

CONSTRUCTING REALISM: THE CONTEMPORARY GAZE IN HELLENISTIC
ART AND POETRY

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In

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Alice Jessica Chapman

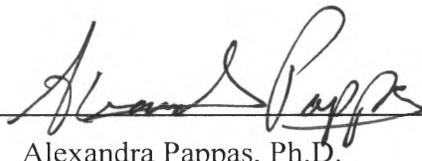
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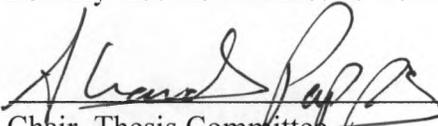
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CONSTRUCTING REALISM: THE CONTEMPORARY GAZE IN HELLENISTIC
ART AND POETRY

Alice Jessica Chapman
San Francisco, California
2015

This paper explores the relationship between Hellenistic *ekphrasis* and contemporary sculpture. It posits that Hellenistic artists working in both media used references to Archaic and Classical sources alongside references to contemporary events and situations to turn the gaze of the viewer back onto contemporary society. By orienting the gaze of the viewer in this way, the artist created a deeper understanding of Hellenistic culture and society through a mixing of the old and the new.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.


Chair, Thesis Committee

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Introduction: Ptolemaic Alexandria

This thesis creates a conversation between Hellenistic literature and contemporary sculpture to highlight the desire of artists to create a clear and integrated picture of the Hellenistic world for their audience, which included both contemporary images and the traditional forms of Archaic and Classical Greece. Although we mostly rely on Roman copies of Hellenistic originals for the study of Hellenistic sculpture and thus lose the context for these objects, Hellenistic literature can often be traced to large cities, the most important of which is the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt, Alexandria. This thesis focuses specifically on two poets working in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy II (309-246 b.c.), Herodas and Theocritus, both of whom addressed the Hellenistic landscape in new and enlightening ways. Examining these works alongside pieces of Hellenistic sculpture brings to light the intention of artists working in different media to understand the city around them and to bring that understanding to their audiences.

The Hellenistic kingdoms, founded after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 b.c., provided a unique and complicated landscape for contemporary poets and visual artists to traverse. The conquests of Alexander the Great spread Greek culture and enforced Greek rule in lands as widely spread as Egypt, Greece and the western boarder of India. After Alexander's death, kingdoms including the Seleucid, Attalid, Antigonid and Ptolemaic, took control of this vast empire, each hoping to subjugate the other kingdoms under its own rule. This new world provided artists with many challenges with which they were forced to contend in their works, as well as opportunities to grow and

develop existing art forms. For example, the foundation of kingdoms encouraged artists to travel much more broadly in safety, and we begin to see an emergence of artistic centers in what, only 50-100 years earlier, would have been the outskirts of the Greek world, where wealthy patrons tempted artists away from previous strongholds of artistic production like Athens. Artists were drawn to centers of learning where they could expect royal patronage as well as access to the first collections of Archaic and Classical Greek texts. On the other hand, diverse populations and changing cities created challenges for visual and literary artists, who had to contend with new audiences and experiences. In Hellenistic Alexandria, visual and literary artists grappled with integrating the ideas of the older Archaic and Classical texts and artworks with the new modern city and the different populations that inhabited it. Ultimately, as this thesis argues, visual and literary artists directed the gaze of their audiences in new and instructive ways, in order that they see the Hellenistic world as a mixture of the old and the new.¹ In this chapter, I provide a framework for my discussion of artistic production in Hellenistic Alexandria by discussing the history of the city, its foundation, and its population.

Alexander the Great founded the city of Alexandria on the island between the Mediterranean Sea and the Mareotis River in 331 b.c. He built Alexandria around the port city of Rhakotis, an Egyptian village with a deep harbor often utilized to dock large ships.

¹ This is more fully discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

Rhakotis was a highly advantageous port since there was no fear of approaching ships running aground and it was protected by two surrounding landmasses (figure 1).²

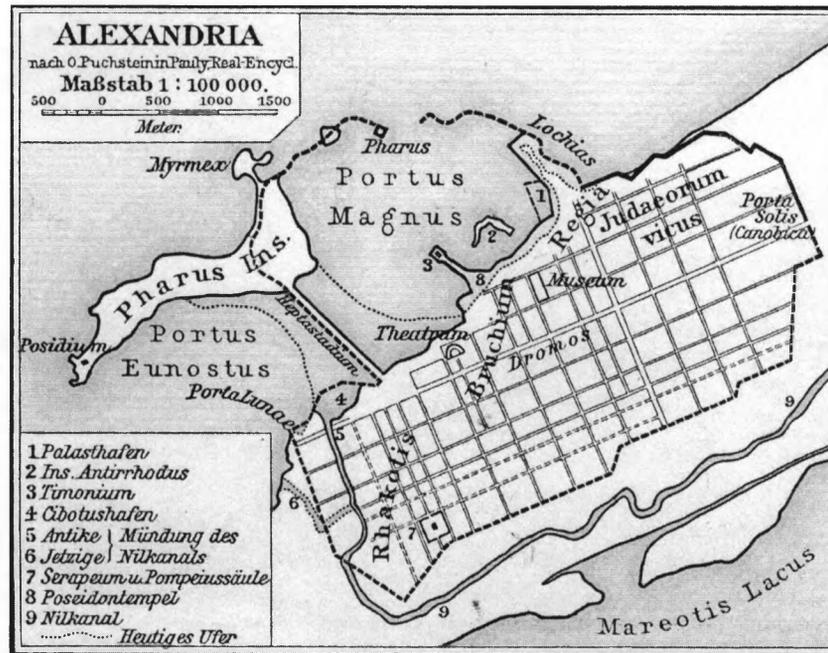


Figure 1: Map of the city of Alexandria

Later, Rhakotis was integrated into the plan of the city and became its Egyptian quarter. The placement of the city, in the Nile Delta on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, allowed it to thrive as the gateway between the Greek world and the Nile Valley. A few months after founding the city, Alexander the Great left his new capital to his viceroy Cleomenes, who continued with the city's creation and expansion. The great architect and city planner Dinocrates of Rhodes (late fourth century b.c.) designed the city in a

² Map from Putzger (1901).

Hippodamian grid plan.³ Unlike earlier city plans, which allowed the city to grow up organically, the Hippodamian grid plan, which was used as early as 460 b.c. to design the Piraeus harbor in Attica, created an ordered and organized rectangular grid with wide streets and centralized public spaces. The plan of Alexandria was based around a central Canopic road, which ran east to west along the spine of the city⁴ and another wider road, which ran north to south and intersected the Canopic road near the center of the city.⁵

Although historically it seems that Alexander the Great had little to do with the creation of Alexandria, since he left soon after he founded it, later authors like Plutarch describe the mythical foundation of the city as a prophetic and divine intervention by literary heroes of the Greek past. In his *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch (46-120 c.e) describes the foundation of Alexandria as the fulfillment of a dream, in which Alexander was visited by the poet Homer and told the location of his future capital: εἶτα νύκτωρ κοιμώμενος ὄψιν εἶδε θαυμαστήν ἀνὴρ πολιοῦς εὖ μάλα τὴν κόμην καὶ γεραρὸς τὸ εἶδος ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ παραστάς λέγειν τὰ ἔπη τάδε: νῆσος ἔπειτά τις ἔστι πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ,/ Αἰγύπτου προπάροιθε: Φάρον δέ ἐ κικλήσκουσιν: “In the night, when he was sleeping, he saw the wonderful vision. A grey-haired man with a majestic figure appeared to stand beside him and say these things: there is some island in the stormy sea, in front of Egypt and men call it Pharos.”⁶ In his description of the dream, Plutarch uses a quote

³ See map on page 8.

⁴ Luisa Ferro and Giulio Magli posit that the orientation of this road was deliberately placed to correspond to the direction of the rising sun on Alexander the Great’s birthday (2012), 387.

⁵ Strabo, *Geographica*, 17.8.

⁶ Plut. *Alex.* 26.3.

from the *Odyssey*, νῆσος ἔπειτά τις ἔστι πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ,/ Αἰγύπτου προπάροιθε: Φάρον δέ ἐ κικλήσκουσιν: “there is some island in the stormy sea, in front of Egypt: and men call it Pharos,”⁷ and turns it into a prophecy for Alexander, making Alexander into a modern day Odysseus and creating a parallel between Hellenistic monarchs and the Homeric kings of the Greek past. Although this foundation myth was written long after the actual foundation of the city, it can be instructive in understanding the way that the city was viewed even in antiquity. Plutarch implies that Alexandria was destined to be a center for learning even from the moment of its foundation and connects it with the great literary tradition of Ancient Greece. Further, Plutarch implies that Alexandria was quintessentially a Greek city, connected to Greek tradition through Homer. By invoking Homer, he legitimizes the scholarly prowess of the city even though it is outside of what is traditionally seen as the Greek territories.

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 b.c., one of his six *Somatophylakes*, personal bodyguards, Ptolemy of Macedon, took control of Egypt and made Alexandria his capital. After a series of victories in the Wars of the Diadochi (322-275 b.c.), which were fought by Alexander’s successors in order to define their territory, Ptolemy successfully held his lands in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Cyprus. Taking the name Ptolemy I Soter, or “savior,” Ptolemy I was the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty that would rule Egypt from 305 b.c. until its defeat by the Roman Octavian in 30 b.c. Ptolemy I began

⁷ Hom.*Od.* 4.354-355.

his reign by claiming and rehousing the dead body of Alexander first in Memphis and then in the communal mausoleum of Alexandria. This act both legitimized the rule of Ptolemy I and connected the foreign land of Egypt directly with the Greek mainland and the Greek past. The body of Alexander served both to distinguish the kingdom of Ptolemy I and his successors as distinctly Hellenistic, but also to endow it with a Macedonian past and link it to all the lands conquered by Alexander the Great.

After Ptolemy I died in 283b.c., his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (309-246b.c.) took control of Egypt and created a lavish court where poets like Theocritus, Callimachus and Herodas studied and worked.⁸ Made wealthy by the trade in and out of the harbor, Ptolemy II transformed Alexandria into a center for Hellenistic learning by building a large *Museum* and Library, founded by his father, which promoted the study and preservation of materials from Archaic and Classical Greece. As Peter Fraser illustrates, both the *Museum* and the Library in Alexandria were designed by Ptolemy I Soter under the direction of the peripatetic orator and Athenian king Demetrius of Phalerum, but were later built during the reign of Ptolemy II.⁹ Both the Library and *Museum* formed the large academic complex that was at the heart of Alexandrian scholarship and artistic production. This complex housed scholars working in both literary and scientific fields,

⁸ Although these artists were working in Egypt, Alan E. Samuel (1983), 68, suggests that very little of the artistic output from this time is influenced by Egyptian themes or populations and seems to speak specifically to a Greek audience.

⁹ Fraser (1972), 315. Jensen (2009), 80, argues however that it was founded and built completely by Ptolemy I Soter.

who were able to devote their lives to academia.¹⁰ With the ready patronage of the royal family, artists were able to produce new works as well as catalog and copy vast amounts of Greek text. The physician Galen (129-200 c.e.) recounts that Ptolemy II was so desirous of new texts to add to his library that he ordered that all scrolls brought into the city be seized from their owners and immediately copied.¹¹ Further, Roger Bagnall asserts that the library contained works not only in Greek but also from surrounding cultures and in different languages.¹² It is within the context of these academic spaces and in this culture of academic vigor that many scholars posit the literary works of poets like Callimachus, Theocritus and Herodas were produced and later performed and read.

Outside of this elite academic environment, the city of Alexandria itself was divided along racial and social lines into five districts: the Alpha and Beta districts were reserved for the royal palace complex, the Gamma district was occupied by the native Egyptian population and was on the site of the original city of Rhakotis, the Delta district was home to a large Jewish population and the Epsilon district was a suburban area inhabited mostly by rich Greeks (figure 2).¹³

¹⁰ Jensen (2009), 81.

¹¹ Fraser (1972), 325.

¹² Bagnall (2002), 361.

¹³ Adams (2006), 41.

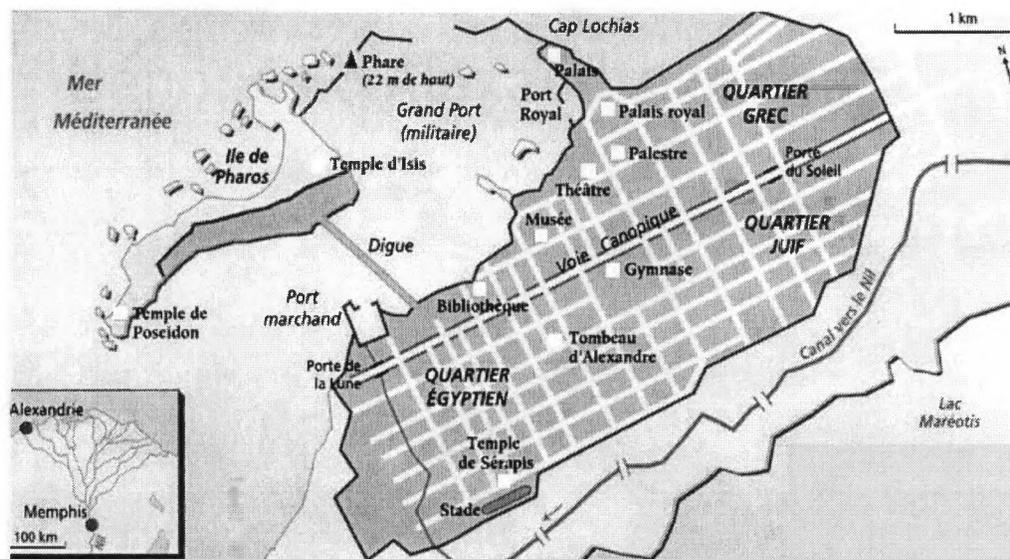


Figure 2: Plan of the city of Alexandria showing districts

This sense of division is also facilitated by the Hippodamian plan of the city, which created royal, sacred, and public zones separate from areas of housing. The division of spaces within the city is palpable especially in *Idyll XV* of Theocritus, as he describes two women's journey from the residential area of their homes, through the crowded streets and into the sacred palace complex of Arsinoe II.¹⁴

Not only did artists have to confront physical divisions of space, but also major differences in gender roles and political structures. As Sarah Pomeroy discusses in her book *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, the introduction of the Egyptian monarchy created a space for women in the previously male domain of politics and forced citizen men, who used to participate actively in the political realm, to retreat back into the domestic

¹⁴ This *Idyll* is discussed further in chapter 2. Map from De Hann and Mols (2011).

sphere.¹⁵ This role reversal created a new academic interest in women authors, like Sappho and Erinna, and inspired male authors to incorporate voices and images of contemporary females into their works in new ways.¹⁶ Greek citizens were also faced with political challenges when they were asked to accept the practices of the Egyptian Pharaohs. As Frederick Griffiths points out, many aspects of the Egyptian political system, like marriage between brothers and sisters and self-deification, were unacceptable to the Greek mindset and artists were left to navigate the space between patrons and audiences.¹⁷ As Susan Stephens points out, the poets working in the courts of Alexandria were willfully participating in a dialogue, using traditional themes and language, to comment on Egyptian court practices and reconcile them with archaic standards.¹⁸

This thesis examines both visual and literary arts in the Hellenistic period to understand the artist's engagement with the contemporary city of Alexandria. More specifically, this project addresses viewer supplementation, the process by which an audience fills in narrative gaps in both visual and literary arts with images from imagination and memory, in both literary ekphrases and Hellenistic sculpture, to posit that artists working in the Hellenistic period were making a deliberate effort to affect the gaze of the audience in new ways. By manipulating modes of viewing, artists were able

¹⁵ Pomeroy (1984), 82.

¹⁶ For more on Erinna see chapter 2.

¹⁷ Griffiths (1979), 85.

¹⁸ Stephens (2003), 73.

to integrate the modern city of Alexandria into the traditional Greek worldview by fusing the past and present using Archaic and Classical models imbued with contemporary elements. This gaze, generated using both contemporary and past images, became a metaphor for the city of Alexandria itself and helped the audience more thoroughly understand the culture and society in Hellenistic Alexandria.

To achieve this goal, this thesis has two distinct halves. In the first, I examine the fourth *Mimiambos* of Herodas alongside Hellenistic sculpture in the baroque, rococo and veristic styles. I argue that Hellenistic poets and artists used viewer supplementation to turn the critical gaze of the viewer back onto contemporary society. Using a comparison between the objects described by the two women narrators, Kynno and Kokkale, and actual objects from the corpus of Hellenistic sculpture, I posit that artists were using these descriptions and objects to give their audience the tools visual tools necessary to navigate the rapidly changing world of which they were a part.

In the second half, I argue, using Theocritus *Idyll XV* and contemporary representations of women, that artists not only sought to direct the gaze of the viewer towards contemporary society, but used a mixture of past and present elements to help the viewer understand the nature of the city of Alexandria itself, which was not strictly Greek nor solely Egyptian. In this chapter, representations of women are essential to the artist's renderings of the changing landscape of their world, since women's roles are changing alongside other societal and political changes. The artist uses confusion and

brevity to encourage the audience to blend supplemented images of past and present in the mind's eye and ultimately to turn that mixed view back onto contemporary society.

Now I will turn to a closer examination of Herodas *IV*.

Hellenistic Sculpture and Ekphrasis in Herodas IV

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 b.c. a series of monarchies came to dominate the Mediterranean social and political landscape. Greek identity, previously embedded within the structured system of the Greek *polis*, was threatened by foreign intervention into the Greek social hierarchy. Greek artists and intellectuals, enticed by the wealth of new kings, like those ruling the Ptolemaic dynasty in Alexandria, began to move away from the Greek mainland and towards the edges of the previously established Greek world. There, in newly formed cities, they encountered foreign peoples like Jews, Egyptians, and Persians who inhabited the same geographical area. They also came across immense disparities in wealth and social stratification.¹⁹ Faced with these new challenges, Greek artists and writers sought to renegotiate the position of the Greek intellectual within the Hellenistic world. To this end, they created artworks that both connected them to the Archaic and Classical Greek past and forged them a new place in the evolving Hellenistic intellectual landscape. Within this chapter I examine Hellenistic literary ekphrasis, the poetic description of a work of art, to reveal how Hellenistic artists, working both in literary and visual media, used the rhetorical tools of the Classical Greek world to turn the gaze of the viewer towards contemporary society as well as connect the audience with the Greek past. Specifically, I examine the short ekphrastic passages found in *Mimiambos IV* of Herodas in conjunction with Hellenistic marble sculptures to argue

¹⁹ For more on Hellenistic Alexandria see Gutzwiller (2007), Fantuzzi (2004), Scheidel (2004), Stephens (2003), Samuel (1983), and Fraser (1972).

that artists used these media to shift the gaze of the audience onto aspects of everyday life in contemporary society.

During the reign of the Ptolemaic kings (312-221 b.c.), Alexandria was the cultural and economic center of the Mediterranean world, made rich by its land holdings among the Aegean Islands and its trade relationships in Asia and Africa.²⁰ Under the patronage of Ptolemy II (283-246B.C.), Alexandria became a great center for learning, housing both a *Museum*, an institution in which scholars from around the Greek world could conduct scientific research and study literature, and Library, which played host to some of the greatest minds of the Hellenistic world including the poets Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius.²¹ Despite the desire on the part of the monarchy to create a fundamentally Greek city which espoused Mediterranean values, Alexandria remained a city geographically divided by cultural, racial, and social boundaries. As Susan Stephens discusses, a surge of immigrants during the reign of Ptolemy II left Alexandria without a distinct cultural identity.²² The disjunction between different racial and social groups can be seen especially in the plan of the city, which divided various groups into five zones, creating distinct spaces for aristocratic Greeks, who lived in lavish double storied houses, and impoverished Jews, Greeks, and Egyptians, who lived in three-story tenements first introduced to the city by Ptolemy I.²³ It is in the context of this city, divided both

²⁰ Fraser (1972), 132.

²¹ Ibid, 305.

²² Stephens (2010), 47.

²³ Tomlinson (2007), 309. See map on page 8 for a map of Alexandria with marked districts.

culturally and economically, that we must understand the *Mimiambi* of Herodas and the marble sculpture of Hellenistic artists.

Although the biography of Herodas is not attested, most scholars believe that he composed his *Mimiambi* in the third century b.c. in or near Ptolemaic Alexandria or perhaps in Kos.²⁴ His *Mimiambi* consists of eight long fragments written in dialogue that cover a wide range of subjects from contemporary life. Here, I focus exclusively on *Mimiamb IV*, in which two women visit an Asclepeion, a Greek sanctuary dedicated to the God Asclepius and his healing powers. As Ian Cunningham describes it, this poem was written in a ring composition, in which the ekphrasis contained within the poem is framed by religious ceremony related to the Asclepic cultic ritual.²⁵ The two participants in the ritual, Kynno and Kokkale, stop to admire the marvelous artworks contained within the temple and discuss them with one another. It is within this context that the ekphrasis is housed (27-38):

Κο: ὄρη, φίλη, τὴν παῖδα τὴν ἄνω κείνην
 βλέπουσαν ἐς τὸ μῆλον· οὐκ ἐρεῖς αὐτήν,
 ἦν μὴ λάβῃ τὸ μῆλον ἐκ τάχα ψύξειν;-
 κείνον δέ, Κυνοῖ, τὸν γέροντα· - πρὸς Μοιρέων 30
 τὴν χηναλώπεκ' ὡς τὸ παιδίον πνίγει.
 πρὸ τῶν ποδῶν γοῦν εἴ τι μὴ λίθος, τοῦργον,
 ἐρεῖς, λαλήσει. μᾶ, χρόνον κοτ' ὄνθρωποι
 κῆς τοὺς λίθους ἔξουσι τὴν ζοὴν θεῖναι –
 τὸν Βατάλης γὰρ τοῦτον, οὐχ ὄρη, Κυνοῖ, 35
 ὅκως βέβηκεν, ἀνδριάντα τῆς Μύττεω;
 εἰ μὴ τις αὐτὴν εἶδε Βατάλην, βλέψας

²⁴ Esposito (2010), Ussher (1985), and Headlam (1922) argue that Herodas lived and worked in Alexandria or Kos. Cunningham (2004) claims that there is no evidence that Herodas should be associated with Ptolemaic Egypt.

²⁵ For more discussion of the religious context of this poem, see Headlam (1922).

ἐς τοῦτο τὸ εἰκόνημα μὴ ἐτύμης δείσθω.

Ko. Look, dear, at that girl over there
 Gazing towards the apple; wouldn't you say that she
 Will faint straight away if she does not seize the apple? –
 And there, Kynno, that old man; - suitable for the Fates
 How the boy strangles the goose.
 If it were not stone, upon closer inspection, one would say
 That the sculpture could speak. Someday, in time, men
 Will be able to fashion a living thing from stones
 Do you not see, Kynno, that this statue,
 Walks like Batale daughter of Myttes?
 If someone had not seen Batale, when they looked upon
 This image, he would not be in need of her herself.

In this passage, Kokkale focuses on the description of four specific artworks; she sees a statue of a young girl reaching for an apple, an old man, a boy strangling a goose and finally a portrait statue of Batale, probably a local woman. By using the description of artworks in his *Mimiamb*, Herodas constructs an ekphrasis, a literary trope that has a long history of use in Greek literature beginning with the famous description of Achilles Shield in *Iliad* 18.²⁶ Ekphrasis is defined by Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner as “words about an image, itself often embedded in a larger text.”²⁷ This type of description becomes a feature of epic, mime,²⁸ tragedy,²⁹ satyr plays,³⁰ and, finally, of Hellenistic poetry, where it appears prominently in the poems of Callimachus, Theocritus, and Herodas. The *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius, a rhetorical manual for aspiring orators

²⁶ For more on Hellenistic ekphrasis see Webb (2009), Goldhill (2007), Faber (1995), and Goldhill and Osborne (1994).

²⁷ Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner (2007), i.

²⁸ Sophron Frag 10, discussed below.

²⁹ For a complete discussion of viewing and Ekphrasis in Euripides see Zeitlin (1993).

³⁰ Aescylus *Theoroi*, P. Oxy 2162 frag 78a; for more discussion of this fragment, see O’Sullivan (2000).

written in the fourth century c.e., states that, "Ἐκφρασις ἐστὶ λόγος περιηγηματικὸς ἐναργῶς ὑπ' ὄψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον" "ekphrasis is a descriptive speech which vividly brings the thing shown into view."³¹ This definition, although it may include the description of artworks, has a much wider reach, using the vividness (ἐναργῶς) of words and the combination of seeing (δηλούμενον) and speech (λόγος), rather than the content of speech to separate ekphrasis from other rhetorical devices. Graham Zanker also pairs ekphrasis with *enargeia*, which he defines as a "stylistic quality of descriptive representation which makes a vivid appeal to the senses, in particular sight."³² As Ruth Webb asserts, however, the goal of both ekphrasis and *enargeia* was not simply to appeal to the eye, but to involve the audience "both imaginatively and emotionally."³³ She goes further to assert that ekphrasis gave the author the power to become a "metaphorical painter" with the ability to create images in the mind of the viewer, which carry the same weight as physical objects.³⁴ Therefore, by definition, an ekphrasis has the unique ability to communicate with the visual world through descriptions of the physical world, including people, landscapes and actions, which create a clear, detailed, and above all vivid, picture in the mind of the audience. Therefore, ekphrasis has a direct connection to the gaze of the viewer. Using ekphrasis in this way, the author has the ability to direct the audience's gaze both inward, towards the experience contained within the piece of

³¹ *Rhetores Graeci*, Vol. 2, 1854.

³² Zanker (1981), 300.

³³ Webb (2009), 20.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 28.

literature itself and the object it describes, and outward, endowing the reader with a critical gaze with which to view society.³⁵

Like Herodas does in this passage, many Hellenistic authors used ekphrasis to describe art objects within their works. Hellenistic poets employed two different types of ekphrasis, classified by Graham Zanker as descriptive and non-descriptive exchange.³⁶ He couches these classifications within his discussion of reader supplementation, the process by which an audience member creates a mental picture of an object using both the author's description and images from memory. He suggests that descriptive exchange is intended to create a picture of an object for the listener with a detailed description of each aspect of the piece.³⁷ For example, the shield of Achilles is described by Homer with great detail (*Il.*18.478-608). It catalogues a long series of visual fields that show men battling, celebrating, working, etc. It is an immensely complex poetic construction that uses detail to create a vivid picture of an unreal object.³⁸ Zanker asserts that non-descriptive exchange, on the other hand, forces the reader to supplement a short description with already-familiar images.³⁹ This is not to say that non-descriptive ekphrasis was meant to reference a real object, although this may have been the case, but

³⁵ Goldhill (2007), 2.

³⁶ Zanker (2007), 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Becker (1995) and Taplin (1980) speak to the poetic function to the ekphrasis as a poetic device within the Homeric text.

³⁹ Zanker (2007), 85.

that it would evoke a type of object recognizable to a contemporary audience from daily life rather than a fantastical one such as Achilles' shield.

Herodas' use of densely packed and pithy non-descriptive ekphrases indicates that he is relying on the audience to supplement the majority of the imagery with direction from the author. In the first line of the passage, Kokkale tells her friend to look (ὄρη) at the beautiful artworks in front of her and the passage is full of similar words that direct the gaze of the viewer (βλέπουσαν (28), ὄρης (35), εἶδε (37), βλέψας(37). Without being able to look at actual objects, however, the audience must supplement images to create a mental picture of the artworks from the short descriptions which Kokkale provides to them.

The first statue Kokkale discusses depicts a young girl reaching for an apple. Herodas creates a parallel between Kokkale, Kynno and the statue by pointing out that she is gazing (βλέπουσαν) at the apple, just as the two women are gazing at her. The extreme emotional intensity with which the young girl reaches for the apple creates a sense of agitation and excitement, so much so that Kokkale actively worries that she will faint (ἦν μὴ λάβῃ τὸ μῆλον ἐκ τάχα ψύξειν). Although she is not explicitly connected here with a mythological subject, scholars have found mythological parallels and artistic models for this sort of figure among nymphs in the garden of the Hesperides.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Lehmann (1945), 433, suggests that this could also be a scene showing a child under an apple tree.

Although the description of this artwork is brief, the emotion captured by the figure and the possible mythological context of this piece make it likely that Kokkale is describing a work in the baroque style, one of the three artistic styles represented in this ekphrastic passage. Sculpture in the baroque style is defined by its theatricality and extreme emotional intensity.⁴¹ Although this statue does not remain or perhaps never existed, an example of the Hellenistic baroque can be found in the “Pasquino Group,” a heavily restored Roman marble copy of a 3rd-century original, now housed in the Loggia di Lanzi in Florence (figure 3).⁴²



Figure 3: Pasquino Group

⁴¹ Pollitt (1986), 111.

⁴² Pasquino Group (Menelaus supporting the body of Patroclus), Roman copy of a 3rd century B.C. original, Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence.

This pyramidal composition contrasts the straining muscles of the hero Menelaus with the body of Patroclus as he is dragged from the battle field. The body of Patroclus, still perfect even in death, creates a deep sense of *pathos*, an evocation of deep suffering, for the audience, who will at once connect this scene to the deep loss and mourning of Achilles and anticipate his blinding rage and his part in the destruction of Troy. By using a canon of recognizable figures, the artist allows the viewer to supplement the rest of the mythological narrative, aided by a knowledge of literature and other art images.⁴³

Brunilde Ridgway asserts that baroque sculptures “leave scope for the imagination, often suggesting a background story bound to arouse a compassionate response.”⁴⁴ Hellenistic artists working in the baroque style sought to use the body as a theatrical tool to illicit deep emotional responses from their audience and further, they used the idealized bodies of heroes and the stories of Greek mythology to relate specific emotional messages, in the case of the Pasquino group, of injury and loss. In Herodas’ description of the girl and the apple, he asks his audience, using only the briefest of descriptions, to supplement both the mental image of this statue group and the emotional intensity of the scene, in this case a sense of longing and anticipation.

In contrast, the next statue described by Kokkale is one of a very old man, who is just at the point of death (πρὸς Μοιρέων). This short phrase omits a verb, instead using a preposition (πρὸς) and an implied (εἶναι) to convey its meaning: the effect is that Kokkale,

⁴³ Zanker (2007), 73.

⁴⁴ Ridgway (1965), 53.

excited by the statues in front of her, blurts out short, broken sentences as her eyes flick to different statues in the room.⁴⁵ Kokkale, in her haste, omits conventional structural elements necessary to create a complete sentence. Herodas uses the descriptive language of ekphrasis to create in his audience an auditory experience that stimulates a visual one. Thus, the audience's mind's eye, the creator of imaginative spaces, would have to quickly supplement images from memory, just as the ear quickly turns from one subject to the next, all in parallel to Kokkale's constructed eye as it moves between sculptures. As Ruth Webb describes: "The souls of both speaker and listener are stocked with internal images of the absent thing, and these provide the raw material with which each part can 'paint' the images that ekphrasis puts into worlds."⁴⁶

Using his characters as models of behavior for his audience, Herodas educates the viewer on the way that he should be viewing and invites him to imaginatively mimic the actions of his characters by directing the external audience's gaze through the internal gaze of Kokkale. As Zanker has suggested: "The audience's or viewer's imagination is shown at work in the interpretive commentary offered by the describer, who is made to see to it that the person for whom he is describing the art object becomes integrally involved not only in the object but also in the process of interpretation."⁴⁷ The insights and emotions of the describer, therefore, form an integral part of the audience's imaginative experience. As Simon Goldhill puts it, "We read [or listen] to become

⁴⁵ Headlam (1922), 184.

⁴⁶ Webb (2009), 113.

⁴⁷ Zanker (2007), 15.

lookers, and poems are written to educate and direct viewing as a social and intellectual process.”⁴⁸

After the abbreviated description of the old man, Kokkale moves on to a statue of a boy strangling a goose, an image which exists in many copies throughout the Hellenistic world and is assigned by Pollitt to a genre he calls *rococo*.⁴⁹ Pollitt describes the *rococo* as a lighthearted and playful art form with characters removed from the heavy emotion of the baroque. This style often features statues of children, lovers, and sleeping/intoxicated members of the retinue of Dionysus. The statue of the boy and the goose is attributed to Boethos of Calcedon (2nd century b.c.) by Pliny in his *Natural Histories*, although clearly this is a later artist working with a well-known and often used theme.⁵⁰ In a Roman marble copy located in the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna (figure 4),⁵¹ which Ridgway asserts is the statue described by Herodas, we see a young boy, who resembles figures of the infant Eros or Dionysus, reaching out towards the viewer and bracing a small goose in his left hand.⁵²

⁴⁸ Goldhill (2007), 2.

⁴⁹ Pollitt (1986), 127.

⁵⁰ Pliny NH 34.84 Boethi quamquam argento melioris, infans ex animo anserem strangulate, “Boethus, although he is better known for silver work, he made a boy strangling a goose.”

⁵¹ Boy Strangling a Goose, Roman marble copy of a 3rd-century b.c original. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

⁵² Ridgway (2001), 647. Herzog (1903) also discusses the possible physical models for this statue.



Figure 4: Boy Strangling a Goose

A pyramidal composition is created by the arms and legs of the boy, whose face betrays a sense of urgency, willing the viewer to engage emotionally with the child. His pudgy limbs indicate his youth and innocence and create a delicate shadow, softening his figure. Headlam associates the figure of the healthy pudgy child either with Asclepius himself or with his power, making it an image appropriate for the sanctuary.⁵³ The attribution of the statue, however, is less important than the role that it plays within this particular poetic context.

The goose is a *χηναλώπεκ'*, a species described by Herodotus as originating in Egypt and worshiped by the inhabitants along the Nile river.⁵⁴ The reference to a specific geographical location is a common feature of Hellenistic poetry and can also be seen in

⁵³ Headlam (1922).

⁵⁴ Hdt.2.72. ἱρούς δὲ τοῦτους τοῦ Νείλου φασι εἶναι, καὶ τῶν ὀρνίθων τοὺς χηναλώπεκας, “They say that these things are sacred to the Nile, and also the Egyptian goose among birds.”

the works of Callimachus and Theocritus. For example, in his Prologue to the *Aetia*, Callimachus refers to Thrace (13), Persia (18), and Lycia (22), within ten lines, taking his audience on a geographical tour of the Hellenistic world. In many Hellenistic contexts, references to specific geographical places contain embedded references to poetic authors or genres, as in Theocritus *Idyll* VII, where he uses references to over 30 geographical places within the 155 line poem. References to geographical locations can also be used by the Hellenistic poet to situate himself within the poetic as well as physical landscape.⁵⁵ As Nita Krevans posits, Theocritus uses allusions to geographical places, something she credits specifically to Alexandrian poets, to claim Homer, Hesiod, Stesichorus, Philoxenus, and Philetas as his artistic precursors.⁵⁶ In the case of Herodas, the reference to the Egyptian goose allows him, also an Alexandrian poet, to create a parallel between himself and the sculptor who created the work his character describes, someone also working in the corpus of Alexandrian imagery. Herodas situates the sculpture in the precise landscape and artistic context in which he himself is working. Thus he makes a metapoetic connection between visual and literary arts, forging a bridge between the artist who created the sculpture, who is in reality the poet himself, and the artist who created the *Mimiamb*. In so doing, he creates a further parallel between his audience and his characters, both of whom gaze upon the work of the same artist, reaffirming the gaze of his characters, which instructs his audience. Further, the introduction of a specifically

⁵⁵ Krevans (1983), 204.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 203.

Egyptian goose creates a sense of immediacy for the audience, since its gaze has been shifted from a created space, invented by the artist, to one which contains objects recognizable in the contemporary world. Thus the imagined space has become one which is able to be permeated by views or memories from contemporary society. Therefore, by instructing the vision of the viewer, the poet uses ekphrasis to direct that gaze back onto contemporary society.

The final image described by Kokkale is the portrait-statue of the woman Batale, daughter of Myttes. This statue was most likely placed in the sanctuary as a votive to Asclepius, created in thanks for the god's assistance with some illness.⁵⁷ The introduction of this sculpture calls attention to the final type of Hellenistic sculpture that will be discussed in this chapter, verism. Sculptors working in the veristic tradition often abandoned mythological subjects in order to represent the daily experiences of everyday people. For example, the "Old Woman at the Market" in the Metropolitan Museum reaches out towards the viewer in a feeble attempt to sell us her wares (figure 5).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Headlam (1922).

⁵⁸ Old Woman at the Market, 1st-century c.e. Roman copy of a 2nd-century b.c. Hellenistic original, Metropolitan Museum.

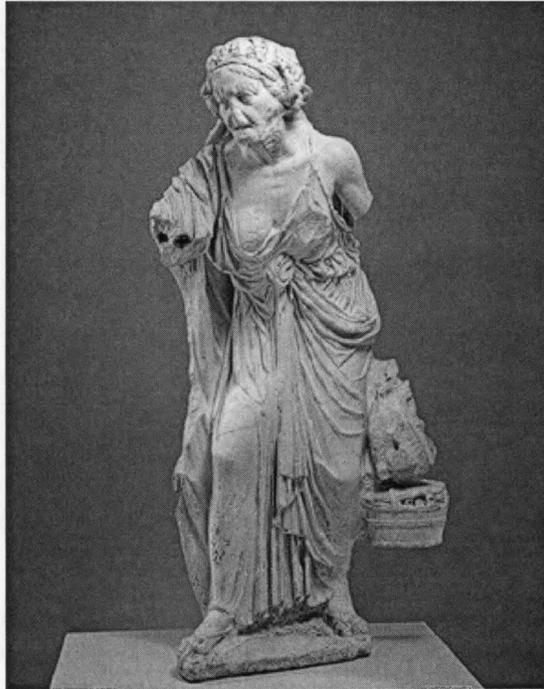


Figure 5: Old Woman at the Market

The sculptor rendered every wrinkle on her face, her shifting garment that almost exposes her breast, and her hunched posture in order to immortalize a fleeting moment in the lifelong struggle of a poor elderly woman. Although this sculpture may seem to have been taken from contemporary life, there is no evidence that this woman actually existed and the purpose of this sculpture is not to capture the likeness of a specific person but rather intends to represent a type that would have been recognizable to a contemporary audience.⁵⁹ Instead of calling to mind images of heroes and mythological narrative, this type of sculpture relied on the audience to supplement a completely different corpus of

⁵⁹ Pollit (1986), 141.

images, those from everyday life. As Graham Zanker argues, these supplemented memories would have endowed this figure with the same amount of *pathos* as that of a dying hero, and thus the supplementation of imagery, in the end, achieves the same goal, namely the evocation of emotion.⁶⁰ An emotional reading of a statue like the “Old Woman at the Market,” which forces the viewer to direct his gaze back onto contemporary society with the supplementation of images from everyday life, creates a point of emotional connection and reflection through which one can view contemporary society.

When viewing this veristic statue, Kokkale insists that it is like a real woman so much that the statue itself walks (βέβηκεν). This provides an analogy for Herodas himself, since he, as author, creates an imitation of life, in this case, in the form of personae. Just as Hellenistic verism uses detail to create an imitation of people from contemporary society, so, too, does Herodas use characterization and ekphrasis to create a mental, visual, and auditory experience for his audience that reproduces moments from everyday life. It is a common trope of Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic ekphrasis to endow sculpted or painted objects with movement and sound. In Homer’s ekphrasis in *Iliad* 18, the figures crafted in relief on the face of the shield are described as moving “ὀρώρει,” (493), whirling “ἐδίνεον” (494) and the flutes and lyres are describes as having sound “βοὴν ἔχον” (495). Other Hellenistic authors also adopted this trope. For example,

⁶⁰ Zanker (2007), 152.

in *Idyll* I, during the ekphrasis of a shepherd's cup that will be awarded as a prize during a singing competition, Theocritus describes two foxes eyeing the dinner of a young boy [...] ἀμφὶ δέ νιν δὺ' ἀλώπεκες ἅ μὲν ἀν' ὄρχωσ/ φοιτῆ [...] , "And on both sides of him, two foxes went to and fro among the vines" (48-51). By referencing the movement of his ekphrastic image in a Homeric fashion, Theocritus endows this passage with allusions to Homer in order to contrast the severity of epic with the lightheartedness of his new bucolic genre. As Riemer Faber argues, this juxtaposition is furthered by a contrast between the materials of the two objects being described and the metal of the shield becomes a stand in for epic while the wood of the shepherd's cup indicates the rustic bucolic.⁶¹ Herodas also endows his sculptures with movement, in the manner of Homer, thus referencing the tradition of ekphrasis that began with Achilles' shield, but instead of describing the artwork in the authoritative voice of the author as Homer does, Herodas instead places the words in the mouth of Kokkale, emphasizing her importance as the director of the audience's gaze. By referencing the way Batale walks, an image that Kokkale clearly supplemented from her memory of contemporary society, Kokkale gives the audience a model for their own viewing. Thus, Herodas invites the viewer to supplement images from life, when addressing his poems, just as Kokkale does in the face of contemporary artworks.

⁶¹ Faber (1995), 415.

In the second ekphrasis (56-70), Kokkale describes a relief of a nude boy and a painting of a bull being led to sacrifice which is rendered in three-quarter perspective.⁶²

[...] οὐκ ὀρῆς, φίλη Κυννοῖ;
οἷ' ἔργα κεῖν' - ἦν, ταῦτ' ἐρεῖς Ἀθηναίην
γλύψαι τὰ καλὰ - χαιρέτω δὲ δέσποινα.
τὸν παῖδα γοῦν τὸν γυμνὸν ἦν κνίσω τοῦτον
οὐχ ἔλκος ἔξει, Κύννα; πρὸς γὰρ οἱ κεῖνται 60
αἱ σάρκες οἷα θερμὰ θερμὰ πηδεῦσαι
ἐν τῇ σανίσκῃ· τὼργυρεῦν δὲ πύραστρον
οὐκ ἦν ἴδησι Μύλλος ἢ Παταικίσκος
ὁ Λαμπρίωνος, ἐκβαλεῦσι τὰς κούρας
δοκεῦντες ὄντως ἀργυρεῦν πεποιῆσθαι; 65
ὁ βοῦς δὲ κὼ ἄγων αὐτοῦ ἢ θ' ὀμαρτεῦσα
κὼ γρυπὸς οὔτος κὼ ἀνάσιλλος ἄνθρωπος
οὐχὶ ζῶν βλέπουσιν ἡμέρην πάντες;
εἰ μὴ ἐδόκευν ἂν μέζον ἢ γυνὴ πρήσσειν,
ἀνηλάλαξ' ἄν, μὴ μ' ὁ βοῦς τι πημήνη· 70
οὔτω ἐπιλοξοῖ, Κυννί, τῇ ἐτέρῃ κούρῃ.

Do you not see, dear Kynno?
What sorts of works these ones here are – you would say that Athena
Carved these beautiful things – hail the mistress.
If you scratch this naked lad close at hand
Would he not bleed, Kynno? His warm flesh
Pulses, throbbing with warmth
In the picture; if Myllos or Pataikiskos, son of
Lamprion, sees the fire tongs, won't they let their eyes drop out
Because they think that they are made from silver?
The bull and the one who leads it and the girl who attends
And the hook-nosed man and the one with bristling hair:
Don't they all have the look of light and life?
If it did not seem to be rather unbecoming for a woman,
I would have screamed lest the bull do me some harm;
Since he looks sideways at me, Kynno, with one eye.

⁶² Headlam (1922).

Just as in the previous ekphrasis, this passage begins with a direction to look, in this case in the form of a question, directing the gaze of both the internal audience, namely Kynno, and the external audience, those listening to or reading Herodas' *Mimiamb*. A similar direction of gaze is used by Theocritus in *Idyll XV* when Gorgo commands her companion Praxinoa to gaze upon the beautiful tapestry: Πραξιινόα, πόταγ' ὄδε. τὰ ποικίλα πρᾶτον ἄθρησον (78) "Praxinoa, come here. First gaze upon these embroideries."⁶³ As Walter Headlam notes, this direction by the author to look is not a trope inherited from the ekphrastic tradition of epic, since Homer uses an omniscient narrator to describe Achilles' shield.⁶⁴ He posits instead that Herodas is inspired by "the old Ionic descriptive style of narration."⁶⁵ It is also possible that it was inherited from the iambic tradition of Hipponax, in which the second person imperative is often used to command the attention of the internal audience members.⁶⁶ The desire on the part of the poet to address the low, base or everyday features of society is also seen in the earlier *Iamboi* of Archilocus and Hipponax. In the *Mimiambi*, Herodas uses an appropriation of dialect and meter to connect directly with the iambic poetry of Hipponax. He chooses to compose his poems in choliamb, a meter which consists of three iambic trimeters and an extra "limping" foot and was invented and used by Hipponax.⁶⁷ The connection between Herodas and Hipponax also manifests itself in direct literary allusion. For example,

⁶³ This connection is explored further in chapter 2.

⁶⁴ Headlam (1922).

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 199.

⁶⁶ For more discussion of direct address in Hipponax, see Acosta-Hughes (2002).

⁶⁷ West (1974).

Herodas appropriates some of the character's names from Hipponax 78 and integrates them into his third *Mimiamb*.⁶⁸ As Ralph Rosen argues, there was a strong sense of temporal continuity between the iambic poetry of Hipponax and that of the Hellenistic poets, who considered themselves part of the ancient iambic tradition. Like the *Mimiambi* of Herodas, archaic *Iamboi* brought the world of the everyday laborer to a public audience.⁶⁹

Perhaps most intriguing is Herodas' connection to epigram, in which the funeral monuments themselves "speak" to passers-by, asking them to stop and mourn the deceased. For example, in Callimachus' epitaph to his father, he commands the one passing by his grave, ὅστις ἐμόν παρά σῆμα φέρεις πόδα, "to know both the name of his father and his son."⁷⁰ This is not a new facet of Hellenistic epigram, but one inherited from Archaic and Classical funeral monuments.⁷¹ Epigram, although initially confined to stone, took on a new meaning in the Hellenistic period, when authors composed them as strictly literary works, divorced completely from their funerary context.⁷² As Katherine Gutzwiller describes it, "the monument adorned by the epigram is no longer visually present but [...] must now be reconstructed in the reader's imagination."⁷³ Thus, Hellenistic epigram and Hellenistic ekphrasis take on a similar role, creating a picture in

⁶⁸ Hipp. Frag. 78 and Herodas iii.

⁶⁹ Rosen (2007), 208.

⁷⁰ Gow and Page (2008), 29.

⁷¹ Bettenworth (2007), 85.

⁷² Gutzwiller, (1998), 3.

⁷³ Ibid, 7.

the mind's eye of the audience; a picture that the audience must supplement with images from memory. Interestingly, as Jackie Murray and Jonathan Rowland point out, it is also within literary epigram, because it divorces performance from poetic voice, that poets, both male and female, first attempted to create a female voice that “did not, as its primary function, reinforce the patriarchal culture.”⁷⁴ Murray and Rowland define the attempt on the part of the male author to portray characters with an authentically female voice as “trans-gendered.”⁷⁵ In this *Mimiamb*, Herodas chooses to house his ekphrasis in a conversation between two women, creating an inherently female gaze and female perspective on the artworks that are being described.⁷⁶ Although Kokkale and Kynno are described by Page DuBois as “silly” and “naïve,”⁷⁷ and although some scholars see them as a negative counter-example for the audience,⁷⁸ the poetic capacity to represent a “trans-gendered” voice indicates that there is a deeper significance in the use of a female perspective in this ekphrasis. The use of the authentic female voice that is unclouded by the weighty influence of past literature and scholarship, allows Herodas to concentrate the thoughts of his characters and therefore the supplemental images of the audience on the contemporary moment. The use of these women, then, does not create a negative example for the audience, but a positive one that reinforces the supplementation of images from everyday life and the direction of gaze onto contemporary Alexandria.

⁷⁴ Murray and Rowland (2007), 213.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ This theme is also be explored in chapter 2.

⁷⁷ DuBois (2007), 48.

⁷⁸ See Fn 30.

In this passage, as Kynno asserts later in the poem, she is viewing a work by Apelles of Ephesus, a court artist of Alexander the Great, whom Pliny refers to in his *Natural Histories* as working in the late fourth century b.c, both for Alexander the Great and Ptolemy I.⁷⁹ Although none of Apelles' works survive, Roman wall paintings thought to be copies of his artwork brought to Rome by the emperor Augustus at the end of the 1st-century c.e. do. Interestingly, Pliny tells us that there were three important works by Apelles in the Asclepeion at Cos, a statue of Aphrodite Anaduomene, a portrait of Antigonus I Monophthalmus, who was a general under Alexander the Great and then went on to found the Antigonid dynasty, and another statue of Aphrodite which was unfinished.⁸⁰ Ian Cunningham, however, posits that Herodas is not referring to a real painting or sculpture by Apelles, but rather wants the audience to creatively imagine a sculpture in the style of a known artist.⁸¹ He asserts that Herodas is not referring to an actual sanctuary but rather intentionally creates a space which does not exist because he is more interested in the characters than the scene they inhabit.⁸² Thus, by describing a fictional space, Herodas forces the audience to supplement images not from a single location, but from cumulative interactions with artistic and ritual spaces throughout the city. Herodas creates a constructed space which unifies real and fictional space. As Verity Platt argues, this *Mimiamb* takes place in a temple, a ritual sacred space, in which the act

⁷⁹ Plin. *NH.* 35.36.79-97.

⁸⁰ Plin. *NH.* 35.36.91.

⁸¹ Cunningham (1966), 117.

⁸² *Ibid.*

of viewing takes on both a scholarly and religious aspect.⁸³ She argues that the temple creates a specific environment, which mitigates the distinction between scholarship and religion.⁸⁴ Thus through the eyes of Kokkale, the audience becomes aware of this intersection between the scholarly, as represented by the poem itself, and the ritual, supplemented by images from the audience's memory of contemporary temples and sacrifices.

The next statue described by Kokkale is of a nude boy. Using the tactile nature of the statue, Herodas creates a connection between the internal gaze of Kynno and Kokkale and the eye of the audience by using the onomatopoeic repetition “θερμὰ θερμά” (61). The sound of the repeated word metrically mimics the human heartbeat, both that of Kokkale and Kynno and that of the listener, connecting the audience in a physical and aural way to the words of the poem. Furthermore, the visual repetition of the words on the page recreates what Kokkale is describing, as they expand and contract within the written space just like the chest of the boy as he breathes in and out. The Hellenistic poet Simias in his *Wings*, takes this idea a step further, creating a shaped poem, a *technopaegnon*, which is composed in a physical shape significant to the content of the poem. As Alexandra Pappas claims, the *technopaegnon* manipulate the gaze of the viewer to reshape conceptions of past and present literature and visual art by conflating the acts of reading, hearing, and seeing.⁸⁵

⁸³ Platt (2010), 205.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Pappas (2012), 218.

The final image described by Kokkale is a painting of a bull being led to sacrifice. She begins this description by naming two men, Pataikiskos (62), whom Walter Headlam describes as “thievish, covetous, unprincipled and dishonest,” and Myllos, whose identification is less certain.⁸⁶ References to thievishness are also found in Theocritus *Idyll XV*, when he describes the streets of Alexandria before the intervention of Ptolemy II. In that poem, Gorgo praises Ptolemy II for clearing the streets of Alexandria of the thieves who used to plague it.⁸⁷ Herodas similarly praises Ptolemy II in his first *Mimiamb*, although he houses it within the speech of a matchmaker with questionable morals.⁸⁸ The inherent juxtaposition between the thing described and the one describing it is similarly emphasized in *Mimiamb IV*, since Kokkale interprets the gaze of a thief upon an art object in a future more vivid condition “οὐκ ἦν ἴδησι Μύλλος ἢ Παταικίσκος/ ὁ Λαμπρίωνος, ἐκβαλεῦσι τὰς κούρας”. Kokkale, here, takes on the role of Herodas, creating a persona, through which she can interpret art objects. Because Kokkale diverts the viewer’s gaze through the eyes of an absent character, she wraps the ekphrasis in layers of personae. This wrapping forces the audience to not only supplement visual elements to understand the art objects described to them, but also to create a character through whom that gaze can be interpreted. Thus, Herodas puts his audience in the

⁸⁶ Headlam (1922), 202.

⁸⁷ Theoc. 15.46-50. πολλά τοι ὦ Πτολεμαῖε πεποιήται καλὰ ἔργα, / ἐξ ὧ ἐν ἀθανάτοις ὁ τεχν: οὐδεὶς κακοεργὸς/ δαλεῖται τὸν ἰόντα παρέρπων Αἰγυπτιστί,/ οἷα πρὶν ἐξ ἀπάτας κεκροτημένοι ἄνδρες ἔπαισδον,/ ἀλλάλοις ὄμαλοι, κακὰ παίγνια, πάντες ἐρειοί, “Let me tell you, Oh Ptolemy, he has done many good things/ since your father went to the immortal. Not one villainous man/ is doing mischief, creeping up to someone walking like the Egyptians do/ men do not run around playing tricks such as they did before/ they are all the same as each other, everyone would say that they are roguish playmates.”

⁸⁸ Herodas *Mimiamb I* 26-36.

position of the poet, creating characters from the vast array of images and memories gathered throughout their lives.

Finally, Kokkale describes a bull, which is so lifelike that it seems to stare right out at her (66-71). The description of the bull as staring out at Kokkale shifts the gaze one last time and the internal viewer becomes the viewed. The bull stares out at Kokkale and the world around her just as the audience observes the *Mimiamb*. Using this shift in gaze, Herodas asks his audience to undergo the same process of reflection and reintroduce supplemented images back into the context they originated from, namely contemporary society. By forcing the viewer to acknowledge his gaze, Herodas brings back into focus the Hellenistic city of Alexandria. Similarly, artists working with Hellenistic sculpture sought to bring something of contemporary society into the constructed spaces that were meant to hold art objects, introducing aspects of everyday life into a place that was traditionally divorced from it and recontextualizing all of the images supplemented by the viewer back into contemporary society. Using direction of gaze, Herodas achieves the same goal and at the end of his ekphrasis, inviting the reader to reflect upon all supplemented images as aspects of everyday life.

Visual and literary artists of the Hellenistic period were engaging with the same issues in a diverse and economically-divided city like Alexandria. The dispersal of Greek culture through education and scholarship, made possible by wealthy benefactors like Ptolemy II, created an extremely educated aristocratic class with strong cultural and scholastic ties to Archaic and Classical Greece. At the same time, the economic

prosperity of Alexandria allowed lower class merchants and traders to come face-to-face with Greek monuments. The literary and visual artist was tasked with attempting to bridge the gap created by this cultural disparity and producing artworks applicable to this rapidly evolving world. At the same time, however, it was essential to maintain ties with the cultural history of the Greek past. To accomplish this feat, poets like Herodas used the tropes and vocabulary of the archaic past, in this case, ekphrasis, and presented it to the audience in such a way that audience members were invited to supplement images from everyday life in order to spark reflection on contemporary society. References to specific artworks within poems created a direct connection between the two media, endowing both the sculptor and the poet with the power to invite reflection on modern society, namely to create a new way of viewing in the Hellenistic world, one which integrated both past and contemporary society in the mind of the audience.

Theocritus *XV*: Female Perspective in Hellenistic Alexandria

As many scholars have observed, the social make-up of Hellenistic cities often consisted of people from all over the Mediterranean. This is certainly the case in Ptolemaic Alexandria, where kings and queens adopted and instituted many of the customs of the ancient Greek society and especially focused their patronage on the study and collection of Greek texts.⁸⁹ Some of the institutions of traditional Greek culture, however, were necessarily adjusted to meet the requirements of an Egyptian population, who were used to a different set of cultural norms. Thus, the social status of women, who were marginalized and restricted in the Greek world, began to adjust to an Egyptian standard.⁹⁰ For example, Egyptian women were often sent to market, while men stayed home.⁹¹ Although Athenian women had religious and social duties that allowed them to leave the domestic space, they were ideally confined to the home, except in special situations where lower class women were required to supplement the family income by selling wares at the market.⁹² This shift is also seen in the artistic world where there is a movement away from the traditional male-centric worldview to one that includes female protagonists and female perspectives. As seen in the previous chapter, this female perspective was also introduced into ekphrasis, a work of art described within a work of

⁸⁹ For more on Hellenistic Alexandria, see Gutzwiller (2007), Scheidel (2004), Fantuzzi (2004), Stephens (2003), Samuel (1983), and Fraser (1972).

⁹⁰ For a discussion of the social and political position of women in Ancient Egypt, see Edwards and O'Neill (2005) and for a discussion of Athenian women see Blundell (1998).

⁹¹ ἐν τοῖσι αἱ μὲν γυναῖκες ἀγοράζουσι καὶ καπηλεύουσι, οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες κατ' οἴκους ἐόντες ὑφαίνουσι: "among them, the women go to the market place and conduct trade, while the men, who remain home, weave" Hdt. 2.35.

⁹² Blundell (1998), 72.

poetry, where female protagonists comment on and describe art objects often contained within a sanctuary or public space. Similarly, visual artists begin to explore different aspects of the female form, moving away from traditional portrayals of aloof goddesses and mythological characters and creating sculptures that explore the perceptions of women and their relationship to the contemporary world around them. Artists used women's voices and experimented with representations of the female body and mental states to create a sense of tension between classical values and modern experiences. Thus they challenged the audience to integrate both classical and everyday images alongside one another when approaching works of art and literature in order to mentally meld classical ideals with the realities of life in the contemporary city. Within this chapter, I examine the short ekphrasis found in Theocritus *Idyll XV* alongside sculpted Hellenistic artistic portrayals of figures at rest, an image which most closely resembles the figure of the sleeping Adonis referred to by the ekphrasis itself, to argue that artists used these depictions to encourage audiences to integrate contemporary images into classical models. This mixture of images, then, would allow the audience to gain a more clear understanding of and reflect upon the mixture of Classical Greek thought and contemporary Egyptian life that was present in the Hellenistic city of Alexandria.

Although the status of women in Classical Athens is a matter of some debate, it is clear that there was a distinction between the world of men, which included politics, education, and warfare, and the world of women, which was mostly focused on the home,

religious duties related to the *polis*, and childrearing.⁹³ Although some citizen-women in classical Athens were engaged in commerce and therefore did have interactions with the community at large, they were excluded from the realm of politics and the critical decision-making processes that governed their world.⁹⁴ During the Hellenistic period, however, a change in the role of women in society began to emerge. As Sarah Pomeroy points out, the democratic style of government, in which all men were equals but women were not, created a divide between the sexes, while the monarchical government under the Ptolemies created a sense of unity for the entirety of the ruling class who held political power over the larger underclass.⁹⁵ Women, previously relegated to the outskirts of society, were suddenly thrust into the political spotlight, as Ptolemaic queens ruled and then were deified alongside their husbands and female aristocratic elites began to contribute their patronage to both the civic and religious spheres.⁹⁶ These women defied the traditional Greek model of female behavior and forged a unique place for themselves in Alexandria. At the same time, an interest in the voices and perspectives of women becomes apparent in the work of Hellenistic poets and artists, who moved away from classicizing representations of women and began to incorporate contemporary elements into their portrayals. One of the most famous literary examples of this change in the

⁹³ For a discussion of the debate over women's roles in Classical Athens, see Blundell (1998).

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the roles of women in the marketplace, see Brock (1994).

⁹⁵ Pomeroy (1984), 42.

⁹⁶ Ridgway (1987), 409.

representation of women can be found in *Idyll XV* of Theocritus, and as I will go on to demonstrate, a parallel expression can be found in contemporary visual art.

According to the *Suda* (c. 10th century c.e.), Theocritus was the son of Praxagoras and Philinna and was from either Syracuse or Cos.⁹⁷ Theocritus is connected to Syracuse through his works as well: in *Idyll XI*, Theocritus refers to the cyclops, Polyphemus, who dwells on the island of Sicily, as ὁ παρ' ἀμῖν “one who dwells near me.”⁹⁸ Also, in *Idyll XVI*, typically referred to as “Encomium to Hiero,” Theocritus aligns himself with the poets who praise the Syracusan tyrant Hiero (308-215 b.c.).⁹⁹ As Kathryn Guztwiller argues, this is not an encomium in the traditional sense, but rather an attempt to secure the tyrant’s patronage by giving him a glimpse of what a modern poet’s praise could be.¹⁰⁰ Since none of Theocritus’ other known works seem to be related to Hiero, Gow infers that he was denied a commission and quickly left the island of Sicily for the more lucrative patronage of the Ptolemies.¹⁰¹ Based on evidence from his extant works, some scholars posit that Theocritus was well-travelled and was familiar with the plants and

⁹⁷ ἔστι καὶ ἕτερος Θεόκριτος, Πραξαγόρου καὶ Φιλίνης, οἱ δὲ Σιμιμίχου: Συρακοῦσιος, οἱ δὲ φασι Κῶνον: μετόκησε δὲ ἐν Συρακούσαις. (*Suda* 166).

⁹⁸ Theoc. XI.7.

⁹⁹ Theoc. XVI. 98-103: ὑψηλὸν δ' Ἰέρωνι κλέος φορέοιεν αἰοῖοι/ καὶ πόντου Σκυθικοῦ πέραν καὶ ὅθι πλατὺ τεῖχος/ἀσφάλτω δήσασα Σεμίραμις ἐμβασίλευεν./ εἶς μὲν ἐγώ, πολλοὺς δὲ Διὸς φιλέοντι καὶ ἄλλους/ θυγατέρες, τοῖς πᾶσι μέλοι Σικελᾶν Ἀρέθοισαν/ ὑμνεῖν σὺν λαοῖσι καὶ αἰχμητᾶν Ἰέρωνα. “May the singers repeat the glory of Hiero and may they sing that he reign across the sea of the Scythians and where Semiramis bound the wall with bitumen, and I am among the many and various ones whom Zeus and his daughters love, it is a care to all of them to celebrate Sicilian Arethusa and the spearman Hiero with the people”.

¹⁰⁰ Guztwiller (1983), 235.

¹⁰¹ Gow (1965), xxvi.

landscapes of the Greek East, islands, mainland and Southern Italy.¹⁰² Although his movements throughout the Mediterranean world are debated, it is most probable that he was living and working in Alexandria by 272 b.c.¹⁰³ Kenneth Dover credits Theocritus with writing 32 poems, 22 epigrams, and a *technopaegnon*, or shape poem, and he breaks down Theocritus' poems into categories including bucolic, mime, epic, and encomium based on their content, dialect, and meter.¹⁰⁴ In this chapter, I focus on one of the poems classified as a mime, *Idyll XV*, which was composed around 272 b.c. and describes two women, Gorgo and Praxinoa, who attend the festival of Adonis, which was held in the royal palace in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy II (309-246). When they arrive at the palace, they encounter a royal tapestry with images, set out for the festival (78-86) and their description of the work offers the audience an ekphrasis that encourages a melding of images from contemporary life with classical models to create a parallel between the ekphrasis itself and the city of Alexandria.

Γοργώ: Πραξινοά, πόταγ' ὧδε. τὰ ποικίλα πρᾶτον ἄθρησον,
λεπτὰ καὶ ὡς χαρίεντα: θεῶν περονάματα φασεῖς.

Πραξινοά: πότνι' Ἀθαναία, ποῖαί σφ' ἐπόνασαν ἔριθοι,
ποῖοι ζωογράφοι τὰκριβέα γράμματ' ἔγραψαν.
ὡς ἔτυμ' ἐστάκαντι, καὶ ὡς ἔτυμ' ἐνδινεῦντι,
ἔμψυχ', οὐκ ἐνυφαντά. σοφόν τοι χρῆμ' ὄνθρωπος.
αὐτὸς δ' ὡς θαητὸς ἐπ' ἀργυρέας κατάκειται
κλισμῶ, πρᾶτον ἴουλον ἀπὸ κροτάφων καταβάλλων,
ὁ τριφίλητος Ἄδωνις, ὃ κῆν Ἀχέροντι φιλεῖται.

¹⁰² Lindsell (1937), 92.

¹⁰³ Dover (1971) xv-xvi.

¹⁰⁴ Gow (1965) xvi. Although Gow attributes the shape poem "the syrinx" to Theocritus, scholars now believe this attribution is erroneous. See Kwapisz (2013).

Gorgo: Praxinoa, come here. First, look at the embroideries
How fine and graceful! You will say that they should be buckled on by the gods.

Praxinoa: Mistress Athena, such laborers made them
Such capturers of life drew the exact drawings.
They stand so truly, and they go about so naturally.
They are living, not embroidered. Man has a wise nature
He, so wondrous, lies on the silver couch
He who is growing his first whiskers on his cheeks,
The thrice-beloved Adonis, who is loved even in Acheron.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Theocritus, like Herodas, relies on “non-descriptive” ekphrasis, which gives the audience only a minute amount of detail, to construct a mental picture of the object being described.¹⁰⁵ Unlike a descriptive ekphrasis, which gives a highly detailed and vivid description of an unreal object, a non-descriptive ekphrasis creates an image of a type of object that would have existed in contemporary society, but offers minimal detail.¹⁰⁶ As Simon Goldhill asserts of non-descriptive ekphrasis, “such poems do not merely describe works of art – and they often offer no physical description at all – but play a role in the cultural milieu that aims to create and enforce and explore particular ways of *seeing meaning* (emphasis original).”¹⁰⁷ The audience, then, is left to supplement a substantial amount of information from a corpus of mental imagery that includes both art objects and experiences from everyday life in order to visualize the object described. Although some scholars assert that this *Idyll* is meant to describe a specific festival,¹⁰⁸ I find it unlikely that Theocritus is relying on his audience

¹⁰⁵ Zanker (2007), 85.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Goldhill (1994), 223.

¹⁰⁸ Gow (1965), 287.

to recollect a specific tapestry from a specific occasion. Instead, he asks his audience to construct a mental picture of a generic type of object that would have been recognizable as belonging to this religious occasion. Further, Theocritus uses his characters to direct the gaze of the audience and provide a model of viewing; not only is the art object itself important as the subject of the gaze, but the way that the characters respond to that art object also becomes an integral and instructive element, which gives the audience directions on how to view.

Like Herodas, Theocritus directs the gaze of the audience with commands from his characters. Gorgo orders Praxinoa to come here, “πόταγ’ ὦδε” and look, “ἄθρησον” (78). Using this language, both inherited from the tradition of epigram¹⁰⁹ and the mimes of Sophron, whom the Suda tells us was working in Syracuse in the second half of the fifth century b.c.,¹¹⁰ Theocritus gives the audience a verbal clue to begin to create a mental picture of the image that is about to be described. Although little of Sophron’s work remains, it is clear that the subject matter and tone of mime was a humorous look at the lives and troubles of the lower classes.¹¹¹ It is also clear from fragment 10 of a papyrus found in Oxyrhynchus and attributed to Sophron, that reads ΤΑἼ ΘΑΜΕΝΑΙ ΤΑ ΙΣΘΜΙΑ, “Women Marveling at the Isthmian Things,” that at least in this mime, Sophron was concerned with directing the vision of his female characters, if not his general

¹⁰⁹ For more on the connection between epigram and ekphrasis, see chapter 1.

¹¹⁰ Suda, 893.

¹¹¹ For more on Sophron’s mimes, see Hordern (2004).

audience.¹¹² This fragment also holds deeper significance for the study of Theocritus and is often cited as the model for *Idyll XV*, since it, too, concerns women at a public event or festival.¹¹³ It is this connection, as well as the “humorous” everyday content, which leads scholars to call Theocritus’ work an “urban mime” rather than an encomium or bucolic poem.¹¹⁴

Leading up to the ekphrasis, Theocritus paints a picture for his audience of two gossiping housewives complaining about their husbands, admonishing their slaves, and showing off their garments. These characters would be perfectly at home in the world of Sophron’s mimes. Therefore, the audience, when asked to view the streets of Alexandria through the eyes of these women, would naturally judge them as inferior models for viewing, since they are far from the educated elite. Directing the audience to look, a trope inherited from mime, would further connect Gorgo with characters from that genre, and the audience would be ready to dismiss her opinion as the prattle of an uneducated woman. Thus, Theocritus seems to give his audience a negative model for vision. Further, Theocritus endows his characters with a Doric accent, which is criticized shortly after the ekphrasis by a bystander (87-88):

Ἄλλος Ξένος: παύσασθ' ὧ δύστανοι, ἀνάνυτα κοτίλλοισαι
 τρυγόνες. ἐκκναισεῦντι πλατειάσδοισαι ἅπαντα.

Another Foreigner: Stop, oh wretched women, you who chatter
 Endlessly like turtle-doves. They, who speak with all broad vowels, will wear me out.

¹¹² Tyrrell (1908), xv.

¹¹³ For more on Theocritus’ connection to Sophron and the tradition of mime see Eitrem (1993).

¹¹⁴ Hence Joan Burton titles her book *Theocritus’ Urban Mime* (1995).

The reference to their accent further separates them from the academic elite of Alexandria, who most likely would have spoken in Koine Greek.¹¹⁵ Joan Burton stresses the gender imbalance that is apparent in the criticism of these two women by a male bystander since they, allowed to leave their homes for this religious occasion, do not know how to behave in a public setting.¹¹⁶ Clearly, Kokkale and Kynno do not have the training or authority to command the gaze of the viewer.

In the next line, however, Theocritus subverts the judgements of the audience by placing a Homeric quotation in the mouth of this seemingly inadequate model.¹¹⁷ Gorgo describes the fabric as “λεπτά καὶ ὡς χαρίεντα” (79), a phrase that is modeled on a passage from Homer’s *Odyssey* (10.220-223): ἔσταν δ’ ἐν προθύροισι θεᾶς καλλιπλοκάμοιο/ Κίρκης δ’ ἔνδον ἄκουον ἀειδούσης ὅπι καλῆ/ ἰστὸν ἐποιχομένης μέγαν ἄμβροτον, οἷα θεάων/ λεπτά τε καὶ χαρίεντα καὶ ἀγλαὰ ἔργα πέλονται “and they stood in the doorway of the goddess with the beautiful hair, and inside they heard Circe singing with a beautiful voice, when she went to the great immortal loom, and so great were the works of the goddess, they were fine, graceful, and splendid.” The use of this Homeric phrase, which describes the garments made by Circe, links the language and characters of epic directly to these Hellenistic Alexandrian women. The use of Homeric language here asks the audience to reconsider their evaluation of the women and reinterpret their gaze in

¹¹⁵ Burton (1995), 13.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 57.

¹¹⁷ Although R.W. Garson (1973) interprets these Homeric quotations as aspects of Theocritus’ humor, I would like to see them as otherwise productive.

a positive way. As Frederick Griffiths points out, “by the end, they prove to be serviceable observers of a world far more complicated than the narrow realities which define their natures.”¹¹⁸ The whole corpus of images which the audience calls up to supplement the journey of Praxinoa and Gorgo through the streets, images which are inherently tainted with judgements about gender, class, and ethnicity, must now be intermixed with images from epic and mythology, typically understood as the domain of the educated male elite. Thus, the audience is forced to negotiate the space between contemporary Alexandria and elite, not to mention traditional, Greek epic. This mixing serves, then, as a metaphor for the way that elite Greek audiences had to understand the world in which they were now living, namely the city of Alexandria. This problem is intensified by their perceptions of women, almost immediately relegated to the ranks of the uneducated and incompetent, and highlights the change in status that was occurring during this period. Finally, this sort of quotation created a window through which the elites could understand the images that permeated the world of the underclasses, for example, the everyday concerns of contemporary women, the dirt and horses on the streets, and the religious festivals funded by local royalty. It forced them to reconcile their world, which revolved around the study of Archaic and Classical texts and was mostly confined to the elite Greek suburbs, with the streets of Alexandria that surrounded them.

¹¹⁸ Griffiths (1979), 108.

The play with appropriate and inappropriate models and mixing of perceptions can also be seen in the ways which Hellenistic Greek sculpture engages its viewing audience. For example, upon encountering the “Sleeping Hermaphroditus” from the rear, the viewer is immediately aware of the beauty of the female body (figure 6):¹¹⁹

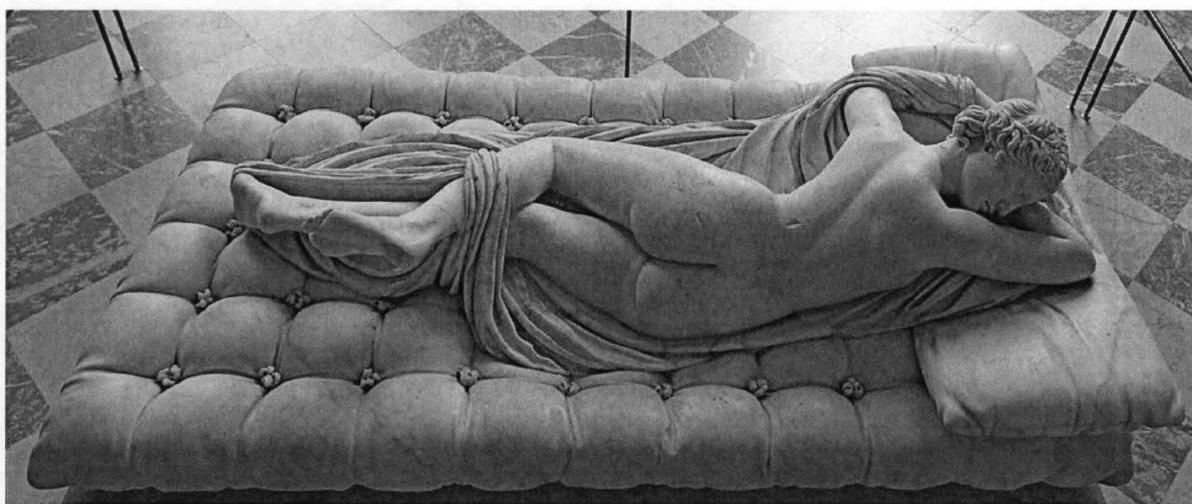


Figure 6: Sleeping Hermaphroditus (Rear View)

Although this statue itself is a copy of a figure from 155 b.c., the origins of the Hermaphroditus type can be traced to fourth-century Athens and this statue type seems to have been wide circulating and prevalent by the Hellenistic era.¹²⁰ The body is composed of a series of opposites. The drapery and her skin are soft and invite the touch, yet the material out of which is she is made is inherently cold and unforgiving.¹²¹ She is both at

¹¹⁹ Roman copy of a Greek bronze original by Polykles, 155b.c. Louvre. MA231. This may be the same sculpture mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural Histories* by the famous sculptor Polykles (*NH* 34.80).

¹²⁰ Ajootian (1997), 220.

¹²¹ The pillow on which the figure sleeps is a later addition by the baroque sculptor Bernini and Brunilde Ridgway suggests that this sculpture should be understood as resting in nature in a *temenos* (2001), 329.

rest and in action. Her upper body lies peacefully on the pillow while her legs are agitated, pulling against the constraint of the drapery that wraps around them. She is both revealed and concealed. Her nudity is accentuated by the curve of her back and the position of her legs, which lead the eye directly to her buttocks. At the same time, however, the twist of her body conceals her breast, which barely shows from underneath her torso, as well as her pubis, which is only visible from the other side of the sculpture. Further, this concealment entices the viewer to encroach upon the sleeping woman's serenity. In all respects, from behind, this is an idealized model of feminine beauty and scholars posit that it is based on a famous classical painting of the sleeping Ariadne.¹²² From the back, the viewer is invited to supplement images of the perfect feminine physique to complete the fragmentary understanding of the sculpture as a whole. The viewer is also invited to walk around the sculpture, in a voyeuristic way, to verify the mental picture that has been created through supplementation.

In order to gain a full understanding of the sculpture, however, the viewer must break that uncomfortable barrier that lies between the waking spectator and the unconscious subject, become the encroaching voyeur and move around the sculpture. As Aileen Ajootian asserts, "The Sleeping Hermaphrodite type [...] exploits the voyeuristic potential of a torsional pose to reveal its identity, relying on the back view of a vulnerable sleeping woman to engage the viewer in the process of discovery."¹²³ The view from the

¹²² Smith (1991), 134.

¹²³ Ajootian (1997), 231.

other side, which includes Hermaphroditus' penis, completely subverts the images supplemented by the audience (figure 7).¹²⁴

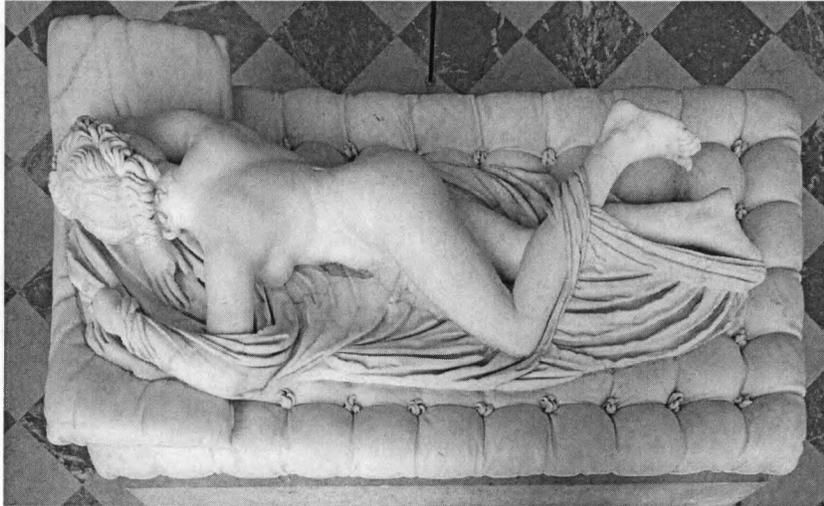


Figure 7: Sleeping Hermaphroditus (Top View)

As Graham Zanker describes, the sculpture then integrates the viewer into its narrative by creating a moment of surprise.¹²⁵ The viewer must access a completely different corpus of images and negotiate the space between the classical ideal of gendered beauty and the Hellenistic character Hermaphroditus.¹²⁶ Therefore, both the *Sleeping Hermaphroditus* and *Idyll XV* of Theocritus force the viewer to go through the same mental process from different directions: the audience of Theocritus' work must

¹²⁴ Roman copy of a Greek bronze original by Polykles, 155 b.c. Louvre. MA231. This may be the same sculpture mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural Histories* by the famous sculpture Polykles (*NH* 34.80).

¹²⁵ Zanker (2007), 122.

¹²⁶ The exact nature of the cult of Hermaphroditus is debated. Ajootian (1997) discusses Hermaphroditus' important role as a protective deity, while Pollitt (1986) links it more specifically with fertility and dual sexuality.

reincorporate images from epic for a full understanding of the females Gorgo and Praxinoa, who defy initial judgements about their ineptitude and assert themselves rather as positive models for viewing, while the audience of the Sleeping Hermaphroditus must incorporate the Hellenistic ideals of surprise, joking and voyeurism into the corpus of classical imagery, which is triggered by the rear of the statue. Thus both Theocritus and the sculptor of the Sleeping Hermaphroditus use a reversal of the audience's assumptions to underscore the importance of mixing classical models with contemporary values to truly understand the Hellenistic world.

After the introduction of the Homeric quotation, Gorgo continues her assessment of the tapestry by commenting on its fine workmanship and worthiness to dress the gods, θεῶν περονάματα φασεῖς (79). Praxinoa replies, remarking on the skill of the workmen who made it: πότνι' Ἀθαναία, ποῖαί σφ' ἐπόνασαν ἔριθοι,/ ποῖοι ζωογράφοι τὰκριβέα γράμματ' ἔγραψαν (80-81). This moment is self-reflexive, since the audience would immediately recall of the beginning of the *Idyll*, in which Gorgo praises Praxinoa's dress and inquires about its cost (ln 34-38):

Γοργώ: Πραξινόα, μάλα τοι τὸ καταπτυχῆς ἔμπερόναμα
τοῦτο πρέπει: λέγε μοι, πόσσω κατέβα τοι ἀφ' ἰστῶ;

Πραξινόα: μὴ μνάσης Γοργοῖ: πλέον ἀργυρίῳ καθαροῦ μνᾶν
ἢ δύο: τοῖς δ' ἔργοις καὶ τὰν ψυχὰν ποτέθηκα.

Γοργώ: ἀλλὰ κατὰ γνώμαν ἀπέβα τοι.

Gorgo: Praxinoa, that ample-folded dress
suits you very much: Tell me, what did it cost off the loom?

Praxinoa: Don't remind me Gorgo: more than two pure
silver minae and I put my soul into the work

Gorgo: But it turned out how you wanted.

There is an inherent connection here between Praxinoa, as creator of the garment she is wearing, and the maker of the tapestry. Thus, the women are artists in their own right, just as those who made the tapestry are and, in turn, as Theocritus himself is. As Pomeroy describes, women in Hellenistic Alexandria would still have been involved with weaving and cloth-making, although, as this passage implies, they would have been able to purchase cloth as well.¹²⁷ As Gow asserts, because the cloth is already made, the “τοῖς ἔργοις” that Praxinoa mentions is most likely the embroidery of the cloth.¹²⁸ This comparison makes the audience aware that these women are not simply viewers, but “connoisseurs of the weaver’s art.”¹²⁹ Furthermore, by referencing an earlier point in the poem, one which helped the audience create a mental picture of modern day Alexandria, Theocritus uses the makers of the tapestry to entrench his description further in the contemporary moment. Thus, he instructs his audience to access the corpus of images from everyday life that had already been assembled earlier in the *Idyll* to supplement his description of the tapestry in the following lines.

The link between women, weaving, and Hellenistic poetry was an important theme in Hellenistic literature. As a dramatic increase in epigrams written from the point

¹²⁷ Pomeroy (1984), 164.

¹²⁸ Gow (1965), 278

¹²⁹ Skinner (2001), 214.

of view of female poets demonstrates, during the Hellenistic period, poets began to feel connected to the poetry of female authors like Sappho and Erinna.¹³⁰ Erinna, a female poet working in Rhodes, Lesbos, or Teos, is described by the Suda as a contemporary of Sappho who died a virgin at age 19.¹³¹ In Erinna's *Distaff*, the poet writes a mourning song for her friend Baucis, who died right before or right after marriage. By naming her poem *Ἡλακάτη*, probably a reference to the fates spinning out the life-thread of her friend,¹³² she intimately links the acts of poetry and weaving.¹³³ As Marilyn Skinner asserts, "the *Distaff* forged a tight metonymic bond between the fashioning of intricate polychromatic designs in wool or linen and the arduous effort of composing a slender, but exquisite and touching, literary masterpiece."¹³⁴ In Theocritus *Idyll XV*, because of the connection to Erinna and the relationship between poetry and weaving, Gorgo and Praxinoa become not only connoisseurs of the tapestry, but connoisseurs of poetry as well, an assertion that is supported by the fact that the women themselves, either consciously or unconsciously are able to quote Homer. This creates a direct connection between the audience, Gorgo and Praxinoa, and the poet himself. The vocabulary of the ekphrasis not only plays with the line between reality and art, but also the boundary

¹³⁰ Cameron and Cameron (1969), 285.

¹³¹ Suda 401. Sylvia Barnard (1978), 207, argues that Erinna was actually a Hellenistic poet with a literary rather than temporal connection to Sappho who lived into adulthood as a priestess.

¹³² Cameron and Cameron (1969), 288.

¹³³ Although the poem may not have originally been named *Ἡλακάτη*, it is clear from epigrams that Alexandrian scholars knew it by this name. Ibid 286.

¹³⁴ Skinner (2001), 214-215.

between the academic Greek aristocracy and the diversity of class and race found on Alexandria's streets.

The description of the art object itself is quite brief, only eight lines, and like the ekphrases in Herodas, it focuses on the intense realism of the scene and the beauty of the reclining figure. Scholars posit that the scene shows Adonis laid out on a silver couch at the moment of his death, unaware that he is about to be reborn.¹³⁵ Praxinoa praises the tapestry by claiming that the figures are alive and are not embroidered at all, ἔμψυχ', οὐκ ἐνυφαντά (83). As Joan Burton asserts, Praxinoa delights in the realism of the tapestry because it allows her to incorporate herself and her reality into the mythological narrative.¹³⁶ Thus, the housewife is able to leave behind her daily cares and integrate herself into the romance of Adonis and Aphrodite. By designing a poem in which women discuss weaving, Theocritus imports into his own work the literary values assigned to Erinna's, namely brevity and precision.¹³⁷ This brevity necessitated the supplementation of images from both contemporary life and epic simultaneously. As Burton describes, "qualities Gorgo and Praxinoa admire in the tapestries coincide with qualities prized by aestheticized Hellenistic poets, e.g. fineness and delicacy (λεπτά, χαρίεντα, 79), variegation (ποικίλα, 78), craftsmanship (ἐπόνασαν, 80), realism (τὰκριβέα, 81; ὡς ἔτυμ', 82), and learnedness (σοφόν, 83)."¹³⁸ Placing the words of the educated elite into the

¹³⁵ Gow (1969), 289.

¹³⁶ Burton (1995), 101.

¹³⁷ Cameron and Cameron (1969).

¹³⁸ Ibid 130-104.

mouths of these everyday women, along with the earlier Homeric quotation, blurs the line once again between conventional and unexpected models of viewing. It also calls into question the intended audience of Hellenistic art, which has long been assumed to be restricted to the educated elite. This ekphrasis mixes the culture of the Alexandrian elite, which was focused on knowledge of Classical Greece, and the experience of everyday people, giving both possible audiences a window to understand one another.

This recourse to brevity is also seen in Hellenistic sculpture, where one figure takes on the meaning and emotional intensity of an entire narrative. For example, the image of the sleeping Ariadne expresses the vulnerability of an unguarded sleeping heroine who has just been abandoned by her lover, while at the same time anticipating the power she will soon inherit as a goddess when Dionysus rescues her and makes her his wife (figure 8).¹³⁹

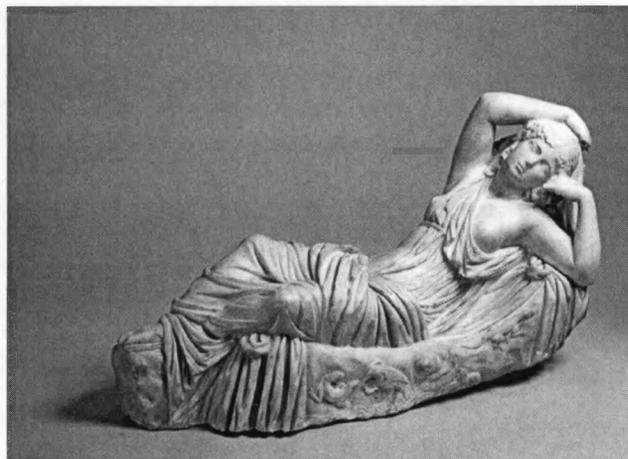


Figure 8: Sleeping Ariadne

¹³⁹ Sleeping Ariadne, San Antonio Museum of Art, Roman marble copy of a Hellenistic Greek original, 2nd-century b.c.

Ariadne sleeps on a rock, her body and a single exposed breast vulnerable to the viewer. Like the sleeping Hermaphroditus, Ariadne does not sleep peacefully, but rather she raises her arm above her head to clutch her falling drapery, and her legs are tangled by the heavy folds of her garment. Shelia McNally asserts that this is “dreaming that reveals conflicts [...] with the outside world that waking had concealed.”¹⁴⁰ Although she does not know that she has been abandoned by Theseus, her body seems to react nevertheless to his absence. The artist relies on the audience’s ability to supplement imagery from the corpus of classical mythology to make sense of the isolated scene. Although her body is agitated, the hand that clutches at her falling veil makes a gesture common to brides, prefiguring her marriage to Dionysus and the end of her isolation. The viewer is left in a charged space between knowledge and innocence. Although the style of the piece is deliberately classicizing, the psychological impact of the figure displays a Hellenistic interest in changing physical and psychological states.¹⁴¹ As McNally discusses, the Greek conception of sleep as a small death may have played a part in the cult of Ariadne and been essential her rituals.¹⁴² This piece is similar to the scene described in Theocritus’ ekphrasis, in which Adonis is caught between death and rebirth, another state that momentarily disrupts his ability to communicate with the world. Although the scene of Adonis sleeping does not survive in Hellenistic sculpture outside

¹⁴⁰ McNally (1985), 174.

¹⁴¹ Ridgway (2001), 331.

¹⁴² Ibid, 183.

of Italy, the sleeping Ariadne is a good foil for a sleeping Adonis, since the pose and mental state are comparable to the tapestry described by Gorgo and Praxinoa.

By showing Ariadne in her mortal state, still sleeping after her abandonment by Theseus, and still able to be spied on by the voyeuristic eye, the artist breaks down the barriers that traditionally separate art from life.¹⁴³ In doing this, the artist mixes verism with classicizing ideals to create an enriched experience for the viewer. In this way, the viewer must take an active role in understanding the relationship between gods and humans, evaluating the form of the sleeping maiden just as Dionysus did before making Ariadne his wife. Just like in an ekphrasis, then, the viewer must understand his place as the “seer” and use supplemented images both from mythology and contemporary society to read meaning into an art piece that otherwise would lack meaning.¹⁴⁴ Using images like these, sculptors were able to take images that were usually separated from the viewer, both in style and emotion, and place them in direct contact with both elite and non-elite viewers.

Finally, Theocritus uses the brief description of the lounging Adonis and the hymn that follows to glorify the Ptolemies and their dynasty, creating a tangible connection between the world of mythology and contemporary royal Alexandrian society. As Frederick Griffiths notes, the movement from the streets to the palace and the description of the beautiful things contained within it, contrast the life of Praxinoa and

¹⁴³ Robertson (1993), 90.

¹⁴⁴ Goldhill discusses this process in ekphrasis as well (1994).

Gorgo - who have no power to influence their surroundings - with the largesse of Arsinoe II, the wife and sister of Ptolemy II.¹⁴⁵ He also posits that Adonis and Aphrodite are meant to be analogous for Ptolemy and Arsinoe, since just as the mythological couple triumphed over death, so, too, will the Ptolemies pass down their lineage and monarchy to the next generation after becoming deities themselves, preserving their power far into the future.¹⁴⁶ Such a parallel creates a further connection between Praxinoa and Theocritus, since both become vehicles through which the greatness of the Ptolemaic dynasty is preserved with connections to conventional Greek epic together with images from contemporary society. Griffiths goes on to argue that the two women serve as a vehicle for Theocritus to present his Sicilian mime and Syracusan dialect to the court of the Ptolemies.¹⁴⁷ This further affirms Praxinoa's place as a positive model, if not uncomplicated one for viewing, since she is presented as a direct stand-in for the poet. It also confirms her place as a contemporary woman, freshly divorced from the stereotypes of the earlier Greek world both by her speech and her place in Alexandrian society, who works with a corpus of images from both classical epic and everyday life. The festival of Adonis itself, then, which necessitates a mixture of different viewpoints and voices, becomes a foil for the Ptolemaic dynasty, which rests on both the elite Greek and native Egyptian ritual.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Griffiths (1981), 255.

¹⁴⁶ Griffiths (1979), 66.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 84.

¹⁴⁸ Reed (2000), 346.

Thus, both Theocritus and Hellenistic sculptors connect the world of Greek epic, which was claimed by the elite Greek inhabitants of Alexandria, to the streets of the “everyday” citizen. We see this most clearly in Theocritus *Idyll XV*, where he uses ekphrasis and viewer supplementation to invite his audience to mix facets of Greek epic with images from everyday life. As Joseph Reed describes,

“what Theocritus made of mime, it could not have been before, for he expands it to depict the whole social spectrum from pickpockets to kings, and to embody all levels of cultural attainment, from the high style of Homer down to the language of the streets. He encompasses the varieties of life in the vast new city in a single literary form, which in its own modest way supplies a unifying perspective on the increasingly centrifugal pressures of a mass society.”¹⁴⁹

As this chapter aims to illustrate, Theocritus was also in the company of visual artists working in the Hellenistic period, both of whom attempted to bridge the gap that was created by the heterogeneous population of Alexandria. They used the conventions of the past and integrated them with images of contemporary society to create a clearer understanding of the world in which they lived.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 107.

Conclusion

Both visual and literary artists working in Alexandria during the Hellenistic period faced similar challenges. They both encountered an urban landscape which was seemingly unsuited to the Archaic and Classical themes and tropes that formed the backbone of Greek education and thought and they were asked by their patrons to navigate the socio-economic and cultural chasms created by the Ptolemaic monarchy. Further, they had to grapple with contemporary images while maintaining a connection to the traditional Greek past, both as a way to legitimize the new world in which they were living and to understand its complexity. In order to overcome these challenges, artists turned towards the viewer, using the tool of viewer supplementation to create works of art that were in themselves a metaphor for the Alexandrian cityscape. These works were comprised of both traditional and contemporary elements, which the audience brought to the work. Thus each audience member would encounter the work differently, bringing supplemented images from his own life, education, and experience to fill in the gaps deliberately created by the artist to evoke this individualized experience.

Both Herodas and Theocritus used non-descriptive ekphrasis to create a viewing experience that brought together traditional and contemporary elements to create a more complete picture of the contemporary Alexandrian city. Herodas and Theocritus each used female narrators to evoke current changes in the social status of women, as well as to emphasize current scholarly interest in female poets like Sappho and Erinna, and to

create tension between appropriate and inappropriate narrators. Furthermore, both poets used the integration of contemporary images alongside Archaic and Classical elements to encourage the audience to merge contemporary and traditional thought when viewing the city. The pieces of art themselves became a metaphor for the city and the audience was taught to view both with the same critical gaze.

Hellenistic artists working in both literary and visual media attempted to endow their audience with this critical gaze, with which they were able to view the world around them, in order to create a deeper understanding of their diverse surroundings. Thus, Hellenistic art was not only a metaphor for the city, but also provided the audience with a new window through which to understand life and Hellenistic culture. The modern scholar, therefore, can gain an enriched understanding of the challenges faced by the ancient Alexandrian when both visual and literary arts are viewed together as a conversation between audience and artist.

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