Women and Visual Replication in Roman Imperial Art and Culture

Why did Roman portrait statues, famed for their individuality, repeatedly employ the same body forms? The complex issue of the Roman copying of Greek “originals” has so far been studied primarily from a formal and aesthetic viewpoint. Jennifer Trimble takes a broader perspective, considering archaeological, social historical, and economic factors, and examines how these statues were made, bought, and seen. To understand how Roman visual replication worked, Trimble focuses on the “Large Herculaneum Woman” statue type – a draped female body particularly common in the second century CE and surviving in about 200 examples – to assess how sameness helped to communicate a woman’s social identity. She demonstrates how visual replication in the Roman Empire thus emerged as a means of constructing social power and articulating dynamic tensions between empire and individual localities.

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GREEK CULTURE IN THE ROMAN WORLD

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The Greek culture of the Roman Empire offers a rich field of study. Extraordinary insights can be gained into processes of multicultural contact and exchange, political and ideological conflict, and the creativity of a changing, polyglot empire. During this period, many fundamental elements of Western society were being set in place: from the rise of Christianity, to an influential system of education, to long-lived artistic canons. This series is the first to focus on the response of Greek culture to its Roman imperial setting as a significant phenomenon in its own right. To this end, it will publish original and innovative research in the art, archaeology, epigraphy, history, philosophy, religion, and literature of the empire, with an emphasis on Greek material.

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JENNIFER TRIMBLE
To my parents
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Acknowledgments

This book took form with the help of many advisors, colleagues, and friends to whom I owe far greater thanks than can be expressed here. It has its roots in a dissertation that Elaine Gazda advised with an inspiring combination of openness and rigor. Insights, challenges, and help from Julia Adams, Susan Alcock, Tonio Hölscher, and David Potter shaped that work for the better. Throughout the book’s writing, Jaś Elsner was unfailingly generous with stimulating ideas, comments on drafts, and patience. Susan Alcock, Jaś Elsner, and Melissa Bailey read the entire manuscript in draft and offered valuable critiques. Jonathan Mitchelmore, and then Jodie Barnes and Frances Brown for Cambridge University Press, provided great help with copy-editing and proof-reading. Colleagues at Stanford have changed the way I think; it is a pleasure to thank especially Ian Morris, Walter Scheidel, and Maud Gleason. While writing the book, I benefited from discussions with graduate students at Stanford, including David Platt, Lidewijde de Jong, Danielle Steen, Sarah Levin-Richardson, Darian Totten, Melissa Bailey, and Corisande Fenwick. Rolf Schneider offered key suggestions at critical junctures. For helpful comments and advice, I am grateful to Tina Najbjerg, Greg Woolf, Tally Kampen, Susanne Muth, Glenys Davies, Andrew Wilson, Michael Dietler, and Bissera Pentcheva. I particularly appreciate the continuous support of my home department of Classics at Stanford. Stanford University generously provided research time through the Junior Faculty Leave program, and I thank the Fellows of Corpus Christi College at Oxford University for a stimulating term spent there. At every step, Deborah Beck was an acute commentator on ideas and academic life, and an extraordinary friend. Family and friends make life worth living and a book more fun to write; I am especially grateful to my parents and siblings for their unflagging interest over many years. For his tremendous love and support in the final stages, I thank my life partner, Philip Heller.