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**Ancient Greek Women: Weavers, Painters and Patrons**

A Thesis Presented

by

**Mikaela Batista**

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Abstract of the Thesis  
**Ancient Greek Women: Weavers, Painters and Patrons**

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Linda Nochlin and the Guerrilla Girls, amongst others, have advocated for the equal representation of women artists. I have found that this contemporary concern of gender inequality can be traced back to Classical Antiquity. The patriarchal structure that women lived in assisted in the construction of female roles within society. Through these roles we can examine their contributions to the art world of Ancient Greece as weavers, painters and patrons. The analysis of their artistic significance led to their historiography by writers such as Pliny the Elder and Giovanni Boccaccio. Their written works, created in Ancient Rome and 14th century Italy, delineated how women with connections to the art world should be educational models and worthy of recognition. We must revisit the women's connections to the ancient arts, review the literature that discusses their contributions, and continue to educate future artists and historians of their artistic importance. By doing so, we can prevent the echo of their existence and their accomplishments from becoming lost in history.

## Dedication Page

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. I have been surrounded by kind, intelligent, beautiful and strong women who have encouraged me to pursue the things that would make me happy. My grandfather and my uncles have also been key elements to making me the persistent individual that I am today. I am forever grateful to have a wonderful family that has watched me grow, supported my passion for art and blessed me with their unconditional love.

I would especially like to say “thank you” to two women in particular. My mother Lorraine, aka “Mami” aka “Mom”, has always been, and always will be, an inspiration. She is the embodiment of strength, resilience and love and I hope that one day I will be as wonderful as she is. I would not have made it to where I am today without her words of wisdom to guide me through the obstacles that life has laid at my feet. She is beautiful on the outside and the inside and I will never forget all that she has done for me. For that, I am forever grateful. Thank you, Mom.

I would also like to thank my grandmother, Isolina Aguilar, aka “Nana”. Her knowledge of motherhood, patience, independence, keeping traditions alive, accepting others and loving life has also contributed to who I am today. She raised two generations of strong women and she has always encouraged us all to be the best that we can be. She will always be my earth, sky, sun and moon. Her wisdom and love will always be remembered and, once again, I am eternally grateful to have had her in my life. *Gracias por todo y te quiero mucho para siempre, Nana.*



*Ancient Greek Women:  
Weavers, Painters and Patrons*

*Mikaela Batista*

## Images

Frontispiece created by Mikaela Batista, 2016. Images used: The Ludovisi Cnidian Aphrodite, Roman Marble Copy based off of Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Knidos, Marble Statue, 4th Century BC. Ludovisi Collection, Rome. National Museum of Rome. Available from Google Images:

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Ancient Greek Women: Weavers, Painters and Patrons

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Linda Nochlin's 1974 essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* began the discussion of the underrepresentation of women within the realm of art. She discussed that we discredit and eliminate numerous female artists by failing to identify them and their contributions.<sup>1</sup> A decade later, the Guerilla Girls, in their gorilla masks, facilitated a satirical campaign criticizing numerous art institutions and galleries for the inadequate presence of female and ethnically diverse artists.<sup>2</sup> These are only two of many examples advocating for a restoration of gender balance within the art historical world. This contemporary matter of gender inequality within the arts can be traced all the way back to Classical Antiquity. We must review the positions of women in ancient Greek society to further delineate their relationship to the arts. By identifying the roles of ancient women as weavers, painters and patronesses and using their contributions to their community, we can begin to re-instate a sense of equal representation in art history. The analysis of their artistic significance led to their historiography by writers Pliny the Elder and Giovanni Boccaccio. We should also take their texts into consideration to prevent the artistic accomplishments of these ancient women from being lost in history.

Let us begin by identifying the patriarchal influences that classical mythology and literature had upon the formation of the roles of women. Classical mythology was a literary method for the ancient Greek men to establish a "symbolic order to their universe"<sup>3</sup>, but it essentially instituted the authority of men within the society. Hesiod's *Theogony*, written in 700 BC, began with the earthly and natural rule of the mother goddess, Ge. Her grandchildren were ferocious entities who had to be hidden away in the earth. Her son, Cronus, also hid his children away inside Ge's granddaughter, Rhea. No longer willing to accept the punishment of hiding away her children, Rhea asks Zeus to overthrow Cronus. After defeating him, Zeus, and the other Olympian gods, resided on Mt. Olympus and instituted a patriarchal government as well as a moral rule for Greek culture.<sup>4</sup> Hesiod deconstructed women's power further by depicting the first

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<sup>1</sup> Nochlin, 145 – 178.

<sup>2</sup> Guerilla Girls, 6 – 17.

<sup>3</sup> Pomeroy, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Pomeroy, 2. When Zeus defeats his father Cronus, the major Olympians become a part of the patriarchal society that he establishes. These gods and goddesses include the anthropomorphic Athena, Artemis, Hestia, Aphrodite, Hera, Demeter, Dionysus, Ares, Hermes, Apollo, Poseidon, Hades, Hephaestus. (Pomeroy 2 – 4)

mortal woman, Pandora, who was meant to be the compassionate symbol of fertility, but then unleashed pain and sorrow onto mankind by opening the forbidden box.<sup>5</sup>

The writings of Hesiod supported the construction of patriarchal society of Greece and the view that women were inferior to men. The creation of goddesses and literary women within the male dominated realm of mythology provided a case where men could project attributes onto mortal women; goddesses became archetypes of ethical behavior. Greek goddesses were ideal women with power, independence and wisdom. They radiated traits such as loyalty, chastity, intellect, and divine love.<sup>6</sup> The mortal women who possessed these qualities were deemed honorable women within Greek society. Women needed to possess these qualities but also must be capable of executing an art form that was associated with the divine. For instance, Athena, who embodied the characteristics of a virtuous woman, was also the goddess of crafts. She had a major influence on all women with her spinning and weaving abilities.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, this art form became a prominent literary tool indicating a level of spiritual and intellectual significance to the women creating textiles.

There are numerous mythological and poetic legends that are associated with the importance of weaving. The fact that this art is associated with the mighty goddess Athena instantly elevated its importance to women and granted them a sense of power. Spinning and weaving also illustrated a spiritual endeavor through the Three Fates. Homer, another influential poet, described the divine ability of weaving within his epic poems of the Iliad and the Odyssey.<sup>8</sup> The *Moirai*, or Apportioners, were three women who spun and wove the destinies of humans. Klotho spun the threads of human lives, Lachesis measured the threads, and Atropos made the decision to cut the thread and end the life of the human. “And then the person will suffer whatever Fate and the heavy-handed Spinners spun into their linen thread for him coming into being when his mother gave birth to him.”<sup>9</sup> In this literary example, the Three Fates related to women and the divine ability to create life and to fabricate destiny.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 1 – 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 8 - 9.

<sup>8</sup> Barber, 235.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 235.

Homer does not cease depicting women and the art of weaving. He also connects this sacred art to the wife of Odysseus and she becomes another archetype for mortal women. Odysseus, the main hero and protagonist of Homer's *Odyssey*, spent ten years abroad fighting in the Trojan War. It took him another ten years to return home to Ithaca. In the span of twenty years, his honorable wife Queen Penelope had faith that he would return. In the meantime, Penelope and her son, Telemachus, attempted to ward off the numerous imposing suitors who aimed to take Penelope as a wife. Penelope used her weaving to deceive her persistent suitors. She promised her hand in marriage when she would finish her weaving project, but she would undo her work to keep them waiting. "Young men...keen as you are to marry me, until I can finish off this web...so by day she'd weave at her great and flowing web, but by night she would unravel all she'd done."<sup>10</sup> The literary tool of weaving thus illustrated the cunning and intelligence that women possessed.<sup>11</sup> Athena, the Three Fates and Penelope show the interconnection with women who possessed positive traits through their weaving talent.

It should be noted that there is a weaving legend associated with the negative traits that women should strive to avert. The legend of Arachne indicated that having the talent of weaving was important within society, but women had to avoid pretension. Arachne was a woman who trained and occupied herself with spinning and weaving. Her fame for her talent had grown and she challenged the goddess, Athena, to a weaving challenge. Accepting her challenge, the goddess of wisdom and weaving produced textiles alongside the mortal woman and found that Arachne's skill was impeccable. Upon further inspection, Athena saw that the human depicted various images of the faults of the gods. Enraged, Athena beat her and punished her by turning her into a spider to weave her threads until the end of time.<sup>12</sup> Women could be proud of their weaving talent, but becoming too vain in their skills was considered insolent. Despite being morally influenced by the written works of men, women had a creative enterprise that would essentially define a sense of balance to their community.

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<sup>10</sup> Homer, "The Odyssey", trans. Robert Fagles, 96.

<sup>11</sup> Bundrick, 293.

<sup>12</sup> Morford and Lenardon, 101 - 104.

The women of Classical Antiquity used this mystical skill of weaving for an assortment of purposes according to the positions they held within society. I primarily will focus on the specific weaving accomplishments by women in the domestic sphere, priestesses and aristocratic girls known as the *arrebphoroi* and the *ergastinai*, and the textiles produced by prostitutes. Based on these roles, we can assess the reasons behind their textile production. Women in the domestic sphere were treated with a level of respect even though their husbands and male relatives had more social and political power. The philosopher Aristotle, despite his own theoretical perspective on women,<sup>13</sup> does not dispute the importance of wives providing harmony within the *oikos* (household) by fulfilling the role of the wife and mother. The wives implemented the necessary balance to the *koinonia* (marital partnership). Aristotle stated, “The community needs both male and female excellences or it [the household] can only be half blessed.”<sup>14</sup> The balance within the *oikos* overall reflected the functionality of the community through the duties completed by husbands and wives. Harmony could be found through the achievement of weaving within the domestic sphere.

Mothers, housewives and young girls wove for numerous functions. One main function for weaving was to ensure a successful marriage. A woman’s textiles would exhibit her intelligence and dexterity for her future husband as well as add to the monetary value of her dowry.<sup>15</sup> To become a mother, to bear children and to guarantee the survival of the community was the ultimate goal; the art form of weaving was used to proclaim the woman’s worthiness to a prospective husband. Weaving would encourage respect and marital stability. “The dowry gave a wife considerable economic power

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<sup>13</sup> For a brief consideration on his theoretical perspective on women you can look towards Denise Riley’s *Am I That Name?* in which she describes the “Aristotelian Concept” utilized by author, Ian Mclean. This concept is based on Aristotle’s perspective of women belonging to a lower stratum when compared to men. “Although she is thought to be equally perfect in her sex, she does not seem to achieve complete parity with man...Her physiology and humours seem to destine her to be the inferior of man, both physically and mentally.” 23 – 24. You can also refer to Aristotle’s *Politics*. Chapter 12 delineates the hierarchy within the household. “The male, unless constituted in some respect contrary to nature, is by nature more expert at leading than the female...the relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled.” <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-pol/#SH7e>. Accessed Feb. 16 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Bundrick, 310 – 311.

<sup>15</sup> Pomeroy, 62 - 65. The textiles that the women would produce in order to assist for their dowries were considered a crucial part in the woman’s display of her artful capabilities and her character. In another example, if the woman was to divorce her husband, she could recover her elegant textiles since they were considered her possessions, and utilize them in order for another marriage.

within the marriage...the dowry was regarded as the wife's contribution to the household."<sup>16</sup> The textiles created by the bride-to-be would essentially add to the wealth of the household.

The value of woven creations is reflected in the text *Oikonmikos*, written by the ancient Greek historian, Xenophon. This text was considered to be a guide and compilation of other literature relating to household management and agriculture. Within this text, Ischomachos documented the items belonging to a prosperous family within ancient Greece, including textiles woven by women. "The most valuable bedding was kept in the *thalamos* (inner chamber or vault) for safekeeping...the bedding visible through the *thalamos* door are likely to represent the fruits of women's labor."<sup>17</sup> This exemplifies how precious handcrafted textiles were considered and, crucially, how women were contributing to their society through this revered skill. The overall worth of the textiles did add to the women's dowries and familial wealth and yet, there are other functions for weaving within the domestic realm.

Not only was textile production a part of a woman's life in terms of marriage and familial wealth, but it also became an educational tool for future generations of Greek women. Women who married and brought balance to the community would be expected to have children. If they gave birth to girls, it was also part of their role as mothers to maintain the weaving practice.<sup>18</sup> When mothers and wives had the opportunity to get together in a community setting, they educated their children to the weaving skill. "In such a world, the women could bring their smaller crafts out into the communal yard in good weather, to chat together and to help one another as they worked and watched the children play. The children could play at helping, pretending to do what the big folks do...such play can function as a sort of vocational kindergarten, teaching the children

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<sup>16</sup> Bundryck, 319.

<sup>17</sup> Bundryck, 318. There is a pyxis, or Greek ceramic vessel, in which includes the iconography of a woman spinning and a *thalamos* door is opened behind her. There are textiles that are seen within the door to the chamber, which Bundryck is referring to. This pyxis is currently housed in the Centauromachy section of the Louvre in Paris. The official title is *Woman with distaff and woman with handloom, pyxis by the Painter of the Louvre Centauromachy*.

<sup>18</sup> Lovén, 135 – 136. The wife and mother of the domestic home would then become an instructor of a vocational skill that would assist her children later on in life. It should also be noted that textiles skills were taught and learned from one generation to the next, and that also included the education of slaves as well.

the basic steps in the processes that they will have to master in earnest later.”<sup>19</sup> The girls eventually had to learn and master weaving. This art skill reflected that she was educated in the domestic arts and would contribute to her marital wealth. In this way, textiles produced within the home maintained the balance of the ancient Greek marriage, or *koinonia*.<sup>20</sup>

The art of weaving had more purposes within the religious sector. Priestesses used weaving as a process to assist in their religious ceremonies. The women utilized their mastered weaving skill to honor the gods and goddesses as well as advise others in the construction of honorary garments. One ritual that exemplifies this artistic contribution was for the birthday celebration of Athena, called the *Panathenaea*. Athena Polias was the patron goddess of the city of Athens. The priestesses were chosen from the noble family of the Eteoboutadae to honor the goddess.<sup>21</sup> The celebration of the birth of Athena was a religious festival and every four years a commemorative *peplos* (robe or dress usually worn by women) would be created for Athena. “The weaving of the cloth was begun by two of the *arrephorai*, who were girls between the ages of seven and eleven...other women continued the weaving and embroidering of the *peplos*.”<sup>22</sup> The *arrephorai* would work alongside the priestesses during the Chalkeia festival<sup>23</sup> in order to prepare the warp upon the loom that would be used for Athena’s offering (Figure 1).<sup>24</sup> Textiles dedicated to Athena were culturally defining aspects of the priestesses’ talent and social interaction with the noble families.

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<sup>19</sup> Barber, 85.

<sup>20</sup> A term which could also reflect the equilibrium that the marriage brought to the community.

<sup>21</sup> Pomeroy, 75.

<sup>22</sup> Pomeroy, 76. Pomeroy also mentions a scene within a frieze on the Parthenon that depicts a woman (priestess) offering a peplos.

<sup>23</sup> A festival that was celebrated nine months before the next Panathenaea which celebrated Athena as well as the god, Hephaestus, as the patrons gods of crafts.

<sup>24</sup> Palagia, 34. In order to have a better understanding of the physical process regarding weaving, refer to Elizabeth Barber’s *Women’s Work: The First 20,000 Years*. A loom is a rectangular framework in which to attach the wool threads for the weaving process. A *warp* is the one set of vertical threads that has to be kept in place tightly in order to avoid any loose strands, which can hinder the design and construction of the peplos. The other set of threads, which is interlaced horizontally to create the pattern or design is referred to as the *wef*. Barber 39. On the frieze of the Parthenon, the building dedicated to Athena’s birth and the home of numerous artistic sculptures and reliefs, there is a relief depicting the woven offering to a priest in order to give to the goddess. The elite women and the priestesses completed this woven gift, however, it seems as if a young boy is offering the woven peplos to the priest. It is unclear who this boy is.

There is another set of young women who were involved with the production of the honorary *peplos*. The other group of elite Athenian women that were under the tutelage of the Athenian priestesses was the *ergastinai*, also known as the *parthenoi*. They were at a marriageable age compared to the *arrephoroi*. After the *arrephoroi* completed the set-up of the loom and warp, the *ergastinai* continued the weaving process under the guidance of the priestesses.<sup>25</sup> The ritual set up of the loom as well as the weaving of Athena's *peplos* shows the vital link between religion and the community. More importantly, this was an artistic ritual that was facilitated by the well-respected priestesses and the young women of aristocratic families. Weaving of the ceremonial *peplos* exhibited the mystical properties that were reflected in mythology as well as being the respected art skill for women of the time. Priestesses, the *arrephoroi* and the *ergastinai* used their creative talent to bring poise to the community in a religious way.

We should also examine how prostitutes and courtesans used their weaving talent to contribute to the community as well. Despite the unfortunate circumstances in which these women were born, there were opportunities for them to contribute artistically. In most cases, the notion of becoming a prostitute was not determined by the woman.<sup>26</sup> Most were slave women, or sold into brothels and if they were female infants of other prostitutes, they would be property of the brothel master or mistress.<sup>27</sup> They were a part of the economics of the brothel system, which began to prosper as early as the Archaic Period.<sup>28</sup> There were opportunities for the prostitute to be granted freedom from her owner.<sup>29</sup> She could practice the profession on her own and make her own money by other means. As a woman within the lower class, she had the liberty to roam into the streets and markets. Freedwomen had the prospect of selling any textiles, wreaths or

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<sup>25</sup> Palagia, 34. Palagia also discusses the further duties of both sets of girls other than the weaving process in regards to the *Panathenaea*. They also were part of the procession of presenting the various offerings to Athena. She also utilizes various images of different sections of friezes within the Parthenon in order to depict sculptures that illustrated the religious festival. The role of the priestesses and young girls by weaving and their participation in the ancient ritual was influential enough to be included as a motif of the Pantheon.

<sup>26</sup> Pomeroy, 140.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 89, 140.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 89. Pomeroy states that there is a loan system in which the freedwoman would have to pay back her master or mistress, but she would ultimately be independent, something that would be highly uncommon for a housewife.



garlands they had woven.<sup>30</sup> The woman had a chance to be prosperous by using the art skill as a freedwoman and be a part of the community's monetary flow. The woman expanded her options of financial gain outside of her physical body by being capable of selling her woven creations and artistic talent.<sup>31</sup> This was one way that the lower class prostitutes had contributed to the arts using the talent of weaving. We must also take into consideration the artistic talent and their possibility of becoming a higher ranked courtesan, known as the *hetairai*.

The *hetairai* had an elevated status compared to the common prostitute for numerous reasons. One main reason was the training that they had to undertake. "Those at the top of this social scale were called the *hetairai*, or companions to men. Many of these, in addition to physical beauty, had intellectual training and possessed artistic talents, attributes that made them more entertaining companions to Athenian men at parties than their legitimate wives."<sup>32</sup> This particular group of Greek women had the education as well as having the opportunity to utilize their artistic skills amongst men at various social occasions.<sup>33</sup> Their artistic talents included playing instruments, performing as well as the partaking in the erotic.<sup>34</sup> They possessed a variety of talents as well as maintaining the ubiquitous skill of weaving. Based on the visual motifs used on various vase paintings and erotic cups we can suggest that they continued this artful practice alongside their other talents. However, we shall discuss this shortly in the next section. All in all, textile production was one of women's significant artistic contributions within

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 73. Pomeroy discusses poor women, encompassing slaves, freedwomen and even citizens as women who went out in order to make money at the markets. This was an opportunity to sell their textiles apart from their construction in a domestic setting. "Most [women] pursuing occupations that were an extension of women's work in the home." In relation to weaving, there have been some vase paintings in where the women are wearing very transparent clothing, revealing their anatomy, and they are partaking in numerous activities, such as weaving. Pomeroy does not know whether or not these are respectable female citizens being portrayed, but since their bodies are exposed, she considers the option of a prostitute weaving as the motif. (Pomeroy 144)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 89 - 90

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>33</sup> We should also compare the notions of women utilizing their artistic talents in various atmospheres. For instance how most citizen women were primarily found in their homes, constructing the clothing and textiles for their families where as these *hetairai* had the independence to be out in public, utilizing their artistic talents, including weaving, amongst men. This would have been unheard of for the women within the domestic sphere.

<sup>34</sup> Davidson, James, 36 – 40. This chapter of *Making a Spectacle of Her(self)* discusses numerous subtopics that falls within the umbrella term of the "Ancient Greek Courtesan". He discusses the training, the differences between male and female musical training as well as how the courtesan ultimately became a muse and subject for numerous artists.

ancient Greek society. Textiles were used to display a successful marriage, honor for the gods and goddesses and provide alternative monetary gain for the working prostitutes and the *hetairai*. The art form was so prominent for women in ancient Greek culture, that it eventually became an iconographical motif in vase painting (Figure 2).

Weaving rituals accomplished by women influenced the production of pottery and vase painting. The visual trope of women weaving and spinning were popular images painted on Athenian vases (Figure 3). They ensured that textile construction was a strong cultural trait as a powerful circulated image, especially during the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens. The economic demand for pottery with those images and the potter's interest in the subject led to a major production during this time.<sup>35</sup> The vase paintings produced with the imagery of women working, in the presence of a male or the gods, symbolized her significance to her marriage<sup>36</sup> as well as connecting their talent with mythology.<sup>37</sup> The illustrated mortal and married women did not have a specific identity in order to appeal to a wide variety of female citizens, who the vases were often bought for.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, the use of the generalized working women within the domestic realm with a husband or god present was meant to showcase a cultural ideal.

The textile production images circulated throughout Athens<sup>39</sup> were meant to be influential for the wife or the domestic atmosphere. For instance, a ceramic piece that is currently within the collection at the Mount Holyoke Art Museum in Massachusetts depicts this ideal harmony between husband and wife (Figure 4). This pyxis completed by the Veii Painter around 470 – 460 BC shows a woman working next to her collection of wool. Her husband enters the scene holding a leg of meat and offers her a ball of wool that he has brought from outside. This image of the couple works as an efficient tool to discuss the societal ideals between the husband and wife.<sup>40</sup> The wife maintains

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<sup>35</sup> Bundrick, 285.

<sup>36</sup> Bundrick, 286. Bundrick also discusses how the visual trope of women working with their textiles again has the powerful significance of representing the balance that was necessary for the functionality of the community. "I argue below that these scenes exalt the role of women in maintaining the literal and metaphorical *harmonia* of the *oikos*, a message consistent with larger sociopolitical attitudes of the day."

<sup>37</sup> Bundrick, 286, 290.

<sup>38</sup> Bundrick, 285.

<sup>39</sup> Bundrick, 291 – 294. It should also be noted that these images were not only manufactured and sold within Athens, Greece, but they were also exported to other markets. Bundrick mentions the exportation and the sales of Greek vases with the working women motif in the Etruscan market as well.

<sup>40</sup> Bundrick, 306 - 307.

the domestic sphere as well as sorting through and constructing wool for her future spinning and weaving projects. The husband, with the leg of meat in one hand, shows his accomplishments within the social world of Greece as well as being the main provider for the family. It should be recognized that the leg of meat is not the main focus. The main focus of this pyxis is the dialogue that is created between the two figures; the husband has extended forward the raw wool for his wife to utilize, thus symbolizing the respect he has for her skills in textile production and his willingness to contribute to her art form.

While it is crucial to take into consideration the marital harmony that is delineated through this particular vase painting, we should also examine the importance of the woven cloth and its connection to the gods. The red figure painting on the hydria attributed to the Oinante Painter, circa 470 – 460 BC, portrays the birth of Erichthonius<sup>41</sup> (Figure 5). The mother earth goddess, Gaia, holds up her newborn son so Athena may wrap him safely in a patterned cloth. Zeus, as well as other members of the Olympian family, such as Nike and possibly Hera, are witnessing the birth. This mythological scene illustrates two important notions within Greek society: childbirth but also the significance of cloth production. Athena, the goddess of war, wisdom and weaving is bringing forth a mystical cloth to this newborn child, linking the metaphorical importance of weaving for mothers within society. “How appropriate cloth and the idea of weaving become in that regard; a symbol for the self-sufficiency and harmony of the *oikos* when appearing in contemporary household scenes of textile production, here textiles express the *harmonia* and self-sufficiency of Athens itself.”<sup>42</sup> The gesture of the goddess offering a textile to the newborn may have inspired the construction of her honorary *peplos* garment for the *Panathenaea*.<sup>43</sup> The scene portrayed on this vase not only connects to the women of Athens as mothers and identifying weaving’s mythological

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<sup>41</sup> He was the first King and founder of the city of Athens. He had a mystical birth that was described as Hephaestus attempting to rape Athena, however she was able to ward him off. Some of his semen got onto her leg and she wiped it off with some wool and threw it to the earth. The earth, Gaia, was then impregnated and gave birth to Erichthonius. Athena decided to raise him in secret.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 327.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 326 - 327. Bundrick constructs multiple allusions as to what the imagery could represent. “In these scenes Athena becomes the caregiver and protector of one of the city’s autochthonous founders, just as she protects the city of Athens; we can compare the arrangement of figures, gestures and gazes to those in scenes of mortal families. The infant, Erichthonios represents the promise of the future, as male children do elsewhere on vases.”

power, but the vase represented the promising future of the city. Vase painting proved to be an influential custom that circulated the visual tropes of women and their weaving as well as their craft linking to the higher order of the success of Athens.

However, vase painting and weaving imagery were not limited to mythological allegory or the domestic practices. The iconographic motif of women working also illustrated themes belonging to the erotic. As mentioned earlier, prostitutes and *hetairai* were also involved in weaving. Some scholars hypothesize that their image has also been used as a visual trope on vase paintings and erotic cups. This subject has been under a great debate, but we should consider the representation of these women weaving as another visual motif exhibiting the erotic instead of the domestic. A theory developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century concerning the vague identity of women wool working presented the possibility of the women being *hetairai*.<sup>44</sup> “Iconographic criteria such as a money pouch, nudity, and the presence of men are often read as indicators of a female figure’s lack of respectability, and sometimes vase shape -- if a scene appears on a cup or other sympotic vessel – inspires the identification of a *hetairai*.”<sup>45</sup> The theory also suggests that the representation of the *hetairai* weaving can indicate that the courtesan was constructing textiles in order to provide means of an extra income while she was not accompanying and entertaining male customers. It could also be said that by weaving and participating in textile production, the courtesan was attempting to display her intellectual capabilities in order to attract customers.<sup>46</sup>

Another weaving *hetairai* theory to consider was presented by T.B.L Webster. The depiction of women wearing transparent garments completing weaving tasks had become an interesting subject for vase paintings. Webster discussed the notion of the segregation between men and women within ancient Greece and how that created a sense of “voyeurism”.<sup>47</sup> Representing women completing their daily tasks, like weaving, became more sensual. There were large public paintings during the 5<sup>th</sup> century that

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 296.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 296.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 296. Bundrick also describes the courtesan as displaying certain qualities to potential customers as “trappings of virtue” as if to allude that the courtesan was utilizing the ideal of the honorable women to lure men in, knowing that is what they are seeking in a woman, despite the fact that these women were not eligible to be married. However, the courtesan would be using her intellect for her own personal monetary gain.

<sup>47</sup> Pomeroy, 144. The separation of the sexes during their daily activities may have sparked a desire from men to know what women were doing.

illustrated women wearing transparent and clinging drapery, indicating the women's body and emphasizing the erotic. This was not something that was previously used when depicting honorable women weaving. The theory suggests that the women illustrated could have been prostitutes or *hetairai*.

Women portrayed with transparent garments while weaving implies erotic undertones that appealed to men's desire. During the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, there were paintings portraying women in thin garments completing their daily tasks, such as weaving. It has been suggested that even though the paintings no longer exist, there are vase paintings that may have mimicked their sensual content.<sup>48</sup> "Some of the scantily attired women are spinning, weaving and visiting tombs. It is difficult to decide whether these were portrayals of respectable women or of prostitutes. On their tombstones, citizen wives are shown modestly garbed, but in their homes they often wore light garments. On the other hand, prostitutes, especially those living as concubines had to perform domestic chores such as spinning and weaving."<sup>49</sup> Whether the images represent wives or prostitutes, it is peculiar that an artist would show respected citizen women in transparent clothing, especially since this was not a practiced artistic style prior to this time. The visual motif of women spinning and weaving alluded to their skills but the sensual visual trope illustrated that prostitutes weaving may have also been a popular motif that was circulated in the later part of the Classical Period.

These few examples illustrate how woven textiles and the act of weaving were significant cultural characteristics. Vase paintings of women weaving were crucial to the identity of ancient Greece and they were used as allegory to represent the ideals and the customs during 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens. It is essential to understand that the illustration of women weaving as a visual trope provided an insight to their textile accomplishments within the domestic as well as erotic practices. However, there are other possibilities of

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<sup>48</sup> Pomeroy, 144.

<sup>49</sup> Pomeroy, 144 - 145. Pomeroy uses Webster in order to illustrate the Greek male's desire to see the female body depicted in art. She uses his theory to bridge the 5<sup>th</sup> century depictions of women wearing thinner garments to the development of the female nude during the 4<sup>th</sup> century Hellenistic Period. One of the first representations of the female nude appeared in a large-scale painting. Zeuxis utilized five models in order to capture their best features to construct a nude image of Helen. It would be interesting to see who these models were. Were they prostitutes or courtesans? Were they slave women? Where respected citizen women allowed to pose nude for an artists? If not, then could we attribute the development of the female nude to the prostitute and the courtesan during the Hellenistic Period?

women participating in other forms of art production aside from the mystical and respected art of weaving. As essential as weaving was, there were other forms of art production that were important in defining Greek culture. Based on one hydria's visual evidence, we can examine the possibility of women being in another artistic role.

The notion of women participating in pottery production is suggested by the depiction of a young woman working in a pottery workshop on the Caputi Hydria (Figure 5). Similarly to how vase paintings showed women weaving, the hydria illustrates a woman at work among other male artisans. The presence of a woman within this scene suggests that, at some point, women had been involved in the pottery business during the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>50</sup> The Caputi Hydria is a red figure vase painting painted by the Lenigrad Painter in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and it is depicting a series of artisans at work. This vase was located within the grave of a woman in Ruvo and it is currently a part of the Torno Collection in Milan.<sup>51</sup> However, the scene is no ordinary scene of a group of craftsmen working because they are in the presence of two goddesses. Athena and Nike, the winged goddess of victory, bestows upon the male workers honorary wreaths while all the way in the right hand corner, a singular young woman continues her painting on top of a vase's surface (Figure 6). The goddesses' presence alludes to an ideal situation and the gods honor the work completed within the workshop. One would ask as to why the young woman is not also receiving the attention and acknowledgement from the goddesses. Marjorie Susan Venit investigated the composition and came to the conclusion that the Leningrad Painter included the girl in order to fill a gap in the right corner without overpowering the image of Nike and her wing.<sup>52</sup> The inclusion of the woman was not to connote a higher iconographical and metaphorical meaning; instead her image was used to balance the composition of the three figural groups of goddesses and men within the workshop.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Venit, 266 - 271.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 270.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 271. If the girl was included as a compositional edit, it would make sense that she would not have any other metaphorical meaning other than being a worker in the shop. If she had any higher meaning within the context of the hydria and producing work for the shop, would she not also be given a wreath within the scene? I would be more interested in the girl's status within society and how she came to work within the pottery workshop. I would guess that women who worked within the workshop had a male relative that wanted them to learn the craft. Based on the evidence of the patriarchal society and Athens during the Classical Period, the

The idea of the woman as a compositional motif connects her with other women who could have been found working in pottery manufacturing. Why portray a young woman rather than a young man? “The Leningrad Painter chose a woman to fill the space, rather than another boy, suggests to me that women vase workers in Athens were a perfectly normal sight.”<sup>54</sup> Although there is limited evidence on female artisans and no record of any female signatures on existing pottery, we should not exclude the possibility of women participating in this realm of art manufacturing. It is worth taking into consideration the other forms of art production in which women could have participated. By doing so, we can further delineate their significance to the ancient arts outside of the realm of textile production. We have an understanding of how mythology played a role in integrating the sacred art of weaving to women’s everyday lives and now we have begun to investigate the other possibilities of women’s contributions to the ancient arts by looking at the compositional evidence within the *Caputi Hydria*. We should continue to expand the scope of women’s involvement in the arts not solely as art manufacturers in weaving and pottery painting, but as elite patrons.

Women of the aristocratic classes had the financial means to fund a variety of ancient art enterprises. Although there are some traces of women from the higher classes involved in the patronage of multiple grave items and sculptures prior to the Classical Period<sup>55</sup>, I will mainly focus on the sculptural and architectural patronage of women during the Classical and Hellenistic Eras. Before discussing the specific projects funded by women, we should understand the why portrait statues were constructed and the crucial purpose of the sculpture’s base.

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girl could have been someone from a lower economic status who had to work in some sort of trade in order to bring revenue into the household. This theory, however, would need some more research to substantiate it.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 270 - 271.

<sup>55</sup> Ridgway, 400. I am referring specifically to a life-sized sculpture that was investigated by Brunhilde Sismondo Ridgway in her essay *The Material Evidence*. She describes one of the earliest evidence of a female patron is connected to the statue dedicated by Nikandre of Naxos. This sculpture could be a burial memorial or an honorary sculpture of the goddess of the hunt, Artemis. The sculpture does not possess the sculptor’s signature, however, it does have the written dedication from Nikandre, the woman who funded the project. “The names not only of Nikandre of Naxos, the dedicator, but also of her father, Deinodikos, her brother Deinomenes and her husband, Phraxos, in that order. After her patronymic, Nikandre adds of herself: ‘excellent among others,’ a boast of self-worth in keeping with the value of her dedication.” This sculpture is also indicative of the developing style that the Greeks were assimilating from the neighboring countries, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. The kore sculpture is depicted in a similar manner as to the *Lady of Auxerre*. This large sculpture is dated around 650 BC and is currently displayed within the National Archeological Museum within Athens.

Portrait statues served to commemorate the accomplishments of the women during their lifetimes. For numerous portrait statues created during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, the actual facial features were generalized and were not crafted to identify the woman. Instead, the base of the marble statue possessed an inscription in which delineated who the woman was, her occupation and position in society, her family, and the purpose of the statue.<sup>56</sup> There are other subtle references on the statue that pertain to the identity of the woman; the gesture, the woman's clothing and draped *peplos* were all essential in defining the woman of the portrait sculpture. Christine Vorster stated, "Perfection in the handling of her clothing was considered a sign of a woman's education and manners and therefore revealed much about the origin and social status of the person depicted."<sup>57</sup> There are a variety of traits that assist in identifying the women and, even though the women who funded these projects were from the higher class, they varied in occupation.

Priestesses were one main group of elite women who funded honorary statues during the Classical Period. The priestesses who had the monetary means had sculptures created in their image to not only be remembered for their deeds during their priestesshood, but to also honor the gods of their sanctuary.<sup>58</sup> For instance, one priestess who had financed a sculpture was Lysimache. The sculptor Demetrios of Alopeke crafted her portrait statue. Her portrait statue had been mistakenly attributed to a Roman head in the Classicizing style. However, when the base of the statue was analyzed, the identity linked to the priestess within the Athenian Acropolis during the Classical Period.<sup>59</sup> Priestesses financing commemorative portrait statues became a common artistic trend and thus provided women another connection to the ancient art world. Another example includes a relief panel created in mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BC that depicts the Athena Parthenos next to a smaller, worshipping figure, who is being crowned by the goddess of victory, Nike. Both goddesses are a larger size than the worshipping figure, and the hierarchic scale indicates that the smaller figure is a mortal. More importantly,

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<sup>56</sup> Dillon, 9 - 59.

<sup>57</sup> Dillon, 26.

<sup>58</sup> Ridgway, 405.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 405. With this example, the base plays a crucial part in not only identifying who the woman was, but separating her statue from a Roman statue. The base again is essential to the construction of the sculpture and the respect given to the woman who it is meant to represent.



the mortal is iconographically recognized as a woman due to her attire as well as the large temple key that she possesses.<sup>60</sup> Even though we can identify this figure as a mortal priestess, her actual identity remains unknown. We can still draw the connection between priestesses and their involvement within the art realm outside of weaving their sacred garments. We should reflect on the various women that have contributed to the arts through female patronage, including *hetairai*.

There is evidence illustrating a *hetaira* funding sculptural projects as well as attempting to sponsor a major architectural project towards the later part of the Classical Period. Phryne was a courtesan who was eminent for her offer in order to rebuild the walls of the city of Thebes. Alexander the Great had destroyed Thebes' architecture in 335 BC and Phryne had proudly proposed to pay for the renovation with an inscription stating, "Alexander took them down, Phryne re-erected them."<sup>61</sup> This is an interesting case to consider, especially when the patron willing to fund a major architectural project was a woman associated with the *hetairai* class. This was not a woman by noble or aristocratic blood, but she was educated, liberated and more importantly, prosperous enough to be influential on the art production during the later part of the Classical Period. The sculptor, Praxiteles, had worked with her as his model in order to generate various sculptures including the Knidian Aphrodite (Figure 8).<sup>62</sup> She also worked with him to commission various portrait statues, in her own image, for sanctuaries within Delphi and her homeland of Thespias.<sup>63</sup> One of her gilded portrait statues was inscribed "Phryne the Thespian, daughter of Epikles" and was located between a sculpture of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 405. Ridgeway indicates within her footnotes that there are a variety of sources that link to this honorary decree relief. She lists a priestess' name, Myrrhine, who was identified as being a priestess of Athena Nike. We should take into consideration that this could have been one of the women who were part of the worship of these goddesses within the Acropolis. Within the Athens Epigraphical Museum, there is an epitaph (a statement written in memory of a deceased individual, usually an inscription on a tombstone) dedicated to the priestess Myrrhine. It states, "Far-shining memorial of Kallimachos' daughter, who was the first to watch over the temple of Nike. Her name accompanied her glory, as by divine good fortune she was rightly called Myrrhine. She was the first to watch over the seat of Athena Nike. (Chosen) from all the Athenians by a fortunate lot, Myrrhine." An image of the epitaph can be found at <http://drc.ohiolink.edu/handle/2374.OX/246?show=full>. It would be interesting to see if there were any more connections to this image to this priestess as well as the other epitaphs that were written in order to commemorate the priestesses for fulfilling their religious duties to the goddesses.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 406.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 406.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 406.

King of Sparta, Archidamos, and Philip II of Macedon in Delphi.<sup>64</sup> Phryne was a part of the art production of Ancient Greece as a model as well as a patroness, thus indicating a woman's potential of becoming significant within the art world. Although she was not born into the elite class, she was prominent enough to contribute to the art businesses during this time.

While regarding the elite priestess and the prosperous *hetairai* in terms of art production, we should now explore the architectural projects that were financially backed by Greek queens. One expensive and well-known architectural plan that was funded by a queen was the construction of the Maussoleion at Halikarnassos (Figure 8). This was a project that was sponsored by Queen Artemisia II of Caria in order to memorialize her husband Mausolos, who was also her brother.<sup>65</sup> The preparation of the honorary building was included during the planning of the building structures of the overall city, thus indicating that Mausolos had been alive for some of the arrangements.<sup>66</sup> However, he did pass away, and it was Queen Artemisia who had continued to facilitate the creation of this structure. She had hired a variety of prevalent artists and architects who were popular during the Classical Period; they included Scopas, Bryaxis, Timotheus, and Leochares. Although Artemisia did not live long enough to see the work completed, the artists continued their commission and the tomb was completed circa 350 BC.<sup>67</sup> These examples illustrate the numerous connections that women had to the arts outside of the ancient textile production in the Classical Period. They represent women who participated in the arts as models for honorary sculptures, managers of art projects, and ultimately, women who were the primary sources of money for various enterprises that exhibit ancient Greek culture.

The examples of female patronage do not end in the Classical Era, but continue after Alexander the Great's death into the Hellenistic Era. There is another prominent priestess who created an honorary portrait statue during the Hellenistic Period. Simo was a priestess of the sanctuary of Dionysus. However, unlike the mysterious offerings and representations of the priestesses that I have mentioned, there is more concrete

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 406.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 406. Inter-family marriages were a common practice within the Karian custom in Ancient Greece.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 406.

<sup>67</sup> Boccacio, 116 – 117.

information about Simo corresponding to her statue. “Simo, wife of Zoilos, priestess of the city, daughter of Pankratides, set up this image, *eikon* (mirror – like representation),<sup>68</sup> of beauty and an example of virtue and wealth, for Dionysus as an eternal memorial for my children and ancestors.”<sup>69</sup> Simo presents another example of a woman creating an offering to the gods in her image. The inscription left behind affirms her success, her position in society and her importance to her religious community. It is evident that as a patroness she wished to not only honor the gods, but she also wanted to be remembered for her contributions to her society.

Other influential women who wanted to be memorialized for their efforts to their community were women who were civil magistrates during the Hellenistic Period. Elite women during this time held public offices, which had contrasted against the sociological structure within the Archaic and Classical Periods.<sup>70</sup> Women within the socio-political world were able to sponsor and facilitate architectural construction to benefit the community.<sup>71</sup> Not only were women managing the finances and planning for a variety of projects, they were also looking for an opportunity to be remembered for their political and architectural deeds.<sup>72</sup> For example, circa 130 BC through 100 BC, the magistrate Archippe had a council building renovated. She managed the finances towards the building reconstruction plans, the salaries of the workforce as well as the cost of the work itself.<sup>73</sup> She was one of many of many women who represented their city by

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<sup>68</sup> *Eikon*: a mirror – like representation; a replication, and in this case, a replication of a woman.

<sup>69</sup> Dillon, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Carroll, 494. The overall Greek society had been highly intellectual, and by the Hellenistic Era, women were becoming more educated outside of the domestic realm. There are a variety of men who had advocated the intellectual training of women in Ancient Greece, such as Cleobus and Pythagoras. Cleobus had once stated, “Maidens should have the same intellectual training as youths...” (Carroll 494 – 495) “Alexander’s Empire, in overthrowing the exclusive State laws of the various cities, accomplished much for the emancipation of women, and from that time forward we find women engaged in almost all the branches of higher learning.” Including philosophy, philology, poetry and the fine arts. Women often needed a male chaperone or familial figure in order to introduce them to these male dominated areas of learning. (Carroll 496)

<sup>71</sup> Bielman, 239.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 239. The family history of Archippe is discussed within the essay; although we have evidence indicating her position within society, her familial background is still a bit ambiguous. She was the daughter of a benefactor from Kyme, and she also had a brother named Olympios, but died prior to her own death. Due to his death, she was entrusted with the paternal fortune. It would be interesting to look further in terms of inheritance throughout the Hellenistic Period. How many cases are there that involve a women inheriting a large sum of money from a male guardian? Although Bielman discusses the women who were involved within the socio-political realm and their funding for various architectural projects, she does not discuss how the

stepping forward to assist in its maintenance. They illustrated being capable of possessing another influential role within society. “These mature, wealthy women, without husbands, show originality in their choice of architectural projects. To restore the *bouleuterion*, or build an edifice in the forum affirmed the power and fortune of a women in a masculine community.”<sup>74</sup> Women who had the financial means did not stop at renovating political public buildings, but even restored religious sanctuaries.<sup>75</sup> Women who fulfilled their civic duties by preserving the architecture of their cities were respected enough to be memorialized.

The women involved in this realm of restoration were commemorated for their involvement with the arts and architecture. One female magistrate was Menophila who lived in the city of Sardis. She lived during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and held the prominent office of *stephanophoros*<sup>76</sup> in the city. Her responsibilities within office had been respectfully honored on her funeral relief; she was portrayed with a crown on her head, an icon to indicate her as a significant individual amongst fellow citizens.<sup>77</sup> The portrait statue, the base inscription and the relief sculpture with visual motifs designating the woman’s crucial role to society expanded her role outside of the domestic. The patronesses as well as magistrates contributed to their community and were memorialized through the prominent art forms of the time. Let us consider the option of where the base, the sculpture and the textiles have been lost throughout history; how else can we identify women who contributed to the ancient arts if their work or their memorial no longer exists?

There are literary sources that have documented the artistic accomplishments of women in ancient Greece. One literary source includes the written work *Naturalis Historia*

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women have claim over their inheritance or how they came into office. This would be a topic that should be researched further.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 239. Other influential magistrates include Megakleia from Megalopolis, Theodosia from Arkensine, Phile from Priene.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 240. Epie from the city Thasos, restored a variety of temples. She had been chosen by the city to preserve the religious sanctuary. The name for this role was *neokoros*. She was a female citizen who had participated in the religious realm of up keeping the architecture, which was considered sacred to the inhabitants of Thasos.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 243. *Stephanophoros* is another way to say the chief eponymous magistrate of the city.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 243. A crown was a motif that represented a level of importance of a person within society. In most cases, the crown was included in a relief or sculpture to represent both male and female priests, and during the Hellenistic Era, men and women who held public office.

completed by Pliny the Elder<sup>78</sup> in 77AD. The *Naturalis Historia*<sup>79</sup> is an encyclopedia composed of 36 books, which were compiled of “20,000 topics worth of attention”.<sup>80</sup> Pliny the Elder mentions the accomplishments of women within the fine arts in his encyclopedia. His descriptions of them do not include their responsibilities within the domestic realm or their level of textile production; instead he describes women who painted during the Hellenistic Period.

There are a few examples of women being documented as painters. In Book 35 towards the end of Chapter 40, Pliny the Elder provides summaries of the women and their artistic work.<sup>81</sup> All of the painters have been recorded as living and practicing their art during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The first painter that he discussed is Timarete, who is also known as Thamyras. She was described as being the daughter of the artist Micon and she learned her skills through her father. She has been identified for creating a panel painting of the goddess Artemis at the temple of Ephesus.<sup>82</sup> The next painter he mentioned is Irene. Her artistic training and education, like Timarete, were acquired by her father’s instruction. She painted portraits of a girl located at Eleusis, Calypso<sup>83</sup>, an aged man, the juggler, Theodorus and a famous dancer, Alcisthenes. The next painter he described is Aristarete, who again, learned her talent through her father, Nearchus. She painted Aesculapius, the god of medicine.<sup>84</sup> The last female Greek painter that he discussed is Olympias. She was an enigmatic painter and none of her work seemed to be recorded. What is recorded is that she had a male protégée named Autobulus.<sup>85</sup> These

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<sup>78</sup> Bostock. Perseus.tufts.edu. He was a Roman historian who compiled a variety of noteworthy topics, discoveries as well as theories during the ancient times.

<sup>79</sup> The encyclopedia was dedicated to his friend Titus Vespasian.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. perseus.tufts.edu.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, Book 35, Chapter 40. Pliny the Elder does not give a very detailed description of the women or their lives and he does state that he does not claim to be an expert of all the topics that he mentions within his book. There is a sense of mystery when he describes the women especially since this is one of two works that I have found that have these painters documented. He describes numerous women that had the occupation of being painters during the Hellenistic time; some are from Greece and some are from Rome.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, Book 35, Chapter 40. Within the text Pliny the Elder uses “Diana” instead of Artemis in order to address the mythology corresponding to the Roman citizens.

<sup>83</sup> A nymph in Greek mythology known for detaining Odysseus on his travels after the Trojan War. Also known to be the daughter of a powerful titan, Atlas.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, Book 35, Chapter 40. Pliny the Elder raises the question as to if she painted a painting or if she painted an actual sculpture. Greek sculptures and architecture were known to have been painted with bright colors, so to link this woman with painting a sculpture, again adds to women’s involvement within the art world outside of the domestic realm.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, Book 35, Chapter 40.

women present something very interesting to us; they have been educated by their fathers in order to participate in a career in the fine arts as well as becoming educators of the painting. Even though Pliny the Elder had a limited amount of information on these women, he did not disregard their contributions to the ancient arts based on their gender or their traditional domestic roles. Instead, he included them within his anthropological study of humans, their inventions and their accomplishments. Women have been identified as textile producers, inspiration for the visual tropes on vase paintings, possibly vase painters, models, benefactresses, art facilitators, and also painters. The scope of women's contributions to the Ancient Greek arts is more expansive than previously recognized. Pliny the Elder was one man who chose to include some women within his encyclopedia since they had a role in defining Greek culture.

However, Pliny the Elder was not the only historian to document women's influence within the arts during ancient Greece. During the beginning of the Renaissance, some of the women we have discussed as well as their accomplishments, are documented in another literary source written by Giovanni Boccaccio. This is a different literary source than Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*; this was a book solely dedicated to discussing women and their significance within Classical Antiquity.<sup>86</sup> The *raison d'être* of *Famous Woman* was to educate the women of the 14<sup>th</sup> century of the cultural deeds completed by women in ancient Greece.<sup>87</sup> Contrary to the use of the mythical archetypes of goddesses for mortal women, Boccaccio utilized the lives of real women in hopes of influencing their behavior as well as their artistic education.<sup>88</sup> He mentioned the artistic achievements of Timarete, however he called her Thamyris, Irene, and he also mentions Queen Artemisia and how her dedication towards the completion

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<sup>86</sup> Although this book is dedicated to women, it should also be noted that this book mentions a variety of women, including goddesses. However, he discussed real women as role models of ethical and inappropriate behavior (prostitutes, the artists and aristocratic women).

<sup>87</sup> Brown, xii. Boccaccio was inspired to compile a collection of research based on women during antiquity in order to be a companion for Petrarch's *Lives of Famous Men*. Also, Boccaccio had dedicated the book to a royal lady of the Florentine court, Andrea Acciaiuoli. He had hoped that this book would influence the minds at court towards the developing attitudes towards women in Italian society (Brown xvi).

<sup>88</sup> Brown, xii. "Women who were renowned for any sort of great deed. Inevitably, this means including both good and bad women, but the distaste aroused by recounting the wicked deeds of some protagonists will be offset, he claims by the exhortations to virtue that have been included. Boccaccio hopes that this mixture of the pleasant and the profitable will make its way into his reader's mind and function as a spur to virtue and a curb on vice."

of the Maussolleion was admirable.<sup>89</sup> Boccaccio embellished the lives of the women who were integrated into the arts. For instance, when he discussed Timarete, he stated “Thamyris (Timarete) scorned womanly tasks and practiced her father’s craft with remarkable talent...She gained such acclaim for her painting that the Ephesians, who had a particular veneration for Diana (Artemis), long preserved as a celebrated image of this goddess a panel painting done by Thamyris. This work of art endured for many years and provided such convincing proof of her ability that it seems worthy of remembrance even today – indeed, eminently so if we compare it with the usual spinning and weaving of other women.”<sup>90</sup> He established a dichotomy of the typical weaving endeavors of women to a woman who had connections to the fine arts. Ultimately, both are deemed worthy of remembrance in his written work.

His work influenced the artistic education of women during this time. To inform the 14<sup>th</sup> century courts of the changing ideology towards women’s education, Boccaccio’s literature provided a romanticized viewpoint of the lives of artistic women. “Though still influenced by medieval conceptions of women, Boccaccio provides in *Famous Women* a striking foretaste of ideas that would later find clearer expression in the Renaissance – ideas such as the view that it was appropriate for gifted women to seek and acquire fame for their contributions to art, literature and the active life of public affairs. Such themes would become common in Quattrocento humanist writings.”<sup>91</sup> The women portrayed in Boccaccio’s book linked the influential artistic accomplishments from the Greek world to the developing ideologies of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. More importantly, he utilized the artistic endeavors of real women in order to illustrate those growing ideologies.

Despite the fact that this was the first book dedicated on the lives of women and it was meant to reflect developing beliefs towards women’s education, it should be noted that there are traces of gender bias that reflect patriarchal society and the inferiority of women during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. “I thought that these achievements merited some praise because the art of painting is mostly alien to the feminine mind and cannot be attained without that great intellectual concentration which women, as a rule, are very slow to

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<sup>89</sup> Brown, 114 – 124.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, 114 – 115.

<sup>91</sup> Brown, xiv – xv.

acquire.”<sup>92</sup> As progressive as this book may be, it also mirrored the perceptions of woman and their “slowness to acquire intellectual and artistic skills”. This gendered bias, which has been present since the days of Aristotle, contributed towards the reticence of representing women within the art world. However, the artistic education presented in this book as well as the women and their contributions towards the *oikos* through their weaving, influenced the growing talent of female artists during the Renaissance and onward.<sup>93</sup> The women within this text represented the artistic significance that they had in their ancient culture. They were ultimately used sporadically in future years to show that women were capable of participating in the arts and that they were proficient enough to be alongside their male counterparts in this field.

Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland used Boccaccio’s text in their introduction of their contemporary book *Women Artists: 1550 – 1950*. This book, similarly to Boccaccio’s, was created to shed light onto the artistic accomplishments of women within the western world. These women are considered rare exceptions due to the neglect that is often associated based on their gender.<sup>94</sup> Through our discussion and analysis of the roles of women in ancient Greece and their various contributions to the art world, women in the art world should no longer be regarded as rare exceptions. Their responsibility to their community, their families and their culture are reflected as a constant echo that reverberates through their ancient rituals, pottery paintings and written literature. These women were fulfilling a multitude of roles that were crucial in predicating their artistic culture. Yes, we understand that their role within the domestic realm was vital, but there are numerous instances of women doing much more than being the heads of their households. Women were successful in the sacred art of weaving, both for their families and their gods, they were lovers who utilized their art skills to generate revenue, they

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<sup>92</sup> Brown, 124.

<sup>93</sup> Such painters and artists who were also trained by their father were Sofonisba Anguissola and Artemisia Gentileschi. Other female artists who are attributed to have worked within a male dominated workshop include Properzia de Rossi who was also under the tutelage of a male engraver, Marcantonio Raimondi.

<sup>94</sup> Harris, Nochlin, 11. On page 23, Nochlin and Sutherland include the written works completed by Boccaccio and Pliny the Elder and the brief descriptions of the female painters and carvers lives. During the Renaissance, the famed artists were constantly looking back to the ancients in order to seek inspiration in hopes of one day surpassing them in talent. “In the visual arts ancient precedent had the authority, one can say, of Holy Writ: whatever ancient artists had done was good.” Therefore, the inclusion of women within the arts was not necessarily seen as some alien notion, although there was a good deal of gender bias that hindered women from officially succeeding in the field.



were icons, they were models for sculptors, they were patronesses, they were painters, they were queens. We must look at their cultural contributions to establish the needed balance that has been lost in time due to gender bias. It is our responsibility as current art historians to hear their echo that has waned in and out of time. We must share their accomplishments and essentially continue to educate others that women artists are worthy of equal representation in art history. We cannot dull their existence into a timid whisper to be forgotten.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

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