W. offer in support of their identification of F as Hecuba<sup>21</sup> is this figure's torch, in which, as we have already noted, they recognize the firebrand prefiguring Paris in his mother's dream. But anything less suggestive of the future pyromaniac than the nearly spent torch hanging down almost forgotten from F's listless fingers, it would be hard to imagine. Further, the story of the dream requires that Hecuba should be asleep, but P. and W. seem to be in two minds about F's state of consciousness, first describing her as 'in an attitude of surprise while sleeping and dreaming', but later pronouncing it 'no wonder she averts her eyes [from the ominous firebrand]!' In fact the pupils of her eyes are clearly indicated, thus ruling out any idea that she is asleep; at most she might be day-dreaming. Lastly, F's pose is wholly inappropriate for the pregnant Hecuba, being the stereotype used in Roman art for unsuspecting beauty about to be surprised by a lover: for Ariadne approached by Dionysus, Endymion by Selene, Rhea Silvia by Mars.<sup>22</sup>

P. and W. see confirmation for their division of the frieze into two contrasting scenes in the architectural background. The 'complete architecture' behind A on Side 1 refers, they believe, to the Augustan rebuilding of

<sup>19</sup> According to my measurements, the fracture in the vase is 11.9 cm long, that in the disc 11.4 cm.

<sup>20</sup> Harden (n. 18) 46 f.

<sup>21</sup> Schwarz (n. 15) 289 n. 104 reproaches P. and W. for failing to mention that Polacco (1984 [n. 5] 773 and n. 31) has identified the object lying on the ground at F's feet as a Phrygian cap, an observation which, she thinks, would have given their 'recht eigenwillige Interpretation' of this figure as Hecuba much needed support. But the object cannot possibly be a cap: its stepped shape and rigidly rectilinear contours clearly indicate something hard and unyielding, a conclusion confirmed by the fact that it unmistakably props up the isolated capital beside it. To say what it is, is more difficult: another fragment of architecture perhaps, or simply a stylized lump of rock. Not dissimilar forms occur in the rock at the bottom of the tree between Ariadne and the Maenad on one of a pair of cameo-glass panels from the House of Fabius Rufus at Pompeii (D. Harden et al., *Glass of the Caesars* [Milan 1987] 72, 73 no. 32).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Haynes 1968 (n. 1) 73 67 f. with figs. 5, 9 and 15. The pose occurs most often in representations of Endymion and Ariadne, but is evidently a stereotype characterizing a particular situation rather than a particular person. Harrison (n. 15 132) claims that F 'conforms in every respect, including her dress and coiffure, to the familiar Hellenistic and Roman type of the sleeping Ariadne'; but this very miscellaneous category includes no really close parallel, so far as I can see. Certainly no Ariadne holds a torch.

Rome, while the pillar behind E on Side 2, from which they suppose the capital lying on the ground at F's feet to have fallen, epitomizes the ruin of Troy. But the distyle structure from which A sets out is a simple rural shrine of a type known from numerous Roman sacro-idyllic landscapes<sup>23</sup>—not a very apt image of urban aggrandizement. And the pillar behind E, another stock item of the sacro-idyllic repertory, is in fact intact, the low slab with panelled sides which now tops it, being, as many other examples testify, its original crowning member.<sup>24</sup> The capital on the ground is thus unconnected with the pillar and may be compared with similarly isolated capitals on the Blue Vase from Pompeii and on an agate cameo in Naples representing Daedalus and Icarus.<sup>25</sup>

But to return from the scenery to the actors. On one side of the vase a lover advancing towards a goal of which he has not yet caught sight; on the other a beautiful girl lying down to rest, unaware that she will shortly be surprised by a lover: that the two figures are complementary is surely the obvious conclusion. P. and W. rule it out on the grounds that a single scene would not be spread over the two sides of the vase, since they cannot both be seen at once. But this objection rests on two false premises. That the whole of a single scene must be simultaneously visible is a rule unknown to ancient art, as is evident from the many Greek vases on which figures directly connected with each other by the action are depicted on opposite sides: on the Penelope Painter's skyphos in Berlin, to name but one example, Odysseus shoots from one side of the vase at the suitors on the other, despite the fact that the two parties are separated by the elaborate palmettes under the handles.<sup>26</sup> And even if there had been such a rule, it would not be applicable in the present case. Since the lover has not yet set eyes on his love, there was no need for the artist to contain them both in a single spatial framework. He was free to divide them with their attendant figures into two self-contained groups or tableaux and set them on opposite sides of the vase with no clearly defined relationship in space. On the other hand, the two groups are certainly not 'firmly divided by the [Pan] masks and handles', as P. and W. assert. The masks, of which there will be more to say below, punctuate the frieze, but do not interrupt it: at most they hint at the interval still parting the lovers.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Haynes 1986 (n. 1) 58 f. with figs. 2-4.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Haynes 1968 (n. 1) 67 with figs. 10-14.

<sup>25</sup> Blue Vase from Pompeii: Harden *et al.* (n. 21) 76 no. 33; Naples cameo: G. Lippold, *Gemmen und Kameen des Altertums und der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 1922) pl. XLVIII, 1. Similar rhomboid blocks but without central holes occur on two other cameo works: one on a large sard intaglio in the Hague (M. Maaskant-Kleibrink, *Catalogue of the engraved gems* [The Hague 1978] 370 no. 1166, pl. 184; Simon 1986 [n. 6] 163, fig. 213) where it leans against the rock on which Venus sits, and the other on the cameo-glass panel from Pompeii already mentioned (n. 21), where the goat to the right of Ariadne sets a foot on it.

<sup>26</sup> Berlin F 2588, *LIMC* vi s.v. 'Mnesteres II no. 19'. Among many other examples we may mention two amphorae in Würzburg: one by the Berlin Painter with Herakles and Apollo (G. Beckel *et al.*, *Werke der Antike im Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg* [Mainz 1983] 96 f. no. 41), the other by the Kleophrades Painter with Hector and Ajax (*ibid.* 100 f. no. 43). We may also mention, as an example closer to the Portland vase in technique and time, the J. Paul

Once recognized as a pair of lovers, it is not difficult to name A and F.<sup>27</sup> We need a lover who has already fallen in love with a girl on some previous occasion and is now intent upon meeting her again. Moreover, he must be a lover whose suit a sea-goddess, for as such C is unmistakably identified by her *ketos*,<sup>28</sup> encourages by the sustaining gesture of her outstretched arm. I still believe that the only story to fulfil these requirements is that of the wooing of Thetis by Peleus in the pacific and auspicious version we catch a glimpse of in Catullus *lxiv*. On Side 1 we see Peleus conducted towards his bride-to-be by Eros and sped on his way by Tethys (or Doris or Amphitrite) with Oceanus (or Nereus or Poseidon) looking on pensively. On Side 2 Thetis, tired from her nocturnal wandering, has found a rocky couch on which to rest and, as we can see from her slipping torch, is on the point of falling asleep. Over her watch two seated figures, E and G. That G represents Aphrodite/Venus benignly presiding over the lovers' meeting, is generally agreed; and E's symmetrical correspondence with G, unmistakably emphasized by the mirror-imagery of their legs, leaves little doubt that he, too, is a divine spectator, most probably Hermes, Aphrodite's frequent accomplice in match-making.<sup>29</sup>

Getty Museum's cameo-glass cup (*JGS* xxxii [1990] 143 ff. no. A4, figs. 100, 101) whose handles with the Silenus-masks under them separate Dionysus and his companions from Ariadne and hers, but whose two sides constitute nevertheless, as P. and W. themselves admit, 'a single figured frieze.'

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Haynes 1968 (n. 1) 69 f.

<sup>28</sup> The *ketos* occurs as an attribute of Amphitrite on silver cladding from Marengo (G. Bendinelli, *Il tesoro di argenteria di Marengo* [Turin 1937] 22, pl. VII-VIII, fig. 14); of Tethys on mosaics from Antioch (D. Levi, *Mosaik pavements from Antioch* ii [Princeton 1947] pl. CLVIb), Shabba-Philippopolis (J. Balty, *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie* [Brussels 1970] 66 ff., nos. 28-29) and Anazarbus (L. Budde, *Antiken Mosaiken in Kilikien* ii [Recklinghausen 1972] fig. 82), and of an unidentified sea-goddess on a fragment of a Roman sarcophagus in the J. Paul Getty Museum (G. Koch, *Roman funerary sculpture. Catalogue of the collections, the J. Paul Getty Museum* [Malibu 1988] 66 no. 22).

<sup>29</sup> For the identification of E as Hermes see Haynes (n. 1) 70. In support of her theory that this figure represents Theseus on the point of abandoning Ariadne, Harrison (n. 15 133) quotes Simon (n. 2 25): 'er sitzt so leicht und flüchtig da, wie sonst nur der Götterbote;' and Felten (n. 16 209) and Meyer (n. 16 131), who both follow Harrison in identifying the figure as Theseus, likewise describe it as restless. But far from suggesting any intention of flight, E's pose clearly characterizes him as a settled spectator, being closely comparable, for example, with that of the herdsman admiring Apollo on a painting from the Casa della Caccia Antica, Pompeii (*LIMC* ii [1984] s.v. 'Apollon/Apollo no. 281'), or the Vulcan paired with Venus on a sarcophagus with Mars and Rhea Silvia in the Palazzo Mattei (Haynes 1968 [n. 1] fig. 9), or the bearded observer of Dionysus and Ariadne on a sarcophagus in Baltimore (F. Matz, *Die dionysischen Sarkophage* [Berlin 1969] pls. 225, 226 no. 226), or the personified Latmos looking on as Selene approaches Endymion on a sarcophagus in the Louvre (F. Baratte and C. Metzger, *Catalogue des sarcophages en pierre d'époque romaine et paléochrétienne* [Paris 1985] 71 f. no. 25). Although spelt out by Polacco (n. 16 131) long ago, the ludicrous implications of supposing E to be F's lover continue to be disregarded. Others opting for Theseus and Ariadne are Möbius (n. 1) and Becatti (n. 14), while Achilles and Helen are preferred by Ashmole (n. 14), Clairmont (n. 16) and Hind 1993

Since the frieze has nothing to do with Octavian, the goat's masks under the handles must represent Pan, not Capricorn. P. and W. claim that Pan is 'irrelevant to any scene showing Peleus and Thetis'. Whether the handle-masks of a vase must always be thematically relevant to its main decoration is open to question;<sup>30</sup> but as a close associate of Aphrodite and Eros,<sup>31</sup> Pan could hardly be considered out of place in a representation of the wooing of the sea-nymph; and as the god of remote and lonely regions, he aptly personifies the romantic solitude in which it takes place.

#### THE PROVENANCE OF THE VASE

Following Ashmole<sup>32</sup> P. and W. seek to revive the story, first encountered in Bartoli's *Gli antichi sepolcri* (1697), that the vase was found in the Monte del Grano, a large tomb of Late Severan date on the south-eastern outskirts of Rome.<sup>33</sup> Excavated in 1581 or early 1582 by its then owner, Fabrizio Lazzaro, the tomb contained a marble sarcophagus which was afterwards purchased from Lazzaro by the Consiglio Comunale of Rome and put on exhibition in the courtyard of the Palazzo dei Conservatori, together with a label in which the two portrait-figures on its lid were identified as Alexander Severus and his mother Mamaea.<sup>34</sup> In the caption to his pl. lxxxiv Bartoli states that the vase was discovered in this sarcophagus.

For the next two centuries Bartoli's testimony went unchallenged, but in 1909 H. Stuart Jones<sup>35</sup> drew attention to an account of the discovery of the sarcophagus in the *Memorie di varie antichità* of Flaminio Vacca, a series of notes compiled by the sculptor in 1594 as material for a book on Roman antiquities planned by Simonetto Anastasii but never completed:

Mi ricordo fuor di Porta San Giovanni un miglio passati li acquedotti, dove si dice il Monte del Grano, vi era un gran massiccio antico fatto di scaglia; bastò l'animo ad un cavatore romperlo et entrarvi dentro, e poi calarsi giusto tanto, che trovò un gran pilo storiato con il ratto delle Sabine, e sopra il coperchio vi erano

('Archaeology around the Black Sea 1982-92', *AR* xxxix [1992-93] 91), Achilles and Iphigenia by Smart (n. 16), Achilles and Deidameia by Brown ('Achilles and Deidameia on the Portland vase', *AJA* lxxvi [1972] 379), Achilles and Polyxena by Schwarz (n. 15), Perseus and Andromeda by Hunger (n. 16), Paris and Helen by Harrison (n. 16) and Apollo and Atia by Simon (1984 [n. 5], 1986 [n. 6]).

<sup>30</sup> On a cameo-glass jug from Besançon (J. Koltes, *Catalogue des collections archéologiques de Besançon VII: la verrerie gallo-romaine* [Paris 1982] 31-7 no. 82, pls. 46-8) a purely Bacchic frieze is interrupted by a Gorgon handle-mask.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *RE* suppl. viii (1956), s.v. 'Pan', 1000, 1002 (F. Brommer); *LIMC* ii (1984), s.v. 'Aphrodite', 128 f. (A. Delivourias et al.)

<sup>32</sup> Ashmole (n. 14) 10.

<sup>33</sup> On the date of the tomb see F. Coarelli, 'L'urbe e il suburbio', *Roma, politica, economia, paesaggio urbano. Società romana e impero tardo-romano* ii, ed. E. Giardina (Rome and Bari 1986) 56-8.

<sup>34</sup> Helbig, *Führer*<sup>4</sup> ii (Tübingen 1966) 73-6, no. 1222 (B. Andreae). On the purchase negotiations see R. Lanciani, *Storia degli scavi di Roma* ii (Rome 1903) 87 f., iii (Rome 1907) 58.

<sup>35</sup> 'The British School at Rome', *Athenaeum* (London) no. 4222 (27 Feb. 1909) 265.

due figure distese con il ritratto di Alessandro Severo, e Julia Mamaea sua madre, dentro vi si trovò delle ceneri... (*Memorie* 36)<sup>36</sup>

Since Vacca makes no mention of the vase in his description, Stuart Jones concluded that it could not have been found in the sarcophagus.

P. and W. disagree. Stressing the fact that the *Memorie* are no more than brief notes compiled for use by another writer, they suggest that Vacca's failure to mention the vase may have been due to the summary nature of such a work. But if he judged the presence of 'ceneri' in the sarcophagus worthy of notice, it is surely inconceivable that he would have said nothing of the vase, an object of much greater interest, had it, too, been there. Another possible explanation of Vacca's silence, P. and W. claim, might be that he had no first-hand knowledge of the excavation. He was writing, they point out, twelve years after the event he describes,<sup>37</sup> and they think it almost certain that he derived all his information from a report they presume Lazzaro to have prepared for the Consiglio Comunale at the time of the purchase negotiations. That such a report existed, is of course very likely; but to suppose that Vacca used it as his source, is an unwarranted conjecture. His description of the excavation is one of the *Memorie* introduced by 'mi ricordo' by itself, without the addition of 'sentii dire' or other qualifying phrase; and these, as Michaelis has pointed out,<sup>38</sup> are 'notizie di cui il Vacca stesso, da testimonio oculare, si fa garante'. An equally high opinion of the *Memorie* is expressed by Sauer,<sup>39</sup> who compares Vacca's reporting with that of a trained archaeologist. If the vase had been found in the sarcophagus, it is reasonable to assume that Vacca would have known about it and reported it.

But P. and W. have an alternative culprit up their sleeve. Elaborating an idea of Ashmole's,<sup>40</sup> they suggest that having opened the sarcophagus and found the vase inside it, Lazzaro might have decided to keep the latter for his own collection<sup>41</sup> or to sell it privately; in which case he would, they argue, have concealed it at once before anyone could know of its existence; and no word of it would have appeared in the report they presume him to have made on the sarcophagus to the Consiglio Comunale, the source, as they believe, of all Vacca's information. Such a reconstruction of events supposes,

<sup>36</sup> I give Vacca's text as edited by Th. Schreiber, 'Flaminio Vacca's Fundberichte', *Sitzungsberichte der sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* xxxiii (1881).

<sup>37</sup> An unfortunate argument to use against Vacca when defending the uncorroborated evidence of someone writing more than a century after the event.

<sup>38</sup> A. Michaelis, 'La collezione capitolina di antichità', *RM* vi (1891) 6.

<sup>39</sup> B. Sauer, 'Geschichte der Archäologie', *Handbuch der Archäologie*, ed. H. Bulle (Munich 1913) 83: 'Mit besonderem Ruhm ist des Bildhauers Flaminio Vacca zu gedenken, der wie ein geschulter Archäolog über stadtrömische Funde berichtet.'

<sup>40</sup> Ashmole (n. 14) 10 f.

<sup>41</sup> P. and W. describe Lazzaro as the owner of 'a notable collection of antiquities in the Palazzo del Bufalo', but it comprised only four pieces: a pilaster, a tombstone (*CIL* vi no. 1924), an inscription (*CIL* vi no. 8658) and a statue of Venus, all of which he had acquired as part of the property (Lanciani [n. 34] i [Rome 1902] 104). Nothing suggests that he was himself a collector.

it will be seen, that in keeping the vase secret Lazzaro would have been breaking the law; and in support of this hypothesis P. and W. cite brief extracts from an ordinance of the Consiglio dated 9th April, 1579, which they construe as prohibiting the appropriation by their finders of objects found in unauthorized excavations. But the ordinance, as a longer extract from it will show, had quite a different purpose:

Perché ogni giorno si vede che le cave per l'avaritia dei padroni di luoghi ò poco rispetto di cavatori per non essere riempite è spianate come si ricerca, ò per essere fatte contro la forma de Bandi portano pregiudizio alle strade pubbliche, alle muraglia o antichità. Però per rimediare per l'avvenire à questi et altri inconvenienti ... si ordina et espressamente comanda à tutte et singole persone di cave et cavatori et altri che faccino cavare che non ardischino ne presumino di cavare ò far cavare cosi dentro come fuori delle mura di Roma dove si sia senza prima haver fatto vedere il loco al nuovo Commissario che è il signor Camillo Coronato nobile romano.

Nowhere in this ordinance, it will be seen, is there any question of the ownership of objects found in excavations: its sole object was to prevent the roads and walls and ancient buildings of Rome being damaged or undermined as a result of the frenzied search for marble and travertine, mostly for building material, which was notoriously the bane of sixteenth and seventeenth century Rome.<sup>42</sup> Whether the excavation of the Monte del Grano would have needed authorization or not, we do not know; but given its situation, it seems unlikely. In any case, since the Comune publicly recognized Lazzaro's title to the sarcophagus by buying it from him, there is no reason to suppose that, had it contained the vase, he would not have been free to dispose of this too as he wished. To cast him in the role of a 'clandestino' is an anachronism.

In support of Bartoli's statement that the vase was found in the sarcophagus, P. and W. argue, as did Ashmole before them, that the sarcophagus must have contained a receptacle of some kind since Vacca tells us that 'ceneri' were found in it, and ashes would not have been placed there loose. But when Vacca speaks of 'ceneri' does he necessarily mean ashes? This is, of course, the primary sense of the word, but it is frequently used of uncremated mortal remains. Thus Migliorini's *Vocabulario della lingua italiana* (Turin 1965), s.v. 'cenere', includes the definition: 'Le ceneri, Il cenere ... anche se non vi sia stata cremazione, cadavere già seppellito. Avanzi mortali.'<sup>43</sup> That this meaning of the word was not unfamiliar to Vacca, is evident from *Memorie* 113, where he describes how 'ossa d'huomini ... come si toccavano, perdevano la forma, et si convertivano in ceneri ...' When, therefore, he reports the discovery of a sarcophagus, 'dentro il quale vi erano delle ceneri ...,' but says nothing about any accompanying receptacle, the most obvious conclusion is, surely, that he is talking of uncremated remains—which are,

<sup>42</sup> On the disastrous consequences for Roman antiquities of the hunt for building materials see R. Lanciani, *The destruction of ancient Rome* (New York 1899) chap. xix.

<sup>43</sup> In English, too, a corpse may be described as ashes: Poor key-cold figure of a holy King!  
Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster!  
(Shakespeare, *King Richard III* i ii 6 f.)

after all, what we would expect to find in a sarcophagus.

Lastly, while Bartoli is the first known person to state explicitly that the vase was found in the Monte del Grano sarcophagus, P. and W. endorse Ashmole's view that this provenance is already implicit in Teti's conjecture in his *Aedes Barberinae* (1642) that the vase had been made to contain the ashes of Alexander Severus: such a notion, Ashmole argued, would never have entered Teti's head had it not been common knowledge that the vase had been discovered in the sarcophagus reputedly of this emperor. But this argument fails to take into account the unique veneration accorded to Alexander Severus in the Christian tradition, which by magnifying his virtues and suppressing his faults had transformed him into 'a veritable Saint Louis of antiquity',<sup>44</sup> 'of governance so perfite an ymage', even a Christian himself.<sup>45</sup> The quite arbitrary identification of the Monte del Grano sarcophagus as that of the emperor and his mother can only be explained by the desire to possess a relic of such a paragon; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the same kind of wishful thinking could have independently prompted the claim that the vase was his cinerary urn. We first encounter this notion in a letter of 1634 from Cassiano dal Pozzo to Peiresc in which it is described as then current.<sup>46</sup> Since Peiresc seems to have heard nothing of it when he visited Rome in 1600 and saw the vase in Cardinal del Monte's collections it looks very much as if it was invented in the new Barberini Palace in a bid to promote the vase as a rival to the sarcophagus on the Capitol.<sup>47</sup>

However that may be, the connection of the vase with Alexander Severus is readily explicable without reference to the Monte del Grano; and I remain convinced that the story of its discovery in the sarcophagus was no more than a clumsy attempt on the part of Bartoli<sup>48</sup> or some other antiquary of the period to conflate two related but irreconcilable fantasies.

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<sup>44</sup> 'Keiner von den vielen Imperatoren erregt so sehr die Teilnahme der Nachwelt wie dieser im Verhältnis zu seiner Gesamtumgebung unbegreifliche Mensch [Alexander Severus], ein wahrer Sanct Ludwig des Altertums' (J. Burckhardt, *Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen*). Cf. A. Calderini, 'Le "virtù" di Alessandro Severo', *Studi dedicati alla memoria di Paolo Ubaldi* (Milan 1937) 431-42.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Elyot, *The image of governance* (1541). On Elyot's influence see S. Lehmburg, *Sir Thomas Elyot, Tudor humanist* (Austin, Tex. 1960); J. Major, *Sir Thomas Elyot and renaissance humanism* (Lincoln, Nebr. 1964).

<sup>46</sup> D. Jaffé, 'Peiresc, Rubens, dal Pozzo and the Portland vase', *The Burlington Magazine* cxxxi (1989) 556, 588 no. 25.

<sup>47</sup> We might compare the frequent multiplication of saintly relics resulting from ecclesiastical rivalries. The body of St. Teilo, for example, miraculously triplicated itself overnight to satisfy the competing claims of Llandeilo, Penally and Llandaff.

<sup>48</sup> This is not the only occasion on which Bartoli's testimony is open to question. There are grounds for doubting whether the Protesilaos sarcophagus formerly in the Barberini Palace and now in the Vatican was found in a tomb on the Via Appia (*Gli antichi sepolcri* pls. 53-5; cf. C. Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs* iii 3 [Berlin 1899] 498 no. 423), or the Farnese Palace strigil-sarcophagus in the tomb of Caecilia Metella (*Gli antichi sepolcri* pls. 35-8; cf. L. Canina, *La prima parte della Via Appia* [Rome 1853] 87 n. 25).