Aphrodite: The Goddess at Work in Archaic Greek Poetry

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FOR MY PARENTS

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ABSTRACT

Greek literature frequently associates female beauty with clothing and jewellery. In addition, the concept of female beauty and allure is closely connected with the goddess Aphrodite. The fact that her beauty is repeatedly singled out as an object of comparison for mortal women suggests that beauty, to a certain extent, bridges the gap between mortal and immortal. Pandora and Helen best exemplify this connection because, like Aphrodite, they are known for their beauty and also enjoy semi-divine status.

Moreover, these three women are notorious for their ability to deceive and it is mostly then that their beauty is emphasised. This has led to an association between beauty and deception which climaxes in the famous seduction scenes of Greek literature. Not only are these seduction scenes closely related to Aphrodite but they also rely heavily on nonverbal

communication, in particular so-called significant objects and objects adaptors such as clothing and jewellery. Consequently, female beauty comes to be misrepresented as artificial and relying on external decorations.

However, in contrast to the traditional texts of Homer and Hesiod, Sappho offers a different perspective. Combining Homeric and Hesiodic elements with her own ideas, she alters the way female beauty is viewed. For example, the Homeric war chariot – a symbol of male, military prowess - comes to symbolise the totality of Aphrodite’s power uniting in itself male and female qualities.

Having addressed the concept of beauty directly, Sappho then concludes that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. With the help of Helen of Troy and her beloved Anaktoria, Sappho sets out to reinvent the concept of female beauty as a godlike, subjective quality that may be expressed in many ways, yet remains inspired by Aphrodite.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout Greek literature Aphrodite and her semi-divine derivatives, Pandora and Helen, not only have in common the fact that their power is symbolically and socially linked to their beauty ('das schöne Geschlecht') but they also share the depiction of their bodies as dangerously desirable.[1] Aphrodite, known as the goddess of feminine beauty, sex-appeal and love, is apparently so beautiful that Hermes, when asked by Apollo if he would lie with her, declares that even chained and exposed to the other gods, he would still bed the goddess (*Od*. 8.339-42). In fact, her power becomes so well known that her name developes into a synonym for beauty, as demonstrated in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*:

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[1] Of course, this is the case with a number of women in ancient literature but I have chosen to concentrate on Aphrodite, Pandora and Helen as they are directly relevant to the following three chapters. At this point it is also necessary to clarify that I do not differentiate between what Jax (1933, 7) refers to as 'Schönheitswirkung' and 'Liebeswirkung' but rather understand the two to be closely interlinked.

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> And in the hunger of his eyes
> All loveliness is departed.
>
> (418-19)

Similarly, Pandora who has directly inherited Aphrodite's beauty and ability to arouse desire (Hes. *WD* 66-7) effortlessly manipulates Epimetheus into ignoring his brother's advice and accepting her as his wife (*WD* 83ff.), thus condemning humankind to a life of endless toils. Finally, Helen, famously dubbed by the much later Marlowe as 'the face that launched a thousand ships', represents the 'epitome of feminine allure and the devastation it can wreak on society'.[2]

It comes as no surprise, then, that in Greek literature female beauty is frequently regarded as a source of danger. Walcot sums up its hazards in commenting that 'even when it is realised that a woman's beauty is the cause of disaster, it remains beyond man's power to resist', and Hawley adds that 'with regard to women [beauty] appears a threat to male-ordered society'.[3] Consequently, beauty is only then explicitly focused on when it is used as the

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[2] George & Duncan (2004) 1.
[3] Walcot (1977) 37; Hawley (1998) 40.

means to deceive a male (see *Il*. 14.153ff; *Hom. Hymn* 5.81ff).

However, given the fact that Aphrodite's, Pandora's and Helen's beauty apparently poses such a great threat, we are given relatively little information in the literary sources about their physical features. Aphrodite is supposedly admired for her 'tender throat and white breast' (*Hom. Hymn* 6.10),[4] Pandora allegedly has 'a face such as the goddesses have and the shape of a lovely maiden' (*WD* 64)[5], and Helen is described through the use of standard epithets such as •••••••••• (*Il*. 3.121) and •••••••••• (*Il*. 1.143, *Od*. 15.123).[6] In fact, detailed descriptions of physical beauty seem to be so rare that Jax is uncertain if there even was such a thing as 'ein einheitliches Schönheitsideal',[7] and Meagher hits the mark when he points out that, while Helen's face may have launched a thousand ships, it remains 'strangely faceless'.[8]

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[4] In the *Iliad* Helen recognises Aphrodite because she sees her neck and breast (3.396-97).

[5] Translation by Athanassakis (1983).

[6] While these and other standard epithets may take on a significant meaning, many of them have been classified as generic. Similarly, in Mesopotamian literature, many goddesses are described by an epithet meaning 'beautiful' 'but it is never made explicit what beauty entails' (Asher-Greve, [1998] 23). For a more in-depth discussion of these epithets in Greek literature, see Parry (1971) 149.

[7] Jax (1933) 179.

[8] Meagher (1995) ii.

While I agree with both Jax and Meagher on the scarcity of evidence of physical descriptions of women, I consider it necessary to briefly discuss a small number of literary references to women's physical features.[9] For example, women are often compared to goddesses as a means of emphasising their 'larger-than-life' beauty. This is not so much an actual comparison of qualities which the mortal and immortal women in question supposedly have in common, but rather a generic observation such as ••••• ••••••••• ••••• ••• ••• ••••••: - 'terrible is the likeness of her face to immortal goddesses' (*Il.* 3.158).[10]

Moreover, epic women are often described through epithets such as 'slim-ankled', 'fair-cheeked', and 'fair-haired' and while these adjectives may be classified as generic, they nevertheless serve their purpose by capturing and stimulating the audience's imagination.[11] For example, a scene in the *Odyssey* demonstrates that white skin and a curvaceous figure were considered highly attractive in women. Thus Athene, in order to make her more beautiful, whitens

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[9] I shall focus on archaic Greek literature here to keep within the bounds of my thesis.
[10] These mortal/ immortal comparisons will be elaborated upon in the first chapter.
[11] Jax (1933) 7.

Penelope's skin and fills in her figure (18.192-96)[12] – we are also told that Odysseus prefers Penelope to Kalypso even though 'seen face to face [Penelope] is less striking in form and size' (5.217). Nevertheless, as already pointed out, the above means used to illustrate female beauty are not only generic but in fact surprisingly unspecific for a culture which seems to have cultivated such an underlying fear of female beauty and sexuality.

However, Clark proposes that one only needs to consult Semonides' caricatural poem on the different types of women 'to learn what the archaic Greeks represented as feminine allure'.[13] For the poet singles out the 'horse-woman' as beautiful because of her lovely long hair and freshly bathed and anointed body (*fr.* 7 56-70). Nonetheless, there appears to be a catch: 'unless he is a king or head of state, who can afford extravagant delights', the husband will not be able to maintain his wife. Thus, to a certain extent, the 'horse-woman' not only represents the previously mentioned threat to male-ordered society, that is the *oikos* and male wealth bound up in it, but also refuses to work and appears pre-occupied with her appearance. In addition, she

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[12] Thomas (2002) 6; note the previously mentioned epithet •••••••••• in reference to Helen.
[13] Clark (2001) 9.

is expensive to maintain, which implies that there are costly aspects to her beauty. Her beauty appears to depend not only on her long hair and well-maintained body but also on other precious qualities of monetary value, most likely clothing and jewellery.

Blundell observed that ‘as a generic item, clothing is much more closely associated with females than males, both in Greek literature and in Greek art’, and if we briefly survey the literary evidence for this in reference to Aphrodite, Pandora, and Helen, it becomes apparent that much of their beauty manifests itself in their clothing.[14] Moreover, the instances which describe female clothing in detail are all part of seduction scenes and therefore highly suspicious to men. The concept of seduction, of course, is closely connected with Aphrodite who, as indicated in the account of Pandora’s creation (Hes. *WD* 61-83), passes on her abilities to womankind.

This study will focus primarily on Aphrodite and the way she has influenced the concept of female beauty and allure in archaic Greek poetry.[15] Because of the

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[14] Blundell (2002) 145.

[15] I have chosen to focus primarily on the literary tradition for this study. Although I may refer to the visual record, I

vast amount of material, it has been necessary to narrow down my choice of literary sources. I made the deliberate decision to select the Homeric texts along with the near-contemporary Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, and Sappho's poems one and sixteen. While Homer's *Iliad* and the three *Homeric Hymns* dedicated to Aphrodite (5, 6, 10) offer not only one of the earliest but also one of the most traditional accounts of the goddess, Sappho presents us with a more innovative interpretation of the material since the female figure in the earlier Homeric texts is always the object of a male. In contrast, Sappho, as a woman, knows two cultures: her own and the dominant male one (while 'extra-familial men would not have been able to access women's culture').[16] Moreover, as we will see, poems one and sixteen are both loosely modelled on episodes of the *Iliad* as well as showing similarities with *Homeric Hymns* (5, 6, 10).

In the first chapter, I shall briefly discuss the divine frame of reference used to compliment and comment on female beauty, identifying it as a contemporary phenomenon of the archaic period. Then I will illustrate how Aphrodite emerges as an authority within the concept of beauty and its

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do not engage with it in detail, as to do so would be rather outside the scope of my thesis.

[16] Giacomelli (1980) 95.

accompanying powers of seduction. Closely connected to beauty is also the motif of clothing, which, as suggested above, is not only linked with female beauty but more importantly represents a fundamental part of any seduction scene. It is then my aim not only to demonstrate that the concept of female beauty in Greek literature is heavily gendered, but also to examine the idea of 'Schönheit als Angriffswaffe' as the means to reinforce the male-structured gender codes of archaic Greek society.[17]

The second chapter will not only introduce the Sapphic Aphrodite, but also discuss in depth the mixture of traditional and new themes which the poet employs to create a more powerful and universal goddess. While Sappho draws on much of the Homeric material for inspiration, she establishes a more personal picture of the goddess through their intimate relationship. An amalgamation of *Iliad* 5, the *Homeric Hymns*, and the Sapphic Aphrodite encourages the audience to compare the goddess to both Hera and Athene. In addition, the Sapphic Aphrodite appears to imply an aspect of universality, combining opposites such as male and female consciousness.

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[17] Jax (1933) 37.

The final chapter of the thesis will introduce the concept of nonverbal communication and its importance in understanding Sappho's poem sixteen. The epic point of reference at the beginning of the poem clearly establishes its Homeric links, but the lack of gender stereotyping also implies that a metamorphosis has taken place. Sappho confronts the male beauty ideal, which is typically dominant, with her own subjective viewpoint. Not only is the Sapphic Helen independent but she also follows her desire and represents a mobile female character rather than the passive victim which we encounter in Homer. Moreover, the very poem that claims to explore the theme of beauty does not contain any of the references typically associated with it or its patron goddess Aphrodite. In the mythological exemplum, not only does the object of desire which in archaic Greek poetry is usually female here become male, but Sappho also avoids the embellishment of beauty altogether. I will examine the way Sappho directs the poem back to Aphrodite who remains present throughout despite the fact that there are no direct references to her or any of the qualities typically associated with beauty.[18]

[18] While there is a significant lacuna in the text which originally may have contained Aphrodite's name (she is a favourite supplement by translators), I have chosen to work with Campbell's version (1982) which does not supplement her.

Throughout this thesis, I have normally used the Greek spelling for Greek names, except in cases where familiarity dictates the use of an Anglicised or Latinised form.

I have quoted from the following translations of Greek texts: for Homer, Lattimore (1951), (1965); for the *Homeric Hymns*, West (2003); for Hesiod, Most (2006); and for Sappho, Campbell (1982).

CHAPTER I:
THE HOMERIC APHRODITE

Greek literature frequently uses a divine frame of reference to compliment and comment on female beauty. For example, Briseis (‘in the likeness of golden Aphrodite’, *Il*. 19.282), Penelope (‘resembling Artemis or Aphrodite’, *Od*. 17.37) and Kassandra (‘a girl like golden Aphrodite’, *Il*. 24.699) are all said to look like a goddess, while Nausicaa’s beauty is also likened to that of the immortals (*Od.* 6.16). Moreover, in an attempt to obtain her confidence Odysseus flatters her asking if she were a goddess as suggested by her great beauty (6.149).

One explanation for the occurrence of these comparisons is, of course, the fact that the Homeric epics are set in a time not too distant from the

mythological past when gods and humans mingled freely.[1] Thus in the Homeric texts there are numerous reflections of an imagined shared past of mortals and immortals, such as the great number of heroes of divine parentage, or the origin of the Trojan war itself.

In fact, this search for comparisons between mortal and immortal qualities is repeatedly recognised as an archaic phenomenon. In reference to the mortal/ immortal relationship, the late J. –P. Vernant discusses what he calls 'the sub-body' – a concept that renders the human body an imperfect reproduction of the divine body.[2] He argues that the human body cannot be understood except in reference to what it presupposes: a 'super-body', namely the body of the gods, which is immortal and eternally beautiful.[3] Correspondingly, Clay suggests that the gods of the Homeric epics are defined in opposition

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[1] In the *Odyssey* we are told by Alkinöos that in the past the gods used to show themselves openly and participate in the feasts held in their honour: 'for always in time past the gods have shown themselves clearly to us, when we render them glorious grand sacrifices, and they sit beside us and feast with us in the place where we do, or if one comes alone and encounters us, as a wayfarer, then they make no concealment, as we are close to them' (16.201ff.).

[2] Vernant (1991) 31.

[3] Vernant (1991) 31. Similar concepts are found throughout Greek literature. Herodotus, for example, states that the Ethiopians are closest to the gods by virtue of their striking physical beauty, the fragrance they exude, and the fact that their diet does not contain any bread (3.22.19).

to mortals.[4] She argues that the formulaic epithets used in Homer to characterise the gods stand in direct opposition to those used in reference to mortals.[5] 'Reflection on the gods in Homer', she explains, 'appears to be preceded by reflection on men, on the human condition, and on mortality'.[6]

Moreover, Jax even considers the gods to be ideals of human perfection arguing: 'Homer hat in seiner Götterdarstellung Idealbilder menschlicher Vollkommenheit geschaffen, die sozusagen als Prototypen für alle Folgezeit zu Höchstleistungen auf dem Gebiet der Kunst anregen',[7] while Friedrich specifies that 'to compare a woman to Aphrodite is the most eloquent way to extol a woman's beauty.[8] Thus, a significant fascination with the divine body clearly permeates Greek perception of human physical appearance.

As a result, it seems only natural that female beauty should be assessed by such standards. Lyons,

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[4] Clay (1982) 112.
[5] 'To the most common epithet, a negative formation, •••••••• "deathless ones," corresponds a positive •••••• or ••••••••••, "mortals." The gods inhabit Olympus (••• ••••••• •••••••, ••• ••••••• ••••• •••••••), while men are confined to the earth (•• ••• ••••• •••••••••••, ••• ••••••• •••••••). Doomed to death, mankind is wretched or miserable (••••••), but the gods remain blessed and "live easy" (•••••••, •••• •••••••)' (Clay [1982] 112).
[6] Clay (1982) 112.
[7] Jax (1933) 5.
[8] Friedrich (1978) 89.

for example, adopts this viewpoint, considering it ‘at once natural and dangerous’ that a woman should be compared to the gods.[9] She explains that the gods are always available as the highest standard of comparison for mortals, but also cautions that when an individual makes him- or herself the object of such a comparison, it may also be regarded as *hybris*.[10]

There are many examples in Greek mythology that demonstrate the results of such acts of *hybris*, and beauty appears to be a particularly sensitive subject. For example, Side, the first wife of Orion, offends Hera by claiming to rival her beauty and is subsequently sent down to Hades (Apollod. 1.4.3). Similarly, Athene feels threatened by Medusa’s beauty and, as a result, uglifies her (Hes. *Th*. 270-83). Thus, this particular type of comparison, it seems, must remain within certain limits so as to not turn into a challenge between the two parties. Lyons elaborates on this:

> In general the distinctive features of the Olympian goddesses signal the ways in which mortals will come into conflict with them. Athena is most often challenged in contests of skill in crafts and martial arts, while Hera’s rivals claim equal marital happiness or they claim Zeus himself. The specificity breaks down, however, when it comes to beauty, for although

[9] Lyons (1997) 95.
[10] Lyons (1997) 95.

> it is clearly the province of Aphrodite, it is not hers alone.[11]

Lyons correctly views these comparisons as a potential source of conflict and concludes that ‘goddesses are not eager to share their reputation for beauty even with one another’.[12]

At this point, however, it is necessary to bear in mind that there appear to be two types of comparison in respect to beauty. Firstly, most comparisons of beauty that involve mortal women take place in the epic genre. For example, Nausicaa, Helen and Penelope are repeatedly likened to goddesses (see above). Perhaps even more important, though, is the fact that in all the above cases the comparison is drawn either by the narrator, or by some other observer, but never by the subject of comparison herself.

Therefore, the comparison of these women to some goddess appears to offer an opportunity for the narrator to characterise and effectively illustrate a woman’s beauty through its perception by other characters.[13] For instance, when Helen enters the scene in *Iliad* book three Homer suitably illustrates

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[11] Lyons (1997) 95.
[12] Lyons (1997) 95.
[13] For a discussion of this narrative technique, see Lessing (1984) ch. 20-21 and Braswell (1988) 181-2.

her beauty by likening her to the immortals. His description of the Trojan elders' reaction in immediately agreeing that Helen's beauty literally compelled both parties, Trojans and Greeks, to engage in a war, aptly encapsulates its manipulative effect (*Il*. 3.154ff). Lyons, it seems, is referring to the second type of comparison which involves a mortal woman deeming herself superior to a divinity, and thus committing an act of *hybris*. As demonstrated by the fate of Side and Medusa, women who boastfully compare themselves to some goddess do not go unpunished.[14]

Moreover, as Lyons observes, 'the goddesses are not keen to share their reputation for beauty even with one other'.[15] This is best illustrated by the beauty contest that precedes the Trojan War. Not only is this story a prime example of the importance of beauty among the gods but it also illustrates Aphrodite's superior status in terms of beauty. Paris, because of his reputation as the world's handsomest man, is assigned the responsibility of

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[14] This applies not only to beauty but to any aspect in which a mortal claims superiority over the gods. Thus, Niobe, for example, claims herself superior to Leto because of her great number of children and immediately pays with a tragic price. Similarly, the women Zeus commits adultery with eventually all experience the wrath of Hera.

[15] The portrayal of the Greek gods is strongly anthropomorphised and, consequently, allows the gods to display a range of emotions, one of which is envy. Kalypso, in the *Odyssey*, even tells Hermes that the gods are 'jealous far above others' (5.118).

determining which of the three goddesses, Hera, Athene, or Aphrodite, qualifies as the most beautiful. However, unwilling to rely on the judge's unbiased opinion the three contestants immediately begin to bribe him. Hera offers Paris rule over the world while Athene promises never-ending victory on the battlefield. However, Aphrodite, recognising the magnetic power of beauty, guarantees him the love of the most beautiful woman, Helen, and, as a result, receives the title of the most beautiful for herself.

Not only does this piece of mythology demonstrate the importance attributed to beauty among the divinities but it also goes to show that, even if beauty may not be reserved for Aphrodite alone, she certainly is the only one capable of understanding its power. While Hera and Athene deal in what they know best, offering rewards they themselves would value, Aphrodite cunningly offers what she knows no man can resist: beauty. It is also significant that Hera and Athene offer rewards which are typically associated with characteristically male displays of excellence such as power and warfare, while Aphrodite is dealing in terms that are more feminine. Therefore, she may share her reputation for beauty with other goddesses to the extent that

all gods are expected to be physically attractive, but she is the only one who repeatedly demonstrates her full grasp of the concept of beauty and its accompanying powers of seduction.

This ability of hers is also fully acknowledged by the other gods who frequently ask for her help. For example, Hera, intending to seduce Zeus, seeks counsel from Aphrodite to ensure the success of her plan (*Il*. 14.190ff.), while in Hesiod's account of the creation of Pandora, Aphrodite, instructed by Zeus, endows the first woman with the cruel capacity to arouse strong sexual desire, dangerous to the health of the human body and mind (*WD* 66).[16]

However, ultimately, as a basic principle, a comparison implies the quality of being similar or equivalent. Therefore, if one reduces the comparison of beauty to essentials, stripping it bare of any technicalities such as the goddesses' vanity and desire for respect, one is left with the 'Ur-conflict', that is the tension between the binary oppositions, mortal and immortal.[17] More

[16] MacLachlan (1993). Note that in the *Iliad* Hera's earrings radiate *charis*. This suggests that *charis* plays an important role in seduction and the concept of female beauty.

[17] In archaic Greece gods are generally considered to be beautiful, the exception being Hephaistos who, as a result, is singled out and mocked by the other gods for his ugly appearance; in point of fact he represents the exception to the rule. Epic heroes too share the quality of beauty with the

significantly, the source of the conflict has its roots in one of the characteristics that these oppositions have in common, that is the shared factor that initially triggered the comparison: their female beauty. Comparing a woman's beauty to that of a goddess suggests a strong connection between the two and places beauty in the middle of the archetypal polarity of mortal and immortal. Thus, beauty, to a certain extent, appears to bridge the gap between mortal and immortal.[18]

Evidence for this thesis can be found in the story of the creation of Pandora, as recorded in Hesiod's *Works and Days.* As the first woman, Pandora not only embodies beauty but also receives it from the immortals themselves:

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gods. Similarly, among them ugliness is also singled out as represented by Thersites (*Il.* 2.211-277). Their women are repeatedly praised for their beauty and, ultimately, the cause of their fighting is the beauty of a single woman. Smith (1981) 40.

[18] The act of bridging is done by the Charites who 'in distributing beauty, fostered human or divine interaction' (Clark [1996] 149-50).

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He commanded renowned Hephaistos to mix earth with water as quickly as possible, and to put the voice and strength of a human into it, and to make a beautiful, lovely form of a maiden similar in her face to the immortal goddesses. He told Athene to teach her crafts, to weave richly worked cloth, and golden Aphrodite to shed grace and painful desire and limb-devouring cares around her head; and he ordered Hermes, the intermediary, the killer of Argus, to put a dog’s mind and a thievish character into her.

So he spoke, and the obeyed Zeus, the lord, Cronus’ son. Immediately the famous lame One fabricated out of earth a likeness of a modest maiden, by the plans of Cronus’ son; the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, gave her a girdle and ornaments; the goddesses Graces and queenly Persuasion placed golden jewellery all around on her body; the beautiful-haired Seasons crowned her all around with spring flowers; Pallas Athene fitted the whole ornamentation to her body. Then into her breast the intermediary, the killer of Argus, set lies and guileful words and a thievish

> character, by the plans of deep-thundering Zeus; and the messenger of the gods placed a voice in her and named this woman Pandora (All-Gift), since all those who have their mansions on Olympus had given her a gift – a woe for men who live on bread.
>
> (*WD* 61-83)

Hesiod describes Pandora as being created like a piece of art, formed from clay and endowed with divine qualities. Hephaistos is responsible for her general body-shape while Athene, Aphrodite, and Hermes add characteristics which are repeatedly associated with women in archaic Greece such as domestic skills and beauty. Yet unlike the epic female characters whose beauty is defined through comparison to the divine, Pandora, as the first woman, is not only as beautiful as a goddess but she herself is, indeed, divine. Hesiod himself, perhaps unintentionally, further encourages such an interpretation of Pandora's character when he reads her name in the passive sense, thus translating it as 'all-receiving' in reference to her accepting 'presents' from the gods (*WD* 77).[19]

It is only logical, then, to deduce that, if Hesiod denies Pandora any power of her own, he is suggesting that all of her defining qualities such

[19] Her name may in fact refer to the epithet •••••••• commonly used to characterise Earth, in which case it can be translated as 'giver of all' (Ep. Hom.7); see Lyons (1997) 98 & nn. 23, 24.

as beauty, handiwork and physical attraction are, in fact, not her own but divine.

Thus, bearing in mind that Pandora as the 'Ur-woman' embodies qualities associated with women in general, we may conclude that every woman, to a certain extent, harbours divine qualities.[20]

Moreover, if, as suggested above, the premise that beauty bridges the gap between mortal and immortal is true, then, to a certain extent, beauty serves as a mediator between the binary oppositions mortal and immortal.[21]

However, along with her beauty, Pandora has also received the ability to arouse sexual desire, which is closely allied with deception. Both of these qualities originate from Aphrodite whose responsibility it was to ensure that 'women, descended from Pandora, have a deceitful exterior and dangerous interior'.[22] The goddess' deceitful

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[20] Pandora's divine heritage is consistent with her ostensible role as earth-goddess, to which several vase paintings attest. A red-figure crater from 450 BC depicts Pandora as *Gaia-Kore*, 'giver of all gifts', while a kylix of approximately the same date labels her •]•E•I•OR• – a title Marquardt (1982, 286) deems befitting for an earth-goddess.

[21] Beauty repeatedly functions as the connecting element between mortals and immortals. For example, Anchises' handsomeness attracts Aphrodite, Psyche's beauty mesmerises Apollo and Zeus' countless affairs with mortal women are all triggered by beauty.

[22] Clark (2001) 8.

character was well known, as illustrated by numerous references in literature: in Hesiod's *Theogony* Aphrodite is said to enjoy 'maidenly conversations, smiles, deceit' (205) while, in the *Odyssey*, Helen explains that she first went to Troy because the goddess had driven her mad (4.261-2). Similarly, in the *Iliad,* the goddess' belt, which will guarantee the success of Hera's seduction of Zeus also involves deception:

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> Then in turn Aphrodite the laughing answered her: "I cannot, and must not deny this thing that you ask for, you who lie in the arms of Zeus, since he is our greatest.'
> She spoke, and from her breasts unbound the elaborate, pattern-pierced zone, and on it are figured all <u>beguilements</u>, and loveliness is figured upon it, and passion of sex is there, and the whispered endearment that steals the heart away even from the thoughtful.

(*Il.* 14. 211-216)

The above episode not only demonstrates the importance of deception by placing it in the emphatic position at the beginning of the list of

the belt's functions, but it also indicates, according to Greek gender codes, the close connection, if not correlation, between beauty and deception. This correlation is best demonstrated by the seduction theme in Greek literature, where 'one person persuades another to have sex with him or her, usually against the better judgement of the person being seduced. Because seduction usually involves some kind of beguilement or deceit, it tended to be associated with characters that had developed as wily or jealous, like Hera, Odysseus, Penelope and Aphrodite',[23] and almost always involves what has been identified by Brown as the 'epic *topos* of divine dressing'.[24]

However, as pointed out by Sowa, 'Aphrodite's role in Hera's seduction of Zeus suggests a point of view that we shall meet in other seduction stories, namely that, in a sense, all seductions are ultimately performed by Aphrodite herself'.[25] This is very plausible when we consider the fact that the dressing *topos* itself was very closely associated with the goddess, often featuring objects of gold, which, according to Brown, was also known as the

[23] Sowa (1984) 67.
[24] Brown (1997) 30.
[25] Sowa (1984) 76.

‘metal of Aphrodite’.[26] She adds that in an erotic context ‘gold helps to represent, largely from a male viewpoint, an ambivalent appreciation of feminine sexuality’.[27] This ambivalence stems from the underlying belief of ‘Schönheit als Angriffswaffe’,[28] which, as Jax argues, led to the ‘fast ängstlich gemiedene Schönheitsbeschreibung’ we encounter in Homer.[29] It becomes even more explicit in the portrait of Pandora in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, which encourages the view that ‘a woman’s physical beauty conceals from the man who wants her and the son he cannot have without her her power to do him harm’.[30] Thus, the close relationship between beauty and deception to the point where the two are almost synonymous clearly has its roots in Greek gender codes.

What is more, these gender codes, as noted by Clark, are frequently expressed through various kinds of nonverbal behaviour. Cairns comments in his

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[26] Brown (1997) 46. Kinsley (1989, 200) further explains that gold ‘in association with Aphrodite seems to have at least two meanings. First, gold is bright and shiny. Its glitter is attractive in itself and calls attention to the person who wears it’. Friedrich (1978, 71) points out that gold was held synonymous with beauty itself. Gold does not tarnish but it stays forever bright and is immune from age and decay, thus reflecting Aphrodite’s ever-young, ever-beautiful appearance in its ever-bright nature. This would also explain the fact that the previously mentioned comparisons between women and Aphrodite seem to have been replaced by comparisons between human beauty and gold itself (see Alcman 1.51-5; 3.64 -8; Sappho *fr.* 132, 156).

[27] Brown (1997) 36.

[28] Jax (1933) 37.

[29] Jax (1933) 182.

[30] Lefkowitz (1986) 115.

introduction to a recent study of such behaviour that it has become an increasingly popular subject amongst classical scholars[31] and its significance for ancient literature was aptly demonstrated by Lateiner's study on its use in the Homeric epics. In his introduction, Lateiner enlarges on the functions and different forms of such behaviour:

> Every body, by its distinguishing characteristics, gender, age, motions and positions, sends and oozes thousands of messages at every moment in "ordinary" life. These appearances, placements, and displacements accompany, reinforce, contradict, and even replace words and ordinary deeds. Nonverbal behaviour supplies the interpersonal climate for communicative words and instrumental acts. Gesture, posture, and vocalic variation subconsciously structure human interchange and modulate its dynamics.[32]

Thus, nonverbal communication can range from the clothes people are wearing and the way they deport themselves to the colour of their skin.

However, it is important to bear in mind that these nonverbal behaviours in Greek literature 'do not simply depict "real life"'.[33] More exactly, they represent idealisms of Greek culture, as has been suggested by Thomas in his recent study of the concept of whiteness and femininity.[34]

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[31] Cairns (2005) xi.
[32] Lateiner (1995) 5.
[33] Clark (2001) 3.
[34] Thomas (2002, 1-15) is the first to suggest that the whiteness of a woman's skin, usually expressed by the epithet ••••••••••, could be indicative of more than simply physical

In this study, Thomas makes explicit the impact the former can have on sociocultural perceptions. For not only is the whiteness of a woman's skin considered to be aesthetically pleasing and an indicator of her high status,[35] thus making her highly desirable, but it can also reflect on her behaviour.[36] Based on the fact that visual depictions of men and women frequently emphasise a highly artificial distinction in colour,[37] she argues that, in Greek literature, a woman's whiteness is only then highlighted when both her appearance and behaviour are consistent with society's standards, thus 'whenever she performs a positive feminine role (obedient wife, agreeable mother, concerned guardian)'.[38] Thomas validates this conclusion by pointing out that immortal females such as Kirke or Kalypso are never characterised as having white skin since they both 'transgressed the rules for conventional Greek womanhood in that they were

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appearance. Traditionally, the epithet has been deemed a 'standard filler between penthemimeral caesura and bucolic dieresis for a female character' (Clader, [1976] 44) and, since it can be found to modify more than one character (see Parry [1971] 148ff.), as simply generic.

[35] A pale complexion, as in Edwardian England, meant that its owner was of sufficient standing not to have to work outdoors.

[36] It would have been possible only for women of the highest class (i.e. aristocratic) to avoid the sun and thus maintain a light colour of skin.

[37] For example, female figures are painted with stark white pigment while male figures are painted with dark reddish pigment. Thomas (2002, 2) suspects the reason for this to lie in the Greek tendency to polarise sexual characteristics. See Thomas (2002) 13, n.14; Hawley (1998) 40.

[38] Thomas (2002) 5.

masters of their households'.[39] Therefore, by choosing to emphasise or omit comment on a woman's white complexion, literature deliberately conditions the way women are viewed.

Similarly, the concept of seduction in Greek literature also relies heavily on such nonverbal phenomena as the means to deceive a victim. Above all, however, it relies on so-called significant objects and object adaptors such as clothing, jewellery, and hairstyles. Clark explains, using examples from archaic Greek literature:

> Sexual attractiveness is embodied in the mare-woman,[40] who has lovely long hair and anoints her freshly bathed body with perfume (57-70). One has only to consult this description, or Hesiod's account of the creation of Pandora (*WD*. 60-82 and *Th*. 570-602), or Hera's adornment of herself in preparation for her seduction of Zeus (*Il*. 14.169-86), to learn what the archaic Greeks represented as feminine sexual allure. This allure depends upon skin colour and texture (white, fresh), long hair dressed with flowers or colourful ribbons, jewellery, trailing gowns, perfume, lovely laughter and soft words, and swaying walk. That is, allure depends upon not only physical attributes such as fair skin and pretty hair, but also object adaptors, such as hair ornaments, jewellery and dress.[41]

Likewise, in her discussion of the *Hymn to Aphrodite* Brown goes even further when she observes that it is

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[39] Thomas (2002) 6.
[40] See Semonides *fr.* 7.
[41] Clark (2001) 9.

‘as if feminine beauty were inconceivable without fine clothes and elaborate jewellery’,[42] while Vernant, in reference to Pandora’s clothing, talks of ‘vestmental trappings that will make this body “operative”’.[43] Thus, both suggest that feminine beauty is artificial and, as Brown further elaborates, ‘to a large extent female beauty is not a matter of inherent qualities of features or physique, but a product of artifice – an illusion created by external decoration’.[44] Similarly, Deichgräber comments that: ‘Lieblichkeit ist für homerisches Denken etwas, das man anlegen kann, das hinzutritt, als wäre es nicht von der Natur aus mitgegeben’.[45] This notion is further maintained by such examples as Hera’s extensive toilet before the seduction of Zeus or Pandora’s elongated dressing scene before her arrival amongst humans.[46] As indicated earlier, both episodes rely heavily on nonverbal communication, that is clothing and jewellery, to accentuate the women’s beauty. Pandora’s beauty, in fact, is so striking that it is universally acknowledged. This is demonstrated by the fact that immortals and mortals alike consider

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[42] Brown (1997) 31.
[43] Vernant (1991) 38.
[44] Brown (1997) 37.
[45] Deichgräber (1971) 23.
[46] In his *Works and Days* the poet attaches so much importance to the creation of Pandora that he does it twice: first in the instructions given by Zeus to the other gods (60-8), then in showing them how to interpret those instructions (70-82).

her a marvel (*Th*. 559f.),[47] while Hera's appearance manages to cloud Zeus' mind. Thus, similar to a woman's white skin which is only then stressed when she complies with the expected standards, it seems that the cluster of references to shining clothing and golden jewellery functions as a signpost for men indicating that deception is about to take place.[48]

In addition, Zeus' reaction to the ••••••••• of Aphrodite's belt highlights this artificial quality of beauty even more. Not only does Hera need to put on beautiful clothes to impress her husband but it is also made clear in the *Iliad* that, in order for her mission to succeed, she needs the help of Aphrodite (14. 211 – 223). It is striking, then, that this help comes in the form of another item of clothing, namely Aphrodite's belt. The fact that, as Kinsley remarks, 'Aphrodite's seductive nature is embodied in her girdle, which lends to the wearer an irresistible ability to seduce anyone whom he or she

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[47] Pandora's reception among the gods is also very reminiscent of that of Aphrodite who, upon her arrival, causes such great desire that all gods desire her as a wife (*Hom. Hymn* 6).

[48] Clothing and precious objects generally appear to be problematic for men in Greek literature. The motif of clothing is often used in tragedy with fatal consequences. Whenever a woman is clothed in luxurious garments, it frequently functions as a form of characterisation, i.e. to symbolise how swiftly one's fate can take a turn. In Aeschylus' *Persians* the theme of clothing is pre-eminent throughout the whole play and it serves to highlight the rise and fall of the Persian empire. Another example can be found in Euripides' *Andromache*. Euripides places strong emphasis on Hermione's luxurious clothes and jewellery in contrast to Andromache who represents the ideal wife.

chooses'[49] confirms the notion of artifice, as sexual allure can be put on and removed as needed.

Hera, by putting on the belt of Aphrodite, seems to clothe herself with the powers of seduction.[50] What is more, Faraone compares the goddess' belt to the 'necklaces given to Pandora' and observes a 'constellation of interrelated effects', ranging from the obvious fact that both are worn by women, to the enhancing of attractiveness and the ability to 'seduce and captivate a male'.[51]

Fittingly, in the Greek text the use of the word ••••••••• (*Il*. 14. 211) denotes a deception achieved by means of nonverbal communication, i.e. a striking appearance through dressing up. It refers to deception achieved not necessarily by words only but also by deeds or things. As Pratt explains, the outcome of such a deception is a kind of enchantment (*thelxis*) that describes a physiological effect which 'need not involve the presence of the false,

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[49] Kinsley (1989) 207-8.
[50] The idea of clothes denoting power can also be found in the myth of Inanna's (Aphrodite's Oriental prototype) descent into the underworld. The goddess is required to take off one item of clothing during the different stages of her journey down below. When she eventually reaches her destination, she finds herself powerless since, with the removal of each item of clothing, she has also disposed of her powers. Thus, her clothing is synonymous with her power. See Dalley (1989) 155-62.
[51] Faraone (1990) 222; cf. Sowa (1984).

only the absence of a full awareness'.[52] This absence of full awareness is very similar to the loss and pain which Hesiod associates with the act of intercourse when he describes it as •••••••••• (*WD* 66) and ••••••••• (*Th*. 122), physiological reactions which Homer frequently associates with death (e.g. *Il*. 5.16, 11.579, 15.332, 21.114, 22.335; *Od*. 18.212). In fact, in the *Iliad* Zeus suggests that Hera's beauty has a similar effect on him:

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For never before has love for any goddess or woman
so melted about the heart inside me, broken it to submission
as now…

(*Il.* 14. 315ff.)

Homer uses the verb •••••••••, which is repeatedly used of mastering animals, inferiors, and women, often taking on the special meaning of sexual mastery although it can also refer to war with the meaning 'conquer' or 'kill'. In addition, Zeus describes his heart as •••••••••••••, which is typologically very close to Hesiod's •••••••••. Homer here chooses to illustrate Hera's beauty through an extensive description of her stunning clothing, the mention of Aphrodite to suggest the irresistibility

[52] Pratt (1993) 74.

of her appearance and the likening of Zeus' reaction to death. To a certain extent, then, shining clothing and dressing up appears to be indicative of the deception of men and their consequential psychological semi-consciousness (as demonstrated by Zeus' reaction).

In addition, as mentioned earlier, there is the view that, in a sense, all seductions are ultimately performed by Aphrodite herself, which seems more than plausible if we re-consider that Aphrodite has already been identified as notorious when it comes to beauty. She has proven her superiority in the beauty contest and in the creation of Pandora as well as in Hera's dressing scene. She has fulfilled her role as the dispenser of the capacity to arouse strong sexual desire, dangerous to the health of the human body and mind.

In addition, the epic *topos* of divine dressing, the distinguishing feature of most seduction scenes, is closely connected to Aphrodite through its frequent references to the goddess herself or her metal gold.[53]

[53] For the significance of gold as the metal of Aphrodite, see Brown (1997) 26-47.

The dressing scenes make use of nonverbal communication in the form of clothing and jewellery, which encourages the notion that female beauty and sexual irresistibility can be put on and taken off at will – the ultimate example being Aphrodite's belt in the *Iliad* lending its power to whomever the goddess chooses. This nonverbal behaviour then causes a physiological effect on the victim which is frequently described as a 'melting' or 'loosening of limbs' - metaphors characteristic of death in Homer - and associated with a loss of control.[54]

Consequently, I argue that the frequent use of nonverbal communication in these dressing scenes has produced a rather ambivalent view of women which closely associates beauty enhanced through clothing and jewellery with negative consequences for men. The parallel between deception/ seduction and the beautifully clothed female body is confirmed by McClure who remarks 'that a brief survey of feminine deception suggests that women's seductive speech was viewed as inextricably bound to their bodies and the desire engendered in them'.[55] Thus, while clothing and jewellery may enhance a woman's beauty, from a man's point of view they also ought to be treated

[54] Carson (1986); Marquardt (1982).
[55] McClure (1999) 67.

with the highest suspicion since they usually imply some sort of deception.[56]

The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) represents the ultimate example of this, as it highlights the literally larger-than-life beauty of the woman (Aphrodite) and, simultaneously, the horror it causes the man (Anchises). Acclaimed as 'brilliant and unitary', 'the finest of the longer hymns', 'the most finished and appealing of the longer Homeric Hymns' and 'probably the most successful of the Homeric Hymns', it comes as no surprise that the hymn continues to be of interest to scholars.[57] While its circumstances such as date, place of origin and relation to other poetry remain remarkably obscure, it nevertheless provides a useful insight into the character of Aphrodite and the previously discussed epic *topos* of divine dressing. It tells the story of Anchises' seduction by the goddess but, as Sowa

[56] This notion is also found in later ancient literature. A fragment of Hyperides states that 'it is right for a woman to adorn herself as she may please for her husband, but when she does so for going out there is cause for alarm, since that is not for her husband but for other men (*fr.* 206). Similarly, in Euripides' *Elektra* a wife is rebuked for beautifying herself: 'A wife, who in her husband's absence will take pains to enhance beauty, may be written off as bad. She has no need to show a pretty face outdoors unless she is seeking what she shall not' (1072-1075) while Juvenal declares: 'There's nothing a woman baulks at, no action that gives her a twinge of conscience once she's put on her emerald choker, weighted down her ear-lobes with vast pearl pendants' (6.456ff.). In contrast, the male equivalent of the dressing scene, the putting on of armour, is frequently glorified as becoming a hero and fulfilling his duty, thus suggesting entirely positive notions.

[57] Friedrich (1978) 65; M. L. West in Dover (1980) 23; Smith (1981) 2; Beye (1987) 73.

points out, ‘it is special in its depiction of the meeting between an ordinary human (Anchises) and the supernatural’ as it illustrates the great tension between mortal and immortal planes of existence.[58] Throughout the poem, there are numerous references to gods mixing with mortals (39, 50, 52, 250) and even the very incentive for Aphrodite’s seduction of Anchises has its roots in such mortal/ immortal encounters: Zeus, tired of being ridiculed for his countless extra-marital affairs with mortal women, reverses the roles causing Aphrodite to fall for a mortal man.[59]

The hymn begins with a confirmation of the goddess’ powers, which appear to be universal, since they cover the immortal and mortal sphere, as well as including all animals in the sky, on land and in the sea (1-4). This totality of Aphrodite’s power is then immediately compromised by the mention of the three goddesses immune to her trickery, Athene, Artemis and Hestia, all of whom are virgin goddesses.[60] Smith also points out that all three goddesses are somehow associated with the act of

[58] Sowa (1984) 73.
[59] This is certainly significant if we recall that to mortals the gods represent ‘Idealbilder menschlicher Vollkommenheit’ (Jax [1933] 5). However, from the gods’ point of view the union with a mortal seems to be regarded as a source of ridicule and shame. The gods carefully select only the most beautiful mortals to be with as they are the most godlike.
[60] Note that Athene was also Aphrodite’s opponent in the beauty contest.

killing, be it in war (Athene), on the hunt (Artemis) or as patron of the ritual killing of animals (Hestia). Therefore, all three goddesses are patrons of characteristically male domains. In contrast, Aphrodite, as we are told at the beginning of the hymn, unites immortals, mortals, and all animals in procreation. In fact, her power is so great that she is even capable of deceiving Zeus who, along with the other gods (50-1), considers her power a source of embarrassment.[61]

Nevertheless, the nature of this embarrassment appears to be rather uncertain. Smith claims that it is not the gods' inability to resist the goddess' power that causes the embarrassment but the fact that 'it has involved them in a kind of miscegenation, a painful contact with mortality and so with death'.[62] On the contrary, Lenz argues that the problem lies with 'Aphrodite's exceptional power over the other gods, which threatens to upset the Olympian hierarchy'.[63] Smith rejects this notion on the rather unconvincing grounds that the stable Olympian hierarchy actually depends on the exercise of the goddess' power which would thus not be

[61] The idea that Aphrodite's power is capable of subduing even Zeus is also found in later literature such as Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (497ff.).
[62] Smith (1981) 40.
[63] Lenz (1975) 129.

regarded a threat in any way. While Smith is correct in assuming that, to a certain extent, the Olympian order relies on Aphrodite's exercising her power, one must not overlook the threat it represents at the same time. The Olympian hierarchy may be regarded as stable, but it is equally important to bear in mind that it was also profoundly patriarchal. Thus, naturally, Aphrodite, with her Near Eastern heritage as a powerful deity to whom all creation –human and divine- was subject, [64] represents a threat to this order.[65]

However, it is my aim to demonstrate how nonverbal behaviour in the form of clothing and jewellery serves to modify the view of women. As the dressing scene in the hymn will illustrate, this particular branch of nonverbal behaviour, which is also referred to as significant objects and object adaptors, functions as an indicator of the deception of a male about to happen. Furthermore, it offers an opportunity to misrepresent female beauty as 'an illusion created by external decoration' to encourage the notion of female beauty as deception.[66]

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[64] On Aphrodite's Near Eastern heritage see Marcovich (1996).
[65] As a result, I agree with Lenz' argument that the hymn aims to reinforce Zeus' status as the ultimate ruler (1975, 129-130) rather than concentrate 'on the production of mortal children from both possible types of mortal-immortal contact' (Smith [1981] 111 n30).
[66] Brown (1997) 37.

It comes as no surprise, then, that only a few lines into the hymn Aphrodite's skills are referred to as •••••••• (8), meaning 'to deceive', which is then repeated a further three times for emphasis (33, 36, 38). Pratt explains that this kind of deception need not necessarily have negative connotations,[67] but the horror of Anchises' delayed registration of what is actually going on fully encapsulates the extent of his negative experience. His reaction is like that of a small child when he hides his face under the covers and begs the goddess not to harm him (181-4).

Combined with the theme of deception is an element of mystery involved in what Aphrodite does. Upon conceiving desire for Anchises, the goddess rushes to her temple and disappears behind locked doors.[68] Her temple and altar are both described as 'fragrant' (58, 59) and the doors as 'shining' (60) which clearly foreshadows Aphrodite's own shining appearance and is also very reminiscent of the later Sapphic scene setting.[69] While the reference to clothing may only be brief, it certainly establishes a context of seduction: Aphrodite herself is washed and anointed with perfumed oil (61-2), beautifully

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[67] Pratt (1993) 78.
[68] Note that in the *Iliad* Hera also closes her doors behind her and even proceeds to lock them 'with a secret door-bar, and no other of the gods could open it' (14.166-8).
[69] This will be elaborated upon in chapter two.

clothed (64), and, perhaps most importantly, she is adorned with gold (65). As pointed out earlier, gold is often recognised as the metal of Aphrodite and frequently features in seduction scenes. Here it serves to further accentuate the goddess' beauty. Smith comments on Aphrodite's preparation:

> Her going home and dressing up for the coming seduction, itself understandable for someone in the position, also appears to have been felt something of a requirement in Greek epic, even for a goddess. A woman in epic does not rouse a man's desire by overtly seductive behaviour; in fact, if she said openly what was on her mind, she invariably failed her purpose.[70]

He also states that 'in Greek myth a woman's power over a man, whatever its real basis, tends to be expressed as the power of appearance'.[71] Therefore, Smith recognises Aphrodite's dressing up as normal behaviour, which represents the norm even for a goddess. In addition, he rather cautiously recognises the dressing up as the only means of a woman to exert power over a man.[72] Indeed, the preparation scene demonstrates the fact that any woman can derive power from her clothing. Aphrodite may be adorned with precious jewellery and beautiful clothing but, as illustrated by the power of her

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[70] Smith (1981) 41.
[71] Smith (1981) 113 n.36.
[72] While there are examples of the explicit voicing of sexual desire by women, this is always done in a negative context as in the case of Phaidra and Stheneboia.

belt in the *Iliad* (14), the power thus generated may be available to any woman.[73]

Furthermore, the fatality of this power is revealed by Anchises' behaviour. At first sight, he rightly assumes that Aphrodite is a goddess, yet then allows himself to be persuaded into believing the exact opposite. When initially he even suspects her to be Aphrodite (90-9), he then almost instantly believes her to be his young bride. His reaction is very reminiscent of that of Zeus in the *Iliad*. Similarly, he considers himself master of the situation and even claims that his desire for the goddess is so great that he would happily die to be with her only once. This is precisely the physiological reaction to which Pratt refers, which involves the absence of a full awareness.[74]

To conclude, nonverbal behaviour features greatly in the seduction scenes of archaic Greek literature. Through so-called significant objects and object adaptors, largely represented by clothing and jewellery, the seducer achieves the absence of full awareness of the victim. Moreover, the concept of

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[73] Like Pandora in the *WD* (73-4), Aphrodite is wearing golden necklaces (*Hom. Hymn* 5.88-90) which, as Buxton (1982, 37) reminds us, were powerful 'and their power might be dangerous and evil if they seduced women into immoral sexual behaviour'.
[74] Pratt (1993) 74.

seduction is closely associated with Aphrodite who appears to hold patronage and features in most seduction scenes, either in person as seen in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (5), or indirectly as seen in the deception of Zeus by Hera who achieves the desired effect with the help of Aphrodite's belt.

Furthermore, Aphrodite also endowed the *Ur-woman*, Pandora, with the ability to arouse strong sexual desire, dangerous to the health of the human body and mind (*WD* 66). Pandora, according to myth, then arrives among humans and establishes the race of women (*Th*. 590ff). As a result of this we can assume that women also inherited the ability to seduce, and thus to deceive. Male fear of this deception expresses itself in the rejection of extensive descriptions of beauty. Consequently, a woman's beauty is misrepresented as being artificial and applied in the form of clothing and jewellery. Brown states that: 'it is as if feminine beauty were inconceivable without fine clothes and elaborate jewellery' and this is plausible if one considers the lack of physical references concerning the female exterior.[75]

[75] Brown (1997) 31.

Finally, this substitution of the description of physical beauty by clothing and jewellery then leads to an underlying suspicion of such objects in general. The mention of beautiful clothing and shining jewellery in literature is not only reminiscent of Aphrodite but also symptomatic of the deception about to take place. Thus, to an extent, the extensive description of clothing and jewellery not only functions to introduce a seduction scene but also, more importantly, serves as a word of warning to men.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, female beauty is often referred to in a divine frame of reference and the comparison of any single woman with Aphrodite is 'the most eloquent way to extol a woman's beauty'.[76] However, Aphrodite is closely allied with the theme of seduction. The most distinguishing feature of the theme of seduction is the use of nonverbal behaviour, in particular so-called significant objects and object adaptors, namely clothing and jewellery. The concept of seduction, then, inextricably links the goddess to these forms of nonverbal behaviour. In fact, they are so closely linked that in the deception of Zeus

[76] Friedrich (1978) 89.

the power of the goddess is personified by such a significant object, namely her belt.

The next chapter will introduce the Sapphic Aphrodite and explore the way these traditional themes are taken up and adapted in lyric poetry.

CHAPTER II:
THE SAPPHIC APHRODITE

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Ornate-throned immortal Aphrodite, wile-weaving daughter of Zeus, I entreat you: do not overpower my heart, mistress, with ache and anguish, but come here, if ever in the past you heard my voice from afar and

> acquiesced and came, leaving you father's golden house, with chariot yoked: beautiful swift sparrows whirring fast-beating wings brought you above the dark earth down from heaven through the mid-air, and soon they arrived; and you, blessed one, with a smile on your immortal face asked what was the matter with me this time and why I was calling this time and what in my maddened heart I most wished to happen for myself: 'Whom am I to persuade this time to lead you back to her love? Who wrongs you, Sappho? If she runs away, soon she will pursue; if she does not accept gifts, why, she shall give them instead; and if she does not love, soon she shall love even against her will.' Come to me now again and deliver me from oppressive anxieties; fulfil all that my heart longs to fulfil, and you yourself be my fellowfighter.

Accorded the place of epigraph to the collection of Sappho's poems, *fr.* 1 is the only complete extant song and remains a source of much disagreement. For example, it has been used as evidence for the notion, first suggested at the beginning of the 20th century and still supported by some scholars today, that Sappho was a priestess at the head of a religious cult.[1] While there is absolutely no ancient evidence for this theory it continues to gain currency in modern assessments because of the frequency with which Sappho represents herself in conversation with gods and goddesses, most notably Aphrodite. Wilson remarks that Aphrodite 'features most often and most significantly'[2] in Sappho's poetry while Robbins points

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[1] On notions of Sappho as priestess see McIntosh Snyder (1989); Wilamowitz (1913) 17-28; Merkelbach (1957); Calame (1977); Hallet (1979).
[2] Wilson (1996) 21.

out that ‘Aphrodite dominates Sappho’s *personal* life’.[3] Similarly, Castle observes that ‘Aphrodite commands a prominent position in the works of Sappho’,[4] and McIntosh Snyder considers the poet a protégé of the goddess.[5]

While there is certainly no doubt that Aphrodite receives preferential treatment in Sappho’s poetry, it is necessary to bear in mind that she is not the only divinity to be addressed by the poet. Almost as popular as the goddess herself are the Graces and the Muses (*fr.* 128) but other goddesses such as Hera (*fr.* 17) and Artemis (*fr.* 44) also feature in her poetry. Moreover, all these divinities have in common with the poet not only the fact that they are female but also that they represent areas of life naturally associated with women. Aphrodite is the personification of human sexual desire and, according to Hesiod, partly responsible for the creation of the first woman, Pandora. Along with the Graces, she equips Pandora with attributes ranging from sexual allure to breathtaking beauty (*WD* 65-80). Hera and Artemis cover between them marriage, virginity, midwifery and childbirth, while the Muses, ‘hailed as the source of

[3] Robbins (1995) 229 (sic).
[4] Castle (1958) 73.
[5] McIntosh Snyder (1997) 7.

artistic and intellectual activity', are undoubtedly also important to Sappho as a poet.[6]

In my view, rather than being a cult-connected hymnic celebration of Aphrodite, *fr.* 1 is more literary-orientated deriving its characterisation of the goddess from the epic 'give because you gave' prayer.[7] Favoured by the Homeric heroes this type of prayer traditionally addresses the divinity of choice with a series of flattering epithets before it justifies its request with the underlying presumption that if help was offered in the past, it ought to be offered again.[8] Sappho's address to the goddess is similar and thus suggests a parallel between herself and the Homeric heroes who enjoyed a much more intimate relationship with the gods than anyone else. The divine-human barrier seems somewhat permeable in the *Iliad* and this is most apparent in book five when Diomedes wounds and rebukes Aphrodite. It is notably this episode on which Sappho seems, at least partly, to have modelled her prayer to Aphrodite.[9]

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[6] Harris & Platzner (2001) 63.
[7] Lateiner (1997) 267.
[8] For an example of this kind of prayer, see *Il*. 16.236-8.
[9] Note that men are more likely to address their pleas to male gods (*Il*. 16. 233-48) for the purpose of immortal intervention in battle so it seems very plausible that Sappho would turn to a female goddess to get involved in her case. For an in-depth study of the Homeric aspects of Sappho's poetry, see Rissman (1983).

Further controversy surrounds the poem. It has been labelled, for example, as ‘a synthesis of old and new, a blend of male language and female creativity’,[10] ‘an unusual combination of traditional form and idiosyncratic treatment’,[11] ‘a poem of oscillation and uncertainty’,[12] an articulation of the poet’s ‘own experience in traditional (male) terms,’[13] and ‘an essay in self-observation and self-understanding’.[14] A basic problem, of course, is that, on account of the fragmented state of Sappho’s poetry, scholars are working without any real overview, and the interpretation of any given poem inevitably involves a significant degree of speculation.

The ‘hymn’ begins with a series of flattering adjectives in reference to Aphrodite, followed by a vocative along with Sappho’s plea to the goddess not to burden her with the heartache of love. On the surface the structure of the invocation resembles the norm; however, as already observed by Cameron, its ‘brevity and directness is unusual in omitting safeguarding qualifications and the traditional recital of powers, functions and areas of domination’ while the poet’s choice of words also strikes one as

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[10] Wilson (1996) 23.
[11] Wilson (1996) 22.
[12] Wyatt (1974) 213.
[13] Winkler (1990) 169.
[14] Stanley (1976) 321.

somewhat curious.[15] Stanley aptly describes these irregularities when he observes that ‘all else has been compressed into three epithets: ••••••••••••, ••••••• and •••••••••’.[16] Sappho begins with the compound adjective ••••••••••••, which has been subject to much discussion. Given its emphatic position, along with the fact that it stands in direct reference to Aphrodite, a goddess of primary importance to the poet, Sappho clearly meant to draw attention to it.

Much controversy also surrounds its translation. Seemingly Homeric, the word never occurs in the epics and is ‘impossible to integrate into a hexameter’.[17] Considering it ‘a purely ornamental epithet, [that] is not found elsewhere’ and the idea expressed in it as ‘not at all common in literature’, Page, along with the majority of commentators and translators, understands it to mean “richly enthroned”.[18] Campbell agrees and explains that ‘Sappho pictures Aphrodite in her Olympian home’.[19]

Lawler rejects the derivation from •••••• (‘throne’) and identifies the adjective as a compound of ••••••• and •••••, which comes to mean ‘with decorative

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[15] Cameron (1939) 2.
[16] Stanley (1976) 309.
[17] Scheid & Svenbro (1996) 53. Rissman (1983) 21 n.10.
[18] See Page (1955) 5; Cameron (1939) 2.
[19] Campbell (1967) 264.

flowers' or 'flower-patterned'.[20] She dismisses the conventional translation on the rather unconvincing grounds that the Greek word for 'throne' is never qualified as •••••••• in Homer and thus cannot be used in that sense in Sappho's poetry either.

Fortunately for Lawler's interpretation, evidence for this meaning of the word can be found in the ancient sources. Kleitarchos tells us that •••••, among the Thessalians means 'woven designs', and, among the Cyprians, 'flowered clothes' (*Scholia to Theocritus* 2.59), and Hesychius adds that the word also means 'flowers' or even 'woven designs of varied colour'. In contrast, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who initially mentioned such a translation, also immediately rejected it arguing 'hier darf wahrlich niemand an [*throna*] denken: wo wären sie denn?' thus questioning the flowers' physical location.[21] Lawler, however, simply solves this problem, suggesting an ellipsis of the Greek word for 'cloak' or 'coat', this unstated object being adorned with a design of flowers.[22]

With both translations possible from a grammatical and etymological point of view, the most suitable meaning

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[20] See Lawler (1948) 80-4.
[21] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1913) 44.
[22] Lawler (1948) 84. Burnett (1983) 250-1 also opts for flower-patterned. It seems somewhat significant that female critics tend to opt for the latter translation, while the male critics mostly settle for the 'throne' interpretation.

may be determined from the context. The epithet is followed by another one, •••••••, meaning ‘immortal’. While this particular adjective is frequently employed in Homer to refer to the gods collectively, its singular use is rather unusual and reserved for Zeus only.[23] This leads to the conclusion that the departure from the Homeric use of the word here represents the poet’s effort to add her own flavour to her poetry. Rissman, in her study on Homeric allusion in Sappho’s poetry, observes that the poet repeatedly coins new words that seem Homeric but differ substantially in meaning and interpretation. Thus, her coining of •••••••••••• (1) indicates her desire to remodel the goddess into something uniquely Sapphic while at the same time maintaining a certain level of Homericity.[24]

The compound •••••••••, the last in the series of adjectives describing Aphrodite, is another example of this technique. Newly coined but with a Homeric flavour to it, the epithet juxtaposes Homeric and Sapphic qualities. Not only is the first half of the epithet ••••• closely associated with cunning and wit (such as famously displayed by the Homeric hero Odysseus) but it also implies a certain degree of skill. Despite the fact that in Homer she is only once characterized by a compound of ••••• (*Il.* 3.405)

[23] Page (1955) 5.
[24] Rissman (1983) 3.

Aphrodite repeatedly demonstrates her successful employment of it.[25]

The second half of the word, •••••• (taken from the verb 'to weave') 'seems to achieve one of [Sappho's] characteristic mixtures of the concrete with the abstract',[26] and, as Castle observes, echoes the 'cunning artistry'[27] implied in ••••••••••••.[28] While there are many accounts of women making use of a •••••, combining it with the notion of weaving is certainly unique at the time of the poem's composition.[29] Traditionally, weaving has always been regarded as a female task and as belonging to the *oikos*. Lyons remarks that 'over centuries, from Helen in the *Iliad* to the women on fifth-century vases, the one productive activity consistently associated with women, and especially with the aristocratic wives of myth and epic, is weaving'.[30]

This is particularly well illustrated by a scene in the *Iliad* when Hector urges Andromache to return to

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[25] Examples of this can be found in the *Homeric Hymn* (5) where her outstanding ability to deceive others, including the gods, is celebrated and then demonstrated by her seduction of Anchises. See also her part in the famous deception of Zeus by his wife Hera in *Iliad* 14.
[26] Burnett (1983) 251.
[27] Castle (1958) 69.
[28] Furthermore, the idea of a net alludes to Aphrodite's capture in a net described as ••••• - •••••• (*Od*. 8. 274-6). See Privitera (1967) 40; Burnett (1983) 251.
[29] The epithet was later borrowed by Theognis (1386).
[30] Lyons (2003) 100.

her duties, that is the loom and the distaff (*Il*. 6.490ff.). By choosing an epithet which not only demonstrates the goddess' ability to beguile but which also highlights the most prominent female skill in ancient Greek society, namely weaving, Sappho makes Aphrodite, as Burnett puts it, 'the author of fabricated tricks or snares that are suitably the work of a woman'.[31]

The Sapphic Aphrodite has clearly evolved from her Homeric self who, rebuked and insulted by a mortal, Diomedes, departs from battle only to seek comfort with her mother (*Il*. 5.346-417).[32] Rather than ridiculing her power and restricting it to the domain of love and marriage as suggested by Zeus (*Il*. 5.418-430), Sappho chooses to emphasise and celebrate it in a series of flattering adjectives. In addition, Aphrodite's departure from her Homeric self is marked by the use of the word •••••• in the vocative and without another noun, something which Rissman characterises as very unHomeric.[33]

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[31] Burnett (1983) 251.

[32] Sappho's intention to bring to mind the Homeric Aphrodite is made clear by the use of the patronymic ••• ••••. For a more detailed explanation, see Rissman (1983) 3.

[33] Rissman points out that in the Homeric epics •••••• is 'only found in the position immediately following the bucolic diaeresis', as in the line-ending formulae •••••• •••#, •••••• •••••#' [sic] (Rissman [1983] 3).

As a result, the translation of the epithet •••••••••••• is likely to display a similar idea, namely that of an Aphrodite that combines in herself Homeric as well as Sapphic features. It is my view that Sappho deliberately chose to maintain a certain degree of ambiguity, and thus opted for an adjective that would allow for such a double meaning. On the one hand, referring to the goddess' flower-embroidered cloak emphasises her association with beauty, while, on the other hand, the reference to a possible throne adds a certain element of sovereign power.

The allusion to flowers, of course, is easily explained by Aphrodite's function as goddess of love and beauty which closely associates her with all things sweet and alluring, while at the same time the reference to her throne is complemented by the word •••••••. As mentioned earlier, this adjective is generally only used in the singular to characterise Zeus, the official ruler of the gods. By relating it to Aphrodite in this context, Sappho stresses the centrality and power of the goddess and her domain. To Sappho, Aphrodite is both powerful ruler of all, and also a beautiful goddess of all that is sweet and lovely.[34]

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[34] I believe that this dual aspect of the goddess is also communicated in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5.1-44) where it is clearly stated that she conquers all (albeit with the

The address of the goddess is followed by the short interjection •••••••• ••, which is typical of prayer. The stanza then closes with the poet's request not to be 'tamed'. Sappho here uses the verb ••••• which is frequently used of 'mastering animals, inferiors and women, often taking on the special meaning of sexual mastery',[35] although it can also refer to war with the meaning 'conquer' or 'kill'. Not only does the use of this verb call to mind Aphrodite's power but it also keeps in line with the idea that 'Aphrodite is, in Sappho's poetry as in Homer or in the *Hymn*s, the goddess who *subdues* with the torment and passion of love' (see Sappho *fr.* 102.2; *Il*. 14.199, 316; Hes. *Th.* 122).[36]

In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) the goddess' conquering power is demonstrated when she manages to infuse even the wildest animals with love and desire (*Hom. Hymn* 5.68-74).[37] Sappho's choice of words here clearly establishes that she is addressing the powerful and inescapable Aphrodite, the subduer. In

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exception of Athene, Artemis and Hestia) including Zeus, and thus, in this aspect, can be understood to rule over all.

[35] Burnett (1983) 253, n.63.

[36] Lanata (1996) 15 (sic).

[37] Later literary works such as Euripides' *Hippolytus* demonstrate her power even more effectively: Aphrodite makes Phaidra fall in love with her stepson as a punishment for his vehement rejection of her powers and subsequently causes both of them to suffer a cruel fate.

the *Iliad* we merely find a subtle indication of the goddess' potential power:

> ••• •• •••••••••••••• ••••••••• •••••• ••••
> "••• ••• ••• ••••••••• ••• ••••••, •• •• ••••••
> •••••• •••••••••• ••• ••••••• ••••••••••.

> Then, with false lying purpose the lady Hera answered her:
> 'Give me loveliness and desirability, graces with which
> you overwhelm mortal men, and all the immortals.

(*Il.* 14.197-9)

and also in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite:*

> ••• •' •••••••••• •••• •••••••••• •••••••••
> ••••••• •• •••••••••• ••• ••••• •••••. . .

> And she overcomes the peoples of mortal kind,
> and the birds that fly in heaven, and all creatures
> [. . .]

(*Hom. Hymn* 5. 3-4)

However, what is used merely as flattery in the *Iliad* by Hera in order to trick Aphrodite into aiding the seduction of Zeus has become reality in Sappho. The Sapphic Aphrodite is a very powerful goddess 'who unites opposites into a whole', a notion that certainly was threatening to a belief system built on binary oppositions and strictly controlled exchange of such.[38] In fact, the goddess is so powerful that Sappho is experiencing pain - •••••• …••••••• (3). Both of these nouns signify pain and discomfort of some sort

[38] MacIntosh Snyder (1997) 9.

and are often used by the medical writers to refer to physical distress.

Having juxtaposed Aphrodite's power with her own defencelessness, Sappho moves on to remind the goddess of her past intercessions. As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the structure of *fr.* 1 loosely resembles that of a hymn or invocation to a god. The traditional hymn has a tripartite structure: first, one would seize upon the deity using flattering epithets, patronymics, favourite haunts and his or her characteristic powers. Next there would follow a reminder of past deeds of the god or the suppliant, and, finally, the actual request would be presented.[39]

At this point in the poem, Sappho's plea is entering the second stage of this structure, also referred to as *hypomnesia*. Sappho's request not to be overpowered by pain is followed by a typically *hypomnesiac* feature, the conditional expression (•• . . . ••••••), thus reminding the goddess of any previous requests or epiphanies. The echo of the patronymic of the first

[39] Burnett ([1983] 247) enlarges: 'The traditional 'cletic' hymn had a tripartite structure. First the god was seized upon, wherever he was, by an effective manipulation of his names, his favourite haunts, and his characteristic powers. Next he was impressed and pleased by the reminder of past deeds, the petitioner's or his own. Finally, when he had been thus favourably prepared, he was made to listen to a direct appeal. In the first of these phases, the invocation, a knowledge of names, titles, parentage, powers, cult epithets, and divine geography was important, for with the erudition of this sort one could catch the god in a specific form and bring him on to the scene with the attributes most needed in the present case.'

line in the phrase •••••• ••••• reiterates Aphrodite's status as daughter of Zeus and emphasises the dichotomy between the goddess and the poet. Furthermore, the quick succession of the aorist verbs (••••••... ••••••... •••••••.. •••••) conveys a sense of hurry on the goddess' part: she hears Sappho's pleas and immediately proceeds down to earth.

The following portrayal of Aphrodite's descent shifts back to the combination of Homeric and Sapphic features found in the first stanza. The description of the goddess' chariot is very reminiscent of the golden chariot used by Hera and Athene to drive down to battle in the *Iliad* (5.724, 727, 730, 731). Thus, the mention of the chariot subtly cultivates a traditionally male image of war, and, perhaps more importantly, connects Aphrodite with Hera and Athene. Hera, of course, deceives Aphrodite in the *Iliad* while Athene belongs to a small group of divinities over whom the goddess of love holds no power. Yet in her poem Sappho consciously borrows imagery typically associated with the war goddess Athene and thus endows Aphrodite with qualities she seemingly lacks in the *Iliad*.

Rissman regards this as 'the first step in the redefinition', which seeks to 'equate Aphrodite with

more warlike goddesses'.[40] Unlike the Iliadic goddesses' chariot, though, that of the Sapphic Aphrodite is drawn, not by horses, but by sparrows. While Stanley points out that 'Aphrodite does not normally use a chariot for conveyance',[41] Svenbro suggests that in the *Iliad* the phrase ••••• ••••• occurs 28 times at the end of the line and, subsequently, is identified as an epic formula by the audience. He further explains that Sappho included an altered version of this formula for a change 'which goes very well…with the intimate character of the poem'.[42]

Another explanation for the substitution of sparrows for horses can also be found in Homer where chariots are frequently described as being drawn by horses that fly (like birds). In addition, it is necessary to consider their connection with Aphrodite. Page observes that sparrows 'were notorious for wantonness and fecundity' (see Athen. 391^{e-f}, Schol. B Hom. *Il*. B 305; Pliny, *N. H. x.* 36 (107); Festus, p.410.21 (Lindsey); Hesych. s.v. •••••••• etc.) and 'their eggs and flesh might be eaten for their aphrodisiac effect' (Terspsicles ap. Athen.1.c.; Pliny, 1.c.) and thus concludes that it would only be 'natural' that they

[40] Rissman (1983) 9.
[41] Stanley (1976) 311.
[42] Svenbro (1975) 43.

should be thought ‘to symbolize the power of Aphrodite’.[43]

Hawkes also reminds us that birds were symbols associated with goddess figures which later ‘became the emblem of the goddesses of human beauty, love and fertility – Aphrodite and Venus’[44] and Wilson observes that while the ‘natural world – whether topographical or poetic – also contains a variety of creatures’ only very few images of these creatures find their way into Sappho’s poetry.[45] The most frequent of these images is that of birds. However, they appear ‘not [as] the portentous winged omens of epic’ but as sparrows that provide a vivid image, mediating between heaven and earth.[46]

Finally, in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* birds are the only species referred to individually while all other animals are mentioned collectively as ••••• (5.4.). Sappho creates an unHomeric scene by alluding to a typically Homeric image. The sparrows add an element of grace and lightness to the image which is then immediately juxtaposed with the Homeric phrase

[43] Page (1955) 8.
[44] Hawkes (1968) 138.
[45] Wilson (1996) 113.
[46] Wilson (1996) 113.

•••• ••• •••••••• (11).[47] The contrast between the mortal poet and the divinity is further emphasised by the image of the divine chariot descending from the golden and thus very bright home of Zeus to the dark earth, which is very reminiscent of the Homeric battle scenes (with its idea that the earth is stained red with the spilled blood of war).

Once she has arrived on earth Aphrodite smiles •••••••••••• ••••••• ••••••• (14) words which clearly allude to a line in the *Homeric Hymn*:

> ••••••• •••• •••••••, ••' ••••••• •• •••••••• •••• ••••••••. . .
>
> On her lovely face is always smiling […]

(*Hom. Hymn* 10.2-3)

While the goddess is repeatedly characterised as •••••••••• (Hes. *Th*. 200; *Od*. 8.362) this is usually done to emphasise her erotic qualities. For example, in the *Iliad* the above epithet is applied to the goddess when she is encouraging Helen to sleep with Paris (3.424), and, in the *Homeric Hymn*, the adjective's close association with sexual desire is aptly illustrated by its combination with a form of ••••• – a word that frequently takes on a meaning of sexual mastery (see above):

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[47] The earth is frequently described as 'dark' or 'black' in epic poetry. See *Il*. 2.699; 15.715; 17.416; 20.495: *Od*. 11.365; 19. 111. Sappho also uses the epithet in two other poems (frs. 16.2: 20.6).

> ···· ···' ····· ·····
> ·····
> ····· ·· ····· ·····
> ·····
>
> Nor is Artemis of the gold shafts
> and view-halloo ever
> overcome in love by smile-loving
> Aphrodite.
>
> (*Hom. Hymn* 5.16-17)

In fact, smiles are so closely associated with the goddess' domain of love that the epithet also appears when Aphrodite is about to bed Anchises.[48] Acting as if she were an innocent *parthenos* she allows Anchises to lead her toward the bed:

> ·· ····· ···· ····· ····· ·' ·····
> ···· ·····, ···' ····· ···· ·····,
> ·· ····· ·····. . .
>
> With these words, he took her hand,
> and smile-loving Aphrodite, casting
> her lovely eyes down, turned and moved
> to the well-bedecked bed. . .
>
> (*Hom. Hymn* 5.155-7)

While Anchises is blissfully unaware of the goddess' identity, her name and traditional epithet allow the audience to fully appreciate what is about to happen. The juxtaposition of the named goddess, further characterised by an adjective at the end of the line and Anchises, who remains unnamed and represented merely by a verb plus participle construction, highlights the incompatibility of the couple and the

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[48] Rissman (1983, 11) supports this view and points out that 'it is usually employed in passages which specifically underscore Aphrodite's role as a goddess of sexual love'.

stark contrast in power.[49] Finally, the epithet seems to repeatedly occur in a context of deception (see *Iliad* 3 and *Hom. Hymn* above) and belongs with others which feed into the large corpus of female characteristics that ought to be treated with suspicion.[50]

In a similar fashion, Sappho also plays on the contrast between mortal and immortal, but she chooses to simply reiterate the adjective of the first line in reference to the goddess' face (••••••• •••••••). Thus having established Aphrodite's immortality once more, Sappho further describes her using an aorist participle formed from the same stem as Aphrodite's traditional epithet.

However, unlike the Homeric epithet, •••••••••••• here is clearly devoid of any sexual connotations. While Aphrodite's smiling face in the short *Homeric Hymn* (5) arouses pressing desire,[51] Campbell correctly rules out any sexual aspects when he identifies the Sapphic smile as denoting 'good will rather than amusement'.[52]

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[49] Of course, not every instance of the adjective must necessarily be associated with the erotic aspect of Aphrodite's domain, but there certainly are a number of instances where the epithet is to be understood in such a context.
[50] As explained previously, verbal communication such as smiles and 'bed-eyes' feature heavily in the image of the seductive woman.
[51] Calame (1992) 47.
[52] Campbell (1967) 265.

Another suggestion as to why Sappho feels the need to reiterate Aphrodite's immortality is made by Robbins who argues that in the face of the goddess Sappho sees what she seeks for herself, i.e. immortality.[53] This is very plausible if we consider that 'elsewhere Aphrodite is characterised by her beauty and smile' rather than by her immortality.[54] More importantly, Sappho's preoccupation with immortality is evident throughout her entire collection of poems (see *frs*. 24, 27, 55, 147). However, given the fact that the goddess then enquires after Sappho's well-being, one can assume that it is at least a patient smile of either amusement or, as Campbell suggests, good will.

Aphrodite' s affection toward Sappho is further expressed by the use of the aorist tense. Not only does the quick succession of the three verb forms (••••••••• - ••••••••••••• - •••••••) indicate Aphrodite's swift response, but the aorist also adds a certain element of urgency. I deliberately stress her patience here because Aphrodite is also known to be an unkind and brutal goddess as can be seen in Euripides' much later *Hippolytus* or in her threats to Anchises once they have had intercourse.[55] While some Homeric heroes certainly enjoy a very intimate relationship with the

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[53] Robbins (1995) 229.
[54] Robbins (1995) 229. See also *Hom. Hymn* 10.
[55] Wilson (1996).

gods, any hymn or invocation generally takes care to approach any divinity as laid down by tradition so as to not offend him or her.

This is best done within the previously mentioned tripartite structure of the cletic hymn according to which the petitioner would then traditionally remind the divinity of any help previously offered or find some other motivation for his request. Having presented his case the petitioner would then make his request. As we have seen, on the whole Sappho has followed this pattern rather meticulously (with the odd irregularity as demonstrated above), while, nevertheless, adding her own touch through the coinage of new epithets and allusions to Homer.

However, the nature of the verbal exchange between the goddess and Sappho suggests an unusual closeness between the two. As the temporal adverb ••••• implies, this is not the first meeting between them. If we examine the adverb ••••• more closely, we find that while it is by far the most popular of temporal labels among the lyric poets (for examples see Alcman *fr.* 591; Sappho *frs.* 1.15, 16, 18, 22.11) it remains rather obscure as to what point in time it actually denotes. A *krasis* of the particle •• and ••••, the adverb combines two meanings: while the former component of the adverb signifies vividly and

dramatically that something is taking place at the moment, thus marking a time in the present, the latter translates as ‘again’ or ‘once again’, denoting a pattern of repeated actions.[56] Carson fittingly summarises the meaning of the adverb as •• ‘places you in time and emphasizes that placement: *now*’ while •••• ‘intercepts “now” and binds it into a history of “*thens*”’.[57]

Sappho manages to encapsulate the very essence of the word in her use of it. By inserting it in the goddess’ speech to the poet rather than the petitioner’s plea she makes Aphrodite ever-present. From the use of the word ••••• by Aphrodite herself we know that this is the not the first time she has extended her help to Sappho, nor will it be the last. The goddess is present that very moment, while the temporal adverb indicates the numerous times she has appeared in the past and will do so again in the future, whilst also displaying her great patience and willingness to hear Sappho’s request which also demonstrates her good will toward the poet.

The adverb appears first in line 16 and is reiterated in line 18 which Campbell understands to be for the sake of heightening the pathos. However, given the

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[56] Deniston (1954) 203, 214, 250.
[57] Carson (1986) 119.

fact that the goddess is now addressing Sappho in direct speech, while earlier she was being quoted by Sappho herself (indirect speech), I believe that Sappho is trying to encapsulate their close relationship with each other. The goddess addressing her directly, whilst implying that this is just one of many exchanges, suggests a great level of intimacy between them.

If Euripides' *Hippolytus* gives an example of the goddess' harsh characteristics, then Sappho is here showing us a more sympathetic, kind and almost light-hearted side of Aphrodite. Rather than an 'encounter between a victim and a controlling deity', as argued by Winkler,[58] the relationship between the poet and the goddess is reminiscent of that between Aphrodite and Dione in the *Iliad*, namely that between a mother and daughter. Similarly, Burnett observes that the 'charming goddess treats Sappho with a familiar affection, almost as if there were kinship between them',[59] thus rejecting the approach of Page who succeeded in hearing a tone of 'reproof and impatience' in her speech.[60]

While I do not share Page's opinion on this matter, I do not completely reject it either. There certainly is

[58] Winkler (1996) 94.
[59] Burnett (1983) 254.
[60] Page (1955) 13, cf. Wilson (1996).

no reproof in Aphrodite's words but there is, however, a subtle indication of impatience which Page later comments on when comparing her to 'a mother with a troublesome child'.[61] While Sappho may perhaps not be *troublesome* she certainly appears to be troubled and, like a child, she seeks the reassurance and comfort of a more mature mother figure in the form of Aphrodite.

To shed some light on the nature of the relationship between the goddess and Sappho it is useful to consider the scene from the *Iliad* which shows the goddess interacting with her own mother. Having been wounded, Aphrodite returns to Olympus only to seek comfort from her mother. Upon her return Dione asks:

> "••• •• •• •••••• •••••, ••••• •••••, ••••••••••
> ••••••••, •• •• •• ••••• •••••••• •••••;"
>
> 'Who now of the Uranian gods, dear child, has done such things to you, rashly, as if you were caught doing something wicked?'
>
> (*Il*. 5.370 ff.)[62]

Here the role of Aphrodite is reversed. Not only is she the one in pain (quite literally) but rather than descending to earth, she ascends to heaven, which is where she has just come from in Sappho's poem. While there is no direct allusion such as repetition of phrase or expression in this scene, one can detect a significant similarity of situation. Aphrodite and

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[61] Page (1955) 15.
[62] See Winkler (1996).

Sappho have both been hurt – Aphrodite has been reproached and physically wounded by a mortal while Sappho is suffering the emotional turmoil of love – and they seek comfort. In Aphrodite's case, naturally, the daughter calls upon her mother while Sappho, unsurprisingly, chooses the goddess as her confidante.[63]

Furthermore, the word •• used in the scene between mother and daughter not only serves to strengthen the question but, like the Sapphic •••••, is a temporal adverb which denotes not only the immediate present but also the past and the future.[64] 'Who now of the gods…?', Dione asks her child, implying that there have been previous occasions when Aphrodite was upset and mocked by the other gods. As already mentioned above, in Sappho's poem the temporal adverb similarly establishes that there have been other times the poet has felt the need to turn to the goddess.

Like Aphrodite in the case of Sappho, Dione then dispenses advice to her daughter. She tells her to be patient (381-415) as all gods have endured injury at one point or another and need to accept it. The general idea behind her counsel is the fact that everything happens in cycles. Similarly, Aphrodite

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[63] Wilson (1996).
[64] For examples of its use with reference to the past, see *Il.* 3.439, and in reference to the future see *Il*. 5.279.

later assures Sappho that her beloved will soon experience being a lover since, naturally, love is also circular.[65] One moment, one is pursuing an object of desire while the next moment one is being pursued.[66] Thus, Sappho's object of affection will eventually experience a reversal of roles.[67]

Finally, Dione uses the phrase ••••• •• ••• ••••••••• in the direct address to her daughter.

According to Parry's definition, these words represent a Homeric formula[68] and Levine translates it as 'He /she gave him/her an affectionate caress'.[69] He also remarks that in the *Odyssey* this phrase is always combined with a smile of affection and thus this 'gentle action reinforces the loving regard expressed by the smile'.[70] In the *Iliad*, however, 'the formula is simply an affectionate caress' that is never used in connection with smiling and 'involves parent and child, husband and wife'.[71]

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[65] Greene (1996).
[66] Giacomelli (1980).
[67] By this, I do not necessarily mean that the roles of Sappho and her beloved will be reversed as suggested by Giacomelli (1980); Burnett (1983) 255-7. I merely would like to draw attention to the fact that eventually Sappho's beloved will fall for someone who does not reciprocate her feelings.
[68] 'In the diction of bardic poetry, the formula can be defined as an expression regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express an essential idea. What is essential in an idea is what remains after all stylistic superfluity has been taken from it' (Parry [1971] 13).
[69] Levine (1983) 101.
[70] Levine (1983) 101.
[71] Levine (1983) 101.

Smiles in the *Iliad* frequently express ‘affection mixed with amusement’ (see 1.595ff.),[72] and while Dione is not said to be smiling, Zeus is later described as smiling with amusement at Athene’s joke about Aphrodite’s behaviour:

> •• ••••, •••••••• •• ••••• •••••• •• •••• ••,
> ••• •• •••••••••••• ••••••• •••••• •••••••••

> Thus she spoke and the father of gods and men smiled on her
> and spoke to Aphrodite the golden, calling her to him.

> (5.426-7)

Here, Zeus is clearly amused by the account of his daughter’s behaviour and, like Dione, thus displays his affection toward her.

In summary, both women are suffering. Sappho is emotionally hurt and confides in Aphrodite who arrives smiling at her. Similarly, in the *Iliad* Aphrodite also finds herself hurt, albeit physically, and in need of consolation she turns to her mother, Dione. The Sapphic Aphrodite is described as •••••••••••• while in the *Iliad* Dione welcomes her with affection as illustrated by ••••• •• ••• ••••••••• – an expression which is repeatedly associated with the action of smiling in the Homeric epics. As a reaction to her behaviour, the goddess’ father Zeus breaks into a

[72] Levine (1983) 100.

smile of amusement as demonstrated by ••••••••. In addition, Dione and the Sapphic Aphrodite, who is now in the role of the confidante, both indicate through a temporal adverb that they have indeed encountered this situation before.

To conclude, it is necessary to recall the fact that at the very beginning of her poem Sappho consciously indicated that her prayer would involve the Homeric Aphrodite, namely the daughter of Zeus and Dione, rather than the primordial force that rose from the sea as a result of the violent castration of Ouranus, as indicated by Hesiod (*Th.* 176-206). Thus a role reversal has taken place in every way possible: Aphrodite has evolved from her Homeric self, her powers formerly being restricted to the domain of love and snubbed by all (note that Aphrodite is, after all, put in her place by a mortal!), to a goddess that rules over love at her will. Moreover, this role reversal also concerns Sappho. After all, it is the feeling of reassurance and the wisdom of a mother figure she seeks.

While, as mentioned earlier, there may be subtle hints as to the goddess' potential power in Homer (*Il.* 14.197-9 as quoted above) which become much more explicit in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, it is Sappho's poem which demonstrates the full extent of

her supremacy. Through enriched allusions to Homer, Sappho attempts to create a much more powerful Aphrodite than her epic predecessor. By drawing upon vocabulary that is traditionally used in reference to Zeus such as ••••••• in line one and the suggestion of a possible throne by the ambiguous adjective •••••••••••• Sappho establishes a multi-faceted goddess whose reign extends far beyond that of her Homeric self.

Furthermore, the epithet ••••••••• illustrates that this new Aphrodite unites in herself male as well as female qualities. As explained earlier, the epithet is a compound of the word •••••, which means ‘trickery, deception’ and is repeatedly associated with the male hero Odysseus, who is admired throughout antiquity for his resourcefulness and ability to bounce back from any setback, no matter how serious.

The second part of the adjective consists of the word •••••• from the Greek for ‘to weave’, and thus represents the traditionally female task of weaving. Pantelia explains that ‘in the Homeric poems all women, including queens and goddesses, are either specifically described or said to be involved in the spinning of wool or the creation of cloth on their looms’, and further elaborates that this ‘work symbolizes the normal order of life, in which women

take care of their households while men defend the city'.[73] Thus, as demonstrated by her epithet (which here reflects the 'three major Homeric epithets for the goddess'—•••• •••••••, •••••••••••• and ••••••),[74] Aphrodite combines in herself an admired male quality and highly recognized female activity. Like Odysseus, she is skilful and cunning without lacking the female skills.

The second aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is that of the relationship between Sappho and Aphrodite. Wilson observes that 'one god [Aphrodite] figures most often and significantly' in Sappho's poetry and its 'framework also centres on Aphrodisian characteristics: beauty, love, and associated symbols such as the flowers that decorate her worshippers'.[75] Snyder supports this view:

> Difficult though it is to extract many consistent themes from the fragments of Sappho's poems, one relationship emerges quite distinctly: the singer as the protégé of Aphrodite, goddess of love. If we had the complete collection of Sappho's songs, it is a reasonable guess that we would find Aphrodite to be the most prominent among the gods and goddesses whom Sappho addresses or describes.[76]

Thus, there is no doubt that Sappho harboured a certain affection for the goddess who subsequently

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[73] Pantelia (1993) 493.
[74] Rissman (1983) 2.
[75] Wilson (1996) 21.
[76] McIntosh Snyder (1997) 7.

received preferential treatment in her poetry. For the same reason it comes as no surprise that Sappho would address a prayer to the goddess in her hour of need. While such behaviour is by no means unusual, given the fact that in epic poetry most heroes enjoy a close relationship with a divinity and thus frequently address them in prayer (*Il*. 1.450, 3.296-301; *Od.* 1.378, 2.143, 9.526-36), Sappho suggests that her relationship with the goddess is much more intimate than that of the average divinity and petitioner.[77] Burnett points out that traditionally 'when a petitioner makes reference to past benefactions, he does so in terms as vague as possible, which is only common sense, since he does not want to offer any point that might be challenged or denied'.[78]

As I have suggested earlier, Sappho has clearly modelled large parts of the poem on passages from Homer's *Iliad* with a particular focus on book five. As Rissman points out, the 'Homericity' of the poem is 'indisputable' and Sappho has made a conscious effort to relate her Aphrodite closely to

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[77] In fact, Lateiner points out that 'Homeric prayer differs from later Greek traditions and literary epiphanies. Heroic mortals stand closer to gods than later thinkers imagined possible…. Homeric man and god remain remote and mutually impenetrable even when face-to-face. They preserve an unencroachable kernel of selfhood, beyond suasion or sympathy. Thus, epic heroes demonstrate a different relationship between humans and gods. This self-sustaining attitude determines not only Odysseus' prayers, but Sappho's to Aphrodite, and Sophoclean Ajax' to Zeus' (Lateiner [1997] 241, 249).

[78] Burnett (1983) 253.

that of Homer.[79] The allusions to Homer may be many but it is the reference to the episode between Dione and Aphrodite in *Iliad* 5 that best exemplifies the nature of the relationship between the Sapphic Aphrodite and the poet.

As demonstrated above, there is a certain similarity of situation, which leaves both Iliadic Aphrodite and Sappho suffering. Whereas in Homer the goddess suffers physical and emotional abuse so to speak, Sappho is experiencing purely emotional pain (3). While in the *Iliad* the goddess receives counsel from her mother, Sappho chooses Aphrodite. In a situation where many women would turn to their mothers, girlfriends or some other confidante, Sappho prefers Aphrodite. While such feelings on Sappho's behalf would certainly explain the goddess' position of superiority and the frequency with which she appears in Sapphic poetry, the interpretation of Sappho's poetry remains highly speculative.

However, it is striking that Sappho has chosen Homeric passages that encourage a comparison between Aphrodite and both Hera and Athene. After all, it is precisely these three goddesses that embody among themselves the triple aspects of the Great Goddess that is maiden – wife – mistress/ whore. This goddess is often said to

[79] Rissman (1983) 1.

unite opposites such as ‘light and darkness, both upper and lower worlds, embracing the totality of the cycle of birth, death, and renewal in all aspects’.[80] More importantly, her presence is felt in a poem that aims to represent Aphrodite as a powerful, multi-faceted goddess. Unlike the Homeric Aphrodite, who merely represents one aspect of the three embodied in the Great Goddess (and perhaps in the male-orientated world of Homer it is also the least valued aspect), the Sapphic Aphrodite seems to fully embody the triple aspects of her predecessor. While initially this may seem far-fetched, it would certainly explain the allusions to Hera and Athene as well as the mention of sparrows: birds were recognised as a common symbol of the Great Goddess since their flight links earth and sky.

Therefore, despite the fact that the universality of Aphrodite may seem somewhat underdeveloped in *fr.* 1, the symbology such as the sparrows and chariot clearly point toward a development of the goddess’ powers. Combined with the amalgamation of Sapphic and Homeric characteristics, this symbology then creates a much more universal and all-encompassing goddess who embodies in herself a number of binary oppositions. As previously discussed, she shows male and female characteristics (for example, as expressed by the use

[80] Harris & Platzner (2001) 100.

of unique epithets such as •••••••••), whilst also uniting the brightness of the sky and the darkness of the earth by her descent. In addition, her intimate relationship with the mortal poet indicates a degree of mediation between the binary oppositions of mortal and immortal.

It is this universality of the goddess and the mediation between the binary oppositions, in particular the male/ female conflict, that will be explored in the following chapter. Not only has Aphrodite’s omni-presence become more apparent but the concept of female beauty, which was discussed in the previous chapter, has also been adjusted to fit a less dichotomous format.

CHAPTER III:
THE OMNIPRESENCE OF APHRODITE IN SAPPHO'S LYRICS

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Some say a host of cavalry, others of infantry, and others of ships, is the most beautiful thing on the black earth, but I say it is whatsoever a person loves. It is perfectly easy to make this understood by everyone: for

> she who surpasses mankind in beauty, Helen, left her most noble husband and went sailing off to Troy with no thought at all for her child or dear parents, but (love) led her astray . . . lightly . . . (and she?) has reminded me now of Anaktoria who is not here; I would rather see her lovely walk and the bright sparkle of her face than the Lydian chariots and armed infantry . . . impossible to happen . . . mankind . . .but to pray to share . . . unexpectedly.

'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder' – this is essentially what Sappho instructs her audience in this poem (Sappho *fr.* 16). 'Some', she explains, 'say a host of cavalry, others of infantry, and others of ships, is the most beautiful thing on the dark earth, but I say it is whatsoever a person loves.' The poem begins with a catalogue of military options, which has received much scholarly attention.[1] Page identifies it as a common device whereby 'the principal theme is introduced as the climax of a series of popular subjects for comparison' also known as priamel.[2] He is supported in this view by other critics who consider

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[1] In fact, the sheer magnitude of secondary literature on Sappho's poetry and *fr.* 16 demonstrates the controversy and mystery surrounding this particular poem. However, due to space limitations I shall mainly focus on the scholarship of the twentieth century, selecting a few significant studies to gain a deeper understanding of the poem.

[2] Page (1955) 55.

this poem as a model instance of the use of the priamel.[3]

In contrast, Wills and Schmid argue that the application of the priamel technique is faulty. While the former is more cautious in considering the nature of the relationship between the catalogued values and the climactic one to be 'tenuous',[4] the latter frankly doubts the effective use of the device remarking: 'Fast scheinen beide Seiten überhaupt nicht miteinander vergleichbar zu sein.'[5]

The problem, it seems, lies with Sappho's choice of military imagery as a means of comparison and its relationship with the remainder of the poem. At first glance there does not seem to be much scope for variation of the theme, and, while horses and ships occur in lists of visual splendour in Pindar (*Isthm*. 5, 4-6) and in the *Hymn To Apollo* (155, 263-6), Dornseiff points out that these lists are either 'more varied than Sappho's, or more specifically connected with the poet's subject matter'.[6] In addition, Wills

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[3] Bundy (1962) 5; Dornseiff (1921) 99; (1933) 78-82; Oehler (1925) 49-50; Kröhling (1935) 32-4.
[4] Wills (1967) 435.
[5] Schmid (1964) 54.
[6] Dornseiff (1933) 79-80.

criticises the poem for juxtaposing the concrete with the abstract claiming that the ‘proposition and the specific items exist on such different planes as to make their comparison seem almost clumsy’.[7] Page and Kirkwood show even less enthusiasm for the poem’s content and structure and consider it lacking the skill demonstrated by other poets of Sappho’s time.[8]

Previous scholarship, then, as demonstrated above, seems mostly preoccupied with determining whether the application of the priamel was done effectively or not. Nevertheless, Wills, who initially fails to see past the problem that surrounds the opening lines of the poem, reaches a significant conclusion when he identifies Helen’s beauty not as stationary but rather as drawing ‘society after her in a human earthquake’.[9] This suggests that Helen’s physical appearance is somewhat more than a façade – a channel, rather, of some kind of magnetic power mobilising herself and, subsequently, society. More recent scholarly response to the poem (mostly female) has been even more positive. duBois, in particular, rejects Page’s view, valuing the poem as ‘extraordinary not only for its

[7] Wills (1967) 436.
[8] Page (1955) 52-7; Kirkwood (1974) 107.
[9] Wills (1967) 442.

superb control and unity but also for its ambitions'.[10] She conceives it first of all as a love poem, and, secondly, as an attempt by Sappho to treat Helen as an 'autonomous subject'.[11] Sappho's Helen, according to duBois' understanding of the poem, has evolved from her Homeric static self (present in the Homeric diction) to a new lyric self that allows her to define herself not as part of a male hierarchy but as measured against a common standard.[12]

Dornseiff's difficulty in associating the military theme of the priamel with the general subject matter has been swept aside by Burnett who compliments Sappho on her 'usual wit, as she boldly sets the undulating step of a single absent friend beside the grand deployments of the martial world, and pits the remembered sparkle of a girl's eye against the sheen of countless waves and shields and windfilled sails.'[13] Here, the juxtaposition of military with feminine imagery is no longer seen as problematic but rather as

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[10] duBois (1995) 101.

[11] duBois (1996) 88.

[12] duBois ([1996] 84, 86-8) understands this common standard to be ' that of the most beautiful on the black earth' (16.2-3) and attributes this approach to the transitional nature of the seventh century which saw the introduction of money and a change in the traditional archaic marriage system leaving women such as Sappho in new, undefined roles.

[13] Burnett (1983) 280.

a confident step of Sappho's toward breaking down the stereotypical codes of a heavily gendered society.

Yet another approach is taken by Worman whose reading of the poem focuses on the body's seduction of the eye. She detects a close connection between 'the role of the visual in desire and the compulsion that sight may arouse',[14] and subsequently identifies a pattern according to which desire is aroused through sight. This leads her to conclude that seduction works through the eyes, that is, 'through the love object's being seen by the lover and through the beloved as seeing subject attracting with her eyes'.[15] The significance of this statement becomes apparent if we consider Clark's argument. Not only does she maintain the idea 'that power relations are entailed in the action of seeing and being seen, that observation is a mode of domination' but she also claims that the body '"mediates" all action, being the medium for the internalization and the reproduction of social values'.[16]

This can usefully be seen in the context of Worman's argument that the 'ode is thus structured by a sort of

[14] Worman (1997) 167.
[15] Worman (1997) 167.
[16] Clark (1996) 145.

body logic: the movement of bodies in the visual field, and their analogical relations to one another as viewer and viewed, maps a reasoning from exemplary bodies to familiar ones'.[17] Thus the bodies move from the impersonal body of the army to more specific territory involving Helen and Troy, and eventually, to Anaktoria, closest and personal to Sappho. Not only do these bodies move, but they also play with the concept of desire through sight. Helen who is usually viewed by others is the viewer in the poem while at the same time also being viewed by Sappho and the audience. The poet also draws attention to her desire for Anaktoria whose image she holds above all others. Yet Anaktoria is neither viewer nor is she being viewed; she is absent and it is the memory of her image that Sappho adores.

It is the term 'body logic' and the bodies of the poem that I would like to explore further. Not only was the body central to Greek culture, but it was also the locus of much gender-specific stereotyping (as in any culture) and it certainly plays a significant role in this poem. Sappho *fr.* 16 seems filled with bodies, be it male or female bodies, present or absent bodies, collective bodies as represented in the military

[17] Worman (1997) 168.

catalogue, or singular units such as Helen and Anaktoria.[18] While these bodies differ by gender in that the military catalogue of the first stanza denotes a male, martial world of war, and, in contrast, Helen and Anaktoria are female, who by tradition are associated with the domestic sphere of the *oikos*, and perhaps even love, they all share a common denominator - the fact that they are in motion.[19] While one could argue that it is only natural for the military bodies to be on the move during their campaigns it appears unusual that the women of the poem are also rather actively involved in movement. More importantly, in Helen's case, this movement is by her own choice.

In line two of the poem Sappho uses the Homeric phrase ••[•] ••• •••••[•]•• which not only recalls the Trojan War but also prepares for the introduction of Helen at the end of the second stanza. Helen, we are told, went to Troy (•••, 9) and she did so accompanied by the participles (••••[••••]•• and •••••[••), which indicate further movement.[20] As duBois correctly points out, this movement stands in direct contrast to her

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[18] Perhaps one can even include Paris and Menelaos in this catalogue. Both may not be mentioned by name but their presence is made known by the allusion to the Trojan War.

[19] Helen is also closely associated with the battle formations of the first stanza by mythological tradition as well as domestic transgression, which I shall comment on at a later stage.

[20] Note the active voice of the verbs here – Helen is not snatched away by Paris but chooses to go to Troy.

supposed static role as a wife, mother and daughter which, by tradition, ought to have satisfied her.[21] The name of Helen is also quite literally surrounded by men (7), [•••]••••• ••••• [••]• •••••, and the phrase is preceded by the word ••••••, her beauty, in the emphatic position at the beginning of the line.[22] It is indeed her beauty that qualifies her as an example for Sappho's thesis but it is not itself the object of desire. Helen's beauty may, by tradition, be her trademark, but here it represents the means by which she is enabled to surpass, as it were, and leave behind the mortal sphere.

In addition, the hyperbolical phrase, which elevates her above all others, •••• •••••••••• •••••• (6-7), finds - in Helen's estimation – an unsatisfactory response in the superlative [•••••]••••• (8), clearly alluding to Menelaos. Despite the fact that Menelaos, who remains unnamed in the text, is the best man of all, he is, nevertheless, mortal, while Helen, as established earlier, has become larger than life and been made immortal by the outstanding quality of her beauty (8). Sappho also makes her the grammatical

[21] duBois (1995) 103.

[22] duBois ([1996] 81) also points out that it is her beauty that makes her immortal in history while in this line of the poem she is surrounded, quite literally, by mortal men.

subject of the sentence while her male counterpart remains the unidentified, passive object, merely described by a generic and, perhaps Homeric-formulaic, adjective. Therefore, the syntactic structure of the sentence translates to the action of the poem. Helen becomes the agent while the male figures regress to passivity.

Sappho thus seemingly rejects what Lyons refers to as the 'economics of gender'. Coined by Lyons to encapsulate the range of relations and transactions conditioned by the different status of men and women, the term also refers to a rigid concept that sees the integrity of the *oikos* closely connected to the wife's fidelity and submission to her husband.[23] The Sapphic Helen pays no attention to such traditional bridal terminology but adopts the male role for herself. After all, she is on her way to Troy of her own volition to become the bride of Paris. Not only has she abandoned her husband and family, but she has also chosen her new husband herself, and her rejection of the traditional customs that accompany the Greek wedding ritual is further emphasised by the active

[23] Lyons (2003) 98.

voice of the verb.[24] Sappho further accentuates this role reversal by creating contrast after contrast: the armies versus the singular voice of Sappho (1-3); Helen versus mankind by means of her beauty; immortal versus mortal; Helen, immortal through her beauty, versus the unnamed mortal man (7); Sappho's presence versus Anaktoria's absence; and finally, the movement of one (Anaktoria) versus that of an entire army (17 – 20).

Moreover, although female beauty, as discussed in the first chapter, can be represented in several ways, it is almost always done with the aid of beauty-enhancing objects such as jewellery or flowers. As Clark demonstrates, the Greek representation of female beauty focuses upon skin colour and hair, garlands of flowers and crowns, golden jewellery and shining gowns, the sweet laughter of young virgins and the elegant walk of soft feet.[25] Judging from her other extant poems one can safely conclude that Sappho was very capable of portraying feminine beauty according to the traditional epic and lyric standards. As *fr.* 44 aptly illustrates, she skilfully sets the scene with a number of references to the above features, while

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[24] Lyons (2003). A man marries in the active voice while the middle voice is used of women in the same context, e.g. *Od.* 15.241, 2.113.

[25] Clark (2001) 9.

another poem depicts beautiful Dika placing garlands on her lovely hair (Sappho *fr.* 81).[26] Foley generalises that 'the poems repeatedly evoke the same symbols (garlands, beautiful clothes, flowers), similar erotic spaces and similar events (songs, dances, festivals or picnics in groves)'.[27] Yet in the poem in which Sappho directly refers to beauty and attempts its explanation this is not the case. The poet departs from her usual style leaving behind the female as the exclusive object of desire. There is also no setting of the scene, only a loose time frame: events take place in the distant past (Helen, Troy), in the more recent past (the memory of Anaktoria) and in the present (Sappho reminiscing). The object of desire becomes ambiguous, taking on many roles, and in Helen's case it even becomes male.

Given that *fr.* 16 appears to differ from most of Sappho's works in style as well as subject matter, it may be useful to consider Clark's work on Sappho's *fr.* 31. Clark observes that like *fr.* 16, *fr.* 31 also lacks certain very common devices, which are generally characteristic of lyric poetry.[28] As in *fr.* 16, Sappho avoids any descriptions of female beauty, there being

[26] For further examples see Sappho *frs.* 96, 98.
[27] Foley (1998) 66.
[28] Clark (2001) 11.

no comments on clothes, hair or physical appearance in general. Being faced with such interpretative difficulties she then sets out to examine more closely the category into which all such descriptions fall: that of nonverbal communication. As briefly explained in chapter one, this particular communicative behaviour represents a category of interaction that refers to communication made with body, face, voice and posture. Moreover, its significance for ancient literature has been successfully demonstrated by Lateiner's study on its use in the Homeric epics.

As discussed in chapter one, nonverbal communication covers a wide field including interactive behaviours stretching from decisive gestures such as shaking someone's hand as a means of greeting to involuntary quivering when scared and also to the clothes a person is wearing. As Lateiner goes on to show, nonverbal communication can be used for a variety of purposes in literature. For example, when Odysseus encounters Nausikaa in book six of the *Odyssey* he considers carefully how to approach her so as not to scare her or violate her social status as *parthenos*. As Lateiner observes, the hero is 'consciously calculating the most effective communication strategy' to put across

his intentions.[29] In this instance, the hero deliberately opts to conform to social etiquette. Thus through his nonverbal actions he displays his benevolent intentions toward the young girl and it is this nonverbal conduct of the situation that enables all further verbal communication between the two.

Adapting and developing Lateiner's discoveries for her own purposes, Clark applies them to lyric poetry. She explains that due to the compact nature of lyric poems and their rapid development the use of nonverbal behaviours is particularly well suited when it comes to 'revealing emotional states quickly or contradicting them, creating atmosphere, and initiating or furthering the plot'.[30] For her argument, she identifies six categories of nonverbal communication, which the lyric poets employ consistently:

> **gesture** (including facial expressions), **affect displays** (autonomic responses of the nervous system such as trembling and weeping), **proxemics** (the human perception, use, and manipulation of space, including the ways in which people dispose their bodies in relation to one another), **paralinguistics** (vocal effects such as tone, pitch, pace, and breathing), **significant objects and object adaptors** (clothing and jewelry, and hairstyles which reveal gender and

[29] Lateiner (1995) 110.
[30] Clark (2001) 6.

> class codes; symbols of authority such as crowns and scepters), and **chronemics** (the human perception, use, and manipulation of time).[31]

Out of the above six categories gesture and significant objects are by and large the most popular among lyric poets. Sappho herself often makes use of significant objects such as garlands and flowers to enhance feminine beauty, while in literature gesture, along with facial expression and posture, has been known to convey 55% of expressed emotion with verbal communication at times accounting for as little as 10%.[32] Moreover, both of the above categories are closely associated with and widely popular in descriptions of female beauty. As shown earlier, significant objects feature greatly in the creation scene of Pandora, Aphrodite's beautification prior to her seduction of Anchises, and Hera's toilet preceding the deception of Zeus.[33] Moreover, Sappho herself emphasises the importance of gesture and posture when she mocks a country girl for her inelegant way of walking and graceless deportment (Sappho *fr.* 52).

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[31] Clark (2001) 5-6 (my emphases added).
[32] Lateiner (1992) 133.
[33] For examples of Pandora see *Hes. Th*. 575ff., *WD.* 72ff; of Aphrodite: *Hom. Hymn* 5.60ff.; of Hera: Hom*. Il.* 14.166ff.

Given the popularity and success of the employment of such devices when it comes to the description of female beauty, it then seems somewhat startling that Sappho chooses not to make use of them at all in the very poem that deals with the topic of beauty. Despite Helen’s outstanding beauty, of which Sappho is clearly aware, she only acknowledges it with a very general term in line six and avoids any further embellishment of it. On the surface, Anaktoria seems to receive a similar treatment. The girl whom Sappho evidently considers equally beautiful compared to her mythological counterpart may comply with the poet’s personal beauty standard but once more her physical appearance lacks detailed description. There are no references to flowers, garlands, jewellery, colour of skin or hair, no finely woven garments, no significant objects at all. Sappho chooses to comment only on her beloved’s walk and the somewhat ambiguous sparkling quality of her face. Indeed, even the very thing that causes Helen to leave behind everything familiar - namely Trojan Paris, in her view the most beautiful thing of all - is never directly mentioned. While there would be plenty of scope for further descriptions, he remains unnamed throughout the poem.

It is, of course, merely through mythological tradition that we have come to know Helen's motivation for leaving home. Sappho here clearly avoids any direct descriptions of her characters and simply includes an allusion to Homeric epic. It is the telltale sign of the Trojan War that enlightens the audience. The epic point of reference informs Sappho's audience that this is none other than Argive Helen, and that for once it is not her beauty that calls for attention. For once Helen is not a slave of her own physical appearance but the means by which Sappho intends to prove a point.

The poet uses Helen as an example in her argument for the subjectivity of beauty. After all, who else could prove her point better than the woman who is universally known for her beauty? As Pantelia explains: 'there is a certain dimension present in every poem which is based on knowledge that both the audience and the poet share'.[34] It is this shared knowledge that allows the audience to enter the world of the poem and familiarise itself with the subject matter. While the military elements of the first stanza are relative claims to beauty, Helen undoubtedly is the authority on the subject. Thus

[34] Pantelia (1987) 53.

Sappho to an extent exploits Helen's reputation here to add credibility to her argument. However, to achieve this it is essential to avoid all traditional embellishment of her beauty, as it no doubt would lead to gender-related stereotyping.

At this point it is useful to remind ourselves of the extent of gender-related stereotyping in Greek literature.[35] More often than not the female body is depicted as 'dangerously desirable'. Female beauty is repeatedly juxtaposed with hazardous consequences for men and almost always regarded as 'a threat to male-ordered society'.[36] This is especially so with the character of Helen. As Bassi observes: 'Helen occupies a central position in the Western tradition of females who engender suspicion and conflict just as she is persistently appropriated as an object of struggle for authorship and authority'.[37] Thus along with the suspicion toward her beauty there also comes the notion of a power struggle between the sexes that perhaps may not end in favour of the man.

Likewise, Worman makes the very valid point that the females described in such fashion are more often than

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[35] Worman (1997).
[36] Hawley (1998) 40.
[37] Bassi (1995) 61-2.

not immortal, semi-immortal, or of immortal fabrication which leads to an immediate stereotyping of the characters of Aphrodite, Helen and Pandora.[38] It is my view that Sappho attempts an exit from such traditional characterisation because of its negative connotations. Significant objects such as jewellery and clothing may perhaps be frequently used throughout Greek literature, but one needs only to recall the circumstances of their employment, as discussed in the first chapter, to be able to identify a negative, heavily gendered pattern. Hera, Aphrodite and Pandora are reportedly most beautiful when fully adorned. However, as previously illustrated, all of these instances occur immediately before the deception of a male. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Lyons, the combination of women and precious objects, which repeatedly features during the goddesses' beautification, almost always has harmful consequences for the male.[39] Other examples are Eriphyle who trades her husband's life for a gold necklace (*Od*. 15.247), or a scorned Medea sending a poisoned robe and crown as a wedding gift to Jason (Euripides' *Medea*).

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[38] Worman (1997) 155 n. 14.
[39] Lyons (2003) 106.

However, in *fr.* 16 Sappho takes great care to leave behind such heavily stereotyped imagery. In Helen's case she does so by simply omitting it. As briefly mentioned earlier she does, nevertheless, illustrate Anaktoria's beauty in somewhat more detail. Sappho may have chosen not to emphasise any of her regular physical features but she does comment on her lovely walk (17). She uses the noun •••• (17) here, which recalls the verb of the same stem used of Helen earlier (••• 9). Not only does this link the two characters of the poem but it also implies a very subtle association with Aphrodite.

To establish and explain this connection with the goddess it is useful to consider the importance of feet and their erotic nature in Greek literature. As Levine has recently pointed out, the Greeks were very aware of the erotic potential attached to the human foot and repeatedly used it to describe attractive and desirable women.[40] There are numerous epic references to beautiful-ankled females all of which are sexually active, such as Persephone (*Hom. Hymn* 2.2, 77), Clymene (*Th.* 509), Hebe (*Od.* 11.604), Medea (*Th.* 962) and Danaë (*Il.* 14.418 -20).

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[40] See Levine ([2005] 55-72) for a more detailed study of the erotic potential of the foot in ancient Greece.

In support of his argument for this sexualisation of the foot he also refers to a possible use of the verb ••••• in an erotic context. This suggests it may have doubled as a sexual term.[41] Therefore, bearing in mind this possible second meaning of the verb the poem appears to be much more closely linked to Aphrodite than it appears to be at first sight. While this association may seem a little implausible at first, one only needs to look at the vast amount of literature on Sappho to find confirmation of the goddess' influence on her poems. Despite the fact that the understanding of Sappho's works has greatly suffered because of their fragmented state one uniform aspect of her poetry has been repeatedly highlighted and commented on:

> Difficult though it is to extract many consistent themes from the fragments of Sappho's poems, one relationship emerges quite distinctly: the singer as the protégé of Aphrodite, goddess of love. If we had the complete collection of Sappho's songs, it is a reasonable guess that we would find Aphrodite to be the most prominent among the gods and goddesses whom Sappho addresses or describes.[42]

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[41] Levine mentions the verb being used in a sexual context but gives no example. In *Hom. Od*. 3.481 it is used with an accusative meaning 'to mount' in reference to mares.

[42] MacIntosh Snyder (1997) 7.

Bearing in mind that Sappho’s audience, by tradition, is already aware of the great beauty of Helen and the good looks of Paris along with the desire that is aroused by their sight, Sappho naturally chooses to focus on Anaktoria. By deliberately singling out Anaktoria’s feet to illustrate her physical appearance, Sappho at once establishes erotic desire and thereby skilfully alludes to Aphrodite. The emphasis on her beloved’s feet recalls a passage from Hesiod, which tells of the birth of Aphrodite:

••••• ••
••••••••• •••••••••
•••••', ••••• •••••• ••••••••••
••••• ••••••.
•• •' ••• •••••• •••• ••••, ••••
•• ••••
•••••• ••• •••••••••• •••••••

> First she approached holy Cytherea, and from there she went on to the sea-girt Cyprus. She came forth, a reverend, beautiful goddess, and grass grew around her beneath her slender feet.

(*Th*. 193-6)

As we can see, the archaic poet also makes use of the verb ••••• and consciously chooses the goddess’ feet to illustrate her beauty. Not only are her feet well-formed but they also demonstrate their sexually charged potential when they cause the grass underneath to grow.

Even though Sappho only very subtly comments on Anaktoria’s walk, some of the erotic potential of the feet infiltrates into the poem and certainly adds weight to the theory of Anaktoria and the poet as former lovers. The passage is certainly rich with indirect allusions to erotic desire and Aphrodite. While most epic references to the feet of a woman are directly commenting on the slenderness of the ankles (usually a compound-adjective made up of a prefix denoting ‘beautiful’ or ‘slim’ plus -••••••) Sappho here deviates from the norm. It is Anaktoria’s walk, in particular, that Sappho fondly remembers. As with Helen’s character, which above all was characterised by her unusual mobility, Sappho alters the epic epithet so that its meaning fluctuates between eroticism and literal mobility.

The association with Aphrodite is then confirmed by the comment on Anaktoria’s face and its somewhat unexplained sparkle. The poet praises the ‘bright sparkle’ on her face using the adjective ••••••• (18). While it is usually bright or shining clothing that is referred to in a female context Sappho makes a conscious effort to avoid such gendering. Instead, she chooses an adjective which in Homer is frequently used

of body armour and heavenly bodies such as stars.[43] Rissman comments that: ‘by using the word •••••••, she [Sappho] invests the girl with the precise quality that distinguishes warriors in bright armour’.[44] Thus the adjective echoes the military imagery of the first stanza.

However, it is not only the warriors with whom Anaktoria shares this visual quality. Traditionally, goddesses are often described as generating a radiant light from their head. For example, a similar method of characterisation is used in the *Hom. Hymn* 5. After her encounter with the mortal Anchises the goddess proceeds to dress herself:

> ••••••• •' •• ••••• •••• •••• ••• •••••
> •••• ••• ••••••• ••••••••• ‹••› •••••••
> •••• ••••, •••••• •• ••••••• •••••••••
> ••••••••, •••• •' ••••• •••••••••• ••••••••••

> Her body well-clad in them all, the noble goddess stood in the hut – her head reached to the sturdy rafter, while from her cheeks shone a divine beauty, such as belongs to fair-garlanded Cytherea.

(*Hom. Hymn* 5. 172-5)

In this passage, the anonymous poet of the hymn is slightly more specific than Sappho when he informs his

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[43] Of armour see Homer *Il*. 13.132, 265; 16.216; 19.359; of heavenly bodies see *Il*. 1.605; 4.77; 5.6, 120; 8.485; 22.30.
[44] Rissman (1983) 45.

audience that it is the goddess' beauty which is shining forth from her head. He uses the verb •••••••• meaning 'shine forth, reflect'. It is not only formed from the same stem as Sappho's adjective for Anaktoria (•••••••, 18) but it is also used of the earrings worn by Hera when she seduces Zeus (*Il*. 14.183). In fact, it is the very gleam of these earrings that enables the goddess to deceive her husband. The earrings are radiant with 'the luminous *charis* of beauty' – a quality that according to MacLachlan is irresistible.[45] The use of this word in the context of *charis*, however, becomes significant when we consider Sappho's remark on the sparkle of her beloved's face. She uses the noun •••••••• (18) which can mean anything from 'a sparkle of the eye' to 'a quick, light motion'. It first occurs in the Hesiodic fragments where it is used of the Graces (*fr.* 21) and, as MacLachlan has demonstrated, 'the Greeks loved light and naturally associated it with a positive notion like *charis*'.[46]

What is more, the references to Aphrodite and Hera above are both taken from an erotically charged context, which suggests that this shining quality

[45] MacLachlan (1993) 35.
[46] MacLachlan (1993) 35.

somehow generates erotic desire.[47] In fact, Koniaris confirms that Sappho associates light with the beauty that arouses desire.[48] Thus light shining from the face is frequently seen in goddesses to express their beauty and divine status but it also strongly suggests the erotic desirability of its object.

Clarke observes another aspect when he points out that the fact that the light shines forth from the goddess' face suggests that 'gleam is assimilated to a facial smile, with the two symbolically or visually implying each other'.[49] This argument can be further supported by Burkert's theory that in archaic tradition there survives the idea that human encounter with divinity is experienced as a sudden bright light.[50] In Sappho's case this then means that the reference to the sparkle in Anaktoria's face most likely denotes a smile and perhaps also implies the powerful desire that is aroused in Sappho by the sight of her beloved. Just as Helen has become a supernatural, immortal example for great beauty and the power it can arouse, Anaktoria has been immortalised in Sappho's memory through her

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[47] For a more thorough study of the erotic quality of *charis* see MacLachlan (1993) 57-72.
[48] Koniaris (1967) 267.
[49] Clarke (2005) 47.
[50] Burkert (1997) 21.

strong association with qualities characteristic of Aphrodite herself. To Sappho, Anaktoria not only shines like a goddess but also draws her in with her smiles which further connect her to Aphrodite.[51]

By illustrating Anaktoria's beauty in a way that allows the poet to associate her with the divine rather than the image of suspicious female beauty Sappho cuts all ties with the literary tradition of gender stereotyping. The poet places Anaktoria in the typically male sphere of war while simultaneously confirming her femininity and beauty through the subtle but effective suggestion of a possible association with Aphrodite. Thus, she attempts to create a personal standard of beauty. This personal standard of beauty is far removed from what Greek literature so far considered beautiful. Not only does Sappho attempt to treat beauty as a 'genderless' subject by comparing Anaktoria with the armies of the first stanza but she also adds a personal, subjective dimension to its definition. While the Greek attitude towards female beauty has been rather unilateral and heavily stereotyped by nonverbal communication which set the standard for dress, deportment and gesture,

[51] Aphrodite's smiles are often mentioned as part of her allurement and feature greatly in love poetry. The goddess herself is said to be 'smile-loving' (*Hom. Hymn* 5.16).

Sappho argues for the individual’s perception and subjectivity.

CONCLUSION

''Tis woman that seduces all mankind; by her we
first were taught the wheedling arts'
(John Gay 1685-1732)
The Beggar's Opera Act. I Sc. 1

Female beauty is symbolised by the figure of Aphrodite. As a goddess, she represents the ideal of human perfection and, therefore, is repeatedly singled out as an object of comparison for mortal women (*Il*. 19.282, 24.699; *Od*. 17.37, 19.54). These comparisons have their roots in the quality shared by both Aphrodite and the mortal woman being compared to her, namely their outstanding beauty. Thus, as suggested earlier, beauty, to a certain extent, appears to bridge the gap between mortal and immortal. This is best illustrated by Helen and Pandora who both enjoy great beauty and semi-divine status.

As implied by Hesiod in his *Works and Days* divine qualities including beauty were granted to Pandora, the 'Ur-woman', who then passed them on to womanhood in general. Consequently, every woman harbours divine qualities among which beauty, contributed by Aphrodite, ranks most prominently.

However, as Homer and Hesiod teach us, with great beauty there usually comes deception. Hera's dazzling appearance in the *Iliad* compromises Zeus' integrity while Pandora's attractiveness causes men to toil for eternity. The deception itself occurs in the form of seduction – a concept very closely associated with Aphrodite and the 'epic *topos* of divine dressing'.[1]

As demonstrated in the first chapter, according to Greek gender codes the epic *topos* of divine dressing and subsequent deception have become almost synonymous with beauty. As a principle, these gender codes are frequently expressed through nonverbal behaviour, which also plays a significant role in the concept of seduction. Chapter one illustrates how Greek literature repeatedly uses such nonverbal phenomena to deceive a victim and thus gradually establish a pattern which renders female beauty an

[1] Brown (1997) 30.

illusion created by external decorations. Thus, Aphrodite along with female beauty comes to be misrepresented as artificial and deviating from the norm, immediately associated with deception.

However, if we leave behind the traditional texts of Homer and Hesiod to focus on Sappho we find an entirely different viewpoint. Sappho, as we have seen, has been able to represent Aphrodite and female beauty from a double perspective. Living in a patriarchal society the poet was clearly aware of male ideas and values but, simultaneously, because of her status as a woman, enjoyed a much deeper insight into female life as well. In her poem dedicated to Aphrodite Sappho paints a very different image of the goddess. Clearly very familiar with the Homeric texts Sappho has created an amalgamation of Sapphic and Homeric and male and female values. The Sapphic Aphrodite is still very much the goddess of love and beauty but, in contrast to her Homeric self, she also displays a more powerful side. Her portrayal is very reminiscent of that at the beginning of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5.1-6) when the goddess' powers are characterised as universal.

Furthermore, Sappho has used traditional Homeric imagery such as the chariot, repeatedly associated

with war, and attributed it to Aphrodite. Instead of horses, however, it is drawn by sparrows who with their flight between sky and earth signify her all-encompassing totality. Therefore, the Sapphic Aphrodite has clearly evolved from her Homeric self which is further illustrated by the allusion to book five of the *Iliad*. Therefore, the rather underdeveloped hints of Aphrodite's potential power in Homer (*Il*. 14.197-9), which are slightly more explicit in the Homeric Hymn, have reached their climax in Sappho's *fr.* 1. The goddess comes to unite in herself binary oppositions immortal and mortal through her seemingly close relationship with Sappho as well as mediating between male and female qualities as demonstrated by the use of such as epithets as •••••••••••• and •••••••••.

Sappho's *fr.* 16 attempts to tackle the subject of beauty directly. Sappho begins with a list of options: 'some say a host of cavalry, others of infantry, and others of ships, is the most beautiful' (1-3) only to then conclude that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. On first sight Aphrodite seems absent and Helen has taken her place as the most beautiful. The poem seems to have moved to familiar epic territory and several male elements such as the above armed divisions, Paris and Menelaos are mentioned or implied.

However, the time frame is very loose and soon Sappho moves on to debate her beloved's whereabouts. It seems significant that the women of the poem are all mobile, Helen choosing to move from Greece to Troy and Sappho's beloved having left. This is also reflected by the syntactical structure, in particular Helen's grammatical position as the subject (9) and the disregard of the unnamed Menelaos despite the fact that he is ••• [•••••]•••••. Thus Homeric tradition is cast aside by Helen and Sappho.

Furthermore, the fact that the very poem that sets out to deal with the subject of beauty fails to include any of its traditional characteristics, that is the nonverbal phenomena such as jewellery and clothing, as discussed above, seems significant. Sappho's conscious decision to comment only on Anaktoria's lovely walk (17) and the bright sparkle of her face (18) serves to re-introduce Aphrodite. If we consider the erotic potential attached to the foot in Greek literature and the fact that Aphrodite's own feet are immediately singled out as beautiful only shortly after her birth (Hes. *Th*. 193-6), the connection to the goddess becomes clear. Morever, the sparkle on Anaktoria's face signifies another divine quality implying a connection with

Aphrodite’s beauty shining from her own head (*Hom. Hymn* 5.172-5). Thus, Sappho thoroughly re-invents the concept of female beauty as a godlike, subjective quality that may be expressed in many ways, yet remains inspired by Aphrodite.

To conclude, Aphrodite along with female beauty evolves from the dangerously desirable image of the Homeric and Hesiodic works into a pleasurable quality to be enjoyed individually. While a warrior may be inspired by the beauty of a battle formation, Sappho sees ultimate beauty in the appearance of Anaktoria.

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