CHAPTER NINE

MASCULINE PEOPLE IN FEMININE PLACES: THE BODY POLITIC AT HOME AND ABROAD

The popularity of local personifications dramatically increased at the end of the fifth century and into the fourth century, when artists seem to have created them *ad hoc*, for explanatory purposes. Their proliferation reflects a strong relationship between public art and political ideology in late Classical Athens. Hellas (Greece) is the most inclusive geographical personification known from the Classical period. Perhaps even regions within Greece—Makedonia and Peloponnesos—were also personified. Hellas, the regions, and cities—as in the earlier Classical period—are embodied as ageless women. Attic artists personified the city of Athens and her populace, however, in a variety of other forms: Attika, the land occupied by the Athenians; Boule (Council) and Demos (the Body Politic), the legislative groups that represented the Athenians; the *phylai*, tribes or voting groups into which the people had been divided by Kleisthenes at the beginning of the Athenian democracy (508/7); and the individual *demes*, or neighbourhoods, that constituted the most basic divisions of the people of Attika, which were in turn represented by their own Demoi. The Athenian artists also represented foreign *poleis*, cities with which Athens had relations, by their personified Demoi or by local personifications of the cities themselves. Demos and his kin are arguably local personifications, for *demos* (ὁ δῆμος) originally denoted country or land (Homer, *Ilias* 5.710, 16.437, *Odyssea* 1.103, 13.266, 322, 15.95, 24.12), and by association came to mean the people that inhabited that land (Homer, *Ilias* 3.50; Hesiodos, *Erga kai hemerai* 261; Aiskhylos, *Persai* 732).

Towards the end of the Peloponnesian War, local personifications began to appear in explicitly public contexts, on monuments intended for public display commissioned at public expense. Many of these late fifth and fourth century personifications are found on document reliefs erected in sanctuaries and market places of the city. These reliefs surmounted inscriptions documenting treaties and honourary decrees. They may have helped to make the content of each document intelligible to the reader who either could not or would not read the entire inscription (Henry, 2002: 91-118). As with all art embellished with words, a symbiotic relationship necessarily evolved between each relief and accompanying inscription, which may have been interpreted differently by different audiences, perhaps according to the degree to which they could read: “Both art and text serve to extend, complicate, negate and consolidate each other” (Blanshard, 2007: 21). On these reliefs local personifications appear alongside other divinities, and less rarely with other personifications, as in the case of Epidaurus on *VP* 28 (fig. 5.14). To signal the less than divine status of the personifications, the sculptors generally showed them at a smaller scale than the Olympian divinities, at a size comparable to that of local or eponymous heroes, while real people (generally honorands) were shown at an even smaller scale.

While personification and deification are means to two very different ends—personification is a form of expression whereas deification is a form of belief—they have become muddled in scholarship. This is especially the case with regard to local personifications, for which philologists have come to rely too heavily on the limited material evidence. From the definitive secondary work on the *polis*, comes this misunderstanding:
Deification of the *polis* itself, however, is unattested until the Hellenistic period, when, e.g., the sculptor Eutychides created the cult image of Antiocheia in the shape of Tykhe with a turret crown on her head and her right foot on the river god Orontes [on the founding of Antioch in 300]. (Hansen & Nielsen, 2004: 132)

While Eutychides’ statue was truly original, neither the conception of Tykhe (Fortune), nor her worship, were novel at that time (see Matheson ed., 1994, especially articles by Matheson and Metzler; Messerschmidt, 2003: 61-140; Christof, 2001). The Tykhe of Antiochheia was not the personification of the city Antiochheia, the region Antiochheia, or any *polis*, but rather, as her name quite literally puts it, a personification of the Fortune of the City, which itself had precursors (Broucke, 1994). Our most secure evidence that an Athenian personification of place received worship in the Classical period is Pausanias’ report (8.30.10; trans. Pollitt, 1990: 84) of the cult statue of Megalopolis, S 5.

Quite near...is a sanctuary of Zeus surnamed the Savior. It is ornamented with columns placed all around it. Next to Zeus, who is seated on a throne, stands, on the right, ‘Megalopolis,’ and, on the left, is an image of Artemis the Savior. These are of Pentelic marble, and the Athenians Kephisodotos and Xenophon made them.

Although the creators of this Megalopolis were Athenians, none other than the Megalopolitans can be given credit for the idea to worship her. The Megalopolitans were not alone, however: Pausanias and others enumerate a plethora of unattributed statues of local personifications (Hamdorf, 1964: 90-93).

The fact that artists consistently represented personifications, like heroes, at an intermediate scale between gods and humans, however, might imply that they ascribed some element of semi-divinity to their personifications. These representations should not, however, be taken as attestations of cult status. There is no evidence, in fact, that personifications of places and peoples were worshipped at Athens. The abstract concept of the *polis* itself, in the sense of settlement or community, was personified in old comedy but not deified (and see VP 10, fig. 11.5, for Eupolis [Good city] rather than Polis on a vase painting). Hansen and Nielsen suggest that the closest one comes to the worship of the *polis* is the public cult of Hestia, worshipped at Athens as elsewhere through the public hearth in the *pytaneion* (Parker, 2005: 13-15, 404), because the hearth housed the eternal flame that was meant to symbolise the eternal life of the *polis* (Hansen & Nielsen, 2004: 132; Miller 1978, 14-16, passim). While this may be true, Hestia—a goddess in her own right—cannot be taken as a personification of the city, although her name is that of the hearth through which she is represented. It is rather the places (*polis* locations or regions) as well as its institutions (including *demos* or ‘body politic’) that are first personified and (sometimes) later deified.

**Athens and Attika**

Athens is never personified, but rather represented by the goddess Athena. Even the personification of the Demos of Athens—who was meant to represent all of the male citizens of Athens—did not represent all of Athens’ people and therefore didn’t represent Athens in as complete a sense as would Athena. Athena’s image served on the Classical coins, as on document reliefs, to represent the people and everything else that comprised Athens (Lawton, 1995a: 40-46). The sculptors of document reliefs might have represented the personifications of the legislative entities that issued the decrees recorded on the documents—Demos and/or Boule—but included Athena on as many as 25 reliefs to emphasise that the legislative bodies were those of Athens. Perhaps the inclusion of Athena became unnecessary after a while, when the public had become accustomed to the meaning and iconography of the personifications on the document reliefs.

The personification of Attika (the region that comprised Athens and her *demei*) might have stood in for Athena, in representing the people,