

TO ENTERTAIN AN EMPEROR: SPERLONGA, LAOKOON AND TIBERIUS AT THE DINNER-TABLE

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(Plates IX–XII)

Even to-day, twenty years after its discovery in September 1957, the great corpus of sculptures from the grotto by the sea-shore at Sperlonga still retains many of its secrets. The sheer quantity and richness of the material, its clearly programmatic character, and the enigmatic personalities and affiliations of its sculptors cannot but prompt any visitor to the cave and museum, specialist or no, to ask: what was the purpose of this great complex of Odyssean themes? When were they carved and for whom? Only recently, with the preliminary publication of the major fragments and their replicas by Conticello and Andraea, have their subjects and positions been satisfactorily determined, and the groundwork laid for a solution to such problems as these.¹

All four major groups had, as their protagonist, Odysseus. First of all, at the mouth of the cave on the left, he was shown dragging the limp corpse of Achilles away from the battle before Troy (Pl. IX, 1), and on the right, standing thwarted of his plan to snatch the Palladion away from Diomedes (Pl. IX, 2 and 3); in the centre of the pool the scene shifted to his wanderings, with his ship, its helmsman still clinging desperately to the stern, enmeshed in Scylla's coils (Pl. IX, 4–X, 2), while in the dim light of the cavern at the rear to the right, he appeared for the last time to direct his companions in the blinding of a gigantic Polyphemus (Pl. X, 3–XI, 4; cf. Pl. XII, 1).

From Conticello's publication, and even more from an inspection of the sculptures *in situ*, it is evident that these present a unified programme, carved in the same marble (perhaps from Asia Minor)² and by the same workshop. That they are not a mixture of works originally diverse in origin is evinced by the common technique and surface finish of the fragments,³ and by the clear fact that, although their sculptors were fairly uneven in quality and approach, no style is restricted to any one group or figure but re-appears, here and there, throughout the whole complex.⁴ That the same *atelier* produced the Laokoon now seems beyond doubt. Besides the coincidence of names in the signature inscribed on the outrigger of Odysseus's ship ('Athanosodoros son of Hagesandros, Hagesandros son of Paionios, and Polydoros son of Polydoros the Rhodians made it'), and in Pliny's remark that 'eum (sc. Laocoonta) ac liberos draconumque mirabiles nexus de consilii sententia

¹ B. Conticello and B. Andraea, 'Die Skulpturen von Sperlonga', *Antike Plastik* XIV (1974). This, with its careful reconstructions based on the findspots, replaces all earlier studies of the subjects and iconography; reference to it is made here under the name of each author separately, e.g. Conticello, 24. Essential secondary reading is P. H. von Blanckenhagen's review in *AJA* 80 (1976), 99–104.

This article is the result of a visit to Sperlonga, Conticello and Andraea in hand, made by students of the British School at Rome and friends in February, 1975. I thank my companions (Alan Griffiths, Rosemary Fleck, Amanda Claridge and Raimund Wünsche) for their company and for much of the inspiration that lies behind what I have written in the following pages; their specific contributions to my argument will be acknowledged in the proper place. My thanks also go to my colleagues, Professor A. H. Thornton, Professor J. Barsby, Dr. D. A. Little and Dr. G. Zanker for their help and criticism. Pl. XII, 1 is the work of Murray Webb, after Conticello fig. 7.

² Information from Amanda Claridge and Rosemary Fleck. It is not the Rhodian *lithos Lartios* which, as pointed out by G. Merker, *The Hellenistic Sculpture of Rhodes* (SIMA XL, 1973), 6 and n. 13, is unsuitable for monumental sculpture.

³ The Odysseus-Achilles group (Pl. IX, 1) was presumably too compact, and the Palladion group too

conspicuous, for the massive supports found in the Scylla and Polyphemus groups (Pls. IX, 4–XI, 4: see further below, p. 89). The technique of *Ansätze* varies considerably with the carver: on the Scylla group (and the Vatican Laokoon) surfaces are scored roughly with a coarse point and secured by round dowels (Pl. IX, 4–X, 2; G. Säflund, *The Polyphemus and Scylla groups at Sperlonga* (1972), fig. 39; F. Magi, 'Il ripristino del Laocoonte', *Atti Pont. Acc. Rom. d'Arch. Ser. III, Memorie* IX (1960), pls. 26, 2 and 27, 3) and heads cut diagonally across the top of the skull when this is joined separately (Pl. X, 1; Säflund, loc. cit.; Conticello, pls. 30–2; Magi, op. cit., pls. 5, 1 and 24, 2); alternatively, a medium claw may be used, again with a dowel (Säflund, op. cit., fig. 44; Magi, op. cit., pl. 32, 3) or alone if the surface is not a joining one and out of sight (Conticello, fig. 25; Magi, op. cit., pl. 33, 3). Hair is often vague and impressionistic, with raw drill-holes left in the centres of curls in places and 'Verbindungsstege' remaining between them (Pl. IX, 2; Conticello, pl. 15; Magi, op. cit., pls. 2 and 5, 1; cf. Pl. XI, 2 for the 'Stege' between Polyphemus's toes). Parallels for certain of these techniques, on the whole rather facile and slapdash, may be found occasionally at Rhodes (cf. Merker, op. cit., figs. 8–10, 33 and 74 and e.g. Pl. IX, 3 (the fingers); Säflund, op. cit., figs. 39, 44; Conticello, fig. 25).

⁴ Conticello, 40, 43, 49.

fecere summi artifices Agesander et Polydorus et Athenodorus Rhodii',⁵ stylistic comparison shows that not only were two or three of the Sperlonga sculptors responsible for the carving of the Vatican group, but that their work was as uneven there as it was at the grotto.⁶ Whenever they are to be dated, then, the four Odysseus groups and the Laokoon may not be separated by more than a few years.

In this regard, a *terminus ante quem* of a kind is provided by the known architectural history of the grotto, which shows that the installation of the sculptures took place at some time during the first century of the empire. While the villa itself, some way up the hill, is apparently late Republican, from the character of its reticulate work the architecture of the grotto (its round and rectangular pools and the *triclinium* facing into the cave) is generally held to be early Augustan.⁷ Improvements seem to have been made either late in Augustus's reign or in Tiberius's, when the façade was revetted in regular fashion with the tufa *tesserae* typical of the period, the interior was lined with stucco bearing frescoed seascape motifs, and—most importantly—the floor of the circular basin was paved with polychrome marble slabs.⁸ Finally, under Nero or Vespasian, came a last elaboration of the small oval grotto immediately adjoining to the north, together with the incrustation of the walls and podium of the inner part of the main part of the grotto with the stucco, pumice and seashell decoration popular in late Julio-Claudian and Flavian times.⁹ The installation of the groups therefore cannot be earlier than c. 30 B.C., is most likely in the late Augustan or Tiberian era (for it would be very inconvenient to lay the floor around and perhaps even under them),¹⁰ and possible even as late as Nero and Vespasian. As an extreme lower date for the Sperlonga material, this last period coincides with that established independently for the Laokoon by the publication of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* in A.D. 77.¹¹

Perhaps not surprisingly, these findings mark the limits of agreement. It is a measure of our ignorance of the course of Greek sculpture after the classical period that no unanimity exists as to whether the groups are Hellenistic or Roman in date (opinions cover the full range of nearly three hundred years available, from c. 200 B.C. to the late first century A.D.),¹² or whether they were designed and carved for the grotto and 'domus Titi imperatoris' or acquired elsewhere and transported there; *pari passu*, a further argument rages as to whether they are Greek originals, Roman copies, or a mixture of the two, or even whether categories like these have any real meaning when applied to sculpture of this kind.

Whatever the correct solutions to these problems may be, we only know for sure that the work of the three Rhodians caught the interest of a wealthy Roman (or Romans) of the early empire, of the emperor Titus, and perhaps also of the emperor Tiberius, whose visit to the grotto at Sperlonga (and narrow escape from death when the roof of the cave suffered a partial collapse while he was dining there) is securely documented for A.D. 26.¹³ It is a sobering thought that, were it not for the two short passages in Tacitus and Suetonius which mention the incident, much of the value of the groups as a side-light on Roman culture of

⁵ Pliny, *NH* xxxvi. 37; the inscription on the Scylla group reads 'Ἀθαν[ά]δωρος Ἀγησάνδρ[ο]ν καὶ Ἀγησάνδρ[ο]ν Πά[ρ]ωνίου κ[αὶ] Π[ο]λύδωρος Πολλυ[δ]ώρου Ῥόδι[ο]ν ἐποίησ[α]ν'. That the sculptors of the Vatican and Sperlonga groups are identical is now universally admitted: cf., e.g., Conticello, 43, 48. I do not propose to discuss the various genealogies of the three reconstructed by, e.g., G. Iacopi, *ArchClass* x (1958), 160–3, Säflund, op. cit., 73, and F. Coarelli, *Dialoghi di Archeologia* vii (1973), 97 f., since the possible permutations are virtually infinite.

⁶ P. H. von Blanckenhagen, 'Laokoon, Sperlonga and Vergil', *AA* 1969, 256–75; Conticello, 42–5, 49.

⁷ *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica* s.v. 'Sperlonga', 440; Conticello, 40–1; E. Salza Prina Ricotti, *RPAA* xlii (1969–70), 117–34; for the dates see Rakob in *AA* (1969), 275, n. 53; Säflund, op. cit., 98. For the reticulate work compare, e.g., the villa at Prima Porta: M. E. Blake, *Ancient Roman Construction in Italy I: the prehistoric period to Augustus* (1947), 272 and pl. 50, 3; cf. G. Iacopi, *L'Antro di Tiberio a Sperlonga* (1963), figs. 4, 9, 17; Salza Prina Ricotti, op. cit., fig. 1.

⁸ Säflund, loc. cit. (n. 3).

⁹ *ibid.*; cf. H. Lavagne, *MEFR* lii (1970), 673.

¹⁰ An inspection of the site proved inconclusive on this point.

¹¹ In *NH*, *Praef.* 3, Titus is described as 'sexies consul', which fixes the date of publication exactly—though of course some books may have been written considerably earlier. On the findspot of the Laokoon see below, n. 63.

¹² For example: G. M. A. Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*⁴ (1970), 238–9 (c. 175–150 B.C.); H. Lauter, *RM* lxxvi (1969), 162–73 (c. 125 B.C.); Conticello, op. cit. (n. 1), (c. 100 B.C.); A. W. Lawrence, *Greek and Roman Sculpture* (1972), 249–50 (c. 60–c. 22 B.C.); Andreae, op. cit. (n. 1), 104–5 (c. A.D. 10–26); Säflund, op. cit. (n. 3), 97–8 (c. A.D. 14–70, but copies of originals of the third and second centuries B.C.); A. Geyer, 'Nero and Laokoon', *AA* (1975), 265–75 (A.D. 64–8); R. Hampe *Sperlonga und Vergil* (1972), 58–63 (c. A.D. 70–90).

¹³ Suet., *Tib.* 39; Tac., *Ann.* iv. 59.

the early first century A.D. might have been lost beyond hope of recovery—for, as will I hope become apparent, it is Tiberius's character, career and tastes that seem to offer the best clues to the complex enigma surrounding the presence of the work of Hagesandros, Athanodoros and Polydoros at Sperlonga and Rome. Since at first sight this must seem a somewhat extravagant claim, perhaps the best way to support it is to work from both ends towards the middle, first discussing the programme of the sculptures in the grotto, their relationship in general terms to what we know of the culture of the early empire and their possible sources of inspiration, and then turning to Tiberius and his tastes in art, literature and prandial entertainment in particular, for the key to unlock the mystery of their meaning and purpose.

At Sperlonga, as far as one can tell, the intention was to show Odysseus in situations that would reveal the many different sides of his character: his *pietas* towards Achilles, his *dolus* towards Diomedes, his *virtus* in the fight with Scylla, and his *calliditas* in the blinding of Polyphemus.¹⁴ This goes beyond Homer, who only treated two of these four scenes in his poem; the rescue of Achilles' body is first heard of in Sophocles (perhaps drawing on the *Little Iliad* as a source),¹⁵ and the attempt to kill Diomedes in Aristophanes.¹⁶ All in all, the synthesis looks to be literary and Alexandrian, with its exaggeration of the hero's chameleon-like personality and its emphasis, over and above what is in Homer, upon the two extremes of his character—his courage and his perfidy.¹⁷ The possibility of a Stoic interpretation must be discarded, for although Odysseus was the darling of the Stoics from Zeno on, they seem studiously to have avoided the extra twist given to the Palladion story: treachery and attempted murder of one's friends were not Stoic virtues.¹⁸

The view of Odysseus' character presented here is a fairly extreme one, and the choice of situations to emphasize the contradictions in his personality is skilful. Skilful, too, is the way in which the settings of the four groups were used to enhance the drama of the scenes and the contrasts in the hero's character that they reveal (Pl. XII, 1). Seen from the triclinium, the two groups to the left (Achilles and Scylla) stressed his valour, and the two to the right (Diomedes and Polyphemus) his deviousness. Of these, the most straightforward examples, his courageous rescue of the body of Achilles and his perfidious behaviour towards Diomedes, were placed directly opposite one another in the foreground. Each group was also positioned in the cave in a location appropriate to where the action it depicted originally occurred: the two scenes on the plain before Troy on the flat incurving rim of the basin at the front, the Scylla group in the centre of the pool, and the blinding of Polyphemus in the gloom of the small cavern at the rear—eerily illuminated, we may imagine, by the flickering light of torches on feast-nights.

This is sculpture at its most sophisticated, a *tour de force* commissioned or procured for the mansion of a connoisseur and as such, one may assume, an object lesson in the tastes of at least one member of the early imperial élite. But how far were these personal predilections typical? In the context of a discussion of the Sperlonga grotto as a cultural phenomenon, to raise this question now is not irrelevant; when the point at issue is an attempt to specify its owner, any answers obtained may later be profitable.

Grottoes, either with or without sculptural decoration, were a feature of the landscape gardens of the rich from at least the last years of the Republic: Lucullus's estate near Naples included 'hills suspended over vast caverns',¹⁹ and, in a striking passage of his *Civil Wars*, Appian recounts the murder of a wealthy Roman for his grotto by the sea-shore, in the proscription of 43.²⁰ Both this and Strabo's account of the coastline between Terracina and Caeta

¹⁴ Conticello, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 36, n. 52; cf. Andreae, *ibid.* 92-3 on the Odysseus-Achilles group.

¹⁵ *Philoctetes* 372-3, expanded by Ov., *Met.* XIII. 282-5.

¹⁶ Reference to Διομήδεις ἀνάγκη in *Eccl.* 1029; cf. Plat., *Rep.* 493D, and for the full story, Serv. II. 166. W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme* (1954), 258, n. 12 shows, against O. Jahn, *Philologus* I (1896), 47, that the treachery story is unlikely to have originated in the *Little Iliad*.

¹⁷ cf. Stanford, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 120-1, and 98-9 on πολύτροπος.

¹⁸ On Odysseus and the Stoics see *ibid.* 121-5; such an interpretation is suggested by Andreae, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 105; his other (contradictory?) suggestion (*ibid.* 93, 102-3) that the Achilles and Palladion groups could be Ovidian in spirit is, however, attractive—though, like *Met.* XIII. 282-5 (Achilles), lines 337-53 could, of course, well be derivative.

¹⁹ Plut., *Luc.* 39.

²⁰ IV. 4. 29; cf. Säf Lund, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 79 for the suggestion that Appian could be talking of the grotto at Sperlonga.

(ἀνέωγέ τ' ἐνταῦθα σπήλαια ὑπερμεγέθη, κατοικίας μεγάλας καὶ πολυτελεῖς δεδεγμένα)²¹ show how popular this kind of amenity had become by the end of the first century B.C. To judge by plentiful references in the Augustan poets and representations such as that in the cubiculum at Boscoreale,²² the prevailing mood was basically idyllic, the grottoes haunts of rustic deities such as Bacchus, Pan and Priapus:²³

Sunt topia et kelebes, cyathi, rosa, tibia, chordae,
Et tricia umbrosis frigida harundinibus.
En et, Maenalio quae garrat dulce sub anatro,
Rustica pastoris fistula more sonat.

The ancestors of such grottoes are late classical and Hellenistic, the caves that appear on fourth-century Athenian reliefs to Pan and the Nymphs,²⁴ those that feature prominently in the idylls and epigrams of Theocritus,²⁵ and artificial examples such as that of Ptolemy Philadelphus, carried in his *pompe* of 271/0 B.C.²⁶ That the Sperlonga grotto was originally of this kind may be assumed from the character of the remainder of the sculptures found there, which presumably preceded the introduction of the Odysseus cycle: a statue of a girl (a priestess?), herms of Dionysos and satyr, *putti* (one with a comic mask), and a relief of Venus Genetrix and Amor.²⁷

Ut pictura poiesis: the role of artists and poets in shaping a society's attitude to its surroundings is too well-known to need emphasis here.²⁸ In Roman literature, it was Vergil and especially Ovid who first recognized the dramatic possibilities of water-filled caves and grottoes. Vergil's underworld is a vast cave: 'spelunca alta fuit vastoque immanis hiatu, / scrupea, tuta lacu nigro nemorumque tenebris';²⁹ for contrast, there are the strange and beautiful grottoes of Cyrene,³⁰ the enormous, eerie cavern at Cumae: 'quo lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum, / unde ruunt totidem voces, responsa Sibyllae',³¹ and finally the storm-swept cave of the Nymphs near Dido's Carthage.³² The atmosphere of these caves and grottoes betrays little or nothing of poetic artifice: they evoke feelings and associations which heighten and amplify the narrative, but exist in their own right and are solidly real.

Ovid's caves, on the other hand, are ambiguous, poetic constructs which hover between fantasy and reality. As the poet himself explicitly tells us twice in the *Metamorphoses*, they are simply too good to be true:

... est antrum nemorale recessu
arte laboratum nulla: simulaverat artem
ingenio natura suo; nam pumice vivo
et levibus tofis nativum duxerat arcum;
fons sonat a dextra tenui perlucidus unda,
margine gramineo patulos succinctus hiatus.³³

and:

Myrtea silva subest bicoloribus obsita bacis
et specus in medio, natura factus an arte,
ambiguum, magis arte tamen, quo saepe venire
frenato delphine sedens, Theti, nuda solebas.³⁴

²¹ v. 233: 'There are grottoes of immense size here, occupied by large and costly residences.'

²² *Encyclopedia of World Art* VIII, pl. 424b; *Encyclopedia dell'Arte Antica* II, 144 (bibliography), v fig. 1000; E. Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen* (1923), fig. 707; A. Rumpf, *Malerei und Zeichnung* (1953), pl. 54, 5; 57, 11.

²³ Verg., *Cop.* 7-10; cf. *Cul.* 78; *Ecl.* vi passim; *Geor.* II. 469; *Prop.* II. 32. 39; *Hor.* C. I. 5. 3. etc.

²⁴ J. N. Svoronos, *Das Athener Nationalmuseum* (1908), pls. 73, 137 etc.; N. Himmelmann-Wildschutz, *Θεσληπτος* (1957), passim; R. Feubel, *Die attischen Nymphenreliefs* (Diss. Heidelberg, 1935); for short discussions cf. C. M. Dawson, 'Romano-Campanian Landscape Painting', *YCS* IX (1944), 25, 40, 45; T. B. L. Webster, *Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (1964), 161-5.

²⁵ cf. e.g. *Idylls* III and VII; see esp. G. Luck, 'The Cave and the Source', *CQ* LI n. s. VII (1957), 175-9 for the special meaning of such caves for poets.

²⁶ Callixeinus ap. *Ath.* 200 c; cf. 148b on Mark Antony's theatre-grotto at Athens.

²⁷ Iacopi, op. cit. (n. 7), 109-41, figs. 104-8, 112-13, 118-21, 127-37; cf. also Säflund, op. cit. (n. 3), 78-84.

²⁸ See esp. E. H. Gombrich, 'The Renaissance theory of art and the rise of landscape', in *Norm and Form* (1966), 107-21.

²⁹ *Aen.* VI. 237-8.

³⁰ *Geor.* IV. 360-85.

³¹ *Aen.* VI. 43-4.

³² *ibid.* IV. 160-8.

³³ III. 157-62.

³⁴ XI. 234-7.

Yet the calm is deceptive: in both cases, violence swiftly ensues. Thetis is raped by Peleus, Actaeon torn to death by his own hounds. 'Ovid has, in fact, deliberately cultivated a specious pastorality in order to set off the more sharply the violence which exists as a fundamental part of the world he depicts.'³⁵ It is these highly contrived settings, their outward peacefulness vividly and pointedly contrasted with the scenes of brutality they all too often witness, that seem to me to give the first real indications in Roman literature that the Romans were alive to the dramatic possibilities offered by a water-filled grotto such as that at Sperlonga.

Parallels in the representational arts for the use of a cave as a backdrop for drama and violence of this kind are few. In fact, the only ones known to me are the series of Third-Style pictures from Pompeii and Herculaneum that depict the punishment of Dirce. On one of these, now destroyed but known from a nineteenth-century drawing (Pl. XII, 2),³⁶ the action takes place wholly inside a cave, with a pool in the foreground, on the banks of which two duels are taking place, while the main group is placed a little further back, in the centre of the picture. Dawson and others have made the plausible suggestion that the setting could reproduce some form of theatrical scenery, though in the circumstances a reminiscence of some kind of grotto like that at Sperlonga elsewhere in Campania seems not to be beyond the bounds of possibility.³⁷

By Neronian and Flavian times, as the use of caves as evocative settings in literature developed into something of a commonplace, their connotations accordingly seem to have grown more conventional and stereotyped. Two types are popular: the Stygian, haunt of monsters and mantics, and scene of horrifying and disgusting rites,³⁸ and the bucolic, playground of dalliance and love.³⁹ Grotto-*triclinia* become increasingly fashionable: examples are known from Pompeii, Stabiae, Sorrento and Rome itself.⁴⁰ That at Sperlonga is the earliest-known to date, though, if Varro's remark on the subject is accurate, Lucullus seems to have incorporated a *triclinium* into the aviary complex (built and decorated, apparently, as an artificial grotto) installed in his villa in Campania, probably after his retirement in 59 B.C.⁴¹ Of these complexes, the closest to that at Sperlonga is undoubtedly that at Domitian's villa at Castelgandolfo, itself furnished with a Scylla and a rather rustic Polyphemus.⁴² It is noteworthy, however, that in no case are the sculptural groups discovered in such grottoes comparable in size, scope, or dramatic power with those of the three Rhodians at Sperlonga.⁴³

Regarding the sculptures themselves, their arrangement and their relation to the landscape setting in which they were placed (Pl. XII, 1), it is remarkable just how *unrealistic* to modern eyes the whole ensemble appears to be: to quote out of context a remark by von Blanckenhagen, 'a curious combination of rich and exact realism in detail and complete lack of realism in composition'.⁴⁴ The key to the paradox is that narrative in sculpture can only be realistic in a continuous frieze—for, at Sperlonga (where the groups are not even arranged in chronological order), the spectator takes in all four at once and from a single viewpoint, and can no longer equate his progression through space with the progressive changes in place and time demanded by the action. From this point of view the grotto and its sculptures must be considered alongside a class of Roman monuments that are in many

³⁵ C. P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (*Hermes*, Einzelschr. xxiii 1969), 82 (though I do not believe the deeper symbolism alleged by Segal; an ironic reversal of the pathetic fallacy, beloved among other more recent writers by Hardy, seems perfectly adequate as an explanation to me. Cf. also L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (1955), 172-86).

³⁶ Dawson, op. cit. (n. 24), 94, no. 31 and pl. 11.

³⁷ *ibid.* 162-3; W. J. T. Peters, *Landscape in Romano-Campanian Mural Painting* (1963), 90.

³⁸ cf. Luc. vi. 90-2: . . . 'Tali spiramine Nesis/emittit Stygium nebulosis aera saxis/antraque letiferi rabiem Typhonis anhelant'; *ibid.* 642-830, on Erichtho's cavern in Thessaly.

³⁹ Mart. iv. 57. 1-2: 'Dum nos blanda tenent lasciu stagna Lucrini/et quae pumiceis fontibus antra calent'; also vii. 50 and, e.g., Vatia's two grottoes in her villa near Cumae, mentioned in Sen. *Ep.* 55. 6.

⁴⁰ F. Rakob, 'Ein Grottentriklinium in Pompeii', *RM* LXXI (1964), 182-94, and esp. fig. 9.

⁴¹ *RR* III. 4. 3; cf. the conjectural plan and reconstruction of Varro's own aviary (described in *RR* III. 5. 8-18) published by C. desANGES and G. Seure, *Revue de Philologie* III (1932), 241, whence B. Tilly, *Varro the Farmer* (1973), 113 and 115.

⁴² A. Balland, 'Une transposition de la grotte de Tibère à Sperlonga: le Ninfeo Bergantino de Castelgandolfo', *MEFRA* LXXIX (1967), 421-502; for the sculptures, cf. Richter, op. cit. (n. 12), fig. 842; Säflund, op. cit. (n. 3), 100; Andreae, op. cit. (n. 1), 74-81 and figs. 16-20.

⁴³ *idem.*, loc. cit.

⁴⁴ *AJA* LXI (1957), 81; the context is that of a discussion of the basic differences between the Greek and Roman narrative traditions, published just before the discovery of the Sperlonga sculptures.

ways analogous: the mythological landscape panels from Pompeii and elsewhere that conflate two or three episodes from the same story and unify them by a single landscape background and within a single frame (cf. Pl. XII, 2).⁴⁵

With these, the Sperlonga sculptures have in common their uniform background and 'frame' (the cave), and the fact that they, too, were designed to be seen from a single viewpoint (Pl. XII, 1). Although, as has been mentioned, the setting of each of Odysseus's adventures is indicated by the position of the groups in the cave and by their immediate surroundings, all form part of a single 'picture' with the cave itself as the unifying factor. Compare, for instance, the way in which the story of Marsyas is depicted in three separate scenes within a single yet appropriately varied landscape setting on a Third Style mural from Pompeii.⁴⁶ Close parallels for this employment of the continuous narrative technique may be found in the descriptions of works of art that became popular in Roman literature towards the end of the first century B.C., though it is often unclear whether the poet has a frieze or single panel-painting in mind. Such is the case, for instance, with Vergil's description of four scenes from the life of Romulus as depicted on the shield of Aeneas.⁴⁷ Where the narrative panel-pictures and sculptures from Sperlonga diverge is in the vast scope of the action in the latter, covering as it does many years and a geographical area ranging from Troy to Sicily and Italy, and in its meticulously planned programme and learned exposition of the character of the hero.⁴⁸

Finally, style and choice of subject-matter; here the point at issue has been concisely put by Lawrence, who remarks that 'it may seem strange that the sculpture of horrors should flourish contemporaneously with Neo-Attic and other archaistic prettiness'⁴⁹—and, he might have added, imperial classicism as well. Yet, as Fuhrmann has recently reminded us, horror as a literary device is a very old component of Latin epic and other heroic poetry.⁵⁰ In Republican literature, as far as can be judged from the meagre remains, its function seems to be simply to colour the narrative, often in rather naive fashion.⁵¹ In Vergil and his contemporaries, it is usually played down, and in any case employed only as an integral part of the plot, to make a moral point or, by its very unexpectedness, to prepare for or to heighten a catastrophe.⁵² It is not till the first century A.D. that it comes into its own, largely owing, it seems, to the disregard of Augustan convention in this respect so openly displayed by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*; thereafter as an integral, and often very considerable, part of the narrative its employment is virtually obligatory, though the purpose of such 'Schreckensbilder' varies with the writer in question.⁵³ Descriptions of violent death become more grisly, more anatomical and more extended, as for instance with the flaying of Marsyas:

Clamanti cutis est summos direpta per artus,
nec quicquam nisi vulnus erat; cruor undique manat,
detcetique patent nervi, trepidaeque sine ulla
pelle micant venae; salientia viscera possis
et perlucetes numerare in pectore fibras.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ See esp. Dawson, op. cit. (n. 24), passim; von Blanckenhagen, *The Paintings from Boscotrecase (RM Supp. VI, 1962)*, 46–51. In the myth Lycus (if he is the figure sprawled in the foreground) was killed after Dirce.

⁴⁶ Reg. v, Ins. 2, house 10; Dawson, op. cit. (n. 24), 90, 197 and pl. 8, 23; Peters, op. cit. (n. 37), 83 and fig. 69; von Blanckenhagen, op. cit. (n. 44), 82 and fig. 12.

⁴⁷ *Aen.* VIII. 630–41.

⁴⁸ The literary examples of the genre seem to be the only parallels here; for other examples see *Aen.* I. 466–93; VI. 20–33 and e.g. Ov., *Met.* VI. 103–14; V. Buchheit, *Vergil über die Sendung Roms* (1963); R. D. Williams, 'The pictures on Dido's Temple', *CQ* X (1960), 145–51.

⁴⁹ op. cit. (n. 12), 251.

⁵⁰ M. Fuhrmann, 'Die Funktion grausiger und ekelhafter Motive in der lateinischen Dichtung', *Die nicht mehr schönen Künste* (ed. H. R. Jauss, 1968), 23–66.

⁵¹ *ibid.* 33–7: cf. Lucr. v. 1308–49 on the employment of animals in war, and *idem* VI. 1114–1286 on the plague at Athens; also, e.g., Vergil's description of Scylla in *Ecl.* VI. 74–6.

⁵² Fuhrmann, op. cit. (n. 50), 37–41; cf. *Aen.* II. 199–233 (Laokoon); see esp. H. Kleinknecht, 'Laokoon', *Hermes* LXXIX (1944), 66–111; III. 22–33 f. (Polydorus); VII. 323–58 f. (Allecto).

⁵³ Fuhrmann, op. cit. (n. 50), 41–57.

⁵⁴ *Met.* VI. 387–91. For other gruesome death scenes, cf. *ibid.* III. 708–33 (Pentheus); V. 99–106 (Emathion); VI. 601–74 (Itys); IX. 159–210 (Herakles); XII. 210–535 (the Centaurs); XIII. 545–64 (Polymestor). For monsters, see IV. 481–96 (Tisiphone); V. 346–58 (Typhoeus); XIV. 51–67 (Scylla); 165–220 (the blinded Polyphemus); and for luridly described personifications, VII. 768–82 (Envy); VIII. 796–808 (Famine). See, in general, Wilkinson, op. cit. (n. 35), 162–8.

To turn to Silver Latin, it would be tedious to list the enormous number of detailed descriptions of the macabre, the horrific and the disgusting, some of them extending over more than two hundred lines, that occupy so much of the works of Seneca and Lucan. After this, it is hardly surprising that in Flavian epic poetry the interest in *horrenda* slackens noticeably; wounds and corpses are often only cursorily described, the focus shifting instead to demons and the intervention of the supernatural in the affairs of men.⁵⁵

It would, of course, be vain to attempt to guess a date for the groups on evidence such as this: as Lessing pointed out more than two centuries ago, the limits of art and poetry are different,⁵⁶ which makes comparisons at this level awkward, if not impossible. One can only say, and that no more than hesitantly, that whereas on archaeological grounds the groups could have been installed in the cave at any time between c. 30 B.C. and c. A.D. 80, the degree of horror attained would perhaps not have been acceptable to educated Roman taste until after the reign of Augustus. I doubt whether Augustan sensibility, prepared as it was to countenance Laokoon, Polydorus and Allecto as integral parts of the plot in the more diffuse medium of poetry, would have extended the same tolerance to Laokoon and Scylla in sculpture.

Briefly to sum up, then, the setting, arrangement, style and subject-matter of the groups seem to correspond with what one might expect for grandiose mythological compositions of the Julio-Claudian era (more precisely of the reigns of Tiberius, Gaius and Claudius), though, as a personal idiosyncrasy of the owner of the grotto, the combination of bookishness and horror in what is, after all, dining-room decoration, is worth bearing in mind.

To turn, briefly, from the cultural background in general to the possibility of more specific sources of inspiration for the sculptures, the suggestion has been made that they may be dependent upon the treatment of their themes in Augustan poetry.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, attractive as this proposal (with its implications of a firm *terminus post quem*) might seem, it is by itself unprovable, since not only is there some indication that Vergil at least made extensive use of the Alexandrian poet Euphorion's account for his Laokoon episode⁵⁸ (of which more later); but here, in the only case where the literature is detailed enough apparently to be decisive on the question of a literary prototype (both poets added Laokoon's elder son to the victims of the snakes), the sculpture does not exactly tally with Vergil's description of the scene, where the two sons are portrayed as already bitten and in the throes of death *before* Laokoon himself arrives to help.⁵⁹ Vergil's point was not taken by Hagesandros and his companions, whose elder son is still very much alive, perhaps, in fact, escaping.⁶⁰ The range of possibilities thus passes beyond control, for now not only is there no conclusive reason to assume that the sculptors were interested in following any single one of the various versions of the story with fidelity (perhaps rather the contrary), but even if they were, it could easily have been Arktinos's, where one son got away.⁶¹ Alternatively, and for all one can tell, Vergil's account *could* even have been a reminiscence, suitably re-cast, of the sculpture (or its models), not vice-versa: the argument is open-ended. Similar objections, together with a few others, apply to Geyer's recent and more speculative attempt to establish a connection between the Laokoon and Nero's own epic, the *Troica*.⁶² In this case, suffice it to say that the only direct link between the emperor and the sculpture, the

⁵⁵ Fuhrmann, op. cit. (n. 50), 58-65.

⁵⁶ *Laocoon* (1766), 3-4, 24-5.

⁵⁷ Von Blanckenhagen, op. cit. (n. 6), 257-63; Andrae, op. cit. (n. 1), 93, 102 and 104, following Lessing, 4-5; the passages in question are *Aen.* II, 212-22 (Laokoon); *Ov., Met.* XIII, 282-5 (Achilles), 337-53 (Palladion); cf. n. 18, above

⁵⁸ *Serv.* II, 201.

⁵⁹ *Aen.* II, 212-17.

⁶⁰ Magi, op. cit. (n. 3), 31; M. Bieber, *AA* LXVI (1962), 105; H. Sichtermann, *Laokoon* (*Opus Nobile* III, 1957), 8; von Blanckenhagen, op. cit. (n. 6), 261 n. 14; Conticello, op. cit. (n. 1), 48, n. 99.

A further complicating factor is the scarab in the British Museum, which shows that both sons appeared in the composition with their father as early as the fourth century B.C. (A. Furtwängler, *Die Antiken Gemmen* I (1900), pl. 64 no. 30; III, 205; Richter, *The Engraved Gems of the Greeks and Etruscans* (1968), 208, no. 851).

⁶¹ Δύο δράκοντες ἐπιφανέντες τὸν τε Λαοκόωντα καὶ τὸν ἕτερον τῶν παίδων διαφθέρουσιν (ed. Kinkel, *Epica Graeca Fragmenta* (1877), 49); cf. Conticello, loc. cit.

⁶² op. cit. (n. 12).

supposed find-spot of the latter in room 80 of the Domus Aurea, has long been known to be false,⁶³ the poem itself is lost, and the only fragments attributable to it are disputed.⁶⁴

Among the various possibilities of this kind available, one that does not seem to have received its due is the chance that, whenever they may have been carved, the Sperlonga sculptures were erected in the grotto at the behest of the emperor Tiberius himself, between the first of his extended holidays in Campania in A.D. 21 and the rock-fall of 26.⁶⁵ The evidence is mostly circumstantial, but suggestive nevertheless.

First, there is the coincidence of names, whereby the ancient 'Spelunca' has been preserved in the modern 'Sperlonga', and long-established local tradition asserts that the cave is indeed 'l'antro di Tiberio', where the emperor so nearly met his death in 26. To this, tenuous as it may be, one may add a clue from Suetonius, who describes the villa in the grounds of which the accident occurred as a *praetorium*: the word occurs five times more in the *Lives* and never means anything other than an imperial residence.⁶⁶ The accident occurred while Tiberius was dining, as both our authorities tell us; when this is combined with the undoubted fact that the *triclinium* faces into the cave, and that it was from here and nowhere else that the groups were intended to be seen (Pl. XII, 1), the inference that the whole complex of sculptures was placed there for the pleasure—and at the behest—of the emperor is difficult to avoid. As outlined above, the known architectural history of the grotto would not conflict with this conclusion, and to some extent supports it.

Secondly, certain parallels are available from just before and during Tiberius's reign for the style and the tastes it catered for. On the lower frieze of the Gemma Augustea, the seated barbarian on the left seems close, in the undercutting of his features and the wildness of his face and hair, to the Odysseus from the Polyphemus group (Pl. XI, 3); and the Neptune at top right is also comparable.⁶⁷ A similar penchant for baroque fury and brutality recurs on the attic frieze of Tiberius's own arch at Orange, where the battle between Romans and Gauls is waged pitilessly and no horror is omitted: faces are contorted with hate and one fallen Gaul even clutches futilely at his stomach while his entrails spill out over the ground.⁶⁸ Undated works in Italy close to the style of the three sculptors are the Gaul from Ostia,⁶⁹ which strongly recalls the Diomedes from the Palladion group (Pl. IX, 2) in both modelling and surface treatment, and the colossal Herakles Epitrapezios found in 1960 in a temple of the early first century A.D. at Alba Fucens.⁷⁰ As for the relatively high quality of much of the work of Hagesandros and his companions, and its complete divergence in style from the official sculpture of the time, these involve no problem. For the former we have evidence of the Ara Pacis and several of the portraits of Augustus to show that, at the emperor's command, sculpture of the highest standards could be produced in Italy in the early empire,⁷¹ and for the latter the simultaneous flourishing of utterly different styles has long been an accepted feature of Roman sculpture and, indeed, Roman art in general.

Following the connection with Tiberius a little further, it is fortunate that, thanks to Suetonius, Pliny and others, we are remarkably well informed upon his interest in art and literature, and also upon his dining habits. These were idiosyncratic, markedly different

⁶³ See C. C. van Essen, *Mededelingen Ned. Akad. XVIII* (1955), 12, 291–308.

⁶⁴ On Nero and the fall of Troy see Dio LXII. 18; Suet., *Nero* 38; Tac., *Ann.* xv. 39; Geyer, op. cit. (n. 12), 270–5; to connect the Sperlonga sculptures with the epic would be even more difficult, for from Serv. v. 370 we learn that its hero was most probably Paris, not Odysseus (cf. M. P. Charlesworth, *JRS* XL (1950), 70). I thank Dr. D. A. Little for his patient help in an unfamiliar field.

⁶⁵ The chronology is Tacitus's: Tiberius stayed in Campania for most of 21 (*Ann.* III. 31, 47); his last visit in 26 is documented in iv. 57 f.; for other trips between these two dates cf. Suet., *Tib.* 39–40; Sen., *Ep.* 83. 14.

⁶⁶ *Aug.* 24. 2 (Augustus's tent); 72. 3 (a royal residence in the country; note here Augustus's dislike of 'ampla et operosa praetoria'); *Calig.* 37. 2; *Vit.* 8. 2 (the emperor's rooms); *Tib.* 8. 4 (a royal residence).

⁶⁷ Best photograph: G. Becatti, *The Art of*

Ancient Greece and Rome (1968), fig. 284; for the date (c. A.D. 12) and bibliography see Richter, *Engraved Gems of the Romans* (1971), 104, no. 501.

⁶⁸ R. Ami, P.-M. Duval and others, 'L'arc d'Orange', *Gallia* suppl. xv (1962), 113–14, 130–5 and pls. 11 (fig. 80), 28, 68, 93–9.

⁶⁹ W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*⁴ IV (ed. H. Speier, 1972), no. 3033; Becatti, op. cit., fig. 243.

⁷⁰ F. de Visscher, 'Héraklès Epitrapezios', *L'antiquité classique* xxx (1961), 67–129 and pls. 4–10. Apart from the very characteristic modelling of hair, hands and legs, note the technique of adding the left foot separately, with a round dowel and *Ansatz* cut with long strokes of a medium point; cf., e.g., Merker, op. cit. (n. 2), fig. 11.

⁷¹ For an example of a slightly earlier Roman copy of about the same quality in painting, see the Odysseus landscapes in the Vatican, sections 2–5; von Blanckenhagen, *RM* LXX (1963), 100–46 and esp. 110–14.

from those of his predecessor and, for us, instructive: for one thing, they seem to have been the only pleasures he was prepared to spend money on.⁷² His standing as a gourmet is amply attested: Suetonius recounts some notable banquets of his, one lasting for two days and a night, an event further authenticated by Pliny, who supplies a number of details.⁷³ We are told that, among other delicacies, he was fond of mullet⁷⁴ (the *triclinium* at Sperlonga, incidentally, was equipped with its own fish-farm, complete with tanks and breeding-holes, of the type celebrated by Pliny in his descriptions of the amenities of the emperor's villas in Campania),⁷⁵ also pears, cucumber, skirret and asparagus (of which he discovered a new variety),⁷⁶ and is reported to have taken up cudgels with no less an authority than Apicius over whether or not sprout cabbage was fit for the table.⁷⁷ He also made several contributions to the science of viticulture, and was not backward in giving his opinions on the subject of wine-tasting.⁷⁸

In the arts, not for him the Roman classicism of Augustus; instead he was a philhellene, a connoisseur of the late fourth century and the Hellenistic, with a special care for the sculpture of Lysippos and paintings ranging from the mildly erotic to the frankly pornographic. Falling in love with the Apoxyomenos, he appropriated it for his own bedroom until forced by the public outcry that ensued to return it to the Baths of Agrippa;⁷⁹ similarly favoured was Parrhasios's painting of a High Priest of Cybele (archigallus), valued at six million sesterces, and on Capri a picture by the same artist of Atlante and Meleager in the act of fellatio.⁸⁰ In sculpture, his earliest recorded purchase was a statue of Hestia which he compelled the Parians to sell him in 6 B.C.;⁸¹ after his accession, he acquired the 'colossal and beautiful' statue of Apollo Temenites from Syracuse for the temple of Augustus,⁸² which, as Pliny tells us, he then proceeded to fit out as an art gallery, dedicating there his predecessor's favourite picture, a Hyacinthus by Nikias, together with a Danae.⁸³ Fortunately Martial has left us a fuller account of the collection, where one finds a similar range of tastes (as well as the Hyacinthus and Danae, works on show in this vein included an Apollo Sauroktonos, Strongylion's statuette of a 'leisurely' boy, a marble Hermaphroditus, a painting of Europa and a contorted and brutal mask of a German, and a Herakliskos struggling with two snakes.⁸⁵ Interestingly in this context, Suetonius tells us that Tiberius was particularly fond of a 'serpent dragon' that he kept as a pet.⁸⁶ Finally, there is the evidence from Capri: the famous 'Blue Grotto', with its sea-thiasos involving Poseidon, Tritons and presumably Nereids as well, all part of a sumptuous decorative composition in developed Hellenistic style, rising from the waters of the pool and set against the walls of the cave.⁸⁷ In the words of Suetonius: 'he furthermore devised little nooks of lechery in the woods and glades of the island, and had boys and girls dressed up as Pans and nymphs posted in front of caverns or grottoes.'⁸⁸

⁷² Though his stinginess manifested itself even here: as Suet., *Tib.* 34 tells us, leftovers were a common sight on the tables of the Domus Tiberiana. On the character of Tiberius, see esp. the penetrating essay by Syme, *Historia* xxiii (1974), 481-96.

⁷³ Suet., *Tib.* 42; Plin., *NH* xiv. 144-5.

⁷⁴ Suet., *Tib.* 34, 60.

⁷⁵ Iacopi, op. cit. (n. 7), 22-4 and figs. 4, 11-12, 17; Pliny, *NH* ix. 167; cf. x. 193; xxxii. 16.

⁷⁶ Pliny, *NH* xv. 54; xix. 64, 90, 145.

⁷⁷ *ibid.* xix. 137.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* xiv. 16, 64, 144; cf. Suet., *Tib.* 42.

⁷⁹ Pliny, *NH* xxxiv. 62.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* xxv. 70; Suet., *Tib.* 44; cf. *ibid.* 43 on the *lascivia* displayed in the bedroom and grottoes of Capri.

⁸¹ Dio lv. 9. 6.

⁸² Suet., *Tib.* 74; cf. Cic., *Verr.* ii. 4. 119.

⁸³ Pliny, *NH* xxxv. 28, 131; cf. Dio lvi. 46. 3; lvii. 10. 2; Suet., *Tib.* 47. For a description of the Hyacinthus see Paus. iii. 19. 4, and for both pictures Mart. xiv. 173, 175 (see following note); both were from Alexandria.

⁸⁴ Mart. xiv. 170-82; see esp. K. Lehmann, 'A Roman poet visits a museum', *Hesp* xiv (1945), 259-69. From its nickname of Βρούτον παιδίων and from a further mention in Pliny, *NH* xxxiv. 82 (cf. Mart. ix. 50. 5), it is clear that the boy was a favourite with the tyrannicide Brutus; for the story of Hermaphroditus see Ov., *Met.* iv. 285-389.

⁸⁵ Mart. xiv. 176, 177.

⁸⁶ Suet., *Tib.* 72.

⁸⁷ A. de Franciscis, *Le statue della Grotta Azzurra nell' isola di Capri* (1965); *idem*, *Archaeology* xx (1967), 215-16. De Franciscis calls the style 'neo-classic', but the elongated proportions, dance-like movement and what remains of the features surely relate more closely to the Hellenistic rococo. On two other grottoes at Capri, both without sculptural decoration, see P. Mingazzini, 'Le grotte di Maternaria e dell'Arsenale a Capri', *Arch. Class.* vii (1955), 139-63.

⁸⁸ Suet., *Tib.* 43; cf. Aus., *Caes.* xiv. 3. 3-4: 'frustra dehinc solo Caprearum clausus in antro, quae prodit vitiis, credit operta locis.'

Clearly, then, the mixture of an updated Lysippan style and the last word in the Pergamene baroque that was the three Rhodians' speciality would have catered very adequately for Tiberius's tastes in sculpture;⁸⁹ as for his literary leanings, here again we have the vital testimony of Suetonius, who devotes a whole chapter to them:⁹⁰

He composed Greek poetry in imitation of Euphorion, Rhianos and Parthenios, poets of whom he was very fond, placing the writings and portraits of all three in the public libraries among the eminent writers of old; and for this reason many academics vied with one another in editing their works for him. His special aim, though, was a knowledge of mythology, carried to ridiculous and laughable extremes; for he used to test the scholars (a class of men in whom, as I have said, he was particularly interested), by questions along lines such as these: 'Who was Hecuba's mother? What was Achilles' name among the maidens? What songs did the Sirens sing?'

Such esoteric conversations took place, we are told, at the dinner-table, and the retinue of pedants followed the emperor to Capri. There, amongst other things, they were put to work on investigating the lineage of Pan, presumably to provide background material for the *tableaux vivants* that Suetonius describes with such relish.⁹¹

Tiberius's interest in the love-romances of Parthenios runs parallel to his delight in the erotica of Parrhasios and others; for us, however, the real meat of Suetonius's account lies in his mention of the two poets, and especially Euphorion. To judge from the hundred and seventy-or-so fragments of his work that survive, a fair sample of the crabbed and extravagant versification of this erudite Alexandrian, with his penchant for the obscure and the monstrous, is the Berlin parchment with a fragment of a poem concerning the Labours of Herakles:⁹²

οἱ δ' ὄπιθεν λασίηι ὑπὸ γαστέρι πεπ[τηῶτες]
 οὐραῖοι λιχμῶντο περὶ πλευρῆισι δρά[κοντες.]
 ἐν καὶ οἱ βλεφάροις κυάνωι ἤστράπτετο [πέμφις]
 ἢ που Θερμάστραις ἢ που Μελιγουνίδι τοῖαι
 μαρμαρυγαί, αἴρησιν ὅτε ῥήσσοιτο σίδηρος,
 ἤερ' ἀναθρώσκουσι, βοᾶι δ' εὐήλατος ἄκμων,
 ἢ Αἴτην ψολόεσσαν, ἐναύλιον Ἀστερόπιοι.
 ἴκετο μὴν Τίρυνθα παλιγκότῳ Εὐρυσθῆι
 ζωὸς ὑπέξ' Αἶδαο δωδέκα λοῖσθος ἀέθλων,
 καὶ μιν ἐνὶ τριόδοισι πολυκρίθιοι Μιδεῖης
 ταρβαλέαι σὺν παισὶν ἐθήησαντο γυναῖκες.

Not only does this kind of poetry seem to parallel the baroque of Sperlonga and the Laokoon very closely in both style and treatment of subject-matter (change the gender, and the first two lines could almost be used to describe the Scylla group, Pl. IX, 4-X, 2), but Euphorion certainly treated at least two of the five themes used by the three Rhodians, and may also have treated the others. In Servius's commentary to *Aeneid* II we find the following note: 'As Euphorion says, after the coming of the Greeks the priest of Neptune was stoned to death, because he did not prevent their arrival by sacrifices. Afterwards, when the Greeks had left, when they (i.e. the Trojans) wanted to sacrifice to Neptune, Laokoon, the priest of Thymbraean Apollo, was chosen by lot to do this, as was the custom when the right priest was lacking. He began the sacrifice before the image of the God, together with his wife Antiope, and for this reason was killed with his sons by the dragons sent (by Neptune).'⁹³

⁸⁹ On their style cf., e.g., W. Fuchs, in Helbig, *op. cit.* (n. 69), I, 165; von Blanckenhagen, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 260; Sjöflund, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 35; Conticello, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 42, 44.

⁹⁰ *Tib.* 70. I thank Alan Griffiths for first bringing this passage to my notice.

⁹¹ *ibid.* 56; Tac., *Ann.* IV. 58; Plut., *Mor.* 419 D (see further below, n. 109).

⁹² J. U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* (1925), 40 fr. 51; D. L. Page, *Greek Literary Papyri* I,

Poetry (1942), 492-3. Cf. also the other fragments in Page's selection, esp. (a) (2) with its series of gruesome deaths, from a poem of curses ('Αραὶ ἢ Ποτηριοκλέπτῃς Powell, *op. cit.*, 31, fr. 9). There is also a poem on Hyacinthus (cf. the picture mentioned above, n. 83); Powell, *op. cit.*, 38, frs. 40-3.

⁹³ Serv. II. 201; Powell, *op. cit.*, 43, fr. 70. Euphorion seems to have been particularly fond of dragons and serpent-tailed monsters and their doings: cf. *ibid.* frs. 30, 37, 40, 50, 112.

Secondly, and a little earlier, Servius also mentions apropos of Autolyclus that he 'was a certain thief, who took on various forms. He had as his children Aesimus, Sinon's father, and Anticlia, Ulysses's mother; the two were therefore cousins. So it was not without cause that Vergil attributed both deceitfulness and a traitor's role to Sinon, so that he should not depart much from the story, because according to Euphorion all these things were Ulysses's doing.'⁹⁴ The reference here is to Sinon's two speeches of *Aeneid* II 77-104 and 154-94, the second of which is entirely concerned with the theft of the Palladion and its supposed consequences for the Greeks.

To which poem or poems these two notices refer is unknown. From the number and variety of Servius's references to Euphorion in his commentary on *Aeneid* II,⁹⁵ however, together with other fragments of the poet's work that deal with the gathering of the fleet at Aulis, the burning of some of the Greek ships by Trojan women, speeches given by Nestor, the Wooden Horse, Coroebus, Laodice, and the disasters suffered by the Greeks on their way home,⁹⁶ it is possible that it was one that dealt with the Trojan War and the Nostoi, perhaps the first book of his *Chiliades*. This was apparently an account in five books of a millennium of prophecies of doom fulfilled, from c. 1250 (the traditional date of the refounding of Troy by Apollo and Poseidon after its sack by Herakles) to his own day, around 250.⁹⁷ The ship-burning certainly comes from this work; and just as this, the Palladion episode,⁹⁸ Laokoon's death and the other scenes would have been well appropriate to what is assumed to have been its theme and contents, so would the remainder of the subjects that occur at Sperlonga (Achilles's death and Odysseus's tribulations at the hands of Scylla and Polyphemus), all being excellent examples of disasters foretold,⁹⁹ and in any case hardly to be dispensed with in any account of the Iliou Persis and the Nostoi.

All this is enough, it seems to me, to establish two mutually supporting, but nevertheless independent, possibilities: that as far as their setting, arrangement and treatment of subject-matter are concerned, these sculptures fit in fairly well with what one might look for in grandiose mythological compositions of the early Julio-Claudian period, though the blend of pedantry and horror in decoration meant for the dining-room perhaps indicates an owner of somewhat unusual interests; and that the literary and artistic tastes of Tiberius, together with his known predilections in dinner-table entertainment, were such as to furnish a suitable climate in which sculpture of this kind, erudite, academic and monstrous, could have flourished. Supporting the thesis that what we have at Sperlonga is a kind of petrified conversation-piece for an emperor of remarkably idiosyncratic tastes are the known layout of the grotto (Pl. XII, 1), where the *triclinium* is without doubt the focus of the whole ensemble, and the fact that his favourite poet dealt with at least two of the five themes translated into stone by the three Rhodians. Tiberius could have acquired a taste for the style in Rhodes, where the family of Hagesandros and Athanodoros were hereditary priests of Athena Lindia,¹⁰⁰ and, if the foregoing is correct, seems to have retained a liking for it even after his

⁹⁴ Serv. II. 79, cf. 166. Powell, op. cit., 43, no. 69.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* II 32, 79, 201, 341; Powell, op. cit., 41-3, nos. 55, 69-71; cf. M. Hügi, *Vergils Aeneis und die Hellenistische Dichtung* (1952), 113-15.

⁹⁶ Powell, op. cit., frs. 46, 59, 63 (see *POxy* xxx (1964), 2525 for more of this fragment), 65-6, 68, 71-3.

⁹⁷ E. Thrämer, 'Euphorion bei Plutarch,' *Hermes* xxv (1890), 55-61; on the subject see Suidas s.v. 'Χιλιάδες': ἔχει δ' ὑπόθεσιν εἰς τοὺς ἀποστερήσαντας αὐτὸν χρήματα & παρέθετο, ὡς δίκην δοῖεν κἄν εἰς μακράν' (ὡς . . . μακράν om. BVE) εἶτα συλλέγει διὰ χιλίων ἑτῶν, χρησμούς ἀποτελεσθέντας· εἰσι δὲ βιβλία ε' ἐπιγράφεται δ' ἡ πέμπτη Χιλιάς (δὲ πέμπτον Χιλιάδες Sitzler) [περὶ χρησμῶν ὡς διὰ χιλίων ἑτῶν ἀποτελοῦνται A in marg. additamentum e prioribus verbis confictum expulerunt edd., om. BVE]: Powell, op. cit., 28-9. For a fragment of a commentary, perhaps by Euphorion himself, see *POxy* xxx (1964), 2528.

⁹⁸ On Helenus's prophecy concerning the Palladion see Serv. II. 166; Apollod., *Epit.* v. 10.

⁹⁹ Achilles: *Il.* IX. 410-16; Apollod. III. 13. 8. Odysseus: *Od.* II. 170-6; cf. Apollod., *Epit.* III.

7; Hyg., *Fab.* 95; Serv. II. 81. Before leaving the subject of Euphorion and the work of the three Rhodians, it is perhaps worth remarking that all four of Odysseus's adventures and the Laokoon episode recur in the *Alexandra* of 'Lykophron' (II. 271-80, 347, 658, 659-61, 669, 765), a poem long recognized as displaying many striking coincidences with the extant fragments of Euphorion, though which has the priority is still uncertain (summary of the evidence and arguments, together with bibliography, in *RE* s.v. 'Lykophron', 2376 and *Suppl.* XI, 925-30; cf. Powell, op. cit., frs. 13, 30, 45, 46, 53, 56, 58, 67, 73, 98, 114). Like the *Chiliades*, the *Alexandra* is in the form of prophecies fulfilled, spans the millennium from the refounding of Troy to the poet's own time, and is written in a highly obscure and allusive style; the first half is taken up largely with the *Iliou Persis* and the *Nostoi*.

¹⁰⁰ On Tiberius's exile see Tac., *Ann.* I. 4. 4; IV. 57; Suet., *Tib.* 10-13; for the inscriptions see *Lindos* II. 1 (1941), 29 and nos. 1, 345, 385-6; *IG* XII. 1. 425, 847; P. M. Fraser, *Eranos* LI (1953), 42 n. 10, 45-7; cf. Iacopi, op. cit. (n. 3), *passim*.

narrow escape in 26; a signature of one Athanodoros, son of Hagesandros, the Rhodian, was found in his villa in Capri in 1822.¹⁰¹

In conclusion, it is perhaps worth asking why Odysseus, above all the Greek heroes, should have been chosen as the subject for the Sperlonga sculptures. Though any answer cannot but be speculative, two possible explanations suggest themselves. First, there was the old connection between him and Italy, known as early as Hesiod.¹⁰² By Tiberius's time exact locations had been established for most of the events in the *Odyssey*: the Cyclops' cave was normally considered to lie under Aetna, and Scylla to have lurked in the straits of Messina, near Rhegion; one account even located the Sirens on Capri.¹⁰³ The whole subject, including as it did stories of a meeting with Aeneas,¹⁰⁴ reports of Odysseus's death and burial in Etruria,¹⁰⁵ and even a tradition, fifth-century or earlier, that one of his sons, with the convenient name of Rhomus, founded Rome,¹⁰⁶ might well have provoked much argument among Tiberius and his scholarly circle. In any case, to enjoy Euphorion, one would have to be particularly fond of obscure coincidences and unlikely etymologies like these.

A second clue may perhaps lie in the character of Odysseus himself and its curious similarity in some respects to that of the emperor; indeed, by the time of Trajan we find Juvenal drawing a quite explicit comparison between the two, if Housman's interpretation of the passage is to be relied upon.¹⁰⁷ Certainly Tiberius, like Odysseus, 'cherished dissimulation'; his intellect was penetrating, his caution excessive, his anger quick, his harshness proverbial and his pride in his own achievements, especially military ones, enormous. 'Complex and devious in the best sense of those words' (Syme),¹⁰⁸ he was also, one imagines, an intensely lonely man. Of course the similarities, considerable as they seem to have been, were by no means total: for one thing Tiberius hated his disingenuousness being seen through, and for another he was ferociously sarcastic.

Close to some extent, then, in temperament, and close also in fortune: Tiberius, too, had spent a great deal of his life (up to his fifty-first year) abroad; he had had his time of campaigning in the field, and his time in exile (eight years to be precise), enduring multiple humiliations before attaining what was due to him. Of course, none of this is in any sense conclusive and might well be dismissed as merest fantasy, were it not that his interest in Odysseus is illustrated from another source, the questions Suetonius records him as asking of his retinue at one of his soirées: all three may be referred, in one way or another, to Odysseus and his doings. Hecuba failed to denounce him when she discovered him in Helen's bedroom, and on the fall of Troy became his slave; it was he who discovered Achilles 'among the maidens' at the court of Lycomedes; and as for the songs of the Sirens, there was only one man who could ever have enlightened Tiberius as to these.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ R. Guarini, *BdI* 1832, 155; *CIG* 58706; E. Löwy, *Inscripfen Griechischer Bildhauer* no. 520; *IG* XIV, 898; Andreae, op. cit. (n. 1), 104. The letter-forms of this and the other Athanodoros signatures (Löwy, op. cit., nos. 203, 496, 479, 480; *IG* XIV 1227-30) are apparently early imperial (Säftund, op. cit. (n. 3), 89).

¹⁰² See E. D. Phillips, 'Odysseus in Italy', *JHS* LXXII (1953), 53-67 (earliest reference in *Theogony* 1011-16); for up-to-date discussions see esp. A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins* (1965), 240, 279; G. K. Galinsky, *Aeneas, Sicily and Rome* (1969), 103-5, 112, 120-1, 149.

¹⁰³ Cyclops: Phillips, op. cit., 61 and e.g. Strabo 20; Scylla: Phillips, op. cit., 58-61, 63 and e.g. Strabo 26; Sirens: Serv. v. 864.

¹⁰⁴ Phillips, op. cit., 57-8, 60-1, 67; Hellanicus ap. Dionysius, *Ant. Rom.* I. 72; Lyc. 1242-9.

¹⁰⁵ Phillips, op. cit., 60-1; Lyc. 805-11.

¹⁰⁶ Phillips, op. cit., 66; Xenagoras ap. Dionysius, loc. cit.; cf. Serv. I. 273. The mention of the river Nauaethum, where Rhome burnt the Achaean ships, in one of the fragments known to be from the *Chiliades* (Powell, op. cit. (n. 92), 39 fr. 46), shows that at least one of the versions of the Rhome/Rhomus story was in Euphorion and therefore known

to Tiberius. See further F. Krampf, *Die Quellen der römischen Gründungssage* (1915), 15-20, also Galinsky, op. cit. (n. 102), 23, 105, 140-3 etc.

¹⁰⁷ Juv. x. 84; cf. *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman* II (ed. J. Diggle and F. R. D. Goodyear, 1972), 615. The standard equation, found e.g. in L. Friedländer's edition of 1895, is Ajax = Tiberius, Odysseus = Sejanus, but does not this completely miss the point of the joke? After all, it was Sejanus who lost and died an ignominious death. The quaking orator whose speech all this refers to is probably Brutus Niger, aedile in 22. Interestingly in this context, Caligula often called Livia a 'Ulysses in petticoats' (Suet., *Calig.* 23): by this time the comparison had perhaps become a standing joke on the doyens of the family in general.

¹⁰⁸ op. cit. (n. 72), 494.

¹⁰⁹ In addition, apropos of Tiberius's question to his retinue on Capri concerning the lineage of Pan (supra, n. 91), if the answer had come from Euphorion then Odysseus would have been involved here too: a laconic note in a commentary to Lucan III. 402 tells us that (Pana) 'Euphorion Ulixes filium manifestat' (Powell, op. cit. (n. 92), 49 fr. 109). The scholars, however, preferred the rival claimant, Hermes.

Perhaps, then, we may be forgiven for imagining that he found the character of the wily Odysseus thought-provoking, and, privately, maybe even congenial. Certainly, if the resemblance ever did strike him, I doubt that he overlooked the irony of the comparison.

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APPENDIX: THE DATE OF THE SCULPTURES

Although this study has concentrated upon establishing Tiberius's claims to be considered as the owner of the Sperlonga grotto and its sculptures, what it has not done is to determine, beyond the assumption of a *terminus ante quem* of A.D. 26, the date when the groups were carved. Yet certain evidence does exist to indicate (though not, as yet, to prove) that they were designed for the setting in which they were found, and in the reigns of either Tiberius himself or Augustus. Since this could mean that they were actually created at Tiberius's behest, as opposed to merely being brought by him or by others from the East, it is relevant to list the arguments for this point of view here. Most are not new, though few, as far as I am aware, have appeared in English before. They are as follows:

(1) The rear part of Laokoon's altar is of Luna marble, tooled and clamped in the same way as are the other joining surfaces (*Ansätze*) in the group, and is thus unlikely to be a restoration.¹¹⁰ Since the Luna quarries were not in use before the time of Augustus,¹¹¹ this would suggest a date of after c. 40–30 B.C. for the group, and thus for the Sperlonga sculptures as well.

(2) In the only two cases where Roman replicas can be exactly matched with what has survived from Sperlonga, the indications are that the Sperlonga statues are not the originals of the type. In the case of the head of the 'third companion' from the Polyphemus group (Pl. XI, 4) and the parallel version from Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, now in the British Museum, each sculptor included details omitted, slurred or misunderstood by the other;¹¹² and in that of Odysseus from the Palladion group,¹¹³ the Sperlonga sculptor has made his *chlamys* hang straight down the back of the statue, yet on the left flank has also included the ends of the diagonal folds which characterize the *chlamydes* of the Via Margutta and Palazzo Mattei replicas;¹¹⁴ these do not hang down the back at all but are gathered towards the left hip in order to give sufficient cloth for the garment to be wrapped around the left arm. Thus, the *chlamys* of the Sperlonga statue is an impossibility, for enough material would simply not be available in reality for it both to be slung around the arm *and* to cover the back of the figure like a curtain in the way it does. So, since the 'third companion' and the Odysseus (both from different groups) are almost certainly copies, the probability that *all* the Sperlonga sculptures and even the Laokoon are not themselves originals but high-quality copies or versions of Hellenistic pieces is enormously increased, all five groups being the work of the same *atelier*. It thus becomes impossible to determine on stylistic grounds when any of the groups was carved, since it can never be proved that any of them is *not* a copy, and thus that all do not simply follow the style(s) of their respective Hellenistic originals.

(3) The carving of at least three of the Sperlonga groups seems to have taken some account of their destined positions in the grotto. In the case of Scylla and her victims, the complex is only credible from the front, since the ship was abruptly terminated just forward of the steering oar and only its port side fully worked out in detail.¹¹⁵ Thus, the illusion can only have been complete when the stern pointed straight towards the spectator, who was presumably intended to be reclining in the *triclinium*. The same seems to have been true of the Polyphemus group: Andrae's analysis of the modelling of the head of the 'third companion' (Pl. XI, 4) and its replica from Tivoli has shown that here, too, each sculptor carved his statue in accordance with the demands of its intended setting.¹¹⁶ The Sperlonga head was intended to be seen from the back and the back only, since great gaps are left in the hair at the sides, whereas the copy from Tivoli is credible from anywhere within an arc of about 120°, from a full frontal position to somewhere a little behind left profile, the hair on the right and at the back being only sketchily worked in. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the two groups differed somewhat in the placing of their individual figures, and that whereas that at Tivoli could be inspected from a number of positions, that at Sperlonga was again designed only to be seen

¹¹⁰ Magi, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 20; von Blanckenhagen, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 264; Andrae, *Gnomon* xxxix (1967), 87 (with full references to studies on the quarries). N.B. that both Andrae and von Blanckenhagen advocate a Tiberian date on stylistic and iconographical grounds (*op. cit.* (n. 1)).

¹¹¹ Andrae, *loc. cit.*

¹¹² Andrae, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 71–3 and figs. 5–12.

¹¹³ Conticello and Andrae, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pls. 45–7.

¹¹⁴ Andrae, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 95–8 and pls. 69–72.

¹¹⁵ Conticello, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 32, 35; fig. 25 and pl. 29.

¹¹⁶ See n. 112, above.

from a single optimum viewpoint, presumably the *triclinium*. Finally, it was only on the Scylla and Polyphemus groups, sunk as they were in gloom at the rear of the cavern, that the massive supports that strengthened and stabilized projecting limbs and even whole figures were allowed to remain (Pl. IX, 4-XI, 4).¹¹⁷ Despite its complexity, fewer appeared on the nearer (Scylla) than the further (Polyphemus), and all supports were removed from the legs of the Odysseus of the Palladion group in the foreground, weakening the figure so much that to-day one has had to be restored in reinforced plaster.¹¹⁸ To argue that the sculptures were transferred *en bloc* from elsewhere thus entails the unlikely supposition of an almost identical arrangement there for the whole ensemble, with the added factor that, in this hypothetical original setting, to maintain the illusion the spectator should be unable to move more than a few feet from his allotted place, an eventuality precluded at Sperlonga by the moat around the *triclinium*. Most likely, perhaps, is that the sculptures were commissioned specially for the grotto but were not actually carved *in situ*: struts like those between Polyphemus's toes (Pl. IX, 2) would then be explicable as safeguards against damage in transport.¹¹⁹ The more complex of the groups are made in many pieces, which must have been shipped separately and re-assembled on site.

(4) The date of the signature of the three sculptors is a difficult problem: again, views range from the late second century B.C.¹²⁰ to the late first century A.D.¹²¹ Recent opinion, however, seems to be coming round to an early imperial date for the letter forms.¹²² It now seems unlikely that the signature is a renewal: the slab upon which it is inscribed is not separate as was first thought, but an integral part of the ship, forming the after-end of the port outrigger (*parexeiresia*).¹²³ Since the group was clearly conceived as rising from the sea in a naturalistic fashion, in the same way as the Sea-thiasos in the Blue Grotto at Capri, there was simply no other place for the signatures to go but here. In any case, if the Scylla group is not a second-century original but a replica, as could well be the case (see (2) above), the natural inference is that, as with other copyists' work, inscription and sculptures are contemporary.

(5) Finally, mention must be made of Andreae's revival of Lessing's interpretation of Pliny, *NH* xxxvi. 37-8, where immediately after the remark, illustrated by the Laokoon ('qui est in Titi imperatoris domo') and its authors, that sculptors who collaborate tend not to receive their due in the eyes of the public, we read: 'Similiter Palatinas domos Caesarum replevere probatissimis signis Craterus cum Pythodoro, Polydeuces cum Hermolao, Pythodorus alius cum Artemone, et singularis Aphrodisius Trallianus.' The inference is that Hagesandros and his companions decorated the Domus Titi in the same way ('similiter') as Craterus and the others filled the Palatine palaces with statues.¹²⁴ This, if true, could be taken as excluding a Tiberian date for the Laokoon, but there are

¹¹⁷ Conticello, op. cit. (n. 1), 43, 47 and pls. 1-6, 8-10, 23 (Polyphemus), 26, 29-31 (Scylla).

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* pls. 45-7.

¹¹⁹ Conticello, op. cit. (n. 1), 47; cf. von Blanckenhagen, op. cit. (*ibid.*), 103—though considering the dearth of sculptors' signatures in Rhodes after the disaster of 43 (example = *CIRh* II, 198, no. 30; VI-VII, 431, no. 50; *Lindos* II. 2 no. 347 and perhaps 357 and 363) and the total lack there of signatures of the Athanodoros family after this date, is the atelier not more likely to have been based in Italy (in Rome? N.B. that no struts appear on the Laokoon), where all their signatures were found (cf. *IG* XIV, 1227-30 and, most recently, F. Zevi, *Hellenismus in Mittelitalien* I (1976), 60-1)? Note, too, that Athanodoros signs on the bases of his statues (except in the case of the Scylla group: explanation, (4) below); exporters, on the other hand, like Agasias of Ephesos (*IG* XIV. 1226), Xenon and Sogenes of Paros (*ibid.* 2287) and the Neo-Attics sign on the statue itself, which then gets its base on arrival (cf. here P. Graindor's pertinent remarks in *Athènes sous Auguste* (1927), 208-9). The third class of signatures found in Italy, renewals, does not come into account here, since these always concern works plundered from the East, usually of sculptors long dead. For examples, see the signatures of Phromachos, Lysikles and Phradmon from Ostia (F. Zevi, *Rend. Pont. Acc.* XLII (1969-70) 95-116; Richter, *AA* LXXV (1971), 434-5) and those from Pompey's theatre in Rome (Coarelli, *Rend. Pont. Acc.* XLIV (1972), 99-122).

¹²⁰ Iacopi, op. cit. (n. 5), *passim*; *idem*, op. cit. (n. 7), 39-42; cf. Conticello, 23 n. 36.

¹²¹ Hampe, op. cit. (n. 12), 43.

¹²² M. Guarducci in Magi, op. cit. (n. 3), 39; W. Peek, in Andreae, loc. cit. (n. 110); Mr. A. G. Woodhead and Miss Joyce Reynolds have kindly given me their opinions on the subject, agreeing that a date either in the second half of the first century B.C. or the first half of the first century A.D. seems the most likely. The poem by Faustinus (Iacopi, op. cit. (n. 7), 42-7 and fig. 34; Hampe, op. cit. (n. 12), 45-57 and pl. 33) is variously dated to Augustan (Woodhead), Flavian (Reynolds and Hampe) or even late imperial times (P. Krarup, *ActIRN* IV (1969), 19-26); in any case, considering how scrappily it is written and that it omits two of the groups (Odysseus and Achilles, and the Palladion group), surely it is more likely to be an encomium dashed off by a bedazzled friend who came to dinner, than the official record of the completion of the work and/or of its donation to the reigning Caesar (Tiberius, incidentally, refused the appellation of *dominus*: Suet., *Tib.* 27). At any rate, there is no necessary or even likely connection between it and the original commissioning of the sculptures. For this interpretation cf. A. Herrmann, *ActIRN* IV (1969), 27-32, and for *domini* = master and mistress of the house, or host and hostess, see e.g. Cic., *Off.* I. 139; Ov., *Am.* II. 2. 32; Stat., *Silv.* II. 2. 45, 107. Considering the quality of his poetry, I doubt whether this Faustinus could have been the friend mentioned so often by Martial (III. 2, 58; IV. 57; V. 71; X. 51) and so strongly urged by him to publish in I. 25.

¹²³ Conticello, op. cit. (n. 1), 32 n. 36; cf. J. S. Morrison and R. T. Williams, *Greek Oared Ships* (1968), 281-3.

¹²⁴ Andreae, op. cit. (n. 110), 86-7; cf. *idem*, *RM* LXXI (1964), 239 n. 5 and Lessing, *Laocoon*, 26.

two problems here, both caused by ambiguity of the text. The first is that Pliny does not actually state that the Laokoon was made for the Domus Titi, merely that it happened to be there at the time of writing; even if Andreae's reading of 'similiter' is correct, all one can infer is that the three sculptors worked at some time for the Caesars, and that in Pliny's day one of their works was to be found in the possession of the emperor Titus. Secondly, the meaning of 'similiter' is in any case by no means clear: though 'in the same way' is indeed a tenable translation, it is still perfectly possible that Pliny's point remains the simple one that the artists employed on the Palatine did not get the fame they deserved because, like the Laokoon sculptors ('similiter'), they collaborated.