INTRODUCTION

Finding the Female Portrait in Greek Art

When the famous Greek artist Zeuxis was commissioned by the people of Croton to paint a portrait of the great beauty Helen of Troy, the painter looked about for a suitable model. Not finding in any one woman alone the physical perfection he was seeking, Zeuxis blended the features of five women to produce his portrait of ideal female beauty. This fragmented strategy of artistic production, in which various elements from observable reality are combined, generalized, and improved upon to produce a more satisfying result, is one that pervades the discussion of image making in Greek art.[1] Images of women in particular seem to have been constructed in this way, perhaps because of the specific difficulties associated with the representation of feminine beauty, the defining feature of female identity. Indeed, the female portraits studied here clearly show that the individuality and personal characterization of the portrait subject was much less important than the representation of virtue and desirability that beauty was thought to portray. As Elizabeth Cropper has observed for the female portrait in Italian Renaissance painting, "the differences between the representation of beauty and the beauty represented are often elided, and, as a result, peculiar problems of identity and efficacy are attached to the interpretation of female portraiture."[2] So it is with the female portrait in Greek art.

This book is an attempt to reframe the history of Greek portraiture by moving away from its exclusive interest in male portraits and such questions as the development of physiognomic realism to focus on the portraits of women. Although female portrait statues were a major component of Greek sculptural production, particularly in the Hellenistic period, they are mostly missing from our histories of Greek portraiture. The life-size marble portrait statue of the priestess Aristonoe, for example, is arguably one of the most

fully documented portrait statues in Greek art (Figure 1, Chapter 1).[3] We know where and roughly when the statue was set up, and we know who dedicated it and why; and the three crucial components of any portrait statue monument – the head, the body, and the inscribed statue base – are in this case all preserved. The extent of our information about this portrait statue is in fact extraordinary, yet this monument plays no role in our histories of Greek portraiture, probably because Aristonoe's beautiful face differs little from the faces of countless other women – both mortal and divine – in Greek art. In defining their subjects according to normative ideals of beauty rather than notions of corporeal individuality, portraits of women work differently than portraits of men and must be approached with different expectations. Rather than excluding these images of women from the history of Greek portraiture, it is our conception of the portrait that needs to be critically engaged.[4]

It must be admitted at the outset, however, that the portrait statue of Aristonoe represents the exception rather than the rule for most of the material included in this book; that is, very few of the portraits presented here are preserved as a complete ensemble of base, body, and head. Indeed, given the real difficulty of identifying detached female heads as portraits based on their appearance alone, I have organized the material in a way that is different from most studies of Greek male portraiture, which tend to focus first and sometimes exclusively on the portrait heads. I begin instead with the epigraphic evidence, because the inscribed statue bases provide unequivocal evidence for the existence of portraits of women, particularly in the fourth century from which very little sculptural evidence is preserved. In fact, if we were to rely on the extant statues alone, we might conclude that female portraiture was a phenomenon only of the later Hellenistic period. The draped statues, which are indeed mainly Hellenistic or later in date, are dealt with next. A core number of these statues are securely identified as portraits based on a variety of factors, including context, scale, costume, and posture. Although some undocumented figures might be goddesses given the fact that the portrait statues of some women – in particular priestesses – could wear costumes that were similar to those worn by the goddesses they served, many of the draped figures are recognizable as mortal women by their scale and the real contemporary dress they wear. The portrait heads are presented last. Those heads that are still attached to draped bodies that are themselves widely accepted as portrait statues constitute the core examples; these include the statue of Aristonoe from Rhamnous, the portrait of Baebia from Magnesia, and a group of unidentified female portraits from Kos. Because these examples are all Hellenistic (or later) in date, it was necessary to organize the material in this chapter in reverse chronological order; the better-preserved and documented Hellenistic portraits are presented before the more exiguous evidence for the portraits of the late Classical period. Adhering to a more traditional chronological arrangement of

the material is in any case not warranted as the female portrait face appears not to have changed much if at all over time. Organizing the presentation of the material evidence in this way – inscribed bases first, then draped statue bodies, and lastly portrait heads – breaks these portrait monuments down into their constituent parts, each of which had a different role to play; the inscribed base provided the precise identity of the portrait subject, the scale and costume of the draped statue body indicated that the subject was a mortal woman, and the portrait head broadly signified not individual identity, as was the case with male portraiture, but ideal beauty.

Most of the sculptural material studied here has been previously published, and the draped statue bodies have been the subject of numerous studies, concerned mostly with issues of chronology, typology, and stylistic development.[5] Three recent studies, however, go well beyond this traditional focus on style and date, and have been crucial to the present project. The first is the short section on draped women in a chapter on goddesses and women in R. R. R. Smith's handbook of Hellenistic sculpture, published in 1991.[6] This is the first attempt, as far as I know, to place female portrait statues of the Hellenistic period within their broader social, historical, and art historical contexts. Many of the issues and problems with which this study is concerned are set out there in a few brief pages; I have returned to this analysis frequently during the writing of this book. I have also relied a great deal on the recent dissertation by J. Cordelia Eule on the statues of draped women from Hellenistic Asia Minor.[7] Her collection of more than two hundred inscribed statue bases was particularly helpful in identifying the material treated in Chapter 1, and her catalogue of draped statues provided a comprehensive and up-to-date compilation of the sculptural evidence. Eule focuses on the contextual evidence for Hellenistic female portrait statues in the cities of Asia Minor; her study is more comprehensive in terms of the sites that she surveys but more restricted both chronologically and geographically than what is offered here. Finally, Joan Connelly's *Portrait of a Priestess* has also been an important source of information during the final stages of researching and writing.[8] Connelly's study has very different interests and aims than this book, but it deals with many of the same statues and inscriptions. I also find myself sympathetic to her suggestion that it might be more helpful to understand the Archaic *korai* as precursors to the draped women of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods. In many ways such a diachronic view makes good sense, especially because the later portrait statues were almost all votive dedications set up in sanctuary contexts, as were the earlier Archaic statues. The later statues, which represent a range of subjects, also suggest however that not all of the Acropolis *korai* need represent either priestesses or cult agents, as Connelly suggests.[9]

The present study also builds on my recent book on Greek male portraiture of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, which sought to expand the range of

images used to write the history of Greek portraiture and to complicate the notion of the portrait primarily as likeness by exploring the range of strategies used to construct male portrait identity.[10] A similar theoretical framework informs my approach here, and although this book focuses on images of women, I have tried to situate these female portraits within this larger history of Greek portraiture. As in that earlier study, I am less concerned here with tracing the stylistic development of the draped statues and with the precise dating of individual examples; not only have these aspects of this material been well studied by others, but I also believe that most of this material cannot be closely dated based on style alone. This book, which is the first detailed analysis of the female portrait in Greek art, also differs from previous studies in its broader chronological range – from the late Classical to the Roman period – in its serious consideration of the portrait heads, in its engagement with the epigraphic evidence in a book concerned primarily with sculpture, and in its integration of the evidence for the representation of mortal women from terra-cotta figurines and gravestones. My focus is primarily on the portraits of nonroyal women; not only is there little evidence for the representation of Hellenistic queens outside of Ptolemaic Egypt, but also the portraits of the civic elite, I argue, seem not to have been dependent on or derived from royal models. The overarching goal of the project is to explore the historical phenomenon of the commemoration of women in portrait statues, but I am also interested in how the study of these images might help us to understand the ways in which the Greeks articulated the relationship between a portrait and a person and how that relationship was shaped by the gender of the portrait subject.

Ultimately this study has its origins in the fieldwork I carried out at the site of Aphrodisias in Turkey from 1992 until 2004, first as a graduate student and then as a staff member of the sculpture study team. It was conceived and is written from a deeply materialist perspective, from my own physical and intellectual engagement with the fragmentary remains of ancient portrait sculpture. Indeed, I first became aware of and interested in the idealizing or generic style of female portraiture while working on the catalogue of the Roman portrait statuary from Aphrodisias.[11] During the course of studying the female portraits from the site for publication, it became clear that some fragmentary female heads were difficult to categorize definitively as portraits of mortal women rather than as images of goddesses based on their appearance alone. Indeed, a number of the female heads from Aphrodisias that had already been published in Jale Inan and Elizabeth Rosenbaum's 1979 catalogue of Roman portraits from Turkey were designated "not portraits" ("keine Porträts") by Klaus Fittschen in his review of that volume.[12] Although Fittschen acknowledged that such ideal-looking heads may well have been portraits, citing the well-known example of Plancia Magna from Perge, he

concluded that such a portrait conception had little if anything to tell us about the history of Roman portraiture, but rather belonged to the history of religion. This assertion seemed to me to impose a very narrow view on what our portrait histories should look like. For me this style of portrait image raised all sorts of interesting questions with which the study of ancient portraiture ought to be concerned. This then was the impetus for the current project – on the one hand to address the very practical matter of deciding which heads to include in the catalogue of portraits from Aphrodisias, and on the other hand to explore the broader history of a style of portraiture used regularly for images of women from at least the late Classical period that had been completely overlooked.

The first chapter sets out the evidence for the historical practice of dedicating portrait statues of women in Greek cities and sanctuaries from the late Classical period until the late Hellenistic period (fourth–early first centuries BCE), mainly comprising the material remains of inscribed statue bases. The aim of this chapter is to explore when and why women were honored with portrait statues and who might make such dedications, and to look at the range of display contexts in which such statues might be set up. I focus primarily on a handful of sites that have yielded an abundance of inscribed statue bases: Athens, Priene, Pergamon, and Delos. I also consider aspects of the statues' manufacture, including medium, scale, and the role of color, and attempt to recombine the typically now disparate elements – head, body, and base – into a complete monument standing in a public place. Topped by a statue that might be 2 meters tall, these were physically imposing and conspicuously public monuments, which the fragmentary state of the remains and the way we study them tend to obscure.

Chapter 2 surveys the various portrait costumes and statue formats used for the portraits of women from the late Classical to the late Hellenistic period. Portrait statues of women in Greek art were always clothed – nudity was the costume of the beautiful male body. Nudity in female portraiture, a focus of considerable scholarly attention, was a later Roman phenomenon, a costume that never seems to have been used for female portraits in the Greek East. In Greek portraiture, the beautiful female body was always lavishly but modestly covered. In fact, the draped bodies of Greek female portrait statues exhibit such an astonishing range of variation in costume format and statue pose that the statue body would seem to have been the place where female individuality and personal identity were articulated. Of particular interest is a new style of dress that was in fact invented during this period specifically for the portrait statues of women. It consisted of a thin, nearly transparent mantle, made probably of fine Coan silk or Egyptian linen, worn over a long full dress of thicker material. The skill with which the different textures and weights of the fabrics were rendered by sculptors represents a striking technical innovation in Greek

sculpture and shows the importance of this new fashion as a symbol of luxury and affluence.

Shifting the focus away from issues of chronology and stylistic development, I argue that the combination of idealized face and rounded shapely body wrapped in copious amounts of semitransparent drapery created a palpable tension in these portrait statues between appropriate female modesty and sexual attractiveness, between self-restraint and erotic charm. This tension shaped and animated the public image of elite women, for whom it was necessary to be both conspicuously dressed and publicly visible, while also maintaining the ideology of feminine modesty. Women are in fact praised in literature and inscriptions for their *sōphrosunē*, a constellation of virtues that comprised chastity, modesty, obedience, and inconspicuous behavior. Contemporary treatises advise women against dressing in transparent clothing made of imported silk, just the kind of clothing they appear to be wearing in these statues. I work to situate the public display of the beautifully dressed female body within this apparently contradictory discourse of appropriate feminine behavior.

Chapter 3 examines the style and presentation of female portrait heads and explores the aims and effects of constructing portrait identity through the homogenizing language of female beauty. I also consider how the prevailing social norms of feminine modesty and chastity might have impinged on sculptors' accessibility to female subjects, and the role that the practice of veiling may have played in the public presentation of the female face in portraiture. Whereas male portraiture, particularly in the Hellenistic period, mostly aimed to present the features of an apparently recognizable individual, this more nuanced realism and intensified individuality were not deployed for the portraits of women. The power structure operating in contemporary male portraiture that linked differentiation and an apparently real-looking physiognomy with personal identity and the expression of inner psychology seems to have had no purchase here. Defined by ideals of physical beauty, the faces of female portraits were confined to a narrow representational range; sameness rather than individuality is their defining feature. In contrast to male portraiture, which had to represent many more social categories and age groups, female portraits divided their subjects into only two broad groups: young women before marriage and married women and mothers. The homogeneity of female portraiture was, therefore, socially determined. It surely also had something to do with female statue making. That is, whereas a male portrait was probably made by matching image to subject at some point during the process, the model for a female portrait was probably not the subject herself but another image, one in which the appropriate representational conventions had already been worked out. Such an indirect approach to female image making is also implied by the story of Zeuxis; the people of Croton take him first to the place where artists must have frequently gone when they wanted to study the human body – the gymnasium.

In Chapter 4, I examine the continued use of the generic female portrait in the Roman period, with a focus on portrait statues of women from the sanctuary of Artemis Polo on the island of Thasos and from the cities of Aphrodisias and Perge. With the development in the late Republican period of a sharply objective manner of portrait representation for women, women now had a choice between the more generic Greek style of portrayal and a more individualized, "real"-looking portrait face with an imperial fashion hairstyle in emulation of Roman Imperial models. In the Roman West, the "not portrait" style of portrait seems not to have been regularly used, whereas in the Greek East both options seem to have been available, and both appear to have been regularly chosen. From second-century CE Perge, for instance, we have the well-known example of Plancia Magna, a powerful figure who sponsored a number of important public buildings and who clearly had close ties to Rome but who was represented in the traditional Greek style of portrait with a face devoid of individualizing features. This appears to have been something of a trend in second-century Perge, because other local women were similarly represented. At Aphrodisias, the situation appears to have been more varied and complex. Here only a few portrait statues fully utilize the idealizing Hellenic style of female portraiture; most others adopt contemporary Roman fashion hairstyles but tend to pair them with a strongly idealized physiognomy. Thasos, on the other hand, seems to have been mostly untouched by the new Roman style of female portrait; indeed, the votive portrait statues set up in the sanctuary of Artemis show strong continuity with the Greek past in both the form of the monuments and their style.

The evidence for the female portrait in Greek art is just as fragmented and fragmentary as was Zeuxis' image of Helen. We might indeed learn something from Zeuxis' strategy of artful recombination. That is, to comprehend fully these portrait statues as the impressive standing monuments they once were, heads need bodies, bodies need heads, costumes need color, statues need bases, and bases need statues. Sanctuaries and civic spaces need their statue monuments. Interpretations need, of course, to be fully grounded in the material evidence, but some imaginative reconstruction and recombination of the fragmentary remains can provide us with a better understanding of the visual impact of these statues. Further, because of the importance of inscriptions and inscribed statue bases to the understanding of these portrait monuments, this study is also an argument for the importance of working across disciplines and historical periods and for venturing well beyond one's own field of expertise. Although this book focuses primarily on female portraits from Greece and the Greek East, it is hoped that it has a contribution to make to the study of Roman portraiture. I would argue, for example, that female portraiture of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods was a key source of inspiration for the representation of Roman women, particularly in the early Imperial period. It is also to be hoped that a book on the female portrait in Greek art will

be of interest to art historians specializing in later periods, particularly those concerned with the changing conventions of female representation. Although these art historians tend to trace such representational strategies as allegory and idealized beauty to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian conventions of female portraiture,[13] this work will show their roots in the visual culture of classical antiquity.

CHAPTER 1

Portrait Honors for Women in Late Classical and Hellenistic Greece

[S]imo, wife of Zoilos, priestess of Dionysos before the city, daughter of Pankratides, set up this image (*eikōn*) of beauty and example of virtue and wealth, as an eternal memorial for my children and ancestors.[14]

—Phaidimos, son of Phaidimos
Meniske his own daughter, to Apollo.[15]

When Simo, wife of Zoilos, set up her own portrait statue in Erythrae in Asia Minor in the fourth or third century BCE, she was explicit about her reasons for dedicating the monument, and the effects she intended it to have. The image was an *eikōn*, a likeness, which demonstrated visually – and in perpetuity – Simo's beauty and virtue. The monument itself was tangible, physical proof of Simo's great wealth – in the late fourth century, a bronze portrait statue, which this may well have been, cost 3,000 drachmas, a significant sum of money to invest in an object that was in essence useless.[16] The heavy stone base on which the statue stood and the statue itself – a life size hunk of metal or marble – were, however, the best insurance against the loss of one's memory, a sentiment plainly expressed in the statue's inscription; the statue would still be there standing on its base long after the subject was gone, an immortal and immovable reminder to one's ancestors (and anyone else who stopped to see it) of an individual's now absent presence. Simo was forward-thinking in other ways as well. The tradition of setting up votive portrait statues of women had, as we shall see, only begun in the fourth century, and thus Simo's statue is an early example of this new trend in dedications. In fact, if the inscription is correctly dated to the fourth century, she was also one of the first women to dedicate her own portrait statue, or at least one of the first to tell us that she did so.

Phaidimos, in contrast, tells us very little about the dedication of the statue of his daughter Meniske, which was made sometime after 166 BCE and set up in front of the Portico of Antigonos on the island of Delos. The statue itself is not explicitly mentioned, nor is the reason or occasion for the dedication. The inscription simply states who set up the statue and to whom it was dedicated, a votive formula well known from the Archaic period. It also names the subject of the portrait statue, a new piece of information that was added to votive inscriptions beginning, as we shall see, in the late Classical period. And although there are a handful of more detailed and loquacious inscriptions like Simo's, the majority of statue bases utilize this concise, almost shorthand form.[17] Such simple labels – "Phaidimos to Apollo his own daughter Meniske" – have the effect of collapsing the distance between text and image, so that in some fundamental way the statue *is* Meniske. Ancient writers do much the same when they speak about statues as people.[18] The inscription on a portrait statue base provides essential information about the subject of the statue that is not given by the figure itself – namely, who this statue is and why it is here. The words that were included in the inscription, those that were left out, and their formulation can also give us some insight into how these statues were viewed and what they were thought to mean.[19]

The aim of this chapter is to survey the epigraphic and archaeological evidence for the portrait statues of women in the form of inscribed stone statue bases. Although the statues that stood on these bases are in most cases not preserved, the inscribed bases provide crucial evidence for the historical development of female portrait statues, particularly for the fourth century from which little sculptural evidence is preserved. Many of the extant draped portrait statues of women are Hellenistic in date, and much of this sculpture has been found outside of its original display context. The statue bases, which are sometimes found in or near their original location or preserve the name of the divinity to which they were dedicated, help us to reconstruct the range of display contexts in which female portrait statues would have been set up. The inscriptions also give us the names of the various individuals who were responsible for dedicating these monuments and sometimes the reason or occasion for the honor. Some bases preserve evidence on their upper surface of the material from which the portrait was made; although most of the preserved statuary is marble, the bases show that bronze was also used for statues of women. In addition, the inscriptions can sometimes provide another means of dating the portrait statues, either by the names of the sculptors or the names of officials sometimes mentioned in the inscriptions.[20] The bases, then, allow us to study the commemoration of women in portraiture both historically and archaeologically and provide an important supplement to the dating of the extant statuary evidence by sculptural style.

I have chosen to focus primarily on the evidence from the following sites: Athens, Priene, Pergamon, and Delos. Athens and Priene are particularly