

The Fruits of his Labors or the Sprouts? An Examination of the Farnese Hercules and the Apples of the Hesperides Type

The Farnese Hercules by Glykon is a well-known and well-studied 3rd century CE Roman 'copy' of a supposed bronze original by Lysippos from the 4th century BCE, originally placed in the Baths of Caracalla. This statue depicts Herakles within the type of the 'Weary Herakles'. The Farnese Hercules is in-the-round in a scene of repose, leaning against his knobby club that is draped with the pelt of the Nemean Lion. Behind his back should, supposedly, be the Apples of the Hesperides. Vermeule (1975) notes that there is a confluence of Hellenistic prototypes involving the imagery of Herakles. Over time, separate types develop - one of the Weary Herakles with the apples in his right hand-on hip, and the other with right hand-on hip but the apples omitted. Overall, it must be understood that this type is one of the most popular among Greek sculpture from the Hellenistic period through to later antiquity.

Many other statues and statuettes of Hercules, such as the *Statue* of Herakles holding three apples (Acc.147, marble statue) at the Hearst Museum or *Hercules Resting* (BR 652, bronze statuette) in the Louvre, represent the Weary Herakles of the Apples of the Hesperides type. These statues show Hercules resting his right arm behind him, grasping three apples. Specifically, they are large, spherical shapes of equal size and little decoration. However, these apples are both larger and less detailed than those of the Farnese, which have small folded leaves against the spherical body. Rather than apples, these spheres look more like brussel sprouts.

Cabbages both large and small were cultivated within the Mediterranean, in contexts known as 'Greek' and 'Roman' and have been identified in texts dating from the 6th c. BCE to the 4th c. CE (Maggioni et al. 2017). Texts such as Cato's *De Agricultura* (2nd c. BCE) has a long section on *brassica* and Varro's *De Re Rustica* (1st c. BCE) alludes that brassica

was commonly consumed not only for general health, but to stave off excessive drunkenness (1.16). Indeed, these authors state the existence and consumption of cabbages like brussels sprouts, but also allude to their use within comedy. Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistes*. (9.9) of the 3rd c. CE uses the term *κράμβη* to provide a humorous substitution for swearing by the gods. Additionally, paleobotanical remains of *Brassica oleracea* have been found from the Neolithic and Bronze Age in some small numbers but have been more confidently dated to the Roman period in Italy (Tomlinson and Hall 1996). Maggioni et al. (2010) identifies the domestication of *B. oleracea* in the northeastern Mediterranean based on linguistic, literary, and genetic evidence.

Based on this manipulation of language, the positioning of the Farnese Hercules within the Baths of Caracalla, and the knowledge that these 'apples' look far less like apples than they should, I argue that this may be signaling a language of visual humor that the viewer would recognize and parse with the story of Hercules. The evidence for this argument can be further attained through the contextualization of the statue within its artistic history, cultural practices, and the traditional cooking and eating practices outlined both by text and paleobotanicals.

Within this paper, I will analyze the Farnese Hercules in conjunction with other statues and statuettes of the Weary Herakles type and frame it within the tradition of Hellenistic Greek statuary, early and late Imperial Roman copies, and contextualize its reconstruction during the statues time with the Farnese family. By analyzing the statue's context, I hope to provide confirmation on the oddity of these 'apples' of the Farnese Hercules and to provide the necessary depth to this complex argument and articulation of various cultural contexts that play into the object biography of this statue. While the analysis may not definitively prove the deliberateness to depict cabbages in place of apples by Glykon, this paper serves to critically analyze

previous interpretations of the Farnese Hercules and illuminate the forethought of artists and authors in their characterization of the leafy, green *brassicae*.

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