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INTRODUCTION

"THE MENTION OF ANTIQUITY and the citation of examples give the speech authority and credibility as well as affording the highest pleasure to the audience." Thus wrote Cicero of the value of antiquity as *figura* in his last work on rhetoric, the *Orator*.[1] Although the definition of antiquity changed thereafter – its temporal compass expanding to include Cicero himself as well as several more centuries after him – this general attitude did not change. Indeed, up until our very own times the fascination with antiquity has remained a constant, and that constant has done much to give Western culture a particular distinctiveness and cohesion.

Yet, in the chain of cultures that have cherished antiquity at their bosom the Renaissance holds a place apart. Programmatically focused on retrieving, interpreting, reliving, and reconstructing a dimly perceived antiquity, it has come to embody this relationship and function as its icon. If the notion of a long-past "Golden Age" is as old as antiquity itself, the notion of looking at it as if into a mirror belongs to the Renaissance.

This peculiar relationship between history and identity where the two merged held its own fascination, and subsequent generations of artists, writers, historians, and critics have amply demonstrated it. Second only to antiquity itself, the Renaissance has been scrutinized, dissected, and perpetually reinvented. Its very name, describing as it does an attitude toward the past rather than a temporal location or a formal characteristic of the age, held within it something of the redemptive appeal and promise of the phoenix myth, seductively projected upon a much larger cultural plane.

Needless to say, the vantage points from which the Renaissance has been examined have varied greatly. For some, like Jacob Burckhardt, the Renaissance interpretation of antiquity actualized a model of harmony and balance between politics and art, power and aesthetics;[2] for others, like Heinrich Wölfflin, it offered an example of how timeless characteristics of form could be identified and adapted to new uses;[3] for others still, like Aby Warburg, it showed how pagan myths and motifs could be translated into a Christian and hermetic key.[4] Yet, despite such diversity of viewpoints, without exception engagement with the Renaissance in its relationship to antiquity has been inextricably tied to the present in which historians and artists sought to work through their own cultures and negotiate their own encounters with the past and their anxieties with respect to what seemed to be increasingly alien, industrial presents.[5]

Nearer our own time such investigations have taken on a more positivistic cast and ambition as the relationship between the Renaissance and antiquity has been submitted to ever more systematic readings. The literature has also grown proportionally and has reached a scope that almost prohibits reference. Nevertheless, vast though this literature is, it can be seen to fall into two broad categories: that focusing on the transmission and survival of forms and ideas; and that focusing on the phenomenon of appropriation itself. Rubinstein and Bober's *Corpus of Ancient Sculpture Known to the Renaissance*, Haskell and Penny's *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900*, or Günther's *Das Studium der Antike in den Zeichnungen der Hochrenaissance* are milestones of one; Panofsky's *Renaissance and Renascences*, Salvatore Settis's *Memoria del antico nell' arte italiana*, Bolgar's *Classical Influences on European Culture*, or Green's *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (for a textual example) belong to the other.

Yet, heavily tilled though this terrain may be, one critical aspect of the antiquity–Renaissance relationship has drawn less attention. This is its fundamen-

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tally circular nature, for the Renaissance inaugurated traditions of interpretation that, despite all efforts at scholarly rigor and later scholars' cultural motivations, have marked all subsequent receptions of antiquity. At some level, the imagination and desire that fueled the appropriation engine of the Renaissance remained embedded forever after in the most innocent and apparently factual statements. Thus specific prejudices, hierarchies, attention and neglect of topics, forms, texts, and periods that were established long ago acted (and still act) as old sins with long shadows. Antique canon and anomaly were imperfectly known, and so the fragments and the texts modeled – and still model – patterns of imitation and historiography that do not reflect the far more copious reconstructions now available.

For instance, no reading of antiquity was able to shake established prejudices in favor of Vitruvius: his central place in both Renaissance and ancient studies, which far exceeds his importance in his own time, is almost entirely due to the Vitruvianism of the sixteenth century. Similarly, because studies of Greek art and Roman cultures along the Mediterranean basin (Africa, Asia, Spain, etc.) flourished much later than those of Italy and were thus not consecrated by the Renaissance, their own place in the panopticum of problems addressed by ancient studies has suffered, as has their perceived place in the development of Western culture.[6] Or, to take two instances of Renaissance scholarship guiding later approaches to specific forms, the relative neglect of triumphal arches and their afterlife in the literature, and conversely the treatment of the Composite order, are also a consequences of this reception phenomenon. Triumphal arches attracted violent criticism in the Renaissance even as they set much needed examples of how to decorate the plain surfaces of an essentially bearing-wall architecture; yet, in what seems to be a case of cause and effect, scholarly attention has also been deflected away from them.[7] The giant-stone picture series that veneered the surfaces of major extant arches at Rome (those of Titus, Septimius Severus, and Constantine), by contrast, though much imitated, elicited little theory; in parallel fashion, ancient scholarship on arch-related-picture sets still stands apart from advanced studies of other pictorial media. Similiarly, although the Composite order, identified as a type and named in the Renaissance, consists of a broad range of different forms, it is tacitly accepted now as a fifth order in the Doric-through-Corinthian sequence even in ancient scholarship.[8] The case of Ovid's *Metamorphoses's* status in the Renaissance and in Renaissance studies matches its impact on ancient Rome; but Renaissance fascination with the prescriptions of Horace's *Ars poetica* is as much a postantique artifact as the period's rapture over what Vitruvius proffered – both were used to authorize an austerity in formal choice very far from actual antique practice. Isolated material survivals took on paradigm status in similar ways, a classic example being the Pantheon, which was designed to be exactly *not* what the Renaissance took it for, that is, typical of Roman religious architecture. Without oversimplifying the situation, it is still fair to say that, in a pattern of cultural supply and demand, the Renaissance determined the latter while ancient scholarship attended to the former. Thus a reflexive situation arose, as one period reinvented the other through the work each ignited.

Viewing this complex relationship in this light suggests still one more dimension to its multiple facets, and in some ways in defining antiquity as literary ornament and so as trope Cicero comes closest to naming it. This is the haunting presence of either the Renaissance or antiquity at the core of each other's textual and artifactual production or interpretation even when not directly claimed. Each half of this cultural pair invokes its absent twin and places it at the heart of its own discourse. Such an elliptical presence may be thought of as a cultural trope, and "transumption" may be its nearest equivalent in the corpus of literary *figurae*. Most recently brought to scholarly attention by Leonard Barkan, the term is also an ancient one.[9] In classical rhetoric, as codified by Quintilian, transumption meant a transfer of terms, a form of metaphor or allusion involving several tropes: a skipped trope exists as shadow within a new one, which gains its status of literary figure precisely from this elliptical reference.[10] Exceeding a metaphor then, transumption draws specific attention to the gap, to that which has been left out in the movement from one trope to another across a third. As such, "transumption" more accurately suggests the complex relationships involved in cultural borrowing than the more commonly used terms "appropriation" or "reception" imply.

Such, then, are the issues this volume addresses. Of course, given the richness of the field it cannot claim to be exhaustive. Indeed, it does not seek to offer "the" or even "a" basic book on the Renaissance dialogue with antiquity. Instead, it proposes to outline fruitful future directions as it takes note of ferments now under way. Perhaps most importantly, its format is indebted to the conference "Antiquity and Antiquity Transumed" held in Toronto in 1994; the book is not its carbon copy, but it does seek to preserve the dialogue generated at this gathering and the excitement of potential offshoots, rebuttals, and debates.

In keeping with the experimental nature of this project, the essays that follow are case studies and this format and its constituent parts aim at anything but closure. Instead of proposing another single-voice narrative, these attend to particular and representative

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situations, texts, and artifacts. Like their topics, the methodological frameworks of these essays are heterogeneous, case-specific, and case-determined rather than pre-set. In this manner the volume testifies to a broad range of working methods, their potentials and complementary nature. For these reasons the book can be read in several directions and it is intended to be used in this way: unlike a monograph, it does not have a linear structure but is built up of mutually reflecting facets whose purpose is to provoke the readers to engage in their own lateral connections.

A salient characteristic of this collection of essays is that it focuses most decidedly on Italy. This may seem yet another instance of traditional Italocentrism (another deep-rooted feature of Renaissance studies); but it was deliberately sought for two reasons (though not to this degree, which was the unfortunate consequence of attrition in a project of this scale). First, it seemed useful to us to examine the phenomenon of imbrication between the Renaissance and antiquity in this narrower geographic context so as to achieve cumulative insight that probings in depth rather than breadth can supply. Second, we felt such emphasis was warranted because the mechanism of appropriation established in Italy became the matrix and point of reference for subsequent or geographically remote "renascences." Italy's Renaissance seemed a necessary preamble before its cultural siblings could be similarly attended to.

Although variously focused, the chapters in this volume suggest several fundamental categories of cultural behavior that the four-part structure of the book acknowledges: "pursuing culture" and "making culture" as companion categories to writing history "then" and "now." Vision and behavior are central to all four categories. Vision is central because it causes the selection of the material for interpretation and therefore precedes it: it informs what they – the artists, historians, and critics of the Renaissance – and we – the artists, historians, and critics of today – chose to and could see, what impinged as a subject of representation, what entered into the realm of the visually desirable. So is behavior central: one of the most crucial legacies of antiquity is artistic behaviors themselves, self-consciously articulated and honed. Ultimately, in describing any such age of creative rapprochement what is at stake are acts of making and observing, that is, acts of attention, valuation, and use.

Embedded in these manifestations the authors identify a common set of structural conditions: (1) this was a culture of imitation; (2) the access to ancient material was based on incomplete and random preservation; (3) the sources, textual and visual, did not speak in a unified voice; (4) the Renaissance artists' and critics' needs and wishes (like ours) are what drove how they saw and selected from the random spoils of the past. As a corpus these essays also testify to certain interesting patterns regarding the role individual media or phenomena played in shaping the encounter with antiquity: (1) the preeminence of the text in a culture deeply marked by humanist interests and methodologies; (2) the important place that architecture claimed for an appropriation-based culture, whether as carrier of *spolia*, as quotation of imperial ambitions, or simply as physical device sustaining the fiction of a recovered antiquity; (3) the significance of social interaction between artists and humanists, antiquarians and patrons, in what came to be a cultural *effort d'équipe*.

Part I, "Inhabiting History," focuses on the construction of historical narratives as an act of self-positioning within a historical field and thus as a crucial vehicle to self-definition. To this end its essays examine the tradition of history writing of the Renaissance, its explicit and implicit motivations as well as linkages that elude our latter-day artificial classifications. In section 1, "Historical Self-Definition" James Ackerman, David Galbraith, Patricia Fortini Brown, and Philip Sohm identify mechanisms and key moments for the historical self-construction of the Renaissance. Thus Ackerman probes the historical justifications of cultural *imitatio*; Galbraith looks to the metaphors of renewal and disinterment employed by Petrarch to characterize his own moment in time vis-à-vis a disjunct culture (Roman antiquity); Fortini Brown turns attention to Venice and examines "official" histories and the conscious invention of an antiquarian stance and their political motivations; and, finally, Sohm suggests that Vasari's tenets on imitation and style informed his understanding of a periodized, processual history.

Section 2, "Historical Continuities," probes further – and challenges – some of the traditional modern temporal and spatial boundaries with which we frame the period of the Renaissance. The authors look at what we think are diagnostic behaviors for Renaissance responses to antiquity and locate them earlier, outside Italy and outside Rome and Florence. Sheila Bonde, Marina Belozerskaja and Kenneth Lapatin, and Martine Furno emphasize the Gothic/Byzantine edge of the Renaissance and so posit the mediatory role of the Middle Ages, with chapters on architecture, sculpture, and source criticism, respectively. Bonde looks at the French medieval exploitation of Roman monuments, Belozerskaja and Lapatin map Venetian strategies for incorporating Byzantine *spolia* into a city-state core and so into a contemporary politicized visual narrative; finally, Furno draws attention to the eclectic sources and exegetical conventions – medieval and humanist – at work in the Venetian Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.

Part II, "Culture Pursued," turns to the mecha-

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nisms of retrieval and interpretation, their preferred focus and media. Section 1, "Transmission of Meaning," focuses both on the "hermeneutical failure" inevitable in the interpretation of ancient literary and visual narratives and of the creative consequences of this situation. Instead of looking for meaning only by way of iconographical matchings, this chapter investigates the gaps between paradigm and its transformation to offer insights into the accumulated interpretive layers that have continuously re-created the ancient culture we inherit. In this context Leonard Barkan's reading of the critical reception of the ancient Zeuxis imitation topos suggests that it exemplifies a generic interpretive stance for the culture of the Renaissance. Julia Perlman juxtaposes visual formulations by Michelangelo and Botticelli to probe the impact of Neoplatonic discourse on the visual/verbal practices of the Renaissance and its (homoerotic) social settings. Finally, Nicola Courtright shows how the mapped Rome of the Tower of the Winds exploits antiquity as source and subject for a newly created religious reform-rhetoric.

Section 2, "The Reemergence of the Aesthetic," gathers essays that focus on the self-consciousness of the aesthetic act and the rise of artistic theory. As the essays in this section argue, though both this aesthetic stance and much of the language in which it is couched are drawn from the ancient canon and ostensibly resemble it, the effects they cause are substantially different. In this context Alina Payne examines the migration of ancient poetics and rhetoric topoi into architectural theory and the consequences of such visual/verbal crossovers; Rebekah Smick reexamines the modern art-critical approach to ancient and Renaissance descriptive techniques; Gerhard Wolf juxtaposes the painting, sculpture, and architectural theories of Alberti and their dialectical relationship with the corpus of literary texts surviving from antiquity; taking the Vitruvian triad of *utilitas, firmitas* and *venustas* as a prism, Christof Thoenes argues for a disjunction at the very heart of architecture: while new conceptions of beauty are deeply marked by perceived antiquity, building technology and function remain firmly rooted in the present.

Part III, "Culture Produced," looks to the implications of these patterns for the making of art and its theory. Ancient texts obviously afforded a significant source for the reconstruction of a fragmentarily preserved visual culture and seemed to provide insight into its theoretical and literary underpinnings. The will to precision and rigor initiated by the humanists in the examination of texts became an intellectual modus operandi for all areas of material culture, albeit one as dependent upon interpretive and creative overlay as was the reception of visual matter itself. In Section 1, "Textual Exegesis," Michael Koortbojian examines the tensions between material recuperation – the newly found Laocoön – and the tradition of textual antiquarianism; Tod Marder raises the converse problem: the powerful physical presence of the Pantheon, which no textual sources described and which consequently invited creative interpolation.

Because the Renaissance will-to-reconstruct fed on the assumed temporal disjunction between two distant cultures, it entailed the development of intellectual and visual techniques, tools, and strategies to recuperate and reassemble fragments. Those tools were activated by highly specific, real social contexts to enable aural and visual communication. In Section 2, "Reconstructions," Phyllis Bober examines the *convivium* as one such tool and form of reenactment of ancient social practices; for Richard Betts, the architectural treatise constitutes both a site for the reconstruction of Vitruvius and the locus for systematic reordering of heterogeneous archaeological data into one coherent whole.

Finally, the Coda, "On Renaissance and Antiquity from the Outside," looks to our modern readings of the Renaissance and its relationship to antiquity, readings that variously derive from and impose on the Renaissance as well as the antique cultures that it filtered. In this context, Catherine Zerner focuses on the critical evaluation of the Renaissance interpretation of antiquity in eighteenth-century Spain; Richard Brilliant looks from the vantage point of twentieth-century assessment studies back to Winckelmann's and Warburg's evaluation of Graeco-Roman sculpture through a Renaissance lens; Michael Ann Holly deconstructs Wölfflin's reading of the Renaissance to show its structural dependence on its own objects of inquiry; and Carl Goldstein addresses the imbrication between visual and verbal in historical accounts of art from Giorgio Vasari to Ernst Gombrich.

Like Bolgar's now classic volume of more than a quarter of a century ago, this collection of essays is also the snapshot of a field in movement, illustrative of new directions and hopeful of provoking more. The Renaissance–antiquity relationship, like the Renaissance itself, is a historical landscape that will always invite a new road map of its places and of the itineraries between them. A particularly compelling *locus amoenus* to seek and to inhabit both then and now, it brought together this group of fellow travelers. To all those who like us are engaged on this journey, let this volume be a token of the pleasures it offers as well as of the ever elusive enigmas and obstacles it presents.

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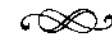

NOTES

1. Cicero, *Orator*, ed. and trans. H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 395.
2. On the relationship between Renaissance studies and German architecture culture at the turn of the twentieth century, especially as they interacted with Burckhardt's celebrated *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1867), see Francesco dal Co, *Figures of Architecture and Thought* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990); see also August Buck, *Renaissance und Renaissancismus from Nietzsche zu Thomas Mann* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1990), and Burckhardt's own political writings. Jacob Burckhardt, *Jacob Burckhardt als politischer Publizist, mit seinen Zeitungsberichten aus 1844/5* (Zurich: Fretz & Wasmuth, 1937).
3. Heinrich Wolfflin, "Prolegomena zur einer Psychologie der Architektur," in *Kleine Schriften (1886–1933)*, ed. J. Gantner (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1946), pp. 13–47; idem, *Renaissance und Barock* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1907; 1st ed. 1888).
4. See, for example, Aby Warburg, *Italienische Kunst und internazionale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoja zu Ferrara* (Rome: Maglione & Strini, 1922).
5. Wolfflin, for example, was also greatly interested in contemporary art and a strong supporter of Adolf von Hildebrand's work (whose *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* shared much with Wolfflin's own views on the psychology of reception). See Wolfflin, *Kleine Schriften*. The scholarly literature on the imbrication of past and present in the writing of history is vast. For particular emphasis on the reception of the Renaissance by art and architectural historians and full bibliography, see Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), and Alina Payne, "Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism," *JSAH* 53 (1994): 322–42.
6. Some of the delayed interest in other ancient sites was certainly due to the Ottoman conquest and the ensuing difficulty in accessing them. But this was not the case everywhere and cannot explain the intensity of scholarship claimed by ancient Spain and Gaul in the 1980s and 1990s. See, for example, *Die Monumentalisierung hispanischer Stadte zwischen Republik und Kaiserzeit*, Kolloquium in Madrid vom 19. bis 23. Oktober, 1987, ed. W. Trillmich and P. Zanker (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), and the essays and review articles in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 8–10 (1995–97).
7. Sebastiano Serlio consecrated the critical stance vis-à-vis the triumphal arches: though, unlike other treatise writers, he discusses them in his *Terzo libro* (1540), he only praises one (the Arch at Ancona). However, most architects filled their *taccuini* with sketches of these same arches, and Palladio intended to publish a separate book on them. On this issue see Alina Payne, "Von *ornatus* zu *figura*: Ornamentplastik in der italienischen Architektur des sechzehnten Jahrhuderts," in *Ornament*, ed. I. Frank (Berlin: DuMont Verlag, 1999).
8. See, for example, John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).
9. Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). For an earlier rehabilitation of the term, see John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
10. Quintilian defines "transumption" as follows: "There is but one of the tropes involving change of meaning which remains to be discussed, namely, *metalepsis* or *transumption*, which provides a transition from one trope to another. . . . It is the nature of *metalepsis* to form a kind of intermediate step between the term transferred and the thing to which it is transferred, having no meaning in itself, but merely providing the transition." Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1986), Book VIII, 6.37–39. In 1562 Giangiorgio Trissino offered this definition: "La Metalepsis, over transumptione e quella, la quale per similitudine di significato, dimostra un'altro significato diverso, come e, un greve tono, che a dirlo propriamente si dovrebbe dir grave tono, ma perche greve e grave hanno lo istesso significato nel peso, ma nella voce solamente si dice grave, e Dante lui ha transunto il significato del peso, e l'ha posto nella voce." Giangiorgio Trissino, *La quinta e la sesta divisione della poetica (1562)* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1969), 41.

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PART I

INHABITING HISTORY

Self-Definition

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1
IMITATION

James Ackerman

THE CONCEPT OF IMITATION informs and connects almost all of the studies in this volume; it was a concept that preoccupied makers in all disciplines during the Renaissance – writers, historians, artists and others concerned with invention. More than an issue of orienting the maker to his natural and cultural milieu, it was a way of grasping history and the difference of the past from the present, a way of formulating a structure for explaining cultural evolution, a foundation for education, and finally a way of defining the limits and the opportunities of invention; it is central to understanding the arts and letters in antiquity and the Renaissance. Though developed mainly by writers on poetics and rhetoric, it could be applied to invention in a wide spectrum of disciplines – as these essays attest. I shall review the major contributors to the dialogue on imitation in the ancient world and in the Renaissance up to 1550, emphasizing the principal differences of opinion, and shall conclude with a commentary on the implications of its merging in the modern era into the concept of influence.[1]

Imitation was understood in two senses during antiquity and the Renaissance: (1) the imitation of Nature or human behavior and (2) the imitation of preceding writers and artists. The latter was the most common concern in antiquity, especially in Rome; and among Renaissance humanists it was addressed in the context of rhetoric, in particular in discussions of style, structure, and exposition. Aristotle was the principal source of the idea of imitation as mimesis; in his *Poetics*, which dealt primarily with drama, art is the mirror of Nature in the sense of human behavior. In this sphere, Plato did not generate nearly as much discussion, because he had proposed the imitation of ideas, which was not open to extended interpretation and debate. Aristotelian imitation dominated discourse on the subject throughout antiquity and extended, for example in the Elder Pliny's history of the fine arts, to the representation of the visible world in general. Renaissance humanists and theorists followed this path, reiterating that art copies Nature, both in the Aristotelian sense of human action and in the sense of representing the ambient world. Both natures were to be represented, not exactly as they are, but as they ought to be, but the rationale for this was almost never made explicit. Jan Bialostocki, in a brilliant essay of 1963, discussed this in terms of the duality of imitation of *natura naturata* (created Nature) and of *natura naturans* (Nature as creator).[2]

The imitation of preceding makers, however, which did not fit the category of mimesis, was the subject of a vast literature in both periods. That is to be expected, because if Nature was to be bettered by the maker, the work of predecessors would be the only external guide to how to better it. For this reason rhetorical texts advised would-be Roman orators to ingest the written records of their predecessors' speeches, and Renaissance artists and humanists to absorb the remains of antiquity and the best moderns. So the two imitations were inextricably linked. Modern commentators, especially on the fine arts, have segregated the two meanings of *imitation* as if working from Nature and working from preceding artists and writers were unrelated.[3] But even in the visual sphere, the double meaning is ambiguous only to us; critical commentary throughout the Renaissance took it for granted that one learns and practices verisimilitude from art as well as from Nature.

The bond between Roman and humanist writers – as we have neglected to stress sufficiently – was cemented by the similarity of their historical position. Both were engaged in a renaissance, the Romans responding to their Greek predecessors in almost the same ways as humanists did to the Romans.[4] In his early writing, Cicero, whose texts and style dominated

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the discussion of imitation, focused on the lessons of Greek oratory and only later dealt with those of his Latin predecessors. Cicero was inconsistent in his answer to the question of whether to imitate many orators or to focus on one model. In the early *De inventione*[5] he wrote that in composing the work he "had culled the flower of many minds." He prefaced this discussion in the introduction to Book II by an example from painting, a story, repeated by Alberti and incessantly through the Renaissance, of the painter Zeuxis who, when commissioned to do a painting for the Temple of Juno in Croton, chose to depict Helen of Troy. Because Croton was famed for its beautiful women, he decided to seek as a model, not the most beautiful one, but several, from each of whom he would select the most beautiful feature. Cicero commented that even the best in Nature – or presumably in oratory – would have some flaw.[6] Cicero's pairing of rhetorical and figural imitation was at least as important for practice as the more frequently cited Horatian *ut pictura poesis*.

In Cicero's *De oratore*, however, Greek oratory is seen as a sequence of masters who formed schools based on their special styles. Referring to the Greeks of the period between Pericles and Isocrates, he wrote: "their uniformity of style could never have come about had they not kept before them some single model for imitation: . . . they all still retained the peculiar vigor of Pericles, but their texture was a little more luxuriant."[7] Cicero refers to each successive style as an *aetas* (age, era), which Vasari appropriated in his three *età* marking the historical evolution of Renaissance art. In this way, Cicero's review of imitation in Greece served also as the model for Vasarian art history and, in a sense, for the art history of succeeding centuries.

Even Cicero's two last rhetorical texts, which are contemporary, differ on the issue of one or many models: in the *Brutus*, Demosthenes and Attic style in general is the recommended model,[8] while in *Orator* the argument becomes Platonic, and the orator imitates an image (*species*) presented in the mind.[9]

Horace provides a more personal reflection on the issue, closer to praxis, when replying to the criticism that he had leaned too heavily on his predecessors. "I was the first to plant free footsteps on virgin soil; I walked not where others trod; who trusts himself will lead and rule the swarm. I was the first to show to Latium the iambics of Paros, following the rhythms and spirit of Archilocus. . . . "[10]

This implies first that the reading public did not approve of borrowings that were too close (Horace himself was derisive of his imitators), and second that borrowings from great Greek predecessors would have been more acceptable than from Roman, as in the Renaissance borrowings from Rome were always considered acceptable.

Because Cicero had left a mixed message, Quintilian's work on rhetorical education, the *Institutione oratoria,* was to become the principal source for those Renaissance writers – a majority – who favored combining the most admirable features of the finest predecessors, though he emphasized that the best qualities of any maker – *ingenium, inventio, vis, facilitas* – are inimitable.[11] What is imitable seems to be style: he speaks of the brevity of Sallust, the fullness of Livy.[12] But mere imitation is too easy, the path of lazy people; one must above all be inventive.

A view of imitation as the motivator of artistic evolution came readily to the Roman writers of the Augustan age and their immediate followers, but already in the course of the first century before our era a sense of decline from that peak crept into the discussion and undermined its rationale. Cicero observed of Greek oratory after Isocrates: "After these men had disappeared, the memory of all of them gradually was obscured and vanished and another mode of oratory came into being that was softer and more lax."[13]

Pliny was even more severe in assessing late Hellenistic sculpture, though, when he wrote bluntly, "art stopped" (in the third century B.C.), he was using "art" in the sense of technique, and was referring to the capacity to realize large-scale bronze casting.[14]

The elder Seneca, who was born during Cicero's lifetime, wrote in his *Controversiae:* "You should not imitate one man, however distinguished, for an imitator never comes up to the level of his model. Moreover, you can by these means judge how sharply standards are falling every day, how far some grudge on Nature's part has sent eloquence downhill. Everything . . . reached its peak in Cicero's day. . . . "[15]

The better-known son of this despondent gentleman, Lucius Seneca, following Horace and Virgil, advised the maker to imitate bees,[16] gathering pollen from many flowers. But he was the first to ask in this context whether pollen is itself sweet or whether it is transformed to sweetness by the bee's breath – the breath being, of course, the inventiveness of the maker.

Despite the variety with which ancient authors approached their discussions of imitation, all agreed that it was inevitable, and desirable, that the imitator recast his source and appropriate it to his own inventive capacity; only in this way could the art evolve and avoid decline. The discussion of imitation became a major enterprise of the humanists from the fourteenth century on, starting with Petrarch's review of the Ciceronian arguments. After Petrarch, the theme was addressed by most of the major humanists, sometimes in the framework of a particular genre of dialogue, an

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