

in contrast, were often colored by Pythagorean, Platonic, Stoic, Gnostic, and even Iranian ideas; in chapters 46, 47, and 48 the dualistic basis of Zoroastrianism was presented in an exposé, which has often been quoted as authoritative.

For evidence on the contemporary cult of the Egyptian deities, Plutarch relied to some extent on his friend Clea, who held a double priesthood at Delphi—that of Isis and that of Dionysus. His book is dedicated to Clea. (It is possible, though not certain, that Plutarch was also an initiated devotee of Isis.) On a wide range of information about Egyptian religion, Plutarch was greatly indebted to a large number of Greek writers, whose compilations he probably used. Their quality varied, but most important among them to Plutarch was Manetho, a bilingual Egyptian and a high priest at Heliopolis under the first two kings of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

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**POETRY.** See Hymns; Literature; and Lyric.

**POLYGAMY.** See Marriage and Divorce.

**PORTRAITURE.** The origins of portraiture in ancient Egypt no doubt lie in the belief in eternal life. In the early

phases of Egyptian history known collectively as the Predynastic period, there were attempts to preserve the body. In the Old Kingdom, the cadaver was wrapped in linen that was stiffened with resin or plaster. Lifelike details were molded or modeled, creating a sculpture from the body. Throughout Egyptian history, the ever-increasing elaboration of funerary equipment reveals the desire to prepare the deceased for eternity; tomb sculptures represent a personal ideological imperative that preserves the identity of the deceased as a self-presentation of a virtuous life, both to the deities and to humans.

The ancient Egyptians required abstract qualities or physical correspondence, and often both, in their portraiture, which was limited almost exclusively to sculpture. A pensive or contemplative expression, for example, is a frequent component of a lifelike rendering. Still more than outward appearance, the virtue of the individual represented his or her reality. Foremost in the Egyptian value system was a principle known as *maat* ("harmony, cosmic equilibrium"), which all persons were expected to preserve. Idealizing statues must have been portraits because they created a necessary fiction; they revealed the admirable qualities, especially the adherence to *maat*, by which the deceased wished to be remembered. They are the three-dimensional equivalents of the paintings of the judgment of the dead found on cartonnages and sarcophagi. In both sculpture and painting, the deceased is always represented as a sinless, upstanding individual. Unlike later artists, the Egyptian sculptor had little opportunity for personal expression or deviation from convention. Many strictures, including the patron's wishes, controlled the portrait's content.

Tomb sculptures were private and directed primarily toward the deities. Public statues, particularly of royalty, were erected in and around temples and palaces to serve as the official images or self-presentations to both mankind and the theological pantheon. Although the context and purpose of public sculpture often explain the variation in facial types, especially in royal statues, the aspects or character traits were not necessarily different between private and public statues. Furthermore, the official image of a ruler was but one element of the ideological program of his sculptures, regardless of context. His dress, insignias, and crowns—even the dazzling paint or luster of the highly polished stone—were critical elements in the dramatic presentation of his stature.

A few scholars deny the existence of portraiture in Egyptian art, claiming that idealizing sculptures cannot possibly be realistic and that lifelike sculptures are formulaic or pastiches. Others insist that any lifelike attributes, particularly in the facial features, qualify a sculpture as portraiture. To be a portrait, the reasoning goes, an image must be recognizable and unable to be confused with the

representations of other individuals. Advocates of this argument do not necessarily require complete verisimilitude. They admit stylistic conventions—a unique configuration of the eyebrow or the outlines of the eye—as markers of identity, along with more specific details such as facial musculature. The problem with this interpretation is that it implicitly requires a physical correspondence between the subject and the sculpture. It also precludes a common means of association by an individual with a group or, in the case of royal portraits, with an earlier ruler. The genealogy of portraiture and the association of an individual with an earlier period contain a very specific political, social, or theological message. Therefore, the continuation of a portrait type may indicate a desire to be associated with a previous person or era rather than being proof of physical similarity. Despite the denial of an individual's "real" appearance, sculptures—as well as paintings and reliefs—of this type are portraits because they reveal the qualities by which the person wished to be known.

There are other factors that must be taken into account when considering a historical portrait in isolation. For example, a statue can be identified with a particular individual in several ways. In its original context or through an identifying inscription, the identity would have been clear, regardless of the stylization, idealization, or similarity to earlier representations. Then again, the great majority of Egyptians would not have seen the pharaoh; hence, the degree of realism of a royal statue would have been lost on them. Furthermore, most sculptures have by now been removed from their settings, and many either are uninscribed or have lost their original identifying text. Because the facial features of so many of these sculptures are non-individualized, they remain anonymous. Many sculptures were appropriated by later persons and transported to distant locations. Sometimes they were recut and reinscribed for the new owner, but occasionally they were simply reinscribed. Because the original face was left untouched, the recognition factor seems irrelevant. The new inscription gave the sculpture a new identity; hence, its inner qualities now applied to the new owner. Even when naturalistic details appear, the identity is often difficult to determine without an inscription. Although these works seem idealized, stylized, or formulaic to us, to the ancient Egyptians they were portraits because they conformed to the prevailing style that was appropriate for expressing the inner character of individuals or the role that they fulfilled.

Thus, three different types of portrait are found in ancient Egyptian art: idealized and realistic portraits of real individuals and depictions of fictitious or nonspecific individuals, such as a "foreigner." The third category combines the first two types because it is a "study" of a more

general nature, often with a seemingly realistic appearance. Realism does not consist of surface appearance; otherwise, any photograph would be a portrait. What makes a portrait is the artist's elucidation of an emotional, psychological, or intellectual component, an inner life that transcends physical correspondence. Those components are not always recognizable; artists often transmit them in a personal code decipherable by no one else. In modern times, the artist's perception becomes the defining element of the portrait. This luxury of personal interpretation, however, was a freedom that the ancient Egyptian artist did not enjoy.

That portraiture resists a single, all-purpose definition is not surprising, because it encompasses at least four sometimes opposing impulses: the public's expectations, the subject's wishes, the artist's vision, and artistic conventions. Despite the difficulties of interpretation, in very simple terms a portrait is a character study. It probes beneath the surface and reveals not the full range of the individual's psyche but one or a few aspects, which differ according to the needs that the portrait satisfies. Frequently a portrait is a labored or artificial study, especially when it serves an official or public purpose. Most often, a portrait captures a passing but revelatory mood and transfixes it for all time. Because the artist, subject, and viewer have different perceptions of the finished product, some scholars have rightly questioned the validity of the specific label "portraiture" and have suggested simply "representation" or "approximation" as alternatives. "Likeness" is another option, if it includes works that evoke the psychological or intellectual qualities of the individual and not merely the physiognomic details.

Consequently, portraiture is one of the most confusing, ill-defined, and controversial terms in the study of ancient Egyptian art. Part of the problem is the overemphasis on and misunderstanding of realism, which generally conforms to the modern expectation of anatomical verisimilitude. Realism, however, remains the greatest obstacle to the understanding of portraiture and is the focus here. Before the importance of realism to the Egyptological controversy can be assessed, some general observations on portraiture are necessary.

The style or type of portrait varies according to the intended audience. A portrait created for public display relies heavily on physiognomy. Because the portrait is an official image, however—most often of government, business, and academic persons—the artist acquiesces to formulaic exigencies and endows the representations with heroic qualities, such as the abilities to lead, make difficult decisions, and endure crises. Individual qualities are subordinated to expected roles, and it is sometimes questionable whether correspondence exists. Realism thus serves an ideal or an expectation, but it does not necessar-



PORTRAITURE. *Red quartzite bust of Akhenaten, eighteenth dynasty.* The bust is 12 centimeters (4.75 inches) high. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1911. [11.150.26])

ily portray the individual. Realism is not an objective quality; it is subjective and mutable. The realism of a portrait depends on the viewers for whom it was created and the function that it served.

Correspondence is perhaps more evident in portraits intended for the subject's personal enjoyment because something of the individual's inner qualities appear. Nonetheless, uncertainty about the realism remains. The artist may defer to the patron's vanity by subduing some features and emphasizing others. The subject may specify the qualities to be expressed or the manner of representation. The descendants of an illustrious ancestor sometimes commission a flattering portrait, as if to create an official image.

Because the majority of human representations in Egyptian art appear to contemporary sensibilities as idealizing, generalizing, or even formulaic—slim, youthful, physically appealing figures devoid of lifelike features—they are not often regarded as portraits. By contrast, the slightest personal flourish—a furrowed brow, a pensive look, a distinctive nose—supposedly makes the representation the genuine item. Quite apart from the unwarranted primacy accorded to realism, this reductive reasoning is unfortunate on at least two counts. It omits the many nuances of realism, and it completely overlooks an intriguing related issue. Why are lifelike human representations generally confined to sculptures of men? Although numerous exceptions exist, Egyptian paintings and reliefs of both men and women are usually not individualizing, or fall within the category discussed above. Not until the Ptolemaic period do individualizing sculptures of women appear with any regularity, and even then the artist depends heavily on iconographic attributes to portray the

identity of an individual queen. Before then, that women are generally depicted in all three media as beautiful, svelte, young, and flawless may seem an enlightened aesthetic, but an equally valid interpretation is darker and pessimistic: the individuality of women was unimportant. The lack of evidence for individualizing portraits of women is as much a social as an artistic commentary because it demonstrates that their role was limited and minimal. The sculptures and reliefs of Hatshepsut illustrate this point well; this female pharaoh is typically portrayed in the guise of a male. The only compromise that convention allowed is Hatshepsut's very occasional portrayal in female form in some of her portraits.

The third portrait type is the most intensely personal, a representation intended neither as an official image nor as a private commission, but as an independent work. It is a category that either did not exist or was rare in ancient Egypt. The artist is free of constraints and expectations and endows the portrait with whatever qualities and sensations come to mind. Because these images are occasionally unflattering to the individual, they may seem more honest and realistic. For example, caricatures, especially the political and social varieties, are freighted with prejudice. Nonetheless, the majority of "independent" portraits are more benign, and on first consideration they are ostensibly the most important of the three types because they represent a personal, unbound, and therefore objective response; but they are no more realistic than portraits commissioned as official images or as more private and personal works. The representations of the same individual are subjective aesthetic responses that may differ from one artist to the next. Which portrait is the most realistic? Whether physical or internal, realism in portraiture is not an empirical, objective quality grounded in consensus. It is an ethos, a preference, or an interpretation, an ever-shifting variable, whose validity and expression depend on the audience, the subject, and the artist.

Few ancient Egyptian portraits are free of stylization. The best illustration consists of the plaster masks found in the workshop of the sculptor Thutmose at Tell el-Amarna, the capital of the eighteenth dynasty pharaoh Akhenaten. Some of the masks seem unretouched, but the majority are reworked or stylized to fit the prevailing artistic style. Although part of the individual's outward appearance is preserved, the alterations suggest that realism was not as important as the assimilation of the individual with the pharaoh by adopting his official style.

Stylization occurs in even the most seemingly realistic portraits. From the fourth dynasty come numerous sculptures known as "reserve heads," which display highly individualizing features. Among the most "realistic" of all Old Kingdom artistic works, these sculptures are regarded as true portraits. In one case, evidence exists for their ana-

tomical veracity: the hooked nose on the head of Prince Nofer, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, recurs among his tomb reliefs. The function of the reserve heads has been debated, but it is generally agreed that they preserve the deceased's vital character. Interestingly enough, that character or inner life is less in evidence than the meticulous surface treatment. However, on a related sculpture, the bust of Ankhkhaef, also in Boston, both the internal and external aspects are revealed. The significant point is that on all these realistic heads, stylization is also crucial. The eyes and the eyebrows are rendered in an artificial manner that is not lifelike but is a traditional aesthetic style. The awkward proportions of some of the heads, the peculiar treatment of their mouths, and their overall ungainly appearance indicates stylization or at least suggests that the heads are not completely lifelike.

Because the mummies of numerous kings survive, a comparison between their heads and their artistic representations is often instructive. The aquiline noses of the mummies of the nineteenth dynasty pharaohs Sety I and Ramesses II are prominent throughout not only their sculptures but also their paintings and reliefs, which are among the most individualizing royal representations in these two media. Nonetheless, they display the same stylization around the eyes found in the reserve heads.

Even the most anatomically detailed Egyptian representations can be deceptive, sometimes they are almost caricatures. The idealizing images of the deceased as slim and athletic have their counterpart in remarkably corpulent figures such as the renowned Old Kingdom statues of Kaiaperu in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, and of Hemiunu in the Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim. Although physical correspondence is a possibility, these statues may have been shaped by a class distinction. Both persons held important positions that freed them from need and from hard manual labor. Their dramatic bodily presence may have been a visual conceit manifesting their affluence. At the opposite extreme, the depictions in painting and relief of pot-bellied fishermen, emaciated and lame cowherds, bald and bewiskered laborers, and carefully observed foreigners are probably more genre figures born of social commentary than actual individuals. The famous relief of the queen of Punt from Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri and the innumerable scenes of other foreigners are meticulous in their detail; yet it is the peculiarity of the subject matter, its non-Egyptian otherness, that captured the artist's attention. The image of the queen of Punt may seem at first to be extraordinarily realistic, but it could well be a caricature. Unless the artist accompanied Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt, he would have relied on eyewitness reports, which no matter how reliable would have resulted in exaggeration and stylization. Likewise, for all their ostensible realism, the representations

of foreigners surely served as conventions or stereotypes; they are not necessarily realistic portraits of actual, historical foreigners simply because they seem to be individualizing.

Still, not every secondary character is formulaic. From the tomb of Horemheb at Saqqara come several reliefs depicting stock figures such as mourners, some of whom have anatomical details (receding hairlines, everted navels) that are unparalleled in similar scenes and probably indicate actual persons. These surprising individual flourishes in ancillary figures provide much of the liveliness of Egyptian art and serve as reminders of the profit to be gained from close study of even the most formulaic or repetitive phenomena.

Realism can be misleading also among representations of historical persons. The well-known statues of Senwosret III and his late twelfth dynasty successors in various collections, for example, have very lifelike, careworn faces, lacking the usual stylization of the eyebrows and eyes. Most remarkably, indications of advanced age are manifest in these statues as never before. Nonetheless, their expressions and appearances seem to be idealizations, evincing a quality or aspect of the king that was part of his official image, his self-presentation to deities and the public. Although the rulers of the waning twelfth dynasty may have had family resemblances that were accurately rendered in their sculptures, the close similarities between the sculptures of Senwosret III and his successors indicate that more than genealogy is at work. Actually, the rudiments of the style successfully exploited by Senwosret III first appear in the reign of Senwosret II. A new ideology expresses itself in the ponderous, haggard faces, which have their analogy in several pensive didactic texts related to kingship.

The phenomenon of appropriation is the clearest indication that physical correspondence was not essential for portraiture. In the thirteenth dynasty and about a millennium later in the twenty-fifth dynasty, private persons followed the late twelfth dynasty royal style. The physiognomy of these nonroyal persons obviously had no importance in their self-presentation. Their borrowing or adaptation of the official image of earlier kings allowed them to share some of the ideological aspects inherent in the royal sculptures. Similarly, portraits of the early Ptolemaic rulers are often hard to distinguish from those of the thirtieth dynasty. This similarity may have been a deliberate royal policy to link the Ptolemies with Egypt's past or, alternatively, the continuation of a stylistic convention. The type was then copied by private individuals, who commissioned portraits that demonstrated a desire to be associated with the royal house.

Exactly the same process recurs throughout Egyptian art, royal and nonroyal, not only in sculpture but also in painting and relief. Once a new official royal style was es-

tablished, it became the archetype among kings and commoners, who made their own modifications through successive generations. Among many examples, there are a Thutmosid and a Ramessid style. Sometimes the official image had an antiquarian aura. Because Ahmose and Amenhotpe I, the first two kings of the eighteenth dynasty, restored native rule after the Hyksos domination and saw themselves as the heirs of Nebhepetre Montuhotpe, the late eleventh dynasty pharaoh who reunified the country after a period of civil strife, they depicted themselves in his image. Many pharaohs, particularly Ramesses II of the nineteenth dynasty, appropriated the sphinxes and other sculptures of much earlier kings; sometimes the only alterations were not to the face but to the identifying cartouche.

In many respects, portraits filled a general role. It was not necessarily just the facial features of an individual that mattered, but rather the role that was fulfilled. When the pharaoh died, the portrait could be reused acceptably by his successor because it represented the ideals of kingship and not merely the actual features of the individual ruler. New portrait types developed in order to show a ruler's desire—such as association with the previous pharaoh and the promotion of a dynasty—rather than his features. The representation of women in Egyptian art follows a similar pattern: their continual idealization indicates the limited social role of the eternally youthful, slim, beautiful woman.

Portraiture enabled the Egyptians to promote themselves to their deities and their fellows alike in a desired or prescribed manner. The evidence for "realistic" representations of individuals needs to be treated with the utmost caution, because they potentially account for the most stylized type. Idealizing images at least portray an individual in a specific role, and as a consequence they should not be misleading to the modern onlooker.

[See also Reserve Heads.]

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**POTTERY.** See Ceramics.

**POULTRY.** Taking full advantage of the abundance of avian life in their country, the ancient Egyptians' diet was enriched by birds, especially delicious and highly nutritious migratory waterfowl. Just how plentiful and comparatively easy water birds are to obtain in Egypt can be seen from the fact that from 1979 to 1986, by a conservative estimate, between 260,000 and 374,000 of them were taken annually without firearms in the Nile Delta alone, using essentially ancient technology. Moreover, there is sound ecological and other evidence indicating that four or five thousand years ago, the available wildlife was far richer. [See Birds.]

By the middle of the first dynasty, as shown by a representation on a gaming disc found in the tomb (no. 3035) of the chancellor Hemaka at Saqqara, and now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, fowling had perfected the technique of employing large, rectangular clapnets to capture huge numbers of these migrants. Most of this hunting presumably took place in the then-extensive swamplands of the Delta, but probably also in the Faiyum. Those birds not immediately killed when caught were fattened, even force-fed, and kept in a semidomesticated state until needed for food or sacrifice. Members of the aristocracy maintained, as did individual temples, substantial stocks of poultry on their domains. These birds had considerable economic importance. The vast repertoire of scenes from daily life decorating the walls of tomb-chapels belonging to the elite from the Old Kingdom onward routinely include the activities of busy poultry yards and aviaries. These places are shown teeming with various kinds of ducks, geese, cranes, and doves, and frequently have captions giving the birds' names and numbers. The famous fifth dynasty *mastaba* (tomb 60) of the high-ranking court official Tiy at Saqqara, for example, is noteworthy for its wide assortment of vibrant aviculture and fowling compositions. Such birds must have been so esteemed as table fare, that tomb owners evidently wished to eat them throughout eternity. Generous numbers of waterfowl are carried as offerings by bearers featured in tomb-chapels and temples spanning all eras, they appear among the piles of victuals heaped before the deceased, are put on funerary tables, are named in their extensive menus for the beyond, and are mentioned in temple offering lists. There is some textual evidence from the New Kingdom that birds were affordably priced in ancient Egypt. However, the specially raised and force-fed poultry on view in tomb scenes were undoubtedly reserved for the wealthy. Curiously, the eggs seem to be absent as food in funerary contexts, probably owing to a taboo.

When images are carefully executed and paint is still extant, it is sometimes possible to recognize the precise