NOTE ON THE PIECING OF BRONZE STATUETTES

(Plates 76 and 77)

In 1854, the distinguished archaeologist Braun discovered and published with a good engraving a bronze statuette in a private collection, calling it “Bacco giovane dalla spalla mozza.”1 This Bacchus, wearing the characteristic high boots and the ivy wreath in his hair, was remarkable in lacking the whole left arm, exposing a left shoulder sealed with bronze as if there never had been an arm; it was not a case of a break, for the shoulder was smooth and finished. Braun could suggest no explanation for this strange phenomenon which he thought significant enough to bring to the attention of his fellow scholars. I first appreciated the same problem when I began to catalogue bronzes in the Walters Art Gallery and discovered four statuettes all in this condition, a Jupiter, two figures of Bacchus, and a Mercury, and also a detached arm (below, Nos. A3, A20, A26, A27, B1), in a collection of less than 300 items. Recently, various authors have remarked on the quantity of statuettes of various types, all lacking the left arm, and also the number of detached left arms.2 They have deduced correctly that what Braun observed but could not explain was evidence of a process of assembling complicated sculptural creations, casting figure and limb separately and joining them to each other by soldering or brazing, just as statuettes were attached to bases and handles to vases in all periods except the Archaic. The result is the same in each case: statuettes come off their bases, handles leave the vases which frequently disintegrate, and statuettes become armless as if in deliberate teasing of museum goers, making them sigh for the beautiful complete works that once existed. The 38 defective figures and 23 detached arms listed below are very widely distributed and usually do not indicate their place of manufacture; rather, they illustrate a general practice of assemblage.3


Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

Boucher, Recherches = S. Boucher, Recherches sur les bronzes figurés de la Gaule pré-romaine et romaine (Bibliothèques sur des Écoles Françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, 228), Rome 1976

De Ridder = A. de Ridder, Bronzes antiques du Louvre I, Paris 1913–1915

Hill, Catalogue = D. K. Hill, Catalogue of Classical Bronze Sculpture in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore 1949

Kaufmann-Heinimann, Schweiz I = A. Kaufmann-Heinimann, Die römischen Bronzen der Schweiz, I, Augst, Mainz am Rhein 1977

Leibundgut, Schweiz II = A. Leibundgut, Die römischen Bronzen der Schweiz, II, Avenches, Mainz am Rhein 1976

Leibundgut, Schweiz III = A. Leibundgut, Die römischen Bronzen der Schweiz, III, Westschweiz, Bern und Wallis, Mainz am Rhein 1980


3 Leibundgut, Schweiz II, p. 25.
My intention here is to collect as much material as possible on this group of objects and to consider the implications of this method of assembling statuettes, in factories located over a great expanse of territory and a long period of time. My lists (A and B), placed at the end of this article, will certainly be incomplete. Damaged statuettes are never featured in artistic displays or in books aimed at conveying pleasure; at best, one finds them in comprehensive catalogues such as have begun to appear in increasing numbers. My lists can be merely a guide to the types used and, in an even more restricted sense, to the relative profusion of representations. Nevertheless, some conclusions are self-propelling.

Let me begin by emphasizing that the loss of an arm is accidental. When parts are found separately, it may happen on the site of an ancient factory where finished works were being produced, but probably we see the result of improper soldering and must suppose that the first owners had purchased complete works of art. For every Mercury without a left arm and for every left arm without a body we must suppose literally thousands of Mercury statuettes that stayed together. One would not today pry them apart even if one could.

Why left arms? Partly because the left arm, being less active than the right, frequently carried drapery which could be adjusted in such a way as to conceal the joint at the shoulder. Also, choosing always the same arm would make assemblage easy; one could cast hundreds of arms and attach them as needed to various suitable subjects. In other words, the separate casting was an aid to easy, quick, mass production, and mass production is profitable only on a grand scale. So, we must believe in gigantic mass production from which a small proportion now graces our museums. In just this way the common, graceful oil jugs of the early Roman age were assembled from cast parts: base, handle and body, and neck.

Disparity in size is another proof that mass production was practiced on an enormous scale. While the majority of statuettes involved is in the range of 10 to 20 centimeters, much larger examples exist. I think the disparity is further proof that arms were mass produced for quick manufacture, arms of all sizes being made available for figures of varying size.

Arms could be shifted from type to type, as is apparent from the tabulation below. The left arm wound with a short chlamys falling before the shoulder in a loop, sometimes with the addition of a circular fibula, was suitable for Hermes, Dionysos, Castor or Pollox, Alexander or Apollo. The garment was so draped on marble statues in the Hellenistic period, notably statues of Alexander and other rulers. The long, free-hanging chlamys was correct for Hermes and Zeus, but normally Hermes’ arm hangs down and his left hand grasps his caduceus, whereas Zeus bends his elbow and holds an upright spear. Sometimes the artist used the wrong arm, causing a contamination of the Hermes and Zeus types, as S. Boucher has noticed. Consider also the handsome Hermes in Boston with an extraordinarily long chlamys, not required by his type but incorporated with considerable artistic taste (Pl. 76:a). These two types of arm are the commonest; of others, so few examples are preserved that the possibilities and practices are unclear.

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5 Boucher, Recherches, pp. 283–284, fig. 496.

When did this method of working begin? The majority of armless statuettes and detached arms are early or middle Roman imperial (one could say the same of all bronzes). The Jupiter statuettes with the tight curls (Nos. A19–21; Pl. 76:d) are perhaps Hadrianic. Some others are not datable, given our present state of knowledge. But some are definitely pre-Roman. A Dionysos in the Walters Art Gallery (Pl. 77:a) and another formerly in the Fouquet Collection (Nos. A26 and A28) were recognized by Rubensohn and Perdrizet as Hellenistic. A third, similar but complete, is in the Cairo Museum, thus indicating an Egyptian provenience for the other two.  

I will not venture a precise date, merely accept one late in the Ptolemaic period. Another, the battered Dionysos (No. A25), with a forward swing to the abdomen and a general “open form” was appraised by Van Gulik as from the 2nd century B.C. Still another Dionysos (No. A27) is of a yellow fabric that might have caused doubts of its authenticity which is, however, established by the sealed left shoulder that it could not have occurred to a forger to create. Its pose, twisted and elastic, can stem from no other art cycle than the Hellenistic. The statuette from Ruvo in Berlin (No. A36) was assigned by Neugebauer to his book on Greek bronzes before his death, although he had not ventured to date it. The left arm had been attached “mit einem Stift”.  

This figure is thin, youthful. The great height seems to place it in the orbit of the 1st century B.C. when tall figures were commonest; there were, however, still earlier periods of this fashion, for example the years immediately after the death of Lysippos. I incline toward a 1st-century date. Not listed here, since it is a complete entity, is a large statuette from the wreck off Antikythera (Pl. 76:b). The ship with its rich and varied cargo went down on its way from Greece to Rome at the height of the art-stealing boom, during the 1st century B.C. Most of the contents, contrary to earlier opinion, appear to have been fairly new at the time. Bol decided that the statuette, which certainly resembles No. A36, had been made in several parts, the bent left arm having been cast in one with the chlamys and attached to the left side and shoulder. Indeed, the line of demarcation is obvious. It would be easy to interpret the subject as Hermes-Mercury but with the dearth of attributes it must remain unidentified. That it antedates the establishment of the Roman Empire is assured.

Surely bronze manufacturers who cast separate left arms in order to expedite the production of statuettes would be unlikely to limit themselves to this one trick. There had to be other short cuts, and one readily visible is the common practice of casting separate bent arms for female figurines, especially Aphrodite, and attaching them at the edge of armlets worn half way between elbow and shoulder. This and other practices of cold piecing deserve to be studied. What I think the present effort offers is evidence of a factory system of producing small bronzes, by which the left arm with drapery was cast separately from male figures and attached; the practice allowed some variety in assemblage, some mistakes, and generally increased ease and speed. This system in use on a grand scale under the Empire began in late Hellenistic times in lands which were artistically Greek—South Italy, Ptolemaic

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7 C. C. Edgar, *Greek Bronzes (Catalogue général, Cairo XIX)*, 1904, repr. 1973, p. 4, no. 27.643, pl. 1.
8 Dr. Irmgard Kriseleit kindly informs me that only a hole and some modern restoration are now visible.
Egypt, and the port of origin of the Antikythera ship. Because of this important early development I have dedicated this article to two scholars who have added so much to our knowledge of Hellenistic art, Virginia Grace and Dorothy Burr Thompson.

**A. STATUETTES LACKING LEFT ARM, WITH FINISHED LEFT SHOULDER**

**HERMES-MERCURY WITH IDENTIFYING ATTRIBUTES**

1. Hermes with wings in hair
   Avenches, Musée Romain 463 (594). From Avenches. H. 9.3
   Leibundgut, Schweiz II, pp. 24–25, no. 11, pl. 6

2. Hermes with traces of wings in hair
   Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum U 1238. H. 13.3
   H. Menzel, Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, Römische Bronzen, Ein Auswahl, Düsseldorf 1969, p. 22, no. 9

3. Hermes with wings and leaf in hair, and marsupium. Pl. 76c
   Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 54.989. H. 15.1
   Hill, Catalogue, p. 19, no. 31, pl. 6

4. Hermes with winged sandals and marsupium
   Brussels, Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire B. 198. From Quevauchamps. H. 14.8
   G. Faider-Feytmanns, Les bronzes romains de Belgique, Mainz am Rhein 1979, p. 65, no. 44, pl. 24

5. Hermes with winged petasos and marsupium
   Liège, Musée Curtius 1/2472. From Juslenville. H. 15.4
   Faider-Feytmanns, op. cit., p. 65, no. 45, pl. 25

6. Hermes with wings in hair and marsupium
   Liestal, Kantonsmuseum Baselland A 1753. From Muttenz. H. 12.6
   Kaufmann-Heinimann, Schweiz I, p. 31, no. 21, pls. 12, 13

7. Hermes with wings in hair and marsupium
   Lyons, Musée des Beaux-Arts A 1944. H. 9.6
   S. Boucher, Bronzes romains figurés du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, Lyons 1973, p. 81, no. 132

8. Hermes with winged ankles or sandals and marsupium
   Paris, Musée de Louvre 529. H. 13.3
   De Ridder, p. 78, no. 529, pl. 39

9. Hermes with winged sandals and marsupium
   Paris, Musée du Louvre 190
   De Ridder, p. 35, no. 190, pl. 20; Boucher, Recherches, p. 280, pl. 93, no. 475

10. Hermes with wings in hair and marsupium
    E. Babelon and J. A. Blanchet, Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris 1895, p. 143, no. 317

11. Hermes with marsupium
    Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 318. H. 12.5
    Babelon and Blanchet, op. cit., p. 143, no. 318

12. Hermes with marsupium
    Musée de Saint-Germain-en-Laye 61. H. 8.7
    S. Reina, Bronzes figurés de la Gaule romaine, Paris 1894, p. 75, no. 61

13. Hermes with winged petasos and marsupium
    Lausanne, Musée Romain de Vidy (unnumbered). H. 17.5
    Leibundgut, Schweiz III, pp. 24–26, pls. 20, 21

14. Hermes with winged petasos and marsupium
    Strasbourg, Musée 2098. From Ehl Hatt, op. cit. (footnote 2 above), pp. 218–219, figs. 81, 82, and p. 230, fig. 89

15. Hermes with winged petasos
    Lausanne, Musée Romain de Vidy 109. H. 13.5
    Leibundgut, Schweiz III, p. 31, no. 21, pl. 29

16. Hermes with winged petasos and marsupium
    London, British Museum. From Barry, France. H. 14
    H. Rolland, Bronzes antiques de Haute Provence (Gallia, Suppl. XVIII), Paris 1965, p. 39, no. 27; H. Remy, Description de la Collection Morel, Reims 1893, p. 24, no. 48

17. Hermes with marsupium
    Present location unknown
    F. A. Schaeffer, Un dépôt d’outils–découverte à Seltz, Haguenau 1927; Reina, op. cit. (footnote 1 above), VI, p. 31, no. 2

10 Height (H.) given in centimeters.
**Possibly Hermes-Mercury but without identifying attributes**

18. Youth in Polykleitan stance. Lacking lower right arm
Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum 8196

**Zeus-Jupiter with thunderbolt**

19. Zeus holding thunderbolt. Pl. 76:d
Berlin (West), Staatliche Museen HZ 51.51.
H. 15

20. Zeus holding thunderbolt
Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 54.982. H. 17
Hill, *Catalogue*, p. 8, no. 11, pl. 6

21. Zeus holding thunderbolt
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 65.462. H. 8.5
Comstock and Vermeule, *op. cit.* (footnote 6 above), p. 114, no. 121

**Probably Zeus-Jupiter but without thunderbolt**

22. Zeus, right hand lowered and pierced as for thunderbolt
In trade, 1970. Formerly Warnecke Collection
*Art of Ancient Italy*, André Emmerich Gallery, New York 1970, p. 62, no. 102

23. Bearded deity, arms lacking
Paris, Musée du Louvre 516. H. 14
De Ridder, p. 77, no. 516, pl. 38

24. Bearded deity (arms formerly restored, now armless)
Paris, Musée du Louvre 505. H. 19.3
De Ridder, p. 75, no. 505, pl. 38

**Dionysos-Bacchus with attributes**

25. Dionysos with high boots and wreath of ivy
Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum 1381. H. 12.7

Van Gulick, *Catalogue of Bronzes*, p. 16, no. 25, pl. VII

26. Dionysos with high boots, ivy wreath and rhyton. Pl. 77:a
Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 54.741. From Erment, Egypt. H. 18.3
Rubensohn, *AA [JdI 21]*, 1906, cols. 142–143, fig. 12; Hill, *Catalogue*, p. 23, no. 40, pl. 14

27. Dionysos with ivy wreath, boots and rhyton
Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 54.1031. Formerly Borelly-Bey. H. 20
Hill, *Catalogue*, pp. 24–25, no. 43, pl. 14

28. Dionysos with ivy wreath(?), right hand raised as if to hold rhyton
Formerly Fouquet Collection. From Athribis, Egypt. H. 13
P. Perdrizet, *Bronzes grecques d'Egypte de la Collection Fouquet*, Paris 1911, p. 13, pl. VI

29. Dionysos with ivy wreath and boots
Formerly Fejevary Collection
Braun, *op. cit.* (footnote 1 above), p. 82, pl. 14

**Other subjects**

30. Alexander
Present location unknown. From Hatra

31. Alexander(?)

32. Harpokrates wearing double crown, right first finger to mouth
Cairo, Museum 27.687. H. 24.4
Edgar, *op. cit.* (footnote 7 above), p. 14, no. 27.687, pl. III

33. Herakles holding club
London, British Museum 787. From Bavai. H. 32.3
34. Phrixos or Hermes with ram’s head in right hand. Pl. 77:b
Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 58.AB.6. H. 17.5

35. Sucellus or Celtic Zeus wearing tunic and holding olla
Lausanne, Musée Cantonal d’Archeologie et d’Histoire 169. From Pully. H. 9.1
Leibundgut, Schweiz III, p. 44, no. 39, pl. 52

36. Youth, both arms missing
Berlin (East), Staatliche Museen 7143. From Ruvo

37. Athena wearing aegis and helmet
Luxembourg, Musée d’Histoire et d’Art 3-478 [G. Thill], Bronzes figurés de l’époque romaine, Luxemburg 1975, p. 10, no. 11, pls. 40, 41

38. Alexander
Paris, Musée du Louvre 369. From Alexandria. H. 15
De Ridder, p. 58, no. 369, pl. 31

B. DETACHED LEFT ARMS

WITH CHALMYS SHORTENED BY DRAPING OVER ARM

1. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 54.1021
Fingers spread to rest on hip, thumb turned up. H. 7
Hill, Catalogue, pp. 110–111, no. 247, pl. 48

Hand grasping straight object. H. 11.5
Comstock and Vermeule, op. cit. (footnote 6 above), p. 70, no. 72

3. Dijon, Musée d’Archeologie
Elbow bent, hand holding long caduceus. H. 7.3
Detys and Rolley, op. cit. (footnote 2 above), no. 911, pl. LXI

4. Langres, Musée
First finger extended. H. 7.6
P. Lebel, Catalogue des bronzes antiques du Musée de Langres, Langres 1965, p. 163, no. 23, pl. XI

Pl. 77:d
Fist clenched. H. 11.8
Exhibition catalogue, Von Troja bis Amarna, Mainz 1978, no. 63

6. Rabat, Musée. From Volubilis
Elbow bent. H. 9
C. Boube-Picot, Les bronzes antiques de Maroc, I, La statuaire, Rabat 1969, p. 229, no. 257, pl. 185:4

7. Vienne, Musée Municipal 2158
Elbow bent. H. 8.5
Boucher, Vienne (footnote 2 above), p. 96, no. 48bis

8. Carnuntum, Museum Carnuntinum 12122
Elbow bent, hand holding thunderbolt. H. 7

9. Enns, Schloss Ennseck P 13/156
Elbow bent, hand holding thunderbolt. H. 7.9
Fleischer, Bronzen Österreich, pp. 191–192, no. 278A, pl. 130

10. Private collection, Switerland
Hand holding sword, shoulder of cuirass visible. H. 11.6
J. Dörig, Art antique. Collections privées de Suisse Romande, Mainz 1975, no. 368

WITH CHALMYS FALLING FULL LENGTH

11. Avanches, Musée Romain 387
Hand curled to grasp staff
Leibundgut, Schweiz II, p. 25, no. 12, pl. 6

12. Augst, Museum 21.79
Elbow bent. H. 9.3
Kaufmann-Heinimann, Schweiz, I, p. 96, no. 120, pl. 99
NOTE ON THE PIECING OF BRONZE STATUETTES

13. Besançon
   Elbow bent.
   P. Lebel, *Les bronzes figurés (Catalogue des
collections archéologiques de Besançon V),
*Paris 1961, pl. L:4

14. Dijon, Musée Archéologique 66.40. From
   Clinchet
   Holding undetermined object
   Detys and Rolley, *op. cit.* (footnote 2 above),
   no. 31, pl. LXI

15. Grosser St. Bernhard, Hospiz 14
   Elbow bent. H. 9.9
   Leibundgut, *Schweiz* III, pp. 80–81, no. 78, pl. 107

16. Lecce, Museo Provinciale 2754
   Hand lowered. H. 11
   G. Delli Ponti, *I bronzi del Museo Provinciale

17. Lyon, Musée de Fourvière
   Hand lowered, first finger pointing down
   Boucher, *Recherches*, p. 280, pl. 93, no. 473

18. Strasbourg, Musée 2095
   Hand lowered
   Hatt, *op. cit.* (footnote 2 above), p. 230, fig. 89

19. Verona, Museo Archeologico A4.88
   Hand lowered holding caduceus which touches
   shoulder. H. 8.5
   L. Franzioni, *Bronzetti romani del Museo Ar-
cheologico di Verona*, Venice 1973, p. 72, no. 52

   From Garina
   Elbow bent. H. 7.9
   191, no. 277, pl. 130

OTHER DETACHED ARMS

21. Augst, Museum 60.8025
   Long aegis. H. 10.5
   96–97, no. 121, pl. 99

22. Parma, Museo Nazionale di Antichità B. 400.
   From Veleia
   Small chlamys, large cornucopia. H. 19
   F. d'Adria, *I bronzi romani di Veleia*, Milan
   1970, p. 78, no. 99, pl. xxv

23. Rabat, Musée V 905. From Volubilis
   Nude arm, large cornucopia. H. 10.5
   219, no. 240, pl. 170:2

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b. Hermes. X.13398. Courtesy, National Archaeological Museum, Athens


DOROTHY K. HILL: NOTE ON THE PIECING OF BRONZE STATUETTES


d. B5. Arm from statuette. Collection of Norbert Schimmel

DOROTHY K. HILL: NOTE ON THE PIECING OF BRONZE STATUETTES