Harald Mielsch, **Die Verleumdung des Apelles. Ein frühhellenistisches Gemälde?** Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Künste. Geisteswissenschaften, Vorträge, G 438. Editor Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 2012. 44 pages, 23 illustrations in black and white, 5 figures in color.

In every modern study of ancient allegory and personification, the lost painting that goes by the English title »The Calumny of Apelles« has played a central role. Dated to the later fourth century by the attribution to Apelles, the court painter of Alexander the Great who was considered by many the greatest master in Antiquity, the painting would be the earliest known example of a complex narrative scene in which all the characters are abstract personifications, with the exception of the unnamed king to whom the ›calumny‹ (slander, in Greek διαβολή) is reported and the young man dragged before him, who stands accused. The personifications comprise Agnoia (Ignorance), Hypolepsis (Distrust), Diabolê (Slander), Phthonos (Envy), Epiboulê (Treachery), Apatê (Deception), Metanoia (Repentance), and Alêtheia (Truth). The message seems to be a warning about the dangers of believing unsubstantiated accusations.

The painting has always raised questions and aroused doubts. It is known to us only from a single ancient description by the second century C. E. writer Lucian (Calumniae non temere credendum 2–5), which inspired many depictions from the Renaissance onwards, most famously Botticelli's painting of about 1495, now in Florence (Fig. 1). But there are no works of ancient art that seem to copy or quote from Apelles' painting, and in the few instances where we have depictions of the same personifications (Apatê, Phthonos) in another medium (vase-painting), they do not bear any resemblance to Lucian's description of the picture. Although simple two-figure allegories are known from earlier periods in Greece, in both poetry (Homer's story of Atê and the Litai, Il. 9, 502 f.; p. 8 f.) and vase-painting (Dikê smiting Adikia on a vase of ca. 520: p. 24 fig. 14), there is nothing of the complexity of Apelles' picture before the Roman period. Furthermore, the historical events said by Lucian to have inspired the painting arouse suspicion, since at best they involve an anachronism, taking place long after the time of Apelles (p. 8).

All this has led some scholars to question whether the painting either was created at a later date or never existed at all, merely a literary fiction of the notoriously clever and playful Lucian. It is the latter view that Mielsch sets out to prove by means of a careful review of the many varieties of personification and allegory in Greek and Roman art, as well as the literature of the Second Sophistic, to which Lucian belongs (cf. J. M. Massing, Du texte à l'image. La calomnie d'Apelle et son iconographie [1990] 16 f., who adduces a series of nineteenth century scholars, including no less than Otto Jahn, who considered both the anecdote and the work of art to be fictions).

Most of this monograph is devoted to a survey of a wide variety of works of art, from Archaic Greek vases (the Dike-Adikia vase cited above) through the Hellenistic and Roman periods. A number of textbook objects get a brief mention and an illustration, including the Apotheosis of Homer Relief (p. 16 fig. 8), the Tazza Farnese (p. 18 fig. 9), the cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta (p. 19 fig. 10), and the anti-tyranny decree from the Agora showing Demokratia crowning the Demos (p. 26 fig. 16). Mielsch does not, however, dwell on any of these works and offers few comments.

Since the survey is arranged thematically, by varieties of allegory, there is some doubling back chronologically, from Classical Attic vases to Hellenistic and Roman reliefs and on to Roman mosaics, but then back to the Dike-Adikia vase and Late Classical Greek works like the Kairos of Lysippos (p. 27 fig. 16) and the anti-tyranny decree. Then back to more Roman mosaics and luxury silver, and finally a more detailed discussion of another complex allegory that, like the Calumny, exists only in a literary description, the Tabula Cebetis. This extravagant allegory of the world, brimming with personifications, is nominally attributed to the Classical period (Cebes being a contemporary of Socrates), but was probably composed in the first century C. E. And, like the Calumny, it was never certainly depicted in Antiquity but did inspire some attempts in the Early Modern period (p. 33 f. figs. 22–23). For Mielsch this is »die bekannteste Allegorie der Antike« and provides one of the closer parallels in scope to Apelles' alleged painting, itself a purely literary creation in the author's view.

In the last section, the author discusses several works by Greek writers of the second century C. E., first Dio Chrysostomus and then Lucian himself, to show how fond they were of personified abstractions, both positive and negative. One of Mielsch's more emphatic arguments against the authenticity of Apelles' painting is the preponderance of negative personifications, while the first flowering of abstract personifications on red-figure vases of the later fifth century comprises almost exclusively positive concepts (Eunomia, Eudaimonia, et al.). Yet the two figures on Apelles' painting that can be found on South Italian vases close in date to the master, Apatê and Phthonos (cf. p. 14 fig. 7), are both negative, which somewhat weakens the argument.

The footnotes are kept to a bare minimum, in keeping with the monograph's origin as a lecture. Nevertheless, a few comments on recent scholarship that touches on works of art included here may be mentioned. Two of the Attic red-figure vases illustrated by the author for their relatively high number of personifications in a single scene have been re-examined, with the result that two personifications previously thought to be hapaxes (i. e. occurring only on these vases) may not exist at all, victims of incorrect readings of faint inscriptions long ago and then passed down as fact in the subsequent scholarship. On the pyxis in New York (p. 13 fig. 6), Gloria Ferrari has shown that Aponia (›freedom from

toil‹) is a mis-reading for Eunomia (See Metropolitan Mus. Journal 30, 1995, 17 f.; LIMC Suppl. (2009) 83 s. v. Aponia [H. A. Shapiro]).

On the even more famous amphoriskos in Berlin (p. 12 fig. 5), the name-vase of the Heimarmene Painter, Agnes Schwarzmeier has very recently shown that the name restored as Heimarmene (›that which has been fated‹) should rather be read as Eunomia as well (Arch. Anz. 2012, H. 1, 17–41). The latter study was too recent for Mielsch to take into account, as is a new and detailed study of the Kairos of Lysippos (p. 27 figs. 16–17) by Dietrich Boschung (see id. / G. Blamberger (eds.), Kulturelle Figurationen. Genese, Dynamik, Medialität [2011] 47–90).

The loss of Aponia and Heimarmene is especially painful for the present reviewer, who had based whole interpretations on their existence (Greek Roman and Byzantine Stud. 25, 1984, 107–110 [on Aponia]; Boreas 9, 1986, 4–23, reprinted in Italian, with expanded illustrations, in E. La Rocca [ed.], L'esperimento della perfezione [1988] 318–50 [on Heimarmene]). But scholarship consists not only of adding new knowledge, but also of eliminating erroneous or misinterpreted information. In that spirit, Mielsch has enhanced the suspicions of much earlier scholars that the painting attributed to Apelles almost certainly did not exist. The reviewer is among those who took the existence of the painting at face value, along with more distinguished scholars cited by the author, such as Martin Robertson. While we have lost one of the great works of ancient art, we have gained a better understanding of the literary culture of the Second Sophistic that was able to produce such a compelling description of a work of art. And the Early Modern works of art based on Lucian's ekphrasis, such as Botticelli's painting, are no less »real« for the loss of their putative archetype.

We can only be grateful to Harald Mielsch for setting the record straight and giving us a salutary warning, when it comes to »lost« masterpieces of classical art, to scrutinize the evidence and always to bear in mind the literary, artistic, and cultural context to which it belongs.

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