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INTRODUCTION

A Critical Time in the Study of Roman Artistic Imitation

THE CASE OF THE APOLLO BELVEDERE: AN ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF SKEPTICISM

The Apollo Belvedere (Figure 1) is one of the most recognizable sculptures from antiquity. It is understood by much of the public, and by many students of Greek art, as a copy of a lost Greek original by the fourth-century B.C.E. sculptor Leochares because it is described as such in tourists' guidebooks and even in some textbooks on ancient art. The original attribution of the Apollo Belvedere to Leochares was, however, based on reasoning that is astonishingly tenuous by contemporary standards.[1]

In 1892, F. Winter argued that there were significant similarities of style between the Apollo Belvedere and a statuette in the Vatican Museums – probably, in fact, a table leg – depicting Ganymede (Figure 2).[2] This table leg, still on display in the Galleria dei Candelabri, had by then long been thought to copy a bronze by Leochares on the basis of the following description in Pliny:

> Leochares [made] an eagle carrying off Ganymede, in which the bird realizes what he is seizing and for whom, and is careful not to let his claws injure even through the boy's clothes.

[1] For a review of this sculpture's interpretation from its first display in 1503 to the present, see Mattusch (2002), 99–100.

[2] Winter (1892).

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1. The Apollo Belvedere, Vatican Museums, Belvedere Courtyard (photograph: Vatican Museums).

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2. Ganymede and the Eagle, Vatican Museums, Galleria dei Candelabri (photograph: Vatican Museums).

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> Leochares aquilam sentientem, quid rapiat in Ganymede et cui ferat, parcentemque unguibus etiam per vestem puero.[3]

Winter concluded that stylistic similarities between the Vatican Ganymede and the Apollo Belvedere warranted an identification of the latter as a replica of Leochares' work. His argument shared many of the presuppositions of the methodology known as copy criticism or *Kopienkritik*. (One sees the latter term more frequently than the former because the method was first practiced and popularized by German scholars.) For more than three-quarters of a century, *Kopienkritik* was the dominant methodological approach to Roman sculptures that depicted divine, mythological, heroic, or athletic subjects. Its practitioners treated as axiomatic the proposition that such sculptures consisted mostly of copies, "exact" or free, of Greek works by famous masters. Starting from this premise, they hoped to recover lost Greek originals by determining which copies were more faithful and which were less so. Winter himself did not need to sort out different copies to make his case, because both the Apollo Belvedere and the Vatican Ganymede existed in only one version each, but in most other respects his approach was typical of the time.

More will be said about the history, presuppositions, and effects of *Kopienkritik* in Chapter Three. For now, however, an examination of the various assumptions and hypotheses that led to an attribution of the Apollo Belvedere will serve provisionally to illuminate some of the more problematic features of this long-standing scholarly tradition. First, the Vatican Ganymede was associated with a particular Greek master on the basis of a very brief ancient text. It was already common long before the full development of *Kopienkritik* to attribute Roman sculptures to Greek masters whose work was described in ancient testimonia. These testimonia, however, only rarely offered detailed descriptions of the works in question. Sometimes they merely mentioned that so-and-so carved or cast an image of a particular god or hero. In fact, part of the argument for

[3] Plin. *HN* 34.79. For an example of earlier scholarship that associates the Vatican Ganymede with this passage, see Baumeister (1885), Vol. 2, 815. Visconti (1782–1790; III. 241–247) was the first to associate Pliny's text with the Vatican statuette.

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associating the Apollo Belvedere with Leochares has traditionally been that Pausanias assigns to that artist a statue of Apollo that stood in front of the Temple of Apollo Patroos in Athens.[4] We know nothing else about the statue in Athens, and so the conjecture that the Apollo Belvedere replicates it is just that – conjecture. Even attributions that are based on somewhat more substantial texts, such as Pliny's description of the Ganymede by Leochares, tend to ignore the formulaic propensities of Roman art and to assume that if a motif is described in an ancient text *and* appears in a work of art, then the work of art must replicate (or be) the painting or sculpture described in the text. In this way, any depiction of Ganymede in which the eagle holds the boy "through his clothes" becomes a candidate for identification as a copy, accurate or poor, of Leochares' work.

The core of Winter's own argument was stylistic. He first delineated the reasons he believed the Apollo to be essentially fourth century B.C.E. in style but then focused on the dispositions of the two figures as particularly revealing of the artist who created the (presumed) original. He perceived similarities between the posture of the Vatican Ganymede and that of the Apollo Belvedere, and these suggested to him that the (again presumed) originals of the sculptures were produced by the same artist.[5]

It is not my intention to disagree systematically with Winter's stylistic analysis. In fact, the Vatican Ganymede should be employed in stylistic arguments only with extreme caution because much of it is not even ancient. It was in the hands of the eighteenth-century sculptor and restorer Vincenzo Pacetti just before it came to the Vatican. The restorations include the entire dog with the exception of the paws, and the wings and head of the eagle, the right leg of Ganymede below the knee, the left leg between the knee and the ankle, the right arm below the elbow, most of the left arm, the neck, the chin, part of the mouth, and the nose.[6]

[4] Paus. 1.3.4.

[5] For an iconographic argument against identifying the Apollo Belvedere as a copy of a lost work by Leochares, see Deubner (1979).

[6] Helbig[4] I.528. For discussion of Pacetti and bibliography, see Ramage (2002), 6–71 and n. 26.

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For present purposes, however, it is not Winter's explicit argument but what he presupposes that is interesting. His attribution of the Apollo Belvedere requires the reader to accept as axiomatic several presuppositions that were common among the practitioners of *Kopienkritik,* including the following: that both the Ganymede and the Apollo were replicas, that *what* they replicated were Greek masterpieces, that those masterpieces could be identified with the help of ancient testimonia; that the "hand" of a particular artist can be determined from a copy made by other artists many centuries later, that one can determine what constitutes a good or poor copy even when one lacks the originals, and that stylistic similarities between two sculptures are indicative not only of region or time period, but, more specifically, of an artist's hand.

The Apollo Belvedere is extant in only one (relatively) complete and uncontested example. We should therefore question whether it fully replicates anything at all, much less a famous Greek sculpture.[7] Replicas of the head have been identified, but this proves little because Roman sculptors often replicated heads for use with different bodies.[8]

All of these considerations should suggest that the Apollo Belvedere is better described as an ideal sculpture (a term derived from the German *Idealplastik*) and not as a replica. The term "ideal sculpture" embraces divine, mythological, heroic, and related subjects, but it does not make unsubstantiated claims for the work's status as a reproduction of a lost original. In other words, it encompasses both the possibility that the sculpture might one day turn out to be a replica *and* the possibility that it might be a Roman classicizing creation. At the very least, it acknowledges the limits of the present state of our knowledge. It therefore reasserts a note of skepticism in a field where such skepticism has been too long absent. The next generation of scholars will not accuse us of deluding our students or ourselves when we argue that attributions should no longer be made or accepted when they are based on chains of evidence whose links are not all sound.

7 "So far as we know, this is the only ancient statue of its kind, so we cannot be certain that the Apollo Belvedere is a copy," Mattusch (2002), 101.
8 Fink (1964); Marvin (1997).

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RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON IMITATION AND EMULATION IN ROMAN ART

The Apollo Belvedere is a particularly famous work of art, but in other respects it is just another case study among many that question the assumption, once ubiquitous, that those Roman sculptures representing gods, mythological figures, or athletes are mostly copies of lost Greek originals. The scholars who have presented these case studies over the last thirty years have made many and varied arguments.[9] Some have attacked the tenuous association of Roman sculptures with brief or vague ancient texts. Others have undertaken to investigate the *romanitas* of Roman ideal sculpture, noting, for example, that Roman sculptures of gods, mythological creatures, heroes, and athletes appear to derive some of their meaning from the physical contexts in which they were displayed or from the patron's desire to promote a certain image.[10] Some scholars have argued that the artists of Rome, like those of Pergamon, often produced classicizing creations and that many of the sculptures previously considered mere copies of Greek originals, although they were classicizing

[9] Rumpf (1939) anticipated this trend by several decades in his study of the bronze statue in Florence nicknamed the "Idolino." Earlier scholarly consensus held that this work was either a Greek original of the fifth century B.C.E. or at least a very good Roman copy. Rumpf demonstrated, instead, that it belonged to a peculiarly Roman class of lampholders. His study was particularly important to scholars such as Wünsche (1972; 54–58) and Trillmich (1973), who helped to usher in the present phase of scholarship on Roman *Idealplastik*. It would be cumbersome to provide a complete bibliography of recent scholarship that emphasizes the *romanitas* of such works. This and subsequent footnotes will be limited to a few texts that deal explicitly and primarily with this subject. Recent overviews and general reevaluations of the history of "the copy problem" may be found in Ridgway (1984), Bartman (1992), Jaros (1993), Bergmann (1995), Gazda (1995), Fullerton (2001), and Gazda, *Emulation*. Fullerton's is a review article, which notes that, in some circles, the positivist assumptions of *Kopienkritik* remain unaffected by recently posed methodological questions. For opinions in favor of continuing the practice of *Kopienkritik*, although with some modifications, see Hallett (1995) and Pollitt (1996).

[10] Studies in which architectural setting is considered as one of the interpretive prisms through which sculptural decoration must be viewed include Manderscheid (1981), Hill (1981), Fuchs (1987), Bartman (1988), and Marvin (1989). For detailed analysis of the application of the Roman concept of appropriateness to relationships between physical setting and sculptural selection, see Chapter Three.

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in style, had been entirely conceived and executed by artists of the late republic and early empire.[11] Others have pointed out that Roman artists, even when imitating existing models, were hardly limited to Greek prototypes: they also reproduced their own workshop models in series and replicated the works of their contemporaries. There are, for example, three known versions of a clearly Roman archaizing Diana, the most famous of which was found at Pompeii.[12] Still others have suggested that visual repetition, whether in ideal sculpture or in other genres such as portraiture, was a conscious strategy employed by Roman patrons toward various ends that often had nothing to do with the appreciation for and reproduction of Greek masterpieces.[13]

It is important to establish at the outset that these various recent investigations never question that artistic replication was an important phenomenon of the Roman world; rather, they question the presumptions of *Kopienkritik* about the frequency and motivation of such replication, and especially the notion that it exclusively or even primarily aimed at reproducing Greek masterpieces of the Classical or early Hellenistic periods. Reflecting on the remarkably few surviving copies of a portrait of Perikles generally attributed to Kresilas (Figure 3), Ridgway has remarked that these replicas "seem few indeed compared with the mass of Demosthenes replicas. Kresilas, if the statue copied is truly by him, should have been more famous than an early Hellenistic artist by whom nothing else is known; it was therefore not the fame of the respective sculptors but the importance of the subject to the Romans which determined demand and consequent production."[14] Although the priorities of artistic replication could range far beyond a simple interest in subject matter, this observation suggests the extent to which the practitioners of *Kopienkritik* may have overrated the importance of particular Greek masters in Roman visual culture.

[11] Arguments identifying as classicizing creations works that had once been called "copies" include Wünsche (1972), Trillmich (1973), Zanker (1974), Trillmich (1979), and Marvin (1997).
[12] Naples Mus. Naz. 6008. See Fullerton (1990), 22–29 and 34–35.
[13] Gazda (1995); Trimble (2000).
[14] Ridgway (1984), 67.

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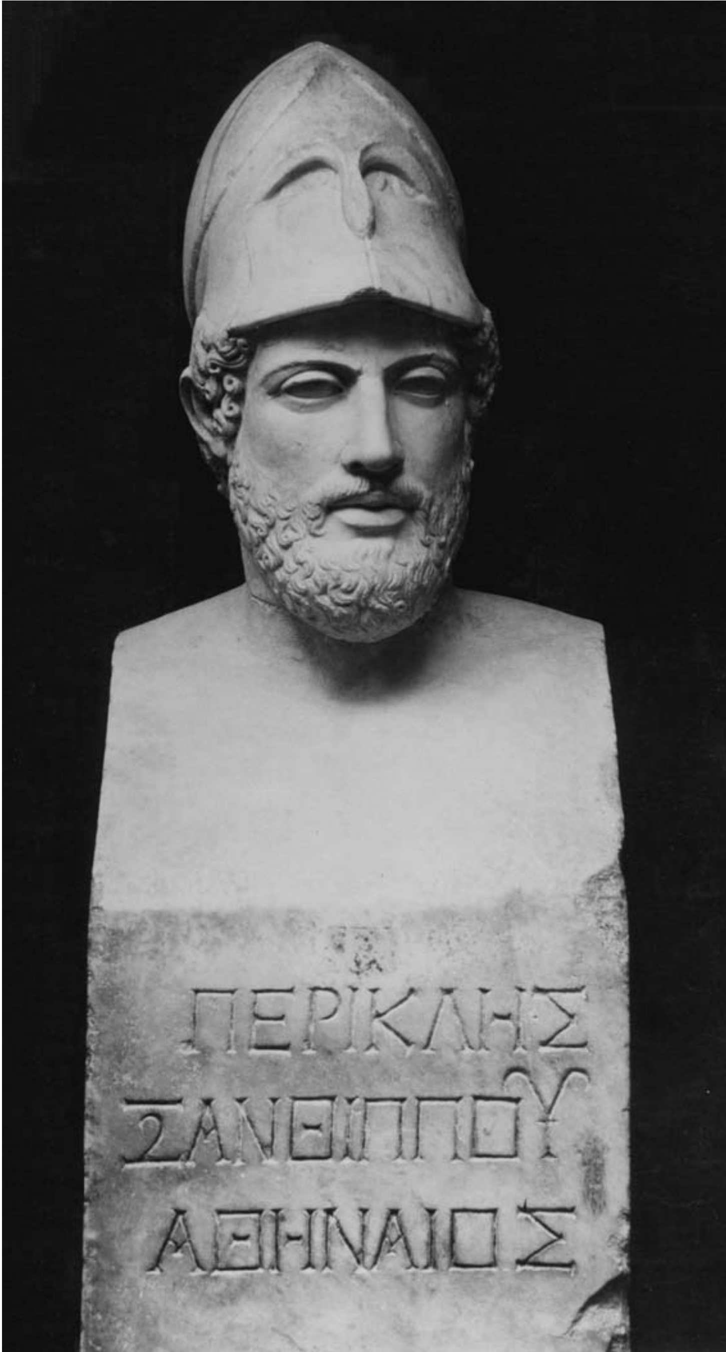

3. Herm of Perikles, a type often attributed to Kresilas (photograph: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Faraglia, negative no. 34.85).

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Recent conferences, colloquia, and anthologies have, moreover, moved beyond the issue of replication altogether. Although imitation has, in one form or another, been a constant preoccupation of ancient art historians for more than two centuries, in recent years questions of appropriation and artistic reproduction have come to the forefront of the art historical discourse concerning other periods. The results have enormous potential for illuminating our understanding of Roman art because they suggest myriad possibilities other than the naive notion that works of art are necessarily either copies or originals.[15] So, for example, sculptors of many periods have been known to reproduce their own works or to produce them in a series for which the only "original" may have been the artist's workshop model, made of clay, wood, plaster, wax, or stone.[16] This general observation cannot, of itself, prove anything about Roman workshop practice. What it can do is expose the assumptions implicit in *Kopienkritik* and suggest both that we evaluate various possible explanations for the formulaic qualities of Roman art and that we reopen the questions of precisely how and in what ways Greek art influenced Roman artists. Scholars who question the notion of the "Greek original," either generally or with respect to particular sculptural types, find that it is easier to persuade audiences who understand the variety with which artistic repetition has manifested itself throughout history.[17]

The variety of artistic multiplicity in Spanish sculpture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may serve as an illuminating example. Sometimes the sculptors of this era produced their own works in a series; at other times they employed a favorite figure in several different groups. Some sculptors produced figures that recognizably imitated the work of a famous contemporary; others continued to employ a recognizable type hundreds of years after its first introduction. Part of the explanation for all of these manifestations of visual reproduction is that these sculptures

[15] Anthologies include Krauss (1989), Hughes and Ranfft (1998), and Gazda, *Emulation*.
[16] Gazda (2002), 9; Krauss (1989), 9.
[17] On the widespread but misleading notion of the Greek bronze original, see Mattusch (1996, 2002). For arguments that certain widely familiar sculptural types may not have been based on a single, famous, or recognizable original, see Willers (1986) and Bartman (1992) 120–123.

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